SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item: <u>9.3</u>

<u>Meeting Date</u>: April 4, 2019

<u>Subject</u>: Special Education Update

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

<u>Division/Department</u>: Academic Office/Special Education Department

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

<u>Background/Rationale</u>: 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 November 15, 2019 Board meeting.

<u>Financial Considerations</u>: None

<u>LCAP Goal(s)</u>: College and career ready; Family and Community Empowerment

<u>Documents Attached:</u>
1. Executive Summary

Estimated Time of Presentation: 10 minutes

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Approved by: Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent

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I. Overview/History of Department or Program:

An external review of SCUSD special education services was commissioned by the district in the fall of 2016 and was conducted by a team from the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS). The purpose of the review was to assess and provide feedback on the district's special education services, practices, support structures and staffing to inform changes and improvements. Although a special education review was commissioned, the CGCS team conducted a comprehensive review and provided ten recommendations with implications for the entire organization. The report called attention to the fact that the provision of quality special education services is a shared responsibility and is dependent on coherence within the entire system. In response, staff drafted a theory of action to guide implementation of the recommendations in the summer of 2018 and provided updates to the Board on progress in September and November, 2018. This document outlines the additional actions taken by the district since the November, 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 the 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 disabilities, 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:

SCUSD's budget for special education services includes funding from multiple sources including federal, state and district funds. Because 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

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significant amount of LCFF funding towards the delivery of services and transportation for students with disabilities. The 2018-2019 budget for special education is as follows:

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	$ 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:

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). In addition, a significant amount of work has gone into developing a set of local performance indicators within the district's Performance and Targeted Action Index (PTAI). These indicators are used to monitor the progress of students with disabilities in key areas and to continuously assess and improve upon the services provided,

Below are the indicators for the elementary, middle, and high school segments that have been developed to closely monitor the progress of students receiving special education services.

Elementary and Middle School
- 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

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- EIIS 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 – tell us how many students return for a 5th year of high school and graduate with a diploma
- 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 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 November 2018.

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

The MTSS work team continues to meet monthly to develop the district's MTSS implementation plan. The work team is comprised of a cross functional team of district and site administrators. As previously noted the team has reviewed Board policy and drafted a set of performance indicators to be used to monitor and assess the impact of an MTSS on student outcomes. These indicators include the following:

Student Outcomes: Academic Interventions

- Grade Level Off Track Status - How many students are receiving a 1 or 2, D or F and/or failing score at the end of the most recent marking period or assessments? Although the district does not currently have common formative assessments to monitor student progress, once an agreement is reached, these assessments will be used to determine students' specific learning needs and students' learning progress.
- 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?

To gather information on existing site practices related to academic interventions, the MTSS work team drafted and administered a survey to school sites to assess their current practices of providing academic interventions and their infrastructure of support. The findings from the survey reveal that sites are using a variety of curricular resources and programs to provide academic and behavioral interventions; however, these are not documented systematically and are not implemented consistently. Furthermore, in most instances there is not a consistent leadership team structure to monitor implementation and continuously assess impact.

The MTSS work team is currently reviewing best practices from the CA Department of Education and Iowa Department of Education and developing a guidance handbook and standard work processes for schools to develop site-level plans for an academic intervention structure including:
- Processes for reviewing assessment data to identify the types of interventions needed (i.e. Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3)
- Expectations for leadership team structure and leadership team practices
- A bank of evidence and research-based academic intervention programs, curricular resources, and assessments for sites to select from
- A data-base to document interventions
- Data analysis tools and protocols for use with the Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIIS)

The tools will be completed by the end of the school and will be used in 2019-2020 with training for site leaders occurring in August of 2019.

In conjunction, the Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIIS) is currently being used primarily among the 28 sites with Student Support Centers and the Connect Center and the 20 sites focused on Chronic Absenteeism through the *Be Here* Grant. The EIIS is an early warning system that reports on students who are placed at risk in the areas of attendance, behavior and/or course/academic performance. All principals have been trained on the system and we are preparing for system-wide use in 2019-20. EIIS 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 and discipline for students with disabilities on their sites. To date learning sessions were provided on August 2, September 26, November 28 and March 13, 2018; and a session is scheduled each month for the remainder of the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, all certificated staff (special education, related services staff and general education teachers) received professional learning between September, 2018 and February, 2019 on the same topic areas.

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 Services, 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 eithers signs the Assessment Plan or rescinds the request for testing in writing. A closure notice is also sent at the conclusion of this phase of the timeline. This collaboration with Technology Services and the school sites continues to trigger internal data clean-up as an incidental benefit to this new practice. The Notification System was further refined on March 1st to enable data to be collected after a two week cycle to determine patterns of coherence to the system and where additional training and monitoring needs to take place. The next phase in the Notification System is the 60 Day Assessment and Initial IEP meeting which is projected to become operational in the field on May 6th. There will be two other short cycle notifications to

complete the Initial Assessment notification protocol and those are expected to be operational by the end of the school 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*

Academic Achievement

To support academic achievement among students with disabilities, the district has focused its efforts on making progress in the selection and adoption of evidence-based reading intervention materials that are aligned to the CA dyslexia guidelines. A curriculum review committee has been established 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. The team has narrowed the selection to two sets of resources to pilot. Training on the first set of resources is set for April 8, 2019 for teachers participating in the pilot and the pilot will commence immediately after. The pilot for the second set of materials will occur in the fall and materials will be adopted and implemented during the 2019-2020 school year.

The Special Education department will also expand the role of the Inclusive Practices coaches to include coaching in other traditional settings for students with disabilities. This will include coaching around instructional practices, curriculum implementation and effective teaching in Resource and Special Day Class settings for the 2019-2020 school year. A more defined outline of their role will be developed with input from the current coaches and aligned with needs that have been reported by school sites, i.e., classroom management, effective instructional schedules, differentiated grouping of students and providing collaboration and consultation in the general education classroom.

Social Emotional Well Being

The District work team for School Climate/Suspension continues to meet on a biweekly basis and have focused on developing the Theory of Action for the district's school climate and culture initiatives. The team has identified a set of local performance indicators for School Climate and Suspension that sites will use to monitor the impact of the school climate work on student outcomes. These are outlined below:

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School Climate:
- Safety – How many students report that they feel safe on the school climate survey?
- Connectedness and Belonging - How many students report that they feel connected and have a sense of belonging on the school climate survey?
- Attendance – How many students attend school 98% of the time?
- Behavior – How many students are in the EIIS Green zone (no behavior infractions, no suspensions)?
- Growth Towards Grade Level Readiness – How many students who participated in at least one pro-active or positive school climate approach saw improvements in their grades?

Suspensions
- Suspension Rate – How many students have one or more suspension incidences?
- Disproportionality – How many students with one or more suspension incidences are from a disproportionately represented group?
- Appropriate Behavior Intervention – How many students that were suspended received an intervention?
- Suspension Incidents per 100 - How many unique suspension incidents have occurred?
- Growth Towards Positive Behavior and Grade Level Readiness – How many students that have been suspended and received an intervention are making progress towards being grade level ready?

In addition, the work team developed and administered a 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. Data from the survey reveal inconsistent practices for using the student information system to document behavior infractions and suspensions and variation in what infractions sites consider cause for suspension and how they respond.

The work team has also drafted a discipline matrix that outlines expectations for responding to various infractions. The focus is on identifying more positive and restorative responses and alternatives to suspension. The team will also develop a set of reflective questions for site leaders to consider prior to suspending. The matrix will be taken to stakeholders including parent advisory groups, the African American Taskforce, and labor partners for vetting prior to implementation. The work team will also create a handbook to support site level planning in areas similar to those outlined above for MTSS (i.e. leadership team structures, data analysis protocols, responsive practices, implementing school climate initiatives, etc.). This will include explicit guidance on manifestation of determination and effective discipline practices for students with IEPs and those who are disproportionately suspended.

Concurrently, staff continues to support schools with positive school culture and climate initiatives including those implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The SEL training specialists' team has organized their work to focus primarily on sites with the highest number of suspension incidences. They've connected their work to the climate/culture/suspension indicators of Connectedness/Sense of Belonging, and Suspension sub elements in the PTAI. They provide leadership support for principals, coaching and modeling of lessons for individuals and groups of teachers, data analysis with School Climate survey and suspension data, and professional learning for staff. Some of the professional learning topics they have focused on are:

- Collaborating with Expanded Learning and Inclusive Practices coaches
- Community building circles
- Relationship and rapport strategies
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Mindsets and Implicit Bias
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- SEL Curriculum implementation
- SEL/Academic Integration in collaboration with content Training Specialists
- Classroom management through such strategies like calming corners, establishing norms and rituals, and RP Affective statements and language
- Welcoming Strategies and Optimistic Closures
- Training Peer Mentors

As the MTSS System develops, we intend to scale this reading intervention program into the general education program.

Also, as presented at a recent 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. 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.

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)

The monthly professional learning sessions for site principals continues 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. Takeaway comments from the most recent session include, "I learned that we have a number of IEPs that show to be un-affirmed or overdue which I need to follow up with the case manager"; "I learned how to better navigate SEIS"; "Excellent reminders of administrative attendance and importance of following laws/procedures". This professional learning is building the capacity of the site leaders to support and monitor the services on their sites.

The Special Education management team is continuing its 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 venue is also used to analyze data regarding referral and eligibility rates and compliance to IEPs so that each Instructional Assistant Superintendent can support their principals to address these issues and celebrate successes with their teams. Finally, this 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 anticipate vacancies for the 2019-2020 school year due to a local shortage of teachers certified to teach students with moderate to severe disabilities. To address this issue, the District applied for and recently received a state sponsored Local Solutions Grant for $400,000 over four years which will provide the District with needed resources to build capacity for recruitment both in and out of state and a 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 continues to require strong collaboration between the Special Education Department and Technology Services as we together prepare for this shift in practices.

The Community Advisory Committee has been reconstituted. Meetings are held monthly with attendance ranging between 30-40 parents at each meeting. Elections were held in December, 2018 and the CAC now has a standing Executive Committee of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Members-at-Large and Parliamentarian. The SELPA met with the Executive Committee in January to finalize the topics for the meetings for the remainder of the year and to review duties and support from the SELPA.

Finally, a number of parent information resources have been added to the District's Special Education webpage, including a listing of all staff assigned to schools, informational power points that have been presented during staff professional learning and summaries of the Special Education Comprehensive Review 2017-2018 conducted by CDE.

VI. 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.

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:

- Building and implementing the Theory of Action is an ongoing process due to the depth and complexity;
- Site leaders have consistently voiced appreciation for the professional learning that has been delivered to them by the department this school year and highlights the importance of sustained and ongoing professional learning
- Focused attention on greater communication and transparency about the initiatives and progress of the work to improve the system and its relationship to the CGCSs recommendations is critical
- The participation in a number of cross disciplinary work teams have provided multiple perspectives regarding the system overall and established stronger working

relationships to engage in the continuous cycles of improvement across departments
- Systems and processes for regular reporting on the progress and performance of students with disabilities is an important first step, however scheduling dedicated time for data analysis and progress monitoring is vital
- Rebuilding the CAC has been a positive step to have this group become key change agents in the communication and implementation of these plans going forward; members of the group are looking forward to representing the SELPA on May 1st for the SELPA Legislative Action Day with the SELPA Director

Next Steps
- Continue to refine the communication protocol and partnership with Instructional Assistant Superintendents to assist site administrators in ensuring quality services are provided to their students with disabilities and families
- Vet a recently obtained Parent Survey from the State to collect parents' perception of the special education services received by their child, including development of and participation in the IEP, as well as being a full member of a multidisciplinary team making decisions regarding their child's education. This will be administered in June 2019 and annually thereafter.
- Construct a plan for the development and gradual implementation of Learning Centers to return students to their home schools; via the Special Education Workgroup, vet a draft tool of steps elementary sites will take to welcome these centers onto their sites over the next two years (This is scheduled for April 1st at the next scheduled meeting.)
- Develop data review points focused on budget and expenditures to insure that expenditures are monitored monthly for accuracy and cost effectiveness
- 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
- Continue to collaborate on culture and climate initiatives on SEL, Bullying prevention, and Restorative Practices.
- At the request of the CAC Executive Committee, the Department will take the rest of the 2018-2019 school year to share out each draft recommendation and to receive feedback from the group so that needed changes can take place during summer, 2019