

# School Administrators and Autism Spectrum Disorder Part 1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ADVICE FROM OTHER  
ADMINISTRATORS

1

Presented by:

Annette Wragge M.Ed., BCBA  
State Coordinator Nebraska ASD Network  
[awragge2@unl.edu](mailto:awragge2@unl.edu)

2

## Agenda

1. What is autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?
2. Can students with autism receive special education services?
3. How do we serve this student? (individualized, comprehensive programming options)
4. What training/resources do staff need?
5. Do we need to have a para educator for all students with autism?
6. As an administrator how do I support staff working with students with autism?
7. How to deal with problem behaviors
8. What to do when things are working?

3

WHY IS IT  
IMPORTANT FOR  
ADMINISTRATORS  
AND STAFF TO  
UNDERSTAND...

# 1. What is autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

5

## WHAT EXACTLY IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

“Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 44 children in the United States today

Center for Disease Control and Prevention website:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>

6

## Features That Directly Impact Learning



- Attention difficulties
- Communication impairments
- Lack of social skills understanding
- Auditory processing impairments
- Generalization of skills
- Difficulties imitating behavior
- Behavioral issues
- Trouble with task/event sequencing
- Transitions and time concepts

12



## Strengths



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to learn and follow rules | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused attention related to special interests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong visual performance skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rote memory                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty                           |   |

13

## ASD 101 Webinars

[www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/webinars](http://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/webinars)



The Tri-State Webinar Series is made available through continued partnership and collaboration between the Colorado Department of Education, Kansas TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports, and the Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network.

Through this collaboration we provide a wide variety of autism related presentations, presented by local and national experts in the field **and available when it is convenient for you! All webinars are provided at no charge and participants can receive a certificate of attendance for professional development CEUs following the training.**

Anyone with an interest in learning about the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders and evidence-based practices is invited to attend any of our webinars. This may include administrators, general education teachers, specialist teachers, family members, paraprofessionals, special education professionals, healthcare, and related service providers.

14

**N** NEBRASKA AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS NETWORK

[About ASD Network](#)
[Autism Spectrum Disorders](#)
[Education & Training](#)
[Tri-State Webinars](#)
[Nebraska ASD Network State Conference](#)

Nebraska > Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network > Tri-State Webinars

## Webinars

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**New To Autism?**

Check out our introductory webinars to start learning today!

[Watch the Autism 101 Webinars](#)

[EMAIL US](#)

15

### Webinars By Topic

|                       |                       |  |                         |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Assessment Curriculum | Behavior              | Classroom Structure / Instructional Strategies | Communication           |
| Early Childhood       | Executive Functioning | Family / Home Supports                         | First-Hand Perspectives |
| Mental Health         | Social Supports       | Special Topics                                 | Transitions             |

Search

[Apply](#)

Topics: Family / Home Supports

**Where Do We Go from Here: Navigating Through the Autism Diagnosis and/or Educational Identification**

My child has received an autism diagnosis, or educational identification - now what do I do? Please join us as we discuss a variety of steps and resources you can use to help navigate your way to finding supports for your child.

Completion Time: 44 minutes

Topics: Special Topics

**Improving Interprofessional Collaborations between School and Clinical/Health Contexts**

This webinar is targeted for all members of school-based teams that conduct special education evaluations for Autism. In this webinar, participants will learn about strategies and benefits for engaging in interprofessional collaborations with clinical and health providers.

Completion Time: 45 minutes

Topics: Behavior

Classroom Structure / Instructional Strategies

Executive Functioning

**Strategies for Increasing Problem Solving in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

In this webinar Dr. Kisamore will share a problem-solving strategy that can be used to guide the instruction of a variety of social and vocational skills topics and be used by the student to independently complete vocational tasks and work through different types of problems.

Completion Time: 55 minutes

Topics: Assessment / Curriculum Early Childhood

**Early Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder - Part 1**

In this webinar participants will learn the importance of identify autism symptoms in early childhood rather than adopting a "wait and see" approach. Early emerging symptoms of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in young boys and girls across the domains of social, communication and flexibility will be discussed as well as how to differentiate between ASD.

Completion Time: 60 minutes

[EMAIL](#)

16

2. Can and should students with autism receive special education services? If so, how?

In Nebraska, each school district is responsible for providing special education and/or related services to all eligible children in their school district, birth to age 21, who have been identified with a disability.

One of the disability categories under Rule 51 is autism; the school district must first evaluate them through a multidisciplinary team process (MDT).

18

## Need to Identify

“The CDC data also reveals that delay in identification continues for those with ASD with average or above average intellectual abilities...These factors matter, primarily, because as long as ASD in any individual (regardless of gender or cognitive functioning) is unrecognized, the individual does not receive essential services.”

The Ziggurat Group Newsletter March 31, 2014, Volume II [www.texasautism.com](http://www.texasautism.com)

19

19

## When there is debate- - EVALUATE

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Evaluations are triggered based on school suspicion of disability | Increase in behaviors   |
| Criminal behaviors  | Deterioration of grades |
| Hospitalization   | Trauma                  |

- Other medical diagnosis- ADHD, OCD, PTSD
  - Discussion of red flags for a disability
  - Cannot use MTSS/RTI process instead of evaluation - especially when parent/staff requests evaluation due to a suspected disability
- 20

20

## Medical Diagnosis ≠ Educational Identification

An educational identification of autism spectrum disorder **is not** the same as a medical or clinical diagnosis.

| DIAGNOSIS                                  | Ed. Id.                            |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Based on set of criteria: DSM-5            | Based on federal law and state law |
| Used in medical and private settings       | Used only in public schools        |
| May be determined by an individual or team | Must be determined by a team       |

**A medical diagnosis of ASD does not automatically translate into eligibility for Special Education under the Autism Disability Category**

21

### 3. How do we serve this student? (individualized, comprehensive programming options)

As an administrator, it is critical that you consider providing the very best education possible for all the students in your care. It is also critical that the services you provide are proactive and accountable to student progress.

Most litigation around ASD has to do with a lack of qualified staff, inadequate progress and the absence of data to guide decision-making. In order to provide an effective program for students, consider emphasizing the following:

- Make sure staff understand the procedural requirements of IDEA and conduct thorough assessments.
- IEPs developed using inadequate information decrease the likelihood of measurable progress over time.

23

### Supreme Court Decision in the Endrew F. case

In Endrew F. the court held that to meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances and expressly rejected the merely more than de minimis, or trivial progress standard. Although the Court did not determine any one test for determining what appropriate progress would look like for every child, IEP Teams must implement policies, procedures, and practices relating to

- (1) identifying present levels of academic achievement and functional performance;
- (2) the setting of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals; and
- (3) how a child's progress toward meeting annual goals will be measured and reported, so that the Endrew F. standard is met for each individual child with a disability.

24

## Supreme Court Decision in the Endrew F. case

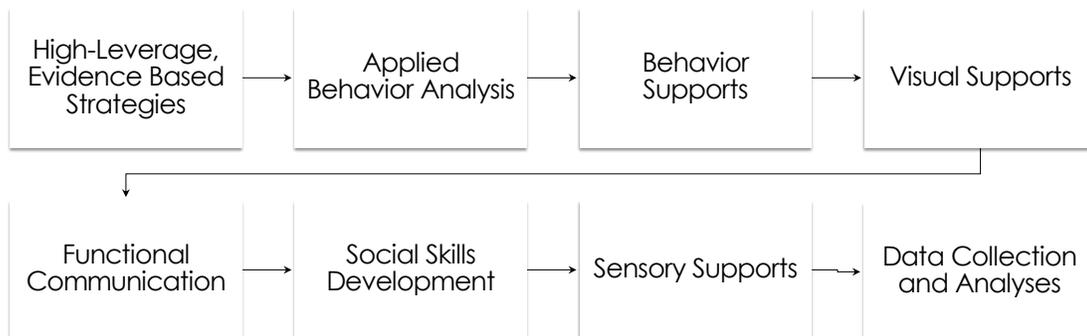
Separately, IEP Teams and other school personnel should be able to demonstrate that, consistent with the provisions in the child’s IEP, they are:

- ▶ providing special education and related services and supplementary aids and services
- ▶ making program modifications
- ▶ providing supports for school personnel allowing for appropriate accommodations that are reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances and enable the child to have the chance to meet challenging objectives

25

How do we serve this student? Including individualized, comprehensive programming services.

Educational Programs for Students with Autism should include:



26

## 4. What training/resources do our staff need?

A training plan for a particular student or district is something that needs to be developed with individual student needs and district needs in mind.

We do know that most special education teachers and others on the team likely did not have extensive training on ASD during undergraduate and graduate programs. They will likely need training in some core and advanced training areas to support students with autism.

28

## What training/resources do our staff need?

Intro to Autism

Intro to Individuals with Higher Verbal and Cognitive Skills

Verbal Behavior: Direct Instruction of Language and Learning Skills

Principles of Structured Teaching

Educational Identification of Autism

Social Skills Trainings (Circle of Friends, PEERS, Unstuck and On Target)

Behavior and ASD

29

RECOMMENDED  
ADDITIONAL  
TRAINING:  
(Based on  
individual  
student and  
team needs)

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Sensory Solutions and Supports

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Transition

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Modification and Accommodations for students with High Functioning Autism

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Executive Functioning

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Enhanced Communication Strategies: PRT, Manding, Verbal Behavior and AAC,

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Autism and Females

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Mental Health and ASD

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Assessment Tools for Program Planning

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Assessment and Intervention for Severe Problem Behavior: PFA/SBT

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Preventing Emerging Problem Behavior: Balance

30

The Good News... training and  
resources are available!



ASD Tri State Webinars -  
Available 24/7 on each of  
the Tri State Partners  
websites – start there!



District Training



In person trainings



AIM Modules



AFIRM Modules



Consultation and support  
with implementation  
fidelity

31

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5. Do most students with autism need support from a para educator?

**HELPING OR HOVERING?**

33

## What Do We Know About Para Educators and Students with Autism

Some students benefit from and/or require 1 on 1 assistance

↓

There are concerns in the field on the effectiveness of para educators mostly related to:

|                       |             |                                    |   |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|---|
| training (or lack of) | supervision | proximity –lack of access to peers | student's lack of access to certified staff |
|                       |             |                                    | student dependance on adults                |

34

## Reminder: Activities that may NOT be <sup>35</sup> delegated to Para educators

- ▶ Identifying learner needs and instructional goals
- ▶ Planning of lessons to meet those goals
- ▶ Modifying instructional strategies to meet the needs of learners without teacher guidance
- ▶ Evaluating the effectiveness of instruction
- ▶ Designing feeding programs, physical supports (i.e. standers), or communication systems
- ▶ Informing parents of student progress and educational needs

35

36



THE INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT  
ASSIGNED TO PAT EXPERIENCES ONGOING  
GENDER CONFUSION.

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## Effects of Inappropriate Paraprofessional Proximity

36

37

## Effects of Inappropriate Paraprofessional Proximity

**Separation from classmates**

- The paraprofessional sits with the student at the back of the room near the door
- The special educator pulls the student out of the classroom for instruction

**Interference with ownership and responsibility by general education teachers**

- When asked why a classroom teacher did not list the name of the student with disabilities alphabetically in his grade book, his response was, "Someone else is responsible for that student's assessment."

37

## Guidance on Effective Use of Para educators

- Include support staff in Training
- Include support staff in discussion/information on IEP goals (social skills, independence, executive functioning, organizing materials, etc.)
- Encourage or facilitate meetings to discuss the role of the para in the general education setting, specialist classes, etc.
- Discuss the effects of constant close proximity to student and ways to facilitate peer interaction
- Remind General Education Staff of their important role in the education of ALL Students.

42

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>6. As an administrator how do I support staff working with students with autism?</p> | <p>One of the most important things you can do as an administrator is to make sure staff have opportunities to attend training and have adequate time to meet and plan for optimum programming.</p> <p>Often with students with autism, staff are creating very individualized programming. Training and time are needed to help get that program up and running, and to make modifications and updates as needed.</p> |
|---|--|

44

|  |  |  |                                |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS:</p>  | <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">Visit</td> <td>Visit the classroom often</td> </tr> </table>                          | Visit  | Visit the classroom often      |
|  | Visit  | Visit the classroom often  |                                |
|  | ↓  |  |                                |
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|  | Solicit  | Solicit the teachers' concerns   |                                |
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| Discuss  | Discuss high-leverage, evidence-based practices that are being used  |  |                                |
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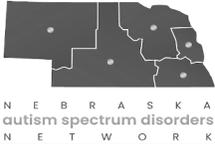
45

## ASD Walk-through Observation Form

A great resource for administrators is the ASD Network Walk-through Form that we created to help administrators look for quality programming and interactions in a quick walk-through of a classroom/program.

It can also be used as a tool for teachers to provide feedback to para educators and others working with students with autism.

46

| <b>ASD Staff Observation "Walk-through" Form</b>                                  |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| District: _____   | School: _____        |  |
| Observer: _____   | Subject/Grade: _____ |   |
| Staff: _____  | Times: _____         |   |
| Date: _____   |                      |   |
| Feedback Type & Date: (When/how was the observation discussed with staff person)  |                      |   |
| Features  | Items Obs.           | Notes   |
| <b>Classroom Routines</b>   |                      |   |
| 1 Enters/Exits Room quietly   |                      |   |
| 2 Implements plan for student   |                      |   |
| 3 Collects data as requested  |                      |   |
| 4 Takes initiative as appropriate   |                      |   |
| <b>Provides Support to Student(s)</b>   |                      |   |
| 5 Sits behind student to provide assistance                                       |                      |   |
| 6 Moves in and out of activities as assistance is needed (not "stuck" to student) |                      |   |
| 7 Moves around classroom and helps other students when possible                   |                      |   |
| 8 Supports students with and without IEPs   |                      |   |

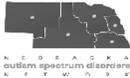
NE ASD Network, 2010

47

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| 9  | Knows and provides behavior supports as needed (reinforcement, visual supports, assistance with writing, etc.)        |  |  |
| 10   | Fades supports as appropriate (provides more visual prompts than verbal prompts, reduces prompts as tasks get easier) |  |  |
| 11   | Allows and encourages student to perform skills independently   |  |  |
| 12   | Provides positive reinforcement to student following classroom routines/rules appropriately                           |  |  |
| <b>Facilitates Interaction with Peers and Adults</b> |   |  |  |
| 13   | Directs peers to communicate directly to target student   |  |  |
| 14   | Coaches successful interactions between student and peers   |  |  |
| 15   | Sits so students have access to peers to facilitate interactions  |  |  |
| 16   | Facilitates student interaction with teacher  |  |  |
| <b>Communicates Effectively</b>                      |   |  |  |
| 17   | Uses age appropriate language   |  |  |
| 18   | Uses a positive tone of voice   |  |  |
| 19   | Uses appropriate sentence or direction length   |  |  |
| 20   | Does not discuss student when student is present  |  |  |

NE ASD Network, 2010

48



**Things to Consider when it "Just Isn't Going Right"**  
 This is not an exhaustive list of all considerations, but rather a tool for teams to use when beginning to problem solve.

Things to Consider when it "Just Isn't Going Right"

- Does the student have a way to communicate wants and needs in all environments?
- Does the student have a way to quickly request a break and is that request being honored?
- Are preferred activities and breaks built into the schedule?
- Are you indicating changes on the student's schedule and discussing changes before they occur?
- Do you have a plan in place to teach the student independent use of their schedule?
- Is an overall classroom schedule posted to guide staff and help them work more efficiently?
- Are classroom routines predictable? If not, how can you make them more predictable?
- Is a reinforcement system being taught, visually represented, and used consistently?
- Do we know what motivates the student or has this motivation changed? *If you are unsure, complete a motivation/preference assessment.*
- Is all work modified at the student's level?
- Who is responsible for modifying the student's work and pre-teaching activities when needed?
- Are staff members trained in how to use accommodations and modifications as listed in their IEP?
- Are students being taught how to use visual supports and other accommodations?
- Are the supports needed for instruction immediately available to the student when needed?
- Are folders or visual work systems used to show what work and how much work needs to be done?
- Are new topics, games, and routines pre-taught?
- Are rules positively stated (what TO do, rather than what NOT to do) and posted where all students can easily see them?
- Are rules reviewed and modeled for students on a regular basis?
- Are there designated quiet places accessible to the student? *These should include spots where the student can go when they need a quiet place to work or a place to "chill out" before escalating into more severe problem behaviors.*
- Has a functional behavior assessment (FBA) been completed to better understand reoccurring behaviors? *If so, has a behavior intervention plan (BIP) been created to address the behavior(s)?*
- Are power struggles undermining your ultimate goals? *If you find yourself in a standoff, reconsider your approach. What do you ultimately want to accomplish during this activity?*
- Are social narratives being written and reviewed regularly? Are they sent home so the parent(s) can also read them with the student?
- Are social skills being directly taught and practiced? Are they also being taught in "real life"?

51

## 9. How can we access additional support?

### **Colorado Autism Education Network**

The **Autism Education Network** is designed to provide school teams support, training, and resources to guide services for students with autism. Below are potential offerings autism network team members may provide based on the request. The level of support provided will be based on AU/school team needs as well as autism team availability.

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-autism>

52

## 9. How can we access additional support?

### **Kansas TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports project**

Develops **agency** capacity to serve students with ASD and other complex needs in a manner that maximizes positive outcomes. Our activities that lead to improving outcomes include:

We work directly with agency administrators to identify the goals of their agency. We collaborate with leadership to identify the resources within their agency to meet the diverse needs of students with ASD and Complex Needs. We help to analyze the gaps in those resources. We work together with agencies to develop a systematic plan to address the professional development needs of staff who serve students with ASD and other Complex Needs.

<https://www.ksdetasn.org/atbs/autism-and-tertiary-behavior-supports-project>

53

## 9. How can we access additional support?

### **Nebraska ASD Network**

The Nebraska ASD Network is committed to providing up-to-date information and training based on current research about autism spectrum disorders. Each year trainings are scheduled throughout the state on high leverage practices. Regional Coordinators and Behavior Specialists also provide onsite school district training and consultation support.

<https://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/>

54

## **Resources**

1. **Things to Consider when it "Just Isn't Going Right" – Problem Solving Questions**
2. **Nebraska Autism FAQ's for Administrators**
3. **Evidence Based Practices and Autism 2020 Report**
5. **Supporting Behavior Resources - NDE**

55

## References

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