

**ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
TASK FORCE**

# **COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS**

## **Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development**

**2022-2023**

### ***Task Force Goals***

To assist urban public school systems in teaching all students to the highest academic standards and in closing identifiable gaps in the achievement of students by race.

To improve the quality of professional development for teachers and principals in urban public education.

To alleviate the shortage of certified teachers and principals in urban schools.

To improve the recruitment and skills of urban school principals.

### ***Task Force Chairs***

Sonja Santelises, Baltimore CEO  
Elyse Dashew, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board  
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College School of Education

## **DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW**



# Academic Department Overview

## January 2023

### **Overall Academic Department Goals/Priorities**

The goal of the academic department is to support the work of urban educators to improve student achievement for all students in our member districts. The department collaborates with researchers to determine district systems and resources that correlate with improved student achievement. These results inform our recommendations to instructional leaders.

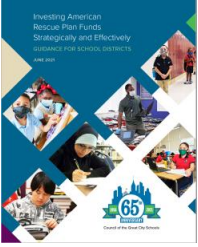
We share high-leverage information through publications and videos, and provide virtual and on-site strategic support teams, webinars, and job-alike conferences to facilitate networking and collaboration among our members. We collaborate with other national organizations including Student Achievement Partners (SAP), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), The National Academy of Education, The Center for School Leadership, and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) in support of raising student achievement in our member districts.

Our efforts this school year continue to focus on supporting districts as they continue to work through the impact of COVID-19 and systematically improve student learning and achievement. This includes addressing unfinished learning during Tier I instruction, attending to the social, emotional, and well-being of staff and students, as well as supporting districts in developing and implementing high-quality curriculum. In the upcoming second edition of the *Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework*, to be released March 2023, we will also emphasize culturally relevant pedagogy, equitable instruction in the content areas that embrace respect and appreciation for racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity while optimizing student voice, assets, identity, and agency. We are also developing on-line modules that will expand access to high-quality resources, research, and tools to support strategic planning that offers professional development for district leaders, school leadership, coaches, teachers and staff, and raising student achievement. Regular meetings of CAOs, Chiefs of Schools, and content area directors enable districts to share challenges and solutions with their peers. Additionally, we convene joint monthly Instructional Spotlights that highlight district problems of practice identified in our monthly role-alike meetings and ways to address them.

We will continue to provide technical assistance and offer cross-functional learning opportunities to support district leadership in intra-departmental collaboration in elevating teaching and learning to align to college- and career-readiness standards. Additionally, we offer guidance for assessing the implementation of college- and career-readiness standards within a district, and for using the academic key performance indicators to inform strategic planning for creating and implementing instructional district priorities and initiatives.

## Strategic Support

### *Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively*



This document lays out a framework for the nation’s large city school systems to spend the new federal dollars strategically and effectively. It sets out overarching goals for the use of funds; articulates broad investment strategies; defines principles for the effective use of funds; and asks a series of questions that leaders and stakeholders should ask themselves as they embark on planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. The document also draws on lessons learned from previous infusions of federal dollars and summarizes the main provisions of the federal legislation and agency guidance. <https://www.cgcs.org/Page/1283>.

Now updated with Interim Progress Assessment Guides that provide guidance and support to school districts in assessing the investments related to instructional materials and resources. Districts can use this document in the ongoing process of investment planning, implementation, and oversight to ensure that federal relief funds are allocated strategically and effectively. Here is the link to the guides, including Investing in Instructional Resources and Student Support Services: <https://www.cgcs.org/Page/1430>

This document was the basis for a meeting of superintendents, chief academic officers and chiefs of schools on December 9, 2021. Members met in break out groups to share their rationale and intended outcomes for targeting their primary instructional investment using ARP funds and how this investment designed/being implemented to address unfinished learning.

The document was also the foundation for meetings with publishers to inform them about what districts need from publishers. The initial meeting included considerations and quality criteria for special populations and a district panel with representatives from Baltimore City Public Schools, San Diego Unified School District, and San Antonio Independent School District discussing their goals and priorities.

### *Monthly Virtual Meetings*

Since March 24, 2020, instructional leaders (CAOs, Instructional Leaders, Chiefs of Schools, Content Directors, Special Ed Directors, Mental Health and SEL Leaders) have been invited to join in job-alike forums as a safe space for speaking frankly and for sharing ideas with peers as they accelerate student learning and support during the sudden, rapidly changing COVID-19 landscape. Additionally, the Council developed a secure space on EdWires for council member districts to access and share resources, PowerPoints, and other relevant information. We will continue to convene these meetings and compile additional resources as requested throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Major topics include:

- Providing opportunities for districts to share ways that they are operationalizing curriculum guidance so that teachers are using priority instructional content in ELA and Mathematics to plan for Tier 1 grade level instruction, including how to foster positive student mindset.
- Addressing Unfinished Learning: Acceleration versus Remediation
- Creating coherence between Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction in service of Tier 1
- Addressing grade-level instruction for students, including English language learners and students with disabilities using culturally and linguistically-relevant content and pedagogy
- Designing and implementing a continuum of social emotional learning and mental health support for students, families, and staff.

- Planning for and responding to instruction and compliance needs in Special Education to support students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment.
- Considerations for strategic planning, investments, and project management in the use of ARP funding to achieve district goals related to the safe reopening of schools, building staff capacity, and accelerating student learning. (*Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively: Guidance for School Districts*)
- How to meet the diverse needs of learners by focusing on their assets, abilities, skills, and utilizing multiple instructional methods for engaging learners, presenting content, and demonstrating student understanding of content.
- Communicating effectively on potentially divisive issues.
- Implementing equitable instruction in the core content areas the K-12 instructional progression/continuum.
- Optimizing high school scheduling and extended time to supplement instructional programming
- Planning and implementing innovative summer school programs and sharing insights gained from summer school implementation.
- Interrogating attendance, grading and promotion policies.
- Learning Management Systems that include multiple applications to provide high quality instruction in various learning contexts and environments.
- Re-engaging students in the learning process in multiple instructional environments.
- Sharing examples from districts for addressing social-emotional learning while teaching grade-level priority content to diverse learners, especially those that are traditionally vulnerable and marginalized.
- Programming for Professional development for fall and winter.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of capturing student growth in all content areas.
- Developing formative classroom assessments and discussing student work to inform instruction.
- District plans and actions to locate unregistered students.

### ***Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures***

Following school closures due to Covid-19, a subset of the CAOs volunteered to meet weekly for eight weeks to provide guidance for implementing a districtwide approach to addressing unfinished learning in a just-in-time rather than a just-in-case model.

With funding from the Schusterman Foundation, the Council was able to enlist the help of nationally recognized experts in mathematics, English language arts and literacy, special education, and English as a second language to delineate a rationale and instructional approaches to address unfinished learning. The document emphasized that school districts would not only need to address the significant social and emotional toll that the crisis has taken on children, but also widespread unfinished learning. We have always had students who entered a grade level with unfinished learning; however, our previous, well-intentioned attempts to use remediation programs had the impact of keeping students from engaging in grade-level content and resulted in their falling further behind their peers.



The document highlights key transition grades and illustrates how to focus on essential content for the grade. This approach provides the space and opportunities to address underlying unfinished learning just in time for all students to engage in grade level work, and acquire facility with language demands, skills, and concepts to accelerate their learning. To illustrate these approaches, the document provides examples of just-in-time scaffolds to accelerate student learning in mathematics and English language arts.

<https://tinyurl.com/ya4g73f9>

The Academic Team also collaborated with Student Achievement Partners on their *2020–21 Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics*. Districts can confidently focus on instructional content priorities in mathematics (K–8, high school) and ELA/literacy (K–12) for the 2021–22 academic year and leverage the structure and emphases of college- and career-ready mathematics and ELA/literacy standards. This enables teachers to spend the necessary time to ensure that students can address the most essential learning and be prepared for the following school year.

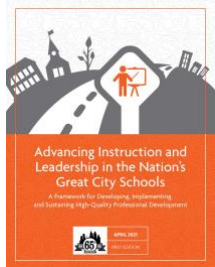
Additionally, the Council completed a 3-part series of **webinars** that focused on translating the principles of *Addressing Unfinished Learning* into curriculum, instruction, pedagogy, and formative assessment. The Council and Student Achievement Partners developed and facilitated this series, along with experts and urban school district practitioners, to support and provide examples of implementing the principles of addressing unfinished learning. Key topics included: (1) how prioritized ELA/literacy and math content and addressing unfinished learning work in tandem as illustrated through unit design, tasks, and conceptual models, (2) successes and challenges in addressing unfinished learning while focusing on essential content, and (3) moving this work to scale. The recordings are available using this [link](#).

## Major Activities/Projects

### *District Considerations for Universal Dyslexia Screening: Ensuring Appropriate Implementation and Instruction for English Learners*

Many states across the country now have policies requiring districts to implement universal dyslexia screeners and/or process for identify students at risk for reading difficulties and dyslexia. In response to Council members request for more guidance on the utilization of universal dyslexia screeners with English learners, a brief was developed. The purpose of this brief is to (1) share potential challenges regarding the implementation of universal dyslexia screening for English learners (ELs) and (2) highlight considerations that ensure English learners are appropriately screened given their language development trajectory and the foundational literacy instruction ELs have received. Furthermore, the brief offers considerations for the appropriate interpretation and use of screener results when districts are required to universally screen for dyslexia, including for students who have limited oral language development and little to no knowledge of English phonemes (e.g., when sound/letter correspondence differs between languages with different writing systems). This brief will be released November 2022.

### *Professional Development Framework*



In 2019, the Council established an advisory committee composed of Chief Academic Officers, curriculum leaders in mathematics, English Language Arts, Bilingual education, and Special Education representing our member districts to define the salient features of quality professional development. Additionally, a panel of experts agreed to serve as critical friends in support of the work, and we interviewed several renowned researchers in the field of professional development. The resulting professional development framework was released during the 2021 March Legislative Conference.

This guide presents district instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what high-quality professional development entails. What makes this document different and useful is the focus on practical issues

of district-level implementation in multiple teaching and learning environments. This is a guide designed by practitioners for practitioners, and it was important to the advisory committee and project team to develop a resource that provides clear, concrete guidance for district leaders based on our collective experience with best practices—and common pitfalls—in selecting, designing, implementing, and sustaining high quality professional development that not only represents what has traditionally worked in the past, but is nimble enough to meet the demands of the present.

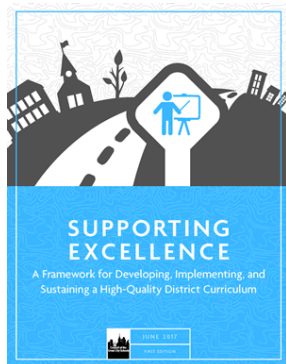
The guide lays out a working definition of high-quality professional development, and then briefly reviews the research on what makes professional learning effective including lessons from the field. The framework then presents a set of preconditions and design principles of high-quality professional learning. These principles touch on the “why” (What is the purpose of professional development? How does it serve students, teachers, leaders, and the district as a whole?), the “what” (What knowledge or skills should professional development provide or focus on?), the “who” (Who are we targeting? Who should have access to professional learning opportunities, and who should be deployed to provide, support, and reinforce this professional learning?), and the “how” (How should professional development be structured, delivered, and evaluated to best improve instructional outcomes?). To illustrate these principles in action, the framework then provides a set of annotated exemplars from districts around the country. See: <https://www.cgcs.org/Page/660>

### ➤ *Resources for Supporting Rigorous Academic Standards*

#### *Overview*

With continued funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Schusterman Foundation, the Council works to advance district capacity to implement college- and career-readiness standards, ensuring that all urban students have access to high-quality instructional materials, interventions, and programming. Additionally, funding from the Wallace Foundation supports our districts in enhancing the role of principal supervisors as instructional leaders and the instructional use of American Rescue Plan funding.

### *Assessing the Quality of District Curriculum and Providing Technical Support to Districts*



The academic team led the development of the first edition of *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum* with principles that are appropriate for all college- and career-readiness standards. This framework provides instructional leaders and staff with criteria for what a high-quality curriculum entails. Developed through combined efforts of Council staff together with school district academic leaders and other experts, this first edition framework includes annotated samples and exemplars from districts around the country. It also provides actionable recommendations for developing, implementing, and continuously improving a district’s curriculum. This emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the district’s curriculum guidance reflects shared instructional beliefs and high expectations for all students and clarifies the level of instructional work expected in every school. The document includes a study guide. <https://tinyurl.com/6ch2k796>

During the CGCS 2022 Annual Fall Conference in Orlando, FLA, the Council provided an overview of the **second edition of *Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework*** to refine the previous document and include some additional areas:

- Standards-aligned expectations for student work and writing.
- Instructional coherence within and across grade levels and learning environments.



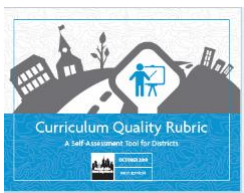
- Culturally and linguistically relevant instruction.
- Current research and best practices on addressing unfinished learning, scaffolding and support for diverse student populations (including English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and gifted students).
- Addressing social-emotional learning and trauma.
- Expanded instructional use of technology.

The second edition of the curriculum framework will be released in March 2023 and will incorporate additional illustrations of key features across the four content areas. It will also include examples illustrating the use of hyperlinks within district curriculum documents as well as the use of online resources and primary sources. We would like to express our appreciation to the Curriculum Framework advisory committee comprised of Chief Academic Officers, curriculum leaders in the four core content areas, Bilingual Education, and Special Education from our member districts who provided guidance and feedback during the revision process as well as national experts who served as technical advisors.

To further guide district leaders with implementation of the *Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework*, virtual learning opportunities, Instructional Spotlights, are designed to provide focused professional engagement on highly relevant curriculum and instruction topics that our instructional leaders have surfaced as areas of interest and need. These monthly Instructional Spotlights are aligned to and expand upon the key features in the CGCS *Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework*. Topics range from addressing early literacy and early mathematics, grading for equity, to telling your data narrative. Presenters also include national experts and member district leaders with in-depth experience in the topics.

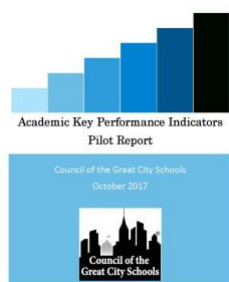
The CGCS academic team also provides on-site as well as virtual technical assistance for district curriculum leaders and their teams throughout their curriculum development and implementation process. We customize our work for individual districts in determining implications for teaching and learning, curriculum development and refinement, implementation, and raising student achievement. Such technical assistance is available to member districts upon request.

### ***Curriculum Quality Rubric***



Based on the first edition of the *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*, the Academic Team developed a rubric members can use to evaluate the quality of their curriculum guidance materials. The rubric was reviewed by members of the Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development during the 2019 CGCS Legislative Conference and by an advisory committee of Chief Academic Officers, curriculum leaders in mathematics, English Language Arts, Bilingual education, and Special Education from our member districts to provide additional feedback and test the rubric using their curriculum documents. The final version of the *Curriculum Quality Rubric: A Self-Assessment Tool for Districts* (<https://tinyurl.com/t8xh85hs>) is now in use in curriculum reviews but will be revised along with the *Supporting Excellence* in the coming year.

## *Academic Key Performance Indicators*



The Council developed academic key performance indicators (KPIs) in a process similar to the one used to develop operational KPIs. Using feedback from the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force, indicators were selected for their predictive ability and linkage to progress measures for the Minority Male Initiative pledge taken from a list of 200 potential KPIs.

Since SY 2016-17, the indicators have been refined and are part of the annual KPI data collection and reporting. This now enables districts to compare their performance with similar urban districts and to network to address shared challenges.

## *Early Reading Accelerators Pilot: Joint Project with Student Achievement Partners*

With funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the Council and Student Achievement Partners collaborated with San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) to pilot an augmented approach to balanced literacy. It provided research-based content and instructional practices to raise the literacy levels of students in K-1 so that they would be able to read grade-level texts and be prepared for success in future grades.

During this three-year process, SAISD, CGCS, and SAP worked collaboratively to build the systems and structures to develop shared buy-in in the pilot schools, to strategically plan for evaluation, and to prepare for future scaling of implementation throughout the district. Representatives from five member districts observed the process to guide future planning for implementation in their own districts. These member districts include Cleveland Metropolitan, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Denver. Metropolitan Nashville continues to be part of this cohort as the pioneer district for the Early Reading Accelerators Pilot (ERA).

Project leaders developed and facilitated a **three-part webinar series** for continuing district support and implementation of ERA in the wake of COVID-19. In this three-part series, hosted by the Council and Student Achievement Partners, experts and urban school district practitioners presented and discussed: (1) the latest findings about teaching foundational skills and making use of complex text as part of comprehensive literacy approach and (2) the pedagogy related to teaching foundational skills, including phonemic awareness to monolingual students and English Language Learners. The recordings for the series and additional resources are available using this [link](#).

Important outcomes of the pilot were the increase in academic rigor and engagement in classrooms, more collaboration and cohesion on school campuses and within the district, instructional environments that became more culturally sustaining and visually rich, and re-ignition of the joy of teaching and learning literacy. This work continues to evolve as we partner with member districts in designing current early literacy plans. To learn more about the details of this pilot, use this link <https://achievethecore.org/page/3360/shifting-early-literacy-practices> to access the case study, *Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District*.

➤ ***Building Capacity of Urban Schools***

*Mathematics and Science*

Under the leadership of Gabriella Uro, *A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction: Examining the Interdependence of Language and Mathematical Understanding*, informed the work of a Joint Procurement Project, to use the Council’s joint purchasing power as an alliance to more effectively influence the market to produce higher quality materials that reflect the interdependence of language and mathematics for English language learners. This project included a Materials Working Group, composed of district practitioners and experts in mathematics and English language acquisition. This group provided concrete feedback to selected vendors on their revised units in their proposed materials.

In 2019, the Los Angeles Unified School Board approved the establishment of a nationwide “bench of contracts” with three publishers who have met the Council’s pre-determined quality criteria for ELL math materials: Curriculum Associates, LLC; Imagine Learning, Inc.; and Open Up Resources. Any school district in the nation can now use these contracts to purchase the vetted materials to support teachers of English learners.

➤ ***Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference***

After a 2-year hiatus, the Academic, Research, and School Leadership Conference July 11-14, 2022, was held at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio. The theme was: **Seize the moment: Implementing and assessing solutions for accelerating student learning**. Having learned a great deal from our job-alike forums, we decided to expand the function of this annual meeting to include not only CAOs and Research and Evaluation leaders, but other key roles in a successful, comprehensive instructional program, including Chiefs of Schools, CAOs, content area directors, equity officers, SEL leaders, and special education directors.

This conference focused on how urban districts can continue to move forward this fall in improving school culture and climate that optimizes student and staff experiences and outcomes, re-centering instruction, addressing unfinished learning, as well as the strategic use of data. Districts had an opportunity to network across instructional roles within and across districts that share common goals and challenges. Districts also shared promising innovations and strategies, how they scaled innovations, and how they connected American Rescue Plan (ARP) investments to programming and evaluation.

The 20th Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders meeting will be held at the Nines Hotel in Portland, Oregon, July 10-13, 2023. We will continue to focus on how urban districts can move forward from the pandemic through re-centering instructional strategies and high-quality curriculum, increased focus on positive school culture and climate, addressing unfinished learning, as well as the strategic use of data and research to inform district decision making. This meeting gives participants an opportunity to connect, learn, and strategize across instructional roles in districts that share common goals and challenges. Consider bringing a team of instructional leaders including Chief Academic Officers, Chief Accountability or Performance Officers, Chiefs of Schools, Equity Officers, Curriculum Directors, Research and Accountability Directors, Principal Supervisors/Instructional Leaders, Special Education Directors, and SEL Directors.

➤ ***Academic Strategic Support Teams and Technical Assistance Partnering***

In November 2021, a CGCS strategic support team led by Robin Hall assisted the Atlanta Public Schools' leadership team in identifying opportunities for strengthening the organizational, operational, and effectiveness of its Office of Student Support Services to schools. The team provided actionable feedback to key district leaders and submitted a final report to the Board in February 2022.

A CGCS strategic support team led by Karla Estrada, former CGCS Chief of Academics, and Ray Hart convened in Boston Public Schools' and worked with members of the leadership team to provide recommendations for improving special education systems, practices, and compliance activities that would best meet the needs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The team provided a final report to the Boston School Committee on November 16, 2022.

➤ ***Middle School Science Units developed by OpenSciEd***

The Council conducted a virtual meeting in January 2022, facilitated by OpenSciEd, to provide an overview of their middle school science units, discuss the time schedule for the development and release of elementary and high school units. Regular updates and reviews are planned between OpenSciEd and district science directors.

OpenSciEd is a project led by ten states and funded by four foundations committed to improving the supply of high-quality science curriculum aligned to new college and career ready standards. OpenSciEd provide the units free of charge and offers professional development for a fee. These middle school level units are designed to address equity gaps in science by reorienting classrooms to be driven by student interest and curiosity.

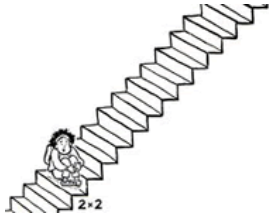
➤ ***Math Summit***

The Council, in collaboration with the Institute of Educational Statistics (IES), the National Science Foundation (NSF), Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), will sponsor a virtual mathematics summit in September 2023. The Summit theme will focus on opportunities to learn and addressing persistent gaps in mathematics achievement with rigorous and innovative instruction. There are six strands for the conference and participants will be able to attend sessions at a specific grade span, such as K-2 or 9-12. The strands include: increasing opportunities to learn and raising expectations for all, strategies for differentiating instruction for diverse learners, high-dosage tutoring and other academic recovery strategies, learning progressions and high school pathways, language and mathematics (includes ELL), and technology and mathematics. Speakers will include practitioners, presidential award winners in mathematics, experts in the field of mathematics such as researchers, mathematicians, and policymakers. Additional details are forthcoming.

## CGCS Instructional Support Materials

The Council of the Great City Schools developed the following tools to help its urban school systems and others implement college- and career-readiness standards.

### Basics about the Standards



*Staircase.* Two three-minute videos (one in English and one in Spanish) that explain the Common Core. This is particularly good for presentations to community and parent groups. (2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUjjk9lgDcY&t=38s>- English

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qs7Spmjmn0>- Spanish

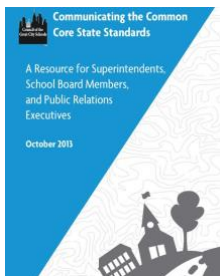


*Conversation.* Two three-minute videos (one in English and one in Spanish) that explain how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and help them learn what they need to know to get to graduation and beyond. (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8ebMICO1c8&t=14s>- English

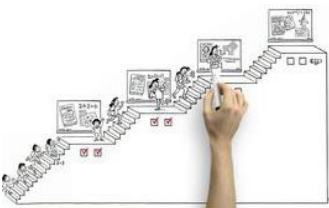
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm4-W\\_o1boU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm4-W_o1boU)- Spanish

### Communicating the Standards



*Communicating the Common Core State Standards: A Resource for Superintendents, School Board Members, and Public Relations Executives.* A resource guide that helps district leaders devise and execute comprehensive communication plans to strengthen public awareness about and support for college- and career-readiness standards. (2013)

<http://bit.ly/2wi5tu6>



*Staircase.* Two 30-second Public Service Announcements (one in English and one in Spanish) to increase public awareness regarding Common Core standards for English Language Arts. Also, two 30-second Public Service Announcements (one in English and one in Spanish) to increase public awareness regarding Common Core standards for Mathematics. (2012)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsooGc9kI\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsooGc9kI_o)- English

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VX4RRhbCwn8>- Spanish



*Conversation.* Two 30-second Public Service Announcements (one in English and one in Spanish) that explain how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and help them learn what they need to know to get to graduation and beyond. (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQJtEK8iA38>- English

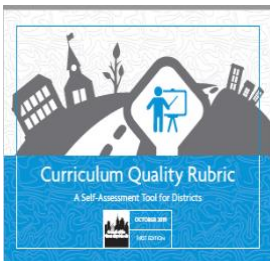
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5Vdvt4up4M>- Spanish

## Developing and Aligning Standards-based District Curriculum



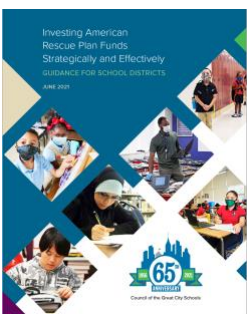
*Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum.* A framework that provides instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what a high-quality curriculum entail. This guide includes annotated samples and exemplars from around the country. It also provides actionable recommendations districts for developing, implementing, and continuously improving a district curriculum, ensuring that it reflects shared instructional beliefs and common, high expectations for all students, and that it focuses the instructional work in every school. (2017)

<https://tinyurl.com/6ch2k796>



*Curriculum Quality Rubric: A Self-Assessment Tool for Districts* is a companion resource to *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*. Districts can use the rubric to assess how well their district curriculum reflects the seven key features of a high-quality curriculum identified in the framework. Using the rubric and the framework, districts can revise their curriculum as a part of ongoing improvement and provide substantive guidance and support for teachers and administrators.

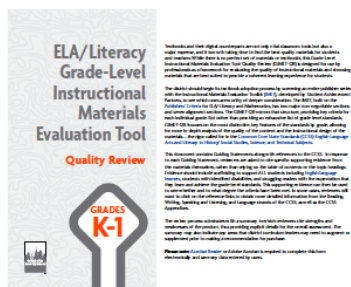
<https://tinyurl.com/t8xh85hs>



*Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively: Guidance for School Districts.* District can use this framework to consider how to spend the new federal dollars strategically and effectively. It sets out overarching goals for the use of funds; articulates broad investment strategies; defines principles for the effective use of funds; and asks a series of questions that leaders and stakeholders should ask themselves as they embark on planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. The document also draws on lessons learned from previous infusions of federal dollars and summarizes the main provisions of the federal legislation and agency guidance. (2021)

<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/1283>

## Selecting and Using Standards-based Instructional Materials

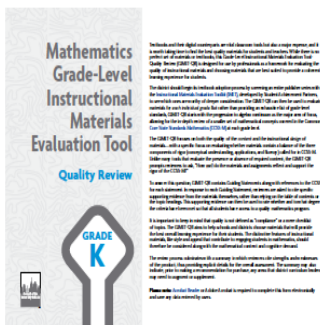


*The Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET- QR), (English Language Arts).* A set of grade-by-grade rubrics and a companion document that define the key features for reviewers to consider in examining the quality of instructional materials in English Language Arts K-12. In addition, the tools are useful in helping teachers decide where and how adopted classroom materials could be supplemented. The documents align with similar tools developed by the Council for English language learners. See below.(2015)

While GIMET-QR was designed to support textbook materials adoption, feedback from Council members using the tool indicates that there are additional uses:

- 1) to assess alignment and identify gaps/omissions in current instructional materials;
- 2) to assess alignment of district scope and sequence, and the rigor and quality of instructional tasks and assessments; and
- 3) to provide professional development that builds capacity and a shared understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy and/or Mathematics.

<http://www.cgcs.org/Page/474>



*The Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET- QR), (Mathematics).* A set of grade-level rubrics and a companion document that define the key features for reviewers to consider in examining the quality of instructional materials in mathematics K-8. The key features include examples and guiding statements from the Illustrative Mathematics progression documents to clarify the criteria.(2015)

While GIMET-QR was designed to support textbook materials adoption, feedback from Council members using the tool indicates that there are additional uses:

- 1) to assess alignment and identify gaps/omissions in current instructional materials;
- 2) to assess alignment of district scope and sequence, and the rigor and quality of instructional tasks and assessments; and
- 3) to provide professional development that builds capacity and a shared understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy and/or Mathematics.

<http://www.cgcs.org/Page/475>

## Additional Tools and Resources

*The Text Analysis Toolkit:* The Council and Student Achievement Partners are partnering to provide CGCS ELA/ Literacy District Leaders opportunities engage in professional development of this toolkit. This toolkit aims to support educators in the process of selecting and analyzing texts based on complexity and cultural relevance. The resources focus on tools for reflecting on the identities of educators and the students they serve, analyzing texts with multiple lenses, and considering implications for use in their specific context.

<https://achievethecore.org/page/3369/text-analysis-toolkit>

### *Alignment Projects:*

The Council continues to collaborate with Student Achievement Partners to create English Language Arts projects demonstrating how to adapt textbooks to the rigor of college-and career-readiness standards. The resources developed through these projects are available at

<https://achievethecore.org/category/679/create-aligned-lessons>.

*Read Aloud Project.* A set of classroom tools that explain how to identify and create text-dependent and text-specific questions that deepen student understanding for kindergarten through grade 2 with more than 150 sample lessons.

*Text Set Project: Building Knowledge and Vocabulary.* A set of classroom tools that include materials and activities, enabling participants to create and use Expert Packs (text sets) to support students in building knowledge, vocabulary and the capacity to read independently for grades kindergarten through grade 5. Text sets are comprised of annotated bibliographies and suggested sequencing of texts to provide a coherent learning experience for students. This is accompanied by instructional guidance and tools for teachers, as well as a variety of suggested tasks for ensuring students have learned from what they have read.

## Professional Development on the Standards



*From the Page to the Classroom—ELA.* A 45-minute professional development video for central office and school-based staff and teachers on the shifts in the Common Core in English Language Arts and literacy. The video can be stopped and restarted at various spots to allow for discussion. (2012). Districts can use portions of the video as a springboard for enhancing current implementation of the standards and supporting rigorous instruction.

<https://www.cgcs.org/domain/127>



*From the Page to the Classroom—Math.* A 45-minute professional development video for central office and school-based staff and teachers on the shifts in the Common Core in mathematics. The video can be stopped and restarted at various spots to allow for



discussion. (2012) Districts can use portions of the video as a springboard for enhancing current implementation of the standards and supporting rigorous instruction.

<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/345>



*The Great City Schools Professional Learning Platform.* A series of 10 video-based courses for school administrators and teachers to enhance language development and literacy skills for English Language Learners and struggling readers. (2018)

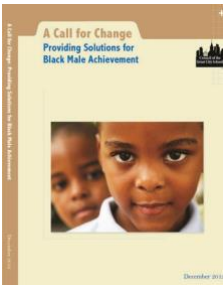
<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/667>

### Implementing High Standards with Diverse Students



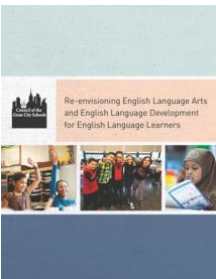
*Common Core State Standards and Diverse Urban School Students: Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.* A white paper outlining the key components of an integrated, multi-tiered system of supports and interventions needed by districts in the implementation of the Common Core with diverse urban students. (2012)

<https://www.cgcs.org/domain/146>



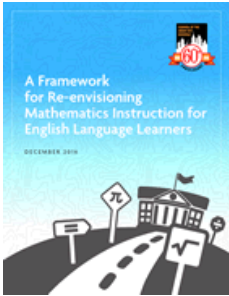
*A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement.* A book-form compendium of strategies by leading researchers that advocates for improving academic outcomes for African American boys and young men. Areas addressed include public policy, expectations and standards, early childhood, gifted and talented programming, literacy development, mathematics, college- and career-readiness, mental health and safety, partnerships and mentoring, and community involvement. (2012)

<https://www.cgcs.org/domain/88>



*Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners.* A framework for acquiring English and attaining content mastery across the grades in an era when new college- and career-readiness standards require more reading in all subject areas. (2014, 2017)

<http://tinyurl.com/yasg9xc4>



*A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners.* A guide for looking at the interdependence of language and mathematics to assist students with the use of academic language in acquiring a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics and applying mathematics in real world problems. (2016)

<http://tinyurl.com/y7flpyoz>

*Butterfly Video:* A 10-minute video of a New York City kindergarten ELL classroom illustrating Lily Wong Fillmore’s technique for ensuring that all students can access complex text using academic vocabulary and build confidence in the use of complex sentences as they study the metamorphosis of butterflies.

<https://vimeo.com/47315992>

### Assessing District Implementation of the Standards



*Indicators of Success: A Guide for Assessing District Level Implementation of College and Career-Readiness Standards.* A set of indicators districts might use to track their implementation of college- and career-readiness standards. Indicators are divided into seven sections, including: vision and goal setting, resource allocation, parent and community outreach, curriculum and instruction, professional development, assessment, and student data. Each section provides descriptions of what “on track” or “off track” might look like, along with examples of evidence to look at in determining effective implementation. (2016)

<http://tinyurl.com/hh6kesd>



*Calendar of Questions.* A series of questions about ongoing implementation of college- and career-readiness standards, arranged by month, focusing on particular aspects of implementation for staff roles at various levels of the district, as well as milestones for parents and students. (2013) These types of questions are still valid and can be customized for any districtwide project implementation.

<http://cgcs.org/Page/409>

### Implementing Standards-based Assessments



*Beyond Test Scores: What NAEP Results Tell Us About Implementing the Common Core in Our Classrooms.* An analysis of results on four sample NAEP items—two in mathematics and two in ELA— that are most like the ones students will be seeing in their classwork and on the

new common core-aligned assessments. In this booklet, the Council shows how students did on these questions, discusses what may have been missing from their instruction, and outlines what changes to curriculum and instruction might help districts and schools advance student achievement. It also poses a series of questions that district leaders should be asking themselves about curriculum, professional development, and other instructional supports. (2014)

<https://tinyurl.com/c2pv9pdh>

### Resources for Parents about the Standards



A series of parent roadmaps to the Common Core in English Language Arts and literacy, grades K-12 in English and grades K-8 in Spanish. (2012)

<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/330> (English)

<https://www.cgcs.org/domain/148> (Spanish)



A series of parent roadmaps to the Common Core in mathematics, grades K-12 in English and K-8 in Spanish. (2012)

<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/366> (English)

<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/367> (Spanish)

**CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK SECOND EDITION**



# Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework (Second Edition)

## Nine Key Features of a Strong, Standards-Aligned Curriculum

The Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework is a resource that provides guidance on the design principles, pre-conditions, and the nine key features of high-quality curriculum. With the impact of the pandemic on student learning and achievement, the second edition of the Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework has been updated to further reflect the needs of diverse learners and unfinished learning. Each of the nine key features will include explanations of why the feature is essential, how it can be implemented, and will provide concrete examples for illustration. These are the nine key features of a strong, standards, aligned curriculum:

- 1 A district's curriculum documents reflect the district's beliefs and vision about learning and achievement for all students.
- 2 A district's curriculum documents are clear about what must be taught and at what depth to address unfinished learning and reflect college- and career-readiness standards for each grade level and course.
- 3 A curriculum builds instructional coherence within and across grade levels and learning environments.
- 4 A curriculum explicitly articulates standards-aligned expectations for student work or writing at different points during the school year and across grade levels. It also provides guidance and metrics on how to gauge student progress in meeting these expectations.
- 5 The curriculum supports culturally-responsive instruction and embraces respect and appreciation for racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.
- 6 A curriculum contains scaffolds and other supports to address unfinished learning and to meet the needs of diverse learners, while ensuring broad-based student attainment of grade-level standards.
- 7 The district's curriculum supports the effective use of technology to enhance grade-level instruction and student engagement.
- 8 A district's curriculum provides guidance and resources for integrating social emotional learning and skill-building into core content instruction.
- 9 A curriculum provides teachers with guidance on where the materials are high quality, where gaps exist, and how to fill them to meet district expectations, including links to supporting instructional resources.



# Preconditions for Supporting a High-Quality Curriculum

A number of political, technical, and organizational preconditions are needed to support the development and implementation of a high-quality curriculum. In particular, a high-quality curriculum has the best chance of improving instruction systemwide if:



The district has consistently communicated a strong, unifying vision for high-quality school and classroom practice that is founded on college- and career-readiness standards and high expectations for all students.



The district has set clear, measurable goals for the academic attainment of all students.



Curriculum guidance should explicitly indicate what instructional decisions and mandates are to be made at the district level (i.e., what the district “holds tightly”), and where schools and teachers have autonomy in making decisions about what and how to teach.



The district has provided equitable access to high-quality instructional resources, including technology.



The district has a comprehensive professional development plan in place and communicates the message that not only teachers, but a wide variety of central office and school-based leaders and staff are expected to develop the content knowledge and skills necessary to implement district college- and career-readiness standards within a supportive classroom environment.



The district ensures that both internally- and externally provided professional development is consistent with the district’s instructional vision, aligned to college- and career-readiness standards, and prioritized and logically organized to address teacher needs.



The district continuously works to build a culture of shared accountability, including processes to monitor student learning and achievement across central office departments, staff, and schools.



The district has a system in place to inform modification, continuation, and evaluation of its curriculum guidance using evidence of student work and teacher feedback.

An additional consideration is the need for a thoughtful, internally consistent approach to instructional management and oversight. Some districts are highly centralized in their control of curriculum and instruction, while others give schools a high degree of autonomy in these areas. Districts need to explicitly consider why and how their particular approach to school oversight is likely to improve instruction and advance academic achievement based on staff capacity and student performance. The most effective approach is one that tailors the level of central oversight to the needs of schools, based on where schools and the district are on the continuum of progress.



# Principles for Design and Implementation

In developing and adopting curricula, districts often face many of the same challenges. These challenges range from the strategic to the tactical. For instance, a curriculum is unlikely to be implemented with integrity across a school system if district leaders have not communicated “why” it is essential for all students or its importance as a driving force behind instructional improvement. Districts must also ensure that teachers and instructional leaders share an accurate understanding of instructional expectations. At the same time, implementation can also be derailed if curricular materials are not aligned to the standards and easy to use, or if there are problems in the pace of instruction presented or in the distribution of materials, resources, or guidance. Whether the curriculum guidance takes the form of a hard copy or is situated on an electronic platform, it must be easily accessible, user-friendly and immediately useful to instructional staff.

It is therefore helpful to start with a shared understanding of the curriculum design principles and how it should be introduced and implemented in schools throughout the district, such as:

- Reflect the district’s values and its philosophy of how students learn and what learning is essential at each grade level;
- Provide coherent instructional experiences that increase in complexity over time within and across grade- levels from pre-kindergarten through high school and systematically build student academic and social emotional readiness for college and careers.
- Identify areas where large numbers of students are likely to have unfinished learning and provide teachers guidance for addressing those gaps in the context of grade-level instruction.
- Identify appropriate required and optional resources for all instructional staff, including those who support and supervise teaching.
- Incorporate and guide teachers in the use of culturally responsive texts, tasks, and resources that respect and celebrate the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of students.
- Provide guidance in the use of technology to enhance grade-level teaching and learning across multiple learning environments.
- Specify what content knowledge, academic language, and skills should be taught, and at approximately what point during a school year, so that students who transfer between schools have a coherent learning experience.
- Create the floor, not the ceiling, for learning at every grade level and in every course. In this way, the curriculum should support and challenge the full range of learners, from struggling students to gifted and talented students.
- Illustrate exciting learning opportunities within and outside school to keep students engaged as they learn challenging content, skills, and concepts.
- Integrate social-emotional learning opportunities that will increase student preparedness for rigorous learning experiences and collaborative tasks.
- Indicate when and how to use assessments, including formative assessments, to determine how well students are progressing in attaining a particular standard or set of standards.
- Be regularly updated and refined in response to user feedback to meet evolving student and educator needs.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL SPOTLIGHTS**



## Monthly Instructional Spotlight

Date/Time	Topic/Presenter	Alignment to ARP/Addressing Unfinished Learning/Supporting Excellence	Audience	CGCS Facilitator(s)
<p>(75 minutes) <b>Thursday, September 15, 2022</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)</p>	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b>  Overview of the Supporting Excellence Instructional Framework Second Edition Key Features  Addressing unfinished learning: Using learning progressions as a conduit to grade-level understanding for all students, (including Extended Learning Time)  Meredith Liben, Literacy Consultant, Liben Education Consulting, LLC and Phil Daro, Director of Mathematics, SERP</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to Key Feature 6  Addressing Unfinished Learning, principles 1-6</p>	<p>CAOs, Instructional Leaders, Chief of Schools, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, SPED Leaders, SEL Leaders</p>	<p>Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks</p>
<p>(75 minutes) <b>Thursday, November 16, 2022</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)</p>	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b>  Building knowledge by focusing on academic language development for mono-lingual and English Learners  Gabriella Uro, Director, English Language Learner Policy and Research, CGCS  Dr. Okhee Lee, professor, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University  Dr. Quintin R. Bostic, II, founder and chief operating officer, Elevated Ed</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key feature 5 and 6  Addressing Unfinished Learning, principles 1-6</p>	<p>CAOs, Instructional Leaders, Chief of Schools, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, SPED Leaders, SEL Leaders</p>	<p>Academic team, EL Director, and Kalin Hicks</p>

Date/Time	Topic/Presenter	Alignment to ARP/Addressing Unfinished Learning/Supporting Excellence	Audience	CGCS Facilitator(s)
(75 minutes) <b>Thursday, December 15, 2022</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b> Attaining Excellence using UDL to support a variety learning differences and students with disabilities</p> <p>–Gabriella Uro (CGCS), STEM team from Dallas ISD</p> <p>Teaching and Learning team from Newark PS</p> <p>Chief Academic Officer, Birmingham City Schools</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key feature 5 and 6</p> <p>Addressing Unfinished Learning, principles 1-6</p>	CAOs & Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders	Academic team, EL Director, and Kalin Hicks
(75 minutes) <b>Thursday, January 19, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b> Using culturally diverse texts and primary sources to teach from <i>Multiple Perspectives</i> including process for reviewing text and materials.</p> <p>Cary Swanson, Literacy, Student Achievement Partners</p> <p>Dr. Jonathan White, Senior Fellow, Center for American Studies</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key features 1, 5, and 9</p>	CAOs & Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders	Academic team, EL director, and Kalin Hicks
(75 minutes) <b>Thursday February 16, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b> <i>Bringing Equity to Grading</i> Presenter: Tim Hudson, Education Leader, DreamBox Learning</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key features 1, 2, and 4</p>	CAOs & Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders	Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks

Date/Time	Topic/Presenter	Alignment to ARP/Addressing Unfinished Learning/Supporting Excellence	Audience	CGCS Facilitator(s)
(75 minutes) <b>Thursday, March 16, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b></p> <p>Telling the data story and decision making</p> <p>Dr. Akisha Sarfo, Director of Research, CGCS</p> <p>Possible: Dr. Thomas Kane, Harvard University</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key features 1, 2, and 4</p>	<p>CAOs &amp; Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders</p>	<p>Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks</p>
<p>April (75 minutes) <b>Thursday, April 20, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)</p>	<p><b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b></p> <p>Civic Reasoning and Discourse: Implications for teaching across content areas; Reading and writing to connect students to their literary lineage to foster agency, identity, and voice.</p> <p>Dr. Carol Lee, Professor of Learning Sciences, Northwestern University &amp; President, National Academy of Education</p> <p>Dr. Alfred Tatum, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Metropolitan State University of Denver &amp; President-Elect for the Literacy Research Association.</p>	<p><i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key features 1, and 5</p>	<p>CAOs &amp; Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders</p>	<p>Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks</p>

Date/Time	Topic/Presenter	Alignment to ARP/Addressing Unfinished Learning/Supporting Excellence	Audience	CGCS Facilitator(s)
May (75 minutes) <b>Thursday, May 18, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b> Equitable Structures and Instruction Across Content Areas  District presentations and panels	<i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to key features 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	CAOs & Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders	Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks
June (75 minutes) <b>Thursday, June 15, 2023</b> 3:00pm (EST)/12:00pm (PST)	<b>Supporting Excellence Instructional Spotlight Series:</b> Pulling it Altogether: moving from Theory to practice. District perspectives, initial steps, and considerations for scaling	<i>Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework</i> aligned to the 9 key features	CAOs & Instructional Leaders, COS, Content Leaders, Equity Leaders, EL Leaders, Sped Leaders, SEL Leaders	Academic Team along with Kalin Hicks

**MONTHLY CALLS**

## JOIN US!

***Monthly Chief Academic Officers, Chief of Schools, District Directors/ Content Leaders of Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, and History/Social Science meetings, Equity Leaders, Social-Emotional Learning Directors***



**Council of Great City Schools**  
on [Facebook](#) / [Twitter](#)

*The Council of the Great City Schools continues to host standing role-alike Zoom calls for our member districts to provide a safe space to share effective practices, common concerns, and solutions for issues that impact the safety, wellbeing, and success of staff and students.*

*We have expanded our role-alike groups for chief academic officers and chief of schools to include **monthly calls** with district directors /content leaders of mathematics, English language arts, science, and history/social science. These meetings provide opportunities for collaborative problem solving, sharing practices, and communicating what is needed to provide guidance and on-the-ground support for teachers and principals. These meetings also include discussions about strengthening opportunities to learn for all students. Content directors' meetings are held from 5:15PM-6:30PM Eastern. Chief Academic Officers meetings (3-4PM ET, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month), and Chief of Schools (4:30PM – 5:30PM ET, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month).*

## Monthly Meetings

### ***Chief Academic Officers***

Adapting curriculum guidance for teachers using essential instructional content, acceleration versus remediation, addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, developing coherence between Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction, supporting the needs of diverse learners including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Every month on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, until Jun 1, 2023 @ 3PM Eastern

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83139149244?pwd=d3VRVVZ3MSs2VE9UNFVCQW5NaENJZz09>

Meeting ID: 831 3914 9244

Passcode: 952419

### ***Chief of Schools***

Principal pipeline programs, recruitment, and retaining teachers and principals of color, strengthening collaborations with the department of teaching and learning, supporting principals as instructional leaders, addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, programs/offerings showing promising results.

Every month on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, until Jun 1, 2022 @ 4:30PM Eastern

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81928791139>

Meeting ID: 819 2879 1139

### **Meetings with Research Directors**

Sharing best practices in research, evaluation, accountability, assessment, and research partnerships.

Every other Tuesday at 1pm Eastern, until June 30, 2023.

### **Meetings with Special Education Directors and General Counsels**

Sharing best practices in special education programming, accountability, and external partnerships. This includes addressing the supports and scaffolds needed so students can access grade-level learning in the least restrictive environment.

Bi-monthly on Wednesday, until December 28, 2022 @2PM Eastern

## District Content Directors Monthly Meetings

### ***Science District Leaders***

Attending to equity by developing high-quality curriculum guidance and building a strong K-12 science program, designing secondary science pathways, developing effective collaborations with external partners, and considering environmental education. Previous speakers included: Beginning in September, meetings focused on addressing unfinished learning in science with attention to language acquisition. Dr. Vinci Daro connected mathematical practices and language routines to science; Dr. Okhee Lee, New York University, and Theresa Ocol, New York City DOE, addressed academic language acquisition as students explore different phenomena in science. In November, there was a joint meeting with mathematics leaders focused on Data Science.

Every month on the Second Tue, until Jun 20, 2023.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82539157037>

Meeting ID: 825 3915 7037

### ***History/Social Science District Leaders***

Developing high-quality curriculum and support for a strong History/Social Science program, effectively using primary and secondary source documents, and other resources to cultivate student understanding and cultural proficiency, attend to equity, and develop student agency, authority, and identity. Beginning in September, meetings focused on elevating the voice and history of Indigenous people beginning with the work of Dr. Fay Yarbrough, Rice University. Dr. Justin Gage, University of Florida, continued this discussion with a focus on *We Do Not Want the Gates Closed between Us: Native Networks and the Spread of the Ghost Dance* during a joint meeting with English Language Arts and Literacy and History/Social Science Directors.

Every month on the Third Tue, until Jun 27, 2023

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcodO6trzlGNXctorDuHVed7dJ20Aeat8o>

## District Content Directors Monthly Meetings

### **English Language Arts & Literacy District Leaders**

Addressing unfinished learning, integrating social-emotional learning within the academic content, culturally responsive texts, and curriculum unit development. Beginning in September, meetings focused on the Text Analysis Toolkit developed in partnership with CGCS and Student Achievement Partners. The toolkit aims to support educators in the process of selecting and analyzing texts based on complexity and cultural relevance. The resources focus on tools for reflecting on the identities of educators and the students they serve, analyzing texts with multiple lenses, and considering implications for use in their specific context. This continued with a joint session between ELA content directors and History/Social Science directors with Dr. Justin Gage, University of Florida. Dr. Gage focused on the history of Indigenous peoples with his seminal book, *We Do Not Want the Gates Closed between Us: Native Networks and the Spread of the Ghost Dance*. Discussants Lily Wong-Fillmore, Consultant and Carey Swanson, Student Achievement Partners, connected this work to literacy.

**Every month on the Fourth Thu, until May 25, 2023**  
**Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82947924883>**  
**Meeting ID: 829 4792 4883**

### **Mathematics District Leaders**

Attending to equity and access by focusing on mathematical pathways, addressing unfinished learning, integrating social-emotional learning within the academic content, culturally responsive tasks, and curriculum unit development. Beginning in September, meetings are focused on improving student outcomes by addressing unfinished learning within Tier 1 instruction. Facilitators, Phil Daro, consultant, and Kristin Gray, Amplify, provided concrete examples of how addressing unfinished learning is translated into practice. In December, district leaders shared their upcoming units while facilitators provided feedback and guidance about on-ramps and potential misconceptions, so students have access to grade-level standards.

**Every month on the Fourth Tue, until Jun 27, 2023**  
**Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87563823673>**  
**Meeting ID: 875 6382 3673**

## Additional Job Alike Meetings

### **Meetings with Equity Directors**

Supporting Equity Directors in embedding equity throughout their district including sharing best practices, strategies, and resources.

**Every month on the last Tuesday until August 30, 2023.**

### **Meetings with Directors of Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health**

Sharing best practices for attending to embedding social-emotional learning in the academic program and elevating student voice.

**Every month on the last Thursday until June 30, 2023**



## Assessment Consortia Meetings

### NWEA/MAP Assessment Consortia Meetings

A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the NWEA Map Growth assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment.

**Every month on the second to last Wednesday until August 30, 2023.**

### Renaissance/Star Meetings

A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the Renaissance Star assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment.

**Every month on the last Wednesday until August 30, 2023.**

### Curriculum Associates/iReady Assessment Consortia Meetings

A collaborative of research and assessment directors from districts that administer the Curriculum Associates iReady assessments. This time is used to share assessment practices, product development and enhancements and student performance using the assessment.

**Every month on the second Wednesday until August 30, 2023.**

## *Joint Monthly Instructional Spotlight*

Address highly relevant curriculum and instruction topics that instructional leaders have surfaced as areas of interest and need. All CAOs, Chief of Schools, Principal Supervisors, Instructional Leaders, Content Directors, Social Emotional Learning Directors, Directors of Special Education, Equity Directors, and English Language Learner directors and leaders are invited to attend.

**Every month on the Third Thursday until June 2023.**

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

**[https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZwtcu2gqzjH9GvoZEFsK3hgluCLC\\_9RvR1](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZwtcu2gqzjH9GvoZEFsK3hgluCLC_9RvR1)**



**CHIEF OF SCHOOLS MEETING**



# CHIEF OF SCHOOLS *Meeting*



Based on your feedback and demand, the Council of the Great City Schools is intentionally creating space to engage our Chief of Schools and create an environment where this important group can come together to support each other, build community, and solve authentic problems of practice. That's why we've partnered with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) to address the opportunities and challenges we currently face in creating equitable educational communities. So stay tuned for our monthly calls.



**Karen Gallman**



**Max Silverman**

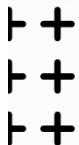
CEO



**Michele Mason**

**EVERY FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH  
4:30PM - 5:30PM ET**

**ZOOM LINK: [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/81928791139](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81928791139)**



**EAST BATON ROUGE SPECIAL EDUCATION  
REVIEW**

**Improving Achievement  
and Well Being  
for Student with Disabilities  
in the  
East Baton Rouge Parish School System  
Report of the  
Strategic Support Team  
of the  
Council of the Great City Schools**



Summer 2022

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this review of instruction and support for students with disabilities and students who are English learners in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS or EBRPSSPSS). Their efforts were critical to our ability to present the district with the best possible proposals for improving special education and related services in the school system.

First, we thank Dr. Sito Narcisse, the school district's superintendent. It is not easy to ask one's colleagues for the kind of review conducted by the Council's teams. It takes courage and openness and a real desire for change and improvement.

Second, we thank the EBRPSS school board, who approved having this review done. We hope this report meets your expectations and will help improve special education services across the school system.

Third, we thank staff members of the school district who contributed to this effort, particularly Andrea O'Konski, Chief of Accountability, Assessment, and Evaluation for EBRPSS and her team who organized and facilitated the interviews and ensured that data and documents requested by the team were provided. Most people have no idea how much time and effort are required to organize a review such as this, much less the time to conduct it and write up the draft and final reports. The details are numerous and time-consuming. Thank you.

Fourth, the Council thanks the parents and advocates with whom we met. They work passionately to support children with disabilities and ensure the school district serves these students in the best possible manner.

Fifth, the Council thanks Dr. Debra Brooks, Executive Director, Special Education & Student Support Baltimore City Public Schools. Her contributions to this review were enormous. The enthusiasm and generosity of these individuals and districts that have supported this review serve as further examples of how the nation's urban public-school systems are banding together to help each other improve performance for all students.

Finally, I thank Julie Wright Halbert, the Council's legislative counsel, who facilitated the work of the special education team prior to and during the team's site visit; and Sue Gamm, a nationally known expert in special education and long-time Council consultant, who worked diligently with Ms. Halbert to prepare the final special education report. I thank Gabriela Uro, Director English Language Learner Policy and Research, David Lai, Special Projects Manager for leading the evaluation of ELLs in EBRPSS and Dr. Akisha Osei Sarfo, Council Research Director, for her exceptional job organizing the agenda and all the data collection for the review. Their work was outstanding, as always, and critical to the success of this effort. Thank you.

Dr. Ray Hart  
Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools

## CHAPTER 1. PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

EBRPSS Superintendent, Dr. Sito Narcisse, asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the district's instruction and support for students with disabilities and for students who are English learners, and provide recommendations to improve teaching and learning. It was clear that the superintendent and his staff have a strong desire to improve student outcomes for these groups of students and all students generally. This report was written to help EBRPSS achieve these goals and maximize the district's capacity to educate all students effectively.

### The Work of the Strategic Support Team

To conduct its work, the Council assembled a team of experts who have successfully administered and operated instruction and support for students with disabilities and English learners in other major urban school districts around the country. These individuals also have firsthand expertise with relevant federal and state laws.

Due to COVID, the Council's Strategic Support Team (the Council team or the team) on January 24<sup>th</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 2022 conducted remote interviews and focus groups with district staff members, parents, community members, and many others. (A list of individuals interviewed is and reports, analyzed data, and developed initial recommendations and proposals before presented as an appendix to this report.) In addition, the team reviewed numerous documents finalizing this report. (See the appendices for a list of documents reviewed.) Following the team's visit, the superintendent and staff members with oversight for special education and English learner instruction were provided with a summary of the team's initial conclusions and preliminary recommendations.

This approach of providing technical assistance to urban school districts by using senior managers from other urban school systems across the nation is unique to the Council and its members. The organization finds it to be effective for several reasons.

*First*, it allows the superintendent and staff members to work with a diverse set of talented, successful practitioners from around the country. The teams are made up of experts who superintendents and staff can call on for advice as they implement the recommendations, face new challenges, and develop alternative solutions.

*Second*, the recommendations from urban school peers have power because the individuals who developed them have faced many of the same challenges encountered by the district requesting the review. No one can say that these individuals do not know what working in an urban school system is like or that their proposals have not been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

*Third*, using senior urban school managers from other urban school communities is faster and less expensive than retaining large management consulting firms that may have little to no

programmatic experience. The learning curve is rapid, and it would be difficult for any school system to buy on the open market the level of expertise offered by these teams.

Members of the Strategic Support Team for this project included the following individuals:

Dr. Debra Brooks Executive Director, Special Education & Student Support Baltimore City Public Schools	Sue Gamm, Esq. Former Chief Specialized Services Officer Chicago Public Schools
Dr. Ray Hart Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools	Julie Wright Halbert, Esq. Legislative Counsel Council of the Great City Schools
Akisha Osei Sarfo, PhD Research Director Council of the Great City Schools	

## CHAPTER 2. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

While East Baton Rouge is the most populous parish in Louisiana, with over 450,000 residents<sup>1</sup>, East Baton Rouge Public School System (EBRPSS) serves more than 40,000 students, making it the third largest school district in the state of Louisiana, after Jefferson and Orleans<sup>2</sup>. EBRPSS encompasses 83 individual schools with fourteen of the district's schools serving as charter schools approved and held accountable by the East Baton Rouge Public School Board<sup>3</sup>. The EBRPSS-run schools are located within five regions: North, Broadmoor-Sherwood, Mid-City, Highland-Old South Baton Rouge, and Southeast. The school system educates most public-school students residing within the parish, while those residing in three other incorporated parish cities (Zachary Community School System, Central Community School System, and Baker City School System) are educated by separate school systems.

Some 71 percent of the district's students are black, 11 percent are white, 13 percent are Hispanic, and 4 percent are Asian. English language learners (ELs) account for 8 percent of the district's total student enrollment. Of all EBRPSS students, 10.4 percent receive special education services, compared to 13.2 percent for the state and 14.5 percent for the nation. Of all ELs, 4.0 percent have an IEP and of all students with IEPs, 3.1 percent are English learners.<sup>4</sup> Along with this, EBRPSS works with a higher percent of economically disadvantaged students than the state average. Please note that East Baton Rouge Parish encompasses East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools, Zachary Community School System, Central Community School System, and Baker City School System (EBRPSS 2019) so when looking at the level of poverty among the parish as a whole, it masks the level of poverty of EBRPSS as other districts in the parish have much lower rates of poverty. EBRPSS student enrollment by demographic group is compared to the state in Exhibit 1.

When we examine student enrollment in EBRPSS over time, we find that outside of the initial impact the pandemic had on the district's enrollment, enrollment in EBRPSS has remained quite consistent over time. From 2017 to 2022, the district has increased in enrollment by 383 students, a 1 percent increase. Louisiana, as a state system, has seen a nearly 5% decline in enrollment since 2017, with a decrease of 33,462 students.

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<sup>1</sup> Census, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Louisiana Department of Education, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Louisiana Department of Education, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Students with disabilities who have individualized education programs (IEPs) and receive special education services are also referred to as students with IEPs.

Exhibit 1. Comparison of Enrollment Demographics, East Baton Rouge Parish and Louisiana

	East Baton Rouge		Louisiana		EBRPSS as % of Louisiana
	#	%	#	%	
African American or Black	29,121	70.5%	290,289	42.1%	9.9%
Asian	1,573	3.8%	10,954	1.6%	14.8%
Hispanic or Latino	5,240	12.7%	64,871	9.4%	6.9%
Native American or Alaska Native	70	0.2%	4,006	0.6%	2.0%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	77	0.2%	557	0.1%	16.0%
White	4,707	11.4%	296,731	43.0%	1.6%
Male	2,0801	50.3%	337,113	48.9%	5.9%
Female	20,531	49.7%	352,959	51.2%	5.6%
English Language Learners	3,359	8.1%	28,945	4.2%	10.5%
Special Education	4,298	10.4%	91,092	13.2%	4.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	33,106	80.1%	491,346	71.2%	6.7%
Grand Total	41,332	100%	690,092	100.0%	5.7%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2021

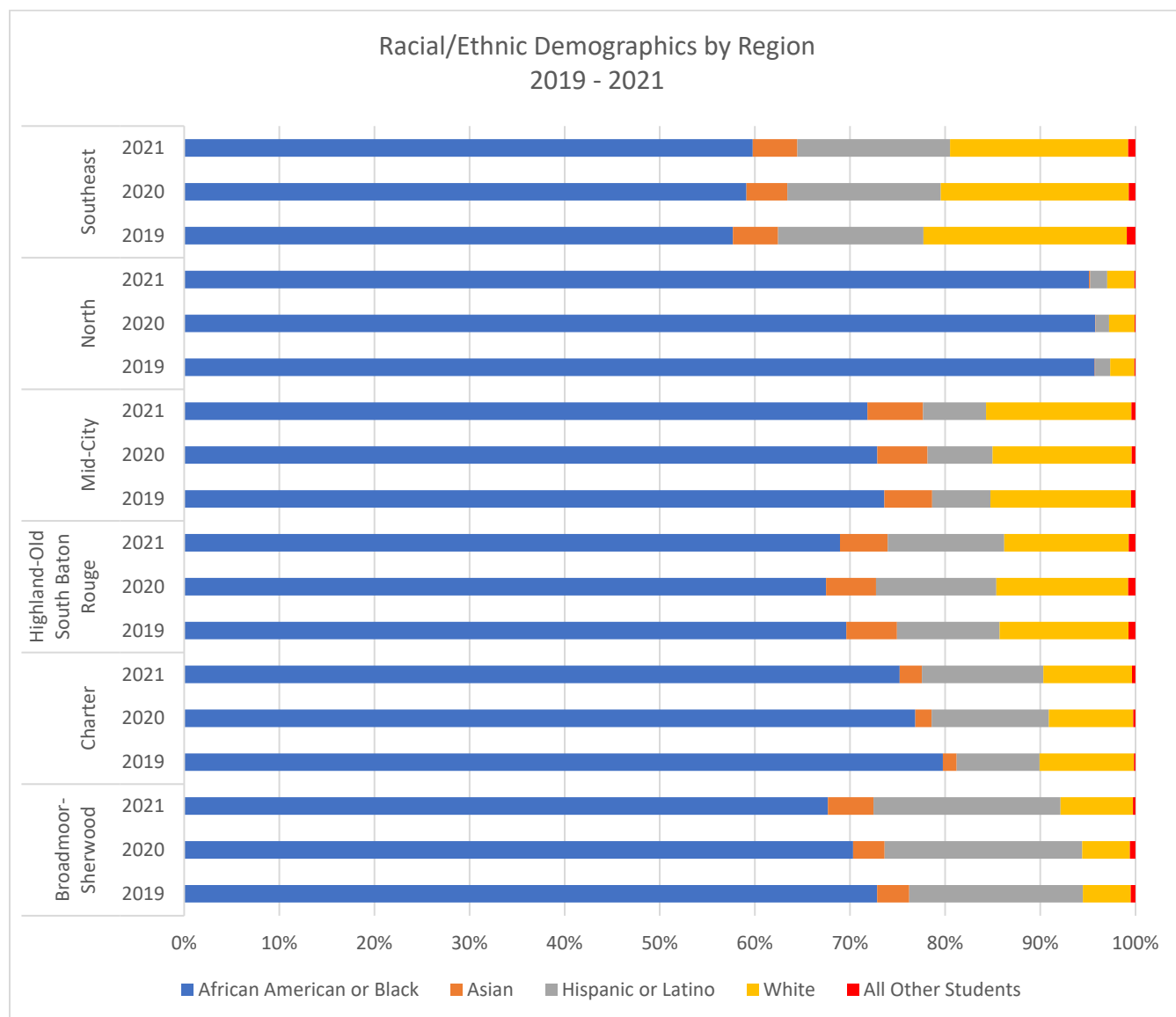
We also look at demographics within EBRPSS by region and over time from 2019 to 2021 (See Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 3). In doing so, we find that while the majority of students in each region are black, the North region has the highest percentage of black students compared to the Southeast region with the lowest percentage of black students. Broadmoor-Sherwood and Charter regions have seen the greatest decline in students of color while Southeast has seen the greatest increase from 2019 to 2021.

Exhibit 2. Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Region, 2021

	African American/Black		Asian		Hispanic/Latino		White	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Broadmoor-Sherwood	4722	67.7%	335	4.8%	1372	19.7%	531	7.6%
Charter	3022	75.2%	94	2.3%	513	12.8%	375	9.3%
Highland-Old South Baton	4083	68.9%	297	5.0%	725	12.2%	776	13.1%
Mid-City	6871	71.8%	560	5.9%	634	6.6%	1462	15.3%
North	5796	95.1%	9	0.1%	109	1.8%	174	2.9%
Southeast	4221	59.8%	331	4.7%	1134	16.1%	1323	18.7%

Source: District Student Data File 2021

Exhibit 3. Enrollment by Region, 2019 - 2021

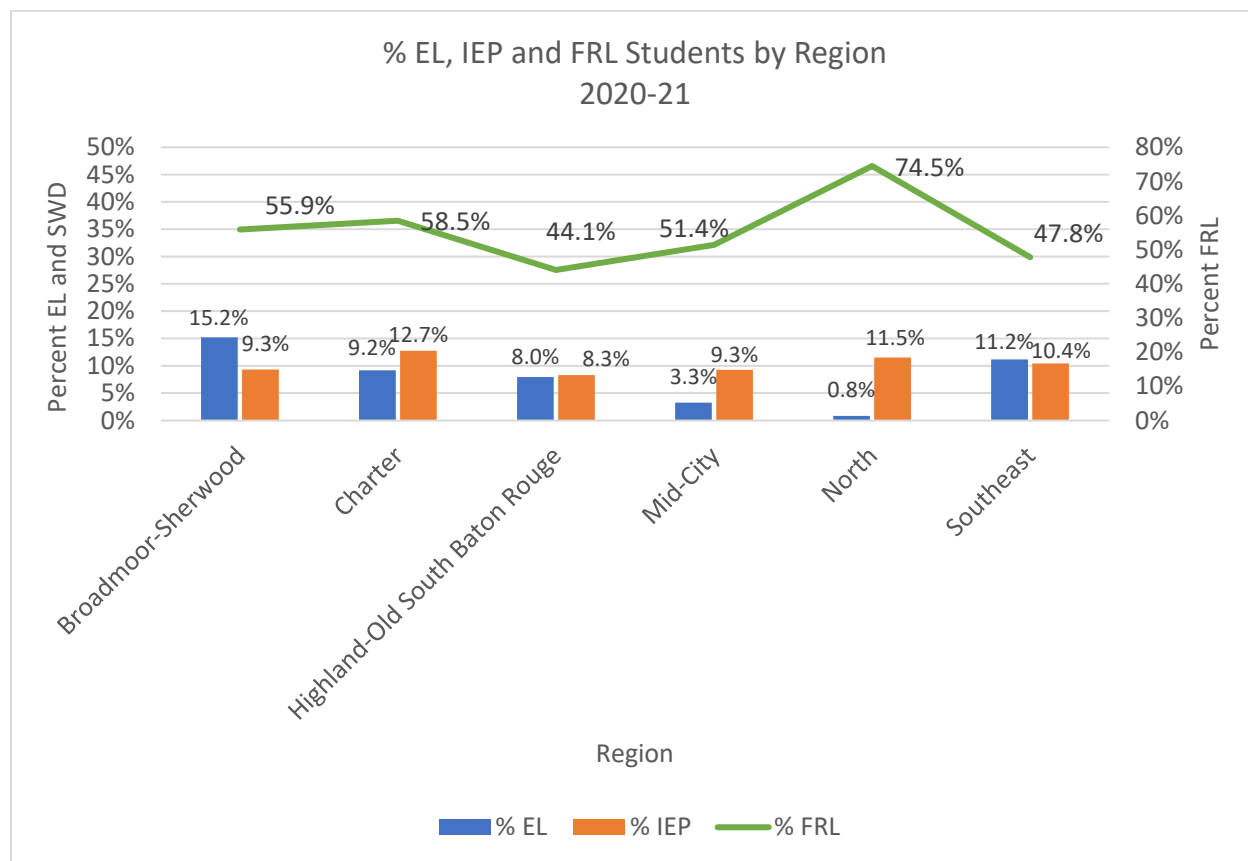


Source: District Student Data File 2021

We also examined the EL and special education populations of these regions compared to their levels of rates of poverty. In doing so, we find that Broadmoor-Sherwood region has the highest percentage of EL students (15.2%) compared to North region with only 0.8% EL students. North region also has the highest percentage of students on Free and Reduced Lunch (74.5%) and the second highest percentage of students with IEPs (11.5%) only behind the Charter region (12.7%). Highland-Old South Baton Rouge region has the lowest percentage of special education students (8.3%) as well as the lowest rate of poverty (44.1%). (See Exhibits 4 and 5).



Exhibit 4. Percentage of Student Enrollment for English Language Learners, Students with an IEP, and Free or Reduced-Price Lunch by Region, 2021



Source: District Student Data File 2021

Exhibit 5. English Learner, Students with Disabilities, and Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Enrollment by Region, 2021

	Total # of Students	EL Students		IEP Students		FRL Students	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Broadmoor-Sherwood	6978	1061	15.2%	650	9.3%	3902	55.9%
Charter	4018	368	9.2%	512	12.7%	2350	58.5%
Highland-Old South Baton Rouge	5922	471	8.0%	491	8.3%	2611	44.1%
Mid-City	9566	312	3.3%	885	9.3%	4916	51.4%
North	6094	51	0.8%	701	11.5%	4542	74.5%
Southeast	7062	788	11.2%	736	10.4%	3374	47.8%

Source: District Student Data File 2021

LEAP Assessment Performance Trends in EBRPSS

The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) tests students' mastery of content from grades three through twelve. The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program has roots dating

back to 1986 with a law requiring schools to use the LEAP assessment to determine K-8 students' promotion (Decuir, 2012). As part of a new push for higher standards, higher college graduation rates, and overall higher expectations of schools Louisiana rolled out more rigorous third through eighth grade testing in 2013, referred to as LEAP 2025. The 2015 scores from this new assessment was used as benchmark with a goal that a "level four" performance becomes the new minimum by 2025 for school rating.

Using this testing data, we chart student performance on the assessment from 2017 to 2022 and compare this performance to that of school districts that share similarities across demographic groups, such as race, English learners, special education, and/or economically disadvantaged, (Caddo Parish (CPSS), Jefferson Parish (JPSS), Lafayette Parish (LPSS) and Orleans Parish (OPSS), as well as the statewide average. The demographics of all five comparison districts are provided in the Exhibit 6 below. This overview also shows performance of economically disadvantaged, English learner, and Special Education students. Student performance is provided for students in grades three through eight as well as student performance on three high school courses of English I & II and Algebra I. The data is reported as the percentage of students who achieve at least a Basic level or higher on the LEAP. There is no 2020 data reported for all subjects and grades due to the COVID-19 pandemic, although the year shows in all graphs. These charts and comparisons help ground this review in an understanding of how students EBRPSS have performed over the most recent years, prior to COVID-19, as well as to the performance of other districts with like demographics.

In reviewing EBRPSS student performance over time, most grades and subjects show a decline from the 2019 to the 2022 test. This is unsurprising given the disruption caused by COVID-19 to schools, teachers, and staff. There are several exceptions to this pattern. We find there was an increase in performance for fifth grade math students with disabilities, English learners in Algebra I and English II, as well as for students with disabilities in English II. Also, for most assessments, years, grades, and subjects, EBRPSS performs below the statewide average, with other districts falling above or below EBRPSS depending on year, grade, subject, and breakout. Overall, this report shows that there is room for improvement and given the performance of similar school districts this improvement is possible.

**Exhibit 6. Comparison of Enrollment Demographics of EBRPSS and Similar Louisiana school districts.**

	East Baton Rouge		Orleans Parish		Caddo Parish		Jefferson Parish		Lafayette Parish	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
American Indian	70	0.17%	79	0.18%	40	0.11%	162	0.34%	84	0.27%
Asian	1,573	3.8%	718	1.6%	461	1.3%	2,181	4.6%	761	2.4%
Black	29,121	70.5%	34,264	77.9%	22,289	63.6%	16,955	35.5%	12,640	40.0%
Hispanic	5,240	12.7%	4,524	10.3%	1,730	4.9%	16,141	33.8%	3,027	9.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	77	0.19%	26	0.06%	16	0.05%	15	0.03%	23	0.07%
White	4,707	11.4%	3,543	8.1%	9,543	27.2%	11,045	23.2%	14,097	44.6%
Multiple Races	544	1.3%	828	1.9%	978	2.8%	1,221	2.6%	978	3.1%
Total Student Population	41332	100.0%	43,982	100.0%	35,057	100.0%	47,720	100.0%	31,610	100.0%
Male	20531	49.7%	21486	48.9%	17447	49.8%	23124	48.5%	15486	49.0%
Female	20801	50.3%	22496	51.2%	17610	50.2%	24596	51.5%	16124	51.0%
English Language Learners	3359	8.1%	3001	6.8%	591	1.7%	8328	17.5%	1823	5.8%
Special Education	4298	10.4%	5604	12.7%	4242	12.1%	6490	13.6%	2908	9.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	33105	80.1%	37822	86.0%	24324	69.4%	39778	83.4%	20204	63.9%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2021

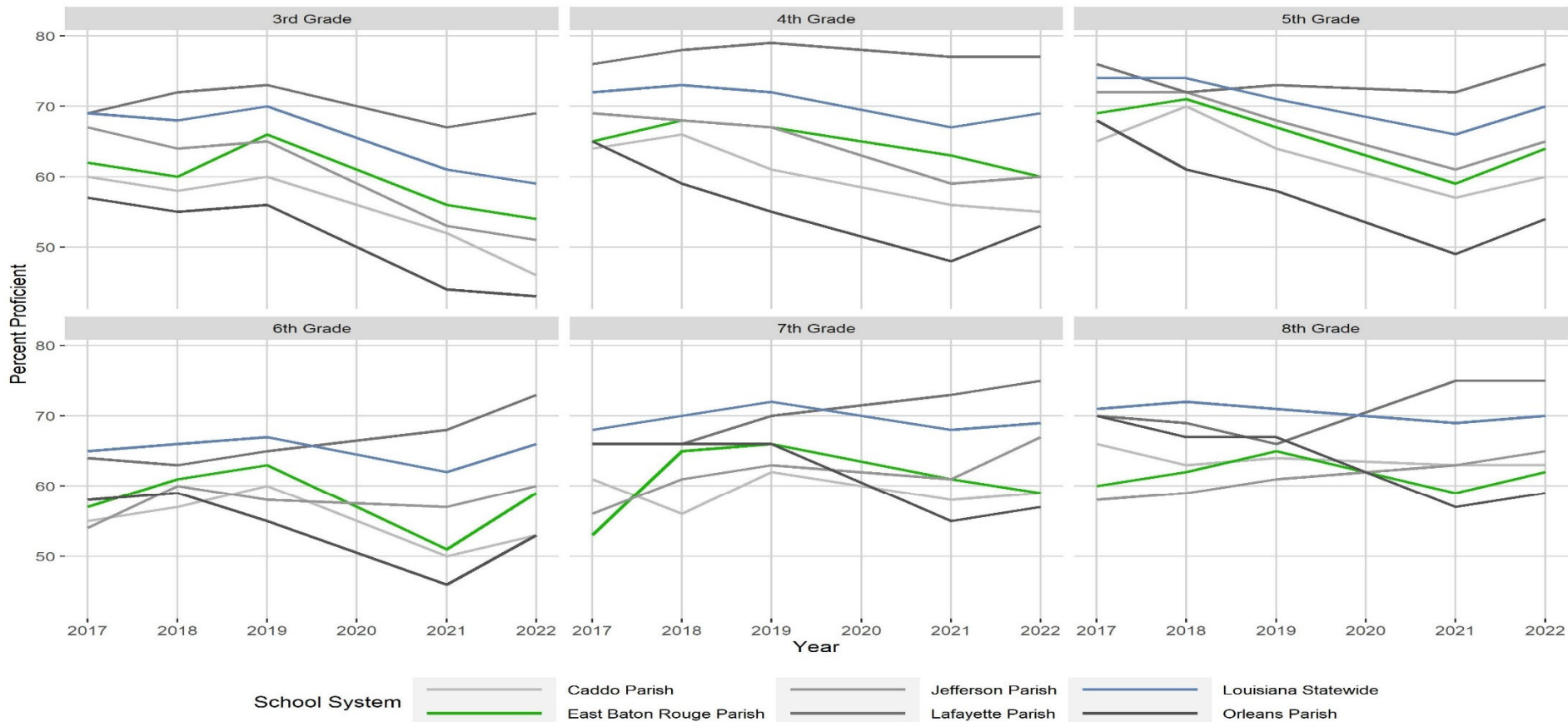
*EBRPSS LEAP Assessment Results and Comparisons – All Students*

Exhibits 7 and 8, along with their accompanying tables, display data on student test performance for the total student population from 2017 to 2022 in grades 3 to 8. Scores for 2020 are not included as there was no data that year due to COVID-19.

These data demonstrate that, generally speaking, EBRPSS falls in the middle of the group of similar districts and follows similar performance trends of similar districts and the state of Louisiana for most grade levels with performance trending downward until the 2022 school year where improvements were made. In 2022, increased ELA performance was seen among EBRPSS students in grades five, six and eight. EBRPSS students also performed better than students in Orleans Parish and Caddo Parrish in all grade levels. Student performance was lower than the state in all grade levels, although the rate of decline was similar to the state in grade 3 – the only grade level where the state declined in ELA.

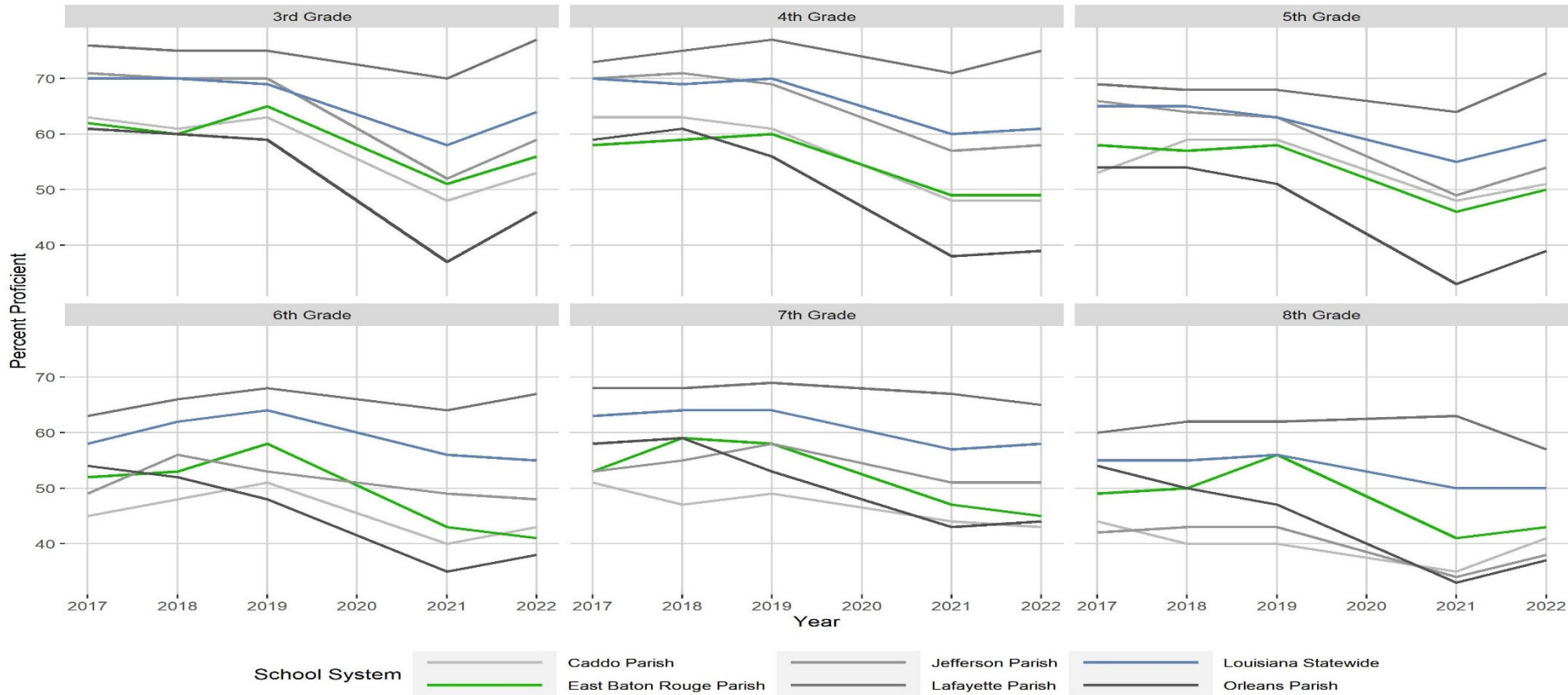
As it relates to math, EBRPSS students maintained or increased performance from 2021 to 2022 in grades three, four, five and eight, following the trends of similar districts and the state in these grade levels. In grade six and seven, EBRPSS students experienced a two-percentage point decline. This decline is similar to the state in grade six, where the state experienced a one-point decline but not to most comparable districts which experienced an increase. EBRPSS and Caddo Parrish are the only two districts comparable districts to experience a decline from 2021 to 2022 in grade seven math.

Exhibit 7. EBRPSS Student Performance on LEAP 2025 ELA Test – All Students



District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish									
Year	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22
Grade 3	69	68	70	61	59	62	60	66	56	54	57	55	56	44	43	67	64	65	53	51	69	72	73	67	69	60	58	60	52	46					
Grade 4	72	73	72	67	69	65	68	67	63	60	65	59	55	48	53	69	68	67	59	60	76	78	79	77	77	64	66	61	56	55					
Grade 5	74	74	71	66	70	69	71	67	59	64	68	61	58	49	54	72	72	68	61	65	76	72	73	72	76	65	70	64	57	60					
Grade 6	65	66	67	62	66	57	61	63	51	59	58	59	55	46	53	54	60	58	57	60	64	63	65	68	73	55	57	60	50	53					
Grade 7	68	70	72	68	69	53	65	66	61	59	66	66	66	55	57	56	61	63	61	67	66	66	70	73	75	61	56	62	58	59					
Grade 8	71	72	71	69	70	60	62	65	59	62	70	67	67	57	59	58	59	61	63	65	70	69	66	75	75	66	63	64	63	63					

Exhibit 8. EBRPSS Student Performance on LEAP 2025 Math Test – All Students



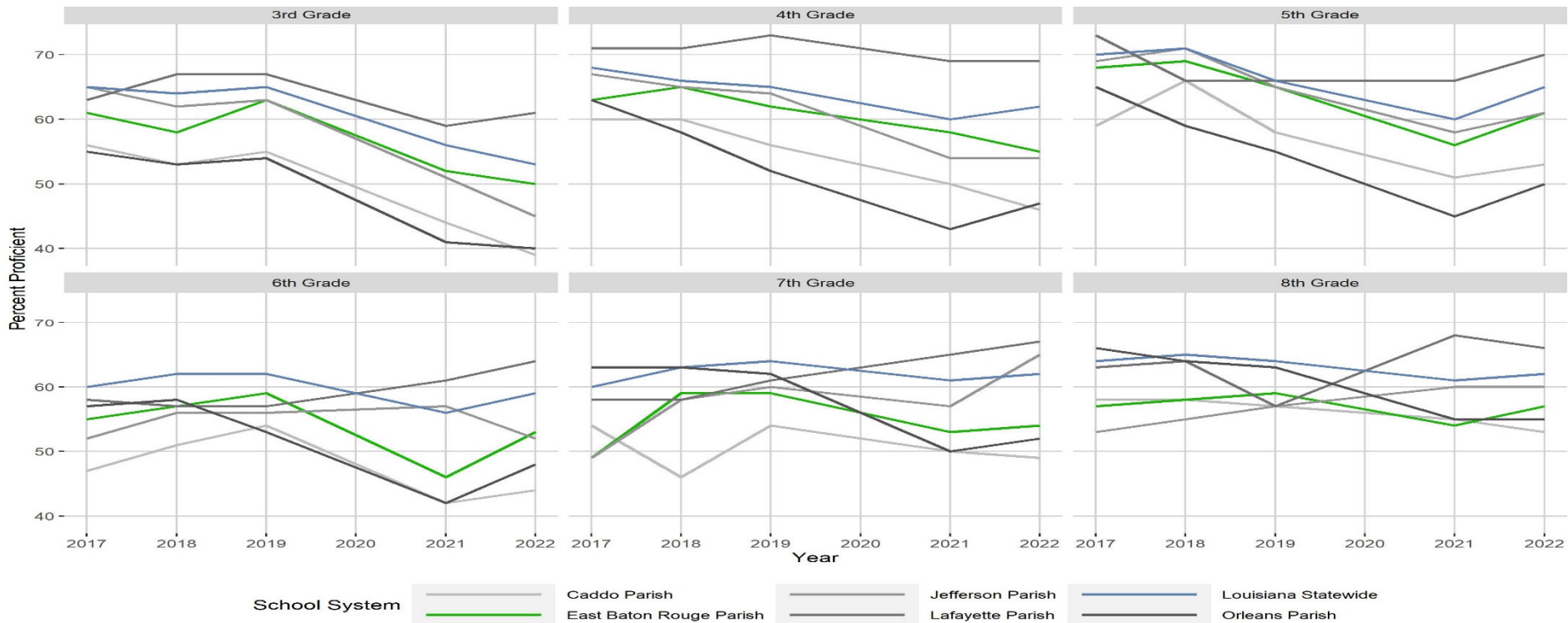
District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish								
	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21
Grade 3	70	70	69	58	64	62	60	65	51	56	61	60	59	37	46	71	70	70	52	59	76	75	75	70	77	63	61	63	48	53				
Grade 4	70	69	70	60	61	58	59	60	49	49	59	61	56	38	39	70	71	69	57	58	73	75	77	71	75	63	63	61	48	48				
Grade 5	65	65	63	55	59	58	57	58	46	50	54	54	51	33	39	66	64	63	49	54	69	68	68	64	71	53	59	59	48	51				
Grade 6	58	62	64	56	55	52	53	58	43	41	54	52	48	35	38	49	56	53	49	48	63	66	68	64	67	45	48	51	40	43				
Grade 7	63	64	64	57	58	53	59	58	47	45	58	59	53	43	44	53	55	58	51	51	68	68	69	67	65	51	47	49	44	43				
Grade 8	55	55	56	50	50	49	50	56	41	43	54	50	47	33	37	42	43	43	34	38	60	62	62	63	57	44	40	40	35	41				

EBRPSS LEAP Assessment Results and Comparisons – Economically Disadvantaged Students

Exhibits 9 and 10 display the same ELA and math performance data, but specifically for students identified as economically disadvantaged in grades 3 to 8. EBRPSS’s economically disadvantaged ELA performance increased from 2021 to 2022 in every grade level except grades three and four. Economically disadvantaged students increased their ELA performance at the same rate as the state in grades five (5-percentage point gain) and seven (1-percentage point gain) and at an even greater rate in grades six (7-percentage point gain) and eight (3-percentage point gain).

Generally speaking, the trend in EBRPSS economically disadvantaged students’ math performance mirrors that of the state and other comparable districts, with increases from 2021 to 2022 in all grade levels except grade 7 which experienced a 2-percentage point decline. EBRPSS’s economically disadvantaged students had the largest increases in math performance in grades five and eight, increases larger than the state.

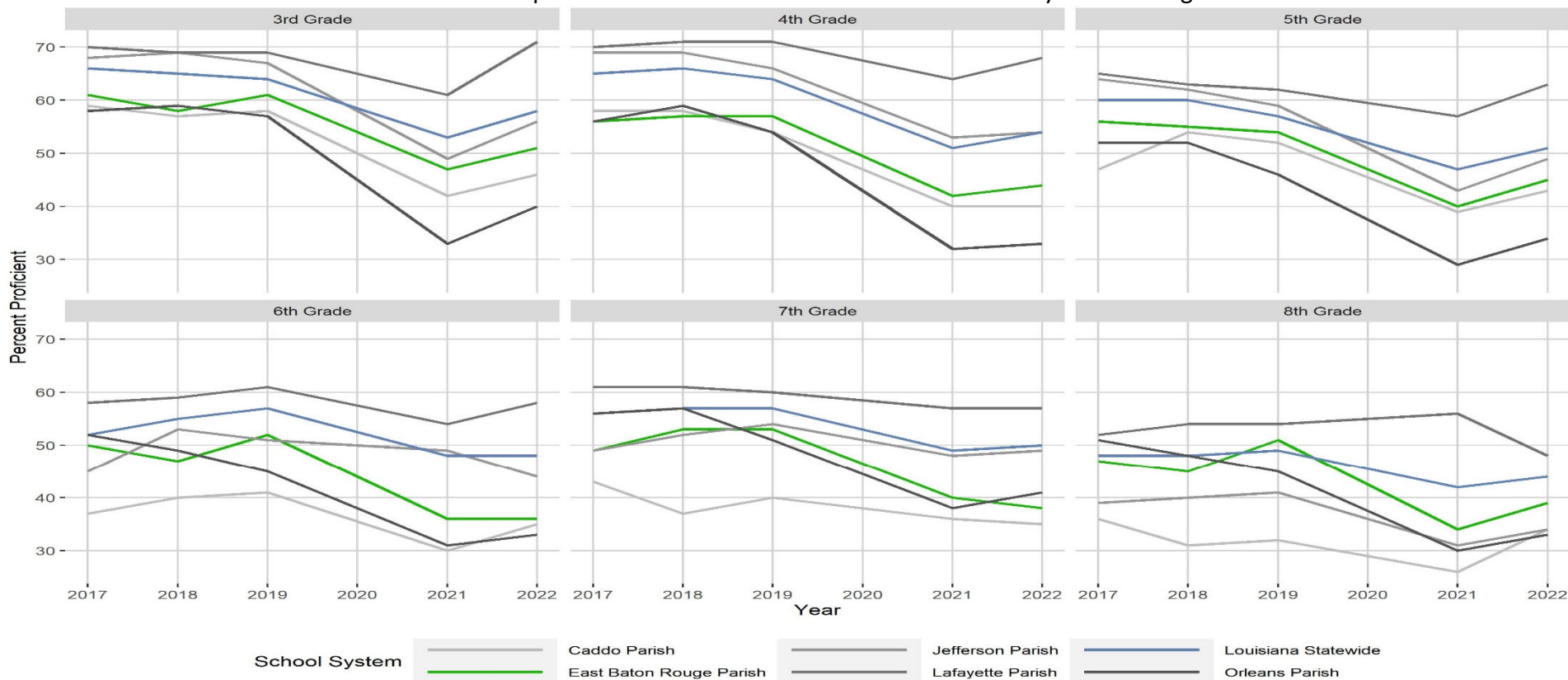
Exhibit 9. EBRPSS Student Performance on LEAP 2025 ELA Test – Economically Disadvantaged Students



District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish									
Year	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22
Grade 3	65	64	65	56	53	61	58	63	52	50	55	53	54	41	40	65	62	63	51	45	63	67	67	59	61	56	53	55	44	39					
Grade 4	68	66	65	60	62	63	65	62	58	55	63	58	52	43	47	67	65	64	54	54	71	71	73	69	69	60	60	56	50	46					
Grade 5	70	71	66	60	65	68	69	65	56	61	65	59	55	45	50	69	71	65	58	61	73	66	66	66	70	59	66	58	51	53					
Grade 6	60	62	62	56	59	55	57	59	46	53	57	58	53	42	48	52	56	56	57	52	58	57	57	61	64	47	51	54	42	44					
Grade 7	60	63	64	61	62	49	59	59	53	54	63	63	62	50	52	49	58	60	57	65	58	58	61	65	67	54	46	54	50	49					
Grade 8	64	65	64	61	62	57	58	59	54	57	66	64	63	55	55	53	55	57	60	60	63	64	57	68	66	58	58	57	55	53					



Exhibit 10. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 Math Test – Economically Disadvantaged Students



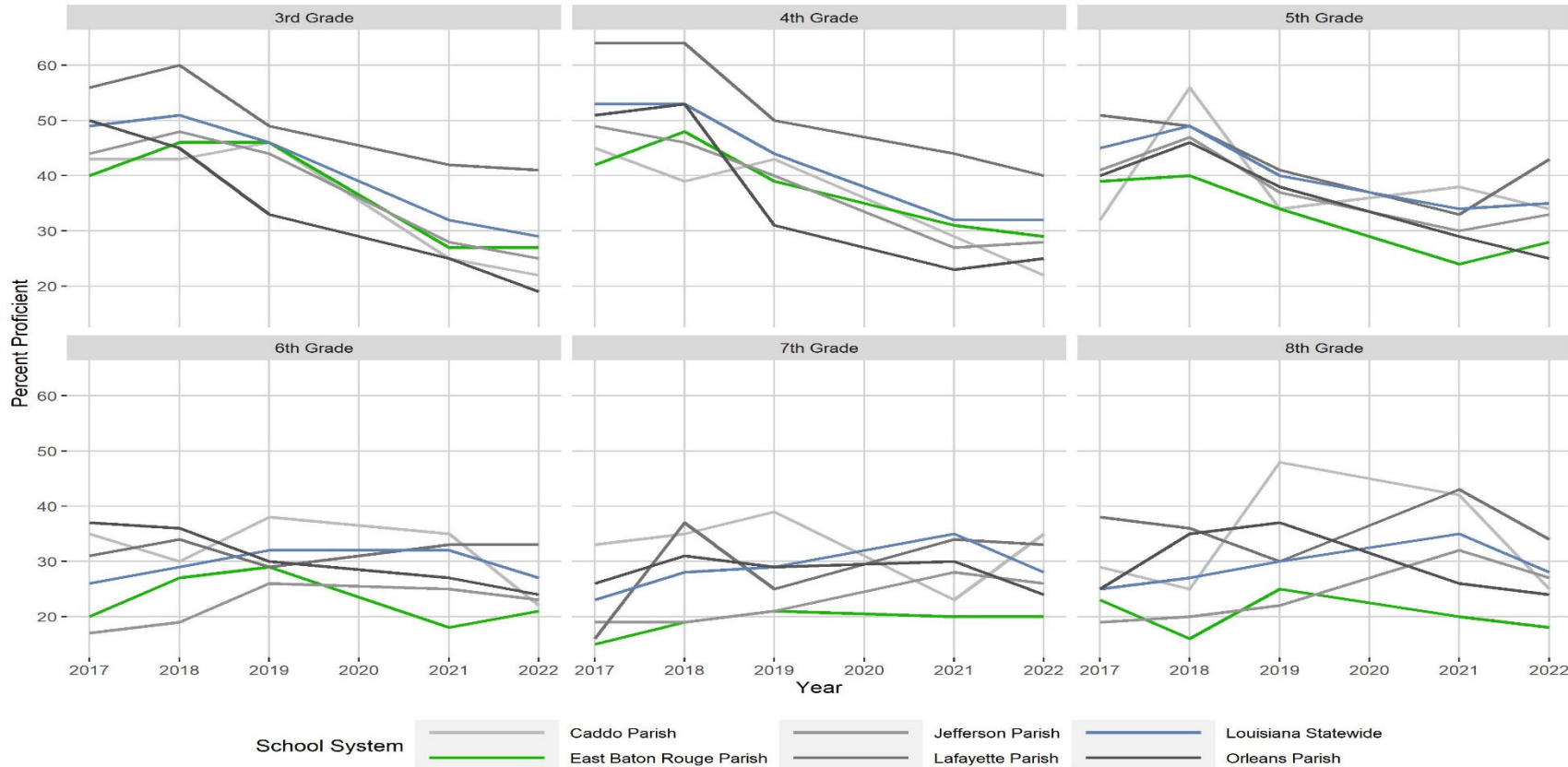
District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish				
	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22
Grade 3	66	65	64	53	58	61	58	61	47	51	58	59	57	33	40	68	69	67	49	56	70	69	69	61	71	59	57	58	42	46
Grade 4	65	66	64	51	54	56	57	57	42	44	56	59	54	32	33	69	69	66	53	54	70	71	71	64	68	58	58	54	40	40
Grade 5	60	60	57	47	51	56	55	54	40	45	52	52	46	29	34	64	62	59	43	49	65	63	62	57	63	47	54	52	39	43
Grade 6	52	55	57	48	48	50	47	52	36	36	52	49	45	31	33	45	53	51	49	44	58	59	61	54	58	37	40	41	30	35
Grade 7	56	57	57	49	50	49	53	53	40	38	56	57	51	38	41	49	52	54	48	49	61	61	60	57	57	43	37	40	36	35
Grade 8	48	48	49	42	44	47	45	51	34	39	51	48	45	30	33	39	40	41	31	34	52	54	54	56	48	36	31	32	26	34

EBRPSS LEAP Assessment Results and Comparisons – English Learner Students

ELA performance for English learners in EBRPSS increased in all grades except grade four and eight. Most significantly, EBRPSS English learners had greater increases or rates of change than the state in all grade levels except for grade four, which experienced a two-point percentage point decline. In addition, EBRPSS was the only district of the comparable districts that experienced an increase in grades three and six among English learners.

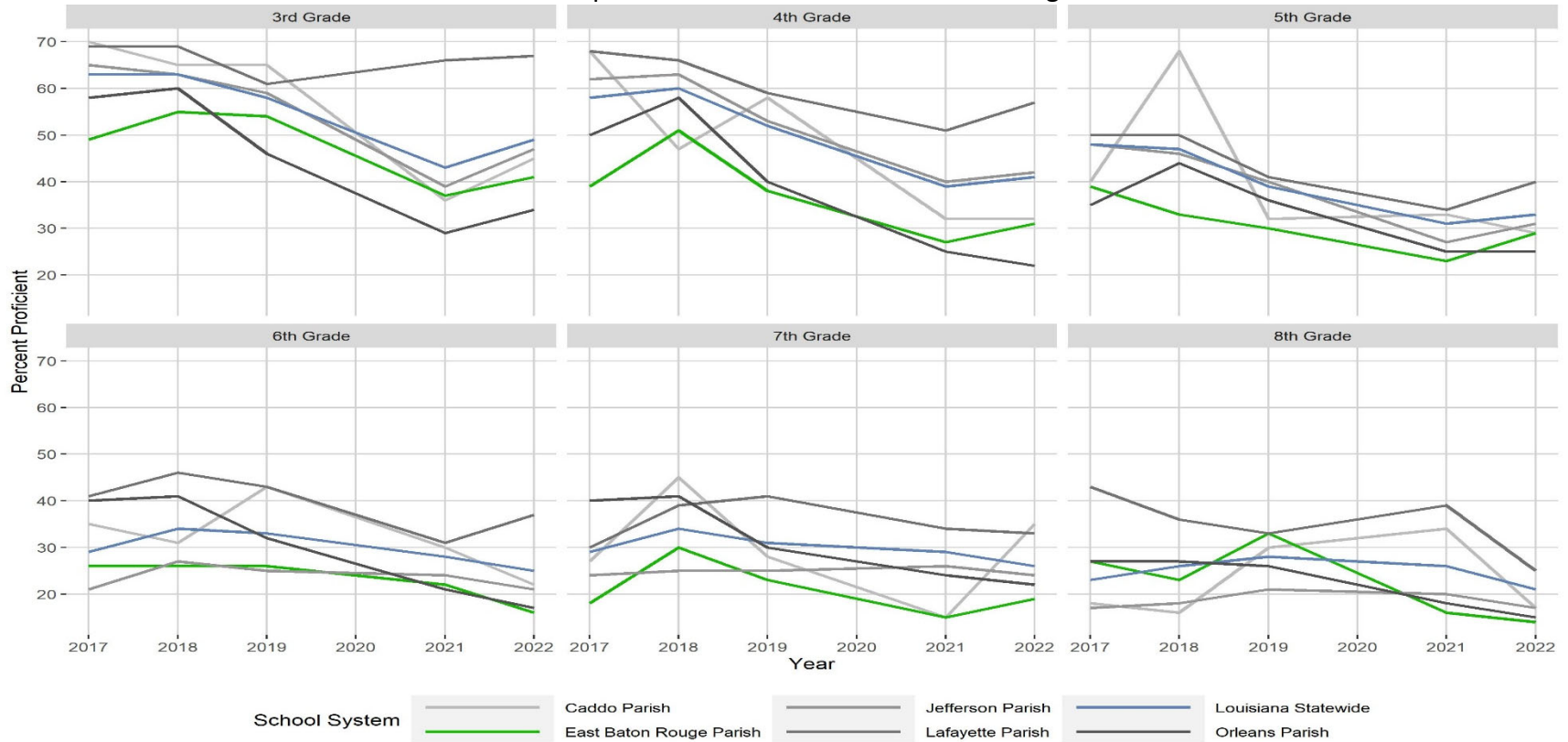
EBRPSS English learners also increased their math performance from 2021 to 2022 in every grade level except for grades six and eight, with the largest increases in grades five (6-percentage points) and grade seven (4-percentage points). Trends in increases in math performance mirrored the state and most other comparable districts in the elementary grades. EBRPSS had greater declines than the state and comparable districts in grade six (6-percentage points), although had greater rates of improvement than the state in grades seven and eight. (See Exhibits 11 and 12).

Exhibit 11. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 ELA Test – English Learners



District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish								
	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21
Grade 3	49	51	46	32	29	40	46	46	27	27	50	45	33	25	19	44	48	44	28	25	56	60	49	42	41	43	43	46	25	22				
Grade 4	53	53	44	32	32	42	48	39	31	29	51	53	31	23	25	49	46	40	27	28	64	64	50	44	40	45	39	43	29	22				
Grade 5	45	49	40	34	35	39	40	34	24	28	40	46	38	29	25	41	47	37	30	33	51	49	41	33	43	32	56	34	38	34				
Grade 6	26	29	32	32	27	20	27	29	18	21	37	36	30	27	24	17	19	26	25	23	31	34	29	33	33	35	30	38	35	22				
Grade 7	23	28	29	35	28	15	19	21	20	20	26	31	29	30	24	19	19	21	28	26	16	37	25	34	33	33	35	39	23	35				
Grade 8	25	27	30	35	28	23	16	25	20	18	25	35	37	26	24	19	20	22	32	27	38	36	30	43	34	29	25	48	42	25				

Exhibit 12. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 Math Test – English Learners



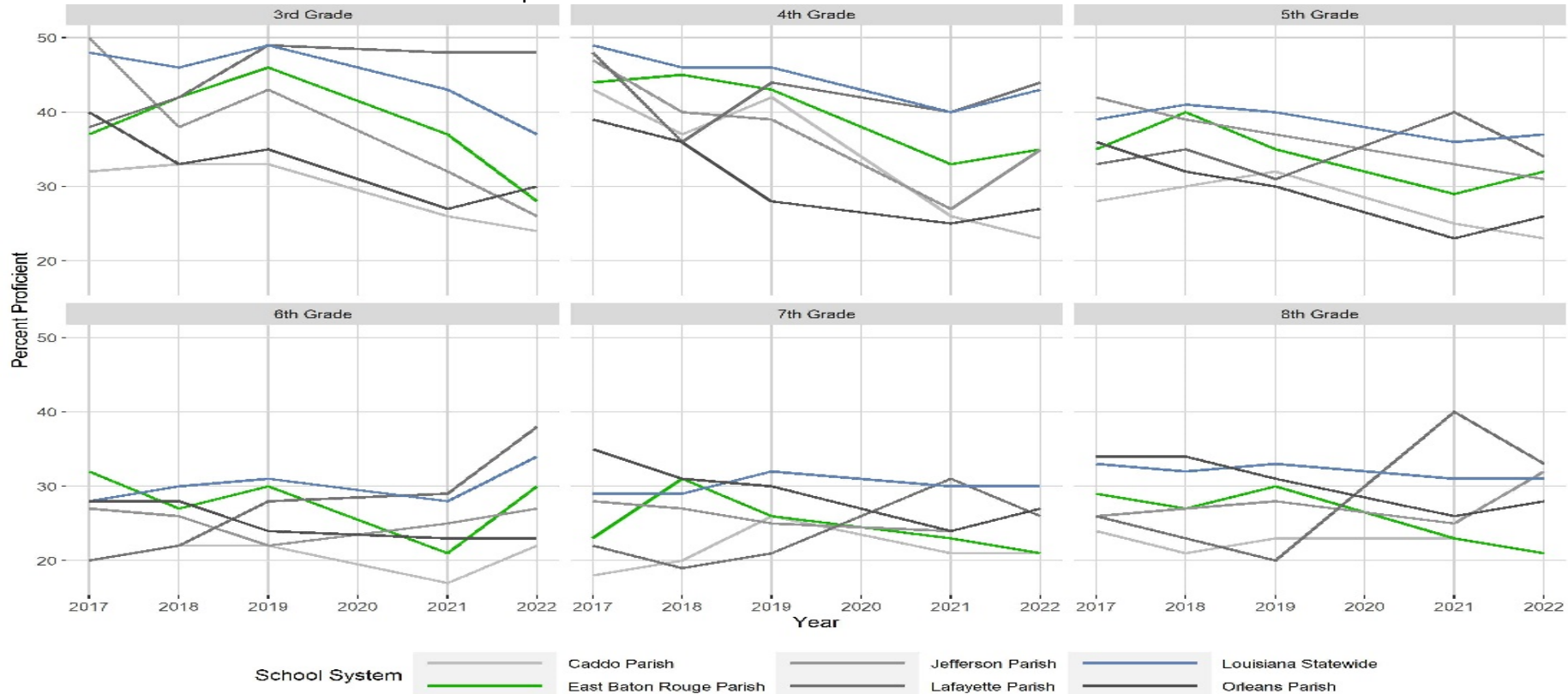
District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish								
	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21
Grade 3	63	63	58	43	49	49	55	54	37	41	58	60	46	29	34	65	63	59	39	47	69	69	61	66	67	70	65	65	36	45				
Grade 4	58	60	52	39	41	39	51	38	27	31	50	58	40	25	22	62	63	53	40	42	68	66	59	51	57	68	47	58	32	32				
Grade 5	48	47	39	31	33	39	33	30	23	29	35	44	36	25	25	48	46	40	27	31	50	50	41	34	40	40	68	32	33	29				
Grade 6	29	34	33	28	25	26	26	26	22	16	40	41	32	21	17	21	27	25	24	21	41	46	43	31	37	35	31	43	30	22				
Grade 7	29	34	31	29	26	18	30	23	15	19	40	41	30	24	22	24	25	25	26	24	30	39	41	34	33	27	45	28	15	35				
Grade 8	23	26	28	26	21	27	23	33	16	14	27	27	26	18	15	17	18	21	20	17	43	36	33	39	25	18	16	30	34	17				

EBRPSS LEAP Assessment Results and Comparisons – Students with Disabilities

The 2022 ELA at or above basic rates for students with disabilities increased from 2021 to 2022 in grades four, five and six, with the largest increase in grade six – a 9-percentage points. The largest decline in ELA performance from 2021 to 2022 among students with disabilities is seen with students in grade three who experienced a 9-percentage point decline. There is no clear trend in ELA performance of students with disabilities across EBRPSS, the state, and comparable districts.

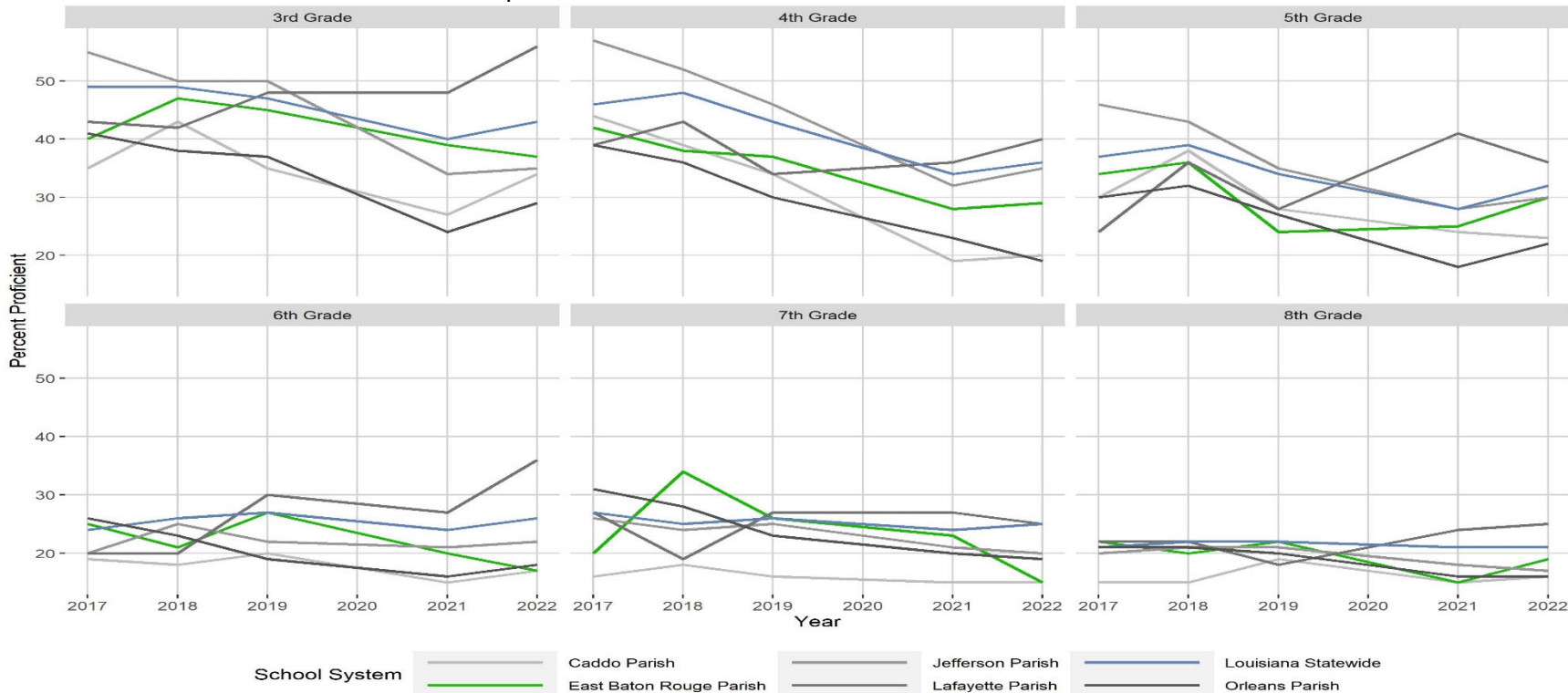
In math, EBRPSS students with disabilities increased their performance from 2021 to 2022 in grades four, five and eight. The grade eight math increase (4-percentage points) was the largest across the state and other comparable districts. Math performance declined in grades three (2-percentage points), six (3-percentage points) and seven (8-percentage points), while the state increased math performance at these grade levels. (See Exhibits 13 and 14).

Exhibit 13. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 ELA Test – Students with Disabilities



District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish				
	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22
Grade 3	48	46	49	43	37	37	42	46	37	28	40	33	35	27	30	50	38	43	32	26	38	42	49	48	48	32	33	33	26	24
Grade 4	49	46	46	40	43	44	45	43	33	35	39	36	28	25	27	47	40	39	27	35	48	36	44	40	44	43	37	42	26	23
Grade 5	39	41	40	36	37	35	40	35	29	32	36	32	30	23	26	42	39	37	33	31	33	35	31	40	34	28	30	32	25	23
Grade 6	28	30	31	28	34	32	27	30	21	30	28	28	24	23	23	27	26	22	25	27	20	22	28	29	38	20	22	22	17	22
Grade 7	29	29	32	30	30	23	31	26	23	21	35	31	30	24	27	28	27	25	24	27	22	19	21	31	26	18	20	26	21	21
Grade 8	33	32	33	31	31	29	27	30	23	21	34	34	31	26	28	26	27	28	25	32	26	23	20	40	33	24	21	23	23	21

Exhibit 14. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 Math Test – Students with Disabilities

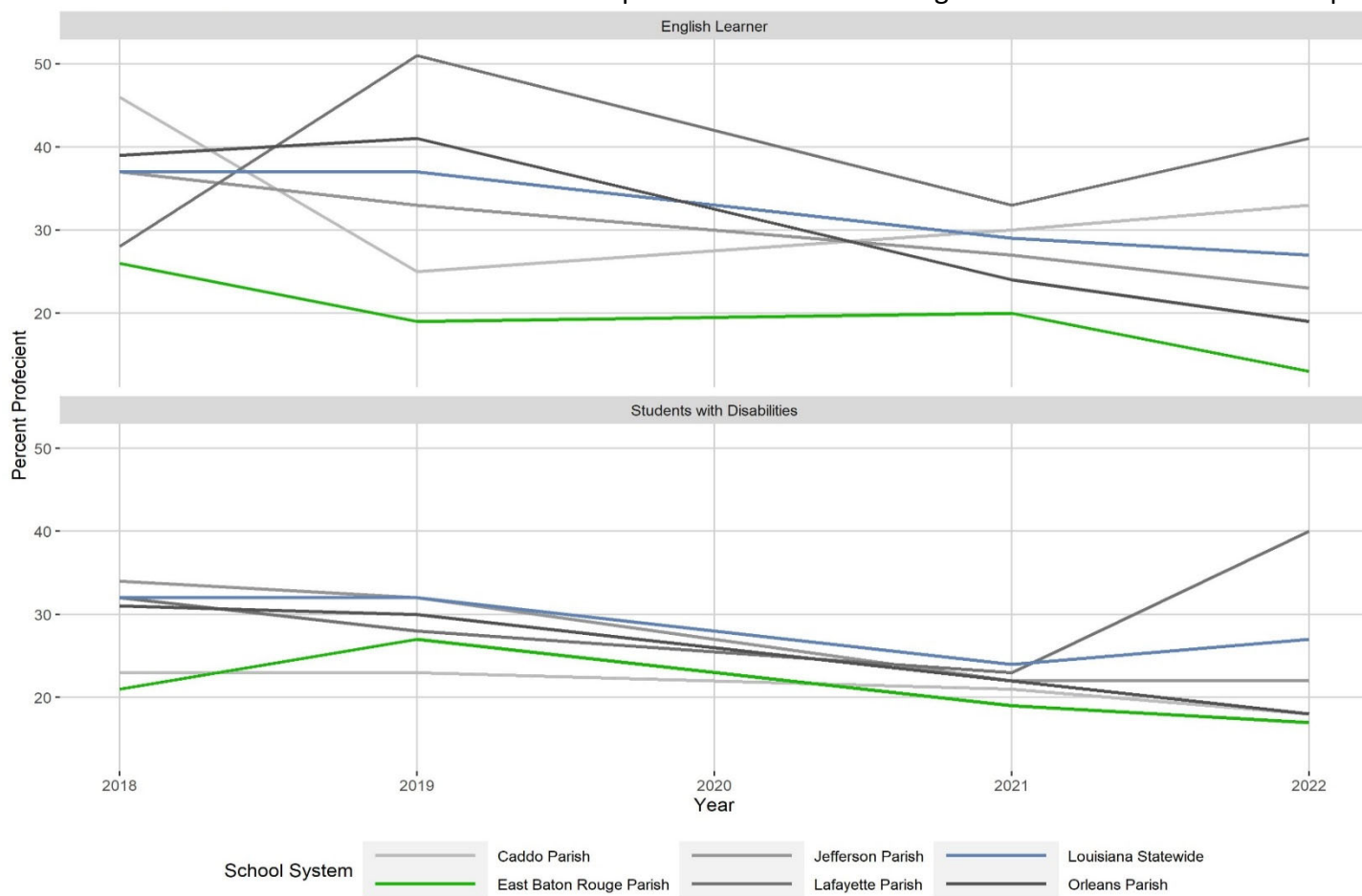


District	Louisiana Statewide					East Baton Rouge Parish					Orleans Parish					Jefferson Parish					Lafayette Parish					Caddo Parish				
Year	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22	17	18	19	21	22
Grade 3	49	49	47	40	43	40	47	45	39	37	41	38	37	24	29	55	50	50	34	35	43	42	48	48	56	35	43	35	27	34
Grade 4	46	48	43	34	36	42	38	37	28	29	39	36	30	23	19	57	52	46	32	35	39	43	34	36	40	44	39	34	19	20
Grade 5	37	39	34	28	32	34	36	24	25	30	30	32	27	18	22	46	43	35	28	30	24	36	28	41	36	30	38	28	24	23
Grade 6	24	26	27	24	26	25	21	27	20	17	26	23	19	16	18	20	25	22	21	22	20	20	30	27	36	19	18	20	15	17
Grade 7	27	25	26	24	25	20	34	26	23	15	31	28	23	20	19	26	24	25	21	20	27	19	27	27	25	16	18	16	15	15
Grade 8	21	22	22	21	21	22	20	22	15	19	21	21	20	16	16	20	21	21	18	17	22	22	18	24	25	15	15	19	15	16

EBRPSS High School Assessment Results and Comparisons – Students with Disabilities and English Learners

High school data is grouped by subject test rather than grade, with the subgroups of EL and SPED displayed in Exhibit 15. In algebra I, EBRPSS’s SPED and EL students had the lowest rates at or above basic, as compared to the state and other similar districts. EBRPSS’s SPED performance rate increased by one-percentage point from 2019 to 2021 but took a two-percentage point decline in 2022. EBRPSS EL students’ algebra I performance declined by seven-percentage points from 2021 to 2022, the largest decline among the state and other comparable districts.

Exhibit 15. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 Algebra I Test – EL and SPED Groups



English I rates in Exhibit 16 show at or above basic for EBRPSS SPED students remained steady from 2021 to 2022 at 19-percent at basic or above, performing only higher than Caddo Parrish. Only Jefferson experienced an increase in their English I performance among SPED students. EBRPSS EL students declined in performance by seven-percentage points, the largest decline among comparable jurisdictions. Only 13-percent of EBRPSS EL students performed at or above basic on the English I assessment, the lowest of all the comparable jurisdictions and at the same rate as Orleans Parish.

EBRPSS EL student performance on the English II assessment declined by one-percentage point, while the state increased by one-percentage point. EBRPSS’s 2022 EL student performance, at 16 percent at or above basic, was the same as Orleans Parish, and the lowest among comparable jurisdictions. There was no clear trend in English II performance among EL students across analyzed jurisdictions. EBRPSS SPED students experienced a



larger decline at four-percentage points, making their 2022 performance the lowest among comparable jurisdictions and the state at 18 percent at or above basic.

Exhibit 16. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 English I Test – EL and SPED Groups

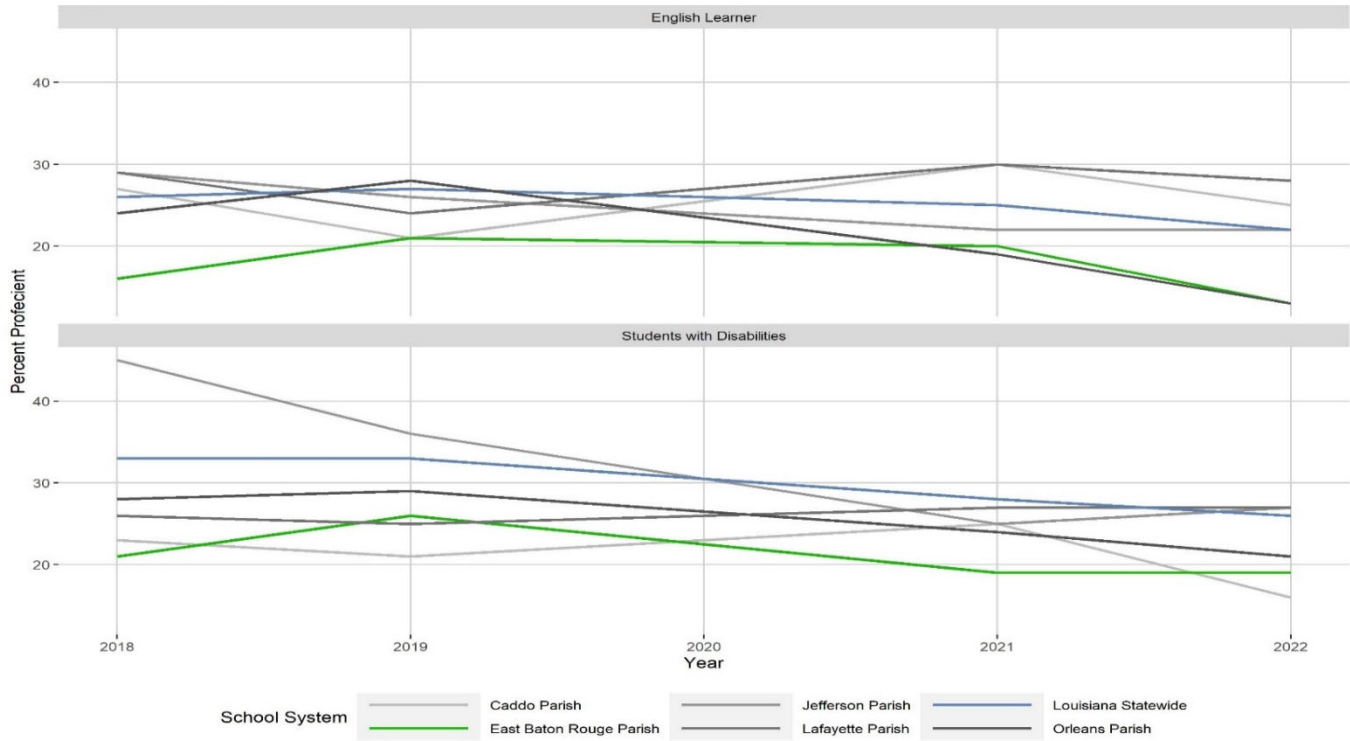


Exhibit 17. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 English II Test – EL and SPED Groups

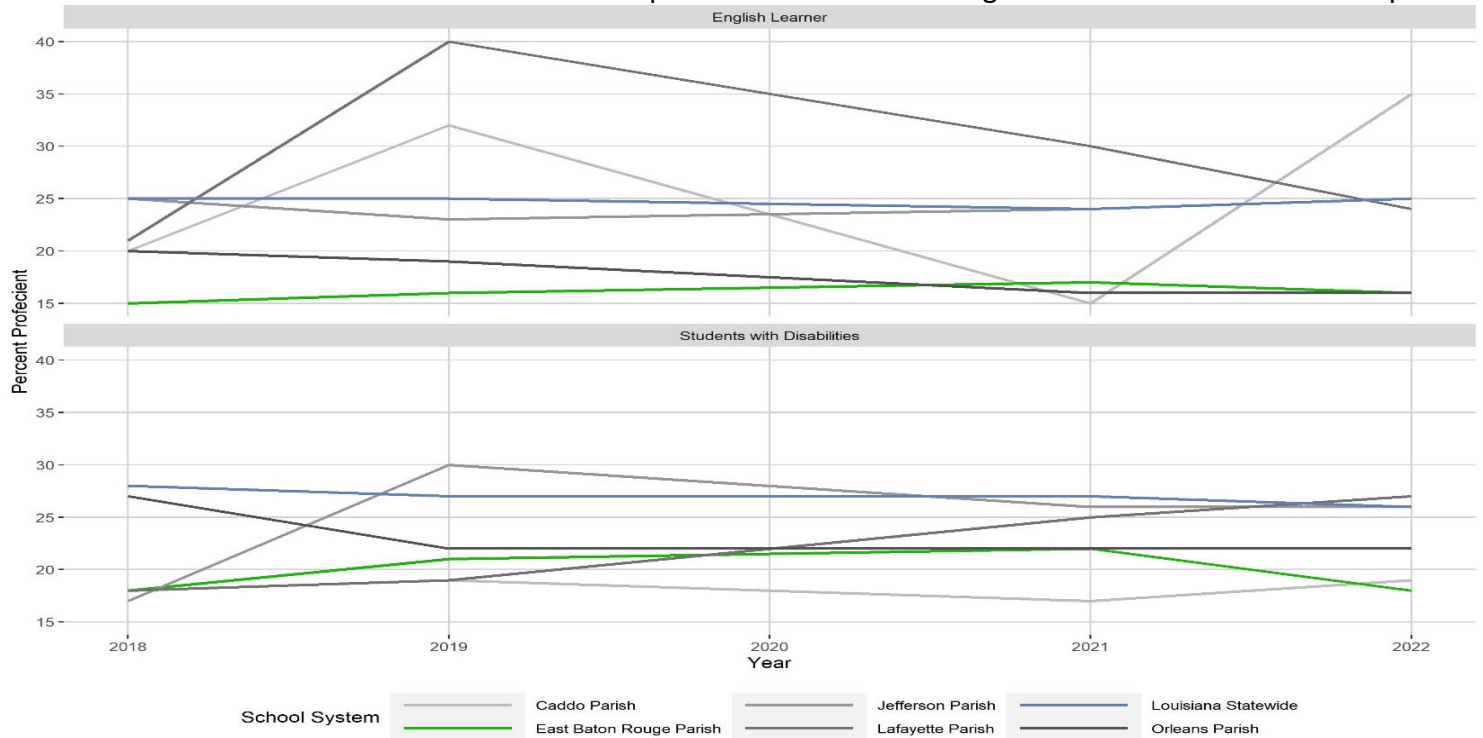


Exhibit 18. EBRPSS Student Performance and Comparisons on LEAP 2025 English I English II, and Algebra I Tests – All Student Groups

	District	Louisiana Statewide				East Baton Rouge Parish				Caddo Parish				Jefferson Parish				Lafayette Parish				Orleans Parish			
	Year	18	19	21	22	18	19	21	22	18	19	21	22	18	19	21	22	18	19	21	22	18	19	21	22
English Learner	Algebra I	37	37	29	27	26	19	20	13	46	25	30	33	37	33	27	23	28	51	33	41	39	41	24	19
	English I	26	27	25	22	16	21	20	13	27	21	30	25	29	26	22	22	29	24	30	28	24	28	19	13
	English II	25	25	24	25	15	16	17	16	20	32	15	35	25	23	24	25	21	40	30	24	20	19	16	16
Students with Disabilities	Algebra I	32	32	24	27	21	27	19	17	23	23	21	18	34	32	22	22	32	28	23	40	31	30	22	18
	English I	33	33	28	26	21	26	19	19	23	21	25	16	45	36	25	27	26	25	27	27	28	29	24	21
	English II	28	27	27	26	18	21	22	18	18	19	17	19	17	30	26	26	18	19	25	27	27	22	22	22

**ACT Scores**

The ACT scores of ELs who are enrolled in EBRPPS are among the lowest of the student groups, similar to the ACT scores of students with disabilities in both SY 2018-19 and SY 2020-21. Moreover, the ACT scores for ELs as for all student groups dropped between the two administration years, a period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Exhibit 19 shows comparisons to two other Louisiana school systems that enroll similar number of ELs, in which ELS from EBRPPS consistently show comparable ACT scores than ELs in Jefferson and Orleans Parish.

**Exhibit 19. Composite ACT Scores by Selected Subgroup in EBRPPS and Comparison Districts, SY 2018-19 and SY 2020-21**

	East Baton Rouge Parish		Jefferson Parish		Orleans Parish	
	SY 18-19	SY 20-21	SY 18-19	SY 20-21	SY 18-19	SY 20-21
English Learner	14.5	13.4	14.6	13.9	15	13.7
Economically Disadvantaged	16.6	15.7	17.7	17.1	16.7	16.3
Students with Disabilities	14.4	13.8	14.9	14.2	14.4	13.8
Asian	25	24.3	25	23.9	25.9	24.7
Black or African American	17	15.9	16.7	15.8	16.9	16.3
Hispanic/Latino	17	15.6	17.6	17.5	17.8	17.7
White	24.3	23.3	21.2	20.4	27.9	27.2

Source: Council analysis of LDOE data. Louisiana Department of Education. (2021). *High school performance*. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/high-school-performance>

Note: LEA-level data includes charters. No data available for SY 2019-20.

## Methodology and Organization of Findings

The findings in this report are based on multiple sources, including documents provided by EBRPSS and other sources; electronic student data provided by EBRPSS; group and individual interviews; email documents; and legal sources, including federal and state requirements and guidance documents. A list of EBRPSS staff members, parents/community members, and other individuals who were interviewed for this report is provided in the Appendix. No one is personally referred to or quoted in the report, although school district position titles are referenced when necessary.

Chapter 2 of the report presents a brief background on the school district and an overview of the team's work. Chapter 3 presents an executive summary of the report and a brief discussion.

Chapter 4 of this report presents the Strategic Support Team's findings and recommendations. These observations and proposals are organized by the following sections.

- I. Multi-tiered Systems of Supports
- II. Disability Demographics
- III. Achievement, Suspensions, Absenteeism, and Educational Environment Outcomes
- IV. Supports for Student Outcomes and Wellbeing for Students with IEPs
- V. Operational Supports for Teaching and Learning for Students with IEPs

Each category contains a summary of relevant information, and recommendations. Finally, Chapter 5 lists all recommendations for easy reference and provides a matrix showing various components or features of the recommendations. The appendices include the following information:

1. Appendix A compares disability incidence rates and special education staffing ratios in 80 major school systems across the country.
2. Appendix B provides a proposed ESS organization chart
3. Appendix C lists documents reviewed by the team.
4. Appendix D lists individuals the team interviewed individually or in groups and presents the team's working agenda.
5. Appendix E presents brief biographical sketches of team members.
6. Appendix F presents a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools and a list of the Strategic Support Teams that the Council has fielded over approximately the last 20 years.

## CHAPTER 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Sito Narcisse, EBRPSS' superintendent, asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the district's instruction and support for both students with disabilities and for English learners, and to make recommendations for improvement. To conduct its work, the Council assembled a team of experts with strong reputations for improving these areas in their own districts. Because of the rapid increase of the Omicron COVID virus, the team worked with EBRPSS staff to move from an in-person to remote review process. Members of the Council team conducted interviews and focus groups on January 24<sup>th</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 2022, reviewed documents, and analyzed data. Shortly after the visit, the team formulated preliminary observations and recommendations and presented them to the superintendent. This report constitutes the Council team's full review.

Overall, there were a considerable number of positive observations in the district. First, it was clear that the district is beginning to provide stronger support to schools from the district's central office. This year, the district created the office of student support. Reporting to the chief officer are leaders of seven units: MTSS/SEL, Counseling, ICARE, 504, TASC, CWA/Hearings, and health services. Also, this was evidenced by the new *East Baton Rouge Literacy Blueprint* and the new Chief of Literacy role in the district. To support the important area of literacy, the district established a department with a literacy chief who reports directly to the superintendent. The renewed focus is likely to play a significant role in improving student outcomes across the district.

Second, the emphasis on improving Tier 1, or classroom instruction, in the district is commended. In the Council's report, *Mirrors or Windows: How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers*, we show that large urban school districts produce greater "educational torque" than their peers across the country. In other words, our districts are able to improve outcomes for students at a faster rate than their peers when controlling for demographic differences between districts. The report indicates that focusing on improving classroom instruction is the key to producing these results.

Finally, the district's recent grant award from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to improve mathematics outcomes for students will allow staff to further focus on helping students rebound from the impact of the pandemic. These and many other improvements observed are promising for students and staff.

The Council team has shared several recommendations for improving support to students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Systemwide MTSS Framework, Implementation Plan, and Oversight.** Establish MTSS as the districtwide framework within which all work designed to improve student achievement and positive behavior/social emotional learning exists.
2. **Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility.** Improve consistency and appropriateness of referrals, assessments, and eligibility decisions for special education.
3. **Achievement Outcomes, Suspension, Absenteeism, and Educational Environments.** Use and monitor data for students with IEPs regarding their achievement, suspension, absenteeism, and educational environments by disability, race/ethnicity to understand gaps and need for follow-up action.

4. **Promoting Achievement and Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities.** Have the extended cabinet establish a clear and defined vision expressing the value of inclusive education that is based on strong general education instruction and ESS collaboration and high quality instruction/intervention. Ensure that this vision includes support for the academic, behavioral, and social/emotional needs of children.
5. **Interoffice Collaboration.** Consider collaborative strategies that include ESS leadership working closely with the chief academic officer's leadership team and other critical departments to improve interoffice/departmental collaboration to minimize fragmented support and leverage support to school personnel and students.
6. **ESS and Organization.** Eliminate leadership by an associate superintendent and director. Consider two directors with compliance and instructional support responsibilities. Ensure that the work of both divisions is well coordinated through the new ESS leader.
7. **School-Based ESS Personnel.** Ensure that personnel who support students with IEPs are employed in sufficient numbers and are available to meet student needs.
8. **Compliance Support and Access to Information.** Investigate how the ESS Procedural Handbook can have a table of contents with pages that bring the user to the area of interest and post the Handbook on the district's ESS webpage. Gather all individual guidance documents currently in use (e.g., ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook, Section 504 Handbook, ESS Department website) and embed them in the Handbook with links to have a single source of information.
9. **Fiscal Considerations.** As soon as possible review any positions for which services **may** be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement for Medicaid qualified students that are IDEA funded. Identify alternate funding sources, initiate Medicaid billing, and explore any retroactive billing as appropriate.
10. **Shared Accountability for Student Achievement.** Review the reporting of Strategic Plan elements and ways to disaggregate outcomes for students with IEPs and English learners, as well as different parent survey and personnel areas so each group's outcomes are not masked by overall higher rates.

## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the Council team’s findings in the areas described in Chapter 1. Each section includes a summary of the team’s findings and concludes with recommendations.

### I. MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

Although the Council team was asked to focus on the groups of students with disabilities and English learners (ELs), the team began its inquiry with the foundational aspects of teaching and learning for all students as reflected in the development and use of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. The Council of the Great City Schools’ *Common Core State Standards and Diverse Urban Students*<sup>5</sup> described the MTSS framework as one that is intended to improve the educational outcomes for *all* students. It focuses on prevention and early identification of students who might benefit from instructional or behavioral interventions. The framework has merged the principles of response to intervention (RTI), which has focused on academic achievement, and supports for positive student behavior, such as positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS). Both approaches are based on high-quality, research-based instruction targeted to learner needs. Three tiers of increasingly intensive instruction/intervention are modified based on monitoring data showing student progress. All students are involved in the MTSS framework, including those who have disabilities, are English learners, and are gifted. When the term MTSS is used in this report, it denotes a comprehensive approach to supporting instruction that applies to academics, social/emotional learning, and behavior.

MTSS incorporates universal design for learning (UDL) principles, which optimize instruction and supports in Tier 1 for all students by eliminating instructional barriers to students and making the curriculum accessible for all students at the outset of the instructional process.<sup>6</sup> UDL provides multiple ways of acquiring information; alternatives for demonstrating what students have learned; and strategies for engaging diverse learners and motivating them to learn.

The information below describes key elements of MTSS based on the Council’s document, Louisiana guidance, and EBRPSS guidance, which is followed by focus group feedback.

#### General Description of MTSS Framework

Based on current research, the essential components of an MTSS framework include:

- Well-defined district- and school-based leadership and organizational structure.
- District policies and practices that align with and support a multi-tiered system.

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<sup>5</sup>Retrieved from <https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/77--Achievement%20Task%20Force--RTI%20White%20Paper-Final.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See UDL Guidelines at <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>.

- Technology that is adequate to support instructional decision making and implementation of instruction (e.g., UDL).
- Robust and valid core or Tier I instruction delivered to all students.
- Assessment of expected rates of progress.
- The use of three tiers of increasingly intensive (time and focus of instruction) instructional supports and strategies.
- Professional development to ensure fidelity of implementation of MTSS methodology and of the Common Core State Standards.
- An evaluation process that monitors both implementation and outcomes.
- The engagement of parents and caregivers.<sup>7</sup>

### Use of MTSS for Documenting Suspicion of Disability

As described in the CGCS document, MTSS has significant implications for identifying students suspected of needing special education. Factors other than a disability may account for students having difficulty in language and literacy (as well as numeracy). Such factors may include the nature of a student’s educational opportunity, as well as teaching practices or assessment tools that are insensitive to cultural or linguistic differences, for example. Other circumstances might include family circumstances, e.g., children who grow up without access to nutritious food, who live in chaotic households, and who have no written materials in the house. When implemented with fidelity, however, MTSS can help ensure that these factors are not blocking the way for students or staff members who consider making a special education referral for determining eligibility for special education services.<sup>8</sup>

### First Teaching and Support

One important principle of MTSS is the importance of universal instruction, or that which is provided to all students based on Louisiana standards.

For English and standard-English learners alike, MTSS is based on instruction that is both culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate, along with being explicit and rigorous. Appropriate instruction considers and builds on a student’s cultural knowledge, home language, background, and experiences, as well as linguistic proficiency (in both English and native language). These considerations help determine how a student learns best, in what settings, and the teaching conditions that support learning based on Louisiana’s high academic standards. Some students may simply need a different teaching approach to understand a lesson’s content. For instance, English learners (as well as native language learners) can be successful with instruction/support in reading challenging, short texts that are beautifully written and feature complex vocabulary and narrative, before moving onto longer texts as students increase their reading stamina and their skills become more advanced. Attempting to teach these students the

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at page 18.



same way from the beginning to the end of the learning process would not be effective. Thus, initial teaching methods may be designed with diverse student needs in mind, but other teaching methods may be required as conditions, circumstances and student needs change.

Engaging students in academic work regardless of their achievement level is also critical. Students need to be actively involved in the learning process and need the time to learn and practice the skills that they are being taught. In fact, research shows that the time spent engaged in academic work is a primary predictor of student achievement—more so than IQ, race, and socioeconomic status.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has K-12 academic standards grouped by birth through five and K-12 for ELA, math, science, and social science. In addition, LDOE has developed Connectors for English learners and for students with significant disabilities that describe aligned pathways for students to work toward the standards and for what specialist teachers teach.

### Louisiana Requirements and Guidance

Unlike many other states, LDOE has expansive requirements posted through law and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Bulletins with many references to RTI. The Department’s webpage also addresses MTSS. Relevant information is summarized below.

### MTSS References

LDOE does not have an MTSS webpage dedicated to the framework and implementation guidance for academics and behavior. However, the framework is prominently referred to on the Department’s Student Behavior and Discipline webpage and BESE’s Bulletin on dyslexia.

### Student Behavior and Discipline

The LDOE webpage<sup>9</sup> for student behavior and discipline refers to the relationship between behavior problems and academic difficulties and refers to MTSS’s employment by schools that achieve sustained high performance for all students, including students with disabilities.

MTSS is first described broadly as a “comprehensive system that screens all students to identify needs early and provide real-time interventions and supports that can be intensified, if needed. MTSS uses data-based problem solving and decision making across all levels of the educational system for supporting students.” The information is then limited to the social/emotional domain:

MTSS prioritizes alignment of resources and support for students, teachers, and staff. MTSS includes universal screening of all students **for social and emotional needs**, collaborative data-based decision making to guide more intensive screening and referrals, evidence-based interventions for students who struggle in routine instructional settings or with social-emotional behaviors, and frequent progress monitoring to assess interventions and facilitate necessary adjustments. (Emphasis added.)

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/public-schools/discipline>.

Similarly, the webpage’s description of evidence-based interventions is limited to behavior and social emotional learning (SEL) –

The primary objective of all **behavioral intervention** practice is to ensure struggling students are identified and receive appropriate evidence-based interventions to assist them in progressing toward graduation, postsecondary education, and career readiness. Evidence based interventions should be selected to target each specific area of student behavior, ranging from reducing aggression, addressing trauma, reducing disruption, etc. ...

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula and strategies should be implemented within a[n] [MTSS] framework. Use of an SEL curricula is one component of a system of prevention, response and intervention to assist students struggling with disruptive or concerning behaviors. The SEL curriculum should be used heavily in workforce learning to expand awareness of SEL deficiencies and as a tier 1 intervention for problematic student behavior.

### Bulletin 1903. Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia

Unlike most states, Louisiana has had state laws on dyslexia since the 1990’s. In 2020, Louisiana passed Act 206 to revise the state definition of dyslexia for purposes of testing and providing services to students. A LDOE workgroup met to review Bulletin 1903. In June 2021 BESE revised its Bulletin to align with the state definition of dyslexia and used an MTSS framework to direct instructional interventions.

Dyslexia is defined as “an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader, most commonly caused by a difficulty in phonological processing, which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell.” Requirements and guidance include –

- **Screening.** Required early literacy screening (kindergarten through grade 3), following up with additional screening components based on student deficit. Screening is not limited to these grades. Some LDOE approved screeners but the list is not comprehensive. Criteria is provided for the selection of appropriate screening instruments.
- **SBLC Involvement.** The SBLC receives referrals for students with possible dyslexia characteristics based on initial screening results, or parental, educator or advocate concern. Students are considered to have dyslexia when they consistently struggle or have difficulty attaining expected academic progress, despite instruction in a high-quality curriculum with the implementation of additional instructional intervention strategies within the MTSS framework.
- **Instructional Interventions** are based on multisensory structured language and literacy programs that –
  - Contain instruction in phonological awareness, phoneme-grapheme association, phonics, syllables, linguistics, meaning, and reading fluency.

Integrate all aspects of language-based instruction including receptive, expressive, oral and written language, and handwriting.

Use instructional methods that are explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, individualized, diagnostic, demonstrate automaticity of performance, simultaneously multisensory, and follow the synthetic to analytic phonics instructional process.

Allow for adequate practice opportunities to develop automaticity of performance.

Students having characteristics of dyslexia but not of an IDEA disability are entitled to receive multisensory structured language/literacy instruction with the regular school day.

- **Progress Monitoring and Program Review.** Student progress is monitoring with data and interventions are periodically review for appropriateness and effectiveness.

### State RTI Requirements

Below is a summary of state law and LDOE expansive requirements based in RTI that drive expectations for general education practice, identifying students needing an evaluation for special education or Section 504, and diagnosing a particular IDEA disability.

- **RTI Generally.** An administrative rule describes RTI as a three-tiered approach to providing services/interventions to struggling learners and/or students with challenging behaviors at increasing levels of intensity. Essential components include three tiers of instruction and intervention, use of standard protocols and/or problem-solving methods, and an integrated data collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of instruction/intervention. A set of support structures/activities are embedded in each tier to help teachers implement, with fidelity, research-based curricula, instructional practices, and interventions designed to improve student achievement. RTI is used for decision-making in both general and special education decision, creating a well-integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by student outcome data. (BESE Bulletin 1508, §301)
- **School Building Level Committee (SBLC).** SBLCs are required to review/analyze all screening data, including RTI results, to drive decisions for RTI activities, referral for evaluation special education, Section 504 evaluation, or other support services. The SBLC must provide parents a report or summary on the student's response to scientifically research-based interventions which would include repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction. This report or summary must be provided to parents at least once each grading period until a decision is reached. (BESE Bulletin 1508, §303)
- **Special Education Evaluation Referral.** An LEA shall identify a student with a suspected disability only after the student participated in an RTI process that produced data sufficient to support need for a special education evaluation, with evidence minimally showing that scientifically research-based intervention was implemented with fidelity as evidenced by data sheets, computer-generated records, or other permanent products; the student's progress was monitored relative to peers, at reasonable intervals; and graphed evidence showed that the student's rate of progress relative to peers was not adequate.

Exceptions to this process are made for students suspected of having low incidence impairments, and some students with severe disabilities and/or significant health issues; or based on substantial documentation of a student suspected of likely to injure him/herself or others. (BESE Bulletin 1508, §305 and 307)

- **IDEA Disabilities.** Many states use an RTI process for diagnosing a specific learning disability. Uniquely, since 2009 Louisiana requires for seven disability areas evidence that scientifically research-based interventions implemented with fidelity did not significantly modify the problem behavior. *Significantly modify* means that a change in behavior is demonstrated to such a degree that, with continuation of the intervention program by the general education teacher and/or other support personnel, the student could continue in the general education program. These disability areas are autism, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment and other health impairment (OHI), speech/language impairment (SLI) and specific learning disability (SLD). The area of OHI has more detailed requirements, and SLD and SLI each have particular requirements.
  - **OHI.** For an OHI diagnosis with behavioral implications, the following processes are required –
    - **FBA.** Review of functional behavior assessment (FBA), including a description of intensity, duration and frequency of occurrence of target behaviors, and a description of antecedent(s) and consequence(s) maintaining the behavior(s). The FBA is conducted across settings with multiple informants.
    - **Intervention Outcomes.** Review of evidence showing that scientifically research-based interventions implemented with fidelity did not significantly modify the problem behavior. The intervention(s) include operationally defined target behaviors, systematic measurement of targeted behaviors, baseline behavior, student's response to the intervention following implementation (or prior to with repeated measures during the intervention.) Documentation includes graphing/charting of the intervention(s) results, length of time for each intervention, and any intervention changes/adjustments.
    - **Intervention Assessment.** Review of intervention(s) appropriateness/effectiveness and use of additional intervention(s), if deemed necessary. Suspension/expulsion cannot be used as an intervention.
  - **SLD.** When scientifically research-based intervention outcomes and standardized testing do not clearly establish strengths/weaknesses, but a preponderance of all data collected supports the team's position of a SLD diagnosis, the evaluation report must include a full explanation and justification.
  - **SLI.** Documented intervention(s) must be conducted by a speech-language pathologist or speech-language pathology assistant.
  - **Identification of English Learners with Disabilities.** LDOE's guidance document is also based on the principles of RTI and the guidance of SBLCs, which is to include EL service providers. School systems are to use universal screeners as one important data point when considering if ELs need additional general education supports. It is also important

to consider family and personal history with school and what is considered normal progress of language acquisition, as well as social and academic language. Information about a student's language development in all of languages used helps to determine appropriate instructional goals as well as expected progress.

### LDOE Support for First Teaching of English Language Arts and Math

Louisiana has multiple tools to support instruction and support for English language arts (ELA) and math. In addition to state standards, the LDOE website provides –

- **Curriculum.** To support school systems in selecting high-quality curriculum and aligning the curriculum with assessments and professional development, LDOE led an online review of selected materials to help assess their alignment with state content standards. Results were organized by three groups of quality and provided for early childhood, ELA/literacy and assessments, reading intensive intervention, math and assessments. Social studies and science curriculum were also reviewed.
- **K-12 ELA Planning Resources.** This webpage contains information that includes –
  - **ELA Guidebooks.** Intended for whole-class instruction, guides made by and for teachers were designed to ensure all students can read, understand and express their understanding of complex, grade-level text. Each unit has three assessments and about 50 classroom-ready online daily lessons. Teachers are responsible for adjusting lesson supports so all students meet lesson/unit goals.
  - **Planning Guides** for creation of text sets, determination of text complexity, and classroom support.
  - **Instructional Strategies**, e.g., semantic mapping, word displays, mentor sentences, etc.
  - **Assessment Guides** for state level assessments.
- **English Learner** instructional resources.
- **Gifted and Talented** instructional resources.
- **Accelerate.** A webpage entitled “Accelerate” has information designed to support school systems’ implementation of tutoring at scale to address/prevent unfinished learning. This just-in-time model is focused on identifying, celebrating, and building upon the assets students bring to the learning experience. Provided are various guidance documents; webinars; school support institute (SSI) PowerPoints; tutoring material; and an action planning template.

### East Baton Rouge MTSS Framework and Practices

Based on a search of EBRPSS’ website, a small amount information is publicly available about the district’s MTSS model. An MTSS/SEL<sup>10</sup> webpage posted on the student support website explains:

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<sup>10</sup> <https://staff.EBRPSSschools.org/divisions/student-support/mtss-sel/>

The MTSS department is responsible for the development and implementation of the district Multi-Tiered System of Support Program and the Social Emotional Learning plan. The MTSS department supports schools in the development of academic and behavioral tiered systems of supports through relationship building and focused training. The department works to ensure school campuses have the systems needed to guarantee equitable access and outcomes for all students.

In addition to this general statement, the webpage describes MTSS as “a systematic, integrated and multilayer approach used to deliver instruction, assess student progress and provide needed supports and interventions.” In addition, the webpage separately describes SEL as “the process of developing the self-awareness, Self-Control, and Interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success.” Another section refers to “additional resources,” which are available on the “MTSS Playbook” for “internal use only.” Finally, the webpage provides a list of 10 SEL specialists by region who could be contacted.

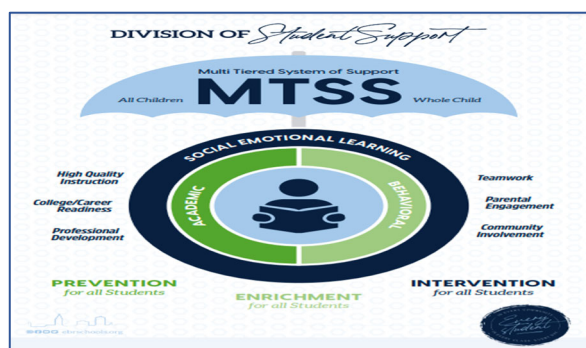
In response to the Council team’s request for information about EBRPSS’ use of MTSS, the district shared, and the team reviewed 19 documents that provided a significant amount of material regarding three MTSS proposals, EBRPSS interim processes, and professional development activities.

This year, the district created the office of student support. Reporting to the chief officer are leaders of eight units: MTSS/SEL, Counseling, ICARE, 504, TASC, CWA/Hearings, 504, and health services. In addition, to support the important area of literacy, the district established a department with a literacy chief who reports directly to the superintendent. At the end of this section the district’s 2021-22 literacy implementation plan is reviewed.

### Draft MTSS Plan

The Council team initially reviewed a draft MTSS plan of October 11, 2021, which was updated on January 27, 2022. The updated plan more closely reflects MTSS framework literacy. The plan’s graphic, which is shown in Exhibit 1a below, applies to all students with a focus on the whole child. Social emotional learning (SEL) surrounds academic and behavioral components, and they are all supported through high quality instruction, college/career readiness, professional development, teamwork, parental engagement and community involvement. Also highlighted are prevention, intervention, and enrichment for all students.

Exhibit 1a. Division of Student Support’s MTSS Framework



The draft MTSS plan addressed strategic plan alignment, introduction to MTSS, social/emotional learning, MTSS components and teams, use of data/universal screening, layered continuum of support, implementation timeline, measuring success, document sources, and three appendices (FAQs, additional MTSS forms, and a school MTSS plan template). Several aspects of the plan are summarized below.

As with the traditional MTSS graphic that shows a tiered approach of increasingly intensive interventions (from Tier 1’s universal prevention/high quality instruction to Tier III’s intensive assistance), the district has added the following key performance indicators (KPIs) for academics and behavior.

Academic	Behavior
Increase students reading on level Increase proficiency on ANET benchmark assessment for math & ELA Increase AP & dual enrollment seats Increase promotion rate for 9th grade Increase industry-based certifications Increase graduation rate	Increase attendance rate Reduce truancy rates Reduce suspension rates Increase social emotional learning practices

The plan does not indicate whether the KPIs will be sorted by subgroups, such as race/ethnicity, ESS, or EL.

Somewhat different from more typical MTSS frameworks is the districts emphasis on SEL and its foundation for MTSS. As stated in the draft:

SEL is integrated district-wide, campus-wide, and within classrooms as a catalyst in creating positive climate/culture, equity, trauma-informed school environments, and high academic standards. We are prioritizing evidenced based SEL instruction to support individual students/groups and to promote a healthy school climate and culture. ... Each school within the district commits to two (or more) tier I universal approaches or framework (SEL Foundations, Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and/or Restorative Practices).

We note that page 20 has a different requirement: all schools are expected to implement SEL and PBIS (MTSS discipline) in additional to one of the following: Restorative Practices (all grade bands); Second Step (elementary); and Too Good For Drugs/Violence (secondary).

In 2021, EBRPSS partnered with the Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to guide its SEL work. According to CASEL, there is overlap between SEL, Second Step<sup>11</sup> and Too Good for Drugs and Violence, as the latter two provide a lesson-based approach

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from <https://pg.casel.org/second-step%E2%93%87-elementary/>

to SEL.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, CASEL has explained that RP and SEL can be implemented together to support aligned goals and enhance outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

CASEL advised that these SEL approaches, along with PBIS<sup>14</sup> can and should be aligned under a single initiative to minimize redundancy, conflicts, cost, and effort. This is done by identifying where they overlap and how they support the school's overall vision. This process facilitates measuring progress, providing professional learning, and facilitating communication.

### MTSS Teams

Consistent with national literature on this subject, the draft plan details the various components of MTSS and describes four collaborative teams: **district level** (plan and provide schools support and accountability for implementation); **school student support teams** (monthly meet to develop/oversee school planning); **grade level teams/professional learning communities** (identify students not responding to Tier I instruction, develop/provide interventions, etc.); and **problem-solving student support team** (has individual student focus with plans for their needs and progress monitoring.) Starting in the 2022-23 school year, SSTs will address all student concerns, and carry out the former SBLC function. In such cases, the SST will add the referred student's classroom teachers as a participant.

The district's planned use of a single student support team (SST) reflects a significant change from the past, which involved multiple teams meeting to address student concerns through PBIS, SEL, instructional, school-based level committee, etc.

Each school's SST will develop/implement a school-side MTSS plan, review/monitor student progress, and make recommendations/decisions on student tiering, interventions and supports. The components reflect those found in the literature that describe the MTSS framework, including the use of universal screening and progress monitoring; data-based problem solving and decision-making; evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices; and family, school, and community partnering. In addition, the draft states that MTSS is the bridge to EL students who may require more intensive interventions to make sufficient progress. However, the plan does not refer to students with disabilities who may require interventions not associated with their disability and receipt of specially designed instruction. It also does not address the extent to which monthly SST meetings would include students with disabilities in their discussions about attendance, discipline, academic, counseling, etc. When such students are not specifically included, they tend to be left out of such discussions.

It is important to keep in mind that pupil appraisal personnel have historically provided support to each school's general education problem solving committee. Chaired by the principal or administrative designee, the team has been staffed with general and special educators, pupil appraisal, and related service personnel. It is not a fast track to special education identification but is intended to drive each school's intervention activities. Pupil appraisal and related service

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from <https://pg.casel.org/too-good-for-violence/>

<sup>13</sup> CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL, Restorative Practices and SEL Alignment, retrieved from [https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/2020.12.11\\_Aligning-SEL-and-RP\\_Final.pdf](https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/2020.12.11_Aligning-SEL-and-RP_Final.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from [https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SEL\\_MTSS-and-PBIS.pdf](https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SEL_MTSS-and-PBIS.pdf)



personnel assist with intervention designs, progress monitoring, data review, and decision making regarding the appropriate next steps for a student. Parents are notified each nine weeks of the student's progress and status in the intervention process. These aspects of the process should not be lost as the district transitions to the MTSS framework.

### **Tiered Interventions**

The plan describes student movement between the three tiers of supports/interventions and identifies for math, English, science and social studies the expected instruction at each tier, along with how students will be assessed and monitored. Tier II and III interventions are the same for math, English and science, expect that at the third tier there is the addition of "individualized interventions," and "individualized acceleration/intervention." It appears that the district anticipates that instruction aligned with these terms will be produced by teachers at the school level. While experienced teachers with a high level of expertise may be adept at doing so, it is unlikely that this will be true for all teachers with students needing this support. The plan does not include any reference to UDL.

### **School-based Plans**

The draft plan provides steps that will be taken during the Spring of 2022 to support school leaders to develop school plans. The draft at page 22 states that training will be provided "to the MTSS department."

Each spring schools will conduct a tiered fidelity assessment developed by the American Institute of Research's Center on MTSS, with the end of 2021-22 providing a baseline for the future. Each school is expected to grow an annual least 3 to 5 percentage points.

The draft plan also includes useful forms for the SST meeting agenda, questions for grade level team data review protocols, SST implementation checklist, student referral meeting, student support plan, and a schoolwide MTSS plan template.

### **Interim Processes and Guidance**

While the district is putting its MTSS pieces in place, staff are using existing processes, procedures and guidance for RTI (academics and behavior), PBIS, and dyslexia screening. In addition, processes are in place for progress monitoring and data collection and review. It was not immediately clear which of the following components would continue or not as the district implements its MTSS framework.

### **Support for First Teaching**

EBRPSS representatives shared various documents they identified as supporting instruction aligned with core standards/curriculum *for all students*, including those with disabilities and English learners. Over 20 categories of documents were provided, but most focused on the disability and EL groups. A folder with Academic documents were more general in nature and included: planning documents for grades 3-4 and grades 7-9 by reading program; and a pacing calendar. For example, the ELA grade 3 document for 2021-22 has information that includes –

- Units by date span with referenced standards
- Enrichment activities

- Formative assessments for each unit by date span
- Technology integration and digital literacy focus by unit
- Resources for handwriting, which must be introduced by third grade and integrated in 4th-12th grade curriculum
- Louisiana connectors for students with significant cognitive disabilities and students who are learning English.

### 2021-22 Literacy Implementation Plan

Reporting to the Chief of Literacy is a group of 34 persons, including an executive director of pre-K and a director of library services. There are also coaches, curriculum content trainers, coordinators, project managers, instructional specialists, parent liaisons, and a project manager for ESS and ESL.

The literacy implementation plan's theory of action is based on building a knowledge of research, best practices and a common vision of effective literacy among pre-K-12 to plan for long term implementation of the vision among district leaders. The vision will then be shared with building leaders through coaching, walkthroughs, and professional learning, resulting in improved student literacy achievement. Major foci of the plan is text complexity, with four cycles of inquiry: 1) how can we see text complexity drive student learning? 2) how can we see text complexity drive within and across lessons? 3) How do teachers utilize curriculum questions and tasks to drive student learning? and 4) How do students demonstrate their understanding of complex text?

It was not immediately clear from the plan or follow-up interviews how the plan and its implementation through literacy coaches and content curriculum specialists will support ESS teachers and students with IEPs having achievement levels below expectations, or students with dyslexia who require the type of targeted interventions specified in BESE's June 2021 Bulletin 1903 and described above. It was also not clear whether or how professional learning will be differentiated to meet the needs of ESS educators teaching students participating in regular state assessments.

### Dyslexia Screening

Although not specifically addressed in the Tier I universal screening described above, in accordance with state law, EBRPSS annually screens students from kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for dyslexia and related disorders. The screening form includes a detailed and useful checklist of characteristics and at-risk behaviors for dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and social/emotional behaviors. Instructions are provided for school counselors for students in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades regarding follow-up action for students with dyslexia concerns. Actions include follow-up testing and screening, and consideration of tiered interventions/support, and/or referrals for 504/special education evaluations.

## School Master Plan for Discipline

The School Master Plan for Discipline contains the following provisions. It is not clear whether this master plan will continue as the MTSS plan is implemented.

- **Template.** A four-page form provides a template for each school to document its master plan based on the positive behavior support model. As part of the model, schools identify data-driven academic, career and technical, discipline/behavioral performance results in their school improvement plans (SIP). An interdisciplinary school-based leadership team is to meet regularly to review data and guide the process. Decisions are to be based on a data-management system that allows for graphical representation of discipline issues, and include specific information about student behavior and referrals, including but not limited to average referrals per day per month; referrals by problem behavior, referrals by location, time, student, and staff; student reports by month and year; and grade level referrals.
- **Suspension/Expulsion.** The leadership team is to review school policies/procedures for handling suspensions/expulsions for consistency with state requirements and consistent/fair execution and use of alternative interventions consistent with best theory and practice are used, including but not limited to counseling, conflict resolution, social/family responsibility, peer mediation, and stress/anger management. Consequences are to create reward/incentives for positive student/teacher behavior, and define consequences that are clear, reasonable, consistently enforced, and support maximum instructional time. Referrals to alternative education programs are made, as appropriate.
- **Behavioral Expectations.** The school plan identifies five (or less) clearly defined behavioral expectations that are posted in prominent places around the schools, are given to parents, and are known by all students and staff

## Behavior Screening

The ESS department shared a document to support annual universal behavior screenings (fall, winter, and spring). According to the form, homeroom or classroom teachers must rate all students who are assessed for a low risk (Tier I), moderate risk (Tier II), to high risk (Tier III). academic and vision/hearing and health screening. It is not clear whether this screening will continue and whether it is for all students or just for students with IEPs.

## Data Collection and Review

After the first round of benchmark assessments in November, principals participated in a data round table presentation and analysis. Schools were grouped by region with three to four schools participating for three-hour sessions. In addition, each school's student support team monthly analyzes discipline data to review disciplinary infractions by location, staff, time, student, and behavior

All data being collected from benchmark assessments, state testing, attendance, SEL pre-assessment and other data points are being uploaded into the Illuminate Educlimber platform to support review by various indicators.

## Professional Development

According to the academic office website, professional development activities occur throughout the school year. Specific events and activities are showcased bi-weekly in the department's official newsletter, GPSPD. The Superintendent's Leadership Institutes, Teacher Leader Learning meetings, as well as each core curriculum's professional development framework outline the dates of workshops throughout the year; additional dates are added based on need. Various login links connect to ELA and Math curriculum resources for grades K-5 and 6-12.<sup>15</sup>

EBRPSS uses the Frontline Education platform's professional growth component for professional learning opportunities and evaluation processes. The professional learning management module allows staff to access/register for learning opportunities; track their hours; and engage in the learning process. The module enables administrators and site catalog managers to create and manage learning activities for school sites and locations, such as approving PD requests, managing rosters, communicating with registered attendees, and marking attendance. Activities may be face-to-face, on-line, blended/extended; and collaborative learning (e.g., PLCs, book studies). The human resources department manages the platform. EBRPSS shared a PD feedback form for participants to rate their experience and document their takeaways, suggest future topics, and give suggestions/feedback to improve the PD experience.

Based on an Excel Frontline listing of PD offerings from October 2021 through February 2022, the PD activities are listed on separate tabs by region, for high schools, and virtual PD available for all schools. Each tab shows the activity date, audience, content area, title, description, time, and location. Regions 1, 2 and 5 list 38 PD activities while regions 3 and 4 show 37 activities. For virtual sessions, 80 sessions were listed. For the region and virtual sessions, four were identified for an ESS content area and none were identified for English learners.

In response to the Council team's request for information about EBRPSS' provision of training to support MTSS, the district provided a list of 11 virtual professional development sessions for December 2021 through May 2022 that pertain to PBIS. Each session is 30 minutes long and is recorded for individuals who miss a time or topic. After each recorded sessions, participants may stay on the call to get individualized assistance if desired.

Relevant information was also provided by the exceptional student services (ESS) department under the direction of the professional development director that pertains to Tier I instruction and supports for diverse students. This information is discussed below under Professional Development in Section IV.

## Focus Group Feedback

The transition from RTI to MTSS has been difficult for EBRPSS school personnel. One change that will help this transition is the move to more centralized leadership and direction. In the past, principals reportedly acted as individual chief executive officers with decentralized curriculum

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<sup>15</sup> <https://staff.EBRPSSschools.org/divisions/academics/professional-development/>

and control. Weekly meetings with the academic team have supported the review of and improvements for each curricular area, which had been viewed as the use of supplemental materials.

- **Curriculum Support.** There has been a more uniform rollout of curriculum with protocols, scope/sequence that continue to be revised, and pacing guides. Although, some believe that curriculum relates to supplementary materials. Reading and math coaches are being used to support schools.
- **Restorative Practices.** There is support for restorative practices and a desire for this activity to be maintained. This is important to teachers who feel defeated when they perceive there are no consequences for misbehavior. There are reports that there are students with behavioral issues in all classes, although elementary schools have found some traction with PBIS.
- **Reengagement Schools.** Alternative schools have been disbanded, and long-term reengagement schools are now available for students who have displayed behaviors resulting in a long-term suspension, expulsion, administrative transfer, or referral through the Reengagement Programs Office. Three schools have a reengagement focus with instruction aligned to the Louisiana Student Standards and services that target students' behavioral and social emotional needs. The goal is for students to learn the replacement behaviors they need to transition back to traditional school settings. The three schools are EBRPSS Readiness Elementary (grades K-5); EBRPSS Readiness Middle School (grades 6-8) and EBRPSS Readiness Superintendent's Academy (grades 9-12).
- **Understanding of MTSS.** There was some concern that school staff will be asked to develop an MTSS plan without sufficient knowledge about the framework. There was an expressed need to better understand the MTSS process and how it drives the work.
- **Role of Counselors.** Counselors will be relied upon to support MTSS at the school level, and some of their responsibilities are being transferred to others to support this function.
- **ESS Involvement.** There is concern that sufficient personnel from the ESS department have not been involved with the development of the MTSS framework. A literacy EL/ESS project manager coordinates with the two departments to support professional learning but it appears that this function is relatively new.
- **Literacy Focus.** School walkthroughs concentrate on literacy with questions focusing on how instruction supports students to navigate text. What is not clear is how such instruction is supported for students who are unable to read the text. There is a concern that more intensive interventions are needed for students reading far below their peers, and professional learning is needed around foundational literacy, especially at grades when this is no longer taught.
- **Dyslexia Identification Follow-Up.** No information was forthcoming regarding the district's instructional strategies for students identified as having dyslexia that are aligned with BESE's Bulletin 1903.

- **Training Needs.** General educators need additional training on the application of state standards and how to differentiate instruction. Typically, educators teach to the middle of students' achievement level and too many avoid built-in mechanisms to stretch instruction. This becomes more problematic when teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about core instruction. There is also a perception that teachers have not sufficiently progress monitored student learning. Information is needed about UDL as there was no to little awareness of this teaching/learning model. There is a continued need to include special education teachers/support staff in literacy and MTSS professional developments as it relates to general education curriculum, state alignment, and strategies for diverse learners.
- **Access to AP.** There is a desire to have more equitable student access to AP courses. However, there has been some resistance by families that believe this will dilute the quality of teaching/learning. There is also a move to have more effective pathways for future jobs and college, allowing students to obtain as many college credits as possible while still in high school.
- **Data Round Tables.** Some suggest that data round tables between principals and executive directors for school leadership should be revisited. There may be four or five discussions occurring at the same time across the district, which makes it difficult for central office personnel to be at each of the mee4tings to support the schools in attendance. There is a desire to look closer at subgroup data, and more involvement from department representatives who are available to talk to principals about the support they could offer.
- **Using MTSS to Support ESS Child Find.** The use of MTSS to progress monitor student achievement and positive behavior needs to be improved to better support the special education referral process. Currently each school has their own process for collecting and monitoring data. Timeliness and feedback to parents could also be improved.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to improve EBRPSS' implementation of first teaching and its system of tiered interventions for all students.

1. **Systemwide MTSS Framework, Implementation Plan, and Oversight.** Establish MTSS as the districtwide framework within which all work designed to improve student achievement and positive behavior/social emotional learning exists. As part of this process, work with the district's external partners, e.g., CASEL, to leverage ongoing initiatives. To support this endeavor, under the direction of the district's MTSS Leadership Team (see 1a below), develop a comprehensive guidance document (see 1b below) to guide the framework's implementation. In coordination with these activities, develop an implementation plan (see 1c below) so stakeholders will have a clear understanding of how the guidance will be communicated, implemented, and supported. Once completed, post the guidance and implementation plan prominently on the district's website, distribute it broadly, and initiate professional development and support for implementation. Use this activity to reinforce a shared sense of urgency among all stakeholders to improve educational outcomes for all

students.

The Council team recognizes that various aspects of these recommendations have begun. Our intent is to provide key areas for district review to determine the extent to which they are being implemented as expected. We strongly recommend that the district use a consultant who has experience developing and implementing MTSS in various urban school districts. Such a consultant could be used to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and reduce the time it would otherwise take to complete these action steps.

- a. **District and School-based Leadership MTSS Teams.** Ensure leadership teams are in place at the district and school levels to support MTSS planning and overseeing implementation activities once identified.
  - **District MTSS Leadership Team.** Ensure the individual who has oversight for the leadership team has the authority to direct the Team and ability to communicate with personnel leaders across office/department divisions. Have the district MTSS leadership team include representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups including those within and outside of the MTSS department, e.g., principals, regional EDs, central office personnel (literacy, curriculum, English learners, special education, 504, IT, etc.) Plan a two-day overview and monthly meetings with the MTSS leadership team to continue to develop common language and planning for necessary implementation resources. Have various advisory groups representing differing interests, such as SEAC, give feedback to the leadership team.
  - **School-Based Leadership Teams.** Based on the district's comprehensive implementation MTSS plan (Recommendation 1b below), have schools identify school-based leadership team (SBLT) participants at each site to be trained and work toward the systemic development of an implementation plan. The SBLT is responsible for developing school based MTSS planning and implementation. SBLTs will necessarily have defined responsibilities, such as learning/ applying/modeling the problem-solving process, providing professional learning and technical assistance opportunities for staff, monitoring implementation and needed support, conducting school-based data days and the like. Also, the SBLT will oversee grade level teams/professional learning communities (including the implementation of core Tier I instruction) and problem-solving student support team. These activities will be inclusive of all students, including English learners and students with IEPs and 504 plans, as well as support by the school's pupil appraisal team.
- b. **Comprehensive MTSS Guidance.** Using a user-friendly electronic platform, post all guidance necessary to support and implement the district's MTSS framework. Include all relevant state guidance on MTSS/RTI, BESE's Bulletin on dyslexia, and content information contained in the district's draft MTSS plan. Involve stakeholders across departments (e.g., literacy, curriculum, English learners, ESS, giftedness, technology, etc.) and school representatives to provide feedback on the guidance document's usability and clarity. Gather and review all guidance to consider their usefulness or need for revision and embed the pieces in the comprehensive guidance document. Establish a reasonable but doable short time frame for the document's completion.

- Use of MTSS for systemic and sustainable change.
  - High-quality, differentiated classroom instruction and evidenced-based academic and behavior interventions and supports aligned with student needs.
  - How support for academic achievement, positive behavior, and social emotional learning are embedded within MTSS, including literacy (and use of multi-sensory reading interventions) and other content areas.
  - Functioning of the SST to reinforce its differentiation from prior teams, e.g., SBLC, PBIS, SEL, etc.
  - Evidence-based universal screening (including dyslexia), benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring;<sup>16</sup>
  - Use of school-based leadership teams and problem-solving methodology.
  - Fidelity of implementation, including for students in AP classes to expand access to and appropriate receipt of rigorous instruction.
  - Professional learning, technical assistance, and collaboration.
  - Parent/family involvement in the MTSS process.
  - Use of MTSS/RTI to identify students in need of special education evaluations and to consider as part of the assessment process, including uniform processes for collecting and monitoring data, time frame expectations, and parent feedback and communication.
- c. **Implementation Plan.** Have the district MTSS leadership team gather information to evaluate its current operational infrastructure as it develops its MTSS framework and implementation plan, e.g., universal screeners, formative assessments, standard protocols for intervention/support, curricular materials, supplemental and intensive resources, data platforms, use of data, professional learning, budget allocations, etc. Modify these as needed to conform with the current MTSS framework. Embed universal design for learning (UDL) into the MTSS framework. As a part of the plan include benchmark and on-going district wide and school-based progress monitoring to support the evaluation of MTSS implementation. When finalized, post the MTSS implementation plan on the district's website along with information relevant links to district information/resources, and publicly available resources. Ensure that the district's Strategic Plan intentionally embeds and utilizes the MTSS framework in its goals and activities. Once the written guidance and implementation plan are finalized, review and modify as necessary school-based planning templates in place and a time frame for completing any revisions.
- d. **Map Resources and Analyze Gaps.** As part of the comprehensive planning process, assess current MTSS-related human and material resources currently available in and funded by the district and independently by schools. Conduct a data analysis of material resources

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<sup>16</sup> See the evaluation tool available from the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, retrieved from <https://mtss4success.org/blog/mtssrti-really-complicated-lets-get-back-basics>.



to evaluate the return on investment in terms of improved student outcomes. Have this activity include all materials, including screening tools, core materials, and tiered interventions for reading and math for all students not achieving as expected. As part of this process, determine whether any multi-sensory products with an Orton-Gillingham foundation are in use. Identify which have data to support an acceleration of student learning and those that are not. To promote use of evidence-based materials, have the district sponsor resources for schools to implement, and support training and implementation. Also, consider the current roles of school psychologists, social workers, and speech/language pathologists, and how they may be used to support any student in need, regardless of IEP or 504 status.

- e. **Literacy Plan.** Have the district leadership team review the literacy plan to ensure that the plan incorporates support to students who are struggling significantly with reading, including those with IEPs and/or dyslexia who have need for a multi-sensory approach to reading. Ensure that regional executive directors, ESS department personnel, and others are involved in planning, training, and implementation. Also, given the literacy plan's focus on reading/comprehending complex text, address how students currently unable to read the text will be included in and benefit from this instruction.
- f. **Professional Learning.** Based on the MTSS framework, implementation plan, and written expectations, develop a professional learning curriculum that is targeted to different audiences, e.g., ESS teachers, related-services personnel, paraprofessionals, parents, etc. Provide at least four to five days of training for school-based leadership teams for two consecutive years. Ground training in the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning.<sup>17</sup> Consider and budget for how access to training will be supported, e.g use of stipends, funds for substitute coverage, incentives for after-school and Saturday training, summer training, etc.

Ensure the following components in the district's MTSS implementation plan —

- **Cross-Functional Teams.** Cross-train individuals from different departments to ensure a common language and common understanding of MTSS that can be applied to district offices to intentional align and support the work of schools as they work toward implementation. Maximize their knowledge and skills in MTSS to provide direct support, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to principals and teachers.
- **Develop the Capacity for High-Quality Trainers.** Develop a plan to develop the capacity of internal staff to deliver data driven professional development and the critical components of MTSS. Ensure that all trainers are knowledgeable and experienced in data analysis, problem solving and effective professional development for adult learners.
- **Access to Differentiated Learning.** Ensure t professional learning is engaging and differentiated according to the audience's skills, experience, and need. Have

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<sup>17</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU>

- professional learning and technical assistance available to new personnel and those needing additional support.
- **Multiple Formats.** Use multiple formats (e.g., videos, webinars, and narrative text) and presentation approaches (e.g., school-based, small groups).
  - **Coaching/Modeling.** Use coaching and modeling to support teachers and other personnel who need assistance to meet the needs of their students.
  - **School Walk Throughs.** Establish a common differentiated electronic protocol for conducting instructional rounds and collecting data for classroom visits that captures use of the MTSS framework.
  - **Exemplary Implementation Models.** Provide a forum where schools can highlight and share best practices, lessons learned, victories and challenges in implementing MTSS for all students (e.g., gifted, ELLs, students with IEPs, students who are twice exceptional). Encourage staff to visit exemplary schools and support models for setting aside time for that to happen.
  - **District Website.** Develop and provide a well-informed and resourced interactive web page that includes links to other local and national sites. Highlight schools within the district and share stories of the impact of MTSS on student outcomes across multiple measures.
- g. Data Analysis and Reports.** Ensure key performance indicators across elementary, middle and high schools are established by student subgroups, data collection systems and analysis (e.g., custom reports) are designed to enable the superintendent, administrators, principals, teachers, pupil appraisal personnel, and speech/language pathologist personnel to review student growth, identify patterns, solve problems, and make informed decisions. Ensure such systems include and differentiate various subgroups of students, such as those with IEPs, 504 plans, etc.
- h. Monitoring and Accountability.** Ensure that the MTSS key performance indicators for academics and behavior (see Exhibit 1b) include indicators for various subgroups of students, e.g., ESS, English learners, 504, race/ethnicity, etc. Consider groups within these subgroups as appropriate so that higher performing students do not mask those in great need of assistance. Evaluate the effectiveness, fidelity, and results of MTSS implementation, and include the following in the assessment –
- **Baseline Data and Fidelity Assessments.** Ensure the district’s standard protocol for collecting and reviewing school-site baseline data includes multiple student groups, e.g., ESS, EL, race/ethnicity, and measures implementation fidelity. Consider the evaluation tools and protocols provided at no cost through federally funded websites.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Several tools are available for monitoring fidelity, such as Florida’s MTSS school level tool, retrieved at [http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/2014/nasp/StockslagerCastillo/NASP%202014\\_School%20Level%](http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/2014/nasp/StockslagerCastillo/NASP%202014_School%20Level%20Tool.pdf)

- **Data Checks.** Conduct at least three checks per year at the school level to facilitate the monitoring and impact of MTSS implementation and to support schools needing additional assistance. In addition, using data and reports associated with Recommendation 1g, continue the superintendent’s regular data conversations with administrators and principals on prioritized key performance indicators to discuss results, anomalies, support needed, follow-up activities, and outcomes. Ensure these discussions include student groups with large achievement gaps. To the extent possible, schedule data roundtables so central office personnel can attend and address issues beyond the control of principals and executive directors.
- **Timely Communication and Feedback.** Design feedback loops involving central office, school personnel, parents, and the community to inform the impact of current as well as future work. Use this process to provide regular and timely feedback to the district MTSS leadership team about barriers that are beyond the control of local schools or where schools require additional assistance.

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[20MTSS%20Instrument\\_Final.pdf](#); and tools available from the RTI Action Network, retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tier1/accurate-decision-making-within-a-multi-tier-system-of-supports-critical-areas-in-tier-1>.

## II. DISABILITY DEMOGRAPHICS

This section presents demographic data for EBRPSS students with IEPs.<sup>19</sup> When available, we compare district students with those in the state and at national levels and with other urban school districts across the country. In addition, data<sup>20</sup> are analyzed by grade, race/ethnicity, and English learner (EL) status. Finally, information on Section 504 is included. This information helps to determine the extent to which school practices produce outcomes that are like or different from the state and nation. Although different rates are not inherently problematic, they provide a basis for asking questions and considering follow-up action.

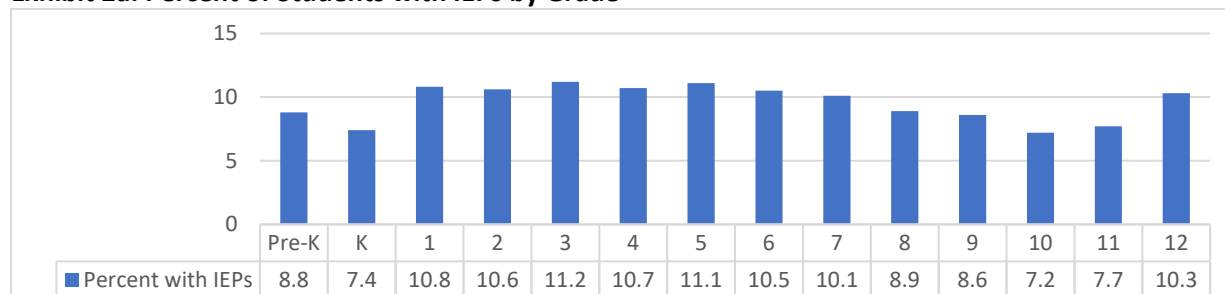
### Disability Prevalence Rates

EBRPSS enrolls 39,461 students in grades PK through 12. Of this number, 3,975 students (10.0 percent) have IEPs. The district’s IEP percentage figure is considerably lower than the nation’s 14.4 percent and the state’s 12.5 percent figures.<sup>21</sup>

### Percent of Students with IEPs by Grade

As shown in Exhibit 2a, the percentage of students with IEPs increase substantially from kindergarten (7.4 percent) to 1<sup>st</sup> grade (10.8 percent). The percentage increases again in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (to 11.2 percent) and begins to decrease in 5<sup>th</sup> grade (10.5 percent) and again in 8<sup>th</sup> grade through 11<sup>th</sup> grade, where it ranges from 8.9 percent to 7.2 percent. The larger 10.3 percent in 12<sup>th</sup> grade is due to students who remain in school to receive postsecondary transition services.

**Exhibit 2a. Percent of Students with IEPs by Grade**



### Students 3-21 Years of Age: Disability Rates by Area for District, State and Nation

Data in exhibit 2b show the percentages of students who are 3–21 years of age in the district, state, and nation by the six most common disabilities, which for EBRPSS comprises about 97 percent of all students with IEPs.<sup>22</sup> These disability areas are specific learning disability (SLD),

<sup>19</sup> Students with IEPs are also referred to as students with disabilities. These data are limited to students with a disability under IDEA and does not include students with Section 504 plans. Also, the data does not include students who are gifted in the category of disability.

<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all EBRPSS data are for the 2020-21 school year. The district’s data includes students in charter schools for which EBRPSS is the local educational agency.

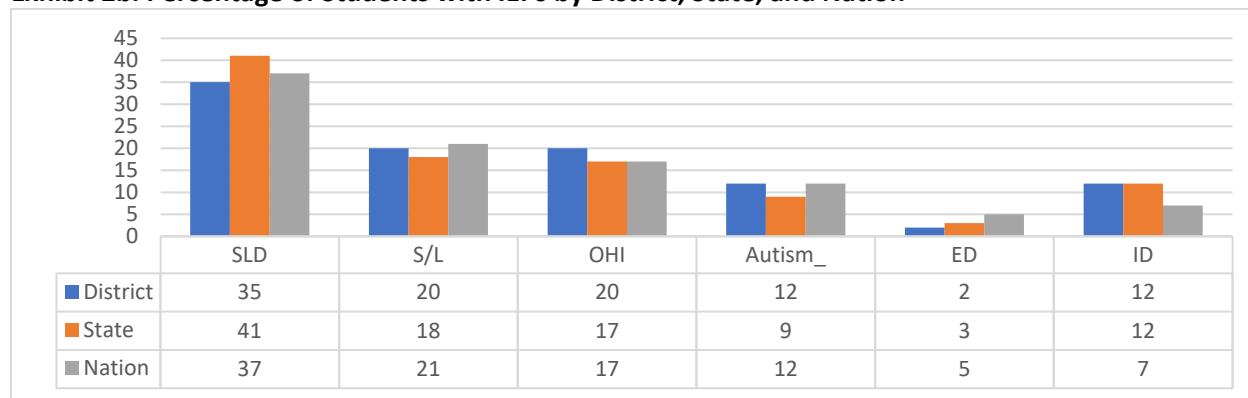
<sup>21</sup> State and national data is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s Digest of Education Statistics, Table 204.70, Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/d t20\\_204.70.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/d t20_204.70.asp)

<sup>22</sup> National and state data are based on the U.S. Department of Education’s IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environment database for 2019-20 is used because the 2020-21 data did not include figures for

speech/language impairment (S/L), other health impairments (OHI), autism, emotional disturbance (ED), and intellectual disability (ID). Similarities and differences are described below.

- **EBRPSS Lower SLD Rate.** The district’s SLD rate of 35 percent is much lower than the state’s 41 percent and is lower than the nation’s 37 percent.
- **EBRPSS Higher OHI Rates.** The district’s OHI rate of 20 percent is higher than both state and national rates (17 percent each).
- **EBRPSS Higher Rates than State or National Rate.** The district’s rates for S/L, autism, and ID are higher than state or national rates, but S/L is lower than the national rate. District and national rates for autism and ID rates are the same.
  - **S/L.** The district’s 20 percent rate is lower than the nation’s (21 percent) but higher than the state’s (18 percent).
  - **Autism.** The district and national rates are both 12 percent, which is higher than the state rate of 9 percent.
  - **ID.** The district and state are both at 12 percent, which is higher than the nation’s 7 percent rate.

**Exhibit 2b. Percentage of Students with IEPs by District, State, and Nation**



### Change in Disability Numbers by Grade for SLD, S/L, and ID

When reviewing the number of students by primary disability and grade, the patterns demonstrated for students with SLD, S/L and ID merit discussion. As shown in Exhibit 2c, as the numbers of students with S/L fall after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as SLD numbers increase in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Furthermore, the number of students with an ID increases at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

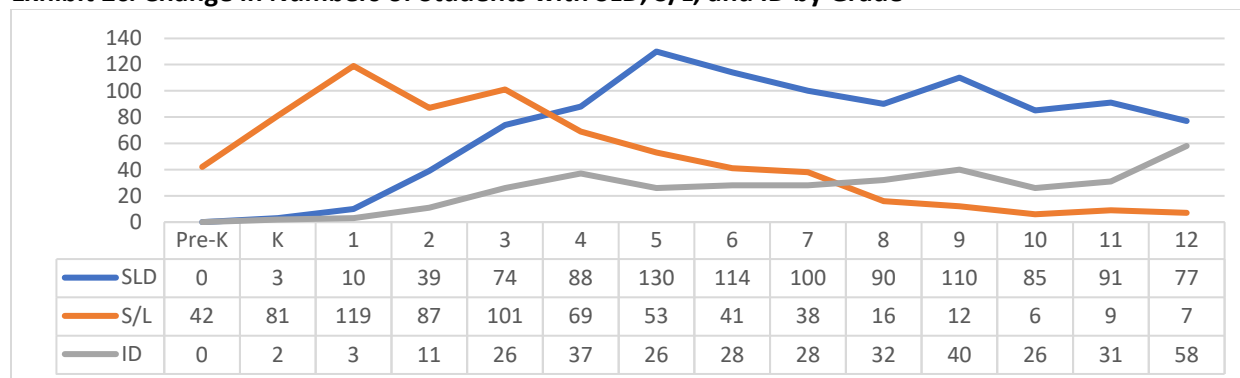
- **SLD.** The number of students with a specific learning disability increases steadily from kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade (3 to 88) and jumps to 130 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Without any obvious reason, these numbers decrease in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to a low of 77 in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This sudden increase at 5<sup>th</sup> grade raises a concern about whether students eligible for specially designed instruction,

Louisiana. Retrieved from <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environ-table3/resources?resource=8e497707-3370-40be-a56a-daa1854959a5> (for 3-5 year old) and <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environ-table2/resources?resource=ba7c6dd6-e313-4a4c-8c42-6c13d9d3c7e3> (for 6-21 year old)

typically for reading, could be identified at earlier grades to address their learning needs.

- **ID.** Only 16 students are identified for an intellectual disability from PreK to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, while 26 students are present in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. the number steadily increases to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (40) when it decreases in 11<sup>th</sup> grade to 31. Twelfth grade shows the highest number of 58, which accounts for students remaining in school to receive postsecondary transition services. This pattern also raises the question about whether students could be identified at a younger age.
- **S/L.** The number of students with a speech/language impairment increases from pre-kindergarten (42) to 1<sup>st</sup> grade (119), drops in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (87) before increasing again in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (101). Onward, the numbers decrease each year to 8<sup>th</sup> grade (16) and then to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (7). This pattern raises the question about whether students are identified with S/L at the lower grades and provided with language services rather than with disabilities that could be associated with additional academic support.

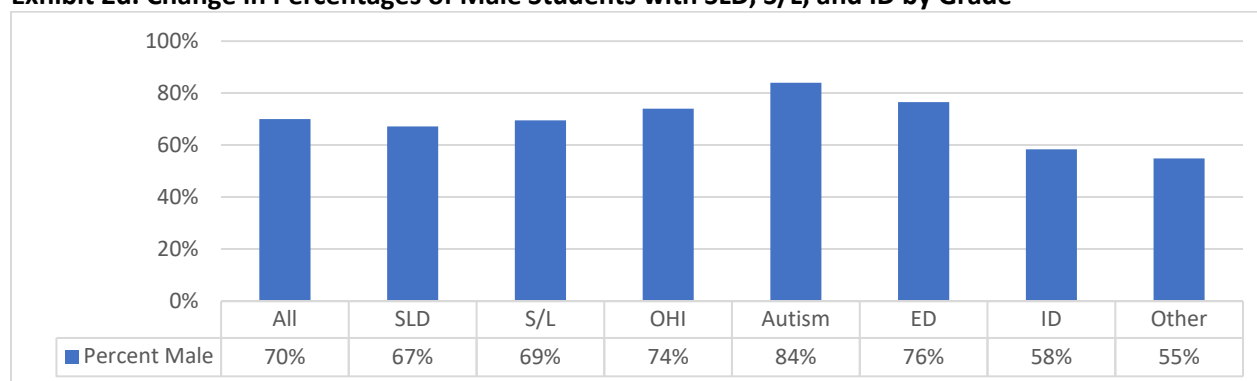
**Exhibit 2c. Change in Numbers of Students with SLD, S/L, and ID by Grade**



### Males and Disability

Although 50 percent of all district students are male, they comprise 70 percent of all students receiving special education. The male percentage is higher for autism (84 percent), ED (76 percent), and OHI (74 percent) and lower for ID (58 percent). (See Exhibit 2d.)

**Exhibit 2d. Change in Percentages of Male Students with SLD, S/L, and ID by Grade**

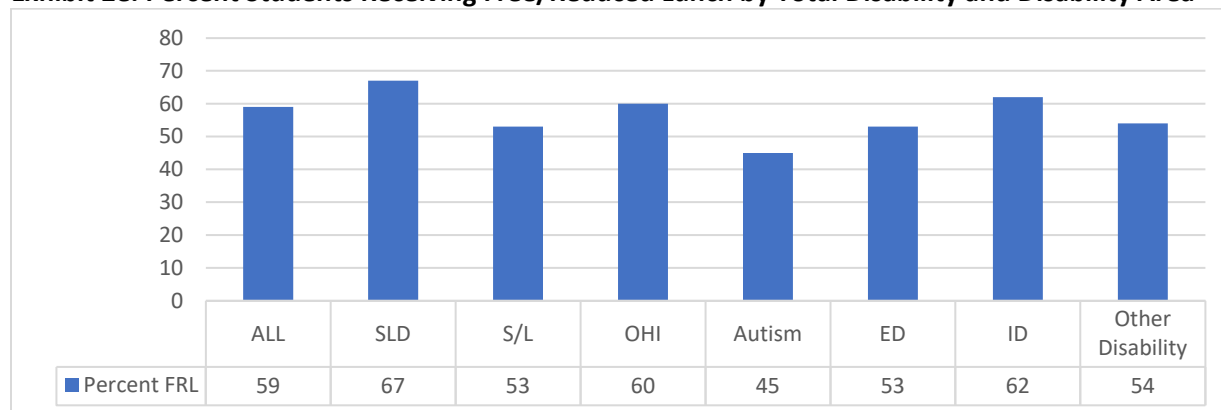


### Free/Reduced Lunch Program by Disability Area

Overall, 58 percent of district students receiving free/reduced lunch (FRL) have an IEP. This figure increases considerably for students with SLD (67 percent). Lower percentages are found for

autism (45 percent), S/L and ED (each at 53 percent), and other disabilities (54 percent). (See Exhibit 2e.) Note: 134 students do not have an FRL status identified, which if entered could change these results.

**Exhibit 2e. Percent Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch by Total Disability and Disability Area**



### Giftedness and Disability

District data reported zero students with IEPs who are identified as being gifted. For students with Section 504 plans, 6.1 percent have this status.

### Section 504 Disability

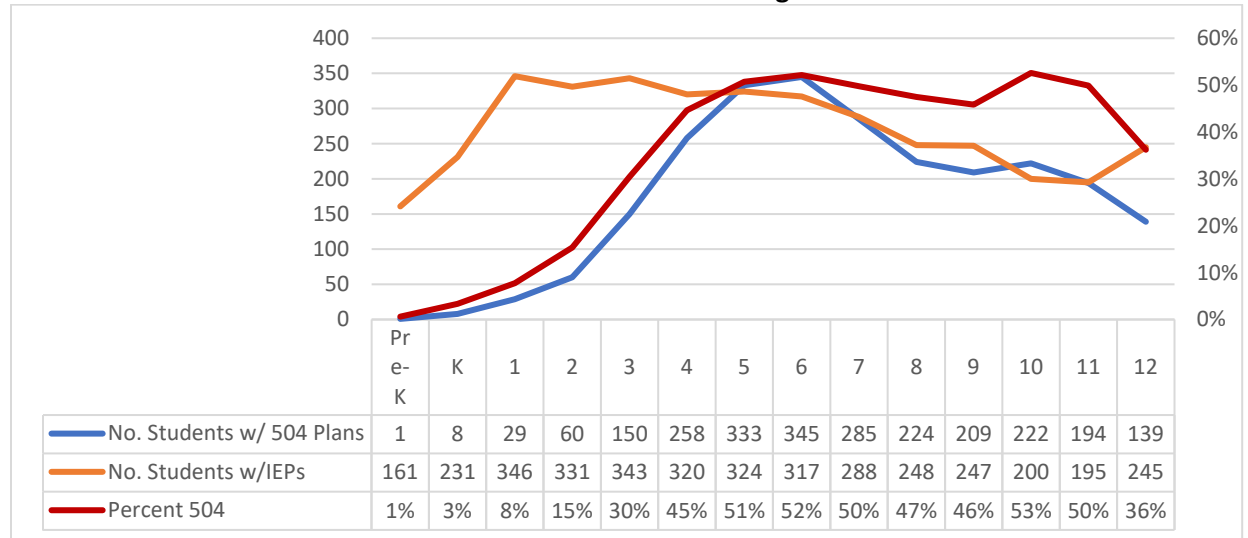
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504 or 504) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. Section 504 eligible students have a physical or mental impairment that substantially impacts a major life activity. These students are not required to need special education instruction to meet eligibility requirements. For students eligible only under Section 504 (i.e., not eligible under IDEA), Section 504 regulations define an appropriate education to be the provision of regular education and related services that are designed to meet the individual educational needs of a student as adequately as the needs of a nondisabled students are met. Related aids also include accommodations, which are adjustments that enable the student to learn and demonstrate what he or she knows. Generally, accommodations do not affect course content or curriculum. Examples include sign language interpreters in classrooms, materials in alternate formats, testing accommodations, etc.

Overall, 6.2 percent of all district students have a Section 504 plan. Although this figure is higher than districts the team has visited in the past, which makes it appear that district personnel are taking this issue and the identification of students seriously. As shown in Exhibit 2f, a much larger number of students in PreK through 4<sup>th</sup> grade have IEPs than 504 plans.<sup>23</sup> This pattern reverses in 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades where more have 504 plans than IEPs. The proportion is the same in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and then the two groups exchange the majority in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades and again in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They are even again in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. In 12<sup>th</sup> grade, more students have IEPs than 504 plans

<sup>23</sup> Grade data was not available for 179 students with a Section 504 plan.

most likely due to the number of students with IEPs who stay in school for postsecondary transition services.

**Exhibit 2f. Number of 504 Plans and IEPs and of these Percentage of Students with 504 Plans**



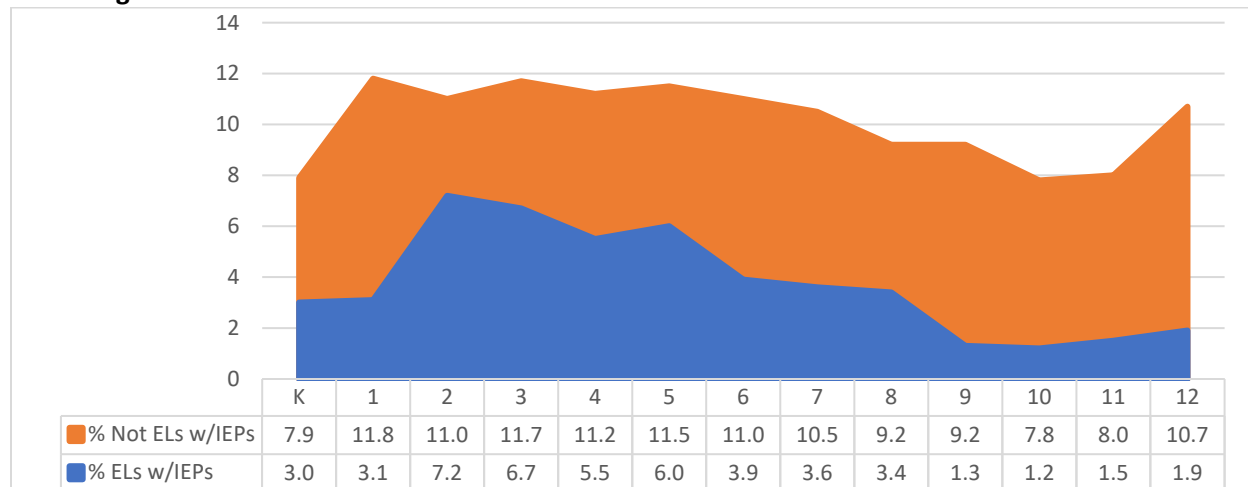
### English Learners and Disability

This subsection addresses English learners (EL) with disabilities, which is not an indicator monitored by the state or US Department of Education. First, district data is addressed, and then information from the ESS Handbook and focus groups about the assessment of ELs is summarized. Overall, while 8.80 percent of EBRPSS students are ELs only 4.00 percent of ELs have IEPs. Students who are not English learners are 3.44 times more likely than ELs to have an IEP.

### ELs and Not ELs with IEPs by Grade

Exhibit 2g shows the large differences in the proportion of students with IEPs for ELs and nonEL students by grade. The percentage is closest together in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (3.8 percentage point difference) and farthest apart in 12<sup>th</sup> grade (8.8 percentage point difference).

**Exhibit 2g. Percent of ELs and Not ELs with IEPs**

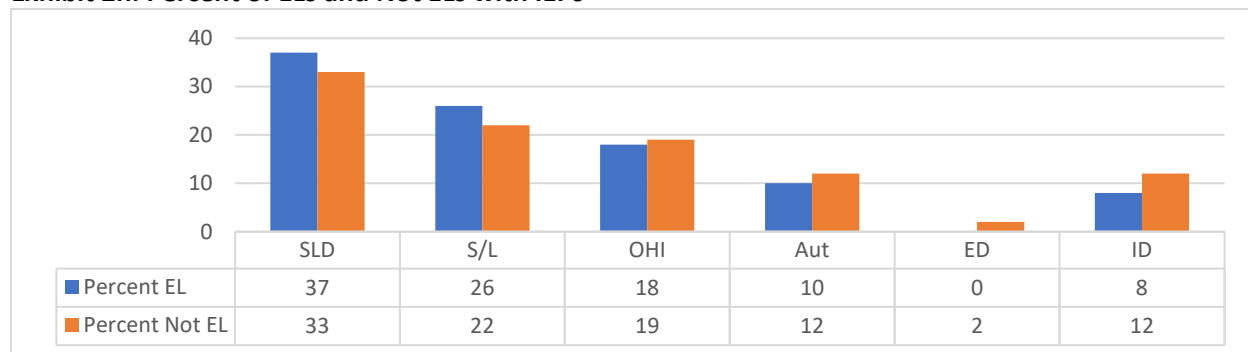




### ELs and Not ELs with IEPs by Disability Area

Comparing EL and not EL students with IEPs by disability area, EL rates were higher in the areas of SLD (37 percent to 33 percent) and S/L (26 percent to 22 percent). (See Exhibit 2h.) The EL rate was slightly lower for OHI (18 percent to 19 percent) and more so for ID (8 percent and 12 percent) and autism (10 percent). Zero ELs were identified for ED, compared to 2 percent of not ELs. Note: 32 ELs with IEPs had no disability area identified.

**Exhibit 2h. Percent of ELs and Not ELs with IEPs**



### ESS Handbook

The ESS Handbook at page 115-116 includes an excellent section for the assessment and evaluation of English learners. The section states –

Multidisciplinary teams are a requirement of special education evaluations. Collaboration among EL Specialists, special education, pupil appraisal, and general education personnel is critical to the process of appropriate identification and determination of support. ...

When identifying ELs with a disability, it is critical to determine whether the difficulties are due to the normative process of second language acquisition, are due to multicultural differences, or are due to a disability.

- ELs have many levels of language proficiency, which creates a spectrum of linguistic and acculturation levels that can directly relate to their achievement and cognitive assessment.
- It is also important to consider that ELs are acquiring academic knowledge at the same time that they are acquiring English language skills.
- Multidisciplinary teams should take a strengths-based approach to assessment, and should consider language development, language acquisition, and language dominance into account as explanatory factors.
- Examiners must have been trained in the processes and materials necessary for the assessment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ideally, examiners would be fluent and literate in the languages spoken by the student and knowledgeable of the student’s culture, although this may not

always be possible in EBR with only monolingual English-speaking assessment staff. The assessment of ELs or bilingual students does not have to be conducted by a bilingual examiner as long as appropriate procedures are followed.

### Focus Group Participants

According to focus group participants, only one person (a speech/language pathologist) who is involved in the evaluation of students for special education need is bilingual in English and Spanish. Focus group participants expressed concern about the very few individuals who are bilingual and ability to carry out the above ESS Handbook expectations, especially evaluation and eligibility team meetings that include individuals knowledgeable about a student's language and culture, such as ESL teachers or other EL department personnel.

Focus group participants shared having difficulty differentiating a student's language acquisition and disability. For a student who is an English learner undergoing an evaluation, unless the bilingual speech/language pathologist is available and appropriate for the assessments identified for the student, a translator is used. For example, the translator will be advised how to administer a Woodcock Johnson assessment. These concerns may help to explain the disproportionately low presence of ELs with disabilities.

### Disability Incidence by Race/Ethnicity

This subsection addresses the issue of racial/ethnic disproportionality, which is monitored by the state and U.S. Department of Education (ED) in two ways. First, under the federally required state performance plans (SPPs), two indicators address this issue. Indicator 9 concerns all students with IEPs and Indicator 10 concerns the six most common disability areas (SLD, S/L, autism, OHI, ED and ID). LDOE defines this indicator as a risk ratio of 2.0 for any racial/ethnic group in which there are at least 25 students receiving special education.<sup>24</sup> Identified districts then complete a Disproportionality Review Rubric to identify practices, policies, and procedures that may lead to inappropriate identification of students for special education and related services. No Louisiana school districts were found to have any disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification.

Second, ED also requires a significant disproportionality measure that also applies to all students with IEPs and to each of the same six most common disability areas. For this measure, Louisiana uses a 3.0 risk ratio for each of three years.<sup>25</sup> EBRPSS risk ratios were below the state's threshold of significant disproportionality for identification of disability from 2018-19 through 2020-21. As discussed in Section III further below, the federal significant disproportionality measure is also applied to students educated in separate settings and to five disciplinary removal categories.

### Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity

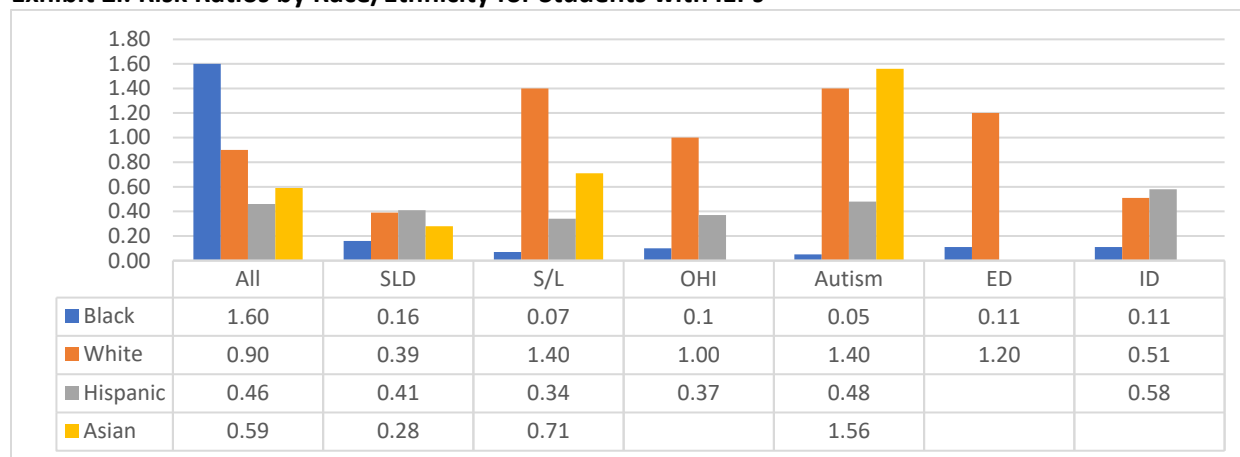
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<sup>24</sup> Retrieved from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters> under Louisiana for 2019-20.

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/students-with-disabilities/significant-disproportionality-ceis-report.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

As shown by Exhibit 2i, no risk ratio approached the threshold of “2.” The largest RR was for all students, with a 1.60 RR for black students, followed by 1.56 for Asian students with autism and 1.40 for white students with S/L and with autism.

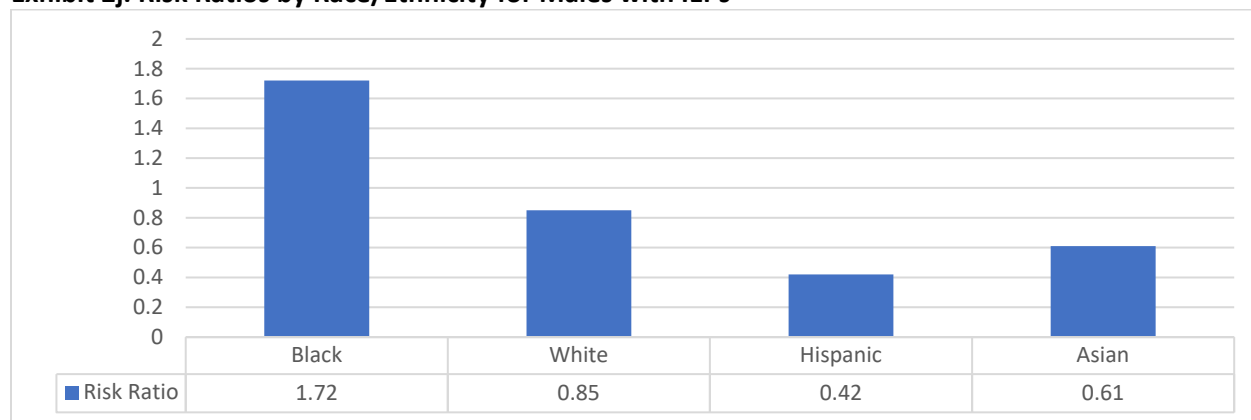
**Exhibit 2i. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Students with IEPs**



**Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Males with IEPs**

The Council team also calculated risk ratios for males with IEPs to determine if there were any differences by race/ethnicity. As shown in Exhibit 2j, there was little association in this area. The highest RR was for black males (1.72) when compared to males of all other racial/ethnic groups. While this figure is substantially below the threshold the state has set for either the SPP (RR of 2) or significant disproportionality (RR of 3) this risk ratio merits monitoring when all students have data entered for race/ethnicity.

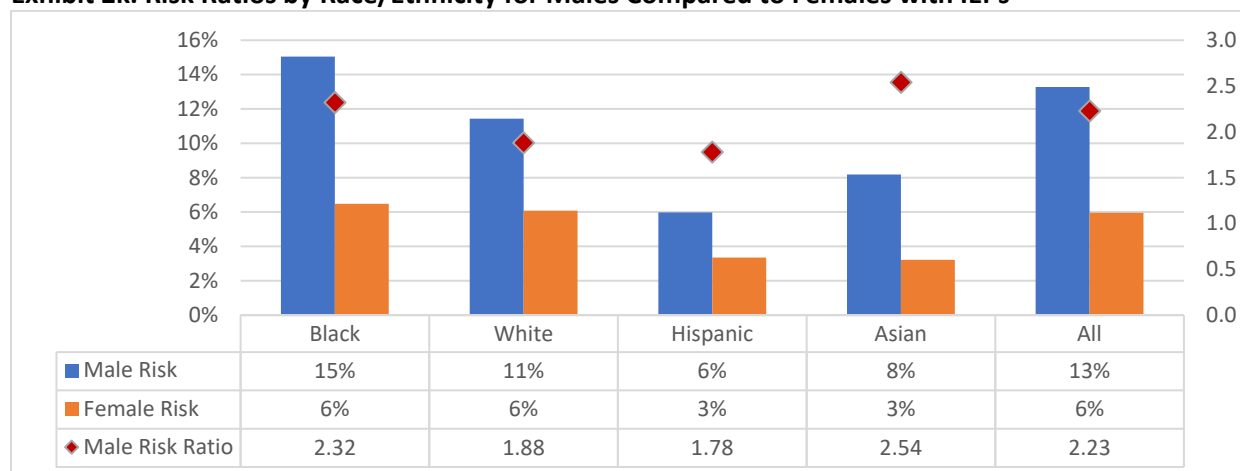
**Exhibit 2j. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Males with IEPs**



**Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Males Compared to Females with IEPs**

When comparing disability data by sex, differences appear for all students with IEPs and by race/ethnicity. Overall, the district enrollment is comprised of 50 percent males and 50 percent females. For all students with IEPs, males are 2.23 times more likely than females to receive special education. This RR is higher for Asian and black males who are a respective 2.54 and 2.32 times more likely to be identified compared to females of the same race/ethnicity. Note that data is missing for 179 students. With this data, these conclusions could change. (See Exhibit 2k.)

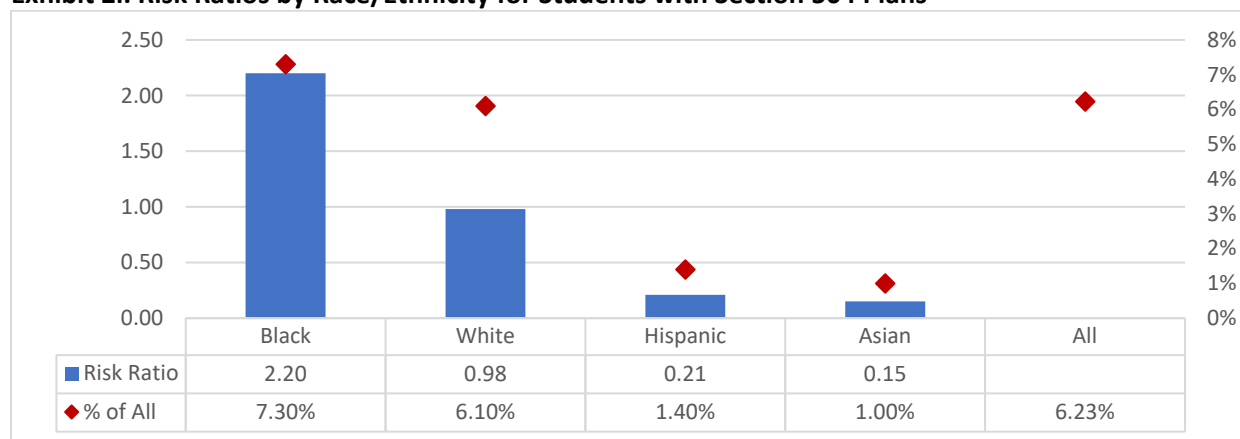
**Exhibit 2k. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Males Compared to Females with IEPs**



**Section 504 by Race/Ethnicity**

Exhibit 2l shows the percentage of all students with Section 504 plans by race/ethnicity and risk ratios for each group of students. Overall, 6.23 percent of students have a Section 504 plan. The figure is different by racial/ethnicity. Black and white students have higher percentages (7.30 percent and 6.10 percent, respectively), and Hispanic and Asian students have lower percentages (1.40 percent and 1.00 percent, respectively). When using a risk ratio measure, black students were 2.20 times more likely than other students to have a Section 504 plan. White, Hispanic and Asian students had low risk ratios (0.98, 0.21, and 0.15, respectively). Data were not calculated for student groups with an “n” below 10. Note: 179 students with Section 504 plans did not have a race/ethnicity identified and these ratios could change with this data is entered.

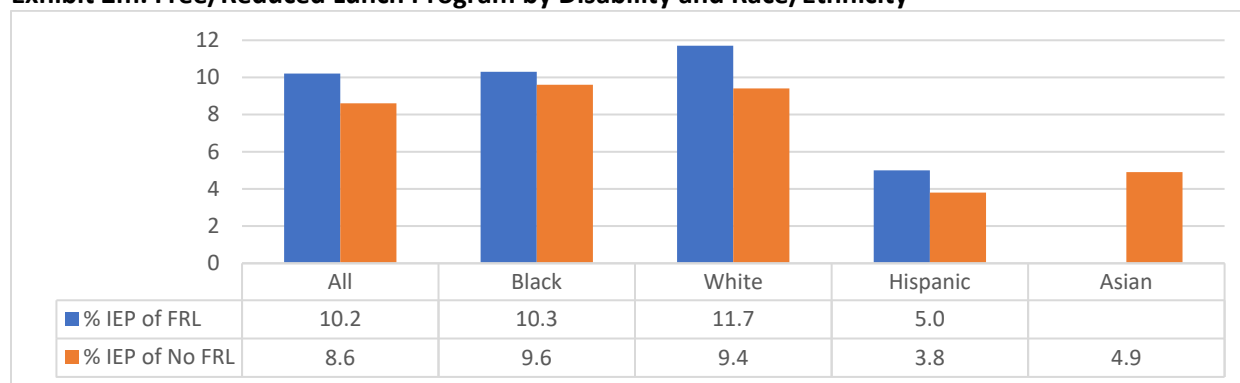
**Exhibit 2l. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity for Students with Section 504 Plans**



**Free/Reduced Lunch Program by Disability and Race/Ethnicity**

Overall, 10.2 percent of all students with IEPs are enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program (FRLP), compared to 8.6 percent of students with IEPs who are not enrolled in the program. For each race/ethnicity with an “n” for IEPs above 10, each racial/ethnic group of students with IEPs comprise a larger percentage of FRLP than their counterparts who are not in the program. (See Exhibit 2m.)

**Exhibit 2m. Free/Reduced Lunch Program by Disability and Race/Ethnicity**



**Exiting Special Education to General Education and Initial Evaluations by Disability**

In 2019-20, 16 percent of Louisiana and 8.1 percent of U.S. students 14 through 21 exited special education by transferring to general education.<sup>26</sup> The district did not provide data to the Council team for this issue. Also, the district did not provide data for initial evaluations that were completed, which resulted in a disability and need for special education by disability.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are offered to address EBRPSS’ demographic patterns among students with disabilities and its identification of students suspected of needing special education/related services.

**2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility.** Improve consistency and appropriateness of referrals, assessments, and eligibility decisions for special education.

**a. Data Review.** With a multidisciplinary team of individuals in and outside the ESS department, review Exhibits 2a through 2m and their associated analysis (along with other relevant data), focusing on the outlier data. For these and any others of concern/interest, develop hypothesis for the data pattern and develop a plan for follow-up actions.

- **Students with IEPs.** Relatively small percentage of students with IEPs compared to the state and nation (10.0 percent, 12.5 percent, and 14.4 percent, respectively.)
- **IEPs by Grade.** Large percentage increase (from K to 1<sup>st</sup>) and decrease (from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>) of students with IEPs by grade. (Exhibit 2a)
- **IEPs by District, State and Nation.** District disability rates are significantly higher (autism) or lower (SLD) than the state or nation. (Exhibit 2b)

<sup>26</sup> Source retrieved from <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-exiting-table-1/resources>.

- **Disability by Grade.** Sudden 5<sup>th</sup> grade increase of students with SLD, very small percentage of students with ID, and interaction between speech/language identification and SLD at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. (Exhibit 2c)
- **Males by Disability.** Very high percentages of males to females, especially for autism, ED, and OHI. (Exhibit 2d).
- **Free/Reduced Lunch by Disability.** Higher rates of students with free/reduced lunch for SLD, ID, and OHI. (Exhibit 2e)
- **Disability and Giftedness.** Zero students with IEPs reported as gifted. This circumstance is due either to a data input or practice issue.
- **English Learners with IEPs.** Relatively low percentage of EL students with IEPs. (Exhibit 2g) ESS Procedural Handbook that refers to SBLC referral for EL students for various reasons but does not mention behavior.
- **EL and Not EL Rates with IEPs.** Higher percentage of ELs to non-ELs with SLD and lower percentage of ELs with ID. (Exhibit 2h) To what extent are ESS Handbook expectations for assessment of ELs (page 115-116) being implemented with fidelity? What impact does the lack of bilingual pupil personnel appraisers and single speech/language pathologist have on child find activities and evaluation of English learners for special education?
- **Males with IEPs by Race/Ethnicity.** Black males compared to other males are most likely to have an IEP (1.72). Although not reaching the threshold of disproportionality, this is an area worthy of attention. (Exhibit 2j)
- **Males and Females with IEPs by Race/Ethnicity.** Black males are 2.32 times more likely than black females and Asian males are 2.54 times more likely than Asian females to have an IEP. (Exhibit 2k)
- **EL/Not ELs by Disability.** Higher likelihood of Asian and black males, and males in general to have an IEP. (Exhibit 2k)
- **504 by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher likelihood (2.20 risk ratio) of black students compared to other students to have a Section 504 plan. (Exhibit 2l)

Note: The district did not provide data to the Council team for students exiting special education to general education; and percent of students with completed evaluations found eligible for special education and primary disabilities identified. In addition to establishing benchmarks, these data could suggest need for additional monitoring and/or actions.

- b. Written Expectations.** For any area that the multi-disciplinary team identifies as problematic, review current processes for referral, assessment and eligibility and amend them to provide more written guidance. Ensure that the ESS Handbook incorporates the additional guidance.

- c. **Differentiated Professional Learning.** Plan for and provide to all relevant district stakeholders the professional learning they need to implement follow-up action planning taken in response to the above recommendations. As part of this process, have ESS and EL department personnel collaborate to address the referral and assessment needs of EL students. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1f.)
- d. **Data Analysis and Reports.** Develop user-friendly summary reports for the district's leadership showing data like those in this report, and others as appropriate. As part of this process, address data not provided to the Council team and the many students throughout the above data analysis that were missing, e.g., 32 ELs with IEPs had no disability identified, 134 students with disabilities identified had no race/ethnic status identified. District personnel who submitted data to the Council are good resources for understanding this issue. The absence of this data makes the Council's analysis incomplete, and results could change significantly with the inclusion of missing data. Investigate the district's electronic data collection system for possible edits that would require the entry of all required data fields. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1g.)
- **Risk Ratios.** To the extent possible and when appropriate, report data disparities by indicators using a risk ratio rather than only percentage comparisons.
  - **Progress Monitoring.** Review and ensure the district's school-based data collection and reporting system includes the monitoring of progress for students with disabilities, both academically and behaviorally. Ensure that benchmark and progress-monitoring data for students taking alternate assessments are included in light of their differing curricular needs.
- e. **Monitoring and Accountability.** Develop a process for ongoing monitoring of expected referral, evaluation, and eligibility practices. Rather than using a traditional record-review model, review files with school-based personnel so they are aware of issues and problems and will better understand the need for follow-up action. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1h.)

### III. ACHIEVEMENT, SUSPENSION, ABSENTEEISM, AND EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS OUTCOMES

For more than a decade, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has relied on 14 performance and compliance indicators that every state educational agency (SEAs) uses to establish targets and collect and report outcome data. Before that, ED issued local and state Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) determinations based on compliance outcomes alone. This compliance focus changed seven years ago when ED's Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) announced its vision for results-driven accountability (RDA), which is primarily focused on improving outcomes for students with disabilities.<sup>27</sup>

Under RDA, IDEA determinations now include the following:

- Statewide reading and math assessment participation rates (4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades).
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) participation rates and percentage of basic/above scores (4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades).
- Graduation and dropout rates.

In addition, Louisiana's state performance plan includes the following areas.

- Participation and performance on statewide assessments in reading and math.
- Significant discrepancies in suspension/expulsion rates of more than 10 days.
- Percent of young children and students educated in different educational environments.
- Outcomes for young children.<sup>28</sup>

The information below focuses on district results in the above areas along with absenteeism.

#### Young Children Achievement Outcomes

One state performance plan (SPP) indicator involves the achievement of young children with disabilities between three and five years of age. The indicator has three components: 1) appropriate behavior; 2) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; and 3) positive social/emotional skills. For each component, calculations are made of the percentage of children in two areas:

- **Substantially Increased Skills.** Children who entered an early-childhood (EC) program below developmental expectation for their age but who have substantially increased developmentally by age six when they exit a program with substantially increased skills.
- **Functioned Within Age Expectations.** Children functioning within expectations by age six or who attained those expectations by the time they exit the EC program.

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<sup>27</sup>April 5, 2012, RDA Summary, U.S. Department of Education at [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/osep/rda-summary.doc](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/osep/rda-summary.doc)

<sup>28</sup> Additional SPP indicators addressing disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic groups of students with IEPs and in six disability categories are addressed in Section II of this report. Indicators concerning transition outcomes are addressed in Section IV, below.



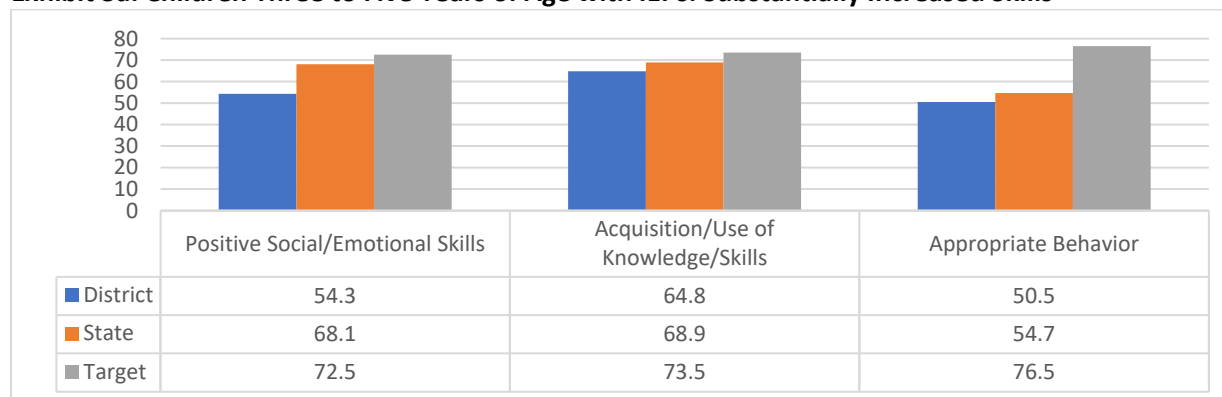
Based on the state’s latest 2019-20 SPP profile for the district, as shown in the two figures below EBRPSS had rates below the state and SPP targets in all six areas. When comparing the district to state and SPP target rates, figures were closest together for substantial increase of skills in acquisition/use of knowledge/skills (4.1 and 8.7 points differences, respectively) and farthest apart for functioning within age expectations for positive social/emotional skills (14.5-point difference with state rate) and for appropriate behavior (51.9-point difference with SPP target).

### Substantially Increased Skills

Data in Exhibit 3a show rates of EBRPSS children who entered EC programs below developmental expectations for their age but who increased developmentally by age six when they exited the program. The district scored below state rates and SPP targets in all three areas.

- **Positive Social/Emotional Skills.** 54.3 percent met standards, which was 13.8 percentage points below the state rate and 18.2 points below the SPP minimum target.
- **Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills.** 64.8 percent met standards, which was 4.1 percentage points below the state rate and 8.7 points below the SPP minimum target.
- **Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs.** 50.5 percent met standards, which was 4.2 percentage points below the state rate 26.0 points below the SPP minimum target.

**Exhibit 3a. Children Three to Five Years of Age with IEPs: Substantially Increased Skills**

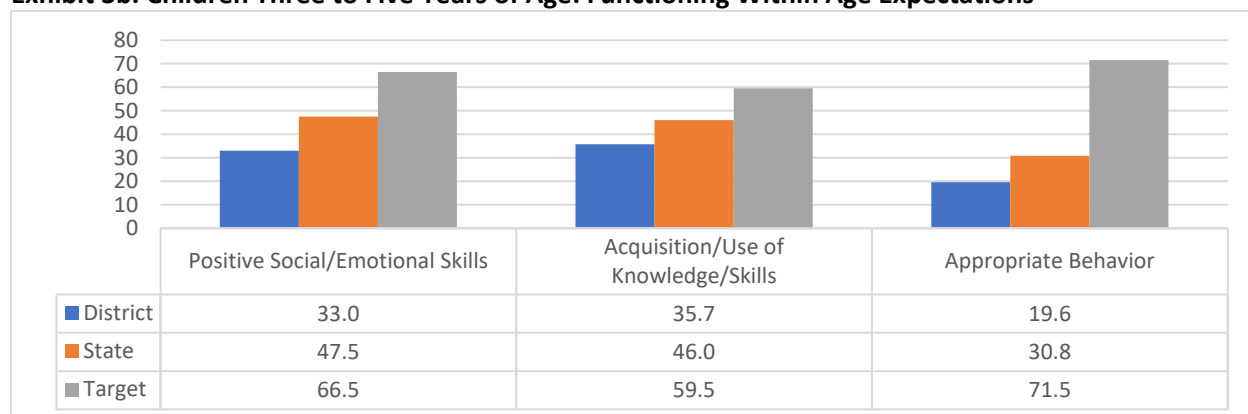


### Functioning Within Age Expectations

Data in exhibit 3b show rates of EBRPSS children functioning at age-level expectations by six years of age or who met those expectations by the time they exited EC. District children substantially exceeded the state target for appropriate behavior, met the target for acquisition/use of knowledge/skills, but missed it for social/emotional skills. (See Exhibit 3b.)

- **Positive Social/Emotional Skills.** 33.0 percent met standards, which was 14.5 percentage points below the state rate and 33.5 points below the SPP target.
- **Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills.** 35.7 percent met standards, which was 10.3 percentage points below the state rate and 23.8 points below the SPP target.
- **Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs.** 19.6 percent met standards, which was 11.2 percentage points below the state rate and 51.9 points below the SPP target.

**Exhibit 3b. Children Three to Five Years of Age: Functioning Within Age Expectations**



### School-Aged Student Achievement

Beginning in 2015, the U.S. Department of Education developed an evaluation system for states to use based on the results driven accountability framework described earlier. Two matrices were used for this purpose, with 50 percent of the ratings based on results and 50 percent based on compliance.<sup>29</sup> The results component is calculated based on three indicators, two of which pertain to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) outcomes, which will not apply to EBRPPS. The third indicator pertains to fourth/eighth graders participating in regular statewide reading and math assessments.

### Statewide Assessments

The Louisiana state assessment system uses the Louisiana Educational Assessment for students in grades 3 through 8. Students in high school take the LEAP 2025, end of course exams (EOC), or the LEAP Connect and LAA1 assessment. Students in Grade 11 also take the College and Career Readiness Assessments (ACT). Exhibits 3g-i below show percentages of students with IEPs who met/exceeded standards on reading/math assessments between 2015-16 and 2018-19. Also shown are 2017-18 percentages by grade, compared to corresponding SPP targets.

### District and State 2018-19 Proficiency Rates (State Performance Profile - SPP)

The 2018-19 SPP has the latest English language arts (ELA) and math rates for the district and state, compared to SPP targets. These figures show percentages of students with/without IEPs who are at or above basic (with/without accommodations), alternate assessment against modified standards, and alternate assessment against alternate standards (grades 3-10). Proficient is basic or above for statewide assessments and meets standards/above for LEAP Connect/LAA 1.

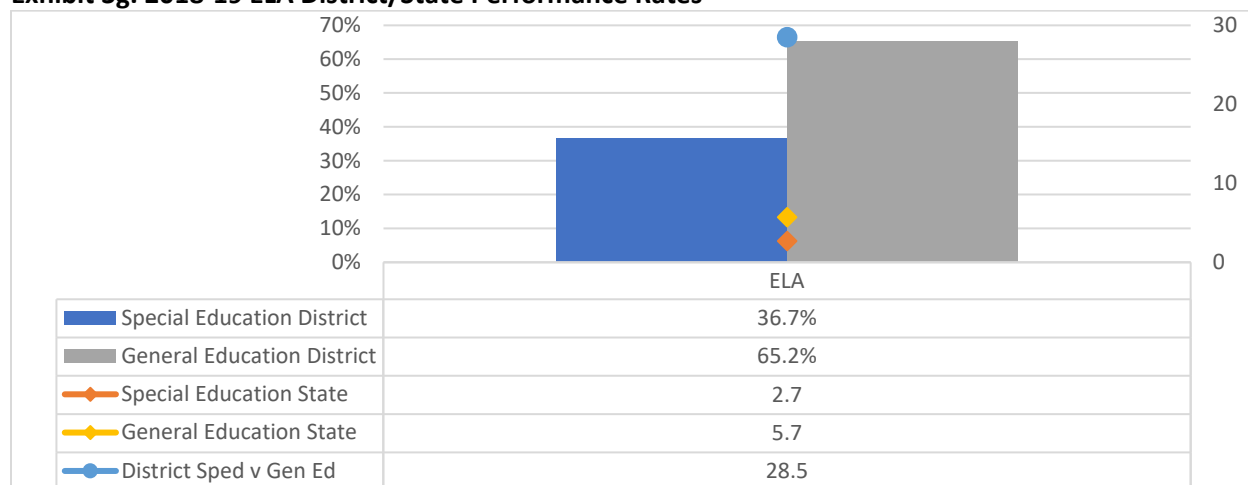
### 2018-19 ELA/Math District and State Rates for Students with/without IEPs

As shown in Exhibit 3g, 36.7 percent of students with IEPs were at or above basic compared to 65.2 percent of students without IEPs (28.5 percentage point difference). The district’s rate was

<sup>29</sup> For a full explanation of ED’s methodology, see How the Department Made Determinations under Section 616(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2015: Part B <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2015/2015-part-b-how-determinations-made.pdf>

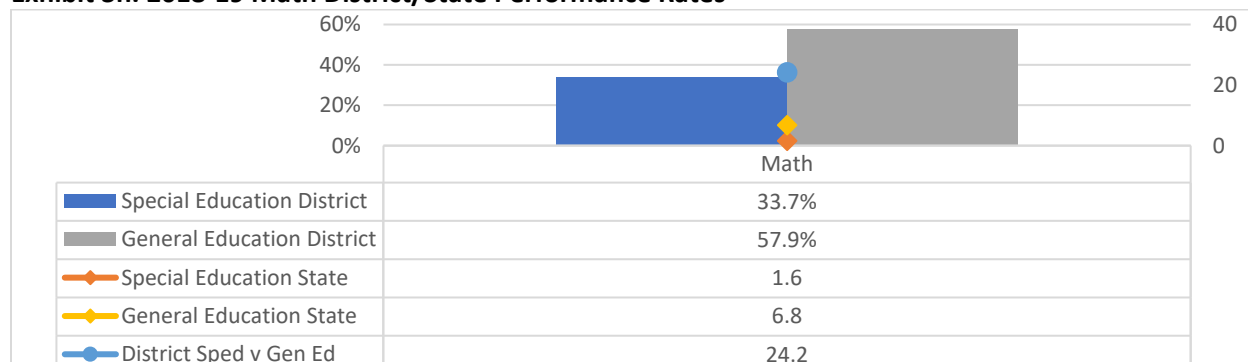
9 points below the SPP target of 43 percent. The state figure was 2.7 percentage points above the rate for students with IEPs and 5.7 points above the general education rate.

**Exhibit 3g. 2018-19 ELA District/State Performance Rates**



As shown in Exhibit 3h, 33.7 percent of students with IEPs were at or above basic compared to 57.9 percent of students without IEPs (24.2 percentage point difference). The district rate was 5 percentage points below the 41.7 percent SPP target. The state figure was 1.6 percentage points above the IEP rate and 6.8 points above the general education rate.

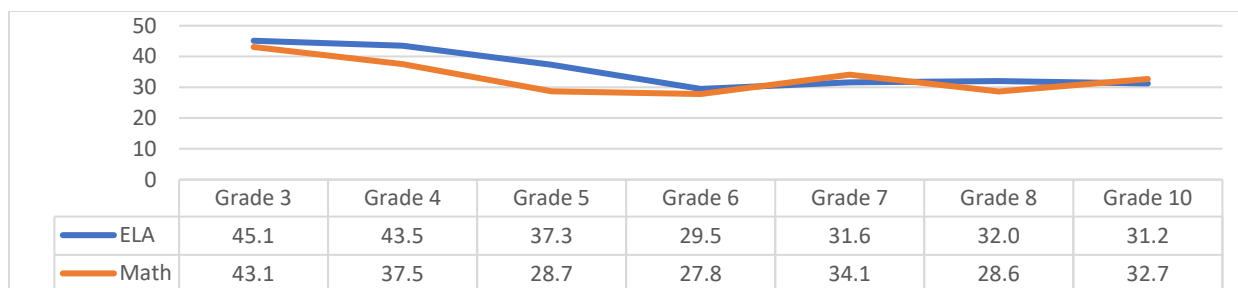
**Exhibit 3h. 2018-19 Math District/State Performance Rates**



### District 2018-19 IEP ELA and Math Performance Rates by Grade

Exhibit 3i shows 2018-19 SPP data, which is the latest available for district students with IEPs by grade for ELA and math. Except for 7<sup>th</sup> grade, a larger percentage of students were at or above basic in ELA than in math. Both ELA and math percentages were highest for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (45.1 and 43.1 percent, respectively), they steadily declined until 6<sup>th</sup> grade (29.5 percent and 27.8 percent, respectively), and increased again in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (31.6 percent and 34.1 percent, respectively). ELA rates increased again in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (32.0 percent) and declined slightly in 10<sup>th</sup> grade (31.2 percent). Math rates decreased in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (28.6 percent) and increased in 10<sup>th</sup> grade (32.7 percent).

**Exhibit 3i. 2018-19 ELA and Math Performance Rates for Students with IEPs by Grade**



### EBRPSS Students with IEPs State Assessment Data (2017 through 2019 and 2021)

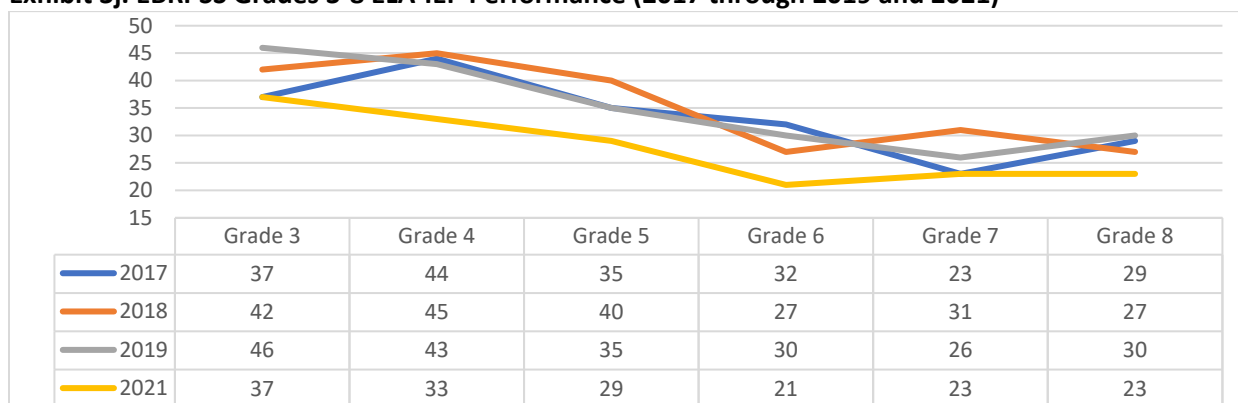
The following three exhibits shows district performance rates for students with IEPs from 2017 through 2019 and 2021 for ELA, math, and high school. Lower rates for 2021 may be associated with students’ more limited access to learning during the Pandemic. Furthermore, almost all rate increases that were gained from 2017 to 2019 were eliminated in 2021. Only 7<sup>th</sup> grade’s math rate increased from 20 percent to 23 percent during this time. These rates do not include students with IEPs taking alternate assessments.

#### English Language Arts (Grades 3-8)

- Differences between 2019 and 2021.** In all grades, performance rates for students with IEPs in 2021 fell below 2019 rates. The largest decreases were for 4<sup>th</sup> grade (33 percent, -10 points) and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades (37 and 21 percent, -9 points), and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (23 percent, -7 points), and 5<sup>h</sup> grade (29 percent, -6 points). With -3 percentage points, 7<sup>th</sup> grade had the smallest decrease.
- Differences Between 2017 and 2019.** Rates increased for three grades in 2019 compared to 2017: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (46 percent, +9 points), 7<sup>th</sup> grade (26 percent, +3 points), and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (30 percent, +1 point). The rate stayed the same for 5<sup>th</sup> grade (35 percent), and 6<sup>th</sup> grade’s 30 percent rate fell by 2 points.

Note: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade’s 2019 increase of 9 points to 46 percent was eliminated in 2021 and the rate that year fell back to 37 percent (2017). (See Exhibit 3j.)

Exhibit 3j. EBRPSS Grades 3-8 ELA-IEP Performance (2017 through 2019 and 2021)



#### Math (Grades 3-8)

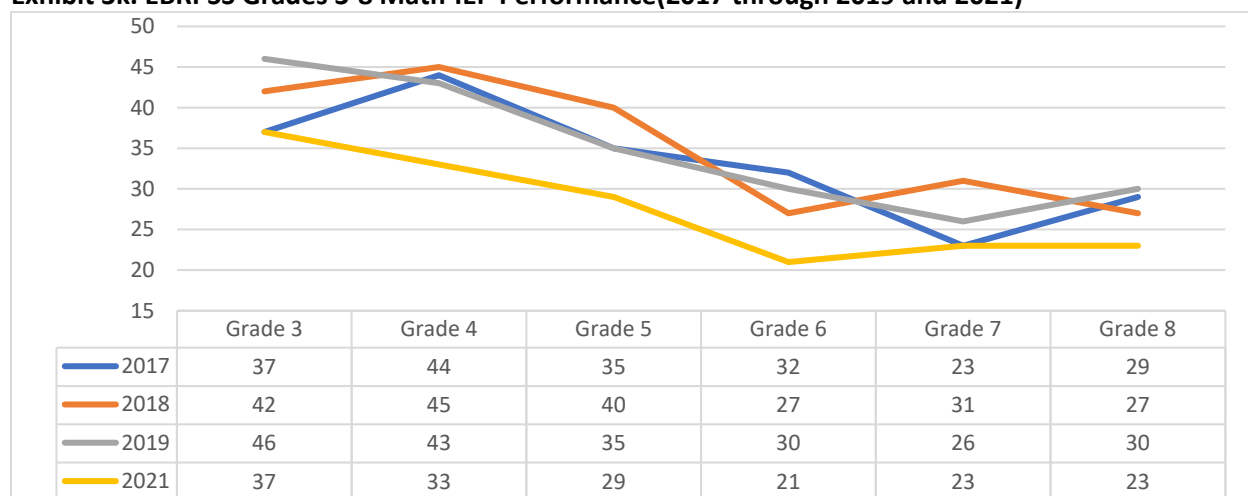
- Differences between 2019 and 2021.** In all grades but 5<sup>th</sup> (25 percent, +1 point), rates of

scores at or below basic fell from 2019. The largest decreases were for 4<sup>th</sup> grade (28 percent, -9 points), and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades (20 percent, and 23 percent, -7 points each). The rate for 7<sup>th</sup> grade fell the least (23 percent, -3 points).

- **Differences Between 2019 and 2017.** Rates increased for three grades in 2019 compared to 2017: 7<sup>th</sup> grade (26 percent, +6 points), 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (45 percent, +5 points), and 6<sup>th</sup> grade (27 percent, +2 points). Grade 8's 22 percent rate remained the same. Rates decreased for 5<sup>th</sup> grade (27 percent, -10 points), and 4<sup>th</sup> grade (37 percent, -5 points).

As with ELA, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade's 2019 rate of 45 percent (+5 points) was eliminated in 2021 when it fell to 39 percent, 1 point below its 2017 rate. (See Exhibit 3k.)

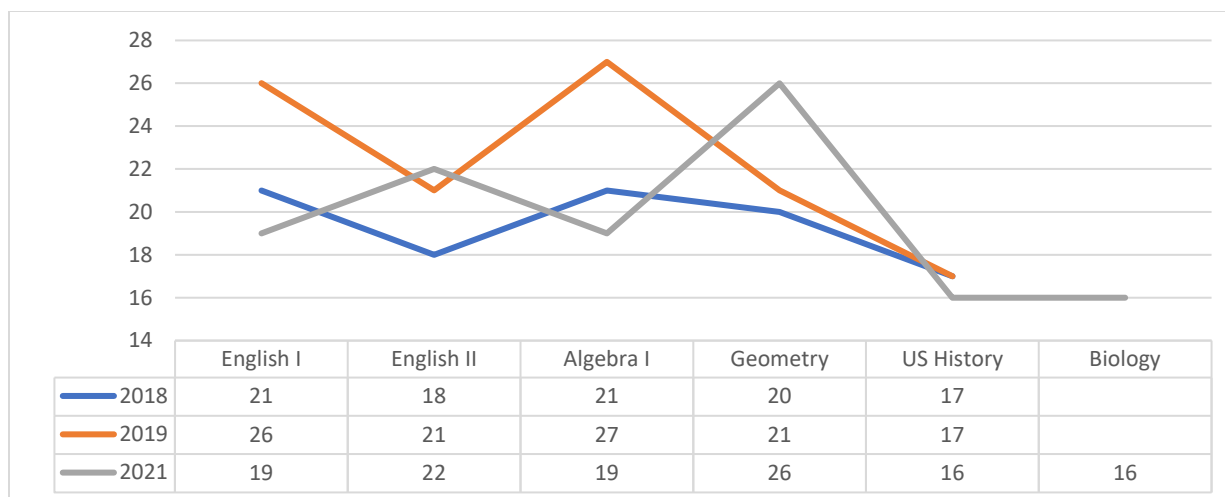
**Exhibit 3k. EBRPSS Grades 3-8 Math-IEP Performance(2017 through 2019 and 2021)**



### High School Assessments

Two subjects (English II and Geometry) had continuous rate increases between 2018 to 2021 rates: English II (18 percent to 22 percent) and Geometry (20 percent to 26 percent). English I's rate, which increased from 21 percent (2018) to 26 percent (2019), fell 1 point to 19 percent in 2021. While Algebra's rate increased from 21 percent (2018) to 27 percent (2019), the increase was eliminated and fell to 19 percent in 2021. U.S. History's had a small decrease from 17 percent (2018 and 2019) to 16 percent in 2021. (See Exhibit 3l.)

**Exhibit 3l. EBRPSS High School Performance (2018, 2019 and 2021)**



### 2021 EBRPSS Comparison with Five Parishes and Louisiana for Students with IEPs

The two sections below compare 2020-21 students with IEPs’ ELA and math performance scores by grades (3<sup>rd</sup> through-8<sup>th</sup>) for EBRPSS with five other parishes and the state and show the district’s standing among the parishes and state. These rates do not include students with IEPs who take alternate assessments.

#### English/Language Arts

The following are rate ranges by grade, and the district’s rate for each. (See Exhibit 3m.)

- **Grade 3.** Rates ranged from 62 percent to 26 percent, with the district at 37 percent.
- **Grade 4.** Rates ranged from 63 percent to 25 percent, with the district at 33 percent.
- **Grade 5.** Rates ranged from 52 percent to 23 percent, with the district at 29 percent.
- **Grade 6.** Rates ranged from 44 percent to 17 percent, with the district at 21 percent.
- **Grade 7.** Rates ranged from 42 percent to 21 percent, with the district at 23 percent.
- **Grade 8.** Rates ranged from 40 percent to 23 percent, with the district at 23 percent.

Exhibit 3m. ELA Performance Students with IEPs: EBRPSS Compared with Five Parishes & State

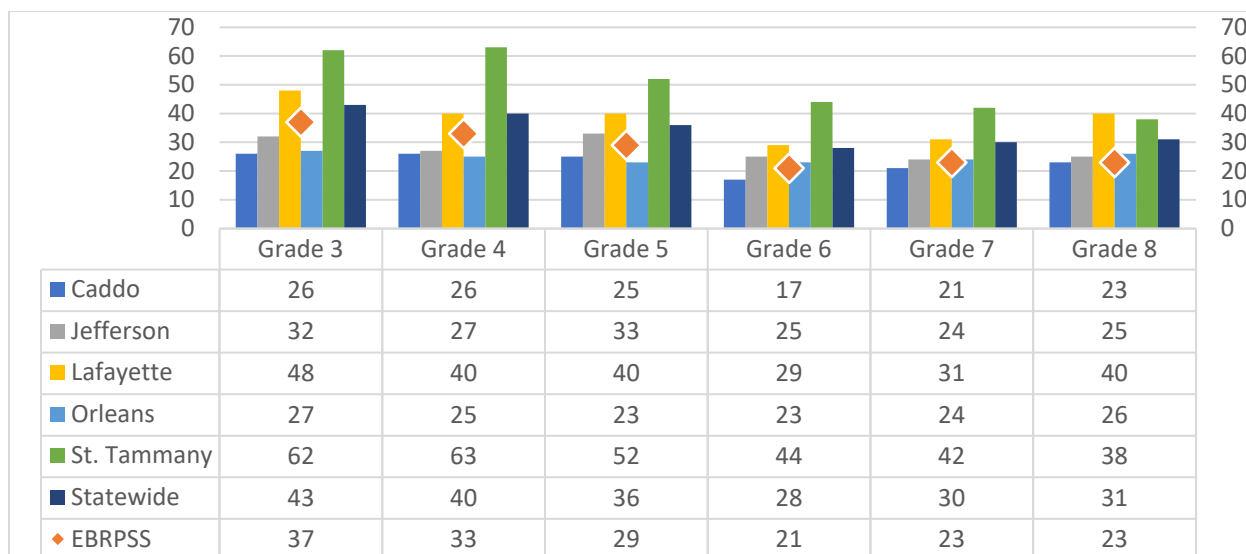


Exhibit 3n shows each parish and state ranking by performance rate order (from high to low). Sites with the same rate are outlined with a red box. For grades 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the district is 4<sup>th</sup>; for 4<sup>th</sup> grade the district is 3<sup>rd</sup>, for 5<sup>th</sup> grade the district is 5<sup>th</sup>; for 6<sup>th</sup> grade the district is 6<sup>th</sup>; for 7<sup>th</sup> grade the district tied for 5<sup>th</sup>; and for 8<sup>th</sup> grade the district tied for 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Exhibit 3n. Parish/State Ranking by 2020-21 ELA Performance Rates for Students with IEPs**

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1	St Tammany	St Tammany	St Tammany	St Tammany	St Tammany	Lafayette
2	Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette	St Tammany
3	State	State	State	State	State	State
4	EBR	EBR	Jefferson	Jefferson	Orleans	Orleans
5	Jefferson	Jefferson	EBR	Orleans	Jefferson	Jefferson
6	Orleans	Caddo	Caddo	EBR	EBR	EBR
7	Caddo	Orleans	Orleans	Caddo	Caddo	Caddo

### Math

The following are rate ranges by grade, and the district’s rate for each. (See Exhibit 3o.)

- **Grade 3.** Rates ranged from 59 percent to 24 percent, with the district at 39 percent.
- **Grade 4.** Rates ranged from 51 percent to 19 percent, with the district at 28 percent.
- **Grade 5.** Rates ranged from 41 percent to 18 percent, with the district at 25 percent.
- **Grade 6.** Rates ranged from 43 percent to 15 percent, with the district at 20 percent.
- **Grade 7.** Rates ranged from 31 percent to 15 percent, with the district at 23 percent.
- **Grade 8.** Rates ranged from 28 percent to 15 percent, with the district at 15 percent.

**Exhibit 3o. Math Proficient/Above Students with IEPs: EBRPSS Compared with Five Parishes & State**

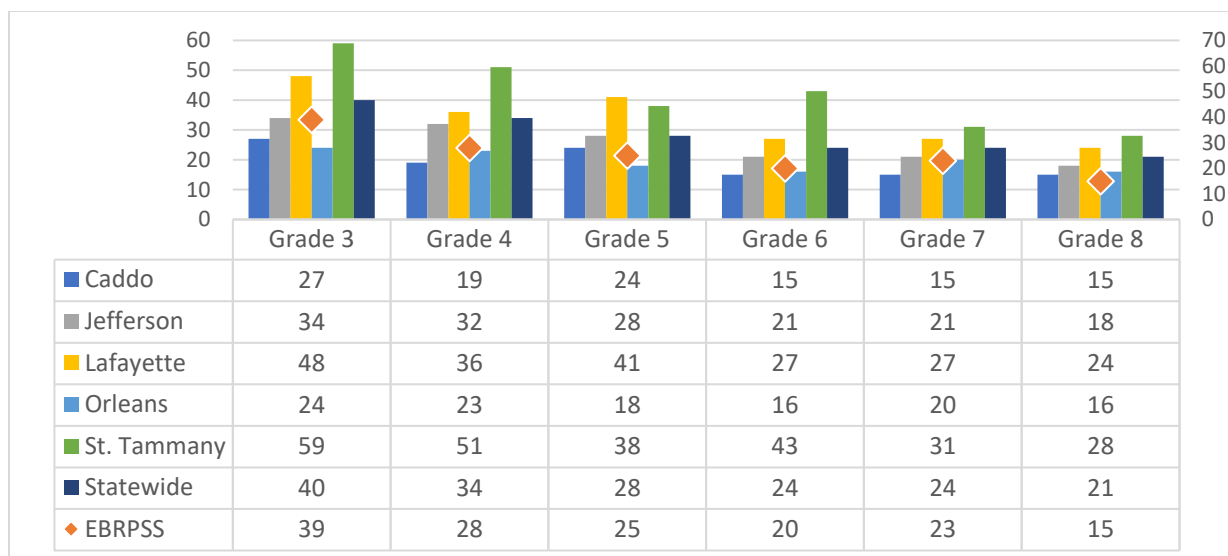


Exhibit 3p shows each parish and state ranking for math. For 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the district is 4<sup>th</sup>, for 4<sup>th</sup> grade the district is 5<sup>th</sup>, for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades the district is 5<sup>th</sup>, and for 8<sup>th</sup> the district tied for 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Exhibit 3p. Parish/State Ranking by 2020-21 Math Performance Rates for Students with IEPs**

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1	St Tammany	St Tammany	Lafayette	St Tammany	St Tammany	St Tammany
2	Lafayette	Lafayette	St Tammany	Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette
3	State	State	Jefferson	State	State	State
4	EBR	Jefferson	State	Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson
5	Jefferson	EBR	EBR	EBR	EBR	Orleans
6	Caddo	Orleans	Caddo	Orleans	Orleans	EBR
7	Orleans	Caddo	Orleans	Caddo	Caddo	Caddo

### EBRPSS 2020-21 Alternate Assessment Participation Rate

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) established a one percent threshold, statewide, on the number of students with significant cognitive disabilities taking alternate assessments. This threshold is based on one percent of the total number of students taking a standardized assessment in any curriculum area. If an LEA exceeds the threshold, the LEA is required to notify NDE and provide information on its reason for doing so. According to EBRPSS data, 1.1 percent of students participating in 2020-21 statewide assessments took an alternate assessment in reading and in math. This figure slightly exceeded the 1 percent standard. Of the students taking the alternate assessment, 53.7 percent met state standards.

### Graduation and Dropout Rates

Two state performance plan indicators measure graduation and dropout rates.



### Graduation Rates

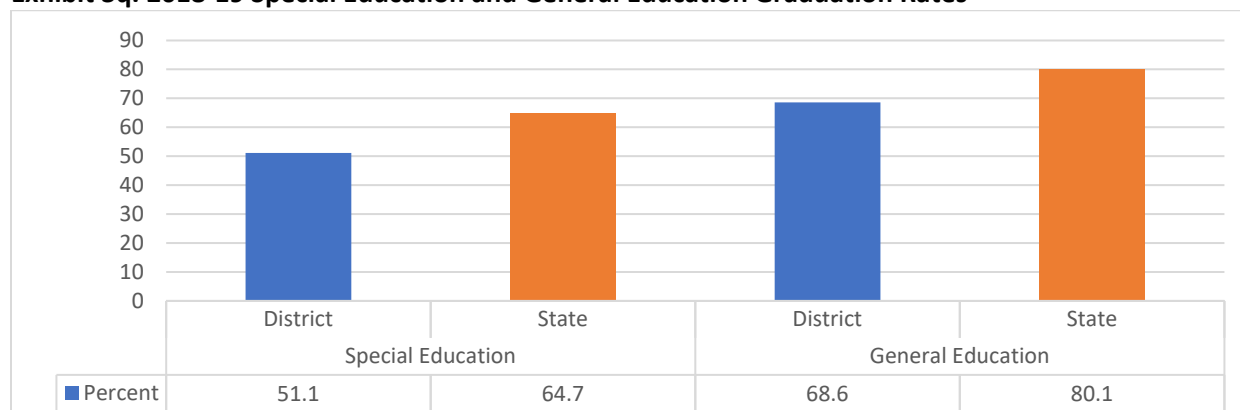
The SPP measures the percentage of students with disabilities in 12<sup>th</sup> grade and exiting ungraded students who are 18 years of age or over who graduate from high school with a regular diploma. For students entering the ninth and tenth grades in the 2014-15 school year, the Louisiana High School Proficiency Examination was replaced with end of course exams. While students are not required to earn a passing score on the end of course exams, they must pass a correlating class. This requirement affects the classes of 2017 and 2018. Based on IEP team determinations, students with disabilities may opt out of college and career readiness assessments.<sup>30</sup>

Louisiana authorized an alternative diploma for students with IEPs who are assessed on the Louisiana Alternate Assessment. Louisiana’s requirements for the Alternative Diploma align to the academic coursework and the College and Career Readiness assessment (ACT) requirements for students working to achieve a standard diploma. By specifying standards-based alignment, Louisiana seeks to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are educated on a similar trajectory as their typically developing peers who are earning a standard diploma. High school students receiving an alternative diploma are counted as a successful graduate and included in the district and state adjusted cohort graduation rates.<sup>31</sup>

#### State Performance Plan Data

Exhibit 3q shows the 2018-19 percentage of students who graduated with a regular diploma based on the latest SPP.<sup>32</sup> With a graduation rate of 51.1 percent, the district met the state’s 50 percent minimum target. The district’s rate was 13.6 percentage points below the state’s 64.7 percent figure. For general education, the district’s 68.6 percent rate was 11.5 percentage points below the state’s 80.1 percent figure. EBRPSS’ special education rate was 17.5 percentage points below the district’s general education figure.

**Exhibit 3q. 2018-19 Special Education and General Education Graduation Rates**



<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from EBRPSS’s website at <http://EBRPSS.net/students/grad-requirements>.

<sup>31</sup> Louisiana Department of Education webpage, retrieved at [http://www.doe.la.gov/Inclusive\\_Education/Alternative\\_Diploma\\_Guidance\\_Documents/](http://www.doe.la.gov/Inclusive_Education/Alternative_Diploma_Guidance_Documents/).

<sup>32</sup>Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma (using a cohort graduation rate) as measured by the percentage of students who enter the ninth grade and graduate four years later. This metric is a lag indicator, meaning that data is one-year older than the 2019-20 SY under review.

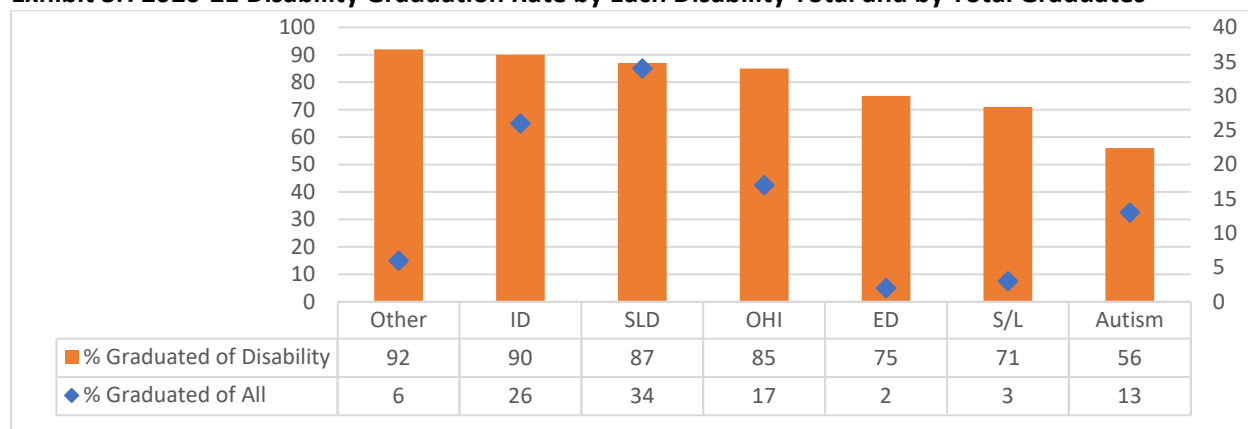
### EBRPSS Data

The district provided graduation data for the 2020-21 school year. This data also includes students graduating with alternative standards but is based on 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduating students and not the SPP cohort group of students. Based on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade measure, a higher 79 percent of all students with IEPs graduated.

Exhibit 3r shows this graduation rate by disability area –

- **Other.** 92 percent of 12 students graduated, comprising 6 percent of all graduates.
- **Intellectual Disability.** 90 percent of 35 students graduated, comprising 26 percent of all graduates.
- **Specific Learning Disability.** 87 percent of 77 students graduated, comprising 34 percent of all graduates.
- **Other Health Impairment.** 85 percent of 40 students graduated, comprising 17 percent of all graduates.
- **Emotional Disturbance.** 75 percent of ED students graduated, comprising 2 percent of all graduates. (The number of students was less than 10.)
- **Speech/Language Impairment.** 71 percent of students with S/L graduated, comprising 3 percent of all graduates. (The number of students was less than 10.)
- **Autism.** 56 percent of 45 students graduated, comprising 13 percent of all graduates.

**Exhibit 3r. 2020-21 Disability Graduation Rate by Each Disability Total and by Total Graduates**

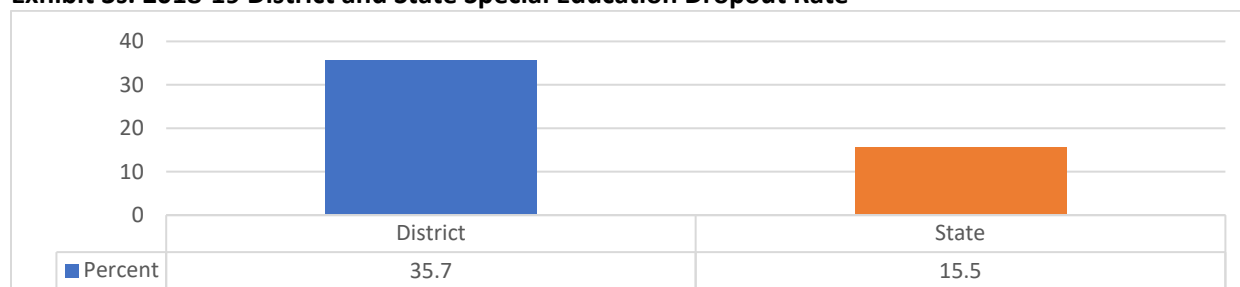


### Dropout Rates

The SPP also measures the percentage of students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and higher, who exit special education by dropping out of school. Some 35.7 percent of district students with IEPs dropped out of school in 2018-19, which was 20.2 percentage points below the state’s 15.5 percent figure, and 10.7 percentage points below the 25 percent maximum SPP target.<sup>33</sup> (See Exhibit 3s.)

<sup>33</sup> Percent of youth with disabilities aged 14-21 exiting special education by dropping out. This metric is a lag indicator, meaning that data is one-year older than the SY under review.

**Exhibit 3s. 2018-19 District and State Special Education Dropout Rate**



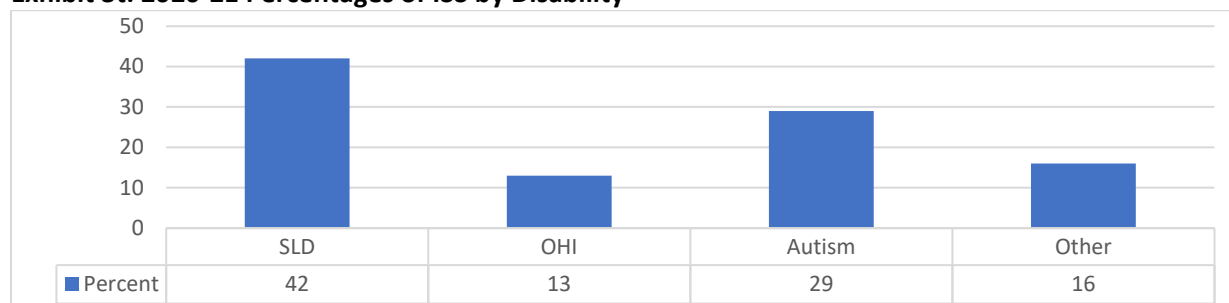
### Suspension Rates and Unexcused Absences

Another critical issue that affects the achievement of students receiving special education is their time out of school due to suspensions and/or unexcused absences. The information below addresses these two issues.

#### Suspensions

Based on data the district provided to the Council team, zero students received out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and very few received in-school suspension (ISS) during the 2020-21 school year. Only 45 or 1.37 percent of all students with IEPs received an ISS. One ISS was for 6-10 total days and the remaining totaled 1-5 days. Exhibit 3t shows ISS rates by disability, with 42 percent for SLD, 13 percent for OHI, 29 percent for autism, and 16 percent for all other areas.

**Exhibit 3t. 2020-21 Percentages of ISS by Disability**



When analyzing this data by race, black students were 1.77 times more likely than students who were not black to receive an ISS.

### Disciplinary Removals and Race/Ethnic Significant Disproportionality

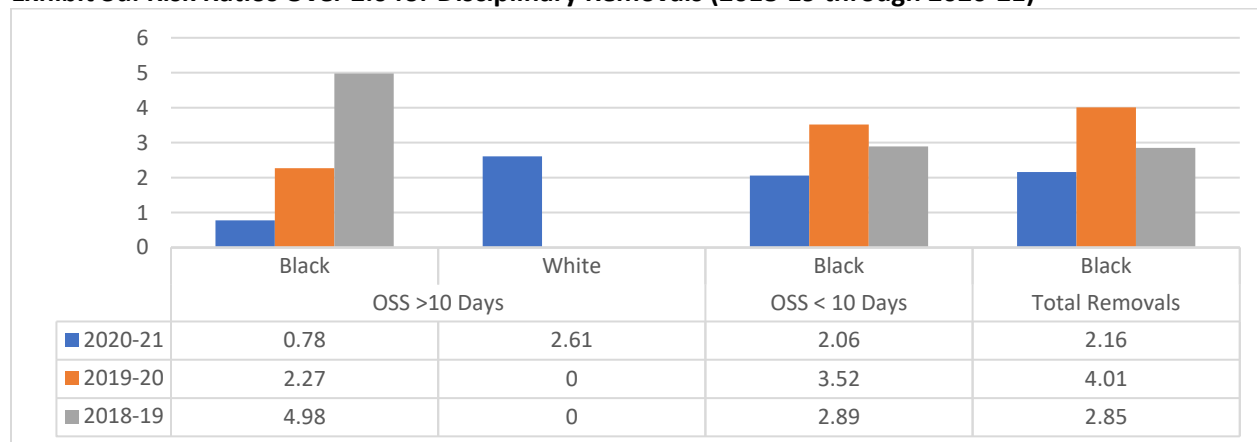
Under IDEA, state educational agencies monitor local educational agencies (LEA) for significant disproportionality (SD) based on race/ethnicity in five areas involving disciplinary removals. Two each involve  $\leq 10$  days and more than 10 days (for ISSs and OSSs) and one involves total disciplinary removals. As discussed above, Louisiana uses a risk ratio of “3,” and finds SD when an LEA reaches/exceeds this threshold for each of three consecutive years. In such circumstances, districts must spend 15 percent of all IDEA funds for comprehensive early intervening services (CEIS). Note the threshold for the SPP indicator is a “2.” In that case, districts are not cited for disproportionality if a self-survey shows no policies, procedures and practices are associated with the disproportionate figures.

Exhibit 3u shows risk ratio data for three disciplinary categories (OSS for both time frames and total disciplinary removals). A district representative provided this state data to the Council team. Risk ratios of more than “2” are presented. This data shows the following for each category –

- **OSS > 10 Days.** For the three-year period, risk ratios for black students were 4.98 (2018-19), 2.27 (2019-20) and 0.78 (2020-21), showing a great degree of progress and no risk of SD for 2021-22.
- **OSS ≤ 10 Days.** Risk ratios for black students were 2.89 (2018-19), 3.52 (2019-20), and 2.06 (2020-21).
- **Total Removals.** When considering all disciplinary removals, the risk ratios for black students are 2.16 (2020-21), 4.01 (2019-20), and 2.85 (2018-19).

Although none of the 2020-21 risk ratios meet the threshold of “3,” they are sufficiently high to cause concern and merit further monitoring and follow-up action. Note that some states have set their RR threshold at 2 and above, which the district’s figures would have exceeded.

**Exhibit 3u. Risk Ratios Over 2.0 for Disciplinary Removals (2018-19 through 2020-21)**



The Council team asked district representatives about the state reported OSSs, which were not present in data provided by the district to the Council team. Following is the district’s response –

Per general policy, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System does not encourage its member schools to utilize the practice of out-of-school suspension (OSS). On some occasions, users at the school site level will code occasional behavior interventions into our information system as OSS, but these occurrences are in error. They may appear on rare occasion in the information system, but again, these were generally supposed to be coded as either in-school-suspension (ISS) or alternate site suspensions.

Under the EBRPSS umbrella exist the charter schools. While they are encouraged to follow our policies, they are not required to do so (they have autonomy). Many of these charter schools utilize our same information system, so the vast majority of OSS by year come from charter schools under the EBRPSS umbrella.

The best explanation for the counts of OSS listed in the LDOE website is that these counts are based on the charter schools utilizing OSS, not EBRPSS direct-run sites.

EBRPSS data collection and reports should include its charter school data as the district remains accountable for their outcomes. Even if all OSSs occur in charter schools, any potential citation for significant disproportionality would require the district to use 15 percent of its total IDEA grant for CEIS, and not just the portion of funds associated with the cause. It would also be important for the district to ensure its OSS data is valid, based on actual practices, and not include coding errors.

### Unexcused Absences

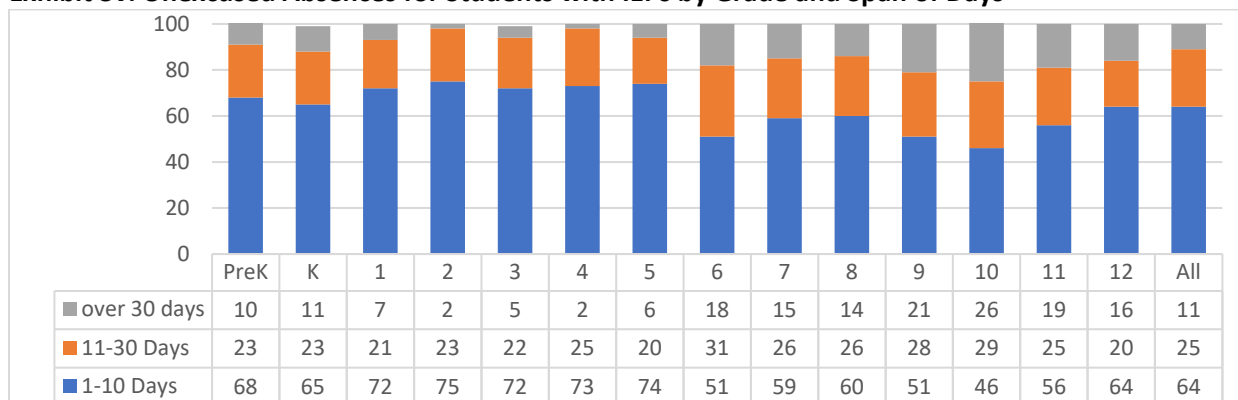
Students with unexcused absences are also unavailable to learn. The following two exhibits show the percentage with unexcused absences by day spans of 1 to 10, 11 to 30, and over 30 by grade and by disability area. Note there was missing data (grade, disability and race/ethnicity as noted in footnotes). The inclusion of these data could change reported outcomes.

#### Unexcused Absences by Grade

Exhibit 3v shows unexcused absence rates by grade compared to the total grade enrollment. Overall, 64 percent of all students with IEPs are absent for 1-10 days, 25 percent for 11-30 days, and 11 percent over 30 days.<sup>34</sup>

- **1-10 Days.** Overall rates range from 46 percent (10<sup>th</sup> grade) to 75 percent (2<sup>nd</sup> grade). The rates are higher in the lower grades: 65 percent (kindergarten) to 75 percent (2<sup>nd</sup> grade). The rates begin to decrease in 6<sup>th</sup> grade (51 percent) and fluctuate between 46 percent (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and 64 percent (12<sup>th</sup> grade).
- **11-30 Days.** Overall rates range from 20 percent (5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) to 31 percent (6<sup>th</sup> grade).
- **Over 30 Days.** Rates range from 2 percent (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades) to 26 percent (10<sup>th</sup> grade). The rates are lower from PreK through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and increase from 6 percent in 5<sup>th</sup> grade 18 percent in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The rates are significantly higher in 9<sup>th</sup> (21 percent) and 10<sup>th</sup> grade (26 percent).

**Exhibit 3v. Unexcused Absences for Students with IEPs by Grade and Span of Days**



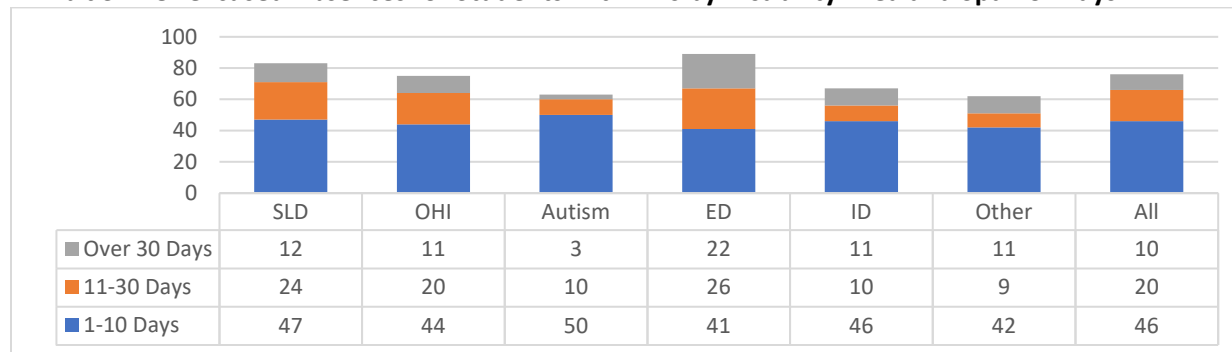
<sup>34</sup> Data not available for 179 students: K (9), 1<sup>st</sup> (22), 2<sup>nd</sup> (23), 3<sup>rd</sup> (18), 4<sup>th</sup> (19), 6<sup>th</sup> (5), 6<sup>th</sup> (10), 7<sup>th</sup> (10), and 8<sup>th</sup> (14).

### Unexcused Absences by Disability

Exhibit 3w shows unexcused absence rates of students with IEPs by disability compared to each disability area’s total count.<sup>35</sup>

- **1-10 Days.** Rates range from 41 percent (ED) to 50 percent (autism).
- **11-30 Days.** Rates range from 9 percent (other disability) to 26 percent (ED).
- **Over 30 Days.** Rates range from 3 percent (autism) to 22 percent (ED), which is 11 percentage points higher than the next highest rate of 11 percent for OHI, ID, and other disabilities.

**Exhibit 3w. Unexcused Absences for Students with IEPs by Disability Area and Span of Days**

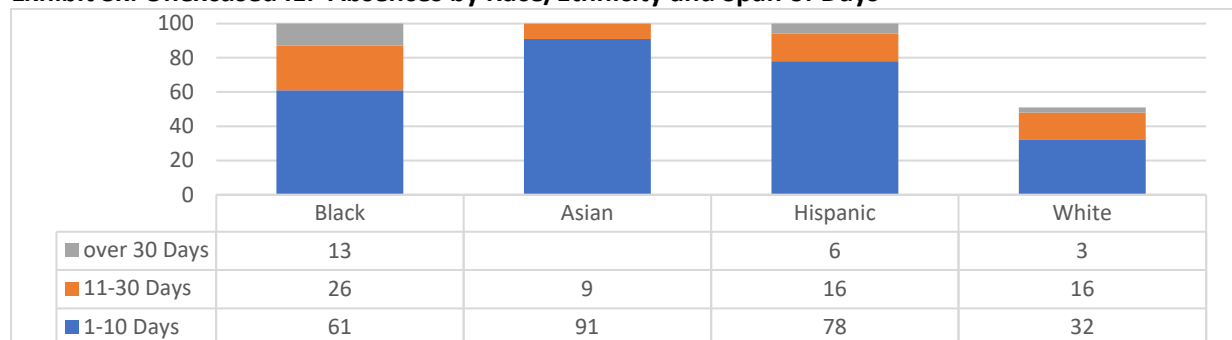


### Unexcused Absences by Race/Ethnicity

Exhibit 3x shows the unexcused absence rate of students with IEPs by race/ethnicity.<sup>36</sup>

- **1-10 Days.** Rates range from 32 percent (white) to 91 percent (Asian).
- **11-30 Days.** Rates range from 9 percent (other disability) to 26 percent (ED).
- **Over 30 Days.** This day span was most discrepant, with 61 percent of black students absent compared to 3 percent of white students and 6 percent of Hispanic/Latino students. Using a risk ratio, black students were 3.37 times more likely than students from other race/ethnicities to have unexcused absences of more than 30 days. Further analysis would show the extent to which black student absences occurred in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

**Exhibit 3x. Unexcused IEP Absences by Race/Ethnicity and Span of Days**



<sup>35</sup> Data was not available for 131 students (65 SLD, 35 OHI, 35 autism, 7 ED, 9 ID, and 3 other disability).

<sup>36</sup> Data was not available for 131 students (74 black, 12 Asian, 18 Hispanic, and 26 white.)

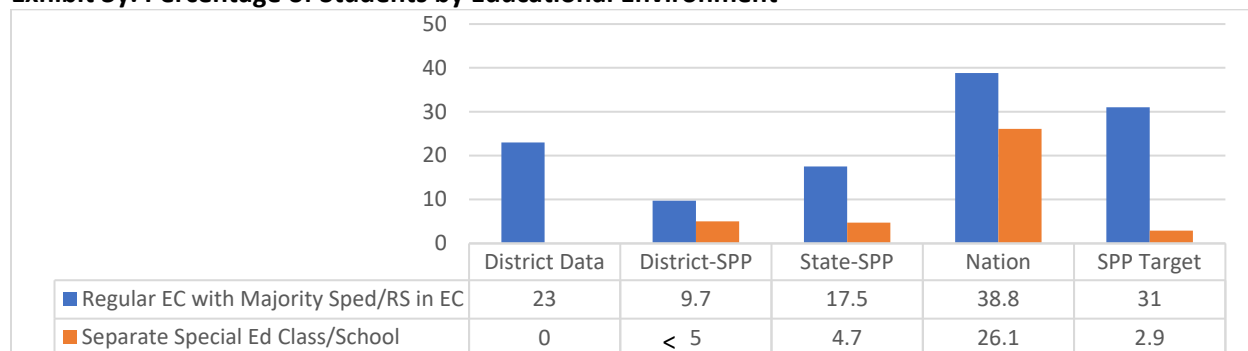
### Educational Environments for Young Children Three to Five Years of Age

Data in exhibit 3y show the percentages of EBRPSS students receiving most of their special education instruction in early childhood (EC) general education and in special or separate classes/schools, compared to students at state and national levels during the 2019-20 school year.<sup>37</sup> Two sets of data were used for the district: data provided by EBRPSS to the Council team (district data) and SPP data.

- Regular EC Setting.** District and SPP data are dramatically different for children receiving most of their special education instruction in regular EC classes. EBRPSS data shows 23 percent of students compared to the SPP’s 9.7 percent. The state’s rate is 17.5 percent and the nation’s is 38.8 percent. The district’s SPP rate is 21.3 percentage points below the SPP target, 7.8 points below the state average, and 29.1 points below the national average.
- Separate Classes/Schools.** EBRPSS data shows zero children educated in this setting and the SPP shows less than 5 percent of the district’s students are educated in a separate class or school, compared to the state’s 4.7 percent, and nation’s 26.1 percent. The SPP did not give a more precise figure for the district, so it is not possible to know whether it met the SPP target. Nevertheless, its percentage is far below the national average.

The district’s zero figure for separate classes is questionable given figures provided to the Council team showing 26 EC special class teachers for four special programs and an overall total of 392 EC students with IEPs.

**Exhibit 3y. Percentage of Students by Educational Environment**



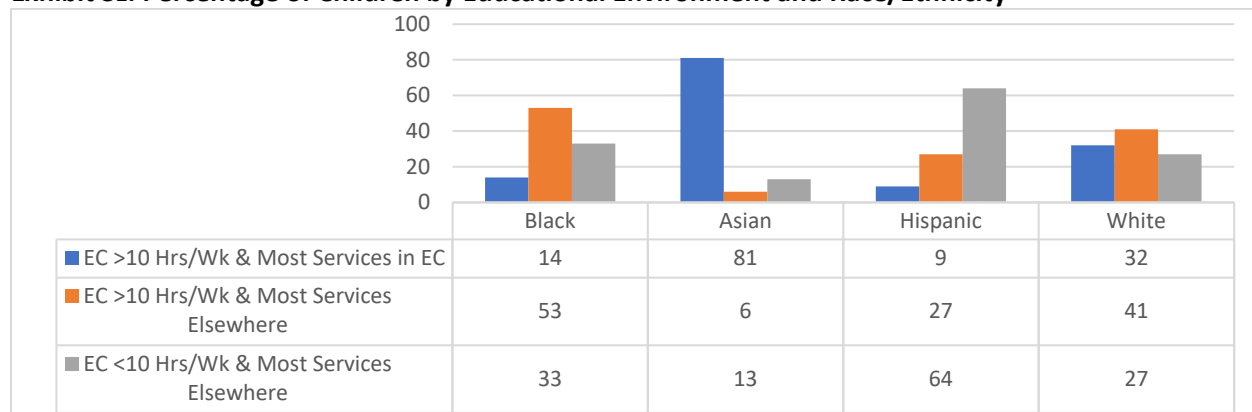
### Educational Environment by Race/Ethnicity

For children in inclusive EC classes more than 10 Hours/week, receiving most of their special education/related services in general EC classes, a much higher percentage of Asian children (81 percent) are included compared to black (14 percent), Hispanic (9 percent) or white (32 percent) children. (The number of Native American children was too small for calculation.)

For children in more restrictive EC classes more than 10 hours/week, receiving most of their services in another location, a much higher rate of Hispanic children (64 percent) are present compared to black (33 percent), Asian (13 percent), and white (27 children). (See Exhibit 3z.)

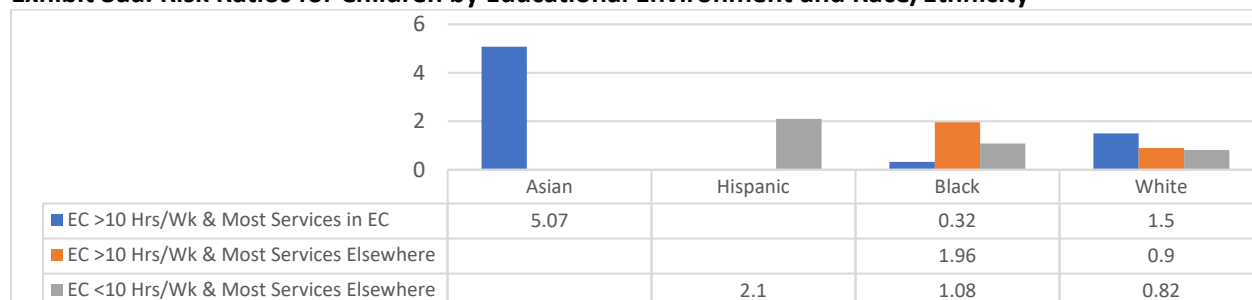
<sup>37</sup> District and state data is from the 2019-20 State Performance Profile, and national data retrieved from <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environ-table8/resources>.

**Exhibit 3z. Percentage of Children by Educational Environment and Race/Ethnicity**



When using a risk ratio measure, Asian children are 5.07 times more likely than other children to be educated in an inclusive EC classroom. This risk ratio is far greater than for black (0.32) and white (1.5) children. Hispanic children are 2.1 times more likely to be educated in a more restrictive EC classroom compared to black (1.08) and white (0.82) students. (Note: risk ratios were calculated for student groups of 10 or more.) (See Exhibit 3aa.)

**Exhibit 3aa. Risk Ratios for Children by Educational Environment and Race/Ethnicity**



### Educational Environments for Students with Disabilities

Based on parameters set by the U.S. Department of Education, educational settings for school-aged students with IEPs is collected by time in general education (80 percent or more of the day; 40-79 percent of the day; and less than 40 percent of the day). Data is also collected for students educated in separate schools/residential facilities.

### Comparison of Rates for District, State, and Nation

Data in Exhibit 3bb compares educational setting data for EBRPSS, the state and nation.<sup>38</sup> District data was provided by EBRPSS. Data for EBRPSS is comparable to the state and nation.

- **80% or More of Day.** The district’s 69 percent rate is 5 percentage points above the state and 3 points above the nation, and above the SPP minimum target of 64 percent.
- **40-79 % of Day.** The district’s 16 percent rate is the same as the nation’s and 5 percentage

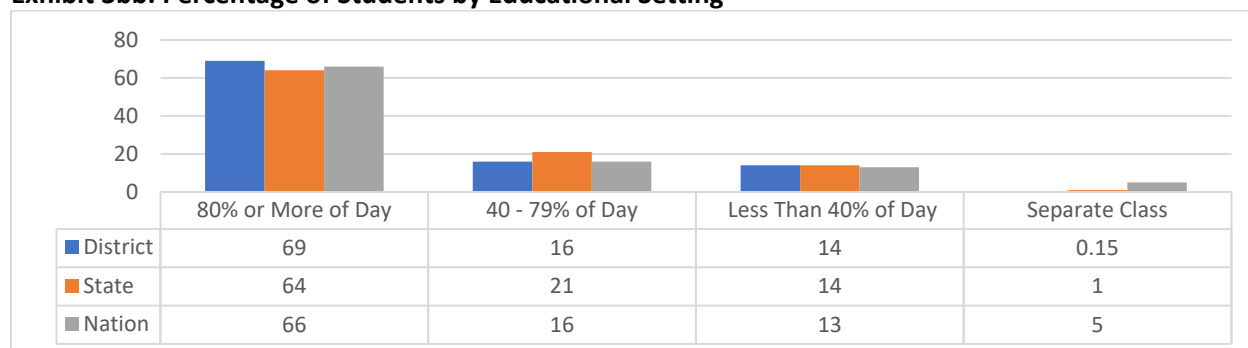
<sup>38</sup> State and national data retrieved from <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environ-table8/resources>. National data is for 2020-21 and state data is for 2019-20 (2020-21 data was not posted for the state).



points below the state rate. (There is no SPP target for this range of time.)

- **Under 40% Day.** The district’s 14 percent rate is the same as the state’s and both are 1 percentage point above the national rate. The district’s rate is just above the SPP maximum target of 13.5 percent.
- **Separate Schools.** The district’s .15 percent rate is far below state and national rates (1 and 5 percent, respectively), and below the SPP maximum target of 1.3 percent.

**Exhibit 3bb. Percentage of Students by Educational Setting**



The Council team explored the separate school data further by reviewing school disability rates. This review showed two charter schools that appear to be solely or for almost all students with IEPs. District data shows the Arlington Preparatory Academy (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades) enrolls 82 (90 percent) students with IEPs based on an enrollment of 91 students. Also, the Emerge School for Autism enrolls only students with IEPs (9 of 9) – kindergarten through 1<sup>st</sup> grade in 2020-21. Adjusting for these students, the district’s separate class rate would increase to 2 percent (one percentage point above the state rate and 3 percentage points below the national rate.) This rate would be above the SPP target of 1.3 percent.

### Educational Setting Rates by Grade

The pattern of inclusive instruction slowly increases from kindergarten to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade when students are almost entirely educated outside of special program classes in high school, except in 12<sup>th</sup> grade when students remain in school to receive postsecondary transition services. As discussed further in Section IV below, focus group participants expressed concerns that students who were learning core curriculum from ESS teachers in eighth grade transitioned to general education classes for this purpose in ninth grade, and they may not be prepared or supported for this change of instruction.

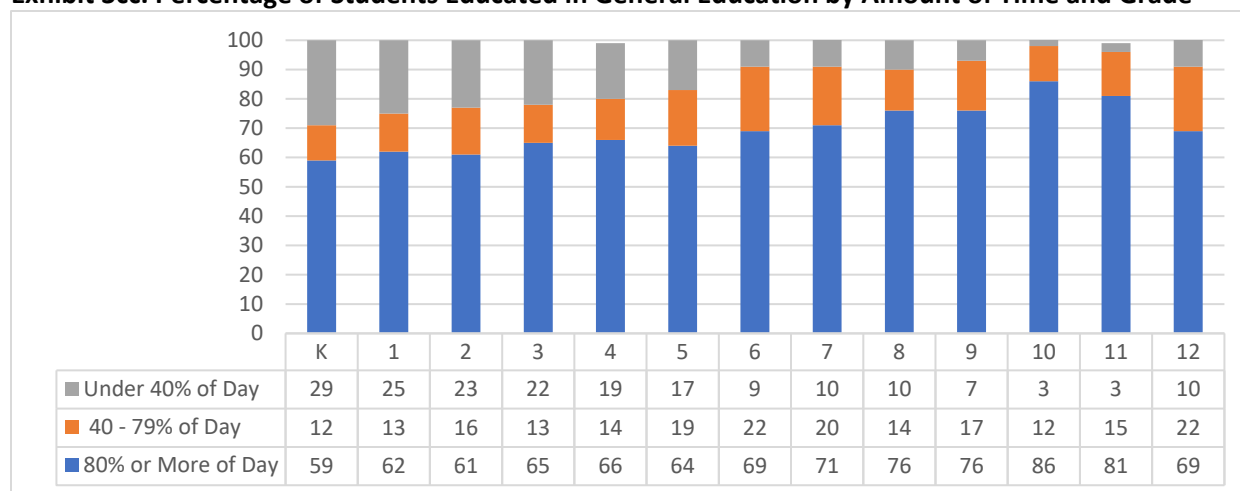
Data in exhibit 3cc shows more specifically how percentage patterns among the general education settings change by grade.

- **80% or More of Day.** Rates range from 59 percent (kindergarten) to 86 percent (10<sup>th</sup> grade.) Generally, the rates steadily increase from lower to upper grades, with a decrease at 11<sup>th</sup> grade (81 percent). The lower rate of 69 percent for 12<sup>th</sup> grade is likely due to the number of students who remain in school for postsecondary transition services.
- **40% to 79% of Day.** Rates range from 12 percent (kindergarten and 10<sup>th</sup> grade) to higher rates

of 19% (5<sup>th</sup> grade), 22 percent (6<sup>th</sup> grade) and 20 percent (7<sup>th</sup> grade).

- **Under 40% of Day.** Students in this setting are educated in special program classes for most of the day. Rates are highest from kindergarten (29 percent) and steadily decrease to 5<sup>th</sup> grade (17 percent). The rates fluctuate from 7 percent to 10 percent (6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and fall to 3 percent in 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. (The higher 10 percent rate for 12<sup>th</sup> grade is likely due to students remaining in school for postsecondary transition services).

**Exhibit 3cc. Percentage of Students Educated in General Education by Amount of Time and Grade**

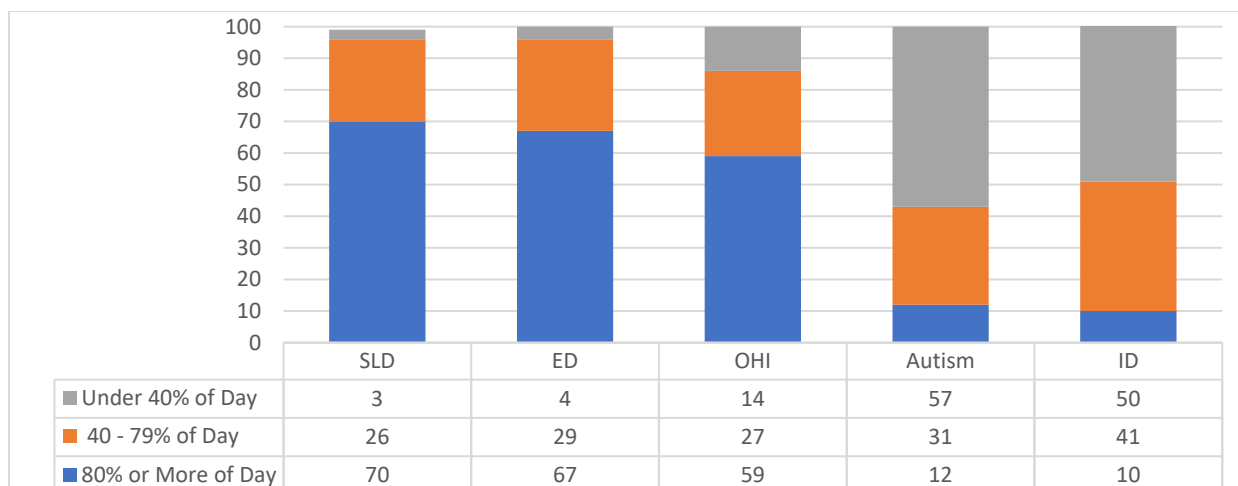


### Educational Environment Rates by Disability

Data in exhibit 3dd show time students spend in one of the three general education environments by five disability areas. For the sixth area of S/L, 98 percent of students are educated in general education 80 percent of more of the day.

- **80% or More of Day.** SLD, ED, and OHI have high rates of students educated in this setting (70 percent, 67 percent, and 59 percent, respectively). Rates are much lower for autism (12 percent) and intellectual disability (10 percent).
- **40-79% or More of Day.** Rates for SLD, ED, OHI and autism are more similar for this setting (26 percent, 29 percent, 27 percent, and 31 percent, respectively). The ID area has the largest rate of 41 percent.
- **Under 40% of Day.** Small SLD and ED rates apply to this setting (3 percent and 4 percent, respectively). The rate increases for OHI (14 percent). Students with autism (57 percent) and ID (50 percent) comprise 69 percent of students educated in this environment.

**Exhibit 3dd. Educational Environment Rates by Disability Area**

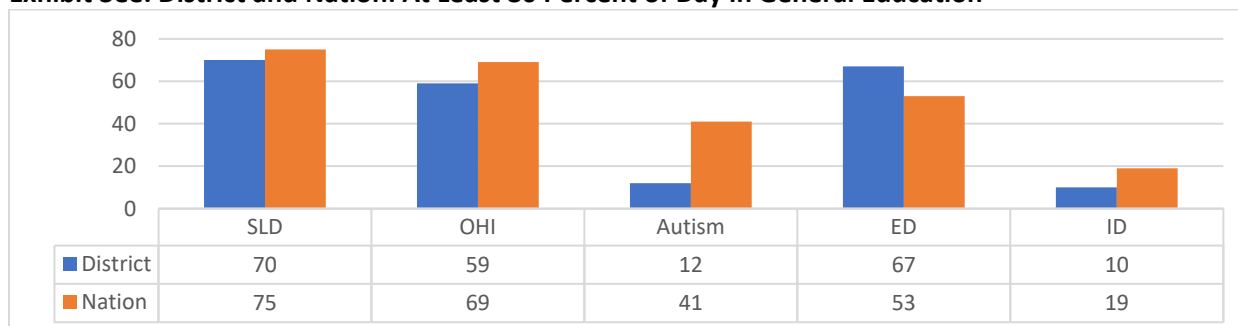


### District and National Rates for General Education At Least 80 Percent of Day

Exhibit 3ee shows district and nation disability rates for the most inclusive educational environment (general education at least 80 percent of the day) for the district and nation. The district’s ED rate is higher than the nation’s and lower in the other four areas.<sup>39</sup>

- **District Lower Rates.** District rates are lower than national rates for: SLD (70 percent, lower by 5 percentage points); OHI (59 percent, lower by 10 percentage points); autism (12 percent, lower by 29 percentage points); and ID (10 percent, lower by 9 percentage points).
- **Higher Rate.** The district 67 percent ED rate is 14 percentage points higher than the national rate.

**Exhibit 3ee. District and Nation: At Least 80 Percent of Day in General Education**



### District and National Rates for General Education Less than 40 Percent of Day

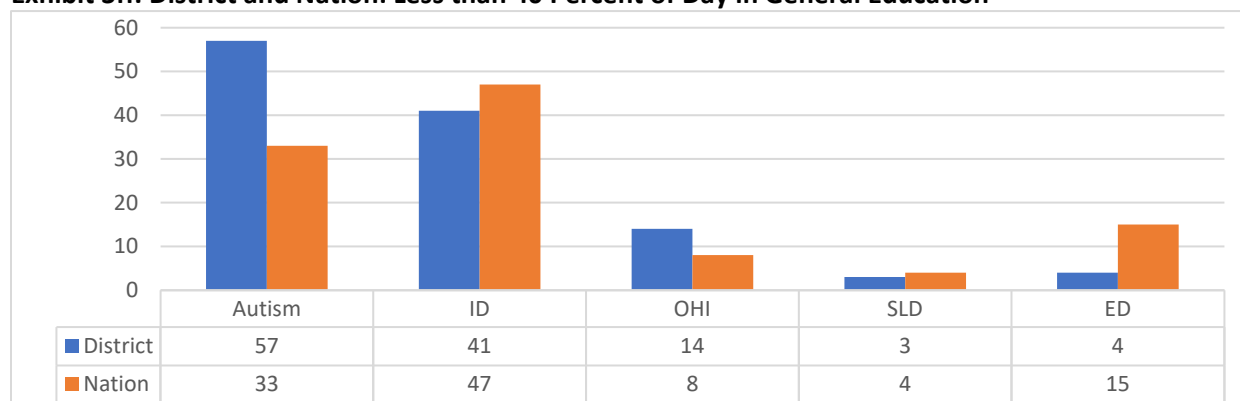
Exhibit 3ff shows district and national disability rates for the most restrictive general education environment (general education less than 40 percent of the day). The district’s autism and OHI rates are higher than the nation’s and lower in the other three areas.

- **Higher Rate.** The district rates are higher than national rates for autism (57 percent, higher by 24 percentage points) and OHI (14 percent, higher by 6 percentage points).
- **District Lower Rates.** The district rates are lower than national rates for: ID (41 percent, lower

<sup>39</sup> National rates retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21\\_204.60.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_204.60.asp).

by 6 percentage points); SLD (3 percent, lower by 1 percentage point); and ED (4 percent lower by 11 percentage points).

**Exhibit 3ff. District and Nation: Less than 40 Percent of Day in General Education**

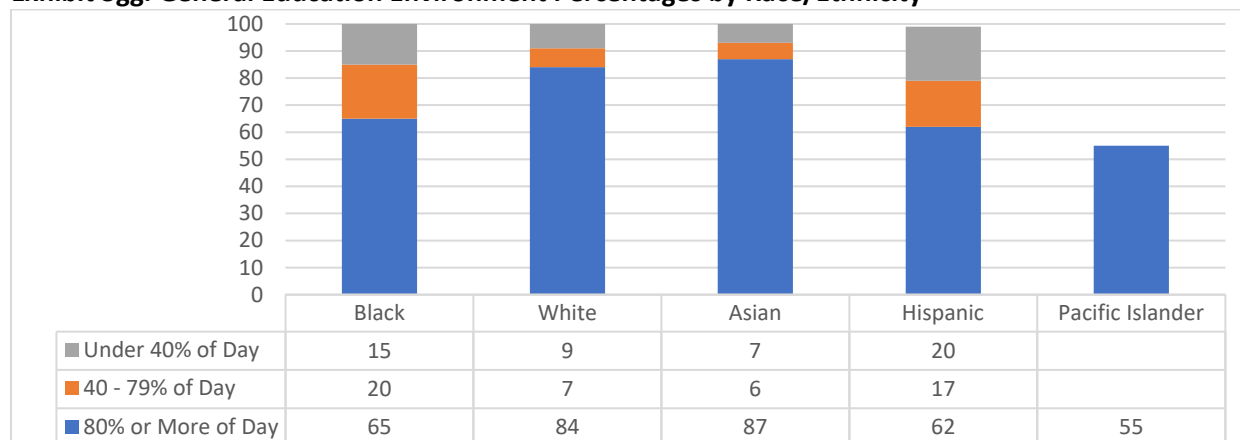


### Educational Environments by Race/Ethnicity

Exhibit 3gg shows district rates in the three general education environments by race/ethnicity. Generally, black and Hispanic students are educated in more restrictive settings at higher have than other students.

- **80% or More of Day.** Rates are highest for Asian (87 percent) and white (84 percent) students, than those for black (65 percent), Hispanic (62 percent), and Pacific Islander (55 percent) students.
- **40-79% or More of Day.** Rates are highest for black (20 percent) and Hispanic (17 percent) students, and much lower for white (7 percent) and Asian (6 students).
- **Under 40% of Day.** For this most restrictive environment, rates for Hispanic (20 percent) and black (15 percent) students are much higher than for white (9 percent) and Asian (7 percent) students.

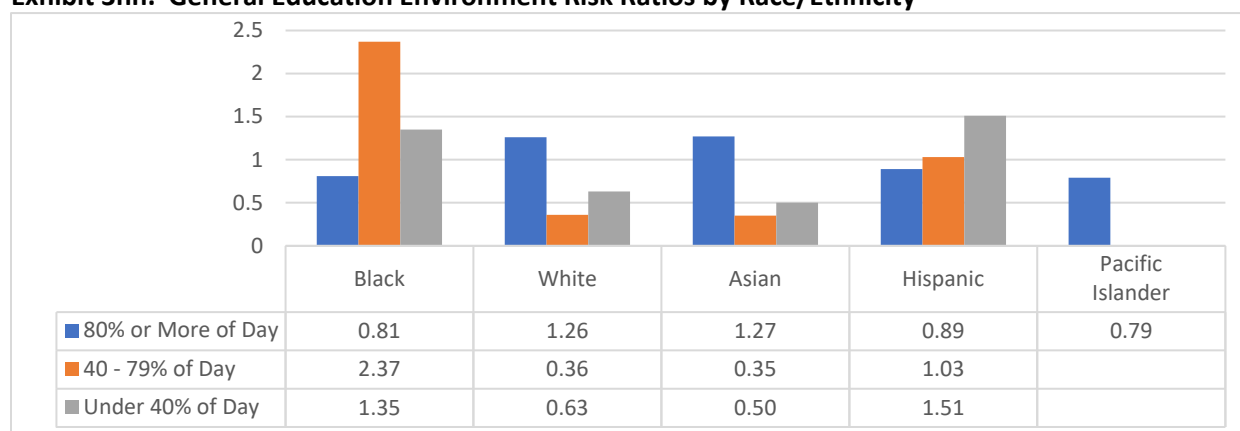
**Exhibit 3gg. General Education Environment Percentages by Race/Ethnicity**



Using a risk ratio measure, black students are 2.37 times more likely than other students to be educated in general education between 40 percent and 79 percent of the day, compared to much lower risk ratios for all other groups of students (white, 0.36; Asian 0.35; and Hispanic 1.03). No

racial/ethnic group of students had risk ratios approaching or over a “2” in any other general education environment. (See Exhibit 3hh.)

**Exhibit 3hh. General Education Environment Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity**

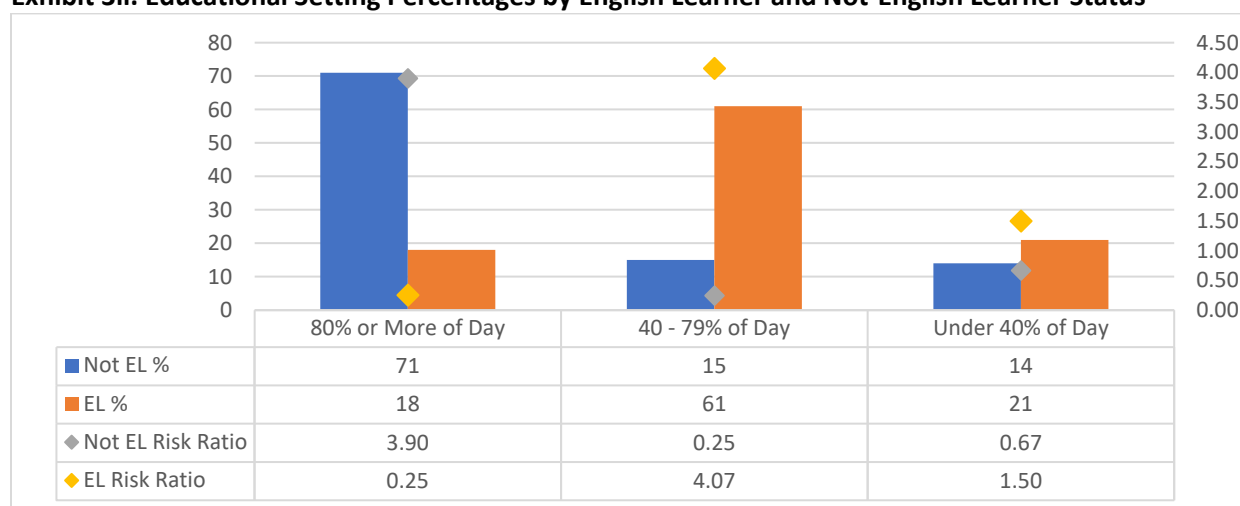


### Educational Environments by English Learner Status

Data in Exhibit 3ii compares students who are EL and not EL by percentages and risk ratios by the three general education environments. Non-ELs are 3.9 times more likely than ELs to be educated in general education 80 percent or more of the time and ELs are 4.07 times more likely than non-ELs to be educated in general education 40 percent to 79 percent of the time.

- **80% or More of Day.** For most inclusive general education environment is comprised of 18 percent ELs and 71 percent non-EL students, with ELs having a low likelihood (0.25 risk ratio) and non-EL students being 3.9 times more likely to be educated in this setting.
- **40-79% or More of Day.** This environment comprises 71 percent of EL and 15 percent non-EL students, with ELs being much more likely (4.07) to have this placement.
- **Under 40% of Day.** This most restrictive environment comprises 21 percent of EL and 14 percent of non-EL students, with ELs being 1.50 times more likely to have this placement.

**Exhibit 3ii. Educational Setting Percentages by English Learner and Not-English Learner Status**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are offered to better understand patterns related to the district's practices, to investigate root causes of performance, and to take appropriate follow up actions.

**3. Achievement Outcomes, Suspension, Absenteeism, and Educational Environments.** Use and monitor data for students with IEPs regarding their achievement, suspension, absenteeism, and educational environments by disability, race/ethnicity to understand gaps and need for follow-up action. Recommendation 4 provides instructional suggestions for improving outcomes in these areas.

**a. Data Review.** With a multidisciplinary team of individuals in and outside the ESS department, review Exhibits 3a through 3ii and their associated analysis (along with other relevant data), focusing on the outlier data. For these and any others of concern/interest, develop hypothesis for the data pattern and develop a plan for follow-up actions.

### Achievement

- **Early Childhood Achievement.** Lower achievement of young children with IEPs compared to state targets and state rates. (Exhibits 3a and 3b)
- **ELA and Math Performance.** Low performance of students with IEPs. (Exhibit 3g-h)
- **ELA/Math Achievement by Grades.** Lower IEP achievement rates for students with IEPs after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. (Exhibit 3i)
- **ELA Performance for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3j)
- **Math Performance for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3k)
- **High School Performance by Year.** Lower 2020-21 achievement IEP rates for English I, Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology (2020-21 first year of testing but low rate). (Exhibit 3l)
- **ELA: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3m-n)
- **Math: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3o-p)

### Graduation and Dropout

- **IEP Graduation Rate.** Lower IEP graduation rate compared to state. (Exhibit 3q)
- **Graduation Rate by Disability.** Relatively lower graduation rates for ED, speech/language and autism. (Exhibit 3r)
- **IEP Dropout Rate.** Higher dropout rate than state. (Exhibit 3s)

### Suspension

- **In-School Suspension (ISS) Rate.** Higher ISS for SLD and autism, and high risk ratio for

black students (Exhibit 3t)

- **Out-of-School Suspension Disproportionality.** 2020-21 risk ratios for black students of 2.61 for OSS less than 10 days and 2.16 for total disciplinary removals. Note: A district representative believes these are due to charter school students or miscoding. However, the data was not included in the district's submission to the Council team and impacts the district's status and potential fiscal IDEA consequences. (Exhibit 3u)

#### Unexcused Absences

- **Unexcused Absences.** IEP rates for unexcused absences increase for over 30 days from 6<sup>th</sup> grade on, and are especially higher at 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, which could portend higher dropout potential. (Exhibit 3v)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability.** Rates above 30 days are highest for students with ED, and rates of 11-30 days are higher for areas of SLD, OHI, and ED. (Exhibit 3w)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability and Race/Ethnicity.** Absence rates over 30 days are highest for black students. Analyze this data further to determine the extent to which these absences occur by grade. (Exhibit 3x)

#### Educational Environments

- **Early Childhood (EC) General Educational Environments.** Higher district rate (23 percent) of children with IEPs educated in general education most of the time compared to state reported rate (9.7 percent). District reported rate is lower than the nation and state target; state reported rate is lower also than the state target. (Exhibit 3y) Investigate reasons for the different rates reported by the state and district.
- **Separate EC Class.** Validate district data showing zero students in ESS classrooms for young children in light of the numerous special program EC teachers also reported. (Exhibit 3y)
- **EC Setting by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher rate of Asian children (5.07 risk ratio) in EC classes most of the time compared to others, and higher percentage of Hispanic (2.1 risk ratio) and black children (1.96 risk ratio) receive most of their services in another location. (Exhibit 3z and 3aa)
- **School-Age Separate Schools.** Although district data reported 0.15 percent of students in this setting, other data showed students with IEPs in one school comprised 90 percent of enrollment, which would qualify the school as separate in nature. Have this data set investigated and corrected as appropriate. (Exhibit 3bb)
- **Educational Environments by Grade.** The pattern of inclusive instruction slowly increases from kindergarten to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade when students are almost entirely educated outside of special program classes in high school, except in 12<sup>th</sup> grade when students remain in school to receive postsecondary transition services. This raises the question of how students are prepared and supported to receive more instruction in general education and whether this change should be initiated in earlier grades. (Exhibit 3cc)

- **Educational Environments by Disability Area.** Students with autism and ID have very small rates in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to those with SLD, ED and OHI. (Exhibit 3dd)
  - **General Education At Least 80 Percent of Time: District Rate Compared to Nation.** The district's autism, ID and OHI rates are below national rates, while ED is higher and SLD is about the same. (Exhibit 3ee)
  - **General Education Less than 40 Percent of Time.** The district's autism, and OHI rates are far above national rates. (Exhibit 3ff)
  - **Educational Environments by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher percentages of white and Asian students are educated in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to others. (Exhibit 3gg) Using a risk ratio, black students are 2.37 times more likely to be educated in general education 40-79 percent of the day. (Exhibit 3hh)
  - **Educational Environments by English Language/Not English Language Status.** Non-ELs are 3.9 times more likely than ELs to be educated in general education 80 percent of more of the time and ELs are 4.07 times more likely than non-ELs to be educated in general education 40 percent to 79 percent of the time.
- b. **Data Analysis and Reports.** Develop user-friendly summary reports for the district's leadership showing data like those in this section of the report, and others as appropriate. As part of this process, address data not provided to the Council team and the many students throughout the above data analysis that were missing, e.g., 179 students with unexcused absences for whom no grade was available. District personnel who submitted data to the Council would be a good resource for understanding this problem. The absence of this data makes the Council's analysis incomplete and could change results significantly with the inclusion of missing data. Investigate the district's electronic data collection system for possible edits that would show errors without entry of all required data fields. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1g.) Also, ensure data includes district charter schools, and all OSS reporting reflects school practices and does not have entry errors.
- c. **Monitoring and Accountability.** Incorporate into the district's key performance indicators targets for critical areas represented in this section by student subgroups. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1h.)



#### IV. Promoting Achievement and Wellbeing of Students with IEPs

This section of the Council team’s report focuses on EBRPSS practices that affect the achievement and wellbeing of students with disabilities. It begins with research that supports the importance of inclusive instruction and EBRPSS’ practices that influence the district’s effectiveness. This discussion includes supports the district provide to students with IEPs in the areas of reading and social-emotional/behavior, and to English learners with IEPs. It also includes information on the district’s configuration of special education instruction; postsecondary transition services and activities; professional learning; and parent support and engagement.

##### Research Supporting Inclusive Instruction Effectiveness

An abundance of research is available to guide effective school practices. As MTSS provides a foundation for high quality instruction and social/emotional well-being for all students, the structure must also support and enhance inclusive education to promote higher achievement and well-being for students with disabilities.

##### Focus on Young Children

“Most 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities learn best when they attend preschools alongside their age-mates without disabilities to the greatest extent possible. These settings provide both language and behavioral models that assist in children’s development and help all children learn to be productively engaged with diverse peers.”<sup>40</sup> Studies have shown that when young children with disabilities are included in the regular classroom setting, they demonstrate higher levels of social play; are more likely to initiate activities; and show substantial gains in key skills—cognitive skills, motor skills, and self-help skills. Participating in activities with typically developing peers allows children with disabilities to learn through modeling, and this learning helps them prepare for the real world. Researchers have found that typically developing children in inclusive classrooms are better able to accept differences and are more likely to see their classmates achieving despite their disabilities. They are also more aware of others’ needs.<sup>41</sup> The importance of inclusive settings is underscored by the federal mandate, which requires that the extent to which young children (three to five years of age) receive most of their services in regular early childhood programs be included as an SPP indicator.

##### Schoolwide Integrated Framework

The Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center summarized succinctly the elements needed to give students a foundation of learning that will help them build a career later in life.

Thirty years of research shows us that when all students are learning together (including those with the most extensive needs) AND are given the appropriate

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<sup>40</sup> California’s Statewide Task Force on Special Education, *One System: Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students*, March 2015, retrieved from <http://www.smcoe.org/assets/files/about-smcoe/superintendents-office/statewide-special-education-task-force/Task%20Force%20Report%205.18.15.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Ronnie W. Jeter, “The Benefits of Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs,” retrieved from <http://www.turben.com/article/83/274/The-Benefits-of-Inclusion-in-Early-Childhood-Programs>.

instruction and supports, ALL students can participate, learn, and excel within grade-level general education curriculum, build meaningful social relationships, achieve positive behavioral outcomes, and graduate from high school, college and beyond. How do we transform education to achieve these goals? According to the research, it takes administrative leadership, multi-tiered systems of support, family and community partnership, an inclusive educational framework, including organizational structure and school culture, and policies and practices providing the backbone to these features.<sup>42</sup>

Research posted by the SWIFT Center shows that inclusive education benefits all students.<sup>43</sup> Some of the research specifies that--

- Time spent engaged in the general education curriculum is strongly and positively correlated with math and reading achievement for students with disabilities
- Students with autism in inclusive settings scored significantly higher on academic achievement tests when compared to students with autism in self-contained settings.
- Students without disabilities made significantly greater progress in reading and math when served in inclusive settings.
- Students who provided peer supports for students with disabilities in general education classrooms demonstrated positive academic outcomes, such as increased academic achievement, assignment completion, and classroom participation.

The Center has also published research supporting the SWIFT domains and core features: administrative leadership; multi-tiered system of supports; integrated education framework; family and community engagement; and inclusive policy structures and practices.<sup>44</sup>

### Massachusetts Outcome Study

A comprehensive study of school districts in Massachusetts found that students with IEPs educated in general education classrooms at least 80 percent of the school day appeared to outperform similar students who were not included to the same extent in general education classrooms with their non-disabled peers. On average, these students earned higher scores on the statewide assessment (MCAS), graduated high school at higher rates, and were more likely to remain in their local school districts longer than students who were educated in substantially separate placements 40 percent or less of the day in a general education classroom. These

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<sup>42</sup> The SWIFT Center, which is associated with the University of Kansas, received grants from the U.S. Department of Education totaling more than \$41 million to help states, districts, and schools make sure all children, including students of color and those with disabilities, have access to all that education has to offer. Retrieved from <https://iod.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/InclusiveEd/researchsupport-final.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* The posting includes all research citations and full references.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

findings were consistent across elementary, middle, and high school years, as well as across subject areas.<sup>45</sup>

### National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

Similarly, the 10-year National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS 2) found that, while more time spent in general education classrooms was associated with lower *grades* for students with disabilities, compared to their non-disabled peers, students who spent more time in general settings were closer to grade level on standardized math and language *tests* than were students with disabilities who spent more time in separate settings.<sup>46</sup>

### Value of General Education for Learning

Although the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are no longer used in Louisiana, their fundamental goal – to create a culture of high expectations for all students – continues to resonate. This vision was specifically applied to students with disabilities, who must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. This outcome is not possible without the supports and accommodations that students with disabilities need to meet high academic standards and fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in ELA (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and mathematics, such as the following –

- **Instruction and related services** designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and enable them to access the general education curriculum.
- **Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel** who are prepared and qualified to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, and individualized instruction and support.
- **Instructional supports for learning** that are based on principles of universal design for learning (UDL), which fosters student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing diverse avenues of action and expression.<sup>47</sup>
- **Instructional accommodations** that reflect changes in materials (e.g., assistive technology) or procedures that do not change or dilute the standards but allow students to learn within the standards framework.

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Hehir & Associates (2014, August) Review of Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: A Synthesis Report, Boston, Massachusetts, retrieved at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/hehir/2014-09synthesis.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> This research was based on the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of a nationally representative sample of more than 11,000 youth ages 13 through 16 who were receiving special education services in grade seven or above when the study began in 2001. Review of Special Education in the Houston Independent School District, Thomas Hehir & Associates Boston, Massachusetts, page 25, retrieved at [http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/7946/HISD\\_\\_Special\\_Education\\_Report\\_2011\\_Final.pdf](http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/7946/HISD__Special_Education_Report_2011_Final.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> UDL is defined as “a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.” by Higher Education Opportunity Act (PL 110-135). See the National Center on Universal Design for Learning at <http://www.udlcenter.org/>.

Learning within general education helps students with disabilities have the full range of courses, activities, lessons, and materials routinely available. These are accessible to students with when they are actively engaged in learning the content and skills that are being taught to all students. To participate with success in general education, students may need additional services, such as instructional supports, accommodations, scaffolding, assistive technology, and other services. With a universal design for learning (UDL) approach, information is presented in varied ways, allowing multiple avenues for learning and expression.

When special educators teach students from multiple grades in a single self-contained class, it is difficult for them to focus on each grade's content standards with any depth or effectiveness. When schools are organized in an inclusive manner, on the other hand, they are better able to support students with various disabilities to attend the school and classrooms they would otherwise attend as their nondisabled peers. This model enables more students with disabilities to attend schools in their community, supports a more natural distribution of students with disabilities at each school, and reduces transportation time and costs. Still, general education instruction must be meaningful for students with disabilities, and their presence in the classroom, alone, is insufficient to make it so. While some students may need separate instruction for varying amounts of time, fewer will have this need when schools embrace inclusivity.

### **Braided Funding in Pittsburgh**

The Pittsburgh public schools educate 89.9 percent of its PK children in a regular early childhood classroom by braiding funds from various public grant programs. Rather than differentiating between teachers in Head Start, state prekindergarten, and other types of funded prekindergarten programs, the district braids all funding sources to support the total cost of classroom services, regardless of the eligibility of individual children in the class. Using this method, students who would otherwise be educated in separate classrooms and programs according to funding source now attend school together with the same teacher. The district tracks its cost allocations to ensure there is no duplicate funding of service costs, and each funding source is charged its fair share of program and administrative costs. Pittsburgh also ensures that all prekindergarten teachers meet the highest credentialing requirements for any funding source and are paid accordingly. The same is true for other program requirements.<sup>48</sup> It is noteworthy that the Pittsburgh Public Schools' EC children with IEPs exceed or come within 9 percentage points of each outcome measure for acquisition/use of knowledge/skills, positive social/emotional skills, and use of appropriate behavior.

### **EBRPSS Support for Inclusive Instruction at the Early Childhood Level**

The information below addresses how EBRPSS supports teaching and learning among students with disabilities to improve their academic attainment and social/emotional well-being within general education and in separate classes and schools. To put this information into context, relevant data reported above is summarized in Exhibit 4a.

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<sup>48</sup> Retrieved from <https://cifr.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ThinkingOutsideTheBucketBraidedFundingInclusiveOpportunitiesForStudentsWithDisabilitiesIFF2016.pdf>. Also see <https://pdg.grads360.org/services/PDCService.svc/GetPDCDocumentFile?fileId=26705>

**Exhibit 4a. Summary of Data Relevant to Achievement of Young Children with IEPs**

- **Early Childhood Achievement.** Lower achievement of young children with IEPs compared to state targets and state rates. (Exhibits 3a and 3b)
- **Early Childhood (EC) General Educational Environments.** Higher district rate (23 percent) of children with IEPs educated in EC general education most of the time compared to state reported rate (9.7 percent). District reported rate is lower than the nation and state target; state reported rate is lower also than the state rate. (Exhibit 3y)
- **Separate EC Class.** Zero students in ESS classrooms for young children. (Validate if accurate) (Exhibit 3y)
- **EC Setting by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher rate of Asian children (5.07 risk ratio) in EC classes most of the time compared to others, and higher percentage of Hispanic (2.1 risk ratio) and black children (1.96 risk ratio) receive most of their services in another location. (Exhibit 3z and 3aa)

When asked to provide written information to the Council team regarding EBRPSS initiatives and training designed to improve instruction for early childhood using an inclusive model, EBRPSS representatives shared –

The Exceptional Student Services (EES) department offers inclusive preschool classes. The PreK inclusion classes which contain both typical and nontypical students offer a welcoming learning environment that supports the diverse academic, social, emotional, and communication needs of all students. Teachers receive ongoing professional development at the district level with other teachers of the general education curriculum and at the department level. Some of those professional developments include training on Literacy, The CLASS (Observational Tool), IEP development, Prek behavior strategies, and Teaching Strategies Gold.

**Professional Learning and Support**

Three of the four professional learning programs associated with early childhood that were on the list shared with the Council team had a focus on social/emotional learning and positive behavior intervention strategies. (Sanford-Harmony for Preschool, Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention, and Social/Emotional Skills in Early Childhood). No information was provided regarding core instruction and tiered intervention provided to address achievement gaps.

**Focus Group Feedback**

Focus group participants provided the following feedback regarding children with IEPs and their educational support.

- **PreK Curriculum.** There was considerable confusion about the curriculum special educators are to use for students who are likely to participate in an alternate assessment. There is a perception that special educators for lower grade self-contained classes are to use the regular curriculum, even though that does not make sense for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- **Increase Inclusive Instruction.** There was some agreement that more students could be

educated within general education classes with a shift of human and material resources to support that instructional environment.

- **Homebased Itinerant Instruction.** The district has not been able to provide in-school instruction for all children three to five years of age who have IEPs specifying self-contained classrooms. As a result, when “seats” are not available, young children are educated at home with itinerant instruction. One reason involves personnel shortages generally and child specific nurses particularly. There have been discussions with contractual agencies to facilitate private nurses working with children at home to accompany the child at school. However, this approach has not been consistently successful. Another reason for home itinerant instruction is the lack of available seats in self-contained classrooms, especially for three-year-old children. The district has a memorandum of understanding with day care and Head Start centers to support EBRPP’s provision of special education to children with IEPs. Also, with state funding the district has enabled some childcare centers to use district schools. Additional support would be useful to improve instruction for young children, including those at childcare and Head Start sites, using evidence-based curriculum.

### Supporting Effective Inclusive Education for School-Aged Students

Previously reported data are shown in exhibit 4b to provide a context for the information in this section. The data summary addresses disability demographics, achievement, graduation/dropout, suspensions, and unexcused absences.

#### Exhibit 4b. Summary of Data Relevant to Achievement of School-Aged Students with IEPs

##### Achievement

- ELA and Math Proficiency. Low performance of students with IEPs. (Exhibit 3g-h)
- **ELA/Math Achievement by Grades.** Lower IEP achievement rates for students with IEPs after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. (Exhibit 3i)
- **ELA Proficiency for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3j)
- **Math Proficiency for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3k)
- **High School Proficiency by Year.** Lower 2020-21 achievement IEP rates for English I, Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology (2020-21 first year of testing but low rate). (Exhibit 3l)
- **ELA: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3m-n)
- **Math: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3o-p)

##### Graduation and Dropout

- **IEP Graduation Rate.** Lower IEP graduation rate compared to state. (Exhibit 3q)
- **Graduation Rate by Disability.** Relatively lower graduation rates for ED, speech/language and autism. (Exhibit 3r)
- **IEP Dropout Rate.** Higher dropout rate than state. (Exhibit 3s)

##### Suspension

- **In-School Suspension (ISS) Rate.** Higher ISS for SLD and autism, and high risk ratio for black students (Exhibit 3t)
- **Out-of-School Suspension Disproportionality.** 2020-21 risk ratios for black students of 2.61 for OSS less than 10 days and 2.16 for total disciplinary removals. Note: A district representative believes these are due to charter school students. However, the data was not included in the district's submission to the Council team and impacts the district's status and potential fiscal IDEA consequences. (Exhibit 3u)

#### Unexcused Absences

- **Unexcused Absences.** IEP rates for unexcused absences increase for over 30 days from 6<sup>th</sup> grade on. (Exhibit 3v)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability.** Rates above 30 days are highest for students with ED, and rates of 11-30 days are higher for areas of SLD, OHI, and ED. (Exhibit 3w)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability and Race/Ethnicity.** Absence rates over 30 days are highest for black students. (Exhibit 3x)

#### Educational Environments

- **School-Age Separate Schools.** Although district data reported 0.15 percent of students in this setting, other data showed students with IEPs in one school comprised 90 percent of enrollment, which would qualify the school as separate in nature. Have this data set investigated and corrected as appropriate. (Exhibit 3bb)
- **Educational Environments by Grade.** The pattern of inclusive instruction slowly increases from kindergarten to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade when students are almost entirely educated outside of special program classes in high school, except in 12<sup>th</sup> grade when students remain in school to receive postsecondary transition services. (Exhibit 3cc)
- **Educational Environments by Disability Area.** Students with autism and ID have very small rates in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to those with SLD, ED and OHI. (Exhibit 3dd)
- **General Education At Least 80 Percent of Time: District Rate Compared to Nation.** The district's autism, ID and OHI rates are below national rates, while ED is higher and SLD is about the same. (Exhibit 3ee)
- **General Education Less than 40 Percent of Time.** The district's autism, and OHI rates are far above national rates. (Exhibit 3ff)
- **Educational Environments by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher percentages of white and Asian students are educated in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to others. (Exhibit 3gg) Using a risk ratio, black students are 2.37 times more likely to be educated in general education 40-79 percent of the day. (Exhibit 3hh)
- **Educational Environments by English Language/Not English Language Status.** Non-ELs are 3.9 times more likely than ELs to be educated in general education 80 percent or more of the time and ELs are 4.07 times more likely than non-ELs to be educated in general education 40 percent to 79 percent of the time.

Information in Section I of this report addressed district challenges in providing high quality instruction framed by MTSS. As falling achievement outcomes for students with IEPs show, the pandemic's impact has had far reaching effects and interrupted gains students have made over the past several years. This circumstance makes it even more necessary to improve "first

instruction” by both general and special educators—including increasingly intensive supplementary interventions – to enable students with disabilities accelerate their achievement to reduce their gaps with expected standards. Low reading achievement by grade 3 is an important indicator of later school success, as well as a predictor of special education need. Given the relationship between high quality inclusive instruction and achievement, the Council team focused on ways in which the district is focused on this approach and using an interdepartmental approach to support school personnel and their young students with IEPs.

### Written Guidance

When asked to share districtwide initiatives to support instruction to all students based on core curriculum aligned with state standards that include students with IEPs and ELs, district representatives provided documents under some 20 categories that focused on disability and EL groups. All but two of these documents were developed by LDOE. One EBRPSS document pertained to professional development, which is addressed further below. A second file included a two-volume newsletter that focused on diverse learners and students with significant disabilities.

#### **Strategies for Success: A Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities**

EBRPSS shared the comprehensive document, LDOE’s *Strategies for Success: A Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities*, which contains evidence-based strategies and resources for supporting instruction of students in general education. One strategy calls for improving academic achievement and high-quality instruction by building a culture of achievement. This requires school leaders to help their staff believe in the potential of each student, and all building adults share the responsibility for every student’s achievement, including those with disabilities. Key actions and resources are given build structures for increasing collaboration among educators across disciplines, grade levels, and areas of expertise to solving complex problems, and giving students high-quality instruction and specially designed instruction. The resources include 10 steps to implement inclusive practices, finding time for collaboration and co-planning, and a vendor professional development course catalog.

The second strategy relates to the provision of high-quality instruction across all settings. The document describes the value of UDL and high-yield instructional strategies, including strategies for creating inclusive schools, and training general/special educators to implement need-driven supports/services. It also emphasizes systemic monitoring of progress and adjusting intensity, location, and frequency of supports/services based on need. Resources are also linked to support implementation. Finally, readers are urged to communicate a vision of excellence for coordinated supports/services, stating –

Doing so requires not only new practices among school personnel and service providers, but new thinking as well. A person-centered strategy is based on a student’s specific needs rather than a global diagnosis or an abstract model of how services should be delivered. By building a vision of excellence predicated on addressing specific student needs, regular and special education teachers and specialists provide coordinated supports and related services that benefit students during core instruction



The third strategy concerns the identification and implementation of specially designed supports/related services, with three implementation strategies: 1) coordinated, integrated, and seamless assists within the general education setting; 2) supplementary, aligned activities across all settings that reinforce student learning and increase independence; and 3) wider continuum of support promoting success across multiple life domains. Each of these implementation strategies are fully described along with best practice examples that highlight supports for students within the general education setting.

While this information is excellent, it was not clear from interviews and focus group meetings how EBRPSS is using these strategies and they are being communicated and supported through professional development. The strategies also do not address ways to reconfigure and transition services to maximize the placement of students within general education classrooms at least 80 percent of the time, making sure that the instruction and support they receive are effective and promote high quality teaching and learning. There are various aspects to this challenge.

First, is the interplay between IEP team decisions that result in a student spending a significant time outside of general education are based on knowledge of current available resources. Without an understanding of additional or different resources that could be made available to support learning for students in general education for most of the day, the IEP team is most likely to rely on participants' current understanding of placement options. Changing this dynamic requires planning to show how services could be effectively redesigned, along with training and supports for implementation.

Second, a theme of focus group feedback concerned students who were not making much academic progress even though they were meeting their IEP goals. One reaction to this dilemma was to increase the rigor of IEP goals and to provide more training in this area. However, IEPs and their goals typically do not describe the specific specially designed instruction that a student will receive to meet their goals. The strategies described in LDOE's *Strategies for Success: A Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities* if localized for EBRPSS could support the description of more specific specialized instruction on student's IEPs and lead to improved practices and higher achievement overall.

### **Bulletin 1903. Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia**

The state's dyslexia guidance also provides an important instructional roadmap that is relevant to students with dyslexia who receive special education instruction/support primarily in general education. The continuation/initiation of this instruction for students with these characteristics is necessary for them to improve their reading achievement.

### **Intervention Programs**

EBRPSS has various intervention programs that are designed to support students achieving below expectations. These interventions are not exclusive for students with disabilities and may be provided to students educated in specialized programs as well. Several of these interventions are described below.

- **Achieve 3000.** This supplemental online literacy program provides nonfiction reading content to students in grades preK-12 and focuses on building phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills.

- **EL Education Skills Block.** Supports English learners, students with disabilities, and readers significantly behind grade level. Students with weak connections between speech and print, are taught foundational language skills that support reading development. The students are described as needing explicit, repetitive, structured instruction to support the neurological connections linking sounds of spoken words (phonemes) to the print code or letters that represent these sounds. The curriculum focuses on phonemic awareness, mapping phoneme to grapheme, and multisensory techniques.
- **WordStudio – Foundational Literacy Lessons for Grades 6-12.** Offers secondary teachers a simple approach to improving essential reading skills that includes instructor-led videos and guided and independent practice. The program: builds phonics, decoding, and word recognition skills; can be used independently or for small group instruction; and provides teachers with extensive support materials.

### Focus Group Feedback

Various participants recognized that placement decisions have changed to become more inclusive over the last twenty years or so. However, there were concerns that some principals judge students based on how well they achieve to influence how receptive they are to welcoming students with low achievement in their schools. The following concerns also emerged.

- **Partnership Enterprise.** There was a desire to have ESS personnel improve instruction. But most EBRPSS students are educated in general education at least 80 percent of the time. Therefore, the efforts of special educators alone will never be sufficient to improve student achievement for these students. Rather, an inclusive professional learning and instructional support approach for general, EL, and ESS teachers is needed for this purpose.
- **Specially Designed Instruction.** There was consensus that the district does not have a clear vision and articulation of specially designed instructional models for reading and math. For example, multisensory reading interventions that are most successful and necessary for students with significant reading related disabilities are not available. A closely related comment from the ESS teacher survey stated the following:

Virtually all of the students in ESS do not know how to read and should be getting explicit systematic and sequential phonics based instruction that teaches them sound-symbol correspondences from the simple to the advanced including all of the syllable types, phonological and phonemic awareness practice, practice in fluency as they learn words, vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension development, and LOTS of handwriting and writing composition practice based on their explicit reading instruction.

- **Supporting Inclusive Education.** Comments from the fall 2021 general education teacher survey reinforced the partnership required for students educated most of the time in general education classes, the timing of pull-out instruction, and challenges to learning about the needs of students with IEPs.

... [W]hen students are mainstreamed in the regular classroom setting, we need for the

ESS Teacher's to come to the classroom and provide support for those students and not just send the paraprofessional on a daily basis. Also, students are pulled out of the regular classroom during their ELA/math instructional time and parents are complaining why their child is not learning.

I have an inclusion teacher in the classroom with me she is not the folder holder for many of my students, so I get limited information about my students' academic and behavioral history to help me plan my accommodations and interventions.

- **High School Transition to Increased Time in General Education.** For Louisiana students with IEPs to receive a regular diploma through the traditional pathway they must earn Carnegie credits through general education classes. There were some concerns that a group of students who were learning core curriculum from ESS teachers in eighth grade transitioned to general education classes for this purpose in ninth grade. Others believe that students who take a regular assessment in self-contained programs transition when students move from elementary to middle school grades. In both circumstances, these students typically are not prepared for this sudden and sometimes difficult transition.
- **Study Skills Classes.** The use of study skills classes varies from school to school with no common expectations for their use. Some use the time to monitor grades, teach studying and notetaking skills, implement Achieve 3000 and other reading/math interventions. Well regarded interventions that have been provided in the past (Read 180 and Language!) are no longer available for students and comparable reading interventions are not available.
- **Training and Support.** General educators of students with IEPs have not had adequate training to target their instruction to student needs and how to use available resources. Generally, teachers are not aware of effective co-teaching strategies and models. Schools with strong principal leadership (such as Woodlawn Elementary School) and varying support from compliance facilitators, behavior strategists, and instructional specialists support the use of co-teaching. However, there is no districtwide vision or support for its implementation as well as other models for strong general/special education collaboration. Also, there appears to be no mechanism for collecting and addressing the concerns of general and special educators who are attempting to provide a high level of instruction but become frustrated with challenges they do not know how to overcome, e.g., enabling students with IEPs to access the regular curriculum, large caseloads, conflicting responsibilities, managing paraprofessionals, scheduled common planning time, etc. The ESS department alone cannot lead a redesign movement as this requires the participation of all educational personnel. Reportedly, the chief of staff and ESS associate superintendent are working on a vision of co-teaching and course sequencing. However, at the time of the Council team's visit it was not clear who else was involved in this effort.
- **Common Planning Time.** Support for scheduled common planning time for general/special educators to meet to plan for the instruction of common students appeared to be sporadic across the district. Some mentioned the use of PLCs for this purpose. Others arranged for this activity on an ad hoc or after school basis. A major challenge for this necessary collaboration appeared to be the presence of adequate staffing.

- **Parent Survey.** The ESS department's fall 2021 parent survey included a comment that more skilled general educators are needed to meet the needs of students with IEPs within general education classes.

### Educating School-Aged Students in Separate Classes

The provision of special education instruction is often predicated on the theory that students with common characteristics can be matched to a specific program. Such programs often include students with a range of grades, achievement, and behavior, as well as students with characteristics that fall between program types. It is not unusual for students in self-contained classes to have the same teacher (barring resignations/retirements) for four to five years. Such specialization can sometimes perpetuate the myth that student needs can be met with correct program matches based on a prescribed set of characteristics. For some students there may be an incentive to remove them from primary instruction in general education because there is a specialized program designed for students with their characteristics.

Too often if a student is failing it is presumed to be because the student is simply in the wrong program, so a new one is sought to provide a better fit. In such circumstances, there is pressure to create more specialized programs rather than creating a broader framework for instruction and behavioral supports within general education classrooms. Furthermore, students are required with this kind of specialization to transfer from the school they would otherwise attend to another school housing the program identified for such students. If that school does not have classes at each grade level, students then must transfer to another school. As a result, students having the most difficulty with transitions are required to transfer schools more frequently than other students.

### Separate Programs for Students with Disabilities

The ESS Handbook at pages 17, 18 and 20 describes the following special education instructional programs:

- **Preschool Program.** The ESS Preschool Program is a free service of the EBRPSS Public School System. Our program is designed to serve disabled students ages three to six years old. This program offers opportunities for activities and routines, curriculum, and planning that are research-based, developmentally appropriate, and address the early childhood standards for language/communication; self-help skills; social interactions, coping skills, and self-regulation skills; safety issues; pre-academic skills; gross motor development; and fine motor development.
- **Autism.** This program is designed to meet the unique needs of students on the Pervasive Developmental Disorder Spectrum relative to communication; social; sensory; behavior; and cognition. Instruction is aligned with academic and extended standards but with modified/adapted materials. Students are provided the appropriate rate of instruction so that the pace and rigor of the subject matter matches the skill level of the student.
- **Significant Disabilities.** This program is designed to meet the unique cognitive and medical needs of identified students utilizing adapted/modified materials. Identified students address

alternate assessment and extended standards.

- **Community-Based Program.** This program addresses academics and gives students opportunities to learn and practice pre-vocational (middle school), vocational (high school) and recreational/leisure skills in the community. Participation allows for success in post-secondary activities.
- **Behavior Program.** This program is a team of behavioral strategists who promote effective, positive behavioral changes in students by providing research-based strategies and interventions to students and schools. The team conducts professional development in classroom management techniques, crisis prevention and other related topics for the sole purpose of developing skills, replacement behaviors, and establishing effective relationships with emotional and at-risk students. Being proactive, behavioral strategists consult with teachers, school administrators, and staff to establish preventative, approaches to address problematic behaviors.
- **Hearing and Visually Impaired Programs.** Students receive services in settings ranging from consultation with regular/special education classroom teachers to special classes in a regular school setting. Students who need daily instruction from a teacher for hearing or for visual impairments are placed at a “cluster” site that can facilitate daily resource instruction and provide for continued utilization of experienced regular classroom teachers from year to year.

#### Programs by Type and Number of Special Educators and Schools

The Council team asked EBRPSS to provide for each special education program model for students with IEPs the grade level and total the number of models by school. EBRPSS data listed for each special educator the grade and program of service in an excel document with 3,727 lines of data. Three categories (inclusion, and speech/only) involve teachers with students who are educated in general education for most of the school day. Remaining are six specialized programs for elementary, middle and high school grades and five for early childhood. Several of these programs were not described in the above referenced ESS Handbook. The website did not list any specific early childhood program. Exhibit 4c lists each program contained in the Excel document.

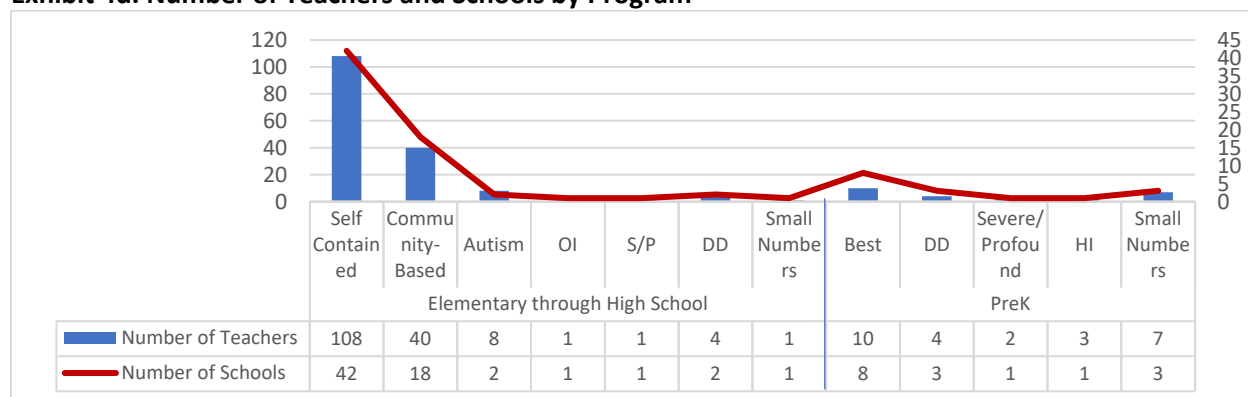
**Exhibit 4c. EBRPSS Programs**

Elementary, Middle & Secondary		Early Childhood	
Self-contained	Orthopedic Impairment (OI)	Best	Hearing Impairment (HI)
Autism	Severe/Profound (S/P)	S/P	Small Numbers
Small Numbers	Developmental Disability (DD)	DD	

The Council team organized the EBRPSS data for the above listed programs by school and by each associated teacher. Exhibit 4d shows the number of teachers reported by EBRPSS who teach in one of the above listed programs. Overall, these programs have 189 special educators, including 26 for early childhood. For elementary-high school grades, the generic self-contained program is the largest, with 108 teachers at 42 schools. The community-based program is the next largest, with 40 special educators at 18 schools. The remaining programs range from 8 to 1 special educator at 1 to 2 schools. For early childhood, the Best program is largest with 10 special

educators at 8 schools, and “small numbers” is next with 7 special educators at 3 schools. The remaining programs have 2 to 4 special educators at 1 to 3 schools.

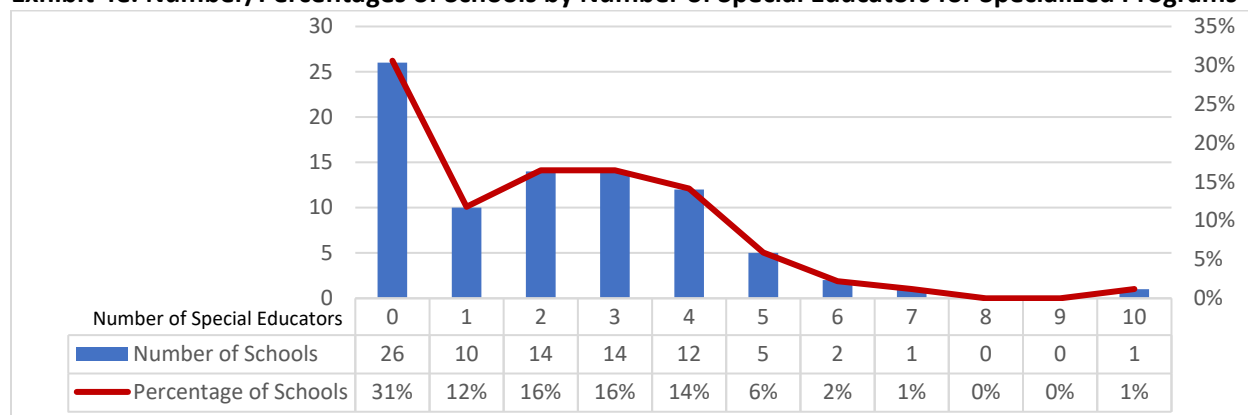
**Exhibit 4d. Number of Teachers and Schools by Program**



The Council team also analyzed the EBRPSS data to show the number and percentages of schools by the number of special educators assigned to a specialized program. As shown in Exhibit 4e, of the 85 schools, the largest proportion (26 schools or 31 percent) have no specialized program that would require an ESS teacher. For the remaining schools, 10 have 1 special educator; 14 have 2 or 3 educators each; 12 have 4 educators, 2 have 6 educators, and 1 school has 7 and 10 educators each.

This data shows that while 31 percent of EBRPSS schools host no specialized programs, 10 percent host programs associated with 5 to 10 special educators. While not uncommon among the school systems the Council has reviewed, this configuration is one to consider for its impact on teaching and learning within the school communities having larger number of specialized programs.

**Exhibit 4e. Number/Percentages of Schools by Number of Special Educators for Specialized Programs**



**Focus Group Feedback**

The comments below reflect interview and focus group feedback about EBRPSS’ use of special programs that educate students with IEPs in general education class less than 40 percent of the time, and in separate schools.

- **Communication.** Educators in specialized programs communicate with each other during

professional development activities where they can also request materials. In most circumstances, students attend general education classes for at least a small amount of time during the day. Participants generally agreed that if more instructional supports were available in general education classes fewer students would need as much time receiving instruction in separate classes. Teachers agreed that fewer separate programs are available at the high school level and students are not prepared for this transition.

- **Alignment with Standard Curriculum.** There was a perception that in Louisiana all students must learn based on the standard curriculum until third grade regardless of having a most significant disability, making them eligible for an alternate assessment. Louisiana Connectors provide aligned pathways for students with significant disabilities to work toward Louisiana Student Standards. According to the state’s document, connectors published for English language, mathematics, and science provide developmentally appropriate content for all grades and courses while maintaining high expectations for all students.<sup>49</sup> These connectors begin at kindergarten and continue through twelfth grade.
- **Large Caseloads.** There were concerns that elementary level teachers educate a too large number of students who are in different grades, which has made it difficult to individualize instruction and give each student the attention needed. This circumstance is also true for resource teachers with students who are from many grades.
- **Administrative Support.** One person supports teachers of students in self-contained classes for students with autism at the elementary level. Once in middle and high schools, students are placed in the cross-categorical community-based program.
- **Movement of Classes.** In some cases, self-contained programs are moved from school to school because of space availability. There are concerns that these students have difficulty with transition and that these changes are disruptive to their learning.
- **Placement.** Participants communicated some challenges but no major concerns about facilitating the placement of students with an IEP specifying a self-contained classroom in a school they would not otherwise attend. Most comments concerned the services and supports students would need at their placement school and making sure they were present upon placement. Typically, the instructional support specialist facilitates this process, but it is not clear if this role is consistent across the district.
- **Separate Schools.** Although they are not designated as separate schools, two EBRPSS schools enroll only or primarily students with IEPs.
  - **Emerge** is a charter school that currently educates students with autism who receive special education in grades kindergarten through second grade, with plans to expand to fifth grade. The school extends the organization’s support for children birth through three and is widely respected by parents. There were concerns, however, that children have difficulty transitioning from Emerge to an EBRPSS regular school because of the setting differences. Also, parents expect the district program to be a replicate of Emerge’s

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<sup>49</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/students-with-disabilities/k-12-louisiana-connectors-for-students-with-significant-disabilities.pdf?sfvrsn=10>

program. District staff are working with parents of transitioning students to prepare them for the various changes that their children will experience.

- **Arlington Preparatory Academy** is listed on the EBRPSS website as a choice option for the “exceptional population” for grades 8 through 12, and lists activities traditionally offered by separate schools for students with IEPs. The school offers transitional training and community-based classes with a very low teacher to student ratio. Students are exposed to meaningful field trips to explore community opportunities. A special focus is placed on work-based learning for exceptional students to gain career experience outside of the classroom. Programs include cheerleading, Special Olympics, and community-based cooking classes among others.<sup>50</sup> According to district data, 83 students have an IEP, 4 have Section 504 plans, and 4 have no special education or 504 status. Although a district representative indicated that the school is not considered to be a separate school for students with disabilities, this data shows otherwise.

### Educating English Learners with Disabilities

The information in this section addresses instruction for English learners with IEPs.

#### SBLC Involvement

ESS’s January 2021 Procedural Handbook includes various procedures for SBLCs and the referral of ELs for special education evaluations and their receipt of specially designed instruction/ related services. The procedures are referenced as “recommendations” and are adapted from LDOE’s EL Program Handbook.

SBLC referrals are appropriate for--

- **Low Achievement.** EL students failing a grade in content classes, or their lack of English proficiency is keeping them from fully accessing the content; or receiving all accommodations and/or classroom modifications but unable to access content.
- **Disability Suspicion Student** suspected of having one or more disabilities for consideration of a possible special education evaluation.
- **Delay Meeting Exit Criteria.** Students with disabilities unable to meet exit criteria after four or more years of EL status and whose disability impacts language acquisition for consideration of exiting from the EL status.
- **Exiting EL Program.** Students exiting a specialized English language program and no longer needing services to determine if there is still a need for specific types of language support.

#### Assessment and Evaluation

ESS’s Procedural Handbook provides special considerations for English learners that supplement regular assessment/evaluation procedures include the following.

- **Collaboration** between EL specialists and typical team members.
- **Multiple Language Forms and Interpreters.** Forms for parents in multiple languages and

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<sup>50</sup> <https://archive.ebrschools.org/ebrschools/arlington-preparatory-academy/>



interpreters offered/provided when needed.

- **Basis of Concern.** Determination of whether a student's difficulties are associated with second language acquisition, multicultural differences, or a disability. This involves a consideration that students are acquiring academic knowledge while acquiring English language skills.
- **Team Considerations.** Having multidisciplinary teams take a strengths-based approach to assessment and take into as explanatory factors language development, acquisition and dominance.
- **Assessors trained in processes/materials for students from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds.** Ideally, examiners are fluent/literate in the student's language and have knowledge of his/her culture. LDOE's English Learner Program Handbook for School System and Charter School Administrators (LDOE EL Handbook) further explains that evaluations are to be given in a student's native language unless it is clearly not feasible to do so, and that the student's English language proficiency be considered to determine appropriate assessments and other evaluation materials.
- **Absence of Assessments in Native Language.** If standardized assessments are unavailable in a student's native language, recommendations for standardized nonverbal measures and nonstandardized assessment techniques, such as the use of an interpreter, and following national professional standards. These actions are to be documented in evaluations/results, as well as recognition that no assessments use bilingual students as the normative group. The English as a Second Language (ESL) department has procedures for translation services for parents and for documents.

LDOE's EL Handbook specifies that it is essential for IEP teams to include participants who have knowledge of the student's language needs and professionals with training, and preferably expertise, in second language acquisition and how to differentiate between student needs stemming from a disability or lack of English language proficiency.

For additional information, the EL Handbook links the U.S. Department of Education's EL Toolkit at Chapter 5, Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities, which has several useful tools, including Tool 2 for considering the influence of language differences and disability on learning behaviors. The tool has an excellent table illustrates 23 student learning behaviors each with corresponding indicators of whether it could represent a language difficult or potential disability.<sup>51</sup> Based on the root cause of these difficulties the most appropriate/effective teaching/learning strategies can be selected. Learning behaviors are grouped for: speaking/oral fluency; phonemic awareness/reading; reading comprehension/vocabulary; writing; spelling; math; handwriting; and behavior.

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<sup>51</sup> The toolkit sourced: Butterfield, J. (2014). *Meeting the needs of English learners with disabilities: Resource Book*. Goleta, CA: Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), on behalf of the SELPA Administrators of California Association. Retrieved from <http://www.sbcselfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/EL-Resource-Book-Revised-6-14.pdf>.

### **Specially Designed Instruction/Service Implications**

The LDOE EL Handbook specifies that ELs with disabilities are to have both the language assistance and disability related services to which they are entitled under federal law. EBRPSS guidance does not include any models for providing English language acquisition development in association with specially designed instruction. For more information the EL Handbook links the U.S. Department of Education’s EL Toolkit at Chapter 5, Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities. This document somewhat addresses this issue by recommending that LEA policies/procedures address whether –

- Each student’s educational program addresses EL language needs and include disability related services designed to address those needs.
- Student progress is measured with respect to language and disability-based goals.

The third tool from the federal EL Toolkit, which addresses service delivery, lists several probing questions regarding the extent to which teachers are trained to some extent in ESL strategies and language acquisition; and whether at least one of an EL’s teachers is trained in appropriate ESL or bilingual strategies to meet the student’s language development as well as disability related needs.

### **IEP Development**

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs, IEP teams must consider whether the IEP of an English learner should include language development goals. The inclusion of at least one team member that has insight into the student’s language needs and is able to differentiate between the student’s disability-related needs and those that stems from the student’s EL status. This might include a speech language pathologist or an individual who specializes in second language acquisition.

Neither the ESS Procedural Handbook (January 2021) nor other district information shared with the Council team appeared to have any specific references about addressing an EL student’s language acquisition in association with his/her specially designed instruction/related services. The federal EL toolkit’s third tool addresses the development of IEPs for ELs with disabilities. The tool has 17 questions to be considered when developing the IEP. These questions cover the student’s dominant language at home; primary language of communication; parent cultural values/beliefs; present levels statement incorporation of use of native language and English; monitoring includes English mastery; goals delineate language used; etc.

### **Translators**

The ESS Handbook includes ESL department procedures for assisting district staff when meeting with parents of EL students who do not speak English. According to these procedures, each region will have a regional translator to assist with translation, and if one is not available another will be available. A process is also specified for translating documents.

### **Focus Group Feedback**

Generally, focus group participants indicated that ELs with disabilities are emersed in English and EBRPSS has no structured and systemic models to support the language acquisition needs of

students with IEPs. In some schools on an ad hoc basis, the EL department, ESS teacher and lead teacher work together to support these students. This limited personnel support does not appear to be sufficient to meet either the LDOE or U.S. Department of Education guidance for supporting the language acquisition needs of students with disabilities.

Additional comments of note are summarized below.

- At some schools the ISS has worked with ESL personnel to support instruction.
- In one school, the ESL department has trained teachers to support student’s English language acquisition. However, it is not clear if the training was comprehensive, included supports for ELs with IEPs, and was sufficient to address the lack of personnel with adequate expertise.
- When parents who are not proficient in English do not bring a translator to a meeting and the school does not have staff to provide translation services, school personnel will request support from the ELL department. Some schools have part-time interpreters on staff. At the pre-kindergarten level, the bilingual speech/language pathologist translates for parents at IEP meetings.

### Social/Emotional and Behavior Support

In response to the Council team’s request for a description of the types of support offered to schools and teachers for students, including those with IEPs, who exhibit behavior challenges described to be beyond the experience of school personnel, three documents were provided.

- **External Behavioral Health Agencies Providing ABA Services in Schools.** ESS developed an agreement with external behavioral health agencies that would permit their behavior analysts to provide services necessary during school hours to assist the student with behavioral health impairments that the evaluator determines are interfering with the student’s ability to thrive in the educational setting. This action is consistent with state law (Act 696) which permits such services at school during school hours if requested by the student’s parent/guardian. EBRPSS is not responsible for the costs of these services.
- **Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities (LASRD) Project.** EBRPSS, as a partner in this project, receives various training and coaching for teachers/educational teams throughout 2021-22. Up to 500 subscriptions are available for website modules/resources, which may be used for training/skill development, and unlimited facilitator emails/calls. Louisiana Autism Quality Indicators for Schools (LAQI) data is collected to assess 63 indicators and eight key areas: collaboration, inclusive practices, environment, curriculum/instruction, communication, behavior, social interaction and transition. The District Capacity Assessment (DCA) tool is used to assist EBRPSS leaders/staff align resources to effectively support LASRD implementation.
- **Insights to Behavior.** This Tier II web-based solution enables district staff to complete a “mini Functional Behavior Assessment” based on 16 questions, and collaboratively create individual behavior plans for students in one-hour or less. The program offers research-based strategies with video demonstrations, tracking tools, and an educational learning component.

EBRPSS was also asked to submit written procedures it uses for implementing special education/related services. One document related to Tiers II and III behavior support planning for positive supports to address challenging behaviors. Information is provided for when a behavior support plan is needed; plan components; functions of behavior; Tiers II and III interventions and planning; website resources for evidence-based interventions; and progress monitoring forms. The document also provided information about a 2015 training to address the most challenging behaviors in schools with a targeted audience of teachers/paraprofessionals in classes for students with emotional disturbance. No updated training information was shared for district personnel available to provide technical assistance to, problem-solving with, or coach teachers who are presented with challenging student behavior beyond the expertise of school and available support staff.

### Focus Group Participants

Participants provided the following feedback regarding support for students with behavioral issues.

- **Increased Behavior Issues.** More behavior problems have been seen this school year, most likely because of COVID restrictions and use of remote learning. There is a perception that students are presenting more severe behavioral issues and these are occurring more frequently with younger children.
- **Behavior Strategists.** There is an appreciation for ESS's behavior strategists, however at the time of our review, of the 13 FTE positions 3 were on leave and 1 position was vacant. As discussed further below, the strategists are each assigned from 1 to 13 schools. There is a desire for the behavior strategists to support students without disabilities as well as those with IEPs or Section 504 plans. Overall, it is perceived that there are too few strategists to meet student and teacher needs. It was also stated that while behavior strategists may make recommendations to address a student's behavior, students' teachers are on the front line for putting the recommendations into practice. Without significant coaching and modeling, it may be difficult for teachers to do so.
- **Students with Severe Emotional and Mental Health Impairments.** Students such as those released from hospital settings require specialized supports that could include medical consultants, nurses, clinical social workers, and ABA specialists to support ESS teachers at their regular assigned campuses.
- **High School Transfers.** At the high school level, there is a perception that students are passed from one school to another to address misbehavior without first putting into place interventions to set the student on a positive direction.
- **Manifestation Determinations.** More support is needed to navigate the manifestation determination process, and classroom teachers need more training and support to proactively address student behavior.
- **Collaboration.** Although other departments have personnel that address social/emotional needs of students, the behavior strategists do not meet with or collaborate with them. (See additional information below under Interdepartmental Collaboration.) Also, various ESS

appraisal personnel also provide counseling services but collaboration with behavior strategists (who have a different supervisor) does not appear to be systemically coordinated.

### Assistive Technology Services and Support

According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, assistive technology (AT) and augmentative/alternative communications (AAC) increase a student's opportunities for a high-quality education, social interactions, and meaningful employment. These provisions also support student learning in a least restrictive environment. Bulletin 1706 specifies that on a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices in a student's home or in other settings is required if the student's IEP team determines that the student needs access to those devices in order to receive FAPE.

Assistive technology staff are currently work with about 615 students from pre-K through high school in both public and private school settings. An assortment of devices and equipment are checked out to students based on their assessments and recommendations. Equipment includes communication devices (static and dynamic), computers, iPads, laptops, switches, touch monitors, single button mice, switch-activated toys, specialized software, and other ADL devices. Staff provide assessment services to charter schools; they do not provide equipment.

Based on procedures shared with the Council team, assessment referrals for students thought to need AT are sent to the pupil appraisal representative assigned to the student's school. An LDOE AT screening checklist is used to documents physical, fine/gross motor, communication, sensory, academic, recreation and leisure, vocational, and self-help areas in which AT may be considered to enable a student with a disability to access the general education curriculum. Based on the areas of student need, the AT assessment includes appropriate related services personnel, and a report is produced.

### Focus Group Participants

Participants gave the following feedback about the provision of assistive technology devices and services.

- **AT Procedure.** The procedure for accessing assistive technology changed to involve the appraisal team to screen a referred student's need for this service. After the screening shows a student's potential need, the AT team evaluates the student and gives the IEP teacher of authority information showing the student's area of need and appropriate AT devices. Based on this information the IEP team is notified and a meeting or arrangement with the parent is made to amend the IEP. If training is needed for the device's use, an AT team representative schedules an appropriate time with the teacher, paraprofessional and parent.
- **Collaboration with Education Technology.** The AT team collaborates with Education Technology personnel to share understanding of various AT devices and how they are used. The Education Technology's help desk is also used to answer AT questions and gather related issues.

## Secondary Transition Services and Support

In Louisiana, school districts are to begin transition-planning for students with IEPs when each student is 15 years old. The planning process includes age-appropriate transition assessments, transition services, courses of study that will reasonably enable students to meet postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to students' transitional needs. Transition services and supports prepare students for employment and independent living through coordinated activities that promote movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

## IEP Compliance and Post School Experience

In addition to the SPP indicators previously discussed (i.e., percentages of students graduating from high school with a regular diploma and students dropping out of high school), the SPP has measures on two indicators that focus on compliance (IEP-related requirements for transition-planning activities,) and on transition outcomes one year after high school. The data below are based on the most recent 2019-20 Performance Profile for EBRPSS published by LDOE.<sup>52</sup>

### IEP Compliance

This SPP indicator measures the percentage of youth aged 15 and above with IEPs with required annual measurable IEP goals and coordinated transition services that will reasonably enable students to meet post-secondary goals. In 2019-20 the state reported the district's rate for this indicator as >99 percent, meeting the state's 100 percent SPP target.

### Outcomes One Year After Students Leave High School

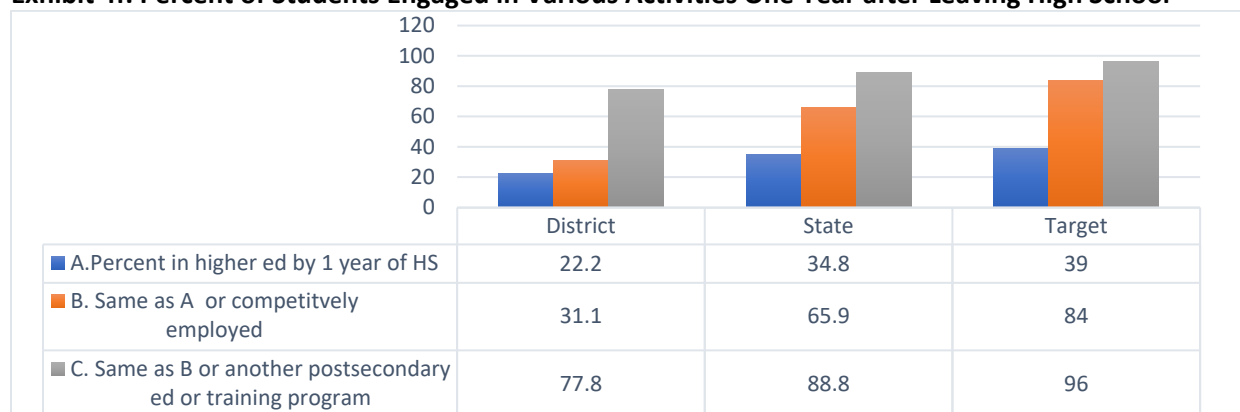
This post-school outcome indicator has targets for the percentages of youth with IEPs engaging in various activities within one year of leaving high school. The data shows that EBRPSS former students performed closer to the state rate and SPP target when all categories analyzed were considered together. Exhibit 4f below shows EBRPSS performance and targets on these activities for the latest 2019-20 SPP state performance report.

- A. Enrolled in Higher Education.** Some 22.2 percent of former EBRPSS students with IEPs met this indicator, compared to 34.8 percent of state students. The district's rate was 4.2 percentage points below the state rate and 16.8 points below the minimum SPP target.
- B. Enrolled in Higher Education or Competitively Employed.** Some 31.1 percent of former district students with IEPs met this indicator, compared to 65.9 percent of state students. EBRPSS' rate was 34.8 percentage points below the state rate and 52.9 points below the SPP minimum target.
- C. Enrolled in Higher Education, Competitively Employed, or Engaged in Other Postsecondary Education or Training Program.** Some 77.8 percent of former district students with IEPs met this indicator, compared to 88.8 percent of state students. EBRPSS' rate was 11 percentage points below the state's rate and 18.2 points below the state target.

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<sup>52</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/special-education-reporting-and-funding>.

**Exhibit 4f. Percent of Students Engaged in Various Activities One Year after Leaving High School**



### Resources and Support

ESS representatives shared a substantial amount of information about the district’s transition services and supports for students to prepare for transition to postsecondary education/training, employment, and independent living. This information helped to give breadth and depth to the Council team’s understanding of these areas. Highlights include the following.

- **Secondary Transition Handbook.** This handbook is a primer for developing the IEP section relating to transition and upon which the SPP indicator’s compliance factors are based. Also included are the various Louisiana graduation pathways, including the high school diploma alternate assessment JumpStart for students with the most significant disabilities (aka April Dunn Act); pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS).
- **Community-based Program Guidebook.** This document describes the use of Unique Learning Curriculum for functional academics; community-based instruction partnered with community businesses/agencies; and occupational opportunities for students with significant disabilities. The document provides 80 pages of detailed information about each of these areas. Eighteen appendix items provide forms and additional implementation details.
- **Transition Curricula**
  - **ACT WorkKeys.** For all students including those with IEPs in 12 high schools, the curriculum, which culminates in a WorkKeys exam. Three courses are used as interventions for students eligible under the April Dunn Act and cover applied math, graphic literacy, and workplace activities.
  - **TeachTown Transition to Adulthood.** Evidence-based instructional strategies/ assessments for middle and high school students with significant cognitive disabilities in domains essential for young adults (personal life, home, vocational, community, and leisure skills).
  - **Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES).** This work development lab is in four high schools giving access to all high school students with significant cognitive disabilities. Through the labs student competitive work potential and interest levels are assessed while exploring various jobs in the areas of computer technology, construction/industrial; processing/production; consumer/ service; and business/marketing.

- **Project Create Summer Internships.** With EBRPSS partner Opportunity Now Youth Services, eligible students with IEPs work with media technology professionals in video production, photography, graphic arts, marketing, and public relations.
- **Transition Month (March) Activities.** The activities included student, parent and service provider offerings in the areas of classroom-based transition; benefits planning; legal status; vocational rehab and pre-ETS services; and fairs for transition services and diversity jobs.
- **EBRPSS Memorandum of Understanding with Louisiana Workforce Commission.** Through this partnership, the Commission works with EBRPSS to coordinate services for students with disabilities, including pre-ETS services such as cross agency training.

### Focus Group Feedback

Focus group participants provided the following feedback about the district's preparation of students for their post high school life.

- **Information for Parents.** There is desire for a program that would help parents understand the available post- secondary resources for their children.
- **PACE Lab.** EBRPSS community-based classes have a PACE lab where students practice skills, learn EBR's bus transit system, have field trips into the community, etc.
- **Pathways to Graduation.** Louisiana's improved pathways to graduation now enables students with disabilities to earn diplomas while engaging in transition activities.
- **Goodwill Industries Partnership.** The district is partnering with Goodwill Industries through the state's rehabilitation agency to support soft skill training and student employment. This partnership has the potential for students to obtain a job with Goodwill post graduation.

### Professional Learning

Learning Forward has developed the third version of its *Standards for Professional Learning*, outlining features of professional learning (PL) that result in effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The standards are based on the seven elements listed in Exhibit 4g.<sup>53</sup>

#### Exhibit 4g. Standards for Professional Learning

**Learning Communities.** Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

**Resources.** Requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

**Learning Designs.** Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

**Outcomes.** Aligns outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

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<sup>53</sup> As a trainee, however, students may meet state requirements and be paid less than the minimum wage. Retrieved from <https://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU>.



**Leadership.** Skillful leaders develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for PL.

**Data.** Uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

**Implementation.** Applies research on change and sustains support for PL for long-term change.

The ESS department provides professional development (PD) in various ways that includes the following.

### District-wide PD

District representatives gave the Council team two PowerPoint documents: Supporting Diverse Learners presented by the academic division with ESS personnel (Principal – AP Learning, Teacher Development Week) and ESS Curriculum Content Trainers presentation to the Special Education Advisory Council meeting on November 17, 2021. Several pages of the two documents overlapped and the second provided additional information. The information below is based on these documents.

We note that EBRPSS' reference to diverse learners is broad, and relates to those with and without disabilities, English learners, gifted/talented students, etc. This broad umbrella recognizes that all students can be a diverse learner at some point over the course of the year, a unit, or a lesson. In this respect, while PD provided by ESS department personnel may focus on staff teaching students with IEPs, there is a recognition that its content is applicable to a broader range of teaching and learning. No specific training was shared that focused on students reading far below their grade level peers and the type of intensive interventions and instructional strategies having evidence of their effectiveness.

In developing and facilitating PD for ESS staff, interviewees reported to the team that there are three ESS curriculum content trainers who work with and follow the lead of the professional development director. These groups jointly provide the focus/structure for the teaming of teachers and leaders, using an adult learning theory framework.

Academic and ESS staff collaborate to –

- Create/facilitate PD for ESS staff on curriculum implementation, modification of curriculum as needed, unpacking LA student standards, and identifying pre-requisite skills/foundational standards.
- Analyze assessment data (formative and summative) and student work samples to identify present levels of academic achievement.
- Visit school sites and classroom observations

The ESS curriculum content trainers' primary goal is to support the academic improvement of students by providing support as described below. However, it is not clear from this information how the content trainers are to address the needs of students with IEPs with significant reading and other achievement gaps.

Appropriate PD on curriculum implementation and any follow up training.

- **Use of Data.** Support special educators in collecting, disaggregating, analyzing and interpreting data for planning content specific instructional strategies grounded in scientifically based research.
- **Diverse Learner Supports.** Support special educators in developing lessons by using the Diverse Learner Supports that are embedded in the Tier 1 curriculum.
- **PD.** Determine PD needs of special educators based on assessment data, classroom observations and administrator recommendations.
- **Leadership.** Provide leadership in individual schools to ensure PD is designed and implemented to differentiate learning to meet the individual needs of students from all subgroups.

During school visits the curriculum content trainers seek to understand current classroom structures/schedules and if they allow for the use of small-group instruction to support a variety of students' needs; if the school is making full use of Tier I curricular supports before providing more intensive intervention; and if the ESS staff are trained on the core curricula. The team analyze data about the above areas to inform future PD and their support for and coaching of teachers. District-wide PD topics are:

- Uncovering the Ladder of Success for Every Student during
- Follow-up: Content Trainers Office Hours
- Supporting Diverse Learners
- Yes We Can! <sup>54</sup>

### PD Specialists/Content Trainers

ESS employs a (1 or 2?) PD specialist who is/are assigned to the PD Center (PDC) to support district training with attention to disability associated issues. The specialist communicates as needed with ESS content trainers and ISSs who also provide PD needed by school staff. These personnel assist school site leaders in analyzing, interpreting, and using school data for planning by collecting ESS student data, disaggregating student data, interpreting and analyzing data, determining strengths and weaknesses, reporting findings, and developing improvement plans. They also collaborate to conduct training on student data and curriculum implementation. The PD specialist(s) serves as a liaison between district's professional development and ESS departments.

### PD Activities Listed in Frontline Platform

Based on an Excel Frontline listing of PD offerings from October 2021 through February 2022, four ESS sessions are listed as the content area for each of the regions and virtual sessions. The four sessions relate to the development of behavior intervention plans, overview of the IEP process, and the Vizzle learning platform for standards-based curriculum at the elementary,

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<sup>54</sup> Describes the collaboration of general and special educators in professional learning communities to address diverse learner supports embedded in Tier I curriculum; and potential conversations/activities that may take place during team meetings that involve the special education teacher.

middle, and community-based high school levels; and tools/strategies for ESS staff to become active participants in school professional learning communities (PLC's).

### PD Based on Requests

Based on submitted school and ESS department requests, the curriculum content team supports PD such as the following.

- K-2 EL education diverse learner supports
- Eureka math diverse learner supports
- New teacher support for Tier I curricula/embedded resources
- Depth of knowledge and Tier I curricula
- Unpacking ELA/math standards to reach every learner.

Based on their 2021-22 summary of 14 requests and reasons for them, 78 percent of the PD requests were for reading (showing the great need in this area) and 21.4 percent for math. Information from the Frontline PD platform reported for March, and September through December 2021 various PD opportunities related to special education. In addition, the Council team received a 2021-22 list of 60 professional development opportunities with titles and description reflected a broad range of topics. These included areas of interest for varied personnel, such as special educators, related service providers, and parents. The topics seemed to concentrate on areas associated with students having significant disabilities but also included more general topics, such as dyslexia, understanding special education procedures, assistive technology, IEP development, etc.

### Support from the PROGRESS Center

A memorandum of understanding between ESS and the PROGRESS Center (Promoting Rigorous Outcomes and Growth by Redesigning Educational Services for Students with Disabilities, i.e., PROGRESS) is designed to collaboratively build local capacity to improve the development/implementation of high-quality educational programming for students with disabilities. PROGRESS is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and housed at the American Institute of Research.<sup>55</sup>

Under the agreement, PROGRESS provides training and coaching to two pilot EBRPSS schools. An IAP describes each site's goals, how progress toward goals will be measured, and timelines for activities. EBRPSS and PROGRESS have agreement to –

- EBRPSS agrees to address and improve the IEP process at the schools in various areas; increase the quality/fidelity of IEP implementation; evaluate need for various training modules; create a monthly coaching site visit schedule; and share data to evaluate results.
- PROGRESS agrees to provide PD for improving IEPs or service plans; improving IEP/ service plan implementation; and provide ongoing coaching at each partner site.

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<sup>55</sup> PROGRESS is a partnership of AIR with the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), Council of Chief State School Officers, Evergreen Evaluation and Consulting, and advisors who support the work.

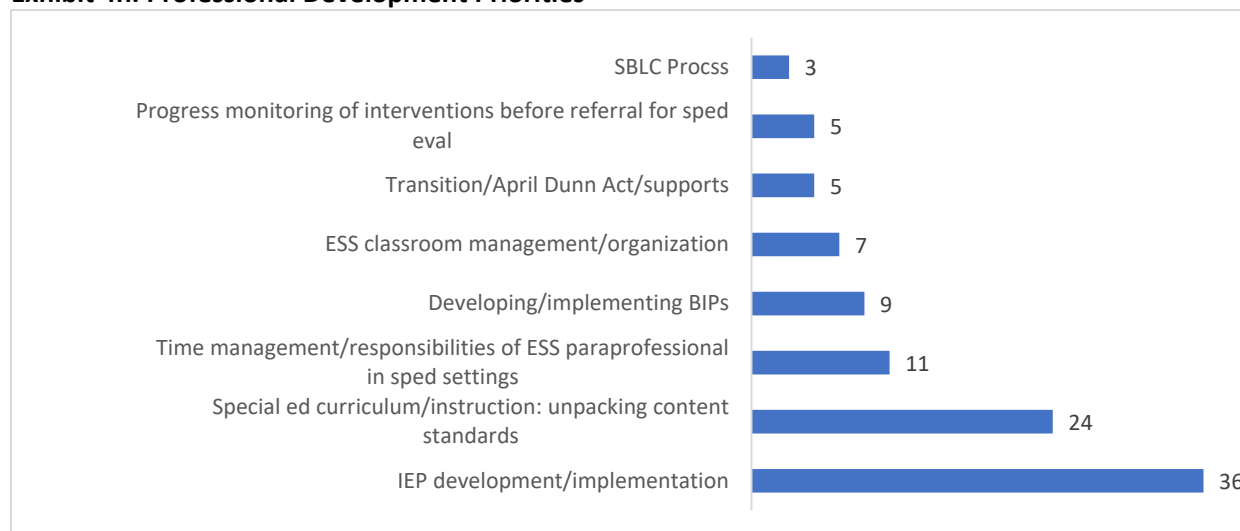
The agreement does not address the extent to which PROGRESS training and coaching will include support for instructional strategies and interventions necessary to improve student achievement such areas as reading.

### ESS Teacher Survey

During fall 2021, the ESS department surveyed ESS and general education teachers about various special education matters. The probes in the figures below pertain to professional development.

As shown in Exhibit 4h, of all areas identified, ESS teachers rated professional development needs at rates ranging from 36 percent (IEP development/implementation) to 3 percent (SBLC process). The probe related to special education curriculum/instruction, or unpacking content standards had the second highest percentage of need at 24 percent. It should be noted that special education does not have its own “curriculum.” Rather, under IDEA students with IEPs are to receive special education/related services and supplementary aids/services (based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable) to meet annual goals and to be involved in/make progress in the general education curriculum. This means that students taking state regular assessment are to receive instruction aligned with state standards, and those who participate in alternate assessments are to receive instruction aligned with connecting standards also aligned with state standards.

**Exhibit 4h. Professional Development Priorities**

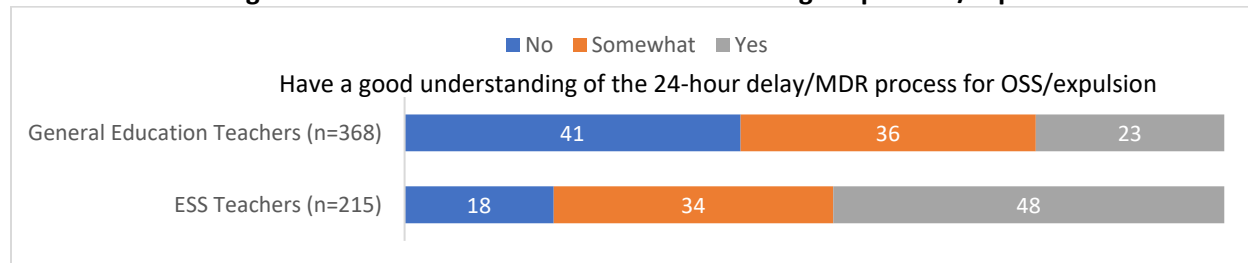


Although general education teachers were also asked for their PD needs, the document cut off portions of the category labels. From the categories that are somewhat visible, it appears that most teachers requested information about inclusion. A review of all PD areas identified would be useful as future training is planned.

Another area relevant to professional development are the responses by ESS and general education teachers regarding their understanding of the 24-hour delay and manifestation determination review processes for students with IEPs recommended for out-of-school suspensions or expulsion. Data shown in Exhibit 4i reports only 23 percent of general educators

understood this process. Although the percentage for ESS teachers is higher (48 percent), it is still less than half of all ESS teachers.

**Exhibit 4i. Percentage of General and ESS Teachers Understanding Suspension/Expulsion Procedures**



### Focus Group Participant Feedback

The following feedback was provided by focus group participants about the provision of professional development to improve the achievement and well-being of students with disabilities.

- **PD Collaboration.** Although general and special education personnel collaborate to present PD, more collaboration is needed during the planning phase.
- **Training Needs.** Training is needed in the areas of co-teaching, instructional strategies, and interventions.
- **Relevant PD for Teachers of Young Children.** At one school, which houses a majority of early childhood classes, while PD addresses the needs of students with IEPs, typically it is not relevant for teachers of young children.
- **PLCs.** PD is provided also through PLCs, which at the high school level is by grade and subject. However, there does not appear to be a systemic approach to ensure the PLCs address the needs of students with IEPs, including those who are English learners.
- **First Year Training Needs.** ESS personnel are receiving feedback from first year teachers to learn what type of training they need to improve their differentiated instruction. This feedback will inform PD that will be provided during the summer of 2022.

### Parent and Community Involvement

A large body of research demonstrates the positive effects of parent-professional collaboration on outcomes for students with disabilities<sup>56</sup> Effective collaboration is often grounded in a strong staff-parent relationship and the combined expertise of parents and professionals in helping students with disabilities meet their goals. Many parents want to fully participate in planning for their child(ren) and supporting changes in services. Nonetheless, collaboration tends to be more

<sup>56</sup> A.T. Henderson, & K. L. Mapp. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Southwest Education Development Laboratory. Cited in *Fostering Parent and Professional Collaboration Research Brief*, Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, National Parent Technical Assistance Center at [http://wsm.ezsitedesigner.com/share/scrapbook/47/472535/1.7\\_Fostering\\_Parent\\_and\\_Professional\\_Collaboration.pdf](http://wsm.ezsitedesigner.com/share/scrapbook/47/472535/1.7_Fostering_Parent_and_Professional_Collaboration.pdf).

difficult when parents are new to the country, when language differences present barriers, and when parents come from poor or low socioeconomic environments.

Reinforcing the importance of parent involvement, an SPP indicator measures the percentage of parents having a child with an IEP who reported that schools facilitated their involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. However, LDOE Performance Profiles for the last two years (2018-19 and 2019-20) do not have EBRPSS data for this indicator.

Organizations that support EBRPSS students with IEPs include the following –

- **Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC).** Louisiana law requires that each school district and charter schools to establish and maintain an SEAC that meets three times each year. The SEAC’s purpose is to advise and give feedback to districts about their special education policies, procedures, and resources. The SEAC is also intended to engage in outreach activities to increase the level of community knowledge, support, and collaboration for special education. Each superintendent determines the number and composition of the local SEAC. The most recent information EBRPSS provided to the Council team was a notice of an SEAC for February 10, 2021. Parents with questions/concerns were given an email to send them to board members no later than two days prior to the scheduled meeting. For subsequent questions, the floor is open for a designated amount of time with each person given two minutes to address the panel. SEAC members at that time included nine individuals; their roles were not included in the notice.
- **Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge (FHFGBR).** ESS staff and Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge (FHFGBR) have collaborated for more than 16 years to form a collaborative ongoing relationship to support parents and students with disabilities. Support is provided by giving information to parents to promote their involvement and teaching parent's advocacy skills designed to help resolve concerns and build good relationships between parents and the school district. Other collaborative activities include –
  - **Referral Form.** FHFGBR developed a referral form for ESS to share with families that would like to learn more about the organization’s services.
  - **Sharing Information.** FHFGBR and ESS have collaborated to share information at parent advisory meetings, transition fairs, and family engagement activities.
  - **Training.** FHFGBR offers free workshops/webinars for school staff and parents of students with disabilities on various topics, including Special Education Frequently Asked Questions Series, Navigating the IEP Series, Parents Rights in Special Education, Louisiana Bullying Prevention Law, Top Tips for IEP Meetings and What Happens When Parents and Schools Disagree (Louisiana Dispute Resolution Options) and Effective Communication.
  - **IEP Meetings.** FHFGBR staff have attended IEP meetings to support school staff and students with disabilities and their families.
- **Exceptional Lives.** This organization has a personalized disability information platform for families, caregivers, and professionals. Easy-to-follow information explains how to assess

programs/services. Information is given about various topics including special education, transition to adulthood, autism, children struggling in school, and decision-making for young adults.

### Professional Development Opportunities

EBRPSS provided the Council team with a list of seven 2020-21 PD opportunities for parents. Topics listed were –

- **Making the Most of Summertime Activities**, facilitated by Louisiana Spectrum and Related Disabilities Project.
- **Google Classroom and Google Meet 101**, with two sessions daily over four days.
- **Kurzweil 3000** to give an overview of this software that offers a multisensory approach and multiple means of access to print or digital text for parents of students with IEPs, Section 504 accommodations, and English learners.
- **Vizzle** overview of the platform that provides a customizable, data-driven, and standards-based curriculum.
- **Don't Stress the Test** for support parents to help their children with standardized testing.
- **ESS Lunch and Learn** with interactive and short virtual activities with different topics covered during four sessions. Two additional sessions were provided for Spanish-speaking participants.

### ESS Parent Survey

The district provided the Council team with the results of an ESS parent survey that was conducted in the fall of 2021. According to this information, 761 parents responded to the survey. However, as a parent commented to the survey, respondents included parents of students who are talented and gifted. The commenter suggested that future surveys differentiate these groups. The combined parent group should be taken into consideration when viewing the results below.

Overall, 75 percent of parents responded they were satisfied with the delivery of special education services that the district has been providing to their children. For context, the SPP includes an indicator for parental involvement, providing the percentage of parents reporting schools facilitated involvement as a means of improving services/results for children with disabilities. No EBRPSS result was shown for 2019-20 or 2020-21. It is noteworthy that the SPP minimum target for this indicator is 83.5 percent, a rate not reached by any of the survey responses.

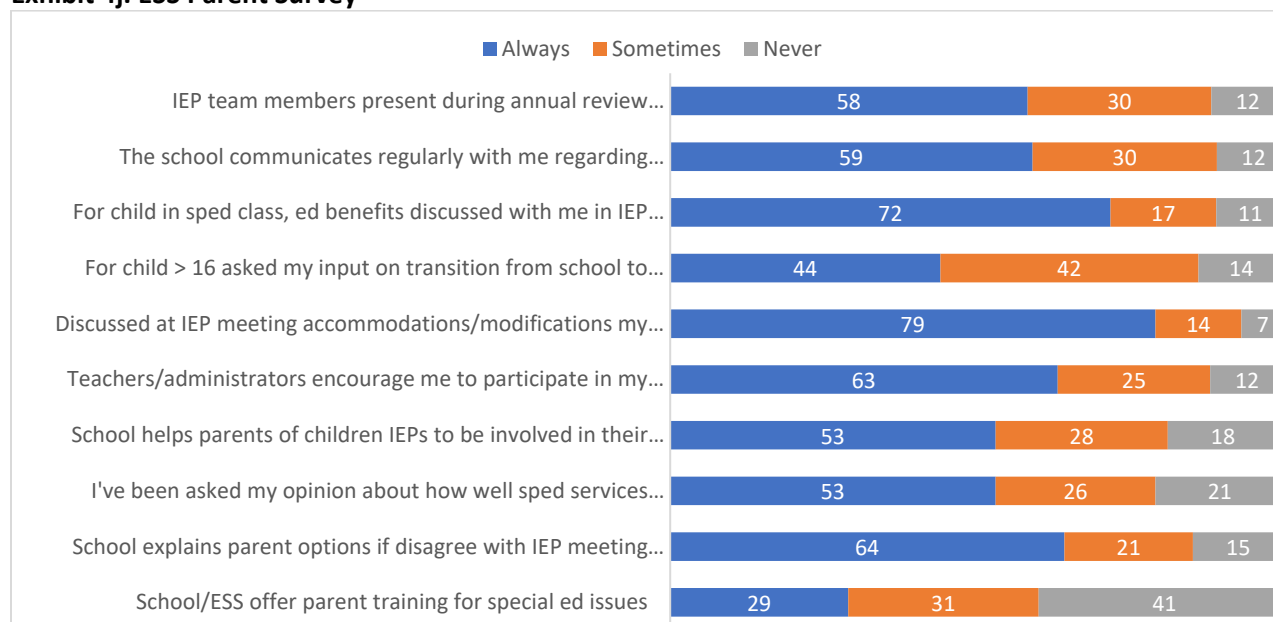
As shown in Exhibit 4j, 10 survey probes were rated by three categories: always, sometimes, and never.

- **“Always” Responses.** Percentages of parents responding “always” ranged from 79 percent (IEP teams discussed accommodations/modifications my child needs, and my input was allowed) to 29 percent (school/ESS department offer parent training for special education issues).
- **Self-Contained Placements.** One probe with a relatively high rate (72 percent) concerned

parents of children with children in a special education class who agreed that always educational benefits were discussed at the IEP meeting and described in the IEP. The question, however, did not address whether the educational benefits of placement in general education for most of the time (along with services/supports that would be provided) was discussed.

- **Post-secondary Transition.** A probe with a lower rate showed that for children 16 years of age or older 44 percent of parents were always asked for their IEP input on their child's transition from school to post-secondary options.
- **Achievement/Behavior.** No question asked parents if their child was making expected progress in their achievement/behavior.

**Exhibit 4j. ESS Parent Survey**



**Focus Group Feedback**

Focus group participants provided the following feedback regarding training and support for parents of students with disabilities.

- **ESS Director.** Positive feedback was shared about the ESS director who was described as responsive to parent concerns, answering emails and phone calls promptly, etc.
- **Title I Family Engagement.** All title I schools have a staff person to support family engagement, which includes families of students with disabilities. Parent facilitators identify various issues that are addressed by ESS personnel at parent meetings.
- **Families Helping Families.** Parents of children with disabilities who became involved with Families Helping Families have continued to take leadership roles in other organizations and worked to network with other parents. The organization's staff collaborates with the ESS director and ESS staff to resolve parent concerns.
- **Families of ELs with Disabilities.** Few families of English learners with disabilities are involved



with various EBR parent organizations, despite outreach to schools about how the organizations can be supportive. Additional outreach and EBRPSS support are urged for this area.

- **SEAC.** The district’s SEAC has new members who are seeking to reenergize the organization after its inactivity during the active COVID pandemic. Representatives would like to have more diversified involvement and parent engagement/communication in multiple languages. There is a desire to reach out to involve more parents of English learners with disabilities and parents of older students. Because all parents do not access Internet websites, there is a desire to use other modes of communication not reliant on technology for parent outreach. The goal is to enable more parents to understand district resources and how to access them for their children.
- **Parent Survey.** The SEAC is preparing a parent survey and are exploring how to raise parent responses from the previous survey rate of 17 percent. A panel will review the survey results and make recommendations for the district’s consideration.
- **School Engagement.** Principals and their staff engage less with parents as students graduate from pre-kindergarten to high school. There is a desire for more accountable engagement at all grade levels.
- **Acceptance of Abilities.** There is a strong desire for school leaders to change the paradigm of expecting students to fit into a typical school world rather than enabling students to fit into their world. This perspective extends to students who do not accept individual differences and instead rely on bullying as a form of communication.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to improve the district’s provision of special education/related services.

4. **Promoting Achievement and Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities.** Consider the following actions to improve outcomes for students with IEPs.
  - a. **Inclusive Education Vision.** Have the extended cabinet establish a clear and defined vision expressing the value of inclusive education that is based on strong general education instruction and ESS collaboration and high quality instruction/intervention. At the same time, the vision should reinforce the importance of supplemental evidence-based academic and positive behavior interventions/supports that increase in intensity to address targeted student needs. Highlight the importance of providing students educated in general education classes with the differentiated and scaffolded instruction they need to learn. Emphasize that the instruction needs to be linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant and aligned with common core standards. This vision will be easier to

actualize as teachers become more familiar with and base their instruction on the principles of UDL.<sup>57</sup>

- b. Implementation Plan.** Based on the district’s inclusive education vision, identify an individual with broad interdepartmental authority to bring together a working group of personnel from general education, ESS, English learners, literacy, and student support to develop a written multi-year action plan that provides for written expectations (see 4c), professional learning (see 4d), data analytics (4e), and accountability (4f). Upon completion of the overall plan, establish a uniform way for school-based teams to embed local implementation activities in their school-based planning documents.

Consider the following to develop strategies for promoting high quality inclusive instruction and improved achievement/positive behavior-SEL outcomes –

### Instructional Support

- **Early Childhood.** Ensure students do not receive homebased itinerant instruction because nursing or other services are not available due to personnel shortages.
- **Braided Funding.** Research use of braided funding to enable more young children with and without IEPs to be educated together.
- **Research-Guided Inclusive Instruction.** Identify relevant research to guide the district’s description of strategies to implement high quality inclusive practices for early childhood and school-aged students, such as LDOE’s *Strategies for Success: A Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities*.
- **Resources.** Ensure a process is in place to ensure services are available for students as they transition to less restrictive settings in their current or another school.
- **Support for Co-Teaching.** Use of high quality co-teaching withing general education.
- **Use of Evidence-based Interventions.** Use of targeted evidence-based reading and math interventions, including those with a multi-sensory foundation for students with dyslexia and others as appropriate.
- **Quality Indicators for Study Skills** classes across schools.
- **Collaboration with General Educator.** Needs of general educators to collaborate with ESS teachers, paraprofessionals, and related services personnel to support students with IEPs in their classrooms, and information they need about their students to be effective.
- **Effective use of paraprofessionals** and their collaboration with general education and ESS teachers.
- **Common Planning Time** approaches and models for multiple personnel working with the same student(s).

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<sup>57</sup> The suggested activities are not intended to be a blueprint or to be exclusive. They are provided as a basis for discussion and further development.

- **Feedback Loops** for school-based personnel to report on challenges beyond their control (as well as successes) to inform technical assistance and changes needed for them to meet student needs.
- **English Learner Support.** Improve language support for English learners –
  - Implementation of ESS Procedural Handbook regarding processes for English learners, and the U.S. Department of Education’s EL Toolkit at Chapter 5, Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities.
  - Establish models for providing ELs with IEPs the linguistic support they continue to require when receiving special education and related services.<sup>58</sup>
  - Specify translation services available to schools for parents/family members who are not English proficient.
- **Positive Behavior/SEL Support** for students with IEPs through –
  - Timely assistance to teachers for students with challenging behavior beyond the expertise of school and available support staff.
  - Strategies for filling vacant behavior strategist positions and considering whether the current number is sufficient to meet student/personnel needs.
  - There is conflicting information between district data showing zero out-of-school suspensions and focus group feedback referring to such suspensions and the presence of ESS personnel who review manifestation determinations for student suspensions.
  - Collaboration between all departments to address students with significant behavior challenges to reduce fragmented support and siloed assistance.
  - Investigation of specialized supports for students with severe emotional/mental health impairments, such as those released from hospital settings, such as require medical consultants, nurses, clinical social workers, and ABA specialists, to support their ESS teachers and the students’ difficult transition from a clinical setting to their regular assigned campuses or other school environment.
- **Modified Curriculum Prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade.** Investigation of whether LA requires students prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade must be educated based on the standard curriculum, regardless of appropriateness, and if so – strategies for teachers to make their instruction align with student needs.
- **Caseloads.** Establish process throughout the school year for addressing caseloads when there is reason to believe they are too high for one or more ESS teachers.

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### Systemic Support for Inclusive Instruction

<sup>58</sup> See *Meeting the Needs of English Learners with Disabilities*, which was prepared by a staff member from the Santa Barbara County SELPA, retrieved from <http://www.sonomaselpa.org/docs/els-with-disabilities.pdf>.

- **Transition to More General Ed Instructional Time.** Have a blueprint for supporting students to transition to receive more instruction within general education.
- **Shifting Gen Ed Time at 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>/High School Grades.** Analyze student movement from less to more restrictive instruction at 5<sup>th</sup> grade and the reverse at 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school to address reasons causing this pattern
- **Equitable Housing of Specialized Programs.** Move toward reducing the number of schools with no or few, or many ESS teachers and programs. This initiative coincides with moving toward more inclusive instruction for students in the school they would otherwise attend without an IEP.
- **Program Movement.** Reduce movement of specialized programs from school to school because of space availability, which impacts students having the most difficulty with transition.

#### Post-Secondary Transition

- Strengthen strategies that would enable youth to be educationally/work engaged one year after leaving high school. (See Exhibit 4c)
- Continue to improve information for parents to help them understand available post-secondary resources for their children.

#### Parent Engagement

- Based on review of ESS Parent Survey (Exhibit 4g) consider ways to improve survey results.
- Have two separate ESS Parent Surveys, one for parents of children with IEPs and the other for children who are gifted. Enable parents of students with IEPs who are gifted to participate in both surveys.
- Add survey questions for parents to address whether their child is making expected progress in their achievement and/or behavior, specifying – if known – the student’s current educational placement (general education versus separate class).
- Work with Title I and parent support organizations to expand strategies for involving more parents of students with IEPs, including those who are English learners, and to consider strategies for having more principals/personnel engage with parents as their children move toward and are in high school.

**Implementation Plan Feedback.** Have the team get feedback on the draft plan from diverse stakeholder groups, including regional EDs, principal, school-based personnel, and SEAC/other parent-based organizations, etc. Continue this feedback loop as the plan is implemented to address areas of concern.

- c. **Written Expectations.** As the implementation plan is being developed, identify those areas that require written guidance for procedures and expected practices.

- d. **Differentiated Professional Learning and Parent Training.** Embed in the professional learning curriculum mentioned in Recommendation 1e and the content needed to carry out the district’s implementation plan discussed above. In addition, consider –
- Target **principal professional learning** to give them the knowledge they need to support their school personnel in areas required to carry out activities identified in the implementation plan, and to support students with IEPs and their parents generally. Reinitiate the summer boot camp for principals to prepare them for the 2022-23 school year.
  - The term **diverse learners**, generally, and students with disabilities who are also diverse learners to ensure professional learning is available specific to the latter’s needs.
  - How **ESS curriculum content trainers** address instructional strategies for engaging students with IEPs having large achievement gaps with their peers.
  - The **PROGRESS agreement** and whether it could be modified to include training and coaching of evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions to improve student achievement in such areas as reading.
  - Targeted **professional learning needs** of ESS/general education teachers of preschool and kindergarten students.
  - **Collaboration of general, ESS and English learner personnel** to plan and present training.
  - Current **training and information-sharing opportunities for parents and community partners**, and identify topics for the 2017-18 school year, including areas mentioned in this report and what the data suggest is needed. As part of this process, consider how professional learning will be provided within the current weekly collaborative time restraint.
  - Continued use of **surveys** to give feedback about training given and needed.
  - **Describing** –
    - How and when personnel will be provided access to training in each critical area.
    - How key information will be communicated effectively.
    - How information will be used.
    - What additional coaching and supports may be needed.
- e. **Data Analysis, Monitoring and Accountability.** Establish and monitor the expectation that principals are responsible for overseeing special education in their buildings, and that regional EDs hold principals accountable for this responsibility. Embed the following activities in the monitoring and accountability systems described in Recommendation 1f and g.
- **Baseline Data.** Establish baseline data on such areas as those included in this report on educational setting rates, achievement, suspension/expulsion rates, graduation

and dropout rates, and begin evaluating the effects of interventions. In each area, consider collecting and analyzing data by race/ethnicity, and English learners, using risk ratios by subgroups.

- **Data Collection and Reports.** Review current data, data collection issues, and reports that are requested by the superintendent and school board. Begin including baseline data described above, and special education state performance plan indicators. Provide regular updates on the status of special education reforms. Develop protocols for reporting data to inform decision-making. Produce templates for user-friendly summary reports showing academic and behavioral interventions and outcomes for students with disabilities, sorted by student group. Review necessary changes in programs and interventions based on the data. Plan follow-up activities on data not easily collected and reports not easily produced.
- **Data Checks.** Include in data check sessions information such as the above for students with IEPs in order to develop follow-up actions and track outcomes.
- **Fidelity Assessments and Walk-Throughs.** Review current walk-through tools used to monitor instruction to ensure they include the use of interventions in general education classes, resource classes, and specialized classes to see how students are being taught and engaged and how consistent instruction is across schools for students with IEPs. Provide written practice expectations like that called for in Recommendation 3c. Initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring to improve practices.
- **Timely Communication and Feedback.** Establish a process for timely feedback to the district MTSS leadership team on barriers to problem-solving activities, particularly when they are beyond the control of local schools or require the schools to seek assistance to resolve problems.

## V. OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs

This section summarizes EBRPSS' supports for teaching and learning of students with disabilities. It includes interdepartmental communications and collaboration; overall administration and operation of special education; principal leadership and support for special education; school-based supports for special education; special education/related services personnel; personnel-to-students with IEPs staffing ratios; compliance activities; operations, and accountability.

### Interdepartmental Communication and Collaboration

As stated in LDOE's *Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs: Student Well-Being* –<sup>59</sup>

All students deserve equitable access to high quality instruction. Yet, school systems often face unique and complex challenges in improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Addressing these challenges is multifaceted and requires strong leaders who can effectively coordinate programming within and across departments and schools to increase equitable access to inclusive learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

To leverage district resources to address the achievement and social/emotional wellbeing of all students, including those with disabilities, English learners, and ELs with disabilities, it is essential that all central office and school leadership collaborate effectively. In our experience, urban districts strive to have collaborative structures but tend to operate in silos. This generality applies to EBRPSS as well. The Council's team identified several opportunities for interdisciplinary discussions and collaboration on matters that affect special education.

### Leadership and Cross Functional Groups

As discussed below, the superintendent and the chief academic officer have structured times to meet with various groups of district leaders.

#### Superintendent's Executive Leadership Team and Cabinet

The superintendent has two levels of cabinet: the executive leadership team and the cabinet.

**Executive Leadership Team.** The executive team encompasses the 16 highest levels of district leaders, which includes the –

- Superintendent
- General counsel
- Nine division chiefs (academics, accountability/assessments, communications/community engagement, literacy, operations, schools, student supports, technology, and chief of staff)
- Four operations department heads (budget, facilities/transportation, finance, and human resources)

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<sup>59</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/students-with-disabilities/guidance-for-leading-inclusive-special-education-programs\\_student-well-being.pdf?sfvrsn=a0236518\\_6](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/students-with-disabilities/guidance-for-leading-inclusive-special-education-programs_student-well-being.pdf?sfvrsn=a0236518_6)

- Health services supervisor

These individuals are the superintendent's primary advisories on all district matters. The group uses a consensus building process to address/resolve an issue and/or establish a new program implementation that will be centrally managed. The Executive Leadership Team meets on a weekly basis each Tuesday of the school week. Each meeting is typically 60 to 90 minutes long.

**Cabinet.** All district leaders serving in the capacity of a director one and higher that directly report to division chiefs are cabinet members. The cabinet discusses all educational, operational, programmatic, and fiscal issues impacting the district. Its purpose is to "ensure that the district is being governed in a fair, equitable, and strategic manner that results in effective and successful outcomes for all stakeholders." The group meets every other Tuesday. These meetings immediately follow the Executive Leadership Team meeting, and typical are 2 to 2.5 hours long. The executive director for English learners is a recent addition to the cabinet. ESS is represented by the department's associate superintendent and director.

#### Chief Academic Officer's Leadership Team

Every Friday the chief academic officer (CAO) meets with a group of 40 to 50 district leaders and supervisors/instructional specialists to engage them in districtwide planning and enable them to bring information back to their department staff. For the ESS department, the participants include the director, four supervisors and three specialists. These meetings on Friday are the Leading for Learning meetings that are planned by the CAO, Chief of Literacy and the Chief of Schools. It is the team's understanding that many of these meeting this past school year were focused on the Superintendent's priority of literacy.

The Friday meetings feature presentations about district initiatives and disaggregated data. Discussions enable departmental personnel to talk about common work. At these meetings, school leaders who receive feedback from the academic team are able to pass on the information to teachers. Also, school leaders use this opportunity to give district leaders feedback about their needs. The meetings are also used to consider the district's PD needs and collaborate on its provision.

#### Focus Group Feedback

Focus group participants expressed a strong desire to continue and increase cross-functional communication and coordination. Specifically, ESS personnel would welcome structured and targeted opportunities to meet with their colleagues in other departments who support students with similar needs. These partnerships would leverage their collective resources and reinforce their common work.

Partnerships between ESS and division personnel in the following areas were cited as examples of strong collaboration: early childhood, technology, and health. Areas that would benefit from stronger collaboration are summarized below.

#### Human Resources

Given the work needed to fill ESS position vacancies and address personnel on leave, more interaction between ESS and human resource personnel would be beneficial.



### Content Area Supervisors and Content Trainers

ESS has curriculum content specialists who provide training for core instruction to improve the quality of first teaching and learning for students with disabilities. Interviewees did not share a structure for these individuals to meaningfully collaborate with the literacy curriculum content trainers to share information about school needs and how they could work together to address them. Although they may attend Friday meetings together, this structure does not facilitate meaningful communication of and opportunity to plan their common work.

### Literacy Support

One of the greatest challenges for most students with disabilities is low achievement in literacy. A major role of ISSs is to look at their achievement and provide instructional support to ESS teachers. According to its organizational chart, the literacy division has 13 instructional specialists, 5 literacy coaches, and 3 literacy innovation coordinators. ESS instructional support specialists (ISSs) have no planned opportunities to meet with these colleagues to inform each other about their work and to identify areas for collaboration.

The literacy division's project manager for ESS and ESL had been with the district for about two months at the time of the Council team's visit. The project manager was learning how to support students receiving special education and/or ESL support but had not yet met with ESS department personnel who directly support schools. Also, it appeared that the project manager has had no previous experience as a special education or EL administrator or designing and implementing practices on a districtwide level. Her learning curve is significant.

### Student Services

According to the student services organizational chart, the relatively new department's chief reports to the superintendent. Six directors report to the chief for child welfare/attendance, counseling, I CARE,<sup>60</sup> MTSS/SEL, and TASC.<sup>61</sup> Also reporting to the chief are a district 504 coordinator, health supervisor, and lead social worker with six social workers. Students with disabilities are likely to have attendance and truancy issues, need for counseling, and detention histories. Both student services and ESS have social workers and other personnel who conduct counseling or engage with students having behavioral challenges. The student services social workers are each assigned to one region and provide social work services upon parental consent. Reportedly, student needs exceed these resources. It is not clear why these human resources are divided between departments and apparently have not had access to such training as CASEL's social/emotional learning.

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<sup>60</sup> I Care assists youth exiting detention to transition back into EBRPSS. Social worker interns, who are supervised by personnel with master's degrees in social work, provide individual services to youth that have been previously identified at their home schools. They also screen and assign youth currently at the facility to participate in the program even if not previously receiving I Care services. Retrieved from <https://www.brla.gov/393/I-Care-Program>.

<sup>61</sup> TASC provides prompt delivery of coordinated interventions to truant children in grades K-5 and their families to prevent continued absences from school and is based on OJJDP Best Practice Principles. Retrieved from <https://www.fysc-ebr.org/tasc.html>.

Sixteen ICARE professionals provide family/student consultation, small group student support, classroom education, staff/parent trainings, and various other activities related to social/emotional learning. ICARE personnel do not provide services to students with IEPs. Reportedly, this is due to a prior ESS directive to not engage. Given the level of services needed for these students, it would be beneficial to explore this relationship further to determine how the two departments could work together to provide mutual support for, e.g., crisis intervention, etc. Similarly, the student services 504 coordinator has not worked with ESS school nurses, even though there are students with health needs without IEPs who require Section 504 support.

### **English Learners**

There is significant need for personnel in the ESS and EL departments to have planned and structured interaction and collaboration for various reasons, including: 1) difficulty in understanding the interrelationship of language acquisition and disability identification; 2) need to support the language acquisition needs of ELs who have disabilities that impact their language acquisition; and 3) complex compliance rules associated with ELs and students with IEPs that become more complicated when students are members of both groups. Both EL and ESS personnel need to collaborate closely to understand these complex issues, to collaborate with professional development, and to coordinate their work at the school level.

### **ESS Personnel and Region Administrative Alignment**

One of the first organizational components that the Council team reviews is the alignment of special education administrators with principal supervisors, which in EBRPSS are the executive directors for school leadership. Absent such alignment, collaboration is difficult to achieve. School districts with which the Council team is familiar that have aligned personnel structures have found this design has many advantages, including the ability to develop stronger administrative relationships based on common work; meet regularly with common principals; review data and develop strategies for schools with similar needs; and establish targeted professional development across schools. In addition, this relationship allows principal supervisors to work with special education personnel who support schools to better assist principals, address complex and difficult issues more effectively, and resolve issues faster.

As will be discussed in more detail in the section on the ESS Department Administration and Organization below, ESS personnel are not organized in a manner to maximize their alignment with the nine executive directors for school leadership (EDs). As a result, there is little if any interaction between ESS department staff members who support schools and the EDs. This structure makes it difficult if not impossible for these staff members to work with the EDs to engage in the various important activities discussed above. For example, if ISSs are unable to resolve issue with principals, they then communicate with their supervisors, who then communicate with the ESS director, who then communicates with the ED. If that process does not resolve the issue, the ESS director then communicates with the ESS associate superintendent who then works to resolve the matter. In the Council team's experience, this process is unnecessarily bureaucratic as it does not enable the ISS to work directly with the regional ED.

There was broad recognition by focus group participants that it would be beneficial to assign ESS personnel to schools aligned with each ED. Such an approach would, for example, enable ESS personnel to collaborate with the literacy specialist assigned to the region.

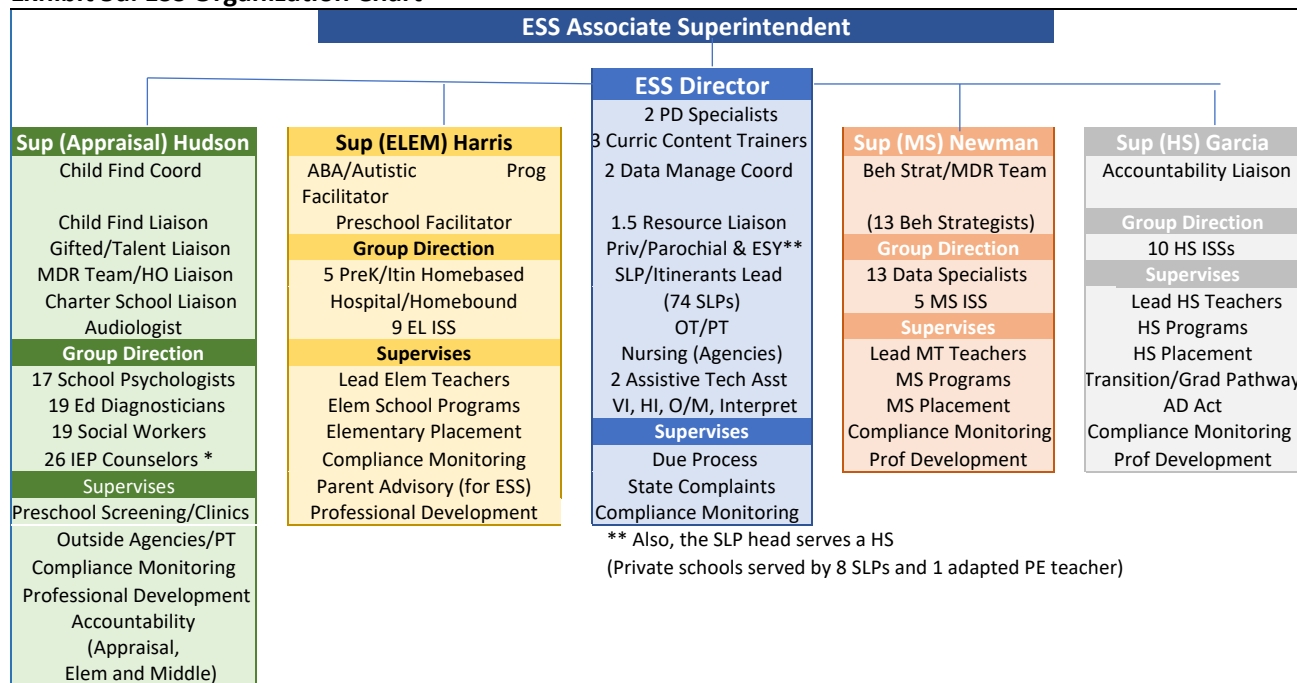
### ESS Department Administration and Operation

This section addresses ESS’s organizational structure and includes focus group feedback on the support that department personnel provide to school-based personnel.

### ESS Organization Description

The information below summarizes the supervisory and program function responsibilities of the current ESS associate superintendent, director and four supervisors, two of whom were added this school year. This ESS structure is shown in Exhibit 5a and summarized below.

**Exhibit 5a. ESS Organization Chart**



\*IEP Counselors: 11 SW, 8 psychologists, and 6 behavior strategists supervised by MS supervisor

### Associate Superintendent

ESS is led by an associate superintendent who has had broad administrative experience within EBRPSS. He assumed his ESS position this school year after he served as the interim superintendent. The associate superintendent serves in the superintendent’s cabinet and communicates with the chief academic officer and superintendent to “push through” needed activities. Going through EBRPSS channels could be difficult and the associate superintendent acts to make sure issues are addressed quickly and correctly. During his weekly meeting with the CAO discussions tend to be more general in nature and are not restricted to special education. Currently, a single director reports to the associate superintendent.

### Director

Four supervisors and 16 individuals report directly to the ESS director. The director had a long administrative history with special education before she assumed her current role about 10 years ago. She typically raises issues that need immediate attention to the associate superintendent, and infrequently communicates with the regional executive directors (ED). This communication tends to concern placement issues for students with challenging behaviors and principals who have contacted an ED for assistance. Overall, the director has oversight for the department's 215-member work force, and in addition has numerous operational and programmatic responsibilities.

- **Positions.** The direct reports include 2 professional development specialists (who also have a dotted report line to the academic professional development center); 3 curriculum content trainers; 2 data manager coordinators; 1.5 resource liaisons; 1 speech/language pathologist (SLP)/itinerants/leads (74 SLPs); 1 private/parochial liaison (also has extended school year duties and serves 1 high school as its speech/language pathologist); 1 nursing agency liaison; 2 assistive technology assistants; and 1 vision/hearing/orientation-mobility/interpreter liaison. Team collected conflicting information stating that the curriculum content trainers reported to the associate superintendent.
- **Programmatic Functions.** In addition to oversight of all department personnel and compliance monitoring, the director manages due process and state complaints.

### Supervisors

There are four ESS supervisors. Although three of their organizational titles make it appear they supervise individuals assigned to a grade level, their responsibilities in several way transcend grade levels and are city wide. Team takes note that as of June 2022 it was reported that there is a plan to only have three supervisors and to have an additional director.

Also, as discussed further below, the supervisors' direct reports have schools in multiple regions. In addition, each of the supervisors have additional programmatic responsibilities in addition to compliance monitoring and professional development. The type and number of direct reports to each supervisor and additional supervisory programmatic responsibilities are described below.

- **Appraisal Supervisor (67 direct reports)**
  - **Coordinator/Liaisons.** Supervises an audiologist, a child find coordinator and liaison, as well as liaisons for gifted/talented, manifestation determination team, and charter schools.
  - **Related Services Personnel.** Supervises psychologists (17), educational diagnosticians (19), and social workers (19). Of these personnel, IEP counseling is provided by 11 social workers, 8 psychologists, and 6 behavior strategists. The behavior strategists also report to the middle school supervisor.
  - **Program Functions.** Include preschool screening/clinics; coordination with outside agencies; and appraisal, elementary and middle school compliance accountability.
- **Elementary Supervisor (16 direct reports and hospital/homebound teachers)**
  - **Supervision.** Supervises an applied behavior analyst (ABA)/autism program facilitator

and preschool facilitator, 5 pre-kindergarten/itinerant homebased staff, hospital/homebound personnel at all grade levels, and 9 elementary instructional support specialists (ISSs).

- **Program Functions.** Include support for lead elementary ESS teachers, all elementary school programs, elementary placement, and ESS parent advisory group.
- **Middle School Supervisor (31 direct reports)**
  - **Supervision.** Supervises 13 behavior strategists for all grades and the MDR team, 13 data specialists, and 5 middle school ISSs.
  - **Program Functions.** Include lead middle school ESS teachers, all middle school programs, and middle school placement.
- **High School Supervisor (11 direct reports)**
  - **Supervision.** Supervises 10 high school ISSs and high school accountability liaison.
  - **Program Functions.** Include lead high school teachers, programs, placement, and transition/graduation pathways/April Dunn Act.

Except for the elementary ABA/autism program facilitator and the behavior strategists, no staff persons have any specific area of expertise, such as literacy, or specialized programs.

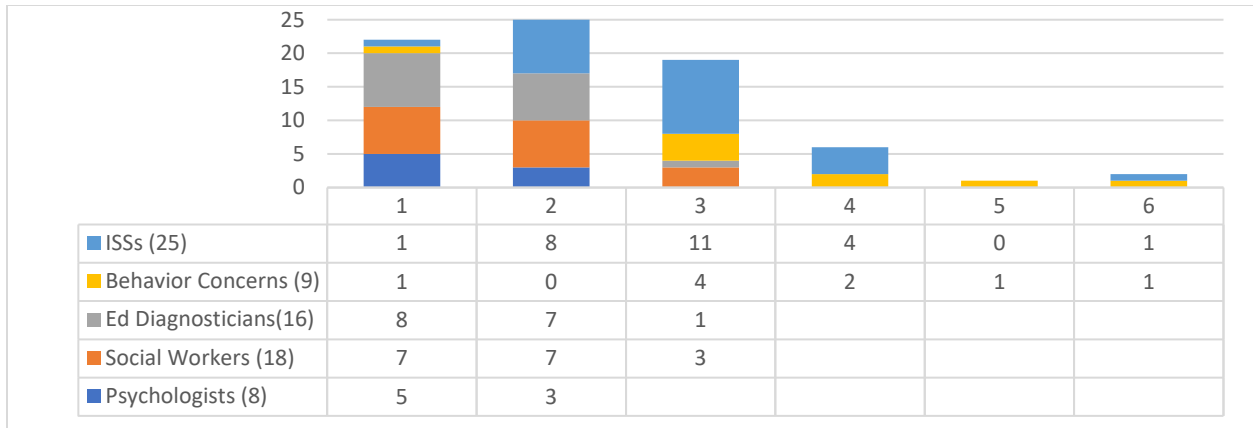
### ESS Department Personnel, in General

The information below shows for each ESS personnel area with school-based responsibilities the number of schools to which they are assigned and the number of associated regions for each. The personnel are psychologists, social workers, educational diagnosticians, personnel addressing behavior concerns (e.g., behavior strategists), and ISSs. This data shows significant variances in the number of school assignments, which may be explained by varying caseloads. Of the 76 lead appraisers and ISSs who are assigned to schools, only 22 (29 percent) report to one region. Data was not provided for the number of schools and regions to which SLPs reported.

### Assignments by Region

Exhibit 5b shows the number of regions to which personnel in each of the five categories report. Of the 75 individuals, 22 (29 percent) report to schools in one region, 25 (33 percent) report to two regions, 19 (25 percent) report to three regions, and 6 (8 percent) report to four regions. Of the remaining 3 individuals, one reports to five regions and two report to all regions plus charter schools. Note that the appraisers have one supervisor and behavior strategists who are also IEP counselors have two supervisors. The ISSs each have different supervisors based on grade levels, which are not aligned with the regional EDs for school leadership.

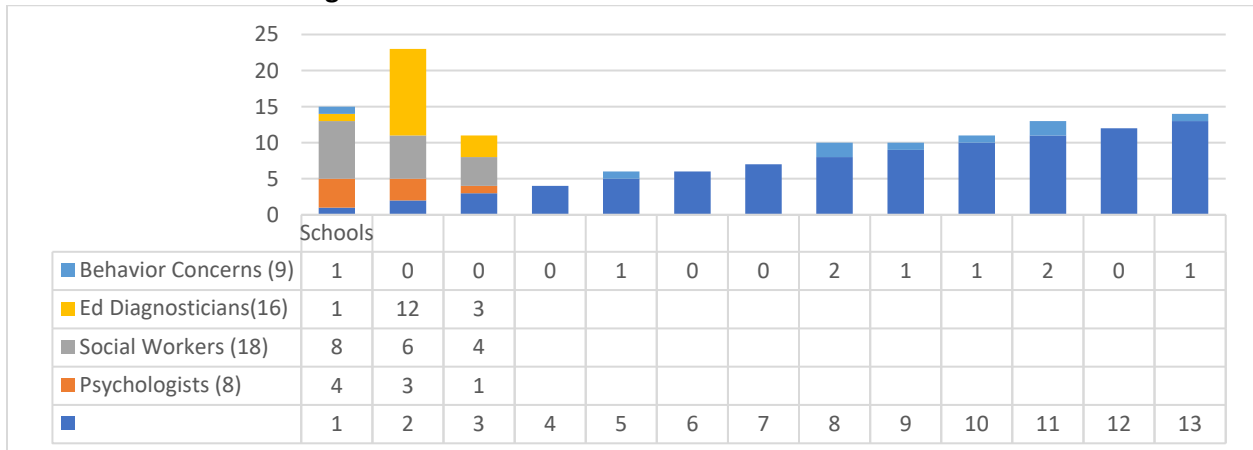
### Exhibit 5b. Number of Regions based on Assigned Schools



### Assignments by School

Exhibit 5c shows the number of schools to which personnel in each of the five categories report. Of the 75 individuals, 15 (20 percent) report to two schools, 25 (33 percent) report to two schools, 18 (24 percent) report to three schools, and 6 (8 percent) report to four schools. Of the remaining 13 individuals, the number of personnel and school reports are: 3 (5 schools), 2 (6 schools), 2 (8 schools), 1 (9 schools), 1 (10 schools) and 1 (13 schools).

**Exhibit 5c. Number of Assigned Schools**



### Appraisal Teams

The ESS department has six appraisal teams. Each school has a lead appraiser who belongs to one of these teams. The lead appraiser chooses a student’s evaluation team based on the components identified as appropriate for the student’s evaluation. Appraisers rotate within their categories, e.g., psychologist, to manage caseloads.

Each team has a leader that reads IEPs for technical errors before they are finalized, and teams 1, 3, and 6 have a mentor appraiser. The mentors are assigned to new employees and to psychologist interns. Reportedly all staff have immediate and ongoing access to the appraisal supervisor and ESS director. In addition, two SLPs are assigned to three teams each.

Exhibit 5c shows for each appraisal team the number of school leads and number of regions represented by each team’s members. The teams each have 8 to 11 members, and they represent three to four regions in addition to charter schools and a preschool team member.

**Exhibit 5c Appraisal Team Number of Participants and Regions Represented per Team**

	Team Participants	Number of Regions
Team 1	9	3
Team 2	10	4 + preschool
Team 3	8	4
Team 4	8	4
Team 5	11	3
Team 6	9	3

### MDR Teams

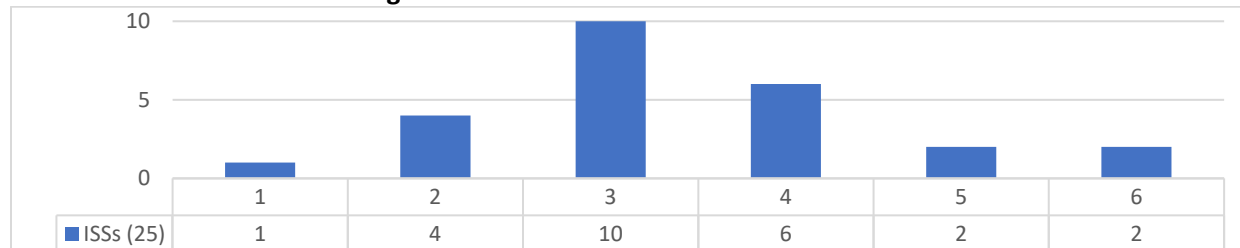
Some appraisal teams also have one or more MDR teams. Team 3 has two MDR teams, team 6 has one MDR team, and the remaining teams have no MDR team. The MDR team is comprised of five appraisal and two behavior strategist representatives. Although they are assigned to an appraiser team they work across the district, conducting reviews as a team of two for students recommended for out-of-school suspension/expulsion. The process begins with the behavior strategist assigned to the school who reviews all relevant data. If all data is in order, the strategist notifies and request the appropriate MDR team to schedule a date and time to meet. At that time the MDR team supports the school team to determine whether a student’s disciplinary behavior is a manifestation of the disability.

### Instructional Support Specialists

ISSs are assigned to schools to support teachers and administrators on ESS related issues. There has been a move to refocus their work from compliance to instructional support. This has been more difficult to accomplish this past school year with the unusually large number of special education vacancies.

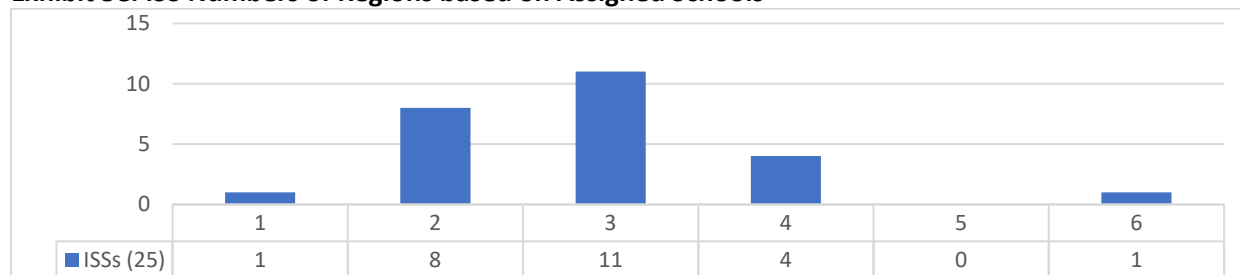
As shown by Exhibit 5d, most of the 25 ISSs are assigned to at least three schools. The number of ISSs by school assignments are: one school (1), two schools (4), three schools (10), four schools (6), five schools (5), and six schools (2).

**Exhibit 5d. ISS Numbers of Assigned Schools**



As shown in Exhibit 5e, most of the ISSs are assigned to schools located in more than one region. The number of ISSs by region reports are: one region (1), two regions (8), three regions (11), four regions (4), and five regions and charter schools (6).

**Exhibit 5e. ISS Numbers of Regions based on Assigned Schools**



ISSs have the following roles -

- Provide and/or assist with school-based professional development.
- Research, share, and model effective teaching strategies to general education and special educators, including problem-solving/higher-order thinking skills and student engagement to align with instructional outcomes.
- Observe/critique teaching methods, assist teachers in implementing research-based teaching strategies and retrain when necessary.
- Analyze/use test data to recommend research-based instructional strategies.
- Assist with developing case-load assignments, course schedules and site-based placements.
- Provide technical assistance to principals/school personnel to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes.

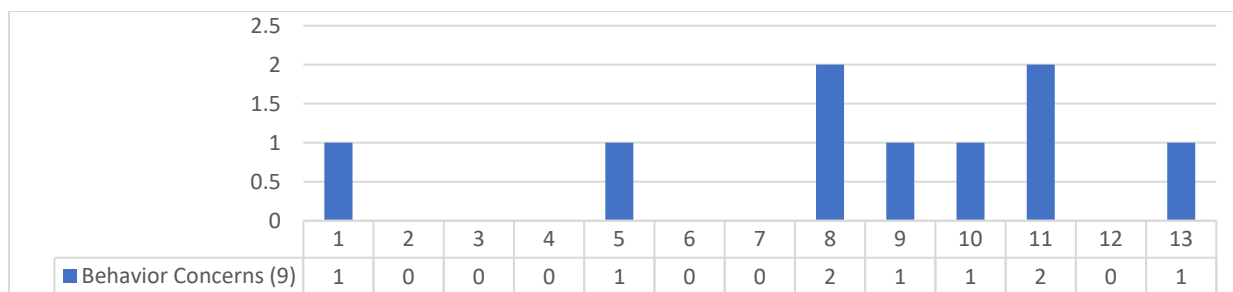
Generally, ISSs as well as behavior strategists received positive feedback about the support they provided to principals and teachers. Unsurprisingly, they are viewed as short staffed and would benefit from additional resources.

### Behavior Strategists

Of the district's 13 behavior strategist positions, 4 are vacant, which has increased the number of schools to which the strategists are assigned. As shown by Exhibit 5f, most of the nine behavior strategists are assigned to at least eight schools. Their number by school assignments are: one school (1), five schools (1), eight schools (2), nine, ten and thirteen schools (1 each), and eleven schools (2).

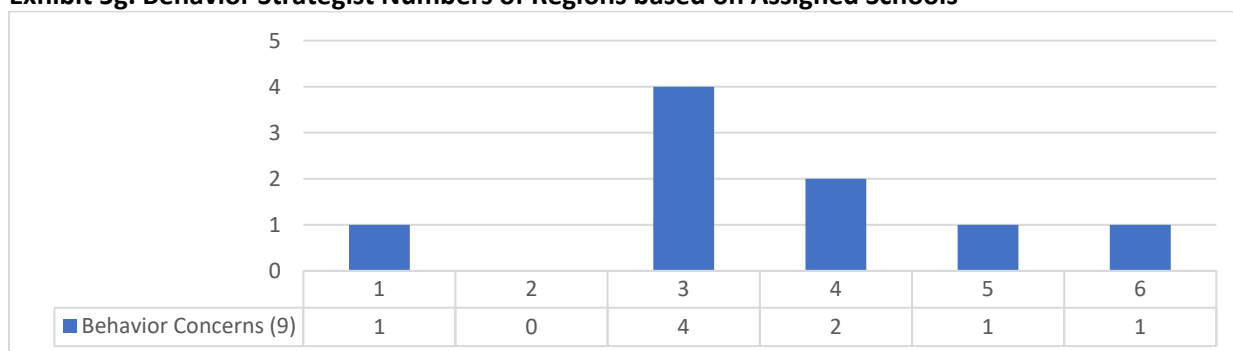
**Exhibit 5f. Behavior Strategist Numbers of Assigned Schools**





Based on their assigned schools, almost all ISSs are assigned to schools in more than one region. Their number by region are: one region (1), three regions (4), four regions (2), and five and six regions (1 each). (See Exhibit 5g.)

**Exhibit 5g. Behavior Strategist Numbers of Regions based on Assigned Schools**



Behavior strategists have an important role in providing behavioral support for teachers, paraprofessionals, and students identified with an emotional disturbance and others with disabilities who display behavior challenges in classrooms and other school settings. In addition to assisting with the development of IEPs, they support the completion of functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans. They also participate as a member of the Non-Crisis Intervention (NCI) and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support training program.

### IEP Counseling

Typically, school districts have related services personnel with counseling qualifications give that service to students with IEPs, along with appraisal and other services they provide at the school. Instead, ESS has identified 26 individuals to provide IEP counseling at their assigned schools: 8 psychologists, 11 social workers, and 7 educational diagnosticians.

### Principal Leadership and Support for Special Education

Principals face a daunting task as they lead and support their school communities in delivering higher student performance. According to *Leadership Matters*, principals “need to be educational visionaries; instructional and curriculum leaders; assessment experts; disciplinarians; community builders; public relations experts; budget analysts; facility managers; special program administrators; and experts in legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives.”<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, supportive principal leadership has been found to be the “standout, top-ranked

<sup>62</sup> Page 2, retrieved from <http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/LeadershipMatters.pdf>.

item” in supporting teacher retention. Principal leadership is essential for supporting practices that improve the achievement and well-being of students with IEPs. This includes but is not limited to expanding effective inclusive education and instruction in separate classes, use of positive behavior intervention/supports, and supporting parents of children with disabilities.

The Council team did not see any documents or training for principals about how they could use their leadership roles to directly influence the inclusive and high quality instruction for students with IEPs. Also, it was reported that principals with zero to three years of experience would normally have a summer training “boot camp,” but this training did not occur for 2021-22 year because the principal training days were eliminated.

### Lead Teachers

Focus group participants reported that each school has a special educator who is identified as a lead teacher to assist the principal with oversight of special education. The ESS teacher of record sends out meeting notices to parents and communicates with them. The lead teachers do not receive a stipend above the additional \$1,000 all special educators receive. Without any expectations that lead principals receive a reduced caseload, some principals have arranged this model to give the leaders time to do their work. Even in these circumstances lead teachers reported that they spend much of their time after school hours to carry out their responsibilities.

There is no districtwide guidance for the role of lead teachers and as the principal’s “go to person” they figure out how to trouble shoot and determine what needs to be done. Primarily they rely on the school’s ISS and behavior strategist for support.

Lead teachers reported their involvement in activities such as the following:

- Support IEP preparation training for new teachers.
- Train school staff to support inclusion and response to intervention (RTI).
- During the summer attend a full day of training for interested persons, and a shorter training after school started.
- At the high school level, support graduation pathways and April Dunn Act implementation.
- Help to schedule classes.
- Coordinate transcript processing.
- Address discipline at tiers II and III for students with disabilities, including conflict resolution, and support for manifestation determination reviews.
- Manager of complaint and due process issues.

### Comparative Personnel-to-Students with IEP Staffing Ratios

This subsection presents data on staff-to-student ratios in special education, i.e., special educators, paraprofessionals, speech/language pathologists, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs). EBRPSS ratios are compared to other urban school

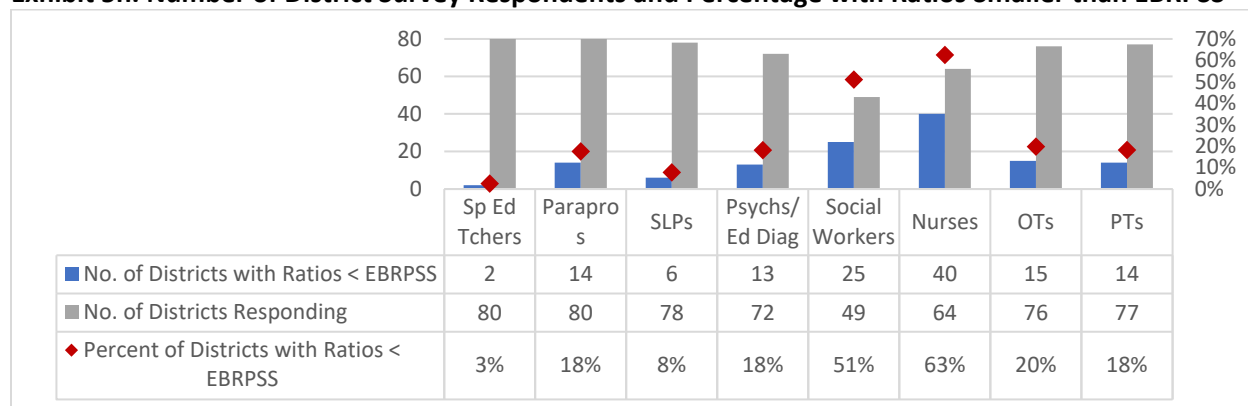
districts on which we have data.<sup>63</sup> (All districts did not report data in each area.) These data are based on full time equivalent (FTE) staff members and not on the number of positions *per se*. Also, the Council team presumes that FTE data included vacant positions.

The data do not give precise comparisons, so results need to be used with caution and should not be relied upon to make personnel decisions. Rather, they should be used to investigate the extent to which personnel in areas outside the norm are being used effectively and how they are meeting the needs of students. In addition, district data are not consistently reported (e.g., some districts include contractual personnel and others exclude them) and data are sometimes affected by varying placement types used by school districts. The data may count all students with IEPs, including those placed in charters, agencies, and nonpublic schools, while other districts do not count these. Still, these data are the best available and are useful as a rough guide to staffing ratios. Appendix B has detailed data on each school district.

### Overall School District Ranking

Data in Exhibit 5h show the percentage of districts having students with IEPs-to-staff ratios by personnel area that are smaller than EBRPSS', meaning these districts have fewer students to staff in the specified area.

**Exhibit 5h. Number of District Survey Respondents and Percentage with Ratios Smaller than EBRPSS**



In the following six personnel areas, small percentages of districts had smaller personnel to student with IEP ratios than EBRPSS.

- **Special Educators.** Two districts (2 percent) had smaller special educator ratios.
- **Paraprofessionals.** Fourteen districts (18 percent) had smaller paraprofessional ratios.
- **Speech/Language Pathologists.** Six (8 percent) had smaller SLP ratios.
- **Psychologists/Ed Diagnosticians.** Thirteen (18 percent) had smaller psychologist/educational diagnostician ratios.

<sup>63</sup> Much of the data were provided by the school districts that responded to a survey conducted by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative; the Council team or members of the team collected the remaining data during district reviews.

- **Occupational Therapists.** Fifteen (20 percent) had smaller OT ratios.
- **Physical Therapists.** Fourteen (18 percent) had smaller PT ratios.

For the remaining two areas, social workers and nurses, EBRPSS ratios were in the middle of all surveyed districts. Some 51 percent of districts had smaller social worker ratios and 63 percent had smaller nurse ratios.

### Special Educators

Exhibit 5i shows the district’s students-to-special education teacher ratios, compared to 80 other urban school districts. With 523 FTE special educators, EBRPSS has an average of 7.6 students with IEPs (including those with speech/language impairments) for every special educator.<sup>64</sup> As of February 8, 2022, 27 teaching positions were vacant and 15 teachers were on sick/extended leave. This ratio is much lower than the 14.2 teacher-student average among all districts on which we have data, ranking EBRPSS as 3<sup>rd</sup> among 80 reporting districts. In other words, 3 percent of the districts had a smaller number of special educators for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS.

**Exhibit 5i. Average Number Students for Each Special Educator**

Number of EBRPSS Staff FTE	523
EBRPSS Student w/IEP-to-Staff Ratios	7.6:1
All District Average Ratios	14.2:1
Range of All District Ratios	7–37:1
EBRPSS Ranking Among Districts <sup>65</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> of 80 districts

### ESS Staffing Determination Procedures

According to a district representative, using LA Bulletin student/teacher ratios established by Louisiana Bulletin 1706, the ESS and human resource departments work together to determine allocations for each school. The ESS department submits recommendations for programmatic changes with special education classes for the next school year, which may require the addition or elimination of positions.

The process for making programmatic changes does not describe a collaboration based on a review of relevant data and that is inclusive of school principals and their respective executive directors, along with ESS department, human resource and budget representatives. Other school districts reviewed by the Council team using such a process report it builds a strong understanding of school needs and elicits creative and effective use ESS personnel resources.

### Special Educator Shortages

The district, as in Louisiana and other school districts across the country, is experiencing significant staff shortages for special education. In December 2021 a House Concurrent Resolution created a Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force (Task Force) to

<sup>64</sup> These and other ratios are based on allocated personnel positions, which include vacancies. Although special educators for the most part do not instruct students with a speech/language impairment only, as speech/language pathologists are the primary providers, these students were included as students with IEPs among all surveyed districts.

<sup>65</sup> Ranking begins with districts having a low average number of students to one staff person.

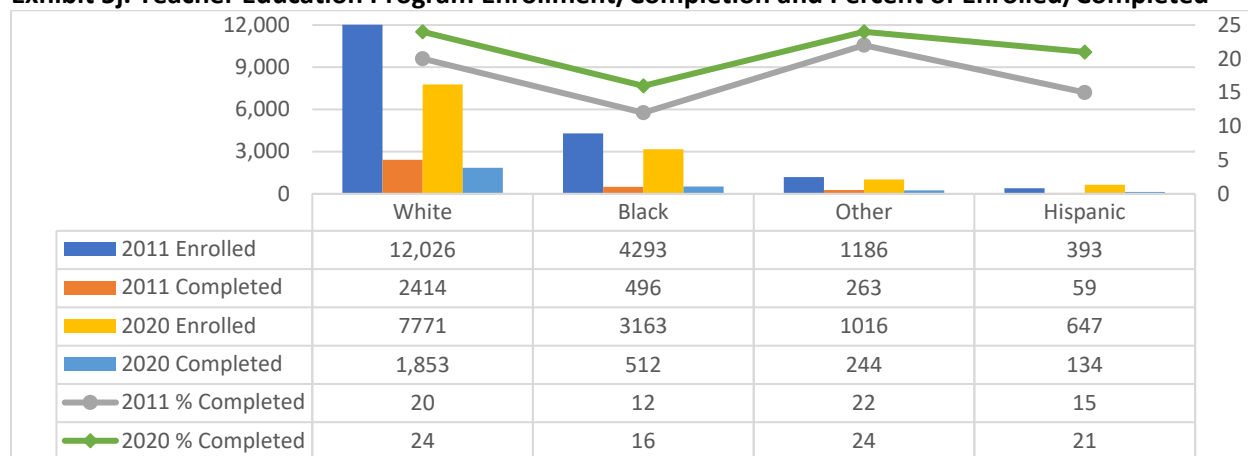
study for two years the declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs and to study strategies and best practices to increase rates of employment and retention of teachers in the State. After five months of study the Task Force on December 22, 2021, submitted to BESE members its preliminary findings and recommendations,<sup>66</sup> a final report is due in December 2022. The preliminary report identified special education (in addition to math and science) as the top areas of staff shortages. Unfortunately, the preliminary report did not disaggregate data and information by the area of staff shortage, but various findings and recommendations are relevant for the district’s consideration for immediate consideration and planning. Relevant Task Force findings are summarized below.

**Task Force Preliminary Findings**

Overall, the nation’s teacher preparation program enrollment declined by 25 percent, from 940,520 (2010) to 604,264 (2018). Mirroring this trend, Louisiana districts have experienced a noticeable decrease in teacher applicant pools, especially in special education, math and science.

**Enrollment/Completion of Teacher Education Programs.** Without identifying students’ major area of study, data in Exhibit 5j shows the numbers and percentages of individuals who in 2010 and 2011 enrolled in and completed a teacher program by race. These figures show that in 2011, completion rates by race/ethnicity were: white (20 percent), black (12 percent), other (22 percent), and Hispanic (15 percent). These figures changed in 2020: white (24 percent), black (16 percent), other (24 percent) and Hispanic (21 percent).

**Exhibit 5j. Teacher Education Program Enrollment/Completion and Percent of Enrolled/Completed**



**Teacher Program Completion Rate Differences.** Exhibit 5k shows the increase and decrease in the percentage of individuals who completed their teacher education program by race/ethnicity in 2020 compared to 2011. This data shows that groups with decreased rates were whites (23 percent – 2,414 to 1,853) and other (7 percent – 263 to 244). Black students

<sup>66</sup> Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force Preliminary Report, retrieved from file:///Users/suegamm/Dropbox/sues%20stuff/Baton%20Rouge/Sped%20-%20Organization/Teacher-Task-Force-Report-FINAL.pdf. All sources and quotes used in this section are from the Preliminary Report.

increased their completion by 3 percent (496 to 512) and Hispanics students by 127 percent (59 to 134).

**Exhibit 5k Teacher Program Completion Rate Differences from 2011 to 2020.**



**Out-of-Field or Uncertified Teachers.** Nineteen percent of all Louisiana classes are taught by special educators who are out-of-field or uncertified.

- **Exhaustion.** National trends indicate that teaching through the pandemic has increased and accelerated the exhaustion of teachers. In many places, only one to two months into the new school year, teachers were reporting the same level of exhaustion that might be expected heading into the winter holiday or the end of the school year.
- **Stress** is the number one reason why they are leaving the profession; the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the high levels of stress that were already in existence.
- **Teacher of Color Barriers.** Teachers of color face unique barriers to entering and staying in the profession; COVID-19 has likely exacerbated these barriers.
- **Job Dissatisfaction.** Teachers are departing because of job dissatisfaction link their decision to leave to inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, low salaries, and a lack of collective teacher influence over schoolwide decisions., “In short,the data suggest that school staffing problems are rooted in the way schools are organized and the waythe teaching occupation is treated and that lasting improvements in the quality and quantity of the teaching workforce will require improvements in the quality of the teaching job.”

**Notable Preliminary Recommendations.** Various Task Force preliminary recommendations are promising but rely on state support that will take time to approve and implement. The following are worthy of consideration for EBRPSS planning and implementation.

- Create a campaign to elevate the teaching profession.
- Invest and expand the para-to-teacher model.
- Develop a strategy to attract mid-career professionals into joining the teaching profession.
- Have enough mentors with expertise needed to effectively support teachers in the residency program.

- Recruit students to consider enrolling in a teacher education program upon high school graduation; explore dual enrollment opportunities to expand pre-educator pathways in high school.
- Expand partnerships with College of Education programs to focus on teacher recruitment.
- Improve induction support for beginning teachers, and new teacher mentoring programs. Studies have shown that content, program duration, and financial cost have an impact on the teacher.
- Intentionally adopt strategies to improve morale in the classroom. Work with principals to create a culture of mutual trust, respect, and open communication among teachers/school leaders to enable teachers to work together to improve practices and solve problems.
- Have listening sessions with special educators to learn about their concerns and barriers to teacher retention.

### Focus Group Participant Feedback about ESS Teacher Shortages

Focus group participants shared the following information about ESS teacher shortages in the district.

- Many participants indicated that it has been difficult hiring and retaining special educators at their schools and supporting new teachers. Even more difficult is finding/hiring teachers who are dually certified in special education and another shortage area, such as math and science, and educators certified to teach students with low incidence disabilities, preschool, and those who are homebound.
- Additional instructional supports are needed for new teachers.
- The district is working with about 200 paraprofessionals with a bachelor’s level degree to help them obtain special education certification.
- It has been difficult to have enough substitutes to cover for absent teachers and vacant positions.

### Paraprofessionals

Exhibit 5I shows the district’s students-to-total paraprofessional ratios, compared to 80 other urban school districts. Based on information of February 8, 2022, 25 of the paraprofessional positions were vacant and 12 were on sick/extended leave. With 422 FTE positions, EBRPSS has an average of 9.4 students with IEPs for every paraprofessional. This ratio is lower than the 15 paraprofessional-student average among all districts on which we have data, ranking EBRPSS as 15<sup>th</sup> among 80 reporting districts. In other words, 18 percent of the districts have a smaller number of paraeducators for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS.

**Exhibit 5I. Average Number Students for Each Paraeducator**

Number of Paraprofessional FTE	422
EBRPSS IEPs-to-Staff Ratios	9.4:1

All District Average Ratios	15:1
Range of All District Ratios	4.3–56:1
EBRPSS Ranking Among Districts <sup>67</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup> of 80 districts

Although district data did not show paraprofessional vacancies, various focus group participants reported vacancies and high personnel turnover. This problem was perceived to be related to new hires who did not anticipate the high need of students, particularly for their behavioral challenges.

ESS has three types of paraprofessionals: instructional, and student specific (1:1 aide), special education transportation aide (SETA). Many districts have moved away from the nomenclature of student specific or 1:1 aide by instead calculating the amount of time a student requires the assistance of a paraprofessional. The IEP could also indicate whether the student needs individualized attention or small group paraprofessional attention. This process enables the IEP to address more flexibly the amount of needed student and allows a paraprofessional to support more than one student when appropriate.

The ESS Procedural Handbook describes the process for determining a student’s need for a student-specific paraprofessional. Under this process, a student-specific paraprofessional committee reviews information about a student’s needs documented in the Student Specific Application. The committee has 10 days to review the information to determine if a paraprofessional is warranted. If so, the recommendation is incorporated in the student’s IEP.

Under IDEA, the IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them to make joint, informed decisions about, e.g., services needed to support the student.<sup>68</sup> IDEA allows use of preparatory activities for district personnel to develop a proposal or response to a parent proposal that will be discussed later at an IEP meeting.<sup>69</sup> However, these preparatory activities cannot predetermine the outcome of decisions to be made by the IEP team that includes all participants, including the student’s parents.

### Related Services Personnel

Related-services personnel ratios are summarized below and shown in Exhibit 5m.

- **Psychologists/Educational Diagnosticians (EDs).** There are 17 FTE allocated psychologist/ED positions, including 4 vacancies, and 19 EDs for a total of 36 personnel. Of allocated positions, there was one for every 110 students with IEPs, compared with the all-district average of 172 students. EBRPSS ranked 14 of 72 reporting districts in its number of personnel in this area. Some 18 percent of responding districts had a smaller number of psychologists for each student with an IEPs than EBRPSS.
- **Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP).** There are 74 FTE speech/language pathologists (SLPs) allocated positions, including 11 vacancies. Of allocated positions, there was one SLP for every

<sup>67</sup> Ranking begins with districts having a low average number of students to one staff person.

<sup>68</sup> Appendix A, Question 9 to IDEA Regulation (1997); 34 C.F.R. §300.343(c)(iii) and §300.346(a)(1) and (b)).

<sup>69</sup> 34 C.F.R. §300.501(b)(3).



54.6 students with IEPs in EBRPSS. Compared with the all-districts average, EBRPSS ranked 7 of 78 districts reporting SLP data. Some 8 percent of responding districts had a smaller number of SLPs for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS.

### Focus Group Participant Feedback

- **Use of Telepractice.** The ESS department is addressing the issue of SPL staff shortages by contracting with a company to provide virtual speech/language services. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) refers to this practice as Telepractice and considers it to be an appropriate model of service delivery.<sup>70</sup>
- **Scheduling Services.** There has been some conflict between SLPs and teachers regarding the removal of a student from class to receive speech/language services. This problem occurs also in charter schools, which in addition do not always have appropriate space for speech/language pathologists to provide services to students.
- **SWs.** There are 28 FTE social workers, including 1 vacant position. There was one social worker for every 142 students with IEPs in EBRPSS, compared with the all-district average of 256 students. EBRPSS ranked 26 of 49 districts reporting social worker data. Some 51 percent of responding districts had a smaller number of social workers for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS. Three schools have social workers that are not included in this count because they were not centrally funded. Instead, they were requested by principals and funded by their school budget allocations.
- **Nurses.** There are 26 FTE nurses who work through independent contractors. Of allocated positions, there was one nurse for every 153 students with IEPs in EBRPSS, compared with the all-district average of 170 students for each nurse. EBRPSS ranked 25 of 64 reporting districts. Some 63 percent of these districts had fewer nurses for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS.

**Focus Group Feedback.** The district relies on agency contracts to provide nursing services. There is a desire to bring this service back to EBRPSS so that ESS department personnel have more control over the nurses and the services they provide, e.g., attending IEP meetings. Although there have been some discussions with the chief financial officer, it does not appear that a cost analysis has been completed to compare contractual and district employment costs.

- **OTs.** There are 22 FTE occupational therapists (OT) who work through independent contractors. There was one OT for every 181 students with IEPs in EBRPSS, compared with the all-district average of 379 students for each OT. EBRPSS ranked 16 of 76 districts reporting OT data. Some 20 percent of responding districts had a smaller number of OTs for each student with an IEP than EBRPSS.
- **PTs.** There are 8 FTE physical therapists (PTs) who work through independent contractors. There was one PT for every 497 students with IEPs in EBRPSS, compared with the all-district average of 1,010 students. EBRPSS ranked 15 of 77 districts reporting PT data. Some 18 percent of responding districts had a smaller number of PTs for each student with an IEP than

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<sup>70</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Telepractice/>

EBRPSS.

**Exhibit 5m. Average Number Students for Each Related Service Area**

Related-Services Areas	Psych/ED	SLPs	SW	Nurses	OT	PT
Number of FTE District Staff	36	74	28	26	22	8
EBRPSS S w/ IEPs-to-Staff	110:1	54.6:1	142:1	153:1	181:1	497:1
All District Average Ratio	172.1:1	117:1	256:1	170:1	379:1	1,010:1
All District Ratios Range	26–1,021:1	31–396:1	26-247:1	58-834	64-1685:1	128-2941:1
EBRPSS Ranking	14 <sup>th</sup> of 72	7 <sup>th</sup> of 78	26 <sup>th</sup> of 49	25 <sup>th</sup> of 64	16 <sup>th</sup> of 76	15 <sup>th</sup> of 77

**Compliance Support**

This section focuses on written guidance on special education and Section 504 management and operations; the district’s IEP system and data reports; state compliance determinations, and state/OCR complaints and requests for due process hearings.

**Written Guidance for Special Education/Related Services and Section 504**

ESS has many documents designed to guide the operation and administration of special education/related services.

**ESS Procedural Handbook (January 2021)**

The ESS Procedural Handbook is a PDF document with information about the various special education processes. The document is user-friendly and contains links to additional information. The table of contents, however, does not have page numbers that migrate the reader to relevant pages and all table of contents page numbers were not accurate. Also, the Handbook is not available on the district’s ESS webpage.

**Procedure Descriptions**

In addition, the ESS department has produced separate documents that include the following –

- IEP procedures and best practices reminders
- IEP checklist
- Initial/reevaluation evaluation checklist
- Sample IEP meeting agenda
- Revocation of consent for special education
- Referral for counseling services
- Related services procedures
- Initiating occupational therapy and physical therapy services
- Alternate pathways for students assessed on the LEAP connect
- Alternative pathways to graduation
- Transition services
- Securing an American sign language interpreter
- MDR process
- Extended school year

- Services for students in private/parochial schools

Each of these documents provide valuable information. It would be more useful if they were all incorporated in the ESS Procedural Handbook with basic information that could include links to full documents.

### **EES Pupil Appraisal Handbook (2021-22)**

The ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook is a PDF document that includes a variety of what could be helpful information but is presented with no logical order or a table of contents. As a result, it was difficult to read, and its contents were difficult to review. Also, a word search found no information about the evaluation of students who are English learners.

### **Principal Playbook**

The Principal Playbook is a 103-page resource guide of policies and procedures for school leaders. The Playbook does not have a table of content. Furthermore, it is organized by department, which is not presented alphabetically. The section on Exceptional Student Services (pages 34-36) has a summary of the department's activities and links sections of the above referenced ESS Procedural Handbook and other items listed under the above referenced ESS Procedure Descriptions. While much of the information in the Playbook is valuable, its format is not user-friendly as, for example, it was not easy to find the EES section.

### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Handbook**

The district's Section 504 Rehabilitation Act Handbook is described as providing provide parents, school personnel and other interested parties with procedures and a summary of specific, practical guidelines for schools to use when working with children who are eligible for protections and services available under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The document clearly explains Section 504/ADA requirements, but it would be improved by providing links from items in the table of contents to the relevant page of interest. Also, while the ESS Procedural Handbook has a useful and comprehensive section about decisions for use of service animals in schools, which is correctly described as an ADA issue, the Section 504 Handbook has no information about this topic.

### **LDOE Compliance Determination: EBRPSS Met Requirements**

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, each year LDOE issues an SPP profile showing each indicator, state and district rates, and state targets. Many of these indicators were reported in prior portions of this report, such as the percentages related to various educational settings for early childhood education and school placements. The SPP reports rates on 14 "performance" and "compliance" indicators.

- **Performance Indicators.** Address graduation; dropouts; outcomes for early childhood; reading/math proficiencies; postsecondary education/training/employment; significant discrepancies (suspensions/expulsions, early childhood educational settings, and school-age educational settings); and parent engagement.

**Compliance Indicators.** Address racial/ethnic disproportionalities in suspension/expulsion over 10 days and disproportionate special education data overall and in six disability areas;

timely transition for young children prior to age 3; timely evaluations; and appropriate IEP-transition related content. In addition, there are measures for timely/accurate child count submission; timely/accurate coordinated early intervening services data; no outstanding single/fiscal IDEA audit findings; and no uncorrected noncompliance/IDEA corrective action plan.

To make a compliance determination, LDOE's profile shows points it has awarded for each relevant indicator and additional components. The state has three tiers of categories identified by color in the chart below, which are associated with different number of points: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. Some SPP performance indicators are not scored with points to calculate the compliance determination.

In 2019-20, the district earned 25 of 27 available points for a total rate of 92.6 percent and a determination of the highest Meets Requirements determination. This determination is based on the district's high level of compliance and graduation growth. However, it should be noted that although the district received 10 of its 25 points (40 percent) based on this growth, only half (51 percent) of EBRPSS' students with disabilities that year graduated from high school.

Exhibit 5n shows all SPP indicators, additional categories assessed, and the points EBRPSS earned for its compliance determination. Due to COVID, student achievement (indicator 3 for participation/proficiency) was not measured during this school year. Also, parental involvement was not measured.

### SPP Indicator Outcomes

The district met or did not meet SPP targets for the following indicators.

**Indicators Met.** The district met the following five indicators –

- **Indicator 1** (graduation with high school diploma)
- **Indicators 4a and 4b** (significant discrepancy for suspension/expulsion) over 10 days and by race/ethnicity resulting from use of inappropriate policies, practices or procedures
- **Indicator 11** (initial evaluations completed on time)
- **Indicator 12.** Students referred by Part C programs prior to age 3 who were eligible for and had an IEP implemented by their third birthday
- **Indicator 13.** Youth 16 years of age and older with IEPs having appropriate measurable postsecondary goals

**Indicators Not Met.** The district did not meet the following 13 indicators –

- **Indicator 2.** Dropping out of school
- **Indicator 5.** Children 6-21 years of age inside regular class  $\geq 80$  percent of the day and  $\leq 40$  percent of the day. Because LDOE's percentage of students in separate schools, residential, and home/hospital settings was reported as  $< 5$  percent with a state target of  $< 1.3$  percent, the document does not give sufficient information to show whether the district met the target.

- **Indicator 6.** Children 3-5 years of age attending regular early childhood and having the majority of their special education provided in an EC program. Because LDOE’s percentage of young children in separate classes schools, or residential facilities was reported as <5 percent with a state target of <2.9 percent, the document does not give sufficient information to show whether the district met the target.
- **Indicator 7.** Outcomes for children entering preschools below age expectations who substantially increased their achievement upon exiting the programs or who functioned within age expectations by the time they exited their program – for each (positive social-emotional skills, acquisition/use of knowledge/skills, and appropriate behavior to meet needs).
- **Indicator 14.** Youth who had an IEP but no longer in high school were by one year later enrolled in higher education, competitively employed, or in another postsecondary education or training program.

**Exhibit 5n. 2019-20 State Performance Profile Results for EBRPSS**

	District	State	Target	Points
<b>1. Graduation with high school diploma</b>	51.1%	64.7%	≥50%	<b>6</b>
LDOE indicator: graduation improvement	6.0 pts		5.1 pts	<b>4</b>
LDOE Cohort Credential Attainment				
Youth with IEPs w/HS graduation & advanced/basic credential	10.2%		>42% by FFY 24	
%-point improvement from previous year	4.2 pts	3 pts		
<b>2. Dropping out of high school</b>	35.7%	15.5%	≤25%	Not Scored
<b>3. Participation in statewide assessments</b>	Not reported		≥98.8%	<b>10</b> Based on 4 Indicators
Proficiency rate by grade/total for ELA	Not reported		≥43%	
Proficiency rate by grade/total for math	Not reported		≥41.7%	
<b>4A. Significant discrepancy: suspension/expulsion rate &gt;10 days</b>	No		No	
<b>4B. Significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity resulting from inappropriate policies, practices or procedures</b>	No		No	<b>2</b>
<b>5. Educational environment (6-21 years)</b>				
Inside regular class ≥80% or more of the day	57.0%	64.1%	≥64.0%	
Inside regular class ≤less than 40% of the day	19.2%	13.8%	≤13.5%	
Educated in separate schools, residential, homebound/hospital	<5%*	1.5%	≤1.3%	
<b>6. Educational environment (3-5 years)</b>				
Attend regular early childhood & majority of sped in EC program	9.7%	17.5%	≥31%	
Attend separate special ed class, school, or residential facility	≤5%*	4.7%	≤2.9%	
<b>7. Outcomes for preschool children with IEPs</b>				
Of those entering <age expectations, substantially increase by exit				
Positive social-emotional skills	54.3%	68.1%	≥72.5%	
Acquisition/use of knowledge/skills	64.8%	68.9%	>73.5%	

	District	State	Target	Points
Appropriate behaviors to meet needs	50.5%	54.7%	≥76.5%	
Functioning within age expectations by time of exit from program				
Positive social-emotional skills	33.0%	47.5%	≥66.5%	
Acquisition/use of knowledge/skills	35.7%	46.0%	≥59.5%	
Appropriate behaviors to meet needs	19.6%	30.8%	≥71.5%	
<b>8. Parental Involvement</b> (parents reporting schools facilitated involvement as means of improving services/results for children with disabilities)	N/A	84.31%	≥83.5%	
<b>9. Disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity resulting from inappropriate special education identification</b>	No		No	<b>2</b>
<b>10. Disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity in specific disability categories resulting from inappropriate identification</b>	No		No	<b>2</b>
<b>11. Evaluation timelines</b> (initial evaluations completed on time)	>99%	92.8%	100%	<b>2</b>
<b>12. Eligible Part C referred &lt;age 3 have IEP implemented by 3<sup>rd</sup> b-day</b>	>99%	100%	100%	<b>1</b>
<b>13. Youth ≥16 years had IEP with appropriate measurable postsecondary goals</b>	>99%	100%	100%	<b>2</b>
<b>14. Youth no longer in HS w/IEP when left school were w/in 1 year in</b>				
Higher education	22.22%	34.79%	≥39%	
Same as above or competitively employed	31.11%	65.93%	≥84%	
Same as above or in some postsecondary ed/training program	77.78%	88.82%	≥96%	
<b>Additional Areas of Review</b>				
Timely and accurate child count submission				<b>1</b>
Timely/accurate coordinated early intervening services data				<b>1</b>
No outstanding single/fiscal IDEA audit findings				<b>1</b>
No uncorrected noncompliance/IDEA corrective action plan				<b>1</b>

### Due Process and Complaint Filings

Urban districts of all sizes typically have relatively large numbers of requests for due process hearings and complaints filed with state and federal agencies. EBRPSS has been successful at resolving disputes, which has resulted in a relatively low number of complaints and due process hearing requests.

### LDOE Complaint

In November 2021, a complaint was filed with LDOE alleging that some students enrolled in the district’s virtual school had not received the special education/related services identified in their IEPs due to staff shortages. In response, on January 5, 2022, the district’s special counsel wrote to LDOE. The counsel acknowledged the district’s staff shortages, noting that these shortages

were also state and national problems. The district offered voluntary actions to resolve the complaint, which included the correction of student-specific findings by offering compensatory education services, continuation of recruitment/retention efforts, and training activities. A district representative reported that LDOE accepted EBRPSS’ resolution proposal.

**OCR Monitoring Activity**

In 2019, OCR reviewed information the district provided to show its resolution of issues that were involved with complaints filed in previous years. Two of the complaints involved the harassment of a student with disabilities. One of these complaints also involved several other issues (access to recess, student record corrections, parent access to the child’s campus, and compensatory education). The third complaint involved accessible parking and a high school stage accessibility. Documentation showed that OCR found that the district had resolved all outstanding issues.

**Due Process Hearing Requests**

Overall, EBRPSS has had relatively little complaint and due process activity over the last three years, which is not typical for urban school districts and speaks well for the ESS department’s proactive activity that has resulted in the resolution of school/parent disagreements. Between 2018 and 2021, the district received 11 requests for due process and 1 complaint filed with LDOE that concerned special education.<sup>71</sup> Of these 11 cases, five were filed by an attorney, four were settled, three were found in favor of EBRPSS, three were dismissed and two are pending. One case had an issue ruled in favor of the parent and two in favor of the district. The following information was shared for one case that was filed in early 2020: payment of up to \$3,200 for tutoring provided by an outside agency, up to \$90 to the parent for tuition reimbursement; and \$3,500 in attorney fees. Of all the cases, only two involved the same school. (See Exhibit 5o.)

**Exhibit 5o. Due Process/Complaints Filed (2018-2021)**

	Filed	Parent	Attorney	Settled	For District	For Parent	Dismissed	Pending
1	2/14/18		X	X				
2	1/31/19				2 issues	1 issue		
3	4/15/19		X	X			X	
4	6/21/19	X					X	
5	8/14/19	X		X				
6	1/23/20	X			X			
7	1/23/20		X		X			
8	5/29/20	X			X			
9	10/30/20		X	X				
10	10/15/21		X					X
11	11/21/21						X	
12	12/3/21	X						X

<sup>71</sup> An additional due process request involved gifted/talented issues, which is outside the scope of this review.

## Operations

Focus group participants provided feedback about transportation, fiscal, and Medicaid related issues.

## Transportation

Although there is a national shortage of bus drivers, a transportation department representative reported that the shortage has not delayed transportation for students with disabilities. Substitutes are available for absent drivers. With only one exception, focus group participants agreed that transportation has not been problematic.

## Fiscal

Because of funding related to federal COVID-related grants, fiscal support for special education has not been problematic. Grant funds are being used primarily for professional development to avoid a fiscal cliff when the supplemental funds are no longer available.

## Medicaid

Based on information received from the district, various social workers are paid through IDEA funds. However, Medicaid rules prohibit reimbursement for personnel services that are federally funded. It is advisable to use state or local funds for all personnel who give Medicaid-reimbursable services so their services to Medicaid-enrolled students are billable.

## Accountability

In the fall of 2011, the Council of the Great City Schools published its report, *Pieces of the Puzzle: Factors in the Improvement of Urban School Districts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress*.<sup>72</sup> The report summarized research the Council conducted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on characteristics of urban school districts that made the greatest academic improvements and had the highest overall performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The first characteristic involved a district's clear statement of goals and districtwide accountability for results. These factors help create a culture of shared responsibility for student achievement. Other research has found similar results.<sup>73</sup> School districts that effectively support school leadership often demonstrate the ability to facilitate learning, address barriers, and govern and manage the district in ways that prioritize good instruction. In pursuing these goals, districts showing improvement have mechanisms for systemic planning, program implementation, evaluation, and accountability.

Louisiana's school/district accountability system and EBRPSS' Strategic Plan and data review activities are described below.

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<sup>72</sup> Available at

[http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Pieces%20of%20the%20Puzzle\\_FullReport.pdf](http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Pieces%20of%20the%20Puzzle_FullReport.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> Toward a School District Infrastructure that More Effectively Addresses Barriers to Learning and Teaching, A Center Policy & Practice Brief, Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. November 2011, at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/toward%20a%20school%20district%20infrastructure.pdf>.



### Louisiana School/District Accountability

Each Louisiana school district receives a District Performance Score (DPS) and each public school receives a School Performance Score (SPS) that is reported on a scale from zero to 150.

#### State and District DPS Score

For 2020-21, school districts received “simulated” performance scores due to the COVID pandemic and loss of instruction. The simulated scores were for informational and planning purposes only and were to be interpreted with caution. The state’s 2019-20 DPS score was 77.1, with an overall grade of B, while the 2020-21 simulated score was 75.3. EBRPSS’ 2019-20 DPS score was 69.1, earning a grade of C, while the district’s 2021-22 simulated DPS score was 67.1.<sup>74</sup> The district’s DPS 2-point decrease was about the same as the state’s 1.8-point decrease.

#### District SPS Score

The SPS measures how well schools perform on indices for elementary schools (3 indices), elementary/middle schools with grade 8 (4 indices) and high schools (6 indices). Letter grades from A to F are distributed based on a school’s SPS, e.g., an A applies to scores of 95.0 – 150.0 for 2021-22 through 2023-24. The number of SPS scores needed for the grades of A to C increase in 2024-25. Note that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the LEAP Connect or LAA1 are not included in the denominator of the school’s index score.

As part of the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, one of three intervention types is required based on the school’s grade for one or more subgroups.

- **Urgent Intervention Needed (UIN).** Subgroup performance equals a “D” or “F” in current year.
- **Urgent Intervention Required (UIR).** Subgroup performance equals an “F” for two years and/or OOS rates more than double the national average for three years.
- **Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR).** Overall performance of “D” or “F” for three years (or two years for new schools) and/or graduation rate less than 67% in most recent year.

According to district representatives, EBRPSS has ranked in the top 10 districts for growth over the past two years and has grown in all major indices except one in the last reporting cycle. About 1/3 of the district’s 32 schools with a CIR classification are “on track to exit.” During the last review cycle, 36 percent of district schools were rated D or F.

#### EBRPSS Strategic Plan (2021-2025)

District representatives informed the Council team that the EBRPSS Strategic Plan is the first to put metrics in place that are measurable, along with publicly reported with outcomes that are public. The Strategic Plan has the following four commitments. Each commitment has measurable objectives with a 2016-20 average baseline, current outcomes, and 2021 projections for the following school year.

- **Student Achievement.** We will ensure every child maximizes their education and personal

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<sup>74</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/performance-scores>.

potential by supporting families/students from cradle to career.

- **Exemplary Customer Service.** We will provide all stakeholders with caring, responsive, and inclusive experiences with the district.
- **Operational Excellence.** We will be responsible stewards of community resources for the achievement of district priorities.
- **Employee Development.** We will develop and provide opportunities for all employees in ways that help them grow and feel valued.

Exhibit 5p shows the Strategic Plan goals by each of the four areas of commitment with 24 overall goals, also known as key performance indicators (KPIs). The plan commitments/goals are clear, and the goals capture important areas for measurement. The district’s intent is to align its work with the Strategic Plan.

According to district representatives, some of the goals are disaggregated by subgroup data, such as students with disabilities and English learners. By disaggregating and analyzing such data, district personnel can identify area of strengths and weaknesses, report their findings, and develop improvement plans. However, the district’s presentation of this information<sup>75</sup> shows data reporting that is global in nature and there is no information indicating any breakdown of data outcomes by subgroup reports, which mask lower achievements of students from various subgroups, such as ESS and English learners. To ensure that data does not mask low performing subgroups, only those goals shown in Exhibit 5p that are highlighted with yellow would be appropriate for overall outcomes. In addition, it would be helpful if goals highlighted with green are disaggregated by personnel or surveyed groups, e.g., ESS and EL. The desegregated data could be acknowledged and displayed through links.

**Exhibit 5p. Strategic Plan by Commitment and Goals**

Goal #	Goal Statement
<b>Student Achievement</b> (Goals marked with an asterisk include current data by school)	
1.1	<b>Pre-K Access.</b> Annual 3-5 %-points Increase in available/enrolled Pre-K seat number
1.2	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Reading*</b> Annual 3-5 %-point increase in 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade student number reading $\geq$ grade level
1.3	<b>ELA Growth*</b> Annual 3-5 %-pts growth for pre-K & 3-8 students in ELA benchmark assessments
1.4	<b>Math Growth*</b> Annual 3-5 %-pts growth for pre-K & 3-8 students on math benchmark assessments
1.5	<b>ACT Score Growth*</b> Annual 3-5 %-pts increase in number HS reporting average ACT score of $\geq 17$
1.6	<b>In/Out-of-School Suspensions*</b> Annual 3-5 %-point reduction in number of in/OOS suspensions
1.7	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion.</b> Annual 3-5 %-point increase in promotion rate of first time ninth grade students

<sup>75</sup> Retrieved from <https://scorecard.ebrschools.org/>.

Goal #	Goal Statement
1.8	<b>Dropout Rate.</b> Annual 3-5 %-point decrease in high school student dropout rate
1.9	<b>Dual Enrollment Course Credits.</b> Annual 3-5% decrease in number of 9-12 grade students with dual enrollment course credit
1.10	<b>Industry Based Credential (IBC).</b> Increase number of students earning an IBC by 3-5 %-points annually.
<b>Exemplary Customer Service (Goals marked with an asterisk include current data by school)</b>	
2.1	<b>Survey Responses.</b> Annual 3-5 %- point increase in number of district stakeholder participants (students, employees, families, etc.) giving favorable responses to district-initiated surveys
2.2	<b>Survey Participation.</b> Annual 3-5 %-point increase in stakeholder participation in districted initiated surveys
2.3	<b>Family Engagement*.</b> 100% of all EBR schools have active family engagement structure by SY 2022-23
2.4	<b>Student Enrollment*.</b> 3-5 %-point increase in total student enrollment
2.5	<b>Language of Communication.</b> By 2024-5 all communications sent to families from the district or school offices will be available in dominant languages spoken by district families
<b>Operational Excellence</b>	
3.1	<b>Transfer Buses.</b> 3-5%annual decrease in number of daily transfer buses.
3.2	<b>Transport Time.</b> 3-5% annual increase in number of buses with 35 minutes or less transport time
3.3	<b>Facility Response.</b> Annually increase by 3-5% facilities response time to 24-hours
3.4	<b>High Risk Incidents.</b> 3-5% annual reduction in number of high-risk incidents reported to district
3.5	<b>Miss School*.</b> 3-5% annual reduction in number of students missing $\geq 10$ school days each year
<b>Employee Development (Goals marked with an asterisk include current data by school)</b>	
4.1	<b>Retention.</b> Annual 3-5% increase in retention of high performing district employees
4.2	<b>Missed Work*.</b> Annual 3-5 %-points decrease in number of district employees missing $\geq 10$ days of work
4.3	<b>Professional Development.</b> Annual 3-5 %-pts increase in number of PD opportunities to all district staff
4.4	<b>Positive/Productive Work Culture.</b> Annual 3-5 %-point increase in number of reports by district staff
4.5	<b>Retention of Newly Hired Teachers for 3 Years.</b> Annual 3-5 %-pts increase

**Data Drive**

As explained in a June 7, 2021, PowerPoint presentation, EBRPSS data drive goals are to –

- Analyze student data to define current states and identify trends
- Collaborate across departments to build coherence, calibrate vocabulary, and formulate common focus areas

- Support increased student achievement and next steps needed to support schools
- Set goals/share resources across departments for data driven decision making, needs assessment, goal setting and implementing continuous improvement cycles

Data analysis focuses on DPS and SPS student achievement data for ELA/literacy, math science/ social studies, progress/top growth, ACT, graduation rate/related areas, and attitudinal survey data. During data drives, participants review common Excel spreadsheets with key data. This information is useful for district/school personnel to review the data, and have PLCs meet to identify and address contributing factors for low scores. Reportedly, district representatives urge school personnel to not get caught up on the grading scales, state actions, and old data. Instead, they urge school personnel to focus on data gaps and plan their actions for improvement in those components needing attention.

Information did not specify the extent to which data drives use disaggregated data based on student subgroups, such as ELs and students with disabilities. Throughout this report there has been a focus on the achievement of students with disabilities and the factors that influence their teaching and learning. Examples include their support for instruction in general education, availability of intensive interventions for those who read at levels far below their grade level peers, integrated supports for children with serious behavior issues, interdepartmental collaboration, and organization of ESS department personnel to align with schools overseen by each regional executive director to facilitate collaborative planning and follow-up. This information may be useful as participants review DPS and SPS data indicators and consider next steps. In some of these areas, district leadership and action will be necessary to support school actions (e.g., intensive reading interventions, district level personnel collaboration and ESS reorganization) and in others principal leadership is needed to better leverage school resources to support more students with disabilities to receive effective instruction and be supported in general education classes.

### EBRPSS Walk Through Document

The district's website posts the Walk Through Document that individuals use to enter their observations during their walks through schools.<sup>76</sup> EBRPSS' posting of this Document provides a transparent look at the process and areas under review. Using this protocol, the following information is collected –

- **Demographics.** Evaluator and teacher names, school, grade, subject, class setting (regular education, ESS, gifted, and magnet)
- **Instructional Practices** (may have multiple responses). Class discussion/seminar, composing, distance learning, hands-on/experiments/labs, informal assessing, content enhancement routines, cooperative learning, group work, coaching, lecture, homework/practice, cues/questions/advance organizers, generating/testing hypotheses, identifying similarities/differences, non-linguistic representations, summarizing/note taking, setting objectives/providing feedback, reinforcing effort/recognition, seatwork, student presentations, video,

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<sup>76</sup> Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfWOK0xs-REeJqEYRLCJmMLpdGlgJvK2z5E6xEBSOW2rNEiwQ/viewform?c=0&w=1>.

learning stations, question/answer, reading/responding, self-evaluation/reflection, modeling, peer review, providing directions/instructions, researching, reading, and testing.

- **Release of Responsibility** measures
  - Teacher engagement/disengagement; students engaged/not engaged
  - Teacher tells, shows how to do it; students listen, observe, minimally participate
  - Teacher leads, negotiates, suggests; students question, collaborate, respond, read or write
  - Student takes charge, approximate, practice; teacher encourages, clarifies, confirms
  - Student initiative, self-direct, self-evaluate; teacher affirms, coaches
- **Grouping Format** (may have multiple responses). Whole group, small group, paired, individual
- **Percent of Students Behaviorally Engaged in Learning Experience.** Disengaged (<50%), Low (50%-74%), Moderate (75%-89%), High ( $\geq$ 90%)
- **Students' Level of Cognitive Engagement** (based on  $\geq$ 75% of students). Authentic engagement, compliance, and retreatism/rebellion
- **Level(s) of Student Work (Revised Bloom's Taxonomy).** Remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating
- **Depth of Knowledge - Levels of Student Work**
  - **Level 1.** Recall/reproduce (recall fact, information or procedure, process information on a low level)
  - **Level 2.** Skill/concept (use information or conceptual knowledge, two or more steps)
  - **Level 3.** Strategic thinking (requires reasoning, developing a plan or sequence of steps, some complexity)
  - **Level 4.** Extended thinking (requires an investigation, time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem)
- **Technology.** Not evident. Teacher uses technology to disseminate information; students use technology to explore content; and teacher/students seamlessly integrate technology with a focus on the learner

It is not clear from the above components whether this protocol provides sufficient information to describe the resource and self-contained classrooms attended by students with disabilities that are significantly different from each other based on student learning characteristics, and the instructional practices, release of responsibility, and for some the descriptions of depth of knowledge one would want to document. Furthermore, the Document does not seem to collect information that would be useful for documenting the quality of instruction students with disabilities are receiving within a general education classroom with the use of accommodations and supplementary aids and services or in separate classrooms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to improve EBRPSS' implementation of MTSS and management and operation of special education/related services and support for the achievement and well-being of students with IEPs.

**5. Interoffice Collaboration.** Consider the following collaborative strategies to improve interoffice/departmental collaboration to minimize fragmented support and leverage support to school personnel and students.

- a. Leadership Team Engagement.** Actively engage ESS leadership to identify issues for the chief academic officer's leadership team that are interfering with student achievement and positive behavior/SEL and are beyond local school personnel to address.
- b. Improved Collaboration.** Develop and monitor an implementation plan for increased collaboration between ESS and other department personnel in the areas described below.
  - **ESS and Other Department Personnel, generally.** Facilitate scheduled and structured meetings between personnel in ESS and other departments to address issues of mutual concern, focusing on support for achievement and positive behavior/SEL.
  - **ESS and Human Resources.** Have HR actively work with ESS and personnel from other departments as appropriate to expedite filling vacant ESS positions and to identify interim measures that will be taken until positions are filled.
  - **ESS Content Area Supervisors and Content Trainers.** Ensure structures are in place for ESS content area supervisors and content trainers to collaborate with personnel in other departments having similar goals and practice areas to maximize their collective work.
  - **ESS and Literacy and English Language Personnel.** Maximize collaboration between these personnel areas and others as appropriate to ensure strategies are comprehensive for all students and that personnel are working together to leverage their resources for maximum impact. Ensure the project manager for ESS and ESL has sufficiently strong expertise in these areas to better collaborate and coordinate approaches.
  - **ESS and Student Services.** Strongly consider having single supervisors for personnel with similar expertise. Reduce fragmented school services resulting from having multiple personnel with similar expertise from different departments but supporting different groups of students, (e.g., ICARE personnel support only students without IEPs even though they have the expertise to support students with IEPs, reading specialists, etc.) To the extent possible ensure resources are available to meet student needs. Ensure CASEL training is available for all ESS personnel supporting students with social/emotional learning.
  - **ESS and 504 Coordinator.** Ensure collaboration between the 504 Coordinator and ESS personnel through regular meetings and coordinated activities focusing on accommodations and supplementary aids and services.

- **ESS and English Learners.** Expediently, have planned and structured interaction and collaboration between ESS and English learner leaders to identify ways to build mutual expertise for identifying disabilities needing special education, and providing language acquisition support for students with IEPs, including various models of support. Consider hiring a consultant for this purpose if sufficient expertise is not available in-house for planning and training purposes.
6. **ESS and Organization.** Consider the following ESS organization proposal to support more effectively and efficiently students with IEPs. (See Appendix B for a proposed reorganization.) The proposed organization would have the following major changes from the present structure.
- a. **Streamline Leadership.** Eliminate leadership by an associate superintendent and director. Consider two directors with compliance and instructional support responsibilities. Ensure that the work of both divisions is well coordinated through the new ESS leader. The associate superintendent has focused on problem-solving issues and collaborating with upper management while the director has a multitude of programmatic and operational responsibilities in addition to supervising all ESS personnel. A singular leader of this department needs to have a high level of expertise in special education content and administration and be able to collaborate freely with other departmental personnel and the chief academic officer. Furthermore, the leader should be freed up to perform this function and be available to those with programmatic and operational responsibilities within the ESS department. At a minimum this individual should be at the executive director level, if not the associate superintendent level given the breadth and depth of responsibilities.
  - b. **Reports to the ESS Directors.** We recommend having the following units reporting to the ESS directors. We expect that this proposal would be vetted by those with close understanding of the work and tweaked as necessary for equitable work distribution and coverage of all necessary responsibilities. Note that expectations for staff members will not be met if there is an insufficient number to carry out their responsibilities. Four positions identified below are recommended in light of the enormous effort that is required to support the regional EDs, school-based personnel, and students with IEPs to raise their achievement and positive behavior/SEL outcomes.
    - **Appraisal Supervisor.** Keep current functions in place but assign appraisers to single regions to the maximum extent possible, e.g., a social worker would be assigned to schools in one region with principals reporting to one executive director. This would enable these appraisers to work with ISSs and behavior strategists assigned to the same region/executive director, and facilitate sharing of information, problem-solving, and giving professional development.
    - **New Citywide Specialists Supervisor.** This new unit would focus on city-wide and specialized activities and support ESS regional supervisors and team members described below. The following recommended personnel/ programmatic functions are currently in place but were assigned by grade level (elementary, middle or high

school), which resulted in personnel aligned with schools supervised by numerous EDs for school leadership. Personnel areas are: preK/itinerant homebased; PD specialists/PD coordination; curriculum content trainers; ABA/autistic program facilitator, lead behavior strategist, lead SLP, assistive technology; vision, hearing, orientation/mobility & interpreter support.

Two new positions are recommended: a reading intervention specialist (to address the wide reading gaps of students with IEPs), and support for modified curriculum instruction.

- **Four Regional Supervisors.** With one additional supervisor, three of the supervisors would have two teams each, with each team aligned with the larger regions that have two executive directors each (B-S, H-OS, and North). The fourth supervisor would have two teams (one working with Highland and the other with Southeast.) Each team would be comprised of ISS, behavior strategists, lead teachers, and speech/language pathologists who would be assigned to schools aligned with a single ED for school leadership. The teams would coordinate and support their schools' specialized programs, lead teacher, placement, compliance, professional development, and support monitoring. As discussed below, the districtwide specialists described above would support the teams and their supervisors. This structure would enable each respective team to be aligned with each executive director for school leadership and have their supervisor work directly with the EDs to promote strategic planning, problem-solve, plan professional development, identify trends and needs, etc. One of these supervisors would also have a team of persons work with the schools supervised by the executive director for reengagement. Very important to take note the team is recommending a total of 5 supervisors, including the above Appraisal Supervisor, because of the significant amount of support schools need to improve the academic achievement of students with disabilities.
  - **New Operations Leader.** Led by an individual with an appropriate administrative status, this unit would concentrate on data, private/parochial school coordination, ESY support, and compliance (coordination of due process, state complaints and compliance monitoring.) This ESS leader and team would provide support to the regional supervisor and team working with a school having a compliance or other operational issue.
- c. Professional Development.** Engage ongoing professional learning activities for new and current ESS personnel to carry out any new responsibilities and to build their respective areas of expertise.
- 7. School-Based ESS Personnel.** Ensure that personnel who support students with IEPs are employed in sufficient numbers and are available to meet student needs.
- a. Principal Support.** As included in Recommendation 4d above, include in professional development for principals the information they need to understand quality indicators for inclusive instruction, measures for increasing student achievement and positive behavior/SEL, and how principals are critical leaders for these initiatives.



- b. **Lead Teacher Support.** Develop districtwide guidance for the role of lead teachers, expected practices, and models for supporting their work through reduced caseloads, stipends, etc.
  - c. **Student-Staff Ratios.** On a regular basis with HR and the CAO, review staffing ratios summarized in this report (see Appendix A). NOTE: Relatively low or high student-to-personnel ratios do not necessarily mean that any given area is staffed inappropriately; however, the ratios should prompt further review, including verification of results with current district data, and additional analysis. Ensure that adequate numbers of ESS and related-services personnel are at each school to carry out their expected responsibilities. Based on a full review, consider needed changes for the short and long term.
  - d. **Personnel-Related Actions.** Review the actions below to address decisions about paraprofessional need, support for related services, and nursing services.
    - **Need for Paraprofessional Usage.** Review the text in the ESS Procedural Handbook related to the consideration of a student-specific paraprofessional and the requirements under IDEA related to permitted IEP decision-making. Review revised text with the district’s legal counsel.
    - **Related Services.** Collaborate with regional EDs, principals and charter schools to address scheduling of pull-out speech/language services to minimize personnel conflicts. Also, address concerns that charter schools do not always have space for speech/language pathologists to provide services to students.
    - **Nursing Services.** Review costs associated with contractual nursing services compared to district-employed nurses. If the cost is comparable or beneficial for the district to employ nurses, develop a plan for doing so using supplemental contractual services as necessary.
  - e. **ESS School-based Staffing Determination Procedures.** Establish a collaborative process where school-based staffing decisions include an ESS department representative, the associated ED for school leadership and principal, HR, and budget to ensure that resources are allocated to meet student needs.
  - f. **Staff Shortages, Retention, and Recruitment.** Establish a task force composed of HR, ESS and English language department representatives and others to review the focus group feedback about staffing shortages and the Louisiana Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force report findings and recommendations. Use this and other information to develop strategies for increasing retention and reducing personnel shortages. In particular, have the task force address the need for bilingual personnel with ESS, appraisal, and speech language pathologist expertise. Have the task force continue to meet to monitor the success of identified strategies and modify them as needed.
8. **Compliance Support and Access to Information.** Consider the following actions to improve compliance support and access to student special education records.
- a. **ESS Procedure Handbook.** Investigate how the ESS Procedural Handbook can have a table of contents with pages that bring the user to the area of interest and post the Handbook

- on the district’s ESS webpage. Gather all individual guidance documents currently in use and embed them in the Handbook with links to have a single source of information.
- b. ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook.** Review and revise the ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook to organize the material in a user-friendly organized manner, along with a table of contents that enables the user to migrate to the page of interest. Include relevant information about the evaluation and identification of English learners for special education qualification and language acquisition needs while receiving special education instruction.
  - c. Section 504 Handbook.** As above, enable a user to use the table of contents to migrate to pages of interest. Include in the Handbook information about the use of service animals, such as that included in the ESS Procedural Handbook.
  - d. Department of Special Education Webpage.** To the extent possible, enhance the ESS webpage to provide links to provide information for stakeholders, including district and publicly available resources.<sup>77</sup>
- 9. Fiscal Considerations.** As soon as possible review any positions for which services are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement for Medicaid qualified students that are IDEA funded. Identify alternate funding sources, initiate Medicaid billing, and explore any retroactive billing as appropriate.
- 10. Shared Accountability for Student Achievement.** Consider the following actions that would strengthen the district’s shared accountability for student achievement.
- a. EBRPPS Strategic Plan.** Review the reporting of Plan elements and ways to disaggregate outcomes for students with IEPs and English learners, as well as different parent survey and personnel areas so each group’s outcomes are not masked by overall higher rates. Acknowledge disaggregated data in goals and use links or other mechanisms to produce user-friendly reports. (See Exhibit 5p.)
  - b. Data Drives.** If not currently in place, disaggregate data by various student groups, including ESS and EL, to better identify schools that need assistance to raise outcomes for these students. Recommended actions suggested above are relevant to such assistance.
  - c. EBRPSS Walk Throughs.** Review the district’s Walk Through Document to ensure it enables reviewers to address all relevant components for students with IEPs in general education, resource, and separate classes.
  - d. Data.** Review all of the data elements contained in these recommendations and consolidate them into a comprehensive plan for implementation. (See Chapter 5’s Recommendation Matrix, which identifies recommendation components with data needs.)
  - e. Shared Accountability for Actions.** Review the information in this report and relevant recommendations pertaining to the need for districtwide expectations, and a shared

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<sup>77</sup> See, for example, the Anchorage School District’s special education webpage, retrieved from <https://www.asdk12.org/Page/1419>.

accountability between school and district personnel. Establish clear processes that track when and how resources and training have been made available and ensure that initiatives that have been announced or launched are followed up on. (See Chapter 5's Recommendation Matrix, which identifies components with monitoring/accountability requirements.)

- 11. Internal Project Manager.** Consider identifying an internal project manager reporting to the superintendent to support the execution of the district's plan and initiatives associated with the recommendations in this report and other related activities. Have the project manager report on relevant data, implementation status, and barriers to execution that require interdepartmental collaboration or the superintendent's involvement, or the need for any adjustments to the plan.

**CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter summarizes the recommendations made in Chapter 4 in two ways. The first way lists the recommendations from the previous chapter and the functional categories into which each one falls. The categories include accountability, planning, criteria/process, training, data/reports, and cross-references. The second way lists all recommendations, so the reader can see them in one place.

**Recommendation Matrices**

The matrix below shows various components for five areas of recommendations to show how they interrelate. Please refer to the List of Recommendations following this matrix for a complete description of each recommendation.

	Recommendations				
	1. Multitiered System of Supports	2. Special Education Eligibility Process	3. Achievement Related Outcomes Data	4. Promoting Achievement and Well-being	9. Shared Accountability for Student Achievement
Data Review		2a	3a		
Implementation Plan	1c	2a		4b	
Written Guidance	1b	2b		4c	9a
Professional Learning	1f	2c		4d	
Data Analysis & Reports	1g	2d	3b	4e	9c-e
Monitoring & Accountability	1h	2e	3c	4e	9c-e

## Recommendations

1. **Systemwide MTSS Framework, Implementation Plan, and Oversight.** Establish MTSS as the districtwide framework within which all work designed to improve student achievement and positive behavior/social emotional learning exists. As part of this process, work with the district's external partners, e.g., CASEL, to leverage ongoing initiatives. To support this endeavor, under the direction of the district's MTSS Leadership Team (see 1a below), develop a comprehensive guidance document (see 1b below) to guide the framework's implementation. In coordination with these activities, develop an implementation plan (see 1c below) so stakeholders will have a clear understanding of how the guidance will be communicated, implemented, and supported. Once completed, post the guidance and implementation plan prominently on the district's website, distribute it broadly, and initiate professional development and support for implementation. Use this activity to reinforce a shared sense of urgency among all stakeholders to improve educational outcomes for all students.

The Council team recognizes that various aspects of these recommendations have begun. Our intent is to provide key areas for district review to determine the extent to which they are being implemented as expected. We strongly recommend that the district use a consultant who has experience developing and implementing MTSS in various urban school districts. Such a consultant could be used to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and reduce the time it would otherwise take to complete these action steps.

- a. **District and School-based Leadership MTSS Teams.** Ensure leadership teams are in place at the district and school levels to support MTSS planning and overseeing implementation activities once identified.
  - **District MTSS Leadership Team.** Ensure the individual who has oversight for the leadership team has the authority to direct the Team and ability to communicate with personnel leaders across office/department divisions. Have the district MTSS leadership team include representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups including those within and outside of the MTSS department, e.g., principals, regional EDs, central office personnel (literacy, curriculum, English learners, special education, 504, IT, etc.) Plan a two-day overview and monthly meetings with the MTSS leadership team to continue to develop common language and planning for necessary implementation resources. Have various advisory groups representing differing interests, such as SEAC, give feedback to the leadership team.
  - **School-Based Leadership Teams.** Based on the district's comprehensive implementation MTSS plan (Recommendation 1b below), have schools identify school-based leadership team (SBLT) participants at each site to be trained and work toward the systemic development of an implementation plan. The SBLT is responsible for developing school based MTSS planning and implementation. SBLTs will necessarily have defined responsibilities, such as learning/ applying/modeling the problem-solving process, providing professional learning and technical assistance

opportunities for staff, monitoring implementation and needed support, conducting school-based data days and the like. Also, the SBLT will oversee grade level teams/professional learning communities (including the implementation of core Tier I instruction) and problem-solving student support team. These activities will be inclusive of all students, including English learners and students with IEPs and 504 plans, as well as support by the school's pupil appraisal team.

**b. Comprehensive MTSS Guidance.** Using a user-friendly electronic platform, post all guidance necessary to support and implement the district's MTSS framework. Include all relevant state guidance on MTSS/RTI, BESE's Bulletin on dyslexia, and content information contained in the district's draft MTSS plan. Involve stakeholders across departments (e.g., literacy, curriculum, English learners, ESS, giftedness, technology, etc.) and school representatives to provide feedback on the guidance document's usability and clarity. Gather and review all guidance to consider their usefulness or need for revision and embed the pieces in the comprehensive guidance document. Establish a reasonable but doable short time frame for the document's completion.

- Use of MTSS for systemic and sustainable change.
- High-quality, differentiated classroom instruction and evidenced-based academic and behavior interventions and supports aligned with student needs.
- How support for academic achievement, positive behavior, and social emotional learning are embedded within MTSS, including literacy (and use of multi-sensory reading interventions) and other content areas.
- Functioning of the SST to reinforce its differentiation from prior teams, e.g., SBLC, PBIS, SEL, etc.
- Evidence-based universal screening (including dyslexia), benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring;<sup>78</sup>
- Use of school-based leadership teams and problem-solving methodology.
- Fidelity of implementation, including for students in AP classes to expand access to and appropriate receipt of rigorous instruction.
- Professional learning, technical assistance, and collaboration.
- Parent/family involvement in the MTSS process.
- Use of MTSS/RTI to identify students in need of special education evaluations and to consider as part of the assessment process, including uniform processes for collecting and monitoring data, time frame expectations, and parent feedback and communication.

**c. Implementation Plan.** Have the district MTSS leadership team gather information to evaluate its current operational infrastructure as it develops its MTSS framework and implementation plan, e.g., universal screeners, formative assessments, standard

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<sup>78</sup> See the evaluation tool available from the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, retrieved from <https://mtss4success.org/blog/mtssrti-really-complicated-lets-get-back-basics>.

protocols for intervention/support, curricular materials, supplemental and intensive resources, data platforms, use of data, professional learning, budget allocations, etc. Modify these as needed to conform with the current MTSS framework. Embed universal design for learning (UDL) into the MTSS framework. As a part of the plan include benchmark and on-going district wide and school-based progress monitoring to support the evaluation of MTSS implementation. When finalized, post the MTSS implementation plan on the district's website along with information relevant links to district information/resources, and publicly available resources. Ensure that the district's Strategic Plan intentionally embeds and utilizes the MTSS framework in its goals and activities. Once the written guidance and implementation plan are finalized, review and modify as necessary school-based planning templates in place and a time frame for completing any revisions.

- d. **Map Resources and Analyze Gaps.** As part of the comprehensive planning process, assess current MTSS-related human and material resources currently available in and funded by the district and independently by schools. Conduct a data analysis of material resources to evaluate the return on investment in terms of improved student outcomes. Have this activity include all materials, including screening tools, core materials, and tiered interventions for reading and math for all students not achieving as expected. As part of this process, determine whether any multi-sensory products with an Orton-Gillingham foundation are in use. Identify which have data to support an acceleration of student learning and those that are not. To promote use of evidence-based materials, have the district sponsor resources for schools to implement, and support training and implementation. Also, consider the current roles of school psychologists, social workers, and speech/language pathologists, and how they may be used to support any student in need, regardless of IEP or 504 status.
- e. **Literacy Plan.** Have the district leadership team review the literacy plan to ensure that the plan incorporates support to students who are struggling significantly with reading, including those with IEPs and/or dyslexia who have need for a multi-sensory approach to reading. Ensure that regional executive directors, ESS department personnel, and others are involved in planning, training, and implementation. Also, given the literacy plan's focus on reading/comprehending complex text, address how students currently unable to read the text will be included in and benefit from this instruction.
- f. **Professional Learning.** Based on the MTSS framework, implementation plan, and written expectations, develop a professional learning curriculum that is targeted to different audiences, e.g., ESS teachers, related-services personnel, paraprofessionals, parents, etc. Provide at least four to five days of training for school-based leadership teams for two consecutive years. Ground training in the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning.<sup>79</sup> Consider and budget for how access to training will be supported, e.g use of stipends, funds for substitute coverage, incentives for after-school and Saturday training, summer training, etc.

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<sup>79</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU>

Ensure the following components in the district’s MTSS implementation plan —

- **Cross-Functional Teams.** Cross-train individuals from different departments to ensure a common language and common understanding of MTSS that can be applied to district offices to intentional align and support the work of schools as they work toward implementation. Maximize their knowledge and skills in MTSS to provide direct support, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to principals and teachers.
  - **Develop the Capacity for High-Quality Trainers.** Develop a plan to develop the capacity of internal staff to deliver data driven professional development and the critical components of MTSS. Ensure that all trainers are knowledgeable and experienced in data analysis, problem solving and effective professional development for adult learners.
  - **Access to Differentiated Learning.** Ensure t professional learning is engaging and differentiated according to the audience’s skills, experience, and need. Have professional learning and technical assistance available to new personnel and those needing additional support.
  - **Multiple Formats.** Use multiple formats (e.g., videos, webinars, and narrative text) and presentation approaches (e.g., school-based, small groups).
  - **Coaching/Modeling.** Use coaching and modeling to support teachers and other personnel who need assistance to meet the needs of their students.
  - **School Walk Throughs.** Establish a common differentiated electronic protocol for conducting instructional rounds and collecting data for classroom visits that captures use of the MTSS framework.
  - **Exemplary Implementation Models.** Provide a forum where schools can highlight and share best practices, lessons learned, victories and challenges in implementing MTSS for all students (e.g., gifted, ELLs, students with IEPs, students who are twice exceptional). Encourage staff to visit exemplary schools and support models for setting aside time for that to happen.
  - **District Website.** Develop and provide a well-informed and resourced interactive web page that includes links to other local and national sites. Highlight schools within the district and share stories of the impact of MTSS on student outcomes across multiple measures.
- g. **Data Analysis and Reports.** Ensure key performance indicators across elementary, middle and high schools are established by student subgroups, data collection systems and analysis (e.g., custom reports) are designed to enable the superintendent, administrators, principals, teachers, pupil appraisal personnel, and speech/language pathologist personnel to review student growth, identify patterns, solve problems, and make informed decisions. Ensure such systems include and differentiate various subgroups of students, such as those with IEPs, 504 plans, etc.



**h. Monitoring and Accountability.** Ensure that the MTSS key performance indicators for academics and behavior (see Exhibit 1b) include indicators for various subgroups of students, e.g., ESS, English learners, 504, race/ethnicity, etc. Consider groups within these subgroups as appropriate so that higher performing students do not mask those in great need of assistance. Evaluate the effectiveness, fidelity, and results of MTSS implementation, and include the following in the assessment –

- **Baseline Data and Fidelity Assessments.** Ensure the district’s standard protocol for collecting and reviewing school-site baseline data includes multiple student groups, e.g., ESS, EL, race/ethnicity, and measures implementation fidelity. Consider the evaluation tools and protocols provided at no cost through federally funded websites.<sup>80</sup>
- **Data Checks.** Conduct at least three checks per year at the school level to facilitate the monitoring and impact of MTSS implementation and to support schools needing additional assistance. In addition, using data and reports associated with Recommendation 1g, continue the superintendent’s regular data conversations with administrators and principals on prioritized key performance indicators to discuss results, anomalies, support needed, follow-up activities, and outcomes. Ensure these discussions include student groups with large achievement gaps. To the extent possible, schedule data roundtables so central office personnel can attend and address issues beyond the control of principals and executive directors.
- **Timely Communication and Feedback.** Design feedback loops involving central office, school personnel, parents, and the community to inform the impact of current as well as future work. Use this process to provide regular and timely feedback to the district MTSS leadership team about barriers that are beyond the control of local schools or where schools require additional assistance.

**2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility.** Improve consistency and appropriateness of referrals, assessments, and eligibility decisions for special education.

**a. Data Review.** With a multidisciplinary team of individuals in and outside the ESS department, review Exhibits 2a through 2m and their associated analysis (along with other relevant data), focusing on the outlier data. For these and any others of concern/interest, develop hypothesis for the data pattern and develop a plan for follow-up actions.

- **Students with IEPs.** Relatively small percentage of students with IEPs compared to the state and nation (10.0 percent, 12.5 percent, and 14.4 percent, respectively.)

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<sup>80</sup> Several tools are available for monitoring fidelity, such as Florida’s MTSS school level tool, retrieved at [http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/2014/nasp/StockslagerCastillo/NASP%202014\\_School%20Level%20MTSS%20Instrument\\_Final.pdf](http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/2014/nasp/StockslagerCastillo/NASP%202014_School%20Level%20MTSS%20Instrument_Final.pdf); and tools available from the RTI Action Network, retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tier1/accurate-decision-making-within-a-multi-tier-system-of-supports-critical-areas-in-tier-1>.

- **IEPs by Grade.** Large percentage increase (from K to 1<sup>st</sup>) and decrease (from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>) of students with IEPs by grade. (Exhibit 2a)
- **IEPs by District, State and Nation.** District disability rates are significantly higher (autism) or lower (SLD) than the state or nation. (Exhibit 2b)
- **Disability by Grade.** Sudden 5<sup>th</sup> grade increase of students with SLD, very small percentage of students with ID, and interaction between speech/language identification and SLD at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. (Exhibit 2c)
- **Males by Disability.** Very high percentages of males to females, especially for autism, ED, and OHI. (Exhibit 2d).
- **Free/Reduced Lunch by Disability.** Higher rates of students with free/reduced lunch for SLD, ID, and OHI. (Exhibit 2e)
- **Disability and Giftedness.** Zero students with IEPs reported as gifted. This circumstance is due either to a data input or practice issue.
- **English Learners with IEPs.** Relatively low percentage of EL students with IEPs. (Exhibit 2g) ESS Procedural Handbook that refers to SBLC referral for EL students for various reasons but does not mention behavior.
- **EL and Not EL Rates with IEPs.** Higher percentage of ELs to non-ELs with SLD and lower percentage of ELs with ID. (Exhibit 2h) To what extent are ESS Handbook expectations for assessment of ELs (page 115-116) being implemented with fidelity? What impact does the lack of bilingual pupil personnel appraisers and single speech/language pathologist have on child find activities and evaluation of English learners for special education?
- **Males with IEPs by Race/Ethnicity.** Black males compared to other males are most likely to have an IEP (1.72). Although not reaching the threshold of disproportionality, this is an area worthy of attention. (Exhibit 2j)
- **Males and Females with IEPs by Race/Ethnicity.** Black males are 2.32 times more likely than black females and Asian males are 2.54 times more likely than Asian females to have an IEP. (Exhibit 2k)
- **EL/Not ELs by Disability.** Higher likelihood of Asian and black males, and males in general to have an IEP. (Exhibit 2k)
- **504 by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher likelihood (2.20 risk ratio) of black students compared to other students to have a Section 504 plan. (Exhibit 2l)

Note: The district did not provide data to the Council team for students exiting special education to general education; and percent of students with completed evaluations found eligible for special education and primary disabilities identified. In addition to establishing benchmarks, these data could suggest need for additional monitoring and/or actions.

- b. Written Expectations.** For any area that the multi-disciplinary team identifies as problematic, review current processes for referral, assessment and eligibility and amend them to provide more written guidance. Ensure that the ESS Handbook incorporates the additional guidance.
- c. Differentiated Professional Learning.** Plan for and provide to all relevant district stakeholders the professional learning they need to implement follow-up action planning taken in response to the above recommendations. As part of this process, have ESS and EL department personnel collaborate to address the referral and assessment needs of EL students. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1f.)
- d. Data Analysis and Reports.** Develop user-friendly summary reports for the district's leadership showing data like those in this report, and others as appropriate. As part of this process, address data not provided to the Council team and the many students throughout the above data analysis that were missing, e.g., 32 ELs with IEPs had no disability identified, 134 students with disabilities identified had no race/ethnic status identified. District personnel who submitted data to the Council are good resources for understanding this issue. The absence of this data makes the Council's analysis incomplete, and results could change significantly with the inclusion of missing data. Investigate the district's electronic data collection system for possible edits that would require the entry of all required data fields. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1g.)
  - **Risk Ratios.** To the extent possible and when appropriate, report data disparities by indicators using a risk ratio rather than only percentage comparisons.
  - **Progress Monitoring.** Review and ensure the district's school-based data collection and reporting system includes the monitoring of progress for students with disabilities, both academically and behaviorally. Ensure that benchmark and progress-monitoring data for students taking alternate assessments are included in light of their differing curricular needs.

**Monitoring and Accountability.** Develop a process for ongoing monitoring of expected referral, evaluation, and eligibility practices. Rather than using a traditional record-review model, review files with school-based personnel so they are aware of issues and problems and will better understand the need for follow-up action. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1h.)

- 3. Achievement Outcomes, Suspension, Absenteeism, and Educational Environments.** Use and monitor data for students with IEPs regarding their achievement, suspension, absenteeism, and educational environments by disability, race/ethnicity to understand gaps and need for follow-up action. Recommendation 4 provides instructional suggestions for improving outcomes in these areas.

- a. Data Review.** With a multidisciplinary team of individuals in and outside the ESS department, review Exhibits 3a through 3ii and their associated analysis (along with other relevant data), focusing on the outlier data. For these and any others of concern/interest, develop hypothesis for the data pattern and develop a plan for follow-up actions.

### Achievement

- **Early Childhood Achievement.** Lower achievement of young children with IEPs compared to state targets and state rates. (Exhibits 3a and 3b)
- **ELA and Math Proficiency.** Low performance of students with IEPs. (Exhibit 3g-h)
- **ELA/Math Achievement by Grades.** Lower IEP achievement rates for students with IEPs after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. (Exhibit 3i)
- **ELA Proficiency for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3j)
- **Math Proficiency for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> by Year.** Lower IEP achievement rates in 2020-21 than prior years (Exhibit 3k)
- **High School Proficiency by Year.** Lower 2020-21 achievement IEP rates for English I, Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology (2020-21 first year of testing but low rate). (Exhibit 3l)
- **ELA: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3m-n)
- **Math: Parish/District and State Comparison.** Lower comparable IEP rates in 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. (Exhibits 3o-p)

### Graduation and Dropout

- **IEP Graduation Rate.** Lower IEP graduation rate compared to state. (Exhibit 3q)
- **Graduation Rate by Disability.** Relatively lower graduation rates for ED, speech/language and autism. (Exhibit 3r)
- **IEP Dropout Rate.** Higher dropout rate than state. (Exhibit 3s)

### Suspension

- **In-School Suspension (ISS) Rate.** Higher ISS for SLD and autism, and high risk ratio for black students (Exhibit 3t)
- **Out-of-School Suspension Disproportionality.** 2020-21 risk ratios for black students of 2.61 for OSS less than 10 days and 2.16 for total disciplinary removals. Note: A district representative believes these are due to charter school students or miscoding. However, the data was not included in the district's submission to the Council team and impacts the district's status and potential fiscal IDEA consequences. (Exhibit 3u)

### Unexcused Absences

- **Unexcused Absences.** IEP rates for unexcused absences increase for over 30 days from 6<sup>th</sup> grade on, and are especially higher at 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, which could portend higher dropout potential. (Exhibit 3v)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability.** Rates above 30 days are highest for students with ED, and rates of 11-30 days are higher for areas of SLD, OHI, and ED. (Exhibit 3w)
- **Unexcused Absences by Disability and Race/Ethnicity.** Absence rates over 30 days

are highest for black students. Analyze this data further to determine the extent to which these absences occur by grade. (Exhibit 3x)

### Educational Environments

- **Early Childhood (EC) General Educational Environments.** Higher district rate (23 percent) of children with IEPs educated in general education most of the time compared to state reported rate (9.7 percent). District reported rate is lower than the nation and state target; state reported rate is lower also than the state target. (Exhibit 3y) Investigate reasons for the different rates reported by the state and district.
- **Separate EC Class.** Validate district data showing zero students in ESS classrooms for young children in light of the numerous special program EC teachers also reported. (Exhibit 3y)
- **EC Setting by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher rate of Asian children (5.07 risk ratio) in EC classes most of the time compared to others, and higher percentage of Hispanic (2.1 risk ratio) and black children (1.96 risk ratio) receive most of their services in another location. (Exhibit 3z and 3aa)
- **School-Age Separate Schools.** Although district data reported 0.15 percent of students in this setting, other data showed students with IEPs in one school comprised 90 percent of enrollment, which would qualify the school as separate in nature. Have this data set investigated and corrected as appropriate. (Exhibit 3bb)
- **Educational Environments by Grade.** The pattern of inclusive instruction slowly increases from kindergarten to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade when students are almost entirely educated outside of special program classes in high school, except in 12<sup>th</sup> grade when students remain in school to receive postsecondary transition services. This raises the question of how students are prepared and supported to receive more instruction in general education and whether this change should be initiated in earlier grades. (Exhibit 3cc)
- **Educational Environments by Disability Area.** Students with autism and ID have very small rates in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to those with SLD, ED and OHI. (Exhibit 3dd)
- **General Education At Least 80 Percent of Time: District Rate Compared to Nation.** The district's autism, ID and OHI rates are below national rates, while ED is higher and SLD is about the same. (Exhibit 3ee)
- **General Education Less than 40 Percent of Time.** The district's autism, and OHI rates are far above national rates. (Exhibit 3ff)
- **Educational Environments by Race/Ethnicity.** Higher percentages of white and Asian students are educated in general education at least 80 percent of the time compared to others. (Exhibit 3gg) Using a risk ratio, black students are 2.37 times more likely to be educated in general education 40-79 percent of the day. (Exhibit 3hh)
- **Educational Environments by English Language/Not English Language Status.** Non-

ELs are 3.9 times more likely than ELs to be educated in general education 80 percent of more of the time and ELs are 4.07 times more likely than non-ELs to be educated in general education 40 percent to 79 percent of the time.

- b. Data Analysis and Reports.** Develop user-friendly summary reports for the district’s leadership showing data like those in this section of the report, and others as appropriate. As part of this process, address data not provided to the Council team and the many students throughout the above data analysis that were missing, e.g., 179 students with unexcused absences for whom no grade was available. District personnel who submitted data to the Council would be a good resource for understanding this problem. The absence of this data makes the Council’s analysis incomplete and could change results significantly with the inclusion of missing data. Investigate the district’s electronic data collection system for possible edits that would show errors without entry of all required data fields. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1g.) Also, ensure data includes district charter schools, and all OSS reporting reflects school practices and does not have entry errors.
  - c. Monitoring and Accountability.** Incorporate into the district’s key performance indicators targets for critical areas represented in this section by student subgroups. (Coordinate this activity with Recommendation 1h.)
- 4. Promoting Achievement and Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities.** Consider the following actions to improve outcomes for students with IEPs.
- a. Inclusive Education Vision.** Have the extended cabinet establish a clear and defined vision expressing the value of inclusive education that is based on strong general education instruction and ESS collaboration and high quality instruction/intervention. At the same time, the vision should reinforce the importance of supplemental evidence-based academic and positive behavior interventions/supports that increase in intensity to address targeted student needs. Highlight the importance of providing students educated in general education classes with the differentiated and scaffolded instruction they need to learn. Emphasize that the instruction needs to be linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant and aligned with common core standards. This vision will be easier to actualize as teachers become more familiar with and base their instruction on the principles of UDL.<sup>81</sup>
  - f. Implementation Plan.** Based on the district’s inclusive education vision, identify an individual with broad interdepartmental authority to bring together a working group of personnel from general education, ESS, English learners, literacy, and student support to develop a written multi-year action plan that provides for written expectations (see 4c), professional learning (see 4d), data analytics (4e), and accountability (4f). Upon completion of the overall plan, establish a uniform way for school-based teams to embed local implementation activities in their school-based planning documents.

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<sup>81</sup> The suggested activities are not intended to be a blueprint or to be exclusive. They are provided as a basis for discussion and further development.

Consider the following to develop strategies for promoting high quality inclusive instruction and improved achievement/positive behavior-SEL outcomes –

### Instructional Support

- **Early Childhood.** Ensure students do not receive homebased itinerant instruction because nursing or other services are not available due to personnel shortages.
- **Braided Funding.** Research use of braided funding to enable more young children with and without IEPs to be educated together.
- **Research-Guided Inclusive Instruction.** Identify relevant research to guide the district's description of strategies to implement high quality inclusive practices for early childhood and school-aged students, such as LDOE's *Strategies for Success: A Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities*.
- **Resources.** Ensure a process is in place to ensure services are available for students as they transition to less restrictive settings in their current or another school.
- **Support for Co-Teaching.** Use of high quality co-teaching withing general education.
- **Use of Evidence-based Interventions.** Use of targeted evidence-based reading and math interventions, including those with a multi-sensory foundation for students with dyslexia and others as appropriate.
- **Quality Indicators for Study Skills** classes across schools.
- **Collaboration with General Educator.** Needs of general educators to collaborate with ESS teachers, paraprofessionals, and related services personnel to support students with IEPs in their classrooms, and information they need about their students to be effective.
- **Effective use of paraprofessionals** and their collaboration with general education and ESS teachers.
- **Common Planning Time** approaches and models for multiple personnel working with the same student(s).
- **Feedback Loops** for school-based personnel to report on challenges beyond their control (as well as successes) to inform technical assistance and changes needed for them to meet student needs.
- **English Learner Support.** Improve language support for English learners –
  - Implementation of ESS Procedural Handbook regarding processes for English learners, and the U.S. Department of Education's EL Toolkit at Chapter 5, Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities.

- Establish models for providing ELs with IEPs the linguistic support they continue to require when receiving special education and related services.<sup>82</sup>
- Specify translation services available to schools for parents/family members who are not English proficient.
- **Positive Behavior/SEL Support** for students with IEPs through –
  - Timely assistance to teachers for students with challenging behavior beyond the expertise of school and available support staff.
  - Strategies for filling vacant behavior strategist positions and considering whether the current number is sufficient to meet student/personnel needs.
  - There is conflicting information between district data showing zero out-of-school suspensions and focus group feedback referring to such suspensions and the presence of ESS personnel who review manifestation determinations for student suspensions.
  - Collaboration between all departments to address students with significant behavior challenges to reduce fragmented support and siloed assistance.
  - Investigation of specialized supports for students with severe emotional/mental health impairments, such as those released from hospital settings, such as require medical consultants, nurses, clinical social workers, and ABA specialists, to support their ESS teachers and the students’ difficult transition from a clinical setting to their regular assigned campuses or other school environment.
- **Modified Curriculum Prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade.** Investigation of whether LA requires students prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade must be educated based on the standard curriculum, regardless of appropriateness, and if so – strategies for teachers to make their instruction align with student needs.
- **Caseloads.** Establish process throughout the school year for addressing caseloads when there is reason to believe they are too high for one or more ESS teachers.

### Systemic Support for Inclusive Instruction

- **Transition to More General Ed Instructional Time.** Have a blueprint for supporting students to transition to receive more instruction within general education.
- **Shifting Gen Ed Time at 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>/High School Grades.** Analyze student movement from less to more restrictive instruction at 5<sup>th</sup> grade and the reverse at 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school to address reasons causing this pattern

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<sup>82</sup> See *Meeting the Needs of English Learners with Disabilities*, which was prepared by a staff member from the Santa Barbara County SELPA, retrieved from <http://www.sonomaselpa.org/docs/els-with-disabilities.pdf>.



- **Equitable Housing of Specialized Programs.** Move toward reducing the number of schools with no or few, or many ESS teachers and programs. This initiative coincides with moving toward more inclusive instruction for students in the school they would otherwise attend without an IEP.
- **Program Movement.** Reduce movement of specialized programs from school to school because of space availability, which impacts students having the most difficulty with transition.

#### Post-Secondary Transition

- Strengthen strategies that would enable youth to be educationally/work engaged one year after leaving high school. (See Exhibit 4c)
- Continue to improve information for parents to help them understand available post-secondary resources for their children.

#### Parent Engagement

- Based on review of ESS Parent Survey (Exhibit 4g) consider ways to improve survey results.
- Have two separate ESS Parent Surveys, one for parents of children with IEPs and the other for children who are gifted. Enable parents of students with IEPs who are gifted to participate in both surveys.
- Add survey questions for parents to address whether their child is making expected progress in their achievement and/or behavior, specifying – if known – the student’s current educational placement (general education versus separate class).
- Work with Title I and parent support organizations to expand strategies for involving more parents of students with IEPs, including those who are English learners, and to consider strategies for having more principals/personnel engage with parents as their children move toward and are in high school.

**Implementation Plan Feedback.** Have the team get feedback on the draft plan from diverse stakeholder groups, including regional EDs, principal, school-based personnel, and SEAC/other parent-based organizations, etc. Continue this feedback loop as the plan is implemented to address areas of concern.

- g. Written Expectations.** As the implementation plan is being developed, identify those areas that require written guidance for procedures and expected practices.
- h. Differentiated Professional Learning and Parent Training.** Embed in the professional learning curriculum mentioned in Recommendation 1e and the content needed to carry out the district’s implementation plan discussed above. In addition, consider –
  - Target **principal professional learning** to give them the knowledge they need to support their school personnel in areas required to carry out activities identified in the implementation plan, and to support students with IEPs and their parents generally. Reinitiate the summer boot camp for principals to prepare them for the

2022-23 school year.

- The term **diverse learners**, generally, and students with disabilities who are also diverse learners to ensure professional learning is available specific to the latter's needs.
  - How **ESS curriculum content trainers** address instructional strategies for engaging students with IEPs having large achievement gaps with their peers.
  - The **PROGRESS agreement** and whether it could be modified to include training and coaching of evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions to improve student achievement in such areas as reading.
  - Targeted **professional learning needs** of ESS/general education teachers of preschool and kindergarten students.
  - **Collaboration of general, ESS and English learner personnel** to plan and present training.
  - Current **training and information-sharing opportunities for parents and community partners**, and identify topics for the 2017-18 school year, including areas mentioned in this report and what the data suggest is needed. As part of this process, consider how professional learning will be provided within the current weekly collaborative time restraint.
  - Continued use of **surveys** to give feedback about training given and needed.
  - **Describing** –
    - How and when personnel will be provided access to training in each critical area.
    - How key information will be communicated effectively.
    - How information will be used.
    - What additional coaching and supports may be needed.
- i. **Data Analysis, Monitoring and Accountability.** Establish and monitor the expectation that principals are responsible for overseeing special education in their buildings, and that regional EDs hold principals accountable for this responsibility. Embed the following activities in the monitoring and accountability systems described in Recommendation 1f and g.
- **Baseline Data.** Establish baseline data on such areas as those included in this report on educational setting rates, achievement, suspension/expulsion rates, graduation and dropout rates, and begin evaluating the effects of interventions. In each area, consider collecting and analyzing data by race/ethnicity, and English learners, using risk ratios by subgroups.
  - **Data Collection and Reports.** Review current data, data collection issues, and reports that are requested by the superintendent and school board. Begin including baseline data described above, and special education state performance plan indicators. Provide regular updates on the status of special education reforms. Develop protocols

- for reporting data to inform decision-making. Produce templates for user-friendly summary reports showing academic and behavioral interventions and outcomes for students with disabilities, sorted by student group. Review necessary changes in programs and interventions based on the data. Plan follow-up activities on data not easily collected and reports not easily produced.
- **Data Checks.** Include in data check sessions information such as the above for students with IEPs in order to develop follow-up actions and track outcomes.
  - **Fidelity Assessments and Walk-Throughs.** Review current walk-through tools used to monitor instruction to ensure they include the use of interventions in general education classes, resource classes, and specialized classes to see how students are being taught and engaged and how consistent instruction is across schools for students with IEPs. Provide written practice expectations like that called for in Recommendation 3c. Initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring to improve practices.
  - **Timely Communication and Feedback.** Establish a process for timely feedback to the district MTSS leadership team on barriers to problem-solving activities, particularly when they are beyond the control of local schools or require the schools to seek assistance to resolve problems.
5. **Interoffice Collaboration.** Consider the following collaborative strategies to improve interoffice/departmental collaboration to minimize fragmented support and leverage support to school personnel and students.
- a. **Leadership Team Engagement.** Actively engage ESS leadership to identify issues for the chief academic officer's leadership team that are interfering with student achievement and positive behavior/SEL and are beyond local school personnel to address.
  - b. **Improved Collaboration.** Develop and monitor an implementation plan for increased collaboration between ESS and other department personnel in the areas described below.
    - **ESS and Other Department Personnel, generally.** Facilitate scheduled and structured meetings between personnel in ESS and other departments to address issues of mutual concern, focusing on support for achievement and positive behavior/SEL.
    - **ESS and Human Resources.** Have HR actively work with ESS and personnel from other departments as appropriate to expedite filling vacant ESS positions and to identify interim measures that will be taken until positions are filled.
    - **ESS Content Area Supervisors and Content Trainers.** Ensure structures are in place for ESS content area supervisors and content trainers to collaborate with personnel in other departments having similar goals and practice areas to maximize their collective work.
    - **ESS and Literacy and English Language Personnel.** Maximize collaboration between these personnel areas and others as appropriate to ensure strategies are comprehensive for all students and that personnel are working together to leverage their resources for maximum impact. Ensure the project manager for ESS and ESL has sufficiently strong expertise in these areas to better collaborate and coordinate approaches.

- **ESS and Student Services.** Strongly consider having single supervisors for personnel with similar expertise. Reduce fragmented school services resulting from having multiple personnel with similar expertise from different departments but supporting different groups of students, (e.g., ICARE personnel support only students without IEPs even though they have the expertise to support students with IEPs, reading specialists, etc.) To the extent possible ensure resources are available to meet student needs. Ensure CASEL training is available for all ESS personnel supporting students with social/emotional learning.
  - **ESS and 504 Coordinator.** Ensure collaboration between the 504 Coordinator and ESS personnel through regular meetings and coordinated activities focusing on accommodations and supplementary aids and services.
  - **ESS and English Learners.** Expediently, have planned and structured interaction and collaboration between ESS and English learner leaders to identify ways to build mutual expertise for identifying disabilities needing special education, and providing language acquisition support for students with IEPs, including various models of support. Consider hiring a consultant for this purpose if sufficient expertise is not available in-house for planning and training purposes.
6. **ESS and Organization.** Consider the following ESS organization proposal to support more effectively and efficiently students with IEPs. (See Appendix B for a proposed reorganization.) The proposed organization would have the following major changes from the present structure.
- a. **Streamline Leadership.** Eliminate leadership by an associate superintendent and director. Consider two directors with compliance and instructional support responsibilities. Ensure that the work of both divisions is well coordinated through the new ESS leader. The associate superintendent has focused on problem-solving issues and collaborating with upper management while the director has a multitude of programmatic and operational responsibilities in addition to supervising all ESS personnel. A singular leader of this department needs to have a high level of expertise in special education content and administration and be able to collaborate freely with other departmental personnel and the chief academic officer. Furthermore, the leader should be freed up to perform this function and be available to those with programmatic and operational responsibilities within the ESS department. At a minimum this individual should be at the executive director level, if not the associate superintendent level given the breadth and depth of responsibilities.
  - b. **Reports to the ESS Directors.** We recommend having the following units reporting to the ESS directors. We expect that this proposal would be vetted by those with close understanding of the work and tweaked as necessary for equitable work distribution and coverage of all necessary responsibilities. Note that expectations for staff members will not be met if there is an insufficient number to carry out their responsibilities. Four positions identified below are recommended in light of the enormous effort that is required to support the regional EDs, school-based personnel, and students with IEPs to raise their achievement and positive behavior/SEL outcomes.
    - **Appraisal Supervisor.** Keep current functions in place but assign appraisers to single regions to the maximum extent possible, e.g., a social worker would be assigned to

schools in one region with principals reporting to one executive director. This would enable these appraisers to work with ISSs and behavior strategists assigned to the same region/executive director, and facilitate sharing of information, problem-solving, and giving professional development.

- **New Citywide Specialists Supervisor.** This new unit would focus on city-wide and specialized activities and support ESS regional supervisors and team members described below. The following recommended personnel/ programmatic functions are currently in place but were assigned by grade level (elementary, middle or high school), which resulted in personnel aligned with schools supervised by numerous EDs for school leadership. Personnel areas are: preK/itinerant homebased; PD specialists/PD coordination; curriculum content trainers; ABA/autistic program facilitator, lead behavior strategist, lead SLP, assistive technology; vision, hearing, orientation/mobility & interpreter support.  
Two new positions are recommended: a reading intervention specialist (to address the wide reading gaps of students with IEPs), and support for modified curriculum instruction.
  - **Four Regional Supervisors.** With one additional supervisor, three of the supervisors would have two teams each, with each team aligned with the larger regions that have two executive directors each (B-S, H-OS, and North). The fourth supervisor would have two teams (one working with Highland and the other with Southeast.) Each team would be comprised of ISS, behavior strategists, lead teachers, and speech/language pathologists who would be assigned to schools aligned with a single ED for school leadership. The teams would coordinate and support their schools' specialized programs, lead teacher, placement, compliance, professional development, and support monitoring. As discussed below, the districtwide specialists described above would support the teams and their supervisors. This structure would enable each respective team to be aligned with each executive director for school leadership and have their supervisor work directly with the EDs to promote strategic planning, problem-solve, plan professional development, identify trends and needs, etc. One of these supervisors would also have a team of persons work with the schools supervised by the executive director for reengagement. Very important to take note the team is recommending a total of 5 supervisors, including the above Appraisal Supervisor, because of the significant amount of support schools need to improve the academic achievement of students with disabilities.
  - **New Operations Leader.** Led by an individual with an appropriate administrative status, this unit would concentrate on data, private/parochial school coordination, ESY support, and compliance (coordination of due process, state complaints and compliance monitoring.) This ESS leader and team would provide support to the regional supervisor and team working with a school having a compliance or other operational issue.
- c. **Professional Development.** Engage ongoing professional learning activities for new and current ESS personnel to carry out any new responsibilities and to build their respective areas of expertise.

7. **School-Based ESS Personnel.** Ensure that personnel who support students with IEPs are employed in sufficient numbers and are available to meet student needs.
- g. **Principal Support.** As included in Recommendation 4d above, include in professional development for principals the information they need to understand quality indicators for inclusive instruction, measures for increasing student achievement and positive behavior/SEL, and how principals are critical leaders for these initiatives.
  - h. **Lead Teacher Support.** Develop districtwide guidance for the role of lead teachers, expected practices, and models for supporting their work through reduced caseloads, stipends, etc.
  - i. **Student-Staff Ratios.** On a regular basis with HR and the CAO, review staffing ratios summarized in this report (see Appendix A). NOTE: Relatively low or high student-to-personnel ratios do not necessarily mean that any given area is staffed inappropriately; however, the ratios should prompt further review, including verification of results with current district data, and additional analysis. Ensure that adequate numbers of ESS and related-services personnel are at each school to carry out their expected responsibilities. Based on a full review, consider needed changes for the short and long term.
  - j. **Personnel-Related Actions.** Review the actions below to address decisions about paraprofessional need, support for related services, and nursing services.
    - **Need for Paraprofessional Usage.** Review the text in the ESS Procedural Handbook related to the consideration of a student-specific paraprofessional and the requirements under IDEA related to permitted IEP decision-making. Review revised text with the district’s legal counsel.
    - **Related Services.** Collaborate with regional EDs, principals and charter schools to address scheduling of pull-out speech/language services to minimize personnel conflicts. Also, address concerns that charter schools do not always have space for speech/language pathologists to provide services to students.
    - **Nursing Services.** Review costs associated with contractual nursing services compared to district-employed nurses. If the cost is comparable or beneficial for the district to employ nurses, develop a plan for doing so using supplemental contractual services as necessary.
  - k. **ESS School-based Staffing Determination Procedures.** Establish a collaborative process where school-based staffing decisions include an ESS department representative, the associated ED for school leadership and principal, HR, and budget to ensure that resources are allocated to meet student needs.
  - l. **Staff Shortages, Retention, and Recruitment.** Establish a task force composed of HR, ESS and English language department representatives and others to review the focus group feedback about staffing shortages and the Louisiana Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force report findings and recommendations. Use this and other information to develop strategies for increasing retention and reducing personnel shortages. In particular, have the task force address the need for bilingual personnel with

ESS, appraisal, and speech language pathologist expertise. Have the task force continue to meet to monitor the success of identified strategies and modify them as needed.

- 8. Compliance Support and Access to Information.** Consider the following actions to improve compliance support and access to student special education records.
  - e. ESS Procedure Handbook.** Investigate how the ESS Procedural Handbook can have a table of contents with pages that bring the user to the area of interest and post the Handbook on the district's ESS webpage. Gather all individual guidance documents currently in use and embed them in the Handbook with links to have a single source of information.
  - f. ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook.** Review and revise the ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook to organize the material in a user-friendly organized manner, along with a table of contents that enables the user to migrate to the page of interest. Include relevant information about the evaluation and identification of English learners for special education qualification and language acquisition needs while receiving special education instruction.
  - g. Section 504 Handbook.** As above, enable a user to use the table of contents to migrate to pages of interest. Include in the Handbook information about the use of service animals, such as that included in the ESS Procedural Handbook.
  - h. Department of Special Education Webpage.** To the extent possible, enhance the ESS webpage to provide links to provide information for stakeholders, including district and publicly available resources.<sup>83</sup>
- 9. Fiscal Considerations.** As soon as possible review any positions for which services are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement for Medicaid qualified students that are IDEA funded. Identify alternate funding sources, initiate Medicaid billing, and explore any retroactive billing as appropriate.
- 10. Shared Accountability for Student Achievement.** Consider the following actions that would strengthen the district's shared accountability for student achievement.
  - f. EBRPPS Strategic Plan.** Review the reporting of Plan elements and ways to disaggregate outcomes for students with IEPs and English learners, as well as different parent survey and personnel areas so each group's outcomes are not masked by overall higher rates. Acknowledge disaggregated data in goals and use links or other mechanisms to produce user-friendly reports. (See Exhibit 5p.)
  - g. Data Drives.** If not currently in place, disaggregate data by various student groups, including ESS and EL, to better identify schools that need assistance to raise outcomes for these students. Recommended actions suggested above are relevant to such assistance.
  - h. EBRPSS Walk Throughs.** Review the district's Walk Through Document to ensure it enables reviewers to address all relevant components for students with IEPs in general education, resource, and separate classes.

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<sup>83</sup> See, for example, the Anchorage School District's special education webpage, retrieved from <https://www.asdk12.org/Page/1419>.

- i. **Data.** Review all of the data elements contained in these recommendations and consolidate them into a comprehensive plan for implementation. (See Chapter 5's Recommendation Matrix, which identifies recommendation components with data needs.)
  - j. **Shared Accountability for Actions.** Review the information in this report and relevant recommendations pertaining to the need for districtwide expectations, and a shared accountability between school and district personnel. Establish clear processes that track when and how resources and training have been made available and ensure that initiatives that have been announced or launched are followed up on. (See Chapter 5's Recommendation Matrix, which identifies components with monitoring/accountability requirements.)
11. **Internal Project Manager.** Consider identifying an internal project manager reporting to the superintendent to support the execution of the district's plan and initiatives associated with the recommendations in this report and other related activities. Have the project manager report on relevant data, implementation status, and barriers to execution that require interdepartmental collaboration or the superintendent's involvement, or the need for any adjustments to the plan.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Incidence Rate and Staffing Ratios

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative and the Council of the Great City Schools, including its team members who have conducted special education reviews, collected the data reported in these tables. *The data do not give precise comparisons, so the results need to be used with caution.* District data are not consistently reported (e.g., some districts include contractual personnel and others may exclude them) and the numbers are sometimes affected by varying placement types used by a school district. The data may count all students with IEPs, including those placed in charters, agencies, and nonpublic schools. Still, these data are the best available and are useful as a rough guide to staffing ratios.

Improving Achievement and Well Being for Students with Disabilities in the EBR Parrish School System

Incidence of Students with IEPs and Personnel Staffing Ratios\*

	% IEPs of All Students		Sp Ed Teachers		Paraeducators		Speech/Lang Pathologists		Psychologist	
	# IEPs	% IEPs	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio
<b>Agawam Public Schools</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>219</b>
Atlanta Public Schools	4,950	11%	431	11	224	22	65	76	22	225
Albuquerque Public Schl	16,738	20.4%	1217	13.8	1290	12.98	161.5	103.6	97.6**	171.5
Anchorage School Dist	6,779	14.1%	716.8	9.5	786.4	8.6	65	104	44.7	151
Arlington VA Pub Sch	2952	13.9%	343	8.6	262	11	38	77	22	134
Austin Pub S D	9,450	11.7%	802	11.8	912.8	10.4	88.7	107	54.5	173
Baltimore City Publ Sch	12,719	16.5%	999.5	12	429	21	92	140	NA	NA
Baltimore County P Sch	12,127	11.4%	1025.4	11.8	2305	29.6	187.5	92	145.7	87
Boston Public Schools	10,478	19.9%	1293	8.1	1104	9.5	133.4	79	63.6	165
<b>Bellevue, WA SD</b>	<b>1,947</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>112.5</b>
Bridgeport, CT	2,618	14.3%	204	13	254	10	25	105	33	79
Buffalo Public Schools	7744	16.6%	753	10.3	439	17.6	109	71	62	125
Cambridge Publ Schools	1,200	20%	176	7	103	12	20	60	22	55
Carpentersville, IL	3,139	15.8%	227	13.8	380	8.3	43	73	28	112
Chicago Public Schools	54,376	13.7%	4,649	11.7	4,228	12.9	390	139	261	208
Cincinnati Pub Schools	8,928	17.4%	457	19.5	801	11.1	62	144	57.7	155
Clark Cty School Dist	40,067	12.5%	3,260	12.3	1,952.8	20.5	390.5	102.6	187.5	214
Cleve Hts- Univ Hts Cty	1,100	18%	83	14	58	19	7	158	8	NA
Cleveland Metropolitan	8,350	21.4%	855	9.8	486	17.2	81	103	82	102
Columbus City, OH	9,727	18.1%	650	15.0	990	9.8	64	152	78	125
<b>Compton CA Unified SD</b>	<b>2981</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>213</b>
Dallas, TX	13,470	9.1%	1,078	12.5	868.5	15.5	81	166	37	364
DeKalb 428, IL	879	14.1%	58	15.2	205	4.3	9	98	7.5	117
DesMoines Public Schls	4,854	15.3%	493*	9.8	358.5	13.5	37.3	130	11.5	422
D.C. Public Schools	8,603	18%	669	13	653	14	90	96	78	111
<b>Davenport Comm Sch</b>	<b>1,857</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Deer Valley Unified SD</b>	<b>3,289</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>31</b>
Denver Public Schools	9,142	12%	592	16	528	18	94	98	98	94
Detroit Public Schools	8,731	16.1%	535.8	16	458	19	98	89	40	218
<b>East Baton Rouge</b>	<b>3975</b>	<b>10.03%</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>ESD 112</b>	<b>1,987</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Elgin U-46, IL</b>	<b>5,304</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>252.8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>288.5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>71.9</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>Everett Pub Schools, WA</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>210</b>
Fort Worth	6,144	8%	520	12	450	14	73	85	31	199
Fresno, CA	8,271	11.2%	509.6	16.2	603.1	13.7	75.5	110	65.7	126
Greenville County, SC	9,894	14%	463	21	376	26	93	106	25	396
Guilford County, SC	10,062	12.8%	575	17.8	448	22.5	127.7	79	52.33	192
Houston Independ SD	15,655	7.3%	3,159	5.0	3,158	5.0	160	98	150**	104
Jackson County FL	2,740	11.3%	193	14.2	89	30.8	25	119	110***	274
Kalamazoo Pub Schools	1,667	14%	70	24	79	22	15	112	NA	NA
Kent, WA Pub Schools	3,069	11.3%	148.7	20.6	318	9.7	32.3	95	25	123
<b>Lake Washington, WA</b>	<b>3,145</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>155.1</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>241.5</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>127.3</b>
Kyrene School District	1,544	9%	141	11	124	13	27	58	14	111
<b>Lakota Local</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
Los Angeles Unified SD	1,969	13.1%	490	14	6019.9	12.0	28	328.2	219	557
Madison, WI Pub Schools	3,808	14.0%	347	10.9	448	8.5	86	44	49	77.7
Marlborough Pub Sch	1,198	25%	141	9	115	11	7	172	4	300
Memphis City	16,637	15%	912	19	655	26	53	314	58	287
Miami-Dade	40,012	11%	2,500	17	1,226	33	209	192	206	195
Milwaukee	16,406	20.9%	1281	13	988	16.6	169	80	136	121
Montgomery Cty Sch	17,226	12%	1,588	11	1,398	13	293	59	97	178
Naperville IL 203	1978	11%	150	13	237	8	33	59	22	90
Nashville	10,141	12.3%	680.5	14.9	594	17.1	109	93	65.5	155
<b>New Bedford</b>	<b>2,655</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>295</b>
N. Chicago, IL (in Dist.)	614	16%	39	15.7	27	22.7	8	76.8	5	122.8
Norfolk Public Schls, VA	4329	13.5%	381	11.4	304	14.2	35	124	23	188
Oakland Unified SD	5401	15.4%	404	13.4	175	31	47	115	43.5	125
<b>Oak Park Sch Dist 97</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>110</b>
Omaha, NE	9,149	17.2%	485	18.9	470.5	19.4	85	108	33	281
Orange County, FL	24,385	11.1%	NA	NA	1,165	20.9	202	121	99.5	245
Pinellas County, FL	14,701	13.0%	881	16.7	774	19.0	150	98	79	187

Improving Achievement and Well Being for Students with Disabilities in the EBR Parrish School System

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	# IEPs	% IEPs	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio	FTE	Ratio
Pittsburgh Pub Schools	4,210	18.1%	308	13.7	263	16	31	136	16	263
Portland Public Schools	7,168	14.5%	282.5	25.4	414	17.3	99.6	72	59.3	121
Providence, RI	4460	18.8%	340	13	339	13	40	111	28	159
Renton, WA	2,108	14.7%	129	16.3	294	7	20	105	15	140
Rochester, NY	5,472	20%	559.2	9.8	428	12.8	148	37	64	85.5
Rockford IL Pub S	4,065	14%	336	12	334	12	49	83	24	169
Round Rock	3,313	8%	369	9	171	20	41	81	29	115
Sacramento	6,519	13.9%	288.1	22.6	246.2	26.5	33	128	50.8	197.5
San Diego Unified SD	16,300	12%	1,100	15	1,300	13	196	84	129	126
Saugus, MA	462	15%	28	17	29	16	6	77	NA	NA
Sch Dist of Philadelphia	33,686	20%	1,535	22	610	56	99	341	100	337
Scottsdale, AZ	2,891	10.9%	246	11.8	230	12.6	39.4	73	28.4	102
Seattle, WA	7,281	12.5%	548.8	13.3	823.3	8.8	82.2	89	60.2	121
Shelby County (Memphis)	14556	7%	852	17.1	768	19.0	55	265	60	243
St. Paul, MN	7,152	1	523	13.7	536	13.3	97	74	19	376
Stockton, CA	4,436	11.2%	258	17.2	344	12.9	47	94.0	36	123
Sun Prairie Area S Dist	697	10%	62	12	93	8	14	50	7	100
Tacoma Pub Schl WA	3,894	12%	172.5	23	223	17	33.6	116	27	144
Tucson Unified SD	8,092	14%	409	20	419	20	61	133	54	150
Washoe County Dist, NV	8,551	14%	472	19	325	27	77	112	37	232
Williamson Cty Schl	2,824	9%	213	13	400	7	34	121	23	178
West Aurora, IL SD	1688	13%	120	14	101	17	21	80	13	130
Worcester, MA	5,172	21%	254	21	366	15	38	137	NA	NA
Averages		13.9%		14.2		15		117		172

\* The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative and the Council of the Great City Schools, including its team members who conducted school district special education reviews, collected the data reported in these tables. *The data do not give precise comparisons, so the results need to be used with caution.* District data are not consistently reported (e.g., some districts include contractual personnel and others may exclude them) and are sometimes affected by varying placement types used by a school district. The data may count all students with IEPs, including those placed in charters, agencies, and nonpublic schools. Still, these data are the best available and are useful as a rough guide to staffing ratios.

\*\* Data includes psychologists and educational diagnosticians.

Improving Achievement and Well Being for Students with Disabilities in the EBR Parrish School System

Ratios for Social Workers, Nurses, OTs & PTs	# IEPs	Social Workers		Nurses (School/RN)		Occupational Therapists		Physical Therapists	
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Agawam Pub Schools	656	NA	NA	8	82	3	219	3	219
Anchorage School Dist.	4,950	NA	NA	112.8	60	21.9	309	7.8	869
Albuquerque School District	16,738	98.5	169.9	N/A	N/A	65.3	256	22.7	737
Atlanta Public Schools	6,779	30	165	58	85	12	413	3	1650
Arlington Pub Schools	2952	15	197	*30	98	20	147	6	492
Austin Pub S D	9,450	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.6	751	12	760
Baltimore City Public	12,719	194.1	66	NA	NA	38	335	11	1156
Baltimore County Pub Sc	12,127	48.7	249	179.8	67	65.2	186	27	449
Bellevue, WA SD	11,534	4	487	13.2	148	5.3	367	5.3	367
Boston Public Schools	1,293	52.1	201	128	82	60	175	21	499
Bridgeport, CT	2,618	38	69	28	94	7	374	2	1309
Buffalo Public Schools	7744	48.5	160	NA	NA	75	103	29	267
Cambridge Pub School	1,200	16	75	0	NA	16	75	7	172
Carpentersville	3,139	36.5	86	27.5	114	22	142	6	523
Chicago Pub Schools	54,376	355.7	142	334	151	115	440	35	1445
Cincinnati Pub Sch	8,928	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	470	5	1786
Clark Cty School Dist	40,067	NA	NA	194.5	206	69.5	577	28	1431
Cleve Hts-UnivHtsCty	1,100	7	158	5	220	2	550	1	1100
Cleveland Metropolitan	37,890	NA	NA	69	113	36	216	9	864
Columbus City, OH	9,727	36	270	103	94	43	226	24	405
Compton CA Unified SD	2981	1	2981	1	2981	1.5	1987	.5	5962
Dallas	13,470	7	1924	NA	NA	14.5	929	4	3368
DeKalb 428, IL	879	8	110	7	126	3.4	256	1.3	204
DesMoines Public Schls	4,854	25.8	188	58.4	83	7	693	4.8	1011
D.C. Public Schools	8,603	90	96	127	68	48	180	16	538
Davenport CommSch	1,857	NA	NA	7	266	NA	NA	NA	NA
Deer Valley Unified SD	3,289	NA	NA	37	89	19	174	4	823
Denver Public Schools	9,142	74	124	77	119	25	366	12	762
Detroit Public Schools	8,731	76	115	38	230	31.6	276	10	873
<b>East Baton Rouge</b>	<b>3975</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>497</b>
Elgin U-46, IL	1,987	56	95	59.5	89	25.2	210	4	1326
ESD 112	5,304	NA	NA	5	398	6	332	3	663
Everett Public Schools	1,049	2	525	11	96	2	525	3	350
Fort Worth	6,144	NA	NA	106	58	16	384	10	615
Fresno, CA	8,271	33.5	247	53.1	1156	3	2757	NA	NA
Greenville County, SC	9,894	20	495	132	75	14	707	4	2574
Guilford County, SC	10,062	75	134	39	258	24.7	407	11	958
Houston Independence SD	15,655	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jackson County, FL	2,740	25	110	BA	NA	6	457	3	913
Kalamazoo Pub	1,667	5	334	2	834	4	417	3	556
Kent, WA Pub Schools	3,069	2.2	NA	NA	NA	12.8	240	4.8	639
Kyrene School District	3,145	NA	NA	4	386	2	772	2	772
Lake Washington SD	1,544	NA	NA	23.6	133	19.3	163	3.3	953
Lakota Local	1,800	6	300	14	129	8	225	2	900
Los Angeles Unified SD	71,969	361.6	199	590.6	122	189.9	379	41	1743
Madison, WI Public Schls	3,808	68	56	38	100	34	112	13	293
Marlborough Public	1,198	9	134	10	120	4	300	2	599
Memphis City	16,637	55	303	68	245	11	1513	9	1849
Miami-Dade	40,012	NA	NA	206	195	65	616	23	1740
Montgomery CtySch	16,406	NA	NA	NA	NA	112	154	61	283
Milwaukee	17,226	140	117	101	162	30	547	13	1262
Naperville, IL 203	1978	27	73	29	68	4	494	3	659
Nashville	10,141	NA	NA	57	178	29.5	344	6	1690
New Bedford	2,655	67	40	30	89	11	242	3	885
North Chicago, IL	875	10	61.4	NA	NA	3.6	170.5	1.6	383.8
Oak Park Sch Dist 97	614	12	73	8	110	7	1125	1	875
Norfolk Public Schools, VA	4329	23	188	50	87	4	1082	6	722
Omaha, NE	9,149	56	163	74	124	NA	NA	NA	NA
Orange County, FL	24,385	67	364	108	226	10.5	2322	7	348
Pittsburgh Pub Sch	5401	40	105	40.6	104	7	601	8	526
Portland, OR	7,168	14	512	NA	NA	20.2	355	5.3	1352

Improving Achievement and Well Being for Students with Disabilities in the EBR Parrish School System

Ratios for Social Workers, Nurses, OTs & PTs	# IEPs	Social Workers		Nurses (School/RN)		Occupational Therapists		Physical Therapists	
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Oakland Unified SD	4,210	19	284	30.8	175	12	450	2	2701
Pinellas County, FLa	14,701	108	136	128	115	56	263	23	650
Portland Pub Schools	6,513	10	652	NA	NA	20	326	9	724
Providence	4460	35	127	NA	NA	11.5	388	4.5	991
Renton, WA	2,108	0	NA	17	124	15	141	3	703
Rockford IL Pub S	5,472	26	135	32	127	12.5	325	4.5	903
Rochester, NY	4,065	89	61.5	55.5	98.6	29.2	187.4	11	497.5
Round Rock	3,313	NA	NA	1	NA	10	332	3	1105
Sacramento	6,519	8	NA	5*	NA	2	NA	0	NA
San Diego Unified SD	16,300	NA	NA	129	127	40	408	10	1630
Saugus, MA	462	4	116	5	93	2	231	1	462
Schl Dist of Philadelphia	33,686	NA	NA	280	121	20	1685	20	1685
Scottsdale, AZ	2,891	NA	NA	31	93	13.8	210	3.8	761
Seattle, WA	7,,281	NA	NA	NA	NA	44	165	11	662
Shelby County (Memphis)	14556	66	221	79	184	29.22	498	12.84	1134
St. Paul Pub Schools	7,152	92	78	33	217	36	199	12	596
Stockton, CA	4,436	3	1479	22.3	199	3	1479	1.6	2773
Sun Prairie Area S Dist	697	8	88	1	NA	5	140	2	349
Tacoma Pub Sch (WA)	3,894	NA	NA	1.2	NA	19	205	11	354
Tucson Unified SD	8,092	26	312	53	153	10	810	4	2023
Washoe Cty Sc Dist	8,551	NA	NA	35	248	12	713	7	1222
West Aurora SD, IL	2,824	19	89	7	241	11	154	7	241
Williamson Cty Schl	1688	NA	NA	37	111	22	187	5	819
Worcester	5,172	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	431	5	1035
<b>Averages</b>			<b>256</b>		<b>170</b>		<b>379</b>		<b>1,010</b>

Percent Students with IEPs of Total Enrollment & Students with IEPs to Staff Ratio in Ascending Order

This table shows in ascending order the percent of students with IEPs for all surveyed districts and staff ratios shown in the four pages above. EBRPSS ratios are shown in bolded red.

Rank	% IEPs	Special Educators	Paraeducators	Speech/Lang Pathologists	Psychologists	Social Workers	Nurses	Occupational Therapists	Physical Therapists
1	8%	7	4.3	26	31	26	58	64	128
2	8%	7	5.26	37	55	40	60	75	172
3	9%	<b>7.6</b>	6.3	44	64	56	62	103	219
4	9%	8.6	7	44	77.7	61	64	112	241
5	9%	9	7	47	85.5	67	67	140	283
6	9%	9	7	50	79	69	68	141	293
7	10%	9.1	7	<b>54</b>	90	73	75	142	349
8	10%	9.5	7	58	94	73	82	147	350
9	10%	9.8	8	59	100	75	83	154	354
10	10%	9.8	8	59	100	78	85	154	367
11	<b>10.03%</b>	10	8	60	102	82	87	163	384
12	10.3%	10	8.3	63	104	86	89	171	449
13	10.03%	10	8.5	65	110	88	89	172	462
14	11%	10.3	8.6	68	<b>110</b>	89	89	174	492
15	11%	10.9	<b>9.4</b>	71	110	95	93	180	<b>497</b>
16	11%	11	9.7	71	111	96	93	<b>181</b>	498
17	11.2%	11	9.7	73	111	105	94	186	523
18	11.2%	11	10	73	112	115	96	187	526
19	11.3%	11	10	74	113	116	98	18	538
20	11.4%	11.36	10	74	115	124	98.6	199	556
21	12%	11.4	11	76	117	126	100	205	596
22	12%	11.7	11	77	121	127	104	210	599
23	12%	12	11.1	78	123	134	110	211	615
24	12%	12	12	79	123	135	111	216	620
25	12%	12	12	80	124	140	113	219	639
26	12%	12	12.6	80	125	<b>142</b>	114	225	659
27	12%	12	12.8	80	127	142	115	231	663
28	12.3%	12	12.9	81	128	153	119	240	676
29	12.69%	12.3	12.9	83	129	158	119	242	680
30	12.5%	12.5	13	84	130	160	120	256	703
31	12.7%	13	13	85	134	163	121	276	722
32	13%	13	13	89	138	170	124	265	724
33	13%	13	13	93	140	188	126	285	737
34	13.1%	13	13	94	142	197	127	300	761
35	13.5%	13	13	95	144	221	127	309	762
36	13.7%	13	13	95	150	249	129	325	772
37	13.9%	13.4	13	96	151	284	133	326	819
38	14%	13.7	13	96.5	154	300	142	332	823
39	14%	13.8	13	98	155	300	144	332	864
40	14%	14	13.5	100	155	303	148	344	869
41	14%	14	14	102.6	159	312	<b>153</b>	366	873
42	14%	14	14	103	166	334	153	367	875
43	14%	14	14	04	169	384	155	374	885
44	14%	14	14.2	104	1272	487	162	384	900
45	14%	14	15	105	178	495	163	388	903
46	14%	14	15	105	178	525	165	408	953
47	14%	14.9	15	106	179	652	175	413	991
48	14.1%	15	15	108	188	673	178	417	1011
49	14.1%	15	16	111	195	705	184	424	1079
50	14.7%	15	16	111	198		186	431	1035
51	15%	15	16	112	199		195	450	1100
52	15%	15.2	16.4	112	208		199	470	1100
53	15%	15.7	16.6	112	210		206	473	1105
54	15.3%	16.0	16.6	114	213		217	474	1134

Improving Achievement and Well Being for Students with Disabilities in the EBR Parrish School System

Rank	% IEPs	Special Educators	Paraeducators	Speech/Lang Pathologists	Psychologists	Social Workers	Nurses	Occupational Therapists	Physical Therapists
55	15.4%	16.3	17	115	213.7		220	477	1134
56	16%	16.3	17	116	218		230	494	1222
57	16%	17	17.1	117	219		241	498	1262
58	16%	17	17.6	121	223		245	518	1309
59	16.2%	17	18	124	225		248	525	1326
60	17%	17.1	18	127	232		266	547	1431
61	17.3%	17.2	18.4	12	233		386	550	1488
62	17.7%	18.9	19	130	240		398	577	1532
63	18%	19	19	133	243		700	601	1553
64	18%	19	19.4	135	263		834	616	1630
65	18%	19	20	136	265			644	1650
66	18%	19	20	137	281			693	1685
67	18.1%	19.5	20	139	295			702	1690
68	19%	20	20.5	140	300			713	1740
69	19%	20.3	21	144	319			772	1786
70	19.3%	20.6	21	158	337			810	1849
71	19.4%	21	22	172	376			1029	2023
72	20%	21	22	192	396			1082	2187
73	20%	21	24	218				1125	2574
74	20%	22	25	263				1479	2574
75	20.4%	22.6	26	265				1513	2701
76	20.5%	23	26	314				1685	2773
77	20.9%	23.5	27	341					2941
78	21%	24	31	596					
79	21%	24	33						
80	21%	37	56						
<b>AVA.</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>1,008</b>

Appendix B. Proposed ESS Organization

Associate Superintendent or Executive Director Title <b>(Newly Given Title for One Person)</b>	
<b>Appraisal Supervisor</b>	No change from current structure
<b>Citywide Specialists Supervisor (NEW)</b>	Preschool Facilitator
	PreK/Itinerant Homebased
	PD Specialists (2) & PD Coordination
	Curriculum Content Trainers (3)
	<b>Reading Intervention Specialist (NEW)</b>
	<b>Modified Curriculum Instruction Specialist (NEW)</b>
	ABA/Autistic Program Facilitator
	Lead Behavior Strategist
	Lead SLP
	OT/PT Leadership
	Assistive Technology (2)
	Vision, Hearing, Orientation/Mobility & Interpreter Support
	Nursing (Agencies)
	Transition/Graduation Pathways/AD Act
Parent Advisory Leadership	
<b>Four Supervisors</b>	<p>Each team is aligned (alignment is new) with a single executive director for school leadership and comprises the personnel below assigned to schools supervised by each respective executive director. <b>ADD one new supervisor.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ISSs</li> <li>Behavior Strategists</li> <li>Speech/Language Pathologists</li> </ul> <p><b>Coordinating functions for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead teacher support</li> <li>Programs within assigned schools with support from specialists</li> <li>Placement</li> <li>Compliance</li> <li>Professional Development</li> <li>Monitoring Support</li> </ul> <p><b>ED for Reengagement Schools.</b> Have a group of ISSs, Behavior Strategists, SLPs, etc., to work under one of the 5 ESS supervisors and align them with schools associated with the ED for Reengagement.</p>
<b>B-S Region</b>	
Team 1 Ex Dir	
Team 2 Ex Dir	
<b>H-OS BR &amp; SE</b>	
Highland Team	
SE Team	
<b>Mid-City Region</b>	
Team 1 Ex Dir	
Team 2 Ex Dir	
<b>North Region</b>	
Team 1 Ex Dir	
Team 2 Ex Dir	
<b>Operations (New)</b>	
	Resource Liaison (1.5)
	Private/Parochial School Coordination
	ESY
	Due Process, State Complaints & Compliance Monitoring Coordination



Appendix C. Data and Documents Reviewed

Organizational structure for the district (org chart)
Briefly describe participants, meeting frequency, and structure for superintendent’s cabinet and other high-level leadership meetings.
Copy of the district's most recent Strategic Plan including performance indicators and the research department's role in developing the indicators
Copy of the district's professional development plan or offerings including, but not limited to, professional development provided by the Math, ELA/Reading, Special Education, ELL, Assessment and Data & Research departments
Copy of a recent evaluation of the professional development for staff members, if available
Samples of third and seventh grade benchmark/interim (short cycle) assessments in math and ELA/reading and in Algebra I and English I and the district policies for administering these to Els
Reports disseminated to schools and staff for benchmark (short cycle) assessments, state mandated assessments, and interpretation of test scores
Description of process used to evaluate principals and assistant principals, with appropriate forms, particularly relevant to teaching/learning for students with disabilities and including the role Assessment and Data & Research play in the review process,
Description of process used to evaluate central office leaders and principal supervisors, with appropriate forms, particularly relevant to teaching/learning for students with disabilities
List of schools that use reading and math programs other than the district adoption
Board agendas from three recent board meetings
Adopted programs of study required by the state or federal government
A description of how the district supports low-performing schools and students
Organization structure for academics (org chart)
Copy of the recent evaluation/review of the Academic department, including ELL or any evaluation particularly relevant to teaching/learning for students with disabilities, if available
An electronic or one hard copy of the district's curriculum guidance (such as guides, pacing guides, curriculum maps, etc.) for third, fourth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades in math and reading/ELA
Information about the district’s magnet plan or other programs designed to attract students to particular areas of interest, including those with ELLs and those relevant to teaching/learning for students with disabilities.
List of high schools and the AP courses offered at each
Organization structure for English language learners (org chart)
List of schools by state and national accountability status for this year and the previous year. For schools that have not made AYP, indicate for each school which factors caused the school to be in the accountability status

Title III state monitoring reports from the State and the US Department of Education, if available. Title III Letter of transmittal from the State and Title III expenditures (3 years)
Description of reading and mathematics instructional approaches and names of textbooks/programs/interventions at pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades for Gen Ed and ELL Programs
A description of the philosophy and time requirements of the district’s programs for English language learners; Graduation requirements, pathways for ELLs
Evaluation of the district’s ELL program, including data on student academic progress and acquisition of English, if available. Any reports prepared for the state, regarding ELL achievement.
ELL identification, enrollment and placement process (handbook?)—information about the placement of ELLs into programs, schools and criteria and process for exiting from the ELL program
Counseling staffing and guidance for high school completion for ELLs
Description of Early Childhood program approach and names of textbooks/programs for ELLs and native English speakers
Relevant State regulations or guidance for implementing state laws on Bilingual Education, including state credentialing/endorsement requirements for teachers of ELLs.
State ELD standards (latest adoption) and implementation plan
District school board policies related to ELLs. Sample school board agendas (4)
District level compliance reports, reviews (e.g. OCR, DOJ, Department of Education other), if applicable.
Walk-through tools for classroom observation, general education, special education, and ELL programs, if different
Handbook/guidance for selective programs--Gifted and Talented
Sped handbook and protocols for evaluation of ELLs for special needs
ELL curriculum-- framework and materials (philosophy and expectations to proficiency)
District’s manual related to district and school implementation of programs for ELLs and for ELLs with disabilities
ELL families and community outreach/communications plan (language access policy) or guidance for district and schools
Total funding and funding schema (state and Title III)—state and federal allocations and school distribution
Selection process and criteria for selecting instructional materials for general education and for ELL programs
HR guide and/or district process and priorities for staffing schools for ELL and Special Education programs
District level data for the past four years of ELL performance on English Proficiency Assessments by level of proficiency, and if available, by number of years in the ELL program, and initial ELP level
ELL reclassification rates by grade level, time in ELL program, and initial level of proficiency, if available

Principal profile--years of experience, languages spoken, and ELL instruction-related qualifications, if available.
Provide copy of the organization chart for special education/related services. and any other office/department or unit associated with social/emotional support, and physical health support for students. Include and identify any nonadministrative staff. For each position a very brief description of major responsibilities.
Briefly describe participants, meeting frequency, and structure for superintendent's cabinet and other high-level leadership meetings.
District-wide improvement plans and templates for school-based improvement plans that pertain to all students, including those with IEPs.
Special education Program/Configuration of Services. For each special education configuration model (e.g., program) for students with IEPs, show by grade level and total the number of models by school. Examples: full inclusion, resource, cross-categorical, autism, etc. Please sort by any school type, e.g., Art Schools, STEM Schools, Montessori, IB, etc.
Instruction Aligned with Core Standards & Curriculum. District-wide initiatives for the provision of instruction to all students based on core curriculum aligned with state standards that includes students with IEPs and ELLs.
Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). District implementation of MTSS, including academic and positive behavior intervention and supports, including social/emotional learning (SEL). Please address: the organizational structure for supporting MTSS, universal screening, progress monitoring, problem-solving, data collection and review, data reports, procedures, and training. a. Attach any documents relevant to MTSS, including any guidance for schools. b. Describe any district-sponsored interventions available to schools for reading, math and social/emotional learning and positive behavior support, e.g., Read 180, etc.
Absences. Indicate when a student is considered to be chronically absent and provide any procedures for following up with the family/student.
Referrals. Any initiatives taken during the past several years that relates to ensuring the appropriate referral of students for a special education evaluation and the responsibility of school principals, other school-based staff, and administrative staff for overseeing this process.
Instructional Support. For early childhood and for school-aged students, provide information regarding any district initiatives/training designed to improve instruction in the following areas. a. Inclusivity. For students with IEPs in general education classes, the provision of effective instruction with the support of special educators and/or paraprofessionals. b. Separate Classes. Instruction aligned with core curriculum for students educated in separate classes who take a regular state assessment, and instruction for students taking an alternate assessment. c. Literacy. Does the district sponsor any curricular materials for students with IEPs who are reading two or more years below grade level? If so, please describe how these students are instructed with names of materials, any quality monitoring, and other information that may be useful to the Council team. d. Behavior. Describe types of support offered to schools and teachers for students, including those with IEPs, who exhibit behavioral challenges described to be beyond

<p>the expertise of school personnel.</p> <p>e. ELs with IEPs. Provide information for ELs with respect to “a, b, c, and d” above. Also, describe how English language acquisition support is provided for students with IEPs.</p> <p>f. Assistive Technology. Access to and usage of assistive technology.</p> <p>g. Post-Secondary Transition. Transition activities and services for post-secondary success, including access to community-based work experiences.</p>
<p>Configuration of Special Education. For each special education configuration model in #5 above, and for resource, co-teaching, etc. Briefly describe each program and placement criteria, and student to teacher/paraprofessional ratios for each program.</p>
<p>Professional development (PD)</p> <p>a. Structure for PD. Provide the number of days available for staff development (school-based and district-wide) and any current policies regarding mandatory nature of any PD for special education personnel and for other personnel.</p> <p>b. Content. PD available for special educators, paraprofessionals, and related service providers. How is content determined?</p> <p>c. Collaborative PD. Extent to which general, special education and EL administrators collaboratively manage PD.</p>
<p>Special Education Teachers</p> <p>a. Allocation. Process for determining the number of special education teachers each district school requires.</p> <p>b. Hiring. Role of principals in identifying special educators to be hired at schools.</p>
<p>Paraprofessionals</p> <p>a. Types. If there is more than one position for paraprofessionals/aides, describe the various positions and duties.</p> <p>b. Determination of need. Guidance for IEP teams to determine a student’s need for additional adult support per IEPs. (Provide a copy of any documents used by IEP teams to document a student’s need.)</p>
<p>Hiring. Role of principals in identifying paraprofessionals to be hired at schools.</p>
<p>Related Services. Process for allocating the FTE number of related services staff (e.g., social workers, psychologists) to schools.</p>
<p>Procedural Manuals. Written procedures for implementing special education and related services (under IDEA), and for implementing Section 504.</p>
<p>Union Contracts, memorandum of agreement, if there are union issues involving special education.</p>
<p>Compliance. The last annual notice from the state regarding the district’s IDEA compliance determination, and a summary of any state or Office for Civil Rights findings from the last two school years. If not included in the annual notice, the district’s last state performance plan results provided by the state.</p>
<p>Due process. Number of due process requests and any additional data readily available about due process cases, issues, settled, won, compensatory services, attorney fees, etc. for the last school year, and the previous two school years.</p>
<p>Data reports. Any regular data reports available for special education administrators and local school administrators to help them manage and coordinate services, monitor performance, and ensure compliance for students with disabilities; and for students who are struggling academically and behaviorally.</p>

Fiscal a. Charters. Describe how any charters are authorized, e.g., as own LEA, authorized by the district, etc. Describe how charter schools are financed. b. Expenditures based on federal, state and local funds for the education of all district students and for students with IEPs. (Most current school year available, segregate ESSER dollars) c. High Cost Areas. For all special education related areas that are considered to have exceptionally high costs, provide amount of expenditures for each year for the last five years. Also, describe concerns and any activities taken by the district to address these areas.
Parents. Names of any parent organizations, training for parents, and any structure for supporting parents to meaningfully participate in IEP and other meetings.
Accountability. Describe the district’s system of accountability for student performance, e.g., school report card, dash boards, school grades, etc. Identify any provisions relevant to ELLs or students with disabilities.
Cohort Graduation Data
Key Performance Indicator Data
Dropout rate data
Student assessment data
Student discipline data

**Appendix D. Individuals Interviewed and Draft Working Agenda**

**Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2022**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Participant Title/Role</b>	<b>Participant's Name</b>
9:00- 9: 45 a.m.	Interim Chief of Schools	Arcelius Brickhouse, Jr.

	Chief of Staff	Caron Smith
	Chief Officer of Accountability & Assessments	Andrea O'Konski
	Chief of Technology	Amy Jones
9:45- 10:15 a.m.	SPED(Breakouts)	
	Chief Operation Officer	Frank Chester
	Chief Technology	Amy Jones
	Transportation	Donna Martin
	ELL (Breakouts)	
	Interim Chief of Schools	Arcelius Brickhouse, Jr.
	Chief Officer of Accountability & Assessments	Andrea O'Konski
	Student Data System Manager	Kasey Ward
	Director of Data	Dr. Trey Earle
10:15-11:00 a.m.	Chief of Literacy	Dr. Barbara Lashley
	Chief Officer of Supports & Special Projects	Stacey Dupre
	MTSS Director	Corie Buras
	Director of Early Childhood Education	Shenoa Webb
11:00- 11:30 A.M.- <b>SPED Breakout</b>		
	Director of ICARE	Erin Pourciau
	Supervisor of Health Services	Jacqueline Duvic
EL Breakout		
	Chief of Literacy	Dr. Barbara Lashley
	Director of School Counseling	Tirza Fernandez- Brazier
Noon- 1:00 p.m. <b>Sped Breakout</b>	SPED Breakouts	
	Supervisor of English Language Arts	Charie D. Worley
	Supervisor of Social Studies	Tiffanye Thomas
	Supervisor of Math	Justin Robicheaux
	Supervisor of Science	Dr. Kristen Antoine- Morse
Noon- 1:00 p.m. EL <b>Breakout</b>		
	Director of Magnet Schools	Theresa Porter
	ED Tech	Nikki Washington
	Director of Gifted & Talented	Brandy Williams
	Curriculum Resource Coordinator	Dr. Marcil Seals
1:00- 1:15 p.m. <b>Break.</b>		
1:15- 2:00 p.m.	Director of Professional Development	Rochell Anderson
	Director of Teacher Effectiveness	Shonel LeDuff

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Chief of Human Resources	Nicola Hall
<b>Sped Breakout</b>		
	Associate Superintendent of ESS	Adam Smith
	Director of ESS	Elizabeth Chapman
Breakout	EL	
	Executive Director of ESL	Cesar Rico
	ESL School and Parent Resource Liasion	Shawnda Floyd
	ESL District Instructional Specialist	Dr. Amy Pan
	ESL School Counselor	Mara Girona Dodd
	ESL District Instructional Specialist	Anita Harleaux
3:00- 3:30 p.m.	Director of Federal Programs	Dr. Sandra Bethley
	Coordinator of Title 1	Maricel Salvacion
	Director of Equity & Diversity	Christina Anderson
	Deputy Chief of Policy	Vicky Silas
	Director of School Counseling	Tirza Fernandez- Brazier
3:30- 4:00	EBR Association of Educators	Valencea Johnson
	EBR Federation of Teachers	Angela Reams-Brown
	Louisiana Association of Educators -LAE	Dr. Tia Mills

**Thursday, February 3, 2022**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Participant Title/Role</b>	<b>Participant's Name</b>
9:30-10:00	Families Helping Families	Cynthia Chesterfield
	Family/ Community Support	Jason & Gol Hannan
	Family/ Community Support	Ursula Brown
	Family/ Community Support	Patricaia Kisamore
10:00- 11:00 a.m.	Executive Director	Demetric Alexander
	Executive Director	Larry James
	Executive Director	Mandy LeCerte
	Executive Director	Summer Dann
	Executive Director	Christal Aguillard- Sylvan
	Executive Director	Stacy Bradford
	Executive Director	Shalika Scott
	Executive Director	Milton Batiste
	Executive Director	Laura Williams
11:00- Noon	Elementary Principal	Lashawn Stewart
	Elementary Principal	Joni Roberts

	Elementary Principal	Tevron Ross
	Elementary Principal	Erica Aguillard
	Elementary Principal	Terrie Junda
	Elementary Principal	Lontarris Williams
	Elementary Principal	Olga Pack
	Elementary Principal	Sharon Thomas
	Elementary Principal	Mary Slack
	Elementary Principal	Daniel Edwards
	Elementary Principal	Richard Rattliffe
	Elementary Principal	Veronica A Sanders
Noon-12:30	Lunch	
12:30- 1:30 p.m.	Middle School Principal	Erin Howard
	Middle School Principal	Zane Whittington
	Middle School Principal	Raquel Brown
	Middle School Principal	Shalonda Simoneaux
	Middle School Principal	Hillary Greer
	Middle School Principal	Curtis Walker
	Middle School Principal	Rodney Coates
	High School Principal	Margot Morgan- Forbes
	High School Principal	Robert Signater, Sr.
	High School Principal	John Hayman
	High School Principal	Dr. Esrom Pitre
	High School Principal	Verdie Batiste
	High School Principal	Robert Wells
	High School Principal	Sherwanda Johnson
1:30- 2:30 p.m.	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Crystal Briscoe
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Dominique Gibbs
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Parrish Riddle
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Sandra Williams
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Courtney Robichaux
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Brittany Barber
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Dedra Breaux
	Elementary General Ed Teachers	Dawn Gray
2:30- 3:30 p.m.	Middle/HS General Ed Teachers	Kirk Green
	Middle/HS General Ed Teachers	Nikita Lacour-Dukes
	Middle/HS General Ed Teachers	Kristin Guidry
	Middle/HS General Ed Teachers	Patricia Cooke
<b>Friday, February 4, 2022</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Participant Title/Role</b>	<b>Participant's Name</b>
9:30-10:00	Families Helping Families	Cynthia Chesterfield
	Family/ Community Support	Jason & Gol Hannan



	Family/ Community Support	Ursula Brown
	Family/ Community Support	Patricaia Kisamore
10:00- 11:00 a.m.	Executive Director	Demetric Alexander
	Executive Director	Larry James
	Executive Director	Mandy LeCerte
	Executive Director	Summer Dann
		Christal Aguillard-
	Executive Director	Sylvan
	Executive Director	Stacy Bradford
	Executive Director	Shalika Scott
	Executive Director	Milton Batiste
	Executive Director	Laura Williams
11:00- Noon	Elementary Principal	Lashawn Stewart
	Elementary Principal	Joni Roberts
	Elementary Principal	Teviron Ross
	Elementary Principal	Erica Aguillard
	Elementary Principal	Terrie Junda
	Elementary Principal	Lontarris Williams
	Elementary Principal	Olga Pack
	Elementary Principal	Sharon Thomas
	Elementary Principal	Mary Slack
	Elementary Principal	Daniel Edwards
	Elementary Principal	Richard Rattliffe
	Elementary Principal	Veronica A Sanders
Noon-12:30	Lunch	
12:30- 1:30 p.m.	Middle School Principal	Erin Howard
	Middle School Principal	Zane Whittington
	Middle School Principal	Raquel Brown
	Middle School Principal	Shalonda Simoneaux
	Middle School Principal	Hillary Greer
	Middle School Principal	Curtis Walker
	Middle School Principal	Rodney Coates
		Margot Morgan-
	High School Principal	Forbes
	High School Principal	Robert Signater, Sr.
	High School Principal	John Hayman
	High School Principal	Dr. Esrom Pitre
	High School Principal	Verdie Batiste
	High School Principal	Robert Wells

1:30- 2:30 p.m.	High School Principal Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers Elementary General Education Teachers	Sherwanda Johnson Crystal Briscoe Dominique Gibbs Parrish Riddle Sandra Williams Courtney Robichaux Brittany Barber Dedra Breaux Dawn Gray
2:30- 3:30 p.m.	Middle/High School General Ed Teachers Middle/High School General Education Teachers Middle/High School General Education Teachers Middle/High School General Education Teachers	Kirk Green  Nikita Lacour-Dukes  Kristin Guidry  Patricia Cooke
2:30- 3:30 p.m.	ESL Teacher Elementary ESL Teacher Elementary ESL Teacher Elementary ESL Teacher Middle ESL Teacher Middle ESL Teacher High ESL Teacher High	
5:00- 6:00 p.m.	ELL Parent Listening Session	

## Appendix D. Strategic Support Team

The following were members of the Council's Strategic Support Team on special education who conducted this review for the Clark County School District.

### Sue Gamm, Esq.

Sue Gamm, Esq., is a special educator and attorney who has spent more than 40 years specializing in the study and understanding of evidence-based practices, policies, and procedures that support a systemic and effective education of students with disabilities and those with academic and social/emotional challenges. Ms. Gamm has blended her unique legal and special education programmatic expertise with her experiences as the chief specialized services officer for the Chicago Public Schools, attorney and division director for the Office for Civil Rights (US Department of Education) and special educator to become a highly regarded national expert as an author, consultant, presenter, and evaluator. Since her retirement from the Chicago Public Schools in 2003, has been engaged in 30 states and the District of Columbia with more than 50 school districts and five state educational agencies working to improve the instruction and support provided to students with disabilities. Twenty-one of these reviews were conducted through the auspices of the Council of the Great City Schools. Ms. Gamm has written standard operating procedure manuals for special education practices and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for more than 10 school districts, and has shared her knowledge of the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act and related issues at more than 70 national, state and local conferences. Ms. Gamm has authored/co-authored numerous periodicals and publications, including those focused on MTSS, disproportionality for special education, responding to OCR investigations, and assessment. [She also testified before Congressional and Illinois legislative committees.](#) Ms. Gamm has served as a consulting attorney on several of the Council's *amicus* briefs focusing on special education that were submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court. Further, she consults with the Public Consulting Group and numerous school districts and state educational agencies and provides training at national, state, and local conferences on special education matters, particularly in the area of special education disproportionality. [Ms. Gamm has also been recognized for her legal expertise in the area of special education through her engagement as an expert witness or consultant involving nine special education federal class action or systemic cases.](#) She is admitted to practice before the Illinois Bar, the Federal Bar, and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar.

### Julie Wright Halbert, Esq.

Julie Halbert has been legislative counsel for the Council of the Great City Schools for over 22 years. In that capacity, she has served as a national education legal and policy specialist, with emphasis on special education. She worked extensively on the reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and 2004. Ms. Halbert is responsible for drafting numerous technical provisions to the IDEA and providing technical assistance to Congress and the U. S. Department of Education. In 1997 and again in 2005, she testified before the U.S. Department of Education on its proposed regulations on IDEA 2004. Ms. Halbert has directed each of the Council's special education strategic review teams, including special education

reviews in the Anchorage, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Charleston, Cincinnati, Des Moines, District of Columbia, Guilford County (NC), Memphis, New York City, Richmond, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence and St. Louis. Working with national experts Sue Gamm and Judy Elliott, she has published a Council national white paper on the implementation and development of MTSS, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports for our nation's urban school districts. Ms. Halbert most recently, January 2017, took the lead working with our cities in the development of the Council's amicus brief to the Supreme Court of the United States in *Endrews v. Douglas County School District*, on determining the educational benefit standard due by our districts to students with disabilities when implementing their IEPs. This case is certain to be one of the most important cases since *Rowley* decided over thirty years ago. She was also the counsel of record for the Council of the Great City Schools' amicus briefs in the Supreme Court of the United States in (a) *Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York v. Tom F., On Behalf of Gilbert F., A Minor Child* (2007); (b) *Jacob Winkelman, a Minor By and Through His Parents and Legal Guardians, Jeff and Sander Winkelman, et al., v. Parma City School District* (2007); (c) *Brian Schaffer v. Jerry Weast, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, et al.*, (2005); (d) *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District*, and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* (2007) and *Forest Grove School District v. T.A.*, (2009). Ms. Halbert graduated with honors from the University of Maryland and the University of Miami School of Law. She is admitted to practice in the Federal Bar, the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, and the Florida and Pennsylvania Bars. Additionally, for the past year, together with Husch Blackwell partner John Borkowski, Ms. Halbert is assisting to develop and implement national legal webinars for urban district's counsel and key staff on emerging legal issues for the Council's districts. They include, Civil Rights Priorities at the End of One Administration and Beginning of Another, Hate Speech,

### **Debra Brooks, Ed.D.**

Debra Y. Brooks, Ed.D. has been in education over 25 years. She has held the following positions: general educator, special educator, ARD Manager, Assistant Principal and Principal. Dr. Brooks has been a principal of both a comprehensive K-8 campus and two separate public day schools. Dr. Brooks has served in various central office positions such as Coordinator of Inclusion, Director of Low Incidence and Inclusion, Academic Director of Special Education all within Baltimore City Public Schools. During Dr. Brooks' tenure in Baltimore County, she was the Executive Director of Special Education and Executive Director of Student Support Services. Currently, Dr. Brooks serves as the Executive Director of Special Education for Baltimore City Public Schools. Dr. Brooks values the importance of student voice and self-advocacy. She believes that all students are capable of achieving greatness when given the appropriate supports and learning opportunities while they are in school.

### **Akisha Osei Sarfo, Ph.D.**

Dr. Sarfo is the Director of Research for the Council of Great City Schools. Akisha uses her years of experience and interest in program evaluation, experimental and quasi-experimental research design, urban education, race and equity in education, education policy, teacher quality and school accountability to help guide and support research and data use in Council districts. Prior to joining CGCS, Akisha served as senior associate partner at Bellwether Education Partners. Most significantly, Akisha served as Chief Performance Officer at Guilford County Schools in North Carolina, the 47th largest school district in the country. In this role, she led the division of Accountability, Research and Planning which is responsible for research, evaluation, accountability, and grant activities for the district as well as local and state assessments, planning, student information, student and school performance, analysis and reporting. As part of the Superintendent's Cabinet, she focused on the strategic and effective use of data, research and evaluation to inform changes throughout the district with an emphasis on reducing inequities in educational systems, policies and performance. She and her team received the Excellence in Education Data award from Harvard's Strategic Data Project for her work in Guilford County Schools.

Prior to working in Guilford, Akisha worked as research assistant professor at the Center for Research on Education and Social Policy at the University of Delaware and as a Harvard Strategic Data Project fellow. She has served in other roles conducting research and evaluation at state and federal agencies and in the nonprofit sector. She earned a bachelor's in Political Science and a master's in Educational Research Methods from the University of Michigan. She also received her Ph.D. in Education Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics from the University of Delaware and is an AERA Dissertation Fellow.

### **Ray Hart, Ph.D.**

Dr. Raymond C. Hart is the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools. Hart, who has more than 30 years of experience in research and evaluation, was previously the Director of Research for the Council, and his work has spanned policy areas such as post-secondary success and college readiness, professional learning communities and school improvement, teacher effectiveness and value-added analysis, early childhood education, and adult and workforce literacy. He has worked with clients from a number of federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of State, the National Science Foundation, and many state and local departments of education. Hart recently led the Analytic Technical Support Task for the Regional Educational Laboratory – Mid Atlantic. He served as the Executive Director of Research, Planning and Accountability for Atlanta Public Schools, President and CEO of RS Hart and Partners, which is an evaluation and assessment consulting firm, and an Assistant Professor of Research, Measurement, and Statistics at Georgia State University. Prior to his work as a consultant, Hart served as the Director of the Bureau of Research Training and Services at Kent State University. His career began in 1989 as a program director for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students in Engineering and Science.

## Appendix E. About the Council and History of Strategic Support Teams

The **Council of the Great City Schools** is a coalition of 76 of the nation's largest urban public-school systems.<sup>84</sup> The organization's Board of Directors is composed of the superintendent, CEO, or chancellor of schools and one school board member from each member city. An executive committee of 24 individuals, equally divided between superintendents and school board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The composition of the organization makes it the only independent national group representing the governing and administrative leadership of urban education and the only association whose sole purpose revolves around urban schooling.

The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and to assist its members to improve and reform. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group also convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies of urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities for areas such as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, instruction, research, and technology. Finally, the organization informs the nation's policymakers, the media, and the public of the successes and challenges of schools in the nation's Great Cities. Urban school leaders from across the country use the organization as a source of information and an umbrella for their joint activities and concerns.

The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961 and has its headquarters in Washington, DC. Since the organization's founding, geographic, ethnic, language, and cultural diversity has typified the Council's membership and staff.

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<sup>84</sup> Albuquerque, Anchorage, Arlington (Texas), Atlanta, Aurora (Colorado), Austin, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Bridgeport, Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), Buffalo, Charleston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Cincinnati, Clark County (Las Vegas), Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, Duval County (Jacksonville), El Paso, Fort Worth, Fresno, Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), Hawaii, Hillsborough County (Tampa), Houston, Indianapolis, Jackson, Jefferson County (Louisville), Kansas City, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Manchester (New Hampshire), Miami-Dade County, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Newark, Norfolk, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orange County (Orlando), Palm Beach County, Philadelphia, Pinellas County, Pittsburgh, Portland, Providence, Puerto Rico, Richmond, Rochester, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Ana, Seattle, Shelby County (Memphis), St. Louis, St. Paul, Stockton, Toledo, Toronto, Tulsa, Washington, D.C., Washoe County (Reno), and Wichita.

### History of Strategic Support Teams of the Council of the Great City Schools

The following is a history of the Strategic Support Teams provided by the Council of the Great City Schools to its member urban school districts over the last 24 years.

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005 & 2018-9
	Legal Services	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Research	2013
	Human Resources	2016
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
	Communications	2008
	Math Instruction	2010
	Food Services	2011
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Facilities Operations	2015
	Special Education	2015
	Human Resources	2016
Atlanta		
	Facilities	2009
	Transportation	2010
Austin		
	Special Education	2010
Baltimore		
	Information Technology	2011
Birmingham		
	Organizational Structure	2007
	Operations	2008
	Facilities	2010
	Human Resources	2014
	Financial Operations	2015
Boston		
	Special Education	2009
	Curriculum & Instruction	2014
	Food Service	2014
	Facilities	2016
Bridgeport		
	Transportation	2012
Broward County (FL)		
	Information Technology	2000

City	Area	Year
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2012
	Information Technology	2018
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
	Bilingual Education	2009
	Special Education	2014
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
	Transportation	2014
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Transportation	2013
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2009
	Special Education	2013
Chicago		
	Warehouse Operations	2010
	Special Education I	2011
	Special Education II	2012
	Bilingual Education	2014
Christina (DE)		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Safety and Security	2008



City	Area	Year
	Theme Schools	2009
	Special Education	2017
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Information Technology	2007
	Food Services	2007
	Transportation	2009
Dallas		
	Procurement	2007
	Staffing Levels	2009
	Staffing Levels	2016
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Organizational Structure	2017
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Common Core Implementation	2014
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
	Staffing Levels	2012
	Human Resources	2012
	Special Education	2015
	Bilingual Education	2015
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004

City	Area	Year
	Food Services	2007
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Facilities	2008
	Finance and Budget	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Stimulus planning	2009
	Human Resources	2009
	Special Education	2018
Fresno		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Special Education	2018
Guilford County		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
	Transportation	2017
Hillsborough County		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
	Special Education	2012
	Transportation	2015
Houston		
	Facilities Operations	2010
	Capitol Program	2010
	Information Technology	2011
	Procurement	2011
Indianapolis		
	Transportation	2007
	Information Technology	2010
	Finance and Budget	2013
Jackson (MS)		
	Bond Referendum	2006
	Communications	2009
	Curriculum and Instruction	2017
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006
	Facilities operations	2015
	Budget and finance	2015

City	Area	Year
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Program Implementation	2007
	Stimulus Planning	2009
	Human Resources	2016
	Transportation	2016
	Finance	2016
	Facilities	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
Little Rock		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2010
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
Louisville		
	Business Services	2005
	Management Information	2005
	Staffing Levels	2009
Memphis		
	Organizational Structure	2018
	Information Technology	2007
Miami-Dade County		
	Special Education	2015
	Food Services	2016
	Procurement	2016
Milwaukee		
	Construction Management	2003
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Maintenance & Operations	2009
	Capital Projects	2009
Milwaukee		
	Information Technology	2013
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
Milwaukee		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Alternative Education	2007

City	Area	Year
	Human Resources	2009
	Human Resources	2013
	Information Technology	2013
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Transportation	2016
	Organizational Structure	2016
Nashville		
	Food Service	2010
	Bilingual Education	2014
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Food Service	2008
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
New York City		
	Special Education	2008
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Transportation	2018
	Finance	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Oakland	Special Education	2017
Omaha		
	Buildings and Grounds Operations	2015
	Transportation	2016
Orange County		
	Information Technology	2010
Palm Beach County		
	Transportation	2015
	Safety & Security	2018
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003

City	Area	Year
	Human Resources	2004
	Budget	2008
	Human Resource	2009
	Special Education	2009
	Transportation	2014
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
	Special Education	2009
	Organizational Structure	2016
	Business Services and Finance	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
	Research	2016
	Human Resources	2018
	Information Technology	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Portland		
	Finance and Budget	2010
	Procurement	2010
	Operations	2010
Prince George's County		
	Transportation	2012
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Human Resources	2007
	Special Education	2011
	Bilingual Education	2011
Puerto Rico		
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2017
Reno		
	Facilities Management	2013
	Food Services	2013
	Purchasing	2013
	School Police	2013
	Transportation	2013
	Information Technology	2013
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Human Resources	2014

City	Area	Year
	Financial Operations	2018
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
	Special Education	2008
Sacramento		
	Special Education	2016
San Antonio		
	Facilities Operations	2017
	IT Operations	2017
	Transportation	2017
	Food Services	2017
	Human Resource	2018
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
St. Paul		
	Special Education	2011
	Transportation	2011
	Organizational Structure	2017
Seattle		
	Human Resources	2008
	Budget and Finance	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Bilingual Education	2008
	Transportation	2008
	Capital Projects	2008
	Maintenance and Operations	2008
	Procurement	2008
	Food Services	2008
	Capital Projects	2013
Stockton	Special Education	2019
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005

City	Area	Year
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Common Core Implementation	2011
Wichita		
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2017

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# East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools



## Special Education Strategic Support Team Overview

Ray Hart

November 17, 2022



# Agenda

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- **Overview**
- **Special Education Observations**
- **Recommendations**
- **Questions and Answers**

# Observations

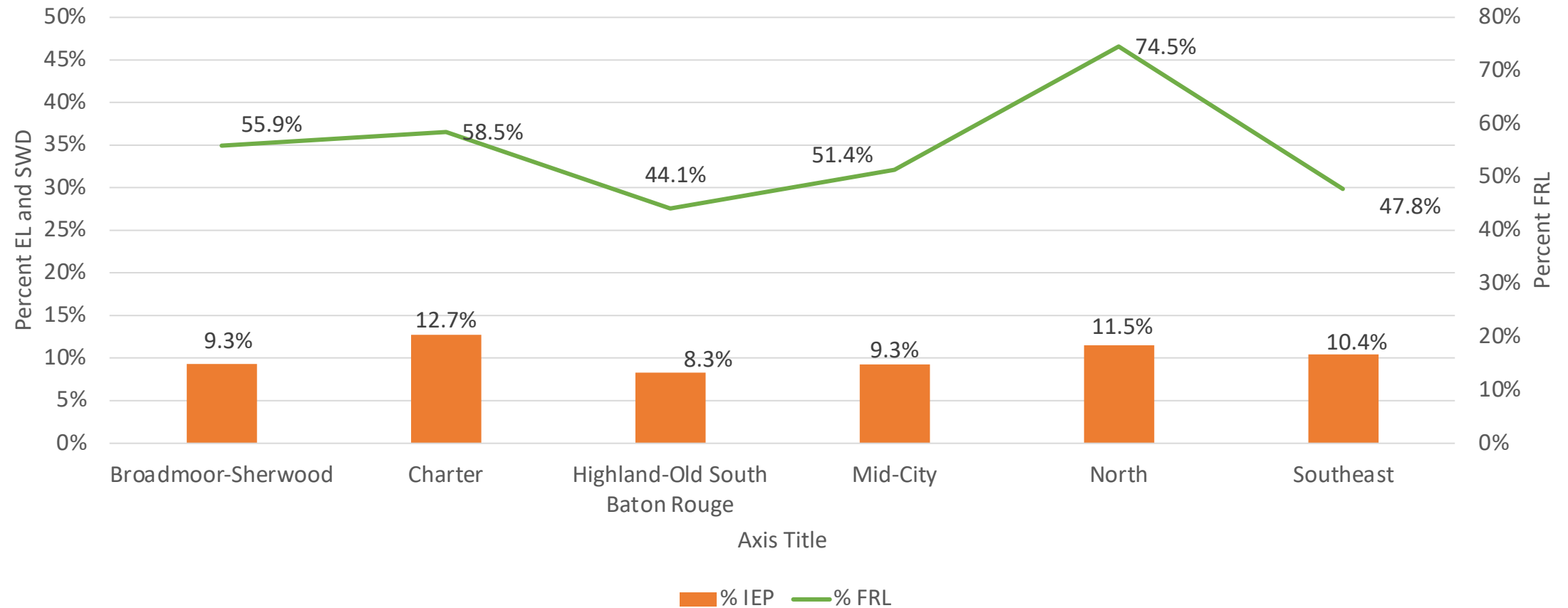
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- Stronger Support to Schools
  - New Office of Student Supports
    - MTSS/SEL
    - Counseling
    - ICARE
    - 504
    - TASC
    - CWA/Hearings
    - Health services
  - New Chief of Literacy/East Baton Rouge Literacy Blueprint
  - Focus on Classroom (Tier I) Instruction
  - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Mathematics Grant
-

# Percentage of Students by Region



Percent EL, IEP and FRL Students by Region  
2020-21



# Special Education Key Findings

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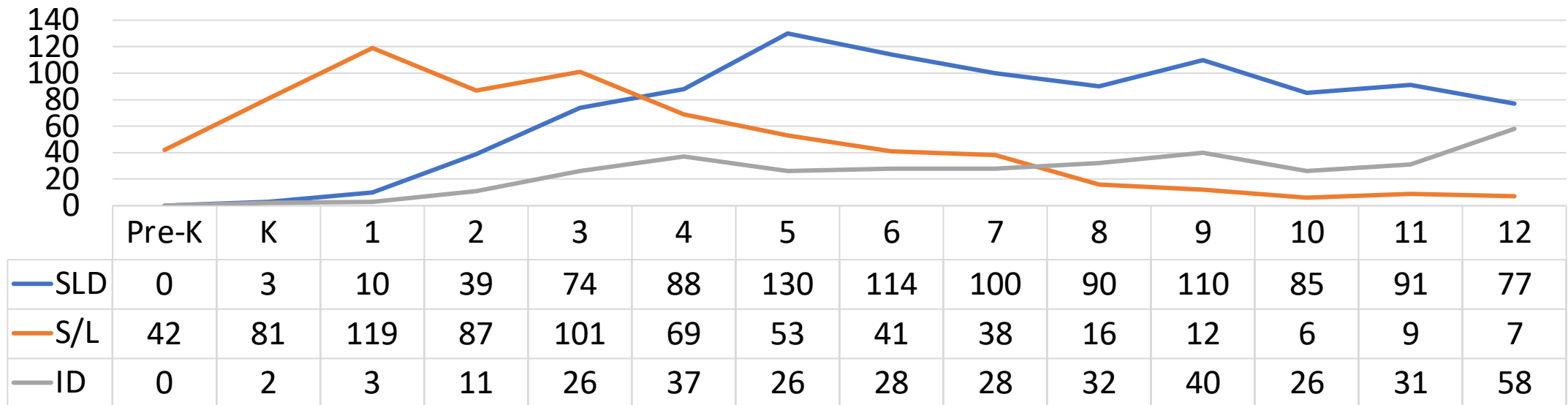
- Relatively small percentage of students with IEPs compared to the state and nation
  - 10.0 percent, 12.5 percent, and 14.4 percent, respectively.
- The district's planned use of a single student support team (SST) reflects a significant change from the past, which involved multiple teams meeting to address student concerns through PBIS, SEL, instructional, school-based level committee, etc.

# Special Education Key Findings



## Change in Numbers of Students with SLD, S/L, and ID by Grade

- Could students eligible for specially designed instruction for specific learning disability (SLD) or intellectual disability (ID), typically for reading, be identified at earlier grades to address their learning needs?
- Are students with identified with a speech/language impairment in need of language services in early grades rather than disability services associated with academic support?



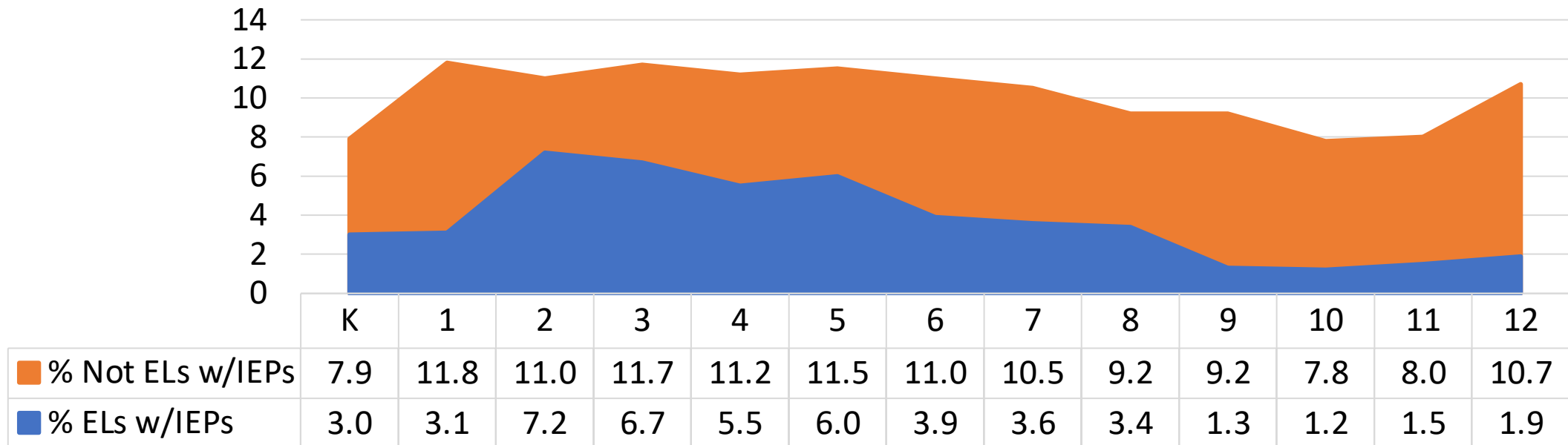
# Special Education Key Findings



## ELs and Not ELs with IEPs by Grade

The ESS Handbook at page 115-116 includes an excellent section for the assessment and evaluation of English learners. The section states –

When identifying ELs with a disability, it is critical to determine whether the difficulties are due to the normative process of second language acquisition, are due to multicultural differences, or are due to a disability.

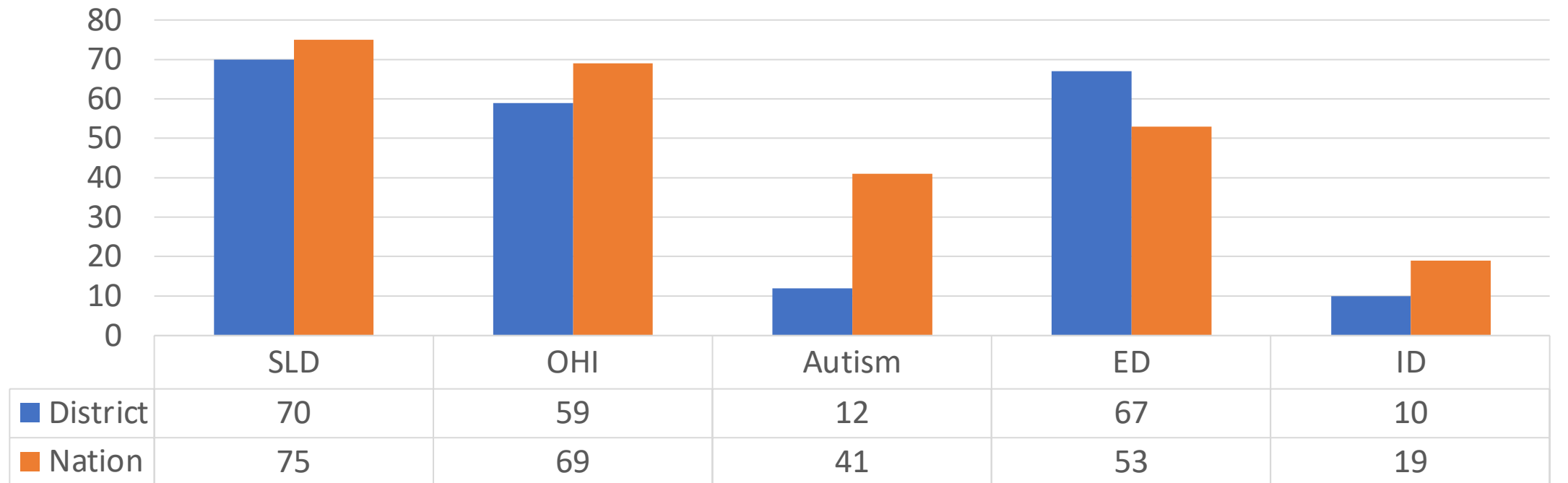


# Special Education Key Findings



## District and Nation: At Least 80 Percent of Day in General Education

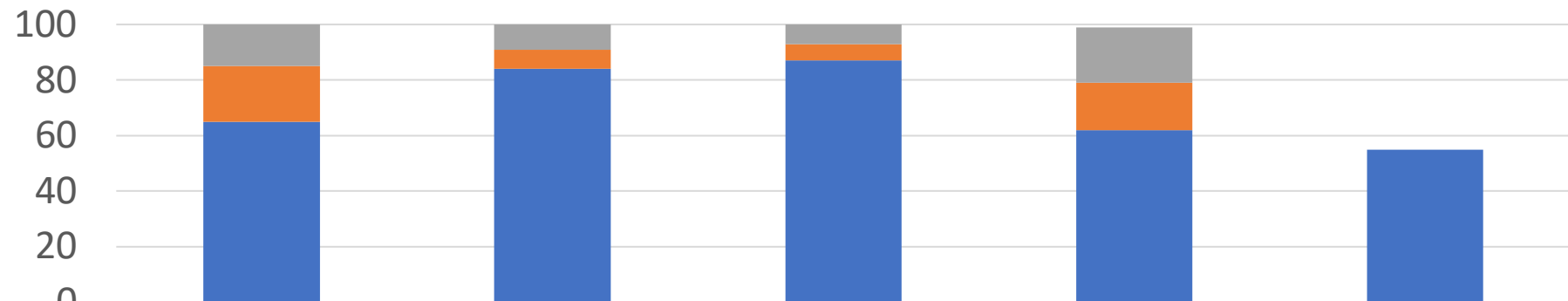
District rates are lower than national rates for: SLD (70 percent, lower by 5 percentage points); OHI (59 percent, lower by 10 percentage points); autism (12 percent, lower by 29 percentage points); and ID (10 percent, lower by 9 percentage points).



# Special Education Key Findings

## General Education Environment Percentages by Race/Ethnicity

**80% or More of Day.** Rates are highest for Asian (87 percent) and white (84 percent) students, than those for black (65 percent), Hispanic (62 percent), and Pacific Islander (55 percent) students. Using a risk ratio, black students are 2.37 times more likely to be educated in general education 40-79 percent of the day.



	Black	White	Asian	Hispanic	Pacific Islander
Under 40% of Day	15	9	7	20	
40 - 79% of Day	20	7	6	17	
80% or More of Day	65	84	87	62	55

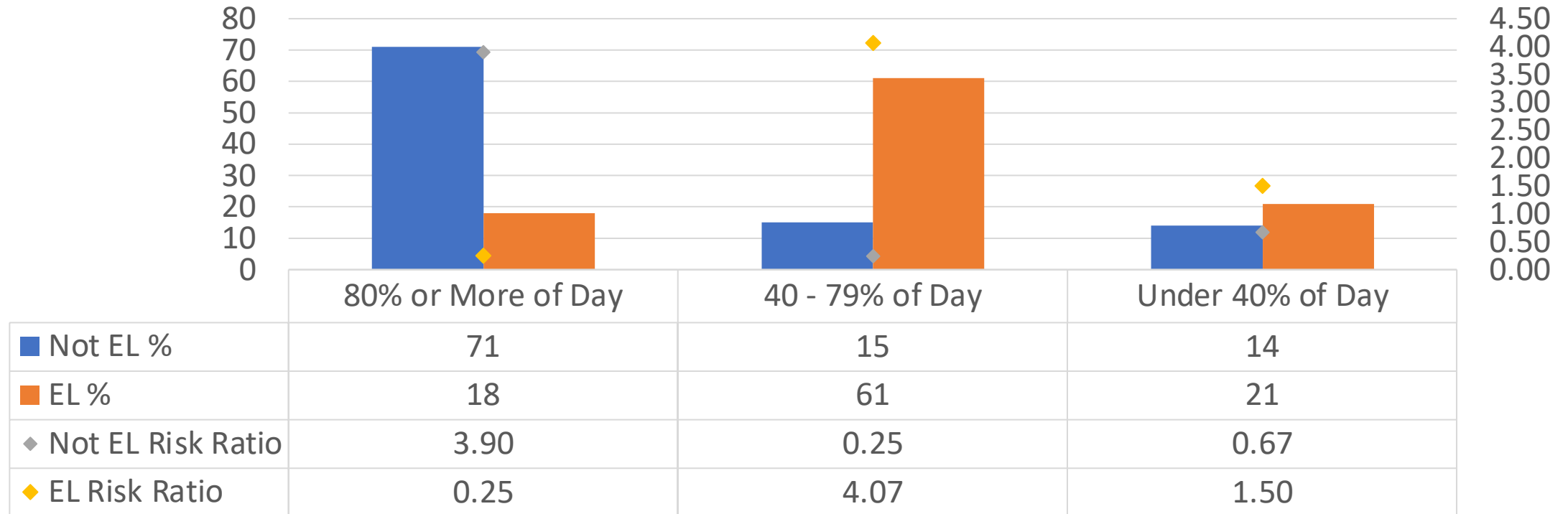


# Special Education Key Findings



## Educational Environments by English Learner Status

**40-79% or More of Day.** This environment comprises 71 percent of EL and 15 percent non-EL students, with ELs being much more likely (4.07) to have this placement.



# Special Education Recommendations



**Systemwide MTSS Framework, Implementation Plan, and Oversight.** Establish MTSS as the districtwide framework within which all work designed to improve student achievement and positive behavior/social emotional learning exists. The Council team recognizes that various aspects of these recommendations have begun.

- **District MTSS Leadership Team**
- **School-Based Leadership Teams**
- **Comprehensive MTSS Guidance**
- **Implementation Plan**
- **Map Resources and Analyze Gaps**
- **Literacy Plan**
- **Professional Learning**
- **Data Analysis and Reports**
- **Monitoring and Accountability**

# Special Education Recommendations

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1. Systemwide MTSS Framework, Implementation Plan, and Oversight.
2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility.
3. Achievement Outcomes, Suspension, Absenteeism, and Educational Environments.
4. Promoting Achievement and Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities. Interoffice Collaboration.
5. Interoffice Collaboration.

# Special Education Recommendations

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**6. ESS and Organization.**

**7. School-Based ESS Personnel.**

**8. Compliance Support and Access to Information.**

- ESS Procedural Handbook
- ESS Pupil Appraisal Handbook
- Section 504 Handbook
- ESS Department website

**9. Fiscal Considerations.**

**10. Shared Accountability for Student Achievement.**

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# Questions and Answers