



Autism Spectrum Disorders

Goodhue County Education District

Pokemon Go: making the community and social interaction accessible



Battling Blastoise for control. Running to capture Dragonite. Going a distance to evolve a Pidgey. All of these actions are motivation to get off the couch and out of the house.

For some individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the thrill of the Pokemon Go chase and the rewards of character collection and evolution are perfect incentives for getting out of their comfort zone.

Pokemon Go, a virtual reality game that lets players use their smart phones to capture Pokemon and battle for gyms in real world spaces, requires players to leave the house, walk long distances, and explore their communities. The game often puts players in contact with other players searching for the same PokeStops, Pokemon, and Gyms.

Though autism's unique challenges can make it

hard for people on the spectrum to find common interests with others and make social connections, Pokemon Go is bridging the social gap for individuals with ASD, encouraging community engagement and also providing a mutual subject of interest with other players.

"I have seen my son not only interacting comfortably with other kids, neurotypical and autistic, but also better with adults," Haddayr Copley-Woods, mom of a child with ASD, said. "His stepparent had found it a little difficult to figure out how to interact with my son, and now the two of them go on 'Pokewalks' together, getting exercise and fresh air, and they talk a mile a minute about their finds."

Video games, 90s nostalgia, and obsessive attention to "catching 'em all" may be the perfect recipe for sparking interest and motivation for some individuals with autism. The ease of game-centric interaction

makes Pokemon Go an entryway for exercise, community engagement, and relationship building. It's a world unto itself, but it's one that both individuals with autism and neurotypical individuals can enter. "As an adult with autism, I feel the most impactful part of this game is the sense of community it instills," Jillian Nelson, an avid Pokemon Go player said. "When you are a person who wants to have friends, and make those vital human connections, but often gets hoodwinked by anxiety or social awkwardness, it is indescribable to be able to download a free app that gives you a key to this unusual universe where bikers and school kids, business men and fitness fanatics are connected with those typically labelled 'geek'."

Nelson spent her birthday in downtown St. Paul's Rice Park playing Pokemon Go. "I spent my birthday with several hundred strangers searching out the elusive Dragonite," she said. "I didn't find him,

September 2016

Volume 7 Issue 1

Inside this issue:

Exercise Connection	2
We Thinkers	2
GPS	2
Region X	3
Tips and Tricks	3
Upcoming Events	3

but I had countless conversations about strategy, previous days' catches, the sociological phenomenon happening, and even about how to play the ukulele. I found a place where it was safe to be just me, where eye contact didn't matter, and everyone else was just as fixated as me."

www.ausm.org

Exercise Connection

David Geslak, or Coach Dave, is the founder of Exercise Connection and ExerciseBuddy, and is widely recognized for the pioneering of visual exercise programs, as well as his insightful and dynamic presentations. As an author, former para-educator and Fitness Coordinator at a school for children with autism, the autism community has embraced Dave's message and are especially encouraged by his results. During this six-hour workshop, you will be educated on the

Five Components of Physical Fitness for Individuals with Autism and how this is used to guide professionals to teach exercise using the Visual Exercise System and ExerciseBuddy, an iPad App.

Coach Dave and the EC protocols have transformed individuals, organizations, parents, and professionals' lives. Participants should be ready to move, have fun and leave with the tools, protocols, and confidence to im-

mediately incorporate exercise into lives of the individuals they work with.



October 18 - Rochester MN

www.region10projects.org

It's Finally Available!! (Formerly The Incredible Flexible You)

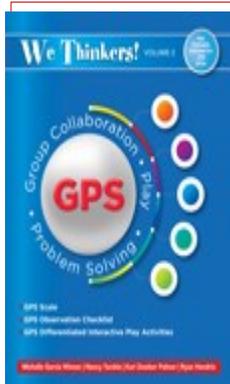
Renamed "*We Thinkers!*" In Volume 2 we delve deeper into how to figure out the social clues to share space, interact, and regulate emotions. We use the term "social executive functioning" to discuss that we are helping children learn to better self-regulate their behavior and emotions when sharing space or interacting with others. Social executive functioning is used in the classroom when sitting in a group to learn, it's used when running onto the playground to play with

others, and kids use it to figure out how to join a play group that's pre-



tending to be pirates. It involves surveying a social situation, understanding what the group is doing,

considering others' ideas, having enough flexibility (in thoughts and behavior) to ride out the shifts and changes that may occur, negotiating roles, turns, or positions, and self-regulating to keep emotions, actions and reactions under control when problems arise. Taken from www.socialthinking.org



GROUP COLLABORATION, PLAY AND PROBLEM SOLVING - The GPS book includes a research review, discusses the importance of interactive play as the foundation for later learning, and offers our brand new GPS tools that help adults widen their perspectives and teaching know-how in providing differentiated instruction and treatment plans. The book introduces our new five-level GPS Play Scale and its related GPS Observation Tools (checklist and scoring forms). Once we know children's starting play level, we demonstrate how professionals and parents can tailor their teachings to build guided interactive play lessons. The second half of the book offers differentiated interactive play activities for GPS play levels 2-5 for each of the five Social Thinking concepts introduced in the storybooks and curriculum units.

Region X Autism Community of Practice

A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

The key elements are:

The domain:

members are brought together by a learning need they share.

The community: their collective learning becomes a bond among them over time.

The practice: their interactions produce resources that affect their practice and the practice of others

Twelve individuals from South East Minnesota, representing the communities of Austin, Fairbault, Fillmore Central, Grand Meadow, Goodhue County Education District, Hiawatha Valley Education District, Northfield, Rochester, Winona, and Zumbro Education District come together monthly to learn from each other and prepare information to disseminate back to staff in their respective districts.



The 2016-2017 goals are:

- ◆ 1 - To create share learning experiences for general educators and other special educators in order to better understand how learners with ASD can participate successfully in the general education setting with more independence., and
- ◆ 2 - To support ongoing implementation of the STAR/ LINKS curriculum

Autism Tips & Tricks

Each month, representatives attending the Autism Community of Practice will pick a theme and put together a one page information sheet intended to be shared with general educators. Part of our mission is to help all educators increase their knowledge of interventions that facilitate success for students on the autism spectrum. I will include the information as an attachment when I send out this newsletter. Please disseminate the information to staff working with students with ASD.

Upcoming Events



October 12 - 14 - Social Thinking for Early Learners/Zones of Regulation - Minneapolis \$245/day. Register at www.socialthinking.com

October 18 - Exercise Connection - Challenging Autism with Exercise 9 - 3 Rochester. \$45.00 Register at www.region10projects.org.

October 19 - Tony Atwood - An Aspie's Guide to Life's Challenges - 8:30 - 4:00 \$115.00 Register at www.ausm.org