Student Stress and Anxiety: Is the American Educational System at Fault?

by John T. Brentar, Ph.D., Executive Director

Recently, a number of stories have appeared in the local and national media about the alarming rise of anxiety in American teenagers. Every year the National College Health Association conducts a research survey that collects data about students’ health habits and behaviors. Between the years 2011 to 2016, the results of their surveys revealed a significant increase (from 50% in 2011 to 62% in 2016) in the number of college undergraduates who experienced “overwhelming anxiety” during the previous year. Another survey of incoming freshman at UCLA found that in 2016, 41% of the students responding “felt overwhelmed by all [they] had to do,” as compared to 18% in 1985.

A similar trend is found among teens. A study done at Yale University found that 25% of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 met the criteria for an anxiety disorder as compared to 7% of Australian teens in this same age range. Another study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that 40% of parents report that their high schooler is experiencing significant levels of stress. Similarly, a survey by the American Psychological Association found that 45% of the teens they surveyed felt stressed by school pressures. The Chicago Tribune reported earlier this year that at one high-achieving suburban Chicago high school, the number of students participating in individual or group counseling rose from 35% in 2010 to 75% in 2017.

continued on page 4
Dear Friends,

This is our first newsletter since last fall. We apologize for the delay, but think that you will find it was worth the wait!

Our priority as an agency is to not only leverage existing services, but to find new ways to help address changing needs for our clients. I’m happy to share with you that we have created an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Clinic at Morrissey-Compton to respond to the rise in ASD diagnoses we have observed in recent years. Pages 8 and 9 also have some terrific articles on this subject by individuals who have faced firsthand the challenges associated with living with ASD.

We have also noticed lately that stress levels in students of all ages are rising at an alarming rate, which is no secret to anyone who pays attention to the news. If left unaddressed, the results of this stress can be catastrophic for families, so I thought it was important to talk about that in this issue’s cover story. Please know that our clinicians are here to help if your student is having trouble coping.

I hope that you will read this issue cover to cover, as I believe that it contains a lot of helpful information for anyone who is interested in learning differences in general and Morrissey-Compton in particular. It includes client testimonials, an introduction to new staff members, information regarding useful community resources, an article to help parents deal with excessive use of technology by today’s students, and a recap of our second Executive Function (EF) and Learning Conference, held last November.

As always, our loyal donors are at the forefront of our thoughts, so we have included special information of interest to our supporters, such as the tax tips discussed on the next page. On page 12, you can find interesting facts about giving trends as well as the return of our annual crowdfunding event, Fund DREAMS, Support MORRISSEY-COMPTON, this May. I hope that you will consider making a special gift during this innovative effort to help us continue to help everyone who walks through our doors, regardless of ability to pay.

Finally, I wanted to reiterate that giving to Morrissey-Compton can take many forms. Aside from monetary gifts, examples include taking the time to write a review or testimonial, volunteering one’s time to help at a special event, or offering in-kind donations. Right now, our satellite office in Half Moon Bay office is facing a special need for certain supplies, so I would like to put out a call for help to our supporters for the following items:

- Office partition
- Folding chairs
- Gift card for Staples, Office Depot, etc. (any amount)
- Printer/Fax/Scanner combo

If you are interested in making a gift of any kind, please call Lyn at (408) 396-8953.

Thank you all for being a part of our wonderful agency.

With Warmest Wishes,

John T. Brentar, Ph.D.

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Saving Tax Dollars While Making a Charitable Gift Under the New Tax Code

by Cam Neri, LPL Financial Advisor (Retired)

Under the new tax code, if you are unable to itemize deductions on your tax return, then you may not be able to get a tax deduction for your charitable contribution.

The reason fewer people will be using itemized deductions is due to the 2018 tax code, which caps state and property tax deductions at $10,000. Your standard deduction is doubled to $12,000 for a single payer (plus $1,600 additional if over age 65) and $24,000 for married couples filing jointly (plus an additional $1,300 per person over 65). Even if you paid $10,000 in state income tax and $5,000 in property tax, you can only use up to $10,000 of these deductions. In this example, if a married couple made charitable gifts of $5,000, their standard deduction is still greater, which means that they are not eligible to get a tax benefit for their charitable gifts.

Penalties for IRA Withdrawals (at any Age)

Upon reaching age 70½, the government requires that the owner of an IRA account begins to withdraw money from this account. The required minimum distribution (RMD) amount is determined by the IRS formula using attained age and the end of the previous year’s account value.

The money that is withdrawn is added as taxable income to your tax return for that year. This is the government’s way to guarantee that tax is paid on the previous untaxed money that went into the retirement account.

Turn to page 12 for some fun facts about charitable giving in the U.S.!
Student Stress and Anxiety: Is the American Educational System at Fault?

continued from page 1

Unprecedented Pressures
Many experts have speculated that the American high school system is flawed and is the cause of the increasing mental health challenges in today’s students. Indeed, in my work with high schoolers, it’s not unusual to hear consistent complaints of juggling a heavy homework load, multiple extracurricular activities, and lack of sleep at the expense of their social life. Routinely, students tell me that they work well past their desired bedtime and often do not have time for unstructured socialization on the weekends. The pressure to perform is significant; high-achieving high schools, students frequently report considerable pressure to perform at a high level with respect to grades, taking multiple advanced placement classes, and college admission because these are the factors that define success. For many students, admission to an Ivy league college defines success. At some high schools, students post their rejection letters on “walls of shame.”

Prestige vs. Practicality
These high expectations often create stigmas with less desirable schools, such as vocational schools or community colleges. However, there are many exemplary alternative colleges designed for students with specific career trajectories. These include the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, SC where the curriculum focuses on carpentry, stone work, iron work, masonry, and plasterwork; the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics, which focuses on aviation maintenance and aviation electronics; and the Los Angeles County College of Nursing and Allied Health, which focuses on nursing careers.

Some community college have established innovative joint programs with local companies. For example, apprentices at the Siemens plant in Charlotte, NC simultaneously attend Central Piedmont Community College (paid by Siemens) and split their time between the classroom and the Siemens factory that builds steam and natural gas-fired turbines for power plants around the world.

Cries for Mercy
At Morrissey-Compton, we regularly work with students who learn differently due to learning disabilities, ADHD, mental health conditions, and related concerns. However, it is not unusual to see historically talented students reach high school and start to experience significant test anxiety. Students with anxiety can be accommodated with additional time on exams if there is a clear diagnosis and they demonstrate functional limitations (i.e., a substantial impairment in learning), but we also see a cohort of bright students who do not have a diagnosable condition and may not be eligible for accommodations. Many times, students make the difficult decision to simplify their life by moving to a lower lane class or reducing the number of extracurriculars.

At Naperville North High School in the Chicago area, students presented a petition to the school’s administrators requesting that they “start defining success as any path that leads to a happy and healthy life. Start teaching us to make our own paths and start guiding us along the way.” In response, some high schools have added less-academic classes such as wood working, furniture design, and jewelry to work harder. Unfortunately, realistic expectations and rigid ideas of what defines success trigger students’ anxiety. And it is important to note that stressed students are not isolated to high school; clinicians and educators are observing increased stress reactions extending down to middle and elementary school students. Academic-related stress has real consequences by fueling anxiety, depression, and physical ailments and reducing students’ executive function and effectiveness.

Sources of Stress
Blaming high schools for all their students’ stress-related concerns is overly simplistic. All schools are committed to promoting the health and well-being of students, and some schools have responded by starting later in the morning or reducing homework load. Sometimes, attempts to reduce homework or add a free period are met with resistance from some parents.

Colleges also share the blame in promoting their admission process as highly competitive. For example, in 2017 Harvard University proudly announced that only 5.2% of applicant were accepted. In his book, Are You Smart Enough? How Colleges’ Obsession with Smartness Shortchanges Students, Dr. Alexander Astin contends that high selectivity by colleges does not automatically equal receiving an excellent education; rather, it creates an image that the excellence of a college or university is based on who enrols.

Other pressures are also at play in the upsurge of anxiety in high school students, who frequently report that both explicit and implicit family pressures contribute to high expectations. Explicit pressures include messages of high expectations by family members (e.g., being a legacy at a certain college) or teachers (e.g., comparing a student to an older academically successful sibling). Implicit pressures may be self-imposed standards to match parental or sibling success, or a strong desire to make one’s parents proud.

There is additional evidence that technology contributes to students’ stress in that they are never (or very rarely) disconnected, and thus constantly reminded of their peers’ success through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. To name a few. An over-reliance on social media or video games has caused students to forget how to relax in the traditional sense (i.e., “just be in the moment”). Indeed, heavy video game use in teens has been associated with challenges in sustaining attention, managing emotions, suppressing impulses, following directions, tolerating frustration, accessing creativity, and executing tasks. Several studies have reported that heavy game users are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and social phobia compared to their peers who play less. This does not mean that all technology use is bad; most experts believe that technology should be used in moderation and as only one part of a well-rounded lifestyle.

A Strategic Approach
What can parents do to help moderate students’ stress levels? It is important for students to develop good coping strategies through a variety of techniques including positive self-talk, physical exercise, saving time for recreation or relaxation, and humor. As the growth mindset research suggests, students also need to reframe mistakes as opportunities to learn rather than failures.

Dr. Lynn Margolies, a psychologist in Newton, MA suggests that parents should not repeat advice their teen has already heard; rather, reframe the advice as “Let’s talk to figure out how to make things easier.” Further, she recommends that parents should maintain a low emotional intensity during stressful periods and avoid threats and escalation. Time conversations with your teen strategically, and avoid discussions when the teen is angry. Dr. Margolies encourages parents to avoid jumping to conclusions by attributing their teens’ challenges to low motivation or lack of effort. Parents should also eschew performance-driven parenting, and instead focus on variables such as effort, taking responsibility, and emotional well-being.
Two Licensed Clinical Psychologists Join Staff

Ben Morsa, Psy.D.

Dr. Ben Morsa completed his undergraduate education at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service and later completed doctoral training at the Professional Psychology Program at George Washington University in Washington, DC. He completed both his predoctoral internship and pre-licensure hours in Oakland; the former at the West Coast Children’s Clinic, serving children and families in a community mental health setting, and the latter through the Ann Martin Center as a school-based clinician.

Dr. Morsa is bilingual, having studied Spanish for nearly two decades. He has worked with a range of individuals from two to 91 years of age, with a focus on the treatment of complex trauma and the impact of cultural oppression on individual development and functioning.

Dr. Morsa utilizes a collaborative approach to psychological assessment informed by psychodynamic, attachment, and family/ community systems theories. He has taught various subjects, including child/adolescent development, psychometrics, and child/adolescent psychopathology, to psychologists-in-training. In addition to providing bilingual assessment services at Morrissey-Compton, Dr. Morsa has a private practice in Berkeley. Dr. Morsa is passionate about serving in the intersection of psychology and social justice, with attention to bilingual development, immigrant populations, sexual orientation and gender diversity, feminist practice, and neurodiversity.

Jacqueline Nguyen, Psy.D.

Dr. Jacqueline Nguyen specializes in conducting comprehensive psychological evaluations and evidence-based psychotherapy with children and adolescents. She graduated with honors from the University of California, Davis with a B.S. in Psychology. She then joined a research study at the U.C. Davis MIND Institute working toward identifying behavioral markers of autism spectrum disorder.

Dr. Nguyen attended the PGSP-Stanford Psy.D. Consortium, where she obtained her M.S. and Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology. During graduate school, she received extensive training in conducting psychological assessments through the Stanford Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. She completed an internship at the University of Miami/Jackson Health System, where she continued her assessment training and worked therapeutically with children with acute and chronic medical conditions.

Dr. Nguyen went on to become a Harvard Medical School fellow, providing mental health services to medically hospitalized children at Boston Children’s Hospital. She specializes in conducting Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and individualizing treatment to each patient. She is dedicated to helping children build resilience to reach their full potentials.

Dr. Nguyen is a Bay Area native who enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

Community Partnerships

Ongoing school consultations are one of the many and varied services we offer at Morrissey-Compton Educational Center. When a school needs more support for their struggling students because of academic, behavioral, or social-emotional difficulties, our educational specialists and psychologists are available for school observation, consultation, and teacher trainings/in-services. These can be short- or long-term partnerships.

This is currently the case with Woodland School in Portola Valley, an independent day school that “offers a balanced approach to learning in a diverse and inclusive environment for approximately 275 students in early childhood through eighth grade.” Our educational consultant, Erin Powers, M.Ed. (left) spends two mornings a week there observing in classrooms, noting student needs, advising teachers, and supporting both the upper- and lower-school deans in developing accommodation and intervention plans for students with learning disabilities. In this way, she can provide objective analysis and recommendations that the teachers can in turn implement immediately.

We also have an established collaborative relationship with Synapse School, a private school in Menlo Park that serves 240 students in kindergarten through eighth grades. Their curriculum combines social-emotional learning, academics, and the practice of innovation to develop the next generation of leaders and innovators. Our psychologists provide classroom observations and teacher and parent feedback about the observations, lead social skills groups, consult with teachers or parents about specific students, provide recommendations for further intervention, and consult with the school’s learning specialist.

At Morrissey-Compton, our goal is to have a positive impact on students’ academic performance and their emotional well-being. Community partnerships such as these allow schools to access our expertise and knowledge and improve their students’ effectiveness and outcomes.

We are pleased to announce the creation of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Clinic at Morrissey-Compton. Our multidisciplinary staff provides a comprehensive program that includes:

- Diagnostic assessments
- Psycho-educational and psychological assessments
- School support services (consultation and advocacy)
- Educational support (educational therapy)
- Speech and language services
- Social skills groups
- Medication evaluation and management
- Parent education

For information and appointments, call (650) 322-5910.

Challenge Summer School

Academic Intervention
Executive Function Strategies
Self-Esteem Building
Medication evaluation and management
Social Skills Groups
Academic Maintenance

June 25th - July 26th
Contact Us to Schedule an Interview
Hurry now! Spots fill quickly!

650.322.5910
SummerAtChallenge@gmail.com

morrissey-compton.org/summer_school.php

M-C Launches ASD Clinic
A Behavior Plan For Parents of Newly Diagnosed Autistic Children

by *Lei Wiley-Mydske

Your feelings about autism are constructed by living in a world that fears and stigmatizes disabled lives. Your distress about an autism diagnosis are most certainly because of these unhealthy messages. Please remember that your behavior in regard to your child’s diagnosis is a choice. Committing to this behavior plan means that you will always put the dignity, autonomy, and love for your child above buying into the dominant narrative of tragedy or the belief that autism is something that the Autistic person is doing to you.

I promise to never use my child’s most vulnerable moments for sympathy or to “raise awareness.” I recognize that I am my child’s safety net against an often-hostile world. When I feel like sharing, I will ask myself if this is something that I would want others to share about me.

I will never blame autism when I have a hard time parenting my child. Parenting is stressful at times, but rewarding as well. This is true for ANY child and I will recognize this.

I will prioritize the voices of Autistic people over the “experts” as I recognize that Autistic people are the ultimate experts on their own lives.

I will throw out the myth of a “developmental window” and acknowledge that my child will grow and learn in their own time, in their own way with my love, guidance and nurturing.

I will never apologize for my child being openly Autistic.

I will look at every therapy offered to my child with a critical eye. I will ask myself what is the desired outcome? Is it supportive or is it attempting to change my child’s neurology? I will never force my child into therapies that vow indistinguishability or that seek to “fix” or promise a non-Autistic version of my child.

I will embrace the neurodiversity paradigm and celebrate my child as a beautiful part of the wide and diverse spectrum of humanity.

I will learn about the social model of disability and confront ableism when I see it. I will learn about the disability and autistic rights movements and use my privilege to further the cause.

I will learn about Autistic culture and find Autistic friends, not just for my child but for me as well. I will promote acceptance and lead by my example.

I will learn about identity first language and show my child that I am proud of their Autistic identity.

I will NEVER say that I love my child but not their autism. I will recognize that autism is an integral part of who they are and shapes how they view, process and experience this world.

What the Doctors Didn’t Tell My Parents the Day They Got My Diagnosis

by *Chloe Rothschild

Dear parents of children diagnosed with special needs: please don’t give up.

On the day of my diagnosis, there was so much they didn’t tell my parents and me. They told us everything I likely wouldn’t do. They evaluated and pointed out my struggles and challenges.

Appointment after appointment, my parents heard and had to be part of conversations about what I couldn’t do and what I likely may never be able to do. Professional after professional, year after year, diagnosis after diagnosis, appointment after appointment, meeting after meeting, time and time again this repeated itself.

You see, I wasn’t diagnosed with autism as a young toddler or preschooler. Seventeen years ago, when I was four years old, autism wasn’t as well-known and definitely wasn’t a likely diagnosis for a little girl who talked early. When the pediatrician asked my mom if I could say a three-word sentence at age two, I told the doctor myself: “I do that!” This was the same little girl who didn’t know how to play with other kids or toys at preschool. This was the same little girl who frequently bumped into things, the same little girl who appeared to have very little knowledge of where her body was in space, etc. I was born six and a half weeks early, 22 years ago. Doctors didn’t know then what they know now.

My mom knew something wasn’t right and she trusted her mommy gut instinct on this one. I was her first child, but she just knew there was something different about me. When I was three years old, we found out I was vision impaired. My parents were told I’d likely be blind by age five or six. Yet, something magical and unexplainable happened over the years—my sight started to get better! The eye doctor, a pediatric ophthalmologist who works at a vision center, would say to us, “I really wish there were more kids like Chloe so I could do a research study!” My fifth birthday came, then my sixth and seventh and not only could I see, but I was learning to read.

I qualified for special education services through our local school district when I was around age five.

“The one thing my parents were never told was that I’d be an intelligent, bright, smart, funny, kind, caring, helpful, loving, and sweet little girl who would grow up to be a young lady and use her past experiences as a way to help others.”

My needs were being met, I received OT and speech, special education services, a teacher for the visually impaired services, PT, and more. We also continued to see a neurologist as well because there was more going on than just vision impairment. My mom continues to hear things like, “It’s possible she had a pre-natal stroke.” Then we heard developmental apraxia as our answer, followed by ADHD, followed by a sensory processing disorder, and finally followed by the one that matched the best: autism.

The one thing my parents were never told was that I’d be an intelligent, bright, smart, funny, kind, caring, helpful, loving, and sweet little girl who would grow up to be a young lady and use her past experiences as a way to help others.

If there was one thing I could tell parents of kids who were just diagnosed it’d be: “Don’t give up, please don’t give up, and remember, no one can predict what the future will bring. Sometimes you just have to wait and see and ride the waves of life to get there.”

About the Author

Chloe Rothschild is a young adult living with autism. She is on the advisory board for the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI) and is on the PSA for the Autism Society. Chloe advocates through writing and speaking. She is on a mission to teach others about autism from her perspective.

The article on this page (and many more insights from Chloe) can be found at https://themighty.com/author/chloe-rothschild/.
2017 EF & Learning Conference

2017 EF & Learning Conference Exceeds Expectations!
by Surina Basho, Ph.D., Director, Executive Function Research Program & Chair, EF & Learning Conference 2017

The Executive Function (EF) & Learning Conference held on November 4, 2017 at the Li Ka Shing Center at Stanford University exceeded our expectations! This was both Morrissey-Compton’s and my second time organizing the innovative conference.

The purpose of the EF & Learning Conference is to bring together multi-disciplinary professionals that assess, treat, teach, and research EF differences and typical EF development. This year we were able to partner with the Stanford Graduate School of Education, California Psychological Association, and the Courses 4 Teachers (affiliated with the University of the Pacific) to present the conference at Stanford and to offer continuing educational credits for professionals.

Great Turnout, Stellar Sessions
Over 240 teachers, educational therapists, psychologists, medical professionals, researchers, graduate students, and volunteers were in attendance. Some of the nation’s top experts in the EF field presented, including our keynote speakers: Dr. George McCloskey, who is a renowned school psychologist, researcher, and author of books on EF assessment and interventions; and national speaker Chris Zeigler Dendy, former teacher, school psychologist, and author of Teaching Teens with ADD, ADHD, and Executive Function Deficit. We were also fortunate to have a number of high-caliber speakers present on a variety of topics during our breakout sessions, as shown in photos on this page and the agenda on the next.

Value: Priceless
Part of Morrissey-Compton’s mission is to not turn away individuals who are in need. For the EF & Learning Conference, we were able to provide full and partial scholarships for over 90 local educators to attend the conference. This opportunity not only enriched the practice of the educators who attended but also the lives of the children that these educators touch every day. I want to sincerely thank our Executive Director Dr. John Brentar and Board of Directors for supporting our educators and local communities through scholarships.

I’d also like to give a BIG thank you to the dedicated parents who generously donated free conference tickets for their child’s teacher and other teachers to attend, as well as the parents who shared the conference announcements with their school’s teachers, administrators, tutors, and other professionals. The power of the parent community helped to bring the EF & Learning Conference to so many professionals.

Lastly, our EF & Learning Conference would not have happened without the dedicated Morrissey-Compton staff and volunteers that gave their time and effort before, during, and after the conference.

Thank you all for going above and beyond to help make the conference a success.

Kudos
We received an overwhelmingly positive response from professionals who attended the conference:

“My supervisor recently attended one of your training workshops and, as a result of your resources, I have been able to better train myself on the nuances of EF challenges.”
—Educational Specialist

“I am very grateful that your group gave this young teacher the opportunity to attend through a scholarship.”
—Teacher

“Thank you for putting on such an informative conference. I learned a lot and feel confident bringing some issues up to parents with the supporting evidence I now have.”
—Educational Therapist

“I enjoyed the conference overall. Congratulations for the great work that you all did to put on such a high-quality conference.”
—Psychologist

“I learned a lot and found it very inspiring and informative.”
—Administrator

What is Executive Function?
Executive Function is an “umbrella term” for the multiple processes in the brain that are responsible for regulating our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. These processes include abilities such as working memory, cognitive flexibility, prioritizing, organization, planning, and self-monitoring.

Breakout Sessions
Chair: Dr. Surina Basho
“Memory: A Key Executive Function Process in Learning”
Michelle Garcia Winner
“Social Thinking Explores Executive Functioning’s Relationship to Teaching Social Competencies”
Dr. Randy Kulman
“Transforming Game-Based Learning into Real World Executive Functioning”
Sara Ballantine & Lisa Edmisten
“EF Strategies and Resources for ELL & SPED Students in a Classroom Setting”
Michael Greashamer
“SMARTS: Promoting Students’ Self-Understanding and Executive Functioning Strategies”
Dr. Darren Kort
“The Benefits and Limitations of Medication Treatment for Executive Dysfunctions & ADHD”

Visit us at: https://efconference.eventbrite.com
Birth Year | 12
---|---
Greatest & Silent Generations | pre-1945
Baby Boomers | 1946-1964
Generation X | 1965-1980
Generation Y | 1981-1997

| Sources of charitable giving: | 
| Corporations: 5% | Foundations: 15% | Individuals: 72% | Bequests: 8% |

Charitable giving by organization type:
- Faith-Based: 32% |
- Education: 15% |
- Human Services: 12% |
- Gifts to foundations: 11% |
- Health 8% |
- Public-Society Benefit: 7% |
- Arts, Culture, Humanities: 5% |
- International Affairs: 4% |
- Environment/Animals: 3% |

Fun Facts About Charitable Giving in the U.S.
- There are currently 1,571,056 tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations in the U.S. |
- In 2016, $390.05 billion was donated to charitable causes |
- In 2016, 7.2% of total fundraising came from online giving. This was a slight increase from 7.1% in 2015. |
- Approximately 17% of online transactions in 2016 were made using a mobile device, up from 14% in 2015 and just 9% in 2014. |

Generational Giving Statistics

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<th>% of Who Give</th>
<th>% of Donor Population</th>
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Social Skills Groups Receive High Marks Online

We are always so happy to hear how Morrissey-Compton has made a difference in our clients’ lives, and would like to share two great online reviews:

**Review #1:** My 11-year-old son was diagnosed last year with high-functioning autism (formerly known as Asperger’s). He has always had trouble navigating social situations and been extremely reluctant and resistant to interventions. The Morrissey-Compton social skills group with Sue and Meredith was wonderful. My son just completed the 5th grade group in Palo Alto. It was the first intervention that had a positive impact. The consistent, relevant messaging and content was extremely helpful. Sue and Meredith were understanding, flexible, and able to help my son engage, learn, and even thrive in the group. My son will definitely be back and I look forward to seeing more growth through each session.

**Review #2:** This review is for the Girl Drama social skills class. Morrissey-Compton was recommended for my 14-year-old daughter for improving her social skills and peer interactions. The class turned out to be smaller than originally planned, and each girl received a lot of close attention from the facilitators. My daughter was a bit nervous at the beginning of the class, but she started looking forward to going every Monday evening. Each session was carried out in a very positive manner and designed to encourage healthier peer relationships. She learned which phrases to use and avoid when facing challenging situations, what healthy friendship should look and feel like, and other useful skills she could put in practice at school. I’m glad that my daughter was able to join this class.

DEBBIE

Testimonials from current and past clients are always welcome and much appreciated!

Call (408) 396-8953 or email lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org if you would like to share your story.

**Thank You,**

DEBBIE

Dear Dr. Brentar,

Hello, I’m Debbie and I wanted to thank you and Morrissey-Compton for helping me with a scholarship for the last 3 years.

I started coming to MC in 4th grade and now I’m in 7th grade at The Girls Middle School. When I first started at MC, reading, writing, and math [were not] very easy for me. But now, I feel much more comfortable with those subjects. I did tutoring twice a week with Meredith. Also, I was a student at Challenge School and plan on working there when I’m older.

When I started the process of taking the ISEE to go the Girls Middle School, MC really helped me prepare for the ISEE test. About two years ago, I also got assessed and learned my strengths and areas I struggle in. By getting assessed, I learned that extra time would benefit me more. I’m very happy at GMS and like getting involved in my community.

Thank you,

DEBBIE
A Great Community Resource
By Jan Tuber, Assistive Technology Specialist, Parents Helping Parents

Parents Helping Parents is a non-profit, parent-directed family resource center located in San Jose. Our mission is to help children and adults with special needs receive the support and services they need to reach their full potential by providing information, training, and resources to their families and service providers. Through our support and expert guidance, parents can learn how to navigate special education services, gain an understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the law, have access to our vast resource library, and partake in our support and information groups, such as the very active LD/ADHD Lecture Series and Parent Support Group. Our parent-to-parent service model makes us uniquely empathetic, compassionate, and accessible to our families.

One of PHP’s exceptional programs is the iTech Center, an assistive technology preview and demonstration center. As a member of the California Department of Education’s Dyslexia Guidelines Workgroup, iTech staff contributed to the creation of the guidelines, including the section on assistive technology.

Assistive technology is any tool that can help an individual with a disability do something more quickly, easily, or independently. From pencil grips and reading rulers to software programs, iPad apps, and Chrome apps and extensions, there are an infinite number of tools and options. Programs such as text-to-speech, voice recognition, and word prediction, for example, can give students equal access to the curriculum and allow them to work to their potential.

Our assistive technology specialists are equipped to address a wide range of challenges, such as reading, writing, note-taking, attention and focus, organization and time management, math, computer access, and more.

We offer families, students, and professionals the opportunity to explore assistive technology during a customized appointment to help them determine which tools best meet their needs. This hands-on, “try before you buy” session is called a “Techsploration.” It provides families and educators with the resources and information they need to make well-informed decisions about assistive technology. Best of all, the Techsploration service provides hope and inspiration to many students who discover that assistive technology can make a difference in their confidence, love of learning, and quality of life.

We offer a variety of Techsploration options, including a specialized College Techsploration for middle and high school students who have a learning disability. In addition, we have an array of low-tech tools for loan, such as the Livescribe Pen and tools for math, reading, writing, early literacy, and more.

For more information about the iTech Center and how your student or child might benefit from assistive technology, please contact Parents Helping Parents at (408) 727-5775 or visit php.com/assistive-technology.

Managing Children’s Time Online
by John T. Brentar, Ph.D., Executive Director

Frequently, we are asked by parents about how to limit children’s use of technology. They describe children sneaking computer use during early morning hours or facing arguments and tantrums when they are asked to turn off technology. In desperation, parents will turn off Wi-Fi or take the laptop away, only to find that children may be accessing their neighbors’ wireless or hiding a second laptop or tablet in their bedroom.

Alternatively, parents are turning to other new technology that help them manage content and time online. Some of our parents have recommended Circle, which pairs wirelessly with your home Wi-Fi and allows parents to manage every device on your network. Using the Circle app, families can create unique profiles for each family member (meetcircle.com).

Another version is SelfControl (selfcontrolapp.com), a free Mac application that lets parents block access to anything on the internet. Other newer apps include: Net Nanny (netnanny.com) or Qustodio (qustodio.com).

We do not have the expertise to recommend any specific app, but if you are interested, we encourage you to investigate these options or consult with other parents to determine which one may be the best for your family. Keep in mind that today’s youth are incredibly tech savvy and they may find ways to circumvent these monitoring products. As a result, some parents use them primarily to assess their children’s computer use and then subsequently develop clear but realistic rules for computer use.
It is the mission of the Morrissey-Compton Educational Center to enable children and adults with learning disabilities and school-related difficulties to achieve their goals by providing the highest quality diagnostic and intervention services in a supportive environment.