UCESC CLASSROOM CHRONICLE

Crossroads School

When we all work together, our students benefit. For the past two years, Crossroads school has been integrating Speech and Occupational Therapy into the classroom. Speech Therapist, Hope Weinstein, and Occupational Therapist, Dina Brigandi, team up to work with students in the classroom. Aided by paraprofessionals Helena Fowley and Peter Welsh, they are able to collaborate on a learning task while ensuring that the student receives a well-rounded education. In addition, all members of this student’s team regularly receive feedback from educators with different specialties.

Hillcrest Academy North

For the past few years, math teacher Carmela Mannino has made it a priority to integrate technology into her math classes. Not only does the use of technology increase engagement, but it also provides students with essential experience using various programs on the computer. As students use the Chromebooks to aid in their learning, Ms. Mannino is still incredibly active in the classroom, assessing students throughout the independent work period and using that assessment to provide individualized instruction and assistance. She has also embraced Google Classroom and is using that to organize assignments for her classes.

Social Emotional Learning Tip of the Month

Teamwork

When students have the opportunity to work with a high functioning group toward a shared goal they tend to thrive. Whether it be a classroom group project, an extra curricular activity, or a community service project, giving students an opportunity to work together is a great way to build social and leadership skills. Group work is most effective when students are given specific roles and are provided with explicit instruction on their roles. Additionally, when teachers model the expectations of group work and then frequently monitor the group providing feedback, teams tend to function at the highest capacity.
Hillcrest Academy South

The students at Hillcrest Academy South are thrilled that art has returned to their school. Art teacher, Kristina Picciano teaches one semester at Hillcrest North and the other at Hillcrest South. In her first week with students, she already has their attention. Students are excited to begin working on autobiographical art projects. By using technology to show completed projects to students, Ms. Picciano provides is able to demonstrate her expectations for the projects, and students have a clear vision of what is expected of them. Now they can utilize their creativity to introduce themselves to their new teacher!

Lamberts Mill Academy

For a number of years, LMA Spanish Teacher, Lilian Flores, has facilitated a peer reading program with Westlake School. Students from LMA visit Westlake classes and read to their students. On this day in Westlake teacher Pat Convery’s classroom, LMA students were reading a picture book about bullying and then leading a discussion with Ms. Convery’s students. Not only does this program give LMA students the opportunity to take risks and share their gifts and talents with others, but it gives the Westlake students the opportunity to have social interactions with peers. Thanks to this partnership, both the LMA and Westlake students benefit from authentic learning activities and learn a great deal about kindness, acceptance, and understanding.

Non-Public Services

Non-Public teachers frequently only get to see their colleagues once a month during Sharing Groups. Unlike our schools, Non-Public teachers can find themselves in a building with few to no other commission staff members. Since reflection and feedback are such essential elements of any teacher’s day, this can be challenging to say the least. In order to ensure they make the most of their time when they are together, they have developed a format for their sharing groups that guarantees they will walk away feeling supported and equipped with new teaching strategies. For the past two years, the Non-Public staff has participated in a book study. Each month a group of staff discuss a section of the book and discuss its applications to the unique role of a Non-Public teacher. With engaging strategies and supportive peers, it’s no wonder the Non-Public staff is so close even when they are apart.
Westlake School

Westlake teacher Mary Lynn Palmer works with students once a week to open Westlake’s Sweet Shop. Students not only prepare the food for their café, but they act as servers and bussers as well. Each week, Hillcrest Academy South brings students to the café as an incentive. Westlake students get the opportunity to wait on tables and both groups of students get the opportunity to socialize with one another. Thanks to the hard work of the Sweet Shop staff, the Hillcrest staff has a weekly opportunity to reward their students and provide them with an opportunity to get to know their friends from the school next door!

Work Readiness Academy

In her role as a paraprofessional at Westlake School, Fawn Boone supports students participating in the Job Academies at Westlake School and Lamberts Mill Academy during their work-learning experiences at UCESC’s Can Do Cafe in Fanwood. Under the direction of SLE teacher Hermena Goodson, Ms. Boone assists students in learning a variety of tasks including: brewing coffee, greeting and serving customers, taking inventory, using a Point of Sale touch screen cash register (including handling money), basic maintenance/cleaning, and preparing deposits for the bank. For the past two years students have also been offering a takeout lunch order option at the café -- and coordinating with Maschio’s Foods back at the Westlake kitchen to fill these orders. Ms. Boone has been the Commission's point person at the Can Do Cafe for several years now and has been instrumental in creating a positive working relationship with the staff at the First Children School who serve as the "customer base" for the cafe.

I Come to School Because

We get the chance to do fun things like building an apartment with Mr. Lopreiato and bake with Mr. Bell. --Noah, Lamberts Mill Academy

I actually like it that we aren’t allowed to have our phones here. My phone distracts me so much and without it I get so much accomplished.—Jocelin, Hillcrest Academy North

“I like Project Search because of the people and because I’m treated like I’m an adult. There’s also no math.” - Elizabeth, Project SEARCH

If you see something that you feel should be featured in future editions of the newsletter, send an email to Carrie Dattilo at cdattilo@ucesc.org. We look forward to bringing you more stories of what is happening in our classrooms next month!