



# The Frostig Center Focus

Exceptional Children,  
Exceptional Education

Issue 7, May 2017

## WHAT'S NEW

### Australia Bound

Executive Director Dean Conklin will take a Frostig team to Perth, Australia, in June to deliver a presentation on the Success Attributes. They will speak to educators from around the world at the biennial conference of the International Assn. for Special Education. Head of School Jenny Janetzke, Clinical Director Jose Annicchiarico and Consultation & Education Director Roberta Goldberg will join Dr. Conklin in the land down under.

### Summer Camp

The Consultation & Education Dept. trains more than school teachers. They will head to Summerkids in Altadena in June to train camp counselors to better serve children with special needs.

## THE SUCCESS ATTRIBUTES Reviewed and Renewed for Students, Parents

By Jenny Janetzke  
*Frostig School Principal*

Two years ago, I was part of a Frostig team of accomplished teachers and administrators that re-examined the Success Attributes. We wanted to know if the Success Attributes—a collection of six characteristics associated with success—remained powerful and relevant nearly 20 years after Frostig published the groundbreaking research that identified them.

The answer was a resounding yes.

We found that many social scientists in recent years have reached the same



conclusions that Frostig arrived at in the late 1990s—that mastery of intangible concepts like perseverance and goal-setting are the best predictors of success. Our review confirmed the Frostig research was groundbreaking and enduring.

The re-examination inspired us to make some important changes this year. We published a new edition of the Success Attributes parent guide to include the latest research and our wealth of experience teaching the Success Attributes to Frostig students. The new guide, beautifully illustrated by former Frostig teacher Jay Carlton, offers more activities to nurture the Success

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## THE SPOTLIGHT Frostig Alumna Shines on Television

When Heather Cowles performed in her first play at Frostig School as a young girl, she discovered her passion and her future career.

Heather is a professional actor who has collected a long list of commercial and television credits. She works primarily as a background actor, playing characters who are seen but never heard.

The 30-year-old actress has portrayed a student on a hi-jacked school bus, a troubled teen in a juvenile camp, and a woman in a

bar, to name just a few of her roles. Her TV credits include *Criminal Minds*, *The Mentalist*, *Hannah Montana*, *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* and many others.

Heather scored her first speaking role in a 2012 Skittles commercial, which continues to run today. Her second speaking role, and first on-screen kiss, came in the 2016 low-budget movie, *Laid in America*, in which she played a high school stalker.

"Frostig gave me my first acting experience, and I just loved it," Heather recalled. "I loved being with my friends

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# Toddlers With Autism Do Not Purposely Avoid Eye Contact

From Emory Medicine Magazine

A new study helps put to rest a longstanding controversy and question about children with autism spectrum disorder.

Eye-tracking measures developed by the authors of the study demonstrate that young children with autism do not avoid eye contact on purpose; instead, they miss the significance of social information in others' eyes.

While reduced eye contact is a well-known symptom of autism used in early screeners and diagnostic instruments, why children with autism look less at other people's eyes has not been known. New research, reported in the American Journal of Psychiatry, helps answer that question.

"This is important because we're disentangling very different understandings of autism," said Jennifer Moriuchi, a graduate student at Emory University. "Depending on why you think children with autism are making less eye contact, you might have



different approaches to treatment and different ideas about the brain basis of autism.

"Drug treatments and behavioral interventions are already being developed and tested on the basis of these different explanations. By clarifying which explanation is correct, we can make sure that we're addressing the correct underlying concern," Moriuchi said.

Together with researchers at Marcus Autism Center and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Moriuchi studied how 86 two-year-old children with and without autism paid attention to other people's eyes. Children with autism watched a series of carefully made videos. "Before each video, we flashed a small picture to capture the child's attention, and when they looked to where the picture had been, they found that they were either looking

directly at another person's eyes or looking away from the eyes," said Moriuchi. "When we did this repeatedly, we found that young children with autism continued to look straight at the eyes. Like their peers without autism, they didn't look away from the eyes or try to avoid the eyes in any way."

However, when varying levels of socially meaningful eye contact were presented, children with autism looked less at other people's eyes than their peers without autism. "These results go against the idea that young children with autism actively avoid eye contact," said researcher Warren Jones. "They're looking less at the eyes not because of an aversion to making eye contact, but because they don't appear to understand the social significance of eye contact."

"Studies like this one help advance our understanding of autism and improve the way scientists and clinicians develop new treatments," said Lisa Gilotty, Chief of the Research Program on Autism Spectrum Disorders at the National Institute of Mental Health, one of the agencies that funded the study.

For the full story, visit <http://bit.ly/2pucXHN>

**The Frostig Focus will share articles on new research that contributes to better understanding of learning differences. We welcome your feedback.**

## In Gratitude to the Taper Foundation

The Frostig Center thanks S. Mark Taper Foundation for a generous grant supporting our work with children with learning differences during the 2016-17 school year.

S. Mark Taper Foundation, founded in 1989, is a private family foundation dedicated to enhancing the quality of people's lives by supporting nonprofit organizations and their work in our communities.

## It's Easy to Make a Difference...

Your gift will support the education of children with learning differences

**DONATE ONLINE**

**[www.frostig.org](http://www.frostig.org)**



FROSTIG ACCEPTS ALL CREDIT CARDS, CASH, AND CHECKS, AS WELL AS GIFTS OF STOCK

# Frostig Families Swept Away to Neverland

*Peter Pan* took flight at Frostig School for three wonderful performances that charmed children and adults alike.

The spring musical is a treasured tradition at Frostig. Every year, Drama Instructor Christina Harris and her students work tirelessly to bring a classic tale to life.

Frostig thanks the parents, teachers and friends who supported this ambitious production with donations of time, money, props, costumes, concessions, and much more. Without your support, Frostig could not provide students with this exhilarating theatrical experience.



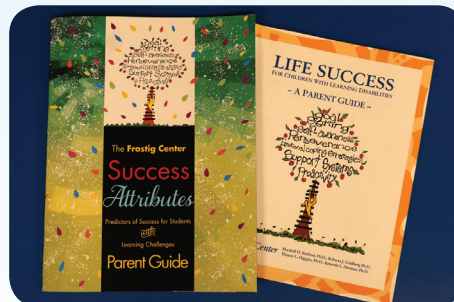
## The Success Attributes

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Attributes at home than the original handbook, which was published in 2003.

The guide may be purchased for \$9.95 through The Frostig Center and soon will also be available through Amazon.

We additionally took steps to make the Success Attributes an even bigger part of the Frostig School experience. School staff consciously worked the Success Attributes into our daily vocabulary with students. You can't spend time at Frostig these days without hearing the words self-awareness, perseverance, goal-setting, coping strategies, pro-activity and support systems. Here are a few



*The new parent guide, left, is now available.*

conversations I recently overheard:

- A high school student saw a younger child crying in the hallway and said, "Let me be his support system," as she went to comfort him.
- A boy explained to his friends he wanted to ride a swing instead of

playing with them because it was his "coping strategy."

- A middle school student told a friend his "goal" for this year's Walk-a-thon was to run 10 laps.

Teachers also wove the attributes into the core curriculum in new and meaningful ways. One elementary class, for example, wrote reports on how historic figures demonstrated one or more Success Attributes in their lives. We also added artwork in the main hallway to provide visual reminders of each attribute.

The final step in the project is to update the teacher guide that we first published in 2006. We are hard at work re-writing every chapter so that teachers everywhere can help their students find success.

## LEADERSHIP

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Frostig Center is dedicated to helping children with learning disabilities reach their full potential through an integrated approach of research, professional development and consultation, and the Frostig School.



Follow our Facebook page to keep up with the latest news at Frostig. See what our students and faculty are doing and learn about the latest developments in the field of learning differences.

## Congrats, Seniors!

Frostig School's Class of 2017 will soon collect their diplomas and begin the next chapter of their lives.



A few of our 14 seniors have attended Frostig since grade school, while others arrived as sophomores and juniors. All have left their mark.

Frostig staff said they will remember this class for its maturity, strong friendships, kindness, and awareness of their strengths and challenges.

The students will take different paths to pursue their interests, which include child development, kinesiology, film and computer science. Some have made plans to attend community college; others have chosen vocational and job training programs.

We will cheer them on at the June 7 commencement exercise. They will all be missed.

## The Spotlight

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and I liked it when parents and friends came to the shows."

Heather has not stopped acting since that first Frostig production. She performed in three more shows while attending elementary and middle school at Frostig. She left Frostig in 2000 to dual enroll at Pasadena High School and Hillside Learning Center in La Canada. Neither school offered her opportunities for acting, so she pursued her passion through community theater.

Once she completed high school, Heather began auditioning for roles. Her acting coach, Mae Ross of 3-2-1 Acting Studios, said the camera loves Heather. "I have seen



many of her shows and they place her right next to the star, like Selena Gomez in *Wizards of Waverly Place* and Simon Baker in *The Mentalist*."

After 12 years of working in television, does Heather have a dream role?

"To be on *Law and Order, Special Victims Unit*. As anything!" she replied. "I love that show."