

## Module 5: Inclusive Strategies

*"We will know that Inclusive Education has really become embedded in our culture when the term becomes obsolete."*

Inclusion of the student with autism into everyday classroom/school learning and activities is the ultimate goal of many of the topics we have already covered, including:

- Visual timetables and other visual supports.
- Environmental adaptations.
- Stories for information and understanding.

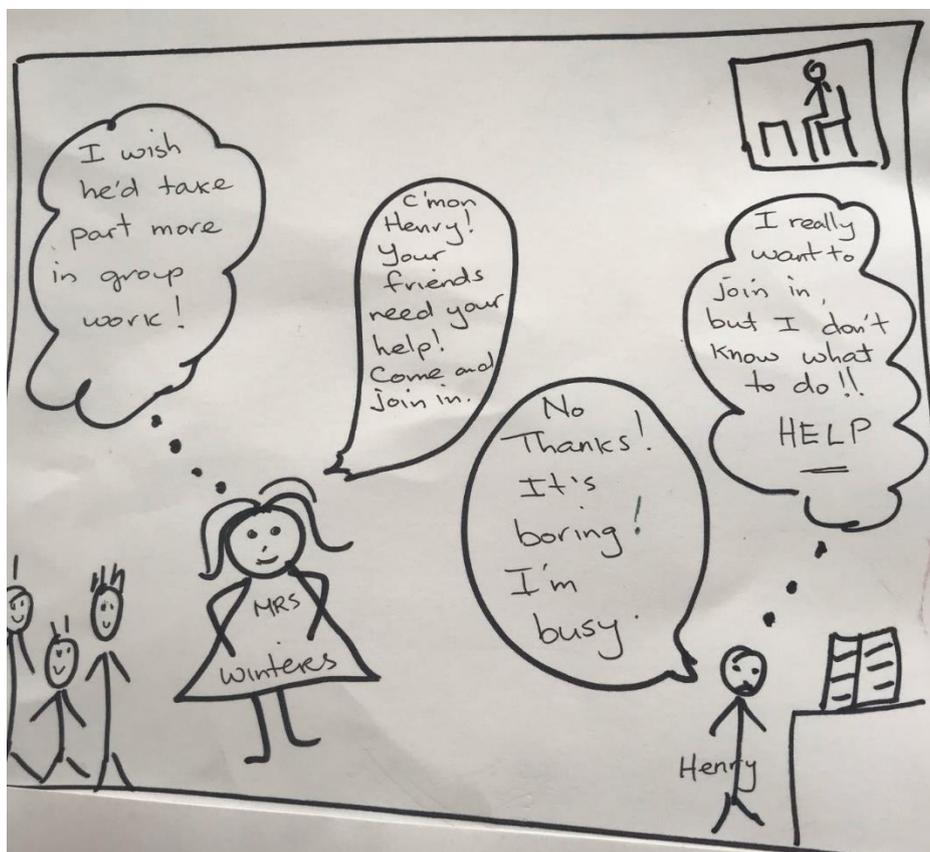
There are some specific learning activities that your student may need extra support to take part in, especially small group activities. There are also specific strategies that you can use with other students to support peer inclusion.

These strategies are useful for all students and vital for students with Autism.

### Inclusion with Peers

*"Sometimes the greatest gift you can give to another person is to simply include them."*

#### Group Activities in the Classroom



Often a class is split up to work in small groups. This can be a difficult situation for a student with autism, as they are faced with the social demands of interacting and communicating as well as uncertainty about what to do and for how long. Such activities are heavily weighted on the dynamic side of the seesaw. They may find themselves challenged on other fronts too– academically, sensorily and emotionally. Such activities are heavily weighted on the dynamic/uncertain side of the seesaw and can become overwhelming.



To help tilt your student’s seesaw to the certain side, give the student a specific job within the group task. Where possible, use the student’s strengths. For example, *Sophie draws well, so she is made the group artist. Jack is good with scissors, so he does the cutting out.* Keep in mind that we are using a “small steps approach” in order for the child as well as the teacher gets to experience “success”. If they are able to take part for a small amount of time - see that as a win and build on that. Let them

know how happy you are that they are participating by perhaps writing in their “proud book” along with a picture of them if possible.

If there is a turn-taking game, try providing a visual ‘turn-taker’ that the students holding during their turn then pass on when they finish. Perhaps the turn taker card could take into consideration their special interests 😊

## Jigsawing

Jigsawing is a process where each member of a group has a specific job to do. Each person is responsible for completing their part of the job and together they combine to form the end product. Each person’s contribution is valuable and vital to the completion of the activity.

Research shows that in mixed ability groups, jigsawing enables less able pupils to participate more fully, and that opportunities for collaboration and interaction were increased.

LEGO® therapy, developed by Daniel Le Goff, uses this approach dividing the group’s tasks into three distinct roles:

**Engineer** – who reads the visual instructions

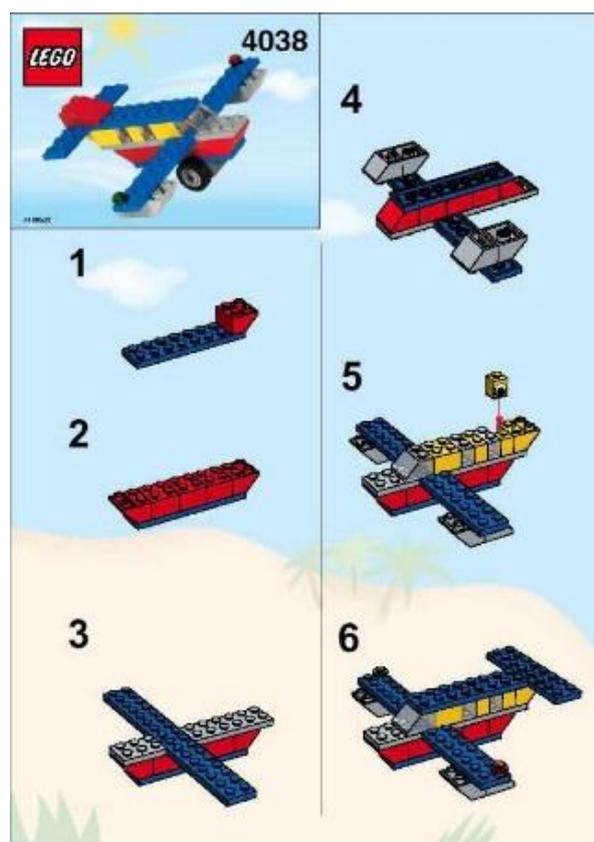
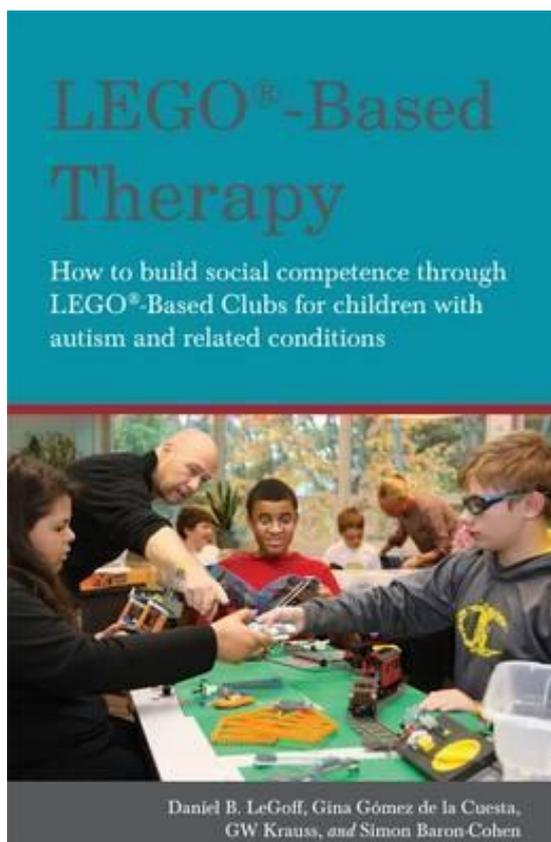
**Supplier** – who finds the pieces as directed by the engineer, and

**Builder** – who builds the pieces

This whole process is supported by visual supports.

E.g. Visual supports that show:

- How to build the model.
- Who is doing which role.
- The expectations of the group.
- What will happen to the model on completion.



Watch how a Sydney teacher is using LEGO in her classroom;  
[https://youtu.be/ Nqn-3l0mGs](https://youtu.be/Nqn-3l0mGs)

### Peer-Mediated Groups: Educating Peers

Specific strategies designed to promote inclusion in learning and playing can be taught to other students in a peer group.

There has been a move towards taking the student with autism out of class to teach them some 'social skills'. However, research shows that it is more beneficial to help educate the other students in the class in specific methods to support and include the student with autism.

Two examples that are widely used are 'stay, play and talk' and 'Circle of Friends'.

Both techniques require:

- Training the chosen peers (friends), which may involve role playing.
- Ongoing support from a supervising teacher (or other trainer).
- Regular meetings of the teacher/trainer with the friends to review progress and provide feedback.
- Open and honest talk about autism and how it affects the student.
- Consultation with parents/caregivers of the students involved, especially of the student with autism.

## **Stay, Play and Talk**

A supportive environment is crucial to the success of this technique. The students who help out are taught to:

- Stay alongside the student with autism.
- Play alongside them.
- Speak to the student using reduced language, for example, using the 'Rule of 5'.

## **Circle of Friends**

*"Circle of friends makes coming to school more fun. My friends like me and we play games together."*

In Circle of Friends, volunteers are asked to support the student with autism in playtimes and lunchtimes. The students who volunteer participate on a roster. They are taught games to play alongside the student with autism. The need for quiet times for the student is also stressed.

Selecting appropriate peers is vital for the success of the above techniques and any other peer-mediated strategies.

The students chosen to participate need to:

- Be the same age or older than your student with autism.
- Respond positively to instruction.
- Have similar interests and preferences to your student.
- Have age-appropriate language skills.
- Be socially respected by the others involved.

## **Strategies for Intervals or Playtimes**

Intervals or playtimes can be a really stressful time for your student with autism. Try to encourage them to have a mixture of play alongside other children and time spent relaxing.

A useful strategy to aid inclusion can be teaching games during class time that the student can play at interval with three or four buddies. Teaching games at a quieter time will reduce the demands placed on the student in the confusing environment of the playground.

Watching the games on YouTube can also be helpful.

Students with Autism may like to sit out on the games initially to watch what's happening. They may be looking for certainty – for a "Pattern" to the game before they feel confident to join in.

It is often helpful for the student to have a visual reminder of tasks they need to do during interval (such as going outside to the playground and returning when the bell rings), as well as of the playtime activities they may choose from.

Another idea is to give the student specific jobs to do during intervals.

Examples of jobs are:

- Straightening library books on shelves.
- Photocopying.
- Sharpening pencils.
- Washing paint brushes.
- Watering garden or pot plants.

Creating a special interest club for the student to join can also be helpful.



### Seesaw Snapshot: Circle of Friends

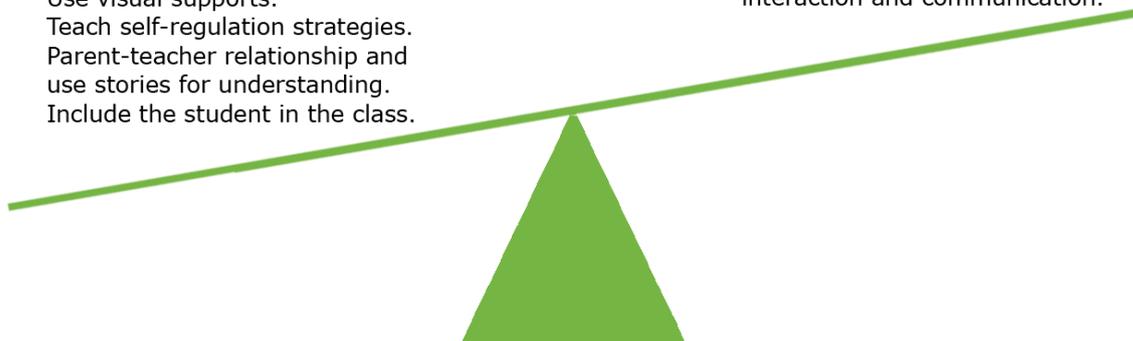
*In one class, 12 students volunteered to take part in a Circle of Friends to support a student with autism. The volunteers were given training in play techniques before they started and took part in regular feedback sessions when the circle was underway. At the end of each term, the child's mother put on a special afternoon tea to thank them.*

*The mother had this to say after the scheme had been running for a year:*

*'For my child, the Circle of Friends made the **biggest difference to his schooling.**'*

Understanding autism and communication style.  
 Use child's strengths and interests.  
 Use visual supports.  
 Teach self-regulation strategies.  
 Parent-teacher relationship and use stories for understanding.  
 Include the student in the class.

Behaviour of student may be easily misunderstood.  
 School is a busy, confusing, social environment.  
 Difficulties with social interaction and communication.



## Technology

Many students with Autism relay that one of the most stressful parts of their school day is handwriting. Using alternative methods can lessen the pressure on the student and “even the playing field”

## Video References

Craig Smith discusses the advantages of the use of iPads in the classroom  
[https://youtu.be/C\\_7IiKtA7dq](https://youtu.be/C_7IiKtA7dq)

A teacher in Sydney shares the many ways she uses LEGO in her classroom  
[https://youtu.be/\\_Nqn-3l0mGs](https://youtu.be/_Nqn-3l0mGs)