

Hello all,

On *date*, we will advocate for Autism Awareness. **All students will be permitted to wear an article of blue clothing.** During lunch, there will be blue snacks and sweets. Additionally, **puzzle pieces will be available to sign during lunch — acknowledging your commitment to advocate —when you come to pick up a treat.** I encourage you all to take a picture and post on Instagram, tagging @publichealth.phc to encourage advocacy and spread awareness!

Please take your time to read the following paragraph:

Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disorder in the U.S. It is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to others. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control 1 in 54 children are affected in the United States today. “We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.” Several factors may influence the development of autism, and it is often accompanied by sensory sensitivities and medical issues such as gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, seizures, or sleep disorders, as well as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and attention issues. The signs of Autism usually appear by age 2 or 3. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, they can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism. In our community at SIA, it is important for us to show compassion, understanding, and acceptance to those who may be dealing with the struggles that people with Autism face.

Let’s wear blue and advocate together!