

TEACCH

TEACCH stands for **Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children**. It is an **evidence-based instructional framework** developed at the University of North Carolina and is widely recognised for supporting individuals on the autism spectrum and students with additional needs. TEACCH emphasises **structured teaching**, **visual supports**, and **predictability**, enabling students to learn more independently by reducing anxiety and promoting engagement.

Core Principles of TEACCH

- **Structured Environment:** Students learn best in a predictable, clearly organised setting.
- **Individualised Support:** Programs are tailored to a student's strengths, preferences, and developmental level.
- **Visual Clarity:** Visual supports help students understand expectations and sequences.
- **Independence and Engagement:** The goal is to foster autonomy and reduce reliance on adult prompting.
- **Holistic Collaboration:** Involves teachers, families, therapists, and specialists working as a team.

Ways of Working in a TEACCH-Informed Classroom

1. Physical Organisation

- Create defined spaces for different tasks: work, play, rest, transition.
- Use furniture, shelving, and coloured mats to designate clear areas.
- Minimise sensory distractions (noise, clutter, bright lights).

2. Schedules

- Use **visual schedules** (pictures, symbols, words) to show daily routines.
- Match the format to student needs (e.g., object schedules for emergent learners, written schedules for more literate students).
- Teach students to **check and follow** their own schedule independently.

3. Work Systems

These answer three key questions:

- What work do I need to do?
- How much work is there?
- How will I know I'm finished?
- Use bins, folders, or trays labelled with symbols or colours to present tasks clearly.
- Incorporate visual cues to show task progression and completion (e.g. "First-Then" charts, tick boxes).

4. Visual Structure Within Tasks

- Colour-code, outline, or number parts of a task to show sequence.
- Use "start" and "finish" markers, arrows, and icons.
- Embed visual cues directly into the task (e.g., a jigsaw outline for puzzles, matching photos for sorting).

Teaching Methods

A. Structured Teaching

- Present tasks in a consistent, predictable manner.
- Use **prompt hierarchies**: visual > gesture > verbal > physical.
- Embed errorless learning where possible to build confidence.

B. Task Analysis

- Break complex tasks (e.g. handwashing) into smaller steps.
- Teach one step at a time, using modelling, visuals, or physical guidance.

C. Reinforcement and Motivation

- Use students' interests as motivators or themes in tasks.
- Build in choice and novelty once basic routines are mastered.

D. Generalisation

- Teach concepts across settings (e.g., sorting in the classroom and in the kitchen).
- Involve various staff to ensure consistency and transfer of skills.

Resources for Implementation

Visual Tools

- Visual timetables, now/next boards, choice boards
- Communication symbols (e.g., Boardmaker, Widgit)
- Token boards and visual reward charts

Task Materials

- Colour-coded file folders, Velcro boards, object bins
- Custom-made TEACCH work tasks using common items (e.g., pegs, plastic tubs, buttons)

Templates

- Task boxes with laminated instructions
- Individualised work systems (3-bin work systems, draw-and-return systems)
- Checklists for self-monitoring

Implementing TEACCH: Practical Tips

- Start **small**: set up one structured work station and expand over time.
- Involve **teacher aides**: train them in prompting, schedule use, and task setup.
- Observe and adjust: note student engagement and independence and adapt supports.
- Collaborate with parents: share strategies, visuals, and routines across home and school.
- Be consistent: TEACCH thrives when routines and expectations are maintained daily.

Conclusion

TEACCH provides a **predictable, visually rich, and supportive environment** that enhances learning for students with disabilities. By reducing anxiety and increasing independence, this approach helps students engage meaningfully with their curriculum and daily activities. With commitment and creativity, any educator can implement TEACCH principles to enhance classroom success.



