



New Autism Curriculum Fills Major Teacher Training Void

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Contact: Benjamin Kaufman, Director, Programs and Community Outreach
(703)243-9762, bkaufman@researchautism.org

ARLINGTON, VA – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is excited to announce the availability of its newest resource, the [*Understanding Autism Professional Development Curriculum*](#). Created in collaboration with the Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSESA), this comprehensive tool provides middle and high school teachers with the foundational knowledge and evidence-based strategies they need to support students with autism in their classrooms.

While students with autism attend school alongside peers in general education classrooms more now than ever before, research indicates that many teachers feel unprepared to serve this population. In order to address this problem, districts need ready-made, flexible resources to better support professional development – large group (e.g. staff meetings or in-services), small teams (e.g. professional learning communities and department meetings), self-study, and/or one-on-one coaching. OAR and CSESA developed the new curriculum with this in mind and envision it will meet a very real and immediate need in schools.

The *Understanding Autism Professional Development Curriculum* is built around two 75-minute presentations that school staff can adapt to meet any schedule constraints: (1) Characteristics and Practices for Challenging Behavior, and (2) Strategies for Classroom Success and Effective Use of Teacher Supports. Each presentation includes video clips from the [*Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers*](#) DVD that OAR released last year. Any school or district staff members who are familiar with autism can implement the curriculum, which comes with slide-by-slide notes for facilitators, handouts, and activity worksheets to help participants apply learned concepts to their own classrooms.

“We designed this curriculum package with the busy teacher in mind,” said Suzanne Kucharczyk, Ed.D., Investigator at the University of North Carolina’s Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and one of the curriculum’s primary authors. “We focused on ways to help teachers think through strategies they could apply immediately into their classrooms to support students’ learning.”

The curriculum not only introduces how autism may affect individual students, but provides specific strategies, such as visual supports, that teachers can easily implement. It also offers insight into challenging behaviors, where to intervene, and how teachers can use available resources to help promote success for every student.

The *Understanding Autism Professional Development Curriculum* is one of several resources OAR has produced as part of its “Autism in the Schoolhouse” initiative, which also includes the [*Kit for Kids*](#) peer education program. Collectively, these resources are the focus of OAR’s outreach efforts during National Autism Awareness Month. OAR is actively pursuing partnerships with school

districts across the country, working closely with special education administrators to disseminate informational materials.

Teachers and administrators (along with other community members) can access, download, and print the entire curriculum (Adobe Reader required) from the CSESA Web site:

<http://cseesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/understanding-autism-professional-development-curriculum>.

Disc copies with additional resources will be available from OAR in the coming weeks. For more information or to request a disc copy in advance, 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. Learn more at their Web site: www.researchautism.org.

About CSESA: The Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSESA) is a research and development project funded by the U.S. Department of Education that focuses on developing, adapting, and studying a comprehensive school and community-based education program for high school students on the autism spectrum. Learn more at their Web site: <http://cseesa.fpg.unc.edu>.

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