



Autism Spectrum Disorder

Developing and Implementing Programming

- > Learning outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do at various points in their school career. These can be public school program learning outcomes, or they can be "individualized," developed specifically for an individual student.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is recognized as one of the most common developmental disorders. It is a complex neurobiological disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact both with other people and with their environment. Characterized by impairments in communication, social interactions, and behaviour, ASD has significant implications on teaching and learning.

The term "autism spectrum disorder" is used today to reflect the variation seen in individuals with ASD. Within the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th Edition (DSM-IV-TR), autism spectrum disorders are categorized under Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) and include autistic disorder, Asperger's syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). Currently Rett's syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder are described under PDD but are not considered autism spectrum disorders.

Programming Decisions

Every student with ASD has unique strengths and challenges. An important step in making programming decisions involves developing a comprehensive profile of the student's strengths and challenges, which serves as a basis for successful programming. All decisions are based on the belief that it is the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming.

ASD and Adaptations

- > Adaptations can be developed and documented by teachers at the classroom level; however, if more planning is required, a program planning team meeting is scheduled. See *Adaptations: Strategies and Resources* fact sheet.

Some students with ASD are able to pursue achievement of the public school program learning outcomes with the support of carefully selected adaptations. Adaptations are documented strategies and/or resources to accommodate the learning needs of an individual student. They are planned, implemented, and evaluated to enable a student to achieve the learning outcomes.

When might an individual program plan (IPP) be required?

Development and implementation of programming for students with ASD takes place in the context of the program planning process. An IPP, based on the student's specific strengths and challenges, is developed for any student, including those with ASD, for whom the public school program learning outcomes are not applicable and/or attainable.

Who is responsible for developing the plan for a student with ASD?

- > Through the program planning process, students with ASD are supported in the achievement of learning outcomes. For additional information, see *The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2006), available at <http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/>.

The program planning process is the same for all students. This team approach to plan appropriate education, and transitions, for students with special needs includes those who have responsibility for planning a student's learning:

- parent(s) or guardian(s)
- principal/vice principal
- teachers, including resource teachers
- other professional staff involved
- the student, if appropriate
- additional members, depending on the learning needs of the student and personnel resources of the school board and the community

> Careful transition planning for passage from one stage to another for students with ASD is pivotal to success. For additional information, see *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through to Adult Life* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2005) at <http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca>.

- > The following Department of Education resources support programming for students with ASD and can be accessed at <http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca>:
- *Special Education Policy* (2008)
 - *Developing and Implementing Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder* (2012)
 - *Teacher Assistant Guidelines* (2009)
 - *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services* (2006)

How does the Department of Education support training specific to ASD?

The Department of Education funds the position of an autism consultant and provides targeted grants to school boards to support professional development for staff as well as acquisition of resources specific to autism education. The department also supports boards as they collaborate with parents and pre-school providers in the transition from home into school.

Some provincial and school board level teacher training strategies have included the following:

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| TEACCH | TEACCH (Treatment and Education for Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children) is a foundational approach that focuses on structuring and organizing the environment with visual supports utilizing the principles of “Structured Teaching.” |
| The ZIGGURAT Model | The ZIGGURAT Model is a framework for designing comprehensive interventions for individuals with ASD. Areas include sensory and biological needs, reinforcement, structure and visual supports, task demands, and skills to teach. |
| STAR | STAR (Strategies for Teaching Based on Autism Research) is a comprehensive developmental curriculum. The teaching strategies include discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and teaching functional routines. |
| FACTER | FACTER (Functional Assessment and Curriculum for Teaching Everyday Routines) assesses and teaches students with developmental disabilities to be independent by addressing the ability to perform typical everyday “routines” while incorporating essential “related skills” for living. |
| TTAP | TTAP (TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile) is a comprehensive assessment used with adolescents and young adults and with ASD to assist with planning for the functional areas deemed necessary for transition from school to community. |



Additional information can be obtained from the *Developing and Implementing Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder* guide (Department of Education 2012), available at <http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca>.

For more information about ASD, or print copies of Department of Education resources, please contact

School: School Principal

School Board: Student Services Coordinator

Department of Education: Student Services (902) 424-7454

- > This is one of a series of seven Supporting Student Success fact sheets. Other topics in the series include *Adaptations, Assistive Technology, Enrichment, Inclusion, Program Planning, and Transition*.