Memorandum

To: BBRSD School Committee
From: Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of PPS and Sally-Ann Stukuls, Director of Curriculum and Grants, Grades 6-12
Date: 4/9/24
Re: DESE Determination of Need for Special Education Technical Assistance or Intervention 2023-2024 rating

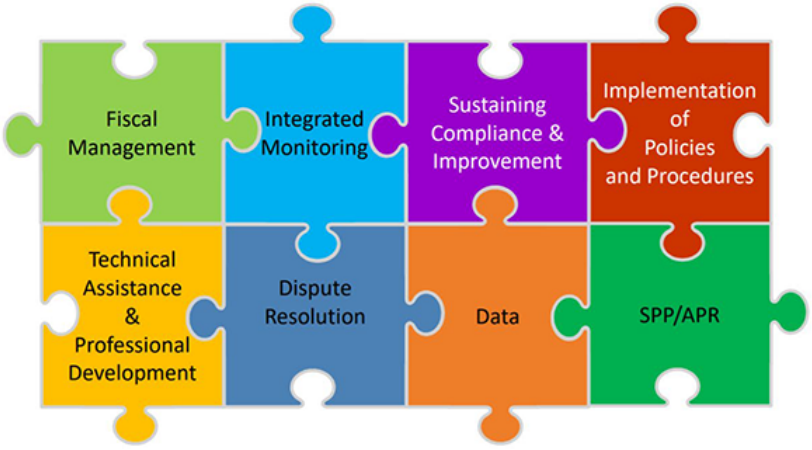
---

Berlin Boylston Regional School District

DESE is required to make annual determinations regarding districts' specific needs regarding performance and compliance data points related to specific federal special education requirements. These requirements are frequently described as "Indicators." Berlin-Boylston's Determination of Need for Special Education Technical Assistance or Intervention 2023-2024 rating is "Needs Intervention." In prior years, the district received "Meets Requirements." The district was ½ a percentage point below the threshold for the higher "Needs Assistance" rating.

Data points included in the calculation range for the determination are 2021-2023. Strengths and weaknesses are identified from this rating.

DESE's model of general supervision is represented by this graphic:



" There are eight components of an effective General Supervision System, shown in the above picture, they are: Fiscal Management, Integrated Monitoring, Sustaining Compliance and Improvement, Implementation of Policies and Procedures, Technical Assistance and Professional Development, Dispute Resolution, Data, and the SPP/APR." **DESE**

The **strengths** of the District's performance and compliance data points are as follows:

1. Low "dropout rate" Indicator 2
2. High 5-year cohort graduation rate Indicator 1
3. Least Restrictive Environment, including preschool-aged children with disabilities, have meaningful access to the general curriculum Indicator 5 Indicator 6
4. Absence of significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions (for greater than 10 days in a school year) of students with IEPs who are members of a specific racial/ethnic group. Indicator 4
5. Children and youth are equitably referred, evaluated, and determined eligible without biases. Indicator 9 Indicator 10
6. Children and youth are appropriately referred, evaluated, and determined eligible for special education in a timely manner. Indicator 11
7. Timeliness of response - Any findings of noncompliance have been corrected in a timely manner

The **weaknesses** of the District's performance and compliance data points and completed and/or planned next steps are as follows:

1. The proficiency rate for children with IEPs who were proficient against grade-level academic achievement standards for the 2022-2023 school year compared to the proficiency rate for all students who were proficient against grade-level academic achievement standards for the 2022-2023 school year. Indicator 3

ELA		Grade 4 BES	Grade 4 BMS	Grade 8	Grade 10
3A	Participation rate for students with IEPS	100	100	100	100
3B	Proficiency rate for students with IEPS	10.00%	50.00%	15.38%	66.67%
	Proficiency rate for students *without* IEPS	61.76%	80.95%	72.13%	91.23%
3C	Proficiency rate for students with IEPs against alternative academic achievement standards	0	0	0	0
3D	Gap in Proficiency	51.76%	30.95%	56.75%	24.56%

Math		Grade 4 BES	Grade 4 BMS	Grade 8	Grade 10
3A	Participation rate for students with IEPS	100	100	100	100
3B	Proficiency rate for students with IEPS	20.00%	25.00%	7.69%	22.00%
	Proficiency rate for students *without* IEPS	79.41%	71.43%	73.77%	78.95%
3C	Proficiency rate for students with IEPs against alternative academic achievement standards	0%	0%	0%	0%
3D	Gap in Proficiency	59.41%	46.43%	66.08%	56.95%

Responses to Indicator 3 Data at Elementary levels

At the elementary level, we continue to develop a phonics program aligned with current research. This includes the implementation of Orton-Gillingham programming for our struggling readers. In elementary classrooms, we are striving to develop the capacity to provide small-group instruction for students around phonics.

One of the identified barriers to student improvement in literacy at the elementary level is the practice of "pulling" students from Tier I instruction to provide Tier III instruction. This practice is an artifact of traditional approaches to scheduling which we will be seeking to address in the upcoming school year. By better organizing pull-out services we hope to be able to enable students to "double-dip" in literacy instruction. Finally, we have begun to investigate adding programming to address fluency issues and to improve student understanding of morphology.

Responses to Indicator 3 Data at Tahanto

We have developed a scheduling committee to look at our current 6 day, 7 period rotating schedule at the middle and high school level. As we are a combined middle/high school with teachers who teach at both levels, particularly for related arts (also known as electives) the schedule can be a difficult item to change. Our intent with the committee was to find more teacher collaboration time so that teachers can meet to discuss interdisciplinary collaboration, content, data collection and analysis, data informed decision making, and other curriculum related topics. Several faculty members at our middle/high school have worked on school-wide goals together with the intent of improving academics for students in the "high-needs" category. These goals are described as, over the next three years, to create and implement a targeted plan to ensure that all students have equitable access to differentiated instruction strategies and assessments tailored to their unique learning needs, styles, and preferences. Teachers will create and implement at least one strategy per quarter to support high-needs students in accessing the curriculum. Action steps include teachers participating in district/school professional development and/or consult with special educators, our ELL teacher, and/or school counselors to understand the needs of students in their classrooms, reviewing MCAS, AIMSweb, WIDA, IXL scores and classroom data to help identify the needs of our students, create and implement at least one target strategy per quarter focused to support the specific learning needs identified in their classrooms and to share practices through a google form distributed by administration each quarter or share during professional development or faculty meetings. Having more time in their day to collaborate on working on the actions steps associated with these goals will help to increase and improve student performance and achievement.

We also plan to add in an "intervention block" for the entire school on a weekly basis to assist students who need tier two support. Our sixth grade middle school team currently runs a "Quest block" daily to pull students for areas of content they are in need of additional support with and this has shown to be beneficial. As a result, we now plan to add a weekly block for the entire school for the same purpose. This will allow students identified as needing more support in ELA, Math, STEM or any subject area to get help with a small teacher to student ratio group and at times one on one.

Additionally, through the scheduling committee, we are looking at models that allow the grade 7 and 8 middle school teams to have back to back core classes so that when on team, they can revise their schedule to fit any team interventions they wish to work on in between weekly intervention blocks.

We created a transitional program, called STAAG, modeled after the BRYTE program and established in the winter of 2022 to help students who have been absent due to chronic illness or school avoidance. The STAAG program, as it is called, permits students to return to school with support available and will continue to run. Students return to school attending STAAG, having the support of a Paraprofessional to serve as a liaison between the student and their teachers and will support the student as they slowly return to their regular schedule to prevent students from feeling overwhelmed upon their return to school. One of our school adjustment counselors is also the program coordinator and supports students in the program from a SEL lens. We recently received a SEL grant to help us fund the consultation services through BRYTE and the coaches DESE has provided us as part of grant monitoring have provided us with professional development opportunities and collaboration to help us in our data collection and analysis of the effectiveness of this program as well as in helping us to inform community members of the importance of this program. This program has helped to improve chronic absenteeism for students who have formally struggled with school avoidance due to chronic anxiety and depression and also helps students returning from extended medical situations to attend school and gradually immerse back into the classroom rather than becoming more overwhelmed due to missed work and subsequently staying home as a coping mechanism. Students who are present for classes are more likely to be successful when taking state assessments merely by being in class for in person instruction and the addition of the STAAG program and intervention blocks will enhance the classroom experiences they are having.

The professional development in our district is now being managed by two individuals rather than the previous one for more collaboration (with principals) on more meaningful and impactful professional development content such as scaffolding, language structure, science, and math in the classrooms across all grades, AI for educators and guidance on the new IEP form as well as explicit instruction, and adapting curriculum based on students' specific learning goals. Some examples of professional development workshops offered were "Meeting All Students' Needs with MTSS, IST and DCAP", " An Introduction to our EL Students", "ELA: prior knowledge and Background", "ELA: vocabulary and comprehension", "Math: Prior Knowledge and Vocabulary", "Differentiated Instruction", "Scaffolding Techniques", "Movement for All Students", and "Language Structure". We are revamping our Professional Development Committee at the middle-high school level to brainstorm ideas for next year and also plan to incorporate more vertical alignment between the elementary and middle/high school core subject departments in the entire district and will be meeting monthly in regards to data analysis, curriculum review, and professional development.

This, along with the recent passing vote through our school committee on next years' school calendar which now includes several half days for increased professional development and the ability to run PD series with follow up and actual practice should help staff to be better prepared and equipped to teach students coming to us with gaps.

We hired an additional assistant principal at our middle high school so that the middle and high school can each be supported by one administrator rather than one administrator sharing both responsibilities. Assistant

principals at Tahanto are responsible for student and staff attendance policies and enforcement. Now, they will have more time to address chronic absenteeism and each assistant principal has more time to meet with teams about data collection, analysis and can assist in informed instructional decision making to improve teaching practices and support those students who are in need.

We will be offering MCAS preparatory classes for math, ELA and STEM this spring after school for any students interested and will make recommendations as to which students will benefit.

Our faculty and Title I staff use assessment programs such as AIMSweb, IXL, WIDA, and individual classroom assessments along with MCAS data to help us additionally inform instruction and make decisions for interventions. Our Title I staff work with students in small groups and one on one to help reinforce literacy comprehension and skills throughout the year. Students are pulled from reading classes to get more individualized attention and help and are assessed regularly for progress monitoring.
Our elementary schools employ a math interventionist and the ideal goal would be to establish the same role at our middle/high school through upcoming grant opportunities. The Director of Curriculum and Grants will also be applying for Title III funds for this upcoming school year. If awarded, these funds will cover the cost of a paraprofessional to assist the EL teacher in her EL classes for additional student support.

Our math, STE and English departments along with our Title I staff are taking the following steps to help students improve their MCAS scores and reduce gaps:

1. Participation in school wide professional development and student goals that focus on ELs and the High Needs groups of students.
2. Use of 5th and 8th grade math and ELA scores to identify weaknesses in foundational knowledge, skills and to help remediate.
3. Through item analysis of previous year MCAS results, identifying standards on which students underperformed and address teaching strategies for these areas.
4. Use of previous MCAS questions to familiarize students with types and formats of questions.
5. Aligning the “Quest”block and the future intervention block with classroom curriculum.
6. Allowing for test corrections or repeats to reinforce content.
7. Practicing test taking and problem solving skills.
8. Supporting students with problem visualization through the use of graphs, pictures and diagrams.
9. Bouncing innovative ideas amongst each other.
10. Including word problems, multi part problems and questions that require more than one answer into regular instruction.
11. Participate in Professional development that encourages student engagement, and targets the home/culture of our students.
12. Create and implement at least one strategy learned from professional development each quarter
13. Sharing successful practices through google forms distributed by administration each quarter or by sharing at faculty meetings and on professional development days.
14. Using project based learning and real world application to help students make connections to and be accountable for their own learning.

At an administrative level, our district is developing a Portrait of a Graduate initiative and has started a Job Shadow and Internship program, all of which open up additional pathways for students that will encourage engagement as it addresses their personal interests and goals for post secondary education. To follow this up, we plan to update our district improvement plan as it is at the end of its current cycle and write a strategic plan to go along with our already existing district improvement plan with the help of consultants to help us create a mission and vision for learning and to help reduce these gaps moving forward.

2. **Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition (Part C to B Transition)**

"Indicator 12 measures the percentage of children referred from Early Intervention who are found eligible for special education services and who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) implemented on their 3rd birthday."

Our data Set consisted of 1 student (1 meeting.) Due to a staff illness, the district needed to reschedule a planned meeting.

This issue was corrected through the following steps:

- ☑ Corrective Action completed
- ☑ Retraining with staff
- ☑ Second data set with 100% compliance

Indicator 13: Secondary Transition

"Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority." Indicator 13

Data set consisted of 40 students. There were technical/compliance errors for 2 students related to:

1. postsecondary goals that are annually updated
2. evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting

This issue was corrected through the following steps:

- ☑ Corrective Action completed
- ☑ Retraining with staff
- ☑ Second data set with 100% compliance

3. **"Identification of noncompliance "** Through a formal complaint system, known as Problem Resolution System (PRS) *single* instances of noncompliance related to the following requirements were identified to impact students receiving special education services:

- Consider steps to assess student's sense of safety following bullying allegation
- Prior written notice of a student's suspension from school
- Scheduling of a disciplinary hearing
- Alternatives to suspension prior to suspension
- Bullying Policy, Prevention and Intervention plan was not updated bi-annually after 2018

These issues have been corrected through the following steps:

- ☑ Corrective Action completed
- ☑ Retraining with staff
- ☑ Adoption of new templates for use in events of discipline/suspension
- ☑ Updated Bullying Policy JICFB in 2022

- A Manifestation Determination Meeting (MDR) was held a day late

This issue was addressed by:

- ☑ Corrective Action completed
- ☑ Providing compensatory services to student
- ☑ Retraining with staff