



MADSEC Newsletter

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Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities
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President's Article

By Dominic DePatsy

Welcome to the 2008-2009 school year in the beautiful State of Maine! I am very excited to be President of MADSEC to continue the work on OUR mission:

"to advocate for the right of all students to receive a free and appropriate public education. We provide support to our members, opportunities for professional growth to Maine educators, and leadership in shaping policies and practices, which impact the quality of education for children with disabilities".

During our MADSEC executive retreat this summer, the executive committee focused on our mission, beliefs, and norms as an organization. As we discussed our mission, we realized that as an organization we support both student and adult learning. With the concept of response to intervention introduced by our regulations, we have an opportunity to collaborate, share, and learn from one another to best meet the needs of each struggling learner.

Melinda Baird, a national expert in special education law, challenged us during her presentation on Special Education eligibility called *Response to Intervention: Why This, Why Now, and Why Not?* She discussed some interesting issues and points that present opportunities for dialogue with regular educators. During her presentation Ms. Baird posed the question:

- How are we going to react to staff in initial IEP meetings when we know that the intervention was not highly qualified or research based instruction for reading and math prior to coming to special education referral, which is required by NCLB and our Maine Special Education Regulation?

I suggest this question challenges us to become even stronger resources and collaborative colleagues for each other and in our schools. The good news is:

- we can set aside 15% of local entitlement to support work with regular educators.
- we have an opportunity like never before to join together for the education of all children.

Please see President's Article on page 2

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ary Workshops, Inc.

*"Behavior is
communication – listen
to what the message is."*

The work of Richard and Becki DuFour on Professional Learning Communities has become well known recently. What is a Professional Learning Community? A **professional** is someone with expertise in a specialized field; **learning** suggests ongoing action and perpetual curiosity; **community** is a group linked by common interests. A professional learning community is characterized by behaviors of professionals – continuous professional learning, collaboration amongst members of the learning community and a focus on “an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone.” (DuFour, 1998) This was the message I had hoped would be heard when I spoke at the Director’s Academy, highlighting the work of Warren Bennis in his book *Geeks & Geezers*. My intent was to honor and celebrate the enormous collective skill and knowledge we have within our organization and to suggest we share those skills and knowledge to continue our professional learnings together!

I believe we can achieve a professional learning community in this organization by taking the following actions this year to build our capacity to:

1. Strengthen leadership skills and practices through our continued professional learning.
2. Support colleagues to sustain the energy and focus that building exemplary instructional practices requires.
3. Build strong, supportive, working relationships with parents and parent groups.

Steps to begin this work have begun. On September 18, 2008, representatives from the Maine Parent Federation, the Autism Society, Southern Maine Parent Awareness, the Committee on Transition, the Learning Disability Association, and MADSEC came together and began work as a professional learning community.

To facilitate action steps one and two, some ideas for professional learning opportunities in addition to the conference model have been suggested such as:

- A MADSEC lending library of sets of professional readings and subsequent book talks via SKYPE (which is audio only when more than two people).
- A professional blog such as edublog.org for professional discussions and sharing.
- Wikispaces.com to facilitate sharing of professional practices.
- Use of regional meetings as professional learning opportunities v. nuts and bolts informational sharing.

More on these later and if you have an idea, let me know! Just as the year has begun, it is my hope that together we can begin some new practices, honor some tried and true practices and meet the challenge to provide the best leadership, instructional practices and collaboration possible within our state.

References

- Bennis, Warren & Thomas, Robert (2002). *Geeks and Geezers*. Boston, MA; Harvard Business School Press
- DuFour, Richard & Eaker, Robert (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work, Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA; ASCD

MADSEC Executive Board

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Erin Chase	President-Elect
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MADSEC Publications Committee members: Jill Adams (MADSEC), Anna Perkins (Good Will-Hinckley).

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MADSEC invites readers to submit articles for consideration for publication in this newsletter. Contact Jill Adams, Executive Director, if you are interested. In addition, if you have a need that can be met through this newsletter, please contact the MADSEC office.

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Mission Statement

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) believes in, and advocates for, the right of all students to receive a free and appropriate public education. We provide support to our members, opportunities for professional growth to Maine educators, and leadership in shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education for children with disabilities.

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MADSEC Regional Representative Board

Aroostook	Rick Umphrey - Caribou School Department
Bridges	Will Burrow - Union # 44 - Sabattus Alt./Lisa Hanson - MSAD #61 -- Naples
Capital	Deb Marshall - Monmouth School Department Alt./Donna Madore - Augusta School Department
Central	Stacy Shorey - MSAD #53 - Pittsfield Alt./Cheryl Mercier - MSAD #47 - Fairfield
Cumberland	Alison Marchese - Scarborough School Department
Hancock	Kelly Rush Sanborn - Union #98 - Mt. Desert Alt. / Lynn Maddocks - Ellsworth School Department
Katahdin	Cheryl Morin - MSAD #67 - Lincoln
Merrymeeting	Susan Matthews - Union #30 - Lisbon
Mid-Coast	Judy Gove - MSAD #28 - Camden Alt./Chris Tofani - MSAD #50 - Thomaston
So. Penobscot	Lesley Snyder - MSAD #23 - Carmel & #38 - Etna Alt./Sharon Brady - Union #87 - Orono
Tri-County	Janet Morse - MSAD #48 - Newport Alt./Norleen Fleming - MSAD #48 - Newport
Waldo	Sharon Goguen - MSAD #56 - Searsport
Washington	Mary Maker - Union #102 - Machias
Western	Brian Foster - MSAD #9 - Farmington Alt. /
York	Ruth Venell - MSAD #60 - N. Berwick Alt./Jean Beetz - York School Department

Liaisons Who Serve On The Representative Board:

Special Purpose Private Schools - Anna Perkins - GoodWill Hinckley
Child Development Services -

MADSEC 2007-08 Calendar

September

- 12 Rep. Board Meeting
 16 "OH!" Those State Required Forms
 Workshop - Presque Isle
 19 DWM Workshop - Augusta
 25 "OH!" Those State Required Forms
 Workshop - Bangor
 30 "OH!" Those State Required Forms
 Workshop - So. Portland

October

- 2 "OH!" Those State Required Forms
 Workshop - Augusta
 17 Rep. Board Meeting
 27 &
 28 Annual Fall Conference

November

- 21 Rep. Board Meeting

December

- 12 DWM Workshop, Augusta

January

- 9 Rep. Board Meeting

February

- 12 Rep. Board Meeting

March

- 20 Rep. Board Meeting

April

- 16 Rep. Board Meeting

May 2008

- 1 Rep. Board Meeting

June 2008

- 21-25 *Directors' Academy* (Bar Harbor)

The [MADSEC website](#) is a good source of information. Check it out to find things like:

- Professional development calendar
- Interesting and important articles written by fellow educators

New Directors/Changes in Personnel

Agency/District	Director
MSAD #44	Elise Thomas
MSAD #63	Cindy Austin
MSAD #54	Ann Belanger
Union #133	John Clark
Wiscasset	Delia Dearnley
Gorham	Katie Hawes
Union #122	John Hedman
MSAD #5	Ralph Newbert
MSAD #58	Lauren Olsen
Hermon	Brandy St. Pierre
Five Town CSD & MSAD #28	Judy Gove
MSAD #8	Alicia Watts
MSAD #41	Susan Worcester

Michael Cushman
MADSEC Regular Education Teacher
of the Year

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Michael Cushman as the Regular Education Teacher of the year.

Lori Prestridge, Special Education Administrator of Mountain View Youth Development Center, Charleston, introduced Michael and presented him with the award at the MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23.

Michael has taught in the Limestone School Department, MSAD #23, and Mountain View Youth Development Center since 1988. Michael studies Music and Psychology at Bob Jones University and earned his undergraduate degree in Music Education and Organ Performance from Cedarville College in Ohio. He currently is working towards his Masters Degree in Instructional Technology at the University of Maine at Orono.

At Mountain View Youth Development Center, Michael teaches youth who have been adjudicated by the courts. Michael's extensive roles include, Music teacher, Personal Learning Plan Advisor, Education Technology Coordinator, Steering Committee Member, Grant Writer, MLTI-Technology Team Leader, and Professional Development Committee Member. Michael is a performing musician with the Bangor Symphony Orchestra and has arranged over 50 community field trips for at-risk students to attend Fine Arts Performances. He also engages youth in technology related Career Exploration field trips. Michael shares his knowledge and success with integrating music and technology at conferences around the state. He has been instrumental in not only integrating the use of technology throughout the M.V.Y.D.C. curriculum, but also with initiating and installing technology for multi-modal instructional purposes as well as

instituting applications that facilitate data collection. His ability to provide a high interest MLR aligned music curriculum, accompanied by a multi-modal instructional approach accommodates all learners successfully in his classroom. Michael is a positive support for all students at their IEP meetings. His insights and student successes are an inspiration to all IEP members. The above accomplishments are just scratching the surface of what Michael brings to the education department at Mountain View Youth Development Center.

Bonnie Shaw
MADSEC Special Education
Paraprofessional of the Year

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Bonnie Shaw as the Special Education Paraprofessional of the year.

Carrie Thurston, Special Education Administrator of M.S.A.D. #3, introduced Bonnie and presented her with the award at the MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23.

Bonnie is a graduate of the University of Farmington majoring in special education. She has worked as a Title One Educational Technician for a K-6 school, within the Title One department at our Junior High. She returned back to the K-6 school to help provide the support necessary to a student with serious emotional needs, in another k-6 school to set up, facilitate, coordinate and teach the program for a kindergarten non-verbal student with autism, while still tutoring the child with serious emotional needs, and still continuing at the Junior High special education resource setting.

Susan Saffer
MADSEC Special Education
Therapist of the Year

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Susan Saffer as the Special Education Therapist of the year.

Dominic DePatsy, Special Education Administrator of Cape Elizabeth, introduced Susan and presented her with the award at the MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23. This annual award is given to a special education therapist who had made outstanding contributions to education and/or has had success as a special education therapist. Other criteria include awareness of current educational developments, professional growth, involvement on school committees, and demonstration of leadership. Saffer's colleagues in Cape Elizabeth school district encouraged the Cumberland Region to nominate her for this award. That group, being well aware of the knowledge and skills that Saffer brought to special education, gladly nominated her for this award.

Susan began her work in a private school for children who are hard of hearing and in a preschool for children with delayed speech/language skills in Virginia. She also worked in a nursing home and for Community Health Services for one year. However, she missed the student contact so she shifted back to the school setting. She also provided private contracting for preschoolers through the CDS system. Susan has been providing services at Pone Cove School for the past 30 years either half time, $\frac{3}{4}$ time, or full time, between having four children of her own.

Susan has done several innovative projects at Pond Cove School. She was able to deliver language therapy in the classroom where she developed a trans-disciplinary model. This allowed all support staff to provide therapies in the life skills room during language groups

so the teacher could then provide follow through. Susan also developed and provided inclusion models and programs for special needs students, co-treatment for OT & speech, social skills groups, phonemic awareness trainings, curriculum and assessments. Susan has written grants for purchasing children's books in order to stimulate language development and reinforce skills in speech/language therapy. Susan also provided several in-service trainings to Education Technicians on auditory processing, pivotal response, training and facilitating language pragmatics. She wrote, with other colleagues for an alternate basic core curriculum, for students in inclusion programs with three levels of competency, and she presented at a MADSEC conference with Pamin in 200. She has taught the speech/language section for Exceptionality Class in Cape Elizabeth when it was a Maine DOE requirement for all teachers to attend. Susan developed a homework brochure and presentation in 2003, as well as inclusion notebooks which contained articles on the student's disability, current IEP and what works to enhance communication and social interaction.

Susan truly loves her job and she often states that she could not do it effectively without the incredibly supportive and talented team she works with. She often things "outside the box" to generate change and help students learn and grow; she feels it is so important to have fun in the process. Philosophically, she feels that when you become a parent you understand what it takes for a human being to grow to his/her full potential. Susan has the utmost respect for the children she works with, and tries to appreciate the uniqueness of each student. She loves working with families and celebrating their child's accomplishments, and hopefully also helping to increase quality of life for everyone.

Louise Little
MADSEC Special Education Teacher
of the Year

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Louise Little as the Special Education Teacher of the year. Polly Crowell, Special Education Administrator of the Falmouth School Department presented the award at the MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23.

Louise is a graduate of the University of Northern Colorado where she earned her degrees in Special Education and Early Childhood education. Since 1978 she has taught in Florida and in Maine serving a wide range of students with significant disabilities. Mrs. Little taught in the Bath Schools from 1987-98 as a Life Skills teacher and resource teacher. She also served as the Special Education Team Leader at Bath Middle School. Since 2002, Louise has taught at Falmouth High School as the Life Skills teacher and has been the Special Education Team Leader.

Because of her strong advocacy beliefs and skillful teacher, Mrs. Little has created a learning environment within her classroom of respect, high expectations, positive effort and meaningful production. Her students learn that they are expected to work diligently and purposefully in order to meet high school standards and prepare for the next phase of their lives after graduation. Her students move from dependence toward independent life as young adults. Every student, without exception, is treated with high respect and with Louise's powerful expectations for their individual success in high school. The goals and ideals promoted by the Federal Individual With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) actually come alive because of Louise's commitment and expertise. Mrs. Little's outstanding work with students, staff and parents is recognized now as being Maine's standard for excellence.

Peter Mills
MADSEC Special Education
Advocate of the Year

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Senator Peter Mills as the Special Education Advocate of the year.

Barbara Gunn, Special Education Administrator of Old Town Regional Program introduced Senator Mills and presented him with the award at the MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23.

Senator Mills graduated from the Maine Law School. He devoted many years to resolving legal problems for Maine people. He owns the Wright & Mills law firm in Skowhegan. He served in the State Senate from 1994-2002 and the Maine house of Representatives from 2004-2004. Since 2004 Senator Mills has, once again, served in the State Senate. He is the Senate Republican lead on the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Some of Senator Mills' work related to education includes chairing the Critical Review Committee to rewrite the Learning Results in 1996, serving on the Assessment Design Team to implement the Learning Results in 1996 and 1997, serving on the Learning Results Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the Learning Results in 1998 and serving on the Education Funding Reform Task Force in 2001.

Over the last year, Senator Mills has contributed many hours of his time on issues related to special education. Senator Mills has demonstrated a sincere commitment to navigate through some very complex issues in order to assure quality programming and services for students with disabilities. His dedication to this work, along with his desire to increase his own knowledge of Special Education, has made him a valuable resource. The focus most recently has been whether a

Continued from page 8 – Senator Peter Mills

definition of adverse effect should be included in our state regulations and what such a definition should include. Senator Mills has devoted considerable time and energy working toward the positive resolution of differences around adverse effect. Last winter, his remarkable insight into the subtleties of what are complex issues led him to draft some language to be considered for inclusion in our state regulations as guidance on determining adverse effect. When the Adverse Effect Task Force met at the end of the summer, Senator Mills maintained his involvement by attending several meetings. Senator Mills’ initial work drafting a definition of adverse effect was considered in the latest draft regulations.

Senator Mills has demonstrated an interest in helping the State of Maine meet the needs of children with autism. He recognizes the challenges this population faces. He has recently submitted a bill, LD 1977, Resolve, To Establish a Statewide Protocol for the Early Detection and Treatment of Autism to the Joint Legislative Committee on Health and Human Services.

Senator Mills’ dedication to education and individuals with disabilities is evident in his work. It is rare to see a legislator roll up his sleeves and actively participate in the work that needs to be done. Senator Mills is truly deserving of recognition for his outstanding contributions which have significant impact on the quality of programs and services for Maine’s children.

Barbara Dee MADSEC Special Education Administrator of the Year

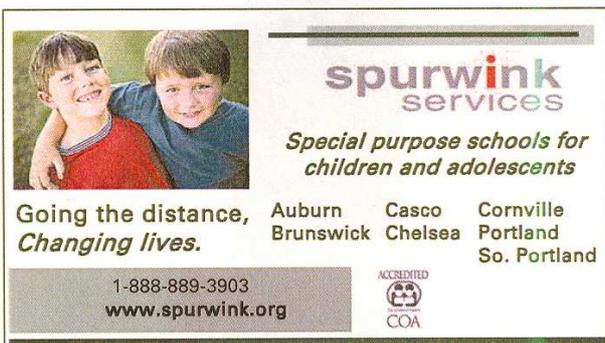
The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) recognized Barbara Dee as the Special Education Administrator of the year.

Lynn Silva, Assistant Special Education Administrator of Portland Public Schools, introduced Barbara and presented her with the award at the annual MADSEC Awards Dinner held at the Atlantic Oakes By-The-Sea in Bar Harbor, June 23.

Barbara Dee has been an administrator of Special Education since 1989 and has served as the Director Student Support Services for the Portland Public Schools for the past eight years. Arriving in Portland in 2000, Barbara also assumed an active leadership role in MADSEC beginning with her service on the representative board, then culminating in her year as President of MADSEC in 2005-2006 and continuing on to today.

Barbara is known in the field for her considerable knowledge of special education, her “progressive” thinking and her child-centered leadership approach.

Barbara began her career as a third grade teacher before pursuing a master’s degree in the education of the visually impaired. She then worked as an itinerant visual impairment specialist for a collaborative in Massachusetts before moving with her family to Frankfort, Germany where she worked for the U.S. Army. Upon returning to the United States, Barbara first worked for the M.S.P.C.C. in Worcester, MA. She then began her career as a special education administrator in private, collaborative and public school settings including Woonsocket, RI and Attleboro, MA.



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2008 Special Education Distinguished Educators

Barbara Gunn

Barbara Gunn graduated from the University of Maine with a Bachelor and Master Degree in Speech Pathology. She began her career at Bangor Regional Speech and Hearing Center (now the Warren Center) before moving on to working in the Bucksport School Department. Barbara spent five years working in private practice serving many school systems in Penobscot and Hancock Counties.

Barbara entered special education administration in January of 1991. She worked in SAD #63 and Union #90. From 1995 to 1997, Barbara was employed as the Regional Administrator for the Southern Penobscot Regional Programs for Children with Exceptionalities. Since 1997, she has been employed as the Director of the Old Town Regional Program, a K-12 public regional day treatment program serving districts in Southern Penobscot County.

Barbara was as a member of the MADSEC Rep Board for many years and has served on many committees.

She is MADSEC's Liaison to the Maine Principals' Association. Barbara served as MADSEC President in 2006-2007.

Barbara has served as a SERT member since 1983. Her first years on teams were spent with her father, Dick Duncan, who was a consultant for Program Review for many years. She is pleased and excited to follow in his footsteps in this exciting process!

Ronnie Hanson

Ronnie entered the field of education following work in related areas. After graduating from Emmanuel College in Boston she was a social worker with DHS, working with indigent families. This led to opening and operating a private day care center for working parents. When three small boys arrived she decided to stay home with them for a few years and subsequently pursued graduate work in Communication Disorders at the University of Maine. Her training involved a residential practicum at the Pineland Center during the exciting time of the class action suit. A desire to work with children within an educational setting resulted in 8 years in Orono/Veazie as a Speech-Language Pathologist doing individual, group, and classroom-based instruction. This period of time also included significant involvement with district curriculum work, as well as area trainings, university workshops, and supervising internships in the field of Communication Disorders. Ronnie subsequently accepted the position of Director of Special Services in Orono-Veazie. During the following 8 years she completed the course of study in the doctoral Educational Leadership Studies at the University of Maine. The move to "sunnier" Southern Maine was made possible when she accepted a position as director in Gorham, where she's been for the last 10 years.

Involvement in multiple aspects of education at the local, regional, and state levels has provided Ronnie with what she describes as "comprehensive experiences that have helped me view issues from a more holistic perspective".

Continued from page 8 – Ronnie Hanson

These have involved writing a parent training grant and co-chairing the implementation for 10 years, serving on numerous state committees and task forces, co-chairing a regional Committee on Transition, supervising internships, and serving on the MADSEC board and being President. Ronnie has annually participated in the SERT reviews and is excited to have the opportunity to travel the state this year in a supportive way to give back to the network that has been a rich resource and support for her over the years.

Meaghan Opuda Swan Recipient of 2008 Lou Fontana Scholarship

Meaghan Opuda Swan is the 2008 recipient of the \$700.00 Lou Fontana Scholarship Award. David Stockford of the Department of Education announced the recipient at the Annual Awards Dinner of the Maine Administrators of Services for the Children With Disabilities (MADSEC).

As a special educator since 2003, Meaghan has consistently worked with the students that many others have given up on. Her commitment to special education has been life long, even when she wasn't aware of it as a career choice. In high school she started volunteering in the middle school resource room and began working one on one with a girl who had traumatic brain injury. From there, her passion for special education continued to grow until it became her career.

While Meaghan feels very passionate about special education, she is pursuing a degree in School Psychology. What drew her to the School Psychology program at the University of Southern Maine is it's focus on empirically based interventions. Meaghan would like to learn how to design effective interventions so that she can

continue to work with children with disabilities to teach other special educators how to use interventions to increase student success. Meaghan says, "For me, a doctorate in School Psychology will not cause me to leave the field of special education, or even teaching. Instead it will broaden my ability to work in special education."

What is Special about Special Education?

Absolutely nothing. In the 1960's, well before there was any IDEA, the students in my doctoral seminar were asked: "What is special about special education?" There was no clear answer then and almost fifty years later the answer is no more apparent. Perhaps we have learned enough in the last fifty years that we can now look for a different approach to serve those with learning differences.

We know more about learning. We know that the basics of learning apply to most living forms from whales to Nobel Prize winners. The basics of learning have many similarities but even within families there are different paths to learning and many patterns of strengths and weaknesses. The similarities and differences are all part of the human condition. Differences in learning do not separate those who are eligible for special education services from those who are not.

We have more data on student performance than ever before. We have group tests and individual tests and we have direct measurement of classroom work. We even have images of the brain working under different conditions. We can aggregate data on an individual or we can compare an individual's performance to millions of students with similar demographics. We are learning to use data to create more precise educational interventions that produce better outcomes in shorter periods of time. Data has also shown us that there is no bright line between a student who receives special education services and others

Continued from page 8 – What's Special, etc.

who do not receive such services. Many students who do not qualify for special education perform at lower levels than those who do qualify. Qualification for special education is substantially less than a precise and replicable process.

We are spending large amounts of money on special education services with good outcomes for some students, but minimal benefits to many others. Additionally, substantial resources are spent on procedural requirements and on legal battles with virtually no benefit at the student level. Can these same resources be expended with more student benefit?

NCLB, for all of its failings, has put the focus back on ALL students. NCLB did not articulate a different set of standards for those in special education. It put a great deal of emphasis on the responsibility of regular education to produce student outcomes that were in line with what we have learned about the learning process. NCLB created the framework for Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is a regular education responsibility. NCLB called for the use of scientifically based educational practices when intervening with students who were not performing up to grade level. Unfortunately, the federal educational establishment did not use its own data or fund new studies to identify those programs with the best record of changing student performance. Project Follow Through was a twelve year (60s and 70s) federally funded research project that examined a dozen intervention programs at a cost of over two billion dollars. The project clearly identified programs that worked, and several that did not. No similar comprehensive research program has been initiated in the intervening 40 years. NCLB has been long on philosophy, but short on active research that would support that philosophy. If we are to have an educational system in this country that is based on sound science, then the government must build on its past work and fund new long term focused research that will give us more insight into what we should be doing in our public schools. Special education issues should be part of that long term research framework.

We have the knowledge and the resources to provide a universal right to educational progress. Every student should have the right to access the educational resources necessary to make

substantial progress in the general curriculum. Based on what we now know about learning, there is no need to maintain separate categories and programs in our public education system. What would our schools do in place of the current special education process?

RTI creates a process of universal screening. Multiple sources of data are now being used in many schools to identify students who are at risk of failing to meet grade level performance standards. The best RTI practices (e.g. curriculum based measures) are based on the direct measurement of student performance rather than formal psychological tests that indirectly measure correlates of classroom performance.

The current RTI process calls for a three-tiered approach to intervention. It appears to be a sound model, although the amount of research on its effectiveness is still rather small, especially above grade three.

What the current RTI model does not do is explain what special education staff can do that will make a difference in student learning in contrast to what is being done by regular education. To the best of my knowledge no one has done any research on methods that might be available to special educators that are different from what should be taking place in RTI interventions. In a system without special education, schools would continue to try different methods of intervention until effective results were obtained. The federal government would need to conduct formal research studies to determine how many students and with what characteristics do not make adequate progress, even with the best available scientifically based interventions.

Conducting additional intensive interventions, even with small numbers of students would be expensive. From what sources would these funds come? At a minimum the resources currently expended for special education would need to be reallocated, at least initially. If the special education bureaucracy were dismantled at the federal, state, and local levels, a substantial amount of funds could be put into direct instruction (not 100%, but considerable funds). Funds that now go into legal activities would be available for instruction. Access to specialized interventions could still involve some legal actions, but this would need to be developed within the

Continued from page 8 – What's Special, etc.

regular education system of rights. On the local level more instructional time would be available because less time would be spent in meetings and far less time would be spent in creating paper work at the teacher level. Every student would have a one to three page individual learning plan that would focus on learning in the core areas. A national template could be created to minimize differences across the country.

Are the above ideas the only way to create an educational system without special education? No. The ideas presented provide a starting point for a conversation about what we are doing for our current students. Would the changes come easily? No. There are powerful vested interests that would resist the changes. A system that has been in place for half a century would not easily give way to a new model of service. However, our current system is not very efficient and in many ways it lacks effectiveness as well. Is the system completely broken? No, but it could be far better than the current system. Let's hear from those with better ideas and different perspectives. We need to talk.

Will H. Burrow
Director of Special Education
School Union 44 (RSU # 4)

MADSEC would like to encourage you to consider submitting an article for publication in this Newsletter. One of our goals, in addition to providing current information, is to provide a resource. If you are taking a class, and perhaps writing a paper for it, please think about how valuable your data or insights might be to fellow educators and administrators. Each article submitted is reviewed by the Publications Committee and recommended for publication, if appropriate.

Pine Tree Society program raffles universally designed playground equipment at MADSEC conference

Asa C. Adams School in Orono is the new home to a unique piece of playground equipment. The universally designed John Deere tractor was constructed with care by The Kids' Project volunteer woodworker Clyde Ricker. The tractor, complete with the signature John Deere green and yellow colors, was designed to provide hours of fun for children of all abilities.

The Kids' Project, Pine Tree Society's adaptive equipment program, raffled the piece of playground equipment at MADSEC's Director's Academy in June.

According to Sharon Brady, Director of Special Services of Union #87, the students are thrilled with the addition to their playground.

"Your generosity will make an immediate difference in the lives of students at Asa C. Adams School," she said. "Thank you again for your kind and generous donation. Kids will enjoy it for years to come!!"

The Kids' Project adaptive equipment program is now offering custom designed universally accessible playground equipment. Over the past three years, the program has provided a number of unique pieces of playground equipment for schools in Scarborough, Augusta and Georgetown.

Like The Kids' Project adaptive equipment, the playground equipment is made with care by highly skilled volunteer woodworkers committed to Maine children with disabilities. Playground equipment has included a lobster boat, a train and fire truck.

According to The Kids' Project director, Jeremy Lucas, the need for this type of equipment is growing.

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“Schools are really seeing the need to make their playground an accessible place for all students,” he said. “For The Kids’ Project it’s a unique opportunity because the piece benefits children with and without disabilities offering opportunities for exercise and play while promoting social interaction.”

The Kids' Project helps children with special needs experience success by providing affordable high-quality, adaptive equipment constructed by talented volunteers. There are currently more than 100 Kids' Project volunteer woodworkers and upholsterers throughout the state of Maine.

Learn more about Pine Tree Society and how we can partner to serve your students with special needs and support your educational team. Please visit www.pinetreesociety.org or call (207) 443-3341.



GET ON BOARD for the 2009 Winter Retreat

The focus of this year's Winter Retreat is Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Maine Support Network is well known for hosting engaging, entertaining and topical Retreats. This year's Retreat will certainly hold to that standard. Our two featured speakers are Dr. Stephen Shore and Sue Rubin.

Dr. Stephen Shore is President Emeritus of the Asperger's Association of New England and author of *Understanding Autism for Dummies*. Dr. Shore was diagnosed with "atypical development with strong autistic tendencies," and doctors recommended to his family that he be institutionalized. However, Dr. Shore's parents and teachers saw another future for this young man. Today, with a doctoral degree in special education from Boston University, he works as an advocate and educator, both nationally and internationally, to match the best educational practices to the needs of those on the Autism spectrum.

Sue Rubin was diagnosed with autism at the age of four. She was also considered to be retarded. However, her life changed at the age of thirteen when she was introduced to facilitated communication. Sue's world opened up and it was soon realized that what she had lacked was a clear way to communicate. Today, Sue is a high school graduate and is attending college. She no longer needs a facilitator to communicate as she types independently. Sue's accomplishments have been featured in a CNN special entitled *Autism is a World*, and she has presented at many national conferences from California to New York. Sue's presentation will move you and challenge you to think beyond labels and appearances. She is a testament to not letting our limited thinking determine someone else's future.

The breakout sessions are currently being reviewed but we know they will include workshops on using technology to inspire and ensure access, music and children with autism, RTI, bullying, and transition. More information will be available soon at www.mainesupportnetwork.org.

So, buy your ticket today for *The 2009 Maine Support Network Learning Express*, and be sure to save the date!

January 24 – 26th - Samoset Resort

GEAR UP: Maine Schools GEARING UP with Technology

Maine GEAR UP districts recently submitted their electronic GEAR UP college access implementation plans. It is very exciting to see how schools are using technology to expand curricula, learning opportunities, and experiences for all members of these learning communities.

The importance of incorporating technology into the daily educational experiences of all members of the school community is growing with each new innovation. The role of technology in increasing student engagement, access to information, and achievement has been documented by researchers worldwide.

The avenues for learning expand with each technological innovation. GEAR UP schools are using technology to increase professional development opportunities, access virtual field trips and college tours, and embed sites like Moodle into their instruction to provide students and teachers with richer learning opportunities.

In an article in *Education World* (2002) Dixie Conner “explains how technology coordinators, by extending the use of technology beyond the classroom, can increase students’ opportunities to reach—and surpass—today’s stringent education standards.” (retrieved September 14, 2008 from http://www.education-world.com/a_tech/tech149.shtml) This article also includes Ten Tips for infusing technology into the educational experience. To find out more, follow the link in the reference. One of the tips she prescribes is to “Learn from those who have demonstrated success.” Below are success stories from three GEAR UP regions, and resources to more fully use technology to enrich learning for both teachers and students in GEAR UP districts.

Advantages for Rural Districts

Washington County has taken advantage of the flexibility technology offers. This is increasingly important in rural areas where teacher expertise, variety of course offerings, and professional development opportunities may be limited.

Enriching Course Offerings

In Washington County, Betty Jordan, GEAR UP Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator, and Ken Martin, Director of Distance Education in

Washington County, are working collaboratively with schools throughout the region to bring an

online Algebra I course to the 8th grade students. Betty and Ken have been working to remove the barriers that can arise in trying to coordinate course work among many districts, and have much learning to share with others as they begin to more fully utilize the resources of distance education in their school programs.

“There are some challenges, such as finding the qualified personnel who feel comfortable and can fully utilize technology to create engaging classes. One big challenge for us has been the scheduling of these courses across school districts. However large the challenges though, the outcomes are worth it! The kids really benefit from having access to richer and more advanced course offerings and from the opportunities to engage with other students across the county.” Betty Jordan, Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator, Washington County

Regional Professional Development

Ken Martin has provided workshops, courses, and on-site support to educators so that they can more fully infuse technology into instruction. This summer he offered two professional development opportunities. The first was a 5-week online course that introduced teachers to blogging, podcasting, wikis, and other resources to support their classroom instruction. Teachers met face-to-face for the first session and then became part of an online learning community. They created their own blogs and wiki pages, read articles and engaged in online discussions via blackboard, and tested their new skills in an environment that promoted experiential learning in a virtual environment.

Ken also offered a course on using Moodle. This innovative and dynamic platform allows teachers to extend and support their course content in a way that both engages students and keeps it accessible, and can provide additional support for students having trouble with the content or concepts being taught. The teachers in this course could focus on the big picture of using Moodle, or on only one aspect of it, to support their instruction. Ken believes that it is critical to introduce teachers to the most current innovations in technology to support distance learning, but to also use these technologies in the classroom to connect students to their learning and to “lift the walls of the classroom.”

Today, all education is distance education, and the role of every teacher is to lift the wall of the classroom and make connections for students outside of school. These can include resources for connecting students with their classmates, and also for connecting them with other students outside of their classrooms, in other counties, states, or countries.

While it is true that many of our students are more comfortable manipulating and using the technologies of today than some of their teachers are, students really need the teachers' expertise to guide them in developing critical thinking skills, assessment, and evaluation.

Our teachers did not grow up with these technologies and are not used to infusing them into their instruction. What we try to do through workshops, courses, and onsite support is to be guide and scaffold support for their needs, to bridge the use of the technologies and their areas of expertise to bring the best of education to our students.”

– Ken Martin, Director of Distance Education Washington County.

A Laptop for Every Student

Mt. Abram Regional High School has a lot of information and expertise to share in the incorporation of technology. Every student at Mt. Abram is issued a school-owned laptop which is integrated into the classroom instruction and advisee programs. Students reported feeling more engaged, that their classes were more relevant and meaningful, and that they were learning skills important to their futures.

“Chelsea Lecander said access to wireless has been unbelievably helpful in all of the classes she’s taken. ‘There are no cords holding you down and no allotted or exclusive times to utilize the Internet. Our wireless network makes my life so much easier,’ Lecander said. She explained that almost every class requires some use of the Internet. (retrieved September 14, 2008 from <http://www.gearupme.org/newsdocs/gunewsletter-winter-07.pdf>)

Statewide Professional Development

The Maine Support Network is developing a series of online workshops that are free for educators in GEAR UP districts. These interactive and engaging workshops are designed to reflect the elements of *Celebratory Learning* in a virtual environment. The first in the series, *Deleting Cyber-Bullying*, is currently being piloted. These workshops will target professional development priorities identified by GEAR UP districts, and will allow educators to engage in learning at their convenience, without the additional travel costs. Upon completion of the online workshops, teachers will be awarded state-approved contact hours applicable for recertification. These online workshops will also be available to non-GEAR UP schools for a nominal fee.

College Access

Additionally, all of the GEAR UP high schools have enrolled in a free college planning and placement service called ConnectedU. This service allows all of the students in GEAR UP schools to take virtual tours of college campuses, engage in interest and learning inventories, utilize financial planning tools, secure information about scholarships and completing the FAFSA, and electronically submit their applications to universities in the University of Maine system.

“I’m really excited about the way ConnectEdu will allow me to track each student’s college application. We’ve had some problems in the past with colleges saying ‘No, we didn’t get that,’ but with ConnectEdu I will be notified exactly when the college receives each piece of the application.” -Ruth Ann Cowger, Guidance Counselor, East Grand HS

For more information on the work these districts are doing, The Maine Support Network, or to view the First Annual State of Maine GEAR UP Yearbook visit <http://www.gearupme.org>.

There is ALOT Going on at MSN!

As the school year begins, we would like to share with our MADSEC colleagues, all that is underway at the Maine Support Network! We have a variety of resources we hope you will find valuable and useful in your work. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like additional information or would like to schedule a meeting to design professional development to meet your needs!

As many of you are aware we have greatly expanded the scope of our work over the last number of years. Here is a brief overview of our current projects. Hopefully this will be a helpful resource you can refer back to as we provide you with regular email updates throughout the year!

GEAR UP

We are now in year four of a six year of this federally funded effort that we are administering for the Maine Department of Education. We are working with 18 districts to create a sustainable program that supports students who are economically disadvantaged in preparing for, accessing, and succeeding in post-secondary education. In partnership with the school districts and numerous partners (MPF, FAME, the University and Community College Systems, MELMAC, Mitchell and others) we are working to assure that all Maine students have the skills and resources needed to enable them to attend and succeed in college. Our 2008 GEAR UP Yearbook is now available on the project website (www.gearupme.org) and it provides an outstanding overview of our goals and the work underway in our schools.

Professional Development and Winter Retreat

We design and provide a wide range of quality professional development that celebrates and supports the work of educators and our online calendar is updated regularly. We also provide a variety of technical assistance, support, and professional development upon request, to meet the regional needs of schools and agencies across the state. The Network will work with you to create personalized interactive workshops for your school, district or region. Our annual Winter Retreat is held each year at the Samoset Resort—this year it is scheduled for Jan 24-26, and has as its focus autism spectrum disorders.

www.mainesupportnetwork.org

MDOE Technical Assistance

We provide a wide range of technical assistance to the Maine Department of Education. Recently we facilitated and staffed the Governor's Task Force to Engage Maine's Youth and we continue to provide technical assistance to assist the Department in meeting the legislative requirements of the bill that passed as a result of the Task Force work to keep "highly mobile" students in school. We facilitate and support the Special Purpose Private Schools Rate Setting Consensus Panel and we also provide policy review and analysis and professional development. www.mainesupportnetwork.org

Maine Chapter, Council for Exceptional Children

The Maine Support Network is the home base for the Maine Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children. CEC is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. For more information visit <http://www.cec.sped.org>

Celebratory Learning Around the World

Network team members teach about *Celebratory Learning* for the Ministry of Education in Singapore each year, as well as providing presentations, publication and fiscal agent support to the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education. Last year MSN staff presented in Italy! www.mainesupportnetwork.org, www.iasce.net

Special Education Alternative Route to Certification

Through a partnership with the University of Maine Farmington, Network staff are providing coaching to students enrolled in the SPARC program. Designed to meet the challenge of severe shortages of special education teachers in Maine school districts, the program includes online courses and face-to-face coaching for teachers and ed techs with a bachelor's degree seeking Special Education 282 certification.

<http://rtdc.umf.maine.edu/SPARC.htm>

MSN's Center for Self Determination, Health & Policy is home to three initiatives:

Healthy & Ready to Work National Resource Center

The Healthy & Ready to Work (HRTW) National Resource Center is one of six federal resource centers funded by the US Department of HHS' Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) supporting the implementation of the New Freedom Initiative and the six MCHB national performance measures. We provide information, models, and tools to help states and medical homes incorporate transition planning into services and develop policy for children and youth in their transition to adulthood. While we are based in Maine in collaboration with Maine's Children with Special Health Needs program, the HRTW team is located across the country.
www.hrtw.org

Integrated Community Systems for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs in Maine

Integrated Community Systems for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs in Maine is designed to assure that Maine's children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHN) and their families have access to an integrated, community based system of care achieving the goals of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's six National Performance Measures. We are working with Toni Wall and Maine's CSHN program to move from direct services to a population based system of care in collaboration with state and regional youth and family advisory councils.
www.servicesforme.org

OQMHP

Under contract with the Maine Department of Education, The Network's Center for Self Determination, Health & Policy is providing Other Qualified Mental Health Professional staff certification for the MaineCare Program's Day Treatment Program (Section 41). The Center has designed a web-based certification process that is serving the needs of more than 75 approved day treatment programs in Maine.
<https://www.mecertoqmhp.org/>

For more information, please see our website: www.mainesupportnetwork.org or contact Debbie Gilmer (gilmer@maine.edu)

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Using the Collaborative Problem Solving Approach: A Workshop for Parents

With Barbara Freethy, M.ED.

Dec 03, 2008

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With Barbara Freethy, M.ED.

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With Ross Greene, Ph.D.

For More information:

www.transdis.com