

NORTHWESTERN ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

SUBREGION I BALLOT

EXECUTIVE BOARD

BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS

According to the Articles of Agreement for the Northwestern Illinois Association, the Directors of Special Education and the At-large Members shall be elected within each subregion by the Boards of Education of the member districts in even numbered years.

Each Board of Education shall cast one (1) vote for Director of Special Education and one (1) vote for a Member-at-Large.

VOTE FOR ONE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION:

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| ● | <u>Nicole Bakalis, Kaneland #302</u> | ● | _____ |
| | Director of Special Education | | WRITE IN – Director of Special Education |

VOTE FOR ONE MEMBER-AT-LARGE:

- | | | | |
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| ● | <u>Margaret Thurman, Sycamore CUSD #427</u> | ● | _____ |
| | Member-at-Large | | WRITE IN – Member-at-Large |

NOTE: Ballots will be counted in the NIA Administrative Office.

PLEASE USE THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO RETURN THIS BALLOT BY
AUGUST 7, 2026

NORTHWESTERN ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH – EXECUTIVE BOARD CANDIDATE – SUBREGION I

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Nicole Bakalis is an experienced education professional with 25 years in the field. She began her career in the Chicago Public School System, where she spent thirteen years serving as both a teacher and administrator. After taking time off to raise her children, she joined the Kaneland School District, where she has worked for the past decade in a variety of leadership roles, including Assistant Principal of Student Services at Harter Middle School and Special Education Coordinator at the district office. She is set to assume the role of Director of Special Services in July following the retirement of Mrs. Eggleston. Throughout her career, Nicole has earned numerous recognitions and led impactful initiatives, including securing a \$250,000 Walton Grant, receiving multiple smaller grants, and earning the USDA's Gold Medal for the Healthier US School Challenge. She has also built strong partnerships with community organizations such as the Ravinia Festival, Chicago Children's Choir, Parent University, and the Kiwanis Club of North Chicago. Her accomplishments further include receiving the CPS Principal Achievement Award for the 2012–2013 school year, attaining Level 1 CPS Principal status, and being named the 2013 Charter Innovator Award winner.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Margaret "Meg" Thurman serves as the Director of Student Services for Sycamore Community School District 427, bringing 27 years of public education experience and 19 years of dedicated administrative leadership to the role. Meg began her career as a school psychologist, and moved into a principal role before finding her true passion as a Director of Special Education where she has served in rural, LUDA, and urban school districts across Illinois. Throughout her career, she has specialized in managing comprehensive special education programs, diverse student support services, and district-wide compliance initiatives. Previously holding the Executive Director of Student Services position at Springfield Public Schools, Ms. Thurman has a proven track record of collaborating with superintendents and school boards to optimize student outcomes and operational efficiency.

Ms. Thurman holds a Bachelor of Science degree and a Specialist degree in School Psychology from Western Illinois University, alongside a National Certification in School Psychology. Her advanced credentials include Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) endorsements in Educational Leadership and formal approval as a Special Education Director. Beyond her district duties, she champions inclusive education through active volunteerism with the Special Olympics and engagement in civic organizations. Her extensive background in fiscal management, policy implementation, and multi-disciplinary leadership makes her a highly qualified asset for the Board of Directors.