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To: Shawn Petri, Superintendent

From: Melisa Akers, Director of Special Education

Date: July 1, 2026

Subject: Special Education Update

### **A Message from our Director, Melisa Akers:**

#### **New Special Education Supervisor**

I would like to officially welcome Jeff Matheney to our team as our new Special Education Supervisor.

Jeff most recently served as a Special Education Teacher at Charlton Heston Academy. Following a distinguished 29-year career in the United States Air Force, he chose to begin a second career focused on giving back to his community by supporting students with disabilities. To prepare for this transition, Jeff earned a Master of Arts in Special Education from Western Michigan University. He also holds a bachelor's degree in Organizational Management, which provides a strong foundation for the leadership responsibilities of his new role.

Throughout his military career, Jeff held numerous supervisory, training, and evaluation responsibilities, ultimately retiring as a Chief Master Sergeant and Joint Terminal Attack Controller Instructor/Examiner. His service included deployments to Kuwait, Iraq, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he developed exceptional leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in complex and high-pressure environments.

What stood out most during the hiring process, however, was not just Jeff's impressive experience, but the positive feedback from his references. They described him as calm, steady, and

approachable. He is someone who remains focused and supportive even in challenging situations. These qualities, combined with his passion for special education and extensive leadership background, make him an excellent fit for supporting our ancillary staff and local district partners.

Jeff will begin working with our team this summer. We are excited to have him on board and look forward to the positive impact he will have on our programs, staff, and students.

### **New Early On Coordinator**

It saddens me to say that this will be Michele Cochrane's last board update as her last day was June 30th. However, she has trained a great replacement, and we look forward to working with our new coordinator, Kim Young.

### **2026 Special Education Determinations**

Each year, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) evaluates every Intermediate School District (ISD) and local school district on its implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These annual [Special Education Determinations](#) measure both compliance with federal and state special education requirements and student outcomes, including graduation rates, dropout rates, and academic achievement for students with disabilities. Districts receive one of three determination levels: **Meets Requirements**, **Needs Assistance**, or **Needs Intervention**.

COOR ISD received a **Needs Assistance** determination for 2026. This determination was driven by student outcome data rather than compliance. COOR earned **100% of the available compliance points**, demonstrating strong systems in Child Find, Early Childhood Transition, Secondary Transition, timely evaluations, and timely data reporting. However, the ISD earned **30% of the available Results points**, with graduation rates, dropout rates, and state assessment proficiency identified as the primary areas affecting the determination.

It is important to note that these challenges are not unique to COOR ISD or to special education. Statewide, many districts are experiencing similar concerns with student achievement and graduation outcomes for both students with disabilities and their general education peers. In fact, the statewide median Results score was **65%**, compared to a median Compliance score of **90%**, and **46% of Michigan's ISDs (26 of 56)** received a **Needs Assistance** determination.

During the 2026-2027 school year, COOR ISD will analyze district-level data to identify the root causes of these outcomes and provide targeted technical assistance to member districts. In addition, the Instructional Services Department and the Special Education Department will work collaboratively to support districts through professional learning and coordinated improvement efforts focused on strengthening MTSS implementation, evidence-based reading and mathematics instruction, co-teaching and inclusive practices, progress monitoring, and increasing graduation outcomes for all students.

Attached are the [individual district determination results](#) for your review. If the Board would like a more detailed overview of the determination process or COOR ISD's results, I would be happy to provide a presentation at a future Board meeting.

### **A Message from our Principal, Joseph Moore:**

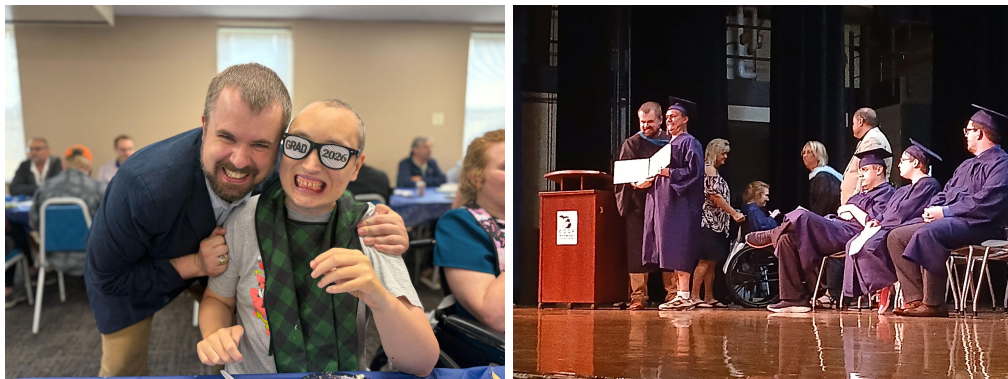
On June 12, we had the privilege of celebrating eight outstanding young adults during our annual commencement ceremony at Roscommon High School's auditorium. We are incredibly proud of Zach, Dominick, Brittany, Mason, Mikayla, Aaron, Jeffry, and Mikey as they reach this important milestone. We wish each of them continued success and fulfillment as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

A sincere thank you goes to the dedicated staff from our high school classroom and Adult Transition Center classroom whose hard work and commitment made this special day possible. I would also like to extend special recognition to our now-former ATC instructor, Angie Stern, for her efforts in organizing the wonderful luncheon that preceded the ceremony and helped make the day even more memorable for our graduates and their families.

As we close out the school year, we also recognize two valued educators who have departed the COOR Educational Center and Adult Transition Center programs. Pat Niemczyk served the past three years as the teacher in our Elementary MoCI classroom, following many years of dedicated service in a variety of roles within COOR ISD. Angie Stern spent the past two years as the instructor of our classroom at the Adult Transition Center and has accepted the principal position at Houghton Lake Community Education.

We are deeply grateful to both Pat and Angie for their dedication, leadership, and positive impact on the students and families they have served. Their contributions have helped

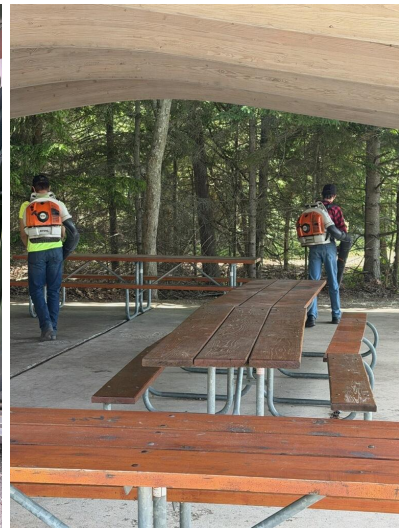
strengthen our programs and enrich the educational experiences of countless students. Both teaching positions have been posted, and we will be interviewing qualified candidates throughout the summer to ensure a successful start to the upcoming school year. If you know someone who is passionate about teaching and would enjoy working with an incredible group of students, please encourage them to submit an application through our website.



### **A Message from our Transition Coordinator, Kerri Smitz:**

Photos from our summer work program





## A Message from our Early On Coordinator, Michele Cochrane:

### Early On Data

We currently have 50 active children enrolled in Early On. During the third quarter (January–March), we received 63 new referrals: RAPS (18), CASD (15), WBRC (14), HLCS (10), Mio (5), and Fairview (1).

### Early On Coordinator

The transition in leadership is progressing smoothly. Kimberly Young began her role as Early On Coordinator on June 1. Following my retirement at the end of June, Early On Training and Technical Assistance through CCRESA will provide mentorship and support through the New Early On Coordinator Orientation process.

### Playgroup

We are excited to offer a summer playgroup in June at Roscommon Elementary for families with children ages 4 and under.



### Thank you

As this is my final board report before retirement, I want to thank the board for their ongoing commitment to young children and families. Working alongside dedicated staff, providers, and families has been a rewarding experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served in this role. I'm proud of the work we have done together, and I look forward to seeing Early On continue to grow and thrive under Kimberly Young's leadership.