School Committee

DISTRICT-WIDE INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES
ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

TIMELINE

- Record review October 2017
- Onsite observations October & November 2017
- Interviews November & Dec 2017
- Final report issued in May 2018

Purpose

"This evaluation is focused on the specific area of inclusionary practices for students who are determined eligible for special education....to assist in having a guided and focused discussion that will enable effective short and long-range planning."

- LABBB Collaborative: Arlington Inclusionary Practices (2017)

Evaluators

- Robert J. McArdle, M.Ed., Special Education Consultant for the LABBB Collaborative

- James B. Early, Ed. D., independent Special Education Consultant.

Process

- Record review:
  - Twenty-six (26) criteria-selected IEPs
  - District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)
  - Program descriptions
  - Special Education student census data, special education staffing, census for out-of-district placements
  - Tiered Interventions for Math & Literacy
  - Student Support Team (SST) procedures

Process

- Observations:
  - Forty-seven (47) observations of inclusion settings and co-teaching settings across grades/school K-12

- Interviews
  - Fifty-one (51) individuals interviewed
  - 1:1 Interviews (30 mins)
  - Focus groups (45 mins)
  - Subjects included: Special Ed Director, Principals, Coordinators, Team Chairpersons, Special Ed Teachers, General Ed teachers, Co-Teachers, School Psychologists, Related Service Providers, Social Workers, & Teacher Assistants

Commendations

- District efforts to provide an inclusionary approach to instruction
  - 70.5% in Full-inclusion vs. 63.3% State-wide average
  - 6.1% in Substantially separate vs. 13.9% State-wide average

- High school co-teaching model, common-planning block for collaborating teachers.

- Middle school co-teaching model – special education teacher & TA travel with students to each content area

Commendations

- Co-teaching class ratios
- Millbrook Program assessment center
- Harbor & Shortstop Programs at the high school for re-entry after extended absences
- Use of technology
- Organizational skill development during academic support periods at middle school
- Google School format for data collection at elementary level

Census data

- Special education eligibility represents 14.6% of the school age population which is below the state-wide average of 17.6%

- We are *not* over-identifying students

- Eligibility categories are largely consistent with the State, with the exception of "Neurological" and "Specific Learning Disability"

Observation findings

- Needs of the students are driving the instruction

- Staff demonstrated flexibility in meeting various instructional, emotional, and social needs of students

- Staff demonstrated effort to continuously refine the curriculum for content instruction

Areas of Findings

- "Pre-referral"/Multi-tiered Systems of Support

- Teacher Assistants

- Co-teaching/Inclusion services

- IEP Development & Evaluation

- Communication/Internal processes

Recommendations

"Pre-referral"/Multi-tiered Systems of Support

- The Student Support Team (SST) needs to be more uniformly practiced throughout the district and aligned with a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)

- The district needs to continue the efforts that have been put forth in the implementation of MTSS

Recommendations

Co-Teaching Model of Instruction

- The district needs to review the current co-teaching and in-classroom support practices and establish a clear and consistent approach to these models across the district.

- Should the district move toward developing more co-teaching models across the grade levels, there will be a need to maintain a balanced enrollment in co-teaching classes.

- Should the administration make a firm commitment to the co-teaching model, several practices will need to be in place

Recommendations

Professional Development

- For all school personnel, the district needs to develop a more comprehensive approach to professional development experiences that focus on regular and special education topics.

- Recognizing the limited time available to teaching assistants, the district needs to provide these assistants with substantial professional development and ongoing support.

- The district needs to continue with the design of a district-wide training program to be shared with all staff that will increase their general awareness level regarding special education terminology, practices, procedures, regulations, and available services within the district

Recommendations

- The director should consider strategies to maximize administrative efficiencies and communication within the department.

- The district needs to establish guidelines by which teaching assistants are assigned to a student, a group of students, a program, or a classroom

- Administrative oversight of special education programming, services, and special education personnel needs to be redefined as to the structure within the Department of Special Education

Recommendations

- Transition practices need to be structured in a more sequential and consistent manner between the various school levels

- There needs to be a thorough review of evidence-based practice that is applicable to the various special education instruction, in-classroom support, and support programs currently operating within the district

- The administration should have a unified data collection system for measuring student progress against student IEP goals

Next Steps SY2018-19

- Professional development *for* Teaching Assistants/Behavior Support Personnel and those working *with* TAs/BSPs

- Continue work with Wediko Children's Services on program development

- Communication ladder/Department Organizational Chart

- Memorialize transition procedures

Next Steps SY2018-19

- Role-a-like working groups (related service providers) to refine assessment resources/eligibility criteria/service delivery/goal attainment

- Work with building administrators and curriculum directors to address co-teaching recommendations

- Five year strategic plan/budget requests