

CATEGORY	Findings	RECOMMENDATION	SY18-19	SY19-20	GE/SE
Student Support Team Process	The SST process (Student Support Team) is not embedded throughout the district, and it is not practiced with consistency;The tiered system of instructional support (Response to Intervention, RtI) is not embedded throughout the district.	The Student Support Team (SST) needs to be more uniformly practiced throughout the district and aligned with the RtI (Response to Intervention) and MTSS (Massachusetts Tiered System of Supports).	Creation of a shared drive for all schools to access SST materials, protocols, resources	Registered District Team (Supt, Asst Supt, Sp Ed Director, SEL/Guidance, Math Director, ELA Director, ELL Director, High School Principal, Middle School Principal, and (2) Elementary Principals for DESE MTSS Institute in Sept/2019	GE/SE
Student Support Team Process	The SST process (Student Support Team) is not embedded throughout the district, and it is not practiced with consistency;The tiered system of instructional support (Response to Intervention, RtI) is not embedded throughout the district. From a review of data and comments by interviewees, referrals for special education evaluations have risen from last year.	The district needs to continue the efforts that have been put forth in the implementation of the RtI (Response to Intervention) and MTSS (Massachusetts Tiered System of Supports).	Enrolled District team consisting of (3) elementary principals, Special Ed Director, School Psychologist, Reading Specialist, Special Ed Coordinator, and two general education teachers in Rennie Center S3 Academy	Registered District Team (Supt, Asst Supt, Sp Ed Director, SEL/Guidance, Math Director, ELA Director, ELL Director, High School Principal, Middle School Principal, and (2) Elementary Principals for DESE MTSS Institute in Sept/2019	GE/SE
Co-Teaching Model of Instruction	Co-teaching opportunities are limited at the elementary level. The co-teaching model of instruction at the middle school is not following evidence-based practice. At both levels, it appears to be primarily in-class support. Best practice requires the special education teacher and the general education teacher to be equally involved in the delivery of instruction;District-wide and consistent definitions for the practices of inclusion, in-classroom support, and co-teaching are lacking	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.	General ed/special education teams sent to off-site Co-teaching workshops	On-site coach/consultant to work with teams grades 6 - 12	GE/SE
Co-Teaching Model of Instruction	Guidelines for the co-teaching model that address the make-up of the class are lacking. Research indicates that the typical student population should make up 2/3 of the class with special education and other categories making up the remaining 1/3. • The percent of special needs students to general education students • The percent of ELL students (if any) • The percent of students on Section 504 plans Although it is not a requirement in Massachusetts, some states have state laws that limit the enrollment of special education students in general education classes. Illinois has a 70/30% law that requires that no more than 30% of the students in a classroom be special education students.	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.	Opened more sections at the high school to allow for this balance.	On-site coach/consultant to work with teams grades 6 - 12	GE/SE
Co-Teaching Model of Instruction	Guidelines are lacking that assist the collaborating teachers in the co-teaching model regarding their role and responsibilities for the co-teaching model and in classroom support.;At the secondary level, the practice of keeping special and general education teachers together as a team, not changing teams each year, is not in place.	Should the administration make a firm commitment to the co-teaching model, several practices will need to be in place.	General ed/special education teams sent to off-site Co-teaching workshops. Providing planning in time in June for SY19-20 partners and scheduling summer planning sessions	On-site coach/consultant to work with teams grades 6 - 12; build planning time into Gibbs schedule; Common planning time/team time in elementary schedule.	GE/SE

Professional Development	There is a need to enhance and encourage dialogue and professional development about what should occur in general education classrooms to assist teachers and instructional assistants working with special education students; The district needs a comprehensive approach to professional development for general education teachers and teaching assistants on the “how to” for working with students with disabilities.	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.	AEA joint committee on Special Educaiton spent the year collecting and analyzing district-wide data on staff needs for professional development/training as it relates to the inclusion of special education students and diverse learners. Shared this analysis with each building principal, Curriculum Directors, Asst Supt. Creation of a district PD Committee for next year's Professional Development day (Nov 1) on "Equity & Inclusion"	New Teacher Orientation special education training will focus on supporting students in inclusion; Common planning time/team time in elementary schedule.	GE/SE
Professional Development	Teaching assistants require professional development in the various curriculum frameworks, instructional strategies, and behavioral strategies. An orientation program for newly hired assistants needs to be in place that is comprehensive and enables the assistants to fully understand the role and responsibilities of their specific assignment.	Recognizing the limited time available to teaching assistants, the district needs to provide these assistants with substantial professional development and ongoing support.	Paraprofessionals engaged in year long professional development during early release time on the following topics: Paraprofessionals engaged in an year-long series of professional development during the early release department time on topics from data collection, implementing behavior plans, Responsive Classroom, fostering independence in the inclusion setting, and cultivating a mindfulness practice. Opened Responsive Classroom core training to TAs.	Planning with BCBA's and SWs to deliver PD during the early release schedule related to the implementation of behavior plans, data collection, report writing, de-escalation, and behavior management strategies from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.	SE
Professional Development	There is a need to enhance and encourage dialogue and professional development about what should occur in general education classrooms to assist teachers and instructional assistants working with special education students; The district needs a comprehensive approach to professional development for general education teachers and teaching assistants on the “how to” for working with students with disabilities.	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.	Created an "all district" training for the "basics" of special education that is not part of the required annual staff training at the beginning of the school year. Creation of a weekly communication to all special education staff regarding state and federal special education regulations and requirements. New Teacher Orientation for special educators included a "scavenger hunt" of district and state resources on special education policy, procedure, & regulations.	Annual mandatory training during Aug in-service days. New Special Staff Orientation training will orient staff will provide overview of programming, resources, and where to find them. Continuation of weekly communication to special ed and administrative staff. Legal counsel presentation to administrative staff during August retreats.	GE/SE
Team Meetings	The district has attempted to implement a time for special education staff to meet by building, by program, by itinerant groups, and by department. These efforts should continue and should be supported; Lists of accommodations in the reviewed IEPs were excessively long. Many of the accommodations listed in the IEPs are good teaching practices that all staff members incorporate in their instruction. Some districts have taken steps to develop a list of good teaching practices employed by staff and post them in the classrooms. Using this approach makes the team responsible for developing accommodations for the IEP that are written specifically for the individual student.	The director should consider the following strategies to maximize administrative efficiencies and communication within the department.	Continued monthly individual principal meetings with Coordinators. Implemented quarterly meetings with related service providers by department. More elementary schools added weekly or biweekly special education department meetings (where AEA membership did not contest it.)	Continue w/ monthly principal meetings and quarterly RSP mtgs. Encouraging the expansion of weekly or bi-weekly special ed department meetings in elementary schools where this is not the current practice. E	SE

Assigning Teaching Assistants	There remains a degree of uncertainty by the general education staff with respect to how to utilize the teaching assistants within their classes; Guidelines are not in place for determining when a teaching assistant is required, or no longer required, for assignment to a student, a general education classroom, or a program. There appears to be an over-reliance on the teaching assistants to provide direct instruction to students at the elementary and middle school levels. This may be due to a lack of adequate staffing of special education teachers at the two levels.	The district needs to establish guidelines by which teaching assistants are assigned to a student, a group of students, a program, or a classroom.	Began a review of rubrics shared from other districts	Will begin to pilot two different tools with educational teams	SE
Administrative	Interviewees expressed frustration with the lack of follow-through by some parents with respect to acquiring out-of-school support for their child and the family. It was expressed, numerous times, that there needs to be a greater emphasis placed on developing school/family partnerships; Clear lines of communication need to be defined so that all special education staff and building administrators know the communication chain of command and the decision-making process within the department.	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.	Creation of a department organizational chart . Creation of a communication chart for caregivers/community members and one for school staff	Update with new information and share with public and school staff at start of the year	SE
Transition Practices	Written procedures are in place for students transitioning from the elementary level to the middle school level. There is also a procedure in place for transition from preschool to kindergarten and middle school to the high school. However, these procedures are not written down. The addition of the new sixth grade school will also need to be factored in.	Transition practices need to be structured in a more sequential and consistent manner between the various school levels.	Memorialized the PK - K transition procedures/timelines; Gibbs to Ottoson transition planning b/t Ms. DeFrancisco. Ms. DeFrancisco created schedule for fifth to Gibbs.	Memorialize the middle to high school transition procedures/timelines	GE/SE
Evidence-Based Practice	Special education "specialized instruction" is not fully understood across the district. There were limited examples of specialized instruction observed in the various special education settings; There is a need to clarify when "pull out" services are required. Is it a general education class scheduling issue, a lack of availability of special education personnel and/or a lack of grade level clustering of special needs students?	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.	Worked with Dr. Melissa Orkin (Tufts) and all elementary special educators: Project Read: Framing Your Thoughts: Sentence Structure & Paragraph Writing; Using assessment data to identify reading profiles and target intervention & Working with Struggling Readers Service Planning and Evaluation; Targeted Reading Intervention Training; Subtyping framework for reading: Application of Framework to Cases. Selected training: Lively Letters; Wilson Reading System; Just Words (Wilson) ; Administering and scoring the WIST; RAVE-O;	Continue to work with Dr. Orkin on interpreting assessment data, developing profiles, determining interventions, designing instruction, develop goals & objectives for literacy (reading & writing)	SE

Evidence-Based Practice	There is a lack of a data collection procedure occurring for special needs students across the district; Some progress reports are lacking specificity in terms of a student's measurable progress; What does the phrase "adequate progress" mean? This does not indicate measurable progress.	The administration should have a unified data collection system for measuring student progress against student IEP goals.	District created shared data bank for student assessment data	Explore commercial products and or locally created tools	SE/GE
Program Development	Interviewees identified the following trends that are appearing in students: ADD, impulse control issues, dysregulation of self, executive functioning issues, poor literacy skills, school phobia/refusal, anxiety/stress, oppositional defiant behaviors, and trauma related issues.	The district needs to further develop and expand program options for the special education population.	Dr. Elizabeth Keefe (Lesley University) worked with AHS & Stratton SLC-A . Wediko Children's services continued consultation to Dallin SLC program and worked with RSPs throughout the year	Dr. Keefe (Stonehill College) will continue to work with AHS/Stratton. Wediko will be working with Dallin SLC, AHS - Compass & Summit, OMS - Summit, Gibbs - Tier II programming	SE
Program Development	Interviewees identified the following trends that are appearing in students: ADD, impulse control issues, dysregulation of self, executive functioning issues, poor literacy skills, school phobia/refusal, anxiety/stress, oppositional defiant behaviors, and trauma related issues.	The district needs to determine which disability categories it will select to develop further program capacity in order to assist with reducing the exiting of students to out-of-district placements.	Dr. Elizabeth Keefe (Lesley University) worked with AHS & Stratton SLC-A . Wediko Children's services continued consultation to Dallin SLC program and worked with RSPs throughout the year	Dr. Keefe (Stonehill College) will continue to work with AHS/Stratton. Wediko will be working with Dallin SLC, AHS - Compass expansion & Summit, OMS - Summit expansion, Gibbs - Tier II programming	SE
Entrance/Exit Guidelines	There lacks a stated set of guidelines for the various services offered to students through special education. In order for the evaluation team members to decide eligibility for specialized instruction, there should be a set of guidelines outlining how students enter and exit a program;There appears to be a lack of understanding of all the special education programs and services available to eligible students.Greater understanding of the referral question by team chairs is required in-order to ensure that assessments that may not be needed are not requested. Special education teachers do not conduct standardized educational assessments at the time of the initial evaluation and re-evaluation.	There needs to be clear and concise entrance and exit guidelines in place for all special education programs and services that are well-established and followed.	Related Service Providers (SWs, OTs/PT, SLPs, School Psychs, Team Chairs, TVI, BCBA, AT & AAC) met throughout the year during early release time to create logic models and service delivery goals/objectives, establish short and long-term goals for service and discharge	RSPs will continue to meet during release time to identify consistent practices across schools and provide training/share resources around these practices	SE
Program and Staffing Oversight	There is a lack of understanding of what constitutes a language-based/learning disabled program. Some interviewed staff members indicated that there may be a need for this type of program; however, based on a review of the data collected by the district, there does not appear to be a need, at this time, to construct a specific program at the elementary level. Most interviewed staff were not aware if a job description exists for their position.	The district has developed and invested in some very successful programs for disabled students within the district. Efforts need to be made to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the students for whom they were developed, and that staff members receive the supervision required to remain effective.	Principals and coordinators collaborate on the supervision and evaluation of special education staff. Consultation provided to Reach/SLC - A, Dallin SLC- B this year	Dr. Keefe (Stonehill College) will continue to work with AHS/Stratton. Wediko will be working with Dallin SLC, AHS - Compass expansion & Summit, OMS - Summit expansion, Gibbs - Tier II programming. Requested addition of elementary asst principals in order to allow principals time for instructional leadership and supervision and evaluation responsibilities.	GE/SE

<p>Caseloads</p>	<p>There was an expressed concern, with respect to special education caseloads, that there is not a system in place featuring a weighted approach that factors in numbers, needs of the caseload, variables of the demographics of each school, and an equity of resources across the district. School psychologists are a valuable resource; however, their primary responsibility is to conduct evaluations. This leaves very little time for them to consult with school-based staff or provide support to students. The district should require special education teachers to conduct the educational testing and work in harmony with school psychologists to assess students and make recommendations. Having special education teachers test would allow school psychologists more time to consult with school-based staff. District class size is having an impact on inclusionary practices in the planning of placements of students from certain disability categories into general education classes. Students with more moderate to severe needs may have limited access due to class size.</p>		<p>Special ed increases went to staffing Gibbs &amp; increases at AHS</p>	<p>Increase of learning specialist to Stratton; Increase of special education teacher to Summit; Increase of OT &amp; SLP FTEs to Hardy, Thompson, &amp; Gibbs; Addition of special education teacher to AHS (Compass); Addition of Team Chair to AHS.</p>	<p>SE</p>
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