

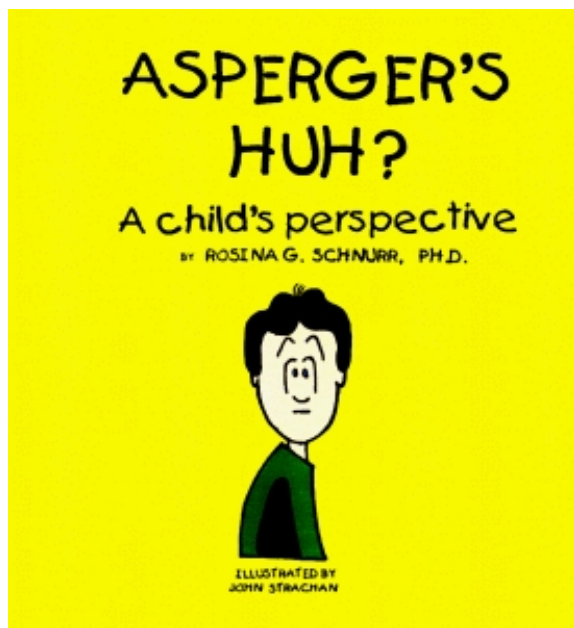
Psychology Autism Consultation Services (PACS) in Dufferin-Peel

Volume 5, Issue 3

February 23, 2011

Psychology Month, Dufferin-Peel C.D.S.B.

By: Colleen Patterson, Psychological Associate



The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board Psychology Autism Consultation Service (PACS) team is a specialty service within the Psychology Department which provides diagnosis and consultation regarding Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Many students enter into our educational system with an existing diagnosis of ASD; however a significant number of students already within our schools are found to exhibit signs of Autism Spectrums Disorders, but have not yet been formally assessed. Other students may have various diagnoses, but present with such complicated developmental and/or medical histories that diagnostic issues need clarification in order to help address the educational, emotional, and social needs of individual students.

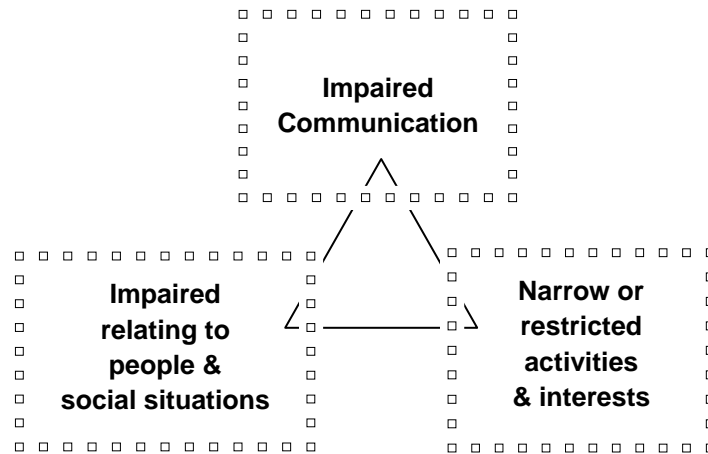
The team frequently consults on students who have complex histories, so all available information is requested by the PACS team (e.g., previous psychological assessments, medical reports, speech and language reports, previous ADOS administrations, OT/PT reports, etc.). Our goal is to determine whether or not a student presents with an ASD profile, and also increase teachers' and parents' understanding of the profile of strengths and weaknesses of the student with ASD. Because PACS provides a very specialized assessment, all referrals for assessment or consultation must go through the school's psychology staff.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex developmental disorder that affects a student's social and communication skills. Although once thought to be rare, current statistics estimate that 1 in 165 people have some form of Autism.

Children and adolescents with ASD have problems in three main areas:

- relating to or understanding people or social situations
- problems with communication and play
- narrow or restricted activities and interests

These core features are known as the *Triad of Impairments*.



The word 'Spectrum' in Autism Spectrum Disorder means that the child's problems may range from mild to severe, and that each of the core features may also range in severity. A child has a more severe degree of impairment in one of the core features does not necessarily mean they will have the same level of impairment in the other two areas.

Continuum of Impairment



Every child is unique and in the same way, every child with ASD has his or her own unique characteristics. As a child with ASD grows and develops, these problems or characteristics may change, but a person with ASD will have some features of the disorder for the whole of their life.

Understandably, being told that their child has a diagnosis of ASD can be overwhelming for parents. While the diagnosis is crucial, acceptance and understanding of the diagnosis by parents and educators is also vital to enhance student achievement and progress in academic, social and emotional spheres.

For further information about the Psychology Autism Consultation Services or about Autism Spectrum Disorder, please contact the psychology staff member at your school or the Chief Psychologist, Dr. Debra Lean.

You can access this or other interesting articles at:

<http://w3.dpcdsb.org/CEC/Programs/Special+Education/Support+Services/PSY/Resources.htm>

□

