



Linking The New Jersey APQI to a Strong ABA Program

Education is the primary intervention for young children with intellectual and developmental disorders. Effective interventions for these students emphasize the need for their educational experience to include not only knowledge and skill acquisition, but also an emphasis on socialization, language and communication, the reduction of problem behaviors, and adaptive skills.

The New Jersey Autism Program Quality Indicators (APQI), was developed to identify research based indicators found in successful programs and is the standard for ABA based therapy for this community of students. The quality indicators are broken into two major areas: Program Considerations and Student Considerations.

Program Considerations describes factors such as personnel, curriculum, methods and community collaboration that should be considered in developing, implementing and evaluating an ABA classroom/program.

Student Considerations presents quality indicators such as assessments, IEPs, changing behaviors and transition to consider when developing, implementing, or evaluating an ABA classroom/program.

See how your school district ranks on a scale of 1-5 in each category.

- 1 = Poor
- 2 = Fair
- 3 = Good
- 4 = Very Good
- 5 = Excellent



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PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

I. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS		
<i>Students with intellectual and developmental disorders who participate in intensive educational experiences with a focus on engagement, make substantial gains in academic, communication, and social domains. Engagement is defined by the National Research Council (2001) as "sustained attention to an activity or person"</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. The length of the school day and the academic year	1 2 3 4 5	
2. Low student-to-teacher ratio	1 2 3 4 5	
3. Location and the content of the activity are determined on an individual basis. (Instruction may occur in school, home, and community settings)	1 2 3 4 5	
4. Systematically planned, developmentally appropriate educational activities are aimed toward identified objectives created for each student.	1 2 3 4 5	
5. The program includes a system for documenting how effective its methods are and its students' progress.	1 2 3 4 5	
II. PERSONNEL		
<i>Characteristics of effective, successful personnel</i>		
<i>* Staff qualifications, experience, and expectations play a pivotal role</i>		
<i>* The training and professional development of teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators is a paramount importance</i>		
<i>* Ongoing and administrative support for professional development opportunities & formal dialogue designed to improve the program</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in these areas of expertise specific to autism spectrum disorders, including:	1 2 3 4 5	
a. Diagnostic criteria and associated characteristics of autism spectrum disorders	1 2 3 4 5	



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b. Familiarity with assessment methods	1 2 3 4 5	
c. Developing IEPs to meet the unique needs of each student	1 2 3 4 5	
d. Curriculum, environmental adaptations and accommodations, and instructional methods	1 2 3 4 5	
e. Strategies to improve communication and social interaction skills	1 2 3 4 5	
f. Classroom and individual behavior management techniques	1 2 3 4 5	
g. Crisis intervention techniques	1 2 3 4 5	
2. Personnel with expertise in autism, e.g., Program Specialist in Autism, supervise the program to ensure that all of the knowledge and skill areas listed above are achieved	1 2 3 4 5	
3. Certified teachers and related service providers who have access to that student's IEP and are informed of their responsibilities for implementation	1 2 3 4 5	
4. Paraprofessionals receive specific and direct instruction and supervision regarding their IEP responsibilities to the student	1 2 3 4 5	
5. Staff is available in a ratio sufficient to provide the support necessary to accomplish IEP goals in general education classes or self-contained classes	1 2 3 4 5	
6. All professional development activities are provided by persons highly knowledgeable and experienced in the education of young children with autism	1 2 3 4 5	
a. Intensive pre-service and in-service training for entry level staff	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Frequent in-service training specific to the program	1 2 3 4 5	
c. Attendance at workshops and conferences designed to further develop knowledge and skills	1 2 3 4 5	



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d. Ongoing consultation & technical assistance for all staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and CST)	1 2 3 4 5	
7. To maximize personnel satisfaction:		
a. Solicits input through mechanisms such as satisfaction surveys and program effectiveness surveys	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Makes program modifications, as appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	
III. CURRICULUM		
<i>The program's philosophies regarding child development, effective education, and successful outcome have a direct impact on classroom and administrative practices. The classroom program should use a curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality or the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards depending on the age and grade level of the student</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. The curriculum has a philosophy and written goals from which instructional objectives, methods and educational activities are derived.	1 2 3 4 5	
2. Curriculum philosophy & goals maximize independence in a variety of settings (home, school, community).	1 2 3 4 5	
3. The curriculum is adapted to the different ages, abilities, and learning styles of students.	1 2 3 4 5	
4. The curriculum emphasizes the development of:		
a. Communication and language: The curriculum has a functional communication system for both verbal and nonverbal students	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Social skills: Social skills instruction is planned and facilitated throughout the day in various settings	1 2 3 4 5	



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c. Play, imagination, and creativity: The teaching of play skills focuses on the appropriate use of toys and other materials, representational/symbolic play, reciprocity, imaginative and cooperative play with peers	1 2 3 4 5	
d. Engagement: Increased engagement and flexibility in developmentally appropriate tasks including the ability to attend to the environment, to imitate and to respond to a motivational system.	1 2 3 4 5	
e. Academics: Skills to meet the curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.	1 2 3 4 5	
f. Replacement of challenging behaviors	1 2 3 4 5	
g. Self-management: The purpose of self-management is to increase one's ability to be as independent and as organized as possible within a classroom or other setting	1 2 3 4 5	
h. Fine and gross motor skills: Skills used for age-appropriate functional activities.	1 2 3 4 5	
5. The curriculum has clear and systematic strategies to maintain learned skills over time and to generalize those skills to more natural environments	1 2 3 4 5	
IV. EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION METHODS		
<i>Ideally, programs should employ a methodology that has been empirically validated in well-controlled research studies conducted with other students with autism. While the acquisition of new skills occurs first, the generalization and maintenance of these skills are equally important.</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. Instructional methods have documented effectiveness and, ideally, reflect empirically validated practices	1 2 3 4 5	



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2. The methodology promotes maximum engagement in appropriate activities and targeted skill areas	1 2 3 4 5	
3. Instructional methods:		
a. Emphasize the use of naturally occurring reinforcers (rewards)	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Promote high rates of successful performance	1 2 3 4 5	
c. Encourage communication and social interaction	1 2 3 4 5	
d. Encourage the spontaneous use of learned skills in different settings	1 2 3 4 5	
4. Programs should have a clear plan to systematically promote the maintenance and generalization of learned skills to a variety of natural environments	1 2 3 4 5	
5. Instructional methods are adapted to the range of ages, abilities, and learning styles of the student	1 2 3 4 5	
V. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT & SUPPORT		
<i>The collaboration between educational personnel and family members is essential to the success.</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. The program supports parents & family members as active participants in all aspects of child's ongoing evaluation and education to the extent of their interests, resources and abilities	1 2 3 4 5	
2. The program provides parents with timely information about educational philosophies, curriculums, effective methods and service options	1 2 3 4 5	
3. The program demonstrates an awareness of and respect for the culture, language, values, and parenting styles of the families they serve	1 2 3 4 5	



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4. The program makes available parent education services that:		
a. Provide parents with information about child development	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Foster coordination of efforts between school and home	1 2 3 4 5	
c. Support the family in behavior management	1 2 3 4 5	
d. Enable parents to acquire skills to support and implement their child's IEP to teach their child new skills and reduce challenging behaviors	1 2 3 4 5	
5. The program provides parents with opportunities to meet regularly with other parents and professionals in support groups	1 2 3 4 5	
6. On a regular basis, the program provides communication to the parents regarding their child's progress and encourages parents to do the same	1 2 3 4 5	
7. The program works in cooperation with families to identify and access family support services provided by other community agencies.	1 2 3 4 5	
VI. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION		
<i>Effective programs take into account the school community and enlist community support to maximize use of all resources available to address student needs.</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. The program works in cooperation with the early intervention system around the transition from early intervention to preschool/special education	1 2 3 4 5	
2. The program assists families to access mental health and parent support organizations	1 2 3 4 5	
3. The program, if it is out-of-district includes a mechanism for ongoing and systematic collaboration between a district and an out-of-district placement	1 2 3 4 5	



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VII. PROGRAM EVALUATION		
<i>All students deserve to participate in effective educational programs to maximize their performance</i>		
<i>This notion carries great significance for students with autism as their learning needs are greater and more complex than their non-autistic peers</i>		
<i>Education Impact: The program incorporates an evaluation system annually to assess program-wide effectiveness in the areas of:</i>		
Items to Be Ranked	Rankings	Discussion/Notes
1. The program incorporates an evaluation system annually to assess program-wide effectiveness in the areas of:		
a. Student progress toward mastery of IEP goals	1 2 3 4 5	
b. Student performance on State and district-wide tests	1 2 3 4 5	
d. Student progress toward long-term outcomes	1 2 3 4 5	
2. At least once per year, the program will implement a systematic evaluation by a professional with experience in the methodology used in the program	1 2 3 4 5	
3. The program evaluation will include measures of parent satisfaction with services	1 2 3 4 5	
4. The program aggregates student outcomes, parent satisfaction, and staff input	1 2 3 4 5	
5. The program utilizes these evaluation data for system-wide improvement	1 2 3 4 5	