
BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Information/Discussion _____

Future Action _____

Action X

Item: Lincoln Pines – Intensive and Safety Support Classrooms

Submitted by: Dave Rodgers

Date: June 16, 2026

Recommended by: Kirsten Myers / Dave Rodgers

Board Meeting Date: July 20, 2026

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Board approve the KIEA Letter of Understanding (LOU) that provides additional compensation during the 2026-27 school year to KIEA teachers who are regularly assigned to our most challenging behavior classrooms designated as Intensive and Safety Support. The Board previously approved a similar LOU for KISSA. It is anticipated that Lincoln School may have three of these classrooms during the 2026-27 school year. At the current time, we don't believe Pine Grove will have any Intensive and Safety Support Classrooms this school year.

BACKGROUND: This concept is being brought forward in response to the increasingly intensive and complex needs of a small group of students whose educational, communication, behavioral, and safety needs significantly exceed the level of support currently available within our existing autism classroom structures at Lincoln and Pine Grove where we continue to experience substantial challenges related to the intensity, frequency, duration, and unpredictability of student dysregulation, including behaviors that place students and staff at risk of significant harm daily.

Like many programs serving students with the most intensive support needs, we continue to face significant challenges in recruiting and, more importantly, retaining highly qualified staff due to the physical, emotional, and safety demands of these environments. High staff turnover and staffing instability directly impact continuity of instruction, relationship-building, regulation support, and overall program effectiveness for students with the most significant needs.

As a result, for the 2026-27 school year, we intend to establish and implement 2-3 Intensive and Safety Support Classrooms, where appropriate based on need and criteria. These classrooms are intentionally designed to support a significantly smaller student-to-staff ratio and increased physical space between students to safely and effectively meet the needs. Identification of students for these classrooms will occur through a data-based decision-making process that considers the frequency, intensity, and severity of behaviors that significantly impact safety and access to learning. This includes students demonstrating self-injurious behaviors, physical aggression toward staff or peers, and/or elopement behaviors that occur at a high level of need, including behaviors occurring multiple times per day.

This proposed educational environment is intended to enhance safety, preserve instructional continuity, reduce the likelihood of further emergency and restrictive interventions, and ensure that students can access communication, co-regulation, and instruction in a setting specifically designed to meet their individualized needs. The staffing structure and environmental design

reflect the intensity required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) while also creating a more sustainable and supportive environment for staff working in these highly specialized classrooms.

What distinguishes these classrooms from other autism classrooms is that students' needs often require one or more adults to provide extended co-regulation and safety support while instruction continues for other students. During prolonged periods of dysregulation, additional staff are necessary to:

- Maintain safety for all students and staff.
- Provide sustained (hours at a time) co-regulation and emotional support.
- Implement individualized communication and behavior support plans.
- Preserve instructional continuity for peers.
- Reduce the likelihood of more restrictive interventions.

While many autism classrooms serve students who are nonspeaking and may engage in behaviors that impact safety, this program is specifically intended for students whose support needs are distinguished by the higher frequency, intensity, duration, and unpredictability of significant dysregulation. Students in these classrooms typically:

- Require constant adult support to communicate, regulate, and participate in learning.
- Use AAC, gestures, body movements, and behavior as primary means of communication.
- Experience frequent episodes of intense dysregulation that may include severe self-injury, aggression, elopement, or extensive property destruction.
- Need substantial physical space to move safely and to reduce sensory overload.
- Require individualized instruction in communication, self-regulation, and adaptive skills beyond what is required in other ASD classrooms.
- Need a higher degree of coordinated interdisciplinary support from speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, behavior analysts, nursing staff, and special education personnel.

This staffing ratio is essential to providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) by ensuring that students have safe access to communication, regulation, and instruction in a setting designed to meet their exceptionally intensive support needs.