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WMLC Perspectives Highlights - July 2014

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WEST METRO
LEARNING CONNECTIONS, INC.

*Developing Social Understanding & Skills Since 2001
 Centers in Edina & Excelsior*

Climbing the Mountain: An Aspie's Take on Life at College

By Michael Koehler, WMLC Alumni and Senior at St. Olaf College

The jump from high school to college is probably one of the biggest changes that many Americans face. For me, thinking about college was a lot like standing at the base of a mountain so ridiculously tall that its icy peak disappears into the clouds. And yet, as you stand there, you know that if you want to reach your goal (whatever that might be for you), you've got to climb it.

If you're like me you probably want some tips and tricks before you start your climb. Well, I haven't quite reached the summit yet (give me another year), but with three years under my belt I do know something about surviving and thriving in college with Asperger's.

The first thing to keep in mind as you start college is that you aren't alone. Hundreds of thousands of students will be facing the same challenges as you. They're a good source of information if you have questions. Also, they're often easier to interact with than the high school students you're used to. Most college students choose to go to college because they love learning, are hard workers, and want a good career in a field they enjoy. They also tend to be less judgmental and a lot more open to Asperger's and other special conditions than typical high schoolers, so you're in good company. I know aspies who shunned their neurotypical peers in high school (myself included) but really enjoy their peers at college.

Next, know that college is hard. That goes without saying, but the hard I'm talking about doesn't involve deadlines and exams. You have a lot more independence in your life than you do at home. This sounds really awesome, and it is, but for many students this is by far the most challenging aspect of college to master. How you handle this independence will make or break you, and for us aspies this part of the

climb really tests how much we've shored up our weak points over the years.

For example, at college you're in charge of organizing your own time. No one else is there to make your schedule, set up meetings with professors (not teachers; some of them get annoyed if you call them that), do your laundry, watch for important messages and events, wake you up if you sleep through your alarm, make sure you're eating right or any prescriptions get refilled, etc. That's all on you. And let's not forget that you'll still have readings, homework and projects to deal with on top of everything. It gets very stressful but you're expected to bear it and prosper.

That being said, there are some things you can do to help manage your stress and your day. For starters, stay healthy. Get a good night's sleep and eat healthy. Schedule regular workouts and use that time to take a break. Plug in your headphones and just forget about work. Intense exercise helps you sleep and you'll focus on tasks better. (No joke. Look it up.) Plus, you feel really good afterwards. If you don't know where to start, take a gym class (it's probably mandatory anyway) and learn what sort of workout you enjoy. I can't tell you how much a daily thirty-minute workout has done for me both in and out of school. For me, daily workouts are mandatory, and I've never been into sports or body-building.

After that, learn to use the resources available to you. Look for colleges with programs to help students with special needs function well. My college has an [academic support center](#) that set up an [accommodation](#) that helps me out on tests (extra time for my slower writing speed) and includes weekly counselor meetings to talk about any issues and help me plan my week out. Most colleges have a career center where you can get help finding and preparing for jobs, but that's a whole other ballpark that deserves its own article so I won't go into it here.

This little introduction should be enough to help you aspiring aspies start your own climb. College will probably challenge you more than anything has before, so stay alert and monitor yourself. But if you can get the hang of things you will soar to heights you've never dreamed of. So good luck, and I'll see you at the summit.



SOCIAL SKILLS THERAPY

HELPING KIDS FIT IN & SHINE

Our social skills classes are off to a wonderful start!

We still have openings in

[Camp Connections Excelsior](#) and [Camp Connections Edina](#) **Sign-up today to save your spot!**

We are also looking for one [typical peer](#) for each group listed below:

Wed/Thurs from 10-12:00: 6, 7 or 8 years old (Excelsior)

Wed/Thurs from 10:30-12:00: 5, 6 or 7 years old (Excelsior)

Please contact Mary Wyatt if your child is interested in becoming a typical peer; It's a wonderful experience for all!

Summer Social Skills Term runs through Friday, August 15.

[EDINA Center](#)

Summer Registration Form
(Edina)

Summer Day Camp & Friday
Excellent Adventure
Calendar (Edina)

[EXCELSIOR Center](#)

Summer Registration Form
(Excelsior)

Summer Day Camp & Friday
Excellent Adventure
Calendar (Excelsior)

[EDINA & EXCELSIOR Centers](#)

Summer 2014 Catalog

Click [here](#) to view the Summer Term Calendar

Contact Mary Wyatt for information regarding registration at mwyatt@wmlc.biz or 952-474-0227 x204



WMLC Family Picnic

We invite you to join us for an evening of food, friends and fun at Lake Susan Park on Thursday, August 14, 2014 from 4:30 to 7:00!

- Register for 2014-2015 Social Skills Groups
- Register for Sleepovers and Friday Open Socials
- Enter for a chance to win great prizes



RSVP to Nicole 952-322-7922 or register at www.wmlc.biz
nringsenber@wmlc.biz 903 Lake Drive East, Chanhassen

[Click Here to Register](#)

WMLC is excited to announce that our Edina Center now has its very own playground!



Congratulations to Liz W. and Patti V., the winners of Caribou gift cards from the May & June "Like Us" on Facebook campaign!



Thank you to everyone who participated in our Facebook campaign, we appreciate you and your support!



Sensory Strategy

This month's sensory strategy explains the use of noise blocking headphones. This sensory tool is very helpful for many of our friends with sensitivity to noise. Limiting auditory input will decrease the brain's processing requirements and distractibility, and will therefore encourage focus on the task.



[Click for More Information](#)



App of the Month

Webber Photo Cards are frequently used at WMLC and in a variety of schools to practice social thinking, inferencing, reasoning and conversational skills. This app contains a variety of 60 photos, each containing a character or characters in combination with thinking bubbles. When you click on the thinking bubble you listen to the character's thoughts, if you hit refresh you will hear a new thought for each thought bubble.

Click for
More Information

Social Skills Practice

Greet your friend

Make your Request

Wait for an answer

Be Polite: if your friend says no, find out what you can do to change the answer.

<http://speciald.about.com>

Help your child practice using their social skills at home, print out two copies. Have your child practice what to say in the event a friend says yes, and what to do and say when a friend says no. Talk about perspective taking and what the other person might be thinking by adding in a couple of your own thinking bubbles in addition to the talking bubbles.



Friday Excellent Adventures

Fridays from 10:00am to 4:00pm

Drop-off & Pick-up is offered at both Edina and Excelsior Centers. These adventures are open to ages 8 and up.

Friday, July 11th - Day at Lake Calhoun

Friday, July 18th - Cascade Bay Water Park

Friday, July 25th - Minnesota Zoo

Friday, August 1st - St. Louis Park Aquatic Center

Friday, August 8th - Nickelodeon Universe

Friday, August 15th - Science Museum (Dinosaurs Exhibit & Omni Show)

Friday, August 22nd - Minnesota State Fair

All of our Excellent Adventures have been carefully researched and planned so clients not only have a great time, but also learn and practice social interaction and communication skills in a supported, but natural setting. Minimum enrollment is three participants. All are welcome, but advance registration is required.

Cost: \$180 + cost of activity/admission fees

Items to Bring: Sack lunch and sunscreen

[View the Flyer](#)

[Click Here to Register](#)



WMLC Sleepover...

Providing a monthly reprieve for parents

Drop-off: Friday, July 18, 2014 at 5:00pm

Pickup: Saturday, July 19, 2014 at 10:00am

Sleepovers are open to ages 8 and up.

Join us for a sleepover at WMLC Edina! Sleepovers are a great opportunity to enjoy some free time, build new relationships, and work on friendship skills in a natural, yet supported, environment. Dinner is usually served for the whole group around 6:30. After dinner, there is time for board games, video games, or a movie before lights out. In the morning, staff prepare breakfast and there is some more social time with friends after we pack up our things!

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

Sleepover Cost: \$175

Items to Bring: Sleeping Bag, Pillow, and any other necessities you may need

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

[View the Flyer](#)

[Click Here to Register](#)

Kool Connections
(Middle School)

A dynamic in-center social skills experience!
Come hang out with old friends, make new friends and have fun!

Games, projects, and FUN with an educational focus!

\$105* each
*Plus admission fee and/or optional spending money

WMLC Edina
Thursdays
1:00-4:00pm
5215 Edina Industrial Blvd.
Suite 400
Edina, MN 55439

WMLC Excelsior
Tuesdays & Wednesdays
9:00 am - 12:00 pm
355 2nd Street
Excelsior, MN 55331

Register online at www.wmlc.biz or call 952-474-0227



Kool Connections are open to ages 11 through 15 years old.

WMLC's Kool Connections are a perfect opportunity for clients to engage peers with similar interests in a natural environment. Clients will participate in a variety of fun activities such as claymation, music, photography and cartooning. Social interactions and communication among peers are facilitated by highly experienced WMLC staff. Minimum enrollment is three participants. All are welcome, but advance registration is required.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Bold Connections
(High School)

A social group supported by WMLC transition staff. Come hang out with old friends, make friends, and have a good time.

Where:
WMLC Edina
5215 Edina Industrial Blvd.
Suite 400
Edina, MN 55439

\$70* each
*Plus admission fee and/or optional spending money

Monthly—Thursdays

	5:00—7:00 pm	
June 26	Yogurt Lab	\$5
July 17	In-Center Games	\$0
August 7	Centennial Lakes	\$8

Register online at www.wmlc.biz or call 952-474-0227



Bold Connections are open to ages 16 and up.

WMLC's Bold Connections are a great way for teens age 16 and older to get together, kick back, and have a great time! These get togethers are designed to introduce teens to new friends and strengthen current relationships through age-typical activities with facilitation from highly experienced staff as needed. Bold Connections are held at WMLC Edina and may include an outing. Minimum enrollment is three participants. All are welcome, but advance registration is required.

[Click Here to Register](#)



Facebook Website

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Our mailing address is:

info@wmlc.biz www.wmlc.biz

Edina Location:

5215 Edina Industrial Blvd., Suite 400
Edina, MN 55439
952-322-7922

Excelsior Location:

355 Second Street
Excelsior, MN 55331
952-474-0227

Better Business Bureau



BBB
Rating: A+

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