

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

Supporting children with autism and their families since 1989

Teaching Children with Autism & Related Disorders in Inclusive Settings

Integrated Play Groups for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Instructor:

Pamela Wolfberg, Ph.D.

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**Friday, October 16, 2009**

~~**Saturday, October 17, 2009\***~~

**Day 2  
is full**

(\*Day 2 is limited to a smaller, core group who attended day 1, and who are committed to carrying out the practices of the IPG model. Space on Day 2 is limited to 25—Register early. Confirmation letters will be sent.)

**Time: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
(registration begins at 8:00 AM)**

**Location: Castle of Knights  
1599 Memorial Drive; Chicopee, MA**

a division of ***THE ASSOCIATION*** FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

*Creating Opportunities, Building Relationships, Improving Lives  
for children and adults with developmental disabilities since 1952*

## Instructor Bio

**Pamela Wolfberg, Ph.D.**, is Associate Professor of special education and director of the Autism Spectrum graduate program (Project Mosaic) at San Francisco State University. She received her doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley with SFSU in 1994. Her research and practice are centered on peer relations, play and childhood culture as related to the social inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders. Prior to pursuing a higher degree, she studied and worked with children in various capacities within the U.S. and abroad, including as an educator and play therapist. While teaching children with autism in the San Francisco public schools, she originated the Integrated Play Groups model. As co-founder of the Autism Institute on Peer Relations and Play she leads widespread efforts to develop inclusive peer play programs worldwide.

Dr. Wolfberg is currently serving as Principal Investigator on major research and training grants including: Integrated Play Groups: Promoting Symbolic Play, Social Engagement and Communication with Peers across Settings in Children with Autism (Autism Speaks Treatment Award) and Project Mosaic: Preparing Highly Qualified Educators to Meet the Unique Needs of Students with Autism in Diverse Settings (U.S. Department of Education, OSEP).

Dr. Wolfberg has published extensively and is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles, books and chapters. She co-edited a special issue on play in *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice* (2003). She is the author of *Play and Imagination in Children with Autism* (2nd Edition-2009), which is based on her doctoral dissertation, and *Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum: The Art of Guiding Children's Socialization and Imagination* (2003). She is co-editor of a new volume with Kari Dunn Buron that includes contributions from world renown authors titled: *Learners on the Autism Spectrum: Preparing Highly Qualified Educators* (2008).

She has an active agenda as an invited speaker at the local, national and international level. She presently serves as associate editor for *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice*, on the editorial board of *RSPD* and as a guest editor for the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. She is currently Director of Project Mosaic: Preparing Highly Qualified Educators to Meet the Unique Needs of Students with Autism in Diverse Settings (U.S. Department of Education Grant No. H325K060211).

Dr. Wolfberg is the recipient of several distinguished awards for her scholarship, research and service to the community.

## Why Integrated Play Groups (IPG)?

### Challenges in Peer Relations and Play

Many children with social problems, particularly children on the autism spectrum, face serious challenges learning how to play and socialize with peers. Autism is a complex condition that impedes children's spontaneous development of reciprocal social interaction, communication, play and imagination. Despite opportunities for play, these children do not naturally acquire capacities to pretend and coordinate social activities with other children. Problems conveying and interpreting social-communication cues make it difficult to join peers in play. Attempts to socialize are often subtle, obscure or poorly timed and mistaken as signs of deviance or limited social interest. Many children spend inordinate amounts of time alone pursuing repetitive and unimaginative activities. Without appropriate intervention, they are at high risk for being excluded from their peer culture and leading impoverished play lives.

### Importance of Play with Peers

Research shows that children learn and develop in a multitude of ways through shared experiences in play. Play's significance is far reaching as a social and cultural context through which children acquire symbolic capacities, interpersonal skills and social knowledge. Moreover, peers perform a distinct role in fostering children's socialization and development that cannot be duplicated by adults. While playing with peers, children acquire many interrelated skills that are necessary for attaining social competence and forming meaningful friendships. They learn to communicate effectively, solve problems, negotiate and compromise, understand the feelings and perspectives of others and work out emotional conflicts. Particularly within a social-pretend framework, children practice and assimilate these skills while exercising their imaginative potential. Considering play's social, cultural and developmental significance, enhancing opportunities for children with autism to become competent in play with peers is of prime importance.

### Guided Participation\* in IPG

The IPG model was created by Pamela Wolfberg out of deep concern for the many children who are missing out on peer play experiences as a vital part of childhood. Drawing on current theory, research and practice, the IPG model is designed to support children of diverse ages and abilities on the autism spectrum (novice players) in play with typical peers/siblings (expert players) in home, school and community settings. Children meet regularly in small groups led by a qualified adult facilitator (play guide). Each group is customized as a part of a child's individual education / therapy program. Through a carefully tailored system of support, emphasis is placed on maximizing children's developmental potential as well as intrinsic desire to play, socialize and form meaningful relationships with peers. An equally important focus is on teaching the peer group to be responsive, accepting and inclusive of children who relate and play in different ways.

*Guided participation* is used to support players in mutually enjoyed play experiences that encourage social interaction, communication, play and imagination – such as pretending, constructing, art, music, movement and interactive games. Play guides incorporate routines, rituals and visual supports while *monitoring initiations*, *scaffolding*, and *guiding social-communication and play* geared to each child's unique interests, ability and experience. Gradually, the adult withdraws support as the children learn to mediate their own play activities. IPG offer natural opportunities for children to simply have fun and make friends while engaged in socially and culturally meaningful activity.

## Seminar ~ Day 1

**Course Description:** This initial one-day seminar is open to a wide range of participants. The primary purpose is for participants to become familiar with the principles and practices comprising the IPG model. This session provides a basic overview of theory and methods. Lecture, slides, video, hands-on activities and interactive discussion are used to illustrate concepts, tools and techniques. Participants will receive handouts to serve as a guide throughout the session and as a resource for future use.

**Day 1 Learning Outcomes: Participants will become familiar with:**

- Theories on the nature of peer relations and play in children on the autism spectrum
- Principles of the IPG model
- Methods to assess play variations in children with autism spectrum disorders
- Methods to guide children's peer socialization, communication, play and imagination
- Methods for designing supportive play environments
- Methods for designing quality peer play programs

**Who Should Participate:** Team members of children with ASD and related special needs, preschool through elementary school age:

- Special and general educators; one-to-one paraprofessionals
- Speech / language pathologists; OT, PT, Recreational therapists
- Inclusion facilitators
- Psychologists & child development specialists
- Clinicians and support professionals
- Counselors and behavioral specialists
- SPED directors
- Parents/family caregivers

**Day 1—Agenda:**

- 9:00—10:15 **I. Embracing the Spirit of Play ~**  
*IPG Conceptual Foundation*
- Nature of play and the autism spectrum
  - Play's prominent role in childhood
  - Key features of the IPG model
- 10:30—12:00 **II. Setting the Stage for Play ~**  
*IPG Program and Environmental Design*
- Gathering and preparing the players
  - Preparing the play setting
  - Structuring the play session
- 1:00—2:15 **III. Observing Children at Play ~**  
*IPG Assessment Methods*
- Fundamentals of the IPG assessment approach
  - IPG Observation Framework
    - \* Social play styles
    - \* Symbolic dimension
    - \* Social dimension
    - \* Communicative functions/means
    - \* Play preferences/diversity of play
  - IPG Assessment Tools
- 2:30—4:00 **IV. Guided Participation in Play ~**  
*IPG Intervention Methods*
- Monitoring play initiations
  - Scaffolding play
  - Social-communication guidance
  - Play guidance
- Case Illustrations and Wrap-up/Questions*

## Seminar ~ Day 2

**Course Description:** The second day session is arranged in advance to involve a core group of participants interested in initiating the practices of the IPG model in home, school, community, or therapy settings. Working in teams, the session focuses on developing action plans to design and implement groups for selected children. Participants are requested (although not required) to prepare and share brief videotapes of selected children at play. Note: *The IPG Field Manual (Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum: The Art of Guiding Children's Peer Socialization and Play)* is required for participation in this session. *Please bring a toy*

**Day 2 Learning Outcomes: Participants will acquire basic knowledge and practice in:**

- Planning Integrated Play Groups for individual children in combination with other educational and therapeutic approaches
- Designing supportive play environments within home, school, therapy and community-based settings
- Conducting assessments of children at play with peers
- Setting meaningful goals for children
- Designing strategies to guide children's peer socialization, communi-

**Who May Participate:** The second day session is pre-arranged to include a smaller core group of 25 participants who attended the initial seminar day 1 and are interested in initiating the practices of Integrated Play Groups in home, school, therapy or community-based settings.

**Day 2—Agenda:**

- 9:00—10:15 **I. Introduction ~**  
*Warm-up activity*
- Overview of IPG Field Manual
  - Discussion — Qualities of effective and meaningful practice
- 10:30—12:00 **II. Program Planning & Environmental Design ~**  
*Introduction to teams*
- Share video/identify selected children
  - Review Design Tools
  - Conduct IPG Action Plans
  - Report on Action Plans
- 1:00—2:15 **III. Practice in Assessment Methods ~**  
*Hands-on Activity: Guided play observation*
- Review Assessment Tools
  - Conduct Play Questionnaire
  - Conduct Field Exercises
  - Set preliminary goals for children
  - Report on play questionnaire, profile, and goals
- 2:30—4:00 **IV. Practice in Intervention Methods ~**  
*Team Activity: IPG Role Playing*
- Review intervention tools
  - Conduct field exercises—role playing
- Wrap-Up (Open Forum)**
- IPG adaptations and extensions
  - Future support and team collaboration

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### REGISTRATION FORM *(please print clearly)*

**Day 2  
is full**

#### **Registration Fees (lunch included):**

School Personnel/Professionals: \$89 (day one only); ~~\$198 (day one and two)~~  
Parents/Family Members: \$59 (day one only)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Street, ST, Zip): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/School Professional: \_\_\_\_\_ Professional: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Relative: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration: Day 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Day 1 and 2: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Certificate of Attendance provided.**

**Registration deadline: September 25, 2009**

**(register early—space is limited)**

*Please make checks payable to:*

Community Resources for People with Autism  
116 Pleasant St., Suite 366; Easthampton, MA 01027

Phone (413) 529-2428 \* Fax (413) 529-2567

Questions? Please contact Karen Greaney at x118

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