

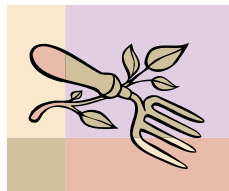


Student Support Services News

Spring 2011

Spring is in the air! Just as flowers start to show their colors and trees begin to bud, Student Support Services has new and exciting information popping up. We hope you enjoy this edition of the *Student Support Services News!* Inside, you will find information that will explain what the latest happenings are.

This newsletter is an effort by the SSS administration and department liaisons to share important information to and from administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, the community and parents like you who are interested in providing the best educational opportunities for students in the Thompson School District. If you have a new learning strategy, a summary article from an educational journal, a funny story, updates on your classroom happenings or anything that you are excited to share with everyone, please send your contributions to **Sammi Spear** via district mail (Administration Building) or email at sammi.spear@thompsonschoools.org. All ideas & requests are welcome!



***The educator is like a good gardener,
whose function is to make available
healthy, fertile soil in which a young
plant can grow strong roots.***

E.F. Schumacher (1911-1977)

German-born British Economist and Writer



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A Word from our Director

Spring is in close competition with fall as my favorite time of year. Spring makes me want to stop and enjoy the work that Mother Nature is doing with all the flowers, trees, and grass. I can draw an analogy from spring to the work that we have done as a Student Support Services group this year. As I stop and enjoy the work that we have done this year, I cannot help but be proud.

If you remember back to the goals we outlined as a department, we focused on closing the gap, family engagement, and systems alignment. I am happy to report that we have shown progress towards meeting each of those goals. For example, our student achievement is improving, according to Acuity data. Because of this data, I am looking forward to reviewing CSAP this summer. I feel that our family engagement practices are improving. We were able to offer something for families almost every week this year. We are also all working hard to engage our parents and families in a collaborative process for the benefit of children. Our work continues towards aligning our systems so that we can provide the most effective and efficient services for students. In an effort to meet this goal, our mental health professionals (counselors, school psychologists, and social workers) have been working hard to review and align their work. I am also especially proud of the partnerships and the sharing of students and support staff that is happening between our Learning Center and Intensive Learning Center teachers.

Spring is also a time when we look forward to our work next year. One of our major initiatives will be our continued work towards actualizing the discussions we have had about standards and standards-based IEPs. This summer, units of study will be completed which will give us the opportunity to bring in our expertise, in a most relevant manner, as we look at how to appropriately differentiate the lessons to meet the needs of our students.

Another area of work for next year includes working hard to find a way to provide you with “on-demand” professional development. We are hopeful, when you return from summer break, that we will have some pilot classes ready for you to access.

You have all worked extremely hard this year and for that I want to thank you. If I don’t have the chance to see you or talk with you before the end of the school year, please enjoy your break and the time with your friends and families.

In sincere thanks for all you do,

Dennis Rastatter

Director of Student Support Services



Together we will: Empower to Learn, Challenge to Achieve, Inspire to Excel



[Practical Co-Teaching Strategies: Effective Strategies for Working Together in Today's Inclusive Classroom \(Grades 1 - 12\)](#)

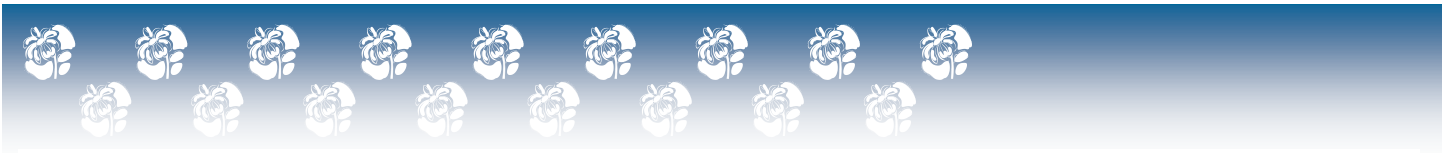
Today's classrooms are more diverse than ever before and we, as educators, are challenged to meet the needs of all students including those with disabilities or other special needs. Co-teaching is a powerful way to meet the academic needs of a variety of learners in today's classrooms. But what exactly is co-teaching and what are the most effective ways to go about it? In this outstanding seminar, **Kathleen Kryza** will offer you dozens of practical tips, tools and strategies to assist you in creating a new co-teaching program or to strengthen your current co-teaching program. You will learn how two teachers can work together most efficiently and effectively, numerous ways to differentiate lessons that work best with two teachers, and how and when to communicate with your co-teaching partner. Co-teaching has the potential to assist educators to create classrooms that recognize and address the range of student abilities by using the expertise of both general and special educators.

Exceptional Student Services will be hosting this exciting Co-teaching seminar on May 5, 2011. The seminar will be held at the VFW in Loveland from 8 to 4.

Good schools, like good societies and good families, celebrate and cherish diversity.

Deborah Meier (1931-)
American Educator and Writer





Autism 101: Teaching Social Skills

The incidence of children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) continues to rise though we still don't know what causes it nor do we have a cure. Fortunately today there is a deepening understanding of the unique needs of individuals with Asperger's Syndrome, high-functioning autism and related disorders such as PDD-NOS. In addition to language development and behavior, a critical area of need for students with ASD is social-pragmatic skill development. Success in school and in the work setting rests to a large degree on a person's social behaviors. Children with ASDs need specialized instruction to develop these fundamental social skills.

What does a disability in the area of social-pragmatic skills look like?

In the school setting, students with ASD may range from low to high functioning and may have symptoms that are mild to severe. Examples of common deficits include:

- trouble discerning meaning intended by others' tone of voice, body language or use of expressions
- engaging in monologues about special interests or including excessive details
- difficulty recognizing other people's feelings and points of view
- tendency to be very literal
- poor ability to work cooperatively in groups
- rigid adherence to rules
- varying ability to initiate and maintain conversations



These deficits often result in associated difficulties in academic areas including poor reading comprehension, spelling, handwriting, written language and abstract math skills. Targeting social skills however often positively impacts students with ASD by improving their comprehension, transition skills, flexibility and emotional regulation (Moyes, 2009). They are less anxious, more cooperative, have fewer problem behaviors, connect easier with peers and teachers and feel more motivated to learn (Malecki/Elliott,2002).

During the current school year, the Social Skills Intervention System has been introduced into eight TSD elementary schools. The SSIS is a research-based social skills curriculum consisting of an assessment instrument, a screening tool, a class-wide universal intervention program and a targeted intervention curriculum. In addition, Peer Buddy programs are being piloted in several schools at the secondary level and help build social skills through peer modeling.





Autism 101: Teaching Social Skills (continued)

What are other effective social skill classroom strategies for students with ASD?

- Use social stories to teach appropriate social behavior and to help the student learn to be more flexible.
- Use incidental teaching to explain idioms, double meanings and figures of speech (i.e. explain what it feels like to be “down in the dumps” or “spinning your wheels.”)
- Use visual modeling along with signals to teach conversational skills (i.e., toss a large ball back and forth to the student and explain that maintaining a conversation is like tossing a ball back and forth and that the ball represents the “topic.” Begin with their special interest as a topic).
- Listen and prompt: “Jack, they are talking about insects now, not computers.”
- Teach conversation fillers (“Awesome!” “No way!” “Really?”), compliments (about another’s appearance, achievement, a personal quality), appropriate ways to end a conversation.
- Model and teach appropriate body language and facial expression – laugh when others around you are laughing and stop when they do.

Observe recess interactions, explicitly teach routines, rules of games and how to “join in” an activity; develop a “menu” of activities for the student to select from and reward/praise the student for participating.

(Moyes,2009)

For more assistance contact TSD Autism Specialists:

Rhonda Ayres x5016, ***Cecilia Gasner*** x6771, ***Margi Scoufis*** x7440

Other resources for social skills programs and instruction:

Brainwise (Barry, 1995), Navigating the Social World (McAfee, 2002), The New Social Stories Book (Gray, 2009), The Hidden Curriculum (Miles, 2004), Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships (Grandin, 2005)

Upcoming Autism events

April 28, 2011: Family Movie Night: Screening of Temple Grandin, 6:00-8:30 MVHS.
Movie, dessert and activities for students

April 26 & May 3, 2011: ASD 101 TIC Class. Register through CourseWhere

May 15, 2011: A-Team Family/ Community Picnic, Fairground Park, Pavillion 2, 2:00-5:00



How to tell if you are a REAL teacher

Real teachers grade papers in the car, during commercials, in faculty meetings, in the bathroom, and (at the end of the six weeks) have been seen grading in church.

Real teachers cheer when they hear April 1 does not fall on a school day.

Real teachers clutch a pencil while thinking and make notes in the margins of books.

Real teachers can't walk past a crowd of kids without straightening up the line.

Real teachers never sit down without first checking the seat of the chair.

Real teachers have disjointed necks from writing on boards without turning their backs on the class.

Real teachers are written up in medical journals for the size and elasticity of kidneys and bladders.

Real teachers have been timed gulping down a full lunch in 2 minutes, 18 seconds. Master teachers can eat faster than that.

Real teachers can predict exactly which parents will show up at Open House.

Real teachers volunteer for hall duty on days faculty meetings are scheduled.

Real teachers never teach the conjugations of lie and lay to eighth graders.

Real teachers know it is better to seek forgiveness than ask permission.

Real teachers never take grades after Wednesday of the last week of the six weeks.

Real teachers never assign research papers on the last six weeks or essays on final exams.

Real teachers can "sense" gum.

Real teachers are solely responsible for the destruction of the rain forest.

Real teachers have their best conferences in the parking lot.

Real teachers have never heard an original excuse.

Real teachers buy Excedrin and Advil at Sam's.

Real teachers will eat anything that is put in the workroom/teacher's lounge.

Real teachers have the assistant principals' and counselors' home phone numbers.

Real teachers know secretaries and custodians run the school.



Family Academy Calendar of Events—April 2011

Date	Time	Topic	Location
04/19/11	4:30-6:00	ESSAC	800 S. Taft Ave. Loveland, CO 80537
04/20/11	10:00-11:30	Family to Family Support	800 S. Taft Ave. Loveland, CO 80537
04/27/11	10:00-11:30	Understanding RtI	Centennial Elementary School

Please RSVP to Beth Johnson at beth.johnson@thompsonschoools.org

Family Engagement

The Family Engagement Team for Thompson School District is in the process of revising the District Parent Involvement policy to reflect the National PTA Standards. The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement were created in 1997. These were based on research by Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University. The standards were designed to help every school and program that serves children and families to establish effective partnerships for student success.

Parents play key roles in successful, comprehensive, and inclusive parent involvement programs.

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs reflect and support these parenting roles:

- Communicating—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful
- Parenting—Parenting skills are promoted and supported
- Student learning—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning
- Volunteering —Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought
- School decision making and advocacy—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families

Collaborating with the community—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Family Academy is asking for input on meaningful activities, classes, or information that it could provide to staff and families to enhance student achievement. Please call the Family Engagement Coordinator, **Beth Johnson** at 613-5014 or beth.johnson@thompsonschoools.org.

KINDNESS

Pass it on!

Give a flower Eat lunch with someone new Listen
with your heart Visit a sick friend Clean a neighbor's walk
Offer a hug Give an unexpected gift Make a new
friend **Pick up litter** *Say "hello"* Call a lonely
student Open a door Help carry a load Plant
a tree **Pass a kindness on** Share a snack
CHEER UP A FRIEND *Thank a teacher* Lend a hand
Read to a young child Do a kind act daily **Leave**
a thank you note Offer your seat Cycle
courteously **Be tolerant** *Let another go first* *Bake*
cookies for firefighters Give a compliment **Help a student make**
friends **Assist an adult** Give a balloon away Celebrate
something every day Encourage a friend **Respect**
others Walk a dog Do a favor **Forgive mistakes**
Smile at someone new