Teaching Strategies for Students with Asperger Syndrome

Characteristics of students with Asperger syndrome may include:

- Impaired ability to understand nonverbal and social cues
- Problems understanding metaphors and words with double meanings
- Problems interacting with others
- Avoidance of direct eye contact
- Flat affect (monotone/rigid speech patterns, or may not smile even when appropriate)
- Emotional vulnerability and difficulty dealing with stress
- Sensory sensitivity problems
- Difficulty with change
- Limited range of interests
- Poor concentration
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor conversational skills:
  - May talk too loudly with little awareness
  - Irrelevant comments, and a lack of understanding concerning the reaction of others
  - Pointed and inappropriate personal questions, and a lack of understanding that he/she is perceived as being insulting or insensitive
  - Poor reciprocal conversational skills:
    - May answer questions with only a “yes” or “no”
    - May pause a long time before responding to others

Possible Accommodations:

- Testing accommodations
  - Separate testing environment
  - Extra time
  - Use of ear plugs for in-class testing
- Lecture notes/PowerPoint available before class
- Use of a recorder for lectures
- Notetakers
- AAC advocacy services
Teaching Strategies:

• On your course syllabus state that students with disabilities and needing special support services may contact the AAC to inquire about accommodations.

• Design instruction in a straightforward and predictable manner:
  o Eliminate complexity (such as in the syllabus or grading scale)
  o Clearly state expectation for assignments
  o Provide copies of your PowerPoint in advance
  o Provide timely and useful feedback
  o Be as concrete when presenting new concepts and abstract material
  o Use examples

• If/when timing is right, educate class regarding disabilities:
  o Disabled students will sometimes like to provide a quick explanation of their disability

• During lecture, if the student tends to interrupt, ask repetitive questions, or participate in any inappropriate manner, discreetly ask him/her to meet with you privately:
  o Be prepared to:
    ▪ Explain “unwritten” classroom rules” (such as during a lecture how often to answer/ask questions)
    ▪ Explain problem behavior and develop strategies for appropriate participation:
      • Consider prearranged nonverbal cues for redirection
    ▪ Explain metaphors and words with double meanings
    ▪ Ignore unusual demeanor/behaviors that are not disruptive

• Consider arranging in-class peer supports (such as a buddy system).
• Reduce classroom distractions (such as excessive noise, flickering lights).
• Encourage students to see you during your conference hours:
  o Be available and supportive
  o Refer students to the AAC for tutoring, computer tutorials, counseling/disability services as needed

• Consult with the AAC disability services counselor, Nancy Pecorilli npecorilli@sc4.edu as needed.

Additional resources can be found on the following AAC webpage:

Disability Related Links || St. Clair County Community College

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