To: Superintendent and BBRSD School Committee
From: Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of PPS
Date: September 5, 2025
Regarding: **Pupil Personnel Summer 2025 Highlights (updated from August)**

New Pupil Personnel Staff for 2025-2026

- Shannon McCarthy, Speech-Language Pathologist, Berlin Memorial
- Jackie Birtz, Special Education Teacher, Berlin Memorial
- Nicole Avery, Special Education Teacher, Bridges (change in role)
- Thomas O' Leary, Special Education Teacher, Tahanto Regional

Extended School Year (ESY)

The 2025 in-district ESY program provided special education services to approximately 45 eligible students for 5 weeks. For the second year in a row, ESY was held at Tahanto in the summer of 2025 to accommodate planned building work and cleaning schedules at BES and BMS. The ESY program was successful at Tahanto and the administration team will consider which location will best serve the students in the summer of 2026 in late winter/early Spring.

Bridges

The ongoing development of our Bridges program continued over the summer. District staff have been in contact with families to share updates and information. We have continued to receive consultative services and implemented professional learning for our Bridges teachers to develop practices and instructional materials.

Facilities and Technology departments have been instrumental in supporting the move of a classroom from Berlin to Boylston. Facilities relocated furniture and materials from the Berlin Bridges' classroom to its new location at Boylston Elementary School. Also, as a result of the Bridges move, the Occupational Therapy and Sensory Room at BES was relocated within the building. Technology updated classroom equipment to ensure equitable access for our students.

An Open House, exclusively for Bridges families, was held August 20, 2025.

Preschool

As part of our efforts to develop increased capacity and ensure continued quality preschool programming, staffing organization of the district's preschool program has been revised for the 2025-2026 school year. Related service providers (OT, SLP and BCBA) for preschool will be the same at Tahanto and Berlin Memorial. This change will enhance staffing efficiencies, provide increased flexibility and consistency for all students. This change also supports needs in the areas of staff travel, caseloads, responsibilities, team consultation schedules, roles, and professional development.

We have a few openings in our Monday-Wednesday-Friday afternoon program at Berlin Memorial and Tahanto that we are eager to offer to new preschool children and families.

Family Communication

The PPS office worked intensively with families over the summer to ensure students' needs were met in July and August, and students were set for a smooth transition to the upcoming school year. Some students require continued high-quality services, evaluations, transportation, community resources, placements and enrollment over the summer, and this is achieved through close coordination and communication with families, colleagues and community partners.

Special Education Timeline Changes

In mid-June, DESE advised districts of new timeline requirements for IEP meetings and provision of IEPS to families. This represents a notable shift from past practice and carries important compliance implications for all districts moving forward. These timeline changes are in effect immediately and will have a considerable impact on our special educators. The PPS office is developing new procedures and identifying priorities to ensure the district remains in compliance with timeline requirements.

Kabs4Kids (K4K)

Through our collaborative, Assabet Valley, our provider for van transportation changed this summer to K4K. K4k will continue to be the van provider for our in and out of district students requiring van transportation in the upcoming school year. The PPS office provides an individual TRF (transportation request form) detailing individual student needs and logistics to the van company, communicates important information to families and works with families through any challenges experienced as part of the transition. Special education staff provide training to van drivers and monitors for individual student needs, as needed.

Training and orientation for staff

Updates related to special education timeline changes, annual IDEA training, responsibilities related to restraint reporting, and educational stability were shared with fellow administrators at the July 2025 admin retreat.

Presentations and trainings for new staff were presented at the August 2025 new staff orientation regarding a variety of PPS topics including special education, 504, the role of paraprofessionals, mandated reporter responsibilities, use of specialized software and particular licensure requirements.

Safety Care training was coordinated and made available to select new and returning staff in July and August. Ongoing training are on district PD days are being coordinated.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal Special Education Entitlement Grant

The IDEA grants commonly referred to as "240 and 262" grants were released on 8/1/2025.

"The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal Special Education Entitlement Grant provides funds to ensure that eligible students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education that includes special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs in the least restrictive environment. The priorities of IDEA are to:

1. Ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;
2. Ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected;
3. Assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and Federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities;
4. Assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to education children with disabilities."

FY26 Allocations are comparable to FY25 allocations.

- Part B (262) : $10,409
- Part C (240): $312,177
- Total $322,586

Circuit Breaker

The district's Fy25 Circuit Breaker claim was filed in July 2025.

- "Funds disbursed through the Circuit Breaker Program are subject to annual legislative appropriation. When fully funded, the program reimburses districts for 75% of costs exceeding the annual per-student claim threshold."
- The FY25 claim threshold is $52,419 – the reimbursement percentage has not yet been made available
- "…qualified special education tuition & instruction services and for associated transportation to out-of-district programs. Pricing is set by state and other public entities outside of the Circuit Breaker program. Those costs include private program tuition rates, individually authorized student program rates, collaborative tuition rates, in-district service rates and transportation costs."
- Visit the Cost of Services Eligible for Circuit Breaker Claiming page for additional information.