GROWTH OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

- 14,598 individuals aged between 2 ½ and 18 receiving autism specific support funded by DES in 2014
- 10,199 students were in early intervention classes, mainstream and special classes in primary schools, special schools and receiving home tuition (NCSE, 2015).
- 127 early intervention classes and
- 670 autism specific classes in mainstream and special schools
- 983 resource teachers (RT) supporting the 5,784 students on the AS in mainstream classes in primary schools (NCSE 2015;16)
EPSEN ACT: DEFINITION OF INCLUSION

• …the education of people with such needs shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs, to assist children with special educational needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives,…

• (Epsen, 2004 p.5)
The policy of inclusion must ensure that appropriate learning or other positive experiences take place. *It is not simply about where an individual is educated or receives services or support; it is about the quality of such a service or support. Inclusive education is a process involving the restructuring of the curriculum and classroom organisation.* This distinguishes it from integration which focuses on the placement of an individual or group and that individual or group having to adapt to what the school is able to offer.

(Barnard, Prior & Potter, 2000 p6)
INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE SETTING ...... INCLUSIVE PRACTICE OCCURS ACROSS ALL SETTINGS; MAINSTREAM, SPECIAL CLASS, SPECIAL SCHOOL
Teaching Students on the Autism Spectrum is Hard!

- Responding
- Initiating
- Turn-taking
- Executive Functioning
- Imitation
- Sensory Issues
- Language Abilities
- Pragmatics
- Weak Central Coherence
- Hidden Curriculum
- Attending to Others
- Theory Of Mind
- Shared Attention
- Restricted Interests
- Cognitive Abilities

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THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUSION

• “Teaching students with ASD is hard. It is hard for just the same reasons that students with ASD find it difficult to learn in our current school system. Just as these students have no natural intuitive ways to understand their teachers, teachers, in turn, have no natural intuitive ways of understanding students with ASD. That means we, as educators, have to work out what to do cognitively when working with these students, just as they do with us; we cannot just rely on our natural social instincts in relating to students with ASD”. (Jordan 2008 p.13)…..

Jordan 2005 argues, “a child with an ASD needs an individualised approach informed by understanding of ASDs” (p. 118)’

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WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Staff

• Access to Autism PD for all staff (Teachers/ SNAs/Bus Escorts/GAA Coach…)
  – SESS, Education Centres, 3rd level Colleges, Parent Groups, Croke Park Hours
  – Audit of Autism Courses Accessed by staff
  – Prophet in own land Syndrome!
  – Cascading Model

• Planning Time for staff
• Ethos/attitude

Student

• Recognise, Use Strengths
• Recognise and teach to the autism related gaps
• Accommodate Differences
• Observe Behaviour through Autism Lens

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Inclusive Practices

- Understand Individual SPD and Implications in Classroom
- Accommodate – View Behaviour thro’ Autism Lens

Tactile Sensitivities – may have difficulties with uniform, art materials, overreact to peers bumping off them in yard lining up falling - may seek pressure shoulder against wall, no idea of personal space.

Auditory Sensitivities - may overreact to loud noises in assembly, yard – certain pitch - my not seem to hear instructions

Taste/Smell implications for lunch time/art/peers

Balance & Body posture - PE yard, corridors….

Sensory Difficulties may cause student to have a “meltdown” for “not apparent reason” -

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# COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences in</th>
<th>May Present as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Functioning</td>
<td>Difficulties in planning, organising, carrying out activities and self-monitoring one’s own performance, inhibit inappropriate responses, utilise feedback and suppress distracting stimuli (McAfee, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coherence</td>
<td>(Weak) Sees the specific but cannot take in the whole picture – cannot filter out irrelevant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Mind</td>
<td>Difficulty understanding mental states beliefs, desires, emotions of others and self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>May have specific interests - has difficulty attending to something that does not interest them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Ability</td>
<td>Comorbidity; cognitive learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DIFFICULTIES IN SCHOOL

- Anxiety issues
- Begins class task but gets distracted
- Loses his/her cool easily
- Doesn’t attend to teaching
- Rarely completes homework
- Lazy
- Hands up sloppy work
- Always rooting in his/her bag
- Never prepared for class
- Late for class
- Forgetful
- Gets frustrated easily

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

- Accommodate-Autism Lens
- Time Management-visual schedules, timers, checklist. Teach strategies….
- Manage Space, quiet place to work, teach ways to organise self/environment….
- Managing Materials-large supply of pens/ensure h/work is recorded/colour code books/two sets of books/PE uniforms..
- Managing Work-teach prioritisation, teach problem-solving, literal understanding, Templates graphic organisers.....
- Self Regulation—teach strategies

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CENTRAL COHERENCE

- Problems seeing the big picture- Cannot get gist of paragraphs focuses on each detail so like a dog with a bone
- Poor Common Sense – takes things literally and as gospel so can be socially naive –Difficult reading the cues in the environment ..Irrational fears, anxiety
- Misinterprets and misjudges- Difficulty with multiple meanings –pear-pair- misinterprets acts of out context

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Accommodate-Autism Lens
- Teach Problem-solving skills
- Meaning of humour, idioms, sarcasm
- Teach Inferences
- Teach- find pivotal point
- Direct teaching of seeing the whole picture

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Theory of Mind

Humour jokes riddles

Sarcasm

Other Perspective

Guessing

Give/take hints

Discuss opinions

Pretend play

Unwritten rules

Deception

Listener’s interest level

Predictions

Role Play

Social Stories

Comic Strips

Guessing Games

Videos

Pretend Play

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ACADEMIC MODIFICATIONS

WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED

Difficulties with
- Communication
- Social Interaction – Hidden Curriculum
- Theory of Mind
- Executive Functioning
- Central Coherence

PROACTIVE SCHOOL

Planning for Individual
- Relevant & meaningful educational objectives (Chronological Vs Developmental)
- Level of Curriculum-appropriate learning-Academic Vs Learning needs of student on AS
- Support and Guidance in learning
  - Direct teaching
  - Use of Visuals & Structure
  - Modelling
  - Role-play
  - Scripts
- Planning lessons with
  - Student’s strengths in mind
  - Incorporating Student’s Interests
  - Cognitive level
  - Learning style
  - Collaborative planning by all teachers involved in student’s learning
- Pre-teaching content for mainstream inclusion.....

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ADAPTED ENVIRONMENT

WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED

• Understanding of the impact of
  – Sensory Processing Difficulties
  – Weak Central Coherence (hones in specific cannot see the whole picture)

PROACTIVE SCHOOL

• Yard / Assembly/ Unstructured curricular areas/ Art/ PE/...modifications required?
• Structured Routine
• Visuals
• Talk Vs Show
• Signalling
• Sensory Differences
• Planning and Maintaining Transitions from special class to mainstream; primary to secondary; mainstream to resource
• Quiet zone

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PARTICIPATION OF STUDENT

• Academic
  – Grouping,
  – Opportunities to learn that best suits their learning style
  – Progress is documented and maintained

• Social
  – Opportunities for inclusion- what adaptations are required for success
  – Peer support- Educate peer group- about inclusive practice for all
  – Feedback
  – Recognition and use of talents
  – Meaningful Play

• Life Skills

Having reciprocal relationships with peers is key to a child’s social emotional and even cognitive development (Scheuermann & Webber, 2002)

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SUPPORT BELONGING

- Self Determination-strengths
- Confidence
- Self Esteem
- Friendships
- Safe place

"I strongly recommend that students with autism get involved in special interest clubs in some of the areas they naturally excel at. Being with people who share your interests makes socializing easier." - Temple Grandin

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The Pros and Cons of Inclusion for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders


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