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## Spotlight on Tom Hill

**Principal of Baker County High School (BCHS)**

Submitted by Nancy Crews, ESE Director, Baker County Schools



Mr. Tom Hill is in his fifth year as principal at Baker County High School. He was previously the vice-principal at the high school for two years. Before that, he was assistant principal at one of Baker County's elementary schools. The first ten years of his career was spent as a math teacher at the high school.

Nancy Crews, ESE Director in Baker County, shared that Mr. Hill "is always reluctant to talk about himself. He is such a humble kind man. Baker County High School is a model PBS school this year. Tom has been a part of the district MTSS team from the very beginning. Academic performance has greatly improved under Mr. Hill's leadership. Mr. Thomas Hill is a true instructional leader for the Baker County School District."

" If you **B**elieve and **C**ommit, **H**onor and **S**uccess will follow "  
is Mr. Hill's tag line on his email.

*ISR D Director's Note:* Principal Tom Hill will be sharing his successful practices as part of the panel of secondary level effective principals at the ISR D Summer Institute for School Administrators in St. Augustine in June.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### June 2014

**10**—Small District Coalition Work Group Meeting, Deerfield Beach, in conjunction with FLCASE

**11-12**—Summer Institute for ESE Administrators, Deerfield Beach

**25-26**—Summer Institute for School Administrators, St. Augustine

### August 2014

**27**—Principal's Briefcase Training for School Administrators, Gainesville

**28**—Training for New ESE Specialists and New School Counselors, Gainesville



## I'm a School Psychologist... What's Your Superpower?

Written by John Seaton, School Psychologist,  
Flagler County Schools



When ISRD needed another article for the newsletter they put out the call for help. I'm here to "save the day" with one more commentary on the role of the school psychologist.

I've had the distinct pleasure of authoring a series of articles on the joys of supervising interns. I never thought of myself as a particularly amusing person, but it's been a real hoot for me writing them. It has afforded me the opportunity to make light of some of the more fascinating aspects of supervising interns, although in reality, it is a very serious responsibility. But, enough of being serious... let's get back to the (hopefully) funny stuff!

School Psychology is a profession just brimming with fun, laughter, and hijinks. Gosh, everyday, I walk in my office door with a smile on my face, a song in my heart, and a dance in my step. (Cue the little cartoon songbirds who softly alight on my shoulders and break into tuneful chirps that harmonize with my lyrics!) School Psychology is just one big Walt Disney movie from the start of the workday to the end of it.

Oops, sorry, I was indulging in a little bit of fantasy. I love my job, but let's be real: being a School Psychologist can be a grueling ordeal on some days. For the most part, it's not a physically stressful job, but the mental stress that comes with working with children (and some adults, too) with some pretty significant academic and emotional issues, takes its toll. There are days when I get home from work and it's all I can do to haul myself to the recliner in my living room. Fortunately, those days are balanced out by some extra special good days. It makes it all worth it on those days that it takes me ten minutes to walk down the hall from the main office to my office, because of all the students who've stopped to say "Hi, Mr. Seaton!" or to shake my hand, or to give/get a hug. Those days not only let you know that you're really making a difference, but they also rejuvenate you and keep you motivated to come in to work for the next day.

I like how school psychology has evolved in the last ten years (not the paperwork end of it, but the practice side). I finally get to know and work with students BEFORE they're referred to me for testing. I actually get to build relationships with them now, which is something that rarely happened under the old test and place model. Back then, I might never have heard of the student I was testing until the consent form was placed in my mailbox. My role was more like Batman. The student would spend most of the first two or three years of their school life struggling or failing, I'd swoop in and test, and then "BOFF! POW! WHAM!" I'd save them from the bad guys (those big bad general ed classes), and then drive off into the sunset in my Batmobile (aka, my 1991 Mazda pickup), never to see them again. I like it a lot better being someone whose name they remember and with whom they want to (and like to) interact. There IS a downside to it though. My poor old brain just can't remember all THEIR names now! Still, I enjoy the challenge, and it beats the heck out of wearing that mask and cape on a hot Florida day!

# Levy County Students Visit Local Government Offices

Written by Pam Thompson, Transition Coordinator, Levy County Schools

Recently, a group of students from Bronson Middle High School took a field trip to the Levy County Courthouse. The students have been studying state and local government and had the opportunity to visit with and tour the offices of Danny Shipp, Linda Fugate, Osborn Barker, and Tammy Jones.

They learned about the duties of each elected official, and how each office can assist them in the future. The students were presented with information on how to register to vote, how to get a driver's license, how to locate parcels of land, and where to pay a traffic citation, among other things. They were able to ask their elected officials many questions, and each official was more than willing to answer.

The staff and students would like to thank Danny Shipp, Linda Fugate, Osborn Barker, and Tammy Jones for being so willing to share their time and resources.



## *An Update From* **Florida Inclusion Network**

The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) collaborates with all districts and schools to provide customized services and supports ensuring all students with disabilities have the same educational, social, and future opportunities as their peers.

We have been busy revising the School BPIE (Best Practices for Inclusive Education) needs assessment, as per [Section 1003.57\(f\), Florida Statutes](#). The web-version of the school BPIE assessment will be available for schools this fall! Please contact your district's ESE director for further clarification on requirements and timelines. In the interim, if you are interested in implementing or improving inclusive practices at your school, please contact your ESE director to coordinate services and support from FIN!

You can also visit our website, [www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com](http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com), for some great resources on inclusion for administrators, teachers, and families! If you would like more information about any of our services or products, please contact your local FIN Facilitator by clicking on the home page tab "Meet the FINs" and locating your FIN regional team.

***We look forward to hearing from you and have a great summer!***

# DESOTO MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM THE BEST BUDDIES PROGRAM

**BEST BUDDIES®**



Written by Kaycee Mays, ESE teacher, DeSoto Middle School

Can you imagine your life without that special friend? Could you imagine not having any friends in school? What about not having friends to invite to attend your birthday parties or maybe even having a sleep over?

Students with disabilities more often than not find themselves without friendships for many reasons. To help my students learn, practice, and apply social skills as well as develop those life time friendships, we have started a Best Buddies program.

Best Buddies fosters one-to-one friendships between students with and without intellectual disabilities. Children with intellectual disabilities are more often than not isolated and left out of social activities. The Best Buddies program allows for the creation of an inclusive school environment as well as the opportunity for socialization, leadership opportunities while providing necessary tools for individuals with disabilities to become more independent and more included in the community.



## **“Best Buddies” Callie and Oscar**

Written by Callie, 7th grade student

Best Buddies is a great organization. It has absolutely changed my outlook on life. I used to not talk or really even care about students with special needs. I just figured that they had people to help them so it was alright. Well, then the organization, “Best Buddies” came along and oh my goodness I so wanted to be a part of it.

Our principal got the program up and running and he asked me to participate in a short commercial about the program for our school news. The minute I walked in the room, I knew exactly who I wanted my best buddy to be. His name is Oscar and he is so sweet and funny. I have realized that students with special needs have many qualities if we just take the time to get to know them. I think that we should learn to focus on what people can do instead of what they cannot do.



Thanks to the Best Buddies Program, not only me, but many other kids at my school have found great life-long friends.

## **GILCHRIST STUDENT LEARNS ABOUT HUNTING AND SAFETY THROUGH SPECIAL PROGRAM**

Written by Mandy H. NesSmith, Staffing Specialists, Gilchrist Co.



While doing some transition planning with Drew this year he shared he had a dream to go hunting. Drew is a senior from Trenton High School in Gilchrist County. We are from an area where hunting is very important to our community and a lot of the students in school talk about their hunting experiences. Drew didn't think he would ever get to share this kind of experience with his peers. I began to call around to see if I could find an agency or person who would take a student with a physical disability on a hunting trip.

After a few phone calls I was connected with Missie Schneider, President of the Gainesville chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), known as the Gator Gobblers. Gator Gobblers strive to introduce more women, kids, and individuals with disabilities to the outdoors by creating new hunters and teaching about conservation in our community and surrounding areas. They strive to ensure that safety is a top priority and help provide the best experience possible. While speaking with her, she shared that only 12 percent of the disabled population compared to 39 percent of the non-disabled population, are 16 years of age and older that participate in wildlife related recreational activities. There are many reasons why this number is low but it was found that lack of knowledge and opportunities were identified as the most common barriers. NWTF is committed to providing individuals with disabilities opportunities to overcome the barriers that keep them from the outdoors..

Drew had to obtain a mentoring hunting license along with attending a pre-hunt meeting. At this meeting he was introduced to his guide, Glenn Davis. He would be paired with Glenn on the big day. He also practiced shooting the gun he would be using during the hunt. Drew had the opportunity to try out an adaptive wheelchair during the pre-hunt meeting. On the morning of the hunt he only used an adaptive gun holder to steady his aim. He says this experience was one of a lifetime and is thankful to Gator Gobblers for giving him this opportunity!!



## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AVAILABLE THROUGH VERY SPECIAL ARTS FLORIDA**

### **Inclusion in the Arts Training**

Learn strategies to enable all children to successfully learn in and through the arts by integrating the arts into the curriculum. Participants will gain knowledge and resources that will enable them to provide successful experiences for children and adults in the creative process.

This session is appropriate for teaching artists, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, staff and administrators.

Training sessions can be for 3,4 or 5 hours. Contact Marilyn Farber at 813-974-0712 or by email at [mfarber@usf.edu](mailto:mfarber@usf.edu) for details. To view additional trainings available go to <http://vsaf.org/learning/training-workshops>