

Message from the Director

Paul Vine, Director of Special Education

I want to thank everyone for all of your support this year. You have been instrumental in our student's success. As we look forward to the remainder of this school year, I wanted to share with you some of the projects our staff has been working on and what we planning to do through the remainder of the school year.

We intend to publish one more special education department newsletter this year. We will continue to update you on the work of our teachers, specialists, our department, and the good work of our PTSA Special Needs Group (SNG) and Parent Advisory Committee (PAC); as well as upcoming events and trainings offered by our PTSA SNG.

I would also like to encourage you to join our PTSA Special Needs Group at our regularly scheduled monthly meetings (see meeting schedule and contact info on page 2. Our PTSA Special Needs Group is an incredible resource for you as a parent. Beth Angelo, our current PTSA Special Needs Group Chairperson, has a tremendous amount of Web site information to assist you in your efforts for your children.

Again, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our schools, teachers, specialists, para-educators, special education IA staff and administrators. It takes our combined efforts to help our students succeed in both school and in their lives.

Federal Stimulus Funding ARRA Update

To recap from our last communication with regards to the Federal Stimulus Funding, we have been fortunate to have additional federal revenues as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). These funds must be used in accordance with the federal government guidelines as follows:

Four Major Principles for Distribution and using funds:

1. Spend funds quickly to save and create jobs.
2. Improve student achievement through school improvement and reform.
3. Ensure transparency, reporting, and accountability.
4. Invest one-time ARRA Funds thoughtfully to minimize the "Funding Cliff"

Funding Cliff funds are not to be used to fund on-going cost items (e.g. staffing or new programs or services that can't be sustained in the district's regular allocation). The federal guidance to expenditures of special education stimulus funds should be focused in the areas of staff development, curriculum, and innovative practices that will be sustained over time without additional funding sources.

This year we have focused our efforts, with our federal stimulus funds, in the following areas: Professional Development, Curriculum and Innovative Practices.



Transition Academy prepares students with developmental disabilities for work and life in the community after graduation.

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PTSA Special Needs Group

The LWSD Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) Special Needs Group (SNG) is made up of parents in Lake Washington School District whose children receive special services and/or classroom support. The group also includes interested staff and students. The group meets every school month except for December and June. We hear from speakers, learn about resources in the community, network with other parents and keep updated on district and PTSA issues affecting children with special needs.

Upcoming LWSD PTSA SNG meetings

Meetings are held 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the LWSD Resource Center, 16250 N.E. 74th St., Redmond, 98052 (located in Redmond Town Center).

- *March 23* – Transitions, What You Need To Do NOW To Prepare Your Child's Next Step
- *April 27* – Autism, Asperger's, ADHD Options Fair
- *May 25* – Family Resilience/Sibling Supports
- No meeting in June

Reminder about Lending Library: This resource is open to anyone in the district who would like to check out materials on special education. The materials are housed on a cart in the LWSD Resource Lending Library. Checkout and return procedures and the list of available material can be found at: www.lwsd.org/specialed. Click on Lending Library on the left hand side of the page.

SNG e-mail distribution list: To be added to this private list, contact SNG Chairperson Beth Angelo 4bangelo3@verizon.net. You will receive meeting reminders/summaries and resource information.

Visit our LWSD special education Web pages for more info about how things work in our district: www.lwsd.org/specialed.

Our district's special education administrators are; the Director of Special Education, Paul Vine, and the four coordinators. You can call (425) 702-3201 to be connected with someone from this team.

Dealing with concerns and dispute resolution

Follow the Ladder of Support when you have questions or concerns regarding your student.

Ladder of Support

1. Start with the special education and/or general education teacher and/or school therapist
2. School principal
3. Special Education Coordinator
4. Director of Special Education
5. Chief Schools Officer
6. LWSD Superintendent
7. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Professional Development Training

All general and special education teachers and specialists

We have provided training on the district's full day teachers training days (LEAP Days) on specific special education topics. During our October LEAP Day, we were honored to have Dr. Ilene Schwartz speak to all elementary teaching staff and administrators about inclusion strategies and effective strategies for working with students diagnosed on the autism spectrum. The secondary teaching staff and administrators training was presented by attorney Chris Hirst, and focused on the legal requirements for general education teachers when working with students on 504 and IEPs. The training emphasized positive behavior intervention, discipline of students with disabilities and the importance of data collection with regards to the referral process, evaluations, and IEP development and updates.

During our upcoming March 19 LEAP Day, our special education staff (Pre -12) will be involved in our district wide promotion process (**To see more information on our Promotion Process, please go to our Web site link listed below*). The general education elementary teaching staff will be involved in special education training modules tailored to their individual building needs. Our secondary general education teaching staff will meet with Dr. Ilene Schwartz who will speak on inclusion strategies and working with students diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

***Promotion Process:** For information about transitioning to the next level, go to: www.lwsd.org/specialed. Then click on Promotion Process on the left hand side of the page.

K-12 special education teachers are participating in four training modules; IEPs, data collection, promotion planning, and functional behavior analysis and positive behavior support plans. These trainings occur in half-day release time increments throughout this school year. The trainings have been very interactive and have given our teachers the opportunity to collaborate and share their best ideas and practices. We will also be dedicating a release training on IEP transition plans for secondary teaching staff.

Special education teachers and para-educators

We are implementing our evidence based practice training for para-educators, in consultation with Dr. Rosenberg and the University of Washington. The initial two-day training occurred in August and focused on the following topics: Environmental Arrangement, General Strategies for Preventing Behaviors, Teaming around Challenging Behaviors, and Basic Teaching Principles.

Dr. Rosenberg and our Autism Support Team have been providing on-going training and support for the first half of the school year through Wednesday LEAP training and coaching opportunities. The trainers provided ongoing support and coaching at all trainings, with hands-on,

practice components. The trainings have and will cover the following topics: Structuring the Environment for Success, Effective Instructional Strategies, Promoting Engagement and Independence, Facilitating Communication, Facilitating Social Interactions, Understanding Challenging Behavior, Prevention Strategies for Addressing Challenging Behaviors, Teaching Self-Regulation, Teaching New Skills to Prevent Challenging Behaviors, and Manipulating Consequences to Reduce Challenging Behaviors and Increase Desirable Behaviors for students with Autism.

SNAPS (Students Needing Autism Programming Services) training

Beginning in September, we started our SNAPS trainings for our paraprofessionals in our preschool extended day program. The following areas were covered:

- *1 full day in September*: Discrete Trial Training and Incidental Training
- *1/2 day in September*: Preventing Challenging Behaviors
- *Two Hour Workshops*:
 - Teaching Critical Communications
 - Increasing Social Interactions
 - Teaching Emotional Regulation
 - Video critiques

Curriculum

Our special education teachers at the secondary level are using a newly purchased curriculum in their literacy classes this year; INSIDE at the junior highs, EDGE at the high schools. Both programs are considered comprehensive and are aligned with our district standards in English/Language Arts. The specific reading and writing strategies are taught utilizing high interest literature and universal themes. The reading selections reflect a diversity of cultures, perspectives, topics and genres.

Our secondary special education teaching staff received training in August followed by another session in October and had the opportunity to spend a half day planning their next unit of instruction with the guidance of a curriculum coach.

Social skills curriculum K-12

Elementary:

Last year, our elementary teachers reviewed several social skills curriculums and the feedback was to purchase two books written by Jed Baker; Social Skills Training and The Social Skills Picture Book. Based on this recommendation, we purchased one copy of each for all our elementary schools. We are very pleased that Staci Allen and Ashley Berger, preschool SNAPS coordinators, will provide teachers with practical strategies and a suggested progression of units to use in conjunction with the Jed Baker books in late February. Both Staci and Ashley have used these materials successfully for two years and have ready-to-go ideas for teachers to use with their students.

Secondary:

Based on our secondary teaching staff's input and recommendations, we have purchased Think Social! A Social Thinking Curriculum for School Age Students and Thinking About YOU Thinking About Me Worksheets! by Michelle Garcia Winner. Each secondary school will receive at least one copy of each book. Each school will designate a special education teacher(s) to receive training over six sessions. The training for this curriculum will be presented by June Evanson, Spec. Ed teacher at **Inglewood Junior High (IJH)** and Laura Suter, SLP at IJH, who both have been trained in this curriculum and have utilized it extensively with their students. We believe this is a fabulous opportunity for our staff to learn about Michelle Garcia Winner's curriculum for teaching social thinking and related social skills to students with High Functioning Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Nonverbal Learning Disability, ADHD and for all others in the "murky gray area of social thinking." Our teachers will be able to immediately take these lessons/strategies and apply them to their students.

Future curriculum work

We will be researching and purchasing core knowledge curriculum materials for students in our self-contained DD K-21 programs. We will also be updating our special education specialists' assessment tools and developing a bank of assessment tools for specialists. Staff development will be budgeted for all purchases based on the individual requirements of materials selected.

Innovative practices

We are currently working on completing a secondary program review with Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) to complete a secondary program review of our high schools and several junior high schools. The review team will look at our current practices and programs and make recommendations based on best practices of a nationwide review of secondary special education programs. The ESD's information will be shared with our special education teaching and administrative staff to assist in developing our secondary staff development plans for the next five years.

We are also working with the University of Washington to collaborate with our K-12 behavior intervention programs. Dr. Doug Cheney, from the U.W., will be leading the program review and working with our teaching and administrative teams to develop program goals and professional development plans. Dr. Cheney, a national leader in the area of educating students with emotional and behavior disabilities, currently directs the U.W. Master's program to prepare teachers for educating these students. Staff from these programs, as well as building administrators, school psychologists and school counselors, will participate in a self-assessment study to identify program strengths and needs. Areas that will be assessed will relate to elements of evidence-based practices, critical elements of program structure such as program foundation and philosophy, classroom or program structure, climate and individualized planning.

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Professional Development Training - *continued*

We are currently participating in a partnership with the University of Washington in a four year reading/social skills study (PEER Network) with Dr. Ilene Schwartz and Nancy Rosenberg and their respective University of Washington graduate students. The following elementary schools were chosen to be involved in this study: **Rosa Parks, Rush, Wilder, and Dickinson**. The Peer Network Study combines the running of social skills groups at the kindergarten level and Reading Mastery direct instruction, to study the effects of social interaction on reading comprehension development.

We have also utilized some of our stimulus funds to pilot a contractual partnership with King County Department of Community and Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Division (with Provail as the subcontracted

provider) to provide employment specialists to work with our developmentally disabled students who are currently enrolled at our **Transition Academy**. The Transition Academy is a community-based transitional program for young adults, ages 18-21, with developmental disabilities (DD) who are committed to building a resume of work and community experiences to help prepare them for employment on or before graduation. The employment specialist(s) will be working with all students, identified by the program, with the goal that every student will graduate with a job.

www.lwsd.org/specialed

Special Education is a service, not a place.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Non-Discrimination Statement

Lake Washington School District complies with all federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, or disability. This holds true for all district employment and for all students who are interested in participating in educational programs and/or extracurricular school activities. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the school district's Affirmative Action Officer, Title IX Officer, ADA District Coordinator, or Section 504 Coordinator. *Affirmative Action Officer, ADA and Title IX officer:* Pat Fowler-Fung, (425) 702-3266. *Section 504 Coordinator:* Paul Vine, (425) 702-3302. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 97039, Redmond, WA 98073.

special education

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