

Message from the Director

Paul Vine, Director of Special Education

Thank you for all of your continued support this year. I believe, through our strong partnership, that we have been able to accomplish another very successful year. You have been instrumental in our students' success this year and we value and appreciate all your time, dedication and efforts on behalf of your children and our district.

Now that the school year has ended, I wanted to share some of this year's accomplishments with you and let you know about some upcoming changes. We intend to continue publishing our special education department newsletter where we'll 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). This will also be a great source for you to read about upcoming events and trainings offered by our PTSA SNG.

I want to thank **Beth Angelo** and the LWSD PTSA Special Needs Group board for their support and hard work on behalf of our students and parents. I encourage you to join our PTSA Special Needs Group at our regularly scheduled monthly meetings. (See meeting schedule and contact information on page two of this newsletter.) 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 website 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.



Autism advocate, Lynne Banki, speaks to fourth graders at Muir Elementary.

Celebrating Autism Awareness

For the past three years, **John Muir Elementary** has invited **Lynne Banki**, a parent, author, and autism awareness advocate, to speak to the fourth graders. Through her 45-minute presentation, *Autism As A Difference*, Lynne helps the kids define stereotyping and prejudice, recognize that we all have things that make us different, and acknowledge that we all feel bad when we are excluded because of those differences. Then, with the help of the book that she co-wrote with her son, Caspian, [What Autism Means to Me](#), Lynn explains some of the aspects of autism and how simple accommodations can help kids include their classmates with autism. More information about Lynne can be found on her website, www.lifelightbooks.com.

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PTSA Special Needs Group

Message from Beth Angelo, PTSA Special Needs Group President

It has been an honor to serve as Chairperson for the LWSD Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) Special Needs Group for the past four years. There are now more than 660 people on our e-mail distribution list. We send out resource e-mails and meeting reminders/updates. It is with great pride that I introduce **Julie Shalaby** as the group's new Chairperson for the 2010-2011 school year. She'll do a wonderful job. I'm thrilled that the following people will be continuing on in their roles; **Deb Murphy** as the Lending Librarian, **Tracey Gerhardt** as the group's PR person, **Amy Verrall** as the Liaison Coordinator and **Betty Tiberio** for Meeting Hospitality. A big thank you to **Noelle Bortfeld** for attending the LWSD School Board meetings on our behalf, **Chris Rostas** and **Joanne Hiebert** for the meeting facilitation help. A huge thank you to **Lys Gobbo** for her role as Presentation Coordinator this year. Next school year, a group of us will be working together on arranging for speakers for our monthly meetings.

The 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 many of our district's special education staff. These informative meetings provide opportunities to:

- Hear presentations relevant to the needs of special needs families and children in LWSD
- Learn about resources in the community
- Network with other parents
- Keep updated on district and PTSA issues that affect our children

2010-2011 meeting schedule:

- **September 28, 2010**
- **October 26, 2010**
- **November 23, 2010**
- **January 25, 2011**
- **February 22, 2011**
- **March 22, 2011**
- **April 26, 2011**
- **May 24, 2011**

Meetings are held every fourth Tuesday of every school month, except for December and June, in the LWSD Resource Center from 7-8:30 p.m. There is no need to RSVP, just come and join us.

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.

Reminder about SNG 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.

Special Education Administrators:

- **Paul Vine**, Director of Special Education
- **Christy Collins**, *Redmond Learning Community Coordinator*
- **Jon Holmen**, *Eastlake Learning Community Coordinator*
- **Wynn Spaulding**, *Lake Washington Learning Community Coordinator*

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

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

Ability Awareness in Lake Washington School District

We are all different; we are all the same is the theme of a series of activities that the Special Needs Group of the PTSA has compiled into an Ability Awareness Kit. It is our hope that this kit will assist school staff and volunteers as they teach each of our students about disability awareness—awareness that we are all different in terms of our abilities and challenges, but all the same in terms of our desire to be accepted and understood.

Along with hands-on activities, the kit includes two DVDs and suggested talking points for classroom teachers. The DVDs, *I'm Tyler...Don't Be Surprised* and *Intricate Minds III: Understanding Elementary School Classmates Who Think Differently*, are unique and impactful because they feature kids talking about themselves.



A Muir Elementary student writes at the motor planning station.

I'm Tyler...Don't Be Surprised was produced as the Eagle Scout project of Tyler Greene. Tyler is a very accomplished young man. As well as being an Eagle Scout, he participates in a community theater, takes martial arts, and works hard in school. He also happens to have cerebral palsy. Tyler believes that what people *can* do is much more important than what they cannot do, and he has made it his mission to educate people about ability awareness.

Intricate Minds III: Understanding Elementary School Classmates Who Think Differently contains interviews with elementary students, grades three through six, who have been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (AS). Asperger's Syndrome is a type of Autism Spectrum Disorder and is often characterized by sensory integration dysfunction, motor planning dysfunction, and social awkwardness. AS, like autism, is often called an "invisible disability" because there are no obvious physical impairments. In *Intricate Minds* these students articulate what types of things are challenging for them and how they feel when classmates exclude them. Both DVDs were picked for the power of kids with disabilities talking about their abilities, their challenges, their feelings, and how the world relates to them.

The hands-on activities of the Ability Awareness Kit include exercises designed to give the neurotypical student

an idea of some of the challenges a person with a disability faces on a daily basis. These include exercises to simulate challenges in mobility, sensory processing, communication, reading and writing, vision, and motor planning. The purpose of these activities is not to invoke empathy for persons with disabilities—no simple exercise can truly let someone know what it is like to have a disability, but to help our neurotypical students know how to include them. It is through this understanding that true friendships, embracing similarities and differences, can be fostered.

The kits that we have put together are based on a kit provided by Northshore Special Families (NSF), a social and support group for special needs families in the Puget Sound area. We would like to thank NSF for making its kit available to Lake Washington School District and our surrounding communities. This past year these schools participated in some form of disability awareness activity: **John Muir Elementary, Rosa Parks Elementary, Norman Rockwell Elementary, Rachel Carson Elementary, Redmond Elementary, Horace Mann Elementary, Emily Dickinson Elementary, Laura Ingalls Wilder Elementary, Robert Frost Elementary, and Juanita High School.** News stories about these activities have appeared on Northwest Cable News and in the Redmond Reporter.

Currently, we have two kits available for sign-out in one-week increments. If you would like to sign out a kit, please contact Special Needs Group member **Rose Mayeda** at rose.mayeda@comcast.net.



A volunteer works with kids at the communication station.

Special Education Teacher Training

All special education teachers (K-12) participated in 10 hours of professional development this year. The topics included: developing quality IEPs aligned to the evaluation, use of data collection systems, and the components of behavior plans. A planning team of teachers helped to design these modules which occurred from November to June. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to attend all the same modules, expand their knowledge base and to collaborate with colleagues.

Parent Education & Support Nights

This program was developed for parents and caregivers of preschool students who are enrolled in the SNAPS program. Our goal was to provide information and training, while developing a forum for families to learn and grow with each other. The group met six times this school year and topics were determined by group interest. This year we discussed:

- Toileting
- Eating and sleeping
- Kindergarten transitions
- Challenging behaviors
- Facilitating social interactions
- Other topics

Each session began with a presentation that included the latest related research and evidence-based practices and was followed by a guided discussion. An important focus of these meetings was providing opportunities for families to exchange information, ideas, resources and strategies that have helped their children. We plan to continue these meetings next year and include parents of elementary school age children.

Program Changes for 2010-2011

We are very fortunate to make it through another tough budget cycle without cutting our valuable staff for the 2010-11 school year. We will be opening a transition center at **Kirkland Junior High School** in our efforts to provide a continuum of the levels of support for students within their neighborhood school feeder pattern. We are very excited about this opportunity as we have not been able to offer a transition center classroom at the junior high school level in the Lake Washington Learning Community in the past. I am also pleased to announce that **Malia West** will be the teacher for the Kirkland Junior High School Transition Center classroom. We are also looking at moving the Samantha Smith Learning Center program to **Audubon Elementary** as most of the students are from the Redmond and Lake Washington Learning Communities. This will dramatically cut down on the transportation times for these students. We are also converting our ½ day intervention center classrooms at **Redmond Elementary** to full day programs based on our current students' needs.

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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