

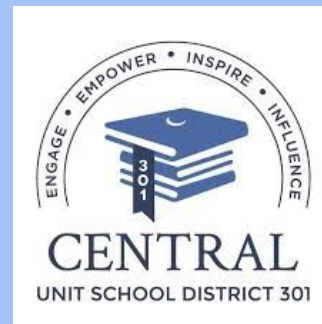
# On the Front Lines of Special Education

**Sarah Nolan**

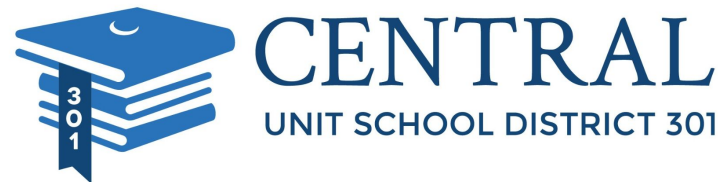
**Director of Student Services**

**Kristen Nowicki**

**Asst. Director of Student Services**



# Purpose



- To meet with special education staff to gather information about what is going well in each of the buildings and areas for improvement.
- While we do evaluate staffing, services, and programming yearly, we have been providing similar service delivery model for several years: ***What do we need to change?***

# What we learned...

## What we knew...

- We have fabulous staff (teachers, SLPs, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and paras) who care deeply about their students and want them all to succeed. We could not do what we do everyday without them.
- Every child's needs and IEPs are different

01

- More **flexibility** is needed for staff to meet the individual needs of the students
  - In resources available
  - In schedule of when students can be pulled at the elementary level
  - In the frequency/duration of the minutes

02

- More **time** is needed
  - Paperwork expectations and regulations from the state cause additional responsibilities and workload

03

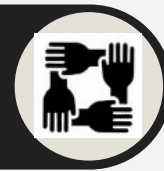
- **Service delivery**
  - Different programming models are needed at different levels

04

- **Students needs are changing**
  - Students are entering our doors with more significant behavior challenges and learning gaps than ever before, which requires us to reassess our continuum of supports.

## Central 301 Continuum of Services

We service students in Early Childhood through age 22



- Service through district programming in students' home school as much as possible: Resource, Collaborative, Self-Contained
- Related services: speech/language therapy, social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc.
- Specialized programs in district:
  - EC
  - Instructional
  - STAR (3-5)
  - ASPIRE (6-8)
  - Life Skills (9-12)
- We partner with Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative (MVSEC) for students who need more specialized programs
- For students who require support beyond MVSEC, we partner with private therapeutic schools as well as residential facilities, if necessary

\*Full continuum available on district website

**CCUSD 301**  
Continuum  
of  
Special Education  
Services



# Current Early Childhood- Elementary School Services



## Early Childhood (Ages 3-5)

- Early Childhood Special Education program (ECSE) provides specially designed instruction
  - Blended Program (General Ed. and Special Ed. students)
    - HBT
    - PV
    - CT
  - Instructional Program (Self-Contained - Special Ed. students only)
    - CT

## Elementary (K-5)

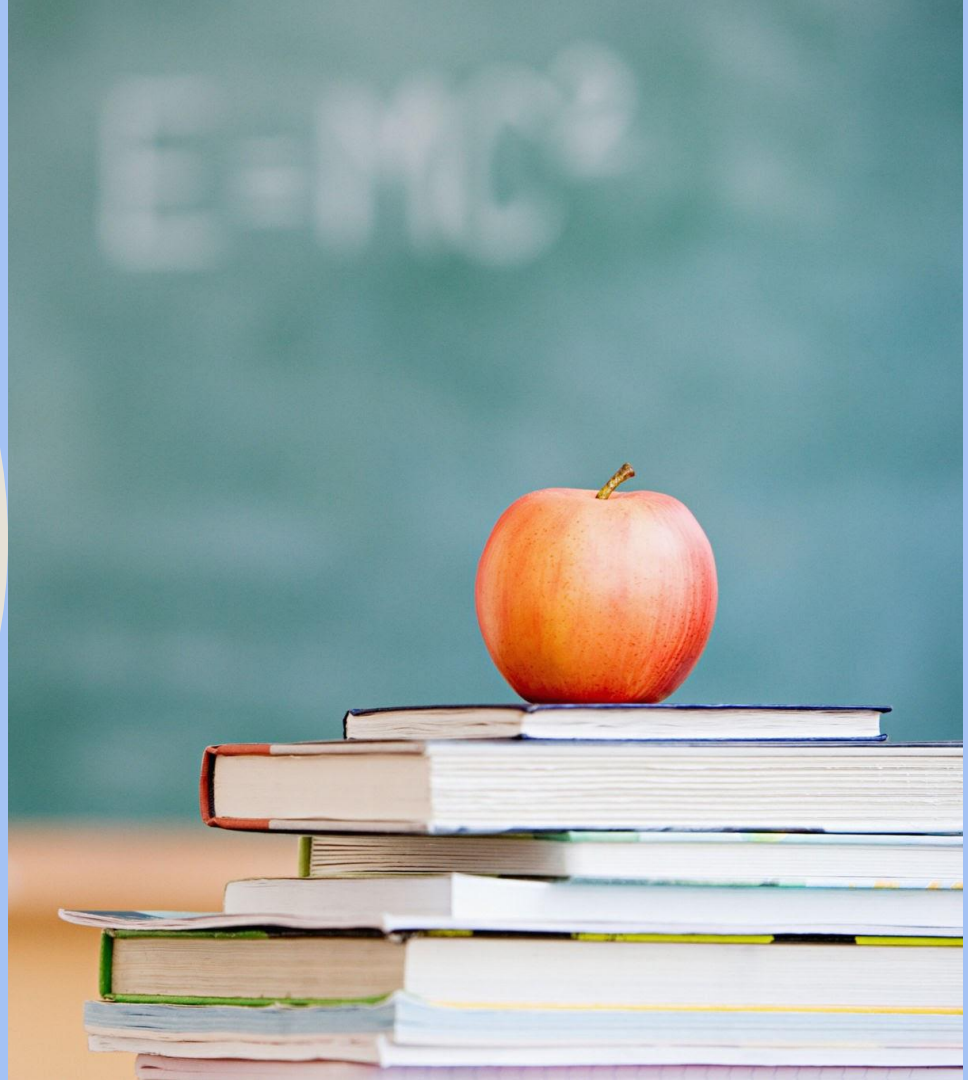
- Pull-out academic services in a Resource setting
- Push-In academic/functional services
- STAR Program (HBT)
  - Instructional classroom for grades 3-5 that provides specialized, targeted instruction and support

# Current Middle School Services

## PKMS - CMS



- Collaborative academic classes (Math and ELA)
  - Classes taught by content expert with special education support to provide students with identified disabilities with support to access the rigor of general education content with their same-aged peers.
- Self-Contained academic classes (Math and ELA)
  - Modified curriculum taught by a special educator with a focus on prerequisite skills needed to meet grade level standards
- Resource support in Task
- ASPIRE (Housed at PKMS for 6th-8th)
  - Self-contained program with alternative curriculum with participation in general education as appropriate



# Current High School Services



## Collaborative Academic Classes

- Classes taught by a content area expert and special educator that provide specific supports to students with identified deficits to access the rigor of the general education curriculum

## Self-contained Academic Classes

- Modified curriculum taught by a special educator with a focus on prerequisite skills needed to meet grade level standards

## Resource Advisory

- Individualized tutorial support and transition planning during Academic Advisory

## Life Skills

- Designed to meet the needs of 9th-12th grade students requiring daily living skills with an emphasis on vocational skill development. Students also engage in functional academics.

Listening Tour

# Strengths and Challenges



# Early Childhood Programming

## Strengths

- **Commitment to Student Success:**
  - Teachers emphasize creating environments where students can succeed by tailoring inclusion to their strengths and developmental needs.
  - There is a focus on using data and observations to track progress and inform decisions.
  - Willingness to problem solve needs with a student-centered approach
- **Dedication of Staff:**
  - Teachers and paras demonstrate a high level of commitment to their students

## Areas to Target for Improvement

- **Increase in Student Complexity**
  - Students being evaluated for special education services are more complex with more intense needs than previous years
  - Students require additional early intervention supports in order to make a successful transition into kindergarten
- **Inconsistencies in Practices and Expectations:**
  - Variability in practices across classrooms and programs
  - Differing philosophies on inclusion opportunities



# Elementary

## Strengths

- **Commitment to Students and Staff:**
  - Strong dedication from both staff and administrators to address individual student needs and improve outcomes.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:**
  - Teams work effectively across schools, sharing resources, supporting one another, and fostering a positive school culture.
- **Strategic Leadership:**
  - Administration is open to feedback, validating concerns, and prioritizing long-term strategic planning to address district-wide needs.
- **Resourcefulness and Innovation:**
  - Teachers effectively utilize tools and strategies, including AI, to overcome resource gaps and support student progress.
  - Staff appreciate GoalBook program and 95% Group intervention

## Areas to Target for Improvement

- **Workload and Staffing**
  - Increased caseload complexity and staffing turnover leads to stress
  - Paperwork demands (i.e. Progress Reports, drafting IEPs) are time consuming
- **Curriculum Resources**
  - Need for broader menu of aligned curricula/resources and progress monitoring tools, particularly for math, writing, and executive functioning
- **Inconsistent Programming**
  - Gaps in continuum of services
- **Behavior and SEL Challenges**
  - Rising student needs post-COVID strain staff and systems with limited resources for early intervention and executive functioning
- **Systemic Barriers**
  - Scheduling and space challenges

# Middle School

## STRENGTHS

- **Commitment to Collaboration and Teamwork**
  - Staff demonstrate strong collaboration, fostering innovative problem-solving and effective support for students
  - A shared commitment to meeting the need of all students
- **Strong Leadership Support**
  - Administrators are responsive and provide latitude for staff to develop solutions
  - Values staff input
- **Programming**
  - Collaborative teaching model beneficial to students in Least Restrictive Environment
  - Self-contained provides alternative curriculum when needed
  - ASPIRE program is strong connection between STAR and CHS Life Skills programs

## TARGETS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Time Constraints and Workload**
  - Paperwork demands (i.e. Progress Reports, drafting IEPs) are time consuming, including progress monitoring demands
  - Multi-subject planning
  - Current MS schedule causes lopsided numbers in classes and the schedule to be inflexible
- **SEL Needs**
  - Increased behavioral and social-emotional needs post-COVID.
  - School refusal and anxiety-related issues are rising, adding complexity to caseloads
  - There is a need for executive functioning/SEL explicit support
- **Inconsistent Co-Teaching Experiences**
  - Success varies widely, depending on teacher relationships
  - Confusion on special ed. versus general ed. responsibilities with differentiation and modification
- **Resource Advisory**
  - Time is limited to provide targeted instruction in goal areas and progress monitor effectively when class sizes are large.

# High School

## STRENGTHS

- **Supportive Culture**
  - GoalBook has been a great support for IEP writing
  - Teams work collaboratively to support students who may not be on their caseloads
  - Helpful paraprofessionals
- **Adaptability**
  - Special Education staff are flexible in addressing individual student needs
  - Focus on student needs even under workload pressures

## TARGETS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Workload**
  - Increasing legal and procedural requirements in special education, combined with complex caseloads, result in higher time commitment than previous years
  - Multi-subject planning
- **Gen. Ed. and Special Ed. Role Clarity**
  - Varies greatly among collaborative teaching pairs
  - Special Ed. teachers feel burden of supporting students with other support plans (i.e. 504s, Multilingual students)
- **Procedural Challenges**
  - Inconsistent systems for providing testing accommodations and instruction in collaborative settings
- **Resource Advisory**
  - Large number of students in Resource Advisory courses make it challenging to effectively progress monitor and transition plan
  - Need for more executive functioning support

## NEXT STEPS

01

- Posted 3 FTE certified teaching positions (Elementary, Middle, and High School) to support caseload/workload challenges.

02

- Posted for an additional paraprofessional for early childhood instructional classroom to support opportunities for blending of students. Continue to monitor the need for additional sections of EC classrooms as we continue to grow.

03

- Establish committees to review our current continuum to:
  - address the needs of changing populations of our students which may include adjustments/additions to our continuum of programming
  - address the need for early intervention supports for our students
  - redefine Resource supports and service delivery at the secondary level

# Thank You!

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