

General Overview

- Autism is the most common condition in a group of developmental disorders known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Autism is a disorder of brain function and a spectrum disorder. Symptoms can occur with varying degrees of intensity. ASD is a developmental disability and children with ASD develop differently than other children.
- Autism Spectrum Disorders are treatable. Early diagnosis/intervention are critical to the developing child. Appropriate intervention fosters progress for children with ASD to make progress academically and socially. ASD affects 1 out of 150 individuals and almost 1 in 94 boys.

Some unique learning characteristics of students with ASD may be:

- Difficulties focusing and paying attention
- Difficulties easily transferring information from one setting to the next
- Difficulties organization/planning
- Difficulties making transitions and sequencing events/tasks/time

By educating yourself about ASD you will be able to make a positive impact on the lives of these students.

References and websites for more information:

Autism Society of America
www.autism-society.org

Anne Arundel County Chapter of ASA
www.aaccasa.org



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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An overview of...

ASD

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is treatable. Students with ASD respond well to a highly structured, specialized education that meets their individual needs.



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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Characteristics Overview

The following are common characteristics associated with ASD:

- Lack of or delay in spoken or expressive language
- Little or no eye contact
- Limited or no interest in peer relationships
- Difficulty with change to routine
- Hyposensitive and/or hypersensitivity to light, sound, touch or smell
- Engagement in self-stimulatory behavior, rocking, hand flapping and/or engage in repetitive behaviors
- ASD varies a great deal and some individuals are only mildly affected with slight delays in language and difficulties with social interactions. Severely delayed individuals may display self-injurious and/or aggressive behaviors, repetitive movements and extremely poor social and language skills. Children with ASD are all different and may experience delays learning to play, talk, read and write. Some have excellent rote abilities and above-average spatial abilities.



Instructional Suggestions:

- Understand that behavior communicates intent or distress. Make environmental changes and implement behavioral interventions to maximize learning for all students.
- Use visuals to convey instructions, meanings, routines and schedules.
- Build on areas of strengths/interests to facilitate social interactions and appropriate adaptive behaviors.
- Have high expectations. Treat the students with ASD with the same respect you would their classmates.
- Encourage peer mentoring. Empower students to be active participants in all classroom and social activities.
- Be aware of sensory needs when developing classroom activities. Do not request information when the students are upset, and allow space for coping. Consider the physical placement of students in the classroom and how this impacts unique responses to environmental stimuli.

Helpful hints for interacting with students who have ASD

- Speak slowly and use simple language
- Use concrete terms
- Repeat simple questions
- Allow time for responses
- Give lots of praise
- Do not attempt to physically block self-stimulating behavior; gentle redirection works better

Instructional Suggestions Continued:

- Provide a predictable and safe environment.
- Minimize transitions, offer opportunities for practice and a consistent daily routine. Avoid surprises, and prepare in advance for special activities. Plan for unstructured times. Allow free-time to be used for special interest research, discussion time or an activity that allows the students to “relax”. Use timers/bells to assist with transitions from one activity to another.
- Protect the child from bullying and teasing, teach peers how to interact appropriately and understand ASD.
- Facilitate social relationships and provide opportunities to interact and develop relationships. Provide social skills instruction on a consistent basis and use proactive modeling/role-playing. Act as an interpreter or have a peer play that role.
- Set clear expectations and boundaries for all students and adhere to them. Students with ASD respond to structure. Provide instructions in verbal and written form as much as possible.
- Modify assignments and homework for length and quantity. Provide homework checklists. Augment curriculum with enrichment activities and other high interest materials.
- Communicate with the family. Be proactive through collaboration to promote success.