



Pineland Learning Center



A Message from Pineland Learning Center

The PLC Clinical Therapy Team

We are proud to introduce you to our resident Clinical Therapy Team. As Pineland Learning Center staff members, their regular attendance places them in close proximity to classrooms, and allows for consistent coordination with teachers and other staff. This allows them to integrate their services into the instructional day, and to monitor student progress. Overall, their professional expertise and presence promotes a positive and supportive school environment for all students.



The PLC Clinical Therapy Team

(L-R): Diane Trout, Animal Assisted Therapist, Student Personnel Services; Loretta Jarmon, School Psychologist; Lauren Taylor, Student Personnel Services; Amanda Ihlenfeld, Lead Clinician and School Social Worker; Meredith McClain, School Social Worker; Joe Kane, Occupational Therapist; Audrey Wolfe, School Social Worker; Debbie Zabel, Speech Language Pathologist; Joanne Reger, School Social Worker; and Debbie Hayes, Speech Language Pathologist. Also pictured are Madison and Morgan, dogs who work with Ms. Trout.

Not pictured: Kathryn Taylor, School Psychologist; Debra Anderson, Family Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

Evolution of the Team

From its inception, Pineland Learning Center (PLC) has had a strong focus on student support services. The PLC Clinical Therapy Team - comprised of psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists, an occupational therapist, and other related professionals - is dedicated to helping students realize their potential within the learning environment through access to a full range of clinical services.

Over 25 years ago, PLC named John Reed, Diplomate in Clinical Social Work and Licensed Clinical Social Worker, as its first school counselor. The program grew with the needs of the students, and today, Reed is the Program Developer for PLC. Reed consults with teachers, supporting staff, and the Clinical Therapy Team; informs parents and caregivers; identifies trends in the field of special education, keeps abreast of emerging knowledge; and designs the vision and focus of the school to best meet the clinical needs of the students within the framework of evidence-based practice.

As part of PLC programming, every student participates in ongoing proactive counseling activities. The Clinical Services Team coordinates individual and group counseling sessions, speech / language and occupational therapies, and other services for all students based on IEPs from their sending school districts.

Amanda Ihlenfeld, Lead Clinician and supervisor for the Clinical Team, works with other team members to determine the best methods for individualized student support. "I am lucky to supervise such talented, enthusiastic and creative people," said Ihlenfeld. "Each member is dedicated to working together to offer students a compilation of clinical services that best addresses their unique needs."

Counseling

Counselors are immediately available for individual situational or crisis interventions, ongoing contact with the family and caregivers, student advocacy, and frequent classroom interactions. Because they work so closely with both staff and students, they are always able to inform Child Study Team case managers about their students' progress.

"Counseling sessions are always based on problem solving, and stress the importance of finding safe appropriate resolutions," said Ihlenfeld. A variety of techniques are used in the sessions, such as cognitive behavior therapy, problem-solving methods, conflict resolution and psychodynamics. Animal-assisted inter-actions, and kinesthetic/art/music affinities may also be used, if appropriate.

Loretta Jarmon and Kathryn Taylor are the PLC School Psychologists. In addition to working on a daily basis with certain students who have been designated as "intensive and exceptional" and consulting with teachers, curriculum coordinators and administrators, they also share and co-ordinate information with parents, caregivers, agencies and districts to ensure that each student can have success outside of his or her school environment.

Meredith McClain, Audrey Wolfe, Joanne Reger and Lauren Taylor are the PLC School Social Workers. They meet with and advocate for students as they initially make the adjustment to PLC. After the student becomes stabilized, they identify and address causes of a student's challenges as they relate to school success, and then work to empower the student toward the goal of self-regulation. As a student becomes ready to transition to a less restrictive environment, the social workers help to prepare them for successful integration.

Each School Social Worker specializes in an age group. Reger works with primary students and uses play therapy, including games, stuffed animals, and puppets, to enable conversation. Taylor, McClain, and Wolfe work with middle and high school students, who require different strategies and interventions as they move through the stages of independence and adolescent needs.

Animal Assisted Therapy

With Madison and Morgan on its side, the Animal Assisted Therapy Program at PLC is one of the most adored. Led by Diane Trout, Student Personnel Services and Animal Assisted Therapist, this program is designed to get troubled students talking.

"Dogs are good for kids who are withdrawn," said Trout. "Sometimes they won't open up to a counselor, but they will talk when the dogs are there."

Students who are referred to animal assisted therapy may also travel together with Trout and the dogs to the local veteran's home where they visit with patients. There, students learn about older populations and how to support them. They also learn teamwork, because they must work together in order for the dogs to respond.

The dogs are also used to diffuse situations as part of the crisis intervention program at PLC. By helping students get along with each other and teaching them to understand others, animal assisted therapy can resolve issues with peer relations and socialization.

For the Extended School Year during July and August, 2011, a pilot program was put together for equine assisted therapy. All indications were positive; students as well as staff were enthusiastic participants. Plans are being made to acquire accreditation, so that PLC may be able to offer this therapy for those students who would best benefit from this intervention.

Speech-Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy

When included in their sending districts' IEP, students receive on-site speech language pathology or occupational therapy. Speech Language Pathology Therapists, Debbie Zabel and Debbie Hayes, work to determine progress and help kids improve on their ability to communicate. Frequency is modified to meet students' individual needs. Sessions may be individual, small group, or consultative. PLC's full range of assessment includes speech production, receptive/expressive language, vocabulary, language processing, pragmatics and fluency.

Joe Kane is the PLC Occupational Therapist, and he provides services as a direct support to students to help them maximize their independence in all school-related functional skills. Kane uses interventions to address proprioceptive, vestibular and auditory needs that include the use of a platform swing, trampoline, therapy balls, pressure vests, body sox, along with other techniques.

On-Site and Consultative Medical Services

PLC recognizes our students' unique needs frequently require that we understand them on a more complicated level than what might be encountered in traditional school settings. In addition to the daily assistance of a School Nurse, we consult on-site with Debra Anderson, Family Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, on a regular basis for information regarding students' medications and recommendations for student management with the goal of maximizing each student's learning potential in the classroom setting. Additionally, Drs. Sonia Burgher and Bhavna Patel of Pedia Place Children's Healthcare Center, Vineland, NJ, regularly visit, inform, and consult with our staff on numerous student health-related issues.

The Clinical Therapy Team's objective is to help all students at PLC navigate their often-difficult developmental tasks by using a variety of therapies. Working cooperatively with children, teachers, administrators and caregivers/family members, the Clinical Therapy Team is able to build an individualized program for each student. For more information on the PLC Clinical Therapy Team, contact Amanda Ihlenfeld at (856) 378-5020 x 250.