

Franklin Academy  
and  
Asperger's Awareness Council  
Present

Annual Conference:  
Completing the Puzzle

October 7, 2016



Franklin Academy  
BELONG | GROW | SUCCEED



ASPERGER'S AWARENESS COUNCIL

Friday  
October 7, 2016  
8:30 – 4:15

Franklin Academy and Asperger's Awareness Council unite again to offer a one-day conference for parents and professionals working and/or living with bright teens and young adults with Nonverbal Learning Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorders, or Asperger's Syndrome.



Featuring Keynote Speaker, **Ron Fournier**. Ron is recognized as an articulate and compassionate voice for parents of children with special needs. His recent book, *Love That Boy: What Two Presidents, Eight Road Trips, and My Son Taught Me About a Parent's Expectations*, has had numerous accolades. In his other professional life, Ron Fournier is the award-winning and nationally acclaimed senior political columnist and editorial director of *National Journal*. Prior to joining *NJ*, he was the Washington bureau chief and a 20-year veteran of the *Associated Press*.

**Friday**  
**October 7, 2016**  
**8:30 – 4:15**

## Conference Schedule

**8:30 – 9:00**                      **Breakfast and Registration**

**9:00 – 10:00**                    **Welcome and Keynote: Ron Fournier**

**10:00 – 10:15**                   **Break**

**10:15 – 11:45**                  **Session 1**

- A.     **Maria Furtado:** *Colleges that Change Lives*
- B.     **Chris Brigham, Esq:** *Schools in Transition – The Changing Face of Enrollment and Hiring*
- C.     **Alex Wood and Shannon Cove:** *Transitions Between Home and School*

**12:00 – 1:00**                      **Lunch**

12:30                      Introduction of AAC

**1:00 – 2:30**                      **Session 2**

- A.     **John Strang, PsyD:** *Practical Techniques to Increase Executive Functioning and Self-Awareness in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders*
- B.     **Melissa Wenz, M.Ed:** *The Competency-Based Curriculum at Franklin Academy*
- C.     **Krishna Davda and Alex Wood:** *Preparing For and Surviving the First Year of College*

**2:45 – 4:15**                      **Session 3**

- A.     **Tom Hays, PhD:** *Tracking Student Progress at Franklin Academy*
- B.     **Barbara Hughes and Robyn Fox:** *Acting Social – Using Improv to Improve Social Synchronicity*
- C.     **Shannon Cove and Chelsea Lazos:** *Transitions Between Home and School*

## **Presentations**

**Ron Fournier**

**Keynote: Love That Boy**

One of the biggest challenges of parenthood today is learning to temper our expectations. We want our children to be brilliant and popular and successful – superstars at something. Most fall short of our ideal. Some are born with disabilities, and we are taught to love them *despite* what makes them different. Ron Fournier will discuss his journey to loving his autistic son *because* of idiosyncrasies.

### **Session 1**

**Maria Furtado**

**Colleges that Change Lives (CTCL)**

This presentation will address some of the layers of the college application/admission/ decision process, including the media portrayal versus the reality of college admission, the value of liberal arts versus STEM, the history and mission of CTCL, and some tips to de-stress the family through the college search process.

**Chris Brigham**

**Schools in Transition: The Changing Face of Enrollment and Hiring**

The legal landscape for schools both in the enrollment and hiring process is changing rapidly. This interactive session will discuss the legal rights of students and employees and the responsibilities of schools when considering the applications of students and employees who are gender non-conforming.

**Alex Wood and Shannon Cove**

**Transitions Between Home and School**

This workshop, designed primarily for Franklin Academy parents, provides an opportunity to learn and discuss practical strategies and interventions to manage school breaks and their inherent transitions. In this seminar, families will learn how to develop reasonable expectations and goals while simultaneously aligning with the Franklin program. We strongly urge all new Franklin Academy parents to attend one of these sessions.

## Session 2

**John Strang, PsyD**

### **Practical Techniques to Increase Executive Functioning and Self-Awareness in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Teens with ASD tend to struggle with executive functioning skills, including the ability to flexibly respond to a changing world, think into the future, and set and achieve short and longer-term goals. But their ability to get “stuck” on ideas and routines also gives them a powerful advantage, especially when they become aware of their own thinking styles. In this presentation we will explore how to help teens increase self-awareness around their own executive functioning with a focus on skills necessary for adult life.

**Melissa Wenz**

### **The Competency-Based Curriculum at Franklin Academy**

Franklin Academy's academic curriculum focuses on thinking skill development with core subject areas organized around the thinking and literacy skills that experts use within each field. The driving force behind this structure is to build greater context for students, highlighting the guiding principles and practices that shape human knowledge. The focus on thinking allows staff to assess student ability to understand, manipulate, and generalize skills across tasks. This curriculum easily translates to specific skill and strategy methods anchored by explicit instruction that ties each task or activity back to the larger thinking goals. Class content is therefore designed to facilitate increasingly sophisticated levels of thinking as the year progresses. This workshop will explore why this method works and how we implement it at Franklin Academy.

**Krishna Davda and Alex Wood: To College and Beyond!**

For students with ASD and related difficulties, the road to college and career often follows a unique and ever complex path to reaching post-secondary goals. This workshop will begin by describing how Franklin Academy prepares students for success through education and practice in social, executive functioning, and self-care skills. Additionally, tips and tricks to navigating the post-secondary search process will be explored as well as support services that can assist our students with navigating this difficult transition. While this workshop is geared to the parents of Franklin Academy students, it will also contain information for other parents and service providers.

## Session 3

**Tom Hays, PhD**

### **Tracking Student Progress at Franklin Academy**

Working with students on the spectrum requires more than just working with them academically or socially. Really helping our students grow requires a more holistic understanding of each one as a unique person with different needs, abilities, and goals. At Franklin Academy, we have always tracked student progress, but we are now moving to a new and more sophisticated way of collecting and analyzing data. This workshop explores ways of tracking students throughout their day, week, and year to better understand how they function, where they succeed, and where they struggle. From this tracking process, patterns of behavior can be analyzed to determine if the patterns are helping or hindering student growth and to better understand the impact of interventions. Come take a journey to understand how this information can improve our students' lives as we explore in-depth our students' functioning in and out of the classroom.

**Barbara Hughes and Robin Fox**

### **Acting Social: Using Improv to Improve Social Synchronicity**

Welcome to "Acting Social: Using Improv to Improve Social Synchronicity!" We are so excited to share our love of improv with you. This workshop is a brief overview of a unique program we created to support social growth, using a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness, and improvisation exercises. We teach techniques for improving relationships with others and to be happier with one's self. From the inside out, you can train your brain to be in sync with your deepest goals, desires, and longings. Our program is designed to benefit individuals with social cognitive learning deficits. That includes people on the autistic spectrum who are functioning in the average to above average intellectual range, those with Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, reluctant socializers, shy individuals, and folks with nonverbal learning disabilities. Improv skills are aligned with effective communication and sharing of space. The games and exercises we teach are socially appealing, enticing for diverse ages, enjoyable, yet challenging, and highly therapeutic.

**Shannon Cove and Chelsea Lazos**

### **Transitions Between Home and School**

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## Presenters

### Ron Fournier

Ron Fournier is recognized as an articulate and compassionate voice for parents of children with special needs. His recent book, *Love That Boy: What Two Presidents, Eight Road Trips, and My Son Taught Me About a Parent's Expectations*, has had numerous accolades. In his other professional life, Ron is the award-winning and nationally-acclaimed senior political columnist and editorial director of *National Journal*. Prior to joining NJ, he was the Washington bureau chief and a 20-year veteran of the *Associated Press*. There, *POLITICO* described him as “a consistent news-breaker while maintaining the classic low-profile style of a wire reporter.” As a columnist today, *The Week* calls him “the most well-read political writer in America” and said, “This veteran writer has become Washington’s most trenchant, most compulsively readable political critic. Liberal or conservative, libertarian or other, you’d be wise to start reading him.” He is also the co-author of the *New York Times* best-selling *Applebee’s America: What Political, Business, and Religious Leaders Can Learn from Each Other*, which examined the shared attributes of successful chief executives.

### Chris Brigham

Christopher L. Brigham is a Shareholder with the firm Updike, Kelly, and Spellacy and Chairman of the Employment Practices Group. He focuses his practice on representing and counseling schools and businesses with respect to workplace and employment law issues. Among his many responsibilities and areas of expertise, he defends clients in a wide variety of employment claims in both federal and state court and represents and counsels clients on matters before the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, the Department of Labor, and the Workers' Compensation Commission.

### Shannon Cove

This is Shannon’s fifth year at Franklin Academy. She was a humanities teacher for three years and became a learning specialist last year. Currently, she serves as a learning specialist for the girls on Team B. She has an undergraduate degree in Secondary Education Literature and a Master’s Degree in Special Education. She wrote her Master’s thesis on the Self-Regulated Strategy Development Writing Program after piloting that program at Franklin Academy.

## **Krishna Davda**

A graduate of NYU, Krishna came to education by working as a consultant in the medical field, most notably at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, GA. Krishna initially taught English as a Second Language (ESL) at The Kiski School, in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania before moving to Connecticut and taking a biology and chemistry position at The Grove School in Madison. Since 2004, Krishna has served in a number of roles at Franklin Academy, including math and science teacher, residential dean, outreach coordinator, and life sports coordinator. Currently, he is the Dean of Students, serves as a member of the senior administrative team, and oversees the Franklin Learning Institute (FLI) program. Krishna has also been closely involved in the development of Franklin Academy's residential and summer programs.

## **Robin Fox**

Robin Fox is an award-winning educator with a wide scope of experience in both the education and entertainment worlds. She has worked in private and public schools (K-12), as a special educator, trainer, and video production teacher for over thirty-six years. She is a founding and current member of a professional improvisational comedy troupe, Comedy on Demand, as well as co-founder with Dr. Barbara Hughes of Acting Social, LLC. Her focus now involves incorporating Cognitive Behavior Therapy, mindfulness, and improv exercises into her private therapy practice. She also works in public and private schools as a consultant, conducting social improv groups and leading professional development programs. Robin has written and been awarded multiple grants to fund her educational projects. She has a B.A. in Psychology, a Master's in Education, and a 6th year in Broadcast Media and Writing. She is listed in the Directory of Clinical Trainees on the Social Thinking website after completing a clinical training with Michele Garcia Winner and her staff. More information can be found at [actingsocial.net](http://actingsocial.net), and Robin can be reached at [actingsocial@yahoo.com](mailto:actingsocial@yahoo.com).

## **Maria Furtado**

Maria Furtado is the Executive Director of Colleges That Change Lives, Inc. CTCL is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement and support of a student-centered college search process. This organization supports the goal of each student finding a college that develops a lifelong love of learning and provides the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life beyond college. Ms. Furtado has been extensively involved with CTCL since its inception and has counseled thousands of students about college choice. Having previously worked for two CTCL colleges, Ms. Furtado now devotes herself to the Colleges That Change Lives mission: helping students and families better understand the college admissions process to find the best college fit possible.

## **Tom Hays, PhD**

Dr. Hays is the Educational Director at Franklin Academy. As one of the founding administrators, he helped to build the school program from the beginning. Tom has an MA in Experimental Psychology and a PhD in Clinical Psychology. He has worked in residential and outpatient clinical settings as well as public and private schools and hospitals. His clinical experience includes individual, group, and family therapy, testing, and assessment. Tom's research includes the areas of families and stepfamilies, adoption, child and adolescent coping, child and adolescent person perception, anger, and child and adolescent social status.

## **Dr. Barbara L. Hughes**

Dr. Hughes is a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist with her doctorate in education in counseling from The College of William and Mary. She has over 30 years of experience in the field of psychotherapy working with diverse mental health populations. She currently specializes in working with children and adolescence with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Nonverbal Learning Disabilities (NVLD) along with coexisting anxiety and depression. She uses a variety of theories and techniques to meet client needs in a supportive, interpersonal, and educative style. She believes in a collaborative approach with the various members of a child's "village," from family to important professionals, all whose aim it is to help the child grow and develop in a happy healthy manner. She has a private practice in Middletown and Old Saybrook, Connecticut and also works with individual students and groups on location at Franklin Academy and The Lighthouse. She is co-founder with Robin Fox of "Acting Social LLC," a company providing social cognitive improv groups, professional development conferences, consulting, and workshops. Barbara can be reached at [barbara.l.hughes.ed.d@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.l.hughes.ed.d@gmail.com)

## **Chelsea Lazos**

Chelsea Lazos has been a staff member at Franklin Academy for nine years. She served as a mathematics instructor for the first six and a half years and residential dean and FLI advisor for the remaining. She has also worked as the liaison between Franklin Academy and the University of Connecticut's Early College Experience program that allows Franklin students to take college credit courses taught by Franklin instructors on our campus.

## **John Strang, PsyD**

Dr. Strang is a pediatric neuropsychologist in the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders with Children's National Health System. John specializes in the evaluation and treatment of children, teens, and young adults on the autism spectrum. In addition to neuropsychological evaluation and individual and group autism treatment, Dr. Strang runs a clinic for young people on the autism spectrum with gender and sexual development issues. Dr. Strang is involved in collaborative research, including school-based autism intervention development and a national study of gender non-conforming children.

## **Melissa Wenz, MEd**

Melissa Wenz is the Academic Dean at Franklin Academy. Melissa holds a dual certification masters degree in special education and education. She has worked with individuals with disabilities for fifteen years. Melissa's experience includes working with students categorized as learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, with traumatic brain injury, and intellectually disabled. She has also worked in the home with families and children with disabilities and independent adults with disabilities.

## **Alex Wood**

Alex Wood has been a staff member at Franklin Academy for nine years. He has served as a humanities instructor, chair of the humanities department, and residential dean. He also initiated, developed, and runs the FACTS Program (Franklin Academy College Transition Support Program). This program is aimed at supporting students with ASD through their first year or two of college by providing phone and Skype support along with structures to help with everything from packing for college to choosing courses to time management and much more.



**Franklin Academy and Asperger's Awareness Council**

**Fall Conference: Completing the Puzzle**

**October 7, 2016**

**Water's Edge Resort and Spa, Westbrook CT**

**Registration Form**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Fee**    **Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_    **Pay at the door** \_\_\_\_\_

Fee: \$125

Franklin Academy Parents – no charge

Franklin Academy Professional Service Providers – \$50

**Professional Development Certificate requested** \_\_\_\_\_

**Return form:**

**By mail** to Conference Registration, Franklin Academy, 140 River Road, East Haddam, CT 06423    or

**By email** to [Mary@fa-ct.org](mailto:Mary@fa-ct.org)    or

**By FAX** to 860-873-8861



**Franklin Academy creates a community-focused boarding and day school where students with unique learning styles develop and strengthen academic and social competencies vital to the pursuit of college goals, professional aspirations, and fulfilling lives.**

**To fulfill this mission:**

**Students belong to a school community where they feel safe, connected, understood, and supported.**

**Students grow into independent, responsible young adults ready to pursue their interests and passions.**

**Alumni succeed because they understand their own strengths, are able to self-advocate, and have the skills necessary to move ahead as life-long learners.**



**The Asperger's Awareness Council is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of professionals in the New York metropolitan area that strives to raise awareness and funding for Asperger's Syndrome, an often under-recognized high-functioning form of Autism. The Council pledges to accomplish this goal via targeted marketing, promotional events, fundraising efforts, and direct outreach to children with Asperger's Syndrome by way of mentoring programs.**

**The funds generated will go towards the AAC's grant initiative, geared towards programs that focus on specialized education and direct services for children with Asperger's, as well as for research on the disorder. In its first five years, the AAC provided grants to the NYU Child Study Center, a collaboration that helped develop a mentoring program for young adults with Aspergers and high functioning Autism, as well as to other organizations.**



At beautiful  
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For more information, contact Mary Murphy: [Mary@fa-ct.org](mailto:Mary@fa-ct.org)