

Specialized Programs

Definition:

Each school should have the capacity to serve the majority of students with disabilities; however expertise in effectively educating students with particular needs, such as students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, students with significant intellectual disabilities or English Language Learners who have disabilities and need bilingual education, is developed over time. As such, there are students who may be best served in schools with such expertise.

The following are currently considered specialized programs:

- **ASD Nest** – an integrated class setting (reduced class size) in community schools for high functioning students on the autism spectrum
- **ASD Horizon** – a self-contained class in a community school for students on the autism spectrum
- **ASD Support** – an innovative program for supporting students in a community school who are on the autism spectrum
- **Barrier Free** – a school building that is accessible to students who have limited mobility, serious health issues, or use a wheelchair or other mobility device
- **Bilingual Special Education** – a specialized program for students who speak Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Yiddish, or Haitian Creole whose IEP mandates bilingual special education program and/or services
- **Specialized Program for students with ID classification** – a special class or program in a community school for students who are classified as intellectually disabled and who are being alternately assessed
- **D 75 programs in community schools**
- **D 75 programs in specialized schools**

Criteria:

ASD Programs – Students who are on the autism spectrum should be offered a range of programs and services along the continuum, as is the case with all students with disabilities, depending on students’ individual needs. The following represent some of the possible service delivery models for consideration for students who have an autism spectrum disorder, and are specialized programs in community schools:

Type of ASD Program	Horizon and 8:1:1 (SI)	Nest	ASD Support
Disability Classification	Autism	Autism	Autism
Cognition	Low-average verbal or Full Scale IQ, or borderline IQ with clear evidence of higher functioning, as determined by subtests of IQ testing; If entering K: Preschool level (developmentally 3 to 4 year old level)	Average IQ; On or close to grade-level	Varies - Low-average
Language	Phrase speech of at least single words or phrases used functionally; may rarely initiate communication; follows one and two step directions	Close to age appropriate speech; Close to age appropriate comprehension of verbal language	Varies – nonverbal to age appropriate
Behavior	Mild to moderate stereotyped behaviors; Mild to Moderate; may occasionally tantrum, some non-compliance; self-injurious behavior is	Mild to moderate stereotyped behaviors; Mild to moderate; self-injurious behavior is almost absent; physical aggression is mild and	Stereotyped behaviors may be present; physical aggression is infrequent; does not require one to one support throughout the day

	infrequent; physical aggression is infrequent	infrequent; does not require one-on-one support frequently during daily activities	
Relationships/social functioning	Moderate delay/difference: little initiation of interaction; little interest in peers; appears to prefer solitary activity most of the time; rigidity and strong need for sameness; poor coping and self regulation skills; able to function in a group of 8 for short periods of time without impeding behavior	Mild to moderate delay/ difference: poor skills in interacting and playing with peers; rigidity; poor skills for coping with change and unexpected events; poor self-regulation skills; able to function in a group of 12 during instructional activities with appropriate support	Moderate – mild delay; difficulty understanding social cues; difficulty self-regulating
Adaptive functioning (for Kindergarteners)	Adaptive behavior at a three to four year old level; may not be fully toilet trained; able to function independently in group of 8 with 2 adults (1 teacher and 1 assistant)	Toilet training complete with occasional accidents (for students entering kindergarten); other adaptive skills at close to age appropriate level	N/A

Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities:

It is critical to understand that a classification of Intellectual Disability does not, in and of itself, indicate the need for a specialized program. Many students with ID are best served in a general education setting in a community school and it is extremely important to make thoughtful decisions appropriately utilizing the full continuum of services matched to individual pupil needs so that all students are given equal opportunity to meet their academic potential. As with other specialized programs, if you are considering an ID program always use the [LRE checklist](#) first.

The criteria for a student to be referred to an ID program are:

1. Classification of ID – According to NYSED, Part 200.1 regulations, “intellectual disability means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance”.
2. Student is alternately assessed - The criteria that the IEP team must use to determine a student’s participation in alternate assessment are:

A. The student participating in the alternate assessment has:

- a severe cognitive disability, and
- significant deficits in
 - communication/language, and
 - adaptive behavior.

AND

B. The student requires a highly specialized educational program that facilitates the acquisition, application and transfer of skills across natural environments (home, school community and/or workplace).

AND

C. The student requires educational support systems, such as:

- assistive technology,
- personal care services,
- health/medical services, or
- behavioral intervention.

Participation in the state assessment may not be based on: category of disability, excessive or extended absences, language differences, or cultural or environmental factors. For definition of “severe disability” and additional information see [alternate assessment](#).

3. The student’s need for a program that includes functional skills precludes a full time general education setting, but the student is able to receive education in the community school.

If all 3 of these criteria are met (ID classification, alternate assessment, and setting/LRE checklist), then the student may be recommended for a specialized program for students classified as ID.

Bilingual Special Education:

If a student requires bilingual programs and/or services, and also meets the eligibility criteria for special education services, they may be recommended for a bilingual special education program. If this is the case ensure, as with all students with disabilities, that the LRE checklist has been used and that the student is recommended for an appropriate level of services, with appropriate language supports.

To ensure that the IEPs for ELL students are appropriately developed, at least one member of the IEP team must hold bilingual certification. This IEP team member must also have knowledge of second language needs and how these needs relate to the student’s disability. The student must receive a bilingual evaluation that has adequately assessed native and second language strengths and weaknesses, and all evaluation results pertaining to language proficiency, including HLS, LAB-R and NYSELAT levels in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing should be documented in the Present Levels of Performance.

For all students with disabilities with limited English proficiency, the IEP Team must consider how the student’s language needs (English and native language) relate to the IEP. Schools must provide a student with limited English proficiency with ELL services (ESL or Bilingual Education) to enable him/her to acquire proficiency in English (as well as the native language in a bilingual program) and to provide him/her with meaningful access to the content of the educational curriculum that is available to all students, including special education and related services.

In developing an IEP for a student who is an English Language Learner, the team must consider how the student’s level of English language proficiency affects the special education services that the student needs, including:

- whether the student needs special education services for any part of his or her educational program (e.g., consultant teacher to be provided in the student’s English as a Second Language class; and
- whether the special education services will be provided in a language other than English (e.g., bilingual speech and language therapy).

If all of the above has been considered, AND the student requires bilingual programs and/or services AND the student meets the criteria for requiring a special education program, the student may be referred to a bilingual special education program.