

Performance. Achievement. **Legacy.**

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OF **LORAIN COUNTY**  **REGION 2 STATE SUPPORT TEAM**
LORAIN • ERIE • HURON



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PERFORMANCE. ACHIEVEMENT. LEGACY.

New Look Unveiled

One outcome of the organizational and operational changes underway at the Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 SST was the unveiling of our new image. The “branding” or look reflects a Native American Indian theme, unique to this region.

“The graphics used represent our heritage, most notably reflected in the names of two counties served — Erie and Huron — former Native American Indian tribes in this region,” states Sharon Rybak, Executive Director of Regional School Improvement. “The design symbols also reflect this proud heritage. The hand represents man: his work, achievements and legacy. The swirl represents continuous renewal and growth. These attributes align with the Mission and Vision of ESCLC and Region 2 SST.” ☉

We hope you enjoy our new look!

Letter from the Superintendent

STRATEGIC PLANNING UNDERWAY AT ESCLC/ REGION 2 SST



Thomas Rockwell, Ed.D.
Superintendent

The operational “heart and soul” of any business or institution is founded on a focused approach to meeting customer needs and expectations. During the past two years, the ESC/Region 2 SST has undergone significant organizational

changes. These redefining events created a commitment to develop new strategic initiatives that would enhance our ability to provide cost-effective services to our districts. The revision of our Strategic Plan became a top priority.

On August 12th and 13th, a team of twenty-one ESC/Region 2 SST staff and eight community colleagues invested their time and leadership in the development of a revitalized, comprehensive Strategic Plan. In the picturesque setting of the Carlisle Reservation Metro Park, Dr. Linda Williams facilitated the development of the plan.

Together, these key personnel identified four immediate goals to align with the Mission and Vision Statements:

Mission

The Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 SST is a premier provider of cost-effective, customized services and technical assistance that leverage resources to advance essential initiatives of our regional school districts.

Vision

The Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 SST will reach and maintain fiscal self-reliance, increase organizational capacity and expand strategic alliances by providing districts with services and programs tailored to optimize teacher performance with a specific focus on school improvement, special education, early learning and student achievement.

Goals

1. By May 1, 2010, clearly identify staff roles, expertise and skills, and increase internal and external communication.
2. By May 1, 2010, promote the use of our products programs and services to our communities and new and existing customers through a marketing plan.
3. By May 1, 2010, align 100% of our products, programs and services to the assessed needs of our customers.
4. By May 1, 2010, increase the contribution of our self generated revenues by 10%.

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UPCOMING EVENT

DATA INSTITUTE

Presenter: **Victoria Bernhardt, Ph.D.**

Dates: November 16-17, 2009

Location: Sawmill Creek Lodge & Resort
400 Sawmill Creek
Huron, OH 44839
1-800-SAWMILL for room reservations (code: Data Institute)

District Leadership Teams and/or Building Leadership teams are invited to attend this training to help you understand the importance of multiple data sources.

Registration Deadline: October 9, 2009

Contact: Moira Erwine
440.324.5777 ext. 1156

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Elyria, OH 44035
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Letter from the Superintendent

STRATEGIC PLANNING UNDERWAY AT ESCLC/REGION 2 SST *continued from page 1*

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Community Colleagues

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Bill Guinter, Consultant

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Dave Jones, Avon Lake City Schools

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MESSAGE FROM SHARON RYBAK, PH.D. Executive Director of Regional School Improvement



Sharon Rybak, Ph.D.

Executive Director of Regional School Improvement

Whether you call it OOYP or O-I-P or the Ohio Improvement Process, Ohio is now fully engaged in a unique process that focuses districts school improvement work. The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) is done through a series of stages.

In Stage 1 the districts identify a district leadership team and work through the use of a tool called the Decision Framework (DF). The DF is now web based and allows the district to examine all components of their district data in areas such as instructional management, leadership, school climate and resource management.

In Stage 2 of the OIP the district leadership team develops a focused plan that identifies needs and creates goals, strategies and action steps. The decisions for the work must be grounded in evidence/research and supported through the identified needs. At the conclusion of the work the results are transferred into the district CCIP, the identified tool for planning and fiscal management.

In Stage 3 of the OIP the district leadership team begins to look at the dissemination of the plan across the district. The district leadership team begins the work with the building leadership teams helping to explain the plan and the expectations for implementation. Each building leadership team (BLT) works together to determine how they will actualize the DLT's plan. The BLT's must work within the parameters of the DLT's plan and define their components for successful implementation.

The second component of Stage 3 is the monitoring of the plan. Monitoring must be done at both the district and building level and it is viewed as one of the most critical steps to successful

implementation. The monitoring is supported with the Management and Monitoring (IM/M) Tool that provides support for district data gathering .

Stage 4 of the OIP is the evaluation and improvement process that is intended to gauge the overall implementation of the plan. The impact of the work will be examined along with efforts at consistency and integration. Pre-post data will be used along with all other data points that have been gathered to substantiate district/building growth.

The OIP is recursive and designed to continually monitor the organizational health of the district.

The Core principles underpinning the work are:

- Emphasizing district role and recognizing that each district and all of the schools within that district need to operate as a system.
- Redefining leadership is about the “improvement of instructional practice and performance regardless of role” (Elmore, 2006) and recognizing that improvement is everyone’s responsibility.
- Redefining the system to include a focus on aligned and coherent actions at the school, district, regional and state level.

“In schools where teachers examined the evidence of the impact of teaching effectiveness on student achievement and regarded their professional practices as the primary cause of achievement, the gains in student achievement were three times higher than in schools where the faculty and leaders attributed the causes to factors beyond their control.” Reeves, 2007 The OIP is designed to focus the work and promote achievement. ☺



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPO
RSTUVWXYZ

SUMMER FUN AT THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

One summertime school program has brought tears to the eyes of some of its students – but not why you might think.

“Some of the children literally cry when it is time to go home,” says Judy Skoczen, who directs the extended-school-year summer fun camp for special-needs and typical children at the Early Learning Center of Lorain County.

The camp, offered by the Educational Service Center of Lorain County, wrapped up its third year this July and its first year at the Early Learning Center. The facility, located on LaGrange Road in LaGrange, was acquired by the ESCLC last year.

“School districts in the county send their special-needs students if the child needs extended-year services, or parents of any student – whether a special needs or a regular student – can pay a nominal fee to send their child there,” explains Skoczen, coordinator of special services for Midview Schools and an employee of the ESCLC.

“We focus on academics or whatever the school districts would like us to focus on,” she continues. “Certain students have certain goals.”

The camp is equipped to serve up to 60 students from age 3 on up to seniors in high school. Classes are taught by teachers and paraprofessionals who have applied and been selected for the positions. This summer, the program ran for 16 days over four weeks in June and July, from 9 to 11:30 a.m., Monday – Thursday.

“It seems like a short time, but we really do see them develop such a long way,” Skoczen says.

“This past summer, we had wee little ones who were going to be entering preschool in the fall who, in the matter of a week, were able to learn to sit and attend a story or circle time,” she elaborates. “Kids we had last summer who weren’t even talking had so much to say this summer.”

By December, Skoczen notes, calls begin coming in from parents asking about registration for the limited-space summer program.

This year, six teachers and six paraprofessionals taught the

classes, each of which is divided primarily by age and includes no more than 10 students. An occupational therapist and a speech and language therapist are also on hand to provide services as directed by the school districts. The cost to parents this year was \$100 for the 16 days, which is more affordable and longer than other camps, Skoczen points out. Some organizations donated money to send four children through the program.

Many families send multiple children to the program, she adds. “We had some children with special needs whose siblings also attended who were not special-needs children,” Skoczen says.

Part of what makes the camp fun is a weekly assembly, which provokes enthusiastic participation from the students and kicks off the theme for each week. Guests have included the Ohio State Extension office, Lorain County Metroparks, the Lorain County engineer, a local fire department and a local dentist. The week the dentist came, for example, students focused on health and wellness, daily hygiene skills and so on, Skoczen says.

The children not only have the chance to improve their skills in areas such as reading and math, but also reap other benefits from the small-sized classrooms.

“They do a lot of not only individual work, but they also enjoy working in groups and having the chance to make new friends,” Skoczen says.

Other fun aspects of the program include the chance to learn outdoors when the weather permits, earning “cash” for snacks, and each classroom creating their own design for a summer camp T-shirt. A field day and family party conclude the last day of the program.

“They’re learning so much without really realizing how much they are learning,” Skoczen says.

During the school year, the Early Learning Center of Lorain County is home to a pre-kindergarten program for handicapped and non-handicapped children ages 3 to 5. The program offers a developmentally appropriate learning experience from quality licensed, early childhood education professionals. ☺

KEYSTONE MIDDLE SCHOOL CO-TEACHING TEAM RECEIVES FRANKLIN B. WALTER OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD

“Who would have known that you could win an award for having a great time teaching kids!”

That’s the sentiment of Cindy Smith, special-education teacher, who, along with colleague Kim Sturgill, received the Franklin B. Walter Outstanding Educator Award. This award is presented to an educator from each of Ohio’s 16 State Support Team (SST) regions who made extraordinary contributions to the education of students with disabilities. The award was named in honor of Dr. Franklin B. Walter, superintendent of Public Instruction from 1977-1996. This year’s local award celebrates the achievements of a Keystone Middle School co-teaching team!

“Kim and I have been co-teaching sixth-grade science for

10 years at Keystone. Sometimes, we can look at each other and know what we are thinking. We get along very well. For co-teaching to work, I believe the personalities have to be there – you have to just click in a co-teaching team,” explains Smith enthusiastically.

“You have to respect each other’s teaching style,” adds Cindy’s dynamic duo Kim Sturgill. This is Sturgill’s 26th year in the teaching profession --13 years spent in special education and 13 years in general education science at Keystone Middle School. While Sturgill is responsible for developing lesson plans, she insists both teachers plan together and ensure all align with state objectives.

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KEYSTONE MIDDLE SCHOOL CO-TEACHING TEAM RECEIVES FRANKLIN B. WALTER OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD continued from page 3

“We started ‘team teaching,’ and it’s evolved from there,” chuckles Sturgill. “At the end of the day, we determine what works, what could be done better, and make notes on units for next year. We work hard to also challenge kids who excel and support those who struggle.”

Smith states, “We are always trying to find what makes the best sense for our students to learn. We look at the different individual learning styles to adapt our lessons. We use a variety of approaches, different strategies, and evaluate what we did to determine what works and what needs fine tuning. There is no harm in changing the ways we teach by trying different things. We learn from the kids.”

Keystone Middle School Assistant Principal Dan White says when done effectively, co-teaching produces good learning outcomes for students. He cites research that indicates students are more engaged, have more questions answered, and comprehend more through co-teaching.

“This past year was my first year at Keystone. I loved what I witnessed walking into their classrooms. Students were having fun! I can tell Cindy and Kim enjoy their job, laughing with each other and with their students. They complement their students a lot which fosters an atmosphere focused on learning outcomes. They model a positive environment for their students.”

“I think Kim and Cindy are great teachers. Their top goal is to see students learn and achieve to their highest level. They are really working in the best interest of their students,” adds White. “They

made a lot of changes — even during the school year — because they wanted their students to learn more and thrive.”

HE CITES RESEARCH THAT INDICATES STUDENTS ARE MORE ENGAGED, HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ANSWERED, AND COMPREHEND MORE THROUGH CO-TEACHING.

“In class Kim and Cindy make a real commitment to get the students with special needs working with the other students. All students are treated the same — with encouragement to do their best at their current ability and to grow,” White continues.

Smith says Keystone Middle School attempts to involve special education students in all the general education classes. While there are some pull-out classes, like reading and math, generally there is no distinction between the students in class. “They are all accepted. You cannot tell who is receiving special education

services and who is not,” Smith insists. “I love teaching at Keystone. They have an experienced staff, and we share best practices that are getting great results. That’s what it’s all about — team collaboration among the teachers.”

Sturgill concurs, “Our district has great teachers. I am glad I chose this career. I love sixth grade because my students still love school and question everything! I love that about them. I tell my students, ‘I love school; that’s why I never left.’”

Both teachers are flattered to receive the Franklin B. Walter Award.

“Receiving the Franklin B. Walter Award was like getting a pat on the back,” admits Smith with a smile. “Now I know how the students feel when we give them positive encouragement. It’s nice to be recognized for the effort. Still, what’s most rewarding for me is when students come up and say thank you; or when parents recognize we are truly trying to help their children.”

Sturgill remembers, “It was funny because when they said we had been nominated and came to observe us, we laughed. We just do what we do. It was nice to be recognized as teachers, but we don’t think of ourselves as anything special.”

The veteran teacher acknowledges that today teachers must be more like performers to capture their students’ attention. “I tell them on the first day of class, ‘This is going to be your favorite class. When you walk through this door, you’re a scientist. You must think and act like a scientist.’”

Sturgill salutes her colleagues: “As a teacher, you work so hard because you want the best out of every student. The reward is — you make a difference — big or small, with everyone!”

Smith concludes, “When I entered the teaching profession, particularly special education, people said I would burn out in five years. It’s been 10 years now, and I feel like I’m just getting started.”



Cindy Smith and Kim Sturgill
Winners of the Franklin B. Walter Outstanding Educator Award



TEACHERS JAZZED OVER TECH WORKSHOP

Many local teachers have a new tool in their tech toolbox this year: videoconferencing.

Teachers from Lorain, Cuyahoga and Erie counties recently participated in a five-day, hands-on workshop facilitated locally but that had them working virtually hand-in-hand with teachers across the country.

“The workshop is to help teachers learn how to use video conferencing as a tool to enhance student learning,” says Paul Hieronymus, a consultant for technology integration at the Educational Service Center of Lorain County and Northern Ohio Research and Technology Hub (NORT2H). Hieronymus was the local facilitator for the professional development workshop in late July.

The workshop itself was a video-conference, with participation from educators at three other sites in Ohio, six sites in Texas and two in New York. The fast-paced workshop kept educators on their toes.

“Each day was a combination of simulations and project-based learning,” Hieronymus says.

The educators also did sample content-provider sessions; for instance, one team connected to the Fort Worth Science Museum, and another to NASA — and they also teamed up with teachers in other states over video-conferencing to plan and develop a project to launch and present to all of the other schools.

“It was an experience of working with remote partners and using technology tools to collaborate to create a project together,” Hieronymus says. Teachers also learned about and could sign up for resources to identify and locate content providers.

The workshop focused mainly on using video conferencing as a tool in the classroom, but immersed teachers in technology in other ways as well, Hieronymus adds. Many educators provided feedback about the workshop on a blog, and they could also upload and share pictures they took during the workshop via the image-sharing Web site Flickr. Some of the early comments make note of intimidation or inexperience with technology; but by the final days, many teachers noted a newfound confidence and comfort level.

“I am out of my comfort zone, but I am learning so much!” wrote one teacher.

“I can’t help coming up with immediate applications for these tools in my planning and teaching,” wrote teacher Johanna Dus.

Even roll call is fun at Jazz!



Teachers discover tech workshop just another day at the beach!

Educator Paul Mitchell wrote: “I’m excited to bring my students and teachers content at a more concrete level — to make learning more REAL... so that they can SEE things like knee replacement surgeries, or how armadillos really look.”

“The blogging piece for us was a way for facilitators to assess how we were doing during the workshop,” Hieronymus says. “Flickr allowed for capturing the experience and capturing the fun of it.”

“They served as an example to teachers of how they can be implementing projects and activities into their classrooms,” he continues. “They need a blended approach to working with their students. One technology is not all you should do; you should be making it a media-enriched program.”

Educators can use the technology in a variety of ways, Hieronymus points out. For example, teachers can connect to content providers, such as a museum or a zoo, which can provide a lesson that meets state standards. Technology may also be used to collaborate by connecting one classroom to another, even one around the globe. A class could also be taught via video-conferencing; guest speakers can address multiple schools at once; and teachers can even participate in professional development without physically being present at a seminar or workshop.

“That’s one of the things we do,” Hieronymus says. “Teachers don’t have to leave town to get professional development.”

Another application that is used by NORT2H is a virtual college tour, an all-day conference with six different universities.

Many of the teachers commented about carrying the knowledge they learned back to other teachers, engaging with their school technology employees on implementing video-conferencing and even setting up lesson plans with other educators they met through the workshop.

Paul Mitchell summed up the workshop this way: “Ultimately, my message to my faculty is that (video conferencing) is an inexpensive, relatively simple way of bringing experts into the classroom and expanding the borders of our classrooms beyond our walls.”

To see the workshop blog and teacher photos, visit <http://123vc.wordpress.com/category/nort2h-oh/>.





Elna Wright

Recognized as State and Local Recipient of the R.A. Horn Award



COMMUNICATING AT A GLANCE: ELNA WRIGHT RECEIVES R.A. HORN OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Some say that the eyes are the window to a person's soul. For Elna Wright, this adage may be more profound because her eyes are her principal means of communication. Although she is nonverbal and has limited use of her hands due to physical restrictions caused by cerebral palsy, the 10 year old speaks her mind using her eyes to activate a voice-output communication device to interact with teachers, classmates, friends and family members.

"Elna has been able to demonstrate to teachers that she understands content vocabulary and concepts. She is now viewed as a more capable student by teachers and a worthy friend by peers," says Jennifer Heim, Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 State Support Team Autism/Low Incidence/Assistive Technology Consultant and former Elyria City Schools Speech/Language Pathologist/Assistive Technology Coordinator.

A DynaVox Systems VMax communication device with an EyeMax accessory enables Elna to use eye gaze only to access a grid of 12-18 locations on the communication device using only her eyes in an appropriate time frame. While Elna has always had strong receptive language skills, as a result of the large gap between her expressive and receptive language abilities, a DynaVox Systems DV4 was obtained for her in January 2005. Elna accessed the DV4 by directly touching the screen to

navigate among multiple 'pages' and make selections. However, as the mobility in her arms decreased over a few years, her frustration increased because it became much more difficult for her to use this touch system in a timely manner. Therefore, she began a trial in 2008 with a DynaVox Systems VMax communication device with the EyeMax accessory, which uses eye gaze as its means of access.

As soon as she began using the VMax with the EyeMax accessory device, Elna's face immediately lit up. She readily understood how to operate it functionally to participate in class and engage in conversation with others at a pace nearly equal to her peers. Her confidence boomed, and she began raising her hand without prompting for the first time to respond to questions during class discussions. The new system was funded for Elna, and she received it in March 2009 during her fifth grade year at Erie Elementary School in the Elyria City School District. Now, as long as the device is with Elna, she is able to speak her mind and be an active part of her surroundings and not just an observer.

"The DynaVox helps me tell my teachers what I have learned and tell my parents what I want," expresses Elna.

Her parents Ebony and Ingrid Wright agree that the communication device has given Elna the opportunity to articulate in a way more typical of a girl her age.



ABOUT JENNIFER HEIM, M.A., CCC/SLP

Title: Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 State Support Team Autism/Low Incidence/Assistive Technology Consultant. This is a new position established in August 2009 by the ESC of Lorain County/Region 2 SST which serves Erie, Huron and Lorain counties.

Responsibilities: To assist school district personnel and parents in supporting students with autism, low incidence disabilities and assistive technology.

Educational Background: Masters' Degree in speech pathology and Masters in Education with a concentration in assistive technology - Bowling Green State University.

Past Experience: Experience in Public Schools, County Board MRDD, and Regional Resource Center

Philosophy: The strong belief that students with disabilities are able to succeed academically with some needing supports or technology at times to reach their academic potential.

Professional Goals: To strengthen the service delivery and broaden the understanding of autism and low incidence disabilities as well as empower the region regarding effective use of assistive technology supports and services.



“The DynaVox VMax with the EyeMax attachment has been a blessing at school and at home. Elna is now able to tell me what she wants instead of me or others guessing what it is that she wants. She enjoys repeating exactly what she wants until she gets it,” Ingrid Wright chuckles with pride.

In recognition of her unwavering determination and success, Elna is the recipient of the R.A. Horn Outstanding Achievement Award from the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities. She accepted the award in May at the Educational Service Center of Lorain County awards luncheon. Elna was also chosen to represent Region 2 SST at the state award ceremony held in Columbus, Ohio in August.

Heim and Theresa Kaczay, Elyria City Schools intervention specialist, nominated Elna for the award.

“Despite facing many challenges in her life, Elna is always willing to take on one more. She embraced the new challenge and excelled in quickly mastering her new eye gaze communication system. Elna is an inspiration to students and staff alike,” Kaczay exclaims.

“Despite her severe communication and motor disabilities, she never gives up. With the addition of her VMax, her efforts just bear more fruit,” Heim adds.

Elna was very excited to receive the R.A. Horn Outstanding Achievement Award. Even though she never heard of the award before and not knowing what to make of it at first, it didn’t take long for her to figure out that it was a pretty big deal.



Elna Wright with her family at Walter/Horn Statewide Award Ceremony



Elna Wright and Jennifer Heim

“I feel very special and proud for being acknowledged in that way,” Elna communicates through the VMax.

With the assistance of the communication device, Ingrid Wright sees a brighter future for her daughter who can now express herself as the dynamic individual she is inside.

“Elna inspires me everyday to be a better person. She shows me how to be patient. It’s so much fun being around her. She has a smile that lights up the room, and you can’t help but fall in love with her warm personality,” says Wright.

She continues, “My hopes and dreams for Elna consist of supporting her in any way possible in order for her to fulfill her life dreams. I want her to be as independent as possible. I want her to have peace within and not be full of frustration. Her ability to communicate is key to this becoming a reality.”

Elna has already set goals for herself such as attending college, traveling and perhaps getting married and having children. Yet, while she’s still contemplating her future, she plans to continue to do her best.

“I want to learn something new everyday,” Elna says. ☺





PROVIDING A LINK TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Imagine a world where you could not hear the giggles and squeals of delight from your small children. You could only imagine the sound of ocean waves crashing or raindrops during a spring shower. You never heard, “I love you.” Imagine knowing only silence.

Thankfully, advances in health care and technology have vastly decreased the number of deaf or hearing impaired individuals. However, it remains a reality for a small number of children and adults.

Sue Petz, 49, has dedicated the majority of her life to teaching deaf students in the Lorain City Schools district. She was “turned on” to the field as a freshman in college, eventually earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Kent State University in 1982, with a teaching license in educating the deaf.

For the past 24 years, Petz has taught hearing impaired or deaf students at Lorain High School and later Admiral King High School. She looks back fondly at those years today as she embarks on a new career as Special Education Supervisor for the Firelands School System.

“Teaching students who are deaf or hearing impaired has been very rewarding,” says Petz with a smile. “Oftentimes, the high school students are very respectful of me because I’m their link to the outside world. I’m seen as an asset.”

Petz admits that as a high school teacher, she missed not seeing the excitement the first time a deaf child learns to read, but she insists working with high school students brings its own rewards. “My students varied a great deal. Some students were able to use lip learning and assimilate language. Most were amplified with some hearing device and couple it with sign language to understand what is being said.”

Petz insists the greatest challenge is to teach deaf or hearing impaired children sign language early in life. “Typically, deaf children enter school not knowing ASL (American Sign Language) and have language delays. This often translates into poor academic scores and behavior issues.” She says youngsters who already knew sign language hit the academic program running.

She compares what these children are being asked to do in kindergarten with our learning a second language like French, but our not being able to hear it spoken as we are learning.

“Language delay is common with deaf children. This is a big problem. It affects all areas of their academics – learning to read and consequently, science, history, math, etc. It would really help if all parents and siblings signed at home. I have found that only a handful do. Parents usually develop some signing skills, but when the child gets to high school and parents are trying to teach values and morals, sign language is needed to communicate in-depth concepts. The result is frustration on both ends. Kids will act out in their home environment.”

Petz explains that the learning process is slow and requires a lot of patience as a teacher. “That is the part that is not rewarding,” she laughs. “Sometimes it’s frustrating – particularly if the student has other disabilities.”

She says her classroom tended to be a safe place where her students could communicate all their ideas.

Sue Petz



While Petz was hired to teach deaf or hearing-impaired students regular education curriculum, through the years the dedicated teacher offered deaf clubs or sign language clubs outside of the classroom.

“It’s always a very popular offering. Some kids made friendships that lasted beyond high school. I really feel strongly that these extracurricular activities be provided so more social experiences occur,” says Petz. “Many colleges today offer sign language as a second language.”

“I also helped with their transitioning from school to life. I definitely became more than a teacher, but a friend. I played the role as advocate and often helped hook them up with available social services for the deaf. It helps that I’ve been around a long time,” Petz laughs. “I also helped with little things -- like getting their driver’s license. It goes way beyond what an average teacher would do, and the parents were grateful.”

Petz says one of her favorite movies is *Children of a Lesser God*. “It explores areas that my students truly experienced,” she explains. “Often my students, as part of a hearing world, saw their future mate as a hearing person. When they do marry later in life, their spouse tends to be deaf. My students never believe that. It’s hard to find a spouse that is fluid in sign language or wants to communicate almost exclusively in sign 24/7 in their home.”

The Lorain Educational Service Center contracted with Petz to teach American Sign Language to teachers and paraprofessionals in their district as a professional development offering. “A lot of teachers who attended the workshop had one or two deaf student in their school. They wanted sign to directly communicate with their students rather than through an interpreter,” explains Petz.

The dedicated teacher explains that ASL can also help to communicate with children who have other disabilities, such as autism or mental retardation. She encourages educators and parents to learn sign language.

“The deaf world is very small. Sign language is a link to the world for children and adults who are hard of hearing or deaf. When a deaf child understands that you took the time as a teacher, parent or sibling to learn their language, they immediately appreciate it and consider you a friend,” insists Petz enthusiastically.

She concludes, “For all of us, the more connections we have in the world, the better off we are.” 📍





WORKSHOP PROMOTES SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL CONFIDENCE IN YOUNG CHILDREN



Breakout session at workshop

What behaviors really push your button? Whining? Running and screaming when it's time to settle down? Talking out of turn or daydreaming?

More than 45 local teachers and paraprofessionals invested three summer days to gain a better understanding of why challenging behavior occurs and strategies that promote positive social behaviors and emotional confidence in their young students.

Presenters Betty Lord, Coordinator of Early Learning and School Readiness, Educational Service Center of Lorain County/State Support Team Region 2, and Laurie Martin, Director of Early Childhood Program, North Point ESC in Sandusky, were two of 128 initial educators from across the state to receive training on "Promoting Social & Emotional Competence in Young Children and Creating Supportive Environments," developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning. This is the second time Lord and Martin are able to share this transformational teaching data with their local colleagues in this three-day workshop. Eighty educators attended the first workshop this past spring.

"We are presenting research-based material that is recognized across the country as effective in building social and emotional competence in preschool children," Lord states. "Laurie and I teach this material in a down-to-earth manner that is fun and casual. Participants learn state-of-the-art techniques they can practice in their classrooms as well as share ideas on what works with their peers."

Strategies identified in the workshop that promote positive social behaviors and emotional confidence included:

- Building positive relationships with children, families and colleagues
- Designing environments, schedules and routines
- Structuring transitions
- Helping children learn roles and routines
- Planning activities that promote engagement

Key social emotional skills that children need as they enter school include:

- Confidence
- Capacity to develop good relationships with peers and adults
- Concentration and persistence on challenging tasks
- Ability to effectively communicate emotions
- Ability to listen to instruction and be attentive
- Ability to solve social problems

Lord says that when children do not have these skills, they often exhibit challenging behaviors – like whining, running, screaming, talking out of turn and daydreaming!

"Rather than punishing the child for bad behavior, our job as educators is to teach these necessary social emotional skills," advises Lord. "If a child doesn't know how to behave, we must teach – not punish."

According to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning, challenging behavior usually has a message – "I am bored. I am sad. My feelings are hurt. I need some attention." Their research findings suggest children often use challenging behavior when they don't have the social or communication skills they need to engage in appropriate interactions.

"We need to focus on teaching children what to do in place of their challenging behavior," Lord explains.

- Teach expectations and routines.
- Teach skills that children can use in place of challenging behaviors.

Her fellow presenter Martin explains that teachers and paraprofessionals need to also create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. Key to this is building a relationship with each child. According to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, adults' time and attention are very important to children. Furthermore, it is important to give that time and attention at times other than when they are engaging in challenging behaviors.

Suggestions for developing relationships include:

- Greet every child at the door by name.
- Post children's work around the room.
- Have a "star" of the week who brings in special things from home and gets to share them during Circle Time.
- Call a child's parent in front of them to say what a great day she is having or send home positive notes.
- Call a child after a difficult day and say, "I'm sorry we had a tough day today. I know tomorrow is going to be better!"
- Give hugs, high fives and thumbs up accomplishing tasks.
- When a child misses school, tell him how much he was missed.

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WORKSHOP PROMOTES SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL CONFIDENCE IN YOUNG CHILDREN *continued from page 9*

- Write on a t-shirt all the special things about a given child and let him/her wear it.
- Find out what a child's favorite book is and read it to the whole class.
- Give compliments liberally.
- Let children make "All About Me" books and share them at Circle Time.

Martin says considering classroom arrangement and design – such as minimizing large open spaces – and developing a schedule and routines can promote child engagement and success. "You need to balance activities – active and quiet, small group and large group, teacher-directed and child-directed," suggests Martin. "You should also prepare children for transitions by providing a warning. Also structure transitions so children have something to do while they wait."

Workshop attendees also heard about effective techniques for implementing classroom rules:

- Have a few simple classroom rules – 3-5
- Involve children in developing the rules
- Post the rules visually
- Teach the rules systematically
- Reinforce the rules


"Rules need to fit the class and children. They need to be few and understood by the children," cautions Lord. "I really think three to five rules should do it. I challenge you to have only three. Next, post the rules and teach them verbally and with pictures. Maybe one student can demonstrate the rule. Kids know. They really do." Fun ways to reinforce rules could include: Rules Bingo; making a book about the school rules; and playing rules charade!

"I'm sure there are days or will be days when you feel all you did was manage behaviors all day," Lord acknowledges. "We want to minimize these days for you."

Martin concurs, "Our goal was to give you these tools as you start the school year rather than at the end of the year. As you implement some of these tools, include your administration so they can support you."

Karyn Barnette, a second-year teacher at Kaleidoscope at North Point ESC, says the most important thing she learned was how to work with children in many different ways, and different ideas and strategies to work with children who are challenging. "I would recommend this workshop to all pre-school teachers. I also learned just through listening and talking to other teachers at this program," Barnette says.

Maryterese Hendrickson, a 26-years teacher at Masson, Lorain City Schools, says she appreciated the workshop, "A lot of the information I knew, but it was great they reiterated what I should be doing – like the visual schedules and being more positive. I'm going to make a greater effort to catch my students when they are good. The presenters gave concrete ideas and practical examples."

This workshop was sponsored by the Educational Service Center of Lorain County (ESCLC)/State Support Team Region 2 (SST2). 



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November 5, 1:00 - 3:00 pm
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PBS PROGRAMMING TAKES OFF AT LORAIN COUNTY ACADEMY

The staff at Lorain County Academy (LCA) is undergoing research-based training to help propel their school and their students toward success.

“What we’re trying to do is build the infrastructure of a school,” explains Bill Hamilton, program coordinator for the LCA, located in Oberlin. “We’re trying to find some strong opportunities for staff to be able to think independently, have a voice, and be able to reflect. It has made us better. We are stronger together.”

“We had to bring in people who could help fill some gaps in our training to get these kids to the next step,” Hamilton continues. “We’ve already seen students benefit from us being able to deliver a more individualized curriculum.” Their staff development in literacy and Positive Behavior Supports is being provided by the Educational Service Center of Lorain County/Region 2 State Support Team.

LCA provides an alternative school setting for children in grades six through nine who are not achieving and/or have behavioral needs that require a different school setting in order to be successful, explains Nancy Osko, regional school improvement consultant for the ESCLC and Region 2 SST.

LCA supports the social, emotional and academic needs of students and prepares them for a successful transition back to their home school or vocational school and into adulthood, Osko says. The LCA is a collaboration involving the ESCLC, 12 Lorain County school districts, Lorain County Joint Vocational School, Lorain County Juvenile Justice System and 17 human service agencies.

“Last year, my focus with the academy was the adolescent literacy pilot initiative,” explains Osko, a three- to five-year process still in progress. This year, a behavioral component is being added through training in Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), also called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Osko and fellow Regional School Improvement Consultant Robin Hanson are providing the training. “We’re building upon the development from last year,” Osko notes. “The students’ academic success will directly correlate to their behavioral success.”

PBS is a framework, with a focus on positive behavior that is first developed school-wide, Osko says. “That means all decisions are made on a team basis,” Osko explains.

LCA, which has a capacity of 55 students, includes four certified staff, paraprofessionals who provide support to students and staff in the classroom. Because LCA has such a small staff, all are able to be part of the team. Data on student behaviors are collected, and staff then tries to teach students behavior expectations in all areas, Osko explains.

“From there, they collect additional data that would identify strengths and weaknesses of the system they have developed school-wide,” Osko adds. “Data is a driving force in the decision-making, used to determine the levels of support the students may need.”

Staff outline behavior expectations in a universal sense, meaning what is expected of all students in all common areas,

such as hallways; on a secondary level, which applies to small groups and individuals; and, for about five percent of the population, on the tertiary level, which addresses complex needs and more chronic behaviors that impact students’ functioning in school, at home or in the community.

“The PBIS program requires the guidance of PBIS coaches,” says Osko’s colleague, Hanson. “While we don’t prescribe how to do things, we suggest things to consider, tips from other places, and background and research to equip them with the knowledge they need. This consists mostly of meeting with the entire team, reviewing the data collected, and gathering evidence about what is working and what needs to change.”

This fall LCA adopted a school mascot - the Lorain County Academy Aviators - and visual supports throughout the school bear the mnemonic “ACES,” Accountability, Cooperation, Excellence, and Safety.

“There is a visual aid with airplanes and pilots to remind students this is their school, and they have the power to make this a positive learning environment,” Osko adds.

“It is essential that the whole climate be designed to promote the benefits of positive behavior,” Hanson adds.

Osko and Hanson both came to the ESCLC from out-of-state, where each worked in districts that implemented PBS and witnessed the results -- such as improved attendance and a dramatic decline in suspensions. “Academics became more effectively administered as well,” Hanson states. “Once behavior is better, it is much easier to have effective academics in place.”

“Taking the proactive approach and really creating an environment where learning and teaching are valued, not just on an academic level but a behavioral level, is very important,” Osko says.

Hamilton says the framework is not only beneficial to students but builds upon the partnerships between teachers and staff as well.

PBS varies from school to school, and LCA staff realized early on that the framework for an alternative school needs to look different than that for a traditional school, he adds. The school has a diverse level of student need, including students with IEPs and students with layered levels of issues that have contributed to a lack of success at their home schools, he says.

Having the experts come in has provided “insight into how students learn and how we are going to roll out the educational process,” as well as how to be more intervention-driven, Hamilton says. “I am thoroughly enamored with the things Nancy has been able to do for us,” he adds. “At the same time, I think she has learned a lot from us, too, from the alternative school environment.”

Osko and Hanson will continue to meet monthly at a minimum with the LCA’s team and continue to provide support and coaching as needed. ☺





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