

# Special Educators' LETTER

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A view of the garden area just outside St. Stephen's Academy.

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## Dear Colleagues,

*St. Stephen's Academy was recently designated as a model school for the Pennsylvania School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports program and we are beaming with pride. We have spent the past four years fine tuning our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Our staff have driven the cause since the initial roll-out and their passion*

*for educating and rewarding our students have not wavered.*

*The process of being designated as model school includes an intense review of PBIS policy, procedures and artifacts along with collaboration with a PBIS Coach from our supporting intermediate unit, Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV (MIU IV). During the site visit and evaluation, professionals from Midwestern*

*Intermediate Unit IV conducted interviews with school leadership, teachers, and students as well as conducting an artifacts review. St. Stephen's scored an impressive 100% on the evaluation. Please keep in mind what makes this an impressive accomplishment is that according to Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) the entire St. Stephen's Academy population would be considered a public school's Tier III. Once at St. Stephen's,*

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Special Educators'  
LETTER

New PBIS Designation: Continued

students settle into our Tier I with universal supports, such as use of safety plans and daily point cards.

The Pennsylvania School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports program (PBIS) is a proactive approach to discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. St. Stephen's Academy maintains its focus on rewarding the positive. We start with three school wide expectations of being accountable, safe and kind. The expectations are clearly defined with a developed matrix that is displayed in all school areas. We then explicitly teach the desired behaviors. Lesson plans are written and time is allocated to teach the student handbook, how to walk in line, how to act in the hall, restroom,

gym, art class, etc., procedures for the dining hall, expectations for being wanded and searched each morning, and how to address staff. Once the behaviors are taught and practiced we then use multiple reinforcement systems to reward positive behaviors. Students carry ASK Point Cards (Accountable, Safe and Kind) where they can earn up to 30 points a day for practicing positive behaviors. These point convert to Jaguar Bucks and all students have access to school cart and school store where they can "spend" their jaguar bucks on snacks and other tangible rewards.

One of the most noticeable changes in our culture since implementing PBIS has been a change in our language. First, we all share a common, positive and proactive verbiage. In the past you may have heard "you lost your points for not doing your work" now you

will hear "you didn't earn your accountable point because you did not complete your assignment". Because of the change in semantics students now think I want to walk correctly in line not because I will receive a consequence but I want to earn my incentives. This allows for a positive school wide culture that focuses on solutions, learning and growing not punitive consequences.

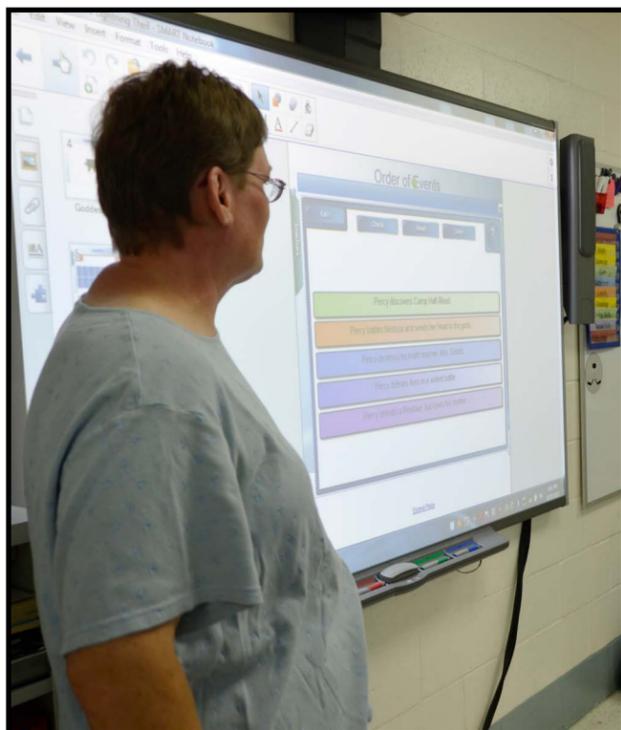
St. Stephen's Academy will be formally recognized during the 2013-2014 Pennsylvania Department of Education's School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Implementer's Forum in May in Hershey, PA.

*Amy Williams*

Amy Williams  
Principal, Supervisor of Special Education



Beyond Classroom Walls



Special education teacher Robin Lindey uses Smart Board technology in her classroom.

Dear Colleagues,

With spring upon us it's no wonder that many of us can't wait to be outdoors. One of the most unique things about the educational environment at St. Stephen's is our variety of course offerings. Some of the courses we integrate into our daily schedules take students out of the "four walls." With courses such as horticulture, animal barn, transition, PBIS and maple sugaring, we continually develop electives that help our students connect learning to their everyday lives.

Experiences outside of the classroom enhance learning by providing students with opportunities to practice analytical thinking and problem-solving in everyday situations. At Glade Run Adventures, our Master Herbalist, Joanie Lopic, shows students the life cycles of plants, tying into a variety of biology lessons. Students are able to practice social skills while interacting with many of the animals at the adventures barn.

Our sixth grade students use digital maps viewed on iPads to learn about

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Glade Run's Autism Activities in the Community

Dear Colleagues,

I am excited to share with you the latest autism related events at Glade Run Lutheran Services.

Students and staff together wore blue in support of "Light it Up Blue" World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 at St. Stephen's. Our website and social media even "went blue" for the day in support of the cause!

One of the most exciting new developments is our inaugural Autism Workshop happening on campus this fall. The event is titled "Inspired Strategies and Creative Approaches" and seeks to provide the tools for enhancing the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders. The keynote speaker is George Braddock, President of Creative Housing Solutions, who pioneered the implementation of person-centered planning principles to homes for people with disabilities. We are also eager to hear Carolyn Komich Hare speak about the transition years in her breakout session about autism beyond high school. The workshop takes place on October 10, 2014 and features 4 breakout sessions as well as breakfast and lunch. Tickets are \$99. All are welcome to attend and can find out more information by visiting: [www.gladerun.org/autismworkshop](http://www.gladerun.org/autismworkshop).

Glade Run will also be represented at the upcoming Walk Now for Autism Speaks on June 14 at the Heinz Field in downtown Pittsburgh. The annual Walk raises money to fund vital research for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Jamie Grace  
Director of Autism



Beyond Classroom Walls: Continued

ancient civilizations and understand cultures from thousands of years ago. Middle and high school students utilize laptop computers to access online textbooks in various subject areas. These interactive textbooks provide learning opportunities that standard textbooks do not offer. For example, students can follow, view, and conduct a biology lab on dissection right from their desks. The interactive textbooks also connect to students who have diverse learning needs, which helps make learning fun and engaging for all.

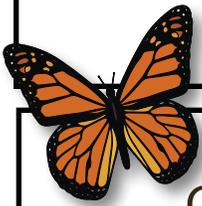
Showing students that education happens in places beyond a brick-and-mortar school building is just another way to commit to the concept of lifelong learning.

Mary Ann Wilson  
Program Manager, Autism Educational Services

## Words Matter

How can we be more mindful of our words when motivating students? One way to implement positive behavior intervention strategies is to compare an individual student's progress to prior progress, instead of comparing that student to other students. Another helpful tip is to give specific praise and recognize the details what makes an action commendable. Here are a few ideas listed below.

Instead of this:	Try this:
"You did a nice job."	"You put all the lids on the glue so now they won't dry out."
"Joseph, you are the best runner in the class!"	"Joseph, you run so fast now."
"You're such a nice young lady, Janice."	"Janice, I noticed that you helped Patty put her books away."
"You are the best helper in the class."	"You helped Max clean up all the puzzles."
"If you forgot your permission slip you can't go on the field trip."	"Students who remembered permission slips today are welcome to go on the field trip."
"Don't run."	"Please walk in the hallway."
"You read well."	"You are learning to read lots of words!"



### Glade Run Adventures Community Workshops

Join us for a day of hands-on cultural enrichment! Our next class discusses backyard chickens and will leave you with the skills to raise your own flock.

**May 10 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm**  
**\$15 per person** (groups of 4 or more)

### Spring Plant Sale

**10am to 4pm**  
**MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND**  
**FRIDAY MAY 9th &**  
**SATURDAY MAY 10th**



### Benefits of Classroom Technology

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*Special-needs students who regularly use technology:*

- practice independence
- gain confidence
- feel empowered to ask for help
- collaborate
- self-advocate
- challenge themselves
- seek out new opportunities

*To learn more, please visit [www.gladerunadventures.org](http://www.gladerunadventures.org) or call Julie Wahlenmayer at (724) 452-4453 ext. 1236.*