HALLSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

District program: Special Education and Services

Person(s) responsible: Donna M. Simkins, Director of Special Services

Submission deadline: February 12, 2024 **Date of Board Presentation:** February 27, 2024

The Board-approved goals of this program are:

1. The district identifies and provides effective, differentiated learning and behavioral support programs for all students.
2. Comprehensive services for all resident children with disabilities, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Chapter 162, RSMo., are an integral component of the District's educational program.

The Board-approved objectives of this program are:

1. The District has policies and procedures in place to ensure the provision of effective special education services to children (ages 3-21) and their parents in accordance with state and federal regulations.
2. All students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum, participate in regular education settings with non-disabled peers, and demonstrate progress in the general curriculum.
3. The District ensures that all students with disabilities receive appropriate supports, services, and modifications (including related services, assistive technology, and positive behavioral interventions) to address their individual needs.
4. The District implements programs that result in improved opportunities for post-secondary education and employment for students with disabilities.
5. Instructional staff routinely collaborate and use student data to provide appropriate interventions to address a range of student instructional and behavioral needs.
6. The district uses a variety of student and program data to monitor, evaluate, and inform decision-making to identify and implement successful learning and behavioral supports.
7. The district collaborates with community partners to provide information and resources to students and parents to address barriers impacting student success, including but not limited to academic, physical, and mental health needs.

The data sources used to determine the extent to which the goals and objectives are being met include:

x	Attendance/dropout/suspension rates		Library media standards assessment
x	Parent/teacher/student surveys	x	State/federal program requirements
x	Assessment statistics	x	Longitudinal performance data
	College attrition/completion rates	x	Finances—revenues and expenditures
	Long-term facility/maintenance needs	x	Internal evaluations by district staff
	Participation in extracurricular activities	x	External evaluations by others
x	Participation in special/supplemental programs		Other:

HALLSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATION RESULTS

Goals and objectives that were met:
All Board-approved objectives for this program have been met**.**

Goals and objectives that were not met:

None

Evidence of change in the past two years resulting from program evaluation: Year of change

The Hallsville special education program is experiencing significant growth, as there is a rising number of students who require more specialized support than what was previously offered in the Hallsville School District. We are dedicated to providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students within our district. It is our responsibility as a school to create personalized programs and allocate staff resources to ensure that every student receives the education they deserve. These programs are tailored to meet the unique needs of each student and align with the Continuum of Services for Special Education. The IEP team conducts thorough evaluations for every student to determine the most suitable services along this continuum. 22,23,24

By adding two Learning Specialists, the number of students per caseload decreased to an average of 14. However, the Learning Specialists in each school are currently facing difficulties due to the high number of students they are responsible for. This makes it hard to effectively meet the unique needs of each student and provide the required support and services for those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

At present, there are three separate educational environments within the district dedicated to serving a portion of our high-needs special education students (K-12). This means that our current approach involves assigning a single teacher to a classroom of students with more significant needs.

In response to the growing number of special education referrals, we have broadened our range of resources and partnered with credible external organizations to conduct our standardized assessments. This approach has significantly enhanced the support provided by the Process Coordinator to the special education team.

The Hallsville R-IV School District Department of Special Services collaborates with external organizations to provide the necessary support services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These services include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Through these valuable partnerships, we have been able to engage highly skilled therapists who seamlessly integrate with our staff and students, resulting in successful outcomes.

HALLSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

Program strengths:

1. Attracting and retaining highly skilled Special Education teachers has been an ongoing challenge. Our Learning Specialists must possess a thorough understanding of inclusive teaching methods, legal obligations, and effective approaches to assist students with a range of needs. It is crucial for them to have a deep comprehension of disabilities in order to effectively address the specific difficulties that students with diverse learning needs encounter.

2. Due to the vital role that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) hold in the everyday routine of our Special Education teachers, a crucial aspect of their training revolves around the development of impactful personalized education plans. Given that IEPs guide the teaching process, the Hallsville Department of Special Services ensures that our teachers receive comprehensive guidance and hands-on practice in crafting successful IEPs. By creating effective IEPs, our teachers will be equipped to make a significant and enduring difference in the lives of our students.

3. In order to accommodate the growing number of special education referrals, we have expanded our available resources and established partnerships with reputable external organizations to conduct standardized assessments. This approach has proven beneficial for the Department of Special Services, as it enables us to provide enhanced support to the special education team in a more efficient manner.

4. The ongoing utilization of our software, Spedtrack, for our Special Education Program has established a structured and effective approach for our educators to meet the paperwork requirements mandated by federal and state regulations in accordance with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). This is the fourth year since the department started implementing this program. Spedtrack has emerged as the benchmark software adopted by more than fifty percent of the districts in Missouri and a few neighboring states.

5. The Department of Special Services at Hallsville R-IV School collaborates with external organizations that meet the necessary qualifications to provide related services to students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These services include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. These successful partnerships enable us to engage highly skilled therapists who effectively support our staff and students

Program concerns:

1. Our resource teachers in each school building currently have an overwhelming number of students on their caseloads, making it challenging to adequately address the necessary accommodations, modifications, and services for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Attracting highly skilled Special Education teachers has been an ongoing challenge.

Additionally, due to the limited supply, we have observed an increase in the number of individuals applying for positions in Special Education who hold alternative certifications or lack any certification at all. This poses a significant challenge when it comes to recruiting teachers in the highly specialized field of special education. The extensive training necessary to excel in this role becomes even more difficult to obtain for educators who are already managing a demanding daily classroom environment with a substantial student population

2. The occurrence of student behavior issues has shown a consistent increase over the past three to four years.There are numerous factors that can influence student behavior and contribute to challenging situations for schools to address. These factors encompass biophysical aspects like medical conditions or disabilities, as well as psychological elements such as emotional trauma or deficits in social skills.

Presently, within the district, there are 38 students allocated a combined total of 3,176 minutes per week for behavior management skills. Additionally, 22 students dedicate a collective 3,799 minutes per week to develop social skills, while 95 students invest a total of 12,454 minutes per week in enhancing executive functioning abilities through Special Education services.

3. The growing number of students in Special Education necessitates additional space in buildings throughout the district. Managing the shared space between general education and Special Education can be challenging. The administration team must prioritize discussing and coordinating the management of this issue. Ensuring students' needs are prioritized when allocating space for all students is crucial.

4. The school district should maintain its focus on examining the salary structure for Paraprofessional positions and devising comprehensive approaches to enhance classified staff compensation fairly and consistently across various departments within the district. This will enable us to enhance our competitiveness and attract exceptionally talented paraprofessionals

Future recommendations resulting from this evaluation:

1. Creating a district-wide position for a Paraprofessional/Behavior Interventionist dedicated to addressing the behavioral and social skills requirements of our special education students.

2. Develop a method for allocating and distributing suitable spaces within district buildings to fulfill the requirements of Special Education staff and students.

3. Prioritize the evaluation of pay scales for Paraprofessional roles and create inclusive strategies to ensure fair and consistent compensation for classified staff across different departments. By doing so, we can improve our competitiveness and attract highly skilled paraprofessionals to our district.

4. Continuously work to enhance the role and effectiveness of the Student Assistance Teams (CARE, SAT, PST), as well as implementing programs like PBIS with fidelity. They are also introducing research-based interventions, both academic and behavioral, to support struggling students at their individual learning levels. The aim is to improve their performance and reduce the likelihood of failure. By fully implementing a Multi-Tiered System for Support (MTSS), more students will have the opportunity to succeed academically and behaviorally, resulting in fewer students being classified with Special Education disabilities according to the State Standards.