

# SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

## Staff Member of the Month

Erin Upton, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Case Manager



Please join us in welcoming Mrs. Erin Upton to the SPED Team! Mrs. Upton comes to us from The Forbush School at Glyndon, a secondary special education setting that is part of the Sheppard Pratt Health System. For the past two years, Mrs. Upton served as an Assistant Principal and has previously taught health and science, along with various other content areas. While she counts her time in administration as some of the most challenging and rewarding moments of her career, Mrs. Upton's love of creative and intentional instruction has lead her back into the classroom.

Mrs. Upton began her career with the Baltimore City Public School System, where she learned that building authentic relationships with students was among her greatest joy. Since then, Mrs. Upton has adopted a philosophy of educating for happiness and wholeness in life. Completing her bachelor's degree in Health Education at Towson University in 2002, she then went on to complete her Master's degree in Educational Administration from McDaniel College in 2010. Pursuing a PhD is not out of the question, says Mrs. Upton.

Married for 13 years, Mrs. Upton and her husband have two children, Raleigh (10) and Jake (7). Mrs. Upton enjoys a good book to read and a suspenseful series on Netflix. Her true hobby is photography, where she loves capturing the moments of family and friends. Guided by her faith, Mrs. Upton feels called to be back into the classroom here at SEED, and is excited to support students in reaching their educational and personal growth goals.

### ISSUE 12: MARCH 2017

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## Accommodation of the Month: More White Space

This accommodation may seem like it's a waste of paper or just awkward. However, simply putting more room on the paper around the problems that students work on can drastically improve performance.

Giving student's more white space allows them room to work on problems, and makes a paper seem less overwhelming. How many of you did minute math in elementary school? The sheer

amount of problems on the half sheet of paper was overwhelming and could lead to shut down behaviors. However if they gave you 5 problems per page it wouldn't look quite so difficult.

Try adding white space to your next worksheet...it may be more pages but I bet you'll see less stress.

## Strategy of the Month: When is Direct Instruction Appropriate?

Direct instruction can be controversial lately as the push to be student driven becomes more widespread. Educators often struggle with finding an appropriate balance between letting students guide their learning and take ownership over their education and ensuring they understand the concepts.

While group projects and independent work are important to determining students' mastery, students often need to view examples and be given steps first. Student with special needs often require more direction and support and therefore the direct

instruction is extremely important for them.

One model that is quick and easy to implement which allows for students to demonstrate mastery and to receive the instruction is the "I do, We do, You do" model. Show them an example, with written steps or directions when possible, then have them help with a problem, then have them do one independently. Obviously this looks different in every room and subject but feel free to reach out to your special educator for support on ensuring you are giving a good balance of direct instruction and student activities.

By: Kristi Fausel

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## Grit and Growth: Establishing Mutual Trust with Families

In addition to working diligently with students, schools also have to establish and maintain a positive connection with the families from where the students come. This is a necessity because there is a proven link between positive family relationships and the student's sense of connectedness to the school. Both of these have a direct correlation with academic and behavioral success. Mutual trust with families can be achieved in many ways:

1. Make sure your initial contact with the family is positive. Find a specific strength in the student, an accomplishment or a reason why you are looking forward to work with the student.
2. Use appropriate titles when referring to the members of the family so that you don't appear uniformed, disrespectful or condescending.
3. Listen and learn both the message and the tone of the family during conversations. Hold your thoughts, do not dominate the conversation and specifically invite the family member's suggestions.
4. Avoid terminologies and use language that the family members will understand. Present your ideas in an easy to understand, everyday language, lest you appear condescending.
5. Project an attitude of confidence and respect the family's concern even if you feel it is not warranted. Believe in the family: they care and they are doing their best to support their child. Cultivate an open mind and respond appropriately and sensitively.
6. Sustain an on-going rapport with the family. Avoid interacting with the family only when there is a crisis.

In conclusion, the overall goal is to provide adequate quantity and quality interactions with families as long as their child is under your care. Treat families with the diversity of their cultural, educational, social, economic, and religious or any other characteristics.

By: Francis Lando, Ed. D  
Adapted from Voltz, Sims & Nelson, 2010.



## Director's Corner

If a special education student, who attended SEED, went to another high school for the day, without permission from SEED officials, and was then assaulted at that school, who do you think would be liable for not implementing services outlined in her IEP if she filed a negligence claim against SEED? Do you think that her claim would be legitimate and that SEED would be liable? If we look at existing case law, it can be quite instructive in helping us answer those questions. In the case of *Doe v. Rochester School District*, a student who had cognitive and social functioning delays filed a claim against the Rochester School District for negligence. Her IEP called for door-to-door transportation and an aide to accompany her throughout the school day. Since she wasn't properly supervised and did not have her aide, the courts accepted her claim of negligence. The student initially reported to police that she was attacked and raped during lunchtime in a girls' bathroom near the cafeteria at a high school in the district that she did not attend. She said that an African-American student, who was a student at the high school that she actually attended, attacked her; however, after school officials reviewed video footage, they deemed it impossible for the student to have been assaulted at that location. Later, the student reported to police that her assailant was an unknown, white student with a scar on his neck and placed the location of the rape in the girls' locker room of a school she did not attend. She said the incident took place in the afternoon. Again, video evidence did not support this claim. After the filing of the state court lawsuit, the student was required to give sworn testimony at a deposition. This time, she said her assailant was an adult, African-American male, whom she believed worked as a janitor at the high school where she was attacked.

In her deposition, the student, yet again, changed the location and the time of the rape to bleachers on an athletic school field during after-school hours. Because of cognitive and social functioning delays as well as her fear and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the attack, the courts after an appeal allowed changes to her initial claim. The case then moved forward, and the school was allowed to further investigate the allegations. It's not clear from court documents why the student was at the school in the first place. It is also unclear how she ended up at this high school, which was not the school she attended. Some information states that she walked; another account states that a teacher from the high school that she attends drove her to the high school where she was assaulted. Do you think that the school district will be held liable for the injuries incurred by the student while she was at another school? Stay tuned for an update in our next installment.

By: Patricia Richardson

## Psychologist Corner

### Why Kid's Shouldn't Sit Still in Class!

<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/well/family/why-kids-shouldnt-sit-still-in-class.html?referer=http://m.facebook.com>

Found By: Ryan Brown

## OUR TEAM

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