

# URLEND Survey Finds Future Teachers Largely Unprepared For Children On The Autism Spectrum | CPD Blog

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When it comes to teaching students on the autism spectrum, a recent survey of future teachers in eight states found most could be better prepared. The preservice teachers were in their third or fourth year. Their average score on the autism knowledge scale was a D.

That's significant, since the odds are teachers will have a child with autism in their classroom at least once in their careers. According to [Autism Speaks](#), autism is one of the fastest-growing developmental disorders in the United States, affecting 1 in 68 children.

The [Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities](#) trainees who conducted the survey presented some of their results in the video below. Their project, *Including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Preservice Teacher Preparation*, was reported via videoconferencing in five states. The Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University is one of several university entities in the URLEND partnership.

The team is now looking to publish their results in an academic journal. During their presentation they advocated for improved teacher training and support.

The URLEND program brings together graduate students and professionals across many educational and health fields. Multi-state, multi-disciplinary leaders are advised by families who experience disability in their everyday lives. End-of-year projects are one way they learn to approach their professions with an interdisciplinary mindset. This unique experience is available to trainees in Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

The autism inclusion leadership project team included Dr. Gwen Mitchell, Faculty Advisor, (University of Idaho); Nikki Baldwin, Education-Early Childhood (Wyoming); Shayne Barker, Occupational Therapy (Utah); Melissa Crist, Education-Early Childhood (Idaho); Eric Desmarais, Psychology (Idaho); Amanda Hagman, Psychology (Utah).