

**BERKELEY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL SERVICES**

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We wanted to take a moment to address some questions that have made their way to us regarding moving forward with the collaborative-consultation model (“consultative model”) for the delivery of special education support at the secondary level. First and foremost, we are moving forward, as planned. Dr. Katherine Vroman of the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE) has been working closely with the district throughout the last year to support us with training, consultation and problem-solving and she continues to do so in this remote environment. In consultation with Dr. Vroman, we have developed a plan to conduct the co-planning professional development (previously scheduled for May/June) virtually, with both a recorded informational training as well as a live discussion session, for the teachers involved in the model in 2020-2021.

For the 2020-2021 school year, we will be implementing some positive changes to the delivery of special education in grades 6, 9 and 10. The purpose of slowly rolling out some of these changes is to 1) focus comprehensively on a smaller group of staff/students to ensure success and 2) be sure that we have any challenges worked out for the additional grades the following year.

The ALL (Academic Learning Lounge) room, a location we have planned at CMS and GLHS next year, will have a special education teacher available during most periods in order to provide assistance to any student who may need support or specially designed instruction. It is also a location where special education teachers can work with small groups of students at various points in the day. While we do envision this becoming a resource for many students, it will primarily be a resource directed to students with IEPs. Students will have an opportunity to access this setting and receive additional support depending on their individual needs. There will be a special education teacher in the ALL room for much of the school day, including lunch. Special education teachers are certified to provide support in all academic subjects, while some also happen to have additional content certifications - technically speaking, all special education teachers can provide support in all things. However, if a teacher doesn't feel he/she has the background to assist on something that is significantly content-specific, he/she will work with the student to advocate and coordinate a time that the student can get that support. As with all aspects of what we do as a department, we will be closely monitoring each component of our programming and adjusting as necessary, based on feedback about individual students.

Furthermore, Special Services has recently contracted with NJCIE to provide additional virtual training this spring, on a variety of topics that came up in our secondary level meetings/discussions with staff. The training sessions will address items such as classroom management, paraprofessional support in a consultative model and topics that help make classrooms more accessible to students with disabilities. We are taking advantage of

the time that teachers and paraprofessionals are instructing remotely and allowing them to work through the added training at their own pace this spring, summer and fall. Special Services will be setting up in-person follow-up training in the fall to expand on many of these topics and provide ongoing support and coaching to the teachers.

Finally, the district will be exploring New Jersey Inclusive Education Technical Assistance Project, announced today. The NJIETA project is a collaborative effort between the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education (OSE), the Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health (CAECMH), and the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE). NJIETA is designed for the collaborators to partner with public, charter, and vocational schools to provide Technical Assistance and Systemic Change Facilitation to develop more inclusive educational opportunities. NJIETA will also work to develop a statewide vision for more inclusive schools through the Inclusion Leadership Development Group.

An informational recording on the district's inclusive strategic planning goal and the consultative model have been posted on the parent training portion of our Special Services website and can be found here:

<https://www.bhpsnj.org/Page/6734>

Please continue to stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Michele Gardner
Director of Special Services

Kevin Morra
Supervisor of Special Education