

## **Special Education Board Update**

### **November 11, 2021**

- **Professional Development and Training**
  - Special Services Staff are continuing to attend webinars, collaborative trainings in the areas of interest, student need, or those addressed in their Professional Development Plans.
  - I would highly recommend a district wide, mandatory special education trainings for all staff as due diligence and a move toward better practices; the prevention of disability discrimination and to bust any urban myths, legends and out of date practices.
    - Legal training
    - Universal design for learning and public school environments
    - High Leverage practices- these are strategies to garner the biggest bang out of our time with students so that the focus becomes What did students LEARN? and how can a teacher know for certain... VS What did the teacher teach?
    - General educator and special educator inclusive practices training on how to collaborate, co-plan, co-teach so that all students have access to high quality learning
- **Recruiting of exceptional personnel:**
  - We did hire the Social worker referenced in last month's report- she is operating on the general education side to support the multiple needs of our students.
- **Community Relations & Communication:** Building Community Connections and Relationships with agencies and providers in our county to ensure we have continuity for our students and families
  - We held a parent advisory meeting at SMS on October 28<sup>th</sup>. It was the first held in a while. We had community members and a 3 parents attend. This is a start, but I look forward to continuing to an on-going dialogue.
  - November 12–We will participate in the Socorro County SCOTS Part-C to Part B Early Childhood transition team meeting. We will begin updating the MOU. –
  - We have discovered some interesting information that I hope will be positive but as of now, it is a bit muddy until the state informs districts of exact process. The new Ombud legislation that was passed in the last session allows the Ombud network to collect parent complaints regarding special education and send them to the Ombud for investigation. These investigations will occur with minimal knowledge of either the Superintendent or the Director of Special Education. The Ombud has expressed that they would like districts to pay for any wrongdoing found. Our incoming Board Member is a part of the elected board to the Ombud. Thus far concerns in our district have been solicited via social networking and to date, I have been given a head's up. I am hoping that open communication will continue.
  - We may need to enter into an additional MOU with some of the entities under the Positive Outcomes umbrella. We are not exactly certain how the Alberta Academy is licensed. There are many names associated with this business and it is difficult to discern because they are under the direction of the new Early Childhood Division that is a partner with CYFD, but not under the direction of PED. There is a Socorro County Office, but it is unmanned. We have left inquiry messages. This is important because we have provided related service to pre-k students enrolled there as the LEA, however, it has come to our attention that

they may actually be a private pre-school not covered by our existing MOU. If this is the case, we may have a data funding and service reimbursement issue. At the direction of the state I have made changes and we will research next steps.

- **Updating of Process and Procedures:**

- All of the processes referenced last month are all in use and staff continues to make additional recommendations as we find gaps.
- We will begin holding Early Childhood Developmental Screenings for the community monthly and may increase to twice monthly depending on demand. This is twofold project; one we are under obligation to find any students with suspected delays or disabilities in our LEA boundary, and two, we can increase enrollment in our early childhood programs for 3 and 4 y students by offering our program for any students who qualify. Our programs are better because of highly qualified teachers, embedded therapies and the state supported FOCUS curriculum and training. Other area programs cannot compete with what we are able to provide free of charge.
- We are in the final stages of 40- day Validation- Finally! It has been a journey but I am pleased with the learning curve of everyone. Each data field on an IEP is tracked and pulled into our STARS reporting data, so accuracy and the understanding of why IEP's are written a particular way is of huge importance.

- **Needs to be addressed:**

Since the last Board meeting, we have made much progress.

- We need to create a true continuum of placement options for students with disabilities. We have a need for alternative placements for students exhibiting severe behaviors or who have mental health issues that are impacting learning or the learning of others.
  - **UPDATE:** I am so excited that we are able to create these placement options without hiring new staff! We have been given the go-ahead to think outside the box and rethink our how.
    - The elementary option is being created and we have willing teachers and staff who will begin the program.
    - The secondary option has been internally posted and we have existing staff who have applied!!!
    - I have attached the draft continuum. The options we are developing are described as TAP, LINC and ITAP on the page.