



Special Education Report **September, 2026**

**Natalie Fuller – Trisha Hassett – Mark Sly – Jody Pung –
Cheryl Granzo – Angela Miller – Ben Woolston**

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

- **General Supervision Grant Team Updates:**

- Lakewood Public Schools is implementing the action plan related to the state complaint.
- The opening day activity included activities related to creating safe learning environments, specifically it focused on learning about crisis prevention and universal supports.
- The professional learning opportunity for district leaders, interventionists, and special education coordinators titled, "Addressing Absenteeism: Strategies and Solutions" was postponed until the month of October to allow for more district level participation.
- District data portrait conversations are being scheduled for early this fall.
- The state complaint against Belding Area Schools was completed with findings. The GSM team will collaborate with BAS to revise procedures for IEEs will be developed.

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

- The next ancillary staff meeting is scheduled for September 16.
- PLC meeting dates for all discipline groups will follow the ancillary staff meeting on September 16.
- The Engagement Consultants are hosting Data Collection Training on October 14.
- Special education teacher PLC dates have been released for the school year; the first date will be on October 15th.

- **New Hires or Current Vacancies**

- Current Vacancies:
 - Speech and Language Pathologist
 - (2) School Social Workers
- New Hires:
 - School Social Worker - Hayley DeBoer
 - School Social Worker - Kaylin Hoy (contracted staff)
 - Speech and Language Pathologist-Michelle Dodge (contracted staff)



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

- No Report

Early Childhood Programs (C. Granzo)

- No Report

Freedom Acres School Programs (A. Miller)

Staff Updates

- Adaptive PE Teacher: Seth Munroe unexpectedly resigned on Wednesday, August 12. While excited to join the Freedom Acres team, he accepted an opportunity with a neighboring local district that allows him to pursue his goal of coaching football. The position was immediately reposted, and an interview was conducted on August 27. An initial offer has been extended, and employment negotiations are currently underway with high hopes of reaching a final agreement soon.

Open Positions & Recruitment

- SCI Teacher (HS/Transition): Two candidates were interviewed on August 27, but neither was extended an offer. The position remains posted. A promising new application was recently received, and an interview is being scheduled for the week following Labor Day.
- Health Care Assistants (HCAs): Our newly hired HCAs have successfully completed all onboarding requirements and are off to a strong start.
- Library Position: This position remains vacant and actively open for recruitment.

Projects & Funds

- Ukeru Host Site & Cost Savings: Freedom Acres/Ionia ISD is serving as the host site for an upcoming two-day Ukeru Train-the-Trainer event on September 17–18. The event will host 34 new trainers, while recertifications have grown from 60 participants up to 79 for Day 2. Hosting secures one free recertification slot and one free new-trainer slot. Additionally, overall training costs are split among all participants, significantly driving down expenses for Ionia ISD and our local partner districts.
- Safety Training & Crisis Prevention: For the first time, Ionia ISD hosted the CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI) Advanced Physical Skills training on-site, providing critical safety preparation for staff.



De-escalation & Safety Benchmarks

- **Positive Culture & Zero Restraints:** Grounded in our commitment to reserve physical intervention strictly as a last resort, Freedom Acres has started the 2026–27 school year strong with 0 days of suspension, 0 restraints, and 0 seclusions. Teachers are prioritizing relational capacity with students, intentionally promoting student independence, and stepping back to evaluate instructional support decisions through this lens.
- **Start-of-Year Incident & Facility Response:** The school year began with an unexpected electrical incident that necessitated canceling opening day to assess safety and establish a plan of action. ISD staff and response crews worked long hours, maintaining exemplary communication to keep staff and families continuously informed.
- **Calendar Adjustment & Resilience:** To offset the lost instructional time, the Education Association (EA) supported a key calendar change. Staff completed required First Aid and CPR Professional Development on August 26, allowing us to convert the professional development day originally scheduled for September 25 into a full student instructional day. Staff, students, and families have shown extraordinary flexibility and resilience through these initial hurdles, and there is shared gratitude across all stakeholders to be back in session.

Transition Training Sites/MoCI Programs (M. Sly)

We have four new staff members.

Danielle Archbold, Jefferson Elementary MoCI HCA

Aleah Edwards, High School MoCI HCA

Charlotte Lott, Middle School MoCI HCA

Rebecca Patrick, Transition Specialist, Saranac and Lakewood

ILC (House) will be located at Freedom Acres for the 2026-2027 school year. The prior location will be put up for sale, and a new facility will be constructed by the AEC building on the ISD campus.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing (J. Pung)

- **Professional Learning:** This month, Hannah attended the *Auditory Learning Guide: Facilitating Learning Through Listening* training at Kent ISD. The training provides our DHH team with a more intentional framework for supporting students who use spoken language, including guidance on the skills students should be developing, areas of auditory and spoken-language growth to monitor, and considerations for developing meaningful goals and instructional priorities. This will help provide a clearer roadmap for supporting the individual listening and spoken-language needs of our DHH students.



- **Start-of-Year Equipment Support:** Our DHH team, Hannah Wilson and Lauren Denti, worked diligently to ensure a successful start to the school year by visiting each district within the first few days of school. During these visits, the team checked students' hearing technology and related equipment to ensure everything was functioning properly and that students had the tools and supports they needed to fully access instruction from the beginning of the year.
- **Interpreter Support:** This year, Ionia ISD is fortunate to have three full-time, fully certified ASL interpreters providing services to students across the county.

Upcoming Events

September 9, 2026; Principal Palooza
September 18, 2026; Early Childhood CoP
September 22, 2026; Inclusion Coaches Training