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Parent Focus

December 2011

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled

MAP-A Assessment – How Did Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled Do?

By Jackie McKim, Central Office

The MAP-Alternate (MAP-A) is the state of Missouri's achievement test designed only for students with significant cognitive disabilities. All students at Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) take the MAP-A at certain grade levels:

- Communication arts is assessed at grades 3-8 and 11.
- Math is assessed at grades 3-8 and 10.
- Science is assessed at grades 5, 8 and 11.

Every year, more than 500 MSSD students are required to be assessed with the MAP-A. The MAP-A is collected early January through early March at certain intervals, returned to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for scoring, and results are sent to MSSD schools in September. Parents whose child was assessed with the MAP-A should have received a copy of their child's results from their MSSD school in September. Please contact your MSSD school if you think your child was assessed, and you did not receive a copy of his/her results.

Communication Arts and Math: Continued Success

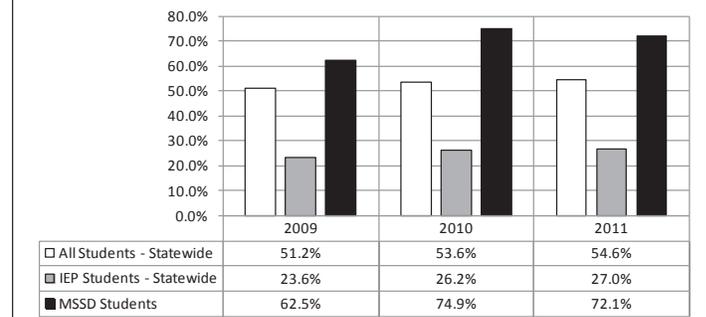
As a school district, MSSD performs very well in communication arts and mathematics. In fact, MSSD's performance in communication arts and mathematics exceeds that of all students and IEP students statewide. Three-year results comparing MSSD students to all students and IEP students are shown in the graphs below.

These results show that in 2011 MSSD students scored 45 percent higher than IEP students and 17.5 percent higher than all students in communication arts. A similar comparison can be made for 2009 and 2010, with MSSD students scoring significantly higher than IEP students and all students.

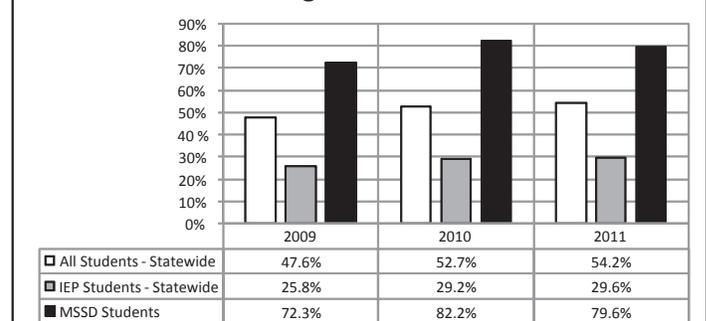
In mathematics, MSSD students scored 50 percent higher than IEP students and 25.4 percent higher than all students in 2011. Likewise, MSSD students scored significantly higher than IEP students and all students in 2009 and 2010.

While there was a slight decline in performance in 2011 in communication arts and mathematics, it is anticipated that scores will continue to improve in the coming years as MSSD strives to improve the education and programming provided to students. ➔

**MAP Communication Arts - All Grades
Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced**

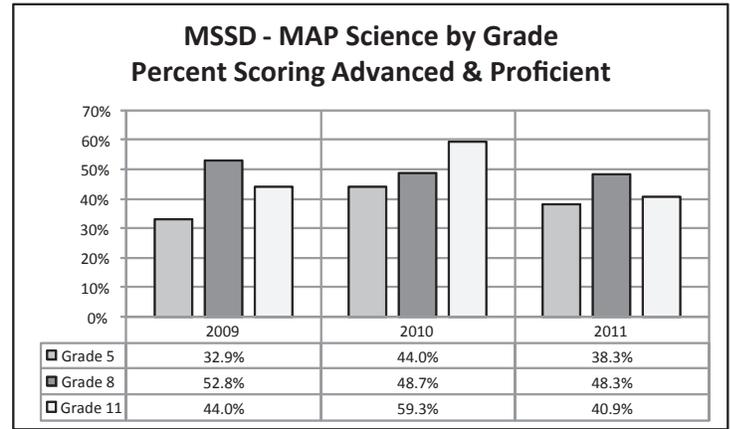


**MAP Mathematics - All Grades
Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced**



Science – A Difficult Area to Compare

Science is a difficult area to compare since other students are now required to take End-Of-Course Assessments in high school that are incorporated into the MAP results. Students who are eligible for the MAP-A assessment do not participate in End-Of-Course Assessments as these assessments are not appropriate for students with significant cognitive disabilities.



Making a comparison between MSSD student performance in science and MAP results for all students and IEP students seems impractical. In the future, these data will be studied to determine an appropriate comparison. For now, the data shared here will compare the performance of MSSD students in science by grade level. The results are shown in the graph above.

These data show that in 2011 some decline can be noted for grades 5 and 11 with only a slight decline for grade 8 from the previous year. These data will need to be studied to determine the steps needed to improve the science scores for MSSD students. It should be noted that all students, including those with and without IEPs, typically score much lower in science than in communication arts and mathematics.

Summary

The performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities is difficult to measure. The MAP-A is only one of many measures used by MSSD staff to measure the performance of students. Parents are encouraged to discuss MAP-A results and other measures used to assess the success of their child with their child's teacher.

Further information concerning the interpretation of MAP-A score reports for individual students can be found at dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/asmt-mapa-gir-1011.pdf.

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Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled
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Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled for any specific product, organization, or philosophy.

The Pros and Cons of a Gluten-free Diet

By Merv Blunt, Central Office

Researchers estimate that between 15 percent and 38 percent of families with a member who is autistic have tried a special diet to treat the symptoms of autism. One of the diets most frequently discussed in the literature and on the Internet is a gluten-free diet and the effects it can have on the symptoms of autism.

A gluten-free diet avoids all foods containing wheat, rye and barley. Proponents of a gluten-free diet say that many children with autism have gastrointestinal difficulties that make it difficult for them to digest certain grains properly. Even within the anecdotal records on gluten-free diets, there is a wide range of response about the success of the diet – from no effect to dramatic effects on a child's speech and behavior. A number of pros and cons surround the gluten-free diet issue.

Pros:

- There is an abundance of anecdotal information on the success of the diet.
- Some grocery stores have a section specific to gluten-free products.
- The diet poses minimal health risk to the child.
- Effectiveness should be seen in six to 12 months.
- Many recipes can be found on the Internet.
- The child's gastrointestinal function may improve. ➔

Gluten-free Diet (from page 2)

Cons:

- It may be difficult to find gluten-free foods in some grocery stores.
- The entire family may have to go on a gluten-free diet so as not to contaminate gluten-free foods.
- It may be difficult for a child to understand why he can't have certain foods.
- There can be a high level of inconvenience when starting the diet – changing family eating habits and introducing new foods and recipes.
- A child may resist a new routine or new foods.
- Most fast foods or commercially prepared foods may have to be eliminated from a child's diet.

You should first consult with a doctor, pediatrician or nutritionist prior to starting any specific diet for your child.

Sources: www.autism-help.org; www.autismspeaks.org; www.myaspergerschild.com; www.autism.healingthresholds.com

Current River School Hosts First PTO Walk-A-Thon

By Janet Arnold, Teacher in Charge, Current River School

Current River School held its first Walk-A-Thon on Monday, Oct. 17. The event was organized by Ellen Jessup, a coach and physical education teacher, and was sponsored by the Current River PTO.

A perfect autumn day was enjoyed by those who participated in the large-group physical education activity, which incorporated participating students' IEP goals and benchmarks. Susan Cato, home school coordinator, served as the official to count each lap completed. Some students were assisted around the track by their parents and grandparents for up to 33 laps. The students received a medal and an award certificate for their participation.

Drinks and healthy snacks were available at rest stops along the way. Janice Tucker and Tina Jackson, teacher aides, created Walk-A-Thon signs as well as a beautiful fall scene around the MSSD sign in front of the school, creating a warm welcome for family and community members. The local newspaper published an article with pictures about the fantastic afternoon.

Halloween Celebration Offers Sensory Experience

By Connie Bruce, Teacher in Charge, Cedar Ridge School

Cedar Ridge School had a wonderful, spooky Halloween party in October. March, a classroom teacher, and other staff decorated the gym, creating a sensory experience enjoyed by all. The preschool staff, which shares the building, helped decorate the gym. Activities included a bean bag toss, a spider sweep in which students used brooms to sweep plastic spiders into a net and a feel-the-monster-body-parts activity, which involved touching brains (spaghetti), bones (baby carrots), fur (cotton candy) and teeth (candy corn).

Other highlights of the celebration included lighted pumpkins, a crawl-through cobweb tunnel, a hall of ghosts illuminated by a black light, bubble wrap for popping and an icy wind tunnel created by placing ice in front of a fan. March's class made "frozen ice hands" for the witch's pot and recorded scary sounds that were activated by switches. The event also included a shadow wall and a tin-can alley (cans tied to a rail that students banged together to make noise while walking by). The lights were turned off in the gym, and the students used flashlights to maneuver around the darkened room. The event provided a spooky, sensory-filled Halloween celebration at Cedar Ridge School.

Ideas for Rewards for Children

Let your child:

- Choose what is for dinner (from two or three options).
- Help with fixing dinner.
- Help with a household chore.
- Camp out in the backyard with a parent.
- Choose a game for family night.
- Send an email to grandma (or other relative) telling her about an accomplishment.
- Search for buried treasures in a sandbox.
- Decorate paper place mats to be used at the dinner table.
- Choose the activity for family night (bowling, movies, playing games).
- Have a one-on-one shopping trip with mom or dad.
- Make mud pies with mom or dad or have a contest with the family for the best mud pie.

Students Learn About Safety Awareness

By Brenda Bayless, RN, School Nurse, College View School and Oakview School

Courageous firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) visited College View School on Oct. 11 and Oakview School on Oct. 12 during Safety Awareness Week. During the events, students learned that emergency personnel help people when they are in trouble. The students were involved in demonstrations about how firefighters and EMTs search and care for people during an emergency.

Firefighters dressed in their protective clothing and gear to allow students to see what firefighters would look like if they came to the student's house or school during a fire. Students learned that if a person's clothes are on fire the person needs to "stop, drop and roll" to put the fire out. The firefighters showed students and staff the fire truck with the siren and lights activated.

The EMTs showed the students and staff the ambulance, and students had an opportunity to sit inside it. The EMTs demonstrated the tools they use, including stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, oxygen saturation monitors and thermometers. They explained to the students how EMTs can help them feel better by taking good care of them.

The tornado that caused widespread destruction and devastation in Joplin last year underscores the importance of safety awareness. Students participate in safety drills at school in order to be prepared for various emergencies.

Parents can prepare for emergencies at home by:

- Practicing actions to take during an emergency at home.
- Showing family members a place in their yard to meet if there was a fire in their home.
- Placing a window sticker on the bedroom window of a family member who would have trouble exiting the home in an emergency to assist emergency personnel in finding them quickly.
- Checking smoke and carbon dioxide alarms, furnace filters and chimney flue before using the furnace. Local fire departments may provide a smoke alarm to people who do not have one in their home.
- Stocking a home emergency kit with: a flashlight, batteries, weather radio, address and phone number book, first aid supplies, food, and water.

Students learned that emergency personnel help people when they are in trouble.



Local firefighters visit with students at College View School and Oakview School.



Emergency medical technicians talk to students about how they help people during emergencies.

Art is for Everyone at Helen Davis School

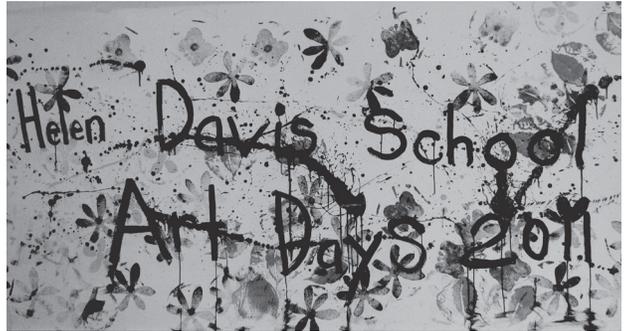
By Jennifer Burns, Home School Coordinator, Helen M. Davis School

Every year, Helen Davis School holds its Annual Ability Arts Day – better known as Art for Everyone – where all students have an opportunity to participate in adaptive art activities.

The Blue Springs Pilot Club and Tiger Pilot Club of Columbia provide the tools and guidance to assist students with the creation of beautiful murals to proudly display at school. All students can be creative using the adaptive art equipment furnished by these organizations. Some of the specialty equipment includes special art stamps, chalk drawers, attachments to wheelchairs and pogo art stamps.

The adaptive equipment allows students with physical disabilities to create a unique masterpiece but doesn't require the use of small paintbrushes or fine motor skills, as this can be very challenging for many MSSD students.

For the 3rd Annual Ability Arts Day, held in the spring of 2011, students had an opportunity to be creative with clay. They each made their own special character called an "Oogly," created by artist Myrna Minnis. Students were guided through the hands-on process while staff and volunteers provided one-on-one support to the students when needed.



Art is for everyone during the Annual Ability Arts Day at Helen M. Davis School.



A clay "Oogly" takes shape in the hands of a student.



A student uses a chalk drawer to create artwork.

Parent Resources: Information You Can Use

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) publishes *Parent Resources* papers to provide information on a variety of topics to parents of MSSD Students. The growing library consists of one-to-two-page papers that focus on a specific topic of interest in three main areas: home, school and health. The newest *Parent Resources* paper is featured on page 7.

The *Parent Resources* papers, as well as the *Parent Focus* newsletters, are available on the Internet at dese.mo.gov/divspeced/stateschools/. You may also contact your child's school to obtain a copy of any of the papers. If you want to suggest a topic for a *Parent Resources* paper, contact Debbie Stover by calling 573-751-0706 or Relay Missouri 800-735-2966; mailing them to Debbie Stover, Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; or sending an email to debbie.stover@dese.mo.gov.

Parent Resources papers are available on the following topics:

- Locating resources for children and young adults with disabilities
- Buying a wheelchair
- Helping your child sleep better
- Caring for a child with strep throat
- Working with your child's teacher
- Keeping your life in balance
- Promoting independence in your child
- Installing assistive technology hardware devices
- Preparing your child for life after school
- Transporting students safely to and from school
- And more!



Parent **Resources**

A Better Bedtime: Helping Your Child Sleep Well

How much sleep does your child need each night?

According to the Wall Street Journal, most parents underestimate the amount of sleep children should get. The amount of sleep recommended by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine is:

- Infants: 14 to 15 hours
- Toddlers: 12 to 14 hours
- Preschoolers: 11 to 13 hours
- School-age children: 10 to 11 hours
- Teenagers: 9 to 10 hours

It is estimated that 43 percent of all children and 86 percent of children with developmental disabilities have some type of sleep difficulty. Sleep problems can make children moody, short tempered and unable to engage in interactions with others.

Sleep problems can also impact a child's ability to learn. Plus, parents need to feel well rested so they can deal with their growing and active children.

Here are some proven hints that will help make bedtime and nap time easier for parents and children:

Establish good sleep habits

- Develop a regular time for going to bed and taking naps and a regular time to wake up.
- If possible, make sure your child has outside time and physical activity daily.

- Help your child understand the steps in the napping and bedtime routines.
- Tell your child what might happen when he wakes up.
- Allow your child to carry a favorite transition object to bed.
- Provide choices whenever possible.

Create a good sleep environment

- Provide your child with calming, rest-inducing activities, sounds or objects in the bedtime and nap-time routine.
- Put your child down for sleep while he or she is still awake.
- Avoid giving your child certain foods and drinks six hours before sleep.
- Reduce noise and distractions in and near your child's room.
- Reduce the light in your child's room.
- Make sure your child is comfortable.

Keep a sleep diary for a week

A sleep diary is a log of when the child falls asleep and wakes up and the total amount of time asleep. Since some children are erratic in their sleep patterns, keeping a sleep diary will give you a clear picture of your child's sleep patterns.

- Write comments about what events happened that day.
- Write comments about how your child slept.

Look for signs of sleepiness

- Signs of being tired may include

yawning, difficulty focusing, turning away from objects and people, and rubbing eyes or nose. Other signs are losing interest in play, not following directions, being aggressive or becoming grumpy.

Talk to your child about his fears

A child might be scared of something in his room and be unable to tell you how he feels.

- If your child expresses fear of something, first, let him know you understand his fears by saying you know he is feeling scared.
- Next, reassure or comfort your child and let him know that you will protect him. For example, say, "That box is making a scary shadow, I'll move it."
- Let your child know you are nearby if he needs you.

Celebrate the successes along the way

- Acknowledge all successes no matter how small.
- Tell your child he is doing a good job.

Remember, when your child is having a restful nap or bedtime sleep, you can get more rest, too.

Source: www.challengingbehavior.org

Helen's Haven: An Outdoor Classroom Continues to Grow

By Jennifer Burns, Home School Coordinator, Helen M. Davis School

Helen's Haven is an outdoor learning environment at Helen Davis School that has promoted learning through nature since its inception two years ago. In order to ensure the classroom is utilized for its intended purpose, the Outdoor Classroom Committee seeks ways to promote nature-themed school-wide activities and lessons that allow students to learn and respect what nature has to offer.

The most recent event was held in August and involved 40 freshman students from Missouri Western State University. The university volunteers assisted students with creating garden stepping stones, log bird feeders and nature-inspired cookies. The volunteers guided the students in completing the projects, which provided hands-on opportunities for all students based upon their abilities. While making stepping stones, students were able to choose decorative items to place in the wet concrete. Many students enjoyed putting their hands in the concrete and feeling its texture. The stones will be displayed in the outdoor classroom for years to come.

Volunteers also assisted students one on one to create log suet bird feeders for feathered friends inhabiting the area. Students were then helped by the volunteers to hang the feeders in trees. Many of the university students also worked tirelessly in the garden pulling weeds and laying mulch.

The event provided a wonderful opportunity for students to appreciate nature and its offerings as well as promote connections and kinship with the community. Many of the university students were interested in returning to Helen Davis School to volunteer and assist in other areas, including upkeep of the garden and working directly with students.

An event held in the garden in November was coordinated by Helen Davis Physical Education Department. Physical education teachers coordinated a variety of physical-activity events including tactile discrimination such as finding (toy) worms and bugs in the garden sand, hands-on activities including dressing a scarecrow, raking leaves and stuffing them in pumpkin bags, simulated apple picking, and knocking over pumpkins from hay bales.

Fall is a wonderful time to be outdoors and learn.



A freshman from Missouri Western State University helps a student create a stepping stone for the outdoor classroom at Helen Davis School.



A student chooses a decorative item for his stepping-stone project.