



Special Education and MTSS Department Program Review

Pine-Richland School District

June 2022

The information contained in this report is provided by the Pine-Richland World Language Department for general purposes only. While this report serves as a strategic approach to curriculum planning, recommendations must be considered with respect to all programs provided by Pine-Richland School District.

Special Education and MTSS Department Program Review

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Executive Summary

The mission of the Pine-Richland School District is to *Focus on Learning for Every Student Every Day*. Within the PRSD Strategic Plan, long-term and short-term goals outlined in the Teaching and Learning category form the foundation for continuous improvement. One of the short-term goals for 2016 - 2017 was to design and pilot an in-depth program review process for two of our departments (i.e., Science and Health & Physical Education). That initial work led to a final report and set of recommendations for program improvement. The process itself was refined and used in 2017 - 2018 in the areas of Mathematics and Business & Computer Science. For the 2018 - 2019 school year, we reviewed the Social Studies Department and also modified the process for programming related to gifted and highly achieving students. The sequence of departmental study and implementation for 2019-2023 is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Strategic Plan: Mini-Engine

2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022 Revised	2022 - 2023 Revised
Pine-Richland School District Strategic Plan			
Teaching and Learning			
2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
Refine and strengthen each element of the model for teaching and learning with a focus on integration.			
	Educational Continuum (During COVID-19)	Educational Model Transition and Transformation (Post COVID-19)	
In-Depth Program Review: Study (English, Library and Music)	In-Depth Program Review: Study (Special Education, World Language, and Art)	In-Depth Program Review: Study (Special Education, World Language, and Art)	In-Depth Program Review: Study (H/PE, Counseling & Health Svcs., Family & Consumer Science)(Technology Education, Science)
In-Depth Program Review: Implement Recommendations and Resource Integration (Science, Health/PE, Math, B/CS, Gifted, SS)	In-Depth Program Review: Implement (Math, B/CS, Gifted, SS, English, Library, Music)	In-Depth Program Review: Implement (Math, B/CS, Gifted, SS, English, Library, Music)	In-Depth Program Review: Implement (English, Library, Music, Special Ed., W. Lang., Art, Health/PE, Counseling/Health Svcs., FCS)

This report outlines the process, findings, and recommendations from that work related to the **Special Education and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Programs**. As an organization, it is understood that the pace of change may be dependent upon the impact of that change on other aspects of the educational program. When conducting this work in an individual department or program, it is important and difficult to balance competing interests and constraints. The process model reflects this challenge as the “ripple effect” of balancing people, time and money. The committee utilized the action-priority matrix to evaluate each recommendation and established an implementation timeline with associated cost estimates. **Within the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model, we know that recommendations designed to meet the needs of students with special needs and/or requiring intervention or acceleration, must address all learning environments from the general education classroom, to a pull-out setting, to the potential for intervention or acceleration.**

One key element of the in-depth program review was the consideration of a program philosophy and vision (Figure 2). Since this parallel process was being applied to students demonstrating certain needs or characteristics - versus a content area - a different approach was given to the idea of a program philosophy or vision. **The very mission of the Pine-Richland School District is to focus on learning for every student every day.** It is the word “every” that makes this mission so challenging and worthwhile. Students in our Special Education and/or MTSS programs are reflected in the word “every.” As a result, there is not a “special image or phrase” for this work. Our image of “every” is reflected in the words and concepts of our district image.

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Figure 2

This report outlines the process, findings, and recommendations from that work related to the **Special Education and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Programs**. As an organization, it is understood that the pace of change may be dependent upon the impact of that change on other aspects of the educational program. The committee utilized the action-priority matrix to evaluate each recommendation and established an implementation timeline with associated cost estimates. **Within the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model, we know that recommendations designed to meet the needs of students with special needs and/or requiring intervention or acceleration, must address all learning environments from the general education classroom to a pull-out setting to the potential for intervention or acceleration.**

Recommendation Overview

Recommendation #1: Philosophy and Vision

1. Adopt and widely communicate the specific areas of alignment and focus between the characteristics and individualized needs of students participating in our special education and/MTSS programs and the existing PRSD vision to internal and external stakeholders.

Recommendation #2: Vertical Alignment and Approach

1. Enhance and promote a systematic, K-12 approach for providing special education supports and inclusive practices for all learners.
 - a. Restructure and expand AS/LSS/ES (e.g. multi-disability) program locations (hubs) to ensure access to a full spectrum of intervention supports from K to 12+.
 - b. Develop a K-12 scope and sequence for students in the autistic and life skills support programs (e.g. inclusive of video-based curricular resources).
 - c. Refine K-12+ co-teaching practices through ongoing professional development and making student placement decisions based on data and IEP goals.

Recommendation #3: Enhancing Transition Services

1. Strengthen and expand transition services for students aged 14-21 to include self-advocacy, pre-vocational, post-secondary education, employment, and independent living skills.

Recommendation #4: MTSS Programming for all Students

1. Promote and implement best practices for communication, compliance, and progress monitoring to enhance programming effectiveness for MTSS.
 - a. Expand and align the K-12 Decision Trees with consistent cut points and resources embedded for Math, ELA, and SEL, with development of placement criteria (e.g. entrance/exit) into interventions/programs (e.g. Wilson, SpellRead, autism support, emotional support, life skills support) and provide professional development for staff.
 - b. Establish meeting schedules and/or structures that allow collaboration between building administrators, professional staff, support staff, and related service providers.

Recommendation #5: Literacy and Math Interventions

1. Strengthen and align **literacy interventions and teaching strategies** within Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the MTSS model.
 - a. Implement consistent phonics and phonemic awareness instruction at the Tier 1 level in grades K-3.
 - b. Provide ongoing professional development to interpret data collected from district quarterly assessment/screener such as STAR360 along with other interventions and how to use the results to inform differentiated instruction.
 - c. Evaluate current and new Tier 2 and Tier 3 vertically aligned intervention resources considering how effectiveness is measured (e.g., student growth data, movement toward Tier 1) and how the interventions are consistently implemented (fidelity). Determine how to most effectively integrate those interventions into a student's day understanding the unique structure of the secondary program.

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- d. Evaluate and modify the utilization of reading specialists and other staff in order to provide interventions (Tier 1, 2, 3) to students based on needs at all levels.
2. Strengthen and align **mathematics interventions and teaching strategies** within Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the MTSS model.
 - a. Implement consistent number sense, numerical operation, and basic fact fluency instruction at the Tier 1 level in grades K-5.
 - b. Enhance and refine tiered approach for providing math intervention in Grade K-3.
 - c. Identify, evaluate and select research based math intervention programs for qualified students for grades K-12+ in Tiers 2 and 3.
 - d. Revise the curriculum map to focus on essential skills across all tiers in order to increase student understanding of math concepts (Vertical Team, AIU recommendation).

Recommendation #6: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

1. Design and implement a structured K-12 SEL program to provide dedicated supports and services that address students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health skill development in Tier 1.
 - a. Develop district- and school-based SEL teams to review research, and develop the curricular framework, and ensure consistent implementation at each grade span and integrate these teams with existing teams (e.g. SAP, MTSS, and RAMS Way).
2. Design and implement a structured K-12 SEL program to provide dedicated supports and services that address students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health skill development in Tiers 2 and 3.
 - a. Provide more diverse therapies (e.g. art therapy, pet therapy, music therapy) and increase accessibility of one-on-one and group therapy at Tiers 2 and 3.
 - b. Restructure and expand ES/SEL program locations to ensure access to a full spectrum of intervention supports at the K-3 level.
 - c. Provide Tier 3 therapeutic interventions including individual and group therapeutic counseling utilizing evidence-based therapeutic approaches.

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In-Depth Program Review Process

The process for in-depth program review was developed in the 2016 - 2017 school year and has been refined through multiple cycles of improvement. The process was “paused” during the 2020 - 2021 school year given workforce capacity and response to the pandemic. The departments scheduled for that year were shifted to 2021 - 2022 with some modifications to the meeting schedule to accommodate pandemic-related constraints.

To help ensure a clear understanding of the systematic approach to program improvement, the following process diagram was developed and reviewed on a regular basis. Major elements of this image are further described below:

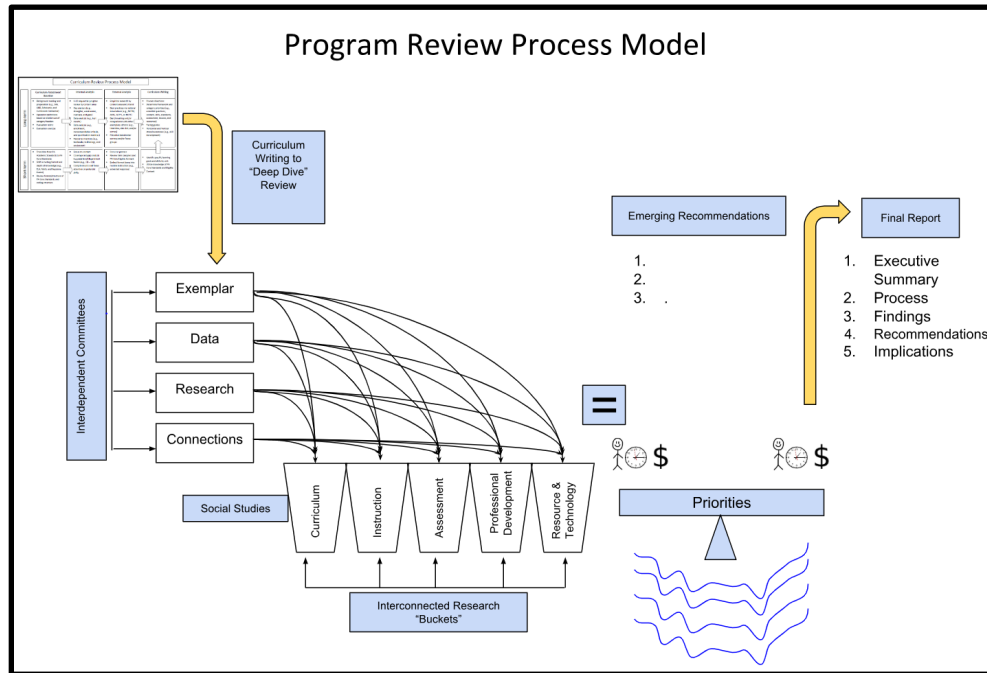


Figure 3. IDPR Process Model

Curriculum Writing to “Deep Dive”

Given the time and effort invested into curriculum writing at Pine-Richland from 2014 - 2016, it is important to understand the relationship of that work to the in-depth program review process. The two-year curriculum writing process was designed to capture the current content in a consistent format through vertical teams (e.g., units, big ideas, and learning goals). That process allowed the department to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Most of the attention was directed internally at a review of our district’s current structure and practices.

The **in-depth program review process has a broader focus** on all elements of the department. Importantly, the process was designed to emphasize a balance of internal needs and a review of best practices from external sources. It asks questions, such as, “Are we doing the right things?” or “Do we need to consider more significant changes in program design?” In the image above, the curriculum writing process is like a “springboard” to “dive” more deeply into the content area. The personnel, structure, and work were organized into four major sub-committees.

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In-Depth Special Education and MTSS Program Review Process

The process for in-depth program review for the Special Education and MTSS Programs **required a slightly different structure than the typical program review process**. As stated earlier, this process was being applied to students demonstrating certain needs or characteristics - versus a content area. Therefore, our process diagram was revised to reflect our unique task (Figure 4). Specific differences are reflected below:

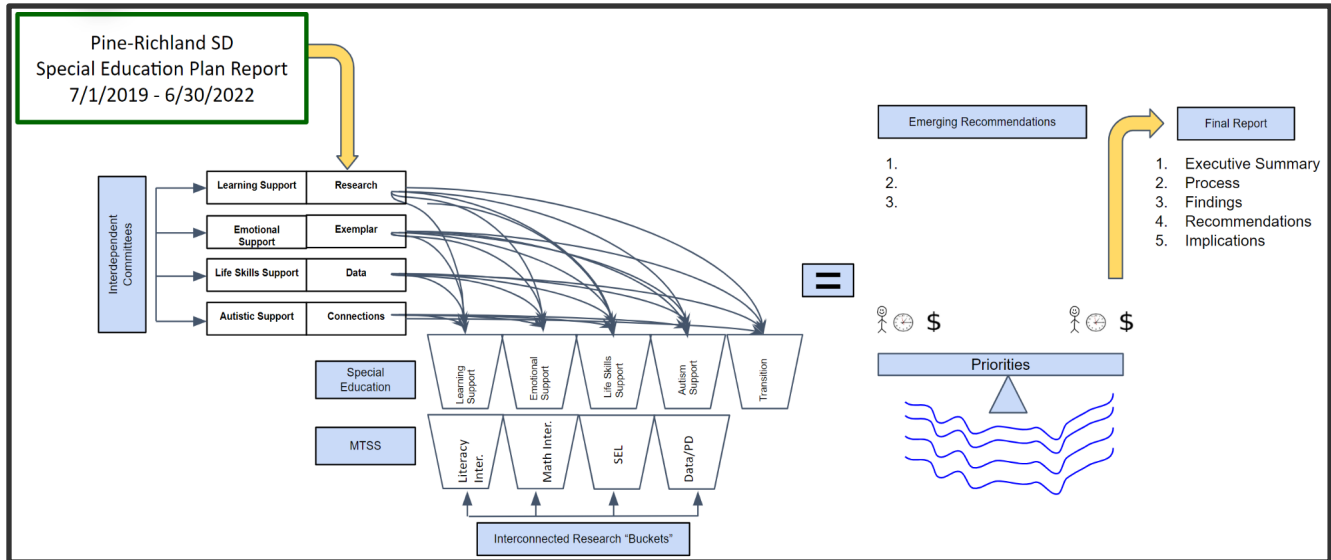


Figure 4

Different than a department or specific content area, the district's **Special Education Plan served as the springboard** for this work. The Special Education Plan is required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and must address a wide range of program elements. Since the delivery of services for special education students occurs in a wide range of settings, the composition of the expanded team was designed to serve as a representative sample of the overall teaching and paraprofessional staff. The addition of paraprofessionals was a new feature to this year's process.

Special Education and MTSS Program Review Design Model

We strongly believe that meaningful and lasting change requires engagement of all key stakeholders. The core team included several district office administrators, building principals/assistant principals based on vertical team assignment, school psychologists, academic leadership council members (i.e., department chairs), and teachers. The core team conducted the planning and thinking necessary to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the expanded team. The expanded team included all core team members and additional teachers, intervention specialists, and paraprofessionals to ensure representation by all buildings, levels, and types of support.

It is important to note that the expanded teams also used a systematic approach to listen to parents. Parent and community input was gathered during day and evening town hall sessions. Parents who were unable to attend those face-to-face meetings were able to submit comments electronically.

The Special Education and MTSS program is grounded in special education supports and interventions (Figure 5). Pennsylvania State regulations from Chapter 14 drive many aspects of the special education program; however, each school district can develop their unique processes for **complying** with those regulations as well as structures for providing

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student-specific **programming**. The committee used these two program categories to design the in-depth review model.

The expanded team was first divided into special education and MTSS teams. Within the MTSS team, a more traditional approach to in-depth program review was followed by organizing members into **four main subcommittees**: (1) Research; (2) Exemplar K-12 Schools/Districts/Programs; (3) Connections to Universities, Businesses, and the Community; and (4) Data and Information. We recognized quickly, however, that Connections to Universities, Businesses, and the Community was not a realistic fit for this program review. Instead we formed a second Exemplar subcommittee focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) while the original Exemplar committee focused on math and literacy interventions.

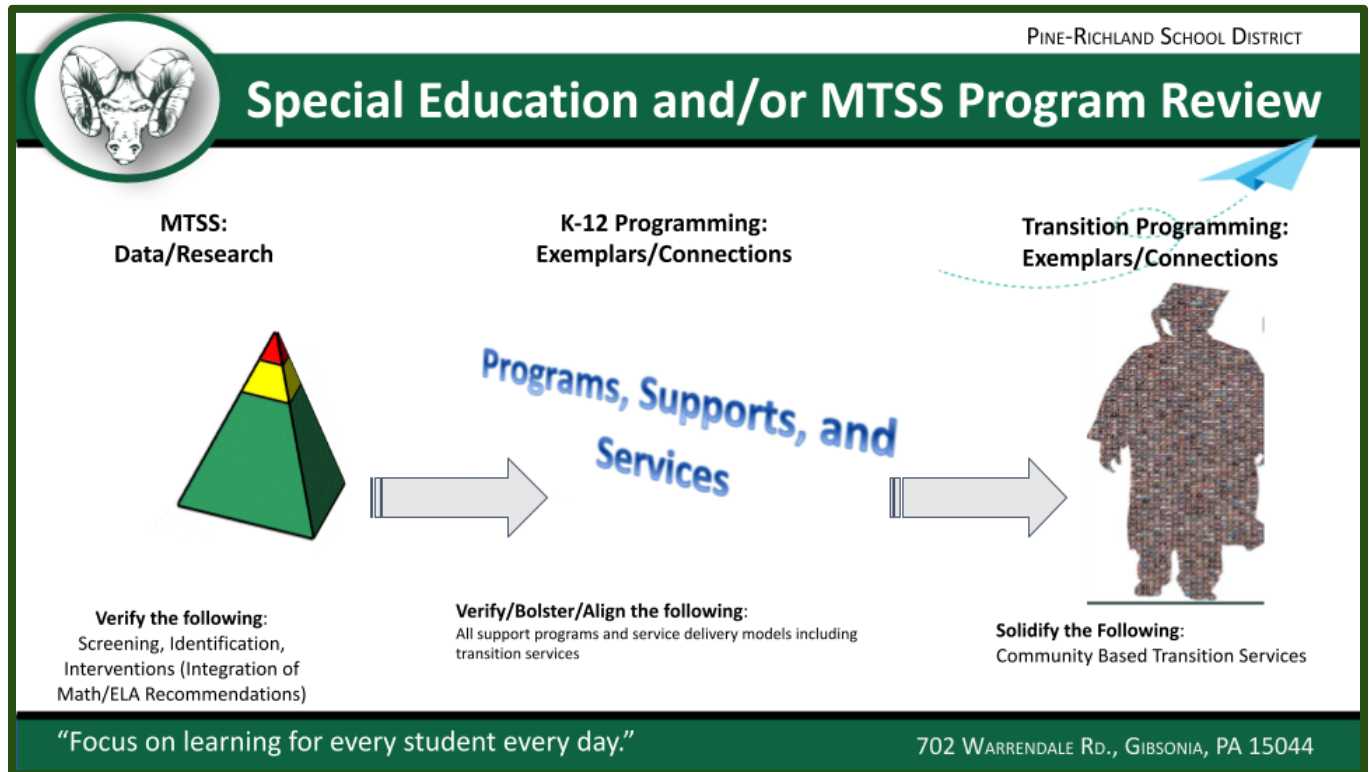


Figure 5

Within the special education team, we employed a jigsaw approach (Figure 6). We first formed subcommittees based on the most frequent support categories of Learning Support, Autistic Support, Emotional Support, and Life Skills Support. Within those committees, we conducted our initial planning. We then scheduled representatives from each of these subcommittees to participate in the traditional subcommittees (e.g., research, exemplar, etc.). After research within these subcommittees was completed, members returned to their original subcommittees of Learning Support, Autistic Support, Emotional Support, and Life Skills Support. We felt this approach would best create a cross-pollination of information to inform recommendations for strengthening each support group and the program overall.

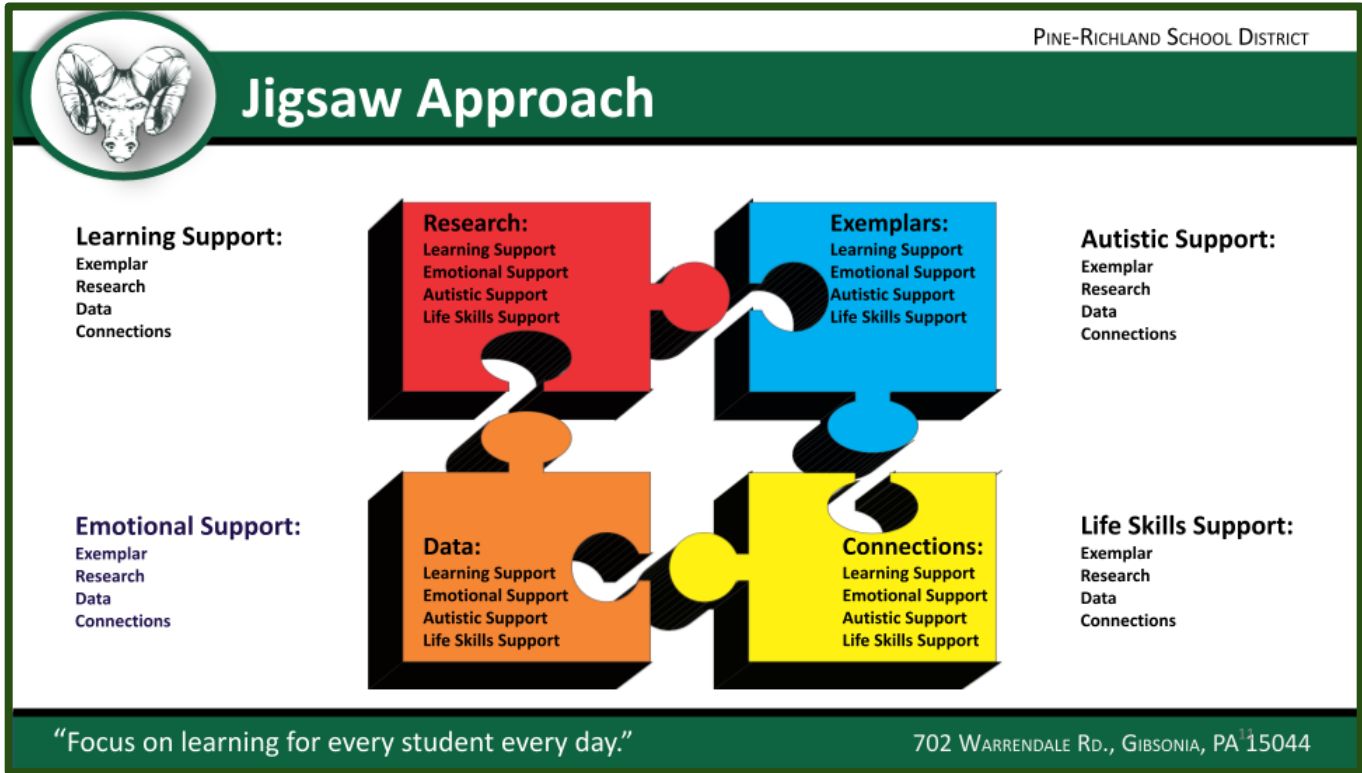


Figure 6

Research “Buckets”

As MTSS and special education program information was gathered by subcommittees, it was organized into key “buckets” for each program. **MTSS subcommittees** organized information into the following “buckets”: (1) Literacy Interventions; (2) Math Interventions; (3) Social Emotional Learning, and (4) Data and Professional Development. **Special Education subcommittees** organized information into the following “buckets”: (1) Learning Support; (2) Emotional Support; (3) Life Skills Support; (4) Autistic Support; and (5) Transition . With the goal of vertically strengthening each type of intervention and special education support category, we felt that the “buckets” should not be overcomplicated, and chose what seemed to be obvious. This turned out to be an appropriate approach as it helped focus committee members' thinking and engagement in the process. Importantly, the arrows on the bottom of the buckets also demonstrate the relationship between areas (i.e., no silos). The subcommittees’ learning and identification of information for the buckets were interconnected, as information from one area informed others. Based upon the information gathered through the bucket findings, a set of emerging recommendations was developed.

Emerging Recommendations

A systems thinking approach was critical to the in-depth program review process. The transition from “findings” to “emerging recommendations” required skills of synthesis, critical thinking, healthy debate, and communication. The entire expanded team used one set of lenses to review the list of internal strengths and weaknesses. The lenses refer to the four subcommittees. Some emerging recommendations were designed to improve current gaps and weaknesses. Other emerging recommendations were identified in the analysis of exemplary programs, universities, businesses, or in the research literature. The team brainstormed recommendations by identifying recurring themes, ideas, and opportunities for growth. The team then discussed, modified, and edited the recommendations. Emerging recommendations were consolidated into a draft. The expanded team worked with the draft to link the emerging

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recommendations to data provided by the subcommittees.

Balancing Priorities and Resources

The action-priority matrix evaluates the impact versus the effort of the emerging recommendations (Figure 4). Emerging recommendations were categorized as fill-ins, quick wins, major projects, and hard slogs. For example, a hard slog was used to categorize those recommendations that would require much effort but have little impact on student learning. As a system, the “ripple effect” of recommendations was built into the process model (Figure 5). This is further described in the next section.

Figure 7. Action Priority Matrix

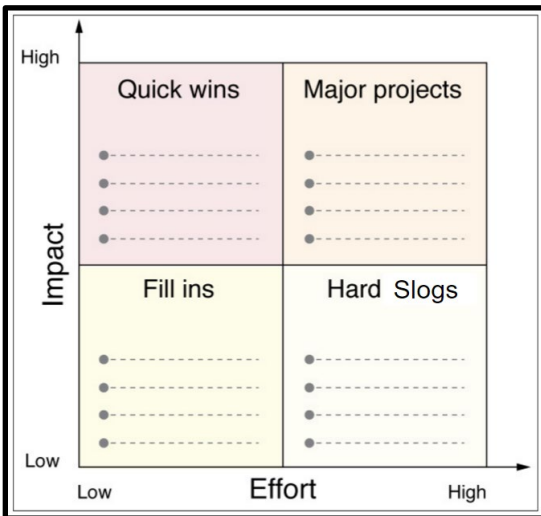
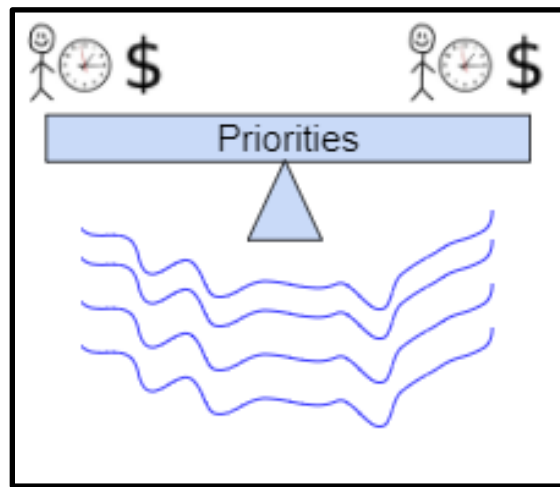


Figure 8. Balance of People, Time and Money



Elmansy, Rafiq. “Time Management Tips for Designers: The Action Priority Matrix.”*Designorate*, 14 June 2016, www.designorate.com/time-management-the-action-priority-matrix/. Accessed 14 Mar. 2017.

Tensions of Balancing People, Time and Money with a Rigorous Research Process

It is important to address the challenge that emerges at this stage of the work. At Pine-Richland, we have a culture that believes in the pursuit of excellence at the organizational, department and individual levels. Our departments are composed of certified, experienced, dedicated and passionate educators. Through the in-depth program review, the process exposes department members to current literature/research, exemplary programs, data/information, community connections and focused dialogue about internal strengths and opportunities.

At this point, it is common for a recommendation to directly or indirectly require expanded resources of additional people, time and/or money. Time is impacted by the structure and schedule of the existing day at each level (i.e., K - 3, 4 - 6, 7 - 8 and 9 - 12). Simply stated, additional time for one content area has the effect of reducing time in another area. Additional staff added to one department may have the effect of possible reduction in another department. The assignment of staff and/or scheduling parameters are also addressed through the collective bargaining agreement (e.g., teaching periods and course preparations).

These discussions can be difficult. They are conducted with honesty, support and an understanding of potential implications for the entire system. For example, the concept of adding requirements and/or courses - with associated staff - were discussed in Health/Physical Education, Music, Business & Computer Science to name a few. We work

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creatively to determine how we can strengthen the specific department, take steps on the improvement continuum and also ensure sustainability and fiscal responsibility. For example, personal finance was addressed at the high school level as a graduation competency and not a required course. If a course was required, we would need to increase staff and that requirement would have decreased flexibility for elective course selections. In science, a recommendation was implemented for “science every day” at Eden Hall. This recommendation caused a major “ripple” in the master schedule and student day. It required a curriculum revision. It impacted multiple other content areas (i.e., ELA, math and social studies). However, it was also able to be addressed without additional staffing requirements.

Given all of this discussion, the team then identified the final emerging recommendations to support continuous improvement.

Continuum of Improvement

Throughout the in-depth program review process, it was important to maintain perspective on the nature of program improvements. Especially when considering effective elements of exemplary schools or programs, the desire to move from the current program ("Point A") to an ideal future ("Point Z") is natural. However, it is more realistic to recognize that meaningful program improvement within an organizational system will often result from a series of smaller steps ("Points B, C, D, etc."). Although depicted as a straight line in the image below (figure 8), the in-depth program review committee recognizes that continuous improvement is not always a linear process.



Figure 9

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Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Philosophy and Vision

1. Adopt and widely communicate the specific areas of alignment and focus between the characteristics and individualized needs of students participating in our special education and/MTSS programs and the existing PRSD vision to internal and external stakeholders.



Internal Analysis

- The Program of Studies offers multiple pathways of support (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Students are fully included in their least restrictive environment (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Teachers differentiate within the classroom for different learners (Vertical Team, 2022).
- “PR provides an amazing experience with supports” (Parent Town Hall, 2022).
- A Full Continuum of support is provided to students through the MTSS process in the least restrictive to the most restrictive environment to best support student needs (Special Education Plan, 2019).

External Analysis

- Students with disabilities shall be educated in the least restrictive environment (PA Code: Chapter 14).
- A student may not be removed from or determined to be ineligible for placement in a regular education classroom solely because of the nature or severity of the student’s disability, or solely because educating the student in the regular education classroom would necessitate additional cost or for administrative convenience (PA Code: Chapter 14).
- Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of a student with a disability from the regular education class occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular education class with the use of appropriate supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (PA Code: Chapter 14).
- School entities shall be required to provide access to a full continuum of placement options (PA Code: Chapter 14).
- “Successful inclusive education of students who have IEPs involves the use of appropriate supports and services necessary to participate in and benefit from both the general classroom setting and other natural environments” (PATTAN, 2018).

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- “The mission of The National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET) is to render all possible support and assistance to professionals who teach children with special needs” (National Association of Special Education Teachers, 2022).
- NASET seeks to promote standards of excellence and innovation in special education research, practice, and policy in order to foster exceptional teaching for exceptional children (National Association of Special Education Teachers, 2022).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): August 2022 - Ongoing

Key Personnel: Special Education Department Teachers; MTSS Teams; Administrators

Major Action Steps: (1) Refine and communicate the programs’ vision and philosophy; (2) Professional development for special education teachers and MTSS teams to understand how to integrate the vision and philosophy into curriculum, assessments, and instruction; (3) Communicate and display the special education and MTSS program’s vision and philosophy in classrooms and other appropriate locations.

Estimated Budget/Resources: Resources for printing and displaying images and philosophy.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): Integration of vision and philosophy into special education and MTSS team processes and strategies.

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Recommendation #2: Vertical Alignment and Approach

1. Enhance and promote a systematic, K-12 approach for providing special education supports and inclusive practices for all learners.
 - a. Restructure and expand AS/LSS/ES (e.g. multi-disability) program locations (hubs) to ensure access to a full spectrum of intervention supports from K to 12+.
 - b. Develop a K-12 scope and sequence for students in the autistic and life skills support programs (e.g. inclusive of video-based curricular resources).
 - c. Revisit and refine co-teaching practices from K to 12+ to best utilize professional resources and align special education supports with general education curriculum.
 - d. Implement additional math credit at the secondary level as an intermediate step between concepts of math and applied math.

Internal Analysis

- The district's special education program does not currently have a scope and sequence of curriculum that transpires from school to school K-12 (PRSD Special Education and MTSS Program Review Team, 2022).
 - A scope and sequence is helpful in planning learning experiences tailored to children's ages and developmental levels. It helps staff look ahead to see where development is going, and intentionally scaffold their learning
 - Parents have expressed concerns and a need for more fluid transitions in terms of curriculum between buildings (Parent Town Hall Responses, 2022).
- A need for more accessible elective courses that can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of students (PRSD Special Education and MTSS Program Review Team, 2022).
- Inclusion and acceptance around the building is a strength that aligns with the district's mission, vision, and values (Vertical Teams, 2022).
- Gaps exist in the current curriculum to incorporate research-based practices along with clear and concise expectations for students (Vertical Teams, 2022).
- Parents are requesting this at earlier grade levels (Vertical Teams, 2022).
- Current courses offered with co-teaching support are limited to Math, Science, and English departments, excluding Social Studies (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Current levels of co-teaching expand from freshman to senior programming, i.e. Concepts of Math, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and Trigonometry have all been co-taught (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Students enrolled in technical programs (AW Beattie Career Center) that are recommended for core courses with additional lab periods (i.e. Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2) are oftentimes forced to choose between scheduling intervention periods versus opportunities for vocational training (Vertical Team, 2022).
- A "Consumer Math" course as a math credit for students with IEPs does not exist as an intermediate step between Applied Math and Concepts of Math course offerings to support students with needs (Math Vertical Team, 2022).
- Proactively scheduling students for intervention and support time (e.g. RAM Time, Goal Progress Support, Academic Support) to be rebranded with one name to reflect student support across the K-12 experience, to receive interventions outside of the core instructional block as appropriate (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Middle School IEP case managers see students on their roster daily in Academic Support but schedules at the high school do not always offer the same opportunity for support with Goal Progress Support (Special Education Dept, 2022).

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- The Middle School schedule does not allow for researched based intervention and full choice of elective offerings (IDPR Vertical Alignment Committee, 2022).
- Courses offered as co-taught need to be refined and demonstrated student need through intentional and strategic scheduling (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Inconsistencies remain throughout co-taught courses surrounding execution of the various co-teaching models (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Guidelines and expectations need to be provided to both general and special education staff (Vertical Team, 2022).

External Analysis

- Exemplar school districts utilize comprehensive curriculums that have a scope and sequence across all buildings making transitions across buildings smoother (Elizabeth Forward, Fox Chapel, Baldwin Whitehall, 2022).
- "Developed to enable teachers to reflect on their respective instructional pedagogy and to review the recommended components necessary to establish a successful program" (Program Components to Support Students with Intellectual Disabilities, 2022).
- "Students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID), placed in an alternate curriculum program would benefit from a highly structured program embedded with a multi-modal communication system, differentiated instruction, and a consistent social skills program that address the academic and social-emotional challenges of the students. Students with ID need consistent and effective instructional support in order to learn new concepts and tasks that many of their general education peers may learn incidentally" (Program Components to Support Students with Intellectual Disabilities, 2022).
- "Inclusion is also an issue that is frequently discussed by parents and professionals. Probably a major advantage of including a child with autism in a regular education classroom is the presence of verbal peers who can model typical verbal interactions, present a wide variety of verbal stimuli, and produce consequence verbal behavior through social interaction and specific reinforcement. However, the decision to place a child with autism in a regular education class should be based, in part, on whether the child has the basic verbal repertoires necessary to acquire new behaviors in that learning environment" (Sunderberg and Michael, 2001).
- Exemplar school districts utilize a full spectrum of support within their K-12 settings. Special Education teachers service the needs of all students across all special education settings (Elizabeth Forward, Fox Chapel, and Baldwin Whitehall, 2022).
- On-going teacher training and professional development through professional learning communities and teacher collaboration days allow for consistency and stay current with research-based practices (Elizabeth Forward SD, Fox Chapel SD, and Baldwin-Whitehall SD, 2022).
- Exemplar schools implement adaptive arts and music classes, incorporating peer buddies into these programs as well. This promotes accessibility to the curriculum as well as promoting inclusion and relationships between students with and without disabilities (Baldwin-Whitehall SD, Fox Chapel SD, 2022).
- His research and teaching focuses on strategies for promoting full participation, belonging, and valued roles in school, work, community, and congregational settings for children and adults with intellectual disability, autism, and multiple disabilities (Carter, Erik W, et al, 2013).
- Through outside offerings for students, learning can be extended and applied to real-world experiences. Students can take higher-level courses to extend their knowledge beyond the provided curriculum. Students can participate in clubs, competitions and extracurricular activities that expose them to real-world applications (State College Area SD, 2022).
- PA's Bureau of Special Education currently provides training materials on ABA and encourages its use in both special education and general education classrooms (Bloh and Axelrod, 2008).
- "In schools, ABA has been used to guide a wide variety of successful educational practices in both

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general and special education programs. Over the past 20 or more years, ABA has been established as a powerful source of interventions in educational programs for students with autism. ABA has consistently been effective in assisting individuals with autism in achieving meaningful and non-trivial progress" (National Autism Center, 2009).

- "Applied behavior analysis, which emphasizes this relationship, has been reported by the Surgeon General of the United States to be the most effective way to treat autism" (Schoen, 2003).
- "Although applied behavior analysis can take many forms, the common core procedure described above links all the attempts taken to modify behavior. For example, techniques such as discrete trial training, direct instruction, and response prompt systems (e.g., increasing assistance, decreasing assistance, time delay) provide repeated practice and rigid presentation" (Schoen, 2003).
- "The Pennsylvania Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support System uses ABA methods to proactively address behaviors. This proactive, direct instructional approach is more effective than traditional punishment-based alternatives in improving academic success" (Bloh and Axelrod, 2008).
- "Preliminary analysis of the interventions representing both models (ABA and TEACCH" category) demonstrates a balanced variety of recommended activities including both general best practices (e.g., ensuring teachers are knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified in autism) as well as very specific curricula, materials, and techniques (e.g., the use of specialized strategies to teach social skills). The effective implementation of these items, in concert with specific ABA or TEACCH components (based on the skills, experiences, and desires of the parents and professionals implementing them), would arguably result in the most effective outcomes possible (Callahan et al., 2010).
- The investigations reveal that specific variables interact strongly with co-teaching success, and that these variables—academic content knowledge, high-stakes testing, and co-teacher compatibility—interact strongly with co-teaching success (Mastropieri et al., 2005).
- "Co-teaching starts in third and fourth grade and continues for all subsequent grades, all teachers except ES co-teach by discipline" (Montour School District, 2022).
- "Co-teaching is strength, try to match co-teachers based on personality; provide common planning time and time to develop the relationship. Students recommended for co-teaching based on teacher recommendation and student universal screening data. This is a fluid process where students can move in and out of co-teaching" (Baldwin Whitehall School District, 2022).
- Following SIS suggestions, the teachers participated in school-wide collaboration and team building, used curriculum-based assessment, adapted their instruction, sought to motivate their students, and taught them a series of learning strategies (Rogan et al, 1995).
- "An assumption that full-time special education support is usually needed to support students with severe disabilities does not appear warranted" (Logan, Kent R, 2022).
- "One-to-one and small group instructional arrangements are clearly superior to whole class instruction in obtaining higher levels of engaged behavior for students with a range of disabilities." (Logan et al., 1997).
- Wehmeyer (2006) stated, "when instructional content is truly designed to be accessible for all students, up-front and not after-the-fact, using both technology and pedagogical strategies, then we can begin to make progress in ensuring access to the general curriculum" (Rao et al, 2017).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): Present–Ongoing

Key Personnel: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Student Services & Special Education, Psychologists, Principals, Life Skills Teachers, and Transition Counselors

Major Action Steps: (1) Develop Life Skills Support and Emotional Support "Hubs" at the K-3 level; (2) Identify a co-teaching model and schedule that best supports students in an inclusive and least restrictive environment that allows for access to interventions (Core + Interventions); (3) Designate time for professional

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development to enrich co-teaching practices such as opportunities to observe teams, demonstrations amongst staff, and fidelity checks. (4) Enhance adaptive art, music, and PE instruction (K-12+); Strengthen and align the current Peer Buddies program and curriculum to provide a cohesive scope and sequence (K-12+); (5) Expand interventions that address student's communication, academic, social language and healthy relationships, and social and behavior needs that are closely aligned to the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and train staff accordingly (K-12+); (6) Provide applied behavioral analysis training to teachers and support staff who support students on the autism spectrum; (8) Purchase materials for VB-Mapp.

Estimated Budget/Resources: There are some estimated additional costs for personnel when adding life skills and emotional support hubs. An additional special education teacher was budgeted for this year that will be utilized in one of these hubs in the future. Substitute coverage may be needed for professional development sessions.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): Modification to the high school course of study; potential realignment of paraprofessional staff to support hub classrooms.

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Recommendation #3: Enhancing Transition Services

1. Strengthen and expand transition services for students aged 14-21 to include self-advocacy, pre-vocational, post-secondary education, employment, and independent living skills.

Internal Analysis

- 11th grade students are introduced to an OVR contact in their junior year but may need it sooner (Parent Town Hall Responses, 2022).
- Student involvement in preparing and presenting their IEP is minimal and should be increased (Parent Town Hall Responses, 2022).
- Increase community/vocational involvement to enhance student independence and vocational skills (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Identified need for smoother transition between buildings (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Students need opportunities to explore career pathways earlier than 12th grade (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Parents are not confident in their awareness of resources relating to life after high school (Vertical Team, 2022).

External Analysis

- “Post school outcomes for youth with disabilities are significantly lower than those of their nondisabled peers in virtually every single category as measured by the NLTS-2.” (Bakken, Jeffrey P, and Festus E Obiakor, 2019).
- “When students with disabilities wish to explore support at the collegiate level, much self-advocacy is required” (Culley, 2022).
- “Advice for parents - allow them to let their child take the lead” (Culley, 2022).
- Transition coordinator whose sole responsibility is transition (Elizabeth Forward SD, Moon Area SD, Fox Chapel SD, 2022).
- A designated person such as a transition counselor develops and implements transition goals and grids helping to assist with transition activities and social activities in the community (Fox Chapel, SD, 2022).
- Effective teaching techniques such as advanced organizers, student involvement, clear objectives, feedback, use of guided and independent practice, and monitoring of student progress are as important to SIM-based approaches as they are to other approaches to secondary education (Rogan, Joseph, and Lajeunesse, 1995).
- Secondary transition is the process of preparing students for life after they leave high school, including participation in post-secondary education or training, employment, and community living (Pattan, 2022).
- “RIASEC Assessment should be completed at a young age to guide middle and high school supports for transition (Elizabeth Forward SD, 2022).
- “Steps for Transition Planning: 1. Identify Transition Goals, 2. Link Post-Secondary goals with IEP goals, 3. Troubleshoot and adjust Transition and IEP goals, 4. Provide opportunities to teach the skill(s), 5. Evaluate progress” (Bakken and Obiakor, 2019).
- “Family Support: Involve families in transition process, Demonstrate cultural competence, Support family values, Promote a family-centered approach” (Bakken and Obiakor, 2019).
- 16 Predictor Categories Correlated with Improved Post-School Outcomes: Career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements, inclusion in general education curriculum for core content instruction, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid employment/work experience, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/self-determination, self-care/independent living, social skills, student support, transition program, vocational education, and work study (Weiss and Faggella-Luby, 2019).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): Fall 2022 - Ongoing

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Key Personnel: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Student Services & Special Education, Psychologists, Principals, Transition Counselor, Special education teachers and support staff

Major Action Steps: (1) Outline transition opportunities for students including available agencies; (2) Explore community partnerships in the development of an independent living/vocational program; (3) Explore a researched-based formative assessment of functional skill levels and career interests that aligns to curriculum; (4) Adopt a career training program with the development of independent living/ vocational skills at the secondary level as part of the transition experience; (5) Examine and redefine the role of transition services with existing staff with a clear job description and expectations; (6) Provide parent trainings on Transitions Services; (7) Promote student awareness and ownership over their diagnosis and documentation- self-determination; (8) Redefine the role and relationship with the OVR counselor and Pine-Richland; (9) Initiate transition services sooner and connect students to the Transition Coordinator and/or OVR contact; (10) Identify and provide professional development for staff to provide job coaching.

Estimated Budget/Resources: Potential cost for career training program. Potential cost for transportation to support students in the community. Potential partnerships would be voluntary.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): Potential change in job description of the paraprofessional to include job coaching. Additional professional development would be required.

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Recommendation #4: MTSS Programming for all Students

1. Promote and implement best practices for communication, compliance, and progress monitoring to enhance programming effectiveness for MTSS.
 - a. Expand and align the K-12 Decision Trees with consistent resources embedded for Math, ELA, and SEL, with development of placement criteria (e.g. entrance/exit) into specialty programs (e.g. autism support, emotional support, life skills support).
 - b. Revise K-12 math and English Language Arts Decision Trees based upon updated cut points that will then guide tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions. Once decision trees are updated, provide professional development for staff;
 - c. Establish meeting schedules and/or structures that allow collaboration between building administrators, professional staff, support staff, and related service providers.

Internal Analysis

- Lack of consistency with common assessments through grades K-12 (Vertical Teams, 2021).
- Current decision trees cut points need to be revised (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Decision trees are challenging to navigate in their current format (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Interventions within decision trees need to be updated based on emerging recommendations for the most effective tier I, II, and III programs (Vertical Team, 2022).
- The Tier I and II best practices checklist needs to be updated with more recommendations for classroom interventions and enrichment resources (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Create a list of resources for classroom teachers to implement tier II instruction during Reading and Math (RAM) for reading (Vertical Team, 2022).

External Analysis

- On-going teacher training and professional development through professional learning communities and teacher collaboration days allow for consistency and stay current with research-based practices (Elizabeth Forward SD, Fox Chapel SD, and Baldwin-Whitehall SD, 2022).
- Spring math is highly research and evidence based highly efficient, classwide math interventions for targeting math deficits. Vertical. AIU, PaTTan, teacher pilot 2022.
- Addressing unfinished skills in the Tier 3 setting via targeted lessons on previous grade level(s) is a very effective way to address math deficits and prepare students for on grade level learning in instruction strategies (AIU, 2022).
- Teachers would benefit from investment in hand held math manipulatives across all grade levels. (AIU and Vertical Teams, 2021).
- EngageNY coupled with additional research intervention based strategies is an effective way to Teacher Pilot 2021/22
- Renaissance Star benchmark cut scores (math and English Language Arts) should align with Renaissance standards and research (Renaissance Learning, 2022).
- Activity-based interventions cannot be conducted in a 10-minute session at the beginning of the day; they must be implemented across activities across the day during naturally occurring opportunities (Hemmeter, 2000).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): New decision trees are currently being developed and will be implemented during the 2022-2023 school year. Updated decision tree will allow implementation of new cut points during the same timeline. Resource evaluation will be on-going.

Key Personnel: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Student Services & Special Education,

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Psychologists, Principals, Special education teachers and support staff

Major Action Steps: (1) Expand and proactively schedule internal monitoring, outside of cyclical monitoring, of Chapter 14 Regulations and guidelines; (2) Identify and evaluate progress monitoring tools (K-12) and data tracking system to ensure effectiveness of interventions (i.e., Wilson, Sonday); (3) Assessment/Screeners - Implement progress monitoring and explore secondary/alternative screeners K-12 for key areas of literacy and mathematics to be aligned with the decision tree. (4) Ensure interventions are provided in addition to core instruction for students demonstrating a need; (5) Implement an executive functioning program (Tier 1) that can be utilized across the district and taught proactively by being embedded in the schedule for the entire PRSD student population (6) Review of SDI with a focus on fading as independence increases; (7) Conduct fidelity checks of co-taught team practice and implemented intervention

Estimated Budget/Resources: Potential costs for resource adoption.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): An updated, interactive decision tree shared district-wide via google docs, will allow more efficient communication both among the MTSS teams and with building administrators and teachers. Common planning time will allow more efficient differentiation within the general education setting.

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Recommendation #5: Literacy and Math Interventions

1. Strengthen and align **literacy interventions and teaching strategies** within Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the MTSS model.
 - a. Implement consistent phonics and phonemic awareness instruction at the Tier 1 level in grades K-3.
 - b. Provide ongoing professional development to interpret data collected from district quarterly assessment/screener such as STAR360 along with other interventions and how to use the results to inform differentiated instruction.
 - c. Evaluate current and new Tier 2 and Tier 3 vertically aligned intervention resources considering how effectiveness is measured (e.g., student growth data, movement toward Tier 1) and how the interventions are consistently implemented (fidelity). Determine how to most effectively integrate those interventions into a student's day understanding the unique structure of the secondary program.
 - d. Evaluate and modify the utilization of reading specialists and other staff in order to provide interventions (Tier 1, 2, 3) to students based on needs at all levels.
2. Strengthen and align **mathematics interventions and teaching strategies** within Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the MTSS model.
 - e. Implement consistent number sense, numerical operation, and basic fact fluency instruction at the Tier 1 level in grades K-5.
 - f. Enhance and refine tiered approach for providing math intervention in Grade K-3.
 - g. Identify, evaluate and select research based math intervention programs for qualified students for grades K-12+ in Tiers 2 and 3.
 - h. Revise the curriculum map to focus on essential skills across all tiers in order to increase student understanding of math concepts (Vertical Team, AIU recommendation).

Internal Analysis

- Opportunities for phonics and phonemic awareness resources at the tier 1 level (PRSD Vertical Teams, 2021).
- Through the PRSD Strategic Plan recommendations, an MTSS model is being integrated into the elementary and secondary schools (PRSD Strategic Plan, 2019-2023).
- A need to identify and evaluate intervention resources for the big '5' areas of reading for tiers 1, 2, and 3, especially at the elementary level, exists (PRSD Vertical Teams, 2021).
- Specific criteria are needed for identifying students who should be recommended for course or grade acceleration (PRSD Vertical Team, 2021).
- Continue to research both online and material resources such as ALEKs, Khan Academy, etc.. and create a faculty sub group to review and implement the resources.
- Create a faculty sub group to re-write a curriculum map to meet the needs of MTSS Tier 2 and 3 students.
- Create elementary and secondary faculty sub groups to define the criteria that will be used when interpreting data collected from district assessments and screeners.
- Provide in service on implementation of Tier 1, 2 and 3 instructional strategies and resources.
- Ensure that there is time and flexibility in the schedule across all grade levels to implement Tier 2 and 3 interventions.
- Gaps in instruction strategies (Vertical Teams, 2021)
- Teachers would benefit from investment in hand held math manipulatives across all grade levels.

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(Vertical Teams, 2021)

External Analysis

- High performing school districts utilize comprehensive reading interventions that address the needs of all students throughout all grade levels (Unionville Chadds Ford SD, North Allegheny SD, Parkland SD, 2022).
- Exemplar schools utilize research-based reading interventions, such as ExactPath, WonderWorks, Studysync, Sonday, Language Live, Read 180, Spire, ECRI, LLI, and Read Naturally (Unionville Chadds Ford SD, North Allegheny SD, Parkland SD, 2022).
- AIMSWeb Plus is an effective progress monitoring program at the secondary level (North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- On-going teacher training and professional development through professional learning communities and teacher collaboration days allow for consistency and stay current with research-based practices (North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- Exemplar schools implement literacy coaches to assist with providing reading interventions at the general education level (North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- Literacy coaches are available to provide professional development to assist the staff with the implementation of reading interventions (North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- High performing schools utilize literacy coaches to assist staff with implementing reading strategies within the general education classroom as well as support students requiring reading interventions (North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- In one meta-analysis, Marulis and Neuman reported that explicit vocabulary instruction embedded within meaningful texts and combined with multiple opportunities to practice results in significant vocabulary gains for at-risk children (Moody, 2018).
- Integrating high-frequency words into phonics lessons allows students to make sense of spelling patterns for these words. Restructuring the way high-frequency words are taught makes reading and spelling the words more accessible to all students (Farrell, 2019).
- Research during the past 2 decades has established a strong link between phonemic awareness and beginning reading. Phonemic awareness is highly correlated to both concurrent reading achievement and future reading achievement (Snider, 2019).
- The National Reading Panel's analysis made it clear that the best approach to reading instruction is one that incorporates: Explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction (National Reading Panel).
- Students Should Demonstrate These Skills at the End of Kindergarten: Sound and Word Discrimination; Rhyming; Blending; Segmentation...Phonological Awareness Benchmarks for kindergarten: 25 first sounds per minute by mid-year; 35 sound segments per minute by the end of kindergarten ("Big Ideas").
- Five Big Areas of Reading: Phonemic Awareness: ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (auditory). Phonics: words are composed of letters that represent sounds and being able to use letter/sound correspondence to read or spell an unknown word; Fluency: the ability to accurately and automatically read words with no conscious attention or effort. Vocabulary: words we have to know in order to effectively communicate in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Comprehension: meaning of text (National Reading Panel Report, 2000).
- Teachers favor explicit and systematic phonics instruction based on data from a survey given in this study. ...Good phonics instruction must be linked with ongoing assessment. In order to make sure that phonics instruction is having the desired effect, teachers must assess students and use data to shape their instruction (Mesmer, 2005).
- Through the process of conducting this study, the researcher learned that students with disabilities can improve their fluency rate and comprehension skills through the instruction using the Sonday multi-sensory reading program (Myers, 2017).

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- Offering a dedicated time for intervention instruction at the middle and high school level allows for more accessibility (Unionville Chadds Ford SD, Parkland SD, North Allegheny SD, 2022).
- An intervention/advisory/activity period within the schedule at the high school level allows for differentiation (Unionville-Chadds Ford SD, 2022).
- Exemplar school districts (New Hope, Mt. Lebanon, Hampton SD. utilize websites to assist with math knowledge and practice of concepts. (New Hope, Hampton SD. Dr Shelly Burr AIU, and Dr. Bob Shields PaTTAN, 2022).
- Exemplar schools have differentiated math pathways for students to follow to
- Maintain a 60 min block for Tier 3 math and create a 20 min block for T2 math at EHUE while maintaining the current T2 Reading block (Mt. Lebanon SD 2022).
- Cap Tier 3 class size at six for grades 3-5 and 10 for Gr 6 -10 or determine relevant cap based on the design of the intervention (fidelity) and/or intensity of the student needs (Mt. Lebanon, 2022).
- Maintain recommended class sizes when implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (AIU, 2022).
- Consider utilizing a guided math block approach for instruction time grades K-8 (New Hope, 2022).
- Endeavor to have both staff and administrators in attendance for all data level meetings (New Hope SD and Mt. Lebanon SD, 2022).
- Consider using appropriate scheduling as an initial Tier 1 intervention, ie.. Fundamentals class at the Secondary Level (Vertical Team, 2021).
- EngageNY is a recommended resource for implementing a Grade 3-5 core plus Tier 3 math intervention program coupled with Spring Math for daily fluency, Pirate Math for generalization/problem solving along with other research based strategies such as Concrete Representational Abstract, and daily spiral review via Zearn.org and Khan Academy (AIU, 2022).
- EngageNY is a recommended resource for supplementing T1 instruction in the classroom setting. (AIU Shelly Burr and Middle School Teacher Pilot, 2021).
- TransMath is a research-based math intervention program designed to supplement Tier 1 core instruction to meet Tier 3 level needs (PaTTAN, 2022).
- Spring Math is a highly research based classwide math intervention. It also uses paired learning to lift all students and build enduring mastery and mathematical confidence (PaTTAN, 2022).
- Explore and implement research-based mathematics tiers 1, 2 and 3 interventions that are vertically aligned K-12 (Vertical Team, AIU & PaTTAN Recommendation).
- To help students experiencing math difficulty with math proficiency, teachers should: Use explicit instructions; Teach clear and concise math language; Use concrete, pictorial, and virtual representations; Use number lines for learning concepts and procedures; Provide deliberate instructions on solving word problems; Use times activities as one way to build math fluency" (The Science of Math, 2017).
- Generally speaking, strategy instruction involves explicitly and systematically teaching steps that guide writing processes while also providing structure that helps organize writing behavior (Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2013).
- Students learn to write by learning through participation, learning by writing with peers, learning by observing, learning through dialogue, learning through teaching, learning through deliberate agency, and learning as a result of accumulated writing capital (Graham, 2018).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): 4/2022 - Ongoing

Key Personnel: Assistant Superintendents, Director of Student Services & Special Education, Psychologists, Teachers, Intervention Specialists, Reading Specialists and Building Principals

Major Action Steps: (1) Finalize the evaluation of Tier 1 resources for phonics and phonemic awareness resources and provide professional development for the newly adopted resource. (2) Allot in-service time and ongoing support/modeling for training staff members on data analysis and the identification of instructional strategies at the Tier 1 level. (3) Evaluate current and new Tier 2 and 3 intervention resources. (4) Measure the

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effectiveness of current and newly adopted intervention resources and the level of consistent implementation. (5) Identify when in the secondary program, interventions can be provided in order to balance students' needs and interests (e.g., academic support, music, other available instruction time). (6) Through intervention design and the staffing process determine how to most effectively and efficiently use support staff.

Major Action Steps: (1) Formalize and communicate to all stakeholders a structure for Tier 1, 2 and 3 intervention and/or highly achieving services and progression from K-12; (2) Provide necessary training for newly adopted interventions and or intervention-based strategies to necessary faculty; (3) Examine current master schedules K-12 and determine possibilities for and implement flexible scheduling and intervention time; (4) Deepen professional development for all Tier 1, 2, and 3 instructors. Focus training opportunities on data analysis and evidence based instruction strategies.

Estimated Budget/Resources: Potential cost for the purchase of newly recommended intervention resources and the purchase of any newly recommended secondary screening/progress monitoring tools, and training of staff if necessary.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): Addition of common intervention time will more effectively meet the needs of all learners. Flexible grouping will allow gifted and/or highly achieving learners additional time with like-minded peers to explore areas of strength and intense interest. Communication with stakeholders will provide common understanding of the progression of programming for gifted and/or highly achieving learners.

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Recommendation #6: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

1. Design and implement a structured K-12 SEL program to provide dedicated supports and services that address students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health skill development in Tier 1.
 - a. Develop district- and school-based SEL teams to review research, and develop the curricular framework, and ensure consistent implementation at each grade span and integrate these teams with existing teams (e.g. SAP, MTSS, and RAMS Way).
2. Design and implement a structured K-12 SEL program to provide dedicated supports and services that address students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health skill development in Tiers 2 and 3.
 - a. Provide more diverse therapies (e.g. art therapy, pet therapy, music therapy) and increase accessibility of one-on-one and group therapy at Tiers 2 and 3.
 - b. Restructure and expand ES/SEL program locations to ensure access to a full spectrum of intervention supports at the K-3 level.
 - c. Provide Tier 3 therapeutic interventions including individual and group therapeutic counseling utilizing evidence-based therapeutic approaches.

Internal Analysis

- Often when supplemental emotional supports are exhausted, an outside placement is considered in order to meet students' needs for more therapeutic supports (Vertical Team, 2022).
- At the K-3 level, emotional support services are provided by learning support teachers without access to a regional program devoted to emotional support at the K-3 level (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Professional development is needed for all staff to better understand students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs and supports (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Chill Rooms with therapies and activities built in, potentially with certified therapists (art therapy, music therapy, pet therapy, play therapy, etc.) (Vertical Team, 2022).
- Organizational skill deficits identified with clear, unified expectations for para-educators and general education teachers for providing this Tier 1 support (Vertical Teams, 2022).
- Professional Development/Training in SEL programs at tiers 1, 2 and 3 is an identified opportunity (Vertical Teams, 2022).

External Analysis

- Teachers need training in positive behavior interventions and support. Collaboration with special education teachers is needed for support (Garwood and Vernon-Feagans, 2016).
- Parents and educators need to set consistent expectations and rules for a positive, safe school environment - to reinforce positive support. It is recommended to promote good physical health and wellness with staff and students (NASP, 2017).
- Educate staff, students, and parents on risk factors and symptoms of mental health and a continuum of resources offered in and outside the school setting. All schools within the school building should have school crisis teams for prevention, intervention, and postvention (NASP, 2017).
- Professional development of social-emotional learning and staff self-care should be a priority due to burn-out and compassion fatigue. Educators are prone to develop compassion fatigue-similar to emergency room workers, police officers, firefighters, and psychotherapists. Encourage staff to conduct a self-assessment and develop a self-care plan (Romero et al., 2018).
- It is important for staff to utilize trauma-informed strategies/practices by providing learning environments that are consistent and feel emotionally safe (Romero et al., 2018).
- "Good SEL assessments foster conversations about needed adjustments in the environment, such as adult support and instructional practices. Consider using SEL assessment data to guide decisions about how to

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adjust environmental supports—and stay away from assessments that lead to conversations about how to "fix" children" ("Top 6 Considerations for Measuring Social-Emotional Learning," 2019).

- Options for obtaining the necessary resources to implement this deescalation support:
 - Schoolwide intervention with a team approach - create a schedule and assign different staff members during times throughout the day (Romero et al, 2018).
 - Graduate-level social work students - internship partner program with local universities (Cumming, 2019).
 - American Rescue Plan funding - districts should invest in organizing staff resources to optimize relationships ("The Three Highest Priority Investments to Make in SEL with American Rescue Plan Dollars," 2021).
 - This type of support should have a structured de-escalation process, time limits, and a plan for team collaboration to address behaviors of concern for students who go to the room frequently (Romero et al., 2018).
- "Teacher fidelity to the structure and process of PBIS played a significant role in reducing student problem behaviors" (Benner, 2010).
- "PBIS professional development activities and coaching of teachers of students with ED in self-contained settings appears to correlate with student behavioral functioning. Study findings demonstrate that the professional development activities were able to successfully build capacity of teachers, which resulted in improved student behavior outcomes" (Benner, 2010).
- "Support when implementing a new program must be continued over an extended period of time.... Ongoing, high-quality training targeted to areas insufficient in teacher preparation must be conducted regularly and considered a high priority in order to increase teacher quality and therefore, student success" (Benner, 2010).
- "With respect to stability of behavior over the academic year, students in both Pennsylvania and California showed lower rates of academic engagement and higher rates of disruptive behavior at Time 2 suggesting that their behaviors deteriorated over the course of the school year" (Hayling, 2008).
- "Independent seatwork instruction was associated with higher rates of classroom problem behaviors. That is, the more time teachers assigned independent seatwork, the less time students were academically engaged and the more time they exhibited disruptive behaviors" (Hayling, 2008).
- "Results of the study indicated that higher-quality classroom management in the first four years of school lead to higher scores on standardized measures of reading achievement in third grade for boys exhibiting EBD. Girls exhibited more internalizing behaviors which may have played a role in their performance (distracted)" (Garwood and Vernon-Feagans, 2016).
- Exemplar schools are developing SEL programming and embedding it into the district strategic plan focusing on staff first and then rolling out to students. "...we cannot expect folks to teach SEL if they themselves are not regulated" (Derry Township SD, 2022).
- Consider who will oversee implementation of the program(s) and how will they ensure that content taught in the programs is integrated - Teach, Model, Practice, Reinforce (Bradfield, et al., 2022).
- There has been a spike at the post-secondary level in the quantity of students requiring services addressing mental health. This trend points to a need for increased SEL services at a younger age to develop resilience before higher education (Culley, University of Pittsburgh, 2022).
- CASEL's SEL framework competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These five competencies are proven to prepare students for a successful future (CASEL Core Competencies, 2021).
- CASEL's Assessment Guide warns against using social-emotional learning assessments to screen for emotional or behavioral deficits. Schools should focus on student strengths, promoting the positive growth, and preventing problems from emerging (CASEL Core Competencies, 2021).
- Because social-emotional learning is a process of development, and success at developmental tasks and skills varies across ages and grade levels, SEL standards should include different developmental tasks at different age levels, and assessments should mirror that to best inform instruction. This can be

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incorporated through tools such as a rubric that shows how the competencies change and how they can be addressed differently across ages. Methods for assessing social-emotional learning competencies should also be developmentally appropriate (Denham, 2018).

- Focus on student strengths promotes positive growth and prevents problems from emerging, so the guide recommends SEL assessments to be used to promote the healthy development of students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Denham, 2018).
- "Art therapy can offer a support to adolescents experiencing abuse, depression, lack of self-regard or sudden social or academic failure" (Riley, 2022).
- Art therapy resulted in anxiety symptom reduction and improved emotional regulation through this case study (Abbing et al., 2019).
- "The ESBA addresses the three big ideas that Merrell (2010) described as being essential for moving behavioral assessment practices forward. These are (1) performing universal screening, (2) assessing student strengths, and (3) linking assessments to effective interventions. The ESBA also uses teacher judgments of student behavior and performance to monitor progress within instructional-behavioral contexts" (Walker, 2015).
- "Effective teachers recognize that academic and behavioral support strategies are more effective when delivered within the context of positive and caring teacher– student relationships" (McLeskey, 2017).

Implementation Timeline (Anticipated Start/Finish): August 2022-Ongoing

Key Personnel: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Student Services & Special Education, Psychologists, Principals, Intervention Specialists, Special education teachers and support staff

Major Action Steps: (1) Identify resources and a framework to incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) at tiers 1-3 in all general education classrooms as captured in the written curriculum, by grade span K-12. (2) Leverage an SEL universal screener and benchmarking tool in grades 3-12, while using minute meetings to assist K-2 students in a developmentally appropriate manner to assess the same. (3) Instruct K-2 students on the identification and management of emotions (e.g. coping strategies) through a consistent framework with accompanying curriculum. (4) Instruct and thread SEL concepts with grade span specific with developmentally appropriate resources aligned to a consistent framework. (5) Create and implement a staffed "Chill Room/Safe Space/Ready to Learn Room" at all buildings with available support. (6) Provide professional development to staff on Social/Emotional Learning. (8) Identify Social- Language curricula, progress monitoring, and generalization K-12 (i.e. Pragmatic Language, Social Thinking, Healthy Relationships, Social-Emotional Learning Groups) (9) Explore additional supports (BCBA; behavior specialists; therapists) to conduct Functional Behavior Assessments, daily group therapies, one-on-one therapy for all Tier 3 students.

Estimated Budget/Resources: Some costs (therapist) are already budgeted for. Potential additional costs for resources/curriculum exist.

Potential Implications (Short-Term and Long Term): A systematic, tiered approach to social emotional learning will provide the district with a solid foundation for addressing the emotional needs of our students. From differentiation in the tier 1 environment to individualized, intensive services in tier 3, we will be prepared to communicate and implement interventions in real time.

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