

AUTISM

(Children with Special Needs)

By

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What is Autism?

- It is a neurological, developmental disorder that affects one in every 88 children, with the female:male ratio of 1:4. Which means 1 in every 54 boys falls in the Autism spectrum
- Delays in speech & social interactions are observed. Symptoms start & become prominent usually ~2 years of age
- Cause is unknown, though MMR vaccination also seems to play a major role, as per Research

Categories

- **Mild to moderately affected:** High functioning children with Autism, whose IQ is above average & who can cope up inclusion with typical peers, with minimal help from Resource room. Some of them could even be “savants” – genius in certain areas, with speech & social delays. For Medical / statistical data for spectrum kids with above average IQ based upon diagnosis etc, please ref: Dr.Shilpa’s document
 - **Moderate to severely affected:** Very severe delays in all areas, along with sensory processing disorder/ may have lesser IQ, as the testing part can be more challenging. May need Special Ed class class rooms / schools with 1:1 therapies. Partial inclusion with strong support system may help.
- (**Resource room facilities:** Should include Special educator, a few para-educators or prompters or shadow aides, to ensure their better classroom performance). **Competent Autism consultants should supervise the entire special Ed team & ASD children on a monthly basis, for on-going guidance & improvements**

CURRENT CONCERNS

- CBSE students with Autism are currently being allowed the “scribe” support for their 10th grade exams & above, **where students with speech & social delays** are expected to “**SAY**” the answers to “**another student**”- It is **UNFAIR** due to their speech & social delays –scribe support is designed for kids with **Dyslexia & LD**. Instead, **SUITABLE** accommodations have to be in place for children with Autism.
- For Theory & Practical exams, the current methods of testing involve descriptive & oral explanation of the procedure respectively, which is **NOT** the right method to test children with Autism, due to their speech delay.

What do we want?

- Children with Autism (entire spectrum) deserve the RIGHT set of accommodations for their **elementary, High school, Board exams** etc, set up based upon THEIR needs such as: **FURTHER DETAILS GIVEN AS ATTACHMENT**
- 1:1 “Adult prompter or special educator” instead of scribe who is a junior student (to motivate & reinforce the kids to perform, for theory & practical exams, to ask suitable “wh” questions to the students to help them understand the question better, so the students can perform better)
- **THEORY EXAMS: They should be tested through MCQ in all subjects** (multiple choice question papers, with visuals should please be used in the question paper). **As Autism significantly impacts a child’s speech, it is UNFAIR to test speech delayed children through descriptive questions** (along with other existing accommodations such as extra time, usage of calculator, computer, waiving 2nd language etc).
- **PRACTICAL EXAMS:** Prompter should be allowed for practical exams also, to avoid any accidents which may happen due to their co-ordination difficulties or sensory processing issues. **And instead of descriptive / oral testing part, they should please be given MCQ options or for oral test part, wh questions with options, can be asked to draw diagram etc.**

Conclusion

Children with Autism also have the Right To Education & learn from LRE (Least Restrictive Environment), along with their typical peers & be eligible for their **NEED BASED accommodations**, so that their test score will reflect their knowledge about the subject, instead of their deficits.

We request the CBSE Board to kindly implement these genuine changes immediately, so that the current batch of students who appear for Board exam can also benefit. Please contact me for any technical details or assistance, in this regard.

Thank you!

Amrutha Ramanujam

(Representing the ENTIRE Autism community of India).