

## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

### WCPSS Special Education Services Supporting Autistic Students

The support services for students with autism can be accessed by each school through the school senior administrator or coordinating teacher. Initial requests can also be made by calling the Special Education Department at 919-858-3149. A more comprehensive list of people can be found in the Wake County Public School System Student/Parent Handbook; Special Education Services Supplement PreK-12.

### Community Resources for Students with Autism and their Parents

SEIC - Wake County Special Education and Inclusion Committee – 919-788-2500  
<http://wake-seic.org/>

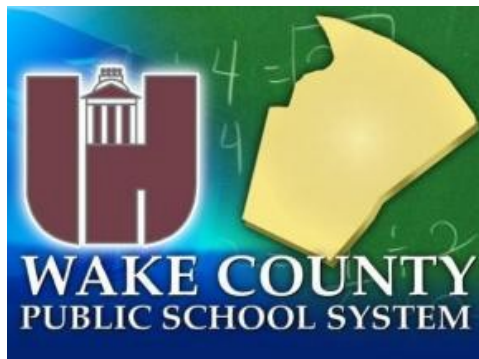
Autism Society of North Carolina – 919-743-0204 or 1-800-442-2762  
<http://www.autismsociety-nc.org>

Wake County Autism Society -  
<http://www.wakecountyautismsociety.org/>

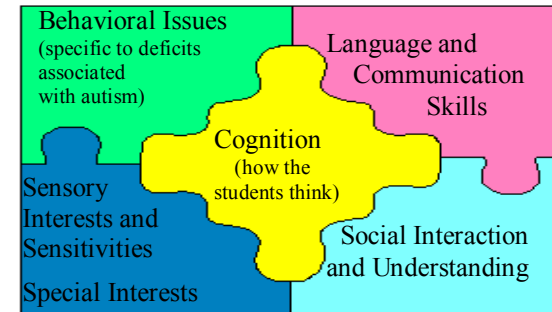
TEACCH – Chapel Hill – 919-966-5156  
<http://www.teacch.com/>

TEACCH – Raleigh – 919-662-4625

Wake County Public Schools Advisory Council for Exceptional Needs Children –  
 919-481-2389



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability. It is diagnosed by the presence of a pattern of characteristics or behaviors. Difficulties are found to some degree in each of the following areas.



In addition to this pattern of characteristics, students with autism display an uneven pattern of overall development.



**Relative strengths:** imitation skills, perceptual skills, eye hand coordination, expressive language

**Relative weaknesses:** motor skills (fine motor, gross motor), receptive language, processing speed

**Cognitive disorganization:** poor sequencing, categorizing, concrete, literal thinkers, variability in performance from day to day

**Adaptive skills:** generally delayed

Autism falls on a continuum of mild to moderate to severe. All students on the autism spectrum continuum show the same pattern of characteristics. The degree of autism and cognitive disability determine how those characteristics manifest themselves.

## What is Aspergers Syndrome?

Aspergers Syndrome is a part of the autism spectrum disorder. Students identified with Aspergers Syndrome have the same pattern of characteristics as those students identified with autism. However, these students generally have average to above average cognitive abilities and they access the standard course of study in school. It is common to hear Aspergers Syndrome and High Functioning Autism used interchangeably. There are minor differences in the development of these students from their peers with more severe deficits associated with autism, but their needs are basically the same when it comes supporting them in school.



### Serving Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

The theoretical framework for educational programming for students with autism in the Wake County Public School System has a foundation that is similar for both those students served in the low incidence programs and the regular and resource programs. Experience has shown that an eclectic approach to teaching is the most effective. Research based and best practice strategies and methodologies include the use of schedules, visuals, work systems, discrete trial learning, social skills instruction, incidental learning, verbal behavior therapy, floor time, and naturalistic teaching strategies.

The NC Dept. of Public Instruction has a “Best Practices in Educating Children with Autism” document on their website at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/instructional/autism/bestpractices.doc>.

### Placement Options for Students with Autism in Wake County Public Schools

A student with autism has access to the same options for placement as any other student. The exact placement and degree of support depends on the student’s degree of autism, any other diagnosed disability and degree of cognitive ability.

Wake County Public Schools provides a whole continuum of services from regular classroom placement including resource support to self-contained programs and alternative school placement. Depending on the placement, students can be taught the Standard Course of Study (SCoS) or the North Carolina Extended Content Standards (NCECS).



### Support Services for Students with Autism

Students with autism have access to the same support or related services as other students; speech and language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, psychological services, hearing and visually impaired support, etc. In addition, there are:

- three low incidence support teachers who provide consultative and training support for any teacher serving a student with a low incidence disability including autism
- autism support teachers assigned to many of the middle schools and high schools to provide assistance to teachers serving autistic students in the regular classroom
- four autism support teachers, each assigned to different regions instead of a specific school, who provide consultation for elementary school teachers serving autistic students in the regular classroom on the SCoS
- transition services for both low incidence students and those students taught the SCoS
- behavior support teachers

