



Forging positive connections between teachers and students on the autism spectrum - using insider information

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Research has shown that understanding, rather than knowledge of the autism spectrum is vital for teachers to be able to forge positive connections with students on the autism spectrum. As both an educator and a person on the autism spectrum I have been using my insider information to help schools and pre-schools understand their autistic spectrum students. By framing autism as a culture I have been able to help individual teachers understand the differences between the way they and their students on the autism spectrum perceive and respond to themselves and the world around them. This in turn has positively impacted teaching and learning as teachers understand the social-emotional framework of their students on the autism spectrum.

The thinking styles prevalent in autism impact social emotional learning and unless understood can be seen to be barriers to connections between students and between students and staff. Personal and social capabilities of students on the autism spectrum can be misjudged when people do not understand the differences in perception experienced by these students and the impact of that on them. For example, time is perceived differently by many on the autism spectrum, who have a 'now is forever' thinking style. Turn taking and transitions are therefore very difficult for these students, but can be made much easier by explicitly letting the student know that they will have another turn soon or be able to go back to that activity later.

This presentation will share some of this insider information and the effect that it has had on teachers and their students as understanding has grown and positive connections have been able to develop more easily. This presentation will enable teachers to gain insights into their students on the autism spectrum as well as facilitate an appreciation of why these students can be so challenging at times. By the end teachers will have an understanding of why strategies work sometimes and not others and ideas about how to maximise the personal and social capabilities of their students on the autism spectrum.