

Special Education Parent Partnership Committee (SEPPC)

Nov 10, 2023

1:00 PM

Present: Ericka Ronnings, Corinna Graner, Dr. Aaron Ruhland, Melissa Martin, Erica Swenson, Erin Murray, Alisa Barnett, Michele McLaughlin, Ali Howe, Jillian Burke, Erica Lammers, Jessie Stratmann, Jackie Schultz, Robin Gipson, Ann Werdel

Introductions by all.

The READ Act Implementation and Timeline:

Dr. Aaron Ruhland introduced the READ Act, (Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act). This act was passed and signed into law by Governor Tim Walz on May 24, 2023. The goal of the legislation is to have every Minnesota child reading at or above grade level every year, beginning in kindergarten, and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. The READ Act replaces the Read Well by Third Grade and is in effect July 1, 2023. Access and read the full legislation under [Minnesota Session Law Chapter 55](#).

Screening: Districts and charter schools will have the 23-24 school year to transition to using an approved literacy screening tool. Beginning with the 24-25 school year, districts must administer an evidence-based reading screener that is approved by MDE to all students in K-3 within the first six weeks of school, including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services.

Training: Work was being done and we were aligned with some of the statutory requirements. We did some leadership training and also trained special education teachers. By July of 2025 all teachers will need to be trained. Leaning towards models that are comprehensive but not taking too much time. It will be a balancing act. Timeline was shared.

Literacy study will happen this year and will help determine a new literacy course and will get a list of approved curriculums from Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) – and this is an unprecedented change. We will be grappling with what can be changed and what can't. There will be some challenging decisions to make. Dr. Ruhland finished up on the READ act.

Unified Activities at Orono Schools are introduced by Michelle Swenson, and 2 students from the Unified program. One student shared that he was asked by Ms. Swenson to participate in the Unified program and that he fell in love with the Unified movement and is now acting as the chair of Unified at Orono Schools. In addition to that role, he is also serving as President representing Orono in partnership with Special Olympics MN. The purpose of the club is to foster inclusion and acceptance.

A video created by Anna Stankevitz was shared surrounding Unified:

Link is here: <https://youtu.be/O-AyG9e3Wbw>

Students continued to talk about Unified and Unity week. Unity day is Wednesday, T-shirts are sold and the entire students participate. Mobile Polar Plunge was created last year to raise funds for Unified.

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

Young people are encouraged to be leaders in their schools and communities. A student shared that he is working through DECA on adding a hockey sport to be added to Special Olympics MN.

## Unified Sports

It was inspired by a simple principle: Training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is a movement aimed at empowering a generation of student leaders to change their school culture to be more inclusive. Orono Schools is now recognized at a National level after applying for this recognition, along with 4 other schools in Minnesota. This was the first year that schools from Minnesota applied.

Ways to make change in the OHS. Saying hello to our unified members including all students in group projects, mentoring, young athletes and attending sporting events together.

They have incorporated Special Olympics into the younger students. A question was asked about younger students being involved and how they can start. There is an online registration that Michelle Swenson does.

A question was asked about including Chess and how to get it implemented, and other types of activities besides the sports.

A question was asked: how do the kids get to be a unified representative? Kids can be in the club and not participate in sports. When does the club meet? At OHS it is during Spartan hour.

Questions or comments for today? Corinna G asked if there are any topics that would be of interest to parents.

A parent asked about American Sign Language and how that could be incorporated into speaking and non verbal communication. Erin Murray talked about how they might be able to incorporate this, and have just started brainstorming this with other teachers.

The group was thanked for coming.