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September 20, 2023

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of introduction and welcome you to the 2023-24 school year. I am honored to have the opportunity to lead the Special Education Department as the Interim Director of Student Services for the Wayland Public Schools. I started in early July and spent time meeting with administrators, staff, and many parents. For the past two weeks, since school started, I have visited schools and programs to watch our students engage in the learning process. I am excited to be working alongside such a committed and talented staff on behalf of your children.

I want to take this opportunity to share some important information.

Parent Notice of Procedural Safeguards (PNPS) - Federal law requires school districts to provide the PNPS once per year to all families of eligible students with disabilities. In addition to the annual distribution of the PNPS, school districts must give the PNPS to parents upon:

- an initial evaluation request by the parent or another person;
- parental request at any time; and
- removal of a student with a disability from his or her placement to an interim alternative education setting as a result of discipline.

The Parent Notice of Procedural Safeguards can be found on the DESE website in multiple languages. Click [here](#) to view and download the procedural safeguards.

SEPAC – Wayland is fortunate to have a supportive and active Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). The SEPAC is a volunteer organization comprised of parents, guardians and caregivers of students with disabilities as well as other individuals interested in special education. Here is a link to [SEPAC's webpage](#) where you can peruse their activities. SEPAC will host monthly meetings beginning in October and is planning several special workshops this year.

The 2023 -24 schedule is listed below. All meetings will be held from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the School Committee Room at the Town Building unless otherwise noted.

- October 12, 2023 @ Wayland High School Lecture Hall, 2nd floor
- November 2, 2023 @ Wayland High School Lecture Hall, 2nd floor; start time 7:00 p.m.
- December 7, 2023
- January 4, 2024
- February 1, 2024
- March 7, 2024
- April 4, 2024
- May 2, 2024
- June 6, 2024

Be on the lookout for more information about upcoming SEPAC meetings and events!

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) – There are two updates from our work with DESE.

1. This year, Wayland will participate in a process called **Tiered Focused Monitoring**. All school districts in Massachusetts are reviewed every three years through this process. This review emphasizes elements most tied to student outcomes, and alternates the focus every three years. The focus of Wayland's review includes:
 - a. Student identification
 - b. IEP development
 - c. Programming and support services
 - d. Equal opportunity

During the week of December 11, 2023, an on-site team from DESE will be in Wayland for meetings with families and school personnel. An informational session with DESE is planned for the first half hour of the November 2nd SEPAC Meeting. More information will be forthcoming as the time draws nearer.

2. **New IEP** – For the first time in twenty years, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) document is being revised. The new IEP must be used by school districts by the fall of 2024. Wayland will spend this school year learning about the new IEP in preparation for full implementation the following year. The overarching goals of the new IEP are to:
- Increase effective and efficient collaboration between general educators, special educators, related service providers, families, and students.
 - Support teachers to know how to respond to the needs of students with disabilities and use that knowledge to proactively work with students across the curriculum frameworks and the life of the school.
 - Promote a high-functioning process for evaluation and ongoing assessment across environments.
 - Develop student-centered IEPs driven by data and written to ensure that students will gain knowledge and skills to prepare themselves effectively for postsecondary opportunities, career training options, economically viable careers, and healthy, productive lives.
 - Support families of students with disabilities to understand how their student learns and interacts with the life of the school, as well as what the individualized program and outcomes will be during the course of the school year.
 - Promote student voice and engage students in their own IEP process.

Click on this link to view the [New IEP Document](#).

Communication – The foundation of special education is built on the concept of a Team to support each child. We view parents, guardians and caregivers as partners on each child's special education Team. A strong Team is essential for each student's success. We look forward to partnering with you to support your child throughout the school year. In addition to myself, there are a few additional individuals I would like to introduce to you as primary contacts for special education at each of the schools in our district.

Ronnie Kessler, Assistant Director of Student Services/Out of District Coordinator Ronnie_Kessler@waylandps.org
Katie Chagnon, The Children's Way Early Childhood Coordinator, Katharine_Chagnon@waylandps.org
Meridith Palmer, Claypit Hill Special Education Team Leader Meridith_Palmer@waylandps.org
Kristin Fay, Happy Hollow Special Education Team Leader Kristin_Fay@waylandps.org
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Thank you for your individual and collective support of our students, programs and schools. Feel free to contact any of us regarding the contents of this letter or any other matter. We are here to collaborate with you and support your children. We invite and welcome your input, questions, and feedback regarding special education in Wayland.

Best wishes for a wonderful school year.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dixon

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