

# 10TH ANNUAL PALATINE HIGH SCHOOL ELS PLAY SHOWCASES 'OCEAN LIFE'



For the 10th straight year, students in the Educational Life Skills (ELS) program at Palatine High School dedicated their classroom work to showcase their talent and creativity in a spring play.

The annual ELS play took place on April 8 in the auditorium, and students chose to create an "Ocean Party" that spoke of themes accepting others' differences, not judging someone by their appearance, and taking care of the Earth. The range of student ability is vast, but all students participated regardless of their physical or cognitive disabilities.

"We do this every year, and it is definitely something the kids and school look forward to," said Karen Lange, art teacher at Palatine High School. "The students love that they can perform in front of the school, and it's a very positive event."



The show is completely put together by students in the Fine Arts A100 class, which is an art elective for students in the ELS program. The school and parents are invited to the play, which takes place during their class period. Students, under the supervision of their teacher and teaching assistants, work together to produce props, costumes, storylines, and a dialogue for the show.

This year's show, "Ocean Party," featured characters in an underwater community, complete with fish, jellyfish, and a scary shark that had no sea creature friends. Each scene revolved around the general theme of accepting others' differences. In the past, themes have included aliens, time traveling through history, and the ABCs of art.



Lange said the class worked on the projects, costumes, and practiced their roles for about 11 weeks. She said this activity is not only important in developing physical and cognitive skills, but it boosts students' confidence by providing an opportunity for them to be on stage. She added that she believes these types of sensory projects help her students.

“Art education is necessary and can expand paths,” Lange said. “Art gives back, and this is a great, different avenue for our students to be creative, which is very relevant to their lives. It challenges them, excites them, allows them to move their bodies in different ways, and by the day of the play they really step up to the plate.”

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## DIRECTIONS 2012 EVENT APPROACHING FOR STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



In an effort to help parents transition their students out of high school and into post-secondary opportunities, District 211 has teamed up with other local educational institutions to participate in the annual event Directions 2012.

The event is open to all students in special education and family members on Oct. 2 from 6 – 8:30 p.m., and features various informational sessions and a college and career fair. The event will be held at the Forest View Educational Center, 2121 S. Goebbert Road in Arlington Heights. The event is sponsored by the Northwest Educational Council for Student Success, in conjunction with District 211, Township High School District 214, Barrington Community Unit School District 220, William Rainey Harper College, and St. Viator High School.

“We have more than just colleges coming to meet with our parents and students,” said Diane Pfister, transition specialist at District 211. “We will have vocational training programs, and everything that might be a post-secondary option, including colleges that offer a post-secondary educational experience for students with intellectual disabilities.”

The session will start with a welcome from Scott Friedman, director of Access and Disability Services at William Rainey Harper College. From there, there will be four different breakout sessions to attend, with the option of a college and career fair that will be going on the entire night.

Representatives from several different organizations will be there to discuss their programs, answer questions, and hand out materials. The breakout sessions include: College Training Programs; Four-year Colleges and Universities; Life Skills Training Programs; and Community College Options.

“Sometimes planning for post-secondary opportunities for students in special education takes time because there could be several factors to consider, so we encourage students from all grade levels to attend with their parents,” Pfister said. “We want our students and parents to explore various options and see what’s out there after graduation, and hopefully this night can be an important part of the post-high school transition process.”

For more information on Directions 2012, please visit the [website](#) or contact Diane Pfister at [dpfister@d211.org](mailto:dpfister@d211.org) or (847) 755-1851.

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## WHAT'S NEW FOR THE 2012-2013 SCHOOL YEAR

The start of school is an exciting time each year in High School District 211. Back to school means teachers have worked on their curriculum during the summer and are ready to share new lessons or techniques. Many students have taken a summer school class, but most are eager to get back to school. In addition to that excitement, there are many things happening in District 211 that help make the start of this year unique to any other.



*Conant High School junior Jordan Wolff receives his iPad for the One-to-One Initiative.*

Technology has rapidly increased in education throughout the years, and District 211 is incorporating more of it in the classroom. This fall marks the start of the One-to-One Pilot program, where students are given iPads and use classroom portals and online communications in their coursework. The teacher makes all classroom materials available online, and students can continue to communicate to their teacher and classmates when away from school.

Another technological advancement is the initiation of Infinite Campus, the new student information system that allows parents to have access to grades, teacher communication, and classroom work. The new system allows for easier communication between parents, teachers, and students. With this system, parents will have an individual login where they can view grades and classroom assignments. This also is a great way for students to keep tabs on their classwork, as well.

This fall, there have been two courses added to the District 211 curriculum. The first is Entrepreneurship, which helps students in grades 10-12 gain an understanding of the business and marketing principles necessary to start and operate a business. Students will learn to identify, analyze, and develop an idea into a realistic business. The fundamentals of economics, marketing, management, and finance will be studied as students work on developing a comprehensive business plan throughout the semester.

The second course is Chinese mandarin level 3. This year-long course continues the methods used in Level 2 and is designed to further develop students' communicative skills using thematic vocabulary units and real life situations. Authentic materials, CDs and videos will be used to reinforce grammar skills and language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.



District staff continues to build a balanced assessment system, which includes both formative and summative assessments. Part of the process is to link assessment questions to course critical learning standards and National Common Core Standards. Formative assessments provide teachers with information to guide instruction and provide academic intervention to students to increase student achievement on the end of course summative assessment.

The special education department has exciting programs starting this year. District 211 Academy-North will implement a new program model that focuses on assisting students to gain independence through inner- and intra-resourcefulness. The special education department also will be utilizing a new computerized I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) system which is available through Infinite Campus.



*All summer construction plans were completed. Floors and carpeting are common items to replace each year.*

All summer facility work was completed whether it was done by District maintenance or contractor. One major project was relocating and adding wireless access points at each school to better serve mobile and wireless devices. Individuals also will have access in school stadiums and parking lots.



*More fresh greens, fruits, and vegetables will be available for students to choose from.*

District Food Services staff have worked hard to change meals to meet new state regulations. Students will see new menu items with numerous health benefits outlined by federal nutrition standards. The improved meals will provide healthy, well-

balanced, trans fat-free options that have all the nutrients students need to succeed at school.

District 211 continues to see improvement in energy efficiency. Through the efforts of District 211 staff and a willingness to embrace conservation efforts, the District has saved more than \$8.6 million since the beginning of its energy-conservation program nearly eight years ago. The District is using about 20 percent less electricity and natural gas than it did in the period of November 2003 through October 2004 despite having added significant additions to four of the high schools.

With each of these initiatives put in motion for the 2012-2013 academic year, District 211 will continue to enhance and expand programs for years to come. For any information regarding any of these programs or improvements, please call 847-755-6600, and you will be directed to the appropriate department.

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## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS, STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION'S SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM

Starting high school can be a stressful time for students and parents alike. For many students that are developing social skills, such as students with communication disabilities, specifically those on the Autism Spectrum, entering high school might be more stressful for reasons other than just coursework. These students and their parents might seek additional support when preparing to enter school freshman year.

This is why High School District 211 offers a summer transitional program in conjunction with the Life and Learning Strategies program entitled "The Hidden Curriculum-Navigating the High School Environment." The course content for The Hidden Curriculum series is based on research from leaders in the field of autism. Students and their parents are given an opportunity to attend four summer sessions to familiarize themselves with the challenges of high school, meet peers and teachers, and ease overall stresses of entering high school.

"This is for students who need to know what to expect, and we hope we provide that as best as we can," said Mary Pat Kronos, assistant director of special education in District 211. "It also gives a chance for the staff to know the students so they can identify needed supports."

On the first evening of the summer sessions, parents are invited to a session to hear an overview of how they can best support their students during this significant transition. Students get introduced to who they should speak with if they need help, stress reduction and sensory strategies, opportunities to get involved with when

school starts, and to meet students and other teachers they will interact with. They also get a chance to walk around the school, find where their classes, and become familiar with the environment they will be in when they start school. Staff members get to meet and observe students they are working with in the fall. At the end of all four sessions, there is an ice cream social where students can mingle with their peers. Parents are invited to attend this session in order to have an opportunity to learn more about what their students learned, as well as to meet the staff who worked with their students during these sessions.

“Parents are learning to navigate all of this, too,” Krones said. “This program allows them to connect with other parents and voice the same concerns, dreams, and fears they might have for their children entering high school, while also learning the keys to a successful high school experience and how they can be a great support. It’s a parents’ orientation, as well.”

Students who participate in the annual summer transition program are incoming freshmen recommended for the Life and Learning Strategies Program that is offered to special education students all four years of high school. During that program, students will learn instructional resource-based support during a 50-minute daily course. They will focus on learning to deal with challenges such as adjusting to change, regulating sensory needs, social skills, and problem-solving, and will earn .25 credits per semester of passing, with no homework or final exam. The curriculum was created by Life and Learning teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and administrators. Not every student stays in the program all four years, however, there is an opportunity to do so.

“It’s a program where there is more communication with families and support,” Krones said. “As students move through the program and get older, we start focusing and talking about the transition into adulthood. We start getting them to think about post-secondary opportunities, and we teach them to become self-advocates for their needs.”

Krones said the best part of this program, especially during the summer orientation meetings, is seeing how it helps relieve concerns of both parents and students. It’s especially great when students ask questions and connect with each other about various aspects of entering high school.

“From the initial introduction on night one, to when they leave the ice cream social on night four, it’s great to see the increased level of comfort and confidence from students and the growth in that short period of time,” Krones said. “We want our students to be successful, and we want parents and students to know that we are here for them, that we have a lot of resources to offer, and we want our students to take advantage of the full high school experience. That is our goal.”