

# Arlington Public Schools



## **SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATION**

**JANUARY 23, 2020**

# LABBB Program Evaluation



“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)

# TIMELINE



- Record review October 2017
- Onsite observations October & November 2017
- Interviews November & Dec 2017
- Final report issued in May 2018
- Report presented to School Committee in September 2018
- Second presentation on implementation to School Committee in June 2019

# Findings



- Issued thirty-three (33) findings which fell into the following broad categories:
  - “Pre-referral”/Multi-tiered Systems of Support
  - Teacher Assistants
  - Co-teaching/Inclusion services
  - IEP Development & Evaluation
  - Communication/Internal processes

# Recommendations & Explanations



Report followed with recommendations in these areas:

- Student Support Team Process
- Co-Teaching Model of Instruction
- Professional Development
- Team Meetings
- Assigning Teaching Assistants
- Administrative
- Transition Practices
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Program Development
- Entrance/Exit Guidelines
- Program and Staffing Oversight

Report went on to offer “explanation[s] that [are] intended to further expand on the rationale for the recommendation.”

# Appendix



- While time and scope of the evaluation did not allow evaluators to observe the substantially separate programs, speak with staff, or review records and materials associated with the programs, they included an appendix with four additional recommendations and further explanations specific to the in-district special education programs.

# District-Wide Inclusionary Practices LABBB Collaborative Report



## Recommendations

# Student Support Team Process



- 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.)
- 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.)



# Actions taken



- Creation of a shared drive for all schools to access SST materials, protocols, resources.
- 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) attended DESE MTSS Institute in Sept 2019. District-wide team is registered for Feb 2020 follow-up Institute.
- District team participation in year-long Systemic Student Support “S3” Academy run by Boston College and the Rennie Center.
- District gathers information annually and shares with building administrators on both referral source and eligibility determination.
- Applied for 2019 School Climate Transformation Grant Program. Grant application outlines extensive proposed actions regarding MTSS.
- Data-wise training provided by Teachers21 to District Admin, reading specialists, and volunteer school-based staff.

# Budget implications



- Assistant Director for School Counseling and SEL
- Elementary assistant principals

# 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.

# Actions taken



- General ed/special education teams sent to off-site co-teaching workshops.
- On-site coach/consultant currently work with teaching staff and administrators in grades 6 – 12.
- New elementary schedule implemented to allow for common instructional blocks across grade levels.
- Opened more sections at the high school to allow for enrollment balance.
- Expanded co-teaching to more learning communities at Gibbs.

# Budget implication



- Professional development
- Consultant
- Learning specialists/special education staffing increases
- General education staffing increases

# 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.

# Actions Taken



- Created an "all district" training for the "basics" of special education that is now 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.
- Legal counsel presentation to administrative staff during August retreat.
- New Teacher Orientation special education training focus on supporting students in inclusion.
- Common planning time/team time in elementary schedule.
- AEA joint committee on Special Education 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/Supt.
- DESE revising professional tool "Is Special Education the Right Service." District special education administrators, team chairs, and psychologists participated in state-wide feedback sessions. Follow-up from state is forthcoming, as well as other stakeholder feedback sessions.
- See detailed account of professional development (SC presentation June 2019)

# Budget Implications



- Professional development
- Instructional coaches
- Job-embedded, on-site consultants



# Team Meetings



- The director should consider the following strategies to maximize administrative efficiencies and communication within the department.
  - *Establishment of Special Education “Chain of Communication Command”*
  - *Establishment of an Assessment Handbook*
  - *Procedural Manual*
  - *Team Decision Making (learning specialists/special education teacher complete initial academic testing)*

# Actions taken



- “Communication ladder” was created and exists both for families and for staff members. Families can locate on the District website. Internal document shared and is provided to new staff annually.
- New Special Education orientation includes a "scavenger hunt" of on-line department resources.

# Assigning Teaching Assistants



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

# Actions taken



- Began a review of rubrics shared from other districts.
- Implementing pilot of selected rubrics.
- Business office and human resources created internal checks in hiring practices.
- All special education staff training at beginning of school year focused on the use of adult support in the inclusive classroom and the emphasis on promoting independence. DESE advisory shared with participants.
- New teacher training for all educators provided by the Special Education Director focuses on the use of adult support in the inclusive classroom and the emphasis on promoting independence. DESE advisory also shared with participants.

# Administrative



- 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.

# Actions taken



- The AEA Joint Committee worked the previous year (2017-18) on reviewing job descriptions.
- The related service providers, including Team Chairpersons, have been working with Wediko Children's Services on a logic model description of the services they provide.
- Director of Human Resources, with input from Asst Sup and Director of Special Education, created a "Google Classroom" for staff that begin after the orientation period

# Transition Practices



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

# Actions taken



- Memorialized the PK - K transition procedures/timelines; Used existing transition procedures from fifth to sixth and again at sixth to seventh grade transitions.
- Memorializing the middle to high school transition procedures/timelines.
- Recommendation addresses general education practices that are not undertaken by the special education department



# Evidence-Based Practice



- 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.

# Actions taken



- The process that was described in report reflects the work shared with the evaluators regarding the “Logic Model” development the District has been engaged in with Wediko Children’s Services (SC presentation 06.06.19 & 10.27.16)
- Purchase of an "Executive Function" curriculum for pilot in the middle school.
- Need to develop family education/training on purpose of academic support.
- “EF” strategies need to be embedded into the work of general educators.
- Continue to work with Dr. Melissa Orkin on interpreting assessment data, developing profiles, determining interventions, designing instruction, develop goals & objectives for literacy (reading & writing.)

# Budget Implications



- Professional development
- Consultant(s) to program development
- Instructional materials

# Program Development



- The district needs to further develop and expand program options for the special education population.
- 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.

# Actions taken



- The department reviews placement data annually and determines where needs arise as part of our budget process.
- Added staffing to the Summit Program at OMS and the Compass program at AHS.
- High school Summit program participating in consultation with MacLean's Hospital.
- Director of Special Education & Director of School Counseling creating a district-wide Behavioral Health Team to address needs of this professional population, as well as assess district resources and capacity.
- Dr. Elizabeth Keefe (Stonehill College) worked with AHS & Stratton SLC-A .
- Wediko Children's services continued consultation to Dallin SLC program and worked with RSPs throughout the year.

# Budget implications



- The SLC figures have dropped at Brackett & Dallin (12 & 10 students respectively as of Nov 2019) and projections based on current student populations do not predict a significant increase for SY20-21. Therefore the requested staffing increase in the five-year plan is not needed next school year at the elementary level.
- Consultant(s)

# Entrance/Exit Guidelines



- 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.

# Actions Taken



- This work is being addressed by the Wediko consultation to sub-separate programs and development of logic models.
- 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.



# Budget implications



- Consultant

# Program and Staffing Oversight



- 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.

# Actions taken



- Supervision and evaluation roles are defined by the collective bargaining agreement.
- Continuation of monthly meetings with individual principals and special education coordinators/Director.

# Questions

