

SOUTH ORANGE MAPLEWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT
Department of Special Services

September 3, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is difficult to believe how quickly the opening of the new school year came upon us. We have been quite busy getting ready for the upcoming school year, in partnership with you, teachers, administrators, and all of our special services staff. I am pleased to share some of our accomplishments:

1. **Leadership Team** - I am thrilled to announce the team of administrators who will lead the important work on behalf of our students:
 - Leroy Johnson III, Supervisor of Pre-K Education and Related Services
 - Karen Thomany, Supervisor of Special Education K-8
 - Susan Ellis, Supervisor of Special Education K-8
 - Gerri Colon, Supervisor of Special Education 9-12
2. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)** - Along with the new leadership structure, a critical building block is the design and implementation of SOPs; which aim to promote efficiency, uniformity of performance and quality of services for our students and all staff.
3. **Extended School Year Program (ESY)** - I extend my gratitude to all the staff involved in the planning and execution of ESY. A focused and fun program was led by Ms. Tivoli Hunt and Ryann Varney. This collaborative effort led to the creation of a framework that can be replicated with minimal effort. This is an example of the Department's goal to build capacity for improvement.
4. **NEW IEP System** - You will be pleased to learn that our commitment to establishing a more efficient and effective approach to developing and evaluating the implementation of required Individual Education Programs (IEP), we will be launching a new IEP system. We look forward to introducing the new system to you on TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2019, 7:00PM-8:30PM at Columbia High School Auditorium.
5. **Teacher Leaders** - In light of the expansive program options the District makes available to students based on their academic and social needs, the professional development of classroom teachers is paramount. To this end, the Department has built capacity that will transcend any changes in leadership; therefore, the talent and expertise of our teachers is being recognized through the establishment of the *Special Education Teacher Leader* stipend position at each level. Their active engagement will foster a job-embedded and collaborative professional learning environment that is responsive to the varied needs of Grades K-12 special education teachers, with the ultimate goal of improving student learning.
6. **Communication with Parents** - We are committed to establishing a communication system that allows for ongoing articulation with you. A monthly update will be prepared and shared with you electronically.

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7. **Case Managers** – I am pleased to share that case management assignments will be vetted by members of the child study team upon their return to work on September 3, 2019. We recognize that the assignment of case managers prior to the opening of the school year can be challenging. If you have any questions, please reach out to any of the members of the child study team assigned to your child's school.

Our child study team members will be reaching out to you to introduce themselves as your child's case manager. Throughout the school year, please reach out to your child's case manager to address any questions that you may have regarding the implementation of your child's IEP. Our supervisors will be meeting with our child study team members on a weekly basis to ascertain progress and our responsiveness to the needs of our students.

8. **Related Services** – A concerted effort has been made to developing schedules for speech and language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy and/or counseling services. Related Services will start on Monday, September 16, 2019.
9. **Paraprofessionals** – With the input of school administrators and child study team members, paraprofessionals continue to support learning in the special education and general education setting. Time for articulation with teachers and their participation in staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, Back-to-School Night, professional development, among others is expected.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with ESS, paraprofessional services provider. ESS Coordinator, Tom Bashore, participated in two meetings held this summer. Also, ESS hired an on-site coordinator of paraprofessionals. Andrea Dykes is a former paraprofessional who spent several years at South Mountain Elementary. She works out of our office and will be visiting schools on a regular basis.

10. **Special Education 2019 Back-to-School Night** – The traditional event is being planned to allow for the interaction between parents and members of the child study team.

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Time: 7:00pm – 8:30pm

Location: Columbia High School Auditorium

We look forward to working with you throughout the school new school year. Below you will find contact information for key staff in our Department.

Sincerely,

Laura C. Morana

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Special Services

Cc: School Administrators

Child Study Team and Related Services Providers

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Department of Special Services

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