

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.



2010

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Acknowledgements

In 2009, a comprehensive evaluation of programs serving students with autism spectrum disorders was undertaken. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify competent practices, note any deficits or less effective practices, and provide recommendations for needed unity and improvement. As a result of that report and with a desire to improve outcomes for all students with ASD across the district, we set forth these program guidelines.

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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

Believing that our charge is to “Educate...every child, every day” includes those students who have significant barriers to learning by virtue of their communication and behavior and who are in need of highly specialized support to realize our mission. 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 measurable outcomes for this population.

This document strives to promote unity in vision and a common language across District staff, and to ensure the consistent implementation of best practices in service delivery at each and every building. Once a student is identified as eligible for special education services due to an autism spectrum disorder, parents and students must be able to depend on the school to provide quality services that are consistent regardless of where the student may reside.

Our Students

Today, despite the efforts of over 60 years of research, autism remains one of the most perplexing of disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines autism as “A development disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” Autism, however, is not a single condition; rather, it is a spectrum disorder that results in individuals presenting with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. The Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) refers to this spectrum of autism as including: 1) qualitative impairment in social interaction, 2) qualitative impairments in communication, and 3) restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities. DSM-IV includes five subcategories of autism: 1) Autistic Disorder, 2) Pervasive Development Disorder, 3) Asperger’s Disorder, 4) Rett’s Disorder, and 5) Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong disorder, persisting through adulthood with no identified etiology or cure. The deficits displayed by individuals having ASD affect the most vital aspects of their quality of life, including interacting with other people, communicating ideas and feelings, and understanding what others feel or think.

Schools in Colorado may use the IDEA educational criteria to determine a child’s eligibility for special education services; “autism” is a subcategory of “physical disability” in State guidelines. To be eligible for services, the presence of these communication and

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behavior patterns must result in an inability to benefit from regular education along with an inability to assume responsibility and meet the demands of their environment.

The complex nature of Autism Spectrum Disorders aside, the challenges that educators, parents, and students experience daily are well known. Common ASD student characteristics may include:

- Delays in or absence of spoken language
- Unusual or repetitive use of speech without understanding (echolalia)
- Inability to get needs met through requesting and functional communication
- Difficulty initiating or sustaining a conversation with others
- Centered on self; limited or no peer interactions or relationships
- Absence of mutuality in social or emotional exchanges
- Difficulty understanding others' perspective or point of view
- Lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment or interests with others
- Absence of typical spontaneous play
- Impaired use of nonverbal social behaviors such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures
- Inflexibility in thinking; perseveration of thoughts
- Intense or focused preoccupation with narrow topics of interest
- Inflexible adherence to unproductive routines or rituals
- Limited ability to plan or organize
- Repetitive motor movement or mannerisms such as flapping, twisting, rocking
- Lack of tolerance for and sometimes intense reactions to change
- Perfectionism or wanting things to be "just right"
- Unpredictable behavior across settings or time
- Unaware of dangers; may have a high tolerance for pain
- Inability to integrate and use sensory information
- Unaware of or acute awareness to environment
- Heightened sensitivity to light, sound, etc.
- Lack of awareness of body position in space
- Poor hygiene and self-care
- Impulsive
- Unpredictable aggression
- Over-focus on details; inability to see big picture
- Anxiety
- Limited vocabulary and conceptual knowledge that is a foundation to learning

- Slow development of basic or pre-academic skills typically acquired more incidentally by other students
- Literal and concrete thinking
- Uneven learning profiles and “splinter skills” or areas of special aptitude
- Difficulty generalizing rote or new learning to contexts
- Inability to understand nuances or make inferences

Understandably, many students with these behavior patterns not only have school problems, but also experience long-term effects on their overall quality of life. While some families respond to the challenges of having a child with ASD with great determination and resiliency, studies show that many of these families are grieving and recurrently seeking solutions, are often pulled by conflicting recommendations from varied providers, are strained by the high supervision demands of these children, are sometimes troubled by their aggressive behaviors, and can become socially isolated due to the challenges of including these children in routine life and community activities.

Interventions and educational programming for students with ASD may be quite different from educational services for typically developing students or even students with other disabilities as behaviors that typical children learn incidentally will likely need to be explicitly taught to children with autism. Additionally, because autism is a spectrum disorder, students are impacted to varying degrees; 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. The best services for students with autism spectrum disorder are those thoughtfully designed to be responsive to their very unique presenting problems and based upon the principles of applied behavior analysis, social learning theory, and language development. The graphic on pages 7-8 relates the above student characteristics with effective core components that should be included in any educational program for students with ASD.

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.

It is our purpose to provide a highly supportive and structured teaching environment essential to address the often-significant delays in communication and social interaction, and thereby unlock the child’s potential. We provide every student with an ordered, safe, and positive learning environment that expands verbal and non-verbal abilities, inter- and intra-relational skills, and the executive or self-control and decision-making abilities foundational to all learning. 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 getting needs met.
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. Arrange for use of expanding language in natural environments to interact with others throughout the school day.

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 skills and the norms of school and society.
5. Provide guided and unguided 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-regulate, gain control over impulses, and increase flexibility.
8. Conduct task analysis of daily activities and teach the specific behaviors necessary to organize and carry out routine functions.
9. Provide direct instruction and supervision to help students assume responsibility for personal management of hygiene, health, safety, and life skills.
10. Develop the processes and skills for students to recognize the need and advocate for themselves to receive support 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.

11. Conduct evaluation of skills to set relevant individual learning goals.
12. Provide explicit, fast-paced instruction utilizing strengths, talents, and interests
13. Modify curriculum as needed to ensure acquisition of pivotal, essential learning tasks
14. Facilitate learning, where appropriate, in the general education setting with needed accommodations

Our Philosophy and Beliefs

Knowing what intervention is best on behalf of students with autism often seems like a moving target. While literature regarding interventions has exploded in the last 10 to 20 years it is all too often a mix of science, anecdotal reports, and unproven theories. Emerging proven practices can be lost in the inconsistencies of service delivery and practices across schools. While that research on interventions has failed to identify only one approach that is better than all other approaches or equally appropriate for all children with ASD, essential truths of interventions for this population have emerged and provide us with clear direction. Strategies using applied behavior analysis (ABA) are proven effective in systematically teaching socially important targeted behaviors and are the foundation for many of the approaches used. However, ABA is not a specific program, procedure or technique, but principles or methods that can be applied in diverse ways.

Our 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 primary focus is teaching those behaviors that will lead to greater independence within the learning environment.
- Functional communication must be a primary focus.
- Behavior change is difficult and takes time. Interventions lead to lasting change when used with integrity and fidelity for a sustained period of time.
- Conscientious use of interventions occurs when planning is based on data.
- Instruction must focus on 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.

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- Using student-preferred items or activities and natural reinforcers increases attention and promotes motivation and engagement.
- Positive and proactive behaviors must be taught and developed. The student's problem behavior should not merely be decreased or eliminated; interventions should focus on replacing the problem with appropriate alternative behaviors.
- Educators should always consider the functionality of skills targeted, and focus should be on those skills that are most likely to be useful in the student's life to control his/her environment and increase independence and quality of life. Acquisition of pivotal behaviors is crucial to wide areas of functioning because a change in the pivotal behavior will result in acquiring a variety of other new behaviors.
- Instruction must build progressively based upon a developmental sequence.
- While many students may still be working on basic academics, presentation and materials must be age-appropriate.
- As students with ASD age, instruction must broaden to teach adaptive responses to the real world, increased tolerance for change, and an ability to function in new and unfamiliar situations, as well as experience and handle frustration and uncertainty.
- Services are best framed around individuals; student needs dictate the model for service delivery, not existing programs or preferred teaching arrangements.
- No one program, support, or service (e.g., self-contained class) is likely to meet the needs of the population as a whole. The District must provide a full continuum of services and offer flexible placement and support options to meet each student's individualized goals.
- To the extent that it leads to achievement of education goals, children with ASD should be taught within the context of the school community where ongoing interactions can occur with typically developing students.
- A classroom environment that is structured is essential, allowing students to predict what will happen next as well as anticipate requirements or expectations of present and future activities.
- The physical environment should be free of extraneous distractions and designed to reflect the particular sensory, emotional, and educational needs of the student.
- While inclusion in the general education environment is preferred, such inclusion must be purposeful and consist of meaningful engagement in the learning activities.
- Transition planning is central to all we do. Student goals that focus on the behavioral skill sets necessary for success in the next life stage support relevance in learning.
- Parent involvement is fundamental to student success. Regular structures for communicating with and engaging parents, families, and community agencies have the ability to strengthen student outcomes.

Matching Student Characteristics to Program/Services Features

| Presenting Problem | 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 | <i>Individualized Educational Planning, Teaming, and Progress Monitoring</i> |
| <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 | <i>Language & Communication Development</i> |
| <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 • Poor hygiene and self-care | <i>Social Instruction</i> |
| <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 | <i>Environmental & Sensory Accommodations</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible adherence to unproductive routines or rituals • Repetitive motor movement or mannerisms • Perfectionist behaviors; needing things to be “just right” • Impulsive; unpredictable behavior across settings or time • Aggression • Anxiety | <i>Behavior Interventions</i> |

| Presenting Problem | Program/Services Feature |
|---|--|
| <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 Program and Services

The Poudre School District provides the resources to address a full continuum of individual student emotional and behavioral needs in all District zones and across educational levels. The program features, uniquely matched to the common presenting problems of this population, are explained below.

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

A hallmark of all Integrated Services is the joint planning with school staff, parents, and other agencies when appropriate, to determine personal learning and behavior goals and frame the services needed to realize those goals. This IEP is mutually determined, based on the student’s immediate needs, solution focused, and allows for mastery of the District’s learning standards set forth for all students. Credible planning decisions occur with sufficient data, including the function of the behavior, and allow the team to readily discern services. Thoughtful involvement of parents enhances ownership and likelihood of program commitment.

2. Language and Communication Development Language delays, the absence of language, and/or diminished use of functional communication are, perhaps, the most salient attributes of the student with ASD. Intensive language and communication instruction is an all-encompassing component of services for this population and is provided through 1:1 training, in small group or natural environment teaching, and are reinforced in all activities

throughout the entire school day. All instruction is based on a sequence of skills that build on each other and seeks to address foundational knowledge and skills that will lead to early language use, conversing with others, self-advocacy, problem-solving, and academic learning. Language and communication development includes teaching 1) specific interpersonal communication skills (e.g. requesting skills), 2) vocabulary and concept development through intensive teaching, 3) oral comprehension ranging from routine directions to understanding stories, and 4) foundational concepts for academic skill acquisition. This training is done through discreet instruction extended through Natural Environment Teaching opportunities to generalize or apply. While much of this training occurs under the direct instruction of the speech and language pathologist, it is critical that all staff be knowledgeable of the interventions to ensure that teaching permeates all activities and is conducted by a variety of adults to maximize learning and generalization.

3. Social Skills Instruction Social skills have been identified as prerequisites for academic achievement as well as for success in the community and on the job. They allow students to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to being accepted by peers and facilitate effective coping strategies. Social skills instruction is a positive, proactive intervention that replaces negative behaviors with more desirable ones through direct teaching, modeling, feedback/coaching, and use of positive and negative consequences. A district curriculum of social skills aligned with behavioral standards provides a roadmap and a common language for developing student social competencies. Social skills instruction is most effective when used selectively to reflect the needs of individual students. Social instruction must include guided and unguided practice and opportunities to use skills in natural settings.

4. Environmental and Sensory Accommodations Students with ASD often bring atypical sensory reactions to light, noise, touch, temperature, tastes, and space, etc. Effective programs consider individual sensory needs and develop personalized accommodations both to prevent and reduce anxiety, stress, and extreme behavior. The goal is to create an environment that maximizes learning, but also to help the student learn what is personally needed for them to adapt and self-regulate so as to be successful in other environments. Environmental accommodations may include 1) creating a classroom environment that is calm and soothing; 2) minimizing clutter, ensuring that all visuals are purposeful, and “sanitizing” the environment; 3) providing each student with a personal “office” or work space with clearly defined materials for use; 4) creating multiple clearly defined learning areas (desks, tables, floor, etc.); and 5) planning a balance of hard/easy, quiet/noisy, inside/outside tasks. Sensory accommodations include scheduling breaks to engage in a personally selected sensory activity or movement or arranging for ongoing use of noise-blocking options or other tools to help students regulate their own nervous system and optimize their work and interactions with others. As with all interventions, sensory accommodations should be used purposefully, proactively, and personally. Strategies should be based on an individual functional analysis of behavior, consider replacement behaviors, and always strive to assist the child toward socially acceptable behaviors. The ultimate goal is developing capacity, tolerance, and building adaptive responses. So as to prevent avoidance behavior, sensory breaks should generally be embedded or scheduled

and not used on-demand. Finally, sensory accommodations should be limited to those interventions and durations absolutely necessary to prevent or minimize a behavior and must be monitored and adjusted in an ongoing way.

5. Behavioral Interventions The challenging behaviors of students with ASD often interfere with the opportunity to participate in many learning and social activities and require highly systematic interventions based on the principals of applied behavior analysis. The process begins with identifying target behaviors and conducting a task analysis of the desirable or replacement behaviors; efforts concentrate on building or accelerating appropriate behavior. With the many behaviors of concern, this selection of behaviors on which to intervene must focus on pivotal behaviors that will allow the student maximum gain and access to the next level of behaving and learning. Behavior protocols are created to guide the consistency and precision of staff interventions. They include how to explicitly teach the expected behaviors in 1:1 or small group settings, how to prompt for behaviors, and the use of consequences based upon a functional assessment. As with any precise intervention, it is important to use protocols with integrity for a sufficient time to realize change and to gather and analyze data carefully to guide any intervention modifications.

6. Targeted, Explicit Academic Instruction Students with ASD may be given 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 uneven learning profiles, limited vocabularies, difficulty learning incidentally, along with problems generalizing and understanding nuances often requires very specific and intense instructional approaches. 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. Due to restricted conceptual knowledge, 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. The goal of all learning activities is the acquisition of behavior that will maximize personal growth and development and promote the ability to assimilate into settings with typically developing peers.

7. Collaboration with Families-Home and Other Agencies ASD Students often bring such complex life issues that call for school staff to work with parents and other agencies to ensure continuity of efforts across settings, inviting those agencies or individuals to join the team efforts on behalf of students.

Our Classroom Setting

The environment of the classroom for students with ASD is often distinctive from other special needs setting. With the atypical sensory reactions and unique language and learning needs, classrooms need to be carefully planned and organized. Routines should be structured to allow student to perform regularly occurring activities as independently as possible. The goal is to create an environment that maximizes learning, eliminates competing attention-pulling stimuli, and promotes certainty in routine functions while helping each student to learn what is personally needed for them to adapt and self-regulate so as to be successful not only in the special class environment, but in other settings as well. While some differences in classrooms will exist as we accommodate the wide range of individual student needs, there are some common expectations for ASD classrooms, things that we should see or experience in most or all classrooms.

Environment Checklist for ASD Classrooms

- Classroom located within the mainstream school setting.
- Overall appearance is age-appropriate, reflecting interests of same-age normally developing 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.
- Visuals are kept to a minimum and are purposeful; chalkboards are clear of irrelevant information.
- Each student has a personal “office” or workspace designated with his or her name.
- Personal desk/workspace is organized.
- 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 posted, visible to all; pictures or icons are used to enhance understanding.
- Picture sequences for most major activities and classroom routines exist (e.g., lining up, using the restroom, lunch, setting table, getting dressed, etc.)
- Visual support systems are readily available (e.g., folders, portfolios with pockets, etc.)
- A visual cue system is available to help regulate emotions.
- Protocols or cues for targeted skills are visible for reference by all staff.
- Personal augmentative communication devices are accessible and used consistently.
- Noise distractions have been eliminated (e.g., area rugs, no sound emitting equipment, closed doors during instruction, etc.).
- Timers and clocks direct the schedule and provide students with cues for task change.

- High student response rate sustains engagement.
- Varied activities reflect different modes of learning.
- Activities reflect a balance of hard/easy, quiet/noisy, and inside/outside tasks.
- Direct measurement of student performance is built seamlessly into instruction.
- Students track activities against their schedule, noting completed tasks.
- Time is scheduled tightly; there is little or no down time.
- Breaks are scheduled for personally selected sensory activity or movement.
- Short concise directives are used.
- Students are required to use language to the maximum appropriate.
- Positive tone is prevalent with smiles, touch, compliments, etc.
- All adults use a high rate of positive feedback/reinforcement (4:1 positive to negative).
- All staff are purposefully engaged and responsibilities are clear and scheduled.
- Talk among adults is private/quiet, movement through classroom quietly.
- All staff use ongoing intentional modeling of social skills.

Our Roles and Responsibilities

The complex needs of students with ASD are best served through a team of teachers and support staff working in harmony. Each building may have a differently configured team based upon the severity of student behaviors and building size and educational level, however, working together to plan and deliver services is critical to realize good student outcomes. It will ultimately be up to each building team to define their roles and responsibilities that best serve their staffing arrangement, personal skill sets, and setting. This is a first priority in program planning. In addition to having clear roles, teams are to create structures for regular meetings so as to discuss student progress or difficulties and determine specific assignments, thereby closely coordinating interventions and efforts. Guidelines for role clarification follow.

Building Administrator Studies show that building-level support from principals and general educators has strong effects on virtually all critical aspects of special education teachers' working conditions. The values and supportive actions of building administrators create the context through climate and culture for ASD services to flourish. While their role is largely one of overseeing the provision of human and physical resources, they also provide continual support and personal engagement with teams and students. They model the expected acceptance and inclusion of these students throughout the school and across all activities. This role includes:

- 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, ensuring the development and efficient operation of the team to plan and deliver services.
- 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, speech and language pathologist) 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.
- Develop a plan for providing support to teachers for intense student behavior (e.g. physical aggression) that is congruent with the program philosophy.
- 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 Teaching ASD student is a complex job that requires full understanding of the nature of their students and assuming primary responsibility for developing and implementing targeted and defensible interventions. This includes teaching students with varied needs, collaborating with numerous teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents, and completion of data and other document management systems. To avoid overload, teachers must fully utilize the support of the team, allowing them to focus on the primary role of designing and delivering student interventions of the highest caliber. This role includes:

- Plan and coordinate IEP meetings, helping to transfer assessment and intervention data into needed interventions and services, and ensuring completion of written IEP.
- Plan and coordinate an effective schedule for students and paraprofessionals to ensure high student engagement and intensive instruction.
- Clearly define paraprofessional's role and provide useable knowledge of student characteristics, interventions, and appropriate student interactions.
- Meet with paraprofessionals regularly to review student data and related modifications to interventions as well as provide ongoing training.
- Supervise paraprofessionals and provide ongoing feedback on implementation integrity.
- Design an orderly classroom environment that establishes clarity of purpose and focus through clear procedures and routines with attention to unique student sensory needs.

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- Consider behavioral and social norms to design behavior plans based on functional behavior assessment data.
- Maintain consistent protocols to teach and reinforce acceptable student behavior and social skills.
- Design curriculum, lesson materials, and visual aids (schedules, organizers, etc.) for individual students based on intervention data, pivotal skill needs, and the IEP.
- Deliver lessons through individual and small group instruction that engage students and ensure opportunity for students to gain mastery of clearly identified learner outcomes.
- Clearly define the need and parameters for differentiated instruction for each student so others can implement interventions consistently and with fidelity.
- Gather, organize and synthesize data for sharing with the team and parents, and to drive intervention modifications and IEP planning.
- Meet with paraprofessional and general education teachers to collaborate on including ASD students into classrooms including their roles, learning outcomes, behavior tracking tools, and differentiated expectations, instruction, materials, or assignments.
- Participate in ASD team meetings to discuss progress of individual students, promote appropriate implementation of language, behavioral and academic interventions, and determine modifications.
- Serve as case manager and individual point of contact for students and families, ensuring regular communication.
- Communicate regularly with parents by means of progress notes, emails, phone calls, and conferences, and promote parent understanding of and engagement with the school and their child's program. Assist parents to use consistent interventions within the home.
- Educate the school community (staff and students) as well as parents about ASD.

Paraprofessional The special education paraprofessional is an essential team member to ensure the intensity of services necessary for and supervision of students with ASD. The paraprofessional assists and supports the teacher with instructional and non-teaching tasks, but does not assume decision-making authority. Much of their day is devoted to carrying out individual and small group instruction designed by the teacher or SLP and overseeing personal needs of students. The demands for technically accurate application of interventions means that paraprofessionals must be fully trained and supervised. Teachers must take time to plan together with paraprofessionals so that they are not left to create and design instruction that is not teacher-driven. The following is a list of paraprofessional tasks:

- Participate in training and work to acquire the unique skills essential for working with students with ASD.
- Implement behavior protocols and behavior interventions as designed by the certified staff. View behavior objectively and disengage emotionally to intervene with fidelity.

- 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 With the significant challenges in the area of language development and pragmatics, the speech and language pathologist is vital to ASD services. The integration of language training across all settings is, perhaps, the distinctive characteristic of the autism classroom. The SLP has a unique perspective, as they are often the one professional that has contact with all students. Therefore, they often provide a strong leadership role in programs and services, working closely with the classroom teacher to assess, guide, deliver and monitor the high intensity individual and small group speech and language therapy. This includes:

- 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.
- Determine appropriate pragmatic language and social skills targets.
- Explore creative methods of communication for some students as needed (sign, augmentative devices, etc.) and provide training.

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- Conduct social skills instruction in collaboration with other certified staff.
- Oversee the preparation of unique lesson materials to accomplish language and social skills targets.
- Carry out individual and group speech and language therapy sessions using personalized activities that address the identified targets.
- Conduct, in conjunction with teachers, social skills instruction.
- Train teachers and paraprofessionals on language, behavior principles, IT and NET interventions and specific strategies for each student.
- Supervise other staffs' implementation of language lessons and provide feedback to ensure fidelity.
- Guide decisions for scaffolding learning and shifting learning objectives.
- Gather data on interventions, share with staff, and add/adjust targets, teaching materials, and instructional activities as needed.
- Meet regularly with the team, often leading team meetings along with teachers to ensure a regular and productive student progress review and related intervention planning focus.
- Communicate with parents, in harmony with instructional staff, on student progress, continual needs, and ways to support school efforts at home.

Occupational Therapist Occupational Therapy (OT) services for students with ASD include evaluation, intervention, and measurement of outcomes. OT is a related or adjunct service to support special education goals as deemed essential by the IEP team. As such, OT may not satisfy all medical or therapy needs of the child, and clinical or home health interventions may be desired outside of the educational environment. Occupational therapists provide direct services or consult with teaching staff and parents to help improve a student's ability to perform tasks and routines as independently as possible so as to access the teaching-learning environment. These services might include:

- Conduct context-based evaluations (ecological assessments) to determine the student's ability to function/perform within various school or classroom settings.
- Bring foundational knowledge of human development and milestones to the team to ensure developmentally appropriate activities.
- Provide staff with strategies to assist with daily living activities such as feeding, dressing, hygiene, community mobility, safety awareness, etc.
- Provide direct instruction to students for facilitation of new skill development and sustainability of acquired skills needed for classroom success.
- Assist with the design of play activities to help with interaction and communication.
- Assess and plan for sensory-motor or access skills development to help students to self-regulate in a variety of contexts and settings (e.g., cope with transitions, respond to noisy or crowded settings such as the lunchroom, assembly, or fire drill).

- 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 The school psychologist provides consultation and direct support to ASD programs in the areas of assessment, instructional and behavioral interventions, social skills instruction, and progress monitoring. Some of the more typical responsibilities of the school psychologist include:

- Collaborate with the team on student assessment, conducting and assisting others in data collection to ensure integrity in intervention decisions.
- Participate in IEP team meetings, interpreting assessment and intervention data, and contributing to valid decisions regarding services.
- Become familiar with students and their needs to be of assistance in planning and problem solving.
- Participate in ASD team meetings to discuss progress of individual students, promote appropriate implementation of language, behavioral, and academic interventions, and determine needed modifications.
- Monitor student progress through direct student contact, observation, and consultation with teachers.
- Provides leadership in functional behavioral assessments which supports behavior analysis and promotes a collaborative process for the development of an effective behavior intervention plan.
- Champion planning for transitions of students and create procedures to ensure thorough communication with others across settings.
- 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.

Parents ASD programs will want to sensitively approach their partnership with parents, sharing with them the key role they play in their child's success at school and providing the supports for parents to arise to meet those expectations:

- Participate in IEP meetings and become familiar with the program, the staff, and services.
- Model and encourage a positive attitude toward school, the staff, behavioral expectations, and learning for their child.
- Communicate the ongoing family situations and medical needs of their child including any significant changes in medications, etc.

ASD Guidelines

- Encourage their child's success through regular attendance.
- Communicate with the school if behavior problems or concerns develop.
- Respond in a cooperative and timely manner to school staff who are working to help solve a child's behavior or learning problem (e.g., return phone calls, attend planning meetings).
- 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.
- Respond without delay to routine school communications (e.g., communication book).

General Education Teacher Teachers in the general education setting play a key role in the generalization of behavior and the meaningfulness of contacts with typically developing peers. Thoughtful selection and preparation of these teachers is important to the overall success of services for students with ASD. Their role in working with these students includes:

- Gain and develop knowledge and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders, support effective accommodations or modifications as put forth in the student's Individual Education Plan
- Collaborate with the Special Education staff related to general education instruction for implementation of effective learning strategies.
- Participate in IEP meetings and have a working knowledge of the plan's behavioral and learning interventions.
- Partner with the Integrated Services staff to fully develop accommodations and/or modifications for their specific classroom implementation.
- View the student as a full member of the classroom, including/inviting the student to participate in all appropriate class activities (parties, special learning activities, field trips, etc.)
- Foster positive regard and acceptance of student with ASD among all students.
- Carry out accommodations/modifications and behavior interventions with integrity.
- Assume the primary teaching responsibility for the student with ASD, and direct/allow the paraprofessional to provide general support.
- Complete all feedback tools conscientiously and return promptly to the special education teacher.
- Communicate with parents routinely and keep Integrated Services staff informed of those communications.
- Maintain respect and confidentiality in all communications about the student(s).
- Actively seek consultation from the ASD team as needed.

Least Restrictive Environment

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. 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. The student should be provided with supplementary aids and services necessary to achieve educational goals if placed in a setting with non-disabled peers

Role in the Least Restrictive Environment The LRE is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the inclusive setting.

Children with and without disabilities may benefit by learning about differences between people and by having the opportunity to assist others. Teachers may benefit from a broader appreciation of differences and by learning new techniques for instruction. The heterogeneity one sees in autism requires many options and possibilities, not one solution for all. A label of Autism does not outline an exact picture of what a student needs in terms of support in the educational setting.

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

1. **Individual/functional assessment.** Inclusive activities should be offered based on an individual assessment of the student's skills and abilities to function and participate in the setting. Inclusion activities are appropriate only when preceded by adequate assessment, pre-placement preparation, and ongoing evaluation of the appropriateness of the activity and placement.
2. **Individual Education Plan.** All decisions made regarding a student's instruction and goals are based upon individual need and are developed by the IEP team.
3. **Least Process for review and change.** Administrative support is critical to allow the staff to work as a team and collaborate together to ensure a successful experience for the student with ASD. Adequate resources and supports must be identified as part of the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Close monitoring must occur to ensure the student is making progress in the setting and meeting the specified goals and objectives.

Indicators for Successful Inclusion for Students with ASD

- The school is prepared (through philosophy, staff, student understanding, and assistive materials) to accept special needs students.
- 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 interventions plans and strategies have been developed to achieve the desired outcome in the inclusive setting
- The inclusive setting is age appropriate for the student.
- Student has the opportunity to participate in social interactions that will promote social competencies and support individual development
- Students are full members of the learning community.
- Student demonstrates the ability to learn from the naturally occurring environment with the aid of accommodations
- Student is successful with the 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 setting if the following exist: an inclusive culture; students' time is wisely used; sufficient support is provided; thorough planning has been done; all stay well informed; reasonable accommodations have been made; 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. When administrators are not overtly supportive of students' participation in the school community and the change this requires, teachers are left to bargain for every bit of assistance.
 - **Training for Teachers** It is unrealistic to expect that regular education teachers will have the specific training required for this population, 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. Each grade level should have a regular educator with the inclination and training to provide the structured learning environment that students with ASD need for academic success. Special needs staff and administrators need to ensure that training provisions are made.
 - **Teaming Time** In addition to training, the instructional team—comprised of special educators, support staff, and general educators—needs time to meet to plan, problem solve strategies and to address concerns. When general education teachers do not receive adequate information and support, both students and teachers are set up for failure and the inclusive culture suffers. 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, its causes, impacts, and how students with ASD benefit from understanding and cooperation of fellow students. Weekly or monthly classroom meetings are often helpful to review

student reactions to and support of included students with disabilities. 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 instructional assistants are commonly used, peers are also a natural and readily available resource for supporting students.
 - **Instructional Assistants** Too often assistants are assigned to students without sufficient training or a clear understanding of their supportive role. Assigned assistants need information on instructional approaches, behavioral interventions, and the process of building independence and fading of supports. It can be helpful if instructional assistants are not always closely positioned next to the student. Instead, assistants should be used to provide general support to the teacher and all students in the class along with the assigned student. Rotating assistants and positioning assistants away from the student are both important strategies for avoiding cue dependency. While different assistants can be helpful, adopted strategies must be consistent. It is also essential to allow assistants time with the team to problem solve and plan.
 - **Peer Helpers and Models** Research and practical experience indicate students can sometimes learn best from each other. Identify 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 before initiating inclusion. 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 on a clear analysis of the learning environment, the prerequisite skills necessary for student success, and reasonable accommodations to the setting and curriculum. Such planning is best done after observations have occurred—observation of the included setting by the special services teacher and observation of the student by the receiving teacher. A written plan that minimally outlines setting and instructional accommodations and behavioral interventions is essential. Planning should also include the development of tools for daily communication and monitoring student success.
4. **Engage in Preventive Teaching** Once staff observations have occurred, the setting analyzed, classroom procedures identified, and learning pre-requisites outlined, pre-teaching of those behaviors to the student must occur. The general education setting can be less stressful if students are prepared with information about and skills that match the setting they will be entering. For some students, it might be helpful to have the student observe the class with the purpose of looking for or identifying rules and expectations. Teaching, role-play, and practice of skills can then occur and, in some cases, the provisions of written cues to take home, review, or use in the classroom during times of stress can be helpful. Social stories can be written and visual supports

provided to assist the student in following schedules, identifying classmates, completing homework assignments, getting to class prepared and using self-control. Preventive teaching should be ongoing and occur daily, by re-teaching/reviewing expectations just prior to entering the included classroom to set students up for success and by reviewing/reflecting on success 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 a diverse array or educational settings. Multi-age grouping, cooperative learning, authentic assessment, instruction based on the concept of multiple intelligences, differentiated instruction, thematic approaches, and other innovations in general education provide a positive framework for teaching students with ASD. While these general education practices make inclusion easier, it will still be necessary to provide the structured learning environment 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 the way the student receives information (the way material is presented) or the way they express what they have learned (how they demonstrate mastery).
- **Setting Accommodations** might include addressing auditory and visual distractions (e.g., eliminate noise producing machines, no music or sounds during lectures or when students are to be working quietly, avoid visual clutter, seating student in front of classroom, control lighting, ensure volume level is appropriate to hear auditory cues, teacher's clothes and accessories that do not provide additional distracting stimuli, etc.). Presentation accommodations may need to be considered (e.g., avoid switching topics abruptly or talking too rapidly, use close proximity when delivering instructions, make transitions in an orderly, calm, predictable way, maintaining an even tempo, using multi-sensory approaches to teaching that the student can see it, hear about it, and touch it, etc.)
 - **Instructional Accommodations** to ensure the student has access to learning should be efficient, easy to use and unobtrusive, meaningful and provide a solution that ensures participation in academic instruction. Presentation accommodations for the delivery of instruction might include repetition of instruction, reporting back instructions, wait time, acting as an advance agent letting the student know that they will be called on ahead of time, rephrasing questions, modeling, visual cues, use of graphic organizers or word banks and sentence starters, assignments broken down into smaller tasks, verbal and visual prompts and cues, allowing for movement, shortened writing utensils, weighted pens or pencils, grips, highlighters, etc.
 - **Accommodations for Demonstrating Mastery** may also be necessary for included students. The final product may not look like everyone else's, but still allows the student to express mastery of the content (e.g. co-writer, interviewing/verbal assessments, extended time, private quiet area for tests, create a PowerPoint, etc.)

6. **Communicate and Monitor Progress** It is essential to create means for effective, efficient, and regular communication between general education staff, special needs staff, administration, the student, and the student's parents. Tracking tools can be used for daily feedback between regular and special classes and the home. Many such tools can also be used to provide moment-by-moment feedback to the student on targeted behaviors and be used to motivate and monitor progress. Self-monitoring/reflection checklists can be used with some students to help them think about and reflect on learning and behavioral goals. These tracking tools can be sent home daily and serve as a means for parents to review and report back about relevant home issues. 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. Transition activities should be addressed prior to the year of transition. An effective transition planning process includes:

- Inform and support parents early in the process.
- Collaborate with the receiving school.
- Arrange and conduct observations between the sending and receiving school staff.
- Conduct staff information and teaming meetings in preparation for successful

student transition.

- Teach and prepare the student in anticipation of the new setting
- Plan and allow for adjustment for the new setting

Sensitive Issues

Children with ASD, particularly those who are non-verbal or have communication challenges, may have difficulty understanding the social nuances surrounding personal care and sexuality. Furthermore, they are particularly vulnerable to behavioral interventions such as restraint or seclusion. In this section, we will briefly outline some considerations for these sensitive issues.

Restraint and Seclusion. Poudre School District employees must comply with District Policy in the use of physical intervention, restraint, seclusion and time out procedures. The District believes that the least restrictive positive educational strategies should always be used to respect the child's dignity. This belief especially pertains to restraint and seclusion. The District provides training annually from the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), which offers clear direction for professionally responding to students who are out-of-control and in need of external supports to assist the student in regaining behavioral control. A few important guidelines follow:

- Any behavioral interventions used must promote the right of all children to be treated with dignity.
- Behavioral interventions should, first and foremost, emphasize prevention and positive and instructional approaches.
- Students whose patterns of behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others or is dangerous should have a Crisis Intervention Plan and a Behavioral Intervention Plan based on a Functional Behavioral Assessment that includes instruction in appropriate or alternative desirable behavior and strategies to de-escalate their behavior. The full IEP team should be involved in the creation of that plan.
- All staff working with students with ASD should have completed CPI training and hold a certificate reflecting successful completion. Staff should fully utilize conflict de-escalation techniques to avoid and defuse a crisis.
- A comprehensive debriefing should occur after each use of restraint or seclusion. A report of the incident should be created, including parental notification, and emphasis placed on proactive interventions and de-escalation strategies to prevent future need for restraint or seclusion.

Personal Care For students with ASD, physical changes that come with maturity and daily hygiene such as toileting, grooming, menstruation, and masturbation can be quite at odds with where the student is functionally. These issues are important and integral components in the development of social and communication skills and being an accepted

and valued member of a group. Some considerations for thoughtfully assisting students with these significant personal care issues follow:

- Make it a priority to address those personal care skills that will allow the student to function within their community with as few restrictions as possible and are consistent with patterns and behaviors expected of individuals without disabilities.
- It is imperative to be sensitive to a student's need for privacy and dignity and equally as important to support the family's context in caring for their child.

Glossary

While services for students with ASD are often riddled with acronyms and technical language related to the specialized interventions, it is essential that we learn to communicate with others in non-threatening, non-isolating, easy to understand language. Some of the terms that are frequently used, that may need clarification, and should be understood by those working with students with ASD follow.

Antecedent – A thing, condition or event that is present or occurs before a targeted behavior is exhibited. Antecedents can help to explain the function of the behavior and guide the selection of effective interventions.

Aversive – A behavior reduction approach that is a type of punishment. Something that is disliked or aversive, ranging from verbal disapproval to more controversial physical responses, is applied following an inappropriate behavior. Physical punishment is unacceptable, inappropriate, and illegal in public schools settings.

Behavior momentum – A procedure used to increase compliance by using high probability requests prior to the low probability request. Typically a minimum of three requests with which the student has a high probability of compliance are made immediately before making the low probability request.

Chaining – The teaching and combining of simple component behaviors into a more complex, composite behavior.

Chunking – Breaking down a complex task into smaller incremental steps or “chunks.” By mastering each step individually, the student can more easily master the larger task.

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 – A psychological therapy in which misperceptions and distortions in the individual’s thinking that lead to an inappropriate response or behavior are identified and the individual assisted to correct these distortions, thereby changing their behavior.

Compliance – The act of participating in a task or activity in response to someone’s request to do so.

Compliance hierarchy – 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.

Concrete thinking – Thinking that focuses on details and facts in contrast to ideas or concepts.

Consequence – An event that occurs after a particular behavior and serves to decrease future occurrences of that behavior.

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). Contingencies are generally stated in an if/then or when/then format.

Delayed gratification – The ability to put off receiving a reward or reinforcer until a later time.

Direct instruction – Systematic instruction occurring in (typically) a one-to-one setting, 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) in response to which the teacher would like the child to exhibit a particular behavior. The desire is that the child begin to discriminate certain stimuli (teacher/parent/peer requests, important environmental events, etc.) from the background noise of everyday life, and ideally to recognize that stimuli as something more important than the background noise. For example, teaching what to do when a particular school bell is heard or what to do when classmates are lining up, when a task is completed, etc.

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” and then, “Can you say it?” to elicit an echoic response. Echoic behavior can become too strong as in echolalia.

Echolalia – The repetition or parroting of words or phrases, often without meaning. The student may be using echolaic utterances to rehearse what is heard in order to process the information, or as a strategy for self-regulation.

Embedded skills – Targeted skills taught through specific activities within the context of naturally occurring opportunities throughout the day.

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 and praises. 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 reinforces more strongly (differential reinforcement) and moves on. If the student again begins to respond incorrectly, the

adult prompts again, and then moves on to other targets. However, the adult soon returns to the missed target to try for an independent correct response.

Executive functioning – The ability to plan and organize tasks, monitor one’s own performance, inhibit inappropriate responses, utilize feedback, and suppress distracting stimuli.

Extinction – The process of discontinuing any reinforcement to reduce an undesirable response. It is often used with tantrums or attention-seeking behaviors and not effective for intrinsically reinforcing behaviors such as self-stimulation.

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.”

Figurative language – Language that conveys a meaning that is different than the literal meaning of the words or phrases being used.

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 possible cause of problem behavior determined by looking at the antecedent and consequences. For students with ASD, his function of behavior may often be communication frustration, sensory issues, confusion, boredom, task avoidance, need for attention, unrealistic expectations or a need for things to remain the same.

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.

Idiom – A figure of speech that is commonly known and used within a culture or subculture, in which the intended meaning is different from the literal meaning of the words (e.g., “You’re skating on thin ice.”).

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.” Training often uses questions of what and where without visual cues.

Intrinsic reinforcement – The positive reinforcement that comes from an inner sense of achievement or pride in having completed a task or behaved successfully. Contrast with “extrinsic reinforcement.” It is also often used in reference to a feeling of pleasure or happiness associated with doing an activity.

Irony – The use of words to convey the opposite meaning of the usual or expected meaning of the words.

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 nine out of ten times, the generally accepted point at which the student will be able to retain the ability to independently accomplish the skill in the future.

Metaphor – A form of figurative language in which there is an implied comparison between two different things without using the words like or as (e.g., “He is a sly fox.”).

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.

Negative stimulus – A situation or task which a person finds repellent, and which he/she will avoid if possible.

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.

Over-correction – A procedure to reduce serious inappropriate behaviors by requiring the person to do something unpleasant as a consequence. It is a form of punishment and typically unacceptable in public school settings.

Pairing – Building desired responses by presenting a neutral or aversive stimulus with a reinforcing stimulus so the neutral or aversive also becomes reinforcing.

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

Positive Behavior Support (PBIS) - Positive behavior intervention supports is a school wide initiative that offers primary, secondary and tertiary levels of behavior intervention to reduce academic and social failures.

Pivotal Response Training – An intervention based in applied behavior analysis where two pivotal competencies have been identified that affect a wide range of behaviors in children with ASD: motivation and responsivity to multiple cues. Positive changes in these behaviors should have a widespread effect on other behaviors. The key to PRT is teaching these skills during naturally occurring opportunities when the individual is highly motivated, thus increasing generalization of new skills. Motivation is increased by including child choice, turn taking, reinforcing attempts, and interspersing maintenance tasks. PRT has been used to target language skills, play skills, and social behavior for children with ASD.

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 listening, 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.

Prosody – As it applies to speech, prosody is the pitch or intonation, loudness, and tempo of the spoken word.

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 desirable to the recipient. The expectation of receiving a positive reinforcer (e.g., stickers, toys, tokens, social praise, preferred activities, and edibles) motivates the recipient to increase the desired behavior. A **negative reinforcer** is something that follows a behavior that a person will want to avoid. In the process of avoiding the negative reinforcer, the individual increases the desirable behavior.

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.

Simile – A figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another thing. Similes always use the words “like” or “as.”

Social story – A brief story that is used to teach a student an important lesson that would be difficult to explain to the student using usual teaching methods. Often used for teaching about transitions, life issues, or routines.

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, signing “soft” as a result of petting a cat, writing “happy” after being presented a picture of someone smiling, or saying, “It’s hot” when going outside.

Tactile defensiveness – Tactile hypersensitivity. A sensor integrative dysfunction characterized by observable aversive or negative responses (emotional reactions, hyperactivity, behavior problems, etc.) to certain types of touch that most people would not find painful.

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.

Theory of mind – A set of interrelated concepts used to try to make sense of our own mental processes and those of others, including the variability of beliefs and desires. First order theory of mind is the ability to understand or predict what another person thinks, feels, desires, intends, or believes about something (person, place, thing, or event). Second order theory of mind is a person's ability to understand or predict what a second person thinks or believes about the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, desires, or intentions of a third person.

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.

Triggers – An event that precipitates a certain behavior.