

Teaching Students With Asperger's Syndrome

Definition

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) is a pervasive developmental disorder at the high functioning end of the Autism spectrum. According to the DSM-IV, the essential features of AS are severe and sustained impairment in social interaction and the development of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities. In contrast to Autistic Disorder, there are no clinically significant delays in language, cognitive development, the development of age-appropriate self-help skills and adaptive behavior (other than in social interaction).

Characteristics and Educational Implications

- Difficulty with social, emotional and communication skills
- Lack of desire to interact with peers
- Difficulty in forming friendships
- Lack of conversational reciprocity - often talks without listening in return
- Poor understanding of social cues, the feelings of others and body language
- Marked impairment in the use of eye contact, facial expression, vocal inflection and gestures
- May have delayed motor development or appear awkward and clumsy
- May experience writing difficulties
- Commonly do not understand jokes, irony and metaphors
- Repetitive narrow and unusual patterns of behavior and interests
- Eccentricity

Special Skills and Talents

- Often have average to above average intelligence
- Tend to possess excellent abstract thinking abilities and rote memory skills
- Expertise in their chosen topic of interest
- Extensive vocabulary
- Driven to perform well at school or work

Suggestions and Instructional Strategies for Faculty

- Keep instructions as uncomplicated as possible.
- Avoid long series of verbal instructions.
- Define course material and requirements clearly in both oral and written forms.
- Provide concrete guidelines and structure.
- Provide a predictable environment with consistent routines.
- Use concrete visual methods to teach number concepts.
- Work together with the student and the Disability Resource Center to ensure a successful learning experience for the student.

Possible Academic Accommodations

- Reduced course load
- Extended exam time
- Extended time on lengthy assignments
- Access to class notes/note taker
- Use of tape recorder for lectures
- Alternative testing arrangements/test space

This document is a compilation of resources from the DSM-IV, CARD, NAMI and UCI



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