

Message From:

Alexa Mills

**DIRECTOR OF EXCEPTIONAL
STUDENT EDUCATION AND
STUDENT SERVICES**

Welcome back, students!

I am so excited about the new school year, and working in Exceptional Student Education and Student Services! **HELPING STUDENTS MOVE FORWARD** is first and foremost, as we work to meet the academic and behavioral needs of our students. **Thank you, parents, staff and community**, for your continued involvement in our efforts to bring about student achievement in **Dixie District Schools**. You are appreciated.

**EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT
EDUCATION**

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING NEEDS

When there are learning problems, the teacher will begin to keep records about what is happening. The records will consist of classroom observations, behaviors, work samples, attendance, discipline, and any other records which will help to determine the student's needs.

The problems may be resolved in the general classroom with interventions, or changes in the way of doing things. For example, there may be changes in the way the subject lessons are presented, changes in the classroom environment, or other changes which may help the student improve learning. Depending upon how the student responds to interventions then determines further actions. Should there be improvements in learning, the interventions are considered to be working in a positive way and no other actions may be necessary. Small changes may be noted at first, and it is important for the teacher and student to work together and be allowed enough time for the process.

STEP 2: REFERRAL AND EVALUATION

When a student does not improve school performances with interventions, the teacher and parent may decide to refer the child for an evaluation. Depending upon the student's needs, the evaluation may include social and emotional status, general ability and achievement, academic and classroom performances, speech and/or language, and motor skills.

STEP 3: EVALUATION REVIEW

A report will follow the student evaluation, at which time a parent review meeting will occur at school. At that time, a decision is made about whether or not the student is eligible for special education services, as per State Board of Education Rules.

STEP 4: PLAN

If a student is eligible for ESE services and the student needs the services in order to achieve, a plan is written. The plan is called the Individual Educational Plan, or IEP, and is written with input from everyone at the review meeting. The plan will include all the school services that the student will receive. If parent is in agreement, written consent to the plan is obtained at the meeting.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

School psychologists evaluate students who are referred in the intervention process. Student evaluations provide information to help the IEP team decide which services are needed to be of most benefit to the student.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The alternate campus setting provides a different placement for students needing a "second chance", depending on their needs. This smaller, more structured and supervised campus gives students a place to focus more intensively on positive behaviors, while ensuring the safety and welfare of the general student body. Supports and guidance for acceptable behaviors are in place in order to help the students meet their goals.

IDEA PART B PROJECT

The **IDEA, PART B PROJECT** provides funding for:

- 18 Aides to help assist students with disabilities
- 2 Bus Aides for added supervision
- 1 Parent Liaison to help coordinate school services and information to parents
- 1 ESE Program Specialist to assist with staffing students
- Stipends to teachers for training on special education services

The **IDEA, PART B, PRESCHOOL PROJECT** provides funding for:

- 3 Aides to help students with disabilities.

ESE PARENT RESOURCES

Parent involvement and communication is such a vital part in making decisions about the needs of students with disabilities. We appreciate having parents show up at meetings to participate, as it is parents who can give schools the most information of benefit about their child. Parents know their children best, and should stay informed about school services to help their children succeed. The Dixie School District provides resources to help parents communicate with school staff.

A Parent Resource Library is available for parents to use and provides another avenue to gain information about how best to meet student needs. The library is located at the Old Town Educational Complex, Building #11.

Ms. Marilyn Philmon serves as the Dixie district parent liaison. She assists parents needing support or clarification about the ESE services available. Ms. Philmon attends workshops and training on current ESE topics, also organizes the ESE Advisory Council meetings, and can be reached at 498-6112 between the hours of 7:45 and 3:15. Email marilynphilmon@dixie.k12.fl.us.



PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

We are proud of the **Dixie Schools PK Program**. Projected to serve 144 students this year are three preschool programs. The **Voluntary PK Program** provides 540 hours of service during the regular school year, or 300 summer service hours, per parent choice. Students may attend the **VPK Program** free of charge. Children who are age 4 by September 1st of the school year are eligible for **VPK**.

The **PK Disabilities Program** serves those children identified with one or more disabilities, and individualized services are provided to these students. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness and the Early Learning Coalition of the Nature Coast govern and fund **the VPK Program**: this program is not governed nor funded by the local School Board.

Children are screened for preschool at the preschool offices located on the Old Town Educational Complex, 349 South at 55A. The screening helps in determining readiness skills. Parents can make a screening appointment by contacting the office at 498-6110. Ms. Marilyn Philmon serves as the Dixie PK Coordinator, with Mrs. Diane Lord assisting with coordination.

There are four preschool classrooms each at Anderson Elementary School and Old Town Elementary School.

FDLRS

FDLRS, Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resource Center, is a network of state and federal agencies providing support to exceptional education teachers, parents and communities. Services are provided in Alachua, Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Marion Counties.

FDLRS helps to identify children with special needs during the child find process, offering services for children aged three to five. The screening and evaluation services provide follow up support to children with disabilities from birth to age three in helping them transition to school.

FDLRS also provides training to general and special education teachers to help schools understand children with disabilities. Students with disabilities are thereby assisted during school progression with their transition needs at school, and following school into the community. Training resources are available as needed.

FDLRS provides parent services, helping with communication among school staff and family, and assisting to develop stronger partnerships between schools, agencies and the community. Parent information and training is provided.

FDLRS provides technology assistance in evaluating students adapt to the classroom and campus. Teacher information and training is provided.