



Special Services: A Department Overview

Kerry DiGiacinto, Director of Special Services

Americans with Disabilities Act vs. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

ADA

A Civil Rights Law

- ❑ 1964-Civil Rights Act
- ❑ 1973-The Rehabilitation Act
- ❑ 1990-Americans with Disabilities Act

IDEA

An Education Act

- ❑ 1954-Brown vs. Bd of Ed
- ❑ 1963-PL 88-164
- ❑ 1975-Education for All Handicapped Children
- ❑ 1990-Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



Accommodations vs. Modifications

ACCOMMODATIONS

- ❑ Supports and services provided to help a student access the general education curriculum and validly demonstrate learning

MODIFICATIONS

- ❑ Individualized changes made to the content and performance expectations for students (Promotes success)



Our Guiding Philosophy

We develop programs that take into consideration the “whole child” by capitalizing on the individualized strengths of our students while providing the appropriate level of support to address their areas of difficulty.



SY 2023-2024 Initiatives

Building strong, collaborative relationships with families to enhance the success of our students:

- ❑ SEPAG Quarterly Meetings
- ❑ Parent Workshops
 - ❑ You know your ABCs & 123s, but What about your IEPs & 504s
 - ❑ Transition to MLHS from RVS
- ❑ Parent Informational Sessions
 - ❑ Navigating the Transition to College for students with special needs
 - ❑ ARC Morris: Project College Program, Habitation Without Walls, Respite Programs, Spring and Summer break programs



SY 2023-2024 Initiatives

Align Special Services Practices with RVS:

- ❑ Placement in our specialized programs
- ❑ Joint Professional Development on the Patterns of Strengths & Weaknesses (PSW)
- ❑ Case management liaison services for rising 9th graders currently in out of district placements (OOD)
- ❑ 8th grade transition activities
- ❑ Parent Presentation on the Transition to MLHS
 - ❑ In district
 - ❑ SEPAG



SY 2023-2024 Initiatives

- ❑ Continuation of training in Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW)
- ❑ Looking at models for a redesign of the master schedule at Wildwood
 - ❑ Grade level meetings
 - ❑ Collaboration with Mr. Higgins
- ❑ Expanding Orton-Gillingham Program
 - ❑ 3 teachers engaged in internship



How we foster the overall health of our schools/community

- ❑ Sitting Child Study Team member(s) on all Intervention & Referral Services Committees and Core Mental Health Teams
- ❑ Targeted observations and consultations by Related Services providers
- ❑ Sponsor “Homework Club” in each school
- ❑ Financially support related services to students with 504 plans
- ❑ Professional Development workshops and Parent Forums
- ❑ Seeking Systemic Change Grant through NJCIE



AEC Report Recommendations

- ❑ Summer/Fall 2022
 - ❑ Reviewed AEC Report
 - ❑ Identified trends/presented to staff
- ❑ Fall 2022 through Spring 2023
 - ❑ Standing meetings/Tours/observations
 - ❑ Review of artifacts
- ❑ Summer 2023
 - ❑ AEC Report Recommendations provided to Superintendent
- ❑ Fall 2023 through Winter 2024
 - ❑ Collaborative project to identify 1 indicator per subtitle to implement





Lake Drive Program

Updates & Progress - March 2024

Based on the Recommendations from
American Educational Consultants - May 2022

Julie Lazeration, Principal of Lake Drive Program

Recommendations: Budgeting & Staffing

- Examine potential redundancy of related services staffing patterns for LD students at WW, BC, & MLHS
- Develop written guidelines for hiring and assigning paraprofessionals
- Obtain information and recommendations from audiologist regarding updates and replacements
- Develop a plan that projects attrition of staff. This should be an ongoing practice



Updates: Budgeting & Staffing

- Reviewed related service providers schedules to find opportunities for shared services (page 30)
- Paraprofessionals roles (page 30)
- New sound booth installed in February 2024, new audiology testing equipment purchased in June 2022 (page 30)
- Collected data on all NJDOE certifications of current Lake Drive Staff (page 29)



Recommendations: Educational Programming

- Reconsider the preschool teacher certification requirements
- Review instructional practices for the purpose of evaluating
- Include Lake Drive students in clubs and activities that occur during the school day



Updates: Educational Programming

- Ivy Hall Preschool, adjusted teacher credentials to meet the needs of MLSD special services. (page 40)
- Director of Guidance, Director of Special Services, Assistant Superintendent, Principals and District Supervisors completing teacher observations (page 41)
- Lake Drive students in all schools are participating in extracurricular activities - next few slides highlight activities at each school. (page 41)



Updates:
Educational Programming (continued)
Student Activities:

Lake Drive School

- Signing Chorus
- Art Class Projects and Contests
- Character Education
- Wingman
- Dance Residency Program

Wildwood Elementary School

- Band
 - Kindness Club
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Updates:
Educational Programming (continued)
Student Activities:

Briarcliff Middle School

- Band
- Environmental Club
- Boys Soccer
- Girls Softball
- Wingman Champions
- School Play
- Homework Club
- Middle School Deaf Math Team



Updates:
Educational Programming (continued)
Student Activities:

Mountain Lakes High School

- Boys' Soccer
- Girls' Volleyball
- Girls' Basketball
- Girls' Softball
- Track and Field
- Wingman Champions
- National Honor Society
- Chess Club
- JrNAD (Junior National Association of the Deaf)
- Deaf Academic Bowl Team



Recommendations: Revenue Sources

- Consider increasing the educational itinerant services program
- Consider increasing itinerant audiological services
- Consider expanding Ivy Hall



Updates: Revenue Sources

- Lake Drive Enrollment continues to increase
- Lake Drive Itinerant Program continues to grow
- Audiology billable services increased (page 30)
- Lake Drive Specialized Evaluation Team continues to thrive (page 30)
- Lake Drive PR Committee attended Deafopia (page 30)
- Consider expanding itinerant services to counties in South Jersey



Recommendations: Professional Learning

- Assess the professional learning needs of all Lake Drive staff
- Design and implement personalized professional learning program for Lake Drive staff
- Implement the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model



Updates: Professional Learning

- Lake Drive staff consistently pursue professional development. (page 41)
 - Professional development that staff have participated in since July 2023
 - A Practical Discussion of Mathematics Assessment for Deaf/HH
 - 4 Simple Ways to Bring the Science of Reading into K-2
 - Beyond the Hearing Aid - The Impact of Hearing Loss in the Classroom & Strategies for Access
 - Clarke Schools: Deaf Plus Addressing the Needs of Students with Hearing Loss & Additional Challenges
 - Clarke Schools: Trading in the One-time-in-service for Consistent Communications with School Teams
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Updates: Professional Learning (continued)

- Explode the App
- Child Abuse in Ethnic Minority & Immigrant Communities
- Ethics for Counselors
- Food for Mood Workshop
- Educational Sign Language Interpreter: Virtual Video Conferences
- Educational Sign Language Interpreter: Mastery of Meaning
- Educational Sign Language Interpreter: Teaching Strategies: Implementation in Classroom Interpreted Discourse
- My Ethics vs Your Culture: Interpreting Ethics in a Multicultural World
- NJDOE - Deaf Student Bill of Rights



Updates: Professional Learning (continued)

- Behavioral Hearing Testing in Infants and Young Children
 - Facilitating Full Time Use of Hearing Devices
 - Virtual Conference Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss
 - Cochlear Nucleus 8 Introduction
 - Handle with Care- Trainer Certification
 - Deirdre's House: Child Abuse Prevention & Recognition
 - Self-Care for Teachers
 - Updates from Advanced Bionics
 - NJ Tiered System of Support
 - Virtual Roundtable for Professionals Serving Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing - Transition Planning
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Updates: Professional Learning (continued)

On January 29, 2024, Lake Drive staff lead the district in PD sessions in all 4 schools:
(page 41)

Wildwood Elementary School

- FM (Frequency Modulated) Training: Deaf/Hard of Hearing Equipment Usage in the Classroom (SPED & LD partnered for this presentation)
- ASL Strategies for Elementary Educators
- Handle with Care: Verbal De-escalation and Restraint Trainings



Updates: Professional Learning (continued)

Briarcliff Middle School

- Deaf Education and ASL Presentation
- Using Planbook.com for Student Centered Speech-Language Therapy Lesson Planning

Mountain Lakes High School

- Survival ASL for the Mainstream Teacher
- Roles of the Lake Drive Program at MLHS
- HS Deaf Ed Department Bedrock Collaborative
- HS Deaf Ed Department Planbook.com Workshop



Updates: Professional Learning(continued)

Lake Drive School

- Lesson Planning for Diverse Learners with the Lake Drive Program
- Zumba for Mental Health and Mindfulness
- ASL Vocabulary with the Core Subjects
- Art Mindfulness
- Using Technology in the Itinerant Sessions
- SPICE for Life 2
- Standardizing the Itinerant Session
- LD Para Training - First Aid, School Safety and Security
- LD para Training - Confidentiality and Other Topics



Recommendations: Deaf Culture

- Include Lake Drive students in mentor programs
- Celebrate students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing by including them in MLSD award recognition programs
- Create a group or club that brings Hearing and Deaf students together



Updates: Deaf Culture

- Lake Drive students are Wingman Champions in Briarcliff and Mountain Lakes High School. (page 41)
 - MLHS ASL students and LD-HS students come to Lake Drive School to read to students for Read Across America (page 41)
 - ASL interpreters at MLHS Fall Drama, MLHS Spring Musical, and BC Spring Play
 - ASL 1, ASL 2, and ASL 3 are World Language options at MLHS
 - Sign Language is taken by all 8th grade students in Briarcliff as an allied rotation.
 - MLHS has a JrNAD, open to all students (page 42)
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Recommendations: Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

- Consider developing an IEP format that can be provided to sending districts for uniformity
- Consider including the annual report with audiogram within the introduction of the body of the IEP to support the placement
- State the specific conditions warranting the need of the 1-1 paraprofessional in each student's IEP



Updates: Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

- All Lake Drive students' IEPs are created by the sending district. (page 42)
 - Lake Drive is accountable to comply with the IEP
 - All IEPs are reviewed by staff annually (page 42)
 - Currently adding IEPs into Genesis for easier access
- Rationale for 1-1 paras are provided to sending district, sending district is financially responsible for the cost. (page 43)



Recommendations: Administrative

- Consider designating a Mountain Lakes School District administrator to oversee Lake Drive website and work with necessary parties to provide timely and updated information
- Eliminate redundancies in information and under which heading the information resides



Updates: Administrative

- Mountain Lakes School District recently updated the website for all the schools (page 47)
 - District Technology Coordinator managed this and continues to oversee updates
- Lake Drive Program is continuing to find ways to enhance the website for ease for the end user (page 47)



Recommendations: Social Media

- Link Lake Drive Facebook account to the Lake Drive website and district website
- Create Twitter account and link it to the Lake Drive and district website



Updates: Social Media

- Lake Drive Program is active on Instagram and Facebook (page 48)
- Lake Drive Instagram and Facebook post updates a few times a week (page 48)
- Lake Drive will continue to grow their presence in social media, as per the District Technology Committee recommendations (page 48)



Recommendations: Presentations

- Considering forming a traveling presentation team that would showcase Lake Drive to current and potential sending districts
- Link to websites
- Send Lake Drive ambassadors to information-sharing meetings



Updates: Presentations

- Lake Drive Program attended Deafopia at The American Dream Mall in Fall 2023
- Lake Drive Program is listed on the NJ Department of Education Website in several areas (page 48)
 - Program and Services for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
 - Regional Deaf Education Centers of Excellence
 - School-Age Programs by County
 - Itinerant Programs/Related Services
 - Consulting Audiologist
 - Evaluators for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



Additional Information:

- Lake Drive Program is currently represented in the following state level committees
 - Regional Deaf Education Centers of Excellence Administrator Committee
 - National Deaf Centers - NJ State Team on Transition Planning for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students
 - Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf Advisory Committee
 - NJDOE - Deaf Education Advisory Council

