



San Joaquin County
Special Education Local Plan Area

SPECIAL EDition

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FALL 2011

McFall Students Off to a Great Start



My name is Jacob, but they call me JJ. I like to count.

Getting used to school starting is not always easy. How much more so for children with autism? By the looks of the students in this photo essay, they have the school routine down pat! Busy learning and having fun, these



*I'm Andrew and I'm going to build a tower.
How much bigger can I get it?*



Carter enjoys learning and playing with the eensy weensy spider.

youngsters are on their way to another great year! Thanks to teachers Tina Derksen, Susan Navarrette, Rochelle Strickland and Sean Wilson and McFall School for sharing their students.



Jacob can kick the ball hard.



Playing and learning is what Sebastian likes.



Clayton stamps the page.

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 services for your child.

Call your school district office or the San Joaquin County SELPA at 209-468-4925 for more information.

From Our SELPA Director Kathleen Skeels

The 2011-2012 school year is off to a very fine start. Our San Joaquin County Special Education Programs have added four new classes in response to growing student needs in our 10 districts. In the area of deaf education we have placed additional supports in the D/HOH preschool class in preparation for providing an aural–oral program option and added a high school class. In addition we have added a primary class for students with social emotional disabilities and a primary class for students with Autism.

Whether we are planning for an additional class or determining how to provide services unique to each student, we always have to remember to connect the dots. Special education is a part of the bigger picture of education in general. We are interconnected, and that which impacts special education also affects the rest of the educational family. Legally mandated special education programs and services impact services to all children. In these times we are called on to be even more creative and to adopt solutions that work to maximize our limited fiscal and human resources. Looking at data and developing our proposals for new programs is a good example of how our district special education directors work on behalf of their students and families with county and SELPA staff in a creative and collaborative fashion to provide quality services for students.

The current session of the California Legislature is completed. I feel that it is very important to be active and involved in the legislative process so our legislators hear from those in the field. I have been involved in a statewide effort to support three notable bills: AB 9, Pupil Rights/Bullying; SB 161, Emergency Medical Assistance/Administration of Epilepsy Medication; and, SB 946, Health Care Coverage, Autism. All three were signed into law. For more information on these and other bills, go to: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>.



Kathleen Skeels
Asst. Superintendent/SELPA Director

C.A.C. - Community Advisory Committee

The CAC 2011 - 12 series of presentations kicked off on the evening of Monday, October 3rd. The CAC and Family Resource Network (FRN) co-hosted the presentation “Financial and Estate Planning Issues for Families of Children with Special Needs.” The presenters included Frank Quacinella, First Vice President-Investments and Financial Advisor as well as National Spokesperson for Families with Special Needs Planning Network, Merrill Lynch and Mark Drobny, Attorney at Law, who specializes in estate planning and has extensive experience working with families raising children with special needs.

Attendees commented on how informative and helpful the presentation was as they proceed in making long-term plans for their own special needs children. Both Mr. Quacinella and Mr. Drobny offered participants an hour of consultation, respectively, at no cost.

The next CAC meeting will be a Business Meeting. It will be held on Monday, November 7, 2011, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Wentworth Education Center. The next CAC presentation, “Resources for Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Their Families,” will be held on Monday, December 5, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Wentworth Education Center. The presenter is Ananda Aspen from the California Diagnostic Center, Central California. For attendance and registration information regarding this presentation, please contact Rolf Athearn at (209) 468-4901 or by email, rathearn@sjcoe.net.

The CAC continues to seek additional parent representatives and educational representatives. If you are interested, please contact Rolf Athearn at the previously noted contact information.



Class for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Resumes at Sierra High School

New this year to the array of San Joaquin County Special Education programs is the class for ninth through twelfth grade Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HOH) students at Sierra High School in Manteca. The class was brought back after a hiatus of several years because of the growing number of students who have need for a centralized class with the support of a credentialed D/HOH teacher and a community including both hearing and non-hearing peers, according to county special education administrator, Barbara Brown. Brown said the class is expected to continue to grow as current 7th and 8th grade students in D/HOH programs move up.

In explaining what led her to become a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing Gleed remembered, "I always wanted to be a teacher. My mom had taken some sign language classes and I studied her books. Then, when I signed up for my high school classes, American Sign Language was offered as an elective. I took classes in ASL at the high school and through the community college. I went to USU because of their program in deaf education."



Bryanne Gleed, teacher of Deaf/Hard of Hearing



Farshad gets some help from interpreter Melinda.

Currently there are five students in the program. All are mainstreamed in general education classes for some or most of their day. Two interpreters assist the students in their mainstream classes and with assignments in their study hall.



Jesus has the right word for Melinda.



Interpreter Mark helps Jesus with vocabulary.

Chosen to lead this class, teacher Bryanne Gleed comes to San Joaquin County Special Education Programs with 4 years experience teaching D/HOH students. After receiving her B.A. and M.Ed. in deaf education from the University of Utah at Logan, Utah, she taught one year in El Centro, California and for three years at the Utah School for Deaf/Blind in Ogden, Utah. Looking for a change from snowy winters, she applied for and was hired to teach the new program at Sierra High School.



Interpreter Melinda helps Paige set up for a Physics test.

Back to School and Defying Perceptions

San Joaquin County Special Education Programs started the new school year with a get-together for over 200 teachers, instructional assistants, administrators, and specialists. The enthusiastic group received a warm welcome from Superintendent Mick Founts and Deputy Superintendent Gary DeiRossi to open the morning's activities. Assistant Superintendent and SELPA Director Kathy Skeels added her welcome and gave an in-depth review of recent actions and activities at the federal, state and local level affecting special education.



Brandie Brunni, Special Education Programs Director, challenges staff to Defy Perceptions

Brandie Brunni, Director of Special Education Programs introduced new staff and gave an update on changes in programs and facilities. She introduced the theme for the year, Defying Perceptions, by reminding her listeners that perceptions are extremely individual and ever-changing. What one person sees or understands may be far different from what another sees in the same situation or from what is actually happening. Some members of society see our students as incapable of making a meaningful contribution to the community, a perception that we know is inaccurate. She urged everyone to take the extra time to listen, to understand and to clarify perceptions for the most productive and professional outcomes in the year to come.



Mick Founts, Superintendent of Schools, welcomes Special Education Programs staff



Special Education Programs Administrators (l to r) Shelly Garrett, Staci Johnson, Christie Mueller, Bruce Kern, Barbara Brown, and Director Brandie Brunni



Special Education Programs Nursing Staff (l to r) Andrea Maxwell (LVN), Donna Beckman (School Nurse), Pam Wampler (LVN), Maria Mendoza (Health Aide), Viridiana Munguia (Health Aide), Not Pictured: Katie Savage (School Nurse)



New Director Takes the Helm at Jefferson

Helen Pursell has been chosen to lead the Special Education department at Jefferson School District. Pursell, who began her teaching career as a regular education teacher in the elementary grades, has Master's Degrees in Spanish, counseling, and administration. She also holds credentials in multiple and single subjects and pupil personnel services. She served as Special Education Director at Byron School District for two years. She brings her experience as a teacher, school counselor and psychologist and school administrator to her new position as Director of Special Education at Jefferson School District.

As a new director Helen Pursell thinks her biggest challenge is getting to know the staff, programs and families in the district and the SELPA. She hopes to develop collaborative and cooperative relationships that work toward building excellent programs for her students. "I love working with families and teams to put together appropriate programs for children," Pursell said. "Keeping abreast of all the changes in special education is an ongoing challenge for all special educators," she remarked. "There is so much to learn!"



Helen Pursell

Helen Pursell hopes to quickly acquire a clear idea of the strengths and areas for development in district special education programs. "My intent is to provide the leadership and the professional development to help achieve the potential for growth in our programs and staff." In the next three to five years she wants to achieve improvements as identified necessary and to be "further down the road" in student services and in her knowledge of and relationships with staff and families.

Helen is an enthusiastic gardener. She enjoys camping and hiking in the mountains and is an avid reader.

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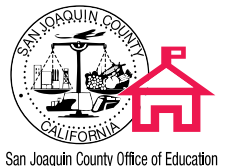
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Jamie Mousalimas, Assistant Superintendent, County Operated Schools & Programs



Happy 15th Birthday to the San Joaquin County SELPA WorkAbility I Program!!

Back in 1996 the San Joaquin SELPA was fortunate enough to be awarded a WorkAbility I (WAI) grant from the California Department of Education. This was fantastic news as WAI is a career awareness, exploration and training program for middle, secondary and young adult students in special education.

The grant had humble beginnings, initially only being funded to serve 32 students. Over the next 15 years, additional funding was requested at every opportunity. In 1999, we were awarded a WAI middle school service component enabling middle school students to be involved in career awareness and vocational activities. The younger the better when it comes to planning for the future!

Last year the WAI grant served 858 high school students and 201 middle school students. On-the-job

training was provided to 176 high school and young adult students at several local businesses. Career and vocational activities were provided to students by 45 high school and 12 middle school special education teachers allowing the students to make the connection between school and work. Judy Casetta, Laura Estrada, Tanya Shepherd, Sharon Gaines and Margaret St. George are the WAI job developers, administrative assistant and educational specialist who assist the teachers and students in meeting the WAI grant goals.

An open house was held for teachers and employers on October 4, 2011 to celebrate the 15th birthday of the WAI program and to recognize their years of service and commitment in assisting San Joaquin SELPA students to become productive, involved members of their community. Here's to another 15 years!!



Mike Paige



Traci Suyeyasu



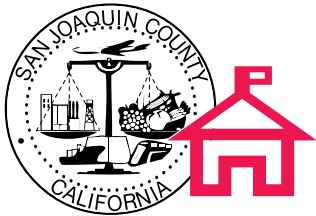
*WorkAbility I Staff (l to r)
Margaret St. George,
Tanya Shepherd, Laura Estrada,
Sharon Gaines, Judy Casetta*



Corinna Moreno-Guerrero



Kathy Skeels & Margaret St. George



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Lucas is back to school and enjoying activities with Teacher Amy Bereta



*Frankie builds a wall.
 (see more McFall students back to school on front page)*

Save The Date!

- Nov 9** Workshop - Joint Attention Interventions, presented by Ananda Aspen - Central CA Diagnostic Center, 3:30 - 5:30pm
HELD AT TRACY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
- Dec 1** Workshop - Pivotal Response Treatment, presented by Ananda Aspen - Central CA Diagnostic Center, 3:30 - 6:30pm
HELD AT TRACY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
- Dec 5 & 6** **2-Day** Workshop - Legally Sound, Effective Response to Student Threats of Violence: An A.R.M.S. Approach and Suicide Intervention, presented by Diana Browning-Wright, 8:00am - 4:00pm, Chartville 2
- Dec 13** Workshop - Priming for Success and Reinforcing for Sustainable Progress, presented by Ananda Aspen - Central CA Diagnostic Center, 3:30 - 6:30pm
HELD AT TRACY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
- Jan 13** Workshop - Visual Schedules, presented by Ananda Aspen - Central CA Diagnostic Center, 3:30 - 5:30pm
HELD AT TRACY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
- Jan 17** Workshop - LSH Winter Symposium - Assessing African-American Students from Diverse Cultural-Linguistic Backgrounds, presented by Toya A. Wyatt, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, 8:30am - 4:00pm, Burwood Auditorium

Unless otherwise noted, all events held at:
 SJCOE Wentworth Education Center - 2707 Transworld Dr., Stockton
For more information/events, check our
Online Calendar at www.sjcoe.org