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To: Shawn Petri, Superintendent

From: Melisa Akers, Director of Special Education

Date: November 7, 2024

Subject: Special Education Update

A Message from our Director, Melisa Akers

October was a busy month! Fall Count Day on October 2nd resulted in an FTE of 63.

We welcomed three new part-time, in-person speech therapists to support our districts, replacing four days of previously provided virtual speech services. Additionally, McKayla Brown, our new OT, joined us on October 21st and is now supporting Grayling, Fairview, and Charlton Heston Academy.

Our professional development offerings last month included an IEP Bootcamp, 504 Training, and a Special Education Mini Session on crafting measurable IEP goals.

Halloween brought festive fun for staff and students! The administration office held a potluck with pumpkin decorating and costume contests. The special education team got creative, dressing up as "The Care Bears of Special Education," showing our ability to stay positive amid daily demands.



On October 23rd, the [OPTIMISE](#) film crew visited and interviewed Nicole Grace and Amber Larrison, who shared insights into Early Childhood and Speech and Language Pathology. We look forward to sharing the final video with you once it's ready!



A Message from our Principal, Joe Moore

October was an eventful month at the CEC & ATC! On October 9th, the Gerrish Township Fire Department visited for their annual Fire Prevention Day presentation. The firefighters spoke to students about safety measures to take in case of a fire at home and showcased their equipment, fire trucks, and an ambulance. Our students were highly engaged, asking many questions and showing great interest. We are thankful to Chief Fisher and his team for their outstanding interaction and support with our students!



We are deeply appreciative of the local businesses partnering with our Adult Transition Center program to provide students with meaningful work-based learning opportunities. Throughout Roscommon, you'll notice window stickers in these establishments indicating their status as community partners. Some of these valued partners include The Butcher's Wife, Sunny Spot (Marathon station), and Up North Candle Depot.



The COOR-Wide PD on November 1st was a great success. Our instructional staff enjoyed an engaging morning with two keynote speakers, followed by a series of excellent breakout sessions covering a range of topics. We were especially fortunate to hear Rodney Page, who delivered an inspiring talk on embracing new perspectives.



A Message from our Special Education Technical Assistance, Nicole Grace

For our November 1st presentation on community resources and Early On, I reached out to current and former Early On parents. I asked how Early On services helped their child transition to school. Below is the feedback we received.

What our parents say:

Second grader with ASD exiting Special Education: "She Graduated! We Cried! None of this would have been possible with you. We are forever grateful."

Student with Apraxia transitioning to HS: "You helped me and encouraged me through one of the worst things I have dealt with...my daughter's speech was devastating to me and you were always kind and patient." "She went from Early On to Preschool speech, so when she went to kindergarten going to speech was a normal part of her routine."

Student with ASD starting school: "It's all the magic of Early On. Michele and Amber changed our lives."

Student with ASD in kindergarten: "In my personal experience as a parent, I would say that the Early On program was absolutely essential in providing [my son] those preliminary services and assessments that helped me reach a more informed decision on how I should be approaching his academics going into Kindergarten. I am forever grateful!"

Student with ASD: "We felt so alone when we got [our daughter's] diagnosis. We don't have a ton of family support. We didn't know what all the steps were or how to help her through some of the challenges she has faced transitioning to school. Through the program we were able to get a good idea of what school would look like for her. The program helped us start early with some of the things they do in school such as structured meals, and incorporating other children into playtime. It also helped us develop realistic expectations for her as well as showing us are options for her once she transitions into school. We really are grateful for everyone who is on her team and has been our support throughout the last couple of years."

It changed our lives in so many positive ways. Early on teaches not only the child but the parents ways to help their child meet their needs and goals. It also opened up so many doors for other resources and information to help Isabelle be successful. We have built lasting relationships through early on that even though she doesn't need services, I know we could rely on for support in the future. We had no idea where to start when we noticed her behavioral changes and development delays. Early on gave us the guidance and services Isabelle needed and we wouldn't be where we are without them. We are truly grateful for this program!



A Message from our Transition Coordinator, Brenda Vaughan-Ide

On October 16th, the Community Resource Event at the CRAF Center in Roscommon provided young adults with disabilities and their families an invaluable opportunity to gather information and connect with representatives from community agencies that offer resources and support for life beyond the educational setting.

A heartfelt thank you to the following agencies and representatives who made this event possible: Rhonda Cross from Roscommon County Transit, Scott Verona from MIABLE, Mike Eva from Special Olympics, Jody Perkola from DHHS, Erin O'Rourke and the team from MI Works, Diane Kline-Gorney & Craig from AuSable Valley CMH, Kiley Fields & team from Northern Lakes CMH, Somer Quinlan & Melinda Nagy from ROOC, April David & Katelyn Goff from Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Kirtland Community College, Sue Root from the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, and Ryanne Jaime from Disability Network Mi-Michigan.

It truly takes a village!



Two of our ATC students were the lucky winners of the gift baskets donated by Fick and Sons and MI Works! Congratulations Dominic Perry and Aaron Ziegler!

