



DATE: 2/9/26

TITLE: Special Services Department Update

TYPE: Information

PRESENTER(S): Dr. Sarah Knudsen, Executive Director of Special Services

BACKGROUND:

The Special Services Department includes oversight of the following:

- Special Education Services
- School Health Services
- Student Support Professionals (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists)
- Mental Health Supervision and Supports (internal and external)
- Oversight of education at Nexus Gerard's New Dominion School
- Oversight of education at the Austin Albert Lea Area Special Education Cooperative (AALASEC)

Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment

- The Special Education Advisory Council was held on January 21st. The content presented was a special education IEP basics overview. Participants asked questions and the Special Education Leadership Team provided information about special education services and the IEP process.

Packer Profile for all learners

- Case managers and IEP teams at the secondary level continue to implement transition services built into the special education service delivery. This topic is a focus of discussion at CMT meetings at this level.

District-wide multi-tiered systems of support for all learners

- The School Support Personnel (SSP) group continues to discuss and refine their role regarding crisis response. SSPs will continue to focus on this area for the remainder of this year.
- Case Management Team (CMT) meetings are held in each building at least monthly. These meetings are facilitated by a Special Education Leadership Team member. The meetings focus on team support, problem solving, and IEP due process related topics.
- A Behavior Basics Course for data collection and implementation of student specific behavior plans is being offered. We had an overwhelming response. Thirty staff registered. We are only able to have 18 participants. We will offer this course again in the future.

Excellence in Resource Management

- The MN Department of Education Special Education Fiscal Monitoring Comprehensive Review Corrective Action Plan requirements were submitted and approved. Along with several other districts in our region, we were selected for this review in December 2024. This is a successful conclusion to this audit.

- We are developing and implementing a revised process for requesting specialized transportation.
- We have begun the budgeting process for FY27 including working through staffing projections.
- Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) mid-year updates have been reviewed and validated. We are mandated to use CEIS dollars to provide services.
- Our third-party billing (Medical Assistance) process continues to be refined and improved in order to ensure we are maximizing this revenue source. A team meets monthly to ensure all procedures are followed.