

Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

Dear Parents & Guardians,

As we enter the spring season, I am pleased to share the third edition of our quarterly newsletter from the Program for Students with Exceptionalities. This spring brings important updates across our department as we continue our work to ensure that every student receives the individualized supports, high-quality instruction, and coordinated services they need to succeed. Our teams across schools have been deeply engaged in ongoing planning, strengthening instructional practices, preparing for summer programming, and expanding resources designed to support students and families throughout the year.

In this issue, you will find information about a range of family learning opportunities, including sessions focused on autism, transition planning, behavior supports, and emotional wellness. These trainings are intended to give families practical tools and clear guidance so you can confidently partner with your child’s school team. You will also see updates about program initiatives, community partnerships, and ways to stay connected as we move into the final months of the school year.

We know that meaningful collaboration between home and school is central to student success, and we remain committed to providing accessible information and consistent communication. Whether through trainings, program updates, or direct outreach, our goal is to support each family in navigating the services and opportunities that best meet their child’s needs.

Thank you for your continued engagement with our team.

Patti Camper

Assistant Superintendent

Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)

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**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

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: Virtual session on 3/9/26 from 6:00 PM - 7:00PM

*Registration will close on 3/7/26



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 4/22/26 at 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM.

*Registration will close on 4/20/26



Creating Individualized Transitions for Youth – CITY Connections

Have you heard about CITY Connections? You might have seen the name before but weren't quite sure what the program involves or how it benefits our students. If you would like to learn more, please join us for an upcoming session with the Program Coordinator, Lindsay Del Conte. This is a great opportunity to get a clear picture of what the program offers and how it supports the

Pittsburgh Public Schools' community.

Date & Time: Virtual session on 5/14/26 at 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

*Registration will close on 5/12/26



Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder: Insights for Parents

This session is designed to empower parents with knowledge and tools to better support their children's educational journey. Together we will gain a deeper understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its impact on children in the classroom. We will cover:

- What Autism Spectrum Disorder is and its characteristics.
- How ASD may present in a school setting, including common behaviors and challenges.
- Effective strategies used by schools to support children with autism and how parents can collaborate with educators for their child's success.

Date & Time: Virtual session on 4/14/26 from 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

*Registration will close on 4/12/26



MORE INFO





Keeping You Up to Date:



Special Message from Dr. Maria Paul:



Planning Ahead for ESY & Summer CCS

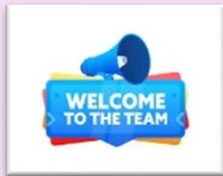
As we begin planning for the summer, we want to let you know that your child's teacher or case manager will be reaching out soon to discuss Extended School Year (ESY) eligibility if they have not already done so.

- For students in the Armstrong Target Group—which includes those with Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, or Multiple Disabilities—these ESY discussions will take place on or before February 28, 2026.
- For all other students, ESY conversations are ongoing and will be completed before the end of the school year to allow plenty of time for thoughtful planning and family input..
- This year, ESY is scheduled to run from July 6 through July 24, 2026, from 8 am to 1 pm daily. While we are still finalizing the specific school sites, we will share those locations as soon as they are determined.
- Additionally, if your child is owed Covid Compensatory Services (CCS) hours, please look for information regarding summer service options and enrollment toward the end of February.
- We understand that planning for the summer can sometimes feel overwhelming, but please know that you are not navigating this process alone. Your child's team is here to partner with you, answer your questions, and support decisions made in your child's best interest. You are always welcome to reach out to your child's teacher or case manager at any time.

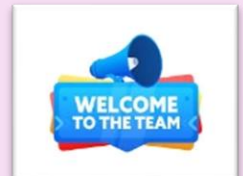
If you have any questions about CCS or ESY, please contact your school's IEP team or reach out to me directly. We are always here to help.

Yours in education,
Dr. Paul

Did Know the PSE Family Has Expanded?



Welcome, Alissa Hage!



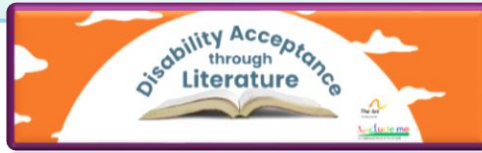
Alissa Hage joins us as a new Program Officer with 20 years of experience in education, bringing a rich background that spans elementary, middle, and high school settings. Originally from West Virginia, she has devoted her career to supporting students, families, and educators through inclusive practices and strong instructional partnerships. Throughout her work across multiple levels of education, Ms. Hage has developed a deep commitment to ensuring that every learner has access to meaningful opportunities and individualized support. She is especially excited to join the team at Pittsburgh Public Schools, where she looks forward to collaborating with staff and serving the diverse needs of our students.

We are so excited to welcome Alissa Hage to the Team!





Additional Resources:



Theme: “Another Way”, a Disability Acceptance Story Series

Group: Kids 5-8 years old

Day/Time: Wednesdays, 5:00 pm – 5:45 pm

Dates: April 1 – 15 (3 weeks)



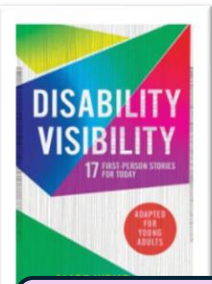
Title: *Get a Grip, Vivy Cohen!* by Sarah Kapit

Group: Kids 8-12 years old

Day/Time: Thursdays, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Dates: April 2 – May 21 (8 weeks)

“Vivy Cohen is determined. She’s had enough of playing catch in the park. She’s ready to pitch for a real baseball team. In this epistolary middle grade novel, Vivy Cohen won’t let anything stop her from playing baseball—not when she has a major-league star as her pen pal..”



Theme: Disability Visibility (Adapted for Young Adults) by Alice Wong

Group: ‘Teens’ 12-17 years old

Day/Time: Mondays 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Dates: March 30 – May 18 (8 weeks)

Join us Mondays at 6:00 pm for our Spring pick for the ‘Teen’ DATL book study crew! Starting March 30, the group and our facilitators meet weekly via Zoom.

“The seventeen eye-opening essays in Disability Visibility, all written by disabled people, offer keen insight into the complex and rich disability experience, examining life’s ableism and inequality, its challenges and losses, and celebrating its wisdom, passion, and joy. The accounts in this collection ask readers to think about disabled people not as individuals who need to be “fixed,” but as members of a community with its own history, culture, and movements. They offer diverse perspectives that speak to past, present, and future generations.”

Registering for a Disability Acceptance Through Literature book study will save your child a seat. Include your mailing address so we can send you the book! Before our first meeting, you will receive an email detailing the resources we share as access tools and the Zoom link we’ll use to join in every week. (Access tools like audiobook recordings, adapted chapter summaries and PODD pages will be provided to help participants access the reading and the conversations each week.) **Questions?** Contact Celia at cmorrison@includemepa.org



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 in joining the club, [SIGN UP HERE](#) Registration full?

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



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 2nd 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





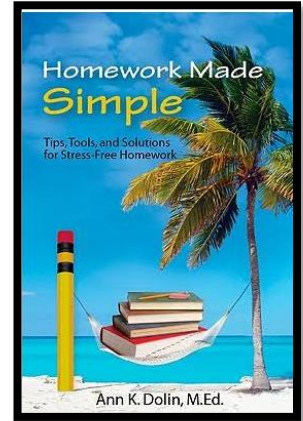
A Note from Dr. Bresnahan & the School Psychologists:



❖ Is your child already wanting to be done with homework for the year? Many of our students identified with disabilities have the burden of homework routines that may not consider their unique disability needs.

❖ For help, perhaps turn to the classic by Ann Dolin

Homework Made Simple: Tips, Tools, and Solutions for Stress-free Homework by Ann K. Dolin is a guide for parents to help children with homework struggles, identifying six student profiles (Disorganization, Rushing, Procrastination, Avoidance, Inattention, Frustration) and offering over 100 solutions, including strategies for study skills, managing distractions, and difficult situations.



❖ There are also a wealth of bloggers and ideas out there, many of which are worth trying. Perhaps check out Dr. Jennifer Welker's blog as a start: <https://www.autism360.com/how-to-help-autistic-children-overcome-homework-struggles/>



Join us on **March 26, 2026, at 6:00 PM** for the next Parents as Coaches training, virtually offered by Psychological Services where we will **explore broad strategies for various neurodivergent students**, followed by a Q & A session.



Looking to the Future:

The final edition of the 2025-2026 Parent & Guardian Newsletter will be available at the beginning of June 2026. It will be posted on the PSE website and a reminder to check the website will come out on Peachjar when it's available