

Proposed Special Services Department Structure

Executive Summary

This proposed Special Services structure is intended to create a more coherent, compliant, and sustainable districtwide system of support by addressing key gaps identified in the Gillaspie report, including inconsistent systems, weak SST and MTSS structures, limited front-end intervention, and lack of alignment between general education and special education. The structure supports the district's broader system improvement action plan by assigning clear ownership to high-need functional areas and building in the training, implementation, and support needed to move from planning to practice. Consistent with a One System approach, several functions within this structure also strengthen districtwide systems such as SST, MTSS, Tier 3 student support, behavior systems, mental health supports, and 504 processes, which may allow portions of this work to align with LCAP priorities related to access, early intervention, student engagement, and school climate.

Purpose

This proposed Special Services structure is designed to create a more coherent, compliant, and consistently implemented system for supporting students by clearly defining leadership, strengthening implementation, and aligning district systems across general education and special education.

This structure shifts the department from a reactive model, dependent on individual staff knowledge and site-based variability, to a system with defined roles, consistent expectations, and districtwide support structures. It establishes clear functional leadership across compliance, placements, behavior, mental health, specialized programs, 504 systems, and early childhood, while also building the implementation supports necessary to ensure consistency across sites.

The structure is organized in three layers:

- Department leadership
- Functional leadership
- Implementation and systems support

This structure would allow Special Services to:

- improve legal compliance and reporting accuracy
- ensure IEPs include data-based present levels, measurable goals, clearly defined services, and documented progress monitoring
- strengthen SST, MTSS, and referral systems prior to special education identification
- improve coordination and response for high-need students through Tier 3 systems
- strengthen consistency in behavior, mental health, and 504 systems across sites

- improve access to instruction and supports for students in general education and special education settings
- reduce reliance on crisis-driven problem-solving and informal systems
- provide ongoing training and implementation support aligned to district expectations

Several functions within this structure also support broader district systems, including SST, MTSS, Tier 3 student support, behavior systems, mental health services, and 504 processes. These areas support both general education and special education students and may align with LCAP priorities related to access, early intervention, student engagement, and school climate.

Summary of Department Structure:

Department Leadership

- Executive Director of Special Services

Functional Leadership

- Compliance, IEP Quality, and Data Systems
- NPS, Out-of-District, and Program Placement
- Behavior and Intensive Student Support
- ESN, Nursing, and K–12 Transition Continuum
- 504 Coordinator
- Coordinator of Mental Health
- ECE Leadership

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports

- 2 IEP Compliance and Case Management Coaches
- 2 Instruction and Access Coaches
- Full-time Special Education Substitute
- SEIS Technicians
- Data / Reporting Support Specialist

Department Leadership	
Executive Director of Special Services	Role Purpose Provides overall leadership, supervision, district

Department Leadership	
	<p>coordination, and strategic direction for Special Services, with a current-year focus on building a more coherent, compliant, and sustainable districtwide special education system.</p> <p>Core functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sets department direction and priorities ● supervises functional leadership roles and core department supports ● aligns Special Services with district priorities and legal obligations ● partners with Educational Services and district leadership ● oversees major staffing, fiscal, programmatic, and legal decisions ● supports board communication and superintendent-level planning ● leads districtwide system improvement across compliance, program implementation, and service delivery

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.	
<p>Compliance, IEP Quality, and Resolution Systems</p> <p>1.0 FTE Program Manager/Specialist</p> <p>Funding note: This role supports districtwide SST, MTSS, and early intervention systems that serve both general education and special education students, which may allow portions of this work to align with LCAP priorities related to access,</p>	<p>Role purpose</p> <p>To ensure that the district’s systems for special education compliance, IEP development, data reporting, and early resolution are legally compliant, aligned to student data, and implemented consistently across sites, while strengthening SST, MTSS-aligned referral pathways, and early problem-solving systems.</p>

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

intervention, school climate, and student support.

Core responsibilities

Compliance Monitoring and Data Systems

- monitor state compliance indicators, including overdue IEPs and timelines
- oversee reporting accuracy and support alignment between SEIS and CALPADS
- support compliance monitoring processes such as CIM
- identify sites and staff needing targeted support based on compliance and quality concerns
- monitors manifestation determination (MD) practices across sites to ensure legal compliance and consistency in decision-making

IEP Quality and Case Review

- ensure IEPs include data-based present levels, measurable annual goals, clearly defined services, and documented progress monitoring
- identify patterns in IEP quality concerns that require additional training, support, or correction

Early Resolution and Complaint Response

- respond to parent concerns and oversee a district Tier 1 ADR / early resolution process
- identify patterns in concerns, complaints, and service breakdowns to inform system improvement and reduce escalation

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

- support complaint response and legal preparation when formal disputes arise
- SST, MTSS, and Referral Systems**
- support the development and consistent implementation of SST, MTSS, and referral pathways across sites prior to special education referral
 - identify breakdowns in intervention, referral, and response systems across sites
 - support a more coherent district approach to early problem-solving, service access, and escalation pathways

NPS, Out-of-District, and Program Placement
1.0 FTE Program Manager/Specialist

- Role purpose**
- To serve as the district point person for NPS, out-of-district placements, and complex placement decisions in order to improve fit, reduce delay, strengthen oversight, and support return-to-district planning when appropriate.
- Core responsibilities**
- serve as SRCS point person for all NPS placements
 - build relationships with NPS and outside programs
 - maintain knowledge of programs, populations, and placement fit
 - attend all NPS meetings
 - support IEP teams with appropriate placement planning
 - reduce lag time in placement and return

<p>Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.</p>	
	<p>decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● monitor when students may be appropriate for return to district programs ● help identify district continuum gaps based on placement trends ● coordinate fee for service placements in SRCS from other districts. <p>Problems this role helps solve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● inconsistent NPS representation ● delayed placements ● weak placement match ● students remaining out longer than needed ● lack of long-term district oversight of specialized placements
<p>Behavior and Intensive Student Support 1.0 FTE Program Manager / Specialist Funding Note: This role supports site-based Tier 3 systems, behavioral intervention, and coordinated student support structures that serve both general education and special education students, which may allow portions of this work to align with LCAP priorities related to school climate, student engagement, and early intervention. Additional LCAP Consideration: Because behaviorist and occupational therapy services are incorporated into tiered systems of support that serve both general education and special education students, portions of this staffing may be eligible for alignment with LCAP priorities related to school climate, access, and</p>	<p>Role purpose To establish consistent Tier 3 systems and strengthen behavioral and intensive student support across sites by developing structured, site-based problem-solving processes, coordinating behaviorist and OT services within tiered systems, and improving the district’s response to students with the highest levels of behavioral, safety, sensory, mental health, or school-functioning need.</p> <p>Core responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tier 3 Systems and Site-Based Problem-Solving ● establish and support site-level Tier 3 student support meetings across all sites ● define expectations, structure, and

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early intervention.

protocols for Tier 3 meetings

- ensure consistent identification, tracking, and monitoring of high-need students
- support sites in coordinating interventions, responsibilities, and follow-through
- attend Tier 3 meetings as needed to support consistency and problem-solving

Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS Alignment)

- develop and implement consistent Tier 3 systems aligned with district MTSS structures
- ensure Tier 3 systems are connected to SST and Tier 2 supports
- identify breakdowns between Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports across sites
- support earlier identification and intervention for students before escalation

Behaviorist and OT Systems

- establish clear district pathways for behaviorist and OT involvement within tiered systems
- support consistent use of behaviorist and OT services across sites
- align behavior and sensory supports with Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 intervention systems
- identify gaps in service delivery and access across sites

Discipline, MDR, and Legal Compliance

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

- attend and support all manifestation determinations
- train staff on MDR processes and legal requirements
- support discipline decision-making for students with disabilities
- attend expulsion hearings when needed
- ensure discipline practices are aligned with legal requirements

Cross-Role Coordination and System

Improvement

- collaborate with school psychologists, counselors, SSAs, administrators, and special education staff
- identify patterns in student need, site challenges, and system breakdowns
- develop training, guidance, and tools to improve consistency across sites
- ensure high-need students are discussed proactively, not only in crisis

ESN, Nursing, and K–12 Transition Continuum
1.0 FTE Program Manager

Role purpose

To provide oversight and continuity for students with extensive support needs across grade spans, including transition-age students and students whose programming requires close coordination with nursing or health-related supports.

Core responsibilities

- oversee ESN programming across grade spans
- support continuity from elementary

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

through transition

- coordinate with nursing and health-related staff
- support transition planning for students with extensive needs

problem-solve around specialized

- classroom/program issues
- monitor student/program continuity across school levels
- Problems this role helps solve
- fragmented ESN systems
- weak continuity across grade spans
- transition gaps
- inconsistent coordination between educational and health-related supports

504 Coordinator

1.0FTE School Psychologist

Funding Note: This role supports districtwide 504 systems, MTSS-aligned intervention, and access to instruction for general education students, which aligns with LCAP priorities related to access, early intervention, and student support.

Role purpose

To establish districtwide consistency in 504 evaluation, eligibility, accommodations, and case management as part of the district's general education access and support system, while strengthening alignment with MTSS, discipline practices, and student support structures.

Core responsibilities

504 Systems and Case Management

- serve as the district 504 coordinator
- establish districtwide 504 evaluation procedures for school psychologists
- establish and train counselors in 504 case management practices
- develop and implement clear district

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

guidelines for 504 documentation and timelines

- support schools with complex 504 questions and cases
- monitor implementation patterns and identify site needs

Training and Implementation

- train counselors, psychologists, and administrators in 504 processes, accommodations, and case management
- provide training on appropriate and implementable accommodations in general education settings
- support alignment between 504 systems and MTSS intervention practices

MTSS and General Education Access

- support development and implementation of Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions prior to referral
- ensure 504 systems are used as part of general education access, not as a default pathway when MTSS supports are insufficient
- help identify gaps in general education support that lead to unnecessary 504 plans

Discipline and Manifestation Determination

(MD) Support

- provide training to school psychologists, administrators, and site teams on manifestation determination protocols in

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coordination with Behavior and Compliance roles

- support understanding of how disability, access, and accommodations intersect with discipline decisions
- help ensure consistent application of MD-related considerations across sites

Problems this role helps solve

- inconsistent 504 processes across sites
- confusion between IEP and 504 systems
- variable accommodation quality and implementation
- lack of clarity for counselors, psychs, and administrators
- overreliance on 504s when MTSS supports are not clearly defined
- inconsistent understanding of disability and access in discipline decisions

Early Childhood Education

ECE Leadership: .5 Program Manager / .5 Principal

Role purpose

To provide coordinated leadership for early childhood special education programming while balancing program needs and site-based leadership demands.

Core responsibilities

- oversee ECE special education programming
- support early childhood staff and systems
- monitor compliance and service delivery
- support transitions into TK/K systems
- align ECE with districtwide procedures

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

and expectations

Problems this role helps solve

- ECE being disconnected from districtwide systems
- weak transition from preschool into K–12 systems
- split leadership without clear ownership

Coordinator of Mental Health
1.0 FTE Certificated Admin

Role purpose

To oversee and strengthen districtwide tiered mental health programming by coordinating school-based mental health supports, supervising mental health staff, and integrating district and community-based services in support of students, families, and staff.

Core responsibilities

- oversees district mental health programming and tiered systems of support across sites
- supervises and coordinates school-based therapists and school psychologists
- supports district and site administrators in the development, implementation, and monitoring of mental health services, partnerships, and stigma-reduction efforts
- coordinates multidisciplinary and ancillary mental health supports across the district
- facilitates collaboration with community agencies and service partners to improve access, coordination, and communication

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

- develops and provides professional development for staff, leadership, and stakeholder groups
- works across departments to support best practices and innovative mental health supports for students and staff
- supports grant access, writing, implementation, and monitoring related to student wellness
- prepares reports, helps develop and manage budgets, and monitors expenditures related to mental health programming
- maintains communication and partnerships with district staff, agencies, and regional or state partners
- supports continuous improvement of district mental health systems through planning, collaboration, and data-informed practices

Problems this role helps solve

- fragmented mental health supports across sites
- inconsistent coordination between therapists, psychs, site teams, and outside agencies
- lack of coherence in district mental health programming
- weak integration of school-based and community-based mental health supports

Functional Leadership Roles: These roles provide focused oversight in high-need, high-risk, or high-impact areas of the department.

- insufficient leadership for mental health systems, partnerships, and staff support
- uneven access to training, coordination, and implementation support in mental health services

Why this role matters

This role provides the leadership bridge between:

- district mental health priorities and tiered systems of support
- the day-to-day work of school-based therapists, psychologists, administrators, and partner agencies

Without this role, mental health systems are more likely to remain fragmented, site-dependent, and difficult to coordinate effectively across the district.

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

IEP Compliance and Case Management Coaches (2)
2.0 FTE Teacher

Role purpose

To support special education teachers, especially interns, first-year teachers, and teachers new to the district, in developing strong, compliant, and meaningful IEPs and more consistent case management practices.

Core responsibilities

- support case managers with IEP

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

development, documentation, and case management systems

- support compliant and meaningful present levels, goals, services, and progress monitoring
- provide support with referral, evaluation, eligibility, annual review, and timeline-related processes
- provide SEIS training and ongoing documentation support
- support teachers in organizing and managing caseload responsibilities
- attend IEP meetings for interns, first-year teachers, and teachers new to the district based on established support timelines
- serve as the LEA representative, when designated, for Tier 1 IEP meetings for the intern and new teachers they are coaching
- use a structured gradual-release model to build teacher readiness for independent IEP facilitation
- use the district's IEP Facilitation Readiness Matrix to guide support and readiness
- provide pre-meeting preparation and post-meeting debriefs as needed
- collaborate with program managers, instructional coaches, administrators, and related staff as appropriate

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- refer complex compliance, placement, or programmatic concerns to Program Managers

Elementary IEP Systems and Case

Management Coach

Additional area of emphasis

- supports elementary teachers with IEP development and case management in elementary settings
- attends all IEP meetings for interns and first-year elementary special education teachers, and for teachers new to the district during their first semester
- may serve as an induction mentor for eligible teachers

Secondary IEP Systems, Case Management, and Transition Coach

Additional area of emphasis

- supports secondary teachers with IEP development, transition planning, and case management in middle and high school settings
- supports transition assessments, ITP development, course of study, diploma pathway documentation, and graduation-related compliance
- attends all IEP meetings for interns and first-year secondary special education teachers
- may serve as an induction mentor for

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

eligible teachers

Problems these roles help solve

- inconsistent IEP quality
- weak case management systems
- compliance drift among newer staff
- lack of structured support for interns and first-year teachers
- uneven readiness for independent IEP facilitation
- overreliance on informal peer support rather than district systems

These roles provide the implementation bridge between:

- district expectations for compliant and meaningful IEPs
- the day-to-day work of case managers across sites

Without these roles, IEP quality and case management support remain too dependent on informal mentorship, site variability, and reactive troubleshooting.

Instruction and Access Coaches (2)
2.0 FTE Teacher

Role purpose

To support special education teachers in strengthening classroom instruction, curriculum coherence, and student access, particularly in Small Group Instruction (SGI) settings, so that students with disabilities have more consistent access to grade-level standards, appropriate supports, and stronger instructional systems.

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

Core responsibilities

- support special education teachers with instructional planning, differentiation, scaffolding, and classroom practices
- support alignment among IEP goals, accommodations, grade-level standards, and daily instruction
- provide modeling, consultation, and planning support related to SGI instruction
- support development of instructional materials aligned to student needs and grade-level expectations
- collaborate with district leadership and education specialists to identify, pilot, and recommend curriculum resources for SGI classes
- help develop shared instructional guidance, pacing considerations, and exemplar lessons for SGI settings
- support implementation of district-adopted or recommended SGI instructional materials
- collaborate with IEP Systems and Case Management Coaches to align instruction with IEP documentation and supports
- collaborate with site administrators, counselors, and other staff as appropriate
- may serve as induction mentors for

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

eligible teachers

Elementary Instruction and Access Coach

Additional area of emphasis

- supports elementary education specialists, especially interns and first-year teachers, with classroom instruction and curriculum coherence in elementary SGI settings
- supports small-group instruction, targeted supports, and access to grade-level curriculum in elementary classrooms
- coordinates with the Aide Supervisor regarding instructional expectations and classroom roles for paraprofessionals
- supports development and implementation of elementary SGI lesson structures and instructional materials

Secondary Instruction and Access Coach

Additional area of emphasis

- supports secondary education specialists, interns, and first-year teachers with instructional access, curriculum coherence, and classroom practices in middle and high school SGI settings
- supports development of consistent, rigorous instructional materials appropriate for secondary learners
- supports instructional routines that address engagement, executive functioning, and credit-bearing expectations where applicable

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

- helps develop shared guidance for SGI instructional expectations across middle and high school sites

Problems these roles help solve

- inconsistent instructional expectations across SGI settings
- weak alignment between IEPs, accommodations, and daily instruction
- uneven curriculum access for students with disabilities
- lack of shared materials or guidance for SGI classes
- site-to-site variation in instructional practice
- limited structured support for newer teachers in specialized instructional settings

These roles provide the implementation bridge between:

- district expectations for access, instruction, and inclusion
- the day-to-day classroom and program practices experienced by students

Without these roles, instructional quality and student access remain too dependent on individual teacher experience, site-based improvisation, and uneven curriculum support.

Full-Time Special Education Substitute

Role purpose

To provide consistent substitute coverage for

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

special education classrooms and programs in order to reduce disruption to student services, protect program continuity, and ensure that district special education leadership staff are not pulled away from their primary responsibilities to cover classrooms.

Core responsibilities

- serves as the district’s dedicated full-time substitute for special education classrooms and programs as needed
- provides substitute coverage across special education settings to maintain continuity of services for students
- reduces the need to pull Program Managers or other district support staff into classroom coverage
- when not assigned as a substitute, provides temporary support in classrooms or programs where additional support is needed
- when not needed at school sites, supports district office backlog tasks such as filing and other department support work as assigned
- helps the department respond more flexibly to staffing disruptions without derailing districtwide meetings, systems work, and site support

Problems this role helps solve

- Program Managers being pulled into

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

subbing

- district meetings and support structures being disrupted by staffing shortages
- loss of continuity in program oversight and leadership when central office staff are redirected to classroom coverage
- limited flexibility when sites need short-term additional support
- backlog of clerical and filing tasks when site needs are low

This role helps protect the department’s ability to function as intended by ensuring that urgent staffing needs do not regularly pull district support staff away from compliance, program oversight, coaching, and systems work. It provides both immediate site support and operational flexibility, while preserving the capacity of Program Managers and other leadership staff to carry out their actual roles.

**Supervisor of Special Education Aides
1.0 FTE Classified/Management**

Instructional aides supported through this role may provide services in general education settings, including classroom support, accommodations, and intervention, which may allow portions of this work to align with LCAP priorities related to access, early intervention, and student support.

Role purpose

To establish and oversee a districtwide system for the supervision, training, and support of special education aides to improve consistency, strengthen staff capacity, reduce reliance on outside agencies, and improve recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Core responsibilities

Supervision and Support Systems

- serve as the primary supervisor for district special education aides across programs
- conduct regular site visits and check-ins with aides to provide ongoing support
- establish clear expectations for aide roles and responsibilities across settings

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

- provide coaching and feedback to improve consistency and effectiveness of support

Training and Professional Development

- develop and coordinate ongoing training programs for all aide classifications, including:
 - instructional aides (academic support, accommodations, classroom practices)
 - behavior aides (behavior support strategies, de-escalation, implementation of plans)
 - ESN aides (daily care routines, student support, consistency of practice)
 - health aides (in coordination with district nurses for medical training)
 - coordinate with district nurses to provide medical training, including procedures such as G-tube support and other health-related needs
 - ensure training is ongoing, structured, and aligned with district expectations

Systems and Program Coordination

- reduce reliance on NPAs by building internal capacity for aide training and supervision
- identify gaps in aide staffing, training, and support across sites
- support consistent implementation of aide roles across programs and classrooms
- collaborate with program managers, site administrators, and instructional staff to align aide support with student needs

Recruitment and Retention

- support recruitment efforts by improving onboarding, training, and support structures
- improve retention by providing consistent supervision, feedback, and professional growth opportunities
- address feedback from aides related to lack of support, training, and guidance

General Education Support (Instructional Aides)

- support the use of instructional aides in

Core Department Infrastructure and Implementation Supports: These positions are critical because they help translate department expectations into day-to-day practice.

general education settings to provide accommodations, academic support, and access to instruction

- align instructional aide support with MTSS and classroom intervention systems

Aide Allocation and Decision-Making Systems

- participate in the review and decision-making process for assigning aides to students and programs
- support the development and implementation of clear district criteria for aide assignment based on student need, IEP requirements, and program design
- ensure aide requests are reviewed using consistent, data-based decision-making processes across sites
- help identify patterns of over-assignment, under-assignment, or inconsistent use of aides across programs
- collaborate with program managers and site administrators to ensure aide support is aligned to student need and promotes independence when appropriate
- provide an additional layer of review to ensure consistency and accountability in aide allocation decisions

Problems this role helps solve

- lack of supervision and support for special education aides
- inconsistent aide practices across sites and programs
- limited or inconsistent training for aides
- heavy reliance on NPAs for behavioral and support services
- difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified aides
- lack of alignment between aide support and instructional or behavioral expectations
- limited use of instructional aides to support general education classrooms

This role establishes a districtwide system for

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training, supervising, and supporting aides—an area that is currently fragmented and inconsistent. By creating structured training, clear expectations, and ongoing supervision, the district can improve the quality and consistency of student support, reduce reliance on outside agencies, and build a more stable and skilled workforce. This role also strengthens consistency and accountability in aide assignment decisions, ensuring that support is based on student need and data rather than site-based variability.

SEIS Technicians

Data / Reporting Support Specialist