



HALLSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

District program: Special Education and Services
Person(s) responsible: Donna M. Simkins, Director of Special Services
Submission deadline: March 6, 2026 **Date of Board presentation:** March 18, 2026

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 which 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:

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



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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

23,24,25

Hallsville Special Services Department Staffing and Program Support Report

The Hallsville School District Special Services Department has experienced a positive shift in staffing stability during the current academic year. For the majority of the school year, the department has been fully staffed with both learning specialists and paraeducators. This represents a significant improvement compared to previous years, when the district frequently operated with a shortage of paraeducators—often by three or more positions. Maintaining a fully staffed team has allowed the district to provide more consistent and effective support to students receiving special education services.

In prior years, shortages in paraeducator staffing placed additional strain on learning specialists and other staff members. Paraeducators play an essential role in supporting the implementation of individualized instruction, assisting with classroom management, providing direct support to students with disabilities, and helping students remain engaged in learning activities. When these positions were unfilled, learning specialists often had to divide their time between instructional responsibilities and providing the additional support that paraeducators typically provide. This made it more difficult to deliver consistent services and could limit the amount of targeted instruction students received.

Another important improvement this year has been the addition of a part-time Process Coordinator within the Special Services Department. The Process Coordinator plays a key role in managing and organizing special education compliance requirements, particularly related to student evaluations and re-evaluations. In previous years, learning specialists were responsible for completing a large portion of the reevaluation process, which often required many hours of paperwork, coordination of meetings, and data collection. These responsibilities reduced the amount of time available for direct instruction and collaboration with staff and families.

The addition of the Process Coordinator has significantly reduced the administrative burden placed on learning specialists. By assisting with the organization and coordination of reevaluations and compliance documentation, the Process Coordinator ensures that timelines and required procedures are followed according to state and federal special education regulations. This support has helped the district maintain compliance with evaluation timelines and documentation requirements while allowing learning specialists to dedicate more time to instructional planning and direct services for students.



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Overall, these staffing improvements have had a positive impact on the district's ability to effectively serve students with disabilities. Having a fully staffed team of learning specialists and paraeducators ensures that students receive the appropriate level of instructional and behavioral support outlined in their IEPs. Additionally, the support provided by the Process Coordinator strengthens the district's ability to meet compliance requirements while improving efficiency within the department.

These changes contribute to a stronger special education program across the district. By ensuring adequate staffing and providing support for compliance-related responsibilities, the Hallsville School District is better positioned to provide high-quality services, support staff effectively, and meet the diverse needs of students receiving special education services.

Program strengths:

The Hallsville Special Services Department has been effectively meeting compliance requirements over the past three years, largely due to its manageable case manager caseloads, which average 16 students. This lower caseload allows case managers to dedicate more time and attention to each individual student's needs, ensuring that IEPs are developed and reviewed thoroughly and on time. With fewer students to manage, case managers can engage more deeply in lesson planning and instructional strategies, tailoring them to meet the specific goals and accommodations outlined in each student's IEP. This personalized approach not only enhances the quality of education for students with disabilities but also ensures that the district stays in full compliance with state and federal regulations, providing a more responsive and supportive environment for students and families.

Now that the Hallsville Special Services Department has the capacity to focus more on teaching, we will be implementing Specific Designed Instruction (SDI) training for all staff involved in special education. This training will empower educators to create even more tailored and effective instructional strategies that align with each student's unique learning needs, as outlined in their IEPs. By using SDI, teachers will be equipped with a range of methods to address diverse learning styles, whether it's through differentiated instruction, assistive technology, or other accommodations. This targeted approach will enhance the overall educational experience for students with disabilities, helping them progress toward their goals in a more focused and supportive environment. Ultimately, this training will further strengthen our commitment to providing high-quality, compliant, and personalized education to every student in our program.

Program concerns:

Overview of Missouri House Bill 656 on Parental Consent for IEP Changes

Missouri House Bill 656 has been proposed, requiring parental consent for changes to a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), including initial placements, annual placements, or revisions. Policies like this often spark debate, as they impact the balance of decision-making between parents and school districts. Below is a summary of the potential positives and concerns that may arise from this bill.



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Potential Positives

One of the potential positives of the bill is that it strengthens parental rights. Parents will have more control over decisions affecting their child's education, ensuring that no changes are made to services without their knowledge or consent. Schools will also be required to clearly explain proposed changes, aligning with the parental involvement principles embedded in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The bill also ensures more transparency by mandating a standardized consent form from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which will ensure that parents understand exactly what they are agreeing to. This will lead to clearer documentation and less confusion across districts, helping resolve potential disputes more efficiently. Additionally, the bill provides an opportunity for parents to visit proposed special education programs before placement, allowing them to make more informed decisions. This can foster better understanding, build trust between schools and families, and lead to better program placements for students. Lastly, the bill includes a partial agreement option, which allows agreed-upon services to proceed even if there are disagreements on other services. This approach could prevent "all-or-nothing" disputes, allowing students to receive needed services sooner.

Potential Concerns

On the other hand, the bill raises some concerns. One major concern is the potential for delays in services. Requiring signed parental consent before implementing IEP changes could delay services, especially if parents do not respond promptly, if communication breaks down, or if disagreements occur. This could lead to students remaining in outdated placements for longer periods, delaying their educational progress. Another concern is the potential for more legal disputes. The bill stipulates that districts can only proceed with changes after due process complaints and hearings if there are disagreements. Critics fear this could lead to more litigation, increased legal costs for districts, and longer delays in student services. The bill would also place additional administrative duties on school districts, such as tracking and storing consent forms, ensuring signatures before implementing changes, and following strict procedures. Smaller or under-resourced districts may find it difficult to comply with these new requirements, leading to potential inefficiencies. Finally, some educators argue that the bill's formal consent process could limit schools' ability to quickly adjust services in response to student needs, making it more difficult to implement timely professional recommendations.

Conclusion

Missouri House Bill 656 raises important questions regarding parental rights, school flexibility, and administrative burdens. While it aims to increase transparency and parental involvement, it could also introduce delays and legal complications. As the Hallsville School District Special Services Department continues to evaluate this bill, balancing the benefits with the potential challenges will be crucial in ensuring that the district can provide effective, timely support for all students.

Impact of MSSD Reorganization on the Hallsville School District and Students with Severe Disabilities

The reorganization of the Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) is likely to affect smaller school districts such as the Hallsville School District. MSSD provides specialized education for students with severe or profound disabilities whose needs cannot be adequately met in a traditional public school setting. These schools typically have very low student-to-staff ratios and teams of specialized professionals, including certified teachers, aides, therapists, and sometimes nursing staff, to provide individualized support.

In 2025, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) approved a plan to close 12 MSSD schools statewide, including Delmar Cobble School in Columbia, which had served students from surrounding mid-Missouri communities.

For the Hallsville School District, this change presents challenges. Currently, the district has one student enrolled in an MSSD program and another potential student who may require that level of support. Without nearby MSSD locations, families and districts may face fewer placement options for students whose disabilities require intensive services.



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Although Hallsville provides special education services and works to ensure that all students receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the district is a relatively small rural district and does not have the same level of specialized resources available in state-operated programs. For students with severe disabilities, appropriate support may require highly trained special education teachers with expertise in severe or multiple disabilities, multiple paraeducators or aides in a classroom, access to speech, occupational, and physical therapy, and specialized equipment and adaptive learning environments. Programs like MSSD are designed specifically to provide these supports with higher staffing ratios and specialized facilities. Smaller districts such as Hallsville may not have the trained staff, specialized classrooms, or medical and therapeutic resources needed to fully support students with the most severe disabilities on-site.

As a result, the closure and consolidation of MSSD schools could create several potential impacts for Hallsville. The district could face limited placement options for students who require highly specialized programs, longer travel distances to reach remaining MSSD schools or alternative programs, increased pressure on the district's special education staff and resources, and the need for additional funding, training, or partnerships to meet students' needs locally.

Overall, the restructuring of the MSSD system may make it more difficult for small districts like Hallsville to ensure that students with severe disabilities receive the specialized education and intensive support services they require.

Future recommendations resulting from this evaluation:

Implementation of Specially Designed Instruction in the Hallsville School District

Providing high-quality educational services for students with disabilities is a central responsibility of the Hallsville School District. One of the most important components of effective special education programming is the use of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). SDI refers to the adaptation of the content, methodology, and delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of students with disabilities and to ensure that they have access to the general education curriculum. These supports are determined through the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are implemented by trained staff to help each student make meaningful educational progress.

SDI is particularly important for students with significant learning, developmental, or physical disabilities. Through SDI, educators modify how instruction is presented and how students demonstrate learning so that educational expectations remain high while instruction is tailored to individual needs. The goal of SDI is not simply to modify assignments, but to intentionally design instruction that allows students with disabilities to successfully access and participate in their education.

Within the Hallsville School District, the implementation of SDI will involve several key instructional practices. Teachers will use differentiated instructional strategies to meet diverse learning needs, including breaking complex skills into smaller steps, providing repeated practice opportunities, and using multiple ways to present information. Visual supports, assistive technology, structured routines, and adapted materials may also be used to help students better understand and engage with instruction. In addition, teachers and paraprofessionals will provide targeted small-group or individualized instruction to reinforce academic, communication, social, and functional life skills.

Effective implementation of SDI also requires collaboration among educators and support staff. Special education teachers work closely with general education teachers to ensure that students receiving special education services can access classroom instruction while receiving appropriate supports. Related service providers such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and other specialists also play a role in helping design and implement strategies that support students' individual needs.



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Professional development and training are essential to ensure that staff are prepared to provide high-quality SDI. The Hallsville School District will work closely with the Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) to provide training opportunities for teachers and paraeducators to strengthen their understanding of special education best practices. This training may include instruction on writing and implementing effective IEP goals, strategies for differentiated instruction, behavior support techniques, the use of assistive technology, and methods for collecting and analyzing student progress data. Staff will also receive training on collaboration practices so that general and special education teachers can effectively work together to support students in inclusive classroom settings.

By strengthening the district's focus on Specially Designed Instruction, Hallsville School District is taking an important step toward ensuring that all students receive the individualized support they need to succeed. When implemented effectively, SDI allows students with disabilities to access meaningful learning opportunities, build independence, and achieve progress toward their educational goals. Through continued staff training, collaboration, and commitment to individualized instruction, the district aims to provide high-quality educational services that meet the diverse needs of its students.