

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: *Strategies for home and school*

Quick Results in Secondary School: 6 Key Strategies

In my experience one of the biggest challenges for staff and students is the number of staff involved with the student compared to primary school. Staff should endeavour to share what works and problem solve with the whole team. Reinforcement across all settings will build competence faster and will result in more success for staff and students.

1. Think of each student as an individual. Support the age appropriate interests* and raise expectations towards independence and peer level behaviour as much as possible. (See book pages 5 and 6)
2. Help the student build skills and independence. Nominate the behaviours/skills working on each week. Building competencies requires patience, setting priorities and establishing small goals to reach the desired outcome. (See book pages 14 and 16)
3. Understand where the student is at and problem solve what is impeding his progress. Then develop the teachable, scaffolding steps that will help him move forward. (See book pages 26, 39, 40 and 68)
4. Motivate to Success. Know what motivates a particular student. Knowing that this may be different to other typically developing students. Use this interest to focus attention on less interesting or non-preferred activities. (See book page 73)
5. Effort Expected = Reward Offered. Ensure that the reward is substantial enough for the student to want to extend their effort. As a student becomes more familiar and more competent with new skills, his confidence, interest and motivation will increase and the need for rewards will decrease. Unfortunately for many of these students we need to use substantial rewards to engage them, as unlike their peers, intrinsic rewards are often irrelevant. (See book page 73)
6. Small Steps of Success = Big Steps Forward. Shape behaviour by making small changes at a time and utilise reinforcement strategies, social (praise) as well as concrete (favourite activity). The reinforcement needs to have more value than the behaviour. (See book page 95)

*Age Appropriate Interests: Sometimes you need to replace earlier interests with new interests which can help build relationships with peers. Moving from Lego, to Minecraft, to computer games. Students need to be able to talk about the same topics as their peers. This is especially important in a mainstream classroom. The broadening of interests will encourage greater participation with others.

Homework

Keep in mind the very real stress and mental exhaustion that many of these students have at the end of the school day. The social aspect of school leaves them with an absence of breaks during the school day and for these students, school is for learning and home is for relaxation and time out. The ASD student needs downtime and that can usually happen at home where there is less pressure to constantly conform.

Be aware that often homework is completed but not handed in. This can be due to anxiety that it isn't good enough or the teacher didn't specifically request it and the student didn't automatically hand it in. This is where home and school communication is vital. We recommend that as soon as a student doesn't hand in homework contact the parents that day so it can be actioned immediately.

9 Essential Strategies for Homework

1. Arrange Learning Enrichment / Tutor / Teacher Assistant to help formulate a homework plan.
2. Only give two good resources from which to gather information.
3. Use a tutor (not parents) to help with the homework.
4. Choose which subjects require homework responsibilities, i.e. if he is good at maths he may not need to revise maths lessons with homework.
5. Find the right time and place (not straight after school. Give them time to relax, eat and drink e.g. do reader in the morning rather than the afternoon).
6. Keep homework short, with specific start and stop times.
7. Think quality not quantity. Choose a few selected questions that cover the most important content or main ideas to support the lesson.
8. Stay involved. Avoid doing the work for them. Give small rewards after doing a small amount of work or, reading and re-emphasising questions can sometimes help to get the right answer.
9. Parents: sometimes if you sit at the same table and do your own work it can encourage the child to do theirs.

Excerpt from The Essential Guide to Secondary School by Sue Larkey and Anna Tulleman, page 58.

ALL NEW Revised and Expanded Version

The Essential Guide to Secondary School: By Sue Larkey and Anna Tulleman

Revised and expanded in 2016. A practical guide to secondary school. Ideas for all staff, from curriculum engagement, accommodations, group work, homework, using technology, behaviour support, organisational skills to building independence. Includes proformas to photocopy and save you time. This book has over 100 pages of proven ideas and strategies.

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