MDSC 10th Annual Educators Forum on Down Syndrome

Meaningful Inclusion for Students with Down Syndrome

College of the Holy Cross – Hogan Conference Center - Tuesday, November 18, 2014- 8:00am-3:00pm

Program Agenda

8:00 – 8:30  Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 9:00  Welcome Remarks

Maureen Gallagher, M.S., MDSC Executive Director

Maureen Blazejewski, M. Ed. – MDSC Education Director

Melissa Reilly, Self-Advocate Keynote Speaker

9:00-10:15  Keynote Address

Achieving Successful Inclusion – An Overview
Presented by Dr. William Henderson, Ed.D., Retired Principal, Disability Advocate and author of "The Blind Advantage: How Going Blind Made me a Stronger Principal and how Including Children with Disabilities Made the School Better for Everyone."

In this session, Dr. Henderson will present practical strategies for developing successful inclusive schools. He will discuss actions that individuals can take as well as policies that schools can develop in order to promote a culture of inclusion, to provide instruction with universal design and specialized supports, and to build a community that collaborates and problem solves. He will also highlight how including students with disabilities can be a catalyst for improving teaching and learning for everyone.

10:15 -10:30  Break

10:30- 12:00  Morning Breakout Sessions

Achieving Successful Inclusion – A Break-Out Problem Solving Session
Presented by Dr. William Henderson, Ed.D., Retired Principal, Disability Advocate and author of "The Blind Advantage: How Going Blind Made me a Stronger Principal and how Including Children with Disabilities Made the School Better for Everyone."
In this session, Dr. Henderson will ask participants to share specific challenges and “awkward” questions that they are experiencing or anticipating around inclusion. Recognizing that there is no “magic formula” and that teaming together for successful inclusion is critical, he will elicit suggestions from participants and then offer his own insights for “figuring it out.”

**Transition from School Into Adult Life – Using the IEP to Create Success**
Presented by Johanne Pino, Project Coordinator, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, University of Saint Joseph

This workshop will address the transition planning, and services required for youth with disabilities ages 14-22, focusing on both the transition special education services which prepare youth for employment, independent living and further education, and mechanisms to plan for services students may require when they exit special education and transition to the adult human service system. Through the use of case examples, parents and professionals will learn strategies that may help students receive important transition services mandated by special education laws. Parents and professionals will also gain an understanding on Chapter 688, the federal law that helps plan for youth with disabilities after they leave school.

**Alternative and Augmentative Communication Tools – Bridging Access to the World Through Communication**
Presented by Kate Ahern, M.S. Ed., Assistive Technology Specialist, Easter Seals Massachusetts

Many students with Down syndrome, particularly those with additional complex needs, such as a dual diagnosis of Autism and Down syndrome have significant communication challenges that impact all aspects of daily functioning, both in school, at home and in the community. In this session, we will explore the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies and the positive impact that their use can have on the lives of many of our students.

**Promoting Strong Literacy Skills in Young Learners with Down Syndrome**
Presented by Pamela Booth, Learning Program Boston Parent Educator

Students with Down syndrome have remarkable capacity to master important early literacy skills at a very young age. In this session, we will explore research-based best practices and strategies for teaching these essential skills to young children and the impact that the development of early literacy skills can have on future success.

**Using the Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities to Find Access Points into the Curriculum for All Learners – An Introduction**
Presented by Maureen Blazejewski, M.Ed., Education Director, Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress and Educational Consultant, 3-21 Foundation, Cambridge, MA
Georgina deBurca, M.Ed., Educational Consultant, 3-21 Foundation, Cambridge, MA

Many teams express concerns about a student’s ability to access curriculum within the General Education classroom setting. Amidst the growing demand of academic achievement and accountability, general education teachers are
charged with the task of covering a broad, complex curriculum at a fast pace. Teachers work hard to attend to all the needs of their students whose individual needs vary greatly from child to child. In this session, we will introduce the Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities and strategies for planning that will allow teachers to plan for units that meet the needs of all the diverse learners in their classrooms.

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch & Networking

12:30- 1:00 Book Signing

1:00 -2:30 Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Understanding Cognitive Challenges of Students with Down Syndrome and the Impact Early ABA Strategies and Discrete Trial Teaching Can Have on Learning Success
Presented by Kay Seligsohn, Ph.D, Pediatric Neuropsychologist, Mass General Hospital Down Syndrome Program
Julie A Grieco, PsyD, Neuropsychology Post-Doctoral Fellow, Mass General Hospital Down Syndrome Program
Gretchen Timmel, M.Ed., MGH Down Syndrome Program Educational Liaison, Licensed Educational Psychologist, Certified Teacher

In this session, the specific cognitive challenges associated with Down syndrome and their impact on learning are explored. In addition, presenters will explain how the early implementation of ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) strategies and Discrete Trial Teaching can have a positive effect on the overall learning success of students.

Fostering Independence- Strategies for Paraprofessionals
Presented by Barbara Didona, M.Ed., Training Specialist and Social Thinking Facilitator, The Moore Center

Independence should be the goal of every student who is supported by special education, just as it is the goal of every other student in the school. Paraprofessionals are uniquely positioned to both foster, and inadvertently hinder, independence during the school day. Whether you support students in preschool or high school, there are tips you can take away that will help you promote independence for every student you support.

Advice From The Trenches – A Panel of Middle and High School Teachers Offer Advice on Successful Inclusion Strategies in the Upper Grades
Panel Facilitated by Anne M. Howard, Ph.D., Professor, Fitchburg State University;

Creating successful inclusion programs can be challenging for educators – especially at the Middle and High School levels where the content of curriculum is more challenging and makes it more challenging to find
appropriate access points for students. In this session, educators from middle and high school who have developed successful programs will share their thoughts on how they were able to make this happen!

**Behavior and Down Syndrome – Applications of Neuroscience**

David Stein, Psy.D., Attending Psychologist, Developmental Medicine Center, Boston Children’s Hospital

Clinically significant behavior challenges occur in at least 30% of children and adolescents with Down syndrome (DS). Behavior challenges can interfere with learning, socialization, and placement in the least restrictive environment. This presentation describes the brain-based causes of behavior challenges in those with DS and provides practical strategies for behavior management tailored to those with DS.

**Using the Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Disabilities to Find Access Points into the Curriculum for All Learners – A Working Session**

**Educators Only**

In this session, teachers will have the opportunity to sit down with other educators and look at the MCAS-Alt resource guide to explore possible access points into the curriculum for their students. Using a specially designed planning template, teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate and network with other educators at their grade level in order to begin the process of developing accessible, differentiated units for their students.

**In order to promote the most effective collaboration and problem solving, this session is designed for education professionals only**

2:30 – 3:00 Wrap-Up & Evaluations