



River Trails

SCHOOL DISTRICT 26

To: The Board of Education
From: Dr. Carie Cohen
Date: 9/8/2026
Subject: Additional Special Education Teacher at Euclid

Background

Over the past two years, District 26 has experienced a higher-than-typical mobility rate within our special education population. While our self-contained program at Euclid School successfully managed previous student move-ins, recent shifts have pushed our current staffing model past an unmanageable threshold.

Special education staffing projections naturally balance outgoing middle school transitions against incoming kindergarteners and routine move-in averages. In prior years, the program absorbed move-ins because a significant portion of the roster consisted of older, more independent 5th graders who required less direct physical and instructional support. However, following the transition of five 5th graders to middle school, District 26 experienced a summer influx of five new students, along with two new kindergarten move-ins and a third anticipated in January.

This recent wave of primary-grade move-ins has fundamentally altered classroom dynamics. Replacing self-sufficient upper-elementary learners with young primary students, many of whom require continuous adult assistance for functional care, toileting, behavioral support, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, has created an operational load that is not sustainable long term.

Analysis and Rationale

While our team successfully absorbed earlier mobility trends, this cumulative volume of high-acuity, primary-grade learners now exceeds our operational capacity for four key reasons:

- **Class Size & Student Complexity:** While the Illinois Administrative Code permits up to 13 students in a self-contained setting when supported by a paraprofessional, maximum state caps assume a standard distribution of needs. District 26's procedure for classroom capacity is driven by student complexity rather than raw headcount. Currently, both classrooms sit at 9 primary-grade learners across multi-grade spans. Because these students present multi-faceted needs, the sheer concentration of complexity per room stretches certified teacher instruction and IEP management past best practice operational limits.
- **Multi-Year Structural Bulge:** This enrollment increase is not a single-year spike. The heavy concentration of young learners in our kindergarten self-contained cohort means this high-need population will remain in our primary program for years to come. Adding a certified teacher addresses a multi-year structural need as these students progress through Euclid.
- **Proactive Capacity for Future Mobility:** Given our high mobility rate over the past two years, establishing a third classroom creates necessary operational bandwidth to absorb potential future move-ins during the school year without compromising service delivery.
- **In-District Continuum & Step-Down Runway:** Expanding internal capacity allows us to educate students in District while building a runway for learners ready to transition back from NSSEO or private outplacements, avoiding costly long-term external tuition and transportation fees.

Recommendation and Next Steps

The administration requests authorization to hire one (1.0 FTE) Special Education Teacher for the self-contained program at Euclid School.

- Immediate Action: The position has been posted and candidate screening will begin upon Board approval.
- Target Start Date: Immediately upon hire.