

Director of Special Education  
Board Report

Jill Mattingly  
Special Education Director

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This has once again been a very busy beginning to a school year, taking on the role as the special education director and also as the principal of Babb school. There has been quite a bit to learn regarding principal duties, that are not required as a special education director. I give a lot of thanks to my secretary Colleen Nolan who has had to take on a lot of extra duties. We have designated Jennifer Augare as Lead Teacher at Babb which has helped to make business go much smoother.

I am glad to report that we are fully staffed this year for certified teachers. This will be a big change at the High School and our goal is to ensure that no special education student falls through the cracks. All special education High School staff will be receiving additional training on how to write effective transition plans. Transition plans help to ensure that each special education student transitions smoothly from the High School setting into the workforce, college, or other settings depending on their cognitive level of functioning.

Colleen has been working very hard to meet the deadline to submit our Child Count Data to the Office of Public Instruction. At the moment we have over 300 students.

We are also making preparations for our compliance monitoring by OPI. This will take place in the spring and is a detailed look at our special education files and assures that we are in compliance with all special education regulations. All special education teachers will attend numerous professional training seminars to help us all prepare for the monitor.

We have Diane Black back again this year. She has been instrumental in supporting classroom teachers who have students with communication and behavioral needs. She specializes in PECS, which is a picture communication system that helps students with cognitive delays and other communication needs to express themselves.

We are getting ready to go to our first Special Olympics trip in Helena. I will be attending one day of the festivities.

We are still working very hard on getting students qualified so that we can get reimbursement from Medicaid. We currently are getting reimbursement for almost all students who are receiving speech services that were previously qualified for Medicaid. Medicaid will also give us reimbursement for services for personal care attendants and in some cases for transportation, we are still in the process of getting parental permission to bill Medicaid for these services. The money coming back into special education is utilized to support our special education department through materials, additional staffing, professional development, and numerous other expenditures. I have to give the credit to Alida Wright and to all of the support staff who work very hard to complete all of the paperwork necessary for us to get reimbursement.

The special education department has had an increase in students who have profound disabilities since this school year started. We have created a severe/profound classroom that is located at Vina Chattin. We have two classrooms that are side by side with one teacher in charge of both classrooms. The materials that are needed to support these students are very costly and we are in the process of getting what we need to service the needs of these students. We have also had to increase the number of personal care attendants in our district. We are now up to 15 PCA's in our district.

Adaptive PE has changed a little bit for this school year. Our goal was to spend less time at the pool and to get the students involved in other physical activities. Students who attend the Middle School and the High School attend PE classes with their peers a few days a week. This way they are socializing more outside of their classrooms while also engaging in a variety of different exercises. Students in the lower grades are swimming one day a week, and then are participating in a variety of activities in their buildings to help improve stamina, strength, gross motor, and fine motor movements. A super fun program we purchased is called Brain Breaks that helps to get the students up and moving. Virgil Bullshoe has worked very hard this school year to get these changes made, while also working as the Special Olympics Coach.

Thanks for all of your support,

Jill Mattingly