



ORGANIZATION FOR AUTISM RESEARCH

"Research and resources that help families today!"

OAR's Kit for Kids:

Helpful information for Teachers and Parents

As a teacher or parent, you know from experience that kids are observant. They are also inquisitive, especially when they see something different that they don't intuitively grasp; having a school peer with autism falls into that category. Leaving kids uninformed about autism opens the door to misunderstanding and adverse consequences: teasing, name-calling, bullying and all the emotional pain that can result.

Teaching kids about autism will help them better understand their classmates who are on the autism spectrum and the idiosyncrasies associated with these disorders. With increased understanding, the focus will shift away from characteristics that may make a classmate appear different and shift towards the positive aspects that make each individual a unique and important part of the school community. As a result, the stage is set for typically developing peers to think of their classmate with autism as a friend, now and in the future.

This kit is designed to be presented by elementary and middle school students to their classmates.

Keep in mind:

- It is intended for all classes, not just those that have a student with autism.
- Do not assume anything about identifying students with autism or siblings of students with autism. Remember, these children (and their parents) may not be comfortable with the idea of public disclosure. Do not put the child with autism (or a sibling) in the spotlight or use the child as an example, unless that action is fully coordinated with the student and parents.
- If you are worried about confidentiality, speak with the parents of the student with autism. Students may associate a peer with having autism after the lesson. Speak with the student with autism (and their parents) about this concern as well.

For a teacher incorporating this information into the curriculum or assisting a student presenter, the following tips will help you make the best use of the kit:

1. Select a student whom other peers look up to and privately ask if he or she would like to help teach a short lesson about autism. You may want to work with other classes to identify a group of thoughtful students to become peer teachers. These students can lead the lesson in other classes. You may also want to train a group of students to lead the lesson for students in lower grades.



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2. If the student or student group agrees to teach the lesson, give them the materials to take home and share with their parents well in advance of any scheduled presentations.
3. Review the materials with the peer teachers and rehearse presentations.
4. Introduce the subject by sharing the three-minute animated video, which can be found by online at: <http://bit.ly/OARnickvideo>.
5. Have the students lead the lessons in their classes, another class, or in a small group setting.
6. For younger students, you may choose to lead the lesson or ask an older student in the school to act as a guest teacher.
7. Place the poster on a wall in your classroom so that is easy for students to access. The poster works as a reminder that although kids with autism may seem very different, they also have many strengths.
8. Download and print grade-appropriate activity workbooks that give students the opportunity reinforce what they learned. All workbooks can be accessed online at: <http://bit.ly/OARactivitybooks>.

Parents are helpful advocates for raising autism awareness within schools. These steps will guide you as you introduce the *Kit for Kids* in your child's school:

1. Contact your child's teacher or the school guidance counselor to recommend this resource.
2. If the school is interested in using the *Kit for Kids*, be sure to address any matters related to disclosure as they might pertain to your child, any other child with autism in the school, and their siblings. Your child may not be comfortable being identified as a student with autism. Similarly, siblings of students with autism may prefer to keep family information confidential.
3. In many cases, siblings are eager to take an active role. Your child's sibling may want to present the lesson to his or her class. If he or she feels uncomfortable, don't force the issue. Discuss this with your child, as well as the possible benefits for your child of teaching classmates about autism.
4. Review the materials and lesson with your child before the class presentation. You may also want to communicate in advance about the lesson with all the classroom parents.

Upon completion of the class presentation, please fill out and mail the evaluation form using the pre-addressed envelope; your feedback helps OAR ensure its resources are meeting the needs of our families and communities affected by autism.