

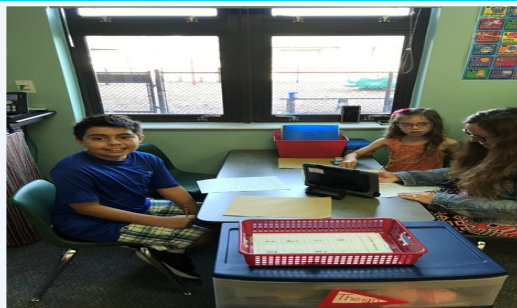


ESE Team at Valley Ridge Academy Works to Meet State Standards; Middle Schoolers Take Leadership Roles to Help Elementary Students

Through PLC collaboration, the ESE team at Valley Ridge has been working together to meet the state standards at varying levels. We planned some school-wide activities to deepen student understanding through hands on activities in which middle school students were able to take leadership roles and help elementary students learn concepts.

Some of these shared experiences included:

- a force and motion experiment using cars and variable surfaces with different textures that provided friction such as carpet, sandpaper, bubble wrap, a table, and a ramp
- a voting activity that involved student's writing campaign speeches for student of the week at the middle school level, and favorite recipes at the elementary level, in which middle school students prepared the recipe for the elementary students
- Reader's Theater in which Middle School students prepared a play to perform for Elementary and discussed story elements. We followed this activity with buddy reading.



Important Dates:

2/12, 6:00-7:30 pm- ESE Parent Advisory Committee Meeting, SJCS District Office, 40 Orange Street

2/28, 6:30-8:00 pm- Gifted Parent Advisory Committee Meeting, Freedom Crossing Academy Media Center



Continued from pg.1
More photos from
Valley Ridge
Academy



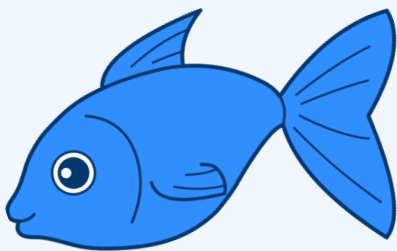
Submitted by
Julie Hudson,
Assistant Principal,
Valley Ridge Academy



Murray Middle School Field Trip to the St. Augustine Aquarium

Murray Middle School's first Behavior Unit Field Trip took place in November. ESE Paraprofessionals Lakevia Rollins and James McMillan, applied for and received funds from the SAC to take 9 of their 18 behavior unit students to the St. Augustine Aquarium. Students earned the trip by meeting their daily behavior and academic goals.

Principal Tom Schwarm said, "I am continually amazed at the work our teachers and staff accomplish with our most challenging students. Their dedication to excellence through creating strong relationships is a model for behavior units throughout the state and nation". Way to go Bulldog students and staff!



Submitted by Tom Schwarm,
Principal, R. J. Murray Middle



Creekside High Spotted at Jacksonville Icemen School Day



The Access Points classes at Creekside High School had a blast at the Icemen School Day. Many of the students and staff had never been to a hockey game before and had a wonderful time!



Submitted
by Kaley
Presnell,
ESE
Teacher,
Creekside
High School



Positive Behavior is the "FCA Way!"

Special Visitors at Freedom Crossing Academy

The Freedom Crossing Academy Falcons hosted Cookie Decorating with Snolaf, an exclusive LiveSchool incentive for Kindergarten and 1st Graders on December 19th. The top 3 students with the highest Live School points in each class this school year were invited. Students enjoyed story time with a very special guest.



Submitted by Melissa Lime, Assistant Principal, Freedom Crossing Academy



Special Visitors at Freedom Crossing Academy



Melissa Lime, Assistant Principal offered a huge thank you to Kathleen Damiano and her team for creating a magical baking experience for our Kindergarten and 1st graders, to Mrs. Haden for dressing up as Olaf and giving lots of warm hugs to the students as they decorated their cookies, to Mrs. Eberhardt's daughter, Hannah, for volunteering as Princess Anna and parading through the 200 Wing hallways singing holiday carols, and to Mrs. Lori Sitch from the ESE Department for volunteering during the event. This magical experience would not be possible without their support and dedication to our PBIS and LiveSchool Program.

"The students had the best time ever!" I look forward to hosting this again next year!" said Ms. Lime.



Submitted by Melissa Lime, Assistant Principal, Freedom Crossing Academy



Multiplayer Online Video Games and Kids With Social Skills Challenges: What You Need to Know

Ever notice that kids who play multiplayer online video games have their own language? They even have their own inside jokes. This unique culture can be fun for many kids. But it can also be challenging for kids who struggle with impulse control, self-regulation or social skills. These kids often have the same difficulties when playing video games with other kids as they do in real-life social situations.

Read on to learn how to help your child navigate the world of online video games.

Multiplayer Online Video Game Culture

Culture is the customs, language and values that a group shares. For example, sports fans mark the year by sports seasons—fall is football, spring is baseball. They're loyal to teams and may also binge-watch on holidays or days with multiple games. They also have their own slang words, like *GOAT* (greatest of all time).

In a similar way, kids who play multiplayer online video games have a shared culture. Summer is a time for binge playing. There are seasonal events throughout the year that gamers tune in to. They also use unique language, with terms like *noob* (new or bad player) or *skin* (the way a player looks in game).

There's a key difference between these cultures, however. Sports fans are generally spectators. While watching others play video games is a growing trend, most gamers are participants who interact. They see what others are doing in the game and how they're behaving. Because of that, they can bully, criticize and leave kids out—just like in the real world.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ONLINE VIDEO GAMES

Millions of kids in the United States play video games. But unlike with school or sports cultures, parents often have less, or no, experience with gaming. Everyone has experienced school. Not every parent has played a first-person online shooting game, like *Call of Duty*.

Not all video games involve interacting with others. But multiplayer online video games, like *Minecraft* and *Fortnite*, are some of the most popular games. Because kids are interacting online, these games are where the most unique elements of video game culture arise.

Many of these games involve role-playing. Kids take on a role of a character with specific skills that often progresses through a storyline. Some games are focused on adventure, but not all.

However, there are games that don't involve role-playing or story lines. Some of these are what's called sandbox games. They don't have a fixed story. Kids have freedom to explore the game's virtual world.

The popular game *Minecraft*, for example, is a sandbox game with action and cooperative elements.

Multiplayer online games can have one or a mix of these attributes:

- **Action-oriented:** Kids fight, jump, dance or take other actions through the game to win or score points. This broad genre covers everything from first-person shooter games to arcade games.
- **Cooperative:** Kids play together to help each other achieve a goal.
- **Competitive:** Kids play and compete against each other. *Fortnite Battle Royale* is a type of competitive game where players (usually about 100) try to eliminate each other.



Trouble Spots for Kids With Social Skills Challenges

There are many positives of video games for kids with social skills challenges. Games can be a lifeline for kids who have trouble connecting in real life to their peers. Not only can a gaming interest lead to online friends, but it can also be the basis for friendship in real life.

At the same time, gaming culture can be very challenging for kids who struggle with social interaction. Here are some of the main trouble spots and how to help your child navigate them.

Video games aren't going away. In fact, most experts agree that the gaming industry will continue to grow—and target younger and younger kids. If your child plays video games, especially multiplayer online games, make sure you're involved so you can help address any trouble spots.

Trolling: Some players will harass or provoke other players for fun. Trolling is often anonymous and random, and it happens without warning. It can be deeply upsetting to kids.

What you can do: If you learn that your child is being trolled, it's important to put the game down right away. Trolls thrive on attention. If your child tries to fight back in the game, it may invite further trolling. Most games have a system for your child to report another player who is trolling. Encourage your child to make a report.

Trash Talking: Negative comments and trash talking from teammates and opponents is not uncommon in multiplayer video games. Sometimes teasing is harmless and good spirited. Other times it gets downright nasty, even between friends.

What you can do: If your child has trouble managing feelings, it's important to set a strict rule to not play with kids who trash-talk. Even casual negative remarks can have a big impact on your child.

Online Anonymity: Being anonymous can lead kids to say and do things they might not in real life. They may be mean because no one knows who they are. That's especially true if they're impulsive.

What you can do: Encourage your child to play games with real-life friends, as a virtual playdate. Another option is to look for a group of gamers dedicated to family-friendly play.

Complex Social Rules: Every video game has its own unique set of social rules. Just as in real life, social rules in games are often unwritten. Kids may struggle to understand them. They may anger and offend other players.

What you can do: Learn about the nature of the game—whether it's cooperative or competitive, for example. You may even want to try playing the game a few times yourself. Then, help your child think through the social rules. Try to have your child stick to one game for a while, to learn what's appropriate.

Hyper Competition: Most video game developers encourage a competitive scene as a business strategy to keep a game popular. This can be tough for kids with impulsivity and self-regulation issues. If they're struggling in the game, they may become moody and emotional.

What you can do: If your child isn't as good a player as other kids, emphasize that a game is just a game. Help your child recognize other strengths.



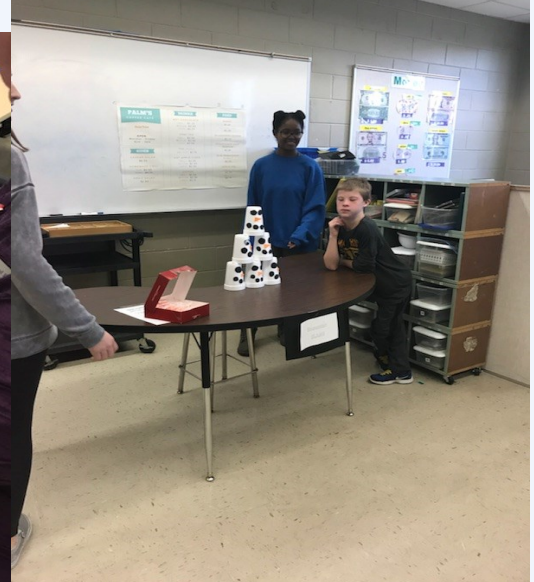
Learn about how to [limit screen time for kids with ADHD](#). Find out how to help your child [transition away from video games](#), and how to [protect your child from online predators](#).

Source: [Understood.org](#), written by: Andrew M.I. Lee, J.D., an editor and former attorney who strives to help people understand complex legal, education and parenting issues, and reviewed by Jodi Gold, M.D., a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist in private practice.

SWISS POINT 8TH GRADERS THROW HOLIDAY PARTY

For two months 8th grade students at Switzerland Point Middle School planned a holiday celebration for the other self-contained 6th and 7th graders. During this time they worked hard to hand-make games, (Snowman Slam and Pin the Heart on the Grinch) design and deliver invitations, and bake sugar cookies for a cookie decorating station. On Monday, December 17th their hard work really paid off! The students all enjoyed socializing together, playing games, dancing to holiday tunes, and decorating cookies. Talk about showing the true spirit of the season by doing something nice for someone else!

Great job, Raiders!



Submitted by:
Ms. Caroline Palm,
Self-Contained Access
Points Teacher,
Switzerland Point Middle
School



A Day in the Life of a Teen With Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a brain-based condition that makes it hard to understand numbers and math concepts. The most common problem is with 'number sense.' This is an intuitive understanding of how numbers work and how to compare and estimate quantities.

Kids can be very smart but struggle with the part of the brain that helps us know that a group of five apples is bigger than a group of three apples. If kids don't understand the basics about how numbers work, they may find it frustrating to work on higher-level math and to use math skills in everyday life.

Meet Ava, a ninth grader who has dyscalculia. She's a bright kid, but her issues with math are often misunderstood by teachers and family members. To see how dyscalculia can affect teens outside of math class, take a look at a typical day in Ava's life.

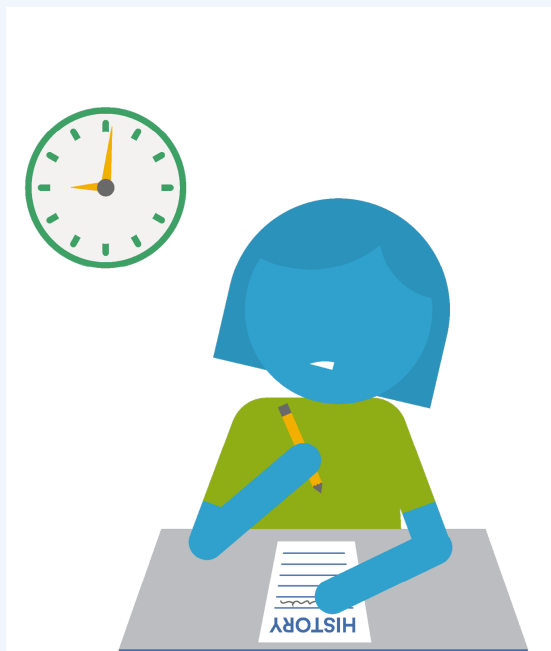


6 am

Ava knows she needs to take a quick shower and get ready for school. She thinks she's only been in the bathroom for a few minutes when her little brother bangs on the door. "Come on, you've been in there for 20 minutes already!" he yells.

Math-Related Skills:

Keeping track of time, estimating



9 am

Ava loves history and studied hard for today's test. But after answering a few questions, she isn't sure how much time she has left. She glances at the clock but knows it would take her a long time to read it. And she thinks she'd probably read the time wrong anyway.

Math-Related Skills:

Visual-spatial processing, keeping track of time



12 pm

After lunch, Ava wants to buy a \$2 muffin for herself and a box of \$5 cookies for her mom. She's not sure she has enough money to buy both. But she doesn't want her friends to see her using her fingers to count, so she hands over all the dollar bills she has and hopes it's enough.

Math-Related Skills:

Recalling basic math facts, budgeting



2 pm

Ava looks at tonight's math homework and starts to panic. Even though she knows how to do some of the steps, her heart starts racing. "I'm never going to be good at this, so why bother?" she thinks. Ava tucks the worksheet into her locker before she leaves school — she doesn't want her mom to find the incomplete assignment.

Related Issues:

Math anxiety, avoiding tasks



4 pm

At track practice, Ava runs the first lap so quickly that she has trouble finishing the second lap. The coach seems frustrated that Ava can't remember the pacing they practiced yesterday. Why is it so hard for her to remember *one minute and 25 seconds*?

Math-Related Skills:

Gauging speed and distance, remembering number sequences



6 pm

Ava needs to feed the pets before her family eats dinner. She knows the dog gets five scoops and the cat gets three. Did Ava measure the amounts correctly? Which of the bowls has more? If Ava gives the cat too much food, he'll throw up. But how much is too much?

Math-Related Skills:

Using number sense, measuring



8 pm

Ava's family is excited about the big game on TV, but Ava is having trouble telling which team is winning. If the point guard gets the next two free throws, will that be enough to go into overtime? Asking too many questions about the game embarrasses Ava, so she retreats to her bedroom.

Related Issues:

Using number sense, solving word problems

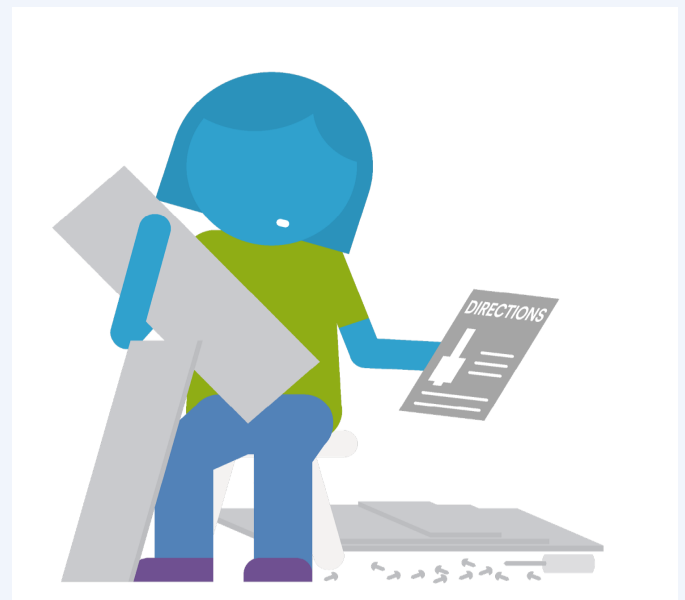


10 pm

The new bookcase Ava really wanted for her room was finally delivered today. Ava unpacks the box and takes out the directions. She gets through the first step, but then gets confused because the pieces aren't fitting together the right way. By the time her mom is free to help her with the project, Ava is so frustrated that she shoves the parts away and tells her mom she doesn't want it.

Math-Related Skills:

Visual-spatial processing



Source: [Understood](#) The Understood Team is composed of writers, editors and community moderators, many of whom have children with learning and attention issues. This infographic was reviewed by Brendan R. Hodnett, M.A. T., a special education teacher in Middletown, New Jersey.

"The Nutcracker" staged at Creekside High School



Creekside Access Point students participated in the Nutcracker for the second year in a row! They had a blast acting as soldiers, mice, flowers, and trees!



Submitted by
Kaley Presnell,
ESE Teacher,
Creekside High
School





Wards Creek Attends Victory Day at Nease High School



Students from Ms. Baker and Mrs. Kaye's classes enjoyed a special day at Nease High School's Annual Victory Day. For some, this was their third year participating.

Victory Day allows students to learn outside of the classroom. Students learn the importance of team work, hard work and perseverance. From the time the students step off of the bus at the gates leading to the stadium, they are made to feel so welcome- through high fives and cheering. This atmosphere carries on throughout the day to the final touchdowns made by each student before saying good bye to our new friends.

See you next year!!



Submitted by: Ms. Dianne Baker, ESE Teacher,

Wards Creek Elementary School



ESE PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is composed of parents, educators, administrators, business representatives, and other interested community members concerned with the education of students with disabilities.

The purpose of the committee is to provide information to parents and input to district staff regarding our ongoing effort to continuously improve services for students with disabilities.

Spring 2019 PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING TOPICS, DATES, AND LOCATIONS:

Topic: BROOKS REHABILITATION PEDIATRIC RECREATION a free program (birth -17)

Presenter: Megan Hyman, Pediatric Community Program Manager, Brooks Rehabilitation

Date/Time: 02/12/19 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Location: SJCS District Office - 40 Orange Street St. Augustine, FL 32084

Topic: RAISING STRUGGLING LEARNERS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, DURABLE, AND RESILIENT

Presenter: Edward C. Taylor, Ph.D., Child and Adolescent Psychologist

Date/Time: 03/05/19 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Location: Fullerwood Training Center - 10 Hildreth Drive St. Augustine, FL 32084

Topic: BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Presenter: David O. Childers, M.D., Neurodevelopmental-Behavioral Pediatrician

Date/Time: 04/02/19 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Location: Fullerwood Training Center - 10 Hildreth Drive St. Augustine, FL 32084



Upcoming Events

Toddler Time & Brunch Bunch

For ages 2-4 (Toddler Time) and ages 5-8 (Brunch Bunch). Fridays, 10-12:00 (dates TBD, once a month per age group). Come participate in activities and free play designed specifically for the minimally verbal child with autism, intellectual disability, and/or related disabilities. Caregivers and children will enjoy a small group setting where CARD/FDLRS staff will lead them in an Art Experience, Music and Movement activity and a group snack time. Staff will help promote play, and teach caregivers how to promote functional communication. Exercises are designed for those children who are not yet able to request items with phrases, whether vocally or via augmentative communication strategies. These activities will be followed up by a Mix and Mingle time where the adults can relax and chat while the children enjoy free play with staff. Groups are for active constituents. Must be registered with UF Developmental Pediatric Center, FDLRS-MDC and/or CARD. A copy of child's most recent IEP must be reviewed by staff prior to child participation. Caregivers provide snack and are to remain onsite for the duration of the activity. Maximum of 6 children per session. For more information contact elise.summa@jax.ufl.edu.

CARD/FDLRS Satellite Clinic – St. Johns County

February 5, 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M., The UF-Jacksonville Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) and the UF-Jacksonville Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System Multi-Disciplinary Center (FLDRS- MDC) offer clinics to outlying counties in order to more effectively serve their constituents. Sign up for a consultative appointment with clinicians who specialize in child psychology, behavior therapy, academic interventions, Autism Screeners, Transition, and more. Appointments are at no cost to the family. Location: South Woods Elementary. To schedule an appointment please contact chanel.baldwin@jax.ufl.edu, (904)633-0816.

Chip In For Youth – UF Health Autism Center (fundraiser)

Tickets available now * Event dates March 12-17, 2019, Chip In For Youth is a fundraising program created by The Players Championship for youth-related charities, schools, PTOs, booster clubs, sports teams, youth groups, and youth sports leagues. Thirty dollars of each \$55 Players Championship Stadium pass sold will be donated back to us. Chip In tickets can be used on any 1 day during TPC Sawgrass. Register for tickets [here](#) (remember to choose UF Health Autism Center (CARD) from the list and use the code: AUTISM).

****New**** CARD/FDLRS Sibshops

February 16, 2019 * 12:30 P.M.-3:30 P.M., When a child is diagnosed with a developmental disability, the entire family is affected. Sibshops are engaging and interactive workshops that offer support and guidance, while allowing siblings to share the challenges and celebrate the joys of having a brother or sister with a developmental disability. For kids ages 8-13 who have a sibling with a developmental disability. Registration is required. Location: Williams Family YMCA, 10415 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32257. These events are at no cost to the individual or family. For more information contact audrey.bringman@jax.ufl.edu. For a flyer about this event, click [here](#).

Kiddin' Around

A new program consisting of small group instruction which focuses on opportunities for social interaction with peers via board games and card games. Skill areas include: sharing the conversation, waiting, turn taking, giving compliments, accepting feedback, playing games fairly, oversharing of information, and making friends. Children must be between the ages of 8 and 12 and registered with CARD to participate. Sessions are offered twice monthly. All group meeting are held at the UF Health Developmental Pediatrics Center, 6271 St. Augustine Rd, Suite 1, Jax, FL 32217. CARD is a discretionary project of the Florida Department of Education. This grant funded program does not change for its services. For more information contact Chelsea.pierce@jax.ufl.edu.

Adolescent Game Group

An opportunity for quality social interactions with peers using board games and card games. Target skills: Sustaining attention, waiting, turn taking, conversation, problem solving, behavior regulation, understanding cues, interest-based leisure skill development. Prerequisite requirements: teens must be between ages 13-28 years and registered with CARD. Please speak with your CARD point of contact in order to determine if your teen meets the prerequisite skills needed to partake in this group. Please bring a preferred board or card game and a snack. All group meetings are held at the UF Health Developmental Pediatrics Center, 6271 St. Augustine Rd, Suite 1, Jax, FL 32217. CARD is a discretionary project of the Florida Department of Education. This grant funded program does not change for its services. For more information contact Chelsea.pierce@jax.ufl.edu.



Octavia Spencer, Best Supporting Actress: *The Help* (2011) is open about how dyslexia affected her in the classroom growing up. She's shared that she was "paralyzed with fear" when it was her turn to read aloud in class. "I didn't want to be made to feel not as smart as the other kids. I know that I'm a smart person." Since her Oscar win, she's appeared in several television series. She's mentioned that working in TV can be more difficult than film for people with dyslexia. That's because they have less time to memorize scripts. She's also written a children's book, *The Case of the Time-Capsule Bandit*.

Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/personal-stories/famous-people/10-oscar-winners-with-dyslexia#slide-9>

Photo credit: <https://www.biography.com/people/octavia-spencer-20724237>

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER:

The Gifted Parent Advisory Council (GPAC) meets four times per year to exchange information between the community and the school district about ways in which we can improve our efforts in serving our gifted students. Learning opportunities are provided at each meeting.

Parents of K-12 gifted students from throughout the district are encouraged to come to all of the meetings.

We meet from 6:30-8:00 p.m. Here are the remaining dates for 2018-19:

Gifted Parent Advisory Council and Parent Trainings

2018-2019

Thursday, February 28	Freedom Crossing Academy	6:30-8:00 p.m. Media Center
Tuesday, April 23	Palm Valley Academy	6:30-8:00 p.m. Media Center



Important Dates

Monday, Jan. 21— Martin Luther King Day/Student-Teacher Holiday

Friday , Feb. 15— Teacher Inservice Day/Student Holiday

Monday, Feb. 18— Presidents Day/Student-Teacher Holiday

Friday, Mar. 15— Teacher Planning Day/Student Holiday

Mon-Fri, Mar. 18-22—Spring Break/Student-Teacher Holiday

Friday, Mar. 29—Report Cards





Jill Tabala, Executive Secretary
(904) 547-7672 Jill.Tabala@stjohns.k12.fl.us

Program Specialists

Lynn Adkins (904)547-7697 (office)
Lynn.Adkins@stjohns.k12.fl.us
Specific Learning Disabilities, Learning Strategies,
Other Health Impaired, FSA/EOC Waivers

Helen DiMare, (904) 547-7692 (office)
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Gifted Services

George Freeman, (904) 547-7704 (office)
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Avery Greene, (904)547-7557 (office)
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Hospital Homebound, Orthopedically Impaired,
Traumatic Brain Injured, Visually Impaired, Virtual
School, Surrogate Parents, Private Instructional
Personnel, Parent Advisory Meetings

Leigh Ann Hale, (904)547-7678 (office)
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Transition, Intellectual Disabilities, Alternate
Assessment, Diploma Options/Deferrals

Sonia Howley, (904) 547-7543 (office)
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Speech/Language Impaired, Deaf Hard of Hearing

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Access Points Curriculum

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CHARACTER COUNTS!



Lori Stich, Confidential Staff Secretary
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Mission Statement: To identify and meet the unique educational needs of exceptional students and to provide support and resources to enhance educational opportunities so they become productive citizens.

ESE programs and services address the unique needs of students who are gifted in kindergarten through 12th grade and those with mild, moderate and severe disabilities from age three until they graduate with a regular diploma or until their 22nd birthday. ESE programs and services are designed to assist students in reaching their educational goals through the use of instructional and behavioral approaches which are research-based and exemplify best practices. Technology is used in many creative ways to meet student needs as well.

ESE services are available at all district schools for gifted students and students who have mild to moderate disabilities. PreK students with disabilities and students with more significant disabilities are served in cluster programs at selected sites. Program support is provided to students, parents and school personnel by program specialists based at the district office. Students with disabilities who are not eligible for services through the ESE program may be eligible for an accommodations plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

We hope that you find this newsletter informative and useful. *Parents As Partners Newsletters* are posted to the St. Johns County School District web site at <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/ese/>

