

Statement from Superintendent Neal to GRPS staff and other stakeholders

Dear Center Based Special Education Stakeholders,

I am writing to inform you I have recommended the Grand Rapids Board of Education transfer operation of center-based special education programs to Kent ISD on July 1, 2019.

This decision is a natural progression of the work that started with the GRPS Transformation Plan in 2012. The plan was informed by the voice of thousands of stakeholders and included the results of the 2010 Special Education Futures Report. We also completed the GRPS Special Education Program Review in 2017 that recommended we review the district's ongoing operation of center-based programs on behalf of Kent ISD and the other 19 districts it serves.

As we listened to feedback of our stakeholders and studied best practices for center-based programming, we learned that the majority of this work across the state is already being done by intermediate school districts and regional education service agencies. GRPS is unique in that it contracts with Kent ISD and the other 19 districts it serves to operate center-based special education programs.

Kent ISD currently provides shared educational support services for all 20 school districts in various other ways. Kent ISD is also in the process of conducting their own independent review of center-based special education programming which should help inform the transition plan to improve academic outcomes for center-based students.

I firmly believe that this is in the best interest of our center-based students as it will ensure greater access, inclusion, and a more direct, vested interest from all twenty districts in center-based special education programming.

While I know this is a big decision and there are a lot of questions, I want to assure all our center-based students, parents, staff and stakeholders that we are committed to working closely with the KISD and the other school districts to create a detailed plan for smooth and seamless transition over the next twelve months. Please stay tuned for additional information.

Sincerely,

Teresa Weatherall Neal, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools