**Case Study – Alan (ASD)**

Alan was late in achieving some of the developmental milestones of early childhood. He started to walk at 18 months and was slow to talk. His early language was almost exclusively repetitive echolalic speech with limited communicative message. As a young child, Alan’s play was repetitive with seeming unawareness of others. He did not like to be touched by or to be close to other children, but he was agitated when separated from his mother. He often used his sense of smell to investigate objects. He had an unusual interest in small objects such as keys or switches. When Alan was three years old his mother, who is a single parent, consulted with a clinical psychologist. The family has seen the psychologist regularly, and his mother has participated in parent training in behaviour management. Alan was evaluated by a speech and language therapist at age three and has had ongoing speech therapy.

Alan still has behaviours that require significant support. Alan is highly inflexible about the schedule (e.g. if a teacher changes a routine process) and becomes aggressive about transitions if unexpected changes are made. The behaviours of concern include banging on the desk or table, head-banging, agitated response if other people around fail to use specific cues, ignoring adult direction, yelling, and throwing objects. These behaviours pose a threat for physical harm to himself and disrupt the orderly functioning of the classroom. Alan’s academic skills are below grade level. His expressive vocabulary is significantly below age-level, but he can master concepts that are represented visually. His reading decoding is about two grade levels below, and his math computation skills about one grade below. Math problem-solving and reading comprehension are the most challenging areas for him. Most academic tasks can be adapted for Alan but he often has difficulty completing assignments, even in his strengths, because he is rigid about how they should look, insisting on starting his work over if he makes errors. It is difficult to evaluate his knowledge using standardized tests or criterion reference measures because he may refuse to do unfamiliar tasks. Alan likes to make detailed drawings, but tends to repeat the same subjects, usually cars and trucks. He enjoys music, especially listening to quiet music, but will not participate in music activities that require interacting with other students.

Alan has developed self-care skills but doesn’t follow them regularly, so that his hygiene and appearance are a contributing factor in poor peer acceptance. When he is anxious, Alan pulls at his hair and recites dialogue from Star Trek very rapidly. For example, when his normal bus route to school was changed, he refused to get off the bus and recited Star Trek dialogue until the principal came onto the bus and talked him into the school. Alan’s preoccupation with the computer and Star Trek can be a problem at times. He does not realize that other people might not be similarly interested. He often tries to start conversations in the middle of a story plot and does not understand when other people do not know the stories.