**System-wide Professional Development in Social Emotional Learning:**
Building capacity to support students with autism while creating a universal design

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**Unique Neuroscience in Social Emotional Learning**

- Research in the neuroscience of social emotional learning highlights specific developmental achievements as predictors of competence in language, social engagement and academics.

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**The neurology of social competence**

- Neuroscience highlights that children with autism have differences in the process of orienting toward social stimuli and, ultimately, understanding the “thoughts” of others.

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**Implication:** Proactive IEP goals focused on a high rate of nonverbal spontaneous communication.

Shifting priorities from “completing tasks” to “initiates interaction”

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**The neurology of social competence**

- Neural sensitivity to social stimuli contributes to the emergence of nonverbal communication, which is a predictor of language acquisition.

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**The neurology of social competence**

- As child acquire language, these neural underpinnings of social attention lead to the use of social words such as people’s names and actions.

- The use of subjects + verbs is a predictor of creative language acquisition.

- Children with autism develop language related to non-social stimuli (e.g., nouns and attributes) and often rely on scripted or “borrowed” language.
The neurology of social competence

**Implication:** Proactive IEP goals focused using the names of teachers and peers and action words.

From “acquiring nouns” to “using subjects + verbs”

- As children with vulnerabilities in these areas mature, neuroimaging has shown that children with autism tend to process social stimuli in regions typically used to process images and sounds that are non-biological.

- This makes predictions of actions, intentions, and emotions more inefficient and intellectualized.

The neurology of social competence

- The “invisible” nature of these social and emotional learning differences makes it difficult for those who interact with the child to recognize the need to provide proactive accommodations.

**Implication:** Accommodations for making our thoughts “transparent” in the classroom are essential.

Aligning efforts with Universal Designs for Learning (UDL)

The National Education Association (NEA) aims to reform instruction by shifting to a UDL model, as this:

- Fosters the creation of instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for all students,
- Provides a framework for access to academics and equity in education by eliminating barriers from the outset rather than accommodating reactively,
- Leads to more community viable and sustainable practices, impacting a greater number of children for the costs invested.

Aligning efforts with the Marcus Autism Vision 2018

The new strategic plan of the Marcus Autism Center aims to transform delivery of care for children with autism by:

- Reducing the average age of the diagnosis of ASD,
- Preventing associated symptoms by promoting social interactions and brain development,
- Building on-site capacity of community-based providers and educational systems to ensure financially sustainable models of care & education.

GA DOE & G-CASE vision for Universal Design for Leadership

Sustainability of professional development within a system can be enabled by these principles:

1) **Multiple Means of Representation** (e.g., use of student case studies and data to acquire new competencies and demonstrate impact)

2) **Multiple Means of Action and Expression** (e.g., large group training paired with engagement of case studies at focus school sites, parent education, system staff replication)

3) **Multiple Means of Engagement or Assessment** (e.g., building infrastructure at the district and focus site level to ensure that staff are mentoring each other and engaging in learning beyond formal training)
Effective Mechanisms for Educational Outreach
Identify internal resources, practice application and replicate

Level I - Enabling environments for students with ASD
- General education teachers
- Special education staff
- Administrators
- Members of the community

Level II - Differentiating instruction for students with ASD
- Highly qualified special education staff
- General education teachers
- School-based coaches and professional trainers

Level III - Trainer of the Trainers

Effective Mechanisms for Educational Outreach
Enabling schoolwide communities and building effective coaching practices in leadership level staff

Level I - Enabling environments for students with ASD

Level II - Differentiating instruction for students with ASD

Level III - Trainer of the Trainers

Cobb County School District: the Development of a Systemwide Plan

Ensuring a systemic plan for building capacity

From focus sites to replication, using technology enhanced learning to coaching leadership staff within a system

Step by step planning for changes in infrastructure

Establishing a collaborative mentorship model

From evidence-based practices to a framework for selecting those practices

Systemwide SEL

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Measuring the quality & impact of capacity building professional development in social emotional learning

In Cobb County, the quality and impact of social and emotional learning has and/or will be measured by:

1. Academic performance,
2. Greater engagement in the classroom, and in
3. Program quality indicators focused on SEL instruction.
4. Training participant interviews.

Additional growth markers should be documented in

1. Parent satisfaction
2. Staff confidence
3. Reduced costs
4. Sustainability within a system
# Checklist of Supports for Social & Emotional Learning

*Helping Students Engage in the Classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>1. Are academic tasks tied to purposeful and meaningful endpoints for the students, so the student can predict why they are engaged in a task, promoting student engagement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples: at early stages, tasks include movement &amp; hands-on materials and cause/effect properties and at later stages, a student’s writing/reading may be tied to real-life events, special events, and/or results in a request/comment shared to others...suggestion cards, greeting cards, letters, a submission to the school paper, or a school public service announcement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>2. Are daily agendas clearly posted, offered and/or individually accessible to each student to predict the sequence of expected activities in the classroom?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples: at early stages, activity baskets in sequence and/or picture schedules, and at later stages, written time-ordered schedules, post-its, day planners?</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>3. Are within-task schedules, help boxes, or timers provided to help children mark the beginning and endpoint and predict the steps within each activity?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples: at early stages, organized materials and/or numbered lists, and at later stages a written “help box” or task list on the front board or in close proximity to the student (either teacher or student generated).</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>4. Are there interactive opportunities paired with visual accommodations available to help children predict how to engage and what to say during activities?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples: partner talks, choral responses, role models, and visuals in close proximity with reminders of how to ask for help, comment about the task, ask questions, and/or respond to questions?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>5. Are supports available to help students regulate their emotions and predict that others are a source of emotional support.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples: responsive communicative partners, visual accommodations reminding the student to “jazz up” when disengaged, “cool off” when agitated, and reminders to share emotions and ask for coping strategies (e.g., “When I am feeling___, I can____.”)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Team Members:** ____________________________  **Date:** ____________________________

**Action Items:**

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**Follow Up Meeting Date:** ____________________________

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**Rating Key**

1 - Not yet  
2 - Sometimes  
3 - Evident

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