Serendipitous chance intervened when special education found Patricia. As an engaged, life-long learner with a variety of interests, her undergraduate degrees in Biology and Sociology with a minor of Criminal Justice reflected her innate curiosity, discipline and engagement in a number of areas. Believing she wanted to pursue a career in sports medicine physical therapy, she was surprised to find that her first job right after college was working in a level 5 school for students with severe disabilities. And guess what? She absolutely loved it. Watching students with profound challenges continue to work hard and persevere in order to meet the smallest of feats filled with an indescribable joy. Patricia had found her passion. She then went on to teach special education in Prince George’s County Public Schools for eight years where she taught math, science, U.S. history and ELA. Ever the motivated self-starter, she earned her Master’s degree in Special Education and a second Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction in order to grow her professional practice. Now almost through her fourth year at the SEED School of Maryland, she is currently the Director of Special Education, after having been a co-teacher and co-director of Special Education at the school. In her free time, she enjoys studying special education case law. Reading and writing short stories and poetry are cherished pursuits; last but certainly not least, the gregarious and caring Patricia loves hanging out with friends and spending time with her husband and two children.

Accommodation of the Month: Chunking Reading Passages

In the classroom:
- Plan ahead, determine what longer passages will be read this week
- Take the longer passage and separate it into sections that are 1-2 paragraphs long
- Give students just 1-2 paragraphs at a time with the corresponding questions rather than 2-3 pages with a list of questions
- Depending on the student chunks may need to be shorter or longer.

In the dorms:
- If a student is reading a longer passage you can tell them which questions correspond to which paragraph
- Give breaks during reading time or ask them to summarize what they’ve read frequently so they have frequent checks for understanding.
Strategy of the Month: Remaining Consistent

One thing most educators know is that it is incredibly important to remain consistent. This applies to classroom routines, discipline, and grading. Consistency and predictability are key in developing a safe classroom environment where students will buy in and work hard to learn. However, even knowing the importance of consistency it can be extremely difficult to remain consistent.

Being consistent in routines is much easier when started at the beginning of the year but it’s possible to start routines at any point throughout the year. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the routines should be student led as much as possible. This way if you are absent for any reason class can continue to be meaningful. Check out this really useful article Ms. Myers shared about making easy but meaningful sub plans: http://www.davestuartjr.com/simple-sub-plans/.

Overall, setting a consistent discipline policy, routines and grading policy helps the kids know what to expect and helps them feel safe in your room.

By: Kristi Fausel

Grit and Growth: What Not to Say to Parents of Struggling Learners

As a continuation of the series “What not to”, this second article points out what staff should not to tell parents of exceptional children.

1. Mary never does anything in class.

While this may be a true statement; it is generic and does not provide any basis for intervention. Please, be precise and inform the parent what specific skills the student is struggling with such as remaining seated, requires several prompts to stay focused, talking with peers, etc. Telling a parent simply to talk to their child about this or that behavior is not appropriate, either.

2. Student needs medication.

Never tell a parent state that their child needs to be put on medication. That does not mean that medication is off the table. Just go through the appropriate personnel and channels for such conversations.

3. Comparing the student with other learners

Every student struggles with learning differently even with the same diagnosis. Please, do not compare or share unsolicited advice about a different child, even your own, with the parent.


It is great that as a staff you have an understanding of disabilities. However, do not mention new disabilities to label their child. Many disabilities have similar traits. Do not try to diagnosis or RE-diagnose a child. A parent will eat you alive!

5. Joking about the child and always.

Please, avoid statements that may ridicule or question the existence of a disability. Do not just see a “bad kid who will not behave” but one who is struggling with a critical life function and that needs support. Disabilities exist. Jokes or “funny” statements only show ignorance and lack of compassion.

6. Inappropriate language

Kindly, avoid stereotyping a behavior and using terms like “That’s Aspy” or “A Downs Kid” because it shows that the teacher defines the child by their disability. Get in the habit of using child first name like a child with Autism, Student with special needs, and child with Down syndrome.

These references, in addition to those from the first article and several others, should be avoided if we need to develop and sustain positive relationships with students and their families. Education is a social transaction more than an intellectual venture. It requires us to embrace “The Relationship Way”.

By: Francis Lando, Ed. D
## Footman’s Footnotes

Healthy Stress Management

As adults, we can model healthy stress management for our students. Remember to encourage exercise, healthy eating, rest, and seeking support from professionals when needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhealthy ways of coping with stress</th>
<th>Healthy ways of coping with stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>Go for a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using pills or drugs to relax</td>
<td>Spend time in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking too much</td>
<td>Call a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities</td>
<td>Sweat out tension with a workout/playing a sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingeing on junk or comfort food</td>
<td>Write in your journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procrastinating</td>
<td>Take a long bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning out for hours looking at your phone</td>
<td>Light scented candles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems</td>
<td>Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping too much</td>
<td>Play with a pet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking out your stress on others</td>
<td>Curl up with a good book</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Watch a comedy</td>
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By: Dr. Louisa Footman

## Psychologist Corner

"According to Smith’s research, most people lean on one of these four things — she calls them “pillars” — more than the rest when they are crafting a meaningful life for themselves. From her work, she designed the quiz below (which she very kindly shared with Science of Us) to give you an idea of what your "pillar” might be."


By: Ryan Brown

## OUR TEAM

**Sarah Strycula-** 6th Grade Case Manager  
**Linda Still-** 7th Grade Case Manager  
**Erin Upton-** 8th Grade Case Manager  
**Toni Gonzales-** 9th Grade Case Manager  
**Francis Lando-** 10th Grade Case Manager  
and 504 Coordinator  
**Kristi Fausel-** 11th and 12th Grade Case Manager and Special Education Coordinator  
**Brian Fausel-** Pull-Out Specialist  
**Patricia Richardson-** Director of Special Education  
**Ryan Brown-** School Psychologist  
**Louisa Footman-** Social Worker