



SESS Supports for the Learning and Teaching of Students with ASDs

- [Aspergers](#) [1]

The SESS aims to provide support to schools and individual teachers in as flexible a way as possible. Through these supports, teachers can be facilitated in availing of professional learning opportunities that enables them to effect a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of pupils with ASDs. For example, support might be financial, advisory or facilitative in nature, in response to an individual teacher, school, or professional group identifying particular professional development needs in relation to the teaching of pupils with ASDs. Supports include the following:

In-School Support

Through the SESS's Supports Scheme, schools and/or individual teachers may avail of advice or support related to the teaching and learning of pupils with ASDs. The SESS may be in a position to offer telephone advice, a school visit from a member of the team, or an in-service course for the staff.

- [Further information about the SESS Support Scheme](#) [2]

Funding

Individual teachers may wish to attend a course that is specific to their professional development needs and to the needs of their pupils and school in relation to ASD. Funding may be sought through the SESS Supports Scheme – each application is reviewed on an individual basis

- [Further information on funding through the SESS Support Scheme](#) [2]

Post-Graduate Courses

- A programme leading to a Graduate Certificate/Diploma in Special Educational Needs (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) is being offered by St Angelas College, Sligo in collaboration with the Special Education Support Service. The aim of the programme is to provide substantial theoretical and practical training for teachers working with pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. Further information is available in [Circular 0006/2009 \(PDF - 215 KB\)](#) [3].
- A programme leading to a Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils with ASDs is organised and delivered by [St Patrick's College Drumcondra](#) [4]. The aim of the programme is to provide substantial theoretical and practical training for teachers working with pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. Further information is available in [Circular 0007/2009 \(PDF - 114 KB\)](#) [5].

Courses organised and delivered by SESS personnel

A number of courses are organised and delivered by the SESS team (see below for descriptions of some courses).

- [Click here to see the SESS calendar of ASD-related courses.](#) [6]

SESS supported/funded courses for teachers teaching in classes with students with ASDs

- **Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH).** TEACCH is based on a system which provides clear, concrete, meaningful visual organisation along with a high degree of structure and progressive independence within the classroom and environs. It organises the classroom (space), the day (time, routine), and the activities (pace and duration). Tasks are chosen following individualised assessment in eight skill areas and goal planning, taught primarily in functional contexts and are structured in a highly predictable manner, referred to as 'structured teaching'. [Information on TEACCH](#) [7]
- **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).** In this system, pupils are taught to communicate a need by exchanging an image, thus helping to enhance the pupil's communication abilities and understanding of the function of communication. The method also encourages the pupil to initiate spontaneous communication. It was designed for young and preverbal children and follows eight defined stages. [Information on PECS](#) [8]
- **Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).** ABA is a highly formalised method of one-to-one instruction and, at times, two-to-one. Based on an assessment of current skills, numerous systematic instructional sequences are presented to the pupil, with appropriate responses resulting in positive reinforcement. Progress is very closely monitored through recording of the pupil's reaction on each trial throughout the day, and then recorded for reference as to when to move on or modify procedures. More information can be found in the [Report of the Task Force on Autism \(2001\)\(PDF - 1 MB\)](#) [9].
- **Social Stories™.** A social story is a short story written in a specific style and format. The story describes what happens in a specific social situation. It describes what is obvious to most of us, but not obvious to those with impaired social understanding. The social story describes what people do, why they do it and what the common responses are. [General information on social stories \(PDF - 526 KB\)](#) [10]
- **Floortime.** Floortime is a form of therapeutic play and involves working with pupils at their current developmental level and inducing them to interact and engage with others. This often requires the parent or professional to get down on the floor with the pupil - hence the term "Floortime." [Floor-time information](#) [11]
- **Lámh** – Language Alternative for the Mentally Handicapped Manual Signing System. [Lámh](#) [12] is a manual sign system designed for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and communication needs in Ireland.
- **Hanen Programme.** In the [Hanen programme](#) [13], parents and staff are videotaped interacting with the pupil and these are conjointly analysed to identify communicative intent and teach the adults to respond to the pupil's lead, and to 'observe, wait and listen' in order to allow the pupil the opportunity to communicate.
- **Assessment: Psycho Educational Profile, 3rd Ed. (PEP-3).** The PEP-3 assesses the skills and behaviors of those with autism and communicative disabilities who function between the ages of six months to seven years. General information on PEP-3 is contained in the [Report of the Task Force on Autism \(PDF - 1 MB\)](#). [9]
- **Social Skills Training.** This is an approach designed to remediate the social competence deficits of pupils. Social skills training programmes may target behavioural social skills, social perception, self-instruction or social problem solving. Various techniques are used under the umbrella of social skills training such as modelling, coaching, Circle time and role play.
- **Intensive Interaction.** This is an approach to teaching the [pre-speech fundamentals of communication](#) [14], in this instance to pupils with autism who are still at an early stage of communication development.

International Speakers

The SESS arranges for international speakers with expert knowledge to visit Ireland from time to time and make presentations in various parts of the country.

International speakers who have presented in Ireland to teachers on behalf of the SESS include:

1. Dr Rita Jordan, Department of Psychology at the University of Birmingham and joint editor of Autism, the International Journal of Research and Practice.
2. Tony Atwood, an international authority on Asperger's syndrome.
3. Cissy Coleman and Tisha Gonzales, practitioners in mainstream education in Texas and of [Building Blox](#) [15].

This presentation was on the topic of teaching reading to pupils with ASDs. Jessica Suhrheinrich of the University of San Diego. This presentation was on Pivotal Response Training. Eileen Arnold presented on [Social Stories™](#) [16]

Support Groups for Teachers of Pupils with ASDs

Since 2008 the SESS, in collaboration with the Education Centres, has facilitated the establishment of support groups for teachers of pupils with ASDs. For more information contact your local Education Centre.

Cross-Border Project

The Cross Border Professional Exchange Programme, 2004-2006 funded by Peace II facilitated the creation and publication of [Opening the Spectrum – Insights into Working with Pupils on the Autistic Spectrum \(PDF - 5 MB\)](#) [17]. This publication is presented in a case-study format where the profile of a pupils are presented, the teacher's response outlined and key learning points summarised. [More information on the Cross Border Professional Exchange Programme can be viewed here](#) [18].



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