

Fall 2012

The West Virginia Autism Training Center @ Marshall University Magazine, Fall 2012

West Virginia Autism Training Center

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THE WEST VIRGINIA AUTISM TRAINING CENTER

@ Marshall University

ABOUT ZACH & NASCAR

+ PLUS

Discussion of Best Practice Interventions

Growing Through Transitions

Fall 2012 | www.marshall.edu/coe/atc

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The West Virginia
Autism Training Center
at Marshall University

“The WV Autism Training Center provides support to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders as they pursue a life of quality”



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THE WEST VIRGINIA

AUTISM

TRAINING CENTER



MARSHALL COLLEGE



I bring you greetings from everyone at the West Virginia Autism Training Center (WV-ATC) at Marshall University. We are very definitive in our mission statement that we support individuals with ASDs as they pursue a life of quality. We are happy to share this news magazine with you highlighting family stories that exemplify that pursuit.

People have different visions of the word “support.” It could be as nonchalant as giving approval and some assistance to someone who wants to attempt something new or challenging. It could mean, “Yes, I will support that and not get in the way.” But at the WV ATC, we take the word “support” and put it into action. For us, it means starting out by finding out what the person on the autism spectrum and their family desire in their lives. What would a life of quality look like for those individuals? Often, no one is asking families that question.

Once that is shared, we work with a team built around the family and we begin to systematically build plans and create opportunities for those dreams to become reality. We ask, what are the important skills the individual needs to have for those dreams become reality? Does it require a certain level of communication skill, social skill, academic or self-advocacy skill? We want every child to identify their ABCs but if you want to be a NASCAR driver, we want to be sure you can identify the letters on a stick shift! What strategies can we employ to teach those skills? What opportunities do we need to create to allow the individual to practice skills or experience different pieces of the dream? What levels of assistance will we need at the start of skill building and how will we fade that support so that the individual is as independent as possible? And finally, how will we as a team celebrate success? This is what we mean by the word “support”. It is the critical word in our mission and our main intervention model, The Family Focus Positive Behavior Support Process.

The WV ATC not only supports families, but we have been collaborating with the WV Department of Education, Office of Special Programs to support teachers of students with ASDs for the past year. You can read more about this exciting project within this magazine. You can also read about our college program for students with Asperger syndrome, now in its 10th year of operation. I am proud to say that our definition of support extends to this nationally known model of serving higher education students.

In closing, thank you to the families and WV ATC staff who contributed to this publication. Your stories are truly inspirational. And a heartfelt thank you to all of WV ATC staff that work hard every day to support those we serve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Becker-Cottrill". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Barbara Becker-Cottrill, Ed.D.

ALEX & CLIFFORD

By **Tiffany Atwell**



▲ Alex

My brother, Alex, was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at 14 months old. When my parents told me the news, I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces. How could my brother have autism? I didn't want to believe it or even think about it. I kept telling myself that the doctors were wrong, but

as time went on his disorder became clearer to me. I realized that denying his disorder wasn't going to make it go away so I started to research autism so I could help him in life. I refused to give up until I understood what was happening to my brother.

As Alex got older, he became a runner. Once he had the chance to get away, he took advantage of it. As you can imagine, this frightened us to our core. My parents

decided to obtain a tracking bracelet for Alex to wear in the event he eloped. I researched a company and came across testimonies from parents with autistic children who have used their product. One parent stood out to me while talking about her son's autism service dog. I fell in love with every word she said because I thought a service dog would benefit my brother as well. I mentioned the idea to my parents; at first, they were skeptical, but I assured them it wouldn't be a mistake.

4 Paws for Ability was the only company I could find that placed service dogs with children. We contacted the founder/owner of the company, Karen Shirk. Karen informed us about the process of receiving a service dog and it was something we had faith in and knew we could do. The challenge was raising the money to buy the service dog. However, with the help of our community, within 5 short months we found ourselves traveling to Xenia, Ohio, to bring home Alex's new companion!

Alex's new friend was named Clifford. Clifford is a trained service dog trained specifically for individuals with autism and behavior problems Clifford is able to track Alex if Alex was to get away. My brother is also tethered to Clifford, which gives him the ability to go out in public without being upset and afraid. Alex and Clifford clicked instantly. We called them a "package deal" because you didn't see one without the other. It warmed my heart to see the love Alex put forth towards Clifford and to see the love being returned to Alex. I felt like Alex had a bit of normalcy in his life.

It has now been 4 months since we added our new addition! Alex and Clifford are closer than ever. Having Clifford has taken away a lot of fear and worries on our part. I like to think of Clifford as a mother hen over Alex: he so much as whimpers and Clifford takes off to find him to make things better. Alex used to not talk or even babble, but he chatters up a storm now. Alex's temper tantrums are not as bad anymore. For the first



▲ Clifford

Morgan's Poem



▲ Alex tethered to Clifford

time, he can go outside and play, accompanied by Clifford. We are able to go in stores and have family time outside of the house because Clifford keeps Alex entertained and has his mind occupied. Clifford has made a significant improvement in Alex's quality of life, and Alex wants Clifford around him at all times now.

I honestly do not know where Alex's life would be right now if we had not gotten a service dog

for him. I believe Clifford is helping Alex mature out of some of his autism. I know that he can't take it away but he can make it better. Clifford has helped Alex express the person that is trapped inside of him. My advice to parents who are looking for help for their autistic child is: get a service dog! You will not go wrong! We had a fear of it not being what we needed; however, there isn't a doubt in my mind anymore. In the beginning, I wanted to take Alex's disorder away but, I understand autism and I see how it's a part of *who* he is and not *what* he is. Alex's life is different in this moment and I have Clifford to thank. Clifford has helped him to a new beginning on life!



▲ Alex will remain in place with Clifford



Morgan is my name
not all kids are the same
one of my favorite things to do
is play a video game
bullies may come and bullies may go
I can let my anger flow
every little thing
does not have to become a big thing

12-year-old Morgan, the author of *Morgan's Poem*, enjoys sports, art, music, and video games. He is also looking forward to attending junior high during the 2011-2012 school year. In anticipation of that transition, Morgan and his team participated in the Family Focused Positive Behavior Support process. His team identified and addressed goals that emphasized supporting Morgan as he worked to enhance his self-esteem and confidence.

Morgan struggles with challenges common to most adolescents, including being the target of bullying behavior. He is, however, working hard to conquer that obstacle by developing skills necessary to manage and respond to bullying. Morgan developed a "Self Talk" poster with visual prompts that reminds him that he has the ability to stand up to – and appropriately respond to – bullying.

Along with his poster, Morgan always includes a copy of his inspirational poem. Morgan and his family are currently enjoying a summer filled with favorite family activities and unforgettable family memories.



▲ Kerrie Harris and Jackie Clark

Growing *through Transitions*

By **Kerrie Harris and Jackie Clark**, Transition Specialists

When you hear the word *transition*, what comes to mind? The term is highly individualized, and means something different to each person. For freshman and transfer students entering college each year at Marshall University, it means learning a new lifestyle, new skills, and how to find their place on campus. For juniors and seniors approaching graduation and planning a career or graduate study, it means learning about the next stages of life, including new job responsibilities and work place etiquette. Transitions can be intimidating. Staff working at WV ATC's College Program for Students with Asperger Syndrome understand the crucial role transitions have in academic and social success, and work closely with students to reduce the challenges that can accompany the process.

A Transition Specialist and a team of graduate assistants dedicated to freshman and transfer students provide extra oversight and support during the first year of college. Supports are holistic, individualized, and generated through a collaborative planning session involving the student, College Program staff, and family members before the first day of classes. The Transition Specialist serves as a liaison between the university and parents, providing updates when needed. Freshman students meet twice per week to attend Discovery Group, a social skills group with topics tailored to meet their needs. This approach to learning social skills often involves role-play and group discussion centered on skills about which students are curious, but may not have been taught in high school. The Transition Specialist meets face-to-face with each freshman weekly to discuss academic, social, and independent living skills. Goal setting is discussed and monitored to determine the progress each student is making toward achieving their goals. These supports – in addition to

daily mentoring sessions with graduate assistants who assist with academic and social organization and facilitate a daily study hall – are essential in helping freshman adjust to college.

Several years ago, the WV ATC's College Program began a Summer Transition Program, designed to reduce the anxiety inherent in transitions by helping students experience college life and adjust to campus before starting classes full-time in the fall semester. Students take one course they feel they will excel in during a five week summer session. The summer experience has been successful in helping teens grow in maturity due to learning the layout of the campus, experiencing dorm life, meeting new people, and learning time management. When students who have been involved in the Summer Transition Program reach their fall semester they feel more like an upperclassman due to their summer experience.

The upperclassmen students also work with a Transition Specialist and a team of graduate assistants dedicated to supporting them. Juniors and seniors meet with the graduate assistant and the Transition Specialist weekly to work on plans for life after graduation. The process of transitioning out of college and into the workforce, graduate or professional school, or the next stages of life can be overwhelming for anyone. Skills such as "networking," "cover letters," and "water cooler talk" can sound foreign to many young adults with little work experience. Discovery Group is offered to these students with themes relevant to their futures planning; such as: self-advocacy, resume building, mock interviews, and work relationships.

Working closely with the Huntington community, Marshall's Career Services, and with students' families is crucial, especially when planning for, obtaining, and sustaining work experience internships for upperclassmen. Fluid and regular communication among families (who have a true assessment of a student's specific needs), career counselors (who have important professional advice to offer), local businesses (which provide a learning environment via the internship), and the Transition Specialist are vital to success of an effective transition out of college.

Before any transition in life, it is helpful to know what to expect and learn skills that will be needed during the transition. Visiting your college of choice before classes begin can help with learning the layout of campus. Prior to attending college students are encouraged to learn to do laundry, develop a regimented sleep routine, practice money and medication management, and learn organization skills to keep a dorm room tidy. In regard to transitioning out of college, work experience placements are utilized so that students can begin to practice the skills of arriving to work on time, dressing appropriately, and communicating effectively with co-workers. Good time management is essential, so learning to develop a good routine where free time is managed properly keeps students on track. Checklists, planners, and visual calendars are among the many tools that can help with time management.

Transition is a process that involves many steps and the WV ATC's College Program knows how daunting these steps can be for someone on the autism spectrum. Transition Specialists and a host of other support staff assist in making the transition for students in and out of college as smooth as possible. As the program's motto states: "With the right supports, the sky's the limit!"

WV Autism Training Center and WV Department of Education – Office of Special Programs Collaborate on an Autism Teacher Outreach Training Project

The WV Autism Training Center and the Department of Education – Office of Special Programs have been working together on a statewide autism teacher training project. The project launched last summer with three regional autism teacher academies and a statewide training in the fall. County Special Education Directors selected a specified number of autism teachers to attend the academies. The focus of the academies was to provide teachers with detailed knowledge about evidence-based practices specific to students with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). Following the academy training, a series of phone conferences and additional face to face meetings were conducted. The overarching goal for this project is to provide teachers not only with the foundation of the newest evidence-based practices, but also to offer teachers support throughout the year. An online teacher network was established for each academy group, where teachers share materials, stories, ask questions, and discuss issues. The summer academies were conducted again this summer. Those participants will continue to be supported throughout the school year and beyond.



▲ Teachers in Cohort 2, Group 1 pose for a group photo during the 2012 summer autism teacher academy



▲ From left: Kevin Philyaw, camp director, Austin Haddox, Isaiah Burns, Ann Burns, Meagan Gibson and Jessica Sherry

Isaiah's Day Camp Experience at Fairmont State University

By Peggy Hovatter

When Dan and Ann Burns were considering summer activities for their son Isaiah, they struggled with a challenge common to all families that include children with autism: Where can my child go that includes activities with same aged peers that offers an appropriate level of support? So the Burns' went to work. They spoke with Kevin Philyaw, who created the Fairmont State University Summer Day Camp. The camp offers children a week of basketball, dance, swimming, arts and crafts, movies, computer lab, soccer, sign language, French and pizza parties. The family knew that Isaiah would need someone to 'shadow' him so that he could participate in and enjoy the activities offered. They also knew he would need a welcoming and accepting environment. The Burns' knew they had found the right environment...but what about someone who knew Isaiah who could attend camp with him? The solution was right in front of them.

Austin Haddix, the same age as Isaiah, had been helping the Burns family on their farm for the past two years. He enjoyed spending time with Isaiah and knew him well. He also knew important tips when working with Isaiah: When you give him a direction, reduce the length of your sentence to three or four words, say his name first to get his attention, and if he gets upset keep your voice calm and remind him to use his words. The Burns' presented their idea to Kevin and the team developed a plan for the adult FSU students working with the program to learn about and meet Isaiah and Austin prior to camp. Visual strategies such as a visual schedule and first/then techniques were prepared. On the first day of camp, Ann and I were present just in case as a precaution; however, Isaiah and Austin maneuvered the day with flying colors as well as the rest of the week. Staff at FSU Summer Day Camp all agreed that it was amazing to see the boys in action and learn more about autism. The entire experience was a wonderful example of planning, acceptance and teamwork. Isaiah participated in ATC's PBS program in 2009.



▲ Austin and Isaiah



▲ A young boy's dream

Cover Story

ZACH & NASCAR

By Anita Estel

I have been racking my brain trying to remember exactly when Zach first became interested in NASCAR and found the answer in Zach's baby book. I had the time dated... July 1997. Zach was 2 then; he is 17 now. This was also the time period we first noticed Zach having difficulties I wrote: *"Zachary loves NASCAR races, he watches taped races over and over. He plays with his racing champions cars while he watches the races. He likes the #10 Tide car the best."*

He would have all of his cars on the coffee table, and line them up in a 2 by 2 line, just like the start of a race. He would bend down and be eye level with the table top and move the cars around in the order of the specific race he was reenacting.

If it wasn't the time of the year that NASCAR was on, he would watch taped races. As most everyone who spends time with our kids knows - their memories are incredible. Zachary can tell you who won what race, when, how many laps the winner led, who his crew chief was, and who sponsored the car. This memory not only applies to recent drivers, but drivers that were racing in the 1970's and before. Zach's elementary

teachers remember him bringing his cars to school and lining them up on the playground.

Zachary and I have been attending as many races as we can afford since he was 5 years old. He loves the environment. Zachary has his own race team on Forza Racing with his Xbox Live account. He talks with – and has friends from – all over the world. He even met one at the Dover, DE Autism Speaks race this year. He made the rules, set up the points system,



▲ Zach standing next to his favorite driver, James Buescher's truck, at Turner Motor Sports



▲ Zach Today



▲ Living the dream

and awarded prizes for the season. Dr. Ball thought it would help him socially to start relationships in the safety of his own home. He has thrived.

When we first became involved with the ATC we started his journey by asking what Zachary wanted to be so that we would know how to get there. One of his dreams was to be a NASCAR driver. As he has aged he's realized that very few people actually make it that far. So, Zachary's modified his dream to: "Be in a racing environment" by going to school at the Universal Technical Institute / NASCAR Technical Institute in Concord, NC. He wants to become a mechanic for a race team.

Zach has not given up on driving a stock car but he is preparing a backup plan.

We were able to see the Institute recently when we took Zachary to Charlotte for his Richard Petty Driving experience. As a birthday gift it was arranged for him to go to the

Charlotte Motor Speedway, get in a stock-car – and drive over 100 miles per hour! I was so proud of him. Everyone who loves Zachary is very proud of him, and knows he is doing really well. But, in that moment, when he pulled out onto that racetrack and was fulfilling his lifetime dream, I couldn't stop crying. He had done it! He had beaten the odds. I realized there was nothing he couldn't work through, nothing he couldn't do. I cried until he pulled back into the pits (and then I stopped, because I didn't want to upset him).

Life is good. My little boy is living his dream.

▼ Where Zach will be attending school to make his dream come true



Drumming Up Success

By Heather Porterfield

We have three children and Daniel is our middle child and has diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. He is a bright, very funny, ten-year old fifth grader, with a seven year old sister and a nine-teen year old brother. When he was a baby, he didn't want to be rocked and didn't like to be sung songs. He had a very strict schedule and it was in our best interest not to change that. When he started school, we did our best to do whatever we could to avoid major breakdowns; for the first two years Daniel had nothing but peanut butter sandwiches and applesauce for lunch.

Before Bonnie, the PBS Trainer from the WV ATC, came to our family, Daniel, an otherwise bright and dexterous boy, could not tie his shoes. Or, he chose not to tie his shoes, I should say. He still chooses not to tie his shoes, but now I know he could if he absolutely needed to do it. Life skills, at least those activities carried out at our home was never really our major issue. We knew Daniel and how to work with him. His life at school was our main source of anxiety. We had lots of worries: How to get things Daniel needed without being pushy; How to stand up for him when others view his behavior as disrespectful and bratty, but I know he just broke down. Our family has a sarcastic streak and we tend to diffuse tense situations with humor; what works for us at home, however, did not necessarily fit in with what needed to be done at school.

Bonnie and PBS entered our lives just in time. Our school year started off with an emergency appendectomy for Daniel, the devastating loss of my brother, and our oldest child moving to Charleston. Add to that, Daniel's last year of elementary school and we had tremendous changes happening all at once. I was so thrilled to get the notice that we would have someone to help us get all the players on the same page.

I must add that Daniel had no idea about his diagnosis before Bonnie. We've known since he was little that he was different, but we had only received his diagnosis at the age of eight. My husband and I struggled with how much information he could digest. It seemed to us that if we didn't tell him, he couldn't be accused of using that information to get more leeway with school work. But if we didn't, I was worried that he would feel like an outcast and never understand why. So Bonnie opened that door and helped us give him the information he needed. It went better than I could have ever expected! He was very nonchalant in the moment, although we have revisited the topic a few times since.

As a result of the team work and the PBS process, his music teacher now stays after school on Mondays and donates his time to provide drum lessons for Daniel and another child. That may not seem like much, but for Daniel it has been phenomenal. He's developing a friendship and building confidence. Mondays were always a struggle, but after drum

lessons his teacher overheard him say, *on a Monday*, "This is the best day ever!" And since then he asked me, yes, asked me, if I would take him to the chess club at the library. He goes alone. And *likes* it. A lot!

Daniel still has days that he doesn't do his work in class, but he knows that will eliminate his play time at home, so it happens a lot less than it used to. With the trainings, meetings and teamwork, the teachers seem to deal with Daniel better now. He has a great relationship with his teachers and they understand him and know that sometimes he just needs to take a walk before starting his writing assignment and that the hand fidget actually helps him focus during his math lessons. Also, PBS helped us come up with a system at home

Before Bonnie, the PBS Trainer from the WV ATC, came to our family, Daniel, an otherwise bright and dexterous boy, could not tie his shoes.

where he earns extra time to play by doing chores. So now, I don't have to beg him to do them anymore. He sees the visual list of what needs to be done, knows he can earn time, and does it. Who wouldn't like a system that can result in that kind of progress?

We have appreciated all the insight, support, resources, and camaraderie that Bonnie, ATC and the entire PBS process has provided to our family. The goal of FF-PBS is a better quality of life for the individual and the family, and by every measure we have certainly achieved that!



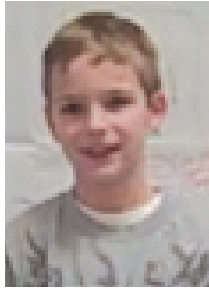
Daniel ▶

MR. SMITH comes to WEST VIRGINIA

By **Bonnie Marquis**, PBS Trainer



▲ Mr. Smith



▲ Andrew Bailey

Any time a seasoned educational professional chooses to relocate to our great state, it is a reason to be pleased. But when the professional comes with the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support credentials of Steve Smith—and just so happens to be assigned to student receiving FF-PBS services—it is cause for true celebration!

Mr. Smith chose to pull up his Colorado roots so he and his wife could be near their daughter and young grandson. Seems she fell in love with a West Virginia boy and, well, you know we don't let go of our own very easily. And lucky for us, because Mr. Smith is a true asset to the teaching staff at Pinch Elementary in Kanawha County where he teaches third grade. And it is no overstatement to say he's made a life changing difference for ATC client, Andrew Bailey. Andrew has Asperger's syndrome and while some years were worse than others, he has never had an easy time at school. Andrew's mother, Carrie, dreaded this year until she met Mr. Smith. She heard he had experience with "difficult kids" and when she asked him if he was willing to take part in the FF-PBS process, not only was he willing, he eagerly explained his own success with School-Wide PBS and was excited to learn how this would work with an individual student!

Mr. Smith has been a vital team member in the FF-PBS process and contributes valuable insights to the

monthly meetings. He embodies both the art and the science of effective teaching and was already implementing a variety of PBS oriented strategies at the start of the school year, which undoubtedly helped set Andrew up for success. To the surprise of his entire team, Andrew even put down as part of his PATH Dream that he might like to be a teacher one day. It is clear to the team that Andrew is thriving and experiencing very few problems in the classroom. Challenges are inevitable but Mr. Smith handles each with a calm supportive hand that makes it possible for Andrew to learn, while also being held accountable for his actions and respectful of the clearly defined classroom boundaries.

Several techniques are employed in Mr. Smith's class that supports the core values of Positive Behavior Support. The first is his use of student teams in the classroom. Team members sit together in pods and are required to work together to achieve common goals. It may be as simple as working out the answer to a math problem or the creative solution to a social studies activity. Teams earn and lose points together and are accountable to each other. Thinking outside the box, working and supporting one another and being respectful when there are differences of opinion are all ways the students earn points for their team. In Mr. Smith's words, "I have really found that the teams help build a sense of oneness within my classroom. The students soon discover that they are responsible to each other and if they don't do their part, the whole team suffers. It also provides ALL students the opportunity to "shine" within a small group setting where the intimidation factor is lessened."

As a result of Mr. Smith's point system he is rewarded with greater student engagement, improved classroom behavior, and students who feel

responsibility for something greater than themselves. The students are rewarded with the opportunity to earn something they value when winning teams earn a previously agreed upon prize. They also are given essential practice developing strong interpersonal skills that are increasingly cited by employers as among the most valuable of employee assets. And it may just help make some of the less exciting aspects of school a bit more interesting and encourage the more reluctant learners to put forth a bit more effort.

Another feature of Mr. Smith's classroom is the weekly class meeting. In these meetings children learn to resolve conflict, and understand there is a time and place to air disagreements, express hurt feelings and problem solve solutions. The time invested here pays off, as Mr. Smith explains, "With my class meetings, the incidences of tattling are dramatically reduced. Students learn how to effectively manage their emotions and respond to each other in a positive environment. They also build conflict resolution skills and problem solving strategies as well." Even students who are not directly involved in conflicts can learn from the process and contribute to creative solutions. Best of all the meetings help the class foster a strong sense of community and support and develop an increased understanding of individual needs, so fewer problems arise in the first place.

These two relatively simple techniques, combined with Mr. Smith's genuine affinity for his students and his commitment to positive behavior support principles, creates an atmosphere primed for learning and succeeding. Although this is his first year at Pinch Elementary, word of his success has spread throughout the building and those who observe his room like what they see. The principal was impressed enough to invite him to share his methods with the entire staff and others are being encouraged to give these methods a try.

Positive Behavior Support – whether at the school, classroom, or individual level – is supported by both research

Continued on page 15

finding a KEY

By **Kathy Knight**



Remember that day you finally reached a level of acceptance with your child's diagnosis?

I do. And in my mind's eye I saw my son as a locked pirate's treasure chest, with salt-water damaged and time-rusted padlock. There was a moment of total clarity when I knew: I must find a key that would unlock that chest.

I'll readily admit trying multiple keys over the course of many years: swimming, social skills training, behavioral modification, occupational, physical and speech therapy, individual education plans, sensory training, counseling, and many other keys. Many of these keys worked on the initial lock. But then I would find yet another locked box contained within the chest.

I finally tried another key, completely by accident. My son Jarred was refusing to go to school and it turned out to be due to a severe bullying issue. Jarred is of small stature and with Asperger's

syndrome he is the perfect target for bullies. So he could defend himself when needed I signed him up for Tae Kwon Do and Hap Ki Do.

What I soon discovered was totally amazing! Jarred was changing from this super klutz to being able to run without falling down. His gross motor skills, balance, and coordination improved. His eye contact and focus greatly improved. He became self-confident, and his self-control improved! I will never forget the look on my son's face, the day he broke his first wooden board and the entire school cheered!

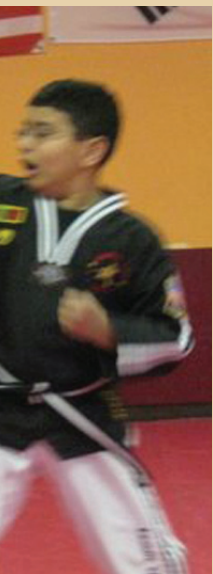
Jarred's Tae Kwon Do Master is Su Hyung Chang owner of Chang's Martial Arts USA, Kearneysville, West Virginia. Master Chang explains that Tae Kwon Do is literally the way of "Kicking and Punching." Tae Kwon Do was developed in Korea and is known for its powerful and dynamic kicking style. Students quickly learn, with proper technique, to generate tremendous speed and

power. Emphasis is on using the legs so balance and coordination will grow very quickly. Hap Ki Do means, "The way of Coordination and Power." It is a situation-based self-defense style that uses joint locks, pressure points and throws as well as kicks and strikes. Hap Ki Do teaches student to flow smoothly in and around any opponent, using their opponent's power against them.

Most parents want to know how I selected the type of Martial arts and the school. I would love to tell you that I spent hours upon hours doing research, but I didn't. There simply was no time. Jarred was in a serious bullying situation and needed some defense skills. And he needed them yesterday!

I picked Tae Kwon Do due to it being a major Martial Art form and looked for a school that was a member in good standing with the World Tae Kwon Do Federation. I then interviewed different Masters in schools that were within a fifty mile radius. I made my selection based

I know Martial arts may not be the key to unlocking every child, but if you don't try it in the lock, you'll never know if it would have unlocked you child too.



on *three questions*: “How do you feel about having an autistic student in your school?” “How would you train my child if you thought he couldn't understand as quickly as his classmates?” and “What is your school's written philosophy?” I strongly suggest if you decide Martial Arts is the right choice for your child, that you select a school that doesn't limit itself to just developing the physical body. The philosophy you should look for is an holistic approach, one that ties all the daily aspects of your child's life together.

Master Chang requires written essays on topics such as *courtesy, respect, focus, and perseverance* as a stepping stone for advancing to the next belt. In addition, a form must be completed and signed off by the teacher for the student's attitude and performance while attending school. Finally, a parent form must also be completed and signed off attesting to the child's conduct and behavior to include *respecting and listening to parents, keeping good personal hygiene and, my favorite, keeping their room cleaned.*

The clean room is a major issue for my son, but it is great to have another person holding him accountable. If I in my “Mom role” refuse to sign the Parent form or his middle school teacher refuses, Jarred doesn't get to test for the next belt so there is plenty of incentive to be good at both home and school.

Last but not least, most parents want to know if a child with autism can be successful in Martial Arts. My answer to that question is this: Jarred started Tae Kwon Do as a first grader and he is now a seventh grader. He is scheduled to test for his Black Belt in one month. Jarred received Chang's Martial Arts USA's, Student of the Year Award for 2010 and the same year placed second in Harpers Ferry Middle School Talent contest.

I know Martial arts may not be the key to unlocking every child, but if you don't try it in the lock, you'll never know if it would have unlocked you child too.

Mr. Smith continued from page 13

and common sense. Not everyone may have the skills and experience of a Mr. Smith, but adopting a philosophy and techniques that teach and support positive behaviors can lead to greater satisfaction and improved quality of life for all involved. Beyond simple behavior management, which merely seeks to control behaviors, PBS aims to teach valuable skills and create environments that proactively reduce or prevent challenging behaviors. This result is real and lasting change, and creates a space for true growth and development, socially, emotionally and academically.

Thank you Mr. Smith – West Virginia welcomes you!

WV ATC FACTS

The mission of the Autism Training Center is to provide support to individuals with autism spectrum disorders as they pursue a life of quality. This is done through appropriate education, training and support for professional personnel, family members or guardians and others important in the life of the person with autism.

- WV ATC serves the entire state of WV
- WV ATC serves individuals of all ages
- WV ATC provides training in autism for approximately 1000 people annually
- WV ATC services are at no cost to registered families
- WV ATC, through Marshall University, provides autism teacher endorsement course-work
- WV ATC sponsors the College Support Program for students with Asperger Syndrome
- WV ATC collaborates with the WV Department of Education Office of Special Programs and WV Birth to Three

Best practice Interventions for Individuals with ASD

By Sarah Kunkel, Positive Behavior Support Trainer for the West Virginia Autism Training Center

Where do we go from here?

What do I do next?

What is the best course of action for my child?

Those, and similar questions, are regularly asked by parents soon after their child has received an autism spectrum diagnosis. The questions do have answers, although finding answers to fit the individual needs of a specific child isn't always simple. The internet provides a plethora of information, suggestions, and potential answers. But Google "autism therapy" and 32 million hits are found! How can anyone person or family sift through this sea of information?

Fortunately, there are specific strategies identified and accepted as best practice for teaching and supporting individuals with ASD. Interventions with the "best practice" label are empirically tested and scientifically sound. In a report conducted by the National Autism Center in 2009, twelve established strategies or treatment packages specific to ASD were identified as established, or "best practice" interventions. The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, at about the same time, identified more, but similar practices. This article will cover some of those best practice interventions. The most important thing to keep in mind is that not every best practice intervention is right for every child. Therapies must be tailored to fit the individual child's needs.

One of the established treatments identified by the National Autism Center was a comprehensive behavioral treatment package. The strategies within this package are based on the science of behavior, or behavior analysis and include a combination of applied behavior analytic (or ABA) procedures. All this may sound confusing, but the important thing to understand is that ABA is not one intervention. It is the foundation for systematic environmental manipulation which relies on direct observation and data collection. Again, sounds confusing... but here is an example. Sally may often scream out in class at what appears to be random times. After collecting data and observing Sally's behavior, her teacher notices that the screaming occurs mostly during group instruction but not during one-on-one instruction. As a result, she decides to ignore Sally when she screams out but praise her when she raises her hand. Soon the teacher notices that Sally is hardly ever screaming out during group instruction.

ABA is sometimes confused with Discrete Trial Therapy, or DTT. DTT is a specific type of therapy that falls under the broader ABA umbrella, and is best associated with the research of Ivar Lovaas, who had success utilizing DTT interventions to teach skills to children diagnosed with autism. DTT can be employed to teach a child each of the small steps involved in learning a skill in a systematic manner repeatedly to gain mastery. For instance, Billy is learning

how to follow directions, so his teacher starts with one-step directions. While sitting at a table one-on-one working together, the teacher says "stand up," and waits for Billy to respond. At first he needs some help with understanding her request, so she prompts him physically to stand up. After a few more attempts with this specific instruction, his teacher is able to fade the prompts to simply a gestural prompt. Eventually, Billy is able to follow the direction numerous times successfully with his teacher and mother. This skill is considered mastered and his teacher moves on to the next direction and eventually to two-step directions.

Because Billy's teacher is very well educated about Autism and ABA, she also knows that she must utilize Natural Environment Training, or NET, to truly master this skill with Billy. NET is similar to DTT but takes place in a more unstructured fashion. This helps Billy generalize the skill he has learned across multiple environments (instead of just the table) and people. For instance, now that Billy has mastered the skill through DTT, his teacher may begin to give the direction in the lunchroom, at circle, and at other appropriate moments, or ask other adults at school to also give the direction to Billy in order to generalize this skill into real world situations.

Another best practice technique is Positive Behavior Support, or PBS. PBS grew out of ABA from a desire to be more person-centered and antecedent-focused. PBS utilizes the same behavioral principles established within ABA with the understanding that it is important to focus on improving the individual's quality of life, creating interventions that mesh well with the family's value system, and on preventing the things that happen before the behavior (the antecedents) rather than just consequences to reduce the behavior. For instance, if Timmy has been hitting his classmates and a functional behavior assessment (FBA) revealed that he did this in order to



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Greg's Technology

By ??????



Six year old Greg is using his computer and also learning to use his new iPad, which was recently purchased by Greg's parents, Jeff and Meredith High. Mr. High researched and selected a variety of educational programs for Greg's iPad. Greg is quickly learning to navigate the device. He works on the educational programs, but also enjoys the games.

Experts say the Apple iPad may assist in overcoming some challenges associated with autism spectrum disorders,

particularly in areas such as communication strategies and academics. There are at least three dozen apps designed for children with autism, including apps for music and reading. And the device itself supports spoken text and other aids for those with special needs.

Parent of teens report that one of the most important reasons the iPad works so well as a communication device is that it has a high cool factor; it doesn't make the child stand out among peers like other communication devices can do.

Mr. and Mrs. High also purchased an iPad 1st Generation 16 GB Wi-Fi for Greg's class at Hoover Heights Elementary School. They replaced the broken printer in Greg's class with a Brother wireless multifunction printer. Now Greg's classmates will have new opportunities to learn and grow. Greg, his younger brother Jacob and his parents have an active life. They plan a trip to Ocean City, the Pittsburgh Zoo, and Idlewild Park this summer. The High's live in Weirton and are working with the West Virginia Autism Training Center Family Focus Positive Behavior Support Program.

A Discussion of Best Practice Interventions

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get attention, PBS would focus more on teaching Timmy to request attention in a more functional manner, such as using verbal speech, PECS, or sign language instead of using a consequence strategy such as Timmy loses 5 minutes of recess every time he hits another student.

There are other interventions and techniques not discussed in this article that are considered best practice, and perhaps we will cover them in a later article. However, it is very important to understand whether a proposed intervention or therapy is considered best practice before beginning treatment. The National Standards Report is available on the National Autism Center website at <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/pdf/NAC%20Standards%20Report.pdf>. The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders information on best practice methods and guidelines is available at projects.fpg.unc.edu/~autismpdc/.

It is important to refer to guides such as these so that everyone can be a knowledgeable and responsible consumer. Additionally, it is important to ensure that a variety of the best practice techniques are utilized with each individual to ensure skills are learned and generalized across environments and that the individual's life is one of quality.

SAVE THE DATE!



Dr. Martha Herbert, Author of the
*Autism Revolution: Whole Body Strategies
for Making Life all it can be*
The Harless Auditorium
Marshall University Medical School

September 21, 2012
12:00 – 03:30 p.m.

To register, go to the WV ATC website at
www.marshall.edu/atc and click on the
Dr. Martha Herbert workshop registration link.

There is no fee for this workshop,
but you must register!

PROMOTING GREATER INDEPENDENCE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ASDs THROUGH THE USE OF VISUAL AIDS

By **Carl Chinn & Marc Ellison**, Associate Director of Training at ATC

I was really excited when one of the college students I support through the WV ATC's College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome started a volunteer job in downtown Huntington, WV during the Spring, 2011 semester. He was excited too, especially because the placement provided him an opportunity to fine-tune skills he will need when he graduates and becomes employed full-time. While helping him plan his experience, we settled on using a visual aid to help him follow directions to and from the location.

When contemplating the location of and themes for the pictures, I chose places and things along the route that would be seen from the viewer's perspective. Because individuals with autism tend to prefer concrete and precise information, I used prevalent landmarks to demonstrate how to get to specific places. I used a basic triangulation technique to do this. If you make a triangle out of three reference points – yourself being one of the points – the viewer can be provided visual information that has greater breadth and depth. On

this particular route to work, the student could get to his destination by taking either the "Route Six" or the "Madison Avenue" buses. By putting both options in the same picture, two reference points exist that the student, the third reference point in the triangulation perspective, are able to look at and recognize.

Referencing locations by more than one landmark makes it easier for someone who has difficulty with spatial direction because it allows them to gauge distance without having to think too abstractly. In this visual aid, for example, the student uses objects such as newspaper stands and the Greyhound bus depot as landmarks. When he recognizes the newspaper stand is facing him and the sign for the Greyhound station is behind him, he understands he has to walk in the direction of the newspaper stand to get back to campus. The student is included in most pictures to add personalization and enhance familiarity. Instructions, including potential choices and examples of things to do if a bus is missed, are included after each picture.



▲ From Old Main, walk down 4th Avenue to the bus station.



▲ Enter the Greyhound facility. The bus will leave the station at 8:45 am and 10:45 am.



▲ Get on the Route 6 or the Madison Avenue at 8:45 am or 10:45 am depending on your internship day.



▲ Get off at 6th Avenue and 1st Street between the Foodfair and the BB & T bank.



▲ To get back after your internship, go to the bus stop in front of Foodfair. The bus will come at 11:25 am and 1:25 pm. The bus should come to a stop in front of you, if you have to cross the street to get to the bus, it's the wrong bus.



▲ To get back to campus, you want to go back the way you came. The picture on the left shows what the bus station looks like when we were coming from campus, and the second picture shows what it should look like when you are heading back to campus. NOTICE the way the newspaper machine is facing. If you are facing the newspaper machine then you are also facing towards campus and should go that direction.



What is Autism?

Autism is a disorder of the brain. Symptoms of autism occur during the first three years of life, although an individual might not receive a diagnosis until much later. Individuals with autism have problems with communication and socializing with others. In young children, autism affects the development of “typical” play behaviors. Autism is considered a developmental disorder in that some normal developmental milestones, such as when a child says their first words, are absent or abnormal. Autism is considered a pervasive developmental disorder in that these developmental differences affect many aspects of life and may last throughout a person’s lifetime. Currently, there is no one specifically known cause of autism and no one treatment. Early special education programs using behavioral methods have proven to be the most helpful treatment for persons with autism.

WHAT ARE THE EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM?

Possible symptoms at 6 months:

- Not making eye contact with parents during interaction
- Not cooing or babbling
- Not smiling when parents smile
- Not participating in vocal turn-taking (baby makes a sound, adult makes a sound, and so forth)
- Not responding to peek-a-boo game

At 14 months:

- No attempts to speak
- Not pointing, waving or grasping
- No response when name is called
- Indifferent to others
- Repetitive body motions such as rocking or hand flapping
- Fixation on a single object
- Oversensitivity to textures, smells, sounds
- Strong resistance to change in routine
- Any loss of language

At 24 months:

- Does not initiate two-word phrases (that is, doesn’t just echo words)
- Any loss of words or developmental skill

For more information on Autism, please also visit: www.marshall.edu/atc

MOVING?



We want to keep in contact

If you move or change your contact information, please don’t forget to let the WV ATC know.

Please call
1-800-344-5115
to make changes
in your contact
information.

GIVE NOW!

Donations to support the Autism Training Center can be made on-line at:
www.marshall.edu/coe/atc



AUTISM TRAINING CENTER



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Huntington, WV 25755

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