EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PLAN

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

2018-2019

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Board Leadership



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Executive Summary

Detroit Public Schools Community District offers services for students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) to receive specialized services and programs. IDEA mandates a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children and ensures special education and related services are provided to address their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. The provision of support, resources and specialized instruction for students identified with a disability may be determined through and Individual Education Plan (IEP). The District currently serves 8,240 eligible students, representing 16.2% of the student population (Appendix A).

The measure of how well a district meets federal mandates is information reported through 20 State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, such as Graduation Rate, Preschool Outcomes, Suspension and Expulsion, Child Find and Secondary Transitions (Appendix B). Results of state level monitoring and the frequency of which state and/or federal complaints are filed against the District is a source of information to measure the degree to which requirements are being met. Though the District offers 15 specialized programs, there have been historical challenges in meeting the needs of exceptional students. The structure of the current service delivery model prevents most exceptional students from accessing instruction within the general education environment and significantly limits post-secondary programming for students with high incident disabilities. As evidenced through both state and federal complaints there have also been glaring discrepancies in identification, compliance and implementation of student programming. Addressing these concerns requires a reorganization of internal systems, deep professional development and strategic monitoring of expectations.

Through a recent audit conducted by the Council of Great City Schools and a District review of current practices, areas of concerns may be concentrated into four strategic themes that will form the basis of the transformation of special education services:

IMPROVING PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES: Develop and implement consistent policies, procedures and processes designed to meet all required mandates and protect the rights of students and families

IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS: Develop and fully implement a service delivery model that assures students with exceptionalities have quality educational opportunities and supports within the least restrict environment

INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY STAFF: Design and implement a highly engaged and effective staffing system to alleviate vacancies in special education

INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: Develop and implement programs and training opportunities for parents of students with exceptionalities, enabling each to engage meaningfully and in partnership with school personnel and support teams

IMPROVING PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Maintaining compliance with special education rules and regulations upholds the legal, moral and ethical responsibility to provide every child with services and programs specifically designed to meet their unique educational needs. To meet this high level of expectation, a clear understanding of special education rules and regulations must not only exist, but be systematically woven into the District's policies, procedures and every day activities. Currently the District is in deficit in not only servicing students with special needs but also identifying these students as early as possible. Through a review of current practices, state and federal complaints received and feedback from parents, the repeated areas of noncompliance can be narrowed to student identification, IEP implementation and disciplinary protections.

DEFINING THE CHALLENGE ADDRESSING ISSUES OF NONCOMPLIANCE

Student Identification: Child Find

Child Find is the component of IDEA that requires states to locate, identify, and evaluate all children who may be eligible for early intervention and/or special education services. A review of data confirms the District does not have an effective system for meeting the Child Find requirements. These deficits include responding to parental requests to evaluate within 10 school days, using referrals to the Resource Coordination Teams (RCT) as a way to delay or deny a requested evaluation and a failure to review records of newly enrolled students that may indicate special education eligibility. Likewise, there is not a consistently used process for addressing a student suspected of having a disability.

The lack of a district-wide tiered intervention process further makes Child Find mandates a challenge. RCT's are expected in all schools, however are often non-existent. Where they do exist, reliable tiered interventions are not evident. This absence of a tiered intervention system leads to unsubstantiated special education referrals, evaluations and placements. As a result, there are students identified as eligible for special education without having received tiered interventions. This over identification is likely a contributing factor to the District's elevated special education percentage rate of 16.6%, as compared to Wayne County's rate of 12.8% and 13.1% statewide (Appendix A).

IEP Development, Implementation and Monitoring

Failure to appropriately identify students and document interventions impedes the District's ability to develop and implement services to meet individual student needs. Without consistent specialized interventions, data cannot be collected in a manner that will appropriately measure and support student progress in the curriculum. Further, the absence of a data collection process and a District level system to ensure data collected is utilized to create measurable goals and objectives by a highly functioning IEP team exascerbates the development challenge. Staff's lack of understanding of data collection, instructional practices, supplemental services and progress monitoring affects overall implementation.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) defines "student records" to include all records including IEPs. Parents have the right to inspect and review student's educational records maintained by the school. With regard to accessing IEPs, general education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers and building administrators who are responsible for implementing an IEP should also have access to student records as a means to ensure services are reviewed and provided appropriately. Without access to these individualized plans, student needs are left unmet and unsupported, progress within the curriculum is limited and the basic rights of the student to FAPE have been denied. Staff frequently share the lack of access to student IEPs.

Disciplinary Protections

Throughout the District exists limited understanding of disciplinary procedures for students with IEPs and those suspected of having a disability. As such, the District has received repeated complaints pertaining to disciplinary practices. Specific areas cited as noncompliant include the absence of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) that helps identify the root cause of a behavior, lack of follow through with the development of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) designed to proactively prevent undesired behaviors from reoccurring and inconsistent implementation of the BIP across identified educational environments. The resulting impact on students is an inadequate process for conducting Manifestation Determination Reviews, which leads to increased removals from school for behaviors related to a student's disability. Additionally, the practice of when and how to record student removals from school is inconsistent across schools. Removals of students with exceptionalities without required and appropriate documentation compromises protections afforded under IDEA and further influences overall progress within the curriculum.

PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PREPARING FOR EXPECTATIONS

To increase the depth and breadth of compliant practices and procedures, personnel must be provided with information required to meet individual student needs. Through ongoing professional development and monitoring, the assurances written within the IDEA will be understood, met and sustained. Professional development for Child Find will focus on the requirements necessary to achieve and sustain compliance. Training will be provided on the process and tools used to identify, locate and evaluate children suspected of having a disability. School and district staff will implement the use of timelines for processing referrals and providing annual notice to the community about available special education services and accessing those services.

Training for general and special education professional staff, support staff and building administrators is necessary to develop a deep understanding of the fundamental components required in the development,

implementation and monitoring of IEPs. This professional development must include a complete overhaul of the IEP process, including:

- a comprehensive review of the members required for the IEP Team
- the steps required to clearly and accurately document the consideration of student supports as it pertains to special factors, such as positive behavior supports
- the consideration and inclusion of appropriate and adequate services, programs, supplemental aids, and measureable goals/objectives as each relates to identified areas of deficit
- the information, resources and skills necessary to progress monitor student growth using research based practices
- the process for documenting and providing parents with timely progress monitoring reports reflecting data driven performance information
- compliance requirements for the Offer of FAPE (Notice) following the development of an IEP.

Disciplinary procedures for students with exceptionalities is more complex than standard procedures. Guidelines for special needs students was included in the newly revised Student Code of Conduct to provide clarity of expectations for discipline of students with special needs. However, training in this area will provide teachers and administrators a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary procedures as mandated by MARSE and IDEA. Training will include alternatives to suspension, the definition of removal, critical compliance timelines when suspensions and the consideration for expulsion occurs, determining patterns of removal, conducting a manifestation determination review, the process for addressing "special circumstances", interim alternative placements, and how to conduct a FBA and BIP.

MONITORING FOR SUCCESS

The ESE Department will develop and make resources available to District personnel and families on the effective process for identifying students who may be in need of services, creating and implementing compliant IEPs and understanding disciplinary procedures. Such resources will include frequently asked questions posted on the website, visual procedural flowcharts and data tracking forms. Quarterly check-ins with staff will be implemented to review documentation and problem-solve. Where possible, technology, including the District's website, will be used as a source of making information available and for easily accessible information.

Through a monthly reporting structure, IEPs, intervention plans and parent complaints will be provided by the ESE Department to District leaders, building administrators, evaluation teams and lead teachers. Reports will indicate upcoming and overdue IEPs as they appear in the student information system. Principals and Lead Teachers will be required to provide oversight of expected processes. District staff will monitor through and require corrective action if procedures are not followed. Data trends will reported to leadership quarterly with an action plan developed for areas not showing improvement.

District IEP compliance auditors will conduct monthly random monitoring of IEPs for compliance standards as aligned to the provided professional development. Data will be used to further develop staff until compliance issues are non-existent.

NEXT STEPS

- Develop Professional Development Plan
- Update Disciplinary Protections Procedures

IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be educated with their nonexceptional peers. Further, special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment, should only occur when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be satisfactorily achieved. The IEP team determines the appropriate services required to meet the unique needs of the student in the least restrictive environment.

IDEA states a student with exceptionalities must be afforded a continuum of services. The District provides specialized services through direct and indirect service delivery models. Challenges faced with creating greater opportunities for students to access instruction aligned to the Common Core State Standards include staff knowledge of how to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities within the general education environment and consistent support available to address questions, concerns and coaching as needs arise. A large percentage of students in these programs course of study will only lead to a Certificate of Completion (COC) and not a diploma.

While the District also operates a large number of center programs for students with moderate to severe disabilities, there are limited opportunities for these students to receive postsecondary programming. The absence of such programming prevents the District from having available a full continuum of services that ensures all students will have the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to thrive in life.

DEFINING THE CHALLENGE SERVICE DELIVERY NEEDS

Course Study Review

Through the process of redefining and fully implementing a rigorous and relevant service delivery model, ESE personnel must ensure that students with exceptionalities have the same opportunities to earn a high school diploma at similar percentage rates as same age, non-exceptional peers. To successfully achieve this goal, comprehensive review of students currently on a course of study leading to a Certificate of Completion will be conducted. This review will determine where the need exists to provide opportunities for instruction in the least restrictive environment and where changing the Certificate of Completion to a diploma will lead to positive, achievable, student outcomes.

Post-Secondary Programming

In developing and implementing a continuum of services, a review of current practices is necessary. Efforts to encourage students to earn a high school diploma must be coupled with provisions for supplemental aides, standards, grading, and the utilization of the personal curriculum, when appropriate. Teachers must be trained in the delivery of grade level information to students who have not otherwise had access to grade level material. Not only are students to be assessed for their educational ability, but an aligned program must also consider advanced training, employment and independent livings skills, as if necessary.

To further ensure students who exceed the four-year cohort plan remain active in their pursuit for a high school diploma, a data collection process must be developed to track, in real-time, students completing those plans that will ultimately lead to earning a diploma.

PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEFINING EXPECTATIONS AND COORDINATION

A fully developed continuum of service delivery will only happen when stakeholders are trained on the implementation of student supports within the least restrictive environment. Researched based strategies, aligned to common core standards, when effectively executed will lead to increased student achievement. The ESE Department will implement professional learning for staff and administrators focused on the effective use of instructional strategies leading to academic achievement. Additional professional development will address LRE decision making as part of the IEP development process, progress monitoring student growth and proactively addressing student behavior that promote social-emotional development.

The revision of the ESE organizational structure is necessary to ensure adequate and appropriate support is provided for a service delivery model that emphasizes appropriate student placement. As practices that are more inclusionary occur, collaboration between special and general education personnel will need to increase to maximize the likelihood of successful student outcomes. To accomplish this goal, teams of special education supervisors, behavior specialists, transition coordinators and ancillary services providers will be assigned to each District cohort to proactively train, plan and monitor each building, and be readily available to facilitate a problem-solving process when concerns or obstacles arise.



NEXT STEPS

- Realign service delivery for high incidence programs
- Complete course study review
- Develop post-secondary programming options

INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY STAFF

Recruiting and retaining high quality special education teachers is imperative to student success. When teacher vacancies exist, the provision of specialized instruction may be left to a substitute teacher who has not received formal training in the area of special education or specialized instruction may be absent altogether. In either case, student needs are inadequately supported and progress within the curriculum is compromised. Throughout the state, many districts are challenged with filling special education vacancies including teachers, related service providers and support personnel. The District faces the same challenges in finding and retaining highly qualified professionals. Presently, the ESE Department continues to recruit talented staff through local job fairs, partnerships with state colleges and universities, networking opportunities and collaborations between other local education entities and the Michigan Department of Education. Currently the department has 45 teacher vacancies and is dependent on contracted service providers to fill several service related vacancies.

Causes for the elevated number of vacancies include current salary scales, negative perceptions of the District based on past practices and current caseloads. High caseloads can be directly connected to the high number of vacancies. The newly released decision to award credit for experience outside the District will likely attract more candidates; however, the special education department must also be intentional about retaining and recruiting high quality staff.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL SHORTAGES-RETENTION

Professional Development

As the focus on high quality special education programs increases so does the demand on classroom teachers. Teachers often feel ill prepared to address the needs of students. Improved professional development will give teachers confidence in the expectation to identify students, develop and implement IEPs, document performance and align with the continuum of student services. By increasing opportunities for training on Common Core and instructional strategies, teachers will be equipped to service students in the least restrictive environment while collaborating effectively with peer teachers. Additionally administrator training on staff roles and responsibilities will augment the alignment to the evaluation system, which will positively impact retention. Through exit interviews and informal feedback, staff have expressed concern that evaluations that do not connect to daily job duties thus leading to feeling devalued. The ESE department will collaborate with District personnel to bridge the gap between job responsibilities and the evaluative tools and process.

Staff Engagement

The ESE Department will increase the retention rates of staff by also improving overall job satisfaction. To create a positive climate and culture, department leadership will conduct engagement activities. Annually staff surveys will be administered and results analyzed to determine common trends, areas of growth and needed improvement. This disaggregated data will serve as the basis to refining goals and objectives. Listening Tours conducted with special education staff from January 2018 to March 2018, supported themes as identified through the CGCS audit and leadership observations. Staff from across the District discussed the positive changes within the department and gave recommendations for growth. These tours will return annually as a form of face-to-face feedback.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL SHORTAGES – RECRUITMENT

Expansion of College and University Partnerships

The District has developed quality partnerships with area colleges and universities; however, increased communication of the need for special education staff is warranted. Aside from making partners aware, staff and leadership will visit site locations to meet with prospective candidates and to promote the District as a first choice employer upon successful completion of the special education teacher certification program. The ESE Department will actively pursue the placement of special education student interns in ESE programs providing each with on-going mentoring support and resources to ensure a successful District experience. Upon completion of their internship, District leadership will collaborate with the candidate to identify a special education placement.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify recruiting team
- Consolidate and streamline course loads
- Train school based mentors

INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

To ensure that the students of today are ready for the careers of tomorrow, families and schools need to work together to promote partnerships that are systemic, sustained and integrated into school improvement efforts. The key to high parental involvement is removing barriers by building genuine relationships that result in a culture of understanding, support and collaboration. We must recognize how parent concerns can result in opportunities for training and focus on what school personnel need to move past parental involvement in pursuit of meaningful and authentic engagement with families. For parents of children with disabilities, navigating the world of special education is often over whelming and frustrating. Parents within the District community struggle to navigate the special education system from the initial referral to the on-going implementation of their child's IEP. Parents often lack the necessary training to understand the complexity of this system, as well as the basic mandates districts are expected to follow. As a result, many parents are unable to fully and meaningfully participate in their child's educational program. Additionally, when parent concerns arise, they often do not know who to contact leaving them feeling unheard and unsupported. At present, the District does not have a structured protocol for addressing and resolving parent concerns in a timely matter. As a result, parent-school relationships are often compromised due to a lack of trust and respect.

As a positive first step in rebuilding relationships and encouraging District level partnerships with families, the District has formed a Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC). The mission of the SEPAC is to work collaboratively with the ESE Department to increase communication with other parents, promote existing services and provide feedback on the development of new programs.

To improve communication and access, the ESE department will create a hotline for parent issues. Whether complaints, concerns or assistance needed, the hotline will be staffed with personnel who can provide immediate resolution to less pressing matters. The department will continue to foster and sustain strong parent-school relationships through the provision of programs and training opportunities, enabling each parent to engage meaningfully and in partnership with school personnel and support teams.

Parent Surveys

Annually parents of children with exceptionalities will be provided an opportunity to complete a survey used to gather parent thoughts, ideas and concerns for the delivery of special education services. Parents will be asked for suggestions for meaningful workshops, discussion topics and training needs. In conjunction with the District's Parent Academy, District staff, teachers and/or parents will collaborate to deliver recommended sessions.

Parent Focus Groups

The ESE Department will organize and facilitate parent forums on a bi-annual basis, held during and after school at strategic locations across the District. The intent of the forums will be to share progress made within the department and provide information about services and supports within the surrounding community for students with exceptionalities. Additionally, these opportunities will also ensure parents have another venue in which they are able to offer feedback on programs and service implementation. Similar to the parent survey, information gathered and shared will be used to guide trainings offered to parents and staff and to review of departmental procedures and practices.

Parent and Staff Workshops

Through the Parent Academy, monthly parent workshops will be conducted. Initial workshops will include training focused on identification and navigating the special education process. Ultimately, workshops will be provided based on the feedback received from parent surveys and focus groups. District staff will also have the opportunity to develop and expand skills to promote and sustain healthy parent-school partnerships. The focus of staff training will include navigating critical conversations, effectively collaborating with parents and advocates and strategies to build parent partnerships to maximize student success.

One measure of the success of workshops offered will be the monitoring of parent concerns and complaints as filed through the state and expressed in writing to the District.

NEXT STEPS

- Create hotline
- Develop parent workshop offerings

Monitoring and Accountability

Tracking and reviewing the ESE Department's Plan on a regular basis will help to ensure the focus areas for improvement are realistic and those executing the strategies are accountable. Monitoring will

include a monthly review of student identification and discipline data, IEP compliance and program implementation. Teacher vacancies and class loads will be monitored weekly to confirm adherence to District and state guidelines. A weekly analysis of parent concerns will be conducted to identify areas of growth and those of needed support and professional development. IEP Compliance staff will conduct monthly auditing visits. Finding reports will be provided for school and District staff to address and development corrective action plans as necessary.

The department will use evaluation data to further improve upon each of the plan's four areas of focus. The monitoring process will include:

- Quarterly review by SEPAC and District staff, including principal, principal leaders and other administrators, to determine the progress of each area.
- The development of a monitoring tool to report and share valid and reliable data pertaining to progress made towards improvement on the four areas of focus.
- The development and implementation of a semi-annual Parent Forum where stakeholders will analyze monitoring data and provide feedback as necessary.

Through the process of implementing and sustaining priorities of the plan, the success of students with exceptionalities becomes a shared responsibility by all stakeholders, whereby all students will be on a path to reach their full potential.

Location Name	School Year	Grade	Student Group	Crosstab	Student Count	Percent of Total
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	All Students	All Students	50,875	100.0%
Statewide	2017-18	All Grades	All Students	All Students	1,520,065	100.0%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	Students With Disabilities	All Students	8,240	16.20%
Statewide	2017-18	All Grades	Students With Disabilities	All Students	198,536	13.06%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	Students Without Disabilities	All Students	42,635	83.8%
Statewide	2017-18	All Grades	Students Without Disabilities	All Students	1,321,529	86.94%

Appendix A: District Students with Disabilities compared to County and State

STUUDENT TOTALS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES SERVED IN DPSCD AS COMPARED TO WAYNE COUNTY

Location Name	School Year	Grade	Student Group	Crosstab	Student Count	Percent of Total
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	All Students	All Students	50,875	100.0%
Wayne RESA	2017-18	All Grades	All Students	All Students	275,214	100.0%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	Students With Disabilities	All Students	8,240	16.20%
Wayne RESA	2017-18	All Grades	Students With Disabilities	All Students	33,957	12.34%
Detroit Public Schools Community District	2017-18	All Grades	Students Without Disabilities	All Students	42,635	83.8%
Wayne RESA	2017-18	All Grades	Students Without Disabilities	All Students	241,257	87.66%

Appendix B: District Compliance per SPP Indicators

MI School Data 2015-16 Special Education Public Reporting - Indicator Report Summary Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)

Indicator Number	Indicator Description	Target	State Performance	State: Target Met/Not Met	State: Target Met/Not Met	Location	District Performance	District: Target Met / Not Met	District: Target Met / Not Met
1	Graduation	>=80.00%	57.12%	×	Not Met	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	47.53%	×	Not Met
2	Dropout	<=9.00%	7.35%	~	Met	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	8.27%	~	Met
3A	AYP/AMO	N/A	N/A		N/A	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	N/A		N/A
3B Reading	Participation Rate	95.00%	92.71-97.89%		N/A	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	92.39%	×	Not Met
3B Math	Participation Rate	95.00%	93.39-97.96%		N/A	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	90.65%	×	Not Met
3C Reading	Proficiency Rate	N/A	23.11-31.06%		N/A	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	18.74%		N/A
3C Math	Proficiency Rate	N/A	16.89-28.44%		N/A	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	18.77%		N/A
4A	Suspension/Exp ulsion	<=4.10%	1.34%	✓	Met	Detroit Public Schools Community District (82015)	2.35%	~	Met

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Appendix C: Services and Programs for Students with Exceptionalities

SPECIAL EDUUCATION PROGRAM	Student Totals	SPECIAL EDUUCATION RELATED SERVICES	Student Totals
Early Childhood Special Education Pre-K (ages 3-5)	277	Teacher Consultant - ASD	11
Resource	3532	Teacher Consultant - Cl	3
Emotionally Impaired	197	Teacher Consultant - LD	36
Learning Disability	608	Teacher Consultant - DHH	117
Mild Cognitive Impairment	917	Teacher Consultant - VI	86
Moderate Cognitive Impaired	624	Teacher Consultant - PI	3
Autism Spectrum Disorder	399	Teacher Consultant - OHI	11
Severe Cognitive Impaired	88	Speech-Language Impaired	4918
Physical or Other Health Impairment	106	School Social Work	3241
Severely Multiple Impaired	215	Occupational Therapy	1149
Day Treatment	63	Physical Therapy	265
Dual Diagnosis	10	Audiological Services	190
Hearing Impairment	84	School Health Services	409

Visually Impaired	43	Orientation & Mobility Services	74
Early Childhood Special Education Services (Birth- 3)	264		
Grand Total	7427		

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES - COUNT BY DPSCD PROGRAM & RELATED SERVICES

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Appendix D: Staffing Data

POSITION	# OF CERTIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF EMPLOYED BY DPSCD	# OF SPECIAL EDUCATION VACANCIES FILLED BY CONTRACTED STAFF	# OF SPECIAL EDUCATION VACANCIES REMAINING UNFILLED
Special Education Teacher	535.8	37.0 Long-Term Subs	18.5 (8.0 covered by Teacher Consultants or Behavior Interventionists)
Speech & Language Provider	44.5	53.5	0
School Social Worker	75.8	15.0	7.0
School Psychologist	35.8	6.0	19.0
Occupational Therapist	9.6	22.0	0
Physical Therapist	3.0	7.0	0

Nurse	11.0	19.0	0
Paraprofessional	458.0	NA	33.0
Supervisor	1.0	1.0	0
	Totals	159.5	77.5