

SNAC 2015-2016 Mid-Year Report Executive Summary

The Special Needs Advisory Committee continues to be a collaboration between parents, staff and the community to improve education for students with special needs. So far this year, we have had presentations on how to serve each other as SNAC Representatives, improve the Open House experience for Parents of Students with special needs, and become better self advocates. District staff have presented on ADHD, hearing loss, Systems Level classrooms, and multiple presentations on transitions.

This year the Special Needs Advisory Council has continued its focus on four areas for the 2015-2016 school year and added a fifth:

1. Co-teaching/Mainstream Inclusion Workgroup

This group has been exploring a survey sent to staff on ways to improve co-teaching/mainstream inclusion.

2. Peer Buddy Group

The purpose of this group is to promote inclusion of EC students as well as to provide support for students in mainstream education. Peer Buddy programs facilitate friendships and promote understanding to reduce bullying.

3. 2E – Twice Exceptional Committee

The 2E committee aims to build upon the previous findings by a district task force in 2009 to determine best practice for identifying and serving 2E students.

4. EC HS Vocational Education Working Group/PATHSS

This group has been successful in working with the district and UNC to create a model vocational training program, PATHSS, for EC high school students. The PATHSS program provides training that is meaningful, sustainable and offers real work experience with a key local employer.

5. Systems Level Classrooms

This group's goal is to improve the consistency, sense of community within the class and schools, and rigor of the systems level classrooms. Dr. Karen Erickson is introducing a reading curriculum for Systems Level Classrooms, training SL teachers on use, and will plan means to measure outcomes related to its implementation.

Progress

- The Co-teaching /Mainstream Inclusion group created a survey that was administered to both EC and mainstream staff. The purpose of the survey is to help identify best programs and teaching practices.
- The Peer Buddy Group began implementing the program at district high schools and middle schools.
- The 2E group developed a definition, are exploring how executive functioning and 2E intersect, and are working on aligning professional development modules with Project Advance.

- The EC HS Vocational Education Working Group and PATHSS Group continues to make exciting progress this year. The PATHSS program has great potential to raise positive awareness for both the CHCCS school district and UNC.

Co-Teaching/Mainstream Inclusion Workgroup

Chairs: Kathy Peticolas, Sherron Leplin

Vice Chairs: Mary Berridge, Laura Henderson, Spencer Register

Action Area Objective:

After studying co-teaching and inclusion models the previous school year, the group is now gathering information on co-teaching and inclusion best practices currently being implemented in the school district.

Rationale:

The EC program works to educate staff on inclusion best practices and principles so that EC students can fully access the curriculum and participate in their classrooms and schools alongside their non-EC peers. These practices are designed to meet the needs of students with a variety of learning styles and needs, providing benefits to both EC and non-EC students. Co-Teaching can provide teachers the opportunity to learn new teaching tools. This type of sharing of best practices can help address the achievement gap and ensure district compliance with the LRE directive under IDEA Federal law.

In addition, there are successful school-wide inclusion programs, such as peer buddies or social skills groups, that are not implemented in all schools, or if present, may not be well known. By gathering data on the inclusion best practices and programs currently in use, those successful practices and programs can be shared increasing the quality of instruction and consistency throughout the district.

Progress:

The Inclusion/Co-Teaching Workgroup has continued reviewing the results of the survey from the spring of 2015. We met with Sherron Leplin and Spencer Register in November to discuss the results and how best to disseminate the ideas and best practices from the survey to teachers and staff. In terms of distribution, we would most likely use already established district communications.

We also considered including 'success stories' that highlight the benefit of these best practices. We have begun compiling some of these stories and would welcome any contributions by other SNAC members or other parents. The stories should describe how implementing a strategy at school successfully resolved a problem for your child. Stories can be sent to petison@gmail.com.

Peer Buddies

Chairs: Cathy Feole, Melinda Buleza

Action Area Objective:

This group is working on creating ongoing Peer Buddy programs to serve EC students and mainstream students in all CHCCS middle and high schools. The group has secured funding from The Oak Foundation to pay for support staff for the program.

Rationale:

The purpose of this group is to promote inclusion of EC students as well as to provide support for students in mainstream education who would like to have a “buddy”. There is a great deal of research available showing that Peer Buddy programs are highly beneficial to all students. “High School Peer Buddies: A Win-Win Situation” 2002 by Copeland is just one example of many articles on the topic. Peer Buddy programs facilitate friendships, build leadership skills and promote acceptance, awareness and understanding of difference and also help to reduce bullying.

In addition Peer Buddy programs provide a much needed opportunity for CHCCS students to earn service hours on campus during school hours.

Progress:

The Peer Buddy program is now up and running in all middle and high schools District Peer Buddy Facilitator, Laurie Josey, was hired with funding from Oak Foundation. The District Peer Buddy Facilitator will oversee the implementation of Peer Buddies at all schools. The District Peer Buddy Facilitator will ensure that the program is sustained from year to year and will work with the School Based Peer Buddy Coordinators to ensure the program is being implemented with integrity. Facilitators have been trained for all the schools. The program will start with one lunch period a week. Will include kids in resource settings and other kids with fragile health conditions or other conditions. Will send a list of the school facilitators to each of the SNAC representatives; the list is also available on the SNAC website:

- Smith Middle – Sarah O’Shea
- McDougale Middle – Julie Walker;
- Culbreth Middle – Matt Straub;
- Phillips Middle -- Allison Blue;
- ECHHS – Ryan Johnson;
- CHHS – Jill O’Kane;
- CHS – Manfred Makor

So far, several schools have had welcome pizza parties to get their groups of kids together. Meetings are set for February for all school facilitators to share their start up experiences and what strategies worked for getting kids together (like a PLC).

We need to get the word out to all families in MS and HS that this is up and running; it should be a part of your school's eblast.

Twice-Exceptional Student Committee Mid-Year Update 2015-2016

Co-Chairs: Dr. Sherron Leplin, Executive Director, Exceptional Children and Camille House, Coordinator of Gifted Education

Committee Members: Andrew Davidson, Board of Education; Kathryn Kennedy, Lead Gifted Education Specialist; Margaret Maternowski, EC Program Facilitator Carrboro HS; Bridget Mora, SNAC Vice-Chair; Spencer Register, Assistant EC Director, Exceptional Children; Alisha Schiltz, MTSS/504 Coordinator; Coretta Sharpless, Principal Northside Elementary; Alfred Soulier, Lead School Psychologist; Steven Weber, Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction

Action Area Objectives:

- Create consistency around the district in regards to 2E and Compliance
- Determine how 2E students are identified 2E, especially when difficulties are masked (specific focus on processing speed and working memory)
- Ensure we look at each individual child's needs to identify 2E students
- Determine the 2E definition that will inform our work

Rationale: CHCCS is believed to have a higher than average number of Twice-Exceptional (2E) students, generally defined as a student with both a disability and giftedness. 2E students are often under-identified, as their strengths can mask their challenges, their challenges can obscure their giftedness, or the combination of disability and giftedness can mask the student's need for both supports and higher level academics. The 2E committee aims to build upon the previous findings by a district task force in 2009 to determine best practice for identifying and serving 2E students. Areas of investigation may also include: professional development, parent education, collaboration between EC and AIG, legal compliance, and improved communication among stakeholders.

Actions: The committee focus this year has been to identify the 2E definition that CHCCS will use, discuss how the MTSS model will support the identification of 2E students, examine how executive functioning and 2E intersect, and consider how we will develop modules that align with professional development in Project Advance. By the end of this school year, the committee would like to develop an action plan to accomplish the proposed ideas.

EC HS Vocational Education Working Group

Chair: Adela Van Name **Vice Chairs:** Margaret Maternowski and Susan Lombardo

Action Area Objective:

Ensure that the community based instruction and school based vocational training of EC high school students prepare the students for a successful transition to work post high school.

PATHSS

Project Achieve For Transitioning High School Students 2015 End of Year Report with December 2015 Update Externship Pilot

Mission Statement: The mission of PATHSS/Project Achieve is to promote positive adult life outcomes for high school students with **disabilities** by facilitating the development of self-determination, work readiness, and everyday life management skills **and helping the student achieve meaningful employment upon graduation.**

Overview: The PATHSS externship pilot continued on a successful course during this past semester from August to December 2015. We started the pilot with five system level students (students with significant disabilities) in January of 2015. We opened the second semester of the 18 month pilot in August of 2015 with four students. One student moved out of NC during the summer. With the addition of another job coach/teaching assistant the program was able to expand from two to three job sites and to individualize the work. This created a total of five developed job sites since pilot inception. CHCCS has strengthened their partnership with UNC and is presently working with them to operationalize program. We are privileged and thankful to work with a partner that is truly vested and supportive of our initiatives and our exceptional students. We are also extremely grateful to the Oak Foundation for their continued support of this rewarding and innovative program. We are looking forward to moving from “pilot” to “program” by the end of June 2016.

For the sake of continuity, the updates for the second semester of the pilot have been added to the June 2015 end of year report below.

Progress Updates:

Students engaged in a variety of work activities that furthered their vocational competencies and person-specific elements of self-determination. All worksites have afforded PATHSS students meaningful and authentic opportunities to develop work specific technical skills, interpersonal skills, awareness of workplace practices and norms, decision-making and problem-solving skills, time management and organizational strategies, and overall self-advocacy.

Externship worksites and tasks included:

August – December 2016

UNC Geology Department: interoffice mail sorting/delivery, shredding and recycling projects, light cleaning tasks, and room organization/set up for special events.

Undergraduate Studies Department: interoffice and cross-campus mail sorting/delivery, shredding, recycling projects, light cleaning, light stocking tasks, organizing supply cabinets, resupplying/replenishing supplies and materials including maintaining paper supply for copiers and printers.

Davis Library: Rough and fine sorting of books by LC call numbers, clearing and scanning discarded books to determine count use, and maintaining paper supply for copiers and printers.

UNC Paws for People/UNC Psychiatry Department: Socializing puppies in preparation for their training to become support dogs for veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

January – June 2015

Students rotated between two main job sites:

- UNC Student Store Warehouse: Job tasks included merchandise intake tasks such as counting, sorting, and pricing merchandise, and repackaging.

- UNC Facilities HR: Job tasks included filing, shredding and recycling projects, data entry, document management, recycling, pricing, manual work

Classroom/Campus/Community Instruction:

- Resume development, word processing, PowerPoint, email, calendar systems, and social media.
- Externship/UNC Employee orientation hosted by UNC's Human Resource Department prior to every externship covering UNC workplace policies relating to employee rights and responsibilities, the prohibition of firearms and drug use on campus, harassment and discrimination, safety and Carolina Alert system, etc.
- UNC's University Day and UNC's Employee Appreciation Day – Student participation.
- Student Showcase/Portfolio – live presentation with PowerPoint
- Money Management and Handling: Students develop and maintain a monthly class budget and plan and shop within this budget. Students practice money-handling skills in authentic and simulated shopping excursions.
- Meal planning and preparation, safe food handling and storage/OT graduate student support
- Home care: including cleaning tasks, laundry skills, and basic clothing care

- Transportation Options, Planning, and Practice - using on-campus bus system/Google Transit/Maps Apps/Chapel Hill Transit
- Adult life exploration and options:
 - Presentation by RSI Social Worker, Eileen Slade, to learn about group homes and supported apartment living
 - Group home tour
 - Presentation by two adult mentors with I/DD on their own transition to adulthood including work, housing, social life, and relationships (family/friends).
 - Volunteer options: Orange County Animal Shelter tour and volunteer information session
- Activity/Event planning, preparation, and execution:
 - Initiating/planning lunch dates with Best Buddies and others using online calendar, email, texting, city transit website (bus routes/schedules)
 - Holiday/Movie shopping trip to Southpoint Mall using regional bus system. Preparations included determining bus routes and fare, exploring theater website to determine movie times and ticket costs)
 - NC State Fair using regional bus system (preparations included determining bus routes and fare, exploring NC State Fair website to estimate costs, prioritize fair activities, and manage time)
 - Friday Center for cooking demonstration and lunch with Chef Michael, Friday Center Executive Chef
 - Party planning, preparation, hosting: SILS Take a Break with Cake Party, Open House – Bring your Parent to PATHSS Day, and Valentine’s Day/Halloween/Winter Holiday Parties (w/ UNC and CHCCS friends)
- Additional community outings - Ackland Art Museum, Planetarium, Franklin Street vendors, UNC Farmers Market (scavenger hunt), UNC Science Expo
- Learning Garden at Chapel Hill Community Park: Students learn horticulture skills and help to maintain the community garden
- Personal safety sessions (monthly) with Sgt. James David from UNC’s Public Safety Department: Topics have include: first aid, self-defense, staying safe in chaotic and unexpected situations (lock downs, power outages, becoming lost in the community, severe weather, fires, etc.)
- NC DMV for state IDs (two students) – applying and obtaining IDs
- Big Buddy/Little Buddy Mentoring: PATHSS students have been paired with a younger student from a special education class at Rashkis Elementary. Activities have included letter writing, Flat Stanly photos and bookmaking, holiday lunch and group reading presentations.
- Maintaining Communication with CHCCS – HS Peers and UNC Support Staff
- Healthy Relationship sessions - Orange County Rape Crisis Center

Programming Partnerships:

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Service (NTACT):

August – December 2015

We have continued to develop our relationship with NTACT* and are currently working with two new consultants from this organization. They are compiling their report from their site visit in November of 2015. These are goals/next steps that we discussed:

- Share immediate resources with CHCCS
- Review program curriculum and provide feedback: in context of predictor implementation and possible requirements
- Provide feedback on implementation of predictors and rationale for the emphasis on specific predictors at this juncture of programs development (the work listed from June 2015 – below- were two of the seventeen predictors)
- Provide guidance/resources specific to (a) student level progress monitoring, and (b) formative assessments of the program (as needed)

*NTACT developed the “Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment” which is “a checklist intended to provide schools, districts, or other stakeholders in secondary transition with a framework for determining the degree to which their program is implementing practices that are likely to lead to more positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.” There are seventeen predictors.

January – June 2015

The pilot also allowed us to partner with a NTACT Program Assessment Consultant, Lauren Bethune. Our partnership resulted in the execution of two key initiatives.

- Student Showcase – this event allowed the students to create and present their individual power points outlining their accomplishments this semester to both CHCCS and UNC staff and parents. This was very well received.
- Parent Survey/Parent Focus Groups. The survey results indicated a high level of satisfaction thus far from both parents and students in the program. The focus groups allowed the administration to get direct feedback on parents concerns and suggestions.

UNC Support:

August – December 2015

UNC administration has invited CHCCS to work together to create an effective communications and operations structure. The following is already under development:

- Development of governance structure:
 - Executive Leadership Committee
 - Operations Committee
 - Action Teams: Job Site Development/Training and Curriculum Planning and Assessment.
- Development of “Basecamp” a shared access internet site for communication.

UNC has been an outstanding partner by helping us through many daily hurdles from arranging parking for our staff, classroom space and technology support for our students and administration and staff support for our program. They are also helping us to secure more and better job sites as we grow the program. Thank you UNC for all you continue to do!

December – June 2015

The PATHSS’ teacher, staff and students also nurtured their close relationships with UNC staff. This development and maintenance of relationships is truly the cornerstone on which the program is being built. PATHSS is becoming better known on campus and many different UNC programs are exploring how to partner with the program. A few of the departments already supporting PATHSS are:

- UNC Human Resources - extern orientation
- UNC Equal Opportunity Compliance Office: employer orientation/training
- UNC TEACCH: Job Development Consultation
- UNC Division of Occupational Science: OT Rehabilitation Apt for Life Skills (weekly)- Bondurant Hall/4 field experience students 1 afternoon/week for 2 five week sessions/ Community Service Project
- UNC School of Information and Library Science: Library and Classroom support (daily) and student information needs support through graduate collection development course and course project.
- UNC Instructional Technology Services: tech support
- UNC Carolina Dining Services: tour/orientation

- UNC Visitor Center: campus orientation/explorations (5)
- UNC Transportation and Public Services: Travel training
- UNC Public Safety – lessons on campus: i.e. personal safety, self defense, and first aid sessions, K-9 unit, 911 call center

Next Steps: Our goals for the next and final phase of the PATHSS Pilot- August 2015 to June 2016 are (**updates in bold**):

- Increase teacher’s planning time to support instructional outcomes and data collection - **In progress**
- Add additional job coach supports for development of more job sites and improve student’s ability to engage in campus activities - **Completed**
- Trial adding OCS/SL students for a ½ day program- Jan. 2016 **Planning**
- Expand MOU with UNC for post pilot “program” agreement- **In progress**
- Submit grant proposal for Oak Foundation support - **Completed**
- Seek other funding sources – **Planning**

Additional Accomplishments:

- Reduced transportation needs by utilizing city/campus bus system
- Developed PATHSS curriculum – waiting district approval
- Developed the Student Selection Criteria and Admissions Process
- Continued alignment with CHCCS district policies
- Integrating all three CHCCS transition facilitators to PATHSS

Challenges:

- Continue development of policies and procedures to align with CHCCS:
 - Teacher evaluations/program evaluations
 - Principal Tully at ECCHS will serve as site administrator
 - Develop Graduation Process (2 graduates projected 2016)
- Data Collection and establish systems to measure goals/performance
- Marketing for Student Recruitment
- Securing and individualizing more job sites is a constant need

Key Learnings:

- Utilize more EC staff for program support from each HS as well as from the EC administration at Lincoln Center to help defray the financial burden.
- Oak Grant Application fostered the development of a business plan for the next 4 years:
 - Plan incorporates consultants to help with system/operational structures/sustainability and replicability

- Monthly budget forecast meetings
- Continued and increased collaboration and communication between CHCCS leaders and UNC leaders is critical to success.
- Expansion of program to OCS and other non-PATHSS students will increase ROI.
- Continue to refine roles and responsibilities of staff and goals of the program.