

# Monday Bulletin on Services to Youth

To Coordinate... To Enhance... To Serve... Through Communication...

## MiConnections Launches in Detroit

By Lynn Boza

Detroit Public Schools (DPS) is becoming a MiConnections site. On July 28, community partners came together at “Detroit’s Workplace” to conduct a community resource scan around the four Guideposts for Success of the MiConnections program. Detroit City High School began MiConnections with a summer program, facilitated by Transition Coordinator, Susan Mason.

DPS’ Career and Technical Education department is involved in the project. Curriculum Leader, Vicki Holmes, observed that while capacity in the areas of Guidepost II—Work/Based Learning, and Guidepost III—Youth Leadership Development exists, we need to expand such opportunities and include more youth. Her observation is similar to those made throughout the state by other MiConnections’ sites.

High School Supervisor, Maxine Dixon, suggests we need to increase teacher awareness of the MiConnections Guideposts for Success and existing community services. Her observation is also similar to comments made by educators and parents throughout the state.

Diann Banks-Williamson, Director of Special Education for Detroit Public Schools, has been extremely supportive of the emerging MiConnections project. She remarked, “We want to begin dialog with agencies in order to link students with existing services.”

Does all this sound like Transition? MiConnections appears to be an excellent model for planning and coordinating transition services. For more information, visit: [www.miconnections.org](http://www.miconnections.org)

## Response to Intervention: A New Way of Defining Learning Disability

By Karen Schulte, Sp.A.  
Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education  
Eastern Michigan University

### Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004 contains language that opens the door to a new definition of learning disabilities. In Michigan, the supporting State regulations are not expected to be finalized until late 2006. Thus, the implications this language may have on special education services in Michigan are not yet clear. Many districts, however, are exploring possible changes in assessment practices related to students with learning disabilities in preparation for the new rules and regulations.

From its inception, the definition of a learning disability has been based on a dysfunction in the way a child processes information, creating a severe discrepancy between a child’s potential for or expected achievement and his or her actual achievement. Children with learning disabilities were believed to demonstrate atypical processing styles which created specific and specialized educational needs. Although this belief still forms the basis of the theoretical definition of learning disabilities, there are a number of difficulties inherent in its implementation. It has

“IDEIA introduces the possibility of using a new process, called response-to-intervention, to define a learning disability.”

Continued on page 3

## LD Resource **UPDATE**

The 2006 version of the **Adult Literacy & Learning Disabilities Forum: Resources for People with Learning Disabilities** was sent along with this edition of *Monday Bulletin*. Please let us know if you did not receive your copy.

## Transition Coordinators to Collect Data on an Indicator of Relevance

By Lynn Boza, MRS Transition Consultant

The Michigan Department of Education's State Performance Plan (SPP) is a required element of IDEA 2004. In 2005, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) changed the annual reporting process for states. States now have to provide data and six-year improvement plans for specific performance indicators for an SPP. Transition coordinators throughout the state are being asked to assemble review teams to collect compliance data related to SPP Indicator 13: The percentage of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the postsecondary goals. The survey instrument was field tested at the last Transition Outcomes Project meeting in April. Baseline data is currently being collected and collection will continue until October 1, 2006. Data will be analyzed and reported to OSEP in February 2007.

For more info on the data collection see: <https://janus.pscinc.com/mde/spp13/>

---

## Study Circle Guide: Adult Student Persistence

A newly revised guide has been released by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The guide includes the second phase of the NCSALL research on adult student persistence and provides comprehensive instructions for facilitating a 10 1/2 -hour study circle. It explores what the research says about adult student persistence and ideas for how to apply what is learned in classrooms and programs.

The guide is based on a review of the NCSALL research on adult student persistence conducted by John Comings and others, summarized in an article entitled "*Supporting the Persistence of Adult Basic Education Students*" and other studies on student motivation and retention. It includes articles, resources, and action research reports to help practitioners consider strategies for increasing adult student persistence.

This guide provides all the necessary materials and clear instructions to plan and facilitate a three-session study circle with an option for a fourth. Each session lasts three-and-a-half hours.

To download the study circle guide, visit NCSALL's Web site: <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=896>

## Career Site for Job Seekers with Disabilities

MonsterR, a leading global online careers and recruitment resource and flagship brand of Monster Worldwide, Inc. and Hire Disability Solutions, LLC, a national leader in bringing together top companies and job seekers with disabilities, recently unveiled a co-branded career resource section on HireDS.com's site. This joint initiative makes Monster job search tools, career content and resume posting capabilities more accessible to individuals with disabilities. To view Hire DS's website, go to

<http://www.hiredisabilitysolutions.com>

## Google Accessible Web Search

Google has launched Google Accessible Search, a stripped down version of the Google search results page. The design was created to make it easier and more effective for the blind and visually impaired. The results are a bit different, tailored to people with vision impairments, to show more accessible pages in the results. To try this service go to: <http://labs.google.com/accessible>

<http://blog.searchenginewatch.com/blog/060720-130945>

## Walgreens Recruits Employees with Disabilities on Web

Walgreens, the nation's largest drugstore chain, has launched an innovative initiative to hire people with disabilities at its new distribution center in Anderson, S.C. and is recruiting through a new, specially-designed Web site.

Walgreensoutreach.com describes jobs available at the Walgreens distribution center and is designed to be accessible to people with sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities. The site incorporates audio messages, photos, video and a large-print text option to depict jobs and work life. The site also is designed to be accessible to individuals who use screen reader technology. Under the jobs section, videos show employees performing various jobs, and the text describes what the workers are doing. Prospective employees unsure if they can perform the essential job functions can take a self-quiz to get an idea of the tasks involved. To view the website, go to <http://www.walgreensoutreach.com>

The articles above are from REFERENCE POINTS, transition updates from the TATRA Project and the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. More about this joint initiative is at: <http://www.pacer.org/tatra/>

# Response to Intervention

Continued from page 1

often been called a “failure definition”, in that educators must wait until a discrepancy between achievement and expected achievement exists prior to providing special education services based on a learning disability. In essence, we must wait for the child to fail before providing supports through special education. Additionally, the degree of the discrepancy that must exist between achievement and expected achievement has never been clearly defined, leaving individual districts to develop their own definition of “severe discrepancy”. A child may be eligible for special education based on a learning disability in one district, but find himself/herself ineligible in another district.

## The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

In an effort to overcome these and other problems with the current definition of learning disabilities, IDEIA introduces the possibility of using a new process, called response-to-intervention, to define a learning disability. IDEIA 2004 states:

*“The LEA is not required to consider a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning.*

*The LEA may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.” [614(b)(6)]*

Section 300.309 (Determining the Existence of Specific Learning Disabilities) states:

*“Eligibility determined if: Failure to achieve at a rate of learning to meet state-approved results... when assessed with a response to scientific, research-based intervention process; or; Exhibition of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement or both... determined to be relevant to the identification of SLD.”*

Although this language does not mandate that districts or states adopt a response-to-intervention definition of learning disabilities, it clearly encourages the exploration of this option.

## Response-To-Intervention

Existing models of a response-to-intervention process for the assessment of students suspected of having a learning disability involve implementing increasingly more significant intervention strategies and monitoring student response to these strategies. There are typically three levels or tiers of intervention. Tier 1

consists of providing research-based, high quality instruction to all students. Those students who do not achieve at this level or tier are then referred to tier 2. This involves more significant and specialized instruction, still within the general education environment. Those students who do still not achieve at expected levels would be referred for special education services based on a learning disability. Thus, a learning disability is defined as a child’s inability to respond to high quality, research-based, systemic instruction.

There are many unknowns concerning response-to-intervention. The Michigan regulations will hopefully provide necessary direction and guidance. Some of the most pressing issues are:

- What interventions are considered high quality and research-based?
- How will interventions and student responses to interventions be monitored and documented?
- How should districts define an unacceptable response to an intervention?
- Are new procedural safeguards necessary to protect student and parent rights?

One of the biggest unknowns, however, is the impact that response-to-intervention would have on general education teachers, instruction, and resource allocation. In the three-tiered model, tiers 1 and 2 are implemented within the general education environment. Resources, materials, personnel, and professional development will be necessary. One of the largest unanswered questions or unknowns, however, is the willingness and ability of the general education system to provide these supports and interventions. This is perhaps the most critical variable in predicting the success of a response-to-intervention model.

IDEIA 2004 represents a turning point for the field of learning disabilities. It will take the collaborative efforts of special and general educators to explore the potential response-to-intervention holds to ensure quality education for students with learning disabilities. As more information becomes available, teachers and administrators will need to thoroughly understand their options and make informed decisions to realize this potential.

## References

Camron, S., Parks, L., Stiefel, G., Schulte, K. *Redefining the Nature of A Learning Disability: A Critical Point In Time.* Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators Bulletin, Spring, 2006.

# Save the Dates • Events & Training

Editor's Note: The format of Save the Dates has changed to be more accessible to screen readers.

## August

### "Job Restructuring/Job Negotiation"

August 15, 2006

2:00 - 2:45 P.M.

Webcast sponsored by T-TAP and Worksupport.com. For more information go to <http://www.worksupport.com/training/viewUpcomingWebcasts.cfm>

### Abilities Expo

August 18 - 20, 2006

Rock Financial Showplace

Novi, MI

Exhibit floor for testing and comparing products and services offered by state of the art exhibitors. Abilities Expo also offers a full line up of FREE consumer and professional workshops. <http://det.abilitiesexpo.com/iaedet/v42/index.cvn>

## September

### 2006 MALDE Conference

#### "Response to Intervention: MALDE's Past and Michigan's Future."

September 28-30, 2006

Shanty Creek Resort

Bellaire, MI

Contact Linda Schmidt for more information and registration materials: [lschmidt@corunna.k12.mi.us](mailto:lschmidt@corunna.k12.mi.us)

## October

### "Critical Issues for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder"

October 17-18, 2006

Detroit Airport Marriott

Detroit, MI

Spectrum Training Systems, Inc.

Phone: (920) 749-0332

Fax: (920) 882-0736

Email: [spectrumtrainingsystems@yahoo.com](mailto:spectrumtrainingsystems@yahoo.com)

Website: <http://www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com>

### LDA Fall Conference

October 22-24, 2006

Michigan State University

Kellog Center

E. Lansing, MI

Call LDA for more info at 1-888-597-7809

## November

### Michigan Rehabilitation Conference

#### "Moving Forward: Navigating the Road Ahead"

November 15-17, 2006

Grand Traverse Resort

Traverse City, MI

More information will be on the web at: [www.maro.org](http://www.maro.org)

**Please forward or print this  
bulletin for others.**

E-mail your contributions or ideas for  
"Monday Bulletin on Services to Youth" to  
Lynn Boza: [bozal@michigan.gov](mailto:bozal@michigan.gov) or call 517/241-3957.

Views expressed in Monday Bulletin articles are not necessarily the views of the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth nor Michigan Rehabilitation Services.