Reminder:
All communications that occur in this format are open to the public. Please refrain from unnecessary comments.

Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

January 16, 2024

Agenda

1. Call to order (5:30 pm)
2. Approval of Minutes: SEPAC Meeting Notes 10-24-2023.pdf
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Director (or Assistant Director) of Special Education Committee Presentation
5. Recognition of Audience
   a. a. (Please sign up through the chat option of the webinar. Each participant who signs up will have 3 minutes to make a public comment. This meeting is open to the public, but it is not a public forum. The primary focus of the meeting is the business listed on the agenda. Generally only the Council person will acknowledge public commentary. Please be assured, however, that all members welcome and appreciate your comments.)
6. Success Stories/ Feedback
7. Work Group Update
8. Community Events/Resources Available
9. Online suggestion box
10. Open Stakeholders:
    a. Non-teaching staff
    b. High School Student Representative
11. Establish Next Meeting Date
12. Adjournment of meeting

Special Education Leadership Updates

- ECSE Presentation by Mrs. Donna Johnson
- Child Count (December 1, 2024)
- Inclusion and Inclusive Practices

ECSE

Who Are We?

- Providing Early Childhood Special Education and Pre-K services to 3-5 years living in the FPS boundaries
- 5 ECSE classrooms at Longfellow Elementary, 8 ECSE classrooms at Agassis
- 2.5 hours a day- both AM and PM, 4 days per week
- Itinerant speech only services; itinerant services for students attending Head Start
- Best in Class General Education Pre-K, 13 students full day , 4 days per week
- Community Friends

ECSE | Early Childhood Special Education

Who Are We?

- **8-9 Students per classroom**
- **3-4 year olds in the morning/4-5 year olds in the afternoon**
- **Currently 188 students, plus 5 already qualified and waiting to turn 3 to start**
- **31 students currently being evaluated**

ECSE | Early Childhood Special Education

Who Is On Our Team?

- **Classroom Teachers**
- **Speech Language Pathologist**
- **OTs**
- **PTs**
- **Social Worker**
- **Paraeducators**
- **DHH, VI as needed**
- **Office staff**
- **Itinerant teachers to go to Head Start**
- **School Psych**
- **Evaluation Team**

ECSE | Early Childhood Special Education

Referral Process

- **Three Sources: Birth -3 (Early Intervention), Parents, Outside Providers**
- **If parent or outside provider- typically begin with a community screening (first Wednesday of the month)- pass or referred for evaluation**
- **Follow the same ND Special Education Evaluation process as K-5**

ECSE

Early Childhood
Special Education

Typical Day In ECSE

- **Meal Time (Breakfast or Lunch)**

- **Large Group/Circle Time**

- **Read Aloud**

- **Centers/Small Group**

- **Guided Play**

- **Gross Motor Time   (Gym or Playground)**

- **Music Time**

Special Education transportation is provided

Key Focus Areas in ECSE

- **Learning Routines**
- **Transitions**
- **Functional Communication**
- **Social Emotional Skills**
- **Independence in Self Help Skills**
- **Self Regulation**
- **Being part of a group**
- **Pre-Academics/Kindergarten Readiness**

ECSE Curriculum Resources

- **Creative Curriculum**

- **2nd Step Social Emotional Curriculum**

- **ND Early Learning Standards**

- **SeeSaw**

ECSE and Special Education

- **Individualized- Not a One Size Fits All Program (goals, number of days, service minutes, accommodations, ESY, etc.)**
- **Adhere to the same IDEA processes and procedures as K-12, following state and federal guidelines**
- **Parents are a very important part of the team**

Early Childhood
Special Education

Future of Early Childhood in FPS

- Continue to experience rapid growth
- Facility needs- would love 1-2 sites with adequate facilities to meet the needs of our district's youngest learners- part of Long Range Facility Plan
- Hoping to continue to expand Community Friends program
- Hoping to expand Best In Class Pre-K program

Need More Information

Community Screenings?

Community Friends???

Best In Class Pre-K??

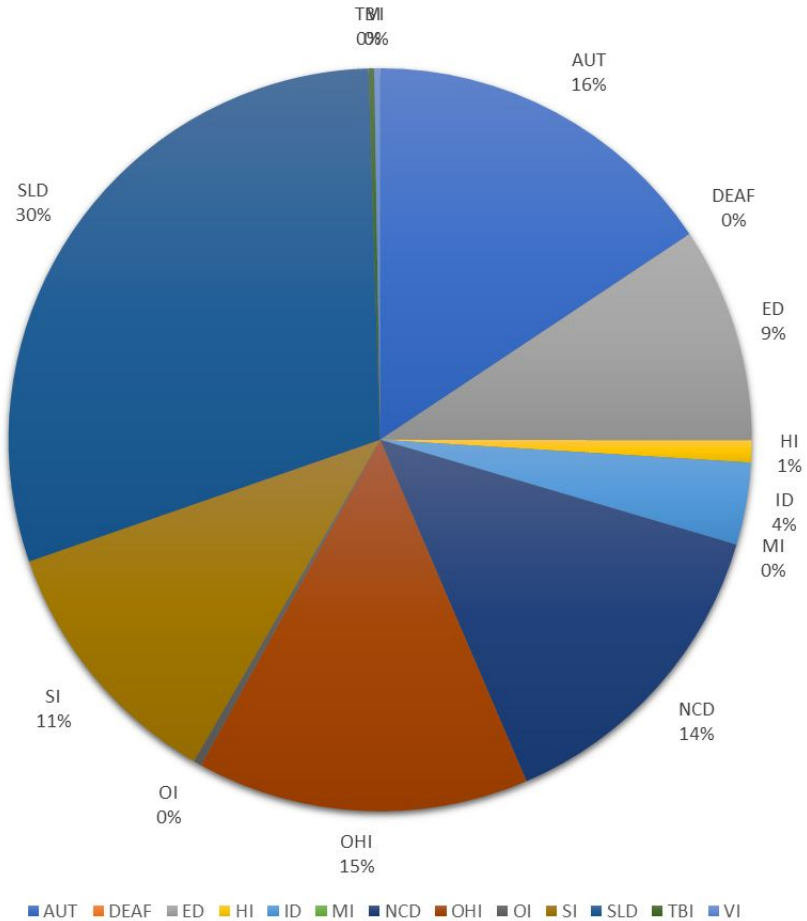**Call Our ECSE Office at 701-446-3100**

ECSE — Early Childhood Special Education

Questions ???

Child Count

2023 Child Count Data:

- Overall percentage: 18%
- AUT: Autism
- DEAF: Deaf/Blindness
- ED: Emotional Disturbance
- HI: Hearing Impairment
- ID: Intellectual Disability
- NCD: Non Categorical Delay
- OHI: Other Health Impairment
- OI: Orthopedic Impairment
- SI: Speech/ Language Impairment
- SLD: Specific Learning Disability
- TBI: Traumatic Brain Impairment
- VI: Vision Impairment

Inclusion as a priority within Fargo Public Schools:

Inclusion for students with disabilities refers to the educational philosophy and practice of ensuring that students with disabilities are provided with equitable opportunities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in the general education environment.

About Us / Disability Rights and Justice for People with Impairments

Inclusion as a priority within Fargo Public Schools:

Inclusionary practices in a school setting are essential for creating an educational environment that values diversity, promotes equity, and ensures that all students have the opportunity to learn and thrive.

What inclusion is (i.e., practices):

1. **Equal Access to Education:** Inclusion means that students with disabilities have the right to access the same curriculum, instruction, and educational resources as their peers without disabilities. It promotes an environment where all students are treated with respect and dignity.

2. **Individualized Support:** Inclusive education recognizes that students with disabilities have diverse needs and may require individualized support to succeed. It involves providing accommodations, modifications, and specialized services tailored to each student's unique requirements.

3. **Collaboration:** Inclusion encourages collaboration among educators, specialists, and parents to develop and implement strategies that support students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This may involve co-teaching, consultation, and professional development.

4. **Social Integration:** Inclusion promotes social interactions between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. It helps build friendships, empathy, and a sense of belonging among all students.

What inclusion is not:

1. **Segregation:** Inclusion is not about isolating students with disabilities in separate classrooms or schools. It rejects the idea of segregating students based on their disabilities.

2. **One-Size-Fits-All:** Inclusion does not mean that all students with disabilities will receive the same interventions or supports. It recognizes the individuality of each student's needs and strives to provide tailored solutions.

3. **Elimination of Special Education Services:** Inclusion does not negate the importance of specialized services. Some students with disabilities may require additional support from special education professionals while still participating in inclusive settings when appropriate.

4. **An Easy Fix:** Inclusion is not always a straightforward process. It may require adjustments in teaching methods, classroom environments, and attitudes. It can be challenging but is important for promoting equity in education.

5. **Ignoring Diversity:** Inclusion does not mean disregarding cultural, linguistic, or other forms of diversity within the student population. It acknowledges and respects the uniqueness of each student, including those with disabilities.

Who does inclusion benefit?

Students with disabilities:

- Improved academic performance
- More time spent engaged in academically challenging curricula
- Improved self esteem and social behavior
- Development of friendships between students with and without disabilities, resulting in opportunities for companionship and increased self concept

Who does inclusion benefit?

Students without disabilities:

- Improved academic performance and social behavior
- Greater academic achievement and increased time engaged academically due to effective instructional practices (e.g. differentiated instruction, peer tutoring)
- Awareness of the needs of others and the development of skills necessary to respond to those needs
- Increased patiences with students who learn at different rates

Who does inclusion benefit?

Teachers and schools:

- Increased teacher insight about and acceptance of students with disabilities
- Opportunities to learn innovative instructional practices that are beneficial for all students, possibly reducing the individual accommodations needed
- Increased collaboration among school staff, possibly leading to a stronger school community

Who does inclusion benefit?

Parents and the Community:

- Increased acceptance of students with disabilities by non-disabled students and their parents
- Heightened support of inclusive efforts through relationships with local agencies
- Greater parent involvement in school activities

About US

District level: [About Us / Organizational Structure](#)

Meet our SPED District Leadership Team:

Dr. Liann Hanson
Director of Standards Based
Instruction

Dr. Patty Cummings
Director of Compliance

Shelby DiFonzo
Assistant Director of SBI and
Special Education

Shirley LaMont
Admin Assistant

Nicole Schuler
Medicaid Clerk/SPED
Secretary- TBD

Meet our SPED Coordinators:

Emily Hanson

Kim Myers

Cassie Jorgenson

Jolene Schue

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Meeting timeline

There will be 4 (quarterly) FPS SEPAC meetings during the school year. Meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month starting at 5:30 PM and will not exceed 2 hours in length. Meeting dates and agendas will be published on the FPS website and sent to parents of students who have disabilities via Blackboard or other electronic communication method. The Chairperson in collaboration with the Director or Assistant Director of Special Education will make every attempt to hold the first meeting before the last working day in October. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled at the end of each current meeting.

Thank you!

Are there topics you'd like discussed?

If you think of the topics after this meeting, please email

Shelby DiFonzo @ difonzs@fargo.k12.nd.us