

In my role as School Committee member, I will advocate for the Wayland Public Schools to follow best practices, use Wayland's already established areas of expertise, and draw on some of the practices for improving Special Education from the District Management Group (<https://info.dmgrouk12.com/10-best-practices-special-education>).

I think we can grow and provide increased services for our special education population, while also maintaining fiscal responsibility. As a district, we should focus on providing comprehensive in-house services as much as is practical. This provides a local learning environment for our students and families, maintains close ties and experiences for children in the schools, and reduces out-of-district costs. Of course, not every student can be served in the district, but by being thoughtful, we can maintain those necessary out-of-district placements and also be fiscally conscious.

As I wrote earlier, we need to ensure that we have appropriate, sustainable, and financially sound approaches to special education. We have both a legal and moral obligation to provide the best education to our special education students. We need to have a thoughtful and robust approach to special education which ensures:

1. Appropriate programming
2. Equal access
3. Excellence in educational delivery
4. Invest in the three programs we currently have at Claypit Hill so that we can address issues early so that we can possibly avoid out-of-district placements later on.
5. Financially sound approaches to out-of-district placements
6. Responsible and viable transportation for students traveling for services

How can we do this? To paraphrase the District Management Group, there are several areas of focus that will help us to appropriately serve our special education students:

1. Focus on student outcomes, not inputs
2. Support of effective general education, which is foundational for all students!
3. Provision for extra instructional time every day for students in need of extra support
4. Ensure that content-strong staff provide interventions and support
5. Allow special educators to play to their strengths
 - a. Content-specific expertise
 - b. Pedagogical expertise
 - c. Social-emotional expertise
 - d. Case management expertise
6. Supporting our paraprofessionals as they work with special education staff to maximize student's growth and development
7. Expand the reach, accessibility, and impact of social, emotional, and behavioral supports
8. Provide high-quality in-district programs for students with more severe needs
 - a. "If a district has at least three students with similar needs within the same age range, it may be more cost-effective to establish an in-house program than to place the students in an out-of-district program. Of course, the savings resulting from decreased tuition payments and transportation costs must be invested in providing enhanced in-district

services.” From the District Management Group
(<https://www.dmgrouppk12.com/blog/10-best-practices-for-improving-special-education>)

9. Discerning how staff spend their time and provide guidance on the effective use of time

While implementing these guidelines and best practices will not be easy or quick, the long-term gain for students makes it a priority for our district.