

Thank you for helping in our art class.

My hope is that you will help your special needs student experience as much of what this art class offers to the best of their ability, and push them, just a little, to do even a bit more and to grow.

In all lessons in an integrated class I want my students with special needs to use the same materials, and work on similar projects as the rest of the class. This not only helps your student socialize appropriately, but also helps other students to understand that people of different needs are around them all the time.

That said, some needs are greater than others, and as we both learn what your student can do, we can customize the lesson we are doing to meet their needs at their levels of ability in a safe and caring atmosphere. Simple skills we can always practice are getting to our assigned seat, waiting quietly while I give directions, and following the lesson and clean up as I demonstrate. Please let them work as independently as they can, but in some cases some students will need hand-over-hand assistance. We will learn this together.

As for simplifying lessons. If I make many colors or materials available, and this is too much for your student, it is okay to focus on one color, material, or as many as they can handle.

If we draw faces with a grid, they can use a ruler to draw lines perhaps even if it is not a grid. Tracing is a good skill to learn, as is holding or using a ruler.

When the class is doing self portraits, your student should do what they can at their level of ability. Maybe they just draw a face on paper and color it. You can prompt them to include similar features to their own; freckles, glasses, ponytail... Maybe you can draw a face very lightly in pencil and that child can trace it. Maybe a student will just be able to draw head-shaped-circles by themselves, and maybe it's hand-over-hand for a severely disabled child who is able to choose colors.

If your student is on the Autism Spectrum, these hints may be helpful, and spell out **A.U.T.I.S.M.**

Avoid "NO"

No is often a trigger word that can make a situation worse. Avoid using it.

U-TURN

Redirect behavior to refocus the student. Instead of saying "no," say, "Let's do this first" or "How about we try this?"

TALK

Talking with colleagues, professionals, and parents is important to understand what behaviors we need to focus on. Some behaviors are antecedents to larger issues.

IGNORE

Ignoring the small behaviors that do not lead to distraction or harm is sometimes just as important as redirecting behavior.

SAFETY

For the child, the adult, and others present. Know the child's antecedents, and address them early. Routine is very important to those with autism. Be ready and watchful when routines are disturbed.

MODIFY

Consistency is important, but sometimes "things happen." Stay positive, and try a different approach. Be ready to modify your methods with a backup plan.

If behavior is disruptive to the class, or endangers anyone, please follow your protocols for that student. Sometimes they just need to go for a short walk to re-focus, or maybe their frustration is telling us that we need to simplify further. If the behavior is escalating, the student may need to leave for a while. If it is an issue, let's have a discussion about it one-on-one when you have some time.

Again, thank you for your assistance. We can do this together!