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SPEAKERS

Veronica

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 back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm Chris Reeve, and I'm your host. And we are moving on from the steps of instruction and different types of instruction to focus on teaching specific skills. And I want to kick it off by talking about some fun ways to engage your students in real life money skills.

Many of our students, regardless of whether you serve primarily special ed, or general ed, benefit from instruction on life skills. And I talked about life skills, and particularly myths about life skills, in Episode 109. And one myth about life skills is that they are only for students who are on alternate assessment.

Now, I've known many students who are on grade level or in a gifted program in general ed, who need explicit instruction in life skills, like money skills. So many skills are going to be what I'm going to talk about today. I've met a number of students who can identify money and even count it, but they don't really know how to effectively make a purchase or solve problems around not being able to make a purchase.

They can't figure out what they can afford to purchase with the money that they have. And they don't understand how things like sales and coupons work. And they think that you just can't afford not to buy something. So that's where we are going today. I have some products for you. But I also have free ideas to implement every single strategy I'm going to talk about, and a free download that you can share at the end of the episode. So let's get started.

As I said, teaching money means going beyond knowing what coins and dollars are worth. Our students need to know how to use money that they have. And they need to understand discounts and sales, when something's a better bargain, etc. And let's face it, our students want to know about money. They want to know about earning money, they want to know about spending money, they want to know about it in a practical way where they get to do it and they get to buy stuff because don't we all.

So let's talk about some ways to get your students engaged with practicing these kinds of skills with real life situations, even if you don't have the budget to do a lot of community based instruction.

Number one is what I call restaurant math. And you can do this in several different ways depending on the time that you have and the needs of your students. One way is to grab a bunch of takeout menus and give your students money and then have them identify what they can purchase on the menu based on how much money you give them.

Now, I also have a set of diner differentiated menus with task cards in my store. And you can grab them from my store and do this more programmatically because they're already differentiated. There are four menus with different skills. One has prices in dollars all the way down to one having you know all the different change options. There are also task cards where students have to either find the price or add the price or determine what can be bought with two or three items.

So it works on basic money skills, as well as more advanced skills. So they can practice their math skills as well as their money skills in some cases. And you can grab the diner math activities for TPT at autismclassroomresources.com/dinermath.

Now, regardless of how you're teaching the skill, and I've also done the same thing, giving them a menu for snack time where they actually use it to buy their snack foods. This allows students who are just starting with counting bills or learning coin values to complete the same activity as a student who's more proficient at money exchange. So since it's differentiated, it's easy to use this activity in small groups. As I said, I really like to use it during snack where I make a menu specifically of the snack items, I might make a different menu for different students only because I want to have the prices be differentiated.

In addition to using the task cards in the diner math set, you can have students that are using real money to pay their bill based on what they want to order on your takeout menus. You can also extend it by giving students a set amount of money and asking them if they can afford to purchase certain items or collection of items on your menus.

This mirrors a real world situation of the way that money is used in a restaurant. And it helps students really begin to understand the true value of money in the community, which also helps them to learn things like just because you have \$10 probably doesn't mean you can buy a new Wii, Nintendo Wii.

The second way to engage your students with this type of activity is to have students earn money as part of your classroom management system, and then to use that money to purchase their reinforcers, their activities, items or privileges that they get for following the classroom management system.

And this can be done with something very simple as just write out price tags for your items or your activities that are on your reinforcer menu. And then the students can make purchases with their earned money. Or it could be more complex where they can earn their money and save it for a more highly desired item tomorrow or later in the week, or they can exchange money every single day.

I also have a token economy system that is designed specifically for life skill students. It's already differentiated. It's in my store. It's got a template to create a school store with reinforcers or prices. I often used it to make individual catalogs so that the reinforcers are individualized to the students and the prices they can handle. And you can change up the skills either way, by either changing the complexity of the price tags, or by allowing the students to save for something more expensive, etc.

You can have different levels of change, where some students catalogs are only single bills, and others have more complex change on it. You can even work on making change, you can also work at adding the amount for different items for some students. If you're interested in the thing that's already made, and set up for you, you can grab the token economy kid at autismclassroomresources.com/tokeneeconomy, and I'll make sure all these links are in the show notes as well.

A third way to get your students to engage with money skills and purchasing is to set up a grocery store within your classroom. So to do this, you can save empty containers, wash out your milk cartons, and put price tags on them and then set them up in a corner of your room on a shelf.

We used to do this as an actual school wide activity for an elementary program that I ran. We called it the field trip prep room. Because we would end the quarter by going on a field trip to the place that the field trip prep room was set up for. It was a room where all of our students would go to practice their community skills and money skills was part of that. And we would set it up with different themes over the year. So we had a movie theater, we had a fast food restaurant, we had a cafeteria, and I'll do an episode or a post about that whole thing in the future.

I talked at the beginning of this episode about students not knowing how to apply or calculate discounts, or know how to make the sense of sales. And I used to have a student who would repeatedly say when he saw some type of sale. but I have to buy it. I can't afford not to. Of course.

his idea was that the discount was so good, that he had to have it even if it wasn't really something he wanted or needed.

Now, clearly, this is partly about buying into the hype of marketing. And that is also a lesson about money. But some of it is about not really understanding how money works or how sales work.

So for instance, if I frequently ordered groceries from my local grocery store, when I go on their app, often if I buy one product by one company, they offer me a discount if I buy more from that company. But the way that it works, I have to buy \$25 worth of products from that company to save like \$3 or something like that. So at the end, it actually tells me when I get ready to check out, spend 20 more dollars to save \$3 and I'm like, if I didn't put them in my cart, I don't need those \$20 worth of things.

Perhaps if it was something if I can find something that I always need, like toilet paper, then I might go ahead and do it. But usually to spend \$20 to save \$3 if it's not something you need is not good math. But I have had many many students who would go for that.

And that brings us to one of the freebies from today's episode. Because another area of sales is using coupons and sale flyers. And coupons can sometimes be confusing. You have to buy a certain brand that may cost more than the brand that you usually buy even with the coupon and you have to check the expiration dates. You have to know what the coupon is for or what specific brand you have to buy or how many you have to buy you have to buy two or three to get the discount.

So I created some ready made coupons and their task cards. This comes from my grocery store life skills product, and I've made them free in the resource library. They're part of the larger product in my store for practicing all different kinds of grocery shopping skills from sales flyers, identifying prices, identifying the requirements and savings from coupons and sales flyers, reading a shopping list, adding money, and lots of other types of skills.

And the coupon task cards include questions like how much shoppers can save with a coupon. What brand is required to be bought with the coupon? Whether making a purchase with a coupon is the most economical choice and any detailed specification of using the coupon like how many items they have to purchase. The paid product has more coupons and more sales flyers and different activities but the coupons will definitely get you started.

And you can find a paid version at my TPT store at [autismclassroomresources.com/grocery](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/store/autismclassroomresources). And you can grab the free set at [autismclassroomresources.com/free](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/store/autismclassroomresources), which is our free resource library.

So those are just some ways that you can integrate important life skills, money skills, into the daily routine. or specific math skills to work on them in a way that's engaging for your students. and teach

...and I'll give them a functional way to use money.

And if you have students that are just working on mastering counting coins or money, then they could use money with templates. Matching coins to the amount of money required. And I have a free set of money templates like that that you can grab in the resource library, also at autismclassroomresources.com/free. And I'll make sure that all of those links are in the show notes as well, so it's going to be easy to access them.

Thank you for joining me today. I hope that this gives you some ideas for engaging your students in money tasks and many skills. If you found this helpful, it would be amazing if you go over to Apple podcasts and leave a review about what you think about the podcast because that helps me to reach more teachers and share strategies and tools with them. I'll be back next week with a new episode. So I'll talk to you soon.

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode of the Autism Classroom Resources podcast. For even more support, you can access free materials, webinars and Video Tips inside my free resource library. Sign up at autismclassroomresources.com/free. That's F-R-E-E or click the link in the show notes to join the free library today. I'll catch you again next week.