



School Counselors and Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Bridging the Divide

**PRESENTED BY:
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INTRODUCTION

- **Katherine Wix, PhD**
- Assistant professor at GSU
- Clinical supervisor at TFI
- Previously: school counselor (CUSD 300), school-based therapist, behavioral therapist, community-based therapist



INTRODUCTION

- **Nicolette Karl**
- Student and research assistant at GSU
- Worked in special education
- Advocate for increased competence among counselors when working with individuals with disabilities



TAKE AWAY

- What are you hoping to learn from this presentation?

PRE-TEST SURVEY



SENSORY OBJECTS

- Take your objects out of the bag and play with them throughout the presentation
- Be mindful of your sensory experience while using these objects



WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

- The DSM-5 recognizes ASD as a form of developmental delay (Neurodevelopmental Disorders Section)
- Recent controversial changes in DSM-5
 - Elimination of Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorders
- Characterized by individual's **social communication impairment** and **repetitive and restrictive behaviors and interests**



WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

Severity Level for ASD	Social Communication	Restricted interests & repetitive behaviors
Level 3 'Requiring very substantial support'	Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning; very limited initiation of social interactions and minimal response to social overtures from others.	Preoccupations, fixated rituals and/or repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Marked distress when rituals or routines are interrupted; very difficult to redirect from fixated interest or returns to it quickly.
Level 2 'Requiring substantial support'	Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions and reduced or abnormal response to social overtures from others.	RRBs and/or preoccupations or fixated interests appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress or frustration is apparent when RRB's are interrupted; difficult to redirect from fixated interest.
Level 1 'Requiring support'	Without supports in place, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairments. Has difficulty initiating social interactions and demonstrates clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful responses to social overtures of others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions.	Rituals and repetitive behaviors (RRB's) cause significant interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Resists attempts by others to interrupt RRB's or to be redirected from fixated interest.

WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

- ASD is a disorder, not a disability
- Rote Memory
 - Ability to memorize information adeptly
 - Ex. Calendars
- Echolalia
 - Repeating words or phrases
- Gestalt Learner
 - Have to perform activities in a specific way
- Boys are more likely than girls to be diagnosed with ASD



WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?



- Many ASD individuals may have an intellectual impairment or language impairment
- Will not respond to their name by 12 months
- Avoid eye contact
- Perspective taking is amiss
- Lack the ability for shared gaze/joint attention

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL COUNSELORS ROLE?

- **ASCA Position Statement-Students with Disabilities**
 - Providing group lessons, individual and group counseling
 - Short-term, goal-focused counseling
 - **Consulting** and collaborating with staff and families
 - **Advocating** for students with special needs



WHAT IS THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE?

- **Discuss with a partner:**
- How does your school counseling department support students with ASD?
- In what areas could your school counseling department improve their support of students with special needs?



THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS A CONSULTANT

- Consultative process (teachers, administration, parents)
 1. Establish the tone
 2. Set a specific description of the problem
 3. Get a second specific example
 4. Clarify the goal of misbehavior and the teacher's (parent's) troubling belief
 5. Review the guidelines for reaching this goal
 6. Solicit tentative suggestions
 7. Attain closure



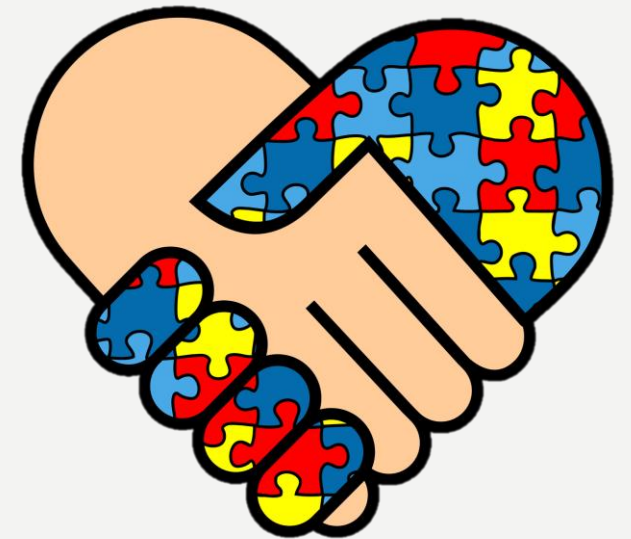
THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS A CONSULTANT

- What does consultation look like for a student with ASD?
- Like neurotypical students, each student with ASD is *different*.
- “...the consultant helps the consultee to directly understand self, others, the relationship between self and others, and procedures to modify behavior”
 - You are not expected to be an expert, but rather *facilitate understanding*.



THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS AN ADVOCATE

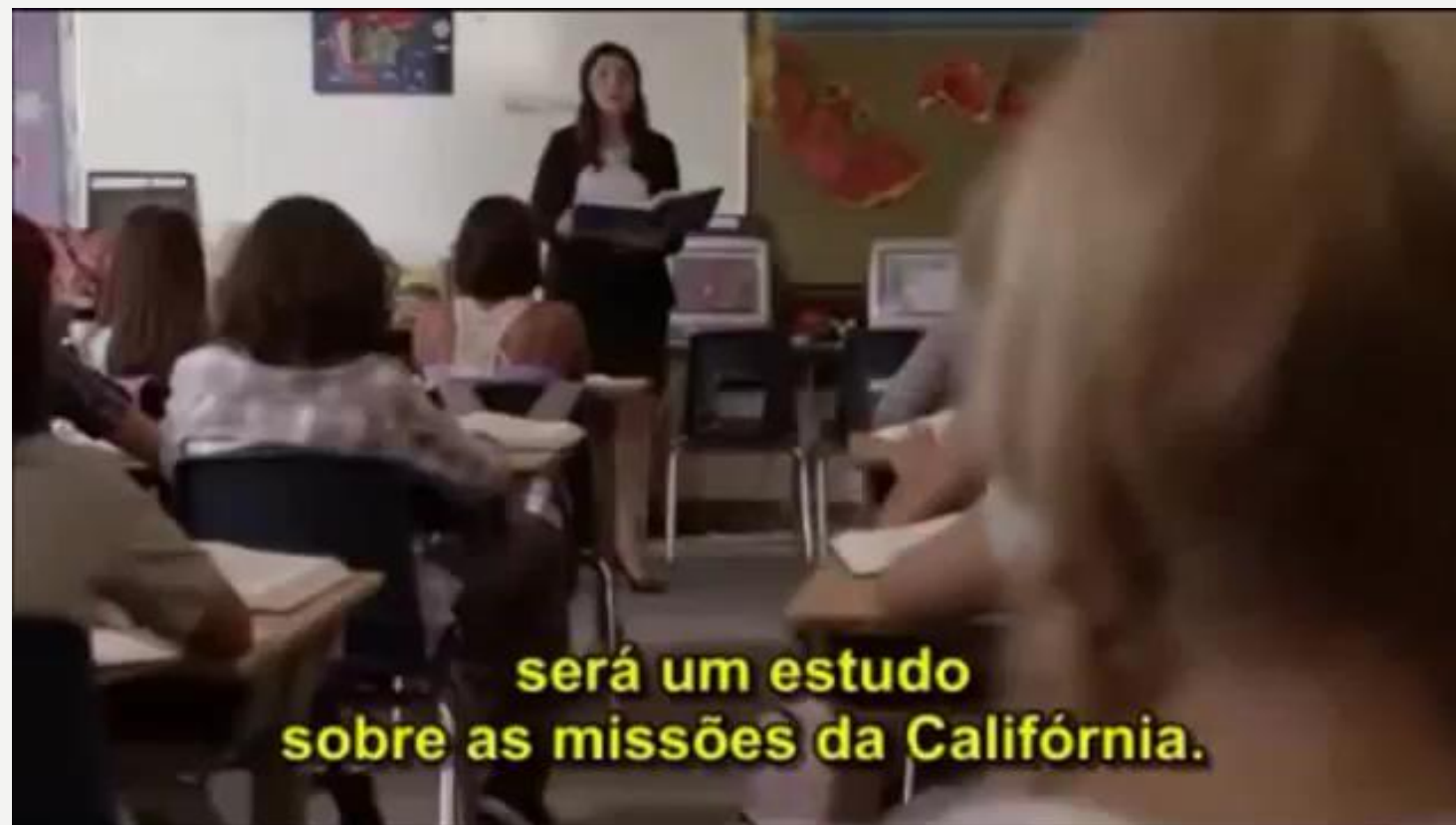
- Developmentally appropriate
 - Access to testing
 - Additional services
 - Familial support
 - Social Support
 - CCR Readiness
 - Statistics say only 11-12.6% of students with an ASD and ID (intellectual disability) have a transition goal for PSE in their IEP
- Getting them what they need



WHAT STRATEGIES CAN SCHOOL COUNSELORS USE?

- Consultation- requesting additional information about the student
- Collaboration
- Creating a space for students to relax (environment, sensory objects, etc.)
 - What was it like having these objects during the presentation?
 - Benefits
 - Disadvantages
 - How could you use these with students with ASD?

CASE EXAMPLE



será um estudo
sobre as missões da Califórnia.

REFLECTION

- **Discuss with a partner:**
 - Your initial observations about the video.
 - What strategies could the school counselor use to improve the classroom environment?



**WHAT HAS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF
THIS SESSION?**



POST-TEST SURVEY



FINAL THOUGHTS



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