

Researching strategies to help students on the autism spectrum stay on-task and transition between tasks in mainstream settings.

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Students on the autism spectrum often find mainstream school environments challenging. There can be a mismatch between the characteristics associated with autism and the school environment which may result in students having problems with regulating behaviour and attending to classwork. Many have difficulty maintaining attention to task, following through from one task element to the next and transitioning between tasks. In autism specific or special education settings, structured teaching strategies or visual supports are often used to provide greater clarity and predictability to school work. Visual schedules and work systems are used to inform students about what they are expected to do, and to give them forewarning of transitions and changes. Adapting these simple strategies to mainstream settings may help to support students on the spectrum and by implementing these strategies as part of an inclusive, whole class approach, other students may also benefit. There are however challenges associated with translating research into educational practice. Strategies that have proven effective in clinical or special education contexts may not transfer easily to mainstream settings. This presentation will discuss research on the effectiveness of visual schedules and work systems in mainstream classrooms. It will illustrate the importance of collaboration with mainstream teachers to facilitate the implementation.