

## **Student Services Overview May 2008**

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to ensure our students are self-motivated, constant learners with enduring knowledge, skills and values for leading responsible, productive lives.

### **Overview of Programs**

Vashon Island School District has a variety of programs to support students with learning disabilities, health impairments or other issues that require additional support to assist them in becoming successful academically, socially, and physically.

Our special education program currently serves over 155 students with a variety of disabilities including Traumatic Brain Injury, Health Impairments, Orthopedic Impairments, Hearing Impairments, Behavior Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities, Down's Syndrome, Vision Impairments and Autism. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Reauthorization 2007) requires that students with a disability who qualify for Special Education services shall receive specially designed instruction to enable them to make academic progress. The law also requires that students with disabilities participate with their typical peers to the greatest extent possible.

The Special Education staff is comprised of a Director of Student Services, nine Certificated Special Education teachers, Para-educators, two Speech and Language Pathologists, a part time, contracted Physical Therapist, an Occupational Therapist and two school psychologists. Special Education staff is available at each of the schools. Many of our staff has advanced degrees and additional certification in other areas. All have received training in techniques and strategies for serving children with a variety of needs.

Special Education programs allow students to receive specially designed instruction in an individualized manner or in small group settings using methods and strategies geared towards their individual strengths and weaknesses. Services are designed and provided after students have been evaluated to determine their learning challenges and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is written outlining the specific goals and objectives that the student will be taught during the year..

Students are identified for special education evaluation through the Childfind process, referral by parents, physicians, or classroom teachers who may be concerned about a student's progress. The purpose of Childfind is to locate, evaluate, and identify children aged birth through 21 who have a disability and are not currently receiving special education or related services and who may be eligible for those services. Childfind is designed to reach all children who reside within the school district boundaries, regardless of the setting in which they are receiving educational services.

Childfind screenings are conducted monthly at Chautauqua Elementary School by the Early Childhood Team (School Nurse, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologist, School Psychologist and Family Resources Coordinator) and include obtaining background information from the parents and assessing the child's cognitive, communication, physical, social-emotional and adaptive development. Parents are notified after the screening of the results and provided with written notice of the results within ten days of the screening. If the screening supports additional evaluation, parent consent is requested to perform additional in-depth assessments.

### **Special Education Programs:**

Special Education programs within the Vashon Island School district include:

- The Vashon Early Childhood Program (Birth to Six years old)
- Supported Learning Class (K-5, 6-8)
- Learning Resource Centers (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)

#### ***The Vashon Early Childhood Program***

The Vashon Island School District offers pre-school children ages three through five years old an environment and classroom experience based on best practices from current Early Childhood research. Activities and expectations are developmentally appropriate and challenge the children to learn, explore and play. The student to teacher ratio is small to insure that every child receives individual attention. The ratio of typically developing peers and children with special needs is approximately 50/50. Two full-time certificated teachers and para-educators support a successful program that for 12 years has prepared children, normally developing and those with special needs, to experience academic and social success in school.

Many children identified as needing special education services may also receive one-to-one or small group services from the Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists and/or Physical Therapist. These related services help to support the development of learning skills by focusing on specific deficit areas identified during the evaluation process.

#### ***K-5 Learning Resource Centers***

This program is for students identified as requiring special education services in academic areas. Students receive individual and/or small group instruction in reading, math and/or written language depending on the identified learning disability. Specially designed instruction (small groups, slower pace, modified content) is provided as per the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Services are provided either within the regular classroom or by pullout depending on the individual needs of the student.

#### ***K-5 Supported Learning Programs***

Students needing extra behavior support may be served within the supported Learning Program at the elementary school. Students in this program receive more intensive behavior

support in a small classroom environment and also within the general education program. Para – educator support is available when necessary in the general education class.

### ***6-8 Supported Learning Program***

Middle school aged students with more significant learning and/or physical disabilities are served through this program. Instruction is delivered individually or in small groups and often in the self-contained classroom setting. Peer mentors participate in many classroom activities including adaptive PE. Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language related services are provided as pull-out services or integrated in the classroom program. Adaptive and pre-vocational skills are an important component of the curriculum for these students. Whenever appropriate, based on individual needs, students are integrated into regular classrooms to the greatest degree possible with Para-educators attending classes with them.

### ***6-9 & 9-12 Learning Resource Centers (LRC)***

Like students in the K-5 LRC program, students in the middle school and high school LRC programs receive individualized support either one-to-one or in small groups to help them be successful in their general education classrooms. Students may be served within the regular classroom or be assigned to the LRC for 1-3 periods a day to receive their instruction. Beginning at age 16, transition services are a required element in the IEP. Students are assessed to determine areas of interests and potential post-school goals. They are provided with opportunities to explore career options, courses and activities are selected to support their post-school goals and instruction in self advocacy skills needed to attain their goals is also provided.

*(Note: We are required to serve students on IEPs through age 21 if appropriate)*

### **Tier Two Support Programs:**

Other non-Special Education supplemental and supportive programs within the district include:

#### ***Title I***

Title I is a federally funded program to provide remedial supplemental support to students scoring below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized testing in reading, writing or math and /or not meeting grade level standards on the WASL.

Students are provided with small group instruction on a p utilizing primarily the Read Well program. In Vashon School District Title I services are provided 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Students are currently identified through the use of a variety of assessment instruments including the Dynamic Indicators of Beginning Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and the Individual Reading Inventory, as well as the previous year's WASL scores. Past participation in Title 1 and both teacher and parent input are also used in determining eligibility. Parents are provided progress reports at least three times a year and their input on program activities is solicited through individual meetings and the yearly parent survey.

### ***Learning Assistance Program (LAP)***

The LAP program provides remedial supplemental assistance in math for grades 1 through 5 and 9-12. Students are identified for LAP support from the Brigance Math grade level screening assessment (at CES), WASL scores, and teacher/parent input.

Student learning programs are developed based on the individually identified deficit areas determined during the assessment process. Student programs are also coordinated with classroom curriculum and individual student skill development interwoven with ongoing curriculum. There is frequent collaboration with classroom teachers, progress reports are sent to parents, at least three times a year, and ongoing assessment determines instruction. Differentiated materials aligned with Everyday Math are used at CES. Students may exit and re-enter the program during the year based on their progress.

### ***Early Intervention Services***

The Early Intervention Program is the result of a research based 3-tier model of identifying and serving children who are at risk or delayed progress in the areas of reading and writing. Kindergarten students are assessed in the fall utilizing the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Research has shown that students with deficits in early literacy skills may be at significant risk for falling behind their peers in reading and writing. After initial screening, children are provided with instruction, either individually or in small groups, focusing on the development of these essential skills. Students will be screened during the Fall, Winter and Spring. If, after receiving additional support and program modifications over the course of the kindergarten year, students are still struggling, they may be referred for special education assessment to identify the presence of learning disability, or they are referred to the Title I program for continued supplemental small group instructional.

### ***Section 504***

Section 504 of the American with Disabilities Act provides for assistance to those individuals with disabilities that affect their ability to access their educational program. Students eligible for a 504 plan do not need specially designed instruction, but do need accommodations to successfully access their educational program. A 504 team evaluates documentation of a student's disability and information from teachers and the student's parents regarding the impact the disability has on the student's ability to access the curriculum. A plan is developed

specifying needed accommodations based on the team's evaluation. Examples of accommodations that students may receive are; more time on tests and homework assignments, the use of technology to complete work and/or the use of scribes to dictate test responses.

### ***English Language Learners (ELL)***

At the beginning of each school year, new and continuing ESL students are identified through the WLPT II (Washington Language Proficiency Test) or the WPLT placement test. For Spanish speakers with little or no English, a writing and oral reading sample in Spanish is obtained to determine first language skills. Both new and continuing students are then grouped and scheduled for pull out ELL services. The ELL teacher also offers consultation to general education teachers to assist them in serving ELL students in their classroom. The ELL teacher also communicates with parents in November, and at the end of the year, through written narratives and parent conferences. Written progress reports go home with the student's report card. The ELL teacher also participates in Success and Evaluation Team meetings with other building professionals when there are concerns about an ELL student's progress or performance.

### ***Readiness to Learn (RTL)***

The Readiness to Learn grant (RTL) provides Family Support services to families of students in preschool through 8th grade. In addition, the RTL grant combines with the Prevention Intervention and the Title IV grant to provide funding for the substance abuse counselor for the high school and middle school. Family advocates staff offices in each of the three schools. RTL also helps support a one day per week position for a family advocate specifically dedicated to support for Spanish speaking families. Advocates provide families with referrals to local and regional social services and connect them with other human services, education and local resources to support the healthy development of the student and their family. Families are referred for Readiness to Learn services through multi-disciplinary student support teams at each school.

The program recognizes that for every child to become successful, partnerships between parents, schools and the community must be emphasized. Readiness to Learn builds safety nets for vulnerable students and their families by developing partnerships with teachers, school staff, volunteers, and community resources.