



Teachers and Administrators

Teachers and administrators may not typically be thought of as “First Responders”, but when a situation arises at school, they will in fact be the first ones to respond to a crisis or escalated situation involving an individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder. With this in mind, it is essential that school personnel understand the basics of autism spectrum disorders and the best ways to respond to an individual on the spectrum. With proper training and information, teachers and administrators will not only have the ability to de-escalate a situation but also to respond to crises in a more safe and effective way. Equipping teachers and administrators with the proper knowledge base and skill set will allow them to ensure the safest learning environment for children on the autism spectrum.

Quick Facts for Teachers and Administrators

- *Step 1: Educate Yourself*
You must have a working understanding of autism and what that means for your particular student(s). Your education about autism will evolve as your relationship with the family and the student develops and your knowledge about the disorder and skills in dealing with its impact on the classroom grows.
- *Step 2: Reach Out to the Parents*
Parents are your first and best source of information about their child. Establish a working partnership with your student’s parents. Building trust with the parents is essential. After that, establishing mutually agreed modes and patterns of communication with the family throughout the school year is critical.
- *Step 3: Prepare the Classroom*
There are ways you can accommodate some of the needs of children with autism in your classroom that will enhance their opportunity to learn without sacrificing your plans for the class in general. Of course, there are practical limitations on how much you can modify the physical characteristics of your classroom, but even a few accommodations to support a child with autism may have remarkable results.
- *Step 4: Educate Peers and Promote Social Goals*
You must make every effort to promote acceptance of the child with autism as a full member and integral part of the class, even if that student only attends class for a few hours a week. As the teacher of a child with autism, you must create a social environment that encourages positive interactions between the child with autism and his or her typically developing peers throughout the day.
- *Step 5: Collaborate on the Implementation of an Educational Plan*
Since your student with autism has special needs beyond academics, his or her educational plan is defined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a blueprint for everything that will happen to a child in the next school year.
- *Step 6: Manage Behavioral Challenges*
For students with autism, problem behaviors may be triggered for a variety of reasons. Such behaviors may include temper tantrums, running about the room, loud vocalizations, self-injurious activities, or other disruptive or distracting behaviors. The key is to be consistent with how you react to the behaviors over time and to use as many positive strategies to promote pro-social behaviors as possible.

Organization for Autism Research, adapted from *6 Steps Success for Autism* (2009)
www.researchautism.org/educators/autismsteps



Resources for Teachers and Administrators

Autism Speaks School Community Toolkit : www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/school_kit.php

Organization for Autism Research : www.researchautism.org

Select Autism Merchandise : www.SelectAutismMerchandise.com

Autism Spectrum Disorders from A to Z : www.asdatoz.com

Caretrak Systems : www.caretrak.com

PACER Center : www.pacercenter.org

Schools with Open Arms : www.schoolswithopenarms.com

The Autism Program of Illinois : www.theautismprogram.org

Autism Risk and Safety Management - www.autismriskmanagement.com

