

Nest Model Framework

Nest is a school inclusion model for Autistic students, in which Autistic students are educated in their neighborhood school alongside their general education peers. They receive specialized supports to be successful with the general education curriculum and develop their social and behavioral competence, in order to ultimately realize their full, unique potential as independent and happy adults.



CLASSROOM SUPPORTS

Built on a foundation of solid instructional practice, Nest classroom supports are devised to help Autistic students and benefit general education students

Class-wide Strategies: Whole-class social, sensory, behavioral, and academic strategies form a foundational level of support; individualized strategies are developed as necessary for students with greater needs

Integrated Therapeutic Supports: Teachers collaborate with therapists to devise strategies that help to create a therapeutic classroom environment

Landmark Documents: Documents outline the use of classroom strategies and serve as a reference and resource for teachers, therapists, and administrators

Social Development Intervention: Speech therapists and classroom teachers co-lead specialized small-group focus time; teachers generalize supports across the day



COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

Collaboration takes place through a series of structures with a variety of stakeholders, at all levels of the model **Co-teaching & Co-planning:** Classroom teachers co-plan and deliver instruction using a variety of co-teaching models **Nest Cluster Teacher:** A Nest-trained teacher supports students in out-of-classroom experiences, such as lunch, recess, and special subjects, like art, music, and gym

Team Meetings: After-school meetings are held weekly, with all relevant staff and administrators, to discuss program business and case conference each student to devise comprehensive support plans

Nest Coaches: Nest Coaches in schools receive additional training and support to become an internal point person for the Nest team, supporting teachers and students, and creating cohesion in the Nest team

Home-school Connection: Regular communication takes place with families, through emails, calls, and meetings, and support from a social worker or guidance counselor

Outside Support: Nest consultants help schools implement the model, problem-solve challenges, and work to develop schools' internal capacity



SYSTEM-WIDE STRUCTURES

Nest schools, under the leadership of their principals, commit to implementing the model; districts commit to funding for the program, for training staff, and for other school system supports

Reduced Class Size: Smaller classes create a comfortable learning environment for students

Training & Professional Development: Pre-service training and ongoing professional development prepares all teachers, therapists, and administrators for working with Nest students

Committed Administration: Principals and assistant principals are the school-level stakeholders who secure buy-in from staff, families, and the broader school community

Inclusive Classrooms: Nest classes are co-taught integrated inclusion classrooms



PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

Several shared beliefs serve as the foundation upon which all structures and practices are built

Understanding of Autism: Autistic students think and learn differently than allistic students; accordingly, all Nest practices stem from a recognition of students' neurological differences which manifest as differences in social understanding, sensory sensitivity, self-regulation challenges, etc.

Focus on Strengths: People are more motivated when they do something they're good at; in Nest, students' strengths and interests are honored and incorporated, instead of focusing on areas of deficit

Authentic Inclusion: Inclusion is not a location; students in Nest are recognized as full contributing members to the class and school community, throughout the entire day

Collaboration: The real expert in any school is the team; in Nest, collaboration exists between and across disciplines, and among the transdisciplinary team of teachers and related service providers

Individual Support: If students don't learn the way we teach, then we must teach the way they learn; In Nest, teams collaborate to devise individualized supports for struggling students

Therapeutic Environment: Students' home base is their classroom; Nest classrooms utilize supports typically provided by outside specialists so students have a safe environment where they can comfortably interact with their peers **Social Development:** Social development is essential to Autistic students; in Nest, social is supported through building of competence, developing relationships, and addressing internal motivation, which support independence and self-advocacy **Positive and Proactive Support:** Proactive planning and support leads to meaningful reduction in challenging situations; encouragement of new skills and praise supports development and results in long-lasting change

Family Involvement: Families provide invaluable knowledge about their children; in Nest, families are part of the team, involved in decision-making, updated regularly about changes and progress, and provided with resources such as targeted workshops and newsletters

