



PARENTS AS PARTNERS

St. Johns County School District-ESE Dept.

Volume 4, Issue 3

Spring, 2015

Drumming It Up At Gaines and Transition Schools

Recently the Transition students have had the extreme pleasure of participating on therapeutic drumming with Mr. Raymond Nutter. Twice a month Mr. Nutter brings his drums and the students practice on following sound patterns, beats, taking turns, celebrating each other's successes and just having fun. Mr. Nutter even incorporates sign language into the sessions to make it even more interesting for some non-verbal students. Everyone is enjoying their time with Mr. Nutter and can't thank him enough for his time, patience and expertise!

*Submitted by: Patricia McMahon, Principal,
Gaines and Transition Schools*



Important Dates:

- 5/12 Gifted Parent Advisory Committee Meeting- 5:30-6:30 p.m.-
Pacetti Bay Middle School
- 5/29 Memorial Day- Teacher/Student Holiday
- 6/4 Last Day For Students

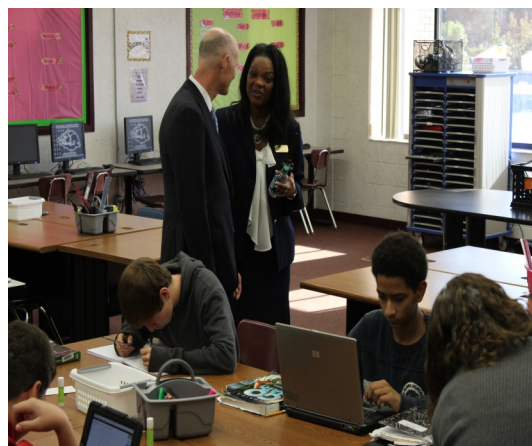


St. Johns Tech High School Visit from the Governor

St. Johns Technical High School students and staff welcomed special guests to their school on January 16, 2015. Florida's Governor, Rick Scott, and Education Commissioner, Pam Stewart, stopped by for an important announcement. Governor Scott pledged to promote to the legislature 20 million dollars to Technical High Schools. "When you provide the funding, that means you're giving us more people to teach the students, more equipment for the students to practice," said Cynthia Williams, principal of St. Johns Technical High School. School Board members as well as Superintendent, Dr. Joyner, were also in attendance. The visitors toured two classrooms that Friday. Erin Lynn, math teacher, led 8th grade students through her signature math centers using differentiating software programs such as iXL and Study Island, as well as small group instruction through MFAS (Mathematics Formative Assessment System). Paula Davis, Intensive Reading teacher, showcased the use of "The HUB" (a digital collaboration tool to support instruction) to demonstrate the function of language in different contexts. After the classroom visits, Governor Scott, Commissioner Stewart, Dr. Joyner, and SJTHS' Principal, Cynthia Williams, spoke to students and community members about the importance of supporting technology education in order for students to learn the skills needed in preparation for future careers. "When you have the training to begin with, you can get a job right out of the gate and get moving," said Alycia Sikes a senior at St. Johns Technical. "I have friends who don't have that, and they're trying hard to get moving, but they don't have the experience."

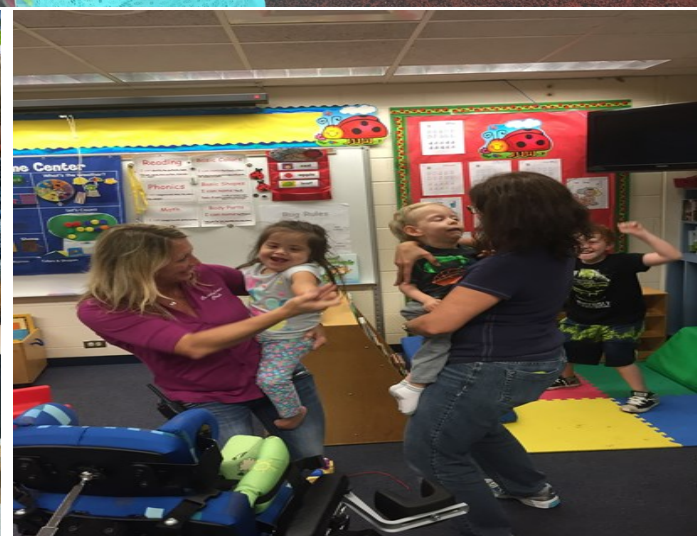


*Submitted by: Jennifer Gamble,
Assistant Principal, SJTHS*



Parent's Night At Cunningham Creek Elementary

Friday, April 17th, Cunningham Creek had its second Parent's Night Out for our Special Needs students. Our students were greeted by familiar faces at 5:15 to start a night of fun with games, crafts, movies, technology, and outdoor exploring. Thanks to our wonderful business partner, Brucci's, students also enjoyed complimentary pizza and cookies! The night was a great success for our students and their siblings. Parents returned to collect the happy campers at 8:30. CCE teachers, administration, paraprofessionals, and service providers all pitched in to help with this special event. Thanks for making CCE the Best Place to Be!! Go Cardinals!



Prom Night At Ponte Vedra High School



On April 22nd over two hundred and twenty– five students from nineteen middle schools, high schools (including PVHS) and colleges in the Jacksonville area put on their Sunday's best to celebrate friendship in style at the Friendship Ball. The Friendship Ball is an annual prom for Best Buddies participants and is highly anticipated by them. Students from PVHS were crowned King and Queen of the Best Buddies Ball this year, much to their surprise. Matt, a senior, is reigning prom king and Rebecca, a freshman, is queen.

Best Buddies is a global volunteer movement which promotes social inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is one of Ponte Vedra's largest clubs.

PVHS club members also travelled to Tallahassee this spring and were able to meet with state representatives and advocate for funding needed to insure success of the program.

*Submitted by Jodi Wissing, ESE Teacher,
Ponte Vedra High School*



How Can I Help My Child In School?

FloridaStudents.org is a new website designed to support students' academic growth outside of the school day. The site includes hundreds of interactive resources to support student learning in language arts, mathematics, science and civics. It is readily available to the public and does not require a login or password to access. The content is reviewed for alignment to the Florida Standards and contains dozens of original tutorials designed by Florida educators to meet the Florida Standards. The site will continue to grow in the months ahead. Visit it with your child to give them extra help with their learning.

The Arc Summer LIFE Experience...

Young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities can experience a "sneak preview" of living on their own through LIFE — Living Independently Finding Enrichment, a summer program for individuals 18 – 26 years of age. The LIFE Experience provides young adults with special needs the opportunity to test life away from home and for families to learn about the prospects of how their son or daughter might successfully transition into community-based living.

LIFE Experience is located in a gated, luxury Jacksonville apartment community that caters to college/university students. Participants enjoy the privacy and responsibility of their own bedroom and bath in furnished 4 bed/4 bath apartments that are conveniently located near college campuses, shopping centers, movie theatres, and recreation opportunities. Each apartment has a housing assistant to provide live-in guidance.

Through LIFE, young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities experience a "crash course" in living independently within an environment designed for success. They learn together social etiquette, conversation skills, how to express and identify emotions and how to gauge nonverbal communication. They experience team work in managing cooking, chores, household repairs and transportation. They work on time management, stress management and decision making with coaching from their peers and their housing assistant.

**Note: Participants needing personal care assistants and any other modifications should call for further information*

LIFE 2015 dates: Session I: May 31, 2015 – June 27, 2015
Session II: July 5, 2015 – August 1, 2015

<http://www.arcjacksonville.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/LIFE-Flyer-3272015.pdf>

<http://www.arcjacksonville.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2015-LIFE-Experience-Participant-Application.pdf>

For more information about Summer LIFE Experience, please contact:

904.620.3890 or email LIFE@arcjacksonville.org



Harrison Ford - (born July 13, 1942) Ford is best known for his performances in the Star Wars film series and the adventurous archaeologist and action hero, Dr. Henry "Indiana" Jones Junior, in the Indiana Jones film series. He suffered from depression in his youth, and would sleep long hours, often miss class and have trouble to keep up with his studies. He quickly got over it after signing up for drama class where he overcame all of his fears.

The Florida Department of Education is working with school districts to gather information on how well parents think their child's school is partnering with parents of students with disabilities, and would like to include your input. Your responses will help guide efforts to improve services and results for children and families. All parents of children with disabilities and a current IEP (PK to 12th grade) are invited to participate in this survey. The survey is opened from February 1, 2015 to May 31, 2015. **Please visit www.ESEsurvey.com to complete the survey.**



St. Johns County School District
Exceptional Student Education
40 Orange Street
St. Augustine FL 32084
 (904) 547-7672
 (904) 547-7687 (fax)

Lisa Bell
 Director



March 23, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We would like to inform you that your child **may** be eligible to participate in the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program. This program was created to provide educational options to parents of students with disabilities. Currently, more than 30,000 Florida students are participating in this program.

By participating in the McKay Scholarship Program, your student may be able to attend a different public school in your district, attend a public school in an adjacent district, or receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school.

To be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or 504 Accommodation Plan issued under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (with duration of more than six months), and

- Have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school for the school year prior to applying for a scholarship (Grades K-12); or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the school year prior to applying for a scholarship; or
- Have received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program from an approved provider pursuant to s. 1002.66 during the previous school year; or
- Have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding school year's student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

To find out if your student is eligible, you may apply for the McKay Scholarship Program on the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org. Select the **McKay Scholarships** link, then **Parents**, and then the link titled **Apply for a McKay Scholarship**.

To learn more about your child's educational options, please contact your school district's Parental Choice Office at 904-547-7712. You may also contact the Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Information Hotline at 1-800-447-1636, or visit the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and click the **McKay Scholarships** link.

In order for a student to be eligible for the program, intent to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program must be filed on the School Choice website prior to withdrawing from public school.

The deadline to apply for the first payment period of the 2015-16 school year is July 1, 2015.

Please note this letter serves to notify you that your child may be eligible to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program. **This letter does not guarantee your student's eligibility.**

McKay Funding for 2014-2015 (funding for 2015-2016 to be determined by the 2015 Florida Legislative Session):

Program 111: Grades K-3			Program 112: Grades 4-8			Program 113: Grades 9-12					Basic K-3	Basic 4-8	Basic 9-12
ESE Lvl 1 251	ESE Lvl 2 252	ESE Lvl 3 253	ESE Lvl 1 251	ESE Lvl 2 252	ESE Lvl 3 253	ESE Lvl 1 251	ESE Lvl 2 252	ESE Lvl 3 253	ESE Lvl 4 254	ESE Lvl 5 255	504	504	504
5,756	7,970	11,309	5,376	7,591	10,930	5,070	7,285	10,624	14,379	20,556	4,762	4,262	4,277

Sincerely,

Lisa Bell
 Director for Exceptional Student Education

Upcoming Events

Annual SJCSD Deaf/Hard of Hearing Picnic– April 26, 2015. Sunday, April 26th, from 1:30-4:00 p.m. St. Johns County School District will be hosting our annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing picnic. This is a wonderful opportunity for families with deaf/hard of hearing students in SJCSD schools to have a chance to meet and enjoy fun, food, and games.

Lighting the Way Free Guardianship Training- May 2, 2015. Free, live training on guardianship and guardianship alternatives to be held on May 2 in Jacksonville. It is sponsored by the Florida Developmental Disabilities and Guardian Trust. You can find more information at www.guardianshiptraining.com or call 1-866-615-0284. Lunch will be provided at no cost and limited financial assistance for travel is available.

****Ongoing** What To Do While You Are Waiting For A Diagnosis & MTSS, RTI, and Other School Related Issues.** Available the last Thurs of every month from 9:00-11:00 a.m. and 5:00-7:00 p.m. Two trainings every month; What To Do While You Are Waiting For A Diagnosis & MTSS, RTI, and Other School Related Issues. This service is provided at no cost to families and educators. Location: The UF Developmental Pediatric Center, 6271 St. Augustine Rd., Suite 1, Jacksonville, FL, 32217. Registration is required at least three days prior to the event. To RSVP for either presentation email Candice.rosenberg@jax.ufl.edu or call (904)633-0802.

ASK Disability Advocacy– The current issue of Parenting Special Needs Magazine is now available. You can begin reading by visiting this address: <http://magazine.parentingspecialneeds.org/publication/?i=233572>

Gifted Education Spring 2015

Spring is a season that brings much activity. For the gifted program, Spring is the season for gifted program eligibility determination. Eligibility for the gifted program is based on three criteria: intellectual potential, characteristics exhibited by gifted students and need for program. The path to eligibility involves many people and countless hours of work. School staff and School Psychologists are involved in screening and testing of potentially gifted students. This year over 700 files were processed leading to both eligible and ineligible determinations for bright students across the district.

A gifted enrichment model for K-8 will be implemented for the 2015-16 school year through gifted enrichment teachers. These teachers will be available on an itinerant basis to all schools serving students in grades K through 8 to provide direct services to gifted students. These gifted enrichment teachers will coordinate and deliver a social emotional curriculum to students to better meet their affective needs. Additionally the gifted enrichment teachers will serve as resources to schools providing consultation with blended programming and providing professional development support to staff as needed. This will assist gifted endorsed teachers in the blended classes to better differentiate for the gifted learners. The gifted enrichment teachers will also be able to provide communication and resources to parents especially as they partner to meet the social-emotional needs of our students.

Submitted by: Helen DiMare, Gifted Program Specialist, District Office



CHARACTER COUNTS!



St. Johns County School District
Exceptional Student Education Department

Lisa Bell, Director Lisa.Bell@stjohns.k12.fl.us
(904) 547-7672 (office)
(904) 547-7687 (fax)



Jill Bullard, Executive Secretary
(904) 547-7672 Jill.Bullard@stjohns.k12.fl.us

Sarah Coffin, Confidential Secretary
(904) 547-7712 Sarah.Coffin@stjohns.k12.fl.us

Program Coordinator

Tina Kennon, (904) 547-7546 (office)
Tina.Kennon@stjohns.k12.fl.us
OT/PT, OI, 504, McKay, Surrogate Parents

Program Specialists

Helen DiMare, (904) 547-7692 (office)
Helen.Dimare@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Gifted Services

Nancy Elliott, (904) 547-4886 (office)
Nancy.Elliott@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Pre-K

George Freeman, (904) 547-7704 (office)
George.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us
EBD, Mental Health Counseling, Behavior Specialists

Sonia Howley, (904) 547-7543 (office)
Sonia.Howley@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Speech/Language, Deaf Hard of Hearing,
Vision Impaired, Assistive Technology,
Parent Services

Carole Taylor, (904) 547-7678 (office)
Carole.Taylor@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Transition, Hospital Homebound

Lisa Thacker, (904) 547-7530 (office)
Lisa.Thacker@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disabilities

Lydia Yeoman, (904) 547-7697 (office)
Lydia.Yeoman@stjohns.k12.fl.us
SLD, OHI, Learning Strategies

Mission Statement: To identify and meet the unique educational needs of exceptional students and to provide support and resources to enhance educational opportunities so they become productive citizens.

ESE programs and services address the unique needs of students who are gifted in kindergarten through 12th grade and those with mild, moderate and severe disabilities from age three until they graduate with a regular diploma or until their 22nd birthday. ESE programs and services are designed to assist students in reaching their educational goals through the use of instructional and behavioral approaches which are research-based and exemplify best practices. Technology is used in many creative ways to meet student needs as well.

ESE services are available at all district schools for gifted students and students who have mild to moderate disabilities. Students with more significant disabilities are served in cluster programs at selected sites. Program support is provided to students, parents and school personnel by program specialists based at the district office. Students with disabilities who are not eligible for services through the ESE program may be eligible for an accommodations plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER ELECTRONICALLY?

We hope that you find this newsletter informative and useful. The next issue of the Parents as Partners Newsletter will be posted to the St. Johns County School District web site at www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/dept/academicservices/ese.

If you would like to receive a copy via email, please send your email address to Sarah.Coffin@stjohns.k12.fl.us and we will gladly add you to our Parent Newsletter email List.

