

Ask the Expert Q&A #8

Preschool Social Communication Instruction

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What will preschool look like for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Preschool for students with ASD will look like typical preschools. They will have of the same elements and activities that other preschoolers have. One of the things that should be incorporated into their daily activities during preschool, would be to individualize the students -- it's always important to look at each individual student and what they will need within the preschool setting. Another area that you might see for a student with ASD would be that the environment is structured in a way that the student can be successful and also help to promote newly learned skills. So, some of those skills that should be incorporated within the preschool environment would be social and communication skills. Making sure that the environment allows opportunities within the preschool day for the student to communicate with their peers.

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Why is it important for children with ASD to have the preschool experiences?

We know that preschoolers with ASD will need many more learning opportunities than their typical peers so you need to provide as many learning opportunities as possible at an early age. The younger the student can attend a preschool and work on these skills, the better off they will be when transitioning to elementary school. You should also work on these foundational skills that they will need from kindergarten throughout their years of schooling.

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What are some tips for preschool teachers who work with students with ASD?

First provide the structure that was mentioned above, making sure that you set up your environment within the preschool to help promote learning and success. This may be visual supports and making sure these supports are in place for students in various aspects of the day. Another tip that is really critical would be to make sure that learning opportunities for social and communication skills are taking place throughout the day. Planning for and setting up these learning opportunities is not just assuming that they might take place during the preschool activities.

This Q&A has been taken from "Ask the Expert Series" which are short videos that discuss important topics for parents, educators, community members, and individuals with ASD and can be found on the VCU-ACE website: <https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/asktheexpert/>