

Connections

Linking school professionals who support student achievement

Connections, Winter 2006

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Winter



What's Next for Education?

By Jo Anne Gearhart, Editor

The election of 2006 brought some leadership changes both on the state and national level. Many states also passed or defeated ballot issues which had important implications for education. What effect will those changes have on education in the years to come?

While much policy change remains to be seen, there are a few “givens” based on the election outcome. 2006 saw voters in 14 states decide a wide variety of education policy issues. Thirteen state elections decided various aspects of school finance, including authorizing bond sales, increasing taxes, *requiring* state funding of schools and changing the management of the state's public school trust fund. Seven states saw voters decide policies in other areas such as overturning legislation mandating school consolidation and banning in-state college tuition for undocumented immigrants and affirmative action at state institutions. In Colorado, the two proposals modeled after the “65% solution” were rejected by voters. Voters in Wyoming voted to create a permanent fund for higher education and equalize school funding in all districts and voters in Nebraska approved a measure to create an early childhood endowment fund.

In looking at the results as a whole, one might have reason to be optimistic in regard to future directions in education. Yet optimism doesn't mean that things will stay the same. Certainly, many national study groups and commissions have called for some key transformations in the way we educate students. Early indications are that Colorado intends to implement some of these proposals (see page 3 of this newsletter). The new party in the Colorado statehouse as well as its majority in the legislature might mean education, public k-12 education as well as higher education, is in store for some major “renovations.”

What we do know is that the world is changing at an incredible pace. Our education system is not keeping up with the new world order (highly recommend Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*). Stay tuned. The old adage that “the only constant is change” is certainly applicable for the foreseeable future.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN A HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC), a Denver-based local education fund, just published a new position paper on accountability, "From Surviving to Thriving: Strategies for Success in a High-Stakes Accountability System." In it PEBC takes stock of Colorado's accountability system and its effect on classroom practice and student achievement; and they call upon policy makers to objectively assess this system and make the necessary changes to ensure that the hard work taking place in classrooms across Colorado -- especially in the most challenged schools -- results in academic achievement for all students. The paper is enhanced with reflections on testing and its effects on classroom practice by four distinguished lab teachers. To review the PEBC findings, go to: www.pebc.org/files/news/FromSurvivingtoThriving.pdf.

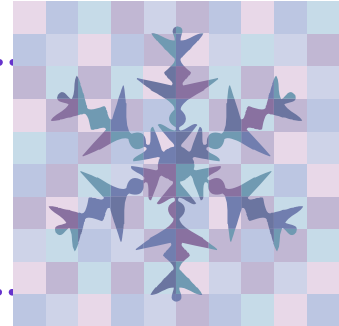
**TWO-THIRDS OF YOUTH STILL NOT GETTING RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUCCEED**

A new study by America's Promise finds that when youth are provided with at least four out of five fundamental resources, their life chances for success dramatically increase and damaging gaps separating low-income and minority youth from other youth are significantly reduced. Unfortunately, the data also show that more than two-thirds of our youth are not currently receiving enough of these resources to benefit from their full effects. The in-depth study, "Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure Into Action", measures the presence and impact of the five fundamental resources -- or "Five Promises" -- that research has shown affect the development and lives of America's youth: (1) caring adults; (2) safe places and constructive use of time; (3) a healthy start and development; (4) an effective education; (5) opportunities to make a difference helping others. The new report finds that children receiving four or five Promises, as compared to youth receiving zero to one Promise, are far more likely to be successful, including being twice as likely to get A's, twice as likely to avoid violence and 40 percent more likely to volunteer. Moreover, the research shows that receiving four or five of these basic developmental resources has the potential to level the playing field for youth across racial and economic lines. The research initiative affirmed that "whole child investments" -- ensuring that children experience the sustained and cumulative benefits of at least four of the five Promises in various aspects of their lives -- at home, in school, out in the community -- greatly increases their odds of success regardless of race or family income. For more information, see: www.americaspromise.org/ECEP.aspx?id=208.

MORE STUDENTS GETTING FREE SCHOOL BREAKFAST

Students from low-income families are eating more free and reduced-price breakfasts at school, reports a national anti-hunger group. The federal breakfast program feeds only two in five who need it. Still, it reached a record 7.7 million low-income children in the 2005-2006 school year, according to a report from the Food Research and Action Center. New Mexico posted the biggest increase, with 58 children getting breakfast for every 100 getting free and reduced-price lunches, up from 53 a year earlier. State officials there spent nearly half a million dollars to boost breakfast participation in schools struggling to meet standards under President Bush's No Child Left Behind program, said James Weill, the center's president. Kids learn better when they're not hungry, Weill said. Run by the Agriculture Department, the breakfast program reimburses schools for providing meals to kids. Breakfasts are free for about 72 percent of the children; 9 percent pay 30 cents per meal and 19 percent pay about \$1 per meal.

For more information, see www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/12/07/school.breakfast.ap/index.html.



NEW REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY - "TOUGH CHOICES TOUGH TIMES"

For the past five years, the national conversation on education has focused on reading scores, math tests and closing the "achievement gap" between social classes. The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, a high-powered, bipartisan assembly of education secretaries, business leaders and a former governor has released a blueprint for rethinking American education from pre-K to 12 and beyond to better prepare students to thrive in the global economy. While that report includes some controversial proposals, there is nonetheless a remarkable consensus among educators and business and policy leaders on one key conclusion: we need to bring what we teach and how we teach into the 21st century. Right now we're aiming too low. Competency in reading and math -- the focus of so much No Child Left Behind testing -- is the meager minimum. Scientific and technical skills are, likewise, utterly necessary but insufficient. Today's economy demands not only a high-level competence in the traditional academic disciplines but also what might be called 21st century skills. COLORADO INTENDS TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS REPORT WITH ITS OWN AUDIT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION K-12.

For more information, see:

http://skillscommission.org/pdf/exec_sum/ToughChoices_EXECSUM.pdf

http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_4842398



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS

Tips for School Administrators Reinforcing School Safety

Violence such as the high profile school shootings in Colorado, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania can cause concern within school communities, even if they are not directly affected by the event(s). Adults and students struggle to understand why these events happen and, more importantly, how they can be prevented. School principals and superintendents can provide leadership in reassuring students, staff and parents that schools are generally very safe place for children and youth and reiterating what safety measures and student supports are already in place in their school.

Suggested Steps to Reinforce School Safety

There are a number of steps that administrators can take to reinforce the fact that schools are safe environments and increase student/adult comfort level.

1. Write a letter to parents explaining the school safety policies and crisis prevention efforts and cite statistics that less than one percent of violent deaths are “school associated.”
2. Be a visible, welcoming presence at school, greeting students and parents and visiting classrooms.
3. Issue a press release about the school district efforts to maintain safe and caring schools through clear behavioral expectations, positive behavior interventions and supports, and crisis planning and preparedness.
4. Conduct a formal review of all school safety policies and procedures to ensure that emerging school safety issues are adequately covered in current school crisis plans and emergency response procedures.
5. Review communication systems within the school district and with community responders. This should also address how and where parents will be informed in the event of an emergency.
6. Connect with community partners to review emergency response plans and to discuss any short-term needs that may be obvious in the response to the current crisis.
7. Provide crisis training and professional development for staff based upon needs assessment.
8. Highlight violence prevention programs and curriculum currently being taught in school. Emphasize the efforts of the school to teach students alternatives to violence including peaceful conflict resolution and positive interpersonal relationship skills. Cite specific examples such as Second-Step Violence Prevention, bully proofing, or other positive interventions and behavioral supports.

School Violence Prevention Measures to Highlight

All schools work to prevent school violence and schools are very safe places. This can be a good time to remind students, staff, and parents of their important role in promoting school safety by following procedures and reporting unusual or concerning individuals or behavior. It also may be helpful to address the important balance between sufficient building security and providing students a healthy, nurturing, normal school environment.

Below is a list of possible school prevention activities that principals may want to reference in letter home or statements to community members about school safety.

1. Limited access to school building (designated entrance with all other access points locked from the exterior).
2. Monitoring of the school parking lot (parking lot monitors who oversee, people entering and leaving the campus).

3. Monitoring and supervision of student common areas such as hallways, cafeterias, and playgrounds.
4. School-community partnerships to enhance safety measures for students beyond school property.
5. Presence of school resource officers, local police partnerships, or security guards.
6. Monitoring of school guests.
7. Crisis plans and preparedness training.
8. Creating a safe, supportive school climate that provides school-wide behavioral expectations, caring school climate programs, positive interventions and supports, psychological and counseling services, and violence prevention programs.
9. Encourage students to take responsibility for their part in maintaining safe school environments, including student participation in safety planning. They, better than adults, know the hidden or less trafficked areas of the school that are more likely to be dangerous.
10. Promote compliance with school rules, reporting potential problems to school officials, and resisting peer pressure to act responsibly.
11. Anonymous reporting systems.
12. Threat assessment and risk-assessment procedures and teams for conducting the assessments.
13. School preparedness drills.
14. Citing school safety incident data. Recent trends have found that school violence nationwide is declining. Many school districts have local data that support this trend. When possible, citing local data helps families and students feel more at ease.
15. Presence of security systems.

What to Say to Students

Information for students should be based entirely on their need, developmental age, and relationship/proximity to the event. The goal is to reassure students that although there is always a possibility of violence occurring in a school, the probability of a school experiencing a high profile violent act is extremely low. Following are some suggested general key point that can be adopted to your school. See Development guidelines below.

General Points/Key Messages

- Schools are safe places. Our school staff works with your parents and public safety providers to keep you safe.
- We all play a role in the school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable. Nervous or frightened.
- There is a difference between reporting, tattling or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
- Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and probability that it will affect you (our school community).
- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
- Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults work very hard to get



those people help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

- Stay away from guns and other weapons. Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.
- **For Parents:** Open communication between home and school is critical to the safety and well-being of our students and your children. Let us know if you have a concern or questions about school policies or your child's safety. Know if your child's friends have access to guns. Keep any guns in your house locked up and

away from children of all ages.

Helpful Guidelines to Keep in Mind

1. Any conversation with a student must be developmentally appropriate. Young children are not able to process the complexities of violence in the same way that adolescents and young adults are prepared to discuss the issue. Young children often gauge how threatening an event is by adult reactions. They may be confused by what they hear and may have basic fear responses such as bad dreams, resistance to separate from their parent, and/or crying and clinginess. They respond well to basic assurances by adults and simple examples of school safety.

2. Communicate to parents about the conversations that school personnel have had with students. Schools need to keep parents informed about how they are responding to student questions and any type of support that has been made available for students struggling with the crisis.

3. Provide parents and teachers with guidelines for talking with children about violence. Encourage parents to talk with their children and validate their feelings. They should let children's questions guide what and how much information to provide, be open to opportunities to talk when children are ready, be honest about their own feelings related to violence, and emphasize the positive things that child/family/school can do to stay safe. They should be aware of signs that their child might be in distress, e.g., changes in behavior, anxiety, sleep problems, acting out, problems at school or with academic work.

4. Reinforce student strengths and focus on normal routines and activities. Where schools choose to alter their daily routines to address students concerns, large or small, it is important to know that one of the best ways for students to recover from the effects of a tragedy is to maintain or return to their normal school routines. Normal routines help establish a sense of calm and predictability important to maintaining effective learning environments.

5. Consider the cultures, traditions, religions and family/community values of students in any school response. It is important that schools respect the values, traditions, beliefs, and customs of the students and their families impacted by the crisis.

NASP has additional information for parents and educators on school safety, violence prevention, children's trauma reactions and crisis response at www.nasponline.org.

Educational Interpreter Update

By Ali Boyle, Educational Interpreter Coordinator

This fall has been a busy time for educational interpreters. In addition to getting back into full swing with students, the Colorado Registry of Interpreters (CRID) for the Deaf hosted a Mentoring Training over two weekends in October. CDE provided support by offering scholarships to ten currently working educational interpreters to pay for the registration, books and materials, and ten future mentoring sessions. Several of the interpreters attended in order to become mentors while others attended for the purpose of working with a mentor to improve their skills.

In addition, CDE sponsored the Oral Transliterating Training part 2 with presenters from the Clarke School for the Deaf. These dedicated interpreters are expanding their training to include those students who may not be dependent on sign language or who may have a cochlear implant and other spoken language needs. This group of interpreters are now preparing to take the RID Oral Transliterating written test which is a prerequisite for the performance test. With the popularity of this training we are hoping to repeat part one again next summer.

The Symposium on Deafness was held on November 17th through the 19th in Colorado Springs. The educational interpreter strand was moved to Saturday to provide a 7.5 hours skills workshop. Friday and Sunday strands offered opportunities for interpreters to obtain continuing education hours for knowledge as well as networking with colleagues from around the state.

Upcoming events:

EIPA performance test: January 6-7 CSDB, February 10-11 CSDB

Contact: www.ed.arizona.edu/ask12 for registration information.

EIPA written test: The next window of opportunity will be the month of February.

Watch for more detailed information on sites and times in future postings.

CRID annual conference: April 27-29 Estes Park

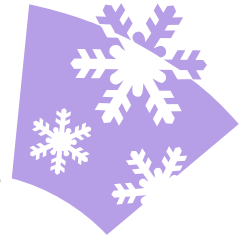
www.coloradorid.org

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at Ali.boyle@bvsd.org

or call at 303-506-9316.



CASN AWARDS



The Colorado Association of School Nurses is currently taking nominations for School Nurse of the Year and School Nurse Administrator of the Year. If you work with an outstanding school nurse or school nurse administrator, recognize them for all their hard work. Nominees must be a member of CASN. Completed nomination forms must be received by February 1, 2007.

CASN School Nurse of the Year CASN School Nurse Administrator of the Year Nomination Form

Instructions:

1. Complete this form.
2. Attach a letter supporting this nomination and curriculum vitae.
3. Send to CASN Awards Committee, P.O. Box 221605, Denver, CO 80222.
4. Deadline is February 1st, 2007

Nominee's name: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Home

Work

Employer's Name: _____

Employer's Address: _____

Present Position: _____

Number of years in present position: _____

Number of years school nursing: _____

Grade levels served in present position: _____

Number of students served: _____ Position full-time: Y _____ N _____

Current member of CASN and previous two years: Y _____ N _____

Current member of NASN and previous two years: Y _____ N _____

Nomination submitted by: _____

Date: _____



DIABETES RESOURCE NURSE

The incidence of diabetes in school age children has dramatically increased over the past several decades. The care of these children is complex and must be attended to in every aspect of their lives – including while in attendance at school. School staff must be knowledgeable about diabetes care in order for children with diabetes to be safe in school and to benefit optimally from their educational programs. Most registered nurses are already knowledgeable about diabetes management and are well-qualified to address the needs of children with diabetes while they are in school. However, as the complexity of management of the disease increases, additional in-depth and on-going training will increase the knowledge and competence of carefully chosen regional nurses who will assist in the management of childhood diabetes in the school setting and will be available to consult with districts at no cost to the schools or families. The larger districts have identified their own Diabetes Resource Nurse to provide support in their district.

The Diabetes Resource Nurse program will connect these expert school nurses and public health nurses with districts throughout Colorado for the purpose of:

- Consulting with school nurses, administrators, & other staff about diabetes related issues to insure optimal care for students with diabetes.
- Assisting with development of health care and 504 plans.
- Providing resources & in-service education to district staff.
- Helping to trouble shoot individual problems (but not providing care to individual students).

Providing standardization of health services for children with diabetes, with a goal toward healthier students who will be more capable of achieving optimally in their education programs.

Districts in need of consultation with a Regional Diabetes Resource Nurse are encouraged to call Kathleen Patrick, RN at the Colorado Department of Education at 303-866-6779.



Response to Intervention (RTI): What Is It?

Response to Intervention (RTI) Response to Intervention is a multi-tiered, problem-solving approach that addresses academic and behavioral difficulties of ALL students. It is an integrated school improvement model that is standards-driven, proactive and incorporates both prevention and intervention. **RTI is effective at ALL levels (Early childhood through High School).**

Some basic underpinnings of a RTI model:

- RTI relies on the premise that all students receive research-based instruction in general education.
- The learning of all students is assessed early and often (ongoing progress monitoring). Assessment is focused on direct measurements of achievement and behavior.
- If there are concerns about student progress, increasingly intense tiers of intervention are available. (*Colorado System for Student Success* three-tiered model supports this thinking—see next page)
- Individual student data gathered through the process may be used to determine appropriateness of a special education referral (e.g., in the case of students who do not respond adequately to intervention) and as part of a comprehensive evaluation for determination of eligibility.

Indicators of School Readiness for RTI: A Self-Assessment Tool Now Available

A self-assessment tool for RTI School Readiness is now available online. It is intended to assist schools/districts wanting to determine “next steps” toward implementation of a multi-tiered Response to Intervention approach for meeting the learning needs of ALL students. The tool addresses 5 broad indicators along with specific indicators/subtopics for each.

The tool could be completed by each staff member in order to formulate a school profile and/or be used to stimulate group conversations. To determine “next steps,” it is important not only to gauge the current implementation status of each item, but to also determine its relative priority. A basic planning format has been provided at the end of the checklist on which specific actions around the top priority items can be documented.

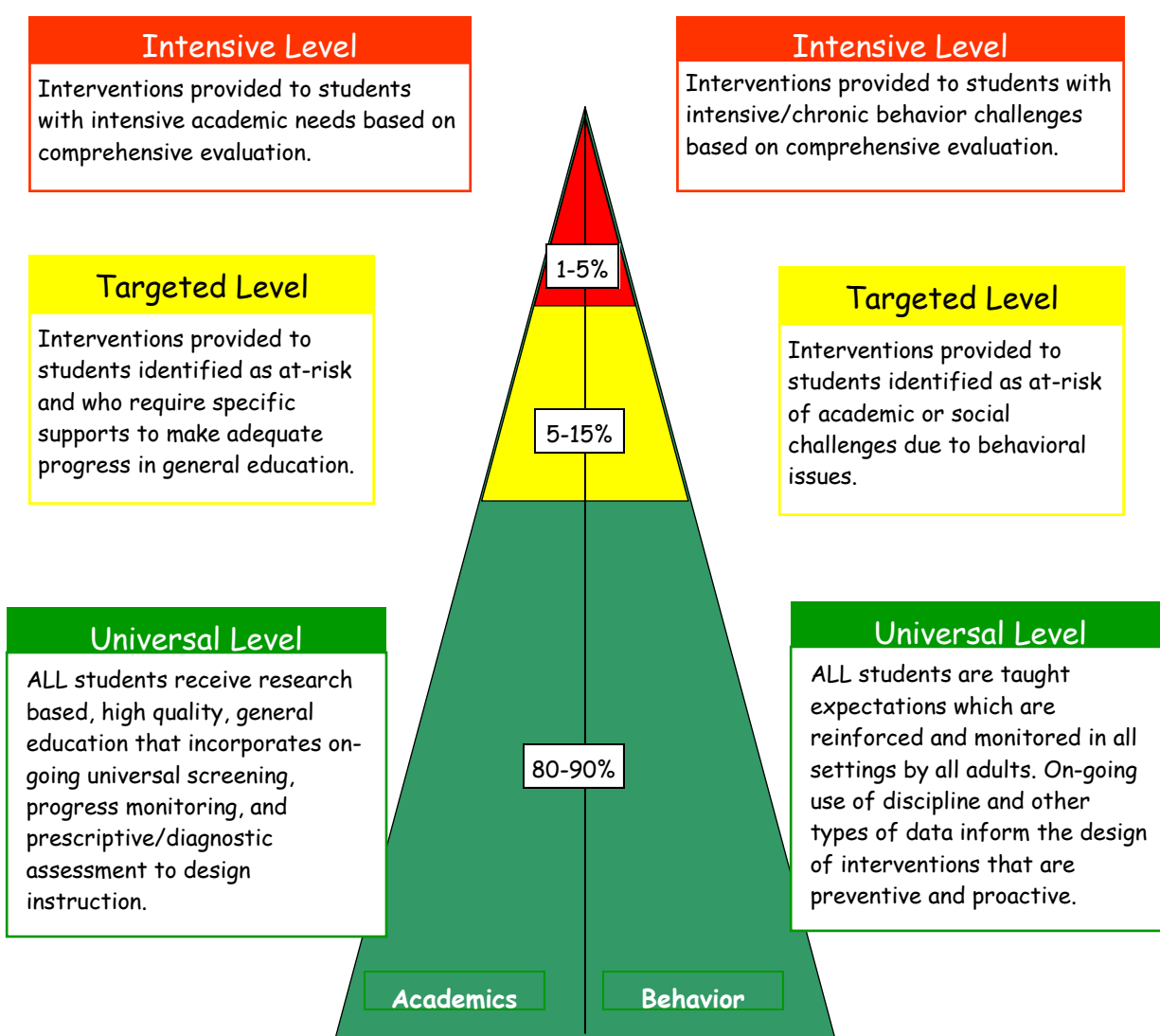
To access the RTI School Readiness Self Assessment Tool, go to:

www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/RTI.asp

Response to Intervention (RTI): Colorado System for Student Success

Response to Intervention is...

a well-integrated system that connects general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction/intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. A continuum of intervention tiers with increasing levels of intensity and duration is central to RTI. Collaborative educational decisions are based on data derived from frequent monitoring of student performance and rate of learning.



Tiers of Instruction/Intervention

SAVE THE DATES!

The School Psychology Futures Project, CSSP and CDE Announce 2007 Training Opportunities

Catherine Christo, Ph.D., Professor, California State
University at Sacramento
“Progress Monitoring and RTI Applications for
Secondary Students”

**February 12, Colorado Springs, CO
February 14, Grand Junction, CO**

Fred Hanna, Ph.D., Director of the School of Applied
Psychology at UNC
“70 Strategies & Techniques for Counseling
Difficult, Defiant Adolescents”

February 13, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley

Co-sponsored by the San Luis Valley BOCES:
Louis Mangione, M.A. Innovations in Education, Inc.
“Interventions and Instructional Strategies for
Secondary Students”

February 23, Alamosa, CO

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

"Opportunity means transformation, and it means realizing justice."

—Monique Harden, Founder, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights



Educational Audiologists Collaborate!

By Lisa Cannon, Audiology Consultant

On October 18th, school audiologists met in an innovative venture with local pediatric audiologists who serve children in clinical practice settings. It was a wonderful chance to meet, learn about and participate in practical discussions about services for school age kids. The goal of the meeting was to help ensure that kids' audiological services are consistent and collaborative both in and out of school.

Clinical audiologists are responsible for fitting personal hearing aids, and educational audiologists are responsible for monitoring and making sure those hearing aids work with FM systems at school. The challenges of technology are never-ending, and many of the issues were addressed in a panel discussion format. Participants left the meeting with a renewed collaborative purpose, and vowed to continue the tradition in future meetings.

"The true test of the American ideal is whether . . . chance of birth or circumstance decides life's big winners and losers, or whether we build a community where, at the very least, everyone had a chance to work hard, get ahead and reach their dreams."

—Senator Barack Obama

School-Based Occupational & Physical Therapy

◆ The provision of school-based therapy is governed by federal and state laws. Therapy is a related service to special education and is provided only if the child needs therapy to function in the educational setting.

◆ In the school, the need for therapy is determined by the IEP Team. Parents are a part of this team. The team determines the amount, frequency and duration of therapy—not the physician alone.

◆ Therapy may be provided individually or in small groups by a therapist or therapist assistant. Intervention may or may not be provided directly with the child. Collaborating with educational staff to modify the child's environment and daily school activities is always a part of school therapy.

◆ Treatment techniques, such as heat/cold, electrical stimulation and biofeedback training are typically not provided.

◆ Therapy takes place where the child receives education. Appropriate intervention may be provided in classrooms, hallways, gyms, playgrounds, lunchrooms, bathrooms, or in a separate therapy room.

◆ The decision to discontinue therapy is made by the IEP Team. This may occur when the student no longer is eligible for special education, when other members of the IEP Team can provide necessary interventions, or when the child can perform school tasks without therapeutic intervention. There may still be a need for community-based services.

Example of Comprehensive Coordinated Services for School-Based Therapy

Judie is a 10-year-old child who lives in a rural community with her parents and three siblings. She has a cognitive disability and cerebral palsy. She receives special education. Part of the day she is in a regular classroom and part of the day in a self-contained classroom. She receives school-based occupational therapy and physical therapy. She also receives community-based occupational therapy and physical therapy.

An IEP goal for Judie is to independently complete classroom and homework assignments using adapted writing instruments.

The school occupational therapy treatment plan for Judie includes provision of a weighted pencil and slantboard; environmental adaptations for seating/positioning in the classroom; collaboration with classroom teachers to develop assignment accommodations, prompts and routines; and the use of therapeutic techniques to improve eye-hand coordination and motor control in the trunk, arms and hands

A second IEP goal for Judie is to move independently throughout the school building using a walker and to attend all academic classes on time.

The school physical therapy treatment plan for Judie includes gait training with a walker in empty and crowded hallways, motor planning and motor control activities for timely exchange of books and class supplies from the locker, as well as collaboration with the physical education teacher to improve strength and balance for safe

movement through the cafeteria lunch line.

Community-Based Occupational & Physical Therapy

◆ Therapy is governed by state and national practice guidelines that focus on a child's medical/functional needs in home and community settings. Community-based therapy is provided in clinics, hospitals, homes and community settings.

◆ In community-based therapy, the physician, family and therapist make the decision regarding amount, frequency and duration of therapy recommended. The amount of therapy actually received may be affected by whether or not an insurance company, Medicaid Program or other funding sources reimburse for the recommended services. Denials of payment are often based on a perceived duplication of service between community and school providers.

◆ A therapist or therapist assistant typically provides individual treatment. Individualized home programs and ongoing caregiver training are necessary parts of the service to encourage carryover outside of treatment.

◆ Treatment techniques, such as hot/cold, electrical stimulation and biofeedback training may be utilized.

◆ Families have the opportunity to seek out services from a therapist with specialty training in areas such as soft tissue mobilization, post surgical intervention, sensory integration, aquatic therapy or neurodevelopmental treatment.

◆ Intervention is discontinued when any of the following occurs: functional skills are achieved, a plateau in progress is reached, participation in service is limited because of various circumstances, child is stable with therapy maintenance program, discharge is requested. At discharge, indicators for potential follow up are identified. There may still be a need for school-based therapy.

Example of Comprehensive Coordinated Services for Community-Based Therapy (refer back to our example of Judie)

The community-based occupational therapy goals will enable Judie to independently perform activities of daily living. She will learn how to wash her face and hands, brush her teeth and hair, dress and feed herself, and perform household chores.

The community-based occupational therapy treatment plan includes arm and hand strength and mobility exercises, myofascial release to shoulder girdle and arms to increase muscle length, neurodevelopmental treatment to improve arm muscle control, therapeutic activities to promote practice of these functional skills in the home and community, and ongoing caregiver training to promote carryover of treatment on a daily basis.

The community-based physical therapy goals will enable Judie to independently transfer in and out of the bathtub, bed and car. She will also walk outdoors and manage curbs, sidewalks, steps and grass.

The community-based physical therapy treatment plan includes myofascial release to hip and leg muscles to improve muscle length, neurodevelopmental treatment to improve muscle control, techniques to improve trunk strength and balance for better standing and walking.

Resources and Research for Physical Activity and Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders Kerrie Berends, PhD. CAPE

We all know that more and more students are being identified with or enter our school system as having an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Provided below are references plus excerpts (most are direct quotes) from some recent articles which you may find interesting and helpful. If you are intrigued, you can always order the article in its entirety from the publisher.

Children with Asperger Syndrome: Implications for General Physical Education and Youth Sports. By Melissa Groft and Martin E. Block. Published in JOPERD, March 2003, Vo. 74 No. 3.

Article Conclusion: As professionals we are challenged with new obstacles every day. If we do our job to the best of our ability, we will find a way to overcome these obstacles and still be able to individualize instruction for each student. Half the battle of individualizing is to understand each student as thoroughly as possible. Helping students with AS become more successful in your environment could help these children to become more successful overall. In summary, consider the following when individualizing instruction for children with AS:

1. Understand that children with AS often have preoccupations with abnormal interests and create a two to five minute time for discussion of the specific interest.
2. Know that children with AS often have a high level of intelligence with poor concentration skills: therefore give them tasks to do that are simple and easy to remain on-task.
3. Children with AS typically have significant social deficits. They need direct instruction concerning appropriate social skills, social stories to help them understand new situations, and reinforcement when they respond appropriately.
4. Children with AS often have an extremely rich expressive language, but have difficulty using this language in social settings. Therefore, be prepared to teach appropriate social skills, and then create a setting that will provide opportunities to practice and use these newly learned social skills appropriately.
5. Minimize and fine and gross motor clumsiness exhibited in children with AS by working on individual components through one-on-one instruction, small group drills, and lead up games with modifications rather than competitive games

Physical Activity for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. By Jody L. Crollick, G. Richmond Mancil, and Christine Stopka. Published in March 2006 in Teaching Elementary Physical Education, Vo. 17 No. 2.

The article provides suggested physical education objectives through presentation of an "Outline for Children with ASD" which include the following excerpts. Each category contains more information and suggestions than included below but I tried to highlight the main idea.

1. **Organic.** Exercises for a child with autism include running or biking and daily stretching of the major muscle groups. Running and other similarly vigorous exercise has been shown to help reduce stereotypical behaviors.
2. **Neuromuscular.** The most important activities for an autistic child are locomotor and motor

factors. Whether the child is not yet delayed or already delayed, special attention in this area at a young age helps improve overall locomotion later in life.

3. Interpretive. The ability to acquire knowledge and make judgments in game activities encompasses strategies, techniques, and knowledge of body functions. Such activities give the child with autism the confidence and ability to operate in real-world situations, including occupational situations.

4. Social. Though communication is often a particular difficulty for children with autism, try pairing them with students who are not autistic. Through this type of direct interaction, the child with autism may begin to copy and understand the patterns of the other student.

5. Emotional. It is also important that children with autism develop the ability to control violent or tantrum-like behavior. Instead of simply disciplining students for these behaviors, take a deeper look into what causes the behavior, for example, changes in routine or proximity of the other students.

Understanding Physical Activity in Youths with Autism Spectrum Disorders. From the Research Applications section of *Palaestra*, Fall 2005, Vo. 21 No. 4.

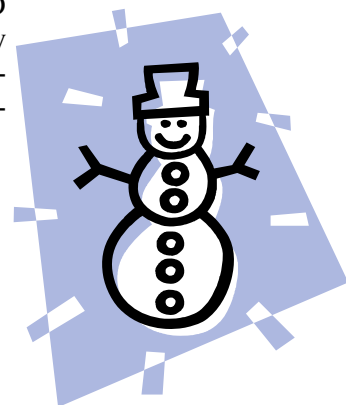
Suggestions for best-practice which were generated from the studies included in this article in Palaestra include some of the following excerpts:

1. Recess was the primary mode for youths with ASD to engage in moderate physical activity: yet, allotted recess time was reduced for these individuals to facilitate transitions. This practice should be re-evaluated and alternatives to reduced recess time examined.

2. The limited physical education time spent in moderate activity was attributed to excessive time spent in classroom management, a need for extra prompts to initiate activity, and the fact that some participants were receiving physical education services from special educators. Most importantly, a certified physical educator with training/experience working with children with disabilities is critical to ensure youths with ASD engage in sufficient amounts of moderate activity during this curricular time.

3. The decline in physical activity during adolescence is a cause for significant concern. Two approaches can be used to address this trend: (a) practitioners and parents much avoid an over-reliance on technology to entertain, occupy, or redirect behaviors, and (b) community recreation agencies, schools, parents, and consumers with ASD must cooperate to identify needs and evaluate options for developing programs that include effective supports.

4. Individual personalities and interests of persons with ASD must be acknowledged and honored. Efforts to promote physical activity participation will be more successful if the activity is matched to individual interests and abilities, and if youths with ASD are allowed to exercise choices.



Friday, February 23, 2007

"Collaborative Teams for the OT, PT, and APE Practitioner "

Presenter: Beverly Rainforth PhD, P.T.

Radisson Hotel Denver Southeast, 3200 S. Parker Road, Aurora, CO 80014
303-695-1700

LODGING: Participants will make their own hotel reservations and secure with a credit card. The conference rate of \$69 is offered until February 12th.

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis; our conference room space is limited. If your registration is accepted you will **receive a confirmation by EMAIL ONLY!!**

REGISTRATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY January 31st!!

Late registrations will have to pay \$75 and may not be accepted. There will be no on-site registration. There are no refunds once an individual has been accepted as a participant of the conference. Each participant will earn 8.0 Contact Hours of CEUs for full attendance of training.

Please make **check** or **money order**.

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Please print neatly and complete the entire form. Your **EMAIL CONFIRMATION**, name tag and certificate of attendance will be derived from this form. **THANKS!**

CUT HERE

"The IDEA 2007—Collaborative Teams" - February 23, 2007

Presenter: Beverly Rainforth PhD, P.T.

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— Please indicate your profession for the CDE mailing database for school motor specialists:

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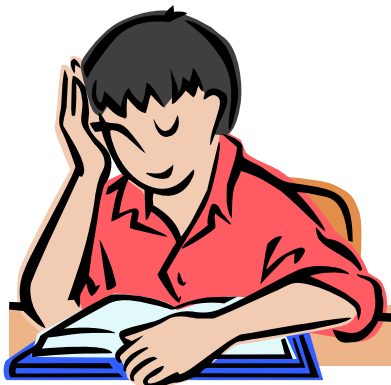
Payment must be made to the **COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

___\$65.00 ___\$75.00(registration received after January 31st)

REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 1st. NO EXCEPTIONS!

_____ Sign Language Interpreter _____ Vegetarian Meal

Reducing School Attendance Problems



Student absences jeopardize student and school success. Academic achievement scores are correlated with school attendance. Students who are not at school cannot receive instruction. Excessive school absence is a precursor of school dropout and is related to juvenile delinquency. And, because average daily attendance rates are a common determiner of school funding, absences mean that schools have less resources to do the job. Given all this, it is not surprising that reducing school absences is a top priority for many schools.

Toward Better Policies and Practices: The Key is Helping Students Feel Connected

Schools, districts, and states have developed policies regarding attendance and have delineated interventions. In general, district policies and practices related to attendance problems focus mostly on truancy. The tendency is toward increasingly harsh punishments for unexcused absences. And, this works against efforts to take into account the various underlying causes of attendance problems and the range of prevention, early intervention, and ongoing support that might more effectively address the problems.

Interventions usually are reactive but may include (1) incentives & disincentives, (2) efforts to provide supports to promote attendance, and (3) coordinated efforts involving school and community agencies, including juvenile justice. There is a clear need for greater attention to prevention and intervening as early as feasible after attendance problems are noted. There is a need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted and integrated approach that weaves together the resources of school and community.

What are the Numbers?

Data from the Condition of Education 2000-2006 indicate the following data for elementary and middle schools:

"In 2005, 19 percent of 4th-graders and 20 percent of 8th-graders reported missing 3 or more days of school in the previous month. . . . In both grades, students were more likely to miss 3 or more days of school if a language other than English was spoken at home, if the student was an English language learner, or if the student was classified as having a disability. Additionally, in both grades, a lower percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students and a higher percentage of American Indian students reported missing 3 or more days of school than their peers in other racial and ethnic groups. Students who were eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch were more likely to be absent from school for 3 or more days than those who were not eligible. This pattern among students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch has remained stable for both 4th- and 8th-grade students from 1998 and 2005."

The National Center for Education Statistics indicates the follow data for 10th graders during the first half of the 2002-2003 school year:

*14.3% of all students missed no days
35.4% missed 1-2 days
33.0% missed 3-6 days
17.2% missed more than 6 days*

As the folks at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory have noted in discussing dropouts: "Children at-risk need to be identified at a young age (as early as preschool) so that early sustained inter-

vention can be applied. Success in the elementary grades diminishes the possibility of later dropping out in high school. The key ... is helping youth to overcome their sense of disconnectedness. It is imperative not to isolate or alienate any students from the school. Not all factors related to dropout [and truancy] reduction are school controllable, and solutions to the complex problem[s] of dropouts [and truancy] cannot be achieved by the schools alone. ... It requires resources that go beyond the school, and solutions require a team approach – the combined efforts of students, parents, teachers, administrators, community-based organizations, and business, as well as the federal, state, and local governments."

What the School Can Do

Addressing lack of connectedness with school and schooling is a growing problem and requires enhancing

- *supports for transitions*
- *interventions to re-engage students in schooling*

Supports for Transitions

Periods of transition can increase school attendance problems. Examples of such periods are:

- *entry into school at kindergarten*
- *moving to a new home and into a new school*
- *beginning a new year in a new class*
- *articulation from elementary to middle or middle to high school*
- *re-entry from suspensions, expulsions, juvenile detention*
- *inclusion from special to regular education*

Every school needs transition supports as part of efforts to address attendance problems. And, student support staff can play a major role in planning and developing such programs.

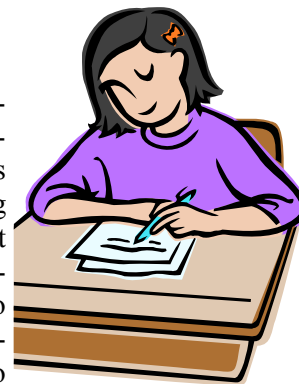
During transitions, potent interventions are needed to ensure students are welcomed and connected with ongoing social supports. Beyond that, individual assistance must be provided quickly to students having transition problems. Practices can be grouped into three categories:

- *Broad-band practices (often designated universal approaches) to ensure support is in place for each identified transition where intervention is indicated.*
- *Enhanced personalization to accommodate minor differences (watching for individuals having minor adjustment problems and providing just a bit more personalized assistance, e.g., aid in overcoming minor barriers to successful adjustment, a few more options to enable effective functioning and make participation more attractive).*
- *Special assistance (identifying as early as feasible those who have not made an effective adjustment or who remain uninvolved, those displaying an intense lack of interest or negative attitudes, and/or lack of capability). This facet of the work requires continued use of personalized approaches, as well as intensive outreach and special assistance.*

A key facet of all this involves careful monitoring that (a) identifies students who are having difficulty making a transition and (b) ensures the problem is corrected.

Connecting with Students Who Are Becoming Disengaged

A second major arena in need of attention is that of designing classroom and school-wide programs to re-engage students who have become actively disengaged from schooling. This is one of the most neglected aspects in school improvement planning. For motivated students, facilitating learning is a fairly straightforward matter and fits well with school improvements that primarily emphasize enhancing instructional practices. The focus is on helping establish ways for students who are motivationally ready and able to achieve and, in the process, maintains and hopefully enhances their motivation. The process involves knowing when, how, and what to teach and also



knowing when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own.

Unfortunately, students who manifest learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems often have developed extremely negative perceptions of teachers, programs, and school in general. This can lead to active disengagement from classroom instruction and school. Where the problem is widespread, it needs to be acknowledged and established as a high priority for school improvement. School support staff and teachers can then collaborate in developing a major initiative for re-engaging those who have become disengaged and for reversing conditions that led to the problem.

Conclusions

It is often said that school attendance is both a right and a responsibility. Certainly, those of us who value education can readily agree with this. And, for students who are absent from school because of circumstances over which they have no control, society has to play a greater role in addressing barriers that are abridging their rights.

However, there are some students who experience school as not a good fit and, therefore, see compulsory education not as a right or a responsibility but as an infringement on their self-determination. From a psychological perspective, the problem becomes motivational (e.g., avoidance motivation, reactance). So, addressing the problem requires strategies that are more psychologically sophisticated than those used by most schools and the society in general. Focusing only on "What's wrong with that kid!" often is tantamount to blaming the victim and leads to ineffective policies and practices.

Given the variety of factors that play a role in school attendance problems, it is essential to avoid lumping all youngsters together. This is particularly important when the problem is truancy. Some truancy is reactive and some is proactive, which means the underlying motivation differs considerably and so should the interventions.

It seems evident that school attendance problems provide another indication of the need and opportunity for moving forward in new directions for student support. The complexity of such problems demands comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches. Policy and practice must now evolve so schools, families, and communities are working together to develop what is needed.

*This article was provided by the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools. It recently compiled a policy and practice analysis brief entitled: **School Attendance Problems: Are Current Policies & Practices Going in the Right Direction?** For the full report, see [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Briefs/school attendance problems.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Briefs/school%20attendance%20problems.pdf).*



To Flunk Is a Lifetime Sentence

By Dr. Rhonda Williams, Counselor Educator at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

As the school counselor, you have been asked by a grade-level team of teachers to sit in on a retention meeting for an underperforming second-grade student and his parents. There has been little discussion between the team, you and the parents regarding retention. However, the teachers are adamant this child should be held back. What is your role as the school counselor, and what are the ethical issues surrounding retention?

Collaboration is one of the consummate roles of a school counselor. Working with parents, teacher, administrators and community members is an essential aspect for the professional school counselor. Although collaboration skills are excellent tools to have, it is important for a professional school counselor to know the risks and benefits of decisions made in a collaborative meeting, especially those meetings involving students who are failing academically. Historically education systems have relied on the easiest response by using in-grade retention for a failing student, despite overwhelming evidence that retention is not an effective practice. In an era of high-stakes testing, accountability and a negative view of social promotion, what are the school counselor's responsibilities and ethical concerns when teachers or parents ask you to support retaining a student?

Retention Issues

As we look at the achievement gap and consider the inequities of many educational practices, it is important to include in-grade retention as part of that inequity. Nationally, African American and Hispanic students are more than two and one half times as likely to be retained than Caucasian students. Of students held back, 60 percent are boys, implying gender inequity. Research also supports that retention is highly correlated with dropping out of school, and retaining a student twice is a virtual guarantee that a student will eventually drop out.

According to "Failing Our Children: Find Alternatives to In-Grade Retention," by Intercultural Development Research Associates, economically disadvantaged students are more likely to be retained, and special education students are retained twice as often as other students. Additionally, urban areas claim a higher retention rate than rural areas, with the largest population being minority and low socio-economic students. Another consequence for flunking is low self-esteem and negative academic self-concept.

At a time when the nation is focusing on high dropout rates and analyzing the achievement gap for minority students, it would seem most appropriate to evaluate the educational practice in in-grade retention, especially when there is little or no evidence supporting retention's effectiveness. The school counselor's influence on in-grade retention can be a powerful conduit for educational change.

As mentioned in the ASCA position statement on at-risk students, standing up for the student's needs is a key component of student advocacy. The professional school counselor should be collaborating with parents, teachers and community agencies in addressing academic failure. Interventions, a specialty of the school counselor, should be implemented utilizing all the key players in this learning situation, i.e., the teachers, administrators, parents and community agencies. These strategies should be assessed through data collection under the school counselor's guidance. The professional school counselor provides individual student planning sessions and develops and assesses intervention strategies prior to conceding to the last resort of in-grade retention.

The ethical school counselor should evaluate if there is an established, research-based evaluation process for those students who are not academically successful. The school counselor's ethical role



is to be involved in that process or at minimum as part of the leadership team establishing the criteria for the retention policy and procedure. It is also important for school counselors to consider the ethical ramifications of any educational practice and decision making. The overriding questions for the school counselors should be, "Will this intervention be academically valuable for this student, and what evidence do we have supporting this?"

Things to Think About

As part of the professional ethical standards, school counselors are expected to be diligent in their professional development and be knowledgeable in areas in which they are practicing. Knowing what practices are supported by research and what practices are not educationally sound is a component of the school counselor's ethical problem solving model. Additionally, as stated by the ASCA Ethical Standards, the professional school counselor is guided "by findings of the evaluation data in planning programs and services" for the students with whom they serve. In-grade retention may not be the best choice for the student or an educationally sound practice; however, it is an ethical responsibility of the professional school counselor to promote and provide as many educational options as possible for the students with whom they work.

Being aware of the best practices and effective interventions for students is part of our ethical mandate of accountability to our students. As ethical professional school counselors, it is our role to support and promote intervention that has been proven effective and not encourage ineffective practices. Knowing what the research and data state and understanding how this influences the students whom you work is paramount.

When interpreting a student's evaluations and assessments and providing individual planning for the failing student, it is the school counselor's ethical responsibility to make sure parents and students understand the ramification of any educational decisions made. Often students, as well as their parents, are unclear about the unintended consequences of such decisions. Identifying and clarifying the risks and benefits of educational choices will help the parents and students make more productive choices.

As professional school counselors, we are ethically bound to advocate for the students' best educational interests. Through collaboration, professional school counselors can have an impact of the educational decision making, strategy development and effective program implementation. All of these tasks can help students achieve academic success.

Rhonda Williams, Ed.D., LPC, NCC, is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs and chair of ASCA's Ethics Committee. She can be reached at rwilliams@ucces.edu.

Student-to-School Counselor Ratios

The Department of Education recently released school data for the 2004–2005 academic year. Although the nationwide average student-to-school counselor fell to 479-to-1 (down from 488-to-1 the previous year), this ratio is still well above ASCA's recommended 250-to-1 ratio. The number of school counselors across the country rose from 99,395 to 101,842 in the same time period. States with the best ratios include: Rhode Island (60-to-1), Wyoming (218-to-1), Vermont (231-to-1) and New Hampshire (251-to-1). States with the highest ratios include: California (990-to-1), Minnesota (795-to-1), District of Columbia (775-to-1), Arizona (772-to-1) and Utah (746-to-1). COLORADO'S RATIO WENT FROM 563-TO-1 IN 2003-04 TO 544-TO-1 IN 2004-05.



Upcoming Events

January 12, 2007

Affective Needs Conference

Denver, Sheraton 4 Points Hotel

For more information, contact:

Krueger_jessica@cde.state.co.us

January 19 & 20, 2007

2007 Courage to Risk Conference

Colorado Springs, Broadmoor Hotel

For more information, contact:

www.couragetorisk.org

January 27 & 28, 2007

Metro Speech Language Symposium

Denver Marriott Tech Center

For more information, contact:

www.cshassoc.org

February 23, 2007

“Collaborative Teams for the OT, PT and APE Practitioner”

Denver, Radison Southeast

For more information, contact:

Jennifer Lockhart at 303-866-6694

March 1, 2 & 3, 2007

Parents Encouraging Parents Conference

Estes Park, Colorado

For more information, contact:

keck_k@cde.state.co.us



YOUR INPUT IS REQUESTED

Would you like to submit a professional article for CDE Connections?

Suggestions? Opinions?

Please submit your ideas to the newsletter editor, Jo Anne Gearhart, at gearhartjm@yahoo.com.

Thanks!



CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER IS NOW EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE!

We will no longer be mailing out a “hard copy” of the CDE Connections newsletter. To be cost-effective, the newsletter will be solely posted on the Related/Support Services website: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/RSS-Connections.asp>.

School counselors can access the CDE Connections at www.cosca.org. Every effort will be made to communicate each posting with all school-based related and support person providers via listservs and email distribution lists. For those disciplines without an electronic “connection,” a post card will be mailed to announce the posting of the newsletter. We thank you for your patience as we move to an exclusive electronic format. Please continue to be in touch with your discipline-specific consultant on your newsletter needs.

CDE Connections Consultants

Maureen Melonis, Assistive Technology
 Assistive Technology Partners
 1245 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 200
 Denver, CO 80218
 Phone: (303) 815-1281
 Email: Maureen.melonis@uchsc.edu

Barb Bieber, School Psychology
 201 E. Colfax Ave.
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 866-6933
 Email: bieber_b@cde.state.co.us

Jo Anne Gearhart, School Counseling
 Broomfield High School
 1 Eagle Way
 Broomfield, CO 80020
 Phone: (303) 447-5374
 Email: joanne.gearhart@bvsd.org

Lisa Cannon, Educational Audiology
 201 E. Colfax Ave., Room 300
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 866-6960
 Email: johnson_c@cde.state.co.us

Tanni Anthony, Orientation/Mobility
 201 E. Colfax Ave.
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 866-6681
 Email: anthony_t@cde.state.co.us

To Be Announced, Speech-Language Pathologist
 201 E. Colfax Avenue, Room 300
 Denver, CO 80203

Kathleen Patrick, School Nursing
 201 E. Colfax Ave., Room 300
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 866-6779
 Email: patrick_k@cde.state.co.us

To Be Announced, School Social Work
 201 E. Colfax Ave.
 Denver, CO 80203

Sheryl Muir, Educational Interpreters
 CDE, 201 E. Colfax Ave.
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 866-69099
 Email: muir_x@cde.state.co.us

Sandra Meagher, OT, PT, APE
 CDE, 201 E. Colfax Ave.
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (720) 244—3411
 Email: meagher_s@cde.state.co.us



Special Education Services Unit
 201 East Colfax
 Denver, CO 80203

Phone: 303-866-6694
 Fax: 303-866-6811
 Email: sesu@cde.state.co.us
www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped

