What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder, which includes Asperger’s, is a complex developmental disability that causes problems in social interaction and communication; additionally autistic students may display repetitive / stereotyped behaviors or obsessively follow a routine. Students with autism can display a variety of different symptoms. One student may have mild symptoms, while another may have more serious symptoms.  

Source: The National Institutes of Health

Suggested Best Practices for Students with Asperger’s and/or Autism

✓ Allow students to tape record lectures and directions for assignments.
✓ Have students connect with a classmate to back up their own lecture notes.
✓ Supply the students with outlines of your lecture and/or copies of overheads.
✓ Allow additional time for overheads or board work to be copied.
✓ Avoid putting too much information on a single page of handouts or overheads. This may be confusing for students.
✓ Use demonstrations and “hands-on” experiences as appropriate.
✓ Allow for all assignments and course expectations in written and verbal form.
✓ Don't use absolute words such as "always" / "never" unless it is exactly what you mean.
✓ Supplement oral with written instructions when revising assignments, dates, etc.
✓ Use clear directives and set boundaries if…
  o a student invades your space or imposes on your time  
  o the student's classroom comments, behaviors or conversational volume become inappropriate

Tips for classroom management when working with students on the Autism Spectrum:

  o Structure – Routine – Schedules – Lists  
  o Use Visual Aids & Be Concrete, whenever possible  
  o Reduce distractions  
  o Don’t take it personal – Don’t sweat the small stuff  
  o Understand the challenge of transitioning between classes / instructors