



**C.O.O.R.**

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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To: Shawn Petri, Superintendent

From: Melisa Akers, Director of Special Education

Date: October 1, 2025

Subject: Special Education Update

## **A Message from our Director, Melisa Akers**

### **Construction Update**

Phase 1 of the furniture installation wrapped up today, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. It feels great to finally have furniture that is both functional and intentionally designed for our students with disabilities.

We are so close to occupancy—it almost hurts! We're hopeful that we'll be moved in and the new classrooms will be up and running by the end of October or first of November. Doors are scheduled to ship on October 3rd.

Below is a sneak peek of one of the new classrooms. Keep in mind we're still waiting on doors and ceiling tiles, but we're getting close!



### **State Collaboration Opportunity**

Last month, I had the opportunity to attend a statewide meeting in Lansing with the MDE Office of Special Education and all 56 ISD Special Education Directors. It was the first time in my tenure that the entire group met in one place, and it was incredibly valuable for networking and collaboration. The event was so well-received that Teri Rink, our State Director of Special Education, has committed to holding these meetings three to four times each year.

A major focus of our time together was the ISDs' role and responsibility in general supervision. The session was led by Lenore Knudtson, an attorney and co-owner of Pingora Consulting, who also serves as a consultant for the U.S. Department of Education on complex special education cases in roughly 11 states. Lenore outlined our obligations to ensure that students within our ISD service area are receiving a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). She also clarified our professional responsibilities in overseeing how IDEA funds are used at the district level.

If you're interested in learning more about ISD responsibilities in this area, you're welcome to review her slideshow [here](#).

### **A Message from our Principal, Joe Moore**



On September 17th, all classrooms joined in celebrating Constitution Day with fun and engaging activities. Students explored what it means to be a U.S. citizen through lessons,

projects, and creative presentations—Ms. Pat's class even dressed in period costumes to bring history to life!

Our building renovation project is also nearing completion. The finishing touches are being added to the former ROOC warehouse, and soon Ms. Hannah's and Ms. Tracy's classrooms will move into their brand-new spaces. These updated learning environments feature ADA-compliant furniture, accessible bathrooms, and other modern amenities designed to meet the needs of all students. Later this year, we look forward to hosting a community open house to showcase these wonderful new spaces.

Meanwhile, students in Ms. Angie's ATC classroom have been shining in the kitchen. With an emphasis on independence and hands-on learning, they've been practicing measuring, mixing, and cooking—embracing the idea that it's okay to make a little mess along the way. Their efforts paid off with delicious batches of pancakes and no-bake cookies!

More photos: [Ms. Pat's students](#)  
[students cooking](#)

[Ms. Angie's](#)



## A Message from our Compliance Monitor, Nicole Grace

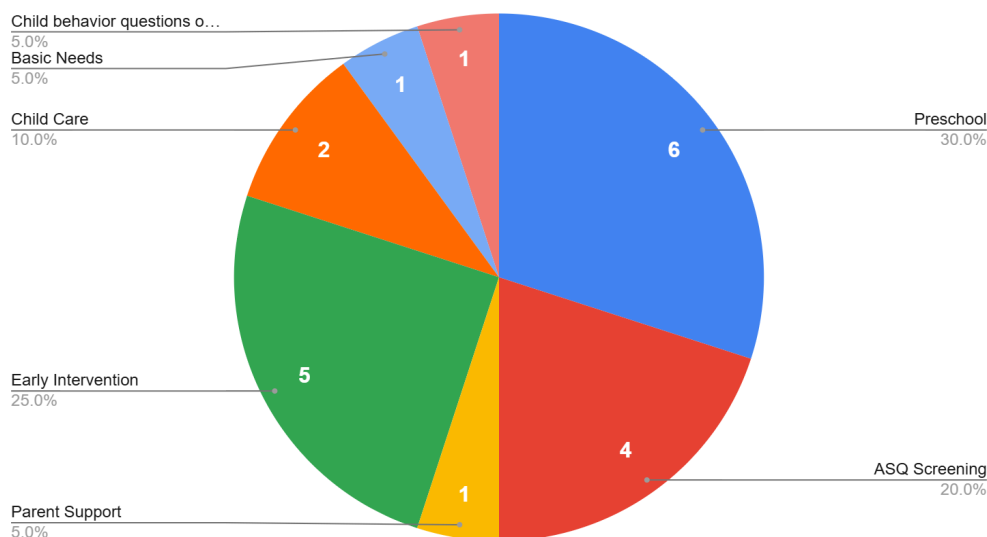
The school year has begun with a strong focus on onboarding new ancillary staff and ensuring that district needs are met in the areas of speech, social work, and occupational therapy. In addition, we have been updating and clarifying district guidance on processes ranging from accommodations to evaluations to ensure consistency and alignment with best practice. Our approach to compliance monitoring continues to emphasize transparency and support, rather than correction, with the goal of equipping staff to provide high-quality services while maintaining confidence in their work. Overall, it has been a busy but productive start to the year as we balance staff support with system-wide improvements.

## A Message from our Early On Coordinator, Michele Cochrane

### Help Me Grow Pilot Data

- Since launch, Help Me Grow has supported **24 families** and made **6 Build Up inquiries**.
- Below is a graph showing what families were looking for when talking with HMG from June–August.

### Reasons for Reaching out to Help Me Grow COOR



## Detroit Lions Early On Public Service Announcement

Early On Michigan has been included in an exciting partnership with the Detroit Lions, Gud Marketing, and local funders to promote early literacy and Early On.

At the Lions training facility in Allen Park on August 27, Early On personnel were filmed promoting the importance of reading to young children, including infants and toddlers. Early On representatives were Dr. Kyana Smith and Charron Williams from Wayne RESA/Detroit Public Schools Community District, and Lynn Legg from Oakland Schools/Royal Oak Schools. In addition, key Lions players were filmed highlighting the fact that you can “Be a Game Changer” by reading to your children. The resulting product will be a public service announcement that can be aired as a television spot and shorter clips that will be appropriate for sharing via social media.

Dr. Nikki Hamp, developmental pediatrician, Early On Michigan Foundation board member and MICC member, made the connection to the Lions organization. Gud Marketing is donating their production time and expertise. Funding for development and promotion is provided by the Preschool Development Grant, the Children's Foundation, and Gardner-White Furniture.

## Our Local Data

We currently have 38 students enrolled in Early On. In the first quarter of this fiscal year, July-Sept, there were a total of 47 new referrals - WBRC 15, RAPS 11, HLCS 11, CASD 9, Mio 1, and Fairview 0.