

**VIRGINIA  
COMMONWEALTH  
UNIVERSITY**

*ace* Autism Center for  
Excellence (VCU-ACE)

# Request for Applications from Virginia School Divisions

for

Divisionwide Technical  
Assistance:

Exemplary Services to  
Support Students with Autism  
Spectrum Disorder

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**VCU**

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

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## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence (VCU-ACE) is requesting applications from school divisions who wish to become exemplary sites in the provision of high quality educational services and supports for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The VCU-ACE will select five to eight school divisions through a competitive review process. Successful applications will demonstrate a clearly defined strategy for long-term systemic changes across the entire school division.

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Nationally, the reported incidence of ASD has risen dramatically in the last 20 years. According to data collected yearly by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the measured occurrence of ASD, as the primary disability reported on the December 1 child count, continues to rise. The 2015 VDOE child count data for autism is 18,256 up from 17,030 in 2014, and 14,624 in 2013. Students with ASD frequently require a higher intensity of structure and carefully designed systematic instruction to acquire the academic and functional skills necessary to become independent and successful adults. School divisions have requested assistance in meeting the educational needs of students with ASD at a higher rate than those with other disabilities. Thus, as the numbers have increased, school divisions have experienced increasing pressure to meet the needs of this growing group of students and to maintain high standards in the provision of educational services across the entire division.

Since its inception, VCU-ACE worked with 24 school divisions to address the implementation of a school divisionwide systems change process to result in improved services at every level of the school division for students with ASD. The VCU-ACE has provided technical assistance to school division teams to improve their understanding of the implementation of evidence-based practices for students with ASD across the age range. Results from this intervention will vary based on the division's specific needs and may include some of the following:

- Comprehensive pre and post testing to guide professional development and professional learning opportunities
- Divisionwide social skills instruction for students with ASD implemented in a variety of formats (after school clubs, dedicated class time, dedicated course elective for secondary grades)
- Divisionwide training and coaching resulting in increased classroom use of evidence-based practices when teaching students with autism
- Development of administrative training to increase understanding of educating students with autism
- Divisionwide development of procedures for students with autism to have functional means of communication
- Divisionwide comprehensive online training for school administrators, faculty, and staff
- Improved interactions with families through the provision of information and development of support groups
- Improved transition between grades, teachers, and schools for children and youth with ASD
- Improved transition from school to adulthood employment or post-secondary education for youth with ASD
- Improved professional development for educational professionals and paraprofessionals in evidence-based practices for children and youth with ASD through professional learning communities
- Improved classroom practices in self-contained and inclusive settings for children and youth with ASD
- Improved teacher assessment procedures for administrators supervising special education faculty

## SERVICES AND MODEL

- Implementation of inclusive, co-taught programs for students with autism
- Development of comprehensive Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention procedures.

For Cohort Three, VCU-ACE will select five to eight school divisions who are the best fit for a long-term commitment to systems change. The VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will assist selected school divisions in completing a self-assessment and facilitating a divisionwide Autism Services Improvement Team (ASIT) in the development of an Autism Services Improvement Plan (ASIP). These plans will provide additional data-based targets and define the exact technical assistance and training activities that will take place in the school division. While school divisions will self-define their own plans, VCU-ACE will guide the development of the plans to result in systems change across the ASD spectrum. These plans will provide a coordinated approach to divisionwide systems change, professional development, coaching, mentoring, and services improvement. Plans may include up to four goals to address professional development, implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs), alignment of divisionwide policies or practices, and/or programs that specifically address the unique needs of students with autism. In addition to providing targeted technical assistance, VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will also collect data on the success of technical assistance efforts, and revise those efforts based on ongoing data-based decision making. Finally, VCU-ACE will guide practice at all levels based on the implementation of technical assistance. This 'bottom-up/top-down' approach has been demonstrated as one of the most successful ways to ensure long-term implementation of evidence-based practice (Odom, 2009).

School divisions who are selected to participate will receive approximately 40 to 50 hours a month of embedded technical assistance from VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates. Our team of Technical Assistance Associates has extensive experience in the provision of evidence-based practices in public school and community settings as well as facilitation of systems change processes using our Bottom-up/Top-Down model of implementation. Technical assistance will target five phases, (Fixsen, Blaze, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009). Please note that the phases are to guide activities and do not necessarily map directly to time. Goals will be updated to reflect progress and completion of the phases. The phases and activities in the phases include:

- Phase 1: Exploration
  - Review division Services Improvement Plan (e.g., general division strategic plan)
  - Identify areas to target change
  - Assess ASD services
  - Identify current division knowledge of ASD and best practices
  - Select members of the Autism Services Implementation Team (ASIT)
  - Identify Division Autism Lead, Specialist, or Targeted Person (infrastructure)
  - Identify division model for educating students with ASD
  - Identify current placements for students with ASD
  - Identify current level of parent-school partnership
  - Identify divisionwide resources
  - Complete divisionwide program assessment of ASD services and stakeholder needs
- Phase 2: Installation
  - Facilitate Autism Services Improvement Team (ASIT) meetings
  - Develop Division's Vision, Mission, and Core Values related to the education of students with ASD

- Develop Division goals for Autism Services Improvement Plan (ASIP)
- Develop and implement Professional Development Plan
- Establish and identify resources needed to address goals
- Identify strategies to develop school-family partnership
- Develop dissemination plan for professional development and follow-up support
- Establish framework for ongoing assessment and data collection
- Assess the five change drivers of collective impact
- Phase 3: Initial Implementation
  - Identify target audience to begin the dissemination plan (e.g., training, mentoring and coaching of administrators, teachers, related service providers and other division staff in evidence-based practices for ASD)
  - Facilitate ASIT and working group/committees to address goals
  - Facilitate parent-school partnership plan
  - Provide regular updates and request guidance from division stakeholders
  - Conduct ongoing assessment of implementation of EBPs
  - Expand institutional knowledge of ASD through training and professional development
  - Conduct ongoing assessment of goal progress (ASIP)
  - Develop Sustainability Plan
- Phase 4: Full Implementation
  - Review functionality of ASIT team
  - Review the five change drivers of collective impact
  - Continue ongoing assessment of ASIP
  - Continue assessment of parent-school partnership
  - Provide guided support as needed to move goals toward completion
  - Review policies as it relates to professional development, student services, commitment to LRE, and specific goals.
  - Identify barriers to sustainability plan
  - Implement sustainability plan
- Phase 5: Sustainability and Maintenance
  - Continue ongoing self-assessment of functionality of ASIT team
  - Continue ongoing self- assessment of ASIP by reviewing established framework for data collection, analysis, and review
  - Continue ongoing divisionwide self-assessment of EBPs
  - Continue ongoing self-assessment of goal maintenance
  - Facilitate future goal development
  - Advise on an as needed basis

Our model is an embedded technical assistance model where we provide services in the classroom (Bottom-up) as well as to the division leaders (Top-Down). Our definition of evidence-based practice is congruent with the VDOE document, *Guidelines for Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders* (VDOE, 2010, Wong, Odom, et al., 2013).

The VDOE document, *Guidelines for Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, can be viewed at: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/autism/technical\\_asst\\_documents/autism\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/autism/technical_asst_documents/autism_guidelines.pdf).

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders document, *Evidence Based Practices for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, can be viewed at: <http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/reports-and-policy-briefs/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>.

## ELIGIBILITY

School divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia that were not included in Cohort One or Two are eligible to apply for Cohort Three. The school division must present evidence that demonstrates its capacity for participation as an exemplary autism site. It is expected that applicants will engage in meaningful planning with autism stakeholders in the preparation of the application. A school division must apply as a single entity; combined division applications will not be considered. Regional programs are encouraged to apply, however technical assistance will only address the regional program, not the cooperating divisions which the regional program serves.

## DESCRIPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Participating school divisions will receive intensive technical assistance from VCU-ACE experts in a wide array of evidence-based practices. While specific school division goals will be determined collaboratively, areas of practice improvement may include:

- Increasing the knowledge of principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, speech therapists, related services professionals, school assessment and child study team members, and division administrators regarding characteristics of ASD and evidence-based practices for students with ASD
- Implementing evidence-based practices to fidelity in public school and community based settings
- Improving Child Study and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams' knowledge and skills in assessment and planning
- Improving transition planning so that all students with ASD leave the school division college and career ready with 21st century skills
- Improving the abilities of principals and school division administrators to provide supervision and coaching to educational staff
- Improving educational staff, community, and family collaboration
- Enhancing a community of acceptance among peers

The VCU-ACE will guide practice at all levels through the delivery of embedded technical assistance. The VCU-ACE will provide a coordinated approach to divisionwide systems change, professional development, coaching, mentoring, and services improvement. Divisions will participate with VCU-ACE to develop goals to address all levels of professional and paraprofessional development, improve classroom implementation of evidence-based practice, implement interdisciplinary teaming, and improve family involvement and support. In addition to providing targeted technical assistance, VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will collect data on the success of technical assistance and project outcomes. Technical assistance activities will be modified based on ongoing data-based decision making.

The VCU-ACE will assist the selected divisions' ASIT in a thorough assessment using the following scales:

- Autism Program Environment Rating Scale -- Preschool/Elementary
- Autism Program Environment Rating Scale -- Middle/High School
- Individual student validity measures such as goal mastery
- Inclusive practices measures adapted from the Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS), fidelity checklist, and other sources

(Odom, Cox, Brock, et al., 2013)

Additional assessments, surveys, and walkthrough checklists may be recommended based on the focus of the school division's priorities.

During this assessment, VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will convene an Autism Excellence Academy for all identified school divisions. During the meeting, VCU-ACE will assist each school division's ASIT in developing a divisionwide ASIP. Included in the plans will be data-based targets, and the specific technical assistance and training activities that will take place in the division.

A major aspect of the Autism Excellence Academy will be to establish specific targets and outcomes with each school division that are customized to the unique needs of that division. Timelines and staffing plans will be developed to address each phase of this project. These timelines will be revisited quarterly for appropriateness and adjustments will be made as needed. It is our goal to assist school divisions to become exemplary providers of services to their students with ASD. Thus, we are dedicated to building the capacity of school divisions serving students with ASD.

The VCU-ACE will provide:

- Facilitation of our VCU-ACE Bottom-up/Top-Down Systems Change Model
- Facilitation of Professional Learning Communities around a division's areas of interest and needs as it relates to educating students with autism
- Baseline, ongoing, and follow-up assessment of division and classroom functioning
- Comprehensive training and coaching dedicated to the use of evidence-based practices
- Development of data-driven decision making practices across the division

Selected divisions will be expected to provide:

- A dedicated project coordinator who is available to spend 50-75 hours a month on the ACE project, who has the ability to make connections with the rest of the ASIT and division leaders, and who is able to work collaboratively on an ongoing basis with a Technical Assistance Associate from VCU. This person will champion the ASIP and will provide coordination of efforts across the entire team. This person should plan on coordinating with VCU-ACE staff weekly. The project coordinator may be determined once division is selected in collaboration with VCU-ACE.
- Identification of ASIT Team Members from among division staff who will assist the team in the development and implementation of the ASIP. The ASIT is usually comprised of approximately 10 to 20 division staff members who carry out the ASIP. The Division should plan to provide release time for those ASIT members who have daily classroom responsibilities, although it is not required that classroom staff participate on the ASIT.
- Attendance and participation by selected division ASIT members in the Autism Excellence Academy in June 2017. School divisions will be required to fund transportation and lodging for their selected ASIT members. School divisions usually send four to five key ASIT members along with their identified ASIT project coordinator.
- Provision of division specific data to assist team in evaluating the impact of project.
- Attendance at two meetings each year with VCU-ACE administrative staff will be held with the special education director to discuss progress on school division goals.
- Attendance at two meetings each year will be held with the VCU-ACE Technical Assistance (VCU-ACE TA) and the special education director to discuss progress on school division goals.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR SELECTED DIVISIONS

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Scheduling and attendance at regular monthly meetings with the entire ASIT to review goals and activities, report on progress toward the goals, and complete regular strategic planning
- Attendance and participation in Regional Communities of Leaders in Autism meetings (usually two per year)
- Attendance and participation in the Communities of Leaders in Autism Summer institute
- Submission of at least one poster for the Communities of Leaders in Autism Summer Institute

School divisions who are selected can expect improvements in services to students with ASD across the division. Specifically, VCU-ACE may work with school divisions to:

- Substantially increase the technical skills and knowledge of staff, including principals, teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, related services personnel, and administrators
- Improve the quality of instructional practices used by special educators
- Increase child study teams' ability to accurately identify and assess students with ASD
- Increase knowledge and implementation of individual positive behavior support strategies
- Increase the quality of IEP development in terms of relevance, functionality, and measurability of goals and objectives
- Increase the ability of general education staff to implement required accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of students with ASD
- Increase the knowledge of school personnel, students, and parents in the use of assistive technology to meet the needs of students with ASD
- Increase parent participation and parent-school partnerships
- Increase knowledge of transition planning, secondary intervention, and social skills competence

## SUBMISSION PROCESS

The submission process is described below:

- Application Available ..... September 1, 2016

Online at:

[http://vcuautismcenter.org/documents/request\\_for\\_application\\_2017\\_2020.pdf](http://vcuautismcenter.org/documents/request_for_application_2017_2020.pdf)

- Application Due ..... December 16, 2016
- Site visits of division finalists ..... January 5 - February 10, 2017
- Interview with selected division stakeholders ..... By February 20, 2017
- Notice of Selection ..... March 1, 2017
- Phase 1 Begins ..... March - April, 2017
- Autism Excellence Academy ..... June, 2017

★ Duration of Technical Assistance: three years based on progression through phases and funding.

★ **All proposals are due on December 16, 2016 by 5 p.m.**

★ Proposals should be no longer than **15 pages, double-spaced with one-inch margins on all pages in 12-point font**. Each page should be numbered and have a footer with the name of the school division.

- \* If there are documents, (e.g., self-evaluations, program improvement plans, or strategic plans) that further describe the school division's commitment to special education and educating students with ASD, please include those documents in an appendix with the proposal. Appendices will not be included in the 15-page limit.

School divisions may provide an electronic submission of these elements at either of the following addresses: [cmschall@vcu.edu](mailto:cmschall@vcu.edu) or [secarr@vcu.edu](mailto:secarr@vcu.edu)

School divisions may provide a hard copy of the proposal to:

**Carol Schall**  
**Virginia Commonwealth University**  
**Autism Center for Excellence**  
**1314 West Main Street**  
**P.O. Box 842011**  
**Richmond, Virginia 23284-2011**

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** For questions or to request an application in an alternative format, please contact: **Dr. Carol Schall -- [cmschall@vcu.edu](mailto:cmschall@vcu.edu)**  
**or Dr. Staci Carr -- [secarr@vcu.edu](mailto:secarr@vcu.edu)**

### **CONSIDERATION FOR SELECTION**

Selection considerations for school divisions to receive intensive technical assistance from the VCU-ACE will include:

- Completeness of application
- Potential to benefit from technical assistance
- Demonstrated commitment to change
- Strength of existing supports
- Vision for systems change
- Explanation of plan to implement divisionwide professional development
- Explanation of current initiatives taking place within the division
- Letters of commitment from designated stakeholders

Please note: Consideration will also include the relative size of school divisions applying, geographic location, and number of students with ASD within the school division.

## **SITE VISIT**

New with Cohort Three, we will be conducting half day site visits with divisions that are selected as finalists. The purpose of the site visit is to meet and interview administrators and autism leaders, observe a classroom that educates students with ASD at each level (Elementary, Middle, and High School) to determine if VCU-ACE is a good match for the division's needs. Some targets we will observe include, but are not limited to:

- Staff knowledge of ASD
- Evidence of inclusive practices and the use of evidence based practices
- Administrator commitment and understanding of evidence based practices for students with autism
- Other VDOE initiatives in place
- Evidence of Professional Development related to ASD

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

- Transition services between teachers, grades, levels, from pre-school to elementary and from high school to adulthood
- Identification and eligibility process for children and youth with ASD

Divisions will be notified if they are a finalist and will be given a site visit. Site visits will be scheduled during January and February, 2017. Please note, having a site visit in your division does not guarantee that you will be selected as a Cohort Three division.

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):** is the application of the principles of behavior to human problems in applied settings. More specifically, ABA in the classroom and community setting involves the application of the behavioral paradigm (stimulus/antecedent > response/behavior > consequence) to everyday situations.

**Autism Services Improvement Plan (ASIP or SIP):** is the plan that the school division staff will develop after divisionwide assessment to finalize the goals and activities they will undertake during the system's change process with VCU-ACE.

**Autism Services Improvement Team (ASIT):** is the team of division staff who will meet at least monthly and oversee the implementation of the ASIP. This team will be composed of the relevant stakeholders in the division who have a direct interest in the outcomes of the systems change process. The VCU-ACE does not prescribe the composition of this team. Rather the team should be composed of those administrative and classroom staff who have a role in the implementation of the school division goals. Team members may spend approximately 20 to 35 hours per month on the project.

**Coaching:** is a professional development process where two or more colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace. The VCU-ACE technical assistance process depends on coaching as a means to increase the implementation of evidence-based practices to fidelity.

**Community of Leaders in Autism (CoLA):** CoLAs are regional learning and networking communities of leaders in autism that meet in each superintendent's region across Virginia. Members share a common interest in the improvement of service delivery and use of evidence-based practice for students with ASD. They create a strong community that fosters trust and encourages collaboration and sharing. Additionally, they develop a core of knowledge through skill development, problem solving, information and resource acquisition, and skill integration using both collaborative and self-directed learning activities.

**Evidence-based Practices for ASD:** Evidence-based practices are those practices that have been validated through research to provide substantial benefit for children and youth with ASD. To date, there have been 24 practices identified that meet a sufficient scientific criterion to qualify for this designation. The majority of these practices are based on the implementation of applied behavior analysis for children and youth with ASD.

**Project Coordinator:** This is the school division person who will lead the ASIT and be the major collaborator with the dedicated VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associate. This person will spend approximately 50 to 75 hours per month on the project.

**Technical Assistance Associate:** This is the VCU-ACE staff member who has extensive expertise in ASD and evidence-based practices. Each division will have at least one dedicated Technical Assistance Associate from VCU-ACE. In addition, selected divisions will have access to the expertise of the entire VCU-ACE team.

**Professional Learning Community (PLC):** PLCs are extended learning opportunities developed to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular area or field. The PLCs are used in school divisions as a way to organize teachers into working groups to share training, resources, and to network.

## REFERENCES

- Cohen, S., & Hough, L. (2013). *The ASD nest model: A framework for inclusive education for higher functioning children with autism spectrum disorders*. Kansas: AAPC Publishing.
- Bleiweiss, J.D., Hough, L., & Cohen, S. (2013) *Everyday classroom strategies and practices for supporting children with autism spectrum disorders*. Kansas: AAPC Publishing.
- Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Metz, A., & Van Dyke, M. (2013). Statewide implementation of evidence-based programs. *Exceptional Children*, 79(2), 213-230.
- Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Naoom, S. F., & Wallace, F. (2009). Core implementation components. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 19(5), 531-540.
- National Professional Development Center on ASD. (2013). *Autism program environment rating scale (Preschool/elementary and middle/high school)*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author.
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- Wong, C., Odom, S. L., Hume, K. Cox, A. W., Fettig, A., Kucharczyk, S., Schultz, T. R. (2013). *Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group.

# Application Coversheet: VCU-ACE Technical Assistance to School Divisions

Name of School Division: \_\_\_\_\_

School Division's Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent's Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Special Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person for follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person's E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax number: \_\_\_\_\_

## NAMES AND TITLES OF PERSON(S) COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

NAME	TITLE

**IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED FOR INDIVIDUALS COMPLETING THE APPLICATION,  
PLEASE ATTACH A SECOND SHEET.**

**Table 1: Description of Students with ASD by Number and Grade**

Description of Population	Number of Students
Total Number of Students who receive special education services through an IEP under the category Autism (specify if this includes primary, secondary, and/or tertiary category)	
Number of full-time students with ASD	
Number of part-time students with ASD	
Number of students in preschool or early childhood special educational with ASD	
Number of students in elementary school with ASD	
Number of students in middle school with ASD	
Number of students in high school with ASD	
Number of students in public school sponsored post-secondary school training or education (e.g., Project SEARCH, Dual enrollment in community college)	

**\*IF MORE DESCRIPTION IS NEEDED ATTACH IN AN APPENDIX**

**Table 2: Description of Students with ASD by Placement**

Continuum of Placements	Percent or Number of Students with ASD in This Placement Category
In general education classes (with or without support) over 50 percent of the school day	
In self-contained special education classes over 50 percent of the school day	
In regional program within comprehensive public school over 80 percent of the school day	
In regional program or classroom in stand-alone special education center over 80 percent of the school day (in or out of division)	
In other public school division 100 percent of the school day	
On home bound school by parent choice	
In private day or residential schools placed by parent	
Receiving school services in hospital, jail, juvenile detention, or other state center	

**\*IF MORE DESCRIPTION IS NEEDED ATTACH IN AN APPENDIX**

# Narrative: Components of Proposal

## A. Background Information on School Division

- Describe:
- a. The school division in terms of size, location (urban, suburban, rural), vision, and mission
  - b. The VDOE Initiatives and other initiatives currently in place within the school division
  - c. Consultation agreements specific to autism currently in place within the school division
  - d. Division policies and procedures for professional development. Please include how professional development is determined for new and existing faculty and staff. Also include the number of scheduled professional development days current special education teachers attend each year and the number for unscheduled professional development days available for special education teachers
- List:
- e. All schools (including alternative, tech, etc.) within the division including name, address, and current administrator
  - f. All alternative programs housed in your schools (including regional programs)

## B. Present Level of Autism Educational Services -- Fill in Tables 1 & 2 which can be found in Section B of the Application Checklist (page 11 and 12)

- Describe:
- a. Existing services provided to students with ASD. Services may include, but are not limited to, classroom environments, supports or programs specific to transition, early intervention, or social skills. This may also include a list of instructional methodologies specific to autism and available divisionwide.
  - b. Exemplary services within the school division (For example: If you have an inclusion program, a specialized transition process, or a social skills classroom that you feel is exemplary of your strengths and vision, please tell us about it.)
  - c. Number of students with ASD in the school division (If data is available, please specify number of students with ASD within early childhood, elementary, middle, high school, post-secondary education or training)
  - d. Number of students with ASD served in private day, residential, alternative placements, home-bound instruction, and other out-of-division placements
  - e. Present numbers or percent of students served in the continuum of placements

## C. Current Challenges

- Describe:
- a. Main challenges the school division encounters serving students with ASD
  - b. Current unmet professional development needs
  - c. Resources currently accessed to address challenges

## D. Division Resources and Processes to Support Autism Services Improvement Goals

- Describe:
- a. Potential divisionwide "ASD Services Improvement" team members with names, titles, and contact information (If a divisionwide team currently exists to improve services for students with ASD, please list the composition of that team and describe their current projects and accomplishments.)
  - b. The way in which the school division currently provides and proposes to provide classroom-based coaching to improve the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in classroom settings. Include in this description:

- School division personnel (if any) who currently coach special education teachers in the division
  - List of school division personnel have received training on coaching methods
  - Description of how the school division will identify and release staff to complete coaching with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals
- c. The way in which the school division currently provides and proposes to provide training to improve knowledge, skills, and abilities of educational staff at all levels related to the provision of services for students with ASD. Include in your description the following points:
- List of current training available to staff related to ASD
  - Formats in which training is delivered (live, online, etc.)
  - Ongoing training opportunities provided in division including professional learning communities or groups, regularly scheduled training meetings, division or department meetings, etc.
  - If available, numbers of staff who have completed the following online training through VCU-ACE or through other online or live resources:
    - PARAPro Course
    - Foundations of Autism Spectrum Disorder course
    - Evidence Based Practices to teach students course
    - Strategies for supporting positive behaviors course
    - Transition 2016: Changing the Outcomes Course
    - Applied Behavior Analyst Coursework (BCBA, BCaBA)
  - How the division proposes to address ongoing training needs for staff at all levels to increase knowledge skills and abilities in ASD
- d. Potential goals that the division would like to address through the VCU-ACE Autism Services Improvement Process

## **E. Division Commitment (Please note, section E will not be counted in the 15 page limit)**

- Provide:
- a. Letters of commitment from the:
- Division Superintendent
  - Director of Special Education
  - At least three administrators, one from each, an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school
  - ASD specialist or similar professional
  - School board member
  - Any other key division personnel who will participate in the development of an ASD Services Improvement Plan

Successful letters of commitment will include reference to the division's goals, confirmation of the division's commitment to release relevant staff to attend various VCU-ACE Academies and training, and relevance of this project related to other current divisionwide initiatives.

- b. Letters of support from key school division stakeholders and constituents (e.g., local businesses, community partners, parent groups, the special education advisory committee members)

# Application Checklist: VCU-ACE School Division Technical Assistance

***Please check to make sure that each of the packets from the division is complete.***

Cover sheet with name of school division and all fields completed

## **Section A:**

Description of school division

Description of current initiatives

Consultation agreements (if applicable)

Division policies and procedures for professional development

List of schools (including alternative, tech, etc.) within division with name, address, and current administrator

List of alternative programs or regional programs in your school

## **Section B:**

Description of existing services provided to students with ASD at elementary, middle, and high school

Description of exemplary services within school division

Number of students with ASD in school division (Table 1 on page 11)

Number or percent of students in private day or alternative placements or on home bound instruction

Present number or percent of students served in the continuum of placements (Table 2 on page 12)

## **Section C:**

Challenges that school division encounters serving students with ASD

Unmet training needs

Resources currently accessed to address challenges

## **Section D:**

Potential ASD Services Improvement Team Members

Divisionwide Coaching Model

Divisionwide Professional Development process that will increase knowledge of ASD

Potential Goals that the division would like to address through the VCU-ACE Autism Services Improvement Process

If available, number or percentage of division staff that have completed autism coursework as described on page 14.

## **Section E:**

Letter of commitment from Superintendent

Letter of commitment from Director of Special Education

3 Letters of commitment from at least one administrator each from an elementary, a middle and a high school

Letter of commitment from ASD specialist or similar professional

Letter of commitment from School Board Member

Letter(s) of commitment from any key personnel who will participate in the development of the ASD

Services Improvement Plan

Other letters of commitment or support