

English classes with an autistic child in the group

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Introduction

- One in every 59 children is diagnosed with ASD in the USA (CDC publication, 2018).
- The number of children known to have autism is increasing all over the world.
- Autism: wide range of levels and symptoms, not possible to establish rules on how to deal with it in class.

Some characteristics of ASD that may be pedagogically relevant

- repetitive activities, stereotyped movements.
- resistance to change in daily routines.
- unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- delay or absence of spoken language.
- lack of response to other people's facial expressions/feelings.
- lack of pretend play, little or no imagination.
- absence of typical interest in playing with peers.
- qualitative impairment in nonverbal communication.

Some issues faced in a regular school

- Level of noise
- Acceptance of music in the classroom
- Lack of desire to communicate
- Lack of imagination

Suggestions for English classes, but possibly, for other areas as well

The following suggestions were things that worked for me, and helped ASD students be included in the classroom and learn as much as possible.

- Create a bond with the student.
- A student with ASD may many times seem absent: it is not lack of respect.
- Lesson plan on the board: lowers the student's anxiety and prevents crisis. (such as repetitive and stereotyped movements).
- Very good and clear scaffolding: lowers anxiety levels and makes use of the student's good memory.
- Memory activities: may help students learn and be included in the group, as they usually have a really good memory.

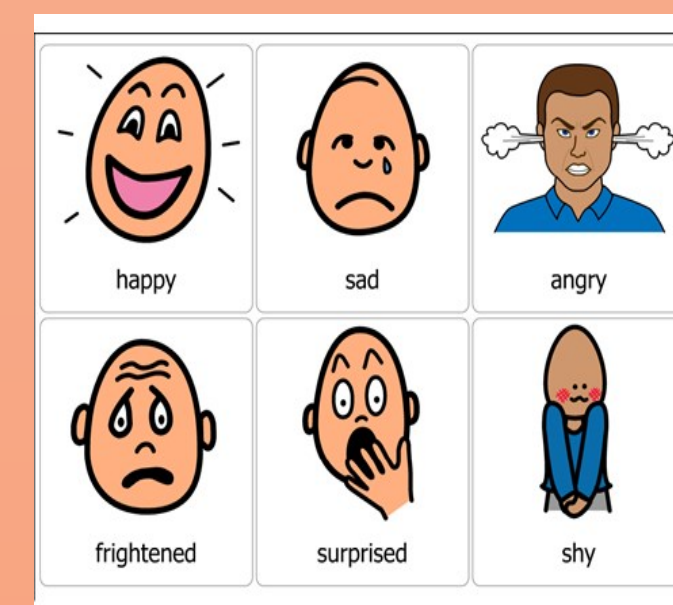
-Music in the classroom: some ASD students love music and others can't stand the noise.

- ✓Let the student know about the a song in the routine and immediately before the song.
- ✓Allow the student to listen from outside the classroom.
- ✓After some time, ask student to stay in the classroom, with the song at a low volume.
- ✓Increase the volume in each class.

-Speaking activities: English classes need speaking interaction to be effective. For autistic students, this is a big challenge.

- ✓Carefully choose students to pair up with the one with ASD.
- ✓Reading and writing activities: they may have coordination issues. So, if possible, use these as means of oral communication.
- ✓Writing activities as base for a speaking activity (controlled).
- ✓Activities in the form of e-mail or messages, so that the students can share and answer (communication).

-Use a board of emotions in the classroom: a very nice moment – specially with young learners - is teaching them emotions in English. For the ASD individual, it may help a lot with social skills.



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