# Maximizing the Day: Building Independence Through Functional and Academic Skills

**Presenters:** Jen Quaranta, Southeast Region Coordinator & Ali Sweitzer, Metro Region Behavior Specialist

**Date:** December 10, 2026

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. MST

**Location:** ESU #13, Scottsbluff Conf Room B/C

**Fee:** $25 (Snack and materials are provided). Lunch on your own

**Audience:** This workshop is for Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School, Resource Teachers, SLPs, Counselors, Psychologists, Transition Teachers/Staff, and Parents of students who would benefit from life skills instruction.

**Description:**
Participants in this workshop will gain an understanding of the importance of beginning with the end goal in mind to develop effective and meaningful programs for students with complex needs. We will envision where we want our students to be in five years, establish broader objectives, and break these down into smaller, actionable goals to create a structured path for learning and skill development. We will explore various curricula and strategies that support academic growth, social skills, life skills, and career readiness for students from upper elementary through age 21.

Dr. Peter Gerhardt emphasized, “Everyone is capable of living and working in the community with the proper supports, and no one should have to earn the right to be in the community.” Participants will leave with the belief that all students are capable of community integration and with practical strategies to continue building meaningful programs for their students.

**Participants will**:

- Be able to articulate why starting with the end outcome in mind is essential for creating meaningful programs for students with complex needs.
- Recognize the importance of identifying long-term visions for their students and break them down into achievable short-term goals to facilitate effective learning and skill development.
- Learn about various curriculums and strategies that support academic, social, life, and career readiness skills for students from upper elementary through age 21.
- Gain insights from Dr. Peter Gerhardt's work on community inclusion, learn strategies to ensure all students can live and work in the community with appropriate supports, and develop plans to implement this in educational programs.
- Leave with practical techniques to design and implement meaningful and supportive educational programs for students with complex needs, aligning with the vision of community inclusion and participation.

**Registration deadline December 2, 2026 or until full**

To register for this training please access the ESU 13 Impact Training Calendar

For registration questions, please contact Megan Lantis mlantis@esu13.org

**Please note that if you register and do not attend, or your cancellation is not received three business days in advance, you are still liable for full payment.*

**ASD Network Western Region Training**

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