

Learning *For* Life

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*Wildwood Programs is a non-profit,
 non-sectarian organization for the
 neurologically impaired, affiliated
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 Association of America (LDA)*



Wildwood School

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A Letter from the Director of Education



Cheryl Marcella
 Director of Education

Here at school we are very pleased and satisfied with all of the positive things happening but our accomplishments have not slowed the energy one bit. Our Professional Learning Committees continue to demonstrate positive changes in how we work together to promote growth for students and staff. We are already seeing a more organized, efficient and consistent

Wildwood School as we continue to work within our program level and department PLCs. We have just gathered all of our baseline data by completing the formative assessments for each student. We will continue to use the assessments throughout the year to monitor areas of growth and determine where we need to devote additional time and implement different strategies.

As pleased as we are, we certainly have not become complacent. We have developed a Family Advisory Council. It is a group comprised half of family members and half of Wildwood staff. We are very excited about the potential such a group offers and the synergy that their observations, discussions and teamwork will bear. Right now, that group is forming and developing priorities and direction for their future course. I know the members are going to have a profound and positive effect on the growth of school.

An unfortunate fact of living in today's world has directed our attention to the safety of everyone at school. The recent acts of violence in Connecticut, Colorado and California have reminded us that we need to prepare as much as possible for what used to be unthinkable. We have had a safety plan in place for years but it is time to update it, drawing on expertise both in and outside of our organization and follow the guidelines of the plan to the letter whenever any circumstance warrants it. It may not be anyone's favorite topic, but it is a necessity of the highest priority and we are working on its development as we speak.

This issue is full of interesting topics that I know you will enjoy. We cover everything from our staff's grant writing efforts to our new positive behavioral supports plan to our new uses of technology to the changes in the diploma (soon to be called a credential) our students will receive upon graduation starting in 2013-2014. Please take time to read about the spectrum of positive work being done by our staff and, as always, please share your thoughts and ideas with us for making Wildwood School all it can be.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports



Meghan Whelan
Lead Behavior Specialist

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a system approach to presenting and responding to school and classroom behavioral problems. Wildwood School is implementing the PBIS model at the high school and young adult program levels in the near future.

The Professional Learning Communities initiative has already laid the groundwork for creating goals and outcomes for our students and PBIS will shape how we acknowledge and reward students meeting these standards. In addition, the system will create common language and goals for addressing challenging behaviors and will help strengthen consistency throughout school. Universal expectations will be developed and communicated to all students and staff and those expectations will be maintained throughout school. Each student's individuality will be considered but the same universal expectations will be applied throughout the student population. We can tailor each student's plan to their learning and behavior style and make setting a consistent environment more practical and streamlined without sacrificing individualized attention.

The process is data-driven and will be tailored to the special needs of Wildwood students. A strong emphasis is placed on acknowledging and rewarding positive behavior and the practice of "catching" a student doing the right things and upholding the universal expectations. The universal expectations are currently in the process of being developed by staff and students.

The school staff sees the movement toward PBIS, like curriculum development and the formation of the Professional Learning Communities, as part of the process of continually improving Wildwood School.

Fast Facts on the New Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential



Scott Iovinella
Transition Specialist

Students graduating from Wildwood School on, or after, 2014 will receive a newly approved credential from their school district. In February of this year, the Board of Regents approved the replacement of the IEP diploma with the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC) for students who participate in the New York State Alternate Assessment. The standards and educational requirements set forth by the New York State Education Department are based on the Career Development and Occupational Standards (CDOS). These standards are designed to help students develop the functional skills needed for their futures beyond school. Wildwood School has been providing education based on CDOS for many years and the new Credential helps to highlight the skills students achieve while they are here.

Below are the key areas of education that the new Credential outlines:

- Career Development • Integrated Learning • Universal Foundation Skills • Basic Academic Skills • Thinking Skills
- Personal Qualities • Interpersonal Skills • Technology • Managing Information • Managing Resources • Systems.

Additional information about the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential can be found on the New York State Education Department's website at: <http://www.p.12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SACCMemo.htm> or feel free to call Scott Iovinella, Transition Specialist at 640-3398 siovinella@wildwoodprograms.org.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Wildwood School is to educate students with autism spectrum disorders, neurological impairments and complex learning disabilities by developing skills to live, work and recreate at their highest level of independence.

What You Don't Know Won't Fund You



Ryan Patrie
Adaptive Physical Education Teacher

Teachers encounter many financial challenges when trying to implement new programs, improve current curriculum or purchase new equipment. These challenges can have a significant impact on the quality of the education their students receive. Teachers with a plan to improve their students' learning environment often have to turn to grants. Whether you are in a healthy economy or not, money is always available, you just have to know where to look. There are many opportunities to generate funds. Many funding and grant resources exist through community and state and federal governments. The Wildwood Physical Education Program along with The Wildwood Foundation have received over \$18,800 in grants during the 2012 calendar year aimed at programs to improve student's health and wellness.

\$1,800 has come from two local organizations; The Hudson-Mohawk Road Runners Club and New York State's Capital Zones Association For Health, Physical Education Recreation and Dance. With funds from these community organizations students have not only been able to participate in the Wildwood School Running Club but have been able to take part in local 5K road races.

This spring Wildwood Programs will start construction on a low ropes course at Curry Road. The elements will be built right into the trees and the natural surroundings providing an active, challenging, supportive environment where individuals can test their nerve and physical abilities. The project is possible through a \$5,000 grant received through The Charles R. Wood Foundation.

With already \$12,000 received through grants from First Niagara Bank and the Maximus Foundation, Wildwood Programs is half way towards our goal of \$24,000 for the development of a fitness center. The fitness center will be in our Latham location and will serve our young adult program and many individuals from our agency. Regular participation in physical activity can have tremendous health benefits. A fitness center will allow all individuals to increase their participation in physical activity. Through exercise and physical activity, all will be able to build stamina making the demands of daily life easier and even leaving extra energy for the pursuit of leisure and social activities.

Instructional Technology



Mark Guifre
Instructional Technology Specialist

After teaching at Wildwood for over 10 years, I am honored to be in the new role of Instructional Technology Specialist. This position encompasses a diversity of tasks and responsibilities throughout the school. Since September, I have been helping educators infuse technology with teaching and instructional practices in order to make learning more engaging and effective; staying on top of current research in the field and filtering information for staff; providing training opportunities to teachers, related service providers, and families; exploring accessibility options that many devices offer to provide more opportunities for our students; and analyzing our continuing need for technological equipment and devices based on budget considerations and strong potential for results.

Over the past several months, we have accomplished a lot as a school. Teachers are infusing more technology into their everyday practice whether using iPads, Smartboards, computer applications, or other devices. There continues to be an increasing demand for training opportunities to use these innovations in technology with a focus on how they can complement strong and innovative instructional practices. There is also a notable shift occurring from solely using technology as a consumption tool to using it more creatively by redefining tasks that were previously inconceivable. As an example, students may use an iPad application to work on social skills and emotions by identifying pictures on flash cards on the iPad. Moving beyond this simple activity, we now see students creating social stories on the iPad using pictures and text, recording their voice, and making it a personally relevant experience.

Everyday I see new and different things being implemented for which I am very excited. Having a clear plan of how we use technology with our students is important. We are lucky to have many resources here at Wildwood, and the capacity to effect great change through the use of technology.

I look forward to what the future will bring in this ever-changing role as Instructional Technology Specialist. You may contact me at mgiufre@wildwoodprograms.org for questions or comments.

School News

CLASSROOM 3 has been hard at work learning new skills through the ACE program. The students have been learning how to cook and sharing a special meal with the other elementary classrooms. During December, the students enjoyed learning about different holidays and celebrating with their friends!

CLASSROOM 7 was very festive in December. We learned about a variety of holidays that are celebrated around the world. We read about and enjoyed Hanukkah, Las Posadas, Kwanza and Christmas celebrations. In January, we learned about and experienced outdoor winter activities as well as focused on kitchen safety and meal preparation. We have a lot to look forward to!

CLASSROOM 10 has been working hard and having fun! We have been working on increasing independence in the halls and learning kitchen and cooking sight words. We are looking forward to using the Smart Board for learning and

the iPad has been great to work with too. We are looking forward to more fun and learning this spring!

CLASSROOM 15 continues to run its monthly cupcake business, "Cheaper by the Dozen". December 2012 was our most successful month so far with over 130 cupcakes sold. Our business allows our students to practice money, cooking and social skills. We thank everyone for their continued support.

CLASSROOM 18 has had a variety of new experiences. In the fall, our class took a trip to Bowman Orchard to pick apples. We recently welcomed our wonderful new speech therapist, Kaleigh McGrouty. Holiday activities included visiting the Pryun House to see 19th century Christmas decorations. The students also made and wrapped gifts for their families. Students enjoyed the holiday dance and had their own classroom feast, which they helped to prepare. The students are looking forward to more educational community outings to come.

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 8 - MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION WITH CAPTAIN SQUEEZE & THE ZYDECO MASHERS BAND CONCERT

FEBRUARY 18 - 22 - WINTER RECESS

MARCH 5 - HALF DAY OF SCHOOL

MARCH 29 - SCHOOL CLOSED

APRIL 1 -5 - SPRING RECESS

APRIL 27 - FAMILY NIGHT AT CURRY ROAD

APRIL 23 - SCHOOL CLOSED - STAFF TRAINING DAY (dependent on the number of snow days used)

MAY 27 - SCHOOL CLOSED - MEMORIAL DAY

JUNE 5 - HALF DAY OF SCHOOL

JUNE 20 - YOUNG ADULT PROGRAM GRADUATION

JUNE 21 - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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A P U B L I C A T I O N O F :

