

THE

**ACHIEVE**

PROGRAM

## ACHIEVE PROGRAM

The ACHIEVE program serves the needs of children medically diagnosed as within the Autism Spectrum Disorder. The program opportunities for these children are very comprehensive. Areas addressed in the program include the teaching of language and communication skills, prerequisite learning, developmental academic skills, socialization skills, life skills and appropriate behaviors. IEP goals and objectives are based on the student's current level of functioning and developed utilizing the ACSSSD's Transition Curriculum. This curriculum is relevant to the needs of the students and cross-correlated with the N.J. Core Curriculum Content Standards.

### GOALS

- To provide a caring environment that stimulates the development of learning readiness, academics, receptive and expressive language concepts, life skills, and appropriate social behaviors.
- To utilize the discrete trial method in conjunction with the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis to teach the above skills and appropriate behavior.
- To use incidental learning to generalize skills learned through direct and small group instruction.

### ENTRY CRITERIA

- Eligible for Special Education Services as cited in N.J.A.C. 6A:14.
- Medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum disorder.
- Chronological ages 3-13 years.

The ACHIEVE Program provides students with many specialized program opportunities. Components of the program are as follows:

- DISCRETE TRIAL INSTRUCTION AND APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA)

Discrete trial instruction utilizes an individualized systematic approach in teaching specific skills. Clear, concise, consistent directions are given to the student. If an error is made by the student, the instructor assists the student with the correct response.

Reinforcement is individualized and given systematically, and responses are recorded. Skills are taught in a progression, after a baseline of abilities is established. Skills may include appropriate eye contact, following simple one-step commands, gross motor imitation skills, basic self-care, and academic skills. Applied behavior analysis is utilized which involves systematic teaching strategies and objective measurement procedures.

- HIGH STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

In order for these students to be successful, a program requires a high staff to student ratio. As the students increase their learning and appropriate behaviors, the ratio of staff to students decreases. The success of the students is highly correlated to staff ratio and the ability to teach skills and modify behaviors at an early age. These supports provide optimal educational opportunities for the students.

- THE COLLABORATIVE THERAPEUTIC MODEL

Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Music Therapy are included in the learning process, as per the students Individualized Education Programs. A collaborative therapeutic model is utilized to support the students and classroom staff. In addition to direct therapy with the students, the therapists also consult with the teacher and classroom aides so that therapy goals and objectives are reinforced in the classroom on a daily basis. This model maximizes student learning and the generalization of skills.

- CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS

Lessons in Language Arts Literacy, Math, Science, Social Studies, Life Skills, World Languages, Health and Physical Education are presented to the students at their individual level of functioning.

- SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

As a consultant, the speech pathologist analyzes communication during the discrete trials and makes suggestions to be used with each student. The objective is to develop individualized pragmatic communication skills for each student through the use of verbal language, gestures, simultaneous communication (verbal approximations paired with signs), the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or augmentative communication systems, such as picture books, language boards or voiced output

computers. In all cases, however, verbal/oral training is considered before any other forms of communication.

- PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy offers expertise that helps to develop functional mobility through the use of therapeutic exercise and adaptive devices.

- OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational Therapy offers expertise that encourages student engagement in activities that promote successful participation in school and community environments. This includes educational tasks, activities of daily living, and social participation, play and leisure activities.

- MUSIC THERAPY

Music instruction is provided by the music teacher. The music program provides a wide variety of activities including movement, song, listening and instrument playing. These activities are structured so that the student's visual and auditory attending skills are emphasized. The music activities stimulate student's receptive and expressive communication skills and motor skills. Social skills are developed by using turn taking and participating in partner and group activities. The goal of the program is to provide these students with a positive interactive music experience.

- ART

Art activities serve to build student confidence and self-esteem. Students have the opportunity to develop their creativity through individual projects, cooperative learning projects, and sensory experiences. These activities also encourage the students to initiate communication, develop their listening skills, fine motor abilities, perceptual skills and interpersonal relationships.

- GROUP INSTRUCTION/SOCIALIZATION

In addition to discrete trial instruction, students work in a group setting to generalize skills that they learned through discrete trial sessions. Group instruction is also used to increase social skills and promote socialization.

- **TECHNOLOGY**

The Achieve Program has a designated resource center with computers, printers, literacy and math software programs, and augmentative communication programs to support classroom instruction. This resource center has been set up with the equipment and materials that can be utilized by the students. Through technology, the students receive instruction in the following areas of comprehension of written and oral information, word recognition skills, fluency, listening skills, math skills, and proficiency in using technology.

### **TRAINING/HOME PROGRAM**

As a part of a child's total education, Atlantic County Special Services School District recognizes the parents as playing a vital role in the maintenance and generalization of skills acquired in the school setting. In addition, parents are critical in establishing appropriate behaviors in the home and community settings. Consistent communication and cooperation between parents and staff facilitate more positive growth in the child, both educationally and emotionally. This is accomplished throughout the year via log books, school and home visits, telephone calls, and report cards. Workshops are also provided throughout the year for both staff and parents. They are facilitated by consultants from Eden Institute Behavioral Technology and include topics such as creating a structured environment, enhancing communication skills, increasing appropriate behaviors and decreasing inappropriate behaviors.