

The Focus

A SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

January - February

DEAR FAMILIES,

Welcome to *The Focus*, a special education newsletter. It is our hope that you find this newsletter helpful and informative. As always, we welcome feedback, suggestions and recommendations on improving our communication with all of our families. If you have comments and questions, please follow this [LINK](#). We expect to provide this focus newsletter on a quarterly basis. We look forward to hearing from you!

How Do We Know?

As encouraged by DESE and Public School Monitoring, we are continually looking for ways to improve our program services, professional development, and training of our faculty and support staff. As a result, we have engaged experts to evaluate and/or assist us in building, using, and sharing evidence of impact and efficacy for student learning.

PROGRAM EXPERTS

DYSLEXIA: Beginning last school year and currently, we have engaged the expertise of the MGH SAiL literacy program to assist us in building a more comprehensive language-based learning environment for our students who have various learning disorders, such as dyslexia. We are excited to be working with the MGH SAiL program director and associates to help identify areas of improvement so that our efforts are implemented as intended and have a positive desired impact on our struggling readers and non-readers.

*The Landmark School is also providing consultation and professional development training.
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Case Manager Trainings & Meetings

Weekly meetings provide our case managers with updated information on our districts process and procedures, as well as special education advisories on regulations.

We recently completed an additional training on Extended Evaluations, a process that was updated in March 2018. In addition, the special education office conducts internal monthly audits of IEPs and other relevant documents for accuracy and adherence to special education compliance. When we spot errors, we provide additional trainings.

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (ESY)

As each New Year rolls in, we begin the early stages of planning for the ESY summer programs. Although we currently remain in a hybrid learning model during this pandemic, we are planning the ESY services for in-person instruction and related services this summer. Taking a cautionary approach, we are also planning a hybrid option. Tentative dates for the ESY services are selected, but we have many variables to work through before those dates can be shared with our families. Once the final draft of dates and building sites are identified, the information will be shared with your TSEPAC board members for consultation and feedback. Thereafter, we will notify you, our families, so you can plan the summer accordingly. We anticipate that finalized dates should be released by early May, if not sooner.

Melmark has been hired to conduct a program evaluation of our Developmental Learning Centers (DLC), PreK-12. Observations of some programs are unway, and some Continued from page 1

faculty and staff have been interviewed. The evaluation also includes reviewing data and student files. As part of the evaluation process, families will be selected to be interviewed. Our building administrators will also be interviewed. We anticipate that Melmark will provide us with information and resources that will help our district continue to embark more knowledgeably on the curriculum design of the DLC programs.

Once completed, the evaluation will be published on our special education website.

Some Fun & Cool Things January 2021

iRobot Afterschool Program and Family Engagement workshops were a smashing success! To build upon Social Emotional Learning (SEL), we implemented a stem product from iRobot's education division. Combining technology with SEL curriculum provided students a peer interactive and collaborative experience to handle challenges, embrace differences, and regulate emotions and frustrations, to name but a few skillsets. We are looking to offer this program again soon in the near future.

Previous Family Engagement Activities:
October 2020 through present:

COVID-19 Compensatory SERVICES (CCS)

General Education Recovery Support: may be made available to students with disabilities and students without disabilities who need it to address educational and social-emotional needs and reorient them to learning.

COVID-19 Compensatory Services: for students with IEPs to remedy skill or knowledge loss or lack of effective progress due to delayed, interrupted, suspended, or inaccessible IEP services because of the emergency suspension of in-person education related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New IEP Services: to address new areas of disability-related need for students with IEPs. [Verbatim, DESE, 2020]

The IEP teams continue to meet and discuss the CCS that a child may need.

- ✓ Video: Dyslexia 101
- ✓ Family Engagement Workshop Series with Carrie Stack kicked off in December, continues through May
- ✓ Remote Learning Strategies Workshop
- ✓ Special Education Updates: SPIRE, Pearson/DAL, iRobot Planning
- ✓ *Kids' Test Kitchen*
- ✓ *Bear Has A Story To Tell* read by Mr. Pelletier
- ✓ Melmark professional development on "What is the best practice for students with autism and how do you get there?"

THE AUTISM INSURANCE RESOURCE CENTER
(AIRC)
UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL, E.K.SHRIVER CENTER
www.massairc.org

Phone: 774-455-4056

A resource for consumers, providers, educators, and employers on issues related to medical insurance for autism treatment.

Family Resource Centers

[Massachusetts Family Resource Centers \(FRCs\)](#) are a statewide network of community-based providers offering multi-cultural parenting programs, support groups, early childhood services, information and referral resources and education for families whose children range in age from birth to 18 years of age. A Family Resource Center is located in each of the 14 Massachusetts counties to provide easy access to information and assistance related to health care, safety, employment training, education and peer support. In each of our communities, our goal is to support families to strengthen their bonds, connect to others, and engage in their community. Our core values are: RESPECT, TRUST, SAFETY, WELLNESS, CARING, CONNECTIVITY, and EDUCATION.

FRCs are supported through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).

SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICES



Behavioral Services

TPS Behavior Services is in its 4th year since its development in 2017. The team provides services to over 150 students across the district. The team works closely with staff and families to assist with enhancing outcomes for students with autism, developmental delays, emotional/behavioral disorders, and learning difficulties.

Behavior services are provided by a team of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) and Behavior Specialists with a wide variety of knowledge and expertise in the delivery of applied behavior analysis. The team continues to grow and expand in their ability to support students in various settings to include school, home and afterschool programming.

Day in the Life of an SLP

My name is Courtney Campbell and I am one of the Speech Language Pathologists from the Dewing school. Click on this link to read more about [My history with TPS](#).

The main role of an SLP in the school system is to work with children who have difficulties in the areas of communication that may impact their ability to access classroom activities, social interactions, literacy and academic learning. Expressive and receptive language, voice, fluency/stuttering, articulation, swallowing and social skills are some of the main areas we address as therapists in the schools. Click on this link to read more about [Professional Requirements for SLP](#).

One of the most important parts of my job is working with a team to incorporate therapy techniques into a student's entire day. Progress is not only made in a 1x30 minute session, but rather with the robust carryover from the child's entire team. Co-teaching with classroom teachers and aides is a big part of my day! Classroom staff carry over techniques and strategies for our students and play a huge role in the student's ability to generalize skills learned in therapy sessions.

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GIVE A SHOUT-OUT

This section is for families who wish to share words of appreciation and gratitude to identify and recognize our special education faculty, including special and general education teachers, related service providers and paraprofessionals. If you have a SHOUT OUT, please follow this [LINK](#).

Speech therapy can be:

1. monitoring and occasional screening/consulting with classroom teachers and/or parents
2. small group therapy
3. remote therapy sessions
4. in class lessons
5. 1:1 pull out sessions based on the student's unique needs.
6. evaluation/ IEP data keeping/development

This year in particular, technology has been an integral, successful part of therapy in the remote/hybrid models, and will likely continue in the future. Click on this link to see a [Demonstration of therapy programs used this year](#).

Overall, being a Speech Therapist in school can look very different from one day to the next and even one hour to the next, but there are endless opportunities to make a difference in the student's school experience. I love seeing my students progress!

REMINDERS

Mark your calendars! We have the following events coming up this month:

- February 3, 2021: DDS Eligibility and Service discussion
- February 10, 2021: Carrie Stack. She will continue with the interactive family engagement workshop.
- February 11, 2021: Basic Rights Workshop. A collaborative between the TSEPAC and special education department. The workshop presentation will inform parents/caregivers of understanding the IEP. This is a free workshop. For more information and to register, please follow this [LINK](#).
- February Vacation Week: 15-19, 2021
- February 24, 2021: Dyslexia. A workshop with MGH SAiL Literacy Lab associates.



THE WEEKS & MONTHS AHEAD

The Focus: future topics and more. . .



- Extended School Year (ESY): program dates, times and transportation
- DLC program evaluation
- Carrie Stack workshops
- The Autism Insurance Resource Center workshop
- May 2021: TSEPAC Elections

CASE MANAGER CONTACTS

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