



TO: Dr. Charles Johns
FROM: Dr. Jennifer Pearson
RE: TrueNorth, TLS and Transition Program Study
DATE: Monday June 27, 2022

Recommendation:

This agenda item is for informational purposes only. There is no action being requested. Glenbrook will be engaging in a study to determine our ability to more directly serve students who currently receive programming through Teaching Life Skills (TLS)/TrueNorth Supported Learning Environment Program (SLE) and the TrueNorth Transition Program.

Background:

Glenbrook District 225 and TrueNorth (formerly NSSSED) have a long-standing reciprocal relationship and value the support each has to offer. District 225 utilizes TrueNorth services in a variety of ways to support students and staff across our continuum of programming. Glenbrook High Schools primarily rely on TrueNorth for the Teaching Life Skills Program (TLS)/Supported Learning Environments (SLE) and the TrueNorth Transition Program. These are programs designed for students with significant intellectual disabilities, autism, and multiple disabilities who require individualized academic and life skills instruction in high school (9th-12th grade) and continued transition programming for students (18-21 inclusive, until the day before the student's 22nd birthday, unless his or her 22nd birthday occurs during the school year, in which case he or she is eligible for such services through the end of the school year).

TLS/SLE enrollment continues to remain high in Glenbrook; however, other districts' enrollment in SLE has substantially dropped. In 2012 SLE program enrollment across all districts was 206.5 Average Daily Enrolment (ADE). Since then enrollment has steadily declined. In FY23, enrollment was at 67 ADE, of which Glenbrook District 225 made up 34 of the ADE. No other high school districts in the cooperative utilize TrueNorth SLE. Further, our two largest sender districts (District 28 and District 34) recently built their own capacity to serve students previously served through TrueNorth SLE. Two of our other sender districts are either in the process of building capacity

(District 31) or are undertaking a study of their SLE programs currently run by TrueNorth (District 30).

Similarly, our TrueNorth transition enrollment has remained high. TrueNorth Transition Program enrollment is evenly made up of District 225 and District 113 students along with a couple of students from districts outside of the cooperative. District 113 is in the planning stages of creating their own transition program to serve the students currently served by TrueNorth.

The district pays a tuition cost to TrueNorth to administer the programs. The tuition cost for FY22 SLE and TrueNorth Transition were \$41,058 and \$44,081 respectively per student. This does not include the cost for related services (e.g. OT, PT) or 1:1 aides. The tuition and aide cost associated with the TrueNorth TLS/SLE and TrueNorth Transition Program is anticipated to be approximately \$3.7 million this year. The new TrueNorth financial model and budget parameter caused increased direct and indirect costs for FY22 and FY23. The FY23 anticipated rates will be \$52,526 (27.90% increase) and \$45,317 (2.80% increase*)¹ respectively. There will also be a 16.1% increase for 1:1 aides based on the collective bargaining agreement.

*The lease for the TrueNorth Transition Program was previously included in the tuition. It is not this year and will be billed separately.

As mentioned, while District 225 primarily uses the SLE/TrueNorth Transition Program, the District accesses other services from the cooperative. Additional information about other programs and services offered by the cooperative and/or utilized by Glenbrook can be provided.

Purpose of Study:

Glenbrook High Schools has periodically reviewed the program for effectiveness, quality, and cost. We view this as a study focused on long-term sustainability, continuous improvement of the program, and creating a greater sense of community and continuity for our students. A comprehensive review of the TLS/SLE program, administered by TrueNorth on our behalf, was conducted in 2015 and again in 2018. We engaged in this process collaboratively and transparently to determine if we had the capacity to serve students directly through programs and classes within the district.

In light of current changes across SLE classrooms in the Northfield region and changes across the member districts in the cooperative, we have once again begun to discuss the

¹ *The lease for the TrueNorth Transition Program was previously included in the tuition. It is not this year and will be billed separately.

implications for Glenbrook High Schools' students, families, and school community. Given such, we have decided to conduct an updated study of both the TLS program and TrueNorth Transition Program concluding with a recommendation to the School Board in the winter of 2023 for consideration for the 2023-2024 school year.

Study Components:

Below is a brief summary of the components of the study:

- The current study will begin in the summer of 2022
- Communication will be provided to families and staff prior to the study's start date
- It is anticipated that the study will be conducted over the next several months to allow for a thorough and collaborative review process
- Input will be sought from various stakeholder groups, including TLS students and their families, TrueNorth and District 225 staff and administration, junior high school staff and families, and other high school districts that have built capacity
- The study will evaluate a number of factors: student needs and outcomes, enrollment projections, staffing implications, costs to administer comparable programming, advantages and disadvantages of building our capacity for serving students with significant disabilities
- The administrative summary and recommendations will be brought to the board for consideration for the 2023-2024 school year
- Should we build our capacity to serve students in the TLS program, we could continue to partner with TrueNorth for support services, coaching, professional development, etc.
- Glenbrook is NOT intending to withdraw from TrueNorth. As previously stated, TrueNorth and Glenbrook have a long-standing collaborative partnership.