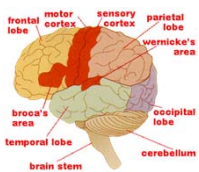


Teaching Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Strategies for Success Using Evidence Based Best Practices for Inclusion

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What is autism?

- Complex biological disorder
- Chronic
- Developmental: Usually occurs before age 3

Autism Spectrum Disorder



- Autism is considered to be a spectrum disorder because the characteristics range in severity and in type.
- They can be mild such as in the case of some children with Asperger's Syndrome or quite severe.

Spectrum



- What is a spectrum?
- What does it depend on?
- What makes it a spectrum?

“Working with a child with ASD is not so much finding the ‘treasure’ at the end of the rainbow as it is finding the nuggets along the way.”

Social Interaction

- Social interactions with other people, both physical (such as hugging or holding) and verbal (such as having a conversation).
- Children with ASDs do not interact with other people the way most children do, or they may not be interested in other people at
- Children with ASDs may not make eye contact and may just want to be alone.



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- They may have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings.
- A child with an ASD may not like to be held or cuddled and may not form the usual attachments or bonds to other people.
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All About Me!

Objective: To enable the child with autism to feel part of your class and to help his classmates get to know all about him and his family.

Materials needed: Pictures and information about the child, ribbon, paper, or other materials to decorate a bulletin board.

When to use this strategy: When you want to help the children in your class get to know more about the child with autism. This strategy also helps the child with autism feel special and valued.

What to do?

Step 1: Talk with the child's family and ask them to send some pictures of the child and his family to school. Action pictures work best, because they show the child doing things.

Step 2: Ask the family to write a few sentences to go along with each picture, which describe what the family is doing, and include names of the people in the pictures.

Step 3: Feature a different child each week on the bulletin board. Put up pictures of his family and pictures of what the child enjoys.

Step 4: After you have displayed the pictures, build an activity around them. Talk about the child's siblings, pets, or activities. This helps the child feel more comfortable and helps all children in the class see the child with autism as being more like them.

Step 5: Another adaptation of this exercise is to have each child in the class make a picture book about their family. Be sure to include grandparents, pets, and activities or customs that the family enjoys. This Book About ____ (child's name) can be used throughout the year.

Step 6: Making a book about a child also helps connect his family to your classroom, and can be used to help children discover things they have in common with their classmates, such as the number of brothers and sisters, types of pets, family customs, family activities, etc.

Step 7: An additional benefit of this activity is that, as you get to know more about the child with autism and his family, you can plan activities centered on familiar things.

Helpful Hints

- Be aware that not all children come from traditional families. Family is defined by the child and those he lives with, not by any traditional rule.
- Some children may be in foster care or come from families that are not currently intact. In this case, the *All About Me* activities could center on what the child likes to do and what activities he enjoys at school.
- It is also not uncommon for a child to be in a blended family or be in a situation where he spends some time with parents in two separate households. In this case, try to include all family members from both households.

Making New Friends



Objective: The child learns how to meet new people.

Materials needed: Cardstock or heavy paper; pencils, markers, or a picture meaning stop; a picture of the child; and clear contact paper or laminating machine.

When to use this strategy: This strategy can be used to encourage the child to make a new friend.

What to do?



Step 1: Make a cue card with two cues. Have one for the child's name and one to remind him to wait for the other person to respond. Laminate the cue card, if possible.

Step 2: Explain to the child that the cue card will help him know what to do when he meets someone new.

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Step 3: Ask several children to help you and the child practice meeting people.

Step 4: Sit in a circle and practice what to say and how to wait for the person to respond.

Step 5: Remind the children that, when you are meeting someone for the first time, it is a good idea to look at them.

Step 6: Look for opportunities to encourage the child to practice using the cue cards to introduce himself.

Helpful Hints:

Later, when the child is familiar with this routine, add additional cues such as communicating something that he likes to do or asking the new friend to play a game.

Remember to make a set of cue cards for the child to take home.

Alert the family that the child is working on introducing himself, so that they can help him practice.



Behaviors

- Routines or repetitive behaviors, like repeating words or actions over and over, obsessively following routines or schedules for their actions, or having very specific ways of arranging their belongings.
- Children with ASDs may repeat actions over and over again.
- Children may want to have routines where things stay the same so they know what to expect.

Communication

Behavior

- Form: Way to communicate
 - Function: Reason to communicate
 - Content: Something to communicate about
- Form: Way to behave
 - Function: Reason for a behavior
 - Content: An event that contributes to a particular behavior



Nothing is free!

- Children must ask or communicate what they want and need
- You are not now nor will you ever be a GAME SHOW HOST!



Deciding When to Use a Communicative Replacement



- When a teacher chooses to replace the challenging behavior with a communicative alternative, there must be general agreement that the function of the behavior was acceptable but the form used to achieve the outcome is unacceptable.
- For example,



*The voyage of discovery
is not in seeking new
landscapes, but in having
new eyes.* -
Marcel Proust

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Good Morning! Good Morning!

Objective: To greet the child with autism and start the day out on a positive note.

Materials needed: Picture schedule

When to use this strategy: When the child first arrives in the morning.

Remember, sometimes the child may arrive upset and needs a few minutes in the quiet area before the day begins.

What to do?

Step 1: Start every day with the same routine. It is important that you use the same words and phrases each day. You might try something like, "Good morning _ _ _." Wait to see if the child responds. "Let's check and see what we do first."

Step 2: Either kneel down to eye level and show the child a picture schedule of what you want him to do, or, if you wearing a **picture apron**

Step 3: If the child does not respond to a spoken welcome, he may respond to a song. Try the following, sung to the tune of *Three Blind Mice* (first verse).

Welcome Song (sung to the tune of
Three Visually Challenged Mice)



Hello _____ (child's name)

Hello _____ (child's name)

I'm glad you're here.

I'm glad you're here.

Let's put your things away and find out what
to do today. I'm glad you're here! I'm glad
you're here!

Next Steps

- Step 4: Direct the child to his cubby. If he hesitates, walk with him and show him. Putting a picture of the child above his cubby helps him identify it more easily.

- Step 5: Tell him what to do next, "After you put up your backpack, go to the _____ center."



- Step 6: Say or sign thank you.

Next steps....

- Step 7: A child with autism likes structure and set routines. Even if you start the morning with independent center time, direct the child to a specific place each morning.
- Step 8: After he is accustomed to the routine, you can vary the welcome, by giving two or more center choices. However, initially, if you tell him to choose where he wants to go, he is more likely to stand in the middle of the floor or go hide in his cubby.

Helpful Hints

- Keep focused on your primary objective, which is to start each day with a calm and predictable sequence.
- Regardless of how you start the day, consistency will make the child with autism feel more secure.
- Face it, some children, even children with autism, are just not *morning people* and need a little more time to *wake-up*. If the child is prone to *rugged* mornings, then begin each day by allowing him to go to his quiet center for a few minutes, until he has adjusted to the routine.
- Don't forget that when you are absent, it is crucial that your substitute or teacher's assistant follow the same morning welcome routine that you follow.

Why Do Children With Autism Have So Much Trouble Communicating?

- Effective communication is more than just sending and receiving messages.
- It requires that one person, either the sender or the receiver of the message, interact with the other person.
- Actually, in order for the interaction to be successful, the other person must reciprocate in some way.

Why they communicate?

- In initiating an exchange of a message or information, the sender must be willing to approach the person she will be communicating with.
- Even though the child with autism may be able to answer a direct question or make a statement about what she wants, starting a conversation is especially difficult.
- In fact, a child with autism will more likely initiate a communication when she wants or needs something. It is less likely she will initiate communication simply for the sake of a social interaction.

Naturalistic Interventions

- Friendship Activities
- Incidental Teaching of Social Behaviors
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Peer/Buddy systems
- Natural consequences
- Communication needs
- Adaptations
- **Behavior Issues**



Sensory Integration



- Organization of sensation for use
- Organizing information coming in from the senses: visual, tactile, auditory, vestibular and proprioceptive to make an adaptive response.

Daily Routines

- Transition Time
- Taming Bath and Toilet Time
- Chaos Busters!

Hands at Home



Objective: The child learns a strategy to keep her hands at *home*, therefore reducing stereotypical behaviors such as hand-flapping and hand-wringing.

Materials needed: Paper, scissors, glue, laminator, string or yarn, and hole-punch.

When to use this strategy: When you want the child to attend to what you are saying and during times of transition. This strategy is particularly effective when you are moving the child from one setting to another. This strategy is least effective when the child has already become so stressed he is tensing his body and preparing for an outburst.

What to do?

- Step 1: Outline the child's hands on paper or material.
- Step 2: Cut out the outlined hands.
- Step 3: Using a hole-punch, punch one hole in the bottom of each cutout, near the palm.
- Step 4: Use a long piece of yarn or ribbon to connect the hands, so they can hang around the child's neck and the cutouts can hang at his side.
- Step 5: Coach the child, so that, when you say, "Hands at home," he knows to place his hands on the cutout hands.
- Step 6: After the child learns the activity, you can fade to just raising your hand slightly, such as when you wave at someone, to cue him to put his hands on the cutout hands.

Helpful hints:
Remember that many children with ASD have difficulty touching certain textures and materials. Be sure to use paper that is of a color and texture that the child can tolerate.

The Top "10" Things Teachers Should Know about Autism Spectrum Disorder

- 1. Autism is a spectrum disorder:** Children with autism display a range of behaviors and abilities from very mild to quite severe. In other words, the word autism can describe a child who fits anywhere within that range.
- 2. Always use 'child-first' language or people-first language, when describing the child:** The child in your classroom with autism is just that – a child with autism and not an autistic child. People-first and, in this case, 'child-first' language helps others see that you view the child first and the disability second.
- 3. Focus on the child's interests:** When trying to encourage a child with autism to play, focus on the interests of the child and make interactions with others as natural as possible.

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- 4. **Novel situations can be overwhelming:** Recognize that children with autism may have difficulty adjusting to new play situations and new play materials.
- 5. **The environment is important:** Children with autism need a special place in the room where they can go without distraction and without all the sensory input they receive elsewhere.
- 6. **Social skills training should begin early:** Learning how to respond in social situations should begin as early as possible. It is a critical skill for children to possess and enables them to interact with others more easily.

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- 7. **View parents as partners:** Parents often agree that the one thing a teacher can do to understand their perspective is to be respectful of their opinions and treat them as valued contributors.
- 8. **Value the uniqueness of each child:** Each child is unique, and while she may have characteristics typical of other children with autism, she will have other characteristics that are not.
- 9. **There is no one single method that works:** There is no magic pill or specific program that can *cure or fix* autism. While many programs and methods have been tried and are successful with some children, they may not be successful with others. Look for methods with a solid research base.
- 10. **Learning about autism is a process:** Learning about autism is not about a product; it is about a process of gathering information and making informed choices, based on the needs of the individual child.
