


Setting and Student-specific Personalized Interventions and Supports for Children with ASD



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Session Two of the Three-part Autism Series

Webinars 2 and 3 will focus on:

- Proactive intervention techniques and tools to reduce challenging behaviors of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Participants will learn how to:
 - Provide student and context--specific environmental, instructional, and social supports to decrease tantrum triggers and increase skill-building learning opportunities.
 - Use seven steps of support drawing from evidence-based best-practices to prevent transition-related meltdowns and make smooth transitions.
 - Develop a safe steps action plan as a team to follow during severe meltdowns and also, partner with family.


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Participant Poll - 1
Are you serving as...


- A. General education teacher?
- B. Special education teacher?
- C. Administrator?
- D. Speech pathologist?
- E. Other Support Staff
- F. Parent


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Padmaja's Sarathy: Books and Publications



Early Childhood Transition Guide



Parenting Book



Executive Function



Students with Significant Disabilities



Serving Students Severe & Multiple Disabilities - Updated



Autism: Support Strategies & Interventions



Autism Seven Steps of Support: Music CD - Transitions



Early Childhood: Transition; Parenting Guide; Executive Function - Early Years; and STEM Teaching Strategies



Paraeducator Training Guide and DVD



Severe and Multiple Disabilities: Significant Disabilities and ESSA



Mindfulness Guide


Behavioral Strategies for Young Learners


Autism Spectrum Disorders
New - Second Edition


Behavior Guide


STEM Guide


Paraeducator Training
Manual & DVD

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□ Educator response to behavior outbursts may be reactive & exacerbate the meltdowns. Resulting in Timeout, Isolation and/or Restraint (Butler 2019; Richards & Cohen, 2019; 2020).

- A 9-year-old with autism placed in a duffel bag, tied up and "treated like trash" For alleged misbehavior
- A child placed in seclusion-isolation room for 5 hours For arguing with the staff and for being uncooperative
- Children were placed in secluded spaces daily. (Illinois schools, Tribune-ProPublica investigation) refusing to do classwork, swearing, spilling milk, throwing Lego blocks
- Students were frequently restrained and secluded repeatedly. A child was confined to a room almost 100 times in a school year, another restrained 745 times in the school year. (Fairfax County Schools) For being disrespectful, profane or not following rules

Behavior Episodes

Civil rights data collection shows students with disabilities are disproportionately restrained and secluded.

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Step 1: Understanding Characteristics and Tantrum Triggers

Let's Reflect...Some of the thinking that may be driving a punitive response

Educators, tormented by uncontrollable behavioral episodes, may...

1. Decide punishment will teach the student a lesson.
2. React immediately to the situation instead of being reflective.
3. Consider flexibility and accommodation reflects a poor discipline approach.
4. Think providing alternate choices is somehow giving in to the student.
5. Want to demonstrate that adults are in control - if teachers didn't exercise control, it reflects poorly on classroom management.

Gives a break from having to deal with challenging behaviors - sending the student to isolation or timeout is reinforcing for both the educator and student.

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Step 1: Challenging Behaviors - Tantrums

Adverse Impact on the Student, Educator and School District

- Children suffer negative impact – academic, social and functional outcomes.
 - Lose instructional time.
 - Miss opportunities to socialize with peers.
 - May lose out on inclusion opportunities.
 - Some students are repeatedly restrained, secluded or placed in timeout.
- Adults (teachers and paraeducators) may suffer physical injuries.
 - Adding stress to the staff.
- Added responsibilities to the classroom staff and district: Additional staff may be required to assist staff in handling severe tantrums; extra paperwork to document incidents; crisis management issues, etc.
- Property damage may occur.
- The district may face potential legal liability issues when pursuing punishment procedures to address tantrums – districts may face lawsuits and the associated stress from financial, emotional and the additional work.

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Step 1: Understanding Characteristics and Tantrum Triggers

Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence

Antecedents Triggering problem behaviors Any situation, action or event that precedes a behavior (When does it happen...)	Behavior: Define the behavior in measurable and observable terms. (What does the student do...)	Consequence/Outcome A response, action or event that immediately follows a behavior. (Why...?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining adult attention (redirection or reprimand) • Receiving a reward/ reinforcer (praise, favorite activity or toy) • Avoiding/escaping an undesirable activity or a difficult or boring task.
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- Let's see how we can transform challenging moments into skill-building learning opportunities.
 - Examining student scenarios and what precipitates the tantrum behaviors.

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2 - Participant Poll

Do you routinely observe any of the following problem behaviors in your students with ASD? Check all that apply:

- A. Engage in aggressive behaviors (e.g., pinching, kicking, throwing objects, etc.).
- B. Refuse to complete the assigned reading or math work.
- C. Difficulty with initiating social contact with others, preferring to be alone.
- D. Transitioning to a group activity from independent workstation or solitary play triggers a tantrum.
- E. Any change in routine, activities, environments or personnel triggers tantrums.

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Understanding Tantrum Triggers

What precipitates the tantrums and meltdowns in children with ASD?

- Changes in routines, activities, materials, environments or personnel can trigger tantrums.
 - Introduces ambiguity and reduces predictability.
 - Too-long a wait time between ending an activity and beginning another.
 - Transitions (arrival, dismissal, going to or coming in from recess, etc.)
- Have a need for "sameness" and lack behavioral flexibility.
 - May engage in aggressive or oppositional behaviors.
 - May get anxious and stressed due to their need for sameness. Behaviors may quickly shift into aggressive or oppositional with little or no prior warning, leading to "meltdown".
- New personnel, new situation, new setting (Anxiety and stress, fear of the unfamiliar)
- Asked to stop an activity and move to another activity (circle-time to center-time, computer to group instruction, unpredictability, stress & anxiety due to not being sure of what to expect in the next activity)
- Poor executive function skills (attention difficulties, difficulty with filtering out distractions)

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Transform challenging moments into skill-building learning opportunities.

Seven Steps for ASD Support

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- 1. Environmental Support Advance Preparation & Alerts Stress & Anxiety Reduction
 - 2. Structural and Visual Support Visuals- Picture/Object Schedule
 - 3. Instructional Support UDL & Task Flexibility and Adaptations
 - 4. Social Support Emotional and Social Competence
 - 5. Calming Support Calming and Self-management Tools
 - 6. Executive Function Support Impulse Control and Cognitive Flexibility
 - 7. Crisis Support Professional Teaming & Partnering with Family
- Understand learner characteristics to provide student-specific and context-specific supports.

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1. Environmental Interventions and Supports

- Physical environment should be proactive in preventing problem behaviors and facilitate active learner engagement.
- Rearrange the seating to prevent potential problem behaviors.
 - Seat competent peers that can model good attention, focus and self-regulation.
 - Provide study carrels for learners as needed.
- Ensure classroom physical environment is designed to prevent sensory overload.
 - Eliminate unnecessary auditory and visual distractions.
- Provide clear visual boundaries with clearly defined areas.
- Label various activity areas of the classroom paired with pictures or photos.
- Have a designated calm-down safe space for student to take a calming break to self-regulate.

Arrange the furniture strategically in the classroom to avoid large open spaces, to prevent children running across the room.



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Step 1: Environmental Supports

Essentials for a supportive physical environment:

- Clearly defined and labeled work areas
 - Math Area
 - Science Area
 - Reading Area
- Rules posted with visuals
- Designated (Brian's) Work Area
- Visual Boundary Personal Space
- Have a Designated 'Safe Space'
- Limit visuals on the walls.
 - Visual Supports Consistently Implemented
 - Behavior Cue Cards

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Coping with Changes and Transitions

- Prepare your students in advance to cope with changes and transitions - transitions between activities and environments.
 - Provide prior warning/alerts before the next activity.
 - Pair visual cues with verbal cues (pictured cue cards).
 - Show the sequenced steps to follow in responding to a fire or tornado drill.
- Use music as a preventive measure to transform transition tantrums to calm-down with younger children:
 - Songs (mini-songs) provide guidance and directions musically to assist children during transitions. Use a song as a transition cue.
 - Ring a chime or play a musical instrument as a transition signal.

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Need for Predictability in the Environment

Advance Preparation

Mark is a high functioning six-year-old kindergartner with ASD. His favorite activity is reading. Mark had a major meltdown when the furniture in his classroom was (suddenly) rearranged. It was different from when he left school the previous afternoon. His favorite area, the book center, had been moved. Mark got so agitated that he started throwing books, blocks and even knocked down the chairs. From Mark's perspective, his world had changed, he was confused and did not know what to expect. He was anxious about what will happen next.

Immediate consequence: Mark was sent to the office to be disciplined.
Other consequences followed: Mark was moved to a more restrictive, less inclusive setting.

Prepare Mark in advance for the change:
 Mark should be primed for the changes by showing him the new locations for the book center and the other furniture in the classroom, preferably aided with photos. Reminders of the forthcoming change occurring daily, a week or two in advance.

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2. Visual Support - Visual Schedule

- Decide which type of schedule to use.
- Decide on the format.
- Train the student to use it.
- Use a mini-schedule for within-activity tasks.
- Use the schedule throughout the day in all settings.
- Ensure visual supports are provided during unstructured activities and times as well (Gym, Lunch time, Recess time, etc.).

1 + 2 = 3
 Math Time

Activities to do: Math Time, Recess Time, Reading Time, Music Time

Activities done: Circle Time

Recess Time

Music Time


Reading Time

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Class Rules

Quiet mouth while working



 Keep hands to self.

Walk inside class. Walk in the hallways.

 Take care of materials.

 Pair pictured rules with voice output support.

Use Pictured Rules

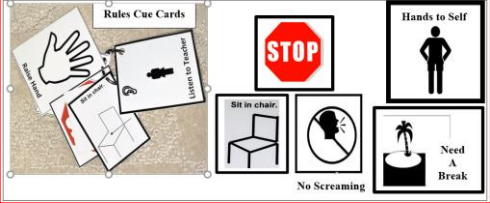



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Use Rules Cue Cards

To alert about rules to follow



Use visual cues to inform students of the rules, their schedule, and any changes in their routine.

Adapted from *Proactive Interventions for Students with Autism* by Saratthy, LRP Publications
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Participant Poll - 3

A student finds noisy and crowded environments (Lunchroom, School Assembly, etc.) overwhelming and engages in tantrum behaviors. What preventive actions would you typically use to prevent such tantrums? Check all that apply.


- A. Seat student in a quieter area of the lunchroom?
- B. Arrive early, and have the student sit in the front row of the school assembly?
- C. Prepare him with Behavior Cue Cards when leaving the classroom?
- D. Have student take deep calming breaths to lower anxiety and stress level?
- E. Rearrange to get help for other students if target student must leave the noisy area?
- F. Warn student in advance about "Time out/Office" if he is not quiet and calm.

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Step 3: Instructional Support
 Adapt, Adjust Task Demands & Apply Flexibility


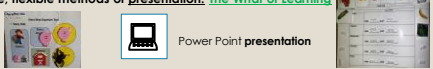
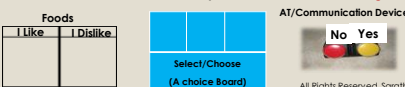
- Apply universal design for learning (UDL) to increase access, engagement, on-task behaviors and to decrease problem behaviors.
 - Provide student **multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation and multiple means of action and expression.**
- Adapt, adjust task demands matched to student's strengths & needs.
 - Consider altering the task or reduce the task demand or complexity level.
- Modify task characteristics:
 - Modify a complex task by simplifying it. Break down tasks into component parts.
 - Offer an "If-Then" option (Complete first 5 problems, then preferred activity & then next 5).
 - Teach the student how to request help (if and when needed).
 - Provide choice-making opportunities routinely.
 - Offer writing frames with fill-in blanks aided with picture supports.
- Offer student-specific positive feedback.



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Applying Universal Design for Learning Framework

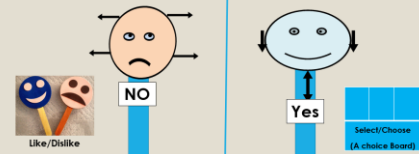
- Provide multiple, flexible options for **engagement**. **The Why of Learning**

- Provide multiple, flexible methods of **presentation**. **The What of Learning**

- Provide multiple, flexible methods of **action and expression**. **The How of Learning**


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Response - Participation Tool

Response - Participation Tool







Offer a variety of options to access, participate and respond to lessons.

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Instructional Support

- Use structured teaching using a visually based approach.



Work Tasks  The work to be started is placed on the left side.	Student Desk  The student takes the work from left side and as it is completed, places it in the "Finished Box" on the right.	Finished Box  When work is completed, it is placed in the "Finished Box".	Preferred Activity  When work is completed, the student works on a preferred activity.
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- Practice tasks already mastered in an independent work area.

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Instructional Situations Triggering Problem Behaviors

Watch out and plan ahead for instructional situations that can trigger problem behaviors and tantrums:

- An inadequate level of assistance is provided to the student, or the directions provided are unclear. 
- Difficulty with understanding multi-step directions or comprehending verbal directions.
 - Activities requiring a long time to complete or that do not have clear ending point.
 - Activities that are too difficult or too easy (perceived as such by the student).
 - Activities that are non-preferred.
 - Activities the student might not perceive as relevant or useful. 



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Student May Need A Personalized Solution. 

Student takes off during transitions between activities: A safety concern.

Brian, a student with significant cognitive strengths and diagnosed with autism, is highly verbal and reads fluently. During transitions between activities, he runs around the room and hides under the table and sometimes, runs out of the classroom.

- **Watch student for exhibiting any trigger behaviors** (precursor behaviors – fidgetiness, swinging legs or feet, clenching fist, etc.) Intervene before behavior escalates. 
- **Post a stop sign at the door** to prevent the student from running out of the door. Use the sign to teach the target student to "stop", "turn around" and "sit in chair" (or "return to seat").
- **Move Brian to the next activity ahead of others.**
- **Offer Brian a role to play in the activity** – Hold a prop related to the lesson (a puppet) or read a small segment or play a special role in the activity. 
- **Ensure the activity is highly engaging and motivating** to sustain Brian's attention.



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Instructional Support Strategies

- ❑ **Provide a visual organizer (text & pictures displaying various steps to be completed within the task.**
 - ❑ *Get the materials, sit in this area and work on item 1, clean up, return to seat, etc.*

Incorporate Built-in Breaks.

- ❑ **Build several timed breaks into the student's schedule for stress relief and to prevent meltdowns later in the day.** 
- ❑ **Predetermine the amount of time and the number of breaks that the student can use.**
- ❑ **Gradually reduce the number of breaks.**
- ❑ **Set up a visual timer to indicate when the break will end. Train the student to self-monitor.** 

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Transitioning from Recess Scenario
Context-specific Need and Support

Taara has a tantrum, refusing to come in from recess.






- Taara is an elementary student with ASD. Refuses to leave the playground after recess, instead clings to the swing or slide.
- When the teacher tries to physically move her from the equipment, Taara kicks, hits and throws herself to the ground. In the struggles to get her back to the classroom, the teacher gets scratched and bruised almost daily.
- As soon they return to the classroom, Taara is put in time-out, Sara continues to cry and starts kicking the objects around her. A paraeducator stands by her side to prevent her from running and throwing objects.

How should you address Taara's transition tantrum? What are some options?
Time-out in the playground? Send her to the office?
What strategies would facilitate prevent future tantrums?

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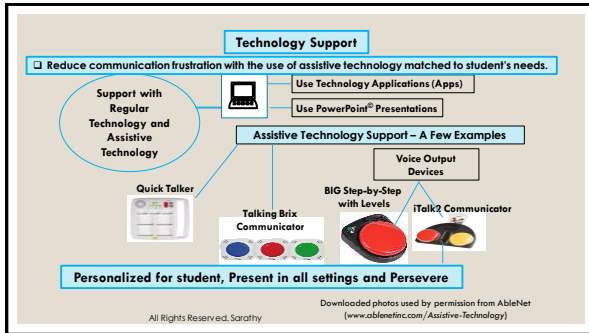
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Personalized Support Tailored to Context & Student-specific Needs

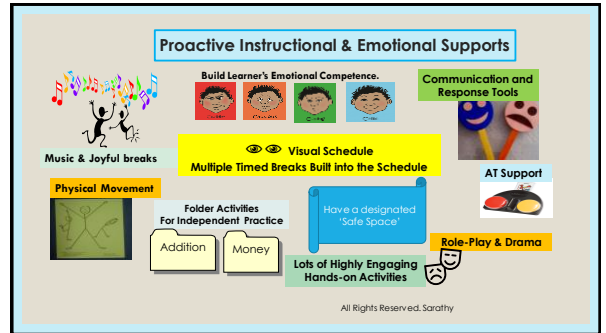
- **Give Taara an advance warning** a few minutes before the end of recess: (e.g., "5 minutes to line up"). 
- **Play a musical instrument** (e.g., may be a Shri-xylophone) to signal all the students to line up at the end of recess. 
- **Gain Taara's attention to the sound of the instrument** by positioning yourself close to her. She could hold the instrument and bring it back to the classroom. 
- **Have students take 10 slow, deep calming breaths –breathing in and out–** as soon as they have lined up. The calming breaths should help all students. 
- **Use music to transform transition tantrum to calm-down** (Magical Musical Transitions by Law and Sarathy, 2009) 
- **Get additional help if Taara has a severe meltdown** and becomes aggressive in the playground.

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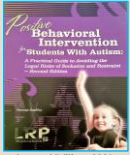


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This webinar draws information from the following books and mini-guides:




Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies for Students With Autism
Second Edition, 2021
LRP Publications
<https://www.shoplrp.com/>




Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
Mindfulness Guide, 2020
<https://ed311.com/>

Autism Guide, 2015
National Professional Resources
www.NPR.inc.com



Serving Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities
An Updated Edition, 2021
LRP Publications
<https://www.shoplrp.com/>



Behavior Guide, 2019
<https://ed311.com/>

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THANK YOU.

A special thanks to AbleNet University for hosting the webinar.
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Upcoming Webinars:

- March 29th, 2022 - 11:00 AM:** Autism Series 3 - Transform Transition Meltdown to Calm-down: Seven Support Strategies for Children with ASD
- June 22nd, 2022 - 11:00 AM:** Art Experiences Integrated with Academic and Functional Outcomes for Learners with Significant Needs
- October 19th, 2022 - 11:00 AM:** Bolstering Family Involvement with Tools and Techniques to Advance Learners with Significant Disabilities

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