



## “OWL” News from the Office of Student Services

*Who is thinking about the next steps after high school? Why that is all our seniors and their families!*

In all honesty, for students with unique learning profiles and their families the thought process for transition out of high school should begin much sooner, and by law, by the time a student is 14. At age 14 the student is invited to be an active participant in their team meetings, and the team should focus on creating and reviewing what is called a “transition plan” which looks at the vision a student and their family sets for the future, including schooling, training for a technical job, or service, housing choices, medical needs, and transportation options. Then the team creates specific goals that help the student move towards fulfilling their long term goals post high school graduation. If your student has more significant needs, finding out about the details of what services and supports are available through adult agencies or a particular college will also be important. It is critical to understand that the entitlements of special education for school aged students is not the same supports available through agencies which work with adults who have disabilities. While your child may still have accommodations afforded through IDEA they might not be able to receive explicit instruction in the same fashion as they had in public elementary and secondary education. Further, the supports afforded are contingent upon the overall fiscal climate of the nation and funding allocations directed to these agencies. Some years have more lean allocations and other years the agencies have more robust allocation. This of course, can be frustrating for families of people with unique needs. That is why planning as early as is reasonable is such a good idea.

I would like to add a note of optimism to this discussion. Our society is getting better at identifying the needs of its members and addressing them appropriately. Just think of the support that colleges afford their students now as compared to when I went to school (yes, back in the dinosaur days). Most universities have student support centers which offer counseling, explicit instruction and tutoring support for most content areas and the colleges offer accommodations that help “level the playing field” for students with disabilities. Getting extra time, or teacher notes is routine, as are other accommodations that many students find help them be successful. What is critical is making sure your student knows to advocate for what they need. At college or in the work place, no one will automatically give them accommodations or know that they have specific needs. Students should be practicing self-advocacy so they can do this for themselves as they take that next step in their lives.



### *Seeking English Language Learner Parents for an Advisory Board*

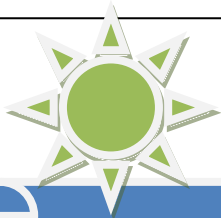
Please help the district be better at programming for students who are learning English! Ashland seeks to start a parent advisory board for support and advocacy for our English Language Learners. The group will be parent led and how often it meets and the mission and vision will be decided by those who choose to participate. However, it will be incredibly helpful for parents to give Student Services feedback about how to support students who are learning English and potentially learning new cultural norms which are different from their family background. If you are interested please contact me at [ksilva@ashland.k12.ma.us](mailto:ksilva@ashland.k12.ma.us)

# Ask Student Services

This is a new section in the Owl News....Parents contact ASHPAC with questions and maybe one of yours will be featured and answered here in the Owl Newsletter.

**Question:** How do I support my student with needs during the holiday season?

**Answer:** All parents wonder how to navigate the holiday season for their student, so great question! First and foremost, think about the values you want to instill in your child. Then think about how you model those values and whether you also give messages which run counter to them. For example, this is a time of gift giving, but do we also show that it is a time to give to the needy by donating to a favorite charity, or donating some time to do for others? While we are all a bit more stressed at this time, do you show or model how you cope with the stress? Hopefully you can show some mindfulness strategies and have your child join in them, such as morning or evening yoga, meditation, or other activity that helps you relax. Keeping to your routines is also helpful. When you deviate from routines, it can be disarming or unsettling to students. Finally, I hope that you all have the chance to just simply be with family and friends and appreciate the relationships that are fulfilling in your life. Help your students recognize this gift.



## "One More Award"

Recipients



Congratulations to the following staff:

As 2019 ends, I would like to give a One More Award to all the parents and guardians out there! Your love and support for your unique learner is felt and respected by me and all who work in Ashland!



As we take time this time of year to be mindful and thankful, we are reminded of all of the *thankless* work that our educators, teachers, related service providers, administrators, and support staff do for our children every day. We appreciate all that you do! May you have a wonderful and Happy Holiday Season!

**Please join us over the next few months at our monthly meetings. We would love your input.** We meet from 7:00 – 9:00 PM at Ashland Middle School in the Activity Room. Feel free to stop by for part of a meeting if that works best for your schedule. **We hope to see you: January 15, February 5, and March 4, 2020.**

**Kristine Kaveney**, Co-Chair: [kriskaveney@yahoo.com](mailto:kriskaveney@yahoo.com)

**Jill Fulhan**, Co-Chair, Secretary, Communications: [jill.fulhan@verizon.net](mailto:jill.fulhan@verizon.net)

**Diana Davis**, Vice-Chair: [diana.davis.ashpac@gmail.com](mailto:diana.davis.ashpac@gmail.com)

**Anna Bukina**, Treasurer, Web site Coordinator: [a.v.bukina@aol.com](mailto:a.v.bukina@aol.com)

We welcome feedback to help us provide programming that supports your needs and answers your questions. Our workshops and meetings are free and open to everyone!

