

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH**  
**ASPERGER**  
**SYNDROME**

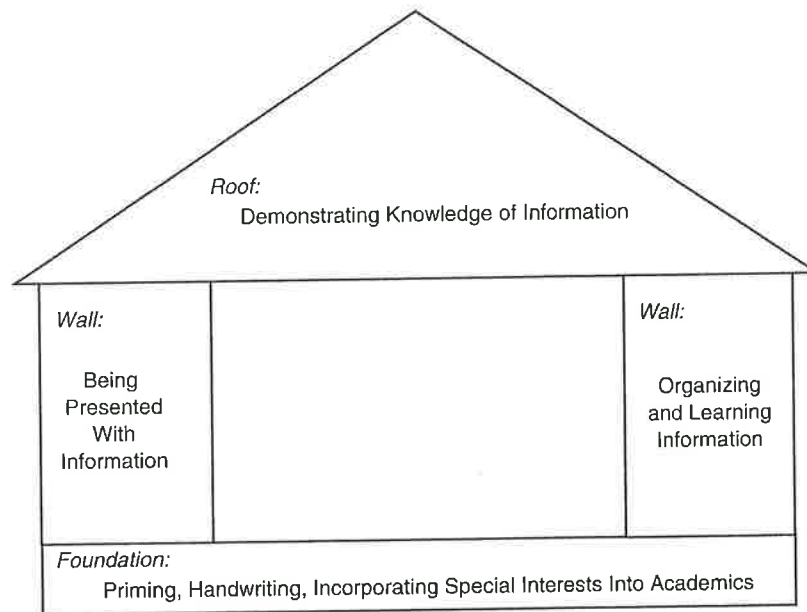
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**STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS**



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**Figure 3.1** Visual Representation of This Chapter's Organization of Academic Modifications



and handwriting skills—followed by a discussion of the benefits of incorporating a student's special interest into his academics. These areas often provide the foundation for the student's academics and for the next area that will be covered, stages of the learning process. The first two stages of the learning process are (a) being presented with information and (b) organizing and learning information. These stages are like walls that are supported by the foundation of predictability, handwriting, and special interests and that provide additional support for the roof, demonstrating knowledge of information. This roof overarches the learning process, as this is the stage where it becomes evident what level of proficiency the student has developed in an academic area. This level of proficiency also provides feedback as to whether or not the strategies put into place (the foundation and walls) have helped the student to develop his skills in this area.

## PREDICTABILITY AND HANDWRITING

### Priming

*Priming* a student means preparing her for an activity that she will be expected to complete (Myles & Adreon, 2001). Priming allows the student to preview information or activities that she will be presented with in the near future in an effort to (a) accommodate her preference for predictability

and (b) promote her success with these activities. With the emphasis placed on previewing activities before they will occur, the student is often less likely to experience anxiety and stress about what lies ahead. With anxiety and stress at a minimum, the student can focus her efforts on successfully completing activities.

Priming is not a time for teaching the academic content of activities or making sure the student has learned it. The actual materials that will be used in an activity, such as a worksheet or outline for a group project, may be shown to the student during priming so she knows what she will be working on in an upcoming class. However, the student is not asked to complete the worksheet at this time. It is strictly a preview. Schedules of events or lists may also be used during priming. They may depict a series of events that will occur or information that will be covered during an upcoming activity.

Priming should occur close to when the target activity will occur. For example, priming may take place the day before an activity, the morning of it, the class period before, or even at the beginning of the class period during which the activity will be completed. Anyone can help the student with priming, from a teacher to a parent to a peer. Priming should occur in short, concise time periods in an environment that is relaxing for the student with AS, and with a person who is patient and supportive (Myles & Adreon, 2001).

### **Handwriting and the Student With AS**

The majority of students with AS have challenges with fine-motor skills, including handwriting (Myles, Huggins, Rome-Lake, Hagiwara, Barnhill, & Griswold, 2003). Teachers of students with AS often describe concerns with these students' handwriting itself as well as the students' feelings towards handwriting, such as:

- Using large-size characters, particularly for older students
- Exhibiting sloppiness and illegibility of handwriting, in general
- Using extensive time to complete tasks requiring handwriting
- Dislike of, or even refusal to complete, tasks that require handwriting

For anyone unfamiliar with the characteristics of AS, or anyone unaware that a student has AS, the latter two characteristics may be perceived as inappropriate, noncompliant behavior. However, this is rarely the case for the student with AS. Handwriting may, in fact, be an uncomfortable (even painful) and emotionally and physically draining process for the student with AS due to fine-motor challenges, similar to completing a two-mile hike when suffering from arthritis in the knees.