



## *Palestis Educational Consultants*

393 West Blackwell Street

Dover, New Jersey 07801

<http://www.palestisconsultants.com>

973-960-4496

973-960-4502

March 28, 2022

Mr. Gregorio Maceri  
Superintendent of Schools  
Franklin Lakes School District  
490 Pulis Avenue  
Franklin Lakes, New Jersey 07417

Dear Greg:

**Palestis Educational Consultants** is pleased to submit this proposal to conduct a special education program review on behalf of the Franklin Lakes School District.

*It should be noted that this special education program review will address the specific needs of Pk – 8 students, staff, and parents. This approach will help the district to focus on the unique needs of the elementary and middle school community.*

This document is a multi-faceted presentation of services that includes the following content sections:

- Part 1: Firm Website <http://www.palestisconsultants.com>
- Part 2: Scope of Work
- Part 3: Responsibility of the District
- Part 4: Fee Proposal
- Part 5: Business Registration Certificate

Our proposed consultants to the Franklin Lakes School District include Dr. Ernest Palestis and Monica Palestis, Esq.

Dr. Ernest Palestis served as a Superintendent of Schools for twenty-seven years. In addition, he has served as a principal, supervisor, and teacher. He has participated in numerous special education program reviews during his career. He serves as an expert witness on education issues in civil litigation cases. Dr. Palestis has been a member of the NJEA, PSA, and NJASA. *He has served as a Director of Special Education in a PK – 8 district.* Finally, Dr. Palestis has taught special education courses on the masters and doctoral level.

Monica Palestis Esq. is an attorney who has twenty-three years of experience. Her specialization is special education law. She has also conducted special education program reviews. Ms. Palestis frequently presents workshops for boards of education and staff. She served as president of the Dover and Mine Hill Board of Education. She has served as counsel for the New Jersey School Boards Association, as well as several New Jersey school law firms. Ms. Palestis has published in the field of special education law. *As a former board of education president, she fully understands the unique responsibility that a board of education has in providing appropriate special education programs.*

Thus, Palestis Educational Consultants will provide two experienced consultants. Both have been published extensively in the field of special education. Both have been recognized by the New Jersey Legislature, the New Jersey Department of Education, and New Jersey School Boards Association for their work in developing innovative special education programs. *Their work in the field of elementary school education was recognized by the United States Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.*

Finally, because our firm will provide both an experienced administrator and an experienced special education attorney / board of education member, we are in the unique position of reviewing both the educational program and compliance with special education law.

Our firm values long - term relationship with our clients. Our goal is to provide continuous, comprehensive, and professional services.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

PALESTIS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

Monica Palestis, Esq.  
President

*Monica Palestis*

Dr. Ernest Palestis  
Vice President

*Ernest Palestis*

## Scope of Work

It is understood that the Franklin Lakes School District is interested in conducting an analysis of special education program and services in the district, in collaboration with district personnel.

[Palestis Educational Consultants](#) commends the Franklin Lakes School District for its commitment to review programs and perceptions in order to enhance student achievement and encourage open communication among board, community and staff.

In order to assist the district in accomplishing this goal, the scope of services to be provided by [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) is as follows:

### Stage 1

Four full school day visits to the district to meet with stakeholders and conduct focus groups with staff. This will include representatives from the following groups: central office administrators, special and general education teachers / paraprofessionals, supervisors, and child study members.

In addition to meetings with staff, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will conduct a series of focus group meetings with parents. *Specifically, one evening meeting will be conducted at Franklin Avenue Middle School. The consultants will also conduct focus group meetings at High Mountain School; Colonial Road School; and Woodside School - thus providing a total of four parent focus group meetings.*

*The purpose of soliciting stakeholder involvement in information gathering groups is to ensure that it is understood that the process is not perceived as a personnel evaluative tool. Rather, the purpose of the study is to focus on best practices in the field of elementary and middle school special education, compliance with LRE and other legal requirements, and then to determine the degree to which the district is meeting the needs of special education students.*

Four full day visits to the district to observe district special education and general education inclusion classrooms will be scheduled. The purpose of these visits is to ensure that students are being provided with appropriate programs and support and that district resources are adequately allocated.

*Our research - based approach will also provide the entire Franklin Lakes school community with an opportunity to provide input via a comprehensive survey that will be provided through the district web site. In addition to a survey specifically designed for the parents of elementary and middle school students, the following groups will also be surveyed: central office administrators, special and general education teachers, paraprofessionals, supervisors, and child study members.*

In order to make this determination, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) also proposes to review and analyze district curriculum documents, IEP's and other available data. This comprehensive and professional scope of work will ensure that all stakeholders in the process have the opportunity to have their opinions acknowledged. It will also provide an in-depth view of whether changes are necessary to ensure that district resources are being utilized in a legally compliant and effective manner.

Using the IEP review as a basis, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will review current out of district placements. The purpose of this review is to determine if the out of district placements are appropriate. In addition, opportunities to return students to in - district placements, if appropriate, will be explored.

Finally, using the IEP review as a basis, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will examine and make recommendations if appropriate, regarding the transition of special education students. *Based upon*

*our collective experience, we find that if students are not prepared for major life transitions, social, emotional, and academic issues can result. This includes transition of prekindergarten and kindergarten students to the elementary school setting; transition of new students who move into the district; transition of students from the three elementary schools to Franklin Avenue Middle School; and transition from grade eight, into grade nine.*

## Stage 2

After meeting with the groups identified above, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will meet with district officials in order to collaboratively create a series of findings and recommendations that can serve as the basis for additional research.

A major focus of the collaborative findings and recommendations will be to provide long-term budget, staffing, and professional development implications to the Board of Education for consideration.

*Specifically, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will suggest a timeline that can be followed in order to address issues identified through our program review.*

*This timeline will review:*

- *Action steps that should be taken within one year*
- *Action steps that should be taken in year two*
- *Action steps that should become long term goals*

## Stage 3

Working with district officials, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will collaboratively conduct an analysis of independent data with regard to the district special education program. This shall include New Jersey Department of Education data regarding enrollment patterns; classification rates and procedures; program placements; out-of-district placements; transportation; staffing patterns; and shared services. Thus, Franklin Lakes School District officials will be able to determine the nature of the local program and also determine how the local program compares to that of similar districts in New Jersey. This perspective can be an invaluable tool in reflection and planning.

## Stage 4

Upon completion of the steps outlined above, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will analyze the data and compile an executive summary for the Superintendent, Child Study Team Director, and the Board of Education. After their review of the executive summary, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will provide a full written report that shall include all data analysis, commendations and recommendations. As the IEP analysis, commendations and recommendations are being conducted solely by Monica Dodd Palestis, Esq., the results of same may be considered attorney-client privileged and, as such, will not be subject to the Open Public Records Act. During the IEP review process, individual students will not be identified.

## Stage 5

A presentation of findings and recommendations will be conducted during a public meeting of the Franklin Lakes Board of Education. The target date for this presentation is November / December 2022, subject to mutual agreement with the Board.

Note:

One of the unique characteristics of [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) is our belief in sustained professional relationships with our client districts. It is our belief that working collaboratively with districts over an extended period of time allows us to truly understand the needs and challenges of each district that we serve. Therefore, in addition to providing the services outlined above, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) can provide highly individualized targeted workshops and/or professional development seminars covering those issues that have been identified as requiring support. Upon completion of the special needs program review, if a particular need is identified, and if the Franklin Lakes district desires, [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) is available to provide follow-up services at an additional cost.

It is our belief, that the Franklin Lakes School District would best be served if highly individualized targeted workshops were scheduled for the second semester of the 2022 – 2023 school year.

Responsibility of the Franklin Lakes School District

Franklin Lakes will make administrators and staff available to the consultants at mutually agreeable times and places.

Franklin Lakes will provide relevant data such as IEP's and other documents in possession of the district to the consultants upon request, free of cost.

Franklin Lakes will provide a mutually agreeable schedule and setting for [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) to meet with focus groups and district staff.

Franklin Lakes will provide an area on the district website in which the survey can be posted. In addition, the district will make email announcements to the school community in regards to this special education program review. All email announcements will be approved by the district.

Fee Structure

[Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will prepare the study outlined in the scope of work above, for a fixed fee of *Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000)*. Please note that [Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will provide electronic copies of all documents to the Franklin Lakes District at no additional cost.

General:

The fee stated above will be due upon completion of the project. However, in the event of school closures due to Covid 19 or any other declared emergency, the Franklin Lakes District will provide a payment of 50% of the total fee upon completion of 50% of the project. The consultants will provide evidence of 50% completion.

[Palestis Educational Consultants](#) will begin work upon the receipt of a valid purchase order.

Project Consultants

**MONICA DODD-PALESTIS, ESQ.**

**Education:** BA, *summa cum laude*, Montclair State College  
JD, *cum laude*, Seton Hall University School of Law

**Professional** Ms. Dodd-Palestis entire professional career has been in the area of school law. She began her career at the firm of Sills, Cummis where she represented boards of education in all aspects of education law. Subsequently she was Associate Counsel in the legal department of New Jersey School Boards Association, after which she started her own practice representing students with disabilities. Having represented Districts, students and a state association, she brings a unique perspective to her consultations and presentations, which focus upon assisting Districts in developing legally sound practices and policies.

Ms. Dodd-Palestis acted as a mediator in Federal District Court for a special education class-action lawsuit filed by the Education Law Center against the State operated School District of Newark and the New Jersey State Department of Education.

Ms. Dodd-Palestis is a frequent presenter in the area of education law and has authored numerous articles on the subject for national education publications. She presents law and special education seminars regularly at Lehigh University, Seton Hall University School of Law, and the Institute for Continuing Legal Education.

Ms. Dodd-Palestis served 17 years as a board of education member, 5 years as a board member for a county special education school and 3 years a member of the Parents' Caucus, a group that advocates for the rights of students with mental health issues. She served as President of two different Boards of Education: Dover and Mine Hill

**Honors:** New Jersey Super Lawyer – 2008, 2009  
State of New Jersey – Senate Resolution for contributions to inclusive education  
Graduated, *summa cum laude*, Montclair State College  
Graduated, *cum laude*, Seton Hall University School of Law

**ERNEST PALESTIS, Ed.D.**

**Education:** BA. Jersey City State; MA. William Paterson; MA. Jersey City State; Ed.D. Nova University

**Professional:** Dr. Palestis entire professional career has been in the area of public - school education. He has served as a teacher, supervisor, principal, school business administrator, child study director, and superintendent of schools.

Dr. Palestis has extensive experience as a principal and superintendent in prekindergarten through grade eight districts. Thus, he is familiar with the challenges that are faced in providing programming at the elementary and middle school grade level. He has presented numerous workshops in the field of special education and teaches masters and doctoral level courses in the field.

Finally, he has published extensively in the field of school improvement.

**Honors:** New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education Best Practices Award  
New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council Exemplary Practice Award (2)  
Recipient of INCLUDE grant of 800K to improve the performance of special education students in the field of mathematics and science.

*NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
DIVISION OF REVENUE AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES  
PALESTIS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING, LLC  
0400507570*

***CERTIFICATE OF FORMATION***

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The above-named DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY was duly filed in accordance with New Jersey state law on 07/24/2012 and was assigned identification number 0400507570. Following are the articles that constitute its original certificate.

**1. Name:**

PALESTIS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING, LLC

**2. Registered Agent:**

MONICA DODD PALESTIS, ESQ.

**3. Registered Office:**

393 WEST BLACKWELL STREET  
DOVER, NJ 07801

**4. Business Purpose:**

EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

**Signatures:**

MONICA DODD PALESTIS, ESQ.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

Certification# 125527819

Verify this certificate at

[https://www1.state.nj.us/TYTR\\_StandingCert/JSP/Verify\\_Cert.jsp](https://www1.state.nj.us/TYTR_StandingCert/JSP/Verify_Cert.jsp)

*Andrew P Sidamon-Eristoff*

*State Treasurer*

*IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have  
hereunto set my hand and affixed my  
Official Seal at Trenton, this  
24th day of July, 2012*