

BACK TO SCHOOL: TEACHERS GUIDE

Integration of PDA Students Into A New Classroom

by Clare Truman for The PDA Space

1. Ask the key question

Start the year by asking your students and their families how you can best support them. This may sound obvious but in the frantic first few days of a new school year we can often forget to do this most basic of things. Students and their families are the experts in what they need from you to help them to do well, so ask them that question. Earning in those first few weeks and beyond.

2. Take an interest in their interests

Showing an interest in the things your students are interested in is the best way to build a foundation for communication and interaction and this is particularly true for students with PDA. This should be more than just paying lip-service to a special interest, really try to understand the interest and you will find you have a lot more to talk about.

3. The working relationship comes first

Forget "don't smile before Christmas"; building a strong working relationship with your student and their family is going to be the foundation for everything you do next. The students with PDA need to trust that you are not going to place more demands upon them than they can bear, so prove that to them in their first few days with you.

4. Keep your ground rules to a minimum

We often start the year by laying down the ground rules for our classes. Keep the list of rules as short as possible, focusing on "legal rules" and those that relate to health and safety. If you can't explain to a student why a rule is necessary, it's probably not.

5. Remember the difference between a learning objective and a learning activity

The learning objective is the aim of the game, not compliance or completion of a set activity. Giving your students the freedom to reach the learning objective in their own way can provide them with the independence and autonomy they need to be successful in learning in those first few weeks and beyond.

