The Collaborative

✓ The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative (Collaborative) was founded in 1994
✓ Sponsored by the Education Development Center, Inc.
✓ The Collaborative’s Mission: To improve educational results and life’s opportunities for students with disabilities and other diverse learners
✓ Membership: 105 large, medium & small member school districts
External Core Team

✓ **David Riley, Executive Director**
  Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

✓ **Ron Felton, Associate Director**
  Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative & former
  Associate Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

✓ **Elise Frattura, Associate Dean**
  University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

✓ **Charlene Green, Deputy Superintendent**
  Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

✓ **Caroline Parker, Senior Research Scientist**
  Education Development Center, Inc.

Purpose of Audit

The purpose of the Audit was to generate recommendations that would assist the school district in its efforts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities who receive special education services.
Methodology

- Document review
- Data analysis
- Stakeholder meetings & interviews
- School visitations
- Parent focus groups
- Report development
- Debriefing and presentation of findings

Focus Areas

- Demographic Context
- Areas of Focus:
  - Infrastructure
    - Organizational Orientation
    - Organizational Structure
  - Service Delivery & Instructional Practice
    - Service Delivery
    - Instruction & Instructional Practice
  - Professional Development
Organization of Report

The following was provided for each area of focus:

- Positive Findings
- Concerns
- Recommendations

Demographic Context

- San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) is among the nation’s 100 largest school districts, with an enrollment of 53,952 K–12 students and 140 schools.
- Nearly one-third of the student population is Asian, with Hispanics (23%) and African Americans (11%) comprising the second and third largest racial/ethnic groups in the district. Ten percent of the school district’s population is classified as White.
Demographic Context

- The school district serves 6,296 students with disabilities (PreK–12), which is 11% of the total district population.
- Hispanics and African Americans, who together make up 35% of the total student population, constitute 55% of the total population of students with disabilities, while Asians make up 27% of the population of students with disabilities.

(CASEMIS) Data: 12/2009

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Demographic Context

- The school district’s special education enrollment has remained fairly steady, rising 4% from 2007 to 2009.
- However, the number of students classified as autistic has increased by 40% in the same time period.
- The proportion of students who are African American and identified as disabled is more than double the proportion of African American students in the school district overall.
Core Findings: Infrastructure

Positive:
- School district has a thoughtful and bold strategic plan and the leadership in place to fulfill it vision.

Concerns re Organizational Orientation:
- Special education is a separate system.
- Special education is a program not a service.
- Focus has been on compliance rather than on quality.
- Disproportionality
- Parent Involvement & Community Engagement

Concerns re Organizational Structure:
- Lack of alignment with rest of school district’s leadership structures
- Student assignment practices
- Data & Data-based decision making
- Funding & Budget
**Recommendations: Infrastructure**

**Organizational Orientation:**
- Articulate a unified vision consistent with principles of the strategic plan.
- Special education is a service not a program.
- School principals are responsible and accountable for all students in their buildings.
- Expand and improve parent communication and involvement, partner with community groups.
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of disproportionality.

**Organizational Structure:**
- Align with school district leadership structure with emphasis on curriculum and instruction.
- Convert Content Specialist position to Instructional Support Specialist & improve coordination with other positions supporting schools and classrooms.
- Continue improvement of student assignment policy so that students with disabilities have the same options as all other students.
- Improve special education data management system.
- Special Education Leader responsible for IDEA budget & investments.
Positive Findings:
- An active and engaged group of professionals within the school district and in the community supporting inclusive educational practices.
- Some schools are, in fact, implementing inclusive educational practices and effectively supporting students with disabilities learning in the general education classroom.

Concerns:
- Programmatic orientation
- Least restrictive environment
  - Accuracy of data questionable
  - Private or nonpublic day and residential program enrollments
    - Disproportionality
- “Inclusion programs” vs. Inclusive practices”
- Cost of nonpublic day and residential program & composition of students served
Concerns:

- Students with disabilities had the smallest percentage of students at or above proficiency in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.
- In 2009, the gap between students with disabilities and all other students ranged from 21 points for ELA in grades 2 through 5, to 43 points for math in grade 10 and the gaps widen as grade levels advance.
Concerns continued:

- SFUSD lacks a system-wide core curriculum and content standards and, therefore, lacks a consistent approach to performance monitoring, benchmark assessments, and professional development tied to strategic goals.
- The school district lacks a systematic and system-wide approach to the implementation of a multi-tiered system of academic and behavioral supports (RtI/PBIS).
Recommenda+ons:
Service Delivery & Instructional Practices

✓ Foundational recommendation: Shift from a programmatic orientation to a more integrated approach to service delivery.
  ✓ Board level commitment.
  ✓ Moratorium on additional segregated programs.
  ✓ Students with disabilities should be able to attend the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability.
  ✓ All special education teachers and support staff must be included in the school district’s professional development plans and initiatives.

SFUSD Board of Education
September 21, 2010

Recommenda+ons:
Service Delivery & Instructional Practices

✓ Establish and implement core curriculum and content standards with fidelity of implementation in the delivery of content and instructional strategies within a multi-tiered system of academic and behavioral supports.

SFUSD Board of Education
September 21, 2010
Positive Findings:

- Teachers are seeking a vision for service delivery supported by cohesive professional development opportunities.
- Parents support a plan to allow for more equitable services for all students with disabilities.
- Special education teachers and related services personnel are looking forward to becoming equal members of educational teams with their general education colleagues.

Concerns:

- Policies and procedures are severely lacking.
- Teachers of students with disabilities have not had the opportunity to be engaged in professional development related to curriculum and instruction.
Recommendations: Professional Development

- Policies & Procedures:
  - Develop a district special education procedural manual with the participation of key staff members and representatives of the advocacy community.
  - Create and disseminate “reminders” and web site prompts regarding key policies and procedures.
  - Utilize school-based data to determine areas of noncompliance and develop individualized school support teams to address needs.

Recommendations: Professional Development

- Policies & Procedures:
  - Train central office clerical staff on key aspects of the regulations in order to help them determine where and from whom to obtain accurate responses to inquiries.
  - Customize school-level training based on the school’s ability to build capacity to serve all students through the use of building-based service delivery teams.
Recommendations: Professional Development

✓ Curriculum and Instruction:
✓ Provide teachers of students with disabilities with the same professional development opportunities that address the improvement of student achievement as all other teacher groups.

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