



Welcome to our e-mail newsletter

As part of our cost-saving initiative, State Support Team Region 8 is piloting an e-mail newsletter. Let us know your suggestions by e-mailing Dr. Karen Majeski at karenm@cybersummit.org.

Save the date: Portage County Transition Fair set for April 9

Families interested in learning about transition services are invited to attend the Portage County Transition Fair on Saturday, April 9, from 9 a.m. to noon at Maplewood Career Center, 7075 State Route 88 in Ravenna.

Intervention specialists, parent mentors and special education directors are asked to inform families about the free event. A number of agency representatives will attend with breakout sessions held on Social Security, guardianship and other topics.

The Portage County Transition Resource Council, which was established last spring, is organizing the event as part of its mission to provide linkages for families and students. The group has also developed a referral form and a link on the Portage County ESC website.

New members are encouraged to attend the meetings held on the second Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. at the Portage County ESC. Contact **Helen Brophy** at helenb@cybersummit.org or call **Rayna Antol** at 330-297-1436.

Continuous learning happening with teacher-based teamwork

By Mary Ellen Murray, SSTR8 Consultant

As we continue to work with districts in the Ohio Improvement Process, we are focusing on learning about effective practices through teacher-based teamwork or TBTs. In order to be a "learning organization," two things must happen. All levels of a school must develop the work from common and relevant data and then the groups must work together. Student learning really happens when teachers become learners of their own teaching and when students become their own teachers. The same is true for teams and leaders.

Successful schools and districts understand that an inquiry-based way of doing business is predicated on firm foundations. McNulty and Besser have found there are "Three Ss" to this success: **SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, and SUPPORTS.**



What do I see in the schools?

By Dr. Karen Majeski,
SSTR8 Director



This year, I've had more opportunities to be out in our schools, working with teams supporting the philosophy of inclusive practices for all children. I'm encouraged to see a growing trend where EVERY student is actively included, regardless of abilities and needs. Here are some examples.

- Administrators are leading initiatives with their staffs to develop a culture that supports teachers working together to teach lessons that engage all students with varied practices.
- Building schedules are being redesigned to provide opportunities to include all students in general education classes and to allow teachers time to share and teach together to offer enrichment or additional support.
- Discussions are taking place among general educators and intervention specialists to plan together and look at options for new and innovative ways to improve student learning.

We still have a long way to go, but more educators are beginning to understand what must be done. I believe it is our role to support general educators in accepting every student and knowing how to access resources for each student's unique needs. SSTR8 is also supporting principals, intervention specialists and parents as their schools become more established in their inclusive practices.

I encourage interested teachers, administrators and parents to contact me, so we can talk about how to develop an inclusive culture within your school.

How to address Section II of the IMPACT Process: 'Environments Matter' in preschools, early childhood

By Sarah Jackson, Early Learning and School Readiness Coordinator

In a recent review of the IMPACT program plans for preschool special education and early childhood entitlement grant programs, many educators are working to strengthen curricular practices featured in Section II: Environments Matter.

This section focuses on

- effective implementation of curriculum and assessment practices,
- how to support young children's social emotional development and
- procedures for supporting data use and teacher reflection on instructional practices.

SSTR8's Early Learning team suggests three ways to support your program in developing a better understanding of how to achieve the quality defined with the Early Learning Program Guidelines. As you develop a plan to submit to ODE this May, please consider the following suggestions:

1. Establish a Program Curriculum Study Group

Developing a deeper understanding of the quality practices defined in the Early Learning Program Guidelines can be achieved through a study group process within your program. Areas within this section of the ELPG may include: addressing content areas with young children, understanding developmentally appropriate practices, curricular practices that lead to successful inclusive settings, building a comprehensive assessment system, and strengthening classroom environments. If your program is interested in designing a study group for the 2011-2012 school year, SSTR8 may be able to assist with purchases to support this professional development. We can provide assistance in developing a study group plan and identify resources that you might want to consider based on your IMPACT goals.

2. Incorporate the use of the CLASS tool

Early childhood programs that have used the CLASS observation tool continue to provide evidence showing how the tool has helped their program focus on the instructional elements that lead to positive outcomes for children and result in a change of classroom practice. CLASS features 10 research-based instructional elements that focus supervisors' and teachers' classroom observations on best practices in their work with young children. The CLASS system is available for use in preschool and can be used to address the IMPACT requirement for annual classroom observations. Training for using the CLASS system and informational overview for teachers observed using CLASS is available through SSTR8.

3. Online resources for Early Childhood professionals

New inclusive practices resources from ODE and OREC will provide early childhood professionals with a wealth of information regarding learning experiences, lesson planning, project based approach, articles, websites, and research on best practices within inclusive settings. Visit <http://rec.ohiorc.org/default.aspx>. For more information about the opportunities listed above, contact Sarah Jackson at sarahj@cybersummit.org.

ECT training includes videotaping

By Jennifer Hood, SSTR8 Consultant

Five times this year, five regional building-based teams of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and speech and language pathologists are taking part in ECT or Environmental Communication Teaching training.

According to certified ECT instructor Kelly Fonner, M.S., ECT involves different techniques, as well as assistive and educational technology in the classroom environment. As part of the ECT training, participants use scripts in classroom situations to help students who have complex communication needs.

Some of these episodes are videotaped and later reviewed by Fonner, as well as the entire group, and then used as examples of ECT techniques. Using a prepared review procedure, each team's videotaped activities/strategies and communication support materials are discussed.

SSTR8 is sponsoring the training in conjunction with the Medina Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Awards Recognition

Luncheon set for May 13

The annual Awards Recognition Luncheon or Gala is planned for Friday, May 13, at St. George Fellowship Hall in Akron from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Visit <http://sst8.org> to download nomination forms for both students and educators. For more information, contact Maureen Cacioppo at maureenc@cybersummit.org or 330-929-6634, ext. 511219 or Alice Doyle at aliced@cybersummit.org or 330-929-6634, ext. 511232.

SSTR8 workshops planned for Spring

Visit <http://sst8.org> for more information and to register for upcoming workshops. Topics include a number of preschool and early childhood sessions, as well as special education and literacy.

Visit our newly updated website <http://sst8.org>
Register for workshops, click <http://sst8.org/Workshops/Default.aspx>