

**THE VISTA SCHOOL IN HERSHEY, PENNSYLVANIA, IS FIRST IN THE NATION TO RECEIVE ACCREDITATION FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CUTTING-EDGE COMPETENT LEARNER MODEL**

**Hershey, P.A.** – The Vista School in Hershey, Pennsylvania, is again receiving national attention for its accomplishments in improving the lives of persons with autism.

In September 2010, Vicci Tucci, president of Tucci Learning Solutions in California will visit Vista to formally award the school accreditation in the Competent Learner Model (CLM) for teaching children with autism. CLM accreditation is the highest honor an organization can achieve for its implementation efforts, and, as an accredited CLM agency, Vista now has the opportunity to support local and regional providers of autism services in their implementation of CLM. Vista is the first center of its kind in the nation to receive CLM accreditation.

CLM constitutes an instructor-friendly approach to applying the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to educational settings. Since 2005, Vista has become a leader in the implementation of CLM in Pennsylvania through an initiative commenced by the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Bureau of Special Education.

“The CLM has provided Vista a firm behavioral and developmental approach to teaching pivotal skills needed by our students to meet the challenges of their everyday lives,” said Kirsten Yurich, Vista’s Clinical Director. “It has enhanced our program, and we are thrilled at this national recognition of our school.” Cathy Scutta, previous Department of Education Lead for the State-wide CLM project adds, “With its focus on excellence and behavior analytic instructional practices, the Vista School was an obvious choice for implementing the Competent Learner Model. The Vista School staff has gone above and beyond to implement the CLM with fidelity and good effect for the children and families it serves.”

Autism is a neurological disorder resulting in social, communication and behavioral challenges. It is a life-long disorder that affects one in every 110 children. Collective societal costs for the disorder reach \$35 billion a year. ABA is the only documented effective treatment for autism, with decades of scientific research demonstrating its effectiveness in increasing communication, learning, and appropriate social behavior.

Established by a group of parents seeking state-of-the-art autism services, The Vista School opened its doors on February 4, 2002, serving four local students with autism. Today, Vista serves 68 students from 33 school districts and five Intermediate Units in its school-based program and another hundred through its Outreach program.