

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) PROGRAMS

The ASD Nest Program and the ASD Horizon Program are two different special education programs in District 1-32 schools that serve certain students with autism who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).¹ Each program is designed to strengthen academic and social skills, but have different service delivery models and eligibility criteria. The same application process applies to both ASD Nest and ASD Horizon Programs.

ASD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

ASD NEST	ASD HORIZON
The ASD Nest Program is a partnership between the NYCDOE and New York University's (NYU) ASD Nest Support Project . ²	The ASD Horizon Program was developed by the NYCDOE in collaboration with the New England Center for Children (NECC).
CLASS STRUCTURE	
This program serves students with ASD and typically developing students in a reduced class-size Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) model, with one special education teacher and one general education teacher. As students get older, the class size increases, as does the ratio of students with autism to typically developing students. There is no classroom paraprofessional in this model.	This program serves a maximum of eight students with ASD in a Special Class (SC), with one special education teacher and one classroom paraprofessional (8:1+1). As students get older and develop necessary academic and social skills, opportunities for inclusion with typically developing peers is encouraged.
SCHOOL-BASED STAFF	
Staff receive training in specialized teaching strategies for students with ASD, including Social Development Intervention (SDI) developed by NYU. SDI is an evidence-based program that supports the social/emotional development of ASD Nest students.	Staff receive training in specialized teaching strategies for students with ASD, including the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia ³ (ACE), developed by NECC. ACE is an evidence-based program based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which supports the academic and social/emotional development of ASD Horizon students.
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION	
As in all NYCDOE schools, ASD Nest Program classes use the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). ASD Nest Program classes combine CCLS and SDI to improve social understanding while also supporting academic success. SDI is taught in small groups and reinforced throughout the day.	As in all NYCDOE schools, ASD Horizon Program classes use the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). ASD Horizon Program classes provide a supportive classroom, combining CCLS and ACE instruction delivered individually, based on student need for academic and social support.
SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS	
Related service providers use SDI to help students develop relationships and improve social functioning. This pragmatic (social) language curriculum is taught in small groups of ASD Nest students and reinforced by classroom teachers.	Related service providers work collaboratively with classroom teachers using individually customized ACE lessons to address specific communication and socialization challenges faced by students with ASD.

¹ More intensive supports for students with ASD are provided by District 75: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District75>

² <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/asdnest/>

³ The New England Center for Children: <http://www.acenec.org/>

ASD STUDENT PROFILE

ASD NEST	ASD HORIZON
Students accepted to the ASD Nest Program must meet the following criteria:	Students accepted to the ASD Horizon Program must meet the following criteria:
CLASSIFICATION	
Students must be eligible for an educational disability classification of Autism.	
COGNITION / INTELLIGENCE	
Average to above average intellectual functioning with consistent development across all cognitive areas including but not limited to, verbal and nonverbal reasoning abilities, working memory, language, and attention.	Low average to average intellectual functioning with uneven cognitive skills.
ACHIEVEMENT	
Academic skills on or above grade level. Students are able to work independently and in small groups, with minimal redirection. Students participate in standard assessments, including New York State (NYS) Math and English Language Arts (ELA) exams. ⁴ Accommodations are provided as written on the student’s IEP.	Academic skills on or near grade level. Students benefit from instruction based on the principles of ABA and can work independently with some redirection and adult support. Students participate in standard assessments, including New York State (NYS) Math and English Language Arts (ELA) exams. Accommodations are provided as written on the student’s IEP.
LANGUAGE / COMMUNICATION	
Language skills on or close to age level, except in pragmatic (social) language, including staying on topic, meaningful conversation, and socially appropriate nonverbal gestures, responses and facial expressions. For example, students may have challenges that include inappropriate responses and/or misinterpreting others’ statements and/or behaviors.	Students may have mild to moderate expressive and receptive with pragmatic (social) language delays. Students entering kindergarten can speak in at least 2-3 word, meaningful sentences and older students are able to string words to express needs and wants, but need support to communicate effectively in the social arena. Echolalia may also be present.
SOCIAL FUNCTIONING	
Mild to moderate delays. Students demonstrate challenges in interacting and/or playing with peers or adults, rigidity, and difficulties with self-regulation.	Mild to moderate delays in initiating and sustaining peer interactions. Students may participate in social activities, but often prefer to engage in solitary activities.
BEHAVIOR	
Students may have mild behavior challenges, but are not physically aggressive, do not engage in self-injurious behaviors, and do not tend to show “escape behaviors,” such as running away from staff or exiting the classroom or school building.	Students may have mild to moderate behavior challenges, but are not physically aggressive, do not engage in self-injurious behaviors, and do not tend to show “escape behaviors,” such as running away from staff or exiting the classroom or school building.

⁴ The school or district-based IEP Team is responsible for determining student eligibility to receive accommodations on state, local, and classroom tests: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/Classroom/instruction>

ASD PROGRAM ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. Submit an application: If you think the ASD Nest Program or ASD Horizon Program may be appropriate for your child, work with your child’s IEP Team to complete and submit an application at any time during the school year. If your child is entering kindergarten next year, we recommend you let us know as soon as possible. All assessments must be completed within one year of the application in order for the admissions process to move forward.

- Work directly with your child’s IEP Team to complete and submit the application.
- You or your child’s current school can send the completed application by:
 - e-mail: ASDPrograms@schools.nyc.gov (*strongly preferred*),
 - fax: (718) 391-6887, or
 - mail: Central ASD Programs Team
28-11 Queens Plaza North (3rd Floor)
Long Island City, NY 11101

<i>If your child is transitioning to:</i>	<i>Submit an ASD Program application:</i>
Kindergarten	As early as possible in the school year during your child’s final year in preschool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note: you should also apply to non-ASD kindergarten programs through the kindergarten admissions process ⁵
Any other grade (1 -12)	Anytime.

Visit the [Specialized Programs page](#)⁶ on the DOE website to download and print the ASD Programs application.

2. Confirmation of Application: applications submitted by email will receive an acknowledgement via email within one to two business days. Applications submitted by facsimile (fax) or regular mail will receive an acknowledgement via regular mail to confirm receipt, which will be mailed out within one to two business days of receiving your application. When an application is submitted, we will also contact your child’s IEP Team to discuss the information provided on the application and ask any follow up questions.

- If you do not hear from the Central ASD Programs Team within one week of submitting your application, please contact ASDPrograms@schools.nyc.gov or call (718) 391-6872.

⁵ The Office of Student Enrollment coordinates the kindergarten admissions process:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Elementary/kindergarten.html>

⁶ DOE Website for Specialized Programs: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/enrolling/specializedprograms/default.htm>

3. Initial Review for ASD Program Eligibility: the Central ASD Programs Team reviews your child's special education record to determine whether assessments are up-to-date and provide sufficient information about your child's intellectual ability and social, language, behavior, academic, and adaptive skills. In addition, we make sure your child meets criteria for an educational classification of autism on his/her IEP.

- **Up-to-Date Assessments:** If the Central ASD Programs Team needs more information about your child or if the assessments are not current, we will ask your child's IEP Team to obtain your consent and conduct any additional assessments. You will receive a letter from the DOE asking for your consent.
- **Additional Information:** Families may also submit additional evaluation materials with their application for review by the Central ASD Programs Team. As with the clinical assessments, materials containing additional information should be no more than one year old for applicants in grades K-5 and no more than three years old for applicants in grades 6-12.

4. ASD Program Admissions Process & Timeline: If the information provided during the initial review indicates your child may be a candidate for either an ASD Nest Program or an ASD Horizon Program, a Central ASD Team member will work closely with you and your child's IEP Team to schedule an observation. The DOE may also conduct additional evaluations, as needed, and will seek your consent to do so. Specifically, the DOE uses the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) for children who may be eligible for the ASD Nest Program.

Following the initial review, the Central ASD Programs Team will contact you with next steps in your child's ASD Program admissions process. If your child's clinical information indicates that s/he:

- **May be a good candidate for an ASD Program:** You and your child's school will be contacted by a Central ASD Programs Team member to review the information and discuss the next steps in the process.
- **Does not meet admissions criteria:** Your child's IEP Team will work with you to determine an appropriate special education program and/or service recommendation to meet your child's needs. You can submit a new ASD Program application at a later date if new information about your child becomes available.

5. ASD Program Admissions Observation: If the initial review indicates that your child may meet at least some of the eligibility criteria, an observation will be scheduled either by an ASD Program School or by an ASD Central Team member, in most cases within four weeks from that initial review. Upon completion of the observation, results will be reviewed to determine if your child meets admissions criteria for and will be offered an ASD Program placement. You and your child's current school will receive a copy of the written observation report and you will be contacted by the Central ASD Team to discuss the results.

6. Admissions Determination: An admissions determination is based on the information and data gathered from your child's psychoeducational evaluation, autism diagnostic testing, observations, and any additional information submitted. The Central ASD Programs team will discuss whether your child meets the admissions criteria for an ASD Nest Program or an ASD Horizon Program with you and your child's IEP Team. Once a student is accepted to an ASD Program, his/her IEP will be written by the school's IEP Team with guidance from the Central ASD Programs Team.

7. Visiting an ASD Program: Families of students accepted to an ASD Program may visit the prospective ASD Program school offered. Please note, due to the specialized nature of this program and the limited number of seats, accepted students are assigned an ASD Program school- there is no application process for specific ASD Program schools. Families of accepted students will be contacted by the ASD Program school to arrange a school visit and to enroll at the school.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ACCEPTED TO ASD PROGRAMS

Families of newly accepted students will receive a Prior Written Notice (PWN) and School Location Letter (SLL) following the IEP meeting. The SLL will specify the assigned ASD Program school your child will attend. Upon receipt of the SLL, families of accepted students should bring the documentation needed to enroll their child at the ASD Program school as soon as possible⁷. It is important to register at the ASD Program school as quickly as possible so transportation, if included on the IEP, is not delayed.

- **Transportation:** Special education transportation is provided to/from the ASD Program school if your child's IEP Team determines that your child is eligible to receive special education transportation as an IEP service.⁸ The need for special transportation accommodations such as limited travel time or a temperature controlled vehicle, must be supported by medical documentation, approved by the Office of School Health (OSH), and reviewed annually. You must complete and sign the Authorization for Release of Health Information (HIPAA)⁹ to be submitted together with the medical accommodation form¹⁰ filled out by your child's doctor. These forms must be signed and completed by you and your child's doctor and submitted annually to your child's IEP Team. Your child's IEP Team will submit signed and completed forms to OSH for review.
- **ASD Summer Program:** The ASD Nest Program and the ASD Horizon Program follow the ten-month Districts 1-32 school calendar from September through June.¹¹ The NYCDOE provides an optional summer program for ASD Program students in kindergarten through fifth grade, to promote continued social development. This optional summer program runs for a half day, four days per week for four weeks. Summer program schedules are set by the site that houses the ASD Summer Program, which may be different from the school that the student attends for the 10 month school year.

A Central ASD Programs Team member will work closely with your child's IEP Team and will also have ongoing contact with you regarding your child's application. For current preschool students who are applying for kindergarten ASD Programs, you should work with your child's Turning 5 Team or your child's preschool IEP Team.

Visit the [Specialized Programs page](#) on the DOE website to download and print the ASD Programs application.

⁷ Enrollment documentation: <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents>

⁸ DOE website for Specialized Transportation Information:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/programs/additionalservices/transportation.htm>

⁹ HIPAA form: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2A444727-0597-4C92-84AE-D6CEF15E796B/0/hipaa_fillablecopy.pdf

¹⁰ Request for Medical Accommodations to be Completed by Treating Physician:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/98856A9E-517B-4198-8640-2B5BECFA10D4/0/MedicalAccommodationsRequest.pdf>

¹¹ Your child's school or district-based IEP Team is responsible for determining whether extended school year (ESY), also known as 12-month school year, services are needed. If your child is eligible for ESY, an appropriate summer program placement will be made. Visit the NYCDOE website on ESY: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/programs/additionalservices/extended>