



ESC NJ Update

The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey

New Jersey's Leader In Shared Services

Giving Nonverbal Students A Voice At CLL

Most educators agree that advances in technology have enhanced instruction and therapeutic intervention for students with disabilities.

Among the advances is the use of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) with nonverbal students. At ESCNJ schools, AAC strategies range from identifying facial expressions and gestures, to pictures and writing, along with electronic speech generating devices such as the iPad with Proloquo2go, and Touch Chat programs. The ultimate goal is to help nonverbal students express their needs, interact with others, and participate more fully in classroom instruction and school activities.

Two years ago, at the Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL), where over half of the 200 students are non-verbal, an AAC Interaction Group was formed to strengthen the current program. During the first year, the AAC Interaction Group helped many AAC users interact more during a cooperative art project, in addition to participating in school activities like the CLL spelling bee. The exposure of seeing peers from other classes use AAC devices greatly enhanced the motivation of many to use their devices more frequently.

Another positive outcome will be featured in May, when nonverbal students will have several speaking roles in CLL's presentations of *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King*.

"The ESCNJ Board of Directors was clearly thrilled to learn of this achievement," said Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

Mr. Finkelstein made his comment following the presentation of *Giving Voice to Voiceless Students*, a self-produced documentary by CLL Speech Language Specialist Terese Manalansan MA, CC-SLP. The documentary included a segment with nonverbal and verbal students rehearsing for the plays, and can be viewed by visiting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBMs1DCbYh4>.

Ms. Manalansan is encouraged with the progress, noting that nonverbal students have increased their communication and interaction with their verbal peers because of increased exposure to AAC by all students.

"The improved communication has had an impact on non-verbal and verbal students in terms of socializing and forming friendships," she said.

"Strengthening interaction between nonverbal and verbal



Center for Lifelong Learning non-verbal students have speaking roles in upcoming productions of "The Little Mermaid" and "The Lion King."

students was one of the AAC Interaction Group goals this year, and it has definitely improved," said CLL Principal Mary Beth Conley.

Practice for both plays began early in the school year. The nonverbal students were cast based on their therapist's

(See **Nonverbal** on page 4)

**New
Friends
Visit ALC**

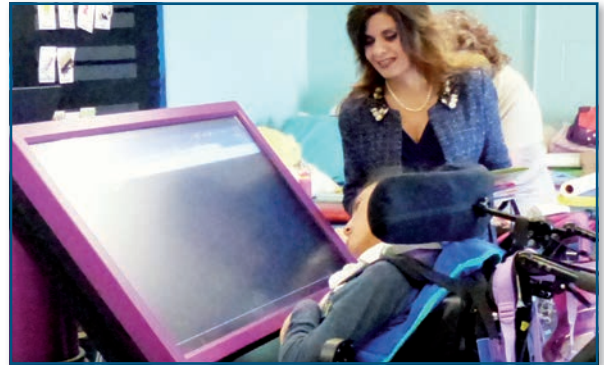
See page 5



Around The ESCNJ



Students at NuView Academy are engaged with Robotics lesson conducted by Teacher Lynn Williams.



Yasmin E. Hernández-Manno, Interim Executive County Superintendent Mercer & Middlesex Counties visits with a student at PRDS.



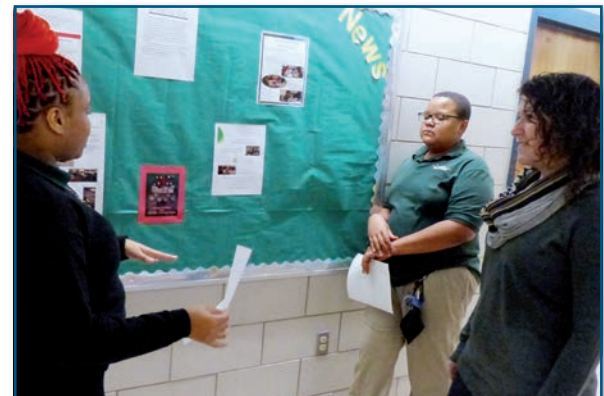
The Nonpublic department hosted a New Jersey Association of Federal Program Administrators workshop, facilitated by NJDOE Deputy Chief, Office of Learning Supports and Specialized Services Peggy McDonald, on the nine essential components needed for effective student learning.



An inspirational bulletin board for students at BBLC.



NuView Academy students review strategies during scootertag.



Student officers led Case Managers on an Open House tour of NuView Academy Annex.

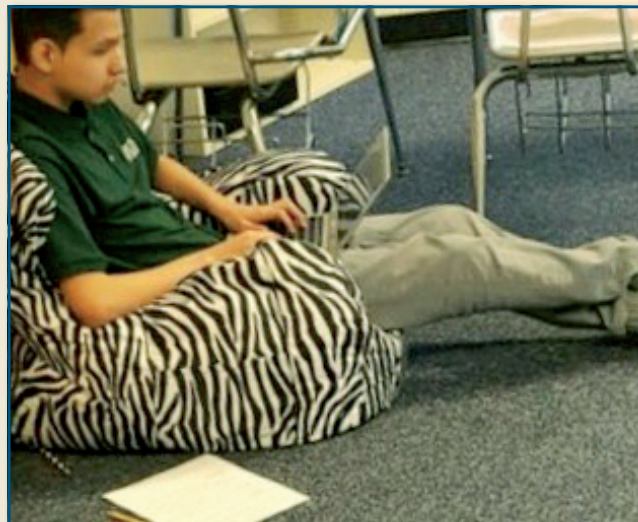
NAA Students Enjoying Flexible Seating

Despite occasional attempts at innovation, classrooms have remained relatively similar over the years: desks neatly lined in several rows where students sit for significant periods. However, given the changes in education, particularly the use of computers, shouldn't classrooms be reconfigured to accommodate the change?

At NuView Academy Annex, the B3 classroom has been reconfigured into a flexible seating environment to determine its impact of student performance. Students have signed contracts promising to use their flexible environment in the way it has been intended, and are allowed to choose a different seating option each day to strengthen their engagement with their work. The contract also requires students to treat the different seating options with respect, and



NAA Teacher Jennifer Alberici works with a student who chose a couch for his seating option.



Students have seating options ranging from a beanbag (above) to a table and chair.

move to another space if they do not feel comfortable in a particular space they have chosen.

"At this point, the flexible classroom seating is working well with students," said NAA Principal Chastity Rivera.

In fact, research indicates students are more focused and productive when working in a flexible seating environment because it allows for more freedom of movement. The increased movement helps student's burn calories, raise their metabolism and receive a greater flow of oxygen to the brain. As a result, students are typically more focused and motivated to learn. Seating options range from a couch and bean bag, to a yoga ball, table, and chair. •

Practice Makes Permanent



Several IDEA Special Education Teachers attended a newly created, "Spelling: Practice Makes Permanent," PDA workshop. Participants learned research based strategies to use with students to strengthen spelling skills.

New Class Opens At PRDS

The Piscataway Regional Day School has opened another classroom for students 5-10 with multiple disabilities. Students with moderate to severe disabilities, ranging from cognitive, neurological, medical and orthopedic disabilities are eligible to apply.

Based on applied behavior analysis principles, the Specialized Program for Students with Multiple Disabilities focuses on the development of independent

functional skills in language, academic, social and vocational areas. The program also includes consumer, social skills and family support training. Classrooms are equipped with student-centered technology, a student-operated full-service café, a dedicated occupational/physical therapy room, and visual and performing arts instruction.

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst, and full time nurses are on staff for medical monitoring, seizure management and dysphagia intervention.

Please contact Principal Phyllis DeLucia at (732) 985-8752 or email pdelucia@escnj.k12.nj.us, for additional information. •



Physical Therapist Joli Semon works with student in the dedicated physical therapy room.

'Better Together' Podcast Update

The ESCNJ's *Better Together* podcast has covered several topics recently including: (1) "Factors Influencing Special Education Placement Decisions," with (L-R) BBLC Case Mgr. Kate Johnson, Principal Wendy Eaton, and Asst. Supt. Gary Molenaar; (2) "Charter School Support Services" featuring (L-R) Academy for Urban Leadership Charter School Social Worker Soveyra Acosta, Dir. of Nonpublic Services Nancy Armbruster, and Bus. Admin. Patrick M. Moran; and (3) "Expansion of the ESCNJ Board of Directors," with (L-R) Supt. Mark J. Finkelstein, Board Vice President Bill Petscavage, Board President Dale Caldwell, and Host and Coordinator of Comm. David Sandler. All podcasts can be heard by visiting ESCNJ's home page www.escnj.k12.nj.us, and clicking *Better Together* Podcast Series.



1.



2.



3.

Free Vendor Expo May 12th



Security systems, LED lighting, copy machines, office supplies, large/small grounds & maintenance equipment, state accredited workshops and much more at ESCNJ's Annual Vendor Expo from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on May 12 at the Garden State Exhibit & Convention Center. Free and open to existing and prospective Co-op Pricing System members, contact the Co-op Team at coop@escnj.k12.nj.us, or call 732-777-9848, Ext. 3120.

Snacks Sold By CBI Students



BBLC Secondary students participating in Community-Based Instruction were out selling snacks to central office employees recently.

Nonverbal (Cont'd from page 1)

recommendations. Scripts were modified to meet the linguistic capabilities of the nonverbal students as recommended by their therapists.

The next step was prerecording the dialogue in the nonverbal student's communication systems, and rehearsing regularly so students became familiar with their roles, and learned more about

collaborating with each other.

The plays, at CLL, are at 1:00 p.m. on May 19 (*The Little Mermaid*), and 1:00 p.m. on May 26 (*The Lion King*.) Preschool and elementary school students are performing in *The Little Mermaid*, and middle and high school students are in *The Lion King*.

For more information, please contact Principal Conley at 732-727-3736 or mconley@escnj.k12.nj.us.



ALC's Tradition Of Fun, Friendship And Learning

What is the best day of the school year?

According to some ALC students, it is when the 5th graders from Ms. Abbe Fleming's class at Woodland School in Monroe Township come over for a visit.

"It is a day of friendship, fun and learning," said ALC Principal Erik Solberg.

The program started about 10 years ago after ALC Teacher Melissa Macwhorter, and Ms. Fleming, who are friends, came up with the idea for the visits.

The Key To Being A Good Friend By Melissa Macwhorter

Academy Learning Center students welcomed Ms. Abbe Fleming's 5th grade class of 25 students from Woodland School in Monroe Township recently. The day began with a greeting from ALC Principal Dr. Erik Solberg, and an orientation about students with autism or multiple disabilities. This joint program, done several times a year, is an opportunity for the two groups to participate in activities while promoting teamwork and fostering friendship.

This year a bowling game was played in the gym, as students formed teams, set pins and rolled a ball down the alley. An art project included decorating keys, identifying and writing friendship related words like "loyal," "kind," and "friendly," and then, gluing the materials on a display board headed "The Key to Being A Good Friend."

The day ended with lunch and more socialization. The students from ALC look forward to seeing their new friends soon, when they visit them at the Woodland School for another day of friendship building activities.



Woodland and ALC students and staff.



Woodland and ALC students working on project.



Students created "The Key to Being A Good Friend" display.

Visit From Candidate For NJ Governor



Greeting Democratic candidate for Governor Phil Murphy was BBLC student Sa'niya McDonald, accompanied by her teacher Kim Ehresman (L), and Principal Wendy Eaton.

Case Managers Visit NuView Academy



Case Managers were interested in learning about the Robotics program during a visit to NuView Academy.

\$6,000 Donation For PRDS Family



At the presentation of the \$6,000 OneManOneBikeOneChild award are (L-R) Case Managers Jamie Zarrett and Debbie Bussiere, Theresa Condora, OneManOneBikeOneChild's William Zuppa, Gaetana Condora, and William's father John Zuppa.

Theresa Condora, born without a heartbeat and unable to breathe on her own, is considered a "miracle child" by PRDS Case Manager Debbie Bussiere.

A student at ESCNJ schools since the age of three, Theresa, now 16 and nonverbal, has battled additional challenges over the years, including cerebral palsy, seizure disorders and visual impairment. Despite the severity of her physical ailments, Theresa is often seen with a "huge smile on her face" and likes interacting with people around her, Ms. Bussiere said.

"She saves the biggest smiles for her mom," Ms. Bussiere said, adding: "It is obvious where Theresa learned resilience and courage."

That attitude is why Theresa's family was the "obvious choice" to receive the \$6,000 raised by Mr. William Zuppa's OneManOneBikeOneChild not for profit organization. Mr. Zuppa has been bike-riding thousands of miles to raise funds for

different PRDS families ever since his nephew, Georgie Caunt, a former student there, passed away at the age of 14 in 1995.

"This is a special moment and I know the money will be used to benefit Theresa," Mr. Zuppa said.

Principal Phyllis DeLucia said Theresa's mother, Gaetana Condora, a single mom, has "embraced the challenges they face together and is a fierce advocate for her daughter."

Each year the PRDS OneManOneBikeOneChild Committee votes to determine which of several PRDS families nominated should be awarded the funds.

Mrs. Bussiere said when she called to inform Ms. Condora that her family had been selected for the OneManOneBikeOneChild award, she was understandably overwhelmed.

"She immediately thought about buying Theresa her own iPad, and possibly taking a trip with her. That is something they have never done together," said Ms. Bussiere. •

Songwriting At NuView Academy



Danny Tieger engaged NuView Academy students with an interactive songwriting session. A songwriter and actor, Mr. Tieger has written songs for TV and film licensing companies, and performs for thousands of students as a member of "The Story Pirates."

Robotics Presentation



BBLC's Kate Johnson was part of a well-received presentation to the Board of Directors on "Classroom Robotics."

20th Annual Read Across America Day

Read Across America day celebrated its 20th year of motivating children and teens to read every day.



A special Guest Reader at PRDS this year was Yasmin E. Hernández-Manno, Interim Executive County Superintendent Mercer & Middlesex Counties.



Director of Human Resources Lorraine Small has regularly engaged students on Read Across America Day.



Onsite Medical Director/Psychiatrist Dr. Nicole A. Zuber reading for students at NuView Academy.



NuView Academy students created a visual display honoring Read Across America Day.



Naomi Glassman (red sweater), worked with students to program a NAO Robot to serve as a reader at BBLC.

Autism Awareness Swim-A-Thon

The fifth annual Autism Awareness Swim-A-Thon, coinciding with "Autism Awareness Month" takes place from 9 a.m. – Noon on Saturday, April 29, at ESCNJ's Aquatics & Fitness Center, 333 Cheesequake Road, Parlin. To participate or make a donation, which benefits Autism New Jersey, please contact Katelyn Dauphinee, Aquatics Coordinator, at (732) 317-0333 or KDauphinee@escnj.k12.nj.us.



NuView Academy Receives Generous Donation



Physical Education Teacher Karen Polanski secured a Dump N Go Utility Cart donation, filled with gym equipment, for use by NuView Academy students.

"Outstanding" ESCNJ Students Recognized

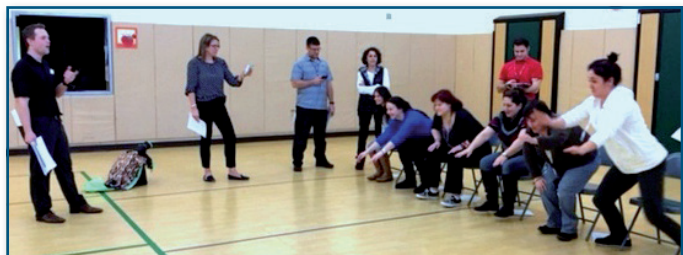
Five ESCNJ students were among the 62 junior and senior Middlesex County High School students honored at the 32nd Annual Student Recognition Program held at Old Bridge High School.

"Your hard work and achievement, despite the challenges that have confronted you, are an example to your fellow students, teachers, principals, and all of us here this evening," said Dr. Linda A. Madison, President of the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators, and a member of the ESCNJ Board of Directors. •



The ESCNJ Student Recognition recipients (family and staff), were: Joseph Crater, BBLC Secondary; Christopher Freeman, ALC; John MacArthur, CLL; Sarah Matula and David Palazzi, both from PRDS.

Rutgers Student Leads ALC Training



Christopher Jones (left), leading ALC faculty and aides in an in-service on "The Effects of Aerobic Exercise on the Ability of a Child with Autism to Perform Classroom Tasks." An approved clinical affiliation site for students in Rutgers' Doctor of Physical Therapy program, Mr. Jones is working at ALC under the supervision of Physical Therapists Dr. Debbie Eisenberg, and Carole Binen-Sokol.



The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey

1660 Stelton Road
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854
(732) 777-9848
www.escnj.k12.nj.us

Mr. Dale Caldwell, President
Mr. Bill Petscavage, Vice President

Board of Directors

Middlesex County

Carteret, Kevin Ahearn
Cranbury, Susan Genco
Dunellen, Eugene Mosley
East Brunswick, Victor Valeski
Edison, Frank Heelan
Highland Park, Scott Taylor
Jamesburg, Brian Betze
Metuchen, Merrill Lunt
Middlesex, Linda Madison
Milltown, Bill Petscavage
Monroe, Michael Kozak
New Brunswick, Dale Caldwell

North Brunswick, Brian Zychowski
Old Bridge, Donna Andriani
Perth Amboy, David Roman
Piscataway, Ralph Johnson
Sayreville, John Walsh
South Amboy, Jorge Diaz
South Brunswick, Gary McCartney
South Plainfield, Noreen Lishak
South River, Michael Pfister
Spotswood, Scott Rocco
Woodbridge, Robert Zega
Vocational, Brian Loughlin

Other Counties

Bergen County Technical Schools/Special Services, Dr. Howard Lerner
Cape May County Special Services, Mrs. Barbara Makoski
Pemberton Township (Burlington), Mr. Tony Trongone
Somerset Hills Regional (Somerset), Dr. Frances Wood
Voorhees Township (Camden), Mr. Raymond Brose

Administration:

Mark J. Finkelstein, Superintendent
Gary Molenaar, Assistant Superintendent
Patrick M. Moran, Business Administrator/
Board Secretary
Kai-Li Pao, Assistant Business Administrator/
Board Secretary
Lorraine Small, Director of Human Resources
Tia M. LaPiana, Principal of Special Projects
Arthur E. Francis, Principal of Special Projects

David Sandler, Coordinator of Communications
Erik Solberg, Principal, ALC
Stacy Rieger, Vice Principal, ALC
Wendy Eaton, Principal, BBLC
Cindy Borell, Supervisor, BBLC
Sandra Giardino, Supervisor, BBLC Secondary
Mary Beth Conley, Principal, CLL
Michael Kane, Vice Principal, CLL
Meena Pasupathy, Supervisor, CLL
Chastity Rivera, Principal, NuView Academy Annex
William Walsh, Principal, NuView Academy
Phyllis DeLucia, Principal, PRDS
Nancy Armbruster, Director of Nonpublic School Services
Barbara Pezzuto, Supervisor of Nonpublic School Services
Fredrika Schwerin, Supervisor of Nonpublic School Services/PDA