

December 2007

About Our Students

- On November 30 a group of students from Thomas Jefferson High School who are members of the Assistive Technology (AT) club, co-sponsored by Assistive Technology Services, visited the preschool program at Belvedere Elementary School to share accessible computer activities they had created. Throughout the school year, AT club members learn to use a variety of assistive technology tools to create accessible interactive literacy activities for young students. These activities are available for teachers throughout the county to use with their students.
- Special education students from Oakton High School traveled by Metrorail to Washington, D.C. to attend a celebration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act at the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum. Students from all over the Washington Metropolitan area divided into groups to visit exhibits on sports, health, and nutrition, famous people with disabilities, assistive technology, and employment where students participated in mock interviews. During the opening ceremony, prominent leaders in the disability community spoke to the students about planning for their future and the importance of setting goals. After visiting the exhibits, students were treated to a free lunch at the museum cafeteria. Many employers were also on hand to provide information about job opportunities and company resources.

Especially for Parents

- On November 8 the preschool social workers and parent resource center presented a parenting workshop entitled, "What is Your Child's Behavior Telling You?" The third in the series of preschool parenting support workshops will be held on Thursday December 13, 2007 from 9:45 to 11:15 am at the Parent Resource Center, 2334 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring VA 22027. Wilson Hurley, LCSW, will present a session entitled: "Surviving the Preschool Years: Self-Care for Parents." For more information, please contact the parent resource center at 703 204-3941.
- Assistive Technology Services (ATS) is offering a series of five trainings focused on the integration of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) into the daily routine of students. This training is open to both staff and parents. In December, the topic was *Integrating AAC into Your Day*. Participants discovered how augmentative and alternative communication devices can be assimilated across the curriculum. A variety of communication systems were demonstrated during this session with suggestions on how to include the AAC user in classroom activities and how to make the communication system a meaningful part of their day (and life). Details about future sessions along with registration information can be found in 'Keep in Touch.' Future sessions will include the following topics:
 - Visuals to foster communication
 - AAC templates
 - AAC and literacy
- The Virginia Department of Education has announced that all students who participate in the Virginia State Assessment Program, including the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, are now

allowed to access some accommodations previously reserved for students with disabilities. These include:

- group size (small group administration)
- environmental accommodations (special lighting, adapted furniture)
- large diameter pencil, pencil grip, etc.
- assistance with directions

These adjustments are now available to all children, and will no longer be coded as testing accommodations on individualized education program (IEP) plans, or on the state assessment materials. The state has indicated that there is no need to addend IEPs to make this change, but will expect the change to be phased in during the coming year.

Especially for Staff

- On November 1 members of the OSE secondary team held a meeting for middle and high school administrators who supervise school-based special education staff. Topics addressed included clinical staffing for students with emotional disabilities, guidelines for the Child Specific Team (CST) process, homebound/home-based services, discipline for students with low incidence disabilities, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) at the secondary level, response guidelines for managing students with challenging behaviors, distribution of individualized education program (IEP) and behavior intervention plan (BIP) information to teachers at the beginning of the school year, and available instructional resources for teachers of students with disabilities.
- On November 1 members of the OSE secondary team provided training to teachers in the implementation of community-based Instruction (CBI) and community work experience (CWE) for students with low incidence disabilities receiving instruction in a functional life skills curriculum. Topics included the philosophy and framework of CBI and CWE, FCPS guidelines for implementation, curriculum content, and the development of appropriate lessons to address skill-development in community environments. Each participant received an updated CBI manual.
- On November 2 and 3 a number of Fairfax County special education teachers and administrators attended a presentation by Brian Iwata, Ph.D., entitled, *“Functional Analysis and Treatment of Severe Behavior Disorders: Methods for Clinicians and Educators”* presented by the Parents of Autistic Children (POAC), Northern Virginia Chapter.
- On November 5 members of the OSE secondary team collaborated with Instructional Services staff from the Office of High School Instruction to provide training to high school special education teachers on how to prepare students for success on WorkKeys® assessments. WorkKeys® Reading for Information and WorkKeys® Applied Mathematics assessments have been identified by the Virginia Department of Education as alternatives to the Standards of Learning (SOL) End of Course (EOC) tests for students to meet literacy and numeracy requirements for the modified standard diploma. The WorkKeys® Writing Assessment is an alternative assessment for students who must pass the EOC English: Writing Test to earn a verified credit.
- On November 8 members of the secondary team conducted a low incidence lead teacher meeting at Devonshire Administration Center. Sixty secondary teachers, inclusive schools resource teachers (ISRT) and pyramid resource specialists (PRS) attended the full day meeting. Presentations included speakers from the Grant Development Office, Assistive Technology Services (ATS), and the Office of Monitoring and Compliance. In addition, Mary Ann Bourgeois, speech and language clinician, and Karen Katzburg, South County High School teacher, presented *“The Art of Communication.”*

- On November 9 fifteen middle and high school mathematics co-teachers attended a full-day workshop on best practices for co-teaching mathematics. The workshop was co-led by Craig Herring, high school mathematics specialist, and a member of the OSE secondary team. The workshop was a follow-up to three days of training that teachers attended in August.
- On November 16 a member of the OSE secondary team collaborated with a member of the gifted and talented office to present a Leadership Academy Seminar to administrators and teachers entitled, *The Twice Exceptional Learner*. The seminar focused on meeting the unique needs and increasing the success of twice exceptional learners through effective programming options and through using research-based learning strategies that promote differentiation in the classroom.
- On November 26 members of the OSE elementary and secondary teams met with administrators of comprehensive service sites regarding best practices for supporting students with emotional disabilities. Topics included procedures for changes in placement, guidelines for challenging behaviors, support for teachers administering the Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment (VGLA), construction of a website for teachers of students with emotional disabilities, reading instruction at the elementary level, and summer school services at the secondary level.
- OSE secondary team staff members provided the following school-based staff training:
 - November 1 – presentation to staff on high functioning autism and Asperger’s syndrome at Whitman Middle School.
 - November 6 – presentation on cooperative learning strategies and implications for special education teachers and administrators at Carson Middle School.
 - November 15 – presentation on research-proven instructional strategies that increase performance for students with disabilities to teachers of students in alternative schools programs.
 - November 28 and 29 - after-school support in mathematics instruction and the Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment (VGLA) at Lanier Middle School.
- OSE preschool specialists and administrators attended the Virginia Department of Education and Technical Assistance Center training on inclusive placement opportunities for preschoolers on Monday, November 26. Turn around training on the process for expanding the inclusive placement opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities took place on December 3 at Keene Mill Elementary for all preschool teachers.
- On November 10 Assistive Technology Services (ATS) hosted the Real Assistive Technology for Everyone (R.A.T.E.) conference at Rachel Carson Middle School. Over 200 people attended this conference, including approximately 50 parents and out-of-county guests. Thirty-two sessions were offered on a variety of topics related to assistive technology. Dr. Yoosun Chung, a professor at George Mason who is also an Augmentation and Alternative Communication (AAC) user, delivered the inspirational keynote address.
- In November nine schools (Bren Mar Park Elementary, Burke School, Camelot Elementary, Cherry Run Elementary, Falls Church High, Shreveewood Elementary, Sleepy Hollow Elementary, South County Secondary, and White Oaks Elementary) joined the 89 schools previously trained in school-wide positive behavior support (PBS). Across a two day training led by Dr. Terry Scott, national PBS consultant, each school-based team began to design the essential features of PBS for their school. The team will complete the planning process on a third day back in their school with a specific start date to be determined.
- Approximately 225 FCPS employees attended a seminar given by Dr. George Sugai, a national consultant and expert on school-wide positive behavior support (PBS) on November 28. Dr. Sugai provided the most recent information relative to the implementation of PBS and emphasized the link between students’ academic and behavioral success.

- Congratulations to selected PBS Leadership Teams for receiving a \$500 mini-grant from the Virginia Department of Education, Training and Technical Assistance Center for Effective Schoolwide Discipline. Award recipients were Dunn Loring Alternative Learning Center, Mountain View Alternative Learning Center, Waynewood Elementary, Armstrong Elementary, Haycock Elementary, Hutchinson Elementary, Oak Hill Elementary, and Franklin Middle. This opportunity was open to newly trained PBS schools. We applaud their efforts in developing a supportive environment for students and staff.
- Staff members from the Office of Special Education (OSE) attended a countywide math vertical articulation meeting on December 5, 2007. School system staff met in pyramid teams that included elementary and secondary math lead teachers, ESOL teachers, pyramid resource specialists, inclusive schools resource teachers, and specialists from Instructional Services. Teams discussed ways to build vocabulary and background knowledge related to math, new math initiatives, and problem solving strategies.
- Staff members from OSE held a workshop entitled *Functional Math* on December 6. This interactive session focused on teaching practical math skills within daily living activities for students who require functional, hands-on learning experiences.
- On December 14 OSE staff will offer two workshops, *Life Skills Curriculum* and *Activities to Support a Life Skills Focus*. These workshops are for staff members working with students who have low incidence disabilities. Participants will learn how to select appropriate skills and develop instructional activities to address objectives from the Standards of Learning and the Aligned Standards of Learning. Registration is through MyPLT
- OSE staff will offer Applied Behavior Analysis Fundamentals training on December 17. This is one of the core training workshops for staff members providing autism services in preschool autism classes and enhanced autism classes.