Systematic Instruction:

Margaret

Gretchen Morris-Archinal

Wayne State University

**Introduction**

**Snap-shot of Margaret “Maggie”**

Maggie is a delight young woman with Aspergers.  At nineteen, she is a college sophomore at majoring in Cinema Studies.  This semester she is taking three film classes and a required English class. She tries to schedule two classes a day so that she is not overwhelmed by school. Her professors are aware of her diagnosis and have generally been very supportive. She can receive support services like a note taker through the disability office if she requests them. She maintains over a 3.0 average as well.

She currently lives by herself on campus.  She has grown a tremendous amount in the last couple of years.  She has learned to: live with four new roommates and share both bedroom and living space; how to navigate her way around a large university campus – both the physical campus and the bureaucracy; as well as how to do her own laundry!

Maggie grew up in a traditional two-parent home.  Her mother, works as a church administrator and a substitute teacher. Gretchen is also working on her MAT in special education.  Her father, Tom, works for the Department of Army.  Maggie has two younger brothers, Sam age 17 and Stephen age 15.

Maggie was not diagnosed with Aspergers until she was twelve years old. She initially received an educational diagnosis through her school district which allowed her to receive special education services in schools with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).  Maggie did obtain a medical diagnosis at sixteen when she was also identified as having non-epileptic seizures. The medical diagnosis is the medical confirmation of the informal educational diagnosis. Although she showed symptoms of autism starting at around three, her initial diagnosis was of ADHD when she was in fifth grade.  Her parents thought she was a lot like them so they didn’t think anything was wrong.  Then puberty and middle school hit and it became apparent that she was quite different than her peers.  An example of this was her wearing snow pants throughout the school day as a sixth grade middle-school student, when her peers where no longer wearing them to school at all. Thankfully, Maggie had wonderful teachers and counselors who realized that more was going on and she needed more interventions. One of her favorite interventions was participating in the annual fashion show put on by the middle-school social worker. Mrs. R, the social worker, worked with the “Looking Good Group” to improve social skills, peer relations and self-image. Maggie loved the group and the culminating fashion show.

Maggie is a very creative young woman.  She loves to write and has been working on a book for years involving a young man named Seth and his journey to self-discover and his determination to keep those he loves safe.  She spends hours a day creating characters with comprehensive traits.  She enjoys drawing anime and fashion-related outfits.  Her photography of flora and fauna allow us to see her unique take on the world around her.  Usually, it is close ups and quite detailed.  Maggie loves all kinds of animals, especially her cat, Jasmine.  Her favorite place is the cottage near Traverse City where she can relax, wonder with her dog and be part of nature.

Maggie also likes to read fan fiction and watch television.  She really enjoys Science Fiction both in terms of reading, writing and watching.  The *Big Bang Theory* and *Bones* are two of her favorites because she sees herself in the different characters.  Maggie has a wonderful quirky sense of humor especially with word play and one-liners and has come to see her sharp wit as an entrée into world around her.

When she was asked, Maggie describes her strengths as her creativity, perseverance and intelligence. She sees her weakness as: her impulse to always answer questions and comment in the classroom; her inability to recognize friends from acquaintances; and her struggle to keep her mind focused on what she needs to do verse what she wants to do.

**IEP Goals and Objectives**

**Goal and Objective 1.** By June 2013, Maggie will independently ask a peer to join her in an activity such as watching TV, shopping or eating a meal, one time a day for five days.

**Goal and Objective 2.** By June 2013, Maggie will independently initiate, engage in and exit conversations with peers across three or four conversational terns in multiple settings: classroom, dorm and cafeteria, three times a day over three days.

**Goal and Objective 3.** By June 2013, Maggie will independently raise her hand and quietly wait to be called on during group discussions, three times per class during three class periods over the course of three days.

**Instructional Settings**

The general instructional settings for the goals and objectives are in and around the college campus. Because Goal and Objectives 1 and 2 focus on social skills and interactions with peers, classrooms, the dorms and the cafeteria are utilized as instructional settings. While Goal and Objective 3 is primarily a large-group based goal, it could be taught not only in the classroom but also in a dorm setting during floor meetings.

**Rational for Goals and Objectives**

Maggie’s goals and objectives are based on the perceived weakness expressed in the ecological inventory by either Maggie or her parents. When Maggie was asked about areas of weakness she mentioned that she struggles with impulsively blurting out answers during classes. Goal and Objective 3 is designed to help her remember to raise her hand during group discussions. She currently tells her professors to let her know when she is pushing their boundaries by her interjecting during group discussions and conversations. This goal and objective will lessen the stress she feels when she violates the classroom rules by blurting out answers and will help her develop a more positive relationship with her professors and fellow students.

Goal and Objective 1 and 2 are designed to start the process of building her skills in recognizing friends from acquaintances and to interact with her peers outside of the classroom setting. Maggie really wants to have friends and her parents would like to see her isolating herself less. She is by nature a very friendly and outgoing person. As a toddler, there were never strangers, just friends she had not made yet. Friendships became much harder for her to initiate and maintain as she grew older and her peers improved their social skills and Maggie’s stayed more static. She was hurt over the years as she tried to develop friends and a social life. Now it is easier for her to isolate herself rather than risk being hurt. Goals 2 and 3 are designed to give her the skills and confidence to make friends and develop a social life outside of her extended family. A peer mentor is utilized so that she can learn to use age appropriate language and behavior and develop an additional support person and friend.

**Assessment Data and Lesson Planning Sheets**

See attached sheets.

**Summary and Recommendations**

After three months, Maggie has come a long way with her Goals and Objectives. Goal and Objective 1 was accomplished after about three months. Maggie did require more one-to-one role playing with her Peer Mentor to learn different ways to handle the variety of acceptances and rejections of social interactions. The planning and follow through portion of the goal proved to be tricky for her. She is enjoying a more active social life with her peers at school.

Goal and Objective 2 proved to be an appropriate balance for Goal and Objective 1 and was also achieved. These two goals worked hand in hand to give Maggie the skills she needed to interact successfully with her peers at school. The next level of generalization for Maggie with Goals and Objectives 1 and 2 is to take them off campus, out of the house and into other settings, including the work place. For Maggie, her “work” place is usually volunteering for the Extended School Year (ESY) program during the summer. Maggie can use these skills not only to improve her interactions with the instructors but the students and other volunteers. They can also be practiced at church.

Maggie’s professors were very helpful in supporting her as she made progress towards meeting Goal and Objective 3. By the end of June, Maggie was consistently raising her hand to answer questions and make comments. Although there are days this is still a struggle, Maggie is more relaxed when she follows the unwritten classroom rules. Her hard work in restraining herself has also improved her relationships with her professors and classmates. Taking this skill into the workplace and social settings like dinners out with family and friends are the next areas of generalization for Maggie. Maggie can be the example for the students at ESY and show them by her example and interactions how to answer questions in the classroom.