New Jersey
Department of Education

Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised
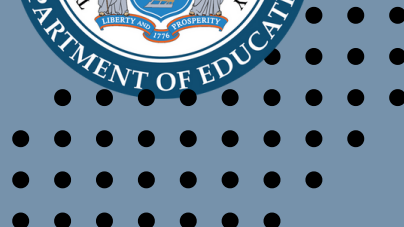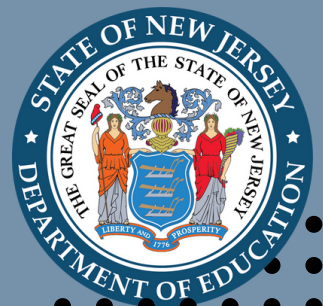
Early Childhood, School-Age, and Youth
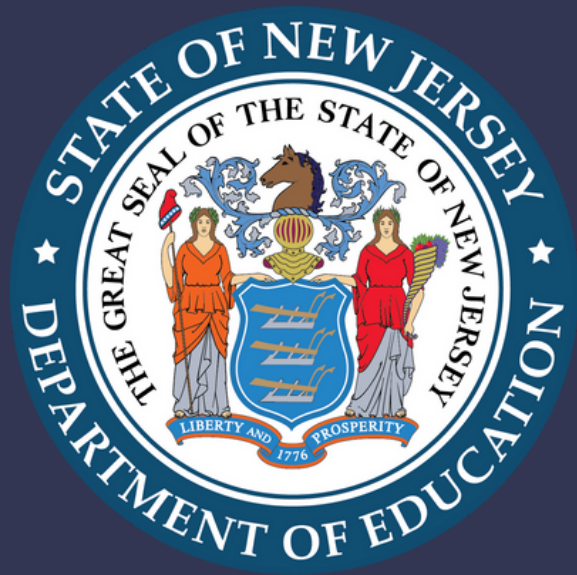

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A self-assessment and quality improvement guide for programs serving students with autism spectrum disorder.

Office of Special Education

Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised

2023

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Introduction and Purpose

This guidance document is meant to serve as a resource for Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in developing, implementing, and evaluating quality programming for all students on the autism spectrum.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased in New Jersey over the past 15+ years. The increase in this population places challenges on schools across New Jersey to provide programs, instruction, and interventions that meet the unique needs of students identified as having ASD.

In addition to the prevalence rates reported by the CDC, the American Psychiatric Association has made updates in recent years to the way in which individuals are identified and clinically diagnosed with autism. With the new developments in the identification and education of students with ASD, this document replaces a previous version, **New Jersey Autism Program Quality Indicators: A Self-Review and Quality Improvement Guide for Programs Servicing Young Students with Autism Spectrum Disorde**r (APQI), published in 2004.

The purpose of this revised document was to:

- Replace older versions of the NJ APQI;
- Assist school-based practitioners in the field of education, including schools and other educational settings;
- Establish a framework that can be replicated in general education to promote more inclusive opportunities and ensure LRE;
- Update language to promote a common understanding regarding ASD;
- Identify and promote the use of evidence-based practices for effective programming and instruction for students with ASD; and,
- Promote non-biased considerations for economically disadvantaged children, children who are diverse in race and ethnicity, and children who speak a language other than English.

This version references the IDEA (2004) special education regulations to promote consistency in programming for students with ASD. The updated APQI-R is designed as a guidance tool for evidence-based best practices to assist those who are providing programs and services to students who have been educationally classified with autism from early childhood through adolescence.

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism has been referred to as a "spectrum disorder," which suggests that the characteristics associated with the disorder present themselves in a variety of combinations, ranging along a continuum from mild to severe. Characteristics vary and may manifest differently per individual with autism. It is typically characterized by impairments in social communication skills (including verbal and non-verbal communication and socialization), as well as the presence of repeated or restricted patterns of behavior. As such, two students, both of whom have a diagnosis of autism, may vary widely in terms of their skills and their corresponding educational needs.

While the IDEA (2004) continues to include the disability category of Autism, the recent provisions to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V, 2013) now includes ASD in place of several other diagnoses previously used to describe the "spectrum" of characteristics and levels of severity seen in individuals with the disorder.

Educational Definition of Autism

Autism, as defined under IDEA, is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics associated with autism include engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and over or under-responding to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance (IDEA 34 C.F.R§300.8(c)(1)(i)).

Educating Students with Autism

The goal of educating all students with autism is to have the same opportunities to be effective members of society and be as independent as possible as individuals without a diagnosis of ASD. This can be accomplished by removing barriers to participation and access to these opportunities. The student with ASD needs pivotal experiences that successfully prepare him or her to:

- Participate effectively in a group;
- Engage in functional routines and activities;
- Self-regulate emotions and behaviors;
- Utilize a schedule to complete learning and/or vocational skills;
- Complete work independently using visual supports or other necessary accommodations;
- Go on to higher education, if desired; and,
- Pursue a career, if desired.

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with ASD must be educated with peers who do not have disabilities. A student with ASD who is found eligible for special education services will have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that enables them to access and benefit from the general education curriculum. In addition, these students benefit from access to peer relationships, as well as school-wide and community-based learning experiences.

New Jersey is well known for providing comprehensive programming to meet the multifaceted needs of students on the autism spectrum. This reputation is a direct result of landmark laws and regulations in the 1970s that established aggressive practices to identify children with learning disabilities and to provide programs that respond to their needs. Since then, the New Jersey Department of Education has maintained a strong commitment to educating all students, including those with autism.

The commitment recognizes that education is the primary intervention for children with autism. The characteristics of ASD can interfere with basic human needs and skills; and, as such, impact the development of a child's communication and social skills.

Effective school-based interventions for students with ASD incorporate a plan for academic skill acquisition, as well as language and communication skills, adaptive skills, and the reduction of problem behaviors.

Evidence-Based Practices for Students with ASD

High-quality programs for students with autism share common characteristics (or indicators), which, in practice, set standards that can serve as best practices. This document, the New Jersey Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised (APQI-R), reflects current evidence-based practices (EBP) for students with ASD.

As IEP teams develop measurable annual goals and short-term objectives to address the needs of students with ASD, they should adhere to the IDEA mandate that educational interventions and instructional methodologies must be validated by scientifically-based research.

Over the past few decades, a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to understanding the educational needs of students with ASD, resulting in the expansion of evidence-based educational practices that address their complex learning needs. IEP teams must be knowledgeable about the range of EBPs (e.g., interventions, pedagogies, strategies, methodologies, and accommodations) and identify those that can address the student's needs.

> The [National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders](#) (NPDC-ASD) and [The National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice](#) defined EBP as those practices for which efficacy is established through peer-reviewed research in scientific journals. They have collectively identified 28 interventions that were demonstrated to be effective when instructing students across the spectrum and various age ranges and skills.

The information contained in this guidance document pertains to all students with ASD in New Jersey school districts. This document is intended to be a tool to guide districts in developing, implementing, and monitoring quality autism programs.

The information presented herein is designed to guide schools' practices for educating students with ASD and to promote consistency of programs across educational environments throughout New Jersey. The APQI-R outlined in the next few sections can act as a roadmap for applying current best practices to a variety of delivery options. Careful attention to each indicator and its components, along with thoughtful integration of these components into an effective whole, will enable autism programs to continue to improve.

Autism is a lifelong disability; therefore, the APQI-R has been divided across three grade spans. They are Early Childhood, School Age, and Youth.

Although the indicators and their associated components have been divided into grade spans, each quality indicator and its components should be used with discretion. Application with a student of any age should be considered individually and incorporate professional judgment and data-based decision-making.

Early Childhood (PreK)

School Age (grades K-5)

Youth (grades 6-12)

A program rarely has the ability to plan, develop, and implement all the components at once. Therefore, a decision must be made as to the order in which the indicators and their components should be addressed.

We have organized this document in a progressive manner. Considerations for an effective educational program are provided in a logical and meaningful order to help the professional make informed decisions.

Reading Instructions

We recommend moving through this document systematically beginning with the first section.

This document should be read in its enitrety.

No section should be read in isolation from the rest of the document.

Some sections may be perceived as more relevant to certain school personnel or more applicable to specific students. However, it is important for districts to be familiar with all of the components outlined in this document in order to successfully participate in quality program development, implementation, monitoring, as well as evidence-based decision-making for students with ASD.

APQI-R Domains

The information presented herein is designed to guide schools' practices for educating students with ASD and to promote consistency of programs across educational environments throughout New Jersey. This document is intended to serve as a resource tool primarily for educators and districts.

The APQI-R comprises two domains:

1

Program Considerations

Program considerations describe indicators such as learning environments, personnel, curriculum, assessment, methods, and community collaboration.

2

Student Considerations

Student considerations present practices to consider in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with autism.

Each of these sections should be taken into account when developing, implementing, and monitoring a program for students with autism.

Often, educational programs combine aspects of self-contained and inclusive settings. Therefore, the APQI-R was designed to be used across educational environments - including general education, inclusion-based classrooms, and self-contained classrooms that serve students with ASD, across the grade spans.

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Program Considerations

Program Considerations presents quality indicators to consider when developing, implementing, or evaluating a program for a student with autism. The information below describes eight specific indicators to consider under the Program Consideration domain. Each indicator contains components of quality. Please refer to the [Master Scoring Report](#) for component descriptions.

In total, there are 34 components across 8 indicators within the Program Considerations domain.

The indicators under Program Considerations include the following:

- ☑ Program Characteristics
- ☑ Educational Environment
- ☑ Personnel
- ☑ Curriculum
- ☑ Instructional Methods
- ☑ Family Engagement
- ☑ Community Collaboration
- ☑ Program Evaluation

Program Characteristics

Autism spectrum disorders present unique challenges to educators. Specifically, individuals with autism typically have marked deficits in attention, imitation, communication, and socialization. These skills are foundational to successful learning. In order to adequately address these needs, educators must develop and implement an intensive educational experience to provide opportunities for all students to enjoy the learning process and learn new skills. Students with autism who participate in intensive educational experiences that focus on engagement make substantial gains in academic, communication, and social domains.

Student engagement, defined by the National Research Council (2001), is "sustained attention to an activity or person" (p. 106). It is a key element of a positive school climate, with a large body of research linking it to academic achievement. For students with autism, student engagement is multi-faceted, characterized by behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement is demonstrated through actions such as consistent attendance, completing assignments, coming to class prepared, and participating in class and in school activities. Students are emotionally engaged when they like school and are interested in and identify with school culture. Students are cognitively engaged when they exert effort to do well in school, which can lead to a strong academic self-conceptualization.
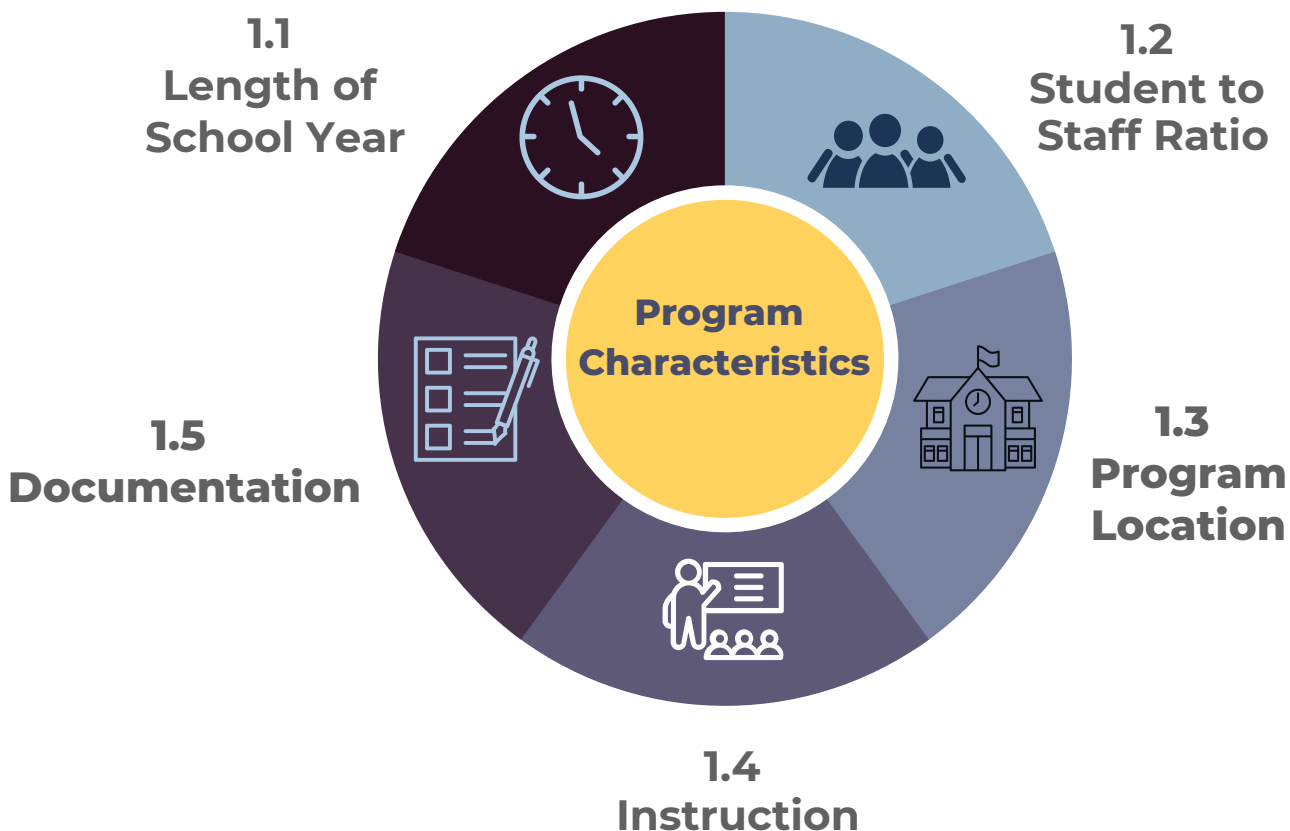
Indicator 1
Program Characteristics
Continued

The intensity of a program can be defined in a number of ways, such as by the length of time in instruction (hours per week, days, per year); student-to-teacher ratio; and the rate of learning opportunities (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(c)). The location in which these intensive educational experiences take place should be individually determined and incorporate the student's best interest in both the immediate and the long term. The decision-making is often based on assessments that determine individual student needs. The content of the educational experiences is derived from the student's needs and abilities, a curriculum aligned to the NJSLS, and teaching methods. The program is responsible for ensuring student progress and regularly documenting the effects of its methods on student progress.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 1 Program Characteristics

1.1 Length of School Year

1.2 Student to Staff Ratio

Program Characteristics

1.5 Documentation

1.3 Program Location

1.4 Instruction

Educational Environment

The diagnosis of ASD does not dictate a specific placement. ASD may also occur by itself or in association with other disabilities. Educational placement decisions must be based on the assessed strengths, challenges, and educational needs of the student rather than on the diagnosis of autism.

Schools must provide a continuum of placement options. This requires a flexible model that can address the individual needs of these students. Placement options range from total inclusive settings where students receive their education alongside nondisabled peers to a private placement in residential programs for individuals with disabilities. Within that range, a wide variety of plans can be created to meet the distinct needs of each student. Using the continuum concept makes it more likely that each student will be placed appropriately in an environment that is specifically suited for him or her.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The IDEA (2004) requires that students with disabilities be educated in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE) appropriate to meet their needs. This requires those with disabilities to be educated in the general education environment with children who are nondisabled "to the maximum extent appropriate." When faced with the challenge of selecting an appropriate placement for a student, parents, and professionals need to understand the intent of this law.

The LRE requirements in section 612(a)(5) of the IDEA apply to all children with disabilities who are served under Part B of the IDEA, including preschool children with disabilities aged 3-5. LRE provision does not distinguish between school-aged and preschool-age children.

Indicator 2
Educational Environment
Continued

The IDEA (2004) recommends that consideration of the LRE will begin with placement in the regular education classroom. However, IDEA recognizes that it is not appropriate to place all students in this setting and that individualized consideration is needed to determine which setting will best meet the specific learning needs of a student. Placement should never be based on the diagnosis or disability category. When the nature or severity of the disability is such that progress cannot be achieved, even with supplementary aids and services, placement in a more restrictive setting(s) might be necessary to ensure an appropriate education.

The following should be considered when determining placement:

- Goals and objectives of the student
- Nature of skills targeted
- Socialization opportunities
- Student's ability to attend and focus
- Teaching methods required
- Amount of direct instruction required.
- Results of assessments
- Student learning profile
- Functional communication skills
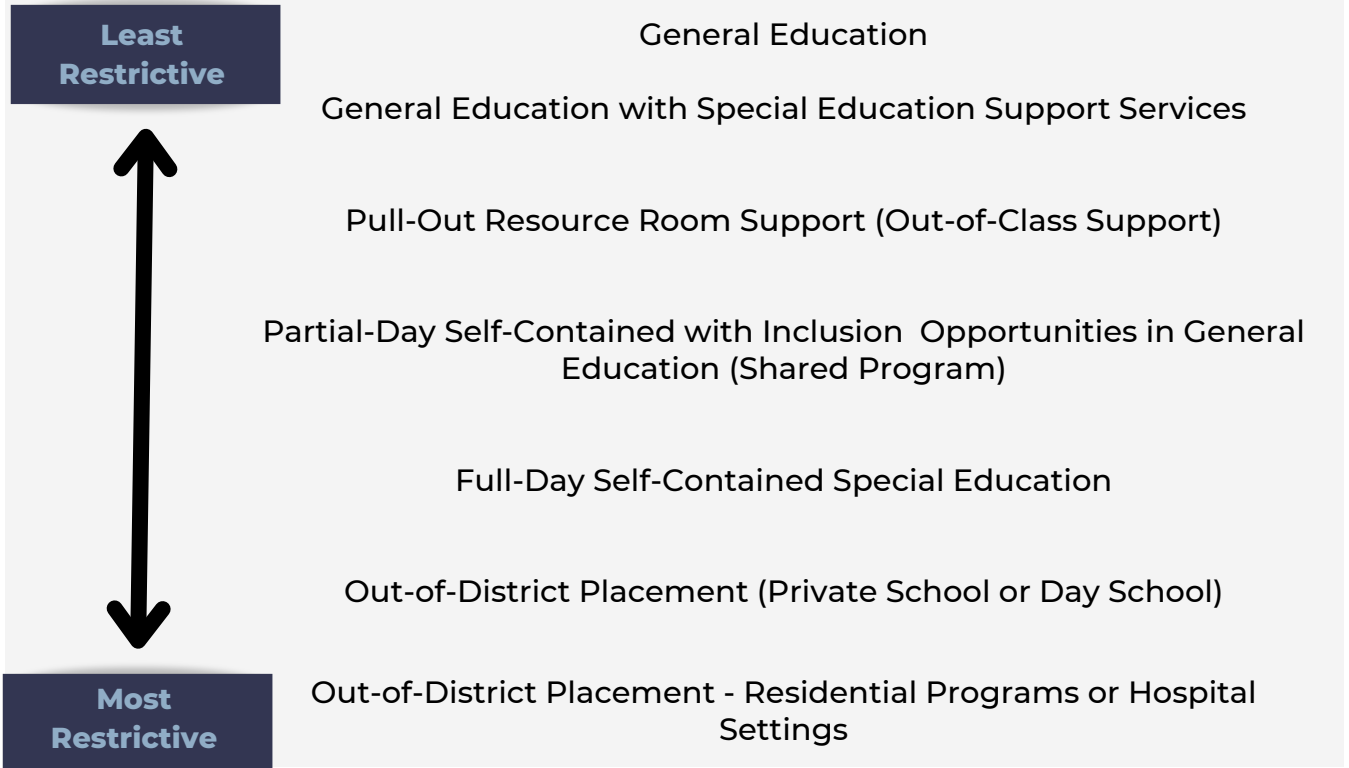- Generalization of learned skills across settings and people

Figure 1 provides an LRE continuum, outlining placement from what is considered to be the least restrictive to the most restrictive environment across grade spans. The continuum is fluid allowing students to move between placements based on needs. Regardless of the placement, individualized support is required. This is true even for students accessing the general education setting, whether it is for part of or all of the school day. At a minimum, supports in the form of accommodations and modifications must be identified and implemented.

Placement options are fluid. A student might receive some services in one setting and other services in a different setting. Further, placements can change over time based on factors such as changes in a student's progress or needs. For some students, the general education classroom is not necessarily the least restrictive setting.
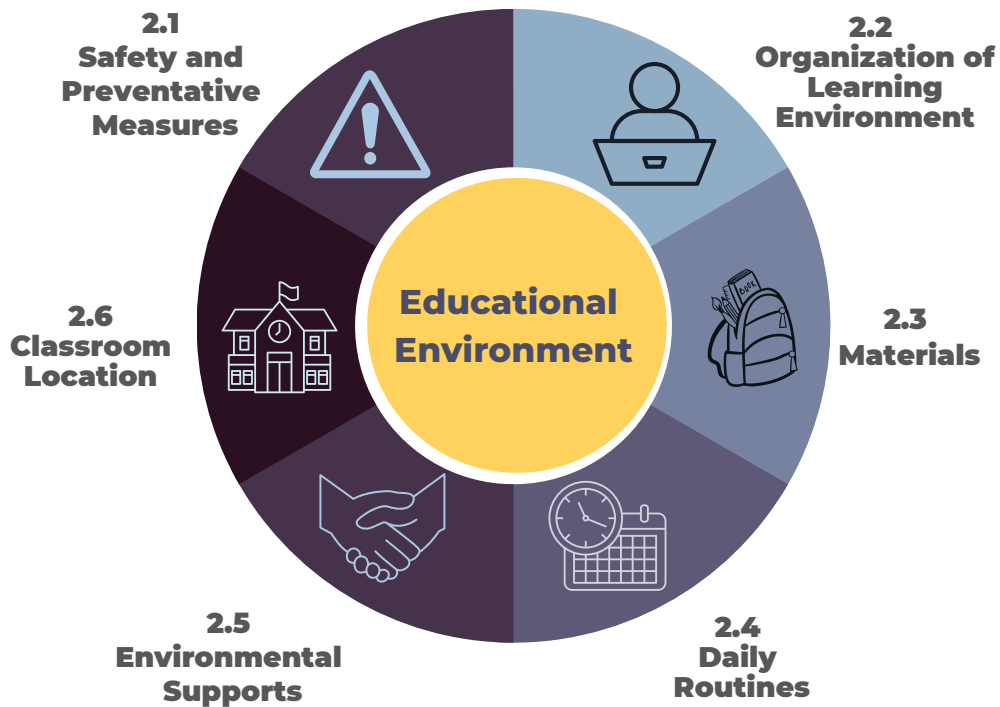
No matter the educational placement, key indicators related to the educational environment have consistently been noted in the research as key aspects of a quality program for students with ASD.

Figure 1. Least Restrictive Environment Continuum

This continuum represents a range of educational placements in which an IEP can be implemented to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. These placement options range from the least restrictive setting (i.e., general education classroom) to some of the most restrictive ones (e.g., residential facility). This is used as an example of possibilities only.

Least Restrictive

General Education

General Education with Special Education Support Services

Pull-Out Resource Room Support (Out-of-Class Support)

Partial-Day Self-Contained with Inclusion Opportunities in General Education (Shared Program)

Full-Day Self-Contained Special Education

Out-of-District Placement (Private School or Day School)

Most Restrictive

Out-of-District Placement - Residential Programs or Hospital Settings

The following components are addressed under Indicator 2 Educational Environment

2.1 Safety and Preventative Measures

2.2 Organization of Learning Environment

2.6 Classroom Location

Educational Environment

2.3 Materials

**2.5 Environmental Supports**

2.4 Daily Routines

Personnel

Staff qualifications, experience, and expectations play a pivotal role in the education of students with autism and the success of the program. Similarly, the administration responsible for supporting teachers can set the stage for success. Given the many challenges of effectively educating students with autism and the crucial role played by personnel, the training and professional development of teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators is of paramount importance. At a minimum, the personnel should be knowledgeable about the characteristics of autism and ideally skilled in evidence-based practices for students with autism. Additionally, consultation and supervision should be provided by an expert in Autism Spectrum Disorders. Teaching personnel should also have access to all appropriate documents and be fully informed about their job responsibilities. Consistent with these goals, and based on the current New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(e)), teaching staff should be available in sufficient ratios to meet the educational needs of the students. Finally, ongoing administrative support should be provided for professional development opportunities, and formal dialogue designed to improve the program is a critical component of a high-quality program.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 3 Personnel
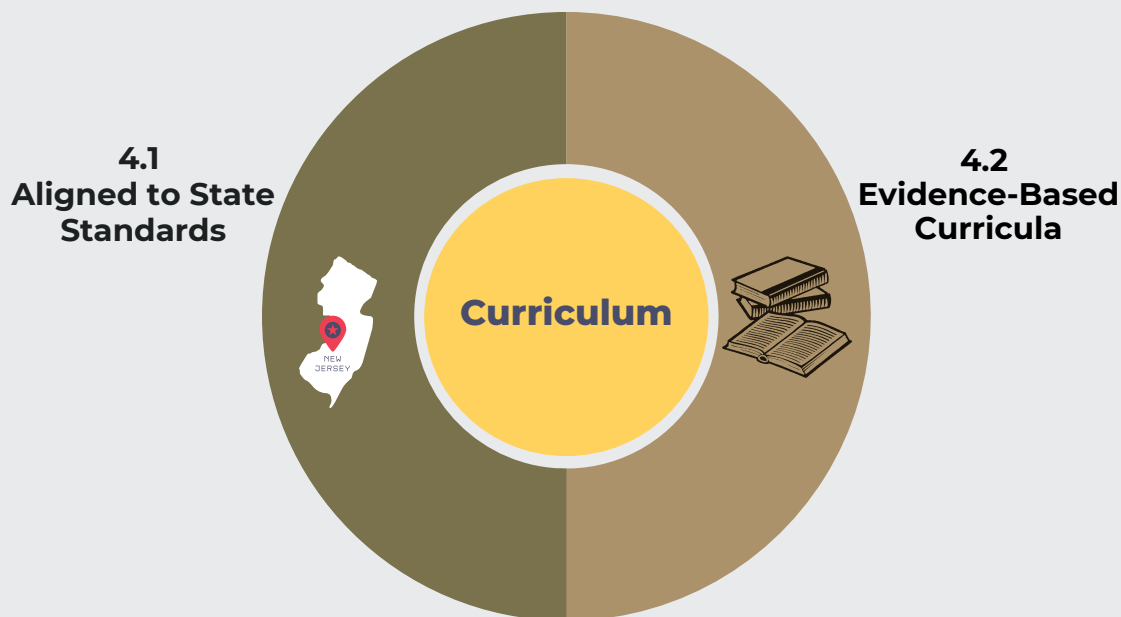
3.1 Knowledgeable Staff

3.2 IEP Implementation and Access

Personnel

3.4 Professional Development

3.3 Program Staff
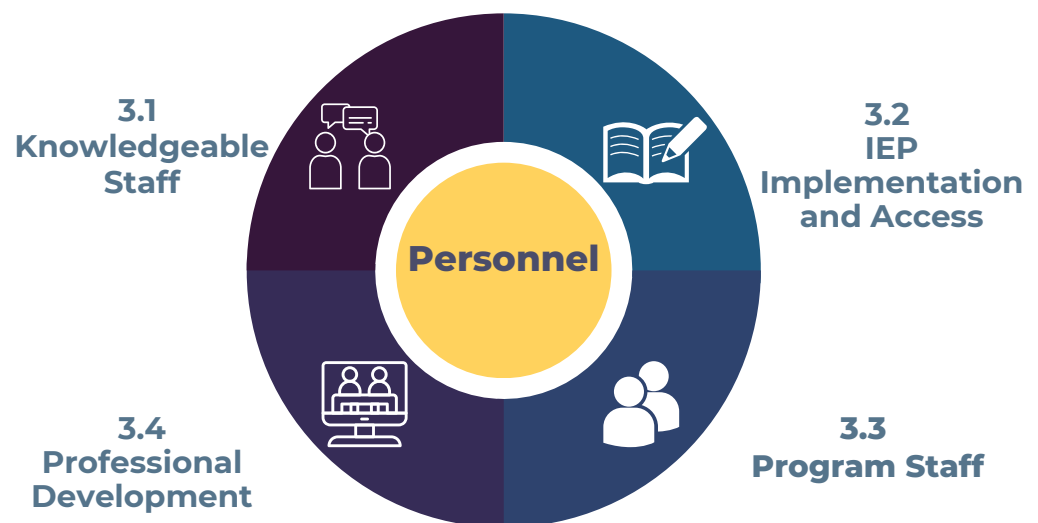
Curriculum

All programs for students with autism should have a curriculum that is research-based and aligned with State Learning Standards. The curriculum should also include written goals that increase the student's independence and ability to respond to the environment in increasingly sophisticated ways. To do so, the curriculum must be adapted to the student's individual characteristics such as age, abilities, and learning preferences. Students should participate in instruction that focuses on a variety of domains such as communication, socialization, and others outlined below. The curriculum should also include written goals and objectives for students to maintain their skills over time and across a range of naturalistic settings. Last but not least, the classroom programs should use a curriculum aligned with the New Jersey Preschool Learning Standards or the New Jersey Student Learning Standards depending on the age and grade level of students.

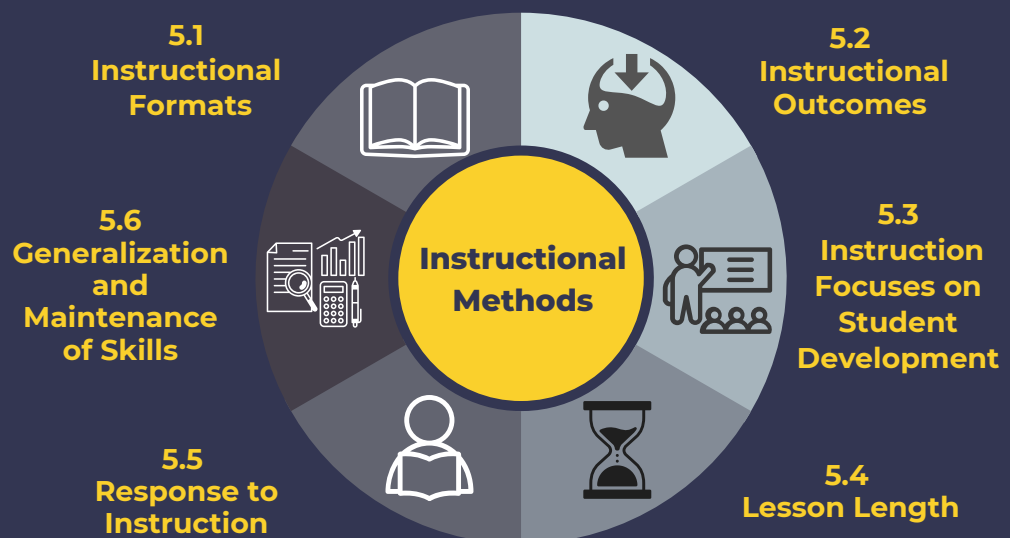## The following components are addressed under Indicator 4 Curriculum

4.1
Aligned to State Standards

Curriculum

4.2
Evidence-Based Curricula

Instructional Methods

According to IDEA, programs should employ a methodology that has been empirically validated in well-controlled research studies conducted with other students with autism. In other words, a program's methodology should rely on those techniques that have been systematically tested and demonstrated to be beneficial. In doing so, it will ensure instructional methods are based on research as well as evidence base (e.g., showing demonstrated effectiveness for educating students with autism). The methodology should be written in sufficient and specific detail to inform parents, train staff, and evaluate the staff's role in the student's progress. Similar to the curriculum, the methodology should promote a student's independence and his/her ability to respond to the environment in increasingly independent ways. The methodology should also provide a written set of strategies to facilitate the maintenance of skills over time and in a range of naturalistic settings. Last, while it is more fitting for a section of the Student Characteristics, it is worthy of mentioning here that the specific techniques used within a methodology must be significantly individualized and adapted to a student's characteristics such as age, abilities, and learning preferences.

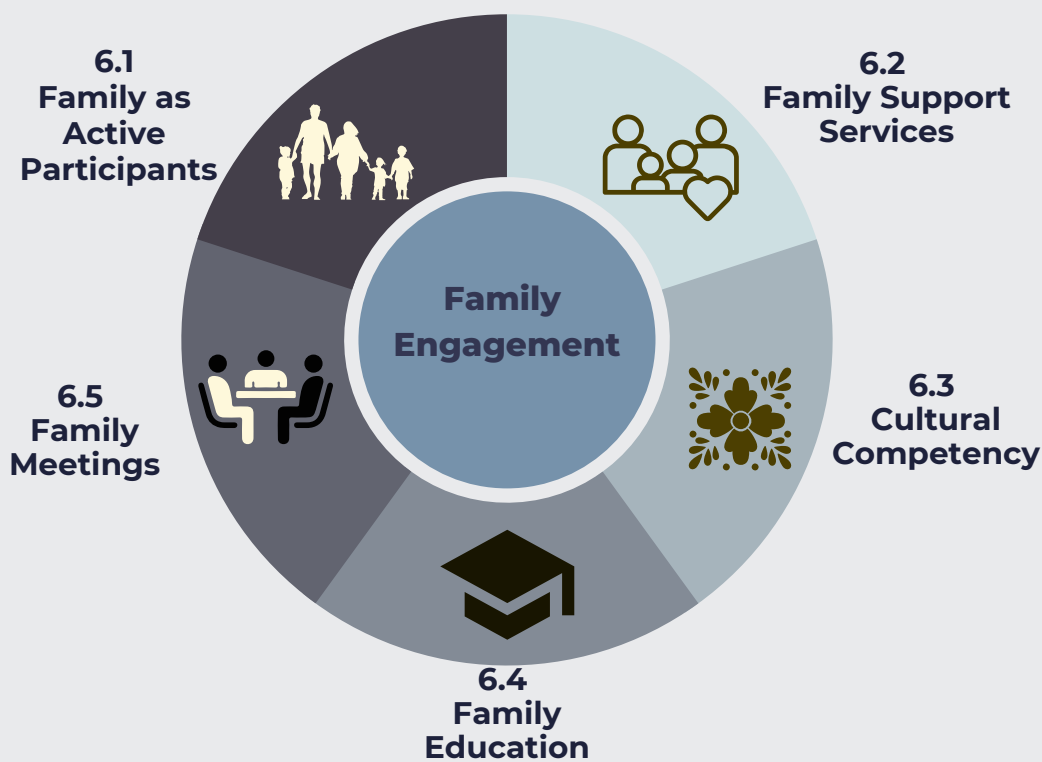The following components are addressed under Indicator 5 Instructional Methods

5.1
Instructional
Formats

5.2
Instructional
Outcomes

5.6
Generalization
and
Maintenance
of Skills

Instructional
Methods

5.3
Instruction
Focuses on
Student
Development

5.5
Response to
Instruction

5.4
Lesson Length

Family Engagement

While the majority of educational effort is rightfully focused on the student, high-quality programs also incorporate the family's values, goals, and concerns. The collaboration between educational personnel and family members is essential to the success of all students, especially those with autism spectrum disorders. The essence of these indicators is equality and support. The program is responsible for making a substantial effort to recognize, value, and include parents as partners in developing and implementing their child's IEP. This section outlines the many ways that high-quality programs actively support families, as well as the ways in which programs rely on parents to improve the program.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 6 Family Engagement

6.1 Family as Active Participants

6.2 Family Support Services

Family Engagement

6.3 Cultural Competency

6.5 Family Meetings

6.4 Family Education

Community Collaboration

School-community collaboration occurs when groups or agencies come together to establish an educative community. The educative community is composed of a multitude of educating entities such as schools, homes, places of worship, the media, museums, libraries, community agencies, and businesses (Drew, 2004). Everyone in the community is accountable for the quality of education. Schools have the potential to build well-educated citizens ready to take on responsibilities as contributing community members. By working together, schools, families, and communities can prepare for a future for students with autism. Effective programs take into account the school community and enlist community support to maximize the use of all resources available to address student needs. High-quality programs link with their communities to assist families to access support and services.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 7 Community Collaboration

7.1
Program/School Transition Support

7.2
Referrals to Community Resources/ Supports

Community Collaboration

7.4
Interagency Collaboration

YOUTH- APQI Only

7.3
Community Collaboration

Program Evaluation

In order to continually ensure optimal outcomes for students, evaluation of programs can help identify areas of improvement and strength. This section provides guidelines for determining whether programs serving students with autism are meeting expectations. All students deserve to participate in effective educational programs to maximize their performance. This notion carries great significance for students with autism because their learning needs are often greater and more complex than those of their non-autistic peers. Students with autism often exhibit inconsistent development across, and within, skills. Given these characteristics and the pervasive nature of these disorders, educators can encounter significant difficulties when teaching students with autism. These challenges mean that some students may exhibit a lack or even limited improvement even with effective program development and implementation.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 8 Program Evaluation
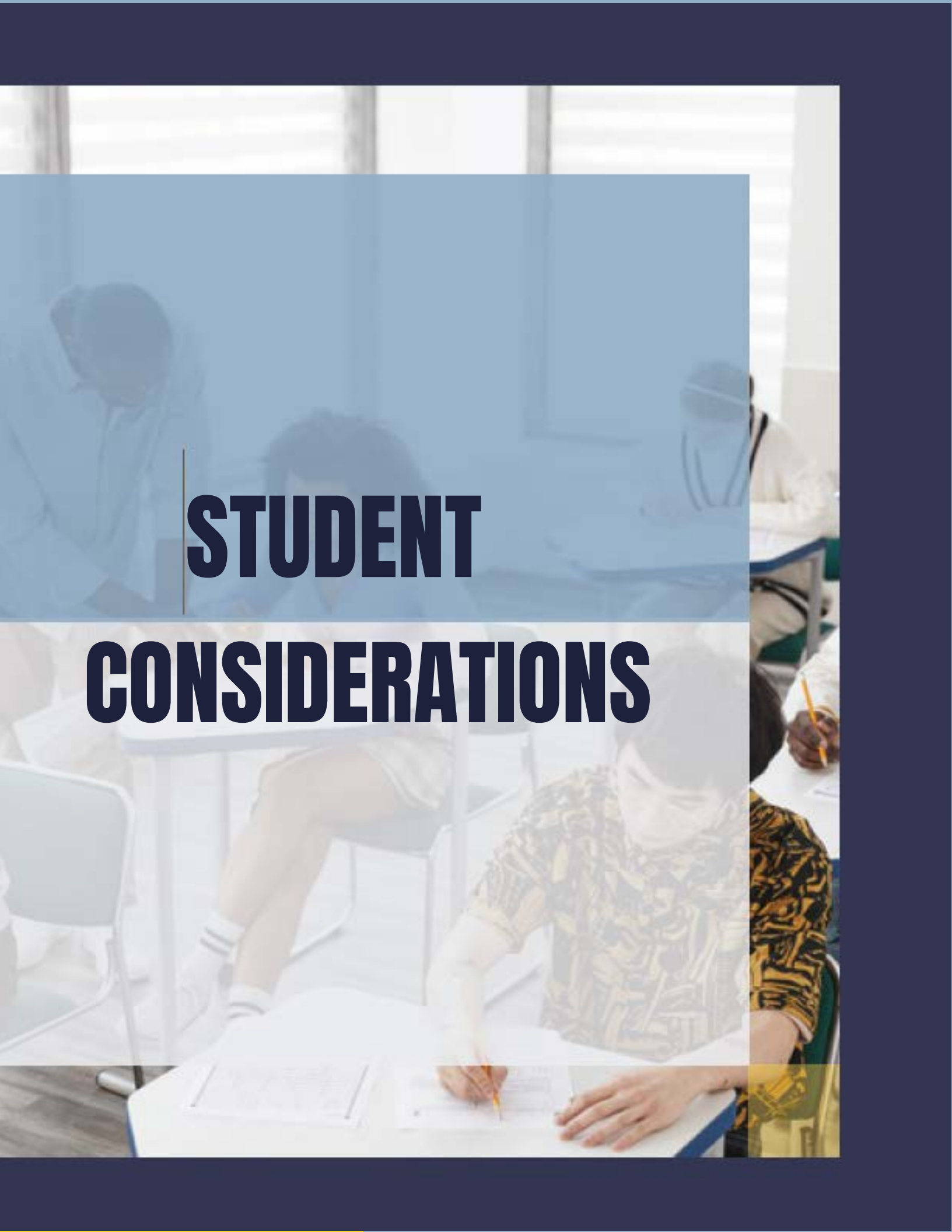
8.1 Annual Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation

8.2 System-Wide Improvement Plan

STUDENT CONSIDERATIONS

Student Considerations

Student Considerations present practices to consider in the decision-making process for each student specific to assessment, the development of Individual Education Programs (IEPs), planning for challenging behaviors through positive behavior approaches, and addressing transition through person-centered planning. Consideration of engagement opportunities, the level of intensity, and the location of the educational program or placement are all individual decisions based on the needs of the student. Intensity can be defined in a number of ways such as length of time in instruction (hours per week, days per year); student-to-teacher ratio; and the rate of learning opportunities. The location or placement in which these intensive educational experiences take place should be individually determined to incorporate the student's best interest in both the immediate and the long term

In total, there are 26 components across 6 indicators with the Student Consideration domain.

The indicators under Student Considerations include the following:

☑ Individualized Student Assessments

☑ Individualized Education Program (IEP)

☑ Challenging Behaviors

☑ Program Options

☑ Program Transitions

☑ Individual Progress Review and Monitoring

Individualized Student Assessments

Assessment of a student with autism must consist of a broad-based, multidisciplinary evaluation that includes measures of current intellectual, academic, communicative, social, and adaptive functioning. The evaluator should present assessment results in a developmental framework detailing the student's abilities, strengths, and needs (aka Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance). Students should be observed across a variety of settings, as behaviors and skills can vary based on the degree of novelty, structure, and complexity across settings. The evaluator should refrain from reporting on the global scores and using that score to form an impression. Using only one score or behavior as an indicator of overall functioning may grossly misrepresent a student's more typical abilities. Given the deficits in social skills and adaptive behavior commonly associated with autism, it is particularly important to thoroughly assess the student's social skills with peers and adults as well as his/her ability to exhibit skills in real-world settings.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 9 Individual Student Assessment
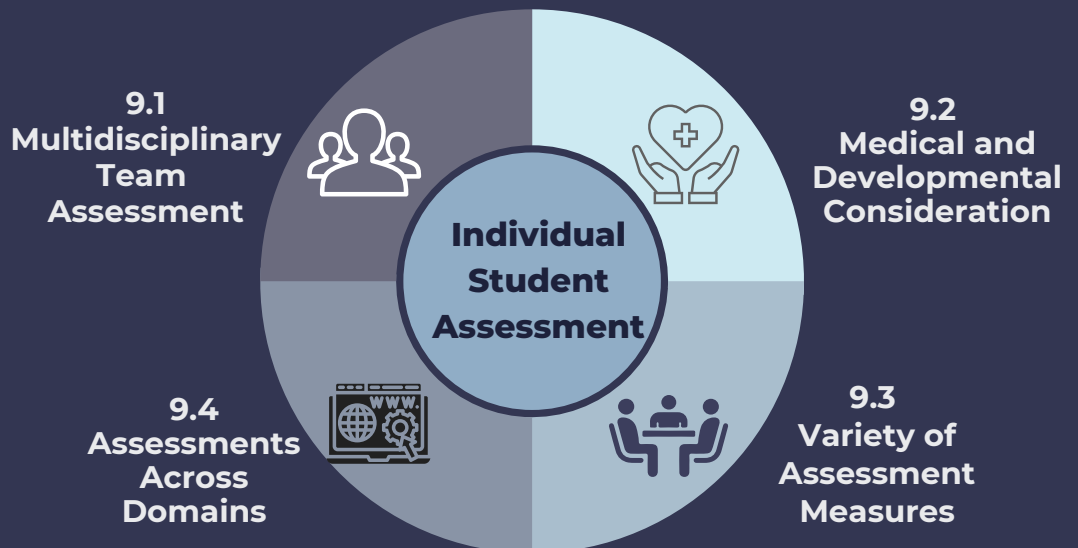
9.1 Multidisciplinary Team Assessment

9.2 Medical and Developmental Consideration

Individual Student Assessment

9.4 Assessments Across Domains

9.3 Variety of Assessment Measures

Individualized Education Program

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document that outlines a customized education plan for a student with a disability. The IEP is designed to identify the student's learning needs, set specific educational goals, and describe the special education and related services that will be provided to meet those needs.

The IEP is developed by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, including the student's parents or guardians, teachers, special education personnel, and other professionals as needed. The team meets to review the student's current academic performance, assess the student's strengths and needs, and determine appropriate goals and accommodations.

The IEP also includes information about the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, annual goals, special education, related services, accommodations, modifications, and any other necessary special education supports. It is reviewed and updated at least once a year to ensure that it continues to meet the student's needs.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 10 Individualized Education Program (IEP)

**10.1
IEP
Implementation**

Individualized Education Program

**10.2
IEP Goals**

a. Functional Communication
b. Social Skills
c. Leisure, Imagination & Creativity
d. Academics
e. Behavioral Skills
f. Self-Management Skills
g. Fine & Gross Motor

Challenging Behaviors

Students with autism can engage in various challenging behaviors based on their individual characteristics. Often, these behaviors are attempts to communicate a want/need or based on sensory input causing a flight or fight response. Assessment and intervention should be used to address behaviors that appear to impact the ability to function or successfully participate in an educational program. Thus, intervention strategies that address problem behaviors should incorporate assessment information about the contexts in which the behaviors occur and the function of the behavior for the student. These strategies should emphasize positive behavioral supports, proactive approaches, and the range of techniques that have empirical support (e.g., Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), functional communication training, reinforcement of alternative behaviors, etc.; National Research Council, 2001). Educators and parents often find these behaviors challenging as they attempt to teach students how to function independently and successfully in their educational programs. Programs will find it helpful to distinguish between those behaviors that are dangerous to a student and others, those that interfere with learning, those that are socially stigmatizing, and those that are of no consequence to the student's overall well-being. Doing so enables the IEP team to prioritize behavioral goals and focus on those that will substantially improve a student's quality of life. Challenging behaviors may include but are not limited to aggression, self-injury, property destruction, and failure to respond to instruction.

**The following components are addressed under Indicator 11 Challenging Behaviors**

11.1 Class-wide Behavioral Support Systems

11.2 Behavioral Assessments

11.3 Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)

Challenging Behaviors

11.6 Restraint and Seclusion

11.5 Persistent Behaviors

11.4 Data-Driven Decision Making
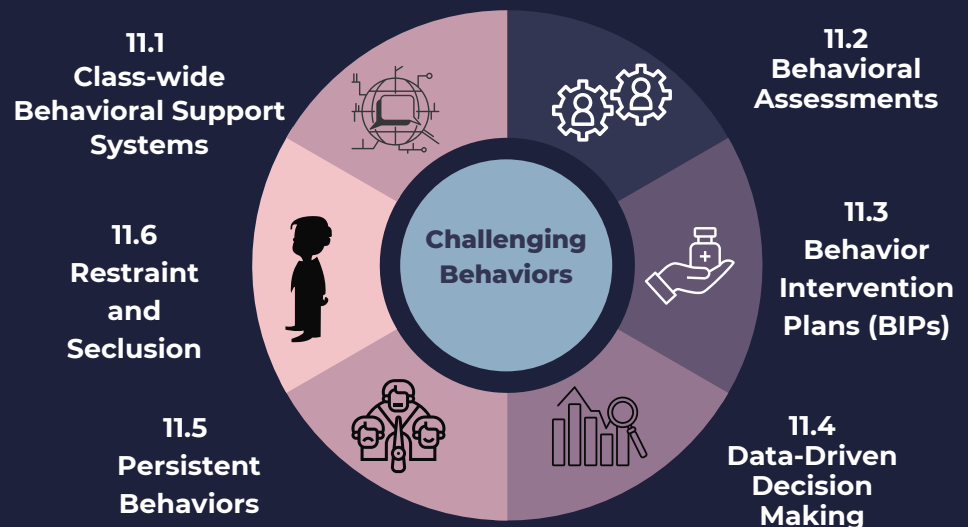
Program Options

Because the LRE is determined by the student's individualized program of instruction and related services rather than a setting, IDEA requires that school districts create a continuum of program options. See the Educational Environments Indicator 2 for an example of a placement continuum.

Program options for students with autism refer to the various educational services and settings that are available to meet their unique learning needs. The program options are also fluid. A student might receive some services in one setting and other services in a different setting. Furthermore, placements can change over time based on factors such as student progress or the need for change.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 12 Program Options

12.1 Least Restrictive Environmental Supports

Program Options

12.2 Continuum of Program Options

12.3 Interactions with Peers
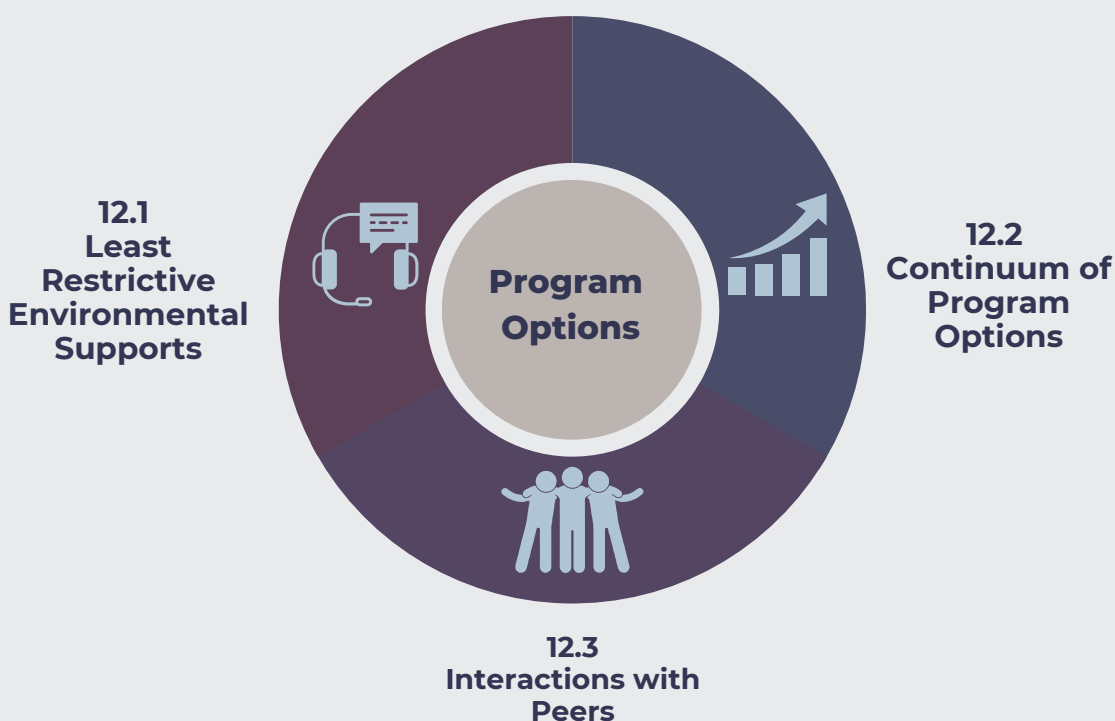
Program Transitions

Transitions for students with disabilities refers to the process of moving from one educational setting or stage to another, such as transitioning from preschool to elementary school, from elementary to middle school, or from high school to post-secondary education or employment.

Transitions can be challenging for students with autism because they may require adjustments to new environments, routines, and expectations. However, with the right support, students with autism can successfully navigate these transitions and achieve their goals.

Transition planning and support services may also involve collaboration between the student, their family, teachers, and other professionals to ensure that the student's individual needs are identified and addressed. Overall, effective transition planning and support can help students with autism successfully navigate the various stages of their education and achieve their full potential in post-secondary education, employment, and community living.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 13 Transitions

13.1 Program Transition Assessments

13.2 Engagement of Student and Family

13.3 Program Transition Planning

Program Transitions

13.4 Program Transition Plan Requirements

13.5 Program Transition Implementation
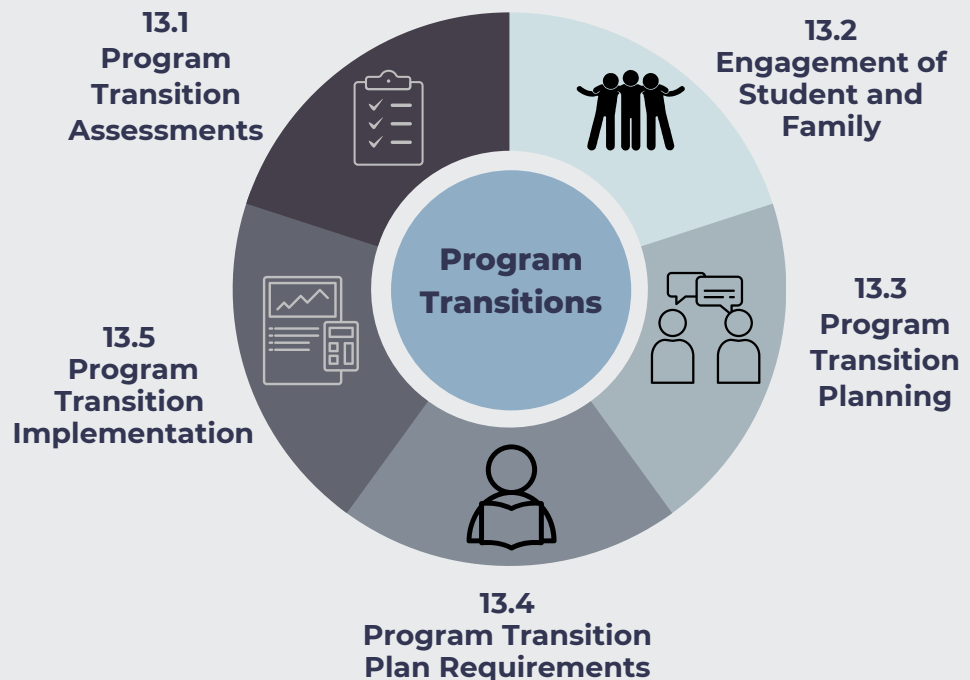
Progress Review and Monitoring

All students deserve and are entitled to a free, appropriate, public education. Best practices include participation in an effective education that maximizes performance and success. Specifically, students with autism often exhibit inconsistent development across and within skills. Given these inconsistencies in performance, it makes sense then to consider the possibility that these challenges will result in limited or a lack of improvement. Thus, any program designed to educate a group of students with autism needs to include a mechanism to evaluate the educational impact on each student. For example, a lack of objective or data-based documentation of progress over a 3-month period is an indicator that a change in programming is necessary. As a general guideline, individual progress should be reviewed and monitored using a collaborative, continuous, and systematic process.

The following components are addressed under Indicator 14 Progress Review and Monitoring

14.1 Data Collection on IEP Goals

14.2 Modifications to Instructional Program

Progress Review and Monitoring

14.6 Annual Student Reports

14.3 Considerations

14.5 Modifications to IEP

14.4 Family Reports
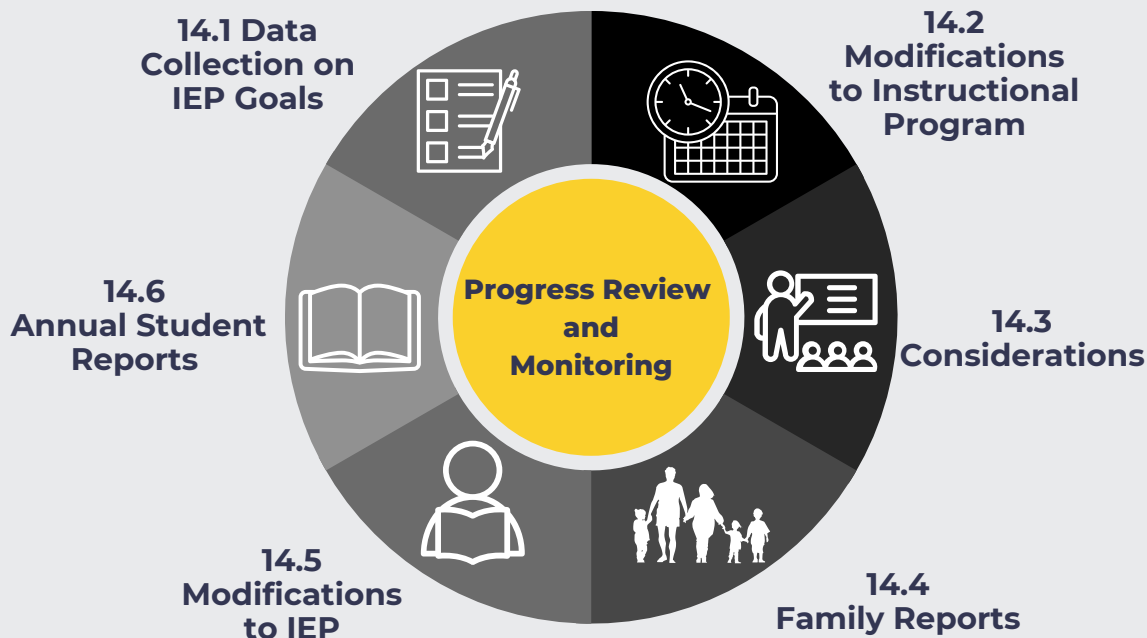
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APQI- R Glossary

This resource provides access to a list of commonly used terms and acronyms in special education.

A

Academics: Academics refer to the learning content set forth by the state.

Adapted Supports: These are the changes or modifications to existing instructional materials, resources, or tools that reflect the individual needs of the student to enhance independence within the educational environment.

Antecedent: A stimulus such as a verbal cue, physical prompt, person, or event that precedes a behavior.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): The science of studying observable patterns of behavior and environmental interactions. ABA is used to gain a clear understanding of how specific interventions or techniques may be affecting certain behaviors through the use of data to guide decisions.

Appropriate: The word "appropriate" in this document does not have a different meaning from its common usage. Generally, the word "appropriate" is used to mean "suitable" or "fitting" for a particular student, condition, occasion, or place (Commentary in the Federal Register, page 46661). An appropriate goal or activity for one student may be completely inappropriate for another student.

Assessment: The process of gathering information to make a decision about what actions should be taken.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.

B

Baseline: The condition or phase in which there is no intervention. The baseline data are then compared to data collected during an intervention to determine whether behavior change has occurred.

Behavior: Behavior is the activity of a living organism that is observable and measurable.

Behavioral Engagement: This is the observable act of students being involved in learning. It refers to the student's participation in academic activities and efforts to perform academic tasks.

B

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A complete description of the assessment and interventions conducted and/or planned for a student's problem behavior. The plan contains specific information regarding the functional assessment conducted, the hypothesis statement stating the possible function of the problem behavior, an explicit description of the antecedent and consequent interventions implemented or planned, and the new skills that will be taught to replace the problem behavior.

C

Communication: Communication is the act of transferring information from one person to another. Communication occurs in various forms including, but not limited to vocal communication, American Sign Language (ASL), the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), speech-generating devices (SGDs), augmentative communication (AC) systems, written communication, etc.

Curriculum: The curriculum is what is taught to students in school.

D

Data: This is measurable, factual information, used to make individualized, educational decisions regarding student programs (adapted from Merriam-Webster).

E

Early Childhood: A stage in human development following infancy and preceding childhood. It generally includes toddlerhood. For the purposes of the APQI-R, early childhood refers to pre-kindergarten (PreK).

Evidence-Based Practices (EBP): EBPs are derived from or informed by objective, peer-reviewed research. They are practices established through research to be effective.

H

Hidden Curriculum: The term "hidden curriculum" refers to an amorphous collection of "implicit academic, social, and cultural messages," "unwritten rules and unspoken expectations," and "unofficial norms, behaviors and values" of the dominant-culture context in which all teaching and learning is situated.

I

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): IDEA is a federal law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities.

Imitation: Imitation refers to behaviors that are emitted and have point-to-point correspondence. In other words, imitation means mimicking another person's behavior.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): An IEP lays out the special education instruction, supports, and services a student Iwith a disability needs in school.

Instruction: How the curriculum is delivered.

Instructional Methods: Instructional methods consist of principles and methods used by teachers to enhance and relate the instruction to learners. It is defined by the process that a teacher uses to instruct students on a particular topic.

Intensity: Intensity can include the length of time in instruction (hours per week, days per year); student-to-teacher ratio, and rate of learning opportunities (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(c)).

Interagency Collaboration: A process in which education professionals establish partnerships with personnel from multiple agencies to achieve a common goal: to improve the postsecondary success of students with disabilities. Interagency collaboration is a means to:
- Coordinate services and supports
- Identify and address gaps in services within the community
- Share and leverage resources to reduce cost
- Promote efficient service delivery

L

Language Development: This is the process by which children come to understand and communicate language.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): LRE is a legal and educational principle that ensures individuals with disabilities, particularly students, are provided with educational services and supports in settings that allow them to access the general education curriculum and participate in the regular classroom environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

M

Motivation: The variables or factors that influence a student's actions or the reason a student behaves in a certain way. An internal state of desire or willingness to emit a behavior.

P

Paraprofessional: Means a school classroom aide who assists appropriately certified personnel with the supervision of student activities (N.J.A.C. 6A:32).

Personnel: Refers to those persons providing services within an educational setting. Educational personnel includes but are not limited to teachers (both specialized and general), paraprofessionals, related service providers, and child study members.

Preventative Measures: Are any reasonable measures or steps taken to prevent, minimize, or mitigate classroom safety (e.g., alarms, speakers/intercom system, movement around the classroom, secured fixtures, electrical equipment [e.g., plug sockets, cables, switches, etc.], ventilation/heating, etc.).

R

Reinforcement: Reinforcement is the function of the relation of a consequence immediately following a behavior, which increases the future probability of the behavior occurring again.

Related Service Providers: Related Services are, " . . . transportation and such developmental, corrective and other supportive services as required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education . . . " (Section 300.34(a)). They include speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation, and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training.

S

Self-Management: Self-management is the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively. The NJDOE defines self-management as "Understanding and practicing strategies for managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Recognizing the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals and identifying and applying ways to persevere or overcome barriers."

Social Skills: These are the skills used daily to interact and communicate with others. They include verbal and non-verbal communication, such as speech, gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Social skill is not a "service" but a functional skill necessary for daily living activities.

Staff: For the purposes of the APQI-R, the term staff is defined as teachers, paraprofessionals (e.g., assistants, aides), related service providers, child study team members, administrators, and other support staff.

Student Engagement: Refers to the degree of attention, interest, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in education.

T

Teams: Refers to two or more professionals directly involved in planning and implementing a student's educational program, particularly those on the IEP team and paraprofessionals directly supporting a student.

Tier 1 and 2 Interventions: Tier 1 and tier 2 interventions refer to the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS), which is a framework of supports and interventions to improve student achievement, based on the core components of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and the three-tier prevention logic of Response to Intervention (RTI). Tier 1 consists of universal school-wide and class-wide supports and tier 2 involves targeted, small-group interventions and supports.

Transition Supports: These are instructional resources, tools, and aids specifically designed to increase student ability in navigating successfully between learning contexts and various environments.

V

Visual Supports: These are concrete cues that provide students with information about classroom routines, tasks, activities, skills, or expected behaviors, which can include, pictures, schedules, labels, text, environmental arrangements, visual boundaries, maps, organization systems, timelines, and scripts (modified from Sam, A, & AFIRM Team, 2015).

Appendix A
NJ Educational Resources

New Jersey Educational Resources

Listed on this resource page are different New Jersey-specific educational resources.

Note: These resources are currently the most recent and up-to-date documents, as of 2023. However, users of the APQI-R should consult with the latest documents and most updated resources.

New Jersey Administrative Code Chapter 13 A
Elements of a High-Quality Preschool Program

New Jersey Preschool Classroom Teaching Guidelines
(NJECE)

New Jersey Student Learning Standards
(NJSLS)

New Jersey Administrative Code
Chapter 14: Special Education

Educational Resources

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports
(NJTSS)

New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in School
(NJPBSIS)

Appendix B
Support Agencies

Family Support Services

Listed on this resource page are different New Jersey statewide family support services available to families across New Jersey.

Arc of New Jersey
Family Advocacy Organization

Autism Family Services (DSP)
State-wide Family Services

Department of Health
Family Center Care Services

Department of Health
NJ Early Intervention Services (NJEIS)

PerformCare
Behavioral Health Services

Autism Speaks
Autism Family Resources

Department of Labor & Workforce
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

Family Resources

Department of Human Services
Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

Department of Human Services
Division of Disabilities Services (DDS)

Autism NJ
Information and Advocacy Network

SPAN
Parent Advocacy Network

Department of Children and Families
Children's System of Care (CSOC)

DESCRIPTION OF **EC-APQI** INDICATORS & COMPONENTS

EARLY CHILDHOOD APQI COMPONENTS

2023

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS I The following components are relevant for the development of appropriate programming for students with autism.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
1.1	Length of School Year	The length of the school day and the academic year of programs for students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, shall be at least as long as that established for nondisabled peers. • The IEP team may, in its discretion, alter the length of the school day based on the needs of the student. An extended school year (ESY) program provides for the extension of special education and related services beyond the regular school year. • An ESY program is provided in accordance with the student's IEP.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.2	Student to Staff Ratio	Staff is available in a ratio sufficient to provide the support necessary to accomplish IEP goals across learning environments. Student-to-staff ratio is set forth by: • State regulations (New Jersey Administrative Code). • Federal regulations. • Student needs, as determined by IEP (Refer to Indicator 10).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.3	Program Location	Location and the content of the activity are determined on an individual basis, depending on the student's identified needs. Individualized least restrictive environment is determined through data-based decision making (i.e., inclusion of students with PreK students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the maximum extent appropriate).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.4	Instruction	Instruction is: • Systematically planned. • Aimed towards students individualized IEP objectives. • Aligned to *New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards* • Engaging (e.g., students actively participate and are not sitting for more than 5-minutes without a lesson/activity). • Developmentally appropriate in length and purpose.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.5	Documentation	A system for documentation reflects: • Student progress towards general education preschool curriculum objectives. • Student progression towards IEP goals. • Effectiveness of instructional methods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

		EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.		
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
2.1	Safety and Preventative Measures	The educational environment supports students with autism in that: • The environment is free of environmental hazards. • Preventative measures are taken to prevent safety issues. • Students are monitored (e.g., staff strategically placed so that all areas of the setting can be viewed with no "blind" spots). • Basic and personal hygiene is part of the daily routines (e.g., toileting, hand washing, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.2	Organization of Learning Environment	The environmental setting is designed so that: • All students can access learning centers. • Physical structure or boundaries convey activity expectations (e.g., science area, reading area, etc.). • Clear physical and visual boundaries help students know where each area begins and ends. • Adaptations support individual student's needs (e.g., sensory table, quiet spaces, appropriately sized furnishings, visuals at eye level, etc.). • Students can engage in small group, large group, and independent work activities, as well as both active and leisure activities, as appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.3	Materials	Classroom materials: • Are age appropriate. • Reflect the characteristics, values, and practices of diverse cultural groups (e.g., books, artwork, diverse lifestyles, careers, locations, climates, etc.). • Incorporate students' areas of interest and preferences, as appropriate. • Are plentiful or in sufficient quantity for all students to participate in classroom/setting activities. • Support a literacy-rich environment through a variety of print, audio, and electronic media. • Arranged to invite purposeful play and expand on learning.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.4	Daily Routines	Daily routines: • Are consistent across days/weeks within the classroom and school setting. • Promote structured activities that facilitate active participation and address stability and familiarity (e.g., circle time, small group, lunch, etc.). • Support independence, as appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

Indicator 2

Early Childhood

		EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.		
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
2.4 Continued	Daily Routines Continued	- A minimum of two strategies are used to support independence across routines (e.g., first-then boards, checklists, 'wait' symbols, timers, etc.). - Transitions are kept short to adapt to student's developmental attention span capacity. - Routines are conducted (e.g., toileting, hand washing, etc.) individually or in pairs to avoid whole-group waiting times.	
2.5	Environmental Supports	Support strategies are provided to facilitate anticipated change, unexpected events (e.g., fire drills) and predicted activities within daily routines. These include: - Adapted materials. - Visual supports. - Transition supports.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.6	Location	The educational environment (e.g., classroom) is integrated into the school and located within the same location as students without disabilities (e.g., the PreK-Disabled self-contained classroom is on the same floor and next door to a general education PreK classroom).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 2

Early Childhood

		PERSONNEL I Students with autism should have an educational team who work together and are knowledgeable regarding autism, child development, and education.		

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
3.1	Knowledgeable Staff	Staff consists of a multidisciplinary team and each staff member is knowledgeable about the core and associated characteristics of autism spectrum disorder and child development (e.g., early childhood, school-age, adolescent development). In addition, staff should be knowledgeable and pose some level of skill deemed appropriate by their position, in the following: • Familiarity with assessment methods (Refer to Indicator 9). • Developing IEPs to meet the unique needs of each student (Refer to Indicator 10). • Curriculum, environmental adaptations and accommodations, and instructional methods Refer to Indicators 2, 4 and 5). • Classroom and individual behavior management techniques (Refer to Indicator 11).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.2	IEP Implementation and Access	Certified teachers and related service providers who have educational responsibilities for a student with autism have access to the student's IEP and are informed of their responsibilities for implementation.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.3	Program Staff	Staff who received autism-specific training and are designated as instructional staff, remain within their roles to the greatest extent possible and as appropriate, to ensure: • Program continuity. • Student educational benefits.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.4	Professional Development	Persons with expertise in the education of students (e.g., preschool education) with autism and child development (e.g., early childhood) provide: • Pre-service and in-service training for entry-level staff. • Ongoing professional development, guidance, and technical assistance for staff that is specific to the program and population of students being served.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

CURRICULUM I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based curricula that is planned, designed, and constructed to address the skill deficits of students with autism. Additionally, the curriculum is linked to new Jersey State Learning Standards.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
4.1	Aligned to State Standards	An effective curriculum is designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge that align with State Learning Standards: • *New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.* • *New Jersey Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines.* • *New Jersey Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
4.2	Evidence-Based Curricula	An evidence-based curriculum consists of practices that have been vetted through rigorous research. The curriculum should meet the following criteria: • It aligns with NJ State Learning Standards. • Research of sufficient quality and quantity is available. • Levels of competency are defined. • High rates of responding are embedded. • Opportunities for providing feedback for correct answers are addressed. • Corrective feedback and remediation are designated. • Scope and sequencing that lead to increasing levels of difficulty are spelled out. • Mastery-based instruction is embedded. • Formative assessments are available. PreK curriculum is based on student needs, strengths, and interests that focus on all aspects of development: • Cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. • Curriculum strategies and/or resources shall be developmentally appropriate and include performance-based assessment measures.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.1	Instructional Formats	Meaningful instruction takes place in the least restrictive environment with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, and staff use instructional formats that: • Are developmentally appropriate. • Are based on student learning needs and abilities. • Vary based on subject/content being taught (e.g., direct instruction, small group, dyads, 1:1 instruction, student-initiated interactions, teacher-direct interactions, independent work, play, and peer-mediated instruction). • Are designed to meet specific IEP objectives. PreK instructional methods and/or strategies are congruent with the cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills of early childhood development.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.2	Instructional Outcomes	Instructional strategies result in meaningful outcomes by: • Promoting high rates of class-wide and/or school-wide participation. • Fostering communication and social interaction. • Fostering the use of learned skills across various settings (e.g., school, home, community).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.3	Instruction Focuses on Student Development	The instruction emphasizes the development of skills across multiple domains, including: • Academic skills to meet the content standards. • Communication and language – functional communication systems for students who have emerging communication skills (e.g., American Sign Language, PECS, etc.). • Self-determination skills (e.g., choice making, problem solving, self-observation/evaluation, and reinforcement). • Self-regulation and self-monitoring (e.g., contingency mapping, self-talk, setting goals, monitoring and delivering reinforcement, and analyzing choices). • Social relationships (e.g., supported interaction with typically developing peers, natural environment teaching) to include symbolic play/leisure, imagination, and creativity.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.4	Lesson Length	The length of lessons and activities are developmentally and/or age appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.5	Response to Instruction	During instruction, staff should: • Provide students with various methods to respond based on individual needs (e.g., vocal, written, AAC, etc.). • Provide students with multiple opportunities to respond. • Provide feedback as needed (e.g., correction and/or confirmation of correct response) and adjust instruction based on student response.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.6	Generalization and Maintenance of Skills	Instructional methods should include a clear plan to: • Systematically program and assess the generalization and maintenance of learned skills. • Provide opportunities to generalize and practice learned skills across various environments (e.g., home, school, community) and individuals (e.g., staff, peers, siblings, parents, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 5

Early Childhood

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT I Families are valued and contribute to the learning team, and their input influences all aspects of their child's education.			
6.1	Family as Active Participants	Parents, family members, and/or caregivers are included as active participants in: • All ongoing evaluation and educational processes as IEP team members. • Relevant stakeholder activities and/or committees (e.g., advisory councils, SPAN, SEPAG) to the extent of their interest.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.2	Family Support Services	Provides important local community, State and/or Federal information and resources to families in multiple ways (e.g., handbooks, videos, emails, websites, flyers, etc.), such as: • Community resources. • Family support services (See Indicator 7 and Appendix A). • Recreational activities outside of school. • Other topics/agencies requested by the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.3	Cultural Competency	The program demonstrates an awareness of and respect for the culture, language, values, and parenting styles of the families they serve, by: • Seeking parental input and preferences. • Providing information and communication in lay terms that is in a language most comfortable for the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.4	Family Education	The program makes available family educational opportunities that: • Enable families to acquire new skills and/or increase knowledge to support their child in relation to current educational and/or behavioral goals. • Promote interaction amongst families through training and/or interests based on topics of interest. • In the preschool program with specific, identified strategies that assist families in remaining actively involved in their child's education throughout their school years (e.g., Review of the Preschool Day).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.5	Family Meetings	The program responds to parental requests to meet (i.e., outside of scheduled IEP meetings), by offering flexible times and formats (e.g., phone conference, virtual, etc.) within the constraints of the school policy.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION I The program links with community agencies to assist families in accessing support and services needed by students with autism and their families.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
7.1	Program/School Transition Support	Transition support for both sending and receiving programs develop transition plans and support that include: • An exchange of information before, during, and after transitions. • The sharing of information regarding transitions about practices most likely to support the student's successful adjustment and positive school outcomes. • Based on individual needs, considering the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. • Staff use a variety of planned and timely strategies with the student and family before, during, and after the transition to support successful adjustments for both the student and the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.2	Referrals to Community Resources/ Supports	The program assists students and families in accessing updated lists of available resources and services, that may include: • Crisis, mental health, social services and family/parent support organizations within the community, as needed. • Information about accessing referrals to community resources (e.g., health services, adult education classes, etc.), as needed. • Self-advocacy organizations, recreational opportunities, cultural organizations, transportation, and social groups, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.3	Community Collaboration	Collaborations with community organizations (e.g., parks and recreation, restaurants, movie theaters, hair salons, etc.) help to ensure the delivery of services to students and families who may benefit from them. The program promotes and fosters collaboration with the community by: • Inviting large corporations, small businesses, and other organizations to support students and their families (e.g., through the creation of a community resource board, sensory friendly events), as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

PROGRAM EVALUATION I The program engages in program evaluations, relative to the needs of the students with autism, that are measurable, ongoing, and systematically collect data to make decisions regarding educational programming for students with autism.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
8.1	Annual Program Evaluation	The program provides regular and ongoing program evaluation reviews (e.g., APQI, surveys, etc.) across educational settings and grade levels that assess: • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of students. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the staff. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the families. • The degree to which the program is engaging collaboratively with stakeholders in the community.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
8.2	System-Wide Improvement Plan	Written data are gathered reliably and consistently to inform and guide quality programming for students with ASD. Data collected from 8.1 will: • Identify needed areas of improvement. • Assist with the development of a targeted improvement plan, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.1	Multidisciplinary Team Assessments	Assessments are conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified and mandated personnel, as well as those who are knowledgeable regarding the characteristics of autism, and the developmental level of the student (e.g., early childhood development, childhood development, adolescent development). Refer to Indicator 3 regarding knowledgeable staff.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.2	Medical and Developmental Considerations	Comprehensive records (e.g., medical, early intervention, developmental history, etc.) are reviewed and incorporated into the students' programming, as appropriate (Refer to 9.1 regarding multidisciplinary team and qualified personnel).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.3	Variety of Assessment Measures	A variety of measures and sources of information are utilized to assess domains, as appropriate and necessary. They include but are not limited to assessments for autism, communication, social emotional and behavioral skills, academics, and adaptive behavior. • Appropriate, most recent versions of, standardized, developmental screening measures and/or observational methods (e.g., KABC-2, BASC-3, Vineland, Developmental Profile-3, ADIR). • Autism-specific measures (e.g., CARS-2, MIGDS-2, SRS-2, ADOS-2, GARS-3). • Family input, (Refer to Indicator 6 Family Engagement). • Review of recent progress and functional level. • Review and consideration of documentation from outside reports, records, and/or testing (e.g., MIGDAS-2). • Criterion referenced assessments. *This list serves as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.4	Assessments Across Domains	For both vocal and non-vocal students' assessments use standardized measures, family report, observation, and spontaneous language samples to assess skills cover the domains of: **9.4a Speech and Language** • Receptive and expressive language (e.g., CELF-5, PLS-5, VB-MAPP, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.4 Continued	Assessment Across Domains Continued	• Use of symbol systems (e.g., augmentative communication systems/speech-generating devices, phones, tangible items, picture communication, American Sign Language, writing). • Pragmatic functions (e.g., Communication Matrix, Conversational Effectiveness Profile, etc.). **9.4b Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Development**, assessed by qualified personnel and specific strategies are in place, including: • Use of self-regulation and coping skills (e.g., Zones of Regulation, Incredible 5-Point Scale, SEAM™) • Assessment of behavioral function using a variety of techniques (e.g., FBA, FA, IISCA) and tools (BESS, SAEBRS, SDQ, SRSS, etc.). • Addressing school-based social code of conduct (e.g., hidden curriculum, respect of personal space, etc.). • Social skills assessments (e.g., TSLAT, TSSA, ATBS, etc.) **9.4c Sensory**, assessed by qualified personnel that consist of assessing students' sensory processing. • Sensory needs (e.g., SOSI-M, TSI, Preschool Sense, SPM/SPM-P, sensory screeners, etc.). **9.4d Daily Living/Self-Help Skills,** assessed to determine activities of daily living (ADLs) tasks that are in the student repertoire and ADLs that are still developing. • Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS). • Casey Life Skills Toolkit (CLS). • Essential for Living (EFLS). **9.4e Academics,** access is linked to students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance, identified by evaluations conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified personnel. • Curriculum based and/or skill-based assessments (e.g., COR Advantage, ABLLS-R, i-Ready, VB-MAPP, STAR Program, PEAK, FACTER, etc.).	*Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.4 Continued	Assessments Across Domains Continued	• Executive functioning assessments (e.g., Organizing, planning, flexibility, problem solving, BRIEF, TOPS, etc.). • Psychological and/or Psychoeducational Evaluations (e.g., CTOPP-2, GORT-5, GSRT, KTEA-3, WISC-IV, WPPSI-IV, SB-V, DAS-II, etc.). **9.4f Preference Assessments**, are designed to determine hierarchies under the specific set of circumstances in which they are conducted to determine preference of potential reinforcers. • Multiple stimulus without replacement (MSWO); multiple stimulus with replacement (MSW); paired stimulus; single stimulus, and/or free operant. *These lists serve as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) I The IEP includes information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning. IEP goals are based on assessments, students' strengths and needs, and goals are functional and align with early childhood student outcomes.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
10.1	IEP Implementation	Staff members plan, implement, and document instruction that targets IEP goals daily (Refer to Indicator 10.2). Data are collected on a regular basis for IEP goals, and data-based decision-making frameworks for data analysis are used to evaluate student progress and guide decision making (e.g., at least 3 data points are collected before drawing conclusions and making decisions).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
10.2	IEP Goals	IEP goals are functional and based on the present level of performance and needs of students. IEP goals are individual to the student and are derived from assessments (Refer to Indicator 9). IEP goals should address the following domains that align with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, as appropriate: **10.2a Functional Communication** • Functional communication system for both verbal and nonverbal students target expressive language, receptive language, and nonverbal communication skills (Refer to Indicator 5.3), as appropriate. **10.2b Social Skills** • Social skills goals are in place to enhance participation in family, school, and community activities (e.g., imitation, social imitations and response to adults/peers, parallel and interactive play with peers and siblings), as appropriate. **10.2c Leisure, Imagination and Creativity** • The teaching of play and/or leisure skills focuses on the functional use of toys, down time, and other age-appropriate materials (e.g., Legos, playing cards, board games, etc.), representational/ symbolic play, reciprocity, imaginative and cooperative play with peers, including typically developing peers. **10.2d Academics** • Academic skills to meet the curriculum aligned to the *New Jersey Preschool Learning Standards and/or Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

| 10.2 Continued | IEP Goals Continued | **10.2e Behavioral Skills**
• Replacement of challenging behavior that interfere with learning and prosocial behaviors, as appropriate (Refer to Indicator 11.3).

10.2f Self-Management Skills
• Independent organizational skills and other behaviors that underlie success in general education classrooms (e.g., completing a task independently, following instructions in a group, asking for help, etc.).

10.2g Fine and Gross Motor Skills
• Fine and gross motor skills used for developmentally and age-appropriate curriculum activities including daily living, creative arts, physical education, and recreation, as appropriate. | |

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level

11.1	Class-Wide Behavioral Support Systems	The program has a class-wide behavioral system (e.g., tier 1 and tier 2 strategies) that:
		• Has clear and concise behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement strategies across settings and school environments.
		  • Behavioral expectations are written in observable and measurable terms and posted visibly in the classroom.
		  • Positive reinforcement strategies are implemented consistently and immediately to reinforce appropriate behaviors.
		• Collects data to show the effectiveness of the class-wide behavioral support systems and individual students' response to tier 1 and tier 2 strategies for behavior management.
		• Consists of regular reviews and provides ongoing training and support to ensure that the positive reinforcement strategies are used consistently and effectively.
			☐ Fully Implemented
			☐ Partially Implemented
			☐ Not Implemented

11.2	Behavioral Assessments	Behavioral assessments are used to understand challenging behaviors and support direct intervention planning (Refer to Indicator 9 and 11.3), as needed. Behavioral assessments:
		• Are conducted using multiple methods of at least one indirect and one direct assessment methodology (e.g., interview, rating scales, direct observations, descriptive analysis, and with expertise, functional analysis [FBAs, PFA, etc.).
		• Are administered by trained and qualified personnel.
		• Identify the specific challenging behaviors that interfere with the student's learning and social interactions.
		• Identify the setting events, antecedents, and consequences of challenging behaviors.
		• Have results that are documented in a written report that includes:
		  • A summary of the student's behavior.
		  • A list of specific and measurable behavioral goals.
		  • Recommendations for interventions that are evidence-based and tailored to the student's individual needs.
		
		*Continued next page
			☐ Fully Implemented
			☐ Partially Implemented
			☐ Not Implemented
			☐ Not Applicable

Indicator 11

Early Childhood

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
11.2 Continued	Behavioral Assessments Continued	• The report is reviewed by the IEP team, including the student's family, to ensure that it is understandable and actionable. • Are conducted in a timely manner in relation to the identified need of the student.	
11.3	Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)	A comprehensive behavior intervention plan (BIP) is created in collaboration with the family, that includes: • Preventative measures, replacement skills, response strategies and reinforcement system(s). • Specific and measurable goals for the reduction of challenging behaviors, including thinning/fading and termination criteria. • Reviews by the team regularly to determine its effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors (Refer to Indicator 11.4).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.4	Data-Driven Decision Making	Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors before, during, and after implementing an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP). • Data are collected using a standardized method (e.g., frequency, duration, latency, etc.) and displayed in a meaningful way (e.g., graphs, tables, etc.). • Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors across all relevant settings. • Data are reviewed, at minimum, on a weekly basis to determine effectiveness of the intervention.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.5	Persistent Behaviors	When challenging behavior continues despite the use of the procedures outlined in 11.1- 11.3, the contributing factors are re-assessed, which may include, but not limited to, medical considerations, changes in personal circumstances, implementation of IEP supports, staff training, motivational systems, educational environment, and consistency of BIP implementation. • If modifications to the BIP are needed, an IEP team meeting is held to address proposed changes and/or updates.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.6	Restraint and Seclusion	Restraint and seclusion should only be used by trained personnel and as a last resort in compliance with the most recent federal and state laws and regulations. At minimum:	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level

11.6 Continued	Restraint and Seclusion Continued	• Ongoing training and support is provided to all staff on alternative behavioral intervention strategies, that may include de-escalation procedures and protocols.
		• Data are collected on the frequency, duration, and reason for the use of the restraint and seclusion, as well as the effectiveness of the interventions that were attempted prior to the use of restraint and seclusion.
		• Parents are notified any time a behavioral incident results in restraint or seclusion techniques being used by staff on a student.
		• Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, staff, and others in the environment.
		    • Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are consistent with current laws and regulations and that they reflect best practices.
		    • Policies and procedures outline a process to review data and decision-making procedures for instances where restraint and/or seclusion are used more than once for a) the same student, and/or b) the same staff using restraint/seclusion.	

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

PROGRAM OPTIONS I Location in which IEP is implemented is individually determined with programs offering a full continuum of programs.			
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
12.1	Least Restrictive Environmental Supports	The program will ensure that students with autism receive educational services and support in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. The program will: • Provide appropriate individualized accommodations and modifications, such as, social skills groups, assistive technology, and positive behavior supports. • Provide ongoing training and support to staff on inclusive practices, such as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and co-teaching. • Have clear policies and procedures in place that ensure that the student has the same educational opportunities and experiences as their non-disabled peers (e.g., extracurricular activities, field trips, etc.). • Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of its least restrictive environmental supports (Indicator 14).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.2	Continuum of Programming Options	A continuum of program options is made available, and placement is determined by: • Individual needs regarding specific skills (e.g., social, academic, communication, etc.). • Most appropriate environment where skills can be addressed (e.g., social skills should be taught in an inclusive setting). *Refer to the most recent federal and state laws and regulations regarding the continuum of programming options.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.3	Interactions with Peers	Programs ensure that students with autism have regular opportunities to interact with peers across a variety of settings, as appropriate. Programs will foster meaningful peer interactions by: • Having clear policies and procedures in place that promote positive social interactions with peers. This may include providing structured opportunities for peer interactions (e.g., peer support groups, social skills groups, etc.). • Providing ongoing training for staff on evidence-based practices for promoting positive peer interactions.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 12

Early Childhood

PROGRAM TRANSITIONS I Programs include written program transition plans based on individual student needs and actively support collaboration between student, families, and school, when appropriate.

Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
13.1	Program Transition Assessments	Program transition assessments are conducted as needed to evaluate the student's skills, interests, and needs to help identify appropriate goals and strategies for supporting the student's transition and success in new environments. Program transitions should include the transition from early intervention to preschool in order to address the full continuum of transitions, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.2	Engagement of Student and Families	The active participation of the student, to the appropriate extent possible, and the family are included to assist with: • Transition assessments (e.g., Identifying individual student's interests, strengths, and areas of need). • Transition planning (e.g., guiding the development of a plan that is relevant and meaningful for the student).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.3	Program Transition Planning	Transition planning begins as soon as a change in placement is anticipated to occur. Transitions include but are not limited to one classroom to another, one program to another, and one service delivery system to another. Transition planning: • Begins while the student is in the current placement. • Provides the student and family with the opportunity to visit the new setting (e.g., meet teachers, view classroom). • Integrates considerations of future placements (i.e., skills and supports needed in the next classroom or school setting). • Includes teacher preparation and other supports to facilitate success in the new setting (e.g., training for peers and support staff).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.4	Program Transition Plan Requirements	A program transition plan includes: • A statement of current supports and needs. • Identification of necessary supports within the new setting. • A schedule of training for receiving staff. • A detailed description of the transition process.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.5	Program Transition Implementation	The program transition plan provides for sufficient time to implement all components (e.g., identified supports and training) and is reviewed before, during, and after the transition.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

		INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.	
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
14.1	Data Collection on IEP Goals	Student progress on IEP goals is collected and assessed: • In at least two different ways (e.g., formal/informal assessment, criterion and/or skills based assessment, direct observation). • Using data that accurately capture the skill identified in the IEP goal (e.g., if accurate identification of letters is an IEP goal, then the data show how many letters the student can accurately select when asked).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.2	Modifications to Instructional Program	The program uses a systematic process for assessing individual student progress and modifies the instructional program and/or intensity of services when one or more the following occur: • IEP benchmarks have not been achieved within the mandated progress reporting periods. • Progress toward IEP benchmarks has not been demonstrated and modifications to instructional strategies have not been successful. • There is an unexpected change in the student's behavior or health status. • Significant change occurs in the home, school or community setting.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.3	Considerations	If a student requires a change in instructional program or intensity (per 14.1) the program considers the following changes and systematically analyzes their effects on a student's performance by: • Providing additional consultation and training. • Increasing the use of behavioral supports to address skill development and/or to enhance motivation. • Modifying curricula and/or changing instructional approach. • Increasing length of time for instructional periods and/or related services.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
14.4	Family Reports	The program provides the family with a report that includes a statement of progress on specific IEP goals and objectives in alignment with mandated reporting periods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.5	Modifications to IEP	When there is a need to consider modifications to the IEP, the teacher or designee routinely reports such need to the child study team/case manager.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

Indicator 14

Early Childhood

		INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.	
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
14.6	Annual Student Reports	On an annual basis, student progress is summarized and reviewed by a collaborative educational team. Student progress is disseminated to student, family, and other related service providers.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

DESCRIPTION OF
SA-APQI INDICATORS
& COMPONENTS

SCHOOL-AGE
APQI
COMPONENTS

2023

		PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS I The following components are relevant for the development of appropriate programming for students with autism.		
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
1.1	Length of School Year	The length of the school day and the academic year of programs for students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, shall be at least as long as that established for nondisabled peers. • The IEP team may, in its discretion, alter the length of the school day based on the needs of the student. An extended school year (ESY) program provides for the extension of special education and related services beyond the regular school year. • An ESY program is provided in accordance with the student's IEP.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.2	Student to Staff Ratio	Student to staff ratio is set forth by: • State regulations (New Jersey Administrative Code). • Federal regulations. • Student needs, as determined by IEP (Refer to Indicator 10).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.3	Program Location	Location and the content of the activity are determined on an individual basis, depending on the student's identified needs. Individualized least restrictive environment is determined through data-based decision making.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.4	Instruction	Instruction is: • Systematically planned. • Aimed towards students individualized IEP objectives. • Aligned to *New Jersey's Student Learning Standards.* • Engaging (e.g., students actively participate and are not sitting for more than 5-minutes without a lesson/activity). • Developmentally appropriate in length and purpose.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
1.5	Documentation	A system for documentation reflects: • Student progression towards general education Student Learning Standards. • Student progression towards IEP goals. • Effectiveness of instructional methods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 1

School Age

		EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.		
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
2.1	Safety and Preventative Measures	The educational environment supports students with autism in that: • The environment is free of environmental hazards. • Preventative measures are taken to prevent safety issues. • Students are monitored (e.g., staff strategically placed so that all areas of the setting can be viewed with no "blind" spots). • Basic and personal hygiene is part of the daily routines (e.g., toileting, hand washing, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.2	Organization of Learning Environment	The environmental setting is designed so that: • All students can independently access personal space (e.g., desk) and materials (e.g., books, technology, etc.) • Physical structure or boundaries convey activity expectations (e.g., computer area, reading area, etc.). • Physical space is provided for students to engage in quiet and leisure activities. • A system is established and in place for monitoring students across multiple environments. • Clear physical and visual boundaries help students know where each area begins and ends. • Adaptations support individual student's need (e.g., sensory area, quiet spaces, appropriately sized furnishings, visuals at eye level, etc.). • Students engage in small group, large group, and independent activities, as well as, both active and leisure activities, as appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.3	Materials	Classroom materials: • Are age appropriate. • Reflect the characteristics, values, and practices of diverse cultural groups (e.g., books, artwork, diverse lifestyles, careers, locations, climates, etc.). • Incorporate students' areas of interest and preferences, as appropriate. • Are plentiful or in sufficient quantity for all students to participate in classroom/setting activities. • Support a literacy-rich environment through a variety of print, audio, and electronic media. • Incorporate the natural environment as part of all classroom instruction (e.g., real money, textbooks, novels, cash register, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

Indicator 2

School Age

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
2.3 Continued	Materials Continued	• Materials and activities implemented as part of the instruction should encourage communication and social interactions.	
2.4	Daily Routines	Daily routines: • Are consistent across days/weeks within the classroom and school setting. • Promote structured activities that facilitate active participation and address stability and familiarity (e.g., circle time, small group, lunch, etc.). • Support independence, as appropriate. • A minimum of one strategy is used to support independence across routines (e.g., first-then boards, checklists, 'wait' symbols, timers, etc.). • Transitions are kept short to adapt to student's developmental attention span capacity and student's behavioral needs.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.5	Environmental Supports	Support strategies are provided to facilitate anticipated change, unexpected events (e.g., fire drills) and predicted activities within daily routines. These include: • Adapted materials. • Visual supports. • Transition supports.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.6	Location	The educational environment (e.g., classroom) is integrated into the school and located within the same location as students without disabilities (e.g., the Primary self-contained classroom is on the same floor and next door to a general education Primary level classroom).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 2

School Age

	PERSONNEL I Students with autism should have an educational team who work together and are knowledgeable regarding autism, child development, and education.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**	
3.1	Knowledgeable Staff	Staff are knowledgeable about the core and associated characteristics of autism spectrum disorder and child development (e.g., school-age). In addition, staff should be knowledgeable and pose some level of skill deemed appropriate by their position, in the following: • Familiarity with assessment methods (Refer to Indicator 9). • Developing IEPs to meet the unique needs of each student (Refer to Indicator 10). • Curriculum, environmental adaptations and accommodations, and instructional methods (Refer to Indicators 2, 4 and 5). • Classroom and individual behavior management techniques (Refer to Indicator 11).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
3.2	IEP Implementation and Access	Certified teachers and related service providers who have educational responsibilities for a student with autism have access to the student's IEP and are informed of their responsibilities for implementation.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
3.3	Program Staff	Staff who received autism-specific training and are designated as instructional staff, remain within their roles to the greatest extent possible and as appropriate, to ensure: • Program continuity. • Student educational benefits.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
3.4	Professional Development	Persons with expertise in the education of students with autism and child development provide: • Pre-service and in-service training for entry-level staff. • Ongoing professional development, guidance, and technical assistance for staff.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	

CURRICULUM I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based curricula that is planned, designed, and constructed to address the skill deficits of students with autism. Additionally, the curriculum is linked to new Jersey State Learning Standards.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
4.1	Aligned to State Standards	An effective curriculum is designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge that align with State Learning Standards: • *New Jersey Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
4.2	Evidence-Based Curricula	An evidence-based curriculum consists of practices that have been vetted through rigorous research. The curriculum should meet the following criteria: • It aligns with NJ State Learning Standards. • Research of sufficient quality and quantity is available. • Levels of competency are defined. • High rates of responding are embedded. • Opportunities for providing feedback for correct answers is addressed. • Corrective feedback and remediation are designated. • Scope and sequencing that lead to increasing levels of difficulty are spelled out. • Mastery-based instruction is embedded. • Formative assessments are available.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.1	Instructional Formats	Meaningful instruction takes place in the least restrictive environment with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, and staff use instructional formats that: • Are developmentally appropriate. • Are based on student learning needs and abilities. • Vary based on subject/content being taught (e.g., direct instruction, small group, dyads, 1:1 instruction, student-initiated interactions, teacher-direct interactions, independent work, play, and peer-mediated instruction). • Are designed to meet specific IEP objectives.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.2	Instructional Outcomes	Instructional strategies result in meaningful outcomes by: • Promoting high rates of class-wide and/or school-wide participation. • Fostering communication and social interaction. • Fostering the use of learned skills across various settings (e.g., school, home, community).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.3	Instruction Focuses on Student Development	The instruction emphasizes the development of skills across multiple domains, including: • Academic skills to meet the content standards. • Communication and language – functional communication systems for students who have emerging communication skills (e.g., American Sign Language, PECS, etc.). • Self-determination skills (e.g., choice making, problem solving, self-observation/evaluation, and reinforcement). • Self-regulation and self-monitoring (e.g., contingency mapping, self-talk, setting goals, monitoring and delivering reinforcement, and analyzing choices). • Social relationships (e.g., supported interaction with typically developing peers, natural environment teaching) to include symbolic play/leisure, imagination, and creativity.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.4	Lesson Length	The length of lessons and activities are developmentally and/or age appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.5	Response to Instruction	During instruction, staff should: • Provide students with various methods to respond based on individual needs (e.g., vocal, written, AAC, etc.). • Provide students with multiple opportunities to respond. • Provide feedback as needed (e.g., correction and/or confirmation of correct response) and adjust instruction based on student response.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.6	Generalization and Maintenance of Skills	Instructional methods should include a clear plan to: • Systematically program and assess the generalization and maintenance of learned skills. • Provide opportunities to generalize and practice learned skills across various environments (e.g., home, school, community) and individuals (e.g., staff, peers, siblings, parents, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

	FAMILY ENGAGEMENT I Families are valued and contribute to the learning team, and their input influences all aspects of their child's education.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**	
6.1	Family as Active Participants	Parents, family members, and/or caregivers are included as active participants in: • All ongoing evaluation and educational processes as IEP team members. • Relevant stakeholder activities and/or committees (e.g., advisory councils, SPAN, SEPAG) to the extent of their interest.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
6.2	Family Support Services	Provides important local community, State and/or Federal information and resources to families in multiple ways (e.g., handbooks, videos, emails, websites, flyers, etc.), such as: • Community resources. • Family support services (Refer to Indicator 7 Community Collaboration and Appendix A). • Recreational activities outside of school. • Other topics/agencies requested by the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
6.3	Cultural Competency	The program demonstrates an awareness of and respect for the culture, language, values, and parenting styles of the families they serve, by: • Seeking parental input and preferences. • Providing information and communication in lay terms that is in a language most comfortable for the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
6.4	Family Education	The program makes available family educational opportunities that: • Enable families to acquire new skills and/or increase knowledge to support their child in relation to current educational and/or behavioral goals. • Promote interaction amongst families through training and/or interests based on topics of interest.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
6.5	Family Meetings	The program responds to parental requests to meet (i.e., outside of scheduled IEP meetings), by offering flexible times and formats (e.g., phone conference, virtual, etc.) within the constraints of the school policy.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION I The program links with community agencies to assist families in accessing support and services needed by students with autism and their families.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
7.1	Program/School Transition Support	Transition support for both sending and receiving programs develop transition plans and support that include: • An exchange of information before, during, and after transitions. • The sharing of information regarding transitions about practices most likely to support the student's successful adjustment and positive school outcomes. • Based on individual needs, considering the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. • Staff use a variety of planned and timely strategies with the student and family before, during, and after the transition to support successful adjustments for both the student and the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.2	Referrals to Community Resources/ Supports	The program assists students and families in accessing updated lists of available resources and services, that may include: • Crisis, mental health, and family support organizations within the community, as needed. • Information about accessing referrals to community resources (e.g., health services, adult education classes, etc.), as needed. • Self-advocacy organizations, recreational opportunities, cultural organizations, transportation, and social groups, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.3	Community Collaboration	Collaborations with community organizations (e.g., parks and recreation, restaurants, movie theaters, hair salons, etc.) help to ensure the delivery of services to students and families who may benefit from them. The program promotes and fosters collaboration with the community by: • Inviting large corporations, small businesses, and other organizations to support students and their families (e.g., through the creation of a community resource board, sensory friendly events), as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

PROGRAM EVALUATION I The program engages in program evaluations, relative to the needs of the students with autism, that are measurable, ongoing, and systematically collect data to make decisions regarding educational programming for students with autism.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
8.1	Annual Program Evaluation	The program provides regular and ongoing program evaluation reviews (e.g., APQI, surveys, etc.) across educational settings and grade levels that assess: • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of students. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the staff. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the families. • The degree to which the program is engaging collaboratively with stakeholders in the community.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
8.2	System-Wide Improvement Plan	Written data are gathered reliably and consistently to inform and guide quality programming for students with ASD. Data collected from 8.1 will: • Identify needed areas of improvement. • Assist with the development of a targeted improvement plan, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 8

School Age

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.1	Multidisciplinary Team Assessments	Assessments are conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified and mandated personnel, as well as those who are knowledgeable regarding the characteristics of autism, and the developmental level of the student (e.g., early childhood development, childhood development, adolescent development; Refer to Indicator 3 regarding knowledgeable staff).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.2	Medical and Developmental Considerations	Comprehensive records (e.g., medical, early intervention, developmental history, etc.) are reviewed and incorporated into the students' programming, as appropriate (Refer to 9.1 regarding multidisciplinary team and qualified personnel).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.3	Variety of Assessment Measures	A variety of measures and sources of information are utilized to assess domains, as appropriate and necessary. They include but are not limited to assessments for autism, communication, social emotional and behavioral skills, academics, and adaptive behavior. • Appropriate, most recent versions of, standardized, developmental screening measures and/or observational methods (e.g., KABC-2, WISC-5, BASC-3, Vineland, Developmental Profile-3, ADIR). • Autism-specific measures (e.g., CARS-2, MIGDS-2, SRS-2, ADOS-2, GARS-3, ASDS). • Family input, (Refer to Indicator 6 Family Engagement). • Review of recent progress and functional level. • Review and consideration of documentation from outside reports, records, and/or testing (e.g., DSM-V TR). • Criterion referenced assessments. *This list serves as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.4	Assessments Across Domains	For both vocal and non-vocal students' assessments use standardized measures, family report, observation, and spontaneous language samples to assess skills cover the domains of: **9.4a Speech and Language** • Receptive and expressive language (e.g., CELF-5, PLS-5, VB-MAPP, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
9.4 Continued	Assessments Across Domains Continued	• Use of symbol systems (e.g., augmentative communication systems/speech-generating devices, phones, tangible items, picture communication, American Sign Language, writing). • Pragmatic functions (e.g., Communication Matrix, Conversational Effectiveness Profile, etc.). **9.4b Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Development**, assessed by qualified personnel and specific strategies are in place, including: • Use of self-regulation and coping skills (e.g., Zones of Regulation, Incredible 5-Point Scale, SEAM™). • Assessment of behavioral function using a variety of techniques (e.g., FBA, FA, etc.) and tools (BESS, SAEBRS, SDQ, SRSS, etc.). • Addressing school-based social code of conduct (e.g., hidden curriculum, respect of personal space, etc.). • Social skills assessments (e.g., TSLAT, TSSA, ATBS, etc.) **9.4c Sensory**, assessed by qualified personnel that consist of assessing students' sensory processing. • Sensory needs (e.g., SOSI-M, TSI, Preschool Sense, SPM/SPM-P, sensory screeners, etc.). **9.4d Daily Living/Self-Help Skills,** assessed to determine activities of daily living (ADLs) tasks that are in the student repertoire and ADLs that are still developing. • Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS). • Casey Life Skills Toolkit (CLS). • Essential for Living (EFLS). **9.4e Academics,** access is linked to students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance, identified by evaluations conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified personnel. • Curriculum based and/or skill-based assessments (e.g., COR Advantage, ABLLS-R, i-Ready, VB-MAPP, STAR Program, PEAK, FACTER, etc.).	*Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance. The assessment data leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.4 Continued	Assessments Across Domains Continued	• Executive functioning assessments (e.g., Organizing, planning, flexibility, problem solving, BRIEF, TOPS, etc.). • Psychological and/or Psychoeducational Evaluations (e.g., CTOPP-2, GORT-5, GSRT, KTEA-3, WISC-IV, WPPSI-IV, SB-V, DAS-II, etc.). **9.4f Preference Assessments**, are designed to determine hierarchies under the specific set of circumstances in which they are conducted to determine preference of potential reinforcers. • Multiple stimulus without replacement (MSWO); multiple stimulus with replacement (MSW); paired stimulus; single stimulus, and/or free operant. *These lists serve as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) I The IEP includes information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning. IEP goals are based on assessments, students' strengths and needs, and goals are functional and align with early childhood student outcomes.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
10.1	IEP Implementation	Staff members plan, implement, and document instruction that targets IEP goals daily (Refer to Indicator 10.2). Data are collected on a regular basis for IEP goals, and data-based decision-making frameworks for data analysis are used to evaluate student progress and guide decision making (e.g., at least 3 data points are collected before drawing conclusions and making decisions).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
10.2	IEP Goals	IEP goals are functional and based on the present level of performance and needs of students. IEP goals are individual to the student and are derived from assessments (Refer to Indicator 9 Individualized Student Assessments). IEP goals should address the following domains and 21st Century skills, as appropriate: **10.2a Functional Communication** • Functional communication system for both verbal and nonverbal students target expressive language, receptive language, and nonverbal communication skills (Refer to Indicator 5.3), as appropriate. **10.2b Social Skills** • Social skills goals are in place to enhance participation in family, school, and community activities (e.g., imitation, social imitations and response to adults/peers, parallel and interactive play with peers and siblings), as appropriate. **10.2c Leisure, Imagination and Creativity** • The teaching of play and/or leisure skills focuses on the functional use of toys, down time, and other age-appropriate materials (e.g., Legos, playing cards, board games, etc.), representational/ symbolic play, reciprocity, imaginative and cooperative play with peers, including typically developing peers. **10.2d Academics** • Academic skills to meet the curriculum aligned to the *New Jersey Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) I The IEP includes information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning. IEP goals are based on assessments, students' strengths and needs, and goals are functional and align with early childhood student outcomes.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
10.2 Continued	IEP Goals Continued	**10.2e Behavioral Skills** • Replacement of challenging behavior that interfere with learning and prosocial behaviors, as appropriate (Refer to Indicator 11.3). **10.2f Self-Management Skills** • Independent organizational skills and other behaviors that underlie success in general education classrooms (e.g., completing a task independently, following instructions in a group, asking for help, etc.). **10.2g Fine and Gross Motor Skills** • Fine and gross motor skills used for developmentally and age-appropriate curriculum activities including daily living, creative arts, physical education, and recreation, as appropriate.	

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level

11.1	Class-Wide Behavioral Support Systems	The program has a class-wide behavioral system (e.g., tier 1 and tier 2 strategies) that:
		• Has clear and concise behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement strategies across settings and school environments.
		  • Behavioral expectations are written in observable and measurable terms and posted visibly in the classroom.
		  • Positive reinforcement strategies are implemented consistently and immediately to reinforce appropriate behaviors.
		• Collects data to show the effectiveness of the class-wide behavioral support systems and individual students' response to tier 1 and tier 2 strategies for behavior management.
		• Consists of regular reviews and provides ongoing training and support to ensure that the positive reinforcement strategies are used consistently and effectively.
			☐ Fully Implemented
			☐ Partially Implemented
			☐ Not Implemented

11.2	Behavioral Assessments	Behavioral assessments are used to understand challenging behaviors and support direct intervention planning (Refer to Indicator 9 and 11.3), as needed. Behavioral assessments:
		• Are conducted using multiple methods of at least one indirect and one direct assessment methodology (e.g., interview, rating scales, direct observations, descriptive analysis, and with expertise, functional analysis [FBAs, PFA, etc.).
		• Are administered by trained and qualified personnel.
		• Identify the specific challenging behaviors that interfere with the student's learning and social interactions.
		• Identify the setting events, antecedents, and consequences of challenging behaviors.
		• Have results that are documented in a written report that includes:
		  • A summary of the student's behavior.
		  • A list of specific and measurable behavioral goals.
		  • Recommendations for interventions that are evidence-based and tailored to the student's individual needs.
			☐ Fully Implemented
			☐ Partially Implemented
			☐ Not Implemented
			☐ Not Applicable
			
			*Continued next page

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
11.2 Continued	Behavioral Assessments Continued	• The report is reviewed by the IEP team, including the student's family, to ensure that it is understandable and actionable. • Are conducted in a timely manner in relation to the identified need of the student.	
11.3	Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)	A comprehensive behavior intervention plan (BIP) is created in collaboration with the family, that includes: • Preventative measures, replacement skills, response strategies and reinforcement system(s). • Specific and measurable goals for the reduction of challenging behaviors, including thinning/fading and termination criteria. • Reviews by the team regularly to determine its effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors (Refer to Indicator 11.4).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.4	Data-Driven Decision Making	Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors before, during, and after implementing an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP). • Data are collected using a standardized method (e.g., frequency, duration, latency, etc.) and displayed in a meaningful way (e.g., graphs, tables, etc.). • Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors across all relevant settings. • Data are reviewed, at minimum, on a weekly basis to determine effectiveness of the intervention.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.5	Persistent Behaviors	When challenging behavior continues despite the use of the procedures outlined in 11.1- 11.3, the contributing factors are re-assessed, which may include, but not limited to, medical considerations, changes in personal circumstances, implementation of IEP supports, staff training, motivational systems, educational environment, and consistency of BIP implementation. • If modifications to the BIP are needed, an IEP team meeting is held to address proposed changes and/or updates.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.6	Restraint and Seclusion	Restraint and seclusion should only be used by trained personnel and as a last resort in compliance with the most recent federal and state laws and regulations. At minimum:	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level

11.6 Continued	Restraint and Seclusion	• Ongoing training and support are provided to all staff on alternative behavioral intervention strategies, that may include de-escalation procedures and protocols.
		• Data are collected on the frequency, duration, and reason for the use of the restraint and seclusion, as well as the effectiveness of the interventions that were attempted prior to the use of restraint and seclusion.
		• Parents are notified any time a behavioral incident results in restraint or seclusion techniques being used by staff on a student.
		• Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, staff, and others in the environment.
		   • Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are consistent with current laws and regulations and that they reflect best practices.
		   • Policies and procedures outline a process to review data and decision-making procedures for instances where restraint and/or seclusion are used more than once for a) the same student, and/or b) the same staff using restraint/seclusion.	

Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
PROGRAM OPTIONS I Location in which IEP is implemented and is individually determined with programs offering a full continuum of programs.			
12.1	Least Restrictive Environmental Supports	The program will ensure that students with autism receive educational services and support in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. The program will: • Provide appropriate individualized accommodations and modifications, such as, social skills groups, assistive technology, and positive behavior supports. • Provide ongoing training and support to staff on inclusive practices, such as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and co-teaching. • Have clear policies and procedures in place that ensure that the student has the same educational opportunities and experiences as their non-disabled peers (e.g., extracurricular activities, field trips, etc.). • Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of its least restrictive environmental supports (Indicator 14).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.2	Continuum of Programming Options	A continuum of program options is made available, and placement is determined by: • Individual needs regarding specific skills (e.g., social, academic, communication, etc.). • Most appropriate environment where skills can be addressed (e.g., social skills should be taught in an inclusive setting). *Refer to the most recent federal and state laws and regulations regarding the continuum of programming options.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.3	Interactions with Peers	Programs ensure that students with autism have regular opportunities to interact with peers across a variety of settings, as appropriate. Programs will foster meaningful peer interactions by: • Having clear policies and procedures in place that promote positive social interactions with peers. This may include providing structured opportunities for peer interactions (e.g., peer support groups, social skills groups, etc.). • Providing ongoing training for staff on evidence-based practices for promoting positive peer interactions.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

PROGRAM TRANSITIONS I Programs include written program transition plans based on individual student needs and actively support collaboration between student, families, and school, when appropriate.

Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
13.1	Program Transition Assessments	Program transition assessments are conducted annually to evaluate the student's skills, interests, and needs to help identify appropriate goals and strategies for supporting the student's transition and success in new environments.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.2	Engagement of Student and Families	The active participation of the student, to the appropriate extent possible, and the family are included to assist with: • Transition assessments (e.g., Identifying individual student's interests, strengths, and areas of need). • Transition planning (e.g., guiding the development of a plan that is relevant and meaningful for the student).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.3	Program Transition Planning	Transition planning begins as soon as a change in placement is anticipated to occur. Transitions include but are not limited to one classroom to another, one program to another, and one service delivery system to another. Transition planning: • Begins while the student is in the current placement. • Provides the student and family with the opportunity to visit the new setting (e.g., meet teachers, view classroom). • Integrates considerations of future placements (i.e., skills and supports needed in the next classroom or school setting). • Includes teacher preparation and other supports to facilitate success in the new setting (e.g., training for peers and support staff).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.4	Transition Plan Requirements	A transition plan includes: • A statement of current supports and needs. • Identification of necessary supports with the new setting. • A schedule of training for receiving staff. • A detailed description of the transition process.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.5	Transition Implementation	The program transition plan provides for sufficient time to implement all components (e.g., identified supports and training) and is reviewed before, during, and after the transition.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

INDICATOR PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.			

Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
14.1	Data Collection on IEP Goals	Student progress on IEP goals is collected and assessed: • In at least two different ways (e.g., formal/informal assessment, criterion and/or skills based assessment, direct observation). • Using data that accurately capture the skill identified in the IEP goal (e.g., if accurate identification of letters is an IEP goal, then the data show how many letters the student can accurately select when asked).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.2	Modifications to Instructional Program	The program uses a systematic process for assessing individual student progress and modifies the instructional program and/or intensity of services when one or more the following occur: • IEP benchmarks have not been achieved within the mandated progress reporting periods. • Progress toward IEP benchmarks has not been demonstrated and modifications to instructional strategies have not been successful. • There is an unexpected change in the student's behavior or health status. • Significant change occurs in the home, school or community setting.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.3	Considerations	If a student requires a change in instructional program or intensity (per 14.1) the program considers the following changes and systematically analyzes their effects on a student's performance by: • Providing additional consultation and training. • Increasing the use of behavioral supports to address skill development and/or to enhance motivation. • Modifying curricula and/or changing instructional approach. • Increasing length of time for instructional periods and/or related services.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
14.4	Family Reports	The program provides the family with a report that includes a statement of progress on specific IEP goals and objectives in alignment with mandated reporting periods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.5	Modifications to IEP	When there is a need to consider modifications to the IEP, the teacher or designee routinely reports such need to the child study team/case manager.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.			
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
14.6	Annual Student Reports	On an annual basis, student progress is summarized and reviewed by a collaborative educational team. Student progress is disseminated to student, family and other related providers.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 14

School Age

DESCRIPTION OF
Y-APQI INDICATORS
& COMPONENTS

YOUTH
APQI
COMPONENTS

2023

	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS I The following components are relevant for the development of appropriate programming for students with autism.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**	
1.1	Length of School Year	The length of the school day and the academic year of programs for students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, shall be at least as long as that established for nondisabled peers. • The IEP team may, in its discretion, alter the length of the school day based on the needs of the student. An extended school year (ESY) program provides for the extension of special education and related services beyond the regular school year. • An ESY program is provided in accordance with the student's IEP.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
1.2	Student to Staff Ratio	Student to staff ratio is set forth by: • State regulations (New Jersey Administrative Code). • Federal regulations. • Student needs, as determined by IEP (Refer to Indicator 10).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
1.3	Program Location	Location and the content of the activity are determined on an individual basis, depending on the student's identified needs. Individualized least restrictive environment is determined through data-based decision making.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
1.4	Instruction	Instruction is: • Systematically planned. • Aimed towards students individualized IEP objectives. • Aligned to *New Jersey's Student Learning Standards* • Engaging (e.g., students actively participate and are not sitting for more than 5-minutes without a lesson/activity). • Developmentally appropriate in length and purpose.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
1.5	Documentation	A system for documentation reflects: • Student progression towards general education student learning standards. • Student progression towards IEP goals. • Effectiveness of instructional methods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.			
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
2.1	Safety and Preventative Measures	The educational environment supports students with autism in that: • The environment is free of environmental hazards. • Preventative measures are taken to prevent safety issues. • Students are monitored (e.g., staff strategically placed so that all areas of the setting can be viewed with no "blind" spots). • Basic and personal hygiene is part of the daily routines (e.g., toileting, hand washing, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.2	Organization of Learning Environment	The environmental setting is designed so that: • All students can independently access personal space (e.g., desk, locker) and materials (e.g., schedules, books, technology, etc.). • Physical structure or boundaries convey activity expectations (e.g., lab area, kitchen area, etc.). • Physical space is provided for students to engage in quiet and leisure activities. • A system is established and in place for monitoring students across multiple environments. • Clear physical and visual boundaries help students know where each area begins and ends. • Adaptations support individual student's need (e.g., sensory area, quiet spaces, appropriately sized furnishings, visuals at eye level, etc.). • Students are able to engage in small group, large group, and independent activities, as well as, both active and leisure activities, as appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
2.3	Materials	Classroom materials: • Are age appropriate. • Reflect the characteristics, values, and practices of diverse cultural groups (e.g., books, artwork, diverse lifestyles, careers, locations, climates, etc.). • Incorporate students' areas of interest and preferences, as appropriate. • Are plentiful or in sufficient quantity for all students to participate in classroom/setting activities. • Support a literacy-rich environment through a variety of print, audio, and electronic media. • Incorporate the natural environment as part of all classroom instruction (e.g., real money, textbooks, novels, cash register, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

Indicator 2

Youth

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT I The educational environment supports students with autism to optimize safety and learning.				
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**	
2.3 Continued	Materials Continued	• Materials and activities implemented as part of the instruction should encourage communication and social interactions.		
2.4	Daily Routines	Daily routines: • Are consistent across days/weeks within the classroom and school setting. • Promote structured activities that facilitate active participation and address stability and familiarity (e.g., circle time, small group, lunch, etc.). • Support independence, as appropriate. • A minimum of one strategy is used to support independence across routines (e.g., first-then boards, checklists, 'wait' symbols, timers, etc.). • Transitions are kept short to adapt to student's developmental attention span capacity and student's behavioral needs.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
2.5	Environmental Supports	Support strategies are provided to facilitate anticipated change, unexpected events (e.g., fire drills) and predicted activities within daily routines. These include: • Adapted materials. • Visual supports. • Transition supports.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	
2.6	Classroom Location	The educational environment (e.g., classroom) is integrated into the school and located within the same location as students without disabilities (e.g., the 6-8th grade self-contained classroom is on the same floor and next door to a general education middle school classroom).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	

PERSONNEL I Students with autism should have an educational team who work together and are knowledgeable regarding autism, child development, and education.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
3.1	Knowledgeable Staff	Staff are knowledgeable about the core and associated characteristics of autism spectrum disorder and adolescent and adult development.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.2	IEP Implementation and Access	Certified teachers and related service providers who have educational responsibilities for a student with autism have access to the student's IEP and are informed of their responsibilities for implementation.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.3	Program Staff	Staff who received autism-specific training and are designated as instructional staff, remain within their roles to the greatest extent possible and as appropriate, to ensure: • Program continuity. • Student educational benefits.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
3.4	Professional Development	Persons with expertise in the education of students with autism and child development (e.g., early childhood) provide: • Pre-service and in-service training for entry-level staff. • Ongoing professional development, guidance, and technical assistance for staff.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

CURRICULUM I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based curricula that is planned, designed, and constructed to address the skill deficits of students with autism. Additionally, the curriculum is linked to new Jersey State Learning Standards.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
4.1	Aligned to State Standards	An effective curriculum is designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge that align with State Learning Standards: • *New Jersey Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
4.2	Evidence-Based Curricula	An evidence-based curriculum consists of practices that have been vetted through rigorous research. The curriculum should meet the following criteria: • It aligns with NJ State Learning Standards. • Research of sufficient quality and quantity is available. • Levels of competency are defined. • High rates of responding are embedded. • Opportunities for providing feedback for correct answers are addressed. • Corrective feedback and remediation are designated. • Scope and sequencing that lead to increasing levels of difficulty are spelled out. • Mastery-based instruction is embedded. • Formative assessments are available.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 4

Youth

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.1	Instructional Formats	Meaningful instruction takes place in the least restrictive environment with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, and staff use instructional formats that: • Are developmentally appropriate. • Are based on student learning needs and abilities. • Vary based on subject/content being taught (e.g., direct instruction, small group, dyads, 1:1 instruction, student-initiated interactions, teacher-direct interactions, independent work, play, and peer-mediated instruction). • Are designed to meet specific IEP objectives.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.2	Instructional Outcomes	Instructional strategies result in meaningful outcomes by: • Promoting high rates of class-wide and/or school-wide participation. • Fostering communication and social interaction. • Fostering the use of learned skills across various settings (e.g., school, home, community).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.3	Instruction Focuses on Student Development	The instruction emphasizes the development of skills across multiple domains, including: • Academic skills to meet the content standards. • Communication and language – functional communication systems for students who have emerging communication skills (e.g., American Sign Language, PECS, etc.). • Self-determination skills (e.g., choice making, problem solving, self-observation/evaluation, and reinforcement). • Self-regulation and self-monitoring (e.g., contingency mapping, self-talk, setting goals, monitoring and delivering reinforcement, and analyzing choices). • Social relationships (e.g., supported interaction with typically developing peers, natural environment teaching) to include symbolic play/leisure, imagination, and creativity. • Vocational skills (e.g., responsibility for materials, self-care, use of work systems, appropriate work related social skills, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS I The program is based on evidence-based or research-based instructional methodologies that address the significant skill deficits of students with autism in the least restrictive environment.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
5.4	Lesson Length	The length of lessons and activities are developmentally and/or age appropriate.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.5	Response to Instruction	During instruction, staff should: • Provide students with various methods to respond based on individual needs (e.g., vocal, written, AAC, etc.). • Provide students with multiple opportunities to respond. • Provide feedback as needed (e.g., correction and/or confirmation of correct response) and adjust instruction based on student response.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
5.6	Generalization and Maintenance of Skills	Instructional methods should include a clear plan to: • Systematically program and assess the generalization and maintenance of learned skills. • Provide opportunities to generalize and practice learned skills across various environments (e.g., home, school, community) and individuals (e.g., staff, peers, siblings, parents, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 5

Youth

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT I Families are valued and contribute to the learning team, and their input influences all aspects of their child's education.			
6.1	Family as Active Participants	Parents, family members, and/or caregivers are included as active participants in: • All ongoing evaluation and educational processes as IEP team members. • Relevant stakeholder activities and/or committees (e.g., advisory councils, SPAN, SEPAG) to the extent of their interest.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.2	Family Support Services	Provides important local community, State and/or Federal information and resources to families in multiple ways (e.g., handbooks, videos, emails, websites, flyers, etc.), such as: • Community resources. • Family support services (Refer to Indicator 7 Community Collaboration and Appendix A). • Recreational activities outside of school. • Other topics/agencies requested by the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.3	Cultural Competency	The program demonstrates an awareness of and respect for the culture, language, values, and parenting styles of the families they serve, by: • Seeking parental input and preferences. • Providing information and communication in lay terms that is in a language most comfortable for the family.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.4	Family Education	The program makes available family educational opportunities that: • Enable families to acquire new skills and/or increase knowledge to support their child in relation to current educational and/or behavioral goals. • Promote interaction amongst families through training and/or interests based on topics of interest.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
6.5	Family Meetings	The program responds to parental requests to meet (i.e., outside of scheduled IEP meetings), by offering flexible times and formats (e.g., phone conference, virtual, etc.) within the constraints of the school policy.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION I The program links with community agencies to assist families in accessing support and services needed by students with autism and their families.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
7.1	Program/School Transition Support	Transition support for both sending and receiving programs develop transition plans and support that include: • An exchange of information before, during, and after transitions. • The sharing of information regarding transitions about practices most likely to support the student's successful adjustment and positive school outcomes. • Based on individual needs, considering the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. • Staff use a variety of planned and timely strategies with the student and family before, during, and after the transition to support successful adjustments for both the student and the family. Transition and pre-ETS services should be provided: • In the community and the most integrated/least restrictive environment. • That includes instruction (e.g., community-based instruction), related services, community experiences, post-secondary school, day programs, implementation of employment objectives including employment training opportunities in the community and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluations.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.2	Referrals to Community Resources/ Supports	The program assists students and families in accessing updated lists of available resources and services, that may include: • Crisis, mental health, and family support organizations within the community, as needed. • Information about accessing referrals to community resources (e.g., health services, adult education classes, etc.), as needed. • Self-advocacy organizations, recreational opportunities, cultural organizations, transportation, and social groups, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
7.3	Community Collaboration	Collaborations with community organizations (e.g., parks and recreation, restaurants, movie theaters, hair salons, etc.) help to ensure the delivery of services to students and families who may benefit from them. The program promotes and fosters collaboration with the community by:	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION I The program links with community agencies to assist families in accessing support and services needed by students with autism and their families.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
7.3 Continued	Community Collaboration Continued	• Inviting large corporations, small businesses, and other organizations to support students and their families (e.g., through the creation of a community resource board, sensory friendly events), as needed. Collaboration with community agencies to provide opportunities for community-based instruction, structured learning experiences and/or work based learning experiences, regarding: • Job sampling and placement sites (e.g., Work-Based Learning). • Visiting speakers. • Mentorship programs. • Recreational partnerships. • Internships. • Fundraising. • Volunteer work.	
7.4	Interagency Collaboration	The program works closely with community liaisons as part of a multi-disciplinary team that provides transitional support to students and/or families. Collaborative partnerships developed with community supports, including, but not limited to: • Schools (e.g., local colleges, universities). • Community rehabilitation providers. • Local agencies and service providers. • Vocational rehabilitation (e.g., DVRS). • Employers. • Community representatives, to the extent appropriate, are invited to participate in IEP team meetings (with the prior consent of the parent/student who has reached the age of majority) when the IEP team discusses transition services.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

PROGRAM EVALUATION I The program engages in program evaluations, relative to the needs of the students with autism, that are measurable, ongoing, and systematically collect data to make decisions regarding educational programming for students with autism.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
8.1	Annual Program Evaluation	The program provides regular and ongoing program evaluation reviews (e.g., APQI, surveys, etc.) across educational settings and grade levels that assess: • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of students. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the staff. • The degree to which the program is meeting the needs of the families. • The degree to which the program is engaging collaboratively with stakeholders in the community.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
8.2	System-Wide Improvement Plan	Written data are gathered reliably and consistently to inform and guide quality programming for students with ASD. Data collected from 8.1 will: • Identify needed areas of improvement. • Assist with the development of a targeted improvement plan, as needed.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

Indicator 8

Youth

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths and needs. This assessment leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.1	Multidisciplinary Team Assessments	Assessments are conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified and mandated personnel, as well as those who are knowledgeable regarding the characteristics of autism, and the developmental level of the student (e.g., early childhood development, childhood development, adolescent development; Refer to Indicator 3 regarding knowledgeable staff).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.2	Medical and Developmental Considerations	Comprehensive records (e.g., medical, early intervention, developmental history, etc.) are reviewed and incorporated into the students' programming, as appropriate (Refer to 9.1 regarding multidisciplinary team and qualified personnel).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.3	Variety of Assessment Measures	A variety of measures and sources of information are utilized to assess domains, as appropriate and necessary. They include but are not limited to assessments for autism, communication, social emotional and behavioral skills, academics, and adaptive behavior. • Appropriate, most recent versions of, standardized, developmental screening measures and/or observational methods (e.g., KABC-2, WISC-5, BASC-3, Vineland, Developmental Profile-3, ADIR). • Autism-specific measures (e.g., CARS-2, MIGDS-2, SRS-2, ADOS-2, GARS-3, ASDS). • Family input, (Refer to Indicator 6 Family Engagement). • Review of recent progress and functional level. • Review and consideration of documentation from outside reports, records, and/or testing (e.g., DSM-V TR). • Criterion referenced assessments. *This list serves as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
9.4	Assessments Across Domains	For both vocal and non-vocal students' assessments use standardized measures, family report, observation, and spontaneous language samples to assess skills cover the domains of: **9.4a Speech and Language** • Receptive and expressive language (e.g., CELF-5, PLS-5, etc.).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths and needs. This assessment leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
9.4 Continued	Assessments Across Domains Continued	• Use of symbol systems (e.g., augmentative communication systems/speech-generating devices, phones, tangible items, picture communication, American Sign Language, writing, etc.). • Pragmatic functions (e.g., Communication Matrix, Conversational Effectiveness Profile, etc.). **9.4b Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Development**, assessed by qualified personnel and specific strategies are in place, including: • Use of self-regulation and coping skills (e.g., Zones of Regulation, Incredible 5-Point Scale, SEAM™). • Assessment of behavioral function using a variety of techniques (e.g., FBA, FA, IISCA, etc.) and tools (BESS, SAEBRS, SDQ, SRSS, etc.). • Addressing school-based social code of conduct (e.g., hidden curriculum, respect of personal space, etc.). • Social skills assessments (e.g., TSLAT, TSSA, ATBS, etc.). **9.4c Sensory**, assessed by qualified personnel that consist of assessing students' sensory processing. • Sensory needs (e.g., SOSI-M, TSI, Preschool Sense, SPM/SPM-P, sensory screeners, etc.). **9.4d Daily Living/Self-Help Skills,** assessed to determine activities of daily living (ADLs) tasks that are in the student repertoire and ADLs that are still developing. • Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS). • Casey Life Skills Toolkit (CLS). • Essential for Living (EFLS). **9.4e Academics,** access is linked to students' strengths, needs, and present level of performance, identified by evaluations conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of qualified personnel. • Curriculum based and/or skill-based assessments (e.g., COR Advantage, ABLLS-R, i-Ready, VB-MAPP, STAR Program, PEAK, FACTER, etc.).	*Continued next page

		INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS I Through diagnostic, developmental, and educational assessments using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach are used to identify students' strengths and needs. This assessment leads to the development of a thorough and appropriate IEP.	
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
9.4 Continued	Assessments Across Domains Continued	• Executive functioning assessments (e.g., Organizing, planning, flexibility, problem solving, BRIEF, TOPS, etc.). • Psychological and/or Psychoeducational Evaluations (e.g., CTOPP-2, GORT-5, GSRT, KTEA-3, WISC-IV, WPPSI-IV, SB-V, DAS-II, etc.). **9.4f Preference Assessments**, are designed to determine hierarchies under the specific set of circumstances in which they are conducted to determine preference of potential reinforcers. • Multiple stimulus without replacement (MSWO); multiple stimulus with replacement (MSW); paired stimulus; single stimulus, and/or free operant. *These lists serve as an example of potential assessment measures and is not exhaustive. The most recent versions of the assessments should be used.*	

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PRPGRAM (IEP) I The IEP includes information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning. IEP goals are based on assessments, students' strengths and needs, and goals are functional and align with early childhood student outcomes.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
10.1	IEP Implementation	Staff members plan, implement, and document instruction that targets IEP goals daily (Refer to Indicator 10.2). Data are collected on a regular basis for IEP goals, and data-based decision-making frameworks for data analysis are used to evaluate student progress and guide decision making (e.g., at least 3 data points are collected before drawing conclusions and making decisions).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
10.2	IEP Goals	IEP goals are functional and based on the present level of performance and needs of students. IEP goals are individual to the student and are derived from assessments (Refer to Indicator 9). IEP goals should address the following domains and 21st Century skills, as appropriate: **10.2a Functional Communication** • Functional communication system for both verbal and nonverbal students target expressive language, receptive language, and nonverbal communication skills (Refer to Indicator 5.3), as appropriate. **10.2b Social Skills** • Social skills goals are in place to enhance participation in family, school, and community activities (e.g., imitation, social imitations and response to adults/peers, parallel and interactive play with peers and siblings), as appropriate. **10.2c Leisure, Imagination and Creativity** • The teaching of play and/or leisure skills focuses on the functional use of items (e.g., iPad, computer, cell phone, etc.), down time, and other age-appropriate materials (e.g., playing cards, board games, etc.), representational/ symbolic play, reciprocity, imaginative and cooperative play with peers, including typically developing peers. **10.2d Academics** • Academic skills to meet the curriculum aligned to the *New Jersey Student Learning Standards.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented *Continued next page

		INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PRPGRAM (IEP) I The IEP includes information for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning. IEP goals are based on assessments, students' strengths and needs, and goals are functional and align with early childhood student outcomes.	
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
10.2 Continued	IEP Goals Continued	**10.2e Behavioral Skills** • Replacement of challenging behavior that interfere with learning and prosocial behaviors, as appropriate (Refer to Indicator 11.3). **10.2f Self-Management Skills** • Independent organizational skills and other behaviors that underlie success in general education classrooms (e.g., completing a task independently, following instructions in a group, asking for help, etc.). **10.2g Fine and Gross Motor Skills** • Fine and gross motor skills used for developmentally and age-appropriate curriculum activities including daily living, creative arts, physical education, and recreation, as appropriate.	

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level

11.1	Class-Wide Behavioral Support Systems	The program has a class-wide behavioral system (e.g., tier 1 and tier 2 strategies) that:
		• Has clear and concise behavioral expectations and positive reinforcement strategies across settings and school environments.
		     • Behavioral expectations are written in observable and measurable terms and posted visibly in the classroom.
		     • Positive reinforcement strategies are implemented consistently and immediately to reinforce appropriate behaviors.
		• Collects data to show the effectiveness of the class-wide behavioral support systems and individual students' response to tier 1 and tier 2 strategies for behavior management.
		• Consists of regular reviews and provides ongoing training and support to ensure that the positive reinforcement strategies are used consistently and effectively.
			☐ Fully Implemented
			 ☐ Partially Implemented
			 ☐ Not Implemented

11.2	Behavioral Assessments	Behavioral assessments are used to understand challenging behaviors and support direct intervention planning (Refer to Indicator 9 Individualized Student Assessment and 11.3), as needed. Behavioral assessments:
		• Are conducted using multiple methods of at least one indirect and one direct assessment methodology (e.g., interview, rating scales, direct observations, descriptive analysis, and with expertise, functional analysis [FBAs, PFA, etc.).
		• Are administered by trained and qualified personnel.
		• Identify the specific challenging behaviors that interfere with the student's learning and social interactions.
		• Identify the setting events, antecedents, and consequences of challenging behaviors.
		• Have results that are documented in a written report that includes:
		     • A summary of the student's behavior.
		     • A list of specific and measurable behavioral goals.
		     • Recommendations for interventions that are evidence-based and tailored to the student's individual needs.
		     • The report is reviewed by the IEP team, including the student's family, to ensure that it is understandable and actionable.
			☐ Fully Implemented
			 ☐ Partially Implemented
			 ☐ Not Implemented
			 ☐ Not Applicable
			
			 *Continued next page

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.

Indicator	Component	Description	Implementation Level
11.2 Continued	Behavioral Assessments Continued	• Are conducted in a timely manner in relation to the identified need of the student.	
11.3	Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)	A comprehensive behavior intervention plan (BIP) is created in collaboration with the family, that includes: • Preventative measures, replacement skills, response strategies and reinforcement system(s). • Specific and measurable goals for the reduction of challenging behaviors, including thinning/fading and termination criteria. • Reviews by the team regularly to determine its effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors (Refer to Indicator 11.4).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.4	Data-Driven Decision Making	Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors before, during, and after implementing an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP). • Data are collected using a standardized method (e.g., frequency, duration, latency, etc.) and displayed in a meaningful way (e.g., graphs, tables, etc.). • Data are collected on the student's challenging behaviors across all relevant settings. • Data are reviewed, at minimum, on a weekly basis to determine effectiveness of the intervention.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.5	Persistent Behaviors	When challenging behavior continues despite the use of the procedures outlined in 11.1- 11.3, the contributing factors are re-assessed, which may include, but not limited to, medical considerations, changes in personal circumstances, implementation of IEP supports, staff training, motivational systems, educational environment, and consistency of BIP implementation. • If modifications to the BIP are needed, an IEP team meeting is held to address proposed changes and/or updates.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
11.6	Restraint and Seclusion	Restraint and seclusion should only be used by trained personnel and as a last resort in compliance with the most recent federal and state laws and regulations. At minimum:	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable *Continued next page

Indicator 11

Youth

		CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS I Programming for students with autism incorporates behavioral supports based on needs (e.g., tier 3) and proactive planning (e.g., tier 1 and 2 interventions). Supports for challenging behaviors are done as appropriate; therefore, some components of Indicator 11 may not be relevant.	
Indicator	**Component**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**

11.6 Continued	Restraint and Seclusion Continued	• Ongoing training and support are provided to all staff on alternative behavioral intervention strategies, that may include de-escalation procedures and protocols.
		• Data are collected on the frequency, duration, and reason for the use of the restraint and seclusion, as well as the effectiveness of the interventions that were attempted prior to the use of restraint and seclusion.
		• Parents are notified any time a behavioral incident results in restraint or seclusion techniques being used by staff on a student.
		• Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, staff, and others in the environment.
		    • Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are consistent with current laws and regulations and that they reflect best practices.
		    • Policies and procedures outline a process to review data and decision-making procedures for instances where restraint and/or seclusion are used more than once for a) the same student, and/or b) the same staff using restraint/seclusion.	

PROGRAM OPTIONS I Location in which the IEP is implemented is individually determined with programs offering a full continuum of programs.			
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**
12.1	Least Restrictive Environmental Supports	The program will ensure that students with autism receive educational services and support in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. The program will: • Provide appropriate individualized accommodations and modifications, such as, social skills groups, assistive technology, and positive behavior supports. • Provide ongoing training and support to staff on inclusive practices, such as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and co-teaching. • Have clear policies and procedures in place that ensure that the student has the same educational opportunities and experiences as their non-disabled peers (e.g., extracurricular activities, field trips, etc.). • Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of its least restrictive environmental supports (Refer to Indicator 14 Individual Progress Review and Monitoring).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.2	Continuum of Programming Options	A continuum of program options is made available, and placement is determined by: • Individual needs regarding specific skills (e.g., social, academic, communication, etc.). • Most appropriate environment where skills can be addressed (e.g., social skills should be taught in an inclusive setting). *Refer to the most recent federal and state laws and regulations regarding the continuum of programming options.*	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
12.3	Interactions with Peers	Programs ensure that students with autism have regular opportunities to interact with peers across a variety of settings, as appropriate. Programs will foster meaningful peer interactions by: • Having clear policies and procedures in place that promote positive social interactions with peers. This may include providing structured opportunities for peer interactions (e.g., peer support groups, social skills groups, etc.). • Providing ongoing training for staff on evidence-based practices for promoting positive peer interactions.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented

PROGRAM TRANSITIONS I Programs include written program transition plans based on individual student needs and actively support collaboration between student, families, and school, when appropriate. This indicator differs from transition services post-school (e.g., post-secondary education and/or employment) which are addressed in the IEP.
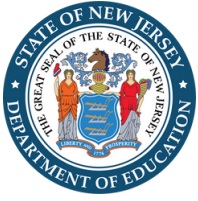
Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
13.1	Program Transition Assessments	Program transition assessments are conducted annually to evaluate the student's skills, interests, and needs to help identify appropriate goals and strategies for supporting the student's transition and success in new environments.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.2	Engagement of Student and Families	The active participation of the student, to the appropriate extent possible, and the family are included to assist with: • Transition assessments (e.g., Identifying individual student's interests, strengths, and areas of need). • Transition planning (e.g., guiding the development of a plan that is relevant and meaningful for the student).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.3	Program Transition Planning	Transition planning begins as soon as a change in placement is anticipated to occur. Transitions include but are not limited to one classroom to another, one program to another, and one service delivery system to another. Transition planning: • Begins while the student is in the current placement. • Provides the student and family with the opportunity to visit the new setting (e.g., meet teachers, view classroom). • Integrates considerations of future placements (i.e., skills and supports needed in the next classroom or school setting). • Includes teacher preparation and other supports to facilitate success in the new setting (e.g., training for peers and support staff).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.4	Program Transition Plan Requirements	A program transition plan includes: • A statement of current supports and needs. • Identification of necessary supports within the new setting. • A schedule of training for receiving staff. • A detailed description of the transition process.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
13.5	Program Transition Implementation	The transition plan provides for sufficient time to implement all components (e.g., identified supports and training) and is reviewed before, during, and after the transition.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

Indicator	Components	Description	Implementation Level
INDICATOR PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.			
14.1	Data Collection on IEP Goals	Student progress on IEP goals is collected and assessed: • In at least two different ways (e.g., formal/informal assessment, criterion and/or skills based assessment, direct observation). • Using data that accurately capture the skill identified in the IEP goal (e.g., if accurate identification of letters is an IEP goal, then the data show how many letters the student can accurately select when asked).	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.2	Modifications to Instructional Program	The program uses a systematic process for assessing individual student progress and modifies the instructional program and/or intensity of services when one or more the following occur: • IEP benchmarks have not been achieved within the mandated progress reporting periods. • Progress toward IEP benchmarks has not been demonstrated and modifications to instructional strategies have not been successful. • There is an unexpected change in the student's behavior or health status. • Significant change occurs in the home, school or community setting.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.3	Considerations	If a student requires a change in instructional program or intensity (per 14.1) the program considers the following changes and systematically analyzes their effects on a student's performance by: • Providing additional consultation and training. • Increasing the use of behavioral supports to address skill development and/or to enhance motivation. • Modifying curricula and/or changing instructional approach. • Increasing length of time for instructional periods and/or related services.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable
14.4	Family Reports	The program provides the family with a report that includes a statement of progress on specific IEP goals and objectives in alignment with mandated reporting periods.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented
14.5	Modifications to IEP	When there is a need to consider modifications to the IEP, the teacher or designee routinely reports such need to the child study team/case manager.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented ☐ Not Applicable

	INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS REVIEW AND MONITORING I Mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring program and student progress is needed.			
Indicator	**Components**	**Description**	**Implementation Level**	
14.6	<u>Annual Student Reports</u>	On an annual basis, student progress is summarized and reviewed by a collaborative educational team. Student progress is disseminated to student, family, and other related service providers.	☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented ☐ Not Implemented	

Indicator 14

Youth

NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Autism Program Quality Indicators Revised (APQI-R)

Master Scoring Form

2023

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HTTPS://WWW.NJ.GOV/EDUCATION/SPECIALED/

EARLY CHILDHOOD

EC-APQI
(PreK)

SCHOOL AGE

SA-APQI
(K-5th Grade)

YOUTH

Y-APQI
(6th-12th Grade)

Master Scoring Form

Instructions:
Begin scoring from the component level, move to the indicator level, and finish off with the domain.

Conducting a Program Self-Review

The New Jersey Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised (APQI-R) is derived from extensive research across multiple disciplines, including special education, positive behavioral interventions, applied behavior analysis, and transition research. The indicators set forth in the APQI-R are program-level supports to promote a positive, effective learning environment and to prevent challenging behaviors. For students with ASD, the APQI-R indicators defined in this document are critical practices across environments for learning, behavior support, and social communication development.

The APQI-R is designed to measure two domains at the program level. The first domain is Program Considerations, and the second domain is Student Considerations. Each domain offers indicators that consist of specific components that assist students with ASD with learning, independence, and developing meaningful communication and social relationships.

Throughout the self-assessment process, it is important to incorporate these three aspects of a constructive assessment process:
- Work as a team.
- Base scores on observational evidence and record reviews.
- Focus on conversations about quality programming.

Score	Component	Indicator	Domain
Implemented (1 point)	All description points written in the description is fully implemented.	Each component listed in the indicator is fully implemented.	Each indicator in the domain is implemented at the fully implemented level.
Partially Implemented (0.5 point)	At least one aspect of the description is not at the implemented level AND half or more at the partially implemented level.	At least one component is not at the implemented level AND half or more at the partially implemented level.	At least one indicator is not at the implemented level AND half or more at the partially implemented level.
Not Implemented (0 point)	There is no evidence of components being implemented OR half or more items are at the not implemented level.	No evidence of indicator being implemented OR half or more items at the not implemented level.	No evidence of domain being implemented OR half or more of the indicators at not implemented.
Not Applicable (1 point)	Component is not applicable.	-	-

Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised
MASTER SCORING FORM

Reviewer Name: _____ Building/Class: _____ Date of Review: _____

☐ Early Childhood   ☐ School Age   ☐ Youth

Directions: Using the EC, SA or Y-APQI for each indicator transfer the data to the Master Scoring Form. For each classroom within the Autism Program (e.g., Self-Contained, Inclusion, etc.) fill out one form per classroom. Begin with the indicators and their corresponding components, place a number in the column next to the component for that indicator that most accurately describes the building/classroom.

Domain	Indicator	Component	Implementation Level		
			Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
Program Considerations	Program Characteristics	1.1 Length of School Year			
		1.2 Student to Staff Ratio			
		1.3 Program Location			
		1.4 Instruction			
		1.5 Documentation			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/5		
	Educational Environment	2.1 Safety and Preventative			
		2.2 Organization of Environment			
		2.3 Materials			
		2.4 Daily Routines			
		2.5 Environmental Supports			
		2.6 Classroom Location			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/6		
	Personnel	3.1 Knowledgeable Staff			
		3.2 IEP Implementation and Access			
		3.3 Program Staff			
		3.4 Professional Development			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/4		
	Curriculum	4.1 Aligned to State Standards			
		4.2 Evidence-Based Curricula			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/2		
	Instructional Methods	5.1 Instructional Formats			
		5.2 Instructional Outcomes			
		5.3 Focus on Student Development			
		5.4 Lesson Length			
		5.5 Response to Instruction			
		5.6 Generalization & Maintenance			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/6		

Domain	Indicator	Component	Implementation Level		
			Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
Program Considerations	**Family Engagement**	6.1 Family as Active Participants			
		6.2 Family Support Services			
		6.3 Cultural Competency			
		6.4 Family Education			
		6.5 Family Meetings			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/5		
	Community Collaboration	7.1 Program/School Transition Support			
		7.2 Referrals to Community Resources			
		7.3 Community Collaboration			
		7.4 Interagency Collab. (Youth Only)			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/4 (Score 1 for 7.4 EC and SA)		
	Program Evaluation	8.1 Annual Program Evaluation			
		8.2 System-wide Improvement Plan			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/2		
		DOMAIN SCORE:	/34		

Domain	Indicator	Component	Implementation Level		
			Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
Student Considerations	**Individual Student Assessment**	9.1 Multidisciplinary Team Assessments			
		9.2 Medical and Developmental Review			
		9.3 Variety of Assessment Measures			
		9.4 Assessments across Domains			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/4		
	Individualized Education Program	10.1 IEP Implementation			
		10.2 IEP Goals			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/2		
	Behaviors	11.1 Class-wide Behavioral Support			
		11.2 Behavioral Assessments			
		11.3 Behavior Intervention Plans			
		11.4 Data-Driven Decision Making			
		11.5 Persistent Behaviors			
		11.6 Restraint and Seclusion			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/6		
	Program Options	12.1 LRE Supports			
		12.2 Continuum of Programming Options			

Domain	Indicator	Component	Implementation Level		
			Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
Student Considerations		12.3 Interactions with Peers			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/3		
	Program Transitions	13.1 Program Transition Assessments			
		13.2 Engagement of Student & Family			
		13.3 Program Transition Planning			
		13.4 Transition Plan Requirements			
		13.5 Program Transition Implementation			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/5		
	Progress Review and Monitoring	14.1 Data Collection on IEP Goals			
		14.2 Modifications to Instruction			
		14.3 Considerations			
		14.4 Family Reports			
		14.5 Modifications to IEP			
		14.6 Annual Student Reports			
		Sum of Implementation Level:			
		Total Indicator Score:	/6		
		DOMAIN SCORE:	/26		

APQI-R Program Self-Review Score Card			
Program Consideration Domain Score:	/34	Student Consideration Domain Score:	/26
# of Indicators per Implementation Level:	___ Fully Implemented ___ /60 = __ %	___ Partially Implemented ___ /60 = __ %	___ Not Implemented ___ /60 = __ %
APQI- R Total Program Review Score:	/60		

Additional Comments/Considerations:
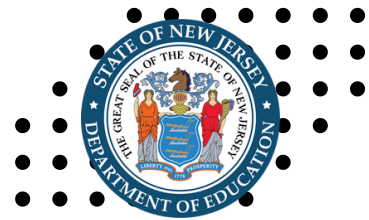
Acknowledgements

To revise and update the Autism Program Quality Indicators (APQI), The Department of Education modified the 2004 New Jersey Autism Program Quality Indicators reflecting the changing needs of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in New Jersey. This revision represents collaborative problem-solving and decision-making between the Office of Special Education, professionals in the field of autism and/or education, special education advocates, and parents within the autism community. A key aspect of this revision includes organizing the APQI document into three grade spans - Early Childhood, School Age, and Youth.

The NJDOE would like to acknowledge those individuals within the NJDOE Office of Special Education and the external advisory panel who provided guidance, feedback, and support throughout the development of the APQI-R updates.

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Disclaimer Statement

The purpose of the Autism Program Quality Indicators-Revised (APQI-R) is to be used as a tool for evaluating a district program, not intended to be used for litigation purposes, to give legal advice, or to be used in isolation for specific court-related matters. The APQI-R was developed as a guidance tool for educational professionals and was not intended for legal mitigation purposes.

Prior to administering the APQI-R, users should participate in appropriate training and/or seek guidance from colleagues with relevant expertise or training. The instrument is intended to be a tool that assesses the environment in which instructional programming is provided, as well as services and instruction specific to students with autism. If the AQPI-R is administered in an inclusive setting, observation and scoring should only be conducted with students who are identified on the autism spectrum.

Information gathered from administering the APQI-R should be used to 1) increase the quality of programming and instruction for students with autism, 2) enhance training or support for teachers, or 3) expand program capacity and services.

Information gathered from the AQPI-R **shall not** be used for 1) evaluating students as part of an IEP process, or 2) evaluating teachers as part of a contractual or supervisory process.

Any decisions to use the APQI-R in legal matters will be part of the experts in litigation's responsibilities and to be determined by the legal team of all interested parties with no responsibility of the creators of the tool.

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