

SSD/Maplewood Richmond Heights

December 2021

Dear MRH Families,

For many of us, this is a time of year when we engage in celebrations with family and friends and keep important traditions alive. It can also be a stressful time. However you will be spending the next few weeks, I hope you are able to experience peace and joy.

Respectfully,

Ben Gleason

Lead Special Education Coordinator

Upcoming

December 7- Early release day

December 22-31- Winter break

January 3- School resumes

January 13- Last day of first semester

January 14- No School-Teacher work/Record day

SSD Student Scholarship Deadline Approaching!

Many opportunities for scholarships and awards are now open for SSD students! SSD scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors are active and **due Dec. 17, 2021**. Students applying for [The James E. Westbury/SSD Board of Education Scholarship](#), [The Allison M. Haake Memorial Scholarship](#), or [The Bonhomme Lions Club Scholarship](#) must receive at least one service from SSD and plan to go to a college, university, or postsecondary program. All scholarships require a letter of recommendation. Visit ssdmo.org/scholarships for more information.

The Special Education Foundation (SEF) sponsors the [John Cary Scholarships](#) for high school seniors, as well. Applications are due **Jan. 24, 2022**.



For more information, please contact Deana Parsons, SSD internal communications coordinator, at dmparsons@ssdmo.org or 314.989.8102.

Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP)

Through the program, students hold a summer job in their community and receive job-coaching support. They are paid an hourly wage for their work. SWEP is funded by the Productive Living Board of St. Louis County and is open to county residents with a qualifying disability. It is conducted through a collaboration of six area agencies - MERS/Goodwill is the Lead Agency.

A few important things to remember about eligibility for the SWEP program:

- You must be a resident of St. Louis County.
- You must be between 16 and 20 years of age and planning to return to a school program in the Fall of 2022.
- You cannot participate in SWEP while participating in the Extended School Year Program.
- Your teacher needs to submit a Teacher Input form before the program begins.
- You must be available for the entire 8 weeks of the program.
- You must have your own transportation to participate in the program.
- Not everyone who applies to the SWEP program will be able to participate this summer.

If your student is interested, please reach out to her/his case manager for the application.

Parent Education and Diversity Awareness

Parent Education has a workshop scheduled for December 9th at 6:30 PM. The workshop, hosted in collaboration with the St. Louis ARC, will be on zoom. Please see the information below.

WORKSHOP: Supported Decision Making (In Collaboration with St. Louis ARC)

Dec. 9, 2021

Starts at 6:30 PM

Description

When an individual with a disability becomes 18, they are legally an adult. This workshop is designed to help families understand the options they have to help their loved one make good decisions and build a circle of support. Using tools from Missouri Supported Decision Making Consortium and Charting the LifeCourse, Debra and Sharon will coach your family how to access each of the six life domains (health, employment, safety, etc.) and create a plan that uses a variety of resources to build self-determination skills. This workshop is ideal for primary caregivers, their family member with a disability, and siblings or other key people who support planning and problem solving in their lives. Small groups will use Zoom breakout rooms to start creating their own supported decision-making plans with templates from the Missouri Supported Decision Making Consortium.

Presenters: Sharon Spurlock, Director of Family Support, St. Louis Arc and Debra Fiasco, Administrator, Parent Education and Diversity Awareness, Special School District

[Register for the Event through Zoom](#)

We are also taking applications for the Parent Leadership Institute. PLI will occur over 4 evenings in February and March. You can learn more and download the application here: [Parent Leadership Institute](#)



Finally, PEDAs would love your feedback! Please complete our PEDAs Communications survey here: [PEDAs Survey](#)

Virtual Lunch and Learn

Special School District's Family and Community Outreach, Social Work, Parent Education and Diversity Awareness (PEDAs), and Communications Department have teamed up to offer a virtual Lunch & Learn series for SSD families and stakeholders. The series, which will involve community organizations sharing information about their work, will take place on the first Wednesday of each month during the 2021-22 school year, from 11:30 AM - Noon.



Representatives from community organizations will participate to increase awareness about their agency and make connections with those in our SSD community who may benefit from their programs and services.

Organizations represented in the Lunch & Learn series include:

- [Easterseals Midwest](#) – Jan. 5
- [The Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis](#) – Feb. 2
- [Team Activities for Special Kids \(TASK\)](#) – March 2
- [St. Louis ARC](#) – April 6
- [St. Louis County Library](#) – May 4

Each event is held virtually through YouTube Live and will remain on our channel for future viewing.

MRH Parent Advisory Council

The MRH Parent Advisory Council had its first meeting last spring. This group offers an opportunity to connect with other parents of students with disabilities and to learn about topics of interest. The group is actively planning for this school year. Please contact MRH parent [Mrs. Kim Gifford](#) if you are interested in participating.

Health and Wellness

It is hard to believe that we have made it this far into another crazy pandemic year and that the final holidays are just around the corner. If you're like many of us, you love the holidays but start feeling stressed just thinking about the amount of work and finances that can be required to make them feel successful. It is all too easy to set unrealistic expectations of how we want our holiday season to go and then feel stressed when we try to actually reach those expectations. Not to mention the fact that our holiday traditions may not be what they once were due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic - you may not be able to see certain family members, gatherings may be happening on a much smaller basis, you might not feel comfortable traveling to family members, etc.

The Mayo Clinic provides several suggestions to help us reduce stress as much as possible so that we can enjoy the upcoming holiday season. Such suggestions include working to acknowledge and accept whatever feelings we are having as the holidays approach. Feelings are always okay, and accepting them as they are creates a safe space for us to feel accepted and not judged or guilty for having them.

Additional suggestions from the Clinic include trying to set more realistic expectations for your holidays, creating a budget for spending, saying “no” if something is too much for you, and planning ahead as much as possible to avoid last minute stress (such as when you’ve forgotten to purchase a gift for someone or forgot to grab ingredients for holiday baking while rushing through the grocery store). Try to notice when your stress level is too high so that you can implement self-care strategies to stay regulated, happy, and healthy. Exercise, breaks, eating well, getting enough sleep, and finding time for our interests and hobbies can make a world of difference when life gets stressful. Practicing gratitude can also go a long ways in helping to reduce stress while simultaneously improving health and feelings of happiness.

The Aetna article listed below includes 5 different exercises you might practice to help prepare you for the upcoming holiday season. Most importantly, reach out for help if needed. Help could be reaching out to a friend or family member or even seeking professional help if symptoms of stress get too big and are interfering with your daily functioning. It’s okay to want the best for your holidays, but it’s also important to take care of yourself and make sure that you aren’t overdoing so that you can be present for this wonderful time of year.

Here are the resources that provided ideas for this article and might be helpful in managing holiday stress:

1. Stress, Depression and the Holidays: Tips for Coping

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>

1. 5 Gratitude Exercises to Help you Cope with Holiday Stress

<https://www.aetna.com/health-guide/gratitude-exercises-for-holiday-stress.html>

SSD Staff Awards

Applications for awards which honor the contributions of SSD staff and community members are awaiting nominations, due Feb. 7, 2022. Please encourage your staff, students, **school parents** and community partners to submit nominations to ensure they are recognized for their meaningful work in SSD.

- [Key to the Classroom Award](#) (classroom teachers)
- [Building Block Award](#) (paraprofessionals)
- [Lasting Impression Award](#) (staff who are not classroom teachers or paraprofessionals)
- [Special Ambassador Award](#) (community members, and SSD staff in some cases)

For more information, please contact Deana Parsons, internal communications coordinator, at dmparsons@ssdmo.org or 314.989.8102.

SSD Board Information: Filing for SSD Board of Education Opens Dec. 7

Candidate filing for two open seats on the Special School District of St. Louis County Board of Education opens at 8 AM on Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021, and continues until 5 PM on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021. The terms of current Board members Ms. Katie Pottroff, Subdistrict 3 and Mr. Scott Moeller, Subdistrict 4 expire in March 2022.

The two open seats are for three-year terms beginning in March 2022 in the following subdistricts:

- Subdistrict 3 – Parkway School District

- Subdistrict 4 – Ferguson-Florissant, Pattonville, and Riverview Gardens school districts
[Learn more about the filing process and eligibility requirements on the SSD website.](#)

NOW HIRING



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ssdmo.org/careers

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Let's Talk!

Let's Talk is an open invitation from Special School District (SSD) to tell us what's on your mind. Let's Talk is an easy way to submit feedback at your convenience directly to the SSD staff member who can help.

Additional Resources

- [SSD Superintendent Updates](#)
- [SSD Parent Advisory Council](#)
- [Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Program](#)
- [SSD Guidance/Resources for In-Person and Distance Learning](#)
- [SSD Partner District - Maplewood-Richmond Heights](#)
- [Academic and Related Services Toolkit](#)



Special School District of St. Louis County

Facebook @SSDDStLCo

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