



STEPP PROGRAM

Spring 2017 Newsletter

SUPPORTING TRANSITION AND EDUCATION THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP

Note from the STEPP Team

Happy Spring! We are wrapping up a great academic year in the STEPP Program and hope you will enjoy reflecting on some highlights with us in the articles to follow. First, I'd like to introduce you to Carson Butler, who is serving as guest writer for this Spring 2017 edition of the STEPP newsletter. Carson is a fourth-year student majoring in Applied Geography. During his time at ECU, he has been a true Pirate - committed to making connections and a positive difference across campus and in our North Carolina community. We are excited to have his leadership in helping tell our spring semester story through this newsletter. Thank you Carson for your hard work on this project - and for the talent you bring to Pirate Nation.

STEPP Program Highlights

The App for That

By Carson Butler

My early college years consisted of some trial and error phases. For example, some students with dyslexia and other learning differences can find the constant note-taking, reading, and weekly planning intimidating. STEPP has molded me into an exceptional note taker, and I am still progressing with my organizational skills. I say progressing because I don't think anyone has figured out the whole organization thing yet! So, I decided to conduct a small, brief research project that introduced students to software that assists with note taking and organizational skills. My fundamental question is quite simple, "How can an academic app assist students with learning differences?" The resource I chose to research for this newsletter is called Sonocent Audio Notetaker.

Sonocent software allows you to import slides, type text, and record audio in an integrated way during a class lecture. It works like this: Ideally, students would download and import Power Point slides before their class. Then, during class, the student can record and take notes to emphasize important information. Just like that, the student has a neatly organized, detailed layout that can be easily accessed on multiple devices. It truly is as easy as it seems, and I think that the simplicity puts this software in a league of its own.

I believe that this app can greatly improve the way that students retain information in class and prepare for tests. I have received nothing but

positive feedback from students who are using the Sonocent software. Students have enjoyed the ability to record and outline important information during class. Students believe that Sonocent is user-friendly and can be used as a great study tool.

Our Possible Selves

By Carson Butler

Morgan James, the STEPP Program Instructor, has been leading a research team implementing a goal-setting strategy that helps college students look ahead in their college career. Possible Selves is an instructional strategy designed to get students motivated about their future and thoroughly consider goals that are important to them. After talking with Ms. James, it was evident that she thinks highly of the Possible Selves approach. She was part of a research team that included instructors from a number of schools in North Carolina. The research team studied how the Possible Selves Strategy affects students with learning differences. The research team is currently analyzing results, and so far the student feedback is positive.

The strategy helps students identify goals in the areas



of a person, worker, learner, and an overall strength. It's easy to go through the motions in college without setting and keeping track of goals. Because of this, students struggle to look beyond their college career with any degree of confidence. Possible Selves encourages students to look toward their college graduation and into their future career and life. Ms. James believes that all college students could utilize the strategy because goal setting in specified areas has proven to be effective for students. Ms. James has been implementing Possible Selves since the spring of 2012, and she believes that teaching the strategy to freshman classes gives students the confidence they need to reach their goals. Possible Selves is helping STEPP students set goals and work hard to achieve their goals while preparing for the future. For that, Ms. James, we thank you very much for your dedication and research.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 16, 2017 - Family Weekend Tailgate

October 31, 2017 - Halloween Treats and Photo Booth

November 15, 2017 - Soup Day

December 5, 2017 - Cookies & Cocoa in the Cove

February 14, 2018 - All Birthdays/ Valentine's Day Celebration

March 19, 2018 - Moustache Monday

April 4, 2018 - Picnic STEPP-style

April 20, 2018 (6 p.m.) - Eye-to-Eye Art Show

April 27, 2018 - End-of-Year Celebration

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Analogies

We are often reminded that students in STEPP represent a group of bright and creative thinkers who offer powerful insights that can be beneficial for so many others! For example, from time to time students mention analogies or illustrations that they have developed or that their parents shared with them at a young age. These images helped them understand not only the challenges that would be associated with having a learning disability, but also empowered them to feel confident that they could meet their goals. We are working this year to collect some of these analogies, connect them with images or illustrations, and share them with young students, their parents, and their teachers in the hope that they can become useful parts of conversations about teaching, learning, and self-advocacy. Emily Bosak, a Hospitality Management major, provided the analogy below, with a photo submitted by Carson Butler.

My mom explained it to me like this:

The teacher is like a faucet and water is information. The teacher (faucet) is feeding you all this information about how to do math tasks. Your short term memory is kind of like a bucket. So all this information coming from the faucet is continuously going into your bucket while you are in math class. Your job is to take your bucket of information and pour it into your bathtub. Your bathtub is your long term memory – the information you have already stored. So you take your bucket filled with water (knowledge of math) and dump into your bathtub.



photo by Carson Butler

A typical student has a really nice steel bucket. Nothing leaves the bucket – it's industrial strength. So those students are getting (and keeping) all the information. My bucket is a beautiful bucket, but it has some holes in it, a little bit of patchwork, and so on. Information does get put into my bucket, but some water leaks out, gets sloshed around, etc. before I can get it to my bathtub. So somebody else might get a full bucket poured in the bathtub, while I only get half a bucket because water fell out in between.

That just means that I need to go back periodically and get more water. Basically, I need to take a couple more trips with my teacher, and I may need a few more practice problems, do some extra review...etc.

Now my bathtub is industrial-strength with no holes. My long-term memory is just fine. Once I have something – it sticks. It may take me more time, more practice, a different approach, or more repetition/support from the teacher, but once I have fully learned, I remember it. I just have to learn the best process that works for me to get the information from the faucet to my industrial bathtub through my holey bucket.

AlumNotes

If you are an alum of ECU and the STEPP Program, we want to keep in touch! Check out these updates from some of our grads.

Bradley Gray (2006) and his wife Natalie are living in the Greenville community, and he works as sales manager at Pecheles Volkswagen in Greenville.

Chelsea Murray (2007) is working as a medical coder and enjoys living in beautiful New Bern, N.C. **Andy Gares (2007)** is spending his first winter on Nantucket, Mass. working in the hospitality field. He

is also pursuing a real estate license and enjoys living on the island. **Noah Poe (2008)** recently reenlisted for four more years of service in the US Army. He, his wife Mary, and their two sons, David and Daniel, live in Alaska where he is currently stationed. In the fall they will move to Hawaii where Noah's next assignment will be at Fort Shafer. The family is looking forward to enjoying their last summer in Alaska. Thank you for your service, Noah! **Rich DeVita (2008)** has an insurance and investment business associated with Northwestern Mutual. After ECU, Rich moved to Chicago to work for a large marketing firm. He and his wife, Haley, have been married since 2012 and they returned to Charlotte in 2013. Rich has been running the Charlotte Pirate Club since 2014. He enjoys every opportunity to return to ECU to cheer on the Pirates! **Maggie Gargan (2009)** has returned to Raleigh and recently bought a house. She enjoys teaching a combined kindergarten/first grade classroom at a public charter school in downtown Raleigh and cheering on the Pirates during football season. **Sam Law (2010)** is living in Wilmington, N.C. and working on commercial properties and private homes as a carpenter. **Amanda Donelan (2011)** teaches 2nd grade at Holy Family School in the Diocese of Arlington, Va. She loves teaching 2nd grade and provides leadership to the Student Council at the school. **Courtney Dupree Dickens (2011)** was married in August 2016. She and her husband, Al, live in Charlotte where she works in medical device sales for Zimmer Biomet. They love the Charlotte area, play golf on the weekends, and will soon be bringing a new dog into their family. **Jamie Hayman (2011)** lives in Atlanta, Ga. and is currently working for Lekotek, a non-profit organization that offers therapeutic play-based family sessions for families of children with disabilities. **Tristan D'Alessio (2011)** is a graduate student at the University of Maryland pursuing his master's degree in Geographic Information Sciences. **Matt Lahey (2012)** graduated from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department Academy and is enjoying living in the Charlotte area. **Becca O'Hea (2012)** became engaged in the summer of 2016 to Tyairr Boyd. She is completing her second semester of graduate school at Towson University and plans to complete her M.A. and C.A.S. in school psychology by 2019.



photo by Barbara Tritt

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