

Parent & Guardian Newsletter

News You Can Use

Welcome Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

The PSE Newsletter is Back!

Dear Parents, Guardians, Teachers, and Friends of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE),

We are excited to bring back the quarterly PSE Newsletter this year. It is our hope that this is more than just words on paper; it's a reflection of our shared commitment to enhancing the education of the students we serve.

In this newsletter, you will find not only information but also resources in hopes of fostering better communication within our PSE department. Together, we will explore updates in policy and best practices in the field. We will also share tips for supporting your child's education and updates about upcoming events and training opportunities.

We hope you will find this newsletter helpful, as our goal is to create a useful tool. Your feedback, questions, and contributions are invaluable in making this a meaningful and enriching resource for all. If you have suggestions for future Newsletters, please feel free to contact any program officer, PSE support staff, or myself.

Warm regards,
Patti Camper
Assistant Superintendent
Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)
Pcamper1@pghschools.org



PSE Vision

PSE will support students, families, communities, school staff, and related service providers in maximizing the individual educational experiences and outcomes in the Least Restrictive Environment.

PSE Mission

PSE will hold ourselves accountable to support school staff in upholding compliance with IDEA and Chapter 14 by collaborating, evaluating and following the systems, protocols, and procedures designed to ensure individual educational plans (IEP) are implemented with fidelity.

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Parent Training Opportunities

Quarterly Update on Parent Training Opportunities

- Do you have questions about the Special Education Evaluation and /or Reevaluation process? If you do, please plan to attend, “*What Parents Need to Know About the Special Education Evaluation and Reevaluation Process.*” There will be two sessions offered via Teams meeting on December 5, 2023, at 11:00 A.M. -12:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. Deadline to register is Thursday 11/28. Please reach out to Mindy Sturgess to register at msturgess1@pghschools.org.
- High Expectations for Students with Low Incidence Disabilities - HELIX Conference, is an annual statewide conference to celebrate high expectations for students with

low-incidence disabilities and to support school staff and families who are working hard to make those expectations a reality in our current school environments. In-person and virtual options are available. The conference is November 15-17th. Please [click here](#) for more information.

- Be sure to check out the PEAL Center monthly calendar for events by [clicking here](#). The PEAL Center is an organization of parents of children with disabilities reaching out to assist other parents and professionals. The PEAL Center provides workshops, training, and information about early intervention, special education, and inclusive education to the western and central regions of Pennsylvania. Parent advisors assist families with information about the special education process and problem-solving strategies.



Looking to the Future

In the future months, we plan to have an additional live Teams session, *Understanding Your Child’s Individualized Education Program*. In addition, we are working on the creation of a video and resource section on the PPS website to provide on-demand access to families. Please check in the next quarterly newsletter for more information.

Document Resources:

- [Parents' Rights: Understanding the Procedural Safeguards Notice](#)



- [Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education for School-Age Children](#) (Please note this will be updated in January 2024)



- [Understanding the Language of Special Education: A Glossary for Families and Educators](#)



Interested in more related resources?

[Click Here](#)

Editors Top 3 Websites to Check Out:

1. [Council for Exceptional Children](#)

The Council for Exceptional Children is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of children with disabilities. By advocating for successful governmental policies, setting standards for professionals in the education industry, and providing professional development seminars, the organization helps teachers, administrators, parents, related services and other educational support staff to best support and educate the children with special needs with whom they work.

2. [Parent to Parent USA](#)

Parent to Parent USA is a group that matches each parent with a fellow parent who has a child with the same special healthcare need, disability or mental health concern, allowing each parent or family to have a contact for sharing information, receiving support and creating new friendships.

3. [Federation for Children With Special Needs](#)

Federation for Children with Special Needs is a national organization that provides information, support and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners and their communities. By allowing these families to more fully participate in community life, children with special needs are able to grow to their full potential. The Federation promotes the active and informed participation of parents of children with special needs in shaping and influencing public policies that affect their families. The peer support network the group provides allows for families to meet with those who can relate and understand.

Make sure to check out the next newsletter for additional website information.

Age of Eligibility:

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has implemented a policy change to better serve students who receive special education services. This change:

- Impacts all students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Ensures students can access Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as they are entitled under federal law; and
- Builds on the Commonwealth's commitment to ensure that all learners have access to high-quality education.

Policy Change

- No later than September 5, 2023, all students entitled to FAPE and all the rights and procedural safeguards under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Chapter 14 of Title 22

of the Pennsylvania Code may remain enrolled in public school until they turn 22 years of age.

- This includes students who turned 21 and exited during or after the 2022-2023 school year.

Information Worth Repeating:

We understand that it can be challenging to keep up with the many forms and documents that require signatures throughout the school year. With our e-SignPA system, we are able to streamline the process and save you time.

Please make sure to take time to [click here](#) for access to the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Special Education, Parent Resources page. If you scroll down, you will find a plethora of "Parental Directions" for a variety of forms.

Keeping You Up to Date:

The New Prior Written Notice Form (PWN)

It is essential for parents and guardians to stay informed and knowledgeable about changes in special education laws, procedures, and forms, such as the new Prior Written Notice (PWN) form. The Prior Written Notice is a new state required document that must be sent before any paperwork commences on any RR initiated by the school. It informs the parent or guardian of the pending reevaluation and their rights.

A downloadable form is accessible by [clicking here](#), and a short webinar is accessible by [clicking here](#).

PSE Family Brochure

Hot off the presses is the new edition of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities brochure. In it you will find our Mission and Vision, as well as a list of our Program Officers by school buildings and what their role is in supporting your child. Please [Click Here](#) for a PDF version of the brochure.



Additional Events:



Did You Know:

- **November is Early Childhood Mental Awareness Month** and throughout the month, organizations such as American Behavioral Clinics, celebrate the importance mental health plays in childhood development. You can check out more information about this initiative by accessing their website by clicking on the icon.
- In light of November being Early Childhood Mental Awareness Month, below are reading suggestions from **Dr. Bresnahan, Lead Psychologist & Program Officer for Psychology**.
 - ✓ *No More Tantrums*, by Maria van Lieshout
 - ✓ *Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents*, by Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons LICSW
 - ✓ *What to Do When You Worry Too Much*, by Dawn Huebner and Bonnie Matthews
 - ✓ *An Early Start for Your Child with Autism*, by Sally J. Rogers

