

What goes on at PLEA

An Alternative School Placement in Pittsburgh

PLEA: PROGRAMS FOR LIVING, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

In 1964, PLEA was established as the Parents' League for Emotional Adjustment by parents of children with the Pervasive Development Disorders and children that were categorized as "Emotionally Disturbed" at the time. In 1966, PLEA became a non-profit that began advocacy and support groups for children and adults with behavioral disabilities.

In 1969, PLEA opened its first classroom for children between the ages 5-7 year old that were diagnosed with ASD and other childhood disabilities. Since 1985, PLEA has served as a school-based partial hospital; students spend school hours in the institution and commute to school from their homes daily.

In 1998, PLEA implemented six classrooms for elementary school children that were placed in an Alternative School Placement (ASP) by their school district. PLEA serves as an ASP for over twenty districts in the Allegheny County, mainly for lower and middle-income families with children that have special behavioral and development needs.

OBSERVATIONS & INTERVIEWS FROM CLASSROOMS

"PLEA tends to get kids who can't learn, that tends to be the attitude. We have discovered through our methods of instruction that these kids absolutely can learn, the problem is that the rest of the world just doesn't slow down enough, and explore the kids individually to find out what they can do"

The PLEA license requires children to be placed in classrooms by age, a child needs to be placed in a classroom within three years of his age. It is difficult for the administration to support the performance management of the educators in the classroom due to the wide range of skills amongst the children. There is a split in responsibility between the Special Education Teacher for the academic programming and IEPs for each child in the classroom, and the Mental Health Therapist for the Mental Health Treatment Plans and behavioral objectives.

STANDARD CELERATION CHART

"Every design implementation is documented, and whether or not it works is documented and you can track the kid back and that one teacher with a fresh idea can go through and see what's worked and what hasn't worked over even 5 years, and implement the program"

The teachers at PLEA use the chart as a measurement system allows a teacher to identify when a student has mastered a specific skill; it displays both accuracy and frequency of the skill over time.

FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS

- Digitizing the Standard Celeration Chart** would allow teachers to:
 - Overlay charts for both within and between subject comparison.
 - Convert Day/Min charts to Weekly and Monthly charts.
 - Measure rate of learning for teachers training to use the chart.
- Establishing a communication contract between parents and teachers** during the child's first week at PLEA would allow teachers to:
 - Assist parents in reinforcing classroom teaching at home.
 - Increased trust and cooperation from parents during crisis.
 - Decline in behaviors of concern due to consistent program implementation in school and at home.
 - Increase in learning comprehension and reading skills due to consistent program implementation in school and at home.

We are collaborating with PLEA to create an application that digitizes the chart for teachers and sends parents a video of their child's daily programs.

