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Seattle Special Education PTSA Newsletter

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Last PTSA Board Meeting for 2009/2010

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Wednesday, June 2 - 9:45 am at the Zoka Café, 2901 NE Blakeley Street, Seattle, WA 98105.

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Board meetings are open to all. If you have an item to include on the board agenda, please email it to [seattlespedptsa@gmail.com](mailto:seattlespedptsa@gmail.com) 48 hours in advance.

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Wrap-up of May General Meeting

Our last General Meeting of the 2009-10 school year was a celebration of best practices. We started out the evening by presenting our PTSA awards. Tom Baisden, a Special Education teacher at Adams Elementary, and Shelley Baker, a First Grade Teacher at McGilvra Elementary, were presented with our Outstanding Educator Award for their exemplary work with children who have disabilities. Marti Bosma, our current PTSA Treasurer and former PTSA Vice President, received our Golden Acorn Award which is presented to a volunteer in recognition of his/her dedication and outstanding service to children and youth. We also recognized UW doctoral student (soon-to-be PhD) Cassie Martin with a Certificate of Appreciation for her "tireless work with families and educators of children with disabilities... dedication to identifying and promoting best practices, and...sustained engagement with our PTSA." Congratulations to all of our recipients and many thanks for your work on behalf of our children!

The celebration of best practices continued with a panel of educators from four elementary schools in our district who are doing great work to expand inclusive educational opportunities within their buildings. Our panelist were Kimberly Kinzer (Principal), West Keller, and Stephanie Lai (Special Ed) from Daniel Bagley; David Swanson (Autism Inclusion Program) from Graham Hill; Virginia Turner (Principal) and Courtney Butorac (Behavior Inclusion Program) from Lafayette; and Gerrit Kischner (Principal) and Julie Way (Inclusion Program) from Schmitz Park. Cassie Martin served as moderator.

The panelists discussed the various ways they have endeavored to develop and engender a philosophy of inclusion within their schools. While they all had as a departure point an Autism Inclusion Program, they each moved the practices of their programs out into the general education population in a variety of ways. At Daniel Bagley, they made a conscious decision to move away from the label of "Autism Inclusion" and just become an "Inclusive School." They have educated both parents and students about inclusion and have carved out time for their teachers to collaborate and plan on areas such as differentiating instruction and co-teaching. Graham Hill also employs co-teaching and a range of social skill programs that include general education peers. Consultation between the special education teachers and their general education counterparts takes place daily. At Lafayette, they engage in small group teaching in the classrooms, lunch buddy programs, and instructing whole classrooms on expected and unexpected behaviors. Using the special education teachers, counselors, and psychologist, the school is able to provide social skills training to a range of children. The panelists from Schmitz Park described how they built a culture of

inclusion, starting with a school philosophy that inclusive practices are not a program but apply to all children. They discussed the many pieces that needed to be in place so they can be used when needed.

Cassie Martin pointed out how we were shifting the discourse from criticism to focusing on positives. She called out many of the practices described by our panelists:

- Using flexible service delivery models
- Providing high quality access to general education curriculum
- Having ongoing and deliberate conversations about diversity and inclusion
- The presence of strong leadership in the form of principals who practice distributive leadership and recognize teacher leaders
- Developing a school community and inviting all to become part of the school's diverse culture
- Partnerships with families and building trust and openness

Many thanks to our panelist and the future Dr. Martin for sharing with us some of the excellent work being done in schools around the district. The big challenge now is to propagate these best practices to other schools. Our thanks go out also to the staff and PTA at Daniel Bagley for hosting the event.

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#### Meeting with SPS Special Education Services

At our monthly meeting with Executive Director Marni Campbell and Director Becky Clifford, PTSA President Janet Anderson, PTSA President-elect Susan Sturms, and SEAAC Chair Rick Minutoli discussed transition planning, ICS next year, principal training, and IEPs.

Marni described the new process in place to familiarize teachers with their new students. Her office is engaged in a readiness assessment for all schools to determine the level of support needed next fall. A file exchange will take place on June 1 between outgoing and incoming case managers, and there will be a training session in June to go over IEPs with new teachers and teachers providing services under the Integrated Comprehensive Services model for the first time.

The Special Education Services department has just reviewed every IEP for new students under the Integrated Comprehensive Services model and is assessing their needs. This service model will continue to have coaches and enhanced staffing will be assigned based on needs.

Principals will attend a Leadership Institute this summer that will include a dedicated session on special education presented by Dr. Elise Frattura, one of the authors of the 2007 outside review of Seattle's special education services. Principals will be reminded that one of their responsibilities is setting clear expectations for their teachers to engage in inclusive educational practices.

The introduction of a new software program called "IEP Online" will support a clearer, more precise process for developing IEPs. In addition, the forms will look different. A pilot launch of the new IEP will take place this fall, and the new system will be implemented in February. Marni and Becky agreed to engage in some parent education activities around this process to help families understand their rights and where they can have input into the various stages, such as the referral process, assessments, qualifying for services, creating an IEP, and independent evaluations.

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District Q&A Section

Question 1: Is there a process in place for students who receive special education services to transition from one classroom to another as we enter a new school year (either risers to new schools or risers to new grades)? What specific guidance have principals and staff been given regarding allowing parents to observe prospective classrooms/teachers, parent input as to appropriate classroom environments, knowing classroom assignments ahead of time, setting a date for a meeting between the parents/student and case manager before school starts in September, and previewing assigned classrooms and schedules ahead of time?

Answer: Most of our schools have internal riser/transition procedures already in place. Visiting individual teachers and classrooms can sometimes be an appropriate part of this transition process, but this should be coordinated with the building principal and staff so that the process is as collaborative as possible. We are encouraging school staff to arrange for parent/student/teacher meetings as soon as possible so that everyone is ready to start the school year with confidence and success. If you are not having success with this, please let me, your consulting teacher, or your supervisor know.

On June 1st we are having an all-district riser file exchange, at which current teachers will have a chance to meet with their students' receiving teachers. This is a chance for teachers to not just exchange files, but also share key insights and information about our students. We are also encouraging teachers to create "IEP at a glance" documents so that schools and teachers can quickly get to know their new students.

Question 2: I heard that the school district is going to increase self-contained class size. Is this true?

Answer: Our inclusion task force did not recommend any adjustments to staffing ratios.

Question 3: The IEP Service Matrix has been the source of much confusion to parents. What are the guidelines for services that should be included on it? Can you please clarify whether IA minutes can/should be listed on the matrix? For example, if a child requires the presence of an IA in a general education classroom to help the child remain on task so he/she can access the curriculum, should that support be listed on the matrix? If not on the matrix, where should it be indicated on the IEP? If the minutes in the Service matrix change from one year to another, does this change need to be supported by data to show why an increase or decrease is justified?

Answer: The primary purpose of the IEP Service Matrix is to document the specially designed instruction (SDI) that is needed for your student to meet her/his IEP goals. The IEP team should work together to determine the location and types of services that will lead to the best learning outcomes. Any change to an IEP should be made by an IEP team and should be directed by clear data.

On some IEPs, instructional assistant support may be listed under "supplementary aids and services."

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Attention: Families with Siblings Assigned to Different Schools

If you have a child currently receiving special education services in one school and an incoming kindergartner who was assigned to a different school during the enrollment process, you can still request a change in the kindergartner's assignment.

The transition plan for the New Student Assignment Plan for the school year 2010-11 has a safety net provision:

- *Assure families that elementary school siblings will not be required to attend different schools, through "safety net" transition rules. The "safety net" transition*

rules provide that:

- If the incoming K student applies just for the older sibling's school during Open Enrollment and is assigned to the new attendance area school instead, the older sibling will be assigned to the attendance area school upon request (assuming services needed are available at that school).

- If the older student is attending a school outside of the attendance area to access special education services not available at the attendance area school, the "safety net" of assigning the older sibling to the attendance area school is not possible. If the incoming K student applies just for the older sibling's school, and if the services the older student needs are not available at the attendance area school, the incoming K student will be assigned to the older sibling's school upon request.

This will be done only if specifically requested by the family after Open Enrollment. A family may choose to exercise this option at any time after Open Enrollment through September 30. Standard transportation eligibility rules apply.

Here is the link: <https://www.seattleschools.org/area/eso/transitionplan.pdf>  
The information copied above is on page 10.

In addition, the SPS Enrollment home page has a similar document posted under "Kindergarten Sibling Report for 2010-11." It can be accessed at this link: [http://www.seattleschools.org/area/eso/K\\_siblings.pdf](http://www.seattleschools.org/area/eso/K_siblings.pdf)

A form will be added to the Enrollment website next week so families can easily contact the district to request an assignment based on the safety net provision. If you have additional questions, please contact Enrollment Services (Tracy Libros, [trilibros@seattleschools.org](mailto:trilibros@seattleschools.org) and cc Marni Campbell and Becky Clifford, [macampbell@seattleschools.org](mailto:macampbell@seattleschools.org) and [rlclifford@seattleschools.org](mailto:rlclifford@seattleschools.org) respectively.

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**Contacting School Board Directors**

Janet Anderson and Susan Sturms have been engaged in discussions with some School Board Directors regarding the state of special education services in Seattle. We provide the "big picture" as we see it and relate in a generalized form some of the issues our members have reported to us. We encourage other parents to engage the School Board Directors in respectful, substantive discussions of their experiences with special education services - good or bad. The following information on contacting the Directors comes from the School Board homepage:

Each Director holds **monthly community meetings** in their districts. The calendar listing these meetings is located at the following link:  
<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/calendar.dxml>

**Individual Directors** can be contacted by email, as follows:

- District I - Peter Maier, [peter.maier@seattleschools.org](mailto:peter.maier@seattleschools.org)
- District II - Sherry Carr, [sherry.carr@seattleschools.org](mailto:sherry.carr@seattleschools.org)
- District III - Harium Martin-Morris, [harium.martin-morris@seattleschools.org](mailto:harium.martin-morris@seattleschools.org)
- District IV - Michael DeBell, [michael.debell@seattleschools.org](mailto:michael.debell@seattleschools.org)
- District V - Kay Smith-Blum, [kay.smith-blum@seattleschools.org](mailto:kay.smith-blum@seattleschools.org)
- District VI - Steve Sundquist, [steve.sundquist@seattleschools.org](mailto:steve.sundquist@seattleschools.org)
- District VII - Betty Patu, [betty.patu@seattleschools.org](mailto:betty.patu@seattleschools.org)

**Testifying before a School Board Meeting:**

The board agenda is posted by close of business the Friday before board meetings. The School Board Office will take sign-ups for the public testimony list starting at 8:00am on the Monday before regular board meetings and continue until 12:00 noon Tuesday before the meeting. The final list of public testimony will be posted on

the board agenda web page: <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/agenda.htm> by 5:00pm, the day before the regular board meeting.

Members of the public can either call or email the board office: (206) 252-0040 or via e-mail [boardagenda@seattleschools.org](mailto:boardagenda@seattleschools.org) and provide the following information: Name, Telephone number, Postal mailing and/or e-mail address, Topic they would like to address. In this way, the district will have contact information in order to respond. (Since Seattle Public Schools is a public agency, this information will fall into the public domain.)

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