



Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members:

One of our goals for the 2012-2013 school year in the School District of Fort Atkinson was to update our website and make it more user-friendly. I hope you enjoy the updated pupil services web page. It was designed with two main user groups in mind: parents / guardians and staff members. It is meant to serve as a one-stop shop to preview and access all relevant resources that are connected to pupil services.

One of the questions that I am frequently asked about my job is, “What do you do?” In other words, exactly what are “pupil services”? In the School of District of Fort Atkinson, pupil services include the following: special education, English Language Learners, school counseling services, and school nursing services.

Each year in the pupil services department, we have some level of changes that I would like to share with you. The first change that I would like to share with you is related to our staff. For the 2012-2013 school year, we have some changes in our personnel due to resignations and retirement. At Rockwell Elementary, we have had increased needs and numbers in providing services to students with both learning and emotional/behavioral disabilities. Due to this increased need, we added a special education teacher to work our students in grades K-2 with disabilities. Mrs. Annie Bialek has filled this spot. Mrs. Bialek student taught for us at Purdy Elementary School, and has been a great addition to Rockwell.

I would also like to welcome Mrs. Jenna Moe, who was hired at Fort High School as a special education teacher. Mrs. Moe student taught for us at Barrie Elementary and I am excited that she is on board with us.

Mrs. Katie Fortney was hired to replace Mrs. Denice Jones, who retired as the District’s Occupational Therapist. Mrs. Fortney recently finished graduate school and started getting her feet wet late last spring, by shadowing her predecessor for two weeks. We also had a resignation in our school nursing services.

Mrs. Sara Noeske joined our staff as a school nurse. To account for increased high medical needs in the district, Mrs. Andrea Davis was also hired as a part time school nurse. With the additional support, both Mrs. Noeske and Mrs. Davis can provide more thorough services and respond more quickly to both emergencies and student-specific care.

The last personnel change that was made for the 2012-2013 school year was the addition of Mrs. Megan Lazare. Mrs. Lazare serves as the ELL Teacher for both Purdy and Rockwell and is replacing Mrs. Ottow who resigned last Spring. Mrs. Lazare has previous teaching experience in both the Janesville and Madison school districts and is a welcomed addition to our staff.

Besides personnel changes, there have been several changes at the state level that have triggered some changes in how we deliver services within the pupil services department. Wisconsin Act 125 was passed by the legislature this past spring and has gone into effect for the 2012-2013 school year. This law requires greater communication between home and school and outlines documentation and training requirements when seclusion and/or restraint are used. In response to WI Act 125, the School District of Fort Atkinson has set up two training opportunities for our staff to receive Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) training. This training focuses in our deescalating a student so that seclusion and/or restraint is not needed. It also focused in on how to safely hold a student in case restraint – as a last resort – is needed.

Besides implementing CPI, our elementary schools have implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports – or PBIS – to ensure that we are teaching students the social and behavioral expectations of the learning community and using a common language while doing so. The responses from students, staff, and parents regarding PBIS have been very positive. As always, our hope is that we don't have to use seclusion and/or restraint on any student. However, if we do, we will always communicate with parents/guardians and do our best to ensure that this does not become a pattern with any student.

Another change that is on the horizon is how we identify students with specific learning disabilities. By December 1, 2013, the District will be required to identify students through a process known as Response to Intervention (RTI). What this means for the District is that we need to map out our intervention pathways in the areas of literacy and math and examine how a student is responding to a minimum of two assessments before determining if they are in need of additional assistance. This process calls for clearer communication between all professional staff members and parents/guardians. This process also encourages the district to show what we have attempted with a student and to demonstrate how they responded through relevant assessments.

I firmly believe that the changes that have been made and/or that will be made in the near future only enhance our services within the district. I am very proud of the staff that I work side by side with, and I hope you are too. If you have any questions regarding special education, English Language Learners, school counseling, and/or school nursing, feel free to contact me at (920) 563-7804 or via email at petersonj@fortschools.org. As always, I am looking forward to working with your child during the upcoming year.

Sincerely,

John Peterson, Director of Pupil Services