



SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item 9.1

Meeting Date: September 20, 2018

Subject: Special Education Audit Update

- ☒ Information Item Only
- ☐ Approval on Consent Agenda
- ☐ Conference (for discussion only)
- ☐ Conference/First Reading (Action Anticipated: _____)
- ☐ Conference/Action
- ☐ Action
- ☐ Public Hearing

Division: Academic Office/Special Education Department

Recommendation: To provide an update on progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Council of Great City Schools' Special Education Audit from May 2017.

Background/Rationale: The district engaged the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) to conduct an Audit of the Special Education services provided to students during the 2016-2017 school year. The CGCS presented its finding at a public Board Meeting in May, 2017. The report made ten broad recommendations for the district to consider for implementation. The purpose of this presentation is to provide a status report on the implementation activities that have taken place to date.

Financial Considerations: None

LCAP Goal(s): College, Career and Life Ready Graduates; Family and Community Empowerment

Documents Attached:
None

Estimated Time of Presentation: 20 minutes

Submitted by: Dr. Iris Taylor, Chief Academic Officer
Becky Bryant, Director,
Special Education Department/SELPA

Approved by: Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent

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I. Overview/History of Department or Program:

In SCUSD our goal is to provide quality instructional and support services to students with disabilities and their families so students graduate college, career, and life ready with an array of post-secondary options. To this end, in the fall of 2016, the district engaged the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) to review its special education structure, staffing, practices and services. The report, released May 2, 2017, provided a comprehensive review and recommendations not only for the special education department specifically, but opportunities for improvement across the system. These recommendations were presented to the Board and staff presented an update in June 2017. In addition, a Board presentation was delivered in May, 2018 with further details regarding the implementation of the audit recommendations. This document outlines a further accounting of actions taken by the district during the summer of 2018 to improve the services provided to students with disabilities and their families.

II. Driving Governance:

SCUSD's Equity, Access, and Social Justice Guiding Principle calls for all students to be given an equal opportunity to graduate with the greatest number of postsecondary choices from the widest array of options. To ensure that this guiding principle is true for students with special needs, a systemic approach is required that includes a supportive learning environment for students and families and well thought out instruction with accommodations for their unique learning needs.

Students eligible for special education services are protected by a comprehensive set of federal and state laws. These laws set the foundations for the provision of special education services by a Local Educational Agency (LEA). 34 CFR§ 300.101 states, "A free and appropriate public education must be available to all children residing in the State between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive, including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school." California is organized into Special Education Local Plan Areas to provide a full continuum of services to eligible students with special needs. SCUSD is a single district SELPA. In addition, SCUSD must actively and systematically seek out all students with special needs, from birth to 21 years of age (EC 56300 and EC 56301).

III. Budget:

The budget that supports special education services is derived from multiple sources of federal, state and district funds. Realizing that the average cost to educate a student with an IEP is at least two times the cost of educating a student without special needs, the district contributes a significant amount of funds towards the delivery of services and transportation for the students. The 2018-2019 budget for special education is as follows:

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2018-2019 Annual Budget Plan Revenue	
AB602 (State funds based on district's ADA)	\$ 25,559,895
IDEA (Federal Funds)	\$ 8,247,400
Special Education Transportation	\$ 3,265,457
Other grants, entitlements and general funds i.e., Educational Related Mental Health, Workability, Department of Rehabilitation (TPP), State and Federal Preschool, Alternative Dispute Resolution	\$ 73,590,731
Funds received to provide special education services	\$110,553,483

*Note: students receiving special education services in special day classes generate ADA which is listed as part of the district's general fund contribution under LCFF

IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures:

To continuously improve upon the services provided, the special education department has developed indicators within the district's Performance and Targeted Action Index (PTAI) that will be used to assess and monitor progress. The progress and academic performance of students will be measured and monitored by analyzing annual indicators including performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and the California Alternative Assessment (CAA).

Additional indicators to monitor progress on a more frequent basis have been developed. At the elementary, middle, and high school segments, five sub elements will be monitored specific to students receiving special education services. The elementary and middle school elements are:

- Grade Level On-Track Readiness - tell us which students are meeting grade level readiness criteria.
- Grade Level Status Growth - tells us which students are making growth towards meeting grade level criteria
- Suspension Rate - tell us the rate that students are being suspended (in and out of school)
- Percent of Time in Least Restrictive Environment - tell us how much time students are spending in less restrictive environments
- EIIS Red Zone Rate - provides an early warning or indication of students who are struggling in academics, behavior, and attendance

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The high school sub elements are:

- Graduation Rate On-Track Status - tell us which students are on track to graduate criteria.
- Grade Level Status Growth - tells us which students are making growth towards meeting grade level criteria
- A-G On-Track Status Grades 9-12 - tell us which students are on track to meet A-G requirements
- 5th Year Graduation Rate
- Percent of Time in Least Restrictive Environment - tell us how much time students are spending in less restrictive environments

The Special Education Operations sub elements are:

- Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education - tells us how many students are receiving special education services
- Disproportionately Identified as Emotional Disturbance -tells us how many students are being over identified as having an Emotional Disturbance
- Social Emotional Well Being - Students receiving special education reporting a bullying incident and have a developed safety plan with no recurrence of reports of bullying
- Percentage of IEPs that are Currently Late - overdue by one or more days of legal timeline
- Students Attending School of Residence or School of Choice - Students are able to attend school of residence or school of choice and services are available there to provide for their individualized learning needs

These indicators, as well additional related indicators will provide real time data for District and school site staff to monitor frequently and will inform instructional and organizational shifts needed to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities.

V. Major Initiatives:

The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) review report includes ten key recommendations and provides related actions for the district to consider. The district utilized a Theory of Action framework to assess existing practices and policies related to each recommendation and develop draft plans. Using the Theory of Action allowed each recommendation to be analyzed in a standardized way which includes the following considerations:

1. In understandable terms, what is the question(s) that each sequenced recommendation is asking that we find answer(s) to; what are sample indicators?
2. For each sequenced recommendation, identify applicable board policy(ies), or crafted sample language for the Board to consider adopting (the what of governance);

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3. For each sequenced recommendation, explain whether we are currently able to record *and* access information to answer the question;
4. If not, explain the conditions or necessary steps we are taking/will take to be able to answer the question (e.g. requires development of a new database to track information, development of a standard work process, professional learning; and
5. Identify case studies to illustrate the challenges we face to answer Step 1 and what we are doing now or planning to do with detailed timelines and milestone completion dates that we will report back to the Board of Education/community

For each recommendation a *Theory of Action* has been drafted. They will be reviewed with stakeholder groups for feedback and prioritization. Below we outline some of the highlights for each of the recommendations including some of the actions that have been taken to date since we last reported progress to the Board in May 2018.

Recommendation 1: Broad system-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Framework and Plan for Implementation and Oversight

- Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIS) developed for implementation in 2018-2019
 - EIS Impact Indicators developed to track student growth in attendance and behavior; and Process Indicators developed for triage assessments, individual mental health counseling, psychoeducational groups and supportive counseling/mentoring
- Team of district leadership, site administrators, and SCTA leaders attended National MTSS conference in Sacramento, July 24-26, 2018
- MTSS Workgroup comprised of district and site administrators convened August, 2018 and is meeting regularly
- Provided professional learning for 1,071 elementary teachers, 312 secondary teachers and site administrators on new ELA/ELD curriculum; professional learning focused on utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to accommodate and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students using technology and success criteria
- Development of Standard Work Process for Student Support Services and School Counseling Referrals; Work processes and database will be utilized by Student Support staff this year
- School Climate/Suspension/ Chronic Absenteeism work team convened in July, 2018 and will continue throughout the school year

Recommendation 2: Special Education Referral, Assessment and Eligibility - Improve consistency and appropriateness of referrals, assessments, and eligibility decisions.

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- Developed tracking system for generation for referrals for special education services with follow-up and notifications via email to team members, site administrators and parents to insure important timelines are met and meetings held on time
- Developed standard work processes for initial referrals, annual IEPs and triennials
- Developed sub elements specific to special education as part of the Performance and Targeted Action Index as noted previously
- Provided professional learning session to all site administrators on August 2, 2018 regarding eligibility, implementation, monitoring and accountability for special education services on their site; ongoing professional learning scheduled at monthly Principals' meetings throughout 2018-2019
- Provided professional learning to School Psychologists on legal requirements of assessments for students who are EL on August 20, 2018
- Provided Professional learning for Language, Speech and Hearing Specialists on assessments for students who are EL scheduled for November 9, 2018
- Professional learning module for all special education and general education teachers developed to build capacity of teachers to understand the requirements of the IEP and its implementation
- Convened Special Education Workgroup comprised of district and site administrators to review and give feedback on plans for implementation of audit recommendations; initially convened in July, 2018 and will continue to meet throughout the year

Recommendation 3: Academic Achievement and Social Emotional Well Being for Students with IEPs - Review and address relevant data pertaining to Academic Achievement and Social/Emotional Well Being for Students with IEPs

- Developed indicators/metrics specific to percent of time spent in general education and students attending their school of residence or school of choice
- Adopted instructional materials aligned with state standards for classrooms serving students with moderate to severe disabilities and accompanying professional learning for teachers for implementation beginning 2018-2019
- Collaborated with Guidance and Counseling Department and Special Education Department in May, 2018 to schedule and hold articulation sessions between 8th grade case managers and 9th grade case managers to discuss needs and class schedules for 18-19 school year
- District replaced its online Credit Recovery platform which provides a greater degree of differentiation for students with disabilities. Progress data is disaggregated and reported for students with disabilities.
- District workgroup established for School Climate/Suspension/Chronic Absenteeism; meetings began in July, 2018 and are ongoing

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- Anti-bullying addressed through various initiatives to build positive school climate; this includes a focus on Social Emotional Learning using evidence-based curriculum and SEL integration into core content areas; Sites use social skills and character building curricula or frameworks such as Leader in Me, Second Step, Stop and Think, Too Good for Violence, etc.; in addition, several sites are engaged in implementing PBIS and Restorative Practices

Recommendation 4: Interoffice Collaboration. *With a representative group of principals, the AASs [Instructional Assistant Superintendents], the deputy superintendent, and the chief academic officer, discuss the optimum configuration for principals to communicate with each other and central office leadership. Follow up based on these discussions.*

- Formed a Special Education workgroup
- Reorganization of principal meeting space for more time to share best practice and communicate with central office staff on operational issues
- Developed feedback process for each Principals' meeting
- Convened process calendar work team to clearly communicate the ongoing calendar deadlines from various departments
- Transactional items to be removed from Instructional Area Superintendents (IAS) and shifted to central office staff
- Reorganized special education staff and other staff aligns with IAS structure; e.g. Special Education Supervisors, Program Specialists, Psychologists, Behavior Intervention Specialists and School Social Workers

Recommendation 5: Special Education and Support Services Organization. *Consider organization proposal to more effectively support students with disabilities as well as all students with respect to social/emotional learning and physical/mental health concerns.*

- Reorganized special education staff and other staff to align with IAS structure; e.g. Special Education Supervisors, Program Specialists, Psychologists, Behavior Intervention Specialists and School Social Workers
- Implemented new ERMHS evaluation process during 2017-2018
- Developed standard work process for assessments for ED and ERMHS referrals, Student Support Services and School Counseling Referrals, and EIIS system and implementation plan
- A School Counselor Framework developed which provide specific criteria and deadlines for Counselors to monitor student on-track graduation using EIIS Indicators, ongoing schedule reviews for adequate placement, parent notification and conferencing for

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grade 10-12 students who are currently credit deficient, and parent notification of students who are off-track in 12th grade to graduate on time; data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education services and EL status

- Professional Learning to Student Support Services staff for new work processes and system shifts delivered in August and September, 2018
- Assigned two Special Education Supervisors to evaluate the continuum of ERMHS services currently being offered, evaluate effectiveness and to develop an implementation plan for needed changes which include services, staffing and resources to do so

Recommendation 6: School-Based Special Education Personnel. *Ensure that personnel who support students with IEPs are employed in sufficient numbers, and are available to meet student needs.*

- Established Recruitment Advisory Committee to staff hard-to-fill positions such as Language, Speech and Hearing Specialists, Occupational Therapists and para-professionals
- Current contract language adopted regarding maximum class size for all special day classes and for Special Education Support Teachers that participate in co-teaching partnerships; ratios for loading classes with students with IEPs and students without IEPs
- Hired two additional Special Education Supervisor positions
- Hired two additional School Psychologist prior to end of 17-18 school year
- Hired one additional Program Specialist for 18-19

Recommendation 7: Compliance Support and Access to Information. *Consider actions to improve compliance and access to student special education records (e.g. procedure manual, SCUSD/SCTA Collective Bargaining Agreement, webpage, dispute resolution, special education records).*

- Appendix D in SCTA Contract dissolved December, 2017 and replaced with updated language
- Procedures for providing substitutes have been formalized to insure attendance at IEP meetings for general and special education teacher
- Developed a CAC Toolkit and distributed to Principals in five languages to assist in promoting the reconstitution of the CAC; initiated a recruitment campaign for each site to recruit at least one parent or family to join the CAC to increase the representation of our different school communities; collaboration with Communication Office to provide regular communication to families of students with disabilities regarding the CAC and its events

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- Provided professional learning to all site principals regarding compliance and requirements of the IEP on August 2, 2018, and continuing monthly throughout the year
- District process calendar developed
- SELPA Policy and Procedures have been rewritten and are undergoing the final stages of revision

Recommendation 8: *Fiscal Considerations. Pursue activities to enhance revenue and shift more funds toward improving instruction at home schools, schools of choice, and SDCs. (Medicaid revenue, transportation, and long-term capacity building).*

- Language, Speech and Hearing Specialists now receive paper logs each month to record their time with students for Medi Cal billing
- New Special Day Classes added for 18-19 to meet contract class size limits for all Special Day Classes; classes were placed on sites to add to the current segment already on site or on a new site if concentration of students living in that area warranted the location

Recommendation 9: *Shared Accountability for Student Achievement. Consider actions that would strengthen the district's shared accountability for student achievement (e.g. state structure, Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), Dashboard, Strategic Plan, Data, SCTA Collective Bargaining Agreement, Professional Learning, and Shared Accountability for Action) Use of data system and Special Education indicators*

- PTAI elements developed with specific sub-elements developed specifically for students with IEPs as described previously
- Principals continue to receive professional learning on the district's continuous improvement framework
- Established Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) workgroup to revise the current process for SPSA development to align plan, budgeting and implementation process with the needs of the school and its students; a Special Education Supervisor is a member of the group to insure that students with disabilities are included in each plan going forward in the new process
- Established Special Education Workgroup of District and site staff in July, 2018 and ongoing throughout the 18-19 school year
- Collective bargaining agreement with teachers dissolved Appendix D and replaced with current and appropriate language that supports all students
- Site Administrators had professional learning on August 2, 2018 on IEPs and compliance to its development and implementation; monthly ongoing agenda items specific to special education at monthly Principals operational meeting
- Online professional learning module developed for all teachers to review requirements for the development and implementation of IEPs

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Recommendation 10: Internal Project Manager. Consider appointing an internal project manager reporting to the Superintendent to support the execution of the district's plan and initiatives, including activities to follow up on the recommendations in this report. Have the project manager report on relevant data, the status of implementation, and barriers to execution that require interdepartmental collaboration, the superintendent's involvement, or the need for any adjustments to the plan.

- The Chief Continuous Improvement and Accountability Officer and Chief Academic Officer directly report to the Superintendent; Chief Officers in the organization oversee all systemic change work within the district; Most of the change work is housed in the Continuous Improvement and Accountability and Academic Offices; these Chiefs will monitor district's plan and initiatives and report progress directly to the Superintendent

VI. Results:

Focusing on the Equity, Access and Social Justice Guiding Principle has provided for solid progress towards the development of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports and organizational and restructuring of certain positions in the central office as recommended in the CGCS' audit. In addition, the comprehensive reviews completed by CDE provided valuable information regarding disproportionality, IEP compliance, comprehensive assessments and delivering services in the least restrictive environment.

VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps:

The district will continue to draw on the recommendations in the CGCS report to make improvements to special education services as well as to other departments within the organization that impact these services. Lessons learned and next steps include:

- There is a need to engage a wider array of stakeholders around the Theory of Actions
- There is a need for greater communication and transparency about the initiatives and work under way to improve the system and their relationship to the CGCSs recommendations
- Cross disciplinary work teams provide multiple perspectives and develop strong relationships to engage in the continuous cycles of improvement
- Regular reporting on the progress and performance of students with disabilities is vital
- Rebuilding the CAC will be a key change agent in the communication and implementation of these plans going forward

Next Steps

- Gather feedback and input about the Theory of Action from the newly established CAC
- Identify key points in the school year to report to the Board on the progress of students with disabilities on the key indicators that have been identified

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- Develop related indicators and a process for gathering data on stakeholder satisfaction with the services of the special education department, including a schedule of communication to families regarding special education updates and the implementation of the audit recommendations
- Continue to refine the communication protocol with Instructional Assistant Superintendents to assist sites in providing quality services to their students with disabilities
- Construct a plan for the development and gradual implementation of Learning Support Centers to return students to their home schools
- Continue to collaborate on culture and climate initiatives on SEL, Bullying prevention, and Restorative Practices