

Bulletin Board

Fall 2012

Every Child Learning: What is Special Education

By Dr. Lisa Fontana, Superintendent

All children can learn and all children have different ways of learning. Sometimes children need specific supports to help them learn, such as the training wheels I required before learning to ride my bike or sitting near the front of the classroom, so I could read my teachers' lips. When children struggle to learn at school, teachers try different strategies to find ways to help each child succeed. Sometimes regular classroom interventions work well (as sitting in the front of the classroom worked for me) while other times they do not. If the teacher is unable to help a student, the teacher turns to a team of other school personnel for new ideas. This team, often called a Student Success Team or SST, provides suggestions for new strategies to try. If the student still struggles even after other methods are tried, the teacher or parent may ask for more help to see if there are even additional specialized ways to assist the child in learning. Once this higher level of help is needed, the student may qualify for Special Education program supports and testing will be scheduled to determine eligibility for services.

There are many areas in which a child may need special help. A child may have trouble connecting what is heard to what is understood (an auditory

impairment), communicating with others (a communication impairment) or how to deal with others and their own emotions (emotional impairment). Sometimes students have specific learning disabilities in math or reading. Other ways children may need specific support might be related to physical conditions such as deafness or overcoming the effects of a traumatic injury. The key idea about Special Education services is that schools provide supports to children so they can still progress educationally



in spite of an impairment, disability or injury.

Once a student's learning issues are evaluated, he or she may qualify for very specific, individualized supports through the Special Education program. A team including the parent and educational personnel meet to design an Individual Education Program or IEP for the child with the goal of ensuring the child succeeds in learning in the most appropriate environment with the most appropriate supports. The team creates a legally binding docu-

ment, often called the IEP, which spells out the details of the individualized program for that child. The student's progress is monitored regularly and additional team meetings are held to evaluate and revise the program as needed but at least once per year.

There are laws protecting the educational rights of students with disabilities that guide schools through the IEP process. The legal guidelines ensure parent participation in designing the individualized program, specify appropriate evaluation procedures, guarantee a free and appropriate public education is provided to all children in the least restrictive environment and that all the legal procedures are followed. Sometimes a team determines there are specific services and supports needed to help a child succeed in school such as a voice projection device or the one-on-one assistance of an aide. Schools are required to provide whatever supportive services are necessary for a child to receive educational benefits from attending school.

Some of the school personnel involved in providing supports to students through an IEP may include:

- A Resource Teacher who has a specialized teaching credential for working with stu-

Special Education (continued from page 1, Superintendent's report)

with special educational needs

- A Speech and Language Therapist or Teacher who helps students to improve speech sounds and use of oral language
- A School Counselor who can help with many areas such as self-regulation, anger management and the social skills needed for making friends
- A School Psychologist who can help create a plan to improve difficult behaviors and administer many kinds of assessments
- The Principal or Superintendent who can identify appropriate funding sources for necessary services and supports

Any parent who is concerned when their child isn't progressing in school as anticipated should speak to their child's teacher about those concerns as soon as they notice problems so the teacher can begin to try different approaches to teaching their child. Of course all children learn and grow at their own individual pace so not all struggles in school indicate a disability or impairment needing intervention. Many times our littlest ones benefit from time and patience but it's best to keep in contact with the teacher to monitor growth. If more support is needed, the parent and teacher become partners on a team to develop a plan of action. Parents must always know they are critical members of the team and they know their own child better than anyone else, so their participation is crucial and welcomed.

If you would like to learn more about Special Education, please plan to attend an informational meeting on **Tuesday, October 16, from 5:30-6:30 pm at the Administrative Annex building on the Diamond Valley Elementary School Campus.** I'll go over some of the specialized lingo, documents and procedures and answer questions. As always please feel free to contact our Principal/Student Services Director, Laura Parks at 530.694.2238 or me, Lisa Fontana, Superintendent of Schools, at 530.694.2230. We'll be happy to answer your questions.

Team Sports—What are they good for? by Laura Parks, Principal

Every day on our campus I get to observe students playing team sports. Whether during P.E. when it is guided by a teacher, or during recess, our kids thrive on the energy and enthusiasm of competing with one another in a physical way. What are the benefits of team sports?

Health. Competing physically provides a fun way to exercise, without it feeling like exercise! Exercise improves circulation, metabolism and energy!

Communication. Team sports provide an opportunity to improve communication and work together for one cause.

Mentoring. Playing together can encourage mentoring. I often see older students encourage younger children by showing them a skill or giving them tips.

Patience. Participating in team sports allows children to practice patience as we wait a turn.

Sometimes I participate in the sports with our students, blocking or passing a soccer ball. When I'm not playing with the students, I'm rooting them on, encouraging good behavior and simply smiling and laughing with them. I'm thinking being a fan is good for my health, communication, mentoring and patience too!



School Board Highlights by Terrie Peets

June, 2012 – The Board acknowledged and thanked Mrs. McCully for her years of services with the District. The 2012-2013 District budget documents were presented in a public hearing and then approved. Revised job descriptions adding physical and mental requirements, and the Douglas County School District & Alpine County USD Interstate Attendance Agreement were explained and approved. A resolution to transfer funds to the Deferred Maintenance Fund was approved along with the resolution ordering the Governing Board Member election for two Trustees in Area A. Additionally, a public hearing for the District and County 2012-2013 Tier III State Categorical Funds was held and by a resolution they were approved. Under the County Board meeting, it was noted that the Early Learning Center was closed during the summer and Dr. Fontana shared information about personnel changes, historical contributions from Alpine First 5, budget amounts and the reasons for closing the summer childcare and next year's infant program. The County budgets were explained in a public hearing and then approved for the 2012-2013 school year.

July, 2012 – Under the District meeting, a new Academic Career Personal/Social Development Counselor was hired along with a Special Circumstances/Full Inclusion Para-Educator. The 2012-2013 Consolidated Application for funding Categorical Aid Programs was additionally approved through both the County and District meetings. Six furlough days for the Superintendent and the Business Manager to help mitigate the significant deficit projected were approved. To lessen the Early Learning Center deficit, the board approved waiving one year mortgage payments from the Office of Education with the 5% interest continued accrual on principal. The Board reviewed and approved updated California School Board Association polices.

August, 2012 – The District approved employment of two instructional aides and updated job descriptions. Discussion was held regarding the "Stand Up for Education" campaign from the California School Boards Association and a draft addendum to the environmental impact report from South Tahoe Public Utility District. It was noted that four candidates have completed their paperwork for the November election for Board Trustees: Kim Jackson, Jane Starratt, Tom Sweeney, and incumbent Jill Wegenstein.

September, 2012 – The District Board approved the employment for two instructional aides, 2012-2013 Superintendent goals and objectives, a resolution for the designation of an Impact Aid representative, a resolution adopting the GANN Limit, and the 2012-2013 Unaudited Actuals-Unrestricted and Restricted Financial Reports. Additionally the Board approved the California Common Core State Standards for K-12 and the California Pre-School Learning Foundations. A resolution supporting the California School Board's Association's priorities in Proposition 30 (Schools & Local Public Safety Protection Act), and Proposition 38 (Our Children Our Future: Local Schools and Early Education Investment Act) was approved. The County meeting also approved the Unaudited Actuals-Unrestricted and Restricted Financial Reports for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, a GANN Limit resolution, and the California Pre-School Learning Foundations.

Future Board Meeting Dates

October 9, 2012 -- District Meeting Closed Session at 5:30 p.m. with General Open Session at 6:00 p.m. followed by the County Meeting in the Hung-A-Lel-Ti Woodfords Education Center Building

November 13, 2012 -- District Meeting Closed Session at 5:30 p.m. with General Open Session at 6:00 p.m. followed by the County Meeting in the Admin. Annex Building and the Bear Valley area to be determined.

December 11, 2012 -- District Meeting Closed Session at 5:30 p.m. with General Open Session at 6:00 p.m. followed by the County Meeting in the Admin. Annex Building and the Bear Valley area to be determined.

**Alpine County Unified
School District**

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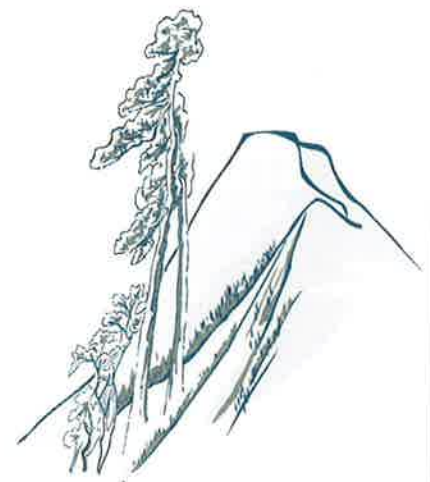
**Alpine County Unified School
District and
County Office of Education**

Vision

**All students are engaged and
successful.**

Mission

**We provide a safe and engag-
ing learning environment**



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