

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN



UPDATE FOR February 2, 2015

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SUPERINTENDENT' NOTES FOR THE WEEK

This week I was able to visit one of the district ABA programs in action. ABA programs are programs that systematically apply interventions based upon the principles of learning theory to improve socially significant behaviors. I was amazed by how versatile, informed, professional, and adaptable the staff were - and how much energy they must expend every day.

COMING UP:

- **Board of Education Budget Session February 11th, 2015 @ 7:30 PM in the Tolland High School Library.**
- **Breakfast with the Superintendent, coming February 18th, from 9:00 – 10:00 AM. Come share you questions, comments, and conversation! See you at 51 Tolland Green (BOE / Central Office building on the Tolland Green).**

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INFO TO KNOW:

ARTICLES OF INTREST

Mass layoffs may trigger increased suicide attempts and other suicide-related behaviors among some teenagers, according to research from Duke University scientists. The study is based on information from a nationally representative survey of 403,457 adolescents from 1997 to 2009, as well as data from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics that looked at mass layoffs and closings nationwide. Researchers found that when 1 percent of a state's working population lost jobs, suicide-related behaviors increased by 2 to 3 percentage points among all teen girls and black adolescents in the following year. Among girls, thoughts of suicide and suicide plans rose. Among black teens, thoughts of suicide, suicide plans and suicide attempts all increased (*American Journal of Public Health*, online Aug 14).

Our brains respond to cues about a person's trustworthiness in a split second, according to research conducted by New York University psychologists. The researchers monitored activity in the amygdalas of 31 study participants while they were exposed to a series of facial images — both actual strangers' faces and artificially generated faces whose visual cues for trustworthiness could be manipulated as established in previous research. Participants saw the faces for just milliseconds and then immediately saw an irrelevant "mask" image thought to prevent subjects from consciously perceiving the faces. The scientists found that specific regions of the amygdala exhibited activity tracking how trustworthy a face appeared — even though participants were not consciously aware of seeing any of the faces (*The Journal of Neuroscience*, Aug. 6).

In addition to problems with math, dyscalculia is linked to difficulties in reading and spelling, finds research conducted at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet in Munich. Scientists tested 1,633 third- and fourth-graders from 125 schools in Munich on reading, spelling and arithmetic skills. They found that about 57 percent of the children who had an arithmetic-related learning disorder — referred to as dyscalculia — also suffered from a reading or spelling disability. Previous research has shown the disorder affects 3 percent to 6 percent of schoolchildren. The study also revealed that gender appears to play a role in determining susceptibility to specific learning disorders: While deficits in spelling were more prevalent among boys, girls were more likely to display dyscalculia. Reading difficulties, however, appeared to be equally prevalent in both genders (*PLOS ONE*, July 29).

Brief counseling for drug use doesn't work, according to a study by Boston University researchers. Scientists tested the effectiveness of two interventions on 528 adult primary-care patients with at least weekly risky drug use. They assigned participants to three groups: one that received a 10- to 15-minute structured interview conducted by health educators; a second that received a 30- to 45-minute intervention based on motivational interviewing, with a 20- to 30-minute follow-up session by counselors; and a third that received no brief intervention. The researchers found that none of the interventions reduced participants' continued use of marijuana, cocaine or opioids, at both six weeks and six months post-intervention, based on self-report and hair testing for drug use (*JAMA*, Aug. 6).

expressed preschoolers were two-and-a-half times more likely to suffer from the condition later on in their school years than children who were not depressed at very young ages, according to a study conducted at Washington University in St. Louis. Investigators followed 246 children, now ages 9 to 12, who were enrolled in the study at ages 3 to 5 years old. The children and their primary caregivers took part in up to six annual and four semiannual assessments in which caregivers were interviewed about their children's sadness, irritability, guilt, sleep, appetite and decreased pleasure in activity and play. Researchers also used two-way mirrors to evaluate child-caregiver interactions, as earlier research had shown that a lack of parental nurturing is a risk factor for depression recurrence. The results showed that 51 percent of the 74 children diagnosed with depression as preschoolers also were depressed as school-age kids. Only 24 percent of the 172 children who were not depressed as preschoolers went on to develop depression during their elementary and middle school years. A portion of the incidence of later depression was associated with non-supportive parental behavior (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, July).

Reading Harry Potter books can make children more tolerant of minorities, finds a two-part study led by scientists at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy. Researchers first asked Italian high school students how many Harry Potter books they had read and which character — Harry or his nemesis Voldemort — they more closely identified with. They then asked students about their views on gay individuals. The researchers found that students who read more books in the series were more likely to have positive feelings toward gay people, and this effect was enhanced in students who

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identified with Harry. In a separate experiment, 34 Italian fifth-graders filled out a questionnaire gauging their views on immigrants. Then, for six weeks, half the children read and discussed excerpts from the Harry Potter books tinged with a focus on tolerance or prejudice. The other half read and discussed unrelated topics from the series. The researchers found that children had significantly less prejudice and more empathy for immigrants in the group that discussed tolerance issues — though only if the participant identified strongly with Harry (*Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, online July 23).

Contrary to previous assumptions, preschoolers are able to gauge the strength of their memories, according to research led by University of California, Davis, psychologists. Scientists asked 81 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds to view drawings of items, such as a piano or a balloon. Half of the images were presented once, and the other half were shown twice. Researchers then presented the children with a pair of images: one they had seen and a new one they had not seen. The children were instructed to pick the image they'd seen in the previous task. After making their choice, the preschoolers rated how confident they were that their choices were correct, sorting their answers into two boxes — one for responses they were confident about and the other for responses they thought might be mistaken. Only 4- and 5-year-olds reported being less confident in their incorrect than their correct memory responses, the findings showed. These children were also more confident about images they'd seen twice and were more likely to use confidence level as the basis of their decision on whether to show researchers their answers for a reward. The study also showed that 3-year-olds who had scored well reported higher confidence overall than kids who hadn't scored as well (*Psychological Science*, online July 11).

Teen insomnia is linked to depression and anxiety, according to a study led by a University of Adelaide psychologist. Researchers surveyed more than 300 Australian high school students ages 12 to 18 about their sleep habits, mental health and the time of day they were most active. The scientists found that teens with insomnia were more likely to have depression, generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder. In addition, participants who were more active at night were more likely to have depression and/or insomnia. This group was also more likely to have obsessive-compulsive disorder, separation anxiety and social phobia, although these disorders were often not independently linked with insomnia (*Sleep Medicine, August*).

Video game-playing for less than an hour a day is linked with better-adjusted children and teenagers, according to research performed at Oxford University. Investigators questioned nearly 5,000 U.K. 10- to 15-year-olds about how much time they typically spent on console-based or computer-based games, as well as how satisfied they were with their lives, their levels of hyperactivity, inattention and empathy, and how well they got along with their peers. Compared with non-players and those who played very frequently, kids who played video games for less than an hour reported the highest levels of sociability and were most likely to say they were satisfied with their lives. They also appeared to have fewer friendship and emotional problems and reported less hyperactivity than the other groups (*Pediatrics*, online Aug. 4).

Seeing e-cigarette use encourages young adult tobacco users to light up, according to a study led by University of Chicago scientists. Investigators recruited 60 young adult smokers and told them they were being tested on their responses to different social interactions. Each participant was then paired with an actor pretending to be a participant, who smoked an e-cigarette or a regular cigarette as the pair had a conversation. At multiple points before and after this interaction, the researchers assessed the real participants' urges to smoke. The study found that participants' desires to smoke both regular and e-cigarettes increased when their partners smoked. However, observing regular cigarette use did not increase participants' desire to smoke an e-cigarette. As a control, researchers also had actors drink from a bottle of water while engaging in conversation with the participant to mimic hand-to-mouth behavior, and they found no increase in participants' desire for either regular or e-cigarettes in this scenario (*Tobacco Control*, online May 21).

Community service programs for youth are more beneficial when they are accompanied by structured time for reflection and discussion, according to a meta-analysis by researchers at Utrecht and Rutgers universities. The study assessed findings from 49 studies from around the world conducted from 1980 to 2012 involving 25,000 participants ages 12 to 20. The investigators found that community service had a positive effect on school grades, school motivation, self-esteem, identity, tolerance, social skills, civic responsibility and volunteering. However, programs that included structured reflection showed a substantial beneficial effect, while those without reflection yielded a negligible effect (*Child Development*, online July 24).

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Tolland High School Weekly Bulletin *2-6-15*

Tolland Triumphs Over Hunger

The ***Tolland Triumphs Over Hunger*** project is our large scale community service event. The idea for this charity meal packing event was brought forward by two Tolland DECA students, **Jordan Lyonnais** and **Kayleigh McManaman**. Our goal is to raise \$10,000 to package 40,000 meals. The majority of these meals will first be delivered to local food shelters and then be distributed to further locales in need. A deadline for donations has been set as March 1, 2015 as the meal packing event will take place on Thursday, March 12, 2015. Donations can be made online on our school website or click the following link to donate:

[FEEDING CHILDREN EVERYWHERE DONATION PAGE](#)

IMPORTANT DATES

February 9 – 8th Grade Orientation & Course Fair – 6:30 p.m.

February 12 – 2nd Semester Open House - 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

February 16 & 17 – No School – Winter Break

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February 23 – Spring Sports Online Registration and Physical Forms Due

February 23 - Booster Club Meeting - 7:00 p.m. THS Conference Room

February 24 – NHS Blood Drive

February 25 – Half-Day Session – In-Service

March 3 - Progress Reports

PROGRESS REPORTS

Due to the four snow days in the 3rd quarter, the progress report date has changed from Wednesday, February 25 to Tuesday, March 3. In addition, the end of the 3rd quarter has changed from Monday, March 30 to Monday, April 6. Please note that the grade reporting dates are subject to change.

BOOSTER CLUB

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9th at 7:00 p.m. has been **rescheduled to FEBRUARY 23RD** in the THS main office conference room.

Please join us to learn about what we do and how you can help in raising funds for our students at THS.

We are looking for a treasurer and a new president for next year.

SPORTS PHYSICALS

This is just a reminder that anyone playing a spring sport at Tolland High School must register online at www.familyid.com/tolland-public-schools or by going to the athletics page on the Tolland High School website and clicking on "Athletic Participation Registration and Forms." Additionally, all updated physical forms must be turned in to the THS nurse.

PLEASE NOTE: The deadline to register online for spring sports and to turn in necessary medical documents to the nurse is **Monday, February 23.**

Anyone with questions regarding the registration process can email Athletic Director Patrick Cox at pcox@tolland.k12.ct.us

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY BLOOD DRIVE

National Honor Society students will be hosting the **American Red Cross Blood Drive** on **Tuesday, February 24** at THS in the mini-gym. In preparation for this event, NHS members will be handing out permission slips and registering donors starting next week during all lunch waves. The registration process will last all week (Monday Feb.2 through Friday 2/6.)

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