



## Special Education Report May, 2026

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### Administrators for Accountability & Program Improvement (T. Hassett, M. Sly, J. Pung):

- **General Supervision Grant Team Updates:**

- The GSM team hosted their final SE Teacher PLC on Thursday, May 7th, focusing on co-teaching models. This PLC has been a great opportunity for SE teachers to connect, collaborate, and grow together. We are excited to continue this work moving forward.
- The IPS B4 corrective action, which is related to discipline, has been closed by MDE. We will continue improving discipline practices countywide through GSM activities.
- Five local districts received B-13 (transition) corrective actions.
- The GSM team will support Belding with a B-10, disproportionate representation in a specific disability category.
- With the support of our GSM team, Lakewood has been working through a state complaint centered around IEP development and implementation. This will be closed by May 30th, 2026.
- ISD Belief Statements were developed based on input from across the ISD. These beliefs will provide a foundation for how staff provide services and supports to students, especially those with higher support needs.





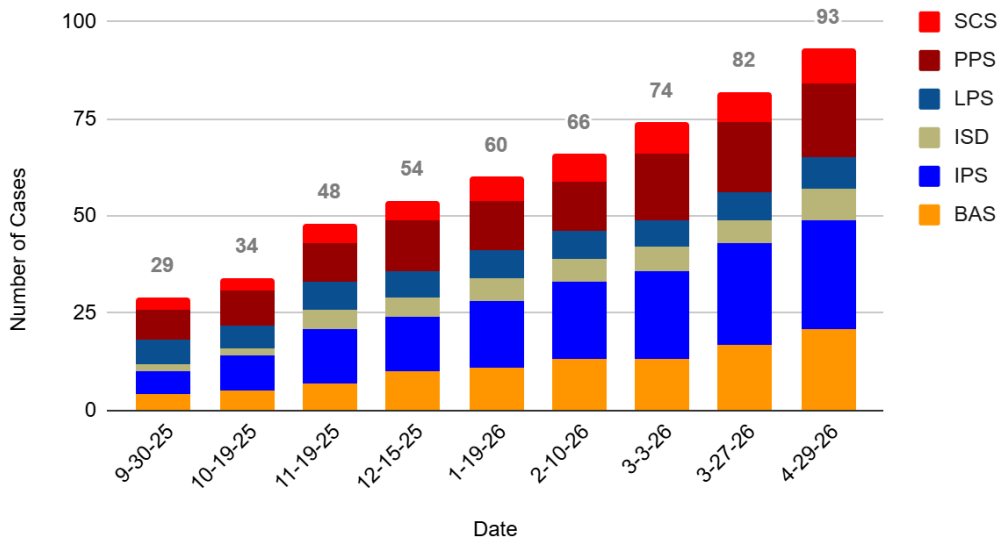
● **Ancillary Team Updates and Upcoming Trainings:**

- Our end-of-the-year ancillary staff meeting was held on May 5th. This was our staff appreciation celebration. Jennifer Stearns was honored as our only retiree. We are grateful for her commitment to the Ionia ISD and our students.



- The engagement consultants have supported 93 cases throughout the ISD, ranging from providing consultation during office hours as well as shoulder to shoulder student focused team coaching. The graph below shows the number of cases per district during the 25-26 school year.

2025-2026 Engagement Consultant Cases



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- The next Infinity New User Group meeting will be held on May 7th, 2026. The group will continue to focus on making improvements to the notice page and staff training around prior written notice.
- The Mentor/Mentee Wrap Up celebration was held on April 29th. We are grateful for all of the mentors who dedicated their time and energy to support our mentees and help build up the organization.



- **New Hires or Current Vacancies**

- Current Vacancies:
  - School Social Worker for the 26-27 school year.
  - Full-time speech and language pathologist for the 26-27 school year.
  - 2 Long-term substitute speech and language pathologist for the 26-27 school year.
  - Full-time Visually Impaired Teacher Specialist
- New Hires:
  - School Social Worker for 26-27 - Seth Mayhew

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Program (B. Woolston):**

- No report

### **Early Childhood Programs (C. Granzo)**

Early On: During the month of April, we received 25 referrals. Staff are working to schedule IEPs and to transition children that will be turning 3 over the summer months.

DPIL:

There were a total of 2000 children that received books during the month of April. The total cost for the month was \$4559.95.

### **Freedom Acres School Programs (A. Miller):**

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***Celebrating Growth, Connection, and Our Shared Mission***

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### **Department Updates or Changes**

Required state assessments are nearing the finish line, and reminders have been sent to all test proctors with students who still need to complete assessments. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) requires 95% participation for state testing compliance. All test proctors have also been provided the MI-ACCESS survey link so MDE can gather statewide feedback regarding the



assessment process. This feedback opportunity is significant, as the last statewide collection occurred in 2015.

Teachers within the SCI program met on Wednesday, May 5, to collaboratively plan for four to five potential new SCI learners. The team reviewed projected class lists to determine program impact and explore possible solutions. This tentative planning process allows for fluid adjustments as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are finalized.

Planning for the SCI summer program is underway, with programming centered around the theme of “games.” The SCI Falcons will integrate CORE language instruction, MOVE activities, and engaging learning opportunities throughout the summer experience. Kara, COTA, is currently designing a Mario Kart-themed track to support movement, engagement, and communication development. At Freedom Acres, fun and learning continue to walk beside one another.

Additionally, the administrator collaborated with a building ISD Education Association member to coordinate development of the 2026–27 school calendar.

### **New Hires or Current Vacancies**

The Falcon team remains fully staffed with no recent staffing changes. Planning for the Severely Cognitively Impaired summer program has begun, and at this time all support staff positions are filled. One open teaching position remains for summer programming coverage. Collaboration has occurred with Autism Program leadership to explore the availability of ISD teaching staff who may be able to support this assignment.

At this time, there are no anticipated or planned vacancies for the 2026–27 school year.

### **Highlights of Positive Work by Staff or Students**

On Wednesday, May 5, Freedom Acres experienced 10 staff absences, with only two substitute positions filled. Despite the challenge, the Falcon team united to support students and one another with flexibility, professionalism, and grace. Staff modeled perseverance and a positive mindset for students throughout the day, reinforcing the belief that challenges can be navigated successfully when teams work together.

### **Initiatives or Grants in Progress / State-Level Work or Involvement**

Staff members have been given the opportunity to provide direct feedback to MDE regarding the MI-ACCESS assessment process.

Rashell Bowerman from MDE will visit the Michigan Career & Technical Institute with students from the SEI program later this month to support transition exploration and postsecondary opportunities.



Freedom Acres is also developing a FAME team for the 2026–27 school year to further strengthen staff support systems and instructional practices.

Additionally, Lisa English and Abby Bailey will travel to Gaylord with the administrator to become certified paraeducator trainers. Upon certification, they will lead professional development opportunities during the 2026–27 school year to build internal capacity and strengthen instructional support practices across programs.

### **Appreciation for Freedom Acres PTO**

Freedom Acres extends sincere appreciation to the PTO for their generosity, thoughtfulness, and commitment to celebrating staff during Staff Appreciation Week. Their intentional planning reflects the strong partnership between families and school staff and demonstrates meaningful recognition for the daily work and dedication of the Falcon team. From stocking the lounge and providing snacks throughout the week to organizing a pizza lunch and staff gifts, the PTO continues to create moments of encouragement and connection for our staff. The Freedom Acres team is deeply grateful for the kindness, support, and care consistently shown by our PTO members.

### **Barriers or Challenges That Need to Be Addressed**

Overall, the Freedom Acres team continues to experience many successes. However, several challenges remain. Freedom Acres currently serves three homebound learners, requiring instructors to extend their school days to provide instructional services and maintain compliance with student programming needs.

Additionally, the limited substitute pool continues to create strain for both staff and administration during periods of increased absences.

Finally, medically complex students continue to require highly specialized adaptive equipment. Due to the individualized and prescriptive nature of these supports, associated equipment costs remain significant.

### **PI-OHI & Assistive Technology Department (K. Foote)**

#### **Department Highlights**

- All ISD-owned Assistive Technology (AT) and PIOHI equipment must be returned to the ISD on the last day of school for maintenance and inventory.
- Starting June 2026 barcodes will be added to all ETC ISD equipment to be tracked for the new lending library. The new lending library has a tentative start date of July. ISD staff have been inquiring and adding to a “wish” list of what they would like to have added to the lending library.
- The ISD Assistive Technology implementation team will be attending the Alt Shift team training June 16th & 17th.



## **Transition Training Sites/MoCI Programs (M. Sly):**

- No Report

## **Deaf & Hard of Hearing (J. Pung)**

- Hannah Wilson, DDH Teacher, and Charity Last, DHH Teacher Specialist, participated in Finger Spelling Our Way to Reading training on May 1st at Kent ISD, as part of the LEAD K Grant.
- Camp T is quickly approaching on May 21st. This is an exciting time for our students to engage in fun camp activities such as fishing, hiking, and rock climbing, while connecting with others from the DHH community.
- Several members of our DHH group had the opportunity to tour the Michigan School for the Deaf. We had a wonderful time learning about the school's programs and had an opportunity to connect with a few Ionia County students.



## **Upcoming Events**

- Clark Hill Legal Presentation - May 4th, 9:00-3:00
- Ancillary Staff Appreciation Breakfast - May 5th 8:00-10:00
- Non-Public Consultation Meeting - May 12th 3:00
- Transition Graduation - May 28th 10:30