



KEYSTONE CONNECTIONS

From the Desk of Steve Farmer

Ugh?! It seems like I blinked and April is gone and May is here! What happened?! ☺

In light of Staff Appreciation week, please know that I truly appreciate each one of you. A couple weeks ago, I was on a webinar with CEASD. There were about 75 superintendents and leaders of Schools and Programs for the Deaf involved in the meeting. As I listened to these leaders, I must say I was amazed and extremely pleased with what we have done and are doing within our organization! We are unbelievably FAR AHEAD of at least 95% of the schools in the country –including some of the “elite” schools! As for the remaining 5%, we are on the same page! It was amazing and so good to hear. Some of these schools were STILL struggling to get Distance Learning up and running and still had many questions! Most of the questions they asked, we addressed BEFORE we had distance learning up and running! This speaks volumes about YOU and your dedication to our students. Pat yourselves on the back!

Some of you may already know this, but May is National Mental Health Awareness month. As you know, we formed the Staff Support Committee for COVID Wellness for the entire organization. We carefully selected 4 committee members within the organization to work on strategies, ideas, tips, and pointers on how to support YOU. Please take the needs assessment if you haven't already done so. We WANT to know how you are doing. We DO CARE!

Please know you can contact me via email, VP, or Zoom if you want to talk with me about how you are doing, vent, or have questions or concerns. I would love to hear from you! (Send me or Judy an email to confirm a good time to chat via VP or Zoom.)

Please remember Friday, May 8, is a day off for all of you! Thank you for all you do! Please know you all are valued. Stay safe and healthy!
---Steve

Notes from Scranton

It's hard to believe it's already May! Last Monday some parts of the Scranton area woke up to three inches of snow on the ground. What a difference a week makes. I also hope that April showers bring May flowers. I have seen enough rain the past few weeks to wonder if there would be a need to build another ark.

Teachers, students, and parents continue to record, Zoom, Google Meet, See Saw, and participate in their Google Classroom activities. In addition to all of this learning, The Scranton School began three virtual clubs last week. The three clubs being offered to our students are cooking, photography, and gardening. A big thank you to Ms. Mackenzie Flanagan, Ms. Sarabeth George, and Mr. Byron Almekinder for taking the lead in running these three respective clubs. In addition, Mr. Mark Beagle, one of our parents, and Ms. Maryann Stefko, are assisting Mr. Almekinder with the gardening club. Ms. Stefko will be integrating her 4H friends, Ruthie the Goat and Lilly the Sheep, into the club, to provide additional excitement.

The Staff Support Committee for COVID 19 Wellness from WPSD & Scranton (Ms. Abraham, Ms. Bailey, Ms. Bartholow, and Mr. Mantz) developed a needs assessment last week asking what activities/trainings/supports you would like to address COVID 19. This was then distributed to all staff. If you have not yet already, please take the time to complete this survey. Thanks to everyone who has responded.

Last week the Early Childhood Programs of WPSD hosted the first of many workshops. The inaugural workshop was titled "Creating and Using Schedules and Routines to Help You and Your Child Navigate these Long Days at Home". This week Jackie Bailey will host the second workshop, "Tantrums, Tension and Troubles: Keeping the Peace during COVID-19," on Thursday, May, 7, 2020. The Early Childhood Programs plans to continue these workshops for our preschool and kindergarten families in Edinboro, Hershey, Pittsburgh, and Scranton in the coming weeks.

Planning for ESY/Summer Preschool has started. Teachers, if you are interested in working ESY or Summer Preschool, please contact your immediate supervisor. We will be online learning utilizing the various platforms of the past few weeks. ESY is scheduled to run from July 6-24, while Summer Preschool will run from July 6-31.

Please stay happy, healthy, and safe!
---Kevin McDonough

From the CECO's Corner

So, we've experienced the joy of turning the page from April to May, and the sadness of seeing all of the end of year, fun things that we do to celebrate the culmination of a successful school year, cancelled. The weather is getting nicer, and there is a promise of re-openings on the horizon. Again, I hope you and your families are safe and healthy. I've been in touch with some of you, shared memes and recipes (overhauled according to WW points!) with some of you, teaching tips with some of you, commiserated with some of you - please feel free to contact me for any reason!

As of Friday noon, 129 of 248 staff have completed all of the Public School WORKS online trainings assigned. As I said before, more trainings will be assigned by your supervisors in the coming weeks. We've also been handling interpreting requests for IEPs, and some interesting online transition activities for some of our students. We've been participating in Zoom meetings, webinars, and other online events as administrators, and I know teachers, counselors, specialists and aides are continuing to work online and on paper providing the best possible educational and support situations for our students and families in these trying times.

Thanks to a team of people, including Tom Halik the Wuber (WPSD-Uber) Coordinator, Wuber drivers, Barb Manning and Judy Barefoot in the business office, Barb Hancock in payroll, Pauline Dunbar and Victoria Vitullo in transition, and Jen Morris in the CECO office, we finished up the last part of billing for the Competitive Integrated Employment grant! Thank you to all of these people for their work and excellent record keeping - a lot of the grant recipients were not able to complete the requirements of the grant, because of the quarantine. Not so, for WPSD! We also had a virtual meeting with the architect to move forward with the Blueprint for Learning grant computer lab renovation project, incorporating "Deaf Space."

At a PaTTAN Supervisors' meeting recently, held on Zoom, I had the thought that they are mostly "in the field," and very much need that support from the group. We in the Programs of WPSD do not have that need, because for the most part, we are still surrounded and supported by our community, even if we are doing it from a distance. We are very fortunate in that way. Go to PaTTAN's website to see their profession-specific repositories for Teachers of the Deaf, Audiologists, and SLPs.

Donald Mazreku and I have been working on finding a replacement for East Catholic, and have made some good inroads in collaboration/engagement. One final positive - remember Jasmine Cho, the "Cookie Artist/Activist?" She has written a book "Role Models Who Look Like Me: Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Who Made History," and has been scheduling virtual read-alouds in honor of May as Asian Pacific America Heritage Month (she was supposed to visit WPSD for one of those events). We've been working on our own student Xiaoli C. doing the read aloud in ASL!

Finally, Happy Staff Appreciation Week! You are all appreciated, more than you will ever know!

---Marybeth Lauderdale

From the Academic Team

We want to thank all of the teachers, aides, and related service providers for continuing to work hard to engage with our students and families and to motivate our students to participate in distance learning. We recognize that some families are facing challenges that may make it difficult for those students to participate at the level that we would like, so we thank you for reaching out to those students and families to figure out how you can support them.

We also want to thank everyone who has responded to the "WPSD/SSDHHC Staff Support Needs Assessment." We have already received a large number of responses. The committee members will be looking at the data to determine which areas of need and ideas received the most responses and then will be developing trainings and activities based on the results. If you haven't already completed the survey, you can complete it at the following link: <https://forms.gle/rQtN1YHrnkqYLx489>

The Early Childhood programs hosted their first Parent Workshop, "Creating and Using Schedules and Routines to Help You and Your Child Navigate These Long Days at Home" on 4/28. Joel Grover and Heather Stiff presented; 10 families from across the state participated. Jackie Bailey will host the second workshop, "Tantrums, Tension and Troubles: Keeping the Peace during COVID-19," on 5/7. They will continue to offer workshops for preschool and kindergarten families from all the programs of WPSD.

Decisions about what the upcoming Summer Preschool and Extended School Year (ESY) will look like are being made now. Although we do plan to offer these summer programs, they will be structured differently than in the past. The biggest change will be that both will be offered via a distance learning platform similar to what we are doing for the remainder of the regular school year. Information will be shared soon.

From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments:

This week is staff appreciation week, and is not how we would have expected it to be. However, thank you to all for everything that you have done and continue to do for our students, parents, each other and our school, it is truly appreciated!!! Continue to stay safe and healthy and look for the positives in every day. I know we will continue to be successful working together as one team! THANK YOU!

FSA:

Reminder: All staff enrolled in the FSA program, please remember that part of the [CARES Act](#) (COVID-3 Stimulus Bill), permits the coverage for Over-the-Counter (OTC) medications and drugs for reimbursement from our FSAs accounts. **These items can be purchased with funds from eligible accounts without needing a prescription.** If you have any questions regarding this new "temporary" addition to our FSA Account, please do not hesitate to contact Dori Bachar and she can assist with questions or reimbursements.

Employee Assistance Program:

Please know that EAP Program, Back on Track, is available to any staff member who needs assistance or has concerns with problems at work or at home that are affecting their daily lives, especially in these uncertain times.

As you may remember, the program provides a confidential helpline (1-800-566-5933). EAP staff are available to listen and provide you with information. You can also learn more about the Back on Track EAP by reviewing the website at www.backontrackeap.com. Through the website, you can access an abundance of information on topics such as balancing work and family, eldercare, parenting, budgeting, mental health, and alcohol/drug dependency. To access the website, you will need to use the following information:

WPSD Staff

User name: w18200
Password: confidential help

SSDHHC Staff

User name: w18700
Password: confidential help

Payroll:

If you need to make any changes to your banking information for direct deposits or would like to change your W-4, please email Barb Hancock or Dori Bachar and we will want to follow up with you through a phone conversation due to the increased concerns of on-line fraud.

Employment Opportunities:

During distance learning and working remotely, we will be continuing to interview applicants for our open positions via Google Meeting or Zoom Meetings for the 2020-2021 school year. In the interim, please know the following individual(s) have accepted a position upon the return of our students to classroom learning:

--Taylor Hill, part-time Audiologist at WPSD.
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From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments (continued from left):

Our open positions are as follows:

WPSD Positions: Teacher, One-on-One Teacher's Aide position (Children's Center), Residential Supervisor, Residential Supervisor (Overnight) One-on-One, Housekeeper, summer maintenance positions - 2 Painters and 4 Laborers, and Substitute Positions: Teachers, Teacher's Aide, and Security.

SSDHHC Positions: Substitute positions: Teacher, Teacher's Aide, Nurse and Security.

Hershey Positions: Part-time SLP

****Reminder:** Any employees interested in applying for a posted position should complete an internal application, signed by their immediate supervisor, attach an updated resume/application, and forward to the Human Resources Department.

---Dori Bachar