

Spring/Summer 2017

# SEPAC

## Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

The mission of the Millburn Township School District's Special Education Parent Advisory Committee is to support and promote appropriate education for all children with special needs in our community by meeting regularly with the Department of Special Services to be a conduit for information and concerns between parents and the school district, to provide information and support to parents, and to encourage honest, effective, and respectful dialogue within the community.

### Do you know the SEPAC representative from your school?

They are:

Dorothy Kelly – Deerfield

Sharyn Stein Berezin – Glenwood

Melanie Rosenbaum – Hartshorn

Tracey Knewitz - South Mountain

Laura O'Neil – Wyoming

Kimberly Vitetta – Wyoming

Debra Clifford – MMS

Ana Holm - Preschool

Natalie Hiott-Levine - MMS

Sonali Ganti – MMS

Sharon Cohen – MHS

Not sure who to contact? Do you want to ask a question but would like to remain anonymous? Send your questions and concerns to [millburnsepac@gmail.com](mailto:millburnsepac@gmail.com).

### Washington School Construction Photos – found on District Website

[https://sites.google.com/millburn.org/referendummovingforward/washington-school/construction\\_1](https://sites.google.com/millburn.org/referendummovingforward/washington-school/construction_1)



## Upcoming Events

### Social Skills Parent Workshop

**May 24th, 9:15-10:15 AM**

**& 7-8 PM at the Ed Center**

Part Two of our workshop from the fall geared towards elementary students. Common social scenarios will be highlighted to demonstrate how to implement some of the more frequently used interventions, as well as how to incorporate the use of technology.

Presenters:

Dr. Michael Appelgren

Dr. Chris Mesopotanese

### Case Manager Meet & Greet

**June 1st, 9-10:30 AM at the Ed Center**

Come meet the case managers that have been assigned to each building for the 2017/2018 school year. We have restructured our child study teams to better meet the needs at each building. A great way to meet the new faces at your child's school.

**A Note from the Director of Special Services**

*Jennifer Sowa*

The school year has flown by and I have enjoyed getting to know the Millburn community. I have felt welcomed and appreciate the strong sense of community Millburn embodies. We have many exciting happenings occurring around the district. With the opening of the Washington School, the Special Services Department reviewed our current child study team structure and considered how best to case manage in-district students. I am thankful for all the feedback and suggestions received during this process. With the adjustments to the teams there are some new faces in some buildings. To provide parents the opportunity to “place a face to a name”, I have scheduled a morning coffee “meet and greet” on June 1, 2017 at the Education Center. Parents are welcome to stop by anytime between 9-10:30 AM to enjoy a cup of coffee and meet the case managers assigned to each building for the 17-18 school year.

I wish everyone a safe, fun and restful summer vacation.

**News from the High School/Middle School Supervisor**

*Brent McGuinness*

One of the most important responsibilities of Millburn High School is to prepare students for life after high school. Whether it is college, trade school or the work force, Millburn’s transition coordinator Roger Askins prepares students for the “real world”. Mr. Askins is part of the NJ Transition Coordinators Network and often works with the Learning Disabilities Association of NJ (LDANJ). The LDANJ is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to providing information, support and advocacy for children and adults with learning challenges. Mr. Askins, in conjunction with our school psychologist Linda Randazza, had the pleasure of recommending a Millburn student, Vytas Belzer to receive a special award. This scholarship award is presented to a student with learning challenges that plans to extend their education beyond high school. Mr. Askins and Mrs. Randazza selected Vytas because he has been engaged in learning about his disabilities and has embraced the challenge of being successful regardless of the daily obstacles that he faces. Vytas has worked hard to receive his acceptance to Colorado State University and has a strong desire to work with animals in the future. He has been a valuable contributor to the self-advocacy program over the course of his high school career, and has grown and developed through his work with Mr. Askins and the Millburn teaching staff. It is Mr. Askins hope that he will return to Millburn to share his experiences in college with both current and future Millburn High School students and the Special Services Department looks forward to hearing about his successes in the future.

## TIPS from the School Psychologists, Sarah Guiney

### Coping with Stress

In the spring, we often think of traditional “stressors” for our students in school including tests, final assignments, presentations, and papers. These may not be the only sources of anxiety. There are other stressors we may not traditionally view as anxiety-provoking, such as awards ceremonies, final performances, and end-of-the-year celebrations which may also cause our students to feel anxious. Below are some strategies that students (and parents!) can use to reduce stressful feelings and increase the enjoyment of this exciting time of year!

#### Things to do when I feel stressed

- Take 10 deep breaths  
*-Breathe in for 4 - Hold for 4 - Breathe out for 4 - Hold for 4 - Repeat 10 x*
- Progressive relaxation and body scan for stress  
*-Squeeze and release your muscles starting from your feet and moving to your head*  
*-Notice where you feel more stress*  
*-Notice how it feels when you release your muscles*  
*-Squeeze everything at once and release and take a deep breath*
- Color a mandala, doodle or draw a picture
- Write about your feelings in a journal
- Take a break: Take a walk -Get a drink of water or a snack - Listen to music - Call a friend - Do something you love!

## TIPS from the District Learning Disabilities Teach Consultants (LDTC)

### Reading Comprehension Strategies and Resources

During Kindergarten, first and second grade your child is learning to read. Beginning in third grade, they are reading to learn. Below are strategies that will help you and your child with reading comprehension while you are reading with them.

- Vocabulary- *the stronger your child’s vocabulary the better their comprehension will be. Provide the meaning for words your child does not know. Use them in context in which they will be able to understand. Use that vocabulary yourself a few times during the week when appropriate to help in the retention of the word for your child.*
- Figures of Speech- *Any child with difficulties in language or reading often struggle when they need to comprehend text beyond the literal level. Discuss different figures of speech that appear in text. Don’t assume your child will know what the phrase may mean. Explain the meaning of “Raining cats and dogs”, “Time is money”, “The wind howled”, and “Likes peas in a pod”.*
- Background Knowledge- *Select reading material that your child may be interested in. It is easier to understand subject matter that you know something about.*

## Other resources and ideas to improve reading comprehension:

- If you have a child who just loves playing video games why not let them have some time on-line this summer while improving their reading comprehension. Try a chrome extension like, "Gamebooks, Read and Learn English". Gamebooks is an interactive eBook collection with audio narration in which readers unlock games and activities as they read. Gamebooks is a library of interactive eBooks with audio, designed to help English language learners and primary/middle school students improve their reading skills. It includes 50 award-winning titles by Oxford University Press, including fairytales and literary classics.
- PLAN A FAMILY GAME NIGHT! Try these games to help improve vocabulary and learn new words while enjoying spending time together: Scrabble, Upwords, Bananagrams, Apples to Apples, Scattergories, Guess Who?, Guess Where?, and/or Balderdash.
- ALTERNATIVES TO PAPER BOOKS- These sites really support really support attending to the books from improved comprehension through AUDIOBOOKS. Some site are AUDIBLE (free streaming with Amazon Prime accounts), Epic (free site for teachers) and RazKids (from the A-Z Reading website). Children should stop and jot answers to comprehension questions as they listen. Students should use earphones and also have the print in front of them, not just the audio components. The Millburn Public Library also offers audiobook downloads and borrowing.
- Websites on Dyslexia:  
<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/2014TabletComparison.html>  
[http://dyslexia.yale.edu/EDU\\_GoodPractices.html](http://dyslexia.yale.edu/EDU_GoodPractices.html)

### **TIPS from the School Social Worker, Ellen Ruban**

#### **Summer Activities**

Summer is upon us. What plans do you have for your children? It can be difficult to select meaningful activities for them, particularly for children with learning disabilities. You may want to consider activities such as, camping programs, sports, volunteer work or activities to enhance academic skills. The following link may be a good resource for making summer plans.

<https://ldaamerica.org/summer-activities-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

Also worth considering, some psychologists and child development experts suggest that it is not necessary to over-schedule your kids. You may be keeping them from discovering their true interests. Lyn Fry, a child psychologist in London with a focus on education, suggests "If parents spend all their time filling up their child's spare time, then the child's never going to learn to do this for themselves." You may want to collaborate with your child to develop a list of enjoyable activities to be done in his or her spare time during the summer months. This may lead to greater self-reliance and creativity.

When making plans this summer, consider what will be most valuable to meet the individual needs of your child. And be sure to have some fun in the sun!

**Guest Contributor – Nancy Siegel, High School Guidance Counselor**

**The Role of the High School Counselor**

The counselors at the High School work with students at all four grade levels, making the process here somewhat different from that at the Middle School where each counselor works with only one grade of students. Even though we may at times be more preoccupied with the needs of one class over that of another (since it becomes clear to all of us that seniors need more attention in the fall of the year) we still want to make certain we are available to all of our students.

We in guidance believe in an “open door” policy. If a counselor is behind closed doors and a student has a question or a problem, one of the secretaries will try to find another counselor who is available or will make certain that his or her counselor will be in touch the next day. We are more than aware that students may well need to see us at a time when we have not sent for them, and we encourage them to seek us out, either by stopping at lunchtime, before or after school or by sending us an email requesting an appointment. We are not permitted to see students when they are in class unless it is an emergency and so we do our best to make certain that we can see them at a time that does not interfere with school.

Counselors will give the incoming class a little time to adjust to high school before reaching out to them and asking them how high school is going for them, about their classes, what they are doing outside of class and how they are handling their lives. We want all of our students to take advantage of the many opportunities that are available here, both within the classroom and outside of it. We want them to take elective courses that are of interest, to find themselves in classes that enable them to achieve and meet with success, to spend free time engaging in activities that will further broaden their horizons. We want them to leave this high school thoroughly prepared for the world that lies ahead – for college, for work, for the success we know is within their grasp.

**DO YOU KNOW?!**

**Common Special Education Acronyms**

**ADL – Activities of Daily Living**

**AYP – Adequate Yearly Progress**

**FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education**

**IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities  
Education Act**

**ABA – Applied Behavioral Analysis**