

# TC Connections

Kris Dean, Editor

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A publication connecting the member districts of Tri-County Special Education Association.

## Director's Notes

Dr. Sheri Piercy

Every November, I inform Tri-County's Executive Committee of the progress this organization has made toward meeting its goals for the year and I extend to Tri-County staff the opportunity to share their thanks. With this article, I integrate both activities into one report by describing our goals for 2005 and listing my thanks to the individuals and partner organizations who have made this progress possible.

**Complete the corrective actions associated with their findings in the compliance monitoring visit report by ISBE.** A report was submitted to ISBE in September. I am thankful that we had such widespread involvement of district personnel when preparing for and responding to the monitoring visit results. Districts allowed Tri-County administrators to meet with special education personnel and district personnel engaged in lively discussions about special education services. I am grateful to all who participated.

**Help to develop effective intervention alternatives for 3-5 year olds within and across districts within the cooperative; Reduce the number and percentage of students with IEPs within this age bracket to more closely approximate the state average (10% of all students with IEPs).** Baseline is 13-15% of students with IEPs are 3-5 and a count of 330.

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## KIDS Program Updates

### **Instructional/Attendance minutes:**

On page 6 of the IEP. Find your school "click" on "Set Minutes" and your schools attendance and instructional minutes will appear. For special circumstances just type minutes in as usual.

### **Archived Files:**

Just added: In the bottom right hand corner there is a "sort archive" button. By clicking on this button the most recently archived file will appear.

### **Termination/Exit Form:**

Please remember to use the termination/exit form when a student moves or is terminated from special education services.

### **Transfer Verification Form:**

Please use this form to notify TCSEA offices when a student moves into your district.

## **New Website**

[www.tcsea.org](http://www.tcsea.org)

The website contains information for parents, teachers, and administrators. Teachers can still access the KIDS program through the website. The website also has links to professional development activities, teacher resources, and policy and procedures. Take some time to check it out.

## **New Staff**

There are some new faces at Tri-county. Please welcome:

- Ginger Payne: Supervisor
- Gayle Hanlin: Physical Therapy Asst.
- Jennifer Bauersfeld: Physical Therapist
- Lisa Joyce: SLP
- Joyce Dachauer: SLP Supervisor
- Donna Morris: Assistant Director of Satellite Offices
- Pat Hilliker: Social Worker
- Tirza Wolf: Social Worker

To learn more about these new staff members go to [www.tcsea.org](http://www.tcsea.org)

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While there is no clear impact of our efforts, early results are promising. 12/1/04 estimates show 12.42% of special education population is 3-5; number is 305, but 2004 is also the first year without Gridley and Chenoa. This goal requires ongoing attention.

Four interventions were implemented in previous years. A Tri-County partner sponsored a family educator to teach toddlers who have siblings in special education. In 2004, Tri-County social workers wrote for a grant that was not funded, but member districts acquired funding for 4-5 additional Pre-K classrooms. These classrooms are an important alternative to special education in those circumstances when no disability is clearly present, but the young child is nonetheless behind same-age peers. In addition, Tri-County restructured eligibility criteria for Developmental Delay and increased collaboration with Local Interagency Councils.

Tri-County and district personnel currently collaborate to provide parent training activities. Parent training/support is likely to increase, even expand in scope to the point where parents and young children attend play or discussion groups focused on developing specific sets of skills. Early literacy, socialization, motor, and communication skills are likely targets of such interventions. These skills might also be taught directly to young children through evening classes led by district or Tri-County personnel. Early Childhood Special Education teachers will be asked at their November meeting to help design an array of effective early intervention services.

I am thankful that we have the will to intervene early with young children and that the most recent reauthorization of IDEA encourages us to do so by allowing funds to be used for "Early Intervening Services." I am also thankful that we already have many effective early childhood and at-risk pre-kindergarten classrooms. I am thankful that we have quality personnel to do the work and, finally, I am thankful that we have solid partnerships with parents, parent groups, schools, and community agencies. District administrators, Tri-County administrators, the Parent Mentor, district teachers and speech-language pathologists, and

Tri-County therapists and social workers all have important roles in making early intervening services effective for young children.

**Restructure and maintain a proactive and comprehensive system of professional development, consultation, and special education administrative and supervisory support for district personnel and families.**

This goal is met. Kris Dean is the primary contact for all questions about professional development, but others have taken a special interest in specific topics:

- Parent information/participation
- Parent Mentor and School Social Workers
- Assistive or Instructional Technology
- Tri-County Admin. & Dist. AT Leaders
- Early Literacy/Assessment
- School Psychologists and TC Admin.

I am thankful for these people and the instruction that they provide. I am also thankful for our relationships with partner agencies that enrich professional development options.

**Implement strategies recommended by the Finance Committee to increase Medicaid reimbursement for the cooperative and to effectively distribute federal IDEA dollars among the cooperative and member districts.**

This goal is met. Tri-County hosted a Medicaid discussion for Tri-County superintendents in January and re-added administrative and clerical personnel to its Administrative Outreach claim. Tri-County's Executive Committee approved a plan presented by the Finance Committee to maintain or slightly expand Tri-County staff in the future primarily through the use of increases in federal dollars. In exchange, districts will experience slight, but consistent, reductions in assessments. Finally, two audits (ISBE and annual) reviewed cooperative

practices, including implementation of new restrictions for (a) Maintenance of Effort and (b) against accruing interest on federal funds.

I am thankful for Executive Committee members and for district administrators who recognize that we are inter-dependent in this cooperative. The way we continue to provide the most needed services in the most cost-effective manner is to continue openly talking to one another and sharing our resources.

Within Tri-County, I am thankful for the well-coordinated efforts of Tri-County personnel and for the initiative taken by various groups of educators throughout the cooperative. We will soon have a procedural manual developed for and by district speech-language pathologists. With the continued involvement of district SLPs and Tri-County's SLP supervisor, the manual will expand into include recommended practices and options for service delivery. Tri-County is for the first time providing speech-language services on a contractual basis to member districts. Tri-County psychologists and district teachers are already working together to provide a variety of early intervening services for students who are trying to learn to read. Tri-County administrators bring technology and special education programming expertise to IEP teams and district programs. Tri-County social workers concentrate their efforts on informing parents about special education services and on connecting students and families to needed mental health or social services. Tri-County therapists demonstrate a commitment to intervening early and providing flexible services that benefit of students with motor-related needs.

Beyond the boundaries of Tri-County and its member districts are many partner organizations: Academic Development Institute, The Baby Fold, Infinitec and the AT Coalition, neighboring districts and special

education cooperatives, Regional Offices of Education, universities, and professional organizations. Finally, Tri-County is supported by capable and committed contractual employees who provide the services needed to keep the rest of us working (technology, facilities, etc.). Ultimately, all contribute much to the education of children in Tri-County's fifteen districts. Please consider your own list of thanks as we enter into the holiday season.

Check [www.tcsea.org](http://www.tcsea.org) for a more comprehensive listing of people and services on Tri-County's upgraded web site.

### **Highly Qualified: What Does it Mean for Special Educators**

At this time the final draft for highly qualified teachers needs to be approved by ISBE Certification Board. Teachers will have different options for becoming "Highly Qualified". One option is to take and pass the elementary/middle grade test at the K-8 level. At the secondary level, the teacher will need to pass content-area test in the subject areas taught. The final option will be to build a HOUSSE of 100 points for each subject area taught. There are many varied ways to build a HOUSSE of 100 points.

#### Some options for building a HOUSSE

- teaching experience in the subject area taught
- Participation in conferences, workshops related to subject area being taught
- peer review or coaching in the subject area
- participation in study groups
- participation in curriculum development

When the final regulations have been approved we will be working with district administration to assist teachers in building their HOUSSE. This is not expected until February at the earliest.

### **Upcoming In-service Opportunities**

#### **Dec 1- Bloomington Dist. 87**

Textbooks, the Students Who Can't Read Them & What to Do About It

#### **HILIA Passport Series**

To see remaining workshops go to:

[www.coe.ilstu.edu/seat/hiliapassport](http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/seat/hiliapassport)

#### **January 26- Olympia Dist. #16**

Dr. Paula Kluth - Strategies to Help Special Education Students Achieve in Classrooms

#### **February 3- Place TBD**

Tri-County Annual LD/BD In-service Day

#### **January 10,18,25 February 1**

**Normal Comm. HS 5-7 PM**

Literacy Software Users Groups

### **Response to Intervention ( RTI):**

#### **What is It?**

You have likely heard or will be hearing the term Response to Intervention or RTI. What does this mean? IDEA 2004 allows schools to examine evaluation alternatives to the "discrepancy model" for identification of learning disabilities. RTI is one method of bringing structure to the delivery of early intervening services while simultaneously providing an evaluation alternative to the discrepancy model in learning disability identification. RTI models may assist students that struggle in early education years.

Tri-County psychologist & social workers are beginning to explore the concept of RTI and its implications for our member districts.

### **Infinitec Group Buys**

Once again Tri-County districts have an opportunity to buy software programs through the Infinitec Group buy until Dec. 15.

Programs being offered are Intellitools, Boardmaker, Writing With Symbols, and SOLO. SOLO is a new product offered by Don Johnston. This is a summary of what SOLO can do:

#### **SOLO**

- allows presentation of grade level curriculum to students with different ability levels
- integrates Read: Outloud, Write: Outloud, Draft: Builder and Co: Writer
- builds skills in reading and writing
- designed for both group and individual instruction

#### **Read: Outloud**

- for struggling readers in all content area
- allows students to construct meaning from text
- provides auditory support
- provides reading comprehension strategy guides

#### **Draft: Builder**

- for struggling writers
- supports planning and outlining
- supports organization and note taking
- draft writing program that leads students through the writing process

#### **Write: Outloud**

- for struggling writers
- motivates students to revise
- encourages students to write more
- motivates students to edit and self-assess written work

#### **Co: Writer**

- for students who struggle to translate ideas into writing
- word prediction program

- flexible spelling support
- topic dictionaries
- vocabulary supports
- narrows the gap between thoughts and written words

Contact Kris Dean, Donna Morris, Sheri Piercy or a TAS for more information.

### **Ways to Develop Strong Bonds With Students**

- Meet & greet students at the door every day
- Smile a lot and be enthusiastic
- Tell students you like them
- Use students' names as often as you can
- Share information about yourself with students
- Refrain from criticizing students
- Let students know you believe in them and their abilities
- Keep good humor
- Be fair, firm & consistent
- Show respect
- Show your admiration
- Teach the whole child
- Write positive comments
- Try to be helpful, patient and understanding
- Make an effort to speak and work with students one-on-one

The Teacher Institute/Better Teaching

To be added to the e-mail list to receive the Tri-County newsletter e-mail:  
tclaurie@tcsea.k12.il.us