Why the increase?

- Several factors are likely to contribute...
  - Better training and improved identification (NICHD '99)
  - Broader spectrum now considered (CDC '99)
  - Possible, undetermined environmental and genetic factors (Bailey'96, Roidier '00)
- Are we over identifying?
  - No, there is evidence we are still under identifying in early years.

- Are other states finding the same rates?
  - Yes and some at much higher rates.

- Will the ASD Child Count continue to increase?
  - Analysis of MDE Child Count and NIH data predicts continued increase.

- What forecasts or estimates can be made?
  - 1/200 to 1/150 births (NICHHD and CDC 2007)
Data Source: MN Dept. of Education/Special Education-Unduplicated Child Count Data  http://education.state.mn.us
What is ASD?

- ASD stands for "Autism Spectrum Disorders"
  - Autistic Disorder
  - PDD-NOS: Pervasive Developmental Disorders: Not Otherwise Specified
  - Asperger Syndrome
  - Rhett's Disorder
  - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

  *In school we just say:*
  "Autism Spectrum Disorders"
What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

- A neurodevelopmental disorder in which a child exhibits impaired development in social interaction, language, and repetitive, or a restricted range of activities.

- Each child may display a different combination of characteristics from mild to severe.
IN A NUT SHELL...

- ASD is a life-long condition that affects each person differently; thus a “Spectrum”

- It prevents individuals from properly understanding what they see, hear, and sense.

- It results in problems with social relationships, communication, and behavior.
Core Features

- Communication Deficits
- Social Interaction Deficits
- Restricted Interests
Examples of IMPAIRMENT IN RECIPROCAL COMMUNICATION

- Not using finger to point or request
- Absence or delay of spoken language
- Inability to initiate or maintain conversation
- Odd production of speech (intonation, rhythm, rate)
- Showing lack of spontaneous imitations of lack of varied imaginative play
- Limited understanding of nonverbal communications skills (gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice)
- Using others’ hand or body as a tool
- Repetitive, idiosyncratic language
- Reduced amount of social communication
Examples of IMPAIRMENT IN RECIPROCAL SOCIAL INTERACTION:

- Limited use of facial expressions toward others
- Gross impairment in ability to make friends
- Appears to prefer isolated or solitary activities
- Significant vulnerability and safety issues due to social naïveté
- Does not show or bring things
- Limited joint attention
- Difficulty relating to people
- Lack of emotional or social reciprocity
- Limited insight into social relationships
- Limited empathy/comments on others’ emotions
- Unusual eye contact; limited shared enjoyment in interactions
Examples of RESTRICTED / REPETITIVE REPERTOIRE OF INTERESTS

- Repetitive hand or finger mannerisms
- Lack of true imaginative play vs. reenactment
- Demonstrating distress or resistance to change
- Over-reaction or under-reaction to sensory stimuli
- Intense, focused preoccupation with a limited range, interest, or conversation topics
- Rigid, rule-bound thinking
- Insistence of following routines or rituals
- Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects
- Excessive interest in highly specific topics or objects
- Compulsion/rituals
Secondary Problems

- Anxiety
- Insistent on sameness
- Inattentive
- Interested in objects rather than people
- Rude
- "Out of it" or "Odd looking"
- Socially unwelcome
- Hanging back from peers
What you might see...

- One-sided conversations
- Intense Interests
- Less than desirable organizational skills
- Students not able to follow more than 1 step verbal directions
- Are able to “repeat” back but really don’t understand
- Unaware of social expectations
- Some areas of great strengths and other areas of weakness
- Difficulty with attention
- Fine motor difficulty
- Writing can be less than a pleasant experience for kids with ASD
School is Going to be Hard

- Social Interactions/ Peer relationships - Working in small groups, recess, lunch, unstructured time

- Organizational skills - desk, locker, turning things in, getting things to and from home/school.

- Sensory Input - (Fire drills, lunchroom, gym.)

- Visual/ Auditory Input - (Open classrooms, bus, too much around the room, gym, lunchroom)

- School assemblies/ field trips - (Should be fun; but really, it's a change in routine)

- Before breaks, after breaks, around their birthday, holiday's - (2 weeks before Winter break and 2 weeks before summer break - AWFUL!)

- School "Party Days" are tough! - They loud, chaotic, many different people at school, out of routine, unpredictable, etc
Simple Things You can Do...

- Visual Schedule
- Mini Schedules
- Be consistent
- Have Routine
- Prepare the student for upcoming changes
- Use their interests to teach.
- Limit your verbalizations!
- Be aware of abstract language

- Let the child know WHAT, HOW MUCH, and WHAT next.
- Help children make connections with peers
- Model appropriate interactions - other kids are looking to you to see what to do!
- Teach “hidden curriculum”
- Clear expectations
Some things NOT to do...

- Don’t try to cure or fix the child.
- Don’t use a lot of language or talking
- Don’t insist on eye contact
- Don’t take structure or visual away
- Don’t give up on the student
- Don’t assume he/she knows; even with routine tasks/events
- Quickly repeat the question “in case they didn’t hear you” they need some processing/wait time
- Do not use sarcasm, or hidden meanings in your speech/body language- they often won’t get it.
- Don’t take behavior personally
Best Practice for the Classrooms

- Use Visuals
- Proactive Behavior Strategies
- Structure/ Routine
- Communicate with IEP team (including parents)
- Ask for help when you need it! Don’t wait for a crisis to happen!
Resources

- www.autism-societynow.org
- www.autismshop.com
- www.autism-network.org
- www.socialthinking.com
- www.incredible5pointscale.com
More Resources

- Intricate Minds I, II, III DVD’s
- Lost at School by Ross Greene
- Explosive Child by Ross Greene
- Fitting in and Having Fun I, II, and III DVD’s
- Autism-Asperger Publishing Company
- SPLISE Network
- Carol Gray, Social Stories
More Resources

- Superflex! (www.socialthinking.com)
- Social Skills Picture Book by Jed Baker
- Hidden Curriculum
- Idiom Dictionary- Scholastic
- Sixth Sense (Carol Gray)
- Room 14 & Room 28
Ten Steps Towards Supporting Appropriate Behavior
Contributed by: Dr. Cathy Pratt  Indiana Resource Center for Autism

Stephen Buckmann  Chicago Public Schools

Challenging behaviors are frequently the primary obstacle in supporting students with Asperger's Syndrome (AS). While there are few published studies to direct educators towards the most effective behavioral approaches for these students, it appears most evident (given the heterogeneity among these individuals) that effective behavioral support requires highly individualized practices that address the primary areas of difficulty in social understanding and interactions, pragmatic communication, managing anxiety, preferences for sameness and rules, and ritualistic behaviors. While the specific elements of a positive behavioral support program will vary from student to student, the following ten steps will go a long way in assuring that schools are working towards achieving the best outcomes on behalf of their students.

Understand the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome that may influence a student's ability to learn and function in the school environment.

It is important for those involved to understand the idiosyncratic nature of Asperger's Syndrome and to consider problematic behaviors in light of the common characteristics associated with this disability. Following are some general characteristics as described by Williams (1995):

- Insistence on sameness: easily overwhelmed by minimal changes in routines, sensitive to environmental stressors, preference for rituals.

- Impairment in social interactions: difficulty understanding the "rules" of interaction, poor comprehension of jokes and metaphor, pedantic speaking style.

- Restricted range of social competence: preoccupation with singular topics such as train schedules or maps, asking repetitive questions about circumscribed topics, obsessively collecting items.

- Inattention: poor organizational skills, easily distracted, focused on irrelevant stimuli, difficulty learning in group contexts.

- Poor motor coordination: slow clerical speed, clumsy gait, unsuccessful in games involving motor skills.
Academic difficulties: restricted problem solving skills, literal thinking, deficiencies with abstract reasoning.


**Acknowledge that behavior serves a function, is related to context, and is a form of communication.**

Effective behavioral support is contingent on understanding the student, the context in which he/she operates, and the reason(s) for behavior. In order to effectively adopt a functional behavioral assessment approach, several assumptions about behavior must be regarded as valid.

The first assumption is that behavior is functional. In other words, it serves a purpose(s). The purpose or function of the behavior may be highly idiosyncratic and understood only from the perspective of the individual with Asperger’s Syndrome. It is important to remember that individuals with Asperger’s Syndrome generally do not have a behavioral intent to disrupt educational settings, but instead problematic behaviors may arise from other needs, for example, self-protection in stressful situations.

The second assumption is that behavior has communicative value (if not specific intent). Remember that individuals with Asperger’s Syndrome experience pragmatic communication difficulties. While they are able to use language quite effectively to discuss high interest topics and such, they may have tremendous difficulty expressing sadness, anger, frustration and other important messages. As a result, behavior may be the most effective means to communicate when words fail.

Behavior is context related. Understanding how features of a setting impact an individual (either positively or negatively) has particular value for adopting preventive efforts and sets the stage for teaching alternative skills.

**Use functional behavioral assessment as a process for determining the root of the problematic behavior and as the first step in designing a behavior support program.**

The key outcomes of a comprehensive functional behavioral assessment should include a clear and unambiguous description of the problematic behavior(s); a description of situations most commonly, and least commonly associated with the occurrence of problematic behavior; and identification of the consequences that
maintain behavior. By examining all aspects of the behavior, one can begin to design a program that can ultimately lead to long-term behavioral change.

**Think prevention.**

Too often the focus of a behavior management program is on discipline procedures that focus exclusively on eliminating problematic behavior. Programs that are reactive to problematic behavior do not focus on long-term behavioral change. An effective program should expand beyond consequence strategies (e.g., time out, loss of privileges) and focus on preventing the occurrence of problem behavior by teaching socially acceptable alternatives to problem behavior and creating positive learning environments.

**Use antecedent and setting event strategies.**

Antecedents are those events that happen immediately before the problematic behavior. Setting events are situations or conditions that can enhance the possibility that a student may engage in a problematic behavior. For example, if a student is ill, tired or hungry, he may be less tolerant of schedule changes. By understanding settings events that can set the stage for problematic behaviors, changes can be made on those days when a student may not be performing at his best to prevent or reduce the likelihood of difficult situations and set the stage for learning more adaptive skills over time.

In schools, there are many examples of antecedents that may spark behavioral incidents. For example, many students with Asperger’s Syndrome have difficulty with noisy, crowded environments. Therefore, the newly arrived high school freshman who becomes physically aggressive in the hallway during passing periods may need an accommodation of leaving class a minute or two early to avoid the congestion which provokes this behavior. Over time, the student may learn to negotiate the hallways simply by being more accustomed to the situation, or by being given specific instruction or support.

**Key issues to address when discussing these types of strategies are:**

What can be done to eliminate the problem situation (e.g., the offending condition)?

What can be done to modify the situation if the situation cannot be eliminated entirely?

Will the strategy need to be permanent, or is it a temporary "fix" which allows the student (with support) to increase skills needed to manage the situation in the future?
Make teaching alternative skills an integral part of your program.

It is critical that students with Asperger’s Syndrome are taught acceptable behaviors that replace problematic behavior and that serve the same purpose as the challenging behavior. For example, a young child with Asperger’s Syndrome may have trouble entering into a kick ball game and instead simply inserts himself into the game, thereby offending the other players and risking exclusion. Instead, the child can be coached on how and when to enter into the game. Never assume that a student knows appropriate social behaviors. While these individuals are quite gifted in many ways, they will need to be taught social and pragmatic communication skills as methodically as academic skills.

One particularly relevant skill to teach is the use of self-management strategies. Self-management is a procedure in which people are taught to discriminate their own target behavior and record the occurrence or absence of that target behavior (Koegel, Koegel & Parks, 1995). Self-management is an especially useful technique to assist individuals in achieving greater levels of independent functioning across many settings and situations. By learning self-management techniques individuals can become more self-directed and less dependent on continuous supervision and control. Instead of teaching situation specific behaviors, self-management teaches a more general skill that can be applied in an unlimited number of settings. The procedure has particular relevance and immediate utility for students with Asperger’s Syndrome. For example, an important self-management skill may involve teaching a student with Asperger’s how to practice relaxation or how to find a place to regroup when upset.

Effective behavioral change may require that all involved change their behavior also.

Since behaviors are influenced by context and by the quality of relationships with others, it is also important for professionals and family members to monitor their own behavior vigilantly when working with students with Asperger’s Syndrome. For example, each time a teacher reprimands a student for misbehavior, an opportunity may be lost to reframe the moment in terms of the student’s need to develop alternative skills.

Design long-term prevention plans.

In the midst of problematic behaviors, it may be difficult to adopt a long-term approach to a student’s educational program. However, it is imperative that plans for supporting a student over the long term be outlined right from the start. Many procedures and supports with the most relevance and utility for student’s with
Asperger's Syndrome (e.g., specific accommodations, peer supports, social skills, self-management strategies) must be viewed as procedures that are developed progressively as the child moves through school. These are not crisis management strategies but the very things that can decrease crisis situations from arising.

Discuss how students with Asperger's Syndrome fit into typical school-wide discipline practices and procedures.

A major issue to discuss is how students will fit into and respond to typical disciplinary practices. Many students with Asperger's Syndrome become highly anxious in the presence of practices such as loss of privileges, time outs or reprimands, and often cannot regroup following their application. Another issue relates to school-wide discipline procedures. Schools which focus on suspension and expulsion as their primary approach, rather than on teaching social skills, conflict resolution and negotiation and on building community learning, will typically be less effective with all students, including those with Asperger's.

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate!

Educators, administrators, related service personnel and parents will all need to collaborate on a behavior support plan that is clear and easily implemented. Once developed, the plan will need to be monitored across settings, and regularly reviewed for its strengths and weaknesses. Inconsistencies in our expectations and behaviors will only serve to heighten the challenges demonstrated by an individual with Asperger's.

References


**Instructional Management Tips for Teachers of Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Susan Unak Marks * Jennifer Shaw-Hegwer * Car! Schrader Iris Peters • Fran Powers • Mark tsvine

Given the increased identification of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), more educators are becoming familiar with this rather perplexing disability. If your class includes a student or students with ASD, you may need useful and practical strategies for meeting the educational needs of your students (see box, "What Does the Literature Say?"). Further, although more and more writers focus on the challenges these students present to schools, we believe educators could particularly benefit from knowledge of specific instructional strategies for accommodating students with ASD in general education settings.

This article highlights some instructional management tips derived from our collective experiences as educational and behavioral consultants. These ideas come from the field and represent a small set of emerging practices that we believe can be useful for educators. The tips provided in this article are derived from our particular work with students diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, which is a special classification within ASD. These students, in particular, are increasingly included in general education classrooms, with teachers who often feel ill-equipped to meet their learning and behavioral needs. In addition, special educators serving in consulting roles for these teachers need tips that they can provide to classroom teachers.

Here, we discuss promising strategies sometimes called antecedent management strategies. These tips can help teachers create a positive and responsive classroom setting. In such an environment, educators may maximize learning and minimize students' challenging behavior. Unfortunately, many educational interventions focus on attempts to address consequences for behaviors (i.e., contingency management strategies). Although these types of interventions may be effective for many students, we have found that students with ASD require educational interventions that address antecedents, or situations that give rise to a problem behavior.

The strategies presented here are a compilation of specific strategies that we have found helpful with some students with ASD — as well as with other students — and we do not mean to imply that the needs of this student population are all the same. In fact, based on our experiences, we recognize that what works for one student may not work for another; and students with ASD have their own individual personalities that we need to take into consideration. Nevertheless, in the past 10 years, we have observed that students with ASD have many common learning needs.

Given the challenges presented by these learning characteristics, we chose to focus on instructional management tips that we believe support teachers in modifying how, not what, they teach.

Most students with ASD are capable of accessing the instructional content, if you use accommodations to promote the learning of all students.

**Lesson Preparation**

One major challenge for students with ASD is making sense of the lesson format and routine, which can often signal what you as the teacher view as relevant for meeting instructional objectives. Because these students need concrete and specific structures, you will need to carefully plan and set up the lesson. Because many students find it difficult to learn incidentally, you should present the content in a controlled fashion. Do this by thinking about key ideas and then structuring the lesson to minimize ambiguity. The following are some ideas that can help you set up the lesson ahead of time.

**Highlight Most Important Concepts.** Students with ASD can become easily overwhelmed with all the information you present. Think about ways to highlight what is important to know, because students with ASD do not easily pick out the most important information (see Table 1).

**Establish Alternate Modes for Completing Assignments.** Students with ASD can become overwhelmed with complex and multiple-step assignments. In addition, writing can be difficult, because of students' poor fine-motor skills. Thus, you should think about alternative modes by which a student...
can demonstrate what he or she has learned. If the task is complex with multiple components, break the assignment down into clear and manageable pieces so that the student can be successful. Again, clearly specify your expectations for what the completed assignment should entail, such as the length of a writing assignment. Many students with ASD are perfectionists, and they can become highly frustrated and anxious when faced with producing material that they do not understand or that they feel is below standard (see Table 2).

Prepare the Student
Students with ASD will find it easier to participate in classroom routines and activities when they “have had the opportunity to prepare. Sometimes referred to as priming activities, such strategies can be used to prepare students for new activities or concepts. Whereas homework can be beneficial as an extension activity for many students, for students with ASD, it might be better as a preteaching activity (see Table 3).

Maximize Comprehension and Content Retention
In planning for instruction, you should recognize that students with ASD tend to be visual learners who can make sense of instructional content when you present it in an organized, visual structure. For example, you could provide an outline before the lesson so that the student is able to record additional subideas under each of the major headings. Outlines can help the student prepare for a test, or be used as a guide for writing assignments.

Because many students with ASD are visual learners, use graphic organizers to depict relationships for key ideas.

Graphic and Visual Organizers. Graphic organizers can effectively depict relationships for key ideas. Although you may ask your students to construct such graphic maps or organizers, students with ASD benefit more from having one already developed for them. By visually representing the information, these students can call on their strong abilities to visualize information (Table 4). Mnemonic Devices. Learning strategies, such as those developed by Deshler and colleagues at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (Boudah & O’Neill, 1999), provide the systematic and concrete steps that are highly beneficial for students with ASD. Learning strategies often include mnemonic aids, such as “SCORE,” “DISSECT,” or “RAP,” where each letter stands for a step in the strategy (Kline, Deshler, & Schumaker, 1992). Students can easily remember these strategies because the steps are linked by the acronym that serves as the mnemonic. You can help students use these strategies for many tasks, such as when reading for content, when deciphering vocabulary words, or when taking a test. These types of strategies appeal to the way many students with ASD learn.

Table 1. Tips for Highlighting the Most Important Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highlight critical information on a page.</td>
<td>Write everything that the student needs to know on a flash card. This can also be used to make studying for tests more manageable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preteach important concepts within a lesson.</td>
<td>Send home a summary sheet which emphasizes the important information contained in the next day’s (or week’s) lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide detailed and clear instructions for classroom assignments.</td>
<td>Write out a step-by-step list of instructions that are sequential for the student. Show a completed model so the student knows what the completed assignment should look like.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Tips for Providing Alternate Modes for Completing Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce requirements for written output.</td>
<td>Have student make a list of adjectives or vocabulary words, as opposed to writing a complete essay or story. Allow student to use class notes from a peer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow alternatives to written assignments.</td>
<td>Give the option of audio- or videotaping the assignment. Provide other means for demonstrating content understanding, such as allowing the student to construct a physical replica of the ideas (i.e., models). Allow student to use the computer to take notes or complete an assignment. Require that some part of the assignment be written, but that other, more detailed parts can be audiotaped. Permit dictation of assignment to an assistant or peer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When writing is necessary, allow student to use portable keyboarding device.</td>
<td>exhibit intentionally defiant behavior when faced with tasks that &quot;they do not find particularly interesting. Indeed, some students with ASD will not complete an assignment simply because an adult has told them to do so. Increase Time on Task. In our experience, it is often best to minimize adult interactions during the times that the student is off task. Instead, we have found that effective strategies minimize teacher verbal prompts to stay on task. Setting up alternative &quot;cuing&quot; systems for bringing the student back to the task can be challenging, but planning ahead can help you avoid unnecessary power struggles that further increase time away from the task (see Table 6). Maximize Attending During Whole-Class Instruction. Whole-class instruction can be particularly challenging for students with ASD, both because of the</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Tips for Preparing the Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work with parents to help prepare the student.</td>
<td>Give the parents an outline of upcoming curriculum topics or a book that will be presented to the class. Suggest background material, such as a video of a book that will be read, or other videos on the upcoming topic, which can be reviewed by the student. This will prepare the student for unfamiliar content and future classroom activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare the student for upcoming themes and subject areas.</td>
<td>Have the students read up on a future content area at home so they have a basic understanding of what will be presented in a lesson. Provide the student with an extra set of texts for home to prevent forgetting needed academic materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see Table 5). (For specific ideas, refer to the Strategic Instruction Model Web site at http://www.ku-crl.org.)

Increase Participation and Attention

Students with ASD may find it challenging to pay attention to classroom instruction, particularly when the content is not related to their particular area of interest. This is a typical characteristic of many students with ASD and is often a source of frustration for their teachers. Because many students with ASD can demonstrate high levels of intelligence, you may misinterpret their lack of attention as intentional defiance. Further, these students may actually high amounts of auditory information and potential disinterest in the content. Creative strategies that increase the student's interest, as well as those that increase accountability for attending, are key to increasing the student's atten-

Table 4. Tips for Using Graphic and Visual Organizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide visual depictions of key ideas.</td>
<td>Give the student a table with major headings, such as key facts, key events, and key people to fill in relevant pieces of information while reading or listening to a lecture. Construct graphic depictions that highlight the key ideas and relationship of ideas, such as a family tree of characters in a story. Use a timeline for conveying key chronological ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly specify your expectations for what the completed assignment should entail.
### Table 5. Tips for Using Mnemonic Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help the student to visualize information.</td>
<td>Have the student practice visualization of events in the text including key words and their definition and where in the text this information can be found (or seen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make rhythms or sayings to help the student remember a fact or idea.</td>
<td>The expression, &quot;Plan your work, and work your plan&quot; can be used to encourage the use of organizational strategies. &quot;H-O-M-E-S&quot; represents the first letters of the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, MacMgan, Erie, and Superior). &quot;Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge&quot; represents the E-G-B-D-F notes on a musical scale. The phrase, &quot;in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue&quot; can be used as a rhythm to remember a history fact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prepare for Instructional and Classroom Transitions*

One area of concern is addressing difficulties students with ASD experience with transitioning from one activity to the next. Classroom activities rarely follow a sequence whereby a task is fully completed before moving on to the next activity. Often an activity will need to be completed at a later point. For students with ASD, this can be highly confusing and disconcerting, because their characteristic rigid thinking may make it difficult to put away something that is not complete to the level that they feel is appropriate. Again, providing the student with a visual and concrete structure can help to ease these kinds of transitions (see Table 8).

*Fine Stage* The following principles are key to setting up a positive instructional environment that can prevent frustration for students with ASD:
- Provide concrete and specific information and expectations.
- Prepare the student ahead of time.
- Use visual representations to the maximum extent possible.
- Accept alternatives for completing classroom assignments and demonstrating what has been learned.

*Finest Thsgwfiorts* As you review the tips presented in this article, we hope it becomes salient how these instructional management tips have the potential to benefit many students. In fact, without coming to this conclusion, it may appear as though these tips can be extremely time-consuming if designed to only meet the needs of a small subgroup of students. We would encourage teachers to think about antecedent strategies for all their students.

**References**


### Table 6. Tips for Increasing Time On Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide a visual way to monitor what is being completed and what needs to be completed.</td>
<td>Use white boards to write down directions or instructions. As the student finishes with each direction they can cross it off the board. Use &quot;work baskets&quot; to indicate how much work is required and when it is completed (e.g., when the basket is empty).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a variety of quick nonverbal cues to help the student get focused on the assignment.</td>
<td>If the student is not attending to the task at hand, walk by and touch the student's paper to nonverbally prompt the student to continue working. Or, stroll by periodically, reminding the student that someone is there to help if needed, rather than pointing out that the student is not working. Provide a secret signal between you and the student (e.g., tugging on your ear) to help cue attending behaviors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7. Tips for Maximizing Attention During Whole-Class Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embed additional activities within the lesson to increase the student’s interest and motivation for listening to the class lecture.</strong></td>
<td>Develop a list of words that might be said during a lecture. Give the student a marker and a list of those words. Every time a word from the list is spoken during the lecture the student should highlight the word they hear. This information can then be graphed. This provides the student with an alternative and potentially interesting reason for listening to the teacher, since students with ASD often enjoy taking notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimize extraneous distractions.</strong></td>
<td>Seat the student up front of the classroom and in a position of least distraction. Offer earplugs to help/block noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relate the material to the student’s preoccupations</strong></td>
<td>For a student excited by dates, have him or her answer questions about what date a given event occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide the student with visual material that allows him or her to follow along when the teacher is speaking.</strong></td>
<td>When reading a book aloud to the class, give the student a copy of the book so he or she can read and follow along. This provides the student with visual material, rather than having to rely solely on information auditorially, which is extremely difficult for students with ASD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accessed 12/18/02. (Available at: www.autism.org/lemple/tips.htm)


To order the book marked by an asterisk (*), please call 2A hrs/365 days: 1-800-BOOKS-NOW (266-5766) or (732) 728-1040; or visit them on the Web at http://www.clicksmart.com/teaching/. Use VISA, M/C, AMEX, or Discover or send check or money order + $4.95 S&H ($2.50 each add’l item) to: Clicksmart, 400 Morris Avenue, Long Branch, NJ 07740; (732) 728-1040 or FAX (732) 728-7080.

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### Table 8. Tips for Preparing for Instructional and Classroom Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Management Tips</th>
<th>Example in Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide specific and concrete beginning and end points, even with activities that may continue over several days or class periods.</strong></td>
<td>Make colored plastic clips with the days of the week written on them. When recess starts, or it is time to move on to the next activity, place one of the plastic clips that says &quot;Monday&quot; on it at the point where the student stopped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prepare the student for daily or weekly activities.</strong></td>
<td>Prepare a picture or written schedule for daily or weekly activities.</td>
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</tbody>
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Social Thinking and its Impact on Academics

As a teacher and parent of children with Autism and Asperger Syndrome I have begun to notice a pattern in the academic development of the higher functioning children. They seem to start out well then fairly quickly fall behind as they progress through the primary grades. As I have watched this pattern of academic development I have seen that it coincides with the children's pattern of social development, a pattern with increasing deficit as the child ages. It has become apparent that the children's academic development is tied to their social development and I have found that by focusing on the development of social thinking these children can be helped to achieve far more than with a focus on academics alone.

The development pattern looks something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Children in the spectrum do fairly well as the curriculum is concrete and easily understood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They learn to read easily and some appear to be avid readers as they read everything in sight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They learn to write their letters but they look a little sloppy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They catch onto math quickly and enjoy the patterns in numbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They love science, as it is hands on and engaging.</td>
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<td>- They participate in parallel play but do not engage other students. Other students occasionally attempt to engage them in cooperative play.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Children in the spectrum are generally working at grade level while the curriculum remains concrete.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It soon becomes clear that even though they can read big words, they do not understand a lot of what they are reading.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• Writing becomes a tiresome chore as they struggle with the mechanics of properly forming their letters and giving them the correct spatial orientation on the line.

• When they are expected to begin writing short stories they tend to focus repeatedly on the same topic and write stories that make little sense to other readers.

• Their math skills remain strong but they often need help understanding the directions and are easily frustrated when they are not allowed to do the worksheet their way.

• They still like science and social studies and tend to enjoy opportunities to make drawings based on their findings. Inappropriate behaviors are starting to show up more frequently and there is a lot more resistance to complete work or comply with the teacher’s requests.

• They continue to participate in parallel play without engaging other students. Other students make fewer attempts to engage them in cooperative play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Grade</th>
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• Children in the spectrum begin to perform below grade level in some areas.

• As they fall farther behind on reading comprehension they start to lose interest in reading because they cannot understand what they have read.

• They begin to slip farther behind in their writing and often exhibit behavior issues when asked to write. Many will refuse to even make an attempt at writing.

• Math skills are still strong but they find it increasingly more difficult to understand the language of math causing them become confused and upset.

• Science and social studies can be fun still, but now they are expected to write their findings and may start to resist doing the work.

• They begin to be loners as other children have given up on engaging them in cooperative play.
Children in the spectrum often fall a full grade behind as the curriculum becomes increasingly abstract. School becomes a lot of work and more negative behaviors erupt.

They have fallen significantly behind in reading and cannot get important information from most grade level texts.

They are unable to organize their writing and are still struggling with forming their letters.

Every subject requires them to write including math where they are now required to write what they were thinking when solving the problem.

They have the added challenge of understanding math story problems, which is particularly difficult since their reading comprehension is so far behind.

They still enjoy the hands on activities in science and social stories but refuse to do the work as it involves a significant amount of writing.

They start wanting to play with other children but are often rejected and teased because they are viewed as quirky and strange.

As the grades progress they become more and more frustrated and anxiety increases as their academics steadily fall farther behind. They don't understand why they are struggling so much academically and they begin feeling lonely because they don't fit in socially.

What is causing this pattern that seems so similar with children within the autism spectrum? According to the DSM-IV (Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition these children have the following diagnoses criterion:

1. marked impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction;

2. failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level;

3. a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests or achievement with other people;

4. lack of social or emotional reciprocity.
In other words they have significant lack in social abilities. These social deficits reach well beyond forgetting to say hello to someone or use please and thank you. They reflect a difference in the way these children think about and view the world around them. They don't know how to think socially and this lack in social thinking can have a serious affect on their academic skills.

We can use Michelle G. Winner's ILAUGH model of social thinking to better understand how these children think and the impact their deficit in social cognition can have on their academics:

**I = Initiation.** This is the ability to ask for help in the classroom, ask to play with friends or initiate help from family members at home. For many years my son would become upset because he was thirsty but nobody was getting him a drink. He would be throwing a fit and when asked what was wrong he would say, "I thirsty." He never thought to ask for help getting a drink of water. In the classroom a child may not understand how to do an assignment and he will sit there never thinking to ask the teacher for help.

**L = Listening With Eyes and Brain.** Most children within the autism spectrum have auditory input difficulties. They don't fully understand what is being said. Listening is also more than just hearing information through our ears. It is using the whole body to understand the verbal and non-verbal cues of the person who is talking. It is using the eyes to look for the clues and piecing the information together. Without looking at the speaker the child will most likely not understand what he is suppose to do or notice when taking a crayon off a desk that the owner of the crayon is visibly upset by the action.

**A = Abstract and Inferential Language/communication:** Children within the spectrum tend to not understand that language is complex and is not always meant for literal interpretation. Our school district has recently adopted a new math curriculum, which is very heavy in math language. It also uses some language that can be confusing to the literal thinker. I have had several of my students and my daughter become very upset because the instructions say to "ring" the right answer. To them a ring is an object you wear on your finger. This simple direction has caused much chaos as the children refuse to do the work because they don't understand the directions. Often, even after I explain it is the same as saying "circle," their minds refuse to accept it. As academics progress from grade to grade the concepts taught become more abstract. Students have to be able to make guesses about the meanings of words and ideas and this is very hard for these children. Math problems become harder to understand and reading comprehension becomes more difficult as language used to relate ideas and thoughts becomes more abstract.

**U = Understanding Perspective:** According to Michelle G. Winner "This is the ability to understand the emotions, thoughts, beliefs, prior knowledge, motives and intentions of yourself as well as others. We generally acquire this skill in our preschool years intuitively." This is one of the biggest factors impacting a child's academic success. In order to understand what you have read, you need to be able to put yourself in the
character's place and understand how the character is feeling and thinking. Children within the autism spectrum tend to struggle with this. They struggle to understand how others may feel or react in different situations. They are unable to read between the lines. So when they read a story about a girl who lost a race and they are asked, "How did the girl feel when she lost the race?" they are confused wondering how they should know. None of the words in the story said how she felt. The story only said that she walked home slowly. They lack the ability to make text connections to experiences they have had in life. For writing you need to be able to understand what information the reader will need. A child's writing might end up reading as, "I had a fun time. I liked my ice cream. I played the game." They are then upset that you have no idea where they went, what flavor ice cream they had and what game they played. They can see the pictures in their head and they don't understand why you don't see the pictures too.

**G=Gestalt Processing/Getting The Big Picture**: Information comes in bits and pieces that have to be put together like a puzzle in order to see the whole picture. These children struggle to put the puzzle together and focus instead on individual pieces. Recently I was working on reading comprehension with a student and I asked him to tell me what the story was about. He told me all about the dog in the pictures and what the dog did throughout the book. However, the story had been about a boy whose mom would go out of town and the good things he would get to do and the things he missed while she was gone. This student focused on the dog and missed the whole meaning of the story. The dog had never been mentioned; it was just in the pictures. This is also where organizational skills become involved. You have to be able to collect information and organize it into a whole. Children within the autism spectrum find it very difficult to organizing their writing. They will write a sentence, then think of a new fact or idea and write it down, and continue on to create a written piece that makes no sense. For example I had one student who, when asked to write a story wrote, "I like basketball. I love my mom. My sister goes, Ahhh! I love my dad. Pizza is good."

**H= Humor and Human Relatedness**: This can be represented in several ways. Some are so anxious about schoolwork and social interactions that they require perfection of themselves. They are very serious, they do not laugh and when they make even a small mistake they have a melt down. Others really want to fit in and will try to use humor at school but are unsuccessful. My daughter was once told a joke that went like this. "Why is 6 afraid of 7? Because 7 8 (ate) 9." She laughed hysterically and it was obvious that her laugh was forced. I later talked to her to see if she understood the joke and she hadn't. She just wanted to fit in so she laughed because she knew that is what you do when someone tells a joke. Most of my students have a great sense of humor (even if sometimes I don't understand them) and allow others to make mistakes. They enjoy pointing out my errors and have humor with me as I laugh it off and fix the issue. However, the humor stops when they make the mistake in their own schoolwork. All of a sudden they become agitated and refuse to believe that I might be right when I mention that they forgot to add a period at the end of a sentence. Which then leads to a refusal to do their work.
As we have seen, an understanding of the ILAUGH model helps us to understand why children within the autism spectrum struggle so much with academic challenges. Social interaction is not just important when they play with others, but in varying degrees it impacts every moment of the day and is a key factor in the academic success of a child.

I have found that the best way to help children in the autism spectrum achieve academic success is to focus on the development of social thinking skills. There are many things that can be done both at home and in a classroom setting. When reading a story talk about how the characters are feeling, make predictions as to what will happen next, point out the direction of the eyes to help the child make "smart" guesses about what is going on and who is thinking of who. Work on sequencing skills to help them learn to organize the information they got from reading. For writing graphic organizers are key. Model writing and create interactive writing pieces together so the child can start to learn what information is needed. Work on specific social-cognitive skills such as learning what emotions are, what it means to think of others, learning to make "smart" guesses and create structured learning social environments. These techniques and many others can help the children learn social thinking.

Most of the content on this website has been designed specifically for teaching social thinking skills to children with Autism and Asperger syndrome and all have been used successfully with both my own children and my students. I have seen great improvement in the children's social capabilities as well as in their academic success. It should be noted however, that none of these materials are intended to provide a quick fix. Improvements can be dramatic but it often starts slowly with a lot of resistance from the children. The greatest successes have been seen in children who have had a year or more of consistent social training in both group and individual settings. The task is not an easy one but with patience and perseverance it can be extremely rewarding for both the child and the teacher.

For more information on the link between social thinking and academics you can read Michelle G. Winner's articles http://www.socialthinking.com/philosophy.htm on her website.

Michelle G. Winner is a speech language pathologist in private practice in San Jose, California. She has written two books: Inside Out: What Makes The Person With Social Cognitive Deficits Tick? (2000) And Thinking About You Thinking About Me (2002). A training and therapy video/DVD out called: Social Thinking Across the Home and School Day is now available. She runs the Michelle G. Winner Center for Social Thinking and travels around the nation and world providing workshops on this topic. Michelle has consulted with the Orange County Department of Education's S.U.C.S.E.S.S. Project for the last 4 years. For more information visit her website: www.socialthinking.com

Top tips for working with a preschool child who has ASD

Behaviour
• Challenging behaviour is often an attempt at communication – it’s not being naughty. Try to identify the trigger for the behaviour. Identify sources of anxiety.
• The child may have outbursts of aggression just like a much younger child due to delayed emotional development.
• Be consistent in everything you do. Discuss behavioural issues with others and make sure everyone agrees on the approach to be used.
• Always give advance warning of changes in routine.
• Tell the child what you expect him to do rather than telling him what you don’t want.
• Remember that common techniques for calming an anxious child, like cuddling or sitting the child on your knee, may have the opposite effect on a child with ASD.
• Don’t try to stop odd or repetitive behaviour unless it interferes with learning or threatens the wellbeing of other children. It is better to modify the behaviour.
• Encourage the child to ask for help before reaching the point of frustration.
• Work with the child’s interests and obsessions to increase motivation and to learn new skills.

Communication
• Simplify your language. Be very specific. Remember language is likely to be interpreted literally.
• Avoid sarcasm and irony. Metaphors may be confusing.
• Before you speak, use the child’s name to gain his attention, even when addressing the group.
• Give one instruction at a time. Allow the child sufficient time to interpret then respond to an instruction. This may take longer in children with ASD.
• Encourage eye contact, but don’t insist if this causes anxiety.
• Be aware that facial expressions and gestures may be misinterpreted.
• Visual cues should be used to support verbal communication.
• Be sensitive to the child’s efforts to communicate.

Sensory
• Children with ASD can be distracted by background noise that other people ‘filter out’. Even minor background noise may disturb some children.
• The child may feel sensory overload from visual stimuli, the close proximity of others or from physical contact.

Social interaction
• Social skills are not acquired naturally – they need to be specifically taught.
• Help the child to become aware that other people have thoughts and feelings that may be different to their own.
• The child may not focus on what you consider to be obvious – be explicit.
• Some children will need time out or quiet time from the demands of social interaction.
• Understand the child’s difficulty interpreting social situations. Model and prompt appropriate social behaviour.

General tips
• Children with autism thrive on routine. Sessions should have a well-defined, predictable structure.
• Although routine is important, allow for some flexibility so that the child learns to cope with minor changes in a supportive environment.
• Rather than tell the child to ‘find something to do’, show them what they can do and provide examples of creative work.
• To encourage generalisation of skills, teach the same task in a variety of situations.
• Be persistent. Progress may be slow and results may be difficult to see at first.
• Be calm, positive and consistent.
• Every child with ASD has individual abilities and needs – what works for one child may not work for another.
• Every child can have a bad day. Don’t feel at fault if things are not going well.
Tips for teaching children with ASD

Behaviour
- Challenging behaviour is nearly always an attempt to communicate – remember that the child is not being naughty. Try to identify the trigger for the behaviour.
- The child may have outbursts of aggression just like a much younger child due to delayed emotional development.
- Be consistent in everything you do. Discuss behavioural issues with others and make sure everyone agrees on the same approach.
- Stick to well-defined and predictable routines so that the child knows what is expected of him and what he can expect each day.
- Always give advance warning of changes in routine.
- Tell the child what you expect of him rather than telling him what you don’t want.
- Remember that common techniques for calming an anxious child, like cuddling, or sitting the child on your knee, may have the opposite effect on a child with ASD.
- Don’t try to stop odd or repetitive behaviour unless it interferes with learning or threatens the wellbeing of other children. It is better to modify the behaviour.
- Look at ways of using the child’s obsession or preferred interest in play and learning activities.
- Monitor the child’s ability to cope in the playground; he may need time to unwind after recess and lunch breaks if he finds this time stressful.

Communication
- Simplify your language. Be aware of language that is likely to be interpreted literally.
- Take care not to overload the child with verbal directions or requests.
- Avoid sarcasm and irony. Metaphors may be confusing.
- Before you speak, say the child’s name to gain his attention.
- Give one instruction at a time. Allow the child sufficient time to interpret then respond to an instruction. This may take longer in children with ASD.
- Encourage eye contact, but don’t insist if this causes anxiety.
- Be aware that facial expressions and gestures may be misinterpreted.
- Use visual cues to support verbal communication, eg daily timetable.
- Be sensitive to the child’s efforts to communicate.

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- Be explicit – the child may not focus on what you consider to be obvious.
- Accept that the child may need time out from the demands of social interaction – have a plan for these times.
- Understand the child’s difficulty interpreting social cues. Model and prompt appropriate social behaviour.

General tips
- Predictability and routine are important but allow for some flexibility in the child’s routine so that he learns to cope with minor changes in a supportive environment.
- Children with ASD need lots of opportunities to learn the same thing in various situations and contexts to encourage generalisation of skills.
- Ensure that the student has all the books and materials he needs for each class or activity.
- Be persistent and consistent. Progress may be slow and results can be difficult to see at first.
- Try to stay calm and positive.
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- Work with the child’s interests and obsessions to increase motivation and to learn new skills.

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- To encourage generalisation of skills, teach the same task in a variety of situations.
- Be persistent. Progress may be slow and results may be difficult to see at first.
- Be calm, positive and consistent.
- Every child with ASD has individual abilities and needs – what works for one child may not work for another.
- Every child can have a bad day. Don’t feel at fault if things are not going well.
Tips for teaching children with ASD

20 tips for teaching students with ASD (Years 9-12)

1. Don’t sweat the small stuff! Be flexible in areas such as school attendance, uniform, timetabling and social expectations.

2. Remember that inappropriate and difficult behaviour can often be linked to high levels of anxiety.

3. Avoid overloading the student with verbal instructions. Give one instruction at a time. Allow the student sufficient time to process and respond to the request.

4. Avoid phrasing an instruction as a question. Instructions should be given as a command that offers no alternative. This does not imply that instructions must be given in an overly stern or loud voice.

5. If a student becomes loud and agitated, be calm, limit gesture, speak quietly and try to engage eye contact. Do not attempt to reason or rationalise with the student when he is upset; save this for when he is calm. Focus on what he should be doing.

6. Make full use of resources such as the internet, educational software and documentaries so that students can teach themselves.

7. Provide the student with extra support to help him organise class materials.

8. Always give the student advance warning of changes in routine.

9. Appeal to the student’s interests, hobbies and obsessions by incorporating these into classroom activities, homework and assignments.

10. Provide a resource room, computer room or library for the student to access when feeling overloaded.

11. Remember that parents know their child best. They are a great source of information.

12. Use visual cues or written lists to support verbal communication whenever possible.

13. Take the time to try to understand each student’s particular sensory issues.

14. Be explicit. The student may not focus on what you consider to be obvious.

15. Help the student become aware that other people have thoughts and feelings that are different to his own.

16. Provide the student with opportunities to improve social interaction skills with role play that practices appropriate social behaviour in a variety of everyday situations.

17. Structure and routine are important but allow for some flexibility in the student’s routine so that he learns to cope with minor changes in a supportive environment.

18. Appoint a staff member who is committed to the welfare of the student to act as a mentor and social coach.

19. Allow for alternate assignment formats and assessment methods.

20. Remember that social and life skills are just as important as academic learning.
Tips for teaching children with ASD (middle years)

Behaviour
- Challenging behaviour is nearly always an attempt to communicate – don’t immediately assume misbehaviour. Try to identify the trigger for the behaviour.
- The student may have outbursts of aggression just like a much younger child due to delayed emotional development.
- Be consistent in everything you do. Discuss behavioural issues with others and make sure everyone agrees on the same approach.
- Adhere to well-defined and predictable routines so that the student knows what is expected of him and what he can expect each day.
- Always give advance warning of changes in routine.
- Tell the student what you expect of him rather than telling him what you don’t want.
- Remember that common techniques for calming an anxious child may have the opposite effect on a child with ASD.
- Don’t try to stop odd or repetitive behaviour unless it interferes with learning or threatens the wellbeing of others. It is better to modify the behaviour.
- Look at ways of using the student’s obsession or preferred interest in classroom activities.
- Monitor the child’s ability to cope in the school ground; he may need time to unwind after recess and lunch if this time stressful.

Communication
- Be sensitive to the student’s efforts to communicate.
- Simplify your language. Be aware of language that is likely to be interpreted literally.
- Avoid overloading the student with verbal directions or requests.
- Say the student’s name to gain his attention before giving instructions.
- Give one instruction at a time. Allow the student sufficient time to interpret then respond to an instruction. This may take longer in children with ASD.
- Encourage eye contact, but don’t insist if this causes anxiety.
- Avoid sarcasm and irony. Metaphors may be confusing.
- Be aware that facial expressions and gestures may be misinterpreted.
- Use visual cues to support verbal communication, eg daily timetable.

Sensory
- Children with autism can be distracted by minor background noise that other people filter out.
- The student may experience sensory overload from visual stimuli, the close proximity of others or from physical contact.
- Take the time to try to understand the student’s particular sensory issues.

Social interaction
- Help the student become aware that other people have thoughts and feelings that may be different to their own.
- Be explicit - the student may not focus on what you consider to be obvious.
- Accept that the student may need time out from the demands of social interaction – have a plan for these times.
- Understand the student’s difficulty interpreting social cues. Practice appropriate social behaviour with role play.

General tips
- Predictability and routine are important but allow for some flexibility in the student’s routine so that he learns to cope with minor changes in a supportive environment.
- Children with ASD need lots of opportunities to learn the same thing in various situations and contexts to encourage generalisation of skills.
- Provide extra support to the student to help organise class materials and books for each class or activity.
- Be persistent and consistent. Progress may be slow and results can be difficult to see at first.
- Try to stay calm and positive.
- Every child with ASD has individual abilities and needs – what works for one student may not work for another.
- Everyone can have a bad day. Don’t feel at fault if things are not going well.
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