



Characteristics of Autism

Facilitator Notes

As just discussed in this module, the characteristics of all individuals who have an autism spectrum disorder are impairments in communication, including social language, and the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors. One of the secondary characteristics is differences in the way the student may perceive his senses. Many things about the bus ride (temperature, noise level, number of students on the bus, etc.) that might impact the senses. Thinking about these things can be helpful when supporting students with ASD.

Discussion Prompts

Think about the sights, sounds and even smells on the bus. Brainstorm some things about the bus ride might impact a student with the characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder.

- How might these experiences differ from day to day?
- What information about the more specific characteristics of a student with ASD would be helpful for you to know as the bus driver?

PBS: Responding vs. Reacting

Facilitator Notes

This module examines how using Positive Behavior Supports helps to support individual students unique needs academically, socially, and emotionally to ensure their success. It focuses on the difference between responding and reacting, emphasizing a proactive approach to meeting student needs to prevent behavior from occurring. When discussing PBS strategies and supports, try to highlight team-based approaches to support students' unique needs to manage behavior before it occurs.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between responding and reacting?
- Think about situations you have dealt with in the past.
- Did you react or respond?

Brainstorm ways that you can start to respond rather than react to situations you encounter on your bus to assist students in displaying positive behaviors.

List at least 3 strategies that you will use in responding to student behavior to promote safe and proactive behavior for the students on your bus.

Bullying

Facilitator Notes

Bullying is increasingly recognized as a very serious problem impacting all students, but students with autism are especially vulnerable due to social language difficulties. Important points for this discussion include: how to recognize signs of bullying in specific age groups and what to do if you see it happen. Some divisions may have forms or require that the staff member report it to an administrator or supervisor. It is important for bus drivers to know local processes so that they can respond quickly in the moment.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever noticed bullying on your bus? How did you know?
- What about students with autism make them especially likely targets of bullying?
- What should you do if you notice bullying happening?

Unexpected Changes

Facilitator Notes

When change occurs, children with ASD may respond in a variety of ways. It is important to remember that these responses are typically the result of extreme anxiety and/or inability to communicate their emotions/desires during an unexpected change. The goal is to anticipate this and put supports in before the behavior occurs when there is a planned change in routine. It is also important to know how to respond when an unexpected change occurs and there was no opportunity to prepare.

Discussion Prompts

- Think about unexpected changes that can occur on the bus route.
 - How do you prepare students for these changes?
 - Based on what has been discussed thus far in the training, why are these kinds of supports important for students with ASD?
- What are some ways to inform or prepare students for unexpected changes that occur without much advance warning, such as a new route?
 - What could a visual look like to support the student?
 - Could it be prepared in advance in case you need it?
 - How would you communicate these needs to the teacher or case manager?

Strategies

Facilitator Notes

Strategies for success on the bus being with planning and being prepared. In this module we discuss 10 strategies that are beneficial for supporting and preparing students with autism for appropriate bus behavior. While we discuss these as strategies used for students with autism, they are good practices for all students. Before implementing strategies it would be beneficial to discuss with the teachers and parents about anything that has been a successful strategy in the past for the student.

Discussion Prompts

- What strategies are you already using? Are they useful?
- What strategies are new to you that you can implement right away?
- Are there any strategies that you do not understand how to make or use?

Collaboration

Facilitator Notes

Collaboration between transportation staff and teachers and parents is essential for the success of the student on the bus, in the classroom, and at home. However, this can be difficult when drivers have a busy schedule that likely conflicts with teachers' availability. Discussion around division-specific processes and people that could help with collaboration is very important to making sure that bus drivers know where to go to get information about students, or to relay information they have to others.

Discussion Prompts

- What works well in collaborating with school staff? Parents?
- What doesn't work well?
- Where are IEPs stored in schools?
- Where should drivers and staff go to get information about a student with a disability?
- Are there any processes or forms in place that facilitate collaboration in the division?