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

Cohort Four: September 2020 to June 2023

Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Commonwealth University
Autism Center for Excellence Request for Applications (2019)

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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). VCU-ACE will select five to six 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 with a clear understanding and plan for focused work in three key areas:

- Divisionwide professional development plan which may include coaching, professional learning communities, or other.
- Administrative knowledge and support,
- Divisionwide systems change initiatives, and
- Fidelity of implementation of evidence-based practices.

Background and Purpose

Nationally, the reported incidence of autism spectrum disorder has risen dramatically in the last 20 years. According to data collected yearly by the Virginia Department of Education, the measured occurrence of ASD, as the primary disability reported on the December 1 child count, continues to rise. The 2018-2019 VDOE child count data for autism is 22,700, up from 21,006 in 2017-2018 and 19,566 in 2016-2017. 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.

After completing work with three cohorts of school divisions across Virginia, VCU-ACE worked with 18 school divisions (fifteen projects) to address the implementation of a divisionwide systems change process to result in improved services at every level of the school division for students with ASD and similar educational needs. VCU-ACE provided technical assistance to division-level directors and administrators, school division staff, including general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, related service providers, resource teachers, and school psychologists 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 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 higher grades)
- Divisionwide training and coaching resulting in the increased classroom use of evidence-based practices when teaching students with autism
- Development of administrative training and 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 groups

- 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
- Implementation of inclusive, co-taught programs for students with autism
- Development of comprehensive Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention procedures
- Collaborative parent-division work groups
- Implementation of division Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that target division specific needs
- Implementation of assessment and curriculum to increase student's independence in functional routine

For Cohort Four, VCU-ACE will select five to six school divisions who are the best fit for a long-term commitment to systems change. 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 entire age range and ASD spectrum. These plans will provide a coordinated approach to divisionwide systems change, professional development, coaching, mentoring, and services improvement. Plans will include four goals annually to address professional development, implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs), programs that specifically address the unique needs of students with autism such as behavior, social skills, independence, and systems change. While plans will directly address students on the autism spectrum, many initiatives will impact instruction for other students with similar needs. These goals will be directly linked to the four high-leverage practices (HLP) that the council for exceptional children (CEC) has outlined as effective, evidence-based procedures: collaboration, assessment, social/emotional/behavioral practices, and instruction. These HLPs provide a clear and concise view of effective teaching. Through the development and implementation of goals and HLPs divisions can expect better outcomes for students. In addition to providing targeted technical assistance, VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will also collaborate with division staff to 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, 2008).

Services, Model, and Tentative Timeline

School divisions selected to participate will receive approximately 40 to 50 hours per 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. Technical assistance will target five phases, based on research (see Fixsen, Van Dyke, & Blasé, 2019). 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. The phases are outlined below:

VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Model Phases and Activities

- Phase 1: Exploration: March-June 2020 (Autism Excellence Academy, June 22-23, 2020)
  - Identify infrastructure
  - Assess current practices
  - Develop commitment and buy-in

- Phase 2: Installation: Fall 2020
  - Establish Leadership teams
  - Develop data Systems
  - Define Vision, Mission, Beliefs and Goals

- Phase 3: Initial Implementation: Fall 2020-Spring 2020
  - Support implementers
  - Continue ongoing assessment
  - Expand knowledge

- Phase 4: Full Implementation: Fall 2021-Fall 2022
  - Embed within standard practices
  - Identify and address barriers
  - Develop sustainability plan

- Phase 5: Sustainability: Fall 2022-Spring 2023
  - Improve and revise plan
  - Facilitate future goal development
  - Continue ongoing divisionwide assessment
  - Provide advising as needed

Our model is an embedded technical assistance model and our definition of evidence-based practice is congruent with the Virginia Department of Education.

According to this document, evidence-based practice is defined as educational practice which has a body of scientific research to support its use (VDOE, 2010). We also rely upon the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC-ASD) to continue to assess the literature and identify evidence-based practices for children and youth with ASD. Applicants can read more about currently identified evidence based practices at the NPDC on ASD Website.

During Phase 1, Exploration, we will use a number of different tools to assess current practices including the Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS, Odom, et al., 2018), The Classroom Indicators Checklist (Palko, Schall, Traylor, 2018), and an ACE made survey of staff. These tools will provide a view of division programs and practices.

Eligibility

School divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia that were not included in Cohort One, Two, and Three are eligible to apply for Cohort Four. 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 practice of 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 can 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 effective evidence-based practices for students with ASD
- Implementing evidence-based practices to fidelity in public school and community based settings
- Improving Child Study and 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

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- Improving the abilities of principals and school division administrators to provide supervision and coaching to educational staff
- Improving collaboration between educational staff, community, and families.
- Enhancing inclusion of children and youth with ASD with peers in general education

VCU-ACE will guide practice at all levels based on the implementation of technical assistance. 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, improvement in classroom implementation of evidence-based practice, implementation of interdisciplinary teaming, and improvement of 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.

Cohort Four Assessment: This data will be collected in the spring of 2020 and analyzed by division teams during the June 22-23, 2020 Summer Academy. This data collection will include the following tools:

1. Classroom Indicators Checklist (CIC):
    a) We will complete a CIC in one self-contained and one inclusion classroom at each school level, from pre-school through transition programing. The CIC is an observation tool that requires classroom observation for at least 45 minutes and at least two different classroom activities.
    b) We will use the data to gain an overview of the use of evidence-based practices in the division.
    c) The CIC will be administered by an ACE technical assistance associate in collaboration with a division project coordinator. The CIC will be collaboratively scored by both individuals.
    d) The division project coordinator will work with the ACE technical assistance associate to develop a schedule to ensure observation of all identified classrooms occurs before the end of the school year.

2. Knowledge, Skills, Practices, and Collaboration Survey of Teachers, Related Services Personnel, Administrator and Parents
    a) The ACE technical assistance associate will send a link to the online survey to the division project coordinator for distribution to key division staff.
    b) The ACE technical assistance associate will update the division project coordinator regarding completion of the survey and response rates.
    c) The ACE technical assistance associate will work with the division project coordinator to analyze the findings from the survey and report that information to the ASIT members.

3. Additional divisionwide information provided as requested
    a) The ASIT will also review information from the division's most recent Special Education Performance Report
    b) The ACE technical assistance associate may request additional information from the division based upon the findings in the Special Education Performance Report

After this assessment, VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associates will convene an Autism Excellence Academy in Richmond, VA for all identified school divisions. This meeting will be held June 22 - 23, 2020. Selected divisions will send approximately three – five of their identified ASIT members to this meeting. During this 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 outcomes with each selected 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.

Expectations for Selected Divisions and Provision of VCU-ACE Services

Selected divisions will be expected to:

- Provide a dedicated division project coordinator who is available to spend 40-50 hours a month on the ACE project, who has the ability to make connections with the rest of the ASIT and division leaders, to work collaboratively on an ongoing basis with a VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associate. This person will champion the ASIP and will provide coordination of efforts across the entire team. This person will coordinate with VCU-ACE staff weekly. This person should not have classroom or case management responsibilities.
- Form an ASIT which is composed of stakeholders who are part of the development and implementation of the ASIP. This team varies by size and composition and is developed according to the division identified goals. VCU-ACE technical assistance associates will assist each selected division in identifying the best stakeholders to include. Most divisions include special education administrators and mentor teachers, special education teachers, general education administrators, general education teachers, and related services personnel. ASIP goals.
- Form a core ASIT team that will be composed of the division project coordinator and a few other key team members who will organize the tasks of the ASIT team and provide logistical support. This team varies in size, but is usually three – four division staff who meet monthly to coordinate activities and report on progress. The members of this team is usually determined by the identified leaders for each ASIP goal. PLEASE NOTE: A division decision maker must be a part of the core ASIT. This is most often a special education director or their designee. This person will follow the implementation of the ASIP and address ASIT questions regarding access to personnel or resources needed to accomplish ASIP goals.
- Attend at least two meetings each year with VCU-ACE technical assistance associate and the special education director or special education coordinator to discuss progress on school division goals.
- Attend in Regional CoLA meetings.
- Attend the Summer CoLA institute.
- Participate in a presentation, speed-share or other information sharing activity in the Summer CoLA institute.
- Link the VCU-ACE website on the division website.

Each of these teams is described below including participants, activities, and approximate frequency of meetings.

Project Coordinators:
- Includes: Division Project Coordinator; VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associate; (Approximately 2 – 3 Participants)
- Activities: Coordinates entire ACE project for the school division; leads all teams; addresses logistics for all meetings; develops meeting agendas; and develops online data tracking systems
- Frequency of Meetings: At Least Weekly

Core ASIT:
- Includes: All of the above plus other leaders who are coordinating activities for each goal in the ASIP (Approximately 3 – 8 Participants)
- Activities: Develops ASIP; coordinates activities across goals; ensures that all activities and strategies are completed; reports on and problem solves barriers and progress to all team members
- Frequency of Meetings: At Least Monthly

ASIT:
- Includes: All of the above plus Stakeholders who represent the individuals impacted by the ASIP (Approximately 10 – 20 Participants)
- Activities: Advise the Core ASIT; participate in the implementation of the ASIP; communicate with their constituencies regarding the ACE project; ensure implementation is doable and matches division
- Frequency of Meetings: At Least twice a year

Division Administration and Superintendents:

- Includes: Division Project Coordinator; VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Associate; Special Education Director; Assistant Superintendents; Superintendent (Approximately 3 – 4 Participants)
- Activities: Overviews progress on the ASIP; provides resources to accomplish goals; advises project coordinators in division priorities and processes
- Frequency of Meetings: At Least twice a year

VCU-ACE will provide the following services:

- Facilitation of the ASIT through a strategic planning process that will result in the development and implementation of the ASIP
- 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

Expected Outcomes

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
- Increase parent participation and parent-school partnerships
- Increase knowledge of transition planning, secondary intervention, social skills competence, and communication

The submission process is described below:

- Application Available ....October 15, 2019
- Online at: https://vcuautismcenter.org/cohort4application
- Application Due.....................................December 16, 2019
- Site visits of finalist divisions....................January 6 – February 7, 2020
- Notice of Selection..................................February 18, 2020
- Phase 1 Begins ....March-April, 2020
- Autism Excellence Academy....................June 22-23, 2020

➤ Duration of Technical Assistance: three to five years based on progression through phases, and funding.
➤ All proposals are due on December 16, 2019, by 5 pm.
➤ Proposals should be no longer than 25 pages, double-spaced with one-inch margins on all pages in 12-point Arial 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. This will not be included in the twenty-page limit.
➤ There are 200 points possible.

School divisions may provide an electronic submission of these elements at either of the following addresses:

cmschall@vcu.edu or **secarr@vcu.edu**

School divisions may provide a hard copy of the proposal to: **Melissa Yopp**
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** **or** **Dr. Staci Carr -- secarr@vcu.edu**
Consideration for Selection	Selection considerations for school divisions to receive intensive technical assistance from 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 • Explanation of current coaching practices if applicable • Explanation of how the VCU-ACE grant will impact your division • Letters of commitment from designated stakeholders <u>**Please note**</u>: 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

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 with 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. In addition, we will request the opportunity to interview select division stakeholders who provided a letter of commitment. Our review of programs and materials during our site visit will include, but are not limited to:

- Staff's knowledge of ASD
- Evidence of inclusive practices
- Administrator commitment and understanding of evidence based practices for students with autism
- Other VDOE initiatives in place
- Evidence of Professional Development
- Transition services
- Identification and Eligibility process of students with ASD
- Identification of potential classrooms where coaching might occur

Divisions will be notified if they are a finalist by January 7, 2020. Site-visits will be scheduled during January and February, 2020. Please note, having a site-visit in your division does not guarantee that you will be selected to participate.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

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 Excellence Academy: is a two day meeting on June 22-23, 2020, where selected school divisions will send small teams to begin the process of reviewing school division specific pre-assessment data and developing their strategic Autism Services Improvement Plan or SIP. All selected school divisions are required to send a small team (at least 3 – 4 staff members) to participate.

Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS): The APERS is a program rating scale that involves a classroom observation, interview of teachers, parents and related services personnel, and a review of IEPs and other educational documents. The purpose of the APERS is to evaluate the degree to which a program includes evidence based practices for children and youth with ASD.

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 quarterly 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. 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.

Classroom Indicators Checklist (CIC): The CIC is a shortened assessment that involves a 45 minute observation of at least two classroom activities. Based upon and similar to the APERS, the CIC is designed to identify the degree to which a classroom practices reflect evidence based practices.

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.

Core ASIT: iis a team of core ASIT members who are leaders of the activities implemented at the division. This team will be charged with all coordination of activities and logistics for the ASIP. They will meet at least monthly.

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 (TA): 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. PLCs are used in school divisions as a way to organize teachers into working groups to share training, resources, and to network.

REFERENCES

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Shaw, J. S., Norlin, C., Gillespie, R. J., Weissman, M., & McGrath, J. (2013). The national improvement partnership network: State-based partnerships that improve primary care quality. Academic pediatrics, 13(6), S84-S94.

KEY WEBSITES

VCU Autism Center for Excellence

Virginia Department of Education Autism Resources

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC)

I. Fillable Coversheet for Application

Name of School Division: _____

School Division's Website: _____

Superintendent's Region: _____

Current Superintendent: _____

Director of Special Education: _____

Lead Person for ASIT Team: _____

Contact Person for follow-up: _____

Contact Person's E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

Telephone Number: _____ **Fax number:** _____

NAMES, TITLES, AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF PERSON(S) COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

NAME	TITLE	EMAIL

NAMES, TITLES, AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF PERSON(S) PROVIDING LETTERS OF SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT

NAME	TITLE	EMAIL

II. NARRATIVE: COMPONENTS OF PROPOSAL

125 points possible. Points are assigned by the quality of information provided in the section. Point totals are also meant to provide an indication of the relative importance of the section in the committee's decision making regarding the proposal.

A. Background Information on School Division (10 points)

Describe: 1. The school division in terms of size, location (urban, suburban, rural), vision, and mission
  2. Any consultation agreements specific to autism currently in place within the school division

List: 1. All schools (including alternative, tech, etc.) within the division including name, address, and current administrator
  2. All alternative programs housed in your schools (including regional programs)

B. Present Level of Autism Educational Services (15 points)

Describe: 1. 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 professional development activities or instructional methodologies specific to autism and available divisionwide.
  2. 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.)
  3. Number of students with ASD: Refer to your December 1, 2018 or (if available), December 1, 2019 child count, and present the number and percentage of students served in the grade levels and continuum of placements below:

   a. Total number of students who receive special education services through an IEP under the category of autism (specify if this includes primary, secondary, and/or tertiary category): _____

   b. Number of full time students with autism: _____

   c. Number of part time students with autism: _____

   d. Number of students in preschool or early childhood special education with autism: _____

   e. Number of students in elementary school with autism: _____

   f. Number of students in middle school with autism: _____

   g. Number of students in high school with autism: _____

   h. Number of students in public school sponsored post-secondary l school training or education programs (e.g., Projects SEARCH, dual enrollment in community college, other internship programs) with autism: _____

   i. Receiving *80 percent or more* of their education with non-disabled peers (mainly included students): _____

   j. Receiving *40 percent of less* of their education with non-disabled peers (mainly self-contained students): _____

   k. Receiving their education in a *separate special education public school.* This might include a public day special education school within the division or a regional special education program out of the division: _____

   l. Receiving their education *out of the school district* in a private day school setting: _____

   m. Receiving their education out of the school district in a *residential or more restrictive setting*: _____

C. Current Challenges (15 Points)

Describe: 1. Main challenges the school division encounters serving students with ASD
              2. Current unmet needs when serving students with ASD.

D. Explain Why Your Division Decided to Apply for this Opportunity (25 Points)

Explain: 1. Being part of the VCU-ACE grant is a significant commitment of the division. This process requires a pledge to change current practices as needed. This can be challenging for many people who have subscribed to these practices for years. While change can be difficult it can result in remarkable progress for staff, students, and families. Why do you and your division want to be considered to be a part of Cohort Four?
              2. What are the key areas or goals that the division would like to address through the VCU-ACE Technical Assistance Project?

E. Division Resources and Processes to Support Autism Services Improvement Goals (25 points)

Describe: 1. 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.)

2. Educational or instructional coaching is a professional, confidential learning experience that is assistive, supportive, and not evaluative. The coaching experience is a collaborative partnership which is intended to promote positive outcomes for all students and staff. Many coaching systems are available, please describe the coaching practices that your division utilizes (if any). Include who the coaches are that have been trained, the process for determining who provides coaching and receives coaching, the role of administration, if this is used for general education and/or special education, how staff are allocated time to coach, how often it occurs, and what are the expectations of coaching for your division?

3. Divisionwide professional development procedures or processes that will support increased knowledge of ASD within the division. When does professional development take place? How are teachers released for professional development during the school year? Who makes the decision about professional development? How does your division provide training and professional development for faculty and staff including online, in-person, professional learning communities, etc.?

4. If available, please provide the number or percentage of current division staff that have completed the following courses and how the division implemented this coursework:
   a. PARAPro Course
   b. Foundations of Autism Spectrum Disorder course
   c. Evidence Based Practices to teach students course
   d. Strategies for supporting positive behaviors course
   e. Transition 2016: Changing the Outcomes Course
   f. Applied Behavior Analyst Coursework (BCBA, BCaBA, RBT, etc.)
   g. Other coursework

5. As part of the VCU-ACE systems-change grant the ASIT Team will be charged with making changes for the betterment of the division. Often, these changes require decisions to be made at the division, school or classroom level in order to execute the planned change. Please respond to the following two questions about your division processes.
   a. Describe Describe the process the division uses ensure that experienced classroom teachers are able to provide coaching and mentoring to their peers who require on-going supports? How are these experienced teachers able to meet their classroom requirements and support their peers? Use specific examples if available.
   b. Describe the process the division uses to add classes or curriculum content to the division's array of approved curriculum for students in special or general education settings.

F. Past and Present Division Initiatives: (15 Points) (Please note, section F will not be counted in the 25 page limit)

Identify: Divisions have the opportunity to participate in a variety of initiatives many of which can be braided into the work that will be done as a part of the VCU-ACE grant. Please review the following list of initiatives and indicate (check) which your division has been or currently is a part of and a brief description of the current status.

☐   1.   Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS)
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

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☐   2.   Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

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☐   3.   Early Childhood Intensive TA for Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschools (IPOP)
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

```

```

☐   4.   Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

```

```

☐   5.   Special Education Program Improvement Results Driven Accountability
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

```

```

☐   6.   Current or Former Office of School Quality (OSQ) Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

```

```

☐   7.   Virginia Alternative Assessment Program Overuse
If selected, provide a description of the current status:

```

```

☐ 8. Inclusive Practices
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 9. Co-teaching (trained partners and demonstration sites)
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 10. Orton Gillingham Trained Teachers
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 11. I'm Determined
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 12. Assistive Technology Team
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 13. Early Childhood Initiatives
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

☐ 14. Other
   If selected, provide a description of the current status:

   [blank text box]

G. Division Commitment: (20 Points) (Please note, section F will not be counted in the 25 page limit)

Provide: 1. Letters of commitment from the:
- a. Division Superintendent
- b. Director of Special Education
- c. At least 3 administrators, one from each, an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school
- d. Transition specialist or similar special education staff member
- e. Administrator in charge of release time for professional development, if not already on this list. Please reference this task in letter of support.
- f. School board member
- g. 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 vision and 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.

2. Letters of support from key school division stakeholders and constituents (e.g., local businesses, community partners, parent groups, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder the special education advisory committee members, members of other initiative teams from Section E)

Successful letters of support will note how the organizations, stakeholders, or constituents see the division collaborating with them.

III. Application Checklist

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
  - ☐ Any consultation agreements (if applicable)
  - ☐ List of schools within division (with name, address, and current administrator)
  - ☐ List of alternative programs housed in your school division including standalone special education schools or regional programs with name, address, and current administrator

- **Section B:** ☐ Description of existing services provided to students with ASD
  - ☐ Description of exemplary services within school division
  - ☐ Number of students with ASD as by grade level and placement (see pages 18-19, B) 3. a-m)

- **Section C:** ☐ Challenges that school division encounters serving students with ASD
  - ☐ Unmet training needs

- **Section D:** ☐ Explain why your division decided to apply for this opportunity
  - ☐ Explain the key areas or goals the division would like to address

- **Section E:** ☐ Potential ASD Services Improvement Team Members
  - ☐ Divisionwide Coaching Model (if any)
  - ☐ Divisionwide Professional Development procedures and processes
  - ☐ Number or percentage of current division staff completing coursework
  - ☐ Division processes responses

- **Section F:** ☐ Past and present division initiatives (see pages 20-21 F) 1-14)

- **Section G:** ☐ 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 transition specialist or similar
  - ☐ Letter of commitment from Human Resource Manager or similar
  - ☐ School Board Member
  - ☐ Letter(s) of commitment from any key personnel