

WEST ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Barbara Longo
Superintendent of Schools

West Greenbrook Road
North Caldwell, New Jersey 07006
(973) 228-1200 ext 100 Fax (973) 228-0559
Email: blongo@westex.org

For Information, Contact Allison Freeman, Manager of Communications and Community Outreach, at (973) 228-1200 ext. 101 or email afreeman@westex.org.

West Essex High School Offers Life Skills Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

For more information, please contact Allison Freeman, Manager of Communications and Community Outreach, at (973) 228-1200 ext. 101 or by email at afreeman@westex.org.

West Essex High School offers a Job Coaching and Life Skills program which incorporates Community Based Instruction to help special needs students become active community members.

High School special education teacher Gabriella Bauer said the High School program combines structured learning experiences, job coaching and community based instruction. The program includes activities which develop life skills, everyday problem solving, vocational skills, and occupational therapy to build spatial reasoning, social interaction and curriculum integration.

In a recent class, Mrs. Bauer worked with students on calculating the cost of purchases at a store and then practiced packing grocery bags of different items. The teacher said she takes students on regular trips to the West Caldwell ShopRite and CVS where they shop and fulfill orders for district staff members. The students learn to handle money, collecting money from staff and then getting change for them at the respective stores. In addition, they make trips to the bank, post office, Target and area restaurants. Students also participate in vocational opportunities within the school such as sorting mail, filing, shelving books in the school library and stocking in the cafeteria.

The program has different objectives in different subject areas, Mrs. Bauer noted. In mathematics, Bauer said she guides students as they share whole dollar amounts equally, explores computational strategies for division and interprets the remainder, explores two-digit multiplication and demonstrates an understanding of vocabulary terms and applies them to word problems.

In Language Arts, the program aims to give students an understanding of punctuation, spelling, grammar and comprehension, to react with literal and critical comprehension and to understand literary story elements. In science, Bauer said she works with her students to build an understanding of scientific theory, human biology and the importance of everything from organs to bones and muscles.

In Life Skills, Bauer said her goal is to develop and strengthen vocational skills including cooperatively preparing recipes, planning and developing shopping and other grocery-related skills.

"The CBI or Community Based Learning Program instills confidence in students and builds self-esteem," she said. West Essex also hopes to expand the program with local businesses, working with local businesses to give students valuable work experience for school credit.

There are several currently enrolled in the program, but Bauer said the program still has openings and could accommodate students from neighboring districts.

“It’s wonderful to watch the students develop life skills immersed in the community setting,” said Tanya Simmons, West Essex Director of Special Services. “The students have an opportunity to strengthen vocational skills with the goal of preparing for independent employment in the future.”