

NEEDHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Special Education Programs and Personnel 2025/2026

Special Education Director: Patricia Mullen

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Special Education Coordinator: Lauren Tarlow

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Special Education Program Assistant: Karen Whitaker

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Special Education Suite: Room 801

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PERSONALIZED LEARNING CENTER (PLC)

The Personalized Learning Center (PLC) is a *general education class* at Needham High School that strives to improve student academic performance by building strong organizational and study skills.

The PLC serves students with or without a diagnosed disability, on a 504 or not, who are struggling to achieve in their academic classes. These students require academic support in a structured environment to improve their organizational, study, and/or self-advocacy skills. Students in PLC are general education students. Students must be referred through the SST process to be considered for PLC.

Special Educators:

- Casey Palmer (706A)
- Bob McInnis (706B)

SKILLS CENTER

The grade-level Skills Centers provide academic support for students on IEPs who are in general education classes at the standard, honors, or accelerated level. The goal of the Skills Center is to lead students toward independent learning and self-advocacy through the direct teaching of skills following the student's IEP. Each student is taught how to learn and how to use their strengths to compensate for individual areas of difficulty.

The Skills Center is designed to work with students with diagnosed disabilities who are served through an IEP (Individualized Education Program). Students who attend the

Skills Center require specialized instruction from a special educator to make progress in the general education curriculum.

Special Educators	Co-Taught Classes
Joshua Keehn (411) grades 9 and 10	English 11
Kara Mahoney (753A) grade 10	English 9
Danielle Shapiro (910) grades 9 and 10	Integrated Math 9, US History 11
Kaitlin O'Malley (411) grade 9 and 10	Biology 9
Abigail Berry (413B) grades 9 and 10	World History 9, Integrated Math 10
Jeanette Word (710) grade 9 (interim)	English 12
David O'Neill (808) grades 11 and 12	
Michelle Kelly (810) grade 12 and 9IP	
Sherene Michlin (450) grades 11 and 12	English 10
Lizzie Cushing (413A) grades 11 and 12	Algebra 2
Jessica Davis (910) grade 11	Foundations of Math, Grades 9 -12
Robert Super (450) grade 12	World and American History 10

All emails: first name_last name@needham.k12.ma.us

Special Education staff working with the Interdisciplinary Program (9IP):

- Special Educator: Michelle Kelly
- Teaching Assistant: Christine Butchart

INSIGHT

Insight is a program designed for students who require support in social thinking, social pragmatics, and executive functioning skills. Students are enrolled in general education classes at the standard, honors, or accelerated level, and also have a specially designed Skills Center. This Skills Center provides academic support as well as the direct teaching of social pragmatic skills. The special educator provides support for developing organizational strategies, previewing/ reviewing concepts, and breaking down assignments. In addition, the speech and language pathologist provides individual and

group lessons to the students, as well as program consultations. A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) also provides consultation and support to the program.

Insight is designed for students with social communication deficits and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder that directly affects their ability to access the high school curriculum and participate in extracurricular activities. Students in the Insight Program have diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Nonverbal Learning Disability, and/ or Social Communication Disorder. These students have cognitive abilities that range from average to superior, but have social pragmatic and/or executive function skills that are below grade-level expectations.

- **Special Educator** - Lysa Bennett (750)
- **Clinician** affiliated with Insight - Heather Harris (403)
- **SLP** affiliated with Insight -Rebecca Mahoney (802A)
- **BCBA** affiliated with Insight - Brian Ziman (802B)

ILC (Independent Learning Center) & Post Grad Program

Skills and Post Grad provides intensive, highly individualized functional academic, pre-vocational, and vocational training so that students continue to develop to their fullest potential and prepare for adulthood. The program supports students from 9th grade up until their 22nd birthday. Due to the unique nature of their needs, these students require a highly structured, low-stimulation environment with clear, consistent routines and specially designed instruction. Student-to-staff ratios are low to ensure student safety and educational success. The program provides a continuum of classroom and community-based services designed to foster the development of functional academics, social pragmatic language, independent living skills, and career development.

Skills and Post Grad students have disabilities that include but are not limited to expressive and receptive language processing disorders, intellectual impairments, autism spectrum disorders, neurological impairments, and attention difficulties that significantly impact their overall functioning. Students in the Skills and Post-Grad Program will participate in state-mandated testing through an alternate assessment and will earn a certificate of attendance.

- **Transition Specialist/ Special Educator in PG** - Ilene Asarch (502A)
- **Special Educator in ILC** - Meg Hennessey (502A)
- **Special Educator in ILC** - Allan Sobon (502B)
- **Occupational Therapist** - Caroline Kalberer (502)
- **Teaching Assistant (PG)** - Deana Moreschi
- **Teaching Assistants (ILC)** - Rita Palestro, Stuart Slawsby, Alex Malmstrom, and SJ Julien
- **BCBA** affiliated with PG and ILC- Brian Ziman
- **Speech and Language Pathologist** affiliated with ILC and PG- Rebecca Mahoney

CONNECTIONS

The Connections Program is a therapeutic program developed to meet the needs of students with emotional disabilities. Students in the Connections Program attend classes in the general education curriculum at the standard, honors, or accelerated level. Students also spend one to two periods a day in the Connections Program, providing them with a safe, structured, and nurturing environment that facilitates academic and social/emotional growth. Special educators, clinicians, and trained teaching assistants work together to meet the needs of the student. Students also participate in both individual and group counseling within the program.

Students in Connections have a diagnosed emotional disability and have an IEP. They are dealing with a range of mental health issues, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, adjustment disorder, and bipolar disorder. This program is recommended through the IEP team process.

- **Special Educators**
- Katie Brady (805)
- Kate McMahon (805)

- **Clinicians**
- Bobby Hermes (805)

- **Teaching Assistant and Clinical Intern (805)**
- Hannah McCreedy

PATHWAYS

The Pathways Program is a sub-separate program located within Needham High School, providing students in Grades 10-12 with an academic curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and a high level of therapeutic support.

Pathways is designed for students with significant emotional and psychosocial challenges who necessitate a small, structured educational setting with a high staff-to-student ratio. The program provides students with a highly structured therapeutic milieu to help students make positive choices, build self-esteem, engage in the learning process, and build a transition plan for the future. The Pathways team consists of a special educator and a clinician.

Students in the Pathways Program have been diagnosed with emotional disabilities that impact their access to the curriculum. These students are served through an Individual

Education Program and have been found to need more intensive services than can be provided in the general education classes at Needham High School.

Special Educator- Ed Fortier (803)

Clinician - Aly Robinson (803)

TRANSITIONS

The Transitions Program is a short-term program that supports the needs of students re-entering high school from a lengthy absence. Entrance into Transitions begins with a re-entry meeting. At the re-entry meeting, an individual plan is designed to include communication with classroom teachers, making up work for return to classes from the student's original schedule or possibly a changed schedule. Transitions is staffed by a Special Educator who liaises with the general education teachers and the rest of the team. It is also supported by a clinician who provides direct counseling and liaisons with inpatient and day treatment facilities.

Transition is available to any student who is out of school for 5 or more days and needs a quiet setting to catch up on work and support to integrate back into classes. Students returning to school after a psychiatric hospitalization or who are struggling to attend and succeed in school due to a variety of psychological or psychosocial difficulties (including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, etc.) are provided counseling and academic support and are closely monitored to tailor supports and services based on individual needs.

- **Special Educator** -Marina Moloney (753B)
- **Clinician** - Michelle Brenhisser (Guidance Suite)
- **Teaching Assistant-** Matt Atkinson

Testing Center - Room 902

The testing center exists to address the need for a quiet, separate setting for students who need testing accommodations that cannot occur in the general education classroom.

Teaching Assistant/ Testing Room Coordinator: Shannon Bowman

Other Special Education Personnel:

- **Special Education Reading Teacher** - Jennie Renna (710)
- **BCBA** (Board Certified Behavior Analyst)- Brian Ziman (802B)
- **Speech and Language Pathologist** - Rebecca Mahoney (802A)

- **Occupational Therapist** - Caroline Kalberer (502)
- **Adaptive Physical Education** - Rachel Ball (District)
- **Teacher of the Visually Impaired** - Julie Goodale (District)
- **Teacher of the Deaf** - Claire Ferraro (District)

Special Education Chairpersons/ Evaluators:

- **Special Education Coordinator and Team Chair** - Lauren Tarlow (801)
- **Team Chairperson/ School Psychologist** - Weslie Surman (801)
- **School Psychologist** - Kali D'Anna (801)
- **School Psychologist** - Katerina Aniskovich (801)
- **Private School Liaison** - Amanda Doran (801)

Teaching Assistants in Inclusion Classes:

- Matt Atkinson
- Kelly Belt
- Liam Conner
- Kyle Gilman
- Chirs Jarrell
- Angela Ledbury
- Mike Robert
- Evan Schaefer
- Joanne Sullivan
- April Yuen
- Liam Conner