Statewide Expansion of Best Practices

School district staff and parents are flocking to CARD Albany’s new Best Practices for Students with ASD training programs being scheduled now around the state. Supported through a grant from the NYS Education Department’s Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), CARD is offering professional development workshops and parent training on Positive Behavior Support (PBS).

Ten PBS seminars were held in late November and early December in Nyack, Saranac Lake, Kingston, Elmsford, Carmel and Queensbury. Over 500 parents and school professionals attended these sessions. Additional programs are planned for the new year in Orchard Park, Jamestown and Fredonia. Center staff will be traveling to every area of the state before the school year ends. Day and evening sessions are offered at each site to accommodate as many participants as possible.

Each seminar begins with a brief overview of PBS. Acknowledging that behavior is learned and influenced by environmental factors and consequences, PBS gives us a method for changing challenging behaviors by teaching new skills. PBS takes information gathered through a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and develops a plan for using interventions and strategies to reduce and prevent challenging behaviors and teach new, appropriate behaviors.

This behavioral intervention plan (BIP) is a working document for school staff, parents, and others who have contact with the child. It is monitored and revised as needed to support the child in meeting goals.

In addition to an overview of the PBS process, CARD staff review federal and state special education regulations which since 1997 have required district Committees on Special Education (CSE) to consider the use of positive behavioral interventions for students whose behaviors impede learning.

(please see “Statewide Expansion”, pg. 3)
Family Fun Wrap Up!

For the past three summers, CARD Albany has offered its registered children the opportunity to go out and have some fun with other kids and CARD staff in our Summer Fun program! Riding roller coasters, petting animals, mini-golf, airplanes, and meeting Jack and the Bean Stalk were all part of the excitement at the Great Escape, Catskill Game Farm, FunPlex Fun Park, Empire State Aerosciences Museum, and Mac-Haydn Theatre. Summer Fun is enjoyment for all!!

CARD Albany hosted its third annual Halloween Party on Friday, October 27th at the Saratoga VFW Post 420. There were plenty of ghosts and ghouls, and even an appearance by The Incredibles! Food was generously donated by Chili’s, The Bread Basket Bakery, Dunkin’ Donuts, Bowman Orchard, and Stewart’s Shops. Trick or Treaters decorated cookies, played “Pin the Stem on the Pumpkin”, “Wrap a Mummy”, and enjoyed plenty of family fun!

A Family Picnic was hosted by CARD Albany at the Crossings Park in Colonie on August 2nd. The grill was fired up thanks to Miller’s BBQ, who provided delicious food, such as hamburgers, hot dogs, corn on the cob, and macaroni salad. The children were able to play on the playground, but seemed to have more fun chasing the ducks! Families were able to talk to each other, as well as with CARD staff. It was a perfect lazy, hot summer day!

On August 30th, CARD Albany provided an Open House for newly registered families. Parents were able to meet CARD staff and receive resources and information that applied to their individual child’s needs. It was a nice way for CARD staff to get to know new families and introduce parents to the services CARD provides. We look forward to hosting another event of this kind in our new building!

Finally, on December 2nd, CARD hosted its 2nd Annual Holiday Breakfast. Families were greeted with arts and crafts, cookie making, delicious food, and even an appearance by Santa! Thanks to the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center for helping us make this event a success!

CARD’s 5th Annual Conference: Promoting Positive Outcomes for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Card Albany held its 5th Annual Conference Promoting Positive Outcomes for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Strategies for Parents and Professionals on October 18th at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany. With almost 300 participants, it was one of the largest conferences to date! It was exciting to see parents and professionals within the autism community come together once again to learn from our renowned speakers as well as from one another.

This year’s keynote address was provided by Dr. Cathy Pratt, Director of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) at Indiana University. Her presentation, Working Collaboratively for Future Success, provided parents and professionals with practical tips for working together to benefit individuals with autism spectrum disorders. In addition to her work as Director of IRCA, Dr. Pratt is a faculty member at Indiana University, and she presents internationally on issues related to autism spectrum disorders. She also currently serves as Chair of the Board for the National Autism Society of America. We were very fortunate to have Dr. Pratt with us this year.

The afternoon consisted of 8 breakout sessions. Topics included: organization and time management, autism and adolescence, early intervention services, assistive technology, speech interventions, functional communication training, Medicaid Service Coordination, and positive parenting.

For the third year, The Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza sponsored a book fair and provided a wide collection of books; some of the publications were authored by our breakout presenters, including Dr. Mark Durand and Dr. Teresa Bolick.

We would like to thank all of our presenters, The Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center and all those who attended for making the 5th Annual Conference another great success! We look forward to seeing you all again next year at CARD-Albany’s 6th Annual Conference.

Save the Date
CARD’s 6th Annual Conference
October 2007
Keynote Speaker: Brenda Smith- Myles, Ph.D.
Parent Education Series and Autism Training

The Saratoga Springs Public Library is the latest site for CARD Albany’s Parent Education Series training. The free series consists of five sessions from September through December, each involving a different step in the Positive Behavior Support process. The Parent Education Series combines an educational component with individualized assistance from CARD staff to help parents develop goals and achieve them. The aim is to increase parents’ knowledge of Positive Behavior Support and to develop skills to prevent problem behaviors and respond more effectively when behaviors occur. Parents involved were enthusiastic, and worked hard to form teams, collect data, and design and implement Behavior Support Plans that fit their families’ needs. As a result, parents were more optimistic about their children and their future, saw an increase in positive behavior and a decrease in negative behavior, and reported an improvement in the overall quality of life for their child and family! The next Parent Education Series will be held at the Columbia Greene Community College, starting on Thursday, January 18, 2007.

Also this fall, four separate Autism Training Initiative programs took place. Berlin, Wells, Schenectady, and Amsterdam school districts each organized teams to participate in trainings to assist teachers, support staff, and other school professionals in best practices for educating students with autism spectrum disorders. School teams received a traditional training in the morning that covered topics ranging from instructional activities and methods to social skill building. In the afternoon, teams had the opportunity to discuss individual students and develop plans for implementing more best practices in their classrooms.

School teams that have participated in the Autism Training Initiative have reported an increase in knowledge regarding best practices for educating students with autism spectrum disorders, and an increase in their skills and capacity to educate these students!

Mark your calendars!

PES: Winter 2007
January 18, February 15, March 22,
April 24, May 22
Columbia– Greene Community College
4400 Route 23, Hudson, NY
Please call CARD to register!

CARD Statewide Conference:
Promoting Best Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
April 20, 2007, 8:30am– 3:00pm
Crowne Plaza Hotel
1605 Broadway, New York, NY

Sibling Study

CARD is pleased to report that our first sibling/parent workshop this past summer was a great success! Siblings and parents who participated enjoyed the experience and made valuable connections with staff members and other families. We are hoping to hold another set of sibling/parent workshops beginning in January and are currently seeking families interested in participating. Participants will benefit from learning about communication and support within the family. Eligible sibling participants must be between 7 and 12 years of age, without the presence of a disability, and have a sibling with an identified autism spectrum disorder. Siblings and parents cannot have previously attended a sibling workshop or training of this nature. Participants will be asked to complete surveys before and after the program, and will need to attend all sessions. The workshops are a wonderful way for parents and siblings to share their experiences with others who have a family member with an autism spectrum disorder.

If you would like more information about the program or are interested in registering, please contact Lindsay Washington at 442-3257 or via e-mail at card@albany.edu.

Statewide Expansion, cont...

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) introduced the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and behavioral intervention plan (BIP) nearly a decade ago and this year districts are required to review their procedures for using this model to address challenging behaviors of students identified in need of special education services.

Each session concludes with practical suggestions for how to conduct an FBA and implement a BIP using prevention strategies and interventions that have proven successful with individuals with ASD.

If you are interested in learning more about the PBS statewide training program or want to know when a seminar will be offered in your area, please contact the Center at (518) 442-2574.
CARD Welcomes Our New Staff!

Catharine McHugh, MS.Ed.
Training Program Coordinator
Catharine received a B.A. degree in history and education from William Smith College and a Master of Science in Special Education degree from the College of St. Rose. She has worked for the past 20 years conducting statewide training programs in IEP development with an emphasis on functional behavioral assessments, positive behavioral supports, and transition services planning. Catharine has worked with students with autism as a teacher, school social worker, and rehabilitation counselor. For the past 20 years, she has implemented a statewide disabilities awareness curriculum including a specially designed program on autism spectrum disorders in elementary schools. For 10 years, she served as the advisor to a disabilities awareness newsletter editorial board of high school students, including students with autism.

Erica Weichsel, M.S.W.
Education Specialist
Erica received a B.A. in psychology from Siena College and a Masters in Social Work from the State University of New York at Albany. Her professional experience includes working as an intern counseling individuals with special needs and their families at the Center for Disability Services. She also worked as an intern with Schonow Preschool providing case management services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Over three years, Erica was a residential counselor at St. Colman's Home where she worked with adolescents with autism. She has worked with individuals to develop independence, including daily living and communication skills.

Kristin Knapp-Ines, Ph.D.
Research Therapist
Kristin Knapp-Ines is a licensed mental health counselor and a board certified behavior analyst. She received her B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Tuebingen in Germany. Her dissertation was a joint project between the University of Tuebingen and the University of South Florida in Tampa, Fl. Dr. Knapp-Ines' professional experience includes over 15 years of behavior analytic assessment and intervention methods with children and adults with developmental disabilities, including autism. As part of her role as a faculty member at the University of South Florida and as a behavioral consultant in private practice, she gained extensive experience in training parents, residential staff and teachers in behavioral interventions.

Lindsay Washington, B.A.
Graduate Assistant
Lindsay received her B.A. in Psychology from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. She was a research assistant on an NIH-funded pediatric pain project investigating pain in children and adolescents with chronic disabilities at the University of Washington. Lindsay gained clinical experience tutoring children on the autism spectrum at the Experimental Education Unit at the University of Washington. She also worked as a therapy assistant for the University of Washington Early STAART Intervention Project, which provided services to toddlers with autism. She is currently a doctoral student in the clinical psychology program at the University of Albany, State University of New York.

Jamie Caligure, B.S.
Education Specialist
Jamie received a B.S. in Elementary Education and Middle School English from the State University of New York at Oswego. His professional experience includes 10 years of teaching. He has taught children on the autism spectrum in a special education class that focused on inclusion. Jamie has worked as part of a team to design interdisciplinary curricula and positive behavior support plans. He has also developed trainings for teaching reading in middle school.

Lisa Burditt, B.A.
Project Support Specialist
Lisa received a B.A. degree in French literature from Middlebury College. She has several years experience working with elementary and middle school Parent Teacher Associations. She has also spent a great deal of time volunteering to bring arts education into local schools to benefit children with and without disabilities.

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Upcoming Events

| January   | 6th: Autism Training Initiative, Germantown  |
| 12th: Mealtime and Children with ASD, Center for Disability Services |
| 12th: Adapting Instructional Materials, Center for Disability Services |
| 18th: Parent Education Series Session 1 |
| 22nd: Peer Victimization, Chatham High School |

| February  | 6th: Autism Training Initiative, Germantown |
| 15th: Parent Education Series Session 2 |
| 27th: Autism Training Initiative, South Colonie |

| March     | 6th: Autism Training Initiative, Germantown |
| 13th: Autism Training Initiative, South Colonie |

| April     | 10th: Autism Training Initiative, South Colonie |
| 24th: Parent Education Series Session 4 |
| 25th: Parent Seminar, Dr. Louisa Bennetto |
| 26th: Medical Professionals Seminar, Dr. Louisa Bennetto |

| May   | 13th: Mealtime and Children with ASD, CASHA |
| 15th: Adapting Instructional Materials, Glens Falls School District |
| 16th: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Story Place Preschool |
| 22nd: Parent Education Series Session 3 |
| 23rd: How to Be an Effective Paraprofessional, Schenectady City School District |
| 27th: Living with Autism, Advanced Therapy |
| 29th: Make and Take Workshop |

www.albany.edu/psy/autism/autism.html