To: BBRSD School Committee
From: Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of PPS
Date: 2/3/2025
Regarding: Pupil Personnel Services Updates

Special Education

Students receiving special education services

As of February 4, 2025 Berlin-Boylston has provided special education services to the following number of students this school year. This data includes any student who may have exited special education earlier this school year.

Berlin Memorial	Boylston Elementary	Tahanto Regional MS/HS	Total
64	71	114	249

SEPAC

The Berlin-Boylston Special Education Parent Advisory Council is a group of parents available to support other parents of students with disabilities. SEPAC meets monthly and hosts various presentations and events. In January 2025, there was a Basic Rights in Special Education presentation. In November 2024, SEPAC tried something new and hosted a parent book swap. SEPAC also attends the annual "preschool information night" to share information and resources with families.

Special Education Determination Rating:

History:

In April, 2024 a report was submitted to the school committee on the strengths and weaknesses of the district's performance and compliance data points from DESE's 2023 Special Education Determination rating. HERE is a link to the April 2024 report.

MCAS data represented through Indicator 3 was identified as an area needing increased attention and improvement. Specifically, there is a proficiency rate gap for children with IEPs who were proficient against grade-level academic achievement standards for the 2022-2023 school year compared to the proficiency rate for all students who were proficient against grade-level academic achievement standards for the 2022-2023 school year that exceeds state targets. In some cases, this gap exists even if students with IEPS meet the state proficiency targets.

Update on the actions taken since April 2024:

In coordination with DESE-provided consultants, SPED Strategies, members of BBRSD administration dedicated themselves to developing a deep understanding of the data and the factors contributing to the gap through root cause analysis and subsequent action planning. Through intensive work, we analyzed data including but not limited to student and teacher attendance, discipline records, student grades, other high needs factors, special education service delivery, areas of disability, correlation to Aimsweb scores, 2018, 2023 and 2024 MCAS data, MCAS accommodations, schedules, calendars, procedures as well as input through School Councils.

As a result of this work, administrators have deepened their understanding of the gaps in MCAS proficiency for students with IEPS, shared these understandings with staff, and began developing a targeted action plan to provide professional learning opportunities to teachers in differentiation and Universal Design for Learning (UDL.)

"Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is intended to increase access and engagement in learning by reducing physical, cognitive, intellectual, and organizational barriers, and other obstacles. It includes providing learners with multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression." (DESE Model Teacher Rubric)

Berlin-Boylston staff have a variety of experience and skills in using UDL strategies. Prioritizing professional learning in UDL across the district will supports all students, including those who are ready for enrichment and advanced learning opportunities.

Funding:

As required, $6,210.54 was reserved from the FY25 240 IDEA grant for Making Money Matter. These funds will be utilized for professional development for all teaching staff in targeted ways to address the success gap for students with IEPS as reflected by MCAS data. Additional grant funding opportunities will be sought to supplement this work.

"The Making Money Matter (M3, AKA "M-cubed") project, is part of the *Massachusetts Results Driven Accountability* (RDA) initiative. This initiative is intended to promote targeted use of federal special education funds in ways that are designed to lead to improved outcomes for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Districts identified for M3 participation are directed to use a portion of the funds made available under the IDEA Part B special education entitlement grant, known as Fund Code (FC) 240, for the improvement of performance issues identified through the Special Education Determination system."

2024 Special Education Determination Rating:

DESE has advised districts that 2024 ratings will be available in March 2025. At this time, it is unknown which indicators will be included in the rating.

DESE School Year 2024-25 Significant Disproportionality Report

In November 2024, Berlin-Boyston received an annual communication from DESE that the district has "no status" related to indicators related to significant disproportionality.

"The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to collect and examine data to determine if significant disproportionality in special education based on race and ethnicity is occurring in the State and in local education agencies (LEAs). State education agencies must examine and determine if disproportionality is occurring in LEAs with respect to:

- the identification of children as children with disabilities, including the identification of children as children with disabilities in accordance with a particular impairment that is described in IDEA;
- the placement in particular educational settings of these children; and
- the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary removals from a student's placement, including suspensions and expulsions."

significant disproportionality Initiatives and Indicators	**Status**	**Indicator Summary**
Indicator 4A	No Status	Indicator 4A refers to a significant discrepancy in suspension and expulsion for more than 10 days for students with IEPs
Indicator 4B	No Status	Indicator 4B refers to significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions (for greater than 10 days in a school year) of students with IEPs who are members of a specific racial/ethnic group
Indicator 9	No Status	Indicator 9 refers to disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services
Indicator 10	No Status	Indicator 10 refers to disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories
Significant Disproportionality	No Status	Significant disproportionality in special education refers to identification, placement, and discipline with regarding to race or ethnicity required for Indicators 9, 10, 4A, and 4B.

Preschool

On January 27, 2025, we held a lottery for the 2025-2026 preschool spots. All families requesting a spot received their first or second choice placement.

2025 - 2026 *Projected Preschool enrollment for children without disabilities as of 2/5/2025:

Tahanto 3-day program	**Tahanto 2-day program**
11 out of 16 spots	5 out of 8 spots

Berlin 3-day program	**Berlin 2-day program**
12 out of 16 spots	8 out of 8 spots

*Enrollment typically increases as the August start date nears.

Professional Development for Preschool Teachers:

Following our preschool program review, we have identified specific professional development opportunities for our preschool teachers on the district PD days. Our plan to focus on UDL, described above, is also consistent with the recommendations from the preschool program review.

Multi-Language Learners (MLL)

Our community of Multilingual learners continues to thrive. New students who need English Language services have moved into the district, and other students have successfully passed the state ACCESS tests and no longer need services. Portuguese continues to be the most prevalent home language. Additional languages spoken in the homes of our multilingual families include Arabic , French, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

In 2024-2025 enrollment of MLLs nearly doubled in BBRSD elementary schools:

- Berlin Memorial School now provides direct English Language (EL) instruction to 15 students and monitors 4 additional students who have exited. This is up from 8 students in 2023-2024.

- Boylston Elementary School now provides EL instruction to 17 students. This is up from 9 students in 2023-2024.
- Elementary EL services are provided by one teacher who travels between the buildings each day.

Tahanto provides English Language instruction to 10 students, which is down slightly from 14 students in 2023-2024.

- Tahanto EL services are provided by one teacher who teaches EL half-time and Humanities half-time.

Multi-Language Learners	**Berlin Memorial**	**Boylston Elementary**	**Tahanto Regional MS/HS**
MLL students receiving direct service in 2023-2024	8	9	14
MLL students who required monitoring in 2023-2024	3	8	12
2023-2024 totals	11	17	26
MLL students receiving direct service in 2024-2025	15	17	10
MLL students who require monitoring in 2024-2025	4	9	18
2024-2025 totals	19	26	28

Direct service is provided via instructional groups, each representing two or more languages besides English. In addition to developing and providing direct instruction, our EL teachers monitor student progress for 4 years after exiting services and provide consultation to classroom teachers. They screen newly registered students who may be eligible for services and administer ACCESS testing. EL teachers are invaluable resources to new students as they quickly establish rapport with students, assist them in developing adaptive academic and social strategies for school and often become a natural school contact for their family.

Health Services

A full-time registered nurse staffs each Berlin-Boylston health office. A job description for the school nurse position was recently revised and posted on School Spring to support our students by directly hiring staff in each health office.

The district also has a 2-day per week "float nurse." The float nurse position is critical to supporting the busy health offices and responding to spikes in illnesses, supporting field trips that require nursing support, mandatory screenings and occasional nurse absences. In addition to daily medication needs and acute illnesses, our nursing staff monitors students with chronic needs, including those of our diabetic students. This position has been vacant periodically throughout this school year, and we are in the process of directly hiring and onboarding an experienced nurse for this position, with an anticipated start after the February break.

Health Office Visits	**Berlin Memorial**	**Boylston Elementary**	**Tahanto Regional MS/HS**
Average Daily Visits for 2023-2024 ● August 30, 2023 – March 13, 2024 ● *Includes Scheduled Daily Visits	9.72	20.9	20.4
*2023-2024 Scheduled Daily Visits	9	12	11
Average Daily Visits for 2024-2025 ● August 28, 2024 - February 4, 2025 ● *Includes Scheduled Daily Visits	12.33	18.93	21.45
*2024-2025 Scheduled daily visits	12	14	25

Education Stability Services

Pupil Personnel Services oversees the provision of educational services and support for students who are experiencing homelessness, in foster care, and whose families have active-duty military members. Our work ensures that children and youth have full access to a consistent public education. We coordinate and collaborate with other state agencies and community providers to support students experiencing these circumstances.