



The BSE Communicator

A Quarterly Update from the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education

End of School Edition 2007

Volume 1, Number 2



Updates from the Bureau of Special Education

By John J. Tommasini, Director

Since *The BSE Communicator* newsletter debuted on May 1 we have received very positive feedback regarding this new type of communication for our stakeholders. This edition has been added as a bridge between the first and second newsletters to provide end of school updates and announcements.



I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank the staff of the BSE for the outstanding work they do on a daily basis. Supporting students with disabilities through strong programs and leadership is our main goal. Without a good, positive staff, my work and the change process for the future would be quite difficult.

One way to accomplish our goals is by having a strong leadership team in place to carry out our mission. **Patricia Hozella** was recently named assistant director of the BSE. We welcome Pat back to the BSE from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) where she was an IDEA consultant. The BSE is very fortunate to have her return because of her expertise and commitment to providing effective programs and services to students with disabilities. Her integrity in working with advocates, families and school communities is unmatched.



Bureau Restructuring will be completed over the summer months. There are still two Acting Chief positions (Eastern and Western divisions) that we anticipate will be filled by mid-August.

2006-07 Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Focused Monitoring on-site visits have been completed and monitoring reports are being generated. This is our second year of implementation of LRE Focused Monitoring, in compliance with the Gaskin Settlement Agreement and IDEA 2004 requirements. We are working diligently to implement the LRE monitoring process that identifies LRE data, procedural and systemic LRE issues in need of corrective action and/or longer term improvement planning. I have convened an LRE Improvement Design Team, made up of individuals representing a variety of stakeholder groups, to ensure that LRE Focused Monitoring results both in identifying the clear expectations for complying with state and federal requirements and in developing a three-year plan for LRE Improvement in a way that aligns with other PDE initiatives to clarify and enhance accountability for results.



Welcoming all Students: Resources for Pennsylvania Schools - This resource packet will include sample lesson plans, resources and posters developed by the BSE and the PaTTAN Inclusive Practices Project, with input from the Advisory Panel on LRE. Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak will be sending the posters and resource packets to each school district superintendent for distribution to every school building in Pennsylvania for the start of the 2007-2008 school year. The purpose of the "This School Welcomes You" posters and accompanying resources is to provide educators with information and tools to ensure that every student and family feels welcome in their school.



Additional activities to support schools in this effort will be offered during the 2007-08 school year, leading up to National Inclusive Schools Week, December 3-7. Information about the week is available at: www.inclusiveschools.org

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Governor

Department of Education

Gerald L. Zahorchak,
D.Ed., Secretary

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Chapter 14 Regulations

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education conducted input sessions on the proposed PA Chapter 14 Special Education regulation changes throughout the school year. The proposed regulations are now posted, under the [regulations](#) link, at: www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/site/default.asp. Please provide your written comments directly to the Pennsylvania State Board of Education at 333 Market Street – 1st Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

2007 Governor's Summer Institutes & Conferences

The following is a sampling of the list of Governor's Summer Institutes and conferences that will take place during the next few months. For a complete listing, go to the PaTTAN Training Calendar at: www.pattan.net/profdev/trainingcalendar.aspx

JUNE

- June 21-22 New Teachers Conference 2007, PaTTAN – Harrisburg:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/NTC0621&2207.pdf
- June 22-24 Family Learning Conference 2007 for families of children who are Deaf/Blind, Crowne Plaza Harrisburg:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/Deafblind0622-2407.pdf
- June 25-26 Educational Interpreter Summer Institute: ASL to Spoken English Compression Features, Nittany Lion Inn, State College:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/Interpreter0625&2607.pdf

JULY

- July 8-13 Governor's Institute: Data-Driven Instructional Practices in Reading & Math, Penn State University Campus, State College:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/GI2007.pdf
- July 11-12 First Annual School Based Occupational and Physical Therapy Institute: Participation is our Purpose, PaTTAN – Harrisburg:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/OT-PT0711&1207.pdf
- July 17-20 2007 Pennsylvania Community on Transition Forum: Achieving Outcomes Through a Shared Agenda, The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/TransForum07.pdf
- July 23-26 Special Education Leadership Summer Academy – Achieving Balance: Managing Compliance, Leading Improvement, Bedford Springs Conference Center, Bedford:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/LdrshpAcadBroch043007.pdf
- July 30-Aug. 3 National Autism Conference: Progress through Partnerships, Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/Autism2007.pdf

AUGUST

- August 6-10 Pennsylvania Low Incidence Institute 2007, The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/LI2007Brochure.pdf
- August 8-9 2007-08 Special Education Paraeducator Training Series Kick-Off, three PaTTAN Locations- King of Prussia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh:
www.pattan.net/files/Flyers07/Para0808-092007.pdf

Ask the Director

There are several questions asked about special education topics throughout the year and we'll highlight them in each issue of *The BSE Communicator*.

Q: If my child, a student with a disability, chose to participate in the commencement ceremony with his/her peers, will he/she be able to continue high school classes?

A: Yes, federal law requires schools to provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. Students with disabilities may attend school until age 21. Pennsylvania House Bill 1618 (Ashley's Law), requires all 501 school districts to allow students with a disability to be included in commencement exercises if the student so desires. Participating in commencement exercises does not negate the student's ability to continue to receive FAPE in LRE until age 21.