

Oklahoma Autism Center School Observation Guide

Name _____ Observation Location(s) _____ Date(s) _____

This table present behaviors typically observed in students throughout the school day. Inconsistency, poor quality or the complete absence of these important behaviors could be indicators of ASD. This is not an exhaustive list.

SOCIAL INTERACTION			
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	BEHAVIORS OBSERVED
Social awareness or social orientation	The student notices that other people are present and shows more interest in people than objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking up when others come near • Alerting when name is called • Walking through school halls without bumping into everyone • Facing teacher in circle time or during class (instead of turning away to look at the computer) • Playing with another child (instead of playing alone or with an object) • Realizing that when the teacher gives directions to the entire class, she is also talking to the him/her 	
Sharing emotions with others	The student directs clear nonverbal cues towards others to let them know how he/she feels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking and smiling at someone else when something good happens • Frowning or making an “angry face” and directing the expression toward others to let them know he/she is frustrated. 	
Sharing attention with others (also called “joint attention”)	The student will follow someone else’s lead and look at what they want him to look at AND give clear cues to others that he wants them to see what he sees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring another person’s eyes and following where their gaze shifts • Following another person’s pointing gesture • Using own eyes to shift back and forth between the person he/she is talking to and the thing he/she wants them to see • Pointing to something to make sure someone else sees it 	
Showing empathy for others	The student shows concern when someone else is sick, hurt or sad and will attempt to comfort a peer who is sad or frustrated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patting a child who has fallen and saying “It’s okay” • Giving a stuffed animal to a child who is crying • Changing facial expression to show some concern or worry when someone else is upset or sad 	

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COMMUNICATION			
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	BEHAVIORS OBSERVED
Using gestures (with or without words)	The student will deliver a message to another person by moving his/her hands, head or body in a motion that is well-understood in the student's particular culture (using gestures shows he naturally pick up some of the practices of his culture, this an important indicator of social learning).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waving to indicate "goodbye" • Shrugging to indicate "I don't know" • Nodding head to indicate "yes" • Placing finger to lips to indicate "be quiet" 	
Spontaneous communication	The student tries to send a message to another person (with or without words; with or without adaptive supports). The emphasis is on attempting to communicate without others reminding or requiring it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenting to another student about the activity • Raising hand to ask a question or ask for help • Asking another person a question about their weekend • Asking an adult for a drink • Gesturing to another child to "come here" 	
Flexible conversation	The student tries different ways to send a message, especially if his/her listener doesn't seem to understand what he/she is trying to communicate AND not just sending the same message over and over again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rephrasing a question so that others can better understand what she is trying to communicate • Using pantomime or acting out motions to clarify your meaning • Applying a change in intonation or expressiveness of the voice to show what the student means or emphasize the most important part of the message • Asking a question once, perhaps seeking a little clarification, but not re-asking the same exact question 	

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COMMUNICATION (continued)			
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	BEHAVIORS OBSERVED
Reciprocal communication	The student takes turns with another person in a back-and-forth exchange of verbal and/or nonverbal behaviors that involves fluidly shifting back and forth between listening and expressing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two preschoolers discuss how many blocks belong on a tower: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sam: "We need more." ○ Ben: "No, 5 is good." ○ Sam: "More will be taller and louder when it falls." ○ Ben: (pause) "Okay, Maybe 8." • Two middle school students discuss a recent history test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harriet: "That was really hard." ○ Sara: "Yea, I didn't get the whole last part." ○ Harriet: "Do you mean the stuff about Henry VIII?" ○ Sara nods. ○ Harriet: "Me either, I don't think she covered that in class." 	

RESTRICTIVE, REPETITIVE, AND STEREOTYPICAL BEHAVIORS			
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	BEHAVIORS OBSERVED
Flexible thinking	The student adjusts to the changes in expectations or routines without a lot of distress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not becoming upset by having a substitute teacher • Transitioning: accepting an adult's request to leave a favorite activity (such as the computer) to do some other activity (such as joining a small group) • Accepting that different words can be used to mean a similar thing (i.e., there is no one way to express oneself). • Willingness to try a new way to solve a problem or play with something 	

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RESTRICTIVE, REPETITIVE, AND STEREOTYPICAL BEHAVIORS (continued)

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	BEHAVIORS OBSERVED
Enjoys a variety of interest and activities	The student is curious and willing to explore a broad range of ideas, subjects and activities. They listen to others talk about their area of interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to another student's book report on a topic never before explored • Willingness to talk about a variety of topics without spending too much time on one particular topic • Willingness to watch another child use a toy in a way that it wasn't intended to be used. For example, watching a child move a block in the air proclaiming "it's a plane" without getting upset 	

Other behaviors you may observe.

OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION
<p>Unusual Responses to Sensory Stimuli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atypical response to pain ▪ Smelling, licking or touching objects ▪ Appears to be sensitive to sounds, touch, light, etc. (e.g., aversion to being touched, squinting eyes, hands covering ears) <p>Engages with Toys or Materials in Unusual Way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spinning, twirling, banging objects ▪ Fixates on how objects work rather than its function ▪ Lines up objects ▪ Preoccupation with parts of objects <p>Challenging Behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hitting, biting, spitting, throwing objects, crying, screaming, running, falling on the ground 	