

Greetings from the Director of Special Education

Dear families,

As we approach the holiday season, District 96 Special Education staff would like to share some of the professional development that they have received this fall. On October 13, Kelly Rathbun, LADSE Autism Specialist presented the ABC's of Autism to 35 District 96 Paraprofessionals. The presentation was well received because of the many helpful strategies to enhance our students' success. Paul O'Malley, LADSE Behavior Coordinator presented a Behavior Management workshop to 51 District 96 Special Education staff on November 20. We wish to thank Paul not only for this worthwhile presentation, but for the many hours he has devoted to helping students and staff in our two Fully Supported classrooms. Here are some highlights of our staff development:

Meg O'Brien, Administrative Coordinator and Ellen Weinstein, LADSE School Psychologist have met two times with LADSE for training on Rtl. During the first meeting, current practices being implemented in our district was discussed. The second meeting was with Dr. Kevin Feldman in regards to vocabulary development. Dr. Feldman is also working internally with RBHS teachers. Meg O'Brien, Renee Lebeque, Laurie Swanson, Vicky Vizek, Sarah Hickey, and Donna Considine will be discussing research based designs at the next meeting.

District 96 Social Workers, Trudi Kessler, Laurie Swanson and Teacher Erin Adelman and Student Teacher Danae Calvo attended the workshop "Autism: Keys to Effective Inclusion" on September 29th. Trudi Kessler, Laurie Swanson, and Carrie Levin attended "Response to Intervention (Rtl) and Behavior- The Application of Rtl Principles to Behavior/Social Emotional Learning" on Nov. 20.

Fully Supported Teacher Barbara Johnson attended the Handwriting Without Tears workshop in October. In November, she attended the district I Pod technology training. In Mrs. Johnson's classroom the students worked on writing Thanksgiving now and long ago, thankful thoughts, and turkey facts.

Donna Considine, Resource Teacher at Central School attended the following conferences: July 09-Donna attended a 2 day conference entitled: Response to Intervention. October 15-Donna attended a workshop by Dr. Alfred Tatum entitled: Providing Responsive Literacy Instruction for Struggling Readers. This seminar took

place at Francesca's Fiore's in Forest Park from 4 – 5 pm. October 18-Donna attended a workshop sponsored by the Magic Tree Bookstore in Oak Park entitled The ABC's of Growing Young Writers given by the author, Esther Hershenhorn. It took place at a bed and breakfast called Under the Ginkgo Tree. October 23-Donna attended an excellent conference entitled: Response to Intervention: Intervening with Students in Reading.

Donna Considine is also attending the LADSE Rtl Coaching Project this year to become one of District 96's Internal Rtl Coaches. The first meeting was an overview of this project and the second meeting took place on 10/23/09 with Dr. Kevin Feldman presenting. The second meeting, held on 11/18 at LADSE, explored consulting strategies.

Donna is using a Wilson Reading Program called Foundation 1 & 2 for her first and second grade reading students. This is a multi-sensory reading program that also integrates writing and dictation with a strong emphasis on decoding. Students have been practicing their fluency using paired reading passages and guided reading books.

In 1st and 2nd grade, Donna is using a research-based mathematics program called Voyages. She has been focusing on place value, number reading, numeration, greater than and less than along with even and odd numbers.

Since the Apple seminar, Donna has been recording her students' reading. She has created an audio file on each student that can be downloaded onto the ITouch and can be played at parent/teacher conferences. The children love reading into the computer and then listening to themselves read the story. It's very motivating and great for practice!

Donna has also downloaded some free apps from the iTunes store in her ITouch. Her students use this application called: Sight Words, which even reads the words to the students.

Ellen Weinstein our LADSE School Psychologist is the treasurer of the Illinois School Psychologists' Association, and a Grassroots Political Activist, in the Illinois Education Association. She attended Illinois School Psychologists' Association Fall Conference,

on October 15, 2009. She attended sessions on: The Neuropsychology of Emotional Disturbance, presented by Dr. Steven G. Feifer and Special Education Legal Update, presented by Sraga Hauser, LLCI. She has participated in recent conferences regarding the problem-solving model and Response to Intervention (RtI) in cooperation with LADSE. The most recent seminar she attended discussed collaboration, coaching and training and was presented by Dr. Kevin Feldman. She also attended November 7th training on political advocacy, candidate recommendation process and upcoming education legislation (HB 174) sponsored by Illinois Education Association.

On November 12, 15 Special Education staff members received training in new Apple applications for struggling learners. We are excited to have state-of-the-art technological resources for our students.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Sincerely, Dr. Mary Polk