

Integrated Services

Guidelines for Serving Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Teaching communication skills, social competence, and personal independence to assure the fullest possible access to learning and life.



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Educate...Every Child, Every Day

Poudre School District exists to support and inspire every child to think, to learn, to care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world.

Integrated Services • Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

We believe that our charge is to “Educate....Every child, Every day”. In compliance with the federal mandate of IDEA, Colorado state statutes, and the District’s commitment to support and inspire every child, the Integrated Services Department of Poudre School District is committed to providing the highest quality services for students with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) resulting in clear and measureable outcomes for this population.

This document strives to promote unity in vision, a common language and to ensure the consistent implementation of best practices in service delivery for students with autism being served in center based programs across the district.

Our Students

The medical community uses criteria from the DSM-IV in their diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders. These criteria include.....

(I) A total of at least six items from (A), (B), and (C), with at least two from (A), and one each from (B) and (C)

(A) qualitative impairment in social interaction, as manifested by at least two of the following:

1. marked impairments in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, and gestures to regulate social interaction
2. failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level
3. a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with others (e.g., by a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest to other people)
4. lack of social or emotional reciprocity (not actively participating in simple social play or games, preferring solitary activities, or involving others in activities only as tools or "mechanical" aids)

(B) qualitative impairments in communication as manifested by at least one of the following:

1. delay in, or total lack of, the development of spoken language (not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through alternative modes of communication such as gesture or mime)
 2. in individuals with adequate speech, marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
 3. stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language
 4. lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level
- (C) restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities, as manifested by at least two of the following:
1. encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus
 2. apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
 3. stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements)
 4. persistent preoccupation with parts of objects
- (II) Delays or abnormal functioning in at least one of the following areas, with onset prior to age 3 years:
- (A) social interaction
 - (B) language as used in social communication
 - (C) symbolic or imaginative play
- (III) The disturbance is not better accounted for by Rett's Disorder or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

In the school setting the criteria used for an educational identification are based on guidelines put forth by the Colorado Department of Education.

Definition of ASD 2.08

(1) A child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a child with a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal social communication and social interaction, generally evidenced by the age of three. Other characteristics often associated with ASD are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental changes or changes in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

(a) The ASD prevents the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education as evidenced by at least one characteristic in each of the following three areas:

- (i) The child displays significant difficulties or differences or both in interacting with or understanding people and events. Examples of qualifying characteristics include, but are not limited to: significant difficulty establishing and maintaining social-emotional reciprocal relationships, including a lack of typical back

and forth social conversation; and/or significant deficits in understanding and using nonverbal communication including eye contact, facial expression and gestures; and

(ii) The child displays significant difficulties or differences, which extend beyond speech and language to other aspects of social communication, both receptively and expressively. Examples of qualifying characteristics include, but are not limited to: an absence of verbal language or, if verbal language is present, typical integrated use of eye contact and body language is lacking; and/or significant difficulty sharing, engaging in imaginative play and developing and maintaining friendships; and

(iii) The child seeks consistency in environmental events to the point of exhibiting significant rigidity in routines and displays marked distress over changes in the routine, and/or has a significantly persistent preoccupation with or attachment to objects or topics.

(b) The following characteristics may be present in a child with ASD, but shall not be the sole basis for determining that a child is an eligible child with ASD if the child does not also meet the eligibility criteria set out in subsection (a) of this rule, above.

(i) The child exhibits delays or regressions in motor, sensory, social or learning skills.

(ii) The child exhibits precocious or advanced skill development, while other skills may develop at or below typical developmental rates.

(iii) The child exhibits atypicality in thinking processes and in generalization. The child exhibits strengths in concrete thinking, awareness and judgment. Perseverative thinking and impaired ability to process symbolic information is present.

(iv) The child exhibits unusual, inconsistent, repetitive or unconventional responses to sounds, sights, smells, tastes, touch or movement.

(v) The child's capacity to use objects in an age appropriate or functional manner is absent or delayed. The child has difficulty displaying a range of interests or imaginative activities or both.

(vi) The child exhibits stereotypical motor movements

Common ASD characteristics may include:

Taken from a list developed by Stephen Shore

Strengths:

- Attention to detail
- Often highly skilled in a particular area
- Deep study resulting in encyclopedic knowledge on areas of interest
- Tendency to be concrete thinkers
- Less concern for what others may think of them (can be a strength and a challenge)
- Usually visual processors (thinking in pictures or video)
- Direct communication
- Loyalty
- Honesty
- Nonjudgmental listening

Challenges

- Difficulties with overall communication skills
- Inflexibility in thinking, perseveration on narrow topics/activities of interest
- Inflexible adherence to rules and rituals
- Grasping the “big” picture
- Independence in self-help skills
- Uneven set of skills
- Difficulty developing motivation to study areas not of interest
- Difficulty perceiving emotional states of others
- Perceiving unwritten rules of social interaction
- Lack of tolerance for and sometimes intense reactions to change
- Unaware of dangers: high tolerance to pain
- Potential for aggressive behaviors especially when presented with task demands, changes in schedule, unpredictable environments, etc.
- Difficulty processing in non-favorite modalities such as aural, kinesthetic, etc.
- Difficulty parsing out and summarizing important information for a conversation
- Sensory integration problems where input may register unevenly, distorted and difficulty in screening out background noise
- Generalization of skills and concepts
- Difficulty expressing empathy in ways that others expect or understand
- Executive functioning resulting in difficulties planning long-term tasks

Interventions and educational programming for students with ASD may be quite different from services for typically developing students or students with other disabilities. Children with autism often require explicit instruction on skills that other children may learn incidentally. Students with autism are impacted in varying degrees across the autism spectrum. Students with ASD are heterogeneous in their presentation of behaviors and in their unique preferences, interests and learning styles. Educational programming should therefore vary as well. Poudre School District contends the best services for students with autism spectrum disorder are those based on the individual needs of each student and based on the principles of applied behavior analysis.

Our Mission and Goals

While the nature of the students we serve is very complex, our mission is clear:

To teach communication skills, social competence, and personal independence to assure the fullest access to learning and life.

We provide every student with an ordered, safe, positive learning environment to develop foundational learning skills. The primary focus of instruction is in the areas of communication, social competency, personal independence and academic achievement. The following are four broad goals that lead to the achievement of our mission:

Communication

To expand the student's ability to use functional, spontaneous language to relate to others and the environment.

1. Provide language training to develop a functional repertoire of verbal and non-verbal communication for requesting, accessing support and basic needs.
2. Provide explicit, systematic instruction on foundational language skills to enable access to learning (e.g., vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, oral comprehension, cause and effect, sequencing, problem solving, prediction, etc.).
3. Provide ample opportunities throughout the day to communicate in a variety of settings with a variety of communication partners to support generalization of language skills.

Social Competency

To develop the student's ability to relate to peers and adults through appropriate and meaningful social exchanges.

4. Provide direct and systematic instruction on basic social interaction and behavioral skills
5. Provide guided practice opportunities, immediate positive and corrective feedback, and consequences to ensure increasingly broader use and generalization of those social skills across settings.
6. Create opportunities to spontaneously interact and use social skills in novel and naturally occurring social situations.

Personal Independence

To assist the student in assuming personal routines, habits, and decision-making so as to function independently and be productive in school and the community.

7. Guide students to self-monitor, increase flexibility and actively problem solve.
8. Provide direct instruction of the specific behaviors necessary to organize and carry out routine functional skills to support independent living and vocational skills.
9. Develop the processes and skills for students to recognize the need for and advocate for themselves and needed supports for success in school, the community, and later in work.

Academic Achievement

To provide instruction in pre-academic or access skills, basic academics, and pre-vocational or vocational skills to realize full learning potential.

10. Conduct evaluation of skills to set relevant individual learning goals.
11. Provide explicit, fast-paced instruction utilizing principles of ABA to enhance learning
13. Modify curriculum as needed to ensure acquisition of academic concepts

Our Philosophy and Beliefs

At this time Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the only evidence based practice for students with Autism. ABA is simply the application of behavioral principles, to everyday situations, that will, over time, increase or decrease targeted behaviors. ABA has been used to help individuals acquire many different skills, such as language skills, self-help skills, and play skills; in addition, these principles can help to decrease maladaptive behaviors such as aggression, self-stimulatory behaviors, and self-injury. ABA is a discipline that employs objective data to drive decision-making about an individual's program. Strategies using applied behavior analysis have proven effective in systematically teaching socially relevant behaviors (i.e. language, social skills, academics, functional skills). ABA is not a specific program, procedure or technique, but principles of behavior or methods that can be applied in diverse ways across a variety of skills and needs.

In PSD, additional principles or beliefs that guide the planning and delivery of services for students with ASD include:

- All students, regardless of presenting problems, can learn and progress along a developmental continuum.
- Early intervention is paramount; educational services should begin as soon as a child is identified as having ASD and in need of specialized services.
- Our charge is to teach those skills that will lead to greater independence within the learning environment. Educators should always consider the functionality of skills targeted.
- Functional communication is a primary focus.
- Social skills are taught through direct instruction, following a developmental sequence that address peer interaction, adult interaction and executive functioning skills. These skills are practiced and supported in the natural context of the general education setting.
- Behavior change takes time and requires systematic assessment of behavior.
- Function-based interventions lead to lasting change when used with integrity and fidelity for a sustained period of time.
- Staff use data based decision making when developing interventions.
- Instruction must focus on skill generalization and maintenance in natural contexts as much as the acquisition of new skills.
- Intensity of instruction and high rates of engagement are essential. Students must receive sufficient individual attention on a daily basis so that learning objectives can be well implemented

- Using student-preferred items or activities and natural reinforcers increases attention and promotes motivation and engagement.
- Positive and pro-social behaviors are taught and developed. The student's problem behavior should not merely be decreased or eliminated; interventions should focus on replacing the problem behaviors with appropriate alternative behaviors.
- Instruction must build progressively based upon a developmental sequence.
- While many students may still be working on basic level skills, presentation and materials must be age-appropriate.
- Services are based on student needs. These needs direct the model for service delivery.
- The District will provide a full continuum of services and offer flexible placement and support options to meet each student's individualized goals.
- Participation in general education environment will be purposeful and consist of meaningful engagement in the learning activities, based on IEP team decisions.
- Parent involvement is fundamental to student success. Regular communication with parents and outside agencies is considered a priority.

Our Program and Services

The Poudre School District provides a full continuum of supports to meet individual student language, academic, functional, emotional and behavioral needs. The program features, uniquely matched to the strengths and challenges, are explained below.

1. Individualized Educational Planning (IEP), Teaming, and Progress Monitoring

A hallmark of Integrated Services is the joint planning with school staff, parents, and other agencies when appropriate, to determine personal learning and behavior goals and identify the services needed to realize those goals. This IEP is mutually determined, based on the student's present levels and needs.

2. Language and Communication Development Language delays, the absence of language, and/or diminished use of functional communication are prevalent for students with ASD. Intensive language and communication instruction is provided by a variety of staff through 1:1 intensive teaching sessions, in small group or natural environment teaching and direct instruction and is reinforced across all activities. Initial instruction is based on the ABLLS (Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills), a tool used as a curricular guide and for monitoring progress. Language and communication development includes the teaching of: 1) requesting skills, 2) vocabulary and concept development, 3) oral comprehension ranging from routine directions to understanding complex language, and 4) foundational concepts for academic skill acquisition.

3. Social Skills Instruction Social skills allow students to initiate and maintain positive social relationships and facilitate effective coping strategies. They are also prerequisites for academic achievement and success in the community and on the job. Social skills instruction is a positive, proactive intervention that teaches desirable social skills: peer interaction, adult interaction, emotions/perspective, choice making and flexibility. These skills are taught through direct instruction, modeling, feedback/coaching, guided and unguided practice with the use of positive reinforcement across natural settings. Poudre School District has developed a social skills manual that provides systematic assessment and instructional materials. This manual is available to staff to utilize in all PSD locations.

4. Environmental and Sensory Accommodations Individual sensory needs are considered and personalized accommodations are developed both to promote a positive school experience and to assist with self-regulation. Sensory accommodations are used purposefully and proactively based on student needs.

5. Behavioral Interventions At times, the challenging behaviors of students with ASD interfere with the opportunity to participate in learning and social activities. Addressing problematic behaviors, requires systematic interventions based on the principles of applied behavior analysis. The process begins with identifying the function of behavior through a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and data collection. Positive behavior change begins with the creation of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) which incorporates antecedent strategies, replacement behaviors, reinforcement based procedures, and data collection and monitoring. Prescribed behavioral protocols are used to address behavior needs as indicated by the FBA.

6. Targeted, Explicit Academic Instruction Students with ASD may be provided instruction 1:1, in small groups, or in large group classroom settings. They may be receiving pre-academic skill acquisition training, a modified or special curriculum, intervention with reading, writing, or math curriculum, or the general education curriculum with personalized learner modifications. The hallmarks of effective instruction include: 1) pinpointing learning needs, 2) teaching those skills discretely initially, then scaffolding to incorporate broader learning, 3) controlling learning through use of prompts to avoid initial practice of errors, 4) continually monitoring progress to adjust instruction quickly as needed, and 5) fading support to foster independence as the student gains the skill and the ability to handle errors in learning. It is essential to select and focus on pivotal content that provides a foundation for future learning. Instruction is often more successful when it integrates the unique special interests and aptitudes of the student. Additionally, the instructional setting should include high student engagement, fast-paced instruction that intersperse easy/hard tasks, and a multi-sensory/multi-modal approach (movement, hands-on, visual, auditory, musical/rhythmic, etc.) that taps into the students' strongest learning channels.

7. Functional and Pre-Vocational Skill Development For students with ASD, independence in post-secondary settings can be hampered by the inability to complete personal care and functional skill routines. As students enter later elementary, middle and high school, targeted instruction is provided, when needed, to teach the following 9 domains: personal hygiene, household maintenance, cooking, community access, first aid, laundry maintenance, clothing maintenance, yard work and leisure activities. Poudre School District has developed an assessment entitled “PSD Functional Skills Assessment” that can be used to evaluate students on a yearly basis on progress within and across the 9 domain areas. These skills are taught in a variety of ways including task analysis and chaining as well as video modeling.

Matching Student Characteristics to Program/Services Features

Challenges	Program/Services Feature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Spectrum disorder; varying degrees of impact · Heterogeneous presentation of behaviors, interests, and learning styles · Needs vary significantly from typical peers 	<p><i>Individualized Educational Planning, Teaming, and Progress Monitoring</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Delays in or absence of spoken language · Unusual or repetitive use of language · Inability to get needs met through functional communication · Difficulty initiating or sustaining conversations 	<p><i>Language & Communication Development</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Impaired use of nonverbal social behavior · Centered on self; limited or no peer interactions or relationships · Absence of mutuality in social and emotional exchanges · Intense or focused preoccupation with narrow topics of interest · Lack of spontaneous seeking and sharing · Absence of typical spontaneous play · Difficulty with self-care routines 	<p><i>Social Instruction</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of tolerance for and reactions to change · Unaware of or overly acute awareness of environment · Heightened sensitivity to light, sound, etc. · Lack of awareness of body position in space 	<p><i>Environmental & Sensory Accommodations</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited ability to plan and organize · Inflexibility in thinking; perseveration of thoughts · Limited vocabulary and conceptual knowledge · Uneven learning profiles and “splinter skills” or areas of special aptitude · Delayed development of basic or pre-academic skills · Limited incidental learning · Over-focus on details; inability to see big picture · Difficulty generalizing rote or new learning to contexts · Inability to understand nuances or make inferences 	<p><i>Targeted Precise Academic Instruction</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Determined parents, recurrently seeking solutions · Family strain from high supervision demands · Possible social isolation of parents/families · May have multiple service providers/need for coordination 	<p><i>Parent-Home & Other Agency Collaboration</i></p>

Our Classroom Setting

The goal is to create an environment that maximizes learning, eliminates competing stimuli, and promotes routines. Routines are structured to allow students to perform regularly occurring activities as independently as possible. While some differences in classrooms will exist to accommodate the wide range of individual student needs. The following are some common expectations for ASD classrooms in Poudre School District.

Environment Checklist for ASD Classrooms

- Classrooms located within the mainstream school setting.
- Overall appearance is age-appropriate, reflecting interests of same-age peers.
- There is minimal clutter; materials/supplies out of sight in closed shelves, cupboards, or closets.
- Lesson materials are prepared and immediately available for each activity.
- Ongoing attempts to keep auditory and visual distractions at a minimum
- Each student has a personal organized workspace
- Multiple learning areas, workspaces, or stations exist that have a well-defined, specific use.
- When a workstation is in use, it is clear of all materials except those that are currently needed.
- Daily schedule is created to best meet the needs of students
- Visual support systems for staff and students are used as needed to ensure student success
- Individual communication systems are developed for each student based on communication needs
- The use of ABA principles: errorless teaching, fluency of responding, fast paced instruction, error correction procedures and effective use of reinforcement are evident in Intensive Teaching (IT), Natural Environment Teaching (NET), and Direct Instruction (DI).
- Ongoing data collection of all IEP goals/objectives drives instruction.
- Downtime is minimized and students are actively engaged in learning activities throughout their day.
- High rates of positive feedback/reinforcement
- All staff are purposefully engaged with students
- Social and behavioral skills are embedded throughout all instruction

Our Roles and Responsibilities

The complex needs of students with ASD are best served through collaboration between school personnel and families. Team configuration at each building may vary, however, programming expectations remain consistent. The following are roles and responsibilities of staff members.

Building Administrator

- Possess a thorough understanding of autism services, the mission, philosophy, and best practices in service delivery, as well as legal requirements.
- Communicate value for and support of the program to the entire building staff.
- Participate in IEP meetings and/or ensure participation of critical staff.
- Promote a collaborative teaming environment for the program.
- Periodically attend team meetings and participate as requested for those cases where administrative assistance is needed.
- Meet with a designated team member periodically (school psychologist, special education teacher, etc.) to maintain familiarity with program activities, cases, and interventions.
- Ensure provision of materials and equipment necessary for program success.
- Set up structures for general education/special education collaboration and planning.
- Create an environment for positive parent engagement, supporting the team and teachers in parent meetings as needed.
- Reinforce a building-wide value for teaching all students social competencies that lead to respect and responsibility.
- Engage with students with ASD to build positive relationships and school connections.
- Supervise and evaluate staff based upon specific knowledge of the program and individual roles.
- Work with other building administrators and District staff to pursue and ensure quality services across buildings and levels.

Teachers

- Plan, coordinate and develop IEPs, utilizing assessment and data to develop goals and objectives, interventions and services.
- Plan and coordinate an effective schedule for students and paraprofessionals to ensure high student engagement and instruction.
- Relay knowledge of student characteristics, interventions, and goals and objectives to all staff who work with student.

- Meet regularly with paraprofessionals to discuss students and provide ongoing training and feedback to ensure program fidelity.
- Design a classroom environment based on student needs
- Collaborate to design behavior plans based on functional behavior assessment data.
- Establishes a classroom management system that reinforces acceptable student behavior and social skills.
- Determine curriculum, design lesson materials and visual supports (schedules, organizers, etc.) for individual students based on intervention data and the IEP.
- Deliver lessons through individual and small group instruction using clearly identified learner outcomes.
- Gather, organize and interpret data to drive instruction, intervention modifications and IEP planning.
- Serve as case manager and primary point of contact for students and families, through regular communication, by means of progress notes, emails, phone calls, and conferences regarding programming and interventions for consistency.
- Support the education of the school community about ASD.

Paraprofessional

- Participate in training and acquire skills essential for working with students with ASD.
- Implement behavior protocols and behavior interventions as designed by the certified staff.
- Help prepare and maintain an orderly classroom environment.
- Provide assistance to the teacher during group instruction, helping pupils to understand and follow through on teacher directions, and guide and monitor student work.
- Conduct small group instruction designed by the teacher and/or SLP.
- Provide one-on-one Intensive Teacher (IT) and Natural Environment Teaching (NET) instruction designed by the teacher or speech/language pathologist (SLP).
- Re-teach with special practice after initial instruction by the teacher.
- Supervise and facilitate appropriate behavior during unstructured times such as recess, bus, passing in hallways, lunch, etc.
- Prepare instructional resources and manage classroom supplies and equipment.
- Assist the teacher with observing and recording data on learning targets and behavior.
- Provide a high rate of reinforcement to all students.
- Assist with personal care needs (toileting, hygiene, etc.) as needed.
- Assist teacher to maintain records, folders, instructional materials, and filing.

- Attend scheduled team meetings to ensure consistency and fidelity of all interactions with students.
- Seek input from certified staff and receive feedback in an ongoing effort to ensure highly effective student interventions.
- Interface positively and professionally with parents and school staff.
- Maintain respect and confidentiality in all communications about the students.
- Convey pertinent information back to staff as it affects the day to day programming, especially when safety is of concern.

Speech and Language Pathologist

- Conduct effective meaningful assessments based on each student's current level of function
- Determine appropriate language targets for Intensive Teaching (IT) sessions and Natural Environment Teaching (NET) based on those assessments. Support maintenance and creation of IT materials/targets as well as data collection systems for NET sessions.
- Assess and implement social skills instruction targeted to increase peer and adult interactions, emotional and perspective understanding, and executive functioning skills .
- Explore alternative methods of communication for students as needed (sign, augmentative devices, etc.) and provide training to staff.
- Deliver individual and/or group language sessions using direct instruction methodology to support literacy instruction.
- Gather data on interventions and use to make data based decisions about instruction and language targets.
- Meet regularly with the team to provide training and input on language targets
- Communicate with parents and outside providers regarding student progress and on-going needs.

Occupational Therapist

- Conduct context-based evaluations to determine the student's ability to function/perform within various school or classroom settings.
- Provide staff with strategies/supports to assist with daily living activities such as feeding, dressing, hygiene, community mobility, safety awareness, etc.
- Provide direct instruction to students for fine motor, hand-writing and functional skill acquisition
- Explore and offer assistance with adaptive technology and low-tech strategies to promote full participation in learning tasks.
- Serve as a liaison with private providers as requested, bringing pertinent information to the team.

School Psychologist

- Collaborate with the team on student assessment, conducting and assisting others in data collection.
- Participate in IEP team meetings, interpreting assessment and intervention data, and contributing to valid decisions regarding services.
- Assist teams in planning and problem solving for students.
- Monitor student progress through direct student contact, observation, and consultation with teachers.
- Support teams in functional behavioral assessments which supports for the development of an effective behavior intervention plan as needed.
- Guide teams in understanding identification criteria and interfacing with teams from other schools considering ASD services to guide placement decisions.
- Work with the school community to promote competence in meeting ASD student behavioral needs.
- Contribute to regular cohesive communication with families and other agencies.

Autism Coach

- Provide modeling, feedback, and training for staff to implement ABA procedures for IT, NET, direct instruction, and social skills as well as behavior protocol implementation
- Create and develop training modules to support staff implementation of procedures
- Support the collection of and interpretation of measurable data to inform decision-making and to monitor student progress on IEP goals and objectives
- Maintain programming for students by updating data collection systems, targets and skills
- Ensure fidelity of implementation of procedures through observation of staff and through formal and informal fidelity checks
- Provide individualized support for students with extensive communication, behavior and life skills needs
- Collaborate on development of FBA's through direct and indirect measures
- Develop Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) for implementation in center-based programs
- Support staff in completion of assessments (i.e. ABLLS) and development of IEPs and progress reports
- Support individual parents on an on-going basis with regular meetings/conferences/Phone/email contact to update on progress, discuss concerns and problem solve
- Support transition of students/staff/parents as students move between levels and as they are placed in a center-based programs
- Support development of curriculum and materials especially in the areas of functional skills and social skills
- Uphold ethical standards set forth by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board

Parents

- Participate in IEP meetings and become familiar with the program, the staff, and services.
- Participate in frequent communication with staff including any significant changes in a student's life that could be impactful in the school setting
- Communicate with the school if behavior problems or concerns develop.
- Work with the teacher, speech and language pathologist, psychologist, or occupational therapist to ensure continuity in interventions at home or by working with other professionals or agencies as may be needed to realize their child's growth and improvement.

General Education Teacher

- Gain and develop knowledge and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and commonly used instructional strategies,
- Collaborate with the Special Education staff to develop appropriate behavioral and instructional supports for students while in the general education classroom
- Participate in IEP meetings and have a working knowledge of the plan's behavioral and learning interventions.
- Partner with the Integrated Services staff to develop and use accommodations and/or modifications for their specific classroom implementation.
Support development of modified materials for students to access and use while engaged in instruction in the general education classroom
- Foster culture of acceptance for all students in classroom and educate peers on ASD as needed
- Assume the primary teaching responsibility for the student with ASD, and direct/allow the paraprofessional to provide general support.
- Communicate with parents and special education staff routinely

Least Restrictive Environment

Schools are required by law to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to meet the individual student's needs. This means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate. They should have access to the general education curriculum, extracurricular activities, or any other program that non-disabled peers would be able to access as determined by the IEP team.

Guidelines for Least Restrictive Environment Three guiding principles should drive our thinking about placement decisions for students with ASD:

1. **Individualized assessment.** The LRE placement is selected based on an individual assessment of the student's skills and abilities to participate and make progress in the identified settings. On-going monitoring must occur to ensure the student is making progress in the selected setting and meeting the specified goals and objectives.
2. **Individual Education Plan.** All decisions regarding a student's placement are made by the IEP team.
3. **Intentional Planning for Activities.** Staff collaborate to ensure a successful experience for the student with ASD. The student should be provided with modified materials, as needed, that align with grade level standards and required supports to achieve identified educational targets.

Indicators for Successful Inclusion for Students with ASD

- IEP goals are being addressed in the inclusive setting, the student is making progress, and successful participation in learning activities is occurring.
- Student is able to demonstrate self-management skills with use of accommodations as put forth by the IEP team.
- Carefully constructed intervention plans and strategies have been developed to achieve the desired outcome in the inclusive setting
- Student has the opportunity to participate in social interactions that will promote social competencies and support individual development
- Student is full member of the learning community.
- Student demonstrates the ability to learn from the naturally occurring environment with the aid of accommodations/modifications
- Student is successful with limited assistance of a classroom aide.
- Student has ability to attend to learning tasks as required for the setting.
- Student demonstrates the ability to ask for help or assistance without supports from adults.

- Teachers in the general education setting who may serve students with ASD will be aware of the students' behavioral needs and work in collaboration with the special education towards a successful experience in the general education environment.
- Teacher in the general education classroom has training and experience working with students with autism.

Barriers for Successful Inclusion

- Behavior is aggressive, distracting or disruptive to the learning of other students or poses safety risk.
- The setting is not age or developmentally appropriate.
- Student performs well in a smaller environment with specialized instruction but becomes overwhelmed in the general education classroom.
- Student is not receiving educational benefit from the inclusive environment
- Student is not making adequate progress towards IEP goals and objectives

Considerations When Including Students with ASD Success stories provide testimony that students across the spectrum can learn in general education settings if the following exist: an inclusive culture; sufficient support is provided; planning has occurred for intentional activities; all staff are well informed; reasonable accommodations are in place; and proven methods of instruction are adopted.

1. **Create a Culture for Inclusion** Successful inclusion happens in schools prepared to accept and meet the diverse needs of each and every student and committed to teaching all students together. Creating an inclusive culture requires careful consideration of:

- **Administrative Vision** The decision to consider all students as members of the school community must be made by the entire school community with strong support from the administrator. Administrators must facilitate the reconstruction of beliefs and set clear expectations for staff that reinforce effective practices and procedures to support differentiated instructional techniques, which address all types of learners and ability levels. Principals also help by taking a personal interest in ASD services and programs, ensuring systematic training of general education teachers, acquiring and distributing necessary resources, and continuously championing the implementation of strategies to improve learning outcomes for all.
- **Training for Teachers** It is unrealistic to expect that general education teachers will have the specific training required for this population, will be aware of the latest research, or be able to readily adapt the curriculum. Teachers will need to

know the primary characteristics associated with ASD, strategies to arrange an effective environment, and ways to accommodate the unique learning needs of students.

- **Teaming Time** In addition to training, the instructional team—comprised of special educators, support staff, and general educators—needs time to meet and plan, problem solve strategies and to address concerns. Such teaming time should occur bi- weekly or monthly.
 - **Preparation of Peers** Students in inclusive settings are provided a vital opportunity to learn empathy and acceptance of differences and the opportunity to be of help to others. Teachers need to educate peers about autism, impact on skills, and how students with ASD benefit from understanding and cooperation of fellow students. Creating a welcoming environment for included students with ASD is essential.
2. **Use Staff and Student Supports Effectively** Students with ASD must receive an adequate level of support during inclusive activities. While paraprofessionals are commonly used, peers are also a natural and readily available resource for supporting students.
- **Paraprofessionals:** Assigned paraprofessionals are informed on instructional approaches, behavioral interventions, and the process of building independence and fading of supports. Paraprofessionals are used to provide individualized support to students based on their needs in a variety of settings. Time for meeting with the team to problem solve and plan is essential.
 - **Peer Helpers and Models** Research and practical experience indicate students can sometimes learn best from each other. Identification of students with academic strengths, compassion and a desire to help, or who have been successful in coping with their own related behaviors to become a “buddy” for the student. Buddies can assist with assignments, studying for tests, completing routine classroom tasks, playing at recess, successfully navigating lunch or assemblies, etc.
3. **Plan Thoroughly** Thoughtful planning must occur during the inclusion process. While this is a joint charge of Integrated Services staff and the general educator, it is important for the classroom teacher to take ownership. Planning should center the prerequisite skills necessary for student success and reasonable accommodations to the setting and curriculum. Planning should also include the development of tools for daily communication and monitoring student success as well as modified materials to support instruction.

4. **Engage in Pro-Active Teaching** Students will be prepared with information and instruction on skills required for the setting they will be entering. Visual supports may be provided to assist the student in following schedules, identifying classmates, completing homework assignments, getting to class prepared and using self-control. Pro-active teaching should be ongoing, by re-teaching/reviewing expectations just prior to entering the general education classroom as well as reviewing/reflecting on participation at the end of the day or at the conclusion of activities.
5. **Make Setting and Academic Accommodations** Many innovative and flexible instructional strategies exist to ensure that students are supported across educational settings. Most important are a structured learning environment, intentional inclusion practices and instructional accommodations that ensure full access to academic and social learning activities. It is important to understand that inclusion should not require an alternative curriculum, but merely reasonable adjustments to provide the student access to the setting and environment. The IEP team determines what accommodations are necessary based on student needs.
6. **Communicate of Progress** Regular communication between general education staff, integrated services staff, administration, the student, and the student's parents is essential. Teams need to determine effective means of communicating progress in behavior, participation, academic and social growth. Additional communication planning might include substitute information, behavior management plan, information for the bus driver, and planning and documentation regarding medications. With thoughtful communication, all are kept informed and concerns can be caught and addressed early leading to greater success and satisfaction by all.

Transition Planning

Transition planning for students with ASD supports a continuum of service for students ages 3-21. Transition services are: 1) a coordinated set of activities, 2) results-oriented, 3) based on the individual child's needs, 4) focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child, and 5) inclusive of instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and other adult living objectives. Transition planning promotes a process that develops a plan of support for effective teacher planning and student success from grade level to grade level, program to program, school to school and to post secondary life.

Goals of Transition Planning The goals of transition planning for students with ASD are straightforward—that the student will move within or between educational settings with:

1. Feelings of safety, belonging, and support.
2. Continuity of interventions and programming.
3. Maintenance of social connections with peers, whenever possible.
4. Comfort and familiarity with the new environment.

Guidelines to Support Transition Preparation for easing transitions between teachers or schools involves not only preparing the student, but the parents and the receiving teacher or school staff. An effective transition planning process includes:

- Inform and support parents early in the process of where student will be transitioning.
- Collaborate with the receiving school to develop a transition plan and meeting
- Arrange and conduct observations between the sending and receiving school staff.
- Encourage staff and parents to complete transition documents
- Teach and prepare the student for the new setting through visits, books, or pictures

Common Terms

Antecedent – A stimulus that occurs before a targeted behavior is exhibited. Antecedents can help to identify when and in what contexts a target behavior may occur and guide the selection of effective interventions. Antecedent strategies focus on reducing the likelihood that problematic behaviors will occur (i.e. scheduled breaks)

Aversive – A stimulus which is considered to be unpleasant or non-preferred.

Behavior momentum – A procedure used to increase compliance by using high probability requests prior to the low probability request.

Chaining – The teaching and combining of a simple sequence of steps that leads to a whole task completion (eg. using a microwave, brushing teeth, dressing, etc.) also see *task analysis*

Class – Refers to the concept of categorization or the ability to place or distribute things into classes or categories of the same type. For example, asking the child, “What are socks?” Child responds, “Clothing.”

Cognitive behavior therapy – An instructional strategy in which misperceptions and distortions in the individual’s thinking that lead to an inappropriate response or behavior are identified and the individual is assisted to modify their thinking in regards to social problem solving thereby changing their behavior.

Compliance – The act of appropriately doing a task or activity in response to a teacher’s request to do so.

Consequence – A stimulus that occurs after a particular behavior. Classified as either reinforcement, punishment or extinction

Contingency – A contract or relationship that specifies and clarifies expectations and what will occur when expectations are met. It defines the expected behavior (work or effort) and the reinforcement (payoff).

Delayed gratification – The ability to put off receiving a reward or reinforcer until a later time. Often used in combination with point systems.

Demand fading – Used in a program to teach a student to comply with reasonable requests. A list of tasks beginning with those tasks that usually elicit compliance from the student and then progressing through tasks that typically cause increasing levels of non-compliance. See also Behavior momentum.

Direct instruction – Systematic instruction with adult control being maintained over the instructional activities, which are highly structured and allow for repetition, practice, and lead to mastery.

Discrete trial – An efficient and effective training technique for teaching a concept that has been broken down into carefully task-analyzed steps. A series of trials is presented

with a standard cue/response/consequence format. By repeating this process, the student receives multiple opportunities to respond with immediate corrective feedback in quick succession.

Discriminative stimulus – A specific environmental event or condition (a stimulus) that evokes a specific behavior or action. For example, when asked to point to a dog, the student points to a picture of a dog out of an array of pictures.

Echoic – One of the six primary verbal operants defined by Skinner. The student repeats what is said. In echoic behavior, the stimulus is auditory and response is vocal. Often used in early shaping behavior and early language development, for example, the teacher might say, “house” in order for the student to repeat “house”.

Echolalia – The repetition or parroting of words or phrases, often without meaning. Echolalia also encompasses rote phrases or scripts (often from movies or TV shows) that students repeated and occasionally use in appropriate context.

Engagement – The ability to remain focused and interactive with or responsive to a person or object.

Errorless learning – An instructional approach using a system of most-to-least prompting, which initially may involve physical prompting of a correct response and gradually fading the prompts to foster independence. The adult delivers an antecedent and waits momentarily and if the student begins to move to an incorrect response or doesn't respond, the adult prompts the correct response. The same antecedent is presented again with the intent of having the student respond correctly without the prompt. If the student is correct, the adult moves on to the next target. If the student again begins to respond incorrectly, the adult prompts again, and then moves on to other targets.

Executive functioning – The ability to plan and organize tasks, monitor one's own performance, inhibit inappropriate responses, utilize feedback, suppress distracting stimuli and demonstrate flexibility in thinking when faced with potential problems.

Extinction – The process of discontinuing any reinforcement to reduce an undesirable response.

Extinction burst – An extinction burst will often occur when the extinction procedure has just begun and reinforcement is withheld. This consists of a sudden and temporary increase in the response's frequency, intensity, duration before it eventually declines and decreases.

Extrinsic reinforcement – The use of a reinforcer that is desirable to the recipient and encourages him/her to perform a target task or behavior. Can take the form of praise, a desired object or food, participating in a favored activity, or a token that later can be traded for a desired object or activity. Contrast with “intrinsic reinforcement.”

Fade – To gradually withdraw either prompts or reinforcers in order to encourage the student to do a task without the need for the outside influence of prompts or reinforcement.

Feature – A distinct property of something or a part of a concept that is a basic unit of that thing or structure. For example, the adult says while pointing to picture, “What does an airplane have?” The child responds, “Wings.”

Fluency – The stage in learning when performance becomes more automatic and correct responses occur at a higher rate than errors.

Function – An abstract association of concept and its corresponding output or what it does. For example, the adult asks pointing to a picture, “What does a train do?” Child responds, “Goes on tracks.”

Function of behavior – The identified cause of problem behavior determined by looking at the antecedent and consequences. The primary functions of behavior are: Escape/Avoidance, Attention, Access to tangibles/items, Automatic (sensory).

Generalization – The transfer of skills learned in one context to different contexts, including the ability to use those skills in different locations with varying stimuli, with different people, and at different times.

Intensive Teaching (IT) – Teaching concepts and skills with a systematic and consistent presentation of instructional materials with appropriate levels of help or prompting and acknowledgement of correct responses through reinforcement. Provides the conditions for the fastest rates of skill acquisition. Also known as discrete trial therapy.

Intraverbal – One of the six primary verbal operants defined by Skinner. Verbal behavior (words, phrases and sentences) in response to or evoked by the verbal behavior of others. Intraverbal behavior is essential for conversation, social interactions, memory, thinking, and problem solving and is a core of academic behavior. For example, a teacher says, “What did you do at lunch?” and the student says, “Ate a hotdog.”

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – Schools are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to the individual student's needs. The student should be provided with supplementary aids and services necessary to achieve educational goals if placed in a setting with students without disabilities.

Maintenance – The stage of learning at which a previously learned skill continues to remain at the mastery level.

Mand – One of the six primary verbal operants defined by Skinner. The student requests something based on the motivation of need; a request for an item, action, attention, or information. For example, when thirsty, asking (either through sign, verbal, or augmentative communication) for water.

Mastery – The point at which a student can accomplish a task correctly and independently based on pre-established criteria

Motor imitation – The child is instructed to produce an action modeled by the adult. For example, the adult says, “Do this” as producing a sign. The child completes the same action. Motor imitation is essential for utilizing signing.

NET – Natural Environment Teaching (NET) is teaching the student away from the desk or table, instead utilizing other natural settings or the “real world” to maximize motivation, engagement, and application of learning concepts. NET usually involves learner selection of the activity and is not dependent on a particular set of materials. The teacher has the curriculum in mind and allows for fluid interaction with the student.

Pairing – The pairing of neutral stimuli with known reinforcers to develop conditioned reinforcers. Often the process of adults/staff using reinforcers and preferred activities in order to gain instructional control.

Perseveration – The practice of repeating a phrase or behavior over and over, or the habit of pursuing a topic relentlessly.

Pragmatics – The social use of language. It refers to the practical aspects of using language to communicate in a natural context. It includes the rules of eye contact between speaker and listener, how close to stand, taking turns, selecting topics of conversation, and other requirements to ensure that communication occurs. Many of these rules have a cultural basis.

Prompt – To encourage, remind or “cue” someone to do something. Prompts can be physically guiding (e.g., placing one’s hand over the student’s hand to guide picking up a pencil) or a verbal reminder or a slight gesture (such as pointing) that reminds the individual to start or continue a response or task. It is generally best to use the least intrusive prompt that will work. It is also important to fade prompts by slowly decreasing the number of prompts or moving to more subtle prompts until the individual requires only the amount or type of prompts appropriate for his/her age.

Prompt fading – An essential strategy for developing independence where the student is weaned from supportive prompts (physical guidance, verbal, modeling, gestures, or position) gradually by reducing the type, amount, or strength of the prompt.

Receptive – The comprehension of what is being communicated demonstrated by an appropriate observable behavior such as following a direction or making a selection. For example, “Touch your nose.” “Clap your hands.” “Point to the car.”

Reinforcer – Anything that follows a student behavior and serves to increase future occurrences of that behavior. A **positive reinforcer** is something that is added to the environment such as praise, an edible, access to preferred activities. A **negative reinforcer** is a consequence that follows a behavior where something (typically an aversive) is removed from the environment.

Replacement behavior – An alternative and preferable behavior that is chosen and taught to replace an undesirable behavior. The undesirable behavior is incompatible with the chosen replacement behavior, thus making it less likely to occur.

Response cost – A punishing procedure that involves the loss of something valued (a reinforcer) as a direct result of an action or behavior, thus decreasing the likelihood that the behavior will reoccur. Response cost involves the giving up of something already in possession, and is best used with the opportunity to re-earn, through appropriate behavior, what was lost.

Seclusion and Restraint- Please see Poudre School District policy and procedures regarding physical intervention, restraint, seclusion and time out.

Sanitized environment – Refers to carefully staging an environment to maximize learning including the removal of distracting reinforcing materials.

Secondary reinforcer – Sometimes called a conditioned reinforcer because a stimulus has acquired a reinforcing function through pairing with something that is already reinforcing. For example, points that are a neutral stimulus can be used (paired) with free time or a snack that are reinforcing and thereby acquire reinforcing value.

Sensory integration – The neurological process that organizes sensation from one's own body and from the environment and enables one to use the body effectively in the environment.

Shaping – To teach an individual a completely new behavior in a gradual, stepwise fashion by first reinforcing the individual for any preexisting behavior that is close to the goal behavior, and then reinforcing successively closer approximations of the desired behavior until it is mastered.

Stimulus – An environmental event. A stimulus can occur prior to a target behavior and is therefore known as an antecedent. An stimulus can also occur after a target behavior and is known as a consequence.

Tact – One of the six primary verbal operants defined by Skinner. Naming or labeling some object, property, or action that is a feature of the physical environment. For example, saying "cat" when looking at a picture of a cat.

Target behavior – A specific behavior identified to be observed, modified, or taught to the student.

Task analysis – The process of breaking a concept or activity down into component parts and sequential, teachable steps.

Time out – The removal of something positive, whether a preferred object or a desirable activity, signaling to the student a certain amount of time he or she won't receive positives.

Trial – A single task or teaching unit.