

Simpson Autism Conference

In early 2017, the Planning Committee at one of its retreats recognized that its “Conference for School Leaders on Behavior Issues” was struggling to achieve attendance. While the concept was still important, it had difficulty attracting the right audience. At the same time, the Planning Committee felt that there was a strong need to bring together the professionals working in autism. As a result, the decision was made to discontinue the “Leaders Conference” and instead plan to offer a conference focused on Autism. This MSLBD conference would focus specifically on the unique needs of educators of students with autism spectrum disorder. A small sub-committee of MSLBD’s planning committee began planning and identifying speakers for the first autism conference in the fall of 2018.

Dr. Richard L. Simpson, a professor at the University of Kansas and founding MSLBD planning committee member, had long been a leader in the field of autism. He



passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack in November 2017. Determined to carry on Rich’s vision for a conference on autism, the planning committee decided to name the conference in his honor and, if successful, make it an annual conference. The Planning committee continued to recruit his colleagues and students from around the country to put on the first MSLBD Richard L. Simpson Conference on Autism in October 2018.

An alliance with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) broadened the resources available for the conference. TASN has supported the conference each year since its inception. The conference was unique in that it focused on bridging the research to practice gap and bringing general educators, special educators, and board-certified behavior analysts together to support the use of evidence-based practices in the school setting to students across the autism spectrum.



2nd Annual
Richard L. Simpson
Conference on Autism
OCTOBER 10-11, 2019
 KU Edwards Campus
 Overland Park, KS




Sponsored by the Midwest Symposium
 for Leadership in Behavior Disorders
 And The Kansas Technical Assistance
 System Network (TASN)

For more information, visit
<http://mslbd.org/autism-conference/>

Theme: Evidence Based Practices, Issues, and Trends for School-Based Professionals who Serve Learners Across the Autism Spectrum



Topics of presentations in the first two conferences included academic instruction, video-based instruction, sexuality education, behavior interventions, inclusion, social skills instruction, and verbal behavior interventions, to name a few. Speakers from the Midwest and all over the country have presented workshops, sessions, and keynotes including Rob Pennington, Jay Ganz, Brenda Smith Myles, Brian Boyd, Lee Stickle, Rose Mason, Stephen Crutchfield, Kaye Otten, Paul Lacava, and Mary Beth Patry. In 2019, the keynote speakers were a panel of individuals with autism who were also self-advocates. They shared their perspectives and experiences about autism and special education.

In conjunctions with the Autism Conference, MSLBD also has instituted an Outstanding Educator Award to annually recognize an individual for outstanding achievement and excellence in classroom service to students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The recipients receive expense reimbursement to receive the award at the conference. Four individuals have received this award as of 2021.

The third Simpson Autism Conference was postponed in 2020 due to the global COVID pandemic, but a virtual Simpson Autism Conference was held October 7 & 8 of 2021, attracting about 500 participants from around the United States.



More information about the conference and the award is available on the MSLBD website at:

<https://mslbd.org/autism-conference/outstanding-educator-of-students-with-autism.html>