

What do I need to keep in mind?

- Individuals with Asperger's can learn & make many dramatic improvements. Academics are often an area of strength.
- Communication challenges differ in individuals, both in terms of understanding (gestures, other's perspectives, idioms or sarcasm) & speaking (word retrieval, timing conversational exchanges, remaining on topic, inappropriate comments, etc.)
- Many people with Asperger's benefit from accommodations that are helpful to visual learners & those with auditory processing challenges or difficulty focusing attention.
- Most are concrete thinkers & literally interpret jokes, idioms or sarcasm
- Social skills are underdeveloped, but interest in friendships and social situations is often present & students are often painfully aware of social status
- Individuals with Asperger's are often the victims of bullying behavior.
- Anxiety, depression & frustration are common
- Each student is an individual – with a distinct set of likes & dislikes, strengths & challenges, & a unique personality.



For additional resources please visit:

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-guide>

If you have additional questions you can contact the
Autism Response Team at

1-888-AUTISM2



Asperger's Syndrome Basics

Information for members of the school community

What does Asperger's look like?

Asperger's Syndrome, sometimes viewed as a high functioning form of autism, is a neuro-developmental condition that is one of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) or Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The core symptoms of Asperger's are challenges related to:

- Social Interaction
- Restrictive or Repetitive Behaviors and Interests
- But not delays in language development or intellectual ability

Individuals with Asperger's have average or higher intelligence, with many exhibiting exceptional skills, knowledge or abilities. They can experience other difficulties, including medical issues, differences in coordination & muscle tone, sleep disturbances, altered eating habits, anxiety or disordered sensory perceptions.

- *Asperger's Syndrome is a neurological/biological disorder, not a psychological or emotional condition.*
- *There is no known cause of most cases of Asperger's Syndrome, though the best scientific evidence points toward a combination of genetic & environmental influence.*
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders, including Asperger's Syndrome, occur in 1 out of 88 children.*

Things that seem like differences in a student with Asperger's may also seem like gifts. He may display some or all of the following characteristics, which may be challenges from one perspective, or strengths from another (for example, a student who seems inflexible or rigid may also be the most compliant with rules of a classroom):

- Difficulty understanding language, gestures and/or social cues.
- Difficulty understanding figurative language, idioms, gestures and/or social cues
- Literal or excessive speech, often with concentration on a particular topic
- Limited or no eye contact
- Difficulty relating or participating in back-and-forth conversations or interaction, such as a game
- Intense or odd interests in unusual topics or objects, unusual play
- Repetitive behaviors, such as pacing or lining things up, or self-stimulatory actions like spinning, hand flapping, or rocking

- More or less sensitivity to light, sound, smell taste or touch than usual
- Anxiety, abnormal fears and/or lack of appropriate fear of real dangers
- Difficulty managing transitions, changes in routine, stress, frustration
- Ability to decode written language (read) at an early age (but not necessarily comprehend)
- Strong visual skills
- Good rote and long term memory (math facts, sports stats, etc.) skills
- Adherence to rules, Honesty
- Intense concentration or focus, especially on a preferred activity
- Ability to understand and retain concrete concepts, patterns, rules
- A strong interest or ability in mathematics, technology, music or art

Assume intelligence, teach competence, promote independence & be respectful.

How can I make a difference?

- Be welcoming & supportive. Meet the student where he is & learn from him. Respect the individual. Please do not talk about him in his presence.
- Set clear expectations & boundaries. Be consistent. Develop structure. Practice & provide repetition to build understanding & skills.
- Recognize that behavior IS communication.
- Develop strategies to compensate for challenges – offer preferred seating, additional response time, organizational supports (written schedules, lists, labels, etc.), visual information & verbal directions.
- Be aware of a student's sensory needs, & adjust supports & expectations as appropriate. Avoid or prepare for known triggers, such as fire alarms. Give breaks for self-regulation.
- Expect growth. Keep standards high, with small steps & supports to allow the student to exhibit success. Promote age appropriate interests, behavior, independence & life skills. Specifically teach social skills & understanding.
- Reward what you want to see with positive reinforcement. Use the student's interests to engage & motivate him.
- Educate peers. Promote acceptance & understanding. Support social development with role-playing, modeling, rewards. Include typical peers. Teach self-reliance. Include.
- Communicate with team members, including family members. Ask questions. Share what works. Problem-solve what doesn't. Keep learning. Be creative.
- Relax, have fun, celebrate success & treasure the individual!