



**DATE:** 4/13/26

**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**

- Working with CPI trainers to develop a plan for training next school year; moving to a model which utilizes a blended approach to learning with a portion of the course being offered online and a portion in person
- Observed a Developmental Adaptive Physical Education (DAPE) class at Neveln; met with elementary DAPE teachers to discuss service delivery options, listen to concerns, barriers, and potential solutions to ensure safe and successful DAPE services

**Packer Profile for all learners**

- Completing an analysis of Next Up Transition curriculum purchased newly implemented this year
  - Number of users
  - Student success
  - Ease of use
  - Potential expansion to other case managers

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

- Working with Ellis administration and special education team to reevaluate and redefine their co-teaching model for special education service delivery
- Goalbook early-adopter group received initial training on March 26
  - The survey following the training indicated:
    - 100% of respondents indicated they plan to use Goalbook more than once a month
    - Users expressed excitement around all areas of the tool
    - Users shared that they gained new knowledge about resources within the tool
  - All special education teachers planning to return next year were given Goalbox access to allow for exploration of the tool; training and full implementation will begin in the fall

- Our SAEBRS pilot (a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) screener at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) was completed for the year. The assessment is Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk (SAEBRS) is a brief, norm-referenced tool for screening all students to identify those who are at risk for social-emotional behavior (SEB) problems.
  - The pilot group met to review the process utilized and determine its usage for next year.
    - Beginning Fall '26, grades 4, 5, 6, 7 will utilize the SAEBRS assessment.
    - Small group of Administrators, Student Support Professionals and Behavior Interventionists from grades 4, 5, 6, 7 will convene for a ½ day this spring to:
      - Develop standard operating protocol for:
      - training teachers on administration procedures
      - Developing a tool to introduce the test to students
      - Make recommendations for integration and use for MTSS teams
      - Define roles and responsibilities

### **Excellence in Resource Management**

- Finalizing staffing and caseloads for Special Education Extended School Year Services (ESY)
  - Services will be provided at CLC, Southgate, Ellis, AHS and Oakland
- Continuing to recruit and hire
  - Currently recruiting special education teachers, SLPs and school psychologists
  - Special education paras will be hired over the summer months
  - Special education Instruction and Inclusion Coaches
  - Assistant Director of Special Education
- Received notification that we are no longer in mandatory Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) status for next year (overrepresentation of students who are two or more races, receiving special education services, being suspended or expelled)
  - As a result, our CEIS grant application for next year will shift to a different focus area
  - Currently analyzing and discussing the need for the use of this resource