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# INTEGRATING AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH INTO YOUR SCHOOL:

## SAMPLE MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS



**START**

These morning announcements were shared with  
START by OCAN (Oakland County Autism Network).

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**APRIL 9**



Hello TOWN community, this is NAME. On behalf of the SCHOOL MASCOT/SCHOOL NAME, welcome back to school, we hope you had a great spring break. Did you know that April 2nd was World Autism Awareness Day and that in America all of April is National Autism Awareness Month? As a way of raising awareness and developing understanding about autism, the SCHOOL MASCOT/SCHOOL NAME will be sharing information about this very common diagnosis throughout the month. SCHOOL MASCOT/SCHOOL NAME will also be selling gourmet lollipops at lunch this month for \$1. Part of the proceeds will be donated to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network. We hope you will take the time to think about what we share with you and what you can do to increase acceptance for people with autism. Thank you.

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**APRIL 10**

Good morning SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. Did you know that autism is one of the fastest-growing developmental disorders in the U.S? Autism now affects 1 in 68 children and out of those 68 kids, 1 in 42 are boys. Boys are nearly five times more likely than girls to have autism. Scientist don't know why boys are more highly effected. With numbers that high, there is a very good chance you could have someone with autism in your family one day, if you don't already. Thanks for listening everyone. Have a great day.

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**APRIL 11**

Happy Wednesday SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. I am sure you have heard adults mention how expensive it is to raise a child. Autism costs a family around \$60,000 a year on average for services such as speech, physical and occupational therapy. There is no medical detection for autism. Being friendly, patient and including kids with autism socially, is like free social skills class for the family!

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**APRIL 12**

Good Morning SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. Here is your daily fact about autism. Autism is officially called Autism Spectrum Disorder or some people may just refer to it as ASD. So what is a "spectrum disorder?" Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the name for a group of developmental disorders which includes a wide range, or "a spectrum," of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability. In a nutshell, spectrum means that some people are mildly impaired by their symptoms, while others are severely disabled. Really it's just like anyone who has strengths and weaknesses.

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**APRIL 12**

Hello SCHOOL NAME community, this is NAME. As mentioned yesterday, autism is a spectrum disorder. Autism is diagnosed by recognizing difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. The most obvious signs and symptoms of autism tend to emerge between 12 and 18 months of age. Some infants and toddlers actually begin to develop typically until the second year of life, when they lose skills and develop autism - this pattern is called "regression." It is important to remember that it is never too late to get help. The more assistance to improve any skills is helpful.

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## APRIL 16

Good Morning SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. Last Friday we mentioned that autism can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Here are some examples of signs that a small child may have autism:

- By 6 months: No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions
- By 9 months: No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions
- By 12 months: Lack of response to name, no babbling or "baby talk" and/or no back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, showing, reaching, or waving
- By 16 months: No spoken words
- And by 24 months: No meaningful two-word phrases that don't involve imitating or repeating
- Please let people around you know that early intervention for babies, toddlers and children on the spectrum is crucial!

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## APRIL 17

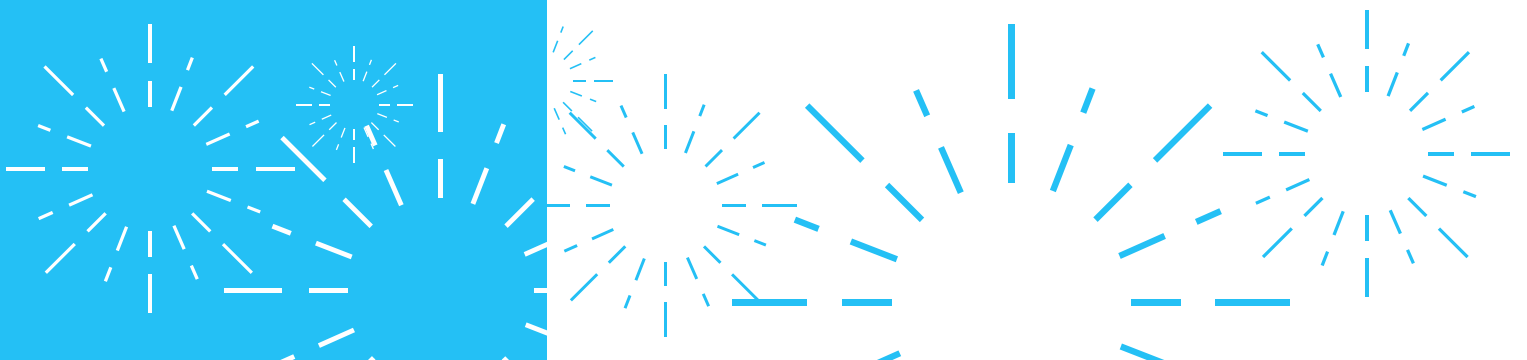
Happy Tuesday SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. Yesterday we talked about common signs of autism in babies two and under. As children get older, the red flags for autism become more diverse. There are many warning signs and symptoms, but they typically revolve around impaired social skills, speech and language difficulties, non-verbal communication difficulties, and inflexible behavior. Here are some things to look for:

- Appears disinterested or unaware of other people or what's going on around them
- Doesn't know how to connect with others, play, or make friends
- Prefers not to be touched, held, or cuddled
- Doesn't play "pretend" games, engage in group games, imitate others, or use toys in creative ways
- Has trouble understanding feelings or talking about them
- Doesn't seem to hear when others talk to him or her
- Doesn't share interests or achievements with others (drawings, toys)
- If you have a sibling, cousin or family friend whose child is showing some of these symptoms, suggest they talk to their doctor right away to rule out autism. As said yesterday, the earlier a child gets help, the better their outcomes tend to be.

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## APRIL 18

Good morning, this is NAME. SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT just wanted to make sure you know that each individual with autism is unique. Approximately 25 percent of individuals with ASD are nonverbal but can learn to communicate using other means such as sign language and/or a computer. With that said, many of those on the autism spectrum have exceptional visual skills, music ability and academic skills. Only about 40 percent have an intellectual disability and many have normal to above average intelligence. Please do not assume that someone with autism is not smart! I know you wouldn't like that if someone did it to you.



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**APRIL 19**



Good Morning SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. Most people with autism are just like you when it comes to wanting friends. Some kids find it hard, while other don't. One hurdle is that many people with autism struggle to make direct eye contact when having a conversation. Eye contact could be making them uncomfortable or making it hard to focus on the other person's words. This lack of eye contact has people missing important facial expressions. Facial expressions say just as much as words! It doesn't help that reading facial expressions and body language doesn't usually come naturally to people with ASD. They often have to be taught how to do so. Your patience and understanding when chatting with a person with autism is kind and can help that person get better at their social skills.

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**APRIL 20**

Happy Friday, this is NAME. SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT wanted to make sure you understand a little more about why most people on the autism spectrum sometimes struggle to socialize and make friends. Many on the spectrum will choose a few, sometimes seemingly random, things to be interested in. Often times this is the only topic that that person feels comfortable talking about. Combine this with the language development delay that many on the spectrum have and the result is a person that struggles to connect socially with others. Be open minded when you meet someone who may seem quirky or different, give them a fair chance.

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**APRIL 23**

Welcome back SCHOOL MASCOT, I hope you had a great weekend, this is NAME. Do you struggle with ADD or ADHD, do you ever get depressed or have bad anxiety? These can be really hard things to deal with for a person that does not have autism, so just imagine what a struggle it could be for someone who does! It is not uncommon for people on the spectrum to also have one of the above issues. Anxiety could stem from having to constantly be social with those around them or just the awareness that this is a weakness. Depression can be rooted in the realization that they are different and that many people don't understand or care to understand. This is the type of situation that even a small amount of kindness and compassion shown to another can help.

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**APRIL 24**

Happy Tuesday, this is NAME. Imagine for a minute that the loud cheering of a basketball game is ten times its regular volume, would you cover your ears? Imagine that all your clothes had itchy tags! What about the bright lights of a school dance seeming 100 times brighter to you and only you? This would make enjoying yourself in many situations really hard. Unfortunately many people with ASD have what is called sensory processing disorder. This increases the perception in volume, touch, brightness, etc. of things by huge amounts. Sensory processing disorder often results in people covering their ears, wearing headphones or leaving a situation when the volume becomes unbearable to them. It would be like someone throwing you in an almost frozen lake and then not understanding when you are too cold and want to come out.

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**APRIL 25**

Hello SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT, this is NAME. Many articles have been written about what people on the spectrum wish "NT's" would know. Did you know that "NT" stands for "neuro-typical," meaning your brain works typically or commonly? Here is a small list of things people on the spectrum wish "NT's" would be more aware of:

- "Please stop saying "I am so sorry you have that" or feeling bad for me. There is nothing to be sorry about, autism is just another way of processing the world."
- "Please stop insisting that I look you in the eye. I really can't do that and enjoy our conversation. Trust me, I am listening."
- "Can you feel emotion?" "Yes, of course, I am not a robot!"
- And lastly, don't ask a question you don't want an honest answer to. People on the spectrum tend to be brutally honest!

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**APRIL 26**

Hello SCHOOL NAME, this is NAME. One cool thing that is happening right now is what colleges and university are doing to welcome students with autism! Transitioning to living independently is hard for a NT but it can be even trickier for a person with autism. Colleges right here in Michigan, like U of M and Grand Valley are considered some of the best in the country for these accommodations. Help in housing, independent living and socializing are just a few areas of assistance that is offered if needed. Smart moves on the college's part!

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**APRIL 27**

Good morning SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT, this is NAME. We have been mentioning a lot about the weakness or struggles that people on the spectrum often deal with but we have yet to discuss the strengths. In 2015, Cambridge University undertook a study of almost half a million people and uncovered intriguing evidence that autistic traits are more common among people involved in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields... careers historically requiring quite a lot of brainpower. Many people with autism have very high IQ's and areas of learning in the superior range. They often have exceptional concentration, are highly focused on detail and are appreciated for their accuracy. Due to these qualities, many large companies, especially in the area of computers and engineering, are seeking out people with ASD as employees. These companies are accepting of the social quirks that come along with autism, especially when that person can offer a level of work or development that many typical people cannot.

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**APRIL 30**



Happy Monday SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT, this is NAME. Thank you for being so open and awesome and learning about Autism Spectrum Disorder. At the beginning of the month, on April 2nd, while we were on break, there were hundreds of thousands of landmarks, buildings, homes, and communities around the world that were lit up with blue light in recognition of people living with autism. As our way of showing support, the SCHOOL NAME/SCHOOL MASCOT crew will be sponsoring a "Light It Up Blue" lunch today. Blue glow bracelets will be given out to each student. Our very own cafeteria will light it up blue to show our respect and understanding. I will leave you with a quote to think about this morning: "Autism is not a choice, acceptance is. Imagine if the opposite was true."

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