



# KEYSTONE CONNECTIONS

## From the Desk of Steve Farmer

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YAY! It's the last week of school... What a year! Kudos to all of you for a job well done. Our students are fortunate to have dedicated employees throughout the entire organization.

Be sure to keep an eye on your email for further information regarding school reopening and other very important information. I will be sending out updates from time to time during the summer.

Please be sure to read the entire Keystone Connection... It has A LOT of information!

While we won't have our annual Pre-graduation dinner announcing awards, we will have a virtual awards ceremony. We will be sending information soon!

Have a wonderful, wonderful summer!

---Steve

## Notes from Scranton

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Here we are! The last week of school. It will be unforgettable and filled with happy memories.

This week Ms. Hart was hard at work putting together the Awards Day/Kindergarten Graduation and Senior recognition videos. I have seen some snippets of it and I know you will enjoy it! The Awards Day/Kindergarten Graduation/Senior recognition video will air at 1 pm on Wednesday and then will be posted for future viewing if you cannot watch it at that time.

Ms. Bailey, Ms. Lukasavage, and Mr. Mantz have developed a set of "Field Day" activities this week for your students. A new activity will be released each day and posted on Facebook. On Thursday there will live field day activities via ZOOM that students and staff are strongly encouraged to join! It will be tons of fun! Elementary activities will air at 11:30 while the middle school/high school activities will air at noon.

The end of the year staff celebration for SSDHHC is scheduled for 10 am on Thursday. A variety of prizes will be awarded. A Zoom link will be sent to all SSDHHC staff for this event.

Thanks for a productive year. I know it's hard to reflect on everything that's happened due to the suddenness of everything, from closing rapidly and abruptly to shifting everyone and everything to online instruction. I know when I stop to think about everything that's happened this year, I realize and appreciate how lucky our kids are to have a school like The Scranton School and the difference everyone at The Scranton School makes for our kids!

Have a great week and have a safe and relaxing summer!

---Kevin McDonough

## **From the CECO's Corner**

As we near the finish line of a very challenging school year, I hope this finds you continuing to be safe and healthy. Every week has brought new events that we couldn't even imagine the week before. I write this with hope for healing for all of us, our nation, and our world.

I'm sure you've seen the plans for graduation next Saturday - and hope you've also seen the tributes to the Class of 2020 online. The most recent issue of the Western Pennsylvanian/Bear Tracks bears witness to so many good things that happened at our schools during the year, prior to March 13, and the Facebook page has continued to promote the schools' activities after March 13. The recent news articles were excellent, as well, explaining how school had to transform from face-to-face to distance learning, practically overnight!

The Public School WORKS trainings are continuing - if you haven't done the COVID-19 training, it was due June 5! Please complete it. We will be continuing with the online trainings for next school year - we have a training plan developed. NOTE: If you ever need to call tech support at Public School WORKS, our "district" is Western PA School for the Deaf. We have two sites - Scranton and WPSD. Please don't hesitate to email me if you have any problems with the online trainings.

The new staff are completing their Induction Plans for the year. Thank you to Joyce Maravich for leading this process for the past several years - with a master teacher like Joyce directing, you will definitely learn well how to be a new teacher/employee at WPSD!

---Marybeth Lauderdale

## **From the Academic Team**

One week to go! Thanks to Dr. Farmer's decision to make next Thursday, June 11 the final day of distance learning, next week will be short one. Remember to use that time to incorporate fun end-of-year activities while also allowing students to make up missing assignments and to submit online/paper assignments.

The last week of school was full of excitement in the Children's Center, Children's Center of Central PA and Edinboro. Several of the teachers did drive-bys to see the students in person one last time before summer and drop off some gifts - the students and families were thrilled to see them! In addition, there were end-of-year parties on Zoom - the 3 year olds had a dance party and the 4 year olds had a scavenger hunt! Kindergarten Graduation is on June 10. It will be a bittersweet farewell, for sure. This is not how we envisioned the end of the school year, but we made special memories, nonetheless!

On June 4, Mrs. Dickinson, Ms. Benjamin, Mrs. Auden, and Ms. Ryan led first grade orientation. It was great to see parents and upcoming first graders excited about being promoted to first grade. The four teachers discussed scheduling and expectations and answered parent questions and concerns as it related to moving up to first grade. We are excited to welcome these students and families to first grade in the fall!

As a reminder, WPSD will be hosting a modified graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020 and their families on June 13. Although WPSD cannot host a traditional graduation ceremony, we are excited to celebrate all of the Class of 2020's effort and accomplishments. If you have not already seen the video celebrating the Class of 2020, it can be viewed on the WPSD website at <http://www.wpsd.org/academics/graduation-2020/> or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNMchcajllI>.

If you would like to submit a video wishing seniors good luck and advice and wishing the rest of the students an enjoyable summer, please remember to follow the instructions on Mary Agnes Behanna's email and upload them to Google Drive by Monday, June 8th.

If you didn't already know, WPSD has recently been highlighted in the news a couple of times. Both stories addressed how WPSD, its teachers, and its students have been adapting to distance learning. We want to thank Erin Mascaro and Maureen Reilly-Price for being involved in those stories and for representing WPSD so well. You can find the stories here:

<https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/western-pennsylvania-school-for-the-deaf-adjusts-to-online-learning/>

<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/06/02/students-teachers-embracing-new-ways-of-learning-during-pandemic/>

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**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments:**

**Years of Service Awards:** Like many of the end of the year celebrations and ceremonies that annually occur, our traditional years of service awards that were presented at the End of the Year Ceremony for our schools will be handled differently. Please know that the Years of Service monetary awards will be included in your June 2020 paycheck. Certificates will also be provided to these staff members at a later date. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Dori Bachar for additional details or information.

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**Performance Evaluations:** Performance evaluations are being completed by supervisors and submitted to the Human Resources Department by the end of the month. If you need a copy of the evaluation form or have any questions, please contact Todd Behanna or Dori Bachar.

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**Change of Address:** Any staff member who has moved recently or will be moving in the near future, please make sure you contact Cathy Morgan in the Human Resources Department to ensure that your records are updated.

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**Unused Vacation Time for 12 Month Staff:** As a reminder, any unused and remaining vacation time for this 2019/2020 school year will be handled as follows. As a reminder, the vacation time is through June 30, 2020.

- We would like to encourage staff to use as much of their vacation time as they can, because this is a great way to get some well needed and well deserved rest and relaxation. We know and understand this has been a very unique, unusual, and stressful year for all of us.
- For this year only due to the current situation, we will be paying staff at rate of \$85/day, for every unused vacation day as of June 30, 2020. This unused vacation will be paid in the June pay, and is similar to how we pay staff back for unused sick and personal time in excess of 70 days.

Please continue to submit emails or Request for Leave Forms for your vacation days, and do not hesitate to contact Dori Bachar at dbachar@wpsd.org, for any questions or concerns regarding your vacation time.

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**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.

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**Employee Assistance Program:** Please know that the 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](http://www.backontrackeap.com).

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**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments (continued from left)**

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

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**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 personal conversation due to the increased concerns of on-line fraud.

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**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.

Our open positions are as follows:

*WPSD Positions:* Part-time Audiologist, Choices for Children Teacher (part-time), 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.

\*\*\*Please note that due to a personal situation, Taylor Hill, who previously accepted the part-time audiologist position to start the at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, had to rescind her acceptance and will unfortunately not be accepting the position. We have re-posted the position and are hopeful we receive additional resumes.

*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

**From the Academic Team (continued from page 2)**

We had the final virtual parent workshop of the year, "Keep Calm and Parent On," the evening of June 2. Doug Boersma shared the core principles of CPI with the families and discussed strategies for de-escalation, setting clear and enforceable limits, and using conflict as a bonding and learning opportunity with their child. We are looking forward to hosting more virtual workshops in the fall.

**From the Department of Institutional Advancement:**

**An Evening in Edgewood:** As you know, WPSD was set to host An Evening in Edgewood on Friday, June 12th (previously scheduled for March 27th and April 24th) at the Edgewood Club. We are thankful for those who generously contributed to the event, whether it be through an in-kind donation, ticket purchase or sponsorship.

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation and its subsequent restrictions, we unfortunately are forced to cancel the event for this year. If you have already purchased a ticket or sponsorship, we are so thankful for your support. You have the option to turn your purchase into a donation to the School or have your contribution fully refunded. Please contact Sarah at [sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org](mailto:sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org) to let the Department know which choice you would prefer. In addition, letters will be mailed from the Department to all donors to provide an update about the event and explain the two options mentioned above. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Matt Campion at [mcampion@wpsd.org](mailto:mcampion@wpsd.org).

We are already planning next year's event and hope to see you there!

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**E-newsletter Subscription:** On the WPSD and Scranton School home pages, visitors have the option to subscribe to an electronic newsletter for each school. The software collecting and managing the names of those who subscribe has recently been upgraded and improved. If you are interested in joining the distribution list visit the home page for either school, click the 'subscribe' button and complete the short form. Staff emails will not be automatically added to the distribution list. In addition, feel free to enroll friends and family members who may be interested in receiving news and events from our schools.

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**Facebook:** Are you following WPSD and The Scranton School on Facebook? These social media channels are key pipelines to families and communities to let them know the many exciting things that are happening on each campus and about the achievements and efforts of our students. If you have not had the chance, please 'friend' us on Facebook this week. For our current "friends" and followers on Facebook, please be sure to 'like' or 'share' a post to your page. This will introduce WPSD and SSDHHC to an entirely new group of people who may have never encountered the schools or know what we offer to deaf and hard of hearing children.

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**2020 WPSD Auction & Gala:** Even though we may be apart right now, we are looking ahead to the future! WPSD's annual Auction & Gala event is set for Friday, October 2 at the Rivers Casino. Stay tuned for more details. We hope to see you all there!

In order to prepare for the big event, as always, we need your help. We are constantly on the hunt for fun items to auction off at the event - whether they be stand alone or part of a basket. Please consider donating an item or items. We would really be appreciative of anything you would be willing to give! We are also searching for baskets. Feel free to donate an empty basket. We need lots of baskets to hold all our items. Baskets of all sizes are welcome, but large ones are especially needed. Contact Sarah at [sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org](mailto:sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org) if you have a basket or donation you're willing to contribute. Thanks so much!

**From the Department of Institutional Advancement (continued from left)**

**COVID-19 resources:** We have added a coronavirus resource page to the WPSD and Scranton websites. The page can be found under the "Academics" tab on the main menu and next to the "Continuity of Education Plan" on the drop down menu. If you have encountered a helpful resource for students, parents, or staff, please email it to Matt Campion to have it added to the page. Feel free to share any of the links on the page with those who may benefit from the materials.

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**WPSD in the News:** Over the past several weeks, the Department has been working on a video project with Brian Slavinsky that provides an overview of the online education efforts of WPSD and The Scranton School. We deeply appreciate the help from the teachers who allowed us to film them either at their homes or on campus, the parents who allowed us to enter their homes to film their students learning online, and for the students in each of the classes. While on campus, we invited local media outlets to watch our teachers and students in action in the online learning environment. As a result, WPSD appeared on WPXI, KDKA, and in the Tribune Review. Two of the news segments are listed below.

[Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf adjusts to online learning](#) (Tribune Review)

[Students, Teachers At Western Pennsylvania School For The Deaf Embracing New Ways Of Learning](#) (KDKA -TV)