

# Strategies for Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder An Online Graduate Course

## Course Description

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This course is designed to focus on developing an understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder, of intervention strategies to enhance communication and learning for these students and methods of teaching social skills to assist them in interacting with their peers. This course will provide teachers with tools and strategies to implement effective teaching practices for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## Objectives

- Examine the definition of autism and how it is diagnosed.
- Analyze the characteristics of autism and their effects on the classroom dynamic.
- Utilize resources found on the Internet.
- Evaluate the secondary skill challenges of autism:  
cognitive/language/motor/sensory
- Facilitate methods to improve learning by teaching specific activities for social skills.
- Analyze the range and impact of communication challenges and how to support these differences using strategies.
- Devise appropriate responses to the different types of behaviors that typically accompany Autism (challenging/ritualistic).
- Determine how to appropriately interact and respond to a child with Autism.
- Compare and contrast students with these disorders with other students, and how to teach them given these differences.
- Critique articles and Internet resources on Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Acquire a basic knowledge of the existing body of research dealing with Autism.
- Evaluate the course.

## Curriculum Design

This is a sixty hour, three credit graduate level course completed over a thirteen-week period. There are a series of major assessment concepts systematically presented by the instructor using the Socratic or Instructional Conversation method. Each concept acts as a building block to form a basic understanding that teachers can weave into their own classroom strategies and best practices to assist teachers in creating a school setting where assessment and learning go hand in hand.

## **Skill and Hardware Requirements**

Computer and Internet access required. Students must have regular access to a computer and be able to use computer skills to successfully complete this course. Many problems instructors and students run into stem from mis-configured browsers, incorrect software versions, pop-up blockers, and other issues. Most of these issues can be prevented by performing the browser tune up before the course or once a problem arises. Often students find it easier to use Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Safari rather than Internet Explorer; for some applications Internet Explorer may work well.

## **Course Materials**

The required textbook for this course is *Decoding Autism and Learning the Way to Successful Inclusion* by Barbara Boroson. In addition, online readings and Web site reviews (including journal articles and best practices from the body of educational research) will be assigned during the course to enhance learning. These readings will be presented as annotated Web sites within the course content.

## **Module Outline**

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#### **Introduction**

Content:

1. Course welcome
2. Introduction forum posts

#### **Module One: Building the Foundation for Effective Relationships and Class Expectations**

Content:

1. Defining autism
2. Identify the characteristics of autistic children
3. Examine the diagnostic process
4. Review research concerning the prevalence of autism today
5. Assignments

#### **Module Two: Collaboration and Cooperation**

Content:

1. Demonstrate the collaborative process through teacher communication and interaction
2. Identify and explain the roles of each team member
3. Explore the various types of team teaching and determine when to implement each style
4. Develop ideas for fading adult support and proximity
5. Assess the ability to utilize team members to achieve student success
6. Assignments

### **Module Three: Friendships, Social Relationships and Belonging**

Content:

1. Identify common social deficits in autistic students
2. Explore and examine strategies for building community and promoting acceptance in the classroom
3. Examine social story techniques that can be used to teach social awareness and expectations to autistic students
4. Assess the power of role play as a tool for socialization
5. Assignments

### **Module Four: Sensory Needs**

Content:

1. Identify Sensory Processing issues
2. Demonstrate the ability to recognize sensory overload
3. Explore ways to utilize Sensory Integration Therapy in the General Education classroom
4. Develop a variety of multi-sensory approaches to create a safe learning environment of the ASD child
5. Assess and evaluate reasons for self-stimulation
6. Assignments

### **Module Five: Building Communication**

Content:

1. Explore ways to support students experiencing Echolalia.
2. Evaluate the various communication devices including Communication Boards, Picture Exchange Communication System and BoardMaker.
3. Compare augmentative and alternative communication
4. Assignments

### **Module Six: Fostering Independence**

Content:

1. Create a plan for teaching life skills to ASD students
2. Evaluate work systems as a tool to build independence

3. Devise appropriate personal schedules to meet the needs of ASD students
4. Determine best practices for dealing with transitions
5. Examine and critique long term goals
6. Assignments

### **Module Seven: Rethinking Behavior: Positive Ways to Teach and Support**

Content:

1. Explore the challenging and ritualistic behaviors of autistic students
2. Evaluate the appropriate times and methods for rewards and reinforcement
3. Identify rewards and reinforcements to meet the needs of children on the autistic spectrum
4. Create an Applied Behavior Analysis Plan to meet a specific student's needs and motivators
5. Assignments

### **Module Eight: Creating a Comfortable Classroom**

Content:

1. Review the environmental challenges autistic students face in the classroom setting
2. Evaluate seating and organizational challenges
3. Examine the different possibilities for classroom organization
4. Acquire a basic knowledge for allowing opportunities for movement
5. Assignments

### **Module Nine: Lesson Planning**

Content:

1. Create a cooperative learning lesson to benefit autistic students
2. Explore service learning as a motivational tool and authentic learning experience
3. Identify opportunities for project-based instruction
4. Evaluate the benefits of centers/stations
5. Create an authentic assessment
6. Assignments

### **Module Ten: Teaching Strategies**

Content:

1. Create meaningful routines and schedules
2. Develop successful transitions
3. List ways to help students with organizational skills
4. Examine the benefits of providing choices
5. Explore ways to create opportunities for breaks
6. Develop the ability to use nonverbal cues
7. Final Assignment

### **Grading Criteria**

<b>Points</b>		<b>Grading Scale</b>	
Talking Points Participation	96	200 -216	<b>A</b>
Reflections	120	188-199	<b>B</b>
		164 -187	<b>C</b>
<b>Total Points</b>	216		

### **Student Academic Integrity**

Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.