

Component Connection



News that's relevant to your district!

October 2019



CO BOCES Excited to Present LETRS Training

With the goal of improving the literacy skills of students, several component districts have started the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training.

A few years ago, CO BOCES provided a brief demonstration of LETRS to local administrators, and as a result several districts have decided to undertake the training. According to the LETRS official website, "Teachers, not programs, teach students how to read."

"The trainings have been going very well," said Megan Popkess Rohlin, Coordinator of Professional Development. "It's a very intensive training, but it's very rewarding."

The LETRS training can be broken into two sections: modules one through four (which are currently being taught), and modules five through eight (which will be provided in the summer of 2020).

To help provide LETRS to the region, Professional Learning Coach Katie Naples was recently trained as a LETRS facilitator. Naples said she is excited for the opportunity to help share the trainings with the region.

"It's exciting to be able to bring the science of reading to the teachers because it's not something that we learn as educators," said Naples. "This knowledge will empower them to teach these students."

New NEDP Program Celebrates First Graduate

Adult Education student Amber VanTassel recently proved that dreams do come true as she became the first graduate of the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) from Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES.

VanTassel started with CO BOCES working towards her High School Equivalency Diploma in December 2017 but struggled with the TASC Exam. Amber's teacher, Adult Education Literacy Instructor Jennifer Kent-Isaacs, introduced her to the new NEDP, believing the program's competency-based learning would aid Amber.



The NEDP is a free way to get a High School Equivalency other than the TASC. While the TASC is comprised of five different parts, reading, writing, social studies, science and mathematics, the NEDP is competency based, focusing on real-world scenarios.

"I really was struggling with the math on the TASC exam. This is a great program, especially for those that struggle with taking all parts of the TASC exam at once," said Amber.

New Food Truck to Showcase CTE Programs

Several Career & Technical Education programs at Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES will be showcasing their skills thanks to the delivery of a new food truck.

The goal is to eventually use the truck as a collaborative project that can benefit the community while giving BOCES students real-world experiences. CTE Director Steve Woodard referred to the truck as a "tailgate on wheels," and noted that it could also eventually help component districts with events such as homecoming.

Before having the truck food-ready, it will first make stops to several CTE programs for repairs, including Auto Body, Auto Technology, Construction Technology, Graphic Design and more.





CO BOCES New Website Provides Progressive, 21st Century Elements

On October 4, CO BOCES launched its new website, which will provide users with a responsive and engaging web experience. The website features many 21st century opportunities, including video streaming, social media streaming, Google integration and more. The website also utilizes an inclusive approach to accessibility for all. View the new site at: cayboces.org



Compass Hosts Annual Welcome Back Picnic

The Compass Program opened its doors during a recent Welcome Back Picnic, which provided families with the opportunity to meet with staff over hot dogs and hamburgers.

Amber Allenbrandt Excited to Help Improve Social-Emotional Learning Throughout Region

Looking to improve the social-emotional well-being of students and staff throughout the area, Amber Allenbrandt has hit the ground running as the first-ever Behavioral Excellence Coach for Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES.

After recognizing a substantial increase in the number of students demonstrating challenging behaviors – specifically in grades kindergarten through third – districts throughout the region formed a think tank to discuss potential solutions. Collectively, the districts determined there was a regional need to create a behavioral specialist position to help support all local schools.

“The districts didn’t have a lot of support for disruptive and dysregulated students, and it became a lot for them,” said Allenbrandt, who was selected by CO BOCES to fill the position. “The main goal of this position is to reduce the disruptive behaviors that we see and keep these students in school.”

Allenbrandt said it is important to make all students feel safe and comfortable in the school setting but noted that local schools need help in providing unique ways for students to feel comfortable. To help aid in this effort, Allenbrandt said it is critical to embed social-emotional learning for both teachers and students.

“We’ve been looking at a ‘you first’ approach for teachers to identify their own social-emotional well-being, which will in turn help them better identify student needs,” Allenbrandt said.

Allenbrandt said that her duties can be broken down into three categories: coaching and consulting, professional

development training, and behavioral data system support. The coaching and consulting assists principals and teachers in discussing, identifying, and helping specific students in reducing and/or replacing disruptive behaviors. Trainings for staff are provided throughout the region and cover topics such as TCIS, the Positivity Project, Social-Emotional Learning, Restorative Practices, and PBIS. Data system support is provided to help districts with creating and implementing plans and procedures used for gathering and analyzing individual student behavioral data.

While Allenbrandt is still new to the position, she said she is thankful for the support she’s received from the component districts and looks forward to continuing the growth of Social-Emotional Learning throughout the region.

“With this being a new position, the ocean is wide open as to where we can go,” she said. “This is my dream job, and I really feel like I was meant to help others.”

