

Autism Spectrum Disorder (Part 1): An Overview for Educators

Use this outline to follow along with the module's main features. The blank "Notes" panels below each section are interactive and can be filled in using Adobe Acrobat. Otherwise, print this document and record your notes by hand.

Module Home

- **Module Description:** This module, first in a two-part series, provides information on the early signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as an overview of the difference between a medical diagnosis and an educational determination of ASD. Resources include notes on instructional considerations for teachers who have children and students with ASD in their classrooms, as well as things to keep in mind when working with the families of those children and students (est. completion time: 2 hours).
- *STAR Legacy Cycle*
- **Related to This Module**
 - Link: [Module Outline](#)
 - Video: [Navigating an IRIS STAR Legacy Module](#)
 - Link: [IRIS and Adult Learning Theory](#)
 - [Wrap-Around Content Map](#)

Challenge

- **Video:** Every child or student with autism spectrum disorder—or ASD—has his or her own strengths, classroom needs, and challenges. Let's briefly meet four students with ASD.

Notes

Initial Thoughts

- What is autism spectrum disorder and what are the characteristics associated with it?
- What should teachers consider when working with students with autism spectrum disorder?

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Perspectives & Resources

❖ Module Objectives

- After completing the entire Perspectives & Resources section and reviewing the accompanying activities, you should:
 - Understand that the strengths and needs of students with ASD vary greatly
 - Be aware of the early signs of ASD
 - Know the difference between a medical diagnosis of ASD and an educational determination of autism
 - Be able to identify key IEP and IFSP team members
 - Understand various factors that might affect family members of students with ASD
 - Become familiar with strategies that teachers can use when working with students with ASD
- This IRIS Module aligns with the following licensure and program standards and topic areas...

Notes

❖ Page 1: What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

- Definition of autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Major characteristics of ASD [bullet points]
 - Link: atypical responses to sensory input [definition]
- Research Shows
- Audio: Wendy Stone discusses some contributing factors for the increasing prevalence of autism
- Link: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) [definition]
- Link: Comparison of the Diagnostic Criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder Across DSM-5, DSM-IV-TR, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA '04) Definition of Autism
 - Graphic: DSM-5 vs. DSM-IV
- Audio: Ilene Schwartz discusses the sometimes-confusing terminology surrounding ASD

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❖ Page 2: Autism Spectrum Disorder Characteristics

- ASD is referred to as a “spectrum disorder” because...
- Differences in the symptoms displayed by the children highlighted in the Challenge video [table with bullet points]
 - Link: functional play skills [definition]
- Link: child or student [definition/clarification]
- Signs of ASD in the First Two Years of Life [box with bullet points]
- Video: Bringing the Early Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorders into Focus
- Audio: Nancy Rosenberg, a parent of a young adult who has ASD, reflects on the early signs that her son exhibited
- Audio: Adrienne Golden discusses the characteristics of the children with autism that she works with and some of the early signs she looks for in the classroom
- Activity: View the videos. For each pair, compare and contrast the behavior of each child
 - Links: video descriptions

Notes

❖ Page 3: Diagnosis

- DSM-5 vs. IDEA '04
- Medical Diagnosis/Educational Determination
 - Link: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA '04)
- Medical Diagnosis
 - Screening
 - Diagnostic Evaluation [bullet points]
 - Disability related services [bullet points]
 - Research Shows
- Educational Determination
 - Link: multidisciplinary team [definition]
 - Evaluations conducted by a multidisciplinary team should involve... [bullet points]
 - Note about educational determination vs. medical diagnosis
 - Audio: Ilene Schwartz discusses why it is important to look beyond academic needs when determining whether a student with ASD qualifies for special education services

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❖ Page 4: The Multidisciplinary Team

- Link: Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) [definition]
- Link: Individualized education programs (IEPs) [definition]
- Required Multidisciplinary Team Members
 - IFSP Team Members: Children ages birth to three years [bullet points]
 - IEP Team Members: Students age 3–21 [bullet points]
 - Audio: Andy and Becky, the parents of a child with ASD, describe their experiences as members of their son's IEP team
- Additional Team Members
 - Related Service Providers [drop-down menus]
 - Link: applied behavior analysis (ABA) [definition]
 - Audio: Nancy Rosenberg discusses her son Brian's IEP team and highlights non-required professionals that she invited
 - Activity: Review Michelle's vignette from the Challenge movie and answer the questions

Notes

❖ Page 5: Working with Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Family members can provide information such as... [bullet points]
- Return to the Challenge: Feasible Family Supports
- Audio: Wendy Stone discusses the importance of involving families when working with children with ASD
- Parent Challenges
 - Examples of parent challenges [bullet points]
 - For Your Information
 - Link: Collaborating with Families [IRIS Module]

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- Audio: Nancy Rosenberg, a parent of a young adult with ASD, describes some of the stressors her family experienced
- Audio: Andy and Becky talk about the challenges of parenting their child with ASD
- Research Shows
- Supporting Families
 - Teachers can support families by...
 - Audio: Adrienne Golden discusses the importance of caregivers and educators communicating with and providing support for families
 - Audio: Nancy Rosenberg describes some of the supports that helped her cope with stressors she experienced

Notes

❖ Page 6: Instructional Considerations

- The instruction of children and students with ASD is a shared responsibility [bullet points]
- Strategies to increase the likelihood of the child or student's success [drop-down menus]
 - Link: executive functions [definition]
 - Link: emotional regulation [definition]
 - Link: flexibility [definition]
 - Link: independence and self-advocacy
 - Link: first-then picture board [definition]
 - Link: Functional Behavioral Assessment: Identifying the Reasons for Problem Behavior and Developing a Behavior Plan [IRIS Module]
 - Audio: Wendy Stone discusses a few other tips for teachers working with students with ASD
 - Audio: Adrienne Golden talks about how to engage children with ASD in the classroom
 - Audio: Ilene Schwartz highlights the importance of teachers using data-based decision making when working with students with ASD
 - For Your Information
 - Audios: Parents Nancy Rosenberg, Becky, and Andy describe some of the things they would like teachers to know about children with ASD
 - For Your Information
 - Link: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder (NPDC)
 - Link: Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules (AFIRM)

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❖ Page 7: Faces of Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Children and students with ASD vary greatly in their strengths and needs
- Benjamin
 - Audio: Lindsey and Ryan, Benjamin's parents, describe their child
 - Video: Benjamin engages in his favorite activity, playing with a bucket of beans. As he does so, his parents describe his strengths, the progress he has made, and the challenges he still faces
- Finn
 - Audio: Andy and Becky, Finn's parents, talk about how their son's ASD impacts his life at home and at school
 - Video: Finn and his mom interact while they read several stories. Finn's mom points out some of his behaviors that are reflective of ASD
- Brian
 - Audio: Nancy, Brian's mother, discusses her son's strengths and needs
 - Video: Brian uses various visual schedules to help structure his activities

Notes

❖ Page 8: References & Additional Resources

- Suggested module citation
- References
- Additional Resources

❖ Page 9: Credits

- Suggested module citation
- Content Experts
- Module Developers
- Module Production Team

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- Media Production Team
- Media
- Expert Interviews

Wrap Up

- The major characteristics of ASD include... [bullet points]
- Children/students from the Challenge [table with bullet points]
- Audio: Ilene Schwartz provides a brief summary of ASD
- Revisit your Initial Thoughts responses

Notes

Assessment

- Complete the numbered questions. Please note that the IRIS Center does not collect your Assessment responses. If this is a course assignment, you should turn them in to your professor using whatever method he or she requires.

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You Have Completed This Module

- Give Us Your Feedback
 - Link: [Module feedback survey form](#)
- Professional Development Hours
 - Link: [IRIS PD Options](#)
- Related Resources [[links](#)]