



# Autism Spectrum Disorders Information for Families

## Meet Your BRIC ASD Specialists

Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council (BRIC) currently employs three Autism Specialists. The role of the Autism Specialist is to attend IEP meetings, conduct evaluations, and support special education staff and schools that are providing the direct services to students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Our hope for this newsletter is to provide families with information regarding Autism. If you would like to receive these newsletters via e-mail please email Jill Yost at [jyost@bric.k12.mn.us](mailto:jyost@bric.k12.mn.us) to be added to the e-mail list.

The first newsletter also contains a short survey for you to complete. You may access the survey by typing the following web-address <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5MW37M2> into your internet browser or complete the attached paper form and return it to your child's case manager. We will also be asking you to complete a post-survey at the end of the school year. Thank you in advance for your feedback.

### Meet Your Autism Specialists

#### Sue Nohner

This is my 35<sup>th</sup> year in the education field and I continue to experience the excitement of the new school year as if it were my first.

Hi, I'm Sue Nohner, Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialist, for the BRIC Special Education Cooperative. This is my 4<sup>th</sup> year in serving districts in that capacity. In the past I have taught kindergarten, Early Childhood Special Education, and individuals on the Autism Spectrum at various grade levels. My current teaching license includes: Elementary Education (grades K-6), Early Childhood Special Education,



and Autism Spectrum Disorder. The majority of my career has been at Lake of the Woods School in Baudette, MN however my husband and I moved back to the Fosston area where I grew up. We feel so blessed to be closer to family and fortunate to be able to see our young grandsons often. Over the past several years I have had the opportunity to attend numerous trainings and workshops as well as completing college course work on Autism. It is an area that is near and dear to my heart and I'm excited to be a part of your child's education.

## Jill Yost

This is my 2<sup>nd</sup> year working for BRIC as an

Autism Specialist.

Prior to

working at

BRIC I was

employed at

Laporte School District for 13 years.

At Laporte I taught high school special education working with all disability areas.



I grew up in Mahnomen and graduated from Bemidji State University with an undergraduate degree in Applied Psychology. I also received educational licensures in Early Childhood Education, Emotional Behavioral Disorders, and Specific Learning Disabilities from BSU. I received my Master's Degree in Special Education with a specialty in Autism Spectrum Disorders from UND.

I live south of Bemidji with my husband, Brandon, and two sons Mikkol and Payne.

I currently serve the following BRIC schools: Cass Lake, Blackduck, Kelliher, Northome, Littlefork, and Indus.

## Christy Zubke

Some of you

may

recognize

the last

name as I

am a native

of the Laporte area. I am excited to

be back in the area serving students

and families.



**“AUTISM IS PART OF MY CHILD. IT’S NOT EVERYTHING HE IS. MY CHILD IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A DIAGNOSIS.”**

S.L. COELHO

ANDNEXTCOMES! CO

After graduating from Laporte High School I went on to complete my bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Special Education at the University of North Dakota (UND). I then had the opportunity to be a part of the Resident Teacher Program through UND. This program was in partnership with the Grand Forks Public Schools. It allowed me to obtain my Master's in Special Education while completing my first year of teaching with the support of a mentor in the program. I wouldn't trade that experience for anything!

I have been teaching students with special needs for the past eleven years. It's been my privilege to teach students from Kindergarten through adulthood. The majority of those years have been in Grand Forks, ND. This past year I was a special education teacher in the Walker Elementary School.

As I stated earlier, I am excited to be back in the area and to be close to family again. I purchased a house this fall just south of Bemidji so I will be trying to get settled in to a new place and routines. :)

For the 2015-16 school year I will be serving the following schools: Laporte, Bagley, Clearbrook-Gonvick, Mahnomen, and White Earth. I look forward to meeting the teams and families that support our students to be the best that they can be!

## Resources

When your child was given the label or diagnosis of Autism, how many of you turned to google to learn more? Did you find the information you needed? Or did you shut down your computer with more confusion than you began?

Today when you google the term "Autism" over 70,000,000 results appear! What information within that search is good and reliable information that might be relevant to your concerns? The answer to these questions may vary depending on what you are looking for. If your

goal is to learn more about the characteristics of Autism; sites such as Autism Speaks, Autism Society, and other national organizations are good places to gather factual information, these sites also provide up-to-date research findings.

If you are looking for information regarding therapies, treatments, or other possible services, sites such as the National Autism Center or the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders provide parents and educators with information about evidence based practices or treatments that have been proven to be successful when working with students with Autism.

We would caution against web-sites or other materials that talk about a "cure" for Autism. We believe a child is born with Autism and we can work on teaching skills that will allow for success, but there may always be situations or tasks that are difficult for a person with Autism.

### LINKS

<http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/>

<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/>

<https://www.autismspeaks.org>

<http://www.autism-society.org>

## "Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew" by Ellen Notbohn

- 1. I am a child.** My autism is part of who I am, not all of who I am.
- 2. My senses are out of sync.** This means that ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that you may not even notice can be downright painful for me.
- 3. Distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).** It isn't that I can't listen to instructions. It's that I can't understand you.
- 4. I'm a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally.** Don't confuse me by saying, "hold your horses, cowboy!" When what you mean is "Stop running."

**5. Listen to all the ways I'm trying to communicate.** It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't have a way to describe my feelings.

**6. Picture this! I'm visually oriented.** Show me how to do something rather than just telling me.

**7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.** Like any person, I can't learn in an environment where I'm constantly made to feel that I'm not good enough and that I need fixing.

**8. Help me with social interactions.** It may look like I don't want to play with the other kids on the playground, but it may be that I simply do not know how to start a conversation or join in their play.

**9. Identify what triggers my meltdown.** Meltdowns and blow-ups are more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload, or because I've been pushed past the limit of my social abilities.

**10. Love me unconditionally.** You didn't fulfill every expectation your parents had for you and you wouldn't like be constantly reminded of it. I didn't choose to have autism.