What is Autism?

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Neuro-biological disorder
- Receives, integrates, & interprets information in the brain differently than others
  - Socialization
  - Communication
  - Behavior

(Centers for Disease Control, 2012; National Institutes of Health, 2012)
ASD Incidence

- 1 in 88 children
- Males > females
- All racial groups and socioeconomic levels

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

“Spectrum”

- Range of challenges
- Mild to severe challenges in functional levels
- Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Autism

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Cognitive Functions

Spectrum

Low cognitive function
Non verbal

High cognitive function
Highly verbal
Gifted skills

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Spectrum

Not interested in others
Highly social

Interaction with others
Understanding facial cues
Lacking awareness of social cues

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Communication

Spectrum

Non verbal

Repeating words
Following directions
Responding to name
Concrete language understanding
Non-verbal or gestural communication
Unrelated responses to question/requests

Highly verbal

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Behavior

Spectrum

Intense

Mild

Personal space
Adapting to change
Predictability & organization
Obsessive & routine behaviors
Atypical behaviors (e.g. spinning, flapping, rocking)

(CDC, 2012; NIH, 2012)
Joint attention
Response to environment
Withdrawing to over-seeking
Low registering to over-responding

(Brown & Dunn, 2010; Whitney, 2011)
Community Participation

Predictable, familiar  Unpredictable, unfamiliar

MUSEUMS

Lights & noises
Crowds & SPACES
Visual stimulation
Intensity of information
How do students with autism learn?
FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE.
The Autism Spectrum

Good Language Skills  Language  Poor language skills

Good cognitive skills  Cognitive Skills  Cognition challenges

Highly Challenging Behaviors that Interfere with Learning  Behavior  Less Challenging Behaviors that Interfere with Learning
Program Modifications

- Predictability
- Space Management
- Sensory Accommodations
- Supports
Space Management

- Meet group in quiet space.
- Plan path to avoid highly over stimulating areas.
- Have a Plan B. (Identify a quiet space where an adult could take a student who is overwhelmed by lights, noise, crowds, etc.)
Assess the sensory qualities of your environment.
To help students who may have difficulty shifting attention or changing activities.

• Advance warning of changes or transitions.

• Use consistent language and procedures during transitions.

• Follow visual schedule.
Supports

Visual Schedules - picture or written schedule helps make an experience predictable.

Video preview of events or activities

Highlight and Repeat targeted concepts/vocabulary

Break down directions one step at a time.

Give extra wait time for responses

Split into smaller groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Postal Museum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read about a <strong>Mail Carrier</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Look at a <strong>Mail Truck</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mail Carrier <strong>uniform</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Scan a barcode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Write a <strong>postcard</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Buy a <strong>stamp</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visual Schedules

**National Postal Museum**

1. Read about a **Mail Carrier**.
2. Look at a **Mail Truck**.
3. Mail Carrier **uniform**.
4. Scan a barcode.
5. Write a **postcard**.
6. Buy a **stamp**.
Visual Schedule

• Provides predictable timeline/sequence of events
• Targets learner outcomes-concepts, vocabulary
• Provides communication system-students may respond to questions or initiate questions by pointing or referring to schedule
• Behavioral support-cross off steps as they are finished

Making a Visual Schedule
• Clear picture focuses on targeted concept.
• Consistent format for pictures/text
• Indicate sequence by numbering or format
• Bold targeted vocabulary
• Plastic sleeve or lamination allows for circling or crossing off steps
Strategies to support people with ASD

• **Visual Schedules** - picture or written schedule helps make an experience predictable.

• **Video preview** of events or activities

• **Highlight and Repeat** targeted concepts/vocabulary

• **Break down directions** one step at a time.

• **Give extra wait time** for responses

• **Split into smaller groups.**

• **Hands on activity.**

• **Identify attention and transition signals.**

• **Make Rules Explicit and Positive.**
Questions to ask before a school visit

• Date/Time/Length of time in attendance/attention span
• Age/grade/size of the class or group
• Any specific theme/link to curriculum/high interest topics
• How many teachers/volunteer helpers will be with the group
• Are there any students in the class with disabilities that need a special accommodation (physical/learning); how many students)
• Are there any types of behavior to be aware of
• What prompts or procedures are students are familiar with
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