Evaluation of Special Education Services to Students with Disabilities in the Tacoma School District

A Report of the External Core Team

Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
February 2013
Why this External Review

• Student performance data for students with disabilities has been flat for multiple years and consistently below state average.

• Failure to meet state targets for students with disabilities in multiple areas.

• Alignment with District Strategic Plan
Graduation Rate

65%
The Collaborative

- The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative was founded in 1994
- Sponsored by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC, Inc.)
- The Collaborative’s Mission: To improve educational results and life’s opportunities for students with disabilities and other diverse learners
- Current Membership: Nearly 100 large, medium, and small urban school districts across the country
External Core Team

Ron Felton, Associate Director
Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative and Former Associate Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Sue Gamm, Consultant
Former Chief Officer of Specialized Services, Chicago Public Schools

David Riley, Executive Director
Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
External Core Team

Claudia Rinaldi, Assistant Director
Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

Carrie Parker, Senior Researcher,
Education Development Center
Methodology

- Document review
- Stakeholder interviews and meetings
- Parent focus groups
- Visits to selected schools
- Data analysis
- Report development
- Debriefing and presentation of findings
Tacoma Public Schools
Every Student. Every Day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Core Values</th>
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<td>Students first</td>
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<td>Results matter</td>
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<td>Flexible continuous improvement</td>
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<td>Data-driven decision making</td>
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<td>Effective leadership</td>
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<td>Parent/community partnership</td>
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<td>Cultural understanding</td>
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<td>Equity</td>
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<td>Quality instruction for everyone</td>
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<td>Rigor and relevance</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Transparency</td>
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Focus Areas of Report

- Instruction and Intervention for All Students
- Teaching and Learning of Students with IEPs
- Support for Teaching and Learning of Students with IEPs
- Accountability
Instruction and Intervention for All Students

- Implementing Common Core State Standards through a framework of a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Establish and Implement a Research-Based Framework for MTSS.
  - Academic
  - Behavior
- Organizational structure that supports the above.
  - Central office modeling what is expected at schools
Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Academics and Social Emotional Skills

Tier 3
Intensive, Individualized Interventions and Support
The most intense (increased time, narrowed focus, reduced group size) instruction and intervention based upon individual student need provided in addition to and aligned with Tier 1 & 2 academic and social emotional instruction and supports.

Tier 2
Targeted, Supplemental Interventions & Supports
More targeted instruction/intervention and supplemental support in addition to and aligned with the core academic and social emotional curriculum.

Tier 1
Core, Universal Instruction & Supports
General academic and social emotional instruction and support provided to all students in all settings.
Teaching and Learning of Students with IEPs

Inclusive School Models
- Home schools
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Access to the curriculum

Professional Learning
Support for Teaching and Learning of Students with IEPs

- Integrated service delivery
  - Use of paraprofessionals and related services providers
- Student Services organizational structure
  - Increased focus on teaching and learning
- Ownership of programs for students with disabilities
Accountability

- Incorporate into Strategic Plan and School Improvement Plans
- Monitor and track progress on:
  - LRE - Inclusion
  - Home school services
  - MTSS targets and implementation
  - On-time graduation
Action to Date

- During the process of data collection, in preparation of the review, and during the on-site review, many issues were identified. District personnel began addressing such issues.
- Recommendations 1, 5, 7, and 13 have been completed.
- Action has been initiated on recommendations 4, 8, 16, 17, and 18.
Next Steps

• District leadership to develop the infrastructure for the foundation of the work, communication and shared vision with accountability and ownership.

• Develop multi-year plan for implementation and accountability to provide embedded CCSS in a MTSS framework, inclusive education. (Recommendations #2, 3 and 4)

• Refine and develop data systems with regular review of data. ( Recommendation #18)

• Establish quarterly monitoring of progress for all recommendations.
CELEBRATE STUDENT LEARNING!