

# CE 500 Research Methods

## Conference Proposal Form

Name	George Dranichak
Proposal Title (120-character limit, not counting spaces)	Navigating Neurodivergence: The Impact of Counseling on Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Proposal Length 30 min.      45 min. 90 min.      120 min.	45 min.
Proposal Audience (ie. School or Clinical Mental Health Counselors or both)	School Counselors

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### Program Guide Description

*Provide a brief description of the proposed presentation in narrative form to be used in conference program. (200-character limit, not counting spaces)*

This presentation examines the effects of counseling on neurodivergent students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in schools, focusing on counseling approaches, their effectiveness, and access challenges.

### Rationale for the Proposal

*Include your research topic and an abbreviated literature review (3 references are needed) (2500-character limit, not counting spaces)*

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of mental health support for students. Among those students, there are hurdles and barriers that a lot of neurodivergent students, particularly those with ASD, may face when seeking counseling practices. Students with ASD frequently face barriers to receiving necessary counseling, including communication troubles and sensory issues like lighting and comfort in the counseling office. Families from minority cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, struggle to access quality healthcare and specialized services (La Roche et al., 2018, pp. 111-112). Many counselors lack the knowledge to recognize the key characteristics of ASD, such as

communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, and repetitive behaviors, which are essential for tailoring effective interventions (Hallet & Kerr, 2020). Without appropriate support, neurodivergent students can experience increased anxiety, social isolation, and academic difficulties, impacting their overall development and success. This presentation will address these barriers by providing school counselors with evidence-based strategies tailored to meet the needs of neurodivergent students, with a focus on ASD.

This presentation aims to equip school counselors with the knowledge and tools necessary to provide effective, inclusive, and affirming support for students with ASD. Counseling approaches such as Positive Psychotherapy (PPT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) will be evaluated to help counselors gain a deeper understanding of how to tailor interventions to better serve students with ASD. PPT focuses on emotional and behavioral improvement through a psychodynamic approach, emphasizing family involvement and holistic well-being, (Ivanova, 2024). CBT can be effective in reducing negative behaviors that may be associated with ASD, (Vause et al., 2020). ABA is effective with parent mediation and paraprofessional mediation, and can show improvements in adaptive, social, and communicative functioning, (Sneed et al., 2023). During counseling sessions, it's important to tailor the approaches to the need of the individual student. Key strategies integral to counseling students with ASD include understanding that ASD manifests differently in each individual, thus requiring disability awareness in the school setting.

Ultimately, this presentation seeks to promote a more informed and empathetic approach to school counseling, where the needs of neurodivergent students are understood and addressed with compassion and expertise.

#### **Learning Objectives**

*Identify three measurable learning objectives that incorporate action verbs. (See [APA guidance](#) for more) (1000-character limit EACH, not counting spaces)*

#### **After participating in this workshop, participants will be able to ...**

1. Identify key characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other forms of neurodivergence in both children and adults.

- a. Characteristics include: Social communication difficulties, repetitive behaviors, restricted interests, sensory sensitivities, and adapting to routine changes.
2. Recognize Challenges faced by neurodivergent students in accessing and benefitting from counseling services in schools.
  - a. Communication barriers, sensory challenges, social interaction, and cultural + socioeconomic barriers
3. Develop skills to support neurodivergent students' needs
  - a. Show importance of skills like PPT, CBT, and ABA.
  - b. Create awareness and training to foster inclusivity
  - c. Teach self-advocacy
  - d. Collaborate with families

**Detailed Description/Abstract**

*Provide a detailed description of the content and purpose of the proposal, which will be used during the review/selection process. Discuss how the proposal content is supported by the existing body of professional literature. (2 references are needed) (2500-character limit, not counting spaces)*

The proposal aims to investigate the effects of counseling on students with ASD, focusing on various interventions and their impact on social and emotional well-being. The strategies discussed in this presentation will equip participants with the knowledge needed to identify key characteristics of ASD, recognize the barriers neurodivergent students face in accessing counseling, and develop practical skills to support these students effectively.

ASD is characterized by challenges in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviors. Children with ASD exhibit a “triad of difficulties: the social area, the communication area, and the imagination area,” but also possess “intellectual potential and special qualities” (Ion, 2021, p. 189-190). ASD affects individuals differently, meaning that counseling interventions should be tailored to the individual. Over 75% of people with ASD have comorbid conditions, such as mental retardation, ADHD, OCD, sensory issues, anxiety,

depression, alexithymia, and other neurological disorders (Ion, 2021, p. 192). Thus, children with ASD are highly relevant to the field of counseling and often require specialized interventions.

School counselors play a pivotal role in supporting the mental health and well-being of students, but some may feel unprepared to address the specific challenges faced by students with ASD. As Jones et al. (2024) state, “The practicality of accommodating for individual client needs may seem challenging; however, an individualized and tailored approach is a core tenet of person-centered counselling” (p.12). Important strategies to note include clear communication free of confusing language, consistent routines and structure, using visual supports, positive reinforcement, monitoring progress, and collaborating with parents and teachers.

Additionally, the presentation will highlight the importance of advocacy within the school environment. By developing inclusive practices, school counselors should ensure that neurodivergent students have equitable access to counseling services, regardless of their background. For students with ASD, teaching self-advocacy involves helping them develop communication strategies to convey their feelings, request accommodations, and assert their needs effectively. Collaborating with special education teachers, behavioral therapists, and families of children with ASD ensures a support system for the child. As Sneed et al. (2023) state, “families have equally efficacious options when discerning the best treatment for their child with ASD in community-based models of care,” (p. 250). To create a supportive environment, a collaborative approach utilizing interdisciplinary teamwork and parental involvement is needed, as it fosters the holistic needs for students with ASD.

#### **Presentation Structure**

*Provide a bulleted outline of how you will use the time (e.g., introduction, lecture, activity, Q&A). (1000-character limit, not counting spaces)*

- Introduction (5 min.) – Welcome and Overview
  - Introduction of myself (background working with neurodivergent students) and the topic
  - Purpose and importance of the presentation
  - Agenda of the session
- Background and Context (10 min.) – Understanding ASD + Diversity and ASD
  - Define ASD and its key characteristics
  - Discuss barriers neurodivergent students face to getting access to counseling

- Explain how cultural and ethnic background influence perceptions of ASD
  - Geographic and SES disparities in access to ASD services
- Counseling sessions (20 min.)
  - PPT, CBT and ABA – Evaluation of these approaches
  - Inclusive practices – Disability awareness and cultural competence
  - Strategies -- Clear Communication, visual aids, and structured sessions
  - Applications – Tailored Support, reinforcement, and collaboration
  - Case studies and examples (i.e. Despois & Andre, 2024).
- Q&A (5 min.)
- Conclusion (5 min.)
  - Summary of key points discussed
  - Emphasize the importance of inclusive practices and advocacy
  - Thank the audience for participation
  - Provide contact information for further questions / follow-up

**Presenter Bio**

*Summarize your educational background, work or field experience, interests, current or recent projects (if applicable), and honors/awards (if applicable), especially as they relate to the proposal topic. Use a formal tone. Do not write in first-person. (800-character limit, not counting spaces)*

George D. Dranichak III is a linguistic graduate from the University of Buffalo, NY. Since he graduated from high school in 2019, he's been employed in 3 various school settings, twice as a teacher's aide and most recently, a building substitute teacher. Within the next month, he plans to relocate from NY to PA and hopes to reprise his role as a teacher's aide at Via of the Lehigh Valley, a school for disabled children. He currently goes to Saint Bonaventure in NY for school counseling after a recommendation from former counselor and dean of students Tane Robinson. Outside of his professional pursuits, he enjoys spending time with his family and goldendoodle named Millie, listening to and blogging about music, and playing video games like Super Smash Bros.

**Diversity Statement**

*Identify at least one aspect to explain how your proposal incorporates multicultural perspectives and addresses diversity.*

**(1000-character limit, not counting spaces)**

This proposal relates to diversity through multicultural views of ASD, recognizing that cultural and ethnic backgrounds can influence perceptions, recognition and diagnosis of ASD. Geographic disparities and socioeconomic status (SES) impact access to ASD services, where rural areas often lack resources compared to urban areas, and higher SES families have better access to services.

By incorporating diverse cultural norms and values into inclusive counseling practices, this proposal aims to bridge communication gaps and improve understanding for clients of various backgrounds with ASD. The approach involves disability awareness and cultural competence to address diverse needs. For example, clear communication, visual aids, and structured sessions will benefit students with ASD. Additionally, tailored support, positive reinforcement, and collaboration with educators and families provide comprehensive care.

Through these measures, this proposal seeks to create a supportive, inclusive environment where all neurodivergent students feel valued, understood, and capable of reaching their full potential.

**References**

*Provide references that support your workshop's content. Use APA 7 formatting. References may be single-spaced for the proposal submission.*

- Despois, J. & André, A. (2024) Inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder in preschool: Investigation of adult-child interactions in two inclusive classes over one school year. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 24, 786–795. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12668>
- Hallett, S. & Kerr, C. (2020) ‘You need support, validation, good coping skills. You need and deserve acceptance’: Autistic Adult Experiences of Counselling. Autistic Mental Health & Autistic Mutual Aid Society Edinburgh (AMASE). [www.autisticmentalhealth.uk/counsellingreport](http://www.autisticmentalhealth.uk/counsellingreport)
- Ion, S. (2021). Social Assistance for Children and Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). *Social Work Review / Revista de Asistenta Sociala*, 2, 187–199.
- Ivanova, V. (2024). The possibilities of Positive Psychotherapy to help children with autism (ASD) and their families. *The Global Psychotherapist*, 4(2), 129–132.  
<https://doi.org/10.52982/lkj240>
- Jones, F., Hamilton, J., & Kargas, N. (2024). Accessibility and affirmation in counselling: An exploration into neurodivergent clients' experiences. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 00, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12742>
- La Roche, M. J., Bush, H. H., & D’Angelo, E. (2018). The assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorder: A cultural examination. *Practice Innovations*, 3(2), 107–122.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/pri0000067>

Sneed, L., Little, S. G., & Akin-Little, A. (2023). Evaluating the effectiveness of two models of applied behavior analysis in a community-based setting for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Behavior Analysis: Research and Practice*, 23(4), 238–253.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/bar0000277>

Vause, T., Jaksic, H., Neil, N., Frijters, J. C., Jackiewicz, G., & Feldman, M. (2020). Functional Behavior-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Obsessive Compulsive Behavior in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 50(7), 2375–2388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3772-x>

### **Revisions**

*Please list the revisions you made to your final submission based on the instructor and peer review feedback you received.*

- Moved around text from rationale and detailed description to better fit the flow and purpose of each section. The peer review was right, I did get them mixed up occasionally.
- Added sentences to better incorporate learning objectives throughout the proposal.
  - o Better identified learning objective 1 in rationale section
  - o Elaborated on self-advocacy (3c) and collaboration (3d) in the detailed description section
- Fixed font choice / formatting
- Fixed in-text APA Citations