

TEACHER TOOL KIT: Lesson Plan



Title: Autism Awareness Lesson(s)

Grade Level: Grades 3-6

Objective:

1. Students will gain an understanding of what autism is.
2. Students will be able to state or write basic facts about autism.
3. Students will learn what it might feel like to have different abilities than they do now.

Materials:

1. Markers
2. Flip Chart (flip chart may work better when comparing beginning lesson lists with end) or White Board
3. Autism New Jersey Kids Book or Fact Sheet
4. Book of your choice (recommendations are below)
5. Items for one of the three sensitivity activities you choose

Opening Activity:

Draw a line down the center of a flip chart or White Board and write the following questions on each side - "What is autism?" "How do you think it feels to have autism?" Make a list of all the answers the students give. (10 minutes)

Procedure:

1. Start a discussion about autism. (7-10 minutes) Use the Autism New Jersey Kids Book to choose age appropriate topics. For the older ages, use the Autism New Jersey Q&A or 10 Thoughts on Autism.
2. Read a book to the class. After, have a short discussion about the book and how it might feel to have an autism spectrum disorder. (total time: 15 minutes) Some recommended books are:
 - a. Amenta, C.A. (1992). *Russell is extra special: A book about autism for children*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 0945354444. 32 pages.
 - b. Gagnon, E., & Smith Myles, B. (1999). *This is Asperger's Syndrome*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company. ISBN: 0967251419. 20 pages.
 - c. Thompson, M. (1992). *My brother Matthew*. Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149476. 26 pages.

3. Now it's time for the class to learn what it might feel like to have different abilities. These exercises may give you some idea of what individuals with autism can be experiencing everyday.

Choose one or more of the following activities (7-10 minutes for each exercise):

a. Understanding what's expected of you:

Have one volunteer leave the room. The rest of the class chooses an action for the person to perform. Bring the person back in the room. Don't talk or provide gestures. As they begin to walk around the room, clap your hands to give them feedback that they are on track. Clap more when they are closer to the desired object or action, similar to the "Hot and Cold" game. After the person figures it out, ask him or her to explain his or her experience.

b. Simulate sensory overload:

Turn on the classroom radio to a high volume. Try to complete a worksheet for a higher grade level, which requires concentration. Were you able to complete the work?

c. Try communicating without words or gestures:

Have someone in a group ask for something s/he wants (a drink of soda, to use the restroom, help using the computer) WITHOUT using any words or hand gestures. Then, have the person describe what that experience felt like.

Closing:

Similar to the beginning of the lesson, draw a line down the center of a flip chart or White Board and write the following questions on each side - "What is autism?" "How do you think it feels to have autism?" Make a list of all the answers the students give. With the students, compare the answers the students gave before the lesson began. Ask them what they might do differently if they saw another student with autism.

For additional information, handouts and tools, e-mail information@autismnj.org, call 1.800.4.AUTISM or visit www.autismnj.org.