



November 2013

A Teacher's Guide to Holiday Happiness!

Lindy McDaniel

It is the busiest time of the year and with our to-do list as long as Santa's list at the North Pole, we tend to overlook what really matters this time of year. Does it *really* matter if we forget to bring treats for the staff breakfast or decide not to participate in the staff's Secret Santa?

Perhaps as teachers, we could focus on setting up our students for lifetime of holiday accomplishments? There are so many social skills involved in holiday festivities. Are we teaching our students these skills needed to successfully participate in a holiday celebration?

Take a holiday meal for example. Do our students know how to pass food appropriately? How to take suitable food portions? How to politely say 'no thank you' if they don't like a specific food or make a good-mannered request for seconds? Do they know how to make respectful conversation at the table? As simple as these skills may sound, we live in a world where mealtime is not always a sit down affair.

Some students unfortunately do not experience eating at the supper table every night. Without that familiarity, children may struggle to sit around a crowded holiday table. In particular, students who do not pick up on social cues easily or have a difficult time in social situations may find holiday

togetherness very overwhelming. Click on the link at the end of this article to access a social story to support students with mealtime. Please use the social story to practice appropriate meal behavior with your students.

In my classroom, we host frequent holiday celebrations like a Thanksgiving feast or Winter Holiday meal. We have also thought outside the box with a Thanksgiving Trail Mix party or Fruit & Vegetable Feast. Need some help getting started? Check out my [Thanksgiving Feast Blog Post](#).

Another helpful social skill needed all year, but particularly important during the holidays, is the ability to build personalized or time-appropriate greetings. As teachers, we work so hard to help children learn to greet one another. But sometimes, they get stuck in a rut of using the same salutations like greeting everyone with "Hi. How are you?". Fortunately, the English language has so much more to offer, "What's Up?", "How's it going?", "Hey there.". Some holiday appropriate phrases may include: "Have a nice break!", "Where are you going for break?", "Have a nice holiday with your family!", "Happy Thanksgiving!", "Merry Christmas!", "Happy Holidays", and many more.

Have your students practice using these phrases, questions and greetings by making holiday greeting cards for your staff. Then, have a delivery day in which they can extend their holiday tokens and appreciation. Here's an example of our Staff Greeting Cards. To make our holiday greeting activity more successful, we use this social story. Our class uses it in support of giving cards for various holidays throughout the year. It is a great way for us to reflect on the students' social progress.

So with these examples, I encourage you to take a moment and make your own list of skills necessary for your students to be socially successful around the holidays. There are so many life skills necessary. Here are a few more to get you thinking. . . giving and receiving gifts, going on a long car ride, shopping, decorating for the holidays, cooking and baking, and playing board games with friends and family.

'Tis the season to teach, review and learn social skills! Happy Teaching! Here's to a successful Holiday Season!

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Please visit my blog for social skills tools pertaining to this article.

November TRAININGS

November 5-6

Autism Interdisciplinary Team (AIT) Training
(Application process required to attend.
Registration closed for this year)

November 6 3:00-4:30

ADT Webinar: ADOS-2 Module 1 Practice Webinar

Link to Register: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/K35SN7R>

Direct link to our website:

www.KansasASD.com

www.TASNBehaviorSupports.com

TIPS FROM THE CORNER:

Hello! My name is Susan Danner and I am excited to be the newest member of the TASN-ATBS team! I most recently worked as an elementary Special Education Teacher in the Kansas City area, where I had the opportunity to primarily have students with Autism and behavior disorders on my caseload. I enjoyed teaching social skills and behavior strategies to my students, as well as academic skills. As the Distance Learning Coordinator for TASN-ATBS, I will produce Webinars and publish the monthly newsletter. I will be working with professionals

across the state, to support them with their students who have Autism and those who exhibit behavior difficulties. I will also be providing follow-up coaching for the Tertiary Behavior Support Teams. Collaborating and educating other professionals are two aspects of this position that I truly enjoy. I look forward to supporting our fantastic Kansas professionals and getting to know everyone!

