Purpose of the Article
While anecdotal reports support the belief that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) demonstrate preference for activities involving visual media, formal investigation of the phenomenon has been lacking. The authors of this study used a distributed questionnaire design to gather 89 parent and caregiver reports about time spent on electronic screen media by individuals with ASD and any “observable behaviors and communicative responses” that follow.

Background Information
- It is known that people with ASD typically demonstrate relative strength in processing and responding to stimuli presented visually.
- The use of visual supports for teaching, organizing daily events, behavior, language comprehension and expression has become accepted best practice when working with individuals with ASD.
- Animated visual media, including video and computer programs, have been used successfully in teaching a variety of skills to individuals with ASD.
- Studies have found children with ASD to be more attentive to computer instruction than to teacher-only instruction, suggesting that “electronic screen media (ESM) could be an effective tool for teaching or improving language and other cognitive and communication skills.”

Key Findings
1. When given the opportunity, children in the study interacted with electronic screen media to the exclusion of other leisure activities. Reading was noted to be the least preferred leisure activity.
2. Animation was a preferred feature of television, movies, and computer activities.
3. More than half of the children imitated something they saw in the program they were watching, suggesting that observational learning was taking place.
4. About half of the children demonstrated procedural knowledge as to how to turn on a computer and independently activate a desired activity.
5. Nearly half of the children in the study demonstrated greater interest in the written language in programs than in the content of the program itself. Almost 1/3 of the children were observed to write after watching television, for example.

6. Boardmaker was among the specialty software (software used frequently in special education) listed as preferred by respondents for creating activities and supports.

Application of Key Findings to Boardmaker Studio:

- On-screen, interactive schedules like those made with Boardmaker Achieve Schedule templates may provide instructions that are more meaningful and effective than those delivered by a teacher alone.

- The interactive onscreen activities available in Boardmaker Studio can provide effective and motivating learning in literacy and other academic areas for students with ASD.

- Project setup within Studio allows you to incorporate brief, animated reward video clips within, or at the completion of many of the interactive Boardmaker Studio activities as an extra motivator.

- A **Popup Video Button Gadget** may be added to a Boardmaker Studio interactive activity to incorporate a vivid, video example, or even video modeling within the activity.

- Use the Templates in Boardmaker Studio to create individualized activities to capitalize on the interests and strengths of individuals with ASD as identified in this study. Check out the examples below and go to our Jumpstart Group on Boardmaker Achieve Community for downloadable boards and activities.

![Reward Animations](image1.png)

**Go to Project Setup in Edit Mode of an activity to add Reward Animation**

![Template: Symbololated Book, Text](image2.png)

**Template: Symbololated Book, Text on the Bottom, with Popup Video Button Gadget**