

SEPAC



PRESS



Volume 1, Issue 1

February 2008

Notes from the PAC...

I think we're off to a good start if January's PAC meeting is any indication. Everyone brought lots of ideas to our brainstorming session including doing a cash calendar to raise money for the PAC once we get our paperwork in to become a non-profit organization. In the meantime, the Salisbury PTA voted to allocate \$250.00 for the SEPAC, and we would like to sincerely thank them for their generous contribution.

Topics for speakers and workshops of interest included assistive technology, alternative therapies, transition planning, developing advocacy skills, and special needs planning, among several others. We will also look into the possibility of doing a Sib Shop for the siblings of children with special needs. We will

keep you posted as things develop.

So far we have formed two subcommittees: one to develop an after school activities program, and another to work on our newsletter, the SEPAC Press. If anyone is interested in joining either of these subcommittees, contact Dawn Atkinson (whitemagik@comcast.net) or Linda Rivera (hotfoot98@hotmail.com).

Speaking of our newsletter, in every issue you can expect to see a "Spotlight" section in which we will be highlighting achievements: either a student's or a staff member who has gone above and beyond for our SPED kids. There will be an area to answer frequently asked questions entitled "Just the Facts, Please". Chris Kneeland, our Director of Pupil Services will contribute a monthly column appropriately named "Chris' Corner" In

"Points of Interest" we will have a different topic each month. This month will focus on the ACE program at SES. Future topics will include other programs in our district, a book a parent has read and recommends, or a little information about a particular diagnosis or resource...that sort of thing. The "Quote of the Month" will hopefully inspire you, motivate you, or at least give you something to think about.

This is a very exciting time for us and with the reconstruction of the Parent Advisory Council underway, I hope that we will see many more parents and staff at future meetings. Your support will go a long way toward making special education a positive and enriching experience.

I hope that you enjoy your first issue of the SEPAC Press. ©

— Dawn Atkinson

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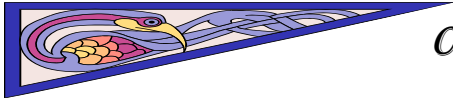
Please Make A Note of it...

- The next PAC meeting will be February 27th at 7pm in the Triton High School Library.

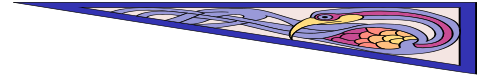
• Quote of the Month

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

—Martin Luther King



CHRIS' CORNER



Chris Kneeland
Adm. Of Pupil Services

Dear Families,

It is with great enthusiasm and pleasure that I contribute to *Chris' Corner*, of the first edition of the Newsletter. I am

honored and thrilled to stand side by side and join efforts with Dawn Atkinson, President and Linda Rivera, Vice President of the Triton Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Their boundless energy and thoughtful insight will afford the opportunity of many new and remarkable initiatives to take place for the students in our wonderful district. I commend them

for their efforts in bringing momentum to our SEPAC and making it one of the best and most productive SEPAC's in the Cape Ann region. Please consider participating and sharing in this exciting endeavor.

"Things can be different only if you can make them different."

Regards,

Chris

Points of Interest

The Alternative Community Education Program at Salisbury Elementary School

The goal of the ACE Program is to provide a safe environment so that students can experience success in academic and emotional challenges, build self-esteem and competency, with the goal of becoming responsible members of the school community.

Objective

The students will: Experience a learning environment where it is safe to succeed, fail, and take academic and personal risks; understand their learning style and use compensatory skills when operating outside their style; receive opportunities for academic remediation in areas of weakness; complete expected grade level academics; increase their emotional growth and self-knowledge through counseling, processing, feedback in groups and interpersonal skills; develop their capacity to accept responsibility for their choices and behaviors as well as consequences; use conflict resolution concepts/skills to work through issues; learn to modulate their emotions and develop strategies to cope during stressful



situations; be able to tolerate feedback from peer and view it as a useful tool; and feel empowered to advocate for their needs in a respectful manner.

Purpose

While we value students equally, some identified students require more intensive services to benefit educationally from their environment. The philosophy of ACE is to provide an alternative environment where a student learns to accept responsibility for his/her behavior and choices and accepts logical consequences. With this knowledge, the student is empowered and develops a stronger sense of competency and the skills to work toward success. Components of this program include academics, remediation, socialization, family work, counseling, anger management, conflict resolution, community services, outdoor education, and a variety of hands on activities

Initial Entrance Criteria for ACE Referral

Student must meet items listed or the teacher may advocate for placement by offering supporting data not specifically mentioned in the criteria:

- a documented history of school difficulties
- academics impeded by social/emotional issues
- unable to conform to school rules despite administrative consequences
- has unusual need for emotional contact or frequent checking in with classroom teacher/administration due to behavioral issues

ACE Program may be needed as a transition back into the school community due to psychiatric hospitalization or similar circumstance

Exit Criteria

The IEP Team will meet to evaluate the student's ability to be integrated into the traditional school community when the student has demonstrated success in meeting their individual IEP goals specifically in the area of social, emotional and behavioral needs. Exit criteria from the ACE Program will include: the student's ability to utilize social skills, modulate affect, demonstrate anger management, confront and accept responsibility for choices. Exit criteria will be determined by the IEP Team. ©

Just the facts, please

It sounds like the PAC is doing a lot of great things. How can I get involved?

All you have to do is come to a meeting! The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 27th, at 7pm. In the Triton High School Library. If you have a special talent such as grant writing, organizing, etc, all the better!

But even if you don't have a special talent, what you should keep in mind is that, besides being a forum for parents to network, the PAC's primary role is to represent the 400+ students with special needs in our district. As such, it is our responsibility to be involved in the development, planning, and evaluation of the special needs programs at Triton. We cannot be successful at that without parent involvement and support.

It is worth repeating Martin Luther King's quote from page one: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter". The PAC is your child's voice; it is another tool in this complicated world of special needs. Why shouldn't you take advantage? Don't be silent...it matters.

I have a child whose achievement I am really proud of. I'd like to submit her story for publication. Who should I contact?

Spotlight...



My son Jacob is an eleven year old boy who came to the Discovery Center at Pine Grove School in October of 2005. Prior to that, and since the age of three, he had always attended private school because there were no local public school that could support his many

You can either call or email Dawn Atkinson or Linda Rivera. You can contact your school's representative. Don't forget, you can also nominate a staff member who you feel has been exceptionally creative or gone above and beyond in helping your child achieve their goals. If a staff member identifies a student they want to reward with recognition, a permission slip will be sent home to parents/guardians first for their approval.

If you have a question that needs a direct answer or would like to just make a comment or suggestion, contact Dawn or Linda. We'd love to hear from you!

Contact Information:

President

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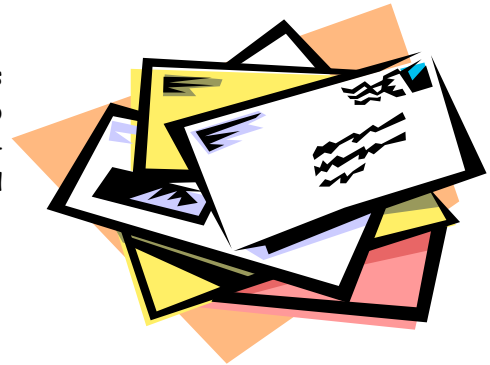
School Representatives

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FYI: School Rep Position still open.

The position of School Representative for the Triton Regional Middle School is still open. If you are interested or would like to nominate someone, please contact either Dawn or Linda. ©

needs. Jacob suffered a devastating birth injury which resulted in a list of diagnoses.

When Jacob was still in private school I decided to explore the possibility of using eye gaze to make



choices, however, I have to doubt that this was ever worked on in earnest because within two months of Jake

being in the Discovery Center he

successfully learned to use eye gaze to say "yes" and "no". When asked a simple question, Jake will look either right to indicate a "yes" response" or to the left to indicate a "no" response.

Prior to this Jake would have to hit a switch with a prerecorded, scripted message in order to "talk". For example, the teacher may record the message, "Turn the page",

if she were reading a story to Jake and would wait for him to hit his switch before continuing with the book. This is not a bad thing by itself, but imagine if you could only "say" things that were scripted for you. While it's appropriate and not a communication tool I would dismiss, it's nice to have options.

As always though and because there is always more than one variable in the mix, his ability to activate the switch is

dependent on his muscle tone for the day, his seizure activity, and his level of alertness. Being able to use eye gaze to make choices and answer "yes" and "no" gives him other ways to "talk".

This is a huge leap in communication and a giant achievement for him! Having a way to communicate throws wide the doors of possibilities and our family is very excited about exploring more with Jake. ☺

EVENTS & HAPPENINGS CALENDAR

- **SEPAC Meeting:** Wednesday on 2/27 at the Triton Regional High School Library at 7 p.m.
- **Vision of Community 2008: A Federation for Children with Special Needs Annual Conference.** 3/1/08, 7:30 am—5 p.m. at World Trade Center, Boston. Email Dawn Atkinson for regis-

- tration form or go to the Federation's website at www.fcsn.org
- **The Creative Soul of Children, 2nd Annual Speakers Series and Fundraising Event.** First speaker is Jonathan Mooney on Thursday, 3/6 at the Winchester Unitarian Church in Winchester. Topic is "Learning Outside the Lines". For

more information and registration information please visit their website at www.embracechildspirit.org

Did You Know...

You can get to the PAC's homepage by clicking on "Parent Groups" on your schools website

February 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Pac Meeting 7pm	28	29	