

October 2006

### Especially for Parents

- As part of a support network for parents of students with disabilities, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) provides specially trained parent mentors, called parent ombudsmen, to assist families who are navigating the special education process. Additional information about the ombudsmen and how to contact them can be found at <http://www.fcps.edu/ss/ombudsmen/index.htm>.
- The Professional Development and Support Services section of the Office of Special Education (OSE) has a new director, William Reeder, and a new name, *Assessment, Assistive Technology, and Support Services*. The change in name better reflects the broader range of support that is provided for students with disabilities throughout FCPS. Cheryl Temple is the new coordinator for Assistive Technology Services (ATS).
- The Parent Resource Center and The SpecialCare Program of the Mass Mutual Financial Group will be presenting two sessions of a special needs planning seminar for parents. Topics will include special needs trusts, guardianships and conservatorships, trusteeships, and other areas relating to protecting a child's financial future. For more information, go to the website of the Parent Resource Center, [www.fcps.edu/ss/prc](http://www.fcps.edu/ss/prc) and choose "Workshops."
- Career and Transition Services (CTS) is offering several workshops for parents this October:
  - October 16, 7:10-8:20 p.m., Hayfield Secondary: *Considerations for Students with Disabilities in the College Admissions Process*
  - October 21, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Falls Church High School: *Moving On to Life in the Community: Independent Living/Vendor Resource Fair*
  - November 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Madison High School or November 9, 4:30-6:00 p.m., Lee High School: *Career and Transition Services Open House*
- A survey of 2005 graduates indicates that 95 percent are either employed, participating in post-secondary education, and/or otherwise actively engaged (i.e., volunteer, Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services client). This survey sample included 30 percent of students with learning disabilities and 100 percent of students in all other disability categories.

### Especially for Staff

- Assistive Technology (AT) school-based teams were piloted by ATS in selected schools this past year. The focus of the AT team was to support school-based staff in making decisions related to the assistive technology needs of students. The AT teams are learning to use and integrate school-based resources (equipment and software) throughout the curriculum, involve school-based staff in the use of AT, and develop a strong knowledge base that encourages sharing resources and information with staff. Schools with current AT teams include Marshall Road, Dogwood, Bush Hill, Aldrin, and Shreveview Elementary Schools, Glasgow and Key Middle Schools, and West Potomac High School. Five more schools will add AT teams during the month of October: Hayfield and Kings Park Elementary Schools, Liberty and Stone Middle Schools, and Robinson Secondary. Sixteen more schools will initiate AT teams by the end of the current school year.

- OSE has unveiled a new intranet website designed for new teachers that provides an organized and efficient way for new special education teachers to access information about the many resources available to them through FCPS. The website includes sections on assessment, effective communication, the IEP process, behavior management, etc., as well as a wealth of other information that ALL new teachers will find useful.
- Jennifer Styzens, Autism Partnership consultant, conducted *Fundamentals of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)* training on September 27 for forty secondary teachers and instructional assistants who work with students in low incidence programs. The training provided information about the basics of ABA and examples of their application in addressing both behavior and instruction.
- Leadership Academy Seminars were offered for administrative and other school staff:
  - *Elementary Mathematics Instruction That meets the Learning Needs of All Students* - Oct. 5. This seminar was a collaborative effort between the OSE elementary team and the Office of Elementary Instruction and Library Information Services, Instructional Services.
  - *Using Reading Assessments to Guide Instructional Decisions for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities* – October 18 and November 1. This seminar is a collaborative effort by the OSE elementary team, the Office of Elementary Instruction, Library Information Services, and Marie Parker, an instructional coach at Graham Road Elementary.
- A variety of workshops were offered to special education teachers to support instruction:
  - September 12, 13, 14, and 19 – *Community-Based Instruction (CBI) and Community-based Work Experiences (CWE): Philosophy and Framework*. This training included CBI and CWE guidelines, curriculum content, and appropriate CBI lesson development.
  - September 13 - administration and interpretation of the pre- and post-test assessments given to students enrolled in secondary special education reading electives.
  - September 26 - *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and Key Math Assessment*.
  - September 27 - *Reading Excellence Word Attack and Rate Development Strategy (REWARDS)* reading program.
  - September 27 - *Working with Secondary Students with Asperger's Syndrome*
  - October 4 - *Creating a Framework for Classroom Instruction* will focus on classroom organization and structure, schedules, work systems, visual strategies, structured tasks and assessment
  - October 18 - *Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)* for staff who work with students who are functionally non-verbal and have limited communicative intent.

### **Other**

- Four elementary schools, Rolling Valley, Brookfield, Floris, and Fox Mill, participated in interactive video training in Positive Behavior Support (PBS) on September 28 and 29, bringing the total number of PBS trained schools in FCPS to 71. The Department of Special Services (DSS) facilitated this training in collaboration with Dr. Terry Scott, University of Oregon, and the Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) at the University of Oregon. This interactive video approach to group training is a first for the Center on PBIS and offers both the Center and FCPS the opportunity to examine new ways to provide professional development.
- ATS sponsored the first Northern Virginia AT Coordinators Meeting on Friday, October 6 at Dunn Loring Center. AT coordinators from surrounding school districts and AT staff from George Mason University met to share initiatives, discuss AT issues, and establish goals for the group. The group plans to meet quarterly to examine issues that relate to the Northern Virginia community.

- OSE and Instructional Services (IS) have been working collaboratively to expand awareness among teachers and administrators of the needs of twice exceptional students. Some of the actions/activities to date include;
  - Training for teachers in the gifted/talented (GT) program to enhance differentiated instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, including a University of Virginia on-line course for GT teachers that is focused on reaching special populations.
  - Two day-long professional development sessions with Dr. Shelagh A. Gallagher, an associate professor in the area of special education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
  - Dissemination of the Twice Exceptional newsletter through a link on both the special education and instructional services websites.
  - Joint IS/OSE presentation on strategies to support twice exceptional learners to the FCPS elementary principals at their summer retreat.

The two offices continue to collaborate in an effort to ensure that these students are provided with the strategies and accommodations they need.

- OSE staff trained over 400 teachers on the *IEP Process*, and conducted workshops for over 650 teachers and school staff on the alternate/alternative assessment programs (Virginia Alternate Assessment Program – VAAP, Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) Assessment, and Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program – VSEP).
- McLean High School student Mason Berry and her father, Patrick, participated in a panel discussion, Education Preparation, organized by Ann Deschamps, FCPS transition liaison, for the Youth Transitions Summit in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the Hospital for Sick Children Foundation on September 21. Mason spoke about her experiences in middle and high school Work Awareness and Transition (WAT) programs, the Office Technology and Procedures (OTP) program, the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) program, jobs she has held throughout her school career, and her goals for life after school. Patrick Berry shared his experiences as a parent, how his expectations for goals Mason can accomplish have changed over time, and how his law firm, Baker Botts LLP, has been transformed because of the contribution of transitioning students who are gaining valuable work experience at his firm.
- ATS staff members have been invited to present the following workshops for the *Closing the Gap Assistive Technology Conference* in Minneapolis, MN from October 19 – 21:
  - “Writing by Dictation: Speech Recognition Throughout the Writing Process” - Nancy Icke, Rachel Perella, and Cheryl Temple
  - “Cook Up Success at CPU’s Computer Café” - Lisa Givens, Shelly Lawrence, Sandy Morrissette, and Karen Wiltraut
  - “Empowering Students to be Self-Advocates for Assistive Technology” - Jennifer Carr, Rachel Connelly, and Bill Reeder
  - “Windows to Writing” - Rita Mars and Colleen O’Hara.
- The Earl L. Pulley Career Center will receive an award for empowering individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. This award will be presented by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services on October 26 at the Marriott Washington Dulles Airport Hotel.