



Inside The Phoenix Center

September 2009

Volume 2.1

Upcoming Dates

September 18
1:00 Dismissal
Staff In-service

September 28
School Closed
Yom Kippur

October 12
School Closed
Columbus Day

October 15
Back to School Night
7:00 pm-8:45 pm

October 22
1:00 Dismissal
Staff In-Service

November 5-6
School Closed
NJEA Convention

November 25
1:00 Dismissal

November 26-27
School Closed
Thanksgiving Break

The Phoenix Center is committed to offering a well-integrated program focusing on the development and education of the whole child and his/her family. Our team approach provides diversified programming with the emphasis on student independence, social-emotional growth, career development and integrated employment opportunities. The Phoenix Center's primary goal is to assist students and adults five to 21 years of age and older in developing skills which will maximize their adaptation to everyday life.

Our New Principal

We are very pleased to announce that The Phoenix Center has a new principal. Julie Mower, MA.Ed, has been elevated to this position after having served as an Assistant Principal for four years. As principal, Julie is responsible for overseeing the daily management of the school, providing training and support for our teaching and related service staff, and maintaining an active role with Partners in Caring (PIC), the school's the parent association.

Julie received her B.A. in Art Education from New Jersey University, and joined The Phoenix Center family in 1994 as an art teacher because of her love of children and desire to creatively work with students with disabilities. While the art teacher, Julie developed and implemented the Visual Arts program for 10 years at the Center. During that time, she also published lessons on various art websites in support of students with disabilities. "I loved the warmth and climate [of the school]. We're all here for the students. The students are our number one priority." Julie also comments that this atmosphere is found throughout the school community.

With the desire to do more to directly serve students with disabilities and their families, and in an effort to have more impact on the educational services provided at the Center, Julie received her master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from The University of Phoenix. She wanted to get more involved in the process of ensuring the education of the students, supporting staff, and educating new teachers. Julie joined the administrative team as the Assistant Principal in 2004. As Assistant Principal, Julie proved herself to be dedicated to providing integrated and individualized programming for our students.

Now in her sixteenth year here, and beginning her first year as Principal, Julie says she has grown up with The Phoenix Center. "I love the fact that the staff, across the board, will do just about anything they need to do for the students, and that's what kept me here."



Update on the H1N1 Virus

The Phoenix Center continues to remain proactive in our attempt to prevent the appearance of the H1N1 virus (swine flu) in school. Some of the steps we are taking to prevent infection include:

- keeping contact with the local Board of Health
- increased education to ensure proper hand washing
- health monitoring
- increase of school- wide cleaning
- tracking of all sick calls

We ask that you assist in our efforts by reminding your child to use tissues when coughing and sneezing to then dispose of tissues in a wastebasket. We are also requesting you send in a small labeled box of tissues to keep on your child's desk. Also, if possible, send in a small labeled bottle of hand sanitizer of your choosing for use in between regular hand washing. If you are unable to send your preferred hand sanitizer we will assume your consent to have your child use what we have available in school (Vionex antiseptic no rinse gel from Metrex) when necessary.

The symptoms of H1N1 are similar to regular influenza, and include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, sudden dizziness, and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting. If any of these symptoms appear, contact your doctor, who will determine whether influenza testing is needed.

Remember, the H1N1 virus is contagious. You can help us prevent any potential spread of H1N1. Do not send your child to school if he or she is ill. **As always, students with a temperature of 100 degrees or greater must remain at home until afebrile for twenty-four hours, without the use of temperature lowering medication (Tylenol, etc.).** If flu is suspected, they must be cleared by their doctor before returning to school.

When calling to report your child's absence for any illness, please be specific as possible with all symptoms. As always, if your child is out for illness 3 days or more, a doctor's note is required upon their return.

Thank you for your assistance in keeping our school a happy and healthy place. We look forward to a happy and healthy school year!



The Phoenix Center
Administrative Staff

Geraldine Gibbia, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Douglas A. Berrian, Ed.D.
Director of Personnel and
Staff Development

Julie Mower, M.A. Ed.
Principal

Audrey Poggioli, M.A. Ed.
Assistant Principal

The Phoenix Center
Board of Directors

Rick Claydon
Rosemary LaGamma
Karen McNamara
Maria Sedlack
John Siracuse
George Spina

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Phoenix Center

Julie McCall, Layout Artist

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Choose Your Attitude...
Play ...
Make Their Day...
Be Present....

A Letter from the Executive Director



Welcome to the opening of our 19th school year! In 1991, when Dr. Berrian and I co-founded the Phoenix Center, we began with 12 staff members and 16 students. Since then, we have continued to grow to our present population of 167 full and part-time staff members and 147 students age five through 21 who come from 72 towns in eight New Jersey counties.

We, as administrators and staff, are very grateful and believe that our commitment to providing well integrated individualized programs driven by the NJDOE Core Curriculum Standards and to living our core values drive this continued growth.

As we begin this new school year, it is appropriate to reiterate these core values for you, our supporters and friends.

- Each learner is someone's daughter, son, brother, sister, niece, nephew, cousin, grandchild and as such, the learner is respected and loved.
- We look at our learners as individuals with abilities, not disabilities.
- We conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity at all times.

We live the four principles of the FISH! Philosophy: *Choose your attitude, Play, Make someone's day, and Be present.*

At our recent New Parents' Breakfast, I shared these core values and invited the parents of our new students to adopt them as well and partner with us as we educate their children. It is a privilege to be able to serve our students and their parents, and we thank them and their sending districts for entrusting these learners to us.

So, I ask as we start this new year that we remember the past and learn from it, we celebrate the present and grow through each moment, and that we believe in the future of our students, their families and our great country, America!

Dr. Geri Gibbia

Phoenix Formal Flies Again!

June was a very exciting month, and one of the events that made it that way was our annual Phoenix Center Prom. The 2009 prom was another great success! The students were dazzling in their gowns, suits, and dancing shoes.

Each year, the prom is a labor of love and many people help make it happen. The prom committee, chaired by school psychologist Anne Jens, began planning the event months in advance. Our DJ, music teacher Rachel Crawford, provided fantastic music to keep everyone on their feet and dancing up a storm. Art teacher Janet Longo helped our students make decorations from scratch so that the cafeteria could be transformed into a fabulous dance hall. Staff volunteers stayed after hours to make sure all the decorations were in place.

Many staff made clothing donations (and in one case, even made alterations for a specific student) so that all students who wanted to roll into the prom in style could do so. Staff volunteers did hair and make-up for interested female students.

The prom is an opportunity for our students to enjoy an event that their peers and family members experienced themselves. Music and dance are invaluable forms of expression and fun, and the prom enables the students to not only celebrate together, but to feel good about themselves.

This year's prom will go down as a fun and memorable time in many of our student's lives. Thanks to everyone who made it a success!

Top: Bianca F., Brian D. Center: Dailene S., Joshua C. Bottom: Sal N., Rut B.





Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security

The Phoenix Center is fully invested in maintaining an atmosphere that is safe, and optimal for learning. As in any school setting, students sometimes engage in behavior that can be disruptive. Due to the individualized needs of our students, their behaviors can at times place themselves or those around them in at risk for injury. In order to empower our staff to manage crisis situations effectively and to maintain everyone's safety, Phoenix Center staff members are trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI). This model for intervention emphasizes the **Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security** of everyone in our setting. NCI is the intervention model established by the Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc. (CPI). CPI has been training human service professionals for nearly 30 years. Over 5.4 million individuals have participated in this training.

The Phoenix Center currently has five certified instructors. All staff new to The Phoenix Center receive a two-day training which has a heavy emphasis on verbal de-escalation skills, which allow staff members to help a student work through a crisis using only verbal intervention. These de-escalation skills are invaluable in helping to keep a student's distress from reaching the point where the student acts out physically. Staff members are also trained in physical safety techniques, to help them prevent injury to themselves or to the student should the student act out physically. For situations in which a student is acting out physically and is a danger to themselves, to others, or to property, our staff is also trained in Nonviolent Physical Crisis Intervention. These techniques are used only as a last resort when other interventions have failed, and when it becomes more dangerous not to intervene with these techniques than to intervene.

All of these skills are crucial to preserving the **Care, Welfare, Safety and Security** of our students and staff. Staff members receive refreshers and problem-solving support throughout the year upon request, and are formally refreshed once a year in a day-long training. Thanks to the enthusiasm of our staff and their willingness to participate in this training, nearly 50 staff members volunteered to come in during the month of August and receive formal refreshers from several of our Certified Instructors. The remaining staff members will receive their formal refreshers during the school year.

Introducing New Teachers



Laura BouDaher
Room 107



Lauren Delgado
Room 106



Jennifer McQuade
Room 104



Matt Palmieri
Art Teacher



Greg Reisman
Room 209



Erin Vogel
Room 103

Welcoming New Instructional Aides



Nicole Bosland



Maryjo Castelli



Justin Corino



Anthony Ferens



Rosa Gago



Jose Granados



Lisa Hazuka



Carmelina Lantigua



Alicia Torres



David Unnasch



Bobby Weir



Class of 2009



Adolfo J.



Allen K.



Dashon H.



Jason (JJ) T.



Mitchell E.



Nicole B.



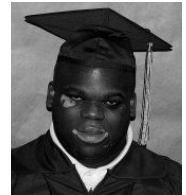
Ruddy R.



Tyler R.



Pedro C.



Qadree P.

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