



DATE: 6/9/25

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

- With some end of year resignations, we are currently at 10 unfilled special education paraprofessional positions for fall (on a positive note—this is half the number of open positions we had at the end of the year last year!).
- We have filled most of our professional positions for the 25-26 school year. We still have 2 SPED teaching positions to fill.
- Our Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) met on May 21 and heard a presentation by IJ SPED Director intern Kaitlyn Meineke on strategies for summer.
- Our Student Support Professionals (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists) met on May 12 and heard an update on the Austin Political Action Committee (APAC). Additional discussion were held regarding soliciting one of our members to become a trainer for Youth Mental Health First Aid, as well as aligning documentation practices.
- Chemical Health Task Force update: Our Teen Intervene pilot ended up with 6 Ellis Middle School students and 2 Austin High School students completing the 3 week course. We are ready to hit the ground running with this initiative in the fall!

Packer Profile for all learners

- 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 work flow.

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

- Representatives from our District MTSS team will present a breakout session at MDE's Compass Institute in June to highlight our work:
Title: Enhancing Student Success Through MTSS and Linked Teaming

Description: Join members from the Austin Public Schools District MTSS Team, as they share insights into implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) with a linked teaming process to drive student success. This session will explore how the district has structured collaborative teams, streamlined data-driven decision-making, integrated the district team into building processes, and fostered a culture of support for all learners. Attendees will gain practical strategies for aligning district, school, and classroom teams to create an effective and sustainable MTSS framework.

- We are working with building administrators to put a comprehensive plan in place for professional development for coteaching staff this fall and throughout the 2025-2026 school year.
- We will be piloting a new math intervention, Delta Math, with elementary special education students this fall. This will supplement their work in the core curriculum.

Excellence in Resource Management

- We are working on 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 preliminary feedback on our special education fiscal audit. Most areas were found to be compliant, with just a few minor issues that will require corrective action.