

Dear Parents,

I hope that this letter finds you and your family well and settled into the school routine. The fall is always such an exciting and interesting time for students and staff -- a new year full of hope. At our opening day meeting, my theme this year was helping students and staff find “joy” in their lives. In preparation for this presentation I did a lot of research on joy and happiness and how we as educators can help nurture joy in our students. One of the recommendations that I thought was absolutely critical for our work is the idea of supporting students and staff in “keeping joyful memories alive”. Some of the ideas for activities that came from this idea included sharing post-it notes with students celebrating their accomplishments and having students take pictures of things in their day that bring them joy and sharing them with classmates. In these times where it is easy to feel overwhelmed, we need to work together to ensure that staff, families and students continue to celebrate, share and remember the things that bring joy to their lives. May the new year bring your family joy and may you keep those moments of joy close to your heart in those times when you need them most.

I am also excited to introduce the new staff members that have joined the Student Services Department this year. I know you will join me in welcoming them to Weston. They are:

Emma Lochhead: Special Education Teacher at Weston High School  
Kara Shipkin: Special Education Teacher at Country School  
Micaela Cunningham: Special Education Teacher at Woodland School  
Michelle Ferretti: Physical Therapist at Country School  
Bonnie Nguyen: Speech/Language Pathologist at Country School  
Brandon Jurewicz: Speech/Language Pathologist at Weston High School  
Jennifer Ethem: Team Chair at Weston High School  
Stephanie Rosenblum: Team Chair at Field School  
Jessica Arena: School Psychologist at Weston High School  
Lauren Chisholm: School Psychologist at Weston High School  
Thomas Lee: ELE Teacher at Weston High School  
Kate Pollender: Nurse at Weston Middle School

This year we are also excited to announce that we will be slowly transitioning to allow most caregivers to receive and sign IEPs electronically. This will allow you to receive your student’s IEP more quickly, to sign your IEP immediately and to have online access to your student’s paperwork at any time. We will be rolling out this ability during the course of the year, and your student’s Team Chair will let you know when you will have the opportunity to opt in to electronic signature and documents. Caregivers will be given the option to receive IEPs online or to continue to receive paper copies. I have enclosed a copy of the “Ed Plan Connect Parent Portal Access Guide” for your reference. We will be in touch with further information as we roll out this new process.

We are also including a copy of the “Parent’s Notice of Procedural Safeguards.” In accordance with Federal Special Education Law, IDEA 2004, school districts may distribute these Safeguards once per year to parents/guardians of students in special education. Please retain these Safeguards for your reference throughout the school year. Should you need an additional copy at any point during the school year, we would be happy to provide that for you upon request.

I would also like to encourage you to join Weston’s Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). They are a great resource and are an important avenue for parents to gain information about the district as well as to provide feedback about current and future district programming. The next SEPAC meeting will be held on December 2nd

from 9-11AM at Heirloom Restaurant in Weston Center. They would love to have you join them at their meetings. Please see the attached flyer for more information.

If you have ideas, questions, concerns or just want to connect, please feel free to schedule a “Martha Meeting” using this [link](#). The link is also available on the Student Services website. I look forward to seeing or hearing from you this year!

Yours.

Martha Bakken  
Assistant Superintendent  
of Student Services