

## **Classroom Management Techniques for Children with Spectrum Disorders** -adapted from *Rhythms of Grace* (Morehouse Publishing)

### **Communication**

- *Simple directions.* Use as few words as possible, speak slowly and give 3 steps or less in a sequence.
- *Enough response time.* When asking questions or giving directions, give ample time for the child to respond.
- *Eye contact.* Do not force eye contact for a child with spectrum disorders.
- *Repetition.* Ask the child to repeat key words in directions to verify understanding.
- *Pictures.* Use visual cues whenever possible to accompany verbal directions.
- *Listening.* Never assume that a child with a spectrum disorder is not listening, even if they appear to be “in their own world.”

### **Schedules**

- *Transitions.* Give warnings, use visual cues (icons or signs), use auditory cues.
- *Routine.* Keep the same routine when possible. If a variation is expected, give ample warning. Review routines at the beginning of the day, breaking it down into small chunks. Give visual guides to remind the child of the schedule.
- *Advance notice.* Give a ‘count down’ (“5 minutes,” “3 minutes,” “1 minute”) when it is time to change activities.
- *Auditory cues.* Use music to aid in transitions. Sing a song as activities change, or use a bell or recorded music as a cue.

### **Physical**

- *Gross-motor precedes fine-motor.* Jumping, running or swinging arms vigorously can help to settle a child for fine-motor activities.
- *Avoid loud noises.* Prepare the child when possible for loud noises. Allow children to cover their ears or leave the area.
- *Limit self-stimulating.* Set limits on ‘stimming’ (tapping, waving fingers, patterns, sounds, etc.) time.
- *Sensory defensiveness.* Notice and plan for particular likes/dislikes. Note which textures are unsettling for some and soothing for others.

### **Social**

- *Safe place retreat.* Provide safe space from which to observe – allow the child to retreat to a safe space with comfort objects if an activity becomes overwhelming.
- *Buddy pairs.* Support, encourage and facilitate friendship and pairing.
- *Use a timer.* Set limits for conversation on one topic.
- *Words and deeds.* Use a verbal description to match a physical/social cue. For example, say “I am happy to see you” with a smiling face.