

To: Board of Education  
Dr. Eric Olson Superintendent  
From: Dr. Lea Anne Frost, Director of Student Services  
Date: July 15, 2019  
Re: Year-End Review of Special Education 2018-19

In spring 2018, D64 engaged in two audits related to special education. One audit was conducted internally by Interim Director of Student Services Michael Padavic; the other audit was conducted by an external group, LMT Consulting. The findings from both audits were reviewed in depth at the May 21, 2018 Board of Education meeting and are [publicly posted on the D64 website](#).

A side-by-side analysis of the audits highlighted where in some instances, the findings of the two audits were duplicative or similar in nature. Attachment 1 offers the “crosswalk” of how D64 integrated each finding and compiled 10 that were ***focused on development during the 2018-19 school year as part of a multi-year renewal of the Student Services department.***

Monthly reports and presentations at regular Board of Education meetings tracked four key areas: Staffing, Professional Development, Consistency, and Message of Inclusion. A comprehensive mid-year progress report was provided to the Board in December 2018. This year-end report will carry forward the same type of progress reporting.

### **Summary of Overall Progress 2018-19**

As confirmed in the audit findings, the D64 Student Services Department offers many strengths, offering the solid foundation so essential for a successful learning experience for our students.

Our multi-year renewal efforts are focused on enhancing and nourishing these strengths, which include:

- Dedicated, hard working and student-centered staff
- Positive relationships between staff and students
- Engaging learning environments being provided for students
- The implementation and expansion of Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS)
- Manageable class sizes
- Involved parents
- An abundance of resources
- Department involvement in the D64 2020 Vision Strategic Plan

Overall, we can report that the District’s multi-year renewal is well underway. Progress on addressing the key findings has been done at a high quality level, and each achievement has

intentionally included various stakeholder groups to ensure that changes are well-thought out and implemented with training and support provided to staff.

These four stand as the most critical of this year's accomplishments:

- **Development of a curriculum map with the special education teachers for launch in the 2019-20 school year.** The map ensures that appropriate and rigorous curriculum and materials will be provided to our students with special needs. The curriculum map lays the foundation for ordering materials, training staff, and providing the necessary support to ensure proper implementation of the curriculum with fidelity. Staff will receive additional support through the Intervention Coach, which was a position approved by the Board for the upcoming 2019-20 school year.
- **Development of a new Section 504 manual for families.** A new version of our 504 manual was created to be shared publicly for the first time to clearly identify the processes and procedures related to the District's 504 plan. It is hoped this manual will be helpful to families whose students may qualify for 504 services by offering an easy to understand summary of what may be expected. In addition, a more detailed internal guidance manual was prepared with the Assistant Principals, who are charged with the responsibility of implementing the process to support students at their schools. This guidance manual will be utilized District-wide to ensure consistency in identifying and providing the appropriate and needed services to students.
- **Extensive Board-authorized investments (both 2018-19 and upcoming 2019-20) to add more staff with specific expertise to further support our staff and students.** To support staff in addressing the individual needs of students, the Board approved the addition of a new Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) for the 2018-19 school year among a package of new positions approved. In addition, the Board has approved for the upcoming 2019-20 school year additional staffing, including a full-time Intervention Coach and an increase from part-time to full-time for an Assistive Technology Specialist position to address the growing needs of the District. The extensive investment in staffing over the two-year period is detailed in Audit Finding #9 below.
- **The successful collaboration of Parents and Teachers Talking Together (PT3).** Building on initial groundwork completed in spring 2018, PT3 began the 2018-19 school year with relationship-building activities to ensure group members could collaborate in addressing priority areas of interest. Later in the year, PT3 successfully addressed these priorities, as sub-groups produced a mission statement, parent survey, and professional development needs assessment by year-end. PT3 will continue its work into the 2019-20 school year, and will also further collaborate with the newly formed All Abilities PTO/A sub-committee.

### **Progress by Each Audit Finding**

As noted above, D64 identified 10 findings to focus our work during the 2018-19 school year. Detailed progress on each finding is listed below.

**Audit Finding 1:** *Strong, systemic professional development opportunities need to be provided throughout the buildings and district to all staff (i.e., co-teaching, restorative justice, facilitated IEP, goal writing, diversity/disability awareness training, mentoring).*

To date, D64 has:

- Held 32 professional development trainings in-house for staff
- Held three trainings for parents
- Encouraged collaboration across disciplines
- Provided opportunities for staff to attend various professional development trainings outside of D64
- Completed a staff professional development needs assessment for use in planning for the 2019-20 school year

**Audit Finding 2:** *Special Education Administrators need to become visible, accessible, and instructional leaders.*

To date, the Director and Assistant Director of Student Services have been actively involved throughout the 2018-19 school year by:

- Attending and participating in 504 and IEP meetings
- Meeting with teams and related services groups
- Visiting schools and classrooms

Additionally, the Director and Assistant Director meet monthly with the Special education coordinators to discuss various items and determine a consistent approach. The special education coordinators are scheduled to be in their assigned buildings approximately 2 ½ days per week; this was made possible by the hiring of an additional special education coordinator at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. During their time in each building, special education coordinators hold staff, team, and IEP meetings as well as engage in various other activities that are in coordination with the building administration.

**Audit Finding 3:** *On-going vertical articulation needs to occur; consider the creation of a newsletter and other communication systems including regularly scheduled meetings.*

To date, D64 has:

- Instituted various communication practices (websites, emails, meetings, staff newsletter, etc.) for staff and parents. This includes updating items in the student services portal for staff with training presentations; releasing a bi-weekly newsletter to staff called “Snapshots”; and updating the parent website
- Reviewed and memorialized policies, procedures, and practices for implementation
- Increased its use of Embrace for state documents and data reporting

**Audit Finding 4:** *Systems (504, MTSS, a continuum of services, and academic and behavioral curriculum/methodologies/interventions/assessment) need to be reviewed, detailed, developed and communicated; these systems need to be implemented consistently and with fidelity.*

To date, D64 has:

- Created a final Section 504 public manual as well as a guidance manual for Assistant Principals
- Finalized the reading and math curricular programs/interventions for special education classrooms
- Begun reviewing and updating the MTSS process
- Begun developing procedures for maintaining school records

**Audit Finding 5:** *Transition processes for students need to be defined.*

To date, D64 has:

- Determined a need to establish a beginning of the year “meet and greet” for students
- Developed EC to K and 5th to 6th grade transition processes
- Begun discussing and instituting more efficient measures to communicate with D207 regarding 9th grade transitions
- Relayed expectations for students from outplacements returning to D64 within IEP meetings

**Audit Finding 6:** *Co-taught classrooms need to have defined expectations and goals.*

To date, D64 has offered three different trainings to teachers in co-teaching environments.

**Audit Finding 7:** Establish programs for inclusion of students (peer buddy, Special Olympics, disability/diversity awareness, etc.).

To date, D64 has:

- Begun developing a disability awareness curriculum
- Created a District-wide Special Olympics team

Additionally, other celebrations of inclusion occurred at individual buildings such as:

- Two Field School students who planned and facilitated an after school party for students receiving services within the instructional classroom and their siblings
- Recognition of an Infinitec award winner at Lincoln Middle School

**Audit Finding 8:** *Engage parents to gain their perspectives, create communication tools and develop resources for parents (i.e. parent universities, Parents and Teachers Talking Together (PT3), annual parent survey, PTO, handbook, website resources, etc.).*

To date, D64 has:

- Updated the resources and information for parents on the [Student Services webpage](#)
- Held 3 Special Education Board Committee meetings
- Met with PTO or All Abilities Sub-Committee representatives on four occasions
- Held 8 PT3 group meetings

A full overview of PT3 activities and accomplishments is included as Attachment 2. The 39-member group includes working groups on parent education, District, training/curriculum, and students. Each subgroup works on activities that correlate with the audit findings. Major items that were completed this year include: a Special Education Mission Statement; a Parent Satisfaction Survey; and a Professional Development Needs Assessment for D64 staff.

The mission statement of Special Education as agreed to by PT3 members is:

*Inspire every child to discover, learn, achieve, and care by recognizing every child has unique and individual needs, while fostering a learning environment that promotes every child's creativity through academic, emotional, and social development.*

It was important to PT3 to align the mission statement for special education with the D64 mission statement.

The parent survey results are also reported in depth in Attachment 2. The survey was distributed via email to every parent that has a child in D64 receiving specialized services, within and outside of D64 schools. 108 responses were received, yielding approximately a 10.86% response rate.

The key findings from the parent survey indicate very high approval of D64 special education services and improvement actions:

- Overall, 87% of the responding parents indicated that they were satisfied with their child's special education services in the 2018-19 school year.
- 89.8% of the respondents were satisfied with their child's IEP meeting in the 2018-19 school year.
- 84.3% of the parent respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the communication from their child's IEP team this past year.
- Overall, 77.8% of the parents responding indicated that they agreed that the special education services in the District are improving.

Looking ahead, PT3 has already clearly identified specific areas of work and focus for 2019-20, which are also detailed in Attachment 2. At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, D64 will reach out to active members to see if they wish to remain on PT3 and additionally, we will seek replacements for those who have not participated. The group has reached consensus to invite general education staff and other related services staff to be participants in PT3. We anticipate

PT3 will remain a highly productive, collaborative environment for parents and teachers to come together for the benefit of special education and all D64 students.

**Audit Finding 9:** *Secure additional staff to provide additional programming options (BCBA, psychologist, social worker, dean, and special education administrators).*

To date, D64 has:

- Hired additional special education staff at the beginning of 2018-19 school year (BCBA, Psychologist, Social Worker, and special education coordinator)
- Completed the Staff Needs Assessment Survey
- Received approval of the Board to hire an additional .5 special education coordinator and .5 resource teacher during the 2018-19 year
- Received approval of the Board for the 2019-20 school year to hire a 1.0 FTE Assistive Technology Specialist (currently .4), an Intervention Coach, 1 instructional teacher, 2 resource teachers, a nurse, and 2 additional speech and language therapists

**Audit Finding 10:** *Create a path for change that does not have competing reform efforts.*

To date, D64 has:

- Ensured all special education coordinators had common goals for evaluation purposes to promote consistency of messages to staff
- Promoted this outcome as identified in the listing of activities in the other audit updates

### **Summer 2019 Activities**

During summer 2019, the Director and Assistant Director of Student Services will complete the following activities:

- Analyze the staff professional development needs assessment for FY20 planning
- Provide training on the 504 manual to administrators and begin development of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) manual
- Hire all required staff
- Begin reviewing and updating the D64 Student Records Processes and Procedures
- Create a budget, order and schedule training on all selected curricular programs/interventions for special education classrooms

### **Plans for the Four Key Targets 2019-20 School Year**

- Review the current service delivery models and provide recommendations to D64 administration and the Board for potential changes to ensure a comprehensive continuum of services
- Further create policies, procedures, systems, and processes to ensure District-wide consistency
- Investigate, review, and monitor curricular programs to ensure appropriate and rigorous

instruction to students

- Continue professional development to staff on curricular programs and interventions for implementation with fidelity and increased student achievement
- Continue development of rich communication systems with all stakeholders to ensure accurate messages are sent and received
- Implementation of activities that promote an inclusionary mindset and positive outcomes
- Development of tools and resources for parents to promote positive home-school-community relationships
- Collaboration with parent groups (PT3 and All Abilities) to ensure aligned perspectives and positive working relationships

I look forward to presenting the department's update and sharing priority projects with members of the Board at the July 15, 2019 regular meeting.

### Crosswalk of Audits

<b>Action Findings</b>	<b>Internal - Padavic</b>	<b>External - LMT</b>
<p><b>Finding 1:</b> Strong, systemic professional development opportunities need to be provided throughout the buildings and district to all staff (i.e. co-teaching, restorative justice, facilitated IEP, goal writing, diversity/disability awareness training, mentoring).</p>	<p>Staffing Professional Development Parents/Guardians Standardization of Practice</p>	<p>Strong, systematic professional development  High quality professional development (goal writing)  Training for administrators</p>
<p><b>Finding 2:</b> Special Education Administrators need to become visible, accessible, and instructional leaders.</p>	<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Being visible, building trust, and making critical decisions</p>
<p><b>Finding 3:</b> On-going vertical articulation needs to occur; consider the creation of a newsletter and other communication systems including regularly scheduled meetings.</p>	<p>Staffing Parents/Guardians</p>	<p>Shared ownership and placement of students by all members of the IEP team  Open Communication</p>
<p><b>Finding 4:</b> Systems (504, MTSS, a continuum of services, and academic and behavioral curriculum/methodologies/interventions/assessment) need to be reviewed, detailed, developed and communicated; these systems need to be implemented consistently and with fidelity.</p>	<p>Department &amp; Curriculum Continuum of Services Standardization of Practice</p>	<p>Detailed information on the MTSS process  Continuum of Services  Programming options</p>
<p><b>Finding 5:</b> Transition process for students need to be defined.</p>		<p>Vertical articulation  Process for exiting special education</p>



<p><b>Finding 6:</b> Co-taught classrooms need to have defined expectations and goals.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Strong, systematic professional development</p> <p>Define expectations and goals for co-taught classrooms</p>
<p><b>Finding 7:</b> Establish programs for inclusion of students (peer buddy, Special Olympics, disability/diversity awareness, etc.).</p>	<p>Standardization of Practice</p>	<p>Celebration of inclusion</p> <p>Celebration of diversity</p>
<p><b>Finding 8:</b> Engage parents to gain their perspectives, create communication tools and develop resources for parents (i.e. parent universities, PT3, annual parent survey, PTO, handbook, website resources, etc.).</p>	<p>Professional development Parents/Guardians</p>	<p>Parent resources</p>
<p><b>Finding 9:</b> Secure additional staff to provide additional programming options (BCBA, psychologist, social worker, dean, and special education administrators).</p>	<p>Department and Curriculum Continuum of Services</p> <p>Behavioral Support at Tier 2 and Tier 3</p> <p>District Investment in Special Education</p>	<p>Coordinator position adjustment</p> <p>Behavior management specialist on staff</p>
<p><b>Finding 10:</b> Create a path for change that does not have competing reform efforts.</p>		<p>Initiative review</p>

## Overview of PT3 Activities and Accomplishments

The PT3 group is currently comprised of 39 individuals. Of these, 18 are parents, 13 are staff, and 8 are administrators. The group meets on a monthly basis. The individuals have divided themselves into four working groups: parent education, District, training/curriculum, and students. Each of these subgroups has chosen to work on activities that correlate with the audit findings. Some of these activities were completed, some are in progress, and others will be addressed hopefully in the next school year.

Items that were completed this year include: a Special Education Mission Statement; a Parent Satisfaction Survey; and a Professional Development Needs Assessment for D64 staff. Each of these areas is described in more detail below.

### Mission Statement

It was important to PT3 to align the mission statement for special education with the D64 mission statement. The mission statement of Special Education as agreed to by PT3 members is:

*Inspire every child to discover, learn, achieve, and care by recognizing every child has unique and individual needs, while fostering a learning environment that promotes every child's creativity through academic, emotional, and social development.*

### Parent Survey Results

PT3 developed and disseminated a parent survey at the beginning of May. The survey closed on May 17, so that the PT3 sub-group could review the data at their meeting on May 21. The survey was sent via email to every parent that has a child in D64 that receives specialized services; this included parents who had students receiving specialized services within and outside of D64 schools. D64 sent the survey to 1,169 emails; 1,086 were delivered, with 83 not delivered.

PT3 received 108 responses yielding approximately a 10.86% response rate. Of those responding, 92.6% indicated their student was receiving services within D64 with 7.4% indicating that their student was receiving services outside of the District. The questions were written as per a Likert Scale system where a rating of "1" was descriptive of *dissatisfied* or *highly disagree* and a rating of "5" was descriptive of *highly satisfied* or *highly agree*.

Here are the key findings:

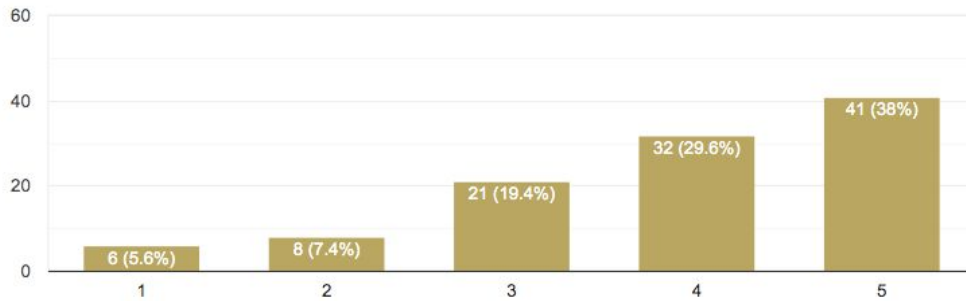
- Question 2 - asked parents how satisfied they were with their child's special education services in the 2018-19 school year. **Overall, 87% of the parents indicated that they were satisfied with their child's special education services in the 2018-19 school**

year.

On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with your child's special education services in the 2018-2019 school year?



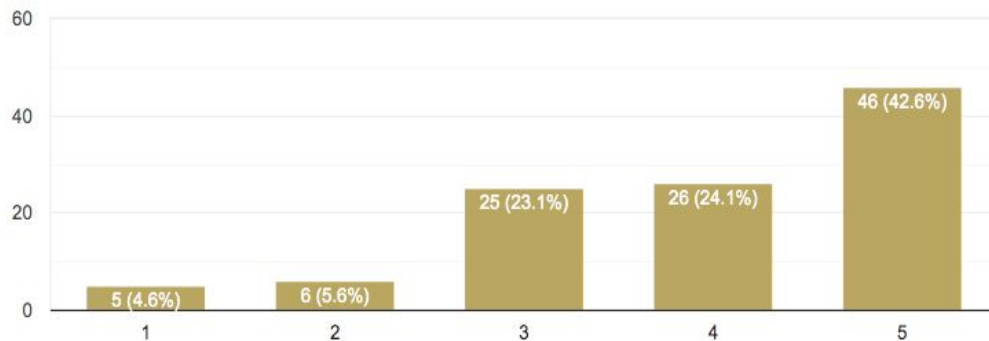
108 responses



- Question 3 - asked parents how satisfied they were with their child's IEP meetings in the 2018-19 school year. The survey indicated **almost 90% of the parents were satisfied with their child's IEP meeting in the 2018-19 school year.**

On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with your child's IEP meeting(s) in the 2018-2019 school year?

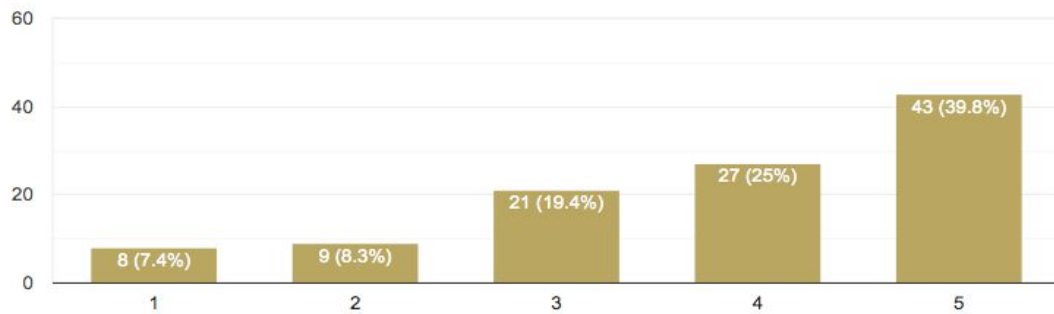
108 responses



- Question 4 - asked parents how satisfied they were with communication from their child's IEP team during the 2018-19 school year. Of the parents that responded, **84.3% of the parents indicated that they were satisfied with the communication from their child's IEP team this past year.**

**On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with communication from your child's IEP team in the 2018-2019 school year?**

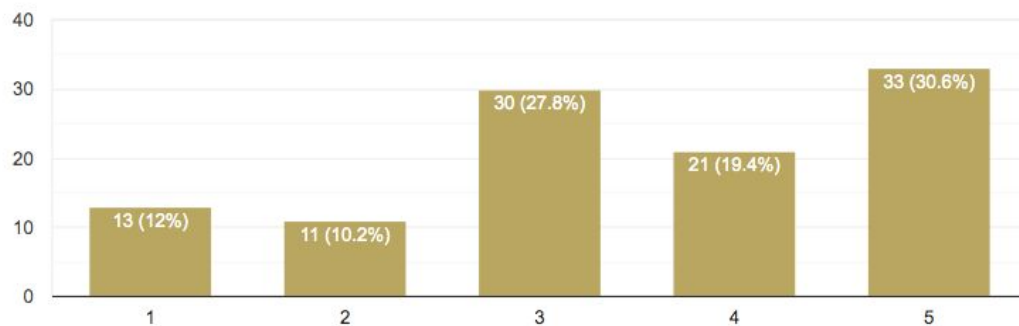
108 responses



- Question 5 - asked parents if they feel special education services in the District are improving. Overall, **77.8% of the parents indicated that they agreed that the special education services in the District are improving.**

**On a scale of 1-5, do you feel that special education services in the district are improving?**

108 responses



The survey also requested additional input from parents; 38 responses were received and coded.

Positive comments from the survey included:

- Staff going “above and beyond” for students (3 responses)
- Individual comments included:
  - Being pleased with the services and education
  - A positive experience with a transition meeting from middle school to high school
  - A positive first year at middle school
  - The ability for opportunities for learning outside of the classroom (field trips,

after school programs)

Concerns from the survey included:

- Lack of communication between home and school (9 responses)
- Continuum of services needs to be expanded (4 responses)
- Communication issues between general and special education in student needs (training and knowledge of accommodations/modifications) (3 responses)
- Increase parent education/training (3 responses) (MTSS, special education rules and regulations)
- More instructional teachers per building are needed (3 responses)
- Coordination/collaboration for teams (2 responses)
- Identification of additional strategies and techniques for academics, sensory, and behavioral needs for students (2 responses)
- Not all audit findings have been addressed (2 responses)
- Individual comments included:
  - Need to include students and their input into their education plan
  - Need to include special education needs in addressing building/facility discussions
  - Special Olympics access needs to be easier
  - Lack of support from District Office
  - Service delivery model needs to be expanded (inclusion, co-teaching, LRE, extended learning block)
  - Different staff working with students on a year to year basis
  - Communication of the status of the audits
  - Need to increase related services (SLP, OT)
  - Increased options for related services for preschool students

### **Professional Development Needs Assessment**

PT3 had also developed a professional development needs assessment. The survey has closed and data is being compiled and analyzed. This task will be completed further during the summer.

### **Activities in Progress**

The following items are activities PT3 is currently in the process of working on:

- Development of a disability awareness program in collaboration with the All Abilities PTO sub-committee
- Establishment of a Best Buddies or like program
- Establishment of inclusionary instructional, recess, and lunch activities
- Creation of common accessible language for parents

Items that will also be addressed include:

- Development and distribution of a training needs assessment to parents to develop Parent

#### University workshops

- Further development of a parent website
- Continuum and consistency of services across the district
- Establishing a consistent communication plan throughout the district
- Development of shared resources for special education staff and families; includes recommendations for updates to web-pages
- Facilitated IEP roll-out
- Parent-advisory group for the use of behavioral interventions for children with disabilities
- Coordination of district-wide Special Olympics team for 2020

Other areas currently being considered include identifying needs of parents with students with 504 plans and special education planning for building construction. Additionally, administration and PT3 will review further the concerns identified from the parent survey.

#### **Membership**

At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, we will reach out to active members to see if they wish to remain on PT3. Additionally, we will seek replacements for those who have not participated. The group has reached consensus to invite general education staff and other related services staff to be participants in PT3.