

## Keys to Classroom Management with Individuals with ASD

### Awareness

- Are you aware how ASD may impact learning in your class? Have you reached out to Disability Services, Accessibility Resources, Counseling Services, etc. for additional information to increase your awareness?
- Are you aware of the individual's accommodations and are you meeting them for your classroom?
- Are you aware of your own biases around individuals with ASD? Often, we grow up with certain thoughts, feelings, and preconceived notions about individuals with ASD. These may include a range of mental states from feeling pity for them, thinking they are in a "brave struggle," thinking they are annoying, etc. Awareness of your own biases can inform you of your tendencies around classroom management for these individuals.
- Are you aware of your own reactions to the individual's behaviors? Sometimes there can be a worsening of behaviors as the individual feels judged, hurried, etc. Exploring your reactions can be a good start.
- Are you aware of other students' reactions to the individual with ASD? These reactions (even outside of the typical social dynamics of the classroom) may trigger or maintain a behavior

### Understanding

- Curiosity is key to understanding. Become curious about the experience of the individual in your classroom
- Has the individual talked with you about what is going on for them? Often the individual is the best "expert" about what they are experiencing and why.
- Are there environmental factors that may contribute to what is seen in the classroom (e.g., lights, sounds, temperature)
- Are there components of the "Hidden Curriculum" of your classroom that may need to be made explicit
- Are there impacts of social dynamics on the individual (e.g., is there subtle bullying taking place, discussion dynamics, group dynamics)
- Are expectations within the classroom explicit (can they be made more explicit for everyone)?
- Are there sudden transitions, or changes in the context of what you are doing, that may be quick and require highly flexible thinking? Could these be signaled prior to their occurring so that individuals can prepare for them?

### Acceptance

- Autism is a neurodiversity. As such, having individuals with Autism in the classroom adds to the overall diversity, creativity, and richness of the discourse in classrooms and on campuses.
- The individual with Autism is whole just as they are. They are not in need of a cure or to be fixed.
- "Acceptance is about recognizing that an autistic person is, and will always be, different but not less – even as some challenges are addressed." – Amy Sequenzia in (Jones S. R., 2017)
- "Good teaching is based in deep respect for the individual, the cognitive learning style of each student, the shared excitement about the topic of study. Best practice in teaching autistic students isn't any different." – Carolyn Ogburn in (Jones S. R., 2017) These principles hold true for good classroom management also.
- What may be perceived by others as behaviors in the classroom are often manifestations of challenges with social communication, social cognition, sensory processing, and/or executive functioning. Awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the uniqueness of the individual can help address these challenges