Understanding Autism
Professional Development Curriculum:
Characteristics and Practices for Challenging Behavior

What is ASD?
- ASD is a developmental disorder that impacts the way individuals communicate and interpret their environment, often resulting in challenges with social interactions and processing information.

Challenges with Behavior
- Self-stimulation
  - E.g. Rubbing fingers, pulling hair, rocking
- Perseverative topics of conversation
- Limited/obsessive range of interests
- Non-functional routines or rituals
  - E.g. Having to have books in specific order
- Anxiety/depression
- Tantrums/meltdowns

What Can Cause Challenging Behavior?
- Can result from stress and anxiety
- When needs for the following can not be met:
  - For information
  - For sameness
  - For a tangible item
  - Due to expectations (of self, others, environment) not met
  - To lower stimulation in the environment
- Appears differently in every student
- Remember: Limited communication skills can impact student’s ability to express needs

3 Stages of Challenging Behaviors
- STAGE 1: RUMBLING
- STAGE 2: MELTDOWN
- STAGE 3: RECOVERY
# Understanding Autism

## Professional Development Curriculum:

**Characteristics and Practices for Challenging Behavior**

## Stage 1 – Rumbling – What Can You Do?

**Out of the ordinary minor behaviors**

**Tell-tale signs that the student is stressed**

- Identify student triggers
- Modify the classroom environment
- Provide choice, feedback, and praise
- Provide strong reinforcement
- Allow for an “antiseptic bounce” – separate student from stressful environment
- Provide a “home base” or “cool zone”

## Stage 2 – Meltdown – What Can You Do?

**Student loses control**

**Externalized and/or internalized behavior**

- Demonstrate empathy
- Provide space
- Provide assurances
- Maintain calm
- Maintain safety
- Implement emergency plan
- Remove others as needed

## Stage 3 – Recovery – What Can You Do?

**Not yet ready to learn**

**Needs help easing back in**

- Direct student to a highly motivating task
- Reintegrate student into a normal routine
- Provide strong reinforcement
- Communicate support
- Build on successes

## After the Meltdown...

- Figure out the root cause
- Talk with others about how to deal with the student’s behavior in the future
- Develop a partnership with parents/guardian
- Teach the student:
  - To recognize his own triggers
  - To ask for help
  - How to properly communicate immediate needs
  - To initiate calming routines or ask for someone to assist