



MID-STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Mid-State Messenger November 2021



Employee Spotlight: Panhandle Welcomes New Staff



Panhandle welcomes ISU graduate, Erica Watts. Erica is from Machesney Park, north of Rockford, IL. She has two brothers and a dog named Cocoa Bell. She has performed in Mamma Mia with Rockford's Starlight Theater, loves to travel and spend time with family and friends.

She is happy to be a part of the Panhandle Community and have the opportunity to enjoy small town living. Erica decided to become a special education teacher after she had an injury in high school. It changed her perspective. She realized she wanted to be a voice for the voiceless and an advocate for individuals who may be misunderstood or different. She feels she has learned a lot about the students' ABILITY that makes them so unique! Erica is enjoying getting to know the families and staff in the Raymond Grade School and is excited about teaching at the elementary level. She recognizes and appreciates the strong sense of support provided by the Panhandle district. Erica would like for people to know that she is very easy going and looking forward to working with the staff to address student concerns.

Social/Emotional Curriculum

During the summer of 2021, four teachers approached Mrs. Bowman at Mulberry Grove Elementary School regarding their concern for the social and emotional well-being of their students. These teachers worked tirelessly to develop a curriculum to implement in the school setting focusing on the well-being of the students. Books and more books were ordered that children could relate to. Mrs. Michelle Huhn, Mrs. Sam Leidel, Mrs. Susan Hall and Mrs. Becky Criner have focused on continuing to build the curriculum. The goal is to let children know that there are ways to deal with emotions and that it is okay to have all of the emotions. Staff also want their students to know that there are adults that love them and want to help them through all that life throws at them.



7 Proven Strategies We Overlook

During the IAASE Fall Conference, Lani Lawson, BCBA and former teacher, shared 7 research-based behavioral strategies that we often fail to use or include in our student's behavior intervention plans. These 7 strategies are easy to implement and highly effective:

1. **Stimulus Pairing** - pair yourself with something that is fun and reinforcing for the student to build a strong relationship
2. **Demand Fading** - gradually introduce demands in situations where the probability of problem behavior is low. We often expect too much too fast.
3. **Prompting** - start with success by prompting early and often when teaching a new skill.
4. **DRA** - differential reinforcement of alternative behavior gives the student the desired reinforcement for a more appropriate behavior. Catch students being good and reinforce!
5. **Choice** - providing a student with choice is reinforcing and gives them more control over the situation.
6. **Attention & Escape** - develop specific attention and escape choices that students can select for short periods of time to decrease unwanted behavior and increase productivity.
7. **Behavior-based reinforcement** - give tokens, points, reinforcement based on the desired behavior not on the amount of time.

Life Skills Meetings

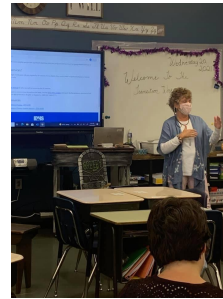


On Thursday, October 21 special education teachers who teach students with cognitive impairments and multiple disabilities came together on Zoom to support each other, share tips & strategies, and discuss available agency supports. Teachers from

Vandalia (Whitney Campbell), Hillsboro (Lisa Lomprez, Abby Reynolds, and Amy Knodle), Carlinville (Abby Kunz) attended the meeting. Transition specialists (Laura Snyder and Joan Saatkamp) also attended the meeting. Future

meetings are being planned monthly. Please email brandy.buske@midstatespec.org if you are interested in attending future meetings.

Transition Agency Fair



We have been working collaboratively with South Macoupin Special Education Cooperative (SMASE) this school year and they invited Mid-State Special Education (MSSE) families to join the Agency Fair on October 20, 2021. The agenda included presentations

from Illinois Valley Rehabilitation Center, Lewis & Clark- College for Life, Blackburn College- Blackburn & Beyond, Macoupin County Transit Services, Central Illinois Service Access (PUNS) and Department of Rehabilitation Services. The event was well attended by both SMASE and MSSE families and students.

Homecoming Kings



Michael Riley, St. Elmo High School student, was crowned Homecoming King on October 21, 2021 with the dance the following day October 22, 2021. Michael is a senior at St. Elmo high school. He enjoys cooking and after graduation he is considering going into Culinary Arts. He is unsure of which Community College

he will be attending. He is pictured with Mrs. Rich, Special Education Teacher.

Johnny Keller, Ramsey High School student, was crowned Homecoming King on October 16th at their Homecoming Dance. Johnny is a senior at Ramsey High school. He recently moved to Ramsey from Pana. Johnny's future plans are to go to Community College, Lake Land or Kaskaskia College, and study music.

