

Proposal

Purpose / Statement of the Issue

Special Programs has a Special Education Teacher vacancy at Titan Academy that has not been filled. No qualified applicants and position is currently being filled by Behavior/Autism Specialist, which is not sustainable.

Background

Students

Titan Academy currently has 5 students, one of which could begin transition to general education and return to Faulconer Chapman with supports from both General and Special Education. This leaves a core group of 4 students, one certified and 2 classified employees.

Special Education Vacancy/Applicants

There have been two qualified applicants that were attempted for hire this year, unfortunately one was unable to commit due to significant family illness and the other decided that Titan Academy was not a good fit for her. There is a shortage of Special Educators in the area. There is even a greater shortage of those specializing in behavioral supports. There are several districts and organizations that also have unfilled positions. Attempts have been made to contract with health organizations nationally to fill the position, at a significantly higher rate that we would normally pay, with no viable options at the time of the proposal.

Proposed Solution

The proposed solution is to close the program for the remainder of the 2014-2015 school year. The spring will be used to recruit skilled and qualified applicants to reinvent the program. Impacts to the following stakeholders are as follows:

Students

The 4 remaining students in the program that are not ready to transition to general education settings will be considered for placement in out of district programs that are best suited to meet their individual needs. IEP placement meetings will need to be held to make the determinations. There are a few options to consider, most will likely transport to various programs in Newberg School District, which is one of the closest districts with available full day programs with available slots.

Families/Community

It is recommended to call parents as soon as possible to inform them of the proposal and pending School Board Meeting and potential action on the proposal to allow for public input. IEP meetings would need to be scheduled as soon as possible to determine placement to allow for a plan of action for transitions.

Staff

Layoffs would need to be implemented for 2 classified employees following the Classified Union Agreement process. It is recommended that employees be given notice of pending action immediately to give them as much notice as possible with final decision and action after the Board decision.

Cost Analysis

Current Costs

It costs \$160,428.53 per year for staff costs at Titan Academy (\$13,369/mo); plus in district transportation costs for students. This does not include the administrative costs of running the program. Special Programs currently has \$25,000 in carry over from last year.

Proposal Costs

Slot costs are an average of \$15,000 per student/per year for Newberg depending upon the program. There is also a potential of needing to add staff to a program that receives 2 students of our program at a cost of \$35,000. Depending upon actual placement decisions made by IEP teams, costs for educational services would be between \$45,000 and \$80,000 for 3 students of the students. There would be a recommendation for 1 student to attend OASIS Day Treatment at approximately \$30,000. Slot costs would be a potential range of \$75,000 to \$110,000.

Transportation costs could be as much as \$30,000/student with Mid-Columbia bus service, but would be much lower with district provided transportation. The purchase of a van rather than a car (already in budget) would allow for group transportation of 1 current student to Newberg and the 3 proposed students. There may be a cost of \$92,000 for transportation (for two students to transport to OASIS in Brooks, OR). Some transportation costs are already budgeted.

The overall costs for the transition (although it should be noted that one of the students would likely require the more intensive placement regardless of the decision to close the program) would be between \$167,000 and \$202,000. Much of the transportation costs are budgeted already. There would be approximately \$175,000 in the Special Education budget to offset costs of the transition/proposal.

Conclusion

Due to the inability to find a qualified applicant the temporary closing of Titan Academy is proposed for the 2014-2015 school year. There is minimal costs savings with the costs of transportation included; however, there is a significant quality of service benefit to closing the program for this year. Closing the program will allow Behavioral/Autism services to be provided district-wide and allow greater concentration of leadership of instructional programs by Special Programs Director.

If the status quo continues another solution to Behavior/Autism Specialist will need to be considered, such as an additional contract with WESD, although it is unknown if they will be able to sufficiently meet this need with the difficulty in acquiring qualified candidates in this area.