



THE TWENTY



*This Month: Resolve Behavioral Health Services,
Special Education, Nonpublic School Services*

Volume 6 Issue 4

Colonial Intermediate Unit 20

December 2010

Executive Director's Message

BY DR. CHARLENE M. BRENNAN

The Twenty for December

One goal of the Intermediate Unit strategic plan is in the area of student achievement and using data to determine if our programs are leading to appropriate goal accomplishments for students. In setting this goal, we believed that if our school districts had to be data driven, then so did our intermediate unit programs.

In this month's The Twenty, our Autistic Support program supervisor Margie DeRenzis, provides an article that highlights a study she and our other supervisor, Sean LeDonne, conducted to determine the effectiveness of our IU Autistic Support program. While we intuitively believed that our program had positive results for students, we are happy to report that the data supports the program's effectiveness.

Other IU programs are doing the same types of data analysis to identify practices that have positive impact and those which are not having the results we expect. That data is then used to change and improve programs. As supervisors have used data analysis in this manner, they have come to see the benefits for students of these types of studies.

Please be sure to read the article by Mrs. DeRenzis as it supports that your investment in the autistic support program has positive results for your students.

Please have a happy, safe, holiday season and as always, if I can be of any help do not hesitate to contact me at the intermediate unit.

Nonpublic Schools Taking Steps to Respect

BY JANIE HECKER, Supervisor, Auxiliary Services

All segments of society are concerned about bullying, its far reaching implications for emotional well-being and how it impacts school safety. Research has shown the harmful effects of bullying on individuals and school communities, and there is a clear negative impact on both the child being bullied and children who bully others.

One of the programs designed to prevent bullying, by providing tools and resources to create a safe school environment, is Steps to Respect. This program, designed by the Committee for Children, helps students build supportive relationships with each other. It has a dual focus on bullying and friendship, which is based on research that indicates friendships protect children from the harmful effects of bullying. Students learn relationship skills, including strategies for making and keeping friends and membership in group activities. It specifically teaches skills for coping with bullying, including recognizing bullying, using assertive behaviors to respond to bullying and reporting bullying to adults. Children also learn how bystanders, who act in either a helpful or harmful manner, are playing a role in bullying. The program emphasizes that all members of the school community must take responsibility for decreasing bullying.

Recently, Betty Ann McInteer and Kate Goodman, Act 89 Psychologists, attended a two-day Steps to Respect facilitator training. They participated in the three-part staff training and learned the tools and resources needed to provide training in non-public schools. They learned how the program aligns with academic standards and offers an updated component on cyberbullying. The psychologists explored what would be needed for effective school wide implementation of the program and they began to develop a plan, which would outline the steps from awareness of the need to address bullying to the actual buy-in and adoption of the program. An overview of Steps to Respect will be presented to the Safe and Drug Free Advisory Council at their meeting in January.



Autistic Support Program Conducts Study to Determine Program Effectiveness

BY MARGIE DeRENZIS, Supervisor, Special Education

Is the CIU 20 Autistic Support program meeting its goal of increasing verbal behavior, increasing social skills and reducing problem behaviors? In order to answer this question as part of the Strategic Plan, Autistic Support supervisors Margie DeRenzis (Elementary) and Sean LeDonne (Secondary) embarked on a study to determine program efficacy.

Thirty-seven students in the Elementary Autistic Support Program were assessed using the Verbal Behavior - Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP, Sunberg, 2008) to determine their skills upon entering the program compared to their relative growth at the end of the school year. The VB-MAPP contains 170 measurable learning and language milestones that are sequenced and balanced across three developmental levels (0-18 months, 18-30 months, and 30-48 months). The VB-MAPP brings together

the procedures and teaching methodology of Applied Behavior Analysis and Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior, which provides a behaviorally based assessment program for students with autism.

All incoming kindergarten students were assessed, as well as a few other students in grades 1-4 who had been targeted for further assessment. Eight students entered at the Advanced Learner level, having achieved a score between 106-170; 14 students entered at the Intermediate Learner level, having achieved a score between 46-105; and 14 students entered at the Early Learner level having achieved a score between 106-170. All students in the study showed improvement in the skills assessed. The average scores for each group were calculated and are represented on the graph on Page 3.

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Colonial Academy Students Cross Social Boundaries for “Mix It Up at Lunch Day”

BY **BARB BAUS**, Teacher, Colonial Academy

Students at Colonial Academy joined over 2 million others to cross social and racial boundaries on November 9th as part of the ninth annual “Mix It Up at Lunch Day.” This is a national event designed to foster respect and understanding in schools by encouraging students to eat lunch with someone new for a day.



Students in Mr. Bruce Milheim’s Life Skills Support class are mixing it up at lunch. Photographed (clockwise) are Juan Jose Cotto, Jr. (Bethlehem), Stevie Swing (Nazareth) and Donovan Cooper (Pocono Mountain).

At Colonial Academy, students face a wide range of social, academic and behavioral challenges. Over 30 students at the Academy signed up to eat lunch with an Autistic, Life Skills or Partial Hospitalization classroom. “This number far exceeds my expectations,” reports Barb Baus, head of the team planning this event. “Our hope is that in getting to know students with challenges other than their own, the students will begin to develop more tolerance and empathy for those so very different than themselves.”

Many schools are planning similar barrier-busting activities throughout the day and some use the event to kick off a year-long exploration of social divisions. More than 5,000 schools were expected to participate in the day, which is sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project.

The Southern Poverty Law Center launched Teaching Tolerance in 1991 to provide educators with free resources designed to reduce prejudice and promote respect for differences among the nation’s children. The Mix It Up program began in 2002.

This is Colonial Academy’s first year of participation in the program.

DID YOU KNOW . . .

The Act 89 Staff is usually referred to as the nonpublic staff. The nonpublic staff is actually comprised of three staffs; the remedial staff serves elementary students, the guidance staff serves secondary students and the school psychologists serve students at all levels within the CIU 20 geographical area.

CIU 20 Provides Assistance Via Truancy Intervention Program

BY **DR. RON PRATOR**, Supervisor of Quality Assurance, Resolve Behavioral Health Services

Nationwide, school communities are struggling with truancy. In some larger cities, truancy has reached epidemic levels. Locally, a partnership between CIU 20 and Northampton County Children, Youth, and Families was developed to assist Northampton County school districts in addressing truancy-related concerns.

Historically, the issue of truancy was addressed using punitive measures. Truant students would be issued fines, suspension of driving privileges, and possible placement in a residential facility. At its core, interventions were designed to punish students and coerce them into school attendance. The problem with this approach is that, in many instances, the student or family are experiencing circumstances that will not be resolved through punishment and the truant behavior is likely to continue.

Northampton County Children, Youth, and Families is currently funding two full-time Truancy Intervention Specialists, who are employed by CIU 20. These people accept referrals from local districts and meet individually with the student and family to understand the barriers contributing to the truant behavior. The goal of these Specialists is to assist districts in designing and implementing a Truancy Elimination Plan (TEP) that is meaningful to the student and family. This often means coordinating services with District Judges; the Administrative Judge; the Office of Children, Youth & Families (OCY&F); local service providers; and human service agencies.

Although the goal of the Truancy Intervention Program is to foster relationships and school engagement, the punitive approach is not abandoned completely. The program is designed so that the therapeutic and judicial process unfold concurrently, with the therapeutic approach taking priority. It is common for the Court system to suspend their sentence as long as the student and family are pursuing a therapeutic resolution to the truant behavior. The Truancy Intervention Specialists have working relationships with many providers of evidence-based treatment approaches. For those families interested in receiving treatment, referrals can be made for high-quality treatment approaches.

For the first quarter of the 2010-11 school year, the Truancy Intervention Specialists have contacted 168 students. Given that the first quarter is usually the slowest, they are well on their way to matching last year’s total of 716 students.

When properly executed, the program is able to increase school attendance, provide districts with documentation that support their efforts at truancy reduction, decrease referrals to OCY&F (allowing these caseworkers to focus on issues such as abuse and neglect), and decrease the amount of Court time needed for truancy-related hearings.

For more information concerning CIU-20 Programs and Services, visit our website at www.ciu20.org or contact:

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Feast, Friends and Fun in the Hearing Support Program

BY KIM McCALL, Teacher, Hearing Support

Thanksgiving is a special time of year for the Hearing Support Program, because it is time for "The Feast," a yearly tradition hosted and prepared by the Elementary Hearing Support Class.

The preparations begin in early November during the classroom's weekly transdisciplinary group lessons. The lessons are a group effort involving the itinerant hearing and speech support teachers, associate specialists and classroom teacher. Each lesson begins with a Thanksgiving related story followed by language, vocabulary and writing activities. These activities include student made invitations, centerpieces, favors, napkin rings, placemats and individual Thanksgiving themed writing passages. The students also prepare a theatrical presentation for their guests.

In preparation for the event, students address and send invitations to their guests including the middle and high school hearing support classroom students and staff members, building, district and IU administration and retired teachers and therapists. After the invitations are mailed, the table



Students are dressed and waiting for their guests to arrive for the feast. The students are: (front row, left to right) Jai Griffin - East Stroudsburg, Jessica Hallman - Palisades, Selena Chaikowsky - Bethlehem, Javin Griffin - East Stroudsburg, Hailey DePietro - Bethlehem, Jacob Fisher - Bangor, and (back row, left to right) Zane Henritz - Northampton and Andrew Wilson - Bangor.

decorations are completed and the show rehearsed, it is time for the cooking to begin. The students are actively involved in all aspects of the cooking including spreading peanut butter for cookies, cracking eggs, "mushing" stuffing, turning a foodmill to make applesauce, stirring fruit salad, or mixing ingredients for broccoli casserole, it is a fun-filled, hands-on language event.

All of the preparation culminates in the actual Feast Day. On the day of the Feast, the elementary students set the tables with all of the things they have made, put on their costumes and impatiently wait for their guests to arrive. As the guests arrive, they have the opportunity to mingle and reunite with old friends and meet new friends as well. After the guests are seated, the elementary students proudly take the stage to perform their show. The show is followed by lots of food, socializing and reminiscing about feasts of the past. As the class celebrated its 10th feast this year, it was clear that this is a tradition full of learning, fun and thankfulness.

EI Program to Debut Assistive Technology Lending Library

BY ANN RIDER, Supervisor, Special Education

The Early Intervention (EI) Program is pleased to announce the January 2011 opening of the Assistive Technology (AT) Lending Library located at Mullen Hall in Bethlehem. Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, the AT library will provide educators, service providers and families with the opportunity to try a broad range of AT devices/software. The AT library will be staffed with a librarian who has expertise in speech and language development.

The AT library will house adaptive toys, games, books, switches, computer programs, Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) related equipment, and professional resources. The librarian can also create picture symbol cards, language boards, and social stories for individual children's needs. All equipment can be borrowed for a period of four weeks to allow the child and adult time to evaluate the items' effectiveness.

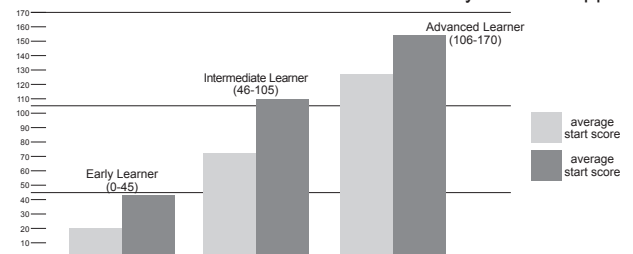
The ARRA grant also allocates funds to improve the expertise of the EI Preschool staff with AT and to build capacity with early childhood partners. The grants goals were to increase the number of children (birth to five) in typical early childhood settings who use AT to participate in activities/routines or for functional skills such as communication; and to increase Preschool EI staff's ability to successfully support children who are receiving EI by using adaptations and AT to participate in activities/routines in their placements in community preschools, private academic nursery schools, Head Start, Pre-K Counts and/or K4. A key component of this year's grant required the EI program to select two children for child study. The children selected had to have significant needs and either be transitioning from a B-3 program to the preschool program or already be enrolled in a specialized preschool and be placed in a regular early childhood program with AT supports. The EI AT team, comprising of a teacher, speech therapist, OT, PT, program specialist, and supervisors, must be directly linked to the efforts of the child's EI team to include training, technical assistance, onsite consultation, guided practice, IEP development support, and support for AT access.

For more information, call 610-849-0260, extension 110.

Autistic Support Program Conducts Study to Determine Program Effectiveness

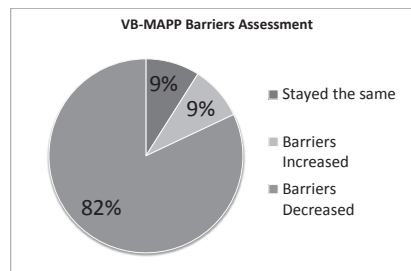
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2009-2010 VB-MAPP Results From Elementary Autistic Support



The second part of the study was based on data collected from the VB-MAPP Barriers Assessment, which provides an assessment of 24 common learning and language acquisition barriers faced by children with autism or other developmental disabilities. General categories of barriers include: negative behavior, absent or weak verbal operants, impaired social behavior, behaviors that compete with learning, and problems related to physical barriers. By identifying these barriers, specific intervention strategies can be developed to overcome these problems. Decreasing the barriers can lead to more effective learning. All students attending CIU 20 Autistic Support programs were assessed using this instrument.

Of the 175 students assessed, 144 showed a decrease in the barriers that may impede their learning, 15 showed no change and 16 showed an increase on the assessment as illustrated on the graph below.



The data analysis indicates that CIU 20 is providing a program that targets the inherent deficits of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and develops the skills necessary to improve students' ability to communicate and function in their environment.

“Business” is Booming at the CIU 20 Main Office!

BY MARY SCHMIDT, Teacher, Life Skills

Students in the Life Skills Support class at the IU 20 Central Office prove that their passion for food, combined with hard work, really pays off for themselves as well as the staff and administrators in the main office.

Business opportunities abound by way of two class fundraisers. Twice a week, students operate a mobile snack cart, assisted by Gayle Chiavaroli, Associate Teacher, traveling to each department and offering a wide variety of snacks, pastries, and beverages. The other fundraiser, a weekly soup sale, under the guidance of Mary Schmidt, Teacher, provides staff the opportunity to sign up and purchase a delicious, homemade soup on Fridays.

Though it may seem like all fun and games (fun, yes!), the functional life applications practiced by the students is anything but a game. Every domain under the Life Skills curriculum is addressed daily. Whether it be Domestic Maintenance (grocery shopping, measuring ingredients, operating appliances, washing dishes), Functional Academics (totaling money/making change, book-keeping to determine net profit earned), or Social/Communication skills (making eye contact, practicing conversational skills, using appropriate manners), the skills being learned now will help the students become more independent when they graduate from the program. Every student is given a job to do, such as counting out the items to be taken on the snack cart, chopping vegetables/meats, or putting foods away properly.

Through the tremendous support of the staff and administration, the class fundraiser has been a huge success. Profits from the sales have enabled the students to purchase a Wii System, DVD's, and art activities for the classroom.



Esperanza Rojas from the Wilson Area School District prepares soup for one of the weekly soup sales at the CIU 20 Central Office.

Monthly Community-Based Instruction trips to a fast food or dine-in restaurant are also provided through the fundraisers. A highlight of each year has been the big overnight “Senior Trip” to Knoebel’s Amusement Park. The students’ hard work and efforts throughout the year are celebrated by a day at the park, followed by an overnight trip at the campground in two deluxe cabins. The next morning breakfast at a Cracker Barrel restaurant concludes the trip.

Fun...Yes! Games...well, Maybe! Life Long Learning Opportunities... PRICELESS!

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