

# Roles of the Educational Staff

In the ASD Nest program, the “expert” is no one person, but rather the collaborative, multidisciplinary team made up of related service providers and educators. Together, these trained professionals work to facilitate Nest students’ access to the school experience. The educational staff—Nest teachers, Nest Coaches, and Nest cluster teachers—are responsible for facilitating both classroom and out-of-classroom experiences and also implementing ASD Nest program strategies and supports.

## ASD Nest teachers:

- All Nest teachers—special and general education—are trained, qualified, and expected to work with all students in their shared classroom during all instructional times. Co-teaching partners work together, co-planning and co-teaching all lessons, using various co-teaching models.
- Nest teachers collaborate regularly with related service providers (as well as Nest coaches, as applicable) at team meetings and throughout the school day to develop and implement academic, social, sensory, and behavior classroom supports.
- Nest teachers communicate regularly with parents. (See Home-School Connection program paper)

## Co-teaching Teams

- Co-teaching functions best when two teachers work together exclusively throughout the day. Though this is sometimes challenging to achieve with middle- and high-school programming, the model of consistent co-teaching teams should be aimed for as closely as possible.
- For effective delivery of instruction, teachers must have time to co-plan and should be able to develop a relationship with teacher partners.
- Options for Nest co-teaching structures include:
  - Maintaining regular co-teaching teams (*i.e., ELA teacher A & ELA teacher B co-teach all classes together—both Nest and other ICT*)
  - Minimizing the number of different partnerships (*i.e., math teacher A co-teaches with either math teacher B or C throughout the week; both math teachers B & C co-teach with math teacher A and only one other teacher*)

## ASD Nest cluster teachers:

- Some middle and high schools have ASD Nest cluster teachers. These teachers are assigned to a grade, a group of classes, or to co-teach with an out-of-classroom co-teacher. They support students during out-of-classroom experiences (e.g., art, technology, gym). The ASD Nest cluster teacher implements individual behavior plans, social strategies, and sensory supports used in the classroom, and shares these supports with the out-of-classroom teacher.
- Nest cluster teachers support students during less-structured periods, such as breakfast, lunch, and recess—times that can be challenging for students on the spectrum.
- Nest cluster teachers do not regularly substitute for absent classroom teachers, perform morning/afternoon bus duty in place of instructional periods, or act as classroom aides.

## ASD Nest coach:

- See Program Paper for “Role of the ASD Nest Coach”

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## **Additional Questions & Considerations:**

### **What types of supports do teachers use in their classrooms?**

Nest teachers implement two layers of support for Nest students in their classes. The first layer is includes class-wide structures and strategies from the Nest Essentials. All Nest classrooms provide this foundational level of support, including particular visuals, a break routine, and planned structures. The second layer of support is of individualized strategies for struggling students. Nest teachers collaborate at case conferences with related service providers, Nest coaches, and Nest cluster teachers to design these more individualized interventions.

### **How are strategies implemented consistently across classes?**

Students with ASD benefit from consistent supports across the day. To accomplish this, the Nest team develops a support plan during case conferencing that each teaching team enacts, with the following options to ensure follow-through:

- Review Nest Essentials: ensure that structures from the Nest Essentials are all in place by reviewing them in the first two team meetings every fall, with a follow-up in January
- Utilize Nest Coach position: check-in or oversee strategy or intervention use across classes; Nest Coaches can offer support for follow-through, as needed
- Create case manager role: assign staff members to individual students to oversee their support profile
- Create case conferencing action plan: include specifics of who is responsible for developing, implementing, and following up on strategy; schedule follow-up check-ins in between the student's regularly scheduled conferences

### **Whom can teachers reach out to when students are struggling in the classroom?**

The multi-disciplinary team offers a variety of perspectives on students' strengths and needs and collaborates with the classroom teachers to develop strategies to foster student success. For example, educators could:

- Contact the speech pathologist if a student is struggling with a social or pragmatic language issue, such as being part of a group, processing classroom language, or perspective-taking.
- Contact the occupational/physical therapist if the student is having sensory or self-regulation issues, such as attending on the rug, self-regulating during transitions, or writing production.
- Contact the social worker/guidance counselor if the student is having emotional difficulties, related to bullying, coping with anxiety, or understanding with their diagnosis.
- Bring their concerns to the ASD Nest team: if a child is having difficulty in several areas, or if the underlying cause is unclear, teachers bring their concerns to the child's next case conference.

#### **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.