

**DATE:** 9/8/25

**TITLE:** Special Services Department Update

**TYPE:** Information

**PRESENTER(S):** Dr. Sarah Knudsen, Executive Director of Special Services

**BACKGROUND:**

The Special Services Department includes oversight of the following:

- Special Education Services
- School Health Services
- Student Support Professionals (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists)
- Mental Health Supervision and Supports (internal and external)
- Oversight of education at Nexus Gerard's New Dominion School
- Oversight of education at the Austin Albert Lea Area Special Education Cooperative (AALASEC)

**Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment**

- We will be working to fill our open paraprofessional positions.
- New licensed staff participated in a Special Education focused session during the new staff orientation week. They learned about data, using Spedforms, and restrictive procedures requirements.

**Packer Profile for all learners**

- We are learning about some changes in how we will partner with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide services to our students with disabilities during the transition to post-secondary. The changes are requirements from Vocational Rehabilitation. Effective at the start of the 2025-26 school year, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) will be implementing a new model for providing Introductory Career Services (ICS), including access to virtual courses. We will continue to collaborate with VR to coordinate services for our students.

**District-wide multi-tiered systems of support for all learners**

- Dr. Knudsen and two school psychologists attended a listening session regarding MTDD/RtI (Response to Intervention) to determine eligibility for students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

**Excellence in Resource Management**

- Our Third Party Billing/MA staff are participating in a training from SpedForms to increase our internal capacity to effectively and efficiently carry out the billing process to increase this funding stream.