



DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT

Enhancing the Classroom Environment

October 2025

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DURANTS SCHOOL – Enhancing the Classroom Environment Policy

Enhancing Environmental and Teaching and Learning Contexts for Students with Autism Spectrum Conditions - Current understanding of best practice

1. Environmental Elements

	Exemplary
Physical structure	Classroom areas are clearly defined (e.g. taped demarcations, signs, desk & table arrangements) and readily apparent upon entry to the room. Environment maximizes student focus through arrangements which emphasises instructional or leisure purpose and cues expected behaviour. Spacing is appropriate for individual needs (teacher and peer proximity) and instructional task.
Calming Areas	There is a distinct space in the room where students can have private time to calm down, maintain, or regain control
Sensory Considerations	Materials are available for students to address individual sensory needs, not contingent on behaviour or performance. Instructional materials reflect thoughtful consideration of student’s sensory needs. Sensory activities are built into instruction (e.g. active students are allowed to walk around the room between tasks) and available across environments. Students requests for sensory stimulation are granted
	Exemplary
Schedules and predictability	Group AND individual schedules are consistent, clear, and predictable and presented in a visual format that is meaningful to the student (objects, photos, icons, words). Students preview and review the schedules periodically. Sequencing concepts are taught and implemented (first, next, last, start, finished, beginning, end, yesterday, tomorrow). Changes in schedules are highlighted with as much advance notice as possible to prepare students for change.
Use of Schedules	Students check their own schedules between each activity. Students transition as independently as possible. Adults cue students with generic phrases such as “Check your schedule” or “what’s next”
Visual Supports	Visual supports are used when making requests, give directions, providing instruction and encouraging participation. Visual supports are tailored to match the student’s needs and include icon, written and/or sign language. Students are supported in organising

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	themselves for activities with concrete reminders of what materials are needed/sequence should be followed.
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	Exemplary
Classroom Transitions	Classroom transitions are suitably structured as determined by students needs (e.g. transition item that represents next activity, verbal cue). Students are prepared for transitions through predictable activities/signals (e.g. waiting chairs/timer/song). Transition cues are followed consistently (e.g. when the timer goes off, student’s transition). Transitions occur quickly to minimise waiting time. Unnecessary transitions are minimised.
Composition of Daily Schedule	Expectations for each student’s schedule accurately reflect his or her abilities (e.g. length of time spend working). Daily schedule reflects developmentally appropriate balance of work and leisure. Non-preferred activities are interspersed with highly preferred activities. Expectations for participation may vary by student (e.g. one student may leave a group activity after a few minutes to return to individual work).
Environmental Distractions	Classroom is attractive, organised, clean and clutter free. Distracting materials are out of sight. Environmental factors that may compete for student’s attention, including movement of other students, are minimised or eliminated. Strategies are in place to minimise disruptions as much as possible.
	Exemplary
Respect for students	Adults communicate respect for students by interacting graciously, talking to them instead of about them, and providing chronologically age-appropriate materials and activities. Students successes are celebrated publicly and student problems are discussed in private.
Independence	Students are expected to perform routine tasks with minimal assistance (e.g. open door, pick up dropped items, throw away rubbish). Appropriate supports are provided so that new tasks/expectations can be performed independently. Students are expected and encouraged to function as independently as possible.

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Behavioural change elements	Exemplary
Classroom expectations	Classroom rules are positively stated and posted. Rules are presented in a manner that is meaningful to students. Expectations are explicitly taught.
Reinforcement Strategies	Positive reinforcers are individually identified and used to maximise student motivation. Students are provided frequent feedback on their appropriate behaviour and high levels of reinforcement are present. Reinforcers are varied to prevent satiation. Factors that influence reinforcement are considered (e.g food reinforcers may not be used immediately after the student finishes a meal).
Implementation	All adults consistently follow-through with planned consequences for both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Adults reinforce student’s appropriate behaviour as consistently as they notice target problem behaviours.

Behavioural change elements	Exemplary
(+) (-) Ratio	Positive feedback for acceptable behaviour is provided 7-10 times more frequently than negative/corrective feedback. Redirection may be used rather than reprimand. Adults reinforce students who are cooperating rather than reprimanding students who are misbehaving.

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Students Self-Determination	Frequent opportunities are provided for student to make choices throughout the day and in all contexts, including those relating to sequencing/selecting activities as well as identifying what they want to work for (i.e. reinforcement)
Effective Interactions	Adults use more visual and nonverbal means of communicating and eliminate talking when students become stressed/agitated.

How are students taught to monitor and assume responsibility for their own behaviour?	Exemplary
Self Management	Positive Behaviour support plans maximise independence and self management. Students are taught to recognise and/or monitor their own behaviour and artificial reinforcement is faded. Adults expect students to determine when they are “in control” of their behaviour. For example students may be proactively taught a variety of ways to cope with environmental distractions, although they may need to be reminded to use those strategies.

How do you develop positive behaviour support plans for your students	Exemplary
Behavioural analysis	Adults address inappropriate behaviour based on function and systematically teach and reinforce appropriate behaviours. Modifications consider immediate antecedents and those setting events that may occur outside the classroom. Behaviour plans include strategies for teaching replacement behaviours that serve the same function as the inappropriate behaviour.

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Communication	Exemplary
Opportunities to Communicate	Adults create opportunities for conversation and encourage communication using gesture, sign, symbols and spoken language and initiate interactions throughout all contexts and activities and consistently expect a response from the students.
Initiations	Adults specifically teach students how to initiate requests, greetings and other interactions.
Communicative Intent	Adults consistently respond to students’ verbal and nonverbal communication, even if the form is not conventional. Unconventional communication is shaped, and the student is systematically taught functional communicative equivalents for inappropriate behaviour.
Use of Alternative & Augmentative Communication	Students have AAC options available throughout the day and adults encourage them to use the symbols/PECs book to communicate and complete tasks.
Expanding Language	During daily activities Students are expected to use their existing vocabularies (spoken,sign,gesture,PECs)and encouraged to expand grammatical structure and sophistication..
Exemplary	
The majority of the school day is devoted to meaningful instruction and the development of skills.	
Student interests are purposefully integrated into classroom instruction across all activities and content. For example if a student likes aeroplanes activities incorporate aspects of flight, even if it is just including pictures of planes.	
Instruction is provided through a full range of formats including one to one instruction, small group instruction, student-initiated interactions, teacher initiated interactions, play and peer-mediated interactions	
As appropriate for students adult affect demonstrates enthusiasm and expectancy for success. Adults use appropriate tone of voice and voice volume during instruction.	
Adults communicate daily with parents/guardians. Accomplishments and challenges are highlighted. Parents are given the opportunity to respond and provided with a consistent format for sharing information about their child with adults in the school environment.	

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How do you reduce student reliance on prompts	Exemplary
Fading of prompts	Instruction demonstrates intentional, systematic fading of prompts.

How do you make sure that students use the skills you teach them in other settings	Exemplary
Spontaneous Learning	Student’s spontaneous use of learned skills is always acknowledged, encouraged and reinforced. Adults create opportunities outside of instruction to encourage, model, prompt and expand the demonstration of skills in a variety of contexts with a variety of adults and peers.
Maintenance and generalisation	Training is provided to others in the school environment (e.g. peers, support staff, other professionals) so they can recognise and support skill use. Instructions includes frequent opportunities for students to practice skills and use those skills in novel settings and contexts.

Data collection and use	Exemplary
	Adults are collecting & recording data on both inappropriate behaviour and skill acquisition and learning .

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How do you use the data that is collected in your classroom?	Exemplary
Using data to document student progress	Sufficient data are collected to provide a complete picture of the student’s progress. . Data review, summary and analysis are consistent, comprehensive and on-going.
Communication with Teams and Parents	Data summaries and analysis are shared with parents and all team on a regular basis.
Data informs future lessons & learning	Data are used as the basis for decision making for modifying students goals and objectives as well as making decisions about changes that may be needed in the curriculum/class.

Socialisation	Exemplary
Imitation	Verbal and motor imitation of adults and peers are explicitly taught.
Social skills	Students social abilities are individually assessed and critical social skills are explicitly taught throughout the school day. Every interaction is treated as an opportunity to teach, practice and reinforce social behaviour. For students functioning on the higher end of the spectrum, social understanding may be taught through the use of social stories, comic strip conversations... For students functioning on the lower end of the spectrum, social skills and understanding are taught through modelling and practice.
Emotions	Emotions are systematically taught and relationships between emotion and behaviour are contextually defined. Students are taught to identify their own emotions as well as those of others and how that information can affect interactions. Opportunities are created to practice these skills.

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Comprehensive Instructional programming	Exemplary
Play/Leisure	Students are specifically taught how to spend leisure time, including how to use leisure materials correctly. Students have opportunities to choose and engage in leisure activities and are given instructional feedback.
Academic	Academic activities related to IEP goals target skills important for immediate and long-term independence, including literacy and quantity concepts. Instruction is based on students' present levels of performance and embedded within the context of teaching functional daily living skills that will promote independence. Therefore relevant and meaningful activities are emphasised.
Functional/Daily Living	Functional and self-help skills are embedded in the curriculum, explicitly taught if needed, and promote long term independence, including personal care, self-monitoring, organisational skills ...
Vocational	Instruction reflects a clear vision for maximising student success in post school provisions/environments, as evidenced by meaningful materials and tasks that are common to other settings.