

Newsletter | Spring 2018



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 同心 同步 同進 RIDING HIGH TOGETHER

主辦院校 Host Institution:



Faculty of
Social Sciences
 The University of Hong Kong
 香港大學社會科學學院



合作夥伴 Partners:



教育局
 Education Bureau

INNOVATIVE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



The JC A-Connect: Jockey Club Autism Support Network is currently collaborating with six NGO partners: Caritas – Hong Kong, Heep Hong Society, New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, SAHK, The Salvation Army and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals. This collaboration provides services to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to improve skills in areas such as social communication, emotional regulation and learning strategies to minimise problem behaviours and enhance their overall learning abilities and social skills.



香港明愛
Caritas
HONG KONG



- **50%** of students with ASD and their parents attending mainstream primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong
- School personnel in the mainstream primary and secondary schools catering for students with ASD



- Direct training through school-based coaching for students
- Staged training programmes including training courses, seminars, sharing seminars and workshops for school personnel

Through the innovative experiential learning programmes offered by NGOs, the JC A-Connect project has aided more than 5,000 students with ASD in 425 primary and secondary schools, covering more than 50 percent of students with ASD studying in mainstream schools in Hong Kong. More than 13,000 professionals have been trained to assist those students.

Raid Battle Checkpoints

New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association



The New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPRA) adopted the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-Context-Based Social Competence Training for ASD (CBT-CSCA), which was developed and validated by the Association, for its coaching programmes in schools, focusing on improving students' perspective taking, emotional regulation and behaviour management.

NLPRA also tailors different thematic elective topics to support students' life-span developmental needs, e.g. ways to handle bullying, relationships with the opposite sex, proper use of social media, time management and employment preparation. Community involvement activities for students include volunteer work and community exploration tasks.

Our coaching programmes incorporate elements favourite among youngsters to enhance the motivation and participation of secondary school students. Inspired by a location-based augmented reality game, one of our most popular activities is 'Raid Battle Checkpoints':

GOAL

- To apply the learnt social skills and problem solving skills
- To practise skills for negotiation and reaching consensus

INTRODUCTION

Students in groups discuss and compromise the sequence for different checkpoint tasks. After completion of each checkpoint task, a card with scores is awarded to the team.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Song guessing

- A student listens to a song with headphones and expresses the lyrics using body language.
- Other students need to guess the song.

Students need to observe others' nonverbal social cues and practise skills of theory of mind.



2. Happy jumping

- A student takes a photo with other group members jumping together.
- The photo must capture the moment of all group members jumping together (no legs on the floor).

Students can practise cooperation skills and foster team spirit through the task.

3. Dialogue forum

- A student communicates with the coach and sustains the conversation for two minutes.
- The student needs to end the conversation appropriately after two minutes.

Students practise conversation skills through the task.

EFFECTIVENESS

Students enjoyed the activity. They learned to respect others' opinions and apply social skills. A student was reluctant to join the group at first and had some avoidance behaviour (e.g. hiding in the cabinet of the classroom and swinging the cutter). After entering the group, he was more motivated to communicate and interact with other people. He joined extracurricular activities and made new friends.



FEEDBACK

Teachers

- Students improved their communication with others. Before joining the coaching programme, they did not know how to sustain a conversation. After joining the group, they had more topics for discussion. They now initiate conversations with other classmates.
- Students understand the nonverbal social cues from others. They also know how to respect others' opinions while participating in different activities.
- Students are more motivated to make friends with others. They can feel the joy of socialising.

Parents

- My child improved in inter-personal relationships. He knows how to read others' facial expressions and body language.
- My child is more willing to listen to and respect others' point of view. He no longer stick to the topic that he loves during a conversation. He will stop the discussion when others are not interested.



New Life

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
新生精神康復會

Witnessing Changes and Improvement through JC A-Connect Teen's Club

The Salvation Army

Most people correlate ASD with negative descriptions, for instance 'stubborn', 'unable to speak fluently', 'bad temper' and 'hard to get along with'. Despite these common views, we believe change is experienced with suitable interventions. One of our core tasks is the implementation of the 'SKY Interest-Based Social Training Model'. Through the facilitation of activities that are chosen based on the autistic students' interests, they can learn social and communication skills, experience less anxiety and fear in dealing with others, and eventually express their thoughts and talents in an inclusive environment and society.

Persons with ASD are usually fearful and anxious about social interactions due to previous unsuccessful life experiences. Together with unique learning strategies and techniques, it is essential to develop a social learning model which suits their developmental needs. 'SKY Interest-Based Social Training Model' consists of two important elements. With reference to the '4MAT System' (McCarthy, 1990), each group session is divided into four parts to match the learning needs of students with ASD. Starting with 'Introduction', the session facilitates students' understanding of the reasons behind the learning objectives. Next, through 'Theme-Based Learning', they learn skills and techniques. The third part is 'Practice and Feedback', which allows students to experience learning through various exercises. Finally, through 'Homework', our coaches encourage students to apply what they have learnt using personalised skills.

Apart from the '4MAT Social Training-Learning Cycle', our project team has integrated students' interests into training (Dunst et. al., 2012). With the knowledge of their preferences, our team has tailor-made package design and content by integrating social skills training based on their interests. For example, students can grasp the knowledge and skills through model design and production, activities they favour.

By incorporating the 'SKY Interest-based Social Training Model' and evidence-based practice for students with ASD (Wong et al., 2015), students can acquire social and communication skills.

'Teen's Club' is one of The Salvation Army's coaching programmes guided by the above rationales. Five senior primary students with ASD participated in our 12-session group training, which aimed at enhancing their conversation and social thinking skills based on responses from others and the social environment. Apart from the group training, they were invited to host and coordinate a one-hour peer activity to apply these techniques.



In the beginning, students were reluctant to join due to fear of boredom. One of the primary six students refused to participate. His attitude slightly improved after his teachers' encouragement. There was a teen's café after the 11th session; the previous sessions focused on skills learning and café planning. The last session was for evaluation of the café and students' performance. During the operation of the café, students gained feedback and responses from teachers and other 'customers' regarding the application of the skills learnt. We were delighted to see changes among students as well as to see their active participation in group and peer activity. As for the primary six student, he raised the idea of setting questionnaires in confirming the supply of food in the café to alleviate others' different opinions. He took up the duty of washing utensils and food, which was not previously handled by anyone. His change was a fulfilment of the learning objective – to adjust behaviour according to others' responses and the environment.

One of the students had never eaten a fishball or siu-mai. This affected his competence in a discussion. Reminded by our coach, his parents were aware of the importance of gaining daily life knowledge. They brought their child to witness the food production processes in snack stores. The parents made a noticeable change by bringing him to church and extending his social network.

With delight and appreciation, our coaches and teachers witnessed the changes of the students and their parents. From teachers' observations, with the input of interest elements, students were encouraged to improve. Compared with their past performance, they were more eager in joining the activities and expressing their thoughts. Teachers believed they were able to perform learnt techniques during class by crediting the positive performance of students.



Despite the end of the Teen's Club, The Salvation Army was motivated to continue using the 'SKY Interest-Based Social Training Model' with the support from students, parents, teachers and peers.

We appreciate the coaches and students in setting training goals and carrying out their plans. The coach was professional in providing suitable services for the children so they could learn in a systematic and relaxing environment. Thank you for the effort paid by The Salvation Army!

The group is closely linked with daily life experiences, so the students were able to apply what they have learnt in daily living.

During the Teen's club and café, we witnessed the diversified performance of the students. We are surprised to see one of them taking up the dishwashing duty, and he was able to handle the task carefully.

We sincerely hope that, with the facilitation and further development of the 'SKY Interest-Based Social Training Model', more would be benefited at schools and in daily lives.



Seeing, Thinking, Electing and Performing - Four STEPs for Practising Friendly Behaviour

TWGHs Ho Yuk Ching Educational Psychology Service Centre

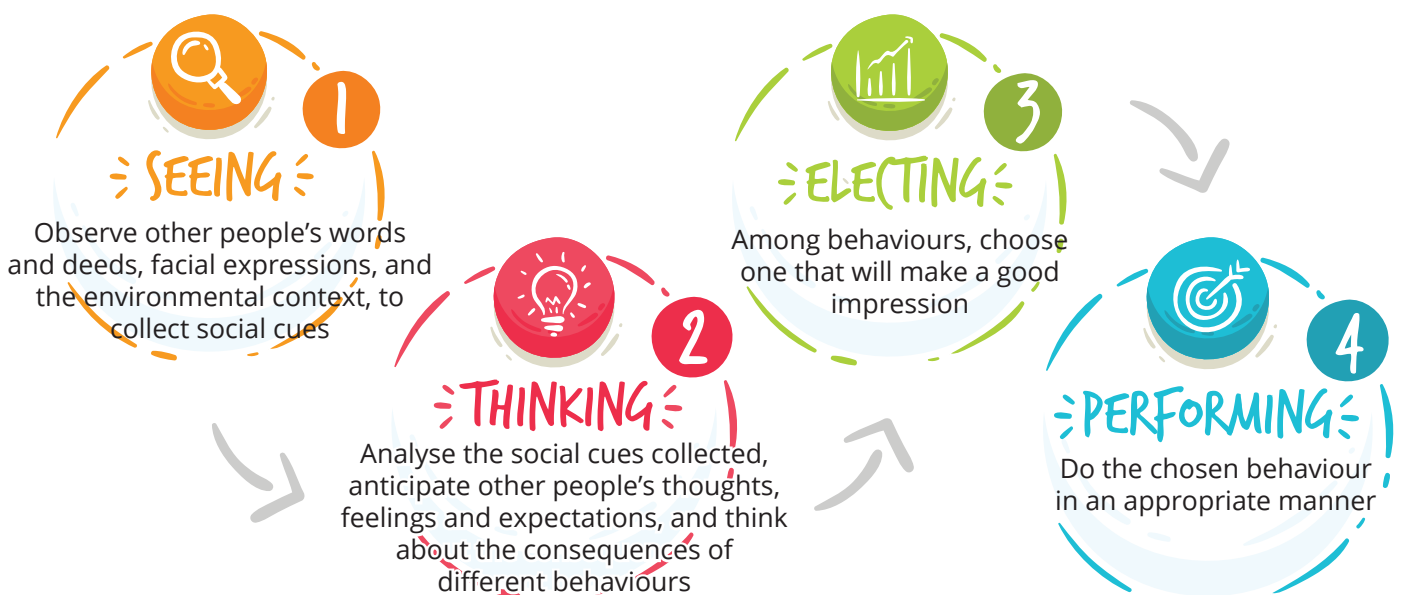
DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS WITH HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM IN PRACTISING FRIENDLY BEHAVIOUR

Friendly behaviour can be defined as voluntarily giving benefits to others (Eisenberg et al., 1986), such as taking the initiative to say hello, appreciating, comforting, sharing, cooperating or offering assistance to others. Practising friendly behaviour can make a good impression and establish or consolidate friendships. The prerequisite is to think from the perspectives of others and to choose an appropriate response according to actual circumstances. Due to cognitive difficulties, students with ASD are less likely to take the initiative to show friendly social behaviour even at the secondary level.

Studies have shown that students with ASD cannot consider and take the feelings of others into account while interacting with them (Baron-Cohen, 1995; Baron-Cohen, Leslie & Frith, 1985). They tend to focus more on side-issues rather than the crux of the matter (Frith & Happe, 1994; Frith, 1989). It is difficult for them to make appropriate friendly behaviour when they get along with others. When other people are in need of help, they tend to ignore them and the critical social cues surrounding, so they often look aloof and indifferent. For example, a classmate is searching for his/her lost mobile phone. Through his/her anxious expression, other classmates are usually reminded of helping or comforting the classmate. However, students with ASD may be too focused on what they are doing, so they ignore the needs of the classmate, giving the impression of indifference.

HELPING STUDENTS TO PRACTISE FRIENDLY BEHAVIOUR THROUGH STEP

To help students with ASD practise friendly behaviour in a step-by-step manner, our team adopted a positivist interventional approach – process analysis (Wong et al., 2015) by splitting the related skills into smaller steps that are easier to follow, i.e. seeing, thinking, electing and performing (STEP). The contents of each step are as follows:



Through STEP, it is expected that students can choose to make appropriate and friendly behaviours in good timing.

EFFECTIVENESS

By splitting abstracted skills into concrete and smaller steps, students use 'seeing' more often to collect social cues. They can identify and focus on the more relevant social cues. Also, they become more thoughtful and can consider the context and the feelings of others before acting.

STEP also effectively deals with students' behavioural problems in daily life, improving their skills in interacting with others. One of the students in the group loved snacks very much. Every time the tutor awarded potato chips to the group, indicating that they were to be shared together, the student still immediately ate all potato chips, ignoring the feelings and thoughts of others. The instructor then analysed with the group members the student's behaviour and others' feelings and consequences through STEP. The student finally realised that his behaviour was unfriendly and impolite. He improved his behaviour by stopping immediately and asking his groupmates before eating the last potato chip.



東華三院何玉清教育心理服務中心
TWGHs Ho Yuk Ching
Educational Psychology Service Centre

FEEDBACK

在參加了小組二年,不只令我能夠洞察別人的心理,更令我擴闊social network,令我的social network更Tight!

'Having joined the group for two years, I learned more about others' psychological aspects. My social network expanded and strengthened.'

透過這個小組,我覺得這次活動可以令我認識朋友。
例如: 1. 睇想選佢做可以知道佢人口吐也眉頭皺
2. 西星目猜測,令人可以知道想甚麼。

'I meet more friends after joining this group. For example:
1. STEP helped me understand other people's facial expressions
2. I can anticipate other people's thoughts by guessing wisely.'

我覺得這個小組對我來說是對我很有幫助,都教了我不少的社交方面。

'The group was beneficial and taught me a lot of social skills.'

它可以讓人做出一些合適的事情,讓別人感到安慰。

'It can make me do things that others feel comfortable.'

Socialisation is a continuous and changeable process that requires lifelong learning. STEP is a step-by-step approach for students with ASD to analyse and understand different social contexts so that they can anticipate other people's thoughts more accurately and respond to appropriate and friendly behaviours.

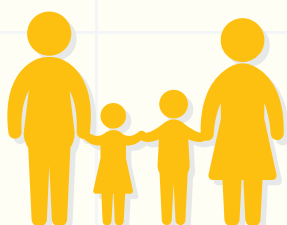
FAMILY SUPPORT



The JC A-Connect project, through three NGO partners: Caritas – Hong Kong, Heep Hong Society and SAHK, has supported 25,000 parents of children with ASD in Hong Kong by offering 5,000 structured parent support/training sessions and mutual-help programmes in 18 satellite centres in different districts in the past two years. From August 2015 to Spring 2017, the HKU Family Support Team had completed a wide array of activities and made the following observations and recommendations.

FAMILY NEEDS

- Parents identified professional support for child's needs as the most important.
- Parents' mental health was vulnerable; they warranted care and attention.
- A-POWER family support framework advocates public acceptance, organised support, the well-being of parents, evidence-informed interventions, and the resilience of families

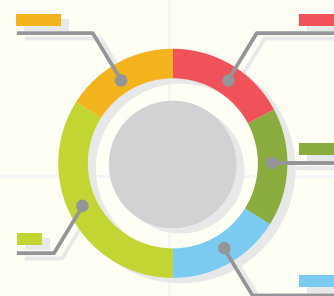


PARENT EDUCATION

- Parent-focused interventions were useful in improving their psychological well-being.
- ASD-specific skills training, information sharing and psychological support for parents were critical intervention elements.
- A-POWER parent education package: a 14-hour programme to support the parents of children newly diagnosed with ASD.

NGO SERVICES

- NGOs had a wide variety of programmes.
- Children's problems were better understood and seen as less problematic.
- Parents felt more competent and better supported.



Observations

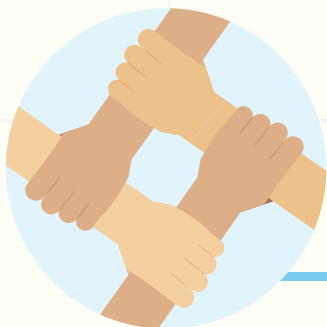


COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Community members had great passion and creativity regarding developing teaching aids, supportive interventions and cultural/lecture activities for people with ASD and their families.

SERVICE

- The developmental transition of ASD individuals and their families warrants unique preventive guidance and support.
- Parents favour programmes with high-quality staff, theory-based programmes with clear goals, complete manuals, and goal-driven steps with role plays and homework.



RESEARCH

- Family support programmes should be adequately developed, goal driven, theory and evidence-based, and delivered in adequate dosages by qualified and experienced professionals.

Implications

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- There are many community volunteers who support people with ASD and their families.
- Hong Kong still has a lot to do to raise the awareness of the general public about ASD and to promote an inclusive society.



FAMILIES WITH ASD MEMBERS

- People with ASD and their families have progressed from 'helpees' to 'self-helpers', then to 'helpers' and even 'advocates' in striving for services advancement.

Recommendations

Long-term service and human resource planning are urgently needed.

Policies, resources and legislative provisions should be research-informed and implemented with professional capacity building and public education support.

1

ASD is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder with specific characteristics and challenges at different stages of life; support is needed to smoothen the stage transitions.

2

3

Support for children with ASD should expand from child to parent/family focused.

4

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING 專業培訓



Teacher Training Course: Module 2 Session 3 - Workshop 學校教職員培訓課程 單元二 第三節 《「星星孩子」的困擾： 自閉症與精神健康》

June 23, 2017



Video 影片

*I have more understanding of the situation of students with ASD.
我比以前明白和理解有自閉特色學生的情況。*

*The case study session was practical and impressive.
個案分享及介入部分實用，令人印象深刻。*

Attending teacher 出席教師

Professional Training Seminar 2017 睿智研討會 2017

August 18, 2017



*The Q&A session was attractive. I understood how to teach students with strategies after watching the videos.
問答環節吸引，影片播放能讓人明白如何運用策略教授學生。*

Attending teacher 出席教師

PUBLIC EDUCATION 公眾教育



Family Fun Day 喜伴共融同樂日

April 2, 2017



Video 影片

*Children with ASD need more opportunities to get along with normal children since they can achieve what normal children can.
其實有自閉特色兒童需要多些機會跟一般小朋友一起玩、一起相處，他們能夠做到一般小朋友能力所及的事。*

Participant 參與者

Talk to Secondary School Students 中學生講座

July 17, 2017



Video 影片



Regular Column on Apple Daily 「打開自閉心」—《蘋果日報》專欄

August 2017 – March 2018



All articles 所有文章





Hong Kong ASD Conference 2018

Autism and Education: What Works

July 5, 2018

Lecture Hall II, Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre, Centennial Campus, HKU



Keynote Speakers 主講嘉賓



Autism and Education: Current Practice, Issues and Emerging Trends
Professor Jacqueline Roberts
Chair of Autism
The Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE)
Griffith University



Preparing Students with ASD for the Future: Good Practices in Secondary Schools
Professor Samuel L Odom
Senior Research Scientist
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Registration 報名詳情

www.socsc.hku.hk/JCA-Connect/hkasd2018

自閉人士與別不同的腦袋 The Unique Brains of People with ASD

HK SciFest 2018 Public Talk 香港科學節 2018 公開講座

The Unique Brains of People with ASD 自閉人士與別不同的腦袋

April 15, 2018 | 11:00am – 12:30pm

Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Science Museum

香港科學館演講廳

Speaker 講者:

Dr Kathy Wong 王潔瑩博士

Assistant Project Director, JC A-Connect (School Support)

賽馬會喜伴同行計劃（學校支援）助理項目總監



詳情及登記

www.socsc.hku.hk/JCA-Connect/scifest2018