

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—classroom teachers, ASD Nest cluster teachers, and ASD Nest coach clusters—are responsible for facilitating both classroom and out-of-classroom experiences and also implementing ASD Nest program strategies and supports.

ASD Nest classroom teachers:

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

ASD Nest cluster teachers:

- ASD Nest cluster teachers are assigned to a grade or group of classes and support students during out-of-classroom experiences (e.g., art, music, gym) and co-teach with that instructor. The ASD Nest cluster teacher supports students by implementing individual behavior plans, social strategies, and sensory supports used in the classroom, also sharing these supports with the out-of-classroom teacher.
- They support students during less-structured periods, such as breakfast, lunch, and recess—times that can be challenging for students on the spectrum.
- They may instruct students in a content area (e.g., social studies) and/or push in to instruction.
- They may participate in SDI focus time.
- ASD 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 cluster:

- The ASD Nest coach cluster supports teachers and students in the Nest program. They are not administrators, nor do they function in an evaluative capacity. ASD Nest coach clusters use assigned coaching periods to work in classrooms and with teachers, meeting and planning with teachers and related service providers. They work with individual students, helping their teachers develop, implement, and monitor classroom supports.
- ASD Nest coach clusters play an active role in facilitating team meetings and case conferences.
- ASD Nest coach clusters receive additional training at Hunter College on applied behavior analysis and participate in ongoing seminars and on-site consultation with ASD Nest consultants.

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Additional Questions & Considerations:

What types of supports do teachers use in their classrooms?

Nest classroom teachers work with their students all day, every day, and identify classroom-wide and student-specific areas of need. Teachers implement Tier I supports (from ASD Nest Three-Tier Model) for all students in Nest classrooms before developing more individualized (Tier II or III) interventions. Teachers collaborate at case conferences with related service providers and ASD Nest cluster teachers to design these more individualized interventions. The team discusses supports and modifications that are then monitored for consistency and efficacy.

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 can bring their concerns to the child's next case conference.

How do ASD Nest cluster teachers and ASD Nest coach clusters support Nest classrooms?

- The ASD Nest cluster teacher supports Nest students during out of classroom experiences such as music and art and also during less-structured times such as lunch and recess. Some ASD Nest cluster teachers push in to classrooms or SDI.
- The ASD Nest coach cluster has assigned coaching periods during which they can push in to classrooms to observe children and recommend strategies to the Nest classroom teachers. The ASD Nest coach cluster can also coordinate collaboration between different members of the team to help support the students in the program.

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.