



**CASTA**

**Communication and Socialization through the Arts:**  
*A Multidisciplinary Approach for Students with Autism*

**Workshop 2**  
**March 4 and 5, 2009**

**PASS THE OBJECT: PART 2**

*There are many variations to the basic idea of "Pass the Object," all of which can increase eye contact, student interaction, and the ability to take turns. Passing a actual object is the simplest and most tangible way to begin, but once students gain proficiency, there are many more challenging variations to work on.*

1. **Pass the instrument:** Pass the instrument around the circle, making eye contact as it is passed. When each person receives the instrument, they play it once or twice before passing it to the next person.
2. **Pass the instrument sound:** Each person has their own instrument (instruments could be all the same, or each person could have a different one). Students take turns playing their instruments in order around the circle, but must "pass" to the next person by turning and making eye contact after they have played.
3. **Pass the clap:** Each person around the circle takes a turn to make a clap. It is helpful to try to maintain a steady beat in the sound of the claps in both of the following versions:
  - One person claps while making eye contact with the person next to them. That person turns and claps while looking at the next person in the circle, and so on.
  - Person #1 makes eye contact with Person #2, and **both** try to clap together at the same time. Person #2 turns and makes eye contact with Person #3, and they try to clap together, and so on.

**KAZOOS**

*Kazoos are an inexpensive and effective way to engage students. Those who vocalize freely are often fascinated, and non-verbal students will sometimes vocalize with kazoos.*

1. **Talking:** To demonstrate how the kazoo works, the teacher can start talking, and mid-sentence, stick the kazoo in their mouth while continuing to speak. This connection to speech helps students understand that they must vocalize to make a sound.
2. **Playing with CD:** Students often enjoy playing along with music on the CD player.
3. **Call and response:** Autistic students often have difficulty modulating their vocal inflections, and kazoos are a great way to practice. The leader can make their voice go up and down like a siren, or play short musical phrases. Students repeat the leader's "call."

## BALANCING KOOSH BALLS

**Use “standard sized” Koosh balls (3.5 inch), not the minis.**

*Many autistic children respond very positively to these activities, and are able to focus attention on the act of balancing for long periods of time. Remember that any activities that “cross the midline” are thought to increase right-left brain integration. Use hand-over-hand assistance when necessary.*

### • BALANCING ACTIVITIES

1. **Hand stretches:** Before handling the Koosh balls, squeeze hands into fists, then stretch them out as much as possible. Repeat a few times.
2. **Squeeze and pass:** Squeeze the ball in one hand, then pass it to the other hand. Repeat the “squeeze and pass” back and forth between both hands. Then, try squeezing the ball in one hand while stretching out the other hand.
3. **Palm:** Hold hand in a lightly cupped position palm up, and balance the Koosh on the palm of the hand. While looking at the Koosh, try the following:
  - move hand up and down
  - move hand side to side
  - move hand around (like wiping a table with a dust cloth)
  - turn slowly in a circle
4. **Back of the hand:** Same as No. 3, but holding hand “flat like a plate” while balancing the Koosh on the back of the hand.
5. **Elbow:** With palm facing down, touch thumb to chest. Put elbow up so arm is parallel to the floor, forming a “shelf.” Balance Koosh on elbow. Look at the Koosh, and turn in a circle, following the Koosh around.
6. **Head:** Balance the Koosh on top of the head. While balancing Koosh on the head, try the following variations:
  - walk or turn around
  - move arms, shoulders, or hips
  - make faces
  - put one leg behind you and descend to floor on the back knee
  - explore different positions on the floor.
  - sit down in and stand up from a chair
  - move around in the chair
7. **Back:** Balance the Koosh on the back while crawling on hands and knees, moving slowly “like a turtle.” Adults may need to walk around and help students put the ball back when dropped. Crawling is great for right/left brain integration, as it uses “movements of opposition” and some students may have skipped the crawling stage, which is important for brain development.

## FUN WITH KOOSH BALLS (continued)

### • PASSING AND TOSSING ACTIVITIES WITH KOOSH BALLS

1. **In a circle:** Pass one ball in circle to lively music. Gradually add more balls (as many as the group can handle)
2. **In partners:** In partners, lightly toss one ball (underhand) back and forth. The ball forms an "arch" between the 2 partners in the air.
  - VARIATION: Each partner has a ball; pass or toss simultaneously.
3. **Solo:** Standing alone, each student lightly tosses a ball from one hand to the other. The ball forms an "arch" above the head. Emphasis is on squeezing the ball immediately when catching.

## COMPOSING WITH "MUSIC CHAIRS"

*In this activity, students get to compose their own music by determining the sequencing of instruments played.*

1. **Chairs:** Put chairs in a row. You should have at least as many chairs as instrument players, and you may have a few extra as desired (more about this later).
2. **Instruments:** Each student chooses their own instrument, and there should be a variety of instruments represented. (Teachers and paras may participate as players as well.)
3. **Composer:** The composer (demonstrate with a teacher first, and then a student becomes the composer) chooses the sequence in which the instruments will play by seating the players in the desired order.
  - **Variation 1:** empty chairs can be incorporated, which represent a momentary silence
  - **Variation 2:** two chairs could be placed together in order to hear two instruments at the same time.
4. **Performing:** The leader then points to each player in sequence. Each player plays their instrument as directed. If there are empty chairs (as in Variation 1, above), the leader points to the empty chair, and all players are silent.

Example (Bird's-eye view of chairs):



## **PAINTING WITH CLAY**

### **“PROCESS” REVIEW:**

*Please remember to encourage student interaction and communication!*

1. **Student choice:** When handing out art materials, ALWAYS offer the object (or a choice of two objects) and WAIT until the student takes it from you.
2. **No “right” and “wrong”:** Remember that the picture you have in your head may not be what's in your students' heads, and this is okay!
3. **Students interaction:** Where possible, have students hand materials out to each other, and have them show their work to each other at the end of class.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Plastilina (a non-drying clay) in a few different colors, pieces of cardboard about 5"x8", cardboard cut into 4 different shapes for each student (circle, triangle, rectangle, square; no more than 2"x2"), Elmer's glue, posterboard, craypas

### **• INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: PAINTING WITH CLAY**

1. **Materials:** Offer each student a piece of cardboard, and then the choice between two colors of clay (pre-cut clay into 3/4-inch cubes before beginning).
2. **“Push and spread”:** Using their fingers, students push the clay on the cardboard, and spread it around.
3. **Check if it's sticking:** If a student is not pressing the clay onto the cardboard so that it sticks, it can be interesting to turn their board upside-down to find out what happens, and to see whether they can figure out how to solve the problem and make the clay stick.
4. **Add another color:** Another color of clay can be offered, if students are interested in adding it to their board.

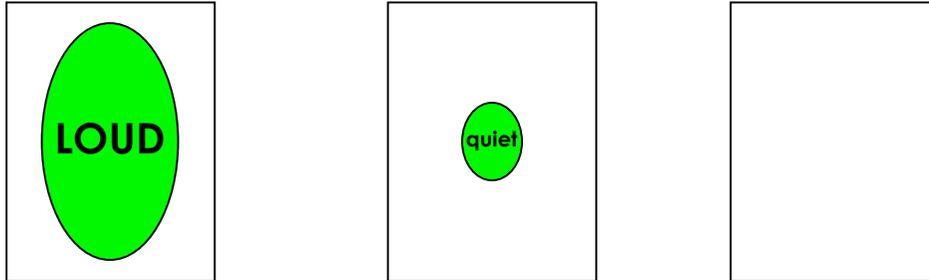
### **• GROUP MURAL ACTIVITY: PAINTING WITH CLAY**

1. **Materials:** Offer each student four shapes cut out of cardboard: a circle, square, triangle and rectangle. Offer one or two colors of clay.
2. **“Push and spread”:** Using their fingers, students push the clay on the cardboard shape, and spread it around in whatever design they wish.
3. **Glue pieces to a common page:** All students come together to create a mural together on the posterboard, using their clay-colored shapes.
  - using Elmer's glue, children take turns gluing their shapes onto the posterboard
  - each child glues only one shape at a time, and then waits until everyone else has had a turn before gluing their second shape
  - students may glue their shapes anywhere on the board *except* on top of someone else's shape
4. **Decorate with Craypas:** After all the pieces have been glued, students can further decorate the posterboard with craypas.

## DYNAMICS: LOUD AND QUIET

In this document, the term “quiet” is used rather than “soft” or “low,” since “soft” is also a texture word and “low” technically refers to pitch in music. Some teachers choose to use “soft” because “quiet” is often used in the classroom when we really mean “silent.” Whatever you choose, be consistent!

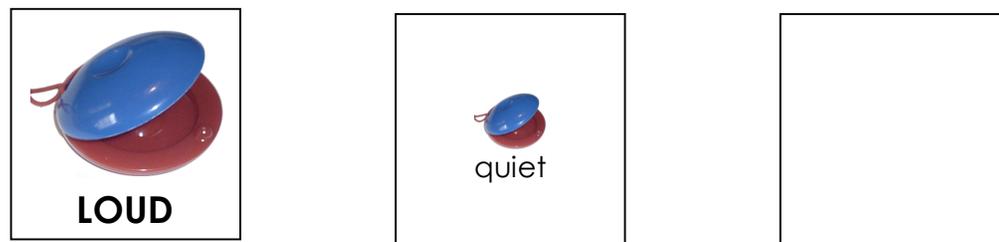
You may wish to use generic “loud,” “quiet,” and “no sound” cards like these:



Or, you may wish to make loud and quiet cards for the specific instruments they are playing:



or ...



... and of course, you can also use Meyer-Johnson symbols if desired.

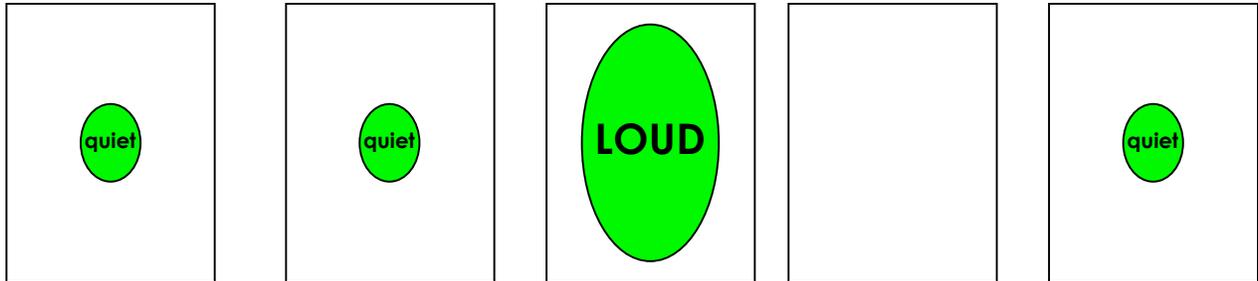
Also, some people prefer to use a “STOP” card instead of a blank “no sound” card. This really depends on the students; some respond better to one, and some to the other.

### 1. Using “Loud,” “Quiet,” and “No Sound” cards: Post three cards

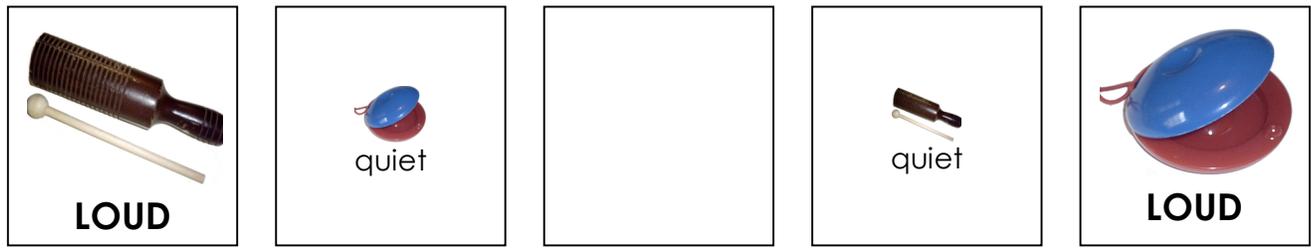
- when the leader points to the “**loud**” card and says “LOUD,” everyone vocalizes, claps, or plays instruments with a loud dynamic
- when the leader points to the “**quiet**” card and says “quiet,” everyone vocalizes, claps, or plays instruments with a quiet dynamic
- when the leader points to the “**no sound**” cards, everyone is silent.

**DYNAMICS: LOUD AND QUIET (continued)**

2. **Composing with Cards:** Students can chose their own sequence of dynamics using different cards. A leader points to the cards as others play.



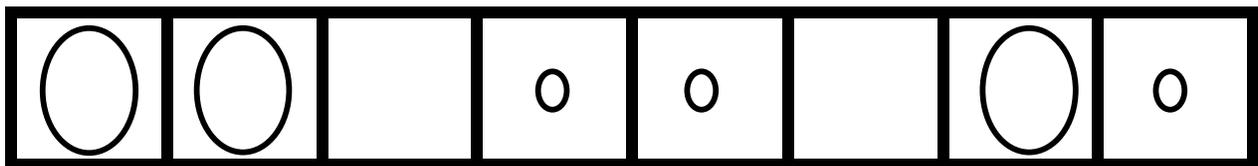
A more challenging composition could involve multiple instruments:



3. **Box Scores:** In music, a **score** is where a composer writes down the music they have composed.

In another advanced activity, students can each compose their own "box score," shown below. A big circle represents a loud dynamic, a small circle represents a quiet dynamic, and a blank box means "no sound."

A blank "box score" template can be found at the end of this handout.



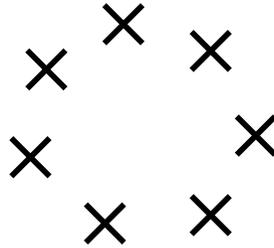
**COMPOSER:** \_\_\_\_\_ *Jennifer* \_\_\_\_\_


COMPOSER: \_\_\_\_\_


COMPOSER: \_\_\_\_\_

## FUN IN A CIRCLE

Use masking tape to put X-es on the floor in a circle, one for each person:



### 1. Musical Ex-es:

- Play music on the CD. Students stand on an X and dance to the music.
- Stop the music.
- Everyone must leave their X and find a different X to stand on.
- Repeat!

### 2. Pass the Object:

 Add an X in the middle of the circle.

- One person stands in the middle of the circle holding the object to be passed.
- The person in the middle chooses someone in the circle, and passes the object to them.
- The two players trade places, and the second player is now in the center with the object.
- Repeat!

