

20 Classroom Modifications for Students with Autism

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(in order of importance)

1. Develop and use visuals for instruction, such as:
 - Individual visual schedule
 - Highlighting important information
 - Using completed models
 - Color coding relevant information
 - Providing visual directions
 - Making endings obvious by use of finished box, folder, etc.
2. Evaluate and assess sensory needs and schedule sensory activities throughout the day. Ideas for sensory activities include:
 - Use swing and monkey bars
 - Carry heavy objects and provide other ways to incorporate proprioception (heavy work) into the day
 - Chair push ups
 - Provide fidget toys
 - Put something in mouth to bite, crunch, suck, chew, or blow
 - Continually assess lighting, temperature, smells, and sounds within the environment
 - Incorporate exercise into the day
3. Develop social stories and social scripts.
4. Give the student choices and control.
5. Adapt the physical environment to include:
 - Close proximity to materials and instruction
 - Limitation of distractions (auditory, visual)
 - Development of clear visual boundaries, where appropriate
 - Make the key learning centers visually obvious within the classroom (carpet squares, furniture arrangements, masking tape, etc.)
6. Provide trained peer support and/or a buddy system throughout the day for the individual. This person should assist with peer social interaction, as well as provide additional support as needed.
7. Conduct training in autism spectrum disorders for all staff members that come in contact with the student. Include detailed training for classroom and therapy staff members, as well as general training for office and administrative staff, bus drivers, cafeteria support staff, and janitorial staff.

8. Actively use a home/school communication book that outlines specific progress and challenges that occurred during the home and school environments. The book is exchanged with classroom staff members and the family on a daily basis.
9. Provide small group instruction, rather than large group instruction. Directions and classroom instruction should be offered in a small group setting so that as much one-to-one and peer interaction is provided as is needed by the student (instruction by peers also).
10. Assess and use interests and strengths of the person to structure both curriculum and free-time activities.
11. Provide a clear beginning and end to activities and tasks.
12. Provide opportunities for one-to-one instruction and support, and then fade support as appropriate.
13. Use role-play.
14. Develop and use rules (social, communication, behavior, and general).
15. Develop and use a communication system across environments. Every person with autism spectrum disorders should have a well-planned communication system to support expressive communication and to support receptive communication.
16. Ensure consistency between classroom staff members, and between school and home. If modifications and specific classroom strategies have been developed for the student, they need to be carried out in all environments of the school, in the same way, by all people. This consistency should be applied to as many other environments as possible so that the student is being taught in the same positive manner in all environments.
17. Allow staff preparation time. Because of the structure and consistency required for students with autism, staff members require additional prep time.
18. Educate students with autism spectrum disorders with other, nondisabled children.
19. Educate peers about students with autism spectrum disorders.
20. Provide activities to teach and support social/emotional skills. Social skill development should be a priority for the student from the first day he or she enters the educational system. Social skills help students in all aspects of their daily life, from childhood through adulthood, and should be actively taught in the school environment.