



Winter 2012

The **SPECIAL EDItion** will be published two times a year by the Division of Special Education. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide information, updates, initiatives, showcase teachers and more. The next issue will be published in the summer 2012.

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## TIPS AND SLIPS

By Chris Mason-Giardini

Happy New Year to all the new special education teachers and speech-language pathologists who have done such a stellar job in their first few months on the job here in Anne Arundel County. The Division of Special Education welcomes the newest team of dedicated professionals who provide instruction, compassion and caring for our students with learning differences in all our schools. The Teacher Induction Program for Special Educators (TIPS) and Speech-Language Induction Program (SLIPS) has provided assistance and specialized workshops for this cadre of teachers/providers, as well as on-site visitations to assist with assessment, instruction, IEP development, data collection, classroom management and lesson planning. The School-Based Resource Teachers continue to provide assistance to our newest peers within their assigned schools as well! We welcome you with gratitude for teaching/serving our students with enthusiasm and expertise. Thank you so much for selecting Anne Arundel County Public Schools to begin your careers in the field of special education and we look forward to many more years of partnership with you.

## Director's Corner

Dear Special Education Family:

This holiday season when reflecting on the blessings I have as the Director of Special Education, I shared the following quote from Disney with my Leadership Team:

The Imagineer states....

"The magic is as wide as a smile and as narrow as a wink, loud as laughter and quiet as a tear, tall as a tale and deep as emotion. So strong, it can lift the spirit. So gentle, it can touch the heart. It is the magic that begins the happily ever after."

I then expressed my sincerest gratitude for never forgetting that what we do supports the "happily ever after" of our children. I feel this sentiment must be relayed to the full special education community as it is your magic that ensures as a school community we concentrate on the abilities of all. It is our collective magic that opens the door for limitless opportunities of our students with disabilities!

As we embrace 2012, transition to the Maryland Common Core Curriculum, and recognize the potential of all students in an educationally rigorous 21<sup>st</sup> century, remember to always reflect on what our students are saying...

"Giving students what they want has more to do with how we approach instruction and position students as learners. (Master Teacher)"

Studies state that...

- Students want to feel like they are respected and that we are nurturing their self-respect.
- Students want to be challenged to think.
- Students want choices and opportunities to tap their creativity.

... Students noted the importance of learning that brings out the best in them and builds on their interests. "When students can see connections between what they are learning and their goals, interests, and lives, they work harder and learn more from the experience."

My oldest son upon his return to college sent me the following quote from thumbpress.com knowing of our vision for the Division. Please remember the power to make a difference is in your hands.

**IMAGINE...** With All Your Mind, **BELIEVE...** With All Your Heart, and **ACHIEVE...** With All Your Might.

Our students deserve the possibilities. Masterpieces can be created with your passionate embrace and dedication.

With such appreciation,

*Mary Tollar*



*Imagine, Believe, Achieve*

## News from Elementary Special Education

By Pam Courson, Coordinator of Elementary Special Education



Happy New Year from the elementary leadership team!

The elementary team and representatives within the Division of Special Education including non public and special services offices provided an exemplary 5- part Paraeducator Training Series this fall for permanent and temporary elementary special education assistants. This has been an exciting endeavor and we are thrilled to have provided this training to our wonderful paraeducators.

Training strands included Autism, Challenging Behavior, working with students with mobility needs, Assistive Technology/Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Fade Plan and fostering Student Independence. We couldn't have provided this training without the support and funding from the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC), ARC of The Chesapeake and Anne Arundel County Autism Society. Our heartfelt thanks to

these organizations as their partnership made this training a huge success.

We continue to build teacher and school capacity through Differentiated Instruction training and workshops this year. Twelve elementary schools have agreed to become Mentor sites to other schools within their region. A very special thanks to the following 12 elementary schools and their fabulous principal leaders: **Rolling Knolls, Shady Side, Four Seasons, Edgewater, Belvedere, Seven Oaks, Ft. Smallwood, South Shore, Oakwood, Sunset, North Glen, Severna Park.** Five member teams from each of the 12 schools have received additional training and growth opportunities in strategies related to differentiation from national consultants. We look forward to the mentor sites sharing many of the strategies and skills they have put into place with neighboring schools as they continue on their DI journey.

## DI is Making A Difference in Student Achievement

By Jessica Haynie, Secondary School Based Resource Teacher

The Secondary Division is beaming with pride over the recent data that shows Differentiated Instruction really does make a difference in student achievement. Over the past 3 years students who receive special education services have been closing the achievement gap in both Reading and Math. Most notably are **Bates Middle School, Lindale Middle School, and Arundel High School.** At Bates Middle, trend data shows the school closed the gap by 40% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and by 27% in 8<sup>th</sup> grade Math. Data collected from the Instructional Coaching Tool shows Bates had a 44% increase in pre-teaching and re-teaching through spe-

cialized instruction. Lindale Middle made growth at each grade level for both Reading and Math. At Lindale, seventh grade Reading MSA scores went from 37% of students with disabilities scoring proficient in 2010 to 77% of students with disabilities scoring proficient in 2011. Additionally, sixth grade Math MSA scores went from 56% proficient in 2010 to 85% proficient in 2011. According to the Coaching Tool data, Arundel High School is helping to lead the way with one of the highest percentages of differentiated instruction and differentiating assignments and tasks in the County. This assisted them in scoring the highest Benchmark scores for students with disabilities in Algebra,

English 10, and Biology on spring 2011, 2<sup>nd</sup> marking period.

As we continue our journey each school will have two full days with DI Experts, **LeAnn Nickelson** and **Melissa Dickson**, this will assist in increasing teacher capacity and student achievement.

### KUDOS

*We want to say THANK YOU to the administrators, team teachers, students and staff at the following elementary schools who so graciously allowed us to come into their classrooms within the past six months to videotape team teaching at its best! Look for these video clips in the upcoming revisions to the TEAM Teaching binder.*

**Edgewater** – Principal Rebecca Schou and Team Teachers Julie Heltsley and Carolyn Garrison

**Germantown** – Principal Walter Reap and Team Teachers Heather Giustiniani and Eileen Gagnon

**Hebron Harman** – Principal Rebecca Blasingame-White and Team Teachers Stacey Coppock and Jen Vosburg

**Oakwood** – Past Principal Bob Kanach and Team Teachers Jen Kubica and Michelle Mekolon

**Seven Oaks** – Principal Lisa Leitholf and Team Teachers Eric Bellarin and Tracy Vitek

**Severna Park** – Principal Lynn Birus and Team Teachers Lauren Byrd and Kathi Foley

**Woodside** – Principal Anthony Alston and Team Teachers Stefanie Sneeringer and Susan Kirkendall

### KUDOS

*To Bates MS, Lindale MS and Arundel High School for their dedication to DI and active use of the Coaching Tool for school change.*

## News from the Nonpublic Office

By Susan Marshburn, Coordinator of Nonpublic Office

Gratitude and collaboration are the themes of my message on behalf of the NPT Office staff. The 2011-2012 school year started off very busy for the office and with odd weather events -- from a hurricane to an earthquake, we truly began this school year shaking, rattling and rolling!

The addition last school year of a new Type I program, **The High Road School @ Anne Arundel County**, continues to be a welcome one. The program has been very responsive to serving our students and now accepts students from K to 12. We all struggle with challenging behaviors in our respective areas, and the number of younger children presenting serious behavioral challenges remains a major concern for those of us dealing with this age group. The ability to have an in-county option for kindergarten is extremely beneficial, allowing for shorter bus rides and more opportunities for interaction with families. The NPT Office is working collaboratively with the Hannah More program @MES and High

Road Anne Arundel, to offer behavior training and family counseling next year in a creative partnership with Maryland State Department of Education to support our youngest consumers and expedite their return to LRE.

The Division of Special Education continues to expand its use of **Preventative Services Allowance** funding to prevent students from separating from their home schools and communities--kudos to all who think "outside" of the box to keep our students wrapped with the appropriate services necessary to maintain LRE! These support services encourage school teams to work with our students in LRE while they engage in grade-level curriculum. Our Division of Special Education is extremely grateful to have outside providers that enhance our continuum, presenting school teams with strategies and suggestions which are relevant and useful across a wide variety of activities and environments.

The expansion of the **Community**

**Resource Initiative (CRI)** to become the Community Resource Initiative Care Team (CRICT) is yet another area of gratitude for the nonpublic office. CRICT has two teams operating successfully now on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. We have achieved the ultimate goal of serving any family living in Anne Arundel County. In May 2011 the passage of legislation (H.B. 840) required each county to develop a CARE team and dissolve their Local Coordinating Council (LCC), to support families with complex needs. Our agency leaders have successfully merged our two teams to one team that is truly a collaborative effort and a key piece of our efforts to support single point of access and Systems of Care in our county. The process is extremely motivating and emotionally moving. I encourage all of you to promote this valuable resource to families struggling to find links to multiple resources and services. My favorite Christmas gift this year was being able to provide a single parent household, with 5 little ones, a Christmas to remember despite the current challenges they were facing.



### OSS KUDOS

To **Renee Strother** and **Amy Hicks** who developed a training series for paraeducators on Working with Students with Mobility or Significant Disabilities and to **Kathy Dorsett, Jennifer Lawing, Theresa Kinsinger, Angela Youmans, and Jeannie Battle** who helped present this topic.

Also to other OSS staff who presented at the Paraeducator Series: To **Sue Wilson** who presented Understanding Autism Series and **Amy Guerke, Corrine Krampf, Judy Brady, Nancy Jones, and Jane Jarzynski** in the Using Assistive Technology Series.

## News from the Office of Special Services

By Eldre Boggs, Resource Teacher for Students with Visual Impairment

The Maryland State Department of Education and The Maryland School for the Blind are hosting the Maryland 2012 Regional Braille Challenge on February 11, 2012. Braille is an important key to literacy! It allows for the enjoyment of reading, leads to school success, and opens the doors to future employment. The Braille Challenge is to celebrate braille literacy with a day filled with fun, competition, learning, prizes, and enjoyment! Some AACPS Students who read braille in grades Prekindergarten through Grade 12 will participate in the 2012 Maryland Regional Braille Challenge reading and writing contests. Parents will participate in workshops while students are taking the tests. Teachers of the Visually

Impaired, Braillists and Paras will assist with test proctoring and scoring and helping to facilitate the day.

AACPS teachers of visually impaired students sponsored a Fall Social Gathering on October 6 at Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville. This social event provided students who are blind or visually impaired from across the county and their families an opportunity to meet each other, socialize, and build relationships. It was a perfect sunny fall day for students ranging in ages from 3 years old to graduating seniors to come out to participate in a fall festival. Activities included a hay maze, a corn crib, a pumpkin patch, a straw pit and hands on exploration of live farm animals.



## KUDOS

To **Cindy Wacker**, Acting Program Manager for preschool special education, on the completing the AACPS Leadership Development Institute (LDI).

To **Lynne Markowitz, Cindy Wacker, Sally Mastroberti** and **Eva Tucholski** for hosting a delegation from the Republic of Vietnam who are in the United States to learn about inclusion of students with disabilities. They observed students at the Mayo Cooperative Nursery School and Creative Beginnings Preschool, two of the more than 100 preschools in the county that are part of our Community-Bases Services (CBS).

To **Zadock Cropper**, ITP speech language pathologist, who is participating on a committee at Towson University that is designing a graduate program in special education that focuses on multicultural education.

To **Kristen Clark**, Kindergarten teacher, **Kalie Bories**, Special Education teacher, **Danelle Volk-Heimbach**, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, **Alice Brown**, Orientation and Mobility Instructor and **Cecilia Surodjawan**, TSA who exhibited exemplary teamwork evaluating and serving a student at Ferndale Early Education Center.

To **Allison Beatty**, Special Education teacher, **Sue Browning**, Teacher Assistant and **Greg Mueller**, Kindergarten teacher, who creatively provided instruction to a student with intensive needs at West Meade Early Education Center,

To the **Van Bokkelen** team of **Melissa Kalavsky, Roni Barill, Denise Roberts, Christina Williams**, health room staff and many teacher assistants who supported a Kindergarten student with compassion and energy.

To **Jodie Williams**, Manager for Occupational Therapy Services, for being selected by the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association for the Recognition of Excellence Award and nationally recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association for her contributions to the field of OT.

To **Fran Silverman**, Speech/Language Pathology Induction Program, who presented a poster session at the American Speech Language Hearing Association Conference on the topic of Mentoring in Schools: Effective Strategies for Recruitment, Retention and Quality.

To five Special Educators who recently achieved National Board Certification:

**Meredith Holmes**, ECI Belvedere  
**Jennifer Vosburg**, ECI Meade Heights  
**Debbie Marcus**, Marley Glen Special  
**Lisa Whipp**, Marley Glen Special  
**Colette Preis**, Central Special

## Technology Spotlight



From Amy Guerke, AT Team Specialist

This year, the Division of Special Education is piloting an exciting web-based curriculum that provides students with visual supports and interactive lessons. Lessons and materials within **Vizzle** are new way to provide meaningful access to curriculum for our students with significant cognitive disabilities. **Vizzle** is currently in place in 8 schools and is being piloted by a group of 20 individuals, consisting of special education teachers and SLPs who work students of all ages.

## KUDOS

We are proud to announce that **Marcella Hess (Woodside Elementary)** and **Melissa Mauk (Chesapeake Bay Middle)** were the **Vizzle** first quarter contest winners. Both teachers demonstrated exemplary use of **Vizzle** for the development of new instructional activities as well as utilizing the pre-created resources found within the **Vizzle** program. We look forward to continued success and exciting instruction with **Vizzle** as we move through the new year!

## Holiday Gifts for ITP Families

By Ed Fienberg, Coordinator of Birth to Five Services



The Infants and Toddlers Program is extremely grateful for the outpouring of gifts for needy families of children with disabilities. Forty-three ITP families were the recipients of multiple holiday gifts from a variety of sources. The fifth grade at **Shipley's Choice Elementary School** "adopted" the program this year for its service project. Students made flyers, presented information about early intervention to other students in the school, purchased and wrapped presents for children in the program as well as their older siblings. Teachers and therapists from ITP, delivered the gifts to families in time for the holidays. The fifth grade plans to conduct a book drive for ITP in the spring and the fourth grade plans to continue this project when they move to fifth grade next year. ITP families and children also received holiday gifts from **Cub Scout Pack 994** which meets at Folger McKinsey Elementary School as well as from Asbury United Methodist Church in Arnold.