

# **Financing Special Education in New Jersey**

New Jersey School Boards Association

September 2007

## **Exemplary Program Descriptions**

As a part of the survey process, school districts were encouraged to nominate programs that are both effective and fiscally efficient. All districts that nominated programs were visited and their programs reviewed. Following are descriptions of the programs considered to be exemplary; descriptions were provided by the local school districts.

### **Alternative Education**

#### **Shared Alternative School Program**

Manasquan Public Schools and Wall Township Public Schools

Manasquan - Clement Bramley, Jr., Director of Pupil Personnel Services, 732-528-8833

Wall Township - Sharon Cox, Director of Special Services, 732-556-2121

**The Problem.** Wall Township Public Schools had been running a successful Alternative School for many years. With the start of the 1997-1998 academic year, however, the district found that they had no place to house the alternative school program. It had the staff but not the physical facilities.

The Manasquan Public School District had been sending all of its students in need of alternative education to other programs in Monmouth County. As this population increased, it became apparent that an in-district alternative school program would be appropriate. While the district had an available building, it would have to hire staff.

**The Solution.** Since the two districts are less than a mile apart, it was decided to create a shared alternative school where each district contributed to the overall fiscal management of the program.

- Wall Township School District provided the teacher, a teacher aide and an art teacher who visits the facility 3 times a week.
- Manasquan School District provided a two-room self contained facility, computers and software and a physical education teacher who provides instruction and recreation every day.
- Costs for such things as art supplies, year book publication, and an end of the year breakfast are divided equally between the districts.
- Administration of the school is shared between the two districts with Sharon Cox, director of special services for the Wall Township Public Schools, and Clement Bramley, director of Pupil Personnel Services for the Manasquan School District, sharing responsibility for the everyday functioning of the school.

**Program Philosophy.** The Manasquan/Wall Township Alternative program believes that, for young people to grow up competent, caring and responsible, they need to be provided with the following assets:

- **Support** – Young people need to experience support, care and love.
- **Empowerment** – Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others.
- **Boundaries and Expectation** – Young people need to know what is expected of them and what behaviors are “in-bounds” or “out of bounds.”
- **Constructive use of time** – Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities such as art.
- **Commitment to learn** – Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to learning.
- **Positive values** – Young people need to develop strong values that guide their choices.
- **Social competencies** – Young people need skills that equip them to make positive choices to build relationships.
- **Positive identity** – Young people need a strong sense of their own power.

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### **Cranford Achievement Program (C.A.P.)**

Cranford Public Schools

Dr. James McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent, 908-709-6218

Stephen F. Izzo, Manager of Grants & Special Programs, 908-709-6207

**History of C.A.P.** The Cranford Achievement Program was established in September 1982 by the Cranford Board of Education to provide a more appropriate setting for classified high school students who were experiencing difficulty adjusting to the traditional school environment. Students from Cranford and students from other districts, referred by their Child Study Teams, were considered for admittance.

During the past two decades that C.A.P. has been open, enrollment has increased from just a few students to almost 60. The C.A.P. program has been expanded several times to meet the constant challenge of providing an appropriate educational setting for those students who can benefit from a non-traditional, individualized, structured approach to their education.

**Program Description.** It is the intention of the C.A.P. staff to provide an academic curriculum that is comparable to the traditional Cranford High School academic setting.

Smaller student-to-staff ratio ensures a supportive and consistent atmosphere. Frequent family contacts and parental involvement are encouraged and play an important role in the program.

A structured behavior management system helps to monitor student progress and systematically award privileges. Academics are stressed and flexibility is allowed to meet the needs of our students. Our curriculum targets individual learning styles and strengths. The entire CAP Staff uses a firm, fair and consistent approach

**Status-Level System.** A status level system is used to monitor and record student progress in our school. Students can earn privileges during the school day. The system is based on points, which are earned through academic efforts and appropriate behavior. A student's status level is based on his/her point total. The more points a student earns the more privileges he/she will receive.

**Counseling Services.** A Crisis Intervention Counselor will meet with students twice a week, once in a small group and once individually. Additional counseling and related services are also available to students as required. Appointments can also be made with our counselor on an "as needed basis".

**Social Skills.** Students will receive group social skills instruction and social problem solving interventions. These skills emphasize the development of self-control and social awareness.

Due to the great success of the CAP for high school students, two additional components were initiated to broaden the grade range:

- Cranford Achievement Middle Program —C.A.M.P.
- Lincoln Elementary Achievement Program —L.E.A.P.

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## **BD Work Study**

Collingswood School District

Gina Scharff, Director of Special Services, 856-962-5725

The Collingswood School District implemented a Work Study Program for high school emotionally disturbed students in September 2004. This program accommodates up to nine students ranging in age from 15-18 years. These students attend classes at Collingswood High School for half the school day, primarily in the self-contained behavior disorder (BD) class. Academic classes address content area instruction and vocational preparation, including transition and life skills. The students are placed for the remainder of the day at either volunteer or salaried jobs in the community. They are required to demonstrate success in their volunteer placements prior to assuming an entry-level paid position. Several students have been promoted to technical positions. If a student is fired from a paid position (due to excessive absences, for example), he or she is

required to once again assume a volunteer position. Students work in any area where there is a need and for which they are qualified. Community job sites include supermarkets, restaurants, a senior citizen complex, hospital, retail stores, and Borough Hall. The special education teacher also serves as the program facilitator, communicating with each employer or visiting each job site on a daily basis to shadow and/or supervise the students.

When a student is recommended for placement in this program, the Child Study Team case manager/school psychologist and special education teacher interview the student and the student's parent(s). The staff members at the conclusion of the interview complete a brief questionnaire in order to help determine the appropriateness of this program for each student. Areas of consideration include motivational factors, interpersonal skills with adults and peers, cognitive and academic abilities, parental commitment and support, adaptive skills, and history of any criminal behavior or substance abuse.

Developing and sustaining positive and supportive relationships with the students' families, other school personnel, and community members is crucial to the success of this program. Behavioral issues are addressed via individualized behavioral intervention plans, counseling services, and collaboration with the high school administration. Students often behave inappropriately when they feel academically or socially incompetent. When they have the opportunity to experience success within a work setting and the small, structured classroom environment, the students' self-efficacy and feelings of adequacy improve, thereby reducing maladaptive behaviors. Individual responsibility and positive decision-making are stressed within the context of the students' real world experiences.

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## Autistic

### **Brick Township Autistic Services**

Brick Township Public Schools

Alan Ferraro, Director of Special Services, 732-785-3080

Approximately five years ago the Brick Township Public Schools embarked upon an innovative program for autistic children. This program was developed based on the latest childhood autism research.

Once established, the program attracted students from surrounding states and other countries. The new autistic program was based on B.F. Skinner's research on Verbal Behavior. The structure of the program was developed to overcome the communication problems of autistic children that limit their ability to become good students and citizens.

Research has indicated that 50% of autistic children learn little or develop no language unless they receive intensive language intervention during early instruction. The new Brick School District program stressed language development, behavior management, natural-environment teaching and direct instruction. The new program structure motivated children to communicate and develop language in naturalistic settings. Early language development has helped autistic children integrate into regular preschool and

elementary programs throughout the district. The new program increased language development for autistic children, and this program includes student assessment utilizing a recognized assessment instrument that continuously records academic, social and emotional growth.

The innovative combination of Verbal Behavior instruction and Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) has allowed children to grow positively in the program. The behavior management techniques established in the program helped to control behaviors that interfere with the learning process and has allowed teachers to engage students in learning activities.

To date, 17 classrooms serve autistic children in the Brick Township Public Schools. Students have been returned from out-of-district locations and staff has received extensive procedure training. Local partnerships have been developed with a parent group and local universities to provide training to professional staff and parents. In addition, the New Jersey Department of Education has encouraged local districts to review the Verbal Behavior program in a seminar at a Regional Training Center.

Most significant, Direct Instruction techniques have helped students develop increased academic skills. Direct Instruction is a highly structured, fast-paced teaching method that has produced exceptional results in training high-risk children in basic skills as indicated in the publication, *An Educators Guide to School Wide Reform*, 1999. Coupled with Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) techniques, Direct Instruction and Verbal Behavior programming have demonstrated positive growth for Brick students.

Extensive student growth has been demonstrated as measured in the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS), developed by Partington and Sundberg in 1998, since this innovative program was introduced for Brick students.

The Brick Township program has embraced the spirit and the letter of the law encouraging students to receive education in the least restrictive environment at the home school district. Students have been returned from out-of-district locations and parents have been supportive of the education received for their children.

The Brick program has demonstrated that student academic progress has been made and behavioral problems have decreased for individual children. The application of the innovative strategies has led to the development of functional communication skills for children, the reduction of problem behaviors and an increase in academic and social skill development for autistic children.

At this time, Georgian Court University in Lakewood is developing a training program for autism education. The Georgian Court University pilot program has evolved from close communication with the Brick Township Public Schools. The Techniques and Outcomes in this program are included in the chart on the following page.

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Applied Behavior Analysis Verbal Behavior Techniques	Behavior Control
Direct Instruction	Language development
Direct Instruction	Academic skill development
Natural Environment Teaching	Skill generalization

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### **The Autistic School Partnership**

Freehold Township School District and  
The Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center  
Barbara Selikoff, Director of Educational Services, 732-866-6866

The Freehold Township School District, Department of Educational Services, has established a partnership with the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center (DDDC), located in New Brunswick and operated under the auspices of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. To meet the needs of people with autism spectrum disorders and their families, Dr. Sandra Harris, executive director, established the DDDC in 1972. Dr. Jan S. Handleman, director of The DDDC for over 30 years, oversees the daily operations of the four divisions that comprise the DDDC, as well as its School Program.

The Freehold Annex was established in September 2006 as part of The School Program of The DDDC to give learners with autism spectrum disorders the opportunity to be educated in their own community and to increase opportunities to be integrated with less disabled and typically developing peers.

The School Program uses an intensive, individualized Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) model that highlights the development and generalization of speech and language, social skills, academics, and self-help and daily living skills. Decisions for all educational and behavioral programming are data based and reflect best practice using the principles of ABA. Strategies used within the program include: discrete trial instruction, natural environment training, incidental teaching, fluency-based instruction, functional behavioral assessment and functional analysis.

For the next three years, The DDDC will operate an elementary class with six students, ages 6 through 8 years, and nine staff to include a Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction, a certified special education teacher, six para-educators and a speech and language specialist. The classroom will be housed in one of the school buildings within the Freehold Township School District. The DDDC will lease the space and continue to receive tuition for the students from the sending districts. In addition to providing clinical oversight for the class, The DDDC will provide comprehensive staff training for in-

district teachers of other students with autism spectrum disorders. At the conclusion of the three years, Freehold Township School District will assume responsibility for the class and will continue to contract with The DDDC to provide ongoing training to special education staff working with students with autism spectrum disorders.

The advantages of entering into the partnership are as follows:

- Freehold Township students who are currently attending an out-of-district school will be educated in their home district. There will be increased opportunity for these students to be included with their typically developing peers.
- Teachers in the district will have the opportunity to be trained by experts in the field of autism and Applied Behavior Analysis. Teachers will have the opportunity to participate in workshops, observe The Annex classroom and be exposed to this model of teaching on a daily basis.
- Freehold Township staff will have the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to operate an exemplary program for students with autism spectrum disorders. As a result, parents of these students may be more willing to have their children attend classes within district as opposed to sending them to private out-of-district placements.
- The Department of Educational Services in New Jersey will be better able to establish long and short-term programmatic and curricular goals for its severely disabled students.
- The establishment of a model program for learners with autism spectrum disorders within a public school system sets a precedent for establishing replication sites in other districts. It is a win-win situation for all as students remain within their own community for their education, parents can have their children participate in classes that reflect best practices and school districts can reduce their costs for placing students out of district.

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## **Stepping Stones**

Fair Lawn Public Schools

Dr. Joyce Beam, Director of Special Services, 201-794-5500

Stepping Stones is Fair Lawn Public School's program for children on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It began in 1999 as the Fair Lawn Board of Education made the commitment to educate children with ASD in their home district in the least restrictive environment. There are currently six Stepping Stones classes across the district. The existing classes encompass three pre-schools, two elementary and one middle school. The Stepping Stones program adheres to the district's official school calendar, supplemented by a 30-day (five hours per day) Extended School Year component (ESY) during the summer. The September-to-June calendar, coupled with the ESY (summer) program, affords children 210 days of instruction.

Each class has a maximum of six students, with a staffing pattern comprised of one classroom teacher and six paraprofessionals. There are a total of thirty students with ASD, with a maximum of six per classroom. Each class has one head teacher with a ratio of 1:1 of paraprofessionals to students. The teacher, who is out of the rotation, serves as a liaison with the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Program Coordinator (BCBA), the parents, the specialists (speech, OT, and physical therapist), the child study team, and the paraprofessionals. The paraprofessionals rotate between a maximum of four of the students throughout the week. They are responsible for delivering programming and recording data daily.

The Stepping Stones program uses the Applied Behavior Analytic (ABA) method of instruction to teach skills. The selected instructional strategies draw upon literature-based methods authored by respected specialists in the field of behaviorism. These methods are designed to bring the students to the center stage in the classroom. Student mastery is measured through daily graphing of data and the Assessment of Basic Language Learning Skills (ABLLS®).

As students progress through the ABA program, individualized instruction time decreases as group instruction increases. Students are systematically taught skills to prepare them for learning in the natural setting. To prepare students to respond to naturalistic contingencies, non-disabled peers are systematically included in the programming.

The Stepping Stones program is governed by a protocol written by the Stepping Stones BCBA Coordinator. It is an extensive guidebook for its team. The protocol defines the roles of the Stepping Stones team (coordinator, teachers, paraprofessionals, and substitutes), procedures for student assessment, ABA program binders, parent collaboration guidelines, and classroom structures.

### **Unique program characteristics include:**

#### Expertise of program personnel

- Highly qualified coordinator (currently BCBA certified)
- Licensed related service providers who have expertise in autism (working both in the classrooms and on a pull out basis)
- Highly trained ABA teachers
- All paraprofessionals meet the State's requirement for "highly qualified"
- Adaptive physical education in the middle school for students with various disabilities
- An occupational therapist with expertise in pre-vocational training

#### Staff support and training

- Bi-monthly staff training by the Coordinator for all Stepping Stones teachers
- Extensive on-going training through in-service sessions for staff (minimum of 2.5 full days per year) and paraprofessionals (minimum of 2 full days per year)
- All Stepping Stones curriculum, behavior plans, schedule materials, etc.,

are “live” through a school-based computerized server, and accessible for the Stepping Stones team

### Family support

- Monthly parent support group organized by the community-based special education advisory group
- The Coordinator and teachers conduct private, individualized monthly clinics with each student’s parents
- Severity scale created for implementing home programming, which considers the number of hours qualified students need for their home program. Home programs assist the generalization of skills to the home setting and work on life skills (tolerating dentist, taking showers, eating at the table, etc.). Home programs range from two hours of teacher consultation to 12 hours of ABA therapy per week.

### Instruction

- A curriculum with over 900 ABA programs used for implementing student goals and objectives. The four core curriculum components are: (1) Academic, (2) Verbal behavior, (3) Self-management, and (4) Expanded community of interests. The sub-components of each core curriculum area are (a) Joint attention, (b) Behavior, and (c) Inclusion readiness. This curriculum database is appropriate for the students who are moving into the middle school. The BCBA Coordinator trains teachers to individualize the program to child-specific needs.
- The ABA teaching methods include: discrete trial instruction, verbal behavior, precision teaching/fluency instruction, video modeling, technological instruction through computerized educational software and incidental teaching/naturalistic environment teaching. ABA will also be utilized to modify curricula. The contingencies and systems of predictability in place are: classroom schedules, individualized schedules, activity schedules, self-management systems, and individualized reinforcement systems. The individualized reinforcement systems will start with a fixed ratio of 1:1 reinforcement, and faded to thinner schedules of reinforcement. When students are ready, a token economy system is introduced through the process of conditioning (pairing of tokens with already preferred stimuli until they gain value). Reinforcements are continuously updated through preference assessments.
- Appropriate behaviors are taught through behavior plans that are created by the Coordinator. Behavior plan rules and expectations are communicated to students through individualized visual systems.

Ultimately, the Stepping Stones program provides treatment and education for its learners to grow as a member of the family, community, and within the least-restrictive environment.

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## **High School Proficiency Assessment Preparation**

### **HSPA Prep**

Passaic County Technical Institute

Candace Chaleff, Supervisor of Special Services, 973-389-4197

The HSPA Prep course at PCTI is designed to give all 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade classified students a better understanding of the skills tested on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade HSPA. Each class has a Math and Language Arts component taught by two teachers who are highly qualified in their respective area. The students are divided into two groups and receive intensive two-week sessions in one subject areas. At the conclusion of each two-week interval, the students switch subject areas with their classmates. Consistent practice in each subject areas during two-week intervals throughout the year – rather than focusing on one subject each semester – ensures that student retain more information.

The Math portion includes computation, problem solving, open-ended questions and fundamental algebraic skills that are introduced and reinforced. The use of calculators, manipulatives, hands-on activities and cooperative learning is emphasized.

The Language Arts portion prepares the students for the challenges of the Reading and Writing sections of the HSPA. The instruction emphasizes writing narratives based on picture prompts, constructing five paragraph persuasive essays, as well as reading passages and answering open-ended questions.

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## **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)/Inclusive Education**

### **Capacity Building Initiative Service**

Jersey City Public Schools

Priscilla Petrosky, Associate Superintendent, 201-915-6079

**Description.** The Capacity Building Initiative Service (CBI) was developed with the philosophy that all students are entitled to a free appropriate public education, which must be provided in the least-restrictive environment. The program provides several services designed to support the progress of special education students enrolled in general education programs.

**Goals.** The goal of the program is to create a cohesive environment in all inclusive settings. Some of the planned services and interventions include:

- Education in neighborhood schools
- Age appropriate learning
- Enhanced social and emotional development
- Staff development

- Staff training on crisis intervention techniques, addressing conflict resolution and behavioral management.
- Therapeutic Supportive Services
- Parent Support and Educational groups

**Target Population:** Special education students enrolled in inclusion classes and special education students in segregated programs and identified for transition into general education

**Recommended Staff.** The program involves a Capacity Design Team that includes a program coordinator, inclusion specialists and a parent liaison as well as district wide support staff for the Capacity Design Team: Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Child Study Team members and Art therapists.

**Program Location.** This program is currently offered in the Pubic Schools 6, 9, 16, 29, 30 and 42 and the Liberty Alternative High School, with expansion projected to all districts schools.

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### **All Inclusive Mentoring Synergy Sessions (A.I.M.S.S.)**

Jersey City Public Schools

Priscilla Petrosky, Associate Superintendent, 201-915-6079

The All Inclusive Mentoring Synergy Sessions Program (A.I.M.S.S.) is a district wide program that supports students, teachers, parents and administrators in the all inclusive model in the Jersey City Public Schools. This year the A.I.M.S.S. Program consisted of 37 Inclusion Specialists. The Inclusion Specialists received intensive training for the second year in a row. The 2005-2006 A.I.M.S.S. training sessions concentrated on differentiating instruction and behavioral strategies. The Inclusion Specialists take training and support students and staff by providing professional development within their assigned schools. The Inclusion Specialists are supported by their District Supervisors, Project B.E.A.C.O.N. (a support program for all of the district's schools), a Capacity Building Team and outside consultants. They return to their schools armed with the tools they need to develop and implement an inclusive program that meets the needs of each student based on observations, needs assessments, action plans and information gleaned from teachers, parents, child study team and administrators.

#### **Goals:**

- Continue to ensure students are placed in their Least Restrictive Environment
- Provide the training necessary for job-embedded professional development on differentiating instruction techniques
- Model lessons daily using differentiating instruction and cooperative learning techniques and strategies
- Continue to develop and implement an Inclusive program that meets the needs of each student and teacher based on observations, needs assessments, action plans and information from Child Study Teams, teachers, administrators and parents.
- Promote Disability Awareness

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to provide workshops on differentiating instruction and behavioral strategies
- Continue to keep lines of communication open through collaborative consultation and supports
- Have instructional supervisors check Inclusion Specialists' binders monthly to ensure turn-keying and modeling
- Ensure Inclusion Specialists are turn-keying strategies and techniques to general education teachers, special education teachers and para-educators

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**Inclusive Education**

Franklin Township School, Warren County  
Mary Sullivan, CST Coordinator, 908-689-2958 x 404

Franklin Township School in Warren County is a small, rural, one-school district that, for the past 20 years, has been both a laboratory for and a model of inclusive education. Our philosophy espouses the belief that all children can and should be educated with their peers in general education programs. By providing training and support for the general education staff, as well as for the supportive special education staff the district has been able to address the educational needs of children with diverse abilities and learning styles within general education programs. We have found through experience that a good collaborative team of teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals is the backbone of a good educational system. We have also discovered that a key piece of the successful inclusive school is the belief and support of the school board and administration in the district. We have been fortunate on both fronts.

Our teaching, therapeutic and paraprofessional staffs have taken full advantage over the years of intensive training and experience in differentiating instruction, assessment and behavior management to fit the needs of all children while they remain in educational settings in general education with their peers. Many of the professionals on our staff, including general and special education teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals, have been awarded Inclusion Fellowships and Awards from the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities. Two of our specialists in the area of visual and performing arts have been awarded the New Jersey VSA award for innovative practices for students with disabilities. Our administrator of the last seven years was awarded the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities Inclusion Fellowship last year honoring his commitment to our philosophy. A part of his mission was to keep the school board believing as well and, in this, he has been successful.

We have on-going support on all fronts and have thus been able to educate virtually all of our children together in a diverse, differentiated and successful educational environment. The awards are heartwarming but the most important reward for all of us is to see the happiness and success of children who work together in a fully inclusive environment helping as well as being helped in the community of learners that makes up our school.

The school and playground are fully accessible far above ADA requirements. Children have full access to all programs at whatever level they can participate. There is a full range of counseling services that are implemented by the Child Study Team for all students in the school. There are no special education classes, and students are educated at all times within the general education programming and schedule. There is available for all students a full array of options for remedial instruction, extra assistance, and modification of curriculum, instruction and teaching strategies by general education teachers as required for the needs of each child. The special education professionals on our staff work in a consultation model and are indistinguishable from other professional staff. All children have access to technology and assistive technology at whatever level they can find success and assistance. From the gifted child who can use technology as a tool to enhance higher-order thinking and learning to the preschool child who requires multiple assistive devices to interact with the world and his or her peers, the children in our school will have knowledge and skills for their lives in the future. The collaborative training and teaming have allowed us to evolve to a point where the long-ago vision of “blurring the lines between special and general education” is a reality in our school.

Probably the most important facet of our inclusive practices here at Franklin Township School is the community engendered by the cooperation, nurturing and caring for each other that is seen on a daily basis among the children. The children start at age three in our preschool programs interacting with each other regardless of the diverse gifts and challenges of each child. They grow strong in their thinking about the diversity in this world. Staff members facilitate each child in embracing their uniqueness and that of others. Our belief is that these are the qualities of mind that will foster strong, independent adults in this ever-changing world. We have all grown together in this learning environment, and we plan to continue to work as hard as we can to keep it going in spite of the challenges that confront our community in the world of high stakes testing and by issues of fair grading and the like. We continue to believe and support the notion of a community of learners where no one has to be “included” because they are all already where they belong with each other in classrooms in their hometown school.

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### **Collaborative Educational Services in Edison**

Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

Mark Finkelstein, Superintendent, 732-777-9848

**Background.** This unique program option for students with autism, conducted with the Edison Public Schools, began with the start of the 2003-2004 school year. The initial concept derived from the desire of the Edison Public Schools to serve students with autism in their home district. However, they were faced with two major dilemmas: the lack of knowledge and expertise to oversee these specialized classes; and assuring parents of program efficacy when their children were already placed in private schools specifically designed for students with autism.

At this juncture, the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission and the Edison Public Schools entered into what is now the “Edison Collaborative Program.”

This effort essentially addressed all aspects of the two aforementioned dilemmas. It addressed the issue of program oversight by having persons with expertise provide training and on-going supervision to staff. It also addressed the issue of program efficacy as a result of the Commission's long-standing reputation for quality services for students with autism. As a result, an initial concept quickly became a reality.

**Current Program.** The Edison Collaborative currently serves 17 students diagnosed on the autism spectrum. These students are educated in the following manner:

- 6 Students per primary class (8 in preschool)
- 2 Primary Classes for students ages 6-8
- Preschool Class for students ages 3-6
- Staffing Ratio of 2:1

**Program Philosophy.** Instruction is based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). This approach is the most widely used and the most documented approach for educating students with autism. Each objective is written in behavioral terms. If an increase in a behavior is the desired outcome, it is addressed through practice and reinforcement. If the desire is to decrease a behavior, it is acted upon through consequences and removal of reinforcement. Teaching strategies that support these principles include discrete trial teaching, shaping, chaining and incidental teaching.

**Evaluation.** The progress of students is closely monitored through a daily collection of quantitative data. Because of the atypical learning patterns of students with autism, this type of data collection is a key component for two reasons: monitoring overall student progress of goals and objectives is enhanced; and the data are also used as a crucial tool for teachers in order to monitor and troubleshoot teaching at a much faster rate. The program is presently being replicated in several other districts in Middlesex County.

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## Literacy

### **Reading Assistance in Special Education**

Jersey City Public Schools

Priscilla Petrosky, Associate Superintendent, 201-915-6079

**Description.** The Special Education Department implemented the Project RAISE (Reading Assistance in Special Education) literacy program to assist students with specific reading needs. A reading teacher/specialist focuses on a student's specific individual literacy goals to foster independent reading and supplement classroom instruction.

The goals of the program are two-fold. The first goal is to concentrate on students' specific, critical literacy needs so that they can focus on the critical strategies and skills needed to become independent readers. The second goal is to focus on strategies to enlighten and strengthen phonemic awareness with emergent readers who are exhibiting difficulty internalizing such skills.

The components of the program are as follows:

- An assessment of phonemic abilities, decoding skills and reading strengths, along with information from the learning consultant; classroom teacher and parent will provide detailed information on a student's specific literacy strengths and needs.
- Individual instruction on specific goals to provide students with lessons, based on their individual literacy needs.
- Time to reinforce skills and strategies to enrich students' literacy ability.
- Activities based on Torgesen Phonological Awareness Kit, Orton Gillingham based Project Read Language Circle and the Wilson Reading System geared to enhance reading skills through multi-sensory approaches.
- Consultation with parents and teachers on students' needs and progress.

**Target Population:** Students with learning disabilities between the ages of 6-11 in the elementary setting, 12-14 in a middle school setting, and 14-21 in the high schools.

**Recommended Staff:** Thirteen Reading Teachers/specialists and a special education supervisor

**Program Location.** The program is currently located in Public Schools #5, 6, 9, ISP, 15M, 22, 25, 28, Academy I, Dickinson H.S., Ferris H.S., Liberty H.S., McNair Academic H.S., Snyder H.S., and Carpe Diem Institute.

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## **Cranford School District Academy**

Cranford Public Schools

Dr. James McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent, 908-709-6218

Stephen F. Izzo, Manager of Grants & Special Programs, 908-709-6207

When conducted early enough, intervention can spur development in students with severe reading problems and special needs. Recognizing this fact, the Cranford Public Schools established a program in 2004 to build reading and comprehension skills for low-level and non-reading students. The Cranford School District Academy (CSDA) provides intensified and extended reading instruction beyond school hours to meet student needs through differentiation, intensive expert tutoring, and exercises that promote fluency, vocabulary building, and comprehension.

Three aspects of the CSDA Program make it an exemplary:

1. It is a true business community-public school district partnership with more than 150 sponsors from Cranford and other communities. In the process, this support has enabled CSDA to provide as many as 25 students with full scholarships to attend the nine-month program.

2. It is a quantifiably effective intervention that provides struggling readers with the academic life-based skills they need to succeed inside and outside of school.
3. It is an effective alternative to formalized special education.

### **The CSDA Program**

On each of 26 Saturdays from September to May, up to 25 low-level reading students meet for a full hour of one-on-one intensive reading instruction. The intensive sessions utilize the Orton-Gillingham, multi-sensory approach to teaching reading. Each student is pre- and post-program-tested using the Woodcock-Johnson Reading Mastery tests, which forms a baseline against which individual and program results are measured. Instruction is overseen and facilitated by a Program Coordinator, a teacher who has satisfied the criteria established by Farleigh Dickinson University for a “teacher of teachers” in this methodology. Additional clinics are provided to the CSDA tutors throughout the year to improve upon lesson planning, implementation and knowledge of the Orton-Gillingham approach.

Upon program completion, students take a second form of the Woodcock-Johnson battery of tests, with results compared to those achieved on the pre-program test. Based on post-program test results, each student is provided with a personalized reading plan of steps he or she needs to take to maintain program momentum. Students whose test scores indicate improvement but additional need are considered for the following year’s CSDA Program. The program concludes with formal recognition of students and sponsors at a televised Board of Education meeting. Afterward, the students, their families and sponsors meet at an informal reception.

### **Student Profile**

CSDA serves a racially, socially and economically diverse group of students in grades 1 through 8. Students range in age from 6 to 14. They include English-speaking and limited English Proficient students, and they come from general education and special education backgrounds. Although some CSDA participants have been classified as having special needs, such a classification is not a program prerequisite. The program’s unique nature enables it to address a wide variety of student needs.

### **Academic Effectiveness**

The Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading, employed in the CSDA Program, has been proven highly effective in helping to remediate students’ severe reading and decoding issues. It is equally effective in enabling instructors to differentiate instruction for the benefit of each student. And although the backgrounds and needs of students attending the CSDA in its first two years of operation have varied, program results have not: over 95% of students entering the CSDA Program have successfully completed it; 34 of 36 participants achieved significant improvement in word attack, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, with several children demonstrating significant progress when comparing current levels to baseline data. Ultimately, there has been significant success made toward the goal of creating fluent readers who can independently read for purpose and pleasure as they move forward in school and life.

### **Cost-Efficiency**

The primary cost-efficiency of the CSDA Program stems from the fact that it addresses students' special needs not through the diffuse and often uncoordinated efforts of a host of teachers and aides, but through one-on-one attention at the precise point of need, and in differentiated fashion. The CSDA has also enabled the business community to become a key stakeholder in the education of our public school students. To date, more than 150 individual, business and corporate donors, sponsors, and grantors have helped fund every aspect of the CSDA Program—from materials to fees paid to instructors. Accordingly, the CSDA Program has been cost-efficient not only for the school district, but also for Cranford's taxpayers and the parents of program participants.

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### **Project Read**

Manalapan-Englishtown Regional Schools

Dr. John Marciante, Assistant to the Superintendent, 732-786-2750

Project Read is a research-based program that provides instructional strategies and multi-sensory activities to assist students in classroom activities and learning. In an effort to improve NJASK scores for all, but especially for special needs students, this K-8 district embarked on a pilot program. It began with four days of training in the Phonology Strand for the special education teaching staff. Over the next two years, they received training in the other three components. A description of the four components is as follows:

- Phonology – decoding approach based on phonics
- Linguistics – decoding approach presenting phonology, syntax vocabulary and word origins.
- Reading Comprehension – presents the underlying structure and format of language in both expository and narrative forms.
- Written Expression – mastery of sentence structure as well as paragraph development and composition.

Initially, the Project Read methodology was used in replacement resource centers in the district's Primary K-3 schools. Over the past two years, Project Read was integrated into the Intermediate 4-6 schools replacement resource centers, as well as informally introduced into the regular education setting by the in-class support teachers. Based on feedback from the professional staff, as well as recent test results of the NJASK 3 (90% of all special education students were proficient in Language Arts 04/05, 88% in 05/06), it was decided to develop a pilot program that integrated Project Read methodology with the district's anthology for first and second grade students who were identified as being at risk. To provide time for additional reading instruction, the curriculum was adjusted with less time for Science and Social Studies. Following the success of this pilot, a complete integration of Project Read and the anthology was implemented in one kindergarten classroom this current academic year. The continued successful performance of all students in this program has led to the district deciding that for the 07-08 academic year this pilot will become the basis for all kindergarten instruction in the district.

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## **Multiply Disabled**

### **Lindenwold High School Business Buddies Program**

Lindenwold School District

Susan Beal, Director of Special Services, 856-627-8686

The Lindenwold School District provides the Lindenwold High School Business Buddies Program in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The program originated September 1, 2004 and serves students with multiple disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21. It focuses on the academic, therapeutic, social and emotional needs of Multiply Disabled students to promote a successful transition to post-secondary activities and employment. The program includes integrated academic core content instruction with opportunities to transfer basic knowledge into real life situations. Frequent, well-planned and curriculum-related field trips are an integral component of the program. Our core belief is that each student's learning must be individualized and delivered in a "least restrictive environment." This environment must be as close as possible to the student's neighborhood and community. Students have opportunities to self-explore through diagnostic assessments, interest inventories, community service and career sampling activities.

**Transition to Post-Secondary Emphasis.** Students participate in integrated academic courses three to four periods a day. The remaining periods of the day focus on transferring academic skills to pre-employment experiences and community-based field experiences involving both employment exposure and adult recreational opportunities. Each of the students involved in the Lindenwold High School Business Buddies Program focuses on development of functional life skills. Students receive a personal grooming kit and begin the day with time spent on grooming. In September of 2004, each student received a pedometer, rain poncho, umbrella and a personal journal for logging job/trip information. Students live in a small, pedestrian friendly town; we began with short walking trips to job site experiences. Students eventually built up a two-mile round-trip hiking tolerance in a variety of weather conditions. Integrated with these trips were pedestrian safety skills, town training skills and job exposure experience. Students experienced 32 trips in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. Students also gained experience in taking a taxi or the local High Speed Line or a NJ Bus Transit in addition to walking to sites. This allowed students to experience bus schedules and train schedules and to verbalize directions. Students also dealt with using money to pay fares. To enhance money management skills, the program also has a collaborative effort with Commerce Bank in Stratford, NJ. A financial instructor comes into the Business Buddies classroom to teach students about money, banking and financing once a week for 45 minutes.

A highlight of the 2005-2006 program was integration of job exploration with volunteerism. Students participated for three consecutive days at a charity project at the Ronald McDonald House in Camden, NJ. On site at the Ronald McDonald House, students worked on a variety of tasks and were assigned to a high school or college job

mentor for support. Tasks were broken down into clear components. The experience was extremely rewarding to all involved. Students also performed volunteer services for several weeks at a local Animal Shelter. Tasks here involved washing towels and feeding bowls. In addition to community field trips, students participate on a regular basis in performing job activities within the local high school and elementary school. Through the Business Buddies Program, students participate in a variety of activities that serve the students and staff at all of Lindenwold's Public Schools. Teachers utilize the "Job Cards" to break down orders/requests into small achievable component steps. Students apply skills learned in academic classes to complete job assignments. They also have opportunity to interact by phone and in person to clarify jobs.

Students are well known and integrated into the larger school community. They eat lunch in the cafeteria with other students and also participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Both school-site and community experiences are an integral component of the program that provides students with frequent opportunities to integrate academic content instruction and transfer skills to real life situations. The program operates on the theory that students will acquire ability to utilize skills through a "learning-by-doing model." They have opportunity to practice social communication, monetary exchange, routine functional living tasks and age-appropriate recreational activities. The combination of on- and off-site experiences will prepare students for future supported-employment activities.

**Parent Involvement.** Each semester the Business Buddies' parents receive a packet of job sampling/shadowing/life skill and leisure trips incorporating adaptive physical education and integrated academics. They are informed of trip dates and locations. Parents are then able to attend or integrate into the job experience activity. This opportunity provides immeasurable feedback as to how their student is progressing toward achievement of life-skill goals. They have opportunity to witness their student in off-campus activities either walking or utilizing public transportation and accomplishing tasks including personal communication skills, finance skills, self-grooming, job exploration and experience, and journal log documentation.

**Evaluation.** Student progress and achievement is monitored through academic curricular assessments, report cards, annual reviews and portfolio assessments.

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## **Employment Transitions**

Delaware Valley Regional High School District

Dr. Frank Guenther, Director of Special Services, 908-996-2132 x 2741

The essence of this program is career exploration through realistic, hands-on work experiences. This program is a vocational program offered at Delaware Valley for special education students. It prepares them for what is expected of an employee on the

job, steps to take to apply for and get a job, job sampling, and job placement with a mentor.

The program runs the last three periods of the day. Students' mornings are devoted to English/Reading, Math, and Physical Education, Science, Social Studies or an elective as per individual student needs.

The course runs in three sections:

The first section would be employment skills preparation where students would study all the elements necessary for successfully obtaining and keeping a job. Topics would include applications, interviews, time cards, appropriate attitude, dress, demeanor, etc. Another part of this section would focus on life skills such as using money, making change, using the computer, organizing, filing, phone skills, looking for information, recording messages, etc.

The second section would be a survey of job situations. This would involve finding information about all of the jobs that might be associated with a particular site. Such information could be incorporated by having people from the community come speak to students in class about the skills necessary to work in their areas – and then, having students go to various job sites to learn what the jobs are like and what employees do.

The third section would be job placement. For older students, this would involve assessing their skills and interests, then matching them up with employment for a half day, two to three days per week. They would leave school and go to their job site. The teacher would visit and supervise, working with the employer to make this as successful as possible for the students. After graduation, it is hoped that the student's employment might continue at the site where he or she was placed.

An actual schedule might look like the following:

September/October –

All students would participate in skills-for-employment class. Students would survey jobs, how to apply for them, job expectations, and simple skills required of most positions.

November/May –

Students would travel to job sites to see actual workers in various job situations. They would continue classroom study. Small jobs would be brought to the classroom so that students would perform actual tasks of workers in various fields using real tools of the trade.

Some students might participate in job sampling where they would go to two or three job sites for a specified amount of time – two weeks to one month – during which they would actually work in a job situation.

Other students would be placed in a job situation for two to three days per week for the remainder of the school year.

Aides would go with these students as job coaches, and the teacher of the program would serve as the job mentor or supervisor. On alternate days, they would join other students from the class.

June –

Students would return to the classroom for follow-up activities. Summer employment could occur for students returning to DVR in the fall, and permanent employment could occur for students graduating from DVR.

To sum up, students will acquire the skill to investigate the world of work in relation to their own abilities and desires, thus enabling them to make informed career choices. Units of study would include locating, evaluation and interpreting career information, investigating a variety of traditional and non-traditional career paths, interacting and working cooperatively with others, learning to make decisions, setting goals, understanding the importance of having a career plan, and developing awareness of their abilities, skills, and interests.

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## **Multiply Disabled High School Program**

Sterling Regional High School District

James Gallagher, Supervisor of Special Services, 856-784-1840

Sterling High School has a wonderful program for Multiply Disabled (MD) students. The program consists of a class of about 8-10 students who work on a range of skills from daily living to academic subjects. The students are included in some mainstreamed classes, such as computer graphics and keyboarding. The program was designed to allow us to back to the home school students placed out of district. The program has gained recognition, and it is now receiving students from other districts.

The Sterling High School MD program includes an extended school year program where the students are not only enriching their learning, but are also participating in planned social activities. For instance, last summer the students took field trips to the Adventure Aquarium in Camden and the Philadelphia Zoo, and then took the Duck Tour of Philadelphia.

As with any program in a school, part of the reason for its success is the teachers and aides that work with these special students. We are very lucky in that all of our aides have

at least an associate's degree and some even have teaching certificates and are pursuing master's degrees. They are all very caring and special people who have made connections with these students. The teacher is not only special education certified, but also certified in physical education which allows him or her to teach a modified gym class to these students.

The MD program has been a great success at Sterling High School, and we are always looking to improve upon it.

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## **Preschool Handicapped**

### **Project Excel**

Wall Township

Sharon Cox, Director of Special Services, 732-556-2121

Project Excel is our integrated program at the Primary School. The teaching staff screens typically developing children to serve as role models for our preschool disabled students. Project Excel students possess age-appropriate skills in language, behavior, academics and social skills and are educated in the same class with our Preschool Disabled students.

**Philosophy.** The Primary School's main goal is to make each child feel special. We build our students' self-esteem by encouraging them to feel good about all of their accomplishments. There are opportunities for individual and group experiences. To fulfill the child's needs, we provide a wide variety of activities, such as art, music, science, cooking, role-playing and outdoor play. Through meaningful play experiences, our preschool children develop concepts and skills basic to the more difficult tasks of learning in later years. We endeavor to create a warm and accepting atmosphere where children are free to learn, to create, and to grow.

The philosophy of the Preschool class of the Wall Township School district holds basically consistent with the philosophy of the district. Although exceptional children may have varied talents, they have a right to have these developed to their maximum in accordance with the basic dignity of human nature. These youngsters present issues that no one method, technique, or program can solve. This area of education, more than any other, indicates the uniqueness of the individual. Each child will go through a somewhat predictable cycle of developmental stages. However, every child has a rate and pattern of growth particular to himself. We view children as total beings. The physical, social, emotional and intellectual aspects of development depend on and support each other. These aspects are not separate, and one should not be pushed ahead of the others. We cannot produce, speed up or ignore readiness. When children are ready, and only then, will they walk, talk, read and perform other academic functions with ease. This requires individualized programs designed to meet the special needs of each student.

The ultimate objectives in the educational program for exceptional children are the same as those set forth for all children. However, the methods, content and material differ, and

must be designed to fit the needs and capabilities of the handicapped student. Constant evaluation from a variety of sources and the use of a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities complete the implementation of this program.

One of the chief concerns of the curriculum is that adults accept the children as they are cognitively, linguistically, and developmentally. Such acceptance means that adults do not try to maneuver children into preconceived roles ordained by the methods or objectives of the program but view them instead as participants, contributing members, so to speak, who help to create the program. This results almost invariably in a positive and supportive relationship between adults and children.

The Preschool program seeks to strengthen all aspects of the child's development. The young child learns best actively and physically, and the program includes opportunities individually designed to build a foundation of skills in all areas. The program provides an environment in which the preschool child's school readiness needs are the primary focus. Typically developing peers are essential to this process as children often learn through imitation and modeling of other children their age.

Another essential part of the program is family involvement that utilizes daily communication between home and school, while offering parents varied opportunities to acquire skills, knowledge and techniques to better understand and cope with the needs of their preschool child.

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### **The Preschool Program**

Lincoln Park Elementary School

Grace Marinello, Director of Special Services, 973-696-9150

The goal of the Preschool Program in the Lincoln Park Elementary School is to provide all students with a nurturing and enriching learning environment in the public school setting, where they can be given the opportunity to grow and thrive. The program began in September 2006 with 12 students aged 4-5 years. During the school year two more students were found eligible for the program. The Director of Special Services oversees the program, which includes a teacher certified in both general and special education. There are two aides, one who is trained in both applied behavior analysis and discrete trial teaching. A full range of therapies is offered to those who qualify including speech, occupational and physical therapies. The IDEA Preschool Grant, tuition and the district's budget fund the program.

Current trends in early childhood education indicate that children who participate in preschool programs are more ready for school than children who do not; and that early childhood education should be provided to young children in a caring, loving, safe, nurturing, creative, and inclusive environment. Research also indicates that special needs students who are properly supported in typical early childhood settings develop socially, behaviorally and developmentally as well, if not better, than their counterparts in

segregated settings.

Positive outcomes are reported for children with disabilities and typically developing children in inclusive settings alike. Researchers have found that the behavior of children with disabilities appears to be positively affected by participation in activities and classrooms with typically developing children. In addition, participating in inclusive settings appears to positively affect the attitudes typically developing children's attitudes toward children with disabilities and increases their knowledge of certain types of disabling conditions.

The Preschool Program in the Lincoln Park Elementary School is a place where all children can realize their potential. This half-day program meets four times per week in the elementary school. It addresses the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality in its curriculum. The program educates students classified Preschool Child with a Disability and seven (or more) typically developing students. The typically developing students are selected by a publicly held lottery and a modest tuition of \$1,500 is charged for the school year.

The Preschool Program in the Lincoln Park Elementary School is innovative because it is an inclusive program, and it is offered in the public school that the children would attend were they not disabled. The literacy program used is the preschool level program for the kindergarten reading program employed within the district. Another innovation of the program is that the students receive all the special subject area courses taught by certified staff including physical education, art, music and library. Computer education is provided within the classroom. Parent workshops are held monthly and focus on timely topics.

Our program has been well received by parents of special needs students and typically developing students alike. Several school districts in Morris and Middlesex counties have used the template, which we created, to start their own programs. The program has broken through the barriers erected by fear, ignorance and silence. Our parents joke that the preschool has been inclusive for them as well.

The Preschool Program in the Lincoln Park Elementary School can be judged based upon the structure, content, environment, materials and standards and deemed a success. We have judged the program a success because the walls, which kept special needs students out and typical students in, are down and the bridges are in place. One needs only to see these children together to realize that there is really no line separating them, at this point. If we are able to keep this momentum going, what an incredible outcome it will be. It will be our goal as we look to the future of this program.

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### **Inclusive Preschool Program**

Englewood Cliffs Public Schools

Joseph Spano, Principal/Child Study Team, 201-567-6151 x 212

In an effort to reach out to all of our special needs students and educate them with their general education peers, we have put several practices into effect. We have implemented an Inclusive Pre-school Program, thereby hiring a dually certified preschool teacher and adopting a state-approved curriculum. Integrating this program allowed our special needs preschoolers, originally placed out of district, to come back in district and attend school with related services.

Within the elementary school, we hired additional special education teachers and support staff so that all grades followed a collaborative teaching model, keeping all children in the classroom with appropriate modifications made to the curriculum where needed. With this program implemented district-wide, we felt we could appropriately meet the needs of our autistic children as well, who were being served in out-of-district placements, and re-acclimate them into district. To make the transition successful, we took the necessary actions and proactively trained teachers and hired certified para-professionals.

Additionally, we have taken a very active and personal role with the parents of the autistic children, who were understandably apprehensive and anxious. Having had their children achieve success in the “private” special education school setting, they were reluctant to bring their children back in-district. We handled each parent’s concern very patiently and with empathy, involving him or her in every step of his or her child’s program.

As more children have become diagnosed with autism in the district, we have seen a very real need to engage parents to work in conjunction with the children’s current programs. Our vision is to focus not only on training the parents to deal with their child’s academic, social, behavioral, and adaptive functioning, but more significantly, hope it will serve as a support system, linking them with the school, other parents, and the community.

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## **Supported Preschool for Our Washington Township Students**

Washington Township Schools, Mercer County

Christine Sevilla, Director of Special Services, 609-632-0944 x 4410

**SPROWTS** is a collaborative (integrated) preschool program housed in Robbinsville High School, serving 3 and 4-year-old children. SPROWTS is a developmentally oriented program based on the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for preschool. The class consists of typically developing children and children with developmental challenges learning together in a structured and enriched environment.

The SPROWTS program incorporates activities into the instructional time based on children’s individual learning styles. The goal is to provide an enhanced preschool environment that meets the social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive needs of all of the students. Occupational and speech therapies are integrated within the classroom

setting.

The inclusion of this in-district program has enabled Washington Township to provide programs to our preschoolers in the least restrictive environment. The district has been able to save considerable funds because, prior to the creation of this program, students requiring an integrated preschool program were sent to out-of-district placements. Also, typically developing students are charged tuition for this program, which brings revenue into the district as well.

A unique component to the SPROWTS program is the involvement of high school students. Later this school year, high school juniors in the Child Care II classes at Robbinsville High School will observe and interact with the preschoolers in the SPROWTS program in order to explore the teaching profession. The purpose is to assist in helping students understand the many aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, preparation, behavior management, classroom organization, etc. The plan is to continue next year with a Child Care III class that would create more specific opportunities for students to actually plan and present mini-lessons to the preschoolers.

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## **Professional Development**

### **Social Service and School Partnership**

Brick Township Public Schools

Alan Ferraro, Director of Special Services, 732-785-3080

The Ocean County Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Council (CIACC), in cooperation with the Brick Township Public Schools, has developed a partnership of state agencies and school districts. The mission of the partnership is to promote, develop and enhance collaborative efforts among the schools, the state Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, New Jersey Child Protection Services and social agencies to improve the well-being of at-risk children.

The objective of this partnership is to enhance the referral process, collaboration, and training programs for both state agencies and educational providers. This project has been presented to the State Wide Joint Education and State Behavioral Health Committee and the state wide CIACC Conveners. This initiative has been described as innovative and has been applauded by state groups reviewing the project.

To date, liaisons have been identified from each school district and school building of Ocean County and from providers in the Division of Behavioral Health and in the New Jersey Division of Child Protection Services. An ongoing training model is being developed to address the following topics:

- o Nature and scope of social services
- o Service access/504/IDEIA/Intervention Referral Services

- o Confidentiality and information sharing
- o Matching children to appropriate social services
- o Procedures and referral system
- o Inter-agency agreement content
- o Social Service Eligibility
- o Length of social service eligibility
- o Social Service School entry and protocol
- o Reporting potentially missing or abused children
- o Attendance
- o Home Instruction
- o Discipline Requirements
- o Transportation
- o Suicide prevention
- o Shelter Homebound Service
- o Harbor House Homebound-transportation
- o Homeless Service

This program shall have on-going scheduled intensive training for the identified state and school professionals. The goal of the training shall be the improved understanding and coordination of services for students in need. The agencies participating in the training are indicated as follows:

<b>Behavioral Health Services, Child Protective Services and Education Systems Partnership</b>	
<b>Ocean County Children’s Inter-Agency Coordinating Council</b>	
<b>Child Protective Services</b>	<b>Education</b>
Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)	School District Liaisons*
Behavioral Health Services	Individual School Contact*
Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services (PESS)	Liaison/Contact Suggestions:  Guidance School Based Youth Services Administration Child Study Team School Nurse Student Assistance Counselor
NJ Division of Children’s Behavioral Health Services  Family Support Organization (FSO) Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS) Youth Case Management (YCM) Care Management Organization (CMO) Traumatic Loss Coalition Emergency Response Team	
Ocean County Department of Human Services	

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## **Support**

### **B.E.A.C.O.N.**

Jersey City Public Schools

Priscilla Petrosky, Associate Superintendent, 201-915-6079

**Description.** Project BEACON embraces the Department of Special Education's goal of Bridging Educational Achievement for Children's Ongoing Needs. This project offers on-going support services that enhance teaching and advance learning to all students in all schools throughout the Jersey City School District.

**Goals.** The goal of the program is to enhance cooperation among the teaching community through mutual involvement and responsibility by:

- Improving educational experience for all our students
- Creating and maintaining an environment that supports, promotes and celebrates diversity
- Providing field-based professional development
- Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement

**Target Population:** Special education students, general education students, inclusion students, bilingual education students

**Recommended Staff.** The program involves specially trained professionals, including special education, general education and bi-lingual education teachers.

**Program Location.** This program serves all of the districts high schools, elementary schools, middle schools and special programs.

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### **Central Core of Support**

West Essex Regional

Judith Ulchinsky, Director of Special Services, 973-228-1200 x 221

West Essex has a unique support program that is working effectively. The Special Services Department wraps the entire program around a central core of services. Each period of the nine-period day, a special education teacher is assigned the role of communication teacher at one central location. A special education teacher is also assigned to the role of itinerant teacher. The communication period counts as a duty period and the itinerant period counts as a teaching assignment for the staff.

The non-instructional responsibilities of Special Education Teacher during the communication period are:

- Assist with the interpretation and writing of IEPs and attend conferences as needed;
- Notify case managers when adjustments to students' programs may be necessary;
- Be available to all teachers;
- Assist teachers with understanding how to adapt/modify assignments & tests;
- Provide parental contacts.

The itinerant special education teacher will be assigned to classes based solely on students' needs and not by content subject matter. The special education teacher is a specialist in accommodating and modifying programs to meet students' needs (s)he is not the content specialist in general education.

The responsibilities of the Itinerant Teacher are:

- Work with students and teachers implementing IEP strategies (knowledge of mainstream accommodations and modifications);
- Assist teacher aides in the implementation of students' programs;
- Suggest strategies and methods to teachers and aides to assist students in their efforts to be successful;
- Communicate with the teacher of strategies, guidance counselors, and case managers as needed.

These services have allowed the district to stabilize special education teaching staff while managing communication issues and general support concerns.