



THE PUPIL PULSE

ISSUE #01: BACK TO SCHOOL BITES

MONDAY
AUGUST 25, 2025

Back to School Bites

Welcome to the very first edition of *The Pupil Pulse*!

This bite-sized newsletter is brought to you by the Pupil Services team at Moon Area School District. Our goal? To serve up monthly morsels of information that keep families and staff informed, supported, and inspired—all in a quick, easy-to-digest format.

Whether you're a parent, teacher, administrator, or community member, we hope you'll find something useful here. Expect practical tips, helpful insights, and a few thought-starters, straight from the people who support students behind the scenes every day.

PUPIL SERVICES

*Supporting Every Student,
Every Day!*

The Moon Area School District's Pupil Services Department provides a range of supports to meet the diverse needs of our students. Our mission is to help every student shine—academically, socially, and emotionally.

Here's a quick snapshot of what we do:

Special Education Services: Ensures students with disabilities receive individualized supports and services to succeed in school.



Services for Protected Handicapped Students (Section 504):

Accommodations for students with physical or mental disabilities to access school programs and activities.

Gifted Support: Provides enrichment and challenge for students who qualify for gifted education.

Secondary Transition Services: Helps students with IEPs plan for life after high school—college, careers, independent living, and more.

English Language Development (ELD): Supports students whose first language isn't English in developing speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Support for Homeless Students: Helps ensure that housing instability doesn't interfere with school access, attendance, or success.

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**Pupil Services
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Parent Pantry

HOMEWORK EDITION, VOLUME 1

Help! My child struggles to complete his homework. How can I help?

You're not alone—many kids (and parents!) face this challenge. After a full school day, homework feels like an uphill battle. But with a thoughtful approach rooted in research, you can guide your child toward success.

The key steps:

1. **Identify the root issue** – What's really standing in the way?
2. **Tackle one area at a time** – Build small successes before adding more.
3. **Stay in regular communication with school** – Teachers and staff are partners in this process.

A well-established approach called HOPS (Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills) divides homework challenges into five core skill areas (nasponline.org):

1. **Accurately recording assignments**
2. **Completing assignments**
3. **Organizing papers and materials**
4. **Planning ahead**
5. **Managing time**

Start by picking the one that causes the most stress at home.

This month, we'll focus on **recording assignments** and **finishing homework**. Other areas—like organizing materials and planning—will come in future tips.

Accurately Recording Assignments

Even if tasks are posted online, research shows that writing them down builds accountability and executive functioning.



Try this step-by-step:

- Get a student planner, paper or digital. (Some schools provide)
- Ask teachers to initial or approve that assignments are correctly noted—including “no homework.”
- At home, give one point per signed assignment.
- Once reliable, shift to rewarding accurate entries—no signatures needed.
- Celebrate progress! A fun dinner or outing reinforces the effort.
- Move on to another skill area.

Sources

Langberg, J. M. (2022). *Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills (HOPS) Intervention, 2nd Edition*. National Association of School Psychologists.

Langberg, J. M. (2014). *Improving children's homework, organization, and planning skills (HOPS): A parent's guide*. National Association of School Psychologists

Completing Homework

Most kids do better with structure and clear expectations.

Build a homework routine:

- **Set a time limit** – e.g., middle schoolers: 60 min per night (adjust as needed).
- **Create a schedule** – e.g., Mon–Tue at 4:30 pm, Wed at 7 pm; keep it visible.
- **Find a quiet workspace** – minimal distractions; visible to parent; regular parental check-ins
- **Define what “on task” looks like** – e.g., eyes on workbook or writing, and praise that.
- **Use short task timers** – especially if attention is a challenge.

Give specific praise – “You’re doing great staying focused!” **Set clear goals** – “Write 20 flashcards” or “Finish 20 math problems with 15 correct,” not vague tasks.

Summary

- Focus on one achievable skill at a time.
- Use structure, rewards, and praise.
- Help your child build responsibility, not dependency.
- Keep talking with your school—you are part of a team.

NEXT ISSUE: Organization, Planning, and Time Management Stay tuned!



Teacher Tidbits

~Building Better Behavior Expectations~

Source: Adapted from the IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/cresource/q1/p03/#content>

The start of a new school year is the perfect time to lay the foundation for a respectful, inclusive, and predictable classroom environment. When behavioral expectations are clearly defined, students feel safer, more supported, and are more likely to do well. Here are some practices to keep in mind when developing or revisiting your classroom expectations:

Start with 3–5 Core Expectations that can guide behavior across classroom settings. **Simplicity is key.**

Common themes like *Be Safe*, *Be Kind*, *Own your actions* are clear and allow for consistency from the classroom to the cafeteria. If your school already has universal expectations, consider adapting them to fit your students' developmental levels and specific classroom routines.

Positive and Developmentally Appropriate Language

State expectations in terms of what students *should* do, not what they *shouldn't*. For example, say:

- “Ask permission before borrowing” instead of “Don’t take things from others.”
- “Use your inside voice” instead of “No talking loudly.”

Match your language to your students' age and abilities. For instance, expectations in a kindergarten room will differ from those in third grade or in classrooms serving students with extensive support needs.

Make It Measurable and Observable

Students need to understand exactly what the expected behavior *looks* and *sounds* like. Rather than saying “Clean up,” state “Return materials to their proper place.” Clear, concrete behaviors are easier for students to learn—and easier for you to reinforce.

Adapt for Activity and Emotional State

Classroom behavior expectations may need to shift depending on the context. A student's expected behavior during independent work might differ from expectations during a whole-group lesson or when entering or exiting the room. Similarly, expectations should reflect flexibility for emotional regulation. For instance, if a student is upset, the goal might shift to using calming strategies or accessing a quiet space rather than participating in the current task. A classroom behavior matrix can help outline how expectations adapt across situations.

 **BEHAVIOR MATRIX**
 Stockbridge elementary school

P Prepare for Success	CAFETERIA Get all needed supplies before sitting down.	HALLWAY FFQ Forward Facing, Feet in Square, Quiet in the hall	RESTROOM Use the toilet.	BUS Bus tags and belongings
A Act Respectfully	Wait your turn in line. Respond to all request immediately.	Walk to and from location with a purpose.	Flush the toilet.	Hands, feet, and belongings to yourself.
W Work Together	Keep table clean, use inside voices.	Stay with the pace of the group.	Report incidents	Talk to the left or the right.
S Stay Safe	Bottoms in seat, walking feet.	Hands and feet to yourself.	Wash your hands.	Bottoms to bottom and backs to back.

Consider Culture and Neurodiversity

Behavior expectations should be sensitive to both cultural backgrounds and disability-related needs. Eye contact, for example, is a sign of respect in some cultures and discomfort in others. Students with autism may focus or communicate more effectively without making eye contact at all. Avoid one-size-fits-all expectations—students interpret and express behaviors differently, and honoring these differences is important.

Co-Create Expectations with Students

Whenever possible, involve students in developing classroom expectations. This approach builds community, increases buy-in, and gives all students a voice.

Behind the Serving Line

What Do School Psychologists Actually Do?

Great question. Here's what the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has to say:

"School psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally."

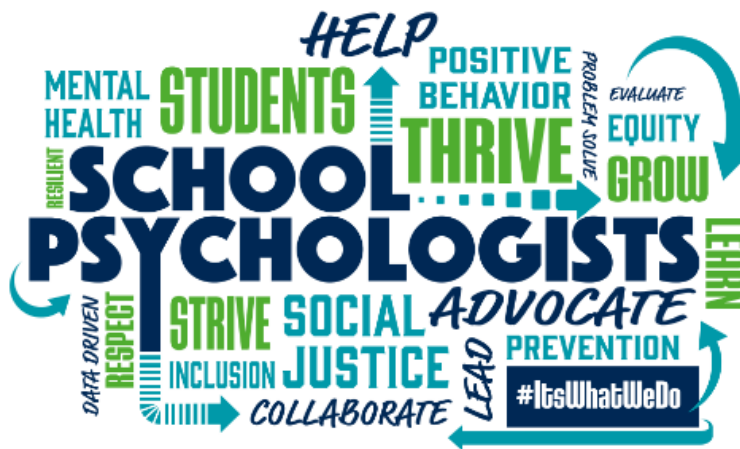
Sounds impressive, right? But if you're thinking, "Okay...but what does that actually look like?"—well, the real answer is: It depends. Yes, we do evaluations (lots of them!)—for special education eligibility, gifted programs, and 504 plans. But that's just one slice of what we do. We also:

- Collect and analyze data (think of us as educational detectives)
- Monitor student progress
- Collaborate with teachers, staff, and families
- Design academic, behavioral, and mental health interventions
- Respond in times of crisis
- Promote resilience, equity, and inclusion
- Support school-wide practices that help *all* students thrive
- Stay up to date on school law, ethics, and best practices

In future issues, we'll be digging deeper into each of these roles—and how they show up in your child's school experience. Our mission? To shift the view of school psychologists from "the people who test" to trusted partners in student success and well-being.

Looking forward to the year!

Demi, Rachel, and Kate



What's on Your Plate?

Fast Q&A with insights you can use tomorrow (and today!)

Got a burning question about behavior, learning, or student support? Send it our way!

Click [HERE](#) to submit your question for a future edition of **What's on Your Plate**—where we serve up evidence-based, practical answers to help you navigate school life with confidence (and maybe a few crumbs of humor)—or scan the QR code below:





Transition Tracks

News, Events, and Resources for Life's Next Steps



Staff Update: Welcome Vicki Wilson!

We're excited to welcome Vicki Wilson as the new Administrative Assistant in the Transition Department. Her support will be instrumental in helping our students and families navigate important milestones.

Upcoming Event: Moon Education & Support Series

When: Wednesday, August 27th at 6:00 PM

Where: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Topic: When Your Child Needs Extra Support:
Understanding Pupil Services

Presenters: Kate Bunton & Rachel Coyle, School Psychologists

[CLICK HERE](#)

or

SCAN QR Code
to join virtual event:



The Pupil Services Department at Moon Area School District provides a variety of supports to help students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. This session will guide parents through the options available when a student is struggling—ranging from informal classroom strategies to comprehensive evaluations. We will also explain how individualized supports, such as 504 Plans and IEPs, are developed to meet each student's unique needs.

Featured Resource: Allegheny Connect

Need help during a crisis or looking for local support services? Allegheny Connect is your go-to resource for essential community support.



Call: 1-800-862-6783



Visit: connect.alleghenycounty.us

Moon Area School District Pupil Services Team

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