

AUTISM IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL: UNDERSTANDING THE AUTISTIC PROFILE AND ADAPTING TEACHING PRACTICES

Training for secondary school teachers and educational staff

Practical tools to support autistic students and promote their academic success

Duration : 5 hours	Modules : 4 modules
Lessons : 19 lessons	Audience : Secondary school teachers, educational staff, learning support assistants
Format : 100% online, asynchronous	Provider : N° 11757351875
Certification : Qualiopi	Price : On request

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Course description

This 5-hour online training course helps secondary school educators understand the cognitive and sensory functioning of autistic students, identify their specific needs, and implement concrete pedagogical adaptations. You will explore inclusive education support systems, crisis management strategies, and effective collaboration with families and multidisciplinary teams. The course includes practical workshops, simulation exercises, and downloadable resources. By the end, you will be equipped to welcome and support autistic students in your classroom, promoting their success without waiting for a formal diagnosis.

Module summary

MODULE 1	Understanding Autism — Functioning, Profiles, and Diversity	5 lessons
MODULE 2	Identifying a student with undiagnosed autism or awaiting diagnosis	5 lessons
MODULE 3	Adapting one's pedagogy and classroom environment	5 lessons
MODULE 4	Working in a team and with families	4 lessons

Learning objectives

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- Understand the cognitive and sensory functioning of autistic students and the concept of the autism spectrum
- Identify warning signs of autism in students who are undiagnosed or awaiting diagnosis
- Implement concrete pedagogical and environmental adaptations to reduce anxiety and promote learning
- Recognise and manage crisis situations with appropriate de-escalation strategies
- Collaborate effectively with families, teaching teams, and multidisciplinary support systems
- Use digital and visual tools to support communication and inclusion in the classroom

General information

Duration	5 hours
Target audience	Secondary school teachers, educational staff, learning support assistants, inclusion coordinators
Prerequisites	None - training accessible to all adult audiences
Price	On request - VAT not applicable (article 261-4-4° du CGI)
Certification	Qualiopi - Certificate of completion
Training provider	DYNSEO - Registration number: 11757351875

Lesson 1 - Autism today — definition and developments in our understanding

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): current definition according to the DSM-5
- The concept of the spectrum: why two autistic pupils can be very different
- What autism is not: neither a mental illness, nor a behavioural disorder, nor a lack of education
- Evolution of scientific and social perspectives: from Kanner to neurodiversity

Lesson 2 - Autistic cognitive functioning

- Weak central coherence: attention to detail rather than the bigger picture
- Executive functions: planning, flexibility, inhibition — difficulties and school impact
- Theory of mind: understanding others' intentions and emotions is not intuitive
- Common strengths: memory, logic, hyper-focus, precision, honesty

Lesson 3 - Hypersensitivity and sensory profile

- The 7 senses involved: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, vestibular, proprioception
- Hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity: practical examples in the classroom
- Why walking between lessons can be more exhausting than an hour's lesson
- Sensory self-regulation behaviours often misinterpreted (stereotypes, withdrawal)

Lesson 4 - Communication and social interactions

- Literal communication: humour, irony, innuendo and sarcasm pose problems
- Difficulties with social pragmatics: speaking up, waiting one's turn, making eye contact
- The implicit social codes of secondary school: a jungle for the autistic pupil
- The difference between wanting to interact and not knowing how: isolation is not a choice

Lesson 5 - Portraits of pupils with autism — 4 profiles to challenge the stereotypes

- Case study 1: The high-achieving autistic student who masks their difficulties
- Case study 2: The non-verbal student with complex communication needs
- Case study 3: The autistic girl with atypical presentation often overlooked
- Case study 4: The student with autism and co-occurring conditions

Lesson 1 - Warning signs in the classroom and school life

- Difficulties with group work, debates and role-play
- Taking instructions and open-ended assessments literally
- Extreme sensitivity to changes in timetable, classroom or teacher
- Intense fatigue at the end of the day despite appearing calm

Lesson 2 - 'Masking' — when the autistic student hides their true self

- Masking: imitating social behaviours to go unnoticed
- Why masking is exhausting and can lead to autistic burnout
- Autistic pupils with high intellectual potential: a diagnosis often delayed
- Autistic girls: often atypical profile, underdiagnosed, masked differently

Lesson 3 - The teacher's role in identification and referral

- Observing without diagnosing: what teachers can notice and report
- How to communicate observations to families and Educational Psychologist without causing alarm
- Diagnostic delays in France: how to act before an official diagnosis
- Local support services: Autism Resource Centres, outreach support, child psychiatrists

Lesson 4 - Navigating the support system without losing sight of the pupil

- Real timelines: between early signs and EHCP, it takes 2–3 years — what to do meanwhile
- How to implement informal adjustments without waiting for formal diagnosis
- SEN units, outreach support, Teaching Assistants: who does what and how to collaborate
- Common mistakes: too many professionals, lack of coordination, pupil becomes a 'case'

Lesson 5 - Simulating autistic functioning — immersion workshop

- Simulated sensory overload exercise: understanding why corridors can be overwhelming
- Interpreting an ambiguous instruction from a literal communicator's perspective
- Watching a classroom interaction and identifying unspoken social cues that may be missed
- Debrief: how will this change the way I plan tomorrow morning's lesson?

MODULE 3

Adapting one's pedagogy and classroom environment

5 lessons

Lesson 1 - Structuring the environment to reduce anxiety

- Predictability as support: visible timetables, start and end-of-lesson routines
- Anticipating changes in advance: give a 10-minute warning, not 10 seconds
- Seating in the classroom: back to the wall, away from noise, near the door
- A calm-down space: a quiet, designated area within the school

Lesson 2 - Adapting instructions and learning materials

- Give clear, concise, concrete instructions with no implicit meaning
- Visual supports: diagrams, pictograms, task plans, numbered steps
- Avoid assigning group work without preparation or clearly defined roles
- Reduce sensory overload: appropriate fonts, plain backgrounds, no background music

Lesson 3 - Adapting assessment and stressful situations

- Mock exams and surprise tests: particularly anxiety-inducing for autistic pupils
- Extra time, separate room, option to respond orally, rewording of questions
- Avoid assessments based on group work without appropriate adjustments
- Marking: separate content from presentation when the pupil's needs justify it

Lesson 4 - Managing crisis situations and preventing future ones

- Recognising early warning signs: restlessness, sudden withdrawal, repetitive movements
- De-escalation strategies: do not touch, speak calmly, allow physical and emotional space
- What should never be done: force eye contact, touch without warning, react impulsively
- After a crisis: debrief one-to-one, identify triggers, adapt environment — crisis as information

Lesson 5 - Transforming teaching materials — before/after workshop

- Rewrite a typical instruction for an autistic pupil: no implicit meaning, broken into steps
- Adapt a lesson plan to include routines and clearly signposted transitions
- Create a 'classroom passport': one-page summary of needs, triggers, coping strategies
- Downloadable templates: rewritten instructions, structured lesson plan, calm-down support sheet

MODULE 4

Working in a team and with families

4 lessons

Lesson 1 - Coordinating the teaching team

- Sharing relevant information with colleagues while respecting confidentiality
- Ensuring consistency in adjustments across subjects to avoid contradictions
- The role of key staff members: senior leaders, pastoral staff, head of year
- Multi-professional review meetings: how to prepare, participate, and ensure follow-up

Lesson 2 - Working with families of autistic pupils

- Understanding that parents are often the first experts on their child
- Common mistakes to avoid: minimising concerns, making comparisons, making empty promises
- Establishing a regular and reassuring communication channel
- How to address difficult situations without putting parents on the defensive

Lesson 3 - Digital and visual tools to support inclusion

- AAC apps: when to introduce them and how to implement them in the classroom
- Visual structuring tools: visual timetables, timers, pictogram-based sequences
- Digital tools for autistic learners: Mon Dico for communication, Coco for cognitive training
- Ensuring continuity between home and school: sharing tools with families

Lesson 4 - Ensuring continuity in the pupil's journey — from lower to upper secondary and beyond

- What is lost at each transition: support strategies not passed on, schools starting from scratch
- Creating an effective handover document: what to include, who writes it, who it's shared with

- Preparing the pupil to become active in their own support: expressing needs, asking for help
- Post-secondary challenges: higher education and employment — laying the groundwork now

Teaching methods

- Online self-paced learning accessible 24/7 from any device
- Video lessons, interactive exercises, practical simulation workshops
- Downloadable resources: templates, classroom passports, visual supports
- Final assessment quiz and reflective action plan
- Certificate of completion issued by Qualiopi-certified training provider DYNSEO

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