

St. Joseph County ISD Staffing Plan to address shortages

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District supports local district special education needs as part of a continuum of services. We are dedicated to ensuring our students receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Educational shortages are a current reality and it is important to implement proactive strategies when unexpected openings occur to ensure our students receive FAPE. The following plan outlines steps that will be taken when shortages occur.

If a classroom teacher or service provider unexpectedly resigns, the ISD is committed to provide services immediately and effectively either through contract employment or otherwise. The following steps will be taken to ensure students continue to receive appropriate education.

- Consider if two similar classrooms can be combined to ensure a certified teacher oversees the program.
- Post for the vacant position, as needed, given above consideration.
- As needed, utilize certified subs that work in our district (floating subs, current staff with sub permits or third party hires) to meet short term needs, assigning the sub a mentor and contracting with certified teachers to support lesson planning and IEP oversight until the position can be filled.
- Utilize staff in other positions with needed certifications and endorsements to support, as practical.
- Notify the local education agency with jurisdiction over ensuring the student receives FAPE to work together on other continuum options if adequate staffing is not found.
- Notify families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue. Consider compensatory education needs due to the lack of a certified teacher.

The ISD will attempt to ensure that teachers and staff responsible for implementing all programs and services at the ISD's Pathfinder Program meet all state certification and endorsement requirements that pertain to those programs and services.

- The ISD will ensure postings for new openings meet state and federal certification and endorsement requirements. Qualified candidates will be solicited through a variety of avenues, including hiring websites, third party vendors, colleges, universities and Michigan Department of Education resources.
- When appropriate, the ISD will consider if two similar classrooms can be combined to ensure a certified teacher oversees a program.
- Knowing local schools and surrounding ISD's are struggling with the same shortages in the area of special education, additional efforts to be competitive have been made. This includes significant salary increases for classroom staff, raised sub pay and offered bonuses, and brainstorming with union groups. St. Joseph County ISD is part of a 48 ISD consortium, called Talent Together, committed to filling programs with certified staff.

- Talent Together has recently been awarded a grant of over 60 million dollars to support growing our own talent locally.
- In addition, the county has opened a teacher cadet program through Career Technical Education to support needs in the community.

The ISD will ensure that students are provided with appropriate instruction if teachers and staff who hold the state required certification and endorsements are unavailable.

- When certified and endorsed educators are unavailable, the ISD will utilize subs with permits that work in our district (floating subs, current staff with sub permits or third party hires) for longer term positions, assigning the sub a mentor and contracting with certified teachers to support lesson planning and IEP oversight until the position can be filled.
- Certified subs will receive priority of placement over non certified subs.
- A letter of agreement allows current staff with appropriate permits to be paid for additional time if they are willing to sub and support classrooms for daily absences.
- Staff in other positions with needed certifications and endorsements will be asked to support immediate needs, as practical, based on their role in the organization.
- The local education agency with jurisdiction over ensuring the student receives FAPE will be notified to work together on other continuum options if adequate staffing is not found.
- Notify families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue. Consider compensatory education needs due to the lack of a certified teacher, if needed.

Continued efforts to overcome staff shortages and provide students with a FAPE.

- Knowing local schools and surrounding ISD's are struggling with the same shortages in the area of special education, we've made additional efforts to be competitive. This includes:
 - Significant salary increases for classroom staff, raised sub pay and offered bonuses.
 - On going communication and brainstorming with union groups.
 - Joining a 48 ISD consortium, called Talent Together, with a grant of over 60 million dollars to support growing our own talent locally.
 - Opening a teacher cadet program through CTE.

When the ISD is unable to find certified staff to fill positions and utilizes substitute teachers, the following steps will be taken to ensure appropriate, quality instruction continues for students:

- For long term subs assigned as the Teacher of Record for a given assignment, building administration will provide support by assigning a mentor and certified teacher to oversee lesson plans and IEP's to provide needed support and peer training.
- A similar evaluation process to other classroom staff will be used for long term subs, including conducting walk through observations with feedback, documenting training or coursework completed at the ISD. EDUStaff sub

evaluations include the building administrator completing an “Employee Performance Feedback Form” no less than once per semester.

- Families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher will be notified of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue.
- Compensatory education needs will be considered due to the lack of a certified teacher.

When a certified teacher who is not trained in the instruction of persons with the disability in question is hired to be the teacher of record, the ISD will consider the following additional supports to ensure that the teacher receives relevant training so that the teacher may effectively and adequately provide program services to the students assigned to their respective classrooms or programs:

- Assign a teacher consultant for specialized support services.
- Utilize performance contracts with certified staff.
- Provide professional development in the area of social/emotional learning.
- Assigning a mentor.
- Provide an extra layer of support from our behavior team, i.e., School Social Worker, School Psychologist.

The Local Education Entity, in collaboration with the ISD, has an obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to each student. This obligation remains intact in the event of a teacher shortage. A notice will be provided to parents of students with disabilities when a certified teacher or staff is unavailable and will indicate the measures in place to ensure students are provided a FAPE, as outlined in this plan.

The ISD will monitor its Plan on a periodic basis, at least every semester, to ensure both the immediacy and effectiveness of its provision of programs and services.