

Special Education/Pupil Services School Board Report
July 10, 2017

Being a newcomer to the district and a parent, I must begin with a huge thank you to the staff of the Tomahawk High School and the School Board for a very festive and lovely graduation ceremony for the Class of 2017 on June 4th. From all of the preparation activities to the school staff being at the entrance to the fieldhouse to create an exciting “tunnel” for our graduates, it was truly something that made me feel truly honored to be a part of this organization.

The high school special education and guidance staff were busy in May and beginning of June finishing IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings to assure students and parents/guardians that graduation and iep requirements were met prior to graduation. Meanwhile the middle and elementary special education and guidance staff were preparing for next year by reexamining IEPs to make sure that they accurately reflected the students’ educational opportunities. Paraprofessional scheduling and coverage was also being closely scrutinized. Careful planning assists with fewer surprises in the fall when we return!

I have been very busy this past month with the Transition Improvement Grant. The goal of working with this grant and the state is to improve post school outcomes for students with a disability. “Post School Outcomes” refers to special education data that districts report to the state regarding whether one year out of school students are engaged in post-secondary education, training, and/or employment. Students identified with disabilities that hold at least one part time job during high school are five times more likely to have paid employment post high school. So my mission is to improve our students’ statistics! On June 13th I participated in an activity called the Amazing Race in Madison which links youth with local employers. It is an opportunity for them to find out more about the area businesses and for the businesses to become more informed about our students. I plan to have our high school students participate in this activity during the 2017-2018 school year. Also through this grant, I participated in Edgewood College’s Job Development Boot Camp from 6/26-6/30. This was an intensive week long course focusing on innovatively meeting employer needs in order to address the shortage of reliable, committed employees that are willing to fill entry level positions through a partnership with the school.



UW-Madison employs individuals with disabilities for their abilities!

Also to improve “Post School Outcomes” I have been involved with the steering committee for the Project SEARCH site being developed this year at the Howard Young Medical Center in collaboration with area districts, DVR (Department of Vocational Rehabilitation), hospital administrators, Headwaters Inc., and many others. The purpose of the program is to develop a rotation of internships to learn valuable transferable skills and find gainful employment. Wisconsin’s current rates of post high school employment are a bit higher than the nation’s at 83%. <http://www.projectsearch.us/>

On June 16th the School District of Tomahawk hosted a professional development opportunity for staff and community to learn about the impact of students’ traumatic experience on learning and behavior. The morning started with an Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACEs) presentation by ACEs trainers Nancy Baake from HAVEN, Inc. (Household Abuse Victim Emergency Network) and Joshua Wright, Dean of Students in the D. C. Everest School District. The afternoon included a screening of the documentary Paper Tigers. Paper Tigers is a testament to what the latest developmental science is proving: that one caring adult can help break the cycle of adversity in a young person’s life. A panel discussion with local resources and community mental health care providers followed the viewing of the documentary. A special thank you goes out to Debra Eichman, HS Guidance, for her collaboration with community and county resources to pull this pertinent learning opportunity together.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Strong
Dir. Sp. Ed./Pupil Services