
BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Information/Discussion _____

Future Action _____

Action X

Item: Request for four new classrooms and fifteen additional positions for 2024-2025;
Pine Grove Learning Center, Lincoln School, Empower U-South and Center Programs

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Date: February 6, 2024

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Board Meeting Date: March 18, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

Additional Classroom (1) at Pine Grove - Severe Cognitive Impairment (SCI):

- 1 Special Education Teacher – SCI
- 2 Instructional Support Specialists (ISS) - SCI
- 1 Program Coordinator

Additional Classrooms (2) at Lincoln School - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

- 2 Special Education Teachers - ASD
- 4 Instructional Support Specialists - ASD

Additional Classroom (1) at Empower U-South:

- 1 Special Education Teacher
- 2 Instructional Support Specialists

Additional Itinerant positions:

- 1 Social Worker (SSW) – Transition Services;
- 0.8 Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) – (0.4 at Pine Grove/0.4 at Empower U)

Rationale:

- **Pine Grove** currently has 4 SCI Classrooms
 - Average of 9-10 students per classroom.
- Overall, our severe cognitive impairment classrooms are designed for students with a SCI plus. Pine Grove continues to get referrals for students with SCI plus behavioral needs.
- This SCI classroom will be a lower ratio classroom that will provide additional support for students with cognitive impairments plus complex behavioral needs.

- Pine Grove Learning Center has seen an increase in students with autism and students with complex behavioral needs. Kent County continues to see an increase in students with autism move into the county. Hope Network has opened 8 new group homes for young adults and for the first time these group homes are in region 3 of Kent County which is the area that Pine Grove serves.
- Pine Grove has restructured the layout of classrooms to increase safety in the building by strategically placing autism and SXI classrooms at different ends of the building. Pine Grove has also converted half of the gym in a gross motor room for the students with autism.
- With the increase in behaviors, the principal is spending more time on managing daily issues. The Program Coordinator will help manage the day-to-day operations of the building.
- Kent ISD Center Programs has moved from Teacher Consultants to Program Coordinators in our other programs. This structure allows for capacity building and developing future leaders. Pine Grove is one of two programs that does not have a Program Coordinator type position. It is needed now due to the increase in behaviors.

- **Lincoln School** currently has 12 Autism Classrooms
 - 11 typical Center Program classrooms
 - 1 low-ratio room
- The 11 classrooms have an average of 7 students per classroom.
- Kent ISD's Special Education plan says that Autism programs shall not have more than 8 students. Local and regional autism programs operate their programs with 6-8 students per classroom. Given the complex behavioral and communication needs of the students in Center Programs a lower staff to student ratio is needed for students to make adequate progress on their IEP goals and objectives.
- Adding 2 Autism classrooms would put the average at 5.6 students per class.
- Kent County continues to see an increase in students with autism move into the county. Hope Network has opened 8 new group homes for young adults, and DART (Developmental Residential Adolescent Treatment) is expanding from 12 beds to 40 beds by December 2025. Adding the additional classrooms will proactively prepare us to meet the needs of students next school year.

- **Empower U** is divided into three regions: North, Central, and **South**
 - Empower U North – 10 classrooms
 - Empower U Central – 11 classrooms
 - Empower U South – 11 classrooms
- Empower U has level 3 levels of programming based on the students' level of need/abilities and independence.
 - We have seen an increase in the number of students with complex behavioral and communication needs. We have needed add lower ratio level 3 classrooms at all 3 locations.
- Over the last 4 years at Empower U
 - 2021-2022 – 217 young adults
 - 2022-2023 – 295 young adults
 - 2023-2024 – 315 young adults
 - 2024-2025 – 340 young adults projected
 - 33 students are graduating/exiting
 - We anticipate around 60 referrals

- Given the increase in numbers and complex needs a new classroom is needed at Empower U South.
- **Social Worker:** 18 to 26 year old, young adults are entitled to special education if they have not graduated with a high school diploma. Currently we offer programming options. To increase our continuum to meet the needs of our independent/employable learners, this position will offer young adults transition services and not just program options.
- Transition programs and services involve employability, adult daily living, and community participation. Our Transition programs focus on all 3 areas of transition. We have a growing number of students who have the employability skills and only need adult daily living and community living coordination and services.
- In collaboration with our Empower U teacher consultants this social worker position would be able to provide services in the natural environment (home/community), while the student realizes their post-secondary vision.
- We continue to see an increase in students in our transition program at Empower U. Of the 340 students anticipated next school year, we predict over 20 students could benefit from Transition Services vs. Transition Programming. Over the last 4 years this included;
 - 2021-2022 – 217 young adults
 - 2022-2023 – 295 young adults
 - 2023-2024 – 315 young adults
 - 2024-2025 – 340 young adults projected
 - 33 students are graduating/exiting
 - We anticipate around 60 referrals
- **Speech Language Pathologist:** Current SLP Setup
 - Pine Grove
 - 1.6 FTE
 - 105 students on caseload
 - Empower U
 - 1.0 FTE
 - 320 Total Students (increasing next year)
 - Supports a large number of students as they transition from school environment to employment (monitoring)
 - 84 students on caseload
- Rationale
 - Pine Grove
 - Pine Grove has seen an increase in students with complex needs. We have intensive Autism classrooms where the SLP is involved with the student study team to help support communication and behavior. Providing intensive instruction in communication will help support Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) decision making for students at Pine Grove. A majority of students in the Severly Multiply Impaired (SXI) and SCI + classes are non-verbal and require Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
 - Empower U
 - Empower U continues to grow in total student numbers. Also we are working with Lincoln Pines and KEC to have more students access a least restrictive environment. We currently have 105 students with autism and 32 of those

students are on the SLPs caseload providing communication support (AAC). We have 26 students that she is provided AAC support with and assisting families with AAC devices. At the transition level communication is a barrier to employment. She is a part of our student study teams to help with communication strategies in natural environments. Empower U has 3 buildings and over 12 community sites. There is considerable travel for this position.

Position	Location	FTE	Accounting Code
Teacher – SCI (1)	Pine Grove	1.0	21-1-122-1240-130-0000-21210-2921-2120
ISS – SCI (2)	Pine Grove	2.0	21-1-122-1630-130-0000-21210-2921-2120
Program Coordinator (1)	Pine Grove	1.0	21-1-226-1165-081-0000-21210-2921-2120
Teacher – ASD (2)	Lincoln School	2.0	21-1-122-1240-193-0000-21230-2927-2120
ISS – ASD (4)	Lincoln School	4.0	21-1-122-1630-193-0000-21230-2927-2120
Teacher – RR (1)	Empower U-South	1.0	21-1-122-1240-194-0000-21270-2934-2125
ISS – RR (2)	Empower U-South	2.0	21-1-122-1630-193-0000-21270-2934-2125
SSW- Transition (1)	Center Programs	0.3	21-1-216-1440-041-0000-21240-2930-2125
		0.4	21-1-216-1440-041-0000-21250-2931-2125
		0.3	21-1-216-1440-041-0000-21270-2934-2125
SLP - (0.8)	Pine Grove and Empower U-North Empower U-Central	0.4	21-1-215-1280-032-0000-21210-2921-2120
		0.1	21-1-215-1280-032-0000-21240-2930-2125
		0.1	21-1-215-1280-032-0000-21250-2931-2125
		0.2	21-1-215-1280-032-0000-21270-2934-2125