

Dear Parents/Guardians;

We trust that this email finds you and yours well.

I wanted to take a moment to reach out and update everyone on the status of Special Education as we traverse through the Pandemic, and to address some concerns that have come to light in the past few weeks since we have returned from the Holiday break.

We are happy to report that we spent the summer working on catching up on our testing and meetings as a result of the Spring closure. The hard work has paid off, and across grades K-12+, we are back on track with evaluations and meetings. We continue to offer remote meetings, as well as evaluations outside of the school buildings, for parents and guardians who have chosen full remote.

We unexpectedly lost our Physical Therapist over break, and are happy to announce that we have secured services through Ms. Kerry Onorato as our Physical Therapist, and Ms. Katie Coe as our Physical Therapy Assistant. They both started their work here on February 1 meeting with all of our staff, meeting our students, and setting up the schedule for missed PT services, and plans for moving forward. We appreciate your flexibility as we deal with this unanticipated event, and work to get all of our students back on track with the PT services that they may require to make effective progress.

Many of you have been sending questions about the recent "Wareham Week" article regarding language in our district N1's. Wareham first created this N1 language that was included in our District Proposed Action to parents of students who have IEPs right after the Governor closed schools. In this language, which we created collaboratively with guidance from DESE, we asked that parents agree to waive timelines due to the school closure. We chose to do this because we did not have access to students, to testing, or to paperwork necessary to keep the process moving within timelines, as no one was physically in schools, and we were in the throes of the Pandemic.

This was a request to parents to be flexible and know that the district was working to do all that we could to keep the process going. It was not a demand, or anything that needed to be agreed to in order for our processes to be carried out with fidelity. It was included in the "Proposal" section of the N1. What you don't see in this complaint is the countless emails, letters and posts about our process to parents and guardians. We have remained transparent throughout the pandemic. If a parent did not agree, then we worked with remote agencies to keep the timelines to the best of our ability, but even DESE kept reiterating to "do the best we could". It was meant to get us through the end of the 2019/2020 school year.

We have continually monitored the COVID situation since the opening of in-person learning in mid-September of 2020. We have since decided we needed to review this statement again, now that in person learning has become more of a mainstay, and it was recently changed, and the language in question has since been removed. I would also add that in our efforts to

consistently promote the success of all of our students, we have only recently changed our website information, which still reflects the language from the Spring closure. We encourage you to visit the new webpage when it is finalized over the next few days.

Wareham never wavered in its special education process or its provision of services. In fact, we have worked with countless parents to provide services in unique ways to make sure that we reach and support as many of our students as possible. Again, it is important to note that the language at issue was contained in the school district "Proposal" section of the N1. Our intention was simply to propose that parents agree to be patient as we navigate this Global Pandemic, and our parents have been not only patient, but supportive and flexible. If any parent did not agree to waive any deadlines, the District worked tirelessly to ensure, to the best of our ability, that the timelines were complied with. We feel confident that the Department of Education will dismiss this complaint, as it is no longer accurate or viable.

It is also important to recognize that this is not a parent complaint, but an advocate with opportunity for financial gain who claims to speak on behalf of families. In fact, the District did not receive one parent complaint on this language.

We will continue to work with DESE throughout the Pandemic and will update information as it becomes available. Please reach out to your Principals, Team Chairs or my office if you have any questions, or require additional support for your child. Wareham is committed to the success of all of our students, everyday, regardless of the current circumstances.

Stay safe and be well.

Melissa J. Fay

Director of Student Services