

Autism Fast Facts: Education

‘Community Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Autism’ & ‘Experiences of Autistic People and their Families’.



As the peak body for autistic people and their families, Amaze is committed to improving access to quality education for autistic students.

Amaze aims to increase community understanding, engagement and acceptance of autism and to influence systemic change within the education system.

Amaze will do this by ensuring Australians understand the facts and reject the myths about autism and by educating the community on how to better support autistic people.

ff Our teachers do their best and have excellent intentions. But they have no chance of following through on their commitment to the kids with diagnoses, as they do not have funding for additional staff supports.”



**Shaping the future
for Autism.**

Understanding education issues for autistic students:

The first step is to reveal what the Australian community knows, feels and thinks about the educational needs of autistic students, and how this compares to what autistic students and their families' current experience of education is.

We've investigated these perspectives to advocate for a more inclusive education system.

The facts are revealing and compelling...

35%

of autistic students
do not complete year 10 or above



44%

of autistic students in secondary school
had to move school because they weren't supported



74%

of Australians agree that
schools should make adjustments for autistic people



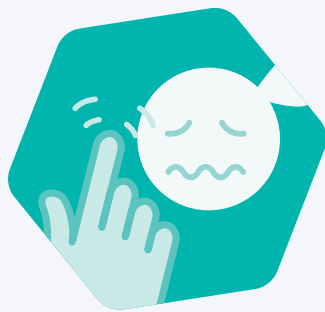
But only 52%

of Australians agree/unsure if
schools can refuse to enrol autistic students



84%

of Australians reported a
perceived discrimination against autistic people



56%

of autistic people
being treated unfairly in education



97%

of autistic students
experience educational restrictions

“Schools and teachers need more training about Autism. Each year, as a parent, I have to educate my child's teachers about Autism, then about girl traits and only then can **I educate them about my child's needs.**”



78% of Australians were aware that autistic people have difficulty making friends



8% of people said they would be concerned if their child's classmate was autistic



10% of people said they would be concerned if their child's best friend was autistic

“People saw me as something they could utilise rather than a burden. I could sense that belief in me. I was able to step up to my potential”.

“I loved learning. School provided the intellectual challenge that I desperately needed”.

98%

of Australians have heard of autism



87%

of autistic people / families agree Australians have heard of autism

29%

of Australians believe they know how to support an autistic person



But only 4%

of autistic people / families agreed people in the community know how to support autistic people

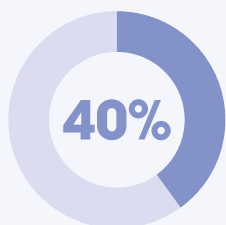
Autism is a lifelong disability but 30-55% of Australians agree/are unsure if autism can be cured and 22% agree/are unsure that people grow out of autism.

There is no specific cause of autism but 12% of Australians agree/are unsure that vaccines (like MMR) cause autism.

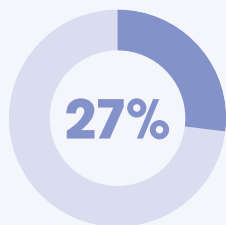
Victoria's report card.

Support for autistic students: how Victoria's schools are doing.

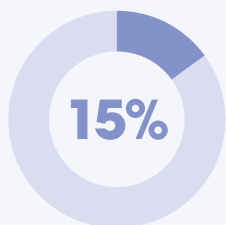
The stats are in on the support currently being experienced by autistic students at school >



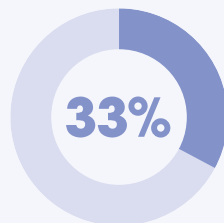
Provision/use of extra classroom support



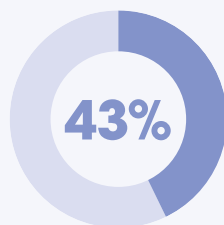
Support for autistic students outside the classroom



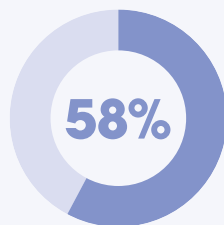
Working with other students



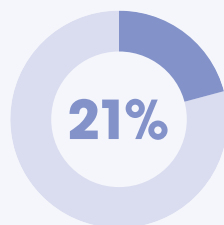
Modification of the curriculum



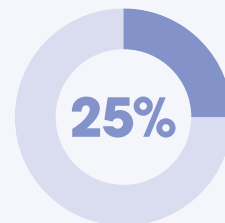
Establishment of clear routines and avoidance of changes



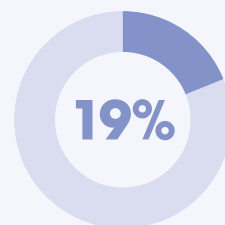
Clear communication between school and home



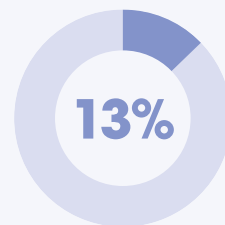
Creation of a 'classroom timeout break' process



Change in assessment techniques



Adjusted sensory environment (noise, light, smell)



Effective process for dealing with bullying

Check out the '10 things schools should do' to improve the education experience for autistic students >

Source: 'Community Attitudes & Behaviours towards Autism; and Experience of Autistic People and their Families': Research report prepared by Centre for Health and Social Research, Australian Catholic University, Social Research Centre for AMAZE 12 December 2017

10 simple adjustments schools can make to greatly improve the educational experience of autistic students.

An individualised learning approach in schools will help each autistic student utilise their strengths and meet their unique needs. These 10 simple adjustments will help pave the way for tailored learning programs and improve the outcomes for students.



1

Modify the curriculum

Autistic students may require the curriculum to be adapted in some way. Lessons and a curriculum which are planned for the rest of the class may not be suited to autistic learning styles. Modifying the curriculum will likely benefit other students with varied learning styles.



2

Change assessment techniques

All students need to be supported to demonstrate what they know, however sometimes the assessment design can act as a barrier for autistic students. Simple changes to assessments, tests and exams such as providing additional reading time, using checklists to assist with planning, and breaking down tasks into stages can help autistic students demonstrate what they know to the best of their ability.



3

Extra classroom support

Additional resources in classrooms, such as a teacher's aide, can be beneficial in supporting the teacher in maximising learning for all students. A teacher's aide can also support students outside of the classroom and on school camps.



4

Establish clear routines and avoid changes

Autistic students find comfort in predictable routines. They may find it difficult to alter routines and change out of particular mindsets. Simple adjustments can reduce the anxiety of autistic students such as using visual schedules, allowing specific seating arrangements and providing as much notice as possible to any changes.



5

Adjust sensory environment (noise, light, smell)

Autistic students can be acutely sensitive and aware of light, sound, odours, tastes, touch and textures – far more than their neurotypical peers. If so, autistic students will avoid sensory stimulus that they find difficult. They may need to leave the classroom if the noise becomes too loud or wear sunglasses or hats to reduce light. Overexposure may lead to becoming overwhelmed and result in a meltdown.



Support autistic students outside the classroom

Autistic students find difficulty outside the classroom. Necessary support strategies should be in place to support the student in all transitions to, and experiences of, new situations. This could include using or developing a buddy system to support students with transitions, establishing lunchtime activity clubs or yard duty teachers observing autistic students in the playground.



Clear communication between school and home

A well-established process for information to be passed from family to teacher at school drop off and pick up, can allow any key details about how a student is feeling, if there were any issues or prior incidents the family or teacher should know about. This should also be supported with formal Student Support Group meetings.



Deal with bullying effectively

Autistic children are more likely to experience bullying because of their difficulty in reading body language and understanding of social and cultural norms. As a consequence, schools and teachers need to be particularly vigilant where autistic students are concerned. A positive attitude towards autistic students and full acceptance requires a commitment to ensuring their safety and wellbeing at all times.



Working with other students

When a student and their parents are comfortable with others being informed of a diagnosis of autism, an agreement can be made to inform and educate other students. Autism should be presented as a different way of thinking and experiencing the world. Educators can then include this in teaching children about difference and inclusion.



Create a 'classroom timeout break'

When an autistic student is becoming overwhelmed, it is important that they are able to self-regulate their behaviour. Allowing an autistic student to leave the classroom for a short period of time to self-regulate in their own time and space will mitigate further escalation and a potential meltdown.