

August Update~Special Education Services in Seattle Schools

At Seattle Public Schools our goal is to provide an excellent education for every child. The improvements we are making to the way we serve our students are key examples of how we are moving toward this goal.

Integrated Comprehensive Services: Forty elementary and K-8 schools in Seattle will be serving students who are part of the “ICS” model, receiving supports and services in the least restrictive environment.

In most cases, there are one to two ICS students in a school. Each school with ICS students has been given additional staffing to provide supports so that students have maximum success.

A few key definitions to keep in mind:

Integrated:

“Students with a variety of needs and gifts learn together in both small and large groupings that are flexible in nature. A school then becomes a community where all spaces are for all learners and shared in a manner to provide the most synthesized instruction for each student.”

Comprehensive:

The school offers an “array of services and supports in addition to a curriculum and instruction that is differentiated to accommodate various learning needs of children to ensure their school success.”

(See http://newhorizons.org/spneeds/inclusion/systems/frattura_capper.htm for an informative article by Professor Elise Frattura and Colleen Capper)

The Summer Institutes: We are offering two Collaborative Summer Institutes this week, August 17-21, at Madison Middle School and West Seattle High School. The Madison Institute is for ICS teams, including principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants, and related service providers from our Elementary and K-8 schools, and is co-presented with the Bilingual Department in the morning session on collaboration and co-teaching.

The West Seattle Institute is for Elementary and Secondary teams, including principals, teachers, and instructional assistants.

Over 150 participants are learning together at the Madison Institute. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Professor Ilene Schwartz (<http://education.washington.edu/areas/edspe/profiles/schwartz.html>) from the University of Washington taught a captivated crowd about positive behavior support and powerful interventions for students with learning disabilities.

On Thursday, a panel of teachers, students, and parents will present their experiences and perspectives at the West Seattle Institute.

Presenters review evaluations at the end of each day in order to make adjustments and ensure that the pace and focus of learning is meeting the needs of the school staff who will be serving your student.

Schools and individuals who were not able to attend the Institutes will receive customized training at their sites from Instructional Coaches, Consulting Teachers, and Supervisors.

Check out pictures of the Institutes at

<http://seattlespecialeducation.blogspot.com/>

Transitions: I have spoken with principals and counselors from many Seattle schools this summer to determine the consistency and efficacy of our procedures as students “rise” from grade to grade, with particular focus on level changes (from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school). I am compiling a thorough list of procedures with the goal of ensuring fidelity of process throughout our schools.

Middle School consulting teachers visited each school site in the Spring of 2009 to ensure that 6th grade IEPs were in place and schedules were being developed for students receiving Special Education Services. They also ensured that 8th grade IEPs were delivered to High Schools. In most High Schools, Special Education department heads work with the counselor, registrar, and grade level administrator to make sure that a schedule is built that will meet each student’s IEP learning goals.

If you have a concern about the transition or riser process, please contact Becky Clifford at rlclifford@seattleschools.org or Marni Campbell at macampbell@seattleschools.org.

Mark your Calendars! Get ready for an all-day family event sponsored by the Special Education PTSA on Saturday, October 17th, from 9-2 (coffee served at 8:30) titled “Best Practices for Inclusive Schools.”

Presenters will include Dr. Elise Frattura, the Krueger family, of National Leaders for Autism Speaks, and a local panel of educators and families. This day of connection and opportunity will take place at the John Stanford Center. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us!

Thank you for all you do to ensure that our students at SPS get an education that prepares them to graduate ready for college, careers, and life.