

Agenda of Regular Meeting

The Board of Trustees Van Buren ISD

A Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Van Buren ISD will be held January 7, 2026, beginning at 4:00 PM in the Van Buren Conference Center
490 S Paw Paw Street
Lawrence, MI 49064.

Items to be discussed, considered, or acted upon are listed below and may be taken in a different order. Unless removed, consent agenda items will be approved in a single action. The public is invited to attend. Individuals needing accommodations, wishing to provide public input, or asking questions regarding any item before the Board are encouraged to contact Superintendent Dave Manson at dmanson@vbisd.org.

I. REGULAR MEETING

A. Approval of Draft Agenda (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

B. Consent Agenda - (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

1. Minutes

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The **Regular Meeting** of the Van Buren Intermediate School District Board of Education was held in person on **December 3, 2025**, in the Board of Education office and called to order at **4:00 PM** with all Board members present, except for Mr. Faul.

Weiss moved to approve the December 3, 2025, draft agenda as presented. Supported by Kent. Roll call vote. Makay – yes, Kent – yes, Weiss - yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Makay moved to approve the Consent Agenda (**October 29, 2025, Minutes, Composite and Summaries**). Supported by Kent. Roll call vote: Kent – yes, Weiss – yes, Makay – yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Weiss moved to approve the Board and Superintendent Travel for October/November 2025. Supported by Kent. Roll call vote: Weiss – yes, Makay – yes, Kent – yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.



**Board of Education
&
Superintendent Travel
Pre-Approval**

Name	Date(s)	Location	Estimated Cost

Approved, Not Yet Attended

Name	Date(s)	Location	Estimated Cost

Post Approval

Name	Date(s)	Location	Actual Cost
MaryAnn Middaugh	October 23 - 25, 2025	MASB Annual Leadership Conference 2025 Grand Traverse Resort, Acme, MI	\$1,556.00
Kenny Kent	October 22 - 26, 2025		\$2,101.60
John Faul	October 24 - 26, 2025		\$979.20
Karen Makay	October 22 - 26, 2025		\$2,536.70
John Weiss	October 22 - 25, 2025		\$2,083.17
Dave Manson	October 23 - 25, 2025		\$895.80
Dave Manson	November 3 - 4, 2025	Delamar Traverse City, 615 East Front Street, Traverse City, MI 49686	\$742.90

Board Members' Updates:

All board members shared heartwarming stories of their Halloween adventures, passing out candy at the Learning Center, and celebrating Thanksgiving with friends and family. Board members enjoyed helping serve Thanksgiving meals at the Bert Goens Learning Center and the Community-based Transition Center.

Superintendent Updates: Superintendent Manson gave an update on the following:

Michigan Association of School Administrators Impact Award: This fall, VBISD received the Education Impact Award from MASA in partnership with SetSeg, Train, and Kingscott. The award supported the distribution of cold weather essential totes to more than 300 multilingual students across Van Buren County districts in November.

Professional Learning with MAISA and John Hattie: In November, MASISA hosted a two-day professional learning event focused on legislative issues and research based instructional leadership. Dr. John Hattie shared findings on high impact practices that strengthen student achievement, including student driven learning and collective responsibility.

Strategic Planning Process: VBISD directors participated in the first strategic planning session facilitated by Katy Holverstott and a Western Michigan University consultant. The discussion focused on clarifying VBISD's purpose and community impact. Additional sessions with the Board, staff, and stakeholders are planned, with updates shared throughout the process.

Impact of the State Budget on VBISD: VBISD released a statement outlining the impact of the state budget, which resulted in modest increases for Special Education and CTE, but reductions in several other areas and a net loss of approximately \$845,000. After inaccurate reporting by WWMT News 3, follow up communication clarified that programs were not eliminated. VBISD remains financially stable and continues to support affected staff and families.

Wood School Supports: VBISD leadership and IT teams have provided ongoing policy, leadership, and technology support to Wood School. These efforts strengthen instructional operations and resulted in a formal note of appreciation from the school.

Presentation: Maner Costerisan- Brendan Baker, CPA:

Audit Overview: The VBISD audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. The auditors issued an unmodified opinion, which is the highest level of assurance and indicates the district's financial statements are accurate and reliable.

District Financial Position: The district's overall net position increased by approximately \$21.3 million, with a total net position of about \$10.8 million at year end. The district maintains significant capital assets and continues to manage long-term pension and retiree benefit obligations responsibly.

Fund Highlights: The General Fund, Special Education Fund, and Vocational Education Fund all remained financially stable. General and Special Education fund balances increased from the prior year, while the Vocational Education fund saw a smaller increase despite higher expenditures. All funds reported positive budget to actual variances, meaning spending was below projections.

Federal Programs and Compliance: Federal programs were audited through a separate single audit process. Major grants, including ARPA related programs, were reviewed and resulted in an unmodified opinion with no findings, indicating strong compliance and internal controls.

The following departments provided updates to the Board and the community:

Finance and Operations: *Expressed concerns about the proposed FY 2025–26 School Aid Fund budget, highlighting funding increases and significant losses for districts and ISDs. While the foundation allowance would increase to \$10,050 and several programs continue or expand, the budget also eliminates or reduces multiple funding sources, resulting in substantial negative impacts. The loss of Section 147a4 funding represents a major hit to district and ISD bottom lines statewide. The changes to MPERS rates, which will lower VBISD’s weighted average retirement cost by approximately 3.8 percent, partially offsetting other pressures. New investments include one-time educator compensation funding and expanding mental health and school safety grants, though some of these funds carry new compliance requirements and legal considerations.*

Human Resources: *focused on strengthening employee support, organization, and engagement across VBISD. A key priority this year is the development of an improved mentoring program aimed at supporting new and existing staff and increasing employee retention. This work has included focus groups with mentors, mentees, and supervisors to clarify roles, identify needed resources, and inform program improvements, with the goal of launching the updated program before the start of the next school year. The update also highlighted progress toward creating a district organizational chart using a new, easy to maintain tool, as well as ongoing efforts to build positive staff culture through fun and team building activities within the Business Office.*

Multilingual Education: *highlighted strong staff leadership, expanded regional impact, and continued growth in services for migrant and multilingual students. The report recognized the work of staff members whose outreach and data expertise have strengthened family support, recruitment, and access to critical resources, while also celebrating statewide recognition for excellence in migrant data systems. VBISD staff participated in national and multi state collaboration through the OSY Consortium Summit, bringing back new curriculum tools, wellness strategies, and planning structures to support at risk youth. The district also hosted regional parent leadership and educator network meetings that connected families, educators, and agency partners around employment pathways, housing supports, instructional strategies, and professional learning. As one of only two Identification and Recruitment centers in Michigan, VBISD continues to expand its reach across 20 counties, recruiting and serving hundreds of migrant students while ensuring consistent access to educational services and supports across the region.*

Career & Technical Education: *emphasizes VBISD’s ongoing commitment to supporting young children and families through collaboration, inclusion, and equity. Despite the state’s elimination of key 32p grant funds, the district continues to sustain essential early childhood programs through local investment. The Great Start Collaborative remains a cornerstone effort, engaging over 40 community partners to deliver thousands of books, educational materials, and training to families and professionals. VBISD also participates in Michigan’s Help Me Grow pilot, integrating early learning, health, and family services to streamline access and improve outcomes for children from birth to five. Advocacy at the state level continues to focus on restoring and securing long-term funding for early childhood systems. The report also highlights a successful intergenerational partnership between Family Links and the Paw Paw District Library, connecting young children with older adults to foster empathy, joy, and community connection.*

Makay made the motion to approve the following resolution:

Whereas the Board of Education has been informed of an anticipated vacancy that will occur upon the conclusion of Mr. Kent's service, effective January 7, and

Whereas the Board of Education is responsible under Michigan law, including the Revised School Code, to fill a vacancy within thirty days of its occurrence and

Whereas the Board desires to conduct a transparent, timely, and orderly appointment process consistent with statutory requirements and the parliamentary principles outlined in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised and

Whereas the Board affirms the importance of public notice, equal opportunity for interested qualified residents, and an open interview process consistent with the Open Meetings Act

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Education establishes the following timeline for posting, receiving applications, conducting interviews, and selecting an appointee to fill the anticipated vacancy.

Posting Period- December 4 to December 18

The vacancy shall be publicly posted and distributed for fourteen days. The posting shall outline the eligibility requirements for service on an ISD Board of Education, the application or letter of interest process, and the submission deadline.

Applicant Contact and Scheduling- December 19 to December 30

The Board President or designee shall contact all applicants, verify initial eligibility, and schedule interviews. Materials submitted by applicants shall be provided to all Board members.

Interview Session- January 5

Interviews shall be held during an open session of the Board consistent with the Open Meetings Act. The Board shall conduct interviews using a consistent set of questions and procedures. At the conclusion of the interviews, the Board shall identify the preferred candidate and confirm statutory qualifications, including residency and voter registration.

Vacancy Becomes Official and Appointment Made- January 7

The Board shall convene at 4 p m for Mr. Kent's final meeting. The vacancy becomes official at 5:15 p m. At approximately 5:20 pm, the Board shall proceed to appoint a new member in open session. A recognition and reception for Mr. Kent shall follow the meeting.

Oath of Office- January 8 or later

The selected appointee shall take the oath of office administered by an authorized official. The oath shall be documented and placed on file with the Board Secretary.

First Meeting of the Newly Appointed Board Member- February 3

The appointed new member shall participate fully as a member of the Board beginning with the regular meeting scheduled for this date.

Be it further resolved that the Board directs the Superintendent and Board Secretary to carry out all required notices, postings, and procedural steps necessary to implement this timeline and to ensure compliance with Michigan law and Board policy.

Supported by Weiss. Roll call vote. Weiss – yes⁵, Makay – yes, Kent – yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Weiss made the motion to approve the following resolution:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board hereby authorizes the Superintendent of Schools, or designee, to submit the District's opt-in form to MDE on or before the Opt-In Deadline, solely for the purpose of preserving the District's eligibility for 31aa Funding, and only on a conditional basis, as provided in this Resolution. Submission of the opt-in form shall not constitute a present waiver of the attorney-client privilege or any other privilege.
2. The District's conditional opt in shall be automatically rescinded without further action of the Board, unless, on or before the Rescission Deadline: (a) the Legislature removes, substantively amends, or otherwise eliminates the privilege-waiver requirement such that acceptance of 31aa Funding would not require waiver of attorney-client privilege or any other applicable privilege; or (b) a court of competent jurisdiction rules that the privilege-waiver requirement is unlawful, unenforceable, or otherwise not applicable to the District. If neither (a) nor (b) occurs by the Rescission Deadline, the Superintendent of Schools, or designee, shall notify MDE, in the form and manner required by MDE and no later than the Rescission Deadline, that the District's opt in is rescinded.
3. If the privilege-waiver requirement remains in effect and enforceable as of the Rescission Deadline, the Superintendent of Schools, or designee, shall have no authority or obligation to accept 31aa Funding.
4. Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed as a waiver of attorney-client privilege or any other applicable privilege.
5. The district's participation in the opt-in or rescission process shall not be construed as a waiver of the Board's or District's right to challenge the legality or enforceability of any condition imposed by MCL 388.1631aa or related administrative guidance.
6. If, after the Rescission Deadline, the privilege-waiver requirement is removed, amended, or invalidated, the Board may take further action as it deems appropriate to pursue 31aa Funding consistent with applicable law.
7. This Resolution does not apply to any "mass casualty event" occurring prior to the Opt-In Deadline.
8. All resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with the provisions of this Resolution be and the same are hereby rescinded.

Supported by Kent. Roll call vote. Kent – yes, Weiss – yes, Makay – yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Makay made the motion to approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the VBISD Board of Education approves a **one-time bonus payment of \$75 to all regular VBISD employees (excluding contract or temporary staff) hired on or before December 3, 2025**, which satisfies the requirements of the **388.1627I Educator Compensation Program** and reflects the Board's intent to recognize the contributions of all staff.

Supported by Weiss. Roll call vote. Kent – yes, Weiss – yes, Makay – yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Weiss made the motion to approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the employment of the staff listed.

<u>New Employee</u>	<u>Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>
Daniel Stout, Assistant Supervisor, Transportation	\$60,500.00	11/17/2025
Michele Arms, GSRP Lead Teacher	\$47,352.00	12/17/2025
Corey Aukerman, School Social Worker	\$54,629.00	12/08/2025

Supported by Makay. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Makay made the motion to approve the following resolution:


RESOLVED, that the Board of Education accepts the resignations/retirements of the staff listed.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Resignation/Retirement Date</u>
Jessica Roy, Mental Health Clinician	Resignation - 11/07/2025
Lauren Dayton, School Social Worker	Resignation - 11/11/2025
Brian Simmerman, Adaptive PE Teacher	Resignation - 11/25/2025
Katherine Ott, Instructor Business Management	Resignation - 01/16/2026

Supported by Kent. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Makay made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Weiss. Voice vote.
Meeting adjourned at 5:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



John Weiss, Vice President
Van Buren Intermediate School District
Board of Education, Lawrence, Michigan

A Special Board Work Session meeting of the Van Buren Intermediate Board of Education was held in person on **Monday, December 8, 2025**, at the Backyard of Kalamazoo in Mattawan, Michigan. The following board members were present: Makay, Weiss, Faul, Kent, and Middaugh. Also present: Dave Manson.

The meeting was called to order at **9:00 am** by President Middaugh. The following items were discussed and reviewed by the Board:

1. Superintendent Updates - *Dave Manson*
2. Human Resources & Marketing - *Britani Olds*
3. CTE - *Robert Smith*
4. Technology Services - *Damian Koob*
5. Multilingual Services- *Angie Gutierrez*
6. Instructional Services - *Melissa Corona*
7. Early Childhood & Special Education - *Susan Reynolds & Monica Mansfield*
8. Assistant Superintendent Updates & Strategic Planning - *Katy Holverstott*

1) Action Items

- a. Approval Of Reassignment Of Board Officers: Treasurer & Trustee

Faul made the motion to approve the following resolution:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Van Buren Intermediate School District Board of Education hereby:

Reassigns Ms. Karen Makay from the position of Trustee to the office of Treasurer of the Van Buren Intermediate School District Board of Education, effective upon adoption of this resolution.

Reassigns Mr. Kenneth Kent from the position of Treasurer to the office of Trustee, maintaining his existing term of office as duly elected.

Supported by Weiss. Roll call vote. Kent – yes, Weiss – yes, Makay – yes, Faul - yes, and Middaugh – yes. Motion carried.

Weiss made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Makay. Voice vote. The meeting adjourned at **3:00 pm**.

Respectfully submitted,



John Faul, Board Secretary
Van Buren Intermediate Board of Education

**VAN BUREN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
DECEMBER 2025**

VOUCHERS

Imprest Fund	1,560,395.45
Payroll Fund	4,774,099.41
Purchasing Cards	88,531.90
EduStaff ACH	20,876.77

PAYROLL SUMMARY

General	1,246,529.63
Special Education	2,756,803.36
Vocational Education	770,766.42
Student Activity Fund	-
Total	4,774,099.41

IMPREST VOUCHER SUMMARY

FUND	CHECKS	REIMBURSEMENT	CARDS	TAX/INTEREST/	TOTAL
General	766,411.52	15,468.02	44,934.64	(16,653.74)	810,160.44
Special Education	332,702.83	26,740.07	20,790.11	6,529.79	386,762.80
Vocational Education	461,281.10	9,473.12	22,763.76	10,123.95	503,641.93
Student Activity Fund	-	-	43.39	-	43.39
Total	1,560,395.45	51,681.21	88,531.90	-	1,700,608.56

**VAN BUREN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
DECEMBER 2025**

BUDGET TO EXPENDITURE COMPARISON 25-26

FUND	BUDGET	ACTUAL & ENCUMBERED EXPENSES	UNENCUMBERED BALANCE	YEAR TO DATE VARIANCE
General	26,221,227	11,451,532	14,769,695	566,531
Special Education	43,256,264	17,042,171	26,214,093	2,783,617
Career Tech Education	17,411,809	7,347,402	10,064,407	633,011

CASH FLOW SUMMARY

	ENDING BALANCE 11/01/2025	CASH RECEIPTS	CASH DISBURSEMENTS	ENDING BALANCE 11/30/2025
General	2,250,343	4,310,330	1,859,783	4,700,890
Special Education	12,584,176	3,464,397	2,893,814	13,154,759
Career Tech Education	5,314,345	1,109,300	2,208,729	4,214,916
Student Activity Fund	33,059	26,872	26,855	33,075
Total	20,181,923	8,910,899	6,989,181	22,103,641

C. Board/Superintendent Travel (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

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Board of Education & Superintendent Travel

Pre-Approval

Name	Date(s)	Location	Estimated Cost

Approved, Not Yet Attended

Name	Date(s)	Location	Estimated Cost

Post Approval

Name	Date(s)	Location	Actual Cost



Upcoming Events and Key Dates *Winter 2025 - 2026*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Board Attendance</i>
1/5	1-4p	Board Appointment Interviews	Conference Center	Requested ▾
1/7	4p	VBISD School Board Meeting	Conference Center	Requested ▾
1/7	5:30p	Celebration of Service for Mr. Kent	Conference Center	Requested ▾
1/9	9:30a - 10:30a	Superintendent's Council Meeting	Virtual	Informational Only ▾
1/19	8:30a - 10:30a	VBISD Professional Development Day	Virtual	Voluntary ▾
2/4	4p	VBISD School Board Meeting	Conference Center	Requested ▾
2/18	9a & 1p	National Technical Honor Society Ceremony	Conference Center	Voluntary ▾



You are cordially invited to attend an induction ceremony in honor of Van Buren Tech Students who have been accepted into the

National Technical Honor Society

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 9:00 AM or 1:00 PM

Please RSVP with the QR code or email mpolomcak@vbisd.org



Van Buren Intermediate School District Conference Center

490 South Paw Paw Street

Lawrence, MI 49064

E. Public Comments
II. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**
A. Board Updates
B. Superintendent Update

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MEMO



DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
RE: MONTHLY UPDATE

January Professional Learning: (Governance & Board Relations, Staff Relations, Instructional Leadership)

The VBISD Professional Learning Day is scheduled on Dr. Martin Luther Jr. Day, which is on January 19, 2026. The morning session will be provided virtually and will include an awards presentation celebrating the recipients of the Great Job Award. The morning's presentation will also include VBISD updates and important information from several departments across the VBISD. After a break for lunch, each department will provide for program-specific learning across the organization.

****Special Services Building Renovations Update: (Community Relations, Staff Relations, Business & Finance, Instructional Leadership)**

Planning for the renovation and new build at the Special Services Center is starting to pick up. Since the initial decision, it has been determined that the new space will be able to accommodate not just the Early Childhood and Special Education Departments, but also the Technology Department and the Emergency Management Program.

Over the last couple of months, several meetings have been held with representatives from Owen Ames Kimball and Tower Pinkster. On December 17, 2025, a site visit was conducted that provided the team from Tower Pinkster the opportunity to meet with Dave Johnson, Susan Reynolds, Damian Koob and Katy Holverstott regarding the overall design and layout. Below is a sketch that was developed during the visit that brings to life the vision.



The building will include a front facing and welcoming environment for families and their young children, therapy and evaluation spaces, office spaces, shared conference, break and work spaces, and the Arbor Credit Union.

****31aa Grant Funding: (Governance & Board Relations, Community Relations, Staff Relations, Business & Finance, Instructional Leadership)**

VBISD and our local districts use Section 31aa funding to support school safety and student mental health initiatives. To receive this year’s funding, districts must agree to certain conditions in the event of a “mass casualty incident,” including permitting a state investigation, waiving attorney-client and investigator-client privileges, and fully cooperating with the investigator. This waiver is broad, includes no time limitations, and could apply to both past and future communications. As a result, a lawsuit was filed on behalf of school districts and school officials.

On Wednesday, December 17, 2025, the Michigan Court of Claims denied the plaintiffs' motion for summary disposition. While the plaintiffs intend to appeal the decision to the Michigan Court of Appeals, VBISD was required to rescind acceptance of these funds prior to December 30, 2025, in order to preserve our existing legal privileges.

****Administrative Mentoring Program (27h): (Governance & Board Relations, Community Relations, Staff Relations, Business & Finance, Instructional Leadership)**

The West Michigan Education Research and Development Foundation (WMERDF) in collaboration with VBISD was approved for \$48,000 to provide an administrator coaching program throughout Van Buren County.

Below is a quick snapshot of the program:

- ✓ **Monthly Full-Group Learning Sessions** (Leadership Development, Case Studies, Consultancy Protocol)
- ✓ **Monthly 1:1 Coaching with a Mentor** (Personalized Support & Leadership Reflection)
- ✓ **Annual Book Studies** (Deepening Leadership Knowledge)
- ✓ **Site Visits & Problem-Solving Labs** (Years 2 & 3)

Each cohort (Years 1, 2, and 3) progressively develops key leadership competencies aligned with NELP standards, moving from foundational leadership development to strategic impact.

****State Vehicle Inspection: (Community Relations, Staff Relations, Business & Finance)**

The State Inspector has completed inspections on 28 vehicles in the district's transportation fleet, all of which passed inspection with flying colors. Four additional buses were not inspected at this time, as they are scheduled for replacement in the near future. All district vehicles are maintained in a safe operating condition, and all maintenance and repairs are performed using parts and procedures that meet or exceed Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The annual school bus inspection cycle runs from September 1 through August 31.

VBI	1/12/22	Stat	Final		Stat	Final
2	Rear slacks Charcoal PS em exit Label		Pass	24	Ready	Pass
3	Ready Will Need Drive Brakes Soon		Pass	26	Ready	Pass
4	Ready Will need drive Brakes Soon		Pass	27	Ready	Pass
6	Ready		Pass	28	Ready	Pass
7	Air Bags Ready		Pass	29	Ready	Pass
8	Emergency Exit Decals		Pass	30	Ready	Pass
9			Pass	34	Ready	Pass
10	Dis Window Alarm Zump		Pass	35	Ready	Pass
11	Ready		Pass			
12	Ready		Pass			
13	Ready		Pass			
14	Ready		Pass			
15	Ready Body Secord		Pass			
16	Ready		Pass			
17	Ready		Pass			
18	Ready		Pass			
19	Ready		Pass			
20	Ready Front Changers		Pass			
21	Air Leak/ Rear Changer Will lift Panel Cracked Hose		Pass			
23	Ready		Pass			

1/21/26 - Red Amoo PS Leak APP. HUS Fleet Sun Monday Drop #12 @ WME For Hood Repair

C. Department Updates

1. Presentation - Early Childhood: Help Me Grow

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Help Me Grow

Van Buren



Van Buren County



Van Buren County

Timeline: Human Services Collaborative Council (HSCC) and Great Start Collaborative (GSC) in Van Buren County

- ❑ 1987 – HSCC formed
("Walk Like An Egyptian" by The Bangles)
- ❑ 1999 – Early Childhood & Ed Task Force formed
("Believe" by Cher)
- ❑ 2009 – Great Start Collaborative formed
("Poker Face" by Lady Gaga)
- ❑ 2023 – Help Me Grow Van Buren launched
("Anti-Hero" by Taylor Swift) ²⁴

What is Van Buren Great Start Collaborative (GSC)?



Van Buren County

The VB GSC is the early childhood systems building and support organization for Van Buren. Membership consists of parents of young children (20%) and organizations that serve children and families prenatal to age 8. These organizations include: DHHS, Community Mental Health, healthcare, non-profits, educational institutions, courts, businesses, child care providers, and especially preschools both public and private.

The GSC works to identify community needs and collectively address them.

- Early literacy access and information for families
- Access to healthcare and health education
- Improve family access to services by organizations working collaboratively
- Coordinate services to help families access and avoid duplication
- Support other organizations that serve families

Examples of Community Partnerships in 2025

HOPE Parent Resource Center/United Christian Services

- Diaper bank support and parent education
- Topics included: Early Literacy, dental health, potty training, challenging behaviors, Early On, abuse prevention, water and car seat safety and safe sleep



Examples of Community Partnerships in 2025

Van Buren Great Start Community Baby Shower

Support and education for expecting & new parents



Over 16 organizations participated including the team that packed the diaper bags: Bronson, Van Buren DHHS, Flowers/Head Start, Early On, GSC, GSFC and Family Links

Examples of Community Partnerships in 2025

Flowers Early Learning/Head Start

- Fishing and Phonics: Father Engagement
 - 50% of families surveyed said they used an introduced resource/service at least once
- Distribution of books

“Loved this event.
Thanks for having this.”

“This event was so cool.
Very kind faces & people.”



Community Partnership...more together!

Van Buren District Library/Project Shine/VB Tech

- Story Stroll permanent installation on VBISD campus

Van Buren District Library/Bronson

- Story Stroll permanent installation in Covert Township



What is Help Me Grow Van Buren?

This service of the VBISD & Great Start Collaborative answers questions, connects families to resources, and refers them to early childhood programs and opportunities for all families prenatal to age 6. It is interwoven into all that the Van Buren Great Start Collaborative does!

This includes:

- “Warmline” with care coordinators for parents to call, text, or email
- Developmental Milestones & Screener (*Ages and Stages Questionnaire*)
- Home Visiting, Childcare & Preschool
- Parent engagement: family events/activities/educational opportunities
- Resource page including 211

“One Stop Shop” and “No Wrong Door”



Van Buren County



Apply for Preschool

ASQ and ASQ-SE
Developmental Screens

I Have Questions

Español/Latino



Help Me Grow Navigator

We can answer your questions and sift through resources so you don't have to.



Preschool & Childcare

Preschool options for 3 and 4 year-olds and childcare resources.



Developmental Milestones

A screening tool that pinpoints developmental progress in young children.



Home Visiting

Free home-based child education and parenting support for families with children prenatal to 5 years.



Family Connections

Includes free and low-cost activities for families as well as community resources and services.

Making a referral:

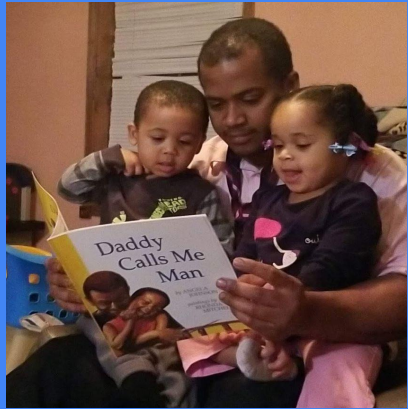
- **“One Stop Shop”** and **“No Wrong Door”** can connect families to VBISD and other early childhood services
- **Developmental screeners** available to any family
- Connect via **phone, text, or email**

(269) 906-2133

hmgvanburen@gmail.com

www.HelpMeGrowVanBuren.org

Great Start Family Coalition



33 Community Events Hosted

- **Reoccurring**
 - Family Gatherings
 - Playgroups
- **Seasonal**
 - Family field trips
 - School readiness
 - Winter celebration
 - Summer events
 - Annual Touch a Truck



Parent Cafes

Parent Cafes are research informed, guided conversations around the Protective Factors that build child and family resilience.

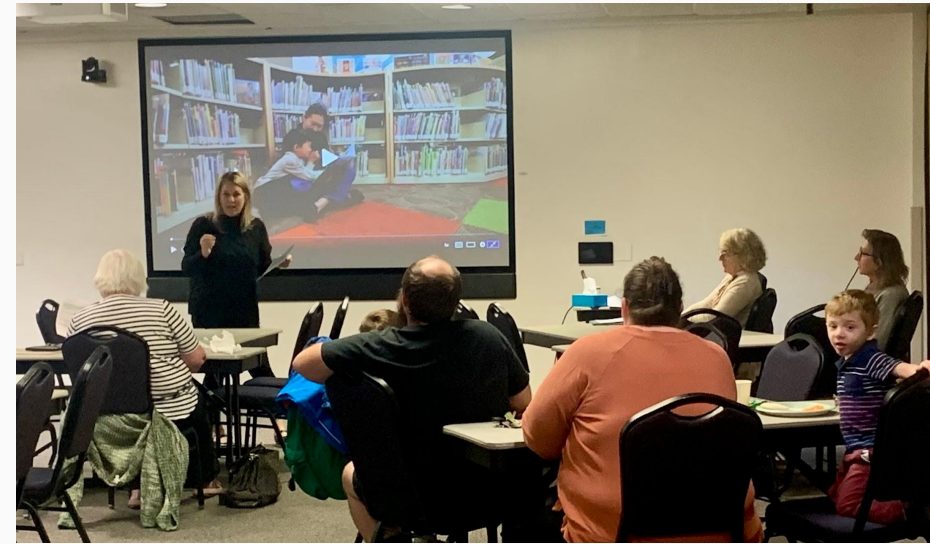


Community Events Supported

- Fantastic Fathers and Families
- Back to school events
- Family literacy nights
- Health and safety
- Migrant events
 - Bienvenidos, Farm Workers Appreciation, Head Start



162+ Hours of Training - For Families & Organizations



288 Family Connections



1499
Facebook
Followers

1407
Newsletter
Recipients



“I like your monthly, non-repetitive newsletters. They have great info! I hope to make one of the events soon.”



“This makes so much sense! I now understand why we teach our kids to play with word sounds!”



“I love all of the events they host, like the Family Gatherings. It's fun to meet other parents and learn a different lesson every month”



13
Parent
Reps.



Ongoing Parent Education



FAMILY GATHERINGS

HOPE Parent Resource Center
901 S. Bailey St., Ste. #1, South Haven



2026 DATES & TOPICS*

January 6

Learn to build brain development through free, everyday activities. Hear about research on how you can Raise a Reading Rockstar at home!

February 3

Struggle with sleep routines? Join Family Links Home Visitor to hear about safe sleep and evidence based bedtime routines for your little one!

March 3

Want to connect your family to local programs, but don't know what's available? Join HOPE PRC Director as we discuss community programs and resources to support your family!

April 7 **5:00-7:30pm, NO CHILDCARE**

Darkness to Light child sexual abuse prevention speaker.

May 5

Have fun and keep your child safe this summer! Get tips on summer routines, water safety, literacy and free/low cost activities for your whole family!

*Topics subject to change

COME & GET CONNECTED!

1ST TUES. EVENING MONTHLY
5:30PM-7:00PM

- All families raising young children welcome
- Free dinner
 - (homecooked meals not prepared in a licensed kitchen)
- Free childcare (except Apr. 7)
- Free book for each child

WHY JOIN US?

- Meet other families with young children
- Learn about family events in your community
- Plan future events
- New child development & parenting topics each month



Van Buren County



Great Start Family Coalition 2026 Winter Events



Family Gatherings

901 S. Bailey Street, Ste #1, South Haven

Meet other families - Discuss child development - Plan future events - Share the ups and downs of parenting - New monthly topics - No registration required- More info. on Facebook!

- Free play area & childcare **April 7, 5:00-7:30pm, no childcare**
- Free dinner for all! Free book for each child

2026: Jan. 6, Feb. 3, Mar. 3, Apr. 7 **no childcare** , May 5

1st TUES./MO
5:30 - 7:00PM



Raise a Reading Rock Star!

901 S. Bailey Street, Ste #1, South Haven

Join us to learn how you can support literacy at home with the Early Literacy Essentials! Hear about the Science of Reading, brain development and how you can *Raise a Reading Rock Star!* Free book bundles for children 0-5yo & literacy kits for children PreK-3rd grade. Registration helpful for dinner & childcare.

JAN. 6
5:30 - 7:00PM



Parent Café

Google Meet Online

Parent Cafés are an opportunity for parents and caregivers to connect and talk about the challenges and every day wins of raising a family. Parents can share their stories and experiences, worries and wisdom with other caregivers. Find your family community here! See Facebook for details.

FEB. 18
1:00 - 2:00PM



March Move & Groove

Van Buren ISD Conference Center, Lawrence

Bring your little ones out to burn off some energy, learn how play can support early literacy skills and to have lots of fun! Families with young children are invited to join us as we move, groove, jump and play our way to learning!

MAR. 4
6:00 - 7:30PM

From Darkness to Light

901 S. Bailey St., Ste #1, South Haven

Every family wants the best for their child! Join other families for this evidence informed training and learn how to keep your little one(s) safe from child sexual abuse! Free dinner will be provided. ****Childcare not available.****

APR. 8
5:00 - 7:30PM

Community Baby Shower

Van Buren ISD Conference Center, Lawrence

Free baby shower for expecting families and those with a baby up to 15mo.! Dinner & gift bags for registered families! Learn about prenatal topics, selfcare after birth, safe sleep and infant safety. This event is open-house style and free for all families living in Van Buren ISD districts. Registration preferred (see Facebook for details) and walk-ins are also welcome!

APR. 30
TIME TBD

Questions? Contact Family Liaison Michelle Dudyca at 269-389-9880 or at vanburengreatstart@gmail.com. Visit us on Instagram @vanburengreatstart or on Facebook Van Buren Great Start Parent Coalition.

Ongoing Parent Ed: We can now offer to K-3rd grade!



RAISE A READING



TUES., JAN. 6

5:30pm-7:00pm

HOPE PRC

901 S. Bailey St., Ste. #1
South Haven

Families will hear how to:

- Build brain development at home with the *Early Literacy Essentials* for families
- Support learning with free, everyday activities
- Hear how you can **Raise a Reading Rockstar!**

All families with young children welcome!

- Each child 5 yrs & under will receive a **free book bundle!**
- Each child PreK-3rd grade will receive a **free book & literacy kit!**
- Free dinner provided & childcare provided, please register!

Please register for free childcare, spots are limited!



Questions? Call or text Family Liaison Michelle Dudycha at 269-389-9880 or email at vanburengreatstart@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook at Van Buren Great Start Parent Coalition or on Instagram @vanburengreatstart

Now available to elementaries to share with their families.

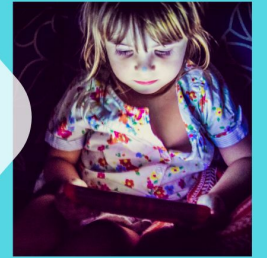
Addresses reading and behavior issues.



Van Buren County



ALTERNATIVES TO SCREENTIME



- Worried about too much screentime for your little one? You are not alone!

TUES., JAN. 27

10:00AM - 11:30AM

- Hear how screens affect your child's brain development
- Find alternatives to screen time that work for your family

Webster VBDL
200 N Phelps St,
Decatur

- Free Busy Book for each family with a child 5 & under (Infant, toddler & PK to choose from)
- Registration is helpful but not required!



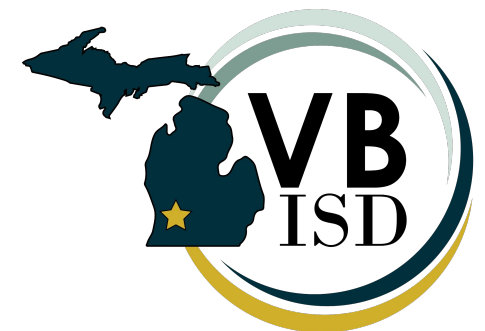
Contact Family Liaison Michelle Dudycha at 269-389-9880 or at vanburengreatstart@gmail.com. Follow us on Instagram @Vanburengreatstart or on Facebook Van Buren Great Start Parent Coalition.

Thank you!

Susan Reynolds, Director of Early Childhood
sreynolds@vbisd.org | 269-539-5106

Sherry Bennett, GSC Coordinator
sbennett@vbisd.org | 269-539-5411

Michelle Dudycha, GSFC Family Liaison
vanburengreatstart@gmail.com | 269-389-9880



DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026**TO:** BOARD OF EDUCATION**FROM:** SUSAN REYNOLDS, DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**RE:** EARLY CHILDHOOD UPDATE

Early Childhood Department Focus Areas

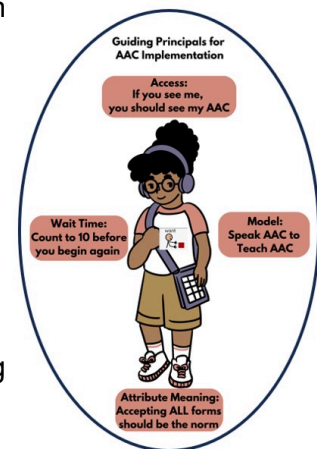
1. Increase inclusive opportunities with appropriate supports
 2. Reduce barriers for families
 3. Promote collaboration & efficiencies across the department
 4. Strengthen community engagement with an equity focus
-

***AAC Foundations: Building Communication, Confidence and Access**

Leadership, Communication Skills, Resourcefulness, Creativity & Innovativeness, Personality, Professional Preparation, Faculty & Staff Personnel, Student Personnel, Community Relations, Establishing a Culture for Learning, Student Achievement

This month, the Early Childhood Department is proud to highlight Communications Specialist, Kate Keller. Along with early childhood Speech and Language Pathologists, Kate has begun delivering *AAC Foundations* professional learning to entire preschool buildings, classroom teams, and families across Van Buren County. These trainings focus on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) as a universal support that strengthens access, participation, and connection for young learners with diverse communication needs.

AAC Foundations is grounded in the belief that communication is a human right and that there are no prerequisites for accessing AAC. Through county-wide trainings, teams are learning how to support communication using a range of modalities, including gestures, visuals, core vocabulary boards, and speech-generating devices while honoring each child's individual strengths and developmental pathway. The emphasis is not on technology alone, but on communication as connection, embedded naturally throughout play, routines, and daily interactions.



One of the most impactful aspects of this work has been the whole-team training model, which brings together teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, administrators, and families. This shared learning experience helps build a consistent and supportive “communication web” around each child, ensuring AAC strategies are modeled across environments and communication partners. As one participant shared following a recent training, “Thank you for making this less scary.” This feedback captures the heart of the initiative: providing access, reducing intimidation, and giving teams permission to try, learn, and grow together.

Trainings delivered in Paw Paw and other local districts have focused on:

- Dispelling common myths about AAC and early communication
- Understanding core and fringe vocabulary and how to use them intentionally
- Modeling AAC during play and daily routines
- Creating classroom environments where communication tools are always accessible
- Supporting families in using AAC strategies at home

This work aligns closely with the VBISD's commitment to inclusive practices, early intervention, and layered systems of support. By investing in foundational AAC training at the early childhood level, Van Buren ISD is strengthening outcomes for children receiving Early On and Preschool Special Education services, while also building capacity within general education preschool environments.

As this initiative continues to expand, this highlights how targeted professional learning, strong staff expertise, and family partnership can come together to ensure every child has a voice and every team knows how to listen.



***County-wide Early Childhood Data Portrait**

Leadership, Communication Skills, Professional Preparation, Decision Maker, Student Personnel, Setting Instructional Outcomes, Student Achievement

This data summary provides a county-wide snapshot of early childhood services across Van Buren ISD, including Early On, Family Links Home Visiting, Community Playgroups, Build Up Michigan, Preschool Special Education, and the Great Start Readiness Program. The data highlight participation, service delivery trends, and areas of growth as the department continues to strengthen inclusive opportunities, reduce barriers for families, and promote coordinated systems of support across programs and local districts.

Early On (Birth - 3yrs)

The data summary begins with Early On (Birth–3), highlighting early identification, referral patterns, and service delivery throughout the county. Across Van Buren County, 201 children are currently active in Early On services for the 2025–26 school year. Of those, 142 children receive Early On services only, while 59 children are served through Early On in combination with Michigan Mandatory Special Education (MMSE). Importantly, 100% of children with IFSPs are receiving services in natural environments, reflecting strong alignment with federal and state expectations and a continued commitment to family-centered, inclusive service delivery.

During the fall reporting period, the VBISD Early On received 127 referrals, with the highest referral volume occurring in Mattawan, Paw Paw, Hartford, and South Haven. These data continue to highlight the importance of early identification and consistent outreach across districts.

Town / Site	Early On Referrals Totals 2025-2026	Active Early On Totals 2025-2026	Early On Only Fall 2025	Early On + MMSE Totals 2025-2026	% Receiving IFSP Services in Natural Environments Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	10	11	7	4	100%
Bloomingtondale	18	18	9	9	100%
Covert	7	6	6	0	100%
Decatur	8	8	8	0	100%
Gobles	5	3	3	0	100%
Hartford	15	34	25	9	100%
Lawrence	4	18	14	4	100%
Lawton	6	13	10	3	100%
Mattawan	29	48	33	15	100%
Paw Paw	12	23	14	9	100%
South Haven	13	19	13	6	100%
VB County Total	127	201	142	59	100%

Family Links Home Visiting

Family Links Home Visiting received 56 new referrals county-wide during the fall reporting period, with 76 families actively participating in services. Referral activity was spread across most districts, with higher engagement noted in South Haven, Paw Paw, Lawton, and Decatur. These data reflect ongoing demand for voluntary, relationship-based family support services and reinforce the role of home visiting in reducing barriers for families with young children.

Town / Site	Home Visting New Referrals Totals 2025-2026	Home Visiting Active Families Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	2	4
Bloomingtondale	3	5
Covert	4	4
Decatur	7	8
Gobles/Grand Junction	4	6
Hartford	5	3
Lawrence	0	2
Lawton	9	9
Mattawan	3	10
Paw Paw	9	12
South Haven	10	13
VB County Total	56	76

Community Playgroups

During the fall reporting period, 21 playgroups were offered across Van Buren County. Average attendance data show that playgroups served approximately 7 children per session county-wide. Community averages varied by location, with Hartford averaging approximately 6 children per playgroup and Lawton averaging 13-14 children per session.

These data help illustrate both the strength of weekly playgroup participation in Hartford and Paw Paw and the more targeted, lower-volume reach of monthly offerings in other communities. They also highlight the need for additional outreach and creative service delivery in smaller, more rural districts, where consistent playgroup access is limited or currently unavailable. Community playgroups continue to serve as an important universal access point for families, supporting early development, peer connection, and referrals to additional early childhood services as needed.

Town / Site	Playgroups Totals 2025-2026	Playgroup Attendance Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	0	0
Bloomingtondale	0	0
Covert	0	0
Decatur (monthly)	2	4
Gobles	0	0
Hartford (weekly)	9	85
Lawrence	0	0
Lawton (monthly)	2	46
Mattawan	0	0
Paw Paw (weekly)	8	128
South Haven	0	0
VB County Total	21	263

Build Up Michigan (Ages 3–5 Child Find)

Build Up Michigan received 95 referrals during the fall reporting period, with 63% supported through Primary Evaluation Teams (PETs) that embed evaluation teams directly within preschool settings. While the Build Up team remains centralized in Lawrence, the expanded PET model improves equitable access across the county while increasing efficiency through more timely evaluations, stronger collaboration with local districts, and reduced disruption for families.

District	Build Up Referral Totals 2025-2026	Build Up Referral Primary Evaluation Team Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	4	1
Bloomingtondale	8	7
Covert	4	4
Decatur	8	4
Gobles	8	4
Hartford	9	4
Lawrence	9	4
Lawton	5	3
Mattawan	12	6
Paw Paw	25	19
South Haven	3	4
VB County Total	95	60

Preschool Special Education (ECSE) – Service Location & Inclusion

County-wide, 208 children ages 3–5 are currently served under an IEP. Of these students:

- 108 children (52%) are served in general education preschool settings
- 60 children (29%) are served in segregated ECSE classrooms

While there is still work to be done, VBISD is leading the way in inclusive practices. Compared to the state average of 52% of PreK students served in segregated ECSE classrooms, our data of only 29% reflects continued progress toward providing inclusive opportunities with appropriate supports. This is especially evident in districts maintaining strong partnerships between ECSE and general education preschool programs.

District	Total # Students with IEP (3-5yr) Totals 2025-2026	Segregated Classroom Totals 2025-2026	IEP in Gen Ed PreK Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	25	2	19
Bloomingtondale	17	9	4
Covert	6	1	5
Decatur	15	5	9
Gobles	14	7	6
Hartford	12	3	4
Lawrence	13	4	7
Lawton	13	4	7
Mattawan	30	4	13
Paw Paw	38	14	20
South Haven	25	7	14
VB County Total	208	60	108

ECSE Classroom Enrollment

Early Childhood Special Education classroom (ECSE) enrollment includes children ages 3–5. There are currently 60 students enrolled in ECSE classrooms across the county, including 25 four-year-olds and 35 three-year-olds. While inclusive preschool options are available for four-year-olds through PreK for All, children ages three and five receive services through ECSE programming. ECSE classrooms continue to play a critical role in providing specialized instruction and related services, while also coordinating inclusive opportunities for four-year-olds when appropriate and aligned with student needs.

District	Total Students in ECSE Classrooms Totals 2025-2026	4-year-olds Totals 2025-2026
Bangor	2	1
Bloomingtondale	9	3
Covert	1	1
Decatur	5	3
Gobles	7	4
Hartford	3	2
Lawrence	4	1
Lawton	4	3
Mattawan	4	1
Paw Paw	14	2
South Haven	7	4
VB County Total	60	25

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Enrollment

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) serves eligible four-year-old children and is a key component of Michigan’s PreK for All system. For the 2025–26 school year, Van Buren County is operating 32 GSRP classrooms, offering 508 total seats. As of the fall reporting period:

- 496 children are enrolled
- 12 children remain on waitlists

Several districts are currently at or near full capacity, including Mattawan, South Haven, Hartford, and Lawton. Continued waitlists in select areas highlight both strong demand for high-quality preschool and the importance of ongoing collaboration with local districts and community-based partners as PreK for All implementation continues.

District / Site	GSRP Classrooms	GSRP Spots Available	GSRP Children Enrolled	GSRP Waitlist Count
Bangor	2	36	35	
Bloomingtondale (Pullman)	2	18	30	
Covert	1	18	16	
Decatur	1	18	18	2
Gobles	1	18	17	2
Hartford	2	34	34	4
Lawrence	1	18	18	1
Lawton	2	32	32	1
Mattawan	2	36	36	
Paw Paw	5	90	87	2
South Haven	3	54	54	
Head Start Blend	6	60	54	0
CBO	4	76	65	0
VB County Total	32	508	496	12

Data Review and Planning Outlook

These data guide how the Early Childhood Department allocates resources, strengthens inclusive and family-centered practices, and ensures equitable access to early learning and support services across the county. As the Early Childhood Department continues to review county-wide participation and service delivery data, the following focus areas will serve as the lens for analysis and guide adjustments to strengthen access, inclusion, collaboration, and community engagement across Van Buren County.

1. Increase inclusive opportunities with appropriate supports

Service location/environment data across ECSE and general education preschool settings will continue to be monitored to strengthen inclusive practices, particularly for four-year-olds accessing PreK for All, while ensuring specialized ECSE supports remain available for children ages three - five.

2. Reduce barriers for families


Referral patterns across Early On, Home Visiting, Build Up Michigan, and Community Playgroups will inform outreach efforts and adjustments to service delivery models, with particular attention to communities showing lower participation or limited access points.

3. Promote collaboration and efficiencies across the department

Now in its third year, the department continues to strengthen coordination by aligning roles, processes, and communication to reduce redundancies and maximize staff capacity. This ongoing collaboration supports efficient service delivery, timely evaluations, smoother transitions, and consistent communication with families and local districts.

4. Strengthen community engagement with an equity focus:

Community-based participation data, including playgroups and home visiting, will be used to inform practice and assess access to services across Van Buren County. This information will guide adjustments to service locations, delivery models, and outreach efforts to ensure all communities have access to early childhood services and that family voice continues to shape program design and improvement.

 [VBISD EC Summary Data 25-26 - 0-3.pdf](#)

 [VBISD EC Summary Data 25-26 - PreK 3-5.pdf](#)

Parent Recognition & Program Impact

Leadership, Professional Standards & Ethics, Communication Skills, Student Personnel, Community Relations, Establishing a Culture for Learning, Student Achievement

The Early Childhood Special Education team at Van Buren ISD, in partnership with the Mattawan Early Childhood Education Center, continues to make a meaningful difference for children and families through inclusive, relationship-based supports. We are proud of the work our staff do each day to build trust with families, celebrate children's strengths, and support growth during these critical early years. The following message, shared with permission by Lars and Jessica Ruser, parents of Pierce, reflects the impact of this work through the voice of a family we are honored to serve.

Hi Dr. Williams and Ms. Hicks!

I just wanted to send an email to express our appreciation for every staff member at VBISD and Mattawan Schools who work with our son, Pierce.

We have had such a wonderful experience with VBISD since Pierce was 2 and it continues into his preschool years at Mattawan ECEC. Every single one of you deserves the highest recognition for all the hard work you do with Pierce, along with other children you work with. Pierce loves going to school and lights up when he speaks about all of you, so thank you for making such a positive impact in his educational journey. He has made such tremendous progress lately and wouldn't be where he is today without all your love and support.

I'm really looking forward to his annual IEP meeting on 1/7 and hope all of you have a wonderful holiday break, you deserve it!

Happy Holidays! 😊

Lars and Jessica Ruser

Feedback like this is a meaningful reminder of why this work matters. It reflects the care, dedication, and teamwork our early childhood staff bring to their roles and highlights the lasting difference these relationships make for children and families across Van Buren County. We are proud of the impact our teams have and grateful for the trust families place in us during these important early years.



District	Build Up Referral	Build Up Referral Primary Evaluation Team	% Primary Evaluation Team (PET) - Eval Team onsite for PreK	Total # Students with IEP (3-5yr)	Total # Students with IEP (3-5yr) Segregated ECSE Classroom	Total # Students with IEP 4-year-olds in Segregated ECSE Classroom	Total # Students with IEP (3-5yr) in Gen Ed PreK	GSRP Classrooms	GSRP Spots Available	GSRP Children Enrolled	GSRP Waitlist Count
Bangor	4	1	25%	25	2	1	19	2	36	35	0
Bloomingtondale (Pullman)	8	7	88%	17	9	3	4	2	18	30	0
Covert	4	4	100%	6	1	1	5	1	18	16	0
Decatur	8	4	50%	15	5	3	9	1	18	18	2
Gobles	8	4	50%	14	7	4	6	1	18	17	2
Hartford	9	4	44%	12	3	2	4	2	34	34	4
Lawrence	9	4	44%	13	4	1	7	1	18	18	1
Lawton	5	3	60%	13	4	3	7	2	32	32	1
Mattawan	12	6	50%	30	4	1	13	2	36	36	0
Paw Paw	25	19	76%	38	14	2	20	5	90	87	2
South Haven	3	4	133%	25	7	4	14	3	54	54	0
Head Start Blend								6	60	54	0
CBO								4	76	65	0
VB County Total	95	60	63%	208	60	25	108	32	508	496	12

Town / Site	Early On Referrals	Active Early On	Early On Only	Early On + MMSE	% Early On Receiving IFSP Services in Natural Environments	Home Visting New Referrals	Home Visiting Active Families	Playgroups	Playgroup Attendance
Bangor	0	11	7	4	100%	2	4	0	0
Bloomingtondale	0	18	9	9	100%	3	5	0	0
Covert	0	6	6	0	100%	4	4	0	0
Decatur	0	8	8	0	100%	7	8	2	4
Gobles	0	3	3	0	100%	4	6	0	0
Hartford	0	34	25	9	100%	5	3	9	85
Lawrence	0	18	14	4	100%	0	2	0	0
Lawton	0	13	10	3	100%	9	9	2	46
Mattawan	0	48	33	15	100%	3	10	0	0
Paw Paw	0	23	14	9	100%	9	12	8	128
South Haven	0	19	13	6	100%	10	13	0	0
VB County Total	0	201	142	59	100%	56	76	21	263

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: REBECCA DEPAS
RE: FINANCE & OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT UPDATE

31aa - The never ending battle (2,4,11,18,19)

The Michigan Court of Claims issued a decision on December 17, 2025, in *Macomb Intermediate School District et al. v. State of Michigan*, upholding the constitutionality of a provision in the State School Aid Act (Section 31aa(9)) that conditions school safety and student mental health funding on a district's agreement to waive certain legal privileges during a state-led investigation following a "mass casualty event." The court granted summary disposition in favor of the State, rejecting claims by school districts that the provision was unconstitutionally vague, coercive, violated the Title-Object Clause, or infringed upon the separation of powers. The court emphasized that participation in the funding program is voluntary and that the statute clearly defines when and how the waiver applies.

As a result of the ruling, the challenged provision remains enforceable, the plaintiffs' case was dismissed with prejudice, and districts must decide whether to opt into the funding under the existing statutory conditions.

December 19th, an emergency appeal was filed with the Michigan Court of Appeals challenging the Court of Claims decision upholding the Section 31aa privilege-waiver requirement, and requesting expedited consideration due to the December 30, 2025 rescission deadline. **The Court of Appeals has now issued an order granting expedited briefing but denying the request for a merits decision before December 30.** The order shortens the briefing schedule and places the case on the first available case call once briefing is complete, but it does **not** change the existing rescission deadline. In addition, the federal court has confirmed that it will continue to hold the related federal case in abeyance until all state-court proceedings, including appeals, are fully resolved.

As a result, there will be no court ruling before the December 30, 2025 deadline, and districts that opted into Section 31aa funding must make a decision. Districts may either (1) take no action and remain opted in, thereby receiving or retaining Section 31aa funds but accepting the statutory waiver of district privileges in the event of a mass casualty incident—subject to the outcome of the appeal—or (2) rescind their opt-in through the MDE website, which preserves all district privileges but requires repayment of Section 31aa funds through future state aid deductions. The rescission deadline remains 11:59 p.m. on December 30, 2025.

Annual Web Reports (13,19)

PA 630 of 2007 requires intermediate school districts to post certain information on our website available for the public to view. Our 2025-26 report is now posted and available to view. During all staff PD in January we will be highlighting this information to increase transparency and awareness.

Medical Plans Update (4,13,19)

Reminder, January 1, 2026 Medical Hard Caps (the amount VBISD contributes towards health care) have gone up by 2.9%

- Single person coverage: \$7,942.09
- Individual and spouse coverage: \$16,609.38
- Full family coverage: \$21,660.30

No changes to Medical Plan offerings based on Health Consortium meetings.

2025-2026 Out-of-School Time Learning Grant (5,8,10,19)

We were recently notified that VBISD was granted our OST Grant Application submitted by Erin Kucharski and the Instructional Services Department. This is great news for Van Buren County and our youth! Additionally, being exposed to this grant will give us a better understanding of how this funding could help sustain our Van Buren Youth Initiative once our ARPA grant from the county has ended at the end of the calendar year.

Van Buren Intermediate School District
Total Funded Amount: \$1,012,860.00
Approved Site(s)

Program Site Name	Program Type	School Year # of Students	School Year # of Days	Summer # of Students	Summer # of Days	Site Funded Amount
Bloomington Public Schools	School Year Only	30	90			\$90,720.00
Decatur Public Schools	Summer Only			83	24	\$48,960.00
Gobles Public Schools	Both School Year and Summer	50	90	72	50	\$228,000.00
Hartford Public Schools	Both School Year and Summer	38	90	126	24	\$174,960.00
Lawrence Public Schools	Both School Year and Summer	30	90	30	24	\$113,760.00
Lawton Public Schools	Both School Year and Summer	55	90	71	50	\$228,000.00
Mattawan Public Schools	School Year Only	26	50			\$31,500.00
South Haven Public Schools	Summer Only			50	24	\$31,680.00
VB ISD Migrant Summer program	Summer Only			85	32	\$65,280.00

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: MONICA MANSFIELD, DIRECTOR
RE: SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

***January Professional Learning Day**

Leadership, Level of Professional Awareness, Professional Standards & Ethics, Communication Skills, Resourcefulness, Planner & Organizer, Supervisor, Faculty & Staff Personnel, Student Achievement

On January 19, 2026, following the morning presentations led by Dave Manson, the Special Education Department will engage in a Tech Safety presentation led by our VBISD Technology Director, Damian Koob. Tech safety is a hot topic for all staff, regardless of role, as technology is embedded in instruction, communication, and daily operations throughout the organization. The afternoon will conclude with a featured presentation by Dr. Shelley Moore. Dr. Moore is a highly regarded inclusive education researcher and speaker known for her engaging and accessible approach to disability, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through practical examples and powerful stories from students, educators, and families, she encourages reflection on inclusive practices and reinforces the importance of designing learning environments that support *all* learners. This session supports VBISD's R.I.C.E. values by reinforcing respect for all learners, compassionate and inclusive practices, and a shared commitment to excellence in how we serve students.

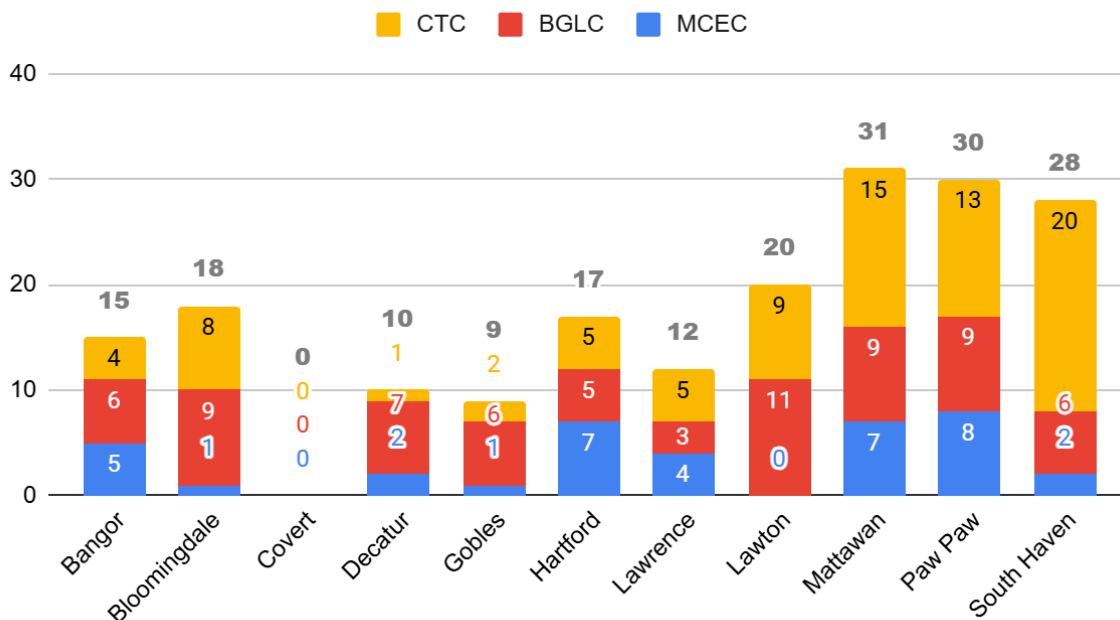
***Member District Participation**

Leadership, Planner & Organizer, Evaluator, Student Personnel, Community Relations, Knowledge and Evaluation, Coherent Instruction and Determination of Resources

VBISD's operation of center-base programs serve students from our member districts as part of the full continuum of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) services. These programs are designed to support students whose educational needs require a more intensive, specialized setting while maintaining a strong focus on individualized instruction, skill development, and progress toward greater independence. The following data chart and accompanying graph provide an overview of resident district participation in VBISD center-based programs, illustrating both the total number of students served from each district and the distribution of students across individual programs. This information is intended to support transparency, planning, and shared understanding of how center-based services are utilized across the county.

TOTALS per District		District	Participation Per District Total Number (Percentage)		
			Maple Creek Education Center	Bert Goens Learning Center	Community- based Transition Center
15	8%	Bangor	5 (13.5%)	6 (8.5%)	4 (5%)
18	9.5%	Bloomingtondale	1 (2.5%)	9 (13%)	8 (10%)
0	0%	Covert	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
10	5%	Decatur	2 (5.5%)	7 (9.5%)	1 (1%)
9	4.5%	Gobles	1 (2.5%)	6 (8.5%)	2 (2.5%)
17	9%	Hartford	7 (19%)	5 (7%)	5 (6%)
12	6%	Lawrence	4 (11%)	3 (4%)	5 (6%)
20	10.5%	Lawton	0 (0%)	11 (15%)	9 (11%)
31	16.5%	Mattawan	7 (19%)	9 (13%)	15 (18%)
30	16%	Paw Paw	8 (21.5%)	9 (13%)	13 (16%)
28	15%	South Haven	2 (5.5%)	6 (8.5%)	20 (24.5%)
190	100%	TOTAL:	37 □	71	82 □

Total # of Students (VBISD Programs)

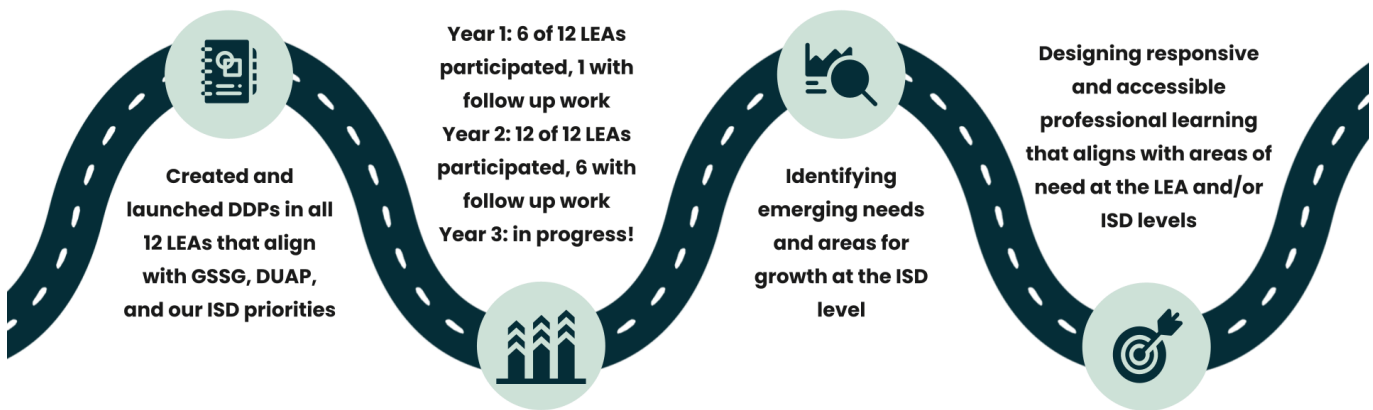


***Leading for Results: Special Education Leadership & Accountability Summit**

Leadership, Level of Professional Awareness, Professional Standards & Ethics, Supervisor, Evaluator, Faculty & Staff Personnel, Community Relations, Instructional Outcomes, Establishing a Culture for Learning

On December 1, 2025, Laura Thornburg (Administrator of Program Accountability) & Jennifer Korinek (Special Education Professional Learning Coordinator), presented to a large audience of administrators from across Michigan at the Special Education Leadership & Accountability Summit. Viewers went on a road trip learning about how the VBISD Special Education Department is making lasting changes in student outcome data by making special education compliance and results data accessible and meaningful for our local teams. [Let the Data Drive: Turning Data Into Action](#) is a map that shares how combining areas of focus can increase actions leading to improved student outcomes. The District Data Portrait (DDP) project has evolved from seeing to doing.

**Where We Are Today:
Intentional, Data-Driven Action is happening!**



Action 1: Invest in Evidence Based Practices

Action 2: Invest in Special Education Teachers

Action 3: Invest in Resource Development

Action 4: Scale automation of data stored by VBISD

Just for Fun ❄️ 🧑‍❄️ ❄️

The DHH/VI Department had a blast hosting the Winter Family Fun Night allowing families to:

- Build connection and community
- Reduce isolation and increase belonging
- Strengthen family–school partnerships
- Provide accessible, inclusive experiences
- Share resources and information
- Celebrate strengths and resilience



MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: DAMIAN KOOB
RE: TECHNOLOGY SERVICES BOARD REPORT

County Tech Director Meeting Update (Leadership, Professional Awareness, Communication Skills, Professional Preparation, Community Relations)

We continue to hold our monthly County Tech Director meetings for this school year, with the most recent being held on December 11th, 2025. We have had all but one District represented at all the meetings, which meeting notes are taken and shared to keep everyone updated.

I changed up the format of our meetings this year by incorporating a workshop portion that we will dedicate most of our time on. The workshops topics include the issues and challenges that all districts either struggle with or work through with the goal of alleviating the stress behind that process. For the latest meeting, we invited one of our long-standing vendors to discuss cybersecurity best practices and some solutions that would assist districts in increasing their cyber posture. Fortunately, VBISD and most of our districts are already utilizing a couple of these solutions. 😊

This is a very cordial group willing to share ideas and ask for assistance/recommendations. I appreciate the collaboration we have between all the districts within the county. Most Districts utilize the same or very similar solutions, which helps with our talks and discussions. I'm appreciative of these folks and our conversations.

****Michigan Association for Educational Data Systems (MAEDS) Fall Conference** (Leadership, Professional Standards and Ethics, Communication Skills, Planner and Organizer, Professional Preparation)



Lukas Enciso, Michael Wolfe, Colton Janecke, Matt Rzonca, Kevin Wanko, Ryan Cox, Derrick Price, Craig Campbell, and I ventured north to Acme, MI for the 61st Annual Fall MAEDS conference. This organization and conference caters to the Technology Directors/Coordinators and System Analysts that work in educational technology.

The conference has great sessions including Google Apps for Education Admins, AI in Education, and a many Cybersecurity discussions. These in-depth sessions play a major role in many of the discussions that we have within the Technology Services department.

I had the honor of being the Conference Chair for this year's conference, which was a great opportunity to see all the inner workings that go along with putting on such a great conference. Lukas Enciso presented on a session names "Situation Dictates", which involves a few scenarios that come up in our daily tech world and how to prioritize what situation may receive the quickest response. This is an exercise the Tech

Services Department performs a few times a year so that we all can put out our ideas and present thought-provoking situations. Lukas had a great turnout and many great questions/thoughts from attendees. 😊

I feel that the best aspect of this conference is the networking that we get to do with folks from other ISDs/RESAs and local Districts that are experiencing the same sort of things that we do. The theme for this year's conference was 'Nightmare on Tech Street: Keeping learning alive and striving.' To go along with the timing of Halloween. There was much collaboration between our staff and folks from other Districts/ISDs to the point where we were asked by a few Districts to assist with some of their initiatives. The other great part of this conference was the team building that occurred within the Technology Services department as well. The department greatly appreciates the Board's commitment to our professional development and opportunity to attend this conference. Thank you!

****December 8, 2025 Board Work Session (Leadership, Communication Skills, Professional Preparation, Planner and Organizer)**

Thank you to the Board and Mr. Manson for allowing me to attend the December 8th Board Work session. I appreciate the time to go over my updates...and all the great things we are doing for VBISD and our local districts. We have a great team and I appreciate the time to show you what we do and the shared services models that we support.



III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of 47 Replacement Doors Throughout VBISD (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

67

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7TH, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: DAVID JOHNSON
FACILITIES & OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATOR
RE: APPROVAL OF THE REPLACEMENT OF 47 DOORS THROUGHOUT VBISD

The Van Buren ISD recently solicited competitive bids to replace multiple doors throughout the district at VBT, MCEC, BGLC, and Transportation.

The eight doors that were installed at VBT during the Main Street / HD project are wood doors with concealed rods to secure them in the locked position. The repetitive opening and closing of the doors have caused the laminated panels of the doors to fatigue and break. Additionally, twenty doors at VBT need to be replaced.

Twelve classroom doors in the west wing of BGLC are the original doors that are beginning to delaminate, have holes in them, and a few continue to splinter creating a safety hazard.

MCEC has two wood classroom doors that are cracked and splintering and the four seclusion room doors have broken welds on the inside of the door that make the door unstable.

The NW entry door of the washbay for Transportation is rusted through on the bottom portion of the panel.

With installation of each door panel being \$1250, we plan to install the door panels ourselves over the summer. This will be a savings of \$48,750 (39 x \$1250=\$48,750).

All new doors (except the two classroom doors in MCEC) are hollow metal reinforced doors with a wood grain finish.

We received two bids for the installation of the eight fire doors at VBT and two bids for the remaining door panels. Bids were opened on December 8th, 2025.

After reviewing the proposals, it is recommended that Van Buren ISD accept the bid from Kalleward for the installation of eight fire doors at VBT in the amount of \$62,000 and the bid from SA Morman for the remaining 39 door panels in the amount of \$82,525.

COMPANY	BASE BID
8 Fire Doors from Main St into VBT	BID A
Kalleward	\$62,000
Jim Hall Builders	\$75,500
COMPANY	BID B
SA Morman	\$82,525
Kalleward	\$86,000

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education accept the base bid from Kalleward in the amount of \$62,000 for eight fire doors and the bid from SA Morman in the amount of \$82,525 for the remaining 39 door panels.

B. Approval of Corwin Meadows Drive Extension Design (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

69

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: ROBERT SMITH, DIRECTOR OF CAREER & EDUCATION
RE: APPROVAL CORWIN MEADOWS ROAD EXPANSION

BACKGROUND

When VBISD originally designed the Corwin Meadows neighborhood, Driesenga & Associates Inc. designed *Corwin Meadows Drive*, the corridor leading into the student-built neighborhood. At this time, we are nearing completion of construction on available home sites and are looking to extend *Corwin Meadows Drive* to connect to *Brandt Drive* and ultimately back to Corwin Road. Doing so will provide an additional 6 residential lots for student-build houses. VBISD administration recently met with Driesenga and Associates Inc. about this project and received a quote of \$72,735 to design the final phase of this project.

RESOLVED, the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the VBISD Administration, approves the hiring of Driesenga & Associates Inc. for the design & extension of *Corwin Meadows Drive*, for a total of \$72,735.

C. Approval of Network Cabling Project (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

71

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: DAMIAN KOOB
RE: NETWORK CABLING PROJECT – COMMUNITY-BASED TRANSITION CENTER

BACKGROUND

The FCC's Category 2 E-Rate program allows Districts to utilize federal funds to purchase network infrastructure equipment and cabling at a heavily discounted rate. This funding allows for the replacement of networking gear, firewalls, and cabling that would normally have to come out of program funding or bond dollars. The discounted rate is calculated from the NSLP (National School Lunch Program) data from the USDA, which VBISD is calculated at an 80% discounted rate.

With the assistance from our E-rate consultant, Elite Fund, an RFP process was utilized to vet the responses. We received four official bids:

1. Vector Tech Group
 - a. \$36,500.00
 - i. Installation and patch cables
 - ii. Abatement – additional \$5,400

2. Division27
 - a. \$41,386.08
 - i. Installation, abatement, and patch cables

3. Amcomm Telecommunications, Inc.
 - a. \$54,600.00
 - i. Installation only

I am recommending the project be awarded to Division27 as they provided the most complete bid with the components we have standardized throughout the ISD and the Districts we support. We confirmed the bids with the three vendors and checked their references to help us determine which vendor would be the best fit for this project. We are familiar with the Division27 installers and this solution will scale to our future needs.

RECOMMENDATION

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approve the network cabling project from Division 27 at a total price not to exceed \$41,386.08. (Actual cost to VBISD would be \$8,277.22 after 80% discount.)

D. Approval of Vacancy Appointment to Board of Education (**ROLL
CALL VOTE**)

73

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026

To: BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: DAVID MANSON, SUPERINTENDENT

RE: **APPROVAL OF VACANCY APPOINTMENT TO
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

RESOLVED that the Board of Education moves to approve the appointment of _____ to fill the vacant Board Trustee seat for the Van Buren Intermediate School District Board of Education for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2029, as of 5:15 pm on Wednesday, January 7, 2026..

E. Approval of Non-Union Pay Adjustments (**ROLL CALL VOTE**)

75



DATE: January 7, 2026
TO: Board of Education
FROM: David D. Manson, Superintendent
SUBJECT: **APPROVAL OF NON-UNION PAY ADJUSTMENTS**

In the past, we have made mid-year adjustments to non-union staff members in an effort to reward exceptional performance, keep up with market conditions, and account for increasing workloads due to staff shortages. As a result, I am seeking approval for the following:

- 1) Provide a \$1,500 ***increase in salary*** to IT Support Specialists, Evan Andres and Christine Nondorf-Maxam. Both have taken on expanded responsibilities by successfully dividing their time between VBISD and our local districts, ensuring both organizations receive timely, reliable, and high-quality technical support. This dual-district coverage requires exceptional time management, advanced troubleshooting skills, and a consistent commitment to service excellence. Their work has prevented disruptions, improved operational efficiency, and strengthened technology systems across multiple settings, going well beyond the standard expectations for their roles.
- 2) Provide a \$2,000 ***stipend*** to Oz Parlak for picking up payroll duties for Bloomington Public Schools this summer.
- 3) Provide a \$5,000 ***increase in salary*** to Alec Williams for taking on additional duties including the SE-4094, quarterly medicaid reporting, year end MAER reporting and proportionate share. He serves as the lead in all grant accounting work specifically for early childhood.

RESOLVED, the VBISD Board of Education approves the non-union member pay adjustments with an effective date of January 12, 2026.

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: BRITANI OLDS, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR
RE: APPROVAL OF EMPLOYMENT OF NEW STAFF

BACKGROUND

Following is a list of new staff, their position, salary and start date. Copies of resumes are attached.

<u>New Employee</u>	<u>Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>
Emily Wallace, Mental Health Clinician	\$51,137.00	12/08/2025

**Salary may be prorated based on start date*

RECOMMENDATION

Resolved that the Board of Education approve the employment of the staff listed above.

MEMO

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2026
TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: BRITANI OLDS, ADMINISTRATOR FOR HUMAN RESOURCES
RE: STAFF RETIREMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

BACKGROUND

Following is a list of retirements and resignations. Copies of letters are attached.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Resignation/Retirement Date</u>
Tyler Hunt, IT Support Specialist	Resignation - 12/12/2025
Laura Getty, Speech and Language Pathologist	Retirement - 12/31/2025
Lissette Mira-Amaya, Mental Health Clinician	Retirement - 01/31/2026
Rick Boze, Instructor, Automotive	Retirement - 04/01/2026

RECOMMENDATION

Resolved that the Board of Education accept the resignations of the staff listed above.

Attachments

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Adjournment

1. Motion to Adjourn Meeting (**VOICE VOTE**)

This meeting is a meeting of the Board of Education in public for the purpose of conducting the School District's business and is not to be considered a public community meeting. There is a time for public participation during the meeting as indicated on the agenda."

It is the policy of the Van Buren Intermediate School District that no discriminatory practices based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, height, weight, marital status, disability, genetic information or any other status covered by federal, state, or local law be allowed during any program, activity, service, or in employment. Inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies should be directed to Barbara Matthews, Director of Finance & Operations or Dave Manson, Director of Special Education, 490 S. Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI 49064, 269-674-8091.