

EDUCATOR TIP SHEET:

WV Autism Training Center

(304) 696-2332

www.marshall.edu/atc

atc@marshall.edu

Using Positive Behavior Supports in the Classroom: An ASD-Focused Approach

Supporting students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the classroom requires intentional planning and proactive strategies. Positive behavior supports provide a framework that emphasizes prevention, clear expectations, and individualized interventions. These approaches help create predictable, structured environments where students with ASD can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & ROUTINES

- **Visual schedules** help students anticipate transitions and reduce anxiety by showing the sequence of daily activities.
- **Classroom rules** should be posted and explained with concrete examples (e.g., instead of “Be respectful,” replace with “Use kind words when talking to friends”).
- **Modeling and practicing routines**—such as lining up, transitioning between activities, or asking for help—should include visual prompts and repeated practice.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- **Specific praise** for observable behaviors (e.g., “I like how you raised your hand before speaking”).
- **Token systems** (stars, stickers, or points) can motivate students and provide clear feedback.
- **Classroom reward systems** like “Mystery Motivator” or “Caught Being Good” tickets encourage engagement.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) SUPPORTS

- **Morning meetings** build community and teach skills like empathy and self-regulation.
- **Calm-down corners or sensory spaces** allow students to manage emotions in a safe environment.
- **Emotion check-ins** using visual tools (e.g., mood meters or color charts) help students communicate feelings.

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT PLANS

- **Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)** are tailored to address specific behavioral challenges.
- **Check-in/check-out systems** can be used with a trusted adult for consistency.
- **Goal-setting and self-monitoring charts** empower students to track progress.
- **IEPs and/or 504 Plans** are team developed and outline specific individualized strategies and supports.



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ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

- **Flexible seating** options accommodate sensory and movement needs.
- **Visual cues and reminders** (stop signs, timers, picture prompts) reinforce expectations.
- **Strategic classroom layouts** minimize distractions and promote engagement.

POSITIVE PEER INTERACTIONS

- **Peer mentoring** or **buddy systems** foster social connections.
- **Cooperative learning activities** encourage teamwork and communication.
- **Group contingencies** help build a sense of shared responsibility.

EXAMPLES OF VISUAL SUPPORTS

- **Daily Visual Schedule:** A chart showing activities with pictures and words.
- **Individual Visual Schedules:** Laminated strips often with Velcro icons for task completion.
- **Task Strips:** Break down multi-step tasks (e.g., writing assignment steps).
- **Center Rotation Boards:** Color-coded charts for group activities.
- **Behavior Cue Cards:** Visual reminders for expected behaviors (e.g., “Raise Hand,” “Quiet Voice”).
- **Transition Timers and Visual Countdowns:** Sand timers or digital countdown clocks to prepare for changes.

IN CLOSING...

Positive behavior supports tailored for students with autism create a structured, predictable, and supportive learning environment. By combining visual tools, clear routines, individualized plans, and positive reinforcement, educators can reduce anxiety, promote independence, and foster meaningful social interactions. These strategies not only benefit students with ASD but also enhance the classroom experience for all learners.