

# ACR 154 final Draft (1)

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Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats in special education but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research based practices in a practical way in your classroom, to make your job easier and more effective.

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources podcast, I'm glad you're here. I'm Chris Reeve, and I'm your host. And for the last couple of months, we have focused on the CORE framework and CORE stands for classroom organization results in effectiveness.

And that is a framework to assure that the core structure of your classroom is strong, so that you can focus on implementing interventions effectively rather than directing everybody about what to do and putting out fires. I talked all about what the CORE framework is in Episode 146. And you can find that at [autismclassroomresources.com/episode 146](https://autismclassroomresources.com/episode-146).

So one of the keys to the CORE framework is thinking through situations or potential crises before they happen. The goal is to plan for contingencies as much as we're able, so that we are making decisions about them when we're calm and we can think rationally.

We don't want to be thinking about how to solve a problem with our fight or flight brain that kicks in when something happens. We want to be thinking through solutions when we're calm and we can have those solutions be set up proactively and even practiced, so they just kick into place when something goes wrong.

And one of those things that can and does regularly go wrong is when you are down a staff member, when someone is absent. Often you don't know that until 6:30 In the morning, or whenever it is that

you report to school. And there's limited time to make a new schedule, figure out how you're going to manage the day and frankly, it's really not a fun way to start the day.

So today I'm going to talk about how we can use the strategies from the CORE model to prevent this problem and be ready for it and hint, it's also really helpful for training staff and for managing when you have to go to an IEP. So let's get started.

I want to share two examples with you. Maggie is a special educator running a self contained classroom. Some of her students attend general education classrooms with support from staff members in her classroom. Maggie comes in on Tuesday morning and gets a message that one of the paraprofessionals for the classroom is going to be out that day with the flu.

Maggie goes to her folder, she grabs her one man down schedule and her woman down zoning plan. She goes and resets her visual schedule to match them, because she set the visual schedule up last night before she left for the day. And then she starts the day.

When the paraprofessionals come in, she lets them know that they're running on alternate schedule. She makes sure they have a copy. They are familiar with it, because they have practiced it before. And her class comes in and runs that schedule and stays engaged throughout the day without anything else any other supports with instruction.

Now maybe they're not doing as challenging instruction throughout all of the day as they typically would be that the day stays together and the students stay engaged.

Kendall is also a special educator, also running a self contained classroom with some of her students attending Gen Ed with support. She comes in on Tuesday morning and finds out that one of her staff is out.

So at 7am when she walked in the classroom, she frantically tries to figure out what activities she needs to change in order to deal with the situation. When her coffee starts to kick in, she starts to think about how to let the staff know about all the changes. And when the students come in, Kendall is still working on the new schedule.

And so she asked the para pro to put a video in so the students have something to do while she figures out the day. Once she gets the schedule figured out. She rearranges the staff assignments and goes and prints it all out.

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Throughout the day she has to keep reminding the staff and the students about where they need to be and what they should be doing. And she didn't really have time to figure out how to rearrange her centers so she set up a listening center during that time, which worked for some students. But without supervision in the center, some of the students don't stay there and they're wandering around the room.

This is the difference between having a one man down and sometimes a two men down and a three man down plan, excuse me a one person down, and not having one.

Part of the CORE framework work includes the additional step that Maggie implemented but Kendall didn't know about. Once her schedule in her class was set up and working, and the zoning plan for the staff was set up and was in good shape and seemed to be working well, it's time to create a one person down plan.

Sometimes, like maybe this winter, we might also want to have a two person down plan in case we need it. Because I knew that there are a lot of staff shortages, and there's a lot of respiratory viruses going around.

This allows you to pick up as Maggie did and know exactly what you're going to implement. But it's more than just making the plan. And I'm going to share that tip at the end.

But first, let me talk about the steps that go into making the one person down plan. Now I'm not going to go into a ton of information about how to put the one man down plan in place because I've covered that in a blog post that I'll link in the page with this episode at [autismclassroomresources.com/episode 154](http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode-154).

But in short, a one person down plan is where you adjust your schedule and your zoning plan or your staff plan to accommodate having a person out.

That means that you have a written schedule that alters what it looks like when you have fewer staff. You have a zoning plan that includes only the staff that you have with one person out. You figure out what centers are going to have to change, how you're going to regroup your students, how you're going to reorganize the day to accommodate the fact that you are out a staff member.

So it's something that's already in writing, it's easy to access. There are several purposes and advantages to having a one person down plan. And they include that you know, when you have an absent staff, obviously, but it's also helpful when you are having to go to a meeting and leave the room. It's helpful when you have staff that has an emergency that has to leave partway through the day. It's also a really great way to provide an opportunity for hands on training with your staff.

So when I set up a one man down plan, every couple of weeks in the beginning of the year, or maybe every week, at the beginning of the year, we don't have frequent absences, we run the one person down plan with everybody in the class, all staff in the class.

I might not run it for the whole day, I might just run it for pieces of the day. But it allows me to free either the teacher up to go and provide training to a staff member or free a staff member up to go and observe what the teacher is doing. So you can get some of that hands on training using your one man down plan.

So essentially, when you go to make your one man down plan, you're doing two things, you're going to adjust the schedule. So figure out if you need to reduce the number of activities because you have fewer staff. So if I have four staff, and that means I have four centers, I'm going to need to combine down to three centers.

And that means I'm going to have to figure out which students I'm moving to another group. And you're going to be able to think more clearly about that if you do it when you're not stressed. So that's going to make that easier. So you're going to think about how you're going to have to regroup the students, how you're going to have to maybe change some activities to keep them engaged, things like that.

And then you're going to adjust your staff plan. So once you've adjusted your schedule, you adjust your staff plan to support that. Maybe it's moving one paraprofessionals job duties to another one, maybe it's moving one of their jobs over to you. However you've adjusted your schedule is going to drive how you adjust your staff.

But essentially, you're actually writing it all down and you're making sure that everybody is familiar with it. And that's a really important component. Because that's where the special hint comes in that I was talking about. I haven't talked about this as much as making the one man down but making the one person down plan is even more valuable, because you should be using it on a regular basis.

So if you use your one person down plan to do training and your staff, like I talked about in episode 152, then you are implementing them say one time a week or once every other week. That gives you the opportunity to see any flaws in the plan and observe what's working and what's not so that when you have to run this plan, you've worked the kinks out of it.

If you've used it regularly for training your staff, your staff is familiar with it, you know that it works, you know where the problems were, and you've tweaked it over time to accommodate for those. So that means that when you're in that rush situation of having a person out, you are going to be much

smoother for everybody just clicking into the new situation, because they're familiar with it.

Maggie's team had actually practice the plan as part of their training routine so the switch wasn't a crisis to them, it was business as usual.

And there's one other advantage to practicing the one person down plan when you are fully staffed. It means that you're modeling to your staff, what you want done when you are not in the classroom. You are showing the staff what the classroom should look like, if you weren't there.

And that's important because you don't want your classroom to fall apart. Because you had to go to an IEP. You don't want the students to have no instruction because you had to go to an IEP. It becomes more routine for the team to know what to do if you are sick or if you have to go to a training or a meeting.

They know what you expect them to do, because it's what you've modeled for them before. Does it guarantee that they'll do it? No, of course not. But ultimately, like the staff in Maggie's classroom, they're likely to have experienced how much smoother the day goes when they stay on schedule and hopefully that will help to make that happen.

So if you're trying to figure out how to deal with this type of issue, or you aren't sure with how to implement the strategies needed to make it work, come check out the Special Educator Academy. We've got quick videos on how to create a one person down zoning plan, what decision you're making, how to make them right down to how I do it on the computer as efficiently as possible.

And another whole video, all of 15 minutes, about what type of tasks you're going to put in place for when you might be absent, or a staff member is absent, to make it more likely that students will stay engaged even though it's different.

I would love to hear about your experiences with this type of situation. Are you like Maggie or Kendall or somewhere in between would be my guess? Come share and join in our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection), answer the membership questions, and we will get you in as fast as possible.

Until then grab your free downloads from the resource library and the link for that is in the post for this episode and [autismclassroomresources.com/episode 154](https://www.autismclassroomresources.com/episode-154). Have an amazing week.