



Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

How to Reach and Teach Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (PreK-5)

PDI Course Number: 125T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC42242

If you would like information about receiving post-baccalaureate (graduate) credit for completing this course, [please click here](#).

Course Timeline

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

Course Description

Are you finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of your diverse learners, especially those with autism spectrum disorder? As more students transition into the least restrictive environment, teachers are finding themselves at a loss concerning how best to reach this unique population in an inclusive setting. This online course is specifically geared toward PreK-5 teachers who want to explore a wide variety of strategies so that they are better positioned to meet the needs of students with autism in the least restrictive environment. Teachers will take a deep dive into autism spectrum disorder, otherwise known as ASD. As they progress through the course, teachers will learn how to adapt their instruction so that it can be differentiated to meet students with ASD at their level. Teachers will learn about the social aspects of ASD and how it can lead to anxiety, especially if there is a comorbid diagnosis. Teachers will learn strategies to help students with ASD remain structured. The basics of behavior are discussed, and teachers will learn about the various functions of behavior and the primary role that reinforcement plays in behavior intervention plans. Social skills deficits are discussed in detail, as this is one of the cornerstone characteristics of students with ASD. Teachers will learn a variety of strategies for helping students with ASD cope academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally in the least restrictive environment. Teachers will learn the importance of collaboration, and they will

take a deep dive into the various co-teaching models. By the end of this course, teachers will have gained valuable insight into autism spectrum disorder, and they will feel much more capable of meeting the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of this diverse population.

Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will learn how the special education laws have changed throughout the years.
2. Teachers will learn what the least restrictive environment (LRE) means and how it differs from inclusion and mainstreaming.
3. Teachers will learn about the various components involved in the creation of an individualized education plan, or IEP.
4. Teachers will learn how to set meaningful IEP goals.
5. Teachers will learn how other specially trained educators (e.g., SLPs, PTs, OTs, etc.) can help special needs students succeed in the least restrictive environment.
6. Teachers will be introduced to autism spectrum disorder, and they will understand its basic premises and common characteristics.
7. Teachers will learn what a spectrum disorder, including how ASD falls into the diagnosis.
8. Teachers will learn about some common classroom implications and challenges for each level of ASD, and they will learn specific strategies for addressing same.
9. Teachers will learn about the necessary components of applied behavior analysis so that this technique can be used in the classroom with students with ASD.
10. Teachers will learn that autism is often part of a comorbid diagnosis, and they will learn about some of the more common comorbidities including anxiety, ADHD, intellectual disabilities and developmental delays, giftedness, and seizures, and epilepsy.
11. Teachers will learn about the complex social challenges and ramifications that students with ASD may face, and they will learn specific strategies to help students deal with these social skills deficits.
12. Teachers will learn specific strategies and activities to help their students with ASD learn how to recognize their emotions and label their feelings.
13. Teachers will learn several coping strategies to help students overcome their social skills deficits.
14. Teachers will learn about the specific challenges that students face who have a comorbid diagnosis of autism and anxiety.
15. Teachers will learn strategies to help their students cope with anxiety while at school.
16. Teachers will learn specific interventions to help their ASD students better engage with their peers, including such things as Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention (PMII), breaking bigger social tasks into smaller parts, and teaching empathy, among others.
17. Teachers will learn how powerful play is to students' social and emotional growth, and they will understand the challenges that many students with ASD face in this regard.
18. Teachers will learn about the guiding principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), including how those principles can be applied to help students with ASD experience success with the content.
19. Teachers will learn specific strategies to help students with ASD handle transitions and changes to routine.

20. Teachers will learn a variety of strategies to help their students with ASD better engage with reading and math so that any comprehension, decoding, writing, and/or math deficits can be minimized.
21. Teachers will learn specific strategies for differentiating the curriculum (either through content, process, product, or learning environment) so that their students with ASD can more easily access the material.
22. Teachers will understand the difference between social and solitary learners, and they will take a deep dive into four of the most common learning styles (visual-spatial, auditory, verbal-linguistic, and kinesthetic-tactile).
23. Teachers will learn specific strategies for helping students with ASD adhere to their structural and academic routines.
24. Teachers will learn how a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) determines a cause for the four functions of behavior.
25. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing some of the most common classroom behavior challenges in students with ASD.
26. Teachers will learn about the different types of positive reinforcement and the role they play in behavior intervention plans.
27. Teachers will learn strategies to help students with ASD recognize and identify their emotions so that they can successfully self-manage their behaviors in the future.
28. Teachers will be introduced to the benefits of co-teaching, and they will take a deep dive into the various models in order to better help their students with ASD in the classroom.
29. Teachers will learn strategies for building strong relationships with parents.
30. Teachers will learn strategies for embracing the entire school community, including the student's friends and peers, administrators, and other support staff.

Instructional Media

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites
- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

Evaluation

- Test #1 (5% of final grade)
- Test #2 (5% of final grade)
- Test #3 (5% of final grade)
- Test #4 (5% of final grade)
- Test #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article/Video Reflection (15% of final grade)

- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Cumulative Assignment/Project: Respond to ASD Scenarios (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- Special Education: Then and Now
- Breaking Down an IEP
- The Importance of a Collaborative Community
- **Assignment #1**
Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about helping students with autism succeed in an inclusive environment. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Test #1**

Unit Two

- Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Existing on the Spectrum
- Comorbidity and Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **Assignment #2**
As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article and video that are relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Test #2**

Unit Three

- The Social Aspects of ASD
- Anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Learning How to Engage with Peers
- **Assignment #3**
Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to helping students with autism succeed in an inclusive PreK-5 classroom. The tip, strategy, or idea that you share needs to make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs and detailed enough for another teacher to follow easily. This is a great opportunity to share and collaborate with other teachers at your grade level around the country. Take time to review and respond to other postings that are relevant to your classroom population in order to gain effective ideas to use immediately in your classroom.

- **Test #3**

Unit Four

- How ASD Affects Academic Learning
- Differentiating Instruction
- The Importance of Routines
- **Test #4**

Unit Five

- Understanding the Basics of Behavior
- The Role of Reinforcement in Behavior Intervention Plans
- The Importance of Self-Regulation
- **Test #5**

Unit Six

- Teacher Collaboration and the Co-Taught Classroom
- Partnering with Parents
- Embracing the Entire School Community
- **Assignment #4**

Review the scenarios contained in Assignment 4. For each scenario, make a plan to help each student with ASD so they can be successful in the classroom. Each plan should be a minimum of two paragraphs. The first paragraph should focus on what you think the problem might be, including what you believe to be the function of the student's behavior. The second paragraph should offer a solution, specifically focusing on what steps to follow to make this problem behavior lessen or become extinct. Each paragraph should be a minimum of six sentences and be written with enough detail so that someone else can easily understand each problem and follow the suggestions for mitigating the effects.

- **Assignment #5**

The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection describing a student you have or have had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.

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