



**Autism Spectrum
Support Group**
of Southern Maryland

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Families helping families.

October 2013 Newsletter
Volume 3, Issue 2

Calendar of Events



October 8, 2013 -- Calvert Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee for Special Education (SECAC) Meeting, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Board of Education office, 1305 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick, MD. Wondering about the state of Special Education in Calvert County Public Schools? Come hear Christina Harris, CCPS's Director of Special Education, speak on "**Special Education Data Review: Successes, Challenges and Next Steps.**" She will give an update and take questions. Following the presentation, you are invited to attend a short business meeting from 7:30 to 8:00.

October 14, 2013 -- Citizens' Advisory Committee For Special Education Support Group Meeting, 5:45-6:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Building, Leonardtown. The purpose of the Support Group is "to allow people to openly ask each other questions, share stories and information together."

October 14, 2013 -- Citizens' Advisory Committee For Special Education Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m. (NEW TIMES!) at the Board of Education Building, Leonardtown.

October 16, 2013 -- Autism Spectrum Support Group Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Coffee Quarter, California, MD.

October 16, 2013 -- Autism Spectrum Support Group Meeting, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the La Plata Panera in Charles County.

October 16, 2013 -- Calvert's Parent Connections Presents "Parents' Basic Rights in the Special Education Process," 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Calvert County Board of Education Building, 1305 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick, MD 20678. Missy Alexander, Parent Educator with the Parents Place of Maryland, will present a workshop for parents of children with disabilities and professionals. It covers such topics as: The importance of parent input and participation in a child's education; Understanding special education; Understanding Individualized Education Programs (IEP's); Learning about new IEP Requirements; Evaluating and re-evaluating students; Keeping special education records; Becoming an effective advocate for your child and an effective IEP Team member; and Resolving differences. This workshop for parents is free, but registration is required. To register, please contact Sue Rafalowski at 301-863-4069 or email parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us.

October 23, 2013 -- Meaningful Inclusion: Supporting Learning and Participation Across the School Day, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting Room, 23160 Moakley St., Leonardtown, MD 20650. Marny Helfrich, M.ED, Parent Educator with the Maryland coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE), will share tools, strategies, examples and activities for inclusive settings in core academic and related arts/elective classes for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. To register for these free seminars, please contact Susan Shannon at 301-863-4069 or e-mail partnersforsuccess@smcps.org.

November 2, 2013 -- Roundtable Discussion, Part 4, 2:00 - 4:15 p.m. at the Leonardtown Library, Leonardtown, MD 20650. Join us for the fourth part of the Roundtable Discussion. The purpose of this meeting is to continue working on courses of action to address problems with educational services in Southern Maryland as identified in the July 29th, August 29th, and September 30th meetings and additional surveys. Even if you didn't attend the other Roundtable Discussions, you are still welcome to attend this meeting. Light refreshments will be provided. Registration is required for this FREE event. Please RSVP to Missy at 301/884-4662 or to Terri at terri@autismsupport-somd.org, or "Join" the event on our Facebook page.

November 7, 2013 -- Autism Support Group Meeting in Calvert County (Parent Connections Support Group of Calvert County/Autism Spectrum Support Group of SoMD), 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at the Hunting Creek Annex, 4105 Old Town Rd., Huntingtown, MD 20639 (in the old school building kittycorner from the Fire Department). Please RSVP: 410-535-7387 or parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us.

November 20, 2013 -- Sensory Processing Disorder, 6:30 -8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting Room, 23160 Moakley St., Leonardtown, MD 20650. SMCPs Occupational Therapist, Julie Grooms, will present information about sensory processing disorder, how it might affect a child in school and at home and activities that parents can do to help their child. To register for these free seminars, please contact Susan Shannon at 301-863-4069 or e-mail partnersforsuccess@smcps.org.

December 4, 2013 -- A Practical Approach to Improving Your Child's Social Skills, 6:30 -8:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting Room, 23160 Moakley St., Leonardtown, MD 20650. Lisa Dean, SMCPs Instructional Resource Teacher for Autism, will explain why some children with disabilities have difficulty with social situations. She will share practical strategies both parents and teachers can use to help strengthen the social awareness and skills of students with disabilities. These strategies can be used by a child with any disability. To register for these free seminars, please contact Susan Shannon at 301-863-4069 or e-mail partnersforsuccess@smcps.org.

Roundtable Discussion, Part 3

Part 3 of the Autism Spectrum Support Group's Roundtable Discussion was held on September 30, 2013 at the Leonardtown Library. Focus groups presented their work so far, and plans were made for continuing during the month of October. It's not too late to join a focus group; please contact Tracie (tracie@autismsupport-somd.org) for topics. The next Roundtable Discussion will be held Saturday, November 2, 2013, 2:00 - 4:15 p.m.

at the Leonardtown Library. Focus groups will again present work completed to date, including any resolutions to identified educational problems. As problems are resolved, new focus groups may form to address other problems. Additionally, identified positives that are happening in the three school systems will be formalized from the data to offer encouragement and support as well as to be included in the final report.



Monthly Autism Support Group Meetings now held in St. Mary's, Charles, and Calvert Counties!

(See the Calendar of Events for details.)



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13 (Better) Questions to Ask Your Child About School

By Bob Cunningham, Contributing Writer



8 Comments



When your child comes home on the first few days of school—or throughout the school year—there will be lots of information you want from him or her. Here are some important things to keep in mind when you're talking to your child about school.



- The way you ask the questions matters. If you give your child the opportunity to answer with one word (*yes, no, a name*), then you're likely to get a one-word response. Try to ask open-ended questions to keep a conversation going.
- Often kids are not specific, so you have to ask for specific information when you want it.
- Starting with factual questions is a great way to ease into conversation.
- Avoiding emotion-packed words (*fun, happy, sad, mean*) will allow the conversation to go on longer.
- Asking positive questions will give your child a chance to express concerns. Negative questions will stop a conversation.

After-School Conversation Starters

Avoid These Questions	Try These Instead
1. How was school?	• What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?
2. Did you have fun at school?	• What was the best thing you did at school?
3. Who did you sit with?	• Tell me the names of the four kids who sat closest to you.
4. Was your teacher nice?	• What was the most interesting thing your teacher said today? • What class rules did your teacher say are important? • What did your teacher say she likes to do?
5. Did your teacher go over the daily schedule with the class?	• What is the best thing about your daily schedule?
6. Did you have everything you needed for school?	• Was there anything you wish you had at school that you didn't have today?
7. Were the kids in your class nice?	• Who did you enjoy talking with the most? • Did anyone have anything fun or interesting to talk about?

8. Did you get your schedule?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which days look best on your schedule?
9. Are your friends in your classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me two kids you remember from each class.
10. Was the work hard?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the best thing your teacher asked you to do in ____ today?

The most likely times for your child to experience negative social interactions at school are the less structured times, such as recess, lunch and during transitions from activity to activity or room to room. Asking questions specifically about these times will give you the best read on social circumstances.

Avoid These Questions	Try These Instead
11. Did you play with anyone at recess?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were most kids doing at recess? • What was the best game at recess? • What did you talk about at recess?
12. How was lunch?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who sat near you at lunch? • What were the other kids eating for lunch? • What was the funniest thing someone said at lunch?
13. Did you get your locker?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is your locker? • Who has a locker near yours?

Try out these conversation starters and report back on how it went in the comments below. Want more conversation starters? Get ideas on [how to talk to your elementary-aged child about LD evaluation](#).

Bob Cunningham, the former Head of School for The Gateway Schools in New York City, has been an educational evaluator and a teacher in general education and special education at both the elementary and secondary levels in several school districts. He was also an instructor in the Learning Disabilities program at Columbia University's Teachers College. Follow him on Twitter at [@tfcmands](#).



The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism

From Amazon.com: You've never read a book like *The Reason I Jump*. Written by Naoki Higashida, a very smart, very self-aware, and very charming thirteen-year-old boy with autism, it is a one-of-a-kind memoir that demonstrates how an autistic mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine. Parents and family members who never thought they could get inside the head of their autistic loved one at last have a way to break through to the curious, subtle, and complex life within.

Using an alphabet grid to painstakingly construct words, sentences, and thoughts that he is unable to speak out loud, Naoki answers even the most delicate questions that people want to know. Questions such as: "Why do people with autism talk so loudly and weirdly?" "Why do you line up your toy cars and blocks?" "Why don't you make eye contact when you're talking?" and "What's the reason you jump?" (Naoki's answer: "When I'm jumping, it's as if

my feelings are going upward to the sky.") With disarming honesty and a generous heart, Naoki shares his unique point of view on not only autism but life itself. His insights—into the mystery of words, the wonders of laughter, and the elusiveness of memory—are so startling, so strange, and so powerful that you will never look at the world the same way again.



In his introduction, bestselling novelist David Mitchell writes that Naoki's words allowed him to feel, for the first time, as if his own autistic child was explaining what was happening in his mind. "It is no exaggeration to say that *The Reason I Jump* allowed me to round a corner in our relationship." This translation was a labor of love by David and his wife, KA Yoshida, so they'd be able to share that feeling with friends, the wider autism community, and beyond. Naoki's book, in its beauty, truthfulness, and simplicity, is a gift to be shared.

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Evidence about likelihood of success, for which children, given what conditions, over what period of time.



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Hypotheses are tested and proven by the scientific method.



PEER-REVIEWED & REPLICATED

Treatment yields the same positive results in independent studies.

BAD CATCH ✗



SWEEPING CLAIMS

Only success stories and personal testimonials.



NO PROOF

Trusted benefits and opinions of consumers and self-appointed experts.



QUICK FIX

Provides immediate results or cure.



JARGON

Uses words that sound scientific and are hard to understand.

CHOOSE WISELY!
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Note: This infographic was created to provide a basic understanding of controversial therapies. The information presented here is not legal advice and should not be used as a legal resource.