



# Special EDition

San Joaquin County  
Special Education Local Plan Area

2014 - 2015 · VOLUME 1

August 2014

## 2014 CALENDAR



## Save The Date!

### October 8

Ananda Aspen of Diagnostic Center, Central San Joaquin will present two trainings on Autism:

- Autism: Joint Attention Interventions, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m., Chartville 1.
- Autism & Pivotal Response, 1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m., Chartville 1.

For more information, contact Gail Brodigan-Dalton at 209-468-4907.

### October 28

LSH Fall Energizer: Anne Sherlock, Attorney, Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost will present on legal issues regarding LSH, 8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m., Burwood Auditorium. For more information, contact Gail Brodigan-Dalton at 209-468-4907.

### All events held at:

SJCOE Wentworth Education Center  
2707 Transworld Dr., Stockton

For more information/events please  
visit our online calendar at  
[www.sjcoe.org](http://www.sjcoe.org)

## Congratulations Class of 2014!

San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) Special Education Programs and Tracy Unified School District (TUSD) sent a total of 24 young adults on to their next step in life at a recent joyful and moving graduation ceremony. Held at the Wentworth Education Center on May 28, the evening began with the traditional procession of graduates. Master of ceremonies, Randy Olson, County Special Education Programs Director II, welcomed those in attendance and introduced SJCOE officials: Mick Founts, County Superintendent of Schools; James Mousalimas, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Kathleen Skeels, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education/SELPA Director, and Brandie Brunni, Division Director of SJCOE Special Education Programs. Also recognized were Janet Skulina, TUSD Special Education Director and Jill Fritchen, SJCOE Board of Education member. Special education staff was asked to stand in recognition of their efforts in bringing the students to this important milestone. The flag salute was led by student Kyle Luna.

The six teachers of the special education young adult classes and TUSD Director Janet Skulina, speaking on behalf of Tracy teacher Gina Berlin, took the stage to tell a little about each of their students. “Generous and big-hearted” were words Christina Bristow used to describe Brittany. She said Jordan looks forward to every day and takes an interest in many issues. Other teachers had similar comments. For example, Gina Berlin, who appreciated Jennifer’s efforts to teach her Spanish and Ed Perry, who called Kevin a “demon bowler” and great conversationalist. Enrique Lopez described Ashley as patient and positive, Glenda Esquivel remembered Markie’s smile and high 5’s for everyone. (See Graduates, page 3)



SJCOE Supt. of Schools Mick Founts, David Marconett, County Programs Division Director Brandie Brunni

## From Our SELPA Director Kathleen Skeels

Welcome back to a new school year! We had a glorious day! May 28, 2014 at the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE). Students anxiously waiting to walk into a beautifully decorated blue and white, balloon filled room at the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance”. Teachers and assistants still there supporting students as needed on the special day. Parents, just as anxious and just as proud to see their young adult now completing their 22 years of hard work and education. It is another point of transition for not just the students but their parents. Thank you to the dedication of all the educators, agencies, and families that worked together to bring these students to this day and beyond.

**“I challenge every educator and administrator”** that work with SJCOE and district students with disabilities, to attend an SJCOE graduation ceremony at least once. It is not just for the teachers that have them as young adults but just as importantly, our preschool teachers, elementary teachers and high school teachers. It will help you recognize the journey that many of our students take and the significance of the influence you have along the way. I am humbled every time.

This last year most of the attention was placed on the development of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) plan. However, a “Special Education State Wide Task Force” was developed to take a deeper look at special education in California. Right now there were no real changes in special education because everyone is waiting for the recommendation from the Task Force that has met all year. A report to the Board of Education is expected in the fall. The Federal government is shifting to “results driven accountability” (RDA) and wanting to find ways to look at student outcome rather than solely compliance. RDA will impact the process and methods we use to report to the State. The State is still in transition when it comes to alternate assessment; what we are transitioning to has yet to be determined. I had the pleasure of working on the State “Positive Behavior Intervention” stake-holders committee. We met monthly and developed guidelines to the field since the Hughes Bill was repealed. Guidelines have been completed and many guidance letters and resources are now on the California Department of Education (CDE) website at [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov). Our SELPA has the fortune of being one out of six SELPAs statewide that received a grant to assist in developing training, data collection and crises intervention. Look for some outstanding training opportunities including general education teachers and special educators at different levels of a pyramid of intervention.

As the State continues to move to alignment with Federal regulations some changes as of July 1, 2014 include using the term “related services” instead of “designated instruction and services (DIS)”. There are updated requirements for the qualification of service providers. For example, the regulations now specifically state that language and speech development and remediation may be provided by a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant under direct supervision of a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), if it is specified in the IEP and if the SLP does not supervise more than two assistants. Additionally, the use of assistants may not be used to increase the applicable SLP caseload limits. The area of eligibility criteria wording was revised to align with the Federal standards wording in areas such as Specific Learning Disability.

Although this last year was a mild year of change in the area of special education, the trend of the State to reflect Federal regulations rather than exceeding them is evident. Hold on to your hat because I think changes in special education is in the wind for the coming years. This gives us the impetus to make sure we are a part of that change and reflect what we feel is best practice for the students we serve.

Have a great year! Keep on...Keep on!



**Kathleen Skeels**  
Asst. Superintendent/SELPA Director

### Search & Serve

If you have a baby who was very small or sick at birth or a young child whose development worries you, a telephone call may put you in touch with someone who can answer your questions and help you get service for your child. Call your school district office or the San Joaquin County Office of Education at 209-468-4925 for more information.

Si usted tiene un bebé, quien era muy pequeño o enfermo de nacimiento o un niño de quien su desarrollo le preocupa, una llamada telefónica puede ponerlo en contacto con alguien quien le puede contestar sus preguntas y ayudarlo a obtener servicios para su niño. Hable a la oficina de su distrito escolar o a la Oficina de Educación del Condado de San Joaquin al 209-468-4925 para más información.

### Graduates (from cover)

Mary Bennett remarked on Matt's wonderful family support and love of outings to McDonalds and Traci Suyeyasu appreciated Erica's help every day doing attendance and reminding Traci to take her vitamins.

A video photo montage of the Class of 2014, produced by Jennifer Barry and Denise Vaughan, evoked both tears and laughter from the audience who especially liked the cute baby pictures and holiday photos.

Certificates were presented to students by Superintendent Founts with help from Director Brandie Brunni, and by TUSD Director Janet Skulina. After the recessional all were treated to delicious decorated cakes by the 2014 Graduation Committee. It is our hope that the future for these 24 graduated of our special education

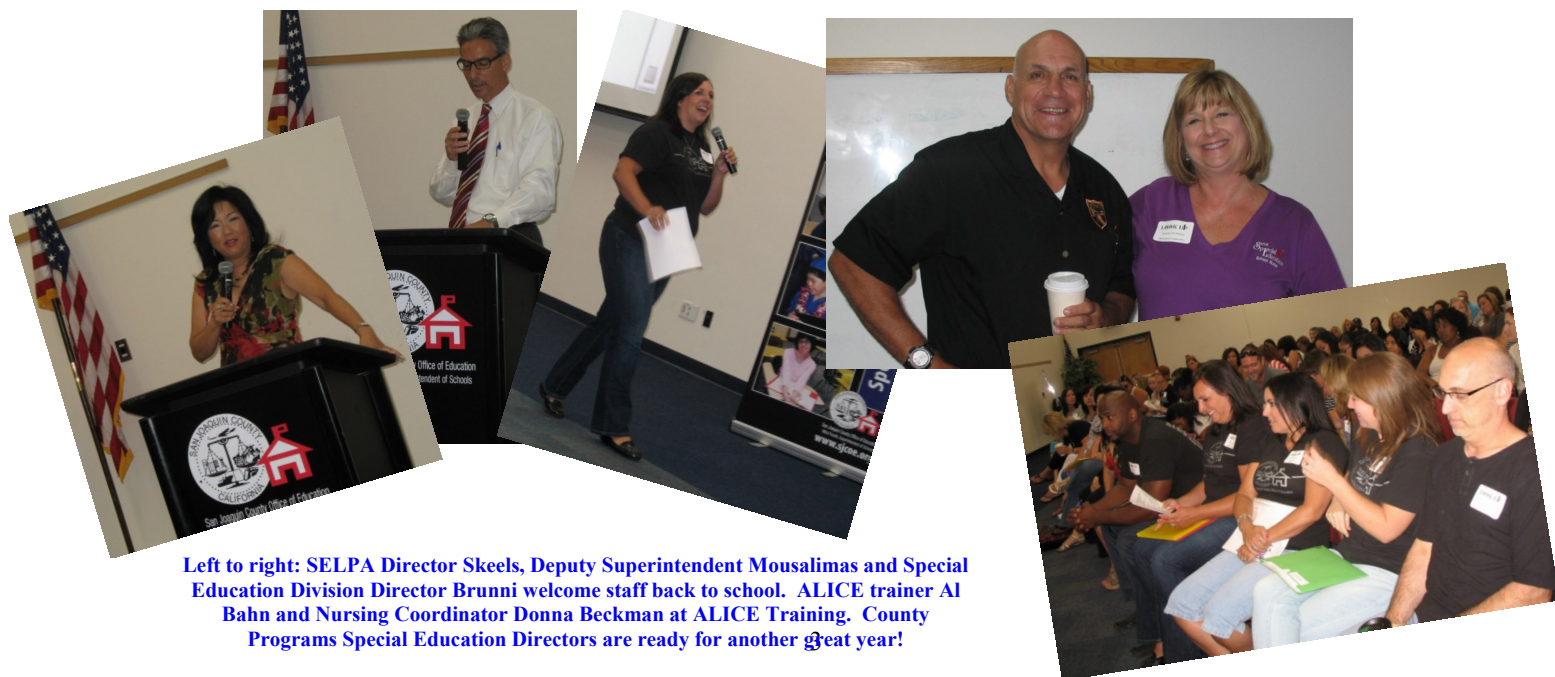
## Welcome Back to School!

Over 300 San Joaquin County Special Education Programs staff members were welcomed at a Back to School meeting at the Wentworth Education Center on August 4. Deputy Superintendent James Mousalimas described some of the new state initiatives we will be asked to implement this year and called the group "the one constant, the one element that ensures that our students will continue to be well-served and educated, that one steadying influence, you, the teachers, instructional assistants, specialists, nurses, counselors, therapists, interpreters, clerical staff and administrators...whose hard work, dedication and passion for our students ensure that they receive the best education possible, despite so many challenges."

Assistant Superintendent/SELPA Director Kathleen Skeels warmly welcomed staff members. She told of the State Task Force on special education that has been meeting and will make recommendations to the state school board in the fall. While these may result in changes, she urged all to remain flexible and grounded in good teaching and positive outcomes.

Division Director of Special Education Programs, Brandie Brunni gave the staff three challenges: take advantage of each moment to make connections with and for students; check your stressors at the door so you can be there for your students; and, have fun and play! Director Brunni introduced program administrators and coordinators and announced that a name has been chosen for the preschool autism program now located at Mc Fall School and three other school sites in the SELPA. The program will now be known as "Connections". Fifty-one new staff members were welcomed to SJCOE Special Education Programs family with colorful leis.

The afternoon was devoted to training in the ALICE program. ALICE is a program that teaches specific strategies that anyone can employ to survive a violent encounter such as an armed intruder/active shooter on site. The ultimate goal of ALICE is to increase survivability of those under attack. It was pointed out that there have been 171 active shooter incidents since 1966 with 51 in 2013. 37% took place in businesses, 34% in schools and 17% in outdoor locations. Every employee will be trained in the program.



Left to right: SELPA Director Skeels, Deputy Superintendent Mousalimas and Special Education Division Director Brunni welcome staff back to school. ALICE trainer Al Bahn and Nursing Coordinator Donna Beckman at ALICE Training. County Programs Special Education Directors are ready for another great year!

# Congratulations to the graduating class of 2014!



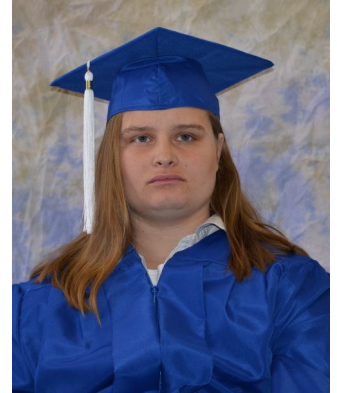
**Brittany Blankenship**



**Erika Boesch**



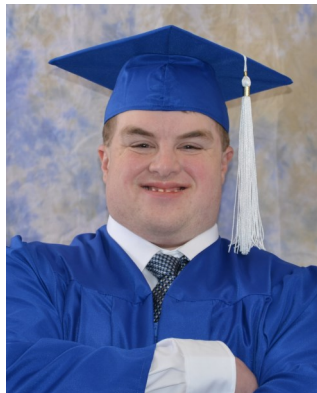
**Jennifer Carillo**



**Ashley Christensen**



**Travis Colagrossi**



**Alexander Craig**



**Domini DeMello**



**Victor Fernandez**



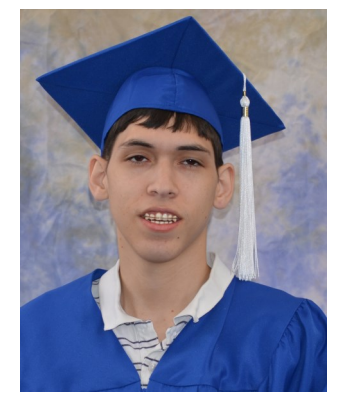
**Kevin Hart**



**Jordon Kennon**



**Lacie Letulle**



**Greg Lopez**



**Kyle Luna**



**Mathew Machado**



**David Marconett**



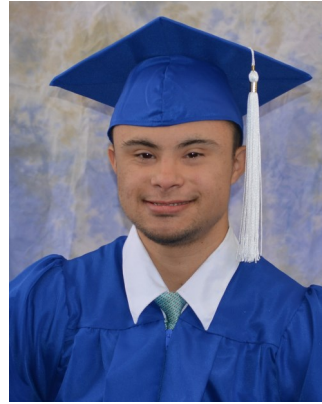
**Sarah McCue**



**Deena Natver**



**Nirali Punyja**



**Joseph Rodriguez**



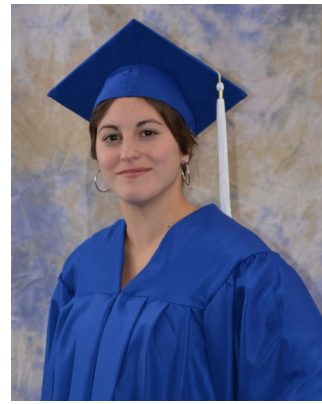
**Markie Tangonan**



**Michael Thongtap**



**Michael Torres**



**Brooke Van Zanten**



**Tyler Van Zanten**

**SJOCE Graduates**

- Manteca USD: 6
- Linden USD: 2
- Lincoln USD: 4
- Tracy USD: 2
- Ripon USD: 3
- Escalon USD: 5

SJCOE Graduates: 22

**Tracy Unified Young Adult Program**

(Not enrolled with SJCOE programs, but participated in graduation ceremony)

Tracy USD Young Adult: 2



**SJCOE Supt. of Schools Mick Founts , Jordan Kennon,  
County Programs Division Director  
Brandie Brunni**

**Congratulations to the 24 Graduates!**

**Class of 2014**



# Assessment Measures Studied

The San Joaquin County SELPA presented training programs leading to certification in Assistive Technology Assessment and Augmentative Communication Assessment during the 2013 – 2014 school year. Taught by Michelle Austin, M.A., CCC/SLP from the Diagnostic Center, Central California, both classes were full with a limit of 30 in each. Educators from San Joaquin County districts and SJCOE Special Education Programs spent seven full days in each program in addition to required observations, assignments and assessments.

The AAC Assessment to Intervention program trains staff to assess communication needs of students. It is a dynamic process looking at current skills in communication, language and speech as well as communication device access. Assessment information is used to develop a match between the student's needs and the appropriate communication system for the child now and in the future.

While educational or instructional technology is defined as tools and/or techniques that help improve learning, assistive technology (AT) is equipment, systems or tools used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. Educational technology enhances the curriculum; assistive technology is a necessity to allow access to the curriculum. An AT assessment starts with in-depth skills and needs assessment in addition to equipment and software needs. In this on-going process, recommendations based on the assessment are considered by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team and may be utilized on a trial basis until the team has determined the appropriate equipment needs.

Staci Johnson, SJC SELPA Program Specialist and SJCOE Special Education Programs administrator took both classes. She was impressed with the stress on the importance of a multi-disciplinary team approach to identify appropriate strategies and supports for students. "I like the collaborative approach," she said. "I loved being a part of this cohort of learners. It's great that we have a network of colleagues to call on as we implement the two assessments."

## Calling all Parents... CAC Needs You!

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is primarily composed of parents of children with special needs and representatives from public and private agencies who work with the special needs population. CAC is very excited to offer a variety of presentation topics this year in order to support the learning needs of our attendees. This year's presentation topics were requested by those who attended CAC programs last year. Presentations are provided free of charge, in a welcoming setting. All presentations are from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. CAC provides an opportunity to network with other parents, the presenters, agency representatives and educators. All presentations are held at: San Joaquin County Office of Education-Wentworth Education Center, 2707 Transworld Dr, Stockton. We look forward to seeing you at any and all of our presentations this year! For more information about CAC, please contact Patti Farhat at 209-468-4928 or pfarhat@sjcoe.net.

### 2014-2015 Presentation Topics

- September 8, 2014-Transition from middle school to high school-emphasis on developing independence
- November 17, 2014-Socialization-providing opportunities for your child to interact with peers
- January 12, 2015-Parenting for success-nutrition and feeding considerations
- March 16, 2015-Behavior-response to intervention
- May 11, 2015-Annual awards and recognition dinner (this event is an evening dinner and program starting at 5:30pm)



# Donna Beckman Receives GEM Award!

Donna Beckman, Health Care Coordinator and School Nurse for SJCOE Special Education Programs, was selected to receive a Regional GEM (Giving Excellence Meaning) Award at a gala awards presentation in Los Angeles. Sponsored by Nurse.com, the awards are held in locations across the country. Donna will now be entered in the national phase of the program. She was selected in the category of Home, Community and Ambulatory Care. “I am very humbled to be in the company of the other winners,” Beckman said after the award. “This GEM Award makes me feel so proud, first of all, to be a nurse.”

Donna has been a school nurse since 2000. She provides direct service to students and families, student case management and supervision of staff. She also holds school-based clinics to administer influenza vaccine to over 200 medically fragile students and collaborates with a local dentist to provide oral health screenings for developmentally disabled kindergarten students. She was recognized earlier this year by the California School Nurse Organization as the California School Nurse of the Year. Congratulations again, Donna!



**Donna Beckman, Health Care Coordinator and School Nurse for SJCOE Special Education Programs.**



**2014 GEM Award Regional Winners**

2014Nurse.com  
**NURSING EXCELLENCE**  
**GEM AWARDS**  
Giving Excellence Meaning



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## San Joaquin County Office of Education

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**Jim Thomas**, Deputy Superintendent, Business Services

**James Mousalimas**, Deputy Superintendent, Student Programs & Services

**Janine Cuaresma**, Assistant Superintendent, County Operated Schools & Programs

**Jane Steinkamp**, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services

**Kathleen Skeels**, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education/SELPA Director



# Dacia Goodwin - SJCOE Classified Employee of the Year

Instructional assistant Dacia Goodwin was selected as the 2014 San Joaquin County Office of Education Classified Employee of the Year at an award celebration dinner on June 12. Dacia, herself deaf, is an assistant in Samantha Coughlin's K-3 Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (D/HOH) County Program class at Stella Brockman School. She has worked in the D/HOH program for 26 years with students from preschool to eighth grade. Her experience makes her an invaluable asset to the classroom with extensive knowledge of strategies that work in presenting information to deaf students.

"There are two other D/HOH classes here at Stella Brockman," Samantha Coughlin said. "We all work together and Dacia works well with the other staff as well as with students and parents" Samantha reports that Dacia is always willing to go above and beyond, to make the extra effort to get the job done. She is involved in the Deaf community and teaches an American Sign Language (ASL) class in the community.

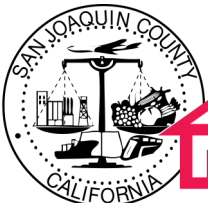
Another important aspect of what Dacia brings to the classroom is herself as a role model. As an avid reader Dacia shows students that although reading and writing in English can be a challenge for these students who use ASL as their "speaking" language, it can be done. "As a deaf person," Samantha said, "she is an example to the students and their families that you can grow up to have a job, a family and be an important member of the community, even if you are deaf. In fact, she shows them every day that you can do everything a hearing person can do except hear!"

Dacia was nominated for this award by teacher Samantha Coughlin. Congratulations, Dacia!



Top: Dacia Goodwin, SJCOE Classified Employee of the Year. Bottom: Dominik and Quentin like to work with Dacia.

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