

Introduction

The Texas Autism Resource Guide for Effective Teaching is designed to assist schools in developing practices from initial referral to program development and implementation with a strong emphasis on research-based and peer-reviewed strategies. As such, this guide contains four sections relative to autism spectrum disorders (AU¹): (a) introduction, (b) evaluation, (c) interventions, and (d) a glossary. Information is presented in alphabetical order; item order reflects no endorsement or mandate. Further, decisions about which assessments and interventions to use are left to qualified individuals or committees charged with reviewing and creating programs for students with autism.

This guide serves multiple purposes for various groups of stakeholders:

1. It provides a single access point for information related to evaluating and teaching students with autism.
2. It describes various evaluation measures and the research that supports their use. Educational professionals who have the required experience and training to administer these instruments can use the evaluation section to help them make decisions regarding which instruments match the strengths and needs of students they are evaluating.
3. Educational professionals can read about interventions that have been used with students with autism. The handy checklist that precedes each intervention identifies for whom a given intervention may be appropriate (i.e., nonverbal, verbal, or mixed; preschool to kindergarten, elementary or middle/high school). Within the intervention section, the reader can also access a synthesis of research on additional resources to learn more about each intervention.

Information for this resource guide was generated from an extensive computer search of a variety of databases, including Academic OneFile, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Medline, ProQuest, PsychInfo, PubMed, and Wilson Omnifile. A review of autism-related journals was

¹ The State of Texas uses the term “autism” and the abbreviation “AU” to describe the spectrum of autism.

also conducted (i.e., *Autism, Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*). Searches were limited to school-aged (3 to 21) children with autism spectrum disorders (autism, Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorders-Not Otherwise Specified). Although the scope is extensive, not all articles on autism appear in this guide, and articles that address other developmental disabilities were not included in this review.

A concerted effort has been made to structure each section so that it is easily accessible to school professionals whose time is limited. A brief description of the structure of each section follows.

Evaluation for Identification and Programming and Issues Related to Eligibility vs. Diagnosis

This section discusses the importance of early identification of autism, diagnosis and eligibility, differential diagnosis, and Texas eligibility criteria for autism.

Educational Implications

A list of behaviors that might be seen in a school setting is presented for each characteristic related to autism. A brief narrative that describes the characteristics follows. To facilitate ease of reading, references for this section are listed at the end rather than being integrated throughout the narrative.

Evaluation

Evaluation measures are listed alphabetically within sections that include the following: adaptive behavior, cognitive, sensory, curriculum-based, etc. Each category appears in parallel format as follows.

- **Overview of Instruments.** This section begins a brief description of the assessment category and what information it can yield for eligibility and/or programming. With the exception of

eligibility, the following brief description of assessment instruments is presented in alphabetical order. That is, the two sections that address eligibility (Diagnosis and Identification and Autism Screening and Assessment) are presented prior to other assessment areas as these are foundational.

- **Table Summarizing Instruments.** Each instrument described in the Instrument Overview appears in this table. The table offers the following information: (a) name of tool/ author (year), (b) age range (in years), (c) method of administration/format, (d) approximate time to administer, (e) subscales, and (f) availability.
- **Misconceptions.** This two-columned table highlights commonly held myths and realities about a given assessment category.
- **References.** References that appear in each section are listed here.
- **Resources and Materials.** Articles and Internet resources that provide further information are listed in this section.

Interventions

Individual interventions and intervention programs/models are described in this section of the guides. Each intervention contains the following elements:

- **Overview of Characteristics.** This section identifies whether the intervention is appropriate for students with autism who have (a) verbal, (b) mixed, or (c) nonverbal skills. In addition, it identifies whether the intervention can be implemented with those at (a) preschool to kindergarten, (b) elementary school, or (c) middle/high school levels.
- **Brief Introduction.** This section provides background information, such as definitions of terms or how an intervention is compatible with student characteristics.
- **Description.** The description includes a narrative of the intervention.
- **Steps.** For interventions that can be broken into steps, individual steps are introduced and explained.
- **Brief Example.** A scenario of how the intervention can be used in a particular setting is presented.

- **Tips for Modifications.** Ways in which the intervention can be modified to meet the specific needs of particular students.
- **Summary.** A brief synopsis of the intervention is provided.
- **Research Table.** A one-line table presents the number of studies, the sample size, behaviors addressed, and outcome (+ for positive outcome; - for negative or no change) that appeared in peer-reviewed journals on a given intervention.
- **Studies Cited in the Research Table.** A brief abstract of each study that appears in the research table is presented. *Note:* The number of studies in the Research Table may be larger than the Studies Cited in the Research Table. For example, a meta-analysis will be listed as one study under Studies Cited in the Research Table; however, if the meta-analysis included 70 studies, that number appears in the Research Table.
- **References.** References that appeared in the Brief Introduction and Description as well as studies cited in the research table appear here.
- **Resources and Materials.** Articles and Internet resources that provide further information are listed in this section.

Intervention models, such as LEAP and TEACCH, appear in the Interventions section of the handbook. Research on the model appears in the table; however, research on components of each model appears under that specific intervention. For example, two components of LEAP are peer-mediated interventions and applied behavior analysis strategies. Articles that address the entire LEAP Model appear in the LEAP Research Table. Peer-reviewed articles on peer-mediated interventions, shaping, fading, reinforcement, and so forth, appear under those respective topics.