



Autism in the Classroom: Tips for General Education Teachers

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Every child with ASD is unique in their individual strengths and challenges. The following are general tips for teachers to aid in helping a child with ASD be successful in a general education classroom:

- ✚ Avoid idioms, hypothetical or abstract questions, slang, metaphors.
- ✚ Use direct precise concrete explanations. *Facial expressions and other social cues may not be effective.*
- ✚ Don't make assumptions, check for understanding.
- ✚ Use preparatory direct or indirect statements to cue transitions.
- ✚ Don't over talk. Be clear and allow for processing time. *It can take up to 45 seconds for a child with ASD to process information.*
- ✚ Provide clear and concrete task directions (e.g. lists, pictures, visual) as well as a visually organized desk/workspace area.
- ✚ During small group work, give the child with ASD a clear defined role.
- ✚ Prepare the student for environmental and/or routine changes early (e.g. assembly, substitutes teacher, testing, rescheduling, etc.)
- ✚ To promote learning a difficult task, break the task down into several steps or present in a variety of ways. *Use a "special interest" if possible.*
- ✚ Focus on process versus product. *Provide the student different options for displaying knowledge.*
- ✚ Don't take behavior personally. Behavior is communication. *Often reactive behavior is due to lack of skills or abilities to deal with uncertainty, confusion, emotions, incompetence, etc.*
- ✚ If a child is displaying signs of stress be aware of social demands.
- ✚ Set limits versus forcing compliance. Clearly outline what is not acceptable rather than telling the child what they must do. *This will help decrease opposition and avoid power struggles.*
- ✚ Post classroom rules that are specific and concrete. *Rules like "be respectful" may be too abstract or vague. Define what respect is or is not.*
- ✚ Consistent treatment and expectations from everyone is vital.
- ✚ Work with a specialist or school counselor to incorporate social skill tools or strategies when needed (e.g. social stories, role-playing, behavior mapping, etc.)
- ✚ Keep in mind sensory aspects of the learning environment. *Normal levels of auditory and visual input can be perceived by the student as too much or too little.*
- ✚ Frequent and accurate communication between the teacher and parent or primary caregiver is very important.
- ✚ Ask for help! Reach out to the specialists in your school and in the community and talk with the child's family.

For more tips or information on workshops, consultations, and other educational services, contact the Responding to Autism Center at (509) 396.9230 info@respondingtoautism.net