What’s Happening...

The Parent Connection Newsletter will be published three times during the school year (October, February and May) to keep you informed of Student Support Services Happenings. We want to keep you current on how staff is working to continuously improve programs and services for children with special needs.

One of the major initiatives occurring presently is the Special Education Study. The consultants have been very impressed with their visits to the schools, and the conversations with staff and parents. The results of the Study will be shared at the February 12, 2008 Board of Education meeting, 7:30 pm, at Mamaroneck High School, Tiered Classroom N104. Please join us to learn about the strengths and future needs to improve services and programs for children with special needs.

The Principals, Assistant Principals, Special Education Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Psychologists, Speech Therapists, Social Workers, Occupational and Physical Therapists and School Nurses have been collaborating on several new initiatives that are outlined in the following articles. We have met with Annie Ward, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, on several occasions to discuss and plan regular education initiatives such as, elementary handwriting, balance literacy, curriculum alignment, system-wide co-teaching practices, response to intervention (RTI), and assistive technology. The Curriculum Coordinator for Assistive Technology, Lisa Kmetz, was recently appointed to assist with the implementation of technology for children with special needs.

The 504 Accommodation Plan process will be documented system-wide beginning in February through IEP Direct and a new 504 Policy will be approved by the BOE. This documentation system will help us better monitor 504 student data, and plan accordingly. We will also be exploring the use of an IEP Direct product to help general education effectively monitor Response to Intervention (RTI) student learning plans, prior to referrals to special education.

We are in the process of developing our 2008-09 Student Support Services budget. The major areas of focus will include:
- Reduce out-of district student placements, where appropriate;
- Enhance school to adult life transition planning;
- Continue to strengthen inclusion practices;
- Create a cohesive plan for assistive technology.

Additional information will be shared with you as we move through the budget development process. Also, included in the issue is important information about the upcoming Annual Review CSE meetings, and Save the Date SEPTA network meetings. Enjoy the readings!

Dr. Anthony T. Minotti   Gail Boyle   Roni Kramer
Asst. Superintendent   Director of Special Education   Director of Special Education
for Student Support Services   Secondary   Elementary

Hats off to Mamaroneck UFSD!!
What’s Happening in Social Work...

Social Workers are actively involved on several committees throughout the District, including Universal Pre-school Planning, Program Alignment Team for Hispanic Students (PATHS), Post-Secondary Access for Latino Middle Grade Students (PALMS), and Counseling Alignment. Recently, a new social worker Elissa Kolb was hired (.5) to support students at Central and Chatsworth. This additional social work time provides for full-time social work at Mamaroneck Avenue and Hommocks. Social workers are working closely with the Community Counseling Center, the Guidance Center, and other community agencies to expand social services for families in need. The Social Workers Prek—12 will continue to coordinate and align services fro Hispanic children and their families through the PATHS and collaboration with community agencies.

What’s Happening in Guidance...

The major news in counseling revolves around college admissions, especially during the first three months of the school year. With more students applying to more schools, and an increasing number of schools offering non-binding early admission or early notification programs, the counselors are processing a large number of applications very early in the year.

Not too long ago, one quarter to one third of our seniors would apply to an “early” program. This year, that number will easily exceed fifty percent. As a result, counselors are under pressure to write student recommendations earlier.

Nick Kourabas, Department Chairman for Guidance, has been working closely with the new Hommocks counseling staff to better align counseling services between the middle school and high school. A Committee has been established to review the effectiveness of all K-12 counseling (i.e. Guidance; Psychology; Social Work), and to better align these family and student support services.

SAVE THE DATE....

“The Road to College” and how to get there—
Tuesday, March 4, 2008, 7:30 pm, Tiered Classroom, MHS
Sponsored by Larchmont-Mamaroneck SEPTA
What’s Happening in Speech...

The Speech/Language Pathologists have been involved in many projects this year. The pathologists have been looking at kindergarten screenings to ensure that the same procedures are followed in all elementary schools. While we screen all children in September or October, we complete follow-up evaluations on those children who fail the screening or who receive borderline scores and are of concern to their teachers. They have been exploring various assessment measures and treatment protocols as well.

Therapists in all schools are collaborating more with special education teachers in an effort to provide the most meaningful services to our students.

Therapists at Central School are piloting a phonological awareness program in kindergarten. Depending upon the efficiency of this training, we will consider implementing phonological awareness training in all the elementary schools for the fall. In addition, we will examine the program itself and revise it as we deem necessary.

At the Pre-K, one of our therapists is piloting a co-treatment therapy group with occupational therapy to enhance and stimulate students’ overall language while incorporating their OT goals. This grouping enables students to benefit from the impact of motor activity on language output and pragmatic skills. In a short time, progress has been observed including increased attention and motivation and greater success in language tasks.

Four therapists attended the ASHA (American Speech-Language-Hearing Convention) in Boston in November. They attended numerous seminars and poster sessions covering such diverse topics as augmentative and alternative communication, language impairment in children with ADHD, vocabulary instruction, social thinking and language in children with Asperger Syndrome, improving expository text comprehension, developing written syntax, RTI, and service delivery models.

At the Pre-K therapists have been meeting with parent groups to discuss language development. In January, three of our therapists presented to the Parent Training Group at Central School, regarding how parents can support language learning at home.

The speech therapists have developed a speech and language alternate service delivery model for the 2008-2009 school year. The speech/language department will be implementing a research-based alternate service delivery model which will enhance services provided to students. The model provides traditional direct service six times per month and indirect service two times per month. The indirect service will allow for increased collaboration with teachers and other specialists and allow the therapist to integrate speech and language goals with the classroom curriculum. This model is being implemented successfully in many school districts across the country and is supported by the American Speech, Language, Hearing Assn. (ASHA).
**What’s Happening in the Elementary Schools...**

As many of you know the district put forth a district wide initiative this year to bring Inclusion (Co-Taught) classes to every elementary school. While the program still looks different in some classes and buildings, it’s the first step in providing a more consistent level of services. In fact, we are a year ahead of the curve, since the state has added Co-Taught as a program on the continuum of services to start in the 2008-2009 school year.

While, as with anything new, there have been some glitches. The programs in general have been well received by educators and parents. Some of our students have been able to return to their home school which is always a major concern.

The administration has hired a consultant to work with the Inclusion teams, to continue the development and improvement of our current model, and prepare us to design the model according to the new state guidelines.

Our Pre-K program has had a Co-Taught model (CPSE calls it Special Class in an Integrated Setting), but this year they are experimenting with Co-Taught through an OT and Speech/Language group. Kudos to them for taking the lead and expanding our practice.

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**What’s Happening in School Psychology...**

School Psychologists have been focusing on developing a cohesive assessment process for bilingual students, coordinating a system-wide structure for functional behavioral analysis, and continuing to provide counseling services for students and parents. The school psychologists recently provided a workshop for parents, *Developing your Child’s Social Skills*. At MHS the psychologists have kicked off the “Be a Friend Club”, and are receiving resources from Building Bridges funds to support this initiative. Psychologists, guidance counselors and social workers are meeting to better align counseling services Pre-K – 12.
What’s Happening in OT/PT…

The Occupational Therapy Department has been very busy this year discussing and developing activities and curriculum for fine motor centers. The occupational therapists met with kindergarten teachers and principals to discuss further the idea to develop a plan for a pilot of fine motor centers in one kindergarten in each school beginning in January. The purpose of the fine motor centers is to support and facilitate children’s development of hand strength and underlying hand skills that are important for writing, drawing, cutting and other fine motor classroom activities. The department collaborated on a grant submitted to the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation to gain financial support for implementing fine motor centers in each kindergarten class in Fall 2008. There will be fine motor centers in all of the Pre-K classes in January due to the generous donation of a Pre-K parent.

Fine motor centers have been successfully used in the Mamaroneck’s Pre-K. An Occupational Therapist and a Pre-K teacher, have been collaborating for some time on developing and implementing fine motor centers. Physical Therapists (PT’s) have collaborated with the Physical Education Department to develop an effective evaluation process to identify children with disabilities who need an alternative physical education program. PT’s are also beginning to plan with OT’s to clarify specific roles and responsibilities.

Save the dates...

What’s Happening in SEPTA ....

- **February 13th**, What is Auditory Processing?  
  Dr. Lydia H. Soifer, 7:30 pm—Hommocks Library

- **April 17th** - Dr. Mel Levine, 7:30 pm, Hommocks Auditorium  
  Renowned learning expert, New York Times best-selling author, and co-founder of the world-famous All Kinds of Minds Institute will talk about how we can help our kids develop their unique learning styles and reach their fullest potential (co-sponsored by Larchmont Mamaroneck Listens and SEPTA).

- **May 29th** - Dr. Candida Fink, 7:30 pm, Hommocks Library

BOE Budget Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 4th</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Library Classroom-MHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Tiered Classroom-MHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>9 am - 12 pm</td>
<td>Library Classroom-MHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Library Classroom-MHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>(Adoption) Tiered Classroom-MHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>(Budget Hearing) Library Classroom-MHS</td>
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What’s Happening in Secondary Special Ed...

Hommocks staff has been busy as ever this fall. We welcomed a new staff member, Haley Weber, who is teaching 8th grade inclusion. Welcome Haley! All teachers have been involved in implementing a foundation grant to support literacy. Teachers are selecting a wide range of texts that will be available to students on a traveling cart. This will enable students to select texts with teacher support for both independent reading as well as modified texts related to curriculum.

The High School is also involved in implementing a 3 year state grant designed to develop transition services for our students. Teachers and guidance counselors have been creating credit-based internships and a college course at WCC for seniors. Supported summer employment and parent workshops are in development. All students involved will be building a portfolio to support their transition to post-secondary life.

Post secondary planning starts early. Ninth and tenth grade special class students traveled to NYC to focus on careers related to technology. Students enjoyed the SONY Wonder Tech Lab and the Professional Studios where they explored communication technologies and digital sound processing.

A group of 10th and 11th grade students are budding entrepreneurs. Students have created their own business plans based on their interests and talents. They have learned about labor charges, money management and about working towards a common goal – success! Some businesses are already up and running bringing in a profit for students.

As we discuss programs for next year and the challenges presented by inclusion, two(2) teachers are visiting neighboring districts to observe other structures at the secondary level and to bring some new ideas back for discussion. Many thanks to all for their efforts for our students and families.
What’s Happening in School Health Services...

School Health Services has had a busy year so far. The nurses, in conjunction with our school physician (Ann Engelland MD), have worked on several policies including Head Lice, Immunization Exclusion, Students with Severe Food Allergies, Classroom Management of emergency Situations, our Concussion management. The State Education Department is implementing several mandates beginning in 2008 and this required the updating of many health forms to include BMI (body mass index) measurements on all students in grades Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 7th & 10th as well as dental screenings in the younger grades.

The school nurses have been meeting monthly to keep abreast of current trends in school nursing and medicine, have had workshops with Dr. Engelland on skin rashes and staph infections, and have given out flu shots at our annual flu clinic. Along with caring for our many students (and staff members) some future plans include standardizing practice across the district and develop additional policies (pandemic flu, tuberculosis, BMI).

Parent Mentor Collaborative...Preliminary Planning

SEPTA and the Department for Student Support Services are in the early stages of development to create a network of parents who have a child with special needs and have experience with the CSE process, IDEA mandates, and understand the education “alphabet soup” jargon of Special Education. This network of mentor parents will assist new parents who are in the initial CSE process or who have questions. The special education maze is confusing and parents at times need advice. If you are interested in helping to explore the development of this concept further, please contact Amy Lieberman(dashdoar@aol.com) or Dr. Minotti (minottia@mamkschools.org). A meeting will be scheduled and you will be invited.
January 2008

Dear Parents:

It is that time of year when the staff at your child’s school prepares for CSE Annual Reviews. Every year we review your child’s program with you at an Annual CSE meeting. At least every three years, the CSE Annual Review may also include a Reevaluation meeting when a child’s eligibility for classification will be revisited. In order to coordinate this enormous system wide process of over 647 CSE meetings, the administration has been working to create a District schedule that will provide you with adequate advance notice.

To assist everyone with this major coordination process, we are requesting that you make every possible effort to attend the scheduled CSE meeting for your child. Arrangements have been made for your child’s special education teacher, general education teacher and other related service providers to be in attendance. When these meetings are cancelled and need to be rescheduled, there is additional impact on the staff’s instructional time with our children, and delays in planning for your child’s special education services for the 2008-2009 school year. Please understand that if a meeting has to be rescheduled it will occur later in the school year.

To help us better prepare for your child’s meeting, please consider the following:

1. While it would be best for you to be at the meeting in person, it is acceptable to participate by telephone rather than cancel the meeting. In giving this alternative consideration, if you can be contacted by phone please call the Office for Student Support Services and give the secretary the phone number where you can be reached.

2. Review thoroughly the Annual Review Progress and Teacher reports that you will receive prior to the CSE meeting. If you have any questions, please contact your child’s special education teacher or the school psychologist.

3. If you need further information regarding IDEA mandates or special education program descriptions, please contact the Office for Student Support Services and this information will be forwarded to you.


4. If you plan to have the CSE committee review any documents or outside evaluations, we ask that they be submitted to the Office for Student Support Services at least seven (7) days prior to the scheduled meeting. These documents will be copied and forwarded to staff.

5. If you plan on inviting any individuals to your child’s meeting, including those participating by phone, please inform the Department for Student Support Services and a packet of materials will be prepared for you to share with them for the meeting. All participants must have a copy of materials in order to fully participate at the CSE meeting.

6. If you must cancel a CSE meeting, we ask that you notify the school psychologist at the elementary level and the Department for Student Support Services (220-3060) at the secondary level.

If you have any questions prior to the Annual Review CSE, please contact the school psychologist, the principal, or us. As previously stated, we have scheduled CSE meetings well in advance as to insure your participation. In order to make this planning process work, we need your assistance. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely

cc: Principals
Assistant Principals
Student Support Services Staff

Anthony T. Minotti
Roni Kramer
Gail Boyle
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>PROGRAM DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declassification Support Services (DSS)</strong></td>
<td>Student may not require support services. CTS or resource may be recommended only if the student requires specialized instruction. Student can be monitored through articulated plan. Foreign Language exemption, if appropriate, and testing accommodations continue through graduation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consultant Teacher Services (CTS)</strong></td>
<td>The development of academic skills and/or compensatory strategies through direct intervention in the mainstream classroom. Consultation with the general education teachers to assist in the modifications necessary to meet the individual needs of students. Teacher consultation services that may be direct to the student within the classroom or indirect provided to the general education teachers. Special education teacher provides direction and support to ancillary staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resource Room (RR)</strong></td>
<td>Small group instruction designed to enable the student to benefit from learning in general education academic classes. Direct service including remediation of basic skills and study and organizational strategies to reinforce primary instruction. Consultation with general education teachers to assure that modifications and adaptations will be provided as necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resource Room/Consultant Teacher Services</strong></td>
<td>Special education teacher provides support in the form of direct and indirect services to facilitate general education participation. The academic areas requiring support through the consultant teacher service in the classroom will be based on individual student need. Student will attend a daily special skills class that will reinforce and support general education instruction through remediation of basic skills, pre-teaching and re-teaching of curriculum, modification of materials, and study and organization support to reinforce primary instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultant Teacher Services/Special Class Skills</strong></td>
<td>Specially designed academic instruction provided to a group of students with disabilities in a general education classroom by both a special education teacher and a general education teacher. Curriculum and assignments are modified to meet the individual needs of the student.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated Co-Teaching Services</strong></td>
<td>Special education teacher provides direct instruction in the academic subjects. (English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Reading. Special Instruction is equivalent to general education instruction in the academic subjects. Materials, facets of the curriculum, and assignments are modified to meet the needs of students. Students are mainstreamed as appropriate. For some students, a high level of supervision throughout the school day to ensure safety and well being in an environment where academic instruction is individualized according to cognitive and developmental levels. A non-equivalent, modified curriculum that includes daily life skills, behavior management and social skills training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Class Services</strong></td>
<td>Special education teacher provides direct instruction in the academic subjects. (English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Reading. Special Instruction is equivalent to general education instruction in the academic subjects. Materials, facets of the curriculum, and assignments are modified to meet the needs of students. Students are mainstreamed as appropriate. For some students, a high level of supervision throughout the school day to ensure safety and well being in an environment where academic instruction is individualized according to cognitive and developmental levels. A non-equivalent, modified curriculum that includes daily life skills, behavior management and social skills training.</td>
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Special Education Continuum of Services (continued)

The goal of the special class programs is to improve and strengthen the student’s abilities and skills in several areas of academics, communication and social skills. The students will participate in the special class for appropriate academics that may include social studies, science, language arts, socialization, math and reading. The students are taught in these areas through materials and teaching strategies based on their individual instructional level. A speech and language therapist will be meeting with students in the classroom setting.

SEPTA WORKSHOP....

What is auditory processing?

How is auditory processing related to language and learning?
How are auditory processing issues identified and how can they be remediated?

If you want answers to these questions and to learn more, come and listen to...

Dr. Lydia H. Soifer
Language and Speech Pathologist
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Wednesday, February 13th
7:30pm
Hommocks Library
Please join us!!!
New Mandate - “District of Location” -

What’s Happening in the Non-Public Schools...

As of July 1, 2007, “District of Location” Public Schools must provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for children with disabilities in non-public schools (i.e. French/American; St. John/Paul’s; Westchester Day – elementary/secondary). A comprehensive support service structure has been created by the Mamaroneck UFSD for CSE meetings, evaluations, direct instruction, and consultation by a 1.7 special education teacher; 1.0 speech therapist; part-time occupational therapist; school psychologist and a special education supervisor. A collaborative partnership has been established between the non-public and public school staff. Special Education and related services are provided to students with disabilities in the non-public school setting in consultation with classroom teachers and administration. All services provided to children with disabilities or their parents will be billed back to the “District of Residency” (where the student resides).

The Parent Connection Newsletter will be forwarded to parents of children with disabilities in the non-public schools, with an ongoing invitation for them to join SEPTA to network with parents, and learn from the different presentations.

Dr. Mel Levine is one of the world’s foremost experts in understanding learning differences in young people. He is co-founder of the renowned “All Kinds of Minds” Institute, and for 21 years served as Director of the Clinical Center for the Study of Development and Learning at University of North Carolina. “Raisin’ Brain: Helping our kids develop their full learning potential”. Don’t miss it!

April 17, 2008—7:30 pm
Hommocks Auditorium

Don’t miss this outstanding opportunity to learn from Dr. Levine!
DOES YOUR CHILD RECEIVE TEST ACCOMMODATIONS OR OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL?

IS HE OR SHE PLANNING TO ATTEND A TRADITIONAL FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE?

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT

Finding the right college for your child
The SAT and ACT Tests
The type of programs and support colleges offer
What documentation is required for the ACT/SAT

SEPTA* INVITES YOU TO A PARENT NETWORK

“THE ROAD TO COLLEGE”
And how to get there

TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2008
7:30 PM

Tiered Classroom at Mamaroneck High School
(enter through the glass doors on the Boston Post Road)

Parents of MHS seniors and graduates will be on hand to share their experiences navigating this complex road. We’ll also have a brief presentation by the MHS Guidance Department and the Special Ed Department on their role and resources for you and your child.

For more information, contact Naomi Lowenthal (833-2958) Diana Burr 834-3511

*Larchmont-Mamaroneck Special Education Parent Teacher Association
PARENT CONNECTION ...

Check out the updated SEPTA website
WWW.MAMKSCHOOLS.ORG

DEPARTMENT FOR STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
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Assistant Superintendent for
Student Support Services
Roni Kramer,
Director of Special Education PreK-6
Gail Boyle,
Director of Special Education Secondary

Supervisors
Ellen Most, CPSE Chairperson
Cindy McKean, Supervisor Out-of-District Placements, Non-Public Schools

Office Staff
Marguerite Caldara
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Edite Kimenis
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Mary Anne Veltri

Curriculum Coordinators
Nick Kourabas, Guidance Counselors
Marge Gasthalter, Speech Therapists
Laurie Olson, Occupational Therapists
Barbara Merling, Psychologists
Lisa Kmetz, Assistive Technology
Karen Cofino, School Nurses

SEPTA-President
Amy Lieberman
Special Education Parent ~ Teacher Association