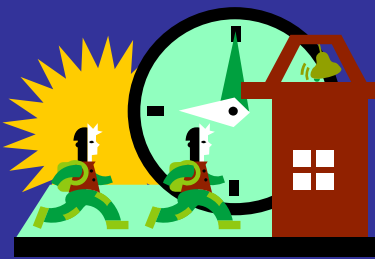


August

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Welcome Back to School

We hope your summer allowed you time to recharge your batteries, take advantage of educational opportunities, and gear up for the challenges of the new school year. The PA State Budget for 2011-12, which included \$860 million in cuts to our public schools, will have an impact on the service delivery models we use in special education. The expression we keep hearing is “do more with less.” The elected officials that say these meaningless statements do not jive with the reality of special education.

Make sure you let your elected officials know the following facts and then let them try to tell you to “do more with less.”

- 60,000 students with disabilities now spend more of their educational day in general education settings. That requires the special education staff to reach into more classrooms to support students, make more contacts with a larger number of teaching staff, and requires more contact time with parents.
- School districts are bringing students with more intensive needs back into the neighborhood school buildings. Districts are challenged to find ways to bring their costs down so one area they are exploring is reducing their reliance on outside providers. This creates new challenges for staff and students to come up with the appropriate supports in this setting. There are more related services supports that have to be integrated into the daily schedule including mental health counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral supports, etc.
- The federal law for special education is 1,700 pages in length. Implementation of this law and our own PA Chapter 14 requires extensive training. Special Education staff and even some general education staff are feeling that they almost need “Esq.” behind their name as the requirements have become so complicated.



- The IEP form was one page in 1976 and included the attendance sheet, measurable annual goals, objectives and specially designed instruction. The minimum number of pages for a current IEP is 14 pages.
- New technology brings opportunities for students to be engaged in their learning. This means that staff needs to know how to trouble shoot and train the student on the assistive technology and how it will work best with the curriculum.
- Students are making substantial progress. The PA graduation rate for students with disabilities is very high for our nation.
- Add your own facts and examples to the statements.

If you would like to subscribe to PSEA's *Current News in Special Education*, please go to <http://www.psea.org/currentnews>
Click on *Current News in Special Education* and follow the directions for the *Stay Connected Section*.

You need to take a minute to reflect on your efforts to impact the decisions of your elected officials. PSEA counted over 124,000 emails that were sent on the State budget issue. This amount of contact does make a difference!!!! The school year would be starting out on a much different note without your communication.

Poll Shows that Learning Disabilities Are Misunderstood by the Public

The Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation of New Haven Connecticut commissioned a poll to get public perceptions on specific learning disabilities. There are some very interesting findings.

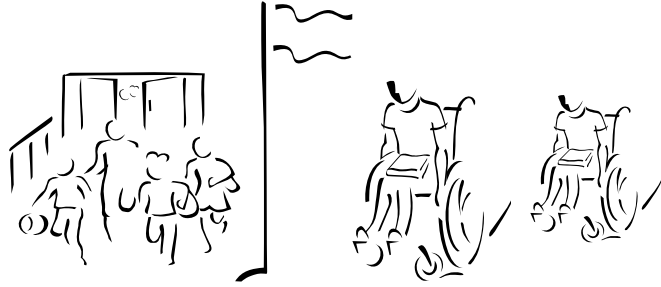
In 2010, the good news is that 80 percent of Americans believe that people with learning disabilities are just as smart as everyone else.

The bad news is their belief that learning disabilities are linked to mental retardation and autism. Even more interesting is that 50 percent of Americans surveyed believe that learning disabilities are often caused by the home environment children are raised in. Teachers and administrators were asked the same question, and four out of 10 teachers and three in 10 administrators agreed that it was caused by the home environment.

The study had some other findings that are worth noting. Parents and the general public agree that learning disabilities are often just laziness.

Sounds like we have our work cut out for us to change perceptions!!!





Ableism - Strategies to Undercut Negative Cultural Attitudes toward Students with Disabilities in School and Society

The “ableist” perspective would make you believe that it is preferable for a child to walk rather than use a wheelchair, spell independently rather than use a spell-checker, read print rather than Braille, and read written text rather than listen to a book digitally recorded. In an ideal world, it would be terrific if all students, when given traditional methods of learning, would succeed and thrive. This “ableist” view becomes a barrier when the education team provides services focused on their disability to the exclusion of all else.

We should revisit the overarching goal for special education of minimizing the impact of the disability and maximizing opportunities to participate. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind so you don’t fall into the “ableist” trap.

Recognize that diagnosis is important. The educational team needs to know the nature of a disability and how that impacts the child’s ability to access his/her curriculum. What is working well and where the roadblocks might be are fundamental to the discussion.

Involve students with disabilities in education decisions when appropriate. The students play a crucial role in achieving results. The students will learn to advocate for themselves and take responsibility for their education if allowed to be involved in the process. The team can focus on self-determination which can also help the students integrate their disabilities into their self-image in a very positive way.

Students should develop skills that are most effective for them, building on what works for students individually. They may find a specific method supports them in taking notes or keeping organized. They find that they can absorb more material if they hear it rather than read it. Practice makes perfect. Students can become more effective in the use of these skills as they mature. Education will focus more on the substance rather than how to access it over time.

Integration into the general education environment should still be strived for. The IEP team considers this issue every year at the annual IEP meeting. Students who are taught by certified staff in the academic fields do better in general.



Comments or questions about the items in this newsletter may be directed to this mailbox:
bmillier@psea.org



It should go without saying that there should be a constant striving for high standards. All we have to do is look at the brain research to see there is so much more we have to learn about the brain and disabilities. Research tells us that the brain is much more pliable especially at the preschool and early elementary grade levels and that serious reading instruction and interventions can have a huge impact on developing new pathways in the brain to assist the student to learn how to read.

Lastly, we could employ concepts of universal design. The use of multimedia curriculum materials can assist students, both general education and special education, access the information. Over the next several years we will see a revolution in the way teaching staff direct lessons. Many publishing companies are developing the multimedia approach to the development of lessons.

A new pilot study shows a science teacher teaching about whales. The student will be able to review a three-minute video on oceans that was previously learned so this information can be the base for scaffolding the new material. The article, with the click of a mouse, can be delivered in multiple languages for the ELL student. Another keystroke allows the student to listen to the article on headsets. The student who is challenged to write will have access to a highlighter feature so that the student can take notes and save them. For gifted students, there would be additional resources and links to review to gain in-depth knowledge on various species of whales.

The strategy ideas were taken from Educational Leadership, "Confronting Ableism", Thomas Hehir, February 2007, Vol. 64, No.5



Gifted Education Federal Funding

Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) introduced the "Setting New Priorities in Education Act" (H.R. 1891). The bill would eliminate more than 40 federal education programs. Included within the 40 programs is the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act which is the sole Federal investment in gifted education. Funding for the bill runs \$7.5 million annually. The monies help pay for studies that help train teachers to recognize intellectual giftedness in minority students, poor students and students learning English. The funds help to pay for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented based at the University of Connecticut and at the University of Virginia.

The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce approved this bill. The vote was 23 to 16 on May 13, 2011.



Gifted Education Conference Sponsored by PAGE

Save the dates of May 3 and 4, 2012 for the PAGE conference. Tight budgets will require planning ahead.

http://www.giftedpage.org/docs/events/CONFERENCE2012-Save_theDate.pdf

Learning Disabilities Association of Pennsylvania Conference

November 18 & 19, 2011

Learning Disabilities Association of Pennsylvania Annual Conference
Holiday Inn – New Cumberland

Keynote Session- “The Future’s So Bright - Forget the Shades”

Lisa A. Dieker, Ph.D.
Professor, Exceptional Education
Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences
College of Education, University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Go to their webpage for a copy of the conference brochure: www.ldapa.org

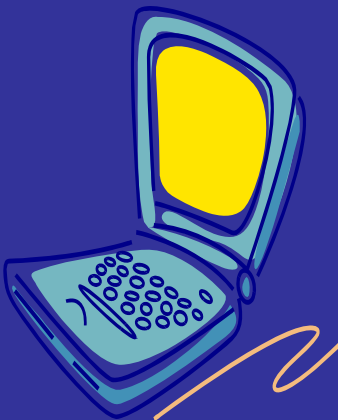
Post Secondary Education: Affordability and Transfer

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education produced a report in June 2011, available at www.highereducation.org. The role of community colleges as an entry point for many students seeking bachelor’s degrees is well known. The report did an analysis of states, especially of states with rapidly growing young populations in which ethnic groups and low-income students with low rates of college participation and completion are most concentrated.

The first issue is college affordability. Usually the most underserved populations are among the least able to afford the continuous escalation of tuition and therefore do not enroll in college. Typical strategies for students with limited resources is to reduce their course loads in order to work



Many current updates and other helpful information on Special Education can be found on the PSEA website. Go to www.psea.org Teaching and Learning > Special & Gifted Education



more hours, “stopping out” of college to earn money to return, or working excessive hours while maintaining a full-time course load. In every case there is a reduced likelihood of completing a degree or any college program.

The second issue that warrants attention is the effectiveness of the transfer path from community colleges to four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions. “The nation relies increasingly upon lower-division education in the community colleges and effective transfer pathways to improve baccalaureate completion rates and raise higher education attainment.”ⁱ

Community colleges are more likely to be low-income, first in their families to go to college, and members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Forty-four percent of low-income students (families with incomes less than \$25,000 a year) attend community colleges as their first school after high school.

Pennsylvania is one of the top 10 states with the highest projected number of high school graduates with a dependence on community colleges. Review the chart to do a comparison with several other top 10 states.

State	Projected number of high school graduates in 2022	Annual undergraduate enrollment for 2007-08 in 2 year institutions	Annual undergraduate enrollment for 2007-08 in 4 year or more institutions	Percent of students enrolled at 2 year institutions
Pennsylvania	123,462	172,417	453,884	28%
Ohio	106,672	204,649	358,557	36%
New York	135,742	325,272	689,702	32%
California	362,658	1,298,067	772,629	63%
Texas	3,041,417	6,288,866	9,612,034	40%

Here are the Transfer and Completion Rates at Two-Year Colleges.

State	Graduation from a 2-year institution	Enrolled in a 4-year institution in year 3	Enrolled in a 4-year institution in year 4	Graduated from a 4-year institution	Graduated from a 2-year or 4-year institution
Pennsylvania	26%	12%	15%	13%	38%
Ohio	15%	11%	12%	9%	25%
New York	27%	16%	20%	16%	43%
California	14%	8%	13%	11%	25%
Texas	12%	12%	15%	12%	23%

This information is very useful as lawmakers make decisions on educational policies. PSEA wants to keep you current on the facts that help to define the issues.

ⁱPolicy Alert, June 2011, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.



The PSEA Special Education Board Meeting Schedule for 2011-2012

The PSEA Special Education Board is an appointed group of members from all regions of PSEA to represent you. The members attend four meetings per year in Harrisburg to bring news from each region on special education issues and concerns. In return, staff provides current information on legislation, court cases, regulations, and information from the PA Bureau of Special Education. Representative report back to their regions and provide information to your local association leaders. Make sure you ask your local leaders what is happening in Special Education. They usually receive a report which they can share with you. One more way to keep informed.

The PSEA Special Education Board meetings are open to members. PSEA cannot cover travel expenses for those not appointed to the Board. Interested members can get more information by writing to bmiller@psea.org.

The schedule for this year is as follows:

September 30: 8:00-11:00 pm

October 1: 9:00am - 5:00pm

(PDE presentations on paraprofessionals, assessments, and Bureau update.)

Feb. 3 8:00 am-11:00 p.m. **Feb. 4** 9:00am-3:00 pm

April 20: 8:00 am-11:00 pm **April 21:** 9:00 am-3:00 pm

May 18 - 6:00pm-10:00pm - **May 19** - 9:00 am-3:00 pm

Resources

“Current News”

Help your fellow members sign up for “Current News.” It is easy to click and sign up. All it requires is that the members use their home email address when they sign up. Sorry, no school email addresses are accepted. www.psea.org/myprofile (look for email subscriptions)

Voting

The Disability Voting Coalition of Pennsylvania has a website to help people with disabilities to advocate for their rights to vote and ensure their vote is counted. www.dvcpa.org

Autism/Spanish

Here is a website that provides information and support to Spanish-speaking families with children on the autism spectrum. Go to www.manitasporautismo.com.

Accessible Air Travel

Go to www.unitedspinal.org for a 24-page booklet. The website has many other free booklets. Check it out!

Are You Facing Budget Cuts?

Teachers can post funding requests for class projects on the Donor Choice website and if selected could have their project selected and covered. www.donorschoose.org

Teacher Tools for Academics, Behavior and much more

Special Connections provides descriptions of various tools. Nicely organized. www.specialconnections.ku.edu



If you use Twitter, you can receive updates on special education when new information becomes available. Information will be sent as it is received rather than on a daily or weekly schedule. You can sign on to follow at www.twitter.com/bernie_miller



