

Learning Circle Connection

Connecting you to events, resources, technology, curriculum, and instruction ...
Creating a learning community that uses best practices to meet the diverse
needs of all students

SAU 53 News and Reviews

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Sharing Best Practices Conference March 9

"Heroes are not giant statues framed against a red sky. They are people who say this is my community and it's my responsibility to make it better!" Tom McCall

Come see our SAU 53 heroes who are presenting this year., helping to make SAU 53 a better learning community.

There is a buzz in the air as people talk about the 101+ workshops being offered. With so many exciting presentations, it is difficult to choose. Hot topics include *Mahesh 101*, *Sakai Basics*, and *Performance Plus* formally known as Performance Pathways. The Literacy Task Force has expressed renewed interest in the *6 Traits Writing* model so these sessions will be very informative. Those of you who missed Carol Ann Edscorn's *Autism Ability Adventure* will have an opportunity to hear about her life living with Aspergers. Let's not forget the white board and other new technology that will be demonstrated.

If you signed up for Neil MacGregor's session on Word Q and Speak Q, you will get \$300 free software. Neil has a learning disability and will share his story about how Inspiration, Word Q, and Speak Q help him write with confidence. Word Q meets the needs of all writers as they listen to and then select words from a list to help them write. Writers can use the "read back" feature to listen to and edit their writing. Word Q reads most digital text including web pages, PDFs and Word documents. With Speak Q you dictate your writing.

Principals have reported that staff is very happy with plans for the day. The staff loves the fact that there are so many choices. The variety of options is diverse. There is even time to meet with grade level/specialists during the 3rd session. A teacher commented, "The SAU has never had something so big before." At recent SAU Leadership meeting, Principal, Terri Kenny along with others thanked Gail Paludi, Mary Rubega, and Peter Warburton for all their work to make this event happen.



The First Best Practice Celebration

Some of you may remember the very first Best Practice Celebration held June 2006 at the Cat n Fiddle Restaurant. The Learning Circle's mission statement includes unifying the SAU by establishing greater relationships with others. To accomplish this goal, members hosted "Let's Veg Out" with 35 people attending. An awareness of all the great things happening in SAU 53 was showcased with the showing of movie, "Growing in Best Practices" with popular tune, "Upside Down". A table of modified units and technology was available for viewing and the evening ended with "Veg out" discussions where personal best practices were shared. Ever since this first event, Learning Circle has heard, "When are we having another event?". It is thrilling to see a bigger and better Best Practice Celebration come to fruition this year. A special thank you to those who helped with planning, registration, and presentations for this magnificent event.

Scoop of Events

Feb. 18 1-3 at SAU, Literacy and Numeracy Task Force meetings

March 2 3-4:00 SAU, Book Study Look Me in the Eye. My Life with Aspergers by John Elder Robinson

March 6 Mahesh Workshop for Paras

March 24 Mahesh, ARD for grades 6/8

April 13 Mahesh, Village for grades K/1

April 14 6:30 Hill, Mahesh Parent Night

May 20 Mahesh, CCS for grades 5/6

Pool of Resources

[SAU Resource Center at PA library](#)

<http://www.sau53.org/lc/resource/lib.htm>

DVDs:

Mahesh's and SAU 53 videotaped classes

[The Paraprofessional's Role in Inclusive Classrooms](#)

Carol Ann Edscorn's SAU 53 [Autism Ability Adventure Presentations](#)

Books:

[Freaks, Geeks & Asperger Syndrome](#), by Jackson

[Thinking in Pictures](#) by Temple Grandin

[You're Going to Love this Kid](#) by Paula Kluth

Exchange

"Top 50 blogs for Special Educators" A great way to find ways to enhance your teaching and discover what others are doing is by reading blogs. The following 50 blogs provide tips and strategies, focus on assistive technology, explore specific learning challenges, share information about news, policy, and law, and more from other educators working in the field of Special Education. <http://www.onlineuniversities.com/blog/2009/12/50-best-blogs-for-special-ed-teachers/>



Mahesh models teaching math for 3rd grade at DCS.

Professor Mahesh Sharma Comes to SAU 53



Mahesh speaks with teachers at PA.

Mahesh is the founder and president of the Center for Teaching/Learning of Mathematics in Massachusetts. He is the former President and Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge College where he taught mathematic education for more than 35 years.

He is internationally known for his groundbreaking work in math learning problems and educations, particularly dyscalculia and other specific learning disabilities in mathematics.

Professor Sharma has been hired by our SAU to work with teachers and administrators to design strategies to improve math curriculum and instruction for all grade levels. Teachers and administrators have been intrigued by how easily students learn math concepts with the use of cuisenaire rods, base 10 blocks, and other hands-on activities. Students appear to be more successful in their math experiences, motivated by the games, and challenged with the lessons Mahesh presents.



Student learns to use Cuisenaire Rods to do math.

Mahesh advocates that with each new lesson, students need to experience developmentally the 6 levels of knowing: intuitive, concrete, pictorial, abstract, application, and communication.

The SAU Numeracy Task Force has adopted benchmarks that all students should be able to demonstrate proficiency in all number facts by the end of 4th grade. Three criteria should be used for mastering facts: response time should be under 3 seconds, problems should be presented randomly, immediate feedback is needed, and question and answer must appear together in some way for optimum learning. It is enlightening to learn from Professor Sharma. For more information about Mahesh, visit <http://www.Mathematicsforall.org>.



Numberless cards help students earn visualize numbers and learn math concepts.

“Students need to know number concepts, place value, and all math facts automatically by the end of 4th grade. Then in 5th grade target fractions, 6th grade integers, 7th grade pre-algebra, and 8th grade algebra.”

Mahesh Sharma

FASTT Math Fact Fluency

(Fluency and Automaticity through Systematic Teaching with Technology)

In December, 25 teachers attended a Deerfield training on Scholastic FASTT Math Software by Amy Conklin. The *FASTT Math* intervention program uses the research-validated FASTT system to help all students grades 2 and above develop fluency with basic math facts addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. *FASTT Math* assesses all students to uncover fluency gaps and to establish a baseline of fluency for each student. Then, *FASTT Math* automatically differentiates instruction in customized, 10-minute daily sessions. A student needs to use the program a minimum of 3 times a week to show progress.

FASTT Math helps build the long-lasting fluency students need to tackle higher-order math. Dr. Ted Hasselbring developed the *FASTT Math* approach which has been validated over several years of research with both non-struggling and struggling students. Math delayed students increased their fluency by more than 70%. Hasselbring also was involved with the programs *Reading Counts* and *Read 180*.

The program begins with a typing test to assess and compensate for keyboarding skills. Only 2-3 new facts are introduced at a time so as not to overload memory. It uses an expanded recall model, spacing targeted facts to get facts from short term memory to long term memory. A game practicing individual facts ends each session.

Deerfield is implementing FASTT Math in grades 2-4 to increase math fact fluency. The program is being piloted by Title 1 and a grade 3 at Hill School and Grade 7 at ARD. A parent reports, “My student came home with a FASTT Math certificate today. He loves the program! Our SAU also uses songs, *Mastering Math Facts* /Rocket Math, *Accelerated Math* Software, and many other programs to help with math facts fluency.

Research (Kulik 2003) supports the effective use of Computer Assisted Instruction for math. However typically it is used as a supplement to classroom instruction. Mahesh encourages concept building using hands-on experiences and oral practice prior to using programs such as rocket math, computer, mad minutes... Only after concepts are built should these programs be used to increase automaticity.



FASTT Math Training at DCS.

Autism Ability Adventure with Carol Ann Edscorn

Learning Circle hosted school visits and an after school community event on November 17.

Carol Ann gave an afternoon presentation to 6-7th graders at Three River's School where she kept student's attention as she spoke about understanding the challenges of autism, effects of bullying, and a need for a sense of belonging. Students enjoyed meeting her dog, Shakespeare who travels with her as a calming fidget tool when she becomes anxious. Upon leaving some students commented, "I will be your friend." A staff member shared, "For my student with Aspergers, it was an eye opening experience knowing she wasn't alone." "When Carol Ann left TRS she had tears in her eyes and expressed her gratitude for being able to speak with students which is her passion. At Pembroke Academy, students learned about neuroscience, the parts of the brain, and how the autistic brain works differently which affects daily living. Carol Ann shared that in spite of challenges, students with Aspergers often known as "Geeks" can become successfully employed.

The after school community event was attended by 85 staff, parents, students, and community members. People were impressed with Carol Ann's ability to speak after a full day of presentations. It was interesting to see and hear her self talk and deal with real emotions and brain derailments. The audience thought Carol Ann was very knowledgeable and seemed thrilled to hear her. One staff member emailed Carol Ann with these comments. "Thank you for your time today. You are an awesome presenter! I could have listened to you for hours! I am sorry for the pain you had to go through socially in your life... I am working with a young man and he identified with a lot you had to say, I think the most important thing I learned from today is "just be yourself".

Pembroke Action League donated refreshments for the event. If you missed this "fantastic", "excellent", "really good" event, Carol Ann is presenting during the second session in PA auditorium on March 9th workshop day. She promises to have additional research and more ideas to support students in the classroom.



TRS students enjoy meeting Shakespeare, Carol Ann's canine companion.



Carol Ann speaks with TRS students about the need to belong.

While I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome in 1994, my early childhood and school life was more typical of classical autism. I didn't talk until I was four years old. I did not participate in story time, recess games, or class discussions. I was teased, bullied, and misunderstood. I was also an accomplished artist by second grade, a musician, writing short stories my teacher thought publishable, and composing symphonies by eighth grade. I love the stars, music, words, my family, and my computer. I am a stranger in a strange world. I believe in life, love, and laughter."

Carol Ann Edscorn

Carol Ann's Favorite Books on Autism

When Carol Ann was asked about books she would recommend, she replied that Freaks, Geeks, and Aspergers Syndrome by Luke Jackson would be my favorite pick for hot topics that affect the lives of Aspergerian students and high functioning autism. It is written by a 13 year old boy with Aspergers. He is funny, direct, and his science is right on and current. It is an easy read and it is geared toward youth, for youth, by a youth so you get a great perspective, and a complete picture of the sensory, cognitive and social challenges. Another phenomenal read is Jackson Whole Wyoming by Joan Clark which is fiction based on fact about two 5th grade boys, one with Aspergers. For adults, Thinking in Pictures by Temple Grandin and You're Going to Love this Kid by Paula Kluth are phenomenal reads."

Reading Dogtails Program

Many schools in our SAU are already involved with this program sponsored by the Concord-Merrimack County SPCA. The mission of the program is to assist students with literacy skills. Students are given the opportunity to share a book with a pet therapy dog on a weekly basis. The concept of the student reading to a canine friend incorporates a student's love of animals and his/her desire to read. The program works with students who may have low self esteem, find the task of reading difficult, and are sometimes intimidated to read in the presence of their peers. Research shows that students are more willing to read to an animal than another person. It is not only fun but an educational experience.

Benefits to students include demonstrated progress with reading skills, improvement in confidence to read, and built self esteem. A special benefit is to receive a book at the end of the year, pawtographed by their canine reading partner. If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Shannon Camara at 753-9801 or email scamara@concordspca.org.



"I liked reading to the dog. He licked me all over!"

Learning Circle Helpline

Learning Circle has started a “Helpline” where Educational Friends offer to call ,email, answer questions or help others . Here are examples of educational friends sharing with others. Jan Santosuosso shared Brigrance Inventory and answered calls regarding its use. Val Leuchter and Heidi Cook shared a DVD on Differentiating Math and Co-Teaching. Jerrica Bradley allowed videotaping of autism room and explanation of program . Jean Fifty shared Mastering Math Facts program with another school. To join Learning Circle on SAKAI to access a list of other educational friends, email Vicki at vtherrien@sau53.org.

The Buzz

Thank you! Cristy Smith catalogues materials for Resource Center David Ricard's Industrial Technology Class at PA made bookshelves .



Learning Circle Mission

The Learning Circle exists to support General Educators, Special Educators, and Administrators in their fulfillment of the SAU philosophy of inclusion of students while promoting their educational gain. The Learning circle will: facilitate reflective practice groups around topics of interest, enhance knowledge of curriculum, instruction, resources, technology, assessment, and unify the SAU by establishing greater relationship with others. Dec. 2006

Learning Circle Members

AES/ARD : Kathy Cruson, Anne Burnett

CCS: Johanna Sanborn

DCS: Val Leuchter

ECS: Jan Santosuosso, Darcy May, Claire Flannery

VILLAGE/HILL : Mona Sandberg

TRS: Mark Richmond

PA: Janice Sheen

SAU: Peter Warburton, Gail Paludi, Patty Sherman

CO CHAIRS: Kathy Hering & Vicki Therrien



Learning Circle Connection will be published in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. Please look for the upcoming newsletter that will include news on SAU 53 summer workshops, Accommodation vs. Modifications, Alternate Portfolio Collaboration, Science, Data Teams, PBIS, and more.

Ann Halvorsen Visits SAU 53 to Learn about Inclusive Practices

Ann Halvorsen visited our SAU on Oct. 13 and 14. Ann is Professor at University of CA, Former Director of CA inclusive system change project, and Consultant to state LRE /Resource Project. She visited 5 states looking at the factors that facilitate inclusive services in states with much higher rates of Least Restrictive Environments. The Federal Government defines this as students spending 80% or more of their time in general education classes. It was quite an honor for Cheryl Jorgensen from UNH Institute on Disability to recommend our SAU to represent the state of NH. SAU 53 schools were chosen by number of students with significant disabilities in general education .

Ann commented on her time visiting with administrators and teams from Deerfield, Epsom, and Three Rivers Schools.

“I cannot begin to express my gratitude to all the SAU 53 staff who ensured that I was informed of your teaching and collaborative practices as much as possible in a very compressed time frame. I have collected a wealth of evidence of those instructional, reflective, and collaborative practices from you. There is a clear, pervasive inclusive vision for all students in SAU 53 articulated by people at every level, and this underlines all the ways in which people talk about children and do their work. There is a collaborative teamwork framework to develop, implement, evaluate, and individualize at the heart of the work that schools are accomplishing, and this is evident across all kids, not simply those “identified” but all. The priorities placed on systems for reflection upon one’s practice and the school resources/systems that support these, stand out as examples of a critically important element of researched based practices that is too often limited by districts with lesser commitment to excellence and equity of education. I want to thank you for giving me a window on your world. I know that providing inclusive supports is a process, not an event, and you are also much further down the road than so many. NH was a real highlight, it was an exhilarating and highly productive learning experience for me.”

Ann will bring back recommendations to the CA State Department of Education and use her findings to incorporate into the CA dual general and special education graduate credential programs.

As a token of her appreciation, Ann has donated the California Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms Training DVD and a book to our SAU 53 Resource Center.