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 updates from the past few months and a look forward to upcoming events.

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

IN THE NEWS

New writers join CDS’s Inclusion blog

UD Professor Karl Booksh, a leader in the movement to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities in postsecondary STEM education, and CDS’s Susan Veenema, an advocate for a greater awareness of issues affecting people living with mental illness and a member of the Center’s School Age unit, have joined the Inclusion blog’s roster of writers.

Booksh is a professor of chemistry and biochemistry, past chair of the American Chemical Society Committee on Chemists with Disabilities and a member of both the ACS Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board and the Community Advisory Council to CDS.

He’s the principal investigator on a unique National Science Foundation-funded research experience for undergraduates (REU) program designed to prepare students with disabilities for graduate school in chemistry.

Veenema is an instructional coach for the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project at CDS, where she leads professional development and coaching on developing Individualized Education Plans and social skills.
Veenema, who is pursuing a graduate degree in Public Policy and Urban Affairs, also discusses her personal experience living with bipolar disorder with students enrolled in UD’s Senior Seminar in Disability Studies.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**CDS’s enhanced Annual Report now online**

Videos, slideshows, news items, research, PowerPoint presentations and more now enhance the Center’s 2014-2015 Annual Report. Adding to the stories about CDS and the disability community that appeared in our calendar version of the annual report, this digital version provides links to two publications that are spurring efforts to achieve health equity for people with disabilities. It offers viewers links to videos of students with disabilities who are “on the job” and of Gov. Jack Markell urging employers to give more of these students opportunities. It allows viewers to relive Artfest and to gain a better appreciation of the benefits of assistive technology through newly created slideshows. It lets them listen to a radio broadcast about an app and website that can help people with disabilities better prepare for emergencies. Discover these and other enhancements to the annual report by viewing it here. For optimal viewing, use the Firefox web browser.

**CDS presents at school psychologists conference in New Orleans**

CDS’s School-Age unit gave presentations on The Delaware School Climate Survey and the PEERS social skills program at the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Conference in New Orleans, La., from Feb. 10 through Feb. 13. Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS) project members Debby Boyer, Sarah Hearn and Lindsey Mantz gave an overview of surveys such as school climate and social emotional competence and the research supporting them. They also offered guidance on how to use survey data. NASP President Todd Savage selected this...
presentation to be part of his recommended list of sessions on school climate.

Boyer and instructional coach Susan Veenema gave a poster presentation outlining the implementation of the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS) program in secondary schools throughout Delaware. Their poster featured data from the 2014-15 school year, demonstrating that the PEERS curriculum was implemented effectively and that the program significantly increased students’ social skill knowledge.

**UD mentoring course returns, expands curriculum**

The UD course *Mentoring Students: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* is returning for the Spring 2016 semester. This will be the second year that Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) students will join their undergraduate peers in all aspects of the course taught by CDS’s Debbie Bain and Wendy Claiser. Students work together inside and outside the classroom in support of CLSC students’ individual social and academic goals. In order to increase the inclusive nature of the course, this semester’s assignments have been modified to ensure that all students can be full participants.

![Debbie Bain](image)

**Spreading CLSC at UD and abroad**

Students and teachers from the Appoquinimink School District visited UD on Feb. 16 to learn about the Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program for students with intellectual disabilities. A panel of three CLSC students spoke with the visitors about the program, including classwork, campus life, and how they are working toward their employment goals. CLSC students then led the Appoquinimink students and teachers on a tour of UD’s campus, with stops at the Morris Library and the Perkins Student Center.

CLSC instructors Debbie Bain and Kathryn Leonard and CLSC students Steven Edwards and Terry Johnson gave two guest lectures to UD’s *Teaching Exceptional Adolescents* course on Feb. 16 and Feb. 18. Bain and Leonard taught about self-

![CLSC student Malik Bradford leads a group of Appoquinimink School District students and teachers on a tour at Perkins Student Center.](image)
determination and person-centered planning. Edwards and Johnson discussed their goals and the skills and experiences that have been important in achieving them.

**CDS celebrates preparedness with 87ers**

The CDS/UD Citizen Corps Council was on hand at the first annual Citizen Corps Emergency Preparedness Night at the Delaware 87er basketball game on Jan 29. CDS/UD Citizen Corps Council members and other Citizen Corps partner organizations provided information to attendees about how to prepare for emergencies and measures that people with disabilities should take to be ready for the unexpected. Citizen Corps is a Department of Homeland Security program with local chapters that train citizens to assist in recovery efforts after a disaster or terrorist attack.

**STAFF UPDATES**

**Esley Newton takes on new ACCESS role**

Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success (ACCESS) project member Esley Newton has accepted a position as the project’s new program manager. Newton will provide leadership to the ACCESS project team and oversee its multiple initiatives. She also will collaborate with Delaware Department of Education staff and district administrators to support implementation of professional development and coaching focused on high quality instruction and assessment of students with disabilities.

**Arrivals**

Amy Brown has joined CDS’s School Age unit as a coach and trainer for the ACCESS project, which seeks to help students with disabilities gain better access to the general education curriculum. Before arriving at CDS, Brown worked as a special education teacher in the Appoquinimink School District for 18 years.
Sue Brewster has been hired as a transition specialist with the CLSC program and Swank Employment Services, where she will support people with disabilities as they find employment. Before joining CDS, Brewster worked as a transition specialist and teacher in Toledo, Ohio for 35 years. She says she is very excited to continue to learn how to support young adults as they venture out into the world of work.

Kathryn Leonard has joined CDS as a senior life skills coach with the CLSC program, where she will support CLSC students in developing and increasing their independence. She will also teach a CLSC course and act as an advisor. Leonard worked as an undergraduate coach with CLSC while she was a student at UD pursuing a degree in psychology and minors in disability studies and cognitive science.

Paige Sordelet and Gabrielle Mills have joined CDS’s National Core Indicators (NCI) project as UD Human Development and Family Studies 400-hour interns. The interns will contribute to the project by conducting in-person surveys and helping with administrative duties. Both students are senior human services majors and disability studies minors. Paige says she enjoyed working on the NCI project last year as a surveyor and wanted to take on a bigger roll within the project this year. Gabrielle, who is hoping to pursue a graduate degree in genetics, says she wants to learn more about people with disabilities and the services that are provided to them.
Nicole Fillion and Emily Klein have joined CDS’s Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities Project as undergraduate interns. Nicole is a senior health behavior science major and aims to pursue a graduate degree in public health. With an interest in learning more about disabilities and public health in a government setting, she is splitting her time between CDS and the Department of Health and Social Services Office of the Secretary. Emily Klein is a sophomore public policy and anthropology double major with a minor in public health. While working at CDS, Emily says she hopes to broaden her understanding of disability, health policy and the human experience.

CDS staff receive honor from School Psychology Review

A study co-authored by CDS’s George Bear, Lindsey Mantz, Chunyan Yang and Debby Boyer received Honorable Mention for Article of the Year in 2015 by the School Psychology Review at the National Association of School Psychologists conference in New Orleans, La. The study, Differences in bullying victimization between students with and without disabilities, found that children with disabilities are generally at greater risk of being bullied than children without disabilities. However, the study also found that how often children with disabilities were bullied varied greatly depending on the type of disability and how an instance of bullying was measured. You can read more about the study on the UD College of Education and Human Development website.

CDS Health and Wellness director joins board of child advocacy organization

CDS’s Jae Chul Lee has joined the board of KIDS COUNT in Delaware, one of 53 similar projects around the nation that provide data about the well-being of children, youth and families, and advocate for positive changes in policies, priorities and programs. Lee will also serve on the program’s data committee. KIDS COUNT in Delaware is housed in the Center for Community Research and Service at the University of Delaware.
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.

Bloggers admonish presidential debate moderators, applaud community altruists

At CDS’s Inclusion blog in February …

Victor Schaffner scolded moderators and sponsors of the presidential debates for failing over several months to ask candidates about issues that concern one in five Americans with a disability. “In town halls and at other events, candidates have touched on disability – when they’re prodded by audience members, on their own, and on the rare occasion when a moderator raises the subject,” Schaffner wrote. But only once during 15 presidential debates has a moderator asked a candidate about disability. Read his post, and comment, here.

David Lynch challenged readers to find ways in which they can embrace others beyond Valentine’s Day. Family members who care for a loved one with a disability might welcome respite, he wrote, while seniors might appreciate others’ encouragement, the homeless might need a meal and children might benefit from tutoring. “We should make an effort every day to help and be a neighbor to people we come in contact with who have struggles to overcome,” Lynch wrote. He asked readers to suggest ways people can help others at the blog. You can do so here.

CDS launched its Inclusion blog in June to engage the disability community, the public and policy makers in a provocative discussion of issues with the potential to bring about positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities.

Our bloggers include advocates and experts, people with disabilities and people without disabilities, staff at CDS and writers outside CDS.

Visit the blog at http://blog.cds.udel.edu/. And please don’t just read what’s there, comment!
SOCIAL MEDIA

CDS on Facebook

If you’re among the growing number of people who like CDS on Facebook, you heard advocates voice their concerns about cutbacks in services for students with blindness in Delaware; you learned that Gov. Jack Markell is asking legislators to tap state funds to make up for the loss of federal dollars that had gone to early education; and you read how Minnesota officials are exploring ways to reduce their state’s reliance on workshops – and how positively many people with developmental disabilities are reacting to their efforts.

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

CDS on Twitter

In February, followers of CDS on Twitter read about a Dorney Park employee with disabilities who was let go due to a new job interview procedure and the ensuing social media outcry which prompted the park to overturn its decision; learned that Newark Charter School received national honors for closing achievement gaps for groups including students receiving special education; and saw that Special Olympics Delaware raised more than $800,000 at the 25th annual Polar Bear Plunge.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

RESOURCES

App allows for all-in-one health and behavior tracking

Birdhouse is an all-in-one platform that allows parents to track and organize important health information for their children with disabilities. The platform offers specialized apps for parents of children with autism, special needs, and epilepsy. All three apps allow users to keep daily behavioral journals, track special diets and sleep cycles, organize medications, and more. In January, Birdhouse launched a fourth app designed to allow special educators to track their students’ negative and positive behaviors, set goals, and document parent communication. All Birdhouse apps are available at the Apple App Store and on Google Play.

Birdhouse can be used on the web or through its iOS and Android apps.
March 2

**Education for All: An Evening with AUCD** The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) will host an event to celebrate the AUCD network’s impact on improving education outcomes for children with disabilities across the country. In addition to celebrating progress already made, the event will also seek to strengthen connections between AUCD’s corporate and federal partners and grassroots leaders. The evening will include a reception, honoree recognition presentation, and entertainment by singer/songwriter Blessing Offor. Visit the [event’s website](#) for more information regarding honorees, presenters and exhibitors. The event will take place at the Carnegie Library in Washington, D.C. Tickets can be purchased at the door for $125.

March 2

**Family SHADE Networking Breakfast** Representatives from organizations in Kent and Sussex counties serving children with special healthcare needs, as well as other interested members of the public, are invited to attend Family SHADE’s Networking Breakfast. Each organization that attends will have an opportunity to share information about upcoming activities and new initiatives with the group. Attendees are welcome to bring flyers and brochures to share with others. The breakfast will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Easter Seals, 22317 DuPont Blvd., in Georgetown. Please contact Annalisa Ekbladh at annalisa@udel.edu with questions.

March 16

**Maximizing Access: Smart Choices in Equipment and Facility Design** Hosted by the Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities Project, this training will offer strategies to help healthcare professionals improve access to health care services and programs for people with disabilities in Delaware. Attendees will discuss common health disparities among persons with disabilities, identify barriers to health service delivery for this population, learn about ADA standards for access to health services, and more. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Dover Public Library, 35 East Loockerman St., in Dover. This training is free, but [pre-registration is required here](#). Please contact Bhavana Viswanathan at bhavana@udel.edu or 302-831-8374 with questions.

March 16

**22nd Inclusion Conference** The gathering will feature keynote speaker Phillip Strain, who is scheduled to address “Inclusion Myths and Realities: Key Findings, Quality Indicators and Longitudinal Needs for Children.” Please see the [conference website](#) for information regarding other workshops available to attendees. The event will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at Dover Downs Hotel, 1131 North DuPont Hwy., in Dover. Attendees must register by March 2. The cost is $40 per person or $20 per full-time student. [Please register here](#).

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.
CONTACT US

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