This film is a must-see for principals and teachers. Adam’s story provides a glimpse of the very real struggle faced daily by children with Asperger syndrome and their families.

Professor Pat Mirenda, Faculty of Education, UBC

I strongly endorse this DVD. It is very honest and typical of so many boys with Asperger Syndrome. The interviews provide the perspectives of the family, the classmates and experts such as Temple Grandin.

Tony Atwood, author and world authority on Asperger Syndrome

Teachers will be able to use the film to create awareness and empathy for the unique social challenges autism presents.

Linda Reid, B.C. Minister of State for Child Care

As a Grade 7 teacher with a child with Aspergers in my class, I feel the film is a valuable tool. It dramatically shows the impact of exclusion, not only on a child with autism, but on any child.

Gina Challenger, teacher, Surrey School District
The Boy Inside Study Guide

Bibliography


Davies, Amelia (2004). *Teaching Asperger's Students Social Skills through Acting: All Their World is a Stage!* Arlington, Texas: Future Horizons.


Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Film Synopsis 3
Characters 4
Special Considerations 5
How to Use the Study Guide 7
Chapter One: List of Scenes 9
Chapter Two: List of Scenes 10
Suggested Teaching Goals 11
Suggested Learning Outcomes 11
Ministry of Education Curriculum 12
Chapter One: Pre-Screening Discussion 13
About Asperger Syndrome 15
Chapter Two: Post-Screening Discussion and Activities 21
Chapter Two: Pre-Screening Discussion and Presentations 23
Chapter Two: Post-Screening Discussion and Activities 23
Additional Ideas to Create Safe, Supportive and Caring Schools 30
Handout One: What is Asperger Syndrome? 31
Handout Two: How to Support a Classmate with Asperger's 32
B.C. Organizations for ASD Support, Intervention and Training 33
Internet Resources 33
Bibliography 35
Introduction

This study guide is based on the critically acclaimed documentary film *The Boy Inside*. Directed by Marianne Kaplan, the film chronicles a difficult school year for her son Adam, a 12-year-old boy who has Asperger Syndrome, an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Although the film focuses on the personal experiences of one boy with Asperger’s, the story is a powerful and wide-ranging teaching tool that addresses the need for education about Autism Spectrum Disorder, and the serious impact of social exclusion, a lesser recognized form of bullying.

Considering young people with ASD are more likely than other students to experience social alienation and other forms of bullying, this study guide is designed to create greater understanding of Asperger Syndrome among middle and secondary school students.

www.autismsocietycanada.ca/index_e.html
Autism Society Canada provides numerous resources for schools and families, including “Life with ASD: Resources for Families and Caregivers” and “Best Practices” for educators.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/autism
The Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Children and Family Development, provides information on resources and programs available to help families who have a child with ASD.

www.aspergers.ca
The Asperger Society of Ontario provides education, resources and support to individuals with AS, their families, educators, medical and mental health professionals, employers, government and the community.

www.autism.org
The Center for the Study of Autism has links to a wide variety of resources and articles on Autism Spectrum Disorder.

www.featbc.org
FEAT B.C. (Families for Early Autism Treatment) is a non-profit, volunteer organization of parents and concerned professionals working for universal access to effective autism treatment for all young people diagnosed with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders. FEAT BC regularly runs a variety of workshops for parents, professionals and others.

www.friend2friendsociety.org
Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society is a non-profit charity in B.C. Friend 2 Friend has a mandate to foster understanding, acceptance, empathy and friendships between young people with ASD and related social-communication disorders and their peers, siblings and classmates.

www.autismbc.ca
The Autism Society of British Columbia (ASBC) was started in 1975 and is a parent-based society providing support to individuals with autism and their families in British Columbia and Yukon.

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/kids/kautismpage.htm
Kids' Quest on Disability and Health is an initiative of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities in the U.S. (NCBDDD). It's a web-based game designed to improve children's understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

www.polyxo.com/socialstories
Teaching Young People with Autism: Social Stories. This website helps parents and others learn how to write and adapt social stories to teach young people with autism about social skills. It includes a strong introduction to social stories and numerous examples of social stories. These stories can be adapted, copied, or just serve as inspiration to help parents and educators write social stories for their own young people.

www.templegrandin.com
Temple Grandin’s official website. Grandin is one of the most celebrated authors with autism in the world.

www.socialthinking.com
This is Michelle Garcia Winner’s home page. Winner’s social thinking curriculum for school-age students with ASD is an excellent resource for teachers.
B.C. Organizations for ASD Support, Intervention and Training

Autism Community Training – BC (ACT)
Suite 240 — 2250 Boundary Road, Burnaby, BC, V5M 3Z3
Phone: Toll-free 1-866-939-5188 or 604-205-5467
E-mail: info@autismcommunitytraining.bc.ca
Web Address: www.autismcommunitynet

Autism Community Training – BC (ACT) is a province-wide information and referral service created to support families of young people with Autism Spectrum Disorders. ACT offers families and professionals a wide range of positive and practical information on everything from sleep problems and diet to core issues such as diagnosis and aspects of intervention, including information on setting up programs for young people. It lists service providers, community groups and community agencies.

Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD)
4746 57th Street, Delta, BC, V4K 3C9
Phone: 604-946-3610
Web Address: www.autismoutreach.ca/index.php

Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD) is a provincial resource program that provides ongoing training and support for teams working with students with ASD. Coordinated through a school district referral process, POPARD education and behaviour consultants observe students with autism in their classrooms and recommend educational and behavioural support strategies to assist the student’s school-based team. Other key services include environmental assessments, online e-learning modules, and an extensive variety of workshops and training activities, including credit and non-credit courses offered in class or online.

Internet Resources

www.theboyinside.com
The official website for the documentary film The Boy Inside. It’s the best resource for information about the film, including upcoming screenings, reviews and personal blogs. It’s also an online community where families, educators and young people living with Asperger’s can connect. This is a good place to share stories, make friends and find support.

www.tonyattwood.com.au
This is Tony Attwood’s official website. He’s an author who writes extensively on Asperger’s. The site is a very good resource for families, children and professionals living and working with Asperger’s.

www.maapservices.org
MAAP Services for Autism and Asperger Syndrome is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing information and advice to families of more advanced individuals with autism, Asperger Syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder (PDD).

www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds/autism.asp
The Government of Alberta website features a downloadable document called “Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders” (separate chapters are listed and downloadable). The document has both theoretical and practical information for school-based teams.

The guide also helps teachers and students recognize and better cope with the unique challenges growing numbers of students with ASD present in the classroom and on the playground. Ministry of Education statistics show more than 3700 students with ASD attended B.C. schools in 2006.

To thoroughly address the challenges ASD presents at your school, teachers should be prepared to seek out additional information and resources as required.

Teachers are encouraged to screen the film and use the following discussion points and activities at their discretion to increase their students’ understanding of Asperger’s, and foster a safe, supportive and caring school environment.

This guide was produced with the encouragement and support of the B.C. Ministry of Education and the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development.
**Film Synopsis**

Vancouver filmmaker Marianne Kaplan turns the camera on her own family in this powerful and candid story about a difficult year in the life of her son Adam. 12-year-old Adam has Asperger Syndrome, a form of Autism Spectrum Disorder also known as high-functioning autism.

*The Boy Inside* follows Adam through Grade 7, his final year of elementary school. As Adam struggles to navigate today’s youth culture, he sometimes says the wrong thing, ends up in tears or in fights with other boys. As a result, he often finds himself isolated, bullied, and excluded to the point of depression.

Adam’s parents constantly counsel him on managing the challenges he faces at school and his teacher does her best to help him fit in. When their combined efforts prove unsuccessful, Adam’s mom takes him to an autism conference in Chicago to meet other families struggling with Asperger’s.

Between talking to parents and young people living with Asperger’s, Marianne meets Dr. Temple Grandin. Grandin is a renowned author with autism best known for her work in animal science and her inspirational personal journey.

The conference reveals there are no easy answers, and Adam returns home even more depressed than before. Facing continued alienation at school, Adam becomes more distressed and acts out.

**Handout Two: How to Support a Classmate with Asperger’s**

Remember that a young person with Asperger’s experiences the world differently than we do and has limited social and communication skills. This makes it really, really hard for him to understand what other people think or feel. In the same way you wouldn’t expect a person who is blind to see, you can’t expect someone with Asperger’s to practice good social and communication skills all the time.

You can help a classmate with Asperger’s develop and practice good social and communication skills in the following ways:

- Get to know your classmate with Asperger’s
- Include your classmate with Asperger’s in school and playground activities
- Focus on your similarities, not your differences
- Be tolerant
- When your classmate with Asperger’s makes a social mistake, show him the proper way to behave by using positive, direct language. Be sure to congratulate him when he acts appropriately.
**Handout One: What Is Asperger Syndrome?**

Asperger Syndrome is a brain disorder that affects the way a person behaves and communicates. It is a high-functioning form of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Every person with Asperger’s is unique and has their own strengths and challenges, although they may share some of the following common behaviours:

A young person with Asperger Syndrome:
- May be very good at certain subjects and activities
- May be very sensitive to noise, physical contact, light and smells
- May get upset easily when plans change or things don’t go his way
- May have a hard time seeing things from another person’s point-of-view
- May want to make friends, but have a hard time fitting in
- May have trouble making eye contact
- May take words literally and not understand figures of speech and sarcasm
- May not be able to read facial expressions or body language

by lying, stealing and fighting. His parents are overwhelmed by his downward spiral and place Adam in foster care for a weekend to give themselves an urgently needed break.

When Adam returns home, his parents have a new plan. Their behavioural consultant goes to Adam’s school to work with his peers in an attempt to disrupt the negative cycle. Once his classmates learn more productive ways of interacting with him, Adam makes a few friends and the school environment improves for everyone. Feeling more comfortable in the company of his peers, Adam graduates elementary school, attends his school dance and the whole family celebrates with a baseball game.

**Characters**
- Adam, 12-year-old boy with Asperger’s
- Marianne, Adam’s mother
- Peter, Adam’s father
- Sarah, Adam’s 14-year-old sister
- Adam’s Grade 7 classmates
- Adam’s teacher
- Parents at the autism conference
- Young people with Asperger’s at the autism conference
- Dr. Temple Grandin, renowned author who has autism
- Adam’s behavioural consultant
Special Considerations

Middle and secondary school students are the main audience for this study guide. It is recommended for students in Grade 6 and above. Some of the content of the study guide may not be suitable for all middle and secondary school students. The age, maturity and developmental abilities of individual students must be considered.

Teachers of students with significant learning or developmental disabilities should consult their school or district-based resource teacher to determine the best method of instruction for young people with special needs. Teachers are also encouraged to use visual aids and other resources to present the material at their discretion.

The Boy Inside represents the story of one boy and is not intended to represent all students with Asperger’s, nor their experiences.

Prior to showing this DVD and using the accompanying study guide, consider the following steps to determine if the content is suitable for all students in your classroom:

- Preview the study guide to familiarize yourself with the main issues so you can explain the nature of the content to your students and their parents.
- Review your school district’s policy about use of DVDs in the classroom.

Additional Ideas to Create Safe, Supportive and Caring Schools

- Praise/commend/reward students who demonstrate attitudes and actions that embody inclusion.
- Invite your school principal to come into your classroom and endorse your students’ code of conduct.
- Set aside time each week to check in with your students and monitor the progress of their collective efforts toward creating a more inclusive environment. Invite your school counselor to participate.
- Check in regularly with the most socially vulnerable students in your classroom to privately review their recent experiences with inclusion and exclusion.
- Use a variety of visual material in your classroom, such as graphic schedules, charts, etc. This will benefit students with Asperger’s as well as the rest of the class.
- Invite parents to participate in the creation of an inclusive environment. Encourage them to regularly check in with their children and seek support from school officials when they have concerns.
- Ensure that students know who to go to for support when things aren’t going well. To overcome reluctance, make the process easy and discreet.
- Ask for help as needed from others in your school or district such as counselors, resource teachers, vice principals and principals.
- Be aware of how your students conduct themselves outside of the classroom. Regularly invite the input of special education assistants and playground supervisors to keep informed.
OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Create a public service announcement (PSA) to promote the concept of inclusion
Promote inclusion and the benefits of diversity by making a public service announcement to be read over the school’s P.A. system. Using voices, music and sound effects, make it cool to be kind and caring towards people with differences.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY FOR OLDER STUDENTS: Write a report about inclusiveness at your school
Investigate how inclusive your school is to people with differences or special needs. Give lots of examples to support your assessment. Be sure to describe at least three ways all students can make things better for classmates with differences or special needs. End your report by explaining how making your school a safe, supportive and caring environment benefits all students.

- Be sure to consult students with ASD in your classroom before showing the DVD.
- Welcome students with ASD, siblings of students with ASD and their parents to preview the film. This will allow those most affected by ASD to make informed decisions about whether or not to participate when their classmates view the film and engage in the discussion and activities outlined in the guide. This will also help to determine which aspects of the film and guide content are most relevant to particular students with ASD.
- If school staff perceive potential concerns for any young people, seek support from appropriate professionals such as the school-based counselor, resource teacher and/or administrator.
- Ensure that debriefing and discussion occur in addition to viewing the DVD.
- Become aware of additional supports and services available within the district and/or community as required.
How to Use the Study Guide

The Boy Inside study guide is designed to be taught over two classes. The DVD is divided into two chapters. Each chapter including discussions and activities will require, at minimum, a one-hour class. Follow the lessons as written or tailor them to best meet the needs of your students and subject.

The first chapter of the DVD takes about 30 minutes, leaving approximately 30 minutes for your lesson plan, discussions and activities. The second chapter of the DVD takes about 20 minutes, leaving 40 minutes for discussions and activities.

For easy reference, each chapter is divided into a number of scenes, which are described in List of Scenes, page 9 and 10. Teachers can use these scene breakdowns to refer to specific discussion points in the study guide.

Is it a safe, supportive and caring environment for all students?

How would you feel about going to your school if you were a student with Asperger’s?

What are the benefits of supporting and including a classmate with Asperger’s?

Examples: when you meet people with Asperger’s in the future, you’ll know how best to interact with them, the school environment will be more enjoyable for everyone, you’ll learn more about how to see things from another person’s point-of-view, including people with differences feels good, etc.

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION: About the film
Invite students to share general thoughts and feelings about the film.

Is there anything you want to say about the film that we haven’t discussed?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Imagine that you need to find intervention and support services for a young person with Asperger’s
Go online to locate as many school and community resources as possible. Compile them into a user-friendly guide for students with Asperger’s.
ACTIVITY: Create a skit that shows how to turn a social mistake into a learning opportunity
Divide the class into small groups and ask them to create and perform a skit in which students respond in a supportive and caring way to someone who makes a social mistake. Remind students to demonstrate respect and sensitivity toward one another. It should be a social mistake anyone could make. For example, if a classmate is standing too close, instead of the other group members telling him to buzz off, they may suggest he move back a step so they can all talk more comfortably. Have the students praise their friend when he adopts their advice.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Create a public service announcement (PSA) to promote awareness of Asperger Syndrome
Divide students into groups and have them create and perform a PSA that promotes awareness and understanding of Asperger’s. Have them explain what Asperger’s is, and how the use of positive, direct language can help a classmate with Asperger’s develop better social and communication skills. Make it cool to be kind and caring towards classmates with Asperger’s.

DISCUSSION: The number of students with Asperger’s is growing
Ask students to think about their school.
**Chapter One: List of Scenes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time in</th>
<th>Time out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MEET ADAM AND HIS FAMILY</td>
<td>01:00:07</td>
<td>01:04:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam floats in the tub dreaming of his ideal school year. He introduces his family at dinner. He worries about being bullied as he leaves for his first day of school. Adam talks about how past bullying made him want to die for a few minutes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>WHAT IS ASPERGER SYNDROME?</td>
<td>01:04:29</td>
<td>01:09:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam talks about baseball and some of his other favorite things. Adam’s mom explains Asperger Syndrome. Adam and his classmates talk about his behavior. Some kids yell at Adam as he walks home from school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ADAM FEELS REJECTED</td>
<td>01:09:07</td>
<td>01:12:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam’s teacher starts class with a lesson on how to make friends. Adam explains how he is excluded because of his Asperger Syndrome. Adam’s older sister worries about his future after some boys in the schoolyard tease her about him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>LOOKING FOR ANSWERS</td>
<td>01:12:14</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam’s mom makes dinner. Adam’s sister doesn’t want her brother to attend her secondary school next year. Adam’s parents discuss his future. Adam and his mom go on a plane trip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>AUTISM CONFERENCE</td>
<td>01:15:24</td>
<td>01:21:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam’s mom takes him to an autism conference in Chicago. They talk to other kids with Asperger’s and their moms about the effects of bullying and isolation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>AUTISM CONFERENCE PART II</td>
<td>01:21:08</td>
<td>01:26:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam’s mom talks to author Temple Grandin about having autism. Adam gets upset when plans change. Adam’s mom worries that he’s becoming depressed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Include your classmate with Asperger’s in school and playground activities**

The more you play and work with a classmate with Asperger’s, the more comfortable you’ll be around each other.

**Focus on your similarities, not your differences**

No two people are the same, but there are many things you and your classmate with Asperger’s may have in common, such as favorite sports, games, school subjects, music, etc.

**Be tolerant**

If you stay calm and remember that your classmate with Asperger’s doesn’t mean to be difficult, you could actually help him develop better social and communication skills.

**When your classmate with Asperger’s makes a social mistake, show him the proper way to behave**

Use positive, direct language, and congratulate him when he acts appropriately.

For example: If a classmate with Asperger’s is yelling in your ear, you could say, “I don’t like it when you shout. Please talk to me in a quiet voice then I would be happy to talk to you.” Then when he speaks to you in a quiet voice, you should thank him by saying, “Thank you for speaking in a quiet voice.” This way you are helping your friend learn and practice good social and communication skills.

Another example: If a classmate with Asperger’s interrupts a private conversation, you could say, “Excuse me, but our conversation is private. We will tell you when we are done, and then you can join us.” Remember to congratulate your classmate if he follows your instruction.
How did life change for Adam after his classmates learned more about Asperger Syndrome?
Examples: he made some friends, he got into high school, danced with some girls, etc.

Why do you think things improved for Adam?
Examples: classmates understood more about Asperger’s, everyone was more tolerant, Adam felt safer and more included, etc.

LESSON: Ways to support a classmate with Asperger’s
The following background information can be used at your discretion to teach students different ways to support a classmate with Asperger’s. A short list is also provided on page 32 and can be used to create a handout.

Remind students that a young person with Asperger’s experiences the world differently and has limited social and communication skills. This makes it really, really hard for him to understand what other people think or feel. Explain that in the same way you wouldn’t expect a person who is blind to see, you can’t expect someone with Asperger’s to practice good social and communication skills all the time.

Get to know your classmate with Asperger’s
Most young people with Asperger’s have special skills and interests that can enrich a friendship.

Chapter Two: List of Scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time in</th>
<th>Time out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ADAM ACTS OUT</td>
<td>01:26:40</td>
<td>01:32:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ADAM GOES TO FOSTER CARE</td>
<td>01:32:22</td>
<td>01:35:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BEHAVIOURAL CONSULTANT VISITS SCHOOL</td>
<td>01:35:30</td>
<td>01:38:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ADAM GRADUATES</td>
<td>01:38:54</td>
<td>01:42:53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggested Teaching Goals

This study guide gives teachers the tools to:

- Introduce Asperger Syndrome and some of its behavioral, communicative and social challenges
- Prompt thoughtful discussion about some of the issues depicted in the film
- Prompt students to think about and value diversity
- Motivate and empower students to work individually and in groups towards creating a safe, supportive and caring school

Suggested Learning Outcomes

This study guide is designed to:

- Increase students’ awareness and understanding of Asperger Syndrome
- Give students strategies to include, support and mentor students with Asperger’s
- Show students the benefits of an inclusive school community

girl on the playground that she sucks at baseball, he doesn’t mean to make her feel bad. He just wants to talk, and may not know or remember that criticizing another person is not an appropriate way to make conversation. As his difficulties at home and school mount, Adam begins to act out and things take a turn for the worse.

When Adam feels bullied how does his behaviour change? Examples: Adam’s behaviour gets worse. He gets depressed and starts acting out by lying, stealing and fighting.

How are the people around Adam affected by his increasing sense of isolation and problem behaviour? Examples: when Adam acts out in frustration it hurts everyone. Kids at school and his principal are upset by his actions, and his family is so stressed out that they send him to foster care for the weekend.

DISCUSSION, Scene 9 and 10: A young person with Asperger’s can thrive in a safe, supportive and caring environment

Point out that Adam’s classmates learned and practiced new, positive ways to interact with him. Adam still makes social mistakes, but it’s a happy ending because he made some friends, and his classmates have a better understanding of how to support and include a peer with Asperger’s.
Chapter Two: Pre-screening Discussion and Presentations

This pre-screening discussion is designed to recap the main issues before moving onto Chapter Two. Students should be encouraged to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

What are Adam’s main challenges?

What have you learned about Asperger’s?

ACTIVITY: Present classroom code of conduct projects.

Show the DVD Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Post-screening Discussion and Activities

This post-screening discussion and following activities focus on how Adam’s behaviour can be influenced by positive interaction with classmates who understand Asperger’s. These activities will provide students with some tools to support and include classmates with Asperger’s, and help create a safe, supportive and caring school for everyone.

DISCUSSION, Scene 7 and 8: Adam feels increasingly rejected and bullied

Point out how Adam continues to experience rejection and isolation at school. Even when he tries his best to be social, he says the wrong thing. For example, when Adam tells the

Ministry of Education Curriculum

This study guide addresses prescribed learning outcomes found in the following Ministry of Education Curricula:

- Physical Education Grade 6 to 10
  Personal and Social Responsibility

- Social Studies Grade 6 to 10
  Applications of Social Studies

- Social Studies Grade 11
  Skills and Processes of Social Studies

- Personal Planning Grade 6 to 7
  Personal Development: Healthy Living, Mental Well-Being, Family Life Education, Child Abuse Prevention

- Personal Planning Grade 10
  Health: Healthy Living, Healthy Relationships

- Career and Personal Planning Grade 8 to 12
  Personal Development: Healthy Living, Mental Well-Being, Family Life Education, Child Abuse Prevention

- Health and Career Education Grade 6 to 7
  Goals and Decisions
  Health: Healthy Living, Healthy Relationships, Safety and Injury Prevention

- Health and Career Education Grade 8 to 9
  Health: Healthy Living, Healthy Relationships, Safety and Injury Prevention
**Chapter One: Pre-Screening Discussion**

This pre-screening discussion is designed to give students the information needed to watch the DVD with discussion points in mind.

**DISCUSSION: People are not all the same**
Lead students in a short discussion about some of the ways people are different from one another. Remind students that every person is a unique individual who deserves acceptance and respect no matter what their differences.

Explain how this tolerance and respect makes our diverse society a nicer place for everyone to live. Now in a safe, supportive and caring environment, explore these individual differences. Record the list on the chalkboard or poster paper.

- **What ways are people different from one another?**
  Examples: hair colour, eye colour, height differences, cultural background, etc.

**DISCUSSION: Good social skills help people relate to one another**
Lead the class in a short discussion about how good social skills help different people get along. Explain that social skills are people skills. We use our social skills when we work and play with others.

Good social skills are important because they allow us to express ourselves, understand others and relate well to people in different situations. Use the chalkboard or whiteboard to list examples of good social skills.

- **What are some examples of good social skills?**
  Examples: being a good listener, taking turns in conversation, sharing, being tolerant, congratulating someone on a job well done, etc.

**ACTIVITY: Classroom code of conduct**
Lead students through the creation of a classroom code of conduct that helps build an inclusive environment for everyone, no matter what their differences. If the class already has a code of conduct, ask if there’s anything they would add.

Remind students to demonstrate respect and sensitivity toward one another when suggesting rules for the code of conduct. Once all the rules for the code of conduct have been established, divide students into small groups to present the code of conduct using different media.

Students could present the code of conduct in the following ways:

- An original poster
- A song or rap
- An announcement over the school’s P.A. system
- A video presentation
- A short skit

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Create a poster that celebrates diversity**
Create a poster that celebrates diversity and shows how society benefits by being tolerant, inclusive and respectful of all unique individuals. This can be a collage of magazine clippings, hand-drawn pictures, famous or original quotes, etc.
Chapter One: Post-Screening Discussion and Activities

This post-screening discussion and following activities are designed to show how Adam wants friends like everybody else, but gets rejected more often because he makes social mistakes.

DISCUSSION, Scene 1 and 2: Adam’s Life
Start off this discussion by referring students to the beginning of the film. In the first scene we meet Adam and his family. He is worried about being bullied on his first day of school. In scene 2 Adam’s classmates talk about his behaviour at school.

Why is Adam worried about going to school?
Example: he’s worried he’ll be bullied.

Why doesn’t Adam fit in?
Examples: he makes a lot of social mistakes because he doesn’t have good social and communication skills. He interrupts people, he can seem rude and insensitive, he gets upset easily, and he sometimes gets special treatment, etc.

LESSON: Accepting people with differences
Give a short lesson about the importance of understanding and accepting differences. Explain that some differences like Asperger’s are harder to recognize than others. Because some of Adam’s classmates did not understand his disability, they rejected him. They mistook his poor social and communication skills for intentionally bad behaviour.

LESSON: The different ways people communicate
Give a short lesson about the many ways people communicate with one another. For example, we communicate our needs, feelings, thoughts and experiences with spoken words or language, tone of voice, voice volume, facial expressions, eye contact, body language, gestures, etc.

DISCUSSION: Non-verbal communication
Lead the class in a short discussion about non-verbal communication. Start off by explaining that non-verbal communication is how we express our thoughts and emotions without words. Instead, we use our bodies and facial expressions to show what we mean. Emphasize how non-verbal communication clues us into what is on another person’s mind — even more than voice or words. Use the chalkboard or whiteboard to list different types of non-verbal communication and what they mean.

What are examples of non-verbal communication?
Examples: smiling when you’re happy, shrugging your shoulders when you don’t know or care, yawning to show you’re bored, etc.

DISCUSSION: Imagine you have limited social skills
Most people have no trouble communicating with others. They naturally understand most verbal and non-verbal communication. Have students take a moment to imagine they can’t understand a lot of verbal and non-verbal communication. Point out that they would make social mistakes more often because interacting with friends, family and classmates could be very confusing. It would be like trying to crack a secret code everyone else but them understands.

How would you feel if you couldn’t understand a lot of verbal and non-verbal communication?
Examples: different, confused, frustrated, lonely, sad, etc.
**LESSON: Asperger Syndrome**

The following background information can be used at your discretion to introduce students to Asperger Syndrome. An abbreviated list about Asperger’s is provided on page 31 and can be used to create a handout for this quick lesson.

*Asperger Syndrome is a brain disorder that affects the way a person behaves and communicates. It’s a high-functioning form of ASD, which affects four times as many boys as girls.*

Chances are you already know someone with Asperger’s. He might be the talkative student who loves to list off bus schedules and hockey statistics, the gifted student who gets upset easily when plans change or the anxious student who always seems to say the wrong thing at the wrong time.

No matter what their personality, young people with Asperger’s share one important thing in common: their brains work differently than most people. As a result, they have intense and focused interests, like to repeat activities and may have limited social and communication skills.

While young people with Asperger’s experience the world differently than we do, most want to make friends. They’re just not great at relationships. They find it very hard to understand how other people feel because they can’t read others’ non-verbal communication such as facial expressions and body language.

**DISCUSSION: Young people with Asperger’s are bullied four times more often than other students**

Lead the class in a short discussion about bullying. Be sure to point out that students with differences or special needs experience the most bullying.

**What are the different types of bullying?**

Examples: physical aggression, such as pushing, shoving, spitting, kicking and hitting. Verbal aggression, such as mocking, name-calling, teasing and giving dirty looks. Social alienation, such as excluding from a group, gossiping, embarrassing, setting up a student to look foolish, and spreading rumours.

**Why do you think young people with Asperger’s are bullied?**

Examples: they act different, people don’t understand them, they say things that can be hurtful, etc.

**Show the DVD Chapter One**
LESSON: Asperger Syndrome cont.
A young person with Asperger’s may take words literally and not understand figures of speech and sarcasm. A young person with Asperger’s may not understand that words can mean more than one thing depending on how they are used. This is why he may have a hard time understanding jokes, figures of speech and sarcasm (when you say one thing, but mean the opposite).

For example, if you told your classmate with Asperger’s that you were “pulling his leg,” he may not know that you meant you were joking, and it would be confusing for him. The same goes for sarcasm. If you said, “Thanks a lot,” after a person with Asperger’s stepped on your foot, he may think you are sincerely thankful.

A young person with Asperger’s may not be able to read facial expressions or body language.
A young person with Asperger’s doesn’t always know what facial expressions or body language means. For example, a young person with Asperger’s may continue talking about his special interest long after his friend becomes bored because he doesn’t understand the warning signs. Subtle clues that a person is losing interest, such as looking away or yawning, are particularly hard for a young person with Asperger’s to pick up on.

Everyone makes social mistakes sometimes, but young people with Asperger’s have more trouble socializing than others who have a natural grasp of good social and communication skills. When students with Asperger’s do or say something inappropriate it can be misinterpreted as intentionally bad behaviour. They are often expected to know better because they may excel in other areas.

Young people with Asperger’s are further excluded because they can get nervous and upset easily. They like to follow routines so they can become familiar with what to expect and how to act in a given situation. They benefit from visual aids and need regular support and guidance from parents, teachers and peers to develop and practice good social and communication skills.

The important thing to know about Asperger’s is that we’re talking about a spectrum or range. That means the needs of one student with Asperger’s can be mild and require little additional support while another student may be more complex and need a lot of help.

Each person with Asperger’s looks and behaves differently. Just as every student in your class is unique, every person with Asperger’s is unique and has his own strengths and challenges.

LESSON: Asperger Syndrome cont.
**Common Behaviours**

It is important to remember no two young people with Asperger’s are alike, although they may share some of the following common behaviours:

**A young person with Asperger’s may be very good at certain subjects and activities.** A young person with Asperger’s may excel in certain areas and be intensely focused on specific subjects or activities. These subjects are often referred to as “special interests.” Special interests are varied, and can include everything from music and computers to baseball statistics and bus schedules. A young person with Asperger’s may be so focused on his special interests that he finds it very hard to talk about anything else.

**A young person with Asperger’s may be very sensitive to noise, physical contact, light and smells.** A young person with Asperger’s may shut down (become non-responsive) or overreact to noise, physical contact, light and smells because he may find them uncomfortable, even painful.

**A young person with Asperger’s may get upset easily when plans change or things don’t go his way.** A young person with Asperger’s may be anxious because the world can be very confusing. He may need more time to process information, such as requests, directions or plans. He can be easily stressed out by social situations, change of plans or requests he doesn’t like or understand. He may not have the ability to communicate with words when he feels overwhelmed. Instead of saying “I feel worried,” he might use behaviour like crying or throwing things to express himself.

**A young person with Asperger’s may have a hard time seeing things from another person’s point-of-view.** A young person with Asperger’s may have a hard time understanding that other people have different opinions or feelings than he does. He is usually very focused on his own experiences and concerns. This can often make him seem selfish and insensitive to others.

**A young person with Asperger’s may want friends, but have a hard time fitting in.** When a young person with Asperger’s says the wrong thing at the wrong time, it’s usually because he’s blurtling out the first thing that comes to mind. He’s just trying to be social and connect with others, but doesn’t know the best way to join in or take turns in a conversation.

**A young person with Asperger’s may have trouble making eye contact.** A young person with Asperger’s listens differently than other people. Making eye contact is often distracting, and can make him uncomfortable. Sometimes it’s easier for him to pay attention or have a conversation without having to look directly at the other person’s eyes.