

# WAYLAND \* PUBLIC \* SCHOOLS



September 3, 2021

Hello everyone,

Welcome to school year 21-22 which we are all hoping is a little less dramatic than the previous two. I hope you were all able to rest and relax over the summer and that the first few days of school treated you kindly. We returned to school last week with a mixture of excitement, trepidation, joy and anxiety all of which were perfectly understandable. I do believe that if we continue to treat each other with patience, respect and flexibility we can reach a place where the excitement and joy can outweigh all other thoughts. This will allow all of us to do our best work together, which is always, always the goal.

This letter is designed to bring you up to speed as to my current thinking and our plans for the year. My hope is that you read it all the way through, even though it may not all apply to you! It's important to me that you are all thinking, as parents and caregivers, how you can support the IEP team in the work they are engaging in with your student. The work continues to challenge all of us, as it should, to be our best selves and to give everything we can to support your student. Please continue to support the special student education staff as thoughtfully as you have over the recent, challenging, school years.

**New Special Education Staff:** there are a number of new staff, noted below, who have joined us this year. They all got off to a great start last week, getting to know your students and settling into their new workspaces. I know that you will give them all a warm welcome to Wayland as the opportunity presents itself.

- Casey Haskell: Occupational Therapist at Happy Hollow and Loker
- Mary Ellen Heilman: Speech & Language Pathologist at Claypit and the preschool
- Kaitlyn LeBaron: Behavior Specialist, Districtwide
- Rebecca O'Murchadha: Special Education Teacher at Loker
- Lydia McDaniel: Speech & Language Pathologist at the preschool
- Matthew Souza: Special Education Teacher at Claypit
- Hailey Suarez: Speech & Language Pathology Assistant at Claypit (covering a leave of absence)
- Courtney Tuttle: Special Education Teacher at the preschool

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**Professional Development:** we are continuing to offer several professional development opportunities to the special education staff, some of which are noted below. They will also continue to work with their general education colleagues on school and district based initiatives.

- [Allan Blume](#) will continue his work with us on IEP writing. This year will be our third year working with Allan and he has helped us develop a district wide consistent approach to IEP writing.
- **Michael Neiman** from [Futures Education](#) will continue working with the Speech & Language Pathologists for the third year running. The expertise he provides as a practicing SLP has been invaluable to our district speech staff.
- [Angela DeSilva Mousseau](#), a Professor at Rivier University, will continue to work with some of our specialized classrooms offering her guidance and expertise in social emotional learning and best practices in behavioral interventions.
- We are starting a new partnership this year with [the Collaborative for Educational Services](#) which is based in Northampton, MA. This professional development will occur throughout the school year and will focus on 'IEP Meeting Facilitation'.

**IEP Meetings:** The Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) has provided guidance that IEP meetings can remain virtual for the foreseeable future. The district has switched to Google Meet which offers the same functionality as 'Zoom' as well as seamlessly linking with other district technology. I anticipate that most of you will continue to want to meet virtually as it is convenient to many of you who might otherwise need to take time off work to meet in person.

We can, however, meet in person if you so choose. This option, however, presents a unique set of problems in terms of finding appropriate space and making sure that we meet all Covid related protocols. If you think that you would like to have an in person IEP meeting this year please [complete this form](#) as soon as possible. We will need time to prepare and reserve the right to revert to a virtual meeting if all safety considerations cannot be met.

**DESE Parent Letter:** DESE has released two documents that we have been asked, as a district, to share with you. At these links you will find the '[Family Letter](#)' and the '[Family FAQ](#)'. Please take the time to read both of these

documents so you are aware of their content. Information contained in these documents is guidance and we will act accordingly on a case by case basis.

In summary, March 2020 to June 2021 was the most challenging professional experience of my working and personal life as I am sure it was for you. A lot of decisions were made about special education in Wayland, sometimes in very quick order in response to changing guidance and prevailing health conditions. Please know that all the decisions we made were in line with DESE guidance and complied with all special education mandates and district responsibilities.

I remain proud of all the work we accomplished together under very difficult circumstances. There is much work to be done, as always. It may well be challenging and frustrating at times as it always is. Special education will never be easy, but the rewards are always amazing as we continue to work together. After thirty plus years of this work I remain excited every day to see what your students can accomplish. They are amazing, unique, talented and wonderful human beings. I look forward to an exciting school year and am always optimistic about what we are able to accomplish together.

With respect to all,

*Richard Whitehead*

Richard Whitehead M.Ed  
Director of Student Services  
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