

January 24, 2023

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

At our staff meeting earlier this month, our team shared several “Celebrations,” shining a light on the accomplishments of our students. I would like to share a few of them with you:

- In a collaboration between home and school, we helped a student stop spitting – a long standing, frequent, behavior that made it difficult to venture out into the community.
- A student who displayed significant aggression requiring that he spend most of his day in a separate area can now sit with a group of peers for 30 seconds and then earn a walk around the building. This plan allows the student to very gradually increase the amount of time spent near peers.
- A preschool student is working on adaptive skills and learning to accept “no” for an answer. Mom shared a wonderful note telling us how well her child did on a recent outing when her answer to many of his requests was “no” or “let’s do this instead.”

These are just a few examples of the progress your children are making. We are here to help overcome obstacles that may sometimes seem insurmountable. Please contact your child’s team if there is a skill you would like your child to acquire or behavior you would like your child to overcome.

As mentioned at open house in September, there continues to be a nationwide shortage of speech language pathologists which is impacting Summit and many other agencies like ours. Although our Human Resources Team is actively recruiting, we continue to be short many therapists, having lost several staff to local school districts.

A large number of our students are affected by this shortage in some way. Here is what we are doing to help bridge the gap:

- We have hired some part-time contractual in-person and virtual therapists. We have asked existing staff to pick up some contractual sessions as well.
- Our SLP supervisors, Kelly Siminski and Rachel Epstein, are working with classroom teams to help implement speech plans. All communication plans are in our web-based curriculum, SummitUP, and accessible to classroom staff.
- We have reached out to all school districts, and some have agreed to use district therapists to provide speech services.

We will notify you and your school district if your child’s services are affected in any way, continue our recruitment efforts, and look for creative solutions to this problem.

On a positive note, this week we will begin phasing Summit Central and Creekside students back into the cafeteria. We will give students time to re-acclimate and work slowly on transitions, with support and reinforcement.

Finally, we are in the middle of a very tough cold and flu season with many staff and students sick. Please ensure that you or an emergency contact will be available to transport your child home before sending them to school each day. Please make sure that we have current emergency contact information for your child in case they need to be picked up from school. Children who are sick cannot be transported home on their regular bus with other students. If your child is showing any signs of illness, please keep them home.

Thank you for your continued cooperation, support of our staff, and commitment to your child's education.

Sincerely,

Mary Bennett

Mary Bennett, M.S.Ed., SBL, SDL
Principal, Summit Academy

A couple reminders:

- **Friday, January 27:** 11:30 a.m. dismissal for school age and full day preschool students. AM and PM preschool classes in session.
- **Monday, February 20:** President's Day Holiday
- **February 21-24:** Mid-winter recess