

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

## Strategic Plan

The AUSD Strategic Plan for Special Education outlines the priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps that will promote a high quality, responsive support system for all students with special needs.



The **Strategic Plan** is designed to identify key services and supports that must be in place to ensure that all students with special needs have the highest quality, fiscally responsible academic and behavioral programs in the least restrictive, most inclusive environment possible. The Strategic Plan is organized around five priorities that compose the backbone of a highly effective special education program. A detailed Special Education Program Guide will be developed to provide guidance to staff on program implementation including policies, procedures, and program evaluation.

## Program Priorities

- 1 **Intervention and Identification**
- 2 **Service Delivery Model**
- 3 **Systems of Support**
- 4 **Leadership and Communication**
- 5 **Monitoring and Compliance**

## Special Education Program Mission

We declare the mission of the Special Education Program in Alameda Unified School District, in partnership with families and the community, is to *support, prepare, and empower* our diverse learners in a least restrictive, most inclusive environment that is **safe, culturally responsive, and academically rigorous** and that is taught and supported by *highly trained* professionals so that all students can participate meaningfully and excel as contributing members of our community.

## The Strategic Plan Team Members

A representative group composed of parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, and community members was charged with the development of the Strategic Plan. The team worked over a one year period, spending more than 20 hours studying district and state data, FCMAT report recommendations, current research, and program exemplars to collaboratively write this plan. They have identified the most critical work to be completed over the next three years. The members of the team were:

**Parents:**

Jolene Barcinas  
Lindsey DeHart  
Andrea Doherty  
Anne Krainer  
Dede Lewis  
Christina Strena  
Sarah Taylor

**Community Members:**

Laurie McLachlan  
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**Support Providers:**

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Kate Lloyd

**Site Administrators:**

Kevin Baker  
Kim Kelly  
Jesse Woodward

**District Administrators:**

Joanne Murphy  
Kirsten Zazo

We would like to offer a special **thank you** to the members of the Planning Team. We appreciate their time, passion, and willingness to engage in difficult conversations. Their hard work produced this Strategic Plan which will guide the district in the years ahead and will change the way we meet the needs of our special education students.

## Special Education Program Beliefs

With passion and conviction, we declare:

1. All students will thrive by being given access to appropriate and evidence-based curriculum that educates the whole child - intellectually, socially, and emotionally.
2. Children with special needs have the right to be included and valued in our school communities and to be free from discrimination.
3. Teachers will be provided with training and curriculum that are evidence-based and which enable students to achieve their full learning potential.
4. The District will fund and support continuing education for teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents in the areas of inclusion and research-based practices.



# 1

## Student Intervention and Identification

### Goal:

All students will access an articulated, systematic intervention system that provides multiple tiers of universal, targeted, effective support that is communicated clearly to staff and families.

#### Strategy 1: Fully develop and implement a multi-tiered academic and behavioral system of support.

**Action Step 1:** Identify and ensure the use of research-based core instructional strategies that are responsive, proactive, evidence-based, and implemented with fidelity.

**Action Step 2:** Create and implement a research-based system to address the social-emotional needs of students, including continued implementation of PBIS with fidelity across all schools.

**Action Step 3:** Create and implement a flexible, continual assessment system where data is collected and accessible using universal screening tools and formative assessments for ELA and Math with cut points for decision making regarding tiered intervention services.

**Action Step 4:** Incorporate and increase the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in all learning environments to create greater access to core curriculum prior to the need for intervention.

**Action Step 5:** Clearly define and implement the elementary and secondary Student Study Team (SST) process across all schools.

**Action Step 6:** Implement the Coordination of Services Team (COST) process consistently in all schools to proactively direct academic and behavioral, social-emotional interventions for students based on data collection and formative assessment.

**Action Step 7:** Identify and ensure the use of research-based Tier 1 supports and interventions across all schools and content areas that provide student support in varied settings (i.e., in-class, pull-out, small group, computer-based).

**Action Step 8:** Identify and implement with fidelity the use of research-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions that respond immediately to student's needs for an appropriate and defined period of time.

#### Strategy 2: Infuse supports and embed services (Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, Psychology, etc) throughout general education Tier 1, 2 and 3 programs.

**Action Step 1:** Analyze effective models that we already have and other research-based models that provide time for service providers to support Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs and develop an implementation plan based upon the analysis.

**Action Step 2:** Analyze current caseloads and workloads to allow for more Tier 1, 2, and 3 support that is both efficient and cost effective and develop an implementation plan based upon the analysis.

**Action Step 3:** Provide co-teaching and planning time between General Education and Special Education staff.

**Action Step 4:** Establish a referral protocol for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy services accessed via the COST process.

#### Strategy 3: Implement consistent professional learning for teachers and administrators related to early intervention and identification of needed supports.

**Action Step 1:** Create a communication system that includes case managers, general and special education teachers, counselors, nurses, and principal to prepare for student enrollment in classes or school highlighting individual needs across school settings.

**Action Step 2:** All staff will participate in ongoing professional learning and collaboration focused on the COST process, MTSS, UDL, Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 intervention strategies.



## 2

### Service Delivery Model

#### Goal:

Provide a continuum of services that develop the whole child using research-based approaches, informed by outcomes that maximize inclusion in the general education classroom; supports include meeting student needs for identified direct and indirect services.

#### Strategy 1: Define and develop an AUSD continuum of services for all students.

**Action Step 1:** Define and develop program descriptions throughout the district that describe and communicate our coordinated continuum of services.

**Action Step 2:** Develop and implement a professional development plan to ensure all staff understand the district's continuum of services.

**Action Step 3:** Develop elementary and secondary program rubrics to assist with student placement decisions.

**Action Step 4:** Standardize programs (i.e., Mild/Moderate, Mod./Severe, Autism) for eligibility, enrollment, and support across the district.

**Action Step 5:** Develop a monitoring process (i.e., rubrics, lists, etc.) to monitor service delivery models across all sites in AUSD including a monitoring system to ensure when a child receives services and for how long.

**Action Step 6:** Define and develop outcome-based measurement tools to monitor overall student success (i.e., annual growth, access to the core classes, electives, and diploma and certificate programs).

#### Strategy #2: Provide access to quality educational opportunities and services in the least restrictive environment for all identified students.

**Action Step 1:** Program students with IEPs in every master schedule FIRST to ensure access to core curriculum classes, including a guaranteed seat in general education for SDC students.

**Action Step 2:** Maximize and monitor Special Education student participation in all academic and social aspects of the general education setting.

**Action Step 3:** Ensure that all students in special education are included in extracurricular activities and collect data to determine participation.

**Action Step 4:** Review all programs and classes to ensure they address IEP goals.

**Action Step 5:** Provide ability awareness training for peers of Special Education students that teaches respect for all and values differences.

#### Strategy 3: Develop an on-going research-based, sustainable staff professional development model that is responsive to student needs and utilizes Professional Learning Communities and collaboration between general education and special education staff that is based on data and includes coaching and feedback.

**Action Step 1:** Conduct a site-based needs assessment related to topics of professional development for all stakeholder groups (i.e., co-teaching and collaboration, behavior management, communication strategies, evidence-based practices, MTSS, and UDL).

**Action Step 2:** Create a comprehensive, fully funded professional development plan (that spans 3 - 5 years) based on the needs assessment results.

**Action Step 3:** Create a professional development calendar that reflects the needs of each stakeholder group (special and general education teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, all specialists, and parents).

**Action Step 4:** Provide ongoing and consistent feedback and support regarding professional development tools and skills by using a consistent district coaching model across grade levels and content areas to ensure teacher competence and confidence.

#### Strategy 4: Utilize an ongoing assessment system to monitor student growth toward grade level and/or content standards, IEP, and 504 goals, including behavior goals as the service delivery model is implemented.

**Action Step 1:** Develop and/or refine the use of pre and post assessments to inform service delivery programs.

**Action Step 2:** Provide professional development to all staff in the use of progress monitoring tools to support ways to respond to student's needs.

**Action Step 3:** Refine the use of all progress monitoring tools and formative assessments to make adjustments to instruction on an ongoing basis in the IEP.



### 3

## Systems of Support

### Goal:

An articulated and consistent system of support is available equitably across the district to ensure the Strategic Plan for Special Education is successful.

#### **Strategy 1: Develop and implement effective procedures and protocols with fidelity.**

**Action Step 1:** Create and continuously update a procedural manual for implementing all aspects of the Special Education program and ensure that it is accessible to all staff.

**Action Step 2:** Create a parent-friendly procedural manual for community access, complete with program descriptions.

#### **Strategy 2: Implement a staffing plan that will ensure the Special Education service delivery model is successful.**

**Action Step 1:** Redefine the role of each staff member to meet students' needs: general and special education teachers, service providers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and site and district administrators.

**Action Step 2:** Develop a plan to recruit and retain high quality teachers and staff with expertise in both content and learning strategies.

**Action Step 3:** Design and implement a staffing system that tracks teacher and support staff assignments and caseloads based on student need to monitor and maintain equitable staffing levels.

#### **Strategy 3: Collaboration and support will be prioritized across the district.**

**Action Step 1:** Collaboration between general education and special education staff will be scheduled at sites and between sites at least 4 times per year.

**Action Step 2:** Utilize district coaching to improve instructional practices at all sites across the district.

#### **Strategy 4: Ensure the financial resources are allocated efficiently and appropriately to support student and program needs.**

**Action Step 1:** Include the resources needed for implementation of the Strategic Plan in both the District's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and in each school's Single School Plan for Student Achievement.

**Action Step 2:** Analyze and define facility resources needed to align with student and program needs (e.g., motor fitness, calm spaces).

**Action Step 3:** With assistance of the Maintenance and Technology Departments, perform a comprehensive inventory of special education resources at every school to identify current status of furniture, curriculum materials, supplies, and storage spaces and develop a plan to ensure equity across sites and programs.

**Action Step 4:** Identify (including a cost analysis) and provide technology infrastructure to ensure that the Special Education delivery model is fully supported.

#### **Strategy 5: Deliver core curriculum including appropriate modifications and accommodations to meet the needs of all learners.**

**Action Step 1:** Clearly define curriculum for preschool through adult transition for all content areas, including replacement curriculum.

**Action Step 2:** Explore and recommend accessible technology and curriculum to enhance academic support for all general education and special education students, including credit recovery and universal design for learning strategies.





# 4

## Leadership and Communication

### Goal:

Create a welcoming and well-informed school community with high levels of trust, respect, and collaboration between and among parents, teachers, and staff.

**Strategy 1: Provide transparent, honest two-way communication systems between staff, families, and the community that are consistent, authentic, and responsive.**

**Action Step 1:** Identify and document the most effective channels of communication and greatest gaps in communication.

**Action Step 2:** Create and utilize effective communication tools (website, newsletters, and other resources) that provide centralized communication and multiple opportunities for dialogue and feedback.

**Action Step 3:** Utilize the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to ensure effective communication within the Special Education Local Plan Area.

**Action Step 4:** Continue to refine and promote the special education webpage to disseminate information regarding all areas of special education.

**Action Step 5:** Create and implement a Strategic Plan "Road Show" to present and actively engage staff, parents, and the community in learning about the Special Education Strategic Plan.

**Action Step 6:** Ensure that all major communications related to the Strategic Plan are translated into necessary languages.

**Action Step 7:** Provide on-going (3-4 times per year) parent information forums regarding all aspects of special education programs, including follow-through on areas of concerns voiced by parents and the community.

**Action Step 8:** Include the following topics of information on AUSD Special Education webpage: programs and services, IEP process, early intervention, 504 process, transportation, transition, complaint procedures, tiered support systems, etc.

**Strategy 2: Provide responsive student-focused leadership that builds positive relationship with parents, students, teachers, and staff.**

**Action Step 1:** Train leadership at all levels to understand special education needs, processes, legalities, and community: district, site, parents, community, and staff.

**Action Step 2:** Define the leadership structure and roles that clearly delineate the roles for site and district administrators (including the Director) to take responsibility for all appropriate aspects of the Strategic Plan.

**Action Step 3:** District leadership will establish a clear, efficient process to gather and respond to parent and community feedback and concerns, including the Special Education communication flowchart.

**Action Step 4:** Utilize and enhance Alternative Dispute Resolution proactively to mitigate disputes in a timely manner. Train staff to use the ADR prior to Due Process.

**Action Step 5:** Define and establish "Inclusive Ambassadors" program to train students and staff.





# 5

## Monitoring and Compliance

### Goal:

Establish an accountability and compliance process that ensures fidelity to the Strategic Plan which must be included and prioritized in the multi-year LCAP planning process.

**Strategy 1: Form a diverse Steering Committee to objectively monitor the implementation of the Special Education Strategic Plan.**

**Action Step 1:** Identify a diverse group of members for the Steering Committee to represent the entire community.

**Action Step 2:** Design and develop an accountability protocol that will allow for an objective review of the Strategic Plan effectiveness and measure outcomes.

**Action Step 3:** Identify and annually publish areas of improvement and continued growth in implementing the Strategic Plan.



**Strategy 2: Develop a Special Education Self Review (SESR) process with success criteria that will hold all stakeholders accountable.**

**Action Step 1:** Implement the self-review process (SESR) twice each year to monitor the status of compliance related to the development and implementation of IEPs.

**Action Step 2:** Share the results of the SESR process for each school and a district-wide composite report annually.

**Action Step 3:** Provide professional development and follow-up support for all staff, based on areas identified for growth related to the IEP process and self-review.

**Action Step 4:** Establish cross-site, multi-disciplinary teams to coordinate and complete the self-review process in the fall and spring.

### The **Steering**

**Committee** will be charged with overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan and communicating the progress annually to the Board of Education, staff, and the community.



### **Service Delivery Model:**

An instructional delivery model that provides individualized services embedded into a variety of instructional settings such as General Education, General Education with Support, Learning Center, Self-Contained Programs, and/or Related Services.

## References and Literature

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- Huberman, Mattie & Parrish, Tom. (2011). *Lessons From California Districts Showing Unusually Strong Academic Performance for Students in Special Education*.
- Cortiella, C., Burnette, J. (2008). *Challenging Change: How Schools and Districts are Improving the Performance of Special Education Students*. New York, NY: National Center for Learning Disabilities.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2014). *CEC Response to Disproportionality*.

## Planning Team Web Page

The Special Education Planning Team met for 10 sessions over the course of a full year. The sessions included analyzing district data (academic, program, and budget), reviewing research and exemplary programs in the state and nation, and having passionate and complex discussions for improving programs and services for Alameda students with special needs. Each session was carefully archived on the Special Education Planning Team sub-webpage so that members of the public and staff could follow the progress of the group as they developed the Strategic Plan. Agendas, notes from the discussions, and reference material from each session were posted on the webpage immediately following each session. To access the Planning Team webpage, visit [www.alamedaunified.org](http://www.alamedaunified.org) and click Special Education under Departments. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the link to the Planning Team webpage.





## Glossary

- **ADR** - Alternative Dispute Resolution: the use of methods such as mediation and arbitration to resolve a dispute instead of litigation
- **All Staff** - general education and special education teachers, Paraprofessionals, specialists, administrators
- **CAC** - Community Advisory Committee: a committee that advises staff and districts regarding the Local Plan for Special Education, assists districts with parent education, and promotes public understanding of special needs students regarding the Local Plan for Special Education
- **COST** - Coordination of Services Team: a tiered and coordinated approach that systematically identifies at-risk student, develops comprehensive multidisciplinary plans, and monitors student progress
- **EBP** - Evidence-Based Practices: practices and intervention strongly supported by evidence from well-conducted research studies, based on high quality data analysis; those instructional practices and interventions that have been shown by research to be most effective
- **ELA** - English Language Arts
- **FCMAT** - Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team: a team of experts that provide assistance to school district in areas where improvement is needed
- **Formative Assessment** - a process teachers and students use during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies
- **IEP** - Individualized Education Plan: written, legal document stating goals and objectives for students receiving Special Education services
- **LCAP** - Local Control and Accountability Plan: a process where a district must engage parents, educators, employees, and the community to establish plans that align to state LCAP requirements
- **LRE** - Least Restrictive Environment (most inclusive environment): Students with disabilities are educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students without disabilities
- **MTSS** - Multi-Tiered System of Support: an integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on Common Core State Standards, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student's needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for students' academic, behavioral, and social success
- **PBIS** - Positive Behavior Intervention Support: an approach to assist school staff in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavioral supports for all students. It is a proactive approach to establishing behavioral supports and a social culture needed for all students.
- **SDC** - Special Day Class: Self-contained classroom where individualized student needs are met
- **SESR** - Special Education Self Review: a process whereby a district audits random student IEPs to determine compliance, identify training needs, and ensure that issues and needs are addressed
- **SST** - Student Support/Success Team: a school-based, problem solving group who provide assistance to teachers that focus on addressing concerns of the team and provide targeted modifications and intervention suggestions for the teacher to try before a referral is made for special education instruction
- **Tier 1** - General education instruction (meets the needs of 80% of students)
- **Tier 2** - Supplemental intervention for any student in need of academic support (10-15% of students)
- **Tier 3** - Intensive intervention that replaces general education support (5 -10% of students)
- **UDL** - Universal Design for Learning: a design model that teachers use to ensure students have a variety of pathways to access content