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## LWPTSA Special Needs Group: Who We Are

LWPTSA Special Needs Parent Group is an informal resource and support network for parents, educators, and community members who recognize, understand and support the unique challenges in parenting and educating children with different learning styles and special needs.

Our goal is to promote a greater awareness of services for student with disabilities, and to bring parents, teachers, students, administrators and community members together to promote the best education solutions and services for our community's children with special needs. We support families of children throughout the entire Lake Washington School District from ages three to 21.

### LWPTSA Website

The LWPTSA website (<http://www.lwptsa.net/special-needs/>) is the main avenue where the special needs group keeps up-to-date information on topics including but not limited to: advocacy, wrap around services, recreational activities, after school group activities and summer camps.

### LWPTSA Council Beliefs

- ◆ All individuals are important and valued.
- ◆ All individuals have unique abilities and needs.
- ◆ All individuals can learn and succeed.
- ◆ All situations are unique.
- ◆ All individuals deserve a safe educational environment.
- ◆ All individuals have access to all services.
- ◆ All individuals develop to their fullest potential when educators, parents, students and the community work together, thus providing a seamless learning environment.



A parent's active participation in the education of their special needs child is invaluable. By sharing knowledge resources and time, parents can help ensure that their child is in the best possible learning environment. Together parents and teachers of special needs students can create pathways to school success.

## Special Needs Group Meetings

Everyone is welcome to attend the LWPTSA Council Special Needs Group Meetings. Come out and meet the wonderful people who believe in your children. The LWPTSA Council Special Needs Group provides speakers who are experts in their field and an opportunity to meet and network. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to receive email reminders of meetings, please email [lakewashing-tonsng@yahoo.com](mailto:lakewashing-tonsng@yahoo.com) to get in touch with the Communications Chair. You will also receive periodic "Information for You" emails about local special needs events.

### The LWPTSA Council Presentations:

Presentations in the past have included a variety of topics, such as:

- **How Special Services Works:** An Introduction to LWSD Special Services Administrative Team (first meeting of school year) with Dr. Shannon Hitch, LWSD Director of Special Services. This meeting keeps you up to date on the new school year's staffing and initiatives. **If you can only come to one meeting a year, we highly recommend this meeting.**
- Presentation by local experts on IEP, 504 Plans.
- Dyscalculia and various presentations on Dyslexia.
- Transitions from high school to work.
- Wrap around services.
- Going to college with special needs.
- Annual Vendor Fair (in February) for organizations that provide recreational after school programs or summer pro-grams/camps for special needs students.

## Meeting Times & Dates

The first meeting will be Tuesday, October 16; thereafter, General Meetings for the 2018-19 school year will be held on the *third Tuesday of every month* during the school year, and the fourth Tuesday in February. (No meetings in December and June).

For the most current information on monthly topics, dates and time be sure to visit: <http://www.lwptsa.net/special-needs>.

**Time:** 6:30-8:30pm

**Location:** LWSD Resource Center (16250 NE 74th Street, @ Redmond Town Center)

### Please note:

Language interpreters are available if requested a minimum of one week in advance. Please make your request to the LWPTSA Communications Chair at: [lakewashingtonsng@yahoo.com](mailto:lakewashingtonsng@yahoo.com)



## Special Needs Group Lending Library

Books, DVDs and other materials are housed currently at the LWSD Resource Center (16250 NE 74th Street, Redmond) in the Curriculum Library on the first floor. The same materials are also rolled on a cart into the monthly LWPTSA Council Special Needs Group meetings for self-checkout.

For a current list of available titles and checkout procedures, please visit the Lending Library website:

<http://www.lwptsa.net/special-needs>.

## LWPTSA Council Special Needs Group Parent Support Network

The LWPTSA Council Special Needs Group is committed to supporting parents in their partnership with schools and providing resources to help you connect with other parents with children of the same or similar disabilities in our district. Our group members are very interested in reaching out to parents who have questions and/or concerns in regards to their child with special needs. We are here to assist and be an outlet you can talk to about both your child's education and the community resources that may be available for your child. We believe the parent-to-parent connection is vital to our children's success in school and in life. The following are parent groups that are disability specific that you may be interested in. If you are interested, please access and connect with them.

- **ADHD:** [ADHD@lwptsa.net](mailto:ADHD@lwptsa.net)
- **Autism:** [Autism@lwptsa.net](mailto:Autism@lwptsa.net)
- **Dyslexia:** [dyslexia@lwptsa.net](mailto:dyslexia@lwptsa.net)
- **Intellectual and Development Disabilities:** [IDD@lwptsa.net](mailto:IDD@lwptsa.net)
- **Parent to Parent Network:** Network for parents with students of similar needs. Contact the Communications Chair at [special.needs@lwptsa.net](mailto:special.needs@lwptsa.net) for more information.

For all other questions or support please contact: [special.needs@lwptsa.net](mailto:special.needs@lwptsa.net).

## Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) Testing Accommodations

For the SBA and other state assessments, the State of Washington has developed a tiered level of "accessibility supports" for students. For information about SBA testing accommodations, please check the OSPI website: <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/statetesting/>.

For specific questions regarding accommodations, first check with your IEP or 504 provider, and then check with the Associate Director of your student's learning community if additional information or assistance is needed.

## How to work with the district when concerns arise about your student's educational program

While both staff and parents approach program development for students who are eligible for special education and 504 services, with their best interest in mind, sometimes differences in opinions may occur. Parents who have questions or concerns about their student should take their concerns first to the special education teacher or 504 coordinator, general education teacher and/or school therapist who work with their student. If the questions or concerns are not answered at that level, parents have a series of people to whom they can go to for support. The District asks that families communicate with District staff in the following order:

**Step 1:** Start with your child's special education teacher and /or special education therapist, or your child's 504 coordinator, and/or your general education teacher depending on the nature of your concern.

**Step 2:** If concerns are not met, please contact your child's school associate or principal

**Step 3:** If concerns are not met, please contact the Special Services Associate Director for your school (see list below).

*If concerns are not met after contacting the Associate Director of your students Learning Community, continue to the following steps 4 through 7:*

**Step 4:** If concerns are not met, please contact Dr. Shannon Hitch, Director of Special Services: [shhitch@lwsd.org](mailto:shhitch@lwsd.org)

**Step 5:** If concerns are not met, please contact Mike Van Orden, Associate Superintendent-Student Academic Success Services: [mvanorden@lwsd.org](mailto:mvanorden@lwsd.org)

**Step 6:** If concerns are not met, please contact Dr. Jane Stavem, Superintendent: [jstavem@lwsd.org](mailto:jstavem@lwsd.org).

**Step 7:** If concerns are not met, please contact Education Parent Liaison at 360-725-6075 or contact the Director Office of Educational Ombuds at 866-297-2597.

As you move through these steps, the LWPTSA Council website has links to outside resources that other parents have found helpful. Please visit the website for more details: <http://www.lwptsa.net/special-needs/>

### Director of Special Services

Shannon Hitch - Director of Special Services

[shhitch@lwsd.org](mailto:shhitch@lwsd.org)

- 504 Coordinator, Health Services, Section 504 Services, ADA Student Coordinator, School Psychologists

### Associate Directors of Special Services

Debbie Wagner - Lake Washington Learning Community:

[dewagner@lwsd.org](mailto:dewagner@lwsd.org)

- High Schools: Lake Washington H.S., Emerson H.S., Emerson K-12
- Middle Schools: Kirkland M.S., Northstar, Rose Hill M.S.
- Elementary: Audubon, Franklin, Lakeview, Kirk, Rose Hill, Rush, Twain
- District Program Support: Speech Language Pathologists, Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Supports/Interpreters, Assistive Technology, and Extended School Year

Paul Vine - Juanita Learning Community:

[pvine@lwsd.org](mailto:pvine@lwsd.org)

- High Schools: Juanita H.S., International Community School, Futures, Transition Academy
- Middle Schools: Finn Hill M.S., Kamiakin M.S.
- Elementary: Bell, Community, Frost, Keller, Juanita El, Muir, Sandburg/Discovery, Thoreau
- District Program Support: Certificated Staffing, Birth to Two and Preschool Programming

Jan Bakken - Redmond Learning Community:

[jbakken@lwsd.org](mailto:jbakken@lwsd.org)

- High Schools: Redmond H.S.
- Middle Schools: Redmond M.S.
- Elementary: Baker, Barton, Einstein, Mann, Redmond El, Rockwell, Rosa Parks, Wilder
- District Program Support: Para and Special Education IA Classified Staffing, Para Support Specialist, Transition Academy Programs

Stacey McGrath - Eastlake Learning Community:

[smcgrath@lwsd.org](mailto:smcgrath@lwsd.org)

- High Schools: Eastlake H.S., Tesla STEM
- Middle Schools: Evergreen M.S., Inglewood M.S., Renaissance School of Art & Reasoning
- Elementary: Alcott, Blackwell, Carson, Dickinson/Explorer, McAuliffe, Mead, Smith
- District Program Support: Co-Lead School Psychologists, OT/PT Specialists, Vision and Mobility

## Before the new school year starts

Here is a list of strategies that parents can use to create a successful partnership with teachers / educators in the classroom:

1. **Inform the School:** If you know your child has special needs prior to starting school in the District, then write a letter/email to the school's principal informing them your child has special needs. You may be asked to provide outside evaluations, medical information or support services which will help the school staff continue to provide a strong educational program.
2. **Introduce Yourself:** Introduce yourself to the members of your team. If your school has a meet-and-greet before school starts, take this time to introduce yourself and child to the Principal, the special education teacher, 504 coordinator and classroom teachers. In addition, if you have further questions this would be the perfect time to schedule a meeting.
3. **Create an "About Me" page / Start self-advocacy training to your child:** Help teachers learn your child's strengths and special needs. Many parents have done this with great success. As the student gets older (enters middle school), encourage your child to be involved in the writing process to promote self-advocacy. In high school, students should be encouraged to write about their disability (in their own words) and provide a copy to teachers each semester to further strengthen their self-advocacy skill development. Colleges require students to articulate their disability and explain why they need accommodations. Starting this self-advocacy skill as early as possible will ensure your son or daughter the best opportunity to succeed in postsecondary education and life after high school. See <http://www.lwptsanet.org/special-needs> for samples of "About Me" pages.

## Information you can expect to be provided from your child's school

You may expect your child's school to provide you with the following information before school starts:

- **For all middle school and high school students on IEP/504:** You may be provided with the name and contact information of your child's case manager prior to the first day of school, if known. You can also contact the building secretary or principal to request this information.
- **Procedure documents:** For students, who qualify for Special Education and 504 services, are available upon your request.
- **Parent brochure for 504:** <http://www.lwsd.org/programs-and-services/special-services/section-504>
- **Schedules:** Middle and high school students may receive their class schedule prior to the first day of school, please check with the school's registrar if you have not.
- **Open House/Meet and Greet:** Information about special education services, the LWPTSA Special Needs Resources Brochure will be available to you online at:

- **Curriculum Night:** Please check with your school to ask if your child's special education teacher and/or 504 coordinator will be have time set aside for short Q&A.

## IEPs & 504s

1. You can request that the draft IEPs and 504 Plan paperwork be provided before an IEP meeting. Time constraints may limit how far in advance you can receive the draft, and, unfortunately, at times it may not be ready until the meeting. So, if you would like to review the IEP paperwork in advance, we encourage you to let the school know your preference well in advance if possible.
2. You can request an IEP or 504 meeting at any time if you have specific questions or concerns; you are not limited to one meeting a year.
3. If you have specific questions for the para-educator that works with your child, be sure to let your IEP case manager know those questions in advance, so they can obtain answers. Para educators do not attend IEP meetings outside of the work day.
4. Prepare yourself for the IEP/504 meeting by making sure you arrive on time and know what the goals of the meeting are. If you did not call the meeting, ask beforehand what the purpose of the meeting are. The best way to remember all your questions and concerns is to write them down before the meeting and be sure to voice those at the meeting.

## Transitions/Annual Grade Level Promotion

**Elementary Schools:** Elementary schools provide parents and students the opportunity in August to attend a meet-and-greet.

**Middle/High Schools:** Each middle school and high school in the district offers parent/student information nights in January and February. Some middle schools provide a time for the student to tour the new school in the spring (talk to your special education teacher at your child's current school to see if this is available). A parent can also contact the new school's principal to request a time to tour the campus (parent only or with their child), if your child has unique needs that would benefit from an individual tour of the school and a meeting with new teacher(s). We encourage you talk to the school as soon as possible to schedule this tour.

