

TOGETHER

Fall 2024

Sensory Spaces for Better Learning

by Chris Klem

The team of BOCES 2 occupational and physical therapists (OTs and PTs) have created state-of-the-art sensory rooms for students of all ages in various classrooms this year. From the Exceptional Children Learning Center (ECLC) and Taylor Elementary to Ridgecrest Academy and Westview, thoughtfully designed sensory spaces provide safe, engaging environments to help students regulate and get ready to learn.

The sensory needs of BOCES 2 students have driven the creation of these new sensory rooms. Within these spaces, staff can help students practice emotional regulation and coping strategies, develop motor and social skills, and explore different sensory stimuli. Sensory rooms have been proven to improve student social-emotional learning (SEL) and academic performance.

“Our new rooms at ECLC proved their worth on the first day of school,” said Heather Malone, supervisor of special education. “There is normally a high level of anxiety for younger students as they transition to a new program, class or learning environment. Within minutes

in one of the sensory rooms, students were laughing, playing and interacting with one another. There were increased levels of language being used; children were relaxed and focused. They acclimated more quickly and were prepared to learn when they returned to the classroom.”

Each BOCES 2 location has its own unique take on the sensory room, designed by program OTs and PTs for their specific students and age group. As students move through the educational continuum at BOCES 2, they can depend on having access to comforting, supportive sensory rooms that will meet their changing needs.

ECLC hosts two dedicated sensory rooms, one for active play, and the other for calming and regulating activities. The youngest students begin each day burning off energy and learning how to play with others in the Rainbow Room — which holds a colorful assembly of modular, soft play equipment to jump on, crawl through, or imagine in. “We’re seeing their play and language skills develop much more quickly than usual here,” said OT Gabby Westcott.

(continued on p. 3)



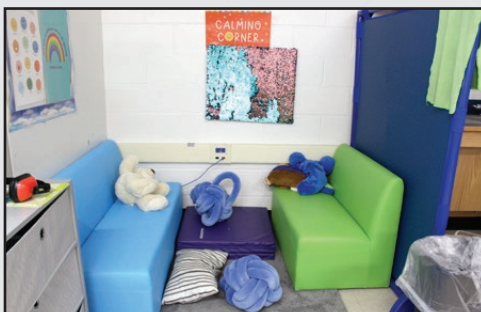
A welcoming environment at Taylor Elementary for students needing sensory support.



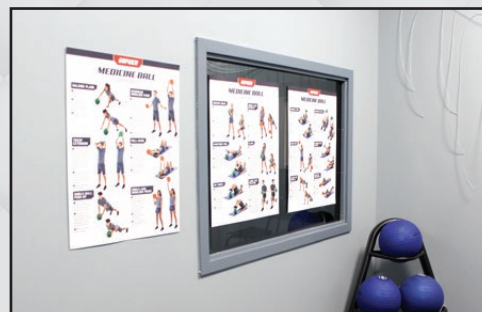
Students explore the tranquil Space at ECLC with OTs Mackenzie Hoven and Gabby Westcott.



OT Mackenzie Hoven helps a student coordinate movement and balance in ECLC's Rainbow Room.



One of the classroom Calm Spaces at Taylor.



The heavy work WIN room at Westview.

Ready for the new year at CTE

The 2024-25 school year is off to a great start for BOCES 2 CTE students! Once again, the CTE classrooms at WEMOCO and Springdale Farm are filled with the future workforce. Can't wait to see what these amazing students create this year in their CTE programs and beyond!



Sharing First-Day Smiles from Around BOCES 2

It's wonderful to have students and teachers back in our classrooms! Pictured are students on the first day at Westside Academy, Ridgecrest Academy and Westview.



Preschoolers Receive Free Books in Honor of Board Members

In honor of School Board Recognition Week (Oct. 14-18), BOCES 2 preschoolers received free books. Inside each book was a bookplate, representing a member of the Monroe 2-Orleans Board of Cooperative Educational Services. The board is comprised of a member from each component district. Superintendent Thomas K. Putnam, Ed.D., brought books to a preschool classroom and read to students. Thank you to the BOCES 2 board for its continued support!



(continued from cover)

Sensory Spaces for Better Learning

by Chris Klem

The second space is dark and quiet, a calming sensory environment with interactive light panels and fiber optics; mirrors; gentle bubbling columns; fiber optic tunnels; and comfortable seating. Children explore their environment with cause-and-effect activities, like using large buttons to change the colors of the light displays.

At Taylor Elementary, the darkened sensory room is filled with soft nature sounds; rhythmically bubbling displays and fiber optics; a sparkling star wall panel; and an assortment of seating options, including a swing. Each of the individual grade K-4 classrooms contains its own corner Calm Space with a carefully curated selection of fidgets, puzzles and other tools.

At Ridgecrest Academy, students in grades 5-8 will find an updated OT/PT therapy room and an all-new sensory room, complete with enveloping bean bag chair; a rhythmic bubbling display; Velcro wall puzzle boxes; and a variety of movement activities in a calming environment.

“For this age group, we’re focused on giving students greater awareness of their bodies in space and more age-appropriate strategies for regulation,” said OT Julie Moretti. “We work very closely with teachers to design individualized plans tailored to each student’s needs.”

In addition to the dedicated rooms, each classroom has adaptive seating and a sensory resource box, full of small tools like fidgets; noise-cancelling headphones; and textural items, like sensory putty and Velcro, that students can use to help them focus on lessons.

At Westview, two new What I Need (WIN) rooms give older students the option of heavy work (exercises using resistance as a means of regulation) or strategic calm. Students can work off excess energy and de-escalate anxiety with a punching bag, slam balls or a variety of exercise equipment in the well-padded, heavy work WIN room. If they need a quieter approach, they will find comfortable adaptive seating; a relaxing bubble column; fiber optic lights; and sensory equipment, like weighted blankets, fidgets, lap pads, and body socks, in the calming WIN room.

“The focus for students in grades 9-12 is on increasing awareness of what they need to achieve balance, understanding which strategies work best for them and independently taking responsibility for helping themselves,” said OT Gabriella Milgate.

Also of note is the new Sensory Closet at ECLC. The closet holds a selection of tools for teachers and therapists across BOCES 2 to try out. Individual programs’ OTs or PTs have more information for those interested.

All these unique sensory rooms were planned by BOCES 2 OT and PT staff members in an intense collaborative work session last spring. Thanks to them, and to the hard work of the Operations and Maintenance staff who have been vital in setting up these spaces, the rooms have taken shape quickly this fall, and they are already making a difference for students.

Westview Open House

On Oct. 8, at the Westview Open House, families had a chance to tour the school, view student work, meet teachers and taste delicious homemade cookies baked by students in the new Culinary program. It was so exciting to see everyone!

Thank you to all the Westview families who visited during our Fall Open House - and to teachers and staff members who made the school environment so inviting.



Westview Students Visit Letchworth State Park

by Chris Klem

Despite rainy fall weather, five Westview students and two staff members recently visited Letchworth State Park. While there, they saw the Mt. Morris Dam and both waterfalls, enjoyed hiking and took in the spectacular views. A few of the students said it was their first time going to a state park; they enjoyed the trip and hoped to return.

Adventurous students hiked down the 125 stone steps to see the Lower Falls. They also walked across the bridge to the other side of the river. On the way home, they discussed more facts about the Genesee River: Did you know it starts in northern Pennsylvania as a hole in the ground? Did you know that it is 157 miles long and flows north into Lake Ontario?



Students Enjoy a Day on the Farm This Fall

by Chris Klem

What a beautiful day for a field trip to see the pumpkins and farm animals at Stokoe Farms! Teacher Samantha Fowler and support staff members took students on a truly memorable field trip.



Learning Unlimited on the Road

by Chris Klem

The Learning Unlimited group traveled to SUNY Brockport this fall to participate in a “Spring Training” style night with the SUNY Brockport baseball team. Participants rotated through a variety of stations, which included activities like hitting home runs, throwing balls at targets and even signing autographs! There were also several spontaneous “arm-wrestling” matches that broke out with some of the coaches. A big thanks to everyone who helped make the night special and so much fun!

Learning Unlimited is a free, 10-week program for adults with disabilities. It provides an opportunity for group members to get together to work on social, leisure and independent living skills. It is offered in spring and fall sessions through a grant from the Organization for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The grant is run through Monroe One BOCES; BOCES 2 Department for Exceptional Children manages the program for residents on the west side of Rochester. It is

free for adults who live at home and qualify for OPWDD services.

Registration for the Spring 2025 program will begin in January. Questions? Please reach out to:

Andrew Fowler – afowler@monroe2boces.org

Julie Moretti – jmoretti@monroe2boces.org



Mental Health Conference

by Hannah Sanson

BOCES 2 hosted the 18th Annual Regional School-Based Mental Health Conference on Oct. 18 in the Professional Development Center. Dozens of educators and mental health professionals from around New York State attended a variety of sessions focused on the digital world in which today's youth are immersed.

The conference featured presentations by experts on the impact of social media on youth mental health, a community outreach specialist from the Federal Bureau of Investigation discussing online safety issues, a local therapist using video game metaphors to connect with kids/teens and representatives from Spreading Wellness Around Town providing the young adult perspective related to social media.

The conference was a collaboration between the Mental Health Department of BOCES 2 and Behavioral Health Services of Monroe One BOCES.



NOW HIRING!

BOCES 2 OFFERS:

- Competitive pay
- Exceptional benefits
- Paid training
- Tuition reimbursement
- NYS pension eligibility
- Summers and school breaks off for many positions
- Opportunities to work with amazing students and dedicated, caring staff members

Scan code or
find out more at:

www.monroe2boces.org/jobs



Questions? Contact Karen Brown at
kbrown@monroe2boces.org or (585) 352-2420

Piccolo Selected as a 2025 ACTE Teacher of the Year State Honoree

by Ashley Roys

Rachael Piccolo is the head of the classroom, and she's now at the top of the class for career and technical education (CTE) teachers.

Piccolo is a BOCES 2 CTE teacher for the Nurse Assisting and Associated Health Careers program at WEMOCO. For her work in the classroom, she was selected as the 2025 Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Teacher of the Year state honoree by the New York State Association for Career and Technical Education (NYSACTE). This honor recognizes the finest career and technical teachers at the middle/secondary school level who have demonstrated innovation in the classroom, commitment to their students, and dedication to the improvement of CTE in their institutions and communities.

Piccolo began her career at BOCES 2 in 1996 when she was hired as the school nurse for the CTE program. She transitioned to teaching in 2010, where she has taught future healthcare workers ever since.



Rachael Piccolo, at right, receives her award from NYSACTE President Erin Smith.

She shared that she made the switch to teaching to challenge herself and be more involved with students. "When I teach, I share my passion with students and hopefully, that leads to them finding their own passions," said Piccolo.

She is also an advisor for SkillsUSA, a role that has enabled her to watch many of her students grow and succeed.

During her tenure at BOCES 2, Piccolo has helped the program grow from a one-year program to a two-year program, and she has watched enrollment increase. She is an active leader in related healthcare programs across the state, having participated in curriculum writing and statewide assessments for the industry-aligned programs.

Piccolo was nominated for the award by her supervisor, BOCES 2 CTE Assistant Principal Theresa Alampi-Cortez. "I don't know of someone who is more deserving," said Alampi-Cortez. "Not only does Rachael work with and train students, but she's also a mentor to her colleagues and a leader in the program who is recognized across the state."

Piccolo was formally recognized at the CTE Technical Assistance Center (TAC) of New York's Summer Leadership seminar on Aug. 6.

CWD Open House

Prospective Center for Workforce Development (CWD) students could see their potential futures in person on Oct. 17. The CWD Fall Open House was an opportunity for adult education and career training instructors to welcome guests into their spaces to tour, chat and witness workforce development. Thank you to those who were able to attend - CWD hopes to see you again soon!



CTE EXPO Draws Interested Students and Families

The WEMOCO CTE Center was full of potential on Nov. 6, as prospective students in grades 8-10 and their families visited to explore the breadth of career and technical education offerings during CTE EXPO 2024. The future is bright for the next generation of skilled workers. Thank you to current and former students, staff members and industry partners who were on hand to show off all the great aspects of CTE.



National Speaker Opens Superintendent's Conference Day for Exceptional Children Staff

by Beth Nash



The Department for Exceptional Children kicked off Superintendent's Conference Day on Oct. 11 with a presentation from Dr. Nia Nunn. A native of Ithaca, NY, she is an educator, activist, national speaker, and executive director and curriculum

writer for the Community Unity Music Education Program (CUMEP). Nunn talked about "radical vulnerability" in her presentation.

Radical vulnerability is a philosophy and practice that helps educational institutions engage in collective self-study to enhance their culture and sense of community. Nunn said that there are three questions that must be asked to accurately assess radical vulnerability:

- What is your greeting culture?
- What does it mean to be a member of your community?
- Why would anyone want to learn from you?

She authored a book about the topic titled, "The Community is My Classroom: A Curriculum of Radical Vulnerability."

This concept struck a chord with the new district superintendent of BOCES 2, Thomas K. Putnam, Ed.D. In an email to staff, he asked them to reflect on their classrooms, and interactions with students and each other. "As an organization, do we support each other, trust each other and welcome each other? As individuals, we have tremendous power to create a positive and healthy work environment. As a team, we can build each other up and support the initiatives from NYSED and BOCES 2." He referred staff to a quote from teacher Haim Ginott, who talks about being the temperature gauge in a classroom: "It's my

personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a student's life miserable or joyous."

Nunn told teachers to bring joy to their jobs. "It's part of the job description," she said. "People treat people how they feel about themselves." She talked about her education and work, stating that she became a participant and researcher in her own life, so she encourages others to do the same. Nunn taught courses in the foundation of special education in her role as professor of education and psychology at Ithaca College, and she explored literacy as a community movement.

She encouraged BOCES 2 to train teachers to take risks. "Teachers need to see themselves as scientists or practitioners," she said. "In turn, get kids to see themselves as teachers of the world." Nunn asked staff to think about learning as a social and civic responsibility. Throughout her program, she was interactive with her audience, using poetry for reflection and incorporating rhythmic chanting/songs.

Director of the Department for Exceptional Children Kerry Macko was excited to bring Nunn to share her message with BOCES 2 staff. "Building and establishing culture in our programs is essential for our work, and Dr. Nunn brought focus to that work," said Macko. "Several staff members shared that her message was inspirational and 'something we needed to hear.' Many asked for her to come back and do more work in follow-up sessions. We're looking into that for the future. For now, Dr. Nunn will provide inspiration and leadership with our Administrative Council members in two follow-up sessions to continue the learning with Radical Vulnerability."

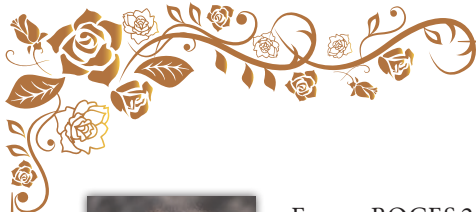
Educators Continue to Explore Using AI in Classrooms

by Hannah Sanson

The Instructional Technology Specialists at BOCES 2 presented "Advancing Together: AI in Education Summit II" on Nov. 5 in the Professional Development Center. This summit followed up the successful first event held in February. Representatives from six BOCES organizations, 14 school districts and five higher education organizations came together to engage in discussions about using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in classrooms.

Attendees with a wide range of familiarity with AI - mostly generative AI systems powered by large language models - joined panels and breakout sessions with experts and peers to better understand this ever-changing technology. The kickoff panel featured local higher education leaders who pioneered AI practices in their educational spaces. The 40-minute breakout sessions, led by experienced educators in the region, demonstrated ways AI has been integrated into education.

Summit participants discussed their experiences using generative AI from challenges produced through the falsehoods of what AI scientists call "hallucinations" to moments of success after learning to generate the desired content most effectively. This summit allowed educators to learn the most strategic ways of introducing and using AI in their learning environments. Another summit is planned for next year.



In Memoriam



Former BOCES 2 Board Member Linda Burlingame died on Oct. 23. She represented Churchville-Chili from 2002-17. She also served on the BOCES 2 Department for Exceptional Children's Special Education Advisory Board for many years. "Linda Burlingame was a steadfast advocate for education who dedicated herself to serving our students and communities with unwavering commitment as a BOCES 2 board member," said BOCES 2 Board President Dennis Laba.

Condolences to:

Shari Bernstine
on the death of her sister;
Jennifer Merkel
on the death of her mother.



Board of Cooperative Educational Services

Dennis Laba, President

R. Charles Phillips, Vice President

John Abbott

Christa Bowling

Kathleen Dillon

Trina Lorentz

Gerald Maar

Michael May

James Musshafen

District Superintendent

Thomas K. Putnam, Ed.D.

Editor

Beth Nash

bnash@monroe2boces.org

585-349-9028

Contributors

Steve Dawe, Amanda Dedie, Chris Klem,
Sonya Kordovich, Danielle Lorenzo,
Nicole Mauro, Jennifer Merkel, Beth Nash,
Abbey Noble, Ashley Roys, Hannah Sanson,
Gretchen Spittler

Graphic Designer

Lisa Constantine

To view our newsletter online, visit
www.monroe2boces.org/together

Past issues are also housed at this location.



Monroe 2—Orleans Board of Cooperative
Educational Services

3599 Big Ridge Road

Spencerport, New York 14559-1799

Telephone (585) 352-2400

www.monroe2boces.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 34
SPENCERPORT,
NY 14559

Mission

We provide quality, cost-effective educational services in partnership with school districts and the community in a manner that supports excellence and equity for all learners. We are committed to customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and personal and professional growth.

Vision

Monroe 2—Orleans BOCES is the educational partner of choice. We strive for continuous improvement in serving the diverse needs of our community, helping all students achieve their full potential.

The Monroe 2-Orleans Board of Cooperative Educational Services does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, color, national origin, disability, creed, marital status, veteran status, military status, sexual orientation, prior criminal offense, domestic violence victim status, gender identity, gender expression or genetic status in its services, employment, programs or activities, and it provides equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups.

The following person has been designated to handle complaints/inquiries regarding the BOCES' non-discrimination policies: Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, 3599 Big Ridge Road, Spencerport, NY 14559, 585-352-2420, and is also the Title VII and Title IX Officer.

For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/addresses.html> for the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481. Please note that those wishing to file a complaint may also do so through the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintprocess.html>. See also New York State Executive Law 296.

Fall Food Drive is Successful with Student Help

A big shout-out to students in the Paul Road Transition program for their hard work on this year's BOCES 2 Fall Food Drive. They went to Whittier Fruit Farm, picked scores of fresh apples (donated by the farm) and packed the apples up in easy-to-carry bags. Then, students organized hundreds of food donations and put together Food Drive boxes for families. Every family received a full box of food staples and a bag of apples. Kudos to students, teachers and staff members who helped bring it all together. A huge thanks to everyone who donated to the annual Fall Food Drive event that helps BOCES 2 families.



To update your mailing address, or be added or removed from this newsletter mailing list, please email bnash@monroe2boces.org.