



About the Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

The purpose of this kit is to provide helpful information about your students with autism and tools and strategies to achieve positive interactions and increase learning for all members of the school community. It will provide valuable information for general education and administrative school staff, aides, office staff, bus drivers, nurses, custodians, classmates & family members who interact with students with autism.

The information that follows will be useful for staff training, new school employees and problem solving throughout the school year. With help from respected experts in the field of autism and special education, & experienced parents, caregivers and teachers, we've included an introduction to autism and specific strategies for supporting your students.

While this tool kit is not intended to be a curriculum for special education, your special education and administration staff may find it helpful for information and resources to support students with autism in general education environments and involvement in the school community as a whole.

Each Student with Autism is Unique

The most successful programs use a team approach that ensures each student is considered as an individual. One student with autism can have very different strengths, needs and challenges from another. School staff should also be encouraged to seek out people who know the student well – experienced teachers, therapists and families – and try to always seek first to understand. With the support of the entire school community students with autism can make great strides and become valued members of the student body.



About the Information & Resources Included

We have included a wealth of information here - from a wide variety of sources - and new tools and information will be added as they become available. We hope you will become familiar with the kit, use and share it's information and re-visit it frequently over the course of the school year as needs change and time allows.





How to Use this Tool Kit

Sections of the kit are broken into modules, to be used in short units, such as at staff meetings or in-service.

Examples, success stories, visual supports and links to additional training opportunities, websites, video clips and examples are also included wherever possible.

Training with this tool kit should be as hands-on as possible: role-play, create examples, apply a technique to a current student's needs, discuss and compare!

Preparing your school community to support its students with autism begins with helping them get to know the student as a person first – with hopes and dreams, strengths and challenges, and most importantly, feelings – just like any other person. Increasing the school community's knowledge about and understanding of people autism will benefit everyone.

Autism Basics & Asperger's Syndrome Basics are two-page summaries located in the **Appendix** that provide key information on autism and Asperger's Syndrome and (mostly) universal strategies for staff with more limited interactions with a student.

The **School Community** section contains specific information in handout form to be given along with Autism Basics & Asperger's Syndrome Basics for preparing and supporting staff, general education teachers, various members of the school community and classmates.

If extended training opportunities are not available, an introduction from a parent, special education teacher or behavior specialist about the child, coupled with the appropriate Autism Basics & Asperger's Syndrome Basics summary, the relevant For Specific Members section and the About Me Profile information provided by the student & his family or caregiver should provide a start to building understanding and support. Ongoing training and trouble-shooting will help increase success for everyone involved.

The "More Information" sections provide further information for particular areas of concern, additional ideas, strategies and examples. Visit this online resource often for new information and tools as they become available.





With gratitude, we thank the members of our Advisory Committees for generously donating their time, experience and resources to this project.

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The 2012 version of the School Community Tool Kit was edited by **Heather Coburn-Snyder** with illustrations and design by **Joe Shea**.

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The first version of the School Community Tool Kit was compiled and edited by **Liz Bell**.





For the Family Members & Caregivers Using This Kit to Support their Student with Autism

Autism Speaks' School Community Tool Kit is was created for all members of the school community and that includes you.

From administrators, to support staff, to the bus drivers with whom your student starts and ends his day, we are aware that often it is the student's parent or caregiver who initiates the connections between their child and many members of the school community. Here are some tips for using this kit to help shape positive interactions for your child.

Complete the **"About Me"** profile for (or with) your student and have copies ready to distribute yourself or for members of your student's team to distribute.

If you would like members of your student's school community to have specific sections of the kit, such as your student's **"About Me,"** the **"Autism Basics"** or **"Asperger's Basics"** brochures, or a section created for specific members of the community, ask whether a member of the student's team can make that happen or arrange a visit to the school to do so yourself.

With the exception of your student's **"About Me"** profile, all of the contents of this kit can be distributed by including a link in an email as well.

The amount of information provided here might be overwhelming at first. Or it might include information you already have. We've done our best to break it down into sections you can use as needed. There is a wealth of good information available from many different sources and we've tried to provide access to as much it as possible. As new tools and information become available, we will strive to provide it here for you.

We hope you will consider the Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit a resource to revisit throughout the school year and throughout your student's school career.



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“About Me” Profile

A Note to Family Members & Caregivers:

The completed “About Me” profile will help people in the school community become familiar with your student with autism. Various members of the school community interact with your student during the course of the day. Providing some information specifically about your student will go a long way in creating a positive relationship with the bus driver, cafeteria aides, general education teachers and many others.

Please answer the questions or, if it is appropriate, help your student answer them, adding additional information as necessary. Include a photo if possible to help people recognize your student. Photos of family or favorite activities or people are also helpful.

Coordinate with your student’s school team to decide how this profile will be distributed to the people who will come in contact with him. Work with the team to decide whether and which other sections of the kit will be distributed as well. The “Autism Basics” and/or “Asperger’s Basics” brochures will be helpful in tandem with the “About Me” profile. You may decide to print some of them out to have on hand for situations outside of school too.

This kit includes information for specific members of the school community:

- **Bus Drivers / Transportation Supervisors**
- **Custodial Staff**
- **General Education Teachers (including Music, Art, Physical Education)**
- **Lunch & Recess Aides**
- **Office Staff**
- **Para-professionals**
- **School Nurses**
- **School Security**
- **Classmates**

A Note to the School Team:

If a family member or caregiver is unable to provide this information, consider whether a member of the student’s team can help.

The “About Me” profile form is adapted from the Welcome Survey.





“About Me” Profile Form

Student's Name: _____

What are some of the things that you are most interested in? _____

What upsets you? _____

What are you afraid of? _____

What makes you laugh? _____

What is ONE thing you would like to get better at this year? _____

What calms you down when you are overwhelmed or upset? _____

What rewards work well for you? _____

What do you do after school or on weekends? _____

Person completing form: _____

Relationship to student: _____

Email address of family or caregiver contact: _____

Phone number of family or caregiver contact: _____

What is the best way to contact the student's family or caregiver? _____

What days or times are convenient for you to meet with the school team? _____

Are there any issues that you would like to discuss or hear more information about? _____

