

LTLD COLLEGE PLANNING & TRANSITION CONFERENCE **2022**

Let's Talk LD

**VIRTUAL 2022 Postsecondary Professional Development Institute for
Transition Professionals Serving Neurodivergent Youth/Young Adults**

Monday, September 26, 2022 - Friday, September 30, 2022

BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM

BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM

**Community Building and Activism to Strengthen Self-Determination:
Closing Equity, Opportunity, and Achievement Gaps
for Neurodivergent Youth and Young Adults**

Our Institute is designed to raise awareness about how to implement best practices that are designed to mitigate the barriers to postsecondary success for neurodivergent youth/young adults. We have challenged our speakers and attendees to consider with great seriousness the kind of consciousness-raising and activism that must occur, both within and outside of the neurodiverse ecosystem, to create actionable means of addressing the complex issues faced by neurodivergent youth and young adults as they journey from college student access to college student success, from employment opportunity to career success, and productive civic engagement. As stakeholders in the education and transition planning ecosystem, we must engage in critical self-reflection and consider our role in impeding the advancement of neurodivergent youth and young adults. If we are to consider the impact of these inequities fully, we must also consider how we might work collaboratively to identify and remedy educational and social injustices that undermine post-secondary success for neurodivergent youth and young adults.

OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTE

INSTITUTE SCHEDULE, Monday 09/26/22 - Friday, 09/30/22

DATE	BLOCK A - 03:30 PM - 5:00 PM	BLOCK B - 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
09/26/22	Dr. Ann Simun, Clinical Neuropsychologist: <i>Understanding Assessments in the Context of Neurodivergent and Ethnic/Racial Diversity</i>	Rebecca Beam, CEO and Hilary Kokenda, COO Zavikon (DE&I employment services): <i>Neurodiverse Hiring DE&I Best Practices in the Talent Management and Recruitment Space</i>
09/27/22	Dr. Erinn Fears Floyd, Equity and Excellence in Education, LLC; The Consortium for Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education: <i>Culturally Responsive and Social Justice Practices to Address Systemic Inequities in Gifted Education</i>	Luna Nombrano Larsen, M.A., Program Manager for the Empowering Autistic Scholars (EAS) Program at California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo): <i>Autistics Empowered: Supporting the Autistic Leaders of Tomorrow</i>
09/28/22	Lydia XZ Brown, JD, Policy Counsel, Privacy and Consumer Data Project at the Center for Democracy and Technology: <i>Building Networks of Support and Solidarity with Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education</i>	Janet Barakat, Council for Exceptional Children Certified Transition Specialist: <i>Best Practices for Writing a Student-Centered Transition Plan</i>

DATE	BLOCK A - 03:30 PM - 5:00 PM	BLOCK B - 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
09/29/22	Judi Uttal, MBA, President, Orange County Asperger's Support Group: <i>Using Toastmasters to Help Individuals with ASD Improve their Communication Skills</i>	Noah Nemitoff-Bresler, Founder 2e Consultants: <i>Using the College Planning and Application Process as a Platform to Help Students Improve Executive Functioning</i>
09/30/22	Serena Manjur, Education Specialist, International Polytechnic High School; Alison Sisco, M.A., Education Specialist, and; Roberta Lomeli, MA, School-to-Career Transition Specialist LACOE: <i>Collaborative Support for Postsecondary Transition</i>	Dr. Kim Miller, Director of College Counseling, Bridges Academy, <i>Negotiating the Next Steps</i>

INSTITUTE PRESENTERS AND SESSIONS

Janet Barakat, M.Ed - Special Education, M.Ed. - Secondary Transition, Council for Exceptional Children Certified Transition Specialist



Janet Barakat is committed to educating students, colleagues, families, and the community through establishing strong connections. She holds a Master's Degree in Special Education, Secondary Transition from the University of Kansas (2018), a Master's Degree in Special Education from Azusa Pacific University (2007), and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Marketing from California State University, Fullerton (1980). She became an educator in 2007. She taught 6th-8th grade special education mathematics, science, and reading until 2014. She held the position of Special Education Department Chair from 2009-2014. In 2014 she became a Transition Specialist and developed a secondary transition program for students with disabilities in grades six through twelve. She has served as a professional development speaker, training teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals on secondary transition, writing standards-based Individual Education Plans, Non-violent Crisis Intervention Prevention, and Behavior Intervention Plans. She is the Practitioner-at-Large for the Division for Career Development and Transition (DCDT) Board. She is a Cadre member of the California Autism Professional Training and Information Network (CAPTAIN). She has also taken an active role in the community, developing interagency partnerships. In July 2019, she took a position as a Program Specialist for a Special Education Local Plan Area. In this role, she works with 14 school districts to provide policy, guidance, and training to their district staff. Janet firmly believes that success in education is about building relationships.

Session and Description: 09/28/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Best Practices for Writing a Student-Centered Transition Plan**

Participants will learn how to write a student-centered transition plan that focuses on the student's strengths to develop their own education, employment, and independent living skills goals as part of their IEP.

This workshop will be lecture-style with a time for questions at the end. Participants will learn what IDEA 2004 says about transition planning, why the SPP/APR Indicators are important, the steps to write a transition plan as part of the IEP, and how to use assessment data to help students discover their strengths, preferences, and interests for education, employment, and independent living. We will answer the following guiding questions: 1) How can we improve the individual Transition Plan as part of the IEP, 2) When writing an individual Transition Plan, how do I make sure it focuses on outcomes expected, 3) Am I considering the student's abilities as well as their micro-cultures? In addition, we will look at the 5 key predictors that positively impact young adults' success in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

Rebecca Beam, CEO of Zavikon



Rebecca Beam is the Founder and CEO of Zavikon. Before launching Zavikon, she was a founding advisory team member launching MindSpark, Inc., whose mission was to train and employ adults on the autism spectrum in technology careers. After MindSpark's acquisition by auticon, Rebecca became President of the US operations leading the US expansion and driving growth.

As a tech sector veteran, Rebecca's career has included senior leadership roles sourcing and developing human capital with high-demand skill sets for the area's leading tech firms, including Fortune 100 and 500 brands. Rebecca believes there is a job out there for everyone to apply their talents and skills in a meaningful way, and she is dedicated to being a bridge to an inclusive working world. She is passionate about opening doors for all individuals with disabilities or those who are neurodivergent to achieve career success. In 2019, Rebecca won the prestigious Milestones Visionary Employer Award.

Session and Description: 09/26/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Neurodiverse Hiring DE&I Best Practices in the Talent Management and Recruitment Space**

Lydia XZ Brown, Policy Counsel with the Privacy and Consumer Data Project at the Center for Democracy and Technology



Among many other things, I am a writer, public speaker, educator, trainer, consultant, advocate, community organizer, community builder, activist, scholar, and attorney.

For over a decade, I have worked to address and end interpersonal and state violence targeting disabled people, especially disabled people at the margins of the margins, in our own homes and communities, in movement spaces, schools, disability-specific institutions, and in jails and prisons. My work begins at and centers intersections of disability, queerness, race, gender, class, nation, and migration. I have provided trainings and consultations to hundreds of individuals, educational institutions, agencies, companies, and organizations across numerous professional and academic fields on a range of issues impacting disabled, queer, trans, and negatively racialized people.

I founded and lead the Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival, and Empowerment, in partnership with the Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network. I created and curated *Bearing Witness, Demanding Freedom*, the Living Archive, and Repository of the Judge Rotenberg Center's Abuses. Along with Morénike Giwa Onaiwu and E. Ashkenazy, I co-edited the first edition of the anthology *All the Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Racialized Autism*. I am one of ten young activist icons featured in Amplifier's We The Future Campaign. I am also featured in People of Color Productions' forthcoming documentary *I Identify As Me*, directed and produced by Tina Colleen and Monick Monell, and HBO Max's documentary *Persona: The Dark Truth Behind Personality Tests*. I'm a past Gender+ Justice Initiative Fellow at Georgetown University and a Justice Catalyst Fellow at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

As an educator, I teach as an adjunct lecturer and core faculty in the Disability Studies Program and the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Georgetown University and as an adjunct professorial lecturer in the American Studies Program at American University's

Department of Critical Race, Gender, and Culture Studies. I'm also a faculty member and Self-Advocacy Discipline Coordinator for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) Training Program at Georgetown's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the Center for Child and Human Development. Previously, I taught as a visiting lecturer in the Experimental College at Tufts University and as a volunteer instructor in various programs for high school and middle school students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Educational Studies Program.

Professionally, I am a Policy Counsel with the Privacy and Consumer Data Project at the Center for Democracy and Technology, where I focus on algorithmic injustice, bias, and discrimination affecting disabled people. I am also the Director of Policy, Advocacy, and External Affairs at the Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network, where I lead policy work with an intersectional approach to disability and neurodiversity.

I provide regular consultations, workshops, and trainings for many other organizations on radical access, care, and justice.

Like all of us, I live at the intersection of many forms of marginality and oppression and many forms of privilege and power. Some identities and experiences that are important to me are that I am a multiply disabled, queer, and nonbinary Chinese American, East Asian transracial, and transnational adoptee of color, working precariously both within and at the margins of academia and the nonprofit industrial complex.

I work on unceded and occupied traditional lands of the Piscataway-Conoy, Nacotchtank, Haudenosaunee, Wôpanâak, Nipmuc, and Kaskaskia (Illiniwek Confederation, now Peouaroua) peoples. (Learn more about Indigenous land acknowledgment and solidarity action plans.)

Session and Description: 09/28/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Building Networks of Support and Solidarity with Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education**

Dr. Erinn C. Fears Floyd, CEO of Equity and Excellence in Education, LLC; The Consortium for Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education (I-URGGE)



Dr. Erinn C. Fears Floyd is a Gifted Education, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Scholar. She serves as Director of Training and Partnership Development for The Consortium for Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education (I-URGGE). Dr. Floyd is an Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia and a Lecturer at Texas State University-San Marcos. She is the former Director of Professional Learning for the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and State Director of Gifted Education for the Alabama Department of Education. She has over twenty-nine (29) years of experience as a classroom teacher, Gifted and School Improvement Specialist, District Gifted Education Coordinator, and Assistant Principal. She has provided professional learning opportunities for educators nationally and internationally at all levels in Alabama. Dr. Floyd is an inaugural recipient of the NAGC Dr. Mary Frasier Teacher Scholarship for Diverse Talent Development and winner of the Emerald Literati Outstanding Author Contribution Award from Emerald Publishing. Dr. Floyd serves on the Board of Trustees for her alma mater, The Alabama School of Fine Arts, and the Board of Directors for the Southeast Alabama Sickle Cell Association, Incorporated. She has authored and co-authored several publications, including *Mentoring and Social Media: Lessons Learned from R.A.C.E. Mentoring*, *Poverty and the (Mis)Education of Black and Hispanic Gifted Students*; *Power Advocates: Families of Diverse Gifted Learners Taking a Seat at the Table*; *Black and Gifted in Rural America: Barriers and Facilitators to Accessing Gifted and Talented Education Programs*; *Shifting the Narrative: Addressing Systemic Racial Disparities of Gifted Students of Color*; *The Red Owl Collaborative: Leveraging Sisterhood and Social Justice*; and *Black, Gifted, and Living in the "Country": Searching for Equity and Excellence in Rural Gifted Education Programs*. Dr. Floyd is the Founder and CEO of Equity and Excellence in Education, LLC, which provides professional learning, advocacy, digital badging, and academic support for educators, parents, and students. Dr. Floyd and her husband are the proud parents of two gifted children, a son (16) and a daughter (12).

Session and Description: 09/27/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Culturally Responsive & Social Justice Practices to Address Systemic Inequities in Gifted Education**

Across intersections of cultural and linguistic diversity, giftedness, and neurodiversity, students are greatly impacted by educators' attitudes and biases often rooted in deficit thinking. At every level of teacher education, training, and experience, practical tools must be implemented to help educators remove systemic barriers facing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) gifted students through unbiased, culturally competent, and responsive instructional philosophies, practices, curricula, and programming. To this end, clinicians, educators, and counselors must take personal responsibility and accountability to develop their own learning to implement best practices to serve and counsel culturally different gifted students. This session will provide transition professionals with a deeper understanding of how culturally responsive, restorative, and social justice practices serve as effective tools to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable learners.

Hilary Kokenda, COO of Zavikon



Hilary Kokenda is the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Before becoming a founding member of Zavikon, she spent 10 years at The Walt Disney Company as a technologist supporting business solutions and processes. Hilary's primary role throughout her career has been to bridge the communication gap between technology resources and the businesses they support at Fortune 500 companies.

Hilary's career has required her to work with individuals at all levels and drive change across all types of departments. Through her wealth of experience in the corporate environment, she has recognized the need for and benefits of diversity. She is passionate about being a bridge to an inclusive working world. Hilary holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics/Applied Science from UCLA.

Session and Description: 09/26/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Neurodiverse Hiring DE&I Best Practices in the Talent Management and Recruitment Space**

Roberta Lomeli, School-to-Career Transition Specialist, Los Angeles County Office of Education



Roberta Lomeli has worked for over 17 years with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Transition Partnership Program (TPP), serving At-Promise students with special needs at juvenile detention halls and camps, community day schools, charter schools, and county specialty schools. Before coming to LACOE, Ms. Lomeli worked as a Program Specialist for Disabled Student Programs and Services at Pasadena City College. She shares a passion for preparing neurodiverse students for the workforce and empowering them with the tools necessary for transition and success in post-secondary education.

Session and Description: 09/30/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Collaborative Support for Post-Secondary Transition**

This session will offer an interactive virtual presentation highlighting concepts of collaborative support designed to include neurodivergent learners in post-secondary transition planning equitably. This session will be presented by a multidisciplinary team of co-presenters, including a Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Transition Specialist, an Education Specialist, and an Administrator/Regional Center Counselor for medically fragile individuals.

The toolkit presented will begin with self-reflective practices. Our toolkit is designed to help students explore their funds of knowledge and individual experiences as a way to learn and/or adapt to new concepts. This reflection can also help students navigate and overcome societal/cultural stigmas around requesting support. Disability Identity Development supports the psychosocial readiness needed for successful transitions to post-secondary settings. This toolkit sets students up with a system for internal resource development they can use to guide their thoughts and actions along their self-determination journey in life.

The toolkit's first level of self-reflection promotes a robust internal resource pool, which becomes the foundation for students to develop a second level, one of the external resources. The next concept will help students to expand on their external resource development. Resources will include: evaluating

and exploring available individualized academic supports, utilizing assistive technology and new learning strategies, and building community-based tools developed to improve self-determination.

Finally, we will discuss the third level of the toolkit- the idea of transferable skills centered on improving post-secondary transition success. We want to show students, and their support system, why a strong emphasis on building advocacy strategies for all stakeholders is the key to forming organic, long-lasting community bonds.

This virtual presentation is a conceptual precursor to the in-person roundtable discussion and activity titled “**Synergy of Three: A Triforce Development of Support for Transition Resources**” that will be facilitated by the presenters of this session on October 1st at the Let’s Talk LD Postsecondary Planning & Transition Conference for Neurodivergent Youth/Young Adults at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College. This roundtable workshop will be focused on developing student advocacy resources, using groups of three (3) people and a triangle. Our activity will focus on collaboration as a critical element when constructing free and accessible resources centered on post-secondary transition success for students who are neurodiverse. Reliable resources for fostering change are available in your local community, and this workshop will show you how to access those resources.

Serena Manjur, Education Specialist, International Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles County Office of Education. Master of Science Candidate for Special Education, California State Polytechnic University (Pomona), College of Education & Integrated Studies



Serena Manjur is an Education Specialist with the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Serena provides instructional support services at International Polytechnic High school, a project-based learning school where they founded a student-driven program to foster inclusion called Collaborative Student Success (CSS). Serena is a recipient of the Personnel Development SEEDS scholarship for the Cal Poly Pomona Education Specialist Dual Credential and Master's program in which they are currently enrolled.

Session and Description: 09/30/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Collaborative Support for Post-Secondary Transition**

Dr. Kim Miller, Ph.D., Director of College Counseling at Bridges Academy



Dr. Miller is a parent of two college students, a veteran educator, and the college counselor at Bridges Academy.

Session and Description: 09/30/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Negotiating the Next Steps**

This session will discuss what happens when students aren't ready to launch into a four-year college straight from high school. We'll talk about formal and informal gaps, the maturation gained from work, the beauty of Community Colleges, and managing all the anxiety that comes from stepping into the unknown.

Noah Nemitoff-Bresler, Founder 2e Consulting



Noah Nemitoff-Bresler is an educational consultant with over two decades of experience in education as a tutor, outdoor educator, classroom teacher, college consultant, and executive function coach. As a 2e learner, Noah understands the struggles of fitting into a traditional learning environment and has experienced first-hand the holistic impact that the right learning environment can have on a neurodivergent student's life.

Noah holds a Bachelor's Degree in Cognitive Science specializing in Neuroscience from UC San Diego. He has been published in the journal *Nature* for his research on memory in the brain. After tutoring for several companies in San Diego and Los Angeles for over a decade and realizing that those companies were not meeting the needs of neurodiverse learners, Noah founded Tutor Connection LLC in 2013 to better serve the needs of all kinds of learners in a one-on-one setting.

Noah was a classroom math and science teacher for six years at several schools for neurodiverse learners, including STEM3 Academy, Bridges Academy, and Fusion Academy. While managing a tutoring company and classroom teaching were valuable experiences, Noah felt that he could do more to support neurodiverse learners, especially during the often tumultuous transition to postsecondary life, so he earned a Certificate in College Counseling from UC San Diego Extension and joined the Independent Educational Consultants Association in 2018.

After moving to Connecticut in 2019 with his wife, Noah began focusing most of his efforts on helping neurodiverse students with the college planning and application process. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Noah realized that many students were struggling to develop and maintain the skills they need to achieve their goals, so he earned a Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity specializing in Executive Function from Landmark College's

Institute for Research and Training in 2020-2021 and has been offering executive function coaching ever since.

Noah founded 2e Consulting in 2022 and is excited to begin this new professional chapter by presenting at the Let's Talk LD College Planning and Transition Conference and Virtual Institute!

Session and Description: 09/29/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Using the College Planning and Application Process as a Platform to Help Students Improve Executive Functioning**

The college planning and application process is a trial by fire for executive functioning skills - it requires at least operational skills in every area of executive function for students to manage it independently. As a result, it's the perfect platform to help students develop better executive functioning skills across the board before they go to college to be more successful in college and in life. Join me to learn how to incorporate executive functioning skill instruction and support at every stage of the college planning and application process and how to customize that process based on the strengths and needs of individual students.

Luna Nombrano Larsen, M.A., Program Manager for the Empowering Autistic Scholars (EAS) Program at California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo)

Jessica Nombrano Larsen (she/her/hers) is a proud, first-generation, autistic Latina. She is the Program Manager of the **Empowering Autistic Scholars Program** at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo and an MLIS student at San Jose State University. She is passionate about helping students from underserved communities obtain social justice and educational equity. Her research is focused on developing more effective academic and socio-emotional supports and resources for autistic college students. She would love to continue this work as an academic librarian/research professor once she obtains her degree.

Session and Description: 09/27/2022, BLOCK B: 06:00 PM - 07:30 PM: **Empowering Neurodiverse Scholars.**

Jessica will present her work with autistic students in the **Empowering Autistic Scholars (EAS)** at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo. EAS is an innovative new program that empowers autistic students at Cal Poly by providing them with the individualized academic, professional, and socio-emotional supports and professional opportunities they need to be successful. Students receive peer mentoring, academic and career advising, and one-on-one technical and design skills training. Students also gain hands-on research experience: they are paid as research assistants to work with their autistic peers on a community-based participatory research project to develop Universal Design for Learning (UDL)-based online workshops tailored to the needs of incoming students (and fully accessible to autistic students).

Dr. Ann Simun, Clinical Neuropsychologist



Ann Simun, PsyD is a clinical neuropsychologist, licensed clinical psychologist, and school psychologist with more than 30 years of experience in assessment. She has trained school psychologists at the district- and university-level, teaches at the graduate level, and has presented nationally at numerous conferences. Her clinic is a training site for neuropsychologists. She has testified in numerous jurisdictions and has been deemed an expert witness in psychological assessment. She specializes in complex diagnostic evaluations, has specialized knowledge in dual exceptional children, and works with youth transitioning from K-12 to post-secondary education.

Session and Description: 09/26/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Understanding Assessments in the Context of Neurodivergent and Ethnic/Racial Diversity**

Psychology and education have a long history of using assessments to sort people into categories; these categories can be helpful at times, such as getting interventions funded, to help define what interventions are scientifically supported, but other times these categories can be used in harmful ways. The fields of psychology and education are coming to grips with this history. It is important for parents, educators, psychologists, and neurodiverse individuals to understand this history, and current issues with commonly used instruments, to become better consumers of the assessment information, and to critically examine information that may limit a student. This session will help participants understand the intersection of psychology, education, and diversity to improve their understanding and interpret assessment data in context.

Alison Sisco, Education Specialist & M.A. in Special Education Candidate



Alison Lynn Sisco received her B.A. in psychology from San Francisco State University. She spent the next ten years working in mental health counseling, as a paraprofessional, as a Consumer Service Coordinator with Inland Regional Center, and as QIDP/Administrator to ICF nursing homes. She left her job at the end of 2019 to pursue a dual Education Specialist Credential and M.A. in Special Education at California State Polytechnic University (Pomona). Alison is a recipient of the SEEDS scholarship in the CalPoly Pomona Education program. She loves the water, her partner Evan, their three fur children (Mama Kitty, Po, and Vanity), and being in service to others.

Session and Description: 09/30/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: **Collaborative Support for Post-Secondary Transition**

Judi Uttal, President, Orange County Asperger's Support Group



Judi Uttal is president of the Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG), a nonprofit organization focused on improving the quality of life for individuals and families dealing with high-functioning autism. For the last fifteen years, OCASG has offered various educational, social, and support programs that have helped hundreds of families. In 2012 Judi, a Distinguished Toastmaster, founded the Spectrum Speakers Gavel Club, a Toastmaster Club designed to help young adults with ASD improve their social and communication skills. Judi is active in the Orange County Transition Initiative focusing on business outreach and bringing Autism @ Work programs to Orange County. Judi recently retired from a successful career as a high technology marketing executive. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Math/Computer Science from UCLA (where she graduated Cum Laude) and an MBA from the Tepper School of Management, Carnegie Mellon University (where she graduated in the top ten of her class). Judi is married and is the mother of a 30-year-old son with High-Functioning Autism who recently graduated with a BA in Cinema and Television at California State University, Fullerton.

Session and Description: 09/29/2022, BLOCK A: 03:30 PM - 05:00 PM: Using Toastmasters to Help Individuals with ASD Improve Their Communication Skills

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. In 2012, Distinguished Toastmaster, Judi Uttal, recognized that many young people with ASD need to develop the same communication skills that Toastmasters teaches so well. For the last ten years, Judi has been using the official Toastmasters International program to help young adults with ASD develop confidence, build friendships, and improve their communication skills through a program called the Spectrum Gavel Club. In this presentation, Judi will share success stories and deconstruct a Toastmaster meeting demonstrating the skills developed in participating in this amazing program. Videos of actual presentations, testimonials, and case studies will be shared. With over 16,200 clubs worldwide, Judi is focused on encouraging other organizations to establish their own clubs to serve the needs of their neurodiverse community. Individuals on the spectrum can join existing clubs or start a new club specifically for people with ASD.

YOUR INSTITUTE ORGANIZERS

KD Harris, M.A., Doctoral Student - Co-Founder/Executive Director, Let's Talk LD (a Social Impact Non-Profit)



KD Harris has served for the past 35 years as a scholar-practitioner-activist with a practice centered around the advancement of social and educational justice for marginalized learners. KD serves as the Co-Founder/Executive Director of the social impact non-profit, Let's Talk LD. Let's Talk LD provides student advocacy, parent education, and professional training and development services designed to improve outcomes for individuals who are neurodiverse. In addition, Let's Talk LD produces one of only a few full-day annual post-secondary transition conferences in the nation that is designed and produced specifically for neurodivergent learners.

As a parent of two neurodivergent adult children and the wife of a neurodivergent man, KD recognizes how critically important post-secondary attainment is for individuals with hidden disabilities. Her activism and passions lie in improving postsecondary education, employment, and civic engagement outcomes for those who are neurodivergent. KD completed two bachelor's degrees at the University of Southern California, graduate work in Education Policy at the University of Southern California, and graduated magna cum laude with a master's degree in Media & Communications Psychology from Touro University Worldwide. A passionate scholar-practitioner-activist, KD is currently pursuing doctoral studies in Educational Leadership at California State Polytechnic University Pomona. Her research interests include Youth Participatory Action Research (Y-PAR), the Social-Affective Development and Disability Identity Formation of ND Individuals, College and Career Planning/Transition of ND Individuals, and Post-Secondary Civic Engagement of ND Individuals.

Janet Barakat, M.Ed - Special Education, M.Ed. - Secondary Transition, Council for Exceptional Children Certified Transition Specialist



Janet Barakat is committed to educating students, colleagues, families, and the community through establishing strong connections. She holds a Master's Degree in Special Education, Secondary Transition from the University of Kansas (2018), a Master's Degree in Special Education from Azusa Pacific University (2007), and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Marketing from California State University, Fullerton (1980). She became an educator in 2007. She taught 6th-8th grade special education mathematics, science, and reading until 2014. She held the position of Special Education Department Chair from 2009-2014. In 2014 she became a Transition Specialist and developed a secondary transition program for students with disabilities in grades six through twelve. She has served as a professional development speaker, training teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals on secondary transition, writing standards-based Individual Education Plans, Non-violent Crisis Intervention Prevention, and Behavior Intervention Plans. She is the Practitioner-at-Large for the Division for Career Development and Transition (DCDT) Board. She is a Cadre member of the California Autism Professional Training and Information Network (CAPTAIN). She has also taken an active role in the community, developing interagency partnerships. In July 2019, she became a Special Education Local Plan Area Program Specialist. In this role, she works with 14 school districts to provide policy, guidance, and training to their district staff. Janet firmly believes that success in education is about building relationships.