

High-Functioning Autism/Asperger's in the Classroom

Teaching Tips

1. **Be flexible.** If I could give only one piece of advice, this would be it. The kids are going to be rigid, black and white thinkers. In life, we must be flexible; however, your students will not be, so you NEED to be!
2. **Do a little research.** These students are not going to be interested in things outside of their preferred interests. In order to form rapport with them, find out what they like, do a little research and have a conversation with them about it. It's from that point that you can begin to start helping them see outside of their preferred interest world.
3. **Use visuals.** Doodle, use clip arts, online images, whatever you can to make a visual for each thing you explain. It truly drives home the point you are trying to make and it activates the VERY visual part of their brain. Also, you can laminate them and use them as non-verbal reminders later on.
4. **Don't take it personal.** These students struggle with filtering their thoughts. They are going to correct you, tell you what's wrong with your lesson, why they hate the treat that you brought in, why you're wrong and they're right, and maybe that your shirt is ugly. Don't take any of it to heart. Instead, use each and every one of those moments as a lesson in how to filter their thoughts and let it roll off your back.
5. **Breaks for everyone.** If it has been a particularly rough lesson, P.E. class, or day in general, chances are you could all need a break. So take one. Don't feel like you must rigidly adhere to your plan for the day. Give them a heads up for the change, and then change the plan. If you try to go through with a lesson when everyone needs a break, chances are, no one will retain the material and you are going to find yourself re-teaching many of the concepts again.
6. **No surprises.** Give your students a heads up on every change. These guys like schedules and predictability. It's going to be easier on them, and you, if you give them a warning. Have a classroom calendar and note all changes for the month (ex. Your meetings, movie parties, early outs, etc.). Remind them of the changes before hand. Use a visual system that is the same every time, to note changes that are short-notice. Even if you plan to surprise them with a little treat, tell them that things will be different during X class, but that it will be a fun surprise.
7. **Listen to your parents.** Make sure that you are hearing out the parents of your students. They see the child more, and at a greater intensity that you will. They are going to be your best resource for knowing what makes the student tick and what changes could be affecting their days. Make sure you share the joys and triumphs with parents. They are aware of what the child struggles with; they deserve to hear the things the child CAN do!