



Pacific Autism Center for Education: [Agency Overview](#)

MISSION

To enhance the lives of people impacted by autism, through innovation, exceptional education and compassionate care.

VISION

A world in which people of all abilities live fulfilled lives. Our goal is to deliver a lifetime continuum of services for children and adults requiring on-going care and treatment for autism.

VALUES

- Providing the highest quality of life for our clients
- A qualified, motivated and happy staff
- A culture of continuous improvement
- A commitment to serve all who can benefit from PACE

BACKGROUND

PACE was founded in 1989 by a group of concerned parents and educators as a private, nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization to meet the critical need of providing education and care for children and adults with autism and related developmental disabilities. Prior to this time, many of our students had been placed in inappropriate classroom settings and many of our residential clients were housed in unsuitable state hospitals and developmental centers.



Without the support of an encouraging, attentive environment, the ability to develop the skills necessary for those with disabilities to achieve integration into the community was doubtful.

PACE was born after years of futile attempts to work within the traditional system to meet the specialized needs of persons with autism. Starting with 14 students in 1989 and one group home in 1992, PACE currently serves up to 60 students in our K-12 school, houses up to 36 children and adults in our residential program, and provides **children's services** for close to 60 families annually.

In January 2008 PACE relocated to its own privately owned facility designed around the special needs of the autism population. Creating the building from the ground up allowed PACE to include special design elements such as natural lighting, precision climate control, hypoallergenic materials and flexible therapy spaces – an energy efficient and natural environment that is consistent with the initiatives for green environments and supports the sensory needs of PACE clients.

In the summer of 2011 PACE merged with FACES (Foundation for Autistic Childhood Education and Support), an intensive behavioral early intervention program in Redwood City, providing ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) to children ages 2-14.



PACE: Programs Overview

PACE provides for the educational and residential needs of individuals with autism and other developmental disorders. Specialists in speech and language development, occupational therapy, behavior management and special education instruction work as a team to serve the diverse needs of our clients. Research has shown that people with developmental disabilities who are enrolled in effective programs at an early age are better equipped to achieve academic, social and workplace success, allowing them to reach their full potential and to lead rewarding lives. PACE programs include:

THE PACE SCHOOL

PACE School is a non-profit, non-public school, certified by the California Department of Education and accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. PACE school serves students ages 6-22 who live with moderate to severe autism, with specific emphasis on non-verbal students and those with especially challenging behaviors and communication disorders. After 11 years of leasing space, in January 2008 PACE school relocated to its own privately purchased facility in Santa Clara.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PACE provides critical comprehensive options in early intervention for young children diagnosed with autism. These options include: Faces, an intensive behavioral early intervention and school age program based in Redwood City; and Sunny Days Preschool, an affect-based early intervention program located in West San Jose that offers an inclusive preschool and speech therapy services. Providing parent training is an **integral part of both children's programs** and services are available for families throughout the Peninsula.



RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

PACE owns and operates two children's and four adult group homes in Santa Clara County, each licensed to serve residents from 6 to 59+ years of age. Each group home houses six individuals and is managed by an Administrator who is assisted by a team of trained residential staff members, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Each home provides an enriched and family-like environment for our residents.





The PACE Model: [A Closer Look](#)

More than four decades ago, then President Gerald Ford, together with the United States Congress, signed into law The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Known as Public Law (PL) 94-142, the purpose of this legislation was to assure access for all handicapped children to free and appropriate public education.

Building upon the earlier law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed in 1997 and was followed by legislation in 2004 that strengthened the earlier Acts. Public schools across the country responded to this law by opening their doors to many children whom they had not previously served.

With enhanced training, school personnel strengthened their special education programs and implemented programs for students with more severe disabilities. Much progress was made. However, public schools could not always provide the level of intensive intervention and instruction that some students required.

In response to this reality, the Pacific Autism Center for Education (PACE) was founded in 1989 by a group of concerned parents, educators and community leaders. PACE School targets a population of students that suffer from moderate to severe Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with a specific emphasis on service to non-verbal individuals. The school is particularly well equipped to accept the least-abled and most challenging students who might otherwise not be well-served.

However, because of its versatile program, PACE can support individuals of all functional levels who are affected by ASD. The PACE Model, employs a multi-disciplinary team including a special education teacher, behavior specialist, instructional aide, occupational therapist, and specialists in speech and language.

Together, the team, which also includes the child's parents, help to assess each student's needs and create a program combining therapeutic and educational strategies to optimize progress.

At PACE school, we believe that autism is a disorder of inter-relatedness, not a cognitive disability. Individuals with ASD are characterized by impairments in social interaction and social-relatedness, and have difficulty interacting with people and the world around them. Furthermore, these students often struggle with conventional language and communication and have trouble regulating sensory input. For students with ASD, the inability to manage the overwhelming stimuli with which they are constantly bombarded, and the frustrations they experience around unsuccessful communication, affect every aspect of their learning.

We believe that socio-emotional factors must be addressed at the same time that we recognize and **respect our students' desire and ability to learn age appropriate material.** Therefore, at the heart of the PACE Model is our vision for every student to develop the ability: to relate, to communicate and to self-regulate. Starting from these building blocks, PACE's multidisciplinary, multi-methodology educational program then strives to help our students develop age-appropriate occupational, language, academic, and vocational skills to last a lifetime.

This affect-based philosophy distinguishes the PACE program from others that serve the ASD population. Further reflecting the unique aspects of PACE school is our ability to provide an aide who travels with a particular student throughout each day as needed.

We believe providing students with aides who can **read the student's sensory needs and** communication efforts ultimately diminishes frustration and promotes growth towards self-regulation and effective communication. Aides and teaching staff alike follow the mantra "**Join/Build/Teach.**"

The prevailing spirit of PACE reflects the belief that each individual has intrinsic value despite his disabilities. To this end, PACE school is committed to enabling all individuals with autism to reach their full potential.



PACE: [Administrative Staff](#)

The PACE executive and administrative staff oversees the implementation of programming and operational objectives to ensure PACE remains responsive to rapid changes in the needs of people with autism and their families. A full listing of Executive Staff can be found on our website.

[KURT OHLFS, Executive Director](#)

Kurt has served as the PACE Executive Director since 2005. With his strengths in technology operations and business management, Kurt has been instrumental in implementing improvements at PACE in organizational management and technology innovation. He is a frequently requested presenter on autism statistics and trends and has been interviewed for radio, television and print media.

[KAREN KENNAN, Assistant Executive Director](#)

Having spent more than twenty-five years working in the non-profit sector, Karen is experienced in child development, fundraising, program development, strategic planning and outreach. She has a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies from Cornell University and a MBA from the University of California, Haas School of Business.

[BARBARA JOHNSON, Director of Human Resources](#)

Barbara has over thirty years of experience in Human Resources. She received her MBA from Colorado Technical University Online, and her B.A. in Personnel/Organizational Psychology from Purdue University. She holds her Sr Professional in Human Resources and California certifications (SPHR-CA). She also has her Global Professional in Human Resources certification (GPHR).

[JANICE MORREIRA, Residential Director](#)

Janice oversees the operation of our Residential Program. Joining PACE in 2012, Janice brings over 20 years of Human Resources and Business operations background to our organization. As an entrepreneur owning businesses of her own she brings a great knowledge base of strategic organizational planning needed to run a successful company.

[NAOMI OMOTOLA-BETIKU, PH.D., Director of Education and Behavioral Services](#)

Naomi has worked in the field of social services for approximately 15 years with emphasis on children with learning disabilities or developmental delays. She comes to PACE following her time as a childcare specialist, Behavior Therapist and clinical director in the Los Angeles area where she worked out of UCLA and with a consulting group. She holds a BS in Psychobiology and a PhD in Developmental Psychology from UCLA.

[TODD WOOD, Finance Manager](#)

Todd Wood has worked for over 30 years as an accountant in the SF Bay Area. His professional experience includes evaluating financial systems as well as quality assurance and audits for engineering and technology companies. Todd is responsible for all the financial management of the PACE agency, including payroll administration and accounts payable/receivable.

[MARTA WEINSTOCK, MBA, Marketing and Resource Development Manager](#)

Marta Weinstock comes to PACE with extensive experience in marketing, operations and development. Her professional experience includes working for start-ups, non-profit organizations, and Fortune 500 companies. Marta manages the strategic marketing, tactical marketing, and fundraising development plans, in addition to, generating new business resources for Pacific Autism Center for Education.

[KELLIE WELCH, Fund Development Associate](#)

Kellie has worked in the non-profit sector for the past four years. She has experience in the early intervention system and connecting families to community resources. She received a B.A. in Public Health and Psychology from the University of Washington.



PACE: Governance and Support

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is responsible for all fiduciary decisions, strategic direction, policy, and leadership.

Paul Lacy, President
Sr. Finance Manager, Symantec

Harry Lopez, Esq.
Partner in Real Estate Law, Berliner Cohen Law

Tom McGovern, Vice President
Managing Director, Cushman & Wakefield

Thomas Marchok
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Director Business Dev., Sequoia Wealth Advisors

Kurt Ohlfs, Secretary (non-voting)
Executive Director, PACE

Sarah Mudgett
Field Sales Representative, Phillips Healthcare

Jeff Fallick
Managing Principal, ONEDigital

Mark Peper
Chief Operating Officer, Sunshine Senior Living

Lisa Grisalin
Partner, Keller Williams Realty-Silicon Valley

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

PACE is supported by the San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) and the California Department of Education. Additional grants and donations from local government agencies, community-based organizations, businesses and individuals make it possible for PACE to provide exceptional care for clients in our school, early intervention programs, and residential homes. **Fully 10% of PACE's budget** is garnered through our fundraising efforts.

For a complete listing of the financial support PACE has received from corporations, businesses and foundations, please visit our website. **If you'd like to join these organizations** in support of PACE, please contact Marta Weinstock at 408.625.6174, or email development@pacificautism.org.

