

Work Session

Tuesday, August 18, 2026 5:30 PM

Fridley Community Center, 6085 7th Street NE, Fridley, MN 55432

A. **Signing Required Documents**

Presenter: Dr. Brenda Lewis

B. **Stadium Tour**

C. **Autism Setting IV Update**

Presenter: Senior Officer Scott and Principal Runsewe

D. **PUBLIC FORUM**

Presenter: Board Chair



A World-Class Community of Learners

VISTA Autism Program

Valuing Individual Student Talents and Abilities

FRIDLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Agenda

- VISTA Framework: Setting IV Autism Program
- Student Population: Who We Serve
- Specialized Supports and Services
- Family, School, and Community Partnerships
- Referral and Enrollment Process
- Questions and Discussion

THE VISTA FRAMEWORK



V **Valuing** (The Core Foundation)

I **Individual** (Personalized Excellence)

S **Students** (Our Purpose)

T **Talents** (Strength-Based Growth)

A **Ability** (The Outcome of Care)

THE VISTA FRAMEWORK

- **VISTA Autism Program will be co-located at the Fridley Community Center**
- **Has its own entrance and serves as its own individual school learning environment.**
- **Learning space is for students, staff and families only.**
- **Opening Fall of 2026**



Federal Setting IV Autism Programming

Federal Setting IV Definition

Specialized Care and Educational Supports

50%+

of the school day spent in a separate program

Students receive comprehensive special education and therapeutic services outside the general education environment to best support their unique behavioral and sensory needs.



Honored to Serve Students with Autism

What Makes Autism Unique

Rather than a linear scale of "mild to severe," autism presents as a dynamic Spectrum Wheel of overlapping traits and dimensions.

Sensory Processing

Unique ways of experiencing and responding to environmental stimuli, requiring tailored, highly supportive learning spaces.

Communication & Social

Diverse verbal and nonverbal interactive styles that foster deep, highly authentic social connections.

Cognitive Style

Exceptional natural capacities for detail-oriented task execution, profound hyper-focus, and systematic analytical thinking.



Honored to Serve Students with Autism

Sensory Processing

Creating environments where students can regulate, engage, and learn.

- Predictable routines and visual supports
- Sensory-responsive learning environments
- Individualized regulation strategies
- Pyramid Model strategies to support social-emotional development



Honored to Serve Students with Autism

Communication & Social

Expanding meaningful communication and authentic connections.

- Multiple modes of communication, including AAC and visual supports
- Explicit instruction in social communication
- Relationship-centered practices
- Teach to Heal strategies that build connection, safety, and belonging



Honored to Serve Students with Autism

Cognitive Style

Building on strengths, interests, and individual ways of learning.

- IB inquiry-based and student-centered learning
- Strength-based instructional practices
- Opportunities to explore interests and develop areas of expertise
- Explicit, structured instruction with opportunities for deeper thinking and problem-solving



TEACH TO HEAL

Key Principles

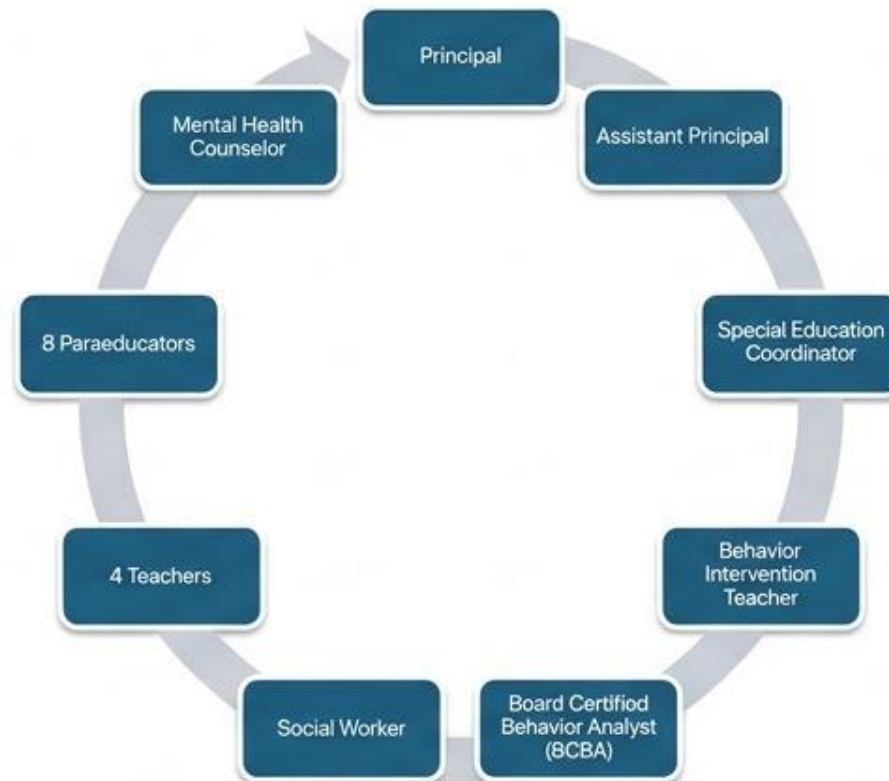
- Trauma Responsive Supports
- Behavior is Communication
- Deescalation & LSCI
- Regulation then Rigor or Regulate and Return (R & R)

4 Key Components

- Change Your Mind Through Your Mouth
- Adult Adjustments First
- Environmental Management
- Data Driven Supports



STAFFING AND SUPPORTS



Each classroom:
6 Students
1 Teacher
2 Paraeducators

Therapeutic Environment

Classroom Design

Structuring for Sensory & Learning Needs

We carefully organize physical environments to provide students with the predictable, safe, and specialized spaces they need to thrive.

Quiet Sensory Corners

Dedicated, low-stimulus spaces within the classroom designed for active self-regulation and calming.

Visual Schedules

Clear, accessible timelines displaying daily routines to reduce transition anxiety and build independence.

Sensory Rooms

Fully equipped, specialized environments tailored to meet intense sensory and self-regulation needs.



Partnering with Stakeholders



Referral and Enrollment

- **Referral from an FPS Neighborhood School:** A referral for Setting IV programming may be initiated by an FPS neighborhood school when a student currently receiving Setting III services continues to demonstrate needs that cannot be adequately addressed through the student's current level of support. The referral should be supported by appropriate data collection, ongoing interventions, and collaborative team decision-making.
- **Referral from a Non-Neighborhood School:** A similar process would be followed for students attending a school outside of their neighborhood school or resident district. The parent or caregiver would work with the student's home/resident district to initiate the referral process and determine whether consideration of Setting IV programming is appropriate based on the student's individual needs and available data.

Questions / Comments
