

Jake is a bright, verbal eight year old, who is an emerging perspective taker. He has an IEP with goals for oral and written language as well as reading comprehension. Attending mainstream classes in a small public school allows Jake to make a few real friends and work primarily at grade level for content subjects. He has a paraprofessional for issues of non-compliance and academic support.

The over-riding concern for Jake revolves around his frequent meltdowns which often have to do with schedule changes. Jake travels with a picture/print schedule notebook, but this along with a behavior modification plan around such behaviors doesn't eliminated the worst of the melt downs.

Jake was initially introduced to the Story Grammar Marker (SGM) to develop his oral language, reading comprehension, and written language. We explored the many characters in books who encountered a wide variety of changes which resulted in a significant feeling shift. We emphasized that without this shift in feeling, there would be no kick off. There were many activities that looked at the character's personality traits and background experiences. This approach became an important part of Jake's development of perspective. It is similar to creating fictionalized "friends files" (Garcia-Winner). Jake came to realize that not all characters react the same to a particular event. Consequently, he came to understand that this might result in different characters creating different plans and actions. For example, in *Anatole* (by Eve Titus), two mice friends receive the same information, i.e., that mice are bad for stealing food. Anatole has a strong emotional reaction to this information and therefore it serves as an initiating event, he makes a plan. His friend, Gaston, having a different personality, does not have a shift in his emotions when he hears this same news.-- No kick off for Gaston. This line of thinking also led to discussions about why there are some 'set' plans, more like reactive sequences, such as fire drills.

We followed the basic SGM manual guidelines of teaching the vocabulary and developing the concepts underlying the words. Jake acquired this vocabulary quickly and the concepts for the critical thinking triangle (kick off+ feeling shift+ plan= character's intent or plan) more slowly, but the basics were laid. We worked with the SGM concepts until it was easy for Jake to identify their components in picture books and grade level short chapter books. Then, we began to write stories with the SGM format. These stories were short, often scribed and accompanied by stick figure drawings showing feeling, thought and speech bubbles. Jake could write sentences on his own but for these stories I quickly transcribed his words and drew stick figures. We began with stories that we acted out and had to do with situations and kick offs that Jake was familiar with but did not create true feelings for him. They were all 'What If' "scenarios. For example, we created stories about riding in a boat going over a large waterfalls, getting lost in the jungle, etc. These stories often were set in foreign countries which was an area of hyper focus for Jake. At this point in time Jake was very facile with the SGM vocabulary, concepts and handling the SGM student marker.

One afternoon I was called to the art room where I found Jake sitting on the floor, red faced and crying. Before making the dash down the hall, I grabbed a student SGM

braid. The art teacher and aide explained that the rest of the class had left for a presentation in the auditorium and that Jake had not put his markers away before lining up. When asked to return to his seat, he threw the markers on the floor and refused to pick them up, and began yelling about how he had to get to the auditorium. Sitting down with Jake, I handed him the SGM braid. He fiddled with the character pompom for a bit and quickly glanced at me and then focused on the pompom. I talked about a smart, wonderful character I knew, an 8 year old boy in fact, who loved geography. I explained this character was actually Jake and that now he could create a real story for himself, not just a 'What If' story. I told more of the story and pointed to the parts on the braid I was talking about. Our character Jake, loved geography and knew that there was a special presentation of Africa in the auditorium. Jake felt happy but also anxious because going to the auditorium was a change in his day. (It had been on his schedule board for a week.) As the time got closer to the end of art class, Jake became more anxious to get to the presentation. His plan was to get to the presentation and his first planned attempt was to jump up as soon as the teacher said it was time to go. I asked Jake if his planned attempt to get to the auditorium had worked and he wailed, "NO!" but moved a bead on the SGM braid. So I said to him, "Let's make another planned attempt, characters often have to keep trying to get their desired direct consequence, right Jake?" I assured him that his highly desired direct consequence (getting to the auditorium) would occur, but that we would have to keep making planned attempts (doing something to achieve the desired result) and moving the beads until we got to the direct consequence. I picked up one magic marker and put it in his hand and told him to move a bead. He did so and then picked up the remaining markers and moved another bead. He signed his name to a "Sorry" note (part of his behavioral plan) and moved a bead on the SGM. We walked to the auditorium and he moved a bead. He achieved his plan and the resolution was so much more than getting to hear about Africa. In the bigger picture, Jake had taken a big step toward directing his own life story,

The use of the SGM gave Jake a vocabulary and a framework to examine the **relationships** between personality, context, feelings, intent or motivation and actions. It allowed us to make transparent the connections between these concepts, giving Jake a method, to examine the 'why' of an individual's action. Understanding of motivation or intent builds perspective taking abilities.

Years prior to working with Jake I had used the SGM as a tool to develop students oral and written language skills. Since then, I often introduce the SGM concepts to children as a starting point for the development of perspective taking.

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Case Study #2

Use of the Story Grammar Marker vocabulary/concepts with a 4 year old boy diagnosed with high functioning autism.

When I first started working with him it was obvious that an area of hyper focus, or strength was his love of stories. His spontaneous language consisted of some contextually appropriate language interspersed with much 'delayed echolalia' of bits of stories he had been read. Any word or visual in the room could trigger a story tangent. He could not talk about Cinderella's slipper, he would tell a whole chunk of the story. At this point in treatment he has learned the names of the parts of the marker and can usually identify character, setting, planned attempts. He is less certain about the elements of the critical thinking triangle but with repeated readings and scaffolding of questions he is becoming more accurate at identifying these elements in a story. I used two picture books, Big Al and Rainbow Fish to show how two characters could be very much alike in some ways...being that they are both fish...and so different in other ways. Big Al is ugly, big and scary but nice while Rainbow Fish is very pretty, but quite shallow and vain. In 4 year old terms rainbow Fish doesn't share.

After several weeks I started more of an emphasis on setting...as that's often the contextual clue he's leaving out of his conversations. We made fish puppets and a play and I could see that during the fish play, those gears turning when we discussed how Big Al and Rainbow Fish lived in the same setting...I don't think he would have had that thought for quite awhile unless it was brought to him, but he did get it. I realize he knows fish in general live in the sea but I don't think that on his own he could take the characters out of context(setting) and then put them back in and draw conclusions.

After reading, acting out, making puppets, etc of these two books, this child acted out his own conclusion to these stories by having Rainbow Fish share a sparkling scale with Big Al. He was able to show his creativity by manipulating the story parts, rather than having his communication ruled by the free floating echolalia story bits. Most importantly we could share in his creativity because we understood him, we didn't have to 'fish' around for his meaning!

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