

# Supporting Children with Autism in the Classroom

## PARTICIPANT GUIDE

**Learning Objectives** Successful participants will:

- List the 2 core symptoms of ASD
- Apply 4 teaching strategies that help children with these difficulties
- Use visual cues and/or sensory soothers in the classroom

### Core Symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)<sup>1</sup>

1. Persistent deficits in social \_\_\_\_\_ and social \_\_\_\_\_ across multiple contexts
2. Restricted, repetitive patterns of \_\_\_\_\_



There is a wide range of symptoms and severity in ASD.

### WHAT MIGHT A CHILD WITH ASD BE LIKE?<sup>6</sup>

| Social Communication/Interaction                  | Restrictive / Repetitive Behaviors  |
|---|---|
| Make little eye contact                           | Repeat movements or have unusual behaviors  |
| Not talk or have delayed speech                   | Focus on moving objects or parts of objects   |
| Have difficulty with turn-taking of conversations | Move constantly   |
| Not respond when spoken to                        | Get upset by slight changes in a routine  |
| Rarely show shared enjoyment                      | Be over- or under-sensitive to sensory input  |
| Not understand others' actions or feelings        | <b>STRENGTHS:</b>   |
| Attend to objects more than people                | May be able to learn things in detail and remember information for long periods of time |
| Not imitate or play pretend                       | May be a strong visual and auditory learner   |
|   | May excel in math, science, music, or art   |

## Intervention Strategies

### General Teaching Strategies<sup>7</sup>

SOCIAL SKILLS MUST BE \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE ENVIRONMENT!

1. Use \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Build relationships
  - b. Motivate
  - c. Offer choices<sup>2</sup>

The interests of children with ASD are important to them. Learn about what they like and use the topic to build relationships and increase their motivation for learning new skills.

2. Provide \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Information processing
  - b. Emotional regulation
  - c. Communicating

Provide extra time to understand what's happening and what's expected before children with ASD have to do something. When they're upset, provide time and help with calming **without talking**. Give time to listen and respond when you talk with them. Also, schedule short breaks for them during the day.

3. Speak \_\_\_\_\_ and clearly
  - a. Use words that match the child's understanding
  - b. Break down tasks
  - c. Coach how to make friends

#### **A 5-Step Model for Making Friends**

1. Choose someone to make friends with.
2. Smile and approach them
3. Introduce yourself (or greet them)
4. Ask open-ended questions
5. Suggest something to play or do together

(Lougy, R. et al. 2007. *Teaching young children with ADHD: Successful strategies and practical interventions for preK-3*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press p.43)

4. \_\_\_\_\_ for what's coming up
  - a. Create predictability with routines
  - b. Review rules<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Help with taking turns<sup>2</sup>
  - d. Use safety signals for transitions<sup>2</sup>

#### **Using Safety Signals**

Provide an early transition warning to the child. Announce the time remaining several times. Break down the transition into the steps from one activity to the next. Use a visual timer for countdown.

### Effective Environmental Supports:

1. Visual Cues<sup>5</sup>
  - a. Visual Schedules
  - b. Guidance Visuals
  - c. Activity Visuals



2. Sensory Soothers

|                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| Sight          | Dim the lighting<br>Make a "calming down" bottle<br>Provide visors or sunglasses  |  |
| Hearing        | Move into a quiet space or turn down the volume.<br>Sing or hum to the child or play soft music<br>Provide noise-cancelling headphones<br>Spend time out in nature                        |  |
| Touch          | Stuffed animals & fidget toys<br>Sensory bins with sand, shaving cream, rice, beans, or water<br>Bean bag chairs and soft blankets<br>Sensory books with pages made of different textures |  |
| Taste & Smell  | Ice pops (plain)<br>Aromatherapy (ex. lavender)<br>Make homemade scent bottles<br>Scented dough<br>Herbs<br>Fresh air!  |  |
| Proprioception | Crash-pad with pillows, cushions & foam<br>Weighted blanket, vest or lap-pad (less than 20 minutes at a time)<br>Movement center  |  |
| Vestibular     | Materials for children to:<br>Swing, Bounce, Rock, Jump, Spin, Scoot  |  |
| Interoception  | Timers for bodily needs (bathroom, snacks, water)<br>Mindfulness activities   |  |

**RESOURCES**

1. Albert Einstein College of Medicine Autism Spectrum Disorder Defined. (2013, Jan 15). <https://youtu.be/bo4-5xnRcYU>
2. Center on the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning. (n.d.). Resources: *Preschool training modules*. [http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training\\_preschool.html#mod3b](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html#mod3b)
3. Ganz, J.B. & M.M. Flores. (2010). Implementing visual cues for young children with autism spectrum disorders and their classmates. *Young Children* 65 (3): 78-83.
4. Gerecke, K. & P. Weatherby. 2001. High/scope strategies for specific disabilities. In *Supporting young learners 3: Ideas for child care providers and teachers*, ed. N.A. Brickman. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
5. Head Start ECLKC. *Children with disabilities: Classroom visuals and supports*. (2018, Jul 16). <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/classroom-visuals-supports>
6. National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Autism spectrum disorder*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/index.shtml>
7. OCALI Autism Certification Center (n.d.). *ASD strategies in action*. <https://autismcertificationcenter.org/> [free 10.5 hours of training]
8. Villa, J. & L. Colker. 2006. A personal story: making inclusion work. *Young Children* 61 (1): 96-10.