

Teachers

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volunteered to participate in the pilot program have signed up for the peer coaching initiative. Peer coaching is open to experienced teachers with excellent track records.

This process involves classroom observations conducted by a fellow teacher in which the observer will take note of his or her team member's effectiveness in specific areas. "My first impression of peer coaching is very positive," said Mary Fran Thomas, a learning support teacher at Dallas Middle School. "It's an opportunity to look at my own teaching through the eyes of another."

Peer coaching participants must join the program with a partner. "A lot of this is about trust - if a teacher wants another to observe how she motivates her students, she has to have confidence that her colleague will provide her honest feedback," said Speziale.

Thomas, who has partnered with another learning support teacher, anticipates the experience will be revealing. "It's like going to the optometrist," she said. "You look through the first set of lenses and everything seems clear but until you compare those to another pair you can't make a decision about which is best."

Another improvement is the self-directed mode of supervision, which requires independent development. It also is open only to teachers in good standing, who are interested in compiling a portfolio of materials, course work, and professional training. "The

"The thing we really wanted to stress was that supervision is completely separate from evaluation."

Dr. Michael Speziale
Assistant Superintendent

self-directed project is similar to the kind of work that would be required of a college professor seeking tenure," said Dr. Speziale. "Each teacher is required to submit a portfolio documenting the work that has been completed as part of an action plan."

Each of the categories requires the development of an action plan which identifies a teacher's goals and strategies for accomplishing them. The teacher then meets with an administrator to gain approval of the plan and to establish a schedule for periodic reviews of his/her progress.

Eventually, differentiated supervision may reduce the need for principals to regularly observe teachers in a classroom setting. "To date supervision has entailed a principal approaching a teacher to inform him that on a specified date the administrator will be sitting in on his class," said Speziale. "That practice provides only a small snapshot of what the teacher has done for 180 days."

Dr. Gilbert Griffiths, Superintendent of Schools, said the new program won't eliminate class-

room supervision, and even experienced teachers will be observed every three to four years.

In contrast, differentiated supervision is intended to increase the spectrum of observation and provide administrators with a clearer picture of each teacher's performance. "This program requires some initiative on the part of the teacher to consider areas which need improvement and to work toward those goals but it also will allow administrators to focus on educators who would benefit from additional support," Speziale said.

The innovative system has received high marks from teachers and administrators who are using the program in other school districts throughout the state. "Gettysburg and a few other districts in Pennsylvania have implemented this program with great success," said Speziale.

More importantly, teachers at Dallas are optimistic about the prospects for its success in their schools. "I love change," said Thomas. "Life would be so boring if everything remained the same. This is a new way for teachers to grow as professionals and as people."

Thomas realizes the pilot program involves only a small group of the district's teachers but she thinks the effects will be felt by everyone. "Enthusiasm is contagious," she said. "Kids know when a teacher loves them and they know when a teacher loves what she's doing."

Cured

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NAMI coordinates a support group for friends and relatives who are striving to assist someone with a mental illness. "I didn't get much out of the first meeting I attended because I was still so angry," said Dukinas. "But I continued to go to meetings and pretty soon I found myself getting more involved with the group."

The support Dukinas received she now offers freely as president of the Luzerne/Wyoming County Chapter of NAMI. "We are making great strides in our understanding of how the brain works and which treatments and medications are most effective, but there is still a stigma associated with mental illness," said Dukinas. "Fighting those misconceptions is NAMI's biggest challenge."

The group works with various local agencies to spread the word that mental illness is a disease like any physical affliction. "People living with this disease should not be embarrassed to seek help," said Dukinas. "Millions of Americans live full happy lives once they get the medical attention they need."

Eliminating the public misconception that the mentally ill are violent or unable to hold jobs is also high on the list of NAMI's priorities. "I don't know why employers are afraid to hire someone with a history of mental illness," said Dukinas. "It isn't any different from hiring someone with diabetes; both workers need medication to stabilize the disease and control the symptoms."

That message is soon to be spread across the country as part of a national campaign featuring famous and successful people who live with mental illness. The public relations drive was unveiled at a recent conference held in Washington D.C.



Peg Dukinas of Shavertown is shown at the White House, where she attended a conference on mental health.

"People living with this disease should not be embarrassed to seek help."

Peg Dukinas
Shavertown

Dukinas was one of 300 people invited to attend the work session hosted by Tipper Gore and Hillary Clinton. "We had a tour and a very fancy breakfast at the White House," she said. "Later, we went to Howard University where we were divided into smaller groups for break out sessions. Tipper Gore was a part of the workshop I attended and many very successful people spoke about their personal experiences with mental illness."

One of the gentlemen who addressed the conference made a particular impression on Dukinas.

"This fellow from Nickelodeon stood up and talked about fixing loose threads on carpeting," she said. "He told the crowd it took him 41 years to find out he had OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). He always thought he was just weird."

There are thousands of stories just like that one and Dukinas is committed to making sure each one is heard. "What keeps me going is the high I feel when someone who is very ill begins to bloom; there is a happiness that radiates," she said.

Those who work with Dukinas have discovered her energy is also contagious. "She is phenomenal," said Fran Moriarty, NAMI Public Awareness Coordinator. "Peg is a mover and a shaker and a real advocate for those suffering with mental illness. We are proud of her accomplishments and grateful for her many contributions."

Time limit

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gested the board modify the policy.

While individuals will be limited to a three minute time period for questions or comments and the time allowed for all visitors to speak will be 15 minutes per meeting. "The board can agree to extend those limits at any time but we'll set those times as the general rule," said Frank Natitus.

School board officials voted to comply with all but one other change. The PSBA issued a recommendation that inhalants not be included in the list of banned substances since the products themselves are not considered harmful. "These products pose no danger if used appropriately but the abuse of such products is a legitimate concern," said Ben Jones III, the district solicitor. "The PSBA made its recommendation based on their anticipation of a bill pending before the legislature being passed into law, but that did not go happen."

Dan Natitus, son of board member Frank Natitus, was hired as an assistant wrestling coach at the middle school. The vote was 8-0, with Frank Natitus abstaining. Jack Wolensky, athletic director, said Natitus was the only applicant for the job, which had been advertised twice. Wolensky said it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill coaching slots, particularly at the junior high.

Prices for the lunch program

will remain the same as last year. Class A lunch at the elementary schools costs \$1.30, at the middle school the price will be \$1.40. Adult lunches and meals at the high school will be a la carte. Reduced price lunches will once again cost 40¢ and half a pint of milk will also cost 40¢.

The Eastern Insurance Group was named Broker of Record for the period of one year and the Don Wilkinson Agency was approved to coordinate tax collection in the district.

The school board also adopted resolutions to increase the rates

of pay for several of the district's transportation providers. Russ Bus Service will receive a 3 percent increase in its daily rate, from \$1,223.33 to \$1,260.03. Charlotte Redmond will receive \$67.72 per day, a rate reflecting a 3 percent increase. Emanuel's Bus Line, Inc. will be paid \$3,503.67, a figure which is also 3 percent higher than last year's daily rate.

A dedication ceremony for the new Wycallis Elementary School has been scheduled for Sunday, August 22 at 2 p.m. An open house will be held from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m.

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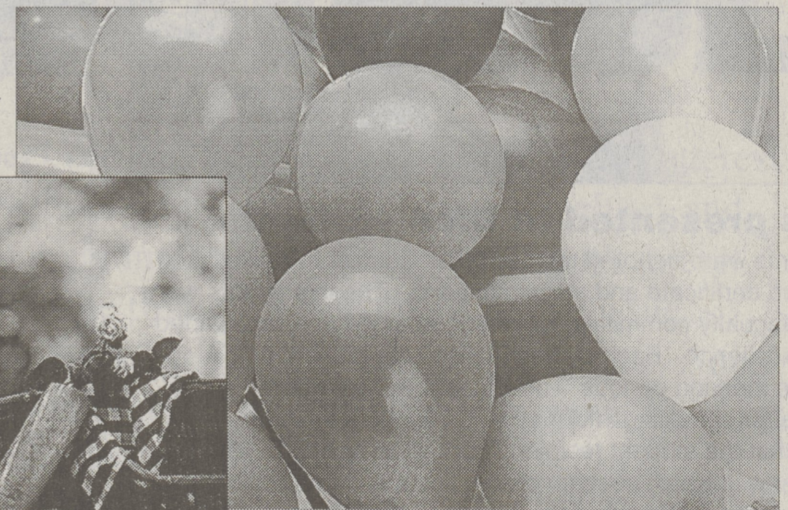
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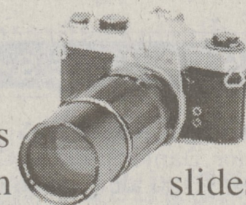
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