

Special Education in the Weston Public Schools

In accordance with the vision of The Weston Public Schools, the special education department is committed to achievement for every student. This is accomplished by recognizing that each of our students learns differently, and requires and deserves our best effort. The Weston Public Schools further recognize that we are specifically and collectively responsible for every student in our school district.

State and federal law mandates the town to provide special education services to its residents beginning at age three and until age twenty two. Students are found eligible for special education based upon three factors: (1) the existence of a disability; (2) whether or not they are making “effective” progress in general education; (3) and the need for specially designed instruction provided by a certified special educator or related service provider. Weston employs licensed psychologists, special educators and related service providers who provide comprehensive evaluations, a key piece of eligibility determination. The percentage of students in Weston who receive special education has been between 13 and 14 % of the total student population over the last several years.

Special education has continued to evolve since the passage of Public Law 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act) in 1975, and research and best practice continue to guide us in making decisions about educating disabled students. One of the most notable changes in special education has been the increase in very young students with significant special needs. Children who have benefitted from progressive medical interventions are now entering our schools and require an increased level of support and intervention. The diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder has also risen significantly. Both of these types of disabilities require intensive services. We have also seen an increase in students with language based learning disabilities. These students require very specific, evidence based interventions for reading, writing and often, mathematics. Extensive accommodations and modifications are often required for these students to access the general education curriculum. Another population that is increasing is our students who are challenged by social and emotional needs. These students require access to educational and clinical services in order to make effective progress.

The law clearly mandates that all children with special needs receive services that allow them to access and make effective progress in general education. This is also known as a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The law further states that when we are unable to provide those services, within our schools, that we will secure a placement outside of the district to provide a free and appropriate public

education that allows students to make effective progress. In Weston, we are committing to create programs within our district whenever possible. We will work to avoid sending a student out of district, as we firmly believe that every student belongs in Weston and should be given the opportunity to be educated in Weston. We believe that our teachers can and will accommodate our students and will further develop instructional practices that support the needs of all students. The instructional differentiation required for special education students to make effective progress is best practice for any student, supporting the range of learning styles and needs of every learner. It is with this commitment that we move forward with our program plan. We recognize that we must be nimble and responsive in our programming to meet the needs of our ever changing population. Please visit the link below to view a comprehensive matrix of proposed programming for fiscal year 14.

I would like to invite you to learn more about our current and future programming for special education students. Please join me for coffee on one of the following dates at Case House:

Tuesday, March 19th, 2013: 4:00 pm

Wednesday, March 20, 2013: 9:00 am

Susan Strong
Director of Student Services