

Preface

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD; Centers for Disease Control, 2009; Kogan et al., 2009). Many of these children are being classified as Autistic (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) and attending their neighborhood schools. However, this increase and the clinical complexity of ASD presents a rather unique challenge to many school districts in terms of their ability to identify and design appropriate educational programs and to identify and use evidence-based methods and practices that lead to improvements in student achievement; both of which are necessary to meet federal education mandates (IDEA, 2004; NCLB, 2001).

To address this challenge an increasing number of books and other materials on educational methods and program models for students with ASD have been developed. Yet, few resources are based firmly in the literature on effective practices in education and ASD intervention. Even fewer still provide schools with a systematic approach that will allow them to evaluate their program development needs and to create a continuum of program options that can meet the varied needs of their students with ASD. This book attempts to fill this gap by describing a program development protocol, entitled the *Autism Spectrum Disorders Program Development and Evaluation Protocol* (Magyar, 2006). This protocol includes a description of an ASD Program Model and its components, derived from the literature on effective educational and ASD methods and practices; and describes the program development procedure derived from the author's field-work for applying the Model that enables a district to develop an ASD program that is specific to their particular needs.

The *ASD Program Development and Evaluation Protocol* is applicable to program development activities across the grade span. The book provides descriptive information on research-based strategies and practices and includes tools and forms to assist the reader with his/her program development and evaluation activities.

The book is designed for a broad readership including school administrators and professional staff. It is organized into three parts. Part I provides the reader with information on autism spectrum disorders, program models and methods of intervention for students with ASD, and reviews methods of program evaluation in

education. Part II provides a detailed description of the various components of the ASD Program Development and Evaluation Protocol. It is organized in a manner that guides the reader through the program development and evaluation process. Part III provides case examples to illustrate application of the protocol in the field. It is the author's hope that readers will benefit from the information and resources contained within this book and that it will increase their understanding of how to approach the daunting task of developing and evaluating educational programs for students with ASD.

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