PROJECT BRIDGE

JULY 2014

Project Bridge is the periodic newsletter of the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) within the University of Delaware’s College of Education and Human Development. This issue includes project updates from the past few months and events taking place in June and July.

Please send news and events for the next issue to Ben Szmidt at bszmidt@udel.edu by August 15.

CDS IN THE NEWS

PBS airs video featuring Career and Life Studies Certificate students

Graduates of CDS’s Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program appeared with CLSC Director Brian Freedman in a new video that aired recently on WHYY, the local Public Broadcasting Station affiliate. The Center for Disabilities Studies and the Wilmington firm Teleduction produced the video, which CDS promoted on Facebook and Twitter and posted on YouTube. You can watch the CLSC video here.

PBS airing video that highlights iCanConnect program

WHYY says it will broadcast a video this weekend that shines a light on the iCanConnect program, which offers free communications technology and training to many Delawareans with combined hearing and vision loss. (The video will air Friday at 5:30 p.m. and 11 p.m., Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. and Monday at 5:30 p.m.)

Produced by CDS and Teleduction, the video features Center Director Beth Mineo and the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative’s Dan Fendler explains the benefits of iCanConnect.
Fendler. CDS has posted the video on YouTube, and promoted it on Facebook and Twitter. You can watch the iCanConnect video here.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you learned this month about a Harrington, Del. man who’s bringing adults with disabilities into contact with kids in area classrooms; about a webinar in which CDS’s Karen Latimer provided an overview of devices and services that are available to individuals with disabilities through the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative; about summer internships for Delaware high school students with intellectual disabilities; and about a Delaware man who found a way to surf again after devastating injuries 25 years ago.

If you haven’t yet liked CDS on Facebook, what’s keeping you? Please connect with us now!

**CDS on Twitter**

In July, followers of CDS on Twitter heard about the release of a resource guide for seniors and persons with disabilities; received information on emergency preparedness; got word of a webinar on employment; and were given tips on stress management and relaxation techniques.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Lunchtime Learning to explain the iCanConnect program**

CDS will devote its next Lunchtime Learning session to the iCanConnect program, which provides free communications technology and training to people with combined hearing and vision loss. The session will be held August 7, from noon till 1 p.m., at CDS.

Presenters Sonja Rathel and Karen Latimer from CDS and Melodye May from the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired will discuss eligibility and demonstrate some of the available technology.

To register, please complete the online registration form or call Katie Hoffman at 302-831-3632. Requested accommodations will be provided if requests are made by August 1. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch; snacks and water will be provided. The session is free.

To learn more about iCanConnect Delaware, call 1-800-870-3284 or email rathel@udel.edu.
CDS promotes iCanConnect in statewide newspaper campaign

Advertisements encouraging people with hearing and vision loss to learn whether they qualify for free communications technology and training began appearing in papers throughout Delaware in June, and they’ll run for several more months. iCanConnect is administered in Delaware by CDS. CDS’s project partners include the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired, the Delaware Program for Children with Deaf-Blindness, and the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative.

STAFF UPDATES

Arrivals

Ben Szmidt recently joined the Communications and Advocacy unit as a communications specialist. He will work to make the information CDS disseminates more accessible, and help raise the Center’s profile through video and other communications offerings. Ben is a UD graduate (Class of 2011) with a degree in communication and is happy to be back at his alma mater. Before joining CDS, Ben was a producer and reporter for WDDE 91.1 FM, Delaware’s source for NPR news.

Susan Veenema joined the Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project at the Center for Disabilities Studies as an instructional coach in June. She will be conducting trainings around the area of IEP development and providing technical assistance to schools in the area of social skills. Susan has over 10 years of experience in Special Education, and possesses a Masters degree in Special Education with a focus on severe and profound disabilities.

Jae Chul Lee selected as scholar for health disparities course at NIH

Jae Chul Lee, director of the Health and Wellness unit at CDS, was recently selected to be a participant scholar for the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) Translational Health Disparities Course: Integrating Principles of Science, Practice and Policy in Health Disparities Research. The course will take place August 11-22 at National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Md., and will provide a cross-disciplinary perspective in research, practice and policy interventions.

CDS researcher finds disparities in health care services among individuals with disabilities

In an article published in the June 2014 issue of Health Services Research, Jae Chul Lee found that there are differences in health care access and preventive care depending on what type of disability people have. The article, co-
authored by Lee, noted that while individuals with hearing impairment had better health care access and receipt of preventive care than those with other disability types, people with multiple types of limitations were more likely to experience difficulty with health care access. For more about the study, read the article abstract on the Health Service Research website.

**CDS’s Laura Eisenman and Megan Pell co-author new article**

In an article being published in *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals (CDTEI)*, Associate Professor Laura Eisenman, Doctoral Candidate and CDS Professional Megan Pell, Doctoral Candidate Bishwa Poudel, and former University of Delaware professional development specialist Amy Pleet describe the experiences of students with disabilities at an inclusive high school in the mid-Atlantic region. This information was collected across five years of interviews with the students themselves, their parents, administrators and teachers. The researchers identified several ways that special and general educators, as well as counselors and administrators, supported students to set their own goals and advocate for themselves. Researchers also found the way that learning supports were delivered within general education classrooms helped to improve students’ confidence in their academic abilities and sense of belonging at the school. The article highlights three particular students to show the range of student experiences from 9th grade to graduation.

**EVENTS**

**August 7**

**CDS Lunchtime Learning**, see above.

**August 9**

**Delaware Crab Feast**, Leipsic Volunteer Fire Company, 318 Main Street, Leipsic, 4 to 7 p.m. The Brain Injury Association of Delaware (BIADE) hosts its annual feast, which includes all-you-can-eat crabs and many other food items. Tickets are $35 for adults and $10 for children and can be purchased by calling 1-800-411-0505. More information about this event is available on the BIADE website.

**August 10**

**Buddy Run and Pancake Breakfast**, 115 McKinley Street, Dewey Beach, 7 to 11 a.m. The Dewey Beach Buddy 5K Run/Walk and Pancake Breakfast will benefit the Boardwalk Buddy Walk and Best Buddies Delaware in an effort to support people with intellectual and development disabilities. Register at event website.

**August 17**

**Autism Delaware Annual Beach Picnic**, Cape Henlopen State Park, Lewes, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Autism Delaware hosts its yearly cookout, with games. Registration and more information can be found on the event website.
Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

RESOURCES

Delaware releases updated resource guide for persons with disabilities

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has updated its free Guide to Services for Older Delawareans and Persons with Disabilities. The guide is a comprehensive directory of services available to Delawareans and contains information on legal, medical and financial services. The 2014-2015 edition is available for download on the DHSS website or by calling 1-800-223-9074.

FCC releases new consumer support line, works on Next Generation 911

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has released a consumer support line for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and use American Sign Language (ASL). This support line will allow consumers who use ASL to speak directly with the FCC using videophones. For more information, visit the FCC website.

The FCC is also committed to rolling out "Next Generation 911," which would allow consumers to text 911 for emergency services. This should benefit deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired consumers. For more information about the process and timing of Next Generation 911, watch a video update on the FCC website.

National Center for Learning Disabilities recommends mobile apps

The National Center for Learning Disabilities offers a glimpse into several mobile apps for kids with LD. The apps run the gamut, from teaching etiquette and building confidence, to warning about cyber bullying and making friends. Check out the list on the NCLD website.

ADVOCACY CORNER

This section is dedicated to informing you about advocacy efforts and new or pending legislation or policies that relate to individuals with disabilities.

Transportation talks extended

Since April 1, legislators, advocates from the disability community and representatives from the Delaware Transit Corporation have been meeting to discuss the DART redesign plan. Advocates asked for the meetings to gain assurance that the new plan, which cuts service and hikes fares, will support the needs of paratransit riders. The meetings were originally slated to end on June 30, but advocates weren’t satisfied with the meetings’ progress. Many issues remain unresolved. For example, there are few alternatives to paratransit in Delaware, a problem because many paratransit riders need to negotiate paratransit service under the new plan. Also, rising fares are imposing hardships to many riders on fixed incomes. Due to these and other concerns, the meetings will continue.
DART considering accessible taxis

As part of the DART redesign project, Delaware Transit Corporation is evaluating ways that taxi companies could offer customers accessible vehicles. One vehicle that might fill the bill was demonstrated at Easter Seals on July 22. Based on a study done by the Institute of Public Administration at the University of Delaware, that vehicle, the MV-1, pictured below, has the most accessibility features among minivans and is able to accommodate several different types of wheelchairs. Several states use it, including New York, Indiana, Florida and Pennsylvania. However, some who attended the demonstration voiced concerns about the cost of the vehicle, the lack of state laws regarding taxi service, and the space within the vehicle to accommodate large wheelchairs or more than one wheelchair.

![MV-1 vehicle](image)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act becomes law

President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act on July 22. Because of the Act, people with disabilities served by the vocational rehabilitation system will be interviewed about their needs before receiving a standard assessment. This change in procedure should increase the likelihood that people with disabilities will obtain work that’s aligned with their strengths and desires.

The Act also benefits students with disabilities who are getting ready to graduate from school. Students who take special education classes historically have been placed in sheltered workshops instead of being trained for competitive employment. The Act will require school districts to train students competitively for employment, as opposed to assuming that they are destined for placement in sheltered work as a consequence of their disability. The Act is also expected to compel schools to help students transition into post-secondary education, if that is their choice.

The new law moves the Assistive Technology Act programs, which include the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, into the Administration on Community Living (ACL), the same unit within the federal government that houses CDS and the other University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities as well as the Developmental Disabilities Councils and the Protection and Advocacy organizations. The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, formerly a unit of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, will also move to the ACL.
Delaware bill provides new assessment option for students with disabilities

On July 15, Governor Markell signed Senate Bill 229, which establishes an additional mechanism for assessing the learning of students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. In the event that parents, IEP teams, and district/charter school leadership do not believe that assessment via standard or alternate assessment will return valid results for particular students, the achievement of those students relative to state standards and IEP goals will now be able to be measured via "portfolio assessment" (consideration of work samples and projects). The Delaware Department of Education is charged with establishing the methods and procedures for this new assessment mechanism, and the legislation specifies that the approach must conform to all federal guidelines. SB 229 also promotes the availability of an extended school year for students who are not beginning to read by age 7 to enable them to access reading interventions.

For more information, visit the State of Delaware website for this bill.

CONTACT US

The University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies is located at 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, Delaware, 19716. Please call us at 302-831-6974 or 302-831-4689 (TDD), send an email to ud-cds@udel.edu or visit our website at www.udel.edu/cds. You'll also find CDS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UDelCDS.

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