Classroom strategies for students with diverse needs

First Tier Support

TIER 1

- Executive function skills
- Self regulation
- Transition & impending change
- Social emotional wellbeing

Technology
Handwriting
Special interests

Support

Sensory
Visual

AutismCRC
The 3-tier approach supporting students on the autism spectrum

**Tier 1 - Preventative instruction**
- Present information in a variety of ways (UDL)
- Explicit teaching using evidence-based approaches
- Teach classroom routines and expectations
- Visual supports to encourage independence in following daily routines

**Tier 2 - Intensive instruction & support**
- Identified students receive more intensive instruction & support
- Focus on specific areas of need
- Support with functional communication & social skills, e.g., self-regulation of emotions & behaviour, managing stress & alternatives to aggression are a focus

**Tier 3 - Wrap-around support**
- Comprehensive support & collaboration from a transdisciplinary team
- Emphasis on functional communication & social skills
- Consideration of intensity & duration of support
- Behaviour plan support plan

Classroom Strategies for students with diverse needs

First Tier Support

The Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism conducted a needs analysis to identify the top 10 support needs for students on the autism spectrum. We then asked teachers for strategies that they have used or seen for supporting students on the spectrum.

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for students with diverse needs

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For info:
Executive Function Skills

Teacher Reported Strategies

Executive Function:
Planning for Assignments

- CREATE A CLASS PROFILE
  Profile the needs of each student
  Use the profile to assign groups and roles

- Encourage study groups or homework clubs

- PROVIDE ORGANISING STRATEGIES
  Use a ‘to-do’ list with check boxes
  Try electronic reminders
  Create visual timelines
  Try colour-coding timetables

- SPECIFICALLY TEACH EFFECTIVE DIARY USE

- CLARIFY THE TASK
  Give clear and explicit learning intentions
  Indicate what success looks like
  Explain procedures
  Breakdown instructions
  Give a model

- INCORPORATE UDL PRINCIPLES
  Use UDL (CAST.ORG)
  Offer multiple means for learning: online, multimodal
  Present information in a range of ways e.g., real-life examples (videos), demonstrations

Supporting Transition & Impending Change

Teacher Reported Strategies
Supporting Transition and Impending Change

PLAN FOR TEACHER ABSENCE
Talk about teacher absence & email parents for unexpected absence
Use familiar relief teacher
Provide info pack for relief teacher

PREPARE FOR NEW TERM
Build a transition plan
Take students to visit new teacher
TA moves to new class
Use preferential grouping with supportive peers

PROVIDE PRE-WARNINGS
Give students pre-warnings – timers, countdowns - for transitions or change
Work with parents to provide support for changes.

BUILD SELF-ADVOCACY
Give choices about managing transitions
Teach coping strategies and normalise change
Teach relaxation ideas for transitions to limit stress

USE SOCIAL STORIES
Use social stories to help anticipate change or transition

Teacher Reported Strategies

Self-Regulation: Staying Calm & Managing Stress

DEVELOP A CARD SYSTEM
Use cards to communicate feelings and needs, such as when they need to take a break, go to the toilet or to express feelings

BUILD SELF-ADVOCACY
Teach self-awareness and develop strategies for countering stress
Teach resilience and coping strategies
Let students 'chill out' or 'check in/out' at the start of the lesson
Support students' involvement in lunch clubs

SUPPORT STUDENTS TO TAKE A BREAK
Use a timer, special watch, or picture prompts as a break reminder
Allow sensory snacks for TA-supported breaks
Give students a special job for breaks, like watering the garden

ENCOURAGE RELAXATION
Use meditation/mindfulness and a sensory corner in the classroom.
Use special interests for calming strategies

CURRICULUM CHANGES
Swap drama or dance for time with specialist or support staff

Special Interests

Teacher Reported Strategies

**Using Special Interests**

- **INCLUDE INTERESTS IN TASKS**
  - Modify tasks to include special interests
  - Provide multiple choice in tasks such as using Lego or Minecraft for experiments in science

- **USE INTERESTS AS A REWARD**
  - Use special interests as a reward e.g., time with a puzzle or book as a reward for target behaviour

- **EXPLORE INTERESTS WITH STUDENTS**
  - Explore students’ special interests
  - Collect evidence of special interests, particularly at the start of the year for new teachers

- **INCORPORATE INTERESTS**
  - Incorporate special interests in content to foster motivation and engagement

- **ENCOURAGE PEER MENTORING**
  - Encourage students to mentor peers in the area of special interest

Social and emotional wellbeing support is essential to successful inclusion. Effective schools know that social emotional competence and academic achievement are entwined and integrating instruction in both areas maximises students’ potential to succeed in school and throughout their lives (Zins & Elias, 2006).

Responding to the social emotional well-being needs of students on the autism spectrum is critical to ensuring they can manage the social and emotional aspects of the class and school environment.

For more information on supporting the social and emotional skills of students on the spectrum in the classroom, see the other postcards in this kit at https://www.autismcrc.com.au/connect-hub/reports/australian-education-needs-analysis
Teacher Reported Strategies

Social Emotional Wellbeing: Coping with Teasing & Bullying

- **Provide Safety Strategies**
  - Provide a safe places to play
  - Help to identify safe people
  - “Who do I go to?” in different situations

- **Provide Social Stories**
  - Teach social stories for what to expect and how to react - bullying and safety scenarios

- **Build Self-Advocacy**
  - Teach preventative strategies for social situations, e.g., Buddy Bench
  - Encourage use of sensory self-calming techniques

- **Role Play Social Scenarios**
  - Role-play social interactions with a safe person or buddy

- **Give Them the Language**
  - Give them set phrases for a variety of situations
  - Help them rehearse a 'script' to use in social situations

- **Build System-Level Support**
  - Include social competence within lessons (as per ACARA)
  - Ensure whole school approach

Handwriting

Teacher Reported Strategies
Handwriting Support

OFFER SHORTER WRITING TASKS
Let students write dot points
Use mind-mapping or graphic organisers to record information

PROVIDE ELECTRONIC NOTES
Give electronic copies of notes or PowerPoints using Moodle or email

DON'T RUSH
Give warning for handwriting tasks
Allow more time for writing
Check in and take a break if writing is painful

PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO HANDWRITING
Use technology to support writing e.g., a word processor, voice-to-text application or a recording device
Ask a peer to write notes

SOME SUGGESTED APPS
Typo HD for typing without spelling errors
Claro PDF for annotating PDF files
Prizmo to turn photos of documents into recognised text
Audionote combines note-taking and voice-recording software – the text and drawings highlight during playback

Teacher Reported Strategies

Visual Supports for Learning

MONITOR TIMED ACTIVITIES
Provide students with a visual clue, such as a stop-watch or timer, to time activities
Use timers to enable better preparation for transitions

USE A KEYRING ORGANISER
Use a keyring organiser, with laminated pictures or text reminders, that can be adapted for each day or week

GIVE THEM A VISUAL TIMETABLE
Provide a visual timetable on the desk or on the iPad
Provide a colourful version as their desktop background picture

USE A CHECKLIST FOR TASKS
Give students a checklist with picture cues to tick off as they progress through a task

USE DIGITAL ‘STICKY NOTES’
Use digital ‘sticky notes’ on laptop rather than a diary or electronic organiser

Technology

Teacher Reported Strategies

Using Technology

**RECOMMENDED APPS**
- Typo HD
- Prizmo
- Claro PDF
- Notes for iPad or Wordpad/Notepad
- Cowriter
- Read & Write Gold
- Natural Reader
- Maps.me
- Google Docs
- Google Maps
- Poplet
- Clicker
- Audio Notes
- Story Starter
- Book Creator

**MORE RECOMMENDED APPS:**

**RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES**
- Use electronic concept maps to organize ideas
- Use photographs or videos to demonstrate ideas, for projects, and for social and transition stories
- Use predictive text on the iPad
- Use devices for playing music – individually or as a class
- Build an electronic glossary around a topic
- Email notes to students
- Allow students to use online reading software

There are 7 main sensory systems for gaining and processing information through the senses, including: taste, touch, hearing, smell, visual, vestibular and proprioceptive systems.

Students on the autism spectrum may be:
- over-receptive (too sensitive) or
- under-receptive (not sensitive enough)

As a result, their sensory needs may influence their ability to participate in classroom environments and adjusting the environment to help support the sensory needs of students on the spectrum may need to be considered.

For more information on supporting the sensory needs of students on the spectrum in the classroom, see the other postcards in this kit at https://www.autismcrc.com.au/connect-hub/reports/australian-education-needs-analysis
Sensory Support

Teacher Reported Strategies

Sensory: Sitting Still

- **Provide Flexible Workspaces**
  - Allow flexible workspaces for class work, including standing up workstations and beanbags
  - Provide a step for their feet

- **Provide Natural Breaks**
  - Provide natural rest breaks
  - Provide whole class movement breaks throughout the day to avoid sitting too long

- **Use Rewards**
  - Use reward charts or special interests as rewards to reinforce sitting still as a positive behavior

- **Use a Visual Timer**
  - Use a visual timer — like liquid sand or a digital timer — to time seat-work activities
  - Help students to anticipate transitions and changes

For more information on supporting students on the spectrum in the classroom: