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STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

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MAP-A PILOT TEST AND FIELD TEST

By Bonnie Aaron, Central Office

What is the difference between the New MAP-A Pilot Test and Field Test?

The Pilot Test is designed to test system functionality, student-technology interface and collect educator feedback. The following is a brief recap of the New MAP-A Pilot Test in Missouri:

- MSSD and Union School District represented Missouri in the New Map-A Pilot Test in November, 2013.
 - ◆ 230 students or 16% of total students participated in the Pilot Test
 - ◆ 111 Missouri-resident teachers participated in the administration of the Pilot Test
- Problems
 - ◆ Not ready for iPads to be used for the Pilot Test
 - ◆ Braille not ready for the Pilot Test
 - ◆ Read aloud text not ready for the Pilot Test
 - ◆ Not enough broadband internet capacity
 - ◆ Double testing
- Solutions
 - ◆ Hardwire computers to increase internet capacity
 - ◆ Upgrade internet service
 - ◆ Teachers will read aloud or sign
- There were 230 Missouri-resident teachers that participated in the external review of test items.

The Field Test is designed to collect information on:

- Design dynamic routing function (student progression across testlets)
- Opportunity to learn content on testlets
- New accessibility features

MSSD will participate in all three New MAP-A Field Tests in 2014. The three Field Test windows are:

- February 17 — 28
- March 17 — April 11
- May 1 — end of school year

The Field Test #1 has been postponed to February 17 — 28, 2014. This adjustment allows Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) to streamline processes and deliver more features in KITE™ than originally planned.

The Field Test for the New MAP-A is designed to accomplish certain goals and collectively prepare the new instruction and assessment system for its operational phase beginning in fall 2014. All Field Tests will include a teacher survey for feedback on system features and the item contents. Grades 3 — 12 will be assessed during the Field Tests in order to collect student data for the Dynamic Learning Maps. →

MAP-A PILOT TEST AND FIELD TEST

(Continued from page 1)

What are DLM Claims and Conceptual Areas?

Claims have been developed for DLM that identify the major domains of interest within Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These claims are broad statements about expected student learning that serve to focus the scope of the assessment. Because the learning map identifies particular paths to the acquisition of academic skills, the claims also help to organize the structures in the learning map for this population of students.

Conceptual areas within the map further define specific knowledge and skills required to meet the broad claims identified by DLM.

English Language Arts and Mathematics each have four claims. Each claim has two to three conceptual areas. Each conceptual area is aligned with the Essential Elements.

The Essential Elements are specific statements of the content and skills that are intended to provide links between the Common Core Standards and grade specific expectations for this population of students. Many Missouri educators contributed their expertise over the past three years and were an integral part of the development of the Essential Elements.

The Essential Elements for ELA can be found at [http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/moreinfo/essential_elements/pdfs/DLM%20Essential%20Elements%20ELA_Horizontal%20EEs%20only%20\(1_9_2014\).pdf](http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/moreinfo/essential_elements/pdfs/DLM%20Essential%20Elements%20ELA_Horizontal%20EEs%20only%20(1_9_2014).pdf).

The Essential Elements for Mathematics can be found at http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/moreinfo/essential_elements/pdfs/DLM%20Essential%20Elements%20Math_Jan_2014.pdf.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC) UPDATE

By Bonnie Aaron, Central Office

During the fall semester two of the three Big Rock District Goals were implemented. The PLC provided the training and strategies for implementing Big Rock District Goals.

Big Rock District Goal 1, Writing Quality IEPs, was implemented using an IEP Quality Checklist. Big Rock District Goal 2, Data Collection, was implemented using a Data Collection Practice Profile. Big Rock District Goals 1 and 2 were revisited to provide needed practice writing goals and benchmarks, and selecting the appropriate chart to measure specific data. Very positive feedback was received regarding the improvement of quality IEPs and data collection due to the checklist and practice profile.

The third Big Rock District Goal, Writing Authentic Lesson Plans, was presented to staff by the Area Leadership Team on January 17th, a MSSD required staff development day.

MISSOURI STATE EMPLOYEES SELF-SERVICE PORTAL (ESS)

By Emily Long, Central Office

Employees may access payroll and benefit information by logging into the Missouri State Employees Self-Service Portal (ESS) at <https://ess.mo.gov>.

Through the ESS portal, you have secure, convenient access to:

- Individual payroll stubs
- Detailed benefit deduction information
- Leave balances
- Statewide electronic payroll announcements
- Individual Form W-2s
- Blank Form W-4s
- Direct links to benefit providers such as MOSERS, MCHCP, Deferred Comp and the Cafeteria Plan

ESS is available to current and former employees who have received a paycheck issued through SAM II during the past five years. In order to register, you will need to provide the following items to complete the registration process from any computer with internet access at <https://ess.mo.gov>:

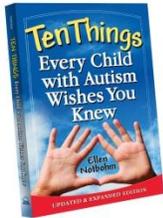
- Last name
- Last four digits of your Social Security Number
- Date of birth
- State Agency where you work
- Net Pay from your most current paycheck *
- Zip code of residence

* Net Pay is your take-home pay — the amount that is deposited into your bank account. You can obtain your Net Pay amount from your most recent bank statement, your bank's online banking system or contact your bank directly.

Ten Things

Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew

by Ellen Notbohm



from the book *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew*, 2nd edition
Bronze Medal in Psychology, ForeWord Book of the Year Awards

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Some days it seems the only predictable thing about it is the unpredictability. The only consistent attribute—the inconsistency. Autism can be baffling, even to those who spend their lives around it. The child who lives with autism may look “normal” but his behavior can be perplexing and downright difficult.

Autism was once labeled an “incurable disorder,” but that notion has crumbled in the face knowledge and understanding that increase even as you read this. Every day, individuals with autism show us that they can overcome, compensate for and otherwise manage many of autism’s most challenging characteristics. Equipping those around our children with simple understanding of autism’s basic elements has a tremendous impact on their ability to journey towards productive, independent adulthood.

Autism is a complex disorder but for purposes of this article, we can distill its myriad characteristics into four fundamental areas: sensory processing challenges, speech/language delays and impairments, the elusive social interaction skills and whole child/self-esteem issues. And though these four elements may be common to many children, keep front-of-mind the fact that autism is a spectrum disorder: no two (or ten or twenty) children with autism will be completely alike. Every child will be at a different point on the spectrum. And, just as importantly, every parent, teacher and caregiver will be at a different point on the spectrum. Child or adult, each will have a unique set of needs.

Here are ten things every child with autism wishes you knew:

1. I am a child.

My autism is part of who I am, not all of who I am. Are you just one thing, or are you a person with thoughts, feelings, preferences, ideas, talents, and dreams? Are you fat (overweight), myopic (wear glasses) or klutzy (uncoordinated)? Those may be things that I see first when I meet you, but you’re more than just that, aren’t you?

As an adult, you have control over how you define yourself. If you want to single out one characteristic, you can make that known. As a child, I am still unfolding. Neither you nor I yet know what I may be capable of. If you think of me as just one thing, you run the danger of setting up an expectation that may be too low. And if I get a sense that you don't think I "can do it," my natural response will be, why try?

2. My senses are out of sync.

This means that ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that you may not even notice can be downright painful for me. My environment often feels hostile. I may appear withdrawn or belligerent or mean to you, but I'm just trying to defend myself. Here's why a simple trip to the grocery store may be agonizing for me.

My hearing may be hyperacute. Dozens of people jabber at once. The loudspeaker booms today's special. Music blares from the sound system. Registers beep and cough, a coffee grinder chugs. The meat cutter screeches, babies wail, carts creak, the fluorescent lighting hums. My brain can't filter all the input and I'm in overload!

My sense of smell may be highly sensitive. The fish at the meat counter isn't quite fresh, the guy standing next to us hasn't showered today, the deli is handing out sausage samples, the baby in line ahead of us has a poopy diaper, they're mopping up pickles on aisle three with ammonia. I feel like throwing up.

And there's so much hitting my eyes! The fluorescent light is not only too bright, it flickers. The space seems to be moving; the pulsating light bounces off everything and distorts what I am seeing. There are too many items for me to be able to focus (my brain may compensate with tunnel vision), swirling fans on the ceiling, so many bodies in constant motion. All this affects how I feel just standing there, and now I can't even tell where my body is in space.

3. Distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).

It isn't that I don't listen to instructions. It's that I can't understand you. When you call to me from across the room, I hear " *&^%\$#@, Jordan. #\$\$%^*&^%\$&*." Instead, come over to me, get my attention, and speak in plain words: "Jordan, put your book in your desk. It's time to go to lunch." This tells me what you want me to do and what is going to happen next. Now it's much easier for me to comply.

4. I'm a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally.

You confuse me by saying, "Hold your horses, cowboy!" when what you mean is, "Stop running." Don't tell me something is "a piece of cake" when there's no dessert in sight and what you mean is, "This will be easy for you to do." When you say, "It's pouring cats and dogs," I see pets coming out of a pitcher. Tell me, "It's raining hard."

Idioms, puns, nuances, inferences, metaphors, allusions, and sarcasm are lost on me.

5. Listen to all the ways I'm trying to communicate.

It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't have a way to describe my feelings. I may be hungry, frustrated, frightened, or confused but right now I can't find those words. Be alert for

body language, withdrawal, agitation or other signs that tell you something is wrong. They're there.

Or, you may hear me compensate for not having all the words I need by sounding like a little professor or movie star, rattling off words or whole scripts well beyond my developmental age. I've memorized these messages from the world around me because I know I am expected to speak when spoken to. They may come from books, television, or the speech of other people. Grown-ups call it echolalia. I may not understand the context or the terminology I'm using. I just know that it gets me off the hook for coming up with a reply.

6. Picture this! I'm visually oriented.

Show me how to do something rather than just telling me. And be prepared to show me many times. Lots of patient practice helps me learn.

Visual supports help me move through my day. They relieve me of the stress of having to remember what comes next, make for smooth transition between activities, and help me manage my time and meet your expectations.

I need to see something to learn it, because spoken words are like steam to me; they evaporate in an instant, before I have a chance to make sense of them. I don't have instant-processing skills. Instructions and information presented to me visually can stay in front of me for as long as I need, and will be just the same when I come back to them later. Without this, I live the constant frustration of knowing that I'm missing big blocks of information and expectations, and am helpless to do anything about it.

7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.

Like any person, I can't learn in an environment where I'm constantly made to feel that I'm not good enough and that I need fixing. I avoid trying anything new when I'm sure all I'll get is criticism, no matter how "constructive" you think you're being. Look for my strengths and you will find them. There is more than one right way to do most things.

8. Help me with social interactions.

It may look like I don't want to play with the other kids on the playground, but it may be that I simply do not know how to start a conversation or join their play. Teach me how to play with others. Encourage other children to invite me to play along. I might be delighted to be included. I do best in structured play activities that have a clear beginning and end. I don't know how to read facial expressions, body language, or the emotions of others. Coach me. If I laugh when Emily falls off the slide, it's not that I think it's funny. It's that I don't know what to say. Talk to me about Emily's feelings and teach me to ask, "Are you okay?"

9. Identify what triggers my meltdowns.

Meltdowns and blow-ups are more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload, or because I've been pushed past the limit of my social abilities. If you can figure out why my meltdowns occur, they can be prevented. Keep a log noting times, settings, people, and activities. A pattern may emerge.

Remember that everything I do is a form of communication. It tells you, when my words cannot, how I'm reacting to what is happening around me.

My behavior may have a physical cause. Food allergies and sensitivities sleep problems and gastrointestinal problems can all affect my behavior. Look for signs, because I may not be able to tell you about these things.

10. Love me unconditionally.

Throw away thoughts like, "If you would just—" and "Why can't you—?" You didn't fulfill every expectation your parents had for you and you wouldn't like being constantly reminded of it. I didn't choose to have autism. Remember that it's happening to me, not you. Without your support, my chances of growing up to be successful and independent are slim. With your support and guidance, the possibilities are broader than you might think.

Three words we both need to live by: Patience. Patience. Patience.

View my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see my strengths. I may not be good at eye contact or conversation, but have you noticed that I don't lie, cheat at games, or pass judgment on other people?

I rely on you. All that I might become won't happen without you as my foundation. Be my advocate, be my guide, love me for who I am, and we'll see how far I can go.

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Award-winning author and mother of sons with ADHD and autism, Ellen Notbohm's books and articles have informed and delighted millions in more than twenty languages. Her work has won a Silver Medal in the Independent Publishers Book Awards, a ForeWord Book of Year Bronze medal, Honorable Mention and two finalist designations, two Mom's Choice Gold Awards, *Learning* magazine's Teacher's Choice Award, two iParenting Media awards, and an Eric Hoffer Book Award finalist designation. She is a contributor to numerous publications, classrooms, conferences and websites worldwide. To contact Ellen or explore her work, please visit www.ellennotbohm.com.

Seven Ways to Help a Picky Eater with Autism

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Autism often goes hand in hand with food aversions; an expert provides strategies for gently expanding a narrow diet

If you have a picky eater with autism, know that you're not alone. A recent review of scientific studies found that children with autism are five times more likely to have mealtime challenges such as extremely narrow food selections, ritualistic eating behaviors (e.g. no foods can touch) and meal-related tantrums.

Researchers are still trying to fully understand the autism-picky eating connection. And Autism Speaks is currently funding a research project focused on expanding food choices by addressing underlying anxiety, inflexibility and sensory issues.

Meanwhile, the lead researcher of this new project – psychologist Emily Kuschner, PhD, of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) – recommends the following strategies to gently expand the diet of picky eaters with autism. (CHOP is a member of Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network.)

#1 Rule Out Medical Problems

If your child is clamping her lips shut when offered a certain food, it may be that she knows it will make her stomach hurt. Gastrointestinal distress is common among children with autism, many of whom can't easily describe their distress. Your child's doctor can help you figure out if this is the case and how to deal with it.

#2 Stay Calm

Many children need to taste a food more than a dozen times before they're willing to eat it without a fuss. Children with autism-related sensitivities can take longer. Be patient as your child explores and samples new foods. If your child continues to reject a food even after a dozen-plus tries, perhaps he just doesn't like it. Consider trying a different food. Above all, don't let mealtime become a family battleground. Instead, get creative.

#3 Take Steps Toward Tasting

Many individuals with autism are afraid to try new things. Help your child explore a new food by looking at it, touching it and smelling it. When he's ready for a taste, he can try giving the food "a kiss" or licking it before putting a whole bite into his mouth. Sometimes, mixing a new food with a favorite one can help.

#4 Tune into Textures

Autism often comes with hypersensitivity to textures. So remember that it may be how a food feels in the mouth, rather than its flavor, that produces a food aversion. The squishiness of a fresh tomato is a classic example. Try chopping or blending such foods to smooth out the offending texture. That tomato, for example, can be chopped into salsa or blended and cooked into pasta sauce.

#5 Play with New Food

That's right. Playing with a new food is another way to build familiarity and decrease mealtime anxiety. Together, try painting with pasta sauce. Use veggies to make faces on pizza. Use cookie cutters to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. While you're playing, let your child see you taste — and enjoy — the food.

#6 Offer Choices and Control

Your loved one with autism may need to feel some control over what she puts into her mouth. It's also okay to simply not like some foods. So try to offer a broad variety and allow choices within the categories you care about. For example, you might decide that your child needs to have one serving of vegetables and one of protein for dinner. So put five types of these foods on the table and allow your child to choose at least one vegetable and one protein. Along the same lines, if you're making a favorite dish such as pasta, ask your child to add one mystery ingredient for other family members to discover during the meal. She gets to choose: corn, broccoli or chicken?

#7 Be Careful with Rewards

In the long-run, it's important to reward and reinforce your child's flexibility with food and willingness to try new foods. But blatant bribes can backfire. Your child may eat the food, but won't learn to enjoy it or understand why it's important to eat a well-rounded diet — and that's the goal. Let dessert and treats be part of meals and snacks, but don't use them as carrots to get your child to eat carrots.