



The January/February Special Edition

New Year, New You?

As I reflect on the past year, I find myself thinking deeply about life and our work, perhaps more so than ever. A new role and the opportunity to serve in this capacity have reminded me how important it is to focus on growth, both personally and professionally. My goal has never been to reinvent myself but to continually grow into a stronger, more effective, and more intentional version of who I already am.

The phrase “New Year, New You” is often viewed as a call to embrace the new year as a chance for transformation. It encourages setting goals, breaking unhelpful habits, and adopting positive changes. While this can be motivating for some, it also carries the risk of suggesting that we need to completely discard our past selves or make dramatic, overnight changes. This perspective can feel overwhelming and counterproductive, especially when true growth is a process that builds on the person we already are.

That’s why this phrase doesn’t fully resonate with me. I don’t want a new me. I want to be more me. For us, as a team, it’s not about completely reinventing how we serve our students. It’s about becoming even better at what we do. It’s about being more collaborative, more innovative, and more intentional in how we support our students, their families, and one another.

This perspective mirrors what I hope to encourage in all of you: the competition isn’t with others. It’s about improvement measured against your own progress. If I could connect with one more student today than I did yesterday, my goal tomorrow is to reach two more. If I implemented a new strategy in one classroom this week, next week I want to expand that impact even further. Progress is personal, intentional, and rooted in the desire to grow.

What does this look like in practice? It means holding firm to our purpose as special education professionals. It means being fully present for the students who rely on us every day. It means taking the time to reflect on what works well in our classrooms and practices and finding opportunities to build on those successes. It means advocating for the needs of our students and ensuring they have access to the tools, instruction, and services they require to thrive. And it means continuing to work together as a team, knowing that our collective effort has a greater impact than any one of us could achieve alone.

It also means recognizing the importance of self-care and balance. To be our best for others, we must also prioritize our own well-being. Whether it’s taking time to recharge, learning a new strategy to bring into the classroom, or seeking support from one another, these steps matter in sustaining our ability to do this vital work.

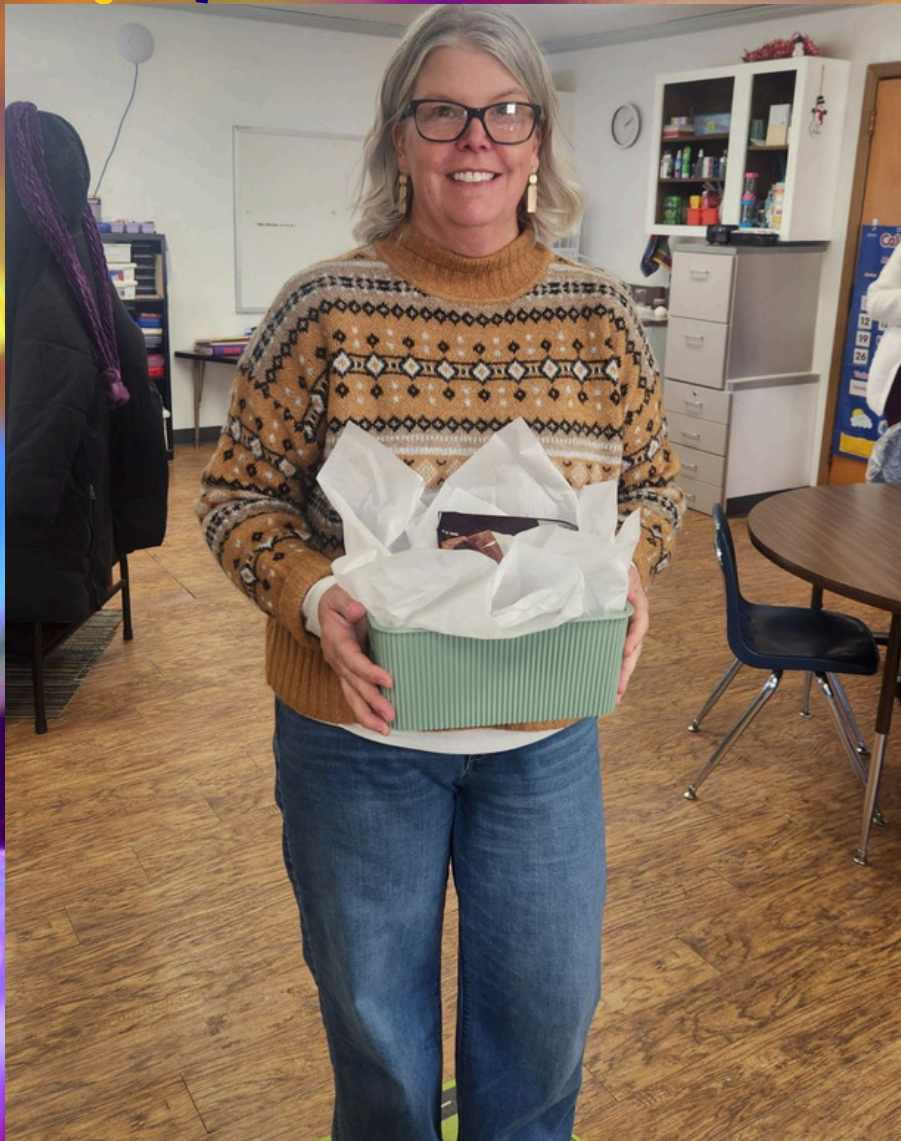
As I think more deeply about this, I ask myself: What stands in the way of being fully, uniquely me in this role? For me, it’s the challenge of balancing priorities while ensuring I’m focused on what matters most: supporting all of you in your work and ensuring the success of every student we serve. To do that, I must lean into my core values: faith, integrity, growth, and service.

What are your values? How do they shape your work as a teacher, paraeducator, or related service provider? How do they guide the decisions you make in your classrooms and your daily interactions with students? These are the questions I encourage you to reflect on as we begin this new year together.

As special education professionals, we have the incredible privilege and responsibility of shaping lives. Our work is not easy, but it is meaningful beyond measure. This year, let’s focus on becoming even better at what we do. Let’s not aim to start over but to build on the foundation we’ve already laid, becoming not someone new, but the truest and most effective versions of ourselves as educators and advocates.

Here’s to a year of growth, collaboration, and progress for each of us and, most importantly, for the students we serve.

DECEMBER KUDOS WINNER



Congrats to Laurie Temple, Para at
Wabaunsee Elementary School!

Nominated by Michelle Stuhlsatz, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
at Wabaunsee Elementary School

Kudos to...

Kim Hall, SLP Paraeducator, working with students in USD 329, makes a positive impact by always expecting the best from the students she works with. She is great at having the "right words to say", and being "one step ahead of them". She builds positive relationships with those students she works with. Kim works with students with strong behaviors. She has a special way of connecting with them and helping them calm down, regroup, and use self-regulation strategies. She teaches the proper behaviors and behavior management strategies throughout the day using visuals, prompting, and self-talk strategies. She is dedicated and has the deep desire to help students manage their strong behaviors appropriately. She cares for the students as individuals and she sees the good in them. Kim is respectful, dedicated and works well with others. She is good at building positive relationships.

Laurie Temple, Paraeducator at Wabaunsee Elementary School, is always giving more to our students. She will see additional students to her regular schedule, adjust her schedule to accommodate our students' general education classroom schedules, and just find more productive ways and times to get everyone covered (often finding nooks and crannies)! And this is after she has spent the full morning "wrangling" our youngest students in preschool! Laurie often finds new ways to use our resources to change up the "regular" ways and keep the material relevant and new. Going outside the box and seeing what our students need is her normal.

Laurie makes a positive impact every day. Laurie goes above and beyond to help preschool students handle their big emotions. She treats them with respect even when she is not receiving respect from them. She is patient and stays calm toward those demonstrating strong aggressive behaviors. Laurie loves teaching and can be seen working with K-5 students when she is not in the preschool classroom. She provides consistent expectations, provides positive supports, and is all about helping students reach their potential in all areas. Laurie comes each day with a smile and positive attitude, ready to make a positive difference in a child's life. She shares ideas and listens to ideas of others. Laurie is fun, creative, dedicated, and has a calm personality. Even on the roughest days, she keeps on doing what she does best-- TEACHING-- even when it is not easy.

Chris Blanton, Paraeducator at Rock Creek Middle School, is dedicated, hardworking, and timely. He has totally changed the experience for some of our students. He pushes them to reach their potential.

Joni Webster, Paraeducator at Rock Creek High School, makes learning fun for the students that she supports. She finds ways to engage them in conversations and activities that they don't even realize that they are "learning" as they go. She is my right hand person. She makes my job as the lead teacher easy as I can count on her to step in and do what we need done to make sure the kids find success. She loves to tell the kids silly jokes and they are always asking her for more. She will goof up on something we are doing and the kids will give her grief and she laughs along with them. Joni is the transport for one of the 18-21 students and they have been doing scavenger hunts in different stores to work on community skills and shopping. She takes pictures and encourages him to find the items and have fun in doing so. One of the trips was to Wamego and he wanted to visit every single "Toto" in town. He took pictures with all of them. They had a great afternoon and it was a great teaching time. Always asking how to help and always asking questions about how to work better with the students that we both serve. It can get tricky with only two of us and two separate programs. She is a trooper and helps get the job done. She is truly a blessing. Joni is wonderful and has been in this position for awhile now. She makes all the days easier to face when I know that she is going to be right there to give her support and ideas. She is a great asset to the para educator group.

Robin Laughlin, Administrative Assistant at the Coop, has helped get PT equipment to various buildings on several occasions this semester. She has been quick to respond to my request and persistent in getting the maintenance staff to follow through with moving it in a timely manner. She is always so friendly and helpful! Robin is always positive and supportive of staff and answers emails quickly which I really appreciate

Now is a great time to review your caseload and remaining IEP due dates. Be sure to move up IEPs as needed to help ease the spring marathon. Reminder, the due date for all regular IEPs is April 11th. Only new placements, EC transitions, or move-in IEPs should take place after April 11. Looking ahead to fall 2025 IEPs, any annual IEP that is due on or before September 15 should be held in the Spring by April 11. Every team member in the Coop appreciates this so they are not scrambling with a beginning of the year IEP when students transition to them. Thank you for planning ahead.

ESY Information

You should have already submitted your list of students who you are considering for ESY, but if you did not, here is the [link](#) to do so now. ALL staff must fill out the form regardless of whether or not you have anyone attending. At this time, you do NOT need to determine that the student qualifies for ESY, amend or make any changes to the IEP, and/or notify families. These steps will be later in the process. Please select the word “NONE” on the form and return it if you do not anticipate any students qualifying for ESY. This form will also collect names of staff interested in working ESY.



DLM Testing - Spring window is February 3 through April 25, 2025.



The Kansas State Department of Education’s website and email domains will change from “.org” to “.gov” this month.

Key dates for this transition:

- Jan 8: KSDE’s website changed from www.ksde.org to www.ksde.gov.
- Jan. 15: KSDE email addresses will become firstname.lastname@ksde.gov (i.e., john.doe@ksde.gov).

The transition to “.gov” for KSDE’s website and email addresses is mandated by House Sub. for [SB 291](#). This statute requires all websites maintained by a branch of Kansas government or state agency to use a “.gov” domain by Feb. 1.

It’s important to note: If “.org” is used to access the KSDE website or to contact a KSDE staff member via email after Jan. 8 and 15, respectively, those addresses will automatically be redirected to their appropriate “.gov” address to ensure no disruption in service.

Contact the KSDE IT help desk at (785) 296-7935 with questions.

Upcoming Events/Trainings

NCI Training Dates

- Friday, January 17 ~ Initial, 8:00am-3:00pm ~ Wabaunsee (1 hr. lunch break on your own)
 - Friday, March 28 ~ Initial or Refresher as needed ~ Wamego PLC Bldg
- Call Robin at the Coop, 785-456-9195, to sign up for a session.

Child Find Screenings

January 24 - St. George
March 28 - Wamego

Medicaid Logs

Quarterly due dates for 2024/25 Reminder of the School year are as follows:
January 8 (November & December)
March 18 (January, February, March 8)
May 24 (March 18-May 21)

SPIRITABILITIES 2024-2025

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:

- Friday, January 17 – Clinic Performance at Varsity Bball Halftime



Para In-service ~ Monday, February 17

Who: Jennifer Taylor, Greenbush Behavior Consultant

What: Paraeducator training on Brain science, de-escalation, dependency (overhelping/underhelping)-knowing how much support to give students

When: February 17, 2025

Where: The morning from 8:30-11:30 a.m. will be in Rock Creek School District at St. George Elementary School cafeteria and the afternoon will be in the Wamego School District at the commons at Wamego High School (12:30-3:30 p.m.). Paras may attend either session.

Sign up by February 12. Here is the link to the sign-up form [Winter Para Inservice 2025 Sign-up.](#)

January 29

Happy
Kansas
Day!

Kansas Day is celebrated on January 29th to commemorate the anniversary of Kansas' admission to the United States on January 29, 1861. It is the 163rd birthday of Kansas and the anniversary of its admission to the Union as the 34th state .



GREENBUSH
THE EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER



INTRODUCTION TO

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

As an educator, you already know how to differentiate your instruction to help kids with learning differences. You've been trained in trauma-informed principles. But what you may need are new strategies for handling challenging behavior that disrupts the learning environment for all. Our evidence-based approach, Collaborative Problem Solving® (CPS), provides a proven roadmap for differentiating your discipline with your most challenging students.

**CHOOSE
YOUR
DATE**

& Register Today

🌻 **February 4, 2025 | 9:00am-3:00pm**
Greenbush, 1104 E 1000 Rd, Lawrence

🌻 **February 6, 2025 | 9:00am-3:00pm**
Greenbush, 947 W. 47 Hwy, Girard

QUESTIONS?

Contact Jennifer Taylor, jennifer.taylor@greenbush.org

If interested in attending, contact the Coop.



Mark Your Calendars

Job Olympics 2025 is on Wednesday,
March 5, 2025, 9:30 am at the KSU
Rec Center.

Human Resources Corner

Just a friendly reminder...From the Para Handbook, Page 29 - Attendance Standards - #2: *“For absences of three (3) or more consecutive scheduled workdays, you will be required to provide a written doctor’s statement to your supervisor. However, your supervisor may request written documentation for any absence of any length. If a paraeducator is absent from work for three (3) or more consecutive scheduled workdays without properly contacting the supervisor, it will be assumed that he/she has voluntarily resigned his/her employment.”*

(Please state a reason; sick, maternity, appt. etc. Please notify HR if taking an extended leave of absence.)

Reminder teachers - If you have a para with attendance concerns, please reach out to Jennifer Nider at the Coop and Courtney Carpenter in HR to notify them.

Early Resignation Incentive in the Negotiated Agreement.

While we never want our amazing teachers to leave USD 320, we understand that it may happen. In the event you know you will not return to your teaching position for the 25-26 school year, you can receive an incentive payment for notifying us with a formal resignation letter by specific deadlines, per the negotiated agreement. The information below can be found in the Negotiated Agreement on Page 18. This payment will be made on the next regularly scheduled paycheck, following the board of education meeting when the resignation is accepted.

- E. Teachers who submit an early resignation from USD 320, effective the end of June, shall receive the following incentive:
- Resignation submitted between September 1 and January 31 shall receive \$500.
 - Resignation submitted between February 1 and March 31 shall receive \$100. This incentive program will be reviewed annually by the negotiation team.

To continue in effect, this provision must be agreed to by both parties, or the provision will be automatically eliminated from the Agreement.



The smallest acts of kindness can make the biggest impact.



Happy Birthday

January

- Kimberly Sweet - 9
- Sandy Young - 10
- Carrie Ficke - 11
- Penny Graber - 11
- Dayna Gabrielson - 13
- Jodi Hecht - 17
- Jerry Borgendale - 20
- Melissa Ginavan - 24
- Diana Phillips - 26
- Kymerberly Pickard - 30
- Julie Hernandez - 31



February

- Cora Ballenger - 1
- Maureen Sawtelle - 1
- Maria Paz - 4
- Jaden Frazier-Brown - 6
- Cheryl Taylor - 7
- Terri Craig - 21
- Bobbie Fouts - 28



INSPIRATION



"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

C.S. LEWIS

"Be so busy loving your life that you have no time for hate, regret or fear."

"What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year."

I hope you realize that every day is a fresh start for you. That every sunrise is a new chapter in your life waiting to be written.



smile
BECAUSE LIFE IS
too short
TO BE UNHAPPY

Whatever makes your soul happy.

do that.

