

The Banner

JANUARY 2010

A publication of the Madison-Oneida Board of Cooperative Educational Services Public Information Department

In cooperation with member schools: Camden, Canastota, Hamilton, Madison, Morrisville-Eaton, Oneida, Rome, Stockbridge Valley, Vernon-Verona-Sherrill and the New York State School for the Deaf

Autism Program Expands to Meet Students' Needs

Peter Draves needs some help communicating with others. An 11-year-old in the Madison-Oneida BOCES Autism Program at J.D. George Elementary School, he is mostly non-verbal, so classmates and teachers couldn't always tell what Peter was saying, his mother, Susan Draves said.

About three years ago, Peter began using facilitated communication, his mother said. He carries a small, specially-designed electronic keyboard that speaks to help him communicate with his classroom teacher, Rosemary Awad, and with classmates, such as his "lunch bunch" buddies – three general education students who eat lunch once a week with Peter and another student with autism.

Susan Draves has served as her son's primary facilitator for several years. Now, for the first time, Peter has another facilitator – Rebecca Smith, the Autism Program's speech therapist. Through a grant from the Mid-State Teacher Center, Smith studied facilitated communication this fall at Syracuse University and is now helping Peter communicate



Speech therapist Rebecca Smith helps Peter Draves type on the computer so they can converse.

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Achieving Through Collaboration

Times are challenging for all of us, but each challenge we face presents an opportunity to try something new, to look at something differently, and to improve what we were doing. Here at Madison-Oneida BOCES, we're sensitive to the financial challenges facing our local school districts, and we see it as a chance to help districts better address their goals. But one thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to meeting students' needs and education goals. If we all remain focused on that core mission, we'll successfully weather the current storm and emerge stronger than before.



By Jacklin G. Starks, District Superintendent

The New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief published a report last year on ways schools can become more efficient and save taxpayer money. BOCES was a critical part of the Commission's recommendations. The report included examples of the ways BOCES across the state can and do help schools and governments cooperatively purchase instructional and non-

instructional shared services – including transportation, energy, fiscal services, and special education services – as a way to make the best use of limited resources. As a Westchester County superintendent enthusiastically stated in the report: "I propose that we unleash the enormous potential of our BOCES throughout the state to reduce costs through greater service sharing..."

Madison-Oneida BOCES is already doing many of the things state leaders have suggested to save money – and we want to do more. By promoting collaboration and sharing and offering our staff's expertise, we can help provide cost-effective, high-

quality services to districts in the Madison-Oneida region. In this issue of The Banner, you'll see a small handful of the many exciting and unique opportunities we offer to help districts maximize their potential to efficiently and successfully run their operations and educate students.

Budget Process Highlights Collaboration

If you ask Stockbridge Valley Superintendent Charles Chafee, one of the most critical pieces of developing a comprehensive plan – a budget, a new curriculum, or anything else – is what he calls “buy-in.”

Working together to set spending goals and develop a budget with component superintendents is one of the things Chafee likes best about the Madison-Oneida BOCES budget development process.

“Anytime you involve stakeholders in the decision-making process, that gives you a better solution,” Chafee said.

“As much as you can get buy-in from your stakeholders and create a sense of ownership, whether that’s fiscally or another area, you create a process and a product that everyone feels a part of.”

A hallmark of the Madison-Oneida BOCES budget process is a budget development subcommittee for each major program area. In addition to program and division directors, those subcommittees include school district superintendents, said Lisa Decker, BOCES director of finance. Every subcommittee has at least one component superintendent, she said, and every superintendent serves on at least one subcommittee.

“The superintendents are the ones who know which services they’ll use and which ones they won’t,” Decker said. “That’s all critical information that we need to establish an accurate budget projection.”

The Regional Information Center completes its budget review in November with representative superintendents from five counties. The primary budgeting process for other divisions happens each December, when subcommittees meet with Decker and BOCES administrators to discuss budget needs for the following school year. Districts have until Jan. 22 to submit their preliminary requests for BOCES services, but the December meetings provide a first look at potential changes in staff, classroom space, and service rates.

Michael Drahos, superintendent of the Morrisville-Eaton school district, said the entire budget creation process is very collaborative.

“I don’t feel like they do this just to placate us and say they met with us. They’re truly encouraging us to give them feedback and ideas,” he said. “There’s a lot of back and forth

and discussion and modification to get a budget we’re all comfortable with.”

Drahos added that the different superintendents represent each other’s interests on their subcommittees. BOCES sends everyone a list of every committee’s membership so superintendents can contact the right people as needed.

“I don’t feel like I’m at these meetings just to say what Morrisville-Eaton needs,” he said.

Budget Development Timeline

October:	Budget criteria are developed and shared with the directors to begin the process
November:	Mohawk Regional Information Center’s Joint Management Team meets to finalize RIC budget
December:	Advisory budget meetings with BOCES divisions and component district superintendents to develop program budgets
Late December- mid January:	Preliminary commitment from component districts of services they will participate in next year, to aid program budget planning
February:	BOCES Board of Education reviews next year’s budget and tech plan
February-March:	BOCES administrators meet with component school boards to review administrative and capital budget
April:	Annual Meeting includes additional budget discussions
April:	Component school boards vote on administrative/capital budget and elect BOCES board members
May:	Budget and tech plan approved by BOCES board

Hamilton Superintendent Diana Bowers agreed.

“We meet monthly with other (superintendents) so we have a good idea of other districts’ needs,” she said.

Component districts vote on the BOCES administrative budget in April. BOCES administrators visit each district to present the next year’s budget in February and March, and present it again in April during the Annual Meeting. Decker said those presentations are rare across the state.

“Not all BOCES make those visits to each school board, and not all of them have superintendents on their program subcommittees,” she said.

Chafee, who has worked in other BOCES regions prior to joining Stockbridge Valley, echoed that sentiment.

“You would think that it’s true around the state, but it’s not. Madison-Oneida really takes the customer service piece to heart,” he said. “It’s integral for me to get involved in the process from the start instead of picking up after the fact.”

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Autism Program Now Has a Class at McAllister Elementary

more effectively in school.

"Facilitation has opened so many doors for us to find out what things he knows, how much he knows," said Susan Draves, of Oneida.

Smith, who has worked with Peter for four years, said the teaching strategies she learned at SU have helped her keep students more focused and think more about planning.

"It's helped with a lot of kids, not just Peter," Smith said. "It's helped me with academics, because I can get better answers when I ask them questions and see what they really know."

But Smith's training isn't the only change in the Autism Program. Housed at J.D. George since its inception in 2002, the program expanded this year to McAllister Elementary School, said Renee Worn, assistant director of special education. Two classes, one serving grades K-2 and one for grades 3-6, are now at McAllister; one class remains at J.D. George, serving grades 3-6.

This year, the 14 students include two from districts beyond the Madison-Oneida region - Cazenovia and Holland Patent, Worn said. Each class serves a maximum of six students with one teacher and one teacher's aide.

Worn said the small setting works best for most children with an autism spectrum disorder and allows teachers to provide instruction tailored to each student's needs. Many of the students need individual aides to assist them in addition to classroom teachers. Some need daily speech therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy to improve their language and motor skills.

All students receive social work services to address behavior and medication issues, connect with community agencies and ensure they have the proper support services to succeed.

"They all have such unique needs, and we want them to be successful, so everyone's program is individually designed," said Molly Creedon, occupational therapist for the Autism Program. "We have to adapt to the kids. It can be challenging, but whatever it takes to get them to learn, we'll do it."

For some students, that individualized plan includes "mainstreaming" into general education classes for part of the day. Peter and his classmate Billy Daggett, of Cazenovia, both join a general education fifth-grade class for social studies, Worn said, and Daggett plays the trumpet in the band.

BOCES also ensures its Autism Program staff is current on state and federal

regulations and certification requirements, and that they're well-versed in the ever-changing world of autism research.

"The parents get all the information I get," she said. "Parent training is key."

Susan Draves said she appreciates the attention Worn and her staff give students, including her son.

"It's been good that BOCES has been so open," she said, "and that they are willing to work with us."



Rosemary Awad (standing, right), a teacher in the Autism Program at J.D. George Elementary School, leads a morning program activity. Peter Draves (standing, left) answers questions using a communication device.

Alternative Education Launches Mentoring Program



Tenth-grader Stephanie Jaegers (left) and eighth-grader Adreanne Woodard (right), both from Rome, paired up this year through Alternative Education's mentoring program, now in its first full year. The two get together in school during different periods to talk, eat lunch and participate in social activities. This year, there are 28 matches between high school students and teachers and 10 matches between high school and middle school students, said Carol Musacchio, dean of students. Jaegers said attending BOCES for the past two years has made her more responsible and willing to help others. She proved it by helping Woodard, a student she didn't know before. That led a

teacher to ask Jaegers to become Woodard's mentor. "I was surprised I was asked, because I wasn't the best student," she said. "It felt good. I'm really glad I'm her mentor."

See more about Alternative Education's new initiatives on page 5.

Grant Puts Web 2.0 in Classrooms

The New York State Education Department awarded a three-year, \$2.1 million grant to Madison-Oneida BOCES and Mohawk Regional Information Center (MORIC) to help improve student achievement and learning through effective use of instructional technology. The Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) grant will benefit teachers and students in four area BOCES regions.

Through the grant, participating schools will receive a number of new technologies and experiences. Most notably, 150 teachers now have access to the Angel Learning Management System, a course management system for both students and instructors that allows remote, online access to curriculum and various Web 2.0 tools. The EETT grant provides teachers and students with Angel log-ins, gives teachers training and professional development, and provides access to online professional learning communities, said Tracy Rowlands, assistant director for technology at MORIC.

"All the teachers are utilizing Angel in different ways," said Heather Cauffman, instructional team leader at MORIC. "The system has a lot of capabilities. There's really a lot of potential."

Each participating district and BOCES selected two "master teachers" to participate in the first year of the grant and spread the benefits of Angel to their colleagues. Tracy Merrell, Allied Health teacher, is one of the M-O BOCES teachers who helped pilot the system in the spring, and she said she has made even better use of it with this year's class.

"I know this is definitely something these students will use in college," she said. "Part of our mission here is to get students ready for college or the workforce."

In addition to college and workforce preparation, Angel helps meet the grant's goal of improving students' technology literacy as well as writing literacy through technology, Rowlands said.

For teachers, Angel can help them stay organized. Merrell uploads her syllabus, course calendar, readings and assignments for each unit, outside links, videos and other materials

so that her classroom prep work is largely done in advance.

Cauffman said Angel also helps teachers differentiate instruction, present information in multiple ways, encourage student collaboration, and think about new ways to lead a classroom. She said she hopes that using Angel will encourage teachers to look at new ideas and technologies.

"Some of them are learning skills they didn't learn in college, like how to facilitate an online conversation, which can be different than leading a face-to-face discussion," she said. "It helps force them out of the traditional lecture model."



Allied Health teacher Tracy Merrell (left) works with Madison senior Jessica Kreiss on the Angel Learning Management System, part of a grant to put Web 2.0 technology in classrooms.

For students, Angel is accessible online and assignments can be completed from anywhere students have Internet access – home, BOCES, their home school, their local library, even a coffee shop, she said.

"We know students learn after the bell rings at 2:30," Rowlands added.

Merrell said the number of lost assignments has decreased by keeping everything online.

"And this really fits in with our 'green' efforts

too," she said. "We've probably cut out 95 percent of our paper use."

Merrell said she sets up online discussions and has students create wikis and blogs to become more familiar with Web 2.0 technology. The "digital drop box" feature allows students to submit assignments electronically, meaning teachers can set deadlines beyond the class meeting time.

Allied Health student Jessica Kreiss, a senior at Madison Central, said the later deadlines allow her to manage her time better among her afterschool activities. Classmate Brandon Carinci, a senior at Oneida High School, said he is less likely to lose his work in a paperless environment.

Rowlands said 150 new teachers will join the Angel system in each of the next two years of the grant, meaning that 450 teachers in the region will participate by 2012. Angel will be a major focus of this year's T.H.E. Symposium, slated for Jan. 13 at Utica College.

The grant also funded MacBook laptops; access to online peer-reviewed lessons; creation of an 8th grade Technology Literacy Assessment; and an annual Summer Tech Camp to explore best practices.

Self-Reflection, Data at the Core of E&AP Initiative

The Excellence & Accountability Program (E&AP) is a self-assessment process for instructional programs that has been in place at BOCES for decades. Through this process, program directors collect and use data to drive strategic decision-making and improve performance. This helps align classroom activities with critical success indicators, such as graduation rates, standardized test proficiency and placement after high school.

Susan Carr, assistant superintendent for instruction, said E&AP is an important process that helps strengthen each of the five major instructional divisions.

"It's important that we're reflective of our practices, that we hold ourselves to high standards," she said. "This allows us to continuously look at our initiatives, our achievements, and areas for improvement."

E&AP rose out of the state's shared decision-making regulations asking schools and BOCES to assess their practices, processes and policies. At M-O BOCES, the divisional committees look at data and goals from the previous academic

year and set goals for the upcoming year, said Patty Vacca, director of Early Childhood Education. Key stakeholders in those discussions can include administrators, faculty, staff and parents.

"We're not making decisions in a vacuum," Vacca said. "These committees are an opportunity to get staff on board with our goals ... and bring us feedback from colleagues."

CTE Director Dave Arntsen said E&AP values collaboration. "A lot of initiatives have come and gone, but this one has ... helped us stay centered and focused on our mission," he said. "This isn't a corporation with top-down decision-making. This is a collective discussion about how to better ourselves and add more value to what we do."

The action plans and program reviews are presented to the BOCES Board of Education each year. So far this year, CTE, Alternative Education, and Special Education have presented to the board. New initiatives are highlighted here. Early Childhood Education and Adult and Continuing Education teams will present later this year.

Alternative Education

- House System: Provides a closer level of support for students, more planning time between staff; decreases student transitions
- New grading, attendance and behavior procedures to emphasize early intervention and prevention of negative actions
- Character Education Program and Student Support Team to address life skills, conflict resolution, anger management
- Literacy Initiative to help struggling readers, improve writing skills, continue professional development
- Student Mentoring: Students paired with adults, older peers for support, guidance
- New dual credit courses for seniors through MVCC, leading more students to consider attending college



VVS junior Channing Skutnik serves a customer at the Snack Shack while VTP teacher Jay Day (center) looks on.

Career and Technical Education

- Integrate and expand green technology and 21st century skills into all CTE disciplines
- Research and implement innovative motivational strategies to address the whole student
- Vocational-Technical Prep (VTP) students create "Snack Shack" to explore retail service and entrepreneurial design. VTP is for students with disabilities. Store just celebrated 2-year anniversary.
- Expand collaborations between Alternative Education and CTE to better engage at-risk students
- Explore further supports for special needs and minority students to improve achievement

Special Education

- Creation of an assessment calendar for more accurate assessment of more students
- BOCES staff helps revise benchmarking process for New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)
- Grant received to purchase augmentative communication devices for preschool and school-aged classrooms, train staff and collect data regarding the effective use of the communication tools across settings
- Developing employability scale and high school credit tracking process; working on secondary transition plans
- Number of work study sites has doubled this year. There is now a need for more drivers and vehicles to transport students
- Seeing a wider range of ages, abilities and needs in students; addressing issues related to students joining BOCES from other programs and agencies; increased mainstreaming at all levels
- Staff training in math, literacy and communication programs and increased use of technology; addressing para-professional training
- Successful parent involvement strategies; working to increase involvement of more parents and develop their skills and contacts with community agencies and schools

What's Your BOCES Story?



"In college, I want to study wildlife science or ecology, and I wanted to be better prepared. It's something more that I can do now that my requirements are done at my school that will help me later on. It's very fun, it's very hands-on. And it's nice being here with people from all different schools that I wouldn't have met. On the first day, no one really said anything, and now you can't get some people to stop talking."

-Melanie Entelisano, 17, senior, equine and animal science, Rome



"I got laid off in March after 36 years in the printing industry. I was always interested in working outdoors and in running large equipment and so I applied (to BOCES Adult and Continuing Education in Verona). I really enjoyed this program, and I have some possibilities for jobs already. I had an ulterior motive in taking this class – besides a new job, I just bought land and I want to be able to do the work myself, and now I can. It's amazing how much I can do now that I couldn't do before. I came in knowing nothing and now I can do anything."

-John Kleaka, 61, Utica resident



"I was looking for a career change. I do hardwood floors now, and my body's getting worn out. I was looking for something that's challenging and interesting, but a little less hard on my body. It was definitely a good experience. And the program was convenient with my work schedule. Now my brother wants to come here

for this class in the spring. He lives in Syracuse, but he liked what I told him so he'll probably come out here."

-Leonard Stephens, 31, Oneida City district



"I want an education so I can be a good mom. I always thought about doing something like cosmetology so when I signed up for the GED program, that's what I picked. It's hard to be a good mom and go to school and do all your homework, and we get a lot of homework (in cosmetology). If I wasn't here, I would probably be doing nothing. Now I'm going to college to be an RN."

-Rosalinda Martinez, 19, Madison



"I like to work with my hands. There wasn't anything at my school that I was interested in, so I come here for half a day. I knew a few people here before, but I've made new friends already. And we've made some cool little things already (in carpentry). I've already used some of what I've learned when I work with my brother some weekends."

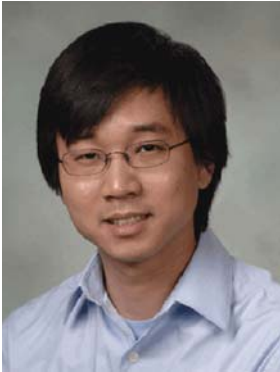
-Floyd Rouse, 17, junior, carpentry and VTP, Camden



"I attended the Early Childhood Education program during my junior and senior years at Vernon-Verona-Sherrill High School. During my senior year, I held three community internships – at J.D. George Elementary School, in a special needs class at Madison-Oneida BOCES, and at the Oneida Area Day Care Center. I really enjoyed my internship in the special needs class and pursued a position as a 1:1 aide in the BOCES Special Programs division. For the past two years, I've been a 1:1 aide with a student at J.D. George. I hope to continue my own schooling in the education field."

-Renee Hildreth, 19, 2008 VVS alumna

Web Seminar Helps Library Sites Become More Interactive



Fujiuchi

The Madison-Oneida School Library System sponsored a workshop in September called "Interactive Websites on a Budget" to help demonstrate some of the great, free Web 2.0 features available to school library media specialists. The workshop, part of the School Library System Communication Coordinators first meeting of the school year, was presented by Ken Fujiuchi, emerging technology librarian at Buffalo State College's E.H. Butler Library.

Fujiuchi outlined features that library media specialists should consider when setting up interactive library Web sites, such as: user decisions on input, two-way communications, places for comments, user created content, online tutorials and flash programming animation controls. Some Web site examples he presented were Google, Amazon, Shelfari, Good Reads and Reviewgamezone.com.

When creating an interactive Web site, Fujiuchi suggested that educators reflect on several key questions:

- What features do you expect from an interactive Web site?
- Who are you interacting with?
- What information are you working with?
- What do you REALLY want to do with his Web site?
- KISS: Keep It Short & Simple

- Start with a basic informational Web page
- Add contact forms
- Add a chat/bulletin board function if possible

The most important thing to remember is to make the information accessible to your users. Aesthetic decisions can come later, when you can afford to be more creative.

Fujiuchi also shared some great simple free tools and techniques to make Web sites more interactive and interesting:

Google Apps <http://www.google.com/intl/en/options> - free applications you can use to create an interactive Web site.

iGoogle <http://www.google.com/ig> - a simple way to create a Web portal using pre made gadgets.

Picasa <http://picasa.google.com>

Some additional links Ken recommends are:

ROOFTOP POETRY CLUB - <http://library.buffalostate.edu/rooftop/>

LIBRARYTHING.COM - <http://www.librarything.com>

12 seconds TV - <http://12seconds.tv/>

Buffalo State Library - <http://library.buffalostate.edu>

Butler Library Blog - <http://askehbl.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/e-h-butler-library-welcomes-new-students/>

Go2Web2.0 - <http://www.go2web20.net>

—By Diana Wendell, coordinator for Madison-Oneida School Library System and the Center for Instructional Support

Youth Construct Wellness Trail

Instructors and teaching assistants from Madison-Oneida BOCES helped unveil a new Wellness Trail in Knoxboro in October, a project completed over the summer with the Oneida-Lewis Chapter of The Arc and the Madison County Employment and Training Office. Seven Madison County youth, ages 18 to 24, participated in the four-week summer work project to create a walking trail around the Arc Day Habilitation site.

The program,



Pictured at the ribbon-cutting, (from left): Director of Career and Technical Education David Arntsen, teaching assistant Philip Maitland, Director of Madison County Employment and Training Lorraine Schmitka, student Samantha Walrad, Tom Reichel, Katey Cordary, teaching assistant Aaron Abbe, and Executive Director of the Oneida-Lewis Chapter of The Arc Angela VanDerhoof.

funded with federal stimulus dollars, helped the youth earn money, build maturity skills and develop vocational and work skills for the future. Participating students were: Derek Bouchard, Jazmine Camarena, Susan Chesebro, Thomas Cook, Timothy Pratt, Terrell Todd and Samantha Walrad, shown holding the dedication plaque.

Educators Focus on Literacy Achievement

Teachers and administrators from Madison-Oneida BOCES and three component districts met to launch the second year of the K-12 Literacy High Achievement Project. The two-year initiative of the BOCES Staff and Curriculum Development division encourages educators to identify and implement best practices to improve student literacy.

About 45 educators from Canastota, Morrisville-Eaton, Rome and BOCES Special Programs spent a day in October planning and sharing literacy goals for the year. They worked under the direction of BOCES staff members Maria Papa, a staff developer and curriculum specialist; Margaret Bailey, director of staff and curriculum development, and Kristin Capotosto, a regional special education training specialist.

After discussions within school district groups, participants shared programs and methods they use to gauge and measure student achievement in literacy and English language arts.

June Clarke, Canastota's assistant superintendent, said she finds the High Achievement projects to be an excellent forum for professional development.

"There is little time in an educator's day to share and reflect, to discuss our literacy practices," she said. "It's a wonderful way to share information across grade levels, both in your own district and with other districts."

Similarly, Rome participants networked with other educators about literacy strategies for all learners, including those most "at-risk," said Becky Marzeski, director of school improvement.

"One of the districts shared with us the great results they are getting with the use of running records," she said. "These results might tell us to research certain formative assessments for future implementation."

She added that receiving professional development and data analysis support from BOCES allows Rome teachers and administrators to look more effectively at "what our district data tells us, what it doesn't tell us, and what other data is needed."

Bailey, of BOCES, said professional development programs provide teachers with a variety of benefits. In particular, the large group workshop days provide a forum for sharing ideas, she said.

"Our educators are able to engage in meaningful dialogue and ask key questions," she said. "These days provide teams with common planning time to discuss, debrief and assess where they are in this process."

The group will have its next multi-district meeting in April.



Ninth and 10th graders from the Alternative Education High School recently began a weekly visit to J.D. George Elementary School in Verona, where they read aloud to special education students in kindergarten through second grade. The high school students also keep a reflective journal on their visits.

MADISON-ONEIDA BOARD OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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