

To: Elena Kalodner-Martin, Professor of English 379

From: Benjamin Lagasse, Student of English 379

Subject: A Report on the Feasibility of Writing and Submitting a Proposal to Seek Funding for Special Needs Education Services devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the Hudson's Helping Hands nonprofit foundation located in Southampton, New York.

Date: October 2, 2020

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to determine if a grant proposal to request funding for Special Needs education services affected by the COVID-19 pandemic would be successfully completed by December 3, 2020.

Summary:

The proposed project will seek funds from Autism Speaks to aid Hudson's Helping Hands in supporting Integrated Learning experiences designed to provide the in-person educational experience special needs children require to effectively learn in local communities affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Research required to complete this project will include the effect autism has on learning, and substantial evidence that supports Integrated Learning as a robust approach for educating special needs children. If successful, this project will simultaneously promote enhanced awareness and endorsement of comprehensive practices, such as Integrated Learning for special needs children. My goal is to complete this proposal comprising

of both research and writing by the end of the fall semester. Despite the challenges I face with this project I believe that with the time and resources I have accessible the project is feasible.

Background/Discussion:

Hudson's Helping Hands (HHH) is a nonprofit organization who describe themselves as a passionate group dedicated to bringing awareness, inclusivity, and support to local communities. This committed group was founded by Kristen Teodoro, mother of 5-year old son Hudson who is on the autism spectrum. Helping Hands began "during the initial months of the coronavirus pandemic, after safety lockdowns left [Kristen] without resources to meet Hudson's needs" (CBS News). Their mission is to "remind [families] that they are not alone ... through providing learning experiences, integrated events, and family support accessible to all local families with young children on the spectrum" (Hudson's Helping Hands). HHH specializes in serving young families who are in the first stages of their child's diagnosis as they believe there is a lack of outreach and information for these groups. To serve these families they provide both Integrated Learning experiences and family events to engage young children on the spectrum. These in-person interactions make it possible for special needs children to adequately learn amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Autism Speaks is the largest autism advocacy system in the United States registered as a 501© (3) national nonprofit organization. The mission of Autism Speaks "is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families ... through advocacy and support; increasing understanding ... and

advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder...”

(Autism Speaks).

The connection between the missions of the HHH and Autism Speaks is immensely strong and it is for this reason why I believe this project will be especially successful. HHH is a small organization with little reach serving the local communities of Southampton, New York and other neighbors while Autism Speaks is the indisputable national leader in autism advocacy who work to serve a more diverse set of regions. Despite this sharp contrast the aim of both organizations remains the same; to raise awareness for and improve the lives of those across the spectrum. This honorable goal will make the lives of so many young children across America that much better.

This project presents a unique opportunity to assist local communities in providing Integrated Learning experiences to children with special needs who have been devastated by the impact of school shutdowns because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the country there are a plethora of young children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. In fact, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) it is estimated that the prevalence of autism has increased dramatically in the last 20 years with about 1 in every 150 children being diagnosed in 2002 compared to 1 in every 54 in 2016 (CDC). An additional statistic is that “more than 7 million public school students in the U.S. receive special education ... [and] only 20% of those students received the support they were entitled to during the pandemic” (CBS News). Given these statistics it is evident that the lack of support for special needs students is a national issue. Thus, making it more imperative than ever to ensure that special needs students get the

care they require to stay on track with those who can learn remotely without in-person attention.

To complete this proposal, I will first need to conduct extensive research on HHH, Integrated Learning experiences, Autism Speaks, the effect autism has on learning, and substantial evidence that supports Integrated Learning as a robust approach for educating special needs children. Once this research has been organized, I will be able to learn more about the programs which HHH and Autism Speaks identify as helpful and how they could be implemented into local communities. Additionally, I will become more knowledgeable about the effects which autism has on students so that I may competently persuade my audience in the grant proposal. Further, I will recognize how the Integrated Learning experiences and other activities can be effective in developing the young mind of a child with a disorder such as autism. Once this research is concluded I will work to display my results in my proposal to manifest the purpose and potential success of this project.

My proposal will consist of establishing a plan for the types of activities and functions the HHH could implement with expanded funding provided by Autism Speaks. I will provide informative details of the positive effects Integrated Learning experiences and local family events will have on students who participate. Another factor which ought to be in the proposal is the number of children and volunteers necessary to make these experiences a success. For volunteers I must settle on any certifications they may require getting to be involved with the organization. Building up my connection with the HHH will be a further piece of the proposal to ensure that the desired grantor (Autism Speaks) understands my authentic support for both their mission

and that of the HHH. To adequately address my support, I plan to elucidate my research by providing how I better understand the issues special needs children face, and by sharing my empathy for this cause. With this information laid out in my proposal I will be able to effectively compose a professional and persuasive proposal that logically presents an inquiry to bolster the educational quality of special needs children across America.

Lastly, I must determine the cost of the proposed programs. According to the Hudson's Helping Hands website there are 3 levels of sponsorship available. Level 1 for a single event is \$500, level 2 is semi-annual support for \$1,500, while level 3 is annual support at \$5,000. Therefore, based upon this information I suppose at this time that \$5,000 would be sufficient funding to aid the HHH in coordinating their programs for at least one calendar year.

Conclusion:

The possibility of completing a grant proposal to seek funding for special needs education services devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be feasible. My required research is well defined into areas of need such as the effect autism has on learning coupled with finding substantial evidence that supports Integrative Learning experiences as a robust approach for educating special needs children. To gather this information, I have at my disposal numerous online resources which will make research as straightforward as can be. One major hurdle I envision for this project is completing my Microsoft Word manual for English 380 simultaneously to this grant proposal. For this reason, I should begin my further research and proposal process soon to improve my chances to produce a higher standard of work.

References:

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2. Hudson's Helping Hands. "Together We Can." *Hudson's Helping Hands*, hudsonshelpinghands.org/.
3. Leah Paulette | 3 years old, et al. *Autism Speaks*, www.autismspeaks.org/.
4. "Data & Statistics on Autism Spectrum Disorder." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 25 Sept. 2020, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html.