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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In Collaboration With...
The Student Support Services Project Welcomes...

Erin M. Sampson

Please welcome Erin M. Sampson as the project’s new multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) liaison to the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, at the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). She introduces herself below.

Greetings!

I am excited to be serving in the role of MTSS Liaison to the FDOE. My educational background includes an undergraduate degree in elementary education, a master’s degree in educational leadership and policy, and I am currently pursuing a doctorate of education in educational leadership and policy studies. Prior to accepting this position, I served as a Leon County Title I inclusion classroom teacher and reading coach for 10 years before joining the Division of Career and Adult Education with FDOE as a Perkins Grant specialist.

As an inclusion teacher, I worked collaboratively with the exceptional student education (ESE) team and classroom stakeholders to provide seamless MTSS to my general education students and my ESE students through instruction with the core, supplemental and intervention curriculum; positive behavior support through individualized, small-group and whole-class multi-tiered behavior management systems; and continuous efforts to increase family engagement in the planning, implementation and progress monitoring process.

As a Title I reading coach, I led efforts to differentiate the delivery of intervention supports to our students based on our local community needs; organized and structured schoolwide formative and summative assessment schedules and data analysis; facilitated professional learning communities to build teacher capacity to engage in data-based problem solving; assisted with school improvement planning and implementation; organized the school based data team; was a member of the school’s problem solving team; and was the chairperson of the literacy leadership team.

Take Action...
Contact Erin at sampsone@usf.edu or call 850-245-7851 if you have any questions!
Building a successful team means more than just finding people who can work together. It means building a team whose members are committed to one another, trust one another, and selflessly build up their colleagues in times of success and in times of distress.

It is with mixed emotion that we acknowledge Helen Lancashire’s retirement from the project at the end of December. As a member of the Student Support Services Project for more than 19 years, Helen has exuded the principles of a successful and valued team member. She has used her talents to facilitate successful student learning outcomes and has maintained the highest standards of professionalism when working with students, families, school districts and her colleagues to provide support and guidance.

On one hand, we will miss her kindness, expertise and unwavering support during her years with the project. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with someone so passionate, calm and professional. On the other hand, we are excited for Helen as she begins the next chapter of her life and know that she will bring the same qualities to anything she chooses to pursue.

Prior to joining the project, Helen earned her master’s degree in guidance and counseling from the University of South Florida. She began her career in Pasco County supporting students as a school counselor, working at the elementary, high school, and adult education levels. She has devoted her entire career to helping students and families throughout Florida.

At this career milestone, we want to honor Helen for the part she has played in making the project what it is today. We wish Helen all the best in her future endeavors.
Addressing Writing Challenges Through an MTSS Framework

Just Read, Florida! (JRF) hosted a topical call and presentation for Florida school districts in collaboration with the project at the beginning of October. The purpose of the call was to identify potential challenges with which students struggle in writing and how educators can address those challenges through MTSS. The outlined challenges included foundational deficiencies in written instruction and learning disabilities such as dysgraphia, dyslexia, processing disorders and executive functioning.

JRF provided definitions and indicators for each of the learning disabilities that can impede writing instruction so that educators can become more cognizant of the challenges students may need more structured and targeted assistance in working through. Nonetheless, it is imperative for educators to evaluate the quality of instruction at the Tier 1 level before attempting to identify the student with a writing disability.

Various districts use different resources that are aligned to the Florida Standards and the writing rubric provided by FDOE to provide writing instruction at the Tier 1 level, but are those resources research based and grounded in foundational skills to build the students’ skill sets at differentiated levels?

A recommendation that was provided within the presentation was for districts and schools to develop a district based leadership team (DBLT) and a school based leadership team (SBLT) to serve as the team to engage in the MTSS problem-solving model to identify district and schoolwide needs with regard to writing instruction and remediation. Members of the DBLT provide instructional and curricular leadership, and advisement and training at the district level by monitoring and assisting schools with their implementation efforts.

Members of the SBLT develop the implementation plan, assist with data analysis and decision making, facilitate trainings or coaching for the school staff, and monitor the schoolwide implementation. The MTSS problem-solving model that both teams apply is a four-step cyclical process that includes Problem Identification (“What specifically do we want students to know and be able to do when compared to their current performance?”); Problem Analysis (Why is it occurring? Generate hypotheses on reasons why students are not meeting performance goals); Intervention Design and Implementation (“What exactly are we going to do about it?”); and Response to Instruction/Intervention (“Is it working? If not, how will the plan be adjusted to better support the student’s or group of students’ progress?”). Problem solving/Response to Intervention worksheets to use for students can be found at http://florida-rti.org/gtips/docs/PS-Rti_Worksheet.pdf.

To access the Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving (GTIPS) and additional tools including problem-solving worksheet forms, visit http://florida-rti.org/gtips/index.html.
MyCareerShines New Features This Fall... Update!

MyCareerShines, the state’s online career planning system, is continuing to grow! With more than 431,000 registered users and 666,758 completed assessments, we are continuing our mission to help Florida students plan for and find a brighter future.

As our outreach continues, our system is also continually improving. From the MyCareerShines system, powered by Kuder, Inc., users can access career and technical education course options as part of the Ed Planner. This feature allows your students to learn about career and technical options they can take as electives, or pursue an industry certification as they plan for high school graduation. Also, meta-major information is now available as part of the Program and School information available to users in the system. The meta-major categories are arts, humanities, communication and design; business; education; health sciences; industry/manufacturing and construction; public safety; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and social and behavioral sciences and human services. Trainings for the MyCareerShines System can be scheduled online at https://www.floridashines.org/web/mycareershines-partners/learning-center/training.

Finally, we are excited to announce that Galaxy, the MyCareerShines system focused on elementary-aged users, will be available for K-5 in 2018. The second- and third-grade pilots are currently being developed and should be available statewide in early 2018. For more information on project timelines, visit https://www.floridashines.org/web/mycareershines-partners/timeline.

Be sure to sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date on the latest news from FloridaShines and MyCareerShines at https://www.floridashines.org/mcs-newsletter.

Tips & Resources...

School Health Resources—Florida Schools

Guidelines for the Care of Students with Life-Threatening Allergies (2017)

The National Association of School Nurses issued a Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Toolkit (2014). These materials provide practical information and strategies for schools to protect the physical and emotional health of students with food allergies, as well as policy guidance for school administrators in accordance with state and federal laws.


This updated document provides reference and policy guidance for Florida school health administrators in accordance with Florida Statutes and the Florida Administrative Code.
Student Services Professionals: Understanding Best Practices for Effective Mentoring

This article provides a list of resources related to helping staff build relationships with students and implement best practices for effective mentoring with students.

The first resource, Relationships Matter: A Toolkit for Launching an Elementary Success Mentor Attendance Initiative from Attendance Works, is a toolkit that focuses on using the “Success Mentor” approach as a way to provide cost-effective early interventions that get students to school. This toolkit includes tips, scripts and many free tools for student services professionals to use and recommend in schools.

The premise of the success mentor approach is building relationships with students, motivating students to come to school, connecting families with supports and services to reduce barriers to attendance, and partnering with school staff to continue to deepen the connection with families. In elementary school, improving attendance includes working with the families as well as the students and mentors to provide a key connection between school and home. Engaging families at the elementary level is critical to understanding why a student is missing school and critical to addressing existing barriers to getting young students to school.

Another excellent resource for schools implementing any mentoring program is Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring Research-informed and Practitioner-approved Best Practices for Creating and Sustaining Impactful Mentoring Relationships and Strong Program Services.

Tip 1: Empower and equip a program coordinator for
◊ Outreach to youth and parents, orient to program
◊ Recruitment and screening of mentors
◊ Training of mentors
◊ Matching youth and mentors with intention
◊ Providing structured support to mentors
◊ Conducting regular check-ins with youth and parents
◊ Identifying and responding to family needs

Tip 2: Employ effective family engagement strategies
◊ Communicate inclusively to orient families to mentoring
◊ Include parents and caregivers in matching to mentors and goal setting with students
◊ Check in with the youth, family and mentor frequently

Take Action...

Utilize student services staff to work with families

...continued
**Tips & Resources...**

**Tip 3: Customize mentor trainings**
- Train mentors in:
  - Strengths-based messaging
  - Social-emotional skill-building activities
  - Activities and conversations that promote healthy closure at the end of school

**Tip 4: Plan for healthy closure**
- Clarify expectations up front
- Provide close supervision throughout the relationship
- Follow through on closure conversations

Finally, the School Checklist for Developing and Launching a Success Mentors Program is a very helpful checklist from the National Mentoring Resource Center.

This checklist can be used by school and district teams to design and implement mentor programs in alignment with evidence-based practices for mentoring. Components on the checklist include where to start, internal mentor recruitment and screening, recruiting mentees, external mentor recruitment and screening, working with peer mentors, mentor training, matching students with mentors, supporting the mentors, and handling closure of mentor-student relationships.

We hope you find these resources helpful as you implement mentor programs with your students!

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**Hurricane Resources**

- **Guidance to School Districts for Enrolling Students Displaced by Hurricane Maria**
  - FDOE K-12 FAQ document

- **2017 Hurricane Key Messages**
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated information in English and Spanish.

- **Interim Immunization Recommendations for Individuals Displaced by a Disaster**
  - The CDC provides recommendations to address childhood vaccinations when immunization records are not available.

- **Homeless Children and Youths Guidance**

- **Hurricane Resources and Outreach**
  - To assist county school districts with resources and outreach support related to the 2017 hurricanes, the project’s website offers resources for colleagues, students and families.

**Spotlight on Student Services**

**Did you know...**

The project web site provides Emergency Preparedness/Crisis Intervention information and resources? Visit us.

Assisting schools and communities in addressing the mental health needs of children and youth

View an article about Frank Zenere, a Miami-Dade county school psychologist who went to Puerto Rico post-Hurricane Maria to provide mental health supports for students and families.

...continued
Taking Action: Using Positive Messaging to Improve Student Attendance

Did you know that most parents of chronically absent students underestimate the amount of days students actually miss school? Attendance initiatives are incomplete without including parents and families who can contribute significantly to turning around chronic absence, especially at the elementary level. It is critical that students and parents know that missing more than 10 percent of school days for any reason greatly impacts positive student outcomes. A very low-cost and easily implemented strategy that schools can use is positive messaging.

The goal of positive messaging is to help parents and students realize that daily attendance is key to reaching their dreams of a successful future. As an intentional shift from using the threat of fines or court action to compel attendance, this approach starts with an emphasis on encouraging families to take advantage of the opportunity for their children to learn. Implementing a comprehensive positive messaging campaign helps change behavior by debunking the myths that prevent families from recognizing that regular attendance should be a high priority as early as preschool.

### Six Tips for Implementing Your Positive Messaging Campaign

#### Tip 1: Directly reach out to parents and families
- Physical messaging, e.g., signs at school and in car loops
- Nudge letters: four-week postcards to parents noting their child’s absences compared to peers
- Back-to-school letters welcoming families, share information on the importance of attendance
- School events are great opportunities to share the importance of school attendance (e.g., attendance rallies, orientations and pep rallies)
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Parent portals on school websites
- Parent resource sheets

#### Tip 2: Attendance incentives for students
- Engage local business partners for gift certificates or prizes
- Include low-cost incentives such as certificates, dances
- Focus on smaller increments of perfect attendance (such as a week) as well as improved attendance
- Make it a contest for classes, grade levels and departments or have a poster contest

#### Tip 3: Slogans and logos
- Create a slogan or logo that reflects your local school or district community that can quickly help get the word out to parents and the community
Tip 4: Use public service announcements
◊ Make use of radio public service announcements! These services are offered by stations and are reserved for nonprofit organizations to publicize events, initiatives or services and play an important role in a comprehensive communication plan
◊ Develop 15- or 30-second public service announcements, find a spokesperson, record the announcement and submit to local stations
◊ Utilize local school district or community public access television stations

Tip 5: Billboards
◊ Billboards catch attention and are ways to increase visibility to your cause

Tip 6: Media outreach
◊ Newspapers (e.g., human interest stories, press releases covering basic facts and letter to the editor)
◊ Blogs—post on community and national blogs
◊ Websites and social media—digital components are a necessary feature of any attendance campaign, reaching more families and community partners

Individualized Learning Plans

What is an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)?

An ILP is:
◊ A document or portfolio consisting of an individual’s—
  ◦ course taking and postsecondary plans aligned to career goals; and
  ◦ documentation of the range of college and career readiness skills the individual has developed including out-of-school learning experiences.
◊ A process that provides individuals with personalized career development opportunities focused on developing their self-exploration, career exploration and planning, and management skills.
◊ An awareness of the relevance of academic preparation; work-based and other learning opportunities; and the importance of completing a two- or four-year postsecondary credential, program or degree.

Research

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth’s research indicates that engaging in ILPs provides access to quality career-guidance activities and connects both college and career-readiness goals by helping all students create secondary and postsecondary course plans to pursue their career and life goals.

The evidence indicated that students who become more competent in self-exploration, career exploration and planning, and management are more motivated and confident learners, actively set goals and record better academic outcomes (Solberg, Wills, Redmond and Skaff, 2014).

...continued
This research found that more than half of the 1,650 high school students surveyed could not describe the nature of the career or educational pathways needed to pursue their career interests. While many of these students may possess the academic skills necessary to enter a postsecondary program, it is not likely that they are “entering college with a purpose” and, therefore, are at risk for leaving college prior to completing their degree and thereby less likely to find employment offering the wages needed to pay off their student debt.

**Promoting Quality ILPs: A “How to Guide”**

A “How to Guide” on ILPs has been developed and focuses on the following four components:
- Curricula supporting implementation of ILPs
- Strategies for gaining whole-school buy-in
- Making it happen: Developing and monitoring ILP implementation
- Additional resources

Mindy Larson, NCWD/Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership

Although these findings may not be a surprise, a study by the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University summarized in “Disparities in Chronic Absenteeism between Students With and Without Disabilities” (Gottfried, Stiefel, Schwartz, and Hopkins, 2017) examined the differences across educational settings and the exceptional education services the students received. In this study, researchers sought to determine if there was a difference between SWD who received services in the general education setting versus those who received services in a self-contained setting.

After examining longitudinal data from New York City schools, it was determined that SWD who received services in a self-contained setting had higher chronic absenteeism rates than those served in the general education setting. The data showed that, on average, SWD who receive services in self-contained settings are 50 percent more likely to be chronically absent than their peers. Furthermore, the gap in chronic absenteeism rates between SWD in general education settings compared to peers without disabilities were significantly less when compared to their self-contained counterparts.

It was also determined that certain populations of students are more vulnerable to being chronically absent than others, regardless of the educational placement. For example, there was no difference among students with intellectual disabilities across all settings. Students with intellectual disabilities miss the most school regardless of where they receive their ESE services.

Chronic absenteeism has gained national attention as a barrier to academic achievement and high school graduation. This is a particular concern for students with disabilities (SWD) who are served in self-contained settings. According to the Office of Civil Rights, chronic absenteeism rates are much higher among these SWD when compared to other SWD who receive services in general education settings.

Chronic Absenteeism and Students with Disabilities

SWD who were integrated in the general education setting reported feeling more connected to the teacher and other peers in the school. When examining student engagement and school climate at your school, you may consider making special considerations for SWD when providing services to ensure we are closing the school absenteeism gap.
2017 State University System of Florida Admissions Tour

Despite Hurricane Irma, the 2017 tour was a huge success with over 2,500 middle and high school counselors and other educators attending one of seven regional workshops at the state universities. At these workshops, directors explained admissions policies and procedures so that counselors can better meet the needs of their university-bound students. The participants were able to address their questions to the admissions directors’ from all 12 institutions at information tables before the workshop, for 30 minutes mid-morning, and during a directors panel question and answer session.

Representatives from the College Board, ACT, the FDOE Division of Public Schools and the Florida College System provided presentations.

We are pleased to announce that the following resources from the tour are available on the Board of Governors website at http://www.flbog.edu/about/cod/asa/admissionstour.php.

In addition, the 2017-2018 Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook provides school counselors and advisors with a comprehensive academic advising resource to guide students with planning for postsecondary education in Florida.

Lynda Page, Director of Articulation
Board of Governors,
State University System of Florida
Lynda.Page@flbog.edu

Medicaid Reimbursement at Work in the Pinellas County School District

Medicaid reimbursement continues to assist districts in providing needed services and equipment to students. This critical source of funding has made a difference in students’ educational success in the Pinellas County School District.

The school district used Medicaid reimbursement to purchase Vision Spot Screeners to screen all students in the district at appropriate age groups. In the first six months, district staff found a tumor in a child’s eye. The following year, the district screened an English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) student and found hearing and vision deficits. The student was given an frequency modulation system, hearing aides, glasses with prisms and ESOL services. In eight months time, the child was almost at grade level.
Student Services Week
We Need Your Help!

“Stories from the Field”

We are looking forward to celebrating Student Services Week with you February 5-9, 2018. Last year we had wonderful feedback from our colleagues who enjoyed reading examples of the great work school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and school nurses have accomplished and highlighting their impact on the lives of students and families.

Last year, we asked Florida Student Services offices across the state to share stories from their districts that highlight the impact of the work student services professionals do every day that contributes to the success of our students. Not only did these stories help us celebrate throughout the week, they provided a way for districts to see what their colleagues across our state are doing. In case you missed any Stories from the Field during last years celebration, click on the links below:

Day 1: https://spark.adobe.com/page/Whn4sHvR2jA0M/
Day 2: https://spark.adobe.com/page/EwudMRgiHIldy7/
Day 3: https://spark.adobe.com/page/VwzhQb2TSTpbl/
Day 4: https://spark.adobe.com/page/M18AFWn8YwN5R/
Day 5: https://spark.adobe.com/page/tYOKtE76o8bTP/

This year, we would like to continue with this way of sharing and celebrating. You can upload your celebrations, stories and photos at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XGB55GZ through January 12, 2018.

On behalf of the entire Student Support Services Project Team, we THANK YOU for your dedication to each and every student in Florida!
Upcoming Event: Virtual Attendance at the 21st National School Social Work Conference

Each year at the School Social Worker Association of America (SSWAA) national conference, we realize that many school social workers are not able to get permission to travel outside of their state or do not have enough professional development funds to cover conference travel. For this reason, SSWAA will be offering a virtual attendee option, which will allow individuals and institutions to attend select sessions of the conference via live-stream services.

SSWAA will be video-streaming their 21st National Conference beginning Thursday, March 15, 2018, and continuing through Saturday, March 17, 2018, from Columbus, Ohio, IF 50 school social workers register for the video-streaming option. *

A selection of sessions will be live-streamed, including the keynote/plenary sessions and featured break-out sessions. Please note that virtual attendees will not be able to select what sessions they wish to attend; conference administrators will select breakout sessions based on popularity and availability. A list of the breakout sessions to be featured will not be available until March 1. Attendees wishing to participate in the live-streaming will need to register and pay with this understanding.

Cost: $300 for members / $425 for non-members (non-member rate includes a one-year membership). Registration allows you to watch the video-streaming live Thursday, March 15 through Saturday, March 17, 2018, AND receive a link to the sessions that were streamed within four to six weeks of the conference to watch at a later date. The link will include extra footage such as interviews and discussions with participants attending the conference. Virtual attendees may receive up to 12.5 continuing education units (CEUs) for all viewed sessions upon passing an online post-test.

Group Rates: Group rates are available for groups that register together on the same registration order. Enroll six attendees and get $300 off. Enroll 10 attendees and get $600 off. In order to obtain the discounted registrations, please enroll the six paying registrants, complete the registration and select the “bill me” option. Then contact Michelle Alvarez at contactus@sswaa.org. Michelle will give you a promotional code that you will be able to use to receive the discount.

*Same procedure applies for groups of 10 that will receive $600 off.

**Schedule of Filming**

**Thursday, March 15, 2018**
- 8:30am-9:45am: Opening Keynote (1.0)
- 10:00am-12:00pm: Session A (2.0)
- 1:45pm-3:45pm: Session B (2.0)

**Friday, March 16, 2018**
- 8:30am-10:00am: Session C (1.5)
- 12:15pm-1:00pm: Keynote (0.5)
- 1:30pm-3:00pm: Session D (1.5)
- 3:30pm-5:00pm: Session E (1.5)

**Saturday, March 17, 2018**
- 9:00am-10:30am: Session F (1.5)
- 10:45am-11:45am: Keynote (1.0)

**Total CEUs = (12.5)**
Note: All times are Eastern Standard Time
*Video-streaming will be provided by Middlebrooks Videos, Nashville, TN.

**Timeline and Next Step:**
- Register for the conference by December 30, 2017, and select the “bill me” option. Please do not pay at this time.
- You will be notified if enough participants have signed up for the virtual conference option on December 31 and payment will be due at that time.
- Payment must be received by January 31, 2018, or the streaming event may be cancelled. It is important that those interested register NOW so that we can see if this option is viable.
Thought Bubbles– Section 504

1. The 504 child find responsibility applies to all children in the district even if not enrolled in a public school.

2. A medical diagnosis is not necessary to establish eligibility under Section 504.

3. Students with individual health care plans that address physical impairments or medical conditions that substantially limit a major life activity or bodily function should be considered for a Section 504 evaluation.

4. A student with a disability should only have one disability plan; if a student with a disability is eligible under IDEA, the student must have an IEP.

5. Successful academic performance does not rule out substantial limitation.

6. Students with a Section 504 plan do not give up their accommodations and services as a condition of participation in accelerated programs.

7. The Section 504 disability determination and the need for a Section 504 plan are separate determinations.

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