#### APRIL 2017

# WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT SERVICES

Spring Newsletter 2017

#### Celebrations in Professional Development!

This year our department has been engaged in hours of meaningful learning opportunities. Below you can find a list of what we have been considering as a department.

- Technology (Assistive, Adaptive, Augmented)
- ♦ Autism in the Classroom
- $\diamond$  ADHD in the Classroom
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Mindfulness
- $\diamond$  Crisis Prevention Institute
- ♦ Collaborative Problem Solving
- Reading Strategies
- Social Emotional Health and Well-being
- ♦ Grief
- ♦ Mindfulness
- ♦ Inclusion
- ♦ Co-Teaching
- Positive Social Interactions
- Peer Buddies
- Foundational skills for our Teaching Assistants
- ♦ First Aid
- Literacy and Dyslexia
- Legal Training
- IEP Writing
- Section 504

♦ ...and much much more

#### Abilities Expo 2017

We are thrilled to present our first ever Abilities Expo in collaboration with the LACD.

On April 30, 2017 from 12:30-4:00 p.m. at Livingston High School ~ we will have nearly 100 vendors to share their resources, research, and strategies. In addition, we will have breakout groups to offer families direct experience with some techniques that our experts use with children and adults with disabilities.

Please stop by for a few minutes or spend the afternoon. We will be entering through the Cafeteria doors in the faculty parking lot.

For additional information, please visit www.livingston.org/abilities\_expo



LISA CAPONE-STEIGER ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF STUDENT SERVICES

KRYSTIE LOEUIS SUPERVISOR OF TRANSITION SERVICES TODD MITCHELL SECONDARY SUPERVISOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION BLAIR ROSENTHAL ELEMENTARY SUPERVISOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TINA RENGA DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF GUIDANCE

#### Mindfulness Across our District

Mindfulness, the key principle of Buddhism, is helping students achieve a higher level of self-awareness, and it has been introduced with great success at all six elementary schools in the District.

Elementary Counselors have brought mindfulness to their schools, and they have incorporated techniques such as meditation and focused breathing to students with the goal of creating a calm, "centered" school environment. Mindfulness helps students learn how to self-regulate their behaviors and emotions, to become more reflective and less reactive, and to manage their stress. With the support of the Livingston Municipal Alliance Committee Grant, counselors have created "Calming Corners" for students in need of a break. These quiet corners of their offices are filled with soothing items equipped to help a student de-escalate when upset or just to relax from a busy day. Each counselor has filled their office library with books to include, The Peaceful Piggy, Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda, and Moody Cow Mediates for students to read.

At Burnet Hill and Collins Elementary Schools, students engage in a "mindful moment" where they practice keeping their bodies and minds still and quiet. It begins with a chime, and students start to focus on their breathing. Relaxing music can found playing in the counselor's office while students are coloring and participating in activities that promote a calming effect.

At Harrison, *Mindfulness and Mindset – The Power of Yet* is this year's school-wide initiative. Prior to the start of the school year, each staff member created a "mindful bottle" filled with water and glitter to be displayed in his or her classroom. The counselor worked with students to understand the connection between their minds and their bodies. Students were shown how to slow down and simply "be" through a variety of "mindful" lessons. The school counselor implemented additional lessons on how the brain works, how students learn and receive information, and what happens to their bodies and their minds when they are experiencing stress and anxiety.

Along the same lines as Harrison, at MPE, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers plan to hold a book club with parents in June. Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* will be discussed. The focus will be on how people tend to have one of two basic perspectives about their own capacity – a fixed or a growth mindset. Participants will consider mindset and mindfulness together.

Caring At Hillside, the Communities initiative is in its third year. This year's focus is centered on Mindfulness. Every member of the Hillside community has made a "Mindful Glitter Jar" and has practiced ways to be more stress-free and peaceful. In addition, the counselor has worked with teachers and students on learning simple strategies to redirect their thoughts back to the present. Lessons on "mindful breathing" and "mindful listening" have been implemented throughout the school as well as in individual and group counseling sessions.

Riker Hill's students are also practicing mindfulness techniques, especially after lunch. These simple practices help settle students down, get them to refocus their attention, and improve their concentration. Through a small group setting, the counselor helps students to manage anxious or negative thoughts and to help them step back and look at that thought as just a thought, as opposed to a reality.

Counselors are teaching students how to be "present" in the moment and less anxious. Mindfulness education has proven benefits: it increases optimism and happiness in classrooms, raises students' focus, decreases bullying and aggression, increases compassion and empathy for others, helps students to relax, and can boost academic performance.

In the secondary schools, our staff have been studying Mindfulness as a tool for engaging students. At HMS a number of special educators teachers have implemented a "Mindfulness Minute" at the beginning of each lesson. The teachers begin by leading a short breathing and relaxation activity to help the learners relax, center themselves, and prepare to learn.

On Monday, April 17, 2017 large numbers of our faculty received direct training in strategies for building more mindful, stress-free students.



#### **Parent Programs:**

There are still many evening events scheduled this school year for parents! Please visit our website for the calendar of events and page two for the events that our staff and leadership team will be offering.

## Volume 2, Issue 2

# **APRIL 2017**

## April 25th

Google Read & Write and Learning Ally for Parents of Students with a Disability, Grades K-5 6:00—7:15 p.m. Parents of Students with a Disability, Grades 6-12 7:30—8:45 p.m. Harrison Elementary School Media Center



### April 30th

Abilities Expo 12:30—4:00 p.m. Livingston High School Cafeteria

# **MAY 2017**

May 18th PRIDE Parent Workshop From PRIDE to Kindergarten: The Transition Process 2:00—3:00 p.m. Burnet Hill Elementary School

### May 18th

Overview of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Division of Developmental Disabilities for Parents of Students with a Disability, ages 16-21 6:00—7:00 p.m. Livingston High School Media Center

### May 18th

Applying to College for All Parents 7:00—9:00 p.m. Livingston High School Auditorium

### May 31st

PRIDE Parent Workshop PRIDE to Kindergarten: The Transition Process 7:00—8:00 p.m. Burnet Hill Elementary School

# **JUNE 2017**

### June 8th

5th to 6th Grade Transition Night for Parents of Students with a Disability 6:30—7:30 p.m. Mount Pleasant Middle School

### June 8th

5th to 6th Grade Transition Night for All Parents 7:30 p.m. Mount Pleasant Middle School

#### June 12th

Managing Expectation of the Junior Year for Parents of Students with a Disability 6:00—7:00 p.m. Livingston High School Media Center

## June 12th

Overview of the Junior Year for All Parents "Getting Started... Where do we begin?" 7:00 p.m. Livingston High School Auditorium

## June 14th

6th to 7th Grade Transition Night for Parents of Students with a Disability 6:30—7:30 p.m. Heritage Middle School

## June 14th

6th to 7th Grade Transition Night for All Parents 7:30 p.m. Heritage Middle School



Page 3