



PACE Setter

PACIFIC AUTISM CENTER for EDUCATION
Connect • Support • Educate

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KURT OHLFS



Pacific Autism
CENTER FOR EDUCATION

With 2024 in motion, we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year. Last September, we were successful in securing an additional campus to expand our PACE School program, allowing us to serve more students and make a tangible difference for many families. We focused on strengthening our organizational infrastructure to ensure sustainable growth and long-term impact. We welcomed a new School Director, BCBA, Teachers, and Speech-Language Pathologists. Through thoughtful strategic planning and hiring efforts, we have laid a solid foundation for future growth, enabling us to continue expanding our reach and serving more families in the years to come.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering

support of our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, and generous community. As we look ahead to the new year, I am filled with optimism for the opportunities that lie ahead. With your continued support, I am confident that we will continue to expand our impact and see many of our goals come to fruition.

In the coming months, we will have several opportunities to connect with our organization. On March 28, 2024, the PACE School staff will host its inaugural PACE Art + Community Exhibition and fundraiser, a showcase of student artwork and special performances. The event will take place at our PACE San Aleso campus at 824 San Aleso Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085, and is free and open to the public. Our art show will kick off our celebration of Autism Acceptance Month which will take place during the month of April. We will have several important events in April to celebrate our community and neurodiversity. To learn more about our upcoming events, we encourage you to visit us at www.pacificautism.org. We hope to see you there, and we thank you for your continued support.



Join Us

The PACE School is proud to present the Inaugural PACE Art + Community Exhibition and fundraiser, featuring:

- A diverse collection of art, including handmade pieces by PACE students. *All sales of art benefit PACE*
- Special musical performances by school staff members
- An opportunity to connect with our mission + community
- Light refreshments

Event Details

Thursday, March 28, 2024
5:00 - 7:00 PM
824 San Aleso Avenue
Sunnyvale, CA 94085

This event is free and open to the public.

PACE ART + COMMUNITY EXHIBITION

PROCEEDS BENEFIT PACIFIC AUTISM CENTER FOR EDUCATION & WILL KICK OFF AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH!



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Our mission is to enhance the lives of people impacted by autism through innovation, exceptional education, and compassionate care.

PACE is a 501(c3) nonprofit organization. Our TAX EIN is #77-0259858

www.pacificautism.org

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SJ SHARKS PARTNER WITH PACE

The San Jose Sharks, in partnership with PACE, will host their 2nd Annual Autism Acceptance Night at their home game at SAP Center on Sunday, April 7, 2024, 3:00PM against the Arizona Coyotes. This special event will help raise awareness of neurodiversity in the Bay Area, and showcase the importance of inclusion and accessibility for families of all backgrounds to enjoy professional sports. The Sharks will offer a sensory room for families, which will be designed with input from our own PACE Occupational Therapists. PACE is proud to partner with the SJ Sharks on this important occasion.

PACE has a special block of seats that includes access to the sensory room (located on the Club Level). Tickets are \$30 with \$10 of each ticket donated to PACE. **To purchase tickets, visit sjsharks.com/autismacceptance**

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE GROUP NIGHT

SHARKS
COYOTES

VS

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7TH, 2024
3:00pm, SAP CENTER**

A PORTION OF TICKET SALES
SUPPORT PACE!

sjsharks.com/autismacceptance





ASK A THERAPIST: ANTECEDENT STRATEGIES

Alania Sabankaya
Registered Behavioral Technician, Faces Behavioral Services



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In this edition of "Ask a Therapist," Alania Sabankaya, RBT, will discuss a commonly used strategy in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): *antecedent strategies*. Antecedent strategies, also known as proactive strategies, can help create structured routines, reduce distractions, and ensure all necessary materials are prepared for your activity or event. Antecedent strategies are tools that caregivers can use to create a safe, predictable, and positive environment for success.

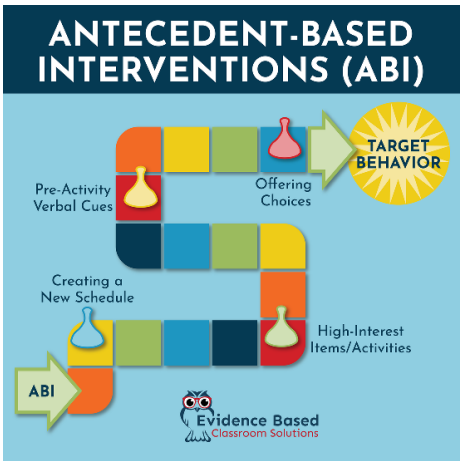
How to implement antecedent strategies at home:

- 1) Creating a structured routine, along with a visual guide, is an effective antecedent strategy to do at home. The two strategies support the planning and predictability of events and activities. For children, knowing a routine can be comforting and helpful when transitioning to a new activity, or away from their preferred activity. Be sure to establish clear and direct expectations when presenting routines and requests in the visual guides.
- 2) Environmental modifications can help reduce challenging

behaviors and support behaviors we want to foster. Some examples of environmental modifications are:

- Reducing harsh lights or noises
- Organizing play and workspaces
- Taking measures to block access to unavailable areas or items

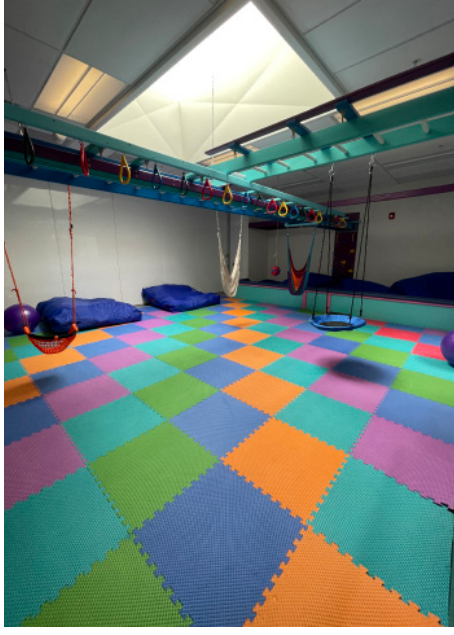
3) Positive reinforcement is a powerful antecedent tool! By acknowledging desired or functional behaviors, we put focus on what we want to see more of. Remember, behavior goes where reinforcement flows! This means the more we reward or praise, or reinforce a behavior, the more we will see it in the future. By understanding the needs of our children and implementing proactive/ antecedent strategies, a positive environment can be fostered.



PACE CELEBRATES NEW CAMPUS

In November of 2023, PACE celebrated the grand opening of the new PACE San Aleso campus in Sunnyvale, CA. The celebration brought together members of the PACE community, including staff, students, and families, and members of the Sunnyvale City Council, including Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein and Sunnyvale Councilmember Richard Melhinger.

Taking part in the official ribbon cutting were Sunnyvale Councilmember Richard Melhinger, Sunnyvale SNAIL Neighborhood Community Chair Valérie Suarés, PACE Executive Director Kurt Ohlfs, PACE School Director Lori Strickland, and Sunnyvale



Mayor Larry Klein. The PACE San Aleso campus is an expansion of the PACE School program and serves upper-age students. The facility can accommodate up to ten classrooms and features an innovative Occupational Therapy gym, dedicated vocational training rooms, and indoor/outdoor space designed to fit the sensory needs of our students. The expansion is a critical part of PACE's efforts to serve more students with autism and families in the Bay Area.

The opening of our new campus marks a significant milestone made possible through the collective dedication and boundless support of our entire community.



JOIN OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS!



Are you a working or retired professional looking to use your time and talents for a good cause? Do you want to grow your professional expertise, expand your network, and make a difference in the community? The PACE Board of Directors is interested in meeting you! As a PACE Board Member, you will make a tangible impact on current and future initiatives of the agency. PACE Board members are responsible for all fiduciary decisions, strategic direction, policy, and leadership, and are encouraged to participate in agency events, such as the PACE Annual Golf Classic, Autism Awareness Month, and PACE School graduation ceremony.

Serving on non-profit Board offers many benefits! According to Board-source.org, "Each year, millions of individuals dedicate their time and expertise to shape the future of nonprofit organizations when they serve on a board. Board members provide critical intellectual capital and strategic resources to power nonprofit success and strengthen communities. For many people, serving on a board allows them to make a difference in their community and support a cause that they care about." If you're ready to grow your professional background and support an important cause, apply to join the PACE Board of Directors today!

How to Apply:

Please send an email with a copy of your resume to board@pacifautism.org

PACE Board Requirements:

Active members commit to attend quarterly meetings via Zoom. Additional meetings may be required as needed. No prior Board experience is required. Board Members are acknowledged on our website, and in print and digital marketing materials.

SAVE THE DATE! 2024 PACE GOLF CLASSIC

Date: September 27, 2024, 12:30PM SHOTGUN TOURNAMENT
Cinnabar Hills Golf Club, San Jose, CA

The 16th Annual PACE Golf Classic will be held on Friday, September 27, 2024, at the beautiful Cinnabar Hills Golf Club in San Jose, CA. This year's event will feature a NEW 12:30 PM shotgun start. The Annual Golf Classic is one of PACE's largest and most successful fundraisers. Proceeds from the event will support our programs and a variety of ongoing residential enhancement projects. We are looking forward to a successful and fun day out on the green for PACE!

For more information about sponsorships and player registration, visit [pacifautism.org/events](https://www.pacifautism.org/events)



CELEBRATE AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH WITH US!

The month of April is nationally recognized as Autism Acceptance Month, a time to celebrate, learn, and raise awareness of the neurodiverse community. While neurodiversity is celebrated every day at PACE, the month of April has become a special time to bring all members of our community together and to raise important funds for PACE. **This year, our fundraising goal is \$20,000 for the PACE Annual Fund.** Help us reach our goal by supporting and/or attending one our Autism Acceptance Month events!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE

APRIL EVENTS CALENDAR:

SHARKS & PACE AUTISM ACCEPTANCE GROUP NIGHT

Sunday, April 7, 2024 | 3:00PM | SAP CENTER, San Jose, CA

PACE is partnering with the San Jose Sharks for their 2nd Annual Autism Acceptance Night, Sunday April 7, 2024, 3PM versus the Arizona Coyotes. The special event ticket includes access to a sensory room located on the Club Level. To purchase your ticket, visit:

sjsharks.com/autismacceptance

PACE Youth Leadership Committee's Voices for Autism Movie Fundraiser featuring *Life, Animated*

Sunday, April 20, 2024 | 3:00PM | 824 San Aleso Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085

The PACE Youth Leadership Committee is proud to host their inaugural movie fundraiser featuring the acclaimed documentary, *Life, Animated*. The film is based on journalist Ron Suskind's 2014 book *Life, Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism*, which tells the story of his son, Owen Suskind, who was diagnosed with autism at age 3 and learned how to communicate through his love of Disney films. This film is rated PG.

Admission is \$15.00. All proceeds will support the PACE Annual Fund.

BECOME AN EVENT SPONSOR! To learn how to sponsor the YLC's efforts, visit www.pacifautism.org/events



CHILDREN'S PROGRAM STAFF SPOTLIGHT: YVONNE AU

Karen Kennan,
Assistant Executive Director

BCBA stands for Board Certified Behavior Analyst. This is a professional title granted by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) to individuals who have met demanding educational and experience requirements and passed a comprehensive examination. BCBAs use the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to develop and implement behavior intervention plans aimed at improving socially significant behaviors and enhancing individuals' quality of life. Certified behavior analysts are trained to assess, analyze and intervene in various behavior issues across a variety of populations.

At PACE, in our Faces Behavioral Services department, BCBAs provide oversight and guidance to a team of behavior therapists who work with children on the autism spectrum to help them reach their full potential utilizing ABA methodology. We are always thrilled when one of our



behavior therapists decides to become a BCBA. This is no small commitment. Candidates must first obtain a Masters' degree in a related subject, fulfill 2,000 hours of related, supervised experience under the guidance of a BCBA, and finally sit for a rigorous exam. I am delighted to announce that recently, Faces' team member (Yee Wan) **Yvonne Au** passed the exam to become Faces' newest BCBA. Yvonne received her Master's degree in Hong Kong in 2018 in Social Science with an emphasis in psychology. She joined Faces in 2019 as an instructional aide and a behavior therapist. She quickly became one of our lead therapists, taking on additional responsibilities and more challenging cases.

Recognizing her passion for the work, she decided to pursue her BCBA and because she already had her MA degree she was able to enroll in a BCBA certificate program in 2021 to meet the requirements to sit for her exam. She passed the exam in January 2024 and now joins fellow Faces BCBAs, Amelia Lalley, Nate Virto and Gicele Corpuz in the department. As she grows into her new role we look forward to increasing our agency's ability to provide services for even more families in our community. Congratulations Yvonne.

CAREERS AT PACE - JOIN OUR TEAM!



We're hiring! At PACE, our employees work together to help our students, clients, and residents reach their full potential. If you are passionate about promoting a culture of continuous improvement and committed to serving those who benefit from our services, we'd love to welcome you on board! Whether you are starting your career or taking a new path, PACE offers rewarding job opportunities that focus on your professional development and skills training.

OUR CURRENT OPENINGS INCLUDE:

Clinic-Based Behavior Therapist
School BCBA
Special Education Teacher
Special Education Classroom Aide
Speech Language Pathologist
Residential Administrator

To learn more about working at PACE, visit [pacifautism.org/careers](https://www.pacifautism.org/careers)

PACE SCHOOL EARNS SIX-YEAR WASC ACCREDITATION



From the desk of Lori Strickland, PACE School Director

-- We are thrilled to announce our success in the WASC Self-Study process, resulting in a six-year accreditation - a testament to the collective hard work and dedication to our students. This achievement is a true reflection of the outstanding efforts of our staff, students, parents, and caregivers, all of whom deserve this well-earned recognition. It is indeed a noteworthy accomplishment and the best WASC outcome. WASC stands for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. According to their website, "WASC accreditation is an ongoing six-year cycle of quality whereby the school demonstrates the capacity, commitment, and competence to support high-quality student learning and ongoing school improvement."

Our WASC Self-Study represents the collective work of our school community. This includes continuous efforts to elicit feedback for purposes of continuous improvement. The PACE school staff has collaborated together

with data, team meetings, and surveys to review student progress and achievement. Staff, students, parents and caregivers have also been involved via surveys and perception data. In July of 2023, the school community reviewed the Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs) and academic standards. Since all students have individual goals determined by their IEP, the schoolwide learner outcomes are able to enhance student learning and productivity. Student data is collected individually while the SLOs will ensure a collective agreement of outcomes for all students who graduate from PACE. These learning outcomes, called C.A.R.E.S., will be embedded throughout the school day at PACE:


**Compassion
Adaptability
Respect
Education
Sociability**

At PACE, our commitment to the continuous improvement cycle remains steadfast, reinforcing our vision of creating a world where individuals of all abilities lead fulfilled lives. Thank you to our staff, parents, and leadership team for their contributions to this rigorous process.

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 **PACE Setter**
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Editors: Melissa Watkins and Sydney Zitzer
Executive Director: Kurt Ohlfs
Contributors: Elise Abraham, Karen Kennan, Kurt Ohlfs, Alania Sabankaya, Lori Strickland, Melissa Watkins, Sydney Zitzer

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.



2023-2024 PACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sarah Mudgett, President	Joe Dermer
Mark Peper, Vice President	Marina Djordjevic
Debbie McCarroll, Treasurer	Mark Gilfix
Kurt Ohlfs, Secretary	Lisa Grisalin
Nancy Brown	Sruba Seshadri

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

Donate: by mail at 1880 Pruneridge Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050, online at www.pacificautism.org/donate, or by phone 408.625.6174.
Double your gift! Make a matching gift contribution at your workplace.

Please contact development@pacificautism.org for giving options.

PACE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Our TAX EIN# is 77-0259858.
Contributions made to PACE are tax deductible as specified by the current tax law.

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GREAT GIVERS

At PACE, our “Great Givers” come in many varieties. Some volunteer their talents and ideas, some volunteer their time, and some make generous financial contributions to support our mission. In this edition of the PACE Setter, we are pleased to honor the **Sunnyvale S.N.A.I.L Community** group as our Great Givers.

According to its website, the Sunnyvale S.N.A.I.L (which stands for Sunnyvale Neighbors of Arbor Including LaLinda) is a neighborhood organization comprised of nearly 1,500 homes located in the north-central part of Sunnyvale, CA. Members of the group are dedicated to informing the community about city services and programs, volunteering, and other events within the Sunnyvale area. When PACE opened the San Aleso campus in Sunnyvale in September 2023, the S.N.A.I.L community quickly came to support us in a variety of ways.



A couple of weeks after the San Aleso campus officially opened its doors, ten adaptive bicycles were stolen from the facility. Upon hearing the news, members of S.N.A.I.L. and nearby residents joined together to collect donations and replace the stolen bikes. In October, the Sunnyvale SNAIL community and Junkluggers Silicon Valley surprised PACE with a brand new adaptive bike to the staff at the San Aleso campus. Local Sunnyvale residents also joined together to raise funds to replace the bikes. SNAIL members raised over \$1,500 to support the cause, and residents of the Elev8tion Apartments (neighbors to the San Aleso campus) raised \$1,050 in donations.

Adaptive bicycles are designed for individuals who may need additional support with sitting or riding a bike. They allow our students to enjoy the activity of riding a bike, which is an integral part of their daily physical/outdoor routine. We are profoundly grateful for the compassion and support from the Sunnyvale community.



WELCOME ELISE TRAN ABRAHAM, BCBA



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In January 2024, the PACE School welcomed Elise Tran Abraham, M.Ed., BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) to its team of therapists. Get to know Elise below!

Welcome to the PACE team, Elise! Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I was raised in San Jose, California, where I grew up being very involved with the Vietnamese-American community it offered. I received my Bachelors of Science in Child Psychology at Saint Mary's College of California and my Masters degree in Special Education, Applied Behavior Analysis from the University of Washington. I worked at PACE from 2016 to 2018 and am so grateful I have recently returned “home” after a five year journey in San Diego. On my free time, I enjoy fostering rescued dogs and using my ABA skills to help make them more adoptable!

Tell us how you became a BCBA. What ignited your passion and what do you like most about your job?

I am inspired by the caregivers of individuals on the autism spectrum, ever since meeting a distant relative who was nonverbal and severely impacted by autism. Seeing how many therapies and accommodations he

required throughout a single day; I was determined to understand the condition better so I can serve his community best. I love that every day, I am given the gift to see the world differently through a completely foreign lens. I truly believe our society benefits from different minds and I hope to contribute to a more accepting space for all through my work.

What excites you the most about working at PACE? How do you connect with PACE's mission?

I genuinely enjoy the children and adolescents I work with for who they are, and I aspire to provide them with a sense of belonging every time they attend school! I connect deeply with the PACE mission to innovate, educate and promote best evidence-based practices in order to care for these individuals the way they deserve.

Any advice for someone who is interested in becoming a BCBA?

By being a BCBA, you are at the forefront of meaningful action. Applied Behavior Analysis is a highly recognized therapy for individuals affected by autism, and with that comes the opportunity to advocate for safer, more respectful, and neurodiverse change to the quality of others' lives. I encourage you to explore the career!

At PACE, our BCBAs provide consultation to school staff and support behavioral plans and interventions to children in the PACE School. If you are interested in joining our BCBA team, visit us at www.pacificautism.org/careers.