

## Case Study – The Listening Program®

### “Aaron”, Age 8, Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Delayed Developmental Disorder

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Pseudonym: “Aaron”

Gender: Male

Chronological: Age 8

Clinical Diagnoses: Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD-NOS) 299.80 with Specific Developmental Disorder(s) 315.00 seq<sup>1</sup> School Diagnoses: Delayed Developmental Disorder bordering on Autistic Disorder.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

“Aaron” is an 8 year old, Middle Eastern immigrant, ELL- P1<sup>2</sup> male, who, when first encountered two years ago, was a critically, developmentally disabled child. At the age of 6 months, he required major surgery to correct some serious bladder and kidney problems. His parents were very protective of him, since he had an older sibling who did not understand the gravity of his condition. During his, overly prolonged, recovery, he was physically isolated from his siblings and waited on, hand and foot. At this early age, we believe that his brain was probably prevented from rapidly growing neurons, dendrites, axons, and connecting synapses as normal children do. We believe that isolating him prevented the development of the normal mechanisms of becoming aware of his surrounding environment; to care for himself as he should have been physically and emotionally able to do, and to participate in the normal activities of growing up and limited the rich variety of sensate stimulation that the brain requires for a normally developing child. His father reported that they were still spoon-feeding him when he entered the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade class!

When we first encountered “Aaron” at the age of 7, he seemed lost in his own little world. When spoken to, he would stare off into space. When asked a direct question (such as “What is your name?”), he normally took a full minute to find the answer and then blurted it out so fast, as to be barely understood. If he were “pressed” for responses, he would stare directly at his teacher, while tears welled up in his eyes. Then, heaving sobs would then arise out of the depths of his person. However, recovery was rapid if he was separated from the demands of the classroom. We had to be very careful about how much and how fast he was stimulated with new tasks. He could not participate in normal classroom activities at first, such as writing, reading, drawing, and class discussions. This is seen in his early test scores. He would not respond to either teacher or peers. He would sit on the benches on the playground and stare into the sky during recess and lunch breaks. In almost every physical activity, he had to be invasively helped. “Aaron” was judged as not only “lost”, but it was not clear, at the time, if he was “recoverable”.

### TREATMENT

“Aaron” was placed in the First Grade Intervention Education Class in mid-first semester, of First Grade. This Intervention Class was formed for 1<sup>st</sup> Grade students who had identified<sup>3</sup> learning disabilities or English language development problems. Mrs. Mintz has taken some of these students through the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades as a combined or cohort class. “Aaron” was put into this

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<sup>1</sup> From DSM III-R. “Aaron” exhibited all of the § 315 Specific Developmental Disorders with the caveat that, because of the History taken at intake, it did appear that there was a presence of neuronal dysfunction.

<sup>2</sup> English Language Learner (ELL) with a Proficiency of Level 1 - (Level 1 = Introductory learner, Level 5 =speaks English, with no accent).

<sup>3</sup> LAUSD requires Psychological and Developmental Testing for students identified as “dysfunctional”.

group by the school administration because he had an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) and exhibited “behaviors characteristic of Delayed Development Disorders bordering on Autism”. During the second year, “Aaron” was also placed in Psychomotor Therapy and Occupational Therapy programs by the Special Ed. Team, because, during the first year, he continued to exhibit a gross lack of psychomotor skills. He had not learned to jump rope, skip, catch balls, play tether ball, or balance on a two wheeled hand scooter.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

“Aaron” was placed on The Listening Program (TLP) Original Kit on the Base schedule - CD’s 1 through 8, fifteen minutes, twice daily, five days per week, for eight weeks, with a one week break, through-out the year. This regimen was modified during the second semester of the second year to the application of one fifteen minute session per day, five days per week, for the rest of school year. CD’s 6, 7, and 8 were repeated for three weeks after completion of the eight CD series.

At first, in simply putting on the TLP headphones, “Aaron” could not place them over his ears, correctly, by himself. He seemed oblivious to the fact that his ears were bent forward, preventing the proper seating of the muffs. He would become easily confused with the tangled wires of the headphones. Within weeks “Aaron” began to show marked improvement in his verbal, academic, and psychomotor skills. (See additional comments in Summary of Changes).

*Below: Example of 1<sup>st</sup> week’s work.*  
*Note the paper is blank except for two letters*  
*Note Comments: “One Hour – Did nothing”*



*Below: Example of 3<sup>rd</sup> week work*  
*after just weeks on TLP*



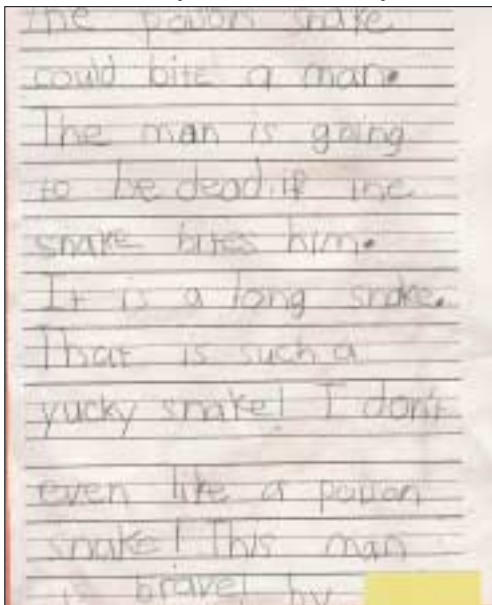
Mrs. Mintz’s comments on 1<sup>st</sup> week’s work: “Child sits for long periods and makes no effort.” “...sat for one hour - did nothing”. “No drawings... simply stared at paper.”

During the two years “Aaron” was in this research program, he has always been behind in his comprehension of, performance on, and applications of the current lessons, compared to his classmates and grade level peers. He was particularly weak in his attempts to understand and apply instructions while working on independent academic projects.

As time went on, however, “Aaron” developed a rather fierce, competitive and independent nature concerning teacher and peer interventions in his performance. His seemingly relentless efforts to try to comprehend the instructions and perform the tasks given to the group, appears to his

teachers and the administrators of the school, to have made a large difference in his learning ability. Of particular interest is the observation that the TLP Program seems to have markedly improved "Aaron's" ability to listen to and comprehend verbal instructions, whereas in the early phases of the program, these verbal instructions were simply sounds which were apparently meaningless to him. Space does not allow us to document, here, all the examples of the steady and remarkable progress which "Aaron" has made as a result of the TLP Program, However, the results speak for themselves. (See Below).

*Below: May '04  
Writing about a man's  
bravery in a Snake Story*



*Below: May '04  
Drawing about the Snake Story*



#### SUMMARY OF CHANGES

By the end of the first year, "Aaron" was almost at Grade Level in many subjects. By the middle of the second year he was reading, out loud, at 120+ words per minute, but, still, almost totally without comprehension. His Math skills have grown, but his conceptual or application abilities are still very weak. He memorized a relatively long speech for a recent all-school assembly, demonstrating a marked improvement in reading and listening skills as well as personal confidence. His interpersonal skills have improved such that he can "hold his own" on the playground with children from the regular classes, but he is easily confused with other children's behavioral problems. "Aaron" now participates in regular playground activities and is able to catch, throw, and kick balls as well as play Tether Ball. However he still has some psycho-motor disabilities which require further intervention. He now negotiates the tangled wires of the TLP headphones with a fierce pride; "I can do it...I can do it myself!", he tells his peers. "Aaron" still exhibits a tongue thrusting/twisting behavior when he is under pressure and concentrating on academic tasks in the classroom or on the playground. "Aaron's" academic scores over the course of this two-year Intervention and TLP Program are seen below. Because of his comprehension problems, "Aaron" is being retained in the Second Grade for the school year 2004-2005. Mrs. Mintz has agreed to tutor "Aaron" during the summer.

Convention	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	
	July '02	May '03	July '03	May '04
Target/"Aaron's" Score				
Writing	3/0	3/1	3/2	3/2
Spelling	6/5	6/4	6/3	6/8
Word Reading	n/a	6/4	Note 1	Note 1
Vocabulary	n/a	Note 1	6/3	6/6
Reading Fluency	n/a	60/42	50/63	80/97
Comprehension	n/a	6/9	6/4	6/9
Mathematics	3/1	3/1	3/2	3/2

**NOTES:**

1. Word Reading is ability to recognize word in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade. Vocabulary is word comprehension/meaning in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade.
2. Curricula becomes more difficult in all subjects over time. Thus, changes in scores are viewed as remarkable.
3. Scores are given for 1<sup>st</sup> and last tests in Grade. Thus, anomalous grade of 9's in comprehension in May are on one test.

End of Case Study

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