



# Of Special Interest

Rocky Point School District Special Education Newsletter



## *A Message from Special Education Director Andrea Moscatiello*

I hope that everyone had a nice, restful holiday season and enjoyable winter recess. This month, our special education teachers are preparing for students' annual reviews. If you have a child on the secondary level and have not returned the Level I Parent Questionnaire, please do so immediately. This feedback is extremely important, as our sponsor teachers will be utilizing that data to draft their students' transition goals.

Earlier this year, I announced a new initiative developed by my office aimed at bridging the lines of communication between our schools and parent community. The Director's Roundtables have proven to be an effective outlet at which our parents can speak candidly about the services provided to their children; they have also helped foster collaboration between our department and those we service. I extend my deepest appreciation to all who attended the first two meetings and encourage all to attend the remaining meetings scheduled for this year. The next three meetings will be held on January 17, March 14 and May 16 at FJC in room 135.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2013!

## Supporting Students, Promoting Independence

The Rocky Point School District continuously works to provide students with the tools and resources needed for success. Through a myriad of services and support techniques, the district strives to promote and maximize learning independence in students, both with and without disabilities. Students serviced through the district's special education department and LRE (least restrictive environment) settings are often guided on their path to independence as part of their IEPs (Individualized Education Programs), but from time to time additional services are required based on the student's evolving needs.

Earlier this year, the State Education Department issued a special education field advisory focused on providing assistance to school districts' Committees on Special Education (CSEs) with regard to criteria for providing and discontinuing one-to-one aides. These recommendations are thorough and in concert with the district's belief that this option should only be exercised after a comprehensive exploration of other options, and with clear documentation of the benefits it would provide the student. Moving forward, in compliance with the State Education Department direction, the district will be utilizing these guidelines to determine students' eligibility for such services.

Implementing a one-to-one aide situation is a significant programmatic decision, and, as the need for one may be only temporarily, the district will be considering a time limit recommendation with specific conditions and goals for students who meet the criteria for an aide.

For more about these state guidelines, please visit the state website, [www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/1-1aide-jan2012.htm](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/1-1aide-jan2012.htm).

### **Understanding the State's Guidelines...**

According to the State Education Department's guidelines, providing a 1:1 aide for a student:

- Is a significant programmatic decision.
- Creates a more restrictive learning environment.
- Should only be a temporary solution and thus be accompanied with a time limit recommendation, specific goals and a plan for reduction of 1:1 services.
- Should help to promote and maximize independence.
- Should be implemented as part of a behavioral intervention plan and include an outline of specific role responsibilities.

# Common Core Standards

The Common Core State Standards articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of mathematics and English language arts (ELA). These standards identify the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in college and careers. Students with disabilities – those covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – are not exempt from the need to meet these requirements and therefore must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide a historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities. The continued development of understanding about research-based instructional practices and a focus on their effective implementation will help improve access to mathematics and ELA standards for all students, including those with disabilities.

## Students who meet the Common Core Standards will:

- Demonstrate independence
- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

*Source: Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, page 7. Available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).*

## Parent Connection

Looking to further equip parents with the resources needed to assist their children with attaining educational learning goals, the district hosted a variety of workshops earlier this year.

Several parents attended two informative fall workshops at Rocky Point Middle School, which the department coordinated with Long Island Parent Center presenter Helene Fallon. During the evening events, Ms. Fallon spoke with the parents and other attendees about self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

In support of students with autism, district professionals Megan McGuire and Denise Valvo conducted an Autism Parent Workshop in late November. During the workshop, special education teachers spoke with attendees about different strategies to use when assisting children with autism. Additional Autism Parent Workshops are scheduled for March 20 and May 22 at 5 p.m. in the middle school library.



*Members of the district's special education department are pictured here with Long Island Parent Center presenter Helene Fallon (center).*

## Social Learning While Learning Socially

The Peer Networking Group began this November under the guidance of teacher Denise Valvo and social worker Jennifer Zaffino. As part of the program, secondary school students in the district who are receiving social skills training (as well as those enrolled in the Life Skills program) meet monthly with 25 general education student volunteers to practice the social skills they are working to develop in class. Research shows that using peers to teach social interaction skills increases the likelihood that the student identified with social impairments will interact appropriately with other peers in other settings. As such, the role of non-special education students will be to encourage, enhance, model and reinforce appropriate social interactions.

The general education students were selected for participation in this program by their guidance counselors based on their positive character traits and regular displays of compassion.

## Enhancing Practices

As part of the district's internal efforts to improve instructional practices, continued work was done this December with regard to fostering the sense of an inclusive classroom. Working with a representative from Access 7 Services, Inc., district teachers received CTD (consultant teacher direct) training. During the workshops, the teachers discussed the inclusion philosophy, explored techniques for implementing collaborative teaching practices and differentiated instruction, and assessed current protocols.



*District teachers received CTD training this December from a representative from Access 7 Services, Inc.*

# Understanding Behavioral Intervention Plans

## What is a behavioral intervention plan?

A behavioral intervention plan is a plan that is based on the results of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and, at a minimum, includes a description of the problem behavior, global and specific hypotheses on the cause of the problem behavior, and intervention strategies that include positive behavioral supports and services to address behavior.

## When must a behavioral intervention plan be developed?

The Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) must consider the development of a behavioral intervention plan for a student with a disability when the:

- Student with a disability is exhibiting persistent behaviors that impede his or her learning or that of others, despite consistently implementing general schoolwide or classroomwide interventions.
- Student's behavior places the student at risk of harm or injury.
- CSE or CPSE is considering a more restrictive program or placement as a result of student behavior.
- Student is subject to disciplinary actions and determination has been made that the behavior is related to the student's disability.

## What information must a behavioral intervention plan include?

### A behavioral intervention plan must identify:

- A baseline measure of the behavioral problem, including frequency, duration and intensity of the targeted behaviors.
- Intervention strategies to be used to alter antecedent events to prevent the occurrence of the behavior, teach individual alternative and adaptive behaviors to the student, and provide consequences for the targeted inappropriate behaviors and alternative acceptable behaviors.
- A schedule to measure effectiveness of the interventions, including frequency, duration and intensity of the targeted behaviors at scheduled intervals.

## For a student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others, what information must be included in the IEP?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) must indicate if a service, intervention, accommodation or other modification is needed to address the student's behavior that impedes his or her learning or that of others. The student's need for a behavioral intervention plan must be documented in the IEP and such a plan must be reviewed annually by the CSE or CPSE.

*Legal Reference 8 NYCRR-Sections 200.1 (MMM), 200.22 (b), and 201.2 (a)*

## Special Education Services Defined

Special education is:

- Free.
- “Specially designed” or specialized instruction that adapts content, methodology and delivery of instruction.
- Designed to meet unique needs of the child with a disability and addresses needs that result from the disability.
- Delivered in the classroom, at home or in other settings.
- Instruction to “ensure access to general curriculum.”
- Instruction that allows the child to meet educational standards of the school system (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 46762).

*Source: Special Needs Advocacy Resource Book: What You Can Do Now to Advocate for Your Exceptional Child's Education, page 106.*



# News from Around the Schools



## *Teaming Up to Compete*

Rocky Point High School students recently participated in an Athletics for the Challenged track and field program at Shoreham-Wading River High School, an event for which they spent about a week preparing. During the event, eight district students completed the one-mile walk/run in their team uniforms while supporters, including district administrators, cheered them on. After the timed event, each student received a ribbon to wear around his or her neck and left looking forward to the next Athletics for the Challenged event, a soccer contest at Brentwood High School.

## *Fire Safety*

In celebration of Fire Safety Month and as part of their System 44 reading program work, the fourth-grade students in David Comando's class at Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School read about out-of-control fires and the historic Yellowstone National Park wildfire of 1988. During the study, Mr. Comando, who volunteers with the Cutchogue Fire Department, showed the students his different pieces of firefighting protective gear and discussed fire safety rules and the importance of smoke detectors. He also tasked the students with sharing the lessons they learned with their family and friends. After proving that they were ready to be fire safety ambassadors in the community, the students each received a fire safety t-shirt, pencil and ruler, coloring book, folding fire truck and coupon for McDonald's.



# Disability Awareness Month



In honor of Disability Awareness Month, Rocky Point students had the opportunity to recognize unique challenges and storied accomplishments of those with special needs both locally and nationally. Teachers were encouraged to introduce lessons that promote awareness of different disabilities.

For their first thematic unit of the year, "All About Me," kindergarten students in Elizabeth Filippi and Nicole Fisher's class at Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School discussed the various character traits that make each person unique and read several stories about how the world is made up of all kinds of people. As a follow-up to their lesson, kindergartner Samantha Palmese and her mother MaryAnne gave a special presentation in which they described one of Samantha's unique personal traits – her severe light sensitivity condition. The program not only helped the students better understand Samantha's condition, but also brought a greater awareness to the different types of visual impairments that individuals can have.

# Upcoming Autism Presentation for Students

Rocky Point middle school and high school students will have the chance to learn more about autism during two informational presentations scheduled for the end of January. During the programs, a representative from Stony Brook University's Cody Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities will speak with the students about autism spectrum disorders in an effort to increase students' awareness of autism's many different manifestations, including Asperger's syndrome. Additional emphasis will be placed on the different symptoms of these disorders, how to foster a person-centered understanding of the challenges they place on individuals, the general prognosis of those who are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, and the advancements researchers have made with regard to these items.





# Exploring the Work Force



As part of the district's Life Skills program, students are afforded the opportunity to engage in a type of hands-on learning that will benefit them for years to come. This year the district has partnered with the Career & Employment Options vocational work program, which is helping to provide career employment opportunities to students. The CEO program, which runs three days a week, enables students to work at several community businesses and receive on-the-job training. During their class time, students continue to work on their resumes, improve the skills needed for the different jobs and learn the vocabulary they will use while working in the varied professions.

“Along with learning to implement the academic skills they are acquiring in the classroom, the students are also able to fine-tune the social skills they will need when they graduate from our program,” stated teacher Janet McLaughlin. “This is a wonderful way for the students to continue to develop the basic independent living skills that life requires them to possess.”

In addition to the hands-on vocational training, students are also able to visit other local establishments to learn about additional crafts and professions and ask the employees about their fields of expertise.



# Learning Resources Available

Parents are often baffled by the problems presented by a child with learning disabilities and unsure of how to address these challenges. Often this “invisible disability” does not become obvious until a child reaches school age, and even then, difficulties may be subtle. Below you will find a wealth of information on understanding learning disabilities, negotiating the special education process and resources that will help you help your child.

**American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry – Facts for Families:** [www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/facts\\_for\\_families](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families)

The AACAP developed Facts for Families to provide concise and up-to-date information on issues that affect children, teenagers and their families.

**Autism Speaks:** [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

This site provides facts about autism, a resource guide, advocacy information and news updates.

**HelpKidzLearn:** <http://helpkidzlearn.com>

This website is a collection of free software for young children and those with learning difficulties to play online. Inclusive Technology Ltd., a commercial organization that provides assistive technology and educational software to individuals, created HelpKidzLearn. Many of the activities at HelpKidzLearn are free samples taken from their own software titles. Inclusive’s primary focus is special needs education, but they also have catalogs for early years and primary education.

**Learning Disabilities Association of America:** [www.ldanatl.org](http://www.ldanatl.org)

Since 1963, the Learning Disabilities Association of America has provided support to people with learning disabilities, their parents, teachers and other professionals. At the national, state and local levels, LDA provides cutting-edge information on learning disabilities, practical solutions and a comprehensive network of resources. These services make the Learning Disabilities Association of America a leading resource for information on learning disabilities.

**National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities:** [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities provides a wealth of information on a wide range of disabilities found in infants, toddlers, children and youth. The site also provides easy-to-read information on IDEA, early intervention services and special education.

**Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights Center:** [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

PACER provides individual assistance, workshops, publications and other resources to help families make decisions about education and other services for their children.

**Parent Center Network:** [www.parentcenternetwork.org](http://www.parentcenternetwork.org)

The Parent Center Network provides a range of resources that parents can use in order to improve outcomes for their children with disabilities as well as their individual families.

## Extra Help!

Extra help is available at all four district schools. Please see your child’s teacher for more details!



# Office Staff, There to Help

The special education office staff members work hard each day to support the students, parents and other staff. If you have any questions regarding any correspondence you receive or need to ask a question, please reach out to these professionals who will be more than happy to assist you.



Pat Williamson  
631-744-1600,  
ext. 7536



Mary Caccavale  
631-744-1600,  
ext. 7532



Bettie Manger  
631-744-1600,  
ext. 7105



Evie Gallino  
631-744-1600,  
ext. 7508



Kari O'Connor  
631-744-1600,  
ext. 7560

## Ladders of Support

### Who to contact when you have a problem

Start with the special education teacher and/or sponsor teacher, general education teacher, or support personnel.

Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School  
631-744-1600, ext. 7200  
Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School  
631-744-1600, ext. 7400  
Rocky Point Middle School  
631-744-1600, ext. 6020  
Rocky Point High School  
631-744-1600, ext. 6030

#### Building Principals

Frank J. Carasiti Elementary School  
Virginia Gibbons  
[vgibbons@rockypoint.k12.ny.us](mailto:vgibbons@rockypoint.k12.ny.us)

Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School  
Linda Towlen  
[ltowlen@rockypoint.k12.ny.us](mailto:ltowlen@rockypoint.k12.ny.us)

Rocky Point Middle School  
Dr. Scott O'Brien  
[sobrien@rockypoint.k12.ny.us](mailto:sobrien@rockypoint.k12.ny.us)

Rocky Point High School  
John DeBenedetto  
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#### Special Education Coordinator Paul Walia

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#### CSE/CPSE Administrator Dr. Terence Reilly

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#### CSE/CPSE Administrator Beth Apostoli

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#### Director of Special Education Andrea Moscatiello

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#### Assistant Superintendent

##### Dr. Deborah Deluca

631-849-7568  
[ddeluca@rockypoint.k12.ny.us](mailto:ddeluca@rockypoint.k12.ny.us)

#### Superintendent

##### Dr. Michael F. Ring

631-849-7561  
[supt@rockypoint.k12.ny.us](mailto:supt@rockypoint.k12.ny.us)

#### Board of Education

Email on BOE web page  
Write to: Rocky Point District Office  
90 Rocky Point-Yaphank Road  
Rocky Point, NY 11778

#### New York State Department of Education Special Education Division

[www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)



[www.rockypointschools.org](http://www.rockypointschools.org)

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Dr. Michael F. Ring

#### *District Mission Statement*

*The mission of the Rocky Point Union Free School District is to develop each child's full potential in a nurturing and supportive student-centered environment that will promote a foundation for lifelong learning.*