**Pointers for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Physical Education**

**Definition:** Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotypical movements, restricted interested, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. This impairment may include Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (Atypical Autism), Asperger’s Disorder, Rett’s Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder or all Pervasive Developmental Disorders.

**General Pointers:**

* Student may be experiencing impaired non-verbal and verbal communication.
* Student may display lack of eye contact.
* There may be a restricted range of interests.
* Student may be resistant to any change in routine or schedule.
* May display obsessive repetitive body movements such as hand flapping or spinning.
* Student may have a lack of awareness of the existence or feelings of others.
* There may be a lack of fear of real danger, or a real fear for no apparent reason.
* the student may have an unusual response to stimuli or sensations (e.g., pain, touch, noise, hearing, taste, smell and balance).
* There may be a wide range of behavior, from repetitive to aggressive to extremely passive.
* May develop an attachment to unusual objects and toys (e.g., a piece of string).

**Modifications Suggestions:**

* Establish predictable and structured routines.
* Establish consistent classroom expectations and consequences.
* Reinforcement should be positive, consistent and frequent.
* Integrate social skills, opportunity to practice self-control and social problem solving in activities.
* Use visuals – picture stories, station signs, picture symbols, etc.
* Choose activity based learning. Encourage vigorous exercise to reduce self-stimulation.
* Allow the student to become familiar with established routines.
* Use stations to teach activities. Keep same stations for several weeks, and change only one station at a time to maintain routine.
* Eliminate excessive/extraneous stimulation.
* Duplicate teaching strategies of classroom teacher.
* Avoid abstract lessons and language. Be deliberately concrete
* Provide a ‘cool down’ or ‘break’ space in the gym where the student can go to settle or get himself under control.
* Give prompts and cues so that the student is aware when activities are changing.

NC Adapted PE Advisory Council 10/26/2011