REGION 5 & 7 AUTISM TASK FORCE

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The mission of the Task Force is to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families, schools, and communities by providing resources, consultation, and training.

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What's Inside:

Social Competency
Early Education
Post - Secondary Education
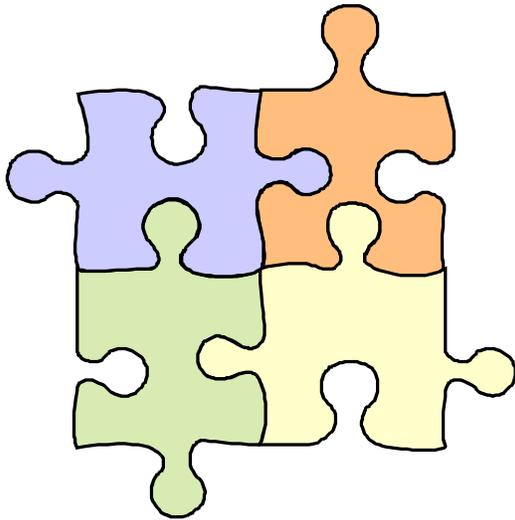
" The person with autism is both teacher and guide, bringing us back to a place where over and over we experience moments of pure happiness."

UPCOMING EVENTS

Location of Design an AuSM Computer Game

Science Museum of Minnesota
120 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55102

Cost Per Session

AuSM and Science Museum of Minnesota Members save $25 on registration for Design an AuSM Computer Game.

AuSM/Science Museum of Minnesota
Member: $325
Non-Member: $350

Spring Break Session (ages 11-16)

Design an AuSM Computer Game

Build your own interactive adventure game and story using programming software from the MIT Media Lab-Scratch 2.0! Select a theme, write a story, build an environment, create characters, add puzzles, and add sound effects. In addition to learning programming and design skills, students will integrate emotions and social interaction into their computer characters, communicate ideas and progress to peers, and offer feedback to classmates.

Class Meets Daily

Over the St. Paul Public Schools Spring Break from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
April 4*-8, 2016

Note: The April 4 session will include orientation and will run from 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. A parking voucher will be included for the first day/orientation session.

Spring Break Session Time
9 a.m.-12 p.m.

AUSM Social Skills Science Museum

April 27-30, 2016

Plan to attend AuSM's 21st Annual Minnesota Autism Conference where you will learn from keynote speakers, cutting-edge break out session topics, colleagues, parents, therapists, educators, professionals and individuals on the spectrum. Get all of the latest information on autism, all in one place. Visit the AuSM Bookstore, gather information from key autism exhibitors, and spend your conference days learning from high-caliber speakers. [AUSM Annual Conference](#)

1st Saturday of each month (Dec. 5, Jan. 9, Feb. 6, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4) Navigating Autism at MSP Airport

*Many families who have children with autism avoid f*lying because they are unsure how their children will respond. In an effort to ease the anxiety associated with an airport visit and flying, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), Fraser and the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) have teamed up to create the Navigating Autism program. The program includes monthly events, all designed specifically for individuals with autism, that guide families through the steps of an airport visit, from walking in the door to finding their seats on a plane.

These events are being offered free of charge, and require pre-registration. Click on the button below to register for the session that fits with your schedule. [Navigating Autism Registration](#)

SOCIAL COMPETENCY WEBSITES

Social Thinking
[Social Thinking](#)

Jill Kuzma's SLP Social & Emotional Skill Sharing Site
[Jill Kuzma's Website](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

Thinking About You Thinking About Me
By Michelle Garcia-Winner
San Jose: Social Thinking Publishing, 2007

Inside Out: What Makes a Person with Social Cognitive Deficits Tick?
By Michelle Garcia-Winner
San Jose: Social Thinking Publishing

Navigating the Social World
By Jeanette L McAfee
Arlington: Future Horizons, 2002

ARTICLES

As you prepare the turkey and trimmings for Thanksgiving, make the holiday more enjoyable for your child with autism by modeling these language and social skills.

By Karen Kabaki-Sisto, M.S. CCC-SLP

[Harvest a Cornucopia of Communication for Your Child with Autism](#)

Self-Management for Improving Social Conversation Skills

We know that individuals with autism characteristically have some challenges with social communication. These challenges may include making statements that are very short, having infrequent social initiations, and a lack of sharing new and relevant information with others in conversation. Recently, researchers conducted a study to help children with autism improve these skills through self-management. Read more here: [Conversation Skills](#)

Anxiety and Social Competencies ("The Spirals")

Michelle Garcia Winner
[Anxiety and Social Competencies](#)

EARLY EDUCATION

WEBSITES

First Signs
[First Signs](#)

Autism Internet Modules
[Autism Internet Modules](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

Understanding How Asperger Children and Adolescents Think and Learn
By Paula Jacobsen
Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005

A Work In Progress: Behavior Management Strategies and a Curriculum for Intensive Behavioral Treatment of Autism
By Ron Leaf and John McEachin
New York: DRL Books, L.L.C., 1999
The purpose of a holiday newsletter is to keep.

Autism, Now What?: The Primer for Parents
By Abby Ward Collins and Sibley J. Collins
Illustrated by Kimberly L. Owsley

Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Comprehensive Guide for Parents and Teachers
by Maria Weeler

Train-Theme 3-Step Visual Schedule
Get this fun visual schedule board free here: [Train Theme 3-Step Visual Schedule](#)

"Shape-osaurs" Shape Identifying Activity
 A ready-to-use printable activity to help a child identify shapes. Includes a built-in data collection sheet to track student learning and progress. Download it for free here: [Shape-osuars Shape Identifying Activity](#)

Increase a positive GROCERY-STORE experience:
This free download contains:
- Decreasing Supermarket Tantrums: Background and Tips
- Match Picture to Object Activity
- Shopping Lists for Practicing Shopping at Home
- Grocery Store Flashcards
- Price Wars: Put Items in Order from Lowest Price to Highest Price

Download it here: [Positively Autism Grocery List](#)

ARTICLES

AUTISM INTERNET MODULES
Linking research to real life.

What should early intervention look like?

In comparison to what we know about effective interventions for older children diagnosed with ASD, Wallace and Rogers (2010) stress two very important points: (a) we have very few studies looking at intervention for our very youngest children with ASD - those who are younger than 3; and (b) the models that have been studied with older children may not fit how infants and toddlers learn.

So Wallace and Rogers took a close look at what we know about effective early intervention in general in order to shed some light on early intervention for children with ASD. Specifically, they looked at well-designed intervention studies for three groups of infants and toddlers: children who were born prematurely, children with developmental delays like Down syndrome, and children at risk for intellectual disabilities due to factors such as parental poverty and intellectual disability. They found four characteristics across all the studies where intervention was effective:

1. Parents were involved in the intervention. Professionals "coached" parents to be responsive and sensitive to their child's cues and to use intervention strategies that were developmentally based.
2. Professionals used a curriculum (i.e., a planned, systematic consistent approach based on teaching families specific knowledge and skills), but individualized the curriculum to each child.

3. Intervention focused on a broad range of learning targets, not just discrete skills.
4. Intervention started early and lasted.

Excerpt from : Autism Internet Modules (You will need to create a free account to access this information on Autism Internet Modules. It is quick and easy, and provides a wealth of information)

POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

WEBSITES

Autism Society of Minnesota
AuSM

High School Transition 9-12 grade
Penn State Transition Checklist

Colleges:
College Programs and Autism Spectrum

Transition:
Autism Speaks Transition

Programs and Services for Transition-Age Individuals
Services by Age: Transition

OTHER RESOURCES

Preparing for Life: A Complete Guide for Transitioning to Adulthood for those with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome
By Dr. Jed Baker
Arlington: Future Horizons, 2005

Realizing the College Dream with Autism or Asperger Syndrome: A Parent's Guide to Student Success
By Ann Palmer
Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006

Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Helping Preteens and Teens Get Ready for the Real World.
By Teresa Bolick, Ph.D.
Gloucester: Fair Winds Press, 2001, 2004

Transition Tool Kit
[Autism Speaks Family Services](#)

ARTICLES

Preparing for the Transition to Adulthood (Part 2)

Michelle Garcia Winner
Social Thinking®
This is the second part of a three-part blog.

The following is a list of questions to explore when students are in middle-high school to help consider realistic options post-graduation. Rarely have the students whom I've observed "pulled it together" in their junior/senior years of high school, given the tremendous increasing pressures they feel as they realize they will be graduating. While we want to include the student in transition discussions, we also have to realize that many of our students cannot imagine something they have not experienced. Many assure their parents they will "figure it all out" once they go to college. We call this *talking the talk*. However, until they demonstrate they can understand and demonstrate action plans to *walk the walk*, it is overly optimistic to they will know how to problem solve independence post-graduation. We should never discount what the student says he/she wants to do after graduation, but we also need to expose the student to all post-high school options and take the time to consider what s/he is ready to pursue!

Consider these questions:

1. Does he keep track of his own homework assignments?

2. Does she create and implement plans that are reasonable for working through short term and long term homework assignments?

3. Does he know how to ask for help?

4. Does she understand how to manage her anxiety when dealing with a stressful day? Or does she require adult intervention for her to implement self-calming strategies?

5. Does he have 1-2 friends he seeks out to maintain a friendship?

6. Can she do homework assignments for language arts/written expression without regular adult assistance?

7. Can he make basic inferences, summarize stories, and understand there is a main idea?

8. Does she have an idea of maintaining her hygiene without constant reminders?

9. Does he understand the need to help at home even if he doesn't want to?

10. Can she find intrinsic motivation to push to do things she doesn't enjoy?

11. Does he or she demonstrate a significant attention span and willingness to learn/participate at harder tasks when doing specific visual-motor or technical tasks (electronics, mechanics, technology, etc.)?

12. Does she say she hates school and struggles (or is completely unable) to wake up in the morning to go to school without parent intervention?

13. Is he asking to get a job in the community (e.g., Retail, food

services, and social services) in lieu of going to college?

If the majority of answers to questions 1-10 were **NO**, then the student is at great risk for not making it - even in the most understanding and helpful college programs. College transition programs do not "entitle" success; a student needs to be able to learn the basic concepts of the college courses and demonstrate knowledge with only the accommodations available and appropriate to the type of disability.

If the answers to 11, 12 and 13 are mostly **YES**, the individual needs choices towards his or her own success outside of the traditional school or college experience.

High school offers a highly structured day. College life, even when commuting from home, is not routine and erratic in structure. There are large gaps in the middle of the day where students do not have classes and they are expected to work on assignments. Many of our students do not know how to make productive use of all the down time and may see it as *free time* or gaming time.

In terms of social demands, a K-12 setting provides opportunities for our students to be surrounded by peers; even if they don't have a lot of friends. Other students typically know who they are and notice when they are not present. Students are also told what classes to go to, attendance is monitored, students are accounted for, and so on. There is no such accountability system in a college program. Students decide whether they want to attend classes and adults don't follow up (usually) if they fail to attend. Others in college may not notice our students or care if s/he doesn't go to class. The same goes for doing homework. The shift of responsibility takes a dramatic turn from

parent/teacher oversight to the individual student, almost overnight! Communication with personnel at the college from parents who want to stay involved with their student's workload is not only discouraged, but prohibited without student permission.

So what to do, given this information?

Parents of upper elementary school and early middle school students who believe their child is college bound should read the book, *Students with Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel*, (2009). It is a very friendly read and provides further insights into the real demands of succeeding in this environment post high school. An honest assessment of your child/student should ensue. If the team feels it appropriate to move forward with planning to attend some form of college, begin to address goals towards helping to shift responsibility and accountability to the student. Parents will need to slowly begin to retreat from being the organizers of all information for a student and let him take on more decision-making and problem solving in high school. If a student is overwhelmed in her classes, consider having her take an easier class where she feels she can succeed with less assistance rather than push teachers to find ways to help her pass with a decent grade. This is the *less is more* philosophy.

It may also be a good idea during the student's senior year of high school to enroll in a college class on a college campus so they can get an idea of how to move around campus. This will also help them to see what it is like to sit in a larger lecture hall, how assignments are submitted, how to organize study off a syllabus, etc. However if you do this, then make sure the team does not support in the same way they do with high school classes. It's okay to orient the student to how to use a syllabus, where they can study at school, but avoid the

helicopter hand over hand assistance. See how your student feels working with this level of freedom. Some of our students love it and are more "able" when placed in an environment that encourages them to be more self-reliant; but many of our students struggle. This practice run gives the student as well as the family, a sense of this transition and whether going to a college setting is the right choice for that time in development.

 Also, don't minimize the importance of developing social networking skills such as clubs, sports, and events while in high school. Sometimes families (and the students themselves) place so much emphasis on pushing academics that when the time comes to develop their own social networks post high school-they are lost with little to no experience. Avoid, thinking that social learning and related social skills should not interfere with academic lessons. These skills, along with grit and tenacity, are the most important predictors of adult success! Social media, too, is a critical type of communication for high school, college and young adults. It's the way in which valuable information is shared, both academic and social. However, as we all know social media is not without dangers. Help your student learn the hidden rules.

All this being said, there are programs on college campuses cropping up everywhere for students with social learning challenges. Some of these are tutorial based that also offer some social skills training, while others are private programs that help teach students life skills along with academic and vocational learning. However, if you answered "no" to most of the questions 1-10, it is very likely these programs may still not be enough to help your child graduate college.

To sum this up:

Start early! Help students to learn new and expanded skills sets, find motivation,

and "own" what they need to work on. Parents may also have to learn to change their own parenting strategy. "Less is more" applies to parents as much as it applies to the student. Parents and teachers need to catch themselves from placing students in programs where they cannot do their own work and still feel okay about the work they are doing. A bird that does not grow wings cannot fly. For more information from Michelle Garcia Winner on Transition, visit: [Preparing for Transition to Adulthood](#)

GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

by Jennifer Twachtman-Reilly and Patrecia Zebrowski

1. Make a concerted effort to maintain structure and stick to daily routines, and take the time to educate family and friends about your child's needs so that they may do the same.
2. Impress upon others the importance of providing advance notice to your child of changes in his/her customary schedule or routine.

3. Use a calendar to help your child anticipate special events as well as change.

4. Add structure to an unstructured event by using a visual template to show your child what will happen, and who will be at a family gathering.

5. Review and practice the specific social skills that your child will need for the holiday event.

6. Provide your child with a means of communication when he/she needs a break, and provide a quiet space for this purpose.

7. Bring a few of your child's favorite comfort objects and sensory supports such as headphones, hand fidgets, oral tools, etc. for travel and break times.

8. Prepare some of your child's favorite foods to supplement holiday meals both at home and at family gatherings.

9. Give your child a special role or responsibility for the holiday event, and/or incorporate some of his/her favorite activities into the festivities.

10. Exercises vigilance regarding the impact of the sights, sounds, and smells that might be stressful for your child. Be proactive in minimizing the effects.