



Beyond Compliance: Building Neuroaffirming Autism Classes

Part 3 of 4

NCSE Relate, planning and assessment

Part 3 index

NCSE Relate, planning and assessment



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Traditional Autism education setting

- Relied upon Behaviourist pedagogy (ABA)
- Highly structured, adult-led schedules and routines (Teacch)
- Teacher/adult-directed activities and instruction
- Visual timetables, prompts and repetition
- Focus on following instructions and expected behaviours
- Withholding preferred items/activities until a task or behaviour is completed
- Limited student choice or control over activities
- Behaviour managed through rewards, consequences and compliance
- Emphasis on task completion and participation
- Predictable, standardised approaches to teaching and behaviour support based on neurotypical norms.



The NCSE Relate Framework

- Released in Feb 2025
- Regulation first approach
- Don't overthink NCSE Relate
 - print it off and use it as a guide
- Training is an advantage but NOT essential

My go-to's:

- **The Stressor Tool**
- **One-page profile; and**
- **Getting to know you**



NCSE Relate

A Regulation-First Approach to Reforming Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation



Why is NCSE Relate so important?

Relate represents the paradigm shift, away from compliance and towards connection and regulation. It gives us permission to work differently.

We believe Relate will prove to be an important turning point in education. But we need to use it, engage with it and practice it!

Note: we want the inspectorate to see us using these valuable tools instead of the old pathologising practices like ABC charts, behaviour plans, ABA-based assessments etc.





Your Relate Toolkit



Getting To Know Me

What do I really love?	What do I like about school?
What activities do I enjoy at school?	What do I like about break time?
What activities do I enjoy at home?	What do I like about yard?
What makes learning easier for me?	Something you should know about me...
I like to show what I have learned by...	

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One Page Profile

My picture goes here!	Things I like to do:	Things that comfort me:
	Things I don't like:	How I like to communicate:
My name is I am years old		
How to support me best:		

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TRESSOR TOOL

Recognising and reducing stressors is an important part of reframing behaviour. Start with the student's strengths and interests. Then fill out the potential stressors that you recognise through your own observations or what you have learned from the student, their parent/caregiver or other supporting adults. When you have recognised the stressors, consider how you might reduce some of them with consideration to the student's strengths and interests. Some will be outside of your control.

Student Name:	Student's Strengths and Interests	Date:
RECOGNISING STRESSORS	REDUCING STRESSORS	REDUCING STRESSORS

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**These can form your initial folder for each child.
You're gathering important information.**



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- Edited by M. Murnaghan
Contributions of all authors
- # Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools
- Uimhúchán don Teagasc agus don Fhoghlaim -
Treoir do gach Bunscoil agus Scoil Speisialta*
- Developed by the Department of Education, the National
Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the National
Board of Special Needs Education and the National Council
for Special Education

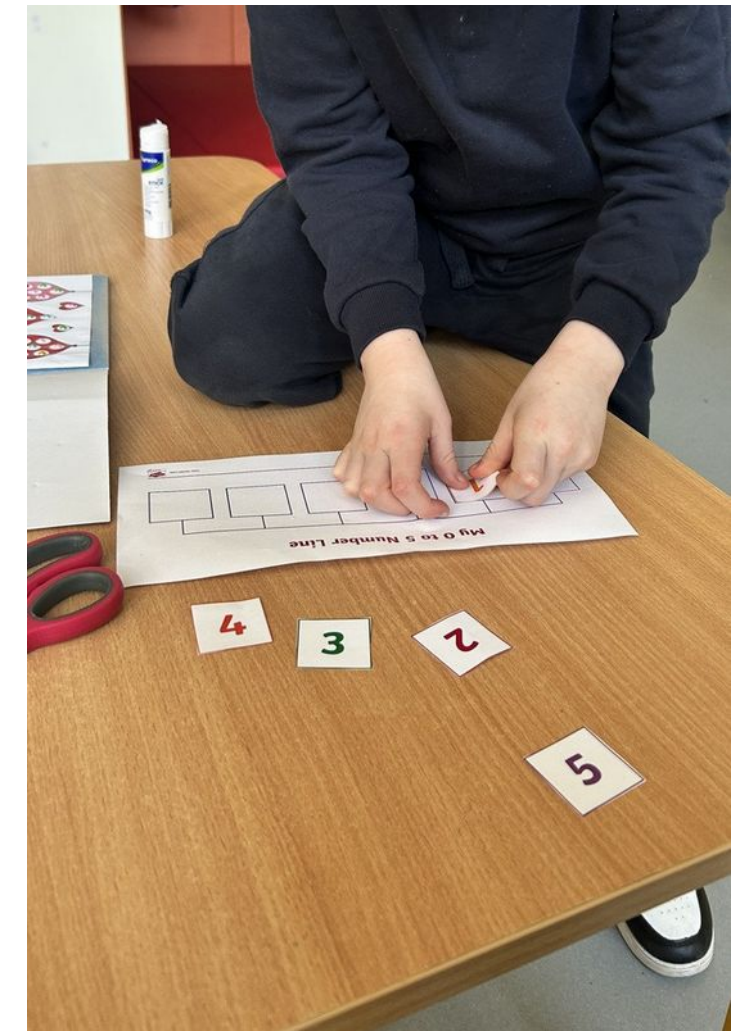
Can we observe and assess a child's progress in a neuroaffirming way?



The traditional assessment and observation tools for autistic children and young people are based on neurotypical standards and ABA (ABBLIS-R, Pep-3 etc.)

In our classroom, we devised an observation/ assessment sheet for the class that is based on their knowledge (senior infant level) but also includes communication, regulation, capacity, current interests (monotropic focus) strengths and challenges.

We updated this periodically each term for each child.



Assessment and observation

- The current Inspectorate position is supportive of ongoing, individualised, observational assessment in autism and special classes.
- In terms of observation and assessment, the inspectorate wants to see 'What did you learn about this child, and what did you do differently because of that information?'
- And how does your monthly planning reflect this information?

Child Information Sheet is available at:
www.neurodiversityireland.com



Child Information Sheet

Neurodiversity Ireland · 3 September 2026

How do we plan when the child takes the lead?



We map child-led learning to the curriculum by observing children's interests and linking their play and experiences to curriculum goals and learning outcomes.

We extend and support this learning through planned activities and interactions.

This makes up the main bulk of our actual planning time.
This is a highly attuned and collaborative way of teaching,
where each child is a unique learner that requires a unique approach.



Student Support Plan

For those starting out – The **Log of Actions** is very important. You will be having communication with outside agencies and possibly more frequent meetings with parents. Keep it up to date or you will forget! [Sample plan below is from NCSE]



Indicators of Effective Practice for Primary Schools:
Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes

Log of Actions

Date	Actions
January 2024	Class teacher met with Lucas' parents to discuss concerns in relation to emotional regulation, interactions with peers and engagement with classwork.
January 2024	Special education teacher contacted NEPS for advice and resources received for school and parents on supporting children who have experienced bereavement.
January 2024	Classroom Support Plan developed by Lucas' class teacher in collaboration with his parents.
April 2024	Review meeting with class teacher and Lucas' parents. Agreed that Lucas has responded well to interventions and supports and continuation of support plan not necessary at this time. Progress to be monitored by class teacher with parents.
June 2024	Classroom support plan targets achieved. Agreed with parents to close file.

Support Checklist

Name: Lucas	Age: 4	Class: Junior Infants
General Information	Date Checked	Comments
Parents/ Guardians Consulted	Jan 31st 2024	Meetings in school between class teacher and parents. Lucas' parents informed teacher of recent family bereavement.
	April 2024	Follow up meeting with teacher and Lucas' mother. Agreed that Lucas is much more settled at school and interacting with peers.
Information from previous school/preschool gathered	N/A	Lucas' parents reported that there were no concerns before starting school.
Hearing		No concerns reported by parents.
Vision		No concerns reported by parents.
Medical Needs		None reported by parents.
Basic Needs Checklist completed	Jan 2024	Completed with Lucas' parents and added to support file – Lucas appears very tired at school since returning after Christmas.
Assessment of learning, social and emotional development: Teacher observation; curriculum based assessment; checklists - Play and social skills - Emotional regulation skills		No concerns with language or learning observed.
	Jan 2024	Emerging needs in turn-taking, attention, and emotional regulation at school. Play and social skills/emotional regulation – Lucas has difficulties with turn-taking and tends to react impulsively by lashing out when things are not going his way in play, particularly during yard time. Cries very easily and sometimes does not seem to know what has upset him. This has become more apparent since the return to school after Christmas.
Observation of learning/approach to learning	Jan 2024	Lucas enjoys hands-on play-based activities as appropriate for his age. He likes role-play but has been observed to show reluctance to engage in activities since returning to school particularly on days when he appears very tired at school.
Child's views	Jan 2024	Lucas likes playing with his friends at school. He also likes colouring and art activities and loves to draw dinosaurs.
Classroom work adapted?		Play-based learning.
Learning environment adapted?	Jan 2024	Sensory space with library books and jigsaws introduced to class to allow for breaks when Lucas is overwhelmed or tired.

STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN-REVIEW

School Support Plus-Few

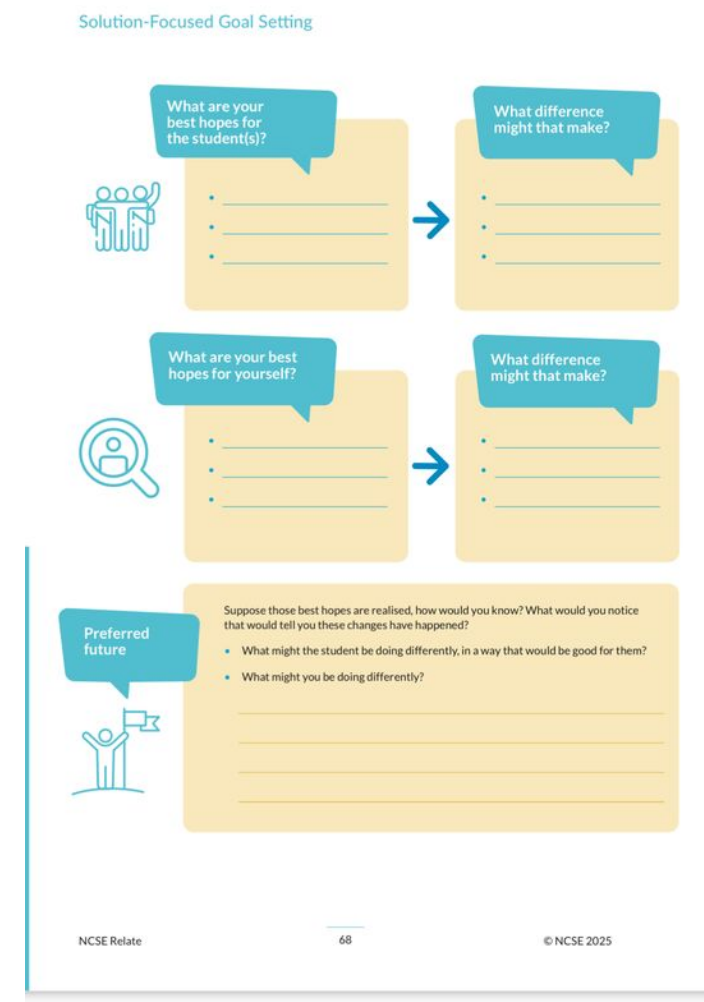
To be completed by the teacher(s) as a review of the plan and as a guide for future actions.

Name: Jack	Class:	3 rd class
Names of those present at review: grandparents, deputy principal, class teacher, special education teacher, SNA, EWO.	Date of Review February 2024	
What areas of the plan have been most successful and why?		
Attendance: Review of steps at two-week intervals has allowed time in school to be increased or kept steady – it has not decreased. Jack now stays in school until just before lunch time 12:20. Taking a stepped approach to ensuring Jack has time to regulate himself before joining mainstream class is working. He is happy to move from the special education teacher's room, goes straight to his desk and is ready to work through his maths with his class teacher. He enjoys the individual teacher time. Jack will choose to start eating his snack on the way back from yard so reduced attention to his eating seems to be working. Enjoys setting up the yard equipment for others. Class buddy in yard – playing well for the five minutes max. Works well with this same buddy in small groups in class time. Likes to complete attendance tick sheet and says a 'loud' goodbye to all the class.		
Literacy: Jack's reading confidence is improving. He enjoys choosing books to bring home and his grandparents report that he will read aloud with them. He also reads aloud in a small group with the special education teacher but prefers not to read aloud in class. Jack can correctly sequence events in a short story using cut up scripts but has difficulty with recall of events without prompting.		
Emotion Regulation: Jack is distressed in the home setting on most mornings. His emotional literacy skills are developing but he seems uncomfortable doing some relaxation exercises e.g. milkshake breathing.		

Neuroaffirming Goal Setting

- SMART Targets are not neuroaffirming as they generally measure the child against neurotypical norms or adult expectations.
- Goals should be meaningful for the child and not based on a child complying with adult demands
- There is a goal setting tool in Relate also to help to plan ahead based on the child's needs and interests.

Solution-Focused Goal Setting



What are your best hopes for the student(s)?

What difference might that make?

What are your best hopes for yourself?

What difference might that make?

Preferred future

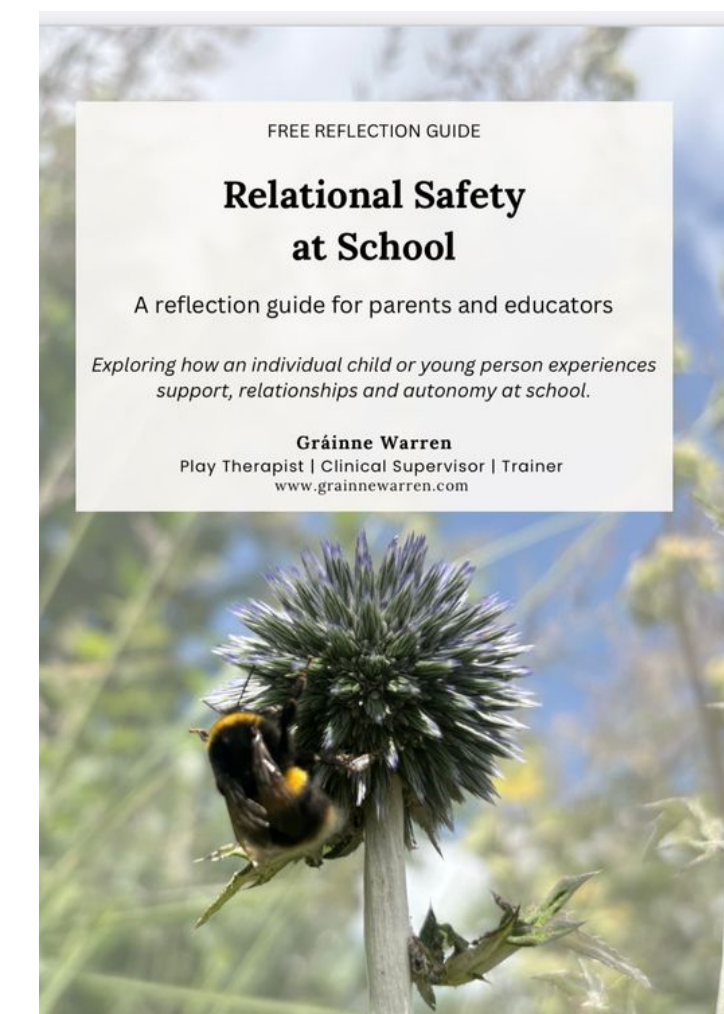
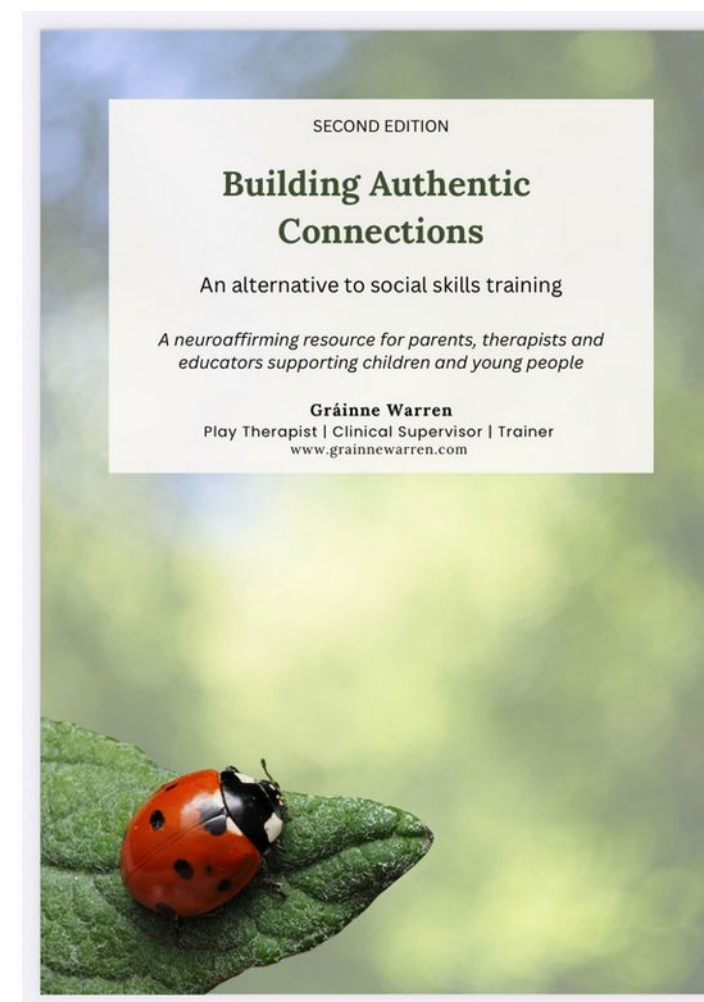
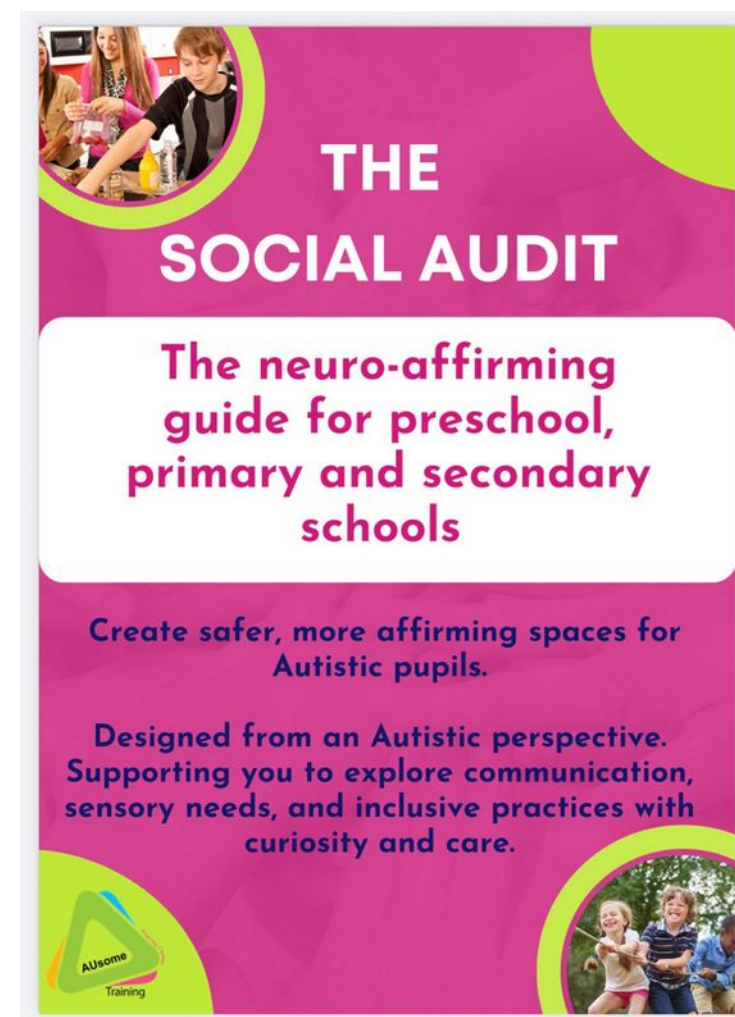
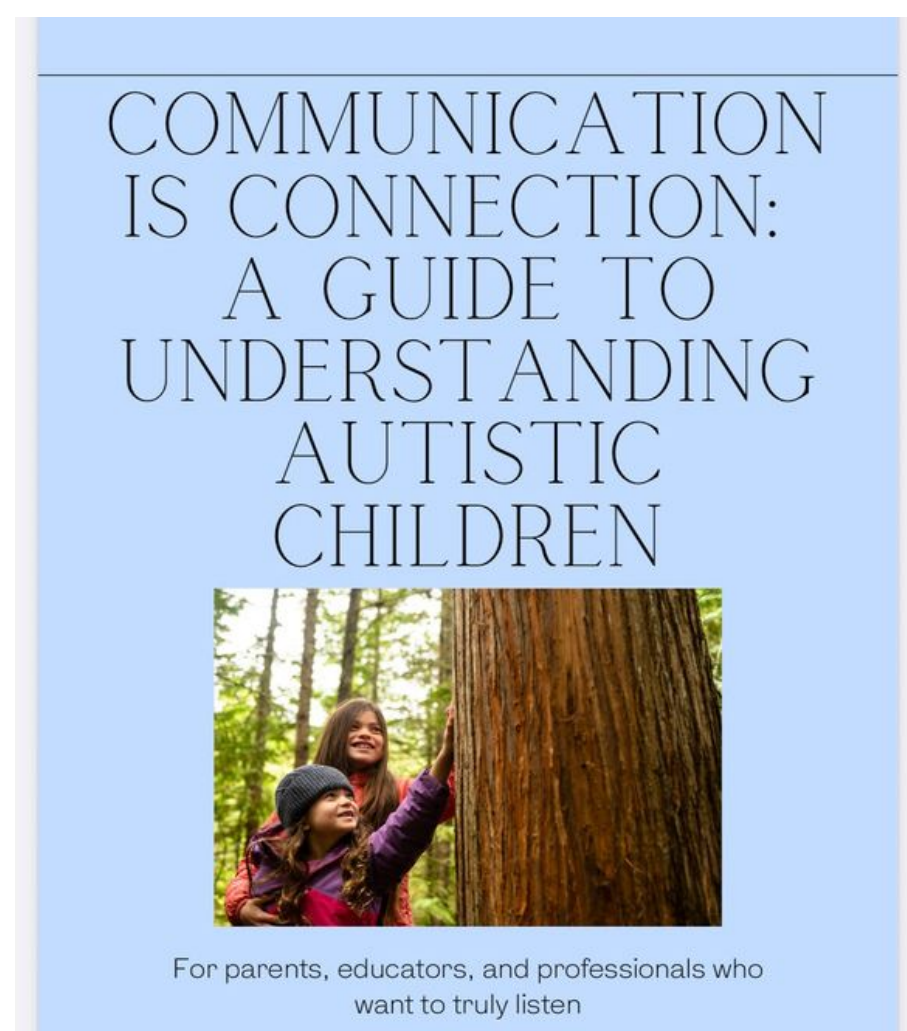
Suppose those best hopes are realised, how would you know? What would you notice that would tell you these changes have happened?

What might the student be doing differently, in a way that would be good for them?

What might you be doing differently?

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Autistic-Led resources for all educators



These resources by Evaleen Whelton of **Ausome training** and Gráinne Warren – The **Neuroaffirming Therapist**, will transform your practice and your mindset when planning, supporting and teaching autistic children.