



POLARIS TIMES
 THE PARENT/COMMUNITY CONNECTION
 COST: PRICELESS



John J. Allison, Jr. Polaris Center

September 2011

Volume 3, Issue 1

Words from the Principal



CORE VALUES OF POLARIS

Hello Parents, Guardians, and Care Providers,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2011-12 school year. Here at the Polaris Center we are very excited about all the new and exciting things happening this year. So far we are off to a great start! Some of the new things for the 2011-12 school year include:

- The addition of numerous new & diverse professionals to our team:
 - ~Associate Instructors – Stacia Wright, John Woods, Lindsay Kirol, Dan Baccaro, Adam Koropatkin
 - ~Student Intervention Specialist – Shiri Layton
 - ~Job Coach – Lorin Charanian
 - ~Activities Coordinator – Ryan McMahon
 - ~School Social Workers – Sarah Livingston, Stephanie Hall
 - ~Special Education Teachers – Blaise Brescia, Maryann Molis
- The introduction of a new and exciting program – Connections Academy
- An expanded Career Center, enabling more students exposure to and access to work opportunities
- We are in our first implementation year of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (PBIS)
- Expanded Polaris Greenhouse Opportunities
- Ongoing relationship with Polaris Outpatient Mental Health Clinic

There are so many other great things going on that it is impossible to list them all. The Polaris Center has so much to offer, however there is one piece that is critical to the success of your child – YOUR INVOLVEMENT. Having parent, guardian, and care provider support and active involvement with our program greatly improves the opportunities and likelihood for even greater growth and progress from your child. Our doors are always open to you to come and visit. We just ask that you call ahead.

We are looking forward to a great year,

Mike

Calendar

September 30	Mid-Quarter Progress Reports
October 10	Columbus Day NO SCHOOL
October 14	Staff Professional Development NO SCHOOL for students
November 4	1st Quarter Ends
November 9	Open House 5:30-7pm
November 11	Veteran's Day NO SCHOOL

Information About Attendance

Just a friendly reminder to please contact the school if your child will be absent from school.

3 or more absences require a doctor's note
(860)289-8131

From the office:

All meal applications must be submitted by October 12, 2011. If the applications is not received by October 12th all previous eligibilities will be changed to full pay. If you would like to pay for your child's meals online please contact Dee Dee Gonzalez, 860-289-8131 x 3401 and she can give you the information you need.

If you have not done so already, please return the information packets that were mailed home mid August. If you need another packet please contact Dee Dee Gonzalez, 860-289-8131 x 3401.

Please remember to contact the school immediately if any personal contact information changes.

If your child is not coming to school, being dropped off late or being picked up early please remember to contact the bus company and let them know that transportation is not needed.

Meal Payment

Meals can be pre-paid or your child can "pay as you go". Please make checks payable to CREC. If your child accrues a balance owed of \$12.60 he/she will be offered an alternative meal (not the hot meal).

Please contact your child's clinician if you have any questions.

Meal Prices

Full Pay: Breakfast \$1.60
Lunch \$2.60
Reduced: Breakfast \$0.30
Lunch \$0.40

PBIS

All school programs at the Polaris Center (the clinical day school, ATLAS, Lincoln Academy, and Connections) are utilizing PBIS as a daily part of programming. PBIS is a nationally recognized school-wide operational framework for incorporating proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making targeted behaviors less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional. A comprehensive computer based data system is utilized to track and monitor student behaviors.

Schools that have been successful in implementing school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports describe the following benefits:

- Increases in attendance
- Student self-reports of a more positive and calm environment
- Teacher reports are more positive and calm environment
- Reduction in the proportion of students who engage in behavioral disruptions
- Reduction in the number of behavioral disruption

A small number of clearly defined behavioral expectations are defined in positive, simple rules. Polaris' expectations are the following:

BE RESPECTFUL Be Responsible Be Safe Be a Learner

BLUE BULLETIN



Artwork by Kelvin R. ~ grade 9

Charcoal, eraser putty, shading pencils, construction paper

The Lincoln Letter

Ms. Finn

Mrs. Cheever

Ms. Sullivan

Lincoln Academy is off to a great start! We have settled into our new home in the Polaris building and have had fun making it our own. The halls are looking great with all of the personal artwork statements. All of the students have been building great relationships during our team building activities both on and off campus. We have had some wonderful field trips including hiking at Talcott Mountain and a learning experience at Hammonasette Beach. The students have had the unique experience of viewing a motion picture production in the making as well as being a part of the walk on cast. Watch out Hollywood! They will continue to be involved in Young Studios on a bi-weekly basis which will be an educational, creative process. They will soon begin their program at the Ebony Horse farm in Hartford and will reacquaint themselves with their equine friends. Community service projects are underway and the students will be involved with working with the elderly and disadvantaged in the near future. All of this, and their academics as well! We have seen sincere dedication to academic growth and have encouraged all the students to make personal goals. This should be a fabulous year for all the students and staff of Lincoln Academy.

Mr. Russo

Ms. Solano

Mr. Arias

Mr. Flagg

DID YOU KNOW...?



The CREC Polaris Center does not just provide educational programming to students. On the same campus, we also have the **Polaris Outpatient Health Clinic for Children and Families**.

The **Polaris Outpatient Health Clinic** offers the following services to children, adolescents and adults:

Individual, Group, and Family Therapy
Medication Consultation and Management
Psychiatric Evaluation
Psychological Assessment/Testing
Specialized Mental Health Services for individuals with hearing loss
Bilingual (Spanish) Clinicians
Substance Abuse Evaluations and Treatment

Day and evening appointments are available with most private and state insurance plans accepted.

Call **860.289.8131 ext 3489** to make an appointment or for more information.

****You do not need to be part of the Polaris Educational Programs to be seen at the Outpatient Health Clinic**

Career Center News

We are off to another fantastic year at Polaris Center! We have hired a Job Coach for our School-to-Career Program, her name is Lorin Charanian. This means that we will be able to place more students at worksites in-house and within the community than we were able to do last year. The training and support Lorin will provide the student workers while on-the-job will give them the confidence and experience they need to become job-ready. The Career Team is providing the following training, instruction and transition services this year: supported subsidized employment, weekly Career Competency lessons in the classrooms, assistance with resumes, job applications, interviewing skills and post-secondary schooling/training. In addition, we will have opportunities for students to job shadow, intern, volunteer at various businesses and agencies and visit colleges and training academies. We also have many speakers from area businesses that come and speak with our students through out the year. I will be sending more information home so as a team we can help your student achieve success and the future they dream of.

Thank you!

Carol Bracken

Job Placement Counselor

School-to-Career Program Coordinator

A Reminder from the School Based Clinic:

- ◆ This year, the clinic will be staffed by two nurse practitioners. Gail Bunce will be here Monday through Wednesday, and Susan DeGennaro will be here on Thursday and Friday. Sue is the nurse practitioner in the Foster Care Clinic but has also been involved with our students for the past three years in our school based clinic.
- ◆ You have received a packet of forms to be completed and returned to us.
- ◆ We are required to get updated information each year, including permission for your child to be enrolled in our school based clinic.
- ◆ In addition, if your child is to receive medication here during the school year, new medication authorization forms need to be completed by his/her practitioner and signed by you.
- ◆ All students who will be entering 6th and 10th grade are required to have a complete physical before the end of this school year. Please let us know if your child has had a physical since January 1, 2011 as this will count as the required exam.
- ◆ We will again be offering dental screenings provided by East Hartford Community HealthCare. You should have received the information regarding this screening. If you wish to have your student be seen please return the paperwork ASAP as we are planning to schedule the first of two clinics in early October.
- ◆ Both of us look forward to providing services to our students this year and hopefully talking with you at our first open house in September.

~Gail Bunce, APRN

~Susan DeGennaro, APRN

860-289-8131 ext 3430

Student Support Center

The Student Support Center is a new addition to Polaris' educational team. This room allows for students who have had difficulties in their behaviors, which are disrupting the learning environment for themselves or their classmates, to safely express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. In addition it provides assistance in learning additional skills to process, and positively grow through those same difficulties. I am excited to serve as the Student Intervention Specialist who runs this room. My role is to provide discussions, activities, and resources to allow for this growth. Students will be referred to the Student Support Center by their team and will aim to work on specific issues as well as their daily class assignments. The goal of this room is to add further support to Polaris students in hopes of increasing their skill levels and self-knowledge. I look forward to working with your students throughout the school year.

~Ms. Shiri Layton, MSW

ATLAS Announcements

ATLAS has started the year off in a great place! The students have already been exposed to new experiences and new places. We have gone to Northwest Park to learn about the animals and to have a team cookout. We hosted several breakfast bake sales to raise enough money to go to the Big E, which was an amazing experience!

Family continues to be an important theme in our group and we are always practicing how to work together. We are also excited to once again invite our families into the classroom to share their stories and their talents with us. We have already made arrangements for our favorite chef, Gladys, to come in and cook with us again! If you would like to come in and share something with our team, please let us know! We would be happy to have you.

This is going to be a GREAT year in the ATLAS room.

Adventure Program

Hello Polaris parents and families, my name is Ryan McMahon, the new Polaris Adventure Coordinator. Last year I worked with our middle school team as an Associate Instructor; this year I have taken on a new roll that will provide our students with many unique opportunities. During adventure activities students must work as a team and push past their perceived limits to successfully overcome a challenging situation. A challenging situation can be physical, mental, or social.

Currently I am offering several Adventure programs:

- **Every week a group helps out on a local 4H educational farm, Auer Farm in Bloomfield, CT. During a two hour session students work together with farm staff caring for a barn of 30 animals.**
- **During the month of September Polaris will be assisting in the filming of Diamond Ruff, a full feature movie currently being filmed in Hartford. Young Studios a film studio and youth arts program based in Hartford worked with our students weekly during the last school year and will be including our students as “extras” in Diamond Ruff.**
- **Polaris has an on-campus challenge ropes course where students depend on other members of their class to face problem solving games and physical challenges 50 feet off the ground.**

As the school year moves forward, other Adventure activities will be added. A student run bike shop, outdoor rock climbing and winter snow sports are all at the planning stage. You may call or email me with any questions or comments at rmcmahon@crec.org or 860-289-8131.

Please encourage your student to sign-up for these unique opportunities!