

THE HELP GROUP'S STEM³ ACADEMY THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE COUNTRY

In January 2016, The Help Group's newest school, STEM³ Academy, the first of its kind in the country, started serving middle school students with social and learning differences who excel in science and technology. The mission of the STEM³ Academy is to connect the particular strengths of students with social and learning differences with an innovative and rigorous STEM³ (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum that positions them for lifelong success. The school opened its doors to high school students for the first time last August, and was already seeing demand for expansion to include grades six through eight.

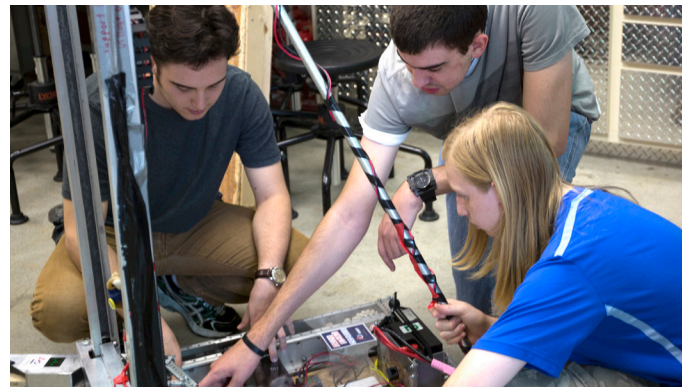
Studies report as many as 85 percent of adults with social and learning differences are either underemployed or unemployed. "Now, with a middle and high school STEM curriculum, STEM³ Academy is transforming our students' lives and preparing them for future careers and lifelong success," said Dr. Susan Berman, Help Group COO. There will be more than 8.65 million STEM jobs available by 2018, and a 28 percent increase in the number of students with social and learning differences enrolled in undergraduate STEM fields. She continued, "At STEM³ we believe that, when given the opportunity, our students will align their passions with their natural talents, and that there is a place for our students in tomorrow's workforce."

STEM³ Academy offers an award-winning robotics program, a wide range of AP classes, courses in computer programming, digital arts and videography, as well as entrepreneurship programs and internships. Much of the learning incorporates group work to facilitate social interaction. Both required and elective classes encourage participation and cooperation among students as they ready themselves for a world in which collaborating and making presentations are as essential as keyboarding and coding. Students develop this literacy through in-class projects, internships, senior projects and personalized education plans. In addition, all students have access to a state-of-the-art Innovation Lab equipped with a CNC machine, 3D printer, CAD machines and electronics.

"The middle school curriculum will be designed to provide a solid foundation for more rigorous classes later on, offering both required classes and electives that engage students as well as ground their education," said Dr. Ellis Crasnow, Director of STEM³ Academy.

STEM³ Academy offers open enrollment throughout the year, a residential program to house out-of-state students, and door-to-door transportation for local Southern California students.

For more information or to schedule a tour, visit www.stem3academy.org



STEM³ ACADEMY

OUT OF THE BOX STUDENTS. LEARNING. RESULTS.

For bright, curious, technology-driven students with social and/or learning differences

IN THIS EDITION

ADHD From Stereotype to Science
Thomas E. Brown, PhD

Motivating Children with Autism to Engage in Social Communication and Academics Using Pivotal Response Treatment
Lynn Kern Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP and Robert L. Koegel, PhD

STEM Education and Autism—Strategies for Success
Ellis Crasnow, PhD

Conversation Starters: Teaching the Do's and Don'ts of Social Communication
Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD

Advances in the Assessment and Intervention for Students with Reading and Writing Disorders
Philip Levin, PhD

Supporting Bilingual Language Development in Young Children with Developmental Disabilities:
Marian E. Williams, PhD and Amanda Tyree, MA, CCC-SLP

Summit 2015 Convenes Leading Experts

The Help Group's STEM³ Academy The First of its Kind in the Country

The Help Group - USC Occupational Science Initiative Expands

The Help Group's Autism Awareness Campaign

HelpLetter

A publication of The Help Group

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Karen C. Enyedy, PhD
Chief Psychologist
The Help Group

Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD
Director
The Help Group – UCLA Autism
Research Alliance

Philip Levin, PhD
Program Director
The Help Group – UCLA
Neuropsychology Program

Sara McCracken, PsyD, BCBA
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The Help Group Young Learners
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Dear Friends,

In our Spring 2016 edition of HelpLetter, we are pleased to share some very interesting articles by a host of expert contributors. These articles shed light on important topics in Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning Disabilities and ADHD.

We feature information about our 2016 Autism Awareness program in partnership with The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Gelson's, NBC4 and Telemundo 52, as well as our *Count me in for Autism Awareness* program. Also included are highlights of our Summit 2015 that convened a prestigious group of presenters who provided a thought provoking and cutting-edge program. Please mark your calendars for Summit 2016 which will be held on Friday, October 14th and Saturday, October 15th at the Skirball Cultural Center.

We invite you to join us at our 6th Annual Special Needs Resource Fair on Sunday, May 15th and our STEM³ Academy, Very Special Innovation Fair on Saturday, May 21st.

So glad to have this opportunity to connect with our HelpLetter community.

Barbara Firestone, PhD
President & CEO, The Help Group

CONTRIBUTORS



Thomas E. Brown, PhD
Department of Psychiatry
Yale University School of Medicine



Ellis Crasnow, PhD
Director, STEM³ Academy and Director
STEM Education
The Help Group



Lynn Kern Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP
Clinical Director
Koegel Autism Center
UCSB



Robert Koegel, PhD
Director
Koegel Autism Center
UCSB



Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD
Researcher, UCLA Semel Institute
Director, The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance
Director, UCLA PEERS Clinic
Assistant Clinical Professor, Semel Institute, UCLA



Philip Levin, PhD
Program Director
The Help Group – UCLA Neuropsychology Program
Clinical Professor, Semel Institute, UCLA



Marian E. Williams, PhD
Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Children's Hospital Los Angeles
USC University Center for Excellence in Developmental
Disabilities (UCEDD)

With

Amanda Tyree, MA, CCC-SLP
Associate Discipline Director of Communication Disorders
CA-LEND Training Program
Children's Hospital Los Angeles
USC University Center for Excellence in Developmental
Disabilities (UCEDD)

RESEARCH AND TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS



Autism Research Alliance

The Alliance is an innovative partnership between The Help Group and the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior and is dedicated to enhancing and expanding clinical research in the education and treatment of those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and to contributing to the development, greater understanding and use of best practice models by researchers, educators and clinicians.



Neuropsychology Program

The Help Group - UCLA Neuropsychology Program provides comprehensive assessment, testing and diagnosis for children with developmental challenges, as well as family conferencing and follow-up services. It also trains post-doctoral fellows from UCLA's Medical Psychology Assessment Center in pediatric neuropsychology.



OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE INITIATIVE

The Help Group - USC Occupational Science Initiative is dedicated to developing evidence-based animal-assisted intervention programs for children with ASD through an interdisciplinary team of researchers, educators and clinicians.

ADHD: FROM STEREOTYPE TO SCIENCE

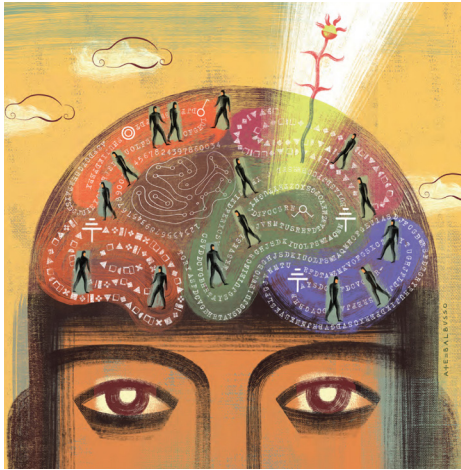
Thomas E. Brown, PhD

Forget Dennis the Menace and other outdated stereotypes about kids with ADHD. New research reveals the breadth and complexity of the disorder, as well as its many faces.

Ever since it was first described in the medical literature in 1902, the disorder, now referred to as ADD or ADHD, has been considered essentially a behavioral problem. For a long time, it was seen as just a problem of little boys who couldn't sit still, wouldn't stop talking, and were frustrating their parents and teachers with chronic misbehavior. The term attention deficit wasn't added to the name until 1980. Since then, there have been substantial changes in our scientific understanding of ADHD.

An Update on the Basic Facts

These facts are now well-established in the scientific research.



- ADHD is now understood as a developmental impairment of the brain's self-management system, its executive functions, that includes problems with getting motivated, organized, and started on necessary tasks; focusing on what needs to be attended to and shifting focus when needed; managing alertness and sleep; sustaining effort to complete tasks; processing and outputting information efficiently; managing emotions; using short-term working memory; and monitoring one's actions to fit the setting and avoid excessive impulsivity.

- All of us experience the characteristics of ADHD from time to time; those with ADHD simply have more chronic and impairing difficulty with these problems. ADHD isn't an all-or-nothing situation like pregnancy, where one either is or isn't pregnant. ADHD comes in small, medium, and large levels of severity. The diagnosis is reserved for those who are significantly and persistently impaired by their symptoms.

- Although some children and adults with ADHD have significant problems with hyperactive and excessively impulsive behavior, many with

the disorder don't display such behavior. The majority of those who were "hyper" as children outgrow most of their hyperactive problems in early adolescence but continue to have chronic difficulty with inattention and related problems.

- ADHD is highly heritable; it runs in families. Twenty-five percent of children with ADHD have a parent with ADHD, and 30 percent have a brother or sister with ADHD.

- Longitudinal and other imaging research has demonstrated significant differences in brain development and connectivity of children with ADHD compared with typically developing children of similar age. Some specific areas of the brain that are important for self-management tend to mature about three to five years later in those with ADHD.

- It was once thought that a child with ADHD would outgrow the disorder before reaching the age of about 14. However, longitudinal studies have shown that approximately 70 percent of those who have ADHD in childhood will continue to have some ADHD impairments at least into late adolescence. For many but not all, the impairments of ADHD continue throughout the lifespan.

- ADHD is sometimes apparent during preschool years, but it's often not noticeable until the child enters school or advances into middle school. Some children don't demonstrate significant ADHD impairments until they enter high school or move away from home and must deal with challenges of more independent life in college or employment.

- ADHD has nothing to do with how intelligent a person is. Some extremely bright and accomplished people suffer from ADHD, despite their high IQs. ADHD is found in people across the full range of intellectual abilities.

- Conscious and unconscious emotions play a crucial role in the problems of motivation and self-regulation that are pervasive in ADHD. Also, many people with ADHD have chronic difficulty recognizing and managing the expression of their emotions.

- ADHD is not just one or two specific symptoms. It's a complex syndrome, a cluster of impairments that often appear together, although some aspects of the disorder may be more or less prominent in any particular person. Those with ADHD are not all exactly alike in either their

strengths or their difficulties.

- Most people who suffer from ADHD also have difficulties resulting from one or more co-occurring disorders. The incidence of learning disorders, anxiety and mood disorders, sleep disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, substance use disorders, and autism spectrum disorders is considerably higher among those with ADHD than in the general population.

- Medication doesn't cure this disorder, but for about 8 of 10 people with ADHD, carefully managed medication treatment significantly improves the symptoms during those parts of the day when the medication is active. These medications aren't like an antibiotic that may cure an infection; they're more like eyeglasses that improve vision while they're worn.

The Central Mystery of ADHD

One fact about ADHD is most puzzling: The symptoms are situationally variable. Every person who struggles with chronic ADHD problems may have none of those problems when they engage in a few particular activities or tasks.

Although they struggle to focus on their schoolwork, students with ADHD may demonstrate a remarkable ability to focus and work effectively when they're playing a sport, creating art or music, doing mechanical tasks, or playing a favorite video game. Although they may not be able to keep directions for assignments in mind or retain basic facts learned in social studies or math, they may have an incredible ability to recall the statistics about their favorite baseball team or lyrics of popular songs.

When asked why they can focus so well when it comes to these few activities, students with ADHD often reply that it depends on whether the task is interesting, that if it's not, they just can't stay tuned. All of us focus better on things that interest us, but most of us can make ourselves focus on something we recognize as important, even though it's pretty boring. For those with ADHD, that focusing is much more difficult because this motivation process is not under voluntary control.

ADHD and Reading

Students with ADHD often report that they may understand all the words in a text as they read it, yet just a few minutes later, they don't have the foggiest idea of what they just read. To extract the meaning of the text and retain it, they often have to reread the text several times. One student with ADHD reported,

When I'm reading something that's not really interesting to me, it's like I'm licking the words and not chewing them. I know what all the words mean as I'm reading them, but they just don't stick inside my head. I don't really digest them.

ADHD is found in people across the full range of intellectual abilities.

MOTIVATING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM TO ENGAGE IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMICS USING PIVOTAL RESPONSE TREATMENT

Lynn Kern Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP and Robert L. Koegel, PhD

It wasn't long ago – in fact just a few decades ago – when the only effective treatments for children with autism spectrum disorder were based on long hours of tedious drills day after day after day. It's not surprising that the children exhibited lots of disruptive behavior, tried to avoid the sessions, cried when they saw their teachers, and never seemed happy or interested in the activities.

This led us to explore ways of making the intervention more exciting for them. We hypothesized that if we could develop ways to improve their motivation to want to engage in the activities we'd have the wind at our backs. Over a period of many years, we researched specific procedures that we could incorporate into the teaching that would improve the children's responsiveness, correct responding, and engagement. We also developed scales to measure their interest, enthusiasm, and engagement.



Lynn Kern Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP and Robert L. Koegel, PhD
Koegel Autism Center UCSB

■ MOTIVATION: IMPORTANT AREAS

We speculated that motivational problems may lie at the heart of autism, and that much of their symptomatology may be severe developmental side effects resulting from the children's lack of motivation for social communicative interactions. We hypothesized that a child who avoided such interactions would have severe developmental abnormalities, but that an intervention that motivated the children to engage in social communication would rapidly reverse the problem. Therefore, we began a programmatic research program aimed at identifying motivational variables.

Child Choice. There have been lots of studies showing that kids on the spectrum do much better if they are allowed choice in the activity. This is in contrast to the old days when all activities were completely selected by the adult. It's important to remember that the target behaviors are still going to be the same, just the way in which we teach the target behavior changes, so that we're using things that interest the child during the teaching. For example, if a child that is learning to say first words wants a koosh ball, having him verbally request the ball is a perfect example of child choice, because it can be given to him as a reward. While this seems straightforward, think of all the activities that are completely boring for your child. This happens a lot with academics. The child may be asked to learn a list of random spelling words or to write a story about the past weekend. By tweaking it just a little and having the child write a spelling list of toys she wants to play with or to write a story about something fun to do then getting the natural reward of playing with the toys or engaging in the activity.

While this seems perfectly logical, and you may be saying to yourself "Yeah! That's a no-brainer," there are several instances where choice could be used, but is not used. First, often times we will see professionals using flash cards. In fact, there are thousands of pre-constructed kits of flash cards for just about any purpose you'd like – learning verbs, saying articulation sounds, learning "he" vs. "she". You name it, you can find a flash card for it. For the most part, kids on the spectrum, don't usually choose these types of teaching materials. So instead, we like to use items that will be found in the child's natural environment and let him choose from those items. Further, most kids prefer those exciting toys and activities rather than sitting at a table and using flash cards. On many, many occasions we've seen a child happily playing with an appropriate toy – a perfect stimulus for a learning opportunity to be arranged and then a parent or another well-meaning adult says "Look at this cool toy" and directs the child to another toy, or directs him back to the table to work with flash cards. While there may well be another cool toy, or the flash cards may make the therapists'

jobs easier, that wasn't what the child was initially interested in. Thus, you have just changed the activity from a child-choice activity to an adult choice activity – even, yes even, if the child appears to become interested in the new activity. Well, we must admit, we've all been guilty of that one, and typical kids are often interested in just about anything, so it may not really matter, but with kids on the spectrum we really need to make sure that we are following their lead and giving them choice. Even when it seems seem like there isn't any possibility of choice you can always give the child the choice of the order that the assignments are completed, what color pencil or pen she wants to use for the assignments, or the room he wants to do the homework in. A little creativity with choices will make a big difference.

Interspersal of Acquisition and Maintenance Tasks. It makes sense to figure out target behaviors and drill, drill, drill if we want the child to learn the task. But it turns out that this can be really frustrating for a child with autism. However, we learned that if we intersperse the more difficult "acquisition" tasks with tasks that the children had already mastered ("maintenance" tasks), they do a lot better. It makes sense. If someone experiences success, they are likely to try harder. If they constantly experience failure, they are likely to give up. Interspersing tasks that the children have already mastered with new tasks helps keep their motivation high. And, you might think that all those trials of easy tasks slow the learning down, but it doesn't. The children actually learn faster when acquisition and maintenance tasks are interspersed.

Task Variation. Task variation goes hand-in-hand with the interspersal of acquisition and maintenance tasks. Kids do better when the tasks are shorter and mixed up. Don't stay with one target behavior too long, even if the child is doing well. Keep varying the tasks and keep the child interested. Varying these child choice activities will make the child come back for more!

Natural Reinforcement. We still see programs that use stacks of flash cards and give the child small treats for responding well. In fact, a long time ago we published research on how rewards worked best and found that varying the treats improved the child's responding. But that was in the old days before we never really gave much thought to the notion of natural reinforcers. Now we make sure the reward is directly related to the task. For example, if the child is learning first words and says "Bye" we let them go out immediately. While you might be thinking that the child will repeatedly ask to leave the session, that doesn't happen. When we give the child some control and naturally reward responses, they're much more motivated, engaged, and responsive. Regardless of the activity, if natural rewards are used, you'll see a big difference in the child's responsiveness. For example, if you're teaching a child to dress independently, you may want to have him put on his jacket in a chilly room rather than a hot room. If you're teaching a child to tie his shoes, have her do it just before going outside. Even advanced activities, like fractions, can be practiced with delicious recipes.

Reinforcing Attempts. Nobody likes to be told "no" or "wrong" especially when they're trying. Rewarding attempts is especially important for children with autism who experience repeated failures. Lots of things can be difficult for them, and so, rewarding attempts by saying "Good try. Try again," rather than punishing the child can make a big difference. Regardless of whether they are correct, or not, they need to be rewarded for trying. Now, don't get this confused with a correct answer when the child didn't try. Sometimes our kids will give a half-hearted attempt that happens to be correct, or will be responding while they are looking inattentively around the room. Do not reward these types of responses. They are not attempts. Attempts must be free of inappropriate behaviors, and it must be clear that the child is really trying. So, even if he isn't one hundred percent correct if there's a good attempt be sure and provide a reward. The child's motivation will improve significantly if each and every attempt, no matter how close (or far) it is to the end desired behavior, is rewarded.

■ THE OVERALL MOTIVATIONAL PACKAGE

The reason we worked on all of this research on motivation was to develop a powerful intervention package that might be able to tackle the critical (pivotal) area of motivation, hypothesized to be at the core of autism. The results suggest optimism in this regard, as very large and very rapid improvements occurred when a package of these motivational

INNOVATIVE NEW PROJECT ADDED TO THE INITIATIVE



OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE INITIATIVE

The Help Group - USC Occupational Science Initiative has announced its next project to develop opportunities for advancing community-based social participation for children with autism spectrum disorders. Under the direction of Dr. Mary Lawlor, Associate Chair of Research and Professor at the University of Southern California's Mrs. T.H. Chan Division



L-R Top: Pamela Clark, Jason Winburn, Stephanie Davidowitz, Katharine Mendivil, Dr. Emily Ochi, Dr. Mary Lawlor, Gretchen Bazela.
L-R Bottom: Julie Peterson, Jennifer Kovacs and Monica Stephen.

of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, this pilot program will implement a science and social participation curriculum in classrooms at The Help Group's Village Glen School and during outings at the California Science Center, an experiential science museum located in Exposition Park adjacent to the USC University Park Campus in Los Angeles.

The science and social skills curriculum will be based upon the educational and therapeutic goals of students with autism and other special needs in the fourth through sixth grades. Lawlor will coordinate a team of USC occupational therapy faculty, graduate students and practitioners, in collaboration with Help Group educators and occupational therapy staff, to lead The Help Group students in a series of field trips to the California Science Center throughout the spring months. These trips will be specifically structured to optimize the students' social interactions in

a museum setting, as well as to help them better access their respective grade-level science curricula.

"We are delighted to be collaborating with The Help Group and California Science Center in developing, implementing and appraising an innovative approach to learning through exploring new frontiers in science and enhancing social participation, both for students at USC and students at The Help Group," Lawlor said.

This project is a replication of an original program designed by Dr. Ellen Cohn, Clinical Professor at the Department of Occupational Therapy at Boston University in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools and the Museum of Science in Boston. The program was designed to support students impacted by autism spectrum disorders to engage in informal science learning, socially interact with each other and with educators, and feel included in a community setting.

Assisting Lawlor will be USC's Dr. Emily Ochi, Assistant Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy; Dr. Jesus Diaz, Assistant Research Professor; Monica Stephens, Occupational Therapy Doctorate resident; and Dr. Jenny Kovacs, postdoctoral fellow. "Our graduate students at USC are excited by this remarkable opportunity to work directly with students at The Help Group to foster science learning and facilitate engagement and community participation through the field trips to the California Science Center," Ochi said.

"It's university partnerships, like this initiative with USC, that inform best practice methods in our classrooms and keep us at the cutting edge of evidence-based interventions," said Dr. Barbara Firestone. "We are proud to continue to expand this partnership with the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy."



Students will experience the Endeavour and other exciting exhibits



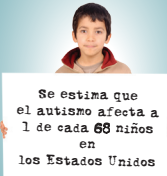
Olga Solomon, PhD

ABOUT THG-USC OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE INITIATIVE

The Help Group – USC Occupational Science Initiative, formed in 2015, is dedicated to developing evidence-based intervention programs for children with autism spectrum disorder through the guidance of an interdisciplinary team of researchers, educators and clinicians. A previous example of the initiative's programming includes the integration of animal-assisted interventions into the classrooms at The Help Group's five autism schools in order to help meet the educational and therapeutic needs of students. Leading the effort in animal-assisted intervention is Dr. Olga Solomon, Assistant Professor at USC's Division of Occupational Science and Therapy.

LENDING A HAND TO PROMOTE AUTISM AWARENESS

AUTISMO Conozca las Características



AUTISM Learn the Facts



The Help Group
www.thehelpgroup.org

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf®, Gelson's, NBC4 and Telemundo 52 are once again supporting The Help Group's Autism Awareness efforts during National Autism Awareness Month.

Copies of The Help Group's "Learn the Facts" brochures are available at 193 Coffee Bean stores in the western United States. Gelson's is hosting the campaign at its 18 supermarkets throughout Southern California. Customers can pick up a brochure and also make donations to The Help Group at the Gelson's checkout counter. During the month of April NBC4 and Telemundo 52 are airing PSA's featuring anchors Daniella Guzman and Dunia Elvir.

Dr. Barbara Firestone said, "Year after year, our wonderful partners help to spread information about autism to countless families. We are most grateful to The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf®, Gelson's, NBC4 and Telemundo 52 for their commitment and support."



Gelson's



Now in its second year, The Help Group's *Count me in for Autism Awareness* is a public service and social media program dedicated to individuals with autism & their families. Through social media, this program disseminates the most up-to-date information on ASD and the ongoing challenges that families confront. It features informational video segments from dignitaries, parent & celebrity advocates, business & community leaders, and autism professionals who are committed to creating brighter futures for individuals with ASD.



Our thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their participation in this program!



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Los Angeles Mayor



Mark Ridley-Thomas
Los Angeles County Supervisor



Hon. Darrell Steinberg
Greenberg Traurig, LLP



Brad Sherman
U.S. Congressman



Robert M. Hertzberg
California Senator



Fran Pavley
California Senator



Carol Liu
California Senator



Peter C. Whybrow, MD
Director, UCLA Semel Institute



Louis Vismara, MD
Co-founder
UC Davis MIND Institute



Sebastian Ridley-Thomas
California Assemblymember



Matt Dababneh
California Assemblymember



Adrin Nazarian
California Assemblymember



Gary Cole
Actor / Parent Advocate



Joe Mantegna
Actor / Parent Advocate



Marv Southard, PhD
Director, Doctoral Social Work Program
USC School of Social Work



Rob McDougall
President & CEO, Gelson's®



Pamela Clark, MA
Director, The Help Group
Autism Schools



Hilary Kip
Parent Advocate



Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD
Director, The Help Group-UCLA
Autism Research Alliance



Mary Urquhart
Parent Advocate



Maria Lopez
Parent Advocate



Sara McCracken, PsyD, BCBA
Director, The Help Group Young Learners
and Early Educational Programs

CONVERSATION STARTERS: TEACHING THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD

Having good conversational skills is one of the essential ingredients to developing and maintaining meaningful relationships in adolescence and adulthood. However, difficulty having good conversations can create a significant social barrier. So why are conversational skills so important? Typically, friendships and romantic relationships are formed and maintained through meaningful communication with others. Thus, having good conversational skills becomes critical to social success upon reaching adolescence and remains so throughout life.

In our experience working with families through the UCLA PEERS Clinic, one of the only evidence-based social skills programs for youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), many teens and young adults with social challenges struggle with social communication. This often includes committing social faux pas such as hogging conversations or perseverating on topics of personal interest—creating a social barrier for making and keeping friends. However, this barrier isn't necessarily fixed or permanent. Understanding the common social errors committed during conversations (i.e., *conversational don'ts*) and replacing those errors with appropriate rules of conversation (i.e., *conversational do's*) may eliminate some or most of these obstacles.



The fundamental practice of having a good conversation involves informational exchange. We call this social behavior *trading information*. Trading information involves at least two partners exchanging information back and forth about one another. I tell you something about me. You tell me something about you. I ask something about you. You ask something about me, and so on. We can liken this conversational exchange to a game of tennis, where the ball goes back and forth over the net, just as a conversation should go back and forth between partners. If the ball stays on one side of the court too long, we're no longer playing the game; just as if the conversation stays on one partner too long, we're no longer having a conversation.

The goal of any good conversation is to trade information and find common interests. Common interests are important in social communication because they provide common ground on which to keep a conversation interesting and stimulating. Common interests are also important because they're typically the foundation of friendships. Think about whom you are friends with. You probably share common interests, and these are the things you probably talk about and do together. We seek common ground because it gives us a foundation on which to build a conversation, and perhaps even a friendship.

Many people think of conversational skills as an *art*, but through our decades worth of work developing the *Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills*, more commonly known as *PEERS®*, we have come to think of these social skills as a *science*. By decoding the social world for young people with ASD and other social challenges, we have demystified the art of conversational skills, and shed light on the science of making friends. Here are some examples of the conversational do's and don'ts taught through PEERS.

CONVERSATIONAL DO'S

- **Trade Information**
Good conversations go back and forth equally between partners. Your friend shares something about him or herself, then you share something related, and so on.
- **Find common interests**
The goal of a conversation is to find common interests because these interests are usually the foundation of a friendship.
- **Ask the person about him or herself**
Ask the person about his or her likes, interests, and hobbies, with the goal of finding common interests.
- **Answer your own questions**
Wait for the person to ask questions about you. Be prepared to share related information about yourself.
- **Share relevant information**
Talk about topics of interest to everyone in the conversation.
- **Ask follow-up questions**
Try to stay on a topic for a while before moving on to something new, especially if that topic is a common interest.
- **Ask open-ended questions**
Try to ask questions that bring out extended responses instead of only asking questions that require a brief preset reply, like yes or no responses.
- **Listen**
Listen and try to remember what the person has to say. Not listening will make it appear as if you're not interested or you don't care.
- **Use good eye contact**
Don't look away too much because this will make you look like you're not interested. On the other hand, don't stare too much either because this can feel uncomfortable for the person you're staring at.
- **Use good body boundaries**
Don't stand too close or too far away when talking to someone. Standing about an arm's length away is a good distance.
- **Use good volume control**
Don't speak too softly or too loudly; this may be frustrating or annoying to the listener.

CONVERSATIONAL DON'TS

- **Don't be a conversation hog**
Don't just talk about yourself and what you're interested in. Give the other person a chance to talk, too.
- **Don't be an interviewer**
Don't ask question after question without sharing anything about yourself; it will feel like an interview or an interrogation for the other person.
- **Don't be repetitive**
Don't talk about the same topic all the time. Just because you have a common interest with someone doesn't mean that's all you can talk about.
- **Don't police**
Don't criticize or point out the other person's mistakes. This will be annoying to the person and you may look like a know-it-all.
- **Don't tease**
Teasing is risky behavior if you're trying to make and keep friends. When you tease, you may offend, hurt, or upset the other person and they may not want to be around you.
- **Don't be argumentative**
Arguing with someone or forcing your opinions on others is not a good way to make and keep friends. It may make you look bossy and controlling.
- **Don't brag**
When you brag about yourself or talk excessively about your accomplishments or your possessions, it may make you look conceited. People generally don't like to be around people who seem arrogant.
- **Don't get too personal at first**
If you share too much personal information about yourself or ask too many personal questions before you know someone well, you may make the other person feel uncomfortable.

This is just a snapshot of some of the conversational do's and don'ts taught in PEERS. If you would like more information, please contact the UCLA PEERS Clinic at peersclinic@ucla.edu or visit our website at www.semel.ucla.edu/peers. Excerpts from this article were taken from *The Science of Making Friends: Helping Socially Challenged Teens and Young Adults* (Laugeson, 2013).



SUMMIT 2015

Summit Chairs

Barbara Firestone, PhD
 Peter C. Whybrow, MD
 Robert M. Bilder, PhD, ABPP

Featured Speakers

Stephen Hinshaw, PhD
 Lynn Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP
 Robert Koegel, PhD
 Wendy Stone, PhD

Presenters

Bruce Baker, PhD
 Jan Blacher, PhD
 Alicia Bazzano, PhD, MD, MPH
 Victoria Berrey, MPA
 Stefanie Bodison, OTD, OTR/L
 Jason Bolton, PsyD,
 Lois Jean Brady, CCC-SLP
 Wendy Chung, MD, PhD
 Pamela Clark, MA
 Ellis Crasnow, PhD
 Mirella Dapretto, PhD
 Alissa Ellis, PhD
 Ted Hutman, PhD
 Elizabeth Laugeson, PsyD
 Steve Lee, PhD
 Philip Levin, PhD
 Sandra Loo, PhD
 Judy Mark
 Peter Mundy, PhD
 Derek Ott, MD
 Helena Seli, PhD
 Karen Sze, PhD
 Marian E. Williams, PhD

The Help Group's 19th annual Summit convened leading experts at the forefront of their fields in autism, ADHD and learning disabilities. Offering cutting-edge presentations and new insights and perspectives in basic and applied research and evidence-based best practices, the Summit brought together more than 500 professionals and parents on Friday, October 23rd and Saturday, October 24th at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles.

Dr. Barbara Firestone welcomed guests and acknowledged the distinguished presenters for their impressive body of work. Dr. Firestone served as chair of this year's conference along with co-chairs Dr. Peter C. Whybrow, UCLA Semel Institute Director, and Dr. Robert M. Bilder, UCLA Semel Institute Chief of Medical Psychology-Neuropsychology & Tennenbaum Center Director.

NBC4 news anchor and multiple award-winning journalist, Colleen Williams served as luncheon host once again this year. With her warmth and enthusiasm, she spoke of NBC4's commitment to children with special needs and to telling the stories that build greater awareness and understanding.

Dr. Firestone acknowledged Major Sponsors First 5 California and First 5 LA for their generous support over the years. She expressed The Help Group's appreciation to NBC4 and LA Parent for their media sponsorships.

After receiving artwork created by the children of The Help Group, Terri Hernandez-Rosales, NBC4 Vice President of Community Affairs and Communications, remarked, "Colleen and I work in a dynamic company, a company that cares about its community, and about giving back in ways that are meaningful





and that matter. Thank you so much for allowing us to be part of this wonderful event and part of The Help Group that continues to do amazing work."

Elena Epstein, Director of Content and Strategic Partnerships for LA Parent, said, "Truly it's the kids, the stories of the families, and what everyone here does that inspires us every day. So thanks for sharing your stories and allowing us to share them with our readers."

Gary H. Carmona, Help Group Chairman, and Dr. Firestone presented The Help Group's *Champion for Children Award* to Dr. Marv Southard in appreciation of his leadership and extraordinary impact on the mental health and well-being of countless young people and their families. Dr. Southard has served as the Director of the County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health since 1998, leading the largest public mental health system in the country, serving over 200,000 clients annually.

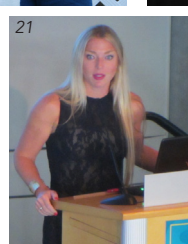
"Dr. Southard's distinguished career has been characterized by his outstanding leadership, vision, compassion and spirit of collaboration," shared Dr. Firestone. "We are so grateful to him for his many contributions to the children and families of our county. We congratulate him on his new role at USC as Professor of Practice for the USC School of Social Work."

In his acceptance remarks Dr. Southard said, "The Help Group has been a model for the mental health community for finding new ways to engage families and communities. We've accomplished great things working together and have made Los Angeles County a better place for our children."

The Summit featured 21 thought-provoking sessions, including keynote presentations by Dr. Wendy Stone on identifying and treating toddlers with autism, and from Dr. Stephen Hinshaw on his new book, "ADHD: What Everyone Needs to Know," which premiered at the Summit as part of its West Coast launch. Drs. Lynn and Robert Koegel capped off the first day of Summit with an engaging overview of the highly recognized Pivotal Response Treatment they developed for children with autism.

One clinician summed up the experience of many of our attendees when she said, "The Help Group's Summit conference is always insightful and relevant and the speakers make it engaging. The comprehensive range of information better informs my practice, year after year."

Our thanks to the outstanding group of Summit presenters for sharing their important work and dynamic ideas with our audience.



THE HELP GROUP PRESENTS SUMMIT 2015 A CUTTING EDGE CONFERENCE FEATURING 30 LEADING EXPERTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Dr. Barbara Firestone, Dr. Peter Whybrow | 9. Colleen Williams |
| 2. Dr. Robert Bilder | 10. Terri Hernandez-Rosales, Elena Epstein |
| 3. Gary H. Carmona, Dr. Barbara Firestone, Colleen Williams, Dr. Marvin Southard, Dr. Susan Berman | 11. Dr. Sandra Loo |
| 4. Dr. Stephen Hinshaw | 12. Dr. Steve Lee |
| 5. Dr. Wendy Stone | 13. Tom Komp, Dr. Philip Levin |
| 6. Drs. Robert & Lynn Koegel | 14. Dr. Peter Mundy |
| 7. Dr. Wendy Chung | 15. Dr. Derek Ott |
| 8. The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance panel: Dr. Bruce Baker, Dr. Karen Sze, Dr. Mirella Dapretto, Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, Dr. Jan Blacher | 16. Victoria Berrey, Dr. Jason Bolton, Judy Mark, Pamela Clark |
| | 17. Dr. Ellis Crasnow, Dr. Helena Seli, Dr. Stefanie Bodison |
| | 18. Dr. Alicia Bazzano |
| | 19. Dr. Ted Hutman |
| | 20. Lois Jean Brady |
| | 21. Dr. Alissa Ellis |
| | 22. Dr. Marian E. Williams |

STEM EDUCATION AND AUTISM - STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Ellis Crasnow, PhD

Much has recently been made of the poor outcomes for students with special needs after they graduate high school, and rightly so. One statistic has it that between 80% and 90% of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are under or unemployed after graduation¹. Another reports that over 50% of those with an ASD have never had a job after high school². The social and financial cost of these outcomes is devastating, and not only for the individuals concerned. After all, we spend at least a third of our lives working. For many, it defines us and says who we are. Work is often where people find friends and have rewarding relationships. To have that whole part of one's life absent is a blow to one's self esteem—it is to have no answer to the commonly asked questions: "What do you do? Where do you work? Do you like what you do?" There is also an associated financial cost. Unemployed or not, those individuals still have to be clothed and fed and sheltered and they still lead lives, however



impoverished. The burden for supporting them falls to their family or to the government. The outcomes for those who apply to and attend college is similarly concerning. Those with special needs apply to college in far smaller numbers than the population as a whole, and when they do attend college they often struggle, drop out before graduating, or graduate and then struggle to find employment. It is a vicious cycle that has to be broken.

On the plus side, STEM jobs abound and are expected to make up a considerable part of the job growth going forward. At present, they account for more than 10% of the jobs available, and many pay twice as much as do jobs overall. Moreover, that 10% tends to be conservative and understates the extent to which technology has infused every part of our economy. Not only are healthcare and IT, the two largest sections of STEM and overall job growth, technology driven but also so are the arts, the humanities, architecture, music and the social sciences. There is almost no area of employment, no job that does not require a measure of technological understanding and expertise.

The connection between those on the autism spectrum and STEM is not an arbitrary one. It is not just that those with an ASD are unemployed or underemployed and represent a large pool of ready labor, whereas on the STEM side there is this huge demand for qualified workers. Those with an ASD have a natural aptitude for STEM-related activities, one that is borne out by the fact that when they do apply to college, they enroll in STEM majors to a far greater degree than the general population, 34% to 23%. The many deficits that are often mentioned in relation to ASD: narrow focus, perseverance, an obsession with detail, and a fondness for repetitious behavior, can also be viewed as strengths when applied to STEM-related activities. Solving a problem can require intense focus; it can require a narrowing of interest to the exclusion of all other distractions. On the path to finding a solution, many repeated trials might be necessary with the rejection of many early attempts. Perseverance becomes an essential quality rather than a weakness. And the same is true of repetitious behavior. The path to success is littered with unsuccessful attempts and without perseverance and the motivation to persist, the willingness to repeatedly prototype, experiment and trial there would never be a breakthrough.

This natural aptitude of our population for STEM and the powerful advantages of many of their qualities have been recognized by commerce, industry and governmental agencies. A host of programs have been established in the public sector to employ them for tasks as diverse as analyzing surveillance satellite images (using their superior visual discrimination), debugging software, accounting, quality assurance, game design, and a variety of others. Such recognition of the aptitude of those on the autism spectrum for STEM is both timely and encouraging. For our part, we provide students in all grades with hands on experience in computer programming, in robotics, in design, and in math and science beyond that required for entry to a 4 year college; we enable students to achieve excellence in these STEM-related areas at what they do well, at what they're passionate about. We enable them to thrive and flourish while still providing practice, supports and work-rounds in areas where they struggle.

As important as content knowledge is, it is not all that there is to being successful—it's not only what you know that's important, but also how you are as a person, how you relate to others, and how motivated you are. Such skills, often called 21st Century Skills or non-cognitive skills, we think of as essential skills. They include personal skills such as being a problem-solver, being a critical thinker, and being creative. They include inter-personal skills such as being communicative and collaborative. And they include positive attitudes that are also crucial to

success. Am I an optimistic person, do I believe that I can be successful by my own efforts, am I motivated to succeed? These too are essential ingredients to success, and they too need to be a part of the education of our population if we wish to see them successful and wish to change their outcomes.



Happily, the essential skills just mentioned are part and parcel of a STEM education. Instead of thinking of STEM as just standing for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, we should think of it as also standing for Self-efficacy, Team-building, Effective communication and Motivation. These essential skills and personal characteristics are embedded in a STEM education. A successful robotics team requires cooperation among computer programming, electronics and machining and collaboration among its team members. But without also being innovative and planning thoughtfully, prototyping and persevering, there would be no successful build. A scientific experiment requires teamwork, creativity, analyzing and synthesizing information from a variety of sources. It too requires many if not all of the skills mentioned. The method of learning we favor is experiential, requiring students to engage the material and each other. It requires them to learn by doing, by applying themselves and demonstrating the relevance of what they've learned to real-world problems. There are a myriad opportunities daily for them to collaborate and communicate, to argue for a point of view, and to construct solutions to presented problems, and thereby develop and solidify these essential skills.

There are early indications of the success of this approach, though definitive results will have to wait for harder evidence over a longer period of time. Two years ago when these methods were first piloted in another of The Help Group's schools, one graduate went on to study engineering, another to study computer science and a third, paleontology. This was unprecedented for us, and a welcome shift in focus of our graduates' college interests. This academic year, our first and only 4 months old, 3 seniors have already declared their intention to study computer science, and an increasing number of juniors are looking in a similar direction. It is by no means our intention to turn all our students into engineers or computer

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ADVANCES IN THE ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS WITH WRITTEN LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Philip Levin, PhD

The past decade has seen extraordinary advances in our understanding of Written Language Disorders. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), outcomes research on special education interventions and newer computerized modeling techniques have provided educational professionals a more thorough understanding of the underlying mechanisms of written language skills. As a result, we also know more about the development of unexpected difficulties in writing which can cause educational delays.

The Fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) provided changes in both the name of the diagnosis and the criteria for diagnosing written language disorders. All academic difficulties are now diagnosed using a singular category of Specific Learning Disorder. DSM-5 also nullified the need to quantify an unexpected delay in writing based on discrepancies between achievement and IQ scores on standardized testing. The current DSM-5 criteria specifies that standardized testing data of a discrepancy is insufficient to diagnose a written language disorder because the assessment should also consider a lack of response to intervention as well as qualitative information from school records and instructional history. Additionally, the diagnosis was moved from the Disorders of Childhood Section to the Neurodevelopmental Section of the manual in order to clarify Specific Learning Disorders as a lifelong issue as opposed to one that only occurs in childhood. Finally, DSM-5 specifies that students with written language issues due to poor fine motor development should be diagnosed with a motor disorder as opposed to a learning disorder in order to specify the type of intervention necessary.



These diagnostic changes follow a decade of research about the underlying causes of written language disorders. Traditionally, Dysgraphia was defined by three categories, (1) difficulties with fine motor control that effect written fluency, (2) errors of spelling/writing that are analogous to errors to phonological errors found in people with reading delays, or (3) errors due to slow sight word reading development also known as orthographic delays. DSM-5 has already moved the fine motor issues once associated with Dysgraphia to the Motor Delay category so that

intervention can be specific to increasing fine motor control. However, research on the differences between phonemic errors (those involving sound perception) and orthographic errors (those involving recognizing errors by sight) revealed interesting insight into the cause of the Written Language Disorders. Researchers have focused on the difference between a student who might misspell *gave* with *cave* (phonemic error) versus those that would confuse *gave* with *have* (orthographic error). Results of research by Frank Manis at USC and Nancy Mather at University of Arizona suggest

Dysgraphia
“Dysgraphia is a learning disability that affects writing, which requires a complex set of motor and information processing skills. Dysgraphia makes the act of writing difficult. It can lead to problems with spelling, poor handwriting and putting thoughts on paper.”
www.ncl.org

that there is a development overlap between the two types of errors. Dr. Manis (2005) determined that less than 20% of students with written language delays only make one type of error, 76% were dual impaired with both phonemic and orthographic errors. The overlapping quality of the errors indicates that Written Language disorders affect most other types of learning including reading and math; thus supporting the DSM-5 committee decision to modify the diagnostic categories to one overarching diagnosis as opposed to three separate diagnoses.

Finally, the research on overlapping learning disorders also affects how we assess Written Language disorders. In prior year, assessment focused upon discrepancies between IQ and achievement. As noted, DSM-5 has changed the practice of simple discrepancy analysis

to also include assessments of response to intervention and reviews of schoolwork. As a result, there is an ongoing change in the way in which standardized assessments of academic skills are interpreted. Until the publication of Woodcock-Johnson 4 in 2014, academics were measured in terms of a student's performance relative to a normative sample. Most students' results were interpreted by their relative standing in the group. For example, 67% of students are in the average range, therefore most results were interpreted as to whether one was in the average range or if they were above or below average. Woodcock-Johnson 4 provides another level of interpretation related to proficiency. Proficiency indicates that there is a standard of performance one needs to achieve in order to be independent. For example, most employment forms use a fourth grade vocabulary therefore if one was proficient in fourth grade vocabulary one could independently complete an application for employment. The outcome of any remedial intervention should be allowing the student to practice a skill independently. It is not the goal of remediation to allow students to excel in a single subject; we just need them to be independent. In fact, a review of the academic literature for the past ten years revealed that there is no research using the Woodcock Johnson to measure a student's ability to excel beyond average. Thus, evaluators are unable to say if having writing abilities better than 75% of peers is significantly different than the experience of having writing abilities superior to 95% of peers because the research is not present to support that interpretation. As a result, in a special education setting, research supports that the outcome of any intervention should be the student's independent ability to apply the skill, not whether or not they excel in a specific academic skill set.

In past decade advances have been made in our knowledge of the causation, diagnosis and assessment of learning disorders. Currently, we have a unified theory about the cause of the disorder and a unified understanding of the diagnostic criteria. Hopefully, the future will hold improved methods to demonstrate the changes in writing due to intervention for parents and educators.

SUPPORTING BILINGUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES: RESEARCH UPDATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Marian E. Williams, PhD and Amanda Tyree, MA, CCC-SLP

As a clinical psychologist and a speech-language pathologist dedicated to supporting family relationships for young children with developmental delays and disabilities, we are passionate about helping inform decisions related to dual language learning. What does the research tell us about bilingual language development, and how can that research lead to practical recommendations for families from non-English-speaking or bilingual backgrounds?



MYTHS AND FACTS ON BILINGUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

MYTH 1: Bilingual children's language will be delayed.

FACTS: Children raised in bilingual homes meet language milestones at the same rate as children from monolingual homes (see Paradis, Genesee, & Crago, 2010, Chapter 3). In other words, exposure to more than one language does not cause communication delays. If a child is not meeting language milestones within the typically expected ranges, an assessment is warranted. When assessing a child's communication, it is essential to consider his/her language skills collectively across the two languages. A child may appear "delayed" in one or both languages when assessed separately, but once the collective skills from both languages are combined he/she may show age-appropriate skills.

There are in fact, cognitive advantages of being raised bilingually. Children who speak two languages show superior metalinguistic awareness (Kovacs, 2007); that is, they are able to reflect on their use of language. This skill is linked to later reading and writing ability. Executive control functions are also stronger in bilingual children (Bialystok, 2001). Because bilingual children have learned selective attention and inhibition through managing two languages, they are able to think in more flexible ways. Finally, recent research with older adults with dementia found that bilinguals had a later onset of dementia symptoms compared to adults who speak only one language (Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007).

MYTH 2: Children are confused by exposure to two languages.

FACTS: Some bilingual children may show "cross-linguistic influence." This occurs when the rules from the more dominant language are applied incorrectly in the less dominant language. For example, a child whose dominant language is Spanish may say, when speaking in English, "I have three years," instead of "I am three years old." Children learn to correct these errors over time as they are exposed to good language models in the second language. Bilingual children commonly "code-switch," meaning that they change from one language to another in the same phrase or sentence. This is not a sign of language impairment or of confusion, but

rather is an adaptive strategy that children use: they substitute words that they know rather than not say anything at all. For example, imagine that a child knows the Chinese word for "kumquat" but does not know the English word. When asking for a kumquat, it is adaptive for the child to substitute the Chinese word to get their message across, especially if their listener is also bilingual.

Children do not have difficulty distinguishing between two languages. In fact, they are good at figuring out when and with whom they should use which language. For example, a study of "bilingual babblers" found that babies babbled with "French" intonation and structure with their French-speaking father, and in "English" intonation and structure with their English-speaking mother (Maneya & Genesee, 2002). From an early age, babies can distinguish the sounds and word choices from different languages.

What can cause confusion is when parents change their natural pattern of language use. For example, sometimes when a parent of a bilingual child finds out that the child has a language delay, professionals or family members advise the parent to limit the child's exposure to more than one language, or to switch to using English. This kind of advice can have a big impact on the way parents interact with their child. Parents may feel they need to stop talking to their child, or need to speak a language that feels less natural to them. These kinds of changes cause confusion in terms of language learning, and also risk interfering with the attachment relationships between parents and children.

MYTH 3: Children with developmental delays or autism spectrum disorders will have more delays if exposed to two languages.

FACTS: Studies have been done to compare children with disabilities from monolingual and bilingual homes to determine if there is a difference in language acquisition. Results show no significant differences between the language skills in bilingual and monolingual groups of children with autism (Hambly & Fombonne, 2012), specific language impairment (Gutierrez-Clellen et al., 2008; Paradis et al., 2003), or Down syndrome (Bird et al., 2005). Children with disabilities who have challenges learning language do not experience additional delays due to exposure to a second language. Parents are a primary source for children to learn language, socialization skills, and cultural norms through interactions and modeling. Children with developmental delays especially need to be exposed to the rules of language and socialization in a variety of ways to learn and understand them. The parent-child relationship is an essential tool in helping children make gains in these areas; therefore, we do not want to limit this exposure (Kremer-Sadlik, 2005).

FUN FACTS ABOUT BILINGUALISM

- Worldwide, approximately 50% of people speak more than one language.
- In the U.S., 21% of individuals speak a language other than English at home.
- Babies are born with the ability to distinguish and make the sounds from all world languages.
- By age 12 months, they lose the ability to make sounds that they are not exposed to.
- Children need to learn language from live humans: exposure to video or audio does not lead to language learning in young children (Kuhl, 2007).
- When adding a second language after age 3, it usually takes 3 to 5 years to become as proficient as a native speaker in the new language.

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STEM³ ACADEMY ANNOUNCES FIRST ANNUAL 'VERY SPECIAL INNOVATION FAIR'

The Help Group's STEM³ Academy, the first STEM³ school focused on young people with special needs, announces its Very Special Innovation Fair, a celebration of discovery and technology. This free family-friendly event will take place on Saturday, May 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the STEM³ Academy campus in Valley Glen and is equal parts science fair, high-tech exhibition, art show, and community carnival.

Inspired in part by the Maker Movement, the event will have specific areas geared toward grade school, middle school, and high school ages and interests. In each area, there will be interactive opportunities for young people and families to build things, get involved in experiments and demonstrations, and take various gadgets for a 'test drive.'

The Fair is produced by STEM³ Academy, The Help Group's newest school, which takes the particular strengths of students with social and learning differences and connects them with a STEM curriculum that expands their life options and positions them for lifelong success. The school offers distinct tracks for middle and upper school with an elementary school opening this fall. A model school that infuses social and cognitive 21st century skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) into a project-based curriculum, STEM³ Academy is an entirely new educational model for students with these needs. The program features include an Innovation Lab and Maker's Space with various resources for building and making; internships and job skills development through partnerships with business and industry; senior projects geared towards developing new solutions to real-world issues; and resources and counseling for college prep.

"STEM³ Academy is transforming students' lives and helping them find their passion," said Dr. Susan Berman, COO of The Help Group. "The Very Special Innovation Fair is a chance for the community to see what is happening in STEM and how our young students are preparing to take these areas to an exciting new level in the future."

The Very Special Innovation Fair will allow hundreds of attendees to have a first-person experience in a range of STEM-related fields, including rocketry, robotics, 3D printing and production, virtual reality, and others. Families will learn about the exciting things happening in STEM and how it is playing an increasing role in fields as diverse as manufacturing, medicine, design, and entertainment, among others.

"By 2018, there will be more than 8.65 million STEM jobs in nearly every industry you could possibly imagine," said Dr. Ellis Crasnow, director of STEM³ Academy. "Technology is progressing every day, and the Very Special Innovation Fair is a way for us to show how that evolution is changing the face of both traditional and developing industries and to show people how science, technology, math, and engineering impacts our students' day-to-day activities."

For more information on attending, sponsoring, or exhibiting at the Very Special Innovation Fair, contact Melissa Spraul at The Help Group at mspraul@thehelpgroup.org or 818.779.5219. The Help Group's Valley Glen Campus is located at 6455 Coldwater Canyon.

More information on the school can be found at

www.STEM3Academy.org.

MAY 21ST
10:00AM-2:00PM
AT THE STEM³ ACADEMY CAMPUS
6455 COLDWATER CANYON
VALLEY GLEN, CA 91606

VERY SPECIAL INNOVATION FAIR

ART
3D PRINTING
DRONES



DEMONSTRATIONS
INVENTIONS
ENGINEERING

BUILDING
BOTS
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FOOD



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THE ALLIANCE MOVES RESEARCH FROM THE LAB INTO THE REAL WORLD



Autism Research Alliance

Leading the way in applied research and intervention

The Alliance is an innovative partnership between The Help Group and the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior and is dedicated to enhancing and expanding clinical research in the education and treatment of those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and to contributing to the development, greater understanding and use of best practice models by researchers, educators, and clinicians



▶ GOALS OF THE ALLIANCE

- Enhance and expand research in the education and treatment of youth with ASD
- Develop educational and clinical evidence-based best practice models for individuals from preschool to young adulthood across the entire range of the autism spectrum
- Contribute to the greater understanding of best practice models for educators and mental health professionals working with individuals with ASD





▶ CURRENT AREAS OF RESEARCH

- Decreasing anxiety through cognitive behavioral treatment methods
- Improving friendship quality and social skills
- Understanding the neural circuitry involved in processing emotions
- Examining the powerful impact of music education and music therapy
- Examining the impact of yoga and motor movement therapies
- Understanding changes in social development across childhood and adolescence
- Examining gender differences in the development of ASD
- Understanding early social and cognitive development
- Understanding the post-secondary needs of adults



For more information, please contact

Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, Director, The Help Group – UCLA Autism Research Alliance
(818) 778-7130 | alliance@thehelpgroup.org | www.thehelpgroup.org  

THE HELP GROUP HOSTS SIXTH ANNUAL SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE FAIR

The Help Group will be hosting its sixth annual Special Needs Resource Fair on Sunday, May 15 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the organization's Sherman Oaks campus. The free event – which attracts more than 400 people each year – is an opportunity for parents and professionals to connect with the many companies and resources Los Angeles offers the special needs community. This includes those with autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, ADHD, developmental delays, abuse, and emotional problems.

A diverse mix of exhibitors from various industries will be on hand to provide information and answer questions about services geared toward children, young people, and adults, as well as their parents and families. There will be representatives from support groups, medical and therapeutic services, educational supports, financial and estate planning, legal and advocacy services, respite services, recreational and camping programs, vocational and residential programs, and more.

The event will feature opportunities for children and families to interact with therapy dogs from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs; take part in a Wahlbangers Drum Circle; visit with a miniature horse from Special Spirit, Inc. Therapeutic Riding Center, and play with friends on the open playground. There will also be food and snacks available for purchase.

"The Help Group Special Needs Resource Fair is a signature event for the organization and a great way for us to provide valuable information to families who need it most," said Nicole Webb, Program Director of Kids Like Me, a key Help Group program offering after-school, weekend, day camp, and social programming to youth with special needs. "It is an opportunity for families to find quality resources, gain insight on important issues, and connect with other families in the community."

Proceeds from event booth sales help generate scholarship funds for Kids Like Me camps, which are offered during the summer, winter, and spring at The Help Group's Sherman Oaks and Culver City campuses. Camp programs are developed by a multidisciplinary team to address unique strengths and abilities, foster social skills, and cultivate friendships. They are led by highly-trained therapists and counselors from The Help Group and campers are assessed and matched with the right program to ensure the best possible camp experience for everyone.

The Special Needs Resource Fair will take place at 13164 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91401. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, please contact Tracy Peters at 310.751.1468 or via email at tpeters@thehelpgroup.org.



6th Annual Special Needs Resource Fair for ages 3-22

An opportunity for parents and professionals to discover the wonderful **RESOURCES** that Los Angeles has to offer its **SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY**

There will be exhibitors representing:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Schools & Camps | Legal & Advocacy Services |
| Residential Programs | Transitional Programs |
| Social Skills Programs | Vocational Programs |
| Recreational & Creative Arts Programs | Parent Support Groups |
| Medical & Therapeutic Services | Respite Services |
| Educational Supports | Equine Therapy |
| Behavior Intervention Services | & Much, Much More! |
| Financial & Estate Planning | |

Children's Activities, Food & Family Fun!!!

Sunday MAY 15, 2016
11am - 3pm Free Admission

The Help Group Autism Center - 13164 Burbank Blvd. Sherman Oaks, CA 91401

For further information contact
Tracy Peters **310.751.1468** or tpeters@thehelpgroup.org

SAVE THE DATE

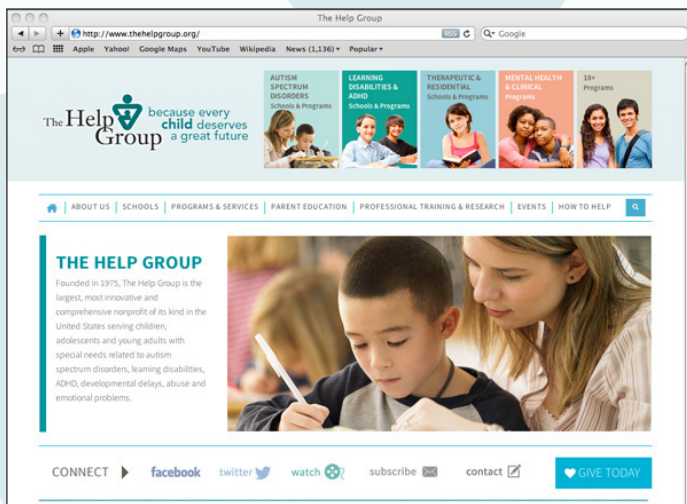
THE HELP GROUP PRESENTS

SUMMIT 2016

Advances and Best Practices in
Autism • Learning Disabilities • ADHD

Friday, October 13th & Saturday, October 14th
Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA

WE INVITE YOU TO CONNECT
WITH THE HELP GROUP



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- **Option 1:** Use the language that you are most comfortable with at home. If your home language is not the dominant language in the community, your child will learn the second language when he or she starts school.
- **Option 2:** Use two languages from the start. If there are people living in the home who speak different languages, your child can be exposed to more than one language and will learn to distinguish them.

The important thing is that each adult in the home provides a rich language model. When speaking in their native tongue, parents and other family members will:

- speak with correct grammar
- use a wider range of vocabulary words
- enable their children to be part of family conversations
- help their children learn from overheard conversations as well as when spoken to directly.
- Give your child many opportunities to hear and practice using both languages in everyday situations.
- Tell stories and sing songs; share books and talk about the pictures.
- Talk about your traditions and cultures.
- Remember that children learn language best from live humans, not from video or audio recordings.
- Make sure interactions in the home language are varied and fun, and not just giving instructions.

RESOURCES ON BILINGUALISM

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website: www.asha.org
- The Advantages of Being Bilingual
- Teaching Your Child Two Languages
- Becoming Bilingual/EI Nino Bilingue

STEM³ Education and Autism ... Continued from page 10

programmers, but for students with the interest and aptitude, the shift represents real opportunity for a strong career and strong job prospects, which are essential to turn around those bad job numbers with which we began.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” We have taken our first steps.

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- 1,2 Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. September 2013, Volume 52, Issue 9, Pages 931-939
- 3 Students With Autism Choose STEM Majors, Advance Healthcare Network for Speech and Hearing. Posted on: February 27, 2013, Accessed January 18, 2016

Motivating Children with Autism ... Continued from page 4

components was implemented. Because it tackled a pivotal area of autism, producing rapid and widespread changes in the entire disorder, we named the package Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT). As a package, we see big improvements in a child's academic performance, socialization, communication, as well as far less (often zero) disruptive behaviors. Making sure your child's program has motivational components incorporated is step one – an essential step. Once a child is motivated we see widespread positive changes in other behaviors, and for that reason it is called a “Pivotal” area.

For more information on Pivotal Response Treatment and Pivotal Behaviors and the scientific studies discussed above please visit our websites: www.autismPRThelp.com or www.education.ucsb.edu/autism

- Paradis, J., Genesee, F. & Crago, M. B. (2010). *Dual Language Development and Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism and Second Language Learning*, 2nd Edition.
- Head Start materials: The Importance of Home Language series <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/home-language.html>

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ADHD: From Stereotype to ... Continued from page 3

ADHD and Memory

Many students with ADHD have quite adequate or even exceptionally good long-term storage memory. They may be able to recite extended song lyrics or explain in detail the storyline of a movie they saw years ago. Yet they may have great difficulty keeping in mind the directions the teacher just gave for an assignment. During class discussions, students with ADHD may raise their hands to answer a question the teacher has posed and then forget what they intended to say if the teacher calls on someone else first. The memory problem in ADHD is usually with short-term working memory, the ability to keep one bit of information in mind while also thinking about or doing something else.

ADHD and Writing

Typically the most difficult academic task for students with ADHD is written expression. In the earliest grades, the student with ADHD may be exceptionally slow in doing any written work. In the higher grades, when writing tasks get longer and more complex, students with ADHD often report that they have many good ideas for what to write, but it takes them forever to put their thoughts into organized sentences and paragraphs. Slow processing speed is often characteristic of students with ADHD.

Thomas E. Brown (www.drthomasebrown.com) is a clinical psychologist and associate director of the Yale Clinic for Attention and Related Disorders at Yale Medical School. His most recent book is *Smart but Stuck: Emotions in Teens and Adults with ADHD* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2014). This article is adapted from the version published in *Educational Leadership*, a national publication for educators.



Leading the Way for Young People with **SPECIAL NEEDS**



Village Glen
School

Bridgeport
School

Bridgeport Vocational
Education Center

Young Learners
Preschool

Sunrise
School

Summit View
School

Westview

North Hills
Prep

Parkhill
School

Our Newest School
Stem³ Academy

Founded in 1975, The Help Group is the largest, most innovative and comprehensive nonprofit of its kind in the United States serving children, adolescents and young adults with special needs related to autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, ADHD, developmental delays, abuse and emotional challenges.

The Help Group's ten specialized day schools offer pre-K through high school programs for more than 1,600 students. Its broad range of mental health and therapy services, child abuse and residential programs extends its reach to more than 6,000 children and their families each year. With more than 980 staff members, The Help Group's state-of-the-art schools and programs are located on six campuses in the Los Angeles area.

ASSESSMENT

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

18+ PROGRAMS

COACHING

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

PARENT EDUCATION

AFTER-SCHOOL ENRICHMENT

DAY CAMPS

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VALLEY GLEN | VAN NUYS - SATICOY | VAN NUYS - SHERMAN WAY

877.943.5747 | www.thehelpgroup.org  



ABOUT THE HELP GROUP

The Help Group is dedicated to the education, treatment and outreach of children, adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other special needs

SPECIALIZED DAY SCHOOLS

Village Glen School for students with Asperger's Disorder, high-functioning autism and nonverbal learning disabilities. The Pace Program is available for gifted students and offers honors and AP classes. The Beacon Program educates students with behavioral challenges.

Young Learners Preschool for children ages 2.9 to 5 years with autism spectrum disorder.

Bridgeport School for students 5 to 22 with mild to moderate cognitive delays and challenges with social communication and/or language development.

Bridgeport Vocational Education Center serves young adults ages 18 to 22 and bridges the gap between high school and adult independence.

Sunrise School serves students ages 5 to 22 with moderate to severe global delays associated with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.

Summit View School for students with learning differences who possess average to above-average intellectual capabilities.

STEM³ Academy is the first high school and middle school of its kind to connect the particular strengths of students with social and learning differences, including autism, with an innovative and rigorous curriculum that positions students for future success.

The Help Group's Westview serves students with learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit and/or mild emotional and social issues.

The Help Group's North Hills Prep offers a WASC-accredited college preparatory curriculum while supporting and challenging creative learners in a nurturing and inclusive community.

The Help Group's Parkhill School is an intensive therapeutic day program serving children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral challenges.

MENTAL HEALTH & CLINICAL PROGRAMS

These programs provide a continuum of comprehensive outpatient services for children and families, including assessment; individual, family and group therapy; case management; psychiatric services; parenting groups; in-home counseling; school-based mental health counseling; **REACH** - after-school day rehabilitation; **Stepping Stones** - an intensive day treatment for children ages 3 to 5 and therapeutic behavioral services. **Wraparound** is an innovative program designed to maintain at-risk children in their homes and avoid placement in institutions or other restrictive settings.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER PROGRAMS

The Help Group Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder features multidisciplinary assessment, consultation, intervention, family support groups, as well as seminars for parents and professionals.

Paws and Pals for Kids with Autism is a volunteer-supported pet intervention program designed to engage young people with social and communication challenges.

RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Kids Like Me provides after-school enrichment, social skills groups and day camps designed specifically for children and adolescents with ASD and other developmental challenges. **Teens on the Go** is a travel camp for young people with ASD. **club I.a. TEEN** provides a supported social network for teens with ASD.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Community Employment Program assists adolescents and young adults with social-emotional and/or mental health challenges with the special guidance, skills and support needed to obtain and maintain successful employment.

Silverlining Resale Boutique & Vocational Training Center provides students with special needs the opportunity to learn and develop valuable work experience and job skills that contribute to their knowledge, self-confidence, employability and future independence.

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Project Six is a therapeutic boarding option for teens ages 13 to 17 with Asperger's Disorder, ASD, mood and anxiety disorders, and learning differences.

Project Six Adult Residential Program provides community-based group homes for adults with developmental disabilities.

18 + PROGRAMS

Advance LA provides one-on-one life skills coaching for teens and young adults with unique challenges in their transition to independence.

Live. Advance. LA. offers a supported living experience on a college campus for young adults ages 18 to 29 who are learning the skills needed to transition to independence.

club I.a. facilitates activities for young adults designed to enhance social skills, meet people with similar interests and develop long-lasting friendships.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & RESEARCH

The Help Group - UCLA Neuropsychology Program provides neuropsychological assessments and consultations for children, adolescents and young adults and enriches the field of knowledge through its research and educational endeavors.

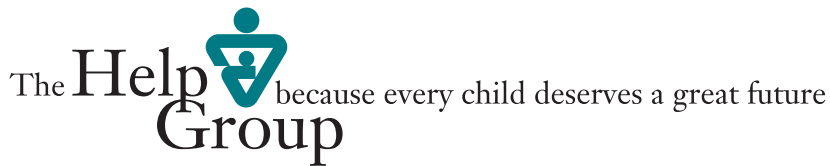
The Help Group - UCLA Autism Research Alliance is dedicated to enhancing and expanding clinical research in the education and treatment of ASD and to contributing to the development, greater understanding and use of best practice models by researchers, educators and clinicians.

The Help Group - USC Occupational Science Initiative is dedicated to developing evidence-based intervention programs for children with ASD through an interdisciplinary team of researchers, educators and clinicians.



Administrative Office
 13130 Burbank Boulevard
 Sherman Oaks, California 91401

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The Help Group's ten specialized day schools offer pre-K through high school programs for more than 1,600 students. Its broad range of mental health and therapy services, child abuse and residential programs extends its reach to more than 6,000 children and their families each year. With more than 980 staff members, The Help Group's state-of-the-art schools and programs are located on six campuses in the Los Angeles area.

The Help Group is widely regarded for its high standards of excellence, unique scope and breadth of services. Through its public awareness, professional training and parent education programs and efforts at the state and national levels, The Help Group touches the lives of young people with special needs across the country and in other parts of the world.

At the heart of its efforts is the commitment to helping young people fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives.

Schools

Village Glen School · Bridgeport School · Bridgeport Vocational Education Center · Sunrise School
 Young Learners Preschool for Autism · STEM³ Academy
 Summit View School · Westview · North Hills Prep · Parkhill School

Programs

The Help Group - UCLA Autism Research Alliance · The Help Group - UCLA Neuropsychology Program
 The Help Group - USC Occupational Science Initiative · Advance LA · Live.Advance.LA.
 Project Six/The Commons · Kids Like Me Recreational Programs & Camps · club i.a./club i.a. TEEN
 Paws and Pals for Kids with Autism · Silverlining Resale Boutique & Vocational Training Center
 The Help Group Child & Family Center · The Help Group Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Campuses

CULVER CITY · SHERMAN OAKS EAST · SHERMAN OAKS WEST
 VALLEY GLEN · VAN NUYS · SATICOY · VAN NUYS · SHERMAN WAY

UPCOMING EVENTS



Resource Fair
 6th Annual Special Needs Resource Fair
 The Help Group Autism Center
 May 15, 2016



Very Special Innovation Fair
 STEM³ Academy Campus
 May 21, 2016



Teddy Bear Tea
 Hotel Casa del Mar
 May 24, 2016



Keys for Kids Teddy Bear Golf Classic
 Valencia Country Club
 September 26, 2016



The Help Group SUMMIT 2016
 Skirball Cultural Center
 October 14 - October 15, 2016



Teddy Bear Ball
 The Beverly Hilton Hotel
 December 7, 2016



We invite you to follow us on Facebook...



www.thehelpgroup.org

For more information on these and other events, please call 818.779.5212