

## **Teacher Handout: Special Interests**

Autistic students often have special interests, subjects or topics in which they are particularly interested and often well informed about. These special interests can be very useful in the social learning process.

If you show an interest in your student's topic of interest, it is a natural starting point for relationship building. Autistic students are sometimes teased about their narrow interest and having a teacher value such interests can be the motivation the student needs to keep coming to school.

Finding an "interest mentor" for a student is a great way to help that student visualize a career involving his interest. For example, if your student loves meteorology and is highly motivated by that area of science, a visit to a local news station and a meeting with a real live meteorologist could be life changing.

Expanding on your student's area of interest is a great way to build on their learning preference and style. If she has memorized every species of amphibian, help her take that information to the next step by having her check online to see where each amphibian lives in the world. Next, pull in the geography of different regions and parts of the world. She could then find out if there are endangered species, and if so, which countries are actively working to protect endangered amphibians? In this way, your student is highly motivated to learn new things by the loose connection to whatever sparked her unique interest in the first place!