

## Fragile X Syndrome in the Academic World

- **Align** with the family.
  - Develop a list of the child's likes and dislikes. Incorporate list of specific preferred interests (ie... topics, activities, games, movies, etc.) into instruction whenever possible.
  - Ask how the child likes to be helpful around the house (ie... clean up, hold things, carry things set the table, etc.). Children with FX often like to be helpful and this may improve the child's participation in activities
- Consider your **attitude** before working with the child; a calm and relaxed state before initiating an interaction.
  - The child may directly respond others emotional state which could increase or decrease compliance with academic tasks. Think about the staff in the classroom and who might be a good fit for working with the child. This can vary throughout the day.
  - Be careful to **avoid having staff conversations that have a negative connotation** while in "ear shot" of the child. It is possible (s)he is "tuned in" to what others are talking about. Any negative talk or demeanor is likely to trigger a behavioral response. If they think you are upset, irritated, or annoyed, they will likely feel that way as well.
- **Approach** the child in a way that will reduce their underlying anxiety and help to prevent increasing anxiety.
  - **Indirect prompting** by having a **side conversation** with a relaxed voice while in "ear shot" of the child which prepares them for the social interaction. For example:

“Well, I think it's just about time for me to go work with Johnny. I think we will probably work on our letters. I think Johnny might like working with me on letters...”
  - Always use a **relaxed eye gaze**. Forcing eye contact is often times anxiety provoking.
  - Maintain a **relaxed interaction** by using a calm voice and demeanor. Remember being overly excited can stimulate the child's nervous system making it harder for them to concentrate.
  - **No hand-over-hand prompting**. This is a more physically invasive approach that will increase anxiety. Remember they have problems with loose connective tissue and this may cause discomfort. If you feel hand over hand prompting is truly necessary, you should prepare the child. The child may put their hand in yours and be accepting of the physical support. For example:

“Here let me help you” and hold your hand out.
  - **Preview the activity** to give a clear understanding of the expectations. First have the instructor demonstrate the task and perhaps a few other children demonstrate the task too. Finally have the child demonstrate the task.
    - Use **more visuals** and less verbiage.
  - If there is going to be a transition, it is helpful to include a **transitional object**. The object functions as something to focus on while providing an opportunity to be helpful (i.e. carrying the ball to the P.E. area).
- **Avoid timers**. Child will hyper-focus on the timer rather than the activity.