

## Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

Dear Families,

As we close out 2025, the PSE team remains deeply committed to supporting every student’s growth, well-being, and success. This time of year offers an opportunity to reflect on progress, celebrate achievements, and look ahead with optimism. We are already hard at work planning for the summer of 2026 and will begin sharing information about available offerings in February.

We are grateful for our continued partnership with you as we support your children and strengthen our school community. I wish you and your family a restful and enjoyable winter break.

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

#### Secondary Transition – 101

Do you have questions about your child's transition into adulthood? Is so, please attend 'Secondary Transition - 101'. This parent training will provide essential guidance for supporting your child's shift from school to adult life, including information on services and programs offered within PPS. You will gain practical strategies to help navigate educational and career planning and learn how to advocate effectively for your child's needs as they approach this critical stage.

**Date & Time:** Virtual session on 1/14/26 at 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

\*Registration will close on 1/11/26



#### What You Need to Know About ESY

Extended School Year (ESY) is a service that provides special education and related services beyond the 180-day school year. While all students are considered for this program, students must meet specific eligibility criteria to qualify for ESY. Would you like to learn more about PSE's ESY program for the summer of 2025? If so, please plan to attend our virtual session.

**Date & Time:** Virtual session on 1/14/26 at 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM or 6:00 PM -7:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

\*Registration will close on 1/11/26



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

Does your child have an IEP or a 504 plan and struggle with different aspects of reading, writing, or organization? If yes, please join us for a session to discover how the Assistive Technology (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 features. Join us to discover how features in these programs, accessible to all learners in PPS, can help a struggling student succeed.

**Date & Time:** Virtual session on 2/19/26 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

\*Registration will close on 2/16/26



#### Creating Individualized Transitions for Youth – CITY Connections

Have you ever heard about CITY Connections? Possibly you have, but were 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, please plan to attend our session.

**Date & Time:** Virtual session on 1/27/26 at 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

\*Registration will close on 1/25/26



#### Early Intervention Parents: Transition to Kindergarten

Transitioning to Kindergarten is one of the most important steps in a young child's life. Children, parents, and caregivers experience a level of excitement and a sense of wonder. Children must learn to navigate academic, behavioral, and social expectations in school that might be different from the expectations at home or in the early childhood setting. Parents and caregivers of students who are currently in Early Intervention might feel discomfort about sending their children into this new experience. Well-planned, collaborative transition models build trust and relationships among children, families, teachers, and the school community. If your child is going to kindergarten next school year and you are interested in learning about the Special Education Services offered in kindergarten, please plan to join us.

**Date & Time:** Virtual session on 2/5/26 at 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

\*If you are interested in attending, please use the following link on the day and time.



## Keeping You Up to Date:



### Special Message from Dr. Maria Paul:

Hello, PPS Families!

I hope you are doing well. I continue to oversee both Covid Compensatory Services (CCS) and Extended School Year (ESY) programming for Pittsburgh Public Schools. As your child’s IEP team begins—or has already completed—their annual IEP meeting for the 2025–2026 school year, you may have discussed one or both of these supports. Below is a brief overview to help clarify the purpose and expectations for CCS and ESY moving forward.

#### Covid Compensatory Services (CCS)

CCS hours were determined based on your child's enrollment in PPS during the Pandemic Period (March 16, 2020 – June 16, 2022) and the amount of learning or services lost during that time.

Here are a few important reminders if your child is owed CCS hours:

- You will receive quarterly updates about those hours along with your child's IEP progress reports.
- CCS hours will also be discussed during your child's annual IEP meeting moving forward.
- CCS opportunities will continue to be offered during the school year and for the upcoming summer. Please watch for a flyer detailing those opportunities, which will be shared again in late January. If you would like to discuss Extended School Year (ESY) programming sooner, please reach out directly to Dr. Maria Paul at [mpaull@pghschools.org](mailto:mpaull@pghschools.org).

Your school’s IEP team can help answer questions about your child’s CCS hours and programming.

#### Extended School Year (ESY)

ESY determinations are made every year for all students with exceptionalities to ensure ongoing progress and prevent significant regression. These decisions may occur at any time throughout the school year.

For the upcoming school year:

- ESY is tentatively scheduled for July 6, 2026 through July 24, 2026.
- Hours will be 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM daily.
- The ESY site has not yet been finalized; more information will be shared when available.

#### ESY for Armstrong Target Group Students

The determination for Extended School Year (ESY) services must be made by February 28, 2026, for students who fall into the "Armstrong Target Group."

This group is composed of students with more significant disabilities, including:

- Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder
- Serious Emotional Disturbance
- Severe Intellectual Disability
- Degenerative Impairments with mental involvement
- Severe Multiple Disabilities

If you have questions about your child’s possible ESY eligibility, please contact their Case Manager or the Program Officer assigned to your school building.

Thank you for partnering with us to ensure your child receives the services and supports they need. If you have any questions about CCS or ESY, please reach out to your school’s IEP team or me—we are always here to help.

Yours in education,

Dr. Paul



## Additional Resources:

# Save the Date



- ❖ **PDE Conference: Join us for the 2026 Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education's premiere event, MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Educational Practices That Work!**
  - Don't miss out, make plans now to participate in this event, bringing together school leaders, teachers, related service providers, IU staff, psychologists, guidance counselors, families, community organizations, and experts in various areas of general and special education.
  - **LEARN \* NETWORK \* VISIT VENDORS AND POSTER SESSIONS \* HAVE FUN**
  - More details and registration information coming soon! Check the [PaTTAN website](#) frequently.

- ❖ **NEW PaTTAN Publications to Read and Share:**  
**Family-Focused Information on Student Safety and Behavior**

- These publications explain steps families can take to learn more about issues that may result from their child's behavior and to understand their child's rights.



[What Families Need to Know About Restraints](#)



[What Families Need to Know About Manifestation](#)

## Additional Resources (Continued):

### IMCC Presents: IMCC Adventure Series for Grades 3-6 (January - April 2026)



Include Me Connection Club is a virtual club that offers creative opportunities for students to connect through games, play, and student-driven discussions. All club meetings are facilitated by our engaging and energetic staff.

Your student is welcome here! Programs occur virtually on the last two Tuesdays from 5:30-6:30pm for the Winter/Spring session, January to April. Themes and topics change monthly and are curated to meet kids where they are. If interested in joining the club, [SIGN UP HERE](#) Registration full?

You can [click here](#) to be added to the waitlist!

### Disability Acceptance Through Literature

**Theme:** Hand in Hand

**Group:** Kids 5-8 years old

**Dates:** January 14 - 28, 2026

**Day/Time:** Wednesdays, 5:00 pm - 5:45 pm

Join us Wednesdays at 5:00PM starting January 14 for this Winter's "Story Tour", our Disability Acceptance through Literature program for 5- to 8-year-olds! The group will meet weekly for 45 minutes via Zoom. We'll read a different children's book aloud each week and talk a bit about the story together. All learners are welcome!

Registering will save you a seat. Register with your mailing address and we will send a copy of each book for your household. Before our first meeting, you will receive an email with the zoom link we'll use to join in every week. \*Spots are limited! Registering means you're committing to join us for the full virtual story tour. If your availability changes, please let us know ASAP before the program begins. [Click here to register.](#) (Registration opens November 14 at 12 pm)



**Title:** *Fish in a Tree*, by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

**Group:** Kids 8-12 years old

**Dates:** January 15 - March 5 (8 weeks)

**Day/Time:** Thursdays, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Join us Thursdays at 5:30PM beginning January 15 for our middle grade pick for Disability Acceptance through Literature this Fall! The group (8- to 12-year-olds and our Include Me facilitators) will meet weekly via Zoom. All learners are welcome! [Click here to register.](#) (Registration opens Nov 14 at 12 pm)

Questions? Contact Celia at [cmorrison@includemepa.org](mailto:cmorrison@includemepa.org)



### Join the Include Me team for an online series on transition!

Learn about the steps to take after your student turns 14 and how to be engaged in their education and transition plans as a parent or guardian. Sessions will be held on zoom the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month, February to May, and recordings will be posted online. [Register here](#)

#### Missed our 2024 Transition Series?

Watch previous recordings and access resources [on our padlet.](#)

Topics covered: supports coordination, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and networking. Questions? Contact Nicole Meier Emery at [nmeier@includemepa.org](mailto:nmeier@includemepa.org)





## A Note from Dr. Bresnahan & the School Psychologists:



- ❖ In the midst of the digital age, students are spending more than a fourth of their day staring at a screen, leading to increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, and depression.
- ❖ As we enter the new year, let's reflect on the effects that our internet usage has on our own, and our students', mental health.
- ❖ Consider viewing Dr. Barbara Jennings' Ted Talk, "Cell Phones, Dopamine, and Development," as she challenges viewers to limit their screen time to improve their overall well-being.



<https://youtu.be/kGZvNbfrNag?si=GgROcGOtC6-68X52>

- ❖ Simple tips for a "digital detox" include turning off unnecessary notifications, setting screen time limits, prioritizing offline activities, and shutting down technology at least thirty minutes before bedtime. Additional helpful strategies are included in the American Psychological Association (APA) fact sheet, Digital guidelines: Promoting healthy technology use for children.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/social-media-internet/technology-use-children>



Join us virtually on **January 22, 2026, at 6:00 PM** for the next Parents as Coaches training, offered by Psychological Services, focusing on concerns related to excessive screen time.



**Looking to the Future**

The next 2025-2026 School Year, Parent & Guardian Newsletters will be available at the beginning of the following months, so please check out the PSE webpage!

- March 2026
- June 2026

Please click on the image below for live access to the events posted by the Special Needs Consortium

**Winter Links**