



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

### *Who is excited for a new school year?*

I definitely am very happy for a new school year. Just like January 1 represents for many a fresh start, the start of a new school year means the same thing for me (my calendar is a school based one!). I am energized by the returning staff that has had a summer to plan, to enjoy family and friends, and to have new adventures. I am energized by new staff joining us who hopefully will ask why we do what we do so that in our answers we will self-reflect and keep the good and change that which can be better. Student Services welcomes back Ms. Jeanne Nisbet who will be the special education administrator for grades 4 to 7. While she knows Ashland well, she was last at the high school so she will be getting to know Mindess and grades six and seven at AMS. To remind parents, we have Ms. Sara Davidson at Pittaway Preschool, Ms. Katie Bent from grades K-3, Ms. Deena LaVallee from grades eight through twelve, and Ms. Robin Wurtzel for out of district students as the special education administrators or coordinators for students who qualify for IEPs. In my office, I have the support of Ms. Colleen Brewer and Ms. JodiRene Anderson. Ms. Brewer handles most of the documentation concerns while Ms. Anderson handles transportation and team meeting scheduling. I am very lucky to have such a talented and dedicated team. We all come into special education because we want to support all students, especially those with unique learning profiles. I happen to be the mother of three young men (yikes, they are all grown up) and they each had unique learning profiles when they were in public education. So I know special education from both sides, and as a result I know that only as a team which collaborates will our children get the best possible supports and services.

### *What makes an excellent teacher?*

This is such a basic question for me....strong relationships with their students! Research shows time and again this one skill is critical to excellent teaching. But there are others including being patient, kind and compassionate, having content knowledge, being dedicated to teaching and learning, and engaging students in the learning process. Excellent teachers create activities that inspire investigation and learning, hold high expectations for all learners, support cooperative and interactive learning experiences, mix in a wide variety of activities, assessments and lessons, and finally hold every student responsible (as well as themselves) for the learning in the class.



### *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:** As we start a new school year, both eager and anxious about the transition, how can the Office of Student Services help us not be overwhelmed (adjusting to new routines, schedules, teachers, buildings, etc)?

**Answer:** Wow, what an excellent and timely question! First and foremost know we are always available to answer a question, both in person and/or by phone or email. My office is open from 7:30 to 4:00 every day. We have summer and vacation hours as well. Communication is one of the focal areas for the district. But it is a two way pattern of behavior....so if you have a need, I might not be able to know it unless you share it with me. Please share your concerns or your knowledge about your child with their new teacher, principal, special education liaison, guidance counselor, or other individual here in the school system. Also share what works for your family and you specifically. Are you the type who can't answer phone calls so an email is more effective? Do you need as much notice as possible for upcoming events? Are you anxious in general or do you handle changes easily. Knowing oneself is one of the SEL Core Competencies, and if you can model it in your family, your child will see this and hopefully learn from you the strategies that have worked. Please check out the district and school websites and teacher webpages for vital information. Also partner with another parent of a child who is in the same grade and promise to share what you learn about events with one another...my sons were horrible about telling me school events and I deliberately partnered with a mother of a girl whose daughter talked about everything—she was my best source of intel! Finally maintain a calendar that is easily viewed by all family members, whether that be electronic or hard copy, hung on the fridge. You can mark events with color coding for each child or school.



## "One More Award" Recipients



Congratulations to the  
following staff:

While there are no  
official One More  
Awards so early in the  
school year, I want to  
thank the summer  
school staff, building  
administration,  
custodial and central  
office staff all of whom  
worked this summer.



## ASHPAC news...



Welcome back to school! We know that the new year brings both excitement and anxiety for both parents and students. Please reach out to our members (all parent volunteers) if you have questions or just need a friendly ear! We can be contacted through our website ([www.ashpac.org](http://www.ashpac.org)) and by email.

**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)

**Elizabeth Souppa**, Vice-Chair: [esouppa.ashpac@gmail.com](mailto:esouppa.ashpac@gmail.com)

**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!

### ASHPAC Upcoming Calendar of Events

**September 9, 2019**

ASHPAC Monthly Meeting, 7-9 PM Ashland Middle School Activity Room. Please join us if you have questions or would like to find out more about what we do.

**October 1, 2019**

ASHPAC Workshop, Meet the Administration and "Lighting the way to Excellence" Awards. Join us in welcoming our administrators and honoring our educators.

**October 7, 2019**

ASHPAC Monthly Meeting, 7-9 PM Ashland Middle School Activity Room.

**October 30, 2019**

ASHPAC Workshop, Basic Rights: Transition Planning for students 14-22. Presented by Leslie Leslie, Federation for Children with Special Needs.