

Attention Loyal Supporters!

In the past, we have received many gifts using the donor envelopes that have been included in our newsletters. With our new newsletter format, these envelopes will not be included. However, we hope you will use the form below when sending in a gift. Your continuing generosity will ensure we are able to provide exceptional educational opportunities for deaf children.

Yes!

I am delighted to support the Rochester School for the Deaf.

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

GIVING LEVELS:

- Friend \$1-\$99
- Partner \$100-\$249
- Sponsor \$250-\$499
- Director's Level \$500-\$999
- President's Level \$1000-\$1,875
- Founder's Level \$1,876 and up (1876 was the year the school was established)
- Memorial Gift (In memory of _____)
- Honorary Gift (In honor of _____)
- My employer (or spouse's employer) will match my contribution. (Enclosed is my matching gift form.)
- Rochester School for the Deaf is named in my will.
- I want to include Rochester School for the Deaf in my will. Please send me information.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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VISA, Mastercard, and American Express are also accepted. (Please circle one.)

Card # _____

Name on card _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____



Inside This Issue...

- Getting "SMART" in the Classroom
- Making Connections, Person to Person!
- Students Shine at Jr. NAD Conference
- RSD Newsbriefs

Building Futures is designed to keep staff, families, and friends of Rochester School for the Deaf informed about the school's programs. Communication with the school is encouraged. To learn more, please contact us today at 585-544-1240 (Voice/TTY) or visit our website at www.RSDeaf.org.

Harold M. Mowl, Jr., Ph.D., Superintendent

Building Futures

Spring 2006

Issue No.111

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE ROCHESTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Getting "SMART" in the Classroom

The SMART Board interactive whiteboard is revolutionizing the classroom at RSD. In the words of one satisfied teacher, "the pure fun of using the SMART Boards fascinate the kids and grab their attention" making it a powerful teaching tool for all ages. Essentially, the electronic board connects to your computer and a projector, and with the touch of a finger -- which acts like a computer mouse -- the user can interact with on-screen materials. Users can write with digital ink over anything and save their notes to a single file for easy distribution. One can also wirelessly connect laptops and transfer control of the board between users. Students are on the edge of their seats ready to use the board as the information comes to life before them.

SMART Boards have been at RSD for almost five years now, but have only been available in the library, the science lab, and the computer lab. Teachers had to bring students to these areas to use the boards, so they were underutilized, and in most cases, used as nothing more than a fancy projection screen.

Denise Stappenbeck, Director of Educational Programs at RSD, has "made it a priority to change the value of SMART Boards as an instructional tool" at the school. In May of 2005, she participated in a SMART Board Master Teacher Training in Nashville, TN where

she learned the ins and outs of the board. She worked with other teachers from across the country to find out how the technology was used in other classrooms. Energized from her training experience, she developed a pilot program to provide SMART Boards -- as well as training and support -- to each RSD school level: preschool, elementary, middle school and high school. Now, just nine months later, SMART Boards are becoming part of the fabric of classroom teaching.

A team of six teachers, along with Mrs. Stappenbeck, has implemented the program across all subject areas. The Early Childhood Center uses the SMART Boards to work on handwriting skills, to learn about money, and other tasks. In a 4th grade health class, students are downloading graphics and information from the Internet, and then using the SMART Boards to manipulate and incorporate materials into their lessons. In Middle School math classes, students



Using a SMART board, a Middle School student demonstrates her math solutions to teacher Heather Mooney (sitting on the right).

can retrieve and review lessons to study for exams and problem solve together using the board as a focal point. A high school modified class uses it to display a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, aiding students in their understanding of budgeting concepts. These are just a few of the applications.

With SMART Boards, teachers report that students are more focused and better behaved, that they're attention is sustained for longer periods, and that it makes learning fun for the students.

Continued on inside

Rochester School for the Deaf 1545 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14621

A Preeminent Provider of Educational, Developmental and Evaluation Services to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Their Families in the Nation

To learn more, please contact us today at 585-544-1240 (Voice/TTY) or visit our website at www.RSDeaf.org



Making Connections, Person to Person!

Creating stronger communicators

Communication is the cornerstone of all human interaction. The Rochester School for the Deaf Speech/Communication Department understands that communicating well is the product of rich and varied approaches, methods, and clinical expertise to raise each individual student's abilities to their personal best.

To better understand the flexible nature of RSD's Speech/Communication program, the following representative examples illustrate how the needs of three different students might be addressed. The examples, based on typical scenarios, do not represent actual cases.

Example 1: A three-year-old has only beginning skills in attending (staying focused on a communication partner) and limited understanding of others' communication. He demonstrates some developing listening and speech skills.

Student Plan: For all students this age, heavy family involvement is essential. This child, in particular, needs to develop better attending abilities, an important precursor of communication and a foundation of language development. He must be able to stay focused on a communication partner to grasp the entire message and to make sense of it. Planned interaction in therapy clarifies the connection between what is conveyed and the corresponding action or event. Emphasizing listening to and speaking using power language -- simple, powerful messages that give the child the ability to impact their world -- is also very beneficial. The result will be a child who better understands what others convey to him, and how communication benefits him and others. Life at home and at school will be less frustrating and will proceed more meaningfully and enjoyably, with learning happening more naturally in all environments.

Example 2: An eight-year-old student is developing reasonably well in several areas of communication. Recently, however, she seems to have reached a plateau, and is experiencing difficulty grasping and using higher-level language. Her listening and speech skills continue to develop at a reasonable level.

Student Plan: While maintaining work toward good listening and speaking, the plan for this student would be to take on larger and more varied segments of spoken language. Through a focus on the cognitive underpinnings of language development -- skills such as making associations, predicting outcomes, comparing and contrasting, deducing new information from that already given, reasoning to determine cause, etc. -- her abilities would be expanded. Visual organizers that match these different ways of thinking may be introduced as support to bolster more



Speech/Communication Teacher Stacy Barry works with an ECC student to develop language concepts as well as listening and speech skills.

analytical thinking. She will then incorporate these skills in all aspects of school life, at home as a family member, and eventually as an adult in an employment setting.

Example 3: A seventeen-year-old student has strong skills in American Sign Language, but less developed skills in English. His listening and speech skills are developing well and he has a desire to continue improving in this area. Overall, the student exhibits a relatively low level of confidence.

Student Plan: For this student, further development of the sounds of speech will help gain clearer, more comprehensible spoken language, which should reinforce skills in English as well. Because he is most fluent in ASL, this would be used as an avenue to teach English grammar, syntax and idiomatic expressions. To build confidence, the student can take part in making public presentations in his preferred mode of communication through the Optimist Club Competition sponsored by RSD, as well as engaging in other opportunities such as debates, small-scale presentations, and group communication. Field trips also offer an exciting option for practice and esteem-building in real-life situations. When a student improves in speech, in English usage, and in confidence, there will be a positive, exponential effect that permeates all communication, inside and outside of school. Indeed, his prospects in future employment will prove brighter as well.

The Speech/Communication Department's varied and flexible approach, geared to each student's unique needs, helps create better communicators. With a trove of effective tools and techniques, the goal is to help each student effectively engage in human interaction and expand personal growth and potential.

Students Shine at Jr. NAD Conference

Two Rochester School for the Deaf students, Barbara Spiecker and Matt Poe, traveled to Indianapolis for the 2005 biennial Junior National Association of the Deaf (Jr. NAD) National Conference held from November 1st through 6th. Two delegates each from 27 schools were represented at this important event, along with observers, advisors and speakers. Barbara and Matt made the journey with RSD teacher and Jr. NAD advisor Susan Klein. The conference was hosted by the Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD).

Jr. NAD is a coalition of chapters across the nation that invests in students so they might become future leaders of the deaf and hard of hearing community. The National Conference brings together delegates from the various chapters to present workshops, team building activities and social events in fun and memorable ways.

Upon arrival, each student delegate registered and was assigned to a group with whom they would spend the next several days of the conference. After registration, an evening safari-theme party was held. Introductions of Jr. NAD members, coordinators and officers were given, followed by dinner, dancing and games.

During the next few days, the various groups attended workshops on topics such as leadership, cultural etiquette, and parliamentary procedure. They also learned about producing a video, publishing a newsletter and other pertinent subjects. Delegates also toured the ISD Museum, visited the Indianapolis Circle Center Mall, and saw the famed Indy 500 Speedway. There was plenty of time for "cutting loose," too, with rock climbing, a challenging rope course, and other games and activities to test the mind and body.



(l to r) RSD Jr. NAD advisor Susan Klein, RSD delegates Matt Poe and Barbara Spiecker

On Friday evening the 4th, the Jr. NAD Pageant was held for Mr. and Miss Jr. NAD. On Saturday, the Jr. NAD General Meeting was conducted from 10:00 AM until noon, and in the evening the delegates donned their best for the final banquet with delicious food and lots of fun.

Both RSD delegates were enthusiastic about their participation. Matt found the team-building rope pit activity "a real challenge," but ultimately his team succeeded. Barbara was part of the group responsible for creating a newsletter. All group members took on job roles to produce a great looking newsletter.

The delegates thank RSD and its supporters for making it possible to be part of this wonderful opportunity to learn, build skills, and interact at the Jr. NAD Conference.

Getting "SMART"

Continued from front page

They also note that it is no more time consuming to prepare lessons and, that once created, lessons can easily be added or modified for upcoming years.

"My students are more motivated if they get to present in the front of the class using the SMART Board," says preschool teacher Julie Shahin. "It aids in retention because deaf students, who are extremely visually oriented, can be active participants in the process in front of them on the board."

The students themselves have offered positive feedback as well. A middle school student says, "I feel comfortable with the SMART Board. It helps me because I can work fast... the

teacher can type and I can organized the information, change the color, and make it work for me." Another student sums it up perfectly: "The SMART Board makes me more interested and focused."

The hope is to expand the program to more classrooms in the coming months. Though the initial response has been very positive, the true proof of teaching effectiveness needs to be addressed. Teachers are in the first phases of evaluation as they collect student performance data to formally document learning improvements.

RSD Newsbriefs

SPRING FESTIVAL AT RSD

Save the date for the 12th Annual Spring Festival on Saturday, June 3, 2006 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at RSD. Sorenson Communications will be the primary sponsor of the event.



Enjoy games and crafts for kids, exhibitor booths, face painting, a bake sale, raffle drawings, and much more, plus a great selection of food. Something for everyone!

For more information, contact Cindy L. Mann, Spring Festival Coordinator by e-mail at cmann1@rsdeaf.org or RSD at (585) 544-1240.

See you at this year's Spring Festival!

SOCCER HONORS

Rochester School for the Deaf is proud to announce that the varsity soccer team was selected as the Team of the Year among schools for the deaf by the Frat. In addition, the team's leading scorer, Justin DiBiase, was selected as the Player of the Year.

Congratulations to the team and to Justin for an outstanding season, and thanks to all the supporters who helped our stars shine!

Bullying: *It's Everybody's Business*

Outreach Center Workshop for Parents & Professionals

Saturday, March 25, 2006
8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

RIT Inn and Conference Center
5257 West Henrietta Road in Henrietta

Adults \$10 (includes lunch)
Child \$5 (lunch)

Childcare will be provided.

Registration deadline - March 22, 2006

For more information, contact vhurwitz@rsdeaf.org or (585) 336-5855 (voice)