

DCBOCES SPOTLIGHT

March 2016

Transitions

IN-DISTRICT STUDENTS GETTING READY TO FLY

Mission Independence: Nurturing Students to Smooth Landings

The Dutchess BOCES team based at Arlington High School focuses on academics, life skills training, communication abilities, and social interactions so that students with special needs graduate ready to make a smooth transition to life after school.

Recently, the program has been strengthened by the staff's efforts to integrate students of all ages and abilities throughout the five BOCES classes and into the wider school community at Arlington.

Other enhancements are clubs, adaptive curriculum, a common approach to social thinking, and monthly field trips into the community.

"The things that we're teaching are things they are going to use in life," said Maureen Moloney. "For me, now, I'm seeing students who were with me in middle school years ago. To now be working at the high school and to see how much they have achieved is wonderfully rewarding."

Work

For some, high school isn't about algebra and science. Students with

special needs spend their school days working to develop real skills



Andy of Millbrook CSD

that will help them in life after school including basic cooking, laundry, infant care, and learning math to better handle money. Some students work in the community with the help of a job coach. Some students graduate with a paying job.



Tyler of Arlington CSD

Tyler, who is 21, will graduate in June. He works at a kitchen at Vassar College and at Adams Fairacre Farms. "I like it and it's very good experience if

you want a kitchen job," said Tyler. "I love working at Adams packing dry fruits and nuts and pricing them."

Now, he is looking toward the future and is busy filling out job applications. "I'm looking at different stocking jobs, but I ultimately want to work at UPS stocking shelves there," said Tyler. "So this stocking and labeling at Adams is good for that. Also, I'm learning basic stuff like math and money management."

Although he is excited about the prospect of finishing school, Tyler is also a bit nervous. "I'm not trying to rush through," said Tyler. "I want to land smoothly like a plane on a runway; I want to land smoothly, not roughly."

Clubs

Juan from Beacon CSD, 19, has found that job coaches really help advise him at his three jobs. He works in the Vassar College kitchen,

at Vassar Express, and at Big Lots. In food service he takes care of silverware, condiments, napkins and makes bags of chips and cookies. In his retail position he prices items and stocks shelves.

Korey of Arlington CSD



Because many students attending school at Arlington are from other districts, they do not have the option to try a club at their home district due to the distance they travel. In order to help develop leisure skills, clubs have been added to the end of the day Monday through Thursday.

"I really like comic book club because I like super heros," said Juan. "I also liked Star Wars club, Harry Potter club and Pixar club." Other clubs, which change every two weeks, include baking club, puzzle club, and trivia club.

Adaptive Curriculum

Adaptive curriculum presents content in a visual manner that is particularly helpful because many students find it difficult to learn in more traditional manners. The technology, which was funded by a grant, allows teachers to project content onto a screen. The program includes current events and lifestyle lessons such as healthy eating or how to get along at work.



Lora of Arlington CSD | Maureen Moloney

Guiding the entire BOCES program is the team's approach to social thinking. Colors and sizes are used as a common language to communicate about the size of a perceived problem and depth of an emotion so that staff members can quickly assist a student handling a situation.

The support offered by related service professionals such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and one-to-one aides, is essential to ensure students progress.



Jason of Poughkeepsie City SD | Anna Goodwin



L-R: Justin of Hyde Park CSD, Bryce of Newburgh ESD, and Evan of Highland CSD

Academics are adjusted to meet student needs and abilities. For example, math class may focus on tax percentages, making change, or comparing the value of different things like a diamond ring to a cup of coffee.

And some students spend half their day at Arlington and then head to the Career and Technical Institute for career training. Bryce, 17, currently attends CTI in the afternoon for Career Exploration. Next year, he plans to attend the culinary program. Eventually, he wants to work in a bakery. "I like the programs at Arlington and CTI," said Bryce. "I feel like it gives me a good education."

Community

Another important educational element is experience outside the classroom. Once a month, students enjoy field trips into the community. The trips are designed to develop a variety of skills and have included shopping at a mall, raking leaves for the elderly, eating at a buffet, and visiting the public library. In the near future, students will take a trip to a local day habilitation facility to see what might be a resource after they are done with school.

Within the school, BOCES classes have participated in some school-wide efforts, including the safe trick-or-treating option the high school provided for younger children last Halloween. By making decorations and assisting at the event, students were able to meet and interact with other students they usually don't encounter.

"I find that by the time the kids leave school, their communication skills have improved more than I ever expected," said Lisa Slagle. "When I help get them in a place where they leave here with a job they feel good about, and go out in the community and feel accepted and confident, that is the most rewarding."