Drawing a Blank:Improving Comprehension for Readers on the Autism Spectrum

Emily Iland, M.A.

Reading goes beyond vocabulary, memorization, recitation, and retention. The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, the foundation for critical thinking, following directions, speaking, listening, writing, and academics. Although they may be fluent readers – indeed, many have very precocious reading skills – individuals with autism spectrum disorders often need support for comprehension. Comprehension difficulties in readers with ASD can be subtle and difficult to tease out. As a result, their substantial level of risk for reading comprehension problems is often overlooked or unaddressed, and many students struggle in silence.

AAPC's newest addition to its extensive line of research-based materials, *Drawing a Blank: Improving Comprehension for Readers on the Autism Spectrum*, provides educational professionals and parents with the tools to improve comprehension for good decoders who have reading comprehension difficulties, as well as readers who struggle with both decoding and comprehension.

Many students with ASD struggle in silence in general education classrooms. Many general education teachers do not know what to do when they realize that a student on the spectrum is having problems understanding. *Drawing a Blank* provides insight and practical strategies into a world unfamiliar to many teachers, parents, and professionals.

About the Author

Emily Iland, M.A., is an author, advocate, researcher, and leader in the autism field. She is the co-author of *Autism Spectrum Disorders from A to Z* (2004). Emily translated and published the Spanish version of the book, *Los Trastornos del Espectro de Autismo de la A a la Z*, winner of the 2006 Outstanding Literary Work of the Year award from the Autism Society of America and the International Latino Book Award for Health. Both books also received the *Exceptional Parent Magazine* Symbol of Excellence award. An adjunct professor of special education at California State University, Northridge, Emily is also an educational consultant, developing materials and conducting training on a wide variety of autism-related topics in both English and Spanish. In addition, she is president of the Autism Society of Los Angeles and a founder of the Santa Clarita Autism Asperger Network. Emily was spotlighted as a "Know the Signs" Campaign Champion by the Centers for Disease Control. A founding member of C.L.E.A.R, Community and Law Enforcement Aware Response, Emily coordinates autism awareness training for up to 9,000 L.A.P.D. officers. As a subject matter expert, she helped create the Peace Officers Standards and Training Autism Awareness DVD that was provided to all law enforcement agencies in the state of California in 2010.

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