

ASD Horizon Program Family Handbook

September 2014

Welcome!

This handbook is for families of children attending the ASD Horizon Program to provide specific information about ASD Horizon classrooms. We recognize that families are a crucial component in their children's success, and your school is committed to working closely with you and your child. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks and months to learn about the program and how to work with the school team in order to maximize your child's achievement.

The ASD Horizon Program Model:

The ASD Horizon Program offers intensive intervention to students on the autism spectrum who are experiencing a moderate degree of challenge with social, behavioral, and communication development. In collaboration with a clinical consultant from the New England Center for Children (NECC) and an ASD coach, classroom staff and related service personnel work together to provide individualized and targeted interventions designed to maximize each student's level of social and behavioral functioning. Services are based on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and are adjusted to meet the needs of each student in the program.

The Horizon classroom is a self-contained classroom nestled in a community school. The program integrates the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia (ACE)©, developed by NECC, and grade level curriculum currently utilized in New York City public schools by the students' general education peers. Reading and math instruction mirror the grade level general education curriculum. When appropriate, related services are provided in the classroom setting. Maximizing opportunities to learn alongside their typical peers, Horizon students may participate in the general education environment for academic subjects and participate in social groups with their typical peers as appropriate.

About ACE©:

ACE© is an interactive database with assessment tools, lesson plans, teaching materials, data collection sheets, graphing protocols and progress reports for over 1000 skills. Each curriculum template is accompanied by a video clip demonstrating step by step instructions to teach and assess skills such as self-help, academics, communication, social skills, leisure and physical fitness in a variety of settings. Data sheets and related materials such as pictures or worksheets are also included with every lesson plan. All documents, once modified for the individual student, can be printed and brought to the classroom for teachers to include in their weekly lesson plans. Assessment is ongoing and progress reports are generated for school and home use.

The school environment:

Educating Children with Autism, a milestone 2001 National Research Council study, states that there is no "cure" for autism. However experts conclude:

"The school environment should and can be the major vehicle for therapeutic change."

The ASD Horizon Program aims to transform neighborhood public schools into "the major vehicle for therapeutic change" that these children need. Our four therapeutic goals are to help children:

- develop social and communicative competence
- improve interpersonal relationships
- increase self-regulation skills
- reduce and replace interfering behaviors.

ASD Horizon program staff receives training on strategies designed to accomplish these goals and share best practices with their colleagues.

Parent/Teacher Conferences:

Your family has opportunities to meet with school staff and discuss your child's progress at least three times per year. Two of these opportunities are Parent/Teacher conferences that occur citywide in November and March. The third is an annual meeting to update your child's IEP. The date of this meeting will vary depending on the individual student. In addition, you may be invited to participate in team meetings at various times during the year. At any time during the year, you may ask the teacher, school social worker or guidance counselor to arrange a meeting with staff to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have.

Each school will have a Horizon Program Liaison. At this school, you may contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

The ASD Horizon Team:

The Horizon Program Team meets one to two times a month to discuss every child's strengths and challenges, and to plan instructional and therapeutic strategies to maximize your child's educational experience. ASD Horizon Program staff receives extensive on-site support from a certified behavioral analyst from The New England Center for Children and an autism coach from the Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support. Together the team reviews best practices and evaluates strategies used with individual students. Team members at your child's school may include:

- a) Principal and/or Assistant Principal: The principal and/or assistant principal takes an active role in the program and often participates in team meetings

- b) The Social Worker (or Guidance Counselor): The social worker or guidance counselor is often the liaison between families and the school. They may organize group or team meetings to facilitate communication between individual parents and the school team, which in turn helps the team understand each child through their parents' eyes.
- c) Teacher: Your child's classroom has one teacher and one paraprofessional, both trained in effective instructional and behavioral strategies for children with ASDs.
- d) Speech and Language Provider: Your child's speech teacher is a qualified speech and language therapist who has been trained to use the ACE© to develop goals and monitor students' progress.
- e) Occupational Therapist (OT): Occupational therapists are critical members of the ASD Horizon team for students who receive this service. They also participate in trainings to use the ACE© to develop goals and monitor students' progress.

Role of the Behavioral Consultant and ASD Coach

A Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA©) from NECC provides consultation to the classroom teacher, paraprofessional and related service providers. The consultant works collaboratively with an autism coach from the Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support. Both professionals support student progress in the classroom by aiding in curriculum implementation, data analysis, and assessment using the ACE©. In collaboration with the classroom teacher and related service providers, they review students' IEP goals, provide assistance in selecting lesson plans and monitor student progress.

The behavioral consultant and ASD coaches also provide ACE© training at the start of the school year for teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers working with students in the Horizon program in the following areas: ACE© user training, assessment training, curriculum implementation, and data entry. They can also conduct professional development during team meetings throughout the school year.

Summer Program:

The ASD Horizon Program is a ten- month program, following the community school schedule from September through June. Special education related services for the summer are available on a case-by-case, year-by-year basis.