



# Understanding Students with Autism

ED 222 Spring 2011



# Defining Autism

- IDEA: Autism is a developmental disability that affects children prior to the age of three in three areas:
  - Verbal and nonverbal communication
  - Social Interactions
  - Academic performance
- Diagnostic and Statistics Manuel of Mental Disorders: Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD)
  - Autistic disorder, Rett's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, Asperger's disorder, and PDD not otherwise specified
- Educators often use the term autism spectrum disorder when referring to some or all of these disorders



# Prevalence of Autism

- In 2006, 223,395 students
- Fewer students with Asperger's Syndrome
- Males outnumber females four to one
- Increased prevalence in last decade
- Different theories for the increase in prevalence:
  - Greater public awareness
  - More refined diagnostic procedures



# Characteristics of Autism

- Language Development
  - Ranging from no verbal communication to complex communication
    - Delayed Language
    - Echolalia
  - Social Development
    - Delays in social interactions and social skills
    - Impaired use of nonverbal behavior
    - Lack of peer relationships
    - Failure to spontaneously share enjoyment, interests, and achievements
    - Lack of reciprocity



# Characteristics of Autism

- Repetitive behavior
  - Obsessions, tics, and perseverations
- Problem behavior
  - Self-injurious behavior
  - Aggression
- Need for environmental predictability
- Sensory and movement disorders
- Intellectual functioning
  - Savant syndrome



# Determining the Presence

- Usually in early childhood
- Often uses some of the same tests given to students with intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities
- Criteria may include:
  - Speech and language
  - Academic achievement
  - Cognitive functioning
  - Medical physical status
- Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised



# Big Issues

- Genetics links
- Vaccines
- Diet
- Epidemic
- ABA treatment



# ABA/DTI Therapy

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2afb4i7LMJc&feature=fvw>





# Kim Peek

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2T45r5G3kA>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjJAbs-3kc8&feature=related>