

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR THE SHOREWOOD SCHOOL BOARD

Topic: Approve Hiring of Occupational Therapist/Assistive Technology Coordinator

Date: July 21, 2015

Prepared by: Jeff Cyganiak

Recommended action:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Information only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/discussion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/action by committee
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/action by board of education
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/action next meeting

Purpose: The purpose of this summary is to provide the board with the background regarding Occupational Therapy (OT) services for the district, and to provide a recommendation to approve the hiring of Erin Lanke as the school district's full-time (1.0 FTE) Occupational Therapist/Assistive Technology Coordinator.

Background: In the area of Occupational Therapy (OT) for working with special education students or students with a Section 504 plan, the Shorewood School District has used different local agencies to contract the services of an OT. The provider that the district has been utilizing, Dominiczak Therapy Services, their contract was up for renewal at the end of the 2014-2015 school year.

Assistive technology (AT) is any tool that helps students with disabilities do things more quickly, easily or independently. It can be elaborate and expensive or simple and low-cost. Assistive technology services are supports for using assistive technology devices, such as assistive technology evaluations, equipment maintenance, technical assistance, demonstration or training.

In Wisconsin schools, assistive technology can provide accommodations, modifications or adaptations made to the environment, curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices. A student with poor vision might use enlarged text. A student with motor difficulties might use an enlarged, simplified computer keyboard. A non-verbal student can be the "caller" for a game of "Red Light/Green Light" by using a talking switch. A student who can comprehend history at the 6th grade level, but can read only at the 3rd grade level, might read a textbook with the help of a computer that scans and reads text. The flexibility of assistive technology allows a teacher to build tools and materials that address students' strengths as well as their weaknesses.

For students with disabilities that interfere with their communication, learning, social relationships or active participation, assistive technology supports their participation in learning experiences in the least restrictive environment. Assistive technology can be the lifeline that increases a student's opportunities for education, social interactions, and meaningful employment.

Occupational Therapy and assistive technology often go hand in hand, so this is the perfect opportunity to hire our own district employee who would serve as the OT for the district, as well as take on a leadership role with assistive technology integration.

We had a strong pool of candidates that interviewed for this position, however, Erin Lanke was the one candidate in particular that the interview committee was extremely impressed with and knew the special education students and staff would feel an immediate impact of her skills. Erin has her masters in Occupational Therapy from Boston College, has experience in both the medical and educational fields, and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with assistive technology to the district.

Recommendation(s): Approve the hiring of Erin Lanke as our new full-time (1.0 FTE) Occupational Therapist/Assistive Technology Coordinator