



**DATE:** 7/14/25

**TITLE:** Special Services Department Update

**TYPE:** Information

**PRESENTER(S):** Sheri Willrodt, Executive Director of Special Services

**BACKGROUND:**

The Special Services Department includes oversight of the following:

- Special Education Services
- School Health Services
- Student Support Professionals (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists)
- Mental Health Supervision and Supports (internal and external)
- Oversight of education at Nexus Gerard's New Dominion School
- Oversight of education at the Austin Albert Lea Area Special Education Cooperative (AALASEC)

**Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment**

- We will be working to fill our open paraprofessional positions in the next month.
- We have filled most of our professional positions for the 25-26 school year. We still have 1 SPED teaching position to fill.
- We are working to crunch the data from our end of year staff engagement/satisfaction survey in order to identify themes and areas of focus moving forward.
- We have applied for and received a Region 10 Mentoring Grant focusing on the retention of special educators. The initiative will provide support to individuals participating in the district mentorship program and allow for differentiated mentoring support related specifically to the role of a special educator. This is year one of the two-year grant.

**Packer Profile for all learners**

- We will be implementing a new transition curriculum called "NextUp" at Austin High School and the Austin Transition Program in the coming school year. NextUp provides educators with transition curriculum, tools, and resources to prepare students for employment, independent living, and post-secondary success.
- Our Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) work experience lab at our On Track building on Main Street will undergo some upgrades this summer. We are purchasing some updated training modules for the curriculum as well as electronic scoring software to assist in efficient workflow.

**District-wide multi-tiered systems of support for all learners**

- We have developed a professional development plan for our coteaching teams at Ellis Middle School and Austin High School for the 2025-2026 school year to include:
  - A kick-off training during workshop week
  - Ongoing coaching via zoom for individual pairs
  - Group meeting with LA teams and group meeting with math teams

➤ Consultant observation and feedback

- Representatives from our District MTSS team presented at a breakout session at MDE's Compass Institute in June. The session was well attended! Information that was provided regarding implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) with a linked teaming process was well received.

**Excellence in Resource Management**

- We have submitted our application for year 3 of mandatory Coordinated Early Intervening Services, due to overidentification of students identifying as 2 or more races in the area of EBD. We will be shifting our focus to provide additional paraprofessional support at the elementary classroom level for students in this demographic.
- We received the final report for our special education fiscal audit. Most areas were found to be compliant, with just a few minor issues that will require corrective action.