

PALS Full-day Preschool Program

Preschool for All Learning Styles

- Eligibility
- Individualization
- Communication

* *An Overview*

The PALS full-day program is primarily designed for children with a medical diagnosis of autism. The program is based upon Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), a science that systematically manipulates variables to increase desired behaviors and decrease maladaptive ones. Teaching techniques used in the Bernards Township classroom:

- define target behaviors and identify the circumstances under which these behaviors will occur
- pinpoint a criterion for mastery
- outline a teaching procedure as well as a teaching probe to ensure generalization
- offer strategies for acquired skills, and
- provide an inter-observer agreement measurement.

* *Eligibility*

In order to be eligible for the Bernards Township Full Day PALS program, a child must meet the criteria for **Pre-school Disabled** as defined by law as well as have an autistic spectrum disorder (i.e., Autism, PDD/PDD-NOS) documented by a medical professional (i.e. neurologist, pediatric psychiatrist, developmental pediatrician) and be in

need of an intensive ABA program. The team that determines initial eligibility includes parents, teacher, speech/language therapist, and at least one Child Study Team member who participated in the evaluation, case manager, and other appropriate individuals at the discretion of the parents or school district.

All children ages 3 to 5 who are found eligible receive the same classification: Preschool Disabled. This disability definition simply identifies the criteria by which a child is found eligible but does *not* dictate the services that are needed or the type of program s/he will receive.

* *Individualization of Instruction*

Once eligibility for the PALS full-day program is determined, a written plan called an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is developed. An IEP is both a process of collaboration between parents and educators as well as a legally binding contract between the parties. It describes the special education program and related services a child will receive and lays out the individual goals and objectives that will meet that child's unique needs.

Identification of these goals occurs following a 30-day comprehensive functional assessment of the child in

his or her classroom environment. After the assessment period, the IEP team reconvenes to discuss, determine, and define the most appropriate goals and objectives for that child based upon demonstrated skills and classroom performance.

Following this adjustment and assessment phase, school and home visits will take place from October to May, as scheduled with the teacher, to ensure that parents have full access to training and to their child's progress. During this time, parents may contact the teacher and/or case manager with

questions.

Teachers and/or the program instructors collect data on a weekly basis to *monitor progress* toward meeting goals and objectives. Parents receive four progress reports each year indicating progress toward all goals and objectives as outlined in the IEP. From October to May, parents are invited to visit the classroom and are given access to their child's data book during these visits, as accompanied by the teacher.