



AUTISM MODEL SCHOOL

2021-2022 Annual Report

Approved & Published on 9/20/2022



AUTISM MODEL SCHOOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE

Mission Statement.....i
Core Values.....i
Brief History.....i

HIGHLIGHTS

“Looking Back”.....1
“Where Dogs Teach Kids to Fly”.....2
“A Big Change at AMS”.....3
“Priority One: Security”.....3

PEOPLE

Students.....4
Staff.....4
Volunteers.....4
Board of Directors.....4

PROGRAMS

Our Approach.....5
Programming Pathways.....5

Academics.....5
Adaptive Skills.....6
Vocational.....6
Enrichment.....6
Afterschool Astros.....6

POSITIVE IMPACT

Student Outcomes.....7
Comm. to Learning.....8
State Report Card.....9
Parent Survey.....10

MORE ABOUT AMS

Special Events.....11
Stakeholder Support.....11
Our Sponsor.....12
School Calendar.....12
Financials.....13
Get Involved.....14
Appendix (Sponsor Report).....15



Autism Model School
3020 Tremainsville Rd
Toledo OH 43613

419.897.4400
amstoledo.org

PURPOSE

THE MISSION

The school, in **partnership** with parents and the community, will provide a **nurturing environment**, and develop the **full potential** of differently-abled students within the Autistic Spectrum Disorders using a multidisciplinary approach addressing **individual needs**.

CORE VALUES

We Believe...	
The only appropriate education is an effective education .	If the child cannot learn by the way we teach, we must teach in a way the child can learn.
Parental involvement and participation is crucial in a child's development.	Behavior in any form, is communication .
A working relationship between school & home is critical to the success of a child's education.	Everyone belongs.
Educational programs should be held accountable to produce outcomes that are socially valuable, functional, and acceptable.	

(BRIEF) HISTORY

The Autism Model School was established in 1998 as one of the first charter schools in Ohio through the state's **Community School Pilot Program**. The school's founders—all parents of children with autism—struggled to find appropriate educational placements in traditional public school settings.

By forming their own program they sought to provide effective, evidence-based instruction in a supportive learning environment. The school opened with 26 students—today, over 100 students are enrolled at AMS and there is a waiting list of over 50.

FUN FACT

The school's graph logo contains a hidden nod to **the initials** of a very important person in our organization's history. **Can you see it?**



STORY HIGHLIGHTS

LOOKING BACK: YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2021-2022 school year seemed to have more than its share of ups and downs.

Some of the bright moments included a full return to in-person learning, the continued development of a customizable web-based support tool, a virtual alumni appreciation week and an outdoor end-of-year celebration—the first of its kind at AMS.



On the downside there were two unfortunate events that happened near the end of the year.

The much-loved swings on the back playground became damaged beyond repair in May. The cost for replacing the swing set was estimated at over \$20,000.



Then, just a month later, the school suffered a string of break-ins after everyone left for June vacation.

On top of stealing items, like cell phones and tablets, the thieves wrecked several classrooms and offices.

They smashed windows, busted printers, tipped refrigerators, spilled bins of supplies and sprayed fire extinguishers.

The destruction was so extensive the school had to delay returning to classes by one week.

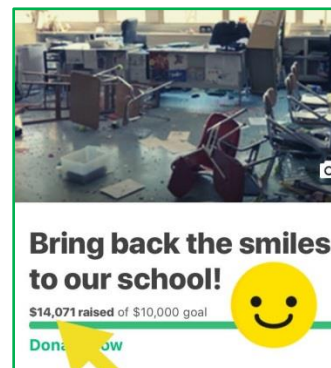


While insurance would eventually pay for destroyed and stolen items, the school was required to cover over \$2,000 in deductibles.

In the face of these stormy situations, the AMS community stepped up and drove away the clouds.

As the 2021-2022 school year came to a close, the school started a GoFundMe page to raise money for a new set of swings.

Hours after the page went live, donations began pouring in.



When the dust settled, over \$16,000 had been donated, including a \$5,000 matching gift from Dr. Gwen Johnson, co-founder of Accelerated Learning Academy in Las Vegas, Nevada.

While the rest of this story belongs to the next school year (playground installation and improved building security are ongoing projects), we can confidently say that our parents, students, staff and board members brought back the smiles! ■

WHERE DOGS TEACH KIDS TO FLY

Their feet did not leave the ground, but they took flight in so many ways.

Soaring confidence, rising self-esteem and rocketing social skills—students experienced all of this and more at Agility Camp, a 6-week summer program.



In partnership with the school, this project was run by volunteers from Agility Angels and, the stars of the show, their team of agility dogs.

Agility Angels is a 100% volunteer organization, partnering individuals with autism, coaches and therapy dogs to improve motor movement, build social skills and foster confidence.

At the start of each session, a volunteer coach gave students a walk-through of the obstacle course. Students were shown when

to give commands--like "jump," "tunnel," and "tire"--and how to lead the dog through the obstacles.



When it came time for the real thing students started by offering a small treat to their dog to gain attention. Then they were off, dashing through the obstacles and re-routing the dog if any wrong turns were taken.

On the final day of Agility Camp students were presented with a certificate of completion and a t-shirt.

They left with other more lasting take-aways, too. Improved confidence, physical health and new friendships!



The school is tremendously grateful to all the volunteers and agility dogs from Agility Angels. Plans are in the works for future

projects that will continue to put smiles on the faces of students in our community. ■

Content originally shared as a blog post on amstoledo.org

A BIG CHANGE AT AMS

In partnership with the board of directors, school leadership made significant changes to the salary schedules for teachers and paraprofessionals. This positive development has brought the Autism Model School closer to matching compensation levels offered by surrounding districts.

Funding for the overhaul of the school's salary schedule came from the state's Catastrophic Aid program. Schools are able to request reimbursement for costs of educating students with disabilities that exceed a predetermined threshold.



AMS was approved for over \$350,000 through this process. This speaks to the quantity and quality of our program, as we provide a 1-to-2 teacher/para-to-student ratio and seek to meet the unique needs of each and every child in our care.

The Catastrophic Aid program is available every year and the school will continue to apply for reimbursement—with an eye towards furthering our mission. ■

PRIORITY ONE: SECURITY

On May 19, 2022, the school was approved for over \$90,000 in funding through

Ohio's K12 Security Grant. Plans were in place to improve monitoring of the building by installing security cameras and to enhance communications by putting in a new PA system.

As it turned out, the school could not move fast enough on putting these dollars to work.

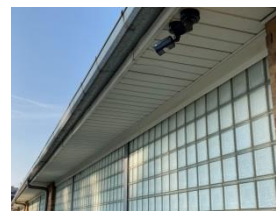
Exactly two weeks after being approved for the security grant, someone attempted to break-in to a classroom by removing an AC unit from a window.

The timing further complicated things, as staff were preparing to leave for June break the next day.

Despite the best efforts of the school and local law enforcement, the break-ins continued over the course of the next several days, resulting in nearly \$30,000 of property damage.

The K12 Security Grant offered a silver lining during these challenging times. The school and a local security company worked as quickly as possible to install a camera system.

Today the cameras are in place and work is scheduled to begin replacing an antiquated PA system with up-to-date equipment.



This bump-in-the-road will hopefully be overcome so students can continue to learn and grow in a safe environment. ■

PEOPLE

STUDENTS

All students who attended the school were age 5 to 22 and residents of Ohio. Average enrollment for the year was just under **100 students**. All students were on Individualized Education Programs and nearly all were residents of Lucas County. Most students who attended AMS were diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

STAFF

The school employed a **dedicated team** of professionals to meet the individual needs of students in our care. For 2021-2022 this included **18** intervention specialists (“special education teachers”), **40+** paraprofessional aides, **10+** administrators—including a transportation director, licensed speech and occupational therapists and board certified behavior analysts.

Joel Vidovic is the school's director. For additional staff details, including contact information, please visit amstoleado.org/about-us/directory

VOLUNTEERS

On any given Wednesday, when the sun was shining and recess was outside, you'd find our favorite 4-legged friends—**Ella**, **Diamond** and **Violet**—bringing joy to our students! This is possible thanks to two of our most dedicated volunteers, Terry McLeary and Linell Weinberg.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Autism Model School's **Board of Directors** consisted of 8 members who met at monthly meetings to discuss organizational issues and vote on policies as needed.

Bruce Weinberg (*President*)

Toni Gerber, MEd (*Vice President*)

Isaac Demarest, MBA, AAMS, CFP (*Treasurer*)

Lisa Marsalek, MA, MLHR

Mark Greenblatt, CLU, ChFC, CASL

Nirav Raj Parikh, JD, BS

Jim Rothschild, JD (*Secretary*)

Linell Weinberg, MSW

PROGRAMS

OUR APPROACH

The school continued its emphasis on providing evidence-based programming—rooted in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)—in a highly supportive environment. Oversight from a supervisory team, a **1-to-2 staff-to-student ratio**, small classrooms (between 5 to 7 students)—these are a few examples of this approach in action.

For more specifics, visit amstoledo.org/about-us/school-philosophy



PROGRAMMING PATHWAYS

The Autism Model School provided a wide range of programs to meet the **diverse needs** of the earliest learners on up to job training and college readiness.

ACADEMICS

For core academic programming—in subjects such as math, reading and writing—the school used **Direct Instruction** (DI) curricula published by McGraw Hill.

DI is a structured approach to teaching that emphasizes carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments. The effectiveness of DI is backed by over **40 years of research**. For outcome data related to the school's initial implementation of DI, see the "Positive Impact" section of this report.

Additional reading and math curricula included computer-based programs, such as HeadSprout and TeachTown.

ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Adaptive skills continued to be a priority for many students attending the Autism Model School. Examples of **adaptive skill areas** include self-care, social skills, leisure skills and safety.

VOCATIONAL

The school implemented individually-based **vocational programming** for students aged 14 or older. Due to the health crisis, many typical experiences—such as off-site job placements and volunteer opportunities—were postponed.

The school continued to provide job training through the **e-commerce program**, which enabled students to run the behind-the-scenes aspects of an online storefront. Learn more about this exciting program at amstoledo.org/partners

ENRICHMENT

With the return to in-person learning, group **enrichment activities** were put on pause for the 2021-2022 school year in light of health guidance and local protocols. There are plans underway to gradually bring back student-interest enrichment clubs for areas such as art, music, gardening and dance. The speed at which these popular activities return will be based on available guidance from local and state health authorities



AFTERSCHOOL ASTROS

Led by Mary Jo Besase and staffed exclusively with Autism Model School employees, the **Afterschool Astros program** continued to provide quality enrichment opportunities above and beyond the normal school day.

More than a dozen students benefited from afterschool during the 2021-2022 school year—way to go Astros! Learn more by visiting amstoledo.org/astros

POSITIVE IMPACT

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students from a diverse range of backgrounds made progress towards their individual goals during the 2021-2022 school year. The personalized nature of these goals makes reporting on them from a school-wide perspective difficult, however, Autism Model School is always looking for ways to evaluate the effectiveness of our program.

This year, Autism Model School rolled out the NWEA Map Growth Assessment, a state of the art academic achievement assessment that will eventually provide students, teachers, and families with a clear picture of academic growth obtained from year-to-year. As this was the first year of implementation for this particular assessment, data is not yet available to quantify academic growth across consecutive administrations of the assessment...but stay tuned!

While we do not yet have data from the NWEA Map Growth Assessment to share, the benefits of the school's core academic curriculum —**Direct Instruction** (DI)—were highlighted in an article published in July of 2021.*

The following excerpts from the article show a remarkable growth in reading skills students at AMS made after two years of DI...

“Outcome data suggest that DI reading programs led to improved scores on standardized measures of academic achievement in the area of reading at a **statistically significant level**.”

“Multiple students made progress at rates **beyond what would be expected** for their age, indicated by scores nearing or exceeding the mean for the KTEA-II Brief Form [*standardized reading test*] after DI intervention.”

“[*The following table*] further explores the changes observed in reading Growth Scale Value (GSV) scores between initial assessment and post-intervention [*i.e. after two years of DI*]...”

Table 1 KTEA-II Brief Form GSV Scores—Participant Makeup

	Initial Assessment	Post-intervention	Change
Scores at or above Mean	6	9	+3
Scores within 1 SD of Mean	12	20	+8
Scores below 1 SD of Mean	49	38	-11
Total	67	67	

“These data [from Table 1] indicate that at least 11 of the participants experienced changes in reading GSV scores between initial assessments and post-intervention, which may indicate **higher than expected rates of learning.**”

**Vidovic, J.L., Cornell, M.C., Frampton, S.E. et al. Adventures in Direct Instruction Implementation: The Devil Is in the Details. Behav Analysis Practice (2021).*

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

The students at Autism Model School aren't the only ones who grew and learned this past year. Autism Model School invested in several specific opportunities for our faculty to advance their instructional skills.

Staff members who lead classrooms that focus on academics attended several professional development sessions to learn how to implement the new **NWEA Map Growth Assessment**. These training sessions prepared our staff to implement the assessment, access the plethora of reports generated by the assessment, and interpret the results to better inform their instruction.

Meanwhile, we continued to increase the number of faculty members who have specific training in the **Practical Functional Assessment and Skill-Based Treatment model** that has been developed and empirically validated by Dr. Greg Hanley, his graduate students at Western New England College, and members of his consulting team at FTF Behavioral Consulting.



Following this training, faculty at Autism Model School have improved their ability to engineer learning environments that are highly learner-specific, and result in each student feeling “**happy, relaxed, and engaged**” (HRE). Once this environment has been identified and carefully built for each student, educational focus shifts to building important life skills in the areas of communication, cooperation, and flexibility.

From the website of FTF Behavioral Consulting:

“Peer-reviewed research has shown IISCAs to be a quick, safe, and reliable means to understand enough about why problem behavior is occurring to design individualized treatments capable of eliminating problem behavior while **promoting essential skills** such as functional communication, delay and denial toleration, and contextually appropriate behaviors (e.g., accuracy with academics, vocational skills, independent leisure activity).”

STATE REPORT CARD

The most recent Report Card for the Autism Model School was released on September 15th, 2022. Schools now receive **star ratings** for five components. AMS's ratings were as follows:

Achievement	★☆☆☆☆	Graduation Rate	★☆☆☆☆
Progress	Not Rated*	Early Literacy	Not Rated*
Gap Closing	★☆☆☆☆	College/Career/Military Readiness	Not Rated*

***Not Rated** = not enough students to evaluate component

The Autism Model School believes the Report Card reflects an incomplete and inaccurate analysis of the school's effectiveness in the area of *Achievement*, *Gap Closing* and *Graduation Rate*.

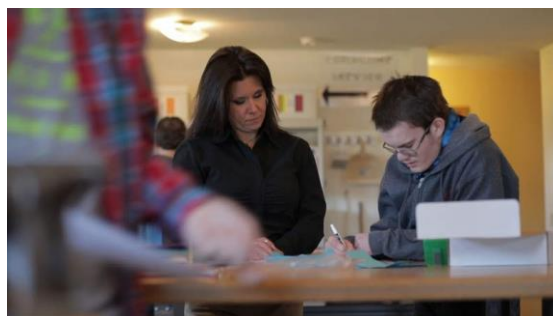
We feel that **measuring growth year-to-year** provides a more accurate reflection of our ability to educate students effectively than does the percentage of students performing at state-determined levels of proficiency.

Many students who attend AMS are not meeting the State's level of proficiency—and in fact remain several grade-levels behind. And yet the vast majority of students are demonstrating **significant academic and functional growth** despite nearly insurmountable barriers to their success (the combination of poverty and disability).

Our belief is that schools should be held accountable to produce outcomes that are **socially valuable, functional** and **acceptable**. We believe the data outlined on page 7 of this report ("Student Outcomes") is an indication we're doing just that.

Additionally, with respect to graduation rates, Ohio Administrative Code 3301-51-02 ensures that all students with disabilities are eligible to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education **through age 21**. Many of our students, through consultation with their Individualized Education Planning teams, make the determination that continuing their education with Autism Model School beyond 4 years of high school is in their best interest.

Often times, these **students continue to work on critical skills** to support their transition to adulthood. This provides important context to Autism Model School's low ranking in the area of graduation rate on the Report Card.



PARENT SURVEY

Over **40% of parents** completed the 2021-2022 survey. The //-- figures refer to **% change** from 2020-2021 survey.

1-The school tries to bring out the best in each child.

Strongly Agree: 72.5%	25.5
Agree: 27.5%	19.5
Unsure: 0%	6
Disagree: 0%	--
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

6-Does your child like going to school each day?

Yes: 65%	10
Mostly: 27.5%	.5
Unsure: 2.5%	2.5
Not really: 2.5%	8.5
No: 2.5%	3.5

2-Progressive & effective teaching methods are used.

Strongly Agree: 62.5%	29.5
Agree: 35%	26
Unsure: 0%	6
Disagree: 2.5%	2.5
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

7-The school helps my child deal with anxious emotions.

Strongly Agree: 45%	17
Agree: 47.5%	7.5
Unsure: 7.5%	9.5
Disagree: 0%	--
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

3-Students have easy access to technology.

Strongly Agree: 52.5%	13.5
Agree: 37.5%	15.5
Unsure: 10%	2
Disagree: 0%	--
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

8-I would recommend AMS to others.

Strongly Agree: 80%	16
Agree: 20%	5
Unsure: 0%	8
Disagree: 0%	3
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

4-Incidents of bullying are noticed & dealt with.

Strongly Agree: 30%	16
Agree: 20%	16
Unsure: 45%	5
Disagree: 2.5%	2.5
Strongly Disagree: 2.5%	2.5

9-School staff members know & appreciate my child's qualities.

Strongly Agree: 72.5%	19.5
Agree: 20%	24
Unsure: 7.5%	4.5
Disagree: 0%	--
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

5-School reports give clear feedback about progress.

Strongly Agree: 67.5%	20.5
Agree: 32.5%	14.5
Unsure: 0%	6
Disagree: 0%	--
Strongly Disagree: 0%	--

10- What words/phrases would you use to describe the school to others?

"Accepting, loving, caring, compassionate, fun."
 "The best decision I made [was] when I sent my son to this school."
 "Most schools put students 'in a box,' but at AMS each student has their own box, designed specifically for their needs."

MORE ABOUT AMS

SPECIAL EVENTS

The **Class of 2022** was celebrated at an outdoor graduation ceremony on the evening of Thursday, June 2nd, 2022. There were a total **9 students** in the class.



An **end-of-year celebration** took place immediately following graduation. Current students and families, alumni, staff and board members attended this first-of-its kind event for AMS. Guests were treated to food trucks, a photo booth and live music from Glass City Steel, a drum band from **Toledo School for the Arts**.

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

The lives of students and staff members were **made brighter** thanks to financial gifts from individual donors, local businesses and grant-making foundations.

Individual donors gave more than **\$7,000** throughout the year—many supporters asked for donations on their birthdays through Facebook. Others gave through workplace giving programs or to honor a loved one.

The school received grants from a broad range of organizations and foundations. This type of support totaled over **\$135,000**.

- Toledo Mud Hens “Helping Hens Fund” (Greater Toledo Community Foundation)
- State of Ohio K-12 School Security Grant
- Norma & Malcom Baker Recreational Grant (Autism Speaks)
- Local Grant (Autism Speaks)
- Elise & Harry Baumker Charitable Foundation
- Toshiba America Foundation
- Dana Open Presented by Marathon (formerly “Marathon Classic”)
- Tommy Wilson Memorial Grant (SHAPE Foundation)
- Rodger & Kate Graef Family Foundation
- State of Ohio Attorney General’s Office Security Grant
- Dollar General Literacy Grant

The Autism Model School's mission is enhanced and furthered thanks to **the generosity** of our stakeholders.



OUR SPONSOR

The **Educational Service Center of Lake Erie West** (ESCLEW) served as sponsor for Autism Model School during the 2021-2022 school year.

ESCLEW monitored the school's academic and fiscal performance, as well as organization and operation of the school, and determined that the school was **overall compliant** with all laws and rules. (See Appendix for sponsor evaluation report.)



SCHOOL CALENDAR

The school year began with a summer Extended Learning Program (ELP), which was optional for enrolled students. ELP students attended classes two days per week from July 1st, 2021 through July 30th, 2021; ELP classes resumed on August 26th, 2021 and ended September 3rd, 2021.

In-person learning across 5 days per week resumed on September 7th, 2021 and ran until June 30th, 2022. There were **a total of 194 instructional days** planned for this time period. School closed 14 times for calamity events (e.g. snow days, low staffing due to COVID-19 cases).

FISCAL SPONSOR AND FINANCIALS

The fiscal sponsor of the Autism Model School is [Massa Financials Solutions, LLC](#).

On April 5th, 2021, the Ohio Auditor of State released a Financial Audit for the Autism Model School—the report period was 7/01/2020 to 6/30/2021. To view the document, visit ohioauditor.gov/auditsearch/Search.aspx and type “Autism Model School” in the *Entity Name* box.

For the second year in a row the school received the [Auditor of State Award](#) for having a “clean” audit report. This is a credit to the collaborative efforts of the front office team.

The following [financial snapshot](#) is taken from the minutes from the Autism Model School's 2022 July board meeting.

Autism Model School	
Statement of Net Position	
<i>June 30th, 2022</i>	
Current Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	883,283
Other Current Assets	47,099
Capital Assets	
Capital Assets – Net	1,008,011
TOTAL ASSETS	1,938,393
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	25,416
Accrued Expenses	(29,938)
Withholdings Payable	10,039
Loan Payable – Vans	13,527
Loan Payable –Signature	46,027
TOTAL LIABILITIES	65,071
Net Position	
Net Position – Operating	1,873,322
TOTAL NET POSITION	1,873,322
TOTAL LIABILITIES and NET POSITION	1,938,393

GET INVOLVED

If you'd like to learn more about the Autism Model School, please contact us by calling [419.897.4400](tel:419.897.4400) or by emailing autismmodelschool@amstoledo.org.

The school is a registered 501c3 nonprofit in the state of Ohio (tax ID no. 31-1606800) and holds a GuideStar Gold Transparency rating for 2022 (guidestar.org).

Be a part of providing life-changing education for a student at AMS through a tax-deductible gift by visiting amstoledo.org/give

