



DCDSB Understanding and Supporting All Learners

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Children with ASD present with a wide range of strengths and challenges. Your child may have difficulties in some or all of the following areas:

Communication

Your child may:

- not talk, or may talk very little
- have good speaking skills but difficulty using this language appropriately in social situations
- have difficulty understanding when listening to others
- have difficulty using and understanding body language

Social Interactions

Your child may:

- have difficulty making and keeping friends
- have difficulty understanding what other people are thinking and feeling
- have little interest in other children or people
- seek out other children but have difficulty with the skills to know how to play and interact with them
- have difficulty managing social problems
- be at risk for being isolated from, or bullied by, other children

Behaviour

Your child may:

- sometimes act differently than other children
- seem rigid and like to do things the same way all the time
- have difficulty with any kind of change
- not be motivated by the same things as other children
- show intense interests in specific toys, objects, or subjects

Emotional and Sensory Issues

Your child may:

- have difficulty managing strong emotions
- have strong reactions, or anxiety, to everyday challenges
- have temper tantrums and meltdowns, or become withdrawn
- be over- or under-sensitive to sensory input, including sounds, lights, smells, textures, and movement

Helpful Resources for Parents

Autism Ontario Durham Chapter (www.autismontario.com/Durham)

Geneva Centre (www.autism.net)

Autism Speaks (www.autismspeaks.ca)

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

Strategies to help support your child or teen at home

- Consult with school staff, as needed
- Provide a predictable routine, which may include a calendar and/or visual schedule
- Keep your language simple and allow your child time to respond
- Use visuals (gestures, pictures, and/or words) to help your child understand and remember information (including rules)
- Use a reward system
- Support social skills development through turn-taking games and pretend play
- Read aloud Social Stories
- Explain to your child what other people may be thinking/feeling, and point out positive social behaviour in books and television
- Let your child know when he/she shows positive behaviour: reward the behaviour you want to see
- Provide opportunities for movement, sensory activities, and quiet time throughout the day
- Give simple choices
- Give warning about changes to routines
- Try to avoid events/activities that may trigger anxiety, sensory overload, or behaviour problems
- Teach your child ways to calm themselves-see the Well-Being Apps page on the DCDSB website:
<https://www.dcdsb.ca/en/parents/resources/Coronavirus/Well-Being-Apps-for-Youth2020.pdf>
- Try to not take challenging behaviours personally: keep calm, talk quietly and slowly, and give your child space
- Try to keep your expectations realistic: focus on one thing at a time, and make small goals
- Stay positive and celebrate your child!

