



Guiding Principles for Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

All students are, first and foremost, *General Education* students.

Inclusion is not optional; participation in general education is not a readiness model.

Presume competence. Always.

Students with autism lack theory of mind and often struggle to show what they know. Teach them anyway.

Visuals are non-negotiable.

Students with autism often have auditory deficits and a propensity for visual learning. Therefore, write it down, write it down, write it down. Understand that to a student with autism, if it's not "written" down, you didn't say it.

Make the program fit the child, not the child fit the program.

Work with the autism, not against it. The autism always wins!

Consistency and structure are critical to student success.

Students should be actively engaged with their visual schedule. Visual schedules are a staple, they do not go away when the individual knows the routine.

Focus on the development of socialization and independence skills.

These are the skills that are needed by all adults to lead successful and independent lives.

Team meetings are essential for supporting students with autism.

Remember, there are no "bad" students...but sometimes poor plans!

It's never no; it's when and where!

Know the students' preferred interest that is part of their autism, and help them learn how to appropriately access it. Once you figure out what makes the student tick, develop a system that works for the individual and the system.

Social skills can only develop by having social opportunities with typical peers.

Adults aren't cool! Typical peers are most effective at teaching social behavior, therefore peer to peer support is a necessary part of the learning process.

Adults set the tone.

"I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized." -Hiam Ginott

Interventions must be based on the law, the research, and the data.

Utilize evidence based practices and collected student specific data to drive decision making.