

Board Study Session

Sonoma Valley USD Review

Maureen O'Leary Burness, October 7, 2023

- With many heartfelt thanks to the great number of participants, including parents, in interviews and visitations who contributed their input. The District is fortunate to have so many dedicated people and committed families!

Agenda

Topics

- Background
- California Ed Code and Federal IDEA
- History/ Data
- 2023 Updates
- Strengths and Issues
- Recommendations and Discussion

The What and the How

Quantitative AND Qualitative

- A belief that What you do is important and How you do it is critical
- Individually and Systemically
- Hence, data points and implementation issues
- Based on a philosophy that all Students are general education students first and that special education is the support to the general education system
- Hence, requiring a strong general education system first in order to address issues in special education

The What

the Substance of the work:

- Two major sets of requirements define the responsibilities for Education and Special Education in California public schools:
 - California Education Code
 - Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Both have Laws, Regulations and Guidance

And the How

the Tone that sets the basis for the culture of an organization

- Policies
- Practices
- Procedures

The required Continuum

From “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE) to Most

- General education must always be the first consideration in the continuum of options
- Add interventions and supports within general education, e.g. ELD for ELLs and UDL strategies (Universal Design for Learning) as first, best instruction
- Then, if identified with a qualifying disability, Special Education services are provided in an individualized manner, according to need, maintaining a focus on ensuring appropriate access to general education curriculum and peers
- % of the day ranges from 100% in a general education setting to 100% in a special education setting and/or with special education services
- Used to be called DIS, and RSP to SDC to NPS to Home-and-Hospital

Special Education Services

from within general education classes to pull-out

- “Specially-designed” academic instruction (SAI)
- Speech and language services
- Counseling, Social Work, Behavioral supports
- Transition services, vocational education
- Low Incidence services: Braille, ASL instruction, mobility, audiology, interpreters
- Adapted PE
- OT and PT
- Nursing services

Monitoring, Compliance and Accountability

- In California, every district's data is available at CDE website, for both all education and special education (caschooldashboard.org)...but CDE just announced yet another change in how they will collect and report information for SWDs
- Based on national requirements, every district is also monitored for compliance and accountability related specifically to Special Education, resulting in an annual report for each District as to its data
- Both have the intention to focus on helping districts reach positive outcomes for students

Dashboard Results

2018 (from district and CDE website)

- “Yellow” for Chronic Absenteeism
- “Orange” for 3 areas: College/Career, ELA and Math
- “Green” for 2 areas: Suspension and Graduation Rates
- “Standards met” for Basics, Implementation of Academic Standards, Parent and Family Engagement, Local Climate Survey, and Access to a Broad Course of Study

State review

Historic issue

- LRE, the Least Restrictive Environment is monitored for every Student, with a state expectation that most students “should” have access to general education at least 80% of their day. The number of students who didn’t meet this criteria in SVUSD was considered too high, leading to a plan to provide for more inclusion and less pullout.
- But, the I in IEP is for “Individualized” and one size doesn’t fit all.
- And the result has been more Inclusion, but fewer services along the continuum provided

The pandemic disrupted
everything...

- Note the “very high” and “very low” in results from the 2022 report:

Student Group Report for 2022

[Pivot Data by StudentGroups](#)

Student Group	English Learner Progress	Chronic Absenteeism Rate	Suspension Rate	Graduation Rate	English Language Arts	Mathematics
All Students	Medium	Very High	High	High	Low	Low
English Learners	Medium	Very High	High	High	Very Low	Very Low
Foster Youth	N/A	No Performance Level	Very High	No Performance Level	No Performance Level	No Performance Level
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	N/A	Very High	High	High	Low	Very Low
Students with Disabilities	N/A	Very High	Very High	Medium	Very Low	Very Low
Asian	N/A	No Performance Level	Low	No Performance Level	No Performance Level	No Performance Level
Hispanic	N/A	Very High	High	High	Low	Very Low
White	N/A	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	Low
Two or More Races	N/A	Very High	Low	No Performance Level	No Performance Level	No Performance Level

Enrollment

by Ethnicity

- Totals: 3,253
 - African American: 0.4% = 13
 - American Indian: 0.4% = 13
 - Asian 1.2% = 39
 - Filipino 0.5% = 16
 - Hispanic or Latino: 63.6% = 2,069
 - Pacific Islander: 0.2% = 6
 - White: 31.9% = 1,038
 - Two or more: 1.7% = 55
 - Not reported: 0.3% = 10

Special Education Enrollment

by Disability and Ethnicity:

- Intellectual Disability: 14 Hispanic
- Speech/Language Impairment: 60 Hispanic, 55 White
- Emotional Disturbance: “under 11” in Hispanic, White, and Multi
- Other Health Impaired: 22 Hispanic, 24 White
- Specific Learning Disability: 149 Hispanic, 199 White
- Autistic-like: 24 Hispanic, 30 White
- Total reported to CDE: 639 at last pupil count

English Learners

Total

- 911, of whom 898 are Spanish-speakers
- 13 report as speaking Italian, Vietnamese, Khmer, “Other”, Russian, Japanese, Filipino, or Thai
- 119 ELLs have IEPs and so have more complex intervention needs, both ELD and Special Education, 20 of whom are at Flowery in immersion program

Proficiency levels:

In ELA and Math

- For all Students,
- 36.79% met or exceeded the standard for ELA and
- 19.9% met or exceeded the standard in Math
- Other categories were “Standard nearly met” or “not met”

Dashboard Results

2022 - post-Pandemic

- Chronic Absenteeism: Very High
- Suspension rate: High
- English Learner Progress: Medium
- Graduation rate: High
- English Language Arts: Low
- Mathematics: Low
- Standard Met for Basics, Implementation of Academic Standards, Parent and Family Engagement, Local Climate Survey, and Access to a Broad Course of Study

Special Education/ Data

from District LCAP for 23/24

- Parents of SWDs reported:
- Areas of Strength: 100% agree that Students are properly assessed, that their Student receives academic support in ELD, that they find Interpreters helpful and receive information in Spanish, they were provided meaningful participation in the IEP, and behavioral goals and needs are addressed
- 96% agree that all goals and objectives are reviewed in English and Spanish at IEP meetings
- 90% agree that the IEP process is helpful, and that they represented with their rights AND

- Areas of growth from LCAP:
 - Outcomes for SWDs on state and local assessments
 - Increase graduation rates
 - The “Youth Truth Student Survey” led to “Listening Responsive Safety Circles” at middle and high schools

Additional data points

Specific to Special Education

- 16% of the Student population is identified as a SWD (was 16.5% in 2018/19; 17.5% in 19/20, and 18.5% in 20/21 per CDE)
- SVUSD has the highest number of Students in NPS in the County (at a cost of \$1,499,058 last year and with \$2,000,000 budgeted for 23/24, plus Transportation)
- ELA scores are high for Whites, low for many, and very low for ELLs and SWDs
- Math scores are low for Whites, and very low for every other group
- New dashboard results are to be posted this month
- There is a Statewide System of Support focus on data, and the new Superintendent has already begun a process to work with that system

Annual Compliance Findings

based on state-level expectations in Special Education

- The District is recognized as being:
 - disproportionate in “Hispanic discipline”, i.e, suspensions
 - disproportionate in Hispanic SLI
 - late for initial assessments and IEPs
- “Significant disproportionality” is denoted when a district is disproportionate in the same area for 3 years in a row.

MTSS: Multi-Tiered System of Supports

for Academics, Behavior and Socio-emotional learning

- Tier 1: Universal
- Tier 2: Targeted
- Tier 3: Intensive
- Often shown as a Triangle or a Pyramid
- Generally 85/10/5 percent in Tiers 1/2/3

What's going well:

District-wide

- Cohesion among many strong staff members
- the Walk to Read program
- the COST referral system as prelude to the SST process
- PBIS and SWIS
- Wellness Centers at some sites, the Wellness Team
- Sites have additional resource people in many areas: bilingual, behavioral, academic intervention teachers; IAs; most sites feel there's good collaboration at their site
- Is an adopted ELA curriculum that includes interventions, the Wonders program
- Efforts to move to a MTSS model

What's Going Well

Continued

- There are strong PD offerings:
 - The Facilitated IEP training
 - Restorative Practices
 - IEP Compliance
 - Various special focus areas
 - PBIS and SWIS

What's Going Well

Continued

- Community wide support, the Sonoma Foundation
- Some grants, e.g., for a bilingual counselor
- 5 different preschool programs, with some unique services e.g. Speech only, but also an ESN class for those transitioning as 3 year-olds
- Having an interpreter available
- Crisis Response Team

From Interviews

Parents

- Positive: loves teacher, services and class; 1:1s helpful; ABA training helpful; pleased/comfortable to know we can provide input; son's program is going well, supported; Communication from Teacher, IA and Principals are all "great"
- Concerns: aggressive behavior of other students; would like more services than she gets; a wish to attend and observe so as to help at home; concern over apparent lack of planning for move of ESN classes; staff need more training; (ESN) students need more inclusion; a need for all teachers and staff to not "have the view of our children as a burden"; feel we've had to fight to get services; Communication in general; need contact info; services at beginning of year should start sooner; GenEd teachers need a copy of the whole IEP; a need for more range of services in district

Site strengths

Elementary

- Walk to Read program with progress monitoring
- COST team as pre-referral to SST
- Having academic Intervention teachers
- Having various additional supports, e.g, bilingual IAs
- PBIS with SWIS
- Able to offer an immersion program
- Strong, passionate administrators

Site issues

Elementary schools

- Attendance is an issue
- There is not a consistent special education curriculum
- Some PD has been offered at different times, so some use Wilson, some use Orton-Gillingham, some use Read 180, or no longer do. End result is no consistency

Site strengths

Secondary

- Have a good plan, annually developed for planning all IEPs, which ensures proper attendance and timeliness
- Ed Specialists keep their students assigned through Middle and High Schools for continuity
- Use a roving sub to allow for IEPs during the day
- Strong, passionate site administrators
- Students have a voice and are comfortable sharing
- Have check-in/check-out and COST

Site Strengths

Continued

- Work with Youth and Family Services
- Teachers/staff appreciate admin support
- Ed Specialists have a prep and a period for planning, meetings, etc.
- Relationships with students is positive, supportive; have good acceptance of our Students
- Supposed to be getting Parent Square to improve communication with parents
- Have a “0” period now, allowing for more options for students at MS, as well as Office Hours and Dragon Time at HS

Site Issues

Secondary

- Attendance is an issue
- No Ed Specialist, IA, or psychologist at the Continuation High School
- Online services less effective
- Have “a high number of 504s” at the High School
- The different schools have different models for schedules and services, not consistent; need true intervention materials
- Special education is seen as a separate place, not a support to general education
- The number of Ds and Fs; the graduation rate is high but CAASP scores don't reflect that
- Need a better process at the HS for scheduling IEP meetings to be onetime and with the right people in attendance

Site issues

Secondary

- There are only 2 IAs for the 3 grade levels at the Middle School
- When Teacher updates of class work and assignments isn't posted in Google classroom, it makes coordination with the core more difficult
- Push in can only work when there is time for collaboration; no common time for collab
- Students still need direct, guided instruction, not just Study Skills; some are still non-readers; 30 minute goals are inadequate
- A new "Alternative Pathway" to the diploma has been instituted statewide and sites need support on how to help implement this
- Growing mental health issues (to the level of 5150s)/suicide attempts; ERMHS offered, but at a standard 30 minutes/ month

District level

Strengths

- Much improvement in Compliance
- Communication with Transportation has improved
- Systemwide adoption of elementary ELA program
- The Wellness program; a Mentor Center
- Has developed multiple support roles: Academic teachers, counselors, TOSAs, POSAs, Behavior Supports, Parent Liaisons
- There is a SART process
- A renewed focus on data and effective use of it

District level

Strengths

- PD plans are developed annually
- PD has included ProACT for Behavior Techs
- October 8th plan includes training on “Unique” for students with ESN
- PECS has been provided, another example that there has been recognition of specific training needs
- Compliance trainings have been thorough and consistent
- There is a ‘Special Education Corner 23/24’ with posted resources

District level

Strengths

- There is a Mentoring Program district-wide
- Now, a strong, cohesive administrative team

District level

Issues/Concerns

- Turnover of staff at all levels
- Attendance
- Little capacity for Interventions at Tier 2 and for ELLs, resulting in too many referrals to COST and SSTs, then over-identification in Special Education
- The Learning Center model was never fully implemented
- Inadequate number of mid-level special ed services:
 - No mild/moderate SDCs
 - No specific classes for Autism or Socio-emotional/behavioral needs

District level

Continued

- Short-term counseling offered with no next step referral options
- No consistency
- A tendency to provide 1:1 IAs vs earlier interventions
- Newcomers need more support
- Student population has many students who have experienced trauma and/or high poverty
- There are many needs for a variety of PD, and contract is a barrier to providing all that is needed, e.g., intervention strategies, effective practices to support inclusion

District wide

Continued

- The consistent message that sites need “more”, more staff, more communication, more support, more BCBA, a plan to address loss/absence/departures
- Bullying was reported as an issue at all schools, and “the bullied are punished for fighting back”
- A culture that students with IEPs are “Special ed kids” and not “ours”
- Training in Special Education hasn’t been consistent, planned like in gen ed
- Post-training requires follow-up and hasn’t been consistent
- Staff is unaware of resources that do exist

Partnerships/Community

Within the County and In District

- SCOE offers multiple supports, trainings
- the SELPA offers multiple resources, supports and training, ADR, and can be individualized as needed
- the Community has been a strong, passionate support
- Community Foundation Sonoma
- Mentoring program

Recommendations

Start with General Education

- Fully develop and implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for the delivery of all services; Include adopted curriculum with research-based instructional and intervention strategies, (UDL), behavioral supports (PBIS), and socio-emotional supports (SEL), with progress monitoring and time for collaboration and planning
- Provide training and coaching to implement effective teaching of first instruction and interventions
- Communicate to staff and the community a well-developed articulation of the standards and processes expected to provide that implementation
- Ensure adequate staffing and subs to ensure the range of identified needed services

Recommendations

Continued

- Articulate clearly the roles of all levels of school supports from the Board and District Office to the range of various providers of instruction and supports
- Provide a positive, cohesive, and supportive environment for staff with celebrations of all that is positive and thanks, kudos, acknowledgements, to improve morale and ensure a place with consistent expectations where people want to work
- Plan for and provide clear, positive communications to staff and the community, in both English and Spanish, and in multiple modalities, i.e., not just electronic, to ensure access to a range of parents, and individualized when necessary, including with parent education/training opportunities
- Support a culture where “all kids are our kids”; We are One District

Recommendations

Continued

- Support effective COST and SST teams at the pre-referral level, using data-informed decision processes in a regular progress monitoring plan
- Ensure written policies and procedures are in place to support implementation and consistency across the different sites with their different populations; and ensure communication of the processes so all are on the same page
- Continue or develop consistent response plans when progress is not as expected, e.g. when secondary students get Ds or Fs
- Provide training, coaching and time for collaboration to support the implementation, especially for “Onboarding” all new staff
- OTs offered to train teachers, even make videos of how to address issues
- Differentiate the Professional Development offerings based on different needs of varied staff
- Ensure that the supports of the SELPA, e.g., PD and consultative support are utilized as needed

Recommendations

Continued

- Ensure regularly scheduled meetings are held for all different classifications: District Leadership, Principals, Teachers, Education Specialists, School Psychologists, Behavior Supports, Speech and Language providers, EL and other Support Providers, Parents, Community, allowing for planning and collaboration
- Differentiate the meetings and Professional Development to provide specific needed supports to their work
- Recognize that staffing for Special Education is at crisis level across the state and needs to be proactively supported with early advertising and outreach, then supported at date of hire and beyond; ex: increase hours for IAs, provide training/support; recognize that housing in Sonoma makes living here out of reach for many; offer a stipend to a great GE teacher to get the SE credential
- Review the contract language related to time for PD and other activities outside the classroom

Recommendations

Continued

- Ensure a true continuum of services from general education with great instructional practices and interventions through supports offered in class and in separate settings, teaching STUDENTS vs teaching the curriculum
- Provide training for co-teaching, especially at secondary levels
- Provide “Special Ed 101” for gen ed teachers on classroom modifications and interventions, what’s appropriate for a referral to COST or SST, to how to use data to inform recommendations and decisions
- Develop more opportunities in district to serve students with greater needs than can be served in general education settings, e.g., enhanced Learning Centers (as envisioned); planned, coordinated pullout for specific interventions; counseling-enriched classes for socio-emotional and behavioral supports; supports for students with Autism; recognizing the need to ensure LRE is considered
- Provide in-district alternatives to expensive NPS placements out of the Students’ community

Recommendations

Continued

- Complete an analysis of required services across the district - and staff accordingly, with clear role definitions that are communicated to all
- For school psychologists and counselors especially, look at site responsibilities and requirements per site to plan for assignments, e.g a preschool assessment team, a bilingual assessment team, number of students on site, number of Special Education programs on sites, numbers of BIPs at sites, SCIA assessments
- To address leaves and absences, develop a plan to address the need that is equitable
- Ensure opportunities for collaboration across general education and special education, as well as across sites and between the district and the various sites and personnel

Recommendations

Continued

- Continue “Youth Truth” and ensure opportunities for Student Voice
- Provide opportunities for Parent Voice, e.g. Listening Sessions as well as Information-sharing opportunities, in both languages
- Review the District’s Mission and Vision statements and ensure they reflect the values and aspirations that support the community of learners
- Ensure that training and communication are culturally relevant and include specific information for differences for ELLs and SWDs

Recommendations

Continued

- Instead of “Blow it all up and start over. Seriously rethink everything”, which was one of the suggestions, go slow to go fast:
 - Create a Special Education Rethink committee to address a full, complete plan, to include the curricular choices preK-12, staff development needs and a plan to provide it, plans for PLCs, and effective systemic delivery systems to ensure a well-articulated full continuum and range of services for all students with IEPs, from preschool through transition, as a support to general education.
 - “We need a vision that we all have the same purpose, that we are here to serve all students. We need to be all one district where all staff understand that all students are general education students first. We need the village to make the difference.”