



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

### *Who loves Thanksgiving? Why this bird of another feather does (Owl, get it?)!*

I must admit I love Thanksgiving. The food is delicious, I get to spend time with my family, and I reflect on my life and what fills me with “a heart full of grateful” to steal a line from Dirks Bentley (song *Living*, 2018). Obviously as a family person, I am grateful for my husband and my three now adult sons, as well as for my extended family of brothers and sisters-in-law, cousins, nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews. I am grateful for friends who love and support me without being connected by blood or marriage. I am also grateful to have a job that sustains and fulfills me. My work here in Ashland is profoundly important to me and I am honored and humbled by the chance to come to work daily and work with a team of educators and support staff, students, parents and community members, a school committee and administrative team that puts students first in all planning and decision making. Right now there are several incredibly important initiatives that people are working on to help Ashland continue to be a model district which supports all learners in their journey towards their goals. I am happy to serve on the Mindess Building Educational Leadership Committee and to have recently lent my voice to the discussion of a united Mindess. In the past, supporting a truly inclusive Pittaway, building in-house programming and making sure all learners get the resources they need have been challenges that I have readily accepted. I am supported by a phenomenal team and the good works of ASHPAC. For all these reasons I have “a heart full of grateful.” I encourage you all to make Thanksgiving special for your family by maintaining your family traditions. Think about including explicit verbalizations of those things you and your family are grateful for having. It helps young children learn about empathy and appreciation and remind older folks what really matters in this life. One year when my youngest son was asked what he was grateful for (a question always asked to every member of my family before we eat) he answered “peas” but my mother heard “peace” and trust me she was touched that a three year old could be so socially aware (and a bit disappointed when she was informed he actually said peas, and that he was speaking from his hunger, not his heart). Finally, if you have picky eaters, don’t fret if your feast is not the “traditional” turkey and all the fixings! It is about gathering together to enjoy one another, not about the bird or the green bean casserole.

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

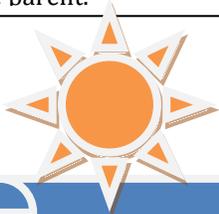
Please help the district be better at programming for students who are learning English! Ashland seeks to start a parent advisory board for support and advocacy for our English Language Learners. The group will be parent led and how often it meets and the mission and vision will be decided by those who 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:** Will you explain how special education programming looks in each building?

**Answer:** That is a great question. Ashland has been working hard to make sure we provide a continuum of services and supports in every building. At every building we have related service support, providing both push in and pull out services (in class, and in clinical offices), such as speech/language, OT and PT. We also have inclusion special education support, again both push in and pull out, by either teaching assistants or aba paras and/or special education teachers. At the preschool and elementary level we also have dually certified rooms which taught by a teacher who is certified in preschool or elementary education and special education, and these rooms are supported with a teaching assistant as well. We have specialized programming at each school, which is sometimes referred to as "sub-separate" classes. I do not like calling them substantially-separate because Ashland always strives to provide meaningful inclusion to all students, and the term "sub-separate" implies being outside of the general education setting more than 60% of the time per regulation, and for many students assigned to these specialized programs that is not the case. Specialized programs include therapeutic classrooms, classrooms based in language based practices, and classroom based for more intensive developmental needs with aba techniques and practices. What is important to remember is that no decision about support for a student is made without a team process that includes you the parent.



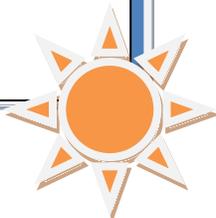
## "One More Award"

### Recipients



Congratulations to the following staff:

Donna Lowell, Lauren Perry, Charlotte Boccuzzi, Michele Stansilawzyk, Marie Melnick, Patty Daly, Brenda Ianarilli, Erin Cameron, Sali Diamond, Jess Malone, Stephen McKeon, Donna Pederson, Lauren Perry (a second nomination), Jen Caputor, Joe Chimienti, Jackie Poole



As we take time this month 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 Thanksgiving!*

We would like to thank Leslie Leslie of MassPAC for her informative workshop regarding Transition Planning for 14-22 year old students. This workshop fulfills OSS and ASHPAC's offering of the Basic Rights in Special Education annual workshop. If you are interested in a more traditional Basic Rights explainer, please visit the Federation for Children with Special Needs website for offerings in our area, or contact one of us for help.

We would like to thank Jennifer Cutler, APS Director of Counseling and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for speaking to us at her recent workshop. Ms. Cutler gave an overall picture of Counseling/SEL in APS and detailed her direction in creating a cohesive and continuing SEL curriculum across APS. We are excited to see the implementation take shape.

In addition, we are happy to co-sponsor Ms. Cutler's discussion of "Scenagers Next Chapter: Uncovering Skills for Stress Resilience" on December 5 from 7:00 – 8:30 at Ashland High School. Join Ms. Cutler and a panel of experts as they discuss strategies to help our teenagers navigate the increasing demands of our technological society.

**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: December 4, 2019 and January 15, February 5, and March 4, 2020.**

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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!