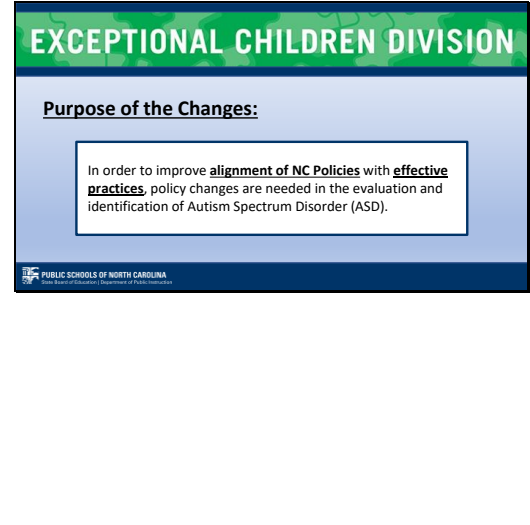
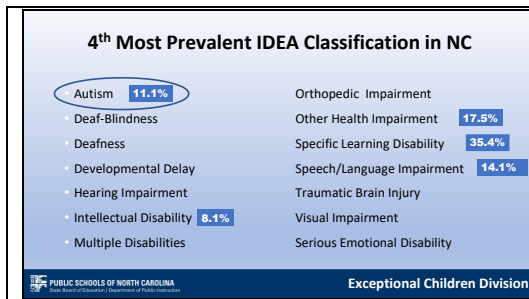
	<p>Brief video and listener notes are intended to summarize NC Policy changes in the evaluation and identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approved by the NC State Board of Education on September 5, 2019 - implementation of the changes for all NC Public Schools is January 1, 2020
	<p>PURPOSE OF THE CHANGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clarity to school evaluation teams in understanding the critical areas to investigate in evaluating and identifying ASD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASD is clearly on the rise; our school teams NEED to know how to evaluate and identify this disability properly so that effective instructional supports can be implemented • Increase parental/caregiver input specific to ASD characteristics, specifically with assisting teams in understanding the symptoms present in the early developmental period that may not manifest until the demands exceed coping capacities of the child (this is often the case in students with high functioning ASD). • Decrease gaps in service/fragmented services across school and community providers • Decrease state complaints, often resulting from inconsistency in applying universally accepted criteria to evaluation practices



In North Carolina, there are 14 areas of eligibility through which a child can obtain an educational classification and receive special education services.

Of the 1,556,141 students in our NC public schools, 206,532 (13.3%) are IDEA identified (source: April 1, 2019 child count)

- ASD identification rates have been on a steady upward trend ASD (IDEA) identifications over time.

April 2014 – 16,315

April 2015 – 17,644 (+1329)

April 2016 – 18,813 (+1169)

April 2017 – 20,102 (+1289)

April 2018 – 21,508 (+1408)

April 2019 – 22,933 (+1425)

- In 2018, ASD moved from 5th most prevalent to 4th most prevalent and continues to close in on Speech/Language Impaired. Considering this trend, it is expected that ASD may soon be the 3rd most prevalent IDEA classification.

A quality evaluation and accurate identification are the cornerstone of a meaningful and ambitiously attainable Individual Education Program for our students with disabilities; a key factor in the decision to provide clarity within NC special education policy in evaluating this highly prevalent disability.

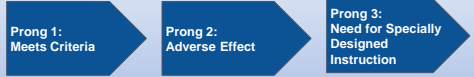



Autism Spectrum Disorder has universally accepted identification criteria that exist within a broader context; therefore, there is a need to ensure that public school practice in identification is in alignment with what we know exist as observable features of ASD.

<p>Outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal and State Definition NC Screenings and Evaluations NC Eligibility Criteria <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>REVIEW OF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basis for how state’s develop special education procedures – the federal IDEA regulations/definitions of each disability (described by characteristics) - Adjustments needed to NC required screens and evaluations, to improve alignment with the federal and state definition of ASD - Delineations to eligibility criteria for ASD
<p>Definition of Autism Spectrum Disorder (Federal and NC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A developmental disability that significantly affects verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and social interaction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adversely affects a child’s educational performance. • Generally evident before age three. • Other characteristics are engagement in repetitive activities, restricted interests, resistance to external changes, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. • ASD does not apply if a child’s educational performance is primarily affected by an emotional disability. <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>Current state definition is in complete alignment with the federal definition</p> <p>Remains in alignment with federal definition; NO CHANGES.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This definition continues to apply to the entire spectrum of Autism (low to high functioning) <p>BULLET 1: addresses the characteristics of verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction/behavior and the requirement of these characteristics to be evident (generally speaking) in the early developmental period (i.e., before age 3)</p> <p>BULLET 2: addresses the characteristics that may also be present related to repetitive behaviors/activities, restricted interests, resistance to change/rigidity and unusual responses to sensory experiences. SOME, BUT NOT ALL OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS MAY BE PRESENT</p> <p>BULLET 3: if an emotional disability is determined to be the primary (first in a series) reason for the student’s educational struggles, then ASD does not apply</p>
<p>Observable Features of ASD</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p>Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p>Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Symptoms present in the early developmental period</p> <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>Features that make up the critical areas under investigation within the evaluation when ASD is suspected.</p>

<p>NC Required Screenings/Evaluations</p> <p>ADD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motor screening• Sensory processing evaluation <p>MODIFY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social/developmental history• Psychological evaluation• Behavioral assessment related to ASD <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA Division of Special Education, Assessment and Accountability</small></p> <p>Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>APPROVED ADDITIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motor screen – as defined in <i>NC Policies</i> manual• Sensory Processing Evaluation – definition added to <i>NC Policies</i> manual <p>APPROVED MODIFICATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social/developmental history; to include an examination of characteristics of ASD present during the early developmental period <p>Note: The investigation of symptoms present in the early developmental period will rely on historical information of the child’s functioning from birth to age 3 (when available). The social/developmental history will aid in this investigation. Considerations for public school systems to include in a social/developmental history when ASD is under investigation: targeted questions related to the child’s social communication and interaction and any restricted repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities present in the child’s early developmental period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychological evaluation – the yielding of an overall intellectual score is not required and should be considered on a case-by-case basis <p>Note: This modification acknowledges that an overall intellectual score provides meaningful information <u>only</u> when there is minimal scatter across abilities measured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students with ASD often have scatter in skills; therefore, an overall score may not represent meaningful information for instructional planning purposes. The reporting of unreliable scores of this type is not required. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioral Assessment related to ASD: an assessment conducted by trained and knowledgeable personnel using behavior rating tools measuring the range of characteristics associated with ASD, yielding information of the child’s functioning across environments. This assessment may also include an individually administered instrument that assesses the range of characteristics associated with ASD. <p>Note: This modification clarifies that tools that specifically assess ASD characteristics must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be used to fulfill this requirement• provide information about the child’s functioning across a variety of environments
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<p>Added Definition: Behavioral Assessment Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder</p> <p>An assessment conducted by trained and knowledgeable personnel using behavior rating tools measuring the range of characteristics associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder, yielding information of the child’s functioning across environments. This assessment may also include individually administered instruments that assesses the range of characteristics associated with autism spectrum disorder.</p> <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>Added to the definitions section of the <i>NC Policies</i> manual</p>																								
<p>Added Definition: Sensory Processing Evaluation</p> <p>Sensory evaluations are performed by occupational therapists. A sensory processing evaluation collects, organizes, and analyzes information specific to how a student’s current level of sensory processing impacts occupational performance and participation at school. This information may be gathered through: review of educational and medical records; interviews with the student, teachers, parents, and others; detailed, in-context observations; and, the administration of formal testing instruments, procedures, and techniques. A sensory processing evaluation should include, but is not limited to, as many of the areas listed below as may be appropriate:</p> <p>(i) intensity of response to various sensory experiences, including (a) visual stimuli (b) auditory stimuli (c) olfactory stimuli (d) tactile stimuli (e) taste stimuli (f) vestibular stimuli (g) proprioceptive stimuli (ii) sensory-motor coordination (a) sensory-motor skills (b) praxis/motor planning skills;</p> <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>Added to the definitions section of the <i>NC Policies</i> manual</p>																								
<table border="1"> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Hearing screening</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Vision screening</td></tr> <tr><td>✗</td><td>Motor screen</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Observation across settings, to assess academic and functional skills</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Summary of conference(s) with parents or documentation of attempts to conference with parents</td></tr> <tr><td>MODIFIED</td><td>Social/developmental history; to include an examination of characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder present during the early developmental period</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Educational evaluation</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Adaptive behavior evaluation</td></tr> <tr><td>MODIFIED</td><td>Psychological evaluation; the yielding of an overall intellectual score is not required and should be considered on a case-by-case basis</td></tr> <tr><td>✗</td><td>Sensory processing evaluation</td></tr> <tr><td>✓</td><td>Speech-language evaluation which includes, but is not limited to, measures of language semantics and pragmatics</td></tr> <tr><td>MODIFIED</td><td>Behavioral assessment related to Autism Spectrum Disorder:</td></tr> </table> <p><small>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA State Board of Education, Department of Public Instruction</small> Exceptional Children Division</p>	✓	Hearing screening	✓	Vision screening	✗	Motor screen	✓	Observation across settings, to assess academic and functional skills	✓	Summary of conference(s) with parents or documentation of attempts to conference with parents	MODIFIED	Social/developmental history; to include an examination of characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder present during the early developmental period	✓	Educational evaluation	✓	Adaptive behavior evaluation	MODIFIED	Psychological evaluation; the yielding of an overall intellectual score is not required and should be considered on a case-by-case basis	✗	Sensory processing evaluation	✓	Speech-language evaluation which includes, but is not limited to, measures of language semantics and pragmatics	MODIFIED	Behavioral assessment related to Autism Spectrum Disorder:	<p>Table summarizing the changes; underscoring that the changes were minimal and designed to provide clarity to IEP evaluation teams in their focused investigation of Autism Spectrum Disorder.</p>
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<p>Eligibility Decisions</p>  <p>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA <small>State Board of Education Department of Public Instruction</small></p> <p>Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy changes impact Prong 1 decisions ONLY (establishing disability type) - NO CHANGES in the requirements for IEP teams to determine adverse effect and need for specially designed instruction
<p>Existing Eligibility Criteria for Prong 1</p> <p>To be determined eligible, a child must demonstrate at least three of the four characteristics listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Impairment in communication; (B) Impairment in social interaction; (C) Unusual response to sensory experiences; (D) Restricted, repetitive, or stereotypic patterns of behavior, interests, and/or activities. <p>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA <small>State Board of Education Department of Public Instruction</small></p> <p>Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>EXISTING CRITERIA FOR PRONG 1:</p> <p>Ambiguity noted with the “3 of the 4” language - potential inaccurate identifications and false negatives <u>Both</u> A and B MUST be present, unclear in previous NC eligibility criteria for ASD</p>
<p>New Criteria: Prong 1 Social Communication & Interaction</p> <p>(A) Impairment in communication; (B) Impairment in social interaction;</p>  <p>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA <small>State Board of Education Department of Public Instruction</small></p> <p>Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>APPROVED CHANGES TO ESTABLISHING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION DEFICITS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides clarity in the targeted areas to investigate to sufficiently address these core features of ASD <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Examples of deficits in social-emotional reciprocity may include abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation, reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect, overly social response/interaction or failure to initiate/respond to social interactions.</p> <p>Examples of deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, may include poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication, abnormalities in eye contact and body language, deficits in understanding and use of gestures or lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.</p> <p>Examples of deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships may include difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts, difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends, absence of interest in peers.</p> </div>

New Criteria: Prong 1
Restricted, Repetitive Patterns of Behavior, Interests, or Activities

(C) Unusual response to sensory experiences;
 (D) Restricted, repetitive, or stereotypic patterns of behavior, interests, and/or activities.

1 or more

- Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech
- Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior
- Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
- Atypical responses to sensory input or atypical interests in sensory aspects of the environment

Currently **or** by history

APPROVED CHANGES TO ESTABLISHING RESTRICTED, REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS, INTERESTS OR ACTIVITIES:

- Provides clarity in the targeted areas to investigate to sufficiently address these features that may also be present in children with ASD



IEP Teams should be aware that students may use strategies (learned or developed) to suppress stereotypical and or repetitive behaviors in the school environment, which then manifest in other ways or in other environments. Restricted interests are sometimes more subtle in girls as they may not be "unusual" as much as they are restricted.

This prong is implied in the definition, but was not explicit in the existing criteria.

New Criteria: Prong 1

Symptoms **generally** present in the early developmental period, but may not manifest until social demands exceed coping capacities **or may be masked by learned strategies in later life. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism spectrum disorder if the criteria in (A) and (B) are satisfied.**

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This is implied in the definition but was not determined to be explicit enough; therefore, the clarifying language is added to support consistency in application across the state.

Prong 2: Adverse Effect

The disability must: (A) Have an adverse effect on educational (academic and/or functional) performance.

Prong 3: Need for Specially Designed Instruction

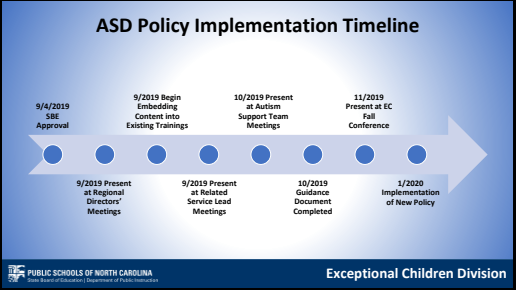
Specially designed instruction means **adapting**, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction - To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.

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When the accurate disability type is established, the IEP team is then required to determine the level of impact that the disability is having on educational performance, and, whether there is a need for specially designed instruction, as defined by the IDEA.

- Adverse effect and need for SDI must be directly linked to the unique needs of the child resulting from the identified disability

There have been no changes to these requirements; however, it is important to note why the changes to identifying the disability accurately are so critical to these subsequent determinations.

 <p>ASD Policy Implementation Timeline</p> <p>9/4/2019 SBE Approval</p> <p>9/2019 Begin Embedding Content into Existing Trainings</p> <p>10/2019 Present at Autism Support Team Meetings</p> <p>11/2019 Present at EC Fall Conference</p> <p>9/2019 Present at Regional Directors' Meetings</p> <p>9/2019 Present at Related Service Lead Meetings</p> <p>10/2019 Guidance Document Completed</p> <p>1/2020 Implementation of New Policy</p> <p>PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA Exceptional Children Division</p>	<p>Implementation timeline reflects the communication pathways used to share the critical elements of the ASD policy changes and support IEP teams across the state in their effective implementation of the changes.</p>
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