

## Preparing for Annual Review Meetings

### New Individualized Education Program Form

At the annual review meetings this spring, the District will be using the model IEP form that has been mandated for all districts in New York State beginning with the 2011-12 school year. The model IEP form will provide a consistent format for all IEPs developed in NYS beginning with the 2011-12 school year.

Staff are now preparing IEPs using these new forms and you will begin to see the new forms when you meet or discuss your child's future IEP with staff prior to annual review. Additional guidance on IEP development may be found at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/iepguidance.htm>.

The guidance document provides important information on federal and State requirements relating to IEPs that must be considered in developing instructionally relevant and legally correct IEPs.

### FYI: What to expect during Annual Reviews

In the spring of each year, the Committee on Special Education (CSE) meets to discuss each student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The purpose of the meeting is to review the progress the student has made as a result of this year's plan and to develop a plan for the coming year.

Your participation in this meeting is important for your child. You will be meeting with your child's special education teacher before the annual review meeting to discuss goals, objectives, services, and any concerns or questions you have. This will help resolve any questions you have and will help you and the team draft the IEP.



The following tips can help you get the most from your child's meeting.

- **Be prepared.** You will receive a copy of the draft IEP one week prior to the meeting. If you do not receive the draft IEP, call your child's special education teacher or CSE Chairperson
- **Read through the draft.** Make notes of your questions and ideas right on the draft. Make a list of questions you want to ask during the meeting. If you have many questions or concerns about the draft IEP, call your child's special education teacher or your CSE Chairperson for a discussion of your concerns before the meeting.
- **Know your rights and the special education regulations.** The PPS Office has provided you with a copy of the booklet; Children are Special, which describes the CSE process, regulations and your rights. The booklet also provides information on the CPSE and CSE meetings. A copy of your due process rights is available in the PPS office and on the district Web site.

Continued on page 2



## Important Notice for Parents Who Children Attend Nonpublic Schools

As of July 18, 2007 the district of location (school district within whose boundaries a nonpublic school is located) is responsible for all evaluations, CSE meetings and special education services. For example, if your child lives in Bethlehem but goes to a private school in the Albany district, Albany School District will be providing all services. If you live in another district but your child attends a non-public school in Bethlehem, the Bethlehem district will provide all services. If you would like the Bethlehem School District to arrange for services for your child in a nonpublic school, send your written request to the PPS Office, Bethlehem High School, 700 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054 no later than June 1 each year. If you have any questions, please contact Judy Covey at the PPS Office (439-8886 ext. 4).

*"We provide special education services that meet the individual needs of the child, are developmentally appropriate and strength-based. These services are planned in collaboration with all the child-serving systems involved in the child's life and are provided in a supportive learning environment."*

Special Education Principles

## Continued from page 1: What to Expect During Annual Reviews

- **Participate in the meeting.** We try to schedule the meeting at a time that is convenient for you. If you are unable to come to the meeting, you can participate by phone. It is difficult for the committee to make decisions without your input.
- **Encourage your child to attend.** Students who are 15 years of age or older are invited to participate in their CSE meeting. Encourage your secondary-aged child to come to the meeting and participate in his/her IEP. Your child's participation may help him or her benefit from the IEP and will help your child develop self-advocacy skills.
- **Be open to possible solutions.** Parents and school staff may have different opinions on the best way to address a student's educational needs. Differences can be resolved positively if all participants work cooperatively and collaboratively.
- **Express yourself.** CSE meetings can be intimidating due to the large number of people who participate. Be honest and clear in expressing your thoughts. The annual review meeting is to focus on your child's plan for next year. You may need to express your concerns about things that did not go as well as planned this year, but then move on. Stay positive and focused on what is needed for next year.
- **Bring help.** If it is helpful to you, bring a friend to assist and support you. Another person who knows your child well may also be helpful to you. Other parents who are familiar with the IEP process may be helpful. If you are planning to bring someone with you, notify the CSE secretary at 439-8886.
- **Negotiate and communicate.** In some instances it may be necessary to negotiate issues. Communicate specific items you wish to discuss to the CSE Chairperson prior to the meeting. A pre-conference may be helpful to discuss various options and ideas.



## A New Language To Speak

Special education staff, actually all educators, tend to use acronyms when they are speaking about education issues. This may be especially true at your CSE meeting. Here are some acronyms that may be used that are unfamiliar to you.

**FBA—Functional Behavioral Assessment.** This is an assessment that may be recommended or may have been completed for a student who has behaviors that interfere with his/her learning or the learning of others. The assessment looks at behavior and tries to determine the cause of the behavior.

**BIP—Behavior Intervention Plan.** This is an individualized plan designed to reduce interfering behaviors and encourage positive behaviors.

**CPSE—Committee on Preschool Special Education.** This is a multi-disciplinary team appointed by the Board of Education to determine eligibility and appropriate services for students with disabilities.

**CSE—Committee on Special Education.** This is a multi-disciplinary team appointed by the Board of Education to determine eligibility and appropriate services for students with disabilities.

**IEP—Individualized Education Program or Plan.** The IEP is a written plan developed by the CSE for a student with a disability.

**PLEP—Present Levels of Educational Performance.** This is a section of the IEP that identifies your child's strengths and needs in the following areas: learning and academic, social, physical, and management.

**G, I or C—Group, Individual, or Consult Services** may be listed on the IEP as G, I, or C. Individual means your child is being seen one-to-one with the service provider. Group means your child is with other students with the service provider. Consult means the provider is working with your child's teacher or other providers on behalf of your student.

**VESID—Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities.** This is the office in the NYS Education Department that oversees the educational and vocational services for individuals with disabilities from age 3 throughout adulthood. There are local VESID offices that can help your child with the transition from high school.

## What is assistive technology?

Referred to as AT, assistive technology is any piece of equipment or device that helps a student with a disability improve functioning in their environment. Computers, specialized keyboards, portable reading devices, many software programs, and communication devices as well as equipment that assists with walking, hearing or seeing better are examples of assistive technology.

At school, assistive technology supports learning and promotes greater independence for students with special education needs. Bethlehem's special education program includes assistive technology support to the classroom, family and individual students. The assistive technology specialist helps others become confident users of technology within the educational setting.

AT assessments for individual students and consultation to special education programs is provided to implement technology when a student is having difficulty completing required tasks. The AT Specialist provides training, consultation and support to teachers, parents and staff when determining the selection, acquisition and use of assistive technology devices, helping students meet the goals of their individual educational program. The AT Specialist also provides direction, training and support during this process. Individual assessments usually consist of time directly with the student, observation and consultation with teacher and parents. Consults occur as needed, at the request of any team member. With successful implementation, students gain the ability to complete tasks that they were previously unable to accomplish. For more information please consult our website or contact Eileen Pasquini at the PPS office.

## Looking for Parent Representatives

We are looking for parents who would like to be parent representatives as Committee on Special Education meetings. This role is very important to the parents of students with disabilities and to the district. You can make a real contribution by being a support to families as they go through the special education process. If you are interested, please contact Rita D. Levay, Director of Pupil Personnel at [levarhs@bcSD.neric.org](mailto:levarhs@bcSD.neric.org)



## Assessing Student Progress

In our efforts to provide the highest quality special education services to the children in our District, we are continually working to improve our services. In 2006-2007 we began using rubrics as an additional method for measuring and reporting progress on IEP goals. A rubric is an assessment tool that evaluates a student's work by measuring it against a set of scoring criteria or "rubric."

Each year you will receive copies of the rubric(s) that are referenced on your child's IEP. They will be used to document progress throughout the year. Data will be gathered according to the assessment schedule indicated in your child's IEP and progress will be reported to you at report card time. Although you are receiving only the rubric(s) that related to your child, all rubrics are available for your viewing on the district website.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's case manager.

### What is a rubric?

A rubric is a scoring guide that evaluates a student's performance based on a full range of criteria rather than a single numerical score. It is an assessment tool that evaluates students' work by measuring it against a set of scoring criteria or "rubric." Rubrics are a way to assess skills and behaviors that are not measures easily by written tests. They can be used in the observation of student's performance and behavior in different settings and at different times. For example, when assessing a student's social communication skills, the evaluator observes the student in a social situation and uses the rubric to note the student's performance level initiating a topic, taking turns, etc.

Rubrics can also be used in assessing a student's skills using the student's schoolwork at different points in time. For example, when assessing a student's skills in written expression, the evaluator uses the rubric to note the student's performance on several samples of the student's writing. These writing samples may be assignments done in English class, resource room or other classes. The special education rubric is used to measure the student's progress on his/her writing goals and is not tied to the grade in the other class.

A scoring rubric will help teachers define performance expectations and plan how to help students achieve it. It will also provide parents with a breakdown of the skills that will be taught and assessed toward attainment of the annual

goal. Rubrics generally use a four-point rating and the criteria for each rating is clearly defined on the rubric.

### Testing Accommodations

Test accommodations are changes in testing procedures or test formats that provide students with disabilities an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without being penalized for the disability. Test accommodations to be provided to a student are determined by the CSE and indicated on the IEP.

The CSE is provided guidelines by the NYS Education Department on allowable test accommodations and how to make determinations for a student.

The CSE must determine the minimum accommodation required to allow the student to participate in the test and demonstrate his/her skills and knowledge. The accommodation selected must alter the standard administration of the test to the least extent possible. The CSE must not provide an accommodation because the student would benefit from the accommodation, but because the student needs the accommodation. Accommodations are not intended to overcome lack of knowledge or skills. The fact that a student would achieve a higher score with the accommodation is not an appropriate criterion for providing an accommodation. There must be a relationship between the student's disability and the accommodation provided.

Test accommodations that are identified by the CSE as needed for the student are added to the IEP. Once listed on the IEP, these accommodations must be used by the student in all testing situations. A student may not decide to use the accommodation at some times and not others. Nor may a teacher decide to provide the accommodation at some times and not others. The need for the accommodation must be such that it is needed on all tests as described on the IEP.

There are specific criteria for the provision of some accommodations. For example, only secondary students who are reading below the 4th grade level may have tests read as an accommodation. For most accommodations, though, it is a discussion of what the student needs. Therefore, it is important to get input from the student and the student's teachers about what accommodations the student uses consistently and continues to need.



## Test Scores: What do they mean?

Teachers and psychologists use standardized tests, often norm-referenced tests, to provide the CSE with information to make decisions about eligibility for special education services and to determine need for specific services. At the meeting, you may often be confused when you hear discussions about percentile, stanines, and grade equivalent. Hopefully, this information can help you understand the test scores of your child. But don't be afraid to ask for an explanation at the meeting. Regulations required that at least one member of the CSE be able to interpret test scores for the other members of the Committee.

A non-referenced test compares an individual student's performance on the test with other students of the same age or grade who have taken the test. The student's performance on the test can be stated as a percentile, a stanine, a standard, or grade or age equivalent score.

Age equivalent scores may seem easy to understand but are often misunderstood. An age equivalent score means that the student has the same score as the average student at that grade level. It does not mean that the student has achieved the skills or knowledge at that grade level. Age equivalent scores are constructed so that half of the students at any grade level will fall below that grade level.

Percentile scores tell the percentage of the students in the norm group who have scored lower than the student in question. It does not mean the percentage correct that the student achieved. A percentile score between 25 and 75 percent is within the average range.

Standard scores tell how far the student's score is from the mean or average score of the norm group. On most tests the average is between 90 and 110.

Stanine scores are scores on a nine-unit scale from 1 to 9, where a score of 5

is right in the middle. The highest stanine is 9; the lowest is 1. Stanine scores of 4, 5, and 6 are considered within the average range.

Test scores from standardized tests are only one source of information that a CSE uses to discuss a student's progress and determine services needed for the coming year. Performance in class as indicated by report card grades, behavioral scales, authentic assessments, observational data, and reading inventories are just examples of other types of information that may be used.

If you have information from tests your child has had outside of school or from counselors or physicians your child sees, please share this with your child's teacher before the CSE meeting. This information may be very useful in developing your child's IEP for the coming year.

*"We recognize that the child's family is the primary support system for the child and participates in all stages of the decision-making planning process."*

Special Education Principles

### Extended School Year Program for 2011

Each summer the district again provides a wide variety of programs for students who qualify for Extended School Year Program (ESY). All ESY programs will be held at Eagle Elementary School.

#### Mark Your Calendars

Extended School Year Program Summer 2011

July 4 (Holiday) through August 12

Details coming this spring.



6

## Special Education Website Check us out online!

Check out our new website. It contains a vast amount of information and resources for families. We also post family training and links to national resources on our site. Go to <http://bethlehemschools.org> and click on special education.



### PPS Who's Who

PPS Director	Rita D. Levay	levarhs@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886
Administrative Assistant	Sheri Noel	snoel@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 1
High School/Middle School CSE Chair	Michele Goldman	mgoldman@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886
CSE Secretary	Nancy Alexander	alexnh@s@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 3
Slingerlands, Glenmont, Eagle, Elsmere Hamagrael CSE Chair	Kathy Johnston	kjohnkhs@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886
CSE Secretary	Janet Tripp	Jtrips@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 5
Clarksville/CPSE Chairperson	Elaine Cammisa	cammehs@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886
CPSE/CSE Secretary	Judy Covey	covejhs@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 4
Assistive Technology Specialist	Eileen Pasquini	epasquini@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 6
Secretary - Purchasing	Leona Teator	teatlhs@bcsd.neric.org	439-8886 ext 7

For an emergency or to reach the operator use extension 0. Fax number 439-8765

Bethlehem Central School District  
 Pupil Personnel Services—Special Education  
 700 Delaware Ave.  
 Delmar, NY 12054

**Board of Education**  
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 Diane Biacone Stever, Vice President  
 Laura Ladd Bierman  
 Michael Cooper  
 Matt Downey  
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 Diane Biacone Stever

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