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Education



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DELAWARE

A collaborative effort of the Center for Disabilities Studies & the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

For this issue of *delAware* we have worked to synthesize information to help you understand the language used by education professionals and the complex impact of state and federal legislation on Delaware families and schools. We believe we have found some intriguing programs highlighting important educational approaches, including inclusion and positive behavior support (PBS).

Dianne Ferguson, a scholar in the area of educational reform, stated in 2002, "The premise of inclusive school communities is that all students... belong to the school that their peers and siblings attend, and should have access to the general education curriculum and have similar broad educational outcomes." The profile of Concord High School is an example of the positive impact of inclusion on the entire school community and showcases how the school has become a model for inclusion.

Michael Partie is the coordinator of the Positive Behavior Support in the Community project at the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS), which brings PBS techniques to community agencies. He defines PBS as "a comprehensive approach to support, one that clarifies expectations, teaches how expectations can be met, builds on strengths, ensures needs are met, plans for and celebrates success, and makes problem behaviors unnecessary." This issue's features on Harlan Elementary School and Redding Middle School focus on the innovative ways PBS is used to improve school climate.

The CDS website (www.udel.edu/cds) includes a Resource Library that links to organizations in the community that provide information about state and national education initiatives. For more information about the state's education activities, highlighted projects, or ways to access resources to enhance your understanding of educational issues, please contact:

Delaware Department of Education
Connie Moran
(302) 735-4210
cmoran@doe.k12.de.us
www.doe.state.de.us

Center for Disabilities Studies, School-Age Initiatives
Debby Boyer
(302) 831-3503
dboyer@udel.edu
www.udel.edu/cds

The Parent Information Center of Delaware
Marie-Anne Aghazadian
(888) 547-4412
picofdel@picofdel.org
www.picofdel.org

The Parent Information Center of Delaware (PIC) is funded by the United States Department of Education to serve as a parental information and resource center. Its mission is to provide families of children with disabilities and special needs the information and support needed to become successful advocates for their children. I encourage you to connect with PIC for resources, workshops, and information related to education.

I'd like to close by recognizing the contributions of several individuals for their ongoing support of CDS's school-age projects. Martha Brooks, Karen Jones, Martha Toomey, and Brian Touchette from the Delaware Department of Education support the Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment project, Inclusive Schools Initiative, and Positive Behavior Support project and make these activities possible. The CDS staff dedicated to these initiatives includes Debby Boyer, Sandi Bradford, Sarah Celestin, Alison Chandler, Teresita Cuevas, Sarah Hearn, Judi MacBride, and Patricia Tressell.

I hope this issue provides you with a clear introduction about how inclusion and PBS improve our community.

Sincerely,

Tracy L. Mann, Editor

delAware is sponsored by the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) and the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council. If you would like to contact us, please call (302) 831-6974 or TDD at (302) 831-4689, fax (302) 831-4690, email to [Tracy Mann, tlm@udel.edu](mailto:tlm@udel.edu), or write to *delAware*, University of Delaware, Center for Disabilities Studies, 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, DE 19716. Editor: Tracy L. Mann, CDS. CDS Contributors: Johanna Homan, Michele Sands, Debby Boyer, and Jamie Wolfe. Copy Editor: Nina Leech. Designer: Cindy Dolan.

The mission of the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) is to enhance the lives of individuals and families in Delaware through education, prevention, service, and research related to disabilities. We promote independence and productivity so individuals and families can fully participate in the life of the community. As a research and public service center at the University of Delaware, CDS relies on public and private support from individuals, corporations, foundations and state and federal entities to operate its programs. All gifts to CDS are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. Please visit our website at www.udel.edu/cds or call (302) 831-6974 for more information about supporting CDS' mission.

Delaware Implements Progressive School Programs for All Students



In Delaware, the approach to special education is changing as the state embraces a model of education that creates supportive school climates to highlight the abilities—and adequately meet the needs—of every student. These systems of support deliver tailored academic and behavioral interventions that enable students to remain and thrive in the general education classroom and access the regular academic content.

In the United States, over 6.6 million children between the ages of 3 and 21 have an identified disability and receive special education services through their schools.¹ In Delaware alone, approximately 15,000 children (or 14 percent of enrolled students) qualified for special education services during the 2007-2008 school year.² Traditionally, those students with disabilities are placed in separate classrooms and may not receive instruction in the general education classroom. This practice can limit student growth, both intellectually and socially. Furthermore, students without disabilities may also face academic or behavioral challenges but fail to receive appropriate interventions or support.

Evidence-based Programs for Academics

State-level initiatives are a response, in part, to federal actions. As educational topics gain spotlight recognition, the federal government has put forth new and comprehensive regulations. School districts are thus challenged to implement these regulations through inventive means that balance resources with program viability and student outcome. For instance, the No Child Left Behind Act states that all students, regardless of disability, must be included in an academic assessment program. In Delaware, the Delaware Alternative Portfolio Assessment (DAPA) measures the academic progress of students with significant cognitive disabilities and is a corollary of the traditional Delaware Student Testing Program (see article on page 2).

Legislative mandates require schools to implement research-based programs and teaching practices. One educational model that is required is Response to Intervention (RTI). According to the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) website, RTI is "the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about change in instruction or goals, and applying child-response data to important educational decisions."

RTI in Delaware operates through a three-tiered model. School-wide screening assessments in reading and math are given three times a year to determine if any students are experiencing academic difficulty. Increasing

levels of interventions and supports are provided to students who are struggling, and their progress is documented. The majority of students receive these targeted, research-based interventions in the general education classroom. One potential outcome, if the interventions at all three tiers have proved ineffective, is that a student may be identified with a specific learning disability and receive special education services.

Creating Behavioral Supports

Like RTI, Positive Behavior Support (PBS) programs operate according to a tiered model of intervention that uses student data to guide implementation (see article on page 3). Yet while RTI targets academic progress, PBS aims to develop positive learning environments and prevent behavior problems. In conjunction with DDOE, the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) leads the Positive Behavior Support Project in the state. Currently, over 55 percent of the public schools in Delaware use a PBS approach.

The first level of intervention entails school-wide behavior support that addresses the behavior of all students in the school. The second and third levels provide interventions for students who experience more frequent or serious behavioral issues. In each PBS school, a team of teachers, support staff, and administrators join to lead PBS activities. However, student involvement is also encouraged, and many schools have worked to include their student body in unique ways (see article on page 4).

Building Inclusive Schools

Educational models such as RTI and PBS operate in tandem to create more inclusive learning environments. In Delaware, CDS and the state also collaborate to foster the inclusion of students with learning differences and identified disabilities through the Inclusive Schools Initiative (ISI). Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment; this means they should remain, whenever possible, in the same setting as students without disabilities.

ISI embraces this notion of the least restrictive environment. It uses a team-based model to guide implementation and provides materials and professional development that districts and schools use to make inclusion a reality (see article on page 3).

¹ United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, www.nces.ed.gov

² Delaware Department of Education, Report of Educational Statistics, www.doe.k12.de.us

DAPA Portfolios Provide Snapshots of Students' Educational Programs



According to federal mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act, all public school students in second through eleventh grade must be included in an academic assessment program. Delaware, which measures student progress with the Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP), created an ancillary program called the Delaware Alternative Portfolio Assessment (DAPA) to assess nearly 1,100 students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot (even with accommodations) meaningfully participate in the DSTP. These exceptional students are measured against the same, though often modified, general education standards as their peers.

DAPA is headquartered at the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS), which works in partnership with the Delaware Department of Education and other education and family stakeholders. Created 10 years ago by former CDS Director Dr. Donald L. Peters, DAPA continues to evolve by adapting its procedures to more adequately meet federal standards as well as the needs of students, teachers, and schools.

Measuring Student Progress

The academic assessment is documented in a portfolio that serves as a snapshot of each student's educational program. The portfolios monitor the same academic content areas as the DSTP (i.e., English, math, science, and social studies). Each academic content area contains four dimensions: *activity* measures how students interact with general education curriculum; *self-determination* gauges how students self-manage tasks and receive feedback; *settings* weighs how students generalize skills to various settings; and *interactions* considers how students interact with peers or coworkers. Measurement across these four dimensions helps create a holistic picture of a student's achievement.

For instance, according to the settings dimension, students must learn to generalize academic skills from the classroom to other environments, such as a job training center. Furthermore, the interactions dimension promotes interaction with a broader range of peers than some students in self-contained schools typically encounter. Lisa Jubb, a teacher at the John G. Leach School in the Colonial School District,

notes, "Because DAPA makes a big push for interaction, we have had to work more stringently to uncover such opportunities. However, students who are higher functioning appear more motivated to do classwork with someone their own age. It is also a good experience for their

information, teachers create a portfolio that melds standards-based skills and IEP objectives to form cohesive instructional activities for their students. Through this process, DAPA aims to promote best practice by aiding teachers in applying research-supported academic

and Ms. Jubb discuss ways in which some civilizations used urns to tell stories; students then construct their own urns. During a unit on the Statue of Liberty, the teachers read a book about the monument to their students and ask general comprehension questions to facilitate discussion. Again, students complete art projects that incorporate the Statue of Liberty theme.

As portfolio development progresses, DAPA staff and DAPA district consultants hold support sessions from October to January in school districts around the state (approximately 40 such sessions were held during the 2007-2008 school year). Teachers may receive assistance with any aspect of portfolio development during these sessions.

Moreover, for the 2007-2008 school year, DAPA added almost 30 new screening sessions (from October to December). At these sessions, DAPA staff examine the portfolios to determine the appropriateness of each articulated standard, objective, and activity. With approval, teachers know that they are on the right track with their assessment activities. "Whoever attends these new screening sessions receives a

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"DAPA is great because teachers are... documenting student achievement...

the work of these students counts just like the progress of all the other students."

typical peers who build awareness of disability."

To measure student progress across these dimensions, teachers record data continually throughout the DAPA process. Zoj Hoxhaj, a special education teacher for the Meadowood Program in the Red Clay Consolidated School District, is one of nine DAPA district consultants. "I think that DAPA is great because teachers are keeping data and documenting student achievement," Ms. Hoxhaj explains. "Therefore, the work of these students counts just like the progress of all the other students in the school district."

Portfolios and Student Activities

The portfolios are developed by the special education teachers who work with students with significant cognitive disabilities. First, teachers examine the general education curriculum and state standards to identify the skills that these guidelines promote; teachers then select objectives from a student's individualized education program (IEP). With this

activities in the classroom.

For instance, IEP objectives for students with significant cognitive disabilities often focus on functional life skills in lieu of academic content. Yet Megan Conway, a teacher at John G. Leach School, says, "DAPA has helped us think about the curriculum in different ways. It certainly has helped us to become more academic, which benefits the students."

Fellow teachers Ms. Conway and Ms. Jubb extract main ideas from the general education curriculum and adapt the content in ways that integrate their students' improvement of communication, sensory, and fine motor skills. "For students who are higher functioning, this approach allows them to gain some new skills, while other students can still achieve functional objectives," Ms. Conway explains.

For example, the ninth-grade general education curriculum addresses ancient civilizations. As part of this unit, Ms. Conway

Assisting Teachers

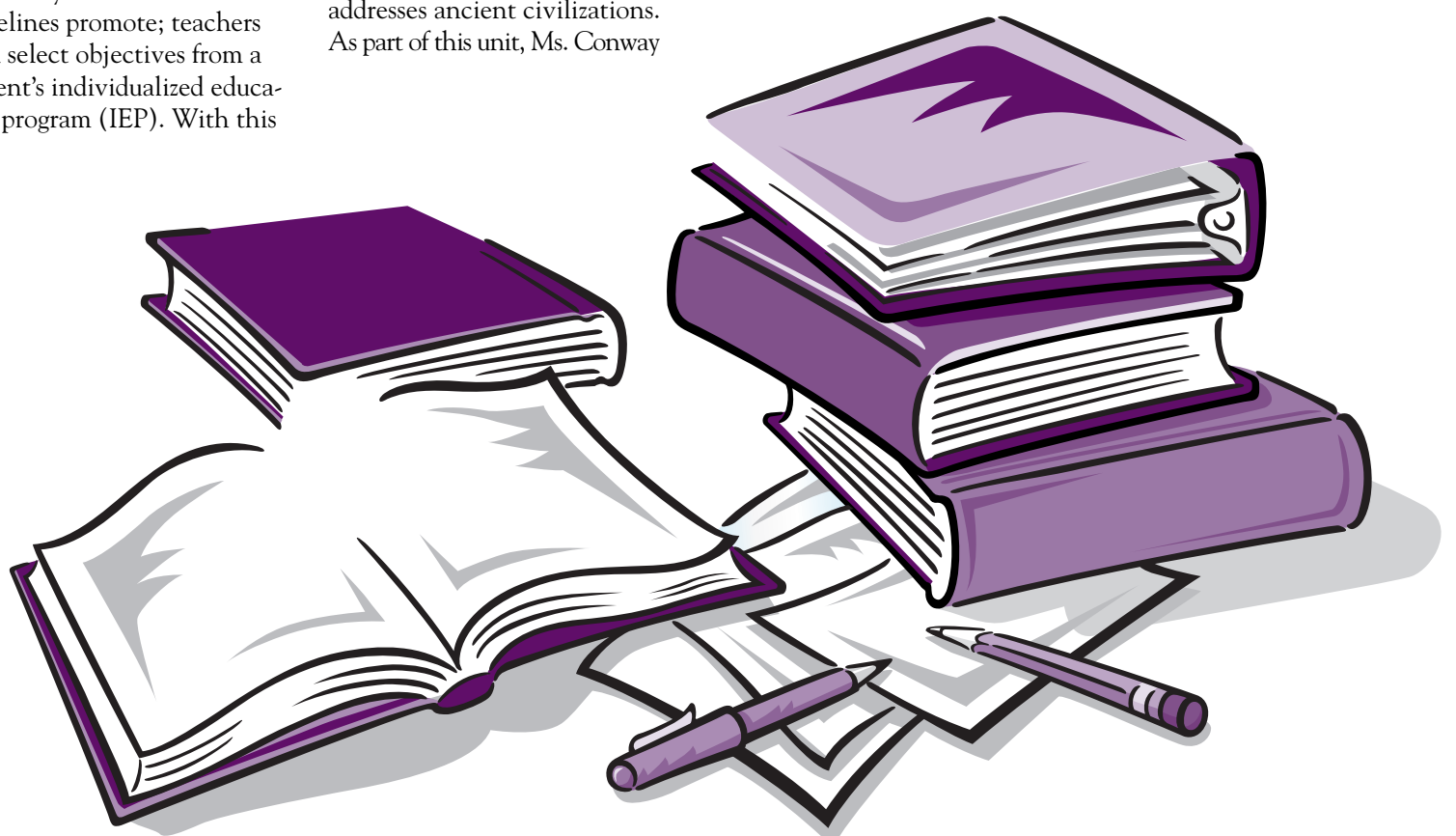
Numerous trainings and supports are in place to coach teachers at every step in the process. At the beginning of each school year, two types of professional development are offered—a full-day session for new portfolio developers and a three-hour session for those with prior experience. Through a variety of interactive activities, these sessions review best-

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"DAPA has helped us think about the curriculum in different ways. It certainly has helped us to become more academic, which benefits the students."

practice measures as tools to adapt the general education curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Practical matters, such as ways to manage the range of paperwork required by DAPA, are also addressed. This past fall, approximately 450 educators from 150 schools in 19 districts attended a portfolio development session.

great deal of feedback," notes Ms. Hoxhaj. "These sessions definitely help teachers catch and remediate mistakes before the portfolios are scored in the spring."

For more information about DAPA, please contact Alison Chandler, Project Coordinator, at (302) 831-1052 or alisonc@udel.edu.



Students Soar at Harlan Elementary with H.A.W.K.S. Succeed



David W. Harlan Elementary School in the Brandywine School District serves a diverse population of nearly 600 students in grades four

through six. Despite the large enrollment, Harlan has taken proactive, forward-thinking steps to ensure that each of its students receives adequate levels of academic and behavioral support. Two state initiatives exist in Delaware to foster the success of students: Instructional Support Team (IST) Project and Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Project. Both projects work with teams in the schools to develop systems for supporting student learning. Many schools view these teams as two separate processes; traditionally, IST is designed to foster the academic success of students, while PBS focuses on students' behavior. Yet Stacey Falls, Harlan's school psychologist, notes, "Academics and behavior are not mutually exclusive. Often, many students have co-occurrent problems in the two areas."

With this in mind, Harlan made every effort to combine its IST and PBS processes. "We looked at the programs we had in the school and how we could align them and our resources—particularly our human resources—more effectively," says Julie Cassel-Martin, International Baccalaureate Coordinator, who has spearheaded the initiative with Ms. Falls. Ms. Cassel-Martin continues, "Under our original model, we found that it was a constant challenge for two separate teams to coordinate academic and behavioral interventions for one student. We knew we needed a more cohesive approach." Therefore, at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, Harlan unveiled its H.A.W.K.S. Succeed program, which

stands for "Helping All World-Class Kids and Staff Succeed."

Data Collection

H.A.W.K.S. Succeed is part of a multi-tiered approach with progressively intensified supports at each level. At the first level, high-quality academic and behavioral strategies are in place for all students through classroom instruction and school-wide PBS. H.A.W.K.S. Succeed comprises the second, or targeted, level of the process. When a teacher requests assistance from the H.A.W.K.S. Succeed team, a case manager is assigned to work with the teacher to pinpoint the problem—whether academic, behavioral, or both—tailor interventions, and collect data. Using this data, the teacher and case manager will continue the problem-solving process until goals are achieved. For students with significant behavioral or academic concerns, an intensive team of support staff and administrators apply more extensive measures.

"Integration was not without its challenges," says Ms. Cassel-Martin. "But we worked to revise the process at various stages of its implementation." Moreover, the results have proved well worth the effort and time. After almost four years, the program has moved Harlan ahead of the educational curve.

In essence, Harlan created its own Response to Intervention (RTI) process through its blending of PBS and IST. With the Delaware Department of Education's official introduction of RTI, Harlan stands poised to meet the new state requirements. "Data collection is a critical component of RTI and

H.A.W.K.S. Succeed is a data-driven process," notes Ms. Falls. "Our streamlined approach helps us generate appropriate data, and with it, we are able to measure trends in student achievement."

Notably, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce presented Harlan with a Superstars in Education Award for the 2005-2006 school year for H.A.W.K.S. Succeed, recognizing the creativity of the program, and specifically, clear data tracking and achievement-trends analysis.

Collaboration and Success

The H.A.W.K.S. Succeed program has improved the overall school climate, benefiting teachers and students alike. "We now have a much more collaborative environment," reports Ms. Cassel-Martin.

Increased lines of communication prompt more conversations related to student achievement, and teachers recognize that there is a clear system in place to support them when students struggle in the classroom. When teachers and case managers work together to address a student's behavioral or academic issues, teachers master strategies that they can then use with all students to proactively enhance the educational quality of the school.

As one teacher notes, "It is so wonderful to have a partner when problem-solving to help a student. I am not alone but have the collaborative resources of my whole building behind me. If I am stuck, someone helps me. If I see a roadblock, someone helps me see a detour. If I am frustrated, someone shares inspiration. There is nothing that cannot be solved at Harlan."

Concord Models "The Way" to Inclusive Education



Inclusive education for all students at Concord High

School has been promoted by Principal Mark Holdick and the school's special education team since Principal Holdick came to the school three years ago. While many consider inclusion best practice, its emphasis also reflects "The Concord Way," the school's guiding philosophy to create a positive environment that benefits individual students and the school as a whole. According to Debby Boyer, the project leader for school-age programs at the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS), Principal Holdick's strong leadership and Concord's commitment to inclusion are informing and strengthening the direction of the statewide Inclusive Schools Initiative (ISI).

CDS and the Delaware Department of Education jointly administer ISI and work with individual schools and school districts to develop a systems change that promotes inclusive schools. Two years ago, ISI provided professional development training for a leadership team at Concord and for a coach from the Brandywine School District.

Through the collaborative work of these individuals, Concord has developed a model for inclusion that has changed its school climate and set a standard for other secondary schools.

"The Concord Way"

At Concord, approximately 120 students with disabilities qualify for an individualized education program (IEP), which provides supports to help them to achieve their educational goals. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that students must be served in the least restrictive environment needed to meet their needs. In accordance with these provisions, the general education classroom is Concord's preferred setting to meet student needs and advance each student's goals. Special education staff use a student-based, consultative-collaborative model that provides resources to both the teachers and special education students. These staff are assigned, as needed, to individual students instead of a specific classroom.

According to Mark Mayer, Assistant to the Principal, this model affords special education teachers the freedom to support students in a more efficient and effective manner. Special education teacher Susan Krikelis further explains, "Special education teachers maintain close contact with classroom teachers to more directly understand the curriculum and student needs, while classroom teachers design differentiated instruction and modify material appropriately,"

Although co-teaching—a model of inclusive education that pairs a special education teacher with a general education teacher in the classroom—has been used at Concord, Ms. Krikelis's current role is as a facilitator or coach, not a teacher. Ms. Krikelis presents information in a way that a student with a disability can access it. For instance, she might sit and work with a student one on one, modify a test or read test questions to a student, provide a textbook at a lower reading level, or encourage a student to use an adaptive device. In addition, Ms. Krikelis typically spends two periods a day in the study hall where she is available to help students as needed.

Seven years ago, Concord had a separate hallway for special education classrooms. Now all students who are in special education and on the diploma track are part of general education classrooms. A small number of students with more significant disabilities remains in a community-based program, but most still attend some general education classes. Mr. Mayer says that inclusion has helped reduce discipline problems and increased school morale. Additionally, students are achieving higher scores on the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) and other tests while general education teachers are more confident regarding the specific learning needs of special education students.

The Benefits of Inclusion

Concord's special education team shared its model of inclusion with staff at St. Georges Technical High School, which opened its doors in November 2006 as an inclusive school. Students and teachers at New Castle County Vocational Technical School District's newest school benefit from the expertise of Dr. Amy

Pleet, Professional Development School Inclusion Consultant with the University of Delaware's Center for Secondary Teacher Education, who provides professional development regarding inclusion of students with disabilities.

Dr. Laura Eisenman, Associate Professor in the School of Education at University of Delaware and CDS staff member, is working with Dr. Pleet to study the experiences of students and teachers at St. Georges. Dr. Eisenman's research interests focus on the interplay of education and disability, such as the ways in which schools can foster self-determination in students with disabilities. Dr. Pleet has observed that the inclusion program at St. Georges is helping special education students monitor their own academic progress, seek help when needed, and become self-advocates. Like their peers at Concord, St. Georges' students are developing these skills within the least restrictive environment of the general education classroom. Special education teachers serve as learning support coaches for teachers and students and provide help to students outside the classroom.

Students "Reel In" Positive Behavior at Redding Middle School



Like many schools in Delaware, Redding Middle School in the Appoquinimink School

District has a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program to enrich the school environment and prevent behavior problems. Like all PBS schools, a team composed of staff from across the school coordinates implementation of the program. This team develops school-wide expectations, plans for teaching and acknowledging expectations, and uses data to monitor program effectiveness. However, Redding is unique because students assume leadership for PBS activities. Four years ago, Redding created the FISHES, a team of 40-50 dedicated sixth, seventh, and eighth graders who collaborate to design and lead PBS initiatives. FISHES stands for "friends in school helping everyone succeed."

To become a FISH, students can be nominated by their teachers or a current FISH. In addition, a student can now apply to become a FISH due to the success of the peer-led team and the subsequent increase in PBS activities. Each FISH has his or her own reasons for joining the team. Seventh grader Cecilia Dunkelberger says, "I wanted to be a FISH because I wanted to help others succeed in what they were doing and help the school become a better place."

Calvin Thompson, also a seventh-grade FISH, agrees, "When I read the packet about becoming a FISH, it discussed ways for students to behave in class. I thought of how it bothered me when people talked in class and I couldn't get my work done. So I thought that I should do something to help myself and other people in the school get better grades."

The FISHES team benefits not only the school but each of its members. Every FISH learns and grows as a result of involvement. Eighth grader Stephani Stilwell joined the PBS team in the fall of 2007, and she describes her experience as follows:

Coming into the FISHES program, I was ready to broaden my horizons, and that's exactly what being a new FISH has brought me. As a "newbie," I am able to present to classes and gain better speaking skills. Also, not only am I teaching how to make our school better, I'm learning about it, too. I get to help with advertising activities as well, which is always fun considering I love art. So many fun events are planned throughout the year and I can't wait to be a part of them all.¹

Jazmine Young and Ryker Calaquian both note that becoming a FISH helped them achieve personal growth. The two members speak of their prior shyness and how working on various public-speaking activities helped them gain confidence and ease in front of their peers. Ryker, who is in the seventh grade, explains, "I knew that there were presentations and that you had to get up in class, present, and actually be good. I used to be shy and quiet in sixth grade, so I became involved in presentations so I could learn to talk in front of a class."

"This used to be the quietest kid ever!" jokes another FISH, highlighting Ryker's growth.

Joining to Develop PBS Activities

At one of the FISHES monthly team meetings, Jessica Lauver, the teacher who supervises the PBS activities, tells the group, "We are FISHES and we don't gossip. As a FISH, you are accepting of everyone." This attitude fosters a collaborative team environment as all members of the FISHES work together to create a panoply of projects and activities, including fundraising, classroom presentations, advertising and public relations, and a PBS cart (students "spend" credits earned for exemplary behavior to "buy" items from the cart). The projects—PowerPoint presentations, videos, posters, game shows, and more—center on various themes, such as how to behave with a substitute teacher. The participating students not only learn valuable skills, they also serve as powerful role models for other students.



Some student members of the FISHES team from Redding Middle School.

Chris Clendening, a veteran FISH in his third year, details a project with which he has been involved:

Knights of the Round Wheel, a game show, is produced at the beginning of the school year. This is used to inform and remind the student body about our school's "Code of the Knights," which are our rules of good conduct: be respectful, be responsible, be a good citizen, be safe, and be there, be ready. There are many different games and questions to go through depending on what the spin of the wheel is. Throughout the game show, the students' knowledge of the "Code of the Knights" and teamwork skills are tested.

The School Environment

While the FISHES projects are fun and lighthearted, they also send serious messages to achieve important goals of PBS, such as creating a safer, more socially responsible school environment. Rebecca Gillie, now in seventh grade, has been a FISH since sixth grade. Her sister, Shannon Gillie, is now in high school but was a FISH throughout her middle-school years. Together, they explain how they have strived to improve the school environment by combating bullying, a main focus of the FISHES team:

Over the last four years, the Redding Middle School anti-bullying program has evolved into a school-wide combat against bullying. When it first began, the program depended mainly on teachers to enforce the policies. Then, students became involved in the program and started talking to their peers and doing presentations. There has been more effort on the students' behalf to stop bullying and promote friendliness in school since this occurred. Now the students host a game show at the beginning of the year and a refresher course halfway through the year, as well as in-class presentations that enforce all aspects of anti-bullying throughout the year.

This year, the motto of the FISHES is "power in numbers," which urges students not to be bystanders to negative incidents in the school. Eighth grader Fran Ford supports this motto: "I wanted to become a FISH because I was tired of seeing people arguing and fighting or bullying others for no apparent reason. If there is something I can do about it, I am going to try to stop it."

¹ A special thanks to the four students who contributed written pieces to this article: Stephani Stilwell, Chris Clendening, and Rebecca and Shannon Gillie.