



PDA School Strategies

Quick-reference card — 15 key strategies

These 15 strategies are drawn from current PDA practice for Australian schools. They can be implemented immediately, without specialist training. Print and share with teaching staff, support staff, and school leadership.

Language and Communication

1. Use indirect language: "I wonder if anyone is ready to..." instead of "You need to..."
2. Rephrase requests as choices: "Would you like to sit here or there?"
3. Reduce the number of instructions given per interaction — one at a time maximum
4. Give time warnings for transitions: "In about 10 minutes, we'll be finishing up"
5. Acknowledge feelings before redirecting: "I can see that's frustrating. When you're ready..."

Task and Environment

1. Offer flexible seating and movement options within the classroom
2. Break tasks into smaller, non-overwhelming steps — offer the first step, not the whole task
3. Allow the student to work at their own pace where possible
4. Reduce visual clutter and sensory stimulation in the immediate work area
5. Build "no demand" time into the day — transition minutes, movement breaks

Relationships and Trust

1. Invest time in low-demand connection — genuine interest in their interests builds trust
2. Never correct or address concerns publicly — always privately and quietly
3. Follow through on what you say — consistency builds safety
4. Celebrate strengths and interests — not just academic compliance
5. Stay curious rather than assuming: "I noticed you seemed frustrated earlier — is there anything I can do?"

The approach in three words

Collaborative. Flexible. Curious. If you can bring those three qualities to your interactions with a PDA student, you're already most of the way there.