

2018-19 Evaluation of the Special Education Program

Department of Evaluation and Assessment

*Michael Hinojosa, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*



© 2019 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD

Department of Evaluation and Assessment

H. B. Bell School Support Service Center

2909 N. Buckner Blvd.

Box 10

Dallas, TX 75228

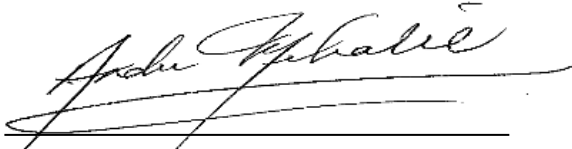
2018-19 Evaluation of the Special Education Program

Approved Report of the Department of Evaluation and Assessment

EA19-519-2

August 2019

Monique C. Mejan, M.A.



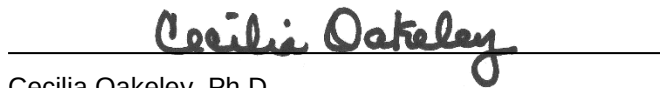
Anduamlak Meharie, Ph.D.

Manager – Program Evaluation



Joan Bush, Ph.D.

Executive Director – Program Evaluation



Cecilia Oakeley, Ph.D.

Assistant Superintendent – Evaluation and Assessment

*Michael Hinojosa, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*



This page is intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	1
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	2
Background Information	2
Program Purpose and Goal	2
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION	3
MAJOR EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND RESULTS	3
What were the characteristics of students served in special education?	3
Methodology	3
Results	3
What were the characteristics of special education teachers?	11
Methodology	11
Results	11
What were teacher and principal perceptions of the special education program communication and support?	13
Methodology	13
Results	14
What were the activities and perceptions of special education evaluators?	19
Methodology	19
Results	19
How did the special education program perform on the 2018 PBMAS Report?	25
Methodology	25
Results	26
What were the special education targeted intervention problem statements and intervention plans? ...	29
Methodology	29
Results	29
What were the trends in the academic performances of students served in special education?	33
Methodology	33
Results	33

What were the dropout, graduation, and attendance rates of special education students?	42
Methodology	42
Results	43
What were the findings of the 2018-19 contracted special education program follow-up review?	45
Background	45
Methodology	45
Results	45
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	47
Summary	47
Recommendations.....	50
REFERENCES.....	51
APPENDICES	52

List of Tables

Table	Page
1 Enrollment of Special Education Students by Feeder Pattern: 2018-19	5
2 Number and Percentage of Special Education and General Education Students by Student Group: 2018-19	6
3 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students by Ethnicity and Grade: 2018-19.....	6
4 Primary Disabilities of Special Education Students by School Level: 2018-19	7
5 Primary Disabilities of Special Education Students by Ethnic Group: 2018-19	8
6 Instructional Settings of Special Education Students by School Level: 2018-19	10
7 Instructional Settings of Special Education Students by Ethnic Group: 2018-19	11
8 Number and Percentage of Special Education and General Education Teachers: 2015-16 through 2018-19	12
9 Characteristics of Special Education Teachers: 2018-19	13
10 Top Eight Reasons for Contacting the Special Education Department in 2018-19	16
11 Themes from Open-Ended Responses Explaining Low Special Education Customer Service Ratings	18
12 Types of Special Education Evaluations with Count Range, 2018-19.....	20
13 Number of Referrals for Additional Evaluations for Speech-only, 2018-19	20
14 Difficulty Finding an Interpreter to Communicate with Non-English-Speaking Students or Parents	22
15 How Can the District Improve Special Education: Open-Ended Response Themes, 2018-19	25
16 Dallas ISD Special Education Program Area Performance: 2018 PBMAS Report	27
17 Dallas ISD and State Special Education Program Area Performance: 2018 PBMAS Report	28
18 Goal #1 Targeted Improvement Plan and Activity Schedule: 2018-19	30
19 Goal #2 Targeted Improvement Plan and Activity Schedule: 2018-19	32
20 Student Performance on <i>TerraNova</i> and <i>SUPERA</i> by Grade: 2018-19	34
21 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at or Above Grade Level on <i>TerraNova</i> by Grade: 2016-17 through 2018-19.....	35
22 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Test Version: 2018-19	36
23 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Grade: 2018-19.....	36
24 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Grade: 2016-17 through 2018-19	37
25 Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR EOC: 2018-19	39

26	Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at <i>STAAR EOC</i> Approaches Grade Level or Above by Test Version: 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19	40
27	Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at <i>STAAR 3-8</i> Approaches Grade Level or Above by Subject, by Student Group: 2018-19	40
28	Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at <i>STAAR EOC</i> Approaches Grade Level or Above by School District by Student Group: 2018-19	41
29	Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at <i>STAAR 3-8</i> Approaches Grade Level or Above by School District: 2018-19.....	42
30	Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at <i>STAAR EOC</i> Approaches Grade Level or Above by School District: 2018-19.....	42
31	Four-Year Longitudinal Graduation and Dropout Rates: Class of 2018	43

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1	Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled in the District and in Special Education: 2010-11 to 2018-19 4
2	Percentage of Special Education Students with Autism and Specific Learning Disability: 2010-11 to 2018-19 9
3	Respondents' Years of Experience in Dallas ISD, 2018-19 14
4	Understanding of Policy and Access to Resources 14
5	Perceptions of Access to Central Staff, Disaggregated by Respondent Subgroup 15
6	Number of Times Educators Contacted the Special Education Department, 2018-19 16
7	Special Education Customer Service Survey Responses: Special Education Customer Service Perceptions 17
8	Nature of Request/Concern Leading to Low Rating on Special Education Customer Service Survey, 2018-19 18
9	Number of Students with an IEP with Whom Special Education Teachers and Teacher Assistants Worked, 2018-19 19
10	Percentage of Initial Evaluations Referred Through Parent Requests, 2018-19 21
11	Percentage of Initial Referral Folders that Included Adequate MTSS Interventions, 2018-19 21
12	Special Education Evaluator Survey, Transition-Related Issues, Part 1 23
13	Special Education Evaluator Survey, Transition-Related Issues, Part 2 24
14	Percentage of Special Education Students Tested by Version of STAAR 3-8 Assessment: 2018-19 35
15	Percentage of Dallas ISD and State Special Education Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR 3-8 Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Science, and Social Studies, by Grade: 2018-19 38
16	Percentage of Special Education Students by Version of STAAR EOC Assessment: 2018-19 .. 39
17	Four-Year Longitudinal Special Education Dropout Rates: 2009-10 through 2017-18 44
18	Average Attendance of Special Education and General Education Students by Grade: 2018-19 44
19	Special Education Program Review: Implementation Status At a Glance 46

List of Appendices

Appendix	Page
A Special Education Customer Service Survey Results	53
B Special Education Evaluator Survey Results.....	57
C Executive Summary of Special Education Program Review, 2019 Progress Report, by Denise Collier, Ed.D.....	58

2018-19 Evaluation of Special Education Program

Project Evaluator: Monique C. Mejan, M.A.

ABSTRACT

- The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) special education (SPED) population was 13,877 students in the 2018-19 school year representing 8.9 percent of district enrollment. This was an increase from the 2017-18 school year (N = 12,871; 8.2%).
- Feedback on a survey designed to gather input about the quality of communication and support provided by the SPED department was generally positive. The majority of school administrators and SPED educators indicated that they understood the district's expectations in providing special education services, knew how to get help with special education related matters, and had adequate access to classroom materials.
- SPED evaluator survey results were mixed and showed that more than half (56%) did not view the transition to campuses, overall, as positive (an additional 12% were uncertain). Also, 82 percent indicated that none or very few initial referral folders contained adequate Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) documentation; 50 percent indicated that 75 to 100 percent of referrals came through parent requests.
- A higher percentage of Dallas ISD special education students scored at Approaches Grade level or Above compared to students at the state level in all *State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness (STAAR)* 3-8 subjects. The percentage of special education students scoring at Approaches Grade Level or Above increased on every *STAAR* 3-8 and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)* exam since 2016-17 except English I.
- The percentage of special education students that scored at grade level or higher on *TerraNova* increased in every grade level for reading and mathematics between the 2016-17 and the 2018-19 school years but varied when compared to the 2017-18 school year. On *SUPERA*, special education students showed a 4.7 percentage point decrease overall among grades kindergarten through two in reading from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and a 15.1 percentage point decrease in grade two (reading) across that same period.
- A follow-up review of the special education program conducted by Collier Educational Consulting revealed evidence of at least some implementation progress on 11 of the 16 recommendations made in the 2016-17 program review.
- Recommendations are: ensure that central staff are trained adequately to handle policy and other support-related questions, and provide support in a timely manner; communicate to teachers and other campus-based staff the necessity of following MTSS procedures; increase efforts to recruit more bilingual special education evaluators; promote additional and regular opportunities for special education evaluators to collaborate and receive professional support; and conduct a needs assessment among special education evaluators to determine professional resource and other supply needs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Background Information

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) is the federal law that ensures that students with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youths with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth to 2 years) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part C and youths (ages 3-21 years) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), schools were held accountable for the education results of every child, including children with disabilities. State assessments determined whether schools had been successful in teaching students the knowledge and skills for their grade level as defined by the state content standards. The most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) and granted states greater flexibility to set performance standards and determine goals and milestones.

Assessment results for students receiving special education services are collected for state and federal accountability systems. Students in grades three through eight are given *State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness (STAAR)* in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students at the high school level are given *STAAR End of Course (EOC)* assessments in Algebra I, Biology, English I, English II, and United States History. In addition to the state and federal accountability systems which provided ratings for districts and campuses, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has also developed an ancillary accountability system known as the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS). PBMAS reports annually on the performance of school districts in four program areas: bilingual education/English as a second language, career and technical education, selected Title I programs, and special education. The PBMAS report is produced at the district level only.

Program Purpose and Goal

The Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Special Education Department provides services and supports designed to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. When parents or instructional staff suspect a student might have a disability, the student is referred for evaluation. An admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, which includes parents, teachers, school administrators, and evaluation personnel, is assembled to review data and determine eligibility for special education services. Once a student is determined eligible for special education services, the ARD committee develops an individualized education program (IEP) articulating learning goals, services and supports, accommodations and modifications, and progress measurements. ARD committees also determine instructional placements suitable for educating special education students while also, to the maximum extent appropriate, placing special education students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with non-special education peers. State assessment and graduation requirements are decided by a student's ARD committee.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this report is to summarize trends in the characteristics and academic performance of students served in special education, focusing on indicators related to state, federal, and PBMAS accountability systems. In addition, this evaluation summarizes feedback from special education teachers, principals, and evaluators identifying challenges and areas for improvement. This evaluation will:

1. Describe the characteristics of special education students and teachers.
2. Gather input from district personnel regarding challenges faced and perceived levels of support from the department of special education.
3. Monitor and report the performance of the special education program in official accountability measures including goals stated in the 2019 annual targeted improvement plan.
4. Continue to examine trends in the academic performances of students served in special education, adding new data.
5. Examine trends in dropout, graduation, and attendance rates of students served in special education, adding new data.
6. Summarize findings from the 2018-19 special education program follow-up review conducted by Collier Educational Consulting.

MAJOR EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

What were the characteristics of students served in special education?

Methodology

Enrollment data for the 2018-19 school year were extracted from the district's student data file, specifically the fall 2018 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) snapshot (October 26, 2018). Descriptive statistics for special education students enrolled in the district in the 2018-19 school year are presented among others by grade, race/ethnicity, gender, disability type, instructional setting, and feeder pattern. Enrollment totals may vary slightly across tables due to missing data for some variables (e.g. feeder pattern, primary disability, instructional setting).

Results

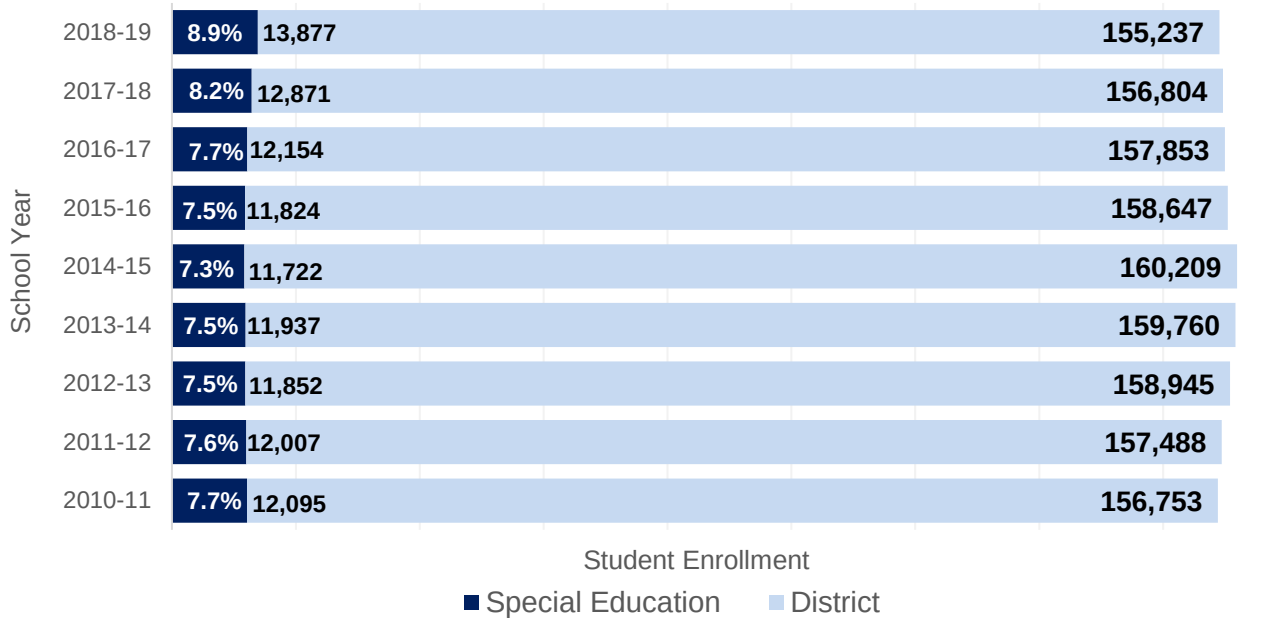
The special education population in the district, as of October 26, 2018, was 13,877 students, representing 8.9 percent of district student enrollment. This was an increase from the number and percentage of students who received special education services in the 2017-18 school year ($N = 12,871^1$ 8.2%), according to enrollment numbers presented in the *2017-18 Evaluation of Special Education Program* (Grimberg, 2018).

The number and percentage of district students served in special education (early childhood through grade twelve) were examined over a nine-year period, from the 2010-11 school year through the 2018-19 school

¹ Enrollment reflects all students enrolled in special education in the district.

year (Figure 1). The percentage of Dallas ISD students who were served in special education remained fairly stable between 2010-11 and 2013-14 but from 2014-15 to 2018-19 increased by 1.6 percentage points.

Figure 1: Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled in the District and in Special Education: 2010-11 to 2018-19



Source: PEIMS district data file dated 10/26/18 (2018-19); *2017-18 Evaluation of Special Education Program* report, Grimberg, 2018 (for 2010-11 through 2017-18 numbers and percentages).

Note: PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

As seen in Table 1, there is variation in the levels of special education representation by feeder pattern. The Lincoln (12.6%), Madison (11.4%), Wilmer-Hutchins (11.2%) and Carter (11.2%) feeder patterns reported the largest proportions of students who were served in special education. (In 2017-18, Wilmer-Hutchins, Intensive Support Network, ACE, Carter, and North Dallas feeder patterns reported the largest proportions of students who were served in special education with 10.6%, 9.8%, 9.7%, 9.6%, and 9.6% enrolled, respectively). The Sunset (7.7%), Wilson (8.3%), Molina (8.4%), and Adamson (8.4%) feeder patterns, in contrast, reported the smallest proportions of special education students served in 2018-19. (In 2017-18, the South Oak Cliff, Transformation and Innovation, Wilson, and Sunset feeder patterns reported the smallest proportions of special education students served – with 5.0%, 6.4%, 6.6%, and 6.9% enrolled, respectively.)

Table 1: Enrollment of Special Education Students by Feeder Pattern: 2018-19

Feeder Pattern	Special Education		General Education		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Lincoln	150	12.6	1,039	87.4	1,189
Madison	222	11.4	1,726	88.6	1,948
Wilmer-Hutchins HS	296	11.2	2,342	88.8	2,638
Carter	582	11.2	4,629	88.8	5,211
Pinkston	625	10.9	5,128	89.1	5,753
Seagoville HS	694	10.5	5,909	89.5	6,603
South Oak Cliff	607	10.1	5,392	89.9	5,999
Transformation and Innovation	288	10.1	2,569	89.9	2,857
ACE	629	9.8	5,765	90.2	6,394
Hillcrest	535	9.8	4,936	90.2	5,471
Spruce	959	9.7	8,925	90.3	9,884
Kimball	708	9.7	6,603	90.3	7,311
White	848	9.6	8,014	90.4	8,862
North Dallas	321	9.5	3,056	90.5	3,377
Samuell	795	9.4	7,651	90.6	8,446
Roosevelt	357	9.3	3,497	90.7	3,854
Adams, B	899	9.2	8,900	90.8	9,799
Jefferson	643	8.6	6,836	91.4	7,479
Skyline	995	8.6	10,617	91.4	11,612
Conrad	399	8.5	4,278	91.5	4,677
Adamson	382	8.4	4,164	91.6	4,546
Molina	565	8.4	6,175	91.6	6,740
Wilson	621	8.3	6,870	91.7	7,491
Sunset	625	7.7	7,542	92.3	8,167

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

Note: Magnet Schools (SPED *n*=102) and Hospital Secondary (SPED *n*=8) not shown in table. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System. SPED=Special Education

As of October 2018, Black or African American students constituted 28.9 percent of all special education students; districtwide, the percentage of Black or African American students was 21.7 percent in 2018-19 (Table 2). Conversely, there was a smaller proportion of Hispanic students enrolled in special education (63.3%) compared to the overall percentage of Hispanic students in the district (69.8%). These differences were similar to those observed in 2017-18, though the differences each decreased slightly (by one to two percentage points) in 2018-19. In addition, although males and females were equally represented in the district total population in 2018-19, more than two-thirds of special education students were male (67.4%). More than 37 percent of special education students were English Learners (EL), which was less than the district proportion of EL students (44.7%).

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Special Education and General Education Students by Student Group: 2018-19

Variable	Special Education		General Education		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
English Learner	5,144	37.1	64,312	45.5	69,456	44.7
Economically Disadvantaged	12,223	88.1	121,727	86.1	133,950	86.3
Homeless	143	1.0	1,757	1.2	1,900	1.2
Ethnicity						
Hispanic/Latino	8,790	63.3	99,595	70.5	108,385	69.8
Black or African American	4,014	28.9	29,649	21.0	33,663	21.7
White	700	5.0	7,269	5.1	7,969	5.1
Two or More Races	190	1.4	1,687	1.2	1,877	1.2
Asian	114	0.8	1,968	1.4	2,082	1.3
Amer. Indian or Alaska Native	42	0.3	505	0.4	547	0.4
Unspecified	20	0.1	618	0.4	638	0.4
Native Hawaiian/other Pac Isl	7	0.1	69	0.0	76	0.0
Gender						
Female	4,526	32.6	71,502	50.6	76,028	49.0
Male	9,351	67.4	69,858	49.4	79,209	51.0

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18. Economically disadvantaged student data in the PEIMS file was updated on 2/6/19; the update is reflected in this table.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Amer. Indian = American Indian; Pac Isl = Pacific Islander. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

The ethnicity of special education students was also examined by grade level (Table 3). The highest percentage of special education students was reported in grade five (9.8%). The lowest percentage was reported in early childhood (1.1%). Many students are not evaluated for special education services until they reach higher grade levels, at which time certain disabilities may become more evident.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students by Ethnicity and Grade: 2018-19

Grade	Hispanic		African American		White		Asian		American Indian or Alaska Native		Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		Two or More Races		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
EC	86	1.0	41	1.0	19	2.7	8	7.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	157	1.1
PK	319	3.6	108	2.7	29	4.1	14	12.3	-	-	-	-	7	3.7	480	3.5
KN	438	5.0	162	4.0	52	7.4	8	7.0	-	-	-	-	14	7.4	678	4.9
1	599	6.8	198	4.9	62	8.9	9	7.9	-	-	-	-	17	8.9	889	6.4
2	704	8.0	243	6.1	63	9.0	6	5.3	-	-	-	-	24	12.6	1,047	7.5
3	799	9.1	315	7.8	83	11.9	8	7.0	5	11.9	-	-	19	10.0	1,233	8.9
4	859	9.8	381	9.5	63	9.0	9	7.9	6	14.3	-	-	16	8.4	1,335	9.6
5	855	9.7	400	10.0	69	9.9	10	8.8	-	-	-	-	20	10.5	1,357	9.8
6	785	8.9	343	8.5	64	9.1	10	8.8	-	-	-	-	13	6.8	1,224	8.8
7	663	7.5	342	8.5	42	6.0	6	5.3	-	-	-	-	18	9.5	1,074	7.7
8	563	6.4	295	7.3	38	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	3.2	909	6.6
9	659	7.5	359	8.9	28	4.0	5	4.4	-	-	-	-	6	3.2	1,061	7.6
10	563	6.4	288	7.2	31	4.4	8	7.0	-	-	-	-	13	6.8	906	6.5
11	438	5.0	252	6.3	25	3.6	5	4.4	-	-	-	-	8	4.2	730	5.3
12	460	5.2	287	7.1	32	4.6	7	6.1	-	-	-	-	7	3.7	797	5.7
Total	8,790	99.9	4,014	99.8	700	100.0	114	100.1	42	100.0	7	100.1	190	100.0	13,877	99.9

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

Note: EC = Early Childhood, PK = Pre-kindergarten, KN = Kindergarten. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Ns and %s are masked to protect privacy where $n < 5$; the “-”dash signifies masking. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

The most commonly reported primary disabilities of special education students across all school levels in 2018-19 were specific learning disability (28.8%), autism (20.7% of all special education students, an almost 3-percentage-point increase from 18.0% in 2017-18), and other health impairment² (16.2%) (Table 4). The least common primary disabilities for special education students across all school levels were developmental delay, deaf-blind, and non-categorical early childhood (each less than 0.01% of special education students in the district). The most common primary disabilities for elementary school students were autism (27.0%, up from 23.6% in 2017-18), speech impairment (22.2%, down from 25.8% in 2017-18), and specific learning disability (19.3%, an increase from 14.9% in 2017-18).

A higher percentage of special education students in middle school (34.6%) and high school (43.3%) were reported with a specific learning disability compared to students at the elementary school level (19.3%, 14.9% for elementary in 2017-18). Additionally, while 22.2 percent of elementary school students in the special education program had a speech impairment, fewer special education students were classified with a speech impairment at the middle school level (3.6%) and high school level (1.1%) (these school level differences were similar to those in 2017-18).

Table 4: Primary Disabilities of Special Education Students by School Level: 2018-19

Primary Disabilities	Elementary		Middle		High		All Grades	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Specific Learning Disability	1,393	19.3	1,042	34.6	1,465	43.3	3,992	28.8
Autism	1,944	27.0	471	15.6	430	12.7	2,870	20.7
Other Health Impairment	1,079	15.0	627	20.8	492	14.5	2,244	16.2
Speech Impairment	1,602	22.2	109	3.6	38	1.1	1,800	13.0
Intellectual Disability	650	9.0	424	14.1	595	17.6	1,697	12.2
Emotional Disturbance	231	3.2	162	5.4	147	4.3	555	4.0
Auditory Impairment	169	2.3	101	3.4	129	3.8	403	2.9
Orthopedic Impairment	97	1.3	43	1.4	45	1.3	195	1.4
Visual Impairment	29	0.4	25	0.8	28	0.8	85	0.6
Traumatic Brain Injury	12	0.2	7	0.2	12	0.4	32	0.2
Noncategorical EC Childhood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deaf/Blindness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Developmental Delay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	7,209	99.9	3,011	99.9	3,382	99.9	13,877	100.0

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

Note: All Grades totals may be larger than sum of school level subgroups due to some students having missing school level information. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. EC=Early. Ns and %s are masked to protect privacy where $n < 5$; the "-"dash signifies masking. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

The most common disabilities also varied by ethnic group. In 2018-19, the most common primary disabilities among Hispanic students were specific learning disability (31.5%), autism (21.9%), and speech impairment (14.2%) (Table 5). The most common primary disabilities among African American students were specific learning disability (26.2%), other health impairment (21.2%), and intellectual disability (16.6%). These

² "Other Health Impairment" is a disability category under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004. It is characterized by a student having a chronic or acute health problem that limits the student's strength, vitality, or alertness that adversely affects educational performance. The health problem may include but is not limited to: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, heart condition, lead poisoning, leukemia, rheumatic fever, and Tourette's Syndrome.

proportions were similar to 2017-18 proportions for both Hispanic and African American students. The three most common disabilities for white students were: autism (31.3% - a more than six percentage point increase from 25.0% in 2017-18), speech impairment (17.4%; 19.1% in 2017-18), and specific learning disability (15.7%; 16.3% in 2017-18).

Table 5: Primary Disabilities of Special Education Students by Ethnic Group: 2018-19

Primary Disabilities	Hispanic		African American		White		All SPED Students	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Specific Learning Disability	2,772	31.5	1,053	26.2	110	15.7	3,992	28.8
Autism	1,929	21.9	621	15.5	219	31.3	2,870	20.7
Other Health Impairment	1,209	13.8	852	21.2	109	15.6	2,244	16.2
Speech Impairment	1,250	14.2	357	8.9	122	17.4	1,800	13.0
Intellectual Disability	929	10.6	668	16.6	62	8.9	1,697	12.2
Emotional Disturbance	188	2.1	316	7.9	39	5.6	555	4.0
Auditory Impairment	293	3.3	78	1.9	18	2.6	403	2.9
Orthopedic Impairment	148	1.7	32	0.8	10	1.4	195	1.4
Visual Impairment	58	0.7	20	0.5	6	0.9	85	0.6
Traumatic Brain Injury	12	0.1	17	0.4	-	-	32	0.2
Noncategorical Early	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deaf/Blindness.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Developmental Delay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	8,790	99.9	4,014	99.9	700	100.0	13,877	100.0

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

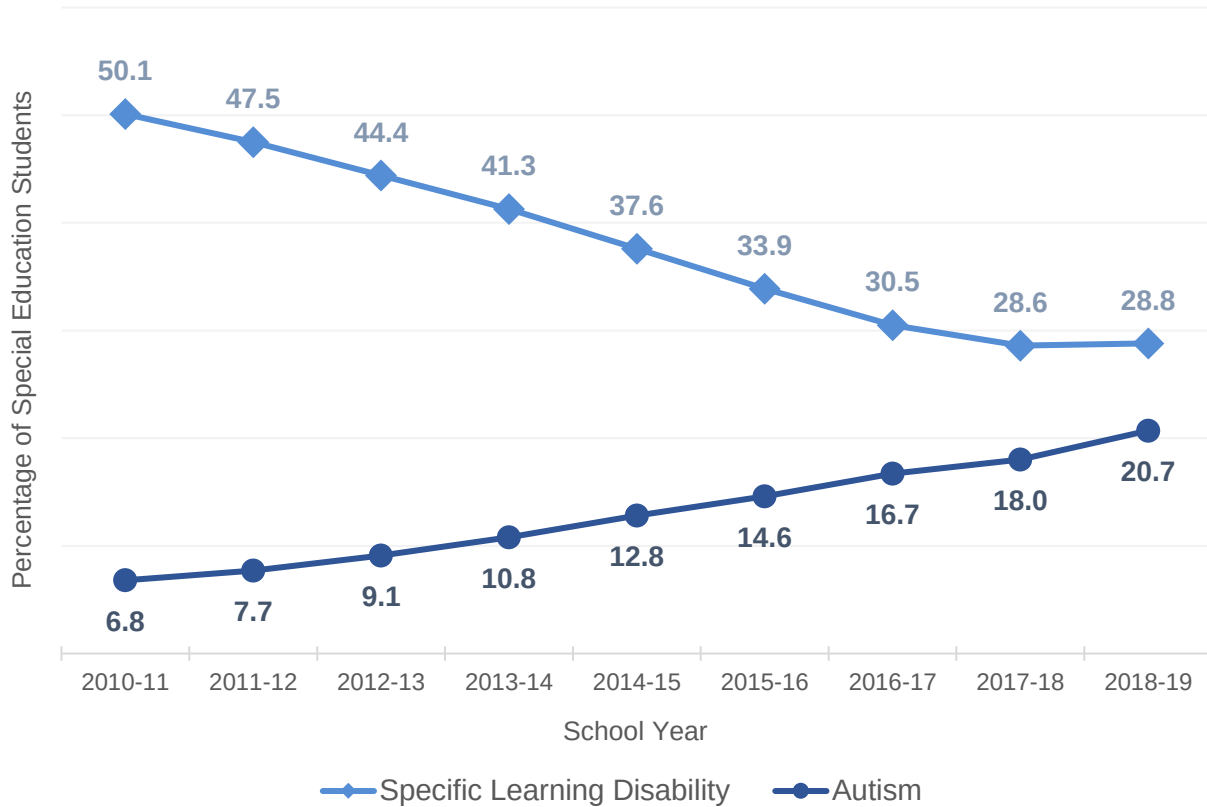
Note: Total is less than overall special education enrollment due to missing primary disability information. SPED = Special Education. A SPED student includes students classified as Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races (N = 373; 2.7%). Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Ns and %s are masked to protect privacy where $n < 5$; the “-”dash signifies masking. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

The two most common primary disabilities of special education students in the 2018-19 school year were compared over a nine-year period from the 2010-11 through 2018-19 school years (Figure 2). The percentage of students with a specific learning disability declined from 50.1 percent in 2010-11 to 28.6 percent in 2017-18 (28.8% in 2018-19). A report by Cortiella and Horowitz (2014) found that, since 2006, the number of students identified as having a learning disability has declined in almost every state. There were several possible explanations for this decline including increased attention and support for struggling students in early childhood education and changes in the criteria and means of identifying learning disabled students.

In comparison, the percentage of Dallas ISD special education students reported to have some form of autism more than tripled between 2010-11 and 2018-19, from 6.8 percent to 20.7 percent. A similar increase in autism spectrum disorder cases was reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for school aged children between 2007 and 2012 nationally (Blumberg, Bramlett, Kogan, Schieve, Jones, & Lu, 2013). A study by Wazana, Bresnahan, and Kline (2007) found that increases in the diagnosis of autism across the United States were related to changes in the diagnostic criteria of behaviors constituting autism spectrum disorder. In addition, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) placed the estimate of autism prevalence at one in 59 children in 2018, up from one in 68 in the two years prior and up from one in 166 in

2004. The CDC also attributes this increase in diagnoses to better monitoring and diagnosis of the disorder, rather than a “de facto” rise in the number of children who fall on the autism spectrum.³

Figure 2: Percentage of Special Education Students with Autism and Specific Learning Disability: 2010-11 to 2018-19



Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18 (2018-19); *2017-18 Evaluation of Special Education Program* report (Grimberg, 2018).

Note: PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

Across all grade levels, the largest percentage of special education students (45.2%, Table 6) were placed into a mainstream educational setting where they received special education and related services in a general classroom for 100 percent of the school day, in accordance with their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). This was an increase from 37.4 percent (across all grade levels) who were mainstreamed in 2017-18. The majority of special education middle and high school students were placed into mainstream educational settings (58.3 % and 68.0%, respectively) compared to 28.7 percent of special education students in elementary school (a notable increase from only 15.1% among elementary students in 2017-18). More than fourteen percent (14.5%) of students enrolled in special education received services outside a general classroom for less than half the school day in a resource room. This was a notable decrease from 2017-18 (when the percentage equaled 25.9%). Resource room-related services included but were not limited to physical therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling by a certified or licensed counselor on a regularly scheduled basis. A higher percentage of special education students at the elementary school level (21.6%) received services in a resource room

³ See <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html> for more information.

compared to middle school (11.4%) and high school students (2.5%). Across all grade levels, approximately one in ten special education students were placed in a Speech Only setting, though this percentage was higher among elementary school level special education students (17.9%). A Functional Living Skills placement was the third most common placement among all grade levels (12.8%), though this was more common among middle and high school special education students (15.0% and 15.7%, respectively, Table 6).

Table 6: Instructional Settings of Special Education Students by School Level: 2018-19

Instructional Settings	Elementary		Middle		High		All Grades	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Mainstream	2,070	28.7	1,754	58.3	2,300	68.0	6,272	45.2
Resource Room	1,554	21.6	342	11.4	84	2.5	2,009	14.5
Functional Living Skills	767	10.6	453	15.0	530	15.7	1,770	12.8
Speech Only	1,290	17.9	80	2.7	24	0.7	1,441	10.4
Total Communication	351	4.9	147	4.9	110	3.3	608	4.4
PPCD-4/5	461	6.4	-	0.0	-	0.0	461	3.3
(No Setting Data Provided)	106	1.5	59	2.0	82	2.4	254	1.8
Regional Day School for the Deaf	110	1.5	49	1.6	53	1.6	212	1.5
Behavior Program	103	1.4	68	2.3	32	0.9	203	1.5
PPCD-3	183	2.5	-	-	-	-	184	1.3
Activities of Daily Living	52	0.7	43	1.4	54	1.6	160	1.2
PPCD-KN	65	0.9	-	-	-	-	65	0.5
Vocational Adjustment Class	-	-	-	-	59	1.7	60	0.4
PPCD-PK	48	0.7	-	-	-	-	48	0.3
Homebound Class	18	0.2	6	0.2	17	0.5	44	0.3
Transition Academy	-	0.0	-	0.0	33	1.0	33	0.2
PPCD-PK3	20	0.3	-	0.0	-	-	20	0.1
Wrap around intervention network	7	0.1	6	0.2	-	-	18	0.1
Hospital Class	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	0.1
Preschool Programs-Children With Disabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vision - Itinerant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	7,209	99.9	3,011	100.1	3,382	100.0	13,877	99.9

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

Note: Sum of school levels is less than "All Grades" totals due to some schools being merged into "multilevel schools in 2018-19. Percentages among all special education students in these multilevel schools equaled 0.8 percent (*n*=106) for the "Elementary/Middle" level and 1.22 percent (*n*=169) for the "Middle/High level. Percentages within columns may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Nondiscript subcategories removed (*n*<5 for each); column total *N*s account for these. *N*s and %s are masked to protect privacy where *n*<5; the "-"dash signifies masking. PPCD=Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities; 4/5=ages four and five, 3=age 3, KN=Kindergarten, PK=Pre-Kindergarten. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

Across the three largest ethnic groups, the largest percentage of students were mainstreamed, though this percentage was lower among white special education students (Table 7). White special education students were also more likely to be placed in a Speech Only setting compared to African American and Hispanic special education students (9.7% compared to 6.7% and 11.5%, respectively). Overall, differences among ethnic groups in instructional setting placements were minimal.

Table 7: Instructional Settings of Special Education Students by Ethnic Group: 2018-19

Instructional Settings	African American		Hispanic		White		All SPED Students	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Mainstream	1,876	46.7	3,979	45.3	284	40.6	6,272	45.2
Resource Room	511	12.7	1,362	15.5	96	13.7	2,009	14.5
Functional Living Skills	610	15.2	1,051	12.0	68	9.7	1,770	12.8
Speech Only	267	6.7	1,013	11.5	100	14.3	1,441	10.4
Total Communication	175	4.4	373	4.2	38	5.4	608	4.4
PPCD-4/5	114	2.8	297	3.4	30	4.3	461	3.3
(No Setting Data Provided)	110	2.7	120	1.4	15	2.1	254	1.8
Regional Day School for the Deaf	48	1.2	147	1.7	9	1.3	212	1.5
Behavior Program	127	3.2	50	0.6	18	2.6	203	1.5
PPCD-3	53	1.3	107	1.2	14	2.0	184	1.3
Activities of Daily Living	39	1.0	111	1.3	6	0.9	160	1.2
PPCD-KN	15	0.4	46	0.5	-	-	65	0.5
Vocational Adjustment Class	22	0.5	30	0.3	5	0.7	60	0.4
PPCD-PK	13	0.3	27	0.3	5	0.7	48	0.3
Homebound Class	7	0.2	33	0.4	-	-	44	0.3
Transition Academy	9	0.2	22	0.3	-	-	33	0.2
PPCD-PK3	-	-	11	0.1	-	-	20	0.1
Wrap around intervention network	11	0.3	5	0.1	-	-	18	0.1
Hospital Class	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	0.1
Preschool Programs-Children With Disabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vision - Itinerant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	4,014	100.0	8,790	100.1	700	100.0	13,877	99.9

Source: PEIMS demographic data file dated 10/26/18.

Note: SPED = Special Education. All SPED students includes students classified as Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Two or More Races and those with no ethnicity data in the database (*n* = 373; 2.7%). Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Nondisrupt subcategories removed (*n*<5 for each); column total *N*s account for these. *N*s and %s are masked to protect privacy where *n*<5; the “-”dash signifies masking. PPCD=Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities; 4/5=ages four and five, 3=age 3, KN=Kindergarten, PK=Pre-Kindergarten. PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System.

What were the characteristics of special education teachers?

Methodology

Demographic and credential data for 2018-19 were extracted from the Dallas ISD personnel data file on November 18, 2018. District job codes were used to identify full-time, active, professional special education teachers. Demographic information included gender, ethnicity, highest degree completed, and number of years teaching experience in the district.

Results

Number of Special Education Teachers

There were 1,082 special education teachers employed in Dallas ISD during the 2018-19 school year (Table 8). There were 462 (42.7%) special education teachers at the elementary school level, 203 (18.8%) at the middle school level, and 244 (22.6%) at the high school level. There were 156 (14.4%) special education teachers who were not assigned to an elementary, middle, or high school in the personnel data file, and 1.6 percent of special education teachers were listed as having been assigned to either a combined

elementary/middle school campus or a combined middle/high school campus. Over the past four years there has been a 1.8 percentage point increase in special education teachers, and a 1.6 percentage point decrease in the number of general education teachers (Table 8). Despite the increase in the number and percentage of special education teachers, the special education program executive director noted that the district continues to experience a shortage of special education teachers.

Table 8: Number and Percentage of Special Education and General Education Teachers: 2015-16 through 2018-19

School Year	Special Education		General Education		All Teachers
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>
2015-16	988	9.3	9,618	90.7	10,606
2016-17	1,013	9.7	9,404	90.3	10,417
2017-18	1,036	10.2	9,154	89.8	10,190
2018-19	1,082	11.1	8,818	89.1	9,900
Change*	94	1.8	-800	-1.6	-706

Source: Dallas ISD Personnel database files dated 11/15/15, 11/13/16, 11/12/17, 11/18/18.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. *Change from 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Demographic Characteristics of Special Education Teachers

Three quarters of special education teachers in the district were female (76.8%, Table 9). A smaller percentage of special education teachers were Hispanic (10.8) (an increase from 8.9% in 2017-18) compared to general education teachers (33.5%) while a higher percentage were African American (54.5%) compared to general education teachers (33.1%). Each of these percentages was similar to those in 2017-18. A higher percentage of special education teachers held a master's degree (31.6%; 35.2% in 2017-18) than general education teachers (22.1%). Sixty-two percent (61.9%) of special education teachers held a bachelor's degree as their highest obtained degree. Almost ten percent (9.8%) of special education teachers were in an alternative certification (AC) program which was lower than general education teachers (12.3%).

An analysis of length of teaching experience found that special education teachers had an average of 8.5 years in the district. This was higher than the average of all teachers in the district (7.8). A higher percentage of special education teachers (49.6%) had more than five years of experience working in the district compared to general education teachers (42.5%). Twenty-nine percent (29.4%) of special education teachers had less than three years of experience. Eleven percent (11.4%) of special education teachers had less than one year of experience in the district.

Table 9: Characteristics of Special Education Teachers: 2018-19

Characteristics	Special Education		General Education		All Teachers	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Gender						
Female	831	76.8	6,148	69.7	6,979	70.5
Male	251	23.2	2,670	30.3	2,921	29.5
Ethnicity						
Black or African American	590	54.5	2,916	33.1	3,506	35.4
White	337	31.1	2,574	29.2	2,911	29.4
Hispanic or Latino	117	10.8	2,950	33.5	3,067	31.0
Asian	34	3.1	288	3.3	322	3.3
Native American	4	0.4	76	0.9	80	0.8
Pacific Islander	0	0.0	14	0.2	14	0.1
Highest Degree Obtained						
Bachelor	670	61.9	6,039	68.5	6,709	67.8
Master	342	31.6	1,948	22.1	2,290	23.1
Doctoral	5	0.5	95	1.1	100	1.0
Missing Data or Other	65	5.7	736	8.3	801	8.1
Alternative Certification						
In AC Program	102	9.8	1,122	12.3	1,224	12.0
DISD Experience						
Newly hired	123	11.4	1,043	11.8	1,166	11.8
1-2 years	195	18.0	1,797	20.4	1,992	20.1
3-5 years	228	21.1	2,225	25.2	2,453	24.8
6-10 years	177	16.4	1,121	12.7	1,298	13.1
More than 10 years	359	33.2	2,632	29.8	2,991	30.2
Average Number of Years	8.5	-	7.8	-	7.8	-

Source: Dallas ISD Personnel data file dated 11/18/18.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. "Other" for Highest Degree Obtained includes those with an associate's degree and those with an unspecified certificate.

What were teacher and principal perceptions of the special education program's communication and support?

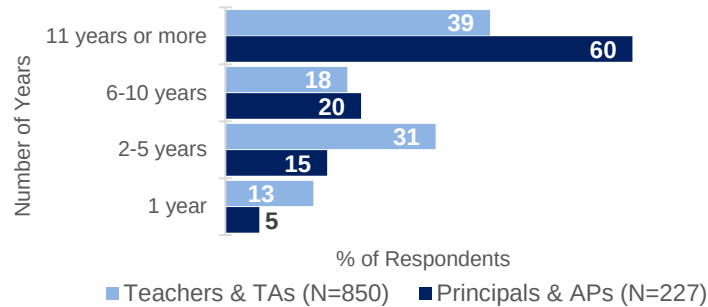
Methodology

A survey was constructed to understand the methods and quality of communication between the Special Education Department and all special education teachers, special education teacher assistants, principals, and assistant principals in the district, focusing particularly on the quality of customer service provided by the Special Education Department. The evaluator utilized SurveyMonkey, an online survey development tool to craft and administer the survey items. A link to the survey was sent to recipients (all known individuals comprising the four above-mentioned groups) on April 15, 2019 along with multiple reminders to access and complete the survey. The survey remained open until May 3, 2019. Altogether, approximately 40 percent (N=1,077 out of 2,743) of those invited completed the survey. Of these, half were special education teachers (50.5%), 28.4 percent were special education teacher assistants, 9.2 percent were principals, 10.8 percent were assistant principals, and 1.1 percent were classified as other.

Of responding principals and assistant principals, 60 percent indicated having at least 11 years of experience in Dallas ISD (Figure 3); of responding special education (SPED) teachers and teacher assistants,

39 percent had 11 or more years of experience in Dallas ISD. Thirteen percent of SPED teachers and teacher assistants were in their first year in the district; five percent of responding principals and assistant principals were in their first year in Dallas ISD.

Figure 3: Respondents' Years of Experience in Dallas ISD, 2018-19



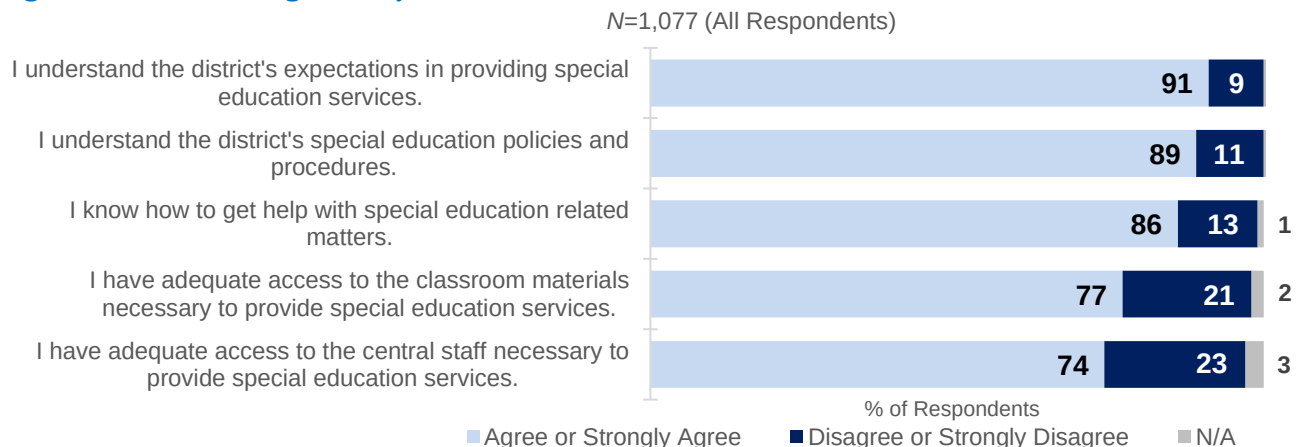
Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.
Note: APs=Assistant Principals, SPED=Special Education, TAs=Teacher Assistants.
Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

Results

Understanding of Special Education Policies, Expectations, and Access to Materials and Support

Similar to feedback about SPED customer service in 2017-18, feedback from special education teachers, special education teacher assistants, principals, and assistant principals on the 2018-19 Special Education Customer Service survey was generally positive (Figure 4). A total of 91 percent of respondents indicated (agreed or strongly agreed) that they understood the district's expectations in providing special education services; 89 percent said that they understood the district's policies and procedures with regard to special education. Eighty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to get help with special education related matters. The survey also inquired about campus staff's ease of access to special education related resources. Overall, 77 percent of respondents indicated that they have adequate access to classroom materials needed to provide special education services; a slightly lower percentage (74%) overall agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate access to central staff needed to provide such services.

Figure 4: Understanding of Policy and Access to Resources



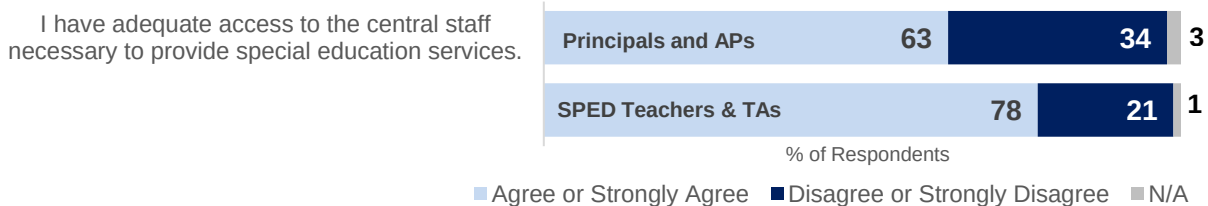
Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.
Note: Refer to Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown of response patterns on these items.

Subgroup Differences

An examination of differences among the two main subgroups (principals and assistant principals on the one hand, and special education teachers and teacher assistants on the other) on the above question set revealed one noteworthy (15 percentage point) difference: regarding access to the central staff necessary to provide special education services at their campus, approximately two-thirds (63%) of principals and assistant principals agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate access to the special education central staff necessary to provide special education services, whereas 78% of special education teachers and teacher assistants agreed that this was true for them (Figure 5). Later sections address this finding in more detail.

Figure 5: Perceptions of Access to Central Staff, Disaggregated by Respondent Subgroup

N=227 Principals and Assistant Principals; N=850 SPED Teachers & Teacher Assistants



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: SPED=Special Education; N/A=Not Applicable.

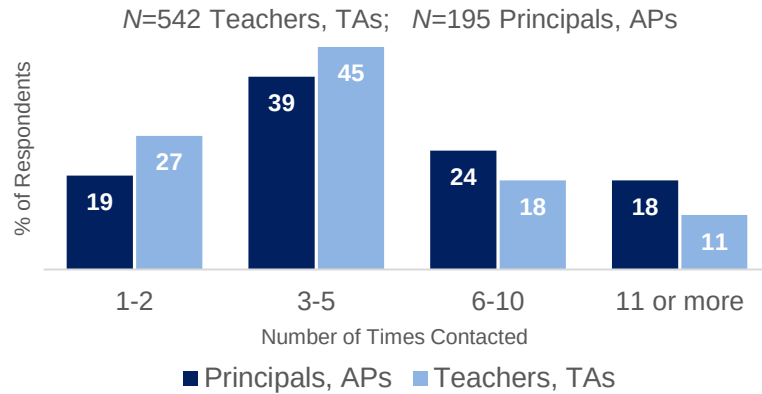
Reasons for Contacting the Special Education Department and the “Core 4”

Additional Special Education Customer Service Survey items focused on particular aspects of respondents’ experiences interacting with the district’s central office Special Education staff. This included though was not limited to covering each of the district’s “Core 4” tenets of customer service provision (Fast, Friendly, Flexible and Focused⁴). Overall, 68 percent of respondents indicated that they had reached out to the special education department during 2018-19; 86 percent of responding principals and assistant principals indicated doing so and 64 percent of responding special education teachers and teacher assistants indicated doing so.

Respondents most commonly indicated attempting contact with the central office three to five times during the 2018-19 school year (39% of principals and assistant principals indicated this, and 45% of special education teachers and teacher assistants indicated this, Figure 6), though a sizable minority indicated that they attempted such contact six or more times during the school year (42% of principals and assistant principals indicated attempting this much contact; 29% of special education teachers and teacher assistants indicated this). The most common methods used to contact the special education department were email (77%) and phone (76%).

⁴ <https://www.dallasisd.org/core4> provides additional information on the “Core 4” tenets.

Figure 6: Number of Times Educators Contacted the Special Education Department, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: APs=Assistant Principals, SPED=Special Education, TAs=Teacher Assistants. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

The most common purposes for which principals and assistant principals contacted the special education department in 2018-19 were behavior interventions/observations (51%), a general question about guidelines or procedures (49%) and moving a student from a least restrictive environment (LRE) to a more restrictive environment (MRE, 46%, Table 10). The most common reasons special education teachers and teacher assistants contacted the special education department in 2018-19 were general question(s) about guidelines or procedures (39%), behavior interventions/observations (35%), and transportation issues (33%, Table 10). A complete list of reasons for contact with the special education department, with frequency distributions, can be found in Appendix A.

Table 10: Top Eight Reasons for Contacting the Special Education Department in 2018-19

Principals and Assistant Principals N=195	%	SPED Teachers and Teacher Assistants N=542	%
Behavior Interventions/Observations	51	General Question about guideline(s)/procedure(s)	39
General Question about guideline(s)/procedure(s)	49	Behavior Interventions/Observations	35
Moving a student from a LRE to MRE	46	Transportation (including bus monitor)	33
Transportation (including bus monitor)	37	REVIEW 360	26
Initial Evaluations for Special Education	33	Moving a student from a LRE to MRE	20
ARD planning and preparation	28	ARD planning and preparation	19
ARD Committee meeting support	26	Classroom Set-up / Materials	19
Lack of Behavior Progress	25	Lack of Behavior Progress	16

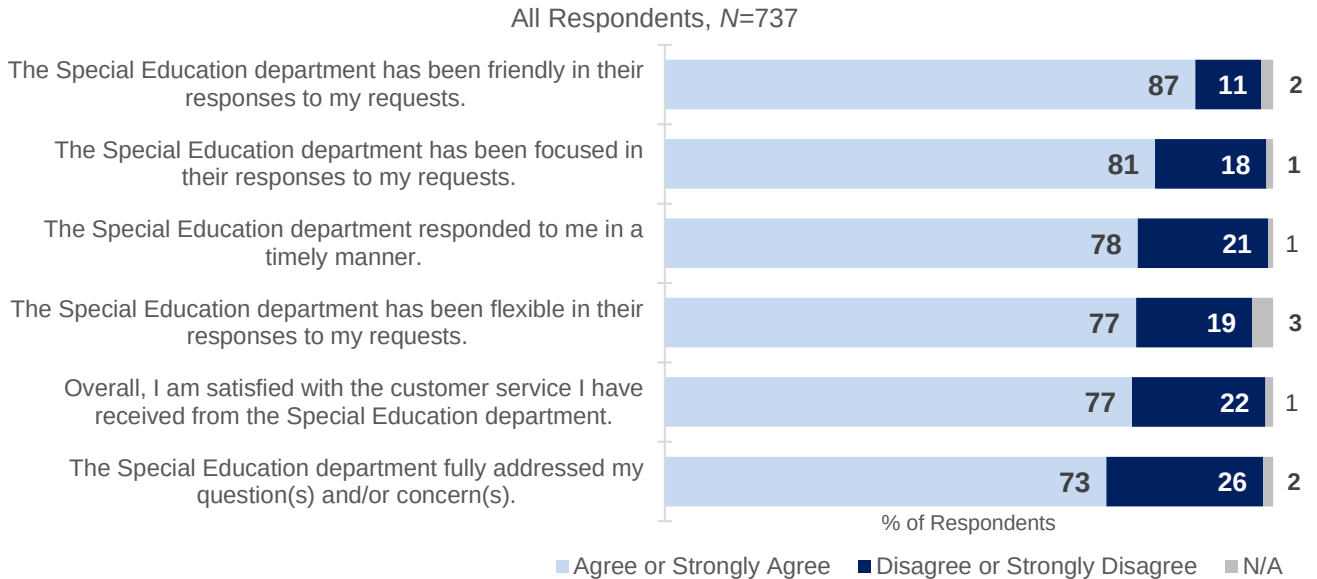
Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: SPED=Special Education; LRE=least restrictive environment; MRE=more restrictive environment; ARD=admission, review, and dismissal. Refer to Appendix A for a complete list of reasons indicated for contacting the SPED department in 2018-19, including by student group.

In terms of the district's "Core 4" principles of customer service: 87 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the special education department was friendly; 81 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the SPED department was focused; 78 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the SPED department was fast (timely) and 77 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the SPED department was flexible in responses to requests (Figure 7). Overall, 77 percent of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the customer service they received from the SPED department, and 73 percent of all respondents agreed

or strongly agreed that the SPED department had fully addressed their question(s) or concern(s) (Figure 7). While the “Core 4” items were a new addition to the survey for 2018-19 and thus cannot be compared to previous findings, findings on last two survey items shown in Figure 7 (overall satisfaction and whether questions/concerns were fully addressed) were similar to those in 2017-18.

Figure 7: Special Education Customer Service Survey Responses: Special Education Customer Service Perceptions

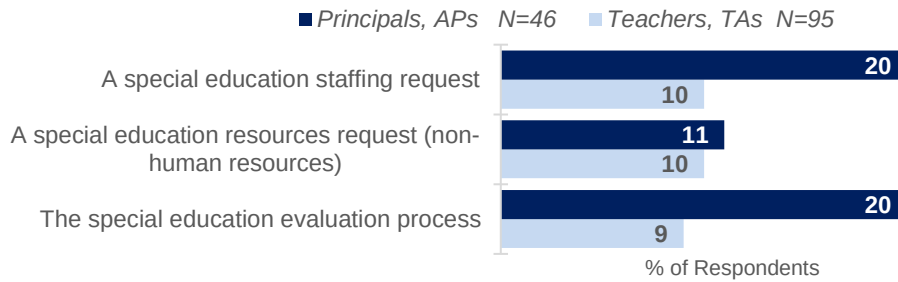


Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. SPED=special education; N/A=not applicable. Refer to Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown of response patterns on these items. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding Appendix figure percentage breakdowns due to rounding.

Another item on the Special Education Customer Service Survey requested that respondents specify – if they had selected “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” to any of the items above (Figure 7) – the nature of the request or concern that led to their providing a negative customer service rating. Respondents could select from any or all of three multiple choice options (Figure 8), as well as type an answer into an answer box. Figure 8 displays the frequency with which each respondent group selected the closed-ended answer options. Twenty percent of principals and assistant principals indicated that their negative rating was related to a special education staffing request; 10 percent of special education teachers and teacher assistants indicated this. Twenty percent of principals and assistant principals indicated that their negative rating was related to a request or concern related to the special education evaluation process (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Nature of Request/Concern Leading to Low Rating on Special Education Customer Service Survey, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Remaining answer options on this item were "Not Applicable" and "Other."

"Other" answer themes are shown in the next table in this report. APs=Assistant Principals, TAs=Teacher Assistants.

Open-ended responses to the above question were also examined and coded for themes. The most frequent themes that emerged are shown in Table 11. Among principals and assistant principals, the top themes were inadequate guidance regarding a special education student(s) (30%), inadequate clarification on or implementation of special education policy (26%), and excessively slow response from special education central staff (17%). Among special education teachers and teacher assistants, the most common themes that emerged were excessively slow response from special education central staff (19%), inadequate guidance regarding a special education student(s) (17%), and no response from special education staff to multiple communications (13%, Table 11).

Table 11: Themes from Open-Ended Responses Explaining Low SPED Customer Service Ratings

Principals and Assistant Principals N=46			SPED Teachers and Teacher Assistants N=95		
	N	%		N	%
Inadequate guidance re: SPED student(s)	14	30	Excessively slow response from SPED central staff	18	19
Inadequate clarification on or implementation of SPED policy	12	26	Inadequate guidance re: SPED student(s)	16	17
Excessively slow response from SPED central staff	8	17	No response from SPED central staff to multiple communications	12	13
Inadequate campus SPED staffing	6	14	Inadequate clarification on or implementation of SPED policy	10	11
Inadequate material resources	6	13	Inadequate resolution to problem	7	7
Inadequate resolution of a concern	4	9	Inadequate communication re: SPED program for new teacher	6	6
Interactions w central staff experienced as unprofessional or disrespectful	4	9	SPED-related supplies requested but not provided	5	5
Central Staff did not respond to my communication attempt	3	7	Inadequate guidance from central staff	4	4

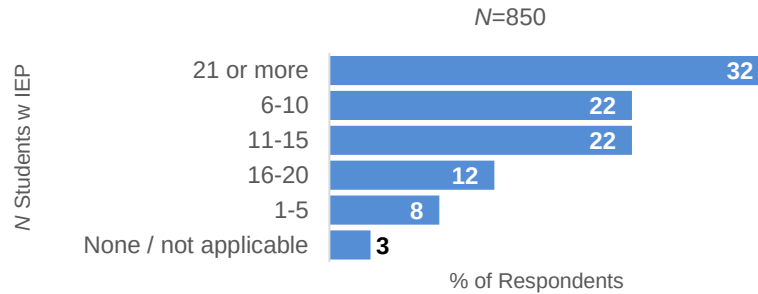
Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: SPED=Special Education; re:=regarding. Percentages will not add to 100.0 because respondents could select more than one answer.

At the request of the SPED department, the 2018-19 SPED customer service survey also included an item inquiring about the number of students with an individual education plan (IEP) with whom the teacher worked, in order to get a better sense of special education teachers' and teacher assistants' workloads with special education students in 2018-19. Of the 850 special education teachers and teacher assistants who answered this item, nearly one-third (32%) indicated that they worked with 21 or more such students; 22 percent

indicated working with six to ten students and an additional 22 percent indicated working with 11 to 15 such students (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Number of Students with an IEP with Whom Special Education Teachers and Teacher Assistants Worked, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: SPED=Special Education, TAs=Teacher Assistants, N=number, IEP=individualized education plan. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

What were the activities and perceptions of special education evaluators?

Methodology

A survey was developed to understand the activities and perceptions of special education evaluators (diagnosticians and LSSPs) during the 2018-19 school year. Survey items were initially crafted based on feedback from three special education evaluators at informal meetings in 2017-18 and refined again in 2018-19 based on the evaluator's conversations with special education program administrators and a review of previous findings. The survey was administered by the Evaluation and Assessment department through SurveyMonkey, an online survey development tool, and sent to all campus-based special education diagnosticians and LSSPs in the district on March 25, 2019. The survey remained open until April 5, 2019. In total, 73.4 percent of those invited completed the survey (N = 84). Of these, 83 percent were diagnosticians (N=70) and 17 percent were LSSPs (N=14). Approximately 30 percent of respondents self-identified as a bilingual evaluator (N=24).

Results

Overall, feedback from special education diagnosticians and LSSPs regarding their transition to campus-based workspaces in 2017-18 was mixed. In addition, many evaluators noted substantially inadequate MTSS interventions in initial referral folders, as well as a high percentage of requests for initial evaluations coming from parents rather than from staff. These findings will be discussed in further detail later in this section of the report.

Types of Evaluations Conducted and Sources of Referrals

Special Education department administrators requested that a few additional items be added to the Special Education Evaluator Survey for 2018-19, including items regarding evaluator workloads specific to the types of evaluations they conducted. Approximately 57 percent of evaluators reported conducting one to 25 initial special education evaluations in 2018-19; approximately 80 percent reported conducting one to 25 special education re-evaluations with testing, and 63 percent indicated conducting one to 25 continued eligibility for

special education evaluations. Table 12 shows additional detail on the frequency with which these three types of evaluations were conducted in 2018-19.

Table 12: Types of Special Education Evaluations with Count Range, 2018-19

Type of Evaluation	N=84						(No response) %	Total %
	None %	1-25 %	26-50 %	51-75 %	76-99 %	100+ %		
Initial Evaluations	1.2	57.1	25.0	9.5	4.8	2.4	0.0	100.0
Re-Evaluations with Testing	6.0	79.8	13.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	100.0
Continued Eligibility	7.1	63.1	14.3	7.1	3.6	2.4	2.4	100.0

Source: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Dallas ISD Evaluation & Assessment department, April 2019.

Note: SPED=Special Education. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

Special education evaluators were also asked how many referrals for additional evaluations they received regarding speech-only students. More than three-quarters of respondents (76.2%) indicated that they received between zero and 10 of these referrals in 2018-19; 1.2 percent said they received between 41 and 50 such referrals in 2018-19 (Table 13).

Table 13: Number of Referrals for Additional Evaluations for Speech-only, 2018-19

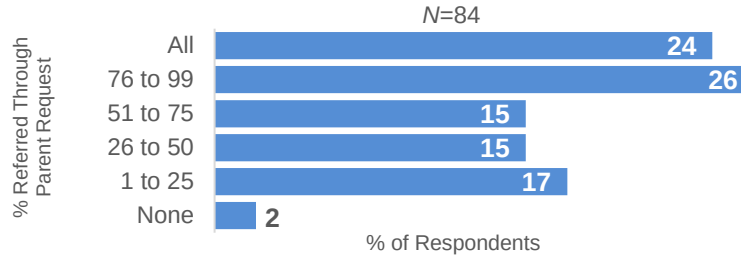
N=84	
Referral Count Range	%
None	11.9
1-10	64.3
11-20	20.2
21-30	0.0
31-40	2.4
41-50	1.2

Source: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Dallas ISD Evaluation & Assessment department, April 2019. N=84.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

In terms of the percentage of initial evaluations that special education evaluators conducted which were referred through parent requests, half (50%) of all responding evaluators indicated that three-quarters to all of their initial evaluations were referred through parent requests (Figure 10). In 2017-18, 62.5 percent of special education evaluators responding to this survey item indicated that 75 percent to 100 percent of initial evaluation referrals came to them through parent requests (rather than through teachers or other school staff). While this 13-percentage point decrease is an improvement, these results suggest that more effort may be needed at the campus level.

Figure 10: Percentage of Initial Evaluations Referred Through Parent Requests, 2018-19

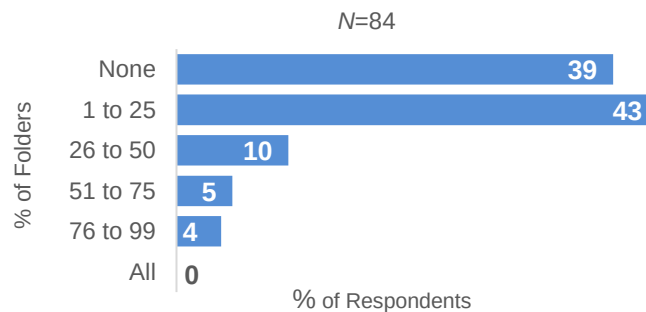


Source: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Dallas ISD Evaluation & Assessment department, April 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

A large percentage (82%) of respondents indicated that none or very few of their initial referral folders included adequate Multi-Tiered Systems of Support⁵ (MTSS) interventions; 39 percent of respondents indicated that “None” of the initial referral folders they received contained adequate MTSS interventions (42% in 2017-18), and almost 43 percent indicated that only one percent to 25 percent of the initial referral folders they received included adequate MTSS interventions (Figure 11; 48% in 2017-18).

Figure 11: Percentage of Initial Referral Folders that Included Adequate MTSS Interventions, 2018-19



Source: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Dallas ISD Evaluation & Assessment department, April 2019.

Note: MTSS=Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

Approximately 85 percent of all responding monolingual special education evaluators indicated that they at least “Sometimes” had difficulty finding an interpreter when they needed to communicate with non-English-speaking students or parents in relation to their work duties. Approximately 15 percent of monolingual evaluators indicated “Never” having trouble finding an interpreter when needed for their work (Table 14).

⁵ The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework replaced the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework in 2018-19 with the goal of providing a more holistic, data-driven, evidence-based approach to prevention and intervention on students’ issues relating to academics, language, and student engagement.

Table 14: Difficulty Finding an Interpreter to Communicate with Non-English-Speaking Students or Parents

Response	N	%
Never	9	15.3
Sometimes	32	54.2
Frequently	14	23.7
Always	4	6.8
Total	59	100.0

Source: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Dallas ISD Evaluation & Assessment department, April 2019.

Feedback Related to the Workspace Transition: Year Two

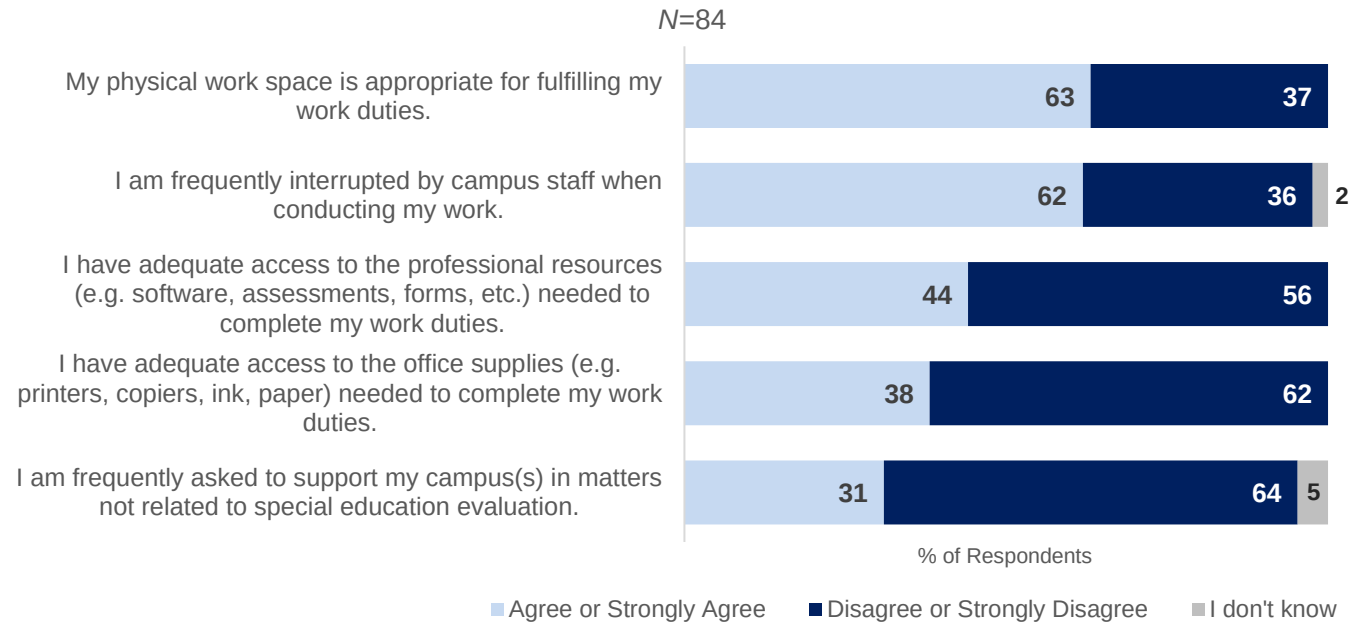
Survey items also addressed transition-related issues in 2018-19 (year two) following the transition from a central office to campus-based workspaces in 2017-18.⁶ The 2018-19 special education survey included follow-up items to assess the status on transition-related issues in the 2018-19 school year.⁷

A total of 63 percent of special education evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that their physical workspace was appropriate “for fulfilling [their] work duties” in 2018-19 (53% in 2017-18). A total of 62 percent of respondents indicated (agreed or strongly agreed) that they were “frequently interrupted by campus staff when conducting [their] work” in 2018-19 (59% in 2017-18). Forty-four percent of responding evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate access to professional material resources (such as software, assessments and forms) needed to complete their work duties in 2018-19 (39% in 2017-18). Thirty-eight percent in 2018-19 indicated they had adequate access to common office supplies (printers, copiers, ink, paper) needed to complete their work duties (42% in 2017-18). Thirty-one percent indicated they were frequently asked to support their campus(es) in matters not related to special education evaluation (Figure 12; 41% in 2017-18).

⁶ In the previous school year (2017-18), special education evaluators transitioned from working out of a central district office to working on a campus (or set of campuses, in some cases). The purpose of this transition was to facilitate greater access between special education evaluators and the students, teachers and parents they serve. Some issues emerged as a result of this transition, which were highlighted in the 2017-18 program evaluation report (Grimberg, 2018).

⁷ It should be noted that while all special education evaluators were invited to take the Special Education Evaluator Survey, the groups of special education evaluators that responded to the survey in 2017-18 and in 2018-19 were not identical. Thus, comparisons in findings between the two years, while valuable, cannot be considered a strict pre-post comparison.

Figure 12: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Transition-Related Issues, Part 1



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, April 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Refer to Appendix B for a more detailed breakdown of response patterns on these items.

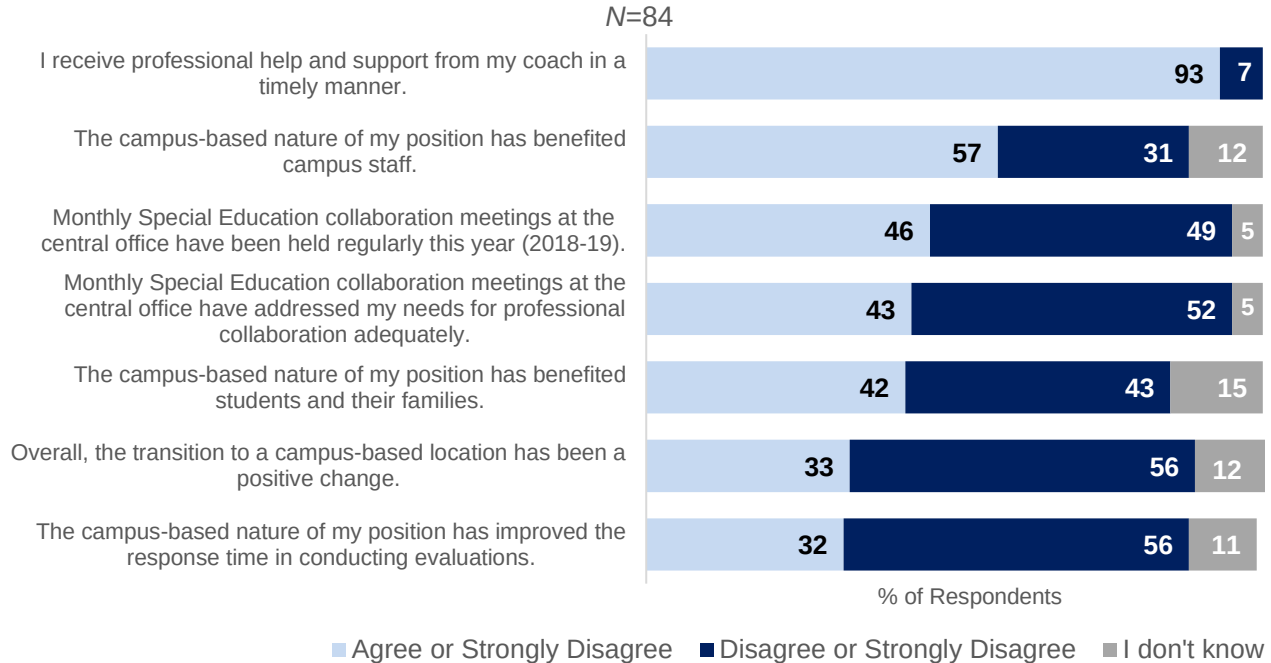
The vast majority (93%) of special education evaluators indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they received “professional help and support from [their] coach in a timely manner.” When asked whether the campus-based nature of their position had benefitted the staff of the campus at which they served, 57 percent agreed or strongly agreed that it did, and 12 percent said they were uncertain (Figure 13).

Feedback from the previous-year (2017-18) Special Education Evaluator Survey indicated that, in the wake of their transition from central office to campuses, evaluators lost regular opportunities to collaborate with one another in person on special education evaluation-related issues. To address this loss, district special education administrators began scheduling regular meetings in 2018-19 to facilitate such collaboration. Two additional survey items therefore addressed this adaptation. One item asked whether monthly collaboration meetings at the central office were held regularly during the 2018-19 school year, to which 46 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case. Another item asked whether monthly special education collaboration meetings at the central office addressed the evaluators’ needs for professional collaboration adequately. To this, 43 percent of evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that this was so; however, survey results indicated that 52 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” in response to this survey item (and 5% were unsure, Figure 13). It appears that more work may need to be done to facilitate opportunities for both more and regular professional collaboration among special education evaluators.

Other survey items pertaining to the central-office-to-campus transition asked whether the campus-based nature of special education evaluators’ positions had benefitted students and their families; 42 percent agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case (23% in 2017-18). Asked whether the campus-based nature of their position had improved response time in conducting evaluations, 32 percent of responding special education evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that this was so (18% in 2017-18). Finally, asked whether,

overall, the transition to a campus-based location has been a positive change, similarly, approximately one in three responding special education evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case (19% in 2017-18); 12 percent said they were not sure (“I don’t know,” Figure 13).

Figure 13: Special Education Evaluator Survey, Transition-Related Issues, Part 2



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, April 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. Refer to Appendix B for a more detailed breakdown of response patterns on these items. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding Appendix figure percentage breakdowns due to rounding.

Perceptions Regarding How to Improve Special Education

The final question on the survey was open-ended. It asked, “How can the district improve special education?” A total of 51 special education evaluators provided responses to this item. Responses were examined and coded for themes. Table 15 displays the top 10 themes.

The most frequently cited suggestion was that the special education department should ensure the provision of basic work-related supplies and dedicated workspaces for special education evaluators (these related themes were typically cited in tandem in evaluators’ responses). This theme first emerged in the 2017-18 evaluator survey, and, as noted in Table 15, 40 percent of the evaluators that responded to the item indicated that this was still an issue in 2018-19. The second-most frequently cited suggestion was that the district should hire more special education evaluators because existing evaluators’ caseloads are too high. Of the 51 evaluators who responded to this item, 28 percent (n=20) identified this as an issue. The third-most common theme identified was the suggestion that the district enable opportunities for more professional collaboration among special education evaluators. The theme had also emerged in feedback on the 2017-18 Special Education Evaluator Survey.

Table 15: How Can the District Improve Special Education: Open-Ended Response Themes, 2018-19

N=51		
Theme	N	%
Ensure provision of basic supplies and dedicated workspaces for SPED evaluators	29	40
Hire more SPED evaluators - caseloads are experienced as "very high"	20	28
Enable opportunities for more professional collaboration among SPED evaluators	16	22
Enable/provide a "central" location for enabling SPED evaluator collaboration and for work supplies for each feeder	12	17
Outline and enforce more consistent, streamlined processes for carrying out SPED evaluator work duties	11	15
Increase pay for SPED evaluators	10	14
Provide professional development on SPED evaluation best practices	10	14
Institute practices that ensure MTSS accountability, fidelity	9	13
Foster a culture that enables greater respect for SPED evaluators	7	10
Ensure easier access to protocols for SPED evaluators	5	7

Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, April 2019.

Note: SPED=special education; MTSS=multi-tiered systems of support.

How did the special education program perform on the 2018 PBMAS Report?

Methodology

TEA Performance-Based Monitoring staff developed the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS), an automated data system that reports annually on the performance of school districts and charter schools. School improvement staff monitors and supports intervention activities within this data-driven and performance-based system. If concerns with noncompliance, student performance, or program effectiveness are identified, school districts are required to participate in intervention activities and may be subjected to additional sanctions and interventions, including on-site reviews. Program areas within PBMAS reports include bilingual education/English as a second language (BE/ESL), career and technical education (CTE), certain Title I programs, and special education.

Each indicator is assigned a numeric performance level (PL), ranging from zero to three. A performance level of zero indicates that the state standard was met. Indicator measures not meeting the standard are assigned performance levels of one to three, higher performance levels signifying areas of concern. Districts that receive high numbers of performance levels of two and higher are required to submit reports to TEA addressing indicators of concern. These reports include a focused data analysis (districts must review data related to indicators of concern and identify causal factors, patterns, and trends contributing to low performance, program deficiencies, and poor data quality), and possibly a targeted improvement plan (used to guide district and campus planning for improved student performance or program effectiveness). Furthermore, the special education program of each school district is staged for intervention based on the mean of all PBMAS special education performance levels.

Results

The special education program of the Dallas ISD was rated stage three for the 2016-17 school year, which required interventions in the 2017-18 school year. In 2018, the Dallas ISD special education program was also rated a stage three, though its mean program performance level improved from 1.8 (in 2017) to 1.5 (2018).

The three-year performances of the district on PBMAS special education program area indicators are shown in Table 16. The performance of Dallas ISD special education on *STAAR* 3-8 exams improved on every subject over the past three years, except for writing (in which performance dipped slightly in 2017 but increased again in 2018). From 2016 to 2018, the percentage of special education students reaching the PBMAS *STAAR* passing rate (PBMAS label) on *STAAR* exams increased 13.8 percentage points in mathematics, 10.8 percentage points in reading, 9.0 percentage points in social studies, 6.7 percentage points in science, and 2.0 percentage points in writing. From 2016 to 2018, the performance of the district on special education *STAAR* year-after-exit performance level indicators held steady in science, social studies, and writing, improved in mathematics (by one PL indicator), and between 2017 and 2018 dropped in reading (also by one PL indicator). On *STAAR* EOC from 2016 to 2018, there was progress on special education indicators in three out of four subject areas; mathematics, science, and social studies each improved by one PL indicator, while performance in English language arts held steady (and poorly) across the past three years with a PL indicator of three. The percentage of special education students tested with a *STAAR Alternative 2* version of the *STAAR* exam increased slightly from 2016 (19.2%) to 2018 (20.2%); for each of the past three years, the district earned a performance level of three for this category.

PBMAS special education program setting performance indicators monitor the placements of special education students into selected educational programs and classroom instructional settings. The percentage of special education students served in regular early childhood programs increased from 2016 to 2017 (15.7% to 23.3%), which resulted in a positive PL indicator of zero for the district in 2017. However, this percentage dropped in 2018 to 19.7 percent, which resulted in a PL indicator of two. The district received a performance level of zero on the 'special education regular class more than 80.0 percent of the school day' performance level indicator over the past three years. The percentage of district special education students placed in a 'regular class less than 40.0 percent of the day' fluctuated from 14.9 percent in 2016 to 16.7 percent in 2017 to 16.4 percent in 2018, resulting in a performance level indicator of one for each of those years for that category. The PBMAS special education annual dropout rate fluctuated slightly over the past three years, from 2.7 percent in 2016 to 2.2 percent in 2017, to 2.5 percent in 2018, resulting in a PL indicator of one, zero, and one, respectively. The special education graduation rate for the district remained fairly stable and was 71.0 percent in 2018 (Table 16), with the performance level indicator remaining at one for the past three years.

Table 16: Dallas ISD Special Education Program Area Performance: 2018 PBMAS Report

Indicator	2016			2017			2018		
	N	%	PL	N	%	PL	N	%	PL
Special Education STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate									
Mathematics	5,641	39.8	3	5,665	46.4	2	6,360	53.6	2
Reading	5,660	34.8	3	5,695	38.0	3	6,030	45.6	2
Science	1,875	37.9	3	1,916	42.3	2	2,140	44.6	2
Social Studies	924	26.2	3	857	32.3	3	871	35.2	3
Writing	1,758	31.3	3	1,925	29.2	3	2,014	33.3	3
Special Education Year-After-Exit STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate									
Mathematics	333	62.2	1	323	65.6	1	219	76.7	0
Reading	336	51.8	2	332	60.8	1	219	58.0	2
Science	101	60.4	1	104	62.5	1	59	61.0	1
Social Studies	28	47.6	2	38	47.4	2	18	51.2	2
Writing	118	48.3	3	112	45.5	3	70	45.7	3
Special Education STAAR EOC Passing Rate									
Mathematics	1,151	38.0	3	1,208	46.0	2	1,108	54.3	2
Science	985	45.6	3	1,018	48.8	3	1,092	57.0	2
Social Studies	802	55.7	2	760	57.8	2	769	63.1	1
English Language Arts	2,395	22.5	3	2,444	22.4	3	2,450	25.6	3
STAAR Test Version Participation									
STAAR Alternate 2 Participation	1,208	19.2	3	1,309	20.7	3	1,436	20.2	3
Special Education Program Settings									
SPED Regular Early Childhood Program Rate (Ages 3-5)	860	15.7	2	-	23.3	0	-	19.7	2
SPED Regular Class >=80% Rate (Ages 6-21)	10,704	76.1	0	-	74.7	0	-	74.8	0
SPED Regular Class <40% Rate (Ages 6-21)	10,704	14.9	1	-	16.7	1	-	16.4	1
Special Education Dropout/Graduation									
SPED Annual Dropout Rate	5,887	2.7	1	5,833	2.2	0	5,760	2.5	1
SPED Graduation Rate	665	72.8	1	667	74.1	1	699	71.0	1

Source: Texas Education Agency 2018 PBMAS Report for Dallas ISD. Detailed information about the calculation of rates and assignment of performance levels can be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/pbm/PBMASManuals.aspx>.

Note: PL = Performance Level Indicator, SPED = Special Education, RO = Report Only. Some Ns are masked to protect privacy; “-” dash signifies masking. N=number of students tested (for STAAR test findings), N=total population for all other subcategories. Passing Rate=PBMAS terminology for “Approaches Grade Level Standard or Above.” PBMAS=Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System.

Dallas ISD performances on special education PBMAS indicators are compared to the state level in Table 17. The 2018 average of all Dallas ISD special education performance level indicators was 1.5 which resulted in the district's special education program being rated stage three, requiring interventions. (TEA does not calculate a state-wide average for all possible performance level indicators for comparison.) Dallas ISD and state special education student performances on STAAR 3-8 exams in 2018 were similar (0 to 2 percentage point difference on all subjects). The district received one performance level worse on three out of five STAAR year-after-exit indicators compared to the state, reflecting lower passing rates in science, social studies, and writing (Table 11); in reading, the PL indicator for the district was two levels worse compared to the state's (58.0% passing versus 75.3 percent passing, respectively), while both the state and district received a PL indicator of zero in the mathematics year-after-exit indicator, reflecting good performance (passing rates were 76.7% and 81.9%, respectively). The state of Texas matched the Dallas ISD on all STAAR EOC performance

indicators, receiving a two in both science and mathematics, a one in social studies, and a three in English language arts.

Dallas ISD received a poorer performance level (two) compared to the state (one) on the special education 'regular early childhood program rate (ages 3-5)' and the same performance level for 'special education regular class less than 40.0 percent of the day' performance indicators. The district had a higher percentage of special education students enrolled in 'regular classes more than 80 percent of the school day' (74.8%) compared to special education students statewide (69.0%), resulting in PL indicators of zero and one, respectively. A larger percentage of district students dropped out of school (2.5%) in 2018 compared to the state (1.8%) resulting in PL indicators of one and zero, respectively. A smaller percentage of district special education students graduated (71.0%) according to the 2018 report compared to students statewide (77.4%) earning a PL indicator of one for both district and state.

Table 17: Dallas ISD and State Special Education Program Area Performance: 2018 PBMA Report

Indicator	District			State		
	N	%	PL	N	%	PL
Special Education STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate						
Mathematics	6,360	53.6	2	225,904	53.6	2
Reading	6,030	45.6	2	210,384	47.0	2
Science	2,140	44.6	2	76,030	44.1	2
Social Studies	871	35.2	3	35,690	34.0	3
Writing	2,014	33.3	3	71,553	31.2	3
Special Education Year-After-Exit STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate						
Mathematics	219	76.7	0	18,581	81.9	0
Reading	219	58.0	2	18,665	75.3	0
Science	59	61.0	1	5,500	77.7	0
Social Studies	18	51.2	2	2,022	64.1	1
Writing	70	45.7	3	6,003	58.3	2
Special Education STAAR EOC Passing Rate						
Mathematics	1,108	54.3	2	45,920	50.8	2
Science	1,092	57.0	2	43,319	58.1	2
Social Studies	769	63.1	1	32,654	63.6	1
English Language Arts	2,450	25.6	3	95,247	27.1	3
STAAR Test Version Participation						
STAAR Alternate 2 Participation	1,436	20.2	3	35,836	14.3	2
Special Education Program Settings						
SPED Regular Early Childhood Program Rate (Ages 3-5)	-	19.7	2	14,573	29.3	1
SPED Regular Class >=80% Rate (Ages 6-21)	-	74.8	0	309,250	69.0	1
SPED Regular Class <40% Rate (6-21)	-	16.4	1	65,984	15.0	1
Special Education Dropout/Graduation						
SPED Annual Dropout Rate	5,760	2.5	1	4,005	1.8	0
SPED Graduation Rate	699	71.0	1	22,065	77.4	1

Source: Texas Education Agency 2018 PBMA Report for Dallas ISD and 2018 PBMA State Report. Detailed information about the calculation of rates and assignment of performance levels can be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/pbm/PBMAManuals.aspx>.

Note: PL = Performance Level Indicator, SPED = Special Education. Some Ns are masked to protect privacy; the "-"dash signifies masking. N=number of students tested (for STAAR test findings), N=total population for all other subcategories. Passing Rate=PBMA terminology for "Approaches Grade Level Standard or Above." PBMA=Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System.

What were the special education targeted intervention problem statements and intervention plans?

Methodology

As mentioned previously, based on PBMAS data from the 2017-18 school year, the Dallas ISD special education program was rated stage three. Consequently, a Targeted Improvement Plan was completed and sent to TEA containing two goals each accompanied by a problem statement, root cause, strategy, and activities for the following school year. Each goal included short term, intermediate, and long-term activities and expected outcomes. Two of the three goals were related to special education.

Results

The following goals, problem statements, root causes, and strategies are reproduced from the 2018 Dallas ISD Targeted Improvement Plan. The short-term, intermediate, and long-term activities and outcomes are shown in Tables 18 and 19.

Goal #1: Students participating in both CTE and Special Education will have a passing rate of 33.3% on the English *STAAR EOC*.

Problem Statement #1: Students participating in both CTE and Special Education have a passing rate of 16% on the English *STAAR EOC* which is 43 percentage points below the PBMAS cut score.

Root Cause #1: Teachers need additional support in scaffolding instruction specifically for special education students to address English *EOC* reading and writing skills and processes in the CTE classroom.

Strategy #1: Create an awareness of the problem, provide professional development/follow up to address effective and routine use of high impact writing strategies and processes for special education students in the CTE classroom, and plan for curriculum development that specifically addresses the needs of special education students in writing.

Table 18: Goal #1 Targeted Improvement Plan and Activity Schedule: 2018-19

Time Frame	Activities	Expected Outcomes
Q1 (August, September, October)		
Short-Term	Conduct campus-based data analysis focusing on specific student groups.	Campus data presentations.
Intermediate	Implement New Teacher Academy (NTA) and ongoing PD including focus on literacy for CTE/SPED.	95% of new teachers hired by August 1 attended NTA.
Q2 (November, December, January)		
Short-Term	Six weeks common assessment data analysis.	Adjust instruction and plan PLCs according to areas of need.
Intermediate	Identify and provide ongoing, individualized campus support to include campus instructional walks to ensure SPED accommodations are being implemented.	Respond to 100% of requests for individualized support.
Q3 (February and March)		
Short-Term	Disseminate scholarly articles related to writing/CTE.	100% of the campus principals and CTE teachers will receive bimonthly newsletter with targeted articles.
Intermediate	Targeted PD; classroom learning walks and observations; PLCs; lesson plan support from CICs and Specialists.	Teachers adjust instruction based on feedback.
Q4 (April, May, June)		
Short-Term	Summer PD catalog reflects continued areas of need.	100% of courses offered align with critical area needs.
Intermediate	Conduct Professional Development on Differentiated instruction for district's Learning Management System.	Teachers who attend the PD are able to provide high-quality and differentiated support for reading and writing instruction.
	Identify continued PD and support, based on assessment, implementation data and survey results.	100% of courses are reviewed and adjusted for the summer and fall PD plan.
Long-Term		
Semester 1	Continue to implement and refine the comprehensive Curriculum Design Project to include budget, timeline, hiring plan, curriculum framework, quality controls, communication plan, feedback/improvement cycle, training plan, platform design, audit, and update to align to new standards and resources. Continue to do the following: provide professional development modules for key stakeholders across the district; use modified/accommodated curriculum for English Learners and Special Education students; embed the MTSS Framework; provide aligned instructional strategies; support the implementation of the curriculum.	Establishing common language and belief system about curriculum and how it supports Special Education students and English Learners within specific content areas by gaining input from a minimum of 1,000 stakeholders.
Semester 2	Hire and retain staff to write and revise curriculum units for Reading Language Arts, Writing, and Social Studies that include specialized support for English Learners and Special Education students.	A minimum of the First and Second six weeks curriculum units will be completed by June for all Reading Language Arts and Writing courses offered in Dallas ISD.

Source: Data provided by Dallas ISD Director of Federal and State Accountability on January 31, 2019.

Note: CTE=Career and Technical Education, SPED=Special Education, PLCs=Professional Learning Communities, PD=Professional Development, MTSS=Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, CIC=Campus Instructional Coach.

Goal #2: Students participating in Special Education services in grades 4 and 7 will have a passing rate of 40% on the STAAR writing assessment.

Problem Statement #2: Students receiving special education services in grades 4 and 7 have a passing rate of 33.3% on the STAAR writing assessment, which is 36.7 percentage points below the PBMAS performance level cut off.

Root Cause #2: Teachers need additional support to effectively and routinely implement high impact writing strategies and processes targeting special education students.

Strategy #2: Create an awareness of the problem, provide professional development/follow up to address effective and routine use of high impact writing strategies and processes for special education students, and plan curriculum development that specifically addresses the needs of special education students in writing.

Table 19: Goal #2 Targeted Improvement Plan and Activity Schedule: 2018-19

Time Frame	Activities	Expected Outcomes
Q1 (August, September, October)		
Short-Term	Literacy and Social Studies Professional Development for the following stakeholders will occur every six weeks: Principals, Teachers, Campus Instructional Coaches, Campus Instructional Leadership Teams (CILT), and District Instructional Lead Coaches (ILCs).	Implementation of a literacy and social studies plan and district-wide curriculum at each campus.
Intermediate	District-wide curriculum provides standardized template for writing across all content areas and specific embedded supports to assist specialized populations with writing.	Teachers who use the curriculum are able to provide high-quality and differentiated support for writing instruction.
Q2 (November, December, January)		
Short-Term	Reviewing common assessment data through the lens of outcomes for specific student groups and identify trends by progress measure.	Successfully identify increases in student group achievement and identify trends for future planning.
Intermediate	Targeted PD; classroom learning walks and observations; PLCs; lesson plan support from CICs and Specialists.	Teachers adjust instruction based on feedback.
Q3 (February and March)		
Short-Term	Interventions based on ACP data.	Increase in student achievement for unit 4 common assessment.
Intermediate	Progress monitoring with data.	Targeted students improve performance in writing.
Q4 (April, May, June)		
Short-Term	Survey teachers, principals, and CICs to receive feedback on implementation on the curriculum.	70% of people who respond to the survey agree that the curriculum provides supports for differentiation.
Intermediate	Survey PD and Campus Support and utilize data as needs assessment for PD and support next year.	PD and Support are aligned to needs of teachers and students.
Long-Term		
Semester 1	Continue to implement and refine the comprehensive Curriculum Design Project to include budget, timeline, hiring plan, curriculum framework, quality controls, communication plan, feedback/ improvement cycle, training plan, platform design, audit, and update to align to new standards and resources. Continue to do the following: provide professional development modules for key stakeholders across the district; use modified/accommodated curriculum for English Learners and Special Education students; include strategies to support English Language learners; embed the MTSS Framework; provide aligned instructional strategies; support the implementation of the curriculum.	Establishing common language and belief system about curriculum and how it supports Special Education students and English Learners within specific content areas by gaining input from a minimum of 1,000 stakeholders.
Semester 2	Hire and retain staff to write and revise curriculum units for Reading Language Arts, Writing, and Social Studies that include specialized support for English Learners and Special Education students.	A minimum of the First and Second six weeks curriculum units will be completed by June for all Reading Language Arts and Writing courses offered in Dallas ISD.

Source: Data provided by Dallas ISD Director of Federal and State Accountability on January 31, 2019.

Note: PLCs=Professional Learning Communities, PD=Professional Development, MTSS=Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, CIC=Campus Instructional Coach.

What were the trends in the academic performances of students served in special education?

Methodology

The Dallas ISD administers *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* each spring for students in grades kindergarten to two. Special education students, like all Dallas ISD students, were assessed in mathematics on *TerraNova* and in reading on *TerraNova* or *SUPERA*.⁸

STAAR, the state's criterion-referenced assessment⁹, was administered in grades three through eight. *STAAR* tests in reading and mathematics were administered to all Dallas ISD students in grades three through eight. Students in grades four through seven were administered writing tests; students in grades five and eight were administered science tests; and students in grade eight were tested in social studies. *STAAR EOC* examinations were administered primarily in high school in English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History. The 2018-19 *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* assessment data were merged with enrollment data extracted from the fall 2018 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) snapshot (October 26, 2018). There were four categories of performance standards on *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* exams: Did Not Meet Grade Level, Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+), Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+), and Masters Grade Level. These performance categories are determined by individual student *STAAR* scale scores on established cut points.

The *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* assessments were available to special education students in two versions¹⁰: *STAAR* and *STAAR Alternate 2*. *STAAR Alternate 2* is an assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards and is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities receiving special education services. *STAAR Alternate 2* is available in the same grades and subjects as the general *STAAR* assessments but is administered individually. The *STAAR* version of the exam includes embedded supports and accommodations available to special education students.¹¹ *STAAR* accommodations and *STAAR Alternate 2* eligibility are determined by a student's ARD committee.

Descriptive analyses were conducted, and data were disaggregated by grade and test version. *STAAR* data were also compared to performance from previous school years, student subgroups, students at the state level, and, students in other large, urban school districts in Texas.

Results

A lower percentage of special education students scored at or above grade level on *TerraNova* reading and mathematics than general education students in the district (Table 20). The percentage of special education students who were at or above grade level in reading (42.8% across all grades on *TerraNova*; 52.7% across all

⁸ *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* are norm referenced assessments. Norm-referenced scores describe individual student performance relative to the performance of a large, nationally representative group of students.

⁹ Criterion-referenced scores indicate whether a student met or exceeded a specific standard.

¹⁰ In previous years, an additional version of *STAAR*, *STAAR Accommodated (STAAR A)*, was available to special education students. *STAAR A* was administered for the last time in December 2016.

¹¹ Designated supports include basic transcribing, Braille, calculation aids, content and language supports, extra time, individualized structured reminders, large print, manipulating test materials, mathematics manipulatives, oral/signed administration, spelling assistance, supplemental aids, and extra day.

grades on *SUPERA*) was higher than in mathematics (37.0% across all grades). There was a higher percentage of special education students in kindergarten that were at or above grade level in reading (66.9%, *TerraNova*, 68.2%, *SUPERA*) and mathematics (52.8%) than students in other grade levels.

Table 20: Student Performance on *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* by Grade: 2018-19

Grade Level	Special Education		General Education	
	N	% at or Above Grade Level	N	% at or Above Grade Level
<i>TerraNova</i>: Reading				
Kindergarten	254	66.9	4,880	80.0
Grade 1	380	46.8	5,002	67.4
Grade 2	526	28.1	5,085	64.1
K-2	1,160	42.8	14,973	70.3
<i>TerraNova</i>: Mathematics				
Kindergarten	405	52.8	9,513	64.3
Grade 1	630	38.4	9,599	58.4
Grade 2	775	27.5	9,586	62.3
K-2	1,810	37.0	28,711	61.6
<i>SUPERA</i>: Reading				
Kindergarten	151	68.2	4,667	84.4
Grade 1	244	61.1	4,663	83.6
Grade 2	261	36.0	4,584	81.6
K-2	656	52.7	13,921	83.2

Source: District *TerraNova* file: 07/02/19. District *SUPERA* file: 07/02/19.

Note: *The measure used to determine grade level proficiency was the percentage of students at or above the 40th percentile. N=number tested. K=Kindergarten. *SUPERA* Mathematics findings not shown because the total N of special education students with a valid score was less than 6.

The performance of special education students on *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* was examined for progress over a three-year period (Table 21). In mathematics (*TerraNova*) the percentage of special education students scoring at grade level or higher increased on average in kindergarten and grade one consistently from 2016-17 to 2018-19, while there was a slight decrease in 2018-19 among grade two students from 2017-18 to 2018-19. In reading, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, grade one special education students showed consistent improvement (an 8.8 percentage point increase), while kindergarten and grade two students on average showed mixed performance (improvement from 2016-17 to 2017-18 but a decline on average from 2017-18 to 2018-19). In reading on *SUPERA*, there was a sizable drop (15.1 percentage points) among grade two special education students from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and a 4.7 percentage point drop overall among special education students in grades kindergarten through two across the same three-year period. The greatest improvement over the three-year period was seen among kindergarteners in mathematics (10.5 percentage point increase).

Table 21: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at or Above Grade Level on *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* by Grade: 2016-17 through 2018-19

Subject	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2-year Difference
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
TerraNova: Reading							
Kindergarten	313	60.1	232	68.5	254	66.9	6.8
Grade 1	511	38.0	378	41.8	380	46.8	8.8
Grade 2	536	25.9	539	30.4	526	28.1	2.2
K-2	1,360	38.3	1,149	41.8	1,160	42.8	4.5
TerraNova: Mathematics							
Kindergarten	471	42.3	377	48.8	405	52.8	10.5
Grade 1	729	28.9	552	30.4	630	38.4	9.5
Grade 2	768	25.7	784	31.3	775	27.5	1.8
K-2	1,968	30.8	1,713	34.9	1,810	37.0	6.2
SUPERA: Reading							
Kindergarten	118	63.6	147	68.7	151	68.2	4.6
Grade 1	183	60.1	173	57.2	244	61.1	1.0
Grade 2	190	51.1	241	45.2	261	36.0	-15.1
K-2	491	57.4	561	55.1	656	52.7	-4.7

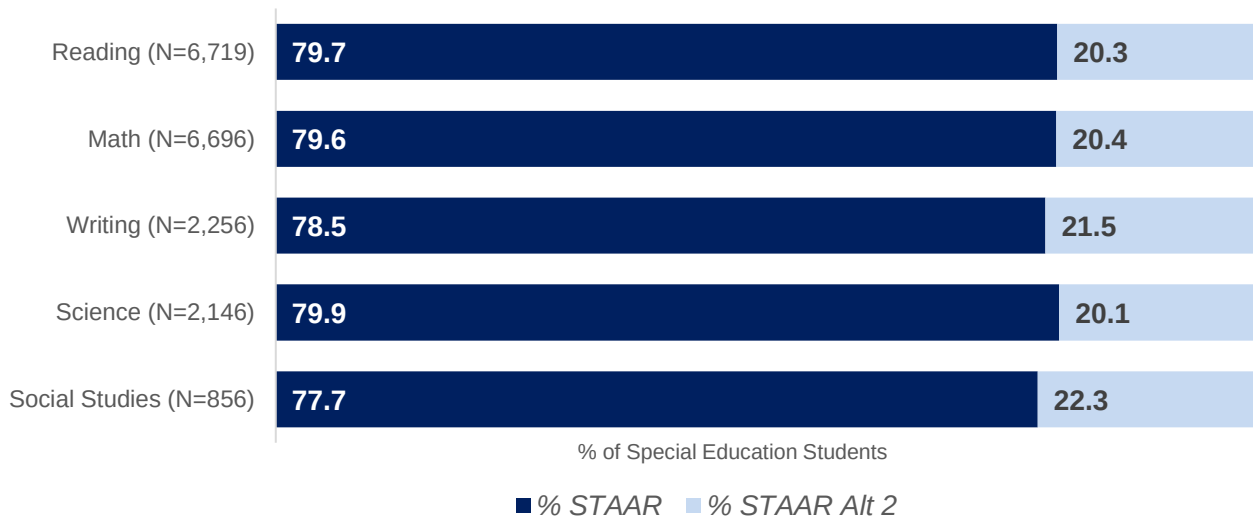
Source: District TerraNova files: 08/02/17 (2016-17), 07/20/18 (2017-18), 07/02/19 (2018-19). District SUPERA files: 7/12/19 for 2016-17, 6/14/19 for 2017-18, and 7/2/19 for 2018-19.

Note: The measure used to determine grade level proficiency was the percentage of students at or above the 40th percentile. N=number tested. K=Kindergarten.

STAAR 3-8

Approximately four-fifths of special education students were tested with the STAAR version of the assessment while about one-fifth were tested with STAAR Alternate 2 (Figure 14). This proportion was similar to the STAAR Alternate 2 participation rate identified in both 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Figure 14: Percentage of Special Education Students Tested by Version of STAAR 3-8 Assessment: 2018-19



Source: District STAAR data file: 06/13/19.

Note: Data reflect the Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Alt=Alternate. N=total number tested (STAAR and STAAR Alternate 2) in that subject.

A much higher percentage of special education students performed at Approaches+ with the STAAR Alternate 2 version of the exam than the STAAR version (Table 22). Across both the standard STAAR tests and the STAAR Alternate 2 tests, students performed at a higher level in mathematics (52.4%) and science (49.1%) than reading (42.9%), social studies (41.1%) and writing (34.8%).

Table 22: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Test Version: 2018-19

Subject	STAAR		STAAR Alternate 2		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading	5,356	30.3	1,363	92.4	6,719	42.9
Mathematics	5,332	41.4	1,364	95.2	6,696	52.4
Writing	1,771	19.1	485	92.0	2,256	34.8
Science	1,715	37.5	431	95.1	2,146	49.1
Social Studies	665	26.0	191	94.8	856	41.4

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file: 06/13/19.

Note: Data reflect the Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

The percentage of special education students scoring at Approaches+ was lower in grades six and seven than the other grade levels in all subjects of the STAAR version of the exam (Table 23). The percentage of students scoring at Approaches+ was high across all grade levels and subjects on STAAR Alternate 2 exams (89.6% to 97.4%).

Table 23: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Grade: 2018-19

Grade	STAAR		Alternate 2		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading						
Grade 3	941	37.4	225	92.9	1,166	48.1
Grade 4	1,007	29.9	255	91.4	1,262	42.3
Grade 5	1,047	40.5	241	89.6	1,288	49.7
Grade 6	915	20.0	222	92.3	1,137	34.1
Grade 7	770	23.9	230	93.5	1,000	39.9
Grade 8	675	26.7	190	95.3	865	41.7
Mathematics						
Grade 3	938	43.8	225	94.7	1,163	53.7
Grade 4	1,007	38.8	255	95.7	1,262	50.3
Grade 5	1,047	50.9	241	95.0	1,288	59.2
Grade 6	912	38.4	222	92.8	1,134	49.0
Grade 7	771	32.4	230	97.4	1,001	47.4
Grade 8	656	41.9	191	95.3	847	54.0
Writing						
Grade 4	999	22.9	255	90.6	1,254	36.7
Grade 7	768	14.2	230	93.5	998	32.5
Science						
Grade 5	1,039	37.1	241	95.0	1,280	48.0
Grade 8	638	35.3	190	95.3	828	49.0
Social Studies						
Grade 8	658	26.1	191	94.8	849	41.4

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file: 06/13/19.

Note: Data reflect the Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

The performance of special education students on STAAR 3-8 assessments was examined for progress over a two-year period (Table 24). The percentage of special education students scoring at Approaches+ between the 2016-17 to 2018-19 school years increased across all subjects overall. During this period, special education students demonstrated the highest growth in mathematics, particularly in the middle school grades, with a 14.4 percentage point increase among grade seven students and a 13.8 percentage point increase among

grade eight students. In reading, among special education students, students in middle school likewise showed the greatest increases from 2016-17 with an 11.5 percentage point increase among grade seven students and an 11.0 percentage point increase among grade eight students. Special education students also showed improvement in writing, particularly in grade seven (8.8 percentage point increase), in science (11.8 percentage point increase in grade 8), and in social studies (9.6 percentage point increase in grade 8).

Table 24: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Grade: 2016-17 through 2018-19

Cover of Absorb by Grade 2016-17 through 2018-19							
Grade	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2-year Difference
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Reading							
Grade 3	894	42.5	1,045	50.7	1,166	48.1	5.6
Grade 4	992	37.9	1,083	43.2	1,262	42.3	4.4
Grade 5	1,053	43.6	1,148	48.9	1,288	49.7	6.1
Grade 6	889	32.7	1,003	31.9	1,137	34.1	1.4
Grade 7	890	28.4	855	38.5	1,000	39.9	11.5
Grade 8	877	30.7	902	32.7	865	41.7	11.0
Mathematics							
Grade 3	895	48.7	1,044	53.6	1,163	53.7	5.0
Grade 4	991	43.4	1,084	51.3	1,262	50.3	6.9
Grade 5	1,053	53.1	1,148	60.4	1,288	59.2	6.1
Grade 6	886	46.2	1,003	46.5	1,134	49.0	2.8
Grade 7	874	33.0	836	45.0	1,001	47.4	14.4
Grade 8	874	40.2	914	46.4	847	54.0	13.8
Writing							
Grade 4	990	35.3	1,081	32.7	1,254	36.7	1.4
Grade 7	899	23.7	865	32.5	998	32.5	8.8
Science							
Grade 5	1,049	46.2	1,137	51.5	1,280	48.0	1.8
Grade 8	868	37.2	884	37.9	828	49.0	11.8
Social Studies							
Grade 8	869	31.8	871	35.2	849	41.4	9.6

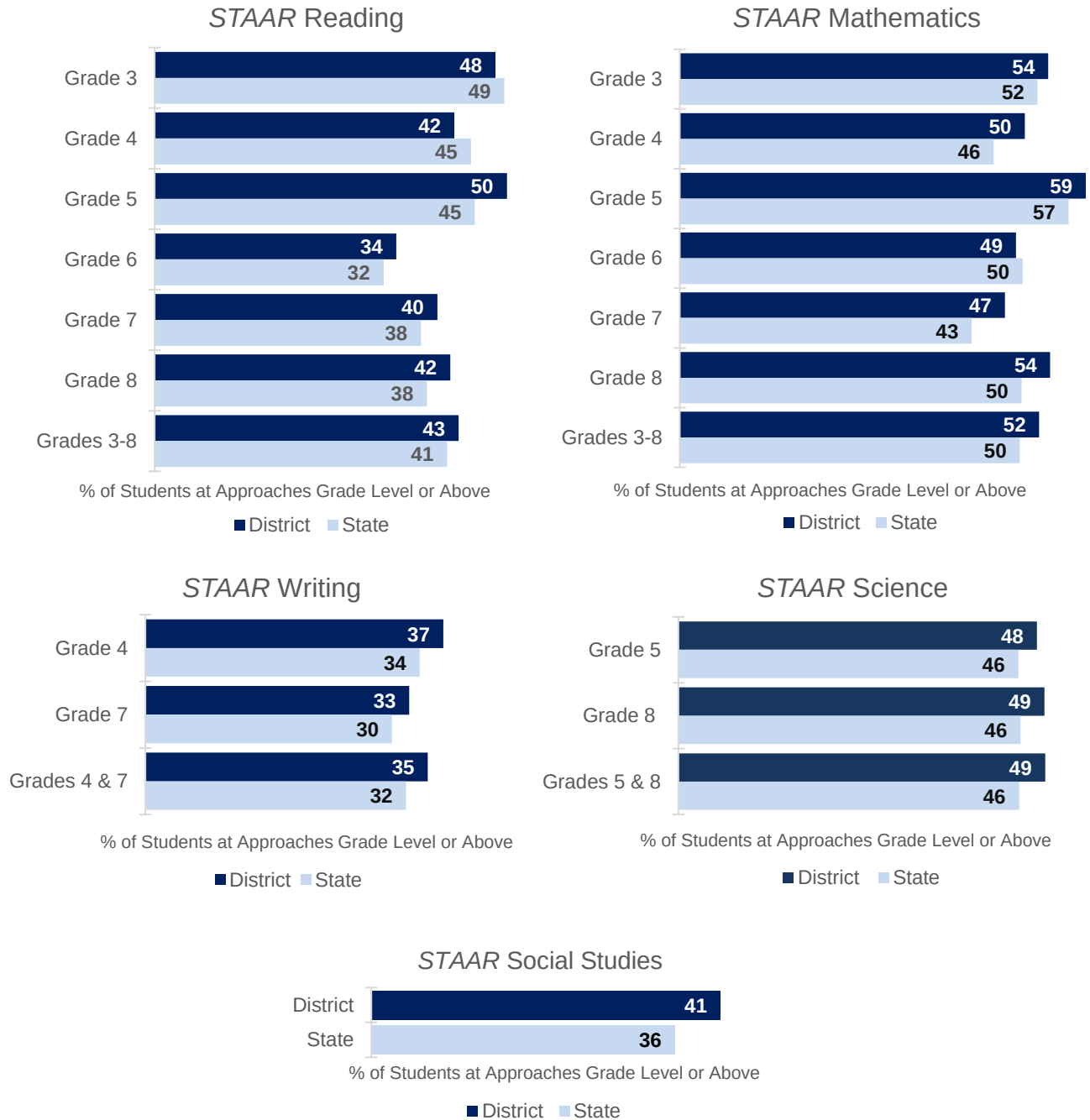
Source: District STAAR 3-8 data files: 6/22/17 (2016-17), 6/20/18 (2017-18), 6/13/19 (2018-19).

Note: Data reflect all versions of the Spring (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

The performance of Dallas ISD special education students was also compared to special education students at the state level, by grade level. The set of charts in Figure 15 displays the percentage of district and state special education students scoring at Approaches+ on both versions of STAAR 3-8 reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies assessments.

In reading, Dallas ISD special education students outperformed special education students at the state level in grades five through eight. In mathematics, special education students in Dallas ISD outperformed students at the state level in all grade levels except grade six. Likewise, in writing, science, and social studies, a higher percentage of Dallas ISD special education students scored at the Approaches+ compared to special education students at the state level in all tested grades (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Percentage of Dallas ISD and State Special Education Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR 3-8 Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Science, and Social Studies, by Grade: 2018-19



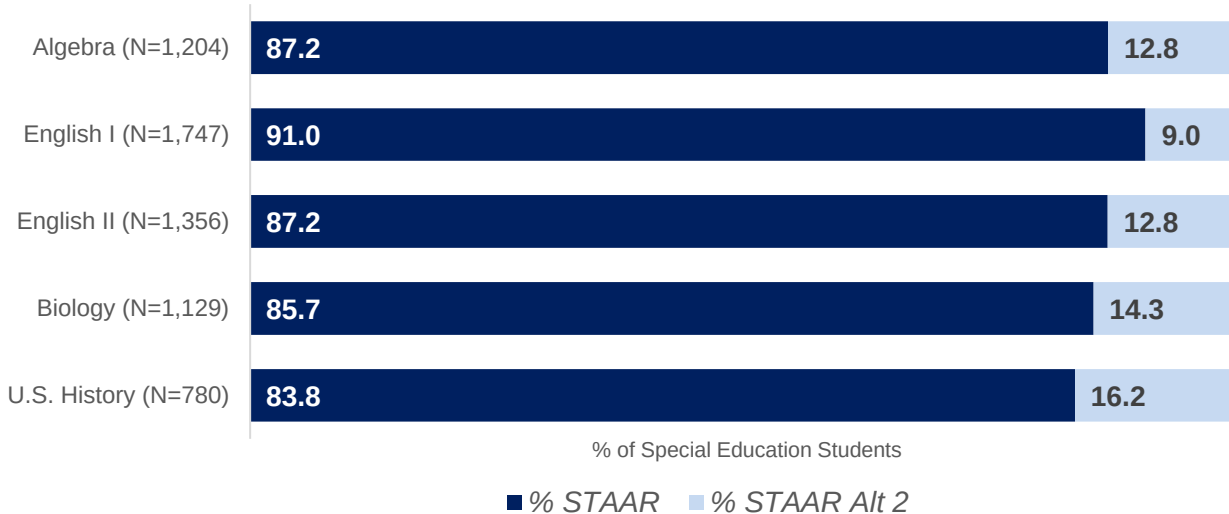
Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file: 06/13/19. State-level data: texasassessments.com, retrieved 07/01/19.

Note: Data reflect STAAR and STAAR Alternate 2 versions of the Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results combined. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

STAAR EOC

By STAAR version of EOC, a higher percentage of special education students were tested with the STAAR Alternate 2 version for U.S. History (16.2%) and Biology (14.3%) compared to English I (9.0%, Figure 16).

Figure 16: Percentage of Special Education Students by Version of STAAR EOC Assessment: 2018-19



Source: District STAAR EOC data file: 06/04/19.

Note: Data reflect the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 (including retests) STAAR EOC results. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC=End of Course. Alt=Alternate

A significantly higher percentage of special education students reached Approaches+ with the STAAR Alternate 2 version of the exam than the STAAR version (Table 25). Overall (across the standard STAAR and the STAAR Alt 2 version), students performed at a higher level on the U.S. History EOC (65.5% at Approaches+), Algebra I EOC (55.2% at Approaches+) and Biology EOC (53.2% at Approaches+), compared to English I EOC (20.9% at Approaches+) or English II EOC (24.2% at Approaches+).

Table 25: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR EOC: 2018-19

Year	STAAR		STAAR Alternate 2		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Algebra I	1,050	50.1	154	90.3	1,204	55.2
English I	1,590	14.0	157	90.4	1,747	20.9
English II	1,182	14.6	174	89.7	1,356	24.2
Biology	968	46.4	161	94.4	1,129	53.2
U.S. History	654	60.6	126	91.3	780	65.5

Source: District STAAR EOC data file: 06/04/19.

Note: Data reflect the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 (including retests). N=number tested. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC=End of Course.

Performances of special education students on STAAR EOC exams were examined for progress over a two-year period (Table 26). The percentage of special education students at Approaches+ increased on every STAAR EOC between the 2016-17 and 2018-19 school years. Special education students demonstrated the largest increases on Algebra 1 (12.5 percentage points), U.S. History EOC (7.4 percentage points), and Biology EOC (5.3 percentage points).

Table 26: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR EOC Approaches Grade Level or Above by Test Version: 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19

Grade	2016-17*		2017-18		2018-19		2-year Difference
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Algebra I	1,431	42.7	1,312	47.6	1,204	55.2	12.5
English I	1,732	18.2	1,792	21.4	1,747	20.9	2.7
English II	1,286	20.9	1,372	21.5	1,356	24.2	3.3
Biology	1,117	47.9	1,239	51.8	1,129	53.2	5.3
U.S. History	737	58.1	752	63.2	780	65.5	7.4

Source: District STAAR EOC data files: 4/30/18 (2016-17), 6/20/18 (2017-18), 06/04/19 (2018-19).

Note: *The STAAR A version of the STAAR EOC exam was administered for the last time in December 2016. Data reflect the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 (including retests) STAAR EOC results. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC=End of Course.

STAAR and STAAR EOC Student Group Performance

The performances of Dallas ISD special education students on STAAR 3-8 exams were disaggregated by ethnic group, gender, English learner status, and homeless status (Table 27). A lower percentage of English learner students scored at Approaches+ than non-English learner students on all STAAR 3-8 subjects. This was also the case in 2017-18. There was a higher percentage of white special education students who scored at Approaches+ than Hispanic, African American, and Asian students on all subjects of STAAR 3-8 exams, though there was less disparity on the mathematics test for the Approaches+ performance level. The performances of male and female special education students on STAAR 3-8 exams were similar on all subjects except social studies (8.1 percentage points higher for females). In 2017-18, the greatest differences among male and female special education students were in writing (5.9 percentage points higher for females) and science (5.1 percentage points higher for males).

Table 27: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by Subject and Student Group: 2018-19

Characteristic	Reading		Mathematics		Writing		Science		Social Studies	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Homeless	64	37.5	64	46.9	21	38.1	22	36.4	-	-
Econ Disadv	6,067	41.1	6,055	50.9	2,049	33.0	1,923	47.5	752	39.4
English Learner										
English Learner	2,581	37.9	2,580	50.5	844	30.2	831	43.7	324	31.2
Non-English Learner	232	53.0	229	64.2	75	46.7	84	59.5	32	46.9
Ethnicity										
Hispanic	4,340	42.6	4,327	53.9	1,457	36.1	1,370	49.0	542	38.7
African American	1,892	39.7	1,884	45.9	649	29.3	634	45.9	270	44.4
White	326	62.3	324	67.9	95	54.7	99	68.7	32	53.1
Asian	42	42.9	42	64.3	14	35.7	-	-	-	-
Gender										
Female	2,224	44.6	2,210	53.3	754	36.1	716	49.7	289	46.7
Male	4,495	42.0	4,486	52.0	1,502	34.2	1,430	48.7	567	38.6

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file: 06/13/19.

Note: Data reflect the Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR 3-8 results. Statistics not reported for groups smaller than 5 students. Econ Disadv=Economically Disadvantaged. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC=End of Course.

Student performances on STAAR EOC exams were also disaggregated by ethnic group, gender, EL status, and homeless status (Table 28). A higher percentage of non-English learner students scored at

Approaches+ than English learners on the English II, Biology, and U.S. History *STAAR EOC* exams. However, a higher percentage of English Learner special education students scored at the Approaches+ compared to non-English learner students on the Algebra I *EOC* exam, and the two groups scored similarly on the English I *EOC* exam. A higher percentage of Hispanic special education students scored at the Approaches+ on the Algebra I *STAAR EOC* exam, while a higher percentage of white special education students performed at this level or above on the U.S. History, English I, and English II *EOC* exams. A higher percentage of female students scored at Approaches+ on the Algebra I, English I, and Biology *EOC* exams compared to male special education students.

Table 28: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at *STAAR EOC* Approaches Grade Level or Above by Subject and Student Group: 2018-19

Characteristic	Algebra I		English I		English II		Biology		U.S. History	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Homeless	11	45.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Econ Disadv	1,022	54.1	1,478	19.8	1,130	23.5	957	51.9	652	65.8
English Learner										
English Learner	476	59.0	725	18.2	521	16.3	463	48.4	289	58.1
Non-English Learner	44	56.8	60	18.3	53	34.0	39	53.8	41	78.0
Ethnicity										
Hispanic	726	61.4	1,084	22.0	847	25.4	712	54.8	467	66.6
African American	424	45.5	591	18.6	448	21.0	373	49.3	265	61.5
White	35	45.7	46	28.3	34	26.5	25	56.0	31	77.4
Two or More Races	11	54.5	-	-	-	-	8	87.5	-	-
Gender										
Female	421	62.9	639	23.2	475	24.4	393	57.0	292	61.3
Male	783	51.1	1,108	19.6	881	24.1	736	51.2	488	68.0

Source: District *STAAR EOC* data file: 06/04/19.

Note: Data reflect the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 (including retests) *STAAR EOC* results. Statistics not reported for groups smaller than 5 students (-). Econ Disadv=Economically Disadvantaged. N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving at Approaches Grade Level or Above. *STAAR*=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. *EOC*=End of Course.

STAAR and STAAR EOC District Comparisons

The performances of Dallas ISD special education students meeting the Approaches+ standard on *STAAR 3-8* exams were compared to those of special education students in other large, urban school districts in Texas (Table 29). Among the five districts examined, Dallas ISD and Austin ISD special education students performed highest in reading (43%). Dallas ISD special education students also performed highest in science (49%) and social studies (40%). Dallas ISD and El Paso ISD special education scored highest in mathematics (both with 51%), while Austin ISD special education students slightly outperformed the other four districts in writing. Dallas ISD special education students also performed better than the state average for special education students in all *STAAR 3-8* subjects (Table 29).

Table 29: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR 3-8 Approaches Grade Level or Above by School District: 2018-19

Characteristic	Reading		Mathematics		Writing		Science		Social Studies	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Austin	4,645	43	4,790	48	1,575	35	1,599	44	659	36
San Antonio	2,621	32	2,588	38	867	22	935	33	441	28
El Paso	2,770	42	2,779	51	918	34	904	43	392	27
Houston	7,469	37	7,485	45	2,540	31	2,633	37	1,192	32
Dallas	6,516	43	7,303	51	2,198	34	2,235	49	901	40
State	255,722	41	256,923	50	85,919	32	84,869	46	39,129	36

Source: Texas Assessment Management System (TAMS) website: texasassessment.com; retrieved 7/02/19. Spring 2019 (first administration) STAAR and STAAR Alternate 2 combined.

Note: N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.

The performances of Dallas ISD special education students on STAAR EOC exams were also compared to other large, urban school districts across Texas (Table 30). Special education students in Dallas outperformed special education students at the state level in Algebra 1 and came within one percentage point of special education students state-wide in U.S. History. Among the five districts examined, Austin ISD special education students performed at a higher level of achievement compared to each of the other districts' special education students in every subject.

Table 30: Number and Percentage of Special Education Students at STAAR EOC Approaches Grade Level or Above by School District: 2018-19

Characteristic	Algebra I		Biology		English I		English II		U.S. History	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Austin	582	59	546	60	746	20	613	28	379	72
El Paso	443	58	477	47	740	19	565	15	304	66
Houston	1,269	33	1,189	45	1,670	11	1,280	18	752	59
San Antonio	510	46	346	46	683	10	453	13	217	55
Dallas	936	51	867	48	1,383	12	1,000	15	589	65
State	39,398	49	35,953	57	48,142	19	37,683	21	25,980	66

Source: Texas Assessment Management System (TAMS) website: texasassessment.com; retrieved 06/14/19. Spring 2019 STAAR EOC (standard version) assessment.

Note: N=number tested. %=Percentage of students achieving Approaches Grade Level or Above. STAAR=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC=End of Course.

What were the dropout, graduation, and attendance rates of special education students?

Methodology

The Texas Education Agency uses the dropout definition provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Under this definition, a dropout is “a student who is enrolled in public school in Grades 7-12, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not: graduate, receive a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE), continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.

Dropout, graduation, continued, and received TxCHSE information is calculated by TEA and published by TEA. Attendance data were extracted from the Dallas ISD attendance data base on July 2, 2019.

Results

Dropout Rates

Table 31 reports longitudinal graduation rates for the class of 2018. The four-year longitudinal graduation rate, used for federal accountability, was the percentage of students from a class of beginning ninth graders who graduated by their anticipated graduation date, or within four years of beginning ninth grade. Continuers were high school students who continued their high school enrollment longer than four years. The four-year longitudinal dropout rate was the percentage of students from the same class who drop out before completing their high school education.

$$\text{Longitudinal Graduation Rate} = 100 \times \frac{\text{Graduates}}{\text{Graduates} + \text{Continuers} + \text{TxCHSE Recipients} + \text{Dropouts}}$$

For state accountability, the indicator was known as completion rate. “Completers” are defined not only as students who graduate in four years but also students who continue in high school for a fifth year.

$$\text{Longitudinal Completion Rate} = 100 \times \frac{\text{Graduates} + \text{Continuers}}{\text{Graduates} + \text{Continuers} + \text{TxCHSE Recipients} + \text{Dropouts}}$$

The Dallas ISD special education dropout rate (11.2%; 11.7% in 2017-18) was higher than the dropout rate for all students in the district (9.0%; 7.9% in 2017-18). A higher proportion of district special education students continued in high school longer than four years (16.7%; 17.3% in 2017-18) than all students in the district (4.2%; also 4.2% in 2017-18). The district special education completion rate (88.8%; 88.9% in 2017-18) was lower than all students in the district (91.0%; 92.5% in 2017-18).

Table 31: Four-Year Longitudinal Graduation and Dropout Rates: Class of 2018

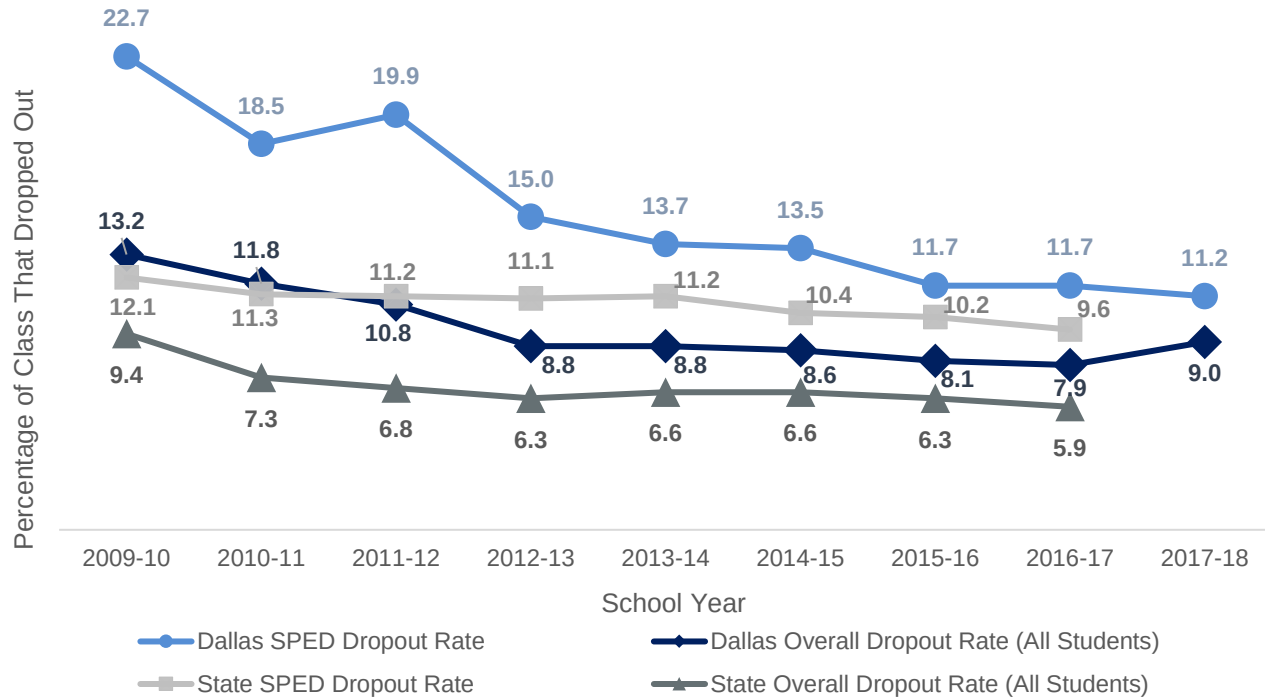
Group	Class N	Graduated		Continued		Received TxCHSE		Dropped Out		Graduated, continued, or received TxCHSE	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Dallas SPED	671	484	72.1	112	16.7	0	0.0	75	11.2	596	88.8
Dallas All	9,019	7,815	86.7	380	4.2	11	0.1	813	9.0	8,206	91.0

Source: TEA Four-Year Longitudinal Dropout data: 06/06/19.

Note: SPED = Special education students. Dallas All= All enrolled students in the district. N=number tested.

Dropout rates were also examined between the 2010-11 school year and the 2017-18 school year to identify any trends compared to state-level data (Figure 17). While dropout rates have been falling for all students at both the district and state level, the dropout rates for Dallas ISD special education students have decreased substantially. The 2017-18 district special education dropout rate (11.2%) was less than half of the 2009-10 district special education dropout rate (22.7%). Over the past nine years, the gap between the district special education dropout rate and the dropout rate for all students in the district has decreased from 9.5 percentage points to 2.2 percentage points.

Figure 17: Four-Year Longitudinal Special Education Dropout Rates: 2009-10 through 2017-18



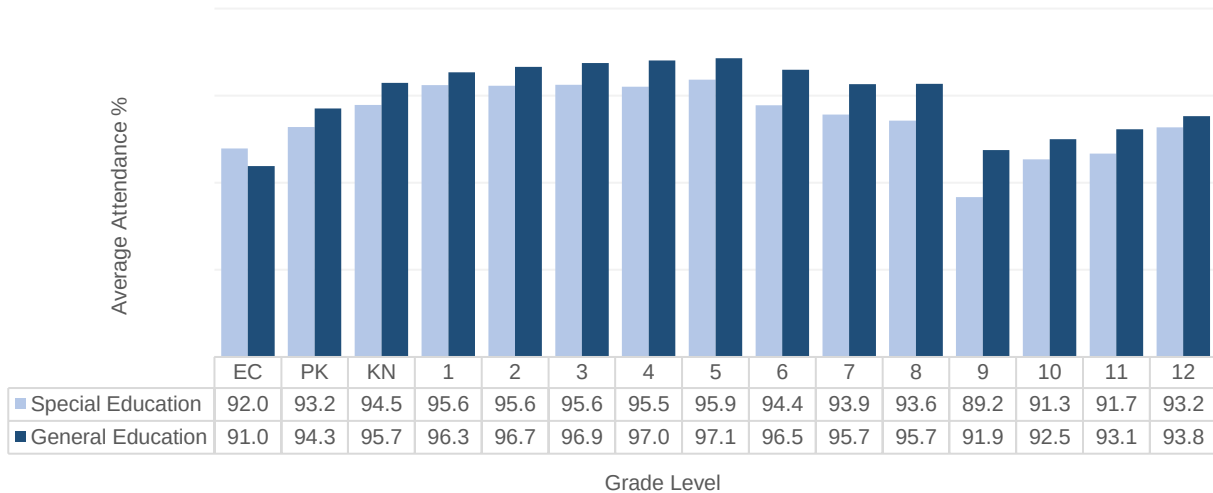
Source: Class of 2018 four-year longitudinal dropout data file dated 06/06/19; 2009-10 through 2016-17 TEA four-year longitudinal dropout data: <https://tea.texas.gov/acctres/dropcomp/years.html>.

Note: TEA=Texas Education Agency. State comparison data for 2017-18 not available at the time of this report.

Attendance

The percentage of days that special education students attended (93.9%) was lower than general education students (95.3%). Attendance was lowest in grade nine among both special education students and general education students. Attendance rates among special education students were generally higher at the elementary school level compared to the middle or high school level (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Average Attendance of Special Education and General Education Students by Grade: 2018-19



Source: District Student Attendance data file: 06/04/2019.

What were the findings of the 2018-19 contracted special education program follow-up review?

Background

In 2015, Dallas ISD received a state accountability rating of “Met Standard” at the districtwide level, but a rating of “Needs Intervention” in the area of special education. At that time, the percentage of students enrolled in the district’s special education program was 7.3 percent – lower than the state’s average of 8.5 percent and lower still compared to the nationwide average of 13.0 percent.¹² To address issues contributing to the “Needs Intervention” rating, the district in 2016-17 hired a contracted, external consultant (Collier Educational Consulting) to review the special education program and provide recommendations for program planning. A follow-up program review, also by Collier Educational Consulting, was conducted during the 2018-19 school year to examine progress on recommendations made in the 2016-17 review.

Methodology

Between November 2018 and February 2019, Denise Collier, Ed. D. of Collier Educational Consulting conducted document/data review, interviews, focus groups, and school site visits to collect information from central staff, principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents. Collier’s follow-up review was completed in February of 2019 and findings were presented to the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees on March 7, 2019.

Results

Figure 19 provides an overview of the number of Dallas ISD special education program areas examined ($N=16$) across the five domains (e.g., clarity in direction and programming, etc.) in the program review, along with the status of progress by the time the 2018-19 follow-up review concluded (February of 2019). The indicator system was developed by Dr. Collier. A darker shade of blue (and attendant higher numeric value) indicates a determination of greater progress, while a lighter shade of blue (and attendant lower numeric value) indicates a determination of less progress. See the key below the table for more detail on the indicator system.

¹² Source: National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>, accessed April 5, 2019.

Figure 19: Special Education Program Review: Implementation Status At a Glance

1. Clarity in direction and programming	2. Equitable access to a full continuum of services	3. Staffing and organizational roles	4. System of support to schools	5. Communication and Engagement
4	3	1	3	3
3	4	2	2	2
3	3	4	2	
	3			
	3			

Key:

- 4** Coherent, thorough planning with evidence of “scaled” implementation across schools, improvement in program outcomes and student achievement outcomes (if appropriate)
- 3** Coherent planning and evidence of implementation progress; some progress in program outcomes; student achievement outcomes not yet evident (if appropriate)
- 2** Evidence of planning and initial implementation; program progress and outcomes not yet evident
- 1** Little or no evidence of planning or implementation

Source: Collier, D. (2019). Special Education Program and Services Progress Report: A Follow-up to the 2017 Review.

The follow-up review revealed evidence of at least some implementation progress on 11 of the 16 recommendations made in the 2016-17 report.

The three special education program areas receiving the highest rating (a “4,” indicating “Coherent, thorough planning with evidence of ‘scaled’ implementation across schools, improvement in program outcomes and student achievement outcomes, if appropriate”) as a result of Dr. Collier’s 2018-19 follow-up program review were:

- Under the domain finding of *Clarity in Direction and Programming*: Collaborate with curriculum and instruction leaders in the development/refinement of the Managed Performance Empowerment educational theory of action and core academic plan.
- Under the domain finding of *Equitable Access to a Full Continuum of Services*: Institute a committee review protocol for all DNQ (Does Not Qualify) determinations and measure success through reduction in DNQ rates and more equitable placements.
- Under the domain finding of *Staffing and Organizational Roles*: Consider hiring a bilingual special education expert in a leadership role and engage bilingual special education parents in the development of the profile and responsibilities for this leader.

The special education program area receiving the lowest rating (a “1,” indicating “Little or no evidence of planning or implementation”) as a result of Dr. Collier’s 2018-19 follow-up program review was:

- Under the domain finding of *Staffing and Organizational Roles*: Remove ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) facilitation/case management duties from teachers and assign this role to campus-based diagnosticians.

More detail on findings from the 2019 Collier follow-up review can be found in the Executive Summary of the Special Education Program and Services Progress Report (2019) located in Appendix C of this report.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In the 2018-19 school year, there were 13,877 special education students, representing 8.9 percent of district student enrollment. This was an increase from the number and percentage of students who received special education services in the 2017-18 school year (N = 12,871; 8.2%). Thirty-seven percent (37.1%) of special education students were English learners, which was less than the district proportion of English learner students (44.7%). A higher percentage of special education students were African American (28.9%) than the overall district percentage of students who were African American (21.7%). Conversely, there was a lower proportion of Hispanic students enrolled in special education (63.3%) than the percentage of Hispanic students in the district (69.8%). In addition, although males and females were equally represented in the overall district student population, two-thirds of special education students were male (67.4%).

The most common primary disabilities across all grade levels were learning disability (28.8%), autism (20.7%), and other health impairment (16.2%). The percentage of students with a learning disability declined from 50.1 percent in the 2010-11 school year to 28.6 percent in the 2017-18 school year; it increased slightly to 28.8 percent in 2018-19. In contrast, the percentage of students reported to have autism over this period more than tripled from 6.8 percent to 20.7 percent. Forty-five percent (45.2%) of special education students were placed into a mainstream educational setting where they received special education and related services in a general education classroom.

There were 1,082 special education teachers employed in Dallas ISD during the 2018-19 school year. There were 462 (42.7%) special education teachers at the elementary school level, 203 (18.8%) at the middle school level, and 244 (22.6%) at the high school level. There were 156 (14.4%) special education teachers not assigned to an elementary, middle, or high school. The total number of special education teachers in the district has increased slightly over the past four years (N = +94, or 1.8 percentage points since 2015-16).

Three quarters of special education teachers in the district were female (76.8%). A smaller percentage of special education teachers were Hispanic (10.8%) compared to general education teachers (33.5%) while a higher percentage were African American (54.5%) compared to general education teachers (33.1%). There was a higher percentage of special education teachers with a graduate degree (32.1%) than general education

teachers (23.2%). Special education teachers had an average of 8.5 years of experience working in Dallas ISD. This was higher than the average of all teachers in the district (7.8 years).

A survey constructed to understand the methods, nature, and quality of communication between the Special Education Department and special education teachers and teacher assistants, principals, as well as campus administration during the 2018-19 school year indicated generally positive experiences with the special education program. In total, 91 percent of respondents indicated that they understood the district's expectations in providing special education services; 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to get help with special education related matters, and 77 percent of respondents indicated that they have adequate access to classroom materials needed to provide special education. Regarding the district's "Core 4" tenets of customer service (Fast, Flexible, Focused and Friendly), positive indicators on each tenet accounted for between 77 percent and 87 percent of all responses.

Feedback from special education evaluators concerning their transition to campus-based workspaces was more mixed. A total of 63 percent of special education evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that their "physical workspace is appropriate for fulfilling [their] work duties." This was an increase from the 53 percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement in 2017-18. However, 62 percent of respondents indicated (agreed or strongly agreed) that they were "frequently interrupted by campus staff when conducting [their] work" in 2018-19, an increase from 59 percent who responded with "agree" or "strongly agree" to this item in 2017-18. Forty-four percent of evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate access to professional resources (such as software, assessment and forms) needed to complete their work duties in 2018-19, a moderate increase from 39 percent who indicated this in 2017-18. Thirty-eight percent of respondents in 2018-19 indicated that they have adequate access to office supplies (printers, copiers, ink, paper) needed to complete their work duties – a decrease from the 42 percent who indicated this in 2017-18.

A total of 42 percent of special education evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that the central-office-to-campus transition benefitted the students and their families. Approximately one in three evaluators agreed or strongly agreed that the transition improved response time in conducting evaluations, and approximately one in three agreed or strongly agreed that the transition had – overall - been a positive change. This was an increase from the 2017-18 finding of 19.3 percent who indicated that the transition was an overall positive change.

A large percentage of respondents indicated that very few of their initial referral folders included adequate MTSS interventions. Approximately 82 percent of these evaluators indicated that "none" to only up to 25 percent of the initial referral folders they received included adequate MTSS interventions (89% in 2017-18).

The 2018 average of all Dallas ISD special education performance level indicators was 1.5 (out of a possible range of zero to three, with three being the lowest performance level), which resulted in the district's special education program being rated stage three, requiring interventions. The program also received a level three rating in 2017. Though the 2018 average performance level of 1.5 was an improvement from the 1.8 average on the 2017 report, 1.5 as an average performance level indicator still fell within 2018 stage three rating parameters.

On *TerraNova*, the percentage of special education students who scored at or above grade level in reading (42.8% across all grades) was higher than in mathematics (37.0% across all grades). A lower percentage of special education students scored at or above grade level on *TerraNova* reading and mathematics than all students in the district. The percentage of special education students who scored at grade level or higher on *TerraNova* increased in every grade level for reading and mathematics between the 2016-17 and the 2018-19 school years, though there was variation by grade level compared to the 2017-18 school year. On *SUPERA*, special education students showed a 4.7 percentage point decrease overall among grades kindergarten through two in reading between 2016-17 and 2018-19, and a 15.1 percentage point drop in grade two (reading).

On *STAAR 3-8* exams, among subjects, Dallas ISD special education students scored highest in mathematics (52.4% at Approaches Grade Level or Above) and lowest in writing (34.8% at Approaches Grade Level or Above). The percentage of special education students who scored at Approaches+ on *STAAR Alternate 2* versions of the exam was high across all *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* exams. Compared to special education students statewide, a higher percentage of Dallas ISD special education students scored at Approaches+ on all *STAAR 3-8* subjects.

Looking historically, between the 2016-17 and 2018-19 school years, the percentage of special education students scoring at Approaches+ increased on every *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* exam. Among the *STAAR 3-8* subject exams, the greatest improvement was seen in social studies, with a 9.6 percentage point increase from the 31.8 percent of special education students who scored at Approaches+ in 2016-17. Among *STAAR EOC* subject exams, the greatest increase was seen in Algebra 1, with a 12.5 percentage point increase from the 42.7 percent of special education students who scored at Approaches+ in 2016-17.

Among demographic student groups, overall, a lower percentage of English learner students scored at Approaches+ on *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* exams compared to non-English learner students. A higher percentage of white special education students scored at Approaches+ compared to Hispanic and African American special education students on all *STAAR 3-8* and *STAAR EOC* exams, except Algebra, on which a higher percentage of Hispanic special education students in the district scored at Approaches+.

Among five large urban school districts across Texas (Austin, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio), Dallas ISD special education students performed at a higher level of achievement compared to each of the other districts in science and social studies, and tied with Austin ISD for the highest percentage of special education students scoring at Approaches+ in reading, and tied with El Paso ISD for the highest percentage at Approaches+ in mathematics. On the *STAAR EOC* subject exams, special education students in Austin ISD performed at a higher level of achievement in every subject compared to the other four districts.

The four-year longitudinal dropout rate for Dallas ISD special education students was 11.2 percent. Dallas ISD special education students had a higher dropout rate than the dropout rate of the district for all students (9.0%). This rate is lower than last year's dropout rate (11.7%), although, the four-year longitudinal dropout rate is less than half of the 2009-10 rate (22.7%). Additionally, the percentage of days that special education students attended was lower than general education students (93.9% versus 95.3%, respectively).

Collier Educational Consulting conducted a follow-up review of the district's special education program in 2018-19 to examine the level of progress the district had made on program recommendations provided in the

2016-17 program review (also conducted by Collier Educational Consulting). The follow-up review revealed evidence of at least some implementation progress on 11 of the 16 recommendations made in the 2016-17 report.

Recommendations

- **Ensure that special education central staff responsible for interacting with campus staff on special education matters are trained adequately to handle policy and other support-related questions, and that guidance is provided in a timely manner.** Feedback on the Special Education Customer Service Survey showed that one in three principals and assistant principals and one in five special education teachers and teacher assistants felt inadequately supported by special education central staff when they reached out for assistance. Ensuring that central staff are adequately prepared to handle questions of policy and other guidance requests in a timely manner will help foster a supportive environment for both students and staff.
- **Communicate to teachers and other campus-based staff the necessity of following MTSS procedures.** Similar to findings in 2017-18, special education evaluators indicated that only a small percentage of initial referral folders included adequate MTSS interventions. MTSS intervention documentation can identify if special education evaluation is necessary or whether other services are appropriate. In addition, teacher-initiated referrals, which must show MTSS interventions, reduce the workload of evaluators, allowing for more timely and appropriate placements of eligible students into special education services. Half (50%) of all responding evaluators in 2018-19 indicated that 75 to 100 percent of their initial evaluations were referred through parent requests rather than through teacher requests, including MTSS documentation. While this is a 13-percentage point decrease from 2017-18 (62.5%), this remains an area for continuous improvement.
- **Increase efforts to recruit more bilingual special education diagnosticians and LSSPs.** A relatively low percentage of special education evaluators indicated that they conducted bilingual evaluations (29.8%; up from 23.9% in 2017-18). Survey results showed that almost one in three (30.5%) monolingual evaluators 'frequently' or 'always' had trouble finding an interpreter to communicate with non-English speaking students, an increase from 25.4 percent indicating this in 2017-18. Additional bilingual diagnosticians and LSSPs should be hired to reduce linguistic barriers in conducting special education evaluations and to increase efficiency.
- **Ensure that additional, regular opportunities are provided for special education evaluators to collaborate and receive professional support.** Feedback from the 2017-18 Special Education Evaluator Survey indicated that, in the wake of their transition from a central office to campuses, evaluators lost regular opportunities to collaborate with one another in person on special education evaluation-related issues. To address this loss, the special education department indicated that they began scheduling meetings in 2018-19 to facilitate such collaboration. In the 2018-19 survey, less than half of respondents indicated that collaboration meetings were held regularly and that these meetings addressed evaluators' needs for

professional collaboration adequately. More work may need to be done to facilitate opportunities for both more and regular professional collaboration among special education evaluators.

- **Conduct a needs assessment among special education evaluators to determine what supplies they require to fulfill their job duties.** A recurrent theme throughout feedback on the Special Education Evaluator Survey (both in 2017-18 and in 2018-19) was that, in the wake of their workspace transition to campuses, a large percentage of evaluators found themselves with inadequate access to the professional material resources (e.g., assessments, forms, software, etc.) and office supplies (printers, copiers, ink, etc.) needed to fulfill their work duties. Ensuring adequate provision of these resources will help ensure more efficient provision of special education services.

REFERENCES

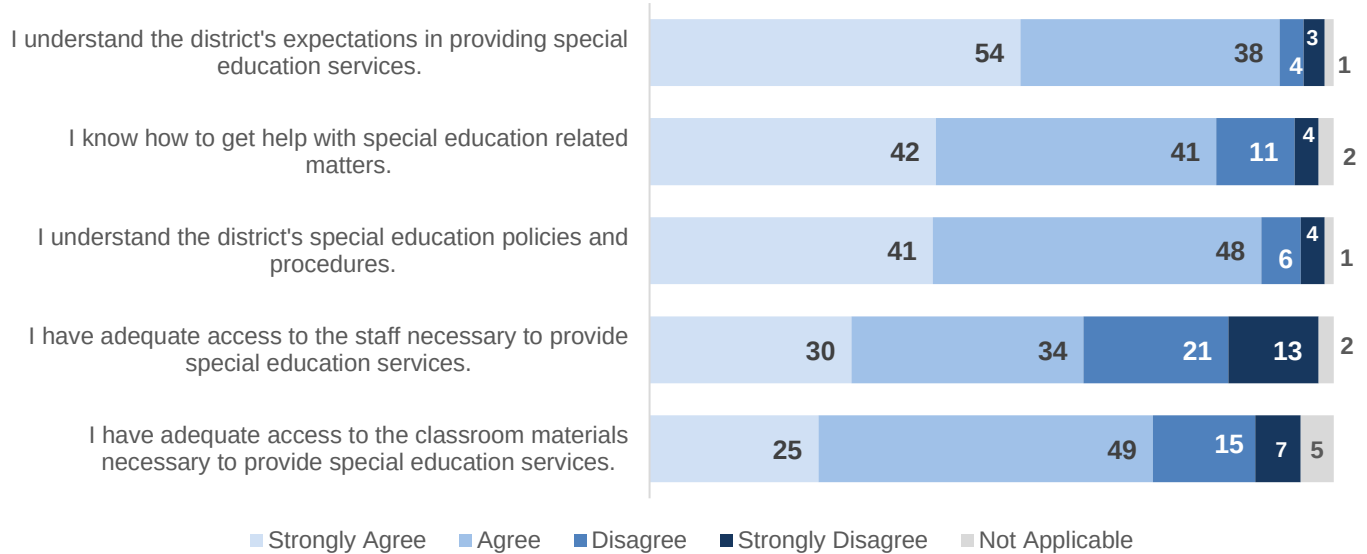
- 2018 Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System Report (Rep.). (2018). doi:<http://tea.texas.gov/pbm/PBMASManuals.aspx>
- Assessments for Students with Disabilities. (2018). Tea.texas.gov. Retrieved 15 January 2019, from <https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/SWD/>
- Blumberg, S. J., Bramlett, M. D., Kogan, M. D., Schieve, L. A., Jones, J. R., Lu, M. C. (2013). Changes in prevalence of parent-reported autism spectrum disorder in school-aged U.S. children: 2007 to 2011-2012. *National Health Statistics Reports*, 65, 1-11.
- Cortiella, C., & Horowitz, S. H. (2014). *The State of Learning Disabilities*. (3rd ed., Rep.). New York, NY: National Center for Learning Disabilities.
- Grimberg, N. Z. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Special Education Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.
- Wazana, A., Bresnahan, M., & Kline, J. (2007). The Autism Epidemic: Fact or Artifact?. *Journal of The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 46(6), 721-730.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Appendix A, Figure 1: SPED Customer Service Survey, Principal and Assistant Principal Responses, 2018-19

Principal and Assistant Principal Responses N=227

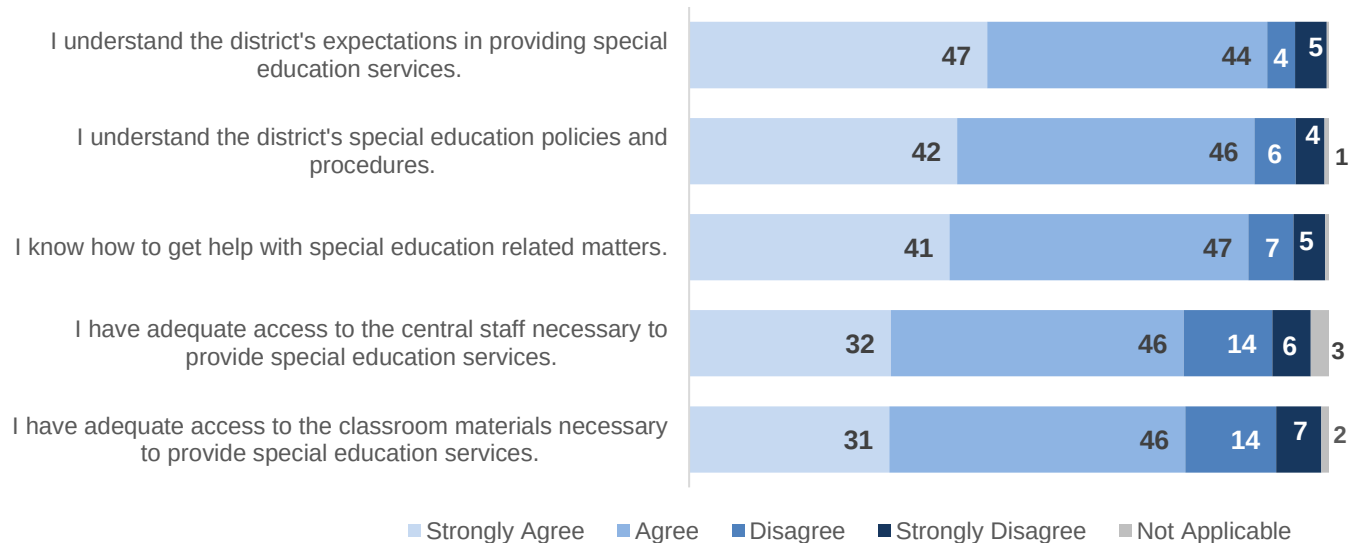


Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. SPED=Special Education. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

Appendix A, Figure 2: SPED Customer Service Survey, Special Education Teacher and Teacher Assistant Responses, 2018-19

Special Education Teacher and Teacher Assistant Responses N=850

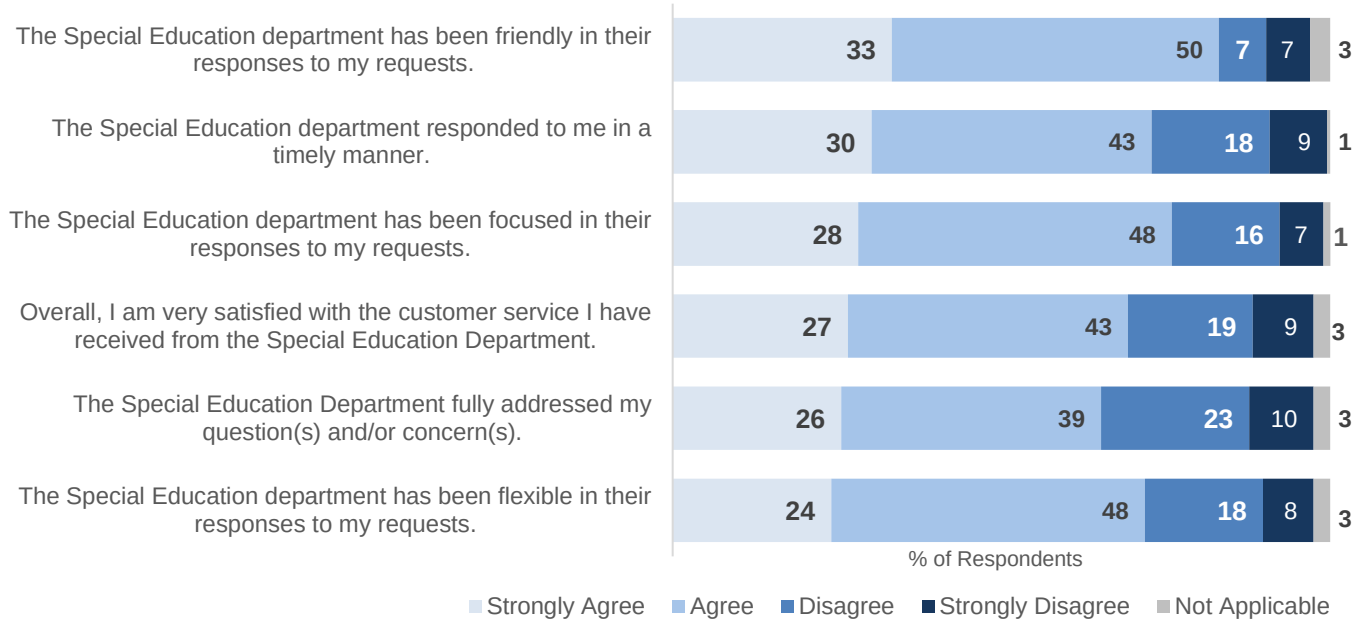


Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. SPED=Special Education. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

Appendix A, Figure 3: SPED Customer Service Survey, Principal and Assistant Principal Responses, 2018-19

Principals and Principal Assistants, N=195

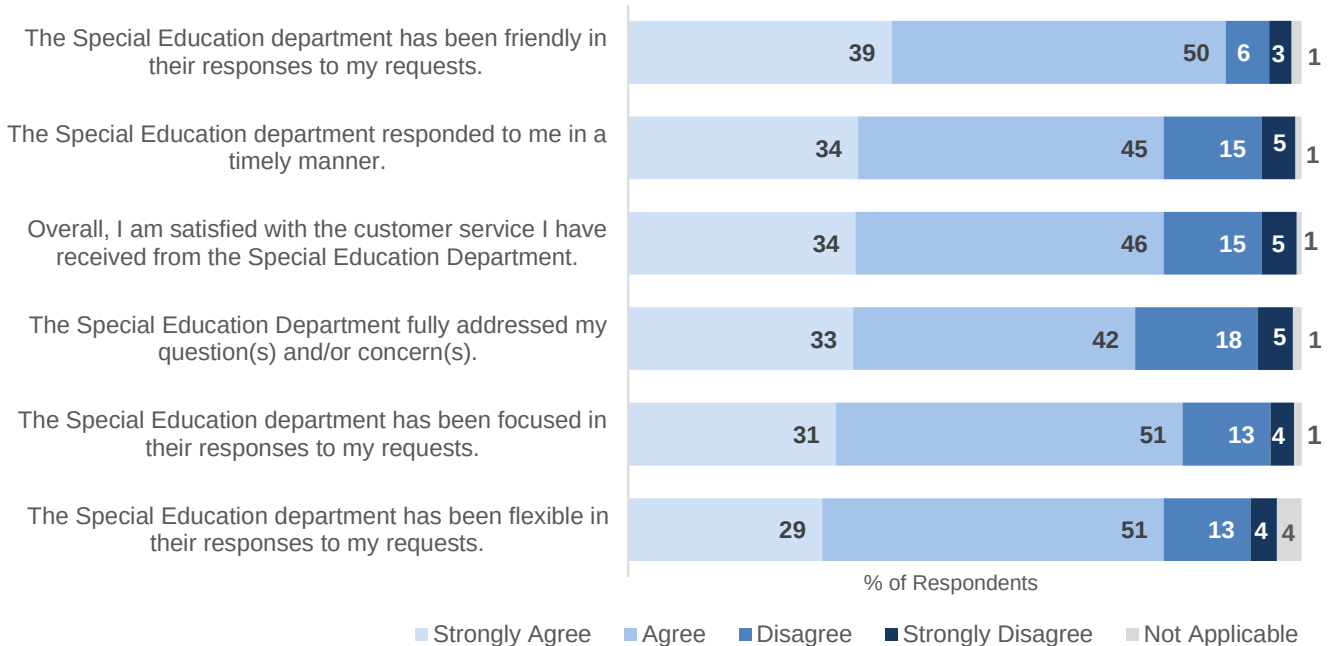


Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. SPED=Special Education. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

Appendix A, Figure 4: SPED Customer Service Survey, SPED Teacher and Teacher Assistant Responses, 2018-19

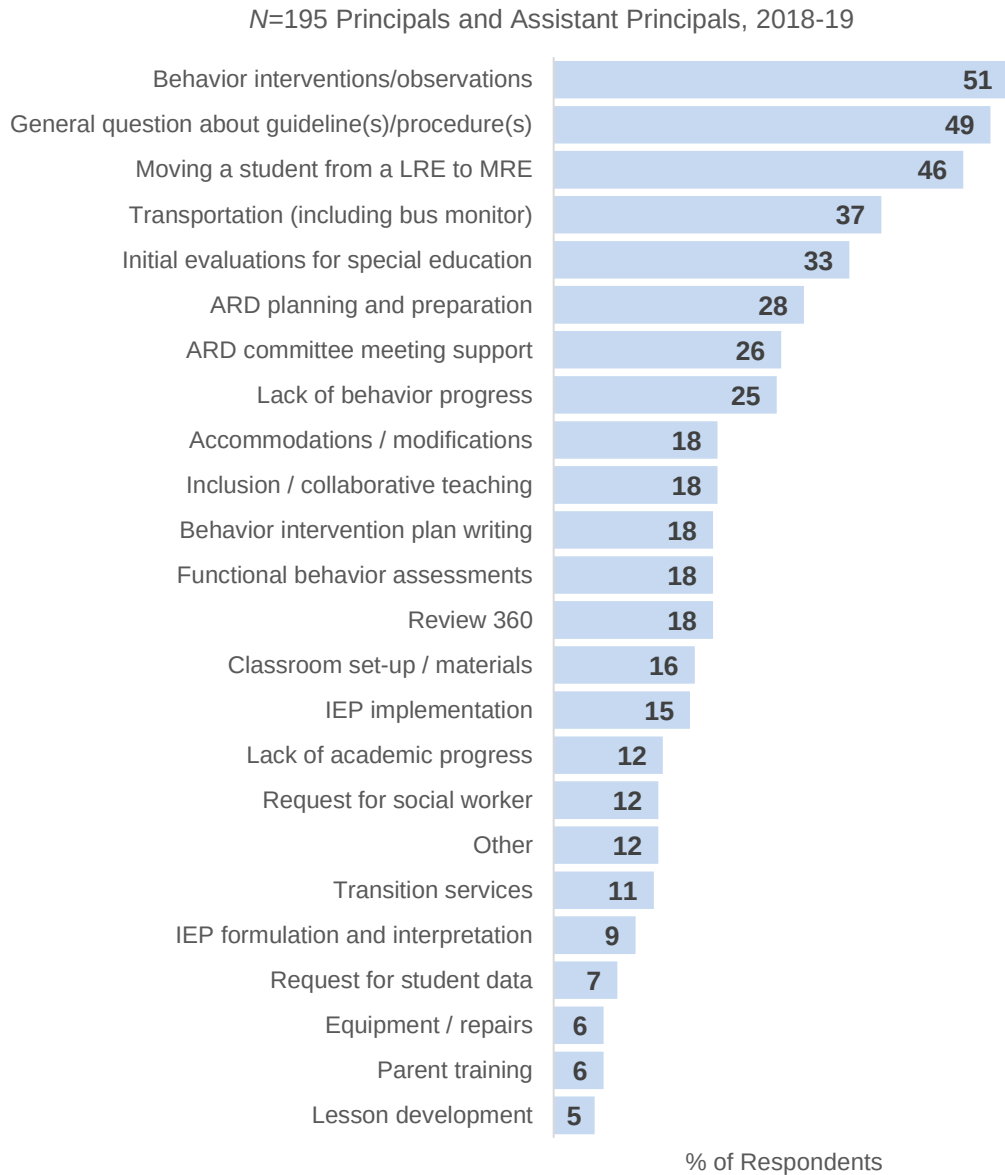
SPED Teachers and Teacher Assistants, N=542, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. SPED=Special Education. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

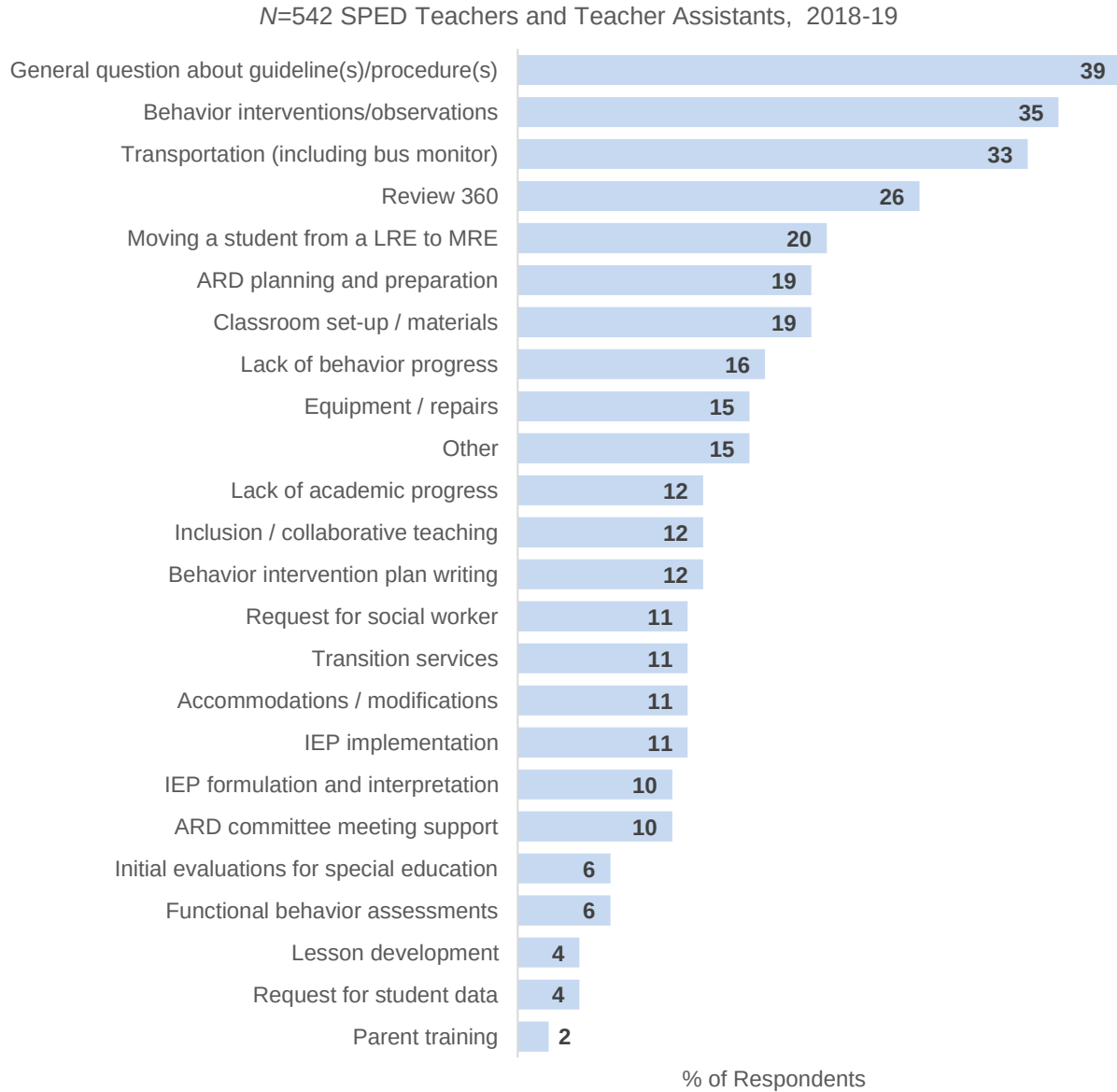
Appendix A, Figure 5: Reasons for Contacting the Special Education Department: Responses from Principals and Assistant Principals, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: ARD=admission, review, and dismissal; LRE=least restrictive environment; MRE=more restrictive environment; IEP=individual education plan.

Appendix A, Figure 6 : Reasons for Contacting the Special Education Department: Responses from Special Education Teachers and Teacher Assistants, 2018-19

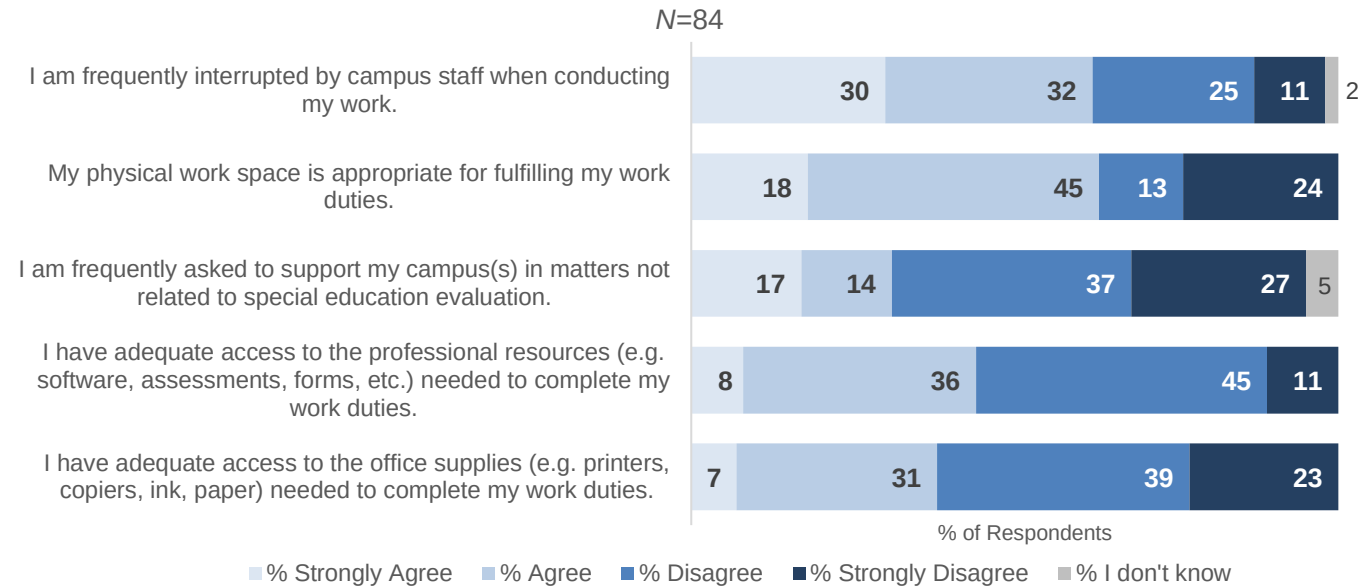


Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, May 2019.

Note: LRE=least restrictive environment; MRE=more restrictive environment; IEP=individual education plan; ARD=admission, review, and dismissal; SPED=Special Education.

Appendix B

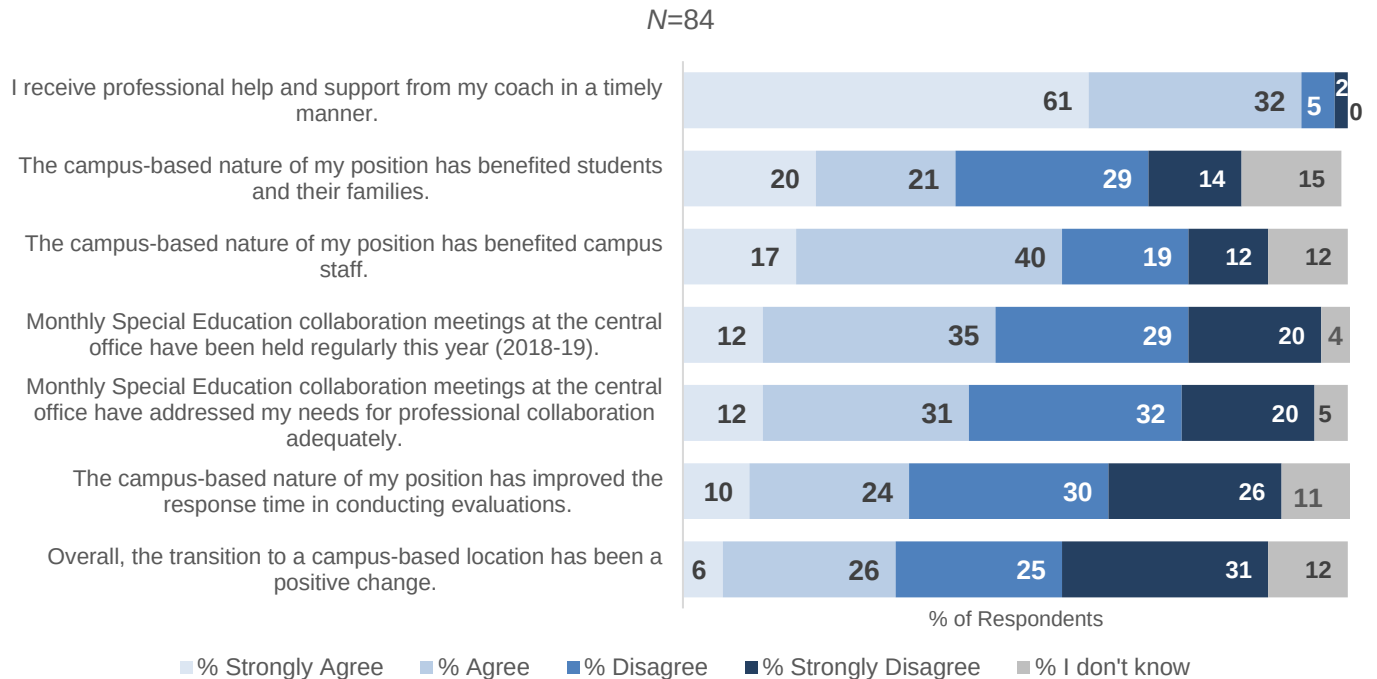
Appendix B, Figure 1: Special Education Evaluator Survey Items Related to Transition from District Office to Campuses, Additional Response Breakdown by Level of Agreement, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, April 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

Appendix B, Figure 2: Special Education Evaluator Survey Items Related to Transition from District Office to Campuses, Additional Response Breakdown by Level of Agreement, 2018-19



Source: Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment Internal Survey, April 2019.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Percentages may vary slightly from corresponding figure percentage sums in report body due to rounding.

Appendix C

Dallas Independent School District

Special Education Program Review 2019 Progress Report

Executive Summary

Denise Collier, Ed.D.

2017 Special Education Program Review

In 2015, Dallas ISD received a state accountability rating of “Met Standard” district-wide, but a rating of “Needs Intervention” in the area of special education. To better understand the special education system with the goal of improving outcomes for students with disabilities, the district sought an analysis of special education programs and services. A special education review was conducted in the fall and winter of 2016, and sixteen recommendations, organized within five key findings, were presented to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees in March of 2017.

Purpose of the Special Education Review Progress Report

After one full year of implementation of the special education review recommendations, as well as other related program improvements, the district sought a follow-up analysis to determine the status of implementation of the initial report recommendations.

Progress Report Development Process

The program review follow-up was structured into three components:

- **Document/data review**—to gain understanding of program improvements and achievement/progress of students receiving special education services as compared to other student groups
- **Interviews/focus groups/surveys**—to generate stakeholder feedback regarding implementation of program review recommendations
- **School visits**—to obtain principal, teacher, and support staff feedback and to observe special education services in action across the district

These processes yielded the information, data, and documentary evidence to make a determination regarding the implementation status of the sixteen special education review recommendations.

Overarching Commendations

Improving outcomes for students receiving special education services are indicated by:

- *Dropout rate*—The dropout rate for Dallas ISD special education students has declined significantly in past years, and the gap between non-special education and special education students has narrowed to less than 4 percentage points
- *STAAR progress*—Performance of Dallas ISD special education students on STAAR 3-8 exams has improved on every subject for the past 3 years
- *STAAR passing*—Percentage of special education students at *Approaches Grade Level or Above* increased on every STAAR 3-8 and STAAR End-of-Course exam
- *Disproportionality*—Continued improving trends in disproportionality of African American students and Hispanic students in special education
- *PBMAS*—Special education remains at stage 3 on the PBMAS system with a slight improvement in PBMAS mean score between 2017 and 2018

Sources: PBMAS Reports, Texas Education Agency Retrieved from: <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/pbm/distrpts.html> and DISD 2017-18 Evaluation of Special Education

The special education program review implementation plan, currently being enacted by the DISD Special Education Department, is geared toward continuing and accelerating this trajectory of improvement.

Progress Report Implementation Rubric

The follow-up review process was intended to gauge progress toward deep implementation of the sixteen recommendations of the 2017 Special Education Program Review, but the ultimate “report card” of the district’s progress will be sustained, significant improvement in outcomes for students with disabilities. This early stage progress report highlights evidence of initial successes that might point the way for continued improvement, but full implementation and significant sustained impact on student outcomes cannot be expected in the short span of time since the recommendations were adopted.

Progress toward deep implementation of each recommendation was rated on a four-point rubric, with four indicating the strongest progress:

- 4 (Green): Coherent, thorough planning with evidence of “scaled” implementation across schools, improvement in program outcomes and student achievement outcomes (if appropriate)
- 3 (Yellow): Coherent planning and evidence of implementation progress; some progress in program outcomes; student achievement outcomes not yet evident (if appropriate)
- 2 (Orange): Evidence of planning and initial implementation; program progress and outcomes not yet evident
- 1 (Red): Little or no evidence of planning or implementation

Implementation Status Summary

While there is much work ahead to meet the district’s goals and expectations for all students with special learning needs, the district has made significant progress in a short period of time. As noted by one principal, *“There have been so many improvements. The special ed. department has really responded to the recommendations fully and more rapidly than expected.”*

Significant effort has resulted in implementation progress toward 15 of the 16 recommendations, with eleven of the recommendations rated 3 or 4, four recommendations rated 2, and one recommendation with a rating of 1. District leaders, principals, teachers, and parents who provided guidance and feedback to the special education review implementation plan are to be commended. District leaders, principals, and teachers who are charged with successful enactment of the plan are to be commended for their efforts and early progress. The status for each recommendation is shown in the table below. Following the table is a summary of implementation evidence and feedback.

Special Education Program Review: Implementation Rating Summary		
Finding	Recommendations	Rating
1. Clarity in Direction and Programming	1.1 Collaborate with curriculum and instruction leaders in the development/ refinement of the Managed Performance Empowerment educational theory of action and core academic plan.	4
	1.2 Engage stakeholders (parents, teachers, school leaders, and other teaching and learning departments) in the development of a clear direction, theory of action, and goals for special education in accord with the district’s education plan and theory of action.	3
	1.3 Work with teacher leaders to develop clear frameworks for all special education program models, providing a “picture” of the expected features and characteristics of each program. Support shared understanding of program models through required professional learning, broad communication, and in-school support.	3

Special Education Program Review: Implementation Rating Summary (*continued*)

Finding	Recommendations	Rating
2. Equitable Access to a Full Continuum of Services	2.1 Simplify and improve pre-referral and initial assessment processes (RtI, SST, FIE) and measure success by reduction in testing time, fewer DNQ determinations, and more equitable identification and placement of English Learners, Hispanic students, African American students, and early learners (PK-2 nd grade).	3
	2.2 Institute a committee review protocol for all DNQ determinations and measure success through reduction in DNQ rates and more equitable placements.	4
	2.3 Review all English learner program placements to ensure special education services are provided in all bilingual/ESL settings (ex: bilingual inclusion classes at elementary school, bilingual sheltered classes at secondary schools).	3
	2.4 Move forward with Destination Access (“de-clustering” of units) by engaging principals, teachers, and other leaders in refinement and implementation of the plan to ensure a full continuum of service at all schools for special education students.	3
	2.5 Ensure equitable allocation of any remaining centralized units (cluster programs) after Destination Access decisions are made, such as ADL, PPCD, Deaf Education and Vision Impairment.	3
3. Staffing and Organizational Roles	3.1 Remove ARD facilitation/case management duties from teachers and assign this role to campus-based diagnosticians.	1
	3.2 Redesign staffing assignments of diagnosticians; move them to full-time single school support (to the greatest extent possible), and engage principals in selection/assignment and evaluations of diagnosticians. Consider using this model to apply to other centrally allocated staff.	2
	3.3 Consider hiring a bilingual special education expert in a leader-ship role and engage bilingual special education parents in the development of the profile and responsibilities for this leader.	4
4. Systems of Support to Schools	4.1 Work with principals and school leadership to develop a system of supports for schools, developing “teams of support” for schools/clusters of schools that are stable over time, scheduled for predictable in-school support, and ensure principal engagement in selection/placement and feedback for evaluation of support team staff.	3
	4.2 Develop, implement, and support a system of high-quality, required professional learning for all teachers and school leaders that is geared to supporting student success in the various programs and aligned to the expectations of the core academic program.	2
	4.3 Support teachers in successful enactment of expected roles through access to the instructional resources, equipment, and supplies needed.	2
5. Communication and Engagement	5.1 Develop a communication and response system for information and feedback to and from schools based on meaningful customer service and short response time expectations.	3
	5.2 Create stakeholder engagement groups for leadership and guidance of program direction and decisions, and include parents, teachers, principals and core academic program leaders in meaningful ways.	2

Implementation Efforts and Evidence

District leadership has developed a plan and identified strategies and actions for moving forward the recommendations of the 2017 Special Education Review. While this executive summary does not attempt to identify and describe the entire implementation strategy, some of the key efforts within each finding are highlighted below.

Finding 1: Clarity in Direction and programming

Efforts are underway in Dallas ISD to advance the district's theory of action and the core work of teaching and learning toward the mission of educating all students for success. Among these are:

1. Development of a theory of action for teaching, learning, and leading
2. Alignment of goals, plans, and strategic efforts to the theory of action
3. Development/refinement of a core curriculum
4. Creation of the online special education handbook to clarify expectations for special education services toward student mastery of the core curriculum and ARD expectations
5. Engagement with stakeholders: Parent Spotlight Meetings, Parent Networks, and Curriculum Advisory Council

Finding 2: Equitable Access to a Full Continuum of Services

New and/or refined processes and systems have been put into place in the area of pre-referral and initial evaluation (IE) and are resulting in more equitable access to special education services.

Examples of these process and system improvement are:

1. Phase one implementation of Destination Access—de-centralizing specialized units to neighborhood schools.
2. Increase in the number of bilingual diagnosticians
3. Clarification of IE guidelines and standards
4. Redesign of the multi-tiered system of support resource (MTSS)
5. Institution of a process for review of all “does not qualify” (DNQ) determinations
6. Reorganization of Individual Evaluation (IE) staff

There is evidence that these improvement are having an impact on student access to special education including:

- Increase in overall special education enrollment rates from 7.0% in 2015-16 to 9.07% of the overall student population in 2018-19
- Decrease in DNQ (does not qualify) determination for English Language Learners from 29.52% in 2015-16 to 13.21% in 2017-18
- Decrease in DNQ (does not qualify) determination for Early Learners from 23.57% in 2015-16 to 15.43% in 2017-18

Finding 3: Staffing and Organizational Roles

Recommendations in finding 3 relate to the roles and assignment of three staffing groups: special education evaluators in the Individual Evaluation (IE) Department, special education teachers, and bilingual/special education leadership at the central level. Three conclusions regarding implementation in this area are as follows:

1. Diagnosticians were reassigned from a centralized facility to one or more campuses. While this move was supported and appreciated by teachers and principals engaged in the review process, it was not without challenges, and it not as widely supported by the IE staff members themselves.
2. ARD facilitation and case management duties still remain the sole responsibility of full time special education teachers, and this continues to be problematic.
3. The district hired a Director of Special Education and Bilingual/ESL Services to clarify and improve students who are dually identified for services in both the bilingual/ESL and special education settings. In addition, a small team of Bilingual/SPED specialists were hired to support schools with dually identified students. This leadership support and focus on dually identified students is widely seen as a needed improvement.

Finding 4: Systems of Support to Schools

Efforts are underway to improve the system of support to schools so that expertise, guidance, resources, and assistance are deployed in a more timely and effective manner. Notably, special education leadership has:

1. Reorganized school-based services into network teams so that a specific team of support staff is assigned to each network. (All principals interviewed mentioned the network support teams positively.)
2. Increased the number and type of professional development offerings.
3. Improved access to resources, models, and instructional supports through the online handbook.

However, interviewees identified barriers to accelerating improvements in professional development and staffing as follows:

- *Professional Development*—As there is not a system of required professional development in the district, building capacity in expected practices at scale across all classroom and schools is unlikely. Interviewees recommended a curriculum of required professional learning for both teachers and principals.
- *Staffing*—Teachers and principals recognize current district efforts toward improving clarity in program expectations and access to the resources needed to fulfill the expectations. The challenge in this area is “going to scale” with equitable supports across the district given current staffing levels. Four areas of staffing support needs shared by teachers and principals toward successfully sustaining improvements at scale over time include:
 - Reducing the student to teacher ratio in the inclusion setting
 - Hiring/training substitute teachers in specialized unit classrooms
 - Increasing access to itinerant teacher support
 - Providing additional language support for secondary dually identified students (English language learners receiving special education services)

Finding 5: Communication and Engagement

Customer service is critical to successful implementation of all other recommendations, and should continue to be an improvement focus for leadership. Three stakeholder engagement efforts geared toward the goal of improving communication, customer service, and engagement include:

1. Establishment of the Special Education Curriculum Advisory Council – to engage stakeholders (parents, teachers, principals, and central leaders) in special education decision-making.
2. Spotlight on Parent Education and Parent Network Meetings – monthly engagement sessions with parents of students who receive special education services
3. Campus Request for Assistance – an online help request system for campus support

These efforts were noted as positive moves toward improved communication and engagement and should be sustained. However, feedback from parents, principals, and teachers indicates that there remains a significant need for better communication, customer service, and stakeholder engagement in special education decision-making.

Conclusion

While there is much work ahead to meet the district’s goals and expectations for students receiving or in need of special education services, the district has made significant progress in a short period of time. As noted by one principal, *“There have been so many improvements. The special ed. department has really responded to the recommendations fully and more rapidly than expected.”*