

Chris Lenahan joins Cushing Centers as Associate Vice President of Education and Program Development. Chris brings to Cushing over twenty-five years of expertise in curriculum and the implementation of research based programming and use of instructional strategies for students across the continuum of disabilities. Of particular interest and focus for Chris has been her work with students on the spectrum and those with intellectual disabilities providing comprehensive programming preschool – 22.

Early on in her career Chris recognized that students with disabilities required transitional programming which focused on development of employment skills in real world settings. To this end she secured on-site placements for students in community businesses with many leading to employment after graduation. She brings that interest here to Cushing and has started reorganizing the CORE programs, providing a more concentrated employment program as well as strengthening the academic components. Believing that in using the term “functional skills “ we are really speaking of the most functional of skills: reading, math, written language and social skills, new programs in reading, math and transitional skills (LIFE Transition/CEC) have been implemented. As part of looking at transitional programming, the first Cushing Career Day was held this spring giving our high school students the opportunity to survey and interview CORE students and employers.

Using her background in curriculum and program design, Chris has also been working with the education department to identify grade level clusters to enhance opportunities for teachers to collaborate on programming. Through monthly grade level meetings, teachers have started to identify curriculum and teaching strategies to enhance our work with our diverse student population. Chris is working collaboratively with the technology department to infuse technology in the curriculum using both iPad carts and chrome book carts in the classrooms and work sites. Next on the agenda is the implementation of smart board technology to support instruction in the classrooms.

When not at work at Cushing, Chris is an adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education at Salem State University teaching the Introduction to Special Education course as well the Autism Interventions course, a part of the Autism Certificate program. Chris has also been the Interim Coordinator for the Special Education licensure program in the School of Graduate Education at Salem State University. Chris has been a presenter at the Best Practices Conference at Salem State, presenting on transitional planning, program development for students on the spectrum and instructional strategies for students on the spectrum.

Chris has a B.S in Elementary Education and M.A.in Special Education both from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio and has completed requirements for certification in Special Education Administration in Advanced Graduate Studies in Administration at Boston University. Chris is certified as an Elementary Teacher, Special Education teacher and Special Education Administrator.

If you're on campus and looking for Chris, she is usually found in and around classrooms and work sites talking to students and staff.