

Coachella Valley Unified School District



**Special Education
Report
May 31, 2019**

**Dr. William Gillaspie
Educational Strategic
Planning LLC**

Educational Strategic Planning LLC

May 31, 2019

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D. Superintendent

Coachella Valley Unified School District

87-225 Church Street

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Dear Superintendent Gomez:

On December 6, 2018, Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) Board of Trustee's and Educational Strategic Planning (ESP) entered into an agreement for a special education study to perform the following objectives in conducting a comprehensive review of the districts special education delivery system to assure fiscal efficiency and effectiveness.

Scope of Services: Dr. Gillaspie will perform the following study objectives:

- A. Review the district's implementation of Student Success Team (SST), Response to Intervention (RtI), and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and provide recommendations as needed.
- B. Determine whether the district is over identifying students for special education services compared to statewide average, and make recommendations that will reduce over identification, if needed.
- C. Analyze special education teacher staffing ratios, class and caseload size using the statutory requirements for mandated services and statewide guidelines.
- D. Review the efficiency of staffing allocation of special education instructional assistants throughout the school district. Review the procedures for identifying the need for the process for placement and cost efficiencies.
- E. Review the costs of due process, mediations, and settlements for the past three years.
- F. Review the revenues and allocations for Medi-Cal LEA and determine areas for greater efficiencies.

- G. Determine the district's general education fund contribution to special education and make recommendations for greater efficiency.
- H. Review to cost of special education transportation and the process of determining eligibility for students to receive specialized transportation.
- I. Review the cost and placement process for students receiving extended school year services.
- J. Provide an analysis of all staffing and caseloads for related service providers: speech therapists, psychologists, occupational/physical therapists, behavior specialists, adaptive physical education teachers, credentialed nurses and others. Review how these services are related to contracted services.
- K. If requested, will provide additional support to assist the district in developing a 1-3 year action plan, based on the findings and recommendations of the special education report. The action plan should be developed with input from district stakeholders. The Action Plan will serve as a road map for the district in developing special education systems, policies, procedures that assure a legal, fiscally compliance, and programmatic sound special education delivery system. It will serve as an accountably document to measure progress being made in development of a best practice special education delivery system. The Action Plan will include, but not be limited, to the following:
 - Reflect, goals (recommendations from the report)
 - Tasks to be completed to meet the goals
 - Identify who is responsible for implementation
 - Status of outcomes
 - Progress made on implementation of meeting goals and completion of tasks
 - Evidence of accomplishment
 - Timelines to accomplish tasks
- L. If requested and if necessary, will provide a sample of an updated and current procedural operational special education manual that will include, but not be limited to:
 1. Include federal and state laws that are written into special education procedures and policies
 2. Implementation district wide in developing a cohesive and comprehensive special education delivery system
 3. Assures district special education practices are legally compliant and meets staff, students and parent's needs
 4. The manual is designed for use by general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, parents, service providers, professionals, and others involved in the identification,

evaluation, and education of students with disabilities in the Coachella Valley USD. In addition, procedural manuals defining roles, responsibilities, for school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, transportation, OT/PT/APE, instructional assistants, one on one assistants, and educationally related mental health services (ERMHS) handbooks, are available, if requested, and if necessary.

M. Review services provided to Charter School Nova, to determine, whether services are effective, efficient, cost appropriate, and make recommendations, to improve services, if necessary.

N. Review organizational structure of the department of special education (added scope)

This report contains findings and recommendations based on review of district data, staff interviews and reviewing education code and industry-based standards. Fieldwork was conducted on site during the week of February 12-15, 2019. Several weeks following field work as ESP continued to develop the draft report, collect and analyze data.

The report received input from the district staff and was reviewed for accuracy and content throughout the month of March and the first week of April 2019. The findings and recommendations are only suggestions for improvement based on Education Code statutory requirements, district staff interviews, review of district data, and industry best practice standards; they do not have any legal binding authority.

I appreciated the opportunity to serve Coachella Valley Unified School District and I extend thanks to all the staff for their cooperation and assistance during fieldwork.

I hope the results of the report will be beneficial to all concerned.

Sincerely

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Forward - About Educational Strategic Planning LLC

Dr. William Gillaspie
Independent Consultant
Educational Strategic Planning LLC

Educational Strategic Planning LLC is owned and operated by William P. Gillaspie, E.D. It is designed to provide technical assistance and support to school districts throughout California in organizational leadership, field operations, special education, fiscal management, governance and professional development.

With over 30 years of experience in public education, Dr. Gillaspie has vast expertise in educational leadership in California as a county superintendent, assistant county superintendent, assistant superintendent of educational services, director of special education, high school teacher, school psychologist, and deputy administrative officer for Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) from 2002 to 2016. Presently consulting in school districts throughout California through his company, Educational Strategic Planning, LLC.

Dr. Gillaspie has taught at all college levels: community college, state universities and universities, as well as a key note speaker throughout California and nationally regarding public education.

Recommendations and/or suggestions from the report are based on district data and staff interviews. This is a management assistance report. In addition to FCMAT, Dr. Gillaspie served as Fresno Pacific University Program Director for Pupil Personnel Services (counseling and school psychology) from 2004-2015.

Background/Degrees/Credentials: Dr. Gillaspie has nearly 35 years' experience in public education. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology with lifetime valid credentials in pupil personnel services from California State University, Humboldt, and a Doctorate of Education in organizational leadership from the University of San Francisco

California Credentials

- Lifetime valid Pupil Personnel Services with emphasis in counseling and school Psychology
- Lifetime valid California Standard Secondary Teaching Credential in psychology
- Lifetime valid California Administrative Credential
- Lifetime valid credentials in California Community Colleges with emphasis in teaching psychology and physical education.

Introduction

Background

At the request of the CVUSD, Educational Strategic Planning LLC was contracted to review the efficiency and fiscal status of the districts special education delivery system.

The Coachella Valley Unified School District is a public-school district in Riverside County, California, United States, with headquarters in Thermal. The District serves a 1,250-square-mile area, including the city of Coachella, a portion of Indio, south of Avenues 48 or 49, and Salton City in Imperial County.

This is the perfect start for a program review. The Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and Director of Special Education, with leadership provided by the District Superintendent, intend to develop an administrative organizational plan, ensure fiscal accountability and strengthen the special educational delivery model between board, superintendent, staff, and community.

The Director of Special Education is newly hired, September 2018. The Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services celebrates her first-year anniversary employed within the district. Both the Chief Business Office and Human Resource Assistant Superintendents are within two years, as well as the District Superintendent.

The district administration has inherited an educational system that is on the verge of fiscal crisis. The declining student enrollments and continued cost increase of employee benefits and fixed charges are major factors contributing to fiscal instability. The newly hired administration and board of trustees are working with staff and community to develop a strategic plan to become fiscal solvent and meet All student's needs. The administration and board are commended for working toward building transparency and trust within the educational community.

Staff noted the District Superintendent is visible, visits school sites and is working toward developing a culture where staff have a voice and allowed to participate with the administration on how best to serve the district. The district administration is transparent and open to listening to staff and community on how best to serve All students. The new administrative leadership brings experience, knowledge, educational expertise, and commitment to Coachella Valley that will benefit all concerned.

The administrative leadership team has inherited a special education delivery system that lacks policies, procedures, systems, transparency and communication throughout the district. There are excellent staff in the district working to meet All student's needs. The staff throughout interview expressed a need for the special education department to set a vision, mission and systems in place that would provide for a cohesive district wide special education delivery system.

Throughout the interview process the staff were passionate, professional, and expressed commitment to serving all students. The Special Education Department is committed to making necessary changes to be efficient and effective in the providing the special education delivery system. The staff reported they are proud to work for the district and committed to providing the best services to all students.

It is imperative for stakeholders to understand the status of the district's fiscal Special Education Program and make certain that policies, procedures and systems ensure legal compliance and meaningful education for all students. In addition, the district should continue reviewing budget development and monitoring and determine appropriate educational options for students who are below academic grade level before placement in special education.

The district has a Chief Business Official (CBO) who is working to develop interdepartmental relationships regarding understanding budget development, monitoring and fiscal responsibility. The CBO is developing support resources; such as but not limited to the following: utilizing the Riverside County Office of Education Business Office for assistance.

Through the outstanding leadership of the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, the district should continue its commitment to providing a coherent system of education for all children. Within a coherent system, students who struggle to compute or read will receive specialized help as soon as they need it in general education. These children's difficulties are identified in preschool or earlier. For years, research has shown for years that with appropriate support, children with early signs of learning problems can catch up with their peers by the time they enter kindergarten. Within a coherent system, transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and elementary school teachers should have readily available evidence-based academic and behavioral instructional strategies and interventions for targeting specific needs. The child who continues to struggle receives more intense levels of support.

The district is recognizing the need to improve early intervention through a system wide approach of MTSS and early intervention models in the district. The newly hired Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services is moving the district in formation of a MTSS.

It should be noted that the development and implementation of MTSS, RtI and Student Study Teams, are the primary responsibilities of general education, not special education. The CVUSD Special Education Department has outstanding staff that can be available for general education staff in supporting intervention programs. However, it is recognized, the rate of identification of special education students, is a reflection of inconsistent intervention models in the district; therefore, general education teachers, find special education placement as their best option for support of students.

The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support is meant to improve education outcomes for All students. It focuses on prevention and on early identification of students who may benefit from instructional interventions that remove barriers to learning or who might benefit from acceleration. It is intended to include all students. With the increasing percentage of students being identified for special education services, it is evident the district needs to develop a district wide system of MTSS developed by a taskforce of stakeholders. Without this system in place, general education teachers find special education as a place to provide assistance to students, without the support of intervention in the general education classroom.

With a strong MTSS model, cohesively provided throughout the district, will reduce the identification rate of special education, and keep many students in the least restrictive environment for learning.

Central to a coherent system is the development of a culture of collaboration and coordination between the district and the numerous educational and family service agencies that influence a child's education.

The success of all organizations is based on effective and efficient human and fiscal resources and a balanced budget that reflects transparency, solvency and integrity.

The district has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In addition, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) system is based on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment (Smarter Balance) in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics in grades three through eight and in grade eleven.

Study and Report Guidelines

Dr. Gillaspie visited the district in February 12-15, 2019 to conduct interviews, collect data and review documents. Several days are committed to drafting the report and analyzing the data. This report is the result of those activities. The report is also based on staff interview comments and district data reviewed.

Study Guidelines

1. Orientation Meeting – Dr. Gillaspie conducted an orientation session at the district central office before fieldwork to brief the superintendent, cabinet, and supervisory personnel on the procedures and purpose of the study and schedule of the on-site review.

2. On-site Review – Dr. Gillaspie conducted an on-site review (field work) at the district office as outlined in the scope of study. He worked directly with Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and Special Education Director.
3. Dates of on-site fieldwork were in February 12-15, 2019. During the months of March and April 2019, the district administration reviewed the draft report and provided feedback regarding accuracy of content.
4. A comprehensive interview list/documentation list request was provided to the district at least three weeks before fieldwork.
5. Exit Meeting - Progress Report – Dr. Gillaspie held an exit meeting at the conclusion of the on-site review to inform the superintendent and his administrative cabinet of significant findings and recommendations to that point.
6. Draft Report – Electronic copy of a preliminary draft report has been delivered to the administration within 30 days of completion of fieldwork.
7. Final Report –Electronic copy of the final study report will be delivered to the district following completion of the draft review by the district.

Executive Summary

Most special education students come from the general education setting. Identification of special needs students is influenced by a district’s implementation of general education supports such as student study teams (SSTs), Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²), and a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Although there is some evidence of intervention support, the district is not implementing a systemic approach to support RtI². Implementing a comprehensive RtI² system can ensure all students are supported by defining a process of intervention. The Educational Services Department is aware of the status of MTSS/RtI and working toward providing an implementation plan for the district. This will take time.

School districts throughout the state face a continuing challenge in funding special education as the difference between federal and state funding provided and the costs for essential services continues to increase. **The Coachella Valley Unified School District’s unrestricted general fund contribution is projected to be for special education is 75% of total special education expenditures in 2018-19 school year. The district’s contribution is significantly higher than the statewide average.**

As of February 12, 2019, approximately 2,248 special education students in the district’s Special Education Information System (SEIS) have an IEP. **Of these approximately 380, or 17%, have transportation identified as a necessary related support service in their IEP. This is a high**

identification rate for students receiving transportation as a necessary related service. IEP teams should be trained to appropriately assess the need for student transportation as a necessary related service using a chart known as a “decision tree” for consistency. One reason for this high rate may be the numerous district staff members involved in IEP decision-making. The district should consider consolidating the decision-makers through the IEP process for determining transportation support or recommending that program managers or other administrators attend the IEP when a new special education student enters the district and any time a student transitions between schools (e.g. elementary to middle school and middle school to high school).

The transportation costs, the district is budgeting \$3,300,000 for specialized transportation for special education. The district cost per student is \$8,663 which appears to be within the statewide average cost per child receiving transportation. **If the district could work toward serving about 10% of the population of students with IEP’s through specialized transportation and assure the student’s educational needs are fully meet, it could save about \$1,420,732.**

The district transportation staff struggled in coordinating transportation support for special education students during the start-up of the 2018-19 school year because accurate data for these students was not communicated in a timely manner. The district should improve its internal processes for special education student data required for transportation support through a district committee of stakeholders and district leadership to ensure that the challenges of timely and accurate data for student transportation are resolved.

The district has been declining enrolment the last 5 years, losing about 250 students each year. This amounts to amount 1,000 less students over a 5-year period. During the same time period, the district’s special education student count increased.

All programs within the CVUSD and costs that the unrestricted budget must be evaluated, including those that require a contribution or transfer from the unrestricted general fund, such as special education.

Regarding the special education contribution from the general fund is excessive, and above state-wide averages, the district needs to develop a strategic plan to assure legal compliance and meeting all students required needs, in reducing the contribution.

The district identification of 12.6% is within the Riverside County average. Due to lack of a cohesive and comprehensive MTSS and intervention models in place, staff refer to special education for assistance with a student who is struggling with behavior or academic performance. If the district could move its identification rate from 12.6% to 11.6%, it would reduce the contribution from the general fund about \$3,443,000 million dollars.

Just moving from 12.6% to 11.6% would reduce number of students of about 178 and reduce the contribution about \$3.4 million. This will take time, 2-5 years to move the culture of the district to identifying students with needs and giving them support of interventions in the general education environment, the least restrictive environment.

The District Director of Special Education has inherited a department that lacks a cohesive comprehensive delivery system that has no written procedures, policies, or systems in place directing how services are provided, when or why. Throughout interviews with staff from the district, it was stated that the special education department has a limited vision, mission and no written procedures on how to provide special education through a system. Each school site is left to operate on its own on how to provide services to special education. Many school sites view special education as a district responsibility and not a school site responsibility.

District data also states there maybe 13 students enrolled in the Desert Sands Unified School District Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, at \$38,616 per student would add another \$105,848 bringing the total to \$533,275.

The district contracts with the Riverside County Office of Education to serve 230 students whom they cannot meet their needs in existing programs within the district, at a cost of \$4,700,000. It would be advisable that the district develop a 2-5-year plan to bring back district students and develop defensible programs for students. **If the district can return 100 students over the next 2-3 years, it could bring back about \$2,000,000** to be used to serve district students in the least restrictive environment and be more cost effective.

The district school sites do not take ownership of special education. They view special education as a district function and responsibility. Principals need support and training in recognizing their responsibility and ownership in providing meaningful special education services.

Findings and Recommendations

SST/RtI/MTSS

SST/RtI/MTSS are usually known as primarily as general education responsibilities, with special education providing support and input in developing these systems. Educational Services should take the lead with collaboration, implementation and support from Special Education Department. These programs are separated at the district, causing some lack of continuity and cohesiveness. School sites view SST as a special education function, rather than a general education function, providing support and interventions to the referring general education teacher.

The superintendent's cabinet is be aware of and support efforts to develop district-wide systems and make a district-wide effort to ensure continuity and cohesiveness in creating vision statement, goals and actions to serve all students. The Educational Services Division is developing a MTSS master plan, and committee meetings started during the 2018-19 school year to the work on development of a districtwide system. Their emphasis is on behavior intervention support, and social emotional learning while Educational Services focuses on academic learning interventions. The departments of educational services and special education should work together and co-chair these different functions to develop a cohesive system districtwide. They should not work in isolation from each other.

Student Study Team (SST)

All school sites operate SST differently, and since the district has no cohesive system. The following overview serves as a reminder of the function and purpose of SST. In many cases the districts SST process is used as the gate way for students to get into special education.

The student study team (SST) process is a longstanding and widely-used method that gathers information from teacher's specialists and parents to provide s struggling student with additional educational strategies and interventions. Either a staff member or a parent can make a referral to the program. SST meetings provide an opportunity for all parties to voice concerns and develop a plan. The interventions agreed upon will vary depending on the child's educational needs. The process has proven to be successful if consistently implemented.

When properly employed, these meetings can be effective in mitigating referrals, but more importantly, in designing strategies for parents, teachers, and ancillary school personnel to assist students experiencing difficulty to improve performance. These teams typically include parents, teachers, school administers, counselors and the student (at the middle school level and beyond). The objective is for people to work together across traditional boundaries to identify the students' strengths and assets to build an improvement plan based on the dynamic skills and perspectives of the participants.

The SST should design and implement instructional and behavioral strategies, providing practical support through the involvement of all team members. The SST should offer

consistent follow-up and evaluation, with regularly scheduled meetings, examining prior decisions that build further plans based on accumulated data and analysis.

Under the best conditions, the district SST should function as a strategic service before a formal referral for special education evaluation is considered. The intervention sequence prior to the consideration for possible special education eligibility should follow these steps:

1. The classroom teacher attempts a documented series of unsuccessful interventions.
2. The team designs another set of proposed intervening measures.
3. The student is referred for special education assessment only after documented measures have been consistently implemented and thoroughly evaluated.

The district has no board policies or administrative regulations on SSTs. It lacks a manual that can be used as a reference across the district. During interviews, employees indicated numerous times that ongoing staff development in this area as well as consistent policies and procedures would be helpful.

Recently, the Director of Special Education, in recognizing the absence of an SST process, forms and manual, has placed in Google Doc an SST document. Multiple stakeholder groups were able to review the document and give feedback. This included psychologist, teachers, speech therapist, Behavioral specialist, coordinators and principals. This new process was presented to the principals and will be trained at the school sites at the beginning of the 19/20 school year.

Some district staff stated that sites that do not have strong RtI implementation process have a higher rate of assessment and referrals. Students from these sites who may qualify under specific learning disability (SLD) may not have qualified if they received reading or math interventions. Serving a student with an individualized education program (IEP) is more expensive than using intervention and general education supports. Identifying a student for special education before general education interventions are considered is illegal under IDEA 2004 and not in student's best interest.

Commendation

The district school sites individually offer SST processes. Each school site recognizes the importance of SSTs and assisting students in the general education classroom settings. Although SSTs are conducted at local school sites, there is no process that provides for consistent implementation districtwide. The staff is commended for realizing the important role SST can play in determining interventions for struggling students. The Director of Special Education is attempting during her short period of time in the district to implement and provide guidance to school sites regarding SST.

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Ensure Educational Services takes the lead in developing consistent procedures and policies districtwide for the development and implementation of SSTs.
2. Develop a districtwide SST policy and submit it to the governing board for adoption.
3. Develop administrative regulations for the implementation of SST policy.
4. Revise the recently developed district wide handbook (manual) including policy, procedures and forms that will be distributed districtwide with staff input. The goal is for all school sites to have a consistent manual that is used throughout the district. This should be both electronic as well as paper versions of the manuals.
5. Solicit input from all school site principals (and other district staff stakeholders) in developing districtwide SST process and procedural manual.
6. Once the SST policy and procedural manual is adopted, provide school-site staff with training in the SST model. This should be ongoing throughout the year, at least annually.
7. Provide ongoing training for the staff responsible for chairing SST.
8. Require all general education teachers to utilize the SST model to assist in meeting students' needs prior to referring to special education for assessment.
9. Provide teachers with training to teachers in behavior management prior to SST referral.

Response to intervention and MTSS

The purpose of RtI is to provide an escalation of high-quality, data-driven instruction and behavior support to all students through targeted interventions. An underlying purpose with the approach is early engagement when students first experience learning roadblocks. Educational Services has made efforts to provide training in RtI, and progress monitoring is taking place at school sites. Educational Services has formed a leadership committee to develop a districtwide MTSS to address behavior and social emotional supports. Educational Services is providing leadership through RtI trainings.

Throughout the interview process, it was evident that some staff are unclear on how RtI works, what it is; ongoing training is needed. Some teachers do not use interventions because of a lack of training, and this may be partially because many teachers in both special and general education are new to the district. Some sites utilize RTI as their own discretion since there is no written districtwide system (master plan) for all schools to follow.

IDEA 2004 shifted researched-based interventions from special education to general education, stressing that this method would no longer be limited to special education students, but would now apply to all pupils. The law left it up to each individual state to develop its own guidelines and regulations. RtI2 provides districts with the vehicle to drive educational decisions and measure academic growth. RtI is now referred to as Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI2). The California Department of Education (CDE) is coining the term Response to Intervention (RtI2) to define a general education approach of high-quality instruction and early intervention, prevention, and behavioral strategies. RtI2 offers a way to eliminate the achievement gap through a schoolwide process that provides assistance to every student, both high-achieving and struggling learners. It is a process that utilizes all resources in a school and school and school district in a collaborative manner to create a single, well-integrated system of instruction and interventions informed by student outcome data. RtI2 is fully aligned with the research on the effectiveness of early intervention and the recommendations of the California P-16 Council. Access, culture and climate, expectations, and strategies are the council's themes.”

The knowledge of RtI2 among the staff is extremely inconsistent throughout the district. There is one major reason the district over identifies special education students, increasing the contribution of the general fund to the special education, and overstaffs in special education: No districtwide consistent intervention system is implemented to help students remain in general education with support.

The district has not developed a written master plan establishing a districtwide system of RtI; however, staff interviews indicated the administration is ready to embrace the development of such a plan. Once the master plan has been developed, the superintendent should submit this document to the governing board for their support and adoption. This process should continue into 2019-20 school-year planning. In order for systemic change to occur, this shift must be districtwide and include every staff member in the district.

Most staff have had some training in the RtI model. Some administrators and teachers have participated in workshops or sessions. Staff indicated employees are committed to developing a master plan and implementing RtI, and specific staff members at each site can lead the effort. Some resources and interventions implemented at the school sites would fit appropriately into the RtI model; however, others are not researched-based and do not include data-collection and progress-monitoring components. The district must ensure that it has a system that would assist with the data-collection components of RtI. The district should plan to provide the staff with intensive RtI2 training in 2019-20, once the districtwide process is adopted. The training phase should be clearly outlined in the master plan.

Because of the lack of understanding of staff roles in implementing RtI, the following is an outline for staff developed by the California Department of Education (CDE) regarding their role and responsibilities in providing RTI services.

Definition

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI2) is a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction that benefits every student. California has expanded the notion of RtI2 to

communicate the full spectrum of instruction, from general core to supplemental or intensive, to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students. RtI2 integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education through a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student.

Core Components

A cohesive RtI2 process integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education into a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student. The following core components are critical to the full implementation of a strong RtI2 process:

1. High-quality classroom instruction. Students receive high-quality and culturally relevant standards-based instruction in their classroom setting by highly qualified teachers.
2. Research-based instruction. The instruction that is provided within the classroom is culturally responsive and has been demonstrated to be effective through scientific research.
3. Universal screening. School staff assesses all students to determine students' needs. On the basis of collected data, school staff members determine which students require close progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, additional targeted assessment, a specific research-based intervention, or acceleration.
4. Continuous classroom progress monitoring. The classroom performance of all students is monitored continually within the classroom. In this way, teachers can identify those learners who need more depth and complexity in daily work and those who are not meeting benchmarks or other expected standards and adjust instruction accordingly.
5. Research-based interventions. When monitoring data indicate a student's lack of progress, an appropriate research-based intervention is implemented. The interventions are designed to increase the intensity of the students' instructional experience.
6. Progress monitoring during instruction and interventions. School staff members use progress monitoring data to determine the effectiveness of the acceleration or intervention and make any modifications, as needed. Carefully defined data is collected on a frequent basis to provide a cumulative record of the students' progress, acceleration, and/or response to instruction and intervention.

7. Fidelity of program implementation. Student success in the RtI2 model requires fidelity of implementation in the delivery of content and instructional strategies specific to the learning and/or behavioral needs of the student.
8. Staff development and collaboration. All school staff members are trained in assessments, data analysis, programs, and research-based instructional practices and strategies. Site grade-level or interdisciplinary teams use a collaborative approach to analyze student data and work together in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention process.
9. Parent involvement. The active participation of parents at all stages of the process is essential to improving the educational outcomes of their students. Parents are kept informed of the progress of their students in their native language or other mode of communication, and their input is valued in making appropriate decisions.
10. Specific learning disability determination. The RtI2 approach may be one component of the process for determining a specific learning disability as addressed in the IDEA of 2004 statute and regulations. As part of determining eligibility, the data from the RtI2 process may be used to ensure that a student has received research-based instruction and interventions.

RtI2 is to be used in schools in the following three ways:

1. Prevention. All students are screened to determine their level of performance in relation to grade-level benchmarks, standards, and potential indicators of academic and behavioral difficulties. Rather than wait for students to fail, schools provide research-based instruction within general education.
2. Intervention. Based on frequent progress monitoring, interventions are provided for general education students not progressing at a rate or level of achievement compared with their peers. These students are then selected to receive more intense interventions.
3. Component of specific learning disability (SLD) determination. The RtI2 approach can be one component of SLD determination as addressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 statute and regulations. The data from the RtI2 process may be used to demonstrate that a student has received research-based instruction and interventions as part of the eligibility determination process.

Tier I. Benchmark: Screening and Targeted Instruction

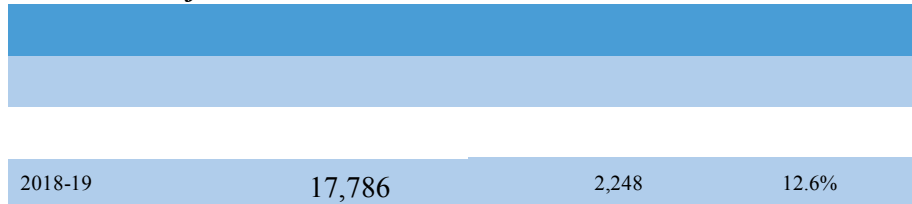
In Tier I, the focus is on a core instructional program that uses a scientifically validated curriculum with all students in the general education classroom. During the course of instruction, the school uses universal screening measures to identify each student’s level of proficiency in key academic areas. The screening data is organized to enable the review of both group and individual performance on critical measures. Instruction is differentiated in response to this data for small groups and individual students. Students who continue to lag behind their peers despite the provision of targeted instruction may receive additional Tier I instruction or may be considered for more intensive interventions at Tier II.

The Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services is an experience leader in curriculum development and understanding of importance of effective instruction and intervention strategies for students who struggle to learn. Her outstanding experience at a previous school district in this area will assist her in providing leadership in this instructional area.

Identification Rate

As shown in the table below, the district is identifying 12.6% of its students as having disabilities, which is s higher than the statewide identification rate of 10.7%. This data excludes infants and preschool age children because the statewide and countywide averages are for students in kindergarten through age 22. However, the district identification is within the average of Riverside County School Districts.

District Identification Rate



Year	Total Students	Students with Disabilities	Identification Rate
2018-19	17,786	2,248	12.6%

Source: Data Quest and Ed-Data.org, CASEMIS **Excludes

infants and preschool age students.

Identification Rate of Students as of December 1, 2018

Some employees reported that school psychologists have not received professional development regarding assessment tools that can help build a defensible report of assessment and identification of disability. Some staff also report that school psychologists and speech and language pathologists have not received professional development regarding the change made to the law in 2013 regarding criteria for autism spectrum disorder (see below). Both of these circumstances can lead to over identification and thus to a variance between needs and the services provided.

The new autism spectrum disorder regulation deletes the phrase “autistic-like behaviors” and adds the phrase “characteristics often associated with autism” (5 CCR 3030(b)(1)). The new

list of three “characteristics often associated with autism” replaces the former seven “autistic-like behaviors” but is very similar:

- (1) Engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements;
- (2) resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines; and
- (3) unusual responses to sensory experiences.

The CDE explained that aligning California’s criteria with federal requirements removes “confusion among educators when state and federal eligibility requirements for determining whether a student has autism are inconsistent” and helps “ensure that students with autism are appropriately identified and receive the appropriate services for their needs.”

Source: <http://adamsesq.com/amended-california-special-education-regulations-in-effect/>

Most districts use a standard assessment report template to help ensure staff can produce a consistent and defensible final report regardless of the assessment team members’ writing abilities and styles. The district lacks such a template. Staff stated they would like to have such a template that is used districtwide.

Properly and accurately assessing a student’s needs allows a district to provide them with the services they need, which benefits both the student and the district.

February 14, 2019 Identification Rates by Disability

Hard of Hearing	30
Deaf	1
Speech or Language Impairment	347 (increase of 100 students from last year)
Visual Impairment	6
Emotional Disturbance	28
Orthopedic Impairment	20
Other Health Impairment	90
Specific Learning Disability	1225 (increase from last year 129 students)
Deaf-Blindness	0
Multiple Disability	4
Autism	256

Source: California Special Education Management Information System (CASEMIS) 12-1-2018; includes preschool

District SEIS 02/14/2019

February 19, 2018 Identification Rate by Disability

District Special Education Information System (SEIS)

Autism	250
Deafness (Deaf)	1
Emotional Disturbance (ED)	30
Hard of Hearing	29
Intellectual Disability (ID)	149
Multiple Disability (MD)	3
Orthopedic Impairment (OI)	22
Other Health Impairment (OH)	89
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	1,173
Speech or Language Impairment	356
Visual Impairment	6

Increases from 2018 to 2019 reflect 100 additional students in Speech or Language and 129 increase in Specific Learning Disability based on data received from the district.

The district places 230 students into RCOE programs. This is considering a high rate of students being placed in County operated programs outside the district. Due to the district having limited continuum of services for All students, the district is required to contract with Riverside COE to provide services to many of their students with disabilities.

Commendations

The district is commended for keeping the identification rate within a county wide average.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider creating a variety of assessments and protocols and making them available to all psychologists to check out and speech & language pathologists should each have their own testing kits.
2. Provide intensive professional development for psychologists and speech and language pathologists in the area of autism.
3. Provide defensible assessment protocols for staff who assess students for speech and language impairments and autism spectrum disorders.
4. Develop a common assessment report template for all staff to use.
5. Rely on professional staff assessments that identify specific disabilities, and do not change the disability determination without justification based on the assessment.
6. Attempt to lower the identification rate by 1% over the next two years and assure your meeting all student's needs.
7. Work on transferring students back to district programs from the RCOE.
8. The district should develop a five-year plan in developing defensible programs that meet all students' needs in the district and reduce the placement of students in RCOE programs.

Special Education Teaching Staffing and Caseloads

The district serves students in grades K-12 with both resource specialist program (RSP) services and special day class (SDC) services for students with mild to moderate disabilities (mild/moderate). District RSP and SDC programs at the secondary level may be modified in service delivery models and student caseloads in keeping with an agreement between the district and the certificated employee bargaining unit.

The intent of the agreement is to help the district move toward more inclusive special education models. The teacher contract also establishes a minimum of one general education teacher and one special education teacher at each of the high schools to collaborate on inclusion. At the secondary level a maximum caseload of 28 students in all special education instructional programs (RSP and SDC) to better support inclusion.

As a result, RSP teachers in the secondary schools have caseloads within the Education Code maximum of 28 students per teacher FTE (E.C. 56362), and SDC teachers have students than the industry standard of 12-15 per FTE for mild/moderate classes.

According to the teachers' contract:

17.2 Special Education classes will be staffed at a ratio of pupils to classroom teachers for each site as follows:

17.2.1	SDC – Mild to Moderate Elementary	15 to 1
17.2.2	SDC – Moderate to Severe Elementary	12 to 1
17.2.3	SDC – Mild to Moderate Secondary	15 to 1
17.2.4	SDC – Moderate to Severe Secondary	12 to 1
17.2.5	Emotionally Disturbed	10 to 1
17.2.6	Life Skills	10 to 1
17.2.7	Autism Mild to Moderate	10 to 1
17.2.8	Autism Moderate to Severe	10 to 1
17.2.9	Special Academic Instruction (SAI) Secondary	15 to 1

17.3 Every reasonable effort will be made to maintain the appropriate number of students safely at each work site. The District and the Association recognize that certain classes will be limited due to the number of work stations provided. The maximum class size shall not exceed the limits stated in section.

17.1 The site administrator and the affected teacher(s) will meet to determine the number of students that can be placed due to the number of work stations in the classroom. If the above parties cannot agree, then the CVTA President and the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services will meet to attempt to resolve the disagreement. The final decision will be made by the Superintendent.

17.4 Classes shall be balanced within two (2) students at each school site based on grade level, subject and program. (For example: Bi-literacy classes will be balanced with other Bi-literacy classes within a grade level, AP English 11 classes will be balanced with other AP English 11 classes, etc.)

The district may want to consider RSP caseload sharing at the elementary level when circumstances permit. This report does not include specific recommendations to reduce RSP teaching staff or increase SDC teaching staff because of the district's decision to modify secondary special education caseloads as it moves toward a full inclusion approach.

The following is a current breakdown on districts program description, number of teachers, number of students and number of paraeducators.

Program	Description	Number of teachers	Number of students	Number of Paraeducators	Number of 1:1
Autism	A variable developmental disorder that appears by age three and is characterized especially by difficulties in forming and maintaining social relationships, by impairment of the ability to	15	121	41	6

	communicate verbally or nonverbally, and by repetitive behavior patterns and restricted interests and activities. Curriculum focuses student accessing multiple environmental modalities to support interaction and increasing social interaction.				
ED	Students identified with aggressive or assaultive behaviors due to the inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual sensory or health factors. Inability to successfully build or maintain relationships. Curriculum focuses on rehabilitating student behavior with intensive behavior and mental health support while focusing on grade level curriculum.	4	39	8	1
Life Skills	Students with a severe disability not able to be on a diploma track for graduation. Curriculum focuses on independent living skills.	14	123	29	3
SDC	Intensive educational program designed for children with special needs	25	249	28	6
RSP	A form of special education that is available to students who have mild to moderate learning disabilities and who are having trouble in one or more areas of classroom learning	26	1127	20	1

Given the variety of service delivery approaches used, the district Special Education Department could benefit from reviewing its secondary special education service delivery models for efficient caseload management and consistency.

The district operates special education preschool 2018-19

Number of SDCs preschool programs	Number of students	Teacher ratio
4	42	1:2

Source: District data and industry standards

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Analyze secondary RSP and SDC service delivery models for efficient caseload management and consistency in light of the inclusion model being implemented.
2. Convene a work group, possibly led by Educational Services and the Special Education Coordinator, to help overcome barriers to mainstreaming preschool students.
3. Review elementary RSP teacher assignments to determine where caseload sharing between schools may be possible to help keep RSP caseloads at or below the Education Code maximum.

Paraeducator Staffing, Instructional Assistants (IAs)

The district has several classifications of instructional assistants: instructional assistant (three hours per day), which does not receive health and welfare benefits based on this single assignment; which serves primarily as 1-to-1 support; and health mobility aide (six hours per day), which performs specialized health support.

Staff reported there is no orientation for new instructional assistants when they are hired; instead, all job training occurs after new staff are on the job. Staff indicated the district does not offer instructional assistants' options for professional development, and notices to staff regarding professional development opportunities are limited.

The California Education Code's only requirement for instructional staffing is in section 56362(f), which states, "At least 80% of the resource specialists within a local plan shall be provided with an instructional assistant." There are established industry standards for instructional assistant support to special education teachers and students, based primarily on the intensity of service. The industry standards are that a full-time resource specialist may receive one six-hour-per-day (0.75 FTE) instructional assistant; and full-time mild/moderate SDC teachers with a caseload of 12-15 students may receive one six-hour-per-day (0.75 FTE) instructional assistant.

No industry standard has been established for 1-to-1 instructional assistant staffing; all 1-to-1 instructional assistant staffing is considered to be in excess of the standard support levels described above.

The district's Special Education Department has inconsistently instituted procedures to standardize how it identifies the need for 1-to-1 instructional assistants. The district has a

recently hired Director of Special Education who is working toward placing more consistent procedures in place.

Staff reported that the district uses the Riverside County SELPA’s Related Services Independence Assistance (RSIA) procedures with reasonable consistency. The RSIA is a formal assessment process that requires a signed assessment plan and decision regarding a student’s need for 1-to-1 support, based on the assessment and determination made by the IEP team. The RSIA process is led by the district’s behavior specialist; however, it also requires the involvement of school psychologists and an Education Support Services Department management employee. It was stated throughout interview the RSIA process could be implemented more effectively.

Staff indicated the RSIA process is lengthy and requires a great deal of time from the staff involved, especially the behavior specialists, and that this takes staff away from other duties, especially for those whose primary responsibility is not assessment. The RSIA process includes the essential step of establishing IEP goals for independence from 1-to-1 assistance for every student who requires it. However, staff indicated that this step is seldom completed, and that if an initial goal for independence is developed, it is rarely assessed, reviewed and revised at subsequent IEP team meetings. This step of the RSIA process is needed to keep staff and parents focused on the goal of reducing and ultimately eliminating a student’s reliance on individual support, and it helps prevent automatically continuing support unchanged from one annual IEP to the next.

Staff stated that the majority of referrals for 1-to-1 assistance are for behavior support rather than medical support, and that most requests or referrals for 1-to-1 assistance come from district staff rather than parents.

The district has a districtwide PBIS that helps staff members understand behavior issues as a skill deficit that can be corrected with replacement skills.

The following is breakdown of staffing positions and number of paraprofessionals as over a three-year trend analysis.

Year	IA Moderate Severe	IA Behavior Intervention	Sp ED I	SPED II	Health Mobility	Expansion Aide	Early Child	Pathway	Total
2016-2017	97	6	1	92	7	0	33	0	236
2017-18	99	7	1	95	7	1	37	0	247
2018-19	95	7	1	97	7	1	36	10	254

The budgeted budget for instructional assistants

- 2018-19 \$7,915,582.
- At the cost of \$31,000.
- 20 1:1 IA's budget \$620,000.

Instructional Assistants 2018-19

Total Cost	FTE	Part time FTE	Total IA	Mod/Seve	Mod Seve 1:1
\$7,915,582.18	156	120	276	\$3,292,222.	\$571,101

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Continue to implement the Riverside County SELPA RSIA process thoroughly and consistently in every case involving a decision about whether a student needs 1-to-1 support.
2. Ensure that all students who receive 1-to-1 support have in their IEP goals for reaching independence from 1-to-1 support, and that these goals are reviewed and revised annually.
3. Conduct a cost benefit analysis of maintaining three-hour-per-day instructional assistants versus employing six-hour-per-day instructional assistants in some settings where it may benefit a program, such as in the preschool SDCs.
4. Offer a variety of professional development opportunities for instructional assistants and student attendant aides.
5. Acquire or develop orientation training to be provided when employees are first hired, such as self-guided instructional videos for instructional assistants and student attendant aides.

Due Process

A growing number of parents in the state's school districts believe they must be represented by legal by legal advocates in their IEP team meetings to ensure the district hears their concerns. Settlement costs include reimbursements for services or projected costs, which is a standard practice in due process mediations. The attorney fees represent costs that parents are entitled to through IDEA.

With the hiring the new director of special education the district does track attorney fees for district representation in due process. A record of these should be included in the due process costs to ensure accurate documentation.

The district has not received **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** training to support professional development for staff in the facilitated IEP process. This process is designed to help

all IEP team members of to focus on the needs of the student and on developing a mutually acceptable IEP. It is designed to reduce conflict and disagreements in the IEP process.

A parent can request independent educational evaluations at the district's expense to counter the district's own evaluations. An often-repeated theme through interviews with district administration, and line staff was the ongoing lack of consistent operational procedures in the delivery of special education services. The absence of such clarity and consistency hinders the most basic service delivery.

To proactively resolve parent concerns and complaints, some administrative staff members have received training in conducting facilitated IEP meetings. However, this resource is not evenly or consistently used throughout the district. The district has offered the assistance of individuals trained in facilitated IEP meetings.

There is little or no application of **ADR** to address parent concerns before due process and litigation. **ADR** involves training staff, community members and parents to resolve disputes between the district and a parent that would otherwise be resolved through due process, ADR does not replace due process, nor does it prevent either a parent or a district from filing a due process action. The intent is to resolve the dispute informally while maintaining a working and non-adversarial relationship between the parties. Advocates and attorneys are not allowed in **ADR** sessions. Various staff members have expressed confusion or questioned the role of the district's special education legal representation in these matters.

The most effective steps in reducing the cost of due process cases are to have legally defensible IEP team meetings and IEPs, and to establish proactive communication with parents. A well implemented, effective communication plan can save the district hundreds of thousands of dollars in one school year. However, some cases are still likely to require one or more levels of mediation/resolution.

The district has no formal system to track high-profile cases. A comprehensive database of information, correspondence, and the support provided for each potential case could reduce exposure to costly mediation and/or due process filings.

Education Code 56501(a) states as follows:

The parent or guardian and the public agency involved may initiate the due process hearing procedures prescribed by this chapter under any of the following circumstances;

(1) There is a proposal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. (2) There is a refusal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child. (3) The parent or guardian refuses to consent to an assessment of the child.

(2) There is a disagreement between a parent or guardian and a local educational agency regarding the availability of a program appropriate for the child, including

the question of financial responsibility, as specified in Section 300.148 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

During the initial determination of whether to consider due process proceedings, the district should calculate the potential cost. It should also consider the amount it contributes to the SELPA for support with due process, the cost of district attorney fees for pursuing and/or defending a due process filing, and the additional expense of any settlement agreements.

Staff are provided district office support to defend their assessments or support their recommendations. Interviews with staff indicate district office staff does not make agreements with parents and advocates before IEP meetings as an attempt to resolve conflict; instead the staff works through the IEP process with the team. Site and support staff report that their opinion and expertise is considered and valued at IEP meetings.

Site and district office staffs indicate that the facilitated IEP process has not been formally utilized. This process has been proven to support both parents and staff with the development of comprehensive and defensible IEPs.

The district should provide trained neutral facilitators, which will allow for collaborative, problem solving, trust building processes. The district was unable to provide consistent documentation of all legal costs specific to special education over the past three years. These documents would include specific resource coding for tracking of all paralegal and legal costs associated with settlements, district costs and parent costs.

Settlement Costs: There were no settlement costs of 2017-18 or 2018-19 at present time.

Staff are provided district office support to defend their assessments or support their recommendations. Interviews with staff indicate district office staff members do not make agreements with parents and advocates before IEP meetings as an attempt to resolve conflict: rather they work through the IEP process with the team. Site and support staff report that their opinion and expertise is considered and valued at IEP meetings. Limited due process, mediation and settlements are done in the district.

Legal Costs:

2017-18	\$60,733
2018-19	\$68,087

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Conduct meetings with staff that are legal under IDEA before an IEP where additional resources may be discussed so decisions can be made as required at the IEP meeting.

2. Continue to develop a process so that the special education management staff, including the director attend IEP team meetings when needed to help resolve complex issues.
3. Continue to train staff that regularly attend IEP meetings, including special education teachers, DIS staff, and site administrators in the methodology for effective IEP team meetings such as collaborative and facilitated IEPs.
4. Train IEP administrators and administrator designees in special education legal requirements so they can effectively chair IEP team meetings.
5. Implement an ADR process and program. Information on ADR and Solutions Panel is attached to the appendix section of this report.
6. Develop a regular schedule for special education district office staff to meet that includes time to review questions from sites and parents.
7. Develop, train and consistently implement operational procedures for the provision of FAPE: assessment; eligibility; identification of strengths and needs; IEP goal development, implementation, monitoring and revision; and effective communication on these components of service delivery to all IEP team members, especially the parents.
8. Develop a system to disseminate consistent information regarding special education policy and procedures. Utilize a published and regularly updated procedural handbook, agenda items at job-alike and principals' meetings, and staff training for major changes. Set a target goal for year one that builds in accountability standards for the implementation of this system.

Medi-Cal

The one revenue area that a district does have some control over is in Medi-Cal Local Education Agency (LEA) billing. It is generally understood that Medi-Cal monies cannot be used to supplant (to substitute for funds or services that would otherwise be provided during the time in question) the district's current expenditures or for staff salaries during the portion of the day that they generate Medi-Cal funds.

Medi-Cal funds can generally be used for one-time expenditures such as a van, other equipment, and travel. When district budgets are severely affected, such purchases may not be possible, even with Medi-Cal funds. Medi-Cal funds are also used to cover the billing contract for the Medi-Cal billing provider and for staffing such as new health aides. Medi-Cal money can also

be used to cover expenses such as new testing materials, protocols or conferences for the support staff that generate Medi-Cal revenue. Once an item is funded under either the special education or general fund budget, the ability to fund it under Medi-Cal is significantly restricted.

The expenditure of Medi-Cal funds must be reinvested through decisions made by a LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option collaborative. In addition to the expenditure decisions being made by a collaborative, the key word is reinvested. These funds are not to be used to supplant current expenditures and unlike the MAA program, the Medi-Cal Billing Option funding must be used for specific purposes and should be accounted for using a restricted resource to reflect restrictions on the use of funds.

Some school districts will use Medi-Cal funds for new nurse, psychologist, or other staff positions that generate Medi-Cal funding. It has also been used to create innovative intervention programs or to cover speech and language pathologists and audiologists licensing and association fees, professional development/continuing education, technology or assessment tools for staff. These funds are also now being used by some districts to offset new mental health costs. All of these expenditures are designed to maintain or increase the current level of Medi-Cal funding and thereby the ability of that funding source to cover future expenditures.

Within CVUSD, an argument is often made by staff that the funds should go to the departments that generate the funds on a percentage basis. This is sometimes done but is not necessary and may be counterproductive.

Increased Revenue

The Special Education Coordinator and Medi-Cal coordinator oversees the Medi-Cal program. The coordinator of Medi-Cal is organized and has an excellent relationship with the committee and has a binder organized reflecting services provided.

Some Committee members are dissatisfied on how funds are distributed and therefore, feel if they do not receive their share of funds generated, they should not be required to track and report billing time.

It was requested to explore options to increase special education revenue using Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA) billing. In the information from their billing Contractor Praci-Cal the district is currently billing for Initial IEP Assessments, amended IEP Assessments, Annual IEP Assessments, Triennial IEP Assessments, Treatments and Therapies.

A committee of district staff is in place and advises the district with Medi-Cal expenditures.

These positions that generated the funds:

2017-18 Revenue:	\$239,803.
Speech:	\$73,038.00
Health:	\$18,890.
Psychologists:	\$88,902

OT:	\$5,240
Nursing:	\$50,055

The district had a carryover from the fiscal year 2015-16 of unspent funds of \$656,565.55

Total revenue for fiscal year 2016-17 of	\$300,335.35
Total revenue for fiscal year 2017-18 of	\$307,048.00
With a carryover of	\$70,539.00
Ending Balance of	\$377,587. As of June 30, 2018

2018-19	Proposed Budget	\$377,587
Estimated Revenue for Fiscal year 2018-19		\$250,000
Expenditure/Encumbrances as of 01/08/19		\$68,605
Sub-Total revenue for 2018-19 proposed		\$558,982

There is a huge potential in revenue, if the district would generate more billing, by staff. It is essential and necessary that the following providers bill for Medi-Cal. The district could estimate an additional \$300,000 to \$500,000 if all providers were maximizing their billing. This is an extremely important area to maximize revenue by recording services provided to qualified students.

Specialized Transportation

1. Does not bill for services provided
2. Additional revenue could be between \$150,000 and \$200,000
3. Department has tracking system in place to implement this billing

Case managers, Adaptive Physical Education

1. These providers are not billing for services
2. Additional revenue could be as much as \$100,000

It is generally understood that Medi-Cal monies cannot be used to supplant what the district is currently expending nor, can they be expended on staff salaries during the portion of their day when they are generating Medi-Cal funds. Specific questions regarding expending Medi-Cal funds should be addressed to the district's Medi-Cal and MAA billing agent. These restrictions were considered when developing suggestions for reducing the Medi-Cal carry over. As stated

earlier the district could also use Medi-Cal money for a portion of any new aide position salaries, not any replacement positions.

In addition, as discussed earlier, there are potential settlement agreements that could be costly to the district and are not at this time in the current school year budget. The agreements, could be paid for by Medi-Cal money, thereby reducing any further deficit spending. Any additional positions that benefit Medi-Cal eligible students, additional costs for the regional classes, new out of district placements or settlement agreements are some examples of how more of the Medi-Cal carry over money could be expended. These suggestions leave a balance which could then be considered to off-set the additional reduced revenues.

The district reports that it is now receiving MAA money. These funds are generated by special education, including speech therapists, and some general education staff. It was also reported that not all administrators are billing for MAA and/or not completing MAA related activities during the billing cycles. Adding reporters and increasing MAA activities could significantly increase the revenue generated and therefore decrease the general education deficit. California Department of Health web site states that MAA activities include: Medi-Cal outreach, facilitating the Medi-Cal application, Non-emergency & non-medical transportation of Medi-Cal eligible individuals to Medi-Cal covered services, contracting for Medi-Cal services, Program planning and policy development, MAA coordination and claims administration, Training, and General administration.

Commendation:

The staff is knowledgeable and understanding the Medi-Cal and MAA process. The Medi-Cal coordinator is knowledgeable and understands how the district can generate more revenue. The district has a collaborative committee to determine how to allocate the funds; however, trust and transparency must be developed and results of decisions on how to allocate funds must be communicated to All stakeholders. Therefor all staff understand and can support the decisions being made on how to spend the funds. This is not the case presently.

Recommendations:

The district should consider:

1. Review all the recommendations for how Medi-Cal carry over funds could be expended and determine which will be implemented as well as how to best use this carry over in the next two year.
2. Increase staff participation in MAA billing to increase the revenue generated and decrease the general education deficit.
3. Bring transparency to the collaborative committee and disbursement of allocations in a fair and transparent manner, based on input from committee members.
4. All providers bill weekly.

5. All staff should have billing for Medi-Cal as part of their assignment.
6. Run a report through SEIS to correlate and verify numbers.
7. Communicate with all stakeholders who serve as providers on money generated, how the calculation was done to spend revenue and why.
8. Training and supporting Case managers, Deaf Hard of Hearing, APE, Orthopedic Impairment staff to bill for Medi-Cal
9. Request Specialized Transportation to bill for Medi-Cal

Fiscal Efficiencies, General Fund Contribution

Coachella Valley USD requested that review its unrestricted general fund contribution to special education. Most school district need to make contributions from their unrestricted general fund to special education to sustain these programs as required, but when the amount of contribution is excessive it becomes a concern. The Code of Federal Regulations defines excess costs as follows:

Excess cost means those costs that are in excess of the average manual per student expenditure in a LEA (local educational agency) during the preceding school year for an elementary or secondary school student, as may be appropriate. (34 CFR 300.16)

Excess special education costs that required a contribution from a district's unrestricted general fund (also known as encroachment) begin to accrue only after the costs of educating special education students exceed the district's proportionate share of the average per-pupil expenditures. Therefore, a school district's local general fund is required to pay its share of the cost of special education first.

The Legislative Analyst's Report dated January 3, 2016 states, "a combination of increasing special education costs and relatively flat state and federal special education funding has resulted in local budgets covering an increasing share of these costs."

The report also states the following:

Districts have little control over special education revenues. California distributes funds to special education local plan areas (SELPAs) based on their member districts total average daily attendance (ADA), not on identified special education students. The reporting methods of districts, county offices, and SELPAs can vary. Some districts include transportation, while others do not and there are variations in how special education funds are allocated through a SELPA's approved allocation plans. Therefore, it is not always possible to accurately compare a district's general fund contribution to that of other districts. However, a district may need to address a general fund contribution that is excessive or increasing.

Maintenance of effort (MOE) is the federal statutory requirement that a district must spend the same amount of state and local money on special education each year, with limited exceptions. In considering how to reduce the overall general fund contribution, the district is required to

follow the guidelines in the MOE document (20 U.S.C.1413 (a) (2) (A)). The MOE document from the California Department of Education (CDE) lists the following as exceptions that allow the district to reduce the amount of state and local funds spent on special education:

1. The voluntary departure, by retirement or otherwise, or departure for just cause, of special education or related services, personnel, who are replaced by qualified, lower-salaried.
2. A decrease in the enrollment of children with disabilities.
3. The termination of the obligation of the agency to provide a program of special education to a particular child with a disability that is an exceptionally costly program, as determined by the State Educational Agency, because the child:
 - A. Child has left the jurisdiction of the agency; or
 - B. Child has as reached the age at which the obligation of the agency to provide FAPE (free and appropriate public education) to the child has terminated; or
 - C. No longer needs the program of special education.
4. The termination of costly expenditures for long-term purchases, such as the acquisition of equipment or the construction of school facilities (must have per unit cost of \$5,000 or more).

Coachella Valley School District Special Education budget

	2018-19 Budget
Special education budget	\$43,397,000
The transportation special education budget	\$3,300,000

Data from the district fiscal documents indicate the district’s general fund contribution:

2018-19 Contribution from general fund	\$32,759,000
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The transportation and SELPA COE services (\$4,700,000) is not included in contribution from the general fund.

The district’s general fund contribution is projected to be \$32,759,000, is about 75% of the special education budget not including transportation. According to the March 2015 California Special Education Task Force Report on the general fund contribution percentage to Special Education, the statewide average was 43%.

However, the Legislative Analyst’s Office 2017-18 Budget: Proposition 98 Education Analysis dated February 9, 2017 states that as of 2014-15 “state and federal categorical funding covers about 40% of special education costs in California. Schools cover remaining special education costs with unrestricted funding (mostly) LCFF.”

This indicates that the unrestricted general fund contribution has increase to approximately 60%. The district is about 75% of the special education budget from the general fund, when you do not include transportation. Special Education funding in California Special Education funding is meant to pay the additional costs of serving students with disabilities.

The California Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) estimates that education students with disabilities cost on average more than twice as much as educating general education students. Three main sources finance California special education services:

Federal government 9 %

State 29 %

Local school districts 62 %

However, the contribution has been increasing each year as a result of no additional revenue in LCFF for special education until the projected state budget for 2018-19 is providing 2.5 % cola for special education.

The cost of special education student in the Coachella Valley Unified School District is approximately \$19,304 per student. At the cost of over identifying students based on Riverside County School Districts and state wide averages the district cost is approximately based on students it is costing the district about \$3,443,000.

That is considering the district would to be serving 11.6% of the students in the district as special education that would be 178 less students a \$19,304 per student, would reduce the support from general fund about \$3,443,000.

The number of preschool children transferring into the district and students being enrolled in the district who have IEP's (transferring from other school districts) are also additional factors out of the districts control when reviewing the identification rate.

Again, several factors affect a district's general fund contribution, including revenue received to operate the programs and the expenditures for salaries, increase of STRS and PERS benefits, increase in health and welfare benefits cost for staff, staffing and caseloads, nonpublic school and nonpublic agency costs. Litigation can also increase a district's general fund contribution.

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was enacted with the passage of the 2013-14 Budget Act, replacing the previous K-12 finance system with a new funding formula. The new formula for school districts and charter schools is composed of uniform base grants by grade spans (K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12) and includes additional funding for targeted students. Under the previous K-12 finance system there was a revenue limit special education ADA transfer that transferred revenue limit ADA funding generated from the attendance in the special day classes from the unrestricted general fund to the special education program. Special day class ADA is no longer reported separately and the CDE determined that this revenue limit special education ADA transfer will no longer take place due to the LCFF.

The district is providing special education transportation as a related service. There is no statewide data that provides an accurate average for the percentage of students with IEPs transported as a related service. Studies have suggested that districts that manage their IEP process well, have approximately 10% of their students with IEPs transported. The district transports about 380 students reflects about 17% of the students with IEPs.

Regarding the cost of transportation services, the district cost per student is \$8,663 which is about the state-wide average cost per child receiving transportation. **If the district could reduce the number of students being transported as a related service, from 17% to 10% they would reduce the number from 380 to 224 students and save \$1,420,732, and assure they are meeting the students' needs in the least restrictive environment.**

In addition to fiscal considerations, the district pays the RCOE \$4,700,000 to serve 230 students. At a cost of over \$20,000 per student. The district needs to identify students over the next 2-3 years that could benefit educationally and socially emotionally from returning the district of residence. If 100 students could return, more than \$2,000,000 could be applied to developing defensible programs for district students in a least restrictive environment.

Recommendations for consideration:

1. Monitor the district's general fund contribution through the annual MOE and determine if the district can reduce expenditures using any of the exemptions allowed.
2. Develop monthly meetings with itemized agenda between the Assistant Superintendent Business, Special Education Director and Fiscal Support Staff responsible for the special education budget that include the following topics:
 - A. Budget development
 - B. Budget monitoring
 - C. Maintenance of effort requirements
 - D. Additional staff requests or change in assignments
 - E. Non-public school and/or agency contacts and invoices and new placements
 - F. Due process or complaint issues
 - G. Number of students being transported
 - H. Staff caseload
 - I. Identified student counts
 - J. Identified needs

4. The Special Education, Business, and Human Resources departments should review all of the staffing and assignments through this process, including contracted positions.
5. Staff should review how positions are being used and charged to the district budget.

Specialized Transportation

Specialized transportation is a related service that is provided to students based on need and is not appropriate for all student with IEP's. Transportation is required if it is needed for a student to benefit from specialized academic instruction. The need for specialized transportation should be determined based on the unique needs of each individual student.

Some student's receiving special education services may be able to either walk or ride to school with their nondisabled peers. For some students, specialized transportation services are essential, and without these services they could not attend school. For student with special needs, transportation is a related service. In essence, when discussing transportation as a related service, there are two categories of student with disabilities:

- Those for who transportation is a related service but delivering that service does not require any accommodation. These students can ride with their nondisabled peers
- Those for who transportation is a related service and accommodation is necessary to ensure they can access educational services.

Federal and state laws require school districts to serve students with special needs in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The lack of consistently used SELPA policy and procedure has left some IEP teams with no written structure for decision making in relation to determine the need for specialized transportation. It was noted decisions are made at the IEP meetings, but a consistent process for determining transportation is not always used in the district.

- There is 380 special education need students being transported.
- Based on previous transportation studies the statewide average is 10% of the special education population is transported.
- Coachella Valley Unified School District has 17% of pupils with IEP's are being transported.

The approximate cost to provide specialized transportation per student is the collaboration between transportation and special education begins with transportation acting as a support service to the instructional program. Transportation's role is help accomplish the goal of each student receiving a free and appropriate public education the LRE as possible.

Collaboration between special education transportation school include a least one annual planning. Planning meetings give special education an opportunity to discuss program, facility needs, routes, needs of students, staffing, role of transportation at IEP meetings, and any medical or specialized supervision required for students with health of behavior needs.

The special education transportation budget

2018-19	# of students	cost per student	# of routes	cost per route
\$3,300,000	380 students	\$8,663	28	\$72,000

Travel time varies from 50 – 65 minutes one way (home to school). Many students are receiving bus services due to behavior issues. The district probably could justify about 50-60% of the students requiring specialized transportation.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure IEP teams are trained to appropriately assess the need for student transportation as a necessary related service using a decision tree for consistency in evaluating the need for service.
2. Review and/or revise the decision tree to identify special education students for transportation as a necessary related service.
3. Consider consolidating the decision makers through the IEP process for determining transportation support or ensure that program specialists or administrators are present for the IEP when a new special education student enters the district, and when students transition to another school (e.g. Elementary to middle school and middle school to high school).
4. Evaluate the percentage of bus monitors and aides on special education routes to reduce the overall number of aides through increased staff training in behavior support.
5. Increase the participation of district transportation staff in necessary IEP meetings to appropriately identify transportation support and ensure that it is applied in the LRE.
6. Enhance the communication and data exchange between the special education and transportation programs to ensure accurate and timely student information data for safe transportation scheduling.
7. Continue the master bell schedule, allowing transportation staff to continue a tiered bell version with staggered school start/end times.
8. Be available to work with the special education department on steps the department is taking to reduce the number of students who may not require specialized transportation during the 2019-20 school year.

9. The district needs to take 2019-20, meet with parents, review all IEP requiring specialized transportation, and discuss options on how to transport students in a more least restrictive environment.
10. Communicate with business services, human resources, special education on what routes may not be required, due to reduction of some students not requiring specialized transportation during the 2019-20 school year, effective 2020-21 school year.
11. Review transportation guidelines for IEP teams developed by the California Department of Education (Refer to California Department of Education website).
12. Develop a transportation policy, procedure, and guidelines for IEP teams to evaluate each student's specialized transportation needs for ESY and during the regular school year.
13. Provide training to special education staff and school site administrators on policy and procedure for specialized transportation.
14. Develop a system that the CBO, transportation, HR, and special education administration meets to review budget costs, staffing, status of number of students being transported.
15. Review all current IEPs, which designate transportation, and determine the need for such service, and if any students can be exited.
16. At any time, a health impaired student with exceptional health needs is being considered for transportation, the transportation department needs to be present at IEP meeting.
17. Continue collaboration planning meetings between transportation, business services and special education.

Extended School Year

Extended School Year (ESY) services is an individualized instructional program for eligible students with disabilities that is provided beyond the regular school year. The need for ESY services must be determined on an individual basis by the **admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee**. The individualized education program (IEP) developed for ESY must include goals and objectives. The need for ESY services must be documented from formal or informal evaluations provided by the district or the parents.

The district does not provide this oversight, therefore, the ESY program is fiscally and programmatically mismanaged. The results of ineffective management are reflected in the chart below with over-estimated staff to serve the student population, which was costly to the district.

If a student requires a significant amount of time to recoup acquired critical skills, then the ARD committee must discuss whether the student needs extended educational or related services during school breaks. If the loss of acquired critical skills would be particularly severe or substantial, or if such loss results, or reasonably may be expected to result, in immediate physical harm to the student or to others, ESY services may be justified without consideration of the period of time for recoupment of such skills.

2018 ESY

#of student's	# of teacher's	# of IA's	# students transported	staff ratio
110	21	50	110	1:1.5

To maintain identified critical skills for students with disabilities, the district should make sure the following requirements are done to make sure that ESY services are available, as necessary, to provide a free, appropriate public education:

- ESY services are determined by the student's ARD committee. Services are student need driven and include a variety of options.
- ESY goals and activities are reflected in the student's current IEP.
- ESY services are not limited to particular categories of disability.

District information reflects that all disability categories are considered for ESY. Consideration is by individual student need. ESY services are not unilaterally limited as to the type, amount, or duration. Consideration of service delivery includes community options and services.

Transportation, as a related service, is considered and offered to students with disabilities who need this service to benefit from ESY services.

All district staff, including administrators, supervisors, teachers, related service personnel, and teaching assistants, should understand the purpose of ESY services and the role staff play in the consideration and delivery of ESY services. It was stated that district staff participate in the consideration of ESY services discussion. Staff stated they usually are not involved in the provision of ESY services are informed of the student's goals and other information related to ensuring the effectiveness of the services.

ESY services are connected to previous and future school year services. A communication system must be in place that defines roles and responsibilities for ESY documentation to flow between and among district staff. Sending and receiving teachers must provide information and feedback regarding the provision and effectiveness of the ESY services. Framework for the ESY

program must include a process for planning prior to the initiation of and following the end of ESY services.

District staff must ensure that parents understand information provided to them in regard to the purpose and intent of ESY services and the role they play in the consideration and delivery of the ESY services. When parents have questions regarding this service, they know who to ask for further discussion or explanation of the process.

It was determined from interviewing staff, that parents do not participate in the ARD committee discussion regarding the consideration of ESY services. Parents communicate with district staff and participate in the ESY services as they would for their child's school year services.

Costs associated with ESY over last three years:

2016	2017	2018	2019
Actual	Actual	Actual	Proposed
\$612,415.38	\$662,015.45	\$293,268.39	\$312,755.00

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Review transportation guidelines for IEP teams developed by the California Department of Education (Refer to California Department of Education website).
2. Develop a transportation policy, procedure, and guidelines for IEP teams to evaluate each student's specialized transportation needs for ESY and during the regular school year.
3. Provide training to special education staff and school site administrators on policy and procedure for specialized transportation and the impact of ESY costs.
4. Develop the Decision Tree follow chart at all IEP meetings and assure it completed prior to making final decision regarding providing transportation.
5. Develop a system that the CBO, transportation, HR, and special education administration meets to review budget costs, staffing, status of number of students being transported and served in programs for ESY.
6. Review all current IEPs, which designate transportation, and determine the need for such service, and if any students can be exited from ESY.
7. At any time, a health impaired student with exceptional health needs is being considered for transportation, the transportation department needs to be present at IEP meeting regarding ESY services.
8. Continue collaboration planning meetings between transportation, business services and special education when determining ESY delivery system.

9. The need to develop for ESY services must be determined on an individual basis by the **admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee**
10. Implement a strategy to communicate with parents as to whether their student(s) will attend ESY and whether they wish to participate in transportation services if they are identified for such.
11. Immediately begin collapsing summer routing one week after ESY starts to ensure the greatest route efficiency and cost savings.

Related Services

Related services are the developmental, corrective and other supportive services required to help a child with a disability benefit from special education (34 CFR 300.34). These services are written in the IEP and include but are not limited to those provided by psychologists, speech and language pathologists, adapted physical education teachers, occupational and physical therapists, and nurses. As is the case in most districts and SELPAs, the district contracts with outside providers for some of these services.

Staff reported that there are three systems for tracking special education personnel: a report generated by the Education Support Services Department from the Special Education Information System (SEIS); a FileMaker database maintained by the Personnel Department; and the Galaxy financial system used by business services and payroll. These three systems are not interconnected and may not all have identical data. ESP used 2018-19 caseload data the district prepared using SEIS.

Speech Pathologists

Education Code Section 56441.7(a) establishes a maximum caseload of 40 for speech pathologists serving preschool age students, and Education Code Section 56363.3 establishes a SELPA wide average of 55 students per speech pathologist for grades K-12.

The caseloads for K-12 speech pathologists are composed of 8% indirect and 92% direct speech and language services.

The SLP's indicated a need for more professional development training. Also, there is a shortage of testing kits for staff. Every SLP should have access on a timely basis for assessment tools.

The total staffing allocation for K-12 is 18 FTE speech pathologists with an average caseload of 49. Most districts determine speech pathologist staffing based on direct services only. Analyzing the amount of time spent providing indirect services could help the district more accurately calculate caseloads.

The district has 18 SLP's.

8 are NPA contracted

10 are district employed

The district 8 speech pathologists Language Assistants for preschool students.

Program	FTE	Caseload	Caseload Average	Education Code Caseload Requirement
Speech and Language Pathologists, Preschool				40 Maximum
Speech and Language Pathologists, K-12	18	933	52	55

Source: Caseload list maintained by the district.

Note: The total FTE for speech and language pathologists includes 3.0 contracted staff.

Rather than immediately decreasing staff to assure the average to the legal requirement, it may benefit the district to perform a more detailed analysis of indirect caseloads and exit rates for students receiving speech and language students.

Employees reported that process for assigning speech pathologists to schools is equitable and functional, and that testing materials are adequate and available.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Attempt to fill speech pathologist positions with district employees. If this is not possible and contracted services are obtained, ensure the cost is negotiated with the NPA and is comparable to or less than the cost of an employed position.
2. Audit speech and language caseloads to determine the extent to which students are exiting speech services and examine the extent to which students who receive indirect services require support.
3. Develop Speech Handbook

School Psychologists

Staffing documents show that the district employs 11.6 FTE school psychologists for grades K-12. The district employs 5.0 FTE mental health counselors. Staff reported the K-12 psychologists have common duties such as providing assessments for all district schools and for its students at nonpublic schools.

Primary work load of school psychologists is providing assessments to students and determining eligibility of special education services.

The mental health counselors provide therapy for students with an IEP that requires educationally-related mental health services.

CalEdFacts (www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fb/ then under Education Statistics select Pupil Services Staff in California Public Schools) indicates that in 2017-18 the statewide average K-12 school psychologist-to-student ratio was 1-to-1,250. Based on the district’s enrollment of 17,282, the district has a psychologist-to-student ratio of 1-to-1,250.

Program	# FTE	Enrollment	Industry Standard	District Average Caseload
Psychologists (K12)	11.6	17,786	1:250	1:1,270

Source: District documents and CalEdFacts 2017-18.

Staff reported that they would like to have more frequent job-alike meetings for the psychologists and that scheduled meetings not be canceled. The psychologists need professional development related to both their general duties and to specific areas unique to their needs and interests. Reports varied about the psychologists’ access to necessary assessments and protocols. The district is working to standardize the assessment tools used; however, some psychologists reported that they do difficulty have access to the Wechsler Intelligence Scales or other assessments and are not able to select different protocols they believe are essential for their work. Other psychologists report that they do have access to different protocols.

As discussed in the Identification Rate section of this report, many evidence-based assessments are available and are used in the field to help assess a wide range of suspected disability areas. Staff reported that the Education Support Services Department lacks systematic criteria for creating equitable assignments for psychologists.

As interviews indicated, the school psychologists provide little to no support to general education. They do not provide consultation, counseling or general education support of interventions to students in the general education classroom. Their primary role is to support special education teachers and testing; therefore, based on that level of service, the district is overstaffing by three school psychologists due to their limited role as a resource to the general education student population.

Staff in the mental health department within special education department includes one coordinator and 5.0 FTE.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Schedule monthly job-alike meetings for psychologists during the school year and ensure that the meetings take place.
2. Establish professional development opportunities based on both the total needs of the program and each psychologist’s professional interests and needs.

3. Consider holding a collaborative planning session with psychologists to allow input regarding the assignment schedule to increase understanding of the department's and the various schools' needs.
4. Determine its current staffing of mental health counselors.
5. Examine the service delivery and levels of mental health services in light of mental health needs specified on IEPs and seek to structure and deliver services to better meet each student's specific needs.

Behavior Specialists

The district has 1.0 FTE behavior specialists. Behavior specialists perceive their role to be consultants to the teachers and staff; however, the job description defines this position as a related service provider and member of the IEP team that is involved in assessment and in developing behavioral goals and objectives.

Behavior specialist support should be part of a training model that helps general education teachers through school-level training and case-specific consultation. Several of the major duties and responsibilities identified in the behavior specialist job description are not being carried out. It is a common and best practice for behavior specialists to serve as subject matter experts during the development of behavior intervention plans, but this is not occurring in the district.

Employees reported that behavior specialists spend a great deal of time and effort developing referrals for the RSIA process and assessments for 1-to-1 assistants and filling those positions. As a result, their responsibilities for training and supporting school sites are limited. This is not the most effective and efficient assignment of work duties; a greater focus on the duties typical of a related service provider is warranted.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Examine the current job description for the behavior specialist position and update if necessary.
2. Ensure that the behavior specialist position is defined as, acts as, and is perceived as a related service provider with a specific caseload, not as a consultant.
3. Ensure that behavior specialists have the training and support they need to serve as the subject matter experts on IEP teams when behavior intervention plans are developed.
4. Consider eliminating behavior specialists' duties related to developing referrals for the RSIA process and assessments of the need for 1-to-1 assistants and filling those positions. Instead, have the behavior specialists focus on direct support for students with behavioral needs and consultation for teachers at the schools.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapists (OTs) collaborate and consult with general education and special education teachers, observe students, provide strategies to teachers, and follow up prior to referral and assessment. The district does not employ an OT. The district contracts with an NPA, Desert Occupational Therapy for Kids, Inc. The district indicated they are pleased with the contractual services and good communication exists between the two agencies.

The cost of the contract with this NPA is \$357,500 for the 2018-19 school year serving a total of 150-160 students in preschool through grade 12 receive OT services.

2018-19 Budget #of students COTA FTE OTA (occupational therapy registered)

\$357,500	160-170	2	2
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The industry standard for OT caseloads is 45-55 students per FTE; therefore, ESP used a caseload of 50 for comparison. The district contracts for 2 FTE of OT services, with an average caseload of 40 students per FTE. The district reported it is using certified occupational therapy assistants successfully and that this mitigates some of the need for more occupational therapists; however, the district does have guidelines that define their work. The NPA following the Riverside SELPA OT guidelines.

The NPA has a referral form and appears to be very effective. The form is evidence of intervention of support has been provided to the student. It asks for is the concern, what has been done to meet the student needs, provides suggestions to assist the student, provides timeline to follow up if interventions have been provided and if not, determination of services provided through assessment and IEP.

Program	No. of FTE	Caseload	District Average Caseload	Industry Standard Caseload
Occupational Therapist		160-170	1:40	45-55

Source: District and industry data.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue to monitor its caseloads for occupational therapists to ensure closer alignment to the industry standard.
2. Continue to follow SELPA guidelines for the use of certified occupational therapy assistants.
3. Analyze the financial and operational feasibility of creating a district staff position of occupational therapist rather than contracting for these services.

Adapted Physical Education

Employees indicated there is 2.0 FTE adapted physical education (APE) teacher, who provides pull-out services to teach specific skills, push-in services to help students in PE classes, and whole class instruction. The total current caseload for both APE teachers is 65. The industry standard caseload is 1:45-55 per FTE.

FTE APE Teachers	Total # of Students	Industry standard ratio	District ratio
2.0	65	1:45-55	1:33
1.0 Assistant			

Recommendation

The district should consider:

1. Monitoring the caseload for the APE teachers and ensure that the caseload remains close to the industry standard.

School Nurses

The district provides a variety of healthcare services districtwide to general and special education students. A school nurse is a registered nurse currently licensed under Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 2700) of the Division 2 of Business and Professions Code, and who has completed the additional requirement for, and possesses a current credential in, school nursing pursuant to Section 44877.

The district has 6.0 FTE school nurses, who support health technicians at the schools. The industry-standard caseload for a school nurse is 2,510 students (CalEdFacts [www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fb/] 2016-17).

The district's nurses have an average caseload of 2,833. However, the industry standards do not include an adjustment for the consultation model the district uses to deliver health services; each school has a health technician who provides services under the supervision of a school nurse.

Data reported indicated that the district contracts with NPA, for 5 LVN, two of them assigned as 1:1 medical.

School nurses carry out all mandated hearing and vision screenings; train and support all health technicians assigned to schools; develop specialized health care plans for disabled students who have IEPs that identify unique and specialized health care needs; and help IEP teams identify students with health impairments.

The district's caseload for school nurses is close to the industry standard. As part of a discussion about additional nursing staff, it would be beneficial for the district to analyze the

efficiencies of its healthcare services and supports and determine if more and/or other types of healthcare staff are needed, including licensed vocational nurses.

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Reviewing nursing caseloads and responsibilities and determine whether it needs more healthcare staff to meet industry-standard staffing levels.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing services as agreed upon between CVUSD and DSUSD 2017-18

Educational Services Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by and between Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) and Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) was entered into August 2017, in the count of Riverside, State of California. Within this MOU CVUSD engages with DSUSD to provide services for students with CVUSD who are identified as Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The rate of this agreement lists the following student costs and totals:

Deaf and Hard of Hearing	\$38,616	9 students	Total cost \$347, 544
Interpreters	\$7,987	9	Total cost \$71,883
Audiological Services	\$500	7	\$3,500
Speech and Language Services			
IEP dependent			\$4,500
Total estimated costs projected for 2017-18			\$427,427

- District data also states there maybe 13 students enrolled in the program, at \$38,616 per student would add another \$105,848 in ADA bringing the total to \$533,275

Regarding the Special Circumstance MOU, CVUSD approves specialized support beyond the full range of instruction and services available to DHH students. There is no long term or short-term goals listed in the MOU format or fading plan associated with these additional support services. The Special Circumstance assistant services are charged to CVUSD base on the average program salary and benefits for the position as outline by DSUSD.

Recommendations

1. The district should evaluate the cost effectiveness of providing their own DHH program.
2. The district should evaluation the projected cost increases for 2018-19 and budget appropriately for 2019-20.
3. The district should consider addition language to the MOU for approving support beyond the teacher, and list long term and short-term goals associated with the approval of Special Circumstance services. A fading plan should be included as well.

4. Determine, if any of the students in the DHH program, could be meet in the district.

Orthopedic Impairment

Orthopedic impairment is one that includes impairment caused by congenital anomalies such as absence of a member, clubfoot, impairments caused by disease such as bone tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, or impairments for other cause to include amputations fractures, cerebral palsy, burns.

Orthopedic Impairment

Staff	Caseload	Industry Caseload	Caseload Ratio
1 FTE	61	1:45	1:30
1 Assistant			

Recommendation

The district should consider:

1. Monitoring the caseload for the OI teachers and ensure that the caseload remains close to the industry standard.

Implementation (Action) Plan

The district requested a format on how to implement the finding and recommendations of this report. Based on the need to develop policies, procedures and systems within the special education delivery system, an action plan should be developed that will cover two to five years.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the special education report, an action plan should be developed with input from district stakeholders (leadership team), co-chaired by Educational Services and Special Education Services. The district should decide who chairs the taskforce. Special education administration must have a dominant role in developing and monitoring the action plan; however, Educational Services needs to participate and collaborate. The following areas should be addressed in a matrix format based on this report's findings and recommendations:

- Goals (recommendations from the report)
- Tasks to be completed to meet the goals
- The employees responsible for implementation
- Status of outcomes
- Progress made on implementation of meeting goals and completion of tasks

- Evidence of accomplishment
- Timelines to accomplish tasks

The implementation (action) plan will serve as a roadmap for the district in developing special education systems, policies, procedures that ensure a legal, fiscally compliance, and accountability, programmatically sound special education delivery system. It will serve as an accountability document to measure progress made in the development of a best-practice special education delivery system.

The action plan should consist of the director of special education, assistant superintendent of educational services, and should consist of district stakeholders of such, as but not limited, to the following; special education teachers, classified, support staff, site administrators, general education staff, program specialists, parent representative, related services staff such as school psychologists, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist.

Several of the tasks require Educational Services to be involved, such as MTSS. Support from Educational Services should also be provided for MTSS and SST not just special education processes.

The strategic plan needs to be transparent and supported by the board, and current board policies must be developed. This area must be a priority. Educational Services and Student Services in-conjunction with Special Education.

Recommendations:

The district should consider:

1. Developing a special education strategic plan
2. The action plan should be a 2- to 5-year implementation plan
3. Creating leadership teams to include district office staff and initially include but not be limited to: principals, general education teachers, special education staff, and parents.
4. Form a diverse group of stakeholders should be selected to serve on the special education taskforce to implement the findings and recommendations of this report.

Procedural Manual, Policies and Procedures

The current District Special Education Policy and Procedural Manual to guide special education practice education practice and decision-making is outdated on not used. Last adopted 2003. The district's staff does not use this document to consistently communicate a cohesive special education delivery system. Subsequently, there are no clear written directions, guidelines or procedures for the Special Education Department staff and site principals. No processes exist to guide staff with addressing questions and seeking support.

CVUSD should review Riverside SELPA manual as a guide.

The manual should consist of but not be limited to the following:

- Purpose, mission and vision statement
- Referral process
- Assessment
- Case management
- Continuum of service options
- Specialized programs
- IEP development, notice of IEP meeting, membership, request for meeting
- Administrative interim placement
- ERMHS
- Policies and procedures
- Organizational chart of the district and department (provide structure)
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Extended School Year (overview, services and programs, eligibility)
- Manifestation determination (behavior is a manifestation of the disability or not)

The Riverside SELPA has an updated manual the district could refer in developing a procedural handbook.

After stakeholder's review and provide input to the revised and updated procedural manual, the district should consider providing some additional areas to strengthen the district-wide process in the document. The areas identified may require a separate section or additional information to be added to procedural manual. As staff review the document, additional areas may be identified including, but not limited to the following:

The identified areas are as follows:

- Organization chart - a flowchart of Special Education Department staff with their specific duties and responsibilities to assist site staff in knowing who to call when a specific question arises.
- Continuum of educational options offered in the districts with descriptions of each that include nonpublic schools, state schools, etc.
- Clear definition of accommodations and modifications and the responsibility of the general education teacher in providing these based on a student's IEP.
- Definition of Due Process and Complaints to provide clarity as to what issues may result in which of these actions.

- The process that the district must follow and CDE follows when either a due process or a complaint is filed.
- The responsibility of the site administrator and site staff in responding to the complaint and/or resolving a complaint when it is filed.
- The responsibility of the site administrator and site in responding to the due process when it is filed and/or resolving the issue(s) that resulted in the due process filing.
- How and when transition IEPs should be held for students changing programs school to another at the same level, or from one level to another (i.e. elementary to middle school).
- How interim placements are completed for a student who enrolls in the district when schools are not in session, and how this information is provided to the school site on time.
- How all interim placements are completed, who is responsible for the paper work who decides where the student will be placed, and the process for ensuring that the receiving school is prepared for the student? An intake procedure form developed by the Special Education Department, with input from sites, could be completed at the time of the interim placement so that a student's specific requirements are in place when the student comes to school the first day. Additionally, if a behavior support plan is part of the IEP, it would be available prior to the student's first day, as well as all necessary personnel on board the day the student arrives.
- How district students attending a nonpublic school will be transitioned into district programs, who will attend the IEP meetings when this is being discussed, how the site that the student may attend is kept informed, and the responsibility of the district office and the site for the implementation of the IEP.
- When an interpreter is to be at an IEP meeting, who is responsible for ensuring that the interpreter is present and the duties of the interpreter?
- When documents and/or IEPs are to be translated into the language of the parents, what is the process and who is responsible for the translation and getting the documents to the parents?
- When special education records are requested by parents or parent attorneys, what is the timeline for producing the records, which records are copied, and who is responsible for ensuring that all required records are copied and sent on time?
- The process for hiring a new aide for a school site, either as an additional classroom aide or as a specific aide for a student, based on that student's IEP. This process would include timelines and forms for approval.

- The procedure for determining if an aide is moved with a student from one site to another.
- The procedure for determining if an aide is no longer needed for a student.
- The procedure to determine where an aide will be placed when the student they have been assigned to either moves from the district or no longer requires an aide.
- The formula for assigning aides to mild/moderate programs, moderate/severe programs, and specialized programs with information on exceptions to this formula.
- When to schedule “staffing” or “file reviews” and who should attend these meetings.
- How to schedule IEP meetings when district special education staff should be in attendance and how to proceed if that staff are unable to attend?
- What must be included in an assessment report to ensure that the report is defensible in a due process hearing, and that the report is available to the parents at the IEP meeting?
- How to complete the forms required that have been identified as problematic, including the prior written notice, invitation to the IEP meeting, and the assessment plan.
- How to complete the IEP sections that have been identified as problematic, including transition, assessment, general education, and parental input.

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Developing a procedural manual to provide useful and legal guidelines for determining special education placements, reviews and process for teachers, parents, administrators. Review current Riverside COE SELPA Guideline and use as reference.
2. Establish a committee made up of representatives of the Special Education Department staff, site administrators, site special education staffs, related changes as services, and other district departments to review the procedure manual and make needed. This committee should meet as soon as possible and be given a short timeline to revise the document.
3. Develop a training module and schedule to distribute the adopted procedure manual to all site administrators and special educators so that there is consistency

in providing special education throughout the district. This should be provided at the beginning the 2019-20 school year, if possible.

4. Provide the procedure manual online so that it can be accessed by all staff as well as having a hard copy at each school site for reference.
5. Establish a process to write the additional sections or portions of sections of the procedure manual indicated in this report.
6. Establish a committee to review these additions to the procedure manual.
7. Develop a training module and schedule to distribute these additions to all principals, special education staff and central office administration.
8. Develop a process for reviewing the district procedure manual at least annually and when any changes are required because of state or federal regulations or due to due process resolutions or corrective actions.
9. Ensure stakeholders, such as program managers, school psychologist, principals and parents, annually review the manual.
10. Provide training in implementing the manual at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year and annually for all stake holders. All stakeholders agree to these procedurals and provided consistent direction to site administration and staff as a resource to follow implementation of special education.
11. Ensure the procedural manual is evaluated annually by the district task force consisting of stakeholders.
12. Finalize the manual by July 2019. All stakeholders (principals, teacher's special education special education and general education, and program specialist) should review and have input into the final document. All school sites receive in-service training at the start of school year, 2019-20. All district office special education staff should deliver the same message and consistently interpret the manual with full agreement; this will ensure consistency of special education implementation in the district.

Nova Academy Early College High Charter School

The district requested Educational Strategic Planning to evaluate the status the Nova Academy Charter. Nova Academy, a California is a nonprofit benefit corporation, opened in 2005 in partnership with Olive Crest, one of the West Coast's premier children's charities, with the keen desire to provide hope and an even playing field for foster and at-risk students, a population who face seemingly insurmountable odds. The Charter School's goals continue to be for students to not only achieve a high school diploma, but also to earn college credit in an academically challenging nurturing environment.

The MOU has a section outlined: PLAN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES/504.

The Charter School has elected to be deemed a public school of the District for special education purposes. A child with disabilities attending the Charter School shall receive special education instruction or designated instruction and services, or both, in the same manner as a child with disabilities who attends another public school of that district.

Also in accordance with Education Coder Section 47646, as a charter school that is deemed a public school of the District for purposes of special education, NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella is required to contribute an equitable share of its charter school block grant funding to support district-wide special education instruction and services, including, but not limited to, special education and instruction and services for pupils with disabilities enrolled in NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella.

All special education services to be provided to NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella students beyond the services to be performed by general education personnel and/or the type provided by general school site administrate at District schools, will be performed by employees, consultants, or the representatives of the District. The District shall be solely responsible for hiring and direct the individuals or entities to provide such special education services to NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella students.

The NOVA MOU with CVUSD is very clearly outlined regrading funding for special education services to be provide at the charter school site by the district. The district has agreed to provide special education services for NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella, consistent with the services it provides at its public schools. The charter school shall contribute a prorate share of its school funding to support the District unfunded special education costs (general fund support).

The district as outlined and agreed upon with the MOU, states that the District shall be responsible for all costs related to the special education services needed at NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella student in the same manner as any other students of the District, in accordance with Education Code Section 47646.

NOVA Academy 2018-19 Grades 9-12

Enrollment	Special Education Students	IA	Teacher FTE
220	11	2 FTE	.5

Instructional Assistants (IA's) are full time district employees with full benefits. SLP and School Psychologist services are provided a small percentage of the time to identified schools with IEPs. The program is a blended program servicing SDC/RSP.

Recommendations:

The district should consider:

1. Assuring at the end of each fiscal year, the district calculates NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella pro-rate share of the District-wide general fund support for that year as calculated by the total unfunded special education costs of the District (including those costs attributable to NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella).
2. The district should provide an estimate of NOVA Academy ECHS-Coachella's share of the general fund support for the following year by June 30 of each year for budgeting purposes.
3. The District Special Education Department should monitor the referrals and assure all interventions in the general education programs at the charter school are fully implemented prior to placement into special education programs.
4. Keep in mind: Special education is a SERVICE and not a PLACE

Organizational Staffing

The district has requested in addition to the scope of study to briefly review the administrative structure of the special education department. In comparison of other districts of comparable size in Riverside County, Alvord, Palm Springs, Val Verde the district's administrative structure as the director and coordinator level is consistent with that of the comparison districts. However, the district is understaffed by program specialists. The CVUSD does not employ program specialists, as compared to the neighboring districts of similar size have between two and four. Therefore, based on this comparison, the district is understaffed at the program specialist level.

There is an essential need for the district to consider hiring program specialists that are important staff to carry out compliance, curriculum development, attend critical IEPs, and assist in communication of district wide cohesive comprehensive special education program. They can also assist the district in development and operation of a more cost effective and efficient ESY program, build capacity by providing training and support for teachers and instructional assistants, and ensure overall program support.

The department does not have a communication protocol. Staff indicated they are unsure on who to report to, what the chain of command is, and how decisions are made and communicated.

The district coordinator position should be reevaluated to assure the position and the duties are clearly defined between the director and coordinator. If the coordinator is spending most of his time attending IEP meetings and reacting to issues, this limits the coordinators ability to provide program oversight, staff training and staff support.

The use of the TOSA position varies among the comparison districts. CVUSD uses the two TOSA to attend IEP meetings and provide routine administrative duties. The district does not effectively utilize the TOSA in an effective manner. The role and responsibilities of TOSA should be redesigned and should clearly identify their role as instructional leaders.

Val Verde uses TOSAs as instruction coaches; and Palm Springs uses TOSAs to provide direct support for mild /moderate program.

There are 5 Bilingual Psych Technicians, and their duties include but not limited to the following:

- Schedule IEP's
- 30% of the time driving from school site to school site each day
- Oral interpret at IEP meetings
- Translate document from written English to Spanish
- Provides services to the following staff: OT, PT, DHH, APE, AT, psychologists

There was support for the technicians, but frustration and confusion between the district office technicians and the school sites. Staff consistently stated there is disconnect between the school sites and the district office technicians. It was stated that it is difficult to schedule IEP meetings at the school sites by the district office located psych technicians. There was unanimous stated support for these positions, but reorganization of duties would be helpful and provide for a more effective and efficient services

Recommendations

The district should consider:

1. Consider evaluating the duties and roles of the coordinator of special education.
2. Consider hiring program specialists to better match comparable districts.
3. Review secretarial/support and determine the special education department is appropriately staffed.
4. Develop a protocol for communication within the department and communicate with all school personnel.
5. Reassigning the psych technician roles. Option # 1 for the Psych Technician to case manage at the school site and provide the school site scheduling of IEP meeting and interpreting
6. Option #2 for the psych technician just do all the interpreting at a school site only, and sites would be responsible of scheduling, since 80% of the parents speak Spanish
7. Meet with the five psych technicians and develop a strategy that would be effective for school sites, staff, parents and district office staff.
8. Consider moving all related staff who have school assignments to offices at the school sites, thus reducing traveling time back and forward from schools to the district office.
9. Evaluate the role of the TOSA and make necessary changes to assure they provide direct support to special education teachers as instructional coaches.