The Statewide Autism Resources and Training Project (START) Intensive Training focuses on evidence-based practices to increase knowledge and skills that enhance the educational programming and outcomes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and related disabilities from preschool through post high school.

Intensive training is provided to multidisciplinary teams including teachers, administrators, ancillary staff, community partners, and parents. Each team is comprised of six individuals who attend each training session and work collaboratively to develop implementation plans for target students, classrooms, programs, and school buildings.

- Early Childhood Intensive Training
- K-12 Intensive Training
- Building Your Future Intensive Training

Eligible applications include Intermediate School Districts, Local Education Agencies, and Public School Academies with preference given to schools and districts:

- that demonstrate a significant need for training and support.
- with high numbers of students with ASD.
- in geographic areas that have not received START Intensive Training recently.
- that work in collaboration with other schools, local agencies, or other organizations.
- that have applied to START previously but could not be accommodated in the schedule.

The START Project is funded by a grant through the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education (MDE, OSE) to provide professional development and resources to school-based teams across the state of Michigan.
Early Childhood Training Curriculum
One - Year Training Commitment

Module 1: Planning for High Quality Early Childhood Programming (1 day)
This training covers the primary components of the START program early childhood intensive training along with the evidence based practices for supporting young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in early childhood settings. Participants learn the critical elements of programming including a focus on inclusion and increasing active learning within all activities. Data collection systems are introduced.

Module 2: Early Childhood Classroom Structure and Foundations for Learning (2 days)
This training addresses organizational, instructional, and people supports necessary to create a highly effective learning environment for young children with ASD. An emphasis will be placed on constructing a classroom environment that promotes numerous learning and social opportunities through creative scheduling, visual supports, student and staff expectations, and proactive behavior strategies. Participants learn goal setting with assessment data, instructional strategies, and data collection. Each team will complete an early childhood assessment tool as a way to evaluate current program components and set improvement goals.

Module 3: Embedding Behavioral Strategies for Instruction and Support (1 day)
This training emphasizes the use of evidence-based, intensive strategies for teaching, with particular focus on applied behavior analysis (ABA). Participants will learn the foundations of ABA in the context of the classroom environment such as identifying learning goals, instructional presentation, prompting and reinforcement, and data collection and analysis. We share creative ways to incorporate individualized instruction into classroom routines. Behavioral support strategies and how to teach toileting skills will also be discussed.

Module 4: Group Instruction in Early Childhood Classrooms (1 day)
This training will focus on small group instruction across various classroom activities. Participants learn to set comprehensive goals and create plans for learning activities such as small group, circle, and snack time along with differentiating instruction. Participants will learn about active student responding and utilizing strategies taught in previous modules during small group time, such as incorporating intensive instruction and behavior support.

Module 5: Teaching Play and Communication Skills in the Early Childhood Classroom (1 day)
This training outlines strategies used to increase learning opportunities to promote play skills in young children. Participants learn to individualize strategies for specific students as well as creating broad activities relevant to an entire class. A variety of strategies will be presented including scripted play, video modeling, reciprocal imitation, observational play, structuring play centers, organizing free play, and peer training. Participants also learn to teach functional communication skills with a particular emphasis on manding/requesting.

Module 6: Implementing High Quality Preschool Programming (1 day)
This training will cover advanced behavioral teaching strategies including how to set up and implement discrete trial teaching in both natural and decontextualized learning situations. Participants will also learn a systematic process for transition planning. Teams will use various tools and strategies to create a work plan for future implementation of practices learned in the training series.
Year One Modules

Module 1: Orientation, Foundations in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and the Teaming Process (2 days)
This module provides participants with an orientation to the START Project and an overview of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) including current characteristics and definitions; learning characteristics associated with ASD, etiologies and research in the area of ASD. The module also includes information on evidence-based practices for students with ASD, including the importance of family involvement in educational planning. Essential practices for conducting effective meetings including a problem solving process will be presented as part of meeting mechanics.

Module 2: Looking at ASD Differently (2 days)
For this module, Looking at ASD Differently is about respecting the characteristics of ASD manifested by people on the spectrum and using their intense interests and needs to their advantage. It is not uncommon for people to observe autistic behaviors in a student with ASD and decide they will develop a plan to “extinguish” those behaviors. However this approach often leads to further challenging behavior. This presentation will focus on a new way of thinking about behaviors associated with ASD, which is foundational for staff at all levels who are working with individuals with ASD.

Module 3: Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support for Students with ASD (2 days)
This module is a team-based training on the principles of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Participants will gain an understanding of the 3-tiered model of PBIS as well as the problem solving process of functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and positive behavior support plan development. Participants will learn to collect relevant data and use that information to guide the development of behavioral strategies. Specific behavioral strategies effective for students with ASD are addressed.

Module 4: Educational Supports and Strategies for Students with ASD (2 days)
This module provides participants with a foundation of educational strategies that build upon the strengths of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and lead to successful learning. Participants are provided an opportunity to experience ASD through sensitivity awareness activities which lead to a better understanding of the learning challenges for these students. Participants learn to provide curricular accommodations and modifications so students with ASD have access to appropriate grade-level curriculum. A framework for developing an individualized academic modification and grading plan for a student with ASD as well as practice in creating such a plan is provided.

Module 5: Peer to Peer Support for Students with ASD (2 days)
This module provides participants with the specific steps necessary to develop a peer to peer support program for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Information covered includes the process for recruiting general education students, the necessary training they require as well as strategies for maintaining the students and program as a whole. The module includes information on the concept of “medium of exchange” which addresses strategies for connecting general education students with students with ASD and all forms necessary for developing, implementing and maintaining the program are provided.
Year One Modules (continued)

Module 6: IEP Development and Implementation for Students with ASD (2 days)
This module focuses on the process of developing an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that incorporates the legal requirements of LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) and embeds established evidence-based practices for students with ASD. Participants complete an Educational Benefit Review that addresses the effectiveness of previous IEPs in order to target discussion points to enhance the future IEP process. Participants learn how to write an effective Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statement as well as develop observable and measurable goals and objectives related to the student’s progress in the general education curriculum and setting. Strategies for implementing the IEP with fidelity and data collection procedures for monitoring progress toward goals and objectives are also covered.

Module 7: Transition Planning for Students with ASD (1 day)
This module provides a framework of activities that leads to a successful yearly Individualized Educational Program (IEP) transition for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Participants are given an opportunity to reflect on the student’s progress of the previous school year as well as conduct the activities necessary to prepare for the upcoming grade or building transition.

Administrator Module (1/2 Day – with option afternoon session)
This module is intended for ISD, district, and building administrators. The administrator module provides a comprehensive overview of the START intensive training components. This module will suggest strategies for positive administrative support of evidence-based practices in supporting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Year Two Supplementary Modules

Systems Change through Coaching – Parts 1 & 2 (2 Days)
This module addresses issues related to educational systems change that increase implementation of effective practices for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Participants are provided a structure for developing a coaching model as well as skills for serving in a variety of coaching roles and responsibilities. Tools to assist in implementing the coaching model, including the Universal Supports Assessment and Planning Tool (USAPT) developed by START, are provided. Participants are provided a variety of strategies for working and interacting with colleagues during the process of systems level change.

Asperger’s Syndrome (2 Days)
This module is intended for participants educating students with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS). The module explores characteristics of students with AS and effective practices identified in the literature to support students in their school environment. Relevant theories are covered, including social attribution theory and theory of mind, which are critical to supporting the social, emotional and behavioral development of students with AS. The Path A / Path B strategy is used to teach participants how attributions impact decision-making and responses to the behaviors of students with AS.
Year Two Supplementary Modules (continued)

Self-Management (1 Day)
Self-management strategies have been used for students with a wide range of academic and behavioral challenges, including students with ASD. Teaching self-management is a pivotal for students to learn how to independently regulate their behavior across many situations. Although teachers and family members initially may play a major role in the implementation of the system, ultimately, the responsibility for ongoing use of the system should be passed to the student as much as possible. This module provides participants with instruction on how to individualize a self-management system for a student with ASD. This will include the steps needed for a student to learn to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, monitor and record their own behaviors, and reward themselves for meeting a specified goal.

Education-Based Evaluations for ASD (1 Day)
This module outlines critical components and processes for an education-based special education eligibility evaluation for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It incorporates key features of its foundational predecessor, CET (Centralized Evaluation Team), and includes a detailed review of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) ASD eligibility criteria. Evaluation components and processes outlined in the Education-Based Evaluations for ASD document published by the Michigan Autism Council are also reviewed which include tools and examples for interviews, observations, and report-writing. A critical review of available standardized tests and their technical adequacy and differential eligibility decision-making processes are also included.
Module 1: Foundations in ASD and the Teaming Process (1 day)
This module covers the training process and logistics for the year as well as the current research, data, and evidence-based practices on ASD and post-secondary transition outcomes. Meeting Mechanics, a problem solving process that can be applied to all team decision-making efforts, also is introduced. This process is used throughout the training series to develop individualized supports for the target individual with ASD.

Module 2: Guiding Principles and the Discovery Process (1 day)
In order to design and implement effective practices for youth with ASD, teams need guiding principles to assist them in decision-making. This module presents the core guiding principles for improving post-secondary transition outcomes for students with ASD. The discovery process also is introduced as an assessment method for understanding student strengths and skills in order to inform the IEP Vision and develop a Vocational Profile and Visual Resume to increase employment opportunities.

Module 3: Looking at ASD Differently for Adults (1 day)
This module will assist participants in better understanding individuals with ASD and the strategies that are most effective for them to be successful in employment, independent living, higher education, and/or community participation.

Module 4: Evidence-Based Supports for Employment Success (1 day)
This module explores effective (and ineffective) strategies for addressing behaviors of individuals with ASD that interfere with success in adult social environments. Included are the steps for implementing a number of evidence-based practices including self-management, visual supports, and effective teaching strategies for preventing behavioral issues.

Module 5: Asperger Syndrome (AS) (1 day)
This module explores strategies to understand and support the characteristics and needs of individuals with AS. Relevant theories will be discussed including social attribution theory and theory of mind which are critical to supporting the social, emotional and behavioral development of individuals with AS.

Module 6: Peer to Peer and other Natural Supports (1 day)
This module covers the evidence-based practice of peer-mediated instruction and other effective strategies for increasing independent skills and social competence of individuals with ASD in adult social environments. Also included is the training and support of naturally occurring supports such as co-workers and/or roommates.

Module 7: Discovery and the IEP (1 day)
This module will assist participants in understanding the discovery process and how to assure the information gathered through the process is embedded in the IEP. Additionally, this module focuses on the process of developing an IEP that incorporates the legal requirements of LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) and addresses the unique needs of young adults with ASD to ensure access and success in employment, independent living, higher education and community involvement.
Module 8: Systems Change (1 day)
This module explores the structures and processes needed to increase the capacity of local communities to embrace individuals with ASD and ensure their successful transition to adulthood. Included in these processes is the planning for ongoing training opportunities for three primary community partner groups: providers (including MRS, CMH, school personnel, etc.), employers and college / technical school personnel, and community professionals (including doctors, dentists, barbers/stylists, etc.).