

Positive Partnerships: Supporting school-aged students on the autism spectrum

Workshop and information sessions for parents/carers

Welcome

Welcome to the parent/carer component of *Positive Partnerships: Supporting school-aged students on the autism spectrum*.

These workshops and information sessions for parents/carers of school-aged students on the autism spectrum, along with the professional development component for teachers and other school staff, aim to improve the educational outcomes for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

These initiatives are being developed and delivered by the Australian Autism Education & Training Consortium (AAETC). The members of the consortium include: Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), University of Canberra; Department of Education and Training, Western Australia; and Autism SA. Aspect is the lead agency.

These initiatives are funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through the Australian Government's *Helping Children with Autism* package.

For further information about the members of the Australian Autism Education and Training Consortium (AAETC) see:

- www.autismtraining.com.au
- www.autismspectrum.org.au
- www.canberra.edu.au
- www.det.wa.edu.au
- www.autismsa.org.au

About the parent/carer two day workshop

Day One:

By the end of the one day workshop it is anticipated that participants will be better able to:

- apply foundational ASD knowledge and better understand how it directly impacts on their child's learning

- understand the processes and strategies that enable effective parent/carer school and teacher partnerships advocate effectively to support their child's learning whilst negotiating with their child's educational environment
- understand the local school systems and processes which support their child's learning through the various educational stages
- apply strategies that help identify ways to maximise their child's learning in the school and home environment

(Note: ASDs and autism are used interchangeably in these workshops).

Overview of the one-day workshop

The one-day workshop is divided into three sessions. Throughout the sessions participants will work in small groups based on their local area, as well as in the following groups based on the learning needs of their child:

- primary school-aged with autism and intellectual disability
- secondary school-aged with autism and intellectual disability
- primary school-aged with Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism
- secondary school-aged with Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism

Three sessions make up the workshop, and all sessions work towards meeting the specified outcomes.

Detailed below are the individual sessions and the expected learning outcomes.

Session 1: How does Autism directly impact on your child's learning?

By the end of the session participants will have:

- used their knowledge of autism and how this directly impacts on their child's learning at both home and school
- investigated a range of practical strategies to use at both home and school to improve their child's learning outcomes

Session 2: Creating positive partnerships

By the end of the session participants will have:

- used a problem-solving model to develop positive partnerships with schools

- explored effective parent/carer, school and teacher partnerships
- increased knowledge of the educational systems and their processes for supporting students with ASDs

Session 3: Supporting your child's learning

By the end of the session participants will have:

- explored the importance of establishing a support network
- used evidence to guide decision making for their child
- compiled a list of tips for success when advocating for their child at school

About the information sessions

The second day of the program is very different and is comprised of information sessions conducted following the parent/carer workshop. All participants are initially involved in a group information session titled: Understanding Behaviour.

Following this session, participants can elect to attend up to three additional information sessions (participants can still elect to attend further sessions on positive behaviour support if they feel they still require more information or they have a particularly complex issue)

Each information session will provide parents/carers with the opportunity to gain additional information about specific topics or focus areas in a 1:1 situation or small group.

The information sessions currently available include:

- positive behaviour support
- siblings
- making friends
- completing work
- managing transitions
- communication
- sexuality, personal health & hygiene
- bullying

The information sessions will provide written materials, additional readings and recommended references. The discussion groups will be supported by a facilitator who will provide practical assistance and will follow up on additional information and/or resources as required.

Information about the online resource

The *Positive Partnerships* initiatives will be supplemented and supported by an online resource.

The online web based component includes:

- **Module 1: An introduction to autism** – This is an interactive self-paced learning Module
- eight interactive modules, topics currently include: communication, bullying, siblings, positive behaviour support, bullying, sexuality, completing work, making friends
- content, materials and learning resources for all modules
- links to further reading and additional websites
- video and audio material
- discussion boards to support the professional networks and sharing of ideas and resources

Over the course of the project the online component will continue to evolve and participants will be alerted when new materials are placed on the website.

Support for participants following the workshop and information Sessions

Following the one-day workshop and information sessions, participants will be able to access additional information and resources from an identified Key Local Facilitator (KLF) for up to a 3-month period.

The KLF will help facilitate parent networks or link with existing parent support networks. The additional support offered by the KLF can comprise online or phone support.

KLFs will be identified by their local agencies as people who demonstrate a range of personal and professional characteristics. For example, they may demonstrate some of the following:

- a degree of local kudos and credibility in the parent/carer community
- be highly valued by a local school community and or parent/carer network or support group
- a propensity to lead
- sound knowledge of ASDs and their implications for families
- an appropriate level of cultural sensitivity
- experience in working with families
- confidence in using and learning about online/web-based technology

The process for accessing follow-up support from the KLF will be outlined in the final session of the one-day workshop.

Overview of day one: Full-day workshop

Time Topic Resources

9:00 – 9:50am	Welcome & introduction (Including pre-evaluation)
9:50 – 11:00am	Session 1
11:00 – 11:20am	Morning tea
11:25 – 1:15pm	Session 2
1:15 – 1:55pm	Lunch
2:00 – 4:15pm	Session 3
4:15 – 4:30pm	Evaluation & Close

Overview of day two: Information sessions:

9:00 – 9:20am	Welcome Question & answers
9:20 – 10:50am	Group Session– Understanding Behaviour
10:50 – 11:10am	Morning tea
11:15 – 12:15pm	Information Sessions and 1:1 consults
12:30 – 1:30pm	Information Sessions and 1:1 consults
1:30 – 2:10pm	Lunch
2:15pm – 3:15pm	Information session and 1:1 consults
3:15 – 4:00pm	Q & A session Summary & evaluation