Joe Klee
Dr. Gust
Mild Interventions
Field Trip Reflection

I really enjoyed the INCEC Autism Conference. I felt like I learned a lot from my experiences. It was a great idea to include all of the handouts in a folder at the beginning instead of passing them out throughout the day because, one it saved time and two it made it possible to learn about what we missed at the breakout sessions we were not able to attend. I found it very helpful to have the reference pages as well. They were well written and it was easy to check off the sites and books that they talked about without having to ask your neighbor what that book was called. Overall I just felt that it ran pretty smoothly and enjoyed my time there.

I learned some interesting techniques to use with children such as using ‘social stories’ and the ‘Theory of Mind.’ Social stories allow us as teachers to put the children in a situation and have them tell you the result such as: ‘If I become upset… I can read ‘Calming Strategies.’’ I can choose a strategy to calm down.’ This allows the child to have control when a situation arises because they have already practiced it beforehand. And the ‘Theory of Mind’ deals with egocentrism and the inability for the child to understand other children’s emotions.

Dr. Ernsperger stressed making the child make choices. She stressed that it will help with behavior problems if you let the children choose what their reward/punishment would be. You would have to negotiate acceptable terms but the child will feel more accountable for their actions if they were forced to decide what the outcomes might be.
Another thing they stressed was not to react to the behavior itself but to try and find the motive behind the behavior. Many times the child only sees one way of doing things, it is not because they were trying to disrupt class but maybe they only thought that screaming out in class would be the only way to be acknowledged by the teacher.

We had not really touched on the behavior plans much in class. So I benefited from Dr. Ernsperger’s crash course on this topic. We really could not participate much during this part but I benefited from the lady sitting by me sharing her experiences and her knowledge.

I learned several strategies from the guest speaker that I intend to use in my classroom. I like the social stories because it allowed the children to practice situations before they occur so they would not be thrown so far out of their routine. This seems to be a great strategy to use with general ed as well but especially the autistic children with set routines. Dr. Ernsperger also talked about ‘Understanding the Reasons and not Merely the Actions.’ As hard as it will be at times to separate what little Johnny just did from why he did it. We as educators need to understand more than just what he did. If we understood why he was doing it then we would better know how to modify and adapt his behaviors to curb his behavioral problems.

The session with the McGrath’s helped me to see what it would be like from the family side of the diagnosis. It allowed me more insight to the parental responses of having a child be diagnosed with Autism. This will help me in the future when I may be asked to help explain something of this nature to a family. I was able to hear her reaction and listen to how she explained the hostilities she holds even to this day. Also in this session we were given a story called ‘The Wingless Boy’ that Dawn had written to help
cope with her son’s diagnosis. That gave me another idea to maybe approach the subject in general terms with my class. Not to learn about and single out a child in my class but just to learn about something like this in general terms, or terms that don’t deal with the subject literally but more figuratively.

The thing that I will use most in my classroom would be the concept of ‘forced choices.’ I see this currently put into action at Metro North Elementary School during my Field Placement. The kids really respond positively to this. The kids really enjoy deciding how to do an assignment, they like the opportunity to write on the blackboard, or write on the wipe boards, to use different colored paper or pencils for their assignments. This would be something that I will definitely use in my classroom.

Overall I thought that this conference was a good use of my time. That I learned several new ideas as well expanded upon my prior knowledge. I really enjoyed hearing all of the speakers talk about their life experiences with autism.