

Monthly WMLC Perspectives Highlights - February 2014



WEST METRO
LEARNING CONNECTIONS, INC.
Developing Social Understanding & Skills Since 2001
Locations in Edina & Excelsior

Spring Break Travel Tips

Written by: Rachel Adamek, BCaBA, Senior ASD Support Specialist

Traveling can be a stressful experience, even if the travel destination is a tropical one. For a child with autism the unknowns of travel, particularly airplane travel and the process which accompanies it, can be especially troublesome. To help ease the anxiety of children with autism and their families, the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) along with Fraser and the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) have teamed up to provide a program to help prepare these families for travel. The “Navigating Autism” events are held monthly, typically on the first Saturday of the month. In the two hour program, families will practice entering the airport, get a security pass, go through a TSA security checkpoint, and walk through the airport to a boarding gate. The participants will then board an aircraft and find their seats (the plane stays on the ground throughout the event).

These events are designed to be fun, safe experiences to learn and practice airport expectations and to find out what does or does not work for individual families. Because these events are so popular, it is recommended that interested families sign up early. Richard Kargel, a pilot with Delta Airlines and father to a child with autism, recommends that families prepare for air travel with the following tips on things to pack:

- Whatever keeps them occupied at home, bring it on vacation if at all possible! Tablets, laptops loaded with games and movies, personal game systems, paper and colored pencils, comfort/security items such as teddy bears or blankets can help ease anxiety and help to occupy the child during flight (but remember to bring headphones or ear buds if using an electronic device, as a courtesy to other passengers)
- Bring familiar snacks from home – just remember that the snacks may not be liquid or paste consistency! Liquids (and many other snack options) are also available for purchase in the terminal and aboard many flights.
- If your child has sensitivity to loud sounds, a pair of noise-cancelling headphones or soft ear plugs may minimize the noise.

Click [here](#) for more helpful tips and information from Kargel.

To find out more about "Navigating Autism" click [here](#).



Spring Term Course Offerings

Save your spot now! Registration is now open for Spring Term 2014, we are offering a wide selection of courses starting at preschool age all the way through young adulthood. We hope to see you this Spring!

***Register by February 17th for two entries into our Early Bird Prize Drawing to win an iPod Touch or a \$200 discount on tuition!**

Click [here](#) to view the Spring Registration Form

Click here to view the Spring Course Catalog

Contact Mary Wyatt for more information regarding registration at mwyatt@wmlc.biz



Metro Friendship Foundation Fundraiser

SAVE THE DATE: The annual Ice Breaker Social will be held on Sunday, April 13, 2014.

[Metro Friendship Foundation](#) (MFF) is a non-profit organization that provides scholarships to qualifying individuals on the Autism Spectrum who are seeking social skills development.



Show Your Support By Following Us on Facebook

If you are interested in keeping up-to-date with all of the "goings on" at WMLC you can follow us on Facebook. You can find interesting stories, information about upcoming events and more. Click [here](#) to follow us!



Monthly WMLC Sleepover

Drop-off: Saturday, February 15th at 5:00pm – Pickup: Sunday, February 16th at 10:00am

Join us for a sleepover at WMLC Edina! This is a great opportunity to enjoy some free time to hang out with friends. At about 6:30, we will eat dinner together as a group. After dinner, we will have more free time for board games, video games,



Sensory Strategy

WMLC uses hand fidgets in both our Lotus Specialized Learning Center Program and in our social skills groups. Hand fidgets can be helpful for individuals of all ages. They are used to help individuals focus and can be used as an appropriate way to alleviate stress. Hand fidgets come in a variety of shapes, sizes and textures. Below I have provided a few examples of hand fidgets that we have found to be beneficial for our clients. You can find many of these items at your local store or they can be purchased from a variety of websites. WMLC has purchased materials from the Therapy Shoppe, click [here](#) for the link.



or a movie before lights out. In the morning, staff will prepare breakfast and we will have even more time to hang out with friends after we pack up our things! (Ages 8+)

Outing Goals: Cooperative play skills and sportsmanlike conduct, verbal support to peers, reciprocal conversations relevant to activities, independence and responsibility.

Sleepover Cost: \$160

Items to Bring: Sleeping Bag, Pillow, Toothbrush

Optional Items to Bring: Games (electronic games are okay)

E-mail Mary Wyatt at mwyatt@wmlc.biz for more information.



Family Speech & Therapy Services provides [speech & language therapy](#) and [occupational therapy](#). They help children and adults with deficits in communication, self-help, gross motor, fine motor, sensory, or academic skills reach their fullest potential. They have three separate locations, one of the locations is located inside of our Edina Center. To find out more about Family Speech & Therapy Services click [here](#).

Check out their blog full of helpful information and ideas [here](#).



App of the Month

Hidden Curriculum. There are two different versions of this app, there is one specifically for kids and another created for adolescents and adults. We live in a fast paced world and we are surrounded by unstated rules and customs on a daily basis. For individuals on the Autism Spectrum, not being aware of the hidden curriculum can be very stressful and confusing. This app provides real-life based entries with explanations and is a great way to start a conversation about "unwritten social rules" such as personal space or using a social filter during conversations.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the kids app.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the adolescent and adult app.



"I Love You to Pieces" Picture Frame

This is a great gift idea for parents, grandparents or other loved ones around Valentine's Day.

What you'll need:

- Unfinished puzzle pieces (*Note: these can be found in most craft stores. They are often in with card making or cardstock materials. If you can't find them, you could use pieces from an old puzzle instead.)
- Red, white and pink craft paint
- Paint brush
- Tongue depressors
- Glue
- Black marker
- Photo

How to make your Picture Holder Craft

1. If using the unfinished puzzle, remove the center four pieces. Snap apart the remaining pieces. Paint the pieces red, pink or white.
2. While the pieces dry, assemble your tongue depressors into a frame shape as shown in the photos. Glue them together.
3. When the puzzle pieces are dry, assemble them back together (roughly) and glue them down to the tongue depressor frame as you

Banana Brunch Cake

From the kitchen of Jen Johnson (Chad's mom)

- 1/2 C butter
- 1 C sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 C mashed banana
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 C sour cream
- 2 C sifted all purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 C finely chopped nuts
- 1/4 C sugar
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1. Cream the butter until light, and then gradually add sugar, beating constantly.
2. Beat in eggs, one at a time.
3. Mix in banana, vanilla and sour cream.
4. Sift together flour, baking powder, soda and salt and fold into creamed mixture, stirring just enough to moisten.
5. Topping: 1/2 C finely chopped nuts, 1/4 C sugar, 1/2 tsp. cinnamon. Combine the nuts, sugar and cinnamon.
6. Sprinkle half of topping over bottom of well greased 9 inch square pan or 10 inch Bundt pan.
7. Spoon half of batter over topping.
8. Sprinkle remaining topping over batter, and then cover with remaining batter.
9. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched.

This recipe was taken from the WMLC Cookbook. To order your copy of this book contact nringgenberg@wmlc.biz
\$6.00 non-color copy / \$10.00 color copy

- go. This takes a good bit of glue.
4. When you get all the pieces assembled, use the marker and write "I Love You To Pieces" along the bottom of the frame.
5. Add in a photo of your child.



Friday Open Social

Join us on Friday, February 21st from 5:00 to 9:00 for our Friday Open Social at our Edina location. This event is open to children ages 8 and up.

Friday Open Socials provide social opportunities to build and strengthen new and old friendships. Participants have a great time playing games and doing activities with peers in a structured environment. Social interactions and communication among peers is facilitated by our highly trained staff while playing games. This is a great opportunity to hang out with friends. Minimum enrollment is three participants. All are welcome, but advance registration is required.



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