

Within our growing, diverse community, we sow the seeds of opportunities to raise prepared, resilient students.

Gervais School District Special Education Department Newsletter Quarter 3 – 22/23 SY

1. **Unified.** If you haven't followed GSD on social media, Unified Basketball is the best! In late January, our team traveled to Forrest Grove and played three games in one afternoon. They played terrific and placed third in their division. Family and friends traveled up to support the team, along with six high school student "helper" players, who gave up the majority of their Saturday to join us. **Our final game, on February 9th at 5:30pm at GHS, will be a home game against Silverton High School. It would mean so much to these athletes and their families to see GSD staff in the stands. If there is any way you can attend and celebrate with us, please consider doing so.** Unified Basketball would not be possible without Coach Rafa and Coach Mayra, along with the instructional staff from both FLC rooms.



2. **Preparing for Tests/SBAC.** Although we're still approximately three months from state testing, if you have a student who has IEP-approved modifications or Section 504 accommodation on the SBAC, the triad of Dr. Atwood, the student's case manager, and your building's testing coordinator are having a conversation about what that will look like during state testing, and you will be hearing from one of them soon (if you haven't already). In nearly all cases, these modifications or accommodations should not be a novel to the student on the day of the test. In other words, if they may use the modification or accommodation on state testing, they should be using it some capacity well in advance. This is for many reasons, but notably to help reduce test anxiety for many of these students. Other things you can do:

- i. Creating and reinforcing the same testing environment will help create familiarity and routine and reduce anxiety.
- ii. Validate student concerns. Text anxiety is very real, and we can break trust when we minimize their concerns around testing. Empathize these concerns with your students on IEPs/504s, and with the positive relationships you've forged over the last several months (or years), encourage them in ways that help them see these tests as a strength-based opportunity to show off their brilliance. How you frame

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this conversation over the next three months may make the world of difference for them.

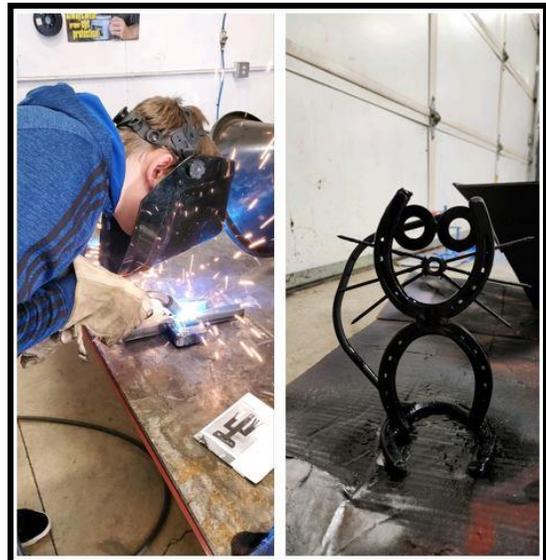
iii. Similar to validating their concerns, put the test in perspective by helping your students on IEPs/504s focus on what they can control. In homeroom or advisory, consider helping them create a visual concept web of things they do have under their control on test day – eating breakfast, trying to get a good nights sleep the night before, self-regulation strategies (breathing and visualization exercises), how to organize summary notes in the margins, test-taking strategies, etc. Then, referencing this concept web for several weeks before the test will help empower them when testing day arrives.

**Just a reminder that testing accommodations and modifications are something we're legally required to provide. If it is on their IEP or 504, we shall. If you have any questions about this or need clarification, reach out to a case manager or me anytime.*

3. Experiences Matter.



Our friend JJ (GES FLC) discovering a dinosaur after chipping apart a plaster egg.



Our friend Alexander (GHS FLC) in Megan Dilson's welding class, creating this amazing horseshoe cat!

In all three buildings, there is a poster that shows the progression of our vision for students with disabilities: exclusion progresses to segregation, segregation to integration, integration to inclusion, and inclusion to **belonging**. When you're planning class parties or fun activities, drop a line to Sue or Suzanne so FLC students in that grade can attend. A field trip or reward trip coming up? Advocate to your building admin that students with disabilities should be represented (if funding is an issue, let me know, I'll figure it out). I challenge myself, and everyone else, to actively build a district where all students with disabilities know they belong!

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