



Autism Developmental Approach Therapies Association

Fall 2017

Foundation Academics

Being back in school can be quite overwhelming for children with developmental challenges. Parents can be very concerned about their children falling behind in academics. Clinical director of the [Rebecca School](#), [Dr. Gil Tippy](#), has coined the term *Foundation Academics*.

In a recent podcast with [Affect Autism](#), he explained that until you master early developmental capacities, like neurotypical children tend to by 48 months of age, traditional academics can only be taught in a memory-based way.

"There are discrete packets of knowledge or skills in our society that we all have to learn, such as our encoding system of reading, which is different from "*I want to represent symbolically what I feel inside*" which is developmental." Students need both.

Dr. Tippy continues that a lot of the academic skills can be taught pretty quickly if you're developmentally ready. He says that our job is to allow the space and time supporting a child through what is holding him/her back, such as sensory processing challenges. This results in longer-term learning and is a respectful way of treating people.

The schools featured in this bulletin all incorporate the Developmental, Individual differences, Relationship-based (DIR) model as their framework of service, which supports students through the early *foundation academics*.



Autism D.A.T.A.'s Fall 2017 Bulletin

Welcome to the latest from the developmental approach to autism intervention world! This issue focuses on four schools for children with developmental challenges using a developmental approach in their curriculum.

Please sign up at [autismDATA.org](#) to receive your copy via email and see past issues at [autismdata.org/bulletin](#).

If you live in Ontario, Canada, please consider adding your name to our petition at [autismdata.org/petition](#) to see Developmental Approach therapies funded.



The Rebecca School

The [Rebecca School](#) in Manhattan consulted with [Dr. Stanley Greenspan](#) on how to apply the Developmental, Individual differences, Relationship-based (DIR) Model in a school setting. It opened in 2006 and serves students age 3 to 21, currently serving 138 students.

The school has a classroom setting for students having therapies integrated into the classroom for the most part. The staff focuses on promoting relating, communicating, and thinking through relationships with a strong focus of the use of affect to promote comprehension.

It's all about supporting their students in every step from having an idea, to communicating that idea in the space of a relationship with a trusted person, to executing it to the end. It's about giving them lots of practice at this, allowing them the time and space to figure those pieces out, and providing the "just right" challenge for them.

You can read more about the Rebecca School [here](#).

Link to this bulletin online [HERE](#).

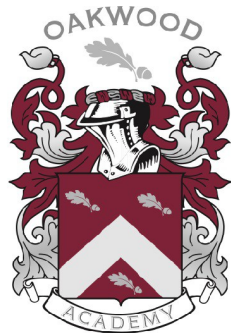
Submissions for bulletin: affectautism@gmail.com

Soaring Eagle Academy

Soaring Eagle Academy in Lombard, IL, just outside Chicago, was co-founded by three speech and language pathologists in 2010. They serve students aged 3 to 21, and are the only school to integrate Developmental Language Models and DIR/Floortime principles.

All curriculum is created with individual differences in mind. The staff matches their language and interactions to each child and his/her interests and intentions. Each student also is supported by a full team including a Floortime player teaching assistant, special education teacher, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, social worker/counsellor and DIR specialist.

Everything is hand-on and multi-sensory where students are encouraged to explore and interact with their learning materials, environment and peers. To read more, see the [blog post](#) at affectautism.com.



Oakwood Academy

Located just west of Toronto in Mississauga, **Oakwood Academy** is the only school in Canada using the DIR model. Their focus is on individualized education in promoting relating, communicating, and thinking, serving students age 3 to 21.

Oakwood Academy offers biweekly speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, and seasonal offerings of music therapy, gymnastics and swimming. There are students with 1:1 support, academic prep classes with 1:4 support, and academic classes with 1:4 and 1:8 support.

Students at Oakwood Academy also have the opportunity to integrate with students at St. Jude's Academy, a private IB Junior Kindergarten to grade 12 school, where Oakwood is housed. As readiness dictates, Oakwood students can join neurotypical students in a subject of strength or preference, with an aid if necessary. For more information, see the blog post [here](#).



The Community School

When his son struggled in educational settings, Dave Nelson in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia started a school to meet his son's needs: a school that offered infinite support yet also offered infinite possibility.

The Community School serves adolescents and young adults. The staff groups of individuals into peer cohorts based on their common goals. The young adults are in various stages of transitioning into adulthood: attending college, getting work experience, or moving out of parents' home to live independently.

They help their students articulate goals and be co-collaborators in their experience. They want the students to be able to make decisions for themselves and advocate for themselves. The program is also therapeutic with seven licensed mental health professionals on staff.

The school also provides a required initial parent training, monthly parent support groups, ongoing parent training, and daily online notes to serve as a training mechanism to reinforce understanding of why the school does what they do. To read more, find the blog post [here](#).

Thank you to the schools featured here for taking the time to tell us about themselves.

Have an idea for our next newsletter? Let us know!