

**Special Education Program Review**

March, 2020

Office of Pupil Personnel Services

S Maselli, Administrator of Pupil Personnel Services

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2018, Milton Public Schools introduced a new Administrator for Pupil Personnel Services. Within that Entry Plan was an opportunity to evaluate the school system’s special education programs and determine next steps for the department in Milton. This review was designed to take into account the perspectives of the district’s administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and students and community member attitudes toward special education as well as an evaluation of the current supports in place for students.

HISTORICAL

The last formal special education program review occurred in 2016 and was conducted by Public Consulting Group (PCG). PCG recommended that the district adopts its curriculum, products, and services. Initial feedback from staff from this evaluation concluded that staff found the PCG platform difficult to manage and recommendations not supportive of forward movement of the department.

METHODOLOGY

Program evaluation for the 2018-2019 school year focused on basic fact-finding and observation throughout the district. Data collection consisted of each of the following measures:

* Review of current programs offered prek-22
* Review of current staffing
* Review of current trends in enrollment
* Outreach to SEPAC and parents regarding community issues and communication
* Collection of historical data and information related to professional development for staff

During the 2019-2020 school year, additional information was obtained by engaging more stakeholders within the district:

* Focus Groups conducted with parents, community members, general education staff, special education staff, and district-wide leaders. Student focus groups were postponed as a result of the school’s closure due to Covid-19
* IEPs reviewed with a focus on student demographics, changing trends and needs related to enrollment, and caseloads for special education teachers and service providers
* Professional Development opportunities for general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals offered
* Continuum of Services reviewed for Prek-22 (post grad) consistency
* Data analysis to student performance on high-stakes testing and grade-based performance standards

TRENDS IN ENROLLMENT

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Students with Disabilities | Total Enrollment October annually | Percentage in Special Education |
| 15-16 | 613 | 4,144 | 14.7 |
| 16-17 | 634 | 4,195 | 15.1 |
| 17-18 | 657 | 4,265 | 15.4 |
| 18-19 | 626 | 4,322 | 14.4 |
| 19-20 | 646 (March) | 4,483 | 14.5 |

SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT 2019-2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School | Enrollment 3/1/2020 |
| Preschool | 51 |
| Collicot | 80 |
| Cunningham | 86 |
| Glover | 70 |
| Tucker | 46 |
| Pierce | 157 |
| High School | 160 |
| Out of District | Residential 8  Day 31  Collaborative 12 |

DISABLITY TRENDS OVER TIME

This data shows trends over time by disability category and years. Overall linear trend lines show relatively stable increases in all disability categories. (2015-2020)

MOVE In STUDENTS in SPECIAL EDUCATION (2019-2020): With increased district-wide enrollment, it was important to capture data related to enrollment of students who moved into Milton in the past year who fit the State definition of “High Need”. This data is important to consider because it provides essential information related to budgetary considerations.

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| --- | --- |
| School | Move In with High Needs |
| Collicot | 3 |
| Cunningham | 2 |
| Glover | 1 |
| Tucker | 0 |
| Pierce Middle School | 2 |
| Milton High School | 2 |

504 ENROLLMENT (2019-20)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | Number of 504 Accommodation Plans | Grade | Number of 504 Accommodation Plans |
| Kindergarten | 5 | 7 | 29 |
| 1 | 8 | 8 | 28 |
| 2 | 18 | 9 | 23 |
| 3 | 15 | 10 | 23 |
| 4 | 12 | 11 | 18 |
| 5 | 25 | 12 | 23 |
| 6 | 29 | total | 256 |

CASE LOADS AVERAGES

Teacher feedback in surveys and discussion concluded that there were questions regarding caseload sizes, class assignment and overall consistency/equity across the buildings. Variation is noted in caseloads for Self Contained/Co-Taught/Collaborative staff and staff teaching more traditional Learning Center positions.  There are several factors that are impacted by this data.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Self contained strands | Learning center strands |
| Elementary | Average 7 | 15-20 |
| Middle | Average 7 | 15-20 |
| High | Average 8 | 18-25 |
| Preschool | Average 7 | Average 7 |
|  |  |  |
| Related Providers |  | 25-40 |

CURRENT GENERAL EDUCATION SUPPORTS

Current general education supports include early literacy and math specialists available at every elementary building. Adjustment counseling is available kindergarten through grade twelve.

Less developed Student Support Teams (SST), tiered supports and teacher assistance for general education is noted grades 6-12. Middle School SST has historically functioned as pre-referral verses a more traditional teacher assistance model.

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) is in early re-development. Job-Alike Teams have been working diligently to create tiered interventions.  In 2019, the district began a more comprehensive K-5 SST process using these resources.

Historical perspective around the use of the district’s Inclusion Specialists and BCBAs revealed that both are presently being underutilized and generally not as accessible to staff, students and families.

District Wide PBIS supported by May Center: This initiative, started several years ago, has developed strong building based teams designed to address behavioral and emotional difficulties in a SST format in response to DESE Safe School Initiatives. This group also addresses the needs of PBIS across the buildings.

CURRENT SPECIAL EDCUATION PROGRAMMING OFFERED IN DISTRICT

In 2019, the district expanded language based programming to the middle school. It also introduced the Collaborative Strand K-5, and separated this cohort from the language based strand. Finally, 2019 brought with it an expansion of the middle school Autism support classroom and high school introduced BRYT.

Four strands of supports compliment the more traditional model of a classic learning center model: Autism, SLD, Social-Emotional and Cognitive/Developmental.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Autism Strand** | **SLD- Language Based Strand** | **Social-Emotional and Behavioral Strand** | **Communication and Developmental Delay/Cognitive Delay Strand** |
| **Preschool** | Integrated and Sub-Separate Preschools | Integrated Preschool | Integrated Preschool | Integrated and Sub-Separate Preschools |
| **Elementary** | NECC and Partners | Co-Taught Instruction | STEP | Collaborative Classrooms |
| **Middle** | NECC and Reach | Co-Taught and Language Based Mini School | SMLC | REACH and Co-Taught |
| **High and Secondary** | ACHIEVE and 18-22 Post Secondary | CO-Taught and Academic Skills Program | BRYT | Achieve and 18-22 Post Secondary |

**PRESCHOOL:**

Milton’s preschool programs are currently housed in two buildings:

Tucker Elementary School

Tucker houses the one Pre-Kindergarten full-day Advancement Program. This program targets Pre-Kindergarten readiness for students who have had limited formal preschool readiness, those who may be dual language at home, and students who may benefit from full day school program due to socio-economic and achievement/opportunity disadvantages.  This program is run by one early childhood educator with a paraprofessional.

 Cunningham Elementary School

Cunningham currently houses six sections of half-day preschool and two sections of full-day preschool. These programs are run as typical integrated and sub-separate preschool models with one special education certified teacher and one paraprofessional. Therapies are fully available into all programs

**KINDERGARTEN-GRADE FIVE:**

Collicot Elementary School

Collicot Elementary School currently supports a traditional Learning Center environment. This model provides the traditional push in and pull out services.

Collicot also houses the district's elementary Partner Classrooms and two NECC classrooms run by the New England Center for Children®. These classrooms offer services and supports to children with Autism and related disabilities. The NECC® Program is lead by a New England Center Lead Teacher. The Partner Classrooms are led by Milton Lead Teachers. Paraprofessionals support students 1:1 and 1:2 throughout the school day. NECC provides clinical oversight and BCBA supports for all three classrooms.

All related therapies are available in this building.

Cunningham Elementary School

Cunningham Elementary School currently supports a traditional Learning Center model as well as two co-taught sections. This model provides the traditional push in and pull out services.

Cunningham also supports a Collaborative Strand. These two-teacher teams support students K through 5 with communication, intellectual and cognitive deficits requiring small group instruction and remediation throughout the day. Each special education teacher is paired with a general education teacher and focuses on a small cohort of 6-8 students across the school day. A strong focus on inclusion-based supports and peer connections are built into this model.

All related therapies are also available in this building.

Glover Elementary School

Glover Elementary School currently supports a traditional Learning Center model. This model provides the traditional push in and pull out services.

Glover also hosts the Language-Based-Co-Taught Strand. These two-teacher teams support students grades one through five with SLD related disabilities. Each special education teacher is paired with a grade alike general education teacher and focuses on a small cohort typically of 6-8 students across the school day.

Glover also hosts the STEP program, a program designed to support kids with social-emotional and behavioral regulation issues. This multi-grade program supports both a full inclusion schedule as well as functioning as a small self-contained program for students based on IEPS and student need. This program has a full time BCBA and Special Education Teacher assigned to the cohort.

All related therapies are also available in this building.

Tucker Elementary

Tucker Elementary School currently supports a traditional Learning Center model. This model provides the traditional push in and pull out services.

In the past, Tucker School has supported Co-Teaching sections based on enrollment.

 All related therapies are also available in this building.

**Middle School**

Pierce Middle School has similar programming to the programs offered at the elementary level and currently supports a traditional learning center model. This model provides the traditional push-in and pull-out services.

Pierce Middle School also hosts the middle school Co-Taught Strand. (Historically referred to as Team Taught, a term that has been reported to be confusing to staff and families). This program is finalizing a transformation into a Language Based Mini School in which supports will be available across grades for content alike classes, with opportunities for inclusion classes as appropriate.

2019-2020 brought the beginning of a formal NECC® ASD (New England Center Partner Classroom for students with Autism) Program to Pierce Middle School. These classrooms offer services and supports to children with Autism and related disabilities. The NECC® Program is lead by a New England Center Lead Teacher. Paraprofessionals support students 1:1 and 1:2 throughout the school day. NECC® provides clinical oversight and BCBA supports for this program.

Pierce Middle School also hosts the district’s Reach Program. This program is designed to support students with communication, intellectual and cognitive difficulties. Small group, co-taught and inclusion classroom experiences are available across content areas for this multi-grade program. A focus on pre-vocational experiences is embedded in functional academic activities. This class is supported by Two Lead Special Education Teachers and supported with paraprofessionals.

Similar to the STEP program, Pierce Middle School offers an SMLC (Student Management Learning Center) program for grades 6-8. This multi-grade program supports both a full inclusion schedule as well as functioning as a small self-contained program for students based on IEPS and student need. This program has a part time School Adjustment Counselor and full time Special Education Teacher assigned to the cohort. Additional paraprofessional supports are available.

All the related therapies are available in this building.

Pierce Middle School is in the middle of adjusting the master schedule for the 20-21 school year.

**High School**

Milton High Schools hosts the Achieve Program as well as an 18 to 22 post secondary program for young adults. Some co-taught classes in ELA and math are available.

Academic Skills classes provide support to most special education students, though the classes do not focus sufficiently on IEP goals. These blocks are often used as homework support. Preliminary review of student outcomes indicates concerns present related to grading and credit for students in these classrooms.

This year, special education and general Education co-hosted an emerging BRYT Program, Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition.  BRYT is designed for shorter or longer term educational placement for students coping with school refusal, return to school following abscesses, medical excusal and school return.

CURRENT ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING 2019-20

The current structure for Milton Public Schools special education Administration Staffing is the following.

* One full time Administrator of Pupil Personnel Services
* 7/1/20 anticipated Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services
* .6 OOD coordinator
* 7.0 Teach Chair People Positions- Unit A
* Self-Contained co-taught and inclusion special education teachers
* Related service providers
* Contacted support services for PBIS, TVI, O&M,TOD, ABA and home based ABA and Audiology

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IEP REVIEW:

A comprehensive review of more than 90% of the IEPs that were developed during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years has revealed some specific trends.

* Strong key evaluation sections
* Comprehensive lists of accommodations, especially in lieu of under-utilized district-wide DCAP.
* Opportunity to expand modification section
* Opportunities to further develop Disability Impact Statements as they relate to the provision of IEP services
* Inconsistent use of measurable goals, and often curriculum related verses disability related. Emerging Progress Monitoring tools.
* Extensive and comprehensive services offered to students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development this year has focused on building capacity for the Special Education team chair people. This has included work on IEP development. Specific training has been offered in a train-the-trainer model regarding for PLEP A and B developments in IEPs. The goal for next year will be to continue this training as well as finding ways to increase parent participation in understanding this part of the IEP process.

A major area for opportunity of growth is has been finding ways to encourage staff to utilize modification component of IEPs. Additional supports and training have focused on utilization of paraprofessionals and training in areas such as PBIS.

In regard to special education issues and staff licensure, the district historically lacks a consistent practice of providing PD for both general and special education teachers.

FY 19 and 20 PD offered to staff included:

* Medicare Training for reimbursement (related providers)
* Related providers Job-A-Likes (SLP, OT/PT, Psych)
* IEP development for Team Chairs
* 10 hour Strands:
  + IEP Boot Camp for General Educators
  + 6 Methods of Co-Teaching using UDL for Special Ed& General Ed Partner Teachers
  + Preschool Eligibility and Service Provision
  + Testing for eligibility (High School Special Ed)
  + Preschool Social Interactions/Cultural Competency

PARAPROFESSIONAL PD Offered:

2020 launched the Paraprofessional Professional Development Classroom Google Classroom. This platform houses over 100 hours of self-paced instructional modules for paraprofessionals ranting from topics such as ELL and Civil Rights, behavior and data collection, social skills and language in the classroom, and the role of a Para in a general education classroom.

**IMPACT ON LEARNING and FINDINGS**

IEP REVIEW:

A comprehensive review of more than 90% of the IEPs that were developed during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years has revealed some specific trends.

* Strong key evaluation sections
* Comprehensive lists of accommodations, especially in lieu of under-utilized district-wide DCAP.
* Opportunity to expand modification section area of consideration
* Opportunities to further develop Disability Impact Statements as they relate to the provision of IEP services
* Inconsistent use of measurable goals, and often curriculum related verses disability related. Emerging Progress Monitoring tools.
* Extensive and comprehensive services offered to students.

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARIES

**Staff**

* Staff feel strong relationships with families
* Staff feel strong connections to colleagues
* Staff report need for professional development around the areas of assessment and instruction
* Staff desire to further enhance district wide RTI and reintroduction of DCAP
* Staff desire to further develop professional development opportunities with general education staff

**Programmatic:**

* IEP mandates are clear.
* Special Education Staff are dedicated and motivated to provide the best supports possible for the students in our community
* Some lack of clarity continues regarding which elementary building “houses” which strand of support services
* District-wide terms can be confusing regarding names and types of services.
* Special Education staff would like support in balancing scheduling needs with student needs

**Parents/Families:**

Parent information was gathered via informal survey in a spring parent coffee and structured focus group, as well as informal parent discussions across the year. Overall arching themes indicated lack of communication across the district. There were variations across building and across the last couple of school years. This is an area of need.

Key strengths parents noted include:

* Positive understanding at the conclusion of IEP meetings on services being offered to their children/students
* Generally parents and guardians know who to contact regarding special education
* Varied understanding of the role of special education as mechanism for disability remediation verses a model to support curriculum access
* Consistent impressions parent felt heard in meetings, whether or not the team was in total agreement
* Generally positive impressions of the Inclusion Task Force and its mission
* Generally positive impressions that general education teachers understand special education related educational needs in their classrooms
* Strong positive connections to related providers and their accessibility

Areas of Opportunity include:

* Challenges related to knowing which types of programs are housed in each building
* Need for parent/guardian access to post-secondary planning
* Need o further connections to SEPAC and its mission
* Varied perspectives and opinions on how families and guardians want to receive special education updates, information and ongoing program developments, parent outreach and ongoing communication supports

RECCOMENDATIONS and NEXT STEPS

Programmatic:

* Continue development of language based strand k-12
* Continue development of collaborative strand k- 5.
* Enhancement ASD supports at Pierce and extend to High School
* Enhancement of HS therapeutic supports
* Continue to update and revise district web site to provide more information on programs housed at each building

Community:

* Continue to engage families
* Build on work of Inclusion Task Force
* Update parent information (web site et al)
* Work with SEPAC to build connections to families
* Offer parents and guardians supports related to the Transition Process

District Wide:

* Professional Development for Regular and Special Education Staff
* Professional Development for Paraprofessionals
* Further development of skills for Team Chair People
* Development of entrance and exit criteria for related therapeutic supports (SLP, OT, PT, ABA, Home Based)
* 6-12 review of SST, MTSS and general education supports, including DCAP and how 504s are utilized.