To summarize the past four months in one word, the word that best fits is “blur!” Since September the time has flown past the initial opening of each building, the confusion of exact bus routes and the panic of remembering locker combinations. We have attended football games, activity nights and music celebrations. Teachers have hosted curriculum nights and parent teacher conferences and they are beginning to wonder how they will complete all of the curriculum requirements before the January exams. Indeed the time has flown by in a blur. Our new year’s reflections allow us to look back on the past few months and begin planning for improvement of the immediate as well as for the 2017-2018 school year.

In September, our students returned to their schools to find new renovations within our buildings. The Special Education Department had growth and there have been renovations at the Early Childhood Center, Hardy Elementary, Centennial Middle School and at South Lyon High School. Through the bond effort, a special education classroom was created to allow for four sections of special education pre-school classes to be held. One of the exciting classroom opportunities for our community has been the blended pre-school class which is a fully integrated grouping comprised of students with special needs learning side by side with their typically developing peers. Other space at the building was converted into much needed office space for our educational teams.

At Hardy Elementary, small changes have had a large impact. The classrooms in the blue hallway were afforded carpeting. Although that might not seem like a huge improvement, the teachers would support that the change has improved the comfort of the classroom and has reduced the level of extra noise.

At Centennial Middle School, configuration of the classrooms has changed. This includes the addition of another bathroom and a sensory room. The sensory room was modeled after the Hardy room to meet the needs of students who crave the vestibular and other sensory inputs which can reduce aggression and anxiety while increasing attention and feelings of relaxation.

The building changes that have been most significant for our department have been at South Lyon High School in the post-high classrooms. The area that in years past served as a pre-school/daycare was converted into space appropriate for our adult students. Entering this newly designed space almost feels like the common areas at our local colleges. The seating arrangements allow for flexibility and grouping to encourage communication and comfort. The post-high space has a new sensory room, a computer/classroom that has cubicles like a small office and the kitchen area that is frequently utilized for the creation of micro-business products. Quite a sight to see and the students are very proud of their adult space.

Looking forward as a department, efforts are currently underway to improve our systems of supports for our students and community. Special education is represented in task force groups, student information systems, subject area curriculum groups, and multi-tiered systems of support all at the district level. These groups have taken into account the needs of all students, including students with special needs. At the county level, our Parent Advisory Committee is working in collaboration with our quadrant neighbors to combine efforts to support each other. This is being done through combined parent meetings with intentional efforts to build networks of support for families. At the building levels, new sections have been introduced to support students with special needs. Two classes of music therapy have been added at Hardy Elementary. New sections of co-taught social studies classes have been added at both South Lyon High School and South Lyon East High School. Both high schools have formed new partnerships with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to improve the employability outcomes of our students. These efforts are beyond the exceptional instruction and care that is occurring daily to support each of the one thousand individual students with Individual Educational Programs.

While the building additions are wonderful and the new initiatives are inspiring, there is still more work to do in our district. We continually need to strive to raise the expectations of our students and to find ways to continue to support our families. All community members are invited to get involved with our schools and our department. The best way to get connected is to attend our special education meetings: January 19, 2017 at South Lyon East High School Media Center at 7:00 PM and April 13, 2017 at Centennial Middle School Media Center at 7:00 PM. At our meetings you will learn more about topics related to special education, you will meet others with similar interests from neighboring school districts, and you will be able to provide suggestions for our future.

It is expected that the months will continue to pass in a “blur” of activity. Exams will be administered, transitions to new buildings will begin and before you know it, school will be out for the summer. Even during these hectic days, you can count on your district to be reflective of the immediate past and to be ambitious with our future plans.
A letter from the Special Education Coordinator, Amy Atwell

The new school year always brings feelings of anticipation and excitement of what the new year will bring. It is a time to reflect on the previous school year, adjust previous goals and make new goals for the upcoming year. In the years past, my overall goal has been team and collaboration with special education staff. Through collaboration we are continuously making changes to help support our students in their learning environments, such as, student problem solving meetings, special education staff meetings, professional learning on the Common Core Essential Elements, crisis intervention trainings, program observations and more para educator training, just to name a few. It’s hard to believe second semester is right around the corner and we will begin reflecting and planning for the next school year. I look forward to continuing my collaboration with classroom teachers, para educators, ancillary staff, administrators and families as we move into the second half of the 2016-2017 school year. Enjoy the holiday season with family and friends! See you in 2017!

South Lyon Community Schools
Parent Advisory Committee

The mission of the South Lyon Parent Advisory Committee is to welcome, support and educate families who have children with different abilities. We collaborate within and beyond our school community to empower parents and others to advocate for all children to ensure the finest quality of educational programs and services through South Lyon Community Schools.

Congratulations to our 2016 Scholarship Recipients!

Each year the Knights of Columbus donate money raised from the Palm Sunday Tootsie Roll Drive to the South Lyon Special Education Department. This year, Fred Heiler, Financial Secretary from the Knights of Columbus, Fr. Edmund Battersby Council, No. 7586 contributed money for scholarships for two students with special needs who are planning to attend college. The scholarship recipients for 2016 were: Peter Haworth, from South Lyon High School and Preston Oakley from South Lyon East High School. The funds also allowed for the purchase of a new bike for students at South Lyon High School. A special thank you Knights of Columbus!
Summer Experience

The Olympics!

Summertime brings warm weather and camp experiences. This year roughly 55 elementary and middle school aged students joined our camp like Summer Experience located at Hardy Elementary. Students had the opportunity to learn about the summer Olympics and participate in their very own Olympic game activities at the beginning of their summer. Each day students rotated to different classrooms, and participated in different Olympic theme related activities. It was great to see the excitement from our students as they went from classroom to classroom. During the three weeks of summer experience, students had the opportunity to learn about the Summer Olympics and see the different sports in action. The last day was filled with Summer Olympic Games and eating ice cream at the very end! A BIG thank you to our teachers, staff, volunteers and students for making our Summer Olympics a great success. We look forward to the 2017 Summer Experience. Thank you again for a great Summer Experience!

Community Support

One of the most important parts of our post secondary program, PALS, at South Lyon High School is Community Based Instruction (CBI) and Work Based Learning (WBL). CBI and WBL provide students the opportunities to learn and apply academic and life skills in the actual settings in which they will be expected to apply those skills. CBI and WBL both include pre-teaching and follow-up activities, so that skills are introduced, taught, practiced and then reviewed. A big thank you to the various community businesses (Active Faith, South Lyon Hotel, Family Video, South Lyon Senior Care Center, WalMart, PowerHouse Gym, South Lyon Library and Busch’s) that help support our CBI and WBL program. Without the support of the community our students would not have the opportunity to apply what they are learning into the natural setting.

We are always looking for other South Lyon community businesses to help support our Community Based Instruction (CBI) and Work Based Learning (WBL) program. Please contact the special education department (248-573-8220) if you have a business or know of a business that would be interested in supporting our adult learners.
Katie Bell a speech and language pathologist has recently been published on the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) blogsite. ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for speech and language pathologists and other professionals. Katie posted 6 Tips for Creating Your Own Communication Café. The tips that Katie shared will give other speech and language pathologist insight in creating a learning environment that has earned recognition from the Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association (Public School Program of the Year Award, spring 2016). Nice work Katie.

http://blog.asha.org/2016/08/11/6-tips-for-creating-your-own-communication-cafe/

In the spring of 2015, the South Lyon Community supported our school district by passing a bond. The bond has supported all students including students with special needs at the Early Childhood Center, Centennial Middle School and South Lyon High School. Here are a few pictures of the environmental changes that have occurred over the summer:

South Lyon High  Centennial  Hardy
If your child has a medical issue that requires a plan to be instituted in an emergency, you must provide our district with a new/updated plan in order for it to be implemented. All medical plans expire at the end of each school year. Medical forms may be found on our website www.slcs.us under “Department and Services” tab on the “Special Education Department” page.

We would like to take a moment, on behalf of South Lyon Community Schools, to thank all of the SLCS paraeducators. Paraeducators are critical to the success of our programs and the students we serve. Our paraeducators help to provide all students with opportunities for positive learning throughout the school day. Thank you for your continuous dedication to our students within SLCS.

We are always looking for dedicated individuals to work within our classrooms. If you or someone you know would like to join our SLCS guest paraeducator team, please contact the special education department (248-573-8220).

Follow us!

You can find the most up-to-date information on our district website, www.slcs.us. You will find the special education department under the “Departments” tab. The special education department is now on Twitter and Facebook too! (SLCS Special Education)

Guest Para-Educators Needed

Our district is currently in need of guest para-educators to serve in classrooms with students who have special needs. Interested candidates are encouraged to contact the Special Education Office for more information 248-573-8220.