

Criteria for Inclusion of Students with ASD

Schools should have the following characteristics and provide the full array of needed supports and accommodations:

1. A strong commitment to include the student with autism in regular classes in the public school.
2. Demonstration of an understanding of the neurological/motor aspects of autism and continuing efforts to access new knowledge through training and other sources of information.
3. Outreach to consultants/specialists in developing more accurate assessments of children, youth and adults with autism.
4. A commitment to developing the unique profile of the individual which acknowledges strengths, needs, and learning style.
5. An awareness
 - that individuals with autism typically do poorly on standardized tests;
 - that performance and skill/knowledge are not exact equivalents; and
 - that other measures of competence are needed and can be used.
6. An awareness of the impact of environments and events which may affect the individual, and accommodations to mitigate such effects (e.g. preferred seating, preview of materials, sensory, diet); and an understanding of the inconsistent performance which may result from such environmental factors.
7. Provision of a full array of supports and accommodations including:
 - computer (Assistive Technology) and other communication devices and systems, and adapted and/or alternative materials;
 - preview of materials and visual referents;
 - accommodations for classroom work, homework, and tests, including additional time;
 - regular physical activity as well as sensory integration therapy;
 - the opportunities to choose to participate (fully or partially) in all activities in the life of the school, and be supported in those activities, or to choose an appropriate alternative (e.g. swimming or walking vs. floor hockey or volleyball);
 - 1:1 tutor/facilitator/teacher for all activities, including individual tutorial as needed in an environment without distractions; and
 - an exemption from or a qualification of the discipline code which acknowledges the sensory and communication difficulties of the individual.
8. Provision of an array of services which can include:
 - speech/language and sensory motor therapies, provided individually and jointly;
 - the development of alternative communication systems matched to the individual's strengths and needs;
 - Extended year and extended day.
9. Development and implementation of an educational program which moves beyond compliance/control models to meet the learning needs of the individual.
10. Capacity to measure progress based on skill and knowledge acquisition rather than the mere suppression of behaviors.
11. Ongoing capacity to identify, evaluate, and analyze problems leading to respectful solutions.

12. Participation (full or partial) of individuals in choosing any or all activities available to others.
13. Promotion of the development of friendships through Circle of Friends and similar groups.
14. Respect for the individual's needs, preferences and strengths.
15. Demonstrated sensitivity to individual, family, and cultural values.
16. The ability to plan well with families to provide services and supports to meet the unique communication, sensory, and learning needs of individuals with autism.
17. As more information about ASD becomes available, it should be incorporated into planning and services for students with ASD.

By Barbara Cutler; Autism National Committee (www.autcom.org/articles/CriteriaForInclusion.html)



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