The ASD Nest Classroom

> The ASD Nest classroom is designed to meet the needs of students with ASD and their general education peers in an inclusion setting with therapeutic supports. The physical environment and classroom supports meet students' social, academic, behavioral, and sensory needs. Class-wide structures and individualized strategies are explicitly planned to ensure consistency of implementation across classes.

The ASD Nest program's *Middle School/High School Nest Essentials*, and the *A[5] Packets* inform Nest professionals' implementation of Nest strategies and supports.

The ASD Nest Program Middle School/High School Nest Essentials:

The Nest Essentials (along with the Expanded Nest Essentials) is a collection of strategies used in Nest classrooms. The strategies are a combination of evidence-based and highly promising practices to ensure a consistent, foundational level of support for students across all Nest classes. The Nest Essentials document is divided into six categories of support:

1. <u>Organization of Classroom Environment</u>: Because students with ASD can become distracted or overwhelmed by their environment, Nest classrooms are arranged and organized in such a way as to avoid visual and auditory distractions

2. <u>Classroom Structures & Routines</u>: Because students with ASD benefit from structure and predictability, common classroom routines are established, taught, and reinforced

3. <u>Self-Regulation Routine</u>: Because students with ASD can become overwhelmed and struggle with self-regulation, Nest classrooms have a routine for allowing students a break to help them self-regulate and avoid becoming overwhelmed

4. <u>Social Supports</u>: Because students with ASD may misunderstand aspects of social relationships and social expectations, classroom structures, instruction, and activities are planned to support students' social challenges

5. <u>Instructional Strategies & Classroom Language</u>: Because the academic performance of students with ASD can be impacted by their social challenges and impairments in executive functioning, instruction is delivered in a way that is accessible to Nest students

6. <u>Collaboration & Individual Supports</u>: Because students with ASD benefit from a coordinated, consistent system of supports, teachers across subjects collaborate to plan and implement individual supports for Nest students

The A[5] (Academic Adaptations for Adolescents with Autism and Asperger's):

The A[5] Packets provide specific academic supports for each of the four primary content areas: ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies/History. Each packet contains general and subject-specific strategies, examples, and lessons, including:

- Students' common strengths
- Students' common challenges
- Supporting note-taking
- Common Core- or state standard-aligned strategies

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Additional Questions & Considerations:

What really makes a "Nest Classroom"?

A Nest classroom is—at its core—positive. A Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) framework ensures that supports focus on prevention, skill development, and reinforcement. Punishment procedures are not used. The overall tone of the Nest classroom is welcoming, supportive, and encouraging. Student strengths are recognized, celebrated, and utilized. Nest professionals provide clear expectations, highlight appropriate behavior, and celebrate experiences using declarative language. Teachers do not yell, use demeaning sarcasm, make threatening comments, or engage in inappropriate discussions in front of students. A Nest classroom employs a foundational level of support based on the six areas of the Nest Essentials. For some Nest students, the ASD Nest team also develops individualized supports that professionals implement consistently across classes.

How do I know when an intervention is working or not working?

Interventions take time to introduce, teach, tweak, and practice, especially when working towards student independence. There is no hard and fast rule about numbers of days or amount of time to give a newly introduced intervention before determining its level of effectiveness. When the ASD Nest team introduces an intervention, they discuss the amount of time this intervention will be implemented and monitored before judging its effectiveness. Nest professionals working with the student monitor the success of the intervention and for any unplanned side-effects. The ASD Nest team reviews the results at the end of the planned trial period and decides if the intervention will be continued, modified, or discontinued. ASD Nest teams immediately modify or discontinue any intervention that causes any harm or excessive stress to the child, regardless of the length of the planned trial period.

For more information on the ASD Nest program, please see:

The ASD Nest Model: A framework for inclusive education for higher functioning children with ASD, edited by Shirley Cohen and Lauren Hough (2013), AAPC Publishing

Everyday classroom strategies and practices for supporting children with ASD, written by Jamie Bleiweiss, Lauren Hough, and Shirley Cohen (2013), AAPC Publishing

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A note on the ASD Nest Model:

This paper outlines an element of the ASD Nest Model. Fidelity of implementation to the model is essential for program consistency. While a degree of flexibility is necessary given individual school needs, the program benefits from schools' commitment to a cohesive model.