

“Ten typical people struggled to push a cart with skids, until an autistic guy showed them a wheel. Without difference, our species would have come to an end long ago.”

John Elder Robison

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“Should Autism Be Celebrated?”

ACCOMMODATIONS THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

BECCA MILLOTT, M. ED.,
ALYCE BENSON, L.C.S.W.,
AND DELL ZIMMERMAN

JOHN ELDER ROBISON

Autistic people are not missing. We have always been here, and we always will. Yet I and many other autistics live with the knowledge that we occupy a world where autism is widely perceived as a disease or defect. I can't speak for other autistics, but I don't much care to be seen as diseased or defective.

Dell's Background Info

- I am 18 and attending CSAS. I will graduate in May.
- I was diagnosed at age 9 in 2008. I qualify for services in the state of TN with autism and giftedness.
- I still receive SLP services for pragmatic language.

Anxiety and Structure

Individuals with autism are anxious.

Routines and predictability decrease anxiety.

Emotional regulation is tough.

Unstructured time may be troublesome.

Anxiety and Structure

Students with autism would rather not be surprised with change.

Substitute teachers, fire alarms, snow days, and field trips will cause stress.

Stress will significantly decrease performance, flexibility, and listening skills.

Accommodations for Anxiety

Allow student to engage in an enjoyable activity for a few minutes as a calming, transitional technique.

Self-removal to a quiet, predetermined place can allow students to reset.

Teachers can extend grace for forgetfulness/student being unprepared for class when a student is agitated.

Tips for the Regular Ed Classroom

Allow student to use a fidget in the classroom if it's not distracting.

Let the student have a five minute break to regroup if necessary.

Frequent changes in the seating arrangement can provoke stress. No assigned seating may have a similar effect.

Executive Functioning

Brain activities that allow us to set goals, organize, and complete tasks.

For those with autism it greatly impacts

Shifting cognitive set/flexibility

Impulse control

Working memory

Planning

Tips for the Regular Ed Classroom

Clear expectations with exemplars help the student know what to do. Be specific.

Teachers can provide a check-sheet of steps within a task to help students progress.

Routines and prompts are helpful.

Advancing questions can be about procedurals.

How to Get Ready in the Morning

- Get out of bed
- Eat breakfast
- Get dressed
 - Socks
 - Underwear
 - Dress or shirt
 - Pants, leggings or shorts
 - Shoes
- Comb hair
- Brush teeth and swish mouthwash
- Place lunch inside backpack
- Put backpack beside door

AFTER ALL THAT IS FINISHED, THEN YOU MAY READ

Organization

In middle school, I was allowed to turn in assignments late. This was mostly a matter of getting the assignment to class and remembering to drop it off.

I need extended time for testing. Poor working memory/executive functioning skills influence this. I test slowly.

One organizational system does not work for everyone. Please let students continue with the one that works for them.

Organization

I have executive functioning impairments. This includes difficulty with time-management, planning, preparation, and most importantly, organization.

Starting in 6th grade, I had a weekly locker and backpack cleanout. This greatly helped me stay organized. My guidance counselor also helped me straighten out binders and throw things away!

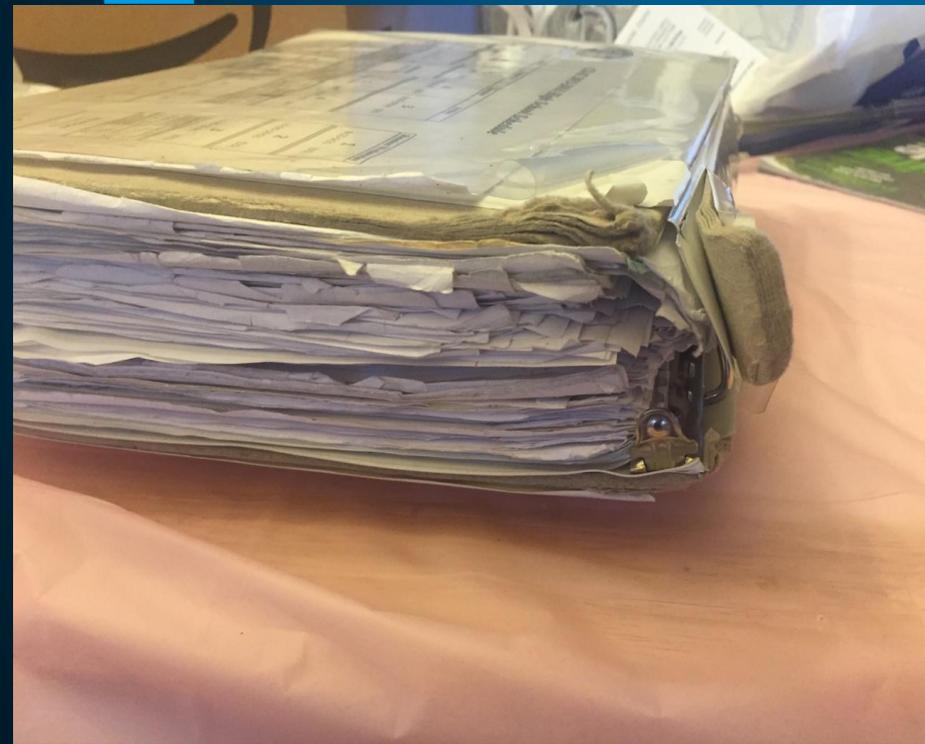
I am allowed to carry a backpack to classes. This makes keeping track of my school supplies and assignments easier.



Sophomore
Locker
Mess



A Friend's "1-inch" Binder



Assistive Technology

For 7 years, I have used a school-provided laptop. This has greatly helped in many areas.

- I type most assignments in Microsoft Word. This is to compensate for slow and messy penmanship. Please understand that this is not a matter of laziness. I simply cannot write neatly.
- I also use Microsoft Excel for graphing. This is because my graphing is inaccurate and messy as a result of weak fine motor skills.

Assistive Technology

- Another major benefit of the laptop is organization. Having everything saved in one place makes finding my work a lot easier. Of course, this only happens when the technology works!
- I also use the laptop for classroom work/lab/time logs.
- I print things at school in the office.

Diagnostic Criteria for ASD

To be diagnosed with Autism a person has to have...

Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities AND

Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts

Many people have a need for sameness/routine, and may have intense interests in particular topics or activities but social impairments are what defines autism.

*“To my way of thinking, social impairments
are the very core of autism --
more so than the repetitive behaviors.”*

Temple Grandin in “The Autistic Brain”

Social Impairments

Auditory processing delays/Receptive language disorder

Reciprocal communication weakness

Lack of attention to nonverbal cues

Misinterpreting intentions of others; effect on others

Speaking what is on their mind (often with no editing) at inappropriate times

Interpreting things literally

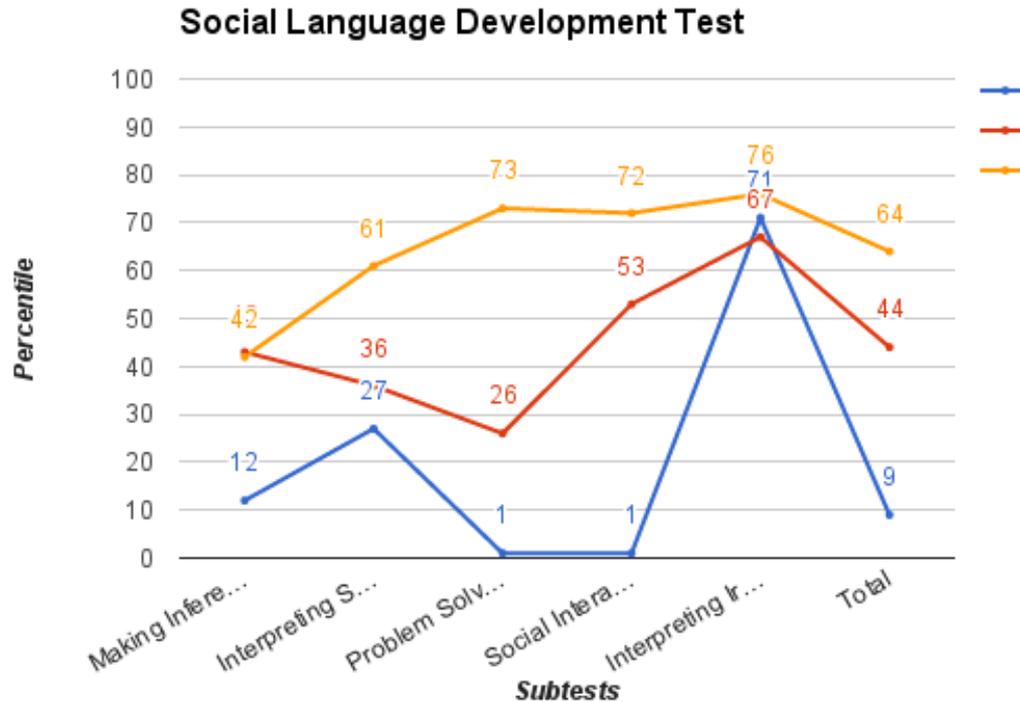
No Reciprocal Communication

4th Grade Observations:

The class worked with partners to complete an activity. They were to guess/estimate how many raisins were in a box. Dell asked the teacher if he could measure the box. He wanted to solve the questions with his own theory. His partners continuously got frustrated with him because he never told them what he was doing. Dell had very little interaction with his partners.



Social Lang. Dev. Test Contrasted with Grades



2010-2011 Grades

Language Arts
94, 94, 97, 97

Mathematics
96, 97, 97, 97

Social Studies
97, 97, 95, 96

Science
99, 98, 100, 96

Stick It in the Office!

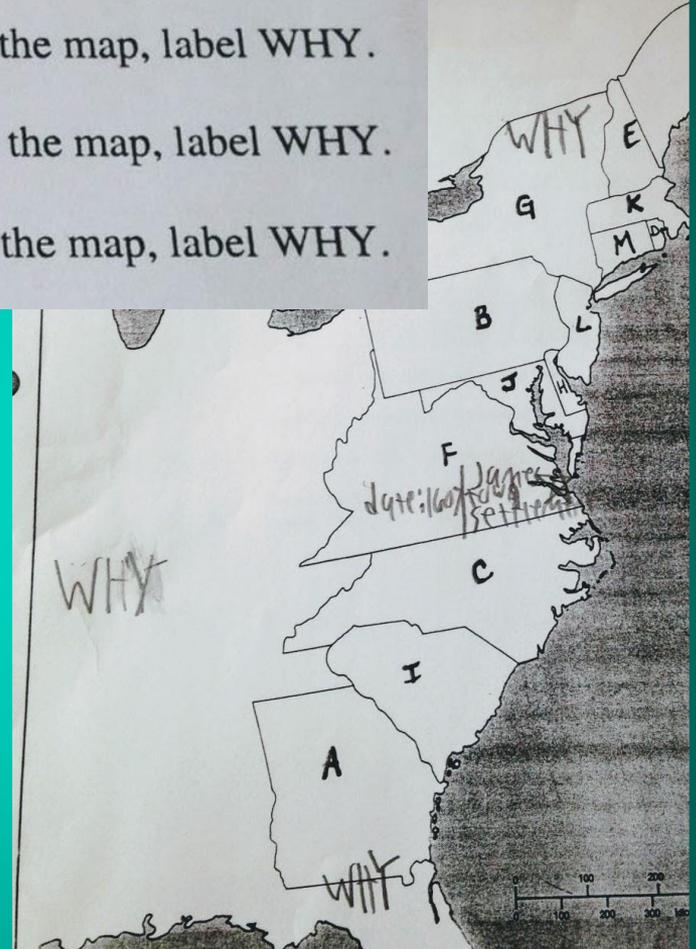


The British colonies could not expand farther north. On the map, label WHY.

The British colonies could not expand farther south. On the map, label WHY.

The British colonies could not expand farther west. On the map, label WHY.

Label "WHY" on the map



Speaking Accommodations

- I am not graded down for poor eye contact, a flat facial expression, etc. When I am presenting in class, these are often weak areas.
- For a year, I worked on interview and conversational skills. Throughout that school year, I had weekly practice interviews with administrators and teachers.

Sensory Issues

All people with autism have sensory issues. These vary with each person.

Individuals may be over or under-responsive to sensations.

A light hug or touch can be painful. In contrast, deep pressure may be calming.

Sensory triggers can be noises, smells, tastes, touch, or visual.

Sensory Issues

4th Grade Observations:

In reviewing science songs, Dell was the first one to answer out and say he knew them all. He seemed excited to sing them. The teacher watched, expecting him to lead the class. Instead, he sat at his desk with his head down and covered his ears, as if the noise was bothering him. After the songs, his ears were red where he was putting so much pressure on them. One student near him was still singing quietly, and Dell told him to stop because he couldn't stand the sound anymore.

Common Sensory Triggers

Rough clothing

Finger painting and glue

Response to heat and cold (May be delayed or absent)

Buzzers/bells

Large group gatherings

Clocks ticking

Contrast of black ink on white paper

Hum and flickering of fluorescent lights

Sensory Issues

When a child exhibits a change in behavior, always consider possible sensory issues first.

THE SOURCE MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS.

Ask parents about sensory issues.

Minimize sensory disruptions once identified.

*I can't tolerate the sound of noodles
being stirred
(that horrid squishy sound).*

-Internet testimony from an anonymous autistic

Sensory Accommodations

- Testing in a quiet environment - I am easily distracted. I cannot think with distracting noise. I have failed tests because of this.
- I use a fidget to relax when speaking to groups.
- Some students use sound-cancelling headphones in class to cut down on extraneous noises.
- Taking breaks/self-removal to a quiet place helps.

Motor Skills

Fine motor delays

Poor handwriting, hate coloring and cutting

Delays in tying shoes

Buttoning and zipping clothes can be a struggle

Gross Motor Delays

Clumsy gait

Low muscle tone making it difficult to sit still

Toe walking

Poor coordination

Motor Skills

4th Grade Observations:

During a brief review before a social studies test, Dell answered all the questions. In fact, he answered above and beyond. He sat in his desk on his knees. While the teacher passed out tests, he fell from his seat. He got back up as if nothing had happened. He made a 93 on the test.

Notes for a Presentation

1 Some facts are that while large amounts of distance & distance realizing it. I was surprised to find out how strict they are compared to us. I also found out about how most people some English but they know that American and all of that.

2 The trip I went to San Francisco to experience the culture and the people. They are very different from us.

Parent/Teacher Conference Self-Assessment

Areas in which I could make IMPROVEMENTS are...

~~At~~ I have a really terrible recovery time.
Step 10/11/12, ~~and~~ bench / technical work and
push up time. For commits to run when
proceeds, just should improve.

Estimate your 5K time at this point; and what are you going to do over the next 8 weeks to reach the 32:59 minute goal?

34-35 min.

When the weather improves, I will be able
to meet the time. For working in class
have ~~some consistency~~ ~~more~~ ~~needs to be~~ spent and focused
Sharon Whitaker
as a runner and should be able
to meet the time.

Motor Skills Accommodations

- Transcribe - I have an accommodation that allows me to mark answers in the testing booklet and a teacher/assistant will bubble in the scantron sheets. This includes even college entrance exams.
- In elementary and middle school, I had accommodations to limit coloring, cutting and copying. I was allowed to make a photocopy of class notes from the teacher.
- Adapted Physical Education can address gross motor deficits.

DR. STEPHEN SHORE

If you've met one person with autism,
you've met one person with autism.

JOHN ELDER ROBISON

As teachers, you will learn about autism when kids fail at something. When confronted by failure it's easy to become discouraged and imagine today's autistic kids will never develop into independent successful adults. Don't fall into that trap. It's impossible to tell which five year old will grow up to be a star....The best thing you can do is to help your kids minimize their disabilities while building their strengths. Never forget the potential power of Being Different.

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