



Special Education in Action

Engaging Stakeholders through Promising Practices and Program Development

SAVE THE DATE
Opportunities "On Watch":

- Communities of Practice:
 - Transition
 - Speech and Language
 - Preschool Disabilities
- The "Dare to Dream" Conference
- The Summer Institute (OSE)



Click on the "Resource Icons" below for direct access to updates, spotlights and opportunities.

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Focus: Guidance on Informal Removals and Proactive Discipline (January 2023)
and **Psychiatric Clearances** (February 2023)



Resource: FAQs for Child Outcome Summary (COS)



PBSIS

Helping Schools Build Systems of Support

NJ PBSIS Announces Enrollment Information Sessions for the 2023-2024 Training and Coaching Cohort to Implement Tiered Interventions for Conduct, Behavior and Social and Emotional Wellness



Resources: The NEW Speech Website and Interventions for Building Language

Winter Wonderland in a West Orange Early Learning Center (Essex County)

Speech and Occupational Therapists came together in The Betty Maddalena Early Learning Center in West Orange, NJ, to create a meaningful educational experience while celebrating the holidays. Six classrooms engaged in a "Winter Wonderland Day" where students and staff participated in stations that worked on a variety of functional skills. Additionally, there was emphasis placed on building activities that reflected the multicultural influences of the community and further developed their gross and fine motor skills, such as: carrying presents across a beam to a tree, decorating a menorah and gingerbread house, and using a dustpan to reinforce coordination of visuo-spatial skills. Other skills reinforced throughout the day were turn-taking, transitioning, both nonverbal and verbal communication skills, and emotional regulation strategies.

While the day was filled with thematic activities and a wide-range of skill-streaming opportunities, it also provided hands-on professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals. Through increased exposure to related service goals, staff developed the knowledge on how to further reinforce individualized skills across school settings. Due to the profound success of this event, the school staff are evaluating future opportunities for a "Spring Fling" and "Fall Festival". There has been additional focus on integrating parent and family engagement to increase exposure to related services and provide a learning opportunity for skills to be reinforced across the student's home environments.



Integrating Related Service Providers to Promote Inclusivity (Maple Shade, Burlington County)



Across the state, related service providers utilize innovative practices to integrate services throughout the instructional day and the school community. In Maple Shade School District at Maude Wilkins Elementary School, one Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), Ms. Rachel Lawler, with the support of the school's Principal, Mr. Steven Ormsby, has taken the opportunity to expand her services beyond the therapy room and into the school culture, where she is able to use innovative models of support. Overtime it has destigmatized her role of getting students to just "go to speech." By engaging in the school community and with students beyond her caseload, Ms. Lawler has been able to get to the pulse of the school and proactively identify students in need of universal support.

One innovative practice that has grown in popularity at Maude Wilkins was the implementation of a robust school-wide behavior support program called the "Right Choice Program". This program included a student-led store that began with a select group of students, in the Behavior and Multiple Disabilities programs, to encourage engagement of students with disabilities beyond the limits of their classroom. In addition, it promoted ownership, worked on speech-related skills that generalized beyond the therapy sessions (e.g., conversations, turn-taking, expression, comprehension, etc.), and evolved into a school-wide culture of accessibility and inclusivity. As a result, students of all ability levels are now engaging in a student government where Ms. Lawler and other professional staff teach various skills, including peer mentorship, presentation skills, and creative thinking. Maude Wilkins is just one school district across the state that recognizes the meaningful learning experiences that can occur when breaking barriers towards integrated related service providers as part of the whole-school environment.

The Parent Corner

Join the "Early Childhood Mini-Conference" to learn about various topics, including:



- Social Emotional Learning in Early Childhood, March 9th
- Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool, March 30th
- Assistive Technology to Promote Early Learning, April 6th