

This lesson plan is suitable for students in middle to upper primary. Read Tamara's stories as told by one of her classmates and complete the activities below.

Lesson Plan – Student Stories: Tamara

Tamara is 9 years old. She has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – we just call this Autism. Tamara doesn't talk very much. Sometimes she doesn't understand what people say to her, so they use visual supports. The visuals that our teacher uses for Tamara are small cards with pictures or sometimes a word to help her understand what she needs to do.

People who have Autism can often understand more from what they can see, rather than from the words they hear – that's why visual supports can be so helpful.

Tamara has her own set of visuals to tell people what she wants or what she needs. As she can't always find the right words, her own visuals 'speak' for her.

Tamara hates loud noises, even some noises that are not really very loud. Sounds can really upset her. She often wears ear defenders so things don't seem so loud to her. When we're outside we try not to yell too much if Tamara is with us.

We know that Tamara doesn't really understand some of the games we play, but she's very good at catching a ball and also at shooting in basketball. So when we're practising team skills for basketball, Tamara likes to join in. She never misses when we take turns at shooting.

Sometimes when it's raining, we can go to the library and read books or do a puzzle. We've seen the puzzles that Tamara is really good at so we don't need to help her with those, but we watch her sometimes; and I think she likes it when we tell her how good she is at doing the puzzle.

When we line up at the canteen, we make sure Tamara has her lunch visual and also make sure other kids don't push in front of her.

First 5 minutes – read Tamara's story

5 to 10 mins – class brainstorm

What have you learned about Autism?

10 to 25 mins

Go into groups and talk about how you might feel if you had Autism

25 to 55 mins – class discussion on how to best support your Autistic classmates

Expect an understanding of:

- the need for visual supports (why?)
- communication difficulty
- sensory differences – (sound, touch, taste and smell)
- how you can help your classmates

If there's a student with Autism in the class, it is recommended to discuss with the student's family beforehand about the level of involvement they wish to have in this session. Other students should be encouraged to talk about how they could provide help to their classmates.