

## **Accommodations to Consider for Students with Problems in Organization (High Functioning Autism, Asperger Syndrome, & Related Disorders)**

### **Transitions:**

*Note the student's response to transition between activities. Is s/he disoriented, distracted, or overwhelmed visually or auditorily when moving or preparing for new activity? Is s/he agitated or anxious during the change? If so, consider these questions in addressing this difficulty.*

#### **Arrival/Departure/Transitions**

Where will the student be dropped off and picked up to prevent confusion?

What is the path of entry and exit for the student? Review crowding, distance & complexity of route, unsupervised areas, and distractions.

Does the student need a script for social interaction in the hall (what to talk about, how to begin and end conversations, how to respond if bullied, etc.)?

While waiting for bus or ride, does the student have a specific routine of things to do to prevent social or activity problems?

Does the student need written preparation on what to do in transition?

Does the student need a written (or picture) list of what to do upon arrival in class in the morning (sharpen pencils, put books in desk, hand in homework, read until the bell rings, etc.)?

Does the student need to make transitions between classes either 5 minutes before or after the bell? (Does an early transition support the student in copying assignments, preparation for class, etc.?)

#### **Possessions/Locker/Books and Materials**

Does the student need a designated area for his possessions marked and contained – box, cubby, etc.?

Does the student need a locker at the end of a row or on the bottom row to prevent physical interaction and limit social interaction during transition?

Does the locker require a "locker shelf" to organize the space?

Does the student need a peer buddy to assist with transitions or changes in or between classes?

Does the student need two sets of books (one in each class, one at home) to prevent loss or additional organizational requirements from student?

Does the student need a list of materials, a list of visual rules, or a class schedule with books/materials needed for each class?

Does the student need to carry a book bag so that he does not have to transfer materials between classes (no locker)?

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## **Classroom Design and Structure:**

*Note the student's response to the stimulation level of the classroom. The student may be drained by sights, sounds, social expectations, verbal directions, etc. Over time the student may lose capacity to focus and performance can deteriorate. Reducing stimulation around the student may improve the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency. If this description fits the student, consider these accommodations. \*Note that the increased stimulation of a new class, new school, or a larger school may lead the student to need more physical support in a transition to a new school. It is easier to remove physical structure later if unnecessary than it is to add it after there are behavioral concerns.*

Does the student show signs over time (more problems in March and April?) of over-stimulation to a "busy" class?

### **Physical Design**

Does the student need physical structure to maintain best academic performance: partitions, carrel, position of desk near walls, etc?

Does the student need to sit at the end of a row, in the front of each class, with an empty desk next to him, with additional distance between desks, or next to one or two students (matched for skills that complement the student's weaknesses) in all environments?

Are different classes using comparable physical structure to reduce stimulation?

### **Schedules/Rules**

Can the student follow a class schedule placed in the front of the room?

What form of schedule (picture, picture-written, written) best encourages independent use by the student?

Does the student need an individual schedule in his notebook, on his desk, in his desk, (where he will refer to it and check off completed activities)?

*What is the routine for change of schedule?* The teacher needs to adjust the schedule and prepare the student visually before changes will happen whenever possible? Unexpected changes can severely disrupt the student's capacity to learn.

Does the student need a "Change in Routine" card (see Moore, S.T., p.50) to prepare for change?

Do rules/visual instructions need to be posted in a central area of room, on the student's desk, in the student's notebook, in different places for different activities?

Are rules presented in concrete terms that the student can use?

Are signs needed for different areas of the room? Are the schedule, rules, signs, and other visual aids posted in each class in a similar way?

When movement in the room is required, is there a consistent pattern to this movement? Can the movement be structured to be in a consistent clock-wise or counter-clockwise direction with short transitions?

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## **Presentation of Assignments, Instruction, and Testing**

*Organizing assignments can cause great frustration to students with certain disabilities. If the presentation of instruction does not fit the learning style of the student, that student may not show us what he knows. Processing auditory information for long periods can lead to avoidance, acting out, or even sleeping in class. Test formats that appear long to the student can lead to anxiety and avoidance. Timing of tests can cause extreme reactions. If any of these issues fit the student consider one or several of these techniques and strategies.*

### **Notebook and Assignment Organization:**

Does the student need a schedule on the front inside cover of his/her notebook?

Does the student need a pouch for all writing tools and materials?

Does the student need color-coded pocket folders for each subject?

Does the assignment agenda need to be in a pocket of the notebook?

Does the assignment agenda need a calendar format for projects and long-term assignments?)

Does the student need an agenda/assignment book adapted for his specific skills?

Does the student need teacher prompts to consistently place new work, study guides, and finished work in specific notebook locations?

How frequently does the student need 'notebook checks' to assure organization?

**The 'notebook check' should be in the form of a list. The teacher, after training, fades his/her involvement. Independence is essential.**

### **Instruction and Testing Accommodations**

How will we **prepare** the student for instructional expectations? How will we familiarize him/her with the materials, expectations, and transitions that will occur during the instructional time? These multiple demands may require written instructions to help the student cope. Does the student need a written list for each assignment that concretely shows the sequence of steps? Does the list need to include organizational (i.e., get the 'Precipitation' worksheet from your Science folder, or Use pages 12-15 for this assignment) or social (i.e., When finished, give the sheet to teacher for corrections, or Switch papers with Sheila for corrections.) expectations?

If a written list is needed in primary academic classes, is this technique used in electives and in physical education? Consider whether the student can handle the rapid verbal pace of gym instruction, the stimulation of the setting, the social and organizational demands of dressing out, etc.

Does the student have an opportunity to learn the content through the use of manipulatives?

Are key words highlighted in a unit, in problems, in text to assure recognition of the most relevant information in instruction?

Does the student require additional repeated practice with a new strategy or formula to assure competence?



These should be routine from year to year.

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## **Presentation of Assignments, Instruction, and Testing page 2**

Does the student require a model or example of the strategy or assignment the student must perform to demonstrate proficiency?

Does the student need a rubric or formula for specific types of assignments? (See Susan Moore, p. 59 for Reading Checklist)

Does the student need an Activity Plan (see Moore,S.T., p.60-63) for center activities or projects?

Does the student need to be told ahead of time when s/he will be asked a question? Does the student need hints or guidance on where to look for the answer as well?

How frequently and in what form should practice tests be provided? Remember that becoming familiar with the format of the test is itself a skill? Some students cannot deal with a new form of test and the content of a test at the same time.

Can the student best show his comprehension of the content through multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank tests? A student with organizational problems may not recognize key content to put in a short answer or essay format.

Does the student need shortened test periods, extra time, a separate setting, or sensory breaks during a test?

Does the student need to be tested orally to assure proficiency?

Does the student need a visual reminder of reinforcers that are available for completing tasks?

Does the student need a "Power Card" strategy (see Moore,S.T., p. 66) to focus attention and instigate action?

## **Writing Performance**

Does the student require segmentation of writing assignments so that he does not have to generate ideas, write ideas, write sentences, and address punctuation and capitalization at the same time?

For instance: 1) concrete questions to help the student put facts on paper, 2) linear graphic organizers to put facts and ideas in a framework, 3) sentence writing task from a graphic organizer, 4) paragraph or paper writing from #3, then 5) correction of punctuation and capitalization separately.

Does the student need to use Susan Moore's I.C.O. strategy (Create list of *Ideas*, make a *Category Chart*, then use an *Outline*-pages 107-113) as a formula for written assignments.

Could the student benefit from an assistive technology device or software to reduce either the motoric or multiple cognitive demands of writing? Consider an assessment of writing issues to determine if a device like AlphaSmart or software such as Draft Builder would improve content and volume of written production.

Does the student need a copy of notes in class or NCR paper copies?

Does the student need specific written cues to support note-taking in class? (Rule on desk states "Write down what the teacher writes on the board." Or "Write notes when teacher holds up her hand [specific cue].")

Does the student need a skeletal outline for note-taking (i.e., teacher provides a sheet with headings to cue student on what subjects or themes require notes)?

Does the student need additional preparation time or a series of specific prompts for producing written assignments?

Areas of Exceptionality Section - Autism

Division of Exceptional Children

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

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### **Presentation of Assignments, Instruction, and Testing page 3**

#### **Cooperative Work: Assign groups instead of expecting students to self-select.**

If the student must work in a group, does s/he need a written list of specific instructions, including what to say to peers and when (i.e., 'Write definitions of key words (page 13) on sheet of paper. When finished, give the sheet to your group leader.')

Does the student need a script for interactions in a group?

Does the student need to be in a group with a student who complements his/her abilities (when this student draws well, place her with a student who writes well, etc.)?

Can the student's special interests be incorporated into the group project in any way?

#### **Homework**

Is a peer or "assignment buddy" needed to assist with homework assignments?

Does the student need a modified plan for homework: homework in only two subjects per night, limited number of problems, limited reading, simplified writing assignments, same assignments with portion crossed out or circled, etc.?

Do we remove penalties for late work to prevent extra stress? (Remember: working on organization and academics at the same time can create avoidance of work.)

Does the student need extended time on assignments, projects and tests?

Does the student need designated time at school to work on homework? Supervised study hall?

When does the student need checks of notebook, of completed work, of assignments? Is this necessary first thing in the morning, at end of day, how many times throughout day?

Does the student need extra reinforcement built into the schedule to assure that s/he can carry out any of the above elements more independently?

Are the student's particular areas of interest incorporated into written assignments to increase motivation as frequently as possible?

Do the parents need to know all assignments because the student has trouble with this organization?

Can the parents retrieve assignments from the school web site?

Does the parent need to receive a separate copy of study guides?

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## **In Case of Stress or Agitation:**

*If the student shows signs of extreme anxiety or agitation, this is the wrong time to teach. Reduce the level of frustration first before correcting, verbal directing, or trying to teach a different approach. This list is abridged. Training on calming techniques, emotional labeling, and visual techniques for self-awareness is available through the John Thomas on the Areas of Exceptionality Section staff.*

Have you taken data to determine the early warning signals of agitation (see McAfee,J., p.29 and 313) so that you can address the behavior before it is out of control?

Does the student need an 'Option Card' strategy (see Moore,S.T., p. 63) to address specific stimulation or social situations that cause frustration?

Does the student need an 'Emergency Card' strategy (see Moore,S.T., p. 67-68) to provide structure for what to do in specific emergencies (i.e., fire alarm)?

Where does the student go when overloaded or stressed? (Remember: verbally directing or attempting to problem solve when stressed is likely to lead to more problems and will not be the best time to figure out solutions)

Does the student have a routine/strategy of moving away from the group when stressed? Does the student have a specific place to go to reduce stress?

Where will the student work on solutions to social and organizational problems and with whom?

How will the student practice these solutions?

How will we disseminate these solutions to other teachers to assure they are applied and practiced consistently?

## **SELECTED REFERENCES**

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