

# *Student Services Newsletter*

The Student Services department oversees the management of services to students in the Ross Valley School District. These services include attendance, discipline, special education and 504 services, counseling and nursing services, programs for English Language Learners as well as homeless and students in foster homes. The department works with principals to implement their site Student Success Teams and develop intervention systems that address all students' needs.

This newsletter is the second of four newsletters that will be offered this year to give you information and update you on services, programs, policies and procedures for the Ross Valley School District Student Services department.

## **Qualifying for Additional Services**

Our first *Student Services Newsletter* described the process that you can use as a parent if you have concerns about your child's progress in school. To review,

Step 1: Talk with your child's teacher. She or he will help develop some immediate classroom strategies to address your concerns.

Step 2: If these strategies don't provide a resolution to your child's issues, contact your school principal and he or she will arrange a Student Success Team (SST).

Step 3: The SST will meet to discuss your child's issues and develop a plan to address the concern. This team includes you (the parent(s) or guardian) your child's teacher, school principal, and specialists that have expertise in the area(s) of concern.

Step 4: The SST will reconvene within a specified amount of time (usually 6 weeks) from the date of the first meeting to make recommendations and discuss next steps.

As part of the SST process, you and the school site team may agree that your student should be assessed to determine if he/she would qualify as a student with a disability either under Section 504 or special education eligibility.

## **504 Accommodations**

Section 504 is a Civil Rights Statute that extends protection to individuals with disabilities and is a part of the Rehabilitation Act.

To become eligible for services and protection against discrimination on the basis of a disability, a student must be determined, as a result of an evaluation, to have a "physical or mental impairment" that "substantially limits one or more major life activities." The 504 Team must determine that the student is substantially limited in performing a major life activity as compared to the same age peers in the general population performing the same major life activity.

Physical or mental impairments may include, but are not limited to, the following: physiological disorders, mental or psychological disorders, hearing impairment or visual impairment. One or more major life activities may include the following: learning, behavior, walking, hearing, speaking, seeing, breathing, working, standing or caring for oneself.

In determining whether a student's mental or physical impairment substantially limits a major life activity, a 504 Team compares the student's

academic progress to that of the “average child,” not a child of similar intellectual potential. A student is not substantially limited simply because the student is not reaching his or her potential. The 504 Team evaluates the impact of the disability on the student’s education and determines what accommodations, if any, are necessary. The parent is invited to this meeting. The 504 Plan is reviewed annually by the 504 Team.

Should a parent/guardian have any concerns or questions concerning rights, the process, or any other related issue, the parent is encouraged to contact your school site principal who is the Section 504 Coordinator for your school. If the issue is not resolved at the site and you wish to discuss the matter further, you may contact the District Compliance Officer, the Director of Student Services.

### **Special Education Services**

In order to qualify for special education services, you student must demonstrate a disability in one of the following areas:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental delay
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment including blindness

And your child’s educational performance must be adversely affected due to the disability.

If your child qualifies for special education services, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed at an IEP meeting in which students and parents are invited to actively participate as IEP team members. The written IEP

- describes the student’s special needs
- describes student progress and defines goals in the following areas: academic, behavioral and transitional
- explains how the student, school, and parents will work together to meet these goals
- is an offer of District services, not a guarantee that goals and objectives will be accomplished

The meeting is usually one of the following: an initial review for special education services (including eligibility); an annual review: a three year review; change of educational placement; change of educational goals or services. Those in attendance include teachers (special education and general education), parents, the student, a school administrator, others as needed such as a counselor, school psychologist, etc. Participants bring knowledge of the student’s accommodations and progress, samples of the student’s recent work and questions for staff. All information covered in the meeting is confidential.

### **Special Education Case Management**

A student’s resource specialist, speech therapist or learning center teacher is his/her Case Manager.

Here is what to expect from a Case Manager:

- Supports the student to meet his/her IEP goals
- Oversees IEP assessments and development with the IEP team
- Communicates and collaborates with general education staff including teachers, counselors and administration, regarding a student’s needs
- Communicates with parents regarding the IEP and the student’s progress by phone, email or meetings.
- Provides input and assists students with academic needs

### **Special Education Programs**

The District provides high-quality education for all students, including those with disabilities. All individuals with disabilities have the right to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The District provides special education instruction and services in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Students with

disabilities are placed in the least restrictive environment that meets their needs.

#### Resource Center Program

This program is designed to provide supplemental instruction in a small group setting. Students work to meet their IEP goals, increase academic performance, develop learning strategies and learn advocacy skills for success in their mainstream classes. All school sites offer this program to students who qualify for this service.

#### Learning Center

This program is designed to provide direct instruction in a self-contained setting for academic subjects such as English and math. Students work to meet their IEP goals in the following areas: academics, behavioral and social/emotional. The District operates a K-5 Learning Center on the Hidden Valley campus and a 6-8 Learning Center on the White Hill Middle School campus.

#### Designated Instructional Services

Designated Instructional Services are supplementary services provided to students which are related to their identified disabilities. Examples are speech and language services, occupational therapy and services to the hard of hearing or visually impaired.

#### School Psychologists

Psychologists are responsible for conducting all assessments of students initially referred to special education and assessments for triennial reviews for students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Each school site has a psychologist providing these assessment services and consultation services to the staff.

#### District Behavior Program Coordinator

The District Behavior Program Coordinator is responsible for working with school psychologists and principals to develop behavior systems to support all students. He works closely with teams to develop behavior support plans for students with behavior challenges and trains aides, teachers and staff.

#### District Counseling Coordinator

The District Counseling Coordinator manages the mental health counseling services in the district. Each site is assigned a mental health counselor who serves general education students as well as

students who qualify for special education services. She also oversees the implementation of the district Social Emotional Learning curriculum.

#### **School Staff:**

##### **BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY**

###### **504 coordinator**

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###### **School Psychologist**

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##### **HIDDEN VALLEY ELEMENTARY**

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**Next Newsletter**

In our next *Student Services Newsletter*, we highlight district discipline policies related to harassment and bullying and outline timelines for providing special education and Section 504 services.

**Questions?**

For further information on any of the topics in this newsletter, please contact your school principal, or e-mail Toni Beal, Director of Student Services at [tbeal@rossvalleyschools.org](mailto:tbeal@rossvalleyschools.org)