

**Tom Guikema, LMSW,
KEC Oakleigh**



Leading Learning Award March 2026



**Allie Hamel,
Student Services**

"I am honored to nominate Tom for the "Going Above and Beyond" award. He is deeply committed to student growth, both socially and emotionally, and works tirelessly to help students build the skills they need to successfully transition back to their home districts. He understands that true progress goes beyond behavior management and requires trust, consistency, and meaningful relationships. He invests the time and care necessary to build those relationships, ensuring that each student feels seen, supported, and capable of success.

In his assigned classrooms, he provides both individual social work sessions and whole-group activities that promote emotional regulation, coping skills, communication, and problem-solving. His lessons are thoughtful, engaging, and tailored to meet the complex needs of our students. He collaborates seamlessly with teachers and staff, always aligning his work with classroom goals and student IEP objectives.

Perhaps most notably, he is a steady and calming presence during times of crisis. In a setting where emotions can escalate quickly, he models patience, empathy, and professionalism. Students respond to his composed demeanor and genuine care, often de-escalating simply because they trust him. Staff rely on his guidance and support, knowing he brings both expertise and compassion to challenging situations. He goes above and beyond not for recognition, but because he truly believes in our students and their potential. Our school community is stronger because of his dedication, and our students are better prepared for their futures thanks to his unwavering commitment. We are incredibly fortunate to have him as part of our team, and I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition."

"Allie exemplifies the spirit of being a leader of leading through her exceptional leadership, deep expertise, and unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Allie is highly data-driven and research-informed, using multiple data sources to guide decision-making, identify trends, and support continuous improvement for both Kent ISD and our districts. She leads our general supervision process, one of the most complex and high-responsibility functions in special education, ensuring districts are using data to continuously improve their systems while ensuring and verifying their obligations under IDEA and MARSE. This work requires precision, persistence, and collaboration, which Allie approaches with clarity, integrity, and a strong learning mindset.

Allie also leads critical work in partnership with MDE OSE on state compliance investigations, translating regulatory requirements into meaningful guidance that supports districts in strengthening both compliance and practice. In addition, Allie serves as the lead for our MiPSE software system, supporting 12 ISD's in accessing and effectively using a platform that houses IEPs and all related documentation, Section 504 plans, Individual Reading Plans, BTAM threat assessments, and other required essentials to support students with disabilities. Her leadership ensures the system is not just compliant, but functional, responsive, and aligned to student needs. Allie is incredibly knowledgeable in state and federal law and consistently integrates that knowledge with data, research, and collaboration. She is a trusted partner to districts, providing high-quality technical assistance that builds capacity, strengthens systems, and promotes shared learning. Through her work, Allie models what it means to lead learning in service of equity, accountability, and improved outcomes for all students."