

Board Report, January 2026

Lori Avart, Special Education Coordinator

Staff:

We are beginning to get some candidates for special education staff for next year. With the staffing shortage in the area, we are happy to have a few possible candidates which are needed as outside placement are also feeling the crunch and do not have the placement openings that they have in the past. This means we need to start thinking about ways to serve our students with more intensive needs as they move up through the grades. Our grade school, life skills class has really worked out for us this year. The ability to have a room that focuses on the needs of these students has made a difference in both their progress, but has allowed for more focused instruction for other students with special needs. We are now investigating how to manage to move those services to the middle school as some of these students are moving out of the grade school ages.

Special Education Office:

This year, the addition of a full time school psychologist, Dr. Elizabeth Galka has been a much appreciated addition to our district staff. In addition to participating in special education meetings and conducting evaluations, writing reports, she has provided more insight and support to special education teachers when it comes to understanding specific student needs and help in planning for meeting those needs with IEP services. In addition, she has streamlined and implemented a system for overseeing the 504 plans for the district, making the process uniform across the buildings and conducting meetings with parents and teachers to evaluate and identify student needs. Liz has taken the load of 504 meetings, dissemination of those plans, and questions off of principals and has met with parents, students, and teachers to ensure plans are appropriate and communicated to all stakeholders. In addition, she has participated in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) data day meetings lending her expertise and knowledge to the building level teams. She also plans and facilitates all of the problem solving team meetings associated with those interventions.

The office has also begun working on ensuring accommodations are indicated in the testing platform and ready for those upcoming state assessments.

Professional Development Activities:

On January 5th Allisa List and I held an Ukeru training for all staff that work at the pre-k and in the elementary life skills classroom. This training focuses on brain based understanding of students dealing with trauma especially when they become emotionally elevated. It provides ideas for how, when, and what to do to assist the students who are having difficulty regulating their emotions while protecting students and staff from possible trauma by escalation of behaviors or aggression in the school. Most of the training focuses on prevention, but does provide instruction on what to do and ways to keep students and staff safe should a child in our care act out aggressively or become physically aggressive toward themselves or others without having to restrain them. This has been an area the state has pushed more focus towards in the last several years.