

Practical tools for ASD

Welcome to Module 16 of your SEN toolkit!

In this module we look at specific tools and resources to use with learners with ASD.

Aims

By the end of this module, I will be able to:

- select and prioritise a series of tools and activities to use with ASD learners
- use and sensitively adapt a series of tools and activities with ASD learners in my context
- understand that these tools and activities are keys to unlocking the potential of ASD learners



Awareness of responsibility

In this section, you are going to ask yourself about how your current practices accommodate students with ASD.

Please answer the questions below, and while you're answering them, think about how they relate to ASD students.

	Yes	No
Do I use photos in my lessons? Schedules?		
Arrange visual clues in a simple way?		
Give simple instructions?		

Work areas

	Yes	No
Is there space provided for individual and group work?		
Are work areas located in least distractible settings?		
Are work areas marked so that a student can find his own way?		
Are there consistent work areas for those students who need them?		
Does the teacher have easy visual access to all work areas?		

Are there places for students to put finished work?		
Are work materials in a centralized area and close to work areas?		
Are a student's materials easily accessible and clearly marked for him or her?		
Are play or leisure areas as large as possible? Are they away from exits?		
Are they away from areas and materials that students should not have access to during free time?		
Are boundaries of the areas clear?		
Can the teacher observe the area from all other areas of the room?		
Are the shelves in the play or leisure area cluttered with toys and games that are broken or no one ever uses?		

Scheduling

	Yes	No
Is the schedule clearly outlined so that teachers know all daily responsibilities?		

Do individual student schedules consider student needs for break times, reinforcement, unpreferred activities followed by preferred activities?		
Does the schedule help a student with transitions – where to go and what to do?		
Does the schedule help a student know where and when to begin and end a task?		
How are transitions and changes in activity signaled? timer rings? teacher direction? student monitors clock?		
Is the schedule represented in a form that is easily comprehended by the student?		

Teaching Method

	Yes	No
Does the teacher have the student's attention before directions are given?		
Is the verbal language used specific to a student's level of understanding and are gestures paired with verbal instructions to help a student understand when he is having difficulty comprehending?		

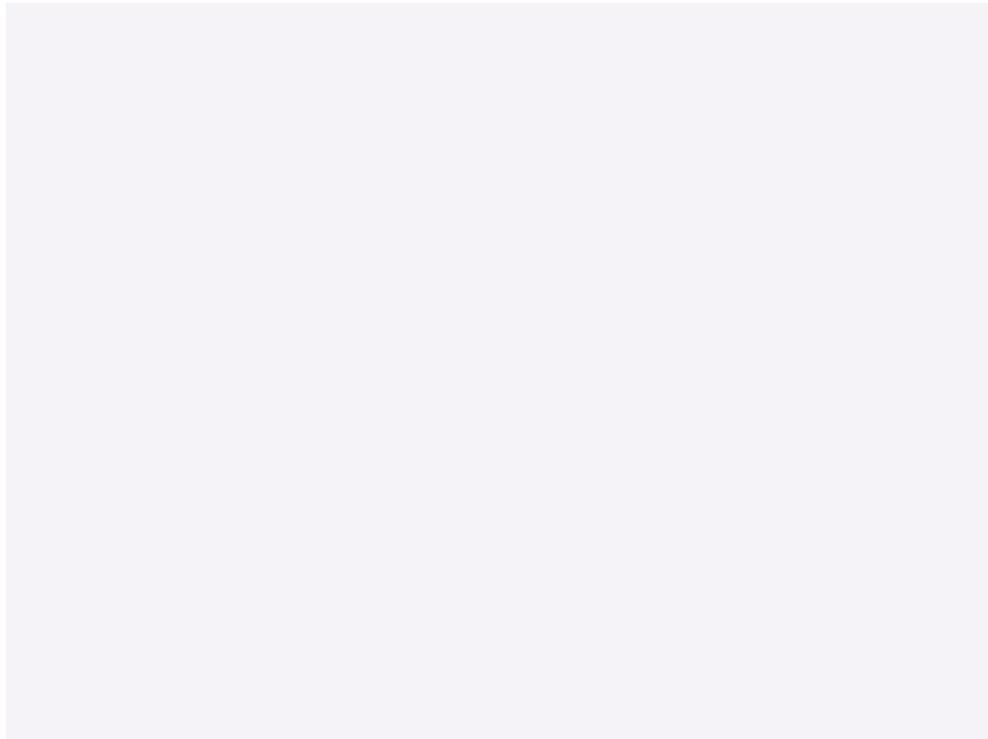
Is the student given enough information to be able to complete a task as independently as possible?		
Does the setting and organization of materials help convey directions to a student?		
Are materials presented in an organized manner?		
Are there too many materials presented at a given time?		
Is a student given as much help as he needs to complete a task successfully?		
Are appropriate prompts chosen specific to a student's learning style and level?		
Are prompts presented before a student responds incorrectly?		
Has the teaching setting been structured so that a student does not receive unintended prompts?		
Is the student given clear feedback regarding correct and incorrect responses or behaviors?		
Are consequences and reinforcers for behaviors made clear to the student?		
Do they immediately follow the desired behavior?		

Is reinforcement given frequently enough?		
Are reinforcers based on a student's level of understanding and motivation?		

Reflexive question

How might the techniques above make a difference to students' lives?

Now visit the website: <https://teacch.com/structured-teaching-teacch-staff/> to learn about structured teaching.



An Interview With an Autistic Teacher Who Teaches Autistic Students

You are about to read an interview with a teacher. This teacher teaches ASD students. The teacher is also autistic.

Read the interview below. Then note down one point of interest from each of the answers to the questions the interviewee was asked:

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Interviewer: (1) When were you diagnosed with Autism?

Teacher: I self-diagnosed as having [NLD](#) (Nonverbal Learning Disability) (which I mistakenly thought was mutually exclusive to Autism – a good reason to get a professional diagnosis, not a web diagnosis) in college, which brought me a lot of peace of mind and self-understanding. (And helped me make peace with a lot of my past.) I was in my 30s when I finally made the decision to get the formal diagnosis. (I was both right and wrong: I do have NLD, but I'm also on the Autism Spectrum.)

I got the diagnosis because I was having a lot of trouble communicating effectively at work, and I was getting written up for it. My supervisors were trying to work with me, but I was afraid I was going to lose my job. It wasn't the first job I've had that happen at. The problems my coworkers were going to administration about were hauntingly familiar: my voice tone, my inability to read others voice tone, my quick answers that don't make sense and sound frustrated. It was a pattern I'd seen before and had never had any success stopping or changing. I knew I needed help if I wanted to save this job.

Interviewer: (2) Why do you prefer remaining anonymous?

Teacher: For now, at least, I want to maintain control over disclosure. Also, privacy. The web is public and it stays there forever. I'm not comfortable with anything about me, disability related or not, being out there like that. I don't have anything meaningful out on the web under my real name, and I'll keep it that way, thanks.

Interviewer: (3) How did you get into teaching?

Teacher: I think it's in my blood. My dad is a teacher. I remember being in first grade, when everyone wants to be police officers and firemen: I wanted to be a special education teacher. I got a BA in Psychology and spent 5 years doing direct care before moving to work in the schools. I worked as a paraprofessional while I got my M.Ed. I'm certified in intensive special needs and deaf/blind education.

Interviewer: (4) Would you talk about your childhood and how autism affected it?

Teacher: I did the stereotypical "little professor" thing. My mom says my favorite word as a kid was "actually." I had friends growing up, and if my parents thought my relationships with them were a little off, I never noticed. I had no other standard of relations, and I was happy with what I had. My mom tried vainly to model more appropriate social interactions (my poor mother) but it all went right over my head

(I do not learn from environmental cues or social models.)

Middle and high school were rough. I was the victim of significant bullying. Kids are mean. I considered changing schools (I went to public school) but decided against it. Instead, I dove into my interests: computers, foreign languages, band, technical theater. Bullying happens during the unstructured times of the school day. I was never unstructured, participating in more classes and extracurriculars than there were hours in the day. (I seriously could have used Hermione's time turner back then....) Not only did it give me structure and purpose, but it successfully buffered me from my would-be tormentors.

Interviewer: (5) Are you concerned that if the school where you work knew you were Autistic your job would be in jeopardy?

I'd be worried about an employer learning that I was Autistic before I had a chance to prove myself as a teacher, yes. The concerns about my communication problems at this job came in the context of "we love your passion, but..." I had already proven myself, multiple times over, as a good teacher getting excellent results with students who are considered difficult. Afterward, I could see I had to re-prove myself because the words of my NT (neurotypical) paraprofessionals (sometimes not just in the area of classroom communication) carried more weight than mine did. I have reason to believe we've gotten past that now, but it lingers in the back of my mind. I know I have to work harder and sometimes that makes me mad. Luckily, I have an administration and paraprofessionals who support me in the work I do and who respect that I am approaching it from an Autistic perspective (even if they don't always understand that perspective.) I haven't always been that lucky, and I am continuously grateful for it.

Interviewer: (6) You say, "with the right accommodations.." can you give an example of a couple that are helpful?

Teacher: Using written communication when possible. This frees me up to only address questions that need to be addressed, which means I am more likely to be clearer because I can devote the needed resources to perspective taking and processing time. Regular meetings. I don't pick up on things incidentally unless I'm working hard to pay attention to everything that is going on. That's impossible when your class is spread between multiple locations. Regular meetings give me a chance to make sure we're all on the same page at the end of every day and put out any fires before they get out of hand. However, the effectiveness of these meetings is predicated on....

Direct communication from staff. This is quite possibly the hardest accommodation to get and the most important. I ask everyone I work with to be direct with me and everyone says they will. But saying and doing are not the same thing. Most NTs find being as direct as I need them to be as impossible as I find reading their non-verbal language. It's a real communication gap. I'm incredibly fortunate that I have a para that can bridge the gap. Some of my new paras are starting to learn as well, and I'm starting to learn to read their individual cues. Translation is never as good as reading the original, but we get by.

Having communication support people I can turn to. I have 2 coworkers I can trust to run things by when I'm concerned about how I'm coming across or not sure if I missed a cue from someone else. This doesn't help, of course, when I'm oblivious to the fact that there was something I should be concerned about in the first place, but it reduces the pool of potential landmines, at least. Also, these are people who can listen for what I'm not hearing on the rumour mill (because I'll never hear it) and potentially warn me of landmines I'm not aware of. They've definitely saved me from several potential disasters already this year.

Interviewer: (7) What are the most common misperceptions you face in trying to teach this population?

Teacher: Top five misconceptions held by administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, and community members that make my job harder:

1. That my students cannot possibly be capable of having control over (or a meaningful say in) what will happen with their lives.
2. That the fact that most of my students may never be fully independent (living alone, working full-time) means that we should not bother teaching them community living and vocational skills.
3. That my students are unpredictable or dangerous.
4. That a student who may exhibit challenging behavior in the school environment shouldn't be allowed in the community because he might exhibit the same challenging behavior. (This one really makes me angry, because it doesn't teach the kid anything useful. Give me appropriate staffing to handle the behavior; don't penalize the kid.)
5. That my students should be pitied.

Interviewer: (8) Have you been surprised by any child's ability?

Teacher: Have I have taught a student who had more skills than their assessments claimed? Absolutely. Have I ever had a student make more progress in a year than I anticipated and had to amend the IEP part way through? I love it when that happens! Have I ever taught a student who may not have a lot of skills that can be formally assessed, but who enriched my classroom in so many other ways? All the time. I don't like the word "surprised" – it's an autism thing, I guess.

Interviewer: (9) How do you deal with self-injurious behavior?

Teacher: Behavior does not occur in a vacuum and all behavior is communication. SIB (self-injurious behavior) usually has a sensory component, but a FBA (functional behavior assessment) will give clearer answers. We need to look at the

environment, the student's communication strategies, and antecedents and consequences. What is the cause of the stress? How can we teach the student to deal with it more effectively? Generally, positive behavior supports are most effective, but they have to be individualized in order to be effective. What is reinforcing to one student may be aversive to another. Behavior does not occur in a vacuum, and we cannot try to treat it in one.

Interviewer: (10) Can you describe some of your own sensory issues and how they impact your life and work?

Teacher: I only recently really mastered reliable daily living skill routines. Showering was a difficult sensory experience for me for years. I still have trouble with toothbrushing and flossing, but I'm working on it. I eat pretty bland foods (though, due to food allergies, my diet is both more varied and more monotonous than average) because I don't care much for significant smells or tastes. I've gotten more tolerant of different clothing textures than I was when I was younger. I still freak out at certain textures, but my repertoire has expanded significantly from the "cotton/poly blend only" I wore when I was younger. At work, I'm in control over the visual environment, since I'm the classroom teacher. So I keep it pretty visually quiet, both for my own sake and that of my students. Any conversations go out of the room, which really helps all of us focus. My para knows to ignore when I'm self-talking, which is my primary self-calming strategy (I try to take that out of the room too, when I can.) I stim when I need to. So do my students. I don't see that (the stimming) as particularly impacting our work. I bring figits or sit on the floor during meetings (I sit in the back so it's not disruptive.) In previous years, when I was trying to pass and having more communication problems, I needed more sensory breaks and did a lot more self-talk (which in turn caused more communication problems.) Now that I'm not trying to pass, I'm more comfortable and less stressed, which means I'm generally more sensory regulated –

and if I'm not, dealing with it is no big deal.

Interviewer: (11) Are there specific things you suggest schools can do to help their students?

Teacher: I think a lot of schools do the first half of this puzzle really well. They have proactive sensory programs: do this activity after this interval for this amount of time. And they have reactive programs: if you see this behavior, offer these choices for this amount of time. The good ones have a mixture of the two. Where the programs tend to miss the mark is in taking it to the next level: teaching the student to recognize when their sensory system is starting to become dysregulated and what to do about it. There are some good programs out there for teaching this skill: [The Alert Program](#) (TM) is probably the most popular. I'm a fan, personally, of the [Incredible 5-Point Scale](#), because the students can apply it to more than just their sensory system and because it has a more flexible metaphor (colors, numbers, can use pictures) and it ties into emotional regulation and understanding.

Interviewer: (12) What is your opinion regarding stimming?

Teacher: I stim. My students stim. I won't stop a student from stimming. My para (the only NT in the room, poor guy) frequently points out that everyone stims, it's just that society has declared NT stims socially acceptable and autistic stims unacceptable. That said, there are also students who demonstrate self-stimulatory behaviors that are not self-calming but rather a precursor to or the beginnings of further stressed or out of control behavior. It is extremely important to know your student and to know the difference between these two types of behaviors. In one situation, the student is using their own coping strategies to de-stress, and in the other the student is indicating the beginning of losing control, and the environment or stressors needs to be addressed to prevent further escalation.

Interviewer: (13) Have you ever witnessed treatment of a student that you objected to?

Teacher: I'd love to say "no," but yes, I have. Most of the time it's things like not giving enough wait time and over-prompting. I get incredibly frustrated by the way that students who are not socially engaging, especially if they have challenging behaviors, tend to get left out in favor of the "easier" kids. But also, yes, I've seen what you're really asking about. I've seen students physically moved or restrained when they shouldn't have been. I'm trained in the use of physical restraint, and yes, I've had to use it. Do I like it? No. Is it ever my preference to use it? No. Will I use it as a last resort to keep students safe? Absolutely. And I would 100x prefer to be called in and asked to do so then to have people who are untrained and don't know what they are doing try to make do. That way only leads to injury, trauma, and possibly death. And I'm not afraid to call it like I see it. I've reported coworkers to administration and when needed I've filed 51a reports (reports of abuse or neglect.) There are certain benefits to having an overarching sense of right and fair and not feeling bound by social conventions, at least where the students rights and safety are concerned.

Interviewer: (14) Is there any methodology that you prefer and why is that?

Teacher: The short answer to this question is no. I am very wary of any program that says that a particular methodology is right for all students with diagnosis x. I don't believe that to be true. The role of the teacher is to be familiar with the breadth of instructional tools that are out there and to find (or adapt) the right tool for the individual student to learn the specific skill. For one student, that might be Discrete Trial Training to learn to attend to directions given in ASL. For another student, that may be a phonics curriculum to learn to read. A third student might be learning vocabulary in the natural context of a community work placement. The one thing that all of these methods have in common is data. I need reliable data

taken daily on student achievement to know if the methodology is effective and the student is making progress, or if the instructional method needs to be changed. There is no right or wrong method; I don't even believe there is a best method. The question is whether the method being used is effectively teaching the student the desired skill, and there is only one way to answer that question: data.

Interviewer: (15) Are there any methodologies that you believe are harmful?

Teacher: Aversives, repeated use of any form of punishment (including time outs,) restraint used as a programming tool as opposed to an emergency procedure. If you're doing it on a regular basis, something is wrong.

Interviewer: (16) How do you work with a curriculum given your student's disparate needs?

Teacher: The short answer is good staffing ratios and competent paras. Also, using the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#). By differentiating how I engage each student, and with paraprofessional support for behavior and data-taking, I can have three students engaged in a group setting. I can have a fourth student, with additional paraprofessional support, engaging in the same material with us and connecting to the group as able. If you're counting, that's 3 staff and 4 students. I've just described to you what my classroom looks like most days.

Interviewer: (17) In an ideal world where Autism carried no stigma and you were able to be open about being Autistic, are there specific things that would allow you to do your job better?

Teacher: I would like to be able to work with my students on understanding Autistic culture and the Autism community. My school does very well teaching our Deaf students about Deaf Culture and their Deaf identity. I believe we could do the same for the Autistic students. I would like to make that happen, and I know that

no one else will lead it, but it would require being open about being Autistic and I'm not ready for that yet. I trust my administration and those I've told, but I am not comfortable working with the rest of my co-workers as an Autistic person, which I'd need to do in order to make that happen for these students. It's something I want to do, but not yet. One day, I hope.

Interviewer: (18) What do you advise people who are thinking about entering the field of special education? Is there anything you wish you'd known when you were just starting out?

Teacher: Work with kids with disabilities before you go into the schools. Work at multiple schools (or with kids from multiple programs) before you start teaching. One of the downsides to being in the schools, especially since most teachers work as paraprofessionals while they get their degree, is that you work with one student, or one group of students, for years. There is frequently only one or two special education classrooms in the building, so there aren't a lot of models to observe. I have had too many experiences of people singing the praises of teachers I know to be mediocre at best, because they have no standard to compare them to. See as many different students and teachers as you can before you settle on a specific subset of the population, a school, and a classroom where you want to work. Most importantly, spend time working with typically developing children. You'll need that reference to fall back on so you can recognize what's typical age-appropriate nonsense and what is actually behavior that needs to be addressed. We tend to acquire tunnel vision in special education; make sure you don't put the blinders on until you have to.

Interviewer: (19) What do you advise parents look for of non-speaking children seeking a good school?

Teacher: Without knowing the specific student or her goals, it is impossible for me

to say what program is best. I can tell you what I look for in a school where I would consider working. The one thing that sends up red flags and makes me stay far away is a school that believes there is one right method to teach all students. Simply put, there isn't. Beyond that, I look for evidence that the people there know how to use picture supports and both high and low tech communication supports, not just for schedules but integrated into everyday activity: academics, leisure/social time, specials, lunch, etc. For an older student, I look for evidence of functional skills and community based learning, not just using pictures to represent and role-play functional community activities, but actually getting out into the school and local community and learning the skills in the real environment.

Interviewer: (20) If you could create a "dream school" what would it be like?

Teacher: My dream school would have the physical environment, educational methodologies, peers, and teachers and paras with appropriate training and ratios to give each student access to both the general educational curriculum and any related services she needs to be successful as an adult: whatever that looks like for each individual student. My dream school is not one school, but a range of options for every student so that the right option is always available. That option would naturally change over time as the child grows and her needs change, and no one would question the need for that change.

Interviewer: (21) Have you had parents or other staff question the competence of a child in your class?

Teacher: I had a former administrator tell me a student didn't matter because his family would take care of him after graduation and to focus all my attention and resources on another student who, she said, actually had a chance of being fully independent. I basically ignored her. They are now both working in the community with support.

Interviewer: (22) Have you had a parent question their child's competence?

Teacher: Not directly, but I certainly have known parents who have underestimated their child's academic or independence skills.

Interviewer: (23) How have you dealt with that?

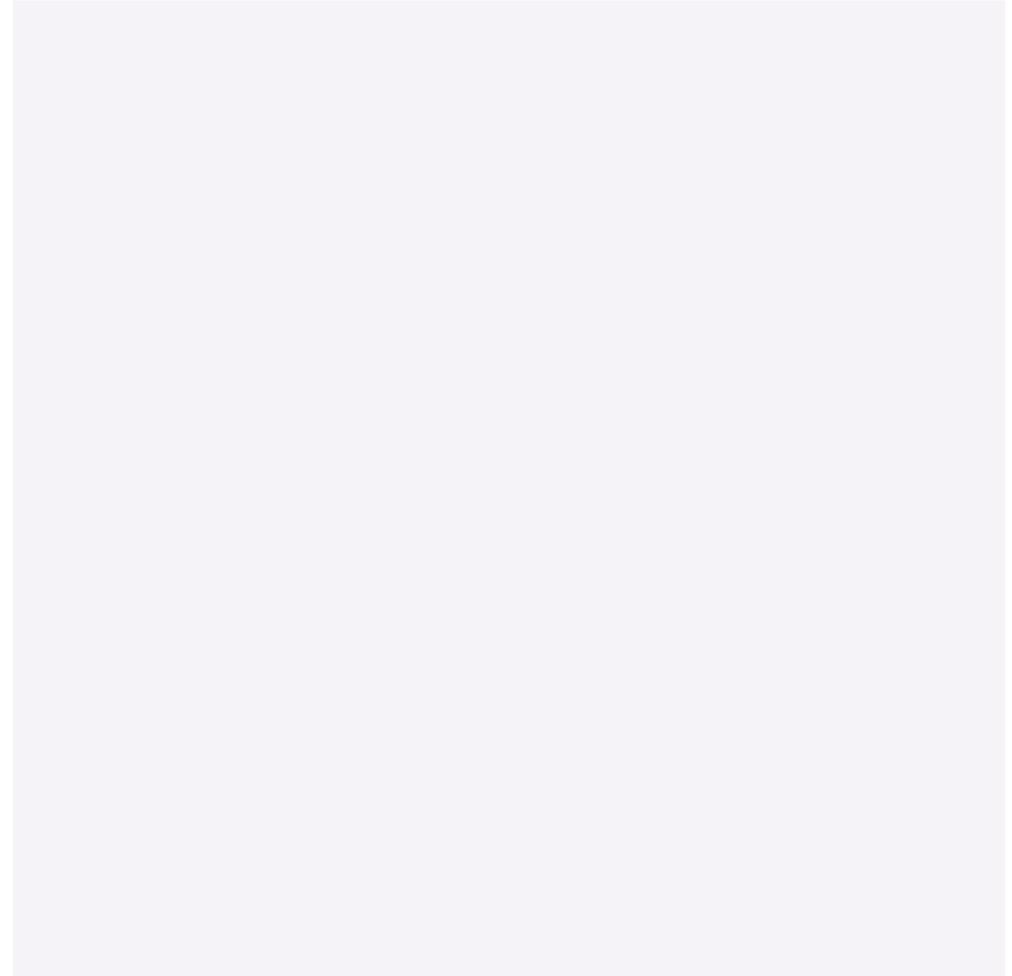
Teacher: I don't judge, because I can't. I don't walk in their shoes. I only see their child at school. I only know what their child does in one environment and I understand well that students will present differently in different environments. I will encourage bridging to home; I will provide support; I will provide information and data. But I will not judge, because I do not, I cannot, really know.

This interview originally appeared on the website: <https://emmashopebook.com/2013/02/04/an-interview-with-an-autistic-teacher-who-teaches-autistic-students/>

Reflexive question

Now compare with the article here: <https://autisticnotweird.com/story-of-an-autistic-teacher/>

What similarities and differences of opinion and experience can you identify?



Problem Solving

You are about to see a collection of potentially problematic scenarios.

Read through the list of potentially problematic scenarios, and ask yourself how best you would deal with them. This is not a “right or wrong” quiz, so we will not provide a set of concrete answers - this is more for you to engage deeply with the issues. At the end, we will provide some suggestions for you.

Part 1

Problem 1: What would you do?

A teacher has been expecting children to communicate/interact with each other. This teacher has been requiring children to work together without considering their social needs.

Suggestions:

Look at these classroom activities (e.g. 10 well-known classroom practices). Can you organise them as more helpful and less helpful for learners with ASD?

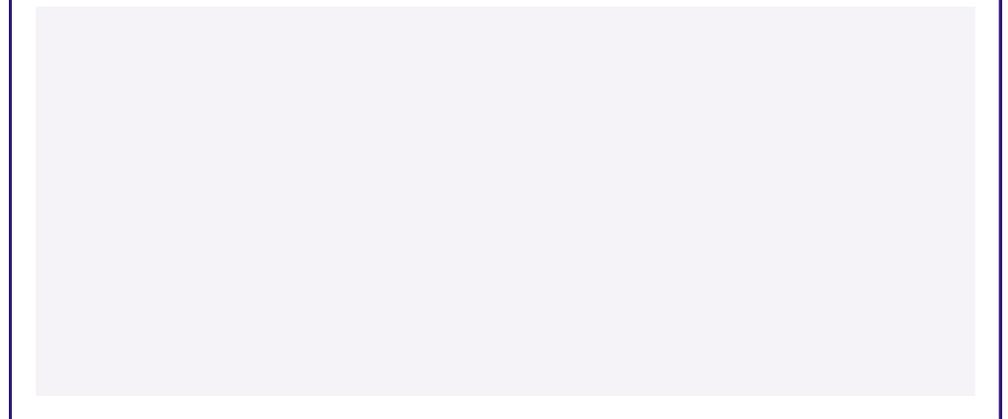
Supporting Students with Autism: 10 Ideas for Inclusive Classrooms <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/supporting-students-autism-10-ideas-inclusive-classrooms>



Problem 2:

A teacher's communication and signposting have been ambiguous, and easy to miss/unclear.

Use what you know about ASD to list five ways of making communication and signposting clear and less ambiguous.



Problem 3:

A teacher has been loading lots of stimuli onto children. eg. look at this piece of material, this other one etc. How would you reduce the amount of “materials stimuli” you give students? What could be the impact of this?

Problem 5:

A teacher grades on output (getting “the right answer”), not input (engagement, application, creativity, time spent, etc). How would you change this within the constraints of the demands of your teaching context?

Problem 4:

A teacher has been asking all the students in class to do the same activities. If different students process information differently, does it make sense to ask them to do the same things? What one simple strategy would you use to change this?

Problem 6:

The parent of an ASD student mentions that her child has complained about the emotional pressure he feels under to get things right. How would you address this?

Part 2

We are now going to examine what teachers can do instead, and how it can work for everyone, not just ASD students!

Technique 1. Factor into your lessons opportunities to work alone-not all children are comfortable/capable at joining in at the same pace.

Technique 2. Make sure you introduce a structure of a lesson, stick to the schedule. Use visual cues to communicate with children eg. a symbol like a traffic light to mark how long you've got left. Visual system of warnings/rewards to show behaviours that are appropriate.

Technique 3. Create a quiet space in/out the classroom, somewhere you can retreat to, limit the number and types of materials used. Map the sensory stimuli that teachers put onto children. Provide stim toys and equipment for all children as well.

Idea/suggestion: Put a video of a classroom and pinpoint the things that are sensorially difficult.

Technique 4. Differentiate! Group work where each person has a different role within the group. Find ways to ensure contribution. Allow kids to decide for themselves how they produce a piece of work (don't limit to writing)

Technique 5. Grade for input, not output! You need to be able to find a way of measuring input (and share this with other teachers). Consider grading on: time, focus, effort, detail. These can be just as important as output. Ask the child what they did and why they did it, reflection (what you learned, what you might do next time, etc)

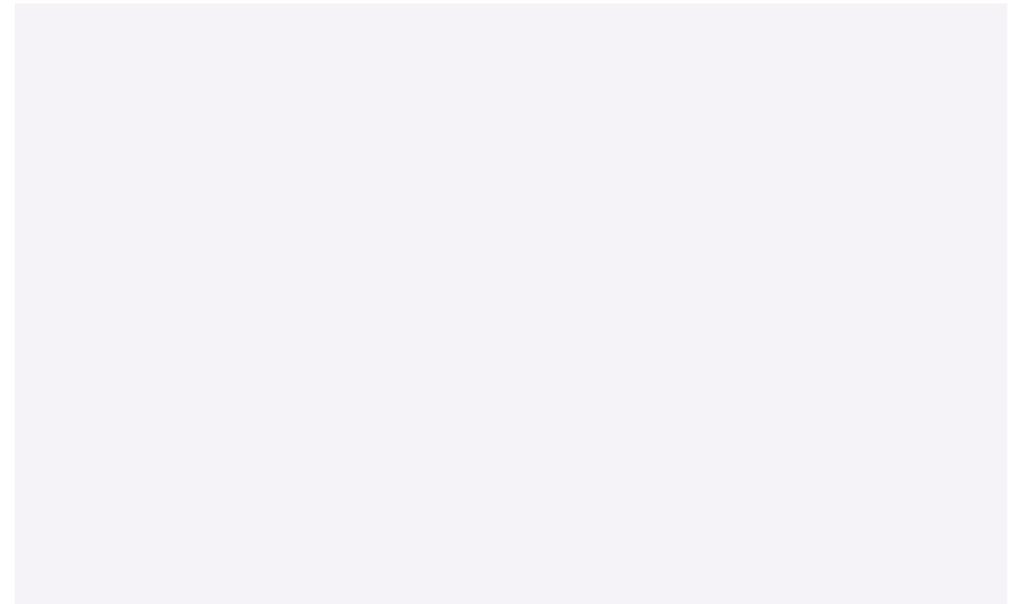
Technique 6. Don't expect all children to produce every piece of work in the same way "Punishment" or "Judgement" should not be the consequence of not getting the right answer. Empower them by talking to them, discussing.

Walter B Barbe: "If you've told a child a thousand times and he still doesn't understand, then it is not the child who is a slow learner"

Part 3

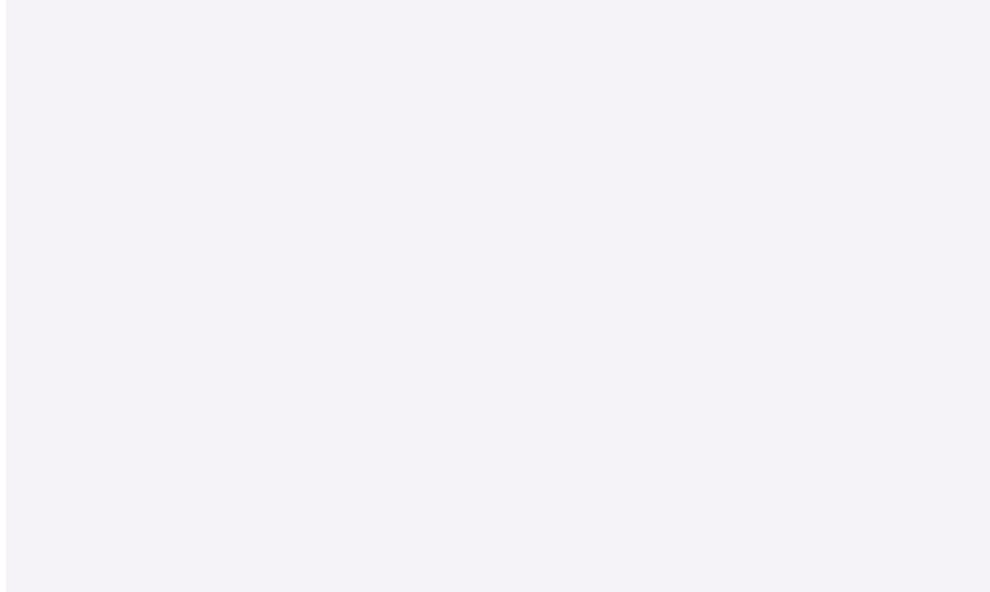
Read the six techniques, above; and write down which of these techniques can be applied to the problems you have just looked at. Match them with the problems as best you can.

Think about how these techniques impact the different learners in the classroom. What are the different pros and cons? Will they work for everyone?



Can you think of any times that you have used these techniques? Did they work? Why/Why not? How are you able to measure whether they have worked?

If they didn't work in the way that you wanted them to work, what could you adjust about them, in order to make them work better?



Part 3

Now choose some teachers who are open to exploring ASD-friendly learning. Ask them to analyse their own classrooms and classroom practices, but relating this examination to the “problems” you looked at above.. Which of these problems do they face in their classrooms?

Prioritise the different techniques you have just looked at in terms of what would be most useful/relevant to your and your colleagues' contexts.

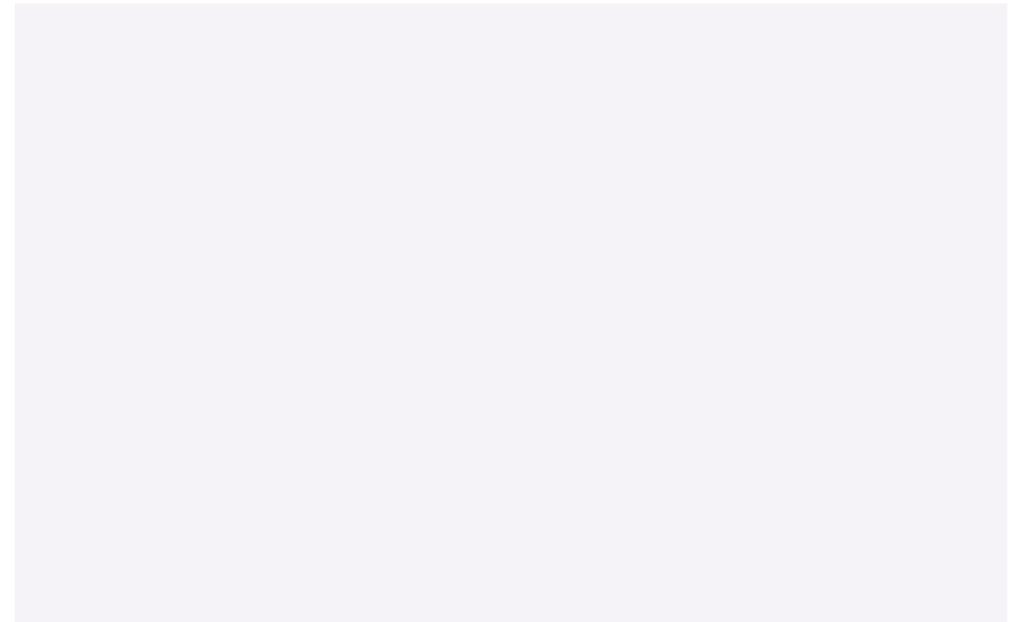
For your top three techniques, what are two first steps that you could take next week to implement them? Could we give them examples? e.g find a colleague to work on this with you/Introduce the concept to your learners, etc)

Implement these techniques, with the stipulation that you all “report back” to each other after a set, agreed period of time.

How will you know if they have worked? What does success look like?

For the techniques that work, how will you work towards making them standard practice within your school? Who will you involve?

For more information, you can read this document, produced for the Northern Ireland Department of Education by Gerry McGinn, Bangor, County Down, Northern Ireland: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6708/7/asd_classroom_practice_Redacted.pdf





TEACCH-ing Students

You are about to look quite deeply at the TEACCH methodology. This is a well-known and well-respected methodology for working with ASD students.

The TEACCH approach is a teaching philosophy rather than a series of techniques. TEACCH stands for:

- **Teaching**-sharing autism knowledge and increasing the skill level of professionals and practitioners.
- **Expanding**- increasing own knowledge to provide high-quality services to autistic people and their families.
- **Appreciating**- appreciating the strengths and uniqueness of autistic culture.
- **Collaborating** and **Cooperating** with colleagues, other professionals, autistic people and their families.
- **Holistic**-adopting a holistic approach, looking at the person, their family and community.

Some Useful Links:

1. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/strategies-and-interventions/strategies-and-interventions/teacch>
2. [https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/babcock_ldp/Core-Downloads/Covid/SEND/C-and-I/Week-9/The-TEACCH-approach-\(2020\).docx.pdf](https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/babcock_ldp/Core-Downloads/Covid/SEND/C-and-I/Week-9/The-TEACCH-approach-(2020).docx.pdf)
3. <http://ocupatea.es/teacch-autonomia/>
4. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/strategies-and-interventions/strategies-and-interventions/teacch>

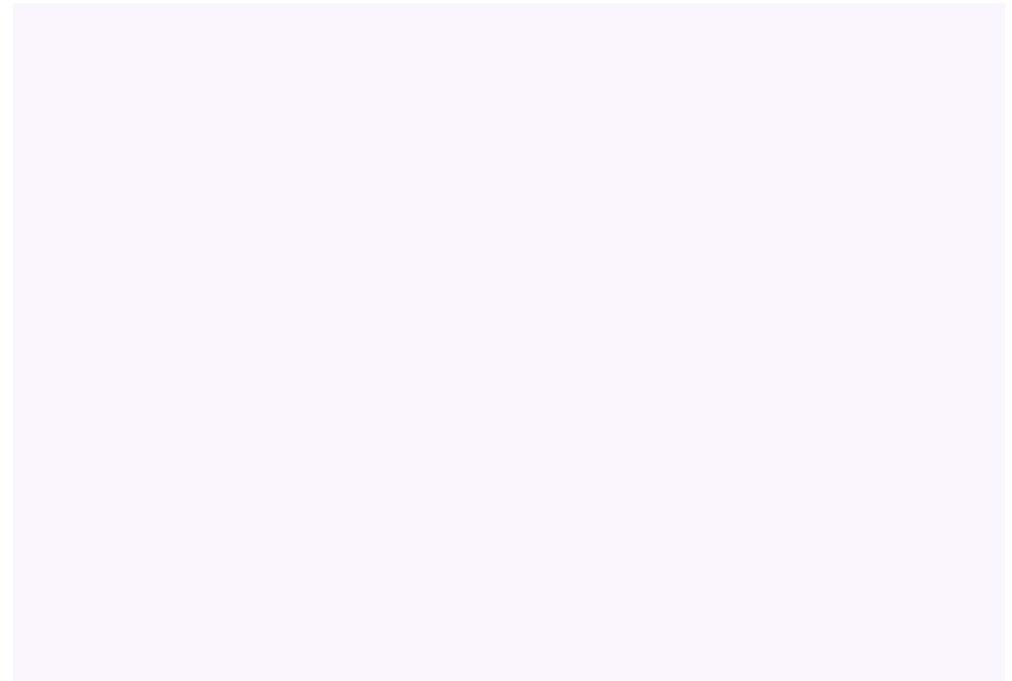
First, categorise the six techniques listed in the previous section with each of the acronyms of TEACCH.

Conduct a survey/focus group with students-with the aim to test and get feedback from students from the techniques suggested KP2 and TEACCH.

Encourage a learner centered approach-learn from the students, what works and doesn't work for them, rather than a top-down approach.

List 3 techniques and 5 questions per technique. The questions can be the same for all techniques:

- What are the pros/cons?
- How can we improve them?
- In which lessons would you like to apply them?
- Have you ever used these techniques in the past?



Strategies to help teach and communicate with autistic students.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex and multi-layered neurological variation that manifests differently from person to person. This creates a challenge when determining how to teach autistic children. Although each child is an individual who responds to teaching methods differently, there are a few strategies that are generally applied to help autistic children succeed in educational goals. These strategies build on the characteristics of autism, including differences in communication, social skills, behavior, and sensory issues.

You are about to be given a reminder of some techniques and strategies you can use to communicate better with - and hence teach more inclusively - ASD students.

Part 1 - Using Strategies to Help with Communication

- Assume that all children are competent
- Recognize how autistic body language can be different.
- Speak in clear, precise language.
- Avoid long verbal commands or lectures.
- Communicate with the child using functional aids if necessary.
- Use closed captions on a television.
- Pay attention to what difficult behavior might be trying to communicate.

Did You Know?

There are many potential reasons for "difficult" behavior. Overwhelm, sensory pain, nervousness or confusion about a task, frustration, anxiety, hunger, tiredness, and more can lead a child to act out or become passive (especially if they struggle to express themselves in words). Don't assume that they're misbehaving when they really might need someone to look closer and offer help.

Part 2- Using Strategies to Help with Social and Behavioral Issues

- Most autistic children are capable of learning social skills.
- Very young children in preschool and kindergarten can learn simple tasks like color discrimination, letter discrimination, or answering "yes" or "no" to simple questions by observing their peers engaging in these tasks.
- Socially savvy kids can be trained to serve as peer models for their autistic classmates, modeling social skills for interaction such as pleasant greetings, sharing ideas, recommending changes nicely, giving compliments, and talking in a pleasant voice, among other things.
- If peer modeling does not help, it may be a sign that there is an environmental or other barrier (e.g. a noisy environment, an unpredictable schedule, or an untreated anxiety disorder) that is hindering the autistic student's learning.
- Create a predictable schedule.
- Talk to the student about good ways to handle difficult emotions.



Part 3- Using Strategies to Help with Sensory Issues

- Delineate the teaching space.
- Reduce distracting or upsetting sensory input as much as possible.
- Observe the child's self-created framework for learning.
- Try making a few sensory tools available.

For further reading, you can visit: <https://www.wikihow.com/Teach-Autistic-Children#Using-Strategies-to-Help-with-Communication>



Check your understanding

Take a short quiz to check you've understood the main points of the module.

Do the quiz to see how well you remember some of the main points of the Intersectionality module.

1. How can you word a request to an autistic child?

- a) Perhaps you should start from scratch.
- b) Don't you think you should try that again
- c) I don't know about you, but I think you should do that again.
- d) I want you to try that again.

2. Why should you pair an autistic child with a neurotypical child during lessons?

- a) The autistic child will learn to mimic the neurotypical child in the lesson.
- b) Many autistic children are able to learn how to interact with others appropriately by watching their peers.
- c) Autistic teenagers can pick up social skills from a neurotypical peer.
- d) All of the above

3. What should you do if an autistic child starts stimming during a lesson?

- a) Allow them to continue if they're not harming anyone.
- b) Ask them not to stim during class.
- c) Have a special education coordinator teach them not to stim during class.

4. What does "least restrictive environment" typically mean for an autistic child?

- a) The child spends most of their day in a special education classroom.
- b) The child's education is mainstreamed.
- c) The child's teacher sets accommodations.

Answers

1.c, 2.a, 3.c, 4.d.

Reflect on the module

In this final section, think about what you've learned this module and how you can use this in your day-to-day working life.

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this module about the challenges that ASD learners face in the classroom?

2. What do you commit to changing in your practice to accommodate the basic needs of ASD students?

3. What do you understand about how ASD impacts different people in different ways?