

## What is Connections?

The idea for a **conference specifically for parents** of children with autism was designed by the "Autism Task Force". This group is comprised of members of community agencies, school district, service providers, and physicians.

The original intent of the Autism Task Force that was established in the Fall of 2005, was to determine needs and support for children and youth in our community who are identified as having Autism through the medical or educational system.

Since that time the purpose has been more clearly defined to: 1) streamline accessibility of services, 2) bridge gaps in services, 3) gather and coordinate information as identified needs arise, 4) refine process for diagnosis, and 5) provide a venue for ongoing need identification for this population of children and youth.

The accomplishments of this task force and adjoining subcommittees has been tremendous as a result of the development of the Task Force. Below are just a few of the major accomplishments over the past four years: Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidelines for Teachers Service Providers, and Parents; Development of Autism Disorder Diagnostic Process for our community; and sponsorship of the Autism Conference for Teachers, Service Providers, and Parents.

### ***Autism Task Force***

Joan Anderson	Bonnie Spehar	Michelle Hoy	Audra Stock
Nita Pennington	Kirsten Tyler	Jan Blair	Patrice Whistler
Steve Bennett	Jr. Rosales	Jill Frazier	Carrie Over
Susan Niemeyer	Vicki Woods	Louann Currier	Rochelle Larson
Tanya Travis	Kevin Wight	Barbara Zind	Colleen Roahrig
Sue Thorndill	JJ Gross	Larry Beckner	

### ***Thanks to Our Sponsors***

**Mesa County Valley School District #51** Grand Junction, Colorado is dedicated to providing quality education in a safe environment for all students. Student Services has been a co-sponsor of the Crossroads Conference since its' inception. Several school district employees serve on the Crossroad Planning Committee and do presentations in workshops. School District #51 is committed to multi-agency cooperative efforts in meeting the unique needs of students with emotional disorders and working as partners with their families.

**Ariel Clinical Services For Children** is a non-profit program that provides therapeutic foster care for abused and neglected children. Often times due to the severity of the abuse or neglect children have endured, their behaviors are difficult and a challenge to work with. Most children placed with an Ariel home have been moved multiple times, preventing them from bonding and connection with a family. Our goal is to provide the last foster home they will live in until they return to family, are adopted or emancipate as adults. Ariel also provides programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities and will soon launch an adoption program.

**Mesa Developmental Services (MDS)** is the single point of entry for Mesa County residents to establish eligibility for services through the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities. MDS offers the following services for children: Child Find developmental screening for children birth to age three; home based early intervention therapeutic services for children birth to age three who have been identified as having a developmental delay or disability; customized Family Support Services to assist families raising a child with a developmental disability; respite care services for caregivers of a child with special needs; and case management services for all eligible children and their families. All services for children are free. An array of services are also available for adults with developmental disabilities. For more information visit [www.mesadev.org](http://www.mesadev.org)

## Connections Conference Schedule

### Saturday October 16 2010

8:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-8:45	Welcome & Announcements
8:45-10:00	Finding Our Way Together: <i>Creating Positive Outcomes</i> Chantal Sicile-Kira
10:00-10:15	BREAK
10:15-11:45	Breakout #1 workshops 1-6
11:45-12:30	LUNCH & Speaker
12:30-12:45	Poster Session
12:45-1:00	BREAK
1:00-2:30	Breakout #2 workshops 1-6

### Keynote Presentation



#### **Finding Our Way Together: Creating Positive Outcomes**

An old Swahili proverb, “A boat doesn’t go forward if each one is rowing their own way” aptly describes the philosophy of collaboration and common vision that infuse this keynote presentation. Drawing from her personal and professional experiences, Chantal shares insights and hard-won wisdom on how different professionals (including parents) with differing viewpoints can come together as a team to move towards a common goal. Her inspiring message reminds us that although we may each be unique, together we can create the change that we want to see.

**Chantal Sicile-Kira’s** passion for empowering others, her love of writing, and her personal interest in autism has led her to become an award-winning author, speaker and leader in the field of adolescence and transition to adulthood. She has 20 years of experience as both a parent and a professional on both sides of the Atlantic. Chantal is the author of four books, her latest [41 Things To Know About Autism](#) was published on March 25, 2010.

Chantal is currently the Co-Chair of South Counties Autism Regional Taskforce of the California Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorder, and serves on the Taskforce on Transitional Services & Supports reporting to the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism.

## Connection Workshop Options

~AM~

### 1. Susan Hepburn-Anxiety

- **Helping Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders to Cope Better: Ideas for Less Verbal Youth** This session will provide an overview of what anxiety looks like in children with ASD, with an emphasis on youth who present with communication challenges (i.e., may or may not use words to communicate, may have difficulty communicating about something that happened in the past). General guidelines and strategies will be presented to assist parents, teachers, and therapists to coach the child to cope with fears, worries and anxieties. Videotaped examples and case stories will be shared to illustrate the main ideas. **Susan Hepburn, PhD, Associate Professor/dept. Of Psychiatry & Pediatrics/Licensed Clinical Psychologist in Colorado. Director of Research for JFK Partners/University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Autism course Director/Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disorders University of Colorado at Denver**

### 2. Chris Chenoweth—Rapid Prompting Method

- Martin and Chris Chenoweth live here in Grand Junction with their fourteen year old son Andre. This session will provide a basic introduction to The Rapid Prompting Method that was created by Soma Mukhopadhyay. RPM is a method used to teach communication and academics. They have seen excellent results with their son, Andrew who is nonverbal. **Chris Chenoweth, Parent, Grand Junction Colorado**

### 3. Joan Anderson—Social Thinking

- **Using social Thinking to Support Students on the Autism Spectrum.** Direct teaching of Social Thinking can increase a student's success and enjoyment of school. Successful social thinkers consider the points of view, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, prior knowledge, and intentions of others. Learn to teach these "perspective taking" skills to children with social cognitive difficulties, including those on the autism spectrum, in this fun and informative workshop. **Joan Anderson, Autism Intervention Specialist, MCVSD #51**

### 4. Nita Pennington & JJ Gross- Teaching Strategies Make and Take

- **Concrete In-Home Strategies:** Do you think your home is like a 3-Ring Circus? Living with a child on the Autism Spectrum can often leave you feeling as though you are living your home life with one circus act after another. We will be discussing techniques of cutting down on resistance, chaos and frustration in your home. There will be "Make and Take" ideas for you to walk away with to implement the ideas we discuss. Even though life is never easy it could be better. **Nita Pennington, Autism Intervention Specialist, MCVSD #51 and JJ Gross, Autism Teacher, MCVSD #51, Grand Junction, Colorado.**

### 5. Bonnie Spehar & Sue Thorndill—Effective Communication Don't Take it Personally

- Unconditional positive regard between parent and professional is critical to the success of any program. Gain insights and effective strategies for working together to best meet the needs of the child or young adult with autism. **Bonnie Spehar, Special Education Professional Development Specialist, MCVSD #51 Grand Junction CO, Sue Thorndill, MDS, Grand Junction Colorado**

### 6. Marisol Montoya & Steve Robinson—Managing Autism Drug-Free

- This session will provide discussion of the benefits of using neurofeedback to address the symptoms of autism; anxiety; sleep issues; attention; hyperactivity; and aggressive behavior. **Marisol Montoya, Neurohealth Center counselor and Neurofeedback Practitioner, Steve Robinson, Neurohealth Center CEO and Neurofeedback Practitioner.**

## Connection Workshop Options

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### 2. Matt Boelke & Laura Coulter—Non-verbal De-escalation

- **Non-verbal De-escalation for Children with Autism:** This workshop will look at applications of Positive Behavior Supports and Functional Behavior Assessments as applied to the Crisis Prevention Institute's de-escalation model for students who are under the Autism Spectrum or who are non-verbal. The workshop will stress as much as possible on prevention of acting out behavior for non-verbal students by setting up environment, assessing function of behaviors, watching for behavior cues and monitoring staff response to behaviors. **Matt Boelke, Progress Monitor, Dos Rios Elementary and Laura Coulter, SSN Teacher, Rim Rock Elementary, MCVSD #51, Grand Junction, Colorado.**

### 3. Nita Pennington & JJ Gross- Teaching Strategies, Make and Take

**Concrete In-Home Strategies:** Do you think your home is like a 3-Ring Circus? Living with a child on the Autism Spectrum can often leave you feeling as though you are living your home life with one circus act after another. We will be discussing techniques of cutting down on resistance, chaos and frustration in your home. There will be "Make and Take" ideas for you to walk away with to implement the ideas we discuss. Even though life is never easy it could be better. **Nita Pennington, Autism Intervention Specialist, MCVSD #51 and JJ Gross, Autism Teacher, MCVSD #51, Grand Junction, Colorado.**

### 4. Panel: Parent Teacher Special Education Service Provider—Autism in the Real World

- While education and training are key in working with those on the spectrum, the qualities of empathy, common sense and insight can't be read in a book or taught in a workshop. The members of this panel have all met with great success in working with a child with Autism, and did so without advanced degrees or years of experience. They are here to share with you the practical strategies they applied when handed such a child in a community or classroom setting, and how integration into the typical world benefits everyone. **Mary Emerson, Girl Scouts, Marilee Ham, Girl Scouts, Jeni Ellyson, Tope Elementary School MCVSD #51, Jaynie Jerome, Homemaker, Sherry Raff, church Leader (AWANA)**

### 5. Connie Robbins-Brady—Sibling Issues

- **The Good and the Not-so-Good parts of having a sibling who has special needs.** Whether they are preschoolers, in grade school, teenagers or adults, brothers and sisters of people with special needs have much to say-if they are given a chance. How is the family impacted when there is a sibling in the home with special needs? This workshop will cover common questions and concerns siblings have when growing up with a sibling with special needs. **Connie Robbins-Brady, Licensed Professional Counselor and mom, Grand Junction, Colorado**

### 6. Chantal Sicile-Kira - Life Skills

- **Autism Life Skills: Ten Essential Abilities Every Child Needs and Deserves to Learn** With advice and reflections from autistic adults across the spectrum, as well as her personal experience as an advocate and parent of an autistic teen, the following essential life skills are discussed: \*Making Sense of the World \* Communication \*Safety \*Self-Esteem \*Pursuing Interests \*Self-Regulation \*Independence \*Social relationships \*Self-Advocacy \*Earning a Living. Based on Chantal's third book, Autism Life Skills, (Penguin, October 8, 2008) this positive and empowering "bill of rights" for every person with autism, regardless of impairment level, this session will provide hope and help—so that every child has a chance to reach his or her full potential.

# Registration Form

## Connections: Putting the Pieces Together for Persons with

**Autism October 16, 2010**

Two Rivers Convention Center  
159 Main St Grand Junction CO

PLEASE REGISTER BY: September 30, 10

Mail registration to: MCVSD #51 Autism Task Force, 930 Ute Ave Grand Junction Co 81501  
Fax 970.257.7117

Email: cindy.mansur@d51schools.org \* jan.blair@d51schools.org

Thanks to the support of our Sponsors there is no fee for parents to attend *but we do ask for a \$10 deposit to cover lunch costs that will be returned to you at the conference. Checks will not be cashed until after the conference, and only for those non-attendees who do not cancel registration by 10/11/10.*

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CIRCLE:

Parent    Medical    Mental Health    Higher Education    Educator    Other

### BOX LUNCH

PLEASE CIRCLE: Turkey, Ham, or Vegi

### Workshop Choices

10:15—11:45    1    2    3    4    5    6    Choose one \_\_\_\_\_

1:00—2:30    1    2    3    4    5    6    Choose one \_\_\_\_\_