

Autism and Classroom Management: Interventions that Work

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While medical researchers continue to search for the "cure" for autism, the educational community is searching for corrective interventions for students with autism. In this article, teachers will find behavioral interventions that work for students.

Classroom Management: The Issue

The current issue in today's classrooms is that students with autism are engaging in behavioral actions that may or may not typify the disability indicators of autism. When teachers and support staff are not aware of what behaviors are characteristics of autism and have identified regular education strategies for corrective responses in their autistic students, it becomes a lose-lose situation.

Early intervention in providing effective behavioral strategies for students with autism begins with education. The education of teachers, school staff and students will be beneficial in developing constructive corrective strategies that are authentic in addressing the classroom management needs of autistic students.

Having a BIP (Behavioral Intervention Plans) and a FBA (Functional Behavioral Analysis) that contain authentic inclusions which provide a basic understanding of "What is Autism?" will go a long way in creating a safe learning environment for students with autism. Creating a generic classroom management plan for students without BIPs or FBAs must include interventions that address each student's specific behavioral issues in the classroom. Read on to find a list of interventions that will address the issues of classroom management for students with autism.

Classroom Management: The Interventions

Once teachers understand the characteristics of autism that may occupy a spectrum of behavioral incidences in class, they will be able to incorporate specific interventions in developing classroom management plans for students with autism. The following interventions can be incorporated into lesson plans to address behavioral issues in the classroom:

- By understanding the student's learning style, you will be able to create lessons that will engage and maximize their academic learning and minimize their behavioral disruptions. Remember an engaged student in the learning process will spend more time on the task at hand and less time being off task.
- Read the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) to get an overview of the whole child. In the IEP, you can learn about the student's academic strengths and behavioral difficulties. When teachers know the extreme of the student's autism, they can align modified instruction that addresses behavioral issues and redirections, along with academic modifications if indicated.
- Mainstream higher functioning students with autism and Asperger's into collaborative groupings to create social peer groups in the classroom. Don't separate them from their peers, put them with their peers in group projects or study groups.
- Provide consistent and positive attention in the classroom, so that students aren't being disruptive to solicit attention. When addressing student behavior make sure that the student understands that the behavior is unacceptable and not that the student is unacceptable or unwanted in the classroom.
- Create structure and consistency in the classroom period. Make sure that students have written schedules and directions as they transition from one activity to the next. Provided guided instruction and guided practice for students.
- Incorporate sensory integration that addresses sensory stimulations that are shown in the IEP to be minimally functioning. Performance based activities that include art projects and music therapy can stimulate their sensory systems and become a wanted reinforcement when students are off-task in the classroom.
- Provide legitimate learning opportunities that build academic and behavioral capacity for students with autism.

The list of interventions can go on and on, but the place to start is when the student enters the educational system. The interventions must be consistent and individualized incorporating the student's IEP in the construction of academic and behavioral expectations that create success and access for students with autism in any classroom throughout their educational career.