

Opening Message from Assistant Superintendent Patti Camper

Welcome to a New School Year!

We are excited to begin another year of learning, growth, and partnership with our students and families. The Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) remains committed to creating inclusive, supportive learning environments where every student can thrive. We recognize that many families have questions and concerns about the Future Ready Facilities Plan (FRFP), and we are committed to keeping you informed throughout this process.

Over the summer, planning for the FRFP began, and we will continue to share updates as the work progresses. To support ongoing communication and transparency, each quarterly PSE newsletter will include key FRFP timelines, milestones, and next steps.

We deeply value the partnership of our parents and caregivers. Together, we will continue to support our students and ensure they feel welcomed, supported, and empowered to reach their fullest potential throughout this transition.

Wishing all of our students and families a successful, positive, and fulfilling school year!

Patti Camper

Assistant Superintendent

Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE)

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Parent & Guardian Training Opportunities

Quarterly Update on Training Opportunities

Understanding Your Child's IEP

This session will provide an overview of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and help families better understand each section of the document. Participants will learn how present levels, goals, specially designed instruction, related services, and supports work together to address their child's individual needs. The session will also highlight the important role parents play as members of the IEP team and offer practical tips for preparing for and participating in IEP meetings.

Date & Time: Virtual session on 10/6/26 from 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

*Registration closes on 10/3/26



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 10/30/26 from 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

*Registration closes on 10/28/26



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 11/6/26 from 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM. If you are interested in registering, please click on the Register Now link

*Registration closes on 11/4/26



Please click here for live access to the events hosted by the Special Needs Consortium

Keeping You Up to Date:

Future Ready Facilities Plan Information

We recognize that the Future Ready Facilities Plan (FRFP) may bring questions and uncertainty for families. The Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) is committed to thoughtful planning, clear communication, and ensuring students' individual needs remain at the center of this transition.

First Quarter: Key Timelines

- **September 18, 2026:** Finalize PSE classroom locations, including regional specialized classrooms, related services, and learning support spaces with facilities.
- **October 16, 2026:** Develop projected classroom lists for regional programming.
- **October 28, 2026:** Notify families of projected classroom assignments for regional programming.

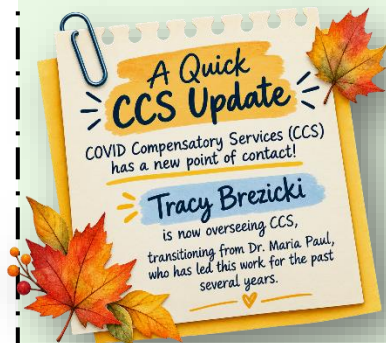
Second Quarter: Next Steps

- Schedule IEP meetings as needed to address individual placement concerns.
- Work with Human Resources to finalize necessary teacher transfers.
- Submit new PSE classroom locations for approval by the Bureau of Special Education (BSE).



Keeping You Up to Date:

Special Message from Tracy Brezicki



- PPS continues to offer exciting COVID Compensatory Service (CCS) opportunities for students who have remaining hours to utilize.
- A Fall flyer will be sent home with current students and mailed or emailed to out-of-district and graduate families.
- Your child's school may also offer on-site CCS opportunities – watch for details, which will be shared directly by the school.

Questions, or didn't receive a flyer? Reach out to Tracy Brezicki at tbrezicki1@pghschools.org

Did You Know? The PSE Family Is Beginning a New Chapter!

Welcome, Michelle Plungin!

We are excited to welcome Michelle Plungin to her new role as Assistive Technology Consultant with the Program for Students with Exceptionalities!

Michelle brings a wealth of experience to this role, having spent 17 years as a special education teacher at Pittsburgh Conroy, where she worked with students with a wide range of support needs. She also served as a technology liaison for approximately eight years, combining her experience in special education with her interest in using technology to support students.

As an Assistive Technology Consultant, Michelle works alongside students, families, and staff to identify tools and strategies that make learning, communication, and participation more accessible. For Michelle, assistive technology isn't always about sophisticated devices or the latest technology. Sometimes, the best solution is a simple one. Her focus is finding practical, individualized solutions that help students participate, communicate, demonstrate what they know, and become as successful and independent as possible.

Michelle is especially excited to work with students and teams across the district. She enjoys the problem-solving side of assistive technology, looking at the needs of an individual student, exploring possibilities, and figuring out what works best for that student.

When Michelle isn't problem-solving, you may find her with her head in a fantasy book! She is a big fan of Rick Riordan's books and is always happy to disappear into a world of Greek gods, demigods, and mythology.

A Message from Michelle

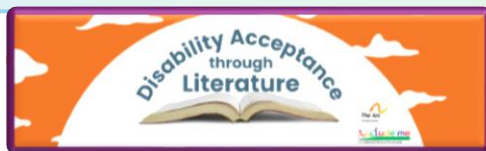
"Every student deserves a way to participate, communicate, learn, and show what they know. Sometimes success looks different than we expected—and that's okay. The goal isn't for every student to do things the same way; it's to make sure every student has a way that works for them."

Welcome to the PSE family, Michelle!





Additional Resources:



Children Ages 5 - 8; Wednesdays at 5:30 pm, beginning October 21

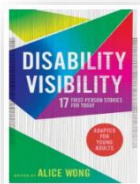
Theme: "The Community Garden", A Disability acceptance story series

Group: Kids 5-8 years old

Day/Time: Wednesdays, 5:30 pm - 6:15 pm

Dates: October 21 -November 4 (3 weeks)

[Click Here to Register](#)



High School Age (Grades 9 - 12) Group - Mondays at 6:00 pm, beginning October 5

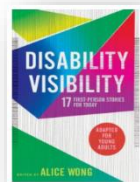
Title: *Disability Visibility* (Adapted for Young Adults) edited by Alice Wong

Group: High school students (9th-12th grade)

Day/Time: Mondays 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm;

Dates: October 5 - November 23 (8 weeks)

[Click Here to Register](#)



Adults' Book Study: Professionals, Educators, Advocates, Family members-- Thursdays at 6:00 pm, beginning October 15

Title: *Disability Visibility* (Adapted for Young Adults) edited by Alice Wong

Group: **Adults:** Professionals, educators, advocates, family members

Day/Time: Thursdays 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm;

Dates: October 15 - November 19 (6 weeks)

[Click Here to Register](#)

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

Transition Series



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, September to May, and recordings will be posted online. [Register here](#)

Missed our 2025 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



Additional Resources (Continued):

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

Your student is welcome here! Themes and topics change monthly and are curated to meet kids where they are. Students can participate and communicate in the ways that work best for them.

Dates for Fall/Winter Tour:

- Sept 22, 29
- Oct 20, 27
- November 17, 24** Earlier in the month for Fall Break
- December 15** Short month for Winter Break

Last two Tuesdays of the month** 5:30-6:30PM

[SIGN UP HERE](#)



The 2026 PAPBS and MTSS Integrated Implementers' Forum, **One System, All Learners: Advancing Integration in PBIS & MTSS**, will be offered in a hybrid modality. The in-person option will

be hosted at PaTTAN Central with a completely virtual, synchronous attendance option available. Presenters will be both in-person and virtual.

For more information from PaTTAN, please [click here](#)



Additional Resources (Continued):

FAMILIES TO THE MAX Training Series Professionals and Families - Join us for our Foundational Courses and Virtual Villages!

Check out these free, one-hour training sessions on various topics in special education, the **FAMILIES TO THE MAX (F2MAX) Foundational Training Courses**. From August through December, one of these five presentations are offered twice a month (noon or 7 PM) on topics such as Presuming Competence, Collaborating on School Teams, Access to the General Education Curriculum, and more. Casual sessions, Virtual Villages, are offered following the trainings to discuss the content and other areas of interest.

F2MAX is the OSEP-funded PA Statewide Network of professionals and families whose mission is leading change for children with diverse needs by maximizing opportunities in the home, classroom, and community.

[Click her to register for the F2MAX 2026 Fall Virtual Village Series](https://www.f2max.org/registration)

VIRTUAL FOUNDATIONAL COURSES FALL 2026		
PRESUMING COMPETENCE: FOSTERING HIGH EXPECTATIONS Defines presuming competence and what it means to have high expectations for all students in their homes, schools, and communities.	WEDS AUG 12 12 PM	THURS AUG 13 7 PM
ACCESS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM ACROSS ALL SETTINGS Describes the importance of and strategies used to provide access to the general education curriculum, regardless of educational placement.	WEDS SEP 9 12 PM	THURS SEP 10 7 PM
MAXIMIZING COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING FOR YOUR CHILD Defines "what," "why," and "how" of speech (language), and communication, and discusses Assistive Technology (AT) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).	WEDS OCT 7 12 PM	THURS OCT 8 7 PM
COLLABORATING ON SCHOOL TEAMS IN WAYS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE Helps families and professionals further develop skills to be collaborative and effective in decisions that provide positive outcomes for students.	WEDS NOV 4 12 PM	THURS NOV 5 7 PM
LEADING CHANGE Shares how families have been initiators and leaders in making change in schools, in partnership with educators and the community.	WEDS DEC 9 12 PM	THURS DEC 10 7 PM
REGISTER FOR FOUNDATIONAL COURSES: https://www.f2max.org/registration		
VIRTUAL VILLAGES		
VIRTUAL VILLAGES INSPIRES FAMILIES ACROSS THE STATE TO ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL DISCUSSIONS THAT DISPOWER THEMSELVES AND OTHERS THROUGH CONNECTION AND SHARING. DROP IN FOR AS LITTLE OR AS LONG AS YOU NEED IT IS! ALTERNATING WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS: AUG 10 @12PM, SEP 10 @10AM, OCT 14 @12PM, NOV 21 @ 10 AM, DEC 16 @ 12 PM		
REGISTER FOR VIRTUAL VILLAGES: https://www.f2max.org/virtualvillages		

Transition Trainings for Students & Families of Middle and High Schools Pathways Forward: Navigating the Future Together

Resources and Information Sessions for Youth 10-21 and Their Families: This professional webinar series, Pathways Forward: Navigating the Future Together, is designed to support transition success at home, school, and work.

**NOTES:

- Target Audience: Youth, parents, and families (please share.)
- This training is funded through the Pathways to Partnership (P2P) Grant, a Disability Innovation Fund grant awarded to the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- To participate, students must either have an active OVR case (confirmed by OVR) or submit a completed OVR-244 Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Request Form must be submitted with registration!

Contact hmangis@pattanpgh.net for more information.

Pathways Forward: Navigating the Future Together

Supporting Transition Success at Home
Practical UDL Strategies for Families

The webinar series helps families understand how Universal Design for Learning can support students' transition from school to adulthood. Participants will explore practical strategies to promote independence, problem-solving, self-advocacy, and successful transitions at home, school, and work.

What is UDL? Supporting Learning, Independence, and Transition at Home
This introductory session explores the core principles of Universal Design for Learning and how families can apply these principles at home. Participants will learn practical ways to support their child's learning, independence, and self-advocacy skills. This session is designed to be a foundational step in understanding UDL and its application in the home.

Registration Link: <https://www.pattanpgh.net/pathways-forward>

October 21, 2026
6:00-7:00 PM ET

Accessibility Matters: Supporting Successful Transitions at Home, School, and Work
What does successful transition mean for you? It's important to understand the barriers that can prevent a successful transition. This session will explore key concepts of accessibility and how families can create an accessible environment for their child's transition. This session is designed to be a foundational step in understanding accessibility and its application in the home, school, and work.

Registration Link: <https://www.pattanpgh.net/pathways-forward>

January 23, 2027
6:00-7:00 PM ET

Planning for Success: Using UDL and Journey Mapping to Support Transition Goals
This interactive session introduces journey mapping as a practical strategy for supporting transition planning. Families will explore how UDL principles can help identify strengths, unique barriers, and develop personalized transition plans. This session is designed to be a foundational step in understanding journey mapping and its application in the home, school, and work.

Registration Link: <https://www.pattanpgh.net/pathways-forward>

April 14, 2027
6:00-7:00 PM ET

Target Audience: Youth, Parents, Families

QUESTIONS?
Contact hmangis@pattanpgh.net for more information or with questions.



Elementary ESY Program Overview 2026

Our elementary ESY students at Langley had a fun, engaging, and busy summer! This year's theme was "At the Amusement Park," and many of our activities incorporated the excitement and fun of the theme.



Throughout the three-week program, students worked on maintaining and strengthening their ESY goals while also enjoying a variety of enriching experiences. We were fortunate to welcome many wonderful community partners, including Play Notes, Include Me, Attack Theatre, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and Open Up Yoga, who joined us each week. Students also enjoyed special visits from the Carnegie Library, RIF, Kona Ice, Pittsburgh Fire Department, and Elliott the Turtle.

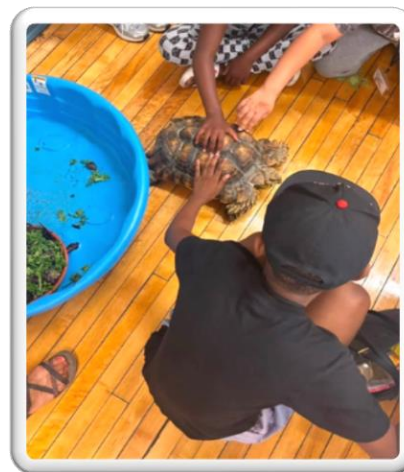


Our 4th- and 5th-grade students had the opportunity to practice independence and community skills by learning to use public transportation while visiting landmarks throughout the Pittsburgh area. These experiences provided meaningful opportunities for students to build confidence and apply important skills in real-world settings.



A highlight of the summer was our first ESY Carnival! Students participated in setting up and enjoying the carnival activities, making it a memorable experience for everyone. The event was such a success that we hope to make it an annual ESY tradition!

We wrapped up another wonderful ESY session with our annual talent show. Our students shared their talents and brought lots of smiles and excitement to the celebration. It was the perfect way to end three weeks filled with learning, growth, friendship, and fun!



Extended School Year (ESY) Adventures! (Continued)

Secondary ESY Program Overview 2025

This summer, our Extended School Year program gave students opportunities to continue building academic, functional, social, and independence skills in a structured and supportive setting. Each day began with breakfast and arrival routines, followed by instructional rotations such as Reading, Math, ADL, CBI, Community, Transition, and Social/Leisure. These rotations helped students practice important skills while staying engaged in a predictable daily routine.



Students who were 14 and older also participated in work experiences at various community sites, including Urban Farm, LAMP, Kuhn's, Northland, Tech25, Thriftique, Busy Beaver, and The Education Partnership. These experiences allowed students to practice job readiness, communication, responsibility, following directions, and workplace expectations in real-world settings.

ESY also included fun and meaningful social opportunities. Students participated in Fun Day activities such as Bingo, Minute to Win It, Jewelry Making, Board Games, Coloring, Leisure Through Art and Music, Scavenger Hunt, gym activities, and classroom rotations. These activities encouraged teamwork, social interaction,

movement, creativity, and positive peer relationships.

Overall, ESY was a successful summer filled with learning, growth, work experience, and fun. We are proud of our students for their hard work and thankful for the dedication of our staff, who helped make each day structured, meaningful, and enjoyable.



A Note from Dr. Bresnahan & the School Psychologists:

❖ Shifts in a student's school environment can bring up a lot of emotions for students especially for students' with disabilities. With that being said, with the right support from trusted adults in their lives they can adjust properly, and even thrive in their new environment. Families can talk openly with their children, establish clear routines, and help emotionally reassure their children. Visit the [Child Mind Institute's website to check out some tips for communicating with your child about change.](#)

❖ Focusing on what is staying the same, such as their hobbies and activities while building excitement for what's to come will help your child mitigate negative emotions. Visit [Psychology Today's website for additional tips to help your child navigate change.](#)

Helping Your Child Cope with School Changes

School changes can bring up many feelings. With understanding, support, and time, children can feel secure and succeed in new environments.

Talk openly and honestly • Give your child space to ask questions and share how they feel. • Remind your child that they are safe, loved, and supported	Reassure and provide security • Keep routines as consistent as possible • Let them know that adults are working to help the family and students • Offer extra hugs, positive words, and encouragement	Focus on what stays the same Help your child notice the things that will remain consistent • Family routines, mealtimes, bedtimes • Favorite hobbies and activities • Friends and family relationships • Values, strengths, and what makes them, them
Explore and look forward • Help your child get curious about what's ahead • Learn about the new school together • Look at pictures or take a tour if possible • Talk about exciting opportunities and new experiences	Build connections • Encourage your child to introduce themselves and get to know classmates • Connect with other families • Reach out to teachers or school staff - these connections can make a big difference	Encourage coping skills Teach and model healthy ways to manage stress and big feelings • Deep breathing, stretching, or mindfulness • Journaling or drawing • Physical activity • Talking with a trusted adult



Join us on September 26, 2026, at 6:00 PM for the next Parents as Coaches training, virtually offered by Psychological Services where we will explore, "Helping Your Children Manage Changes in Their Lives, followed by a Q & A session.

