

Stepping Stones

Ripon Area School District * Student Services Department * September 2015



Director of Student Services- Anne Lang

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Message from the Director

Welcome Back for the 2015-16 School Year!

This is our first department newsletter, which we hope will contain useful information for you.

The goal of the Student Services Department is to provide learning supports and services that promote success for all students in the Ripon Area School District. The department primarily consists of school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, and special education staff/services. In this newsletter, you will see articles from members of our department. There is also information about the BRAVE program, which provides great after-school opportunities for Ripon Area School District students. Future newsletters will contain information about the following topics: our special education audit and procedural compliance self-assessment, response to intervention, universal design for learning, and others.

We are excited to be an integral part of the RASD and its mission: *Inspiring learners, engaging community, enriching the world.* Have a great year!

Parent Support

Answers to your questions!

As the year begins, you will have plenty of questions about your child's education and we are here to help. Please submit any questions that you have to Anne Lang at langa@ripn.k12.wi.us or Britnie Meyer at meyerb@ripn.k12.wi.us.

Question: May my child attend the IEP meeting?

Answer: Your child may attend and participate in the IEP meeting if you determine that he/she should be present. The student may attend selected parts of the IEP meeting, rather than being present for the entire meeting.

Question: Can I bring additional people to the IEP meeting?

Answer: Yes. You can bring "other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding your child..." (34 CFR Section 300.321). This may include private related service personnel, medical professionals, tutors, etc.

Question: Does the IEP meeting have to be in person?

Answer: No. When holding an IEP meeting, you and the school may agree to use other means of participation. For example, some members may participate by video conference or conference calls.

New to the Department

Welcome!

Karalyn Dehn

Elementary School Psychologist

Hello, my name is Karalyn Dehn Massen and I am the School Psychologist at Barlow Park and Murray Park Elementary Schools. I am excited to be working in the Ripon Area School District. I am here to assist all children in being happy and healthy at school and in life. Children are welcome to visit me during the day to tell me about things that are going well and any difficulties that they may be having. I am here to help them problem-solve and develop age appropriate coping strategies. I want every child to reach their potential. Should you have any questions, please feel free to stop by or call me. I look forward to working with you and your children!

Britnie Meyer

Student Services Administrative Assistant

Hello, I'm Britnie Meyer. I have recently switched positions. Before becoming the Student Services Administrative Assistant, I was the Clerical Aide at Barlow Park Elementary and Journey Charter Schools. I am enjoying my new role in the district and am very excited to see what else this position has in store for me. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family. My husband and I stay busy with our seven month old son and love seeing how he grows and becomes his own person.

Daniel McCulloch

Special Education Teacher

I am very grateful and excited to be part of the Ripon team. I am a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and reside in Oshkosh with my wonderful wife, Sara. I am very passionate about Special Education and creating a positive, successful learning environment for students. We've been off to a great start and I can't wait to see what the rest of the year brings.

“I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.”

John Steinbeck

Reminders

“Going Green”

In a district-wide effort to “go green,” the Student Services Department would like to send as many documents electronically as possible. We would like to send IEP information, parent/student rights information, and our Student Services Department newsletters electronically to families through email.

A letter was mailed out to families the first week of school to select your preference on receiving documents. Please complete the form by **Friday, September 18th**. The form can be mailed to Britnie Meyer at 100 Ringstad Drive in Ripon, emailed to meyerb@ripn.k12.wi.us or sent to school with your child and returned to the office.

If you do not have the letter please contact Britnie Meyer at (920) 748-1557 and she can provide you with one.

Message from the Counselors

What is the role of a School Counselor?



Welcome back! As students start walking through the front doors of our buildings, many are filled with excitement and anticipation. However, some might be filled with anxiety and fear of the new and the unknown. The great thing about being at school is there are many resources to help students work through these fears and anxieties. Naturally, schools are full of teachers who are more than willing to help, and the Ripon Area School District also has a School Psychologist and a School Resource Officer. Additionally, each school has at least one (the high school even has two!) school counselors who are available as resources for students.



School Counselors serve many different roles in a school and the roles vary depending on the school level. First and foremost, we are here for any student issue that may arise during the day. Whether that be friendship related, family related, or otherwise. We are also here to help with academic issues. At the high school level, we really work with students to choose the right classes and encourage students to stay engaged and aware of their grades. We also help guide students toward their career goals. Whether it be postsecondary education, the workforce, or military, we are here to help students make the best choice for themselves.

An issue that can be prevalent at the beginning of the school year for students is learning how to cope with change. This will be especially true for students at the high school, since the building known as Ripon High School will be going through physical changes during the school year. What has been familiar territory may turn into new and unknown areas. People react to change differently- ending up somewhere on a spectrum of responses with “I love change and thrive on it!” on one end and “I dread change and it makes me really anxious!” on the other end.

It helps to know how they respond to change so they can understand their feelings as they experience them. It also helps to have coping strategies in mind ahead of time so they are prepared when they have to deal with change- none of us are able to avoid dealing with change at various times throughout life. Talking to their counselor about their feelings and/or working on strategies with him or her about how to cope with change are two areas where their counselor can be of great help to them.

Steve Hazell & Leah Gullickson

Message from the Police Liaison

Officer Michels is here to help!



I'd just like to take a few moments to introduce myself; my name is Lindsey Michels, and I am embarking on my second year as the School Resource Officer for the Ripon Area School District. I have been a police officer with the City of Ripon Police Department for the past 11 years. I started out as a patrol officer, I then became the investigator for eight years and last year I assumed the role of the School Resource Officer.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first year as the SRO! The School Resource Officer has three main duties: 1) Law Enforcement Officer 2) Law Related Counselor and 3) Law Enforcement Educator. I am also fortunate to be part of many teams both within the police department and the school district. One of the school district teams includes the Student Services Team, which allows me to work with school administrators, counselors, psychologists, and the school nurse to assist our schools in helping students to have a positive school experience. I like the versatile role that the SRO has, which allows me the opportunity to interact with students and staff on many different levels.

Please feel free to contact me at any time. My office is located at Ripon High School; however, I cover all of the schools in the district. My office number is (920) 748-4670 and my email is: michelsl@ripon.k12.wi.us. I am looking forward to another new school year and the exciting educational experiences that we will encounter.

Officer Lindsey Michels

Message from the Nurse

Are your child's immunizations up to date?



The school year is starting and it is time again to make sure your children's immunizations are up to date for their grade level. Remember, it is the law in the state of Wisconsin.

Why is this so important?

Diseases that vaccines prevent can be dangerous, or even deadly. Fortunately in the United States our vaccination rates are high, resulting in many vaccine-preventable diseases being uncommon in our overall population. We must, however, keep that rate high for the well-being of our children and for our total community.

Some people cannot receive vaccinations because their immune system is weak, due to an illness such as cancer. But if more parents choose not to vaccinate their children this puts our whole community at risk. It could allow these diseases to return and infect many more within our population. People who can't fight off diseases would be at greater risk for infection and even death.

Where can you check to see if your child's immunizations are current?

A few years ago the state of Wisconsin created the Wisconsin Immunization Registry or (WIR). Your child's immunization record is securely stored electronically in a statewide data base. Health care providers, with parent permission, can update the record and keep it current after your child gets a vaccine at their doctor's office. As a parent or guardian you can access this information via the internet and make sure your child has all the shots that are required to be at school the first day.

If you have questions about state vaccine requirements or how to access the Wisconsin Immunization Registry you may speak to your healthcare provider or visit: <http://dhfsWIR.org> or <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization> or call the School District Health Office at (920)748-4633.

Mary Lyke RN, BSN

Message from the Special Education Parent Liaison

Meet your Parent Liaison!



Hello and welcome back to the 2015-2016 school year! Hoping you all had a wonderful summer. Our family had a wonderful time making memories, some of our most treasured were visiting the beach in Sheboygan, spending the day at Bay Beach and taking a flight in a two-seater, Vintage Aeronca Chief airplane!

My name is Debbie Weiske. I am the Ripon Area School District, Special Education Parent Liaison trained through the WSPEI grant at CESA 6. Last academic year, I completed my two mandatory training sessions at CESA 6 and was left with an ample amount of information, books, resources, contact names, etc.

I am happy to share this information with you, should you wish to see it. Things such as; Transition Action Guide (For Post-School Planning), planning for life after High School, opening doors to employment, school, family and community partnership planning, partnering for children with disabilities, all about IEP's, understanding guardianships, what you should know about Wisconsin Law, etc.

In May of this year, we held a parent program with the Waupun Area School District that was an enrichment session on IEP 101. We had many in attendance and the feedback was wonderful! Many stated they really were able to learn more about the IEP process through the teaching of Sherry Gundlach, Family Engagement Coordinator at CESA 6.

If there is anything, or any area you would be interested in learning more about, please feel free to contact me at weisked@ripon.k12.wi.us. I am looking forward to a fantastic 2015-2016 academic year and, as always, finding ways to continue to be proactive and develop win-win relationships throughout the school year.

Message from the Psychologists

Back to School!



Going back to school is such an exciting time for many students and parents. It's a fresh, new start with many new things like teachers, supplies, and friends. However, it can also be a time of anxiety and worry for many. Whether you sent your four or five year old child off for their very first day of school, your child is starting a new school, or transitions are just difficult for you or your child; back to school can be scary and difficult. Listed below are a few simple things you can do to help ease the transition back to school and start the school year off on a positive note.

- Model a positive attitude. Children often follow adult examples. Having a positive attitude and talking about the positive aspects of school will help your student feel more optimistic.
- Stay calm and show care. If your child is anxious about school, stay calm and show you care. Let him/her know you understand how their feelings and focus on positive ways to help their anxiety. A personal note of care in a lunch or back pack can make a difference.
- Establish a daily routine. Create a consistent, daily routine for mornings, after school, and bedtimes. When children have a consistent routine, anxiety is reduced because they know what to expect and when.
- Homework Routine. A consistent homework routine will increase the likelihood your child will complete his/her work. It will also help your child to feel successful and increase self-confidence. Here are tips on establishing a homework routine:
 - Designate a place in your home where your child will be able to stay focused. This should be a distraction free area that can be consistently used for homework purposes.
 - Include supplies your child may need to complete his/her work.
 - Consistent time. Homework should be completed around the same time every day. Some children may need a break after school, to relax before they start their homework. Other children might prefer to complete it right after school. The earlier in the evening, the calmer and more efficient they will be.
 - Allow frequent breaks after a specified amount of work has been completed. This provides children time to clear their mind and refocus.
 - Consider incentives. Some children may need something to motivate them to complete their work in a timely manner. Allow children to earn a small reward for completing their work, such as a small of computer time, TV time, a game with parents, or time with friends.

These are some ways you can help your child feel more positive about starting school and increase the likelihood of academic success.

If you would like additional ideas to help your child cope with anxiety, ideas for daily routines, or homework routines, please feel free to contact your school counselor or school psychologist. Additional information can also be found at www.naspoline.org, under the *Families* tab.



Kara Olson

Message from the BRAVE Program

What is BRAVE?

The BRAVE program begins its fourteenth year of programming in September. The mission of the BRAVE program is to provide educational, social, health, and recreational programming in a collaborative and innovative manner to all members of the community in a safe, healthy, drug-free and supportive environment. Services include after school homework help and enrichment classes for students grades kindergarten through 8th, Outreach Programming and the STEP program. The BRAVE program served 717 students and adults during the 2014-15 school year.

BRAVE after school programming is available at BPES/Journey, MPES/Quest and RMS/Catalyst. Programming for grades K-5 is provided with four individual sessions. Homework help is provided free of charge and enrichment classes are available for a small fee. Registration for each session is sent home with students and classes are available on a first come first serve basis. BRAVE homework help and Tiger's Den are available for students in grade 6-8th free of charge. One time yearly registration is required for homework help and Tiger's Den. Enrichment classes are available on a separate registration basis throughout the year. All three programs provide students with a safe and supportive environment to gain knowledge and skills.

Outreach Programs are available throughout the year free of charge. Past programming has included educational topics such as Meet the Specialist and Cyber Safety as well as fun family programming with interactive crafts and food creations. Free childcare is available when specified. Families are encourage to take advantage of these fun and educational opportunities.

The STEP Program or Senior Tax Exchange Program provides Ripon area seniors with volunteer opportunities within the district in exchange for property tax credits. Volunteers provided 819 hours of their valuable time last year and many continued to volunteer beyond the allotted 85 hours the program stipulates. This program provides a valuable service to the students and staff of RASD by offering additional classroom support.

The BRAVE program offers many exciting opportunities for the Ripon community. For more information, please contact:

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“People who really want to make a difference in the world usually do it, in one way or another. And I’ve noticed something about people who make a difference in the world: They hold the unshakable conviction that individuals are extremely important, that every life matters. They get excited over one smile. They are willing to feed one stomach, educate one mind, and treat one wound. They aren’t determined to revolutionize the world all at once; they’re satisfied with small changes. Over time, though, the small changes add up. Sometimes they even transform cities and nations, and yes, the world.”

Beth Clark

School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❖ Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- ❖ Missing school days can make it harder for children to learn to read.
- ❖ Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- ❖ Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- ❖ Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.



Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school – and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance in grade school will help children do well in middle school, high school, and beyond.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ❖ Set an age appropriate bedtime routine.
- ❖ Establish a consistent morning routine that allows you to arrive at school on time.
- ❖ Send your child to school every day unless she/he is truly sick. Please keep in mind complaints of a stomachache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- ❖ Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal if your child seems anxious or reluctant about going to school. They can offer advice on how to help her/him feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- ❖ Develop back-up plans with a family member, neighbor, or another parent for getting your child to school if something arises that affects your routine.
- ❖ Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- ❖ For more information, refer to the school handbook or contact the principal.