

Special Educators' LETTER

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Fall 2014



The leaves beginning to fall at the entrance of Glade Run.

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Dear Colleagues,

It is hard to believe that Fall is upon us and we are wrapping up the first grading quarter of the 2014-2015 school year. In this edition we will introduce you to our new ASD Program Manager, illustrate how we are able to positively impact students,

and share the feedback you have provided to us about our partnerships. Our hope is that we can highlight and help you recognize the amazing work we do with the students each day.

Every year, St. Stephen's Academy strives to enhance our

academic offerings to provide our students with an educational experience that transforms their growth as individuals. In order to strengthen our focus on program excellence, many of our staff dedicate their time over the summer meeting with school leaders to develop new goals. The

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Special Educators'
LETTER

Average is Over Continued

time spent on the advancement of our programs has allowed us to adopt the mantra of "Average is Over". With the integration of new technology, curricula, and our Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program (PBIS), our mission is to become the best private academic school in Pennsylvania. One of the ways we are supporting our mission this year is by continuing our focus on grants to help provide tools for our students and staff.

For the fourth consecutive year, St. Stephen's Academy has received a school supplies grant from the Education Partnership. This grant allows our students and staff to obtain free school supplies that they may not be able to afford. Additionally, we have received



three new SmartBoards and are continuing to expand access to technology. Also, we were recently awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Snee-Rinehardt Charitable Trust that will go to installing a new kitchen. The new kitchen will be utilized as a learning space to support our general curricula and maple-sugaring program. Finally, our new outdoor classroom, which

is being funded through a grant from Alcoa is almost constructed. The classroom is expected to be completed by this winter, which will expand our academic offerings outside the four walls within the school.

Sincerely,
Keenan McGaughey
Assistant Principal

ESY Success

Dear Colleagues,

St. Stephen's held its second annual ESY program this past summer, and it was a tremendous success. The growth over this past year enabled St. Stephen's Academy to open two additional classrooms to support the needs that school districts have for our ESY program. There were 36 students who attended the program, ranging in grades first through twelfth. The program focused on every student's individual goals in a structured setting while incorporating social skills lessons, therapeutic animal programs, and horticulture classes into their daily schedule.

After the program came to a conclusion, parents and students completed a survey that included a variety of questions that gauged how well the program met the students' needs. The comments that were received spoke very highly of the program and the positive impact that it made on the students. One student commented, "I liked the staff; they were friendly. I

also enjoyed the variety of electronics we used." Another comment from a student, "I love it, and had fun with the animals." As positive as the students' comments were, the parents also had similar feelings stating, "The communication with the parents was great; the staff always informed us on what was happening in the program." Other comments included, "The ESY program was a more relaxed atmosphere, but maintained structure. Operating centers in place of worksheets was also very beneficial to my child."



This summer was a great success, and St. Stephen's Academy is excited to plan and prepare for the ESY program next year.

Regards,
Brandy Dietrich
Special Education Coordinator

Introducing Kristen Mahoney

Kristen Mahoney is the new Program Manager for ASD Education at St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy. She replaces Mary Ann Wilson, who retired at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.



A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, Kristen received her master's degree in Applied Developmental Psychology. She has also completed coursework in Applied Behavior Analysis through the Florida Institute of Technology.

Kristen comes to St. Stephen's Academy with over six years of service to children with autism and their families. She started her career at Wesley Spectrum Services, where she held various roles from a Social Skills Therapist to Program Coordinator, and finally a Clinical Site Manager.

Throughout the years, Kristen has been awarded the opportunity to contribute to various projects and speak at conferences about her knowledge in the field of autism. Kristen has assisted with creation of published manuals for autism, created and facilitated successful parent support groups, provided consultation to countless organizations and classrooms, and much more.

Kristen is very excited to join Glade Run. She feels that Glade Run offers employees and children a great place to learn and grow. Glade Run's commitment to lifelong learning is a belief that Kristen strongly holds. To her, it is clear that Glade Run holds true to this commitment; staff take every opportunity to teach and learn from the children they are serving in a safe and caring environment. To be able to join this commitment provides Kristen with great joy. She is thankful for the opportunity to be a part of such a strong team of people.

Sanctuary Terms Review

Dear Colleagues,

On September 24th and 25th, the St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy students and staff were observed by representatives from the Sanctuary Institute for our agency re-certification. We thought this would be a good opportunity to review some of the terms that surround Sanctuary in our school.

Sanctuary: Sandra Bloom's program is our guideline for having a safe school. It teaches us about how trauma impacts our students and encourages us to be sensitive about what has happened to our students rather than asking, "What is wrong with you?" It is a process of recovering from traumatic life experiences that allows us to envision a more healthy future. The tools in the Sanctuary toolkit include: Seven Commitments, Team Meetings, Treatment Planning Conferences, Psycho-education, Safety Plans, Community Meetings, and Red Flag Reviews.

Safety Plans: help to keep safe emotional regulation fresh in our minds. When stressed, safety plans contain at least 5 positive coping activities that are appropriate to the school setting. They contain two or three activities that students can do on their own (self-regulating options) with the remaining being choices that require assistance or permission from teaching staff.



Glade Run staff enjoying a Sanctuary training exercise.

Community Meetings: provide an opportunity to set a goal, let everyone know how we are feeling, and to ask for assistance. Community meetings are held in each classroom each morning and also in meetings scheduled throughout the day. In the classroom, a community meeting helps students off to a positive start and provides an opportunity for us to be alert to the possibility that a student may be struggling and need additional support.

Red Flag Reviews: provide us with a team approach for conflict resolution or problem solving. It is a brainstorming opportunity where everyone has a voice to work through their emotions and to work together to resolve any problem and come to a peaceful solution. All are welcome to call for a Red Flag Meeting.

Seven Commitments/Theme of the Month: The 7 commitments that are our focus are non-violence, emotional intelligence, social learning, shared governance, open communication, social responsibility, and growth and change. We celebrate a Sanctuary theme of the month. The theme for October is Emotional Intelligence. The education department celebrated this theme by making safety plans and decorating pumpkins with different emotions.

Sanctuary Room: is a calming atmosphere where students can go to regulate their emotions or de-stress. It is not punishment but rather a place to refocus.

SELF: refers to *Safety, Emotional Management, Loss and Future*; these are stages that progress through life and as one recovers from the impact of the encountered trauma.

Regards,
Linda Cumer
School Counselor

St. Stephen's By The Numbers

All information shown below is from St. Stephen's 2013-2014 *School District Satisfaction Survey*. See the full report at: www.ststephenslutheranacademy.org.



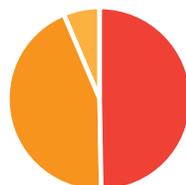
I would recommend St. Stephen's to other school districts.

Strongly Agree	62.5%
Agree	31.3%
Somewhat Agree	6.2%



Initiatives
(Sanctuary, SWPBIS, School as a Society, 21st Century Learning)

Outstanding	55.6%
Satisfied	33.3%
Not Available	11.1%



I believe students at St. Stephen's demonstrate behavioral progress.

Strongly Agree	50.0%
Agree	43.8%
Somewhat Agree	6.2%



I believe students at St. Stephen's demonstrate social skills progress.

Strongly Agree	43.8%
Agree	50.0%
Somewhat Agree	6.2%



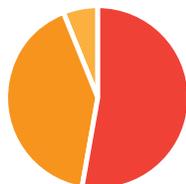
Parent Involvement

Outstanding	47.1%
Satisfied	35.3%
Somewhat Satisfied	11.8%
Not Available	5.8%



Range of Programs Offered

Outstanding	70.6%
Satisfied	23.5%
Somewhat Satisfied	5.9%



Quality of Programs Offered

Outstanding	52.9%
Satisfied	41.2%
Somewhat Satisfied	5.9%