



THE
CLASSROOM
ARCHITECT

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MODULE #4



The Predictable Classroom



PREDICTABILITY

When you first think about characteristics of students with autism, rules, structure and routines come to mind. Students on the spectrum enjoy rules and routines and seek a predictable environment that they can find solace in.



MAIN GOALS

The main goals of having a predictable classroom are:

1. Establish trust and safety
2. Reliability
3. Sense of Control



TRUST AND SAFETY

It is important to establish trust and a sense of safety with your students. If you are not predictable in your classroom, you will have a hard time establishing trust.

If you do not have trust, your students will be less likely to follow through with what you are asking from them.



RELIABILITY

Students with autism are a creature of habit. They want to know that they can count on you to be there. By being predictable, students know that you will be there when you say you will be there and this will add to their sense of trust as well.



SENSE OF CONTROL

Being predictable offers students the ability to increase their sense of control. By being predictable, you are transparent. You are being honest with yourself, your students and others around you.



SENSE OF CONTROL

In a previous lesson, I discussed the importance of being genuine. Being predictable is part of that. Be genuine so your students can decide for themselves if they want to buy-into what you are selling.

If you are genuine, reliable, and foster a sense of trust, your students will be more likely to follow through with what you would like them to accomplish.



PREDICTABILITY

There are a few ways that you can add predictability to your classroom;

1. Predictable Routines
2. Predictable Expectations
3. Predictable Interactions



PREDICTABILITY

Let's examine each one...



ROUTINES

Consistent routines alleviates stress and anxiety in many students with autism. Knowing what is coming next helps them understand that their environment and world around them is a safe and consistent place to be.



ROUTINES

By creating routines that students can depend on day to day, you are fostering a classroom climate that is warm, inviting and understanding of various needs. Students will feel less anxious about your class and in turn, be more open and ready to learn.



ROUTINES

Some of the easiest routines to set up are:

1. Arrival
2. Morning work
3. Group/center work
4. Bathroom routines
5. Rules for various areas of the room
6. Rules for work times
7. Meal time routines
8. End of day activities



EXPECTATIONS

Students with autism want rules, guidelines, etc. They want to know what is expected of them. A student with autism typically wants to please, but may not know how or what you want. So, be explicit. Keep your expectations short, simple, and direct. Make sure your grading rubrics are clear, easy to read and concrete.



EXPECTATIONS

Without expectations, a student with autism may act out, become frustrated, or refuse to complete the work.



EXPECTATIONS

When writing predictable expectations, consider the following:

1. Location
2. Motivation
3. Feasibility



LOCATION

Expectations can change depending on where the student is. For example, the expectations may be different during desk work times, than if they were in gym class, or outside at recess. Students with autism will need to learn that expectations can be different depending on where they are.



LOCATION

This can pose a tricky situation as students with autism are easily overwhelmed by too much information or too many changes. If necessary, create different expectations depending on the area of the room that they are in (quiet reading space, sensory area, independent work space, etc), but try not to have too many areas within one classroom where there are different expectations.



LOCATION

You can try to impose the school's general PBIS model of expectations when in situations that warrant it. In many cases this will be the case. That way you will only need to teach what "Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Kind" means and the student will be able to generalize that to anywhere in the school as these tend to be broad generalizations that are good practice for any student.



MOTIVATION

Good luck trying to get a student to comply with the expectations of a classroom if they are not motivated to do so.

What's in it for them to comply?
Why should they?
And what happens if they don't?

These are questions you should ask yourself when creating expectations for any area in the school.



FEASIBILITY

Okay, if it isn't going to work, it isn't going to work. That's easy enough, right?

If you set expectations that are not feasible, such as expectations that are too high, your students may respond by giving up. And conversely, if you set expectations that are too low, your students may act out due to boredom.



FEASIBILITY

Finding a balance will be key when setting expectations.

And remember, expectations are not set in stone. If you find that you need to tweak them lower or raise them higher, then do it.



SUMMARY

Being predictable is important for so many reasons. It helps ease anxiety and stress and promotes learning and trust.

Being predictable takes a concerted effort of predictable expectations, routines and interactions.



I'll See You in the Next Module!

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