

- **Dr. Jim Westbury**, Board President
jwestbury@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Dr. Dan Cuneo**, Board Vice President
dcuneo@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Dr. Ken Eigenberg**, Board Secretary
keigenberg@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Ms. Jan Goodman**, Director
jagoodman@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Mr. John F. Koeper**, Director
jkoeper@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Ms. Marilyn Stewart**, Director
mstewart@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Mr. Lorenzo Winston**, Director
lwinston@ssd.k12.mo.us
- **Mr. John C. Cary**, Superintendent
jcary@ssd.k12.mo.us

www.ssd.k12.mo.us

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Students at Litzinger School lead the way in the district-wide recycling campaign.



Special School District of St. Louis County
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Town & Country, MO 63131

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SPECIAL EDITION



Going the **DISTANCE**

Tracie Englemeyer earns her living driving a bus for Special School District. But don't tell her she's just a bus driver. For her, getting students safely to school is only part of the job—a job she says she wouldn't trade for anything.

"I hate when people say you're just a bus driver," Englemeyer says. "I am a safe driver, but you have so much more going on than driving a bus."

On her two morning and afternoon routes, Englemeyer drives older students to South Technical High School and young special education students to Parkwood Elementary School in the Pattonville School District.

While delivering students curb-to-curb from home to school and back again, Englemeyer can be a mother or a mentor, a sympathetic ear or a shoulder to cry on, a smiling face to an unhappy child or stern disciplinarian to a rowdy teenager.

"I like dealing with the kids," she says. "I see them the first thing in the morning, and sometimes they might not be happy. You have to be understanding. With the little ones, I can try to cheer them up. We sometimes sing songs. With the tech kids, I hear everything. I try to be a good role model. I teach them to respect everybody."

Although her job has its challenges—like cooling off an occasionally angry parent or navigating traffic filled with careless drivers—Englemeyer says she would never return to her old job at a credit union.

"You could not pay me enough to work back in an office," she says. "If I won the

lottery, I wouldn't stop working here. I'm lucky to have a job like this—that I like to come to work. I couldn't see myself doing anything else."

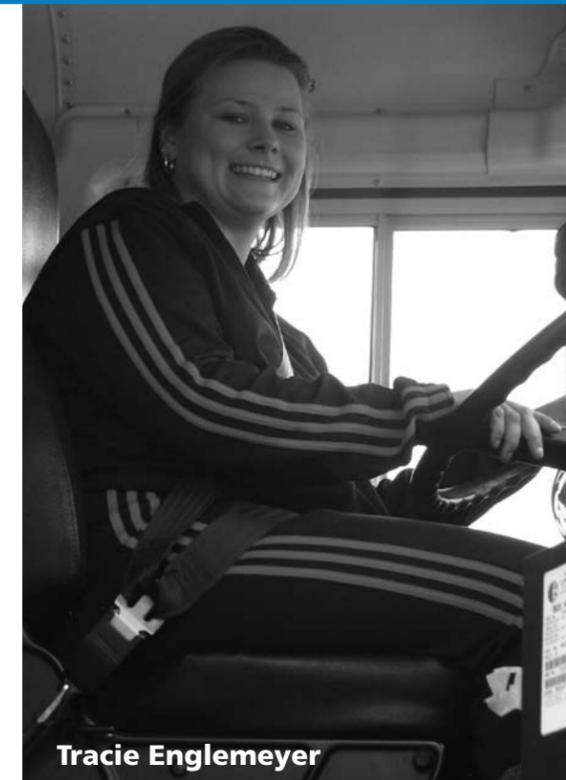
Englemeyer's dedication to her job during 10 years with SSD has earned her respect from students and parents as well as her peers and supervisors. In May, she was honored with the 2008 Lasting Impression Award, a special recognition for district support personnel who positively impact students' success.

In nominating her for the award, Transportation Supervisor Karen Sides described Englemeyer as an "excellent driver" who feels guilty if she misses a single day of work.

"Tracie gets to know the students that are on her bus and their parents and teachers," Sides wrote. "She is a very caring and concerned driver. She handles whatever is thrown her way—be it behavior students being sent home on the late bus or tech students that want to test the limits—and can still give you one of her great smiles at the end of the day."

Englemeyer is one of 269 drivers and 177 bus monitors who annually drive about 5,930 students a total of more than 5.4 million miles annually for the award-winning SSD Transportation Department.

Director of Transportation Kenny Mulder says Englemeyer is an exceptional member of a team that not only includes dedicated drivers and monitors but also



Tracie Englemeyer

a maintenance shop that was recognized last year by School Bus Fleet magazine for 95 percent of its buses passing initial state inspections—and 100 percent on an unannounced spot inspection by the Missouri Highway Patrol.

Mulder notes that while getting students to their destinations safely and on time is the top priority, drivers like Englemeyer who go the extra distance are what truly makes SSD's transportation services a vital part of students' overall educational experience.

"We are how they start their day and how they end their day," he says. "If they have a bad bus ride, they have a bad day. On the flip side, if they have a bad day at school, we have a chance to change their attitude and send them home in a better mood."

Englemeyer sums up her feeling about bus drivers with a sentimental embroidering she was sewing for Sides, her supervisor, as a holiday gift: "We're angels on wheels that carry precious cargo all around the world." ■

What's Happening at SSD

Supports for Including Your Child in the Neighborhood School

9 to 11 a.m., March 16, 2009, SSD Central Office – Room 61

Parents will learn effective inclusion practices for children with varying levels of support needs. Topics will include planning strategies, approaches to adapting curriculum, social supports and success stories.

Helping Children Develop Friendships and Social Skills

6:30 to 8 p.m., April 1, 2009, SSD Central Office – Room 60

This workshop will explore the role parents play in helping children with disabilities develop friendships and will offer parents proven strategies for social skill development.

Dealing with My Greatest Fears

6:30 to 9 p.m., Tuesdays April 7 – 21, 2009, Neuwoehner School (12112 Clayton Road)

This three-part workshop will provide information to students and parents about the transition process and post-school planning.

April 7 (Session I): Supplemental security income (SSI), estate planning and guardianship

April 14 (Session II): Rehabilitation, supported employment, sheltered workshops and continuing education

April 21 (Session III): Quality post-school programming

Sign Language: Beginning

4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Tuesdays April 7 – 28, 2009, SSD Central Office – Room 57

Designed for adults who are beginners or need a refresher, this four-part workshop will teach basic sign language.

Down to the Letter

The field of special education is rife with technical terms, jargon and acronyms. This feature in Special Edition shines a light on some of the more frequently used acronyms at SSD.

SB – Senate Bill. The principal vehicle used by legislators for introducing their proposals in the Senate. Bills are designated with the letter “S” and then numbered in the order in which they are introduced. Bills can address both matters of general interest (public bills) and narrow interest (private bills). Visit the Cooperating School Districts Legislative Action center at <http://capwiz.com/csd/home/> for legislative updates, to search for your U.S. Representative or state legislators, and to view legislative alerts.

SkillsUSA – A national non-profit organization serving teachers, and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in trade and technical and skilled service occupations. SkillsUSA serves more than 300,000 students and instructors annually. The organization has 13,000 school chapters in 54 state and territorial associations. Many SSD technical education students participate in SkillsUSA competitions each year. For more information, visit www.skillsusa.org.

SNAP – Special Non-Public Access Program. A federally funded program in which SSD teachers provide after-school special education services to St. Louis County students who attend private or parochial schools or who are home-schooled. The after-school nature of the program allows students to receive special education and related services without having to leave their non-public schools in the middle of the day. For more information about SNAP services, contact Jodi Hay at 314.989.8239 or jhay@ssdmo.org.

To learn more about the language of special education, visit the Parents section of the SSD Web site at www.ssd.k12.mo.us.

Volunteers Sought for Educational Surrogate Program

The state of Missouri and SSD are asking for volunteers to act as educational surrogates for special education students who are without a parent to represent them in educational decisions.

State and federal laws require that these students have surrogates. The greatest number of surrogates is needed for students who are in the legal custody of the Division of Family Services and reside in a residential facility.

Surrogate responsibilities include participating in the development of the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP), attending teacher conferences, and representing the child in complaint or due process procedures. The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provides training for volunteers serving as educational surrogates. The next training will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on March 14 at SSD Central Administrative Offices.

Surrogates have no responsibility for physical or financial care of the student, nor are they liable for civil damages as a result of representing the student in educational decisions.

For more information about the Educational Surrogate Program or to sign up for training, contact Mary Lee Burlemann at 314.989.8124. ■

HEROES AMONG US



In January, SSD joined school districts around the country in celebrating Board Appreciation Month. In recognition of the board’s tireless work in support of the district, members were treated to a multi-media presentation. The board also received a copy of a comic created by SSD students in which each was featured as a superhero, and care packages and cards from students and staff from around the district.

Bueneman Named Tech Prep STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Writing a story about North Technical High School senior Stacy Bueneman isn’t as easy as it sounds. Sure, finding good things to write about her is a piece of cake. But tracking her down for an interview? That’s another matter altogether.

You see, Stacy is a young woman constantly on the go.

As this year’s Tech Prep Student of the Year, it comes as no surprise that Stacy is a good student who works hard, but that description hardly does justice to her achievements. Stacy’s grade point average is through the roof (3.97), her community service hours are inspiring (250 at last count), and the list of clubs and organizations to which she belongs practically fills a page.

Stacy is studying network administration in the Cisco Networking Academy at North Tech. Her teacher Jim Elkins describes her as a “superstar.”

Nevertheless, Stacy admits she was a little surprised when she was named Tech Prep Student of the Year. The honor is bestowed on one student each year from the SSD Technical Division, representing both North Technical High School and South Technical High School. “Mr. Elkins told me I had a really good shot for the award, but I’m not sure if I believed him,” she says. “It was a happy surprise.”

Stacy’s surprise was compounded when she recently learned that not only was she named Tech Prep Student of the Year among her North Tech and South Tech peers, but among all tech students throughout the St. Louis area. “That was wonderful,” Stacy says. “I wanted to get home really fast that day to tell my parents!”

Stacy admits she has come a long way since coming to North Tech at the beginning of her junior year. “I always loved computers, but I had only had one computer class before coming to North Tech,” she says. “When I got here, I felt really comfortable *using* a computer, but today I can get inside a computer. I understand them inside *and* out.”

Following graduation this May, Stacy plans to pursue a degree in information technology at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. ■



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Special Edition is a publication of the Communications Department of Special School District of St. Louis County.

Nancy Ide
Chief Information Officer
314.989.8434
nide@ssd.k12.mo.us

Tia Kreinbring
Director of Publications
314.989.8168
tkreinbring@ssd.k12.mo.us

Melissa Cogar
Communications Coordinator
314.989.8102
mcogar@ssd.k12.mo.us