

WCSEA Skill Builders Newsletter



- **Program Overview**
- **Classroom Highlights**
- **Staff Spotlight**
- **Helpful Resources**

Program Overview

WCSEA supervises special programs classrooms within the county to support students with individual learning needs. The purpose of the Skill Builders program is to provide K-12+ instruction in functional skills, including academic, behavioral, communication, and fine & gross motor skills. Students are provided an individualized academic experience that allows development commensurate with ability. Self-help, social, and communication skills are an ongoing focus. Repeated practice of skills across a variety of settings is provided in order to promote generalization of skills. Students are integrated into the Least Restrictive Environment when appropriate as per the IEP process.

2018-2019 Program Locations

- K-4 Sowers Elementary School in Roanoke, IL
- K-2 Fieldcrest Primary School in Minonk, IL
- 5-8 Roanoke Benson Junior High School in Benson, IL
- 5-8 Germantown Hills Middle School in Germantown Hills, IL
- 9-12+ Metamora Township High School in Metamora, IL

Program Highlights

- Students receive instruction and are working flexibly in the Skill Builders room as well as the general education setting for integration opportunities as appropriate.
- Peer helpers volunteer in the Skill Builders room at several program locations to help students practice social skills in a meaningful way.
- Many students in the Skill Builders classrooms around the county have a job in the building, including helping prepare the lunchroom and contributing to the school's recycling program.
- Junior High students have their own classroom lockers, PE uniforms and PE lockers, and work to demonstrate independence with adaptive skills including self-care.
- Skill Builders students at RBJHS have the opportunity to participate in the school's Explore classes as appropriate. Some students this quarter are in the LEGO class.
- Skill Builders students have the opportunity to participate in band, chorus, student council, and other clubs and extra-curriculars as appropriate.
- Some Skill Builders staff participated in Epilepsy training/professional development in September 2018
- Some Skill Builders classrooms have a classroom business: In Germantown Hills, they have a weekly classroom coffee shop and in Benson, there is a weekly snack shop.
- The Skill Builders staff meets as a department quarterly to align practices and systems.

Staff Spotlight

- **Chenoa Tolan**

Skill Builders Teacher at Fieldcrest Primary



My name is Chenoa Tolan. I have been married to my husband Donnie 15 years this upcoming May. We have 3 kiddos; Emalynn 12, Miley Jo 11 and Jackson 9. We live on a farm in Minonk. I received my Elementary Education degree from ISU in 1999, but I am new to Special Education this year. I spent my summer working on my licensure so I could officially work with the kids I fell in love with this past spring! When I am not teaching my super Skill Builders class, I bake and decorate cakes! My family and I LOVE to go camping and spend time fishing, hunting and enjoying God's creation!

- **Sherrill Tjaden**

Physical Therapy Assistant at Roanoke Benson District #60*, Fieldcrest Unit #6*, MTHS District #122*, and Lowpoint Washburn District #21.

(* Skill Builders Locations)



My name is Sherrill Tjaden. I have been a Physical Therapist Assistant at Woodford County Special Education Association since August 2004. My work focuses specifically on working with students to advance functional skills and gross motor skills that align with the academic, motor and social needs of the students. A highlight of my career at WCSEA was the creative opportunity to develop weekly gross motor and biking programs with retired Skill Builders teacher, Darlene Senica. I enjoy traveling, working outdoors and searching for antiques.

Helpful Resources

- **1. Family Matters Parent Information Center**

www. fmptic.org

1-866-436-7842

- Family Matters Parent Information Center is a critical resource for families.
- Resources include a helpful newsletter, topic packets by specific request, trainings and webinars on a number of topics.
- They offer free education and advocacy for families.

- **2. Core Vocabulary**

What is Core Vocabulary?

Core Vocabulary consists of high frequency words that can be used in most environments and it is used to increase language skills.

So what does that mean?

There are about 400 basic words in the English language that make up about 80% of what people say. These words make up our Core Vocabulary. In the Skillbuilders classrooms, we are focusing on 20 - 30 of the core words people say most. So far this year we have focused on the words I, GO, IN and HELP and will soon be adding WANT, MORE, and STOP. We have been focusing our efforts on one core word for every 1 - 2 weeks so that all students can:

1. Identify the word on our classroom core board or on a tablet
2. Use the word in a 2 - 3 word sentence
3. Connect meaning to the Core Word

Core vocabulary is being incorporated into language lessons, therapy activities, and classroom activities throughout the day so all students can benefit at whatever level they are using language.

Examples of ways we might use the core vocabulary word GO with other Core words:

I GO, WHO GO, YOU GO WHERE, I GO IN, MORE GO

Of course, we add other words, too!

Fringe Vocabulary, or words that are specific to certain situations or environments, are added to our sentences as well.

For an activity using apples we might say:

I WANT apple. HELP cut apple. I DO IT. Cut MORE. I EAT MORE apple. GO GET apple. PUT apple HERE.

Try to use some Core Words at home! Look to future newsletters for new Core Words we are adding throughout the year.

Questions about Core Vocabulary? Email me! Mrs. Heather Brown, SLP ~ hbrown@wcsea.us

Heather Brown is a Speech Language Pathologist, serving the Skill Builders classrooms at Sowers and Roanoke Benson Junior High.