



New Training DVD Brings Autism Education to Life for Teachers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARLINGTON, VA – It is with great excitement that the Organization for Autism Research (OAR) announces the completion and public release of *Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers*. This engaging, one-hour DVD, created in partnership with Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools, is specifically designed to help teachers support the more than 32,000 middle and high school students with autism who are served in general education settings throughout the United States.

A study conducted by researchers at Saint Joseph University found more than one-third of the 655 teachers sampled had no formal training on the characteristics of autism, and 54% felt “only somewhat prepared” to include students with autism in their classrooms (Teffs & Whitbread, 2009). More students with autism are enrolled in classes alongside their typically developing peers than ever before, and it is essential for districts to implement research-based training tools that can adequately prepare teachers. The DVD, whether used independently or as part of a curriculum that expands upon key learning objectives, will meet a very real and immediate need in schools.

The DVD is a learning tool comprised of four modules that support group or individual learning: (1) Characteristics of Autism, (2) Integrating Supports in the Classroom, (3) Practices for Challenging Behavior, and (4) Effective Use of Teacher Supports. The content was developed by leading autism expert and OAR Scientific Council member Brenda Myles, Ph.D., a consultant with the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. She appears in the DVD alongside fellow Scientific Council members Joanne Gerenser, Ph.D., CCC-SLP and Mary Jane Weiss, Ph.D., BCBA. Their collective professional knowledge is brought to life by the real experiences of students with autism, their parents, and teachers that represent a variety of academic subjects.

In the DVD, Myles urges teachers to “Think of [their] classroom as another country with a different culture,” because students with autism often struggle to process complex social environment school presents, communicate effectively, and stay organized. The DVD not only introduces how the disorder may affect individual students, but provides specific strategies, such as visual supports (e.g. daily schedules, labels, assignment calendars, and graphic organizers), that teachers can easily implement. It also offers insight into the source and trajectory of challenging behaviors, where to intervene, and how teachers can use available resources (e.g. IEPs, special educators, and paraprofessionals) to help promote success for every student.

The DVD is one of three resources OAR has produced as part of its “Autism in the Schoolhouse” initiative, which also includes the *Kit for Kids* peer education program and the [Life Journey through Autism: Navigating the Special Education System](#) guide for parent advocacy. Production of the DVD was supported by funds from the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, and OAR. The four video modules can be [viewed individually online](#) at the OAR Web site.

For more information or to request a copy, please contact Benjamin Kaufman, Director, Programs and Community Outreach at (703)243-9762 or bkaufman@researchautism.org.

About OAR: The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is a national non-profit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome. OAR is dedicated to promoting research that can be applied to help families, educators, caregivers, and individuals with autism find much-needed answers to their immediate and urgent questions. To help fund this critical research, OAR operates the *RUN FOR AUTISM*, a charity endurance program whose participants have collectively raised over \$4 million since 2003. OAR also produces informational materials for the autism community, including the *Life Journey through Autism* guide series that addresses topics such as assessment, education, and transition to adulthood. OAR maintains the “Operation Autism” Web site (www.operationautismonline.org) geared toward the unique concerns of military families, and makes awards to individuals with autism entering college or vocational school through its scholarship program. More information about all of these initiatives can be found at the OAR Web site (www.researchautism.org).

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