

# Special Education Study

## Mountain Lakes: Lake Drive Program

June, 2022

American Educational Consultants

# Introductions

## Team

**Ms. Faith Racusin: Chief Executive Manager and licensed Speech Pathologist**

**Dr. Keith Kelly**

**Mr. Paul DeAngelo**

**Dr. Jane Dunay**

# It's All About the Kids!





# It's All About the Kids!



# Presentation Overview

- Thank You!
- Purpose
- Methodology
- Commendations
- Recommendations
  - Organizational Leadership
  - Fiscal Stewardship and Operations
  - Educational Impact
  - Program Comparisons and Marketing
- Questions

# Purpose of the Study

- Provide insights and recommendations regarding the sustainability of the Lake Drive Program
  - ***Organizational Leadership***
  - ***Fiscal Stewardship and Operations***
  - ***Educational Impact***
  - ***Program Comparisons and Marketing***
- Scope of work is aligned with the proposal
- Represent the voices we heard
- Offer specific recommendations
- Well, Better, What is Needed

# Data and Information Gathering

- Online research: NJDOE, ML/LD websites, demographics, board meeting video
- Review of documents: financial, enrollment, program, staffing, IEPs
- In-person, Zoom interviews, phone calls
  - 4 administrators including the LD principal
  - 42 certified LD staff
  - 6 classified LD staff
  - 2 certified ML staff not assigned to LD
  - 3 directors of special education from sending districts
  - 4 case managers from sending districts
  - 10 Mountain Lakes residents
  - 5 LD parents
  - 8 LD students
  - 3 emails sent from individual stakeholders
- On-site visits to classrooms

# Lake Drive Commendations

- History of success and support
- Talented and committed faculty and staff - respect one another - love their jobs
- Students first - go the extra mile
- Student/teacher relationships
- Communication with parents
- NJDOE recognition
- Total communication philosophy
- Itinerant, evaluation and audiological services
- Mainstream and self-contained programming
- Range of related services
- Mental health team
- Personalized intake process
- Assistive technologies
- Emergency crisis system
- Willingness to reflect and grow



# Misperceptions

- **AEC**
- **Support from the Administration and Board**
- **Rumor - admin shutting LD down**
- **Drain on MLSD budget**
- **Separate budgets do not exist**
- **Take it out back**

# Organizational Leadership

## Recommendation Themes

- Visioning and strategic planning committee: 3-5 year action plan
- Collaboration between Special Services and Lake Drive
- Collaboration with the district office: budgets, capital needs, staffing, programs, culture, marketing and professional learning
- Data-driven decision making
- Task Force charged with crafting bylaws
- Lake Drive Advisory Board
- Communicate and educate - MLSD and LD budgets
- Lake Drive Handbook: organizational chart, operational guidelines, program descriptions, intake procedures, workplace expectations

# Fiscal Stewardship and Operations

## Recommendation Themes

- Independent financial audit
- Continue building budgets informed by data
- Five year technology plan
- Transportation for after school activities
- Written staffing parameters
  - certified and classified
- Potential cost savings
  - staffing classrooms
  - redundancies in related services
  - attrition planning
  - shared services with DHH

# Fiscal Stewardship and Operations

## Recommendation Themes: Potential Sources of Revenue

- Grant Writer
- Increase itinerant, audiological, newborn screening and speech and language services
- Review billing details for itinerant services
- Expand Ivy Hall Preschool - revenue center
- Auditory/oral program
- Mountain Lakes Education Foundation
- Lake Drive Foundation
- Business, corporate and company partnerships

# Educational Impact

## Recommendation Themes

- Balancing student and program needs
- Preschool
- LD curriculum audit
- Professional learning
- IEPs
- Deaf culture -inclusion
- Student transitions
- Inclusion: students and staff

# Program Comparisons and Marketing

## Recommendation Themes

- Comparisons
  - favorable
- Website
- Social Media
  - increased presence - promoting all aspects of Lake Drive
- Presentations
  - LD Showcase - parents, sending districts, potential clients, ML staff
  - Go to sending districts, potential clients
  - Digital marketing brochures



# Getting Started

## Recommendation Themes

- Support
- Collaboration
- Budget
- Staffing
- Culture
- Professional learning
- Marketing

## Summing It Up

Lake Drive is a terrific program that has had a positive and life changing impact on hundreds of students for years. However, advances in technology, costs, misperceptions, declining enrollment and philosophical differences pose a significant challenge. This study is meant to assist the talented educators, residents and partners in the Mountain Lakes Community to meet the challenges head on. Through collaboration and innovative thinking a reimagining of the next iteration of Lake Drive is possible. It is worth the effort for all those who value what Lake Drive means to so many.

Thank You

Questions