



Read Aloud Classroom Connection Activities for Children's Books on Autism



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Directions

After selecting and reading a book from the [Children's Books on Autism](#) collection, consider selecting one or more of these activities to help students deepen their understanding of autism. The activities listed are designed to supplement the reading and may be used with students in pre-K through 12th grade.

Not every activity will be appropriate for every student or classroom setting. Teachers and families are encouraged to choose the activities that best meet the needs and learning styles of their students.

It is also important to respect the feelings, preferences, and comfort levels of autistic individuals. Before engaging in discussions about autism, ensure that any autistic students in the classroom feel safe, respected, and comfortable, and that participation in discussions or activities related to autism is never required.



Perspective Taking Connection Activities

Create a Feelings Map

Have students identify the feelings that the characters were experiencing and map what triggered these feelings. Using a blank piece of paper and markers, students write the character's name or draw the character in the center of the paper. From the center, draw lines outward to make "branches," each labeled with a different feeling (e.g., happy, scared, frustrated, surprised).

Explore the [Grab and Go Resource Gallery of Interventions: Graphic Organizers](#) for additional ideas and templates.

Think-Pair-Share

Have students discuss what they noticed about the autistic character's strengths, challenges, and/or communication style.

Think: After reading the book, give students 1-2 minutes of quiet reflection.

What strengths did you notice in the autistic character?

Any challenges the autistic character faced?

How did the autistic character communicate or interact with others?

How did the other characters respond?

Pair: Have students find a partner and take turns sharing their observations.

What specific moment in the story stood out to you?

How can classmates support someone with similar traits?

What did you learn about differences in communication style?

Share: Invite partners to share with the class their observations. Chart their responses under headings: Strengths, Challenges and Communication Styles. Follow up with how students with autism need to be accepted, not changed.

Develop a Connection Activity

Create a "Me & the Autism Character" Comparison Chart. Students can complete a simple two-column chart:

Column 1: "About Me"

Column 2: "About the Autism Character"

Have students create a "We All Have Something in Common" mural. Each student adds a drawing or sentence showing a similarity they found. This becomes a visual reminder of shared humanity and inclusion.



Strengths of Superstars Posters

After reading a book, discuss the strengths of the main character or characters in the book. Afterwards, each student uses a template to create a poster that outlines their strengths. Discussions can identify how each person has unique strengths and the value that brings to the classroom. Display the posters in the room.

Special Interest Curiosity Cards

Give students question cards based on their autistic classmates' interests. Assign a day and time for them to ask autistic classmates their questions. This activity will help reduce stigma around special interests and shows the autistic person you respect their interests.

Example Questions:

- What do you like most about [special interest]?
- How did you get interested in [special interest]?
- What's one fact you wish everyone knew about [special interest]?

Simulation Activities

Blurry vision

Distribute a worksheet (simple reading passage or math problems) and provide an overlay (plastic wrap, wax paper, smudged glasses covered in petroleum jelly) that blurs their vision. Give students 2-3 minutes to complete the worksheet. Discuss what made the activity challenging. How could you support a classmate with visual processing challenges and what accommodations could you provide to help?

Noise Level Challenge

Have students watch this [animated video](#) to get a glimpse of a person experiencing sensory overload. Discuss how often our sensory experiences intertwine with our daily lives and how we adjust to those experiences.

Noise Filtering Challenge

While playing background noise (e.g., music, white noise), have students listen to a story or to directions/instructions on how to complete an activity. Gradually increase the volume of the background noise. Discuss with students how hard it was to focus on the spoken word with the background noise.

Unexpected Change Challenge

Students are given instructions to start a simple task (e.g., coloring a picture, building with blocks, gluing an art project together, etc.) Shortly after beginning activity,



announce a sudden change. Discuss with students how it made them feel when their original plan was interrupted.

Sensory-Related Connection Activities

Many books focus on sensory preferences and differences. Choose a book that focuses on sensory differences. Read the book out loud and allow students to identify their own sensory needs.

Exploration of Sensory Preferences

Have students think about and explore their own sensory preferences using guiding questions such as:

- What are some sounds that bother you?
- What are some foods that you don't like?
- What smells bother you?
- Do you prefer a warm drink or a cold drink?
- Do you like to listen to music while working or do you need it quiet?
- Would you rather curl up with a heavy blanket or a light-weight blanket?
- What type of clothing do you like to wear?
- What helps you stay focused and pay attention in class?
- Would you rather do your work by standing or sitting?

Sensory Stations

Set up sensory stations with different textures, sounds, visuals, smells, and taste. Have students explore the stations. Have them discuss their preferences, (e.g., which ones feel calming or too overwhelming or unpleasant to them.)

Touch/Texture Station

Provide a variety of textures- soft fabric, rough sandpaper, smooth stones, slime, squishy balls, etc.

Sound Station

Play a variety of different recordings- calm music, nature sounds, city noise, white noise, crowd noise, etc.

Visual Station

Provide bright vs. dim lighting, busy patterns vs. simple visuals, colorful vs. neutral images, etc.



Smelling Station

Add a variety of different smells to cotton balls and place them in film canisters. Consider using scented oils-vanilla, lavender, citrus, peppermint, lemon, cleaning substance, etc.

Taste Station

Provide a variety of food textures- Jello, spaghetti noodles, pudding, pretzels, crackers, applesauce, bananas, etc.

Sensory Station Follow-Up Activity

Incorporate a classroom "Sensory Preference Chart". Provide three columns identified as sensory items, how it felt, and calming/neutral/overwhelming. After visiting stations and trying each item, students think about how the items made their body feel and record their observations on the chart. Compare and contrast the classroom results explaining that each of our bodies responds to sensory items in different ways.

Sensory Tools

Give students the opportunity to create simple sensory tools for the classroom.

Calm Down Jar

Using a jar or plastic bottle, add glitter or beads in water. Seal tightly and decorate.

Weighted Fidget

Using a sock or small Ziplock bag, fill it with rice or beans. Depending on the item used, tie or sew closed and decorate.

DIY Stress Ball

Using a funnel, fill a balloon with rice, flour, or sand. Students choose the balloon they prefer based on either the softness or firmness of the balloon. Tie off at the end of the balloon. Seal tightly and decorate.

Self-Regulation Connection Activities to Support All Students

Break Toolkit

Let students explore a variety of sensory tools and preferred activities. The toolkit can be a pencil box case; small plastic tote with a lid or any other container with a lid. Sensory tools can include, but limited to stress balls, pop-its, small pad of paper with markers/pen, a timer, putty, etc. Students pick 3-5 sensory tools to place in their toolkit. Teachers can discuss when the toolkits might be helpful, and how and where to use them.



Break Choice Boards

Students can create their own visual board with break options (e.g., sensory space or break area, stretching/walking, drawing, using a fidget, etc.). Once the student has picked out their preferred activities, they can cut/paste pictures of those activities on their individual choice board. Discussion can identify why different choices help different people.

Calm Down Corner

Choose a quiet location in the classroom that's away from high traffic areas yet still visible to the teacher. Add comfortable seating such as a bean bag chair or small cushion. Provide calming tools such as fidgets, stress balls, weighted items, noise-cancelling headphones, timers, etc. Set clear expectations by teaching students how and when to use the space. Incorporate visual supports for both teaching when to use the calm down corner and when in the calm down corner, the steps for deep breathing exercises and identification of emotions on a chart with helpful strategies.

Communication Connection Activities

Literal vs. Figurative Language

Discuss with students what is figurative language or idioms. Put common idioms on a card ("break a leg," "hold your horses," "raining cats and dogs"). Have students describe what the idiom means to them (e.g., literal). Then explain to the students what the idiom means (e.g., figurative). Then have students decide how we can speak the message more effectively for everyone to understand.

Communication Boards

Provide a communication board filled with simple picture symbols (apple, weather, car, sun, house, book, bed, etc.). Grab a partner. Identify one partner as the speaker and the other partner as the listener. One partner communicates to the other partner about what they did on the weekend but is only allowed to point to the symbols on the communication board, no words. Discuss with students how difficult it is to communicate information if words are not available.



Long-Term Study or Inquiry Projects

Older students or project-based learning groups can:

- **Research autism pioneers** (e.g., Temple Grandin, Donna Williams, Sondra Williams, Kim Clairy, Stephen Shore)
- **Create classroom awareness campaigns** (posters, videos, school announcements)
- **Compare media representations of autism over time**
- **Build a class library guide linking books** to themes like empathy, communication, or sensory differences.
- **Community Accessibility Review** (research and visit local businesses and community spaces to evaluate their accommodation and accessibility opportunities).

Activities for Supporting Students with Autism

Goal Setting

After reading a selected book, help the autistic student identify goals (social, organizational, and emotional).

Step 1: Ask the student with autism spectrum disorder to think about what the character wanted to work toward in the story, some prompts may be: “What was something the character wanted?”, “What was important to the character?”, or “What was hard for the character in the beginning?”

Step 2: Discuss the steps that the character in the book took to reach their goal. Who or what helped them succeed?

Step 3: Invite autistic students to create a goal for themselves that feels meaningful or helpful to them. Prompts could include:

- “Something I want to practice is...”
- “One thing I’d like to work toward is...”
- “I want to work on feeling more confident in...”



Just Like Me Connections

Create a chart together with two columns:

Column 1: Things that the character likes/needs

Column 2: Things I like/need

Students with ASD can place stickers, draw pictures, or dictate answers. This activity supports self-acceptance and understanding similarities without masking differences.

Visual Supports & Social Narratives

After reading a selected book, think about your classroom and learning environments. Identify areas that you can include visual support to promote access, predictability, and routine. Connect social and/or academic situations from the book to similar experiences your autistic student may encounter during the school day and develop a social narrative to support those moments.

Social narrative topics can include things such as Recess, Lunchtime, Circle Time, Making Friends at School, Doing My School Work, Asking for Help, and When I Need to Calm My Body Down

Explore AIM modules: [Social Narratives](#) and [Visual Supports](#) to learn more on supporting autistic individuals using these evidence-based practices.