

Book review: A Practical Guide for Teachers of Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in Secondary Education.

D. Costley, E. Keane, T. Clark and K. Lane. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012.

This practical guide for high school teachers was developed from an original research project commissioned by the Catholic Education Office, Broken Bay Diocese, NSW and undertaken by Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect). The original research paper documented the knowledge and views of experienced service providers as well as recent literature on teaching adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A number of group discussions were held and also documented, about the most effective ways to teach and support students with ASD in the classroom and beyond. During the many focus group discussions, strategies and suggestions were formulated and discussed. These suggestions form the basis of a comprehensive guide for teachers of adolescents with ASD in mainstream schools.

This useful book is organised into four main sections as follows;

1. Unravelling Autism Spectrum Disorder, Associated features and theories of thinking and learning
2. Implications of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Associated features for High School students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
3. How to combat common obstacles experienced by high school students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Suggestions and Strategies
4. Post High School: Where to next?

The first section of the guide gives a description of ASD, its characteristics and its impact on the student. There is a good outline of theory of mind and executive functioning; this is coupled with case studies throughout the chapter.

Implications for ASD at high school are varied, including the challenges such as the complexity of the learning environment, increased workload, pace of work, nature of teaching, learning and assessment. The social development of students with ASD and their peer interactions are also discussed with emphasis on a multi-faceted approach that includes both prescribed social skills programs and *in situ* social skills development in the real world.

Ideas to combat obstacles include the use of a framework of inclusion. The example given in this guide is the PBS framework; Positive Behaviour Support. Other strategies include planning for transition, having a class-wide pedagogy, the use of ASD-specific approaches, individual learning plans, maintaining social interaction and socio-emotional support, reducing and alleviating anxiety with individual plans, interventions and supporting good mental health.

The final section of the book discusses planning for the future. There is an excellent table that describes *post-school options: contacts and resources*. They are not only Australian based but also cover the UK and the USA. This section also includes higher education disability services, access to employment and workplace support, mental health and community participation organisations.

There is an essential list of resources in the appendices which includes books, curriculum resources and online resources. The reference list is far reaching with some further reading is included.

Overall, this book is a great guide for teachers working in the field to encourage best practice. This is also a worthy resource for student teachers who are hoping to work with students with ASD. Although this is aimed at the high school setting, there are many strategies and tools that can be used across the lifespan. A bonus that this is an Australian

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