Pacific Autism
CENTER FOR EDUCATION

PACE

The Autism Opportunity

Designing for Community-Based Solutions

Social Design

- ☐ **Competence**
- ☐ **Conscience**
- ☐ **Compassion**

The Autism Opportunity

- **Understanding Autism**
- **The Autism Field**
- **Designing for Community**

Connect   Support   Educate

The Diagnosis

ADHD

Aspergers

PDD-NOS

Pervasive Developmental Disorder

ED

OHI

ASD

Autism

ID (MR)

Rett Syndrome

SLD

TBI

LD

CDD

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

HFA

Autism is a Spectrum Disorder

What is Autism?

Autism is a neuro-developmental disability that affects one's ability to communicate, interact socially and learn in conventional ways.

Autism Characteristics

Individuals with Autism have difficulty with:

- ☐ Communication (delayed language)
- ☐ Social Interaction (literal, unfiltered)
- ☐ Behaviors (repetitive stimming)
- ☐ *Sensory Motor Regulation*
- ☐ *Executive Function*

Basic Facts

- Autism is a spectrum disorder: it affects each person differently

- Autism affects a person for a lifetime

- 1 in 88 children has Autism
(4:1 ratio of male to female)

- 11% of school special education in California is an Autism diagnosis

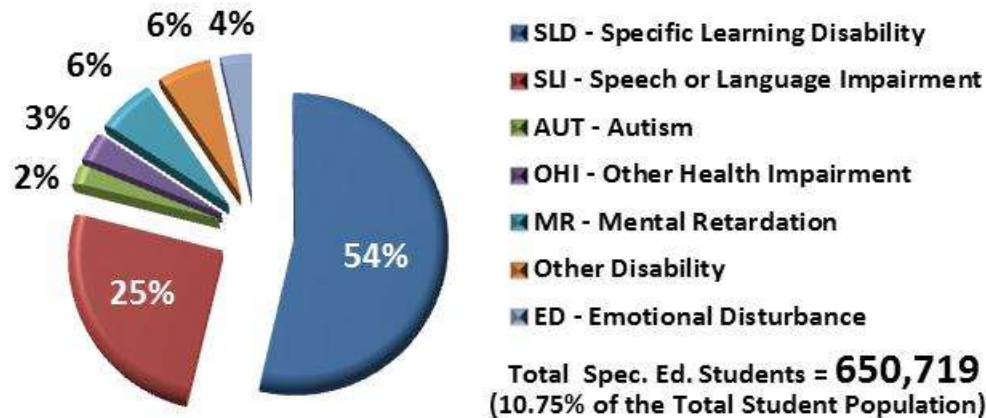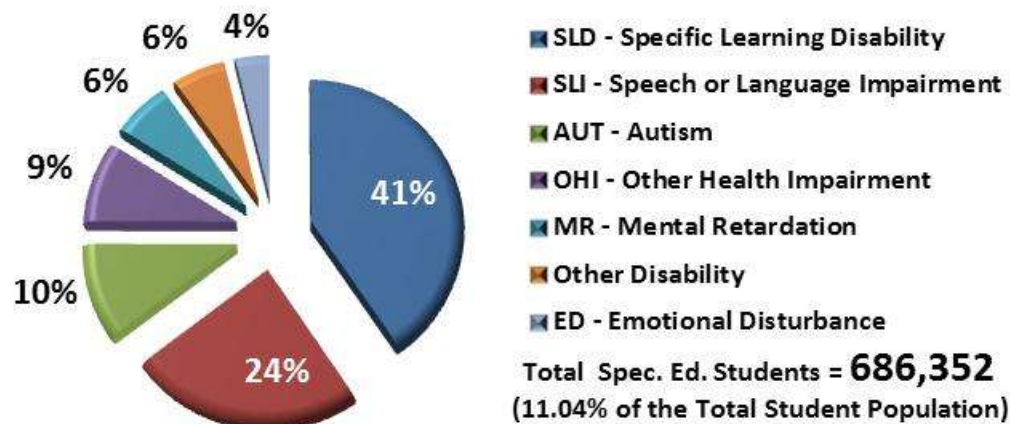- Half of the Autism population is higher functioning (social impairments)

Autism in CA Schools

CA School Age Students Affected by Autism

Autism Diagnosis in School

California Special Education - 2001

6% 4%
6%
3%
2%
25%
54%

- SLD - Specific Learning Disability
- SLI - Speech or Language Impairment
- AUT - Autism
- OHI - Other Health Impairment
- MR - Mental Retardation
- Other Disability
- ED - Emotional Disturbance

Total Spec. Ed. Students = **650,719**
(10.75% of the Total Student Population)

California Special Education - 2012

4%
6%
6%
9%
10%
24%
41%

- SLD - Specific Learning Disability
- SLI - Speech or Language Impairment
- AUT - Autism
- OHI - Other Health Impairment
- MR - Mental Retardation
- Other Disability
- ED - Emotional Disturbance

Total Spec. Ed. Students = **686,352**
(11.04% of the Total Student Population)
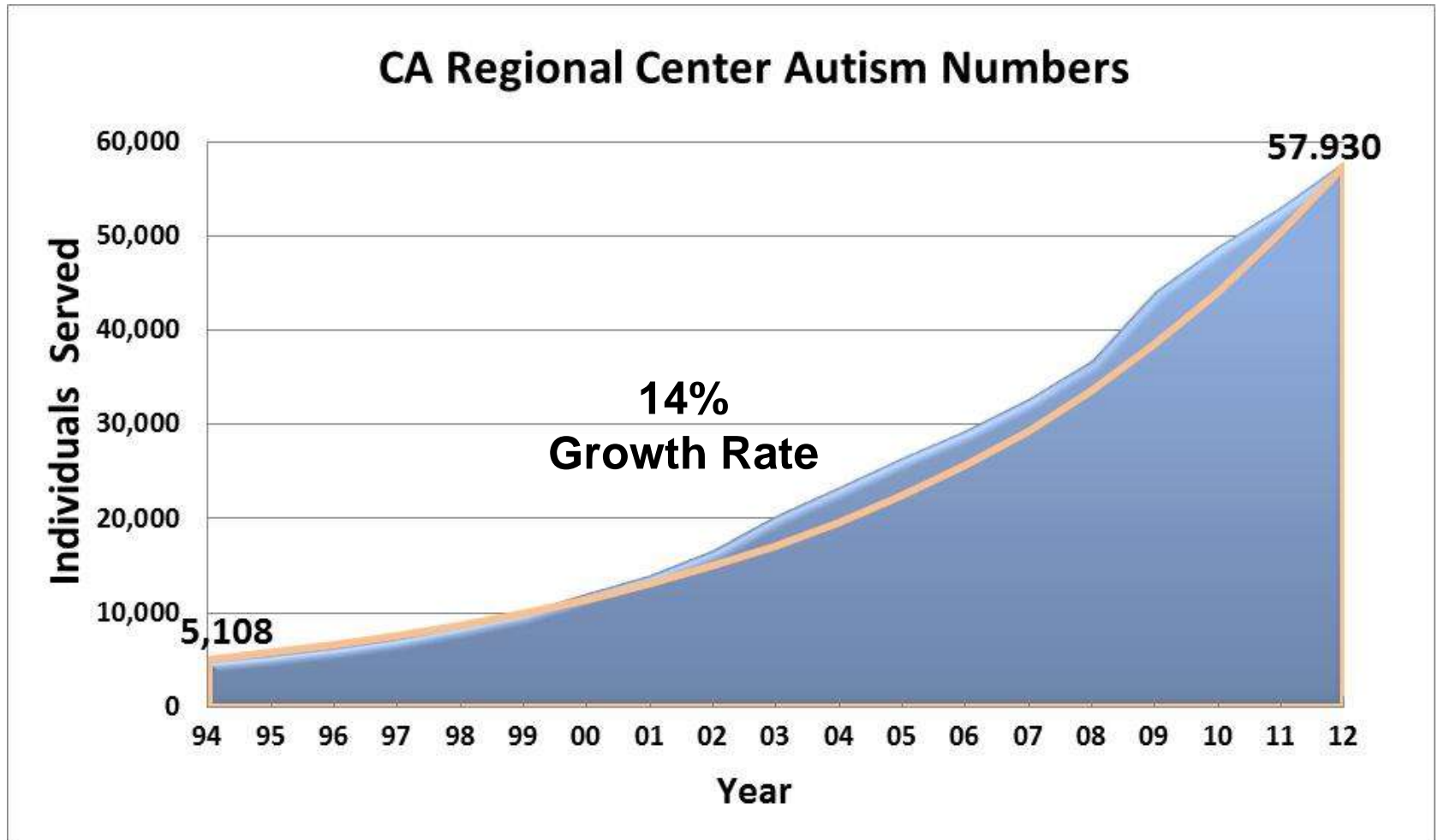
CA Regional Center Autism

Autism Research

- Genetic Predisposition (Proteins – Gene Messages)

- Environmental Factors (Triggers - Toxins)

Top 10 Design Considerations

- Heightened sensory awareness
  - Loud noises, flickering lights, change in temp., etc.
- Need for sensory diet areas (distractions)
- Individuals may not have a good sense of their expression (loud screams, rough play, etc.)

2 Communication

- Visual learners (visual schedules/timers, icons)
- Visual learning more retained than verbal
  - Build a visual library
  - Engage in image sequence elements
  - Visual memory mapping is an important skill

3 Consistent & Predictable

- Change is extremely difficult to manage
  - Management of the sensory surroundings
- Build defined structure and consistent routine
  - Develop a well defined timeline
  - Incorporate frequent breaks (every 15 minutes)
- Involve manageability, predictability & control
  - Slower movements
  - More exaggerated motions (expressive)
- Importance of "First – Then" statements (forecasting)

- Behavior antecedents can be subtle (video replay)
- Utilize reward reinforcement sparingly
- Understand the process of prompt fading
  - Types of prompts: physical, gestural, and verbal
- Importance of transparent data tracking methods

- Children are very pictorial in the way they think
- Visual recognition more receptive than language
  - Build a visual library
  - Engage in image sequence games
  - Visual memory mapping is a good learning tool

Body Language

☐ Less than 20% of communication is verbal

☐ Develop awareness of body language

   ☐ Unable to understand facial expressions

☐ Moods are unpredictable & uncertain

☐ Focus on face-to-face interaction

- Stemming – Repetitive behavior is necessary
  - Helps to center the individual
- Students learn on the move (kinetic learners)
  - Need for physical movement
- Need for dynamic change to avoid rote behavior

Behavior Modeling
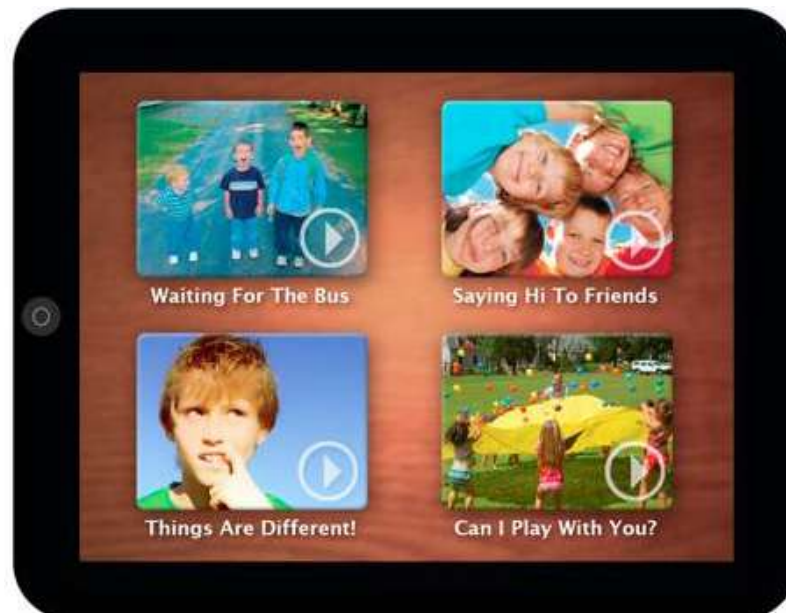
□ Learning through repetitive behavior models

  ■ Focus on multiple repeats of task for memory

9 **Social Stories**

- Social story is a short visual guide
  - Focus on key concepts
  - Break function into simple sequence of steps
  - Incorporate response questions

Design for Community

- Solutions are 24/7
- Parent / caregiver training is critical
  - Easily adaptable (minimal programming)
- Design for solutions that cover multiple domains
- Low tech can be highly desirable
- Understand cultural sensitivities

Contact Information

Kurt Ohlfs

Executive Director

Pacific Autism Center for Education (PACE)

1880 Pruneridge Ave.

Santa Clara, CA 95050

kurt@pacificautism.org

408/625-6171