

REGIONALWRAP-UP

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Welcome, Jacki !

Hello everyone. My name is Jacki Nickel and I came onboard as a T/TAC Education Coordinator this January 3, 2012. I am absolutely thrilled be working with outstanding professional educators and am excited for the opportunity to work with over 20 school divisions assisting with implementation of positive academic and behavior support systems.

Let me share a few personal tidbits about myself. I was born and raised in Newaygo, Michigan. I completed my Bachelor of Science Degree at Central Michigan University and my Masters of Science in Education Administration at Shenandoah University. While living in Michigan I taught middle school social studies and high school English.

Coaching was also an important part of my life before moving to Virginia. I coached varsity girls' basketball and softball. In 1995 my husband, our son, and I moved to Virginia where I started working for Rockingham County Public Schools as a teacher. I taught high school English at Turner Ashby High School, then physical education, health, and keyboarding at Montevideo Middle School. Between Michigan and Virginia I have taught approximately 14 years in the classroom. I completed an administrative assistant principal intern year at South River Elementary, two years as an assistant principal at Turner Ashby High School, five months as assistant principal at ERHS, and a year and a half as principal at River Bend Elementary School. I have been blessed with the variety of experiences provided me during all my teaching and administrative years.

Saving the best for last, I am married to Eric Nickel, who is the Director of University Recreation at JMU. We have three awesome sons, Ryan, Kyle, and Tyler (and a cool dog named Peyton. Yes, like the quarterback!). We enjoy traveling as a family and find beach time a must! Personally, I enjoy all sports, my favorites being basketball and golf. I also love to read books and articles of all types.

I look forward to more great educational experiences and new friendships that are sure to build throughout the upcoming years.



Youth Summit News

Due to the overwhelming growth and success of the past five Youth Summits, the I'm Determined Youth Summit is moving to James Madison University on June 10-12, 2012. This will allow more space and more YOUTH to attend!

The Virginia Department of Education's I'm Determined project, in conjunction with the Partnership for People with Disabilities, invites applications for sponsorship to the SIXTH Annual I'm Determined Youth Summit at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Youth with disabilities who are at least age 14 by June 10, 2012, are encouraged to apply.

RE M I N D E R:
Deadline for submission
of applications is Monday,
April 2nd, 2012.

View and read the application carefully and be mindful of the deadline. The application and more information can be found at www.imdetermined.org.

Playgroups as a Service Delivery Model in Early Childhood

Polly Smith and Dana Guarino-Murphey, ECSE teachers, Lynchburg City Public Schools

As the field of early childhood special education (ECSE) embraces the concept of inclusion and least restrictive environment, developing playgroups may be a great way to provide services that include children with and without disabilities. The playgroup is defined as a group of parents or caregivers and their young children who meet together on a consistent basis to allow children the opportunity to play and interact and parents or caregivers time to share ideas and support for raising children (Playgroups USA). Playgroups are usually scheduled once a week for approximately one and a half hours, often meeting in a public place such as a park or community play area. Children benefit significantly from the chance to engage in free play and structured activities with other children while having the security of their parent or caregiver nearby. Facilitators can be parents who take turns leading the group or a professional with a specific goal in mind related to ECSE services. By participating in play group experiences, parents not only learn how to support their children in skill development, but also increase their awareness of community resources and the likelihood of using those resources outside of the playgroup.

Factors to consider when planning ECSE playgroups include identifying meeting locations in the community, transportation, materials, activities, parent roles, staff roles, and any paperwork required by the school division and community agencies. In keeping with ECSE best practices, child participation should include children with and without developmental

delays. To form successful playgroups, the children's ages, individual needs, abilities, and home locations should be considered. Budgeting must be planned and approved by the school division in advance to ensure that funds are available to include playgroups as a consistent option for service delivery.

Community sites for playgroups may include, but are not limited to, libraries, parks, children's museums, nursery schools, child care centers, urban or rural farms, and gymnastic, dance, or music studios. Collaborative partnerships can be developed with community agencies such as Parks and Recreation, churches (Mother's Morning Out programs), Cooperative Extension offices, and local government departments such as fire and police stations to access a variety of programs and meeting space. There may also be community initiatives targeted toward families of young children such as "Week of the Young Child" or "Day in the Park" activities that would support the playgroup's mission.

For playgroups to be successful, transportation, inclusion of children without developmental delays, and strategic planning are essential components that must be addressed. In order for children and parents to consistently participate in playgroups as an ECSE service option, transportation should be available to those families that are unable to provide their own. To ensure that playgroups are inclusive program options, systematic approaches must be developed to identify and encourage peers without developmental delays to participate in the playgroup. Lastly, playgroup activities must be carefully planned to ensure that the individual goals and needs of children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are met.

Across the Commonwealth ECSE programs have begun the process of establishing playgroups. This mode of service delivery is an option that challenges school systems to be creative and reach outside of their boundaries to meet the individual needs of children and families in natural environments.

References:

Koorana Services – Family Services. Retrieved January 18, 2012, from http://www.koorana.org/au/ks_family.html

Playgroups USA. Retrieved January 18, 2012, from http://www.playgroupusa.com/what_is

ASD News

Peer-Written Handbook Helps Students with Autism Navigate College

The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) has published [Navigating College: A Handbook on Self Advocacy](#), a guide for students with autism, written by adults with autism, and also launched the companion Web site, www.navigatingcollege.org. The Navigating College handbook is a first-of-its-kind resource for and by individuals with autism that explores the various aspects of the higher education experience. From traditional topics like classroom accommodations and dorm life to hot-button issues such as disclosure and sexuality, the handbook provides first-person insights from current and past college students on the autism spectrum.

Early Childhood News

New Tots 'n Tech Web site and Help Desk Resource (Tots 'n Tech Research Institute - November 30, 2011)

The Tots 'n Tech Research Institute (TnT) recently launched a new Web site that includes up-to-date information about adaptations and assistive technology (AT) for infants and toddlers. The Web site features a new Help Desk resource, which is designed to make it easy to find adaptations or AT solutions for everyday situations. Information is presented through various media and can be searched by starting with a functional skill, such as communication/socialization or getting around. The new Help Desk will continually be updated and TnT would appreciate your input.

- The new TnT Web site is available at <http://tnt.asu.edu/>
- To access the TnT Help Desk directly, go to <http://tnt.asu.edu/tnt-helpdesk>
- TnT's November 2011 newsletter provides more information - http://tnt.asu.edu/files/HelpDesk_Newsletter_November2011.pdf
- If you have an idea, good training materials or a great Web site to share, please contact Dawn Greer at dawn.greer@asu.edu

Research Synthesis Points on Quality Inclusive Practices (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion - November 30, 2011)

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) recently published *Research Synthesis Points on Quality Inclusive Practices (2011)*, which provides brief descriptions and supporting references for evidence-based and promising practices that support early childhood inclusion. It is organized into three major sections corresponding to the defining features of high quality early childhood inclusion as described in the Joint Position Statement on Early Childhood Inclusion of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The synthesis can be accessed online at http://www.fpg.unc.edu/news/highlight_detail.cfm?ID=971

Baby Talk

Baby Talk, a new, free one-way listserv, was developed to provide resources that support work with infants, toddlers, and their families. The format was field tested with members of the Infant-Toddler Network in Pennsylvania, who enthusiastically rated the listserv as useful and of high quality. Baby Talk will be distributed once a month. To join the listserv, send an e-mail with no message to: subscribe-babytalk@listserv.unc.edu. For additional information (or to offer suggestions), please contact Camille Catlett at camille.catlett@unc.edu or 919.966.6635.

Reinforced Recommendation: No Screen Time for Kids Under 2

When the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently updated their guidelines, the organization reaffirmed its 1999 recommendation that discouraged television viewing by children under age 2. The AAP's newest policy statement on the topic, *Media Use by Children Younger Than Two Years*, comes on the scene at a time when children's screen options have expanded to include other forms of electronic media, such as computers, video games, tablets, and smart phones. The group once again calls for parents to limit screen time for children under age 2, pointing to additional research showing the negative effects of too much time spent with electronic media at young ages, particularly the sacrifice of time spent engaging in creative play and interacting with people and objects.

Despite the AAP's guidelines, the results of a new survey from Common Sense Media show that electronic media are prevalent in the lives of children from birth to age 8. More than a quarter of all screen time is spent with newer digital media, including computers, video games, smart phones, and tablets, with half of all children having access to one of these devices. More specifically, apps on newer mobile devices are increasingly popular, and have been used by 10% of infants up to 1-year old, 39% of 2- to 4-year-olds, and 52% of 5- to 8-year-olds. (*Baby Talk*, January 2012)

Universal Design for Learning

Educators spend a lot of time and effort modifying and adapting lessons for students with differing needs. Try the Universal Design for Learning approach that CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) staff recommend to make lessons more accessible to all students from the start. In their guest blog for NICHCY, "No Boundaries" Education, Patricia Ralabate and David Gordon of CAST share the three basic principles of UDL and connect you with the National UDL Center's practical examples and videos. <http://nichcy.org/no-boundaries-education>. CAST's Web site is <http://www.cast.org>.

T/TAC Library

Region 5 T/TAC is pleased to announce its newly improved library is now an on-line library with many new materials ready for you to check out. Please take a few minutes to visit <http://www.jmu.edu/ttac/Library/index.shtml> and browse through our materials on-line or come to Blue Ridge Hall at JMU and enjoy looking through our inventory. We offer books, CDs, DVDs, assessment and transition materials, switches, devices, and many other items that are available to check-out for three week periods with the option to renew them for another three weeks. We are also pleased to offer new curricula for use in the classroom that can be checked out for longer periods of time. The curricula available are listed on the right-hand side of our library Web site.

A list to highlight new materials is sent with the newsletter and can be found on our newsletter page at <http://www.jmu.edu/ttac/newsletter/>