RSAs On The Move

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RST Summer Institute
The RST Summer Institute in Saipan during the month of June focused on nutrition and communication skills for the new RST students. Jill Vanderkin, RD, and Tracy Nance, MA, CCC-SLP taught their respective content areas. A highlight of the summer was the feast. Each RST student wrote a recipe using local foods. Everyone made his or her recipe and we all came together on a somewhat rainy Saturday to eat the food. The sun came out by the

Preparing for the RSA Program in Palau
Kathy Ratliffe traveled to Palau in June to prepare for the next RSA training program that will begin in January, 2005. She met with Evans Imetengel, Special Education Coordinator, and faculty and administrators from Palau Community College. She also met with special education teachers from Palau who are interested in participating. Maria Waathan, special education coordinator from Yap participated in the meetings because at least 10 positions in the class will be saved for Yap participants. Several participants from the Republic of the Marshall Islands are also expected to participate. The program will combine at least four on-site institutes in Palau with televideo classes held between Palau, Yap, Majuro, and Hawaii. An internet component of the curriculum will also be offered. The class will consist of between 25 and 30 participants who will begin in January, 2005 and complete the RSA curriculum in November, 2005.

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Evans Imetengel, Palau Special Education, Kathy Ratliffe, RSA program, and Alvina Timarong, Palau Community College, plan the next RSA program in Palau to begin in January, 2005.
NewsBits

RSA Mentor is an Author

Barbara Sher, occupational therapist, is also a prolific author. She has written over 10 books to encourage children and parents to play and learn. Her newest book “Smart Play: 101 Easy Games that Enhance Intelligence” just came out in July, 2004, and is available on Amazon.com. Barbara is a mentor to the RST students in Saipan, and she also has traveled to Kosrae and Chuuk to be a mentor to the RSAs in those FSM states. Her next book will be about games for inclusion.

RSA Cookbook

The RST trainees in Saipan have begun the development of an RSA cookbook using local foods for children with special health care needs and their families. This book is in early production at the Media Center at the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii, and will be available in November, 2004. Currently it has only 20 recipes using local foods including taro, yams, taro tops, breadfruit, coconut, and fish. Each year the book will grow as new recipes are added.

Resource Packages for FSM RSAs

Resource packages for RSAs in the four FSM states have been developed and will be mailed to them in the next few weeks. The FSM Special Education Office funded the resource packages through the remaining funds from the RSA Mentorship Project. The packages will contain strapping material and buckles as well as contact paper, pictures that can be used to make communication boards, and several resource books. The books include:

*Children with Disabilities* by Mark Batshaw. This book has in depth information about different disabilities.

*Clinical Pediatric Physical Therapy* by Katherine Ratcliffe. This book, originally written for teachers and physical therapist assistants, contains information about different disabilities and ideas for goals and objectives and for interventions with children, among other things.

*Helping Children Who are Deaf* from the Hesperian Foundation. This book, written like *Helping Children Who are Blind*, and *Disabled Village Children*, explores how to work together to help children who are deaf and their families promote self-sufficiency, communication, and intellectual skills in Deaf children.

*Resource Binder for RSAs*. This binder includes all of the tests and forms that RSAs in FSM have learned to use over the years of the RSA program. It also includes fact sheets on common disabilities seen in the Pacific, and a list of resources (web sites, addresses) to get more information.

RST Summer Institute, Continued from Page 1

afternoon and we completed the afternoon by taking turns paddling a double hulled outrigger canoe into the sunset.

For the second time, the CNMI RST summer training program was interrupted by a typhoon. Tingting stormed its way across the islands in time to interrupt the last week of classes. CNMI residents took it in stride. This happened also during the summer of 2002.
Billy does his work using a writing wedge to help him focus on his paper. The wedge was made by Linus Mizutani, RST student.

Mercy Tisa, RST (2002) and Del Ruben, RST student (2004), work with twins Casey and Chendryx at home.

Hannah, a teenager participating in the RST Summer Institute in Saipan, figures out how to mop the classroom floor with the help of her RST student, Cathleen Peter.

RST mentors in Saipan met at the beginning of the summer to plan how they could best support the RST students. From left to right: Peggy Owen, Brenda Lynch, Fe Abonal, Kathy Ratliffe, Kristy Gregg, and Rebecca Davis.

The Importance of Routines

Routines help all of us get through our day. For example, I always brush my teeth, wash my face, change my clothes, and read for awhile before going to sleep. This routine helps me settle down and get ready for sleep. If I am not able to follow my routine, I may get cranky or have a harder time sleeping.

When we try something new such as learning a new skill, starting a new school or program, moving from one house to another or one village to another, or beginning a relationship with a different person, we automatically start to develop a routine around that new activity. For example, when moving into a new house, we find a place for clothes, a place to sleep, etc.

Children need to have routines as well. Children with disabilities are even more dependent on routines to help them make sense of their environments.

As RSAs and RSTs, we can work with families to identify daily routines for children, and to help them understand the importance of respecting these routines for their children.
Making Schedule Boards

Schedule boards can help students predict what will happen next during the day. By helping to set up the board and changing it as events unfold, students can feel some control over their participation in school or home activities. Removing events from the board after they are completed can help a child transition from one activity to another more easily.

Schedule boards can be very helpful to all children, and especially for children with disabilities that affect behavior, social skills, and ability to follow directions such as autism, ADHD, mental retardation, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, and Asperger syndrome. Schedule boards can be colorful to get a child’s attention, or can use contrasting colors such as black and white to help a child focus attention. The board can use colors, pictures, or words, or a combination of colors, pictures and words to facilitate the child’s understanding of the concepts. The board should be interactive with the child being able to manipulate pieces.

The schedule board to the left was designed and made by Margaret Soalablai, RST student, for a six-year old child with Down syndrome to use at home. The board uses color, words, and pictures. Cards with each daily event are attached to the poster board using velcro, but rolled tape can also be used (although it is less durable). In the morning the board is set up for the day. When an event is finished, the child goes to the board, removes that card, and places it in the “FINISH” pocket.

The child’s parents love this board. It allows them to help their child move from one activity to the next without nagging her. It helps the child see what she needs to do. If tasks are not completed she cannot do her favorite activities (watching Sponge Bob on TV or riding her bike).

This is only one example of a schedule board. Depending on the needs of the child, different boards may look very different from each other.