About Transactional Supports
A Framework for Supporting Active Engagement in Students with Autism

What are Transactional Supports?

Autism NAVIGATOR® for Success in K-2 Classrooms

The term "Transactional Supports" refers to the supports or strategies used by others to promote a student's learning and development. The following evidence-based supports and strategies can be used in classroom activities with students to promote active engagement and social communication development. These supports are organized into three layers: 1)Supports for a Shared Agenda, 2) Supports for Social Reciprocity, and 3) Supports for Better Skills. Like making a layer cake, it's important to develop the first layer before adding the second and third layers.

Layer 1: Shared agenda

Supports for a shared agenda ensure that activities are meaningful and motivating for students with ASD and that activities reflect a sense of classroom community.

1. **Relevant activities** are both functional and meaningful to the student. When activities are relevant, the student understands the purpose of the activity and how it relates to their experiences or interests. An interest in trains or superheroes can be easily infused into a math example, spelling list, or reading passage.

2. **A productive role** lets the child know exactly what to do and how to participate by using materials in an appropriate way. Roles can be as simple as putting up a backpack, turning in a folder or getting materials ready for an activity.

3. **Predictable, clearly defined activity** lets the child know what is coming next by making the beginning, middle, and end of each activity clear to the child. Teachers can provide verbal, nonverbal and visual supports to help the child anticipate and understand next steps.

Layer 2: Social Reciprocity

Supports for social reciprocity promote successful interactions and encourage communication, questioning, and sharing of ideas.

4. **Clear messages support comprehension** by letting the student know what they are expected to listen to and do. Teachers should say something once while conveying a clear expectation for a response. If the child does not respond, the teacher can say it once more while offering help or contextual cues as needed so the child will comprehend and respond to the message.

5. **Modeling language** consistent with what the student is paying attention to allows teachers to capitalize on critical language learning moments. Modeling language also includes giving the child words they can use in various situations (e.g., answering in class, getting help when needed, getting a peer's attention).

6. **Promoting interactions** creates opportunities for a balance of turns within activities that encourage student initiations by offering choices, using natural pauses during interactions, and holding out for directed communication.

Layer 3: Better Skills

Support for better skills promote flexibility, problem solving, and independence.

7. **Balance of interaction and independence** supports a student's ability to work successfully on their own, to include others when appropriate and be flexible. This means supporting the student to shift between materials, topics, and people, and think through problems on their own.

8. **Adjust expectations and supports** depending on the student's level of emotional regulation. When the student is dysregulated, supports should be increased. When the student is well-regulated expectations and demands can be increased with an emphasis on learning new skills.