



# Family Engagement Newsletter

## April is World Autism Month

By Wendy Overturf

April is World Autism Month, dedicated to increasing awareness about autism spectrum disorder. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of children with ASD can range from gifted (above average) to severely challenged. Some individuals with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

Autism statistics from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) released in December 2021 identify around 1 in 44 American children on the autism spectrum, nearly 2.5 times increase in the prevalence of ASD since first reported in 2000. Studies also show that autism is over four times more common among boys than girls. An estimated 1 out of 27 boys and 1 in 116 girls are diagnosed with autism in the United States. ASD affects over 3 million people in the United States and tens of millions worldwide. In Wisconsin, in the 2020-2021 school year, students with autism (13,398) made up 11.4% of all students with special educational needs. That number could be higher as schools in Wisconsin are not required to report data when autism is not the primary disability. Thus, the number of students identified as having autism as a secondary disability is not reflected in this data.

Dr. Stephen Shore, a leading autism advocate, once said, **“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”** This quote emphasizes that there is great diversity within the autism spectrum. However, children with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. Signs of ASD usually begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person’s life.

Children with ASD might:

- ◆ not point at objects to show interest (for example, not point at an airplane flying over)
- ◆ not look at objects when another person points at them
- ◆ have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all
- ◆ avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- ◆ have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
- ◆ prefer not to be held or cuddled, or might cuddle only when they want to
- ◆ appear to be unaware when people talk to them, but respond to other sounds
- ◆ be very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them
- ◆ repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language
- ◆ have trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- ◆ not play “pretend” games (for example, not pretend to “feed” a doll)
- ◆ repeat actions over and over again
- ◆ have trouble adapting when a routine changes
- ◆ have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- ◆ lose skills they once had (for example, stop saying words they were using)

There is no cure for ASD. However, research shows that early intervention treatment services can improve a child’s development. Early intervention services help children from birth to 3 years old (36 months) learn important skills. Services can include therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others. Therefore, it is important to talk to your child’s doctor as soon as possible if you think your child is displaying some of the typical characteristics of ASD. Parents may also contact the [Birth to 3](#) program for children under three. If your child is over age 3, you can make a referral to your local school district for evaluation. Please note, a medical diagnosis of autism does not automatically qualify a child for special education within the school environment. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has an [Educational Evaluation Guide for Autism](#), including an eligibility checklist, for qualifying for special education on their website.

\*Be sure to check the online resources section of this newsletter for additional resources related to ASD.

## Statewide Events

### Indigenizing Learning Spaces for All

This virtual no cost training will provide learning opportunities to build knowledge and skills that will assist in implementing best practices and education strategies in working with Native students, families, communities, and nations in Wisconsin. This webinar is designed to deepen participants' understanding around Indigenizing learning spaces to improve student outcomes. The training will examine how history, culture, and language can impact achievement, school climate, and student, family and community engagement.

**Date:** April 11, 2022 - 3:30pm - 6:30pm Part 1 and April 12, 2022 - 3:30pm - 6:30pm Part 2

### Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin Conference

The biggest autism-related conference in Wisconsin. It is a place to gather, connect, and belong. It is a place where autistic adults, parents and family members, and professionals come to share experiences and learn together.

**Date:** April 29-30, 2022

**Location:** Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

### Circles of Life Conference

Circles of Life is Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and the providers and other professionals who support them. This is an event for the WHOLE family! There are separate sessions for teens with disabilities (Gathering of Youth), programming for siblings (Sibshop), and a Family Fun Night (Super Heroes).

**Date:** May 12-13, 2022

**Location:** Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point, WI. It will also be live streamed and recorded for those who prefer to participate virtually.



### **Endless Possibilities Conference**

#### **Effective Family Engagement, Honoring Diversity for Successful Partnerships**

**Keynote:** Lola Dada-Olley

[Not Your Mama's Autism \(Podcast\)](#)

A day of virtual training from experts on topics connected to special education for families of students with IEPs and the professionals who support them. This event is coordinated by WI FACETS, in collaboration with WI DPI and other family support/disability organizations.

**Date:** August 5, 2022



## At Home Learning Strategies

### Early Literacy Activity Calendar

Help your child get ready to learn to read! Each day features a fun activity that will help your child build pre-reading skills. Activities are color-coded by skill: Math, Play, Reading, Rhymes, Science, Songs, Stories and Writing.

- \* Write a poem with your child about the joys of spring
- \* Ask your children to close their eyes and pretend they are in a forest. What do they hear?



### Children's Activity Calendar

April is Mathematics and Statistics Awareness Month. Find the most engaging math learning tools for children. [The Best Math Apps for Kids of 2022 - BestApp.com](#)

### International Children's Book Day (April 2)



This day is celebrated to inspire a love of reading and to highlight children's books. Reading to children or having them read to you is one of the best ways to develop literacy skills. Instilling a love of reading promotes a lifetime of learning and enjoyment. The day is celebrated on or around the birthday of Hans Christian Anderson, born on April 2nd (1805). Check out a few of his fairy tale read-alouds:

[The Emperor's New Clothes](#) [The Snow Queen](#) [The Little Match Girl](#) [Thumbelina](#)

### **National Siblings Day (April 10)**

National Siblings Day is a day to celebrate the special relationships and bonds that brothers and sisters share with each other. Check out this [website](#) for a list of games and activities your children can enjoy during this day. More on page 3.



### **National Scrabble Day (April 13)**

This is a perfect day to play the traditional board game with family or friends.



The Scrabble letter tiles are also great **hands-on learning tools**. They can be used for activities such as letter recognition, teaching letter sounds, forming words, and creating words to get the highest score to incorporate math skills.

A fun family activity – bake & decorate some [Scrabble themed cookies](#).

### **Earth Day (April 22)**

Earth Day activities teach kids how to reduce their carbon footprint, appreciate everything the earth gives us, and take steps towards protecting the environment.

[20 Fun Earth Day Activities for Kids to Help the Planet](#)

[Books for Celebrating Earth Day](#)

Books about animals, plants, and conservation for Earth Day and Beyond.



Happy National Arbor Day!



### **National Arbor Day (April 29)**

[Celebrating 50 Years of Tree Planting - Arbor Day Foundation](#)

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tree planter's holiday! Find resources on the history of Arbor Day, planting tips, education and celebration materials.

### **Plant a Family Tree – It's great for the environment and a fun way to celebrate spring!**

Planting a family tree doesn't just help children to form a stronger connection with nature. It also helps children improve their responsibility and develop a deep sense of achievement as they see the tree growing taller and stronger.

Above all, planting a family tree can empower your child to realize that, despite the devastation from forest fires, current events, and other scary things that seem out of their control, they can still make a positive difference in the world around them.

[How planting a family tree could be one of the most empowering activities you'll ever do with your child.](#) Great information on choosing and planting your tree. Remember to let your children be involved in the decision process of choosing a tree. They'll be excited to be part of it!



### **World Penguin Day (April 25)**

What do you call a cold penguin? A Brrrr-d! Watch San Diego Zoo's live [Penguin Cam](#) for a close look at their African penguins. You can also view cams for Koalas, Giraffes, Pandas, Polar Bears and more on this site.

## Online Resources: Autism Spectrum Disorders

### [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This site has an extensive list of links to information relating to autism. [What do the sibs have to say about their experience of having a brother or sister with a disability?](#) Read on, because they have a lot to say!



### [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

Website includes eligibility criteria for autism, information about trainings, and links to archived webinars. Links to additional resources are also included on the site.

### [Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin](#)

The Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin exists to provide a community for individuals affected by autism, their families, and professionals who serve them. Their goal is to increase the quality of life for those affected by autism and respond to the emerging needs of the autism community.

### [Autism Society of Southeastern WI \(ASSEW\)](#)

ASSEW works to increase public awareness about the day-to-day issues faced by people on the spectrum, advocate for appropriate services for individuals across the life span, and provide the latest information regarding treatment, education, research, and advocacy.

### [Autism Navigator](#)

This website features a unique collection of web-based tools and courses that integrate the most current research in autism with an interactive web platform and lots of video footage showing effective evidence-based practices. It is intended for professionals as well as families.

### [Autism Source](#)

The Autism Source™ Resource Database, a product of the Autism Society of America, is the most comprehensive database of its kind. Autism Source employs a nationwide network of affiliates and collaborates with other autism organizations and professionals throughout the U.S. to ensure that the database continues to grow and is kept current with reliable resources for information related to autism.

### [Autism Speaks](#)

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. They do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.

### [100 Day Kit for Young Children](#)

The days after an autism diagnosis can be overwhelming. The Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit helps families of children ages four and under make the best possible use of the 100 days following the diagnosis. [A 100 Day Kit for school age children is also available.](#)

### [MyAutismTeam](#)

MyAutismTeam is the social network for parents of kids with autism. The site provides emotional support from other parents of children with autism. Parents may gain practical advice and insights on managing treatment or therapies for autism. Parents can also as share daily ups and downs in a judgment-free place.

### [IRIS Center Modules](#)

The first module provides information on the early signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as an overview of the difference between a medical diagnosis and an educational determination of ASD. The second module highlights strategies that have been shown to be effective in teaching appropriate behaviors and skills and decreasing inappropriate behaviors with children and youth with ASD. [IRIS Center](#) is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, using effective evidence-based practices and interventions.



### [Get Outdoors - Take a Sensory Hike!](#)

Each family member picks a sense that they want to use as their primary sense, such as sight, sound or smell. Take a walk (you can do this right in your backyard or neighborhood) for about five minutes. Then each person shares the story of the walk based upon the sense that they chose.



### [Sensory Benefits of Gardening with Kids](#)

Gardening with kids can be fun, educational, and full of sensory benefits. Whether a child has difficulty with [sensory processing](#) or not; all children can benefit from [sensory play](#). From birth, children learn about their world using their senses. As children grow and develop, sensory experiences help them make connections and make sense of the [world around them](#).



### [5 Tips for Gardening with Kids](#)

Studies show that kids involved in planting their own veggies are more likely to eat them. The fresh air and exercise is another benefit.

Kid-friendly tips:

- \* Get them their own tools
- \* Plant some things that grow quickly
- \* Plant weird veggies
- \* Encourage their interests
- \* Read up on it!

## WI FACETS



Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

To register by phone: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM  
(unless otherwise noted)

### [Up to Me Series: Different Types of Disclosure](#)

**Presenter:** Emily Jonesberg, Rogers InHealth

**Date:** April 11, 2022, 12pm-12:30 pm

### [Inclusive Strategies to Address Behavioral Needs for Students with IEPs](#)

**Presenters:** Tim Peerenboom and Eva Shaw, DPI

**Date:** April 13, 2022

### [IEP 6: Redacción del IEP- Parte 2](#)

Si tiene preguntas sobre el taller, o necesita asistencia, llame al 414-374-4645 o por email a [nramos@wifacets.org](mailto:nramos@wifacets.org)

**Presenter:** Sra. Nelsinia Ramos, de WI FACETS

**Date:** April 14, 2022

### [Inclusive Service Delivery in Early Childhood: Speech & Language, OT and PT](#)

**Presenters:** Andrea Bertone, Jenny Bibler, and Carlynn Higbie, WI DPI

**Date:** April 20, 2022

### [Verbal De-escalation for Children and Youth](#)

**Presenter:** NAMI-Dane County

**Date:** April 27, 2022

### [IEP 7: Redacción del IEP- Parte 3](#)

Si tiene preguntas sobre el taller, o necesita asistencia, llame al 414-374-4645 o por email a [nramos@wifacets.org](mailto:nramos@wifacets.org)

**Presenter:** Sra. Nelsinia Ramos, de WI FACETS

**Date:** April 28, 2022

**Learning Opportunities**



### Extended School Year Services for Students with an IEP

The school year is ending in the next several months. If parents are considering extended school year services (ESY) for their child with an IEP, now is the time to act. ESY services are required special education and related services provided beyond the limits of the school term, in accordance with the child's IEP, and at no cost to the parents. These services are necessary in order to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE). There are no state regulations addressing when a child needs ESY services, but there are federal regulations that specifically address ESY services. The federal regulations state ESY services must be provided when a child's IEP team determines that the services are necessary for the provision of FAPE. The regulations state a school district cannot limit ESY services to particular categories of disability or unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of the services.

School districts are not required to consider ESY services for each child at an IEP meeting. If parents believe their child should receive ESY services, they need to bring it up at a scheduled IEP meeting or schedule an IEP meeting to discuss it. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has written an [information bulletin](#) with frequently asked questions relating to ESY that provides additional guidance. Please call the WI FACETS Help Desk at (414-374-4645) if you have questions.



### [Research to Read](#)

#### "I'm Not Trained for This!" and Other Barriers to Evidence-Based Social Skills Interventions for Elementary Students with High Functioning Autism in Inclusion

Silveira-Zaldivar, T., & Curtis, H. (2019). "I'm Not Trained for This " And Other Barriers to Evidence-Based Social Skills Interventions for Elementary Students with High Functioning Autism in Inclusion. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 12(1), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2019155337>

#### [Read Full Article](#)

More students with High Functioning Autism (HFA) are in inclusive settings than ever before. The sheer physical combination of students with autism and their typical peers is insufficient to address the social deficits of students with autism. While evidence-based practices (EBPs) for social skills exist, these practices are not being implemented routinely in public schools. A mixed-methods study was conducted to identify barriers to the implementation of EBPs for social skills for students with HFA in early elementary inclusive settings. Thirty-three (n=33) district inclusion related elementary school stakeholders completed a survey created to examine the barriers to the implementation of EBPs for social skills. Additional data collection methods included an open-ended survey question, focus groups (n=12 of the 33 survey respondents), semi-structured interviews, and researcher field notes. Training, time, support, prioritization, materials, and staff mind-set were the top six barriers to the successful implementation of EBPs for social skills as identified by elementary inclusion stakeholders. These barriers revealed three key factors necessary to successfully implement EBPs for social skills: support, preparation, and motivation. The identification of barriers is the first step in bridging the gap between research and practice within inclusion school settings.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family engagement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, contact: Wendy Overturf at [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org).*



## **Contributions to the Newsletter**

**Upcoming newsletter topics:** May: **Mental Health**  
June: **ADD/ADHD**  
July: **Speech & Language**

*To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.*

*Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.*

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter  
can be found online at:***

**[Newsletter | Serving Groups \(servingongroups.org\)](#)**



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