



# The BSE Communicator

A Quarterly Update from the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education

Fall 2009

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## Great News for Pennsylvania in Meeting AYP and PSSA Goals John J. Tommasini, Director

Welcome back! I hope you have had a great start to the 2009-2010 school year. Our focus this year will continue to be on promoting Pennsylvania's Standards Aligned System and providing the necessary supports and training to educators to achieve success for all students.

Pennsylvania has been recognized by the Center for Education Policy, a leading national educational research organization, as the only state to see increases for all students tested in reading and math in all school levels, from 2002-2008. Nearly 80 percent of public schools met the academic goals, or Adequate Yearly Progress, of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The recent release of 2008-09 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results shows an overall increase in students meeting proficient and advanced levels. I am pleased to share that the scores for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have also shown an overall increase in percentages of those meeting proficient and advanced for math, reading and science.

Professional development for students, parents and educators was once again the focus of the BSE during the summer months, and some of the events are highlighted in this issue.

## Pennsylvania Deafblind Family Learning Conference



The statewide Family Learning Conference, "Helping Families Become Stronger Team Members," was held in June and coincided with two important dates, including: Helen Keller's 129<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 27 and National Deafblind Awareness Week. Activities included events and presentations for the deafblind students, their parents and siblings and featured the Pennsylvania Partnership for the Deafblind's meeting, a dinner and a social celebration for all of the participants.



## Mentoring to Mastery (M2M) Project Retains Special Education Leaders

The retention and attrition of special education directors presents an ongoing statewide challenge. The M2M has been designed for the purpose of ensuring that new and veteran administrators in the field are supported, effective and better prepared to meet the responsibilities for coordinating a full range of services to meet the needs of incredibly diverse learners across all grades. M2M is a system of supports intended to increase knowledge and skills, encourage and challenge learning, promote networking and build trusting relationships in an effort to retain our valued leaders. Novice leaders are paired with veteran leaders to share experiences, knowledge and expertise.



*Wendy Emerson, Cheltenham School District, a Mentor of Distinction, is shown receiving a certificate of recognition from BSE Director John Tommasini*

Based on the Council for Exceptional Children and the PA Inspired Leadership standards, M2M offers guidelines for self-evaluation and action planning in the areas of: Effective Leadership, Inclusionary Practices, Effective Instruction, Organizational Change and Learning Theory. For additional information about Mentoring to Mastery, go to: [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net).



You're the only one  
who can make a  
difference. Whatever  
your dream,  
go for it!

*Earvin "Magic" Johnson*

### Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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## First Annual PPDB Helen Keller Award Presented to Rich McGann

The Pennsylvania Partnership for the Deafblind (PPDB), an organized network of parents, family members and individuals with deafblindness, awarded its first annual PPDB Helen Keller Award to Paul Richard "Rich" McGann Jr. for his outstanding work with the Deafblind community at the PA Deafblind Project's Annual Family Learning Conference on June 27.



*In the photo (l-r), Molly Black, Susan Green, Gabe Radzik, Rich McGann, Gordon Boe and Patti McGowan*

The group surprised McGann with the award, along with the PPDB's first Lifetime Membership, during their annual meeting. McGann, who is deafblind, has been employed for more than 30 years by the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children in Pittsburgh, where he has been a valuable asset to the PA Deafblind Project and serves on their Advisory Council. He has been a supportive friend to the PPDB and a strong advocate for the deafblind community.

PPDB is a private, non-profit organization which exists to provide support for individuals with deafblindness and their families through a family-driven network. For more information contact Gordon Boe, president, at [g.boe@comcast.net](mailto:g.boe@comcast.net).

## Updated Volume 3 of the Chapter 14 Questions and Answers

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) recently posted new Question and Answer (Q&A) documents for the following topical areas: Discipline, Disproportionality, Monitoring, Procedural Safeguards and Secondary Transition. New and revised OSEP versions were posted in June 2009 at: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>, and <http://www.pattan.net/regsforms/QuestionsandAnswers.aspx>

A change in policy with regard to parental consent and a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is contained in the most recent Q&A document on discipline released by OSEP. As a result of change in policy regarding consent for FBAs, the PDE is updating and replacing Volume 3 of the Chapter 14 Q&A with an updated version that will include the following new Question and Answer:

**Question:** Is consent required to do an FBA for a child?

**Answer:** Yes, a FBA is generally understood to be an individualized evaluation of a child in accordance with 34 CFR §§300.301 through 300.311 to assist in determining whether the child is, or continues to be, a child with a disability. The FBA process is frequently used to determine the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs, including the need for a behavior intervention plan. As with other individualized evaluation procedures and consistent with 34 CFR §300.300(a) and (c), parental consent is required for a FBA to be conducted as part of the initial evaluation or a reevaluation.

This updated Q&A document supersedes PDE's guidance, titled "Chapter 14 Questions and Answers, Volume 3," issued in February of 2009. Each Q&A document currently available will be updated to add new Q&As as important issues arise or to amend existing Q&As as needed. The change to Volume 3 is limited to question #3 in Section 14.133 of the Q&A document.

## Short Term Loan Distributes Over 200 Kits

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) in Harrisburg, the base of the statewide Short Term Loan project, distributed over 200 kits for visually impaired, hearing impaired and training activities at the start of the school year. In the photo are (left to right), Mike Onofrey, Alex DeFrank and Michael Stagemyer, and over 120 of the kits which were shipped in one day.

