



A-Plus-Consulting LLC thrive on solving complex problems with actionable solutions for a sustainable future. We are an InnovateHER 2015 (Small Business Administration competition aimed at helping women and families) New Jersey finalist.

We are pleased to provide this proposal for a multidisciplinary feasibility social media marketing vocational curriculum for select minority autism spectrum disorder (ASD) high school students in New Jersey and the nation to help mothers and families with children diagnosed with ASD. We consulted autism educators with social media know-how who agreed that it should be further explored. This proposal can also be implemented in other states and we would be happy with a nationwide and global approach.

A-Plus-Consulting LLC, a qualified HUBZone, WOSB and EDWOSB, is a licensed, insured consulting/temporary firm that offers comprehensive Human Resources Consulting Services for private and government clients including staffing and training. We are registered to conduct business in NJ, NY, AL, MD and CA (dba as A-Plus Strategy LLC).

Federal contractors are required to hire people with disabilities, hence our vision focuses on autism where there is a high unmet need for students on the spectrum in Newark, New Jersey, nationwide and globally.

Outline:

1. Brief description of the proposal
2. Legislative language
3. Autism background information
4. Status and stakeholders
5. Steps for social media marketing vocational curriculum
 - a. Plan
 - b. Prepare

c. Succeed

6. Expected outcomes and impact on economic growth
7. Budget to implement feasibility vocational curriculum

1. Brief description of the proposal

Advocates for children with disabilities are cheering a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court as a clear win that establishes more-ambitious academic standards for special education students.

Representatives for some educational groups and districts, on the other hand, have a more measured response. They say that the March 22 decision in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* sets forth a standard for the level of benefit required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that most school districts were exceeding already.

Both sides can find support for their views in the text of the unanimous decision, which was written by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. for the eight-member court as reported in the article "Will High Court Ruling Raise Expectations for Special Ed.?" By Christina A. Samuels and Mark Walsh on March 24, 2017 in edweek.org.

There are more than 3,5 million people on the spectrum in the USA as reported by a market research study funded by Autism Speaks during 2014. Personal conversations with parents and autism non-profits indicate that about one third of people on the spectrum can be considered high functioning. Hence, if we can help about 1 million Americans to learn 21st century skills that will help them to get employed, it can have a great economic impact on ASD and create jobs and employment for those affected by autism.

The case above involved an autistic student and our proposal focuses on helping select autistic students in high school to participate in a multidisciplinary feasibility vocational or apprenticeship curriculum to get 21st century skills that can help them find employment and make a difference in the household income for women and families with children on the spectrum. We plan on using neuro-assessments to ascertain cognitive skills and personality to tailor the vocational curriculum for students to develop a career and life path for them with lasting outcomes.

Radio host Darrell Gunter from Gunter Media Group, Inc has a segment „Leadership with Darrell Gunter” on the award-winning WSOU 89.5 FM and he interviewed Newark, NJ-based American History High School Principal Mr. Bryan Olkowski, Special Needs Educator, Ms. Susan Carborra and myself, Miss Helena van der Merwe, owner of A-Plus-Consulting LLC, about the new approach of tailored vocational curricula for select minority autistic students that aired live on the award-winning WSOU 89.5 FM in the tristate area and wsou.net on 8 April at 8 AM EST. It will also be available on iTunes following the live broadcast.

We want to empower parents, special needs advocates, educators and others interested in autism spectrum disorder for an even higher standard of special needs education to provide students with 21st century skills and potential community based employment opportunities.

2. Legislative language

Currently vocational or apprenticeship curricula must be approved through a petition process through the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) in Washington, D.C. 20210. See separate attachment that outlines the procedure. It involves a sponsor and at least eight employers showing support and hiring workers trained with the curricula. This is a tedious process that could take more than a year to pass bipartisan support. We want to focus on social media marketing curricula in high schools and request the development of a national database of children up to age 21 on the spectrum to facilitate resource allocation and job placements. Social media marketing can be performed remotely regardless of location and the field is very wide which allows for tailoring the training based on the student's cognitive skills and interests (personality). We notice that parents with autistic children start non-profits to help their children and it results in highly fragmented resources and care. We also approached the local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services but find bureaucracy hampers and get in the way of helping students with disabilities with comments such as this: "...our agency does not hire consulting firms and what your company offers is not a service that our agency pays for. I was advised to let you know that the state does public notices which could let you know about grants in the future from the State, but the best way to go might be to continue marketing to various school systems."

A-Plus-Consulting LLC is seeking congress and senate support for our social media marketing vocational or apprenticeship curriculum through developing a national database of children up to age 21 on the spectrum and identify those suitable for an apprenticeship to train them and find jobs for them. We aim to work with special needs educators and support teams in high schools to introduce and select students for the programme to help them develop skills that can be used as they transition out of school into life.

3. Autism background information

Autism rates among African-Americans are the same as rates among whites, but African-American children are often diagnosed with autism at an older age, missing potential years of treatment per a report on PBS published 7 February 2017, "Children of color with autism face disparities of care and isolation". The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 1 in 68 children (or 14.7 per 1,000 eight-year-olds) in multiple communities in the United States has been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This new estimate is roughly 30 percent higher than previous estimates reported in 2012 of 1 in 88 children (11.3 per 1,000 eight-year-olds) being identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The number of children identified with ASD ranged from 1 in 175 children in Alabama to 1 in 45 children in New Jersey (highest in the nation). It is estimated that the annual cost of autism equals \$126 billion in the US, a number that has more than tripled since 2006, as reported in a press release on 28 March 2012 by Autism Speaks, a leading autism science and advocacy organization, "New Research Finds Annual Cost of Autism Has More Than Tripled to \$126 Billion in the U.S. and Reached £34 Billion in the U.K." The research also found that non-medical costs account for the greatest proportion of expenses and that mothers of children with ASD are less likely to work, work fewer hours per week and earn substantially less. Typically, the primary caregiver, mothers are called upon to serve as their child's case manager and advocate, and on average, earn 56 percent less than mothers of children with no health limitations. Furthermore, there is no cure for autism and 15% of those with autism have full-time jobs, per research by the National Autistic Society in the UK, while 9% work part-time. There hence is a high global unmet need in autism employment and emphasis on finding suitable careers for students on the spectrum.

People with autism may demonstrate exceptional talents, despite the varying challenges they face. Some companies have found that these talents can be very desirable for their work environment. One third of people with autism may have heightened abilities in pattern recognition, focus, and attention to detail. While these skills make some individuals well suited to becoming software testers, 80% of people with ASD remain unemployed. In recognizing the talents and abilities of all people with ASD, it is hopeful that other companies may be able to provide other opportunities for people with ASD to thrive, hence the idea of social media marketing which is a high growing industry fueled by digital advertising spend. It's no secret advertisers are flocking to digital at the expense of traditional formats, however the latest data shows the shift accelerating faster than expected in the US. Per eMarketer, 2016 US digital ad spending will reach \$72.09 billion, while TV spending will grow to \$71.29 billion. That means digital will represent 36.8% of US total media ad spending, while TV will represent 36.4% (September 13, 2016; US Digital Ad Spending to Surpass TV this Year; eMarketer.com)

4. Status and stakeholders

A-Plus-Consulting LLC is seeking a sponsor such as a financial institution and federal/state support and at least eight employers (Newark Shoprite onboard) to launch a pilot multidisciplinary feasibility social media marketing apprenticeship curriculum among select minority students with ASD. For ASD students with an entrepreneurial mind set, we offer a course on how to start a store on Amazon and EBay.

Radio host Darrell Gunter from Gunter Media Group, Inc has a segment „Leadership with Darrell Gunter” on the award-winning WSOU 89.5 FM and he interviewed Newark, NJ-based American History High School Principal Mr. Bryan Olkowski, Special Needs Educator, Ms. Susan Carborra and myself, Miss Helena van der Merwe, owner of A-Plus-Consulting LLC about the new approach of tailored vocational curricula for select minority autistic students that aired live on the award-winning WSOU 89.5 FM in the tristate area and wsou.net on 8 April at 8 AM EST.

We want to empower parents, special needs advocates, educators and others interested in autism spectrum disorder for an even higher standard of special needs education to provide students with 21st century skills and potential community based employment opportunities.

5. Stakeholders and sub-contractors of A-Plus-Consulting LLC

We will work with Newark-based American History High School special needs educators and support team to identify students for the curriculum and facilitate on-site instruction as part of the school career path course with the special needs education team.

A-Plus-Consulting LLC sub-contractors:

Barbara Couvadelli MD Ph.D. and other licensed practitioners – neuro – assessments

Prof. Deb Warner – NJ Supervision certification for Structured Learning experience with autism experience; BA in Science MA in Communication/MBA

Jackie Wilson MS CRC– Certified Rehabilitation Counselor

Gaetano Lardieri BA MPM - Newark advocate, liaison and project management

Helena van der Merwe B.Pharm M.Sc. Pharmacology MBL – social media expert and tutor

Advisory Board members:

American High School Principal: Mr. Bryan Olkowski; American High School Lead Special Needs Educator: Ms. Susan Carborra;

Eight employers;

City of Newark – Mr. Tom Bacote - NewarkWorks;

3. Steps for social media marketing vocational curriculum (SMM VC) as part of high school career path course

3.1 Plan

3.1.1 American History High School (AHHS) student self-assessment

3.1.2 Assessment by trusted person

3.1.3 Student conducts Interest Quiz

3.1.4 Student chooses a Job/Career

3.1.5 Student researches the job/career

3.1.6 AHHS special needs team identifies ASD student for feasibility vocational curriculum

3.1.7 Lead special needs educator approaches student and parents/caretakers for participation in SMM VC and obtain consent (release of student medical records, physician referral questionnaire, school records/IEP/504 plans, other psychological/neuropsychological assessments/evaluations and other essential documents to the neuro-psychologist to perform initial evaluation and ongoing neuro-assessments)

3.1.8 Neuro-psychologist

Evaluation/Report/Recommendation/Training/Follow up to evaluate success and plan adjustment

Note: (Pediatric neuropsychology is a medically-related specialty concerned with the study of brain-behavior relationships in children and adolescents. A pediatric neuropsychologist is a Ph.D. fellowship-trained psychologist with expertise in how learning and behavior are associated with the development of brain structures and systems. Medical history, academic history, standardized tests and behavioral observations are used to define a child's pattern of cognitive development to compare performance with other children at the same developmental stage. More specifically, the pediatric neuropsychologist is interested in “how” and “why” the child obtains a specific test score as well as the pattern of scores across different tests. Skills are broken down into component parts, attempting to define a pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Through the evaluation, a comprehensive picture of the child is revealed and subsequently a treatment and vocational plan is developed to ensure the child reaches their potential in all life areas.

A neuropsychological report will be prepared and results will be shared and discussed with the team. The neuropsychologist will be able to guide the rest of the team regarding the type of work the child may be best fitted for based on their cognitive and psychological profile.

In addition, the neuropsychologist will be able to train and/or consult with the job coach or any other team member regarding job training or behavioral management to ensure shorter and more efficient process towards desired goals.

The neuropsychologist will meet with the parents/caretakers/student and discuss the test results and formal team recommendations.

Initial Assessment - Program evaluation/participation

- a. Medical records/Student school evaluations /Consent to participate in program and other relevant documents are submitted to the Neuropsychologist for review/examination and acceptance into the ASD Curriculum program
- b. Notification is sent to School that the student is a good fit for the program
- c. School notification is sent to parent(s) of participation in program
- d. The Neuropsychologist is notified and initial parent/caretakers/student visit scheduled

Initial Evaluation

a. Visit 1:

Parent/Caretaker/Student/Neuropsychologist

A neuropsychological interview usually includes an interview with the

Parents/caretakers about the child's history and an observation and/or interview with the student

This is an opportunity for the parents/caretakers to share specific questions/concerns

During this meeting, the student meets the neuropsychologist and becomes familiar with the office environment

The Neuropsychologist discusses details of formal testing/evaluation/recommendations /program (note: non-verbal child can participate also).

Formal Testing:

a. It takes 2 to 4 visits depending on the level of the student. Each visit lasts from 2 to 4 hours depending on the student's level of functioning and ability to engage in testing.

The following are instructions provided to the parents prior to testing

The night before make sure the student has a full night's rest.

The night before the parent/caretaker should explain to the student that the imminent visit to the doctor does not involve any shots or painful procedures and may be related, in simple terms to a problem the student is having: (ex. "tomorrow we are going to see the doctor will help you with the problem your having with spelling.")

From the student's perspective, the testing will seem like a series of games or activities which, depending on their age and skill level may include, puzzles, constructions and questions.

Testing involves paper, and pencil, hands-on activities and sometimes the use of a computer

Explain to the student that nobody gets all the questions and tests right and they should not worry if they don't.

The Day of testing, the student should eat a healthy breakfast.

Arrive a few minutes early so the student can be re-familiarized with the office environment.

Breaks will be allowed throughout the formal testing day however to ensure optimal performance it is recommended that the parent brings the student's preferred activity.

If the student uses glasses, hearing aid or any other device they need to bring it for interview and formal testing day

If the student is on any medications/stimulant alert the office prior to the test

Parents/caretakers are usually "not" in the room as the student is being tested

The neuropsychological evaluation for a school-aged student usually assess the following areas:

- Intellectual abilities
- Achievement skills such as reading comprehension, mathematics and spelling
- Sensory and motor functioning
- Attention
- Learning and Memory
- Language
- Visual-spatial skills
- Executive skills such as problem-solving, planning, organizing, mental and behavioral control, and cognitive flexibility
- Behavioral and emotional functioning
- Social skills/Pragmatic Language skills

Neuropsychologist - Consultation/Report/Recommendation/Team and Parent Feedback/debriefing meeting/Team/Job coach Training/Follow up

3.2 Prepare

AHHS Team and A-Plus-Consulting LLC discuss the recommended career paths with student/parents/caretakers.

AHHS Career path course, Internship skills development and SMM VC courses are being conducted in parallel

AHHS Career path and Internship skills development

- a. 12 days per month for 10 months of the school calendar year of the 'Deb Warner's Boot Camp for Job Seekers' Program
- b. 8 hours per day for pre-screening, Interview, Orientation Phases Training, Referral, Placement, and Follow-up meetings
- c. 2 hours' in-house classroom, instruction, training, coaching and mentoring
- d. 6 hours/day for off-site Consultant/Staff duties for extended support for planning, tracking, monitoring documentation, follow-up calls, program evaluations/assessments reporting, de-briefing and professional, business outreach to achieve 100% targeted, program commitment and enhanced job opportunities. Practical, hands-on Career & College Readiness skill development based on qualification standards which could range from i.e. fair aptitude tests, assessments, interview, school grades and work samples.
- e. Students will receive related, classroom-based instruction (RCI) to develop observable & measurable patterns of skills, knowledge and behaviors for real, world application. The sessions empower, students with strategies to enhance their communication, interview skills and employment opportunities through twelve (12) days of intense, employability training, referral, and placement assistance. Program includes two to three guest speakers regarding financial literacy, money management, paychecks, taxes and a meet, greet and interview session.
- f. Mock interviews, role-plays and video critiques are set-up where prospective employers can hire ONLY skilled participants for employment who have 100% program completion, targeted commitment, and who meet the hiring companies' approval and guidelines. Therefore, participants are proactive with their own career choices and sustained success for an enriching process. All training materials are included i.e. work samples, videos references, employment applications and resource articles and copies. We will create authentic, interactive learning experiences.
- g. Write a cover letter for resume
- h. Complete paper application with class
- i. Complete paper application on own
- j. Complete on-line application with class
- k. Complete on-line application on own
- l. Discuss job interview skills with class
- m. Conduct a job interview with peer ad/or teacher(s)
- n. Discuss and learn about Personal information and security on an application

A-Plus-Consulting LLC Technical Skills for SMM VC:

SMM VC select modules based on recommendations from neuro-assessments and personality – this is hands-on training using in-class room instruction, materials and computers/laptops. Homework assignments to test understanding and implementation to increase employability skills. This is 12 days per month for 10 months of training depending on the learning ability of students.

The content of published books and references form the basis of the outline as follows:

References and resources:

Design bloggers at home: Ellie Tennant; 2014 published by Ryland Peters and Small

Social Media Marketing for Dummies, 2nd edition: Shiv Singh and Stephanie Diamond; 2012 published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc

Social Media Marketing for Dummies, 3rd edition: Jan Zimmerman and Deborah Ng; 2015 published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc

Likeable social media, 2nd edition: Dave Kerpen; 2015 published by Mc Graw Hill Education

PR News' Google Boot Camp 15 July 2014

PR News' SEO Workshop 10 October 2014

Module 1: Embracing social with your marketing

Lesson 1: Understanding Social Media Marketing

Lesson 2: Social media competitors uncorked

Lesson 3: The Social Media Mindset

Module 2: Practicing Social Media Marketing on the Internet

Lesson 4: Launching campaigns

Lesson 5: Developing your social media marketing voice

Module 3: Reaching your audience via social media platforms

Lesson 6: Finding the right platform

Lesson 7: Facebook

Lesson 8: Twitter

Lesson 9: Google Plus and YouTube

Lesson 10: Genius, Foursquare

Lesson 11: Pinterest, Instagram

Lesson 12: Snapchat

Lesson 13: LinkedIn

Lesson 14: Blogs

Lesson 15: E-mail marketing

Lesson 16: Niche Networks and Online Communities

Lesson 17: Accounting for Influencers

Module 4: Social Media marketing as part of Traditional Marketing

Lesson 18: Your Web site

Lesson 19: How to be an authentic and an engaged advertiser

Lesson 20: Social Media Marketing for Mobile campaigns

Lesson 21: Your employees and Social Media Marketing

Lesson 22: Metrics for Social Media Marketing

Lesson 23: Social Media Governance and Tools

Lesson 24: Real-time Social Media Marketing

Module 5: Top Ten

Lesson 25: Ten best practices

Lesson 26: Ten Common Mistakes

Lesson 27: Ten Must-read blogs and books

Lesson 28: Ten tools

3.3 Succeed

A-Plus-Consulting LLC along with Deb Warner will assist students to find paid Internship(s) and provide coaching, feedback, monitoring, and data collection. The goal is for students to find permanent job placement and we seek at least eight employers in Newark to work with such as Shoprite, Amazon/Audible, Panasonic, PSE&G, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, Prudential, Nike, and NJPAC.

4. Expected outcomes and impact on economic growth

The overall objective is to create jobs and career choices for some minority ASD students based on their skills in a working environment suitable for them using a central database to facilitate the process. It is well known that students on the spectrum find it difficult to get hired because they lack social skills. This vocational/apprenticeship curriculum requires minimal interaction with other people and we aim to facilitate hiring of students on the spectrum by employing a liaison that can interact with employers and students. Through the process of implementation additional supportive resources are likely to be identified as well as areas of employment to be explored. This is a starting point for an underserved population, which has far reaching impact for themselves, their families, employers and has the potential of decreasing ongoing dependency on social programs.

There are more than 3,5 million people on the spectrum in the USA as reported by a market research study funded by Autism Speaks during 2014. Personal conversations with parents and autism non-profits indicate that about one third of people on the spectrum can be considered high functioning. Hence, if we can help about 1 million Americans to learn 21st century skills that will help them to get employed, it can have a great economic impact on ASD, create jobs and employment opportunities for those affected by autism.

5. Budget to implement multidisciplinary feasibility social media marketing vocational curriculum

A-Plus-Consulting LLC principal and sub-contractors: \$350,000

Neuro-assessments: \$100,800

Once off expense for laptops: \$7,000

Total: \$457,800

We can greatly benefit from federal and state resources to launch our initiative as school budgets are being cut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please contact Helena van der Merwe, B.Pharm. M.Sc. Pharmacology, MBL with any questions you may have about our proposal.

A-Plus-Consulting LLC, Newark, NJ, 07103 Tel: 855-275-8726 Fax: 888-391-8417

E-mail: helena@a-plus-consulting.com

