**Autism Quick Facts:**

- 1 in every 88 children in America is on the autism spectrum (A recent national survey now says 1 in every 50!)
- 1 in every 54 boys and 1 in every 252 girls are diagnosed with autism in America
- This is more children than are affected by diabetes, AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy or Down syndrome, combined
- Autism prevalence numbers continue to grow
- There is currently no medical detection or cure for autism


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**In Jenison Public Schools we currently have 61 students with a primary disability of ASD**

**LINKS class Quick Facts**

Please view the front page of your application for the due date

- A parent signature is required on the application
- Teacher recommendation is required along with the application
- The LINKS class is a semester long class
- There will be interviews held for students potentially chosen for the LINKS class
- Students chosen for the LINKS class are required to attend a training day before their semester starts

Questions or concerns?

Please contact

Stacey VanLaan
Jenison Jr. High ASD teacher
[SVanLaan@jpsonline.org](mailto:SVanLaan@jpsonline.org)
[http://jenisonjrhighlinks.weebly.com](http://jenisonjrhighlinks.weebly.com)
Autism

Many of us may not be personally affected by this disability but that might change soon enough. Autism is on the rise and the statistics prove it. Autism affects 1 in every 88 children and 1 in 54 boys. It is very likely that your child has a class or two with someone with autism. It is also very likely that when your child goes out into the work-world they will be working with someone with autism there as well.

Jenison Jr. High School is working hard to increase the awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) within our school. Our goal is to create an environment that is comfortable and accepting for those with autism. In order to make this a reality we have begun a program that will provide support and training for students with ASD. This program, the LINKS program, needs the help of your non-ASD student.

About the LINKS Program

Many of our students with autism need extra one-on-one support either from a teacher or paraprofessional but many studies have proven that students with ASD respond better to their own peers rather than an adult. The LINKS program allows for our students with ASD to receive those extra supports in a more natural way, by placing a non-ASD student with them.

The LINKS student (non-ASD student) will sign up for the LINKS class as an elective and will be placed with a student with ASD during one class hour (their elective hour). The LINKS student will act as a peer advocate, mentor, role model and friend for that student. Together, the students will work toward the goal of independence and socialization. He or she will assist the student with autism in such things as being a meaningful member of a pair or group, organization of assignments and supplies, and focusing on what the teacher is saying. The LINKS student will also be with the student with autism everyday in their assigned class for the purpose of helping them socially, academically, behaviorally and to promote independence.

LINKS students will also have their own learning expectations. The class will meet for instruction that focuses on training students in the methodology for working with people with autism. They will also complete assignments and projects that promote application to their learning. The class will meet face-to-face one day a week and all assignments will be turned in through the Jenison LINKS website.

Once a month the LINKS student will attend a case conference to discuss the progress of their assigned student. As a group, they will also brainstorm new ideas to better support their ASD peer. At the end of the semester the LINKS student will receive a grade based on their attendance, assignments, participation and projects for the class.