

Executive Director of Student Services
Board Update
November 2025

Collaboration: Working together to achieve more collectively.

- Intermediate collaboration: The Teaching and Learning team has been meeting with the other four intermediates to explore opportunities for collaboration. Thanks to the work of Jill Stewart-Kellar to bring our CTE programs together for collaborative professional development, we are now working towards building a day of professional development where we can bring the teachers from our Alternative Learning Centers together based on the work done by Jill last year. We are excited to share our expertise and experiences and learn from others!

Empathy: Considering and respecting the perspective and needs of member districts, students, families and staff.

- Intakes: From October 1st, 2025, through October 31st, 2025 (20 school days), ISD 917 offered intakes to 16 students from the combined setting IV programs' waitlist.

16 students from seven of the nine-member districts were offered intakes. (Randolph currently has zero students on the waitlist.) Districts 191 (3), 194 (3), and 197(4) were offered multiple intakes.

Of the 16 intakes that have been offered from 10/1/2025 through 10/31/2025:

- 1 intake offered between October 1st -31st is currently scheduled
- 6 intakes offered between October 1st -31st have been completed
- 3 of the completed intakes have had students start
- 6 intakes offered were declined due to enrollment change (1), change in need (2), and "other" (2)
- On average, once an intake is offered, it takes **6.7** calendar days to schedule the intake.

From October 1st -31st, there were 14 new Setting IV referrals.

- 4 of these referrals have been placed on a waitlist
- 1 has started
- 1 has been moved to inactive due to being a returning 917 student currently in a treatment program

Of the 9 remaining referrals, we are awaiting additional referral information pertinent to the determination of program placement (i.e., diagnostic assessments review and observation(1), and time to review the student's paperwork to determine placement (8)).

Finally, **7** new students physically began attending programming in ISD 917, setting IV programs since 10/1/25 and **4** more students are expected to start soon.

At TESA (BTC & DCTC), there have been 2 new students who started the 25-26 SY. An additional intake has been completed, with 1 additional student planning to start soon. There have been 6 total referrals for TESA programming since the start of the 25-26 SY

In the DASH program, there have been 1 new student referrals to start the 25-26 school year. An intake has been offered for this student.

There have been 29 referrals for Itinerant services since 10/1/25. There are 40 individual services requested.

Month	Referrals Received	Intakes Offered	Intakes Held	Students Started	Declined (Inactive) (ISO*)
July	1	14	0	NA	3(1)
August	7	19	16	NA	7 (2)
September	19	7	12	36	3
October	14	14	8	7	6
November					
December					
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					

June					
Totals	41	54	36	43	22 (4)

*ISO: Inactive Since Offered
Updated 11/4/2025

Innovation: Ongoing improvement of programs and services.

- J1 visas: We have been working with Lattice Global to explore the possibility of utilizing the J1 visa in place of the H1B visa given the recent action impacting fees for the H1B visa. A J1 visa is a 5 year visa that is considered a cultural exchange. As a cultural exchange, Lattice Global supports many components of the exchange including welcoming individuals to the country, addressing essential paperwork and tasks, and arranging housing. While this comes at a higher cost to the district, it can be cost neutral due to the other benefits that are not paid with this type of visa. I'm including [a presentation](#) from Matthew Conley, their founder, for more details.

Stewardship: Managing financial and human resources carefully and responsibly.

- ESP staffing update: Below is an update on our ongoing needs for ESP staffing.

Program/Site	Role	Openings
DASH	ESP	3 (pending referrals)
DHH	ESP	1
	ISP	1
IDEA/SUN-AEC	ESP	4
SUN-Cedar	ESP	10 (6 for new classrooms)
SUN-CEC	ESP	13
TEA	ESP	5
TESA-BTC	ESP	1
TESA-DCTC	ESP	4

Communication: Multi-dimensional, transparent conversation focused on sharing information and creating a positive learning and working environment.

- Federal update: I presented [a federal update](#) at the MASE Fall Conference a few weeks ago with Cherie Johnson, Executive Director of the Goodhue County Education District and Policy and Legislative Chair for the Council of Administrators of Special Education. There are timely things happening federally that impact education and as CASE Liaison for Minnesota, I am working to keep leaders in special education across the state up-to-date.

Integrity: Aligning our actions with our values and beliefs.

- Visits: Recently we have had visits from two organizations. On Thursday, October 30th, the Minnesota Disability Law Center conducted a monitoring visit specifically focused on our seclusion spaces in the district. They conducted this monitoring due to their designation as the state of Minnesota's federally designated Protection and Advocacy agency for people with disabilities. MDLC has federal access authority which allows them to monitor and investigate facilities that serve people with disabilities. They viewed all of our seclusion spaces in the district at our four setting IV sites.

In addition to this visit, on Friday, October 31st, a delegation from the Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board (PELSB), including their executive director Dr. Yelena Bailey and state representatives Virnig and Clardy, met at Concord Education Center to learn more about intermediate school districts and how they work. This was arranged by Justin Hoelscher, central intake and due process coordinator and member of the PELSB board. We were able to share an overview, engage in discussion, and provide a tour of one of our sites.

Personalization: Building on the strengths and addressing the unique needs of individual students.

- DASH-Lincoln Center Elementary: Recently, I had the opportunity to observe in the new DASH classroom at Lincoln Center Elementary. Our teacher Ali Inserra did a great job providing standards based instruction in math with elements of other standards including literacy. Particularly notable is Ali's collaboration with Amy Kaufman, teacher of the blind or visually impaired, to support our students in the program with [cortical visual impairment](#).

Equity: Intentionally providing opportunities while removing barriers at all levels of the organization.

- READ Act for ESPs: The Teaching and Learning team has been busy training our Education Support Professionals on Structured Literacy to meet the requirements of the READ Act. Our ESPs are asking great questions throughout the training and we can't wait to see the impact their learning has on our students!

Diversity: Appreciating and valuing everyone's unique selves.

- Closing the Gap: We had two of our amazing staff members present at the Closing the Gap Conference that took place from October 22-24. Ari Sherman, Reading Specialist,

presented with Bookshare on our use of their program to support our students in a session titled, "Bookshare-Bringing UDL to Life". Amanda Peters, Instructional Technology Coach, led a presentation titled, "Take a Deep Dive Into AI". Her session introduced some of the great AI tools we are using across the district and received so much praise from the educators in the audience who were thrilled to try out the things she shared!