



# SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item 9.3

**Meeting Date:** November 15, 2018

**Subject:** Special Education 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 since the presentation at the September 20, 2018 Board meeting.

**Financial Considerations:** None

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

**Documents Attached:**

1. Executive Summary

**Estimated Time of Presentation:** 15 minutes

**Submitted by:** Dr. Iris Taylor, Chief Academic Officer,

Becky Bryant, Director, Special Education Department/SELPA

**Approved by:** Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent

# Board of Education Executive Summary

## Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



### I. Overview/History of Department or Program

SCUSD commissioned the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to review its special education structure, staffing, practices and services in the fall of 2016 due to a desire to improve upon existing services. The team from the CGCS conducted a comprehensive review and released a report outlining ten recommendations not only for the special education department, but for improvement across various departments within the system to impact the outcomes for students with disabilities. These recommendations were presented to the Board and staff presented an update in June 2017. In addition, Board presentations were delivered in May, 2018 and September, 2018 with further details regarding the implementation of the audit recommendations. This document outlines the additional actions taken by the district since the September, 2018 Board presentation to improve the services provided to students with disabilities and their families.

### II. Driving Governance:

In SCUSD our goal is to provide quality instructional and support services to students with disabilities and their families so students are able to achieve to their potential. This is reflected in SCUSD Equity, Access, and Social Justice Guiding Principle which 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.

In addition, 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:

# Board of Education Executive Summary

## Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



<b>2018-2019 Annual Budget Plan Revenue</b>	
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	\$ 84,379,731
Funds received to provide special education services	\$121,452,483

\*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
- EIS Red Zone Rate - provides an early warning or indication of students who are struggling in academics, behavior, and attendance

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

## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



- 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 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 district utilized a Theory of Action framework to assess existing practices and policies related to each of the ten recommendations and to develop draft plans. Using the Theory of Action allows 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);
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

Below we provide a summary of the actions taken and progress made to date on those recommendations that have been the focus of our work since the previous update in September 2018.

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

## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



The district formed a MTSS work team in August 2018 comprised of a cross functional team of district and site administrators. The work team has met twice monthly to develop the Theory of Action for recommendation one. The team has drafted a set of indicators to be used to monitor and assess the impact of a multi-tiered system of supports on student outcomes. These indicators include the following:

#### Student Outcomes: Academic Interventions

- Grade Level Off Track Status - How many students are receiving a 1/2, D/F and/or failing score at the end of the most recent marking period or assessment?
- Intervention Status - How many students who are academically off track are receiving instructional interventions to meet their learning needs?
- Intervention Growth - How many students who participate in an intervention and make expected progress or growth?
- Intervention Growth Retention - How many students who participate in an intervention continue to make progress/growth in the next grading period?
- Grade Level on Track Status - How many students who received interventions are grade level ready?

#### Student Outcomes: Advanced Learning Interventions

- Achievement Status - How many students who are eligible for GATE or are academically high achieving meet or exceed grade level readiness criteria/assessments?
- Accelerated/Advanced Learning Status - How many students receive accelerated/advanced learning opportunities?
- Growth - How many students who receive accelerated/advanced learning opportunities make progress or growth on grade level readiness criteria or assessments?
- Achievement Gap or Disproportionality - How many students are underrepresented in the category of needing enrichment/advanced learning opportunities?

The team has also reviewed existing Board policy related to Student Study Teams and Acceleration and Retention given that the district does not currently have a specific MTSS policy. CSBA has developed a model policy for Response to Intervention (RtI) and the committee will review and revise it for MTSS.

To gather information on existing site practices related to academic interventions, the MTSS work team has drafted a survey to be administered to all school sites. Similarly, the School Climate and Suspension Work Team has developed a parallel survey to gather information about site practices related to reporting suspensions, approaches to building school climate, and methods for providing behavior related interventions and supports. The target date for administration is before sites leave for winter break.

## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



In addition, the Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIS) developed for implementation in 2018-2019 is currently being deployed in schools that have students support centers. EIS Impact Indicators have been 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

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

The Special Education Department has continued to provide professional learning to all site administrators in the areas of eligibility, implementation of the IEP, monitoring and accountability for special education services on their site. To date learning sessions were provided on August 2 and September 26, 2018 and a session is scheduled each month for the remainder of the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, all central office certificated staff received professional learning on September 21, 2018 on the same topic areas. Finally, all Language, Speech and Hearing Specialists received professional learning on bilingual assessments on November 9, 2018.

The Special Education Work Team comprised of district and site administrators continues meeting monthly to review and give feedback on plans for the implementation of the audit recommendations and to troubleshoot any areas of implementation of specific recommendations as we move through the various action items to systematize our work.

On October 29th, the automated email notification for an Initial assessment 15-day timeline was implemented. After a strong and consistent collaboration with Technology Service, Case Managers, Principals and Parents now receive progress emails at 15 days, 7 days, 1 day and Overdue Notifications throughout the 15-day timeline until the parent either signs the Assessment Plan or rescinds the request for testing in writing. This collaboration with Technology Services and the school sites is also triggering internal data clean-up as an incidental benefit to this new practice. Additional notifications for other steps in the IEP process including 60-day timelines for initial and triennial assessments are planned at the beginning of February.

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*

The District work team for School Climate/Suspension/Chronic Absenteeism continues to meet on a biweekly basis and as described under Recommendation #1 has developed a survey to gather information on site discipline practices and alternatives to suspension which will be distributed to site administrators prior to winter break.

Also, as presented at the last Board Meeting, all reports of bullying are now being entered into the student information system (Infinite Campus) with additional information on how issues were resolved.

## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



This electronic reporting will assist staff to track data on instances of bullying and incidences of repeated bullying after a safety plan has been developed.

Finally, a curriculum review committee has been established in partnership with SCTA to review, pilot and adopt an intensive supplemental curriculum to use in reading intervention for students who are receiving special education resource services and continue to demonstrate difficulty learning to read well despite individualized specialized academic instruction. It is expected that materials will be piloted after winter break with an adoption recommendation to the Board in June, 2019.

*Recommendations 4 & 9: (4) Interoffice Collaboration. With a representative group of principals, the IASs [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. (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*

The monthly professional learning sessions for site principals continue, with a brief break in October, to provide ongoing learning opportunities for administrators to better support and oversee the special education services delivered on their sites. Feedback from participants has been very positive with comments, such as "I'm leaving with a much better understanding of what needs to happen at my site and my responsibility", "Excellent - very clear and helpful" and, "The presentation was highly engaging, clear and enjoyable."

The Special Education management team now has a standing meeting each week with the Chief Academic Officer and Instructional Assistant Superintendents. This meeting format has provided a vehicle for strong collaboration and just in time problem-solving for issues arising at sites such as staffing, student needs, and parent concerns. This also enables both groups to provide consistent messaging to sites regarding special education practices and issues.

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.*

The District continues to have vacancies in several of its classrooms that serves students with Autism. Despite multiple postings, there have not been a sufficient candidate pool to staff these classes and they remain staffed with a substitute. The positions will continue to be posted until filled. To address this need, the District has applied for a state sponsored Local Solutions Grant which, if funded, could provide the District with needed resources to build capacity for recruitment both in and out of state and a



## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



professional learning and support structure using existing staff after the teachers are hired to ensure that they are supported throughout their first year or two of teaching in SCUSD.

*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).*

The District continues to monitor changes to reporting structures at the state level. There are significant changes coming for data reporting for students receiving special education services. The project is being phased in throughout the next year. The system currently used solely for special education data reporting will be merged into the current CALPADS system and additional data collection will be added over time. This conversion will require continued strong collaboration between the Special Education Department and Technology Services.

The Community Advisory Committee has been reconstituted. Meetings were held on September 25 and October 17, 2018. Attendees that applied for membership and attended their second meeting in October were granted membership. There are now 17 new members with additional possible members added as soon as they fulfill the two meeting attendance requirement. Attendance has ranged between 30-40 parents at each meeting. In addition, the group accepted nominations for Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Members-at-Large. Elections are planned for the November 29, 2018 meeting. Once the Executive Committee is elected, the Special Education Department will meet with the group to review current meeting structure, topics and support, and make changes to the current structure as needed.

#### **V. Results:**

The district continues to refine the plans for implementing the CGCS recommendations through a focus on a clear Theory of Action and the Equity, Access and Social Justice Guiding Principle. 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. This change work is comprehensive and will be implemented over time.

#### **VI. 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:

- Building the Theory of Action is an on-going process and as feedback is received, revisions are made.
- Greater communication and transparency about the initiatives and work under way to improve the system and their relationship to the CGCSs recommendations is needed.
- Cross disciplinary work teams provide multiple perspectives and builds stronger working relationships to engage in the continuous cycles of improvement



## Board of Education Executive Summary

### Academic Office/Special Education Department:

Special Education Update

November 15, 2018



- Systems and processes for regular reporting on the progress and performance of students with disabilities is an important first step, however dedicated time for data analysis and progress monitoring is vital
- Rebuilding the CAC has been a positive step to have this group be a key change agent in the communication and implementation of these plans going forward

#### Next Steps

- Continue to gather feedback and input about the Theory of Actions from CAC and other stakeholders
- Establish consistent periods for staff to review and analyze data to inform improvements
- 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
- 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 Centers to return students to their home schools
- Continue to collaborate on culture and climate initiatives on SEL, Bullying prevention, and Restorative Practices.