

Special Education
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September 5, 2018

The beginning of the school year is always whirlwind of activity while we try to get everyone situated and ready to service students. This year we have three teachers on emergency credentials who will be provided with extra support in order to learn how to write IEP's and also on teaching students with special needs. These teachers are assigned a community mentor and also a mentor who is currently a special education teacher. I am excited that these teachers have all come from the teaching program at BCC, I am hoping that they will be with our department for a long time.

Several of our special education teachers will be attending an experienced teacher training this month. This is a free training given by OPI. This is an excellent refresher for special education teachers who have one or more years of teaching experience. The emphasis is on IEP writing.

We are still short staffed, and are in a really tough spot not being able to hire a school psychologist and two speech pathologists. This is going to harm services to students, delay testing times for students who need services, it is going to overload our current staff, and could potentially put us into litigation. Moving to an online service delivery model will help us, but is very costly and utilizing online services for testing is not best practice. In order to obtain valid testing results the school psychologist needs to build a rapport with the student and testing takes place over many sessions.

This year we are continuing with Master Teacher courses to provide paraprofessionals professional development to help them better serve our students. The feedback on this training has been nothing but positive. The courses are online and are done during extended Wednesday's. Staff usually complete one course per week. This year we added more courses that focus on helping students with behavior issues. This is a very cost effective program and is less than \$30 a year for unlimited courses. There are over 200 courses to choose from. All paraprofessionals would benefit from taking these courses, but not all principals were on board in providing this support to their staff.

Diane Black is back with us again this year. We have contracted with her for more hours to help us with students who have communication needs and behavior issues. Our school district would greatly benefit from having a full-time behavior specialist. At the end of this month our department will be hosting informal parent socials at each building. This will be an opportunity for parents to meet the special education staff who work with their children, and to also ask questions and get information regarding special education services.

My focus for this school year is to spend more time in the classrooms. Through observations I will be better able to support staff to deliver the best possible services to our special needs students. Support will be given through feedback, professional development, and providing additional materials and curriculum.