

## 3 Inclusive Strategies For Accommodating Students On The Autism Spectrum

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It's estimated that at least 70 million individuals worldwide have autism, with 10 million being in India. The world is not always easy to navigate for someone with autism, and students on the autism spectrum may have a more difficult time in the classroom than others. Luckily, from reducing sensory overload to managing transitions in a positive and effective manner, there are a number of ways in which teachers can help make class more productive and enjoyable for everyone by incorporating more inclusive strategies in their teaching.

### The benefits of a visual aid

Many autistic students may have anxiety when it comes to unfavorable events of the day, in which case a visual schedule can be a huge asset. This is because having the day's schedule written up on the classroom board (with images for those who find the written word harder to relate to) can provide a referable and visualized approach in letting the entire class know what is going to happen throughout the day and when. This way, students can look forward to their favorite subjects and know what to expect ahead of time, which can be especially helpful when an assembly, new activity, or other non-everyday event is set to occur. Visual aids can also help autistic students in other aspects of the classroom as well, such as by providing picture diagrams on instructions, which can help to reduce the stress and anxiety that may come with new activities. For instance, visual instructions can aid in a craft project, a classroom game, or even for everyday rituals such as hand washing for younger children.

### Managing transitions in a positive way

As a teacher, transitioning the class from one activity to the next can be a difficult task. However, for students who may be on the autism spectrum, transitions can be an anxiety inducing, confusing, and even disorienting part of the day, which can present a frustrating situation that can potentially lead to a meltdown. In order to prevent such an instance and make transitions easier for the entire classroom, there are a number of techniques you can try. In addition to the visual timetable, for example, verbally reminding the entire class a few times before transitioning to the next activity can help by further letting the students know what to expect before it actually happens.

Providing an activity or a toy can also help to make things easier. For instance, between activities, allowing the students to take a break or to do something such as play with a toy, draw or color can allow them to have time to unwind and prepare themselves for the next activity. It's important to make sure that you're providing the appropriate toys for both the age and developmental stage of the students. For instance, some toys - such as marbles, or toys with small, loose parts - may pose a safety risk for younger children, so it's important to be mindful of the equipment you keep in the classroom. With that in mind, keeping a stock of toys, coloring pages, and other calming activities in a designated place in the classroom can ensure that your students know where to find such supplies for transitional times of the day, thus adding to a more structured routine.

### Reducing sensory overload

Students with autism may also experience difficulties when it comes to sensory overload in the classroom, which can make learning especially difficult on days when there is a lot of activity in the classroom. Examples of sensory overload in a classroom setting can include too many activities going on in the classroom at once or too many students talking loudly. With that in mind, it's important that such distractions be minimized as much as possible, and this can be done in a few ways. For example, reducing noise by having just one or two activities going on at one time can help. Additionally, providing the use of noise-canceling headphones for students who want them can help to reduce auditory sensory overload, as it can help to block out bothersome classroom noise that may prevent effective learning.

Inclusive teaching is an important aspect of any effective learning environment. When it comes to students who are on the autism spectrum, there are several techniques that can help, including reducing sensory overload, managing transitions in a clear way, and providing visual aids within the classroom.

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