

AUTISM

(Children with Special Needs)

By

Amrutha Ramanujam, M.Tech (IIT)

Special Ed & Autism Consultant / Parent Advocate, with many years of exposure to special & Inclusive education from CA, USA

Support Group Owner of “Special-Kids-India”

Email: ramrut1@gmail.com, 9704822663, Hyderabad, India

& AUTISM SOCIETY OF INDIA

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. Medical / statistical data for spectrum kids with above average IQ based upon diagnosis. (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 rooms 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

- Though our Indian Government passed the “No child left behind policy” in 2009, children with **Autism are NOT included in MOST OF THE regular ed school setting (State / CBSE & ICSE boards), as of today.** Only a few schools are supportive.
- Autism children are being given “scribe” support in their 10th grade exams & above, where students with speech & social delays have to “SAY” the answers to “another student” - It needs to be modified because it is UNFAIR to make the Autism children to take the scribe support –scribe support is meant only for kids with Dyslexia & LD. **SUITABLE accommodations have to be in place for children with Autism.**

What do we want?

- Under “No child left behind policy, we want children with Autism ALSO to be included in regular ed State board / CBSE / ICSE schools, with needed resource room facilities. (Each school should be mandated to accept atleast 2% of students, with Autism)
- For their 10th & higher grade exams etc, they should have accommodations set up based upon THEIR needs such as:
- 1. 1:1 “para / special educator / adult prompter” instead of scribe who is a junior student (to motivate & reinforce the kids to perform, to ask suitable “wh” questions to the students to help them understand the question better, so the students can perform better) &
2. They should be tested through MCQ (multiple choice question papers, with visuals should be used). **As Autism severely 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).

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.

Request you to kindly help us towards the goal & we're hoping to see that happen soon. Please contact me for any technical details or assistance, in this regard.

Thank you!

Amrutha Ramanujam & ASI

(On behalf of the **ENTIRE Autism community** of India).

