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Special Education Report

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Happy Spring!! April brings Autism Awareness Month. We hear about autism and “being on the spectrum”, but what does that truly mean? According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); “*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.*” There is often nothing about the way a person with ASD looks that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may interact, communicate, behave and learn differently from most other people. The learning, thinking and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from severely challenged to gifted.*A diagnosis of ASD now includes several conditions that used to be diagnosed separately, autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome. These conditions are now all considered autism spectrum disorders. Please see the CDC website for more information: www.cdc.gov.

While researching autism, I was able to find a lot of valuable and useful information on the AUTISM SPEAKS website. As stated above, we now know that there are many different types of autism and that the term spectrum reflects the wide variety of challenges and strengths possessed by each person with autism. On the AUTISM SPEAKS there are wonderful resource guides that help educate and navigate parents of children who have recently been diagnosed with ASD. Please see the **100 Day Kit for School Age Children.** There are many toolkits that can assist parents, educators, SEPTAS and PTA units in helping to bring awareness and to educate the community. The School Community toolkit is a guide that helps members of the school community in understanding and supporting students with autism. This is a 117 page downloadable toolkit that you may choose to download in whole or you may just wish to download the different sections that you find most helpful.

It is important to remember that every child with any disability should always be treated as an individual. Every child has different strengths, needs and challenges from another. With the support of the parents, educators, school leaders and SEPTA/PTA units providing the education for others, continuing to advocate and by including ALL children in activities and events in schools, students with autism and other disabilities can make great strides and become valued members of the student body.

References:

www.autismspeaks.org

www.cdc.gov

www.psychologytoday.com