

**Monson Public Schools  
Pupil Personnel Services Office**

**October Newsletter**



**SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE**

When I reached out to parents, teachers and staff at the start of the school year, improving communication was a common theme that arose in our discussions. Parents have indicated that they were unsure who to contact when they had questions related to their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). When you have a question or concern about your child's special education services, the person to contact is your child's special education teacher, who is referred to as your child's liaison. As a special education liaison, they are able to answer questions related to your child's special education services.

In order to provide additional support to the special education liaisons, we have created two Special Education Coordinator positions. I am pleased to announce Ms. Colette Bidus and Ms. Katie Czarniecki have been appointed as Special Education Coordinators for the district, which is in addition to their role as Special Education Teachers. Ms. Bidus will be working with grade PK-5 and Ms. Czarniecki will be working with grades 6-12. As Special Education Coordinators, they will be assisting with building and grade level transitions for students, special education compliance and other special education responsibilities and duties.

Although it is only October, grade level and building level transition discussions have started in each building. I am working with the special education teams and Special Education Coordinators in developing a building transition protocol for this year. My goal is to ensure a positive and smooth transition for students for the upcoming school year.

### **MONSON SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEPAC) UPDATE**

Please join the Monson Special Education Parent Advisory Council (MSEPAC) for coffee and conversation on October 24th from 9-10:00 am or October 25th from 6-7:00 pm at Quarry Hill Community School in the School Committee Room. This month's topic: Basic Rights in Special Education: A Workshop for Parents presented by the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. We hope to see you there!

### **TOPIC OF THE MONTH**

On October 24<sup>th</sup> and October 25<sup>th</sup>, I will be providing an overview of Parent's Rights for the Monson Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Parents/guardians have many questions about the process of special education eligibility. This information is presented in the Parent's Rights brochure. However, I wanted to include this information in this month's newsletter to increase parent/guardian awareness of the process.

### **Step 1. Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.**

The state must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities in the state who need special education and related services. To do so, public school districts conduct "Child Find" activities. Parents may be asked if the school district can evaluate their child. Parents can also call the public school district and ask that their child be evaluated.

A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if he or she has a disability. Parents may also contact

the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. This request may be verbal or in writing. Parental consent is needed before the child may be evaluated. Evaluation needs to be completed within 45 school working days after the parent gives consent.

**Step 2. Child is evaluated.**

The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability. The evaluation results will be used to decide the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child.

**Step 3. Eligibility is decided.**

A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA. Parents may ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision if they disagree with it.

**Step 4. Child is found eligible for services.**

If the child is found to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, he or she is eligible for special education and related services, and the IEP team will write an IEP for the child. Once the student has been found eligible for services, the IEP must be written. The two steps below summarize what is involved in writing the IEP. Detailed information on the IEP process is available on the ESE Web site <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/>.

**Step 5. IEP meeting is scheduled.**

The school system schedules and conducts the IEP meeting. School staff must:

- contact the participants, including the parents;
- notify parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend;
- schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school;

- tell the parents the purpose, time, and location of the meeting;
- tell the parents who will be attending; and
- tell the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

**Step 6. IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.**

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are part of the team.

Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the meeting.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation, or the school may offer mediation. Parents may file a complaint with the state education agency and may request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

**Step 7. Services are provided.**

The school makes sure that the child's IEP is being carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child, in keeping with the IEP.

**Step 8. Progress is measured and reported to parents.**

The child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough

for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. These progress reports must be given to parents at least as often as parents are informed of their nondisabled children's progress.

**Step 9. IEP is reviewed.**

The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to attend these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP goals, and agree or disagree with the placement. If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement.

**Step 10. Child is reevaluated.**

At least every three years the child must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often called a "triennial." Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, and what the child's educational needs are. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a reevaluation.

This summary is taken from *A Guide to the Individualized Education Program*, published by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services U.S. Department of Education, July 2000, pages 5 – 7. It is slightly revised consistent with Massachusetts requirements.

I hope that you find the special education eligibility information useful. Next month, we will focus on the transition planning process for students.

Sincerely,  
*Suzanne Morneau*  
Director of Pupil Personnel Services

