



Pelham Resident Barbara Boroson Writes Book on Autism Spectrum Disorders

By Alex Wolff

As more is learned about students with special needs, and as a slowed economy forces school districts to rethink their budgets and programs, students with autism spectrum disorders are more frequently being placed in mainstream, not special education classrooms. Pelham resident Barbara Boroson's new book, *Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Mainstream Classroom: How to Reach and Teach students with ASDs* helps teachers support these students.

"This book is for general education teachers who have students with spectrum disorders in the mix in their classrooms," said Ms. Boroson, who was asked to write the book by the publisher, Scholastic, after she pitched an idea for a product designed to help children with social skills. "The book aims to give teachers all the information they need to help students succeed in the classroom."

Ms. Boroson says that there are more students on the autism spectrum being placed in mainstream classrooms than ever before, with one out of every 110 kids being diagnosed with the disorder. "It's possible that they can do well. But there is not always a lot of support for them . . . or for their teachers."

Ms. Boroson, who has an undergraduate degree in writing from Cornell University and a master's degree in clinical social work from Columbia University, explained that there are many different subtypes of autism spanning a wide range of severity.

"For teachers who are struggling, the book is supportive and accessible. It offers lots of examples and strategies for dealing with different types of behaviors," said Ms. Boroson. "Really, behavior is a form of communication. To just extinguish difficult behavior is like giving only a cough drop to a kid who has strep throat. It makes things better for the moment, but allows the situation to get much worse in the long run. Instead, this book helps teachers look beyond the behavior to address what's really driving it."

The book explores a variety of different challenges that affect students' functioning, including anxiety, engagement, socialization, sensation, regulation, communication, organization and others.

"If teachers don't consider the challenges before trying to teach curriculum, they'll find themselves fiddling with phonics while Rome is burning," Ms. Boroson cautions.

Ms. Boroson is a social worker who has worked at several schools including the Hallen School for Special Education in New Rochelle, where she was the Dean of Admissions and a clinical therapist for many years; the Guidance Center in New Rochelle; and Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry.

In addition, she has been a guest lecturer in graduate school programs at Bank Street College and Albert Einstein College. She will also be a presenter at several upcoming professional conferences, including the NYS Reading Association Conference in October.

While *Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Mainstream Classroom* is Ms. Boroson's first book, she has published a personal essay, which has appeared in multiple journals including "Westchester Family Magazine." She has also been a guest blogger on <http://www.oomscholasticblog.com>.

Ms. Boroson has lived in Pelham since 1997 with her husband, Joseph Rutt, their son Sam, 13, and their daughter Leana, 10.

She is available for trainings and to consult with school districts regarding their efforts to integrate students on the spectrum into mainstream programs. For more information on the book, to order it, or to contact her, please visit www.barbaraboroson.com.

