

Special Education Review

Bedford Central School District

February 2025



PUBLIC
CONSULTING GROUP

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Acknowledgements

The PCG team thanks the many individuals who contributed to this special education review for BCSD. Their efforts were critical to our ability to obtain a broad and detailed understanding of the system so that we could present the best possible roadmap for improving special education and related services for BCSD's students. This review would not have been possible without the support of the Superintendent, Dr. Robert Glass, the Director of Special Education, Dr. Toni Ann Carey, and the Interim Assistant Director of Special Education, Dana Keith, in addition to the Board of Education and other members of the senior leadership team and the Special Education Department.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In July 2024, Bedford Central School District (BCSD) engaged with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct an independent review of its special education program and services. This report describes the current state of the special education program in BCSD and is designed to guide the District toward continuous improvement.

This study examined the following guiding research questions:

Learning Environment and Specialized Services

- To what extent is the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) employed to support students requiring academic and/or behavioral intervention?
- How is the continuum of services organized to support a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?
- Is there a consistent “golden thread,” or supporting body of evidence, that connects the student’s disability with present levels, learner characteristics, goals, progress, placement, and selected accommodations for instruction and assessment?

High Expectations

- How does BCSD perform on outcomes and transition for students with disabilities?

Human Capital and Leadership

- How does BCSD utilize and organize its human capital resources?
- How does BCSD support teacher pedagogy and professional learning?
- How are best practices established for professional development for general education teachers to support classified students better and promote inclusion?

Systems and Structures

- Do current staffing allocation procedures and practices allow for special education staff to adequately meet the needs of students with disabilities in BCSD?
- How does BCSD allocate resources in a way that facilitates a maximum return on district investment? How does budget management occur? How are grant funds accessed and used?

Family and Community Engagement

- To what extent are parents of children with IEPs satisfied with their child’s educational program?
- How do community relations and customer service function specific to the following areas?

METHODOLOGY

PCG conducted a mixed-methods study of the special education program in BCSD. The findings and recommendations related to programs, policies, and practices resulted from a comprehensive review of several data sources. Sources included 1) Data and Document Analysis, including an Independent IEP Review; 2) Organizational Focus Groups/Interviews; 3) Staff, Parent, and Student Surveys; and 4) Classroom Observations. These components were drawn from research and practice literature to inform the findings and recommendations. PCG used publicly available achievement and financial information to compare key BCSD statistics against local, district, state, and national data. The method and sources of data were triangulated to increase the validity of the conclusions regarding program implementation, identification of gaps in services and programming, and recommendations for the continued improvement of BCSD special education programs and continuum of services.

Details of each data source are included below.

Data and Document Analysis

Population Trends, Programs, and Achievement Outcomes Analysis

PCG analyzed special education population trends, programs, and achievement outcomes. Through analysis of assessment data, educational setting data, and other indicators, the team compared student identification rates and outcomes by disability, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic variables. Data included in the report also compared students with IEPs to their general education peers.

Document Review

PCG analyzed over 100 documents for information related to district and school structures, programs, policies, and practices. The documents were coded for themes that aligned with the focus group and interview findings. Documents reviewed were from the following categories:

- Organizational structure, staffing, and resource allocation
- Description of academic programs, services, interventions, and activities
- Documents regarding instruction and professional learning
- District procedures and guides
- Compliance and due process complaints
- Fiscal information, including budget documents

Independent File Review

PCG conducted an independent, virtual IEP student file review. The protocol used for this review was based on PCG's Golden Thread protocol which connects the student's disability with present levels, learner characteristics, goals, progress, inclusion needs, and selected accommodations for instruction and assessment. In total, twenty-five student files were reviewed using this protocol, with random selections made to represent students across all grade levels, various placement settings, and English Language Learners (ELLs). The review focused on present levels, goals, services and placement, and student progress. Additional information about the structure of the Golden Thread protocol can be found later in the report in **Error! Reference source not found.**

For this IEP review, we set an 80-90% confidence interval (CI) and a margin of error (MOE) less than 20% based on the District's size. This was to identify broader trends and areas for potential improvement in the quality of IEPs rather than capturing an exhaustive list of every individual IEP. The MOE for this sample is 16.1% at a 90% CI, which falls under the 20% MOE target set for this IEP sample. With this MOE, the sample of 25 IEPs allows our team to reliably detect patterns and overarching trends using our Golden Thread rubric.

Organizational Focus Groups/Interviews

To understand how special education programs operate within the District, organizational focus groups and interviews were designed to include a range of stakeholders. These focus groups included a variety of central office staff, school-based staff, and family participants. PCG worked closely with BCSD leadership to determine the best outreach and communication methods for focus groups and interview participation, confirming that selection was voluntary and unbiased. PCG provided a sample schedule and list of positions to participate in these groups to the BCSD leadership team to confirm that all stakeholders were included. Overall, PCG held focus groups with a variety of stakeholders.

Focus groups consisted of between 2 and 10 participants, while interviews were conducted one-on-one with participants. Ultimately, there was a cross-section of staff that participated in focus groups to provide a strong sampling of staff in BCSD from both the District level and building level. As part of this review, supervisors did not participate in the same focus groups or interview sessions with those staff members they supervised to allow all staff to speak candidly and honestly.

After receiving feedback from on-site focus groups in September, PCG held a fourth virtual focus group in October, prioritizing bilingual parents. In total, four parent focus groups were conducted.

Staff, Parent, and Student Surveys

An online survey process was implemented to collect data on stakeholder perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of BCSD's special education services. PCG collaborated with BCSD to review survey items and disseminate three optional surveys: one to parents of students with IEPs, one to students in grades 8-12 being served with IEPs, and one to staff.

Survey Items

Survey items were drawn from the research and practice literature in special education and clustered to acquire data from each stakeholder group regarding the extent to which these groups perceived that policies and practices shown in the literature support effective programming, parent involvement, and positive results for students with disabilities in BCSD.

BCSD reviewed the survey items to verify their relevance for this scope of work. The survey incorporated five-point rating scales, yes/no questions, and included open-ended text areas. For reporting purposes, the five-point rating scale was consolidated into three categories: agree (which includes strongly agree and agree), disagree (which includes strongly disagree and disagree), and don't know or not applicable (where this option was provided to respondents).

Survey Process and Analysis

PCG worked collaboratively with BCSD to facilitate a survey process that would result in the highest possible rate of return for three stakeholder groups. PCG kept surveys open from three to five weeks to maximize this response rate.

Surveys are a critical tool for gathering data and understanding stakeholder perspectives. To yield reliable results, it is important to achieve a representative sample that reflects the diversity and composition of the population being studied. Our team strives for a 20% response rate, which is generally considered a strong indicator of representativeness in educational settings. However, even with a 15% response rate, valuable insights can be gained, especially when survey findings are analyzed alongside recurring themes identified in focus groups and interviews. This approach supports a well-rounded understanding of stakeholder needs and experiences.

To encourage participation, all parents of students with an IEP were informed of the parent survey's purpose and provided instructions for access via ParentSquare through a targeted email listserv. Both this communication and the survey were provided in English and Spanish. A total of 116 (approximately 15.4%) parents who received the online survey completed or partially completed it, with 18 parents responding in Spanish. This is a relatively low response rate from parents; therefore, survey results should be interpreted with some caution and may not represent the experiences or perceptions of all parents in the BCSD community.

PCG also worked with BCSD to determine an opt-out process for the student survey. Parents of students with IEPs were notified of the student survey and provided a copy of the survey questions to review. PCG passed on a google form that BCSD disseminated for parents to indicate non-consent for their child to participate in the student survey. BCSD then removed students whose parents indicated non-consent from an email listserv, and links were shared to students whose parents had not opted out within a one week window. Additionally, staff were provided with information about the student survey and encouraged to set aside 15 minutes of time for their students to complete it. The student survey was provided in English and Spanish. A total of 57 (approximately 22.7%) students who received the online survey completed or partially completed it. This student response rate is much higher than what our team has observed in most districts, however we still recommend that these survey findings be interpreted with some caution, as they may not fully represent the experiences or perceptions of all students in BCSD.

PCG partnered with BCSD to send out communication about the staff survey, which was sent out to staff through an email listserv. The survey was accessible via ParentSquare for all school-based staff. A total of 189 (approximately 23%) staff completed or partially completed the online staff survey. Survey responses from staff included the following groups:

- Special education teachers
- General education teachers
- Specials/elective teachers
- Related service providers (OT, PT, Speech, etc.)
- Student support services (Psychologist, Nurse, Counselor, BCBA, Social Worker, etc.)
- Paraprofessionals (e.g., Teaching Assistants/Teacher Aides)
- School building administrators
- Coordinators, facilitators, coaches
- Other school-based staff members

Classroom Observations

In September 2024, PCG visited eight schools in BCSD over three days, observing approximately 34 classrooms. During these visits, classes were observed from 20-30 minutes depending on the subject area and programming. To support a representative sample, PCG requested a list of classrooms that included students with IEPs, along with information on grade level, subject area, and placement designation. Classrooms were then randomly selected from this list for visits. The intent was to confirm that all placement settings were represented across all schools and grade levels.

PCG's School Observation protocol was designed to collect qualitative information about the school building and individual classrooms, it is not designed to evaluate teachers. It focused on several key areas: 1) Classroom Staffing, 2) Classroom Environment, 3) Specially Designed Instruction, and 4) Data Collection Methods. PCG observed all instructional/service delivery settings (e.g., Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT), Consultant Teacher (CT), specialized reading instruction, therapeutic support programs, resource room classes, and Special Classes) across a wide representation of grades.

The resulting data from all school visits are categorized and aggregated to inform impressions of the special education system districtwide and indicate areas in which professional learning in special education practices may be considered. Using aggregated data across classroom level and type adheres to the agreement to not identify specific schools or staff. Furthermore, this information is used primarily as another set of data for overall triangulation.

PCG FOUNDATIONAL APPROACH

PCG's approach to its work with state, county, and district organizations is as a thought partner. That is, we act as an outside agent, with an objective perspective, who works alongside educational entities to identify challenges and provide recommendations for improvement.¹We follow a mixed-method collaborative program evaluation model that is systemic, based upon qualitative and quantitative research methods, and produces credible and valid data that proactively inform program implementation, determines gaps, and offer recommendations for the continued improvement of the system. We value the importance of developing trust, open communication, and fostering collaboration between the review team and program staff.

¹ Donnis-Keller, C., Meltzer, J., & Chmielewski, E. (2013, February). The Power of Collaborative Program Evaluation. https://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/media/1272/pcg_collaborative_evaluation.pdf

Our philosophy for improving student outcomes in schools and districts is driven by the U.S. Department of Education's Results Driven Accountability (RDA) structure and rooted in our Special Education Effectiveness Domains framework.

In the law, Congress states:

*"Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."*²

One purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities. This is done through accountability measures established by both the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and state special education agencies and, at times, special education case law.

While compliance indicators remain important, under the RDA framework, OSEP has sharpened its focus on what happens in the classroom to promote educational benefit and improve outcomes and results for students with disabilities.³ This change was based on data showing that the educational outcomes of America's children and youth with disabilities have not improved as expected, despite significant federal efforts to close the achievement gap. The accountability system that existed prior to the new one placed substantial emphasis on procedural compliance, but it often did not consider how requirements affected the learning outcomes of students.⁴ This shift is having a great impact in guiding priorities of special education systems nationwide, including in BCSD. Districts nationwide are working to raise the level of and access to rigor in the classroom and generate a culture of academic optimism.⁵

The importance of these issues was highlighted by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on March 22, 2017, in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*.⁶ In this landmark case, the Court revised its previous standard for assessing whether a school district is providing an appropriate education for students with disabilities. The ruling emphasized the need for establishing ambitious and challenging goals that enable each student to achieve both academic and functional progress and to advance from grade to grade. For students with disabilities, including those following alternate academic achievement standards, progress must be appropriate in light of their unique circumstances. The Court also clarified that yearly progress must exceed the "merely more than de minimis" standard that some lower courts had previously applied. The ruling underscored that the IDEA requires more than minimal progress. The Endrew decision struck a balance between the lower standard used by the 10th Circuit and other courts ("more than de minimis") and the higher standard advocated by Endrew's parents, which sought to provide students with disabilities opportunities for academic success, self-sufficiency, and meaningful societal contributions similar to those available to children without disabilities. The most significant impact of the Endrew decision in the classroom is seen in: (1) the design and development of rigorous Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); (2) the faithful implementation of these IEPs; and (3) increased monitoring of progress toward IEP goals.

² *About IDEA*. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (n.d.). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>

³ *Office of Special Education Program's Results Driven Accountability Home Page*. U.S. Department of Education. (2024). <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/osers/osep/office-of-special-education-programs-results-driven-accountability-home-page>

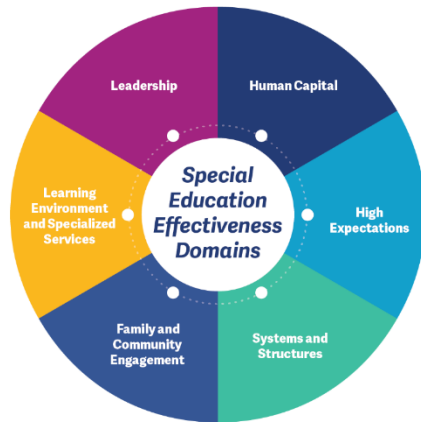
⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hoy, W.K., Tarter, C.J., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2006). Academic optimism of schools: A force for student achievement. Working Paper. The Ohio State University. <http://www.waynekhoy.com/school-academic-optimism/>

⁶ *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1*, 580 U.S. (2017)

SPECIAL EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS DOMAINS

Building on extensive research and our collective experience and expertise serving school districts and state departments of education nationwide, PCG has developed this Special Education Effectiveness



framework to assist school districts in catalyzing conversations about, and reviewing and improving the quality of, their special education programs.⁶ It is designed to provide school district leaders with a set of practices to strengthen special education services and supports, to highlight the multidisciplinary, integrated nature of systemic improvement, and to clearly establish a pathway for districts to move toward realizing both compliance and results. An intentional focus on improving outcomes for students with disabilities leads to improved outcomes for ALL students.

When implemented with a systems-thinking approach, the six domains of our Special Education Effectiveness framework help superintendents and district leaders improve educational and functional outcomes for students with disabilities.

The findings and recommendations provided in this report are organized around these domains and are oriented toward extending BCSD's focus on outcomes for students with disabilities.

TERMINOLOGY

There are several terms used throughout this report that require definition and clarification within the BCSD context. Additional terminology was included from documents reviewed to be more reflective of language utilized in the district.

Committee on Special Education (CSE). The CSE is a multidisciplinary team authorized to identify students in need of services by determining eligibility, developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and placing the student in the least restrictive environment in which they can succeed by providing specially designed instruction (SDI) and supplementary aides and services to meet the child's educational needs. The team meets at least annually to review a child's IEP and determine programming from that point forward.

Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). The CPSE is a multidisciplinary team that determines eligibility and the appropriate level of services for preschool children ages 3-5 years old. The CPSE conducts meetings to develop, review, or revise the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a preschool student with a disability.

Consultant Teacher (CT) Services. Consultant Teacher services are direct or indirect services provided by a special education teacher to assist students with disabilities in general education classes. These services are intended to support students in accessing the general education curriculum and achieving their IEP goals.

District. Throughout this report, the term "District" is used interchangeably with BCSD and refers to the entire school system, including general education, special education, school and district leadership, educators, and support staff. It is not intended to refer solely to the special education department but rather to the collective responsibility of the entire district to support an effective and inclusive educational experience. This distinction is important, as many of the findings and recommendations outlined in this report require collaboration across all departments, leadership levels, and instructional teams, rather than being the sole responsibility of special education staff.

English as a New Language (ENL). Programming in New York that provides specialized instruction to support multilingual learners (MLLs)/English Language Learners (ELLs) in developing English language proficiency while accessing grade-level content. ENL instruction is delivered by certified teachers and incorporates both standalone classes focused on language acquisition and integrated co-teaching with content-area classrooms. The program emphasizes the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English while fostering academic success and cultural inclusion.

Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT). Integrated Co-Teaching involves a general education teacher and a special education teacher working together to provide instruction to a mixed group of students with and without disabilities in a general education setting. The goal is to support students with disabilities in accessing the general education curriculum alongside their peers.

Learning Specialist. Title used in BSCD for Special Education Teachers, these titles are used interchangeably throughout the report.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a framework for delivering evidence-based academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions tailored to the needs of all students. MTSS uses a proactive, data-driven approach to identify and support students through a continuum of services organized into three tiers:

1. *Tier 1 (Universal Supports):* High-quality instruction and interventions provided to all students in the general education setting.
2. *Tier 2 (Targeted Supports):* Small-group interventions for students who need additional support beyond what is provided universally.
3. *Tier 3 (Intensive Supports):* Individualized interventions for students with significant or persistent needs

New York State Education Department (NYSED): The state agency responsible for overseeing public education in New York, including the implementation of state education policies, the administration of standardized assessments, and the management of special education services.

Paraprofessional. Throughout this report, the term *paraprofessional* refers to any staff member who provides instructional or support services to students but does not hold a teaching credential. This includes both Teaching Assistants and Teacher Aides, who play a critical role in supporting student learning, assisting with classroom management, and facilitating access to educational activities under the direction of certified teachers or other school professionals.

Teaching Assistant. In BCSD Teacher Aide and Teaching Assistant roles differ, Teaching Assistants were formerly called Instructional Assistants (IAs) and must hold a Bachelor's degree for this role. This is a BCSD requirement and not a state requirement. Teaching Assistants can support in a variety of ways but often support in an instructional capacity.

Teacher Aides. Teacher Aides act in the same capacity as paraprofessionals and it is not required for them to hold a Bachelor's degree like it is for Teaching Assistants in the District. Teacher Aide and paraprofessional will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

SWD. Acronym for Students with Disabilities which is used throughout the report.

SWOD. Acronym for Students without Disabilities which is used throughout the report.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

Bedford, a historic town located in Westchester County, New York has a rich legacy dating back to its founding in 1680 when it was originally part of Connecticut. In 1700, Bedford officially became a part of New York. The town is known for its rich history, country estates, scenic trails, thriving arts community, and exceptional education. Bedford's dedication to education dates back to the late 1700's with the first deed for a schoolhouse recorded in the 1790's. The town's first formal school, Bedford Academy, was established on January 19, 1807⁷

As of the 2023-2024 school year, Bedford Central School District (BCSD) serves approximately 3,500 students across 59 square miles. The District's budget for this academic year stands at \$164,544,458. ⁸According to the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) report card, the student body is composed of 51 percent male and 49 percent female students. The majority of students are White (50%), with Hispanic or Latino students comprising the second largest demographic at 41%. Multiracial, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Black or African American students account for less than 5% of the student population.⁹

BCSD's student body is diverse in its needs and backgrounds with 18 percent of students identified as English Language Learners and 17% as students with disabilities. Additionally, 39% of all students in BCSD are classified as economically disadvantaged. Within these subgroups, 11% of males and 6% of females identified as students with disabilities. Of the students with disabilities, 9% are Hispanic or Latino, and 7% are White. The District's total K-12 enrollment stands at 3,498 students for the 2023-2024 school year.¹⁰

The District has an impressive 95% attendance rate and a minimal 2% suspension rate. The 2023 graduating class had a total of 283 students, and of those 88% were college-bound. Among those students, 85% were set to attend four-year colleges, while 15% plan to pursue a two-year college education. This data highlights BCSD's commitment to preparing its students for their futures.

BCSD is committed to building strong relationships with its surrounding communities. The District values the voices of parents and community organizations who contribute to the growth and development of students. BCSD's mission is as follows:

"We recognize each child as an individual with the potential to achieve their personal best. We are committed to guiding our students on their unique educational journeys by nurturing their abilities and encouraging a growth mindset, while challenging and supporting their academic development and fostering their social-emotional and physical well-being. We celebrate diversity, an inclusive learning environment, and respect for others as important components in developing global citizens."

BCSD's focus on creating inclusive learning environments was highlighted during the 2017-18 school year under the previous special education leadership team, with "The Inclusion Quest." The "Inclusion Quest" was a multi-year districtwide initiative between the District and stakeholders to identify foundational inclusive practices occurring and strategically prioritizing the roll-out of more expansive inclusion priorities. The creation of a District level steering committee to identify resources to support all students across the continuum of services served as core principle of the "Inclusion Quest." A focus was placed on professional development and coaching of research-

⁷ Bedford Historical Society. (n.d.). *Bedford's history*. <https://www.bedfordhistoricalsociety.org/bedfords-history>

⁸ Bedford Central School District. (n.d.). *District profile*. <https://www.bcsdny.org/about-bcsd/district-profile>

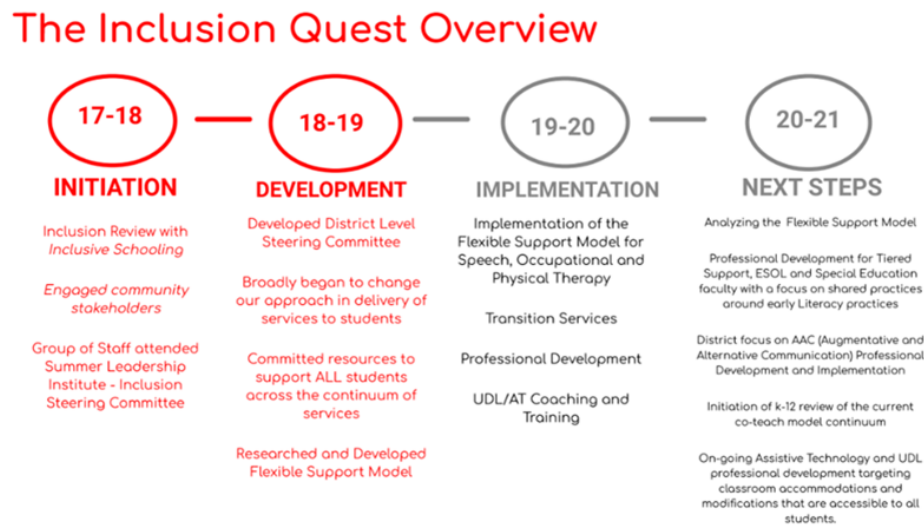
⁹ Data retrieved from: <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?instid=800000035721>

¹⁰ Data retrieved from: [NYSED Report Card: Bedford CSD Enrollment Data 2023-24](#)

based best practices, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and Assistive Technology (AT). BCSD researched and adopted the implementation of the Flexible Support Model for Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapists which is explored in greater detail throughout this report.

The District has continued to prioritize expanding inclusive practices beyond the work of “The Inclusion Quest” initiative. Inclusive practices and UDL were identified as potential foci for the 2022-2023SY Curriculum Council. District leaders have implemented a practice of including students with disabilities in self-contained placements on the roster of their corresponding grade-level general education classroom. This approach promotes access to grade-level instruction and participation in non-academic activities. The creation of the Accessibility Team has allowed for districtwide events to become more inclusive and accessible for students with disabilities and their families. BCSD, in partnership with the Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO), has implemented the Best Buddies Club, a nationally recognized program aimed to build friendships between students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, at Fox Lane High School. Several events have taken place since the program’s inception including cookie decorating, art projects, and the Buddy Bowl, an inclusive districtwide event to raise awareness of the program during the Varsity football game. Additionally, the District has conducted two special education programmatic reviews within the last several years which included an analysis of inclusive practices.

EXHIBIT 1. BCSD THE INCLUSION QUEST OVERVIEW¹¹



The frequency and quality of inclusive opportunities during and outside of the school day for students with disabilities and their families in BCSD has grown considerably over the past few years. This can be attributed to the efforts of community and parent advocates along with District leaders and Board of Education members who recognize the value of meaningful inclusion. The priority for BCSD moving forward is to create a sustainable vision for inclusion and a culture that supports that vision throughout the District. Providing high-quality core instruction and specially designed instruction for students with disabilities in general education settings are two tangible outcomes of this vision. Additionally, BCSD should continue to expand and enhance opportunities for students in more restrictive settings to engage

¹¹ BCSD “Special Education Update” Presentation, November 2019

meaningfully with their non-disabled peers, building upon existing inclusive practices and providing all students with access to enriching experiences.

BCSD staff, parents, Board members, and community-based advocates have a shared vested interest in the success of students with disabilities throughout the District. There is an opportunity for continuing to prioritize collaboration between general and special education staff in setting shared expectations for students with disabilities in BCSD. The recommendations within this report serve as a starting point to facilitate these collaborative conversations.

Previous Audits and Reviews

At the outset of this project, PCG was informed that BCSD had undergone several prior reviews of its special education programming. While PCG acknowledges the existence and value of these past reports, it was intentional not to incorporate findings into this analysis. This decision was made to support an objective and unbiased evaluation of the District's current special education practices, unclouded by previous findings or recommendations. PCG's commitment was to conduct a review that would authentically reflect the District's present strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth, based on the data, insights, and stakeholder feedback gathered during this process.

By approaching this work with a fresh perspective, PCG aimed to honor the progress and efforts that have been made while focusing on actionable steps for the future. It is PCG's hope that the findings and recommendations in this report serve as a catalyst for collaboration across BCSD and its community, fostering a shared vision and direction for enhancing outcomes for students with disabilities. Through this approach, PCG seeks to contribute to building a foundation for sustainable improvements that prioritize equity, access, and success for all learners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A high-quality special education program is only as strong as the general education foundation it is built upon. Our review begins with this fundamental understanding: the effectiveness of special education is not the sole responsibility of the special education department or its staff. Instead, it is a shared commitment that requires alignment, collaboration, and ownership across the entire district—including general education teachers, school and district leaders, Board members, families, and the broader community.

This report is not a one-time evaluation but a step in an ongoing process of continuous improvement. The recommendations outlined here are designed to enhance BCSD's ability to meet the needs of all learners by strengthening inclusive practices, reinforcing shared responsibility, and providing every student with access to a rigorous and supportive educational experience. Implementing these shifts will require a districtwide commitment, and this report serves as a guide to that collaborative effort. Our goal is to support the District in building capacity at every level so that special education services are integrated seamlessly into a high-quality educational experience for all students. While PCG will assist in action planning, lasting change will require sustained commitment and leadership from the District to drive these efforts toward meaningful improvements for all learners.

The following key takeaways have been identified as high-level priorities for BCSD to consider as it begins action planning and developing a roadmap to drive meaningful improvement. These priorities reflect critical areas of focus that address current challenges and leverage opportunities to strengthen systems, structures, and practices. They provide a foundation for building a unified vision of support for all students, strengthening inclusive practices, and aligning resources to promote the effective and sustainable implementation of the District's initiatives. By focusing on these priorities, BCSD can set the stage for actionable steps that promote collaboration, shared ownership of student outcomes, and continuous improvement across all levels of the organization.

1) Strengthen the Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teams

Bridging the divide between general and special education teams is essential to creating shared ownership of student outcomes and embedding inclusive practices into the BCSD culture. Currently, students with disabilities are often seen as the sole responsibility of special education staff, which limits the District's ability to fully implement an effective Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework and prevents inclusive practices from becoming integral to educational programming. To address these challenges, BCSD should prioritize establishing clear and actionable collaborative structures that optimize teachers' time and efforts to support inclusive educational services. The District has made significant strides in integrating strong, Tier 1 intervention practices within a larger MTSS framework. This commitment is evident in the creation of structures to support MTSS implementation. However, at the elementary level an abundance of staffing structures and guidance has been created leading to overlapping streams of support. It is critical that the MTSS framework is documented to highlight the integration of staff (i.e., Tiered Support Teachers vs. RTI problem-solving team) and implementation strategies. Several study participants perceived BCSD has a shortened instructional day, which they acknowledged as a challenge for students trying to access multiple types of intervention. Currently, instructional time at BCSD schools ranges from 6 to 6.5 hours per day depending on transition times, which is slightly below the national average of 6.8 hours.¹² While this perception exists, PCG does not recommend extending the instructional day beyond the current schedule for BCSD students and staff. The critical factor to be considered is how to continue to maximize the impact of current MTSS and intervention practices within the existing structure, including co-serving.

Key actions include defining and communicating clear standards for collaborative teaching and co-planning to promote consistency and effectiveness across the District. Teachers should be provided with dedicated and protected time within their schedules to engage in co-planning, collaboration, and professional learning focused on inclusion. Joint professional development opportunities should target inclusive teaching strategies, accessible curriculum design, and co-teaching models, equipping both general and special education staff with the tools needed to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Cross-departmental teams should be formed to identify and address systemic barriers to inclusion, such as scheduling conflicts, curriculum misalignment, or resource gaps, allowing teachers to fully engage in collaboration without unnecessary obstacles. Regular evaluation of the impact of these collaborative efforts on student outcomes should guide continuous improvement, supported by data collection and analysis. Celebrating successful examples of collaboration will further reinforce a culture of shared responsibility and motivate ongoing engagement.

By implementing these strategies and establishing the necessary collaborative structures, BCSD can make inclusive practices a shared responsibility and a cornerstone of its culture. These efforts will enhance the delivery of high-quality instruction, fully integrate MTSS, and drive improved outcomes for all students, especially those with disabilities.

2) Align District Staffing, Scheduling, and Support Models to Meet Student Needs Effectively

BCSD is working to address challenges in staffing, scheduling, and support models to effectively meet the needs of students with IEPs. To support this effort, District leadership has contracted with a subject matter expert in master scheduling to guide and implement necessary changes. However, as these adjustments are still in progress, some District staff may continue to perceive scheduling and service delivery for students with disabilities as an ongoing challenge. Currently, 33% of staff survey respondents

¹² National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). *Private School Universe Survey (PSS), 2021–22*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/tables/TABLE19f12122.asp>

believe there are enough staff to adequately support students with disabilities, a belief shared in focus groups as well, highlighting a perception of understaffing. However, the caseload analysis indicates that BCSD is meeting or below NYSED requirements for staffing for students with disabilities. Further analysis of staffing and resource allocation was conducted as part of this study. BCSD is appropriately staffed in all roles related to the provision of special education and related services. This discrepancy suggests the need for a more thorough workload analysis to better understand how staff time and resources are being allocated, identify inefficiencies, and address concerns about workload equity as it appears from a caseload analysis that BCSD has the staffing they need to support special education.

The Flexible Support Model (FSM), designed to provide adaptable student services, is another area of concern. Many staff report that the FSM is not effective, despite District efforts to provide guidance. A detailed evaluation of the FSM, including a workload analysis and time sampling during Flex Week, is necessary to determine whether it is achieving its goals or if a transition to a full minutes-based or session-based service model would be more effective. Observations and feedback from staff should guide these adjustments so the model effectively meets the needs of both students and staff.

At the writing of this report, master scheduling also poses challenges, with staff noting difficulties in balancing competing priorities such as core instruction with the new Bookworms curriculum, MTSS implementation, specially designed instruction, English as a New Language (ENL) services, and related services. These competing demands often result in inefficiencies and potentially missed services for students. A comprehensive audit of master schedules across the District, informed by stakeholder feedback, can identify systemic issues and inform improvements. Providing ongoing training and resources for school leaders and staff will be critical to implementing consistent, effective scheduling practices that prioritize equitable and timely delivery of services.

To address these interconnected challenges, BCSD should:

- **Conduct a comprehensive workload analysis** to evaluate staff responsibilities beyond caseload numbers, engaging teachers and related service providers to gather actionable insights.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of the FSM** through time sampling and staff feedback, using findings to determine whether adjustments to the model are needed to improve outcomes for students and staff.
- **Continue to audit and refine master scheduling practices** with a subject matter expert to address systemic barriers, allowing schedules to support high-quality instruction and services for students with disabilities while effectively balancing diverse priorities.

These efforts will enable BCSD to align staffing, scheduling, and support models with student needs, allowing resources to be used effectively and equitably while promoting positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

3) Expand the Continuum of Special Education Programming

BCSD has a significant opportunity to strengthen its continuum of services by addressing gaps in inclusive programming and behavioral support at the elementary level. Currently, Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) and specialized behavioral programs, such as the Therapeutic Support Programs (TSP), are offered exclusively at the secondary level. This absence of similar programs at the elementary level has created a gap in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) continuum, limiting access to collaborative and inclusive teaching as well as necessary behavioral support for younger students. Addressing these gaps is essential to providing equitable, high-quality educational opportunities for all students, including those with behavioral, social, or emotional challenges.

Our data from classroom observations, staff feedback, and survey responses indicate that, in some cases, Learning Specialists function more like Teaching Assistants within the Consultant Teacher (CT) and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) models due to limited opportunities for collaboration and meaningful planning with staff. Survey data further supports this concern, with only 38% of staff agreeing that BCSD has established standards for delivering co-teaching and collaborative instruction, and just 34% agreeing that general and special education teachers have collaborative planning time to prepare for effective instruction for students with IEPs. This initiative could help create the conditions for Learning Specialists to fully leverage their expertise in delivering targeted, inclusive instruction alongside general education teachers.

The District should begin by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the schools and grade levels most suited for piloting the ICT model. Following this, a detailed pilot plan should be developed, outlining clear timelines, goals, and criteria for selecting classrooms. Professional development for teachers must focus on co-teaching strategies, collaborative planning, and inclusive instructional practices. To support success, dedicated collaboration and planning time for co-teachers must be established, and implementation should be monitored closely. Data on student progress and teacher feedback should be collected to evaluate the ICT pilot's impact and refine the approach before scaling ICT to additional elementary schools.

In addition to ICT, the District should address the absence of specialized behavioral programming at the elementary level. Developing programs similar to the secondary-level TSP would provide essential supports for students with behavioral, social, and emotional needs. This effort should include establishing tiered intervention systems or other specialized supports tailored to the elementary setting. Staff training in evidence-based behavioral strategies is crucial, along with maintaining sufficient staffing levels and providing highly trained personnel to support these programs effectively. An evaluation of current staffing capacity and resource allocation will be necessary to determine how best to meet the needs of this student population.

By expanding ICT and behavioral programming to the elementary level, BCSD can build a more cohesive and comprehensive continuum of services. These enhancements will support all students, regardless of age or need, in accessing inclusive and supportive learning environments that promote their academic and social-emotional growth. This work will require thoughtful planning, resource alignment, and ongoing evaluation, but it represents a critical step forward in achieving equitable outcomes for all students.

4) Continue to Build Trust with Families and Community Stakeholders

The relationship between BCSD and its families has faced challenges over the years, particularly around special education, where past issues have left lingering mistrust and skepticism among some families. While new leadership has taken meaningful steps to rebuild trust—engaging families through listening sessions, actionable planning, collaboration with SEPTO, and the creation of a Special Education subcommittee—challenges remain that make it difficult for all parties to work together effectively. Bridging this gap is essential, as the success of any educational system depends on a strong partnership between families and districts, rooted in mutual respect, collaboration, and a shared commitment to supporting all students.

It is critical for families and BCSD to come together and focus on moving forward because the well-being and success of students are at the center of this partnership. While it is natural for systems to face challenges as they evolve and adapt, the willingness to collaborate and respect each other's experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints can create a foundation for continuous improvement. Families bring invaluable insights into their children's needs, while the District offers professional expertise and resources to meet those needs. When these perspectives are aligned, the outcomes for students are exponentially stronger.

Change is rarely a seamless process, especially when it involves addressing systemic challenges and historical grievances. There will undoubtedly be moments of tension and disagreement, but these moments can serve as opportunities for growth and problem-solving when approached with respect and a shared purpose. Acknowledging that all stakeholders may have differing experiences and perceptions is key to fostering understanding and trust. For BCSD, this means continuing to listen actively, being transparent about processes, and consistently communicating its commitment to putting students first. For families, it means remaining open to the efforts of the District, engaging in good faith, and recognizing that progress often requires time, patience, and flexibility.

A strong partnership between families and BCSD also supports more inclusive decision-making that reflects the diverse needs of the community. By working together to develop solutions and embracing a spirit of collaboration, the District and families can navigate challenges with a focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for all students. Success stories and milestones should be celebrated as reminders of what is possible when trust and collaboration are prioritized, inspiring continued commitment from all parties.

Ultimately, the ability to come together and move beyond past grievances does not mean ignoring or forgetting past challenges; rather, it means learning from them to build a better future. The focus must remain on the present and future—on creating systems and supports that truly serve the needs of every student. Trust will not be rebuilt overnight, and there will be challenges along the way, but through mutual respect, transparency, and a shared vision for student success, BCSD and its families can forge a partnership that benefits not only their students but the entire community.

5) Stabilize Special Education Leadership and Priorities

Parents, BCSD leadership, and staff all echoed the importance of stabilized special education leadership and clear priorities to create shared expectations. However, the current variability of perspectives related to special education services provision has impacted building meaningful relationships and trust. As much as possible, all individuals with a vested interest in the success of students with disabilities in BCSD should support the stabilization of special education leadership. This includes embracing priorities communicated and utilizing structures to share input in purposeful ways.

The investments made throughout the District to support the accelerated growth of all students, particularly students with disabilities, cannot be underscored. As BCSD transitions into this new era of instruction, it is critical that systems change, and management evolve with greater accountability and consistency during implementation. PCG believes that BCSD has many strengths on which to build and can achieve high-quality programming for all students, especially those with disabilities, that PCG knows it seeks.

The Superintendent and BCSD senior leadership have publicly expressed commitment to making the changes necessary. The arrival of a new Director of Special Education is a catalyst for change in creating positive outcomes for students with disabilities. Initiating this kind of change requires attention, a strong vision from the Superintendent and Board of Education that is enacted by senior leadership staff, and clear, non-negotiable accountability measures. PCG strongly encourages BCSD to develop a bold, creative, and transparent implementation plan to which it will hold itself accountable, and that is informed by input from a wide range of community stakeholders. Doing so will position BCSD for its upward trajectory for years to come.

III. STATE PERFORMANCE PLAN (SPP)/RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY (RDA) AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The essential question we answer in this chapter and subsequent areas of this report is:



How does BCSD perform regarding student outcomes and transition for students with disabilities?

Below are the overarching strengths and opportunities within the data reviewed on BCSD's State Performance Plan (SPP) and Results Driven Accountability.

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Environment. Of students receiving their education in the District, 72.9% of students with IEPs spent 80% or more of their day in the general education setting • Classification Rate. The rate at which BCSD classifies students with disabilities (17%) is lower than the state average (19%). • Graduation Rate. BCSD's graduation rate for students with disabilities (80%) surpasses the state target (68%). • Dropout Rate for SWDs. BCSD's dropout rate for students with disabilities (5%) is lower than the state average (8%). • Grade 8 ELA and Math Proficiency for SWDs. Grade 8 ELA Proficiency for SWDs increased significantly from 6% in 2021-22 to 26% in 2022-23, a 20 percentage point improvement, exceeding the 2022-23 state target of 22%. Similarly, Grade 8 Math Proficiency for SWDs rose dramatically from 4% in 2021-22 to 33% in 2022-23, a 29 percentage point increase, surpassing the 2022-23 state target of 17%. • High School Regents ELA Proficiency for SWDs. High School Regents ELA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement Gap. There continues to be a substantial gap for students with disabilities compared to all students in the District across all subject areas on statewide assessments. • Grade 4 ELA Score for SWDs. Grade 4 ELA for SWD (13% Proficient) is markedly lower than SWOD (61% Proficient) and lower than the state average for SWD (20% Proficient). • Disproportionality. Multi Racial students are seven times more likely to be identified with Multiple Disabilities, Asian students are over twice as likely to be identified with Autism, Black/African American students with an Emotional Disability, and Hispanic students with a Speech/Language Impairment compared to other racial/ethnic groups. • Gender Disparity. Some 33% of students with disabilities are female, and 67% are male. • Dropout Rate for SWDs Trends. BCSD's dropout rate for students with disabilities has consistently remained below the state target over the past four years but has increased steadily: 2020 (0%), 2021 (0%), 2022 (5%), 2023 (5%).

<p>Proficiency for SWDs in 2022-23 reached 56%, exceeding the state target of 51%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade 4 Math and High School Algebra Regents Proficiency for SWDs. In 2022-23, Grade 4 Math Proficiency for SWDs was 40%, exceeding the state average of 25% by 15 percentage points. High School Algebra Regents Proficiency for SWDs in 2022-23 was 64%, surpassing the state average of 36% by 28 percentage points.• Inclusive Opportunities for Students with IEPs. Among students with IEPs in grades 8-12 who responded to the survey (75%) report consistent access to after-school activities, highlighting BCSD's commitment to fostering inclusion and engagement beyond the classroom.	
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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

BCSD's strong commitment to inclusive education has manifested in a high percentage of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) spending 80% or more of their day in the general education setting. The District's success is further highlighted by its graduation rate for students with disabilities, which surpasses that of students with disabilities across the state by 12 percentage points, and a dropout rate that was 3 percentage points lower than the state average for students with disabilities. However, given the small sample size, even one student dropping out can significantly impact the dropout rate in BCSD, which has risen to 5 percent since 2020—likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The District should examine the factors contributing to dropout and work to strengthen support systems that help students with disabilities stay engaged and on track for graduation. Data on the classification rate of students with disabilities shows that the rate is 2 percentage points lower than the state average, which does not raise explicit concerns about classification practices in the District at this time.

However, these positive indicators are tempered by persistent challenges in academic performance and equity. While the District has made notable progress in certain areas—such as the significant increase in Grade 8 ELA proficiency for students with disabilities, rising from 6% in 2021-22 to 26% in 2022-23, and the dramatic improvement in Grade 8 Math proficiency from 4% to 33% over the same period—achievement gaps remain a concern. For example, on statewide assessments in Grade 4 ELA, the proficiency rate for students with disabilities is 48 percentage points lower than that of their non-disabled peers in BCSD and 7 percentage points lower than the state average for students with disabilities. These disparities highlight that while inclusion and targeted improvements are yielding some success, they are not sufficient on their own to fully address and close longstanding achievement gaps.

Differences also exist in disability classifications among racial and ethnic groups, with Multi Racial students more likely to be identified with Multiple Disabilities, Asian students more likely to be identified with Autism, Black/African American students disproportionately classified with Emotional Disabilities, and Hispanic and ELL students having higher rates of Speech/Language Impairment classifications. A stark disparity also exists in the gender distribution of students with disabilities, with a much higher percentage of males than females classified. Disproportionate identification by race and gender may point to a need

to strengthen Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in the District and examine and address the cultural beliefs and biases that may potentially impact the special education identification processes.

IV. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND SPECIALIZED SERVICES

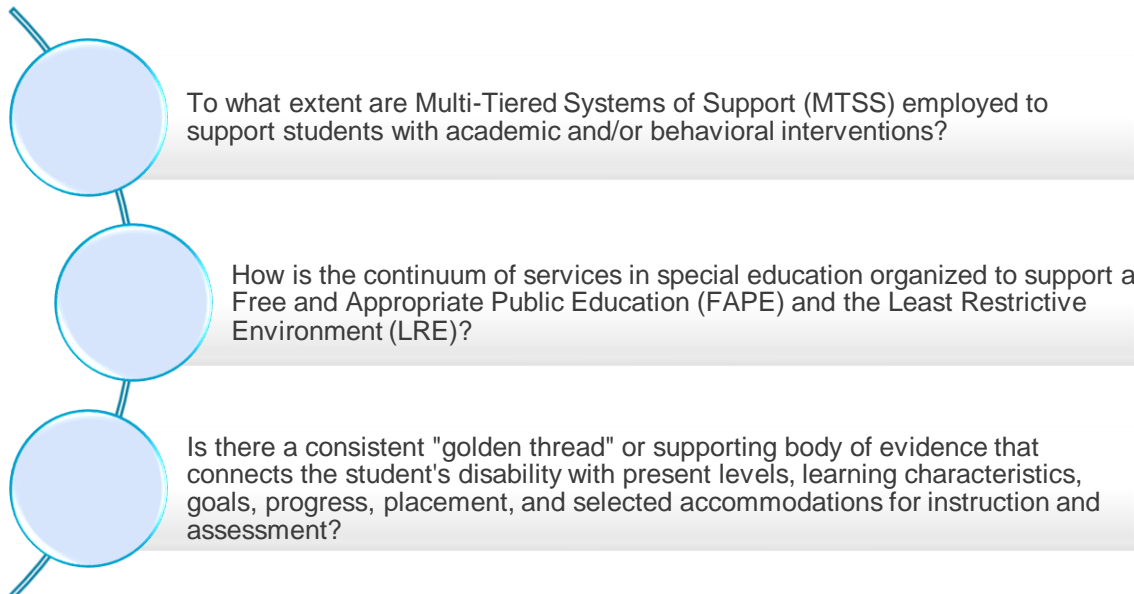
Overview

Within PCG's Special Education Effectiveness Framework, Learning Environment and Specialized Services is one part of developing an effective special education system. High-performing special education systems deliver instruction and interventions within an inclusionary framework and with Individualized Education Program (IEP) fidelity. This leads to increased access and progress in grade-level learning standards and reduced disproportionality in special education.

The main components within this part of the framework include:

- Access to the General Curriculum and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- Continuum of Services
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development
- Individualized Supports
- Coordinated Transition Activities

These five areas are key to developing a learning environment and specialized services that support students with disabilities in a meaningful and proactive way. PCG's review of BCSD special education systems relative to this area of the framework explored the following research questions:



Below are the overarching strengths and opportunities within the Learning Environment and Specialized Services domain of the Special Education Effectiveness framework.

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districtwide MTSS Framework. BCSD has prioritized expanding its approach from targeted strategies, such as UDL practices, to a comprehensive districtwide MTSS framework. This enhanced approach integrates academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports within a cohesive system to better serve all students. • Staff Dedication and Skillset. Across all grade bands, most staff were passionate about their work and highly skilled. • Early Transition Planning. BCSD initiates career interest inventories for students starting at age 12, which is earlier than the state's recommended timeline of age 14. • Systems for Translation/Interpretation. BCSD has developed processes to support compliance with interpretation and translation services for parents whose first language is not English. • Assistive Technology (AT). BCSD has a variety of AT options to support students' access to the curriculum and includes these supports in students' IEPs. • Rigor of Instruction. Across all grade bands, staff held students to high expectations and rigorous coursework. • Hillside Alternative Campus. The Hillside Alternative Campus offered a safe, accessible environment for students, where instruction consistently reflected rigor and alignment with grade-level standards. • Accessibility Team. The creation of BCSD's Accessibility Team highlights the commitment to creating an inclusive community for all. • Processes and documentation. BCSD has an abundance of clear step-by-step documents that guide CSE, IEP, and Referral processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Supports within the MTSS Framework. The preliminary MTSS framework expansion has not explicitly addressed behavioral strategies or interventions with comparable rigor to the academic foci. • Transition Planning. There is a disconnect between BCSD's programming for transition-aged students and their Transition Plans. Additionally, student survey data indicates that students often feel they are not adequately discussing or preparing for life after high school as part of the IEP process. • IEP Development. Inconsistencies were noted throughout IEPs reviewed with regards to quality IEP writing. • Progress Reports and Monitoring. A review of progress reports reveals a lack of objective data to understand how students are progressing toward their annual goals and support needed to establish progress monitoring guidelines for all staff. • English Language Learner Services and Dually Identified Students. Supports and services for dually identified students were not consistently aligned with best practices to optimize student outcomes. • Behavioral Supports and Programming at the Elementary Level. Limited programming supports exist for students with behavioral needs at the elementary level. • Support and Skills Class (SAS). Instruction and effective practices in SAS classes lacked consistency across classrooms. • Collaborative Teaching Structures. BCSD has not yet developed clear collaborative structures to optimize teachers' time for supporting inclusive educational services effectively.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flex Week and Master Scheduling. Challenges with scheduling and effectively utilizing Flex Week for related service providers affect the delivery of services to students.• Expansion of the ICT Model into Elementary Schools. BCSD has developed robust ICT programming for secondary programs. Elementary schools would greatly benefit from accessing an ICT model.
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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings highlight both strengths and areas for growth within BCSD's special education programming. Across all grade bands, staff demonstrated a strong dedication to their work and a high level of skill. Data analysis has affirmed that District staff prioritize holding students to rigorous expectations and challenging coursework and fostering an environment of academic excellence. The Hillside Alternative Campus also exemplifies this commitment, offering a safe, accessible space where instruction aligns with grade-level standards. Additionally, the District has taken proactive steps in areas such as early transition planning, initiating career interest inventories for students at age 12, ahead of the state's recommended timeline. The District's recent compliance with interpretation and translation services for non-English-speaking parents supports equitable access to critical information, and the availability of assistive technology supports students' ability to access the curriculum. Furthermore, the creation of an Accessibility Team underscores BCSD's dedication to fostering inclusivity.

A central effort in building the MTSS framework was the creation of the MTSS Curriculum Council, which included approximately 40 staff members representing various roles within the District. This council collaborated to define the vision, priorities, and strategies for MTSS implementation. However, some gaps in representation were noted: no special educators serving in self-contained settings participated in the MTSS Curriculum Council process. While it may not be obvious to include self-contained special educators in a general education initiative, their absence represents a missed opportunity. The District has positioned its MTSS framework as inclusive of all students, making comprehensive representation vital to its success.

BCSD has created an abundance of structures, and subsequent documents, to promote MTSS implementation. It is clear that District leadership has prioritized and invested in supporting the academic outcomes for all students; however, these efforts appear to be siloed. When analyzing the different MTSS structures and staff roles, each functions more as a stream of support rather than an integrated system. There was a notable absence of social emotional and behavioral support as part of Tier 1 practices in BCSD. The approach to inventory existing practices for understanding and implementation is a reasonable first step. It is recommended that BCSD continues to remain focused on the adoption of a robust MTSS framework grounded in academic, social emotional, and behavioral Tier 1 supports.

The continuum of services and support, across grade bands, is robust apart from an elementary ICT model. BCSD staff have made concerted efforts to create highly individualized IEPs with incredibly customized service delivery models to balance inclusion and instruction for students with disabilities. The District should be commended for these efforts while considering the addition of an elementary ICT model.

Despite these strengths, this review has revealed several areas requiring attention to enhance program effectiveness and equity. Transition planning for students nearing adulthood lacks alignment with their transition goals, indicating a need for greater cohesion between programming and individualized

transition plans. Similarly, IEP development showed inconsistencies in quality, highlighting the need for strengthened training and oversight. Progress reports lacked objective data, limiting the ability to monitor and communicate students' progress toward annual goals, and there was while there is a process for managing transitions for students with IEPs between grades and schools, staff and parents did not always feel it was effective.

Supports and services for English language learners who are also dually identified with disabilities were not consistently aligned with best practices, which can have a great impact on student outcomes. At the elementary level, limited behavioral programming and inconsistent use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) supports hindered some students' ability to fully engage with the curriculum. The Support and Skills (SAS) classes at the secondary level also demonstrates variability in instructional quality and practices, reflecting a need for greater standardization and expectations.

Challenges with collaborative teaching structures were noted, as staff lacked clear opportunities to collaborate effectively to support inclusive educational services. Additionally, Flex Week scheduling for related service providers revealed inefficiencies in service delivery and utilization, with inconsistencies in how this time was used across schools. These operational challenges, if addressed, could help optimize the use of staff time and resources.

The findings suggest that while the District has several foundational strengths, there are opportunities to enhance structures, practices, and consistency across programs. Addressing these areas could support a more equitable and effective educational experience for all students, particularly those with disabilities, and support the District's continued commitment to excellence and inclusivity.

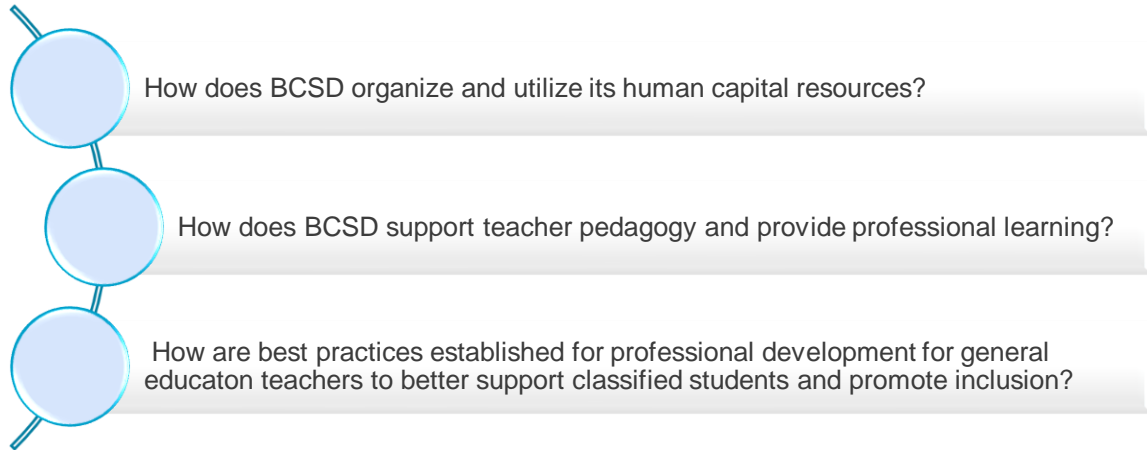
V. HUMAN CAPITAL AND LEADERSHIP

OVERVIEW

This domain within the framework emphasizes the critical role of leadership and human capital in creating an effective special education system. Leadership is essential for fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and student-centered decision-making, where school administrators and staff share ownership of the success of students with disabilities. Effective leadership also involves coordinating efforts with community organizations to enhance outcomes for these students.

Equally important is the investment in human capital, ensuring that the staff, from recruitment to retirement, are highly qualified and continuously trained to meet the diverse needs of learners. High-quality staffing, strategic caseload management, and ongoing professional learning are vital components in this area. Experts emphasize that addressing staff shortages in special education should focus on recruiting and retaining teachers with the right skills and passion, placing them in the right schools, and providing them with the professional development they need to succeed. When leadership and human capital align, they create a powerful force for improving student outcomes in special education.

The essential questions we answer in this chapter are:



Below are the overarching strengths and opportunities within the Human Capital & Leadership domain of the Special Education Effectiveness Framework.

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundance of Professional Development Opportunities. BCSD has established many guiding documents and professional development opportunities for their staff. • Relatively Low Elementary, Middle, and High School Special Education Teacher Caseloads. Most BCSD’s teacher caseloads are below state requirements. • Relatively Low Related Service Provider Caseloads. Most BCSD’s related service provider caseloads are below state and national averages. • Staff Retention. BCSD maintains consistently high retention rates for special education staff across all roles, reflecting stability in staffing. • Collaborative Leadership. The Director's entry plan and the formation of the BOE Subcommittee demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and structured leadership, fostering stakeholder engagement and a clear vision for enhancing special education programming. • Induction Program for New Teachers. BCSD has established an Induction program for new teachers to provide them with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Allocation for Professional Development. While the District offers a wide range of professional development resources, most PD sessions typically take place outside of regular school hours, as there is limited time available during the school day. • Staff Perceptions of Staffing Levels. Some staff perceive that there is insufficient staffing in special education to effectively support students with IEPs. This view is reflected in the staff survey results, where only 33% of respondents agreed that current staffing levels are adequate. • Workload vs. Caseload Analysis. BCSD has not conducted a workload analysis to evaluate staffing needs and the utility of the Flexible Scheduling Model. • Director and Assistant Director of Special Education Job Turnover. High turnover in the Director of Special Education and Assistant Director of Special Education positions. • Building Trust and Communication. Some parents and staff have expressed concerns about communication gaps, collaboration challenges, and the leadership team’s experience.

<p>embedded supports from the start of their employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching Assistant Credentials. In BCSD, Teaching Assistant are required to hold a Bachelor's Degree, which represents a higher credential compared to requirements in most districts for this role.	
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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

BCSD maintains special education teacher caseload ratios below state-mandated limits at all school levels, allowing for compliance and better instructional focus. The District also boasts a low student-to-teacher ratio, with an average of 11 students with disabilities per special education teacher. While these figures suggest a strong staffing foundation, some staff members perceive the District as understaffed for special education. Conducting a workload analysis, alongside the existing caseload approach, could address these concerns by considering the full spectrum of staff responsibilities, such as case management, IEP meetings, and evaluations.

The District's related service provider caseloads align with or fall below state and national averages, with the exception of high school speech and language services. Conversely, the student-to-teaching assistant ratio averages 15:1, which is higher but does not appear to negatively affect outcomes for students. This ratio should also be evaluated within a workload analysis to confirm that resources are equitably allocated to support student needs effectively.

BCSD is appropriately staffed in the District's Special Education department, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities aligned to key priorities, including compliance, collaboration, and program development. Leadership has emphasized inclusive practices, such as implementing the MTSS framework and integrating students with disabilities into general education settings. Sustained collaboration between general education and special education leadership is essential to maintaining high-quality instruction, effective interventions, and specially designed instruction that supports shared instructional outcomes.

The Office of Special Education is structured with a Director of Special Education, who reports to the Superintendent, and an Assistant Director, who reports to the Director. This model effectively distributes responsibilities, with the Director focusing on grades 6-12 and the Assistant Director overseeing grades K-5. However, the primary challenge has been leadership turnover rather than the organizational structure itself. Since the 2015-16 school year, the District has experienced significant attrition, with six Directors and four Assistant Directors of Special Education, including the current Assistant Director serving in an interim capacity. Reducing turnover in these roles is critical to providing consistent leadership and maintaining stability within the department.

The appointment of a new Director of Special Education in July 2023 has marked a new chapter of leadership for the District. The Director's entry plan, released in November 2023, emphasizes stakeholder collaboration as a core priority. The establishment of a Board of Education (BOE) Subcommittee on Special Education and regular engagement with stakeholders further demonstrates the District's commitment to advancing instructional priorities and program improvements.

Despite these efforts, concerns have been raised by parents and staff regarding communication gaps, delays in evaluations, and leadership experience. These concerns highlight the need to rebuild trust through transparency, responsiveness, and proactive relationship-building. Leveraging existing structures, such as the BOE Subcommittee, to balance parent voices with District priorities will be critical in strengthening relationships. Additionally, creating structured opportunities for parents and staff to

provide input and collaborate with District leaders will further support the development of strong partnerships and maintain a unified focus on meeting the needs of all students.

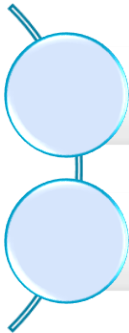
VI. SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

OVERVIEW

This domain in the framework emphasizes the importance of systems and structures within an effective special education system. This includes defining expectations for resource allocation, and equitable funding practices to guide decision-making.

This domain includes the following key areas for effective systems and structures in special education:

The essential questions we answer in this chapter are:



Do current staffing allocation procedures and practices allow for special education staff to adequately meet the needs of students with disabilities in BCSD?

How does BCSD allocate its resources in a way that facilitates a maximum return on district investment? How does budget management occur? How are grant funds accessed and used?

Below are the overarching strengths and opportunities within the Systems and Structures domain of the Special Education Effectiveness Framework.

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School-based Special Education Expenditures. BCSD has shown fiscal stewardship, with special education school based expenditures second lowest among a group of five peer districts. ➤ State Complaints and Due Process. BCSD has not received any state complaints or undergone hearings regarding special education matters in the past three years. ➤ Special Education Action Plan. In SY2023 the Special Education Department developed an Action Plan with clear goals and action steps to support the vision of the Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Standard Operating Procedure Manual. BCSD is currently in the process of developing a Standard Operating Procedure Manual to provide staff with a centralized resource for understanding district policies and procedures, as no such manual is currently available for easy access. ➤ Out-of-District Tuition. BCSD currently spends over \$2 million dollars on OOD placements serving approximately 25 students in OOD programming. ➤ Facilities Planning. Revisiting the facilities review presents an opportunity to assess current building use, explore potential efficiencies, and determine if further analysis on educational adequacy is needed

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

BCSD is the second lowest among five peer districts in Westchester County for special education school-based expenditures. The District should be lauded for providing quality special education programming in a fiscally prudent manner.

BCSD sends approximately 25 students (4%) to out-of-district (OOD) programs. In the 2023-24 school year, there were 10 students at out-of-district schools; 3 students at special act schools; and 12 students at BOCES schools. Students in all schools ranged from elementary school grades through post graduate programming. Most of these placements are in or near Westchester County, providing students an education as close to home as possible. However, the District should continue to carefully monitor the number of students receiving services in OOD placements to identify opportunities to bring some students back to the District as they refine their continuum of services and supports.

For the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, BCSD has faced no open state complaints and has not been involved in any special education hearings. Over recent years, the District's annual settlement amounts have fluctuated significantly, peaking at \$804,235 in the 2019-20 school year and reaching a low of \$226,823 in the 2020-21 school year. Most of these settlements pertain to tuition reimbursement for students attending non-state-approved out-of-district schools, typically arising when parents unilaterally place their child in an external program and subsequently seek reimbursement for that placement.

A 2018-2019 facilities review identified significant unused capacity across BCSD's schools, with enrollment projections indicating a continued decline. While the District chose not to pursue consolidation at the time, the findings suggested that maintaining all current buildings could create challenges in resource allocation and programmatic support. Data from this review has reinforced concerns that the current school configuration may limit the ability to provide equitable access to services, particularly in special education, where students often need to leave their home schools to access necessary programming. The distribution of students across underutilized facilities has also raised questions about the efficiency of staffing and instructional resources. It is recommended the District reassess its facilities and enrollment trends, as the findings from the 2018-19 facilities review provide important context for considering how space utilization impacts the delivery of educational programs.

VII. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

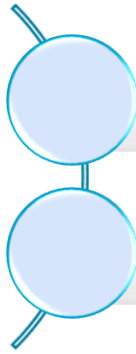
This section of the framework focuses on family and community engagement as part of a high-performing system that includes all stakeholders in the education process by embracing partnerships to make informed decisions and provide equitable opportunities for all students.

This domain includes the following key areas for effective family and community engagement in special education:

- Parent Voice, Collaboration, and Trust
- Language Accessibility
- Parent Training and Resources

A focus on these areas fosters partnerships between students, staff, and families and creates a cohesive system focused on student-centered learning and outcomes. This section of the report summarizes findings from BCSD families from focus groups and survey responses.

The essential questions we answer in this chapter include:



To what extent are the parents of children with IEPs satisfied with their child's special education program?

How do community relations and customer service function specific to supporting families as meaningful participants in the special education process?

Parents are a child's first teachers and are important partners as their children progress through school. Their vital role is acknowledged in IDEA, which requires parental input in writing IEPs, the provision of related services, and placement. IDEA also requires collaboration with parents and students with disabilities, as appropriate, to design special education along with related and supplementary services. As part of this review, the parent's role and satisfaction with special education processes and instructional/service delivery within BCSD were evaluated.

Below are the overarching strengths and opportunities for improvement for the Family and Community Engagement domain of the Special Education Effectiveness framework.

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Participation in IEP Meetings. Survey data show high percentages of parents report feeling heard and supported during IEP meetings, with 86% comfortable asking questions and 85% agreeing their input is considered. • Proactive Measures. The introduction of parent-focused resources, such as letters from the Director and agendas for CSE meetings, demonstrates a commitment to increasing transparency. • Engagement Efforts. Sensory-inclusive events and leadership outreach, including the Accessibility Team, have been positively received. • Interpretation Services. Most non-English speaking parents feel adequately supported during IEP meetings through interpretation services. • Parent Training Development. The District has collaborated with SEPTO to create targeted resources and training opportunities for parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust-Building. Some parents express lingering mistrust regarding special education programming and leadership in BCSD. • Communication Consistency. Some parents reported gaps in consistent communication, especially outside formal meetings, hinder parents' ability to stay informed • Staffing Concerns. Parents perceive BCSD has insufficient numbers of special educators, related service providers, and paraprofessionals to meet IEP needs effectively. • Translated Documents. Inconsistent translation of IEP documents which limit full participation for multilingual families. • Satisfaction with IEP Services. Currently, 65% of parents in BCSD are satisfied with their child's overall special education services. • Progress Monitoring. Some families report BCSD does not provide meaningful data to support student progress and growth.

- **Parent Training Awareness.** Over half of parents are unaware of training opportunities, signaling a need for better outreach and alignment with parent interests.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Developing robust communication and collaboration with families of students with disabilities is crucial for enhancing student outcomes and fostering a positive and transparent educational experience. Research underscores the importance of open, consistent communication, which not only helps parents navigate the IEP process but also encourages their active involvement in decision-making. This partnership enhances the quality of support for students, leading to improved academic and social-emotional outcomes.

In the context of BCSD, the parent survey results reveal positive trends in communication at the school level; 85% of parents feel their input is considered during IEP meetings, and 84% report that teachers respond to concerns in a timely manner. Recent initiatives, such as providing a letter and agenda for initial CSE meetings, demonstrate BCSD's commitment to supporting families through greater clarity and accessibility in the IEP process.

Over the past couple of years, the new leadership team has been actively working to rebuild trust with families and strengthen these partnerships. By implementing structured communication strategies and making concerted efforts to engage parents in meaningful ways, they have taken significant steps toward improving relationships between families and the District. While challenges remain, and some parents continue to express concerns, the data from this study indicate that the District is on the right path. Leadership recognizes that there is still work to be done and remains committed to further strengthening partnerships with all families, so that every parent feels heard, valued, and supported in their child's education.

Feedback from focus groups and open-ended survey responses provide insight into some challenges that require attention. A smaller subset of parents express concerns about insufficient communication from the District, citing instances where they feel ignored or compelled to take the lead in advocating for their child. These parents shared frustrations with the quality of progress monitoring and reporting on IEP goals, noting that reports often lack actionable or meaningful data about student growth. These sentiments point to gaps in transparency and accountability that hinder trust and engagement, despite efforts by BCSD leadership to improve relationships with families. Additionally, survey data highlights perceived staffing shortages in special education services, with concerns about inconsistent service delivery and inappropriate reliance on paraprofessionals. As noted previously in this chapter, our analysis does not reveal a staffing shortage in BCSD, therefore, this perception may be more largely based on how staff are utilized in the District as opposed to the number of staff.

BCSD has made strides in supporting families who require language accessibility. Survey data indicates that interpretation services during IEP meetings are generally well-received, reflecting the District's progress in establishing systems for interpretation and translation that were not in place a few years ago. However, a small subset of parents noted challenges remain in achieving accurate and consistent translation of IEP documents and other critical communications, suggesting a need for continued refinement of these systems to fully meet the needs of all families. These parents also highlight the need for greater inclusion in advocacy opportunities and community events, emphasizing the importance of fostering connections that empower bilingual families to advocate for their children effectively.

Finally, participation in District-provided training sessions on special education remains limited. Only 30% of parents aware of these opportunities report attending, and just over half of attendees find them helpful.

This indicates a need for better alignment between training topics and parent needs, as well as more effective communication strategies to raise awareness. Despite these challenges, BCSD has taken proactive steps, such as updating its special education website, collaborating with SEPTO to include parent voice in resource development and communication, and increasing bilingual resources to support families. By addressing these areas of concern and continuing to build on existing strengths, BCSD can create a more inclusive, trusting environment that enhances outcomes for students with disabilities.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

PCG was contracted to provide an objective view of the special education program in BCSD and has identified in this report both strengths and areas of improvement that require focus in the coming years. PCG saw ample evidence that BCSD has a solid foundation on which to build. BCSD has many notable strengths, including its commitment to inclusive practices for students with disabilities and its willingness to undertake this review and act on the recommendations as part of a continuous improvement cycle.

The recommendations listed below serve as a roadmap to address areas of improvement, leading to the future growth of the special education program. Each is interrelated and will require significant investment on the part of BCSD and its stakeholders. Implementation of these recommendations will set the foundation for all other action steps that emerge from this report. The action steps listed under each recommendation below are organized in a manner that provides a comprehensive view of the activities required to initiate change. Although components of the action steps can be implemented within a shorter timeframe, full-scale implementation of the recommendations may take three to five years.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND SPECIALIZED SERVICES

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Recommendation 1.1: Standardize the expectations for MTSS practices in one guiding document differentiated by grade band.

Action Steps:

- **MTSS Procedure Manual.** Create a universal, step-by-step, procedure manual for the districtwide MTSS framework that clearly delineates each structure and process.
- **Elementary MTSS Teams.** Refine the functioning of elementary MTSS and various intervention teams to enhance efficiency and clarity.
- **UDL Implementation.** Identify if and how the District wants to continue the implementation of UDL for consistency of practice across all schools.

Recommendation 1.2: Prioritize the implementation of social-emotional and behavioral practices within the MTSS framework.

Action Steps:

- **MTSS Behavioral Supports and Interventions.** Adhere to the timelines set forth and garner staff feedback in the adoption and implementation of social emotional and behavioral MTSS practices.

2. IEP Development and Transition Planning

Recommendation 2.1: Improve the quality and consistency of IEP writing across the District.

Action Steps:

- **IEP Development Rubric.** Develop a rubric for quality IEP writing, focusing on measurable goals, appropriate accommodations, and alignment with student needs and include with the current staff website for IEP development.
- **Training and Coaching.** Provide ongoing training and coaching for case managers and staff responsible for IEP development.
- **IEP Peer-Review Process/Auditing.** Strengthen the peer-review process or administrative review to enhance IEP quality and consistency.

Recommendation 2.2: Align transition-aged student programming with individualized Transition Plans.

Action Steps:

- **Review Transition Programming and Plans.** Conduct a review of current transition programming and compare it to Transition Plans to identify gaps.
- **Training and Coaching.** Provide training and ongoing coaching for staff on creating meaningful, individualized Transition Plans aligned with student strengths and postsecondary goals.
- **Peer-Review Process for Transition Plans.** Implement a peer-review process or administrative review to enhance Transition Plan quality and consistency.

3. Progress Reports and Monitoring

Recommendation 3.1: Establish clear progress monitoring guidelines for all staff to promote accurate and objective reporting.

Action Steps:

- **Districtwide Progress Monitoring Tools.** Create and disseminate districtwide progress monitoring tools and templates.
- **Staff Training and Coaching.** Train staff on collecting and reporting data to track student progress toward annual IEP goals.
- **Progress Report Audits.** Conduct periodic audits of progress reports to maintain compliance and uphold data quality.

4. English Language Learner Services and Dually Identified Students

Recommendation 4.1: Align supports and services for dually identified students with best practices.

Action Steps:

- **Professional Development.** Offer professional development on best practices for serving dually identified students.

- **Dually Identified Framework.** Develop a districtwide framework to align English Language Learner (ELL) and special education services, allowing them to complement each other.
- **Progress Monitoring.** Monitor and evaluate student outcomes to assess the effectiveness of services.

5. LRE Continuum and Programming

Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) at Elementary Level

Recommendation 5.1: Develop and pilot an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) model at the elementary level to enhance inclusive practices and provide access to grade-level instruction for all students.

Action Steps:

- **Needs Assessment.** Conduct a Needs Assessment and identify schools and grade levels for piloting the ICT model based on student and staff needs.
- **ICT Pilot Program at Elementary.** Develop a Pilot Plan and create a timeline, goals, and criteria for selecting pilot classrooms.
- **Training and Coaching.** Train teachers and provide professional development on co-teaching strategies and collaborative planning.
- **Collaborative Structures.** Build upon the current Action Plan for collaboration time and allocate regular planning time for co-teachers consistently across schools.
- **Progress Monitoring.** Monitor implementation and collect data on student progress and teacher feedback to evaluate success. Use findings to improve and scale ICT to other elementary schools as appropriate.

Behavioral Supports and Programming

Recommendation 5.2: Expand behavioral programming to meet the needs of students with behavioral challenges at the elementary level.

Action Steps:

- **Behavioral Supports and Programming at Elementary Level.** Develop additional behavioral support programs, such as tiered intervention systems or specialized supports, at elementary schools that are similar to what is offered at the secondary level.
- **Training and Coaching.** Provide training for staff on evidence-based behavioral strategies across all grades and schools in BCSD. This includes training for all staff, including general education staff, on functional behavior assessments (FBAs) and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).
-
- **Evaluate Staffing for Behavioral Supports.** Evaluate staffing needs and maintain the availability of highly trained staff to support students with behavioral challenges across all schools. Assess whether current staffing levels effectively meet student needs.

Support and Skills Class (SAS)

Recommendation 5.4: Enhance consistency in instruction and effective practices in SAS classes.

Action Steps:

- **Staff Instructional Guide.** Develop districtwide guidance and priorities for SAS classes.
- **Training and Coaching.** Provide targeted professional development and coaching for SAS teachers on guidance and priorities.
- **Observation and Feedback.** Conduct regular observations and feedback sessions to maintain fidelity of implementation.

Specially Designed Instruction, Accommodations, and Modifications

Recommendation 5.5: Equip all staff to consistently implement Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), accommodations, and modifications across all settings in the LRE continuum.

Action Steps:

- **Professional Development and Training.** Create targeted professional development on implementing SDI, accommodations, and modifications effectively for general and special education staff.
- **Training and Coaching.** Provide ongoing training for general and special education staff to build shared understanding and skills.
- **Staff Tools and Resources.** Develop easy-to-use guides and tools for staff to reference in classrooms on SDI, accommodations, and modifications.
- **Classroom Observations.** Have leadership teams and coaches conduct classroom observations to promote the consistent use of SDI and supports. Offer staff actionable feedback and coaching to refine practices.

LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN CAPITAL

6. Flexible Support Model and Master Scheduling

Recommendation 6.1: Evaluate the effectiveness of the Flexible Support Model (FSM) and Master Scheduling across the District to promote consistent scheduling practices across BCSD.

Action Steps:

- **Workload Analysis of Related Service Providers and FSM.** Conduct a workload analysis of related service provider (RSP) caseloads to determine appropriate use of FSM.
- **Evaluate Flex Week Practices.** Observe and assess Flex Week practices across schools to identify inconsistencies, barriers, and best practices. Use this data to pinpoint where adjustments can improve outcomes for students and staff.
- **Guidance on Flex Week.** Develop clear guidelines and expectations for how Flex Week should be utilized and hold staff accountable to these guidelines.
- **Alternative Models.** Consider transitioning to an annual service minutes model if Flex Week does not meet its intended goals or other evidence-based frameworks to meet student needs.

Recommendation 6.2: Continue to evaluate and refine Master Scheduling practices to establish consistent approaches across BCSD, prioritizing effective and equitable delivery of services.

Action Steps

- **Continue Master Scheduling Audit.** Collaborate with the subject matter expert currently supporting the District to address districtwide scheduling concerns for students with disabilities. Focus on identifying and resolving systemic issues, such as scheduling overlaps, missed services, or inefficiencies, that may hinder the delivery of high-quality services.
- **Form Stakeholder Group and Solicit Feedback.** Incorporate stakeholder feedback by engaging RSPs, administrators, and families to gather insights into challenges and opportunities related to current scheduling practices. Use this feedback to inform revisions to the FSM and master scheduling process.
- **Training and Resources.** Provide ongoing training and resources for master scheduling to equip school leaders and staff with tools and resources to implement effective scheduling practices that align with District expectations. Focus on aligning schedules to provide students with timely, high-quality services and reduce missed opportunities for support.

7. Conduct a Comprehensive Workload Analysis

Recommendation 7.1: Conduct a workload analysis to gain a deeper understanding of staff responsibilities by examining the tasks and time commitments beyond student caseload numbers. This approach will help address concerns about perceived understaffing and provide equitable resource allocation to meet student needs.

Action Steps:

- **Workload Analysis for All Special Education Staff.** Engage staff, including teachers and related service providers, in a districtwide workload analysis to assess the full scope of responsibilities beyond caseload numbers.
- **Reassess Distribution of Staff.** Use the findings to inform staffing decisions, providing equitable distribution of resources and addressing perceptions of understaffing.
- **Workload/Caseload Framework.** Develop a framework for ongoing workload evaluations to adapt staffing models as needs evolve.

8. Strengthen Collaboration Across General and Special Education

Recommendation 8.1: Develop stronger collaborative structures between general and special education to monitor inclusive educational services and high-quality instruction for all students. By promoting shared ownership of student outcomes, BCSD can advance the work already started for MTSS and special education programming.

Action Steps:

- **Professional Development.** Offer joint professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching strategies, accessible curriculum design, and co-teaching models.
- **Cross-Departmental Teams.** Establish cross-departmental teams to identify and address systemic barriers to inclusion, such as scheduling conflicts or curriculum alignment challenges.

- **Assess Student Outcomes.** Regularly evaluate the impact of collaborative initiatives on student outcomes, collecting and analyzing data to make informed adjustments as needed
- **Celebrate and Model Successes.** Recognize and celebrate successful collaboration efforts to encourage a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement.

SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

9. Special Education Department Job Descriptions and Turnover

Recommendation 9.1: Format job descriptions in a manner whereby they are consistently written and formatted for internal and external audiences.

Action Steps:

- **Reformat and Revise.** Reformat and, if need be, revise Special Education Department job descriptions so they are consistent and clearly formatted.

Recommendation 9.2: Create necessary conditions to retain Director and Assistant Director of Special Education.

Action Steps:

- **Identify Root Causes of Turnover.** Acknowledge root causes of turnover and address the underlying causes of turnover while creating supportive conditions for these leaders.
- **Celebrate Successes.** Celebrate successes and regularly acknowledge the contributions and successes of special education leaders.
- **Team-Building.** Encourage open communication and foster a supportive team environment that encourages open communication between District level leadership and staff across schools.

10. Reassess Facilities Review to Align with Current District Needs and Long-Term Planning

Recommendation 10.1: Revisit the facilities review to determine the next steps for long-term planning

Action Steps:

- **Reevaluate Findings from the Previous Facilities Review.** Conduct a detailed reassessment of the most recent facilities review to determine if its findings remain relevant given current enrollment trends, programmatic needs, and resource allocation. Identify any gaps in the initial analysis that may warrant further study, particularly regarding the educational adequacy of existing buildings.
- **Determine the Need for an Educational Adequacy Assessment.** Assess whether additional analysis is needed to evaluate how well current school facilities support instructional programming, specialized services, accessibility, and long-term District goals. This assessment should focus on confirming that any potential consolidation, including that of Pound Ridge Elementary School, enhances educational opportunities for students rather than limiting them.

- **Establish a Long-Range Action Planning Committee (LRPAC).** Form a committee consisting of District leaders, board members, staff, parents, and community stakeholders to guide the next steps in facility planning. This group will review updated data, explore options for optimizing facility use, and engage in transparent discussions about potential impacts.
- **Engage Community Stakeholders.** Facilitate community forums, staff meetings, and parent discussions to gather input and address concerns. Clearly communicate the purpose of revisiting the facilities review and involve stakeholders in shaping possible solutions to promote broad support and understanding.
- **Develop a Framework for Next Steps.** Based on the findings from the reassessment and community engagement process, outline a phased approach for addressing facility needs. If further analysis is warranted, define the scope, timeline, and key areas of focus to support well-informed decisions that align with District priorities.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

11. Enhance Progress Monitoring and Data Utilization

Recommendation 11.1: Develop clear and consistent progress monitoring practices to provide actionable insights into student growth and improve educational outcomes, helping parents understand their child's progress toward IEP goals.

Action Steps:

- **Develop Clear Guidelines:** Create and disseminate districtwide standards for writing progress reports that provide specific, measurable, and actionable information on student growth.
- **Train Educators:** Offer professional development for staff on data-driven practices, including goal setting, progress monitoring, and communicating student outcomes effectively to parents.
- **Implement Oversight Systems:** Establish regular reviews of progress reports to maintain compliance with District guidelines and provide feedback to educators.

12. Increase Communication Consistency

Recommendation 12.1: Standardize communication protocols to foster clarity, timeliness, and effectiveness in interactions among schools, families, and District offices.

Action Steps:

- **Standardize Communication Protocols:** Develop clear expectations for timely communication and consistent communication between schools, families, and District offices, including regular updates on student progress and program changes.
- **Centralize Family Contact Information:** Create a centralized communication platform to manage parent inquiries, track responses, and support follow-through by relevant staff.
- **Empower Families:** Provide resources such as guides or FAQs to help families understand District policies and know whom to contact for specific concerns.

13. Improve Accessibility

Recommendation 13.1: Strengthen accessibility for parents whose first language is not English to allow for equitable understanding of special education services and processes.

Action Steps:

- **Monitor Translation Systems.** Continually monitor the current translation systems within the District to maintain accuracy and consistency in the translation of IEPs and other essential documents, providing all parents access to special education materials in their first language.
- **Build Bilingual Resources:** Expand the availability of bilingual materials and guides to support parents' understanding of the special education process, making them accessible on digital platforms.
- **Improve Outreach:** Use diverse communication methods, in multiple languages, including social media, newsletters, and school-level outreach, to inform families about available training opportunities and find ways to increase engagement with bilingual families.

14. Rebuild Trust with Families and the Community

Recommendation 14.1: Foster trust and strengthen partnerships with families and the community through transparency, active listening, and collaboration.

Action Steps:

- **Acknowledge Past Challenges:** Transparently address the history of mistrust with families and the community. Demonstrate an understanding of their concerns by sharing specific steps the District is taking to improve practices and communication
- **Engage in Active Listening:** Host listening sessions with a neutral party or conduct surveys to gather input from families, making sure their voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process. Act on the feedback received to demonstrate the District's commitment to addressing their needs and concerns.
- **Celebrate Collaborative Successes:** Highlight the role of the new leadership team in prioritizing trust-building and collaboration with families by sharing stories of successful partnerships with families and community members, showcasing the positive impact of their contributions. Recognize family and community leaders who have supported the District's improvement efforts.

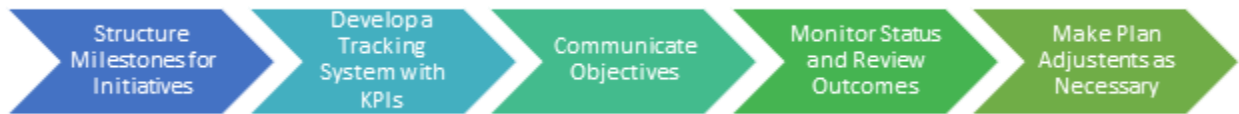
FROM STRATEGY TO EXECUTION

The secret to successful strategy execution is in translating strategies into actions. Further, tracking progress made on an organization's strategy execution is integral to understanding whether it will reach its desired future state. From our experience, the most challenging part of a comprehensive program evaluation for a school district is moving from the recommendations to a concrete action plan, then to a change in practice. These steps require significant focus, in addition to organization, communication, and collaboration across departments. Implementing change across often siloed and independent departments, with differing priorities and reporting structures, requires out-of-the-box thinking and a commitment to approaching issues and solutions in a new light.

While there are different approaches that school districts take to managing this process, the most successful ones create a sustainable structure, with internal and external accountability measures and strong cross-departmental advocates. PCG recommends a five-step Strategy Execution process, which we have found results in grounded, sustainable change within an organization.

PCG recommends that BCSD address each component of our Strategy Execution Process to position the district to make lasting and impactful changes.

EXHIBIT 2. PCG'S STRATEGY EXECUTION PROCESS



Structure Milestones for Initiatives

Action plans must include concrete, measurable milestones that can be assessed regularly. These milestones break down initiatives into manageable steps and timelines. This structure is essential, especially given the school year cycle and the urgency by which BCSD would like to move these critical initiatives forward. At a minimum, given the nature of the initiatives, progress toward milestones should be reviewed monthly through the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years.

Develop a Tracking System with KPIs

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must be established for each measurable milestone. Reviewing these KPIs will help BCSD assess where each initiative stands. By monitoring these KPIs frequently, BCSD will be able to assess barriers and adjust plans early in the process if needed. It is often the case that defining metrics or KPIs is the step that allows teams to recognize challenges within the theory of action that undergirds their action plan.

Communicate the Objectives

To implement new policies and procedures, organizational changes, or new approaches, stakeholders need a solid grasp of the initiatives, the objectives, and the benefits the plan will bring to bear. Communicating progress made on each key initiative is equally important to ensure continued support from those impacted by the changes, as well as the associated stakeholders.

Monitor Progress and Review Outcomes

Action plans are more likely to succeed when staff are deeply involved with the implementation process and there are monthly status checks on progress made toward established objectives. It is also critical at this point to celebrate real progress and hold individuals who have not “delivered” accountable.

Make Plan Adjustments as Necessary

An action plan is not an unchangeable document. It is a fluid plan that should be revised and updated as the BCSD environment changes and grows. Openness to revising the action plans will enable BCSD to adjust to shifting fiscal and regulatory realities as well as changing priorities. If BCSD’s core leadership team sees progress on certain initiatives falling short of expectations, a reevaluation of the original objectives and approach may be needed. However, it is also important to assess the causes of discrepancies between actual and planned results.



Solutions that Matter