

Staff Bulletin

For the employees of San Diego City Schools



Vol. 77

January 15, 2003

No. 1

A Six-Month Progress Report: Special Education Reorganization

In June 2002, the Board of Education unanimously approved the reorganization of the Special Education Department, making it part of the Institute for Learning. To support its goal of increased efficiency, streamlined operations, and the placement of more resources at school sites, the department has spent the past months implementing the role of Site Based Resource Teachers (SBDRTs) and attempting to increase parent involvement and support.

SBDRTs support principals and teachers, serving as liaisons between special and general education staff and training teachers and paraprofessionals. They also are responsible for coordinating the timely and accurate completion of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and for facilitating the resolution of issues that may arise at school sites. "We wanted SBDRTs to be familiar with all aspects of special education since they serve as conduits to and from schools. By increasing their knowledge and skill levels, they can be the on-site experts and can catch issues before they become problems and work to resolve them,"

said Marysue Glynn, director of instruction.

So far, this approach has been quite successful. "There is better coordination between what's happening at the district level and what's happening at our school," said Rick Novak, principal, Marshall Middle. "Teachers are very happy to have someone who can help with a lot of the administrative aspects of their work so they can focus more on the students."

Janice Pingel, a special education resource teacher at Roosevelt Jr. High, agrees that the district-school collaboration facilitated by SBDRTs is helpful. "The SBDRT model has really added a comfort

(Continued on page three)



New Assessment for Students with Disabilities

The California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) will be offered for the first time in spring 2003 to special education students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. The CAPA is an alternative to the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests and meets the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act. Those laws stipulate that each state must show evidence that all students are included in the statewide

assessment and accountability system.

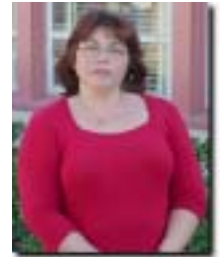
Bob Raines, testing program manager, explained that, "The CAPA will allow the state, district, and teachers to track the progress of our special needs students. These are students who, because of their disabilities, can't participate in traditional testing. Before, they simply weren't tested, or were tested with whatever alternative assessments were identified in the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The CAPA provides the district a standard format

(Continued on page three)

Getting to Know You:

Lora Keller

Ombudsperson, The Center for Student Support and Special Education Services
What are the duties of an Ombudsperson?



We help parents understand what options and services are available and most importantly, help them to make informed choices for their children. Parents are encouraged to take advantage of these options so their children can reach their full potential. We work to resolve issues related to student's special education needs.

There are three of the five positions filled as Ombudspersons. Each of us has a list of schools we serve, which is approximately 3,000 students and respond to 250 - 300 phone calls quarterly.

How did you choose to work in Special Education?

I've worked with families with special needs for 20 years. After my two children were born with disabilities, I volunteered at the hospitals supporting parents whose children had disabilities. I showed them how to navigate through the system, learn what options were available, and offered emotional support.

For four years, I worked with two of my mentors, Dr. Jean Mendoza and Dr. Ellie Lynch from SDSU, in community outreach for *Project Intact*, a grant for aiding families of children with disabilities. Dr. Jean recommended me as a parent facilitator in the Early Childhood Programs at San Diego City Schools, where I worked for three years. I spent two years at the YMCA Childcare

(Continued on page two)

Next Issue . . .

- Online Version
- Budget Update

Lora Keller

(Continued from page one)

Resource Services developing a respite program for children with disabilities. I worked collaboratively with the HOPE Infant Program and wrote a grant to establish a family support center, The Exceptional Family Resource Center, which opened in 1990.

I started in a one-room office in Kearny Mesa which now houses 45 employees in seven locations in San Diego/Imperial Counties. I am very proud of the work we did, but I missed the personal one-on-one contact with families. After 10 years, I felt that I had done all I could and it was time for new leadership.

Fortunately, a position in community involvement opened with San Diego City Schools five years ago. I received my formal training and acquired a certificate in collaboration and later in trauma specialization from SDSU.

I've always been interested in supporting parents with emotional trauma. It was during this time that I realized it wasn't only the parents who needed help in dealing with emotional trauma, but the staff. We forget that as staff members, we are never trained to grieve or have closure when something horrendous occurs, like Columbine.

How do you define "special needs"?

Special needs are defined as emotional, physical, mental, and/or learning disabilities. Sadly, many parents view Special Ed as a dead-end for their child. When I visit with parents, I explain the specific needs of the child, what problems the child has, and what options/resources are available, if any. We also discuss their child's IEP if they like.

Can you explain an IEP?

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program and is a part of IDEA, (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) a federal law designed for students with special instructional needs. The student must meet certain legal requirements to qualify as a student with special needs. Unfortunately, some parents think that because their children are only average-grade students that they should be able to qualify for IEP. **Where can parents find services if they have a problem?**

If a family has a problem or a complaint related to special education I'm called in and do an informal inquiry to observe the student, talk to the family, get a sense of the problem, work with the team, and aid in the

Student Salutes

Deaf special needs students from Madison High School recently raked in the ribbons and medals at the **Special Olympics**. Teachers **Aimee Benner** and **Anna Pineda** coached the team onto a terrific time. A student made up group t-shirts as well to add to the team spirit!

Four district students were recently honored in the 3rd annual **BioCom Nobel Laureate Essay Competition**. They included **Gloria Hoang, Preuss School; Kenta Honjo, San Diego High; Laurel Yianilos, High Tech High; and Lori Alvarado, Morse High School.**

Kumeyaay Elementary School placed third in the **Community Spirit Challenge**, a countywide food drive for the **San Diego Food Bank**. The Kumeyaay students accumulated 12,000 pounds of food, or about 24 pounds per student, and received a \$2,500 technology grant for its effort. Altogether, the food drive brought in more than 185,000 pounds of food which was then distributed to more than 300 local charities that help the needy in San Diego.

A team of 5th graders from **Benchley-Weinberger Elementary** participated in the recent **Legoleague Competition** at Legoland California. The competition calls for students to identify a city with a problem, research the problem and develop a robot built from Legos to assist in the solution. The Benchley team chose a river pollution issue in the city of Detroit. Their presentation included their findings and a demonstration of their robot. The team received the "*Gracious Professionalism Award*" and the "*Team Work Award*" at the conclusion of the competition. Team members included **Alejandro Albanez, Connor Wynveen, Jack McGarry, Rose Forcier, Caroline Clowney, Aliya Levy, Felisha Miles, Jake**

resolution. Usually, it's a communication breakdown on all sides. I offer options for problem resolution and act as an impartial party in solving the problem. If it goes a step further, I help the parents understand and complete the paperwork for due process.

What sort of special education parent-teacher communication is available?

Teachers are required to host annual IEP meetings with the parents; but most hold informal meetings more often. They report



Robertson, Gregory Fink, Andrew Pilsner, Devon Walker, Daniel Coffee and Alyssa Canoff.

Student filmmakers from **Point Loma High School** were invited to feature a film at the **Festival of Festivals**, a film festival held in the Coachella Valley featuring more than 130 international films and world premieres. The students included **Laurel Bausch, Torrey Bell-Edwards, Paula Berkenstadt, Dusty Best, Emelia Brown, Joe Cunningham, Michael Eshleman, Adrian Flores, Adrian Jessop, Andrew Knox, Robbie Lewis, Lauren McCue, Michael Rodriguez, Annie Schlein, Joey Skiff, Nico Smedley, Dylan Silva, Lindsay Stevens, Chloe Wenthur and David Wiczorek.**

Several schools will be sending teams of students to the upcoming **Botball Robotics Competition**, designed to get high school and middle school students interested in and excited about science, information and engineering as they design, construct and program an autonomous robot. Participating schools and their sponsors include **San Diego High**, sponsored by **Cubic Corporation, General Atomics, IEEE and SAIC; Scripps Ranch High, Bell Jr. High and Montgomery Middle**, all sponsored by the district's **School to Career Program; Wilson Middle**, sponsored by **Lockheed Martin**; and **La Jolla High**, sponsored by the **KISS Institute.**

the student's goals and learning objectives. Parents are permitted to call an IEP meeting at any time and the district must comply within 30 days.

Do you have any words of wisdom to pass along to families?

We need to be willing to listen to their needs as well as our own. Often, I see that the child is apprehensive to speak when his parents have told the teacher what they think is best. We need to encourage our students to speak up.

Special Education

(Continued from page one)

level to my job; I feel like now I have a direct pipeline to the central office. I can get answers to questions that used to take days in a much shorter period of time.”

SBDRTs meet each week to continue to refine their jobs and to work on problem solving with their peers. Elementary SBDRT Sarah Baros calls the meetings “a chance for us to get answers from each other and to get ideas of what’s working at other sites. We use our meetings to learn the details of what everyone else needs to know so that we can provide teachers at our sites assistance with the time consuming stuff.”

The department has also created several pilot projects modeled after existing Learning Centers. The district used to send students facing academic challenges to Learning Centers at Whittier, Wangenheim and Kennedy to receive specialized services, which took them away from their regular schools. By developing learning centers on regular education campuses, students are taught using strategies that are specific to their style of learning without spending time in transit.

The department is also increasing the amount and depth of collaborations with other district departments and outside agencies. “Dividing Special Ed into two houses, operation and instruction, means that our operations people can work more closely with transportation, for example, while our instructional people work with the Institute,” according to Carolyn Nunes, director of operations. Additionally,

relationships are being built with community agencies such as the Department of Rehabilitation, the Special Education Employability Department and the district’s School-to-Career Department.

When asked what the future holds for the Special Education Department, Roxie Jackson, special education executive director, said the key is building capacity for all staff working with students receiving

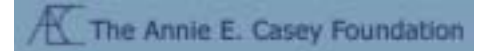


special education services. “The better trained the staff, the better outcomes for our students. Special Education is very complex, both in terms of knowing how students learn and in understanding the legal mandates, so it is imperative to have skilled people at the schools supporting teaching and learning.”

Jackson also hopes to continue building positive parent involvement through the continuation of “Parent Dialogues,” originally begun in November 2002. The department has selected four topics, which include the IEP Process and Transition, for the dialogues, which will be held in locations throughout the district. “The dialogues are open forums for parents to express their opinions and concerns and to learn about issues that affect them. In 2003, we hope to be able to touch more parents and to strengthen district-parent relationships.”

***Editor's note - Thanks to Kroc for assisting with photographs for this article.*

Grant Supports Improved Communications to Parents



The district's Communications Department received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation for \$200,000 for 2002-2003. The grant may fund for up to three years as long as district-parent communication shows improvement. The grant brings together resources from the Communications, Parent Involvement, and Community Relations departments, which support communications, engagement, and outreach of district programs to families, staff, and the community.

Under the direction of Communications Department, the Casey Grant will support:

- creating effective communications tools that provide accurate, timely, and consistent information
- coordinating/implementing special events which offer opportunities for parent and community engagement
- providing opportunities to build capacity for developing skills and knowledge for effective parent and community involvement.

The Casey grant has already provided for the creation of 50-plus district Fact Sheets available online at: <http://www.sandi.net/comm/factsheets/>. Parents, parent involvement groups, principals, and staff requested information on a variety of curriculum areas, district programs and initiatives. A longer-term project is the redesign and reconfiguration of the district's website in parent-friendly language, and improving its navigation and usefulness.

For more information regarding the Annie E. Casey Foundation, please call Victoria Hilton in Communications at (619) 725.5568 or email: vhilton@mail.sandi.net.

Facilities Management Team Lends a Hand to Focus Schools

We all need an extra boost at one time or another, and our Focus Schools are getting just that from Facilities Management.

Since November, Focus Schools have been “blitzed” with enhanced custodial and landscape support, mobile maintenance, and quick turnaround of work orders, equipment repairs and requests for services. Improvements include painting, fencing, turf, concrete, asphalt, walkways, drains, irrigation,

(Continued on page four)

New Assessment for Students with Disabilities

(Continued from page one)

to look at the achievement of these students.”

By law, only specially trained certificated staff, preferably those who are familiar with the students they are testing, may administer the CAPA due to the interactive nature of the test. There are six different levels of the CAPA; the level of the test administered to each student depends on the student's IEP and disability. “The test does not involve any writing; it's more like a checklist. There are different stages of ‘correct.’” explained Raines. Students might be asked to describe an object and are scored on a scale from 2 to 5, with points awarded depending on the student's performance on the task. Test administrators may also give the student a score of “no response” or “orients to task,” meaning the student was able to identify that something was being asked of them.

It is estimated that about 1100 students, or less than 1% of the district's enrollment, will take the CAPA in the spring. Parents will be notified of the testing schedule later this month.

The CAPA will be administered from March 17 to April 25, 2003. For more information, contact Bob Raines at (619) 725-7058, braines@mail.sandi.net or Carolyn Nunes at (619) 725-7600, cnunes@mail.sandi.net



Staff Bulletin Production Changes

Starting this month, the districtwide Staff Bulletin will move to a publishing strategy designed to meet employees' needs for information, while respecting the serious budget crisis. For the remainder of the school year, only the first Bulletin of each month will be distributed to employees in the traditional, printed format. The second Bulletin of each month will be online. Employees will receive an email notification that the Staff Bulletin is available at that time. In order to ensure the Staff Bulletin, both printed and online, meets your needs, please let the Communications Office know what you want the Staff Bulletin to include. What are your favorite sections? What information should be added? Do you believe Staff Bulletin should include the same features each time (e.g. Student Salutes, People and Places, etc.)? How would you feel about having a monthly Bulletin? Send your suggestions and feedback to the Communications Office, Eugene Brucker Education Center, Room 2145, with "Staff Bulletin" marked on the envelope. You can also email: sdcsinfo@mail.sandi.net, subject line: Staff Bulletin.

Focus Schools Get A Helping Hand From Facilities Management

(Continued from page three)

lighting, ramps, blinds, floor tile and carpeting. Other items include marquees, cafeteria tables, stage refurbishing, bookshelves and walkie-talkies.

While Facilities Management supports all schools, this "focus on Focus Schools" is helping improve the physical teaching and learning environment at 10 elementary schools with an Academic Performance Index in the lowest two statewide ranks (API 1 and API 2). Our district is committed to providing resources to these schools so all students can succeed.

"Anything we can do will help," said Arthur Triplette, Maintenance, Repair and Construction Program supervisor. "We're trying to put our words into action by making it easier for staff to do their jobs."

Another satisfied customer

Mobile Maintenance, under the leadership of Barbara George, coordinator, wasted no time and are spending 10 days at each Focus School instead of five. The efforts will continue through the end of the school year.

Edison Elementary School is grateful

"Mobile Maintenance is painting, installing backpack racks and bulletin boards, and repairing sinks and ramps," said Principal Darlene Cason. "The backpack racks have created a safer environment, and they've also eliminated that cluttered look."

Art Johnson, building services supervisor at Edison, said, "Students came

up to me and said 'the school looks like a school now.' Parents, staff and community have noticed. They say it really makes the school stand out."

Cason added, "It makes teachers feel they are valued. It gives them more complete classrooms for teaching and nicer areas to display students' work."

Bruce Betz, a district painter who recently painted at Jackson Elementary School, said, "Most of us on Mobile Maintenance are dads, and we really want to make the schools nice for the children."

As a former principal and teacher, Mike Giafaglione, liaison principal for Facilities Management, knows that an improved physical environment improves morale among staff, students, parents and community members.

"When staff and students see specific needs taken care of promptly, it creates pride in their school and a positive energy in the community," Giafaglione said.

In addition to those mentioned in this article, here are a few more who are making the Focus Schools project possible: Bill DosSantos, director, Maintenance & Operations; Jesse Macias, M&O Maintenance Construction Program supervisor; and Bryan Ehm, M&O Maintenance Planning Program supervisor. Mike Winter, senior facilities development project manager for Prop. MM, is evaluating what Prop. MM work can be coordinated with this effort.

People & Places

Bell Junior High School teacher Andrea Davis has been named recipient of the Gold

Pyramid "Best School Teacher" medal. The

medal is presented in honor of her involvement and support of her students' achievement by the San Diego Urban League's United Front and Family Resource Support Network.

Grant Elementary Physical Education Specialist Laurie Roeder was profiled in the November 2002 issue of the California

Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) *Journal Times* as the edition's 'Featured Member.' Learn

more about CAHPERD at www.cahperd.org.



The next *Staff Bulletin* will appear Jan. 29. Deadline for submissions is Jan. 17. Please note that deadlines are final and cannot be extended. *Staff Bulletin* is on the web site.

Staff Bulletin

Published for employees of San Diego City Schools twice monthly except during school holidays, and monthly in July.

Send news items and classified ads to:

Staff Bulletin

Education Center, Room 2145

phone: (619)725-5578; fax: (619)725-5576

e-mail: communications@mail.sandi.net

Editor: Ursula Kroemer

Board of Education

Ron Ottinger, President

John de Beck, Vice President

Edward Lopez

Katherine Nakamura

Frances O'Neill Zimmerman

Superintendent of Public Education

Alan D. Bersin

Classified Ads

ADS RUN ON SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS - Send to Communications Office, Room 2145, Eugene Brucker Education Center. **Limit to 10 words (not including phone) or ad not accepted. Include work location and phone (for ID purposes only).**

For Sale: Maytag dryer and Conn trumpet, \$100, 858-569-6875; Double bed frames and mattresses, obo, 858-569-6875; '93 Nissan 240SX 4cyl., 5spd., 113K, excl. cond., \$3,500, 619-589-5322; '66 Mustang, V8, 3spd., runs great, all orig., \$9,500 obo, 858-483-4318; Sohmer & Sons cupid grand piano, w/bench & metronome, \$2,500, obo, 858-483-4318; '93 Nissan 300ZX, excel. cond., 73K, new tires, green, \$15,000, 858-672-0080; Electric guitar, Jasmine, brand new, in box \$100, 858-487-3016; Stroller, Graco, like new, folds up, lots of features, \$50, 619-813-5404; Leather couch, like new, lt. tan, double reclining ends, \$600, 619-316-6761; '99 BMW 323i, good cond., must sell, \$18,995, 619-922-7837; **For Rent:** Studio, Normal Heights, appliances, \$550, 619-516-3803; \$975, 2 br., house w/garage, Louisiana St., N. Park, 619-222-8562; Condo, 1bd/1.5ba, 1800 sq.ft., fireplace, decks, view, \$1,000, no rent raises, 619-276-2347; Room, Chula Vista, kitchen, laundry privileges, \$450/mo., 619-426-0852; Lemon Grove, new lrg. pvt. room, w/ba. and laundry, utils. incl., \$500, 619-668-9574. **Wanted:** Treadmill, 619-561-9698. **Donation:** Microscope(s) for middle school ed. prog., 858-546-9327