

OCEAN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT
Huntington Beach, California

(Action)

November 16, 2010

TO: Alan G. Rasmussen, Ed.D., Superintendent

FROM: Anne Silavs, Director, Curriculum and Instruction

SUBJECT: AGREEMENT BETWEEN DANYA INTERNATIONAL, INC. AND OCEAN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT TO PARTICIPATE IN A PILOT STUDY ON EDUCATING ADULTS ABOUT CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (EACA)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Reported autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) prevalence rates have tripled over the past three decades. In a recent survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in 150 children were reported to have an autism diagnosis. With the increased prevalence rates, higher numbers of children with autism are entering the public education system. As schools seek to integrate children with ASDs into ordinary classrooms, they rely heavily on paraeducators, classroom aides, or assistants who are not required to take extensive training and, therefore, may not be equipped to teach them. Furthermore, social inclusion goals can be seen as inclusion in other settings, such as the cafeteria, school bus, or school yard, meaning that children with ASDs have numerous interactions with other adults, often daily. Training these adults is critical to successful social inclusion, especially given the increased likelihood of children with ASDs becoming the target of bullying and their high rates of exclusion from school often due to the school's inability to cope with these children (Cumine, Leach, & Stevenson, 1998; Barnard, Prior, & Potter, 2000). It is important for school personnel to have a foundation in the understanding of ASDs and the associated behaviors and techniques that will help students with ASDs excel both in and out of school.

CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS:

Currently, few programs target school personnel who interact with and are responsible for children with ASDs but are not classroom teachers. Educating Adults About Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders (EACA) will be a unique program created to aid school personnel by teaching them how to properly interact with children with ASDs to assist in their inclusion in the classroom, on school buses, and on playing fields via a cost-efficient, easy-to-use, position-specific intervention. In this way, EACA will be a valuable resource and will help fill an important gap in currently available ASDs resources.

EACA is an educational training program for non-educator, school personnel who regularly interact with children ages 7 to 11 (grades 1–5) with ASDs. EACA is specifically designed to meet the pressing need for targeted educational resources for school staff and personnel who interact with the growing number of children with ASDs entering the public education system.

CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS: (continued)

As outlined in the MOU (Exhibit A), program components include a training facilitator's guide and participant workbook to be used during in-person staff trainings and a supplemental audiovisual program. The educational training program will cover topic areas such as the definition and description of ASDs, how to engage and effectively interact with a child with autism, and how to manage problem behaviors of children with ASDs. The training program includes specific, tailored or customized sections for different types of personnel and staff in public school settings, such as paraeducators/one-on-one aides, principals, bus drivers, physical education teachers, art/music teachers, etc.

EACA strives to meet the following objectives:

- (1) Increase knowledge about ASDs in adults who interact with children with ASDs in the school system;
- (2) Promote positive attitudes in these adults toward children with autism;
- (3) Provide school administrators and other personnel with tools to effectively engage and promote positive social interactions with children with autism; and
- (4) Foster the social integration of children with autism in all school-related settings, such as the school bus, cafeteria, and playing fields.

Danya International, Inc. will conduct a pilot study to assess the efficacy of the EACA prototype in achieving its goals of increasing participants' knowledge related to understanding ASDs and promoting positive attitudes toward children with ASDs. Specifically, the goals of this pilot study are to test the following hypothesis: As compared to a control group, paraeducators who receive the EACA training will demonstrate (1) increased knowledge about children with ASDs; (2) more positive attitudes toward children with ASDs; and (3) increased self-efficacy for providing classroom assistance to children with ASDs. This pilot study will also assess the product's acceptability and usability with paraeducators.

The study will include a total sample size of 62 paraeducators randomly assigned and divided equally into experimental and control groups. Any person employed as a paraeducator who currently works in grades 1–5 will be eligible to participate in the evaluation. Those assigned to the experimental group will receive the four hour EACA training (provided by Danya staff at a school district location). Those in the control group will be asked to review copies of fact sheets; however, they will not receive the in-person EACA training. Surveys will be collected from both groups. The study questionnaires will ask the paraeducators about their knowledge of ASDs, attitudes toward social inclusion, and level of self-efficacy for managing children with ASDs in the school setting. Each set of questionnaires will take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

All participants will be compensated for their participation. Each participant will receive American Express gift cards in thanks for their participation: control group participants will receive \$75 (\$25 for each of the three times they complete the survey); and experimental group participants will receive \$150 (\$25 for each of the three times they complete the survey, plus \$75 for attending the training). The participating school district will receive \$5,000.00.

There is no financial impact on the District's General Fund.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is respectfully requested that the Superintendent recommend that the Board of Trustees approve the Agreement between Danya International, Inc. and Ocean View School District to Participate in a Pilot Study on Educating Adults About Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (EACA), and authorize Alan G. Rasmussen, Ed.D., Superintendent, to sign the necessary documents.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION:

It is respectfully recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the Agreement between Danya International, Inc. and Ocean View School District to Participate in a Pilot Study on Educating Adults About Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (EACA), and authorize Alan G. Rasmussen, Ed.D., Superintendent, to sign the necessary documents.