



San Joaquin County
Special Education Local Plan Area

SPECIAL EDition



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JANUARY 2008

Teamwork is Key to Student Success and Learning

Teamwork and collaboration are hallmarks of the two SJ County special education classes at East Union High School in Manteca. Teachers Benny Dini and Janelle Westcott have taught the classes for severely



Dino, Ms. Westcott and John

handicapped 9 – 12 grade students for 12 years and have developed strong, effective programs and positive relationships with school staff that result in great benefits for their students. "This is a great group of kids," remarked teacher Benny Dini. "We have a good team and staff willing to go the extra mile."

Students are afforded opportunities for mainstreaming in regular education and in less intensive special education classes as their IEP teams recommend.



Patti, Mr. Dini and Gerardo are ready to go out for PE.

"Teachers want our students," said Dini. "They ask for more. East Union teachers are welcoming and helpful to our kids." Students have been successfully mainstreamed in Junior ROTC, PE, Woodshop, Art, Choir and other classes. "Our classes are always included in school activities and events. Every year we have more applicants for our Teacher Assistant position than we can use. This year our assistant is the quarterback on the football team," Mr. Dini enthused.



Gerardo works with assistant Stephanie.

See Teamwork, page 3

From Our SELPA Director Sandee Kludt

Each new year brings us its gift of hope for the future. This year we will have to work very hard to see that hope translates into positive action in light of the fiscal challenges facing Californians. Governor Schwarzenegger released a budget proposal that includes a suspension of the Proposition 98 funding guarantee for education as well as across-the-board cuts of almost 11% to virtually every state education program. We know the Governor's proposal is always bleak when money is short, but this is one of the worst we have seen in its impact on special education. It eliminates the 4.94% COLA and proposes a further 6.5% cut in state special education funds. Cuts of this magnitude could mean that districts may face layoffs and both districts and the state will be unable to meet the federal maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement that protects against cuts to federally funded programs. Failure to meet MOE will result in penalties, another unwanted cost. The initial response from the Governor's office regarding MOE is that districts will meet their MOE spending requirement through local "backfill", meaning additional encroachment.

You can be sure that I will be working with legislators, as part of the state SELPA Administrators and other education groups, to develop legislation that will deal with the budget and try to minimize the proposed cuts. One of our first tasks is to look at prioritizing cuts rather than imposing a uniform cut to all. Mandated programs need to be funded first and not included in the across-the-board cuts.

Although all this is a very bleak and depressing picture, it's wise to remember that it is just the first step in a budget process that will involve the Legislature and the Administration from now until a budget is finally passed this summer. Budget hearings will begin soon and budget bills will be developed and debated in both houses and will undoubtedly include major changes to the Governor's proposal. If you share these budget concerns, now is a good time to contact your California legislators regarding budget cuts. See page 5 of this newsletter for their contact information. It's as easy as sending an email!

In spite of the above, we are working in the SELPA and County Special Education Programs to develop our budget for next year. This includes, as always, a study of our needs and growth for the coming year. We are experiencing extreme growth in certain programs and are working collaboratively with our districts to develop a growth proposal that is fiscally responsible and meets the needs of our students.

Another project we are involved in is a survey of the time and cost involved in implementing the requirements of the Hughes Bill, a law passed in the early 1990's related to working with behaviorally challenged students. San Joaquin SELPA, along with Butte and San Diego SELPAs, initiated a mandated cost claim to secure reimbursement for the cost of activities required by the Hughes Bill. We are now administering a survey approved by the Department of Finance to collect data from 35 SELPAs. Our hope is that the data will eventually lead to a settlement of the claim and result in additional funding for all SELPAs and districts for Hughes Bill activities.



Sandee Kludt, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent / SELPA Director

Search & Serve

If you have a baby who was very small or sick at birth or a young child whose development worries you, a telephone call may put you in touch with someone who can answer your questions and help you get service for your child.

Call your school district office or the San Joaquin County SELPA at 209-468-4925 for more information.

Teamwork *continued from front page*



Dino practices fine motor skills.

Janelle Westcott spent the first 10 years of her special education career as a Language, Speech and Hearing



Patty and Joshua have free time choices.

(LSH) Specialist. "I believe my background in LSH helps tremendously in my class today," she said. "Everything I do is communication based and I try to always take advantage of opportunities to teach concepts in the natural environment. Language occurs across environments so whether we're working on math, doing motor activities or out in the community



John and assistant Sheila work on math.

ordering food in a restaurant, they are all opportunities to improve communication."

Academic instruction is focused on functional skills students will need in the real world. Community based instruction is an important part of both classes. Teaching in a natural environment with an emphasis on independent living skills is very meaningful for the students. "We walk down the block to Raley's every week to shop for our cooking



Ashley tells about her work at Raley's.

continued on page 4

Teamwork *continued from page 3*

project,” said Westcott. The students plan what they will cook and make the shopping list each week. “The goals



Jarrod polishes his computer skills.



Cuong works on his handwriting.

Lindsey is working at Raley’s as a greeter and enjoying the wage-earning experience.

of these outings are based on the needs and abilities of the students,” Westcott continued. “For some, walking there and back appropriately is the goal. Others can read the aisle guides to find items on their list.”

Both classrooms benefit from reverse mainstreaming with the Peer Resource class and the Leadership class, whose students come to the class on a weekly basis. “I feel our



John, Dino, assistant Starr and Cuong



James, Josh and Patti work with assistant Gene.

Another component of the program for both classes is vocational education. Students work their way up from in-class jobs to working on campus in the cafeteria, attendance office or library. After 10 hours of successful on-campus work they are eligible to participate in the WorkAbility I program in a paid, off-campus position. This year Ashley

students and the mainstream kids equally enjoy and benefit from being together,” said Dini. “Each year a student takes on as a project a Spring Fling Dance for our kids and other high school and young adult classes in our SELPA. There are usually students competing to see who gets this project. Everyone works to make it a great event for everybody, with the Peer Resource and Leadership classes, the cafeteria and many others pitching in to help.”

How to Contact Your Legislators

Because of the screening that U.S. Mail must now go through before delivery to these offices, it is suggested that you fax a letter or send an email in order for your concerns to reach their destination in a timely manner.



Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-445-2841
Fax: 916-558-3160
To send an Email please visit:
<http://gov.ca.gov/interact>

Senator Michael Machado

1020 N Street, Suite 506
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-4306
Fax (916) 323-2596
To send an email, visit:
<http://dist05.casen.govoffice.com/>
and click on "Contact me" on the left side of the screen

Senator Dave Cogdill

State Capitol, Room 3048
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 651-4014
Fax: (916) 327-3523
To send an email, visit:
<http://republican.sen.ca.gov/web/14/>
and click on "Feedback" on the left side of the screen

Assemblyman Greg Aghazarian *Represents SJCOE, Escalon Unified, Linden Unified, Manteca Unified, New Jerusalem Elementary, and Ripon Unified School Districts*

State Capitol, Room 4167
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 319-2026
Fax: (916) 319-2126
To send an email, visit:
<http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a26/index.aspx>
and click on "Contact" at the top of the screen

Assembly Member Cathleen Galgiani *Represents Banta Elementary, Jefferson Elementary, and Tracy Unified School Districts*

State Capitol, Rm 2170
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0017
(916) 319-2017
(916) 319-2117 fax
To send an Email, visit:
<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a17/>
and click on "Email Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani" at the bottom right of the screen

Assemblyman Guy S. Houston *Represents Lammersville Elementary School District*

State Capitol, Room 2130
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0015
Phone: (916) 319-2015
Fax: (916) 319-2115
To send an email, visit:
<http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a15/index.aspx>
and click on "Contact" at the left of the screen

Assemblyman Alan Nakanishi *Represents Lincoln Unified School District*

State Capitol, Room 5175
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0010
Phone: (916) 319-2010
Fax: (916) 319-2110
To send an email, visit:
<http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a10/index.aspx>
and click on "Contact" at the top of the screen

WorkAbility Program Benefits Both Businesses and Students

The San Joaquin County Office of Education WorkAbility I Program (WAI), has been in existence since 1996 providing on-the-job training for Special Education students ages 16 and up including job readiness and placement along with other services. WAI is able to provide these services year after year thanks to a state/federal grant. In partnership with local businesses in Manteca, Lathrop, Tracy, Ripon, Modesto, Escalon, Stockton and Linden, WAI staff place students for training at local businesses which best fit their skills and abilities.

WAI works with businesses such as Rite Aid, Kids Junction Preschool, Infant Center, and Petco. The businesses have stated that they enjoy the collaboration between their businesses and

WAI. Some of the advantages

to the business community are: interviews between the business and student to allow the opportunity to meet with each other, a work schedule to fit the needs of both the student and job training site, and on-going support services to the student and employer. WAI provides the training wages and workers compensation insurance during the 40 hours of work experience.

Beyond the obvious benefits WAI provides, businesses have expressed their satisfaction with students' abilities by hiring some WAI students permanently! Employers have said that they enjoy the 40-hour training process because it allows them to screen a potential employee without any obligation to hire. Store managers and workers have also stated that working with our students gives

them a sense of "giving back to the community." Employers have said that WAI has changed their perspective of working with people with disabilities. For all parties involved WAI is a rewarding and worthwhile experience!



Bang Tran and Rite Aid Manager



Erik and PETCO Manager



JaQuann and Safeway Manager



Stephanie and Kids Junction Manager

C.A.C. - Community Advisory Committee

The CAC has been busy exploring issues related to the older population of Special Needs children. On December 10th, we had a great presentation from Jackie Kron and Larry Machado regarding the transition from middle school to high school. They carefully laid out a guide that would help young people navigate their new school universe and succeed in school. Jackie spoke about her program which worked on its own “economy” – students had to take a job in the classroom to earn their “wages” and pay “rent” and “fees” for all items purchased. It was a great way to teach students very adult responsibility. The meeting produced many invaluable ideas for this tough transition.

In November and January, we had the pleasure of hearing the wisdom of Dr. David Demetral who helps us to navigate the less talked about, sensitive issue regarding sexuality for special needs adolescents, teens and adults. He has an amazing way of removing the

stigma from this sticky social aspect and putting it into context – that it is a normal part of life. Underlying all of these issues is our child’s need for love and acceptance. Unfortunately for our children, the best route for fulfilling these needs is elusive, misunderstood and unknown. Dr. Demetral has spent decades exploring this field. His presentation was not only informative, but also thought provoking and inspiring and well received by parents.

Please join us at our next CAC meeting that will be as great as our previous presentations. The meeting will be on “Executive Functioning” presented by Patti Schetter, and will be held on March 10th at 6:30pm. Please contact Sharon Gaines at 468-4908 to confirm your attendance.

*Submitted by Jody Graham,
CAC Chair/Lincoln Unified Parent
Representative*



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San Joaquin County S.E.L.P.A. serving

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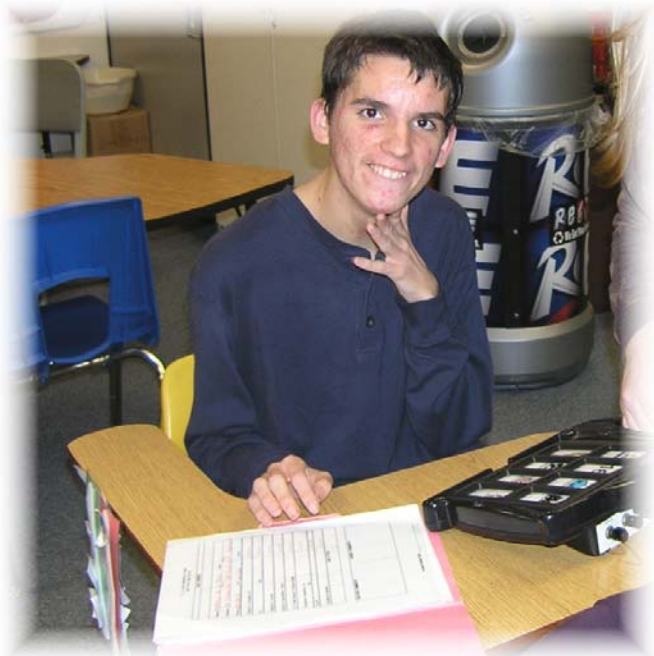


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Jackie Flowers Assistant Superintendent, County Operated Schools & Programs



*Matthew uses a communication device to answer personal data questions.
(See feature story on front page)*

Save The Date!

- Feb 15** Autism Connection Meeting, 12:00pm, Emerson Room
- Feb 20** "It's Never Too Late! The Basics of Teaching Reading for Special Education Teachers" presented by Bev Long, 8:00am - 3:30pm, Burwood 2
- Mar 10** CAC Meeting/Parent Training "Executive Functioning" presented by Patti Schetter, 9am - noon, Business Meeting 12:30pm, Greenwood 3
- Mar 11** "Pieces of the Puzzle - Overview of Autism Basics" presented by Bev Long, 8:00am - 3:30pm, Burwood 1

All events held at:

SJCOE Education Service Center
2707 Transworld Dr., Stockton

**For more information/events, check our
Online Calendar at www.sjcoe.org**

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