

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BOARD REPORT**

Kristen Ninni, Ph.D.

August 7th, 2026

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The summer months have been both productive and purposeful as we have gathered information, evaluated current organizational structures and systems, and made several foundational decisions to support a strong start to the 2026–2027 school year.

Our immediate focus is on ensuring a successful opening of the school year alongside our member districts. As the year begins, we will continue refining our work and finalize the administrative goals that will guide CASE throughout 2026–2027. I look forward to sharing those goals with the Board in the coming months.

Within the Summer Report, you will find updates on our summer goals and priorities, common themes identified through Board conversations, CASE leadership alignment, and outcomes of summer work designed to strengthen collaboration and transparency.

Several Board members also expressed an interest in receiving brief written updates between Board meetings. Beginning at the end of August, I will provide periodic Executive Director updates to keep you informed of key initiatives, progress, and emerging items. Of course, should a matter require more immediate communication, I will reach out accordingly.

### **JUNE BOARD MEETING FOLLOW-UP/CURRENT STAFFING**

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At the June Board meeting, a question was raised regarding the number of employees within each position group. As CASE transitions to Skyward, we look forward to developing a centralized and dependable data system that allows us to respond to future staffing questions accurately and efficiently. Please see the current staffing numbers by position type below.

| Position Category                                     | Staff in position | Open Positions | Contract | Direct Hire |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| Administration                                        | 5.8               | 0              | 0        | 5.8         |
| Out of District                                       | 0.8               | 0              | 0        | 0.8         |
| APE                                                   | 13                | 0              | 0        | 14          |
| AT                                                    | 2.4               | 0              | 0        | 2.4         |
| BCBA                                                  | 8                 | 0              | 0        | 8           |
| Central Office Support Staff                          | 7                 | 0              | 0        | 7           |
| CASE Itinerant Services (HI, VI, O&M)                 | 30                | 0              | 0        | 30          |
| GPAT/GECC                                             | 17                | 0              | 0        | 17          |
| Instructional Support Team (Coaches-EF, Sped Teacher) | 5                 | 0              | 0        | 5           |
| Job Coach                                             | 4                 | 2              | 0        | 4           |
| LBS 1                                                 | 3                 | 0              | 0        | 3           |
| Nurses (LPN, RN)                                      | 5                 | 0              | 0        | 5           |
| OT                                                    | 35.7              | 0.4            | 10.9     | 24.8        |
| PT                                                    | 7.6               | 0              | 0        | 7.6         |
| Program Aide                                          | 4                 | 0              | 0        | 4           |
| Psychologist                                          | 4                 | 0              | 0        | 4           |
| RBT                                                   | 10                | 5              | 0        | 10          |
| SLP                                                   | 26.5              | 0              | 1        | 25.5        |
| SLP-A                                                 | 3.6               | 0              | 0        | 3.6         |
| Social Workers                                        | 14.1              | 0              | 0.5      | 13.6        |

| Position Category | Staff in position | Open Positions | Contract | Direct Hire |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| Updated on 8/3/26 |                   |                |          |             |

### Key takeaways

- CASE currently has 206.5 staff FTE across the listed position categories.
- There are 7.4 open positions, resulting in an overall staffing rate of approximately 96.5%.
- Vacancies are concentrated in three areas:
  - 5 RBT positions
  - 2 Job Coach positions
  - 0.4 OT position
- Most position categories are fully staffed.
- CASE primarily uses direct hires. Contracted staffing is concentrated in occupational therapy, with 10.9 contracted OT FTE, along with 1.0 SLP and 0.5 social worker FTE.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Several legislative and regulatory developments are currently being closely monitored by special education administrators across Illinois. Key updates include:

### State-Approved Director of Special Education Designation

At the end of May, ISBE clarified that, beginning July 1, 2026, member districts of a special education cooperative may designate their own appropriately licensed administrator as the district's State-Approved Director of Special Education. Historically, the cooperative director has served in this capacity for all member districts.

Because this represents a departure from longstanding practice and has generated questions throughout the state, I am gathering additional clarification regarding the responsibilities, implications, and potential considerations associated with each option so that you can make the most informed decision for your district. I will provide the Board with the most complete information possible so members can make a thoughtful and informed decision regarding the designation that best serves CASE and its member districts.

At this time, ISBE has communicated that this clarification provides districts with two options:

1. Continue designating the cooperative's State-Approved Director, consistent with longstanding practice; or
2. Designate the district's own qualified administrator, provided that individual holds the required Director of Special Education license.

No change is required. If a district chooses to designate its own administrator, it must notify the ISBE Special Education Department by sending a letter or memorandum to [ISBESpecEd@isbe.net](mailto:ISBESpecEd@isbe.net) that includes:

- The individual's name and Illinois Educator Identification Number;
- The effective date of the appointment; and
- The individual's educational contact information, including mailing address, phone number, fax number, and email address.

### **Public Act 104-0218—Special Education Joint Agreements**

HB 2390, enacted as Public Act 104-0218 and effective January 1, 2026, established new requirements for special education joint agreements, particularly related to member-district withdrawal, the distribution of assets and liabilities, and annual presentation of the cooperative's budget and calculation of member and usage fees.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

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### **Purchased Services**

Amid leadership transitions at CASE and within several member districts, purchased-services assignments were recently finalized. Tricia dedicated significant time to coordinating assignments, maintaining communication, and working to ensure that district needs were addressed. We will be working to refine the process moving forward to provide greater clarity and support timely decision-making that align with the budgeting and operational needs of both CASE and our member districts. As we prepare for the 2026–2027 school year, our focus remains on service continuity, appropriate staffing, and responsiveness to evolving district and student needs.

### **Monarch Academy**

Natalie, Tricia, and I worked with Teri Engler to begin a review of Monarch Academy's special education procedures, including regulatory compliance, IEP development, and student discipline. This work represents the first phase of an ongoing continuous improvement process designed to strengthen

systems, promote consistency, ensure compliance, and support the continued growth and future development of Monarch Academy.

**Directors of Special Education Meeting**

Director of Special Education Meetings will take place on Fridays from 1:00 - 3:00 PM at the CASE Office on the following dates:

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| August 28, 2026    | January 22, 2027  |
| September 25, 2026 | February 19, 2027 |
| October 30, 2026   | March 19, 2027    |
| November 20, 2026  | April 23, 2027    |
| December 11, 2026  | May 21, 2027      |

**Extended School Year**

Extended School Year (ESY) programming was led by Ally Baisden, ESY Principal, in partnership with Natalie Heinrich, and reflected a coordinated effort among multiple departments and staff members across CASE. Planning was completed successfully, and ESY launched on schedule with 269 students receiving services. We were also fully staffed, thanks to the dedication and collaboration of our staff and member districts in supporting students throughout the summer. We look forward to providing the Board with an update on ESY outcomes and highlights at the September Board meeting.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

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- Final preparations for the start of the school year
- New Staff Orientation - Thursday, August 6th and Friday, August 7th
- CASE Opening Day - Wednesday, August 26th - 3:30 - 5:30 Medinah Shriners
- Continued superintendent transition meetings
- Implementation planning related to Skyward and other operational systems

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like additional information regarding any of these updates.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristen Ninni  
Executive Director, CASE

## BOARD BRIEFS

August 7, 2026

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The CASE Board of Directors approved the following items at the August 7, 2026 Regular Meeting:

- Approval of Minutes, June 10, 2026, Regular Session;
- Approval of June, July and August 2026 Accounts Payable and Payroll Summary and Projected Payroll August 2026;
- Treasurer's Report, May 2026;
- **Contracts:**
  - Allied Support for Kids, Staffing Agreement;
  - Dynamiclynks, Music Therapy Services Agreement;
  - Flourish Together, Contract for Speech Therapy Services;
  - ProCare Therapy, Client Services Agreement;
- **Personnel:**
  - **Employment – Certified Staff**
    - Kelly Belknap, Physical Therapist, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Sarah Carr, Hearing Itinerant Teacher, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Christine Lepore, Behavior Coach, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Christopher Medearis, Teacher, Adapted Physical Education, at a 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Amanda Omaira, School Social Worker, at 0.60 (108 workdays). This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Abigail Reid, Occupational Therapist, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
    - Lilian VanWijk, Occupational Therapist, at 0.40 FTE (72 workdays). This position is necessary to fill a vacancy.
  - **Employment – Non-Certified Staff**
    - Rachel Delporte, Paraprofessional, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;

- Guadalupe Gonzalez Cirne, Speech Language Pathologist Assistant, at a 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
- Carmela Palacio, 1:1 Nurse, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy;
- Allison Pitre, Job Coach, at 1.00 FTE. This position is necessary to fill a vacancy.
- **Separations – Certified Staff**
  - Jennifer Dunham, Physical Therapist, voluntary resignation ending with 25-26 SY;
  - Monica Murach, Occupational Therapist, voluntary resignation ending with 25-26 SY;
  - Jennifer Tate, Instructional Support Team Coach, voluntary resignation, ending with 25-26 SY;
  - Vanessa Verzillo, School Social Worker, voluntary resignation, ending with 25-26 SY.
- **Separations – Non-Certified Staff**
  - Jessica Ahon Sanchez, Registered Behavior Technician, voluntary resignation, ending with 25-26 SY;
  - Gabriela Flores, Registered Behavior Technician, voluntary resignation, ending with 25-26 SY;
  - Christine Lepore, Registered Behavior Technician, voluntary resignation, ending with 25-26 SY.
- **Position Change – Certified Staff**
  - Jodan Cramer, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, formerly, Substitute Board Certified Behavior Analyst, effective 2026-2027 SY.
- **Approved through Other Action Items:**
  - CASE CEA Collective Bargaining Agreement, 2026-2030
  - FY27 CASE Budget, Third and Final Draft

The next regular session of the CASE Board of Directors will be held on Friday, September 11, 2026 at 8am at the CASE Central Office, 290 Town Center Ln., Glendale Heights, IL 60139. For questions or more information please contact us at 630-942-5600.

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