



# Ipswich Public Schools

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## Summary of Program Review Commissioned for Programming for Students with Dyslexia and Programming for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

During the 2020-21 School Year, the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Department commissioned Academic Discoveries, LLC, to complete reviews of two special education student populations. The PPS Department had requested the reviews in order to obtain objective analysis regarding our individualized programming delivery for students with Dyslexia and for students on the Autism Spectrum. The Dyslexia report was received on September 14, 2021, and the Autism report on September 20, 2021. Both reviews included input from stakeholder groups including representatives from the Special Education Parent Advisory (SEPAC), School Committee, parents, students, and school staff.

### Dyslexia Recommendations:

1. **Communication** – It was noted that although parents are appreciative of the variety of assessments and interventions for their students, they do not always understand the language used in parent-teacher discussions. Specifically, in regard to reading level, parents would like to know where their child ranks relative to peers. The review recommended the development of graphs and charts to illustrate reading capability, as well as offering parent training to create better understanding of the tiered support system. Also recommended were increasing parents' understanding around the tiered system of supports within classrooms, as well as how parents could more effectively partner with medical professionals and others with whom they consult when outside evaluations are being completed.
2. **Professional Development** – The review noted that new staff may not share the same background understanding of how Ipswich supports students with Dyslexia. The evaluators recommended mandated professional development for new staff, as well as with current educators regarding the Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines document. Recommendations further indicated that the professional development should also include a focus on data collection and analysis and how to ensure data-driven decision making within classrooms in order to enhance student outcomes. Finally, it was noted that parents who are members of SEPAC recall earlier training about Dyslexia, and would appreciate an update.
3. **Systemic Approaches** – A clear recommendation was made for annual professional development around Dyslexia in order to ensure “a cohesive and consistent approach.” A related recommendation focused on developing district-wide protocols to support migration

of student data between school levels. This would ensure that staff members at the middle and high schools are aware of specific supports that were offered at the elementary level, even when such supports were not within the realm of special education.

Recommendations for Students on the Autism Spectrum:

1. **Transition Process** - The evaluators recommended that when families receive transition plans, that the Team ensures parents understand the Next Steps for students transitioning beyond high school. Although detailed transition plans are provided to families, the reviewers believe that parents could benefit from additional training in understanding the plans.
2. **Explanation of programming** – The reviewers indicated that “IPS could be recognized as a model district in supporting students with autism in a public school setting.” They recommended making this information more available to families by way of a presentation or posting on the website.
3. **Systemic Approaches** – The report noted that the District has well-developed forms and protocols in place in the special education program. The evaluators recommended creating a flow chart listing resources for parents of children with autism in order to provide opportunities for community connections when the students transition beyond the K-12 public school system.

## Action Plan Next Steps

### Dyslexia

Area	Recommendation	Implementation	Timeline
Communication	Increase Parent understanding-graphs and charts for parent understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postings on PPS page</li> <li>• Creation of laminated charts and graphs to increase understanding in IEP meeting discussions</li> </ul>	2021-22 School Year
	Education in regard to medical community and other referral sources.	<p>Parent education via Zoom offerings</p> <p>Ongoing outreach to referring professionals in the community.</p>	2021-22 and 2022-23 School Year
Professional Development	Mandated training in MA Dyslexia Guidelines for staff	Professional Development for all teaching staff	<p>Completed for 2021-22 school year on 10/7/21 and 10/21/21. Will be held annually.</p> <p>Second year will include added emphasis on data collection</p> <p>This links to Action Steps in the 2021-22 Strategy for District Improvement.</p>
	Update training for SEPAC	Presentation to SEPAC and posting on homepage	Before June 2022
Systemic Approaches	Repository for sharing data on reading interventions as students transition to secondary level	Creation of a data storage link or Data Dashboard to ensure non-special education reading data is preserved.	2021-22 School Year

## Autism Spectrum

Area	Recommendation	Implementation	Timeline
Transition to post-22	Transition Plans-increase parent understanding	Targeted discussions for Families of students age 14 and up	2021-2022 School Year
	Explanation of Programming Continuum within the District	Development of both a narrative and visual schema of individualized options  Posting on website	2021-2022 School Year
Systemic Approaches	Develop community connections flow chart listing resources for families	Creation of a parent resource link on the PPS page	Ongoing