



December 2, 2025

Dear Dr. Clendening:

Thank you for the opportunity to support Franklin Community Schools as the district prepares for its next strategic planning cycle. I appreciate the leadership team's candor about the significant stressors you are experiencing—particularly the rise in student behavioral needs, the operational pressures on special education systems, and the financial constraints.

In response to our conversations, I am pleased to share a proposed scope of work for a Board education session focused on special education foundations, current pressures, and long-range strategic considerations. This session is designed to strengthen the Board's understanding of the historical, legal, instructional, behavioral, and fiscal dimensions of special education while surfacing the critical questions that will guide the district over the next five to seven years.

The presentation will highlight:

- The history of special education and students' rights under federal law
- Student behaviors, discipline requirements, and today's emerging patterns
- The case conference committee process and its implications for practice
- Transportation as a related service and the operational realities districts face
- The economic landscape of special education, including cost drivers and levers for sustainability

Our goal is to ensure Board members are well-oriented to the systems and pressures shaping special education so they are equipped to engage confidently in strategic discussions ahead. The session will be tailored specifically to Franklin Community Schools' current context, challenges, and aspirations.

I look forward to collaborating with you and your team and to supporting a productive, forward-looking conversation with the Board.

Thank you again for the opportunity to partner in this important work.

Sincerely,

Angela L. Balsley



www.linkedin.com/in/angela-balsley
angie@unifiedleadership.org
574.933.3705

Board Work Session: Special Education Foundations, Pressures, and strategic Direction

Prepared for: Franklin Community Schools

Prepared by: Dr. Angela Balsley, CEO, Unified Leadership

Purpose of the Board Work Session

Franklin Community Schools is preparing to launch a new strategic planning cycle while also navigating rising student behavioral needs, economic pressures, and the increasing complexity of special education compliance and programming. This Board work session is designed to:

- Strengthen the Board's foundational understanding of special education law, rights, and responsibilities.
- Build shared awareness of current conditions—student behaviors, staffing demands, transportation considerations, and financial realities.
- Surface critical questions that will inform district strategy for the next five to seven years.
- Equip the Board with clarity and confidence to engage in future decision-making related to systems, resources, and student outcomes.

This session is educational in nature and will not require decision-making; instead, it will orient the Board toward a cohesive strategic frame.

Session Components

The History and Foundations of Special Education

A concise, accessible overview covering:

- Federal milestones shaping today's systems (ESEA, IDEA, Section 504).
- Students' rights to access, inclusion, and meaningful progress.
- Key obligations of local school boards and districts.
- How these rights intersect with modern expectations for accountability.

Outcome: Board members gain grounding in why special education exists, what it guarantees, and how it has evolved.

Understanding Student Behaviors and Discipline in Today's Context

- Legal and ethical guardrails for disciplining students with disabilities.
- Manifestation determination reviews (MDRs): purpose and process.

- Systems-level contributors to behavior escalation.
- What boards should look for in strong district behavior frameworks.

Outcome: Board members understand the dynamics behind rising behaviors, appropriate responses, and how the district can build preventive systems.

The Case Conference Committee (CCC) Process

- Step-by-step walkthrough of referral, evaluation, eligibility, and IEP development.
- Role of families and procedural safeguards.
- How general education and special education partner in the CCC process.
- Points where system efficiency, communication, and clarity have the highest impact.

Outcome: Board members understand how decisions about services are made and where districts can build coherence and consistency.

Transportation for Students with Disabilities

- Legal obligations for transportation as a related service.
- Determining when specialized transportation is necessary.
- Cost considerations and staffing requirements.
- Safety, training, and supervision expectations.
- Operational challenges districts commonly face and promising approaches.

Outcome: The Board understands how transportation decisions are made and how they contribute to both student access and resource use.

The Economics of Special Education

- Overview of state and federal funding streams (Part B, APC, Medicaid, etc.).
- Cost drivers: staffing, contracted services, transportation, low-incidence needs, due process.
- Fiscal pressures facing districts statewide.
- Strategic levers districts can pull to manage costs while improving outcomes.
- How operational and instructional systems influence long-term sustainability.

Outcome: Board members are equipped with a realistic view of the economic landscape and strategic options.

Deliverables

- Full Day Board Work Session Presentation and Discussion Facilitation
 - On-site, 6-7 hour session during the week of February 2-6, 2026
- Customized presentation deck tailored to Franklin Community Schools' context
- Pre-session virtual planning with district leadership