

September 1st 2010

Dear Parents/Families:

I hope you had a restful and joyful summer.

The Office of Special Education has worked diligently over the last few months to hire exceptional staff to support our students. As you may recall, three new positions were added to the budget to support the Structured Academics Program (for emotionally fragile students). The positions included a Teacher in Charge, a Behavior Specialist and a Social Worker/School Adjustment Counselor.

Mr. Robert Kelley has been hired for the position of **Teacher in Charge**. Rob has worked for the Cambridge Public Schools for over twelve (12) years in different capacities. These include: Teacher in Charge for the Transition Program, Rise Up Program Coordinator, and Special Education teacher, among others. He holds a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership and a Master's degree in Special Education. Mr. Kelley will be supervising the Structured Academics Program and Behavior Specialists. He can be reached at rkelley@cpsd.us or at 617-349-6701.

The **School Adjustment Counselor** position has been filled by Ms. Natalia Rosenbaum. Natalia has worked as a school adjustment counselor in Medford and Somerville. She holds a Master's degree from Cambridge College in School Adjustment Counseling and a Bachelor's degree in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies. She may be reached at nrosenbaum@cpsd.us or at 617-349-6501.

The **Behavior Specialist** position was posted and interviews were completed. The job was offered and accepted; unfortunately the candidate called and informed the district that she could no longer accept the job. Therefore the position has been re-posted and we are expecting to complete interviews by the third week of September.

Another staff member hired as part of the OSE administrative team is the **Teacher in Charge of Autism**. This position was filled by Ms. Stephanie Barney. Ms. Barney is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and also holds a Master's degree in Special Education. She has worked for the May Institute for the last seven (7) years as a Senior Teacher and Educational Team Case Manager. Stephanie will be responsible for the supervision of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Program and will assist staff with any student on the spectrum that is currently fully mainstreamed in the general education setting. Therefore, the work previously completed by Ms. Megan Joy from the May Institute, will be delivered by Ms. Barney. She may be reached at 617-349-6502 or at sbarney@cpsd.us.

As you may already know, last June parents elected Mark Gardner and Terry McKay as co-chairs of the Cambridge Parent Advisory Council on Special Education (C PAC). I am happy to inform you that a Coordinator has been hired. Ms. Rosalie Rippey, King School parent, has already started to work with the C PAC co-chairs and myself in this capacity. Three parents, including the C PAC co-chairs were part of the interview and hiring process. Rosalie has experience in communications, marketing and fundraising. She has also written grants and done public speaking, all necessary skills for this job. Rosalie is currently working on securing speakers and scheduling C PAC meetings, developing a brochure with information about our department and services provided by the district, among other things. A brochure of upcoming C PAC meetings is included with this letter.

Also, Mark and Terry have worked with a consultant to create a website for the C PAC. The site is <http://cambridgespedpac.org>. They created this website as a resource to you and to keep you inform of upcoming events.

Cambridge Parent Advisory Council Co-chairs Contact Information:

Mark Gardner
 markgardner@jenningsfishman.com
 617-909-5083

Terry McKay
 trymckay@yahoo.com
 617-864-6438

Special Education PAC Coordinator
 Rosalie Rippey
 rrippey@cpsd.us
 617-593-4402

Lastly, as a quick update about the Special Education Evaluation process, our next step is to conduct focus groups for parents. We have secured September 27th and 28th for WestEd staff to hold these groups. The focus groups have been divided by elementary/middle schools and high school. The schedule is as follows:

Location	Date/Time	Groups
Morse School Library	September 27 th 5:30 pm- 7:00 pm	Elementary/Middle Schools Parents
Morse School Library	September 27 th 7:30 pm- 9:00pm	High School Parents
Thorndike Street-Superintendent's Conference Room (Second Floor)	September 28 th 9:00 am – 10:30 am	Elementary, Middle and High School Parents
Kennedy Longfellow-Activity Room	September 28 th 5:30 pm- 7:00 pm	High School Parents
Kennedy Longfellow-Activity Room	September 28 th 7:30 pm- 9:00pm	Elementary/Middle School Parents

We have scheduled two of the focus groups in the evening and one will be during the day to provide access to as many parents as possible. ***Childcare will be available only for the evening meetings.*** If you are unable to attend to any of these focus groups, an online and/or paper survey will also be available for parents to complete at a later time.

A focus groups host from WestED is bilingual (Spanish), therefore she will be able to translate in Spanish in all groups. I have secured a Portuguese speaking translator that will be available on September 27th and a Haitian Creole translator that will be available on September 28th. If you prefer to have access to a translator other language besides Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole please contact me at your earliest convenience so I can try to secure additional translators that might be needed. I can be reached at 617-349-6509 or aramos@cpsd.us.

Focus groups cannot be larger than 15 people at a time. Therefore, we will need for parents that are willing and able to attend a focus group to contact Rosalie Rippey (rippsey@cpsd.us or 617-593-4402) and let her know of your attendance. **You will not have to provide your name as this process in anonymous; however, you will have to indicate the number of participants and which focus group you would like to attend.** Please make sure you attend only one group to allow other parents to also participate as spaces are limited.

On sad note, our Out of District Team Leader, Ms. Olga Garriga accepted a new job closer to home and has resigned. This position has been posted and we are expecting to complete interviews by no later than the third week of September.

Lastly, Cambridge Public Schools website has been updated with current information regarding Special Education and it is our hope that we will keep frequently updating the website with the latest information. I invite you to check www2.cpsd.us under Special Education.

As you can see a lot of exciting things are happening in Special Education. As soon as I have more information I will share it with you.

If you have any questions, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you and have a great school year.

Aida Ramos, Ed. D.
Executive Director-Office of Special Education