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A Day in the Life of a Head Start Family Advocate

What do the Head Start Family Advocates do? They certainly work alongside other staff to fulfill the OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start motto *Sowing Seeds...Growing Futures*. Their work focuses on the family.

Family Advocates assume various important roles, including identifying and recruiting prospective families, assisting families to improve their quality of life, advocating for and connecting families with community resources, and teaching parents how to be better advocates for their children.

Currently, the OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start Program has nine Family Advocates who serve our seven school districts (Bullitt, Eminence Independent, Gallatin, Henry, Owen, Shelby and Spencer). Caseloads range from 26 to 60 families, with Family Advocates working anywhere from 185 to 240 days annually.

Our Family Advocates have three major areas of responsibility – Social Services, Health Services, and Parent Involvement. Their primary goal is to develop trusting, respectful and supportive Family Partnerships. The Family Partnership as defined by the Head Start Performance Standards is a “process of collaborative partnership building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports.” It begins with the parent filling out an application for their child and ends when the child transitions out of the Head Start Program.

Social Services might include planning, scheduling or conducting home visits, meeting with teachers once a week to discuss specific family needs, making referrals to outside agencies, and attending state and county resource agency meetings to bolster community partnerships as needed.

In the area of Health Services, Advocates assist families with medical, dental, vision or mental health needs through helping identify appropriate providers, scheduling appointments, providing transportation to and from appointments, and collaborating with teachers to develop a health/nutrition plan for the child when needed. Each Family Advocate carefully monitors and maintains documentation of all health services for each of the children



Family Advocate Becky Brewer assists with dental screenings.



Henry County parents listen to a presentation on car seat safety.

Family Advocates (Continued)

enrolled in his or her respective classrooms as required by Head Start Performance Standards.

Finally, in the area of Parent Involvement, Family Advocates send out monthly newsletters with classroom news and upcoming events, provide training on a variety of mandated topics in addition to those requested by parents, and hold quarterly parent meetings/family nights where learning is made fun. Successful parent involvement in a Head Start program requires that Family Advocates collaborate with all staff to ensure that program goals are met. Parent involvement also necessitates that Advocates possess the skills and knowledge to communicate effectively with individuals of varying abilities from different socioeconomic and ethnic groups in a variety of settings.

A day in the life of a Family Advocate could include many of the duties listed above, or those regularly scheduled duties could have been superseded by a family experiencing crisis that needed immediate support.

A Family Advocate's job is very labor intensive; however, our nine Advocates would tell you that the job can also be equally rewarding. For example, one of our Advocates was able to assist one of her families in achieving its goal to become a first-time homeowner this year. Although not every family's goal is quite as big as buying a house, it is every Family Advocate's desire to help families reach their goals, no matter how big or small.

In the OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start service area, Family Advocates sow the seeds of mutual trust and respect to develop Family Partnerships in order to grow the futures of the children and families served.



Father and son participate in a “Dad and Me” event.



Family Advocate Mary Ferguson dressed up as Old Mother Hubbard and read a story in the classroom.

Aspiring Principals Academy: “Growing Our Own Principals”

At a P-16 Council meeting during the 2005-06 school year, the group identified the need to create a program to “grow our own principals.” Later the Council decided it was certainly one of its top priorities and appointed an Advisory Committee to assist with the planning of a program that would be in partnership with the University of Louisville.

Not long after this, Dr. Molly Sullivan was hired to work at the University of Louisville in the Department of Educational Leadership. Working with Tina Tipton, Director of District Support at OVEC, and the Advisory Committee, the planning team began the journey of creating what is now the “OVEC/UofL Aspiring Principals Academy (APA).”

The purposes of the Academy are:

- ❖ To assist member districts in preparing highly effective school principals who are capable of leading schools to proficiency.
- ❖ To provide participants with experiences and opportunities to practice and acquire the skills needed to be highly effective school principals.

Once the purposes for the Academy and the strands of study were identified, the task force began to develop the selection criteria and interview process. Just as the entire program was co-designed by University of Louisville and OVEC district staff, the selection process (April and May, 2008) also was a partnership.

The first class for APA began on June 8th with Dr. Sullivan as the instructor. The class met during the summer for two courses and began their internship projects. They are guided in their work by their Individual Learning Plans, reviewed by Sara Monarch, the APA Leadership Coach; Mentor Principals; and Superintendents.

On August 24th the cohort began the fall semester courses taught by Dr. David Thompson and Dr. Sullivan on Monday and Thursday evenings. All the classes are held at OVEC. Members of the APA class have also been asked to attend some regional meetings of the Ohio Valley Organization of Principals and other professional development opportunities. Once they complete the fall semester



Dr. Molly Sullivan (left), Aspiring Principals Academy Instructor, and participants Lucia Hughes and Adam Nance, chat before class.



Sara Monarch, Leadership Coach for the Aspiring Principals Academy, and Tina Tipton, Director of District Support at OVEC, work together to support effective implementation of the program.

Aspiring Principals Academy (Continued)

courses and the spring course on “School Law” they will have completed Level I certification for principalship.

Not only has this cohort learned to work together in class, but participants have also quickly learned that being a successful principal is all about teamwork. They work on assignments together and share articles and research. They have become a very effective “professional learning community!” It has been instilled in them through this Academy that an effective school principal is one who can increase student learning by guiding and supporting teachers while capably managing the school organization. They know they must support each other and keep their focus on “student learning” as they progress through the Academy, because they will need those skills in the future as one of our regional principals!

We congratulate this outstanding class and first class of the OVEC/UofL Aspiring Principals Academy!

- Kathy House – Oldham County**
- Ruth Esterle – Bullitt County**
- Rachel Turner – Bullitt County**
- Susan Dugle – Shelby County**
- Lisa Peters – Oldham County**
- Chip Anderson – Henry County**
- Lucia Hughes – Henry County**
- Adam Nance – Franklin County**
- Susanne Burkhardt – Shelby County**
- Harper Kelly – Shelby County**
- Austin Hunsaker – Henry County**
- Tim Agne – Shelby County**
- Myron Montgomery – Shelby County**
- LeeAnn Mik – Bullitt County**
- Nancy Page – Shelby County**



Participants in the Aspiring Principals Academy talk about an assignment after class.



The fifteen members of the first class of the OVEC/UofL Aspiring Principals Academy are now working toward Level 1 certification for principalship.

ECS Provides Best Practices for Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities

SPLASH, MSDTT, NPDC on ASD Looks a bit like alphabet soup, but in fact each of these acronyms represents a different research project designed to help teachers provide best practices for students with moderate and severe disabilities.

Teachers throughout the OVEC region, in cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Education and several of the state universities, have applied to take part in grant opportunities that concentrate on providing strategies and interventions for the classroom as well as a focus on team building between regular and special education teachers.

SPLASH

The Kentucky Department of Education is in year two of the State Personnel Department Grant (SPDG)/Low Incidence Initiative SPLASH (Strategies for Programming Longitudinally for All Students with Severe Handicaps) action research pilot. The goal of this program is to “support teachers in the education of students with significant cognitive disabilities with a focus on Access to the General Curriculum and Inclusive Programming.” The program is specifically designed for novice teachers, not intermediate or master level teachers.

Two teachers from Oldham County, Melissa Riggs at Buckner Elementary and Megan Cheak at Centerfield Elementary, received coaching/mentoring from Sheila Henson, the OVEC Low Incidence Consultant. Professional development was focused around increasing the teachers’ knowledge level and application of specific content (i.e., behavior, IEP/data collection, collaboration, curriculum, working with paraprofessionals, assistive technology, communication strategies and classroom scheduling) pertaining to students with moderate and severe disabilities.

Sheila conducted periodic observations and provided support as the teachers implemented the content in their classrooms. Melissa and Megan have completed the first five modules and will continue with the program as they start the second year of the program.

New teachers have applied through KDE to be part of the SPLASH program for the coming school year. Two teachers from the OVEC region have been selected to



Oldham County teachers, along with Sheila Henson (left), OVEC Low Incidence Consultant, attended the SPLASH Kick-Off in October.



Special education teachers like Beth Newberry from Shelby County are excited about the excellent opportunities provided to them through grants for assisting students with moderate and severe disabilities.

ECS Provides Best Practices (Continued)

take part in the year 2 Cohort. Brooke Barrett from East Middle School in Shelby County and Therese Hutton-Crump from Maryville Elementary in Bullitt County will begin this three-year program in October.

MSDTT

The second grant opportunity involves Multiple and Severe Disabilities Teach Team training (MSDTT). Dr. Michael Abell and the University of Louisville have awarded seven mini-grants to help train regular and special education teacher teams serving students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities in Kentucky.

Clear Creek Elementary in Shelby County received one of the grants. The team members, Beth Newberry, special education teacher; Kellie Hornback, general education teacher; Karen Downs, Principal; and Sheila Henson, OVEC Low Incidence Consultant, attended a two-day conference in Lexington to learn about the program and to set goals and objectives for the coming school year.

The goal of this program is that "all students in Kentucky will receive a world class education regardless of parentage, poverty, geography or location, in an effort to prepare them for productive adult life, continuing education, and responsible citizenship." These grants target elementary school teachers who seek to increase access to the general education curriculum and improve academic achievement for students with moderate and severe disabilities.

The University of Louisville, in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education, offered the funding for the summer training for the cooperating team members. The team selected one student from the school as the focus for this project. The teachers will be provided with research-based practices at the regional site with follow-up support from University of Louisville faculty.

NPDC on ASD

A third and very exciting opportunity is Kentucky's Partnership with the National Professional Development Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC on ASD). The NPDC on ASD, funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, is a multi-university program that began in July, 2007. The mission of the Cen-



Therese Hutton-Crump, from Maryville Elementary in Bullitt County, has been selected to participate in SPLASH.



Beth Newberry will work closely with students while participating in the MSDTT grant.

ECS Provides Best Practices (Continued)

ter is “to provide resources, professional development, and technical assistance that will increase the number of highly qualified personnel serving children and youth with ASD.”

From 2007 through 2010, three states with the greatest potential to benefit from the resources will be selected to collaborate with the NPDC on ASD for a period of two years to achieve these goals. Kentucky, Michigan and Minnesota were selected to participate this year. Each educational cooperative has been asked to form an Autism Cadre made up of professionals from across the region who have an understanding of ASD.

The cadre members will learn and promote evidence-based practices for early identification, intervention, and education that produce optimal child and family outcomes. The cadre members will form district-level problem solving teams that will provide sustainable, outcome-based professional development and technical assistance that optimizes existing state resources.

This year, three model sites will be set up in Jefferson County, one each in an elementary, middle and high school. The model sites will showcase evidence-based practices and the evaluating/measuring of child, family, practitioner and system-level outcomes. Each year other regions across the state will be setting up model sites as well.

In 2012, the OVEC cadre will select three model sites for this region. Bullitt County Consultant Debbie Williams, Oldham County Consultant Rachel Hammond, and OVEC Consultant Sheila Henson attended the Kentucky Summer Institute in June to help prepare for the roles and responsibilities for participating in this project.

For more information on any of these initiatives, please contact Sheila Henson at shenson@ovec.org or 502-647-3533, ext. 223.



Debbie Williams from Bullitt County will be part of the regional Autism Cadre for the NPDC on ASD grant.

Project THEME Launches for History Teachers

OVEC recently received a new \$1 million Teaching American History grant to conduct professional development for fifth and eighth grade history teachers. Project THEME (Themes of History for Elementary and Middle Educators) aims to raise student achievement by improving the quality of instruction in traditional American history. The three-year grant was awarded by the U. S. Department of Education, with the likelihood of an additional two years of continuation funding.

The eleven school districts taking part in THEME include: Bullitt County, Carroll County, Franklin County, Gallatin County, Grant County, Henry County, Oldham County, Owen County, Shelby County, Spencer County, and Trimble County. A total of 40 elementary and middle school history teachers in these school districts applied and were selected to participate in the grant.

Project THEME will provide approximately 70 hours of professional development for 40 teachers each year. Teachers receive stipends for attendance in after-school, weekend, and summer professional development, as well as classroom resources. To continue in the grant, teachers are required to attend 80% of planned professional development opportunities, including summer institutes, trips to sites of historic significance, mid-year 1-day workshops and monthly after-school network meetings. Project teachers receive mentoring support and regional networking opportunities provided by experienced history teachers who have been in previous history grants. In addition, Glenn Manns and Jack Bosley, the OVEC American History Curriculum Specialists, provide site visits and ongoing instructional support and coaching.

OVEC is partnering with multiple nationally-recognized historical organizations and with faculty from seven regional colleges and universities, including the University of Louisville's McConnell Center, to conduct Project THEME training sessions and events.

Project THEME teachers recently participated in their first network meeting and a high quality 2-day session on the Bill of Rights, featuring specialty trainers from the Bill of Rights Institute and the Teachers' Curriculum Institute. The teachers were pleased with the new resources, curriculum materials, and instructional strategies they were able to take back to their classrooms to enhance history instruction!



Carmen Thompson and Jennifer Faith participate in the constitutional card sort as part of the *History Alive!* training led by Kristi Grubaugh.



Project THEME teachers get into the action during *History Alive!* training.



Dr. John Vile, presenter from the Bill of Rights Institute, gives participants some insight on founding documents.

Seminar: A Valuable Piece of Doctoral Work for UofL/OVEC EdD Students

Doctoral work in education calls on the students to immerse themselves in research – learning to read it critically, interpret it, and – ultimately – design and conduct it. The UofL/OVEC EdD students are doing that. In fact, most students are preparing to complete a qualifying exam in which they will be given an unfamiliar quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodology research article and be asked to critique it using the concepts and language of educational research.

However, the students also immerse themselves in the real and current problems of our profession, both through the focus of their research endeavors as noted above and also through participation in EdD Seminar two to three times each semester. The three purposes of the seminar portion of the UofL/OVEC Pilot EdD program are as follows:

- (1) ***To allow cohort members to hone their “scholarly activism” on current issues and readings.***

Current issues and readings focus students' expanding knowledge base, varying experiences, differing opinions, and use of evidence. Seminar is the avenue for students to practice and hone “scholarly activism” with one another on issues that matter right now; it is the avenue for applying the research skills they are learning. Seminar is the avenue that helps them to SEE the bridge between K-12 and higher education.

- (2) ***To allow cohort members to hold one another accountable for progress on projects/capstones.***

Students are required to present their research progress at regular intervals, which provides ongoing accountability. It also provides others an opportunity to learn content, find common interests and goals, and provide mutual support and feedback through critical questioning.

- (3) ***To build and sustain our community of scholarly activists.***

Seminar is the sustainability part of the program. As cohorts are added, all members attend the same seminars. Eventually, graduates of the program will be invited to continue participating in seminar, and MA students interested in



Left to right: Michael Rowe, Donna McClamroch, Chrissy Jones, and Lynda Redmon engage in peer reviews as a part of their doctoral work for the UofL/OVEC EdD program.

Seminar (Continued)

doctoral work will attend. The program will have 40-50 (and so on) leaders using a scholarly lens to consider the issues of our state and nation.

Typical seminar activities include discussions of Education Week articles, guest speakers or panels, and self-selected book study groups.

As an example of what happens in seminar, this month many cohort members will read and/or listen to Justice by popular Harvard University professor Michael Sandel, will discuss it at November seminar, then attend Professor Sandel's appearance as part of the Kentucky Author Forum in December. The purpose of the UofL/OVEC EdD program is "to create and support a community of ethical activist scholars who lead organizations that improve success for Kentucky P-12 students," so this experience has a direct and exciting connection to our goal.

If you have considered "someday" doctoral work, think about participating in a seminar – read a book with us, discuss the ideas, consider the research of your colleagues, and picture yourself as a full participant. Contact Molly Sullivan (molly.sullivan@louisville.edu) for details.



Dr. Tretter (right) uses the kinesthetic approach to teaching research design in an exercise with Cherry Boyles, Mike Hibbett, and Denise Allen.