

# The Southeast ASD Scoop

March 2010  
Volume 1, Issue 4



## April is National Autism Awareness Month!

Every year, April is designated as National Autism Awareness Month.

Please help spread the word about Autism Spectrum Disorders by printing and placing an Autism Awareness Table Tent in the teacher's lounge or out in your local community. Go to <http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com> to print a table tent.

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Early intervention and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders is crucial to the success of children with autism.

One key to early intervention is to know the red flags of autism in children 12 to 18 months of age. These red flags help us identify those children that may be in need of services.

Here are red flags to look for.

### Differences in social interaction

- Extremes of temperament
- Lack of positive affect, social smiling, social interest
- Poor eye contact

### Differences in communication

- Decreased gestures
- Lack of back-and-forth babbling

## Getting An Early Start

- Coordination of different modes of communication

### Differences in attention

- Orients to objects more than people
- Poor social attention; attends to environmental sounds

- Difficulties disengaging visual attention

### Differences in play skills

- Lack of imitation with toys
- Limited and less-appropriate toy play

### Differences in responsiveness

- Less likely to respond to name
- Poor response to parents' attempts to interact

If you are working with a toddler that displays these red flags, a good resource to use is the More Than Words Program by Fern Sussman and the Hanen Centre. After attending her breakout session at the Nebraska ASD Network Conference, I came away with five goals for toddlers that have autism.

These goals are as follows.

1. Enjoy social interaction.
2. Understand and use non-verbal communication (especially gestures).
3. Pay attention to people's faces and words.
4. Imitate.
5. Respond to bids for Joint Attention.

The first goal, enjoying social interaction, is the most important.

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## 2010 Nebraska ASD Conference

Thanks to all who attended the 2010 Nebraska ASD Network's 7th Annual Conference!

We had over 600 people in attendance and ended up having to close registrations due to space issues! I was so happy to see that so many people from across the state are interested in learning

more about students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Our Keynote speakers were fabulous and shared very relevant information. Several breakout sessions were standing room only and it seemed like everyone had a great time. (A quick side note...the food was amazing!)

My favorite part of the conference was hearing from young adults on the spectrum at the evening dinner on Thursday. They reminded me of why I love to working with students on the Autism Spectrum.

Thanks for coming and plan on coming next year to Omaha on April 7th and 8th, 2011!



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Ideas to help with social interaction is to put away the toys and play “people” games. While playing these games, here are some objectives to start with.

- The child enjoys the game/song.
- The child pays attention to the parent/staff member
- The child imitates or uses an action, gesture, sound, or word.

These objectives need to be tailored specifically to the child you are working with. One child may be working on imitating, while another child may just be working on smiling or looking at the parent/staff member.

Another suggestion to work on social interaction is to follow the child’s lead. It’s important to follow the child’s lead at this time to allow the child to be more sociable, share a focus with a parent or staff member, and it does not demand a child to shift attention.

When following the child’s lead, include the child’s interest. Notice what the child is doing and how you can bring their interests closer. Imitating them at this

## Getting An Early Start

stage also allows social interaction between the child and parent/staff member.

If the child has unusual interests, make sure to include those interests as well. Brainstorm appropriate ways to use the unusual interest while following the child’s lead.

The second goal, understanding and using non-verbal communication, can be worked on by following the child’s lead and interpreting what they are trying to communicate or by giving the child a reason to communicate and waiting for a response. An example of giving the child a reason to communicate is blowing bubbles with the child and then stopping and waiting for the child to communicate “more” in some way.

Goal three, paying attention to faces and words, can be addressed by making sure you are interacting face to face with the child, or getting down at the child’s level. Using the four S’s can also help. **S**ay less to the child by using short sentences, **S**tress fun words when talking, **S**low down your speech, and **S**how real objects when talking about them.

Imitating, which is goal four, is important to the development of

language in toddlers. Motor imitation skills have a direct correspondence to expressive language development and object imitation skills helps improve play skills. Make sure to include the child’s interests when working on imitation skills.

Joint attention, or the ability to coordinate attention between people and objects, is the final goal. You can work on joint attention by drawing the child’s attention to an object, by giving the child a reason to look (e.g., a toy out of reach) and by using cues, such as pointing, a look, or a verbal cue to draw the child’s attention to a toy or object.

As a reminder, social interaction and shared enjoyment is the number one goal. The four other goals need to be developed around the child and family’s specific needs.

For more information on the *More Than Words* Program by Fern Sussman, check out the manual through the Autism Library housed at ESU 6. On the web, take a look at

<http://www.hanen.org>.

Information taken from the Nebraska ASD Conference breakout session “Getting an Early Start with More Than Words” by Fern Sussman on April 9th, 2010.

The #1 goal for the child should be social interaction and shared enjoyment with an adult.



## “Student with Autism” Or “Autistic Student”?

The language that we use on a day to day basis can be very powerful. How we refer to our students with ASD has a huge impact on how they are included and treated in school.

Using “person-first” language is the philosophy that students are students first with their disability being secondary. For example, when talking about a student with Autism, you would say “my student with Autism” instead of “my Autistic student”.

When I was teaching, I wanted all teachers to realize that my students were just like other students. It was my mission for everyone to see their student first as an individual with

likes and dislikes and then see the Autism or Asperger Syndrome. This approach was helped by using person-first language with all of the staff at the school where I worked at.

I also believe that using person-first language is a sign of respect to that student and his or her parents. It tells the parents that you care about the student as an individual and that you aren’t just focusing on their disability.

In the Autism community, there is a debate about using person-first language. Some individuals on the Autism Spectrum argue that their Autism or Asperger Syndrome is part of their identity and something that shouldn’t be

separated out.

I understand their point of view and why they are not bothered by being called “autistic” or an “Aspie” (a term adults with Asperger Syndrome use to call themselves). However, even though some individuals may not mind being defined by their disability, other students and parents will be bothered by it.

My hope is that by using person-first language, teachers and other students in our schools will understand that each student we work with on the Autism Spectrum is a student first and should be treated with respect.

## Are You Feeling STRESSED?

April can be an exhausting month. As you head into May and the end of school, your schedule is probably starting to fill up with meetings and planning for next year. Your students may also be feeling the stress of end of the year assessments and activities. It's important for both you and your students take time to de-stress so you can head into May with energy and a positive attitude.

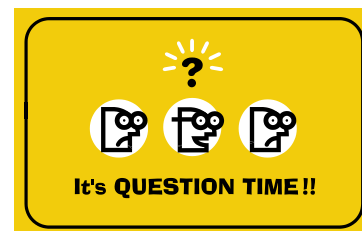
Here are some stress relievers that you can try.

- Practice laughing out loud.
- Lie in a hammock.
- Read something funny every day.

- Count to ten—or 1000— before exploding.
- Watch a really good movie.
- Fly a kite.
- Go for a brisk walk.
- Keep a journal of thoughts and feelings.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Find someone you're grateful to and thank them.
- Eat a good breakfast.
- Do a good deed.
- Smell or plant a flower.
- Watch a cloud for 5 minutes.
- Spend an evening without TV.
- Walk barefoot in the grass.
- Go fishing.
- Get a massage.
- Take a nap.
- Drink a cup of tea.
- Play a round of golf.



Taken from "101 Stress Relievers" from Parlay International.



## Question of the Month

What's the difference between a "diagnosis" and "eligibility" in Nebraska?

From,  
Confused

Dear Confused,

Educators and parents are often confused about the meaning of the terms "diagnosis" and "eligibility". Here is a comparison of what they

both mean.

Diagnosis is based on a set of criteria (DSM-IV-TR). It refers to a specific disorder (e.g., Autistic Disorder, Asperger Disorder). The word "diagnosis" is used in private settings and may be determined by an individual or team.

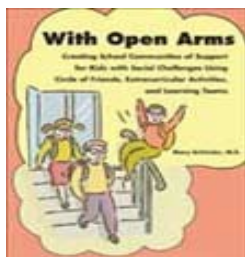
Eligibility is based on federal law (IDEA). For Nebraska, Rule 51 defines special education eligibility criteria. Eligibility refers to a broad disability category and is used only

in the public school setting. Eligibility of a disability must be determined by a team; it can not be determined by one person.

A student may have a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger Syndrome from an outside source. If that student has moved into the school district, it is still the responsibility of the school district to provide an evaluation to see if the student is eligible to receive services underneath the Autism category in Rule 51.

If you have questions about the terms "diagnosis" and "eligibility", contact your local special education director, school psychologist or school IEP team.

## Resources



*With Open Arms: Creating School Communities of Support for Kids with Social Challenges*, written by Mary Schlieder, provides practical, easy-to-use techniques for even the busiest school personnel. This manual pro-

vides step-by-step instructions for how to implement Circle of Friends, foster participation in extracurricular activities and establish professional Learning Teams.

*With Open Arms* is available for checkout through the ASD Library housed at ESU 6.

### **Websites for Autism Awareness Month**

<http://www.asperger.net>—Autism Asperger Publishing Company is running an April Special—Receive a free book and \$10 off a future purchase when you spend \$50 or more during

the month of April.

<http://www.brookespublishing.com/autism>—Check out the Autism Resource Center during the month of April for a free download a day from a Brookes Publishing resource.

<http://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork>—Go to the NEW State ASD Network website to access information about Autism or Asperger Syndrome and other online training opportunities.

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## Check Us Out on the Web !

[http://www.esu6.org/services/asd\\_home.htm](http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm)

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork> (The NEW Updated Website!)

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

The 2011 Nebraska ASD Conference will be April 7th and 8th, 2011 at the Embassy Suites in La-Vista. Our Keynote Speaker is Michelle Garcia Winner!

## **Southeast ASD Region Training Survey**

A short survey has been developed to allow staff in the Southeast Region provide input on trainings and workshops that will be available over the summer and the 2010-2011 school year.

Please go to

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QYYSQKS>

to access the survey.