

Top 5 Educational Strategies for Students with Autism

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The thought of raising a child with special needs can be overwhelming for most parents, but [according to the CDC](#), 1 in every 6 children is faced with a developmental disability that affects the way they grow, learn, or even communicate. Of those kids, many are identified as being on the autism spectrum.

In fact, the CDC has found that 1 out of every 58 kids are faced with an autism diagnosis, and their disabilities can range from barely there to profound speech and language limitations. It probably goes without saying that for many parents, raising a child with special needs, while overwhelming, is just reality.



After the sometimes-long process of diagnosis, parents are sometimes left trying to determine what their child's future will hold. Will he ever learn to talk? Can she get a job and support herself one day? Most parents have an unending list of questions and fear of the unknown. Eventually, every parent will need to figure out how to educate their kids,

and the best way for obtaining it. But what educational options are out there to benefit children with autism?

First, let's take a look at what the government provides all kids, regardless of disabilities. Then, join us as we explore effective educational practices for students with autism spectrum disorders before taking a look at the many options available to your child.

What Does the Law Say?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act, [most commonly known as IDEA](#), was officially enacted in 1990, when the government reauthorized former legislation known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, or EHA. The big idea behind IDEA is that everyone, regardless of disability, should be offered the same access to a free and appropriate education.

There are many parts to IDEA, but some of the key tenets are that all students who have a disability must have in place an individualized educational plan (IEP) that offers him or her a free education in what is known as “the least restrictive environment”. [According to its website](#), it also “governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, [and] special education”.

What you should know as a parent is that your local public-school district is obligated to provide kids with an education at no cost, while providing accommodations to meet his or her needs. In addition, students will be placed in the most typical classroom environment as possible. For example, if it is possible that your child's needs can be met in a general classroom alongside students without disabilities, that placement will be made. However, if your child needs additional resources that can't be provided in a typical classroom, there may be another program or campus available to meet his or her educational needs.

Educational Must-Haves for Students on the Spectrum

Say you're on the hunt for the best placement for your child, but perhaps you don't know what criteria by which to judge. Before we explore public and private options, let's take a look at what parents should be on the lookout for when it comes to the best available schooling options. To help your child reach his or her fullest potential, ensure the following:



- Teachers in the program or school are trained and knowledgeable about working with kids who have autism.
- If your child's teacher is going to be a general education teacher, he or she has in-class support from a member of the special education department on the campus.
- If pursuing public school options, the campus must be easy to work with, and an IEP will be completed with enough time to be implemented before the school year begins.
- Other teachers, such as those in music, art, or physical education should feel equipped to work with a student on the autism spectrum.
- If you're looking into a private school, the campus has a program available to meet your child's needs in place of an IEP, of which private schools are not obligated to create.
- The campus or program has other professionals who can work with kids in any needed services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or for counseling sessions.

Educational Strategies for Students with Autism: Which Route to Take?

The reason autism is referred to as being on a spectrum is because no one child with it is the same. Some kids have a very mild form that is nearly indistinguishable from peers, while some children are completely nonverbal and unable to communicate with family members. Of course, students enter the classroom each year with varying degrees of

disability, and they each manifest different symptoms, or they may display them differently from another student with the same disability.

All said, there are strategies to use that can help children with autism learn. However, those techniques are highly dependent on your child's unique abilities and disabilities, as well as the school placement and/or program that he or she will attend. To narrow down the options, ask yourself the following before making any decisions:

- How does my child react to other kids?
- How does he or she tolerate noise?
- Does my child have sudden outbursts that may become a problem in the general classroom setting?
- How well can he or she communicate with adults verbally? What about through body language or gestures?
- What are some of my child's special interests or talents?

How is his or her focus?

Depending on your answers to the above questions, some school programs may be more beneficial than others. For instance, if your child is nonverbal, it is not likely a mainstream classroom will be recommended or helpful. Kids who struggle with sensory input, such as large groups of kids making noise, may do better in a smaller on-campus resource classroom. For students who communicate reasonably well and are able to participate in a large-group setting may be able to be successful in an inclusive general education class. Once you know your child's individual needs, it's time to explore the options.

Effective Practices

Inclusion classes

Inclusive support options can take place in both public and private schools, though all public schools offer special education support alongside a detailed IEP. If your student is in an inclusion program, it means that he or she is in the regular classroom with grade-level peers, many of whom do not have any special needs or supports. This is the same type of classroom any neurotypical student would attend, but the difference is that public school provide another teacher in the room that supports students with special needs.

Resource classrooms

Most public-school campuses have a dedicated resource classroom for students with moderate to extensive special needs. Students in these classes are given the support needed based upon their IEPs. Most of the time, the students in the resource courses

will be mixed with peers who have varying disabilities, some of which may be cerebral palsy, profound learning disabilities, or students with traumatic brain injuries. Students are typically grouped by their level of academic and personal need, and placed into classrooms with student who need a similar amount of support.

Autistic support programs in public schools

Many public schools in large districts have programs dedicated to supporting children with autism. These schools will have resource rooms available with teacher specialists who only serve other kids on the spectrum. Check with your local district to see what programs are available on your campus.

Private special education schools

Most private schools do not offer special education programs for students with more intensive needs. As a result, some parents look for a private tuition-based program in a dedicated campus that serves only children with autism. If you have the financial resources available, check your local area to see what campuses exist nearby your home.

Homeschool or homebound instruction

Some areas have less support than others. One option that remains for parents who live in areas of the country where support is lacking can successfully homeschool. Research online for curriculum to meet your child's needs. In addition, seek out information about homebound services in your local public school district. Many schools provide teachers who travel to your home to work with students one-on-one. Contact your board of education to inquire, and to see how students may qualify for this free educational option.

At Kids Academy, we know that students learn differently, and all have a unique range of needs and abilities. No matter what option you choose for your child's schooling, we can help support his or her learning with apps that all kids enjoy. If you've only just begun researching the options for your child's schooling, consider the above information in your search. In the meantime, turn to Kids Academy for meaningful practice across the curriculum with a wide range of resources, like worksheets, videos, games, and more!

