

Director of Special Education
Board Report

Jill Mattingly
Special Education Director
February 2019

This school year has been a little difficult for me. My dad became very ill in the beginning of October and died at the end of October. My mom is alone in California and I had to go back to California a couple of times to help her with funeral planning and for emotional support. My department has been very supportive helping out as needed.

I am thrilled to announce that we have hired Katie Kouka as a speech pathologist. She is working on an externship and is being supervised by one of our current speech pathologists. She will be in charge of Head Start through First Grade. We had been operating with two speech pathologists to service over 200 students. Alida Write, who has been with us for over 20 years, has been working overtime and also working from home to help us stay in compliance. I am hoping that Katie will work for us full time for the next school year.

Even though we have raised the salary for school psychologist, and we have been actively advertising and recruiting, we have not had any applicants. For our entire school district, we only have one school psychologist. I have contracted with her to work extra hours outside of the school day to complete

evaluation reports. We have had numerous referrals for students to be tested to see if they qualify for special education services. So far we have had to prioritize them by need and some students may not get tested until the next school year. OPI is working on reclassifying the licensure, since there is a shortage throughout the entire state. This license will only be good in Montana.

I am very excited to announce that we have been able to establish a multi-grade self-contained classroom. Last school year we attempted to set this up but the space that we had was not ideal. We have taken over the space under the sped building for this classroom. We are servicing students from kindergarten through 6th grade. The students in this classroom have significant delays and most of the students have personal care attendants. There are five separate rooms and the atmosphere is warm and inviting. Setting up this classroom was quite an undertaking, but I am so pleased with how it turned out. Having students with significant needs in one classroom allows us to pool resources and to provide better services. We will be having a naming ceremony sometime in February and I would like the board members to come. I will notify everyone once the date has been set.

This year we have continued to refer students out for services that we cannot provide within our district. We have been partnering with Maria's Medical to have students evaluated for their Occupational Therapy needs. Once we receive the evaluation and a student is in need of occupational therapy, it is

written into the student's IEP and the services are then provided by the case manager. One student this year needed an evaluation to determine if the student is Dyslexic. This is a very specialized evaluation and we found an excellent clinician in Billings. The student was diagnosed with severe Dyslexia and also Dysgraphia and we are partnering with them to provide tutoring to the student through Skype.

In January I met with a representative for Vocational Rehabilitation. We have several students at the high school who have been participating in work study. I wanted to make sure that we were in compliance in how we had this set up and also wanted to know how we could partner with businesses in the community to provide work experience for our students with disabilities. By the end of this school year I hope to have resources in the community and also in other buildings in our district to provide paid work experience for our disabled students. We will also be contracting with Voc/Rehab to provide pre employment skills to our sped students at the high school. Once this contract is in place we can receive up to 17,000 per quarter for pre-employment opportunities we have provided special education students. These funds will be funneled back into the high school and the academy.

I am very proud of our department and since I have taken over as director we have grown so much in staff and also in services that we provide to our students. My passion has always been being a voice and an advocate for special education students. The needs of the students in our community has changed

greatly in the 18 years that I have been here. Our department has grown immensely and it is my goal to provide the best services to our students that we can and also to help support parents of these precious students.