



WEST METRO
LEARNING CONNECTIONS, INC.

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

Back to School for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Debra Schipper, M.Ed and ASD Specialist

Unbelievable as it seems, summer is almost over and it's time to prepare kids to go back to school! For students with Autism Spectrum Disorders, preparing for the new school year involves more than just buying school supplies and finding out who their teachers will be.

Why is it more challenging for students with autism to prepare for the new school year than it is for “typical” students?

- Individuals with autism often have a strong preference for “sameness” and for staying in their most comfortable places and routines. Adjusting to a new school year presents many challenges for them.
- The social component of school, that most typical kids can't wait to get back to is often challenging for kids with autism. They often prefer to be alone and often lack confidence that they can be successful in school socially.
- Individuals with autism are more sensitive to environments, especially related to the 5 senses. Going out into new places with unexpected sounds, smells, tastes, touches, etc., can be very uncomfortable for them and almost painful at times.

What can parents of children with autism do to help prepare their children to go back to school?

- The answer to this has two components...One is to prepare the child, and the other is to prepare the child's teachers and school.

August

- Make a special calendar for August
 - Highlight back-to-school preparations, shopping trips, and school activities
 - Make a ritual of marking off each day and counting the remaining days
- Prepare your child for each back to school event and for the first day of school
 - Show when on the calendar
 - Explain why
 - Describe where, who will be there, and what will happen
- Introduce school back into your child's thinking—the people, the place, and the activities
 - Look at pictures and videos from last school year
 - Look at the school's web site
- Introduce school back into your child's world
 - Drive by the school grounds periodically, more often as the first day of school draws near
 - Play at the school

Two Weeks Before School Starts

- Make a T-Chart to show similarities and differences of summer days and routines to school days and routines
- Gradually change bed and wake up times and evening and morning routines from summer to school mode
- Make school routine, school materials, and other checklists
- Establish a visual communication system and/or schedule to structure school routines, events, homework, etc.
- Ease School Back into Your Child's Schedule before the first day of school
 - Tour the school inside and out
 - Find and visit the classrooms your child will go to
 - Meet the principal, the school nurse, the office staff
- Schedule a brief meeting for your child to meet teachers—classroom, special education, art, music, physical education, etc.
- Get a list of children in your child's class. Identify friends, familiar children, new, "potential friends." (Once school has started and pictures have been taken, your child's special education teacher may make "friend flash cards" or a "book of friends" to help your child in learning classmate names)
- Invite children from your child's classroom to come over, to meet at the school for a play date, or to do something else fun. Talk about school together
- Schedule a time with your child's teacher for you and your child to come in and organize desks and lockers
- Schedule at least one time for your child to come in to do "practice runs" of arriving at school, going through the before-school routines, opening locker, etc.
- Prepare and begin reading your child a social story for the first day of school—from getting up and getting ready to waiting for the bus or driving to school to arriving at school and going

through to the end of the day. Include how to handle any problems that might come up

- Read books about other children's first days of school
- Practice school social skills and behaviors—greetings, conversations, invitations, compliments, asking for help, etc.

Prepare Your Child's Teachers

- Schedule a meeting with your child's case manager to plan the "back-to-school" transition. He/she can facilitate this important transition and also help with communication
- Request an IEP meeting with your child's classroom teachers, case manager, and, in some cases, other general and special education teachers, the school nurse, principal, etc., to:
 - Review IEP goals and objectives
 - Review and confirm implementation of IEP Accommodations and Adaptations your child needs to be successful
 - Make any adjustments to the IEP that may be needed based on changes in the school or programming
 - Establish communication systems between school and home
 - Review the visual and other supports that your child needs to be successful and confirm that they will be ready the first day of school
 - Review the services and supports that your child will receive during each day of the school year and the people responsible for them
 - Review any special supports and assistance your child will receive the first day of school and the people responsible for them
 - Confirm your child's "go to" people and places for help, emergencies, etc.
 - If your child's IEP calls for a set of books to have at home, pick these up, if possible
- Prepare a document that will help educate teachers and school staff on your child's disability and on your child. Include the following:
 - Facts and characteristics of your child's disability
 - Your child's unique characteristics and behaviors in general
 - Medical information—medications, allergies, food and diet needs and restrictions, other diagnoses, names and numbers of medical team
 - Your child's academic and personal strengths and challenges
 - Your child's social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics and needs, especially as they relate to the disability
 - Supports and strategies that are especially effective with your child
 - Behaviors to expect in certain situations, e.g., first day of school, various classes, social situations, structured versus unstructured time
 - Communication characteristics, strengths, and needs
 - Patterns of behavior, perseverative interests, stereotypical behaviors
 - Sensory-related information and needs
- Make a "Kit" of supports and items that are especially effective for your child:

Five-point scales and other supports and visuals specific to your child that address and give strategies to understand and manage anxiety and other emotional issues

- Five-point scales and other supports and visuals specific to your child that help with social and behavior issues
- Tips, strategies, and items for calming
- Fidgets and other items to address sensory needs
- Visuals for communication and to encourage conversation
- Social stories for common behavior problems and misperceptions specific to your child
- Pictures of family, successful times, favorites, etc.
- Healthy snacks

August Calendar:

<http://www.waterproofpaper.com/printable-calendar/august-2014-printable-calendar.pdf>

T-Chart Printable:

<https://www.teachervision.com/graphic-organizers/printable/6287.html>

Letter to Teacher:

<http://www.myaspergerschild.com/2011/09/parents-letter-to-teachers-assisting.html>

Example Back to School Social Story:

<http://www.machkovich.com/Cory/AutismRecovery/SocialStories/BacktoSchool.pdf>

Books About Starting School:

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/school/tp/startingschool.htm>

5-Point Scale Webinar PDF:

http://www.kansasasd.com/webinar_attach/Webinar_11_23_10.pdf



SOCIAL SKILLS THERAPY
HELPING KIDS FIT IN & SHINE

Fall Term Registration is Open!

Term will begin on September 15th and will run through November 15th
 We hope you will join us for a Fall full of FUN!

Preschool & Elementary Registration

Click for
More Information

Middle School, High School & Transition Registration

Click for
More Information

September 2014						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	★	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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28	29	30				

October 2014						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2014						
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	★	28	29
30						

2014-2015 WMLC Calendar

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



Cam's Connections

Check out our Fall programming for preschool aged children!

- Educational Components**
- Listening and Understanding (Receptive Language Skills)
 - Communicating and Speaking (Expressive Language Skills)
 - Emergent Reading Skills
 - Writing Skills
 - Self-Awareness and Emotional Awareness
 - Self-Management
 - Social Understanding and Relationships

- Cam's Connections will include:**
- Sensory Integration
 - Facilitated Play
 - Fine & Gross Motor Skill Development
 - MN State Academic Curriculum
 - Music and Movement

[View the Flyer](#)



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
nringgenberg@wmlc.biz 903 Lake Drive East, Chanhassen

[Click Here to Register](#)



Sensory Strategy

This month's sensory strategy involves jumping on a trampoline! This small personal sized trampoline works on muscle development, coordination, and sensory processing. In regards to sensory input this vestibular activity can be a great tool to aide in stimulating an under-responsive child or calming a sensory seeking or over-responsive child. This is one reason the trampoline is often a tool that can be

added to your child's sensory diet. The rhythmic stimulus helps to realign the sensory system, it can also be fun to practice counting by 1's, 2's, 5's or 10's while bouncing up and down.



App of the Month

This month's app is called, "The Social Express", and WOW what an awesome app it is! This app takes users through countless different social situations and offers two different skill levels. There is a game play mode which allows users to select the appropriate method for dealing with a problem. In addition to the play lessons, this app includes printables and The Social Express Guide. The printables include information about feelings, coping strategies and achievements earned for completing different lessons.

[Click for
More Information](#)



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, 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](#)

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WMLC Sleepover...

Providing a monthly reprieve for parents

Drop-off @ Excelsior: Friday, August 15, 2014 at 5:00pm

Pickup @ Excelsior: Saturday, August 16, 2014 at 10:00am

Sleepovers are open to ages 8 and up.

Join us for our one camping sleepover of the year! Sleepovers are a great opportunity to enjoy some free time, build new relationships, and work on friendship skills in a natural, yet supported, environment.

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)

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Website

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Excelsior Location:

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Excelsior, MN 55331

952-474-0227

Better Business Bureau



BBB
Rating: A+

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