

## Language Immersion: “It Was the Best Decision We Ever Made”



Carissa Hopkins-Hoel  
St. Cloud Area School District 742  
Communications Coordinator

We were like any other parents nervous about enrolling their child in kindergarten. All the questions that run through your mind. Which school? What are the best opportunities? Is there busing? Is there before or after school care available? Then another thought crosses your mind. The choice we make now will potentially set the course for the rest of our child’s life.

My husband and I grew up in small towns in Minnesota. We loved it. We knew every- one in our class, even the older and younger

classes. We were involved in everything: band, choir, pop groups, sports, theater, student council, school newspaper and more. We had no experience of raising kids in a large, populous city. We had to start doing the research.

When looking at kindergarten, we often look at the high schools, too. You think to yourself, “When my child gets older will they have the same or better opportunities

than what I had?”

We received a mailer about the open house in our attendance area, which was Madison Elementary. On the mailer was information about enrolling in the Language Immersion Program. Interestingly enough, I had heard about these kinds of schools in the Twin Cities. I remember seeing a news story on two schools: one that taught their entire day in French and the other in German.

I thought at the time, “That would be so cool. I wish I had had that opportunity growing up.”

“We looked at it from a futuristic standpoint as well. If our child is trying to get into a college or university and all things being equal, would they choose our child because she could speak another language fluently? Chinese, in fact? We thought it would be rare to have a Chinese bilingual student. So, Chinese it was!”

Continued on Page 4

## Mckinley Fourth-Graders Wrap Love Around Patients Fighting Cancer

Communications  
Department  
Anoka-Hennepin School  
District

When paramedics lifted 9-year old Julia Ogren’s great-aunt Sharon into the ambulance, she wouldn’t let them take her to the hospital without the fleece tie-blanket Julia had made for her.

“She said that was the one thing she had to have with her — the blanket I made. She said it was all she needed,” Julia said, tears welling up in her eyes as she realized how much that simple gift meant to her great-aunt.

A cancer patient, Sharon had already endured countless rounds of chemotherapy wrapped in that pink and blue fleece blanket and she told Julia that she could feel her love wrapped around her with that blanket.

Julia is one of 150 McKinley Elementary School fourth-grade students who made more than 100 fleece tie blankets last month. On Jan. 18 those blankets were presented to Minnesota Oncology for distribution to patients undergoing cancer treatments at its Coon Rapids and Fridley clinics.



Program manager Alexia Hansen told the children how much those blankets will mean to patients fighting that deadly disease.

Patients getting chemotherapy have to sit for a long time, they’re sick and they don’t feel good and sometimes they get cold and ask for a blanket. I used to have to give them a scratchy wool blanket — that wouldn’t feel very good, would it? Now I can give them one of these

“If you throw a boomerang, it comes back to you. If you throw kindness out into the world, it comes back to you. The kids came up with this idea to make blankets for cancer patients and I know they’ll feel that kindness as they imagine patients using their blankets”

nice, soft, warm blankets you made,” she told them.

“You have no idea what all these blankets mean to them. They can’t believe

Continued on Page 4

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR: Renee Feight  
EDITOR: Andria Reinke  
PAGE COMPOSITION: Andrew Clausen  
WEBMASTER: Scott Bayerl  
SPECIAL ASSISTANT: Allie Zacharias  
Please direct articles, advertising, questions or comments to:

*Teaching Today MN*<sup>TM</sup>  
PO Box 1704  
Eau Claire, WI 54702  
Phone/Fax 715-839-7074  
www.teachingtodaymn.com

Please direct all inquiries to:  
renee@teachingtodaymn.com

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## In this Issue

Students from Wayzata's Blake School Talk with NASA's Astronaut Twins .....	Page 5
Engineering Students Prevail in Regatta Rematch .....	Page 7
Park Terrace Students Build Extreme Miniature Golf Course ....	Page 7
We Are Teaching Technology Literacy .....	Page 8
Hopkins Students Learn the Language of Code During 'Hour of Code' .....	Page 9
Educator's Roadmap to Graduate Studies .....	Page 10
National Board Certification Teachers .....	Page 12
Sara Schwartz Honored for 'Breaking Barriers' .....	Page 15
Reading, Writing and Robots .....	Page 16
Parker Celebrates Blue Ribbon Award .....	Page 16
Autism Spectrum Disorders .....	Page 18

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# Mckinley Fourth-Graders Wrap Love Around Patients Fighting Cancer

Continued from Page 1

someone thought of them, someone wanted to help them, someone made a blanket for them. These blankets mean so much," Hansen said.

The blankets were made after students learned about the "kindness boomerang" during a Kindness Retreat earlier this school year.

"If you throw a boomerang, it comes back to you. If you throw kindness out into the world, it comes back to you. The kids came up with this idea to make blankets for cancer patients and I know they'll feel that kindness as they imagine patients using their blankets," said McKinley teacher Melissa Eilertson, who along with fellow fourth-grade teacher Jeanne Baker organized the project.

With a goal of making 25 blankets one afternoon before winter break, Eilertson and Baker got word out to parents about the project. Soon, enough money and fabric was donated by those parents to make more than 100 blankets.

"We told them what we wanted to do and money just kept coming in. We couldn't believe it. The McKinley families have such a heart, such care and

these kids are all about that," said Baker.

The day before winter break, fourth-graders gathered in the cafeteria for the blanket-making project. Sheets of 60x70-inch fleece had already been cut and laid out on tables and in groups of five or six students, the fourth-graders got to work tying together the colorful fleece fabric. In 90 minutes time, 105 blankets had been made.

Those blankets wrap a special kind of love, Hansen said.

"We often get gifts from businesses or church groups, but something like this from children so young – we don't see that very often. This is something special," she said.

And McKinley students want to keep the giving going.

"The kids are already asking what they can do next," Eilertson said, adding that "this is something more than just the blankets. This has got the kids talking about other ways they can help someone, show someone they care. The lessons they learned at the Kindness Retreat continue."

Baker said she hopes students keep those lessons close to heart.

"Julia knows how much that blanket meant to her great-aunt. She knows that blanket kept her warm and cozy and reminded her of the love that went into it. I hope all these kids always remember how they got together and made these blankets, how they did something for someone they don't even know and how that made such a difference," Baker said.

Julia knows her great-aunt is just one of dozens who will feel students' love wrapped around them as they endure the biggest fight of their lives.

"We just want to help them get through it and know someone cares," Julia said.

Alexia Hansen poetically expressed the patients' deep gratitude for the heartfelt gift of handmade blankets. She read her poem (below) to the McKinley Elementary School fourth-grade students who made the blankets when she visited the school Jan. 18 to collect the blankets.

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## What a Blanket Means

*It starts with some fabric; maybe bright blue or gold  
And ideas to tie here-no there, or so you've been told*

*The cloth begins to change and become something new*

*Much like our cancer patients who are on their journey, too*

*All of us get scared sometimes and can be filled with fright*

*But now our patients have something warm to get them through the night*

*Because, these blankets mean so much more than being cozy*

*It means someone thought of you when life wasn't rosy*

*To say thank you doesn't seem quite enough*

*So without going into too much emotional stuff*

*Please know our hearts are wide open and our arms will hold tight*

*This gift from new friends which will help us through the fight*

# Language Immersion: "It Was the Best Decision We Ever Made"

Continued from Page 1

I took German in middle school, high school and then in college.

My exact thought, "This could really be an amazing opportunity for our child."

My husband and I attended the open house at Madison to get a feel for the school. We then learned there was an informational meeting for parents about the immersion program. We attended the meeting and were able to hear first-hand experiences from parents of current kindergartners. These parents represented the very first class of immersion students.

These parents shared experiences of awe and amazement at how quickly their kids picked up the language. Following the parent's experience, professors from the University of Minnesota shared statistical and brain development data. We discovered that children that are bilingual or multilingual statistically score better on verbal reading and math tests. They have increased right brain activity and acquire the ability to pick-up a third or fourth language easier than their peers.

It became a no-brainer (no pun intended). We were completely sold. The only question was to decide between Spanish and Chinese.

To give some perspective, this was 10 years ago. The Olympics were being held in China. Trade with China was at an all-time high and from what we understood, Chinese is one of the hardest languages to learn. If you could master Chinese, you could learn any language.

We looked at it from a futuristic standpoint as well. If our child is trying to get into a college or university and all things being equal, would they choose our child because she could speak another language fluently? Chinese, in fact? We thought it would be rare to have a Chinese bilingual student. So, Chinese it was!

Now, don't get me wrong. There were apprehensions. We can't read or speak Chinese. My husband had some Spanish in high school, but in no way shape or form were we going to be able to assist with homework in Chinese. We were also concerned about making sure that we spent adequate time reading to our kids in English to help support their growth in English as well.

It was the best decision we've made in regards to our kids' education.

Within the first few weeks of class, our daughter, Paris, was saying numbers, colors, words and phrases in Chinese. She began

to write Chinese symbols with ease as if she were writing the alphabet. Our worries of homework help? Well, instructions were sent home in English for parents to read. Later, as she grew older and our son joined the program, we discovered math homework was in English out of text books, while math worksheets were done in Chinese.

During third grade, English grammar was introduced in the classroom. The ah-ha moment for us was realizing that they use periods, commas and other punctuation in Chinese as well. What they learned in either English or Chinese was transferable between both languages.

By the time middle school came around, the classes in Chinese were reduced to two a day (Chinese language arts and social studies) with the addition of their homeroom in Chinese. This allowed for electives, continual use of the language and a close-knit group of kids to feel like they were traveling a path together.

This year Paris will be traveling to China with the rest of her classmates to spend two weeks learning more about the Chinese culture, attending school, staying a weekend with a host family and really putting her language skills to use.

Next year will be high school and middle school for our family. Paris will only have one class in Chinese, while our son, Tristan will experience two classes a day. And to date, (thank goodness) they still don't want to talk to each other in another language! That thought crossed our mind as well. We'd have no clue what they were saying!

With the incorporation of HSK testing (Chinese equivalent to current MCA standardized tests), Paris and Tristan could be eligible for scholarships to universities in China, allowing both of our kids the opportunity to build an international education and career.

For us, choosing the Chinese Immersion program was the best decision we could have made. Absolutely no regrets.

*\*Carissa Hopkins-Hoel is a St. Cloud Area School District employee, working as a Communications Coordinator.*

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# OUT OF THIS WORLD:

## Students from Wayzata's Blake School Talk with Nasa's Astronaut Twins

By Jason Jenkins

Students from the The Blake School's Highcroft Campus in Wayzata recently heard from a pair of guest speakers that were out of this world — literally.

NASA astronauts Mark and Scott Kelly, who are both now retired, visited students Oct. 1 at Bancroft Elementary in Minneapolis. During their visit, which was attended by elementary students from Blake and Bancroft, the astronauts shared their experience of being part of a groundbreaking study on the effects of long-term spaceflight on the human body. In March, Scott returned from a 342-day mission in space (a record for the U.S.) alongside Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko.

Upon returning, NASA was less curious about what Scott had seen in space and more interested in Scott himself and how his body now compared to his identical twin brother, Mark.

The twin astronauts were in the Twin Cities to give the keynote speech at the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation Heartbeat Gala. Two fifth-grade Blake students, Ella Chester and Maddie Newhouse, were also invited to the event and shared their robotics projects alongside displays from major, local companies.

"I worked on it before school, at recess

and after school — every spare moment I could get," Ella said, explaining how hard she worked to fine-tune her robotic horse using the school's Snap! drag-and-drop programming software.

Maddie said her robotics project was to design a massage machine that could attach to a person's hand.

The two young robotics engineers also had the unique opportunity to meet and talk with the Kelly twins at the gala and during the astronauts' visit to the Minneapolis school. Ella said the twins talked about what it was like being in space and how they came to be astronauts — all with a central theme around the importance of persevering over difficult obstacles.

"Their favorite part of the job is doing hard things," Ella said.

Maddie said the Kelly twins also explained NASA's studies conducted after Scott returned to earth from his nearly year-long expedition. Because they are identical twins, the two were ideal subjects for testing the physiological and psychological effects of prolonged space travel — issues scientists are exploring as NASA considers the potential for manned flights to Mars and beyond.

"They want to know how the body would change up in space," Maddie said.

Ella and Maddie are part of Blake's Tech

Tank, a girls-only technology-focused program made up of third- through fifth-grade students. The group meets after school to explore topics in engineering and programming through hands-on projects.

William Watkins, the engineering and programming teacher at The Blake School, said his Tech Tank students worked on a robotics project to share with the group and the Kelly brothers.

"We made robots using Hummingbird microcomputers that we attached to cardboard and foam-core boards," Watkins said. "It's one-third art project, one-third computer programming and one-third engineering. You put it all together and you have a robot from nothing."

Watkins said it was an exciting and unique opportunity for his students to hear the Kelly brothers' inspirational story of hard work and perseverance that led them to becoming astronauts.

"The fact that they weren't perfect but persisted — it was a theme for students' project, but it really was a theme for the Kelly broth-



ers' lives. . . . They were not perfect students or perfect people, but through their persistence and hard work they became astronauts," Watkins said. "What they shared with the kids was really phenomenal."

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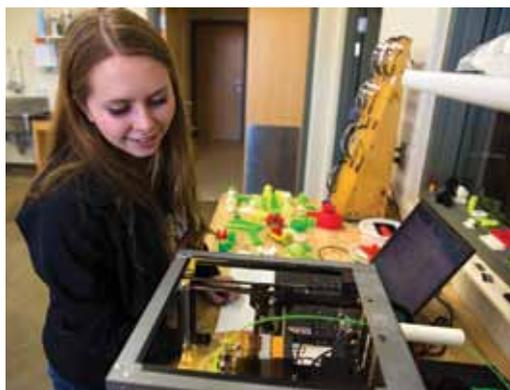
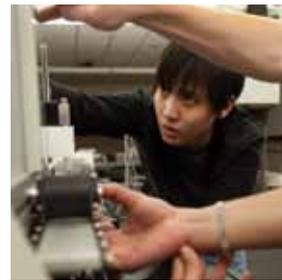
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## Engineering Students Prevail in Regatta Rematch



Article and photos by Becca Neuger  
Communications Coordinator  
Westonka Public Schools

PLTW engineering students who considered themselves to be brilliant boatbuilders had a rude awakening last January when a pair of professional engineers lapped them in their home pool. At the 2017 Mound Westonka High School Engineering Regatta on Jan. 10, the students were on a quest for redemption.

Following instructor Dale Kimball's strict construction guidelines, 12 teams of student engineers (and one team of professionals) had one week to design, document and build boats that could carry at least two people from one end of the high school pool

to the other. Boats were made prior to the race using only broken-down cardboard boxes and each using a single roll of duct tape. The vessels had to fit within a cube measuring 7 feet on each side in order to qualify for competition.

Propulsion during the race had to be provided only by hands and cardboard. Once a boat reached the far end of the pool, one member had to exit the boat and climb back in. If, at any point, a boat capsized, both members had to return to the boat before they could continue.

At the 2016 Regatta, professional industrial engineer Bob Chilson and industrial engineer John Hensley proved their scientific prowess, flying past their competitors on a well-crafted raft. Whether it was due to overconfidence from the prior year or whether the PLTW engineering students merely stepped up their game for the third annual regatta, Chilson and Hensley's raft finished in a surprising fifth place in this year's competition.

Junior Victor Nelson and senior Andrew LaFortune earned the ultimate championship, reaching the finish line in under a minute on their streamlined cruiser. Coming in second place with a time of 1:09 was the team of sophomore Trevor Nelson, junior Alec Louisiana and seniors Jack Stuhr and Jacob Bowe.



Juniors Megan Heins and Amy Howarth and seniors Zach Bohn, Ian Rostis and Brian Burriss finished third with a time of 1:20.

Sadly, six boats did not survive their maiden voyage. The underclassmen representing those soggy shipwrecks will need to go back to the drawing board for next year's regatta.

View the full race results at:

[www.westonka.k12.mn.us/cms/lib011/MN01809628/Centricity/Domain/4/RegattaResults2017.pdf](http://www.westonka.k12.mn.us/cms/lib011/MN01809628/Centricity/Domain/4/RegattaResults2017.pdf)

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## Park Terrace Students Build Extreme Miniature Golf Course

By Olivia Alvshere

Park Terrace Elementary School students spent the last week of school before summer vacation building and playing with a 130-hole miniature golf course.

Every kindergarten through third-grade class made between one and five golf holes out of cardboard and other recycled materials.

Jamie Grange, husband of special education para-educator Andrea Grange, donated hundreds of cardboard pieces to serve as bases for each of the holes, and parents supplied the remainder of the materials — everything from cereal boxes to milk cartons to toilet paper rolls to ribbon.

Through the creation of the miniature golf course, “we’re hoping that (students) realize that problem solving is a process,” said Cheryl Peterson, the school’s gifted and talented coordinator.

Park Terrace staff took inspiration

from the short film “Caine’s Arcade,” which follows a 9-year-old boy from Los Angeles who builds an arcade out of cardboard while his father is working, displaying incredible creativity and determination along the way.

With the district’s emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics education — some of the recently approved \$49.9 million bond referendum dollars will go toward STEM education — Park Terrace was looking for a project to build up those skills, as well as focus on collaboration and creativity.”

— Melissa Gustafson  
First Grade Teacher

Gustafson.

Gustafson’s student Leo Roerig certainly picked up on those goals, working on a camping-themed miniature golf hole that brought a golf ball over a body of water, through woods and even into “fire ashes.”

“Cooperation is a very good thing,” said Leo, who was working with four other boys. “It makes (the project) better.”

Peterson saw students who normally might not be totally engaged in their schoolwork taking on leadership roles as students built the golf course last June.

“They’re really not hesitating — they’re diving right in,” she said.

“We are very excited to make our golf course. Everybody in the school will try it,” first-grader Caleb VonDeLinde said. “Aren’t you impressed?” he asked, eyes shining with accomplishment.

Thanks to a donation from the Panther Foundation, students were able to use clubs and foam balls to test out all 130 holes during physical education classes June 7 through June 10.

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## Technology

# We are Teaching Technology Literacy — How it's Used and How it's Developed



Bryan McGinley, Principal  
Deephaven Elementary  
Minnetonka Public Schools

reading fluency), conduct internet research and create a book or multimedia presentation. By fifth grade they are technically literate in creating content, not just consuming it. A project that would have taken me weeks and many tools as a child now takes students a fraction of the time with one tool.

We also use technology to efficiently pinpoint each student's level of learning. In reading, for example, adaptive testing adjusts the difficulty of questions based on a student's answers, and helps us create a list of "good fit books." Good teaching is understanding "Where are you?" and "What's the

next logical step for you?" Using technology efficiently, we streamline that process and gain instructional time. That's why you see such great gains in our District.

### How It's Developed: Tonka<Codes>

Minnetonka is the first district in Minnesota to teach computer science for all students at the elementary level. Through Tonka<codes> we teach technology literacy—not just how technology is used, but how it's developed. Our society has a great need for people working in this field. Whether students become a developer or they're in charge of a

project that requires a new technology tool, they will have a deeper understanding. Our District helps kids understand both sides and they love it. We are grateful for the support of our partners and the many parent volunteers for their involvement in this innovative program.

### Teaching Responsible Use

Kids in Minnetonka are being introduced to technology in a healthy way—our focus is on a healthy digital balance. Media center specialists teach curriculum on how to use technology effectively, safely and with personal respect. As students gain opportunities to collaborate, comment and share reflective thoughts on shared documents, digital citizenship is critically important. As a parent, I appreciate how the District helps us take an active role in monitoring and managing technology use (through applications like Curbi) and teaching our children about digital citizenship.

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Deephaven students completed Binary Color-by-Number sheets. They learned that computers communicate via a two-number system called binary. A 0 represents the electricity being off in a given wire of a computer, and a 1 represents the electricity being on in a given wire of a computer. Binary uses only 1s and 0s. The 1s and 0s can be strung together to send messages, such as stringing several 1s and 0s together to represent each color. Each binary number, such as 101, stood for a different color, and the students used a key to color in the numbers and reveal a mystery drawing, similar to how a computer sends ones and zeros to a computer screen to light up its pixels different colors.

### How It's Used

Technology has an incredible power to personalize learning for students. After a successful four-year 1:1 iPad program at the middle and high schools, last year we expanded the program to fifth grade.

Touch-screen technology is a growing part of life and proficiency is important for our students. They use tablets to create, compile and explain their understanding. Today, with one tool, a fifth-grader can take a picture, shoot a video, record their voice (helpful in building

## Hour of Code Week

Lyssa Campbell,  
Communications Coordinator  
Minnetonka Public Schools

As part of the worldwide Hour of Code week, Deephaven Elementary students participated in after-school coding parties. The event started in the cafeteria with binary color-by-number worksheets and a fundamental lesson about computer coding:

"What is coding?" Deephaven teachers asked.

"Telling computers what to do!" Deephaven students responded enthusiastically.

Minnetonka's K-5 coding curriculum, Tonka Codes, is now in its third year. This program introduces all students to the language of computer programming and helps them understand the role they can play as producers—not just consumers—of technology.

After recharging with pizza and juice, students moved to the Media Center where

they worked on a variety of applications available through the Hour of Code website—Tynker, Minecraft, Scratch and Kodable to name a few. Representatives from the Minnetonka offices of a company that develops information systems for health care organizations, were on hand to assist students, answer questions, and explain their role in software and hardware development. The District is grateful for their support, including a generous stipend that supports the Tonka Codes program.

"We're in the digital age," said Tommy Kraus, an Application Specialist. "It's going to be more and more important for individuals to have this kind of knowledge. The fact that Minnetonka students are learning so early is wonderful. They're able to soak it up and really understand the technological world we live in."

## STEM / Technology Grants and Contests

### Toshiba America Grant Program for 6-12 Science and Math Educators

Toshiba America Foundation accepts applications from teachers who are passionate about making science and mathematics more engaging for their students. The foundation seeks to support teachers by providing funds to support classroom projects. The foundation strongly encourages projects planned and led by individual teachers or teams of teachers for their own classrooms. Successful projects tap into the natural curiosity of students, enable students to frame their own scientific questions, and incorporate the expertise of community partners. Applications must be for project-based learning.

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**Website:** [www.toshiba.com/taf/612.jsp](http://www.toshiba.com/taf/612.jsp)

### Extreme Redesign Contest 3-D Printing Challenge

The Extreme Redesign Contest 3-D Printing Challenge is an annual competition open to students worldwide. Students work alone or in a team of two to design an original piece of art, jewelry or architecture, or to make an existing design better. Winning entries must be creative, mechanically sound, and realistically achievable. There are three contest categories:

- Engineering: secondary education is open to students in middle school and high school.
- Engineering: postsecondary is open to university, college, or postsecondary school students.
- Art, Jewelry and Architecture: open to students of any grade level.

Scholarships of \$2,500 for a first-place winner, and \$1,000 each for second-place winners are awarded

**Deadline:** Entries are due March 9, 2017

**Website:** [www.stratasy.com/industries/education/extreme-redesign](http://www.stratasy.com/industries/education/extreme-redesign)

# Hopkins Students Learn the Language of Code During 'Hour of Code'

Robots, iPads, and Chromebooks provide hands-on lessons in computer science education as students participate in Hour of Code initiative.



Hopkins Communications Department  
Hopkins Public Schools

Gatewood Elementary fourth-graders watched curiously as a round, brightly lit robot named Sphero meandered around the classroom on Thursday. The baseball-sized rover controlled by Principal Mark French's iPad danced, shook, rolled around, and changed colors. Sphero was one of many technology-focused lessons provided during the week of Dec. 5-9 as students in Hopkins recognized Hour of Code.

In conjunction with Computer Science Education Week, the Hour of Code is a global initiative aimed at expanding the knowledge of computer science, particularly in classrooms. Through interaction with robots and technology-based curriculum, students are introduced to basic coding principles that are the foundation of today's STEM jobs.

During Principal French's lesson, students tinkered with four different hand-held robots: a Code-a-pillar, the Finch Robot, Sphero, and a miniature BB-8 Sphero. Students marveled at the quirky movements of the robots and even tried their hand at programming their friends,

telling each to take two steps forward or backwards, turn left or right, and stop.

"The computer speaks a different language so you have to type to speak its language," said 9-year-old Noah Denfeld, a fourth-grader at Alice Smith Elementary School. "Coding is fun because you get to design shapes and actions and do cool projects on the iPad."

His fellow classmates played with transparent Blue-Bots and learned how to code them in order to follow a certain path. Through a trial-and-error process, students cheered the bots on as they shuffled toward the finish line. Girls in Tracey Beaverson's third-grade class at Meadowbrook Elementary heard from female coders and how women are leading the way in technology. Across the District at Eisenhower + XinXing, Twin Cities software architect Dan Mork showed students how to use iPads to play coding games and learn how coding can be fun. At North and West junior highs, students had the opportunity to participate in Hour of Code activities online in their media centers or at their leisure for a certificate.

District elementary digital learning coach Colette Kastner, who also taught several lessons during the Hour of Code week, said coding, STEM concepts, and computer science education are giving students a glimpse into

what possible opportunities await outside the classroom.

"I hope that kids take away from the Hour of Code that coding and computer science is an option for their future and that anyone can do it and be successful," she said. "Students can play games that someone else created, but they can also be the ones to design the games. The opportunities with coding are limitless."

Hopkins Public Schools is a digital-friendly district and is dedicated to ensuring students and staff have state-of-the-art technology to enhance 21st century education. Our digital content coaches, media specialists, and technology specialists are continually working to advance the District's instruction and curriculum. Kastner said through creating technology standards, equipping classrooms with iPads and Chromebooks, and supporting professional training for staff, Hopkins is leading the way in the digital classroom.

"STEM, coding, and computer science is



an important curriculum to teach and expose young students today," she said, "because it provides a basis of skills such as persistence, creativity, teamwork, determination, and pride, which are necessary for the future in any role students choose."

[hopkins.k12.mn.us](http://hopkins.k12.mn.us)  
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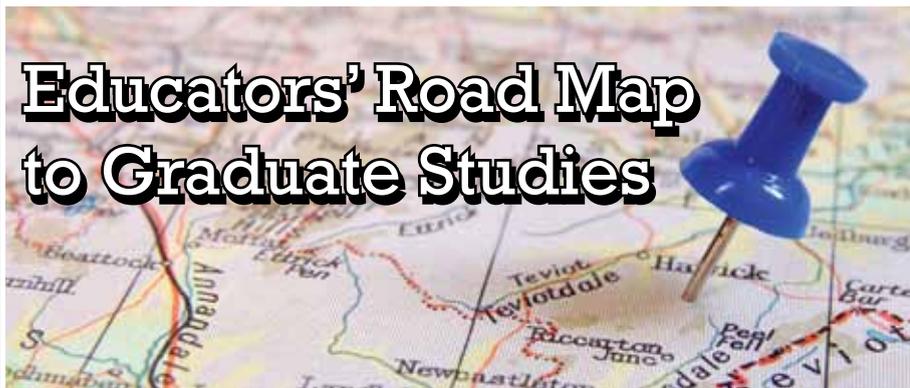


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## Educators' Road Map to Graduate Studies



### How to Become a Postsecondary Teacher

Educational requirements vary with the subject taught and the type of educational institution. Most commonly, postsecondary teachers must have a Ph.D. However, a master's degree may be enough for some postsecondary teachers at community colleges. In career and technical schools, work experience may be important for getting a postsecondary teaching job.

#### Education

Postsecondary teachers who work for 4-year colleges and universities typically need a doctoral degree in their field. Some schools may hire those with a master's degree or those who are doctoral degree

candidates for some specialties, such as fine arts, or for some part-time positions.

Doctoral programs generally take multiple years after the completion of a bachelor's degree program. They spend time completing a master's degree and then writing a doctoral dissertation, which is a paper presenting original research in the student's field of study. Candidates usually specialize in a subfield, such as organic chemistry or European history.

Community colleges or career and technical schools also may hire those with a master's degree. However, in some fields, there are more applicants than available positions. In these situations, institutions can be more selective, and they frequently choose applicants who

have a Ph.D. over those with a master's degree.

Postsecondary teachers who teach career and technical education courses, such as culinary arts or cosmetology, may not be required to have graduate-level education. At a minimum they must hold the degree of the program in which they are teaching. For example, the teacher must hold an associate's degree if they teach a program that is at the associate's degree level. In addition, work experience or certification may be just as important as education for getting a postsecondary teaching job at a career or technical school.

#### Other Experience

Some institutions may prefer to hire those with teaching or other work experience, but this is not a requirement for all fields or for all employers.

In health specialties, art, or education fields, hands-on work experience in the industry can be important. Postsecondary teachers in these fields often gain experience by working in an occupation related to their field of expertise.

In fields such as biological science, physics, and chemistry, some postsecondary teachers have postdoctoral research experience. These short-term jobs, some-

times called "post-docs," usually involve working for 2 to 3 years as a research associate or in a similar position, often at a college or university.

Some postsecondary teachers gain teaching experience by working as graduate teaching assistants—students who are enrolled in a graduate program and teach classes in the institution in which they are enrolled.

Some postsecondary teachers, especially adjunct professors, have another job in addition to teaching.

#### Advancement

A major goal for postsecondary teachers with a doctoral degree is attaining a tenure—a guarantee that a professor cannot be fired without just cause. It can take up to 7 years of moving up the ranks in tenure-track positions. The ranks are assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. Tenure is granted through a review of the candidate's research, contribution to the institution, and teaching.

Some tenured professors advance to administrative positions, such as dean or president.

*Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition*



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**Denise Gloudemans**  
Big Lake High School

This is my sixth year of teaching at Big Lake High School. I graduated from Bethel University in 2010 with a Master's Degree in Special Education (K-12). My husband and I have five children and one grandchild. We enjoy the outdoors specifically camping, hiking, biking, and spending time with our family.

My primary subject area of teaching is math. I co-teach two algebra classes and teach pre-algebra and real world math. I thoroughly enjoy teaching and watching students learn.



**Claire VanBlarcom**  
Big Lake High School

This is my eight year teaching, half of which has been spent in the primary grades. I began my career after graduating from St. Cloud State University with a degree in Early Childhood Education (Birth-3rd Grade). After teaching for a few years, I decided to further my education and received an additional license to teach Special Education (K-12th Grade). I initially started my career in Big Lake in the fall of 2012 teaching Kindergarten at Independence Elementary School. Beginning

the 2013-2014 school year I transitioned to Big Lake High School co-teaching English courses and have truly enjoyed working at the secondary level.



**Laura Unterholzner**  
Rochester School District

Ms. Unterholzner teaches Honors Biology, Human Anatomy and Physiology, PLTW Human Body Systems in the Rochester School District.

First published in 1989 and updated in 2016, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* articulates the National Board's Five Core Propositions for teaching. The Five Core Propositions — comparable to medicine's Hippocratic Oath — set forth the profession's vision for accomplished teaching.

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- Superintendent
- Computer, Keyboarding, and Related Technologies
- Teacher Coordinator of Work-based Learning



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# Student Contests and Awards

## World of 7 Billion Student Video Contest

Population Education is sponsoring a video contest open to all middle and high school students in grades 6 through 12. Contest entrants create a short video of 60 seconds or less that illustrates the connection between population growth and one of the three following global challenges: (1) climate change, which includes weather events and patterns, impact on agriculture, impact on coastal cities, human health, and ecosystem disruption; (2) ocean health, which includes overfishing, coral bleaching, climate regulation, habitat loss, pollution, and dead zones; and (3) rapid urbanization, which includes sprawl, sanitation, air and water quality, megacities, migration, slums, and informal settlements. All videos must include how population growth impacts the issue and provide at least one idea for a sustainable solution.

For high school, one first prize of \$1,000; one second prize of \$500; and two honorable mentions of \$250 are given, for a total of 12 prizes. For middle school, one first prize of \$500 and one runner up prize of \$250 are given for a total of six prizes.

**Deadline:** Entries are due February 23, 2017

**Website:** [www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest/](http://www.worldof7billion.org/student-video-contest/)

## American Association of Physics Teachers High School Physics Photo Contest

Photos may be entered in one of two categories: (1) natural photos are those that involve everyday situations that may demonstrate a variety of physics concepts; and (2) contrived photos are those that are set up to show a particular physics concept or related set of concepts. Photos with multiple images or other computer manipulation will be placed in a separate category. They may be displayed at the national meeting and judged for special recognition ribbons, but not for prizes.

**Deadline:** Entries are accepted annually from March 1 to May 15, 2017

**Website:** [aapt.org/Programs/contests/photo-contest.cfm](http://aapt.org/Programs/contests/photo-contest.cfm)

## The IFAW World of Animals Art Contest

This annual contest for students in grades preK–12 celebrates wildlife and creativity in all its forms. Plus the winning entries will receive a creative artist prize pack, including colored pencils, a sketch pad, an animals coloring book, and more. The first 2,000 entrants will also receive an IFAW 2017 calendar

featuring artwork from last year's contest winners!

**Deadline:** All entry forms must be post-marked between January 3, 2017 and March 30, 2017 to be eligible for this contest.

**Website:** [www.ifaw.org/united-states/our-work/education/art-for-animals](http://www.ifaw.org/united-states/our-work/education/art-for-animals)

## Young Eco-Hero Awards

Action for Nature seeks applications from students ages 8-16 for its Eco-Hero Awards Program. This program recognizes the individual accomplishments of young people whose personal actions have significantly improved the environment.

Winners receive a cash prize and a special certificate of achievement, as well as public recognition on a website and elsewhere.

**Deadline:** Apply by February 28, 2017

**Website:** [actionfornature.org/eco-hero-awards/application-form](http://actionfornature.org/eco-hero-awards/application-form)

## International Interdependence Hexagon Project

The International Interdependence Hexagon Project is a visual arts opportunity for young people aged four to 18 worldwide to explore global themes, issues, and ideas in

school. The project asks students to create art within the interlinking shape of a hexagon, a metaphor for interconnectedness. Any art form in a variety of media, such as a drawing, painting, collage, print, digital, and relief sculpture, is acceptable as long as it can be displayed on a plasterboard gallery wall or on a pedestal or floor.

**Deadline:** Entries are due June 30, annually

**Website:** [hexagonproject.org](http://hexagonproject.org)

## 2016–2017 Cassini Scientist for a Day Essay Contest

The Cassini Scientist for a Day contest challenges students in grades 5-12 to become NASA scientists studying Saturn. Examine three of the best scientific targets imaged by the Cassini spacecraft in its 12 years at Saturn. This year's targets are Enceladus' plumes, Titan's lakes and Saturn's hexagon. After researching the three options, choose the one you think yielded the best scientific results and write an essay of fewer than 500 words explaining your choice.

**Deadline:** Entry Deadline: Feb. 24, 2017

**Website:** [solarsystem.nasa.gov/educ/Scientist-For-a-Day](http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/educ/Scientist-For-a-Day)

**Website:** [grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-15-184.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-15-184.html)

## Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for learning. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 regions, from different states, will be chosen.

Each awardee will receive a Presidential award plaque and an award of up to \$2,500 to be used to further the recipient's professional development in environmental education. They will also receive a congratulatory letter from a senior official from EPA and/or the White House.

Each winning teacher's local education agency will receive an award of up to \$2,500 to fund environmental educational activities and programs.

**Deadline:** Apply by March 1, 2017

**Website:** [www.epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators](http://www.epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators)

should focus on broadening perspectives and helping students understand the wider world and their place in it. The humanities program should be initiated and coordinated by the school librarian, and exemplify the role of the library program in advancing the overall educational goals of the school.

Grants of \$5,000 are awarded

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted from February 3 through May 5, 2017

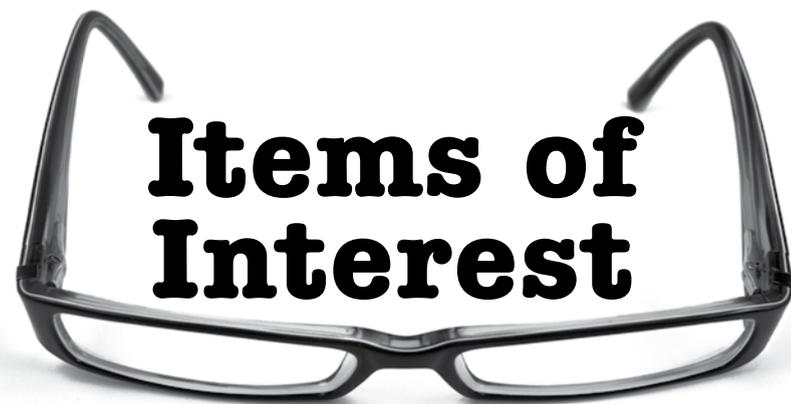
**Website:** [www.ala.org/programming/jaffarianaward](http://www.ala.org/programming/jaffarianaward)

## Summer Research Education Experience Program

The purpose of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Summer Research Education Experience Program is to provide a high-quality research experience for high school and college students and for science teachers during the summer academic break. The overarching goal of the program is to support education activities that foster a better understanding of biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research and its implications.

Grants up to \$100,000 in direct costs per year are awarded

**Deadline:** Optional Letters of Intent are due 30 days before the deadline. Applications are due March 23, 2017 and March 23, 2018



## National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards

The National Arts and Humanities Youth Programs Awards recognize and support outstanding after-school and out-of-school arts- and humanities-based programs for underserved children and youth that operate on a regular basis in the afternoon, on weekends, or during the summer. This annual award is presented to 12 programs that best meet all award criteria. The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities presents the awards, with a ceremony at the White House. Winners are also invited to attend the Annual Awardees Conference in Washington, DC in the summer and are featured on the National Arts and

Humanities Youth Program Award website. Grants of \$10,000 are awarded to 12 programs

**Deadline:** Applications are due February 8, 2017

**Website:** [www.nahyp.org/how-to-apply/](http://www.nahyp.org/how-to-apply/)

## Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award

The Sara Jaffarian School Library Program Award is an annual award given to a school library that has conducted an exemplary program or program series in the humanities during the prior school year. The humanities program can be focused in many subject areas including, but not limited to, social studies, poetry, drama, art, music, language arts, foreign language, and culture. Programs

## Sara Schwartz Honored for 'Breaking Barriers'

By Becca Neuger  
Communications Coordinator  
Westonka Public Schools

Mound Westonka High School teacher and coach Sara Schwartz remembers attending one of Minnesota's first Girls and Women in Sports Day celebrations when she was just 12 years old. "My mom took my sister, brother and me to the state capitol for the event because she wanted us to understand its importance," she said. This February, Schwartz will be honored at the 31st Annual Minnesota National Girls and Women in Sports Day Celebration with a 2017 Breaking Barriers Award.

Breaking Barriers awards are presented each year by the Minnesota Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership to individuals or organizations that have pioneered efforts to provide athletic opportunities for girls and women of all races, ages and levels of ability. For the past 10 years, Schwartz has served as head boys and girls track coach at MWHS, where she also teaches social studies. Starting with just 15 student-athletes in her first year of coaching, Schwartz has grown the White Hawks track program to having over 100 participants each year.

Schwartz was nominated for the award by her colleagues at MWHS Molly Carlson and Kristin Wallace. "As one of the only female head track and field coaches in the state for both boys and girls track, Sara has led her teams to a great amount of success, including the Wright

County Conference Championship in 2016," said Carlson.

"Sara is an amazing role model to her student-athletes, both as a motivating coach and an accomplished athlete herself," Carlson continued. "Her positive attitude is inspiring to students, and she motivates them each day to be better athletes and exceptional leaders."

Schwartz will be presented with the Breaking Barriers Award at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017. It is anticipated that more than 200 people from across the state will attend the free public event.

"It means a lot to me to receive this award and to know that people nominated me for something I strongly believe in," said Schwartz. "I love coaching, and I want girls to have all the opportunities boys have. I grew up hearing about how different it was pre-Title IX for females, so I think I have always had an appreciation for what women and girls my age and younger are able to do."

### It's In Her Blood

Championing for girls and women's sports is a family tradition for Schwartz. In the 1970s her grandparents sued the state of New York to allow her aunt to compete on a boys cross country team, and they won. "She ended up running on the boys' team and was one of the first female scholarship athletes at an Iowa college," Schwartz said.

Schwartz counts her mother, storied track and cross country coach Chris Daymont, among her biggest inspirations. Daymont is in her 36th year of coaching at a college in Northfield, Minnesota, and in 2014 became only the 11th woman inducted into the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

"My mom has done amazing things fighting for equality in women's sports—from being a grad-assistant-turned-head-coach for men's track in the early '70s, when she wasn't even allowed to attend coaches' meetings, to coaching women's sports for 40 years and being a champion for women athletes everywhere," Schwartz said.

Schwartz competed on the varsity cross country, Nordic ski and track teams at Northfield High School and was a three-sport athlete at the Northfield college, where she was coached by her mother in cross country and indoor and outdoor track. As a freshman in college, Schwartz was a Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference champion in the 4×800 relay.

Schwartz graduated with a teaching degree in 2001 and later earned her master's degree. From 2001 to 2004, she taught and coached cross country, track and soccer at Rockford High School. She also coached track and cross country at the collegiate level before coming to Westonka in 2007.

Schwartz and her husband, Mike, live in Minnetrista with their 6-year-old daughter, JoJo, and their four-year-old son, Zachary.



Sara Schwartz teaching her daughter, JoJo, to take splits during a Westonka White Hawks track practice

[westonka.k12.mn.us](http://westonka.k12.mn.us)  
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## Parker Celebrates Blue Ribbon Award



Elk River Area School District #728

Dignitaries, ISD 728 leaders and some old friends joined Parker Elementary for a big celebration, Thursday, Dec. 1 as the school celebrated its designation as a U.S. Blue Ribbon School.

The U.S. Secretary of Education announced earlier this school year that Parker Elementary School in Elk River had been named a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School. Parker is one among 279 public and 50 private schools receiving this honor.

"This is a day for you to soak it in, enjoy

and really celebrate as a staff and as a school," said Assistant Superintendent Jana Henne-Burr at special breakfast for school staff. "This is an incredible achievement."

The morning events were keyed by ISD 728 friend and professional baseball broadcaster Dick Bremer, who said earning a national award such as this takes a "team effort."

"On a baseball team, you only enjoy success when everyone is doing their part and performing at the best level possible – from the front office to the field," Bremer said. "The same can be said for this school. You only earn a Blue Ribbon award if you're all operating at the top of your game. This is a great accomplishment for all of you and, really, for all of us in the school district."

### About Parker Elementary

Parker Elementary serves approximately 525 students in the city of Elk River, an area 30 miles northwest of Minneapolis. At Parker, we are committed to creating respectful, life-long learners and thinkers! We take pride in forming strong partnerships between staff, students and families to help our students shape

their futures, accomplish their dreams and contribute to our local and global communities.

Parker was recently identified as a "Reward School" by the Minnesota Department of Education in 2015 and again in 2016. We feel strongly that our academic success is made possible by the strong relationships and positive culture among staff, students and families.

Parker staff are committed to deep implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). We leverage these PLCs to provide all learners with high-quality instruction supported by tiered interventions and enrichments for students who need them. We work to establish strong academic partnerships with the families we serve through family Math and family Literacy after school events.

Parker also has a Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program. This is a volunteer program aimed at increasing the involvement of fathers, grandfathers, and other male role models within the school. Watch DOGS volunteers have become an integral part of our school culture. These individuals help monitor hallways and exits for safety, assist with supervision during lunch/recess and provide

tutoring and academic support as well.

Our strong school community is supported by our Parent Advisory Council who works with us to plan popular community events including our Fall Carnival and Spring Family Night. At Parker Elementary School, our students and staff have "Puma Pride" and commit to respecting self, others, property and community in all we do.

"Over the past several years, Parker Elementary has been a shining example of our mission — to educate, empower and inspire our learners," said Shane Steinbrecher, ISD 728 Board Chair. "The effort to make Parker a top school for our learners — a place where we inspire and empower our kids — has been noticed locally with our district year-end awards. It has been noticed on a state level, with recognition from the Minnesota Department of Education as a Reward School. And now, the rest of the Country knows what we know — Parker Elementary is a very special place, and a Blue Ribbon Award School."

[isd728.org/ISD728](http://isd728.org/ISD728)  
(763) 241-3400

# Reading, Writing and Robots



Robots aren't typically found in an English classroom, but Andrew Smith isn't your typical English teacher. Smith, who teaches Language Arts at Stillwater Junior High, has always been

an early adopter of technology.

This year he decided to add robots to his 9th grade literature unit. Smith borrowed Dash and Dot robots that can be programmed and coded, respond to light and sound and sense objects around them.

Students took parts of the text from John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men," turned it into an image and used the robots to pair it with light

and sound. The coding language that they use is block coding which is based on if/then reasoning.

"In English we have a simple object, verb, subject sentence structure," explained Smith. "It's thinking about what are those pieces when you have a robot. What do you want to do with the structure of your coding language, how do you structure it for a certain effect."

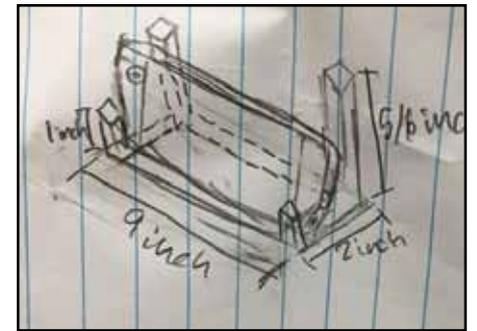
The lesson incorporates technology, reading, writing, art skills, and philosophy, using Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which examines perceptions of the world around us.

"It's taking parts of the text that you read and turning it into an image," said Smith. "Something they can draw and redraw and connect to an image. Then how can they transform that experience into something with light and sound."

Many students say they've never worked with robots, let alone in an English class, but they say the lesson enhanced their learning.

"Taking quotes from the book and using it with technology makes it easier to make sense for teenagers," said ninth grader Campbell Reynolds.

Smith plans to incorporate more technology in his English classes to engage students in new and exciting ways. He recently received a grant from the Partnership Plan to purchase his own classroom set of robots.



[stillwaterschools.org](http://stillwaterschools.org)  
(651) 351.8340



## Apply for a Grant



### AIAA Foundation Classroom Grant Program

The AIAA Foundation Classroom Grant program promotes aerospace education activities in classrooms from kindergarten through grade 12. The program encourages development of innovative aerospace activities within the prescribed curriculum.

Grants up to \$250 are awarded

**Deadline:** Applications due Feb. 12, 2017

**Website:** [www.aiaa.org/Secondary.aspx?id=4184](http://www.aiaa.org/Secondary.aspx?id=4184)

### Air Force Junior ROTC Grants

The Air Force Association Junior ROTC (AFJROTC) grant program was established to promote aerospace education throughout classrooms and units. Applications are judged by the importance and the impact the selected aerospace activity will have on students. Funds may be used for any aerospace education related activity from purchasing textbooks or videotapes, to going on a field

trip to an aerospace museum, Air Force base, or other aerospace facility.

Grants up to \$250 are awarded

**Deadline:** Applications are due February 10 and October 10, annually

**Website:** [www.afa.org/afa/informationfor/teachers/k12grants/airforcejuniorrotcgrantecoTechGrants](http://www.afa.org/afa/informationfor/teachers/k12grants/airforcejuniorrotcgrantecoTechGrants)

### The Captain Planet Foundation

The Captain Planet Foundation, Inc. (CPF) is offering grants through a competitive program for schools and nonprofit organizations. Grants are awarded to support inquiry-based projects in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields that leverage technology or use nature-based designs to address environmental problems in local communities. Seventeen grants of \$2,500 each are awarded

**Deadline:** Applications are due March 15, annually

**Website:** [captainplanetfoundation.org/ecotech-grant/](http://captainplanetfoundation.org/ecotech-grant/)

### Project Produce: Fruit and Veggie Grants for Schools

The Chef Ann Foundation and Skoop have teamed up to help schools increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for children and youth, and nutrition education in schools. The purpose of Project Produce is to create planned lunchroom activities to showcase and taste fresh vegetables and fruits. Proposed projects must be planned with the intention of offering activities to all students in the school building.

Grants of \$2,500 are awarded

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year-round

**Website:** [www.chefannfoundation.org/programs-and-grants/project-produce](http://www.chefannfoundation.org/programs-and-grants/project-produce)

### Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools Grant

K-12 school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program that serve at least 100 reimbursable meals are eligible to receive a six-foot (five-well) salad bar package. Our goal is for every school in the United States to have a salad bar as part of their school food service program so that every child—from elementary school, to middle school, to high school—has daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and healthy proteins.

**Website:** [www.saladbars2schools.org](http://www.saladbars2schools.org)

### High School Weight Room Grants

The Lift Life Foundation's mission is to help provide young people with tools to improve their fitness levels and boost self-worth. The foundation provides high schools across the United States with the opportunity to have their school weight room transformed with brand-new equipment. To be considered for a weight room makeover, high schools must be nominated. Anyone may nominate a high school; nominations must be submitted online.

**Deadline:** Nominations are accepted year-round

**Website:** [www.liftlifefoundation.org/#spark](http://www.liftlifefoundation.org/#spark)

### Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership Grants

The Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership (CGP) awards education grants for projects designed to increase awareness and understanding of Japan in the United States by students and teachers in kindergarten through grade 12. Grants may fund support of teacher training, curriculum development, and community outreach efforts.

Grants up to \$5,000 are awarded

**Deadline:** Grant applications are accepted year-round

**Website:** [www.cgp.org/grassroots-exchange-and-education/education-grants](http://www.cgp.org/grassroots-exchange-and-education/education-grants)

# SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

## Between the Lions

Between the Lions is an award-winning PBS children's series designed to help young children learn to read. The Web site includes games and materials from the show, including a literacy curriculum aimed at children ages 4-7.

**Website:** [pbskids.org/lions/](http://pbskids.org/lions/)

## Art of Making Life Easier — Tying Shoes

Apparently most of us have been doing it the wrong way all of our lives. No, the incorrect way is not the bunny ear technique. Great tie method for kids with sensory issues. The laces do not touch your ankles. From Thriving in School

**Website:** [hosmerot.blogspot.com/2011/05/art-of-making-life-easier-tying-shoes.html?spref=bl](http://hosmerot.blogspot.com/2011/05/art-of-making-life-easier-tying-shoes.html?spref=bl)

## Best Practice of Inclusive Services: The Value of Inclusion

Includes definition of inclusion, overcoming barriers, six step process and best practices of inclusive services, From the National Center

on Physical Activity and Disability

**Website:** [www.nchpad.org/341/1999/Best-Practice-of-Inclusive-Services-The-Value-of-Inclusion](http://www.nchpad.org/341/1999/Best-Practice-of-Inclusive-Services-The-Value-of-Inclusion)

## Curb Cuts — Hands-free Computer Access Video

Video from Curb Cuts, a California TV show about assistive technology highlights hands free computer access options with particular attention paid to an eye gaze system, an infrared head pointing device and a mouth operated joystick.

**Website:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=u35z3Vpobow](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u35z3Vpobow)

## 12 Tips to Setting up an Autism Classroom

Checklist and ideas for keeping a structured classroom, using visuals, schedules, reducing distractions and more.

**Website:** [kendrik2.wordpress.com/2007/10/10/12-tips-to-setting-up-an-autism-classroom](http://kendrik2.wordpress.com/2007/10/10/12-tips-to-setting-up-an-autism-classroom)

## 5 Ways to Minimize the Negative Impact of Change for Autism

Some tips for minimizing the challenges of transitions, change, moving day, etc. for those on the autism spectrum.

**Website:** [ezinearticles.com/?5-Ways-to-Minimize-the-Negative-Impact-of-Change-for-Autism&id=412904](http://ezinearticles.com/?5-Ways-to-Minimize-the-Negative-Impact-of-Change-for-Autism&id=412904)

## The Family Center on Technology and Disability

A resource designed to support organizations and programs that work with families of children and youth with disabilities. We offer a range of information and services on the subject of assistive and instructional technologies.

**Website:** [www.ctdinstitute.org](http://www.ctdinstitute.org)

## 12 Skills and 5 Household Chores That Can Serve as Preparation for Future Vocation

Here are some tips for parents to help their children with special needs build skills at home that can help them find employment later on.

**Website:** [www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2016/02/10/12-skills-and-5-household-chores-that-can-serve-as-preparation-for-future-vocation](http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2016/02/10/12-skills-and-5-household-chores-that-can-serve-as-preparation-for-future-vocation)

## Guides & Toolkits

Colorin Colorado is pleased to offer free print guides created for parents, teachers, and anyone who wants to improve the reading achievement of children. You're welcome to download and print these guides for your own use or to distribute to others.

**Website:** [colorincolorado.org/guides-toolkits](http://colorincolorado.org/guides-toolkits)

## Bridges 4 Kids

Bridges 4 Kids is a non-profit parent organization providing a comprehensive system of information and referrals for parents and professionals working with children from birth through transition to adult life. The organization provides a circle of support for ALL children, with a special focus on those who have disabilities, special needs, or who are at-risk.

**Website:** [www.bridges4kids.org/](http://www.bridges4kids.org/)

## Bookshare

Bookshare, the world's largest accessible digital library for people with print and learning disabilities (such as dyslexia), provides free membership to qualified U.S. schools and students, thanks to an award from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education. Get access to more than 43,000 digital books, textbooks and teacher-recommended readings to help your child succeed and enjoy reading independently.

**Website:** [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org)

## LIBERTY ONLINE UNIVERSITY

### Graduate Certificate in Autism Education

The Certificate in Autism Education program explores the characteristics of, and interventions for, students with autism, including the emotional, educational and intellectual tools available to improve their learning environment.

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\* National Autism Indicators Study, Drexel University

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[www.minnesotalifecollege.org](http://www.minnesotalifecollege.org)

# Autism Spectrum Disorders



## What are the Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Each of the disorders on the autism spectrum is a neurological disorder that affects a child's ability to communicate, understand language, play, and relate to others. They share some or all of the following characteristics, which can vary from mild to severe:

- Communication problems (for example, with the use or comprehension of language)
- Difficulty relating to people, things, and events
- Playing with toys and objects in unusual ways
- Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine or to familiar surroundings
- Repetitive body movements or behaviors

These characteristics are typically evident before the age of three.

Children with autism or one of the other disorders on the autism spectrum can differ considerably with respect to their abilities, intelligence, and behavior. Some children don't talk at all. Others use language where phrases or conversations are repeated. Children with the most advanced language skills tend to talk about a limited range of topics and to have a hard time understanding abstract concepts. Repetitive play and limited social skills are also evident. Other common symptoms of a disorder on the autism spectrum can include unusual and sometimes uncontrolled reactions to sensory information—for instance, to loud noises, bright lights, and certain textures of food or fabrics.

## Tips for Teachers

**Learn more about the autism spectrum** Check out the research on effective instructional interventions and behavior on CPIR's website. The organizations listed in this publication can also help.

**Make sure directions are given step-by-step**, verbally, visually, and by providing physical supports or prompts, as needed by the student. Students with autism spectrum disorders often have trouble interpreting facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Be as concrete and explicit as possible in your instructions and feedback to the student.

**Find out what the student's strengths and interests are** and emphasize them. Tap into those avenues and create opportunities for success. Give positive feedback and lots of opportunities for practice.

**Build opportunities for the student to have social and collaborative interactions** throughout the regular school day. Provide support, structure, and lots of feedback. If behavior is a significant issue for the student, seek help from expert professionals (including parents) to understand the meanings of the behaviors and to develop a unified, positive approach to resolving them.

**Have consistent routines and schedules** When you know a change in routine will occur (e.g., a field trip or assembly) prepare the student by telling him or her what is going to be different and what to expect or do.

**Work together with the student's parents and other school personnel** to create and implement an educational plan tailored to meet the student's needs. Regularly share information about how the student is doing at school and at home.

## Tips for Parents

**Learn about autism spectrum disorders**—especially the specific disorder of your child. The more you know, the more you can help yourself and your child. Your state's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) can be very helpful. Find your

PTI here on CPIR's website. We've also listed organizations at the end of this fact sheet that can help you become knowledgeable about your child's disorder.

**Be mindful** to interact with and teach your child in ways that are most likely to get a positive response. Learn what is likely to trigger a melt-down for your child, so you can try to minimize them. Remember, the earliest years are the toughest, but it does get better!

**Learn from professionals and other parents** how to meet your child's special needs, but remember your son or daughter is first and foremost a child; life does not need to become a never-ending round of therapies.

**If you weren't born loving highly structured, consistent schedules and routines**, ask for help from other parents and professionals on how to make it second nature for you. Behavior, communication, and social skills can all be areas of concern for a child with autism and experience tells us that maintaining a solid, loving, and structured approach in caring for your child, can help greatly.

**Learn about assistive technology (AT)** that can help your child. This may include a simple picture communication board to help your child express needs and desires, or may be as sophisticated as an augmentative communication device.

**Work with professionals in early intervention or in your child's school** to develop an IFSP or an IEP that reflects your child's needs and abilities. Be sure to include related services, supplementary aids and services, AT, and a positive behavioral support plan, if needed.

**Be patient** and stay optimistic. Your child, like every child, has a whole lifetime to learn and grow.

Source — *The Center for Parent Information and Resources*

Website: [www.parentcenterhub.org](http://www.parentcenterhub.org)



Discover our range of services for children and teens with autism spectrum disorder.

**AUTISM DAY TREATMENT** | Ages 2-6

**AUTISM IN-HOME SUPPORT** | Ages 2-26

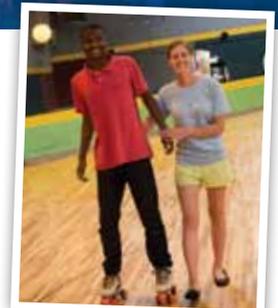
**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY** | Ages 1-13

**SPEECH THERAPY** | Ages 1-12

**THERAPEUTIC RECREATION** | Ages 11+

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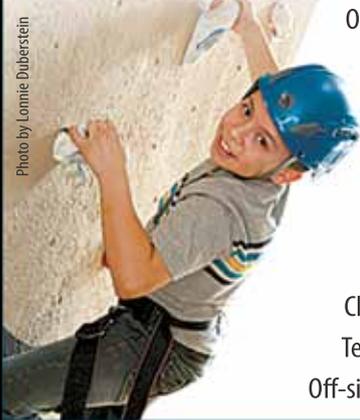


Photo by Lonnie Duberstein

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# NAVIGATING MSP AIRPORT



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



Traveling with your special needs child can seem intimidating. Navigating MSP Airport helps ease the anxiety with free, monthly practice runs through the airport.

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- Experience TSA security
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- Board a plane and meet a pilot
- Prepare for takeoff
- Gather helpful tips, information and resources

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** contact Shelly Lopez at 612-726-5239 or [Shelly.Lopez@mspmac.org](mailto:Shelly.Lopez@mspmac.org).

