
EDUCATION, POLICY, AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT: SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW

It should be noted this report was shared with SEAC at the September 2023 meeting.

October 4, 2023

Purpose

To provide SEAC and the Board of Trustees with an update regarding the Special Education Review; including initial findings and recommendations.

Background

In the spring of 2023 Educational Services facilitated a Special Education Review to gather input and feedback from various stakeholders related to special education supports and services within the Limestone District School Board. This review was intended to build on the information gathered in June 2016 through a similar review process which informed department goals, priorities and decisions. Utilizing the ThoughtExchange platform various stakeholders including students, caregivers/families, staff and community partners were asked the following question:

What key supports and services are important for students with special education needs to experience success at school and reach their full potential?

Two sets of data were gathered during the review. Initially, students with special education needs and their families were surveyed in order to elevate and prioritize the voices of those directly impacted by our support and services. 2,934 participants responded to the question, sharing 3,569 unique thoughts and providing over 66,000 ratings. Following this, additional information was gathered from staff, students, families and community partners. 474 participants responded to the question, sharing 510 unique thoughts and providing over 10,000 ratings.

In addition to the ThoughtExchange tool, Educational Services staff met with a variety of focus groups to further explore this question and provide an opportunity to reflect on some of the initial data gathered. Staff met with students with special education needs, parents/caregivers of students with special education needs, the staff network for persons with disabilities, SSTs and LPS staff, Educational services staff and SEAC.

Data from the ThoughtExchange and focus groups was then analyzed by a team at Educational Services to identify key themes and ideas that had emerged.

Current Status

Through the special education review the following key themes emerged as important to the greatest percentage of respondents and these themes/ideas represented the largest number of responses which resonated with participants.

Staff Support/Human Resources
Inclusive and Supportive Culture
Individualized Supports and Accommodations
Programs and Programming

Further analysis revealed some common ideas/thoughts shared within each theme including:

Staff Support/Human Resources: Individual Help, Staff Knowledge/Understanding, Support from Staff, Educational Assistant (EA) Help

Inclusive and Supportive Culture: Community and Classroom Culture, School/Home Connection

Individualized Supports and Accommodations: Extra Time, Quiet/Alternative Spaces, Regulation Tools and Strategies, Technology

Programs and Programming: My Individual Education Plan(IEP), Specialized Programs, Small Group/Peer Support

The Educational Services team continues to reflect on the data gathered and examine how our current goals and priorities align with feedback from our school communities. Areas for exploration, growth and improvement will be identified and embedded in our 2023-24 monitoring plan.

Recommendations

That Educational Services staff continue to examine and reflect on the findings of the 2023 Special Education Review and that this data be used to inform future planning, goals and decisions.

That additional data be gathered to deepen our understanding of the key services and supports that are needed for student success (focus groups, department data, Board Census data, external research partnerships)

That this report be received by SEAC and the Board of Trustees for information.

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