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## **Milestones Day School Parent Advisory Group Meeting Minutes: March 5, 2021**

- **Milestones' Attendees:**
  - Facilitators: Kim Rockers, Kirsten Esposito, Heidi Warren
  - Participants during the Presentation: Stephanie Bianchi, Ashley-Elizabeth D. Piacitelli
- **Parent Attendees:** Trish Elliott (PAG Co-Chair), Rachel Reynolds (PAG Co-Chair), Lynda Leary, Maryanne Lee, Shira Sokal, Marissa King, Sara Clevering, Tabatha Flores, Joan Murray, Iris Whalen, Sherit Levin, Jennifer Jackson, Will Verbits, Genevieve Simpson, Melissa McDade

### **1) Topic for Discussion and Q & A: “De-escalation and Limit Setting” (led by: Milestones BCBA’s Stephanie Bianchi and Ashley-Elizabeth D. Piacitelli)**

This was a parent-requested topic to learn more about strategies for supporting students in behavioral challenges at home. All parents participated in an open discussion and Q&A.

- The objectives of the presentation were to: (1) Understand the basics of behavior and behavior management. (2) How to use these principles when working with your child or student. (3) Learn strategies to use in the moment when behaviors occur.
- Basics of behavior included definitions of (1) Positive Reinforcement: *Adding something (reinforcing) into the environment to increase the behavior we want.* (2) Negative Reinforcement: *Removing something (aversive) from the environment to increase the behavior we want.* (3) Reinforcement: anything that *increases* the future likelihood of behavior occurring under similar situations. (4) Punishment: anything that *decreases* the future likelihood of a behavior occurring in the future under similar circumstances. (5) Positive Punishment: *Adding something (aversive) into the environment to decrease the undesirable behavior.* (6) Negative Punishment: *Removing something (reinforcing) from the environment to decrease the undesirable behavior.*

- Keys to Limit Setting: Simple, Clear, Enforceable, Reasonable
- De-escalation Strategies:
  - Allow for silence & reflection
  - Use a neutral cadence, affect, & tone
  - Use non-threatening body language
  - Ignore challenging questions
  - Set limits through offering choices
  - Focus on feelings and facts
  - Avoid power struggles-YOU'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE !!!

## 2) Review of Parent Feedback Survey Highlights (conducted February 2021)

Review highlights from the annual Parent Feedback Survey and additionally two questions raised by the PAG.

- A. PAG Question: Would you be interested in participating in virtual social activities for families and parents/guardians?
  - **The very high majority of families are interested or may be interested: Yes = 48.7% and Maybe = 41%. Total who are potentially interested = 89.7% of survey respondents.**
  - No - 10.3%
  - Ideas that were shared by individual families in the survey and/or January PAG meeting: Game Night, Parent Coffee, Parent Virtual Groups to Share Experiences, Family BBQ, Sibling Support Group, Comedians, Magic Show, Escape Room, Online Cooperative Games, Virtual Dinners or Desserts, Student After School Groups, Family Group page on Facebook
  - Ideas that families were interested in exploring after the March PAG meeting:

- Polling families about the best times for a parent/guardian organized Parent Coffee and determining if these would be scheduled exclusively virtually or potentially in-person socially distanced outside at some point in time.
- Researching possible after school opportunities that align with COVID-19 protocols either through Milestones or through an external organization such as a virtual Gaming/Game Learning/Coding/STEM activity or potentially outdoors if it can be approved to adhere to our Task Force's 6+ feet of distancing/no-contact parameters (Hiking/Walking).
- B. The PAG expressed interest in exploring whether we are offering the “just right” amount of email reminders for events and activities at Milestones. Are we offering the right frequency and timing?
  - **The very high majority report that we send the “just right” amount of reminder emails and timing. Yes, Just Right = 87.2%**
  - Would like more = 12.8%
- The CEO reviewed a summary of key findings from the parent feedback survey that was opened to all families this winter. Data was analyzed by Milestones at the schoolwide level and broken down by the specific areas of the school (elementary, middle, high school and post high school). We summarized the following data: schoolwide survey participation; satisfaction rating scales across 6 educational areas (*IEP processes, Academics, Summer Programming, Individual Communication About Your Student, Schoolwide Communication, and How Likely You are to Refer Another Family to Milestones*); top rated schoolwide results; parent suggestions for improvement that align with our current program expansions; and the top 5 highest reported reasons parents choose for their students to remain at Milestones. Sample highlights include:

- All summary scores, across all categories fell in the positive or very positive range (ex: Satisfied/Very Satisfied; Likely/Very Likely, which is a score of 4 or above)
- Overall findings were highly consistent with data from 2019 and 2020.
- Top Rated category: Schoolwide Communication (5 out of 5)
- Overall Satisfaction Score: How Likely Families are to Refer Another Family to Milestones (4.74 out of 5)
- Top 5 reasons families choose to keep your student enrolled at Milestones, listed by the highest frequency:
  - **#1: Staff** (“amazing,” “talented,” “supportive,” “devoted,” “skilled,” “caring”)
  - **#2: Therapeutics** (specialized and individualized programming, social skills support, behavioral support, **emotional support, positive approach**)
  - **#3: Academic Programming and Curriculum**
  - **#4: Class Size**
  - **#5: Integration of Community Based Instruction in Post High School**
- Parents were also provided a summary of parents’ recommendations for future parent trainings. The list was broken down by the top-rated requests, followed by second tier requests. From the list, parent participants indicated the following as their chief priority topics for future trainings: (1) *Transition Programming/Preparing for Life After Milestones/Continuing Education and Preparation for Careers and Jobs after Milestones*; (2) *Anxiety and other diagnoses that impact learning and homelife*; (3) *Teen Relationships/Sex/Cyber Safety*; (4) *Understanding CBT, IEP’s, Behavior (ABA) and families’ involvement in these topics*.

### **3) Follow-Ups on Additional Parent Raised Topics From Prior PAG Meetings and Upcoming PAG Planning:**

- Program Expansion Recognition: Parents are interested in viewing the new addition of the 3rd floor to Milestones. Our third floor was approved for operation in February! A celebration (ex: ribbon cutting/virtual experience) will be scheduled once programming space is finalized.
- School Photos: Parents requested a date for school photos. These are scheduled for the following dates: Tuesday, April 27th with the rain date of Friday, May 7th.
- Teacher Appreciation Week: National Teacher Appreciation Week this year will be celebrated Monday, May 3rd - Friday, May 7th. The PAG will coordinate an activity to celebrate faculty, and more information will be shared by PAG co-leaders as we approach the date.

### **4) Families were encouraged to attend the following meetings/presentations:**

- **PAG Presentation Topic Writing at Milestones (led by Tim Mahoney, Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director): May 14th, 2021 10:00-11:30am**
- **Jessica Minahan, M.Ed/BCBA Free Speaker Series Presentation: On May 12th at 12:30pm** we will be welcoming back Jessica Minahan to speak on "*Practical Trauma Informed Strategies to Help Anxiety in Students.*" Jessica has presented at Milestones in prior years and feedback has been exemplary. In addition, this training topic directly aligns with the 2nd highest requested parent training topic in the recent satisfaction survey.
- **Calendar Reminders:**

- ❖ March 1st-14th: Scholastic Bookfair
- ❖ March 8th: Half-Day Professional Development
- ❖ March 12th, 2021: Pi Day celebration
- ❖ April 2nd, 2021: End of Quarter 3
- ❖ April 7th, 2021: Half day noon dismissal
- ❖ April 19th-23rd, 2021: April Vacation week (no school)

**5) Families were provided a preview that we would share a list of current community resources:**

### **Community Resources:**

#### **Therapeutic Recreation “Navigator Club” and Therapeutic Recreation Activities This Spring - Summer**

##### **Virtual or In-person Event, March 11th, 2021, with The Lexington Recreation Department.**

For ages 13 – 22 with special needs. Now more than ever it is important to stay socially connected with peers.

\* Navigate through life, adventures and crazy times together while fostering social skills through fun activities and games.

\* Each week the group will explore a new theme ranging from health and wellness to personal goals and much more.

\* Crafts, activities, games and movement exercises will be incorporated into each week’s session and tie into the topic of the week.

Fees apply; to register or for more information, contact Kate DeAngleis, CTRS 781-698-4817

\* Additional Adaptive Sports and Recreational Activities Are available this spring and summer at the following link under “Therapeutic Recreation”:

<https://lexrecma.myrec.com/info/activities/default.aspx?type=activities>

#### **Virtual Story Time & Therapeutic Yoga**

### **Virtual Recreation, March 17, 2021, with the Arc of the South Shore in Hingham.**

Join in to enjoy a magical story time and therapeutic yoga class that will bring the book “There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Clover” to life.

\* A limited number of sensory book kits are available for \$10. If you are interested in a kit, please the host and they can schedule a pick-up.

\* Little Bee Yoga motivates children to be active, build confidence, and manage the spectrum of emotions in their day-to-day activities. It is a stress management activity for kids and incorporates cardio conditioning and fun music to teach the children the traditional benefits of yoga: meditation, breathing techniques, peace and relaxation.

To register or for more information visit:

<https://arcsouthshore.org/news-events/upcoming-events.html> or contact [autismresourcecenter@arcsouthshore.org](mailto:autismresourcecenter@arcsouthshore.org) 781-335-3023

### **Virtual Special Artists Crafts Classes**

March 16, 2021 – April 6, 2021

Virtual Classes, March 16th – April 6th, 2021, with the Special Needs Arts Programs, of Lexington, MA. A therapeutic craft class for special needs youth ages 13+. Special Art Classes brings together individuals with developmental disabilities to work on art projects.

\* All art supplies to complete the projects will be delivered or mailed to participants.

\* Participants work at their own pace in a supportive and fun environment, emphasizing creativity and friendship.

\* Special Artists work on different projects each session.

To register or for more information visit: [www.snaparts.org/snap-program-payment](http://www.snaparts.org/snap-program-payment) or contact 781-325-8025 [INFO@SNAPARTS.ORG](mailto:INFO@SNAPARTS.ORG)

### **“Especially for Me” Autism-Friendly Museum Afternoon**

Acton, March 28, 2021, 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Free with pre-registration.

Come play and explore in an ADA-compliant and universally designed museum during this special, free afternoon dedicated to families with members on the autism spectrum.

\* The Museum will be closed to the general public and headcount will be limited.

\* COVID-19 protocols – please check with the museum for updates.

To register or for more information visit:

[www.discoveryacton.org/event/autism-friendly-afternoon-0](http://www.discoveryacton.org/event/autism-friendly-afternoon-0) or contact the Acton Discovery Museum [fun@discoveryacton](mailto:fun@discoveryacton); 978-264-4200

## **Virtual “Beyond The Spectrum” Art Classes for Teens 13-18**

Online only, March 27th, 2021, with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. For teens with Autism Spectrum and Aspergers Disorders ages 13 to 18.

\* Focus on specific art topics and incorporate discussion, critical inquiry, and sketching in the galleries. Students then work independently on a project with guidance from an experienced instructor.

March’s theme: Prints and Patterns – Why are artists so fascinated by repeating shapes? What are the artistic and cultural meanings of different types of patterns? Why do we see the same patterns in art from many different parts of the world? Join in and discuss these questions and more as the class looks at examples of patterns in art. Then design your own repeating patterns.

\* Online classes meet via Zoom.

\* If you would like to receive a materials kit, please make sure to provide a mailing address when you purchase your ticket.

Fees Apply; to register or for more information visit:

[www.mfa.org/programs/community-programs/beyond-the-spectrum](http://www.mfa.org/programs/community-programs/beyond-the-spectrum) or [artfulhealing@mfa.org](mailto:artfulhealing@mfa.org) or 617-369-4027.

## **Research Opportunity at Boston University for High School Students and Parents**

WHEN: Ongoing

Boston University researchers are recruiting high school students on the autism spectrum and their parents to participate in a study on how schools support students for life after high school. Participants can complete an online survey and receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. Milestones has had a positive experience collaborating with this research team on other projects.

\* For more information, contact: [buroad@bu.edu](mailto:buroad@bu.edu) or 617-353-2060 or visit: <http://sites.bu.edu/roadahead/participate/>