

AUSD Begins Process to Address Disproportionality in Special Education

The Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) has initiated a formal process to address the fact that a higher percentage of African American students have been identified as “disabled” and in need of special education services than their white peers for the last three years.

Such “significant disproportionality” has been a topic of concern across the state and country for decades, as the long-term impacts can include loss of instructional time and access to rigorous academics, social and emotional suffering, and reduced opportunities for post-secondary academic and career success.

The California Department of Education (CDE) identified two (of a possible 21) indicators on which AUSD has significant disproportionality and has directed the district to take a number of steps to analyze and address the situation, including:

Develop and submit a Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) Plan

A CCEIS plan outlines services and supports in **general education** to help students who need additional academic or behavioral aid in order to be successful in school. These early interventions are made available **prior** to a student’s assessment for a disability and are meant to benefit any struggling student, and in particular African-American students, who are most affected. CCEIS supports may include professional development, educational and behavioral evaluations, and various types of interventions. AUSD needs to submit that plan by December 15, 2020. Fifteen percent of AUSD’s special education budget will be deferred to the general education budget this year to complete those activities that are specific to general education *before* a student’s referral to an assessment for disability.

Convene a CCEIS Stakeholder Team

This team is responsible for:

- Reviewing the root causes of significant disproportionality based on qualitative and quantitative data
- Prioritizing the foundational issues and trends exhibited in the data and
- working collaboratively in whole and small groups to identify activities that can disrupt disproportionate outcomes for African-American students
- Collecting data to monitor progress among African-American students
- Identifying the modifications needed to guarantee student success

AUSD is committed to convening a diverse team that represents our African American community and includes parents/guardians with students currently enrolled in AUSD, teacher-leaders, site administration, district-level leaders, and the larger community. To apply to be on the team, please fill out this survey: [Interest in Participating on CCEIS/SEP Stakeholder Team](#)

by 9/25/20. The selection process will prioritize stakeholders who best represent the interests of African American students most affected by disproportionality in our district.

Develop a Special Education Plan

The Special Education Plan (SEP) is part of AUSD's mandate from the CDE to improve outcomes on ten unmet Federal Performance Indicators. The plan requires an interdisciplinary team to conduct a root cause analysis of each unmet target and identify activities to improve outcomes.

This plan focuses primarily on addressing a student's referral for assessment of disability and special education, as well as a district's assessment practices, assessment tools, and administration. The SEP focuses on the processes and practices that lead to a student's assessment of disability. This may include investigating:

- Teachers' referrals of students to school site Coordination of Services Teams (COST)
- COST outcomes
- SST outcomes
- Parents' requests for assessments of disability,
- Assessment tools
- Qualifying features of disability for special education

This Special Education Plan is due to the Northern California Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) on December 1, 2020.

"AUSD has taken a number of steps over the years to address the issue of significant disproportionality," says Chief Student Support Officer Kirsten Zazo, "including developing restorative practices, Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, working with the National Equity Project, and setting up Coordination of Services Teams. The CDE mandate gives us an opportunity to take a deeper dive into the data and begin to create a plan that addresses and intervenes in the root causes of that disproportionality."

For more information, please see AUSD's "[Information on Significant Disproportionality](#)" web page, which includes FAQs and other background information. Throughout the fall, staff will also post links to Board of Education presentations about significant disproportionality, as well as the agendas and minutes for the CCEIS Stakeholder Team meetings.