



## Special Education Report October, 2025

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Cheryl Granzo – Angela Miller – Ben Woolston – Kathy Foote

### **Administrators for Accountability & Program Improvement (T. Hassett, M. Sly, J. Pung):**

- **General Supervision Grant Team Updates:**
  - The GMS team met with each local district to review the district data portraits. Teams reviewed the data, made connections to district data and initiatives, and identified focus areas for additional ISD support with the goal of improving student outcomes. The next steps will be to share a summary of these meetings and potential next steps will all stakeholders.
  - The GSM team will meet with the general education department next week to review the ideas generated in the district data portrait meetings and to continue discussing activities and strategies to serve staff and students more collaboratively.
  - Trisha and Jody attended a meeting hosted by MDE OSE to further define the components of the general supervision system.
- **Ancillary Team Updates and Upcoming Trainings:**
  - School psychologists and school social workers each held a PLC in September.
  - The engagement consultants have received 29 requests for support.
  - Infinity Virtual Office Hours have been held twice with limited participants.
  - Engagement Consultants have been regularly holding office hours since September 2. They have supported 4 staff through this service.
  - The Infinity User Group meets monthly to review updates to Infinity and support technical assistance and training to staff. The first meeting will be held on October 1.
  - Infinity New User Training Part 1 Refresher will be held October 2.
  - REED Development Training will be held October 2.
  - High Quality MDR training will be held on October 7.
- **New Hires or Current Vacancies**
  - Current Vacancy: one school social worker position, a new hire in this position would take over the substitute social worker assignment and some of the virtual school social worker assignment
  - Current Vacancy: Floating HCA to support the virtual SSW
  - Current Vacancy: additional behavior coach position
  - Current Vacancy: speech and language pathologist



## **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Program (B. Woolston):**

- ASD Coaches - Our annual coaches training series begins on September 9th. The topic this year is Inclusion within the Least Restrictive Environment. This series of trainings is funded with our annual START grant.

## **Early Childhood Programs (C. Granzo):**

### Early On

The program received a total of 33 referrals for the month of September. All of our staff have returned from their maternity leaves but we will have 2 more staff going out on FMLA in December, each for approximately 3 months. We continue to contract with a retired PSY who we use on a regular basis to assist with the numerous ASD evaluations of the program. In addition, we have a retired early childhood teacher who supports evaluations occasionally and also assisted with some home visits during the maternity leaves over the summer. This has been very helpful to have these skilled providers available to our team.

The inclusive parent-child playgroups started up again in September. We offer these learning opportunities in Belding, Ionia and Portland. Families from any school district can register to attend. The playgroups are made available to families that are involved in the Early On program if this is something the family is interested in. This provides the opportunity to work on goals on their IFSP in a community group setting. Families who have infants and toddlers in the community can also register to attend for a nominal fee. Group activities center around a book that is typically highlighted for about a 6 week period of time. This offers the opportunity for repetition and practice of skills over time. The groups last for approximately one hour and there are 5 groups that occur EACH week!!





The EO staff are participating in the Alt Shift pilot with the AT and are excited to improve their ability to implement AAC into their scope of work with children/ families.

Cheryl is co-leading a state level group that is working on trying to effect system change for the Early On system in the state. The committee is made up of ECAN, SEILN, MDE-OES, MiLEAP, MAASE, ECIC and parent representatives. The group met this month at Eaton RESA and a parent from Ionia ISD came to tell her story about her experience with Early On. The purpose of doing this was as we get into system level work financial burdens and adherence to existing functions tend to emerge and dominate the perspective and this stifles the groups ability to keep momentum. Having a parent come and tell her story and share the plethora of services she received in Ionia and having peers around the table acknowledge that in their communities a family would not have received that was very impactful. Many were moved and it shifted the focus back to wanting equity for all families in the state regardless of their zip code. By the way, the services were not over the top, just what the law says we are supposed to do.

#### Preschool Special Education

This year Cheryl is supervising our Inclusion Coach for preschool and providing support to the special education directors regarding implementation of 1755 services within the preschool continuum. These are special education services that are intended to be provided under the direction of an early childhood special education teacher in a regular education program (ie. playgroups, Head Start, GSRP). Several of the LEA's have hired a full or part time 1755 teacher. Cheryl is working with the local directors to understand the various components and write policies and procedures for providing high quality services that can be used in each of their districts. In addition, Cheryl and Carol (inclusion teacher) are participating in an itinerant early childhood special education teacher mentor program via Virginia so that we can replicate and provide some of those same supports and best practices for implementation into our own work here at Ionia ISD. Carol is functioning as a 1755 teacher for the Lakewood and Saranac districts and also providing mentor support to the new 1755 teachers from the LEAs. There is a lot of challenging yet exciting work happening around the county with respect to preschool special education services and programs.

#### Dolly Parton Imagination Library:

September distribution was 1973 children, 59 newly enrolled, total \$4541.78

We are waiting on the state budget to see if the literacy funding was restored. It had been cut in various iterations of the budget. For the past two years, this funding of approximately \$45,000 went to the GSC for literacy activities of which a significant portion was used to support our local Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This will be a significant loss to our program if this funding was not restored.



## **Freedom Acres School Programs (A. Miller):**

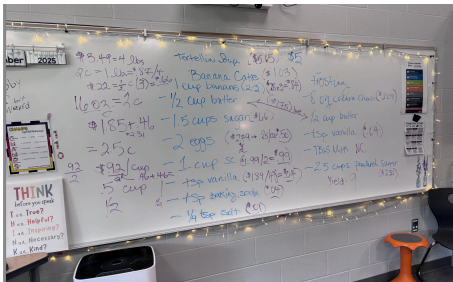
### ***Department Updates or Changes***

*No major departmental changes at this time. Ongoing review of staffing structures continues to ensure alignment with student needs and program priorities.*

### ***New Hires or Current Vacancies***

- *Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN): We received five applications and/or resumes for the open LPN position. An offer has been extended to one candidate.*
- *Health Care Aide (HCA) – SCI Program: This position is not currently posted. The administrator is assessing program needs, potential staff movement or reassignment, and the addition of nursing services before determining next steps.*

### ***Highlights of Positive Work by Staff or Students***



*Our SEI classroom, Team English, has launched a weekly food buffet for students. This engaging activity highlights multiple instructional areas:*

- *Hygiene awareness*
  - *Math skills for pricing and profitability*
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- *Evaluating behavior for community shopping and safety*
  - *Calculating portions and food needs*
  - *Budgeting and financial literacy*



*This initiative combines academic skills with life skills. Photos captured during the events showcase both the instructional highlights and the joy of students making and selling food to Freedom Acres staff.*



## **Initiatives**

- *5D Teacher Evaluations: The administrator has begun the annual evaluation process. Two self-evaluations have been reviewed, growth plan meetings conducted, and additional meetings scheduled for next week.*

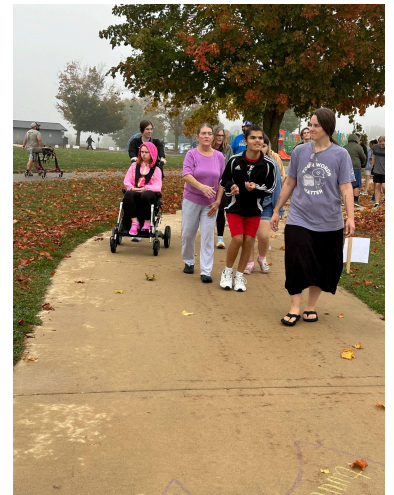
## **State-Level Work or Involvement**

- *Ukeru Training: On September 18–19, Ionia ISD hosted an open Ukeru training for certification of new trainers and recertification of current trainers. Participants included staff from across the state, including Montcalm Care Network.*
- *Statewide POHI/SXI Conference: Planning has begun for the conference to be hosted on April 20 at Ionia ISD and Freedom Acres.*
- *High Leverage Practices Training: Freedom Acres staff will participate in training at Kent ISD this month, offered free of cost and facilitated through MAASE, providing an excellent professional growth opportunity.*

## **Past or Upcoming Events Showcasing Our Programs**



- *Collaborative 5K Event: On September 24, Adapted PE teacher Emily Stall organized a 5K event for students in SCI, SEI, ASD, and MoCI programs. This inclusive event celebrated walking, running, and rolling together, creating a memorable experience for staff and students alike.*







### ***Barriers or Challenges That Need to Be Addressed***

- *The SCI program has seen a decrease in student numbers, with four learners passing away in the past year. Despite this, the complexity of medical needs has increased significantly.*
  - *A homebound student is returning to in-person learning after 20 months of homebound/hospitalized instruction.*
  - *Freedom Acres will soon support its first student in over ten years who requires ventilator assistance during the school day, marking a significant shift in medical complexity and program support requirements.*
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### **PI-OHI & Assistive Technology Department (K. Foote)**

#### **Department Highlights**

- The PIOHI Department welcomes Alysia Blough to our team. She is assigned at Saranac Elementary. We are excited to have her join the PIOHI team.
- Assistive Technology is starting to build a small lending library with the assistance of the Alt Shift & Ionia ISD partnership.

#### **Department Concerns**

- The lack of ESS Willsub substitutes in districts for PIOHI that have not accepted positions is alarming. In the Portland public school district PIOHI has not had a substitute accept a position in over a year. This is a hardship on students and other PIOHI staff who are working to ensure students have adult support and following IEP policies.



### **Transition Training Sites/MoCI Programs (M. Sly):**

- **Transition Training Sites:** We are pleased to say we have filled an open position at our Stepping Forward transition site. Kyle Newton was hired to replace Terri Sanchez, who is retiring on September 30th. In addition to Klye, we have also hired Natasha Brickei to replace Robin Wirth as our Transition Specialist to serve IPS.
- **MoCI Programs:** We have filled our open position for our elementary MoCI classroom located at Jefferson Elementary. Kaitlyn Sweazy has replaced Natasha Brickei, who transferred to our Transition Specialist position.
- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both Robin and Terri for their many years of service they gave to Ionia ISD. They both will be dearly missed.

### **Deaf & Hard of Hearing (J. Pung)**

- Our team, the DHH teacher specialist and educational audiologist, has been meeting every week to ensure students are receiving support with their hearing amplification devices. We currently have 28 students receiving support from our DHH teacher specialist.
- To support the new LEAD-K (Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Children) legislation, Charity Last will be attending SKI-HI Training in October. The Sensory Kids Impaired Home Intervention (SKI-HI) curriculum is a comprehensive approach to family-centered home intervention for families of infants and young children who are identified as deaf or hard of hearing (DHH).
- October 10th, our DHH staff and students will be attending Deaf Pride Day at Anderson's Orchard in Stanton. We are excited to celebrate our students and to make connections with the Deaf community.

### **Upcoming Events**

October 9 & 23 - ICAP (Ionia County Advisory Panel Meeting)  
October 16 - Special Education Legal Updates-Jordan Bullinger  
October 20 - Adult Guardianship Presentation-Judge Sykes  
October 31 - Kona Koco Truck/Halloween Party at Freedom Acres  
November 4 - Inclusion Coaches Meeting