2017 Rhode Island Teacher Assistants’ Fall Conference  
October 14, 2017

Sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of Education  
“Educators working together to support ALL students in Rhode Island”

Here are descriptions of sessions for the Fall 2017 Teacher Assistant Conference. The conference will provide information, resources and strategies for paraprofessionals to support students and improve academic, behavioral, and social and emotional skills.

7:30 – Registration  
8:00 – Session 1  
10:00 – Session 2  
11:45 – Lunch & Welcome – Dr. Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Education, RIDE  
12:15 – Keynote Address:  
“Safe Conversations: Finding Common Ground in a Divided World”  
Kristin Hayes-Leite, 2018 RI Teacher of the Year  
1:00 – Session 3

Space is still available! Cost is $25. Register on line

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS:

Youth Mental Health First Aid (ALL DAY SESSION)

This training is designed to teach school staff how to help an adolescent (age 12 to 18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth mental health first aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a five-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), and eating disorders.

This session will begin at 8:00, continue at 10:00, and conclude at the 1:00 session. This session is NOW FILLED, as participants MUST register prior to the beginning of the conference.
Session 1 – 8:00

Social and Emotional Learning in the School Setting (ALL Levels)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is recognized as an integral part of learning and imminently necessary to successfully participate in the work force. Participants will be introduced to the 5 competencies of SEL using the CASEL framework and will get examples of real life applications for ALL (adults and students).

*Soraya Gomes, School Social Worker, International Charter School  
Katie Nerstheimer, Special Education Teacher, South Kingstown*

Write to Learn Strategies that Foster Student Achievement: An Interactive Workshop (MS/HS)

All students, but especially struggling learners, increase achievement levels when they use "write to learn" strategies. TAs in grades 6-12 across content areas are invited to attend to learn practical, easy-to-implement strategies to improve students' engagement and comprehension with writing and reading tasks.

*Julie Lima Boyle, (English teacher, Coventry High School)*

Understanding Challenging Behaviors

We will take this time to explore various reasons children exhibit challenging behaviors. We will identify how our response to this behavior can influence the course of the behavior. Finally, we will discuss a few techniques that can be helpful when working with children struggling in a classroom setting.

*Staff from Bradley Learning Exchange*

The Write Stuff (Elem)

The focus of the workshop will be to utilize creative strategies in the classroom for assisting a diverse group of students in reading and writing. Develop skills to encourage confident readers and writers.

*Kara Ratigan & Renee Hadfield, East Greenwich Public Schools*

What Matters Most: Profiles of the "Struggling" Learner (K-6)

This session will incorporate brain research to explore the top 5 critical factors that influence learning for our students who struggle: Relationships, Routine, Repetition, Independence, and Mindset.

*Tracy Lafreniere, Reading Specialist, North Smithfield Elementary School and 2016 RI Teacher of the Year*
**Session 2 – 10:00**

**Give Me a Break!**

This presentation will provide you with practical hands-on activities that can be utilized throughout the school day. These activities are designed to redirect and engage students that may need a movement or mental break from the rigors of the classroom. You can look forward to no prep hands-on activities that will provide physical and mindful immersion and redirection. Please wear comfortable attire and sneakers as some activities will include low impact movement. Join the fun!

*Debra B. Reddy, PE/Health Teacher, Susan Mckenna, Media Specialist, Alyssa McCoart, PE/Health Teacher, Lincoln Public Schools*

**Google Applications Support**

Within the course of this particular session, paraprofessionals will learn about the basic functions of Google Applications such as Google Drive, Google Documents, Google Forms, and Google Classroom. Guidance will be given as to how to best utilize working with these features while assisting students in the classroom.

*Sean Connolly, North Cumberland Middle School*

**Topic: Serving Immigrant and Refugee Students: A Cultural Competency Workshop**

It takes a whole community to advocate for a meaningful learning experience for each of our students. Each one of us, who interacts, influences and impacts the learning outcomes of our students, needs to start our advocacy with knowing those students – not only what their needs are but also what their potentials are. The participants will learn techniques and tools necessary to build their own intercultural awareness, challenge their own assumptions, and build positive relationships with their students so they are able to effectively support their students to reach their highest potentials.

*Channavy Chhay, Executive Director, Center for Southeast Asians*

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*Staff from Bradley Learning Exchange*

**Literacy Toolbox: Helping Students With Basic Literacy Skills**

Come and explore the reading and writing process for our youngest learners and those older students working on basic skills. This session will offer hands on ideas to increase student progress using strategies, your prompting, and engagement.

*Tracy Lafreniere, Reading Specialist, North Smithfield Elementary School and 2016 RI Teacher of the Year*
Session 3 – 1:00

Cultivating a Growth Mindset in Students

Too many students have given up on themselves or are so afraid to fail that they shy away from new challenges. Changing the way students think about the process of learning can have a powerful impact on student outcomes. In this session, we will explore our own beliefs about learning and discuss strategies for promoting a growth mindset in our classrooms.

Kristin Hayes-Leite, 2018 RI Teacher of the Year, Social Studies Department Chairperson, Narragansett High School

My Non-Stop Life: Tips and Tools to Manage Stress - In and Out of School

In this session you will learn about stress and the brain, take a look at your own experience with stress, and most importantly, practice techniques to manage it. Come experience breathing practices, gentle exercises and simple meditations from the traditions of yoga and mindfulness. Then bring them back to school to share with colleagues and students! Hear comments that students at an urban middle school have about these activities. This session is applicable for teacher assistants of all levels, and will include tools for different age groups.

Shara Plynton, School Social Worker, Slater Middle School, Pawtucket

The Role of Paraprofessional in a Blended Learning Classroom

Paraprofessionals provide instructional reinforcement; assist with classroom management; and provide instructional assistance in a classroom, computer laboratory, library or media center. What does that mean in a Blended Learning Environment? Explore your role and increase your tech competencies to better support the blended experiences (combination of direct face-to-face instruction and virtual learning) for your students.

Debra Turchetti-Ramm, Instructional Technology Coordinator, Johnston Public Schools

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Debra B. Reddy, PE/Health Teacher, Northern Lincoln Elementary School
Susan Mckenna, Media Specialist, Northern Lincoln Elementary School
Alyssa McCoart, PE/Health Teacher, McCourt Middle School