

## Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

Welcome Back to a New School Year!

Welcome back to another exciting year! We hope your summer was filled with relaxation and fun. As we begin this new school year, we're excited about all the learning that took place this summer through our Extended School Year programs and the many Covid Compensatory Services partnerships. We're already busy at work planning for next summer and hope to have information by January 2025 so you can plan your summer programming in advance!

In the meantime, everyone at PSE is ready to support your child's unique strengths and needs, fostering an inclusive and nurturing environment where every student can thrive. We look forward to working together to ensure that this year is filled with meaningful progress and learning experiences.

Thank you for being an essential part of our community. Let's make this school year our best one yet!

Warm regards,

**Patti Camper**  
Assistant Superintendent  
Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)  
[Pcamper1@pghschools.org](mailto:Pcamper1@pghschools.org)



**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

### Exploring Universal Designs for Learning (UDLs) with the Assistive Technology Department

- Does your child have an IEP or a 504 and struggle with different aspects of reading writing, or organization? If yes, please join us for a session to discover how the AT department can help, who we are, and what the AT process entails here in PPS. Part of this session will also be devoted to reviewing different Universal Designs for Learning, (UDLs), including Read & Write and OrbitNote, Microsoft OneNote, and Apple Accessibility. Join us to discover how features in these programs, accessible to all learners in PPS, can help a struggling student to succeed.

**Date & Time:** 10/8/24 from 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

\*Registration will close on 10/1/24

\*If you cannot attend this session, it will be offered again in February.

### Understanding Your Child's Journey: Exploring the Evaluation Process Together

- 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!

**Date & Time:** 11/7/24 from 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

\*Registration will close on 10/31/24

\*If you cannot attend this session, it will be offered again in March.

### Empowering Parents & Guardians: Collaborating on Your Child's Learning Journey - Providing Parent Input for the Reevaluation & Individualized Education Plan

- 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.

**Date & Time:** 10/17/24 from 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

\*Registration will close on 10/10/24

\*If you cannot attend this session, it will be offered again in April.

**If you are interested in attending any of the events listed here, please register by clicking on this [link](#) or scanning the QR code below prior to the end of registration day**



## Did You Know that September is Recognized as Deaf Awareness Month?

Deaf Awareness Month is a time dedicated to raising awareness about the experiences, culture, and rights of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

- Deaf Awareness Month originated from the efforts of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). It commemorates the establishment of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in the United States in 1880 and emphasizes the importance of recognizing Deaf culture and the contributions of Deaf individuals throughout history.
- The month aims to educate the general public about the challenges faced by Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, including communication barriers, accessibility issues, and social stigma.
- Deaf Awareness Month highlights the rich culture and community of Deaf individuals, including the use of sign language as a primary mode of communication. It emphasizes the value of Deaf culture with its own languages, art, and traditions. This month serves as a platform for advocating for the rights of Deaf individuals, including equal access to education, employment, public services, and communication.



Picture from: *Success for Children with Hearing Loss.*

Observing Deaf Awareness Month helps foster a more inclusive society that recognizes and celebrates diversity in communication and culture.

### Additional Resources for Deaf Awareness Month

- [National Deaf Center](#)  
On Postsecondary Outcomes: Focuses on the advancement of postsecondary outcomes for deaf individuals. Center resources are evidence based, data driven, and aligned with stakeholder needs.
- [Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\) - Pennsylvania Chapter](#)  
This organization works to advocate for the rights of people with hearing loss and provides education, support, and resources across the state.

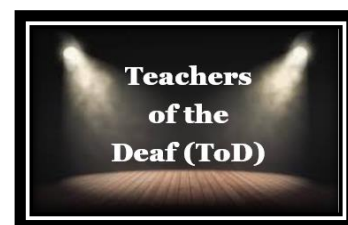
## You Spoke, We Listened: Spotlighting PSE Teams

Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) play a vital role in the education and development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Their expertise and specialized training equip them to address the unique needs of students in various educational settings.

In Pittsburgh Public Schools, we currently have four teachers of the deaf. Specific ways in which they support our students include:

- Self- advocacy as it relates to their hearing impairment
- Academic support and teacher consult
- Creation of a Communication Plan to ensure access to the curriculum

Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) are essential advocates and educators who provide specialist instruction and support to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Their work not only enhances academic achievement but also fosters personal growth and social interaction, making significant contributions to the overall well-being of their students. Their roles are invaluable in promoting equity, inclusion, and understanding within the broader educational landscape.



## Summer Highlights: Celebrating Our Extended School Year (ESY) Adventures!

### Elementary ESY 2024

This past July, students in grades K-5 had fun while learning at their Extended School Year program. The program was held at West Liberty Elementary and the theme for the summer was "Summer Olympics". In addition to maintaining their IEP goals, the students participated in Olympic theme activities throughout the three weeks. The program culminated with their very own Special Olympics on the last day of ESY hosted by Three Rivers Region Special Olympics PA. The students were also treated to a visit from the Kona Ice truck after participating in their Olympic events!



The elementary students also enjoyed visits from several community partners including Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Animal Friends, Alcosan, Play Notes Music Therapy and a Book celebration from Reading is FUNDamental!

This year, all of the students were able to travel to the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History to explore the dinosaur exhibit. Some of the upper elementary students participated in cooking activities, social skills lessons, recreation activities, and community outings.



### Secondary ESY Program Overview

The students enrolled in the Secondary Extended School Year (ESY) program participated in a comprehensive curriculum that included Academics, Activities of Daily Living, Vocational Training, Community-Based Instruction, and Social/Leisure Skills development.

Students aged 14 and older had the opportunity to engage in real-world experiences by visiting job sites at various organizations, including Global Links, Meals on Wheels, Goodwill, the Senton Center Day Care, and local gardening projects. These placements offered valuable vocational training and practical skills application.

To conclude the program, we hosted a celebratory event featuring Kona Ice and a variety of enjoyable activities, including two competitive kickball games. The students expressed great enthusiasm for the diverse range of activities and classes offered.



## Keeping You Up to Date: Did Know the PSE Family Has Expanded?

**Welcome, Dawn Miller**

We're excited to announce that Dawn Miller has joined our PSE team as a Consultant for Assistive Technology. Though she is new to the PSE team, her deep-rooted connection with Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) spans nearly three decades, making her a familiar and respected figure within the district.

Dawn's educational journey with PPS began 28 years ago, when she took on the role of a kindergarten teacher. Notably, her first classroom experience at PPS was at Carmalt Elementary, where she pioneered the district's first fully inclusive kindergarten. This foundational experience ignited her passion for inclusive education and inspired her to further her academic credentials.

A proud graduate of Pittsburgh's own Carrick High School, Dawn has continually strived for excellence in her teaching career. She pursued a master's degree in special education from Duquesne University, driven by her commitment to creating supportive learning environments for all students. As her career progressed, Dawn also earned a master's degree in Instructional Technology from the same institution, allowing her to integrate innovative technological solutions into her teaching.

Throughout her career, Dawn has worked with students across various grade levels and subjects, leveraging her diverse certifications to enhance educational experiences. She has not only contributed to Carmalt's magnet program but has also expanded her expertise by becoming certified in English as a Second Language (ESL). She is currently certified in Elementary Education, Special Education, Instructional Technology and English as a second Language.

In addition to her classroom responsibilities, Dawn has undertaken numerous roles that reflect her leadership and dedication to the educational community. She has served as a Reading First reading coach, student-teacher liaison, assessment coordinator, technology liaison, and book fair chairperson. These roles have allowed her to impact the lives of many students and educators beyond her immediate classroom.

When she isn't busy working with students or colleagues, Dawn enjoys a fulfilling personal life. She has been happily married to her high school sweetheart, Don, for over 31 years. They are proud parents of two grown boys, Zachary (29) and Ryan (24), and are looking forward to welcoming soon-to-be daughter-in-law Kristen into their family. Adding to the warmth of her family life are her two beloved golden retrievers, affectionately referred to by her students as her "daughters."

As Dawn steps into her role as a Consultant for Assistive Technology, her extensive experience and understanding of the diverse needs of students will undoubtedly contribute to the ongoing success of our team. We look forward to her innovative ideas and the positive impact she will have on the educational landscape within our district.

**We are excited to welcome her to the team!**



### PSE Family Brochure

Hot off the press 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 Resources:

### The Arc of PA's Include Me – Parent Information Sessions:

Learn about steps to take after your student turns 14 and how to be engaged in their education and transition plans as a parent.

**Session 1:** What is a Supports Coordinator? How do I get one?

9/23 6:00-6:45 PM or 9/24 12:00-12:45 PM

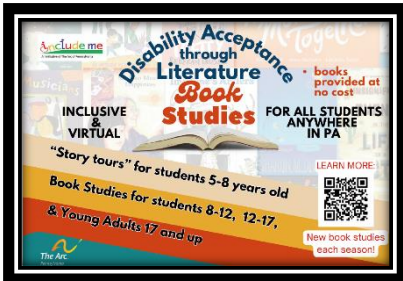
**Session 2:** Why should I work with OVR? What services do they provide for transition-aged students?

10/21 6:00-6:45 PM or 10/22 12:00-12:45 PM

**Session 3:** Why is networking important for my teen's future career? How do social connections increase opportunities?

11/18 6:00-6:45 PM or 11/19 12:00-12:45 PM

If you are interested in attending any of the sessions above, contact Include Me by calling 717-234-2621 or visiting their website at [www.thearca.org](http://www.thearca.org)



### The Arc of PA's Include Me program is excited to present "Disability Acceptance through Literature"

"Disability Acceptance through Literature" is a virtual book study for students. Books selected by our facilitators provide opportunities to learn about the many aspects of disability through the perspective of school-age protagonists. Discussions center on understanding, acceptance, presuming competence, and friendship. Values like compassion, honesty, authenticity, and diversity steer the ship, and we love it when conversations are led by students' interests.

These book studies are an innovative way to provide students interested in reading with a structured opportunity to connect with other students across Pennsylvania. We strive to make the book studies accessible, with:

- audio recordings of each chapter,
- vocabulary resources,
- engaging visual content for discussions, and,
- by providing copies of the book to families as the book studies gear up.

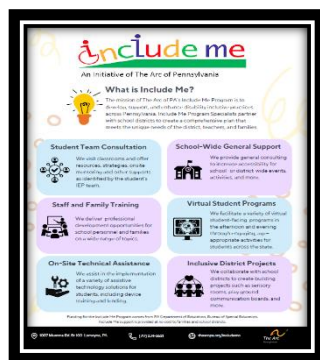
These four or eight-week book studies make room for silliness and curiosity, and we're proud of the stigma-busting power of the program (and that of the students themselves!). Include Me connects each book study and accompanying lessons to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

For more information, contact: [cmorrison@includemepa.org](mailto:cmorrison@includemepa.org) or [jmacsisak@includemepa.org](mailto:jmacsisak@includemepa.org)

Registration for our Winter Sessions are open on our website: <https://thearca.org/includeme/bookstudy/>

### Additional Offerings from Include Me

\* Click on the image for a full-view document

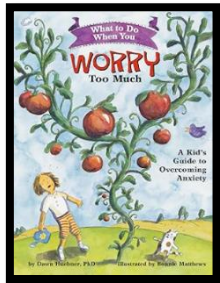
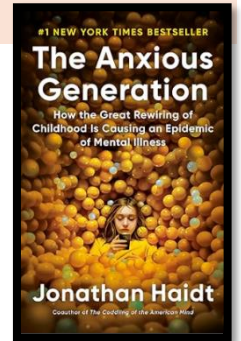


## Additional Resources (Continued):



### Tips from Dr. Bresnahan & School Psychologists:

This fall our students will be navigating their learning amidst a national election and ongoing world conflicts. Many may also be navigating economic insecurity and housing instability. In a setting of massive social connection, these events can cause further increased anxiety for many students already suffering from anxious conditions. A new book, *The Anxious Generation*, helps explain how social media and the virtual world are impacting this, with steps for parents to help mitigate anxiety.



For younger children struggling with many worries, parents may consider the *What To Do When You Worry Too Much* which provides a great plan for working together with your child in reducing worries.

Teens may be interested in finding tips more online. Dr. Becky Kennedy has been publishing strategies for parents and kids for several years. Consider her <https://www.youtube.com/@goodinside> channel on You Tube as a good start.



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

January 2025  
March 2025  
June 2025