

Homer 33C Special Education Update

Mrs. Renee Karalus
Director of Special Services
September 29, 2026

I just want to give a huge shout-out to my three paras, **Jill, Joanna, and Jamie—the “J Crew”!** ❤️

These three ladies have been absolutely amazing, and I honestly cannot say enough good things about them. They are constantly going above and beyond to support our students, support me, and work alongside our specials teachers and service providers. They truly jump in wherever they are needed, without hesitation.

I feel incredibly lucky to have them on my team. I know that no matter what the day throws at us, they are going to figure it out, help where they can, and somehow bring some humor to the situation along the way. They are flexible, hardworking, caring, and just genuinely invested in our students.

There is no way I could run a successful classroom without them. They make the hard days manageable and the good days even better. Their support means more to me than they could ever realize.

I just really want them to know how appreciated and valued they are—not only by me, but for everything they bring to our classroom and our students every single day. They deserve all the recognition in the world, and I am so incredibly thankful for my J Crew!

From: **Teresa Maas**



STAFF SHOUT OUTS!

William J. Butler

- ★ I would love to give a shout out to **Beth Russell**, one of the reading specialists at Butler! She has been amazing for our students and is always helpful when any of us has questions about Map testing scores or if we have concerns about a student she is quick to jump in and test them for us. Beth is an amazing advocate for students and staff and is always there for us when we need someone to lean on!

Sufia Atiq

Luther J. Schilling

- ★ **Schilling sped. department** have all been instrumental in supporting students' transition back to school, especially those in second grade. Also, one to **Amy Durkalski** for joining our team and always being willing to collaborate and problem solve.

Candis Gasa

Goodings Grove

- ★ **Megan Almaraz-Kristen Hottinger and Lindsay O'Neil**. They have made my first couple weeks here so amazing and been such a huge help to my starting here- I am lucky to be on their team!

Megan Almaraz



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Staff Shout Outs.....



William E. Young

- ★ **Terri Leonard** has been an amazing para, as always. She knows exactly what to do and when to do it. She demonstrates flexibility when she is asked to take on new or different tasks, and she always does it with professionalism and enthusiasm. I'm lucky and grateful to have her as part of my team!

Carrie Ballentine

Hadley Middle School

- ★ **Jackie Gallagher** is amazing with all of the SI students and I'm so happy she is with me at Hadley.

Mary Norris

- ★ Shout out to **Mandy Larson**. Mandy is very diligent and proactive with supporting students. She is also always willing to share resources to help others.

Nick Betts

Luther J. Schilling

- ★ A huge shout out to our newest Schilling SI and Thrive paraprofessionals for jumping right in and becoming such a wonderful part of our teams! Their positive attitude, eagerness to learn, and willingness to help have already made such a positive impact on the students and environment! We're so grateful to have your energy and dedication join our amazing and hard working teams! **Melanie Graff, Kerie Peters, Elle Mizwicki, Amanda Brockett, and Shea Ryan**

Victoria Romeo



I would also like to take a moment to shout out the amazing K-1 SI team! **Ms. Sandy, Ms. Rachel, Ms. Victoria and Mr. Baud.**

They have been an incredible support to me as I transitioned from the EC self-contained/blended program into K-1 SI. They have spent countless hours outside of work with me helping prepare for this year and making sure we were setting our students up for success. I am incredibly grateful for every minute they have given me and for everything they have taught me along the way.

We continue to collaborate every single day, and I feel so lucky to be part of a team that works so well together. What means the most to me is that at the heart of every conversation, decision, and plan is one question: What is best for our students? You can genuinely see and feel how much they care about their students and their families, and that comes from such a special place in their hearts.

They are amazing educators and amazing humans, and I feel incredibly fortunate to work alongside them. Our students and their families are so incredibly lucky to have this team advocating for them, supporting them, and working every day to give them the best education and experience possible.

From: **Teresa Maas**



Shout out to **Amiee Dagenais, Michele Zmigrodski, Bridget Withrow, Kristen Jurca, and Amy Durkalski** for being an amazing support to me, the staff, and the department as a whole! You truly make every day worth it, and I could not do this without you!

- Renee Karalus



Specialized Instruction- Hadley- 2nd Community Outing for the 2026/2027 School year!



**Bridges classroom learning
with real-world experiences
to build functional life and
independence skills**



Specialized Instruction Community Outing





Community based experiences

Life and Transaction Skills: Students practice everyday tasks like buying groceries, ordering food at restaurants, and using or handling money.

Skill Generalization: Outings help students apply skills learned in a controlled classroom to unpredictable, noisy, or crowded real-world environments.

Social and Communication Growth: Interacting with cashiers, waiters, and the public improves functional communication, patience, and social appropriateness.

Safety Awareness: Students learn how to navigate unfamiliar spaces, follow safety rules, and respond to unexpected situations.

Adult Independence and Confidence: Regular community exposure prepares students for life after school, fostering personal growth and self-confidence.





Thank you, any questions for me?

