

Educational Highlights for Leaders

Serving Erie, Huron, and Lorain Counties

LRE Practices: Providing Opportunities for Maximizing Student Learning

by Jennifer Heim



IDEA (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires school districts to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) so that they can not only access instruction, but more importantly, make progress within the general education standards. In the context of

increasing expectations of student achievement, research has shown that “students’ presence in the classroom as members of the learning community, as members of both social and academic activities, is a requirement for optimal student learning” (Jorgensen, McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, 2010).

During the 2017-2018 school year, State Support Team Region 2 is offering a professional development series to assist district teams in examining their least restrictive environment (LRE) practices for students with disabilities. District teams will have the opportunity to look at their data to determine the current status of student achievement within various LRE settings. This district team professional development will provide information regarding current research as well as collaborative time to examine current LRE practices, student outcomes, and the opportunity to rethink the settings in which students with disabilities are served.

This team’s work will be aligned to the district’s school improvement process. Therefore, membership of the team should be representative of individuals who serve students throughout the district, preschool through twelfth grade,

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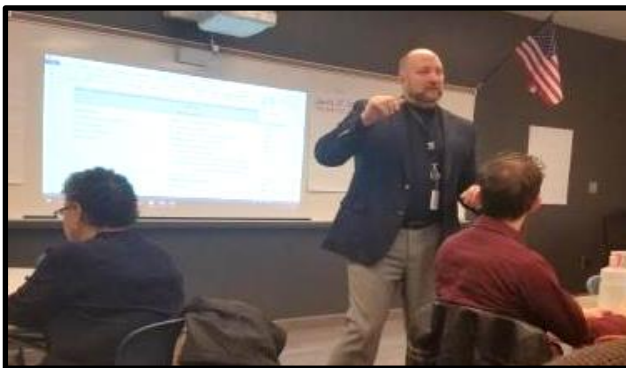
in a variety of capacities. Mandatory members of the team must include the Director of Curriculum (or individual who is responsible for curriculum decisions in the district) as well as the Director of Special Education/Pupil Services.

The deadline for district team applications is April 30, 2017. For more information, please contact Assistant Director Jennifer Heim, State Support Team Region 2, at heim@sstr2.org.

In the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **least restrictive environment (LRE)** means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate.

Lorain City Schools: Moving through Ohio Improvement Process

by Janet Kubasak



Lorain City Schools have come a long way in the development of their District Leadership Team (DLT). Assistant Superintendent Dr. Steve Sturgill and Director of School Improvement Bill Ohle lead the team through determination and continuous dedication to refining their practices. They have developed a steering committee that consists of elementary, middle and high school representation.

I had the opportunity to experience this excellent steering committee in action. They reviewed the DLT minutes and discussed the outcomes that occurred during step 3 (of the 5-step process) in the recent DLT meeting. As a team they discussed possible solutions and additional supports needed for the entire district to present to the DLT.

Ohle commented, “The success in Lorain City focuses around the connection between the Ohio Improvement Process, invested staff, and a district commitment to stay the course.” The steering committee will also be conducting an internal quality audit of the district’s Teacher Based Team (TBT) and Building Leadership Team (BLT) minutes. Lorain City Schools are owning the process, building capacity and driving data driven decision making throughout the district.

During a recent DLT meeting, Dr. Sturgill shared data showing a decrease in student suspension along with expulsion while at the same time an increase in student enrollment. Dr. Sturgill attributes the district's success to “the district and buildings PBIS [Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports] and RTI [Response to Intervention] teams that focus on behavioral and instructional strategies that really focus on the positive behaviors and improving the academics for all students.” As we move forward in the school year, anticipate more high quality, data-driven discussions and decisions coming from this district.





How Will You Celebrate Teacher Appreciation Day?



by Joshua Preece

A quick message to administrators:

How will you sincerely express to an entire staff with individual talents and personalities how thankful you are for their individual and collective contributions on May 9th? Let's face it, everyone wants to be admired and appreciated! Also, let us not forget that staff appreciation is an ongoing process that can immensely improve the climate of a classroom, building or district, and need not be limited to one day a year.

Creative Staff Appreciation Ideas (some have been adapted from classroom PBIS techniques):

- **G.O.O.S.E. Coupons** – “Get Out of School Early” coupons give teachers valuable time to do what they'd like!
- **Staff Activity** - an Egg Hunt, Scavenger Hunt, or Team Trivia Game can be a lot of fun!
- **Hand-Written Thank You Notes** - individualized, from-the-heart notes can go a long way by pointing out the great characteristics of each staff member.
- **Wall of Thanks** - public acknowledgement of good deeds can be completed staff to staff or even student to staff.
- **PBIS for Adults** - model some great, positive reinforcement techniques.
- **Preferred Parking Space** – makes a teacher feel like a VIP.
- **Homemade Baked Goods** - show you care enough to spend the time to make a homemade treat.
- **Spirit Week / Morning Teacher Pep Rally** - Let's get everyone psyched about having a great team!
- **Dress Down Passes** - A day without wearing a necktie? Yes, please!
- **After School Relaxation Station** - Set up an area with calming music, hot beverages and stimulating conversation.
- **Secret Friend** – similar to Secret Santa whereby cross-assigned staff members do kind acts for each other. Don't forget to reveal the secret friends at the end of the week!
- **Student Interviews** - Let students talk about their favorite flattering moments about the staff that have made a difference in their lives.



A quick message to teachers and support staff:

With testing, schedule changes, and paperwork, this can be an incredibly busy time of year. So how can you slow things down to make the learning environment more suitable for our number one priority - the students? John F. Kennedy might have said it best, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” Modeling the types of behaviors and changes we want to see in our schools is shown to be a key element to a positive and productive school culture.

A question for all educators: What event has touched your life so much that it inspired you remain in education?

I would appreciate any feedback so that I can help to show the hard-working educators in our region that they are needed, valued and loved. Please send your quotes, stories, ideas and inspirations to me at preece@sstr2.org. I truly look forward to reading your responses and sharing your thoughts and ideas!



Most importantly, if you are reading this article, you obviously value education and support its importance in our community. So, from the bottom of my heart...THANK YOU! I'd like to leave you with a quote from Colin Hegarty that addresses what I feel is the main reason we choose to continue: “The most important thing we can do to help make teaching be regarded as a more prestigious career is to tell the stories of the wonderful and inspiring work they are already doing.”

Helpful links:

- [14 Teacher Appreciation Ideas They'll Love](#)
- [65 Ways to Recognize Teachers During Teacher Appreciation Week and All Year Long](#)
- [101 Easy Teacher Appreciation Ideas](#)
- [Last-Minute Teacher Appreciation Ideas](#)
- [Teacher Poems](#)
- [Top 10 Inexpensive Ways to Show Your Teacher Appreciation](#)

AMO? Gap Closure? Subgroup?

by Janet Kubasak

AMO (Annual Measurable Objectives) measures the academic performance of specific groups of students, such as racial and demographic groups. Each of these groups is compared to the collective performance of **ALL STUDENTS IN OHIO**. This determines if there are gaps in academic achievement between groups of students.

The current subgroup labels for Ohio are:

- All Students
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Multiracial
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Economically-Disadvantaged
- Students with Disabilities
- Limited English Proficient



It is currently proposed for the ESEA waiver to reduce the threshold number of students for which a subgroup of students must be separately reported for accountability purposes (N-Size) from **30 to 15** to ensure that more student subgroups are identified in an effort to provide targeted interventions. (This could mean more subgroups for your district/building).

To put it simply, if you have enough students in your building to make up a subgroup and they do not reach the ODE's set reading goal of 2016-2017 (77.1%), math goal of (72.0%), and/or graduation rate of (85.1%), you will be facing an educational gap. For more information or assistance, please contact Janet Kubasak at kubasak@sstr2.org.



State Support Team Region 2 Educational Consultant Josh Preece works with educators on strategies to close educational gaps through providing enough supports and challenges to learners of all ability levels (*pictured on left*). State Support Team Region 2 Ohio Improvement Process Consultant Janet Kubasak and Educational Consultant Jennifer Jackson-Ausperk train educators on how to drill down into buildings' AMO data (*pictured on right*).

FREE Future Planning Retreat

by Jamie Tischer

Mark Your Calendars! The Lorain County Transition Group will be hosting a FREE Future Planning Retreat for Lorain County Families this spring. Planning for the future, beyond graduation and Individualized Education Plans, can be an overwhelming process for students and families. Our goal for this retreat is to bring transition age students and their families together to share resources and information on important topics.

Families will have the opportunity to hear presentations from legal experts on guardianship, to learn about benefits and other financial planning aspects, to discuss job exploration and training resources, and more. Students will be able to interact with their peers from Lorain County to talk about their goals for the future and practice important work and independent living skills. The event will also include a “vendor fair” where families will be able to meet local service providers and representatives from local businesses to learn more about accessing supports in the community.



The target audiences for this retreat are students in grades 8-12 and their families; the event will take place on Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Optional: A brown bag lunch will be available on the day of the event for \$3.00.

Don't
FEAR the future!
PLAN for it!

Registration forms will be available at the beginning of March in your local school district. They can also be found on the State Support Team Region 2 Website in the Parents and Families Tab: [What is “Transition”?](#)

For more information, please contact Post Secondary Transition Consultant Jamie Tischer, State Support Team Region 2, at 440-324-5777 x1132 or tischer@sstr2.org.

***Please visit the State Support Team Region 2
New and Improved Website***



New look, same web address www.sstr2.org coming in **early March**.

Bullying Prevention Strategies

by Joshua Preece



Through an effective *schoolwide proactive approach*, some bullying behavior can be eliminated before it starts. Creating and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment takes much time and effort from the entire school community. Although strong leadership is needed, one person cannot do this job single-handedly.

- **Interact with students.** Greet or talk to students in the morning, during class transitions, and after school.
- **Equip your students.** Organize team-building activities and social skills discussions. Frequently revisit the duties of a caring citizen and what it means to be a member of community.
- **Equip your staff.** Prepare your staff with training, practice, and challenge activities. Having staff lead such activities not only fosters leadership within your school, but allows staff to learn with their peers.
- **Talk about bullying and social interactions.** Have an open dialogue between staff and students to help students hear other points of view, create understanding, and dissolve an egocentric mindset.
- **Hold witnesses responsible.** Practice "What would you do?" scenarios to help bystanders understand ways to address bullying situations.
- **Provide several safe and private ways for students to report bullying behaviors to school authorities.** Reduce student fear of retaliation or social backlash from peers.
- **Acknowledge addressed reports.** Victims need to know that their voices are being heard.
- **Use data to guide your decisions.** Gather data from staff observations, student/parent concerns, behavior reports, office referrals, and attendance reports to determine when and where incidents are happening.
- **Assign staff members to monitor ever-changing transition "hot spots".** Staff unstructured and unsupervised times in these high incident areas.
- **Reward examples of anti-bullying behavior.** Rewards can fit easily into a school's PBIS work or other positive character development programs.
- **Create policies and change rules as needed.** Schools must address the proper use of technology and social media.
- **Get the community involved.** The more people that are looking out for our students, the safer they will be. This also helps to spread the anti-bullying message so that the school can be a leader within the community.

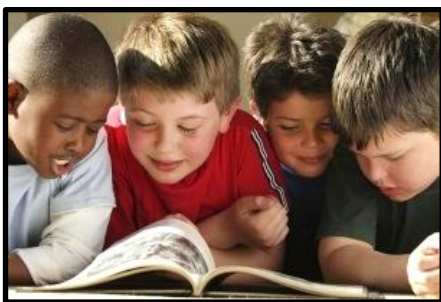
"Meaningful bullying prevention is dependent upon children, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community working in partnership."

For more information, contact State Support Team Region 2: Positive Behavior Intervention & Support and Family Engagement Consultant Darren Conley at conley@sstr2.org or Educational Consultant Joshua Preece at preece@sstr2.org.

What Does it Take to *Really* Teach Reading?

by Nancy Osko

In the first line of her article *Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do*. (2004), Dr. Louisa Moats writes, “Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends.” As educators we know this. No matter the subject, content area or grade we teach, we have a duty to ensure our students receive explicit instruction in reading in order to understand the material necessary for their learning. In PK-5 grades, this means integrating the **PK-5 Reading Foundational Standards** with content area standards tools, by leveraging many resources within our schools. Integration is key to the teaching and learning cycle which occurs in our schools because we know life itself is not a silo of events, rather it is a mix of events occurring concurrently.



Reading is not a natural process; it has only been around for approximately 5000 years. In contrast, humans have been speaking for well over 100,000 years. Think about child development. Children learn from SPEECH TO PRINT. Babies mimic sounds they hear. Toddlers say words and eventually put the sounds/words together until sentences are formed. As children progress and grow physically, their brains become wired for speech. Next we introduce print in storybook reading. This is where the challenge lies. Language is used in the process of building a reading brain. Spoken language is typically less formal and less structured than the written words. There are cultural languages which are shallow orthographies (meaning predictable; like the vowels always saying the same sound is Spanish and Italian) compared to English, which is a deep orthographic-based language, based on many variables. For example, our 5 vowels say 19 sounds depending on variables like placement within the word (syllable types), morphology, and etymology or word origin.

Why does understanding this matter? Let’s look at Gough and Tunmer’s algorithm within their research entitled *Simple View of Reading*. They report that a student must attain mastery in Word Recognition (phonological awareness, decoding and word automaticity of regular and irregularly spelled words) AND Language Comprehension (background knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge) as defined by Dr. Hollis Scarborough, (2001) in order to comprehend what they are reading.



Now let’s take a look through their mathematical lens. If a student has fully mastered Word Recognition skills fluently let’s give them a 1, if they have not yet mastered language comprehension skills they receive a 0, resulting in the mathematical equation: $1 \times 0 = 0$. Likewise, if a student has not mastered Word Recognition Skills, but has mastered Language Comprehension, the equation looks like this: $0 \times 1 = 0$. Students will not be able to demonstrate solid reading comprehension as they start to encounter more difficult words.

We see children able to decode early CVC type words but not as rapidly as they should nor able to transfer this into multisyllabic words at higher grade levels. Another scenario that shows a child who struggles on both sides of the equation: $.5 \text{ Word Recognition} \times .5 \text{ Language Comprehension} = .25$, often presents as a struggling reader earlier on. Whichever the scenario, our role is to dig deeper to determine how we need to close those gaps in Tier 1 instruction.

In the next edition of our newsletter, we will take a closer look at how the Perkins Local School District is embracing this research in their implementation of instructional decisions to better support their students.

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