

EMPLOYMENT

E1 - Child care
 E2 - Employment agencies
 E3 - Help wanted
 E4 - Resumes
 E5 - Sales help wanted
 E6 - Trade schools
 E6A - Employment Aids
 E7 - Work wanted

Child Care Providers

Interview School District

4-11

THE MORNING NEWS

CLERICAL STUDENTS - High School/College. Spend your summer vacation earning top dollar! Must be 18, have reliable transportation, home phone. Confirm your work availability now! No fees! 341-6881

CLERICAL TEACHERS - Spend your summer vacation earning top dollar! Register now for priority placement. No fees. 341-6881

PERSONNEL SERVICES
 2424 Burton SE
 957-3661

DELIVERY SALES - Part time. Saloon and Gift Shop. Have good driving record. 1811 Plainfield NE.

DENTAL ASSISTANT - Southeast Orthodontic office. Someone to work in a team oriented setting. Send resume to: 2423 Burton, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

DENTAL ASSISTANT - Circulating, in Grandville. Flexible hours. Please call or send resume to Dr. Jeff Smith, 3181 Prairie SW, Grandville

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DRIVER/LOCAL - are openings for every. Full time. C.J.O.B.S. Fee

DRIVERS - DOU - growing restaurant. Pa. drivers. We 3 wages, tips and in. If you want to work fun-filled atmosphere ply at 1874 - 29th MI. Must be 18 yrs

DRIVERS - Need - eration. We are a ment daily. Come ply in person. 577 Grand Rapids, MI

DRIVERS

LAKE STATES T - established nation v needs professional pending operation

WE CAN OF

- Well maintained.
- Spouse passenger

Named after that part of the day which provides the greatest opportunity, The Morning News reports activities of the transition grant project. This publication is made possible by a grant from the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, contract #91405. Life Skills Institute, Jenison Public Schools, Jenison, MI 49428.

JANUARY 1991



Included in this issue:

- The Road to Independence is Lined With People
- The Mail Box
- Introducing: The Curriculum System
- It's "Student Friendly"

About Our Cover: The road to independence is lined with people, like "Bud" (right) at D&W Food Center, Jenison, Michigan. Bud is pictured with his fellow employee, Mike (left).

The Road to Independence is Lined with People


-Carol Gray

Recently, as I was discussing returning to college with someone at work, he indicated I had better hurry because I'm getting pretty old. Over Christmas vacation, a relative mentioned to me, "Wow, you sure are looking older." While those two comments took me by surprise, getting older has not. Getting older is what I expected with the passage of time.

Getting older is basic to all of us. It's something we can't totally control. We can eat right, run fast, and jump alot to music, but we won't look 23. We will look better, as we grow older.

Understanding the degree of control we have over events and other people is critical to being at peace with them. Acceptance and attitude is everything. For example, once my hairdresser understood I had no interest in dying my graying hair, she assumed a different perspective..."Carol, more and more your hair is getting natural highlights."



Left to Right: Looks like the eyesight started to slip first.  At least I still have my hair. Tick tock, Carol Gray.

I'm limited as to the improvements I can make on my exterior. Still, figuring I have limitless control over my interior, I found myself reading books on success over vacation. If you've the time or a vacation coming, I recommend, "Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive," by Harvey Mackay, and "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen R. Covey. Both books discuss control from several perspectives. These books helped me realize that with modifications these concepts of success are as applicable to most of our students with autism, as are books on autism...in terms of curriculum and effective education, probably moreso.



In Stephen Covey's book, he discusses how people grow from dependence, to independence, to interdependence. He says, "Life is, by nature, highly interdependent. To try to achieve maximum effectiveness through independence is like trying to play tennis with a golf club - the tool is not suited to the reality."

This past fall provided a good example of independence without an understanding of interdependence. In a regular education class, one of our students was consistently talking out in class. Even the most insignificant question or comment from the teacher would bring an immediate response from the student. For example, in talking about a specific shopping mall in the area, the teacher said, "I don't know if any of you have ever been to this mall, but..." and the student immediately shouted, "NO! I have NEVER been there!"

We addressed this problem in a support session, using an instructional technique we refer to as "Social Reading." We showed our student a videotape of of him in his classroom. We first asked him to name objects in the classroom, and he did - chairs, tables, pictures, pencils. Then, we asked him to point to people in the room - and he did - to his teacher, and himself. When asked if anyone else was in the room, he answered "No", despite the fact the room was full of students he would otherwise call by name. Several times he denied there were other students in the room. They simply were not relevant.

From our student's perspective, the teacher was talking to only him, and he was answering her. He did not understand that to be independent, to be allowed to remain in the classroom, he could not continue interrupting the class and the other students. Understanding the problem more clearly, we were able to write social packets for our student describing his responsibility to other students in that classroom. His behavior improved. At the next support session, we showed him another video of him in the same classroom. This time, he readily identified other students in the classroom.

If Stephen Covey is right, and I believe he is, the goal of education for our students is not independence. The goal is interdependence. The goal is not independent living. The goal is interdependent living. The goal is not to work independently. The goal is to work interdependently. The goal is for our students to have a functional and applied understanding of those events they have complete control over, those they control with others, and those they cannot control. There is no independence without successful interdependence.

We have a responsibility, as part of our grant, to write a manual by March 31st of this year describing our curriculum system. This curriculum system is based on ethical standards we wrote a few years ago. In light of the two books mentioned in this article, "The Ethical Standards" read like an adapted, functional definition of interdependence. In coming issues, we will describe some aspects and components of our curriculum system. In this issue, we share a brief history/introduction, and the latest development with the system - forms that are "student friendly."

When it is finished, we hope our manual will reflect an understanding not only of autism and developmental disabilities, but an understanding of success as well. In several newsletters we have often said "Welcome to the challenges of this grant". For us, this manual is among the most difficult of the challenges. We sincerely welcome your feedback.

(A copy of "The Ethical Standards" referred to in this article is available on request, enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope.)

Introducing...

The Curriculum System

We realized early in this project that the curriculum we needed to teach Donna to work at McDonalds, or to teach Steve how to participate in Retailing, probably was not going to come in the mail. This was especially true considering the curriculum would also need to address the specific learning characteristics of students with autism. To get an objective picture of how our students were progressing in a wide variety of learning environments, we needed one curriculum to address the needs of any student in any learning environment. Not only did we need it, our grant required that we would create it.

Why is it the most challenging projects often take us to remote corners of our brain, only to bring us around to discovering the most logical, common sense solutions? In retrospect, the first year we engaged in some pretty silly efforts and developed rather odd looking forms in our effort to develop a curriculum and evaluation system that would work. It was frustrating, creating and tossing out what we had developed. Still, we learned something. We learned what wouldn't work.



After writing "The Ethical Standards," the effort toward a responsive curriculum was clearer, and more productive. The last three years we have been developing objectives, instructional techniques, and procedures based on the Ethical Standards. The result is a curriculum system that: 1) is based on Ethical Standards; 2) provides comparable information on student progress across environments (vocational/regular education/community); 3) is created by teachers while incorporating input from staff, parents, and students; 4) grows along with students and staff; 5) can incorporate new research or developments; and 5) can be developed from existing resources found in any school system. Currently, we call it The Curriculum System.

One Aspect of The Curriculum System:

it's "Student Friendly"

Prior to placing a student in a new vocational placement recently, we paged through our books of objectives to select objectives that would apply to her upcoming training. In these books, objectives are written one to a page, with blank spaces for staff to complete individual information. While the student was able to read the objectives to me, she could not tell me what they meant...therefore, I would interpret them back to her, explaining the terms which were too difficult.

In was in this session that a problem with our curriculum became readily apparent. If students were to be able to participate in the curriculum, why were the objectives...central to the curriculum... written in professional vocabulary? While the student did not understand most of the objectives - i.e. "Student will initiate greetings," she did understand when the objectives were re-stated more simply, "Student will say 'Hello' to people at work." It seemed logical for the objectives to be written in a simpler vocabulary.

As a result, the objectives are gradually being re-written in the easiest vocabulary and format possible. In this way, students with a 2nd to 3rd grade reading ability will be have a voice in the development of their curriculum, with minimal assistance reading the objectives.

Prior to the beginning of any placement, objectives are placed on an evaluation form. These forms looked great, but were also designed for staff use in professional vocabulary. It became obvious that if we wanted our students to benefit from self evaluation, we needed forms written in a format and vocabulary students could easily understand.

Therefore, we redesigned the evaluation format on the computer. This wasn't easy, as we did not want to simplify our evaluation forms if it meant omitting the detailed information staff rely on to measure progress and assist our students. As a result, our current "student friendly" evaluation form can be folded vertically down the center, with the left side designed for use by students, and both sides used by coaches or observers to record progress. Initial responses from students and staff to pilot use of the "student friendly" evaluation forms have been very positive - positive enough that all future evaluation forms will be "student friendly."

What we thought was a finished curriculum - at least in terms of

the objectives and evaluation forms - is now a curriculum in a state of transition. We are moving toward a completely re-written system that will be parent, professional, and student friendly.

We have a small packet which includes one evaluation form written in the two formats - the former professional vocabulary, and the new "student friendly" form. If you would like a copy, please send a stamped, self addressed envelope to us indicating you would like us to send you the evaluation form packet.

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FROM THE MAIL BOX

Thank you to those of you who sent us Christmas cards! We were genuinely surprised, and appreciated your greetings. Thank you...

An Andrews Announcement!

Our warmest congratulations to Dave and Melissa Andrews on the birth of a beautiful daughter, Marley Elizabeth. Marley was born just in time for Christmas, December 21, 1990.

Newsletters

We received a newsletter recently from the Burger School for the Autistic, Career Exploration and Development Program, in Garden City, Michigan. We appreciate hearing about other programs, and receiving new ideas in the mail... thank you. We also have received newsletters from other programs as well. Please keep us on (or add us to!) your mailing lists! Thanks!

Change of Addresses

Just a reminder to keep us posted should you change your address. If you no longer wish to receive THE MORNING NEWS, please let us know that, also. It will help us keep our mailing list current.

Two Reminders: Please Don't Share This Newsletter, and Eat Right

A few issues ago, we asked you not to share this newsletter, as we wanted to increase our subscribers to qualify for bulk mail. We most likely have enough subscribers, but it occurred to us that if anything should HAPPEN to any of our subscribers, we could fall below bulk mail status. We are waiting a few months to build a "subscriber cushion" to put us above bulk mail status. Compared to Time/Life, we've a small subscriber list - small newsletters like ours feel compelled to remind their subscribers to eat right and drive carefully - we need you!

Next Month In THE MORNING NEWS

- We'll talk about other aspects and components of The Curriculum System.

- We have been indicating for a few months we would like to write more about our experiences in regular education. We hope to do that in our February or March issue.

- We have asked another agency to write a summary of their activities for THE MORNING NEWS, and they agreed. We hope to run their article in one of the next issues.

To request articles or additional information, please contact:

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