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January 18, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Special Education Directors  
Charter School Administrators  
Regional Education Cooperatives

**FROM:** Denise Koscielniak, Special Education Director

**RE: BEST PRACTICES TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING  
INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH  
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

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Attached you will find a best practices document highlighting items to consider when developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The strategies are not mandates; but best practices to consider when developing and implementing the IEP. The strategies do not mandate specific programs or services for students with ASD. The strategies were originally developed in Texas through the Texas Project FIRST (Families, Information, Resources, Support & Training) and can be accessed at <http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/AutismStrategies.html>.

The eleven best practices to consider are:

- Extended Educational Programming
- Daily Schedules reflecting minimal unstructured time and active engagement in learning activities
- In-home and Community-Based Training or viable alternatives that assist the student with acquisition of social/behavioral skills
- Positive Behavior Support Strategies
- Futures Planning
- Parent/Family Training and Support
- Staff-to-Student Ratio
- Communication Interventions

- Social Skills Supports
- Professional Educator/Staff Support
- Teaching Strategies based in peer-reviewed, and/or research based practices

The purpose of the guidance is to provide IEP teams with a checklist to consider when developing an IEP for a student with an ASD. Each of the considerations has a series of questions to begin the conversation amongst the IEP team, which includes the parent, regarding the consideration of each of the best practices. The questions are not finite and I would encourage you to customize the checklist to meet the needs of your district and the student(s). The guidance also lets IEP teams know on which portion of the IEP the best practices should be considered and documented. Lastly, the guidance provides school personnel and IEP teams with technical assistance manuals developed by the New Mexico Public Education Department, which will assist them when considering and implementing the best practices.

I hope you will find this guidance useful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the Special Education Bureau staff member assigned to your district at (505) 827 – 1457.

Enclosure (1)

cc: Dr. Sheila Hyde, Deputy Secretary, Learning and Accountability  
Dr. Kris Meurer, Acting Assistant Secretary, Student Success Division  
Albert Gonzales, Assistant General Counsel  
Special Education Bureau Staff  
Superintendents