



FASD NEWS AND VIEWS

A Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources,
Education and Support (MCFARES) Newsletter

Established in 2003



Questions We Are Asked

Question: *I'm a new teacher. I'll have a special education classroom with 10 kids and a para-professional in the classroom. One of our 4th grade boys has fetal alcohol syndrome. Do you have any suggestions about how I can most effectively work with him?*

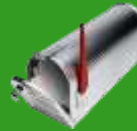
Answer: Congratulations on accepting this position. With the right attitude and an openness to learning, both you and your students will experience an enriching and rewarding school year. Always emphasize the needs of the individual student rather than focusing on his diagnosis or his IEP classifications. He is a young boy; he is not FAS or OHI or SLI or whatever other alphabet soup found in his school record. You may find, however, challenges in one or more of the following areas: behavior, learning, sensory. Seek input from parents about his behavior at home and interventions used there. Discover his learning style and try to adapt teaching techniques to that style. Be aware that transitions may be challenging and prepare him for transitions (subject to subject, moving classrooms, school breaks, end of year). Learn to interpret his signals. Anxiety may be look like hyperactivity. Confusion may look like anger.

There are many resources available to help you learn to decipher behaviors and needs. For example, [Reach to Teach: Educating Elementary and Middle School Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders](#) is a book published by SAMHSA Center for Excellence.

SUMMER 2013



Questions We Are Asked 1



Back to School Letter 3



Bragging / Super Kids 4



Conference / Project /
S.A.F.E / Perspective 5



Did You Know? 6

You can read it free online or order one free copy.

<http://fasdcenter.samhsa.gov/publications/reachToTeach.aspx> Suggest this book to your colleagues who will also be working with your students.

Remember that FASD is about brain damage and not about willfulness or non-compliance. Think "can't" rather than "won't." When speaking to him, keep language concrete and words brief and specific. As the number of words increases, the likelihood of him understanding your request and following

Question, cont'd

through with it decreases. Anxiety and confusion will also increase as he struggles to keep up with the conversation. When you make a request, ask him to re-state the request then show you how he will follow through. Check back periodically to see if he remains on-task. In order for him to learn a concept you may have to repeat and re-teach the information several times and using several different methods.

Many children who are on the spectrum have more advanced language skills than understanding skills. There are days when he will learn a new concept quickly and seem to have it mastered only to be unable to recall the information the next day.

Provide constant structure and supervision. As he may not be able to structure his day or regulate his behaviors, adults may have to act as his external brain and help him order his world. Consider requesting further evaluations if they have not yet been done such as an OT evaluation if you see he is overwhelmed by noise and movement or a speech therapy assessment if he has challenges expressing his needs or has difficulty understanding what is asked of him. Speak with an OT about an appropriate sensory diet to help minimize anxiety and sensory overload. Review his IEP and revise it as necessary to add

accommodations or modifications to his assignments (such as shortening assignments, allowing more time to complete assignments, assigning a scribe, etc.).

Your student likely will be involved with many professionals in your school (social work, OT, etc.) and has a family who is concerned about his future. Coordinate communication between all these people and help to keep everyone on the same page. Seek input from your student's parents about learning methods and behaviors. Many parents desire frequent updates about progress and this may seem that they are overly protective or overly involved but their search for frequent updates may help to maintain the structure and services that are vital to their child's success.

Most importantly, love this child. See him as the unique gift that he is, celebrate his accomplishments and support him when he has challenges. Be flexible to changing your style to meet his needs and be open to seeking assistance and insights from others. You'll need to change as his needs change.

If you have questions for News and Views, please send them charisse@mcfares.org.

New School Year: Introducing the Teacher to Your Child

Another school year is almost upon us. New teachers, classrooms, schedules may cause fear and anxiety for some children who are on the spectrum. To relieve some of this anxiety, parents might arrange to introduce their child to the new classroom and teacher before the first day of school. A letter of introduction may also help your child's teacher to learn about your child's needs and have the opportunity to seek more information before classes begin. Here's a sample letter written by one of our families.

Dear New Teacher,

My name is Mrs. S. My daughter, G., has FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) along with ADHD. I would appreciate if you would take the time to read all emails I send to you. I will have links to helpful information for you. Here is one to get you started: <http://www.mcosa.net/FASD.asp>

There will be days when G. comes home from school angry or upset and won't be able to tell me why. I will send you an email asking what happened. Please don't think I am blaming you for anything. Something may have happened at lunch or recess that you don't know about. I understand you can't watch G. at all times but you may have a better frame of reference than I do.

With the FAS comes brain damage. With the brain damage comes some internal nerve damage. G wears a vibrating watch to remind her when to go to the bathroom. Yes, she is 10 years old. No, she is not completely toilet trained. She will always have a change of clothes in her backpack as well as in the office. Please also feel free to call me if she has gone through all the clothes and needs more.

Please remind her to wash her hands and drink water. She does not remember these things. Be kind to her. She may remember her multiplication facts during science class but have no idea what you are talking about during math. She can have a great memory or a spotty one. My mother-in-law says FAS is like having Alzheimer's as a child. G remembers things best when she sees/holds/manipulates things. G hears very well but doesn't hear everything. Her ability to repeat instructions is fine but she doesn't know what you mean. Keep instructions short--one or 2 things at a time; as few words as possible.

G will try to please you at all costs. Occasionally, she is a little police woman. She doesn't see it as 'tattling', she is trying to let you know about something potentially dangerous. She will hold everything inside unless she is extremely stressed out. We will do as much homework as we can.

Thank you for being G's teacher this year. I look forward to getting to know you better as the months go by. I hope G learns a lot from you and you learn a lot from her.

If you would like to contact us, we can be reached at (h) 586-555-1212 or (c) 586-555-1213 or by email at parents@home.com.

Sincerely, Mrs. S

(Thank you Laurel S. for sharing your sample letter)

Here is an introduction flyer sample:

http://www.fan.org.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/33475/Parent_Info_booklet_Hey_Teacher.pdf

Bragging

Animal Whisperer

Laurel says: Gabby's special ways with animals continues to amaze me. She found this baby robin the other day, treated it very gently and (sadly) returned it to its Mama. As we walked home, she found a caterpillar. Later that day, she found a cicada bug on the netting of the trampoline.



Oakland County Fair, 1st Place Winner

Meg's entry was a Shoebox Float on the theme of Iditarod. She shared what she has learned to look forward to each winter with her club. Everyone watched "Snow Dogs" at movie night, then picked their musher to follow from info they had time to look over online beforehand. Almost daily updates of the race progress helped keep folks involved. At the end, we had a celebratory "Red Lantern Luncheon" featuring Smoked Salmon spread, "Fish head Stew" (krab chowder), "Snow Soup" (Potato-Leek soup), and a 16 dog-faced cupcake

team pulling a cupcake sled with a Peep musher! Her floats' inside show Aliy Zirkle's information and the Skunk's Place Kennel dog yard, complete with dogs on top of their houses. The outside is a map of the 2013 trail cities ending under the "burled arch" being welcomed to Nome, with the lantern of course! She hopes to send pix

and a note to "her" musher pick of four



Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization Program



WSU OT Students

The Super Kids/Smart Choices Summer Socialization program was held in July at Richards Middle School in Fraser. It was hosted this year by the MISD and Wayne State University. The children who attended enjoyed meeting new friends and catching up with old friends. On the last day of the program, everyone enjoyed spending time bowling and eating pizza.

Laurel, mom to Gabby, says: "I think all the kids & teachers at SK/SC camp deserve a big shout-out for having fun, teaching/learning and being good kids this summer."

Michigan FASD Task Forces Announces:

Our Journey of 40 Years and Beyond: Living and Learning with FASD

Please join us on Thursday, September 12, 2013 in Ann Arbor for “Our Journey of 40 Years and Beyond: Living and Learning with FASD.” Our keynote speaker is Dr. Kenneth Lyons Jones who will speak on “Looking Back, Looking Forward.”

Due to generous donors, the cost for the conference is only \$35. Scholarships are available for individuals who are on the spectrum and their caregivers.

For a detailed agenda for the conference, please visit this link:

http://ddi.wayne.edu/fasd/fasd_task_force_registration_form.pdf

To register online, please visit:

http://www.careofsem.com/register.php?table=event&sqnc_nb=66

Project S.A.F.E. (Supportive Activities for Everyone)

We are happy to announce that, thanks to Laurel S., we will again be able to hold Project S.A.F.E. gatherings. Laurel found a church in Sterling Heights that is willing to host Project S.A.F.E. We will meet on Saturday, September 14, 2013 from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. This will be an open Project S.A.F.E. meeting to recognize International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. Please feel free to invite family and friends to join us, enjoy a meal (please bring a dish to pass) and learn more about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Fellowship Chapel is located at 12875 14 Mile Road, Sterling Heights, MI 48312. Please contact Charisse Cossu-Kowalski at charisse@mcfares.org if you'd like to join us.

Future dates for Project S.A.F.E. will be announced on the Families and Supports Affected by FASD yahoo group. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FaSAFASD/>

It's a Matter of Perspective: Understanding How Our Kids' Brains Work

Anna (on her last day of being 5 years old): I did it! I did it!

Mom: You did what?

Anna: I danced in the rain!

Did You Know . . .

Did you know . . .

Members from the MCFARES Coalition are available for in-service training at your agency?

Topics include FASD 101, Signs and Symptoms, Behaviors and Interventions and Services and Supports. We can also develop an in-service specific to the needs of your agency.



Fees are typically \$100 per hour per

Did you know . . .

Many members of the MCFARES Coalition are parents of kids who were prenatally exposed to alcohol. These members are available to talk with parents to offer information and support.

If you know a family who might be interested in talking with another parent, ask them to email Charisse at charisse@mcfares.org or call 586-329-6722.



Help Us Help Families

You can help MCFARES to continue providing support, information and resources to the community. Members from MCFARES host vendor tables at area events to share prevention and resource information, provide information via phone and email, develop a quarterly newsletter, help fund scholarships to the Super Kids/Smart Choices summer socialization program, and host annual International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day events.

MCFARES incurs many expenses and is currently an unfunded Coalition. Your tax-deductible donation or donation of supplies

will help us to continue serving our community. We could always use printer cartridges (HP 564), printer paper, gas cards (to help families attend gatherings and medical appointments), grocery store gift cards (to provide food for family gatherings and other MCFARES events), and cash donations (to help pay phone bills, web-hosting, scholarships, etc.).

If you would like to help MCFARES, email Charisse at charisse@mcfares.org.

Support Groups for FASD in Michigan

(not all groups are specifically for FASD support)

(Please phone or email contact person prior to attending to ensure that group is still meeting. If information has changed, please email Charisse at Charisse@mcfares.org).

Alpena County

FASD Family Support Group, Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month; 6:30 – 8 p.m., Thunder Bay Transportation Authority, 3022 US23 S, Alpena. Contact Mary Schalk at maryschalk@verizon.net or 989-734-2877 for more information.

Eaton County

Eaton County Foster Adopt Support Group, Meets 1st Thursday monthly, 6 – 8:30 p.m. Pot luck dinner at 6:00 p.m. Group/training at 6:30 p.m. Childcare available. Charlotte Assembly of God Church, Charlotte, across from Meijer on M-50. Contact Michelle for more information at besa_93@yahoo.com.

Jackson County

Jackson County, Parenting Challenging Children. Meets 2nd Sunday of each month, 1 – 2 p.m. Cascades Fellowship CRC, 2390 W. High Street, Jackson, MI 49203. Monthly meeting includes family lunch, child care, crafts and videos for children and youth. Speaker occasionally scheduled. Contact Rev. Bob Devries or his wife Alice at 517-784-8034.

Kent County

West Michigan Support Group, Meets 3rd Tuesday of each month, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, 47 Jefferson Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Contact Barbara Wybrecht, 616-241-9126 or bmwybrecht@aol.com; Corry Tait, 616-550-4273; or, Sandy Kezenius, 616-874-9522 for more information.

Self-Advocates with and FASD in Action (SAFA), generally meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The meeting is for adults age 18 and up who have an official FASD diagnosis. Contact Rob Wybrecht for more information, rob1195@yahoo.com.

Macomb County

Project SAFE (Supportive Activities for Everyone), Generally on a Friday or Saturday evening from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. at various locations in Macomb County. Families meet for pot-luck dinner followed by supervised play for the children and support group time for adults. Contact Charisse at Charisse@mcfares.org or 586-329-6722.

Brunch Bunch, Monthly, 2nd Tuesday, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m., In Clinton Township, Contact Charisse at Charisse@mcfares.org or 586-329-6722 for location details.

Monroe County

Adoptive Moms Group, Meets 2nd Wednesday of each month, 7 – 9 p.m. Original Gravity, 440 County Street, Milan, MI 48160. Contact Theresa Light at Theresa.light@yahoo.com for more information as dates and locations sometimes change.

Washtenaw County

Ann Arbor Support Group, Meets 4th Wednesday of each month except November (meets 3rd Wednesday) and December (no meeting), 7 -9 p.m. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Education Center, Classroom #5, 5305 East Huron Drive. Contact Betsy for more information, betsysoden@juno.com.

On-line Support

Families and Supports Affected by FASD: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FaSAFASD>

Note: no liability is assumed with respect to use of or inability to use the information contained in this newsletter. Although every precaution has been taken, the authors assume no liability for errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages resulting from the use of the information contained therein.

MCFARES Member Agencies

- The Arc of Macomb (fiduciary)
- Family members of affected individuals
- Macomb Intermediate School District, Early On
- Fraser Public Schools
- Macomb Family Services
- Macomb County Health Department
- Madonna University
- Macomb County Office of Substance Abuse
- Oakland University School of Nursing
- Macomb County Community Mental Health



*MCFARES needs you.
Call us at 586-329-
6722 to find out how
you can help.*

MCFARES

44050 N. Gratiot

Clinton Township, MI 48036

[Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4