

# Post-Secondary Educator's Toolkit



Connecting the Autism  
Community through Story.



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# Intro to the Campaign

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## Raise The Flag Campaign Overview

Autism Ontario's Raise the Flag campaign, through the simple act of raising a flag, unites families, schools, communities, government and professionals in recognizing World Autism Day, and brings to light to struggles and triumphs of people on the autism spectrum.

Autism Ontario is excited to have you participate and celebrate with us. Through this initiative, we are building stronger, more inclusive communities for autistic people. We are highlighting the work done throughout the province, and the work that still needs to be done to remove systemic barriers and help children, youth, and adults on the autism spectrum live their best life. Thank you for being part of this momentous day with us!

### Raising the Flag

The primary component of this campaign is simple: **raising the Autism Ontario flag**. We encourage you to do so through a formal or informal ceremony. While the act is simple, it is symbolic in representing the unity and strength of making our schools and communities supportive, inclusive environments. There is no specific requirement as to who needs to raise the flag, or at what time. The great thing about this campaign is that it is flexible. We suggest including as many people as is feasible for you. Please take photographs and share your stories of raising the flag with us!

### If You Do Not Have a Flag Pole

Some schools and communities do not have a physical flag pole where the flag can be flown. If this is the case, consider these options:

- Hang the flag over your main door or entrance
- Hang the flag in your main office
- Display the flag in your auditorium or at an assembly

### What's Next?

On the website below, you will find videos, supplementary activities and information to help enhance your World Autism Day celebration with Autism Ontario! These resources are available in French and English and are suitable for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students as an orientation to autism. We invite everyone to peruse our website [www.raisetheflagforautism.com](http://www.raisetheflagforautism.com) to read and share stories and personal experiences.

### For More Information

Questions, comments and feedback can be directed to [rtf@autismontario.com](mailto:rtf@autismontario.com)

# Educator Resources from Autism Ontario CommunityConnect

As part of promoting autism awareness and acceptance through the Raise the Flag campaign, Autism Ontario has put together a selection of resources designed specifically for educators, from Autism Ontario CommunityConnect.

If you'd like to access more information on autism, simply visit our website to search for learning resources. The site contains a series of brief, easy-to-understand documents that are relevant to the lives of youth and adults on the autism spectrum and their families. The documents, which can be read online or printed in PDF format, address a variety of topics therefore benefiting English and French speaking families/caregivers, service providers, educators and autistic people.

Visit our website here : [www.autismontario.com/communityconnect](http://www.autismontario.com/communityconnect)

Please check out the resources below to help make your classroom and school community a supportive environment for all students on the spectrum!

## // iPad Facts for Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder & Other Exceptionalities

With the inception of the iPad and the surge of application (typically referred to “apps”) development for children, youth and adults with autism, the iTunes “App Store” where iPad apps, are purchased for classroom implementation can seem a little overwhelming at times! Check out the following article to see how this type of technology changes the way many learners with autism can, for example, learn new skills, meet curricular expectations, etc. The following 25 apps and facts can help with building a strong entry-level foundation of professional knowledge and skills required to support students with autism in the classroom through the use of iPad-based tablet technology. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/685>

## // 45 Ideas for Classroom Friendly Fidget Toys

A fidget toy is an object that the student can use to get sensory input. They can help improve concentration and attention to tasks by allowing the brain to filter out the extra sensory information. Check out the following article to learn how you can support students from elementary-school age to adulthood, who might be distracted and seeking out sensation to either stimulate or calm their nervous system. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/683>

# Educator Resources from Autism Ontario CommunityConnect



## Understanding the Role of the Educational Assistant

A resource designed to help support parents around the role of their child's educational assistant, including team membership, communication, and their key responsibilities. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/474>



## Strategies for Effective Home/School Communication

Communication between a student's home and school can have a significant impact on her or his school program, the ongoing development of skills and the relationship between parents and teaching staff. Many parents report that they wait anxiously to read the communication book at the end of the day and that their emotional state can be considerably influenced by its content. Check out these easy tips for setting up a successful home/school communication system. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/449>



## Model for an Autism Centre

A resource for educators around designing an Autism Centre for students in grades 7-12. The article describes a novel support model where the characteristics, associated features and needs of students with ASD guide the activities with the goal of continually providing tools to the students in preparation for the eventual transition to adult life. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/487>



## Depression in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Depression is more common among teens with ASD than teens without ASD. Rates of major depressive disorder have been reported as high as 37% in adolescents with ASD compared to about 5% of adolescents in the general population. Studies that measured parent reports of depressed mood have revealed a rate as high as around 50%. There is also emerging research showing an increased risk for suicidal thoughts and tendencies among teens with ASD. This means that parents and school staff need to be on the lookout for the signs of depression. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/488>



## Facing the Challenges of Post-Secondary Education: Strategies for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Post-secondary students are expected to 'take the lead' when it comes to their education and family members are encouraged to be less involved than they may have been in previous years. By law and by the institution students are considered adults, therefore their written permission is needed before college or university personnel can communicate directly with a parent. Students are responsible for knowing due dates for assignments and test dates, completing assigned work, evaluating whether they need help or support, and arranging for it. Although they may be available for individualized student support, busy professors and instructors may not initiate communication about supports with students, even if they are not performing well. The following information has been designed to support students with ASD transitioning from secondary school into to post-secondary education. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/479>

# Educator Resources from Autism Ontario CommunityConnect

## Webinars

Do you know about Autism Ontario's Webinar Series designed for parents and professionals supporting children, youth and adults on the spectrum, in the classrooms and out in their communities? Accessing a webinar is easy! Simply fill out the required information to access the webinar at any time, in the comfort of your own home or office.

// **Everyday ABA: Using behavioural principles to effectively support people with ASD**

In her Everyday ABA Webinar, Dr. Leslie Cohen provides an overview of the basic behavioural toolbox and explores some principles used to address challenging behaviour, and techniques to help viewers to become more familiar with behavioural problem solving strategies. 60 minutes. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/463>

// **The Science of Making Friends for Teens and Young Adults with ASD: The UCLA PEERS® Program**

This lively and engaging webinar will include tips for parents, professionals, and educators on how to provide social coaching using concrete rules and steps of social behaviour derived from the widely popular PEERS® program. This webinar will include easy-to-use strategies to assist teens and young adults with making and keeping friends and handling peer conflict and peer rejection, including research supported strategies for managing bullying. 60 minutes. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/684>

// **Addressing Bullying In Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Research and Strategies**

Jonathan Weiss, Ph.D., C.Psych. Chair of ASD, York University explores the different types and rates of bullying experienced by youth with ASD, best practices for counseling youth with ASD who have been bullied and strategies for brief and effective consultations with families/schools to address bullying. 60 minutes. <https://www.autismontario.com/node/445>

# 5 Tips for Young Adults with ASD to Ease Your Transition into Adulthood

Patricia O'Connor Integrated  
Autism Consulting

**G**rowing up is a tough job for everyone! But if you have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) you usually need more time to adjust to the idea (it's that difficulty with change/transition thing) and more direct teaching to learn what you have to do to live your life as independently as possible. There are no quick fixes but here are a few tips to move you forward into a positive new schedule and a healthy lifestyle once you leave the comfort of that secondary school nest.

**WARNING:** This information contains an attempt at humour scattered with some sarcasm!

**1** Meaningful schedules are powerful tools to get us moving in the right direction. Get to bed at a decent hour and 3:00 am is not decent. If you want to live in the land of the living you have to be awake during the day since that is when most work and post-secondary opportunities are available. Remedy - reduce video game/computer time, schedule bed and wake times daily and reward yourself for sticking to it! Get some help with this one – I know it is a tough one to break! I work with many nocturnal people who struggle to get back on track!

**2** Get some outside social contacts – and I am not referring to Facebook friends and the question I have is... are they really friends?? Get involved with small groups and/or people with similar interests and get connected with other people outside your home on a weekly basis.

**3** Learning new life skills is something that everyone has to do if they ever intend to live on their own. Here are a few for you to learn while in the comfort of the family abode or by immersion once you move out.

- Meal planning, grocery shopping, food preparation and clean up. You can start small with one meal a week and it doesn't have to be fancy. (Pizza, pasta, grilled cheese and

canned soup can sustain life but remember variety is the spice of life.)

- Laundry – the whole deal – sorting, washing, drying (yes the wrinkles do stay there until the next time you wash the shirt – if you leave it in the dryer for days!) and last but not least, folding and putting them away. Please don't leave clean clothes in the basket and start piling your dirty clothes on top!

- Shower daily and then learn the skill of shower and bathtub cleaning. (It is hard to believe that this does not occur on it's own! I think that every young adult thought there was a bathtub-cleaning fairy until they moved out on his or her own. Why not learn the technique in the comfort of your own home under the guidance of a master - mom?)

- Public transportation: How do you get around your town or city? If mom or dad is the answer – time to learn how to use public transportation.

- Money management: Where does one begin? With money... yes but, if you don't have a job yet – start with the first point - meal planning and grocery shopping for your family. It will teach you the fine art of how much food costs and will begin the budgeting process.

**4** Get involved in your community. Never underestimate the value of volunteering your time to help others. Not only does this assist the organization that you are volunteering for but it also provides real experience and builds your resume. It is a definite TWO-FOR (Two for one deal!)

**5** Include daily exercise into your schedule. Anyone who has ever worked with me knows how much I harp about this one... (Blah, Blah, Blah ...Pat!) Exercise is important for people with ASD who continually deal with anxiety. Yes - there are many other ways to combat your anxious neurological state of being but begin here. It really works!

Really the most important thing to remember is that being an

adult has tons of benefits! So learn the necessary skills, get into a positive schedule and enjoy the ride!

Really the most important thing to remember is that being an adult has tons of benefits! So learn the necessary skills, get into a positive schedule and enjoy the ride!

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Integrated Autism Consulting provides coaching and training for young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders to assist them to live independent, engaged and meaningful lives.

One of the programs offered is the Transition to Life course. <https://www.integratedautismconsulting.com/transition-to-life-about.html> This life preparation course is designed for people with Asperger Syndrome aged 18-28 who require support with the transition into adult life.

Patricia O'Connor is the author of the course and has a Training/Coaching Centre for young adults. She could be called the Director or Founder but thinks a more appropriate title for the work she does is Change Agent! [patricia@integratedautismconsulting.com](mailto:patricia@integratedautismconsulting.com)  
[www.integratedautismconsulting.com](http://www.integratedautismconsulting.com)



# Transitioning to Employment

Sarah Southey, MSW, RSW  
The Redpath Centre

**H**onest, loyal, highly focused, creative, logical, and attentive to detail are some of the common traits associated with people with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

Would you want to hire someone with these traits?

How about someone who has better attendance and retention rates than their average colleague?

Your answer is probably yes to these questions; however, **86% of adults with ASD are un-employed or under-employed in Ontario**. The majority of adults (58%) rely on Ontario Disability Income Supports as their primary source of income.

Transition planning for those with ASD needs to start sooner to help the move into adulthood!

Students with ASD need more help in the following areas related to employment:

- Social interactions with colleagues, organizational skills and sensory challenges.
- Making the work activities adequately challenging, rewarding and/or meaningful.
  - Understanding different roles/careers – people with ASD often struggle to take perspective and envision what someone else’s experiences would be like (This is called Theory of Mind).
- Preparing for and attending an interview—difficulties managing anxiety, reading social cues, and/or communicating appropriate information is often challenging.
- Self-advocating - sharing information about personal needs and accommodations.
- Mental health - ensuring stability to be workplace ready. Many people with ASD also live with related mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression.

People also struggle due to a lack of general awareness of the strengths and abilities that someone with ASD can bring to the workplace.

## Ideas for Schools:

- Enroll students in co-operative education (co-op) opportunities in the community to help them explore their interests.
- Educate co-op supervisors on cultivating talents and preferences of those with ASD. Ensure that there is a training plan in place that matches the individual's learning style.
- Support volunteer roles for people with ASD by actively offering opportunities and helping to ensure the individual is prepared for this role.
- Make career planning and regular transition meetings mandatory. Students with ASD may require more time to contemplate and understand different career options. Additional meetings will help guide the individual to their career path.
- Identify the individual's strengths, skills, interests, talents and cognitive style through career assessment tools provided in schools across Ontario.
- Connect with local community transition programs, colleges and employment services.
- Ensure that the young adult contributes to their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

## Ideas for the Individual and Family:

- Participate in chores and regularly structured responsibilities in the home. Allowance or other rewards given for task completion is likely to be motivating.
- Volunteer in the community, and seek out summer employment to get experience in a variety of settings.
- Enroll in programs that focus on employment, life skills, and social skills to prepare for adult independence.
- Connect the individual living with ASD to family and friends he or she can interview to gather information about specific jobs or careers.
- Engage the person in job-shadowing opportunities.
- Develop strong self-advocacy skills so that personal strengths and needs can be communicated to the employer in an effective manner.

- Identify the person's strengths, skills, interests, talents and cognitive style.
- Make use of psycho-vocational testing and assessments.
- When self-employment is viable, evaluate the individual's talents, whether he or she has a product or service that has the potential to be sold, strengthen the individual's entrepreneurial skills, and look for small business training and mentoring.

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Written by: Sarah Southey, MSW, RSW – Employment and Life Skills Coach at The Redpath Centre.

The Redpath Centre (in Toronto, Ontario) addresses the social and emotional needs of children, adolescents and adults with Asperger Syndrome and mental health concerns through best practices, cross-sector collaboration, education and research. Our experienced clinicians bring their knowledge of Asperger Syndrome and related conditions to our work. For more information, visit: [www.redpathcentre.ca](http://www.redpathcentre.ca)

## References:

- Accardi, C. & Southey, S. (2013) Finding and Keeping Employment. Autism Ontario Knowledge-Base: [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)
- Baron-Cohen, S. Leslie, A.M. & Frith, U. (1985). Does the Autistic Child have a "Theory of Mind"? *Cognition*. 21(1): 37-46.
- Stoddart, K.P., Burke, L., Muskat, B., Manett, J., Southey, S., Accardi, C., Burnham Riosa, P. and Bradley, E. (2013) Diversity in Ontario's Youth and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Complex Needs in an Unprepared System. Toronto, ON: The Redpath Centre



# Debate Activity: That's Debatable!

## Purpose:

Students will engage in debating key issues affecting many autistic people with throughout their life. This activity is to encourage critical thinking and help students gain a deeper understanding of what having autism is like and greater sensitivity towards autistic people and their families.

## Duration:

30 – 60 minutes

Number of students:

2 teams needed; works best when the whole class is involved!

## Age range:

14 +

## Instructions:

1. Split the group into two teams who will argue opposing sides of the statement(s) below. One group will argue for the statement, and one will argue against it.

2. Discuss group expectations (taking turns, respecting each other's opinions, no name calling). Instruct the class that the teacher's role will be as the moderator and facilitator.

3. Have each group determine who will:

A. present their opening argument,

B. present a rebuttal to the other team

C. give the closing remarks

4. Choose one of the debate topics below and present it to the class:

A. Autistic students learn best when they are placed in segregated classrooms with only other autistic students as opposed to being in an inclusive class with their neurotypical peers.

B. The government should provide additional supports for adults on the autism spectrum who are seeking employment. This should include job training and mandating that employers adjust their hiring practices to be more "autism friendly."

(provide a quieter work space for autistic employees, allow people with autism to take short "sensory breaks" more often, respect decisions to not attend huge social events or to attend for shorter periods of time).

C. People with autism struggle with relationships more than their peers; the likelihood that they will fall in love, get married, and have a family is slim.

D. Autistic people have a right to be themselves and not be forced to "be like everyone else"

5. Give teams 10 minutes to prepare their opening argument (research on the topic is allowed and encouraged).

6. Opening Argument: Students will have a maximum of 2 minutes to present their arguments with the pro side going first.

7. Give teams 5 minutes to prepare a rebuttal.

8. Rebuttal: Students will have a maximum of 2 minutes to present their rebuttals.

9. Give teams 5 minutes to prepare their closing statements.

10. Closing Statement: Students will have a maximum of 1 minute to present their closing statement

11. Optional: Have the class vote on who won the debate!

## Additional Information on Autism

The Autism Ontario website features a range of resources that can benefit educators, care providers, families and advocates of students on the autism spectrum.

Don't forget to share your classroom or school experiences with us! Visit [www.raisetheflagforautism.com](http://www.raisetheflagforautism.com) to learn how!

This activity is intended to be a supplemental activity for students who have watched the Raise the Flag videos and have had a chance to talk about autism.



# Creative Writing

## A Supportive School Means

### Summary

One of the goals of the Raise the Flag campaign is to get students thinking about the many ways they can make their school a more understanding and supportive environment for students with autism. This discussion often has the added benefit of fostering supporting environments where students become more accepting, understanding and tolerant of all differences.

### Objectives

The objective of this creative writing activity is to engage your class in a discussion about what a supportive school means to them. Invite students to think about some of their unique differences and how they are supported by their friends, peers and teachers. How about other student's unique differences? Are they recognized and supported? Or are they ridiculed? How does that make you feel? Is it fair? Is it right? What are some of the things that could be done to change the prevailing attitudes about difference in school? How would you make your school a more supportive place for students with autism? What do you think the impact might be for the entire school?

### Activity Length

30 Minutes (Depending on length of discussion)

### Additional Information on Autism

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# Welcome to AutismOntario

**A**utism Ontario is the province's leading source of information and referral on autism and one of the largest collective voices representing the autism community.

Our mission is creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism, and our vision is, "Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter." The work we do helps all autistic individuals and families in their communities have access to meaningful supports, information, and connections so they are equitably and seamlessly supported across their life course.

## **18+** Adult Services

Autism Ontario works to support autistic adults and their families reach their potential. Through positive advocacy work alongside autistic adults, professional community stakeholders and policy makers, Autism Ontario aims to collaboratively envision and help create responsive services and opportunities for autistic adults in Ontario.

People connect with Adult Services at Autism Ontario seeking answers to questions about transitioning to adulthood, post-secondary education, accessing a diagnostic assessment as an adult, available funding, mental health and addictions services, housing, scholarships, life-planning, positive advocacy, and learning about social, economic and learning opportunities.

**Visit [autismontario.com/adults](http://autismontario.com/adults)**

## CommunityConnect

CommunityConnect is a centralized community portal that is home to our service listings, learning resources, and events. You can search for autism services, and Autism Ontario resources and events.

**Visit [autismontario.com/communityconnect](http://autismontario.com/communityconnect)**



## Newsletter

Free online newsletter to keep up to date with Autism Ontario.

**Visit [autismontario.com/newsletter](http://autismontario.com/newsletter)**

To learn more about the programs and services offered by our provincial office or our local chapters, please visit our website: **[www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)**

# Thank You and Wrap Up

Dear Students and Teachers,

On behalf of Autism Ontario and the thousands of people on the autism spectrum across Ontario, we would like to thank you for participating in this year's Raise the Flag Campaign in celebration of World Autism Day. Without your school's participation and commitment to making Ontario a more supportive and inclusive place for students with autism, Raise the Flag could not have been such an outstanding success.

Together, we were able to promote awareness and acceptance for autism, and increase understanding, critical first steps to creating more supportive environments for autistic people, not only in the classroom but in communities across the province. By participating in Raise the Flag, a conversation has started about the importance of community, inclusion and understanding in classrooms across Ontario. Our hope is that this conversation will continue both inside and outside the classroom and throughout your lives.

We also want to thank you for your commitment to fundraising on our behalf. Your dedication to raising funds for Autism Ontario is a clear indication your school is invested in the work we do in the community and throughout the province through awareness campaigns like Raise the Flag. Please feel free to contact [rff@autismontario.com](mailto:rff@autismontario.com) if you have any questions.

With the campaign drawing to an end, we would also like to encourage you to share your stories and experiences with Autism Ontario's Raise the Flag Campaign. This is the best way that we can spread the word about your school mobilizing to create a more supportive environment for students on the autism spectrum. Visit [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com), or connect with us on Twitter & Facebook to share your experiences and read other inspiring stories about ASD in Ontario.

With your support, we are one step closer to creating a more inclusive Ontario.

Sincerely,



 [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)

 [www.facebook.com/autismontarioprovincial](https://www.facebook.com/autismontarioprovincial)

 [@AutismONT](https://twitter.com/AutismONT)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/autism-ontario](https://www.linkedin.com/company/autism-ontario)