



OAR Awards Fall 2023 Peer Education Grants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARLINGTON, VA – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is pleased to announce the recipients of its fall [2023 Peer Education Grant](#) competition. The competition is open to teachers, administrators, parents, youth group organizers, and autism professionals interested in organizing an autism awareness initiative in the school or other community-based areas. In this previous cycle, OAR continued its commitment to educating students by awarding grants ranging from \$500 – \$5,000 for applicants conducting programs in their local communities that aim to increase autism awareness and acceptance among students in grades K-8. For the fall, OAR is awarding eight grants totaling \$12,669. Over the years, OAR has continued to help educate more than 190,000 students and peers from both the peer education resources and grant program.

Congratulations to the 8 grant recipients!

AnnMarie Bates

Increasing Autism Acceptance in Shepherd Public Schools

Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan

This will be the third year Bates and the Central Michigan University team will use the Kit for Kids materials to increase autism acceptance within local schools. Encouraged by the previous years' positive feedback from teachers, staff members, and families, Bates hopes to expand into the greater Mount Pleasant area to increase autism acceptance.

Jane Farrell

Acceptance Alliance

East Brook Middle School, Paramus, New Jersey

Farrell and the educators at East Brook Middle School intend to use the peer education materials to teach their middle school students about autism while fostering kindness toward and acceptance of all neurodiverse people. The team hopes this initiative will help the students develop into empathetic and accepting adults.

Shawna Gibson

Empowering Our Students Through Inclusion

Flemingsburg Elementary School and Fleming County Sensory Partners, Flemingsburg, Kentucky

Serving pre-K through 6th grade, Flemingsburg Elementary School has partnered with a local community advocacy group, Fleming County Sensory Partners, to create fun and engaging activities to increase awareness and inclusion in the local school and community. This program will support and educate students to become inclusive leaders and role models in their greater community. By integrating these programs and events, Gibson's goal is for the students to be empowered to serve as champions for inclusion.

Kasi Graver

Vacherie Elementary School – Peer Education

Vacherie Elementary, Vacherie, Louisiana

Vacherie Elementary plans to curate an interactive and engaging program for pre-K to 3rd-grade students. The primary goal of the program will be for students to gain a basic understanding of autism and learn ways to positively interact with their peers who may be impacted by autism. The hope is for students at Vacherie Elementary to learn how to be advocates for their peers impacted by autism and for these young children to help educate the local community as a whole.

Pamela Ha

Wagner Ranch Autism Super Advocate Training

Wagner Ranch Elementary, Orinda, California

Using OAR's peer education resources, Ha and educators at Wagner Ranch will use this grant to foster a more compassionate and inclusive community. They aim to explain the unique perspectives and challenges of autistic individuals to neurotypical students. The team also hopes to build bridges of connection, empathy, and support among the K-8 students, their autistic peers, and the broader local community.

Dana Kern

Autism Awareness

Kuleana Education Academy, Kona, Hawaii

These educators plan to use this grant in their social-emotional learning program to teach students about inclusion and honoring differences. The program will incorporate the school's nurturing learning environment that encourages exploration, community involvement, and lifelong learning.

Mel Robertson

Awareness and Acceptance of Peers with ASD

Valley Center – Pauma Unified School District, Valley Center, California

Robertson and the district's educators serve a diverse school population, including Native Americans, migrants, second language learners, and students from low socio-economic status households. This grant will be used to empower students with ASD through embedded support. That embedded support will include communication support, access to sensory labs throughout the school day, and a robust counseling department to address students' mental health.

Katie Spear

Peer-Mentoring Club

Lawson Elementary, Jefferson City, Missouri

This K-5 public school will create an after-school peer-mentoring club to enhance autism awareness and acceptance. Students will gain a better understanding of diverse learners and learn skills to build friendships with their peers. Students will also have the opportunity to become peer mentors and build relationships with their peers.

For inquiries regarding the Peer Education Grant program or for more information on the next grant cycle, please [visit the website](#) or contact OAR at 571-977-5391; e-mail programs@researchautism.org.

About OAR. OAR is a national, nonprofit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism; it 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. Committed to excellence in its services to the autism community, OAR seeks to fund applied research that will make a difference in individual lives; provide information that is timely, useful, and cost-efficient; and offer opportunities for the autism community to collaborate and make advances together. In short, OAR's mission is to apply research to the challenges of autism. Web site: www.researchautism.org.

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