



OAR Releases Dynamic New Components to *Kit for Kids* Peer Education Resource

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ARLINGTON, VA – OAR’s *Kit for Kids* is a set of peer education materials that teaches elementary and middle school students about their peers with autism. The kit is anchored by a colorful booklet called, “What’s up with Nick?” and also includes a lesson plan and poster. Its goal is to promote more inclusive classrooms where students with autism are respected and valued, leading to better outcomes (e.g. decreased incidences of bullying) for everyone. The first resource produced as part of the “Autism in the Schoolhouse” initiative, the *Kit for Kids* has already been accessed by more than 12,000 students across the United States. In an effort to build on this success and reach even more students, OAR is releasing two new *Kit for Kids* components: a set of student activity workbooks and an animated video that brings the “What’s up with Nick?” story to life.

The new activity workbooks expand upon the information presented in the “What’s Up with Nick?” story and give students a chance to engage with the material they just learned. To account for variances in social development and language comprehension, OAR produced workbooks for students in four different grade ranges: K-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8. Using fun activities (word searches, drawing prompts, etc.), the workbooks not only help reinforce new knowledge about autism, but address topics that are important for every child to explore: being different, expressing ourselves, and using our senses. Teachers can assign activities as independent or group classwork, or even as homework. The three-minute web video uses cartoon animation, sound, and color to capture children’s attention, yet still offers accurate autism information in a brief time window using language they can understand. It addresses some of the behaviors and characteristics that may make Nick and other kids with autism seem “a little different.” Whether used in coordination with the hard copy *Kit for Kids* materials or simply as a conversation starter, the video is an especially effective tool in classrooms where students with autism are learning alongside their typically developing peers.

In 2014, the video will be incorporated into an e-learning Web site for K-8 students, called *Autism Tuned In*. Made possible by a generous grant of \$64,700 from the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, the site will feature eight themed activity modules (e.g. connecting through shared interests, sensory sensitivities) that reinforce learned information in a fun and engaging way. Site design and development will begin in January.

You can download and print the activity workbooks and view the video at the [OAR Web site](#), along with the other *Kit for Kids* materials. To request hard copy materials or discuss how to implement a peer education initiative in your local school district, please contact Ben Kaufman, Director, Programs and Community Outreach, at 703-243-9762 or programs@researchautism.org.