



Office of the Deputy Superintendent

Academic Social Emotional Learning

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**Special Education  
Executive Summary  
October 6, 2016**

During the 2015-2016 school year, community engagements were held to collect feedback on our OUSD Special Education Department quality of services. That feedback was analyzed and became our Special Education Roadmap detailing a focus on six primary elements:

1. Improved Student Performance
2. General Education Collaboration
3. Safe Learning Environments
4. Data Systems
5. Staffing and Resources
6. Improved Compliance

This year, the Special Education Roadmap will be updated to reflect our progress to date and better depict how our Special Education Department is working in partnership with District Departments. Our partnerships will come to life through our collaboration on Superintendent Work Plan Sub-Goal 2c: *Support all schools in implementation of District's Equity Policy & programs, specifically as it relates to outcomes for African American and Latino students, English Language Learners, and Students with Special Needs.* The Work Plan Team is improving equity by examining our practices in: 1) Policies and Structures; 2) Programs for Equity; 3) Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Practices; and 4) Community Engagement.

**1. Policies and Structures**

*Data Processes and Systems:* We are working towards improved data systems to provide us relevant information about how we are supporting students with special needs. Our case managers have diligently changed to Special Education Information System (SEIS) to monitor progress on Individualized Education Programs. Although this is an area much improved, we are working on how SEIS communicates with other reporting data systems like our Student Information System (AERIES). Currently, we are 90% complete with SEIS and AERIES “talking” to each other. The last 10% involves a system fix that we are collaborating with Information Technology (IT) to successfully complete. We are scheduled to complete the integration process by November, 2016. This alignment has supported our learning for the next phase of our data systems communicating with each other. Over the next two academic years, we will be preparing for the CA State initiated transition to a State Data System. The learning from our internal attempt to align our data systems will inform how we approach transitioning to CDE’s expected merger of the CaseMIS (Special Education data) and CALPADS (all student data) systems.

*Compliance:* Annual Performance Report Measures for Oakland Unified School District were provided in February, 2016. The Annual Performance Report identifies targets met and not met on federal performance indicators. Oakland continues to fall short of targets in the areas of Graduation Rates, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Preschool Development, Disproportionality Disability, Timelines, Secondary Transitions, and Post-School outcomes. Alternately, the District met targets in the areas of Dropout Rates, Suspensions and Expulsions, Preschool LRE, Parent Involvement, and Overall Disproportionality. Particular gains were made in the area of on time completion of Annual and Triennial IEPs. Overdue documents were reduced from all-time highs of 1,116 overdue Annual IEPs and 478



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overdue Triennial IEPs to 46 overdue Annual IEPs and 26 overdue Triennial IEPs. To date, we successfully submitted a Comprehensive Verification Review per the CDE's Corrective Actions which included 71 student level corrective actions, 4 systemic Local Plan corrective actions, and 100 pages of systemic corrective actions.

The tenets under which we work are clear. Special education professionals in Oakland must assess each student suspected of having a disability using appropriate evaluation measures, provide each student with a disability free appropriate public education in his or her least restrictive environment, maintain current Individual Education Programs, ensure meaningful parent participation, and afford families their Procedural Safeguards under the United States Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act.

#### 2. Programs for Equity

*Disproportionality & Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):* Consistent with California Task Force on Special Education's recommendations to the State Board of Education, Oakland has put forth the tenet that in a comprehensive system of education, all children are general education students first.

Since 2011, OUSD has been identified as a "Significantly Disproportionate" school district. As a result of this inequity, 15% of all federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) funds are allocated to Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS). CEIS dollars are intended to be used to provide pre-referral intervention services in the form of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to reduce over identification of certain populations of students in any disability area.

Currently, Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS) funds are maintained by OUSD's Community Schools, Student Services (CSSS) Department. Oakland continues to identify as Significantly Disproportionate in the number of African American students it identifies as Emotionally Disabled. The District's numbers improved by merely ½ of 1% in the 2014-2015 school year. In order to provide a true remedy to this inequity, CSSS has contracted with an internationally known expert, Dr. Edward Fergus from New York University. As OUSD's Technical Assistant (TA) Dr. Fergus has begun to guide the CEIS Leadership Team through the four phase process provided from CDE. A team met for three full days in July to complete a Root Cause Analysis to determine systemic causes for over identification. The CEIS team will create a new plan this year for submission to CDE. Recent communication from the U.S. Department of Education indicates that a change to existing laws is expected. The rigor of calculating Significant Disproportionality is expected to increase, and the dollars are expected to be opened up to all students, including those who have disabilities.

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):* Students with disabilities in Oakland Unified School District are not meeting minimum academic standards set forth by the California Department of Education (CDE). From preschool to post-secondary programming, area of need are significant. OUSD's most recent Annual Performance Report (February 2016) indicates that preschool students with disabilities missed developmental targets in both social-emotional/behavioral and skills and knowledge areas by 10%-20%. At the other end of the age and grade continuum, just 46% of OUSD students with disabilities obtained a high school diploma. This is nearly 23% short of the minimum target graduation rate of 69.25%. We are currently working on a Performance Improvement Report for December 2016 submission to CDE.



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A likely contributor to the poor performance indicator scores from California Department of Education (CDE) is Oakland's long-standing practice of educating students with disabilities in alternate settings such as self-contained special day classes and non-public schools. Thus, *Inclusion* has become an integral part of the Special Education Roadmap. Widespread access to quality first instruction is a primary step toward building equitable access to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for all students.

In order to comply with the LRE provision of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), OUSD must increase the time its students with disabilities spend in general education settings by at least 10%.

*Equitably Distribute Special Education Programs:* As a result of an internal study of Special Education programs throughout the regions within Oakland Unified School District's boundaries, inequities were identified. Certain areas of the District hold an excessive number of special education classes and programs while other areas have held few. Programs that started out in early grades in one region and then continued in other regions for higher grades demonstrated a particular disservice to students and families who were unable to become and remain a part of a single school community. Examining program placement affords all students and families equitable access to the continuum of Special Education services in schools close to their homes without the need to shift to another region as a child grows older.

### 3. Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Practices

*Professional Learning and Development:* OUSD Special Education Department has developed a comprehensive plan to support our staff in all of our programs. We believe that supporting our Special Education staff is paramount to retaining them in the Special Education field. There is a monthly Special Education Professional Learning Community where teachers, paraprofessionals, and Instructional Support Specialists work together to learn improved strategies to support their students. This Professional Learning Community is led by our Special Education Team. In addition to the Professional Learning Community, a smaller convening is offered to our New Teachers. New Teachers are supported to learn specific strategies and best practices designed to meet their needs as new teachers entering the education field. In addition, New Teachers were given resources and artifacts that are relevant to their programs. The content from all of our professional learning series can be found on our website, [oaklandspecial.org](http://oaklandspecial.org). Additionally, we will be launching professional learning content on PDgo! our District's learning platform. We will continue these professional learning opportunities monthly and add additional professional learning opportunities for existing teachers who can benefit from additional support.

*Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs):* We will continue to work with school site ILTs so that the unique perspective our Special Education Educators bring to schools is valued. Special Education Educators can support school site ILTs to improve inclusive practices and strengthen their knowledge of how to implement Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).

### 4. Communication Quality

*Community Advisory Committee (CAC):* Feedback from families and parents participating in the CAC indicate the need to work collaboratively on fiscal transparency, quality of service, and developing local and state plans. We have the opportunity to involve the CAC in Department improvements and aim to include them in budget prioritization, improving our programs, and developing an updated Special Education Local Plan.



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*Reduce Complaints:* Improved service and quality of programs will support our efforts to reduce District and State complaints. Our responsiveness and taking quick action to resolve program issues for families and parents is paramount in reducing formal complaints.

*Principal Approval Rating:* Principals surveyed in Feb 2016 expressed their dissatisfaction with our Special Education Department services. Our approval rating was 6%. Our goal is to raise beyond a 50% approval rating by addressing the lack of systems and procedures central to providing schools and families a quality special education experience.

#### **Onward!**

We have had a positive start to the school year. We started classes with fewer teacher vacancies than in the past 2 years. Our central office staff was deployed to support the opening of school by setting up classrooms, subbing in classrooms as teachers were on-boarding, guide curriculum planning with new teachers, and meeting with school site principals to review programs and IEP compliance.

We have improved our support to teachers by offering training earlier in the year than in past years. 60 new teachers joined us for our first 4 week session to learn special education best practices in teaching, behavior management and writing quality IEPs. We also have weekly drop-in sessions for all Special Education Educators that provide the help they need to be successful with their students.

We are making necessary program improvements by tackling issues raised by schools and families. Please join us as we implement our Special Education Roadmap towards a more equitable Special Education Program!