



Birmingham Public Schools extracurricular programs

Finding equitable solutions for the autism community

April 2024





WHY WE ARE HERE

We are here to address a significant void in Birmingham Public Schools (BPS) programming for autistic (ASD) students, and to share ideas on how we can immediately work together to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all students.

BPS's vision and mission are clear...

All students:
7,552 students

Source: [BPS website](#)


In partnership with parents: Does this include ASD parents? Special needs parents?

and the community....
Who can provide a list of current vendors?

OUR VISION
All students in Birmingham will realize their full potential, think critically, and champion an innovative tomorrow.

OUR MISSION
In partnership with parents and the community, Birmingham Public Schools will provide educational excellence that empowers students to cultivate their individual brilliance and positively impact their world.

BE BOLD. BE BRILLIANT. BE BIRMINGHAM.



...as are the six core values.



OUR CORE VALUES

Student Success

We seek to uphold our district's long-standing tradition of outstanding academic achievement through rigorous curriculum, collaborative opportunities, and extensive exploration.

Inclusion

We welcome and celebrate diversity by honoring the dignity of every human being. We seek opportunities to value the differences expressed throughout our vibrant community.

Community

We partner with community organizations to engage families in a reciprocal process that actively supports student learning and well-being.

Equity

We believe in the unique talents of our community members, and we are committed to providing access to the resources and opportunities needed for each individual to thrive.

Perseverance

We support an environment that welcomes challenges, encourages resilience, and inspires the ability to overcome adversity.

Integrity

We lead and act with transparency, fairness, and respect.

**Let's focus on
community and
equity to begin.**

equity • **def:** fairness or justice in the way people are treated, and especially freedom from bias or favoritism.
Source: Merriam-Webster

BPS values **equity**.

ASD families are not included.

OUR CORE VALUES: We believe in the unique talents of our community members, and we are committed to providing access to the resources and opportunities needed for each individual to thrive.

community • **def:** a body of persons
or nation having a common
history or common social,
economic, and political interests.

Source: Merriam-Webster

BPS values **community**.

ASD families are left out.

OUR CORE VALUES: We partner with
community organizations to engage
families in reciprocal process that
actively supports student learning
and well-being.

A culture of unity and wellbeing are targets in the 2022-27 Strategic Plan.

2 CULTURE OF UNITY & WELL-BEING

AIMS

CORRESPONDING GOALS

CREATE A DISTRICT-WIDE SYSTEM TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Ensure that 90% of students will report feeling safe, valued, and prepared for learning, as measured by an annual climate survey.

INCREASE AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS, STAFF, PARENTS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITY, AND ALUMNI

Increase transparent and relevant two-way communication with all stakeholders, as measured by an annual climate survey.

CREATE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXTRACURRICULAR RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Ensure that each school will have an extracurricular opportunity in athletics, arts, culture, wellness, and STEAM.

Increase student access to extracurricular activities as measured by an annual climate survey.

Are there annual climate surveys that go specifically to special education and ASD families? (We haven't seen one.)

How many opportunities were offered in the 2023-24 Birmingham Community Education programming **during the school year**—in addition to winter break, mid-winter break, spring break and summer?

over 875.

302

Fall 2023 Program

“We take great pride in the variety of classes and workshops we offer. From early childhood programs that lay the foundation for our youngest learners to adult education courses that provide professional development opportunities, we strive to create a vibrant learning environment that meets the ever-changing needs of our community.”

344

2024 Winter/Spring Program

“Our course catalog boasts a wide variety of options. We also offer courses designed for parents and children to enjoy together, fostering connections and memories. Additionally, we are delighted to introduce mid-winter and spring break camps to add extra excitement and enrichment to the season.”

230+

2024 Summer Camp Guide

“Our commitment to education extends year-round, and this [Summer Camp Guide] underscores our dedication to providing enriching experiences for learners of all ages. The captivating workshops and camps are tailored to meet the various needs of our community.”

How many were tailored to meet the needs of the ASD community?

Zero.

**How many offered
supports for inclusion?**

Zero.

It can't be zero.

And we tried.

Who is responsible for vendor selections?

IEPs do not typically include tuition based programs outside of the K-12 school day. However, Community Education collaborates with families of special need students to ascertain if a program is a good fit. We do not staff or have a parapro working in break camps. Frequently, it is difficult to secure Birmingham staff to work during break programs as many vacation during this time frame and are not available. Can you provide the names of the parapro that currently work with your child at [redacted]? I do have several high school students who worked at summer camps last year and may be interested in working during break camp with your child. Can you please provide a detailed list of your child's needs, grade level, allergies, medications, if there are any triggers to be aware of and describe what assistance is required. This information would be shared with the contractor presenting the program your child is registered in and with anyone working with your child.

Unfortunately, Community Education has been unsuccessful in trying to locate a one-on-one para to support [redacted] for mid-winter break camp. All three of the paras that currently work with [redacted] are not available. With the programs you have chosen the adult to child ratio is typically 2 adults to 40 children. Some of the camps you chose take place in the cafeteria all day, the others in a classroom. The instructors of these camps are not teachers. They are third party vendors that do not have special education backgrounds.

Are paras and staff the only option?
Are they incentivized to work during break programs?

Do vendors need special education backgrounds?

All registration fees will be refunded.

The class below is being offered in April.

https://birmingham.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=19716&int_category_id=0&int_sub_category_id=0&int_catalog_id=0

Thank you.

SPECIAL NEEDS TEEN/ADULT ZUMBA with KATIE MCGOWAN - Spring Session

ID : 19716

[« back to classes page](#)

Zumba is a total workout, combining all elements of fitness – cardio, muscle conditioning, balance and flexibility, boosted energy and a serious dose of awesome each time you leave class. We take the "work" out of workout, by mixing low-intensity and high-intensity moves for an interval-style, calorie-burning dance fitness party. Once the Latin and World rhythms take over, you'll see why Zumba® Fitness classes are often called exercise in disguise. Super effective? Check. Super fun? Check and check. *This class provides an opportunity for teen and adult students [with special needs] and their families to take a Zumba class that they can be active participants in. We will have a wide range of music and moves that are at easier level and pace so everyone can follow along and have fun!* Adults must register along with their teen/adult, if they are participating. Register early as space is limited!

Class Details

8 Session(s)
Weekly - Mon

Location
Seaholm High School

Instructor
Katherine McGowan

Tuition: \$56.00

[Add To Cart »](#)

[Send to Friend »](#)

Registration Closes On
Monday, April 1, 2024 @ 12:00 AM

Schedule Information

Instructor(s)
Katherine McGowan

Hello,

Unfortunately the abovementioned afterschool class for which your child is registered, has been cancelled due to low enrollment. We are sorry to disappoint you and your child in this regard, but wish to thank you for your interest in this program. A full refund will be issued to your credit card.

Birmingham Community Education

This was for basketball at child's home school.

Thanks. This is for teens and adults. My son is 10.

#itcantbezero

Thank you for reaching out. Afterschool classes are run by outside vendors. Our school is the host for the outside vendors and their activities. Vendors and Community Ed have not been able to provide 1-on-1 support due to staffing, but parents could provide the 1-on-1 support so long as they've completed an iCHAT form.

[REDACTED] had mentioned that they were able to locate a Groves student who was willing help support [REDACTED] the fall. Unfortunately, with this class being in the am that student has class. We could revisit this option in the spring with an afternoon class.

Parents as 1-1?

How does this promote independence and support from the community?

How can we find students willing to volunteer as above?
How can this be revisited in the future?

No support for extracurriculars

No support for field trips

No support for Kids Club

No, sorry, unfortunately

No support for school dances/parties

No support for class concerts

No support for after-school activities

No adaptive swim hours

No network for students to make connections across BPS schools

No, sorry, unfortunately

No vendors dedicated to the ASD and special needs community

No dedicated grants or fundraising

No standardized unified sports

No adaptive sports

No inclusion supports

No, sorry, unfortunately



We hear 'no' in our attempts for inclusion and equitable access. Does this mean our children only have access to a basic education?

#itcantbezero

And this doesn't take into consideration the extracurricular programs that are independently offered by each individual school — i.e. chess clubs, STEAM clubs, glee clubs, sewings clubs, flag football groups, and many more.

How are we to interpret this?

Michigan Department of Education

IEP development - section 5

Supplementary Aids and Services

are provided to enable the student:

- To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.
- **To be involved and progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.**
- To be educated and **participate in activities with other students** with disabilities and nondisabled students.

**What's the impact extracurriculars
have on children and families?**

We can start with the research.

Participation may be particularly important for (ASD individuals) as it helps to address social, emotional, and behavioral impairments by providing an opportunity to interact with peer models, learn emotion regulation skills, engage in physical activity, and navigate social situations.

[From Sitting on the Sidelines: Disparities in Social, Recreational, and Community Participation Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

Participation in extracurriculars has lifelong impact.

1. Extracurriculars improve outcomes in physical, social and mental well-being.
2. Socialization with other children and their parents creates bonds, nurtures support and idea-sharing, and shapes lasting friendships between families.
3. Extracurricular activities go a long way in bringing special needs children into fulfilling connection and socialization with other children, just as they do with neurotypical peers.
4. The community includes leveraging investments made by local citizens through taxes and charitable donations.

Feb 26, 2024 - [BPS Student Spotlight: James Pearson, autistic student attending Seaholm](#)

Being an athlete has instilled in me a passion, and purpose in life! **It also taught me the importance of physical activity for any body, but especially an autistic body.** Not only does it maintain our physical health, it is the best thing for helping with self-regulation and stress-reduction. - Andrew Ackner, CEO of Autistic Athletics

[Motor Performance in School-Aged Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Effects of an Extracurricular Physical Education program and socio-ecological correlates](#)

[\[RESEARCH\] Participation in extracurricular activities for children with and without siblings with autism spectrum disorder](#)

[\[RESEARCH\] Effects of 8-week exercise program in boys with ASD](#)

[Front Psychiatry: Exploring Extracurricular Clubs for Building Social Competence of Students with Autism](#)

“...recreation and leisure activities are particularly important for people with autism. We know that participating in such activities often **produces opportunities** to practice social skills, physical aptitude and increase motivation while also increasing self-confidence **and fuller integration into the community.**” [Source: Autism Speaks - Promoting Autism Inclusion in Youth Organizations](#)

[Extracurricular activities can help autistic students to thrive](#)

Source: Living Autism

The average US student spends **five hours per week in extracurriculars**. 3-6% spend 20+ hours per week.

79% of autistics report feeling socially isolated.

[More here: National Autistic Society, “Too Much Information” campaign](#)

[Access to extracurriculars, adaptive sports, enrichment and unified sports were named among the top activities parents from the Friends of Different Learners community want to see BPS provide. - FoDL Pulse Survey, February 2024](#)



And we can talk **directly** to the
parents of autistic students in BPS.

We travel over two hours for adaptive skiing, and an hour for adaptive soccer and baseball because our town doesn't have anything for special needs, even though it's a wealthy area. They just add the kids to the regular sports, and hope the other kids mentor them and allow them five minutes of play.

Berkley schools have Unified Sports- basketball, soccer & bocce ball. ASD students can join any sport they desire and have para support if needed, plus join band & performing arts programs.

EXPERIENCES, THOUGHTS, IDEAS FROM PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Our kids couldn't go on the fifth grade trip this year because there were no paras/support staff. How many kids needed support staff? Let's say 8. How much would it have cost for 8 paras?

I heard about OTs in the area running adaptive sports programs around Michigan every summer - are there any organizations or activities therapists know of we can share with the BPS community?

Ask for a meeting with the special ed director. It may not help you this summer, but hopefully it will create change in the future because they will know there is a need. Or they may be able to give your child a one-on-one or make other adaptive changes.

**I feel like
all I do is
advocate
nonstop
for every
little crumb
we get.**

Many of our kids would greatly benefit from recreational therapy, social groups with peers, music therapy, art therapy, technology classes. How can we partner with agencies or staff these areas as part of extracurricular programming?

RE: Kids Clubs - we wanted to participate in drop-in during the school year, but because my child needs para support, they were not able to accommodate unscheduled or drop-in visits. If we wanted to develop a schedule, they would need to open a role, which would still be uncertain.

Special Olympics have most of their events too far from my home. And they don't offer transportation. While the local school busses sit empty in a parking lot all summer.

At my child's school, gen-ed parents fundraise for their homeroom each year, and use the money towards birthdays, milestones, etc. Are they sharing funds to recognize their ASD peers? My child's ASD teacher asked me to purchase a game for her classroom as a birthday gift to my child.

Clawson Public Schools has a special needs music program. The funds were raised by an arts grant to develop music therapy & dance programming.

How does BPS fund the supplies needed for ASD classrooms? Our kids do not learn from textbooks, so teachers and parents purchase adaptive items/toys, craft supplies, like cereal, paint, glitter, etc. Can the school supply vendor work with ASD classrooms too?

How much would it cost to run an ASD sports program?

What we **can't do** is say...

“Our **commitment to education extends year-round**, and this (BCE 2024 Summer Camp Guide) underscores our dedication to providing enriching experiences for learners of all ages. The captivating workshops and camps **are tailored to meet the various needs of our community.**”

~ BCE 2024 Summer Camp Guide

...without raising more questions.

How are they tailored to meet the needs of the ASD community?

“All students will participate in intentional and meaningful inclusion opportunities. Regardless of perceived competency, **inclusion in a child’s community is part of every child’s education**; it is not a readiness model. This promotes a community that values and accepts its diversity.”

~ Birmingham Public Schools ASD Guiding Principles, 2023

What opportunities do ASD students equitably have access to?

“Over 70 percent of our students participate in some type of athletic program, and **it is safe to say that close to 100 percent** of our students are engaged in some form of extracurricular activity.”

~ [BPS eNEWS on March 29, 2024](#)

How many of these students are part of the ASD population?

What **can** we do?

- We can **work together** with you to **bring the autism community into a bold, clear vision that is equitable and sustainable.**
- We can partner with you to make **BPS a brilliant place for families and educators** to make a significant impact on the lives of their students.
- **We can create a virtuous cycle to make Birmingham a best-in-class employer of choice not only in the county, but the country.**
- We can recognize BPS is uniquely positioned for this too: Michigan is **the only state in the US** that supports special education through age 26.
- **We can Be Bold, Be Brilliant, Be Birmingham — for all students!**



And we **can** start **this summer!**

QUICK WIN: Use **existing summer programming** and offer placement to all ASD families. Families will be notified it's a pilot program with a limited number of students, and spots will be filled on a first-come-first-served basis.



Open swim hour at Derby

The pool is already in use for open swim and swim lessons during BCE summer. We want one hour minimum with parent support each week while BCE is in session.



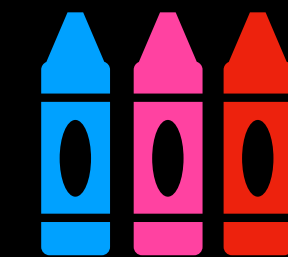
Outdoor Games with Mr Maldonado

Talk to Mr. Maldonado and potential ASD families about inclusive opportunities during Outdoor Games sessions the week of July 22.



Open play hours in Derby school gym

Set up obstacle courses, bowling pins and tents using existing gym equipment while BCE is in session.



Best Ever Art Camp

ESY students choose 1-3 Best Ever Art Camp hours to visit as a field trip from Seaholm to Derby the week of July 29.

Then we can embed the autism equity & inclusion framework in the 2024-25 school year with these six quick wins.



Discovery

Host a facilitated discovery session to brainstorm and jot ideas with ASD parents, Dr. Roberson, new Director of Special Services, ASD staff and service supports - i.e. teachers, paraprofessionals, OTs, school social workers, speech therapists, PTs, school psychologists, learning instructors.

Pilot test again

Pilot test opportunities in Birmingham Community Education for ASD inclusion (push-in model), and with autism-centric vendors (self-contained model). Target 3-5 courses in Fall 2024 program; 2-3 opportunities during mid-winter and spring break in 2025 Winter/Spring; and 15-20 ASD classes (inclusive and self-contained) into 2025 Summer Camps.

02

03

Community Outreach & Strategic Partners

Create a master list of local organizations, businesses and universities in order to baseline the adaptive and inclusion landscape in the metro Detroit area. Meet with BPS Community School Organizers to benchmark the diversity of current vendors and define gaps, targets, and areas of opportunity.

04

Incentivize from within

Summit LINKS groups, high school students, counselors and Birmingham Youth Assistance to identify volunteer opportunities to earn school credit. Create incentives for Birmingham Education Foundation grants that support ASD students and families. Provide compensatory benefits and career recognition to paraprofessionals and staff who support inclusive extracurriculars.

Create ASD events

Invite volunteers to trial activities at school sites and in the community. To name a few: monthly special needs swim hour at Seaholm; sensory hours bowling at Bowlero (a Certified Autism Center); fitness class with Autastic Athletes; buddy yoga session with Belightful; arts-and-crafts project with occupational therapists and art teachers; sensory movie night with sensory tool kits, social stories and emotion recognition flashcards.





Disability resource day

Host a resource fair and panel discussions showcasing local businesses, clinics and nonprofit organizations who support the autism community and their families.

We can also **connect with our
robust community of resources to
discover what else is possible...**

How can we work together? We're sitting on a goldmine!

#itcantbezero

ADAPTIVE SPORTS

[Autastic Athletics](#)

[Special Olympics Michigan](#)

[Equine therapy - Bloomfield Open Hunt](#)

[Miracle League of Michigan](#)

[Bambino Buddy Ball - Babe Ruth League, Inc.](#)

[Sierra Adaptive Gymnastics & Cheer](#)

[Bowlero Lanes](#) - Certified Autism Center, hosts sensory hours every Wednesday & school field trips

[Team GUTS Michigan](#)

[Move United - Adaptive Sports](#)

SPECIAL NEEDS RECREATION

[Friendship Circle](#)

[Oakland County Parks & Recreation Inclusive Programs](#)

[Henry Ford Museum - Accessibility Program](#)

[FAR Therapy](#)

[Belightful Yoga - Special Needs Program](#)

[Annual Adaptive Bike Day at Beaumont](#)

[Metro Parent's Special Needs Summer Camps List](#)

[Special Needs Dance and Movement Therapy - Zoom sessions](#)

[Be Like a Buddy Michigan](#) - SN events/activities across Michigan

AUTISM ORGANIZATIONS

ADVOCACY

[Easter Seals MORC](#)

[Autism Alliance of Michigan](#)

[Autism Speaks: Leading the way: Autism-Friendly Youth Organizations Tool Kit](#)

[Autism Advocate Parenting](#)

[The Arc of Oakland County](#)

[KultureCity](#) - nation's leading nonprofit on sensory accessibility

[Special Needs Living Magazine](#) - Detroit metro area

UNIVERSITIES

FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

PEER SUPPORT

[Best Buddies International](#)

[Friendship Circle](#)

[TIES Center](#)

[How peers can support AAC](#)

[Social support for AAC users](#)

[Creating communities of belonging](#)

[OU Cares at Oakland University](#)

LOCAL BUSINESSES

MINISTRIES

PARENT COMMUNITIES

[Autism clinics: Judson Center, Healing Haven, Life Labs](#)

[Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program at Detroit Airport](#)

[Friends of Different Learners](#)

[Special Needs ministries \(Christ Our Light, Shrine, Kensington Church, Woodside\)](#)

[Catholic Charities of SE MI](#)

[Gesher Human Services](#)

Local theaters & stores with sensory hours

[Volunteers of America - Michigan](#)

And always: promote **self-**
education, awareness &
acceptance every. single. day.

PROMOTE SELF EDUCATION

Studies, articles & more on autism inclusion

RESEARCH, ARTICLES AND BOOKS

- [Sitting on the Sidelines: Disparities in Social, Recreational, and Community Participation Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- [Participation in extracurricular activities for children with and without siblings with autism spectrum disorder](#)
- [Motor Performance in School-Aged Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Effects of an Extracurricular Physical Education program and socio-ecological correlates](#)
- [National Autism Society - Too Much Information campaign](#)
- [Extracurricular activities can help autistic students to thrive](#)
- [MEL.org](#) - click on Education Source - this is a free database with publications related to education topics.
- [You're Going to Love this Kid! Teaching autistic students in the inclusive classroom](#) by Paula Kluth
- [Inclusive programming for elementary students with autism : a manual for teachers and parents](#) by Sheila Wagner

ATHLETICS & FITNESS

- [Creating Quality Sports Programs for Kids with Disabilities](#)
- [Coaching Autistic Athletes](#)
- [Family and Childhood Fitness](#)
- [The Best Sports for Autistic Kids](#)
- [Promoting Autism Inclusion in Youth Organizations](#)

RECREATION

- [Benefits of Recreation for Autistic Children](#)
- [The Mental & Therapeutic Benefits of Nature for ASD Children](#)
- [Participation in Recreational Activities Buffers Impact of Perceived Stress on Quality of Life in ASD Adults](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION & AUTISM MONITORING

- [DOE Guidance on Legal Obligations for Extracurricular Activities | Wrightslaw Way](#)
- [Michigan School Data - Special Education Data Portraits: Disability 2022-23](#)
- [2023 CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring \(ADDM\) Network](#)

#itcantbezero

Although we've focused on autism,
Birmingham Public Schools programs affect
all special needs students.

We welcome your thoughts, ideas and conversation.

It can't be zero.

**THANK YOU TO OUR
SUPPORTERS & CONTRIBUTORS
WHO MADE THIS RESEARCH POSSIBLE**

fellow ASD families and loved ones who champion us daily
teachers, therapists, social workers, doctors, nurses, para-pros
friendly faces and kindness of strangers
public libraries & librarians
autism organizations & advocates
online support communities
all the friends we haven't met yet who already have our backs

“Nothing about us is without us.”

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations observance

#itcantbezero

We appreciate your time and
consideration.

hello@itcantbezero.org

#itcantbezero