



Eanes ISD
A Review of Services for Students with Disabilities
Completed June 2019 by Stetson & Associates
Update #1: August 20, 2019

The Stetson Program Review/Audit was completed in June and was presented to the Board at that time. Over the summer, the special education department engaged in activities to address several of the items in the review. This memo outlines what has been accomplished thus far and is broken into the five themes outlined in the report specifically focusing on the recommendations in each theme. There are recommendations that are not addressed, and those items will be the focus of future conversations with the input and collaboration from other stakeholders.

To date, the Executive Summary has been shared with all campus principals and a vast majority of special education staff. At the mandatory Special Education Academy held for special education staff this summer, attendees were given thirty minutes to review the Executive Summary. The staff then participated in five rotations discussing each of the five themes. Information was collected from the staff on ideas related to the recommendations. This information will all be collated and shared to help inform next steps. In consultation with the Special Education Working Group, I would like to host a community event with the same format to gather additional thoughts and ideas about moving the department forward.

Theme 1: A Common Vision Across All Stakeholders with a Philosophy of Shared Responsibilities for All Learners that Fosters a Climate of Mutual Respect and Trust.

As a department, we focused on language specifically dealing with labels, placement and programming over the summer. We acknowledged the need to bring more education/information to our general education counter-parts. This language and explanation of special education services was the focus of one of the break-out sessions at the New Teacher Institute.

In regards to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), all professional and paraprofessional staff attended a session on UDL at the district Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Conference. UDL was one of the four main foundational topics at the conference. This was the culmination



of two years of work developing a plan for the introduction of UDL to the whole faculty by the UDL implementation team. On-going activities and additional professional learning are planned for full implementation in three to five years.

All campus websites now have a link to the District Special Education Page.

<https://www.eanesisd.net/dept/sped>

We switched all of our internal websites to the new Google Sites to help staff access the sites more easily and make better use of this resource.

Theme 2: Instructional Excellence with a Full Continuum of Supports and Services that are Collaborative, Inclusive, and Foster a Climate of Mutual Respect and Trust

During the day of teacher in-service where special education teachers with job-alike responsibilities gathered, we held a session on collaborative teaching strategies with those serving as collaborative teachers this year. We realize that without the general education teachers, the training is not nearly as effective. However, we were able to present consistent information to our special education teachers K – 12.

A new rotation was added to the New Teacher Institute focusing on inclusive schools practices. This session was presented by Molly May and Linda Rawlings. The focus was not only on students with disabilities and information brought forth from the Inclusive Culture Committee; but, we also shared information on a broader view of inclusion from discussions from the Community Forum. This session was well received and allowed us to address the culture of inclusion for the first time with this group of stakeholders.

As master schedules were developed over the summer, to the extent practicable, campus and special education leadership worked to develop common planning times for collaborative pairs.

Also during “job-alike day,” specific training was provided to our modified/resource teachers with a focus on progress monitoring to help close some of the academic gaps between typically developing peers and students with disabilities. This training again helps with fidelity of implementation across campuses.



Theme 3: Positive, Collaborative, and Respectful Relationships with Parents

This theme was not specifically addressed over the summer since it really focuses on on-going communication strategies with parents. There were many ideas generated from the staff during the focus groups at the Special Education Academy in this area. Additionally, again in consultation with the Special Education Working Group, I would like for this to be a focus area for our work this year. I want to collaborate with the group and other parents to figure out the best format, timing, and topics in terms of increased communication.

Theme 4: Effective and Efficient Use of Personnel and Capital Resources

During the “job-alike day,” all life skills staff, teachers and paraprofessionals were introduced to a new metric for evaluating quality indicators of a life skills program/classroom. Mechanisms for support and a schedule for observations and team discussions were established. This helps not only with ensuring consistency among campuses, but it also reinforces research-based practices. One practical implication would be to make sure staff are being utilized to the fullest extent possible since this program is very staff intensive.

Also, during this day, all behavior support staff, teachers and paraprofessionals, were trained or re-trained on a behavior matrix used to help make individual student driven decisions on levels of support. Again, this enhances alignment among the campuses.

A guidance document and subsequent analysis documents were also developed over the summer around the use of 1:1 teaching assistants, and this was shared with all staff. These documents combined research around the use of 1:1 staff and the positive and negative implications of having a 1:1 staff assigned to a student. There is now a set procedure with information that must be gathered as a team and timelines for making a request.

Theme 5: Compliance with Local, State, and Federal Mandates

A large component of the Special Education Academy was focused on four main compliance issues identified in the report. Following Stetson’s recommendations and working with our software company, we instituted a new way to document time in special education versus general education on the IEP schedule page to make it easier to interpret and more accurately reflect a student’s schedule. We did not change any student’s instructional arrangements, but



going forward, the way time is documented should be easier for parents or other school districts to understand.

Additionally, we trained on the documentation required for the signature page to again bring alignment across the district. Also, we reviewed best practices for writing Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFPs) and goals and objectives.

Lastly, we also discussed the importance of not only knowing student's accommodations and modifications, which was a strength in the report, but having systematic documentation. We trained on this element and provided several systems for teachers to use to provide this documentation. We informed the staff there would be follow-up in all compliance areas.

There were many recommendations made throughout the report, and this list of accomplishments which occurred during the past two months, is only the starting point of addressing concerns and staying on the path of continuous improvement. As stated earlier, much of this work cannot be done in isolation by the special education department. The community, administration, general education staff and in a few instances, the school board, must work collaboratively to institute some of the changes recommended.

As the year progresses, I will keep all stakeholders apprised of long and short term goals, progress and achievements.