



*Action In Autism*

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## Testimony

### **Eden Background Information**

The mission of Eden Autism Services is to improve the lives of children and adults with autism and their families by providing a range of community-based services to meet specific needs throughout the lifespan.

Eden was founded as a private school in Princeton in 1975 by Dr. David Holmes and 14 families, and opened adult services programs in the early 1980's. Eden Outreach was established to provide consultation and support to families who needed services but could not be accommodated in Eden education and adult programs.

Currently Eden serves 60 children in the New Jersey School; 43 children in two Southwest Florida schools; 100 adults in three New Jersey adult employment centers; 75 adults in New Jersey residential programs (group homes and apartments) 10 adults in residential and employment services in Southwest Florida; and more than 2000 individuals and organizations across the country and beyond through Eden Outreach. Recently Eden has expanded its direct impact on autism classroom teachers via edWeb.

### **International Activities**

In November 2006, Eden Autism Services participated in the World Congress Autism Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa and launched its web-based autism training program for teachers and families, and highlighted the Eden Curriculum as an essential element of a comprehensive autism education program.

From time to time Eden Autism Services sponsors internship programs at the request of organizations around the world including: an 18 month internship program in adult services for 8 interns from the Philippines; other intern programs have been provided to students from Singapore and Canada.

Eden Outreach Services has conducted evaluations of individuals with autism from Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, and the Eden Curriculum is being used in Singapore, Philippines, Canada, Israel (and is in the process of being translated to Hebrew) and South Africa.

### **Eden Autism Services Partnerships**

- National Association of Private Special Education Centers – association of schools serving children with disabilities
- Autism Society of America – advocacy and information sharing; presentations at annual conferences held across the US.
- Autism Speaks – advocacy and information sharing; awareness. Eden is working with AS on its Advancing the Future of Adults With Autism
- National Association of Residential Providers for Adults with Autism – shared expertise among providers of direct care services nationally and internationally. Fall conference in England is being planned.
- Autism Europe Member – information sharing

- Eden Innovative Learning – partnership with Innovative Learning, a technology company that has developed competency based testing protocols for web based learning.
- Florida Gulf Coast University – cosponsor of annual autism conference “Promising Pathways” since 2008.
- CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) – assisted in developing autism specific standards for this international accreditation organization.
- Princeton University - Since 1995 Eden and Princeton University have sponsored an annual lecture series on autism research. Since its inception, the Series has featured globally recognized scientists, researchers, educators and administrators. Attached is a listing of the autism experts who have participated in the Eden-Princeton University Lecture Series. Summary

### **Summary:**

Our goal is to share the knowledge and experience Eden Autism Services has gained over the past 36 years to improve the quality of life of children, adults, and families impacted by autism. The information is available; the technology is available. Only with a united and focused effort will we be able to achieve this goal.

## edWeb

Eden Autism Services is working with edWeb.net to create online communities of practice to support educators serving students with special needs, particularly autism and engage educators who are working within an organization, across organizations, or anywhere in the world. edWeb.net is a professional social network for the education community that makes it easy to connect with peers, share information and best practices, spread innovative ideas, and create professional learning communities.

The U. S. Department of Education recently issued a draft report – *Connect and Inspire: Online Communities of Practice in Education* – that makes the case for “broadening educators’ access to and participation in online communities of practice, which show strong potential to support professional learning and collaboration.” See <http://edcosp.org>.

Eden Autism Services has two online communities of practice for educators on edWeb.net:

Teaching Students with Autism: Effective Strategies for Grades preK-5

Teaching Students with Autism: Effective Strategies for Grades 6 - 12

The program uses a combination of interactive live webinars and online discussion forums so that educators can connect on an ongoing basis to receive support from the Eden staff and from each other. The online community is used to archive all of the webinars and supporting resources. Tools like a blog, discussion forum, shared calendar, documents library, wiki, polling tool, and shared links – support the creation of an active and engaged collaborative community of educators.

Webinars are held weekly, and each week, members of the community receive a free lesson plan from Eden. The structured, ongoing activity is the key to active engagement. Community

members also receive a CEU certificate for attending the webinar, or watching a recording and taking a quiz.

The webinar topics are:

- Understanding the Unique Needs of Students with Autism
- Effective Strategies for Paraprofessionals
- Goal Selection for Students with Autism
- Positive Behavior Support Strategies
- Effective Transition from the Classroom to Adulthood
- Establishing Play and Leisure Skills for Students with Autism
- Toilet Training Students with Autism
- Generalization: Why Is It So Critical?
- Facilitating Language and Communication in the Classroom Environment
- Troubleshooting: What is it, and How do you do it?
- Utilizing the Principles of Reinforcement in a Classroom Environment
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Asperger's in the Classroom Environment

The program launched in March 2011 and already has over 900 educators participating.

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Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Rules of the Committee require the disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony and will be made publicly available in electronic format, per House Rules.

<b>1. Name:</b>	<b>2. Organization or organizations you are representing:</b>
Thomas P. McCool	Eden Autism Services
<b>3. Date of Committee hearing:</b>	
Tuesday, May 31, 2011	
<b>4. Have <u>you</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?</b>	<b>5. Have any of the <u>organizations you are representing</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets.</b>	
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