

Q&A

Updated: 11/20/12

1. Are parents of typically developing children getting educated as well? Why aren't those parents here? **All principals were asked to put the announcement on their school web pages so that all parents could attend if they desired. In addition, the Special Education Action Plan asks all sites to share information on inclusion with all parents. Each building will determine how this will be accomplished this year.**
2. How are typical parents being communicated to about the benefits of our kids with theirs? **Parents are hearing information shared through site administrators as noted in question 1. In addition, parents are experiencing the benefits first hand. I had a parent of a typically developing student tell a site administrator how grateful they were for the inclusive work that was new to that school. Her child has been mentioning a particular friend all year that was a new friendship. This friendship seemed to pull her son out of his shell a bit and she was seeing some nice things develop. Later she learned that her child's new friend was a student with a disability that was non-verbal with Autism. She was impressed that to her son, he was just his friend...not a student with a disability. It will take time, but this gives me great hope that the more are students with disabilities are with their neighborhood peers, in their classes, participating in the same activities they will just be friends and the disability will not matter or even be noticed. We model this for our youth, they learn acceptance and tolerance from what they see at home and school.**
3. Students did not return to home schools (from PKL) why weren't we given more information on how inclusion was going to change their structure? **Information was shared at individual IEP meetings and in parent information sessions last year. Information was shared that included copies of the action plan and supporting research via the district website and parent letters. As we try to move toward better inclusive practices at all of our schools, Park Lawn has been more challenging due to the number of students and the capacity of staff to meet their needs in inclusive settings. We have started small, but hope to build from here. Much of what feels like a change in structure is really due to changes in student needs and changes in staff as they take time to learn about new students.**
4. What about emotional/behavioral children? They do not fit in as well/easily as children who have visible disabilities. **Students with emotional/behavioral needs also have a right to start from the least restrictive setting, the classroom of their home school. Behavioral supports are provided for these students to help them maintain success and access learning, although sometimes more restrictive access is needed to help a student maintain control and develop stronger skills to stay in the larger group classroom setting. When/if this occurs, staff develop a transition process that helps move the student back to least restrictive if they are able.**
5. Is our staff trained in trauma informed care? If so, who is? **We have been fortunate to be a partner in a grant with the Department of Family Services in the training of staff in Trauma Informed Care. We have been given hours of staff development time and hours of student consultation with Dr. Mary Hess. All of our Student Services staff have been trained this year (psychologists, social workers and counselors). We are setting up a training for Administrators and one additional for all staff as a selection on our January 21st staff development day.**

School Teams that include teachers have been attending the consultation hours that started in November.

6. Do we have space to create learning spaces at Summit? **The spaces referred to as learning spaces in the presentation were not additional spaces. These were the spaces that used to be designated for special education classrooms. It is the goal of the Action Plan to reallocate the special education spaces and learning spaces for any group of students. The principal reports no space concerns at this time and has additional space that is currently used as storage.**
7. How often are these resource centers being used by other students? **In some schools, these spaces are used quite a bit, in others sites are still moving toward that goal.**
8. Are schools continuing to have special educators keep their desks/stuff in this resource center (this gives the impression that it is a special education room) **In some schools Learning Strategists (a.k.a. Special Educators) still have their desks in that space and are continue to work toward common resource areas. In some schools, teachers have moved their desks in with the regular educator they are working with. In other schools the staff have moved their desks to an office location so that no classroom is linked at all.**
9. Why do we not have high expectations for students at the HS? **We have been working hard on high school reform in the special education department. We have purchased all new curriculum aligned to the Core Standards set by the state and have trained staff in implementation over the summer and fall. Follow up coaching on the curriculum has been occurring from the vendors of the programs as well throughout the fall. We continue to meet as a department during Instructional Training Days to improve the student outcomes and expectations. The High School has been working within the new transformation plan this year that also requires general educators to think differently about teaching and learning and using technology as a stronger tool in this work. Staff have been working with Administration to identify their learning needs as well in order to reach all students.**
10. How are we educating staff regarding different diagnosis and the effects? **Part of the Special Education Plan is to continue to build capacity in staff regarding different disabilities. One goal is for some Instructional Days to be dedicated to learning about different disabilities. This helps all staff understand the needs and strategies they need to understand with students in the classrooms more than they were in prior years. In addition, our Learning Strategists need to learn to work with a greater variety of needs and have been attending workshops and conferences. We have contracted with Kate McGinnity to train a core team of teachers from each building to be the resources on students with Autism. This builds our capacity. That being said, many of our staff have already been working with students that have a variety of disabilities and continually pursue additional information to stay current on topics that support all students in their classrooms.**
11. There is a big push for co-teaching, but how does that special educator who is supporting students in so many classrooms co-teach in all these places so that all students receive the benefits of this practice? **Co-teaching is different than classroom or individual support. We have asked in the Special Education Action plan for teachers to choose 2 subjects to co-teach. This involves co-planning and co-assessing students as well. It is possible that a teacher may**

choose only one classroom for both subjects, thereby limited their need to travel to many classrooms. This does not mean they do not support students in other classrooms or have para-educators that assist in that support, but it does not hold the same expectation as co-teaching. In addition, we have hired more staff to reduce caseloads so staff have greater availability and have narrowed the grades they support by developing caseloads differently for teachers so that they do not cover all 6 grade levels 4K-4 for example.