## RECENT RESEARCH...

### Early Imitation Skills Play Key Part in Social Development

A recent study out of Michigan State University with Brooke Ingersoll, PhD, Professor of Psychology, has found that very early imitation skills can define later social skill functioning in children. Furthermore, when intervention with young children with autism involved imitation skills, there was a marked improvement in social skills. The 27-47 month old children who worked on imitation skills demonstrated more attempts to gain the examiner’s attention to an object through eye contact and gestures. This skill is related to joint attention, and is a pivotal deficit in those with autism spectrum disorders.

This is very exciting because it pinpoints specific discrete skills (imitation) in directly facilitating the development of joint attention and broader social skill development. Moreover, looking at imitation as an important pivotal skill in development may ‘flag’ infants/toddlers even earlier who may be at risk for autism spectrum disorder so they can get earlier intervention. Perhaps, by working on these pivotal skills such as imitation, there could be much improved social skills and concomitant developmental skills.

Further research will be conducted with nonverbal adolescents with autism, to see if working on improving imitation skills might also lead to similar social skill improvements.


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### WAY COOL iPad Accessory!!

Have a ‘naked’ iPad? Or just want to better protect your iPad from drops/falls? There is a terrific accessory out there to rubberize your iPad and insulate it against floor damage.

Get more information about the ‘Big Grips’ iPad frame and stand at: [www.biggrips.com](http://www.biggrips.com)

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### THE BOOK NOOK...

Wondering how to talk to your elementary students about accepting and appreciating differences in different thinkers? A picture book that Jess Beem highly recommends is:

*Albert Einstein* by Ibi Lepscky

This book is a great tool to teach students about accepting peers with ASD. It has recently just come back in print and is available on Amazon.com for $6.95.

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### WHO’S WHO for Your GWAEA Autism Consultants

**Kelly Trier** – Serving: Linn-Mar, CR offsite programs, CR Catholic schools  
**Michelle Sunner** – Serving: NW Region, Cedar Rapids  
**Jess Beem** – Serving: NW Region, NE Region  
**Kelli Robertson** – Serving: SW Region, College Community, CR buildings with autism programs (Gibson, Harding, Kennedy)  
**Tareasa Fetzer** – Serving: Marion, Iowa City  
**Wendi Kaiser** – Serving: ALL GWAEA AREA Early Access (Birth-3)

Questions about who your “go to” person is?? Contact Ann Kessler (akessler@gwaea.org or call 399-6757) to find out.

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**Making the ‘ipad’ a ‘wePad’**

Kathy Harrington, SLP and parent of a child with autism, LOVES the idea of using iPads with children who have ASD. However, she emphasizes the point that the ‘iPad should be a wePad’. Very often, students with ASD are using iPads as a break or an isolated activity. We need to think ‘wePad’ and how to we fit another person into the iPad experience and make it social. See more of Kathy’s blog at: [http://community.advanceweb.com/blogs/sp_3/archive/2012/01/19/the-ipad-becomes-a-wepad-for-autism.aspx](http://community.advanceweb.com/blogs/sp_3/archive/2012/01/19/the-ipad-becomes-a-wepad-for-autism.aspx)

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A Quick Lesson from ‘The Hidden Curriculum’ Resource
By Brenda Smith-Myles

The Hidden Curriculum is a book authored by Brenda Smith-Myles and is available from Amazon.com and is now also available as an iPod/iPad app, as well as a daily calendar format with a Hidden Curriculum tip for each day.

**These are highly recommended resources for teaching unspoken social rules!!**

Hidden Curriculum tip:
“When you want to help another student with a worksheet, do not grab the paper and do it yourself. Let the student keep her own paper and ask if she would like you to explain the answer. If the student says ‘no’, stop right there.”

Professional Development in Autism-Related Topics - Upcoming Local Opportunities

March 29th (night course – 5 weeks – 5:00-8:00pm) – Visual Supports for Individuals with Autism series; GWAEA – Coralville office; Instructors: GWAEA Autism Team

April 5th (night course – 5 weeks – 5:00-8:00pm) – Cognitive Strategies for High-Functioning Autism and Asperger’s Disorders series; GWAEA – 6th St. office; Instructors: GWAEA Autism Team

April 9th – (9:00-3:00) - Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) Recertification for Autism (9678-11-04); GWAEA – 6th St; Instructors: Tammy McSweeny & John Berning from GWAEA

April 10th – Eastern Iowa Technology Conference; GWAEA – 6th St. office; There will be presentations and vendor tables with a variety of strategies and available learning resources in assistive tech!! Cost: $20 for the day, includes lunch! What a deal!!

April 23rd – (8:30am-3:30pm) – Practice with PODD; GWAEA – Coralville office; Instructor: Julie Freed, GWAEA Assistive Tech Consultant

**Register for above Professional Development on the GWAEA website or by calling 399-6771**

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The Structured Teaching in the TEACCH Model class (GREAT class for implementing structure and visual supports when teaching students with ASD!) is also offered frequently throughout the year through Grant Wood AEA – just call 399-6771 to get on the list. Available trainings:

- □ 3-day TEACCH (introductory class/overview; also recommended as refresher every 3-4 years!)
  - OR -
  - □ 2-day TEACCH (Prerequisite: completion of 3-day TEACCH; the focus of 2-day TEACCH is on social communication/group interaction)

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Quote/Thought of the Month...

“I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.”

- Albert Einstein