



Special Education Report June, 2026

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

- **General Supervision Grant Team Updates:**

- All five local districts have submitted their B-13 (transition) corrective actions plans to MDE for review and closure.
- The GSM team supported Belding to complete a B-10, disproportionate representation in a specific disability category procedure review. The procedure review was completed without findings.
- The state complaint with Lakewood Public Schools resulted in various findings. The GSM team will support the district on developing corrective action plans and training to address the findings.
- The GSM team will be continuing our work related to creating safe learning environments for all students. We will be developing a variety of professional learning opportunities over the summer that will be offered during the 26-27 school year.
- In partnership with general education, a professional learning opportunity will be provided for district leaders, interventionists, and special education coordinators titled, "Addressing Absenteeism: Strategies and Solutions." It will be presented in the fall of 2026.
- The GSM team will be updating the district data portraits for the most recent school year and engage in conversation with general education and district leaders in the fall of 2026.
- The General Supervision System Grant final report was submitted to MDE for review on May 29. A new grant will be submitted for approval this summer.

- **Ancillary Team Updates and Upcoming Trainings:**

- Ancillary staff were invited to present on topics of interest during the 2nd annual IPS IDEA Exchange, hosted at Ionia ISD in August.
- The engagement consultants case request form has been closed for the school year.

- **New Hires or Current Vacancies**

- Current Vacancies:
 - Full-time speech and language pathologist for the 26-27 school year.
 - Long-term substitute speech and language pathologist for the 26-27 school year.
 - Full-time Visually Impaired Teacher Specialist
 - Full-time school psychologist
 - Part-time school psychologist



- New Hires:
 - School Social Worker - Melinda Wolf
 - Speech and Language Pathologist- Caroline Barthel
 - School Psychologist - Kaylee Sheridan

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

- The year is wrapping up nicely. Nothing to report :)

Early Childhood Programs (C. Granzo)

Early On: During the month of April, we received 35 referrals. It would be appropriate to say that staff are TIRED! This was a lot of referrals for the month of May coupled with IEPs that need to be done before the LEAs leave as well as all initial and annual IFSPs having to be done 10 days before the end of the month as we can not access the Kelvin due to the end of year count on June 30th and having to process the data. As everyone else is winding down, May and early June are a couple of the busiest months for the Early On team!

We have had some strengths this year—surviving 3 FMLAs by staff adding additional work days and one retiree helping us out. We did not receive any findings on our compliance indicators—meaning we met all of the timelines 100% of the time.

I think our greatest areas of pride this year has been in our participation in Alt Shift and getting staff access to devices, AAC apps and loaners that they can trial with families. We still have a lot to learn but the impact these devices have had on children's communication skills have truly been amazing. Children who did not talk at all have started developing verbal language after the introduction of these devices. Since we have about 180 kids in our program and MANY of them have significant language delays, having more loaner devices for my department specifically will be a goal for next year. Sometimes, the device acts as a bridge to communication—offering another way for a child to express themselves. Other times, it appears to be a catalyst that actually acts as a trigger for a child to start developing speech.

Preschool:

The work with our LEA special education directors has resulted in a further expansion of LRE options for PreK eligible children. We have continued developing processes and protocols intended to assure that preschool children with disabilities have access to and are provided with high quality special designed instruction in a variety of environments. This summer we will be collating all of the processes and procedures together into a “manual” that can be personalized for each LEA and developing PD for ISD and LEA staff with respect to implementation.

DPIL:

There were a total of 2000 children that received books during the month of May. The total cost for the month was \$4561.30.



Freedom Acres School Programs (A. Miller)

Celebrating Growth, Connection, and Our Shared Mission

Department Updates

- After 25 years of dedicated service, Kim King, SCI Health Care Aide, retired on June 2. Kim's unwavering commitment to students, integrity, and compassionate support has left a lasting impact on our program. She will be greatly missed.
- Freedom Acres currently has two open Health Care Aide positions within the Severely Cognitively Impaired (SCI) program.
- On June 15, the SCI program will transition into its summer schedule and will complete its 200-day school year at the end of June. Staff will immediately begin preparations for the next instructional cycle, which starts in July.
- This summer's instructional theme is "Games", providing engaging opportunities to connect academics, the MOVE curriculum, and Core Language instruction through creative, hands-on learning experiences. Staff are already planning innovative activities, including a life-sized Hungry Hungry Hippos experience for students.

Student and Staff Highlights

Field Day Success

- On June 1, Emily Stall coordinated an outstanding Field Day for students from Freedom Acres and the Autism Education Center (AEC).
- Families joined students and staff for a morning of activities, while our PTO added to the excitement by providing temporary tattoos for students and staff.

Celebrating the 2025-26 School Year

- June 2 marked the final day of the traditional school year for our Severely Emotionally Impaired (SEI) program.
- Reflecting on the year, several themes stand out:
 - A staff culture rooted in showing up for students, building relationships, and creating positive experiences.
 - Meaningful traditions that foster belonging, including holiday celebrations, Fun Fridays, and student-centered special events.
 - Continued growth within the SCI program, welcoming seven new students this year, with additional enrollments anticipated as young learners become age-eligible for services.



- Strong partnerships with families, community donors, veterans, and our PTO, whose support enhances opportunities for students throughout the year.

Creating Memorable Experiences

- The annual Christmas celebration remains one of our most meaningful traditions. For some students, it is their first opportunity to visit with Santa Claus. Through the generosity of donors, veterans, and volunteers, students and families experience a day filled with joy, connection, and lasting memories.
- The PTO launched its first-ever Santa Shop, allowing students to independently shop for gifts for family members, creating an experience many will remember for years to come.
- Fun Friday activities continue to build school spirit while helping fund special events, including Reading Week celebrations.

Program Growth and Leadership

- Freedom Acres staff successfully balanced the demands of state assessments, district assessments, annual IEPs, and daily instructional responsibilities while maintaining a strong focus on student engagement and growth.
- This year, Freedom Acres proudly hosted the inaugural Michigan POHI-SXI Statewide Conference, bringing educators together to strengthen services for students with complex support needs.
- Looking ahead, Freedom Acres will host NCI and Ukeru trainings, welcoming educators from across Michigan and neighboring states, including Ohio.

Looking Forward

The strength of Freedom Acres is found in its students, families, and dedicated staff. Their perseverance, creativity, and commitment to excellence continue to drive program growth and innovation. As we close another successful school year, we look forward to building on this momentum and creating even more opportunities for students to learn, connect, and thrive during the 2026-27 school year.

PI-OHI & Assistive Technology Department (K. Foote)

PI-OHI Department News

As the PIOHI department closes this chapter, I want to personally acknowledge and thank the PIOHI HCA's whose positions have been affected by recent organizational changes.

This transition has been difficult for many, and it is impossible to fully capture the impact these employees have had on our students, families, districts, and one another. Day after day, they have shown up with compassion, dedication, patience, and an unwavering commitment to ensuring their assigned students succeed. Their work often extended far beyond a standard job description; countless students—both with and without disabilities—have thrived because of their support and care.



I have had the privilege of working alongside these HCA's and witnessing firsthand the difference they make. They have celebrated successes, navigated challenges, built meaningful relationships, and consistently put students at the center of everything they do. Their contributions have helped shape the PIOHI program and strengthen our organization in ways that will not be forgotten.

While their employment with the ISD is ending, their impact will be felt by our districts, students, and families for years to come. I want the ISD Board to know how deeply grateful I am for their service, professionalism, and the heart they brought to their roles every day.

It is with sincere appreciation and gratitude that I wish each of them continued success, happiness, and fulfillment in the next chapter of their journeys.

Transition Training Sites/MoCI Programs (M. Sly)

We had our MoCI and Transitions graduation last week. Moci had one graduate and Transitions had five.





Deaf & Hard of Hearing (J. Pung)

- Due to low enrollment, starting in the 26/27 school year, the DHH program will no longer be available through Ionia ISD. We will continue to offer services through the support of our DHH teacher specialist, who will be Hannah Wilson next year.
- Camp T took place on May 21st, and we had one of our students attend. The day was a huge success!



Upcoming Events