

.....Special Education.....

*High Functioning Autism (HFA)
and
Asperger's Syndrome*

Characteristics

- **1 in 88 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.**
- **High-functioning autism is considered to be at one end of the autism spectrum meaning that signs and symptoms are less severe than with other forms of autism.**
- **A person with HFA usually has average or above-average intelligence. Many psychiatrists consider HFA as similar to or the same as Asperger's.**

Misconceptions

- **One common misunderstanding about HFA autism is that it can be caused by the way the child was brought up, bad parenting, or emotional issues.**
- **In truth, HFA autism is a neurobiological disorder**

Accommodations for Students

- Managing transitional strategies, agenda planning, constant structure, providing lesson plan to student, and getting to know your student as an individual with individual needs.
- Every student is unique so its important to adjust strategies and management so that your HFA student feels comfortable instead of matching adjustments to a diagnosis.
- Talking to the student before group work and asking if they want to participate or observe can help them prepare to be in a group setting. Observing can be comfortable for students with a higher degree of autism where they feel uncomfortable in big group settings. Allowing the student to choose their comfort level alleviates distress that would be caused by not understanding social normal or etiquette.

Accommodations (continued)

- Allow the student to copy your daily schedule down.
- Work with students to set group or partner work goals
- If a student struggles with transitions and becomes upset in unexpected times (like fire drills) motivate them positively, slowly and efficiently for good behavior during these times
- Setting expectations and prepare them for upcoming events makes them feel secure
- Talking about unusual events provides awareness for the entire class while mentally preparing your HFA student and reducing anxiety.
- Young kids may be easily frightened if they do not remember doing drills in other grades, so alerting allows students to adjust their own routines or written schedules accordingly

Curricular Modifications

- A curricular modification that would be helpful for students would be making the student aware of how much time is left for a task. For example, giving a 10-minute warning or a 2-minute warning.
- This helps them gauge the time left and what they need to do before time is up and the next activity starts. This also notifies students of upcoming transitions and helps the student feel more comfortable if they are given a heads up a few times.

Bullying

Kids with Aspergers are bullied more often than those with any other ASD diagnosis.

- Children with Aspergers are often targets because:
 - They are strict rule followers
 - They do not know basic social cues and norms
 - They like to talk about one subject at length
 - *They often stand up for themselves*
- Keep in mind that as a teacher you are the best advocate for your student, so do the best to include by highlighting positives and not the differences

Resources

- If you would like to find out more information check out these sites:
- http://www.kidneeds.com/diagnostic_categories/articles/teach_students_autism.htm
- autismsciencefoundation.org/?gclid=CPLV_rGu3rUCFQ4FnQodz28Ajw
- www.aspergers.com
- www.autism-society.org/about-autism/aspergers-syndrome/
- kidshealth.org/parent/medical/