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# ASD-EAST Curriculum

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 02

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## Contents

ASD-EAST TRAINING FOR SPECIALIST TEACHERS..... 2

MODULE 1 SUPPORTING COMMUNICATION ..... 3

MODULE 2 EMOTIONAL REGULATION ..... 4

MODULE 3 SOCIAL SKILLS ..... 5

MODULE 4 SENSORY NEEDS..... 6

MODULE 5 MODIFICATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS..... 7

MODULE 6 CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR..... 8





## ASD-EAST Training for specialist teachers

### **Training description**

Through the learning formats of lectures, workshops, discussion groups, case studies, examples from school and everyday life, the focus of the ASD-EAST training is:

- to introduce key knowledge
- to enhance understanding and
- to improve practical skills in the use of appropriate strategies for teaching primary school students with ASD in both mainstream and special education educational settings.

This curriculum has been identified through multiple methods: a literature review, a review of current ‘best practice’ in autism, and a survey of the knowledge, confidence and self-identified training needs of teachers who work with children with ASD in Croatia, North Macedonia and Poland. The curriculum comprises six modules addressing the following topics:

1. Supporting communication
2. Emotional regulation
3. Social skills
4. Sensory needs
5. Modifications and adaptations
6. Challenging behaviour

### **The objectives of the training are:**

- to enhance knowledge and understanding about the diverse needs of students with ASD
- to improve skills of professionals (mainly specialist teachers) working with students with ASD in different settings
- to empower professionals to be able to make evidence-informed decision to support inclusion and participation of students with ASD in mainstream and special schools
- to support professionals to develop their skills in communicating and collaborating effectively with parents and professionals so that the knowledge and understanding of students with ASD is shared in schools and communities.

Identified challenges and training needs in the mapping exercise	Response in the ASD-EAST training curriculum
Managing challenging behaviour	=> Module 6 Managing challenging behaviour => Modules 1-5 explain how understanding and meeting the needs of children with ASD may prevent challenging behaviour
Low confidence in applying strategies for working with children with ASD	=> Improved practical skills and raised understanding of specialist teachers will enhance their competences and feelings of self-efficacy, serving as prevention against burn-out and fulfilling the perceived need for supervision by experts
Collaboration with parents and other professionals	=> Each module contains practical tips on how to communicate the learned strategies with parents, teachers and teaching assistants => Improved knowledge and understanding of strategies for working with children with ASD will raise the skills of specialist teachers in communicating the significance and application of these strategies



## Module 1 Communication

### Description

This module explores the many challenges that students with ASD can encounter with regard to both expressive and receptive communication.

Students may range from having very limited or no expressive verbal communication skills to articulating their thoughts and needs with a wide vocabulary. However, they all will need support with processing receptive communicative information – and for those who speak, support with various semantic and pragmatic expressive difficulties or reciprocal communication skills.

It is important to identify, actively teach and understand the importance of developing these skills, to allow students to reach their full academic potential.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- identify the different expressive and receptive communication skill difficulties for individual students with ASD
- use a range of strategies, approaches and programmes to help teachers both accommodate and develop the communicative needs of their students.

### Key Themes

- Exploring the communicative differences of students with ASD and identifying areas of development with individual students
- Exploring strategies that can be implemented to help students access the curriculum including visual approaches, use of technology, individualised programmes and modifying our communication to help support their receptive communication skills

### Differentiation for mainstream and special schools

Mainstream schools	Special schools
<p><b>Focus on verbal skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social communication, inference skills</li> <li>• Developing expressive language skills e.g. conversation skills</li> <li>• Developing listening skills</li> <li>• Use of visual supports and resources to support development of skills e.g. The Conversation Train</li> <li>• Using examples and anecdotes from mainstream schools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Focus on pre-verbal skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing communication =&gt; introduction to picture-exchange technique =&gt; introduction to simple signing</li> <li>• Receptive language: =&gt; explore communicative differences and strategies to support these. Using examples and anecdotes from special schools.</li> <li>• Use of visual supports and resources to support development of skills</li> </ul>



## Module 2 Emotional regulation

### Description

Students with ASD often have difficulty identifying and communicating changes in their emotional state as well as identifying the emotions of others. These skills need to be explicitly taught without making any assumptions of their actual emotional awareness and understanding. Their level of emotional understanding is not necessarily comparable to their level of verbal communication skills.

This module explains the importance of implementing a curriculum that develops emotional awareness and successful implementation of strategies to help regulate changing emotional states.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- use strategies how to support students to identify and communicate changing emotional states
- Identify and implement strategies to support students when experiencing uncomfortable emotions. Note: There are no 'bad' feelings, just comfortable and uncomfortable.

### Key Themes

- Supporting teachers in recognising the emotional states of their students
- Supporting students in identifying emotional states in themselves and others
- Implementing programmes to develop 'emotional literacy' and understanding
- Implementing strategies to reduce uncomfortable emotional states.

### Differentiation for mainstream and special schools

Mainstream schools	Special schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying basic emotions (happy, sad, etc.)</li> <li>• Identifying emotional state through body language, tone of voice and facial expressions</li> <li>• Scaling feelings</li> <li>• Introduction to Zones of Regulation curriculum</li> <li>• Introducing strategies to self-regulate emotional state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying basic emotions</li> <li>• Creating a visual emotions scale</li> <li>• Identifying and implementing emotional regulation strategies with a focus on the adults needing to identify emotional state support emotional regulation</li> <li>• Introducing relaxation</li> </ul>



## Module 3 Social skills

### Description

ASD is characterized by difficulties in understanding social situations and interaction, and the thoughts, feelings and motives of others. Social skills are closely connected with both emotional understanding and expression and social communication and underpin all social activity and interaction.

It is important to identify, actively teach and acknowledge the importance of developing social skills, to allow students to maximise social capabilities.

This module identifies strategies to support learners with ASD to increase their social competence and to participate in social interactions.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Participants will:

- understand the social skill challenges of students with ASD
- be able to identify methods and tools of teaching different social skills
- gain knowledge of basic techniques and tools for teaching and supporting social skills development.

### Key Themes

- Understanding basic social skills
- Putting skills into practice in the real world: e.g. playing and interacting with others, working, turn-taking and sharing with others
- Techniques and tools for teaching social skills: social stories, comic strip conversations, social behaviour mapping, peer support, early play and interaction skills

### Differentiation for mainstream and special schools

Mainstream schools	Special schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful approaches and strategies for teaching social skills: social thinking concepts including Social Detective and Social Behaviour Mapping, social stories, comic strip conversations and peer support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing early play skills</li> <li>• Introduction to Intensive Interaction techniques</li> <li>• Writing and using a Social Story</li> </ul>



## Module 4 Sensory needs

### Description

Children with ASD experience the world differently from others due to their difficulties in interpreting and integrating sensory stimuli from the external environment and their own body. These differences occur from a very young age and impact on behaviour, social communication, motor skills, posture, speech and cognitive development. Addressing the child’s sensory issues can have a positive effect in all these areas.

Sensory-based strategies can increase the child’s internal motivation and desire for communication through pleasant play-based activities. In this module teachers will be shown how to use a range of different sensory strategies and activities to stimulate and regulate sensory functioning.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Participants will:

- gain knowledge and understanding of sensory differences
- be able to recognize problems in sensory functioning of children
- be able to apply sensory strategies and develop activities.

### Key themes

- Introduction to senses seven senses and sensory threshold
- Identifying sensory needs
- Providing sensory strategies

**Differentiation for mainstream and special schools – choose the presentation that best meets the knowledge and experience of the audience not necessarily the setting.**

Introduction to Topic	Advanced Level Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising that sensory needs (hypersensitivity) may cause anxiety and result in meltdowns, challenging or avoidant behaviour</li> <li>• Introduction to hyper, hypo, passive and active presentation of sensory differences across all senses (Dunn 1997) and strategies to support child</li> <li>• Understanding that sensory needs come first before ability to pay attention</li> <li>• Simple adjustments for the classroom environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In depth exploration of Dunn’s model with the neurological threshold continuum</li> <li>• Identifying the optimal learning zone</li> <li>• Using vestibular system for regulating level of activity</li> <li>• Using proprioceptive system for calming down and preventing self-harm</li> </ul>



## Module 5 Modifications and adaptations

### Description

Teaching students with ASD requires teachers to be flexible in their teaching methods. Adaptations and modifications of working methods as well as content of teaching, physical space and teaching materials may be necessary for effective participation of students with ASD in their learning. Teachers may need to modify the expected learning outcomes and the forms of measuring learning outcomes based on the understanding of diverse individual needs of students with ASD.

Identifying the characteristics of predictable, appropriate routines for children with ASD in a school environment may contribute to their success.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- use various teaching methods and work systems
- structure time, use schedules and implement visual structures
- identify suitable adjustments for individual learners.

### Key themes

- Adaptation and modification of teaching methods
- Adaptation and modification of content of teaching
- Adaptation and modification of space and materials
- Adaptation and modifications of learning outcomes

### Differentiation for mainstream and special schools

Mainstream schools	Special schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual structure in the primary school with some of reasonable adjustments</li> <li>• Modification of teaching content and independent tasks</li> <li>• Minimising distractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using all elements of structured teaching to maximise learning and develop independence with tasks</li> <li>• Creating a distraction-free and structured environment</li> </ul>



## Module 6 Challenging behaviour

### Description

Challenging behaviour may sometimes seem to appear abruptly and without a reason, some even see it as a symptom of ASD, but every challenging behaviour has a purpose and meaning for the individual and all.

Challenging behaviour can take many forms, but the differences and difficulties of those with ASD mean that it is important to examine such behaviour through an ‘ASD lens’: like an iceberg, the visible behaviour is only what we see, and will be underpinned by underlying autistic causes.

It is important to go beyond what is observed, and to explore the functions and underlying reasons of challenging behaviour.

The objective of this module is to support teachers to understand the underlying reasons for challenging behaviour and to develop support plans for individuals who present such behaviour.

### Learning outcomes

Participants will be able to:

- understand the underlying reasons for challenging behaviours (the iceberg model and situational aspects)
- understand the differences between appearance and functions of challenging behaviours
- implement direct and indirect assessment to analyse the function of behaviour
- develop prevention strategies (e.g. adjusting environment, teaching procedures, teaching new skills, using visual support)
- develop intervention strategies that will include the description of support when challenging behaviour appears and description of alternative behaviours that can replace challenging ones.

### Key themes

- What is challenging behaviour?
- Why students express challenging behaviours – functions of challenging behaviours?
- Indirect functional analysis methods
- Direct functional analysis methods
- Developing and evaluating support plans

**N.B. The presentation is the same for both mainstream and special schools but differentiation is through example materials shown, use of anecdotes and real-life scenarios and focus of strategies and resources discussed**

Mainstream schools	Special schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation of prevention strategies based on other modules (e.g.: curriculum adjustments, breaks, sensory reduced corner, adjustment of workstation position, social stories etc.)</li> <li>• Differentiation of intervention strategies (e.g. redirection, self-regulation strategies, reward systems, token system...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation of prevention strategies (e.g. comprehensive visual support, AAC, sensory reduced place and adjustments)</li> <li>• Differentiation of intervention strategies (e.g. interruption and redirection, time-out (break) from sensory stimulation, visual self-regulation strategies, reward system)</li> </ul>

**Note:** participants will use knowledge and skills learned in previous modules to create prevention and intervention strategies