

Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

Dear Parents & Guardians,

As we close out another incredible school year, I want to take a moment to celebrate the growth, resilience, and achievements of our students, families, and staff. The 2024–2025 school year has been filled with powerful moments of learning, new opportunities, and collective growth for our students and staff across the Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE).

In this edition, you'll find updates on upcoming summer services, training opportunities for families, and resources to keep you connected and informed. You'll also see highlights from across our schools—showcasing the incredible efforts of our students, educators, and community partners.

Our work is grounded in the belief that every student deserves the tools and support to thrive. Thank you for being an essential part of that mission. As summer approaches, we invite you to explore the trainings and resources in this issue—whether you're looking into Extended School Year services, CITY Connections, or transition supports. We're here to partner with you every step of the way and look forward to continuing this important work together.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Here's to a safe, restorative, and joyful summer!

Warmly,

Patti Camper

Assistant Superintendent

Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)

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
to give us feedback.**



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Parent & Guardian Training Opportunities

Quarterly Update on Training Opportunities

How Can the Office of Developmental Supports Assist?

This session is provided by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Office of Developmental Supports (ODS). Does your student have an Intellectual Disability, Autism, Developmental Disability (prior to age 9) or Medically Complex Condition (prior to age 22) diagnosis? Are you interested in connection to Supports Coordination (SC/case management)? Join us to learn more. Already registered and working with an SC? We'll address other supports and services. Receive information about resources in the community too. Can't make this session? Watch for another this fall.

Date & Time: August 19, 2025, from 1:00 PM - 2:00PM

*Registration will close on 8/17/25

[Register now](#)

Creating Individualized Transitions for Youth – CITY Connections



Have you ever heard about CITY Connections? Possibly you have but not sure what it was, who it is for, or the benefits of Pittsburgh Public CITY Connections. If you are interested in learning more about CITY Connections from the Program Coordinator, Lindsay Del Conte.

Date & Time: July 16, 2025, from 10:00 AM - 11:00AM *Registration will close on 7/14/25.

[Register now](#)

If you are interested in more information prior to the session, please click on the CITY Connection brochure.



Supporting Calm: How We Help Students Through Challenging Moments

Join us for an informative session where we'll share how our district supports students during times of emotional or behavioral distress. Learn about the proactive, relationship-based strategies staff use to create a safe and supportive environment for all students. We'll discuss how we recognize early signs of escalation, prioritize de-escalation techniques that are respectful and trauma-informed, and ensure safety through compassionate and non-restrictive approaches. This session will also offer guidance on how families can reinforce these strategies at home and collaborate with school teams to support student success.

Date & Time: July 1, 2025, from 6:00 PM - 7:00PM

[Register now](#)

*Registration will close on 6/27/25

Save the Date
Includi-Con
2025

June 24-26, 2025

*Registration is open on our website, thearcpa.org

[Click Here](#)

[SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES Click Here](#)

Additional SUMMER EVENTS

June

July/August

Additional Resources



IMCC presents:

Looking for an inclusive virtual Summer Camp? Join CAMP Include Me Connection Club (IMCC)! We do games, activities, and art projects! Last year we explored Man Vs Sasquatch, held a Color Wars battle and much, much more! Programs occur virtually once a week on Tuesday evenings for six weeks from 5:30-6:30pm.

If interested in joining the club, [SIGN UP HERE](#)

For more information: Contact Nick Webster,
nwebster@includemepa.org

Want to stay up to date on the Include Me Program? Click [here to subscribe to our IM News and Tools newsletter!](#)

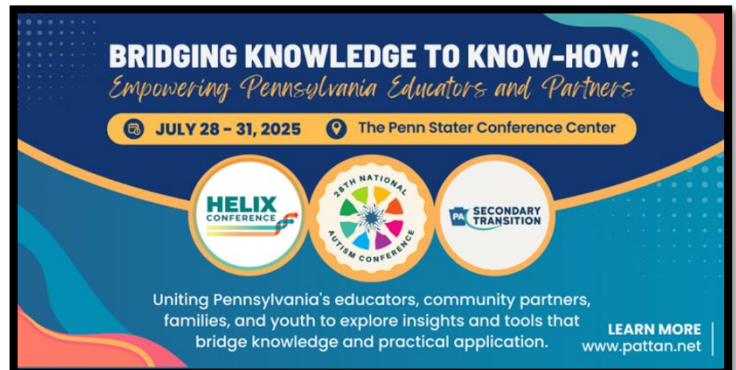
Bridging Knowledge to Know-How: Empowering Pennsylvania Educators and Partners July 28-31, 2025

Uniting Pennsylvania's educators, community partners, families, and youth to explore insights and tools that bridge knowledge and practical application.

- This conference will bring together Pennsylvania's educators, community partners, families, and youth to explore the latest insights, strategies, and tools that bridge the gap between knowledge and practical application.
- Sessions will have a specific focus on autism, sensory disabilities, secondary transition, and students with complex instructional needs.
- Participants will gain tangible strategies to enhance teaching practices, drive student success, and adapt to the evolving demands of today's classrooms.

Location: The Penn Stater Conference Center State College, PA

*In-person and Virtual options available



Scholarship Opportunities

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education (BSE) is excited to announce scholarship opportunities for Pennsylvania residents to attend the Bridging Knowledge to Know-How Conference, July 28-31, State College, PA. BSE is proud to partner with Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) and the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to provide assistance to eligible applicants to attend this new, unique event, with a specific focus on autism, sensory disabilities, secondary transition, and students with complex instructional needs.

Applications will be accepted until the end of day, June 15, 2025.

Scholarships are limited. Don't delay, apply today!

[Click Here
For Information](#)

Keeping You Up to Date:

A Message from Dr. Maria Paul:

Summer Covid Compensatory Services (CCS) 2025

- ✓ PPS continues to offer CCS opportunities for in-district, out-of-district, and graduate students owed CCS hours.
- ✓ A summer flyer was sent home with current students. This flyer was emailed and mailed to out-of-district and graduate families.
- ✓ Please reach out to Dr. Maria Paul if you have not received the flyer and are interested in summer opportunities.

Dr. Maria Paul, mpaul1@pghschools.org

Extended School Year (ESY) 2025

Dates & Time:

- ESY for the 24-25 school year will be held July 7th-25th. The hours are 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM.

Locations:

- ESY will be held at West Liberty and South Brook for our regional and learning support students.
- OCA will host ESY at King.
- Our center-based schools will hold ESY at their school locations.

More detailed information regarding transportation and teacher assignments will be shared with families closer to the start of ESY. PSE students are required to have an ESY determination meeting each school year. Please reach out to your child's assigned PSE teacher if you have any questions about their determination.



Did Know the PSE Family Has Expanded?

Welcome, Jean Marie Gent!



We are excited to announce that Jean Marie Gent has joined our PSE family as a Program Officer. In this role, she will focus on special education programming, IDEA compliance, and family engagement, ensuring that students and staff receive the support and resources they need. She will be servicing Fulton, Liberty, Linden, Mifflin K-8, Obama, and Phillips.

She started teaching at Penn Hills School District in 2003 as a learning support teacher. The majority of her teaching years she taught in the emotional support classroom at Penn Hills High School. For the last four years she was the Special Education Coordinator for the Penn Hills district.

Outside of work she loves spending time with her husband Paul, daughter Grace (20) and son Mason (19). She loves the outdoors, the beach and reading and also has many nieces and nephews that are a big part of her life.

We look forward to welcoming Jean Marie! She is excited to join the PPS team and begin a new chapter in her professional career.

Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services

In the June edition of the 2024 Parent & Guardian newsletter we Spotlighted Transition Services. If you missed the issue, please [click here](#) to review it. Due to this, we decided that in the final issue of the 2024-2025 Parent & Guardian Newsletter we would spotlight the fabulous work the students have done throughout this school year.

YEAR IN REVIEW

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.

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



Brother Andres



Library



Meals on Wheels



Global Links



Goodwill

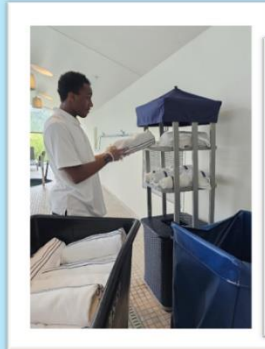


Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)

PITTSBURGH CONROY: Community-Based Vocational Training (CBVT)

Pittsburgh Conroy's Community Based Vocational Training (CBVT) Program was started in September of 2001. Since that time between 35-40 students per school year have trained at various businesses and organizations throughout the Pittsburgh region. Currently, our students are training at Light of Life Donation Center, Eat N Park, Pittsburgh CAPA Food Service, Hamilton Presbyterian Church, Happy Days Dessert Factory, Thriftique, Wyndham Grand Hotel, Northland Library, UPMC Mercy Hospital, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and Kuhn's Supermarket.

The primary goal of CBVT is to provide hands on vocational learning experiences for our amazing students. Weekly training sessions allow our students to gain a better understanding of their vocational strengths and weaknesses. Guidance and support are provided by Conroy Job Coaches. Staff work cooperatively with our young adult students to ensure success. Several of our graduates this year are moving onto employment and additional training at CCAC North.



Community-Based Vocational Education (CBVE)

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.

(Continued on the next page)

Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)

Participation in the program is based on individual needs and recommendations are made by the IEP team. For some students, their CBVE experience lead them to paid employment after graduation. This year, we placed a total of 52 students at various sites across the city this year including the Pittsburgh Public Schools - Board of Education mailroom, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (main campus), Eat N Park, Kuhns Market, Carnegie Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians (LAMP), Mt. Washington Senior Center, Seton Center Daycare and Shop N Save. Our students worked hard this year to increase their soft skills, technical skills and social skills. Most importantly, they had an opportunity to learn work skills in a real work environment.



Spotlighting Change

The CBVE program has seen its fair share of change this school year. Sadly, we lost a dear friend and program coordinator, Alicia Stone. Alicia lost her battle with Pleomorphic Xanthroastrocytoma (PXA), a rare type of brain tumor, in December 2024. Alicia worked as the Program Coordinator for the CBVE program since 2018. In her absence, the program continued to run with the support of our veteran Assistant Teacher, Roxie Eibeck. Roxie stepped up to keep the program running smoothly. She served as liaison between our school teams and worksites, conducted job club activities with students in the classroom, assigned students to their worksites, coordinated transportation and also served as a job coach 4 days/week. We appreciate all of Roxie's hard work and dedication to the program.

We recently filled our second Assistant Teacher position that had been vacant since last school year. Michelle Gehringer is a former Personal Care Aide who most recently, was contracted as a Job Coach for the CBVE program. We are happy to have Michelle with us full-time as we enter into this next school year. The CBVE program would not be able to function without the support of our Job Coaches to assist our students on the worksites. We rely on contracted coaches to provide this support. This year, we added three new coaches to our team - Michaela Page, Liz Pascarella and Pancho Timmons. This well-rounded team worked hard to ensure our students had great work experiences!



As the school year comes to a close, we look forward to one last exciting new change for the 2025-2026 school year. CBVE will welcome a new Program Coordinator - Louise Alfer.

Louise will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from Conroy as their CBVT Coordinator & Life Skills Teacher to the CBVE program at PSE. We look forward to having Louise on our team!



Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)

WESTINGHOUSE: Start on Success (SOS)

This year was a great year for transition programming at Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6-12! Nine seniors participated in Start on Success Internships in industries ranging from culinary to education to retail. In the fall, seniors visited The Highmark Caring Place as part of Disability Mentoring Day. Afterward, one student applied for and received The Linda Dickerson Scholarship from Bender Leadership! Also, in association with Bender Leadership and OVR, two juniors and two seniors participated in a CWI experience at CVS Oakland. Other additional transition experiences that students participated in included the Giant Eagle Young Leaders Academy, University for a Day at CCAC Allegheny, and the TCCAC Mock It 'Til You Rock It Event. Students had the opportunity to meet peers from other schools as well as gain confidence in professional settings. To end the year, students in 10-12th grade will attend the Dan Miller Disability Summit. Also, 10th grade students will participate in two volunteer opportunities: serving lunch at the Homewood Senior Center and bagging donated items at 412 Food Rescue.

Individual shoutouts:

12th Graders:

- ★ **Robert Brown** - Robert won one of the Linda Dickerson Scholarship Awards. He has been given additional hours by his internship employer Shadyside Detail throughout the school year, and they would like to extend him summer employment. Robert has applied to Job Corp.
- ★ **Kahliya Byrd** - Kahliya plans to attend TIP following graduation.
- ★ **Dallas Chapman** - Dallas has done excellent work at PPS Faison, referring to the students as his "kids." He was accepted to CCAC and plans to attend to study psychology.
- ★ **Jakai Edmunds Collins** - Jakai applied to Job Corp and has already visited.
- ★ **Mar'Quan Johnson** - Mar'Quan has done well at his internship at Everyday Cafe, where they plan to extend summer employment to him. He plans on attending Bidwell for culinary.
- ★ **Michael McCallum** - Michael did well at his CWI at CVS Oakland. He was offered employment but declined. Michael plans to attend TIP after graduation.
- ★ **Dynasty McClurkin** - Dynasty has been doing well at her internship at Faison! She was accepted to CCAC and plans to join their EMT program.
- ★ **Khalil Mitchell** - Khalil was accepted to CCAC and plans to attend for business.
- ★ **Antwon Patton** - Antwon was accepted to CCAC and plans to attend for business.
- ★ **Rodney Thornhill** - Rodney participated in the CWI at CVS Oakland. He received travel training and can now take the bus confidently! Through OVR, he plans to obtain supported employment following graduation.

11th Graders:

- ★ **Darius Drake** - Darius has really come out of his shell this school year! He did well at the mock interviews and at his CVS internship. CVS plans to extend him employment after the internship ends.
- ★ **A'meir Ladd-Seymore** - A'meir did really well at the mock interview event (earning 2 perfect scores!). OVR plans to help him maintain summer employment at CVS with a job coach.

Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)

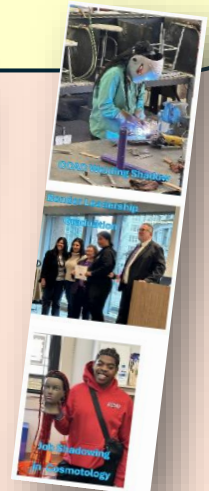
CITY CONNECTIONS: Prepares Students for Real Life



Bryant and I have only 5 more work sessions at Jenny Lee Bakery. We have enjoyed working with our job coaches Ms. Kim and Ms. Patty. This work experience has helped us to improve our focus on work without having our phones. It also has helped us practice working for longer periods of time.



Every month we have Power-Up come to CITY West 1 and 2 to do a cooking lesson. This month's recipe was mini vegetable pizzas on English muffins. Sasha and I had to cut out the peppers and tomatoes to get it prepped. The pizzas took about 15 minutes to cook, and we all built our own.



Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)

Another Great Year of the Start on Success Program



As the school year comes to a close, nearly 150 students, staff, parents, and community partners gathered on May 13th to celebrate the achievements of students in the PSE, Start On Success (SOS) program. Throughout the school year, SOS students have demonstrated dedication and growth through their paid internships—gaining hands-on experience, developing valuable job skills, and building professional networks. Internship placements spanned a variety of employment settings across the city, including Allegheny General Hospital, the University of Pittsburgh, the City of Pittsburgh, Ammon Recreation Center, Tech25, and the Westin Hotel, just to name a few. The SOS program is made possible thanks to funding from Partner4Work and the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Start On Success staff and students extend their sincere thanks to all of our community and employer partners, as well as Pittsburgh Public Schools staff and administration for their support in making these meaningful work experiences possible



Spotlighting: Celebrating 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.

Pittsburgh's public transportation system, Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT), continues to work on several projects to improve the transportation system. These improvements bring detours, delays and inconveniences. Many students who use and who are learning to use public transportation must navigate these changes on a regular basis. The closure of the Mt Washington transit tunnel has resulted in the rerouting of rail transit and buses. PRTX bus rapid transit project continues to alter several bus routes and stops. Several infrastructure projects have led to temporary detours. These changes make navigating routes more complicated.

The Mt Washington tunnel is slated to reopen in October of 2025. Rail and bus transit will then use the tunnel again. Eventually, the Oakland, Uptown and Downtown area will see dedicated bus lanes allowing for more efficient transportation through these areas and into downtown. Bus rapid transit (PRTX) is currently in the construction stage and will soon be able to better serve this highly traveled area. Additional sheltered stops have been added as central stops in Oakland.

As PRT repairs and improves the public transit system and pedestrian infrastructure, new options will present themselves for more efficient and safer traveling.

PROGRAM REFLECTIONS:

From one of our Transition Counselors, Courtney Stonestreet

SOS Partnership with Pioneer

During my 15 years of being a transition counselor, I felt this year really captured what true transition is and in thinking outside the box. One of my seniors will be attending the Compass program at Duquesne next school year while completing a work experience at Pioneer. My student has a goal of working in a water setting after the completion of his programming at Duquesne/PPS. In an ideal world he would like to be an aquatics assistant or some type of rehab water assistant. With that in mind, the Allderdice team in collaboration with the student's mother and staff at Pioneer have developed a beautiful transition plan for him next school year. He will be attending Pioneer where staff have agreed that he can assist with some of the water therapy activities and also be included in some other leadership positions.

It's truly amazing when you have a team of individuals with the students' goals and needs at the frontline work together and create something so beautiful and meaningful.

OVR Partnership

One of my seniors who is an individual with giftedness and cerebral palsy was connected with OVR last school year. With the collaboration between PPS and OVR we have created a wonderful transition plan for this young man. He will be attending the University of Pittsburgh and majoring in Political Science. OVR has been working with the student and family to assist him with getting appropriate assistive technology for college, while getting him assessed to become a licensed driver in the future.

Over the summer they will also be working with him to get a paid work experience since there will need to be some job carving to meet his individual needs.

With this partnership, he will have a very bright and successful future ahead of him.

Spotlighting: Celebrating Transition Services (Continued)



Transition Team Information Blast:



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



- Are you looking to get your child involved in activities outside of school?
- Consider Special Olympics ... Sports include bowling, swimming, golf, basketball and so many more.
- Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Three Rivers Region serves athletes (ages 2+), volunteers, and partners in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

<https://specialolympicspa.org/region-9-home>

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!

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

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!](#)

For more information on transition services or programs within the Pittsburgh Public Schools, please contact:
Crystal Evans, Transition Coordinator
(412) 529-3143 cevans1@pghschools.org



A Note from Dr. Bresnahan & the School Psychologists:



The Parents as Coaches Series will return in the fall!!

Keep a look out on the PPS PSE Webpage for the Next Parent & Guardian Newsletter

In the March edition of the Parent & Guardian Newsletter, the School Psychologists offered, ***Being A Reading Coach at Home***, as a *Parents as Coaches Series* session. If you wanted to attend but were unable to, the session is viewable at the following link:



- The presentation with clickable resources used is accessible by clicking on the following link: [Dyslexia training.pptx](#)

