

Special Educators' LETTER

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Our Rosie enjoying the pasture snow at Glade Run Adventures. She is one of 12 of our horses.

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A Special 'Thank You' to the Alcoa Foundation

Dear Colleagues,

As we were compiling this ASD focused issue of the *Special Educators' Letter*, I recalled the mission of this letter and a shared core value of Glade Run: a commitment to lifelong learning. Beyond providing services in education, St. Stephen's Academy is now too providing educational opportunities to families and to other professionals. These opportunities, like this newsletter, endeavor to create a community of educators built on the

foundation of the culture we practice here, and to advocate for the special students whom we all serve.

To that point, I'd like to announce the first installment of our 2014 Speaker Series, William Galbraith, Ph.D., BCBA. His presentation is titled "*Using Applied Behavior Analysis in the Classroom: Basic Concepts and Principles.*" **This event is complementary to the Special**

Educators' Letter readers and their guests! Details may be found inside. We hope to see you there!

Regards,

Amy Williams
Principal, Supervisor of Special Education

St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy at Glade Run
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Special Educators'
LETTER

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Recipes for Social Skills

Dear Colleagues,

St. Stephen's offers students a unique opportunity to develop social skills through integration with Glade Run Adventures (Animal and Horticulture) Program. Social Skills lessons, aligned with PA state standards, are facilitated "outside" the classroom through strategically planned interactions with the animals, gardens, and greenhouse. Monthly themes and lessons continue "inside" the school, in daily classroom activities, twice weekly social skills groups, and field trips. Our "ingredients" are listed below, along with three sample "recipes" for successful lessons.

Recipe 1: Basic Social Skills

Outside: Prepare 8 ASD students according to the introductory

animal adventures lesson plan. Note that the adventures program is not just about riding horses. It is about developing relationships. When faced with initiating social contact with an animal, some students are excited and highly motivated and others are a bit timid and hesitant. Students learn the correct way to approach and greet an animal, and to read body language for cues of personal space and boundaries. Observe individual horses to watch for displays of emotion while being handled by a person. "The students have to be calm and still before an animal will come near and they figure out what the animal wants or it won't stay," observes Teaching Assistant Melissa Hathaway.

Inside: Add teachers to reinforce concepts in the classroom throughout the day. Students parallel interactions with animals to people. Friendly

greetings, pleasant interactions, good personal space and other basic social graces become routine. Season with two Social Skills Groups per week practicing cooperative activities. "My son has come out of his shell. He is now interacting with others in the community," reported a parent in an IEP meeting.

Recipe 2: Recognizing Needs, Taking Care of Ourselves and Others

Outside: Prepare students according to Horticulture Lessons. Add plants to illustrate that working with plants is also working on a relationship. Students learn that we must give the plant the things it needs before it can give us anything. Add unique plants such as a Venus Fly Trap and Chocolate Mint. Finish by pairing students for a project of cooperation and making gifts for others: herb packets, herbal teas, catnip toys and other plant gifts to teach ways to be kind to others instead of being self-centered.

Add Animal Care Lesson: Review nutrition, exercise and care. Prepare feed mixture, groom, and wash a horse. Discuss veterinary care and careers relating to animals. "I feel that working in the horse barn has helped me learn different responsibilities.... and I am more relaxed when I am there," reports Keegan, a senior.

Inside: Adjust the social skills topics according to age, grade, need, and maturity level. Key points are hygiene, fitness, basic medical needs, reciprocity in relationships, and developing a self-care plan. For students of transition age, concepts are connected to job readiness. "It relaxes me. I talk to Mickey (horse) when I feed

him. He has an understanding look," shares Gretta, an 11th grader who volunteers to feed the horses twice per week.

Recipe 3: Identifying Animal and Human Personal Traits

Outside: Arrange students in teams to critique and chart the personal traits of multiple animals. Students learn to assess horses' personal traits by leading them on a designated path. Discussion continues comparing personal traits to the animals' traits.

Inside: Sprinkle discussion of individual traits throughout daily lessons and student interactions. Discuss common interests; use graphs in math. In Social Skills groups, use games and activities as stimulus to increase respect for individual interests and traits. Administer the *Holland Interest Inventory* to students of transition age to identify potential career interests. Add community based field trips to local business. "It's [the Animal Program] is a conversation starter—it gives me something to talk about," said Grace a 10th grade student.

In Summary, the students develop social skills through the unique integration of animals, plants, group experiences, and education.

Remember, Glade Run Adventures offers field trips to school and a "mobile" program in which some animals can be brought to your school.

Regards,

Mary Ann Wilson
Program Manager of ASD Educational Services

Outside Ingredients

- 300 acre campus with greenhouse, gardens, barn, riding arena, and nature trails
-OR- substitute by bringing your class here for a field trip
- 12 gentle horses with a variety of personalities
- 1 stubborn donkey
- 1 graceful miniature horse
- 1 pregnant miniature cow
- 24 pound Flemish rabbit
- 3 rookie sheep in need of socialization
- 20 friendly chickens (Rhode Island Red, Buckeyes, and Americana)
- 4 highly qualified (animal/environmental science degrees) staff
- 1 Original Animal Adventures Social Skills Curriculum (9 week segments)
- 1 Original Horticulture Curriculum (9 week segments)

Inside Ingredients

- 1 Social Skills Specialist
- 6 ASD Support Classrooms
- 6 Special Education Teachers
- 6 Teaching Assistants
- 48 ASD Students
- 1 Peer Mentor Program
- 1 Monthly Social Skills themes differentiated by grade level

Autism Support Education

Dear Colleagues,

St. Stephen's is very proud of our Tier II level of support in the autism support education program. It is a highly specialized environment that is creatively tailored to the individual learning styles of students where the environment is responsive to sensory differences.

The autism support education program provides:

Specially designed classrooms with an 8:1 student/teacher ratio.

Implementation of Applied Behavior Analysis strategies.

A program philosophy that emphasizes positive social skill development woven

throughout the entire school day.

Full time Master's level Supervisor of Autism Behavior Specialist who provides observational assessments, compiles weekly behavior data, and develops autism-specific behavior interventions.

Full time Master's level Social Skills Specialist that conducts social skills lessons in the classroom and assists in FBA's, Behavior Support Plans, individual interventions, and staff education.

Sensory exploration provided in a state of art sensory room designed to expose students to various sensory stimuli. Activities strengthen, balance and develop the central nervous system's processing of sensory stimuli.

Gross motor room focusing on the strengthening of proprioception and skills through movement activities.

A model apartment with full kitchen and laundry facilities for experiential life learning as well as ongoing opportunities for students to assist with preparing small, social meals promoting skill development in activities of daily living.

A therapeutic animal program which integrates social skills, self-confidence, and responsibility.

A therapeutic horticulture program that is used for hands-on science and math activities as well as developing recreational, vocational, and job-related skills.

Framework for Independent Living Curriculum created by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, which is a standards-based framework and encompasses a systematic program of instruction for the development of independent living skills.

For more information regarding our impactful program please contact Kelly Wheeler at 724-452-4453 x1124.

Regards,

Amy Williams
Principal, Supervisor of Special Education



Glade Run Adventures campers and students of St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy use the animals, including our chickens, for socialization opportunities.

The 2014 St. Stephen's Academy Speaker Series

February 25, 2014 | 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Using Applied Behavior Analysis in the Classroom: Basic Concepts and Principles
William Galbraith, Ph.D., BCBA

Bill Galbraith obtained his Ph.D. in School Psychology from Penn State, and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and licensed Psychologist. Early in his career he worked as a school and an early intervention psychologist. He also supervised Early Intervention Programs, School Psychologists, and Emotional Support classrooms, and most recently worked for PA Training and Technical Assistance (PaTTAN) as the state lead in the Behavior Support Initiative and was the lead consultant for the PA Verbal Behavior Project prior to his retirement. He now works part time as an autism and behavior intervention consultant.

This event is complementary to The Special Educators' Letter readers and their guests!

Sandwiches, snacks and coffee will be provided. Join Us: RSVP by email to Amy Williams at awilliams@gladerun.org

Glade Run Lutheran Services would like to thank the Alcoa Foundation for their generous grant of \$30,000 towards the construction of our new environmental education building at St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy.



A St. Stephen's Academy student checks maple sugaring taps. The new environmental education building will expand the school's resources for these opportunities.