Big Shoes to Fill

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Coordinator for the Student Support Services Project (SSSP). Many of you may know me from my work over the last six years for the PS/RtI Project, supporting district and school leaders as they implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). In that time, I also served as MTSS Consultant on this team in Tallahassee. Originally, I began my work in education in Brevard County as a teacher (general education and exceptional student education [ESE]) and as a district coach/trainer.

In this new role, I have very big shoes to fill and we all deeply miss the calming presence of Heather Diamond, who coordinated this team with excellent leadership for many years. I am thankful that Heather’s style was one of cultivating leadership in others, including the very capable SSSP team, who kept the ball rolling in the interim. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Anne Glass, Medicaid Consultant, for stepping in as interim coordinator during this transition. Thank you ladies!

Finally, on behalf of SSSP, thanks for taking the time to respond to the annual needs assessment survey. Data-based planning and problem solving is integral to our work and your input helps us match support to district needs. Your feedback identified the following areas as having the highest level of need:

◊ Learning supports that promote school-based mental health
◊ Strategies for maximizing student engagement across the K-12 system
◊ Technical assistance on maximizing Medicaid reimbursements
◊ Opportunities to share best practices across districts, including successful and innovative models for integrating student services within an MTSS
◊ Remote professional development opportunities such as webinars and conference calls
◊ Access to professional development and other resources

Based on this input, our team will evaluate how we can address the identified needs, and continue to provide leadership in promoting and implementing an integrated system of student services within a multi-tiered framework.

We often use the SSSP newsletter as an opportunity to share best practices from districts and other state partners who share in the work of innovative practices for student services personnel to improve student outcomes. Please reach out and share your ideas with us so your colleagues across the state can benefit from your practice.

Please enjoy this edition of the SSSP newsletter and the timely information and resources offered!

Jayna Jenkins
Stories From the Field

Florida Aware

In September 2014, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) was awarded a five-year collaborative grant, Now is the Time Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education), from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. One of the two components of the Florida AWARE program focuses on implementing Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA). In addition to the state award, several districts and communities throughout Florida also received “Now is the Time” funding to support Mental Health First Aid and YMHFA trainings.

In the United States, about 1 in 5 adolescents experience a mental health crisis, challenge or illness. As a result, Mental Health First Aid USA created an eight-hour education program for youth-serving adults. Participants are introduced to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other disruptive behavior disorders, and substance use disorders. YMHFA emphasizes the importance of early intervention and teaches individuals how to help an adolescent who is in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

YMHFA uses role playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis; select interventions and provide initial help; and connect young people to professional, peer, social and self-help care. Participants do not learn how to diagnose or how to provide any therapy or counseling. Participants learn a core five-step action plan to support an adolescent developing signs and symptoms of mental illness or who is in an emotional crisis. Participants may include family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens who work with adolescents.

The state’s Florida AWARE YMHFA training plan involves several discretionary projects including the Florida’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (FLPBIS) Project; SEDNET: the Multi-Agency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities; the Student Support Services Project; and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS); and three districts—Duval, Pinellas and Polk. By building on the current infrastructure and systems of prevention and intervention for children and youth with mental health problems in Florida, the YMHFA training plan builds capacity for sustained YMHFA supports beyond the duration of this project and across the state. To date, Florida AWARE has facilitated more than 56 YMHFA trainings and our instructors have certified 1,149 participants as YMHFA First Aiders!

If you are interested in Youth Mental Health First Aid training, please contact Dr. Sandra Sosa-Carlin, Youth Mental Health First Aid Training Coordinator for Florida AWARE, at 813-974-6752 or ssosa@usf.edu. Our trainings are at no cost to participants! For more information visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Did you know...

More than 680,000 people across the United States have been trained in Mental Health First Aid by a dedicated base of more than 10,000 instructors?
Discovering the science behind...

Ever wonder how a touchscreen works or what makes it possible to track your package from warehouse to doorstep?

Discovering the science behind these modern conveniences happens every day at Florida Polytechnic University (Florida Poly), Florida’s newest public university and the first one dedicated exclusively to the study of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Students can pursue six degree programs with cutting-edge concentrations like nanotechnology, machine intelligence, logistics and health informatics. The end goal is to graduate students with the skill sets they need to immediately jump into Florida’s high-tech workforce or begin developing new technology and ideas as entrepreneurs.

Florida Poly has several strategies to make this happen. Because of its STEM focus, students are immersed in their majors from their freshman year. They also gain access early on to advanced laboratory equipment to test and explore classroom topics. With 11 Innovation Labs, one of the largest Makerbot Innovation Centers in the world and a unique all-digital library, this is a place students can gain hands-on learning and make their ideas a reality.

Guiding student learning is a faculty with deep backgrounds in industry and research. Classroom time emphasizes real-world application and hands-on projects to bring textbook learning to life.

Small class sizes and accessible professors make it easier for students to dive deep into topics of interest and develop projects to test their theories. For instance, students right now are testing a way to convert the motions of American Sign Language into audible speech so the hearing impaired can communicate with everyone.

Students can also graduate workforce-ready with the help of more than 90 industry partnerships that provide internship and mentoring opportunities. The payoff could already be seen in the summer 2016 internships obtained by Florida Poly students. A student at aerospace company Lockheed Martin, for example, applied classroom learning to develop a computer program that cut down report preparation time by 85 percent.

In between projects and homework, students are building a distinct and unique Florida Poly culture. As a new university, students have a ground floor opportunity to shape the events, clubs and traditions on campus.

To learn more about the exciting work happening at Florida Polytechnic University, visit BeTheNext.com.
Updated Resources

Emergency Guidelines for Schools
2016 Florida Edition

This updated edition provides valuable information about infection control, emergency planning for student health conditions, injury reporting, school safety and emergency preparedness. It also includes flowcharts to guide the care for students when the school nurse is not on campus.


To purchase hard copies of the guide, visit [https://targetprintmail.presencehost.net/emergency-guidelines-for-schools-manuals.html](https://targetprintmail.presencehost.net/emergency-guidelines-for-schools-manuals.html).

Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook


Take Action...

Download these resources and share electronic or printed copies throughout your district. They are full of important information.

Secondary Student Progression

To assist with the implementation of changes as a result of the 2016 Legislative Session, we have posted a resource to assist you and the student services personnel in your district: [Secondary Student Progression: 2016-2017 Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/school-health/_documents/emergency-guidelines-for-schools-2016.pdf).

Changes to secondary progression include:

- **Online Course Requirement** – section 1003.4282(4), Florida Statutes (F.S.)
- **Credit Acceleration Program** – s. 1003.4295, F.S.
- **Florida Seal of Biliteracy Program** – s. 1003.432, F.S.
- **Concordant Scores** – s. 1008.22, F.S.

This resource also contains continued and relevant frequently asked questions on other topics related to middle grades and high school progression. For more information, please contact Helen Lancashire, School Counseling Consultant, at [hlancahs@usf.edu](mailto:hlancahs@usf.edu) or [helen.lancashire@fldoe.org](mailto:helen.lancashire@fldoe.org).

Credit Acceleration Program – Section 1003.4295, F.S.

A student is allowed to earn high school credit in courses required for high school graduation without the requirement of enrolling in or completing the course through the passage of:

- An Advanced Placement examination
- A College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
ADHD and Section 504: Guidance from the Office for Civil Rights

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) recently issued clarifying guidance on the obligation of school districts to provide students with ADHD equal educational opportunity under Section 504. The Dear Colleague Letter and accompanying guide, Students with ADHD and Section 504: A Resource Guide, provide a broad overview of Section 504 and the school district's obligation to provide educational services to students with disabilities, including students with ADHD. In addition, the Department released a Know Your Rights document that provides a brief overview of the OCR guidance for parents.

Section 504 implementing regulations require school districts to conduct individualized evaluations of students who, because of disability, need special education or related services, and ensure that qualified students with disabilities receive appropriate services based on need. The Resource Guide provides an overview of federal disability laws and practical guidance on how to meet the district’s obligation to identify, evaluate, make placement decisions about disability and provide needed services under Section 504. It also includes information on due process protections for students with disabilities and their parents, and resources to assist districts in meeting the needs of students with a Section 504 disability.

OCR suggests that schools should improve access and educational outcomes for students with ADHD by:

◊ Properly evaluating students, providing supports and re-evaluating when necessary.
◊ Using appropriate evaluation tools depending on the student, and convening the entire Section 504 team to make placement decisions.
◊ Not acting on generalizations about students with ADHD, or limiting placement options to a predetermined universe of options that are unrelated to an individual determination of what a particular student needs.
◊ Providing aids and services the Section 504 placement team decides are appropriate, regardless of cost or administrative burden, or whether such services may have been provided only to IDEA-eligible students in the past.
◊ Creating clear, detailed and individualized Section 504 plans so that school district personnel and parents understand what the plan requires.
◊ Training staff on the requirements of Section 504, including evaluation and behaviors that may be linked to a disability, like ADHD.

Although the OCR guidance specifically addresses students with ADHD, this guidance is applicable to all students with Section 504 disabilities, and provides an excellent refresher on Section 504 obligations and pitfalls. District 504 coordinators may want to disseminate this guidance to appropriate staff and consider using it to supplement professional development for administrators, staff and teachers with responsibility for implementing Section 504.

Additional guidance and training resources, available through BLESS and the SSSP, include a Section 504 Online Introductory Course, a District Implementation Guide for Section 504 and a Section 504 resource page at http://sss.usf.edu/index.html.

Take Action...

Take the Section 504 Online Introductory Course.
Breaking Down Barriers to School Attendance
Promoting Positive Attendance Patterns for Students in Foster Care and How We Can Help...

◊ Student services personnel can provide additional assistance with, for example, 504 plans, health care plans, behavior support plans and academic track plans
◊ An ESE case manager (if applicable) can ensure individual educational plan (IEP) accommodations are provided in the classroom, ensure teachers are aware of accommodations on the IEP and assist in providing the proper interventions
◊ The foster care liaison ensures a smooth transition by
  ◊ Providing a mentor
  ◊ Providing connections to school and community sources

Comprehensive Health Education Toolkits

Health education is integral to the primary mission of schools. It provides students with a continuum of learning experiences to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful learners and health-literate adults. Health literacy is a fundamental part of the school health education program and is essential to the health and wellness of each student.

Comprehensive health education addresses 12 required areas of K-12 instruction under s. 1003.42(2)(n), F.S.

1. Community health
2. Consumer health
3. Environmental health
4. Family life
5. Injury prevention and safety
6. Internet safety
7. Mental and emotional health
8. Nutrition
9. Personal health
10. Prevention and control of disease
11. Substance use and abuse
12. Teen dating violence (Grades 7-12)

Comprehensive Health Education Toolkits for elementary and secondary levels are electronic resources for the essentials of health education instruction. They will assist the classroom teacher, school nurse and others responsible for the delivery of health education. They are available on the Comprehensive Health Education web page. For more information, please contact Penny Taylor, Director, Office of Healthy Schools, Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support, at Penny.Taylor@fldoe.org.
15th Annual Medicaid and Schools Meeting Held

The 15th Annual Medicaid and Schools Meeting was held on September 12, 2016. Over 100 school district Medicaid coordinators, directors and state staff and vendors were in attendance. John Hill, the Executive Director of the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education, was the keynote speaker.

Mr. Hill presented information on the recent federal government initiative to increase Medicaid funding for school-based health services. Opportunities for increased services that are reimbursable by Medicaid are being identified across the country as the result of guidance from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that will enable school districts to seek Medicaid reimbursement for services provided to students outside of the IEP.

Reimbursable services being implemented in states include services provided through Section 504 plans and health plans. State Medicaid agency staff reported at the meeting that they are working on developing rules and changes needed to the state Medicaid plan that will allow for additional reimbursable services.

Mr. Hill also discussed the Washington, D.C. Convening held on July 27, 2016. The convening is a learning collaborative dedicated to expanding access to school-based Medicaid services. The convening was jointly hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and CMS, and was attended by 10 state teams. Outcomes of the work that will be performed by these states include the development of an initial vision to expand access to school-based health services, identification of federal and state policies that impact school-based health services, and identification of different models for delivering school-based health services.

The annual meeting also included updates from the state Medicaid agency policy/monitoring staff and revenue maximization sessions. All presentations and handouts will be posted by September 30 on the SSSP website, Medicaid in schools resource topic page, at http://sss.usf.edu/resources/topic/medicaid/index.html. Any questions about the meeting can be directed to Anne Glass at aglass@usf.edu or anne.glass@fldoe.org.

Cool Thoughts for Hot Topics in Student Service

The SSSP team hosted a “resource rich” session at the recent Administrators’ Management Meeting (AMM) in St. Petersburg. The session was very well attended by district student services leaders who were provided a great deal of information and resources on the following topics: Attendance, Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training, Emergency Guidelines for Schools and Student Progression. Participants used this opportunity to ask questions of state SSSP experts and engage in conversations with other district leaders. For an electronic version of the presentation shared at this session, visit http://sss.usf.edu/resources/presentations/index.html.
Survey Says: What Parents Think About Attendance

The Ad Council, in conjunction with California Public Schools, conducted a research project that examined parent perception of absences and the methods used by the school district to communicate information regarding student attendance. The key findings of this report may assist schools in providing information to parents in a manner that not only grasps their attention, but provides relevant information regarding the effects of nonattendance on academic achievement as well.

Although 86 percent of the parents who participated reportedly understood the connection between attendance and high school graduation, 49 percent stated it was acceptable for their children to miss 5-10 days of school. Excused absences were perceived by parents to have less impact on student’s academic performance. In fact, many of the respondents’ children missed up to 20 days. Surprisingly, the more absences the child had, the less likely the parent linked missed days to negative repercussions for their children. Most parents associated these absences with their short-term benefits such as family vacation, parent fatigue and illness.

The parents reported that absence warning letters were not an effective method for impacting attendance. Some parents indicated that the letters were unjustified because the absences were excused. Others reacted in fear, complying only because they feared they would either be taken to jail or would have benefits discontinued. This method of notifying parents of absences only gained short-term responses and continued the misconceptions about poor attendance. Parents also stated that teachers contact parents regarding behaviors or missed homework, but rarely about attendance. Many reported that if attendance was important then the teacher would contact them about their child missing school.

With this in mind, there are three key points to remember when speaking to parents about attendance:

◊ Structure the conversation around absences not attendance. Linking absences to what is being taught in class and what the child may miss has more of an impact than stressing attendance only.
◊ Elicit a messaging campaign with community partners who play critical roles in the lives of children to emphasize the importance of attendance.
◊ Instead of sending a letter with an emphasis on complying with the attendance laws, send a letter emphasizing what the child is missing in school and offer assistance to parents to ensure the child is in school.

Did you Know...

Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) works collaboratively with the state’s 12 public universities, 28 public colleges, K-12 school districts, and other partners. FLVC provides services that help students succeed in school and life after graduation.

Florida Association of School Social Workers 70th Anniversary Conference

2016 Florida School Counselor Association Convention
October 27-29, 2016, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld Hotel. For additional information visit http://www.fla-schoolcounselor.org.

Florida Association of School Psychologists 43rd Annual Conference
November 2-5, 2016, at the Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort in Palm Harbor, Florida. For additional information and to register for this conference, visit http://www.fasp.org/Events/Annual_Conference.html

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Upcoming Events

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Virtual College Night

FloridaShines will host its first Virtual College Night on Wednesday, November 16 from 5-9 p.m. EST, to showcase information to Florida high school juniors and seniors, parents and counselors. This live event will feature presentations from experts in the areas of college preparation, admissions, financial aid and more.

In addition to the live events, FloridaShines will provide online resources prior to the day of the presentations to prepare students with additional materials. After the live events, FloridaShines will showcase presentation recordings, and follow-up information, to connect students and parents with the institutions of interest.

For more information visit https://www.floridashines.org/join-florida-virtual-college-night.
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Trivia Questions

Q-1.
Florida Polytechnic University, Florida’s newest public university, is the first one dedicated exclusively to the study of __________? 

Q-2.
True or False
The district must have a medical diagnosis of ADHD in order to determine eligibility under Section 504.

Q-3.
Can a student earn high school credit by passing a CLEP examination?

Q-4.
True or False
49 percent of the parents who responded to the Ad Council survey reported that it was acceptable for their children to miss 5-10 school days.

Special note: some images provided by Thinkstock, and Getty Images.