April is National Autism Awareness Month. During the month, schools can take the opportunity to recognize their students, families, and staff. It is also a time to promote an awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as well as encourage appreciation and acceptance of diversity.

National Autism Awareness Month was established in the 1970’s. The purpose was to educate the public about autism, its pervasiveness, and the challenges that generally accompany those who have a diagnosis of autism and their families. According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in 68 children have been diagnosed with ASD. It occurs across all ethnic, racial and socioeconomic groups. Boys are almost 5 times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with ASD. More specifically, 1 in 42 boys are diagnosed with ASD as compared to 1 in 189 girls with the diagnosis.

New Staff Members in the Autism Program

Ms. L. G. joined the staff at Dexter Elementary in January 2016. She is one of our three Autism teachers. She teaches in the Kindergarten/First Grade classroom. Ms. G. has a wealth of experience in special education. Her previous experience includes 14 years of teaching children with autism at public schools in Washington, Ohio and Arizona in both the self-contained environment and the inclusion setting. She has also worked as an English Language Instructor for the U.S. Department of State at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

Ms. G. received a Bachelor’s degree in
New Staff Members in Autism Program—continued

Ms. L. G.—continued:

Business Administration and a Master’s degree in Special Education from Kent State University, Ohio. She also holds a Juris Doctorate from Cleveland State University, Ohio. In addition, she also holds a TESOL certification.

Mr. A. - Educational Aide

Mr. A. A. is an educational aide in Ms. G.’s classroom. He has a Bachelor’s degree with emphasis in Behavioral Health from the University of Nebraska - Omaha. His work and volunteer experience includes mentoring teens and young adults with mental and physical disabilities and helping them reach their full potential.

He worked with an organization named Completely Kids based in Omaha, Nebraska. Their focus is educating and empowering children and families to create a safe, healthy, successful and connected community. They assisted more than 2,000 youth in preschool through middle school, and their families.

Mr. A. also volunteered at the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition: Soaring Over Meth and Suicide (SOMS) dedicated to suicide prevention among youth in the Native American community.

He is a devoted husband and father of 4 children. He enjoys playing sports: football, basketball, softball, and volleyball. He is an advocate of being physically active. In addition to his active lifestyle, he is currently pursuing his educational endeavor to become a physical education teacher.
Ms. J. - Educational Aide

Ms. J. J. began working as an educational aide in Ms. G.’s class in February 2016. Her experience working with children with disabilities began with her work as a day care educational aide. In addition, Ms. J. also served as a substitute paraprofessional at a Christian school.

Her education includes certifications in Computer Secretarial, Medical Billing, and Coding. She is trained in First Aid and CPR, and she has completed some coursework in Day Care modules. Her hobbies are singing, dancing, shopping, crocheting, and playing dominoes and board games. She also enjoys watching Korean television dramas and spending time with her husband.

Ms. K. T. - Educational Aide

Ms. K. T. is an educational aide in Ms. C. J.’s classroom. She joined the staff at Dexter Elementary School in early January 2016. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from Austin Peay State University and a Master’s degree in Fine Arts/Creative Writing from National University. She is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Special Education.

Ms. T. worked as a special education paraprofessional in Muscogee County School District during the 2014-2015 school year. During that time she gained experience working with middle school students who were diagnosed with the Emotional Behavioral Disorder/Emotionally Impaired. She was trained in using de-escalation techniques through Mindset Training in 2015 through Muscogee County School District.

Ms. T. is a military wife and the mother of two elementary school-aged girls.
Ms. L. - Educational Aide

Ms. V. L. is an educational aide in Ms. G.’s classroom. She began working at Dexter in February 2016. She has 6 years of experience working as a special education paraprofessional at DoDEA schools in Germany and Fort Riley, Kansas. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Health Informatics and Management with Liberty University. As a military wife and mother, she enjoys taking hikes with her family, experimenting in the kitchen with new foods, and drawing/painting with her daughter.

Mr. A. - Educational Aide

Mr. C. A. also joined the Autism Staff in February 2016. He supports the students in Ms. J.’s room. Prior to coming to Dexter Elementary School, he worked as both a paraprofessional and a Physical Education Teacher/Adaptive Physical Education in Muscogee County for 5 years. Mr. A. considers Daytona Beach, FL as his hometown. He has an Associate’s Degree in Health and Physical Education from Albany State University. He enjoys fishing, playing basketball, and watching movies.

EFMP Field Day

Dexter students along with other Benning schools participated in the 3rd annual Exceptional Family Member Program field day, which was hosted by the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Approximately 1200 participants and volunteers from Fort Benning, Muscogee and Harris counties in Georgia and Russell County and Phenix City schools attended the event. Some of the events were bowling, softball, wheelchair games and track races. It was a great day for our students.
Hello! I am Ms. E. L. V. and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) from Raleigh, NC. I am originally from Pittsburgh, PA and I am a true Steelers fan who bleeds black and gold! I received my Master’s from Ball State University in Applied Behavior Analysis in 2013. I have been a BCBA since 2014, and I have been working in the Applied Behavior Analysis field for over ten years. I typically work around and in the Raleigh and Fayetteville (Fort Bragg) areas in North Carolina in homes, schools and clinics training others and working directly with those who are diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. I have a background working with people diagnosed as early as 18 months old and as late as forty years of age. I am here at Dexter Elementary for the month of April working with the staff in the autism classrooms. I absolutely love children with autism and know they have changed my entire life for the better, which has led me to be a strong advocate for all families and children on the spectrum. I am very happy to be here at Dexter Elementary and look forward to spending the month with the families and staff at Dexter Elementary School.
Ms. K. McQ. - District Autism Specialist

K. McQ. will serve as the Instructional System Specialist for Autism in the Southeast District. Ms. McQ. has twenty-three years of experience in working with children with autism. She worked for Southeastern Cooperative Educational Program (SECEP), a regional program located in Norfolk, Virginia for 20 years. In SECEP, she served as a Program Aide, Teacher, Education Specialist and Principal. Additionally, for the past 3 years, she has worked at Camp Lejeune Dependent Schools as an Instructional Support Specialist for Autism.

She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Pre-Law at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia and a Master of Science degree in Education at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. She is a practicing Behavior Analyst after completing the graduate level coursework, passing the Behavior Analyst Certification Board examination, and receiving her certification from the Board of Medicine in Virginia. She has also been trained in Floortime, SCERTS, RDI, PECS, TEACCH, and Video Modeling.

Ms. McQ. personally understands the challenges faced by military families. As a wife of a Navy Seal, she has experienced many deployments and family separations. These experiences give her a special connection with military kids and their parents. Ms. McQ. has four adult children and a teenager. She has two dogs and a cat. She enjoys gardening, music, cooking, and the Arts.
Internet Spotlight

www.autismspeaks.org

Autism Speaks, one of the most prominent and successful autism advocacy groups in the USA, sponsors autism research and conducts awareness and outreach activities aimed at families and the general public. If you have not visited their excellent website recently, perhaps it’s time to become reacquainted. The website contains a wealth of up-to-date information on the myriad of issues facing our children and their parents, teachers and caregivers.

One of the most popular features on this site is their ever growing collection of “Tool Kits.” These “Tool Kits” are designed to provide practical, useful information on specific topics in a downloadable booklet format.

Currently, you can find over 30 “Tool Kits” on the site including such diverse topics as autism and medication, puberty and adolescence, managing sleep disturbances, visits to the dentist, and the “First 100 Days” (a “to do” guide for parent of newly diagnosed children).

Art and STEM Activities