Special Education Update & Task Force

Governing Board Study Session
May 4, 2021

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Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
Marge Rehberg
Executive Director of Special Education
SUSD Services

Providing special education services for eligible students age 3 to 21

Special Education Services

- Adapted Physical Education
- Orientation & Mobility
- Behavior Management
- Academic - Social Emotional
- High School Transition
- Hearing Impaired
- Vision Impaired
- Speech-Language Therapy
- Occupational and Physical Therapy
- Preschool Program PANDA
- Nursing
- Assistive Technology
Creation of the Special Education Task Force in 2019
Special Education Task Force Members

**Task Force Members**
Dr. Kim Guerin - Assistant Superintendent
Margaret Rehberg - Executive Director of Special Education
Dorianne Brown - Board Certified Behavior Analysis
Catherine Devers - Coordinator Special Education
Brooke Williams - Principal Laguna
Dr. Dave Priniski - Principal Tonalea
Chris Asmussen - Principal Mohave
Katie Pena - Assistant Principal Saguaro
Jasmin Sylvester - Lead Psychologist
Danette Imafidon - Shine Teacher
Amy Bishop - LRC Chaparral High School
Kellie Thomas - Psychologist
Kim Mills - Principal Desert Canyon Elementary

**Summer Work Group**
Catherine Devers - Coordinator Special Education
Dr. Dave Priniski - Principal Tonalea
Brooke Williams - Principal Laguna
Gayle Myzwinski – SCA Teacher Mohave
Jennifer Kinsey – SCA Teacher Mohave
Tina Albrecht – LRC Teacher Hohokam
Karen Kallis – ALC Teacher Hohokam
Erika Ponesse – General Education Teacher Pima
Amy Palatucci – Principal Coronado

**Process Design Leadership Team:** Chris Asmussen, Kellie Thomas, Amy Bishop, Kim Guerin, Marge Rehberg

**Facilitators:** Paul Cello, Kim Guerin
Vision

Creating a unified understanding of special education, with consistent processes and procedures, dissemination of pertinent information and ongoing professional development, along with a unified commitment to SUSD’s core purpose for students with disabilities adopted and embraced by all stakeholders.

Purpose

The Special Education Task Force is a collaborative team who will join together in a problem-solving capacity. The team will work together to create a common understanding, agreement, and alignment of specific processes and protocols.
Objectives

1. Review the current **Special Education Weekly Meeting (SWM)** process, reaching agreement on current strengths and challenges, needed enhancements or revisions, and a plan to move forward.

2. Review current challenges associated with **student behavior needs** with the goal of enhancing collaborative efforts between stakeholders to support students.

3. Increase **understanding of processes and procedures**, establishing agreed-upon expectations and norms throughout the organization.

4. Examine **inclusion practices**, making recommendations to provide students increased access to grade-level programming and content.

5. Enhance and develop **training and support** for all **staff members**.
SWM – Special Education Weekly Meeting
- Generates recommended strategies & supports
- Ensures compliance
- Guides teams to ensure students’ needs are met

Problem Solving Team
- Core Special Education Leadership Team
- Lead Psychologist
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- School Teams
  - Principals
  - Psychologists
  - Teachers
  - Related Service Providers
  - All staff relevant to student needs
Problem Statement:

1. Lack of common understanding on clear processes and the legal requirements when a team refers a student to SWM in order to seek additional supports or services for a student.

2. Concern around the time it takes for the SWM process to be navigated (i.e. multiple meetings)
Root Cause Analysis

The “Why” behind the problem statement

- Due to conflicting beliefs of timeline/definition of least restrictive environment compliance, staff members are required to continue to collect additional data, which slows the process.
- Some stakeholders believe that SWM is a decision making body that decides placement and services, not a collaborative problem solving committee.
- Many school staff do not attend the SWM meeting where the decision is made so they do not have "buy in" in the decision.
Solutions – Opportunities for Involvement

- SWM leadership member observes student referred to SWM
- SWM meetings in-person AND on Teams, leading to increased participation
Solutions – Communication

- SWM form updated adding more pertinent information
- Change of placement checklist has been updated to ensure communication between sites when moving students to a new site
- SWM notes sent to all team members after meeting to ensure shared understanding of next steps
Solutions – Training

- Presenting at Administrator Academy in July 2021
- Presenting at All Special Education Department meeting in July 2021
- Presenting at School Psychologists Department meetings monthly
Areas of Focus for Future Work

1. Process and Procedures
2. Student Behavior Needs
3. Staff Support/Training
4. Inclusion, Rigor, & Access
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<th>Re-Launching the Effort</th>
<th>Refining Problem Understanding Part 1</th>
<th>Refining Problem Understanding Part 2</th>
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- A shared understanding of work/progress-to-date from 2020 and lessons learned
- Alignment on remaining problem areas to be solved and teams that will work on those areas.
- Agreement on process, timeline, and stakeholder involvement strategies for the next phase of the initiative
- Agreements on communication channels and protocols, with all stakeholders
- Add parents to problem solving groups

- Alignment on a handful of root causes for each problem statement
- A list of assumptions that need to be tested for the identified root causes
- Quantitative and qualitative data gathering plans to test assumptions

- Shared agreement on final root causes of identified problem statements
- Alignment on district, state and federal compliance requirements that need to help shape our recommendations.
<table>
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<th>Building Recommendations</th>
<th>Finalizing Plans</th>
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- Shared understanding of existing best practices outside the district we may want to consider when crafting recommendations.
- A set of initial recommendations for testing with key stakeholders
- Alignment on any changes to recommendations based on internal and external feedback and analysis.

- A list of any potential barriers for implementing our strategies with plans to address those barriers.
- Alignment on a finalized set of recommendations to go to the cabinet for approval.
- Alignment on communication strategy and implementation plan.
- Alignment on key success and accountability measures and continuous improvement/feedback loops.
# Special Education - Shared Success

## Previous Challenges

- **Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE’s)**
  - 2017 - 100 IEE’s
  - No Process for requests for IEE’s
- 2017-17 school psychologist vacancies
- Challenges with compliance, consistent processes, and placement
- Leadership Turnover - 4 Directors in 5 years

## Building Success

- **Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE’s)**
  - 2021 - 4 IEE’s
  - Process created and implemented for IEE’s
- All School Psychologist positions filled
- High school Curriculum Map and course guide for Special Education - all students earn an SUSD diploma
- 2019 Added KABC (Kindergarten Academic Behavior Communication Classroom)
- 2020- Added Model Classroom Initiative to train sped teachers in lab classroom
- Special Education Task Force
- 100% on Public Education Association Determination
To the greatest extent possible, we believe students:

- Should be educated with their non disabled peers
- Immersed in the same rigorous general education curriculum.
- Accommodated in general education classrooms.
- Attend their neighborhood school whenever possible to make friends and socialize with their age appropriate peers.