

Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper


Dear Parents, Guardians, and Educational Decision-Makers,

As we approach what will be a very busy summer, I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for your continued partnership and support throughout this school year. While some of you will have the celebrations of promotion and graduation in the weeks ahead, many more will be looking forward to a summer of Extended School Year (ESY), Covid Compensatory Services (CCS), and other planned trips and events. The Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) has partnered with multiple organizations and PPS staff to provide a summer of unique experiences, opportunities, and enriching programs to ensure continuity and progress in your child's development. While we anticipate a successful summer, we are looking forward to your feedback as we continue to expand our CCS offerings for the 2024-25 school year.

Thanks again for your ongoing support. Wishing you a safe, happy, and fulfilling summer break!
Warm regards,



Patti Camper
Assistant Superintendent
Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)
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**When you speak,
we listen!**

If you have feedback on this issue of the Newsletter or have suggestions for the future Newsletters, please let us know. Scan or click on the QR code below.

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Parent & Guardian Training Opportunities

Quarterly Update on Training Opportunities

- Join us for an interactive session where we will explore how parents and guardians can play an essential role in shaping their child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Reevaluation (RR). Learn practical strategies for providing valuable input, advocating effectively, and collaborating with other members of the IEP Team to ensure your child receives the support they need to thrive academically and beyond. If you are interested in joining us for *Empowering Parents & Guardians: Collaborating on Your Child’s Learning Journey - Providing Parent Input for the Reevaluation and Individualized Education Plan*, on July 31, 2024, from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM or 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Please register to virtually attend by emailing aganatal@pghschool.org by 7/24/24 for a link to the session.
- Join us for an informational session where we will unravel the journey that led to the evaluation process for your child. In this session, we will explore milestones, concerns, and collaborative efforts that brought us to the evaluation, as well as provide clarity to each step in the process. By the end of our session, you will feel equipped with the knowledge and confidence to navigate this process effectively, ensuring the best outcomes for your child’s education and development. Let’s embark on this journey together! Please join us for *Understanding Your Child’s Journey: Exploring the Evaluation Process Together*, on August 1, 2024, from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM or 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM. Please register to virtually attend by emailing aganatal@pghschool.org by 7/25/24 for a link to the session.

On Demand Assistance: e-Sign Webinar Series

Invite e-Sign	ER e-Sign	IEP e-Sign
NOREP e-Sign	RR e-Sign	

Additional Training Resources:

- **Includi-Con - June 25-27, 2024:** This year’s Includi-Con is designed to provide opportunities for you to **Energizing Engagement for Everyone!** Life in schools and their respective communities has been difficult and more challenging than ever, as the impact of the pandemic for students, families and schools was fully understood and felt. We’ve put together a program and speakers that we believe can help all to remember our “why”, to forge positive pathways for students and ourselves; learn new strategies; and expand our circles of connection with others who embrace inclusive education. And we will also have some fun (prizes will be involved)! **What can I Expect:** 3 half days of valuable information from world-renowned speakers on inclusion, hidden curriculum, social engagement, and emotional intelligence.
Cost: Scholarships are available for families, email achan@includemepa.org for more information.
Where: Virtual **Register here:** <https://thearca.org/includi-con2024registration/>
- **National Autism Conference 2024:** The Autism Conference provides comprehensive, evidence-based information to assist educators, other professionals, and families in developing effective educational programming for all students with autism spectrum disorders. For more information and a link to register for in-person or a virtual option please [Click Here](#).



Did you know that there are over ten different teams within the Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) department? In the last Parent & Guardian Newsletters the Assistive Technology Team and the School Psychologists were spotlighted. In this issue, we will be spotlighting the Transition Services Team.

You Spoke & We Listened: Spotlighting PSE Teams



Transition Services is Transition Planning & So Much More!

Transition planning is a multistep process that guides a youth from high school into adult living after graduation. In Pennsylvania, planning begins at **age 14**, or younger if determined appropriately by the IEP team, and continues through high school as academic instruction and community experiences help clarify and support students' goals.



Post-Secondary Education

Preparing students to pursue their dreams of further education or training.

Employment

Preparing students to be competitively employed or supported through the appropriate continuum of employment services.

Independent Living

Fostering skills for living independently in the community.

Transition Services are Community-Based Work Experiences!

Community-Based Work Experiences: How Do They Benefit Students with Disabilities?

The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 and the subsequent reauthorization in 1997 mandate school districts to provide transition services for students with disabilities to improve post-school outcomes for youth. To help meet the requirements for transition, school districts have developed transition programs that provide **work experiences** for students prior to graduation. These programs are designed to help students meet their graduation requirements and prepare them for life after graduation. More specifically, they prepare students for **post-secondary education or training programs, employment and independent living**. These programs also identify specific goals which may include one or more of the following objectives:

- Obtaining employment in a full or part-time paid position in the community
- Participating in college classes
- Increasing mobility in the community
- Engaging the support of adult service agencies
- Improving social and communication skills
- Improving self-determination skills
- Developing friendships with other people of similar ages
- Developing age-appropriate recreation and leisure activities

Spotlighting: Transition Services (Continued)

Setting high expectations early in life is an important step for youth to develop the skills to succeed in the future. **Community-based work experiences** can help students identify their interests, strengths, skills, and needs related to career development. A hands-on experience in a **real-work setting** includes a wide range of opportunities including job shadowing, mentoring, service learning, volunteering, and paid employment. These experiences during high school can benefit students in a variety of ways including:

- Identification of career interests, skills, and abilities;
- Exposure to job requirements and responsibilities, employer expectations, workplace etiquette, and workplace dynamics;
- Development of critical workplace skills and a solid foundation for good work habits;
- Improvement of post-school outcomes; and
- Selection of appropriate courses of study tied to career goals

Research shows that providing work experiences during high school is one of the best ways to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities in secondary education. Youth who participate in such experiences have the opportunity to receive more individual guidance and support that will prepare them for successful adult employment. Youth with disabilities often face challenges that make it difficult to achieve successful employment as adults.

Effective Transition Practices

Strong secondary transition plans start with effective transition practices. How does the PPS transition team provide experiences to ensure that all young people with disabilities, families, and professionals are empowered to create a successful transition plan? Read on to find out.....

Community-Based Vocational Education (CBVE) – Helps Students Gain Job Skills in the Community

The Community-Based Vocational Education (CBVE) Program provides work experiences at various businesses in the community. The goal of CBVE is to expose students to the world of work by assessing soft skills and practicing job skills in a real-work environment. These experiences increase student performance and independence in the following areas: communication, social skills, following directions, task completion, hygiene, attendance, punctuality, self-advocacy, problem-solving, motivation, community travel, and organization. Students also have the chance to practice and explore a variety of tasks and occupational areas to determine their strongest interests, natural talents, and career goals.

Prior to beginning their work experiences, students participate in “Job Club” to learn about the “world of work” and determine their preferences for the work experience. Students complete occupational interest inventories and community exploration activities. They also practice pre-employment skills such as interviewing, filling out job applications, creating a resume, dressing appropriately for the job and maintaining good personal hygiene.

This year, students had work experiences at the Carnegie Library (Oakland), Shop N Save (Mt. Washington), The Dog Stop (Strip District), The Elizabeth Seton Center (Brookline), Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Tech Center (Southside), Eat N Park (Dormont), PPS/PSE Textbook Warehouse (Northside), Eastminster Church (East End), Senior Center (Mt. Washington) and PPS Board of Education (Oakland). Students participate one day per week for three hours and are supported by a job coach on the worksite. Throughout the school year, students may have the opportunity to participate in more than one vocational experience. Participation in the program is based on individual needs and recommendations are made by the IEP team. For some students, their CBVE experience has led them to paid employment after graduation. This year, **more than 40 students participated** in the program.



Spotlighting: Transition Services (Continued)

Start on Success Graduates “Transition” into Leadership Roles



The **Start on Success (SOS)** program is a three-year secondary transition program within PPS that provides a coordinated, progressive series of career development activities and experiences. While all students participate in daily career-readiness classroom instruction, community-based career exploration activities and a paid internship during their senior year, some success stories come to mind! These young men have graduated, entered promising career paths and continue to remain involved with the SOS program as internship site ‘supervisors’, mentors and motivational leaders for current participants.

Marcus Jones – 2022 Carrick Graduate

Marcus participated in a **paid-work experience** through the **Start On Success (SOS)** program during his senior year in high school where he worked as a student education assistant for **Tech 25**. He moved into a full-time position after he graduated where he is now in charge of inventory, cleaning, warehouse management, and teaching students the basics of DJing and audio production. Additionally, Marcus serves as an SOS internship supervisor, currently supervising four student interns. In his “free” time, Marcus is a DJ with Tech 25 and goes by the name of DJ Marky Mark. He believes his leadership abilities come naturally. Marcus said “When I got the award for ‘25 leaders under 25’, I didn’t know what that meant and it’s definitely something I never thought I would have been part of...I was honored and it’s one thing in my life I will never forget.”



Aiyon Hopson – 2020 Westinghouse Graduate

Aiyon has shown repeatedly that he is a hardworking and dedicated young man! Aiyon participated in the Start on Success program between 2017 -2020. During his senior year, he completed an internship at an indoor bike park called The Wheel Mill. After he graduated, Aiyon continued to work there before moving on to Amazon. While at Amazon, he worked as a delivery driver and was most recently promoted to a driver lead position and has the responsibility of training new employees.

Throughout high school and in employment, Aiyon has shown leadership skills and the desire to make a difference and help others. He has volunteered to speak at various events, including the Pittsburgh Promise Future Readiness Fair, The PA Workforce Development Association – Next Generation Youth Workforce Summit and to SOS students from his alma mater, Westinghouse. Aiyon is an inspiration to all of those he reaches and we know he’s got big plans ahead!



Spotlighting: Transition Services (Continued)

PPS Students Learn Travel Skills



Travel training provides students ages 14 to 21 with disabilities the opportunity to gain the skills to travel independently. A student may need to learn a walking route, or a route using one or multiple pieces of public transportation. This year, many students took advantage of this transition program to help them get where they need to be and what an eventful year it turned out to be!

Not only did Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) recently change their name, formerly Port Authority of Allegheny County, but also has begun several projects to improve the transportation system. With any improvements, there are some temporary inconveniences along the way. The Oakland and Uptown area will soon see dedicated bus lanes allowing for more efficient transportation through these areas and into downtown. Bus rapid transit (BRT) is currently in the construction stage and will soon be able to better serve this highly traveled area. Many of our students have had to learn which buses go downtown and how to navigate their trip.

The Wood Street T Station is also undergoing needed repairs and has recently been closed to trolley traffic. Riders are using rail shuttle buses to get between T stations downtown. These changes have been challenging to many students as regularly used transit buses and trolleys have been rerouted. As PRT repairs and improves the public transit system and pedestrian infrastructure, new options will present themselves for more efficient and safer traveling.

Despite all of these changes, several students continued to learn routes to and from their volunteer and work sites. Some were excited to **increase their independence** by learning to travel from home to school. We are happy to be able to provide these opportunities for students and encourage them to increase independence to their highest potential.

CITY Connections Prepares students for Adult Life



Armonni Coleman began his journey at CITY Connections at the start of the 2021-2022 school year and has been a leader in the program ever since. Armonni participated in travel training during his first year at CITY Connections and was quite a fast learner. He has an extensive knowledge of the Pittsburgh Regional Transit bus system and has proved to be a great role model and guide for his classmates. He “quizzes” his peers on the bus schedule, routes, and proper street crossing techniques. Armonni independently navigates through and around the city of Pittsburgh.

Armonni has **volunteered** at Animal Friends and the Education Partnership throughout his time at CITY Connections. He is extremely hardworking and has great social skills with his classmates and other volunteers.

Spotlighting: Transition Services (Continued)

He takes pride in his work and always puts forth his best effort. Most recently, Armonni has gained paid work experience through the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) at the CCAC Allegheny Campus in the Northside, working with their maintenance/landscaping department for the last two years. His job coach reports that he works hard and gives good effort. Armonni never complains about a task and is always ready for a challenge!



After graduation, Armonni plans on attending the CCAC North indoor/outdoor building maintenance training program. It is a one-year program where he will earn a certificate upon completion. The CITY Connections family is so incredibly proud of all that Armonni has done during his time with us. He has truly taken advantage of every opportunity available and has grown into a wonderful young man. He will be greatly missed at CITY Connections. Congratulations, Armonni!

Conroy Students Learn Food Service Skills

Since February 2023, seven students from Pittsburgh Conroy have worked at Pittsburgh CAPA’s cafeteria. All seven students were welcomed with acceptance and open arms. This hands-on learning experience allowed the students to practice food service skills such as preparing breakfast & lunch items, washing dishes, stocking snacks and serving meals. Being able to work in a nurturing environment has assisted our learners to discern, “What do I want to do after I graduate?” Three students have moved on to CCAC North’s Campus to pursue certificate programs in culinary and environmental services. Another graduate is currently working for PPS Food Service at Allderdice!



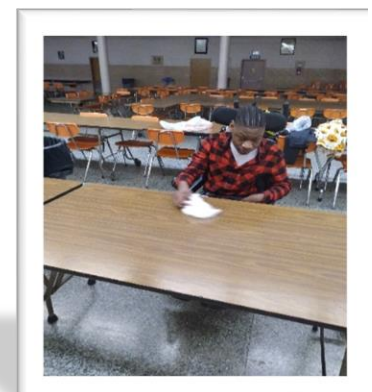
Pittsburgh Conroy’s students and families are grateful to PPS Food Service Department for offering this learning opportunity!

Spotlighting: Transition Services (Continued)

Pioneer's Path to Success

Pioneer's **Path to Success** Program is a transition program for high school-age students attending Pioneer Education Center. Pioneer's goal is to have students explore various volunteer or community-based instruction sites to enable students to practice and **learn job skills** to prepare them for their post-graduation goals.

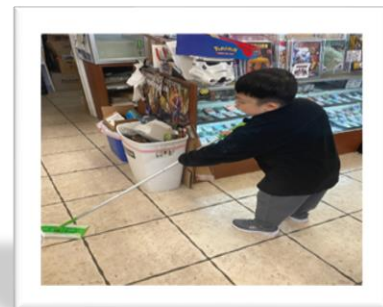
Stacking boxes and wiping tables at Saint Catherine's Church



Sorting and bagging items at Global Links



Cleaning floors at Geek Adrome



Students also volunteer at sites such as Goodwill, Global Links, Geek Adrome, Brookline Library and Meals on Wheels. Our students complete tasks such as sweeping/mopping, sorting clothing, scanning books, and wiping tables. While completing these tasks, staff provide accommodations, as needed, and assess the students' work skills in different work environments.

Keeping You Up to Date:

The members of the Transition Team would like to share the following information & updates with you:



Voter Registration

- Is your child registered to vote?
- Will your child be **at least 18 years of age** or older prior to the next election on **November 5th, 2024**? If so, they are eligible to vote!
- Receiving voter registration information and assistance is an important element of preparing for adult life. The transition section of the IEP must include information regarding voter registration and what assistance, if requested, will be provided by school personnel. Detailed information can be found on the [Voter Registration Homepage](#).



If your child is eligible to vote and would like to register, they may do so online at [Voter Registration Application \(pa.gov\)](#), by mail or at a number of government agencies, including PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Photo License and Driver's License Centers. *If assistance is needed, students/families are encouraged to reach out to the high school Transition Counselor.*

The **deadline to register** for the November 5th election is **October 21st, 2024**.

Additional questions? Please call **1.877.VOTESPA (1.877.868.3772)**

Want More Information about Secondary Transition? Check Out These Resources!

Pennsylvania Secondary Transition

[PA Transition Resources: Take a step ahead in Secondary Transition \(pasecondarytransition.com\)](#)

[RESOURCES - PA Secondary Transition](#)

National Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C)

NTACT:C provides information, tools, and supports to assist multiple stakeholders to provide effective services and instruction for students and out-of-school youth with disabilities. Check out their [Training Resource Library](#).

New to Transition? Check out [Transition 101!](#)

Save the Date:

2024 PA Community of Practice Transition Conference

July 31st - August 1st, 2024

Virtual and In-Person Opportunities Available
Penn Stater Conference Center - 215 Innovation Boulevard State College, PA 16803

More information available on the [conference website!](#)

Free Training Opportunities for Parents

Community Living And Support Services (CLASS)
Benefits Counseling

June 11th, 2024, 6:30 pm (webinar)

June 25th, 2024, 10 am - 2 pm at CLASS (Lunch provided)

[Beyond Skills Seminar Flyer](#)
[Breaking Barriers: The Employment Journey | Eventbrite](#)

PA Secondary Transition Events Calendar

Are you looking for more transition events across Pennsylvania?

Check out the [events calendar](#) to stay up to date on all events related to secondary transition!

For more information on transition services or programs within the Pittsburgh Public Schools, contact:

Crystal Evans
Transition Coordinator
(412) 529-3143
cevan1@pghschools.org

In Case You Missed It:

The Arc of PA's Include Me Connection Club (IMCC)!

The Include Me Connection Club (IMCC) aims to create meaningful and authentic connections among diverse student populations across the state of Pennsylvania.



Designed for 3rd - 5th graders of diverse abilities and interests.

- These virtual club meetings will offer creative opportunities for students to connect through games, activities, and student-driven discussions. Each club meeting will be facilitated by our engaging and energetic staff. **Your student is welcome here!**
- Club meetings occur the last two Tuesdays of each month from 5:30-6:30 pm. Themes and topics change monthly and are curated to meet kids where they are. Registration for the club is always open.

If interested in joining the club, <https://thearcpa.org/includeme/include-me-connection-club/>

For more information: contact: Nick Webster at nwebster@includemepa.org



Looking to the Future:

2024-2025 School Year Parent & Guardian Newsletters will be available at the beginning of the following months, so please check out the PSE webpage!

September 2024
January 2025
March 2025
June 2025

You Make It Happen!

& We Need to Hear from You for Next School Year's Parent Training Opportunities:

Please take a few moments to scan the QR code or click on the QR code to offer your feedback on the different parent & guardian training sessions that you would like us to offer in the 2024/2025 school year.

General topics for these sessions include:

- Behavior
- Response to Intervention
- Inclusive Practices
- Transition
- Assistive Technology
- Autism
- Interagency

