

PROGRESS EVALUATION

- Are objective data which assess the progress of each student obtained for both teaching new skills and addressing behaviors?
- Are programming decisions made based on objective data?
- Is there a systematic way of determining when an objective has been met and what the next step will be?
- Is there daily communication between school and home regarding a student's progress?

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Are staff trained in the following:
 - Positive behavioral intervention and functional assessment?
 - Crisis intervention?
 - CPR and first aid issues?
- How are staff monitored and supervised?
- Does staff receive ongoing training in effective teaching and behavior management techniques?
- Is additional training/consultation available when needed?

RELATED SERVICES

- Related services may include, but are not limited to, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, augmentative communication devices, and transportation.
- Are related services available if appropriate for the student?

- Is in-home programming available if needed?
Is parent training available?
- Does the program offer support groups for family members?
- What professionals are providing related services?

YOUR REACTIONS

- Is the program's philosophy one that fosters parental involvement?
- Do the teachers and other staff appear to enjoy their job and their interactions with students?
- Did you feel welcomed and comfortable?
- Did you feel that your questions were well answered?
- Did you feel good about the program the next day?



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What to Look for in a Special Education Program



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Introduction

Many students with autism spectrum disorders can benefit from participation in special education programs that provide a high staff-to-student ratio and the systematic use of behavioral teaching methods. This brochure is designed to assist parents in evaluating the appropriateness of a given special program for their child. It is important to note that each child is different and has very specific educational needs. Parents should assess their child's specific needs before visiting or selecting a program.

Some of the considerations listed below can be easily observed. Others will require you to ask questions. Once you have made an appointment to visit a program, request a brochure from the school. You can use the brochure and the following checklist to help develop a list of specific questions about the program that you would like answered.

Lastly, try to visit the program more than once. This may help you gain a more complete picture of the program.

GENERAL PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- Can the components of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) be implemented in this environment?
- Is the program operated on a full-day basis and is an extended school year (ESY) program available if needed?
- What instructional methods are used? Are they evidence-based?
- Is there at least one teacher or aide for every three students in the room?
- Are there no more than six students in an elementary classroom; no more than nine students in a secondary classroom?
- Is one-to-one instruction available if needed?

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- Does the classroom appear safe for your child?
- Is there a bathroom nearby?
- Are a variety of materials available?
- Is there a space designated for one-to-one teaching?
- Are visual supports evident throughout the classroom?
- Are there opportunities for supported interaction with typical peers?
- Are there opportunities for community-based instruction?

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

- What happens when the teacher gives a direction? Do students respond?
- Does the teacher seem to have a good rapport with the students?

- Are the activities well organized?
- Are other students in the classroom engaged in activities that would seem appropriate for your child?
- Are rewards used to motivate students? Ask the administration how the rewards are chosen, monitored and changed based on students' needs.
- Are a variety of activities available?
- Are all students in the classroom oriented to the current academic or play activity?
- Are activities appropriate to the child's age?
- Are tasks meaningful and purposeful? Are they designed to lead to a more advanced skill (as opposed to just being "busy work")?
- Do the teachers ensure privacy when meeting hygienic needs?
- What are the policies on parents observing their child in the classroom?
- How are medication needs handled?

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

- How are inappropriate, aggressive and other challenging behaviors addressed?
- Are there thorough and well-monitored procedures in place? Is a functional assessment completed prior to designing interventions? Ask your tour guide how parental consent for interventions is obtained.
- Does the program's philosophy regarding the use of medication to manage behavior problems match your own?
- Are incident reports used to document accidents, injuries, and property destruction? Are parents notified?