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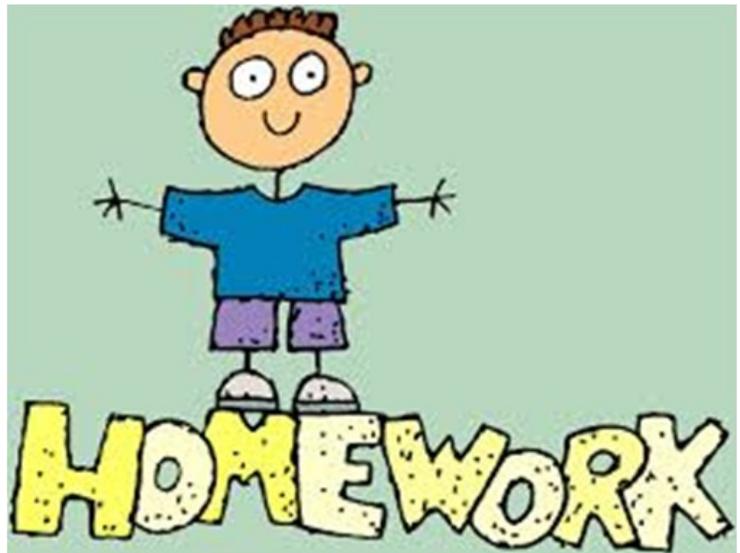
# Autism Agenda

**Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program**

## Welcome Back to School!

### HOW HELP YOUR CHILD GET ORGANIZED FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

- **Get your child organized.** With most children with autism, chaos reigns in their heads all the time. It is essential to help your child stay organized...especially now that school is starting.
- **Set a specific place to do homework.** Ensure that the right school supplies (pencils, erasers, paper, etc.) are there and have their organized place. Lighting and noise are often sensitivities that children with autism struggle with. Make sure your son or daughter have appropriate light and that their study spot is quiet.
- **Eliminate noise.** Ensure the home environment as well as the place that you set aside for your son or daughter to work is quiet and appropriate for studying. Make sure the TV and radio is off in the house and that other siblings are not running around causing commotion when your child with autism is trying to study.
- **Establish a timeline.** Once your child is home from school a good idea is to allow some down time...perhaps 30 minutes. Then it is time to do homework. Establish a specific time for play, for homework, for down time...and stick to this schedule.
- **Allow your child to learn and develop scheduling skills.** One issue that plagues many children with autism is poor organizational skills. Allow your child to help establish an organized plan for the new school year. By doing this your child with autism will learn a valuable organization lesson that will help throughout his or her life.



### 30 Autism Parents Describe Their Kids' Bizarre and Funny Eating Habits

By. Melissa McGlensy

Being a parent to a child with autism comes with its own special set of challenges, one of them being keeping your kid fed. Children on the spectrum can have some seemingly peculiar eating habits, [so we at The Mighty asked our readers](#) what unusual, outrageous and funny food requests they've received from their kids.

With autism, ritual is important, so for these parents, no food request is too difficult, too strange or even too gross to make a reality. They'll do whatever it takes to keep their kids happy and healthy.

1. "When my son was little and eating junior baby food they changed the style of the jar. **I had take the meal out of the new jar and and put it in an old jar or he would not eat it!**" — [Lori Stuart Francis](#)
2. "**Ketchup on everything.** Including his peanut butter and jelly sandwich." — [Myndie O'Hare](#)
3. "**Frozen waffles ([kept] frozen). Frozen peas, frozen blueberries...** always gotta have a theme with autism spectrum disorder." — [Kelly Smith](#)
4. "When [my daughter] eats a turkey sandwich **it must be put together like a sandwich, but she won't eat it that way,** she pulls it apart and eats it separately. However, **she won't eat it if it's not made as a sandwich first.**" — [Lauren Cockrell](#)
5. "**My son just likes to put Sriracha on everything.** Cereal, pasta, yogurt, you name it." — [Shelley Friesland](#)
6. "**My son thinks salsa is a beverage.**" — [Lisa Natham](#)
7. "My son loves chicken nuggets, and he eats a 20-piece. One time they only put 19 in the box. **Needless to say, this did not go well.**" — [Tonya Warren](#)
8. "**Cereal with sprite. Sour cream on eggs. A raw onion.**" — [Jessica Bowen](#)
9. "My son made a **graham cracker cheddar cheese s'more...** and ate it!" — [Jodie Tompkins](#)
10. "My son is now 10, but because I introduced him only to healthy food to start with, that's all he continued to want for years after. So, **we would go to the mall and get something like, say, KFC with the family, and my son would order a bowl of green peas.** Everyone always stared at us in horror, like we were punishing him. I had to keep offering him chicken loudly so they knew we weren't withholding it!" — [AJ Madams](#)
11. "[My son] would carry a box of 'Mac n Cheese.' **Didn't want to eat it, just talk to it.**" — [Teresa Watts](#)
12. "**My son only eats tan, room temperature crunchy items** — chips, crackers, etc. If two crackers are stuck together he won't touch it because 'it's broken.' Been on this 'diet' for the last two years and still going strong! Somehow he keeps growing and he's of a healthy weight." — [Jami Leavell](#)
13. "My daughter loves **Cheetos dipped in cherry yogurt.**" — [Judy Echeagaray](#)
14. "**A butter shake:** a whole stick of butter and milk and ice." — [Iilani Foree](#)
15. "Food may **only be served in either a 'Lightning McQueen' bowl or plate.**"

## BIZARRE AND FUNNY EATING HABITS CONTINUED....

16. "Lemons are my 11-year-old's favorite fruit." — [Erin Howell Sharpe](#)
17. "My daughter used to **dip brownies in ranch dressing.**" — [Mika Clardy](#)
18. "My son is now 21, but still every Friday he has to have a pineapple pizza. **It doesn't matter where we are in the world, he has to have it.** When he was younger it was a cause of great distress if we couldn't find anyone to make one whilst on holiday. I have even taken to buying tins of pineapple and asking pizza shops just to make a plain pizza and add my pineapple to it." — [Jane Parker](#)
19. "**My son will not eat broken crackers. I eat them.** I read somewhere those ones have zero calories... really, he's helping me out." — [Kirstin Aitken](#)
20. "Ketchup with cereal... I stopped asking questions long ago." — [Lindsay Rose Jolly](#)
21. "I made my son a sandwich with turkey, cheese and lettuce. **He took it apart, put it in the 'correct' order and then ate it.**" — [Betsy Burnish Gibides](#)
22. "Mine would **only eat eggs if they were dyed green.** Whatever it takes, I guess!" — [Katherine McBair](#)
23. "**Everything has to be mushy.** He won't eat anything that's in chunks or pieces. So everything he eats takes a trip through the food processor. The only exception to this rule is French fries. Those are fine as is." — [Cindy Webb](#)
24. "**My son was obsessed with salt.** He would attack and steal the salt shakers, dumping them out on the counter and eating the salt. We used to have to hide them. Glad that has passed." — [Karen Cleghorn](#)
25. "[My child] loves Reese's peanut butter cup cereal, but **you have to put milk in, let it soak, then take the milk out.**" — [Jeanine Spano](#)
26. "**All bread items were to be dunked in water** before he consumed them." — [Trudy Leal](#)
27. "[My son] likes to **dip his Triscuits in milk.**" — [Marissa Collins](#)
28. "**Grape jelly on scrambled eggs.**" — [Kimberly Phillips Nelson](#)
29. "**Ice cream cones... just the cone, no ice cream!** I think it's the cold because she also doesn't like ice in her drinks." — [Aimee Lackey](#)
30. "My son orders his burgers like this: **'I want a plain burger, just bun, burger, bun, with nothing on it. Bun. Burger. Bun.'** I love that. Also, his school lunch is always what we call 'meat in a bag.' Ham in a bag with bread in a separate bag, and he eats them separately... [He] says 'I'm just not a sandwich kind of guy,' as his answer to anyone who questions him." — [Lauren Swick Jordan](#)



MUST - TRY UNUSUAL  
FOOD COMBINATIONS  
THAT ARE  
SURPRISINGLY GOOD

### Autism & Your Family....

This is part of the Article Autism and Your Family. Please feel free to read the entire article at <https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/autism-your-family#tips>

#### 15 tips to help your family

As a result of her work with many families who deal so gracefully with the challenges of autism, Family Therapist, Kathryn Smerling, Ph.D., offers these five tips for parents, five for siblings and five for extended family members:

##### 5 Tips for Parents

Learn to be the best advocate you can be for your child. Be informed. Take advantage of all the services that are available to you in your community. You will meet practitioners and providers who can educate you and help you. You will gather great strength from the people you meet.

Don't push your feelings away. Talk about them. You may feel both ambivalent and angry. Those are emotions to be expected. It's OK to feel conflicting emotions. Try to direct your anger towards the disorder and not towards your loved ones. When you find yourself arguing with your spouse over an autism related issue, try to remember that this topic is painful for both of you; and be careful not to get mad at each other when it really is the autism that has you so upset and angry.

Try to have some semblance of an adult life. Be careful to not let autism consume every waking hour of your life. Spend quality time with your typically developing children and your spouse, and refrain from constantly talking about autism. Everyone in your family needs support, and to be happy despite the circumstances.

Appreciate the small victories your child may achieve. Love your child and take great pride in each small accomplishment. Focus on what they can do instead of making comparisons with a typically developing child. Love them for who they are rather than what they should be.

Get involved with the Autism community. Don't underestimate the power of "community". You may be the captain of your team, but you can't do everything yourself. Make friends with other parents who have children with autism. By meeting other parents you will have the support of families who understand your day to day challenges. Getting involved with autism advocacy is empowering and productive. You will be doing something for yourself as well as your child by being proactive.

##### 5 Tips for Brothers & Sisters

Remember that you are not alone! Every family is confronted with life's challenges... and yes, autism is challenging... but, if you look closely, nearly everyone has something difficult to face in their families.

Be proud of your brother or sister. Learn to talk about autism and be open and comfortable describing the disorder to others. If you are comfortable with the topic...they will be comfortable too. If you are embarrassed by your brother or sister, your friends will sense this and it will make it awkward for them. If you talk openly to your friends about autism, they will become comfortable. But, like everyone else, sometimes you will love your brother or sister, and sometimes you will hate them. It's okay to feel your feelings. And, often it's easier when you have a professional counselor to help you understand them – someone special who is here just for you! Love your brother or sister the way they are.

While it is OK to be sad that you have a brother or sister affected by autism it doesn't help to be upset and angry for extended periods of time. Your anger doesn't change the situation; it only makes you unhappier. Remember your Mom and Dad may have those feelings too.

Spend time with your Mom and Dad alone. Doing things together as a family with and without your brother or sister strengthens your family bond. It's OK for you to want alone time. Having a family member with autism can often be very time consuming, and attention grabbing. You need to feel important too. Remember, even if your brother or sister didn't have autism, you would still need alone time with Mom and Dad.

Find an activity you can do with your brother or sister. You will find it rewarding to connect with your brother or sister, even if it is just putting a simple puzzle together. No matter how impaired they may be, doing something together creates a closeness. They will look forward to these shared activities and greet you with a special smile.

### 5 Tips for Grandparents and Extended Family

Family members have a lot to offer. Each family member is able to offer the things they have learned to do best over time. Ask how you can be helpful to your family.

Your efforts will be appreciated whether it means taking care of the child so that the parents can go out to dinner, or raising money for the special school that helps your family's child. Organize a lunch, a theatre benefit, a carnival, or a card game. It will warm your family's hearts to know that you are pitching in to create support and closeness.

Seek out your own support. If you find yourself having a difficult time accepting and dealing with the fact that your loved one has autism, seek out your own support. Your family may not be able to provide you with that kind of support so you must be considerate and look elsewhere. In this way you can be stronger for them, helping with the many challenges they face.

Be open and honest about the disorder. The more you talk about the matter, the better you will feel. Your friends and family can become your support system...but only if you share your thoughts with them. It may be hard to talk about it at first, but as time goes on it will be easier. In the end your experience with autism will end up teaching you and your family profound life lessons.

Put judgment aside. Consider your family's feelings and be supportive. Respect the decisions they make for their child with autism. They are working very hard to explore and research all options, and are typically coming to well thought out conclusions. Try not to compare children (this goes for typically developing kids as well). Children with autism can be brought up to achieve their personal best.

Learn more about Autism. It affects people of all social and economic standing. There is promising research, with many possibilities for the future. Share that sense of hope with your family while educating yourself about the best ways to help manage this disorder.

Carve out special time for each child. You can enjoy special moments with both typically developing family members and the family member with autism. Yes, they may be different but both children look forward to spending time with you. Children with autism thrive on routines, so find one thing that you can do together that is structured, even if it is simply going to a park for fifteen minutes. If you go to the same park every week, chances are over time that activity will become easier and easier...it just takes time and patience. If you are having a difficult time trying to determine what you can do, ask your family. They will sincerely appreciate that you are making.



# Five Tips that Helped Improve My Child's Behavior

by **Chrissy Kelly**

Our house has been a revolving door of Behavior Therapists over the past almost four years. Both boys put in about 20 hours a week of intense therapy. I never thought a kidless 20-something year old might be able to teach me something about my own children. The presence of autism in my life has grown my mind a thousand times over. So much of parenting children with autism is counter-intuitive. I say and do things I never thought would work, but they do. Here is a small list of techniques that we use daily that help reduce tantrums, increase understanding, direction following and happiness (theirs and mine). There is no one thing that works for all children, and there is no one quick fix, however, many of these techniques will work for many children. Whether or not they have autism.

## 1. Use Time to Decrease Transitional Tantrums

Many children have trouble leaving preferred places and activities. This is a BIG one for my 5 year old. There were times I wouldn't even take him to our neighborhood park because I was so scared of that awful moment when we had to leave. He was unpredictable and erratic. Sometimes he would scream and fall to the ground, or try to run into a busy street to get away from me, or lash out to hit me. It broke my heart and downright scared me.

One thing that has been life-changing for us is using Minute Warnings/Timers: Your child may need a 5 minute, 2 minute, or 1 minute warning before there is a change of activity. These warnings help the children prepare for the transition. They will begin to learn that the warning comes and then the change comes. Eventually, the minute warnings become routine, even if the next task is not.

We set a timer on our iphone.

"In five minutes you need to take a bath."

"In two minutes we are leaving the park."

This helps a child feel more in control without controlling us. When the timer goes off you have to carry through every single time. We did this continuously for two weeks before we started to see results. Now it's been years and it still works. Set your boundaries, stick to them, and follow through.

## 2. FIRST/THEN

Many of our other tantrums are over wanting something they can't have at that moment. A toy, a snack, a trip somewhere RIGHT NOW. Or there is something they DON'T want to do. For many of these situations we use first/then. "First \_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_" statements are used to help a child finish a task before getting something motivating.

"First we finish our lunch, then we can go outside."

"First we will clean up, then we can go to the park."

Depending on your needs and your child's skill set, you can either do this verbally, use pictures, or write items on a dry erase board.

Many children with autism think in pictures, so that is often the initial go to method.

It's a simple phrase that provides structure in a child's mind and helps them follow the directions at hand. It can help decrease a child's frustration because they can understand exactly what is expected of them. This works like a charm for my 5-year old, Greyson. It probably took about two months for him to understand that he would get what he wanted as long as he FIRST did what was asked of him. This does not work for Parker who is three. He does not have the same understanding of language that his brother does and he hasn't grasped anything other than he's NOT getting what he wants RIGHT NOW. We still use this language because one day when he grasps language he will understand the importance of it.



### 3. Reward Positive Behavior

Reinforcing language identifies and affirms childrens' specific positive actions and encourages them to continue their appropriate behavior. For example, to a child that shared their swing at the park you might say, "I really like how you shared and played so nicely with that little boy at the park." It's especially important to recognize behaviors that a child usually struggles with- sharing, being quiet, following directions. With these words, the adult lets the children know that their positive behaviors were noticed.

We continually point out good behaviors in areas the boys struggle. "I like how you are sharing your truck with Parker." "Good job cleaning up your blocks Parker." Recognizing good behaviors increases the likelihood that they will happen again. (Please note: this also works with husbands). In an environment with small children you are frequently saying: *no, put that down, don't do that, put that back, you can't have that- you can't eat that, NO NO NO NO-* sometimes it's so nice to recognize and focus on the good. Praise is one of the best reinforcers around.

For some children- praise means nothing. It's not rewarding, therefore, it does not increase the good behavior. In this case you must find something that IS rewarding. Sometimes a small reward is offered- a piece of candy or a token or sticker that when accumulated can be used towards a greater reward. I've heard some people say, "I don't like to bribe my child." To me- it's like getting a pay check for work. We all work for the reward, whether it be emotional, financial or edible or tangible.

### 4. Focus what you want the child to do, not what you want them to stop doing!

How many of you have screamed at your child, STOP SCREAMING?!!!! with crazed eyes and clinched fists? (Guilty)

Minimize the use of 'don't' and 'stop.' For example, 'Walk on the sidewalk' can be much more effective than 'Don't walk on the grass' for a child who might not hear the 'don't'—or for one who isn't sure where the acceptable place to walk might be. This lets the child know exactly what you WANT them to do. 'Stop screaming' becomes, 'Quiet please', 'Don't color on the table' becomes 'Only color on the paper'. It's counter-intuitive to the ways most of us usually parent but it works. There are times when there's NO WAY around a don't/stop statement. DON'T COLOR ON THE DOG. STOP HITTING YOUR BROTHER. Use your best judgement- you'll figure out when you need to lay down the DON'T law.



Here I ignore his screaming because he was mad that I gave one of his cars to his brother when he didn't want to share.



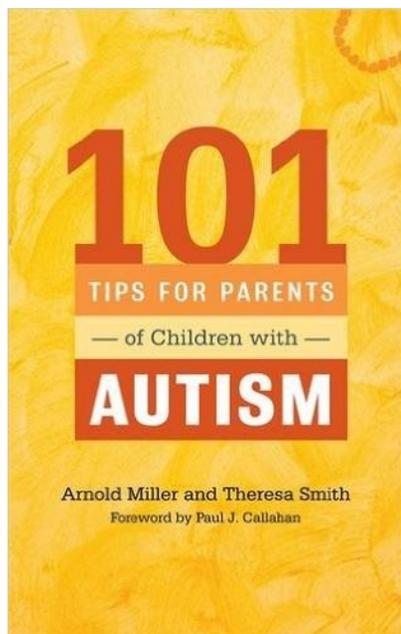
Here I praise him, "Great job being quiet and playing with your cars."

I know, it feels a little weird at first, ignoring your child while they are screaming or throwing themselves on the ground. But when they do that, they are attention seeking and giving them any kind of attention reinforces that behavior. They will learn it doesn't work and realize they get more attention when their behavior is good.

### 5. Remain Calm (YOU!)

This was a hard one for me to learn and is still a hard one for me to remember! This one is especially hard because what usually happens is your child goes out of control and then you quickly follow. It's exhausting, draining and frustrating. I take deep breaths and make sure my words sound calm, even if I'm not feeling it. I remind myself that I am the adult and if I expect my child to modify their behavior then I must too. Children don't always have the language to explain what they want and need and that can be extremely frustrating for them. I have had many, many more years of practice so I need to be much better at being kind, calm and patient while I lead by example.

I can't believe how much happier they are since beginning Behavior Therapy. They are so much less frustrated and so much more understood.



## 101 Tips for Parents of Children with Autism

By Arnold Miller and Theresa Smith

Do you need help dealing with your child's tantrums, inappropriate behavior or communication issues? Then this is the book you've been waiting for. Based on the principles of the Miller Method, this book is filled with effective tips for solving behavioral issues promptly in day-to-day situations. Miller's insights, compiled here and expanded upon by Theresa Smith, are based on an understanding of the cognitive and sensory needs of children with autism and how this can underlie certain disordered behaviors. This practical how-to guide will help you to identify causes of distress, foster friendships, increase focus, toilet train, stop tantrums and handle inappropriate conduct. This will provide essential daily support to parents, families, careers and teachers of pre-adolescent children on the autism spectrum. The book is targeted toward the most affected ASD children.

## We Said, They Said: 50 Things Parents and Teachers of Students with Autism Want Each Other to Know

By Cassie Zupke

Cassie Zupke is the mother of three teenagers, one of whom has mild autism, and the director of Open Doors Now, a non-profit education and support group for students with mild autism/similar disorders, their families and educators.

Cassie writes that after listening to hundreds of parents, teachers and school administrators, she has come to the conclusion that their ability to function as a team is often hampered by their lack of understanding of each other's motivations and limitations. Her book gives educators and parents the necessary tools to build the relationships they need to help their children.

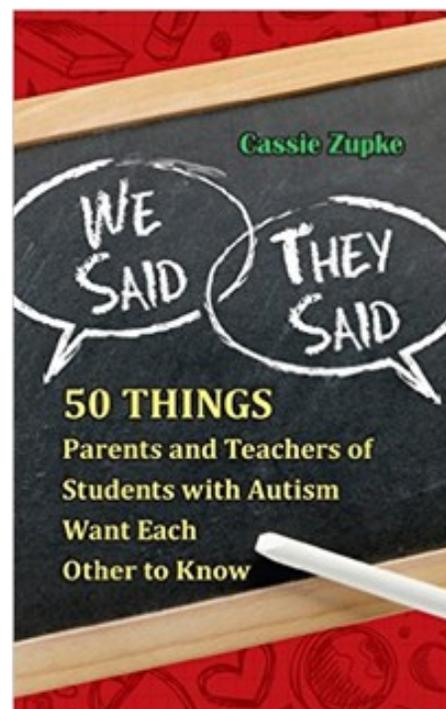
Parents can surely relate to Ms. Zupke as she writes:

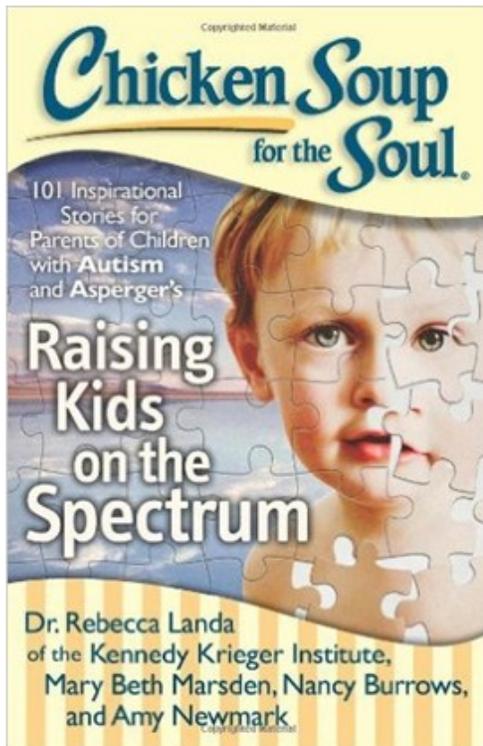
- “Some days I’m lost in the forest of demands, emotions, exhaustion, information, and decisions that autism brings, and my politeness slips.”
- “...”normal” wasn’t going to happen. My boy wasn’t going to be a typical kid. Not now, not ever. He would improve and build skills and mature, but his autism was always going to be there, waiting and setting traps here and there for the rest of his life.”

“As a parent of a child with autism, my emotions have run the gamut.

I’ve felt pride, elation, contentment, confidence, fear, anger, grief, self-pity, and despair. And I’ve felt love—there is always love.”

*We Said, They Said: 50 Things Parents and Teachers of Children with Autism Want Each Other to Know* is reader-friendly book with a conversational tone. It voices what parents and educators want to say to each other, but don’t. It explains why they do what they do. It helps fill the chasms of misunderstanding that breed assumptions like “They don’t care about my child,” and “They’re just in denial.” It gives educators and parents the necessary tools to build the relationships they need to help their children.





## Chicken Soup for the Soul: Raising Kids on the Spectrum

By Rebecca Landa, Mary Beth Marsden, Nancy Burrows and Amy Newmark

With its 101 stories from other parents and experts, this book will comfort, encourage, and uplift parents of children with autism and Asperger's.

If you are the parent of a child – from newborn to college age – with autism or Asperger's, you will find support, advice, and insight in these 101 stories from other parents and experts. Stories cover everything from the serious side and the challenges, to the lighter side and the positives, of having a special child on the autism spectrum.

## LBL ESD NEW WEBSITE!

Check out our New LBL ESD website!



**It is new and improved, more user-friendly!**

- The url: <https://www.lblesd.k12.or.us/cascade-regional-program/autism-program/> (or go to LBL website and type “autism program” into search bar)
- Lots of links to information and printable resources for teachers and parents in the areas of autism awareness, interventions, social communication, behavior management, academics, visual supports, sensory/fine motor skills, technology, life skills, and transition to adulthood
- Information about support services in the area for people with autism and their families
- Back issues of the Autism Agenda newsletter



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**VISUALS**

school bag 	No school 	bus driver 	bus 
school 	sack lunch 	Hot lunch 	breakfast 
snack 	new clothes 	backpack 	binder 
crayons 	paper 	pencil 	desk 