



Community Connections

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR DISABILITIES **SEPTEMBER 2023**
A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service



South Dakota Ambassador for the Usher Syndrome Coalition

by Kendra Gottsleben, B.A., Marketing Communications Specialist

Did you know that Usher syndrome is the most common genetic cause of combined vision and hearing loss. The Usher Syndrome Coalition's mission is to raise awareness and accelerate research while providing information and support to individuals with Usher syndrome and their families. They strive to be THE source of information about everything related to Usher syndrome. We at the Center are thrilled to share that our Ryan Groeneweg is South Dakota's Ambassador for the Usher Syndrome Coalition. In his role as ambassador, he is the state's local resource for individuals in South Dakota with Usher syndrome, their families and the organizations that serve the community. Ryan says, "I look forward to my ambassadorship and working to support the Usher community in South Dakota!" •



Ryan Groeneweg

To learn more about the Usher Syndrome Coalition click [here](#).

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The Center for Disabilities at the USD Sanford School of Medicine is South Dakota's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD). As the South Dakota UCEDD, the Center for Disabilities works with others to create opportunities that enhance the lives of people with disabilities and their families through training, services, information, research, and community education. The Center for Disabilities delivers activities across the lifespan from a community-based, family-centered and culturally-competent perspective.



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This newsletter is available in alternate format upon request by contacting the Center for Disabilities.



South Dakota Board of Regents Approves University of South Dakota's Master of Science in Health Sciences, with a Specialization in Applied Behavior Analysis Degree

by Ryan Groeneweg, Ed.S., BCBA, Director of Community Education

South Dakota undergraduate students now have access to a new graduate program through the University of South Dakota (USD), with potential to cultivate new career opportunities.

The USD Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA[®]) certificate program, a first in South Dakota, has been approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents to offer a Master of Science (MS) in Health Sciences with a specialization in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The USD BCBA certificate program, first offered in the fall of 2021, is ideally suited for Master's level professionals seeking to advance their professional training in applied behavior analysis and expand potential career options. The new MS in Health Sciences with a specialization in ABA now makes it possible for South Dakota undergraduates to pursue a Master's degree that focuses on ABA. This comprehensive program will equip students with the knowledge and competencies to become skilled behavior analysts. The program will require completion of 30 credit hours and will primarily be offered online, combining synchronous coursework with practical experiences and supervised training.

Students will gain a deep understanding of behavior analysis principles and evidence-based interventions to address behavioral challenges across diverse populations. Students will graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to work toward their career as a BCBA. The USD BCBA Program Director, Ryan Groeneweg, is the Director of Community Education at the University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities, located within the Sanford School of Medicine in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Groeneweg's past positions include: Director for Autism Community and Transition services at the Village Northwest Unlimited in Sheldon, Iowa; Interim Clinical Director for the North Dakota Autism Center in Fargo, North Dakota; and school psychologist and BCBA consultant working to expand behavioral support to rural school districts and families with limited access to quality Applied Behavior Analysis services throughout South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. •

Autistic Students and the College Experience

By Brittany Schmidt, MA-CCC/SLP, Speech Language Pathologist



Brittany Schmidt

Going to college or other postsecondary educational options can be a challenging part of life for all young adults. When you are neurodivergent, college can become even more of a challenge. Where do I go for help? Who and how do I ask? How does a meal plan even work? What if I don't know what an instructor or professor is talking about? What if I miss a deadline or don't know how to

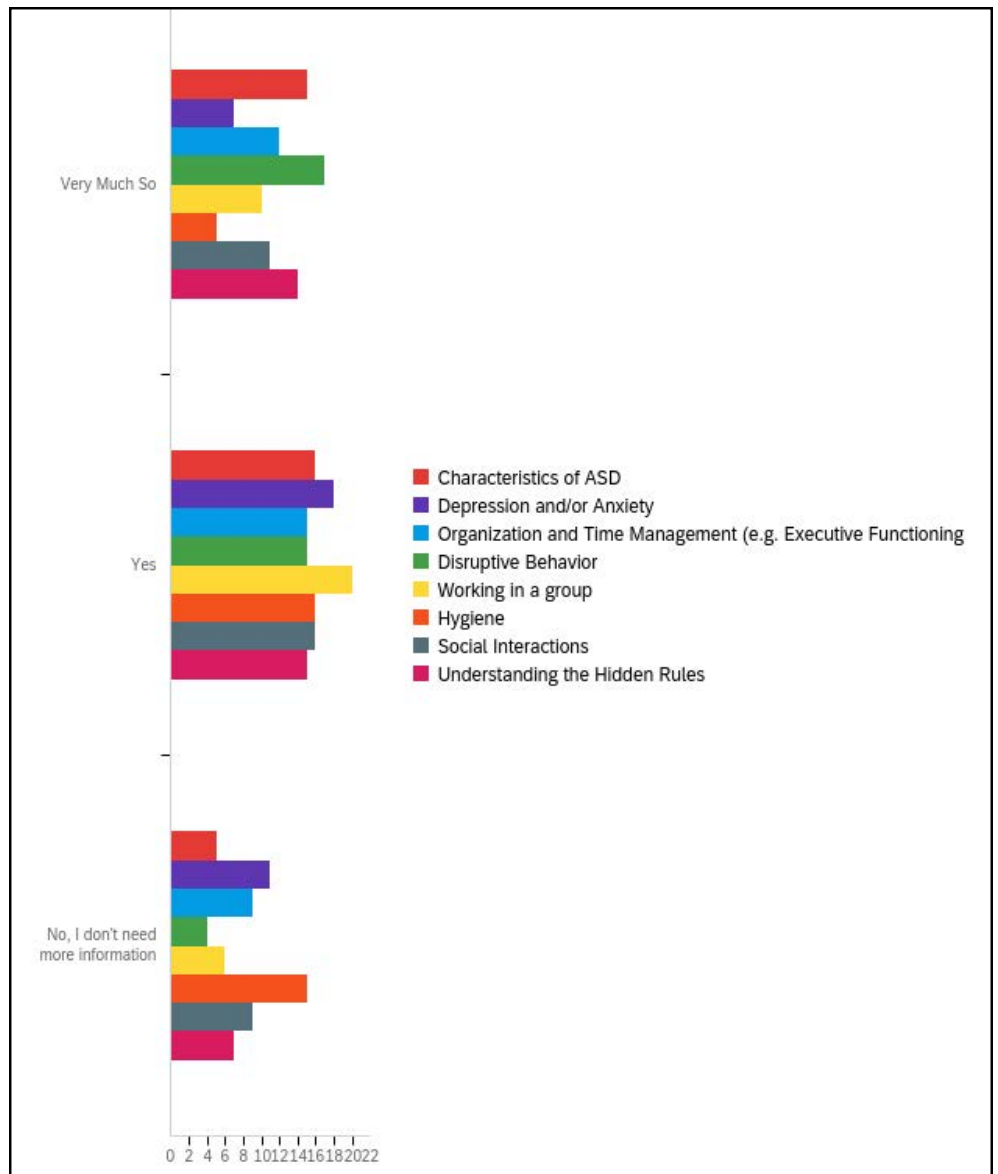
access the syllabus? Don't even get me started on dating and other social relationships!

All postsecondary institutions are increasingly being tasked with how to attract and retain the best and brightest students and this includes those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Over 95% of Autistic individuals present with at least one additional diagnosis (CDC, March 2018) with including commonly co-occurring diagnoses of ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Intellectual Disorder and other mental health diagnoses. Dakota State University (DSU) contacted the Center for Disabilities and Brittany Schmidt spent time researching and developing a staff training on the topic. DSU faculty had specific questions about students' organization of time and energy for classroom requirements, difficulties with student participation, particularly in group work, and how to best support Autistic students who exhibit challenging behaviors in the classroom setting. The training was designed specifically to help meet faculty and other staff's needs when they are interacting with Autistic students.

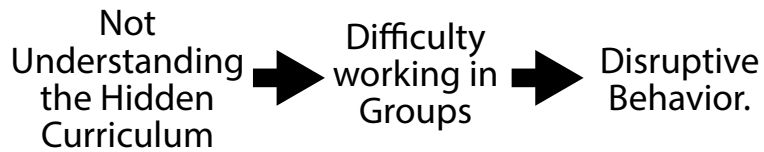
Through that process the lack of information and research on this topic was realized; however, themes of best practice were identified and include the following;

- What is neurodivergence, particularly Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?
- What are the challenges or struggles that are characteristics of ASD?
- What strategies are most effective and efficient?
- Time for follow-up brainstorming and communication about strategies and supports is beneficial for staff and faculty.

To best determine DSU faculty Autism knowledge and understanding, the Autism Spectrum Knowledge Scale Professional Version – Revised (ASKSP-R) was sent to and completed by 46 faculty members. From that survey the following areas of concern were identified as being most impactful within their academic setting.



The training took place over two, one hour sessions and an additional meeting was held with key staff for brainstorming and intervention considerations. An introduction to Autism and specifically to characteristics commonly associated with observable behaviors, common communication and engagement practices and social considerations were covered over the two sessions. A typical chain of events is:



When faculty began considering social and academic demands from the perspective of neurodivergency, great understanding and considerations for how to best meet their Autistic student's unique learner characteristics began to emerge.

Direct intervention is not within the scope of practice for university faculty. However, DSU faculty were needing immediate assistance with day-to-day, practical ways of thinking about and working with their Autistic students. Here are some of the take home messages that they found useful to them.

Weaker Areas

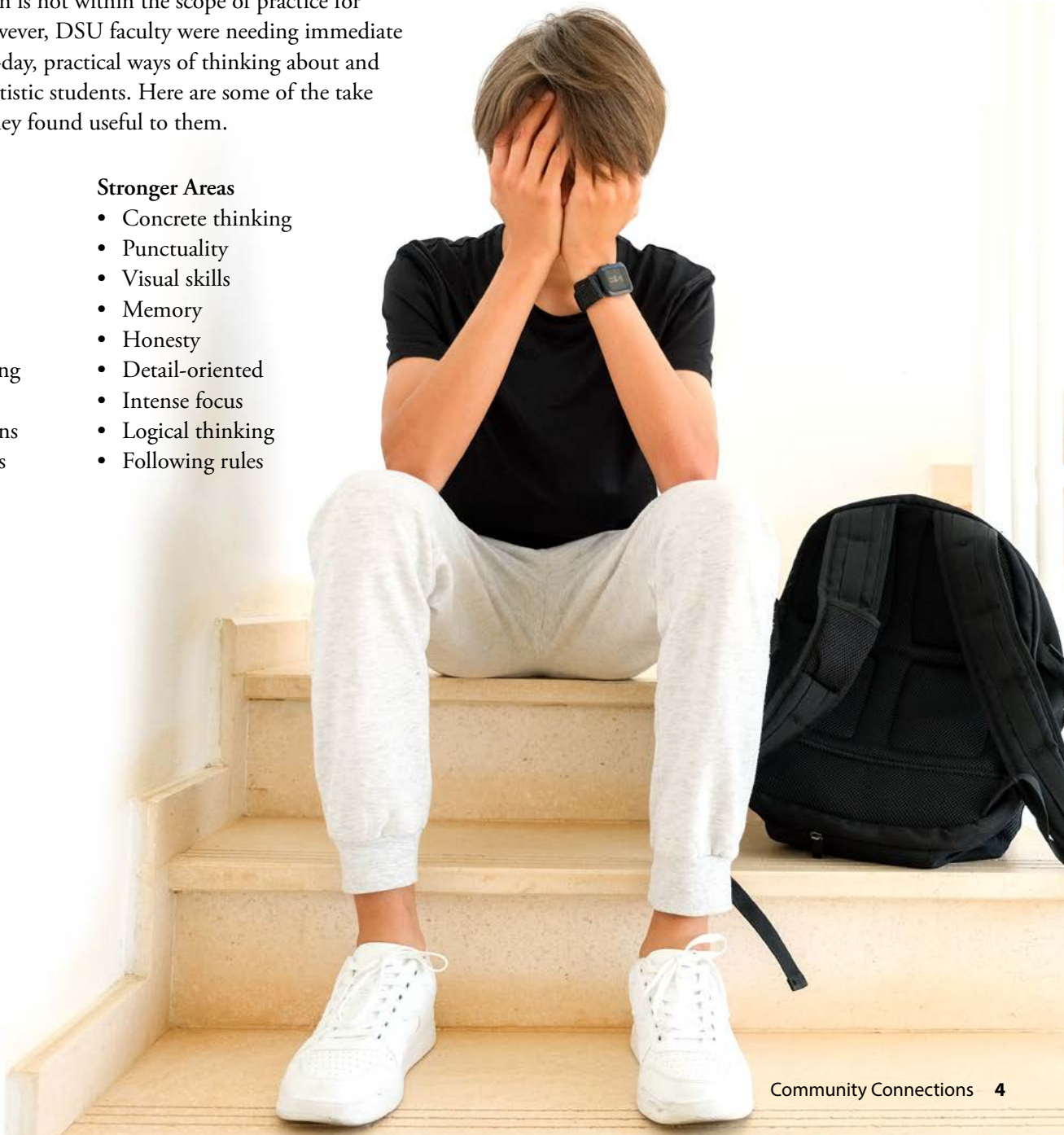
- Abstract thinking
- Auditory skills
- Reasoning
- Imitation
- Generalization
- Long-term planning
- Summarizing
- Perceiving emotions
- Expressing feelings

Stronger Areas

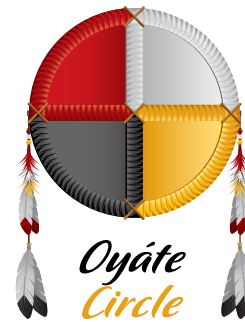
- Concrete thinking
- Punctuality
- Visual skills
- Memory
- Honesty
- Detail-oriented
- Intense focus
- Logical thinking
- Following rules

Use structure within each of your class periods. Make your syllabi predictable as possible. Chunk information and use visual supports for assignments. Rubrics should make very concrete sense to anyone who reads them. Provide structure for how to work in a group such as defining the roles, assigning roles, tell/show and reinforce expected behaviors, give very specific time frames, provide models of expected outcomes, increase the amount of feedback to the student(s).

While research and program development for Autistic college students has a long way to go, we are recognizing the significant importance and positive impact that inclusion and support have for these college ready individuals. •



Oyáte Circle Organizes Adventure for Leadership and Fulfillment with Access (ALFA) Youth Transition Summer Camps



by Pat Herman, MURP, AICP, ADAC, Special Projects Planner

In June, Oyáte Circle, in collaboration with the South Dakota Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, successfully organized two Adventure for Leadership and Fulfillment with Access (ALFA) youth transition summer camps. These camps aimed to empower young individuals by encouraging them to dream big and pursue not just any job, but gainful employment that provides opportunities for leadership and fulfillment. The camps focused on workplace readiness, job exploration and a blend of traditional and cultural activities.

The first ALFA camp took place at Lakota Tech High School, where students from Pine Ridge attending Little Wound High School and Lakota Tech High School came together. Heath Ducheneaux, a Pine Ridge Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, played a role in assisting the students with identifying their interests and exploring potential careers that matched their skills. The students displayed a diverse range of career dreams, including aspirations to become a tattoo artist, construction manager, veterinarian, voice actor and more. Some were still undecided about their career paths, but expressed a desire for professions that involved travel. Notably, one student expressed an interest in joining the powwow circuit as a fancy dancer. To

support the students in developing their dreams and future plans, Brenda Smith, a LifeCourse Ambassador, guided them through two indigenous-designed worksheets: Life Trajectory and Integrated Supports Star. During the camp, the students had the opportunity to interact with a Native American couple who make a living creating beaded jewelry. Rick Olauson, a Rehabilitation Counselor, also attended the camp and provided the students with valuable information on the support available to them through Rehabilitation Services. Additionally, the students engaged in leadership and team-building activities, such as the pipeline challenge and the watermelon rubber band challenge.

The second ALFA camp was held at Sinte Gleske University's (SGU) campus on Antelope Lake in Mission, specifically for students from Todd County. Although most students had not previously visited the campus, they were captivated by the scenic views of the lake and wildlife. Discussions about their dreams and future goals were a central focus of the camp. Among the attendees, two expressed an interest in serving their country, with one aspiring to join the National Guard and the other aiming for a career in the Marines. Other students expressed their ambitions to work in the gaming industry, start their





own businesses or pursue careers in the sports industry. Brenda Smith once again guided the students through the indigenous-designed worksheets, the Life Trajectory, and Integrated Supports Star, assisting them in mapping out their aspirations and plans. As part of the camp, the students had the opportunity to attend a portion of the Sicangu (burnt thigh) Food Summit, held on the SGU campus. Here, they learned about job opportunities in agricultural initiatives taking place on Rosebud and gained insights into regional food systems and the buffalo management program. Additionally, the students visited the Heritage Museum on campus, where the curator provided

valuable knowledge about the traditions of the Rosebud tribe, shared oral history and offered the students an opportunity to research their ancestors.

Through the ALFA youth transition summer camps organized by Oyáte Circle, students from Pine Ridge and Rosebud had the chance to explore their interests, discover potential careers, and receive guidance to help them shape their dreams and future plans. These camps not only emphasized workplace readiness and job exploration, but also incorporated traditional and cultural practices, fostering a well-rounded learning experience for the participants. •

Upcoming Trainings

Stay up-to-date through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Intervener Training Series

What Is an Intervener?

An intervener is a trained paraprofessional staff member who works one-on-one with a child who has combined hearing and vision loss (deafblindness) to provide critical connections to other people and the environment. The intervener opens channels of communication, provides access to information and the environment, and facilitates opportunities for learning and development.

What Is the Importance of an Intervener?

Combined hearing and vision loss creates unique and complex challenges. These challenges are in the areas of communication, concept development, and social and emotional access and development. An intervener responds to these challenges by serving as a bridge to the world for the child who has both hearing and vision loss (deafblindness).

Join us October 27 – April 27
 1400 West 22nd Street, Sioux Falls, SD.
 To view the schedule or to register, click [here](#).
Graduate credits are available.