West Northfield School District # 31

Special Education Review

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Acknowledgements

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Methodology

This section describes the methodology utilized in the evaluation study to collect data as evidence to answer the major evaluation questions and support recommendations. A chart of the evaluation questions and data sources is followed by a description of each method used for collecting the data.

Major Evaluation Questions and Sources of Data

The WestEd team addressed the major evaluation questions through a variety of means including document reviews, school and district accountability data such as finance and academic achievement data, focus group and interview data, classroom observation, and IEP review data. This information was used to provide supportive evidence for findings and recommendations regarding the continuum of supports, multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), finance, student results and outcomes, and professional development needs of the staff. The special education program review addressed the following questions.

1. **Continuum of Services**:
   - What is the continuum of services and support available to students with disabilities in the West Northfield School District?
   - What is the district's capacity to provide a full continuum of effective programs and services to meet the educational and related services needs of its students with disabilities within the district?
   - What is the quality of specific programs or types of service delivery models within the district?

- To what degree do students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs?
- To what degree are IEPs configured for educational benefit?
- What factors may be contributing to placement of students in out-of-district or segregated placements?
- To what degree can programming be modified to reduce the number of out of district placements?
-

2. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:

- Is there a multi-tiered system of support in place to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all learners?
- Does the multi-tiered system of support, including Tier I grade level instruction, have a data-based decision-making structure that uses data to inform instructional practice?
- Does the multi-tiered system of support have a means to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction within the grade-level Tier 1 general education classroom?
- Does instructional pedagogy reflect evidence-based practices and the principles of universal design for learning in all classrooms?
- Does targeted instruction occur during tiered intervention time?
- Does the multi-tiered system of support have criteria for entry and exit of the tiered interventions for academics and behavior?
- Is there a clearly defined process for special education referral?

3. Finance:

- To what degree are special education resources being used in a cost-effective and efficient manner?
- In what ways might costs be reduced while continuing to maintain high quality programs and services to students with diverse disabilities within the district?

4. Student Results/Outcomes:

- How are students with disabilities performing on state and/or district-wide assessments?
- To what degree are there discrepancies between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers on measures such as student achievement results, behavior and social emotional issues?
- Are skill gaps closing for students with disabilities receiving special education services?

5. Professional Development:

- What type of professional development support exists for job embedded support through professional learning communities, grade/subject teams and/or coaching and mentoring?
- What professional development support exists for providing differentiated instruction to diverse learners?

The following chart presents the major evaluation questions and the sources of data that provided supportive evidence for findings. Multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data that produce similar findings build confidence that the findings are accurate.

Major Evaluation Questions and Data Sources by Focus Area	Documents	Assessment Data	Focus Groups	IEP Reviews	Classroom Observations
1. Continuum of Services					
● What is the continuum of services and support available to students with disabilities in the West Northfield School District?	*		*		*
● What is the district's capacity to provide a full continuum of effective programs and services to meet the educational and related services needs of its students with disabilities within the district?	*		*	*	*
● What is the quality of specific programs or types of service delivery models within the district?	*		*		
● To what degree do students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs?			*		*
● To what degree are IEPs configured for educational benefit?			*	*	*
● What factors may be contributing to placement of students in out-of-district or segregated placements?			*	*	*
● To what degree can programming be modified to reduce the number of out of district placements?			*		
2. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support					
● Is there a multi-tiered system of support in place to meet the academic and social emotional needs of all learners?			*		*
● Does the multi-tiered system of support, including Tier I grade level instruction, have a data-based decision-making structure that uses data to inform instructional practice?			*		
● Does the multi-tiered system of support have a means to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction within the grade-level Tier 1 general education classroom?			*		*
● Does targeted instruction occur during tiered intervention time?			*		*

Major Evaluation Questions and Data Sources by Focus Area	Documents	Assessment Data	Focus Groups	IEP Reviews	Classroom Observation
• Does the multi-tiered system of support have criteria for entry and exit of the tiered interventions for academics and behavior?			*		
• Is there a clearly defined process for special education referral?			*		
3. Finance					
• To what degree are special education resources being used in a cost-effective and efficient manner?	*		*		
• In what ways might costs be reduced while continuing to maintain high quality programs and services to students with diverse disabilities within the district?	*				
4. Student Results/Outcomes					
• How are students with disabilities performing on state and/or district-wide assessments?		*			
• To what degree are there discrepancies between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers on measures such as student achievement results, behavior and social-emotional issues?		*			
• Are skill gaps closing for students with disabilities receiving special education services?		*			
5. Professional Development					
• What type of professional development support exists for job-embedded support through professional learning communities, grade/subject teams and/or coaching and mentoring?			*		
• What professional development support exists for providing differentiated instruction to diverse learners?			*		

Data Collection

Protocols for data collection such as the focus group questions, walk-through tool, and IEP review tools were developed to address each of the study questions. Some protocols were designed to specifically answer the same questions across various stakeholder groups to gain different perspectives. For instance, most of the focus group questions related to the continuum of special education services and the implementation of an MTSS framework as each group provided different insights into these programs. This data collection practice is used to triangulate qualitative data to ensure the most valid information is used to determine findings and recommendations.

Documents reviewed included the student services section of the district website, which contains documents on programs and services available, including Section 504 Plans, services for English Learners (Emerging Bilinguals, EB), homebound and hospital instruction, homeless services, literacy intervention, social work and counseling, RTI and information on special education programming. Other documents include financial documentation provided by the district, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and the Illinois District Report Card and statewide assessment data from the Illinois State Board of Education website.

Results

This section presents findings by data source (documents, student achievement data, fiscal, focus groups, observations, and IEP review), and a summary of findings organized by the evaluation questions.

Background on the Program

West Northfield School District is a district that is located approximately 17 miles northwest of Chicago. With schools located in Northbrook and Glenview, Illinois, West Northfield is an elementary school district with two schools, Henry Winkelman Elementary and Stanley Field Middle School.

West Northfield School District supports their mission of:

Inspiring Minds, Building Futures, together

West Northfield employs 95 teachers serving PK-8th grade with an enrollment of 868 students. The administrator-to-student ratio is 129 to 1. The teacher-to-student ratio is 12 to 1. Sixty-two percent of the teachers have a master's degree or higher and the district has a teacher retention rate of 81.8%. One hundred percent of the teachers are licensed in the State of Illinois have an average class size of 17.

During the 2018-2019 school year, 41.5% of the student population was white which is comparable to the state average, 36.9% Asian which is much higher than the state average, 10.9% Hispanic which is lower than the state, and 2.4% Black which is lower than the state average. The two or More Races was 8.3 percent, which is a bit higher than the state. English Learners (Emerging Bilinguals EB) comprised 20.9% of West Northfield's student population, which is high compared to the state overall. The percentage of Low-Income students in the district was 20.6 % of the district population, which is lower than the State average of 48.8%. Students with IEPs made up 14% of the district population, which is only slightly lower than the state average. The high percentage of English learners (EB) points to the need for adequate services to meet the needs of English learners (EB). Table 1 below compares demographics between West Northfield and the state.

Table 1: Student Demographics 2018

	West Northfield	State
Low Income	20.6%	48.8%
English Learners	20.9%	12.1%
Students with IEPs	14%	15%
African American/Black	2.4%	17%
Asian	36.9%	5%
Hispanic	10.9%	26%
Two or More Races	8.3%	4%
White	41.5%	48%

Of students with disabilities, 39% are white, 24% Asian, 18% Hispanic, 11% two or more races and 9% black. Table 2 compares the Racial/Ethnic diversity of students with IEPs with the state averages. West Northfield has a lower White, Black and Hispanic population than the state average, but the Asian population is considerably higher than the state average.

Table 2: Percentage of Students with IEPs

	West Northfield	State
White	39%	47%
Black	9%	20%
Hispanic	18%	26%
Asian	24%	3%
Two or More Races	11%	4%

Thirty-one percent of the students with IEPs had an eligibility of Developmental Delay which is significantly higher than the state average of 13%. Nineteen percent of the students with disabilities had an eligibility for Speech or Language Impaired, 14% Other health Impairment, 9% Autism, 14% Specific Learning Disability, 11% Emotional Disability, 1% Multiple Disabilities, 1% Intellectual Disabilities and 1% Hearing Impairment. The percentage identified under Specific Learning disability is significantly lower than the state average, which brings to question the fact

that some students with SLD may be erroneously identified as having Developmental Delay. While Speech and Language Impairment is only slightly higher than the state average, the higher percentage may be indicative of inappropriate identification of English learners (EB)as having speech and language impairments.

Table 3: Percentage of Disability Categories

	West Northfield	State
Developmentally Delayed	31%	13%
Speech and Language Impaired	19%	16%
Other Health Impaired	14%	13%
Specific Learning Disability	14%	34%
Emotional Disability	11%	6%
Autism	9%	9%
Hearing Impairment	1%	1%
Intellectual Disabilities	1%	5%
Multiple Disabilities	1%	1%

State data shows that in 2018, 93% of students with IEPs participated in the Illinois Assessment of Readiness in English Language Arts, 92% participated in Mathematics and 100% of students with disabilities participated in the Science portion of the IAR.

Gap Analysis data for 2018 shows there is a 45-point gap in English Language Art between students with disabilities and their grade level peers, and a 43-point gap in Mathematics. These gaps are significantly higher than the state gap of 34 for ELA and 27 for Math.

For both students with disabilities and as a district, West Northfield School District students are performing well above the state average on the IAR. Table 3 shows the proficiency for West Northfield students compared to the state.

Table 3: Northfield Proficiency on the IAR

	Students with Disabilities ELA	Students with Disabilities **State** ELA	Students with Disabilities Math	Students with Disabilities **State** Math
Exceeded	1%	1%	1%	1%
Met	19%	8%	17%	8%
Approached	19%	15%	19%	14%
Partially Met	25%	27%	32%	33%
Did Not Meet	32%	49%	26%	44%

Special Education Programming

Based on data from the West Northfield website, in 2018-2019 the special education program at West Northfield School District provided services to 99 students ages 3-14 years old, or until they graduated from 8th grade. The following describes the continuum of special education supports

and services that are described as the scope of special education services in West Northfield School District.

Academic instruction for students with IEPs is provided in the general education classroom (push-in model) or in separate classrooms for students with IEPs (pull-out model). Instruction is provided by special education teachers in the general education classroom through small group instruction and curriculum adaptations. In-class supports are provided in both the elementary and middle schools.

This push-in model of special education supports meets the federal mandate of providing services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Information on the district website reports that teachers work closely with the general education teachers to support students with IEPs to meet the classroom expectations. This in-class instruction can include rephrasing of directions, providing additional cues, modifying assignments, and providing increased feedback. The pull-out model replaces a student's core curriculum and is provided by the special educator.

Resource Services
The Resource services classroom creates an opportunity for individual or small group instruction outside of the general education classroom. At the elementary level, students may be pulled out of their core content classes to receive specific instruction from the special educator. At the middle school level, students receive resource services rather than taking Spanish or other electives. The instruction in the Resource Room is intended to address specific skill deficiencies which interfere with the student's achievement in the general education classroom. The instruction may focus on specific skill development, learning strategies, organizational strategies, and/or study skills. The specialized instruction received in the Resource Room may be related to class assignments or may be remedial. The goal of the Resource Room is to help students to better able to function in their general education classrooms.

Instructional Classrooms
For students with more significant academic needs, the district provides Instructional Classrooms, which are district self-contained classrooms where students receive specially designed instruction in the core curriculum. This instruction is delivered by the special educator through small group instruction that is aligned to the grade-level standards. These students receive all their core instruction in a special education setting and are included in general education classrooms for all non-core instruction with their typically developing grade level peers.

Special Education Staffing
In West Northfield, five teachers serve approximately 40 students at the elementary level with an average caseload of 8 students for each teacher. At the middle school four teachers serve 30 students with an average caseload near 8 per teacher. The middle school teachers also case manage 11 students with 504 plans who do not receive direct instructional supports from the special educator.

North Suburban Special Education District Services (NSSED)
The district contracts with NSSED, a local district co-op for their preschool, some related services and for programs for students with significant needs. NSSED is an educational cooperative compromised of 18 school districts in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Although services are provided by NSSED, the majority of the contracted programs are housed in the district. The staff, including all related service staff, curriculum and resources for each program are provided exclusively by NSSED.

Preschool Program
The NSSED preschool program provides educational services to children with disabilities ages three through five. All preschool students are evaluated and served by NSSED staff.

Supported Learning Environment
Students with the most significant needs are provided both academic and life skills in a self-contained environment. NSSED staff provides the skill development and instruction to these students in classrooms located in the district as well as out of district.

North Shore Academy Social Emotional Behavior Program
North Shore Academy is a therapeutic day school that serves students who struggle with the social, emotional, and behavioral demands of school. The program provides services to meet their complex therapeutic and educational needs. Students in this program receive individualized therapeutic and academic supports to prepare them to return to a less restrictive setting.

Speech and Language Services
Speech and Language services are provided to students to address difficulties with the articulation of sounds and understanding and producing language which can impact communication with others. Services in West Northfield School District are provided either in a separate small group setting or in the general education classroom environment. Therapy focuses primarily on the development of age-appropriate expressive and receptive language skills.

In West Northfield School District, two SLPs provide services to students in K through 8th grade. Both are district employees. The elementary only SLP serves 17 identified students and provides services to 7 unidentified students and the middle school SLP providing services to both the elementary and middle school provides services to 24 identified students and 13 non-identified students.

Counseling Services
School psychologists and school counselors provide counseling services to students to address difficulties with interpersonal skills, peer group dynamics, and conflict resolution. Counseling is offered to all students including those with IEPs. Services can be provided through consultation with teachers to address behavioral concerns or psychologists may facilitate social skills groups to support the development of appropriate social and peer skills.

School psychologists are also responsible for diagnostic evaluation assessments and coordinating the multi-disciplinary initial evaluation of students suspected of having a disability.

At the elementary school, one full time psychologists provides services to students with IEPs and is the case manager for 12 students who have Section 504 plans. The elementary school also has two social workers. There is an additional psychologist at the elementary school that serves the students in the NSSED programs onsite. One psychologist and two social workers to support students at the middle school as well.

Background Summary

In the 2018-2019 school year, West Northfield School district provided special education services to approximately 14% of the student population. Of the students with IEPs, 56% participate in the general curriculum more than 80% of the day as their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which is slightly higher than the state average of 53%.

Special education programming provides academic support with in-class small group and individualized instruction through push-in and pull-out models. Resource supports are provided at all grade levels as an option for students to be pulled out of the general education classroom for small group or individual instruction focused either on skills needed to access the general curriculum or core instruction aligned to the general curriculum. In addition to special education provided by the special education teacher, services such as Speech Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists are provided by the North Suburban Special Education Co-Op and support related services either in the classroom or in pull-out setting as prescribed in the IEP.

The review of documents on the school district website provides a picture of a successful district on many fronts when compared to state averages. The district boasts a highly qualified teaching staff with a very low student to teacher ratio and overall academic achievement higher than the state, but with achievement gaps for subgroups that exceed the state averages.

Extant Data Analysis

Student Achievement

A review of the Illinois School and District profiles provided the following information regarding the academic achievement on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for school year in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts (ELA) and math for the 2018-2019 school year.

In reviewing the most recent data available, West Northfield students outperformed the state in both ELA and math. Across the West Northfield School District in ELA, 18% of students exceeded expectations compared to the state average of 6%. In West Northfield 43% of students met expectations compared to the state average of 32%. Nineteen percent of students across West Northfield approached standards compared to the state average of 26%. Eleven percent of

students in West Northfield School District partially met expectations compared to the state average of 19%. West Northfield School District had 9% of its students not meet expectations compared to the state average of 16%.

Across West Northfield in Math 13% of all students exceeded expectations compared to the state average of 6%. Forty-three percent of West Northfield students met expectations compared to 27% of students in the state. Twenty-five percent of the students approached the standards while the state average was 27%.
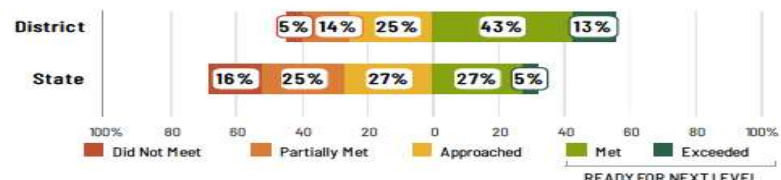
West Northfield Academic Achievement in ELA and Math Compared to State

Fourteen percent of the students across West Northfield School district partially met expectations compared to the state average of 25%. Five percent of students across the district did not meet expectations compared to the state average of 16%.

Subgroup Data

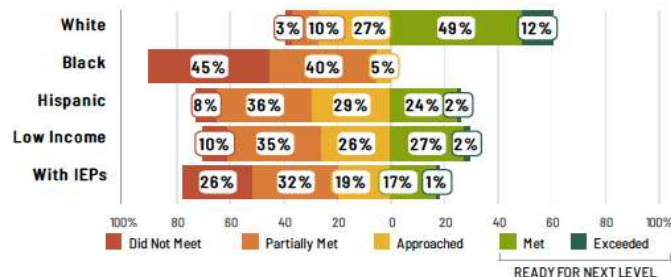When reviewing the 2019 ELA and math subgroup data, the WestEd team focused on students with IEPs and students who are low income compared to all students enrolled in West Northfield since the purpose of the review was to examine how the district is meeting the needs of struggling learners. These populations comprised the largest subgroups with 14% of the school population being students with disabilities and 20% of the population being low income learners.

West Northfield Subgroup Academic Achievement in ELA and Math Compared to State

For 2018-2019, in ELA for grades 3-8, 20% of the students with disabilities population met or exceeded expectations, 34% of low-income learners scored in these categories while 61% of all students in the district met or exceeded expectations. A 45-percentage point gap exists in ELA between students

with and without IEPs and a 34-percentage point gap exists between the low income and non-low-income groups.

For 2018-2019, in math for grades 3-8 18% of the students with disabilities met or exceeded expectations, 29% of the low-income group scored in this range and 56% of all students in grades 3-8 scored in the met or exceeded expectations range. A 43-percentage point gap exists between students with and without IEPs and a gap of 33 percentage points exists between low income and non-low-income students.
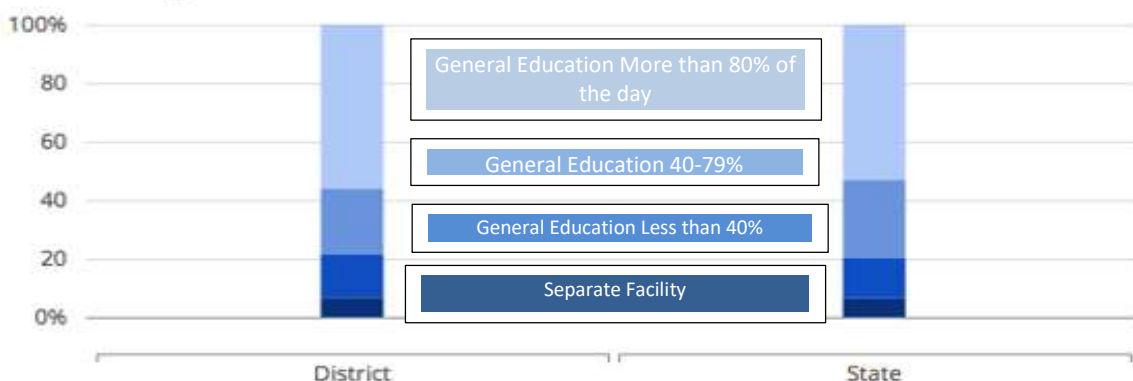
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
The educational environment refers to the extent to which students with IEPs receive special education and related services in the general education classroom.

- 80% or more of time in a general classroom with their non-disabled peers
- 40-79% of time in a general classroom
- Less than 40% of time in a general classroom
- In a separate facility

In 2017 for students ages 6-21, 56% of students with disabilities in West Northfield District were in the general education classroom more than 80% of the day. This is higher than the state average of 53% of students with disabilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom more 80% of the day.

Twenty-three percent of students ages 6-21 in West Northfield district were receiving instruction in the general education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day, which is slightly lower than the 27% of students with disabilities statewide.

% Students by Classroom Environment - 2017

General Education More than 80% of the day

General Education 40-79%

General Education Less than 40%

Separate Facility

West Northfield Least Restrictive Environment Percentages Compared to State

Fifteen percent of students with disabilities were in the general education classroom less than 40% compared to the state average of 14%. Seven percent of students with a disability were educated

in a separate facility compared to the state average of 6%. This data shows that LRE data in West Northfield is fairly commensurate with state averages.

Preschool LRE
For pre-school students with IEPs educational environments are classified as:

- Inside a regular education early childhood program: the majority of time, at least 10 hours or 600 minutes per week, is spent in an early childhood program (EC)
- Outside a regular education early childhood program: less than a majority of time is spent in a regular education early childhood program
- At a separate special education class or facility
- Receiving special education services at home
- Receiving services in a service provider's location.

In 2017, for students ages 3-5 with disabilities, 15% were receiving special education services inside the regular education EC Program for their day compared to the state average of 40%. This is a significantly lower number than the state average receiving services with their typically developing peers. Thirty-one percent were outside the general education EC program compared to a 26% state average and 46% were provided special education services in a separate class or facility compared to 27% state average. All of these numbers reflect a fairly restrictive environment for preschoolers with IEPs and a lack of access to learning opportunities with their typically developing peers. Only 8% of students 3-5 with a disability were provided services in service provider location compared to the state average of 7%.

In 2018, the number of students ages 3-5 in West Northfield inside the regular education EC program improved to 58% with no comparison of the state. The number of students outside the general education EC Program was 11%. The number of students receiving services in a separate facility remained fairly high at 21% and the percentage of students receiving services in a service provider location was 11%.

West Northfield Preschool Environments 2018

West Northfield Preschool Environments Compared to State 2017
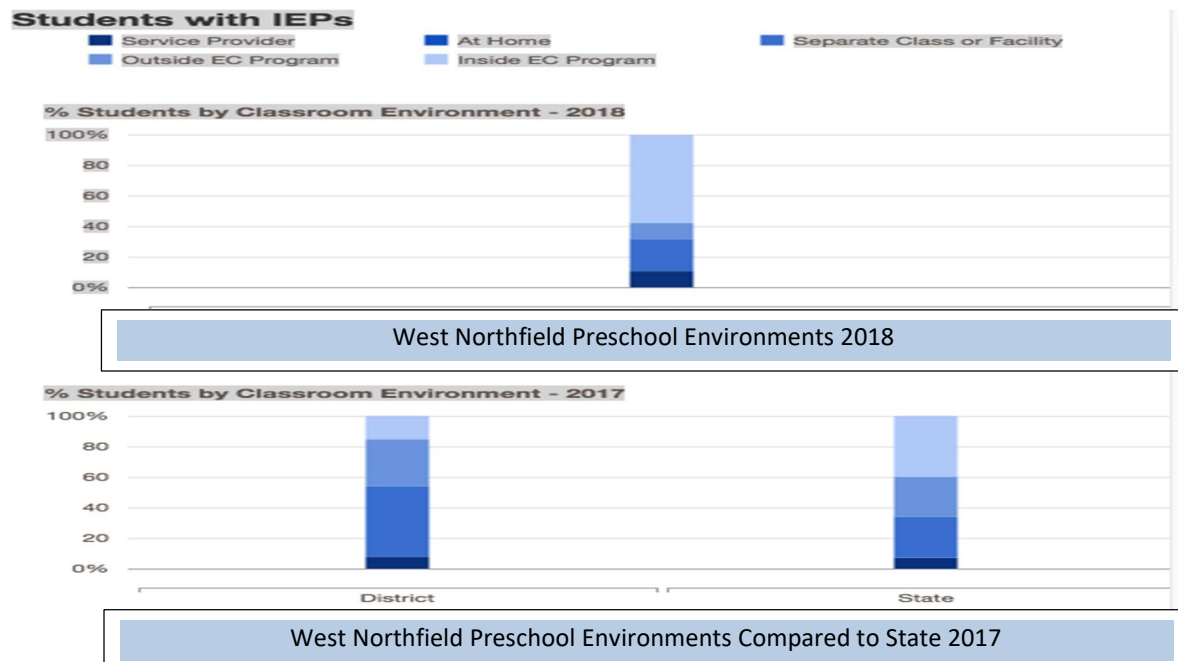
Achievement Gaps
English Language Arts

Across grades 3-8, a 45-percentage point gap exists in ELA for students with disabilities for 2019. This gap is higher than the state average of 34%. In analyzing the achievement gaps across the grade levels for ELA for students with disabilities, a gap of 32 percentage points exists in grade 3. In grade 4, that gap jumps to 58 percentage points but decreases to 49 percentage points in grade 5. In the 6th grade the gap increases again to 69 percentage points and decreases to 57 percentage points in grade 7. There is a huge decrease in the gap in grade 8 to 25percentage points. In ELA, there is a large gap in all grades with the exception of grade 8.
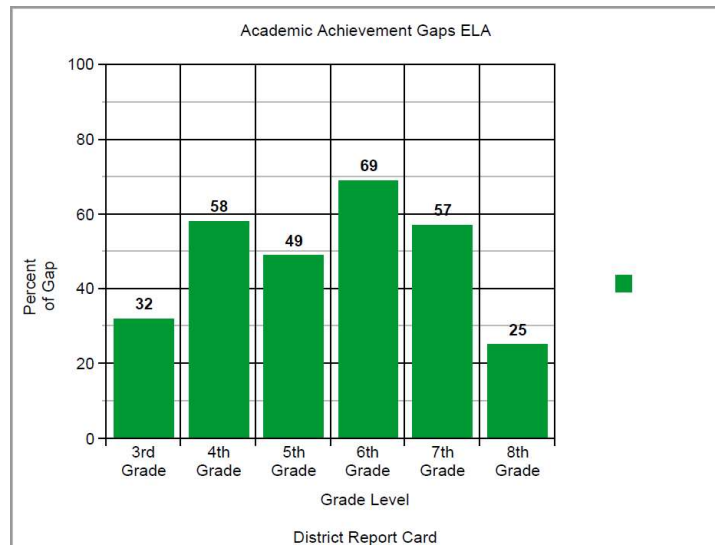
Percentages of gaps on statewide assessments between all students and students with disabilities in ELA at each grade level.

Math
Across grades 3-8, a 43-percentage point gap exists for students with disabilities. This gap is higher than the state average of 27 percentage points. In analyzing the achievement gap across the grade levels in math for students with disabilities, there is no data available for grade 3, but in all grade levels the gaps exceed the state average. In grade 4 there is a 51-percentage point gap between students with an IEP and students without an IEP. This number fall to 37 percentage points for grade 5 and rises again to 64 points in grade 6. In 7th grade, the number drops to 47 percentage points and drops even further (37 percentage points) for grade 8.
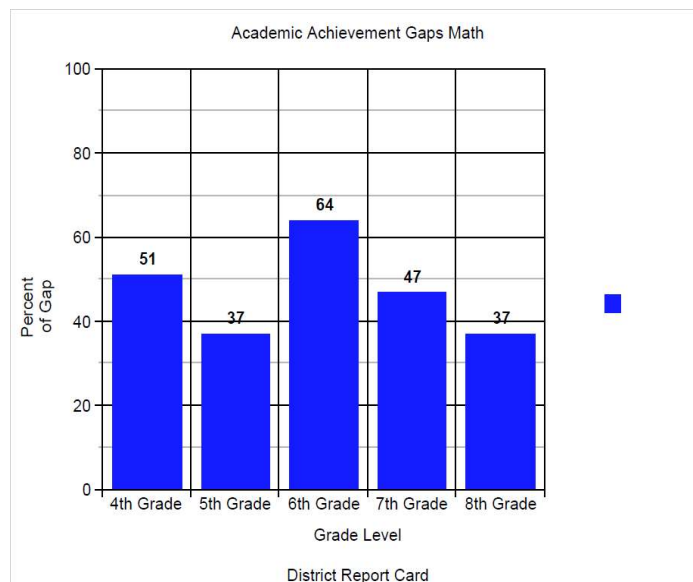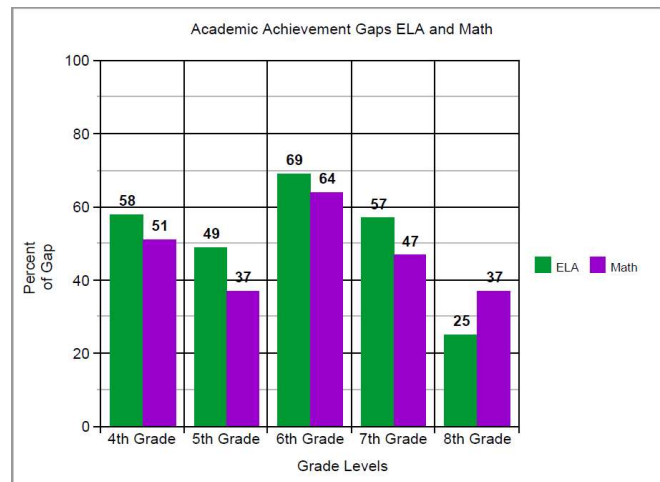
Percentages of gaps on statewide assessments between all students and students with disabilities in Math at each grade level.

Summary of Extant Data

The gap analysis reveals that even though West Northfield has statewide academic high achievement scores overall, an academic achievement gap exists between student with IEPs and the students without IEPs in their performance on statewide assessments across all grade levels. The largest gaps in both ELA and Math are in grades 4 and 6. This reflects the need for more options for direct evidence-based ELA and math instruction that is specifically intended to narrow achievement gaps. The current model of minimal push-in supports and pull-out from core instruction for Resource does not show it is narrowing gaps for students with disabilities. The gaps point to the need for more opportunities to access the grade level core curriculum through co-teaching and in-class special education supports in order to receive instruction from grade level content experts in addition to specially designed instruction by special education teachers in the content areas for those students who need additional support.

While students with disabilities in West Northfield are scoring above the state average in both ELA and math, significant achievement gaps for these students are evident and are significantly higher than the state average at most grade levels in ELA and in all grade levels in math. This is particularly true in grades 4 and 6 in both content areas.

Percent of academic achievement gaps between all students and students with IEPs at each grade level in ELA and Math.

Based on the data, general education students are receiving the supports needed to be successful on the statewide assessment, but the large gap persists between students with IEPs and students without IEPs. This needs to be addressed through more options for access to the grade level core from content area experts in the general education classroom in addition to direct special education instruction across all grade levels in ELA and math.

Fiscal Review

The purpose of this fiscal review was to determine to what degree special education resources are being used in a cost-effective and efficient manner and what ways costs may be reduced while continuing to maintain high quality programs and services, with additional focus on services for preschool school students with disabilities. Of significant interest to West Northfield School District was how their services and spending compare with four similar, nearby Illinois township school districts -- Northbrook ESD 27, Northbrook SD 28, Northbrook/Glenview SD 30, and Glenview CCSD 34. Documents from the Illinois State Board of Education website (ISBE; www.isbe.net) and the West Northfield website (www.district31.net) reviewed for the financial section of this report include:

- 2019 Special Education Expenditures and Receipts Report (FY 2018), May 1, 2019
- Illinois At-A-Glance Report Card 2018-2019
- *West Northfield School District 31 General Fund - Budgetary Basis, SCHEDULE OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES, AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES - BUDGET AND ACTUAL for the Year Ended June 30, 2018*

To examine how West Northfield School District funding supports quality special education programming, WestEd has included a comparison of West Northfield's costs and expenditures, including teacher salaries, to a group of four similar, nearby school districts in Illinois.

Comparison Districts
Figure A (below) describes West Northfield and the comparison districts' school year 2018-2019 demographics including number of schools, enrollment, special populations, and English language arts and math proficiency based on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) and SAT[1] for students with IEPs and without IEPs (SWI and Non SWI).

While the gaps identified for West Northfield were 45% in ELA and 43% in math, all comparison districts had similar gaps in proficiency ranging from 42% to 48% in ELA and from 41% to 47% in math.

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[1] School year 2018-2019 data is the latest Report Card data available on the ISBE website. All Illinois students in grades 3-8 take the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) assessment each year. High school students take the SAT in English Language Arts and Math.

District	No. of Schools	Grade Span	Total Enrollment	Low Income %	SWI %	ELL %	ELA % proficient or higher[1]		Math % proficient or higher[1]	
							Non SWI	SWI	Non SWI	SWI
West Northfield SD 31	*2*	*PK-8*	*886*	*21*	*14*	*21*	*66*	*21*	*61*	*18*
Northbrook ESD 27	3	PK-8	1,273	3	15	5	88	47	81	37
Northbrook SD 28	4	PK-8	1,842	3	14	8	74	27	72	25
Northbrook/Glenview SD 30	3	PK-8	1,219	1	13	9	82	40	84	43
Glenview CCSD 34	8	PK-8	4,740	24	13	17	63	15	60	17

Figure A: Comparison District Demographics from Illinois At-A-Glance Report Card 2018-2019

Expenditures

Figure B shows the net special education expenditures across the comparison districts per student with disabilities for Fiscal Year (FY 2018) and includes each district's Child Count and state ranking. Based on the 2019 Special Education Expenditures and Receipts Report, West Northfield School District has the **second highest Net Expenditure Per Special Education Child Count in the state at $23,540,** just behind Kenilworth SD 38 at $26,561. This figure is tremendously high for the size of the district when compared to all districts in the state. Figures B and C below show how West Northfield compares to four similar, nearby districts and the state.

District	FY 2018 December 1 Child Count	FY 2018 Net Special Education Expenditures	District Rank within the State for Net Special Education Expenditures per Student with IEP for FY 2018
West Northfield SD 31	*131*	*$3,083,732*	*2nd*
Northbrook ESD 27	294	$2,934,532	72nd
Northbrook SD 28	289	$5,365,256	7th
Northbrook/Glenview SD 30	176	$3,293,793	6th
Glenview CCSD 34	847	$10,637,174	36th

Figure B: FY 2018 Net Special Education Expenditures and Expenditures per Student

Below is a graph of the Net Special Education Expenditures per Student with IEP. The state average Net Expenditure per Child Count is $4,158. West Northfield's Net Expenditure per Child Count is 5.66 times more than the state average at $23,540. West Northfield exceeds all the comparison districts in per pupil spending and is the second highest in the state.

Net Special Education Expenditures per Student with IEP (in descending order)

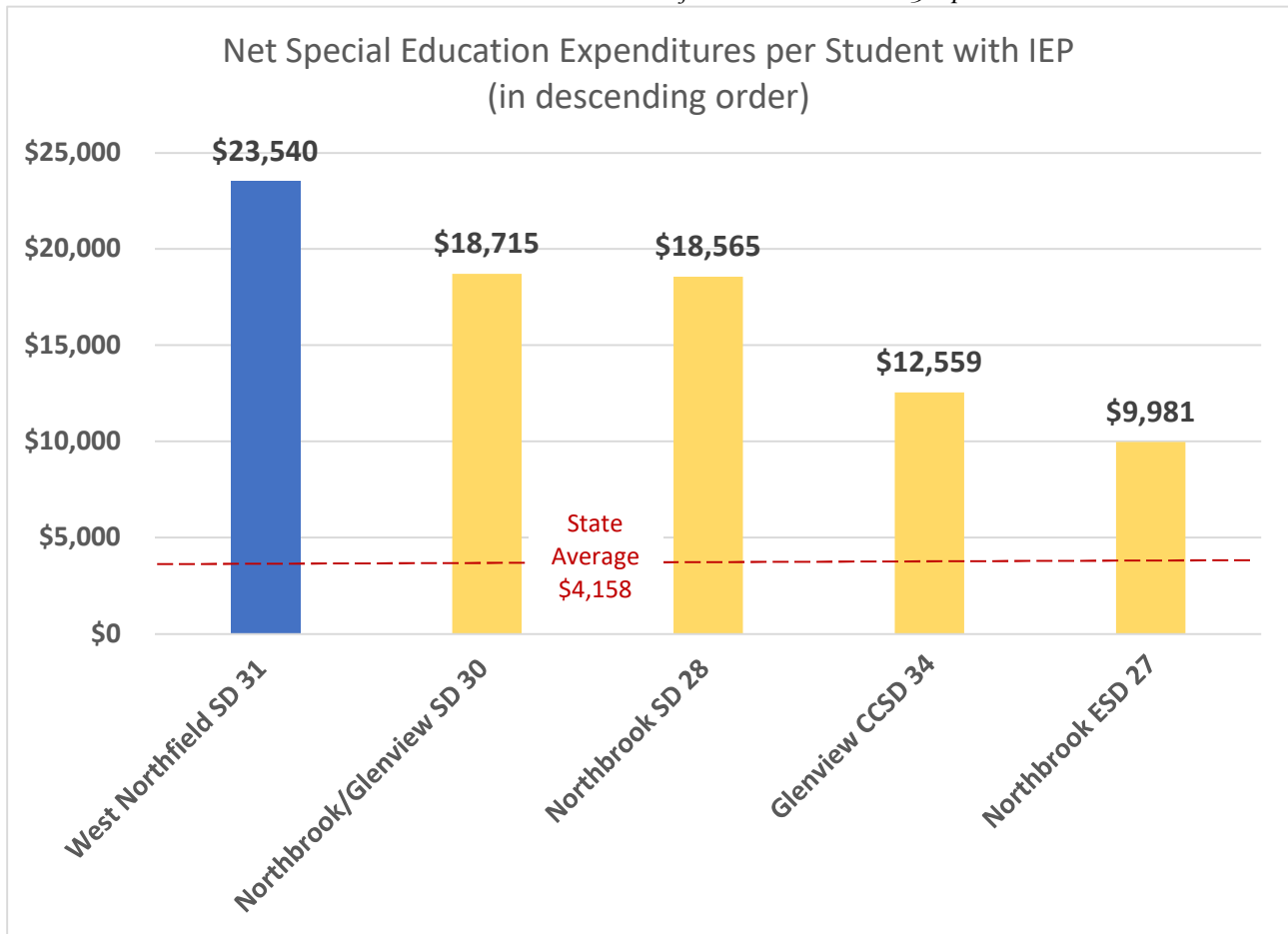| District	Expenditure
West Northfield SD 31	$23,540
Northbrook/Glenview SD 30	$18,715
Northbrook SD 28	$18,565
Glenview CCSD 34	$12,559
Northbrook ESD 27	$9,981

State Average $4,158

Figure C: FY 2018 Net Special Education Expenditures and Expenditures per Student with IEP

Teacher Salaries

The average teacher salary in the State of Illinois for school year 2018-2019 was $67,049. Teacher salaries in West Northfield and the four comparison districts are above the state average, ranging from a low of $70,411 to a high of $95,147. The average teacher salary in West Northfield was $72,988 which was $5,939 more than the state average but $22,159 less than the highest paying school district in the comparison group, Northbrook ESD 27.

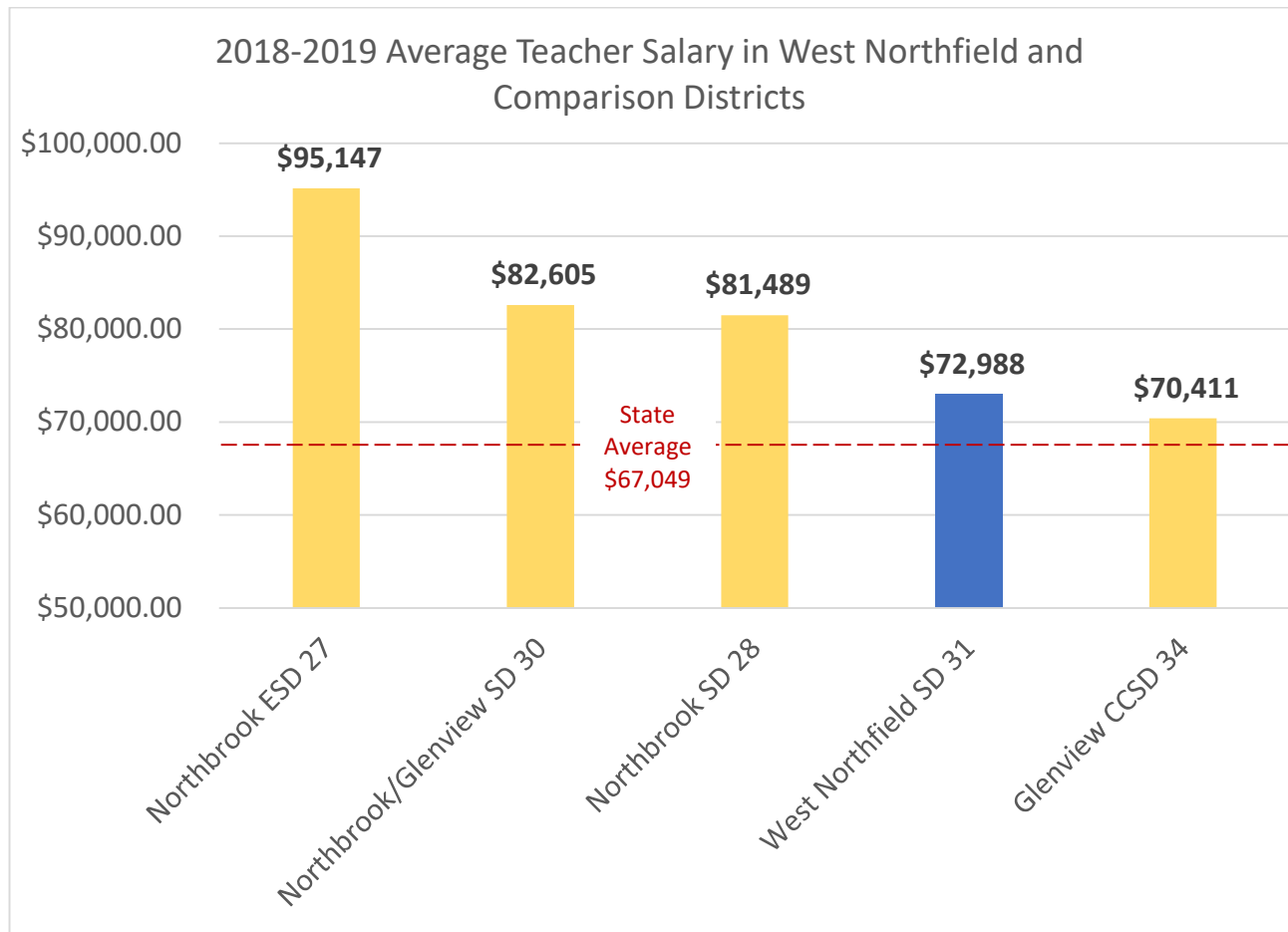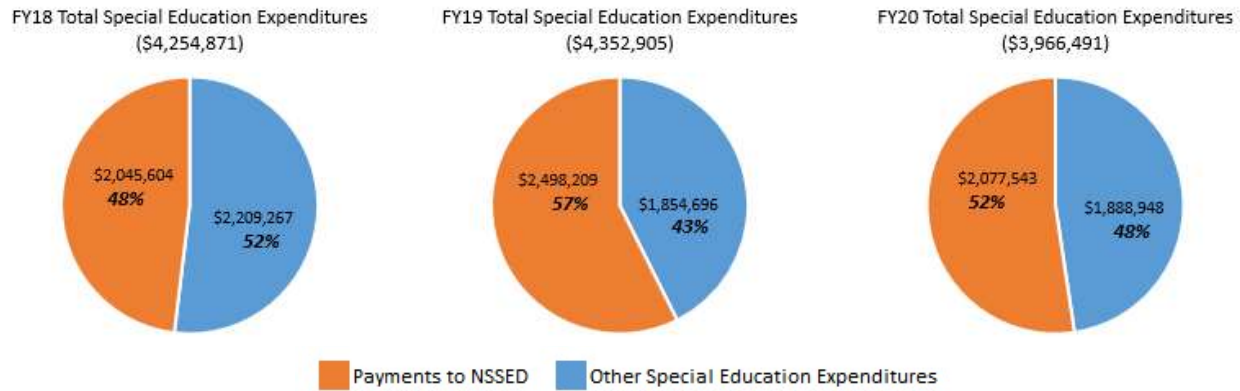Figure D: 2018-2019 Average Teacher Salary in West Northfield and Comparison Districts

West Northfield Special Education Budget and NSSED

A significant portion West Northfield School District's special education budget is used to pay for services provided to students with IEPs by NSSED and to NSSED vendor payments. A review of data from fiscal years (FY) 2018, 2019, and to date for 2020, shows that a range of 48% to 57% of West Northfield special education expenditures are paid to NSSED.

FY18 Total Special Education Expenditures
($4,254,871)

$2,045,604
48%

$2,209,267
52%

FY19 Total Special Education Expenditures
($4,352,905)

$2,498,209
57%

$1,854,696
43%

FY20 Total Special Education Expenditures
($3,966,491)

$2,077,543
52%

$1,888,948
48%

■ Payments to NSSED ■ Other Special Education Expenditures

It may be prudent for West Northfield School District to explore whether students with IEPs are (1) receiving the appropriate amount and intensity of special education instructional supports and related services from NSSED and this service provision arrangement needs to stay in place or (2) whether some of those instructional supports and related services could be provided more efficiently and effectively by staff employed by West Northfield.

Fiscal Summary

According to the 2018-2019 State Report Card, West Northfield's district financial capacity to meet expectations is 125% based on Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) final resources of $14,415,841 and an adequacy target of $11,511,530. West Northfield School District received 90% of its 2018 revenue from local funding.

WestEd reviewed available data to determine if West Northfield's high Net Special Education Expenditures per Student with IEP and relatively low average teacher salary, as compared to the nearby comparison districts, could be at least partially attributable to the amount of special education funds expended for the "total payments to other districts and other government units" line item supporting West Northfield students served by the Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSED). This line item was reported as $2,038,366 in the FY 2018 Audit Report and was 9.2% of West Northfield's total district expenditures of $22,129,657. Most of this budgetary line item is expended for services for West Northfield preschool students with IEPs and students with the most significant needs served by NSSED.

West Northfield has strong financial capacity to support high quality student instruction and may want to consider shifting financial resources from payments to external service providers for students with IEPs to using those funds to build staff capacity to provide high quality special education and related services within the school district. WestEd suggests continuing current efforts to decrease the number of preschool students with IEPs and students with the most significant needs for whom West Northfield pays NSSED to serve by building its internal capacity to provide special education and related services to these students within the school district.

Retaining funds within the district might allow for additional administrative resources to support special education student services staff in non-special education programs such as MTSS and EL services in order to focus on redesigning special education service delivery models that would enhance the capacity of special education teachers to increase opportunities for students to receive collaborative special education supports in the general education classroom.

Classroom Observations

WestEd was scheduled to observe 15 classrooms at Winkelman Elementary School (PreK-5) and 17 classrooms at Stanley Field Middle School (6-8) in order to observe the quality of and differentiation of the core instruction in general and special education classes. The observations included general education classrooms, special education, and encore (Art, Music and Physical Education) classes. Most of the observations lasted approximately 20 minutes, with observations either at the beginning, middle, or end of a lesson. Except for the lessons observed in the special education contained classroom at Stanley Field Middle School all other observations occurred in the general classroom, taught by the general education teacher. In the observed classes, special educators or special education paraprofessionals were assisting where special education students were present. Class sizes ranged from one to 25 students. Students with IEPs in those classes ranged from one to three students.

WestEd staff primarily observed general education inclusion classes therefore we did not observe many of the pull-out services provided by special education staff at the elementary level. While small group instruction was observed in some of the classes, it could not be differentiated through the observation if the special educator was providing specially designed instruction within the classroom or just helping students complete their work. It is difficult to comment on the quality of the majority special education direct instruction since there was only (6%) - 3 observations of direct instruction in the contained special education classroom which was observed at the middle school.
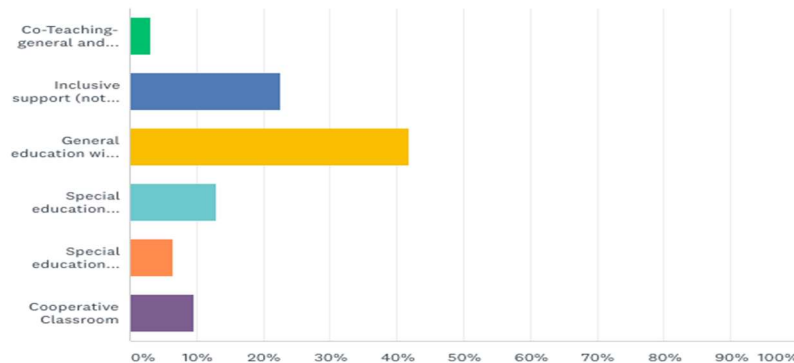
In 29% of the English Language Arts classes observed, most provided a focus on writing. Other content areas observed were math (29%), social studies (6%) and science (10%).
The special education delivery model observed most frequently was push-in support with the special education paraprofessional (23%) and resource room pull-out support (6%).   In the majority of classes (90%) there was no co-teaching evident and within the two special education self-contained classes the co-teaching strategy used was the one teach/one assist model.
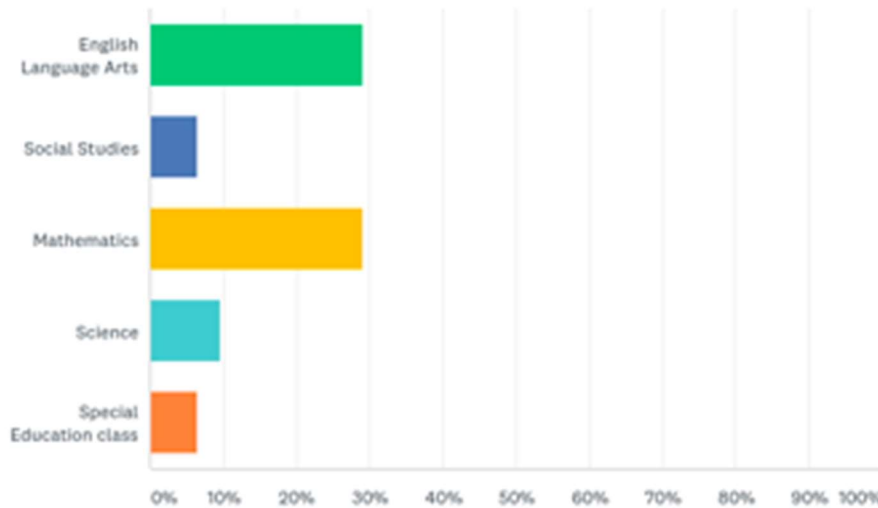
In three classrooms the paraprofessional(s) provided one-on-one assistance, supporting small groups in finishing their work and keeping students on task. However, although support was observed, it also needs to be noted in many classrooms that the paraprofessional was placed or was sitting in the back of the room not involved with any students while the teacher was providing all the teaching and support.

Student engagement varied, but the majority of classes (60%) observed found that (91-100%) of the students were actively engaged in the lesson either through speaking, writing, signaling, performing, and/or responding to instruction during the observation. In (23%) of the observations, (76-90%) of the students were engaged or participating during the observation and in another (13%) only (51-75%) of the students were engaged in the lesson or lesson activities. Those students not engaged were observed laying their head on their desks, playing with their phones, chrome books, laptops, or talking to peers when adults were not directly providing prompts or helping them do their work.

Student Engagement/Participation (Students are: participating through speaking, writing, signaling, performing, thinking/responding)

Answered: 30   Skipped: 1
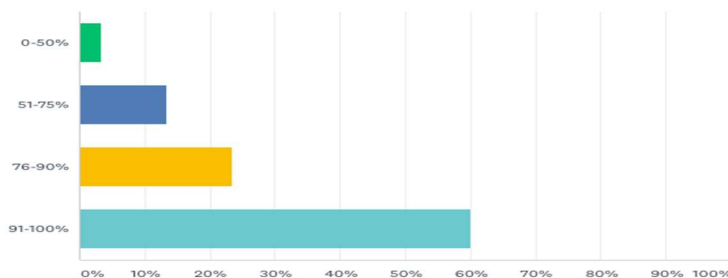
Instructional Delivery
Observations of instructional delivery showed teachers (48%) provided a traditional class lesson through teacher lecture and teacher-led question and answer. It was also observed following a traditionally delivered lesson that a few teachers provided small group instruction that was also teacher led. The lecture model classroom was observed consistently throughout the middle school. In the encore elective classes, the teachers provided modeling and frequent opportunities for students to practice and apply the learning between the instructional delivery.

The majority of classes were set in stadium seating or row seating even at the elementary school level. Only 9% of the classrooms provided opportunities for student-led groupings or to work in pairs and only 4% were setup for cooperative learning observed in lab classes. The lack of opportunity to work in cooperative groups creates barriers for both English learners(EB) and for students with disabilities.

Higher Order Thinking
The complexity or depth of understanding that is demonstrated to answer an assessment question with higher order thinking is the Depth of Knowledge (DOK). DOK was developed through research by Norman L. Webb in the late 1990's. Webb identified four distinct depths of knowledge levels. Level 1 includes basic recall of facts, concepts, information, or procedures. This is the rote learning or memorization of facts. Level 2 includes skills and concepts such as the use of information (e.g., graphs) or requires two or more steps with decision points along the way. Level 3 includes strategic thinking that requires reasoning and is abstract and complex. Level 3 requires students to logically analyze and evaluate complex, real-world problems with predictable outcomes. Level 4 includes extended thinking such as an investigation or application to solve complex real-world problems with unpredictable outcomes. Students must strategically analyze, evaluate, and reflect over time and often must change their approach to arrive at a solution.

Most lessons observed (67%) demonstrated alignment to the Level 2 skills/concept Depth of Knowledge, while almost half (48%) of the classrooms observed, found the instruction was aligned only to the recall level, Level 1, DOK. Only (22%) of the instruction observed was at the strategic or extended thinking level. Observations showed that instruction was most often aligned to the Level 2- Skills and Concepts level where students are not required to think strategically or to extend their thinking to support the generalization of concepts across the content areas.
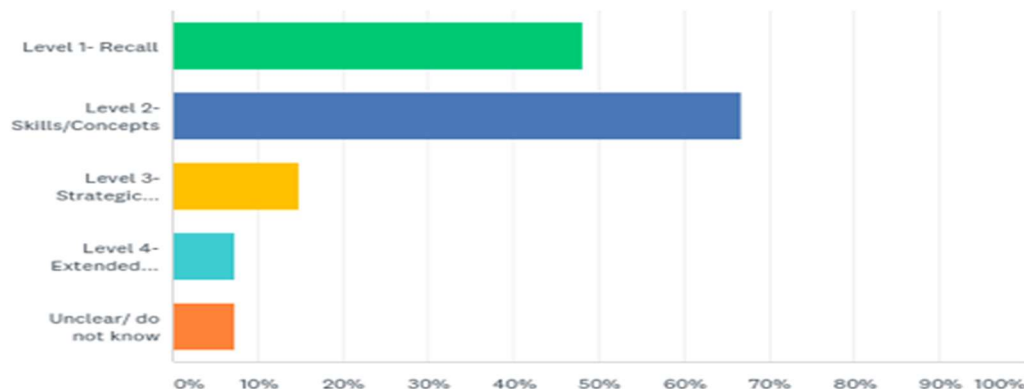
Standards Based Instruction

In most classrooms (98%), the observer did not find the standard posted. It was not clear through the observations that grade level standards were being taught. Since objectives and standards were not posted, it was difficult to ascertain if the checks for understanding were aligned with the objectives intended for the lesson.

Effective Instructional Strategies

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the way information is presented as to how students access material, engage with it and show what they know. Observations revealed that teachers appear to be using UDL strategy of age-appropriate activities in almost half of the classes (48%). However, it could not be determined if the observed teachers had designed the lesson with intention of UDL strategies or if it occurred by lesson default.

**Multiple Means of Representation (The "What" of Learning)**

The "what" of learning is recognition, or how we gather facts and categorize information through seeing, hearing and reading. In 12 classrooms (50%), teachers activated prior knowledge as part of the lesson design along with the using graphic organizers (25%), and multi-media formats (17%) such as Smartboards, Chromebooks or Laptops. In (21%) of the classrooms, the teachers used visuals such as video to help the student make more meaning of their learning.

Examples of multiple means of representation observed include using a white board with visual supports, teacher using mini-white boards and modeling the question and practice of answer then having students practice a question, teacher activating prior knowledge by reviewing content, students utilizing their own laptops along with many types of graphic organizers.
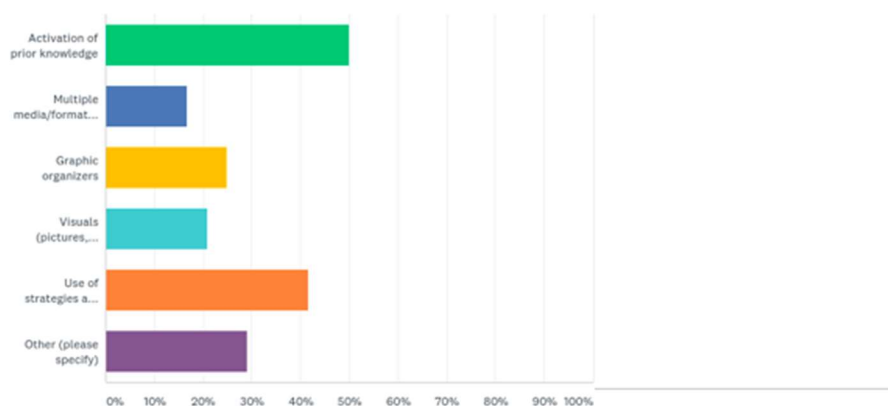
Multiple Means of Expression (The "How" of Learning)
The "how" of learning refers to the planning and performing of tasks. It is how we organize and express our ideas. Multiple ways of expression, or the "how" of learning, is observed as the differentiated ways that students can express what they know. In five classrooms (26%) teachers were observed using verbal and written scaffolds and prompts such as sentence and paragraph frames to support writing. In thirteen classes (68%), teachers provided the option of note taking guides or note taking supports during instruction with multi-media supports for student expression, such as a laptop, Chromebook or drawing to support the "what" of learning. In one classroom students were using checklists and a rubric for preparing for an upcoming quiz. In another, students were provided outlines to monitor and check their own learning while another teacher provided frequent opportunities for students to check their understanding throughout the lesson by performing small experiments, doing an analysis of findings and documenting their work.
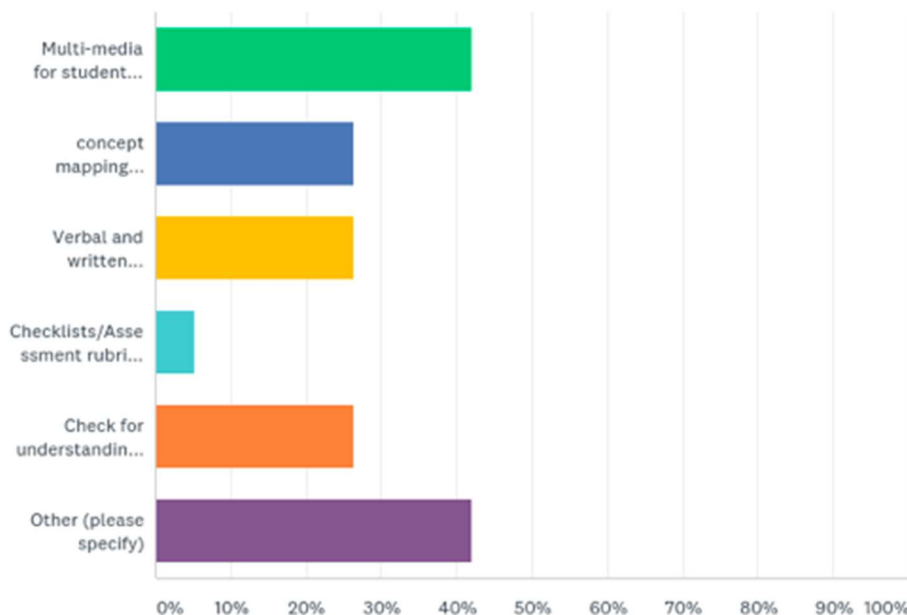
Universal Design for Learning Multiple Ways of Engagement (The "Why" of Learning)
Multiple means of engagement, reflecting the "why" of learning, is how learners are engaged and stay motivated. Observers look for ways that teachers are stimulating interest and motivating for learning. In 10 of the classrooms (47.62%) the instruction reflected age-appropriate activities and four classrooms (19.05%) reflected opportunities for student choice. Seven classrooms (33.33%) used group work or cooperative grouping with 3 classrooms (14.29%) using culturally relevant activities or materials, while seven classrooms (33.33%) had students monitor their own progress using a checklist as a self-assessment to determine if the work contained all the required components of the delivered lesson.
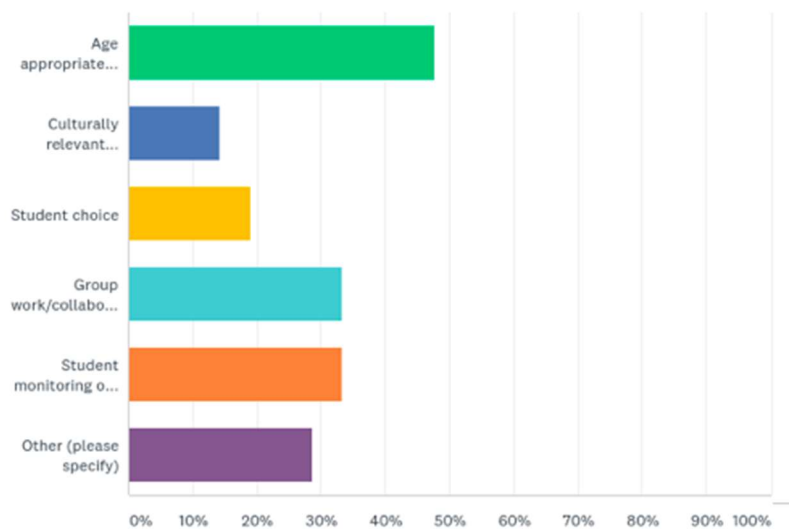
Physical Space

In 48% (14) of the classrooms observed, teachers did use the physical resources they have to increase student learning such as Chromebook, Laptop, computers, standing desks and manipulatives to increase access to learning for all students. Observations also showed evidence that throughout the schools the special education classrooms are located near general education classrooms and are not segregated from the general school population.

Managing Student Behavior

Challenging behaviors were not observed during classroom visits. Students were generally engaged and participating in the classroom instruction. Some students needed an adult to direct them to stay on task, but when off task they were generally not disruptive or combative. Most of the classrooms (71%) had evidence of some type of classroom management policies and procedures in place as students seemed to understand the universal behavior expectation. Rules and common expectations were posted in only a few classrooms and hallways. Procedures observed in some teachers classes, were transitions signals for gaining attention and classroom movement. Many classrooms did post the agenda with the timing for each part of the hour, along with the lesson delivery, which would occur within their room.

SUMMARY OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

In the 22 classrooms WestEd observed, a culture of compliance for the learning of all students was evident. Student independent engagement (91 to 100%) in learning was a relative strength within most of the classrooms observed. Some teachers used a few UDL strategies to support multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of expression but as stated above it was hard to distinguish if this occurred by design or default.

The most common way to deliver instruction in the general education classroom was through traditional teacher lecture, question and answer. Inclusion students appeared to only be physically included in the classroom and the engagement of content occurred by the given support of the paraprofessional or special education teacher in the room.

The Depth of Knowledge focus was primarily on the second level of skills and concepts. Not observed was how students would utilize content information to develop critical thinking through a several step processes, share findings and discuss outcomes. There was very limited evidence of an alignment of the instruction to lesson objectives related to the standards since these were not posted in most classrooms.

Most classrooms were set up in very traditional stadium seating with created seating assignments limiting student interactions and opportunities for cooperative learning. Special education classes were located close to the grade level content classrooms within the building and were not segregated. When observing special education service delivery, services were provided in self-contained, as well as in the general education classroom at both the elementary and the middle school. The Special Education classrooms at the middle school provided an environment of co-teaching for the students within the room. The lessons observed in this model were a math and life skills lesson.

Additionally, while observing the middle school Special Education, learning options provided to students were standing desks, sitting, soft seating along with brain breaks. A brain break was the verbal agreement between the teacher and students, if the students gave her 10 minutes of solid learning and engagement she would give them a 5-minute brain break to do whatever the student would like to do (listening to music, read a book or draw a picture) were observed, at the end of the break the students returned back to the lesson and completed all that was asked off them to complete.

Individual Education Program Review

WestEd reviewed 14 IEPs for educational benefit and compliance with state and federal regulations. The purpose of the review was to determine each IEPs comprehensive interconnection between the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, Goals and Service Delivery in programming of students with disabilities. This interconnection is called educational benefit. An IEP configured for educational benefit is defined as an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress in light of their circumstances. In an Educational Benefit Review, IEPs are not only reviewed for compliance with state and federal laws, but for a cohesive plan that shows alignment between all of the components of the IEP and that the alignment makes sense to provide the necessary supports and services to allow the student access to the core curriculum. The criteria for the IEPs included a range of disabilities to get a snapshot of district practices. Given the criteria listed below, West Northfield School District assisted WestEd to find the following IEPs:

- Developmentally Delayed   4
- Speech Language Impairment   3
- Specific Learning Disability   2
- Emotional Disability   2
- Autism   1
- Intellectual Disability   1
- Other Health Impaired   1

West Northfield Elementary School District utilizes an electronic IEP template with prompts for specific information in designated places in the IEP document. Many of the sections have a drop-down, pre-populated menu designed to choose a statement that most closely aligns to the prompted information needed in the student's IEP. In other sections, which are narrative, there are prompting questions designed to guide the documentation of specific, relevant and meaningful information about a student. Five main sections of the IEP were reviewed as listed below. While each section is designed to contain specific information based on a prompt, the entire document was reviewed to assess cohesion and educational benefit. Sometimes the information needed for one prompt was found in another section of the IEP.

The Educational Benefit Review looked at the cohesion and compliance of these areas of the IEP:

- Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
- Annual Goals
- Service Delivery
- Supplemental Aids and Services, and
- Least Restrictive Environment

The reviewer looked at the IEP holistically for compliance with state and federal law as well as for educational benefit. The compliance areas are narrative statements that meet the criteria set out

by state and federal law. Educational benefit looks at the interconnection of each of these narrative statements throughout the document. The compliance criteria will be listed in each of the listed areas while the guiding questions for educational benefit are listed below:

There are several considerations the reviewer looks for in an Educational Benefit Review:

- Does the IEP describe the ways the student's disability impacts the student's ability to access the curriculum?
- Do the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance describe the student's current performance in the classroom and the strengths and needs of the current performance?
- Are the measurable goals aligned with the student's needs, are they skills-based and do they support enabling the student in accessing the general curriculum?
- Is the specially designed instruction designed to facilitate learning and described clearly enough to explain the instruction that is based on the student's needs?
- Do the supplementary aids, services and program adaptations allow for the student to be educated in the general education classroom?
- Does the IEP align and support the goals, services and least restrictive environment?

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement portion of the IEP provides a wholistic picture of the student strengths and needs in both academic and in functional performance in the classroom. The section begins with the prompt:
"When completing this page, include all areas from the following list that are impacted by the student's disability: **academic performance, social/emotional status, independent functioning, vocational, motor skills, and speech and language/communication**. This may include strengths/weaknesses identified in the most recent evaluation." The section then divides the page into the following prompts:
- **Student Strengths**
- **Parent Educational Concerns/Input**
- **Health Information/Concerns**
- **Student's Present Level of Academic Achievement (Include <u>strengths</u> and areas <u>needing improvement</u>)**
- **Student's Present Levels of Functional Performance (Include <u>strengths</u> and areas <u>needing improvement</u>)**
- **Adverse Effects**
  Describe the effect of this individual's disability on involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and the functional implications of this student's skills
    - **For preschool child, describe the effect of this individual's disability on the involvement in appropriate activities.**
    - **By age 14 ½, describe the effect of this individual's disability on the pursuit of post-secondary expectations (living, learning, working)**

The IEP form is designed to paint a wholistic portrait of the child. The information is child-specific and goes beyond academics. It is about the child as an individual. Areas for review in this section included:

- Data for the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance includes multiple data sources;
- Student strengths, weaknesses and attributes are described
- How the disability affects progress in accessing the general curriculum is described and aligned with needs (adverse effects)
- Parent input is included
- Present levels contain current progress information

Documenting student strengths, weaknesses and attributes is a strength for West Northfield School District. In 92.86% of the 13 files there is documentation of student strengths, needs and attributes. While student personal strengths were documented, they did not consistently document the student strengths in accessing the curriculum. Student strengths were described as "friendly" and "participates in activities outside of academics" rather than providing data on curriculum-based measures and classroom performance. The information should include documenting how the child is progressing in the curriculum to give a clear picture of the child from a wholistic perspective, including academic skills, functional skill and social-emotional competency to support the design of the IEP.

Another strength is the documentation of parent information. Most of the IEPs, 71.43% (10), clearly and concisely provided documentation of parent information. Parent input included "we sometimes need to give him reminders to get his work done" and "she does not yet understand how her behavior impacts her younger sister".

A description of how the disability affects progress in accessing the general curriculum is another strength for the district. The statement describing how the disability affects the student in accessing specific areas of the curriculum was present in 71% (10) of the files. For example, for a student with an emotional disability the statement reads: (Student's) difficulty sustaining attention and completing tasks independently, impacts his ability to function academically within the school setting.

In 65% (9) of the files, the Present levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance provided multiple sources of data but did not include curriculum-based measures and provided mostly standardized assessment data. Assessments should be more than standardized tests; they should include classroom-based assessments which provide a better picture of how the student functions in the general education curriculum. In addition, even if the student is eligibile for speech and language only, classroom performance should be included in the IEP.

Only half of the files (50%) contained current progress in the classroom. The information provided as current student progress information is mostly individualized testing information like MAP or AIMSWEB data which is given at several intervals throughout the year, with some referring to

state test scores as well. The information did not include more current information on how the child is progressing in the classroom. The data should include statements about how the student is accessing the curriculum, progress reports, curriculum-based measures, grades, formative assessments and executive functioning skills.

Q4 IEP Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0
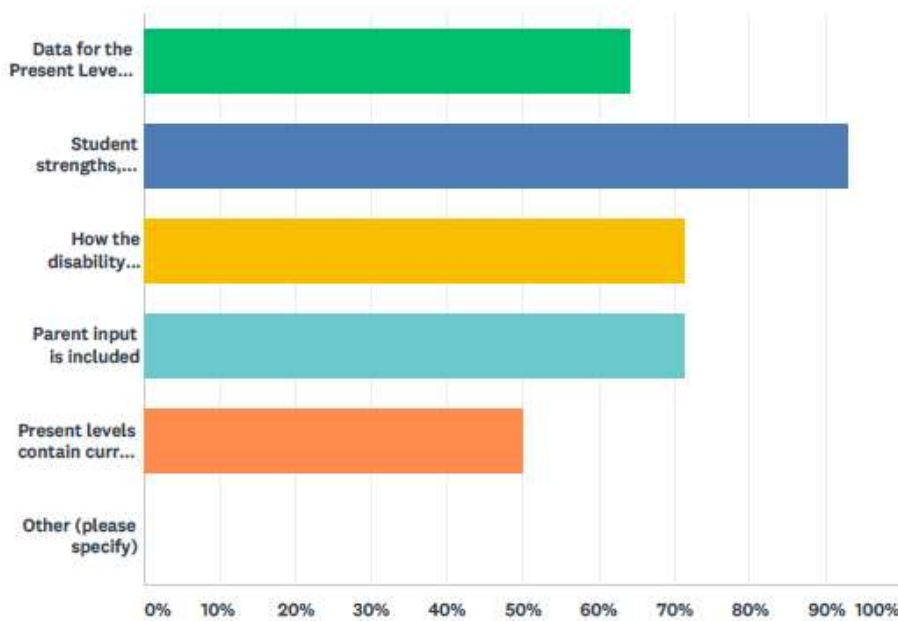
In looking at educational benefit the examiner looked at the data to determine:
* Were the ways the student's disability impacts the student's ability to access the curriculum reasonably calculated to provide educational benefit?
* Were the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance reasonably calculated to describe the student's current performance in the classroom and the strengths and needs of the current performance?

In looking at the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance for educational benefit, West Northfield has an understanding of the ways the student's disability affects their progress in the general curriculum. While there is a good understanding of how the disability impacts access to the curriculum, not all areas described as needs resulting from the disability have a statement as to how that area will impact access to the general curriculum. Describing all of the areas impacted by the disability provides a guide for goals and objectives to be developed to provide educational benefit.

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, provide an overall picture of the student, but lacks data on the student's actual academic performance in the classroom. Ensure there is current classroom information to support where the student is currently functioning in the classroom. The current classroom information should demonstrate how the student is accessing the curriculum and provides a baseline for the development of goals. Without this information it is difficult to link the skills the student is currently demonstrating in the classroom with the skill deficit areas in order to provide justification for the goals demonstrating a reasonably calculated IEP. When there are multiple sources of information and current classroom information, the Present level portion of the IEP is configured for educational benefit.

The design of the IEP document separates Present Levels of Educational Performance into two areas:

Goals and Objectives

WestEd reviewed a maximum of three goals for each IEP. While many of the IEPs that were reviewed contained three goals, several IEPs had less than three goals and some had more. All IEPs had at least one goal.

The structure of the IEP allows for the student's current performance for each goal area to be described above each individual goal. The current performance section is designed to describe where the student is currently performing (baseline) related to a goal. For each goal there are eight parts to the goal and four for the benchmark or short-term objective. Each of the sections has guiding questions or drop down boxes designed as guidance for developing the goal.

- **Goal Number**
- **Goal Type**
    - This prompts the documentation of the type of goal (speech-language, ELA etc.)
- **Goal Area**
    - A checkbox as to the goal being functional or academic
- **Method of Parent Notification**
    - A checkbox as to how parents will be notified on the progress their child is making on the goal
- **Title of Goal Implementor**
- **Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance related to the goal**
    - This section prompts :
        - *"Results of the initial or most recent evaluation and results on district-wide assessments relevant to this goal; performance in comparison to general education peers and standards."*
- **Core Standard**
    - This section prompts the documentation of a specific Common Core Standard
- **Goal Statement**
    - Prompts the documentation of a measurable goal

Below this goal section is where the objectives to achieve the goal are documented. The Benchmark(s) or Short-Term Objective prompts:
*"The goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks shall meet the student's educational needs that result from the student's disability, including involvement in and progress in the general curriculum, or for preschool students, participation in appropriate activities, and shall reflect consideration of the State Goals and Illinois Learning Standards."*

Each goal has space to document four benchmarks or short-term objectives for each goal. There are eight prompts for each objective:
- **Benchmark or Short-Term Objective**
- **Criteria for Mastery**
- **Evaluation Procedure**
- **Schedule for Determining Progress**
- **Benchmark Progress Updates**
    - **Date**
    - **Evaluated By**
    - **Progress**

The reviewer looked for alignment between the information in the present levels with the goals and objectives. Specifically reviewed were:
- Goal is measurable and describes what the student will do by the end of the IEP period.
- Goal focus area is linked to present levels and needs.
- There is a link between the present levels, goals and objectives.
- Objectives are measurable and describe what the student will need to do to complete the goal.
- There is a link between the goals and the student making progress in the general curriculum.
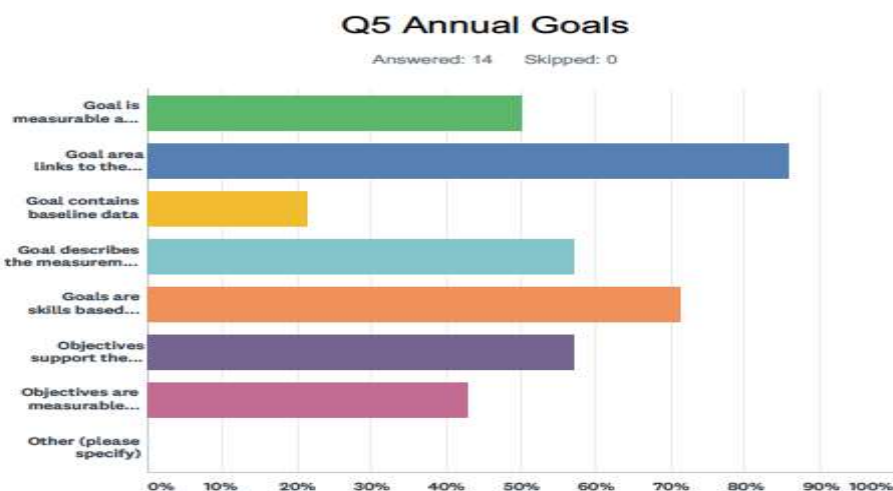
The presence of alignment for each of these areas is described below:

Goals are Measurable
In general, student goals were curriculum and standards aligned. Goals were broad and not consistently measurable. While the information in the present levels related to the goal, they did not contain baseline information. While the information included was important, it did not contain data and/or baseline data to support the narrative. The example does not provide baseline data on the student's current instructional reading level or current ability to do any of the tasks identified.

For example, a goal read *"Given a passage at (student's) instructional reading level, (student) will identify the main characters, the setting, the problem and the resolution by completing story maps or writing short summaries with 80% accuracy by next annual review."*

Seven of the IEPs had consistent measurable goals. In the goals that were not measurable, most contained more than one skill (e.g., identify main characters, the setting, the problem and resolution). Example includes:
- "Will state the problem, answer how and why questions and will state a possible resolution"
- "Will plan and write two paragraphs containing a topic sentence, two-three supporting sentences and a concluding statement."

The goal then was moved into an objective with different percentages given for each quarter. However, since there are different skills there should be different goals because the baseline would not be the same across each of these areas. In other words, goals were broad and contained too many skills to be measurable and completed within the span of the IEP.

Goal aligned with Present Levels
Although most goals (86%) aligned somewhat to the present levels and needs, there sometimes was a disconnect between the present levels, needs and goals. For example, a student who has a primary need in focusing was not given a goal to address his focusing needs and a student who has a development delay in language and math but has average skills in reading was given a reading goal.

Goals contained baseline data
Only 21% (3) of the IEPs reviewed had goals that contained baseline information. While most of the goals contained criteria for measurement and mastery, most had no baseline information to describe where the student was currently functioning in that particular skill or goal area. Baseline or beginning data must be included in the present levels or with the goals that describes what the student is currently doing and must align with the measurement criteria. For example, if a goal states that a student will answer WH questions with 80% accuracy, there must be a starting place, such as 50% identified. In addition, the baseline information must align with the criteria for mastery.

Goals are skills-based to support access to the general curriculum
In 10 (71%) of the files reviewed, goals were based on skills needed to access the general curriculum. In the remaining IEPs, goals were not based on skills but rather academics such as increase Lexile score or complete homework. The focus of the goals should be on the skills needed to increase the Lexile score or how to help the student complete homework.

Objectives support the goal
The objectives are designed to support the goal. They are the specific skills the student will attain in order to meet the goal. In 57% (8) of the files, the objectives did support the goal.

In many cases, the objectives were simply restatements of the goal with measurement criteria that increased each quarter. Objectives should identify the individual discreet skills needed to complete the skill-based goals. Objectives should not be a restatement of the goal, but a task analysis of the skills needed to achieve the goals.

Objectives are measurable short-term steps
The large majority of the objectives did not contain a baseline measurement in which to measure progress. In addition, in a few cases that did describe measurement criteria but not baseline data, the criteria described in the goal did not align with the measurement criteria described in the objective. For example, in one goal the measurement criteria were 4 out of 5 opportunities, while the measurement criteria in the objective were 80% accuracy. In addition, as stated above, the objective was a restatement of the goal rather than the skills needed to achieve the goal. All objectives did contain a measurement tool, however; for several of the objectives the measurement tool did not align to how the goal should be measured. For example, a student may have been given a goal to write a paragraph and the measurement tool was observation.

In looking at educational benefit the examiner looked at the data from the measurable goals to determine:

- Are the measurable goals aligned with the student's needs, are skills based and support and enable the student in accessing the general curriculum?

In looking at educational benefit, there is a link between the goals and the student making progress in the general curriculum. While the goal may not have been measurable, the intent of the goal showed a link between the goals and the student making progress in the general curriculum. Goals were written from a curriculum framework perspective rather than the sub-skills the student needs to access the curriculum. Goals should be based on what a student needs to access and progress in the general curriculum.

Service Delivery
The Service Delivery Section of the IEP reminds writers to include services, related services, program modifications and supports (including positive behavior supports, school personnel and/or parent training supports). Services should assist the student in reaching their IEP goals, to

be involved and progress in the general curriculum, to participate in extra-curricular/nonacademic activities and to allow the student to participate with nondisabled students while working toward IEP goals.

West Northfield's IEP, in the Educational Services and Placement section of the IEP prompts for Participation in the General Education Environment and Participation in Special Education Environment.

Participation in General Education Environment		
General Education No Supplementary Aids Class	**General Education** With Supplementary Aids Class	**Special Education** In General Classroom Class Minutes Frequency

Participation in Special Education Environment	Weekly Special Education Totals
Special Education Outside General Classroom Class Minutes Frequency	Inside General Classroom Minutes: *0* Outside General Classroom Minutes: *0* Total Minutes of Special Education: *0* % (EE) Inside Regular Education: *100* % Special Education: *0*

This section speaks to where a student will receive their services rather than what services the student will receive. The section does not prompt for the specially designed instruction a student will be receiving. In only 2 (17%) of the files was the specially designed instruction described. Specially designed instruction is described as "adapting, as appropriate to the needs of the student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the student's disability and to ensure access to the general curriculum." It is not differentiated instruction, accommodations or learning strategies designed to facilitate learning for all students. The educational services and placement section make it clear that West Northfield sees special education as a place, rather than a service. The design of the IEP make it difficult to decipher how much time a student spends in general education and/or special education when minutes and classes are not listed.
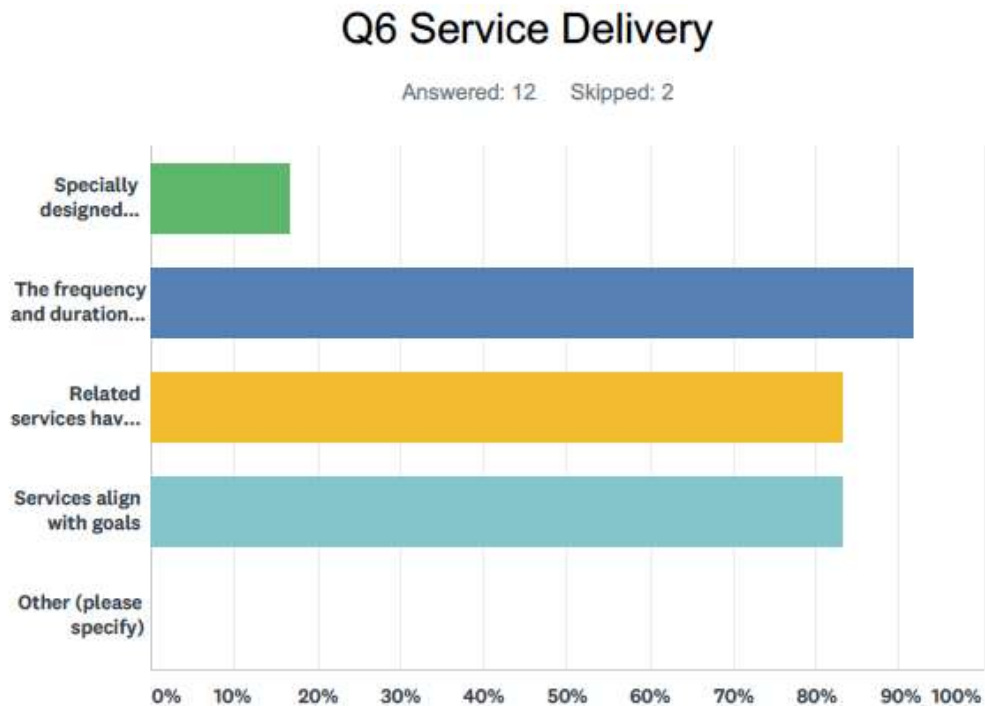
Specially designed instruction must include:
- A description of the service (What is being delivered);
- What is the skill?
- How it will be delivered: small group, individual, large group; and
- How (strategy the service provider will use i.e. scaffolding, guided practice etc.)

The Educational Accommodation and Supports section of the IEP contained some pieces of the specially designed instruction but did not provide a clear description of what the specially designed instruction will look like.

The goals section provided information of what the student will work on, however; goals provide information on what the student will do; **specially designed instruction provides information on what the teacher/special education provider will do.**

In 11 (92%) of the files the frequency and duration of the service provided was listed and was appropriate. In 83% (10) of the files reviewed there was documentation that related services had been considered. The types of services, or placement, that was listed aligned with the goal in 83% (10 of the files reviewed).

Q6 Service Delivery

Answered: 12   Skipped: 2

In reviewing the IEPs for educational benefit, the reviewer looked for

- Is the specially designed instruction designed to facilitate learning and described clearly enough to explain the instruction that is based on the student's needs?

In the IEPs reviewed, specially designed instruction was not described. These IEPs contained pieces of the specially designed instruction in the present levels, goals and supplementary aids and services, but it was not clearly defined. The IEP should contain statements as to what specific specially designed instruction the student will receive. **It needs to be more specific than "Resource" or "English Language Arts" which were descriptors found in the IEPs that were reviewed**. The specially designed instruction the student will receive in Resource or English Language Arts should be described in order to communicate what is being provided by the services provider to the student to support them in accessing grade level curriculum.

Supplementary Aids and Services

There is a prompt for Supplementary Aids and Supports in the **Educational Accommodations and Supports** portion of the IEP. The section specifically prompts for:
Specify what aids, accommodations and modifications are needed for the child to make progress toward annual goals, to progress in the general education curriculum, participate in extracurricular and other non-academic activities, and to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and/or nondisabled children (e.g., accommodations for daily work, environmental accommodations, moving from class to class, etc.). Supplementary aids, accommodations and modifications must be based upon peer-review research to the extent practicable.

Supplementary aids and service are "aids, services and supports that are provided in the general education classes or other education-related settings to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate."

In 100% (12) of the files reviewed, Supplementary Aids and Services were considered. In 10 (83%) the supplementary aids and services aligned with the needs, services and goals. While these files described the supplementary aids and services in some cases, there was a long list of supplementary aids and accommodations that may not have been appropriate for the student based on the content of the IEP. In 75% (9) of the IEPs reviewed the accommodations that were listed were linked directly to student needs.

The program modifications portion of the review provided an opportunity for the reviewer to gauge how many students were actually receiving modifications to the curriculum. Only one IEP described modification for a student. The majority of students are receiving accommodations rather than modifications to the grade level curriculum.
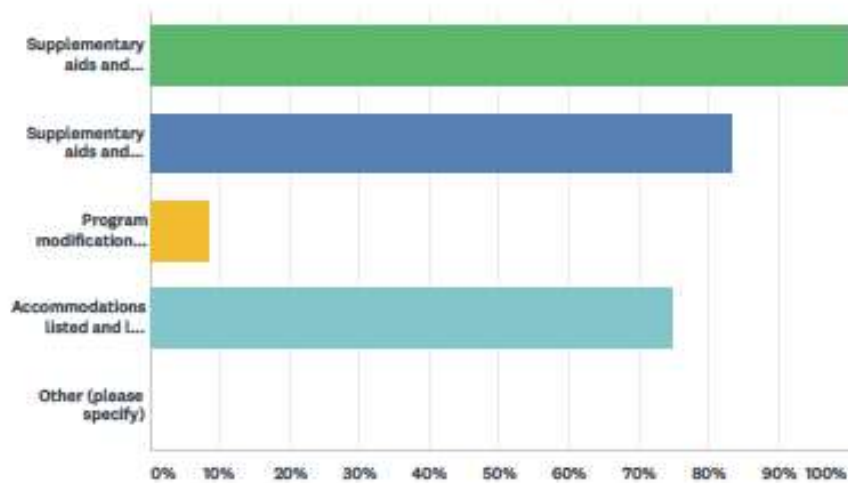
In reviewing Supplementary Aids and Services in the IEP for educational benefit, the reviewer looked for:

- Do the supplementary aids, services and program adaptations allow for the student to be educated in the general education classroom?

West Northfield IEPs do document supplementary aids and services that provide educational benefit. In some cases, there was a long list of supplementary aids and services that may have provided some services/accommodations that the student may not have needed to access the curriculum. Supplementary aids and services should be based on the individual needs of the student. They should be based on what is necessary to allow students with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings with their peers without disabilities.

Q7 Supplementary Aids and Services

Answered: 12   Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Supplementary aids and services were considered	100.00%	12
Supplementary aids and services align with needs, services and goals	83.33%	10
Program modifications were considered	8.33%	1
Accommodations listed and link to needs	75.00%	9
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 12		

Least Restrictive Environment

The Least Restrictive Environment section of the IEP is housed under the **Educational Services and Placement** section of the IEP.

The IEP prompts for **Educational Environment Considerations.** Specifically the prompts ask *To the maximum extent appropriate, all students shall be educated and participate with students who are non-disabled. Provide an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate in general education classes and activities.*

The prompt has yes/no checkboxes for three specific statements.

- *Special education classes, separate schooling, or removal from the regular education environment is required because the nature or severity of the student's disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.* ***Explain:***

- *Student will participate in nonacademic activities with nondisabled peers and have the same opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities as nondisabled peers*. ***If no explain:***

- *Student will attend the school he or she would attend if non-disabled.* ***If no, explain:***

In three files (21%) there was an explanation of why and when the student will not participate with non-disabled peers. This statement should describe when in the school day the student will not be in general education classes. While it could be documented in several places in the IEP it was left blank on the remaining IEPs.

Also, in the **Educational Services and Placement** section of the IEP there is a prompt for **Placement Considerations.** This section includes both the Least Restrictive rationale and the potential harmful effects information. It specifically asks:

When determining the placement, consider any potentially harmful effects either on the student or the quality of services that he/she needs. After determining the student's placement, complete the "Placement" section on this cover sheet.

The section allows for a description of the placement options considered (LRE), a checkbox as to whether the team accepts the placement and the potential harmful effects, or the reason placement was rejected.

100% of the files reviewed described the placement options considered and checked whether the team accepted or rejected the placement. However, there was very limited (2 files/14.29%) information on the potential harmful effects of the placement. The statement should describe any potential harmful effects that may occur as a result of the identified placement. There must also be a statement as to what the team will do to counter these effects.

Q8 Least Restrictive Environment

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0
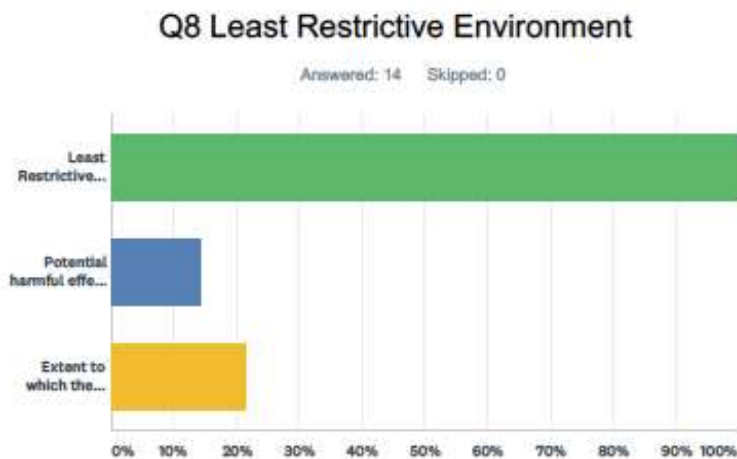
Conclusion

Teachers and staff in the district have a foundational knowledge of the components of the IEP. An area of strength in the review was that they all contained statements about the student's strengths. Goals, while not always measurable for the most part, link to the information in the Present levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance that was based primarily on standardized assessments. A direct link was evident in the majority of IEPs reviewed. In describing services, the frequency and duration of the services was consistently documented, and supplementary aids were consistently considered and documented in the IEP. In addition, there was consistent documentation of the LRE considerations.

In the IEP itself, there is often a disconnect between the alignment of student needs, specially designed instruction and the focus of the goals. In many cases the present levels showed data; however, the data provided was not current classroom data on which to base the special education services and goals. The current performance data is standardized and not a reflection of curriculum-based measure, therefore does not describe how the student is making progress in the general curriculum. Since baseline data was consistently absent, it was difficult to determine if progress was made and to describe the amount of progress that needed to be made in the life of the IEP goal. Since goals were not skills-based, they are often not measurable, and while objectives might be more measurable, they contain too many skills to assess adequately or were just a restatement of the goal with a percentage attached.

From the review, it was difficult to ascertain who is delivering the specially designed instruction and the role that the special education teacher played was not defined. Specially designed instruction, what the teacher will be providing, was not described in the IEP. Service locations did not always line up with the weekly minute totals. Many IEPs had "consult" identified on the IEP without an explanation as to what consultation entails.

In considering the educational benefit of the IEPs, the reviewer considered the following question:

- Does the IEP align and support the goals, services and least restrictive environment?

While the IEP provided information and was compliant in several sections, the missing and/or incomplete information made for an IEP that does not provide educational benefit for a student receiving special education services. For an IEP to demonstrate educational benefit, all components, must be complete and align, providing documentation that supports the student's needs and how those needs will be met. It includes statements about the needs, and how those needs will be addressed through specially designed instruction. The specially designed instruction must be described along with how the services will impact the student in accessing the general education curriculum.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Focus Groups

WestEd conducted seven focus groups with school personnel during the site visit. WestEd conducted focus groups with the following stakeholder groups from both schools in the district:

- General education teachers
- Special education teachers
- Special education related service providers
- Special Education Leads/Coordinators
- Differentiation/Intervention staff
- Special education assistants
- Parents

Focus groups articulated that overall, the staff at West Northfield Elementary School District care deeply and are willing to do what it takes to help students be successful. Groups articulated that the district is beginning to utilize a problem-solving process which includes the use of analyzing data to improve student outcomes. Focus groups further articulated that the district provides many services to students to meet their needs.

Needs

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a general education system of supports that addresses academic and behavioral interventions. Focus group participants identified widespread lack of understanding of MTSS frameworks and a lack of understanding related to what they refer to as RTI as an intervention. For example, the system of supports is defined differently across both sites and the MTSS process is conducted as leveled grouping in the elementary school rather than as an intervention that meets the individual needs of each student. Across both sites, staff expressed that the MTSS process could be improved and that teachers need training in academic and behavioral interventions. Staff participants also expressed that they would benefit from guidance on quality instruction in Tiers 1 (Universal) and 2 (Targeted).

Focus group participants agree there is no consistent system of supports for supporting students who struggle in the curriculum, and teacher focus group participants struggled to articulate the intervention strategies they use in their classrooms. Parents advocate for receiving special education services in order to ensure that their children can receive consistent help for their children who struggle academically and behaviorally. Participants described the system as fragmented or not done with fidelity and identified that more professional development about Tier 1 (Universal; or core curricular instruction), strategies is needed.

A root cause of the fragmented system may be the lack of understanding of the role of the general education teacher in providing Tier 1 (Universal) instruction in the classroom and a lack of training to support teachers in providing these interventions. The absence of a strong standards-aligned Tier 1 (Universal) instruction which is designed to support access for all students utilizing the

framework of Universal Design for learning contributes to a large number of students being referred for evaluation.

Focus group participants expressed broad agreement that there is no shared vision and mission around inclusive practices and inclusion. Most could not describe what inclusion in West Northfield means. Special educators and administrators articulated a need for consistent policies and procedures related to special education referral and services.

Participants further stated there are no criteria for special education placement decisions and that mainstreaming is often based on goals, but sometimes happens because the IEP team has agreed to try it. Classroom behavior was cited as a big concern for general education teachers. General education teachers cite the need for a consistent behavior system and additional behavior management skills.

Special Educators articulated a need for consistent policies and procedures related to special education. Participants further stated that there are no criteria for special education placement decisions.

All focus groups had specific recommendations about improving communication. Parents felt it was "hit or miss", depending on staff member with being notified of their child's progress on the IEP goals. Staff articulated there is no communication concerning policies and procedure and expectations. All focus groups described an accountability system as a primary need.

General Education Teachers Summary
General Education teachers reported:
- Special education teachers have become part of their grade level teams to improve collaboration
- They feel supported by the special education teachers who work very hard to support their students
- They would like to co-teach but they don't always have the same special education teacher in their classroom
- That push-in support is provided by the paraprofessional
- Due to scheduling, the special education teacher is not able to fully participate in the instruction
- Communication about the IEPS is not always quick but it is getting better
- They are not always notified in a timely manner when they have students with IEPs in their classes
- They do not have an adopted ELA or math curriculum, but plan instruction based on the standards
- Although given initial training on inclusive practices, teachers still identified the need for more training
- That they need better communication to understand the expectations for the students with IEPs in their classes

Special Education Teachers Summary

Special Education Teachers reported:

- That service delivery does vary with a continuum including the Instructional classes with support for other students either through pull-out or push-in
- That they are able to push into some classes on a regular basis and would like to do that more in the future
- General education teachers struggle with differentiation and the behavioral and social emotional needs of students with disabilities
- There is widespread confusion on what MTSS is and when it starts and what needs to be done
- They have many resources but feel they are not being utilized very well

Special Education Related Service Providers Summary

Special Education Related Service providers reported:

- There are no clearly identified definitions for MTSS and RTI
- There are no defined Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions
- Currently Differentiation specialists are providing intervention services
- There is a trend to over identify students as teachers don't know how to address behaviors
- There is a concern that a comprehensive plan has not been developed to bring the students back from the NSA program
- Data use is limited with very little baseline data and no progress monitoring occurring
- There is a lack of consistency in programming between the buildings

Special Education Leads/Coordinators

Special Education Leads/Coordinators reported:

- They support other teachers in understanding the special education process
- That from their perspective, general and special education teachers are willing to co-teach
- There is confusion about MTSS and there is a need for a refresher course around what it is and is not
- All NSSED students have a homeroom which is inclusive, but not everyone is clear on the purpose and process for the adults in the room
- Scheduling is always an issue, but this year special education staff were part of the committee
- A need to continue to improve the schedule to allow for more flexibility for students with IEPs
- They identified a need for professional development for the staff in the areas of strategies, behavior, equality vs equity, basic Autism training, MTSS and family engagement
- They added that they find it difficult to be passionate about something they don't understand

Differentiation/Intervention Staff Summary

Differentiation/Intervention staff reported:

- They provide Tier 2 (Targeted) and Tier 3 (Intensive) push-in supports in the classroom
- Push-in is usually for a 25-minute intervention time with each child during small group instruction time.
- They do not feel well utilized during whole group instruction time
- Can't support English learners as they are pulled out of the core instruction time
- Special education students do not receive their supports since they are also pulled out during core instruction.
- They see that the district does provide ample supports through Speech, ELL, OT, PT and special education, but commented that they all need to work smarter not harder and work in a more inclusive and collaborate effort manner
- There is a need for professional development on Universal Design for Learning or other strategies to support struggling learners

Special Education Assistants Summary

Special education assistants shared:

- They play a role in supporting students with IEPs either in a push-in or pull-out model
- Some provide small group instruction in either the special education or general education setting
- In general education they often help students who do not have an IEP
- Their schedules may vary from day to day based on the schedules and the special education minutes that the student is supposed to receive
- In the general education classroom, they modify tests and assignments, support peer interaction and provide guided reading and differentiation
- They have received no formal training, but most have learned from the special education teachers that they work with
- They do not provide any input into the IEP nor they receive copies of the IEP to support them in serving their students
- They feel that their supports are often more reactive than proactive and that their role is to manage the behavior in the room

Parent Focus Group Summary

Parents shared:

- That they seek out having their children identified with an IEP. This ensures that their students who are not in Core+ or Core++ are still are receiving individualized and extra support. They feel that this status ensures that their child's needs will be met
- They also find that information on how to access special education is not easy to find
- They would like policies and procedures developed that will make it clear to parents on the role parents play in the referral, assessment and IEP process
- They are often unsure if their children are meeting their IEP goals or what types of services they should be expecting their child to receive
- That many general education teachers do not understand the needs of students with IEPs

- Some general education teachers are not even aware that they have students with IEPs in their classes
- They would like increased communication from the schools and the district
- They also did not find that outsourcing students was an effective practice for their children
- They feel a lack of inclusive support as they report a lack of team collaboration at the schools as well as a lack of administrative support.

Administrator Interviews
District Leadership
The district leaders shared that the programming that they felt was effective for both general education and students with IEPs included the following:
- Core plus programming for general education students at the middle school level. This program provides an option for re-teaching with the content specialist general education teachers
- Students with IEPs are more integrated than they have been in the past
- Special education staff is well educated with some trained in Wilson reading intervention
- There are adequate materials as well as human resources in the district with low class sizes and low special education teacher caseloads
- Special education staff are improving their practices, especially related to the IEP
- New collaboration time has been instituted to promote collaboration between general and special education teachers

District administrators cited the following as less effective:
- The practice of special education pull-out during core instruction for a large majority of students who have IEPs
- Students miss the grade level core instruction delivered by the content specialist
- The lack of school-wide intervention systems
- Resistance to changing the scheduling that would allow for a school-wide intervention time
- Special education students missing core for intervention when general education students do not miss core to receive intervention
- No system of general education intervention to support either academics or social emotional skills and behavior

The evidence-based practices that are being implemented in the district were identified to include the following:
- Wilson reading at the elementary with a few trained at the middle school
- Level Literacy Instruction (LLI) at both schools in addition to the general education or special education core
- Exposure to the core content in the special education classes
- Scripted math program implemented in special education

In relation to data use, district leaders reported:
- Data that is used includes Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and AIMSWEB to measure student growth and progress
- While data that is collected is not particularly used for instructional planning, is used for grouping
- There is no process for regular data analysis
- Staff does not have a data culture
- There is a lack of common assessments aligned to curriculum maps
- Teachers are not sure of what they want students to know and be able to do

The strengths of the special education programming were identified as:
- Special education staff work hard to individualize services to student needs
- Special education staff are open to improving their practices and improve their teaming
- Janine's leadership has impacted how special education operates
- A well-resourced program with strong committed teachers

Concerns related to the special education programming include:
- The need for a shift in the current mind set of "us vs. them" related to students with disabilities
- Current scheduling at the middle school creates a lack of access to the core curriculum and segregation of students with IEPs
- Wide-spread service delivery using pull-out denies access to the general education core for most students with IEPs
- Lack of appropriate use of data and current resources
- Improved parent engagement

In relation to the NSSED programs in the district the district leadership reported:
- They are unsure if the Co-op programming is the best for the students and if expectations are high enough in the program
- Leadership is questioning whether or not the NSSED programming is effective or better than other district options that are available
- A lack of district control over the large number of West Northfield students that are being served in the program
- There is a preference to bring the preschool program back to the district, but possibly to keep NSSED as an option for behavioral supports

The district leaders identified the following changes that would improve services for both general and special education students in the district.
- Increased teacher collaboration time to have structured conversations around curriculum, instruction and assessment

- Teachers taking the responsibility to teach all students through differentiated instruction rather than sending them out
- Clarifying the general education standards and expectations for all students
- Ensuring students with IEPs have the same access to grade level standardized instruction
- A culture shift that all students are "our kids"
- Pushing for higher expectations for all students, not just for some

Site Administrators
The site leaders shared that the programming that they felt was effective for both general education and students with IEPs included the following:
- Middle school students receive a core plus class for re-teaching and guided studies to support executive functions
- Special education students are pulled from the core for special education minutes and may also receive an additional resource class for re-teach

Site administrators cited the following as less effective:
- There are limited interventions available at the elementary and middle school
- There are a few students accessing intervention at the middle school but there are no particular intervention program and no common intervention time
- The extent of pull-out special education programming creating inequity for students with IEPs
- A mind-set that pull-out special education programming is best
- General education teachers are not comfortable with push-in models of special education service delivery
- Lack of co-teaching and general and special education collaboration
- Very traditional special education programming with some students only being pushed out for non-academics
- No data to determine the effectiveness of the pull-out programming which occurs in science, ELA and math
- Difficulty changing the scheduling for students in special education pull-out or interventions resulting in students being tracked together with limited access to mixed ability groups
- Push-in supports focus primarily on behavior not instruction
- Confusion on the appropriate identification of students for special education services
- Lack of clarity on the goals of special education and interventions
- Lack of any entry or exit criteria for interventions

In relation to data use, site leaders reported:
- They have access to MAP, AIMSWEB and IAR data
- Teachers are not yet using data to inform instruction
- Teachers do not yet have the skills to do data analysis

- Data is primarily used for creating groupings, but not for instruction
- Some behavioral data is used at the middle school for monthly monitoring

The strengths of the special education programming were identified as:
- Janine's leadership
- Great special education staff that is open to learning new skills beyond the "status quo"
- Great resources and support staff
- All students exposed to the grade level content
- Teachers meet specific student needs, meet IEP minutes and support classroom accommodations

Concerns related to the special education programming include:
- Goals and priorities of the special education programs are not clear
- Too many pull-out services
- All teachers do not feel responsible for all students
- A disconnect between general education and special education at the school and district level
- Disconnect on the transition from elementary to middle school
- Lack of consistency of special education practice across the district
- Operational structure of the middle school schedule, limiting access to electives for students receiving special education services, segregating these students in to a "bubble" where they stay with the same students all day

In relation to the NSSED programs in the site leadership reported:
- At the elementary level the program supports exposure to more relationships with general education students
- These students need more access than just "exposure" to the LRE or grade level instruction
- These students would be better served as part of the Winkleman family in their home school
- The staff needs to break the practice of outsourcing students

The site leaders identified the following changes that would improve services for both general and special education students in the district.
- There has been improvement in the last two years since Janine has worked with coaching the special education teachers to be their own case managers and leaders
- Need to change the mindset for all staff that "all students belong to all"
- Staff needs to understand what differentiation means as a right of all children to be utilized with all children
- Change the practice around the advanced classes. Parents advocate for them, but they are creating a tracking system that is segregating students and not allowing for mixed ability groupings.
- Support exiting students from special education

- Clarity on eligibility criteria and consistency in policy and practice across the district
- Work on culture and climate to change the mindset that every kid is ours
- Overall understanding that "every kid is our kid and an IEP is there to support that child, not define that child."

Summary Administrators Focus Groups

Overall both district and site leaders see the need for a change in the current special education programming. They agree that the current practice of special education pull-out from the grade level core is detrimental to students for a variety of reasons including lack of access to the Least Restrictive Environment, access to the grade level core taught by a content expert, access to electives and segregation into a track that does not allow for mixed ability grouping. The wide-spread practice is not supported by data since currently student level data is not used consistently across the district, nor it is used to target intervention instruction. There is a consensus that students in the NSSED program should come back to the district if possible and that all students with disabilities should have more than just "exposure" to the grade level content. The greatest need seems to be a cultural mind-set shift that all teachers are responsible for all students and the culture of outsourcing and sending students out of the general education classroom needs to end.

Response to Special Education Review Questions

The special education program review addressed the following questions.

Continuum of Services:

1. What is the continuum of services and support available to students with disabilities in the West Northfield School District?

2. What is the district's capacity to provide a full continuum of effective programs and services to meet the educational and related services needs of its students with disabilities within the district?

3. What is the quality of specific programs or types of service delivery models within the district?

4. To what degree do students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs?

5. To what degree are IEPs configured for educational benefit?

6. What factors may be contributing to placement of students in out-of-district or segregated placements?

7. To what degree can programming be modified to reduce the number of out of district placements?

Special education programming consists of instructional programming for students who need intensive supports for core academics. These students are pulled out of the general education classrooms and receive replacement curriculums for reading, math and/or science and social studies. The students in the instructional environment need access to the core curriculum and should be provided not only with a replacement curriculum, but access to the general education curriculum.

Students who receive resource supports either receive push in or pull out services for math or for reading depending on the type and intensity. These services are not during the whole group instruction time when the general education teacher is providing core curricula instruction. However, these supports are often provided during small group instruction when the class is doing the daily five or various classroom stations (i.e independent work, writing, word work (vocab), read to self, read to someone else). The resource instruction is intended to provide supplementary instruction to the core

curriculum. However, when students receive pull-out instruction during the station work, they often miss other important core curriculum work provided by the general education teacher, which reflects lowered expectations and a lack of accountability for students with IEPs. The IEPs don't reflect a need to pull students out of the core curriculum and most often the IEP states Resource as a description of the special education service delivery.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:
1. Is there a multi-tiered system of support in place to meet the academic and social emotional needs of all learners?
2. Does the multi-tiered system of support, including Tier 1 grade level instruction, have a data-based decision-making structure that uses data to inform instructional practice?
3. Does the multi-tiered system of support have a means to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction within the grade-level Tier 1 general education classroom?
4. Does instructional pedagogy reflect evidence-based practices and the principles of universal design for learning in all classrooms?
5. Does targeted instruction occur during tiered intervention time?
6. Does the multi-tiered system of support have criteria for entry and exit of the tiered interventions for academics and behavior?
7. Is there a clearly defined process for special education referral?

A multi-tiered system of supports does not exist district wide. There are a limited number of general education interventions available at the elementary and middle school level, but only a small number of students have access to any general education interventions.

There is a lack of clarity on the few interventions that are in place as far as entry, exit and what constitutes the interventions. For students who struggle, there is a lack of a clearly defined general education problem-solving process prior to special education referral. While district processes exist for special education referral, staff and administrators are largely unclear on the processes

Finance:
1. To what degree are special education resources being used in a cost-effective and efficient manner?
2. In what ways might costs be reduced while continuing to maintain high quality programs and services to students with diverse disabilities within the district?

While West Northfield's special education per pupil spending is the second highest in the state, a significant portion of the district's special education financial resources are being used to support the students who are receiving their special education and related services from NSSED.

West Northfield has strong financial capacity to support high quality instruction and services for students with IEP with very low special education teacher caseloads and a wealth of resources within the district. In addition, the district may want to consider shifting financial resources from payments to external service providers for students with IEPs to using those funds to support and build staff capacity to provide high quality inclusive special education and related services within the school district.

Student Results/Outcomes:

1. How are students with disabilities performing on state and/or district-wide assessments?

2. To what degree are there discrepancies between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers on measures such as student achievement results, behavior and social emotional issues?

3. Are skill gaps closing for students with disabilities receiving special education services?

Students with disabilities are outperforming their peers across the state, but significantly high achievement gaps exist for this subgroup, with wider gaps occurring at the 4th and 6th grade levels.
A lack of access to the grade level core content instruction from a content expert in addition to special education services and supports may be attributing to these gaps. Special education programming needs to include access to the core curriculum for the majority of the students with only 1 to 3 percent of the students receiving an alternate evidence-based core curriculum that is intended to accelerate growth to grade level skills.

Professional Development:

1. What type of professional development support exists for job embedded support through professional learning communities, grade/subject teams and/or coaching and mentoring?

2. What professional development support exists for providing differentiated instruction to diverse learners?

Currently professional development is provided on every Monday afternoon. The professional development is district-driven and decided. Along with the theme of the professional development teams are to meet as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) however, there is no process or follow up for grade level teams to show evidence or accountability for what is covered within those PLC meetings.

Recommendations

General Overall Recommendations

Continuum of Services:

In order to provide a full continuum of supports to students with disabilities in the West Northfield School District, the mind set of inclusive practices must be developed with a change to recognizing that students with disabilities are general education students first, and that special education is supports and services, not a place. Students with disabilities, within the continuum of services provided, need to have greater access to the general education core curriculum through the implementation of collaborative instructional models in addition to specially designed instruction that may occur in a pull-out setting based specifically on student need, not disability category.

Program Modifications

- Develop a vision and mission for inclusive practices in the West Northfield School District.
- Develop schedules to provide services in co-taught classes during ELA and math and have opportunities to provide direct instruction to groups of students with similar learning needs in a pull-out model only when needed for skill development. Ensure that students with disabilities receive instruction and grade-level content within the general education environment to the maximum
- If students need both co-teaching supports and Resource pull-out support, the pull-out should not occur during core instructional time to create less fragmentation of the learning.
- Students in co-taught classes can be supported by paraprofessionals who have received appropriate training in science and social studies leaving the special educator available to support direct instruction in ELA and math in the co-taught classroom.

- For a small number of students (1-3%) who need significant supports, provide intensive evidence-based, direct, specially designed, core content instruction by the special educator. These students should receive their academic core content in a special education setting for the academic area identified while still being included in general education classes for all other content.
- Data, including curriculum-based measures, screening and frequent progress monitoring (e.g., weekly) should be analyzed on a regular basis in order to determine the effectiveness of the specially designed instruction being delivered in both the general and special education settings.
- Continue to support and develop the general and special education teachers skills during common planning time through a structured PLC process such as the WestEd Visibly Improving Teaching and Learning (VITAL) to plan lessons to support language needs and learning needs of students with disabilities who are also English learners(EBs).
- Progress monitoring data should be shared with parents in lay person language on a regular basis.
- Paraprofessionals should be provided information on goals and the accommodations of the students with whom they work to provide better classroom supports.
- Define the role of the special education paraprofessional in the classroom so that they can be used more effectively in the general education classroom.
- Support the learning needs of all students with an IEP through the use of Universal Design for Learning practices utilizing the High Leverage Practices for Special Educators identified by the Council for Exceptional Children.
- Train IEP team on how to determine the best programs and supports for students, including the description of the specially designed instruction they will receive.
- Support special educators in developing instructional groupings within and across grade levels to better maximize their instructional time to meet the needs of their small caseload of students and increase their time in the general education classroom.
- Develop the skills of the general education and special education teachers to support the more significant learning needs of the students currently being served in the NSSED cooperative.
- Bring the preschool program back into the district so that the district has some oversight into the curriculum, services and staffing to support the critical early learning needs of this student population.
- Develop clear policies and procedures for appropriate referrals to special education after general education interventions.
- Investigate the high number of students identified as Developmentally Delayed and determine if further training is needed with staff on how to correctly identify students with DD and specific learning disabilities.

Professional Development

- Develop, train and coach co-teaching teams to ensure that effective co-teaching models are implemented.
- Develop, train and utilize a Professional Learning Community (PLC) process to strengthen and support universal instruction and tiered supports.
- Strengthen Universal Tier 1 instruction through job-embedded professional learning through a peer coaching model such as Visibly Improving Teaching and Learning (VITAL).
- Strengthen UDL practices by providing training and follow-up coaching for all staff to ensure UDL is implemented in all classrooms.

- Special education teachers should be provided training in several different evidence-based reading interventions in order to provide direct instruction focusing on the five components of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, reading comprehension.
- Special education teachers should be provided training in a variety of research-based intervention programs in math order to meet the targeted and individualized learning needs of the students including those who are dually identified.
- Paraprofessionals should be provided regular training to support students in other core content classes, including training on different disabilities, and how to provide program supports and accommodations.

Individualized Education Programs

- Use baseline data in the present levels of performance using curriculum-based measures, screening and progress monitoring data since individual standardized test scores do not effectively communicate how the student is progressing through the grade level curriculum.
- Provide training on writing measurable goals and objectives for IEPs to provide educational benefit.
- Revisit the number of accommodations students may need to be successful in the general education classroom and hone in on accommodations that will be the most useful to support the needs of individual students.
- Provide training on educational benefit for developing IEPs that align present levels, needs, goals and services.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:

Schoolwide MTSS framework

- Develop a district wide MTSS framework at the district leadership level
- Develop implementation teams in each building to support the scale-up of the MTSS framework
- Develop a data collection calendar and process for collecting and reviewing the data
- Provide a school wide block of time for intervention at both the elementary and middle school level so that all student including students with disabilities and English learners(EB) have access to general education interventions.
- Develop scheduling that does not block students into schedules that limit their access to heterogenous groups of students
- Use the universal screening and progress monitoring tools with fidelity to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions through frequent progress monitoring and data analysis
- Develop staff skill in data analysis in order to inform intervention and classroom instructional practice.
- Provide a variety of research or evidence-based practices for tiered interventions targeted to specific needs (reading fluency, reading comprehension, math fluency, math problem solving).
- *Universal Tier 1 Instruction*
    - Develop curriculum maps and common assessments across grade levels to ensure consistency of standards aligned instruction in all classrooms at a grade level

- ○ Provide grade level planning time with structured protocols, such as the WestEd Lesson Tuning Protocol to guide teachers in developing lessons that meet the needs of English learners (EB), students with disabilities and other struggling learners
- ○ Investigate the use of evidence-based curricula in reading and math to support consistent standards aligned instruction within each building
- ○ Continue to implement the adopted Social-Emotional curriculum to support all students' social emotional development in the general education classroom.
- ○ Adopt School-Wide Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) to develop common behavioral expectations across the school
- ○ Encourage planned targeted small group differentiated instruction within the core content instruction to meet specific skill deficits prior to Targeted/Selected Tier 2 referral including explicit phonics instruction in the early grades

- *Selected (Targeted) Tier 2*
  - ○ Provide Tier 2 intervention for grades K-8.
    - Develop a schedule that allows for additional intervention time within the school day in each building
    - Develop multiple data source entry and exit criteria for Selected/Target Tier 2 supports in reading, math and social emotional supports.
    - Provide teachers with a variety of evidence-based intervention materials and strategies for tiered instructional supports in reading, including the five essential components of reading instruction, math and social emotional development.
    - Provide teachers with training to implement the interventions with fidelity.
- *Intensive Tier 3 and special education*
  - ○ Provide Intensive Reading Intervention to students who are significantly below grade level in reading skills. (Usually at least 2 years below).
    - Provide an intensive research-based systematic reading intervention o this small group of students.
    - Monitor progress at least weekly to ensure each student is benefitting from the intervention.
    - Implement the research-based intervention with fidelity (frequency, duration, group size).
  - ○ Provide additional math-intensive intervention.
    - Provide intervention in addition to the grade-level core instruction.
    - Monitor progress on at least a weekly basis.
    - Implement the research-based intervention with fidelity (frequency, duration, group size)
  - ○ Provide individualized social-emotional supports for identified students, using a behavior support plan to support behavior change.

Finance:

- Explore whether students with IEPs currently served by NSSED need to continue to receive their special education and related services from NSSED.
- If decisions are made to provide services within the district to students with IEPs currently served by NSSED, consider using some of the freed up funds to provide professional development to existing and new general education and special education staff to ensure that students served directly by the district are receiving high quality instruction, supports, and services.
- Consider working toward increasing the district's average teacher salary to be more aligned with the teacher average salaries paid by adjacent school districts.
- Consider using freed up funds to provide additional administrative supports to support Title I, Title III and MTSS implementation in the district.
- Determine whether special education funds need to be used in conjunction with Title III funds to improve or enhance language supports to English learners (EB) with IEPs.
- Determine whether special education funds need to be used in conjunction with Title I funds to improve or enhance instructional supports to students with IEPs from low income households.

Student Results/Outcomes

- Implement tiered interventions to meet the needs of all students including high needs students, English learners (EBs) and students with disabilities
- Use universal screening, progress monitoring data, statewide assessment data and other data sources to determine which grade level or group of students need more supports in order to provide services where they are most needed and close achievement gaps
- Analyze data to determine the cause of the large achievement gaps at the 4th and 6th grade levels

Concluding Comments and Reflections

Based on the initial review questions focused on the continuum of services, the West Northfield School District currently does provide supports and services for students with IEPs within a continuum, provided by a caring staff who work hard to ensure that specific student needs are met. General and special education teachers are beginning to collaborate and are learning how to better work together and learn from each other to support all learners with the leadership if the Students Supports Director. General education Tier 1 instruction reflects some use of Universal Design for Learning elements and overall student achievement for all students and students with disabilities are higher than the state average across the district.

The current special education programming limits student access to the grade level curriculum due to the frequent practice of pull-out services during core instructional time, limiting grade level core content instruction from a content expert. When students are pulled-out for Resource or other special education programming, the IEP does not describe the specially designed instruction to be delivered in order to support the student in meeting their goals. While the instruction in the self-contained Instructional classroom is intended to allow the students "exposure" to the core curriculum, this reflects lowered expectations and a lack of accountability for many students with IEPs.

District special education programming needs to be modified to include more collaborative co-teaching for students within the grade level core classroom. The low special education teacher caseloads support a model where students should be receiving most of their supports and services in the general education classroom.

West Northfield finances reveal that the district has the second highest Net Expenditure per Special Education Child Count in the state at $23,540 per student. The data shows that approximately 50% of that funding goes to NSSED each year. A culture of outsourcing seems to permeate the district with classroom teachers preferring that students are pulled out for intervention and special education instruction to students being outsourced to the cooperative programming because teachers do not feel they can handle the social emotional and learning needs of some students. West Northfield will need to make a dramatic change in mind-set that all students can learn, all students belong to all staff and all students deserve an equitable education in order to bring students back from the NSSED programs into district special education programming.

This mind-set change should begin with the implementation of a school-wide, Multi-tiered System of Support with an intervention block so that all students can benefit from both Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. All students would benefit from targeted instruction driven by screening, progress monitoring and formative assessment data to support the closing of skill gaps and the reduction of achievement gaps across all grade levels. Instructional practice within the tiered supports can be strengthened through an expansion of the use of UDL strategies with instruction that has a greater focus on higher-order thinking skills.

Delivery of specially designed instruction should be informed by data that goes beyond standardized assessments and should include screening, progress monitoring, curriculum-based measures and diagnostic data to inform the specially designed instruction delivered either in the general education, resource or other special education setting. Without additional data sources and the processes to analyze the data, teachers will not adequately be able to deliver instruction that will reduce achievement gaps.

In conclusion, West Northfield is poised to make the significant changes needed to change the mind-set that all students deserve an equitable education that can and will be provided to students through the resources provided **within** the district. They are moving in the right direction to make the cultural shift to ensure that, "all students are our kids."

APPENDICES –
Appendix A – Classroom Walk Through Observation Tool

Demographic

1. Site
- [ ] Winkelman School
- [ ] Field MS

2. Grade Level

[   ]

3. Subject Observed
- [ ] English Language Arts
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Social Studies
- [ ] Special Education class
- [ ] Mathematics

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Educational Setting

4. Environment
- [ ] Co-teaching- general and special education teacher
- [ ] Special education classroom
- [ ] Inclusive support (not co-teaching) provided by special education staff
- [ ] Special education resource
- [ ] Cooperative Classroom
- [ ] General education with no special education support

Other (please specify)

[   ]

5. Staff in classroom
- [ ] General education teacher
- [ ] Special Education teacher
- [ ] Assistant (Para educator)
- [ ] Related service (OT/PT, Speech, Behavior specialists etc.)

Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. Number of students in the classroom

# of general education students	[ ]
# of special education students	[ ]
# of English learners	[ ]

7. Physical space

☐ Teachers use physical space to increase access to learning for all students.

☐ Physical arrangement encourages engagement in student learning.

☐ Physical space encourages autonomy and choice.

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Instructional Delivery

8. Related Service Providers and Assistants

☐ Providing direct services in the classroom

☐ Assisting student (s)

☐ Observing instruction

☐ Supporting instruction

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. Student Engagement/Participation (Students are: participating through speaking, writing, signaling, performing, thinking/responding)

☐ 0-50%

☐ 51-75%

☐ 76-90%

☐ 91-100%

10. Evidence of standards-aligned instruction

☐ Standard written or stated

☐ Core standards-aligned curriculum used by all students

☐ No standards-aligned instruction evident

Other (please specify)

[   ]

11. Teacher instructional behavior

☐ Provided verbal learning objective

☐ Provided written learning objective

☐ Modeled what students should know ad be able to do

☐ Provided verbal instruction only during lesson

☐ Provided verbal instruction and displayed visual words/numbers to support lesson

☐ Used graphic organizers or visual representation to support lesson

☐ Used technology to support lesson

☐ None of the strategies were observed

Other (please specify)

[   ]

12. Instructional delivery whole class

☐ Teacher talk (lecture, model)

☐ Teacher-led (Q & A)

☐ Teacher modeling/student practice

☐ N/A

Other (please specify)

[   ]

13. Instructional delivery small group/centers

☐ Teacher/Adult led

☐ Student-led cooperative groupings

☐ Working in pairs

14. Universal Design for Learning-Multiple Ways of Engagement

☐ Age appropriate activities   ☐ Group work/collaboration

☐ Culturally relevant activities and/or materials   ☐ Student monitoring own progress/self-assessment practices

☐ Student choice

Other (please specify)

[   ]

15. Universal Design for Learning- Multiple Means of Representation ("what" of learning)

○ Activation of prior knowledge   ○ Visuals (pictures, artifacts, video clips)

○ Multiple media/formats (e.g. interactive smart board)   ○ Use of strategies and tools that can help student make
                                                            meaning of their learning

○ Graphic organizers

Other (please specify)

[   ]

16. Universal Design for Learning-Multiple Ways of Expression "how" of learning)

○ Multi-media for student expression (laptop, IPad, audio, text,   ○ Checklists/Assessment rubrics for students
   drawing)
                                                    ○ Check for understanding/formative assessments used
○ concept mapping tools/note taking guides   through-out

○ Verbal and written scaffolds and prompts (e.g. sentence
   stems or frames, use of protocols)

Other (please specify)

[   ]

17. Higher Order thinking: Depth of Knowledge

☐ Level 1- Recall   ☐ Level 4- Extended thinking

☐ Level 2- Skills/Concepts   ☐ Unclear/ do not know

☐ Level 3- Strategic thinking

Other (please specify)

[   ]

18. Behavioral expectations and support

☐ Evidence of clear classroom management policies and procedures

☐ Transitions and routines observed

☐ Students positively reinforced for expected behavior

☐ Teacher implements and support the classroom policies

19. Brief description of classroom, lesson and instructional practice:

West Northfield Cooperative Preschool
Classroom Observation Record

1. Date:	2. Observer:	3. Start Time	4. End Time	# students with IEPs	# typically developing	5. # of staff	6. # of Tutors

Preschool Fundamental Skill Development		
Approaches to Learning -Self-Regulation (ATL-REG)	Social and Emotional Development (SED)	Language and Literacy Development (LLD)
☐ Engages a child's curiosity and initiative in learning ☐ Development of strategies for regulating feelings and behavior ☐ Increase the child's ability to persist in understanding and mastering activities ☐ Increase the child's ability to share the use of space and materials Observation notes:	☐ Increase awareness of self as distinct from and also related to others ☐ Develop understanding of people's behaviors, feelings, throughs and individual characteristics ☐ Increase child's ability to be competent and cooperative in interactions with peers; developing friendships with several peers ☐ Increase the child's ability to use objects to represent other objects or ideas and engage in symbolic play with others Observation notes:	☐ Increase child's understanding of communication and language (receptive) ☐ Encourage child to communicate or act in response to language (expressive) ☐ Increase the use of increasingly complex language ☐ Engage child in back and forth communication ☐ Engage child in books, songs, rhymes, stories and other literacy activities that are age appropriate ☐ Engage child in understanding the conventions of print material and print meaning ☐ Engage child in the awareness of the sounds (elements) that make up language, including the ability to manipulate them in language ☐ Engage child in the awareness of letters in the environment and relationship to sound ☐ Engage child's interest and ability in writing Observation notes:

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Cognition, Math & Science (COG)	English Language Development (ELD) English Learners ONLY	Preschool Fundamental Skills Notes/Evidence
❑ Engage child in activities that increase ability to compare, match, and sort objects into groups according to their attributes ❑ Engage child in activities that develop an understanding of number and quantity ❑ Engage child in activities that develop the ability to add and subtract small quantities of object ○ Concepts of more and less when objects are added or taken away ❑ Engage child in activities that develop the concepts of measurable properties ○ Concepts of different size objects, how object differ by measurable property ❑ Engage child in activities that develop the ability to recognize, reproduce and create patterns ❑ Engage child in activities that develop knowledge of shapes and their characteristics Observation notes:	❑ Increase the child's progress toward fluency in understanding English (receptive) ❑ Increase the child's progress toward fluency in speaking English (expressive) ❑ Engage the child in activities that increase the understanding of and response to books, stories, songs and poems presented in English ❑ Engage child in activities that increase understanding that print in English carries meaning Observation notes:	

WestEd

Effective Instructional Practices- Universal Design for Learning		
Multiple ways of engagement ("why" of learning) **Provide options for:**	**Multiple means of representation ("what" of learning)** **Provide options for:**	**Multiple ways of expression ("how" of learning)** **Provide options for:**
Recruiting Interest ❑ Individual choice and autonomy ❑ Relevance and value to activities ❑ Distraction free safe environment Sustaining Effort and Persistence ❑ Personal goals for activities ❑ Varying demands on skill level ❑ Frequent feedback Self-regulation Age appropriate activities ❑ High expectations and beliefs ❑ Support personal coping skills and strategies ❑ Opportunities for self-reflection	Perception ❑ Customizing display of information ❑ Alternatives to auditory information ❑ Alternatives to visual information Language and Symbols ❑ Clarify vocabulary and symbols ❑ Clarify language structures ❑ Support pre- literacy and pre-math skills ❑ Illustrate through multi-media Comprehension ❑ Activate or supply background knowledge ❑ Highlight patterns or critical feature and relationships ❑ Guide information processing and visualization ❑ Maximize transfer and generalization	Physical Action ❑ Vary methods for response ❑ Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies Expression & Communication ❑ Use multiple media for communication ❑ Use multiple tools and resources for construction and composition ❑ Build skills with graduated levels of support Executive Functions ❑ Support planning and strategy development ❑ Enhance capacity for monitoring own progress

Notes/Evidence

Instructional Delivery	**Managing Student Behaviors**
Whole Class ❑ Teacher talk (lecture, model) ❑ Teacher-led (Q&A) ❑ Teacher modeling/<u>students</u> practice ❑ Other: **Small Group/Centers** ❑ Teacher/Adult-led ❑ Student-led cooperative groupings ❑ Working in pairs ❑ Other: **Notes:**	❑ Evidence of clear classroom management policies and procedures ❑ Classroom procedures promote student learning, social development and group responsibility (use of norms, routines, "sponge activities," transitions, systems of recognition, consequences v. punishment) ❑ Teachers implement and support the classroom policies ❑ Teachers response to behavioral errors is appropriate yet reflects dignity **Notes:**
Physical Space	**Related Service Providers and Tutors**
❑ Teachers use physical space to increase access to learning for all students ❑ Physical arrangement encourages engagement in student learning ❑ Physical space encourages autonomy and choice **Notes:**	❑ Providing direct services in classroom ❑ Assisting student(s) ❑ Observing instruction ❑ Supporting Instruction ❑ Other: **Notes:**
Brief description of classroom, lesson and instructional practice:	**Brief description of specially designed instruction observed:**

Appendix B- Focus Group Questions

West Northfield School District
District Leadership Interview
Special Education Review

Background:
- What have been your previous roles in education?
- How many years have you been at West Northfield in this current position?

Program Specific:
1. In the district, what programs or interventions for at risk students and students with IEPs do you think are the most effective? What is it about these programs that you think are effective?
2. Are there programs, practices or interventions that you think are less effective? Why?
3. What data is reported to you as a district leader on student progress? How is this data being used to inform policies, practices and programming?
4. What do you see as the strengths of the special education programming in the district?
5. What are your concerns regarding the current special education programming in the district?
6. How do you think the students in the co-ops might be best served?
7. What changes do you think could improve the programming or outcomes for students with IEPs in the district?
8. What else do you want to share about the district that will inform this special education review?

West Northfield School District
Special Education District Leadership Interview
Special Education Review

Background:
- What have been your previous roles in education?
- How many years have you been at West Northfield in this current position?

Program Specific:
9. In the district, what programs or interventions for at risk students and students with IEPs do you think are the most effective? What is it about these programs that you think are effective?
10. What are the evidence-based practices being utilized to provide specially designed instruction across the district?

11. What are the models of special education programming being provided within the continuum of services?

12. Are any of these programs, practices or interventions that are less effective? Why do you think they are less effective?

13. What data is reported to you as a district leader on student progress? How is this data being used to inform policies, practices, programming and procedures?

14. What do you see as the strengths of the special education programming in the district?

15. What are your concerns regarding the current special education programming in the district?

16. How do you think the students in the co-ops might be best served?

17. What changes do you think could improve the programming or outcomes for students with IEPs in the district?

18. What else do you want to share about the district that will inform this special education review?

West Northfield School District
Administrator Interview
Special Education Review

Background:

- What have been your previous roles in education?
- How many years have you been at West Northfield in this current position?

Program Specific:

19. In your school, what programs or interventions for at risk students and students with IEPs do you think are the most effective? What is it about these programs that you think are effective?

20. Are there programs, practices or interventions that you think are less effective? Why?

21. What data is reported to you on student progress? How is this data used to inform instruction or instructional programming?

22. What do you see as the strengths of the special education programming in your school?

23. What are your concerns regarding the current special education programming in your school? In the district?

24. How do you think the students in the co-ops might be best served?

25. What changes do you think could improve the programming or outcomes for students with IEPs in your school and in the district?

26. What else do you want to share about your school or the district that will inform this special education review?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
Parent Focus Group Questions

Background: How long have you been a parent of a child with a disability in this district? In this school?

1. Does your child receive any general education intervention supports at their school? Please describe.
2. What do your child's special education services look like?
    a. Do you feel that these services meet your child's needs? Explain.
    b. What input did you have in making decisions about your child's special education supports and services?
    c. What role did you play in the development of the IEP?
        i. What factors were considered when determining Least Restrictive Environment and service delivery options?
3. How does your child access the grade level content standards?
    a. What supports do they receive in the inclusive classroom?
    b. What does grade level instruction look like in special education settings?
4. What data is shared with you to inform you on your child's progress
    a. In their classes?
    b. In intervention programs?
    c. On their IEP goals?
5. What are the challenges your child faces in their general education program classes?
6. Are teachers using any specific instructional strategies or practices that support your child in learning the content that you are aware of? Can you describe any of the strategies or practices that help your child?
7. Are accommodations identified in the IEP being implemented? Can you provide some examples?
8. Do you feel that the current district services are adequate to meet your child's academic and social emotional needs?
9. What role do assistants (paraprofessionals) play in helping your child?
10. What are the strengths of your child's school in supporting the needs of your child?
11. What are the challenges and solutions to improving outcomes for your child?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
General Education Teacher Focus Group Questions

Background: Name and role
- how long teaching
- in this district
- in this school

1) Please tell us about your current system of supports that are available to students who struggle in the curriculum and/or with social emotional issues.
   a. Please describe the interventions that are used in your classroom (academic and social emotional).
      i. How do you choose your research-based interventions?
      ii. Can you describe the targeted interventions that are occurring during intervention times?
         1. Who delivers the instruction for these interventions?
         2. How do you determine if they are effective?
2) How do you determine if students are in need of interventions?
   a. Do you have defined entry and exit criteria for interventions?
      i. What data do you use to make those decisions?
      ii. What processes do teachers and interventionists use to review the data for making decisions?
3) What is the course of action (process) when interventions do not prove successful?
   a. What is your role in the process?
   b. What is the process for analyzing and reviewing data in order to determine next steps?
   c. What is the process for referring students for special education?
      i. What is your role in this process?
      ii. What is your role in the decision of the least restrictive environment for students to access the general curriculum?
4) What does inclusive practice look like at your school?
   a. What roles do assistants play in supporting inclusive practices?
   b. To what extent do general and special education teachers have the opportunity to meet regularly to review data and plan instruction for their inclusive classes?
5) What instructional strategies or practices are used to support struggling learners in the general education classroom (Tier 1, core) including students with disabilities and English learners(EB) in inclusive classes?
   a. Can you describe the practices that support differentiated learning needs?
   b. Can you describe any strategies you routinely use to support your diverse learners?
6) What type of support (professional development opportunities and/or job embedded support (PLC team, grade/subject team, coaching/mentoring) do you receive to support the instruction of diverse learners?
7) Anything else you would like to share?
8) What recommendations do you have for improving the effectiveness of special education services?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
Special Education & English Learner Teacher Focus Group Questions
Background: Name and role, years in special education, in the district, in this school

1. Please tell us about your current model of special education services in this school.
   a. What is your role in providing special education services?
   b. What does that service delivery look like?
   c. Describe your continuum of services?
   d. How are current special education services provided to students with IEPs?
2. What does inclusive practice look like in this school? In the district?
   a. What is your role in supporting inclusive practices?
   b. To what extent do general and special education teachers have the opportunity to meet regularly to plan instruction for inclusive classes?
   c. What roles do tutors play in supporting inclusive practices?
3. Is the current organization of special education services the most effective means for providing services in inclusive settings while maintaining a full continuum of service delivery options for students with disabilities?
4. What is your role in the decision of the least restrictive environment for students to access the general curriculum?
   a. How are out of district placements decided?
5. What is the current system of supports that are available to students with or without IEPs who struggle in the curriculum or with social emotional issues?
   a. What data is used to make decisions about access to those supports?
      i. Are there specific entry and exit criteria for academic and social emotional interventions?
      ii. What data is used to make those decisions?
   b. To what degree does the district provide support for struggling students who do not have IEPs?
      i. What is your role?
   c. To what degree do students with IEPs have access to general education interventions?
      i. What is your role?
   d. What is your role in providing interventions to non-identified struggling learners?
6. What is the course of action (process) when interventions do not prove successful?
   a. What is your role in the process?
   b. Is this process the process for referring students for special education? How is it different?
      i. What is your role in this process?
7. How are decisions made about placing students out of district?
   a. Who is participates in the decision-making process?
   b. Are there clear criteria that determine the need for out of district placements?
   c. Are there criteria or processes for bringing students back into the district special education programing?
8. What type of support (professional development opportunities and/or job embedded support (PLC team, grade/subject team, coaching/mentoring) do you receive to support the instruction of diverse learners?
9. Anything else you would like to share?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
Differentiation/Intervention Staff Focus Group Questions

Background: Title and roles, years in education, years in this position, years at this school:

1) Please describe your role in supporting students who are identified as in need of interventions.
2) Please tell us about your current system of supports that are available to general education students who struggle in the curriculum and how the system of supports came to be.
   a. Please describe the various interventions that are available (academic and social emotional).
      i. How do you choose those research-based interventions?
      ii. How do you determine if they are effective?
3) How do you determine if students are in need of interventions?
   a. How do you determine if they are making progress in the interventions?
      i. What data do you use to make those decisions?
      ii. What structures are in place to allow you and other teachers to review the data for making decisions?
4) Does the system of supports have a data-based decision-making structure that includes using data to determine the effectiveness of the interventions?
5) What is the course of action (process) when interventions do not prove successful?
   a. What is your role in the process?
   b. Is there a clearly defined process for students who do not respond to intervention?
   c. Is this process for referring students for special education? How is it different?
      i. What is your role in this process?
6) Does the system of support have criteria for entry and exit of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for academics and behavior?
7) Describe what Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction looks like.
   a. What type of targeted instruction occurs in these interventions?
   b. Do students with disabilities have access to Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions?
8) What instructional strategies or practices are used to support struggling learners in the general education classrooms (Tier 1), including students with disabilities and English learners (EB) in these inclusive classes?
   a. Can you describe these strategies?
9) What type of support (professional development opportunities and/or job embedded support (PLC team, grade/subject team, coaching/mentoring) do you receive to support the instruction of diverse learners?
10) Anything else you would like to share?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
Related Service Providers & Itinerant Focus Group Questions

Background: Years in education, years in this position:
1) What does inclusive practice look like in the district?
    a. What is your role in supporting inclusive practices?
2) Please tell us about your current system of supports in general education that are available to students who struggle in the curriculum and how the system of supports came to be.
    a. Please describe the interventions that are available (academic and social emotional).
        i. How do you choose your research-based interventions?
        ii. Can you describe the targeted interventions that are occurring during intervention times?
            1. Who delivers the instruction for these interventions?
        iii. How do you determine if they are effective?
3) How do you determine if students are in need of special education?
    a. Do you have defined entry and exit criteria for special education?
        i. What data do you use to make those decisions?
        ii. What processes do teams use to review the data for making decisions?
4) Is there a clearly defined process for students who do not respond to general education intervention?
5) Is there a clearly defined process for special education referral?
6) To what extent do general and special education teachers have the opportunity to meet regularly to plan instruction for their inclusive classes?
7) What instructional strategies or practices are used to support struggling learners including students with disabilities and English Learners(EB) in inclusive classes?
    a. Can you describe these strategies?
    b. How have teachers been trained in these strategies?
    c. How frequently are you able to go into classes to observe and provide feedback regarding instruction and the implementation of instructional strategies?
8) How are resources allocated in the system of supports?
    a. Is it cost effective and efficient?
9) How are decisions made about placing students out of district?
    a. Who is participates in the decision-making process?
    b. Are there clear criteria that determine the need for out of district placements?
    c. Are there criteria or processes for bringing students back into the district special education programing?
10) What are the professional development needs of staff within the district?
    a. What should be the priority?

West Northfield School District
Special Education Reviews
Special Education Assistants Focus Group Questions

Background: How long have you been an assistant at this school?
What other roles have you had in your career?

1) Please tell us how you support students with IEPs in a general education, intervention or special education classroom.
   a. What is your role?
   b. What do you do in a typical classroom?
2) What training have you had around "inclusive practices" to support instruction in general education classrooms?
3) What is your role/contribution in the IEP process?
4) How do you learn about the instructional and behavioral needs of the students with whom you work?
5) What data do you have access to and/or use to inform you on how you can best support the students with whom you work?
6) How do you become aware of the classroom accommodations and modifications of the students with whom you work?
7) How do general education, special education and assistants collaborate in order to provide instructional support to students?
8) From your perspective, what strategies or practices are teachers using in their classrooms that support struggling learners?
   a What practices have you observed that need to be modified in order to better support students to be successful?
9) Anything else you would like to share?

Appendix C - IEP Review Tool

1. Demographics

Age

Grade

School

Disability

2. Administrative Data sheet

☐ Demographics and data are complete

☐ Meeting information is complete

☐ Re-eval within 3 years of last re-eval

☐ IEP is current

☐ Initial evaluation meets 45 day timeline

3. IEP or amendment

☐ Student strengths, interests and disability area are listed

☐ Vision statement has components

4. PLEP

☐ PLEP includes multiple data sources including CBMs, progress monitoring data, individualized assessments, classroom, district and state assessments

☐ Contains current progress information

☐ Identified needs link to IEP goals

☐ How the disability affects progress statement links to all areas of need

☐ Accommodations listed link to needs

☐ Specially designed instruction includes description of content, method of delivery and performance

☐ Specially designed instruction links to tests, gen ed performance and goals

9. Service Delivery

☐ Clear link between service delivery listed and the needs in the PLEP

☐ Least Restrictive Environment options considered

☐ Least Restrictive Environment identified

10. Service Delivery Consultation

☐ N/A

☐ The service delivery model is described completely, aligns with needs and is appropriate

☐ The frequency and duration of the service provided is listed and appropriate

☐ Supplemental aids, services and program modifications are listed and appropriate

☐ Services align with goals

11. Special and Related Services in General Education

☐ N/A

☐ The service delivery model is described completely, aligns with needs and is appropriate

☐ The frequency and duration of the service provided is listed and appropriate

☐ Supplemental aids, services and program modifications are listed and appropriate

☐ Services align with goals

12. Special and Related Services in Other

☐ N/A

☐ The service delivery model is described completely, aligns with needs and is appropriate

☐ The frequency and duration of the service provided is listed and appropriate

☐ Supplemental aids, services and program modifications are listed and appropriate

☐ Services align with goals

13. Non-participation Justification

☐ Extent to which student will not participate with non-disabled peers explained and appropriate

☐ Extent to which a student will not participate with non-disabled peers links to present levels

14. Schedule Modification

☐ A schedule modification for the student considered

☐ A schedule modification for the student is appropriate

15. State or District Assessment

☐ State and/or district-wide assessments planned during the IEP period are listed

☐ Accommodations are described for the needed content area

☐ Accommodations link to present levels

16. Comments

Appendix D - Special Education Review Schedule

WestEd Program Review
October 17-18, 2019
Winkelman Elementary

Walk-through schedule for Thursday October 17, 2019

Time	Teacher/Service Provider	Type of Service	Location
8:15-8:35	Lisa Chinitz	Pull out Resource 5th grade	59
8:35-8:55	Ms. Rixie (3rd Grade teacher) Kay Conway Resource 1-3	3rd grade gen ed and Push In Resource 3rd	27 13B
8:55-9:10	Mrs. Heuberger	Instructional 3rd grade math	25
9:10-9:30	Mrs. Falozone	1st Grade	14
9:30-9:50	Ms. Gebert	Kinder Gen Ed and Resource K Support Push in	5
10-10:20	Ms. List	PreSchool	70
10:20-10:40	Karen McGrath	Pull out Speech	13B
10:40-11	Mrs. LaPalermo and Quincy Jenkin	4th grade and social worker push in	34
11-11:30	Mrs. Pachowicz	Supported Learning Environment NSSED	18
11:40-Noon	Ms. Gabby List	Core ++ 4th grade	72
12:10-12:30	Ms. Geary	5th grade	39
12:30-1	Lunch		
1-1:20	Ms. Kelly Levy	4th grade	37
1:30-1:50	Ms. Greene	5th grade Maker space	LMC (Makerspace)
1:50-2:15	Ms. Wilkin	3rd and 4th Instructional	33
2:15-2:35	Ms. Bordley Harvell	5th Grade Music	15

Focus Groups
Winkelman Conference Room
October 18, 2018

Focus Group	Times
Parents	8:30-9:30
General Education Teachers (1 from each grade level)	9:40-10:40
Assistants (special education assistants only)	10:40-11:15
Lunch	11:15--12:00
Differentiation Specialists/Intervention	12:00-12:30
Special Education Leads/ Coordinators	12:40-1:20
Special Education Teachers /EL Teachers (all case managers, at least 1 EL rep from Winkelman & Field and Veronica)	1:25- 2:15
Related Service Staff (speech pathologists, social workers, psychologists, OTs)	2:15-3:00

TIME Teacher Class grade & subject Location

8:40 - 8:55 Sackley 8th SS 8

8:55 - 9:10 Fernandez 7th ELA 9

9:10 - 9:25 Braje 7th CC Math 18

9:25 - 9:40 Choi 6th ELL ELA 24

9:40 - 10:00 Ellis 6th/7th instructional ELA 13

10:00 - 10:15 Stodola 6th science 1

10:15 - 10:30 Roche 6th single accelerated math 16

10:30 - 10:45 Hulting 8th ELA 12 G

10:45 - 11:05 Ruiz 6th PE 28 G

11:05 - 11:20 Burns 7th instructional math 13

11:20 - 12:00 LUNCH

12:00 - 12:15 Lauder 6th ELA-W (advanced) 3

12:15 - 12:30 Gandhi 6th CC math 6

12:30 - 12:45 Jacoby 8th CC math 22

12:45 - 1:05 Wolney 7th spanish 11

1:05 - 1:25 Carvell 7th music 39

1:25 - 1:30 break

1:30 - 1:50 Bishop 6th reading intervention 19 B

1:50 - 2:10 Moon 8th science 15

2:10 - 2:30 Menold 6th/7th instructional science 13

2:30 - 2:50 Kim 8th ELA 12 E

2:50 - 3:05 Sprandel 8th Family & Consumer Science19

3:05 - 3:20 Leehy 7th science 17

3:20 - 3:30 Blackman 7th SS 10