

Hello Kindergarten Families and Friends,

My name is Kristina Mecelicaite. I'm Director of Pupil Services here at Winchendon Public Schools. My primary responsibilities in this district are ensuring equal access to curriculum and other opportunities for students who may have special needs. This year, I am with you more than ever before. My own son will be entering Kindergarten, and I feel nervous about his first year, just like you.

I wish to express a few important points:

1. Kindergarten age children tend to differ greatly from one another in their academic, social and behavioral readiness. Some are more ready for school than others. If you think your child is behind his or her peers, please do not worry just yet. We closely monitor all children. Students show a lot of growth in their first year.
2. Trust your child's teacher. Our teachers have a lot of experience and knowledge regarding student developmental milestones. They will raise a red flag if your student's progress is raising concerns.
3. We have a great process for monitoring student progress. Interventions are always made before students are referred for special education services:

When students are not performing well, classroom teachers or other staff members refer the student to the Student Support Team (SST). The team meets at Memorial School on a monthly basis to discuss formal and informal data and observations regarding students who have been referred. If a student requires academic/social-emotional/behavioral interventions, the team agrees on a plan and implements strategies for four to six weeks. They then reconvene to discuss what methods have worked. If the student has made the necessary progress, we resume general routines and closely monitor. If the student did not make progress, we refer the student for a special education evaluation.

So please, before you refer your child for a special education evaluation, talk to your child's teacher, guidance counselor or even principal Atter first. They are great resources. They have your child's best interest in mind and they can advise on a course of action.

If you continue to have any questions regarding special education, you can contact Memorial School's special education coordinator, Crystal Nardini.

I sincerely believe we will have a great year together.

Kristina Mecelicaite