Improving Academic Outcomes for Students With Disabilities While Making the Work of Teachers More Sustainable

Rivendell Interstate School District

March 2025

New Solutions K12

Introduction

Rivendell Interstate School District engaged New Solutions K12 to conduct a systematic study to review the district's special education and general education supports and services for K-12. The district has much to be proud of, and like all districts, still more to do. In all cases, the review recognizes that increasing student achievement, meeting the social and emotional needs of students, managing costs, and respecting children, parents, and staff are equally important. Addressing one, while ignoring the others, is not an option.

The systematic study also respects the reality that school systems are complex organizations tasked with a multitude of expectations, unfunded mandates, priorities, and responsibilities. To that end, only a small number of high-potential, high-impact, and high-leverage opportunities are identified. A short, targeted plan is more beneficial than a long laundry list of observations, options, and possible actions.

New Solutions K12 will work alongside the district to review this information and determine the appropriate next steps for implementation and improvement. Not all areas for further consideration listed in the document can be addressed at once. If the district were to pursue any of these areas further, it would typically take 1-3 years of careful planning, research, communication, coordination, and roll-out, with a commitment from the leadership to provide focus and stability during the implementation process.

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Methodology

The research conducted included extensive in-person and virtual interviews and focus groups, a deep look at hard data, classroom visits, benchmarking against best practices, and a review of existing reports and district documents.

New Solutions K12 has developed a comprehensive approach for identifying high-impact opportunities to improve services and outcomes for students who struggle, both with and without IEPs. It is important to note that, while there were many valid and compelling concerns brought up by a variety of stakeholders, the focus of this work was to identify the potential opportunities that, if addressed, would have the largest and widest impact on student learning. As a result, not all concerns heard are specifically addressed in this report or included in New Solution K12's final list of opportunities. Multiple analyses and rounds of stakeholder engagement were conducted to examine the services, programs, procedures, schedules, and staffing related to special education, general education, and intervention.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was an important element of this review. It included two rounds of engagement. The first round of engagement included all senior district leaders and building principals with the purpose of forming a preliminary understanding of the district's current strengths and challenges. New Solutions K12 also met with a guiding coalition that included teachers, staff, and leadership from across the district.

In the second round of engagement, New Solutions K12 spoke with general education teachers, special education teachers and staff, learning coaches, related service providers, counselors and psychologists, parents of students with disabilities, and members of the school board. The purpose of this round was to build a broad and deep understanding of the current strengths and challenges in supporting students who struggle from a wide range of stakeholder groups. A number of follow-up interviews were also conducted to address specific questions or issues identified from the initial two rounds of stakeholder engagement. All conversations were held confidentially, and so throughout the report, many quotes are attributed to "stakeholders" or more general roles in order to protect anonymity.

New Solutions K12 indicated the roles to be included in the stakeholder engagement and the district identified a representative sample of participants, ensuring voices from elementary, middle, and high school stakeholders.

Data Analysis

New Solutions K12 reviewed multiple datasets from the district. The datasets for this analysis included both current and historical data points and encompassed a variety of topics, including:

- Academic performance of students
- Student enrollment
- Student identification rates for special education services
- Student service minutes
- Enrollment and staffing in substantially separate programming

- Out-of-district placements

- Staffing levels by type of staff and service

- District spending

Best Practices

An important element of this review is to compare and contrast current practices to best practices. New Solutions K12 and its leadership have dedicated over two decades to reviewing thousands of educational research studies and have conducted a number of primary research studies for leading educational think tanks and educational foundations including the Fordham Foundation, Center for American Progress, and the American Enterprise Institute. Key research includes:

- Recommendations of the *What Works Clearing House*, a leading source for field-proven best practices and other published studies.

- Recommendations of the National Reading Panel and The Science of Reading, the preeminent source for reading instruction, especially for students who struggle academically.

- John Hattie's "Visible Learning Effect" size study.

- *Six Shifts for Improving Special Education and Other Interventions* (Harvard Education Press, 2020).

A more comprehensive listing of the best practice research is found in the appendix.

Our recommendations also draw upon our experience working with over 300 school districts in 30 states, including many that outperform expectations. Finally, we have visited and studied roughly 100 schools that have dramatically closed the achievement gap.

Executive Summary

Commendations:

1. The district has hardworking and caring staff, many who have been in the district for many years

2. The small and close-knit community allows teachers and staff to deeply know their students and families

3. The Educational Support Team (EST) at the elementary level regularly reviews student data and uses assessments to identify student needs

4. The multi-grade elementary classrooms are split by grade level for Tier 1 math instruction

5. The district hires retired teachers for short-term and long-term coverage, including covering general education classes, intervention, and other supports

Opportunities:

1. Support general education teachers in playing a bigger role in serving all students who struggle, including those with mild to moderate disabilities

   1A. Implement instructional coaching to better equip general education teachers to support students with disabilities

   1B. Increase general education supports for students who struggle, thus allowing for less reliance on special education

2. Adopt a coherent, district-wide approach to literacy instruction that is rooted in research-based best practices accessed by all students

3. Implement best practice interventions to ensure all students who struggle have access to extra time direct instruction from content-strong teachers

   3A. Implement best practice interventions at the elementary level

   3B. Implement best practice interventions at the secondary level

4. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of learning coaches in the district to better align with their training, skills, and strengths

5. Continue to embrace the inclusive nature of the community classrooms while further refining services and supports for students with challenging behavior

Commendations

1. The district has hardworking and caring staff, many who have been in the district for many years

The district has a deeply committed, caring, and experienced staff, many of whom have worked in the district for many years. District leaders acknowledged the value their staff bring to the schools, sharing that there is a strong sense of community in the buildings. The expertise of staff has created a source of deep institutional knowledge, and many staff shared that they rely on each other for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and problem-solving. Staff work hard to ensure all students can succeed and to create classrooms that promote learning and growth. As one counselor shared, "Our teachers are phenomenal. They seem to pre-empt so many issues right there in the classroom."

2. The small and close-knit community allows teachers and staff to deeply know their students and families

The district's small size and close-knit community has been embraced by educators and staff to build strong, personalized relationships with students and families. As one elementary principal noted, "One of our assets is that we're so small. It's a family. We know every kid and every family really well. It's easy to approach the whole child and what they need." This deep familiarity allows for flexible, individualized support, as described by a school counselor: "Because we're so small, we really know our students super well. I would say there are more students that have individualized, tailored tweaks within their schedule than students who are more systematically set up in the buildings." This level of personalization reflects the district's commitment to meeting the unique needs of every student through strong relationships and responsive support.

3. The Educational Support Team (EST) at the elementary level regularly reviews student data and uses assessments to identify student needs

A strength of the district is the consistent and thoughtful use of its Educational Support Team (EST) process at the elementary level. The district has created a system that not only regularly monitors student progress but also ensures assessment data is driving instructional decisions. To support this process, the district uses triannual assessment windows in both math and literacy, allowing for data-informed adjustments throughout the year. Notably, the team is using assessment data both for students without IEPs and also to inform IEP services and academic goal-setting. As one principal shared, "We have a pretty regular EST process to review how our kids are doing, what kids need a push, who needs support, and what that support looks like." This structured approach reflects a proactive mindset

— one that focuses on catching students before they fall too far behind and ensuring resources are allocated based on demonstrated need.

4. The multi-grade elementary classrooms are split by grade level for Tier 1 math instruction

The district has developed a thoughtful approach to the challenge of math instruction in multi-grade classrooms, where pacing and content standards are tightly aligned by grade. It is common for small schools with combined classes to default to teaching math as a mixed-grade group, often leading to watered-down instruction or content gaps. The district has wisely avoided this pitfall by ensuring students receive grade-specific math instruction during Tier 1 core math time.

What also stands out is not just the decision to separate math by grade but the thoughtful way it is staffed. By leveraging an additional content-strong teacher to support one grade while the classroom teacher focuses on the other, the district ensures all students receive targeted, standards-aligned instruction. This model demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that math instruction remains rigorous and grade-appropriate, even in the face of structural challenges like multi-grade classrooms — a challenge faced by many small schools nationwide.

5. The district hires retired teachers for short-term and long-term coverage, including covering general education classes, intervention, and other supports

The district is taking a creative and highly effective approach to staffing by engaging retired teachers to provide both short-term and long-term coverage. This approach, while highly aligned with best practices, is one that many other districts don't utilize. During classroom observations, the NSK12 team saw firsthand how retired teachers were seamlessly supporting general education classrooms, delivering interventions, and stepping in where needed.

At any given time, the district has three to five retired teachers working in various roles. This model reflects not only smart resource management but also the strength of the district's community ties. As one district administrator described, "We have the advantage of being a small community that knows our people and remains closely connected to the staff that worked here. It's about maintaining those relationships so that when you reach out, they want to help out. They have an investment in Rivendell and want to see it successful."

This approach offers multiple benefits: it brings experienced educators back into classrooms, provides students with skilled instruction, and gives the district flexibility in staffing without relying solely on outside substitutes. It's a sustainable practice that leverages community connections and ensures students are supported by adults who know and care about the district's success.

District Context

As the district reflects on current strengths and new opportunities, it's important to keep the realities of the district, including its size, culture, and past priorities in context.

The district has made a clear commitment to leveraging its small size to prioritize small class sizes and low student-to-adult ratios, valuing individualized attention and support for student learning.

Despite this focus, student outcomes have not consistently reflected the district's commitment and efforts toward student learning. While some students are achieving at high levels, many are not, including students with and without mild to moderate disabilities.

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Better in Reading

SY 2023-2024

Grade	% of students
3rd	33%
8th	53%
9th	55%

- Only a third of students in 3rd grade are reading on grade level

- About half the grade is not reading on grade level in both 8th and 9th grade

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Better in Math

SY 2023-2024

Grade	% of students
3rd	17%
8th	13%
9th	45%

- Less than 1 out of every 5 students are on grade level for math in both 3rd and 8th grade

- In 9th grade, less than half the students are mastering grade-level math

Additionally, the district had the highest per-pupil expenditures in the state of Vermont, at nearly $50,000 per annual daily membership (ADM) for the 2023 year (*per the listen and learn work APA Consulting did with the Vermont Agency of Education*). Given the level of this investment and the room for growth in student achievement, it's even more important to assess the district's services, systems, and staffing to ensure they are leading to cost-effective, meaningful academic gains. The opportunities below represent a practical path forward for raising student achievement and creating a more sustainable work-life for staff.

Opportunities

Opportunity 1: Support general education teachers in playing a bigger role in serving all students who struggle, including those with mild to moderate disabilities

High-quality core instruction taught by a content-strong teacher is the bedrock of all learning, including for students who struggle with and without special needs. While intervention and extra help are important, they are only effective when provided in addition to high-quality core instruction. Districts that have significantly closed the achievement gap don't just have better interventions than their peers, they have more effective core instruction. You can't simply intervene students to mastery.

In gap-closing districts, general education teachers play a major role and take primary responsibility for all students' academic success, including those with mild to moderate disabilities. These districts widely embrace the idea that students with disabilities are all general education students first, and that it is a shared responsibility to help them achieve at high levels.

1A. Implement instructional coaching to better equip general education teachers to support students with disabilities

Instructional coaching, when implemented well, is one of the most effective ways to improve core instruction and change teacher practice at scale. Districts that have successfully strengthened general education's role in supporting students with disabilities almost always invest in coaching as a central strategy.

High-quality coaching provides job-embedded support — offering one-on-one and small-group training, modeling lessons, and delivering feedback in a way that is both safe and welcomed. Research consistently shows that instructional coaching is the most impactful method for increasing teacher effectiveness and helping educators master new skills. Unlike traditional professional development, which often imparts knowledge without changing daily practice, coaching creates sustained improvement where it matters most — in the classroom. For general education teachers, coaching can be the bridge that builds both skill and confidence in their ability to meet the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Impact on Teacher Practice

90%

0%
Demonstration

5%
Presentation

10%
Practice

COACHING
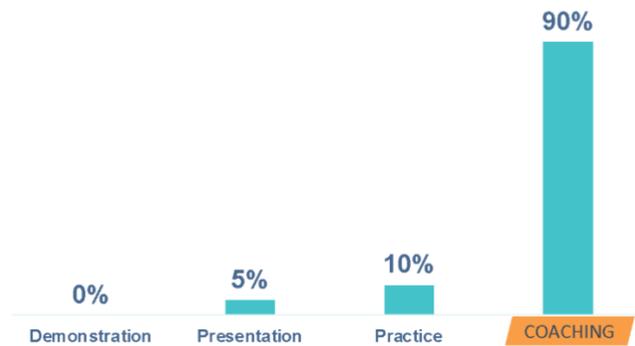
Historically, the district has operated with a mindset that separates the responsibilities of general education and special education staff — with students with disabilities often viewed as primarily the responsibility of special education teachers. This belief, at times reinforced by past leadership, has created a divide where general education teachers have not been expected — or consistently supported — to take an active role in supporting students with disabilities.

Changing this mindset is complicated — and deeply rooted in both training gaps and lived experience. The belief that students with disabilities are primarily the responsibility of special education teachers or special education paraprofessionals (referred to as learning coaches in the district) is common among general education staff, though not due to a lack of caring.

In focus groups, general education teachers expressed genuine concern for students with special needs but also shared that their top priority for improving support would be "more special education teachers to support students with IEPs." This reflects a widespread belief that special educators are uniquely equipped to meet these students' needs — and that general education teachers are not.

This belief is understandable. Most general educators have had little formal training in how to support students with mild to moderate disabilities and limited experience seeing those strategies work in practice. As one general education teacher shared, "I'm good at the content piece, but I need that support to know how to target those students. I don't think our special education teachers have time for that, and so I'm not getting support to do that and support our kids in that way."

While this belief is understandable, it is also undesirable. While general education teachers want to do what's best for students, limited training and support can unintentionally lead to practices that fall short. Families, too, are feeling the impact. As one parent described, "There's an undercurrent of a dismissive attitude towards students with disabilities at the school. It's like, 'This is good enough, it's the best we can do.'"

Many general education classroom teachers assume they will need two different sets of skills, one for students without disabilities and one for students with disabilities. With competing demands and the stresses of post-pandemic teaching, the idea of learning an entirely separate set of strategies for a subset of students feels daunting.

Yet research is clear: the best practices that improve learning for students with disabilities are often the same as those that work for all students — strategies like scaffolding, chunking content, making

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connections to students' lives, and checking for understanding. The adage "good teaching is good teaching" is true. The good news is that general education teachers **can** be well equipped to serve students with special needs, but the bad news is many don't know this.

The district's current leadership is working to shift this mindset, but culture change is difficult. Encouragingly, there are signs that some general education teachers are eager for support and willing to engage — if the right structures are put in place. As one secondary general educator reflected, "I don't have anyone to challenge me and think deeply about what I do since I'm the only teacher of my classes. I need someone to push my practice." This sentiment was also echoed at the elementary level, where one classroom teacher shared, "We often are looking at our data on our own, which can have its challenges. It would be nice to have someone leading us through this process in a more focused way to get more out of it." The opportunity is clear, but addressing it will require time, intentional support, and a shift in deeply held beliefs.

Practices to Consider

To shift mindsets and better equip general education teachers to support students with disabilities, the district can consider implementing an instructional coaching model focused on improving core instruction. A well-designed coaching program can help general educators build the skills and confidence needed to support students with mild to moderate disabilities as part of their daily teaching practice — reinforcing the idea that *"good teaching is good teaching"* for all students.

Best practice coaching models prioritize regular, job-embedded support. Districts that see the greatest impact typically:

- Aim to support at least **80% of elementary classroom teachers** and **secondary math and English teachers**
- Provide access to coaches for **at least one hour per week**
- Sustain coaching **year-round** rather than relying on short bursts of support
- Ensure **75% or more** of each coach's time is spent directly coaching teachers
- Allow coaches to specialize — by content area or instructional strategy — to maximize impact
- Maintain a ratio of **one full-time coach per 20 teachers** being coached

At current staffing levels, the district would need roughly **1 FTE** in total if it wanted to support 80% of all elementary classroom teachers and secondary math and English teachers.

Given the district's size and staffing realities, having principals take on the instructional coaching responsibilities could be worth considering as an alternative or supplement to full-time coaches. This model has proven successful in other small school systems.

Retired, part-time staff can also increase the ranks of instructional coaches during a time of teacher shortages.

Ultimately, the goal is not just better instruction, but a cultural shift: general education teachers seeing themselves as responsible for the success of all students, including those with mild to moderate disabilities. High-quality instructional coaching is the most effective way to achieve this — improving

instruction, increasing teacher confidence, and creating more inclusive classrooms where all students can thrive.

1B. Increase general education supports for students who struggle, thus allowing for less reliance on special education

A strong Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and intervention process is the foundation for meeting the additional needs of students who struggle — including those with mild to moderate disabilities — within general education. In districts where MTSS is implemented effectively, general education teachers are confident and capable of providing targeted support to struggling students before referring them for special education evaluation. This reduces unnecessary referrals and ensures that special education remains focused on students with the most significant needs.

Best practice districts have clear expectations that students should receive multiple layers of intervention and support in general education before special education is considered. General education teachers play a central role in this process, equipped with tools and strategies to adapt instruction and provide targeted interventions when needed. Rather than viewing special education as the first stop for students who struggle, these systems emphasize a shared responsibility for student success.

Additionally, best practice districts establish clear, consistent guidelines for determining IEP eligibility and setting special education service minutes. This prevents wide variation in special education services based solely on the school a student attends or the preferences of individual staff. Instead, eligibility decisions and service levels are driven by data, aligned with student needs, and consistently applied across the district.

When implemented well, these practices create a system where general education is the first and best line of support for students who struggle, with special education reserved for those who truly need it — leading to better outcomes and a more sustainable system for staff.

District practices make it challenging to support students in general education.

Currently, the district's systems and structures make it challenging for general education to serve as the first line of support for students who struggle, contributing to a higher-than-average reliance on special education. While there are intervention efforts in place in some buildings and grade levels with a **six-week MTSS process,** this still often functions as a fast track to special education referral. As one teacher shared, "Once our students have worked with the interventionist for six weeks, it's an automatic referral to special education. It's like they're waiting to say, 'Okay, you've done your six weeks, it's a special education problem now.'"

The lack of a consistent, well-defined MTSS process across the district further complicates collaborative problem-solving between general education, interventionists, and special education. In some buildings and grade levels, educators reported a lack of an MTSS process entirely. "Our MTSS system is non-existent, which makes it really challenging for interventionists to work together with the general and special education teams and decide how to support the student," shared one teacher.

This structure creates the perception — and reality — that intervention is separate from general education rather than an integral part of it. General education teachers often do not see supporting

struggling students as part of their role. As one special education teacher noted, "Our gen ed teachers don't feel as though intervention is in their realm and on their plate — there isn't a mindset that this is a whole district challenge. If we could shift this mindset, then I think we'd see a huge difference in our referrals."

These dynamics are contributing to **special education identification rates that far exceed state and national averages**:

Figure 1.1 - % of Students Served Under IDEA

	District	Vermont	National
% of Students Served Under IDEA	**24.4%**	18.0%	15.0%

Source: *National Center for Education Statistics (2024)*

Inconsistent policies and practices around IEP service minutes compound the challenge. As a special education teacher shared, "Policies and procedures and the way we decide what kinds of services students can get aren't done with fidelity across the district. If you have two kids with the same disability, the services they're getting shouldn't be dramatically different. One kid shouldn't get 20 minutes and another gets 400 because they're at a different school."

This inconsistency shows up clearly in student data. For example, special education identification rates at the elementary level vary significantly:

Figure 1.2 - % of Students Served Under IDEA by Elementary School

Elementary School	% of Students Served Under IDEA
Westshire Elementary	**27%**
Samuel Morey Elementary	**14%**

Without a strong general education system of supports and clear, consistent processes, general educators often feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of struggling students. This has, at times, impacted resulting IEPs and service minutes. As one special education teacher reflected, "Our general educators don't feel comfortable supporting our students who are struggling, and often want to see them get more services as a result. In the past, I've given students more minutes than I thought they needed just to avoid arguing with the teachers about it."

This challenge doesn't just exist for students who are struggling academically, but also for students with behaviors that are challenging in the classroom. As one stakeholder shared, "Our teachers desperately need coaching and support in classroom management. There are a lot of student behaviors that could be addressed through stronger classroom management, but instead, there are a lot of staff members who think students with behavior problems should automatically be in special education. We refer to special education rather than having behavior plans."

Together, these factors create a system where special education becomes the default, rather than the exception — placing additional strain on special educators, creating unfair situations across the district, and potentially leading to over-identification of students with disabilities. To reduce this over-reliance

on special education, the district can focus on strengthening general education supports and clarifying key decision-making processes. This includes reinforcing shared responsibility for intervention across all staff, developing clear and consistent referral guidelines, and aligning IEP eligibility and service minutes to student need rather than school-specific norms. Over time, these shifts can help ensure that students are supported as fully as possible within general education, that referrals to special education are driven by data, and that specialized services are reserved for those who truly require them.

Opportunity 2: Adopt a coherent, district-wide approach to literacy instruction that is rooted in research-based best practices accessed by all students

Reading is the foundation of all learning for students and unlocks academic success in other subjects as well. Teaching reading is both an art and a science, and delivering effective reading instruction requires high-quality instructional materials paired with staff with strong content expertise and skill. Students who struggle, including students with and without mild to moderate disabilities, benefit greatly from research-based reading instruction aligned with evidenced-based curriculums.

Several years ago, the district partnered with an outside consultant to refine and develop the literacy curriculum at the elementary level. Many teachers shared that they feel the resulting curriculum did not provide enough structure, consistency, or clarity. As one teacher noted, "It's very piecemeal and we're all kind of doing our own thing. There's definitely not a clear path through all the grades and schools for literacy."

Grades K-1 are using Fundations and Heggerty for phonics instruction, but many classroom teachers shared that instruction, materials, and planning for much of the rest is largely left up to each teacher. Nearly every classroom teacher interviewed mentioned that they are creating most of the materials and lesson plans themselves for reading, and that they feel a consistent district-wide approach to reading is missing. Special education teachers also shared that there they have much flexibility in what and how they teach literacy, "We have a lot of flexibility with what we're teaching. We're not locked into one specific way of trying to teach."

Because the district does not have a clearly defined curriculum or structure for teaching literacy, a student's experience may differ greatly between schools or even classrooms. Many years of research have identified a set of elementary reading best practices that can help nearly all students achieve at high levels. These best practices are aligned with the science of reading and evidenced-based instructional materials.

The district should clearly define and communicate a district-wide approach to teaching literacy at the elementary level that embraces the science of reading with curriculum that is aligned with these best practices. Instruction and supports for students with mild to moderate disabilities should follow these same research-based best practices and should align closely with the core tier 1 reading curriculum.

Ensuring all general education classroom teachers, interventionists, and special education teachers have access to the same high-quality instructional materials and have the training and support to implement these with fidelity is essential.

Clear expectations should also be set around how teachers should use the literacy block and where intervention supports fit in. The district should carefully outline how to best use the core instruction literacy block each day to ensure all the core curriculum is taught with appropriate pace for completion and rigor, as well as when tier 2 will happen throughout the day. Detailed use of time expectations should include how time during the reading block should be used, such as how much time each day to spend on phonics instruction, which will vary by grade. This will help ensure all students are getting consistent, best-practice reading instruction regardless of their school or classroom.

Adopting a coherent, district-wide approach to teaching literacy rooted in best practices will help ensure all students are receiving high-quality literacy instruction and help all students read on grade level.

While reading is the primary focus, this framework is also relevant for math. The district should ensure there is also a consistent, district wide approach to teaching math so that all students have access to high quality core instruction.

Opportunity 3: Implement best practice interventions to ensure all students who struggle have access to extra time direct instruction from content-strong teachers

Students who struggle, including those with mild to moderate disabilities need extra time to learn taught by teachers with strong content expertise.

Most students who struggle academically will require extra instructional time during the school day to master prior content. This extra time should be provided in addition to, not instead of, core instruction. Students who struggle academically have more to learn, and it will take them more time to learn. This extra time support should consist primarily of direct instruction that is connected to a high-quality curriculum, rather than time spent on independent work, computer programs, or homework help. This extra instructional time can be used to pre-teach or re-teach current-year content, present material in multiple ways, and clarify misunderstandings. Extra time intervention should focus primarily on reading, writing, and math as these are foundational skills that will help students succeed in other areas as well.

Extra-time intervention is foundational to helping students with academic gaps catch up, but who provides the instruction matters just as much as how much extra instructional time is provided. Effective intervention will require time beyond core, and instruction provided by staff with expertise in the subject taught.

Research tells us that effective intervention must be:

- Extra time to learn, in addition to, not instead of, core instruction. Typically, 30 minutes a day at the elementary level, and a full period each day at the secondary level.

- Provided by staff with deep content expertise

- Primarily direct instruction

- Targeted instruction to clearly defined student specific skill and content gaps

- Groups of students with similar areas of need

3A. Implement best practice interventions at the elementary level

Extra time intervention requires extra time. School and staff schedules should be intentionally designed to allow for extra-time interventions.

At the elementary level, to ensure students get 100% of core reading and math plus extra time to learn, schedules must first enable staff to avoid pulling students from core reading and math for special education, related services, or other interventions. Otherwise, these students receive less core instruction than their non-disabled or non-struggling peers.

Additionally, extra time intervention is more impactful, when students are grouped by area of need. Creating groups of students with similar needs makes the instruction more targeted, more impactful, and easier to plan and deliver. Since extra instructional time for academic challenges should target the specific needs of the students, narrowing the range of needs in the room can be beneficial for students and teachers alike. Teaching five students who struggle in phonics, for example, is easier and more

impactful than even a smaller group of three students, one struggling in phonics, one with fluency, and one with comprehension. The same is true for teaching math concepts such as fractions, number sense, or multiplication.
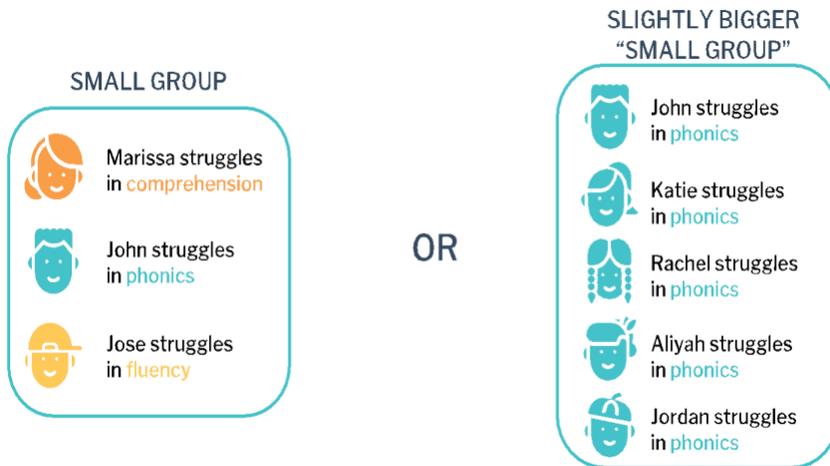
Current supports for students with and without disabilities

Currently, at each elementary school, there is one interventionist responsible for supporting both math and reading for grades K-5. There are two special educators at each school, one supporting math and one supporting reading, as well as special education learning coaches.

Support from interventionists and special education teachers is split primarily between push-in and pull-out models for both math and reading.

At one school in grades 4 and 5, a What I Need (WIN) block is built into the school schedule where interventionists work with small groups. In the other grades, there is not currently a separate WIN block, but some teachers have built their own intervention time into their classroom schedules where they work with students in small groups using math or reading centers. Interventionists and special education teachers will also push in during this time, or pull students to work in small groups.

In many cases, interventionists and special educators shared that they coordinate their schedules based on the general education teacher's classroom schedule to prioritize pushing in during core content time for math and reading, or during small group centers time to work with students. In this model, however, students aren't receiving extra time to learn, just smaller groups during core instruction. In some grades, staff also shared that interventionists and special education teachers will coordinate with each other so that they are pushing in at different times to ensure there is "always someone in the room for extra help". As one interventionist shared, "I try to build my schedule around the schedule put out by principals at the beginning of the year, but essentially I just ask teachers when is your math period and that's when I'll push in."

Interventionists also shared that they try to maximize their reach by helping anyone in the classroom who could benefit from their support, but sometimes feel limited in who they can work with due to the way IEPs are written. As one noted, "If the IEP says special education teacher, then I can't pull them. But we're starting to write interventionist in a couple of them so I can help more."

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When they need to pull students out, interventionists shared that they try to avoid taking students out of core content lessons and instead will pull students during small group centers time, but that this isn't always possible. Special education teachers shared that they also prioritize pushing in as much as possible, but often have to pull students out of tier 1 core curriculum.

While pushing into classrooms can help to promote inclusion and ensure students aren't missing tier 1 instruction, it does not provide students with extra time to learn. Students who are struggling, including students with and without special needs, need additional time on top of core instruction to catch up. This time can be spent re-teaching current year concepts, filling in missing foundational skills, correcting misconceptions, or pre-teaching upcoming content.

School schedules should include consistent, dedicated time for intervention for all grades at both elementary schools.

The district can consider creating elementary schedules that incorporate a designated intervention or WIN block for every day at both elementary schools. This will create dedicated time in the schedule for students who are struggling to receive additional help on top of core instruction.

When the intervention blocks are scheduled can also help to supercharge these efforts. Given the size of the school, scheduling intervention for a few consecutive grades at once (K, 1, and 2 for example), but not for the whole school at once, will allow staff to group students with similar needs, while still maximizing the reach of staff.

When a few grades have intervention at the same time, teachers can pull students from multiple grades into the same small group support based on their specific area of need. However, staggering intervention blocks between grade bands (K-2 and 3-5 for example), allows interventionists and special educators to "flood the grade band" and help more students than if the whole school had intervention at the same time and they had to split their time across all grades at once.

Who teaches intervention is just as important as how much time students get. Research shows that the content expertise of a teacher has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of mastering the material taught. Content-strong staff can teach a concept in multiple ways, identify missing skills, correct misconceptions, and break down complex ideas in ways that are more accessible for kids who have struggled to learn.

Content-strong teachers come in a variety of forms. The best indicator of a content-strong teacher is an educator's training and their students' past growth. Certification, role, and title are not good indicators of who has content expertise or relevant subject-specific training. Some special educators have extensive training in teaching reading, while others do not. Some are highly skilled in teaching math, while others do not have training in this area. Skills, training, and aptitude matter, and certification doesn't always correlate to these skills.

Too often students with disabilities do not receive extra instructional time from staff with content expertise. Some IEPs are written for students to get this extra help from learning coaches even if these staff members lack content expertise or subject-specific training. This is unlikely to lead to accelerated learning, closing the achievement gap, or mastery of grade-level content.

The district should prioritize content expertise over certification to ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to content-strong staff for support, as appropriate. If an interventionist with a

deep understanding of how to teach reading at the elementary level is working with students who struggle in reading, for example, students with an IEP should be included in this group if they struggle in the same area.

3B. Implement best practice interventions at the secondary level

Similar to elementary-age students who struggle, middle and high school students who struggle, including those with and without disabilities, also need extra time to learn content in addition to, not instead of, core instruction from a teacher with strong content expertise. The importance of content-strong interventionists is doubly important at the secondary level, where content knowledge and teaching become more specialized. A teacher's familiarity, aptitude, training, and experience teaching the subject make a big impact on student learning. Best practice calls for subject-specific intervention courses that can be built directly into teachers' and students' schedules.

Gap-closing middle and high schools implement best practice interventions that are:

- Extra time, on top of core instruction

- Taught by content-strong teachers

- Subject-specific, direct instruction targeted to specific skill gaps

- Given a course code

- Sustained for 9 weeks to a year

- Graded or pass/fail

- Credit-bearing in high school

- Up to 15 students in a class

- 40-plus minutes a day, five days a week

- During the school day

Currently, at the middle and high school level, push-in support, where a special educator, learning coach, or Title 1 interventionist supports students in the general education classroom during core instruction, is the primary form of support for both students with and without disabilities who are struggling. Push-in support can help to protect tier 1 core instruction for all students, but does not provide extra time for students to learn the content they have yet to master.

The secondary level has one Title 1 Literacy Interventionist who supports grades 6-12, but primarily focuses on grades 6-9. There are also four special education teachers supporting grades 6-12 in both math and reading, as well as nine learning coaches.

Supports for students with disabilities

At both the middle and high school levels, students with disabilities receive support from special education teachers or learning coaches in the general education setting in their math or ELA/English classes through a push-in support model.

Some special education teachers also shared that they will pull students with disabilities to the "learning center," which functions as a resource room, to work on their individual goals. Special education

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teachers shared that they try to avoid pulling students from core tier 1 instruction in math or ELA, but that it's not always possible. As one teacher noted, "I see a lot of special education kids missing core instruction to go down the hall and work on their goals, but what they're learning in that separate room is not related to what they're learning in the gen ed classroom. These kids walk into their ELA class halfway through and then are expected to participate in discussions. It doesn't make sense to me."

Many students with disabilities in the middle and high school have "Learning Center" or "Study Skills" built into their schedule, which function as structured study halls, led by special education teachers and learning coaches. These classes are not subject-specific and can include students who are struggling in different areas such as math (multiple grade levels and courses), English, and study skills in the same class. Special education teachers shared that these classes often default to homework help or generalized support on assignments, due to the wide range of needs in the class.

Supports for students without disabilities

For students without disabilities at the secondary level, the Title 1 literacy interventionist supports students by pushing into ELA classrooms and working with some students during Skills Block in 6th grade, or "Block 4" in grades 7 - 9, which is a study hall period. This support functions largely as a structured study hall and often includes helping students with homework, classroom assignments, or answering students' specific questions. As one teacher shared, "It's mostly just extra help on whatever they're doing in their English class."

There is currently no structured intervention support in math at the secondary level for students without disabilities.

Most students are not receiving targeted, direct instruction extra time intervention

At the secondary level, students with or without disabilities seldom receive targeted extra-time support from a content-strong teacher, but rather push-in support, which does not provide extra time to learn. It can also create an invisible barrier between students with an IEP and their general education teacher. If a student receives small group instruction from a special education teacher during core instruction, their access to the general education teacher is reduced. Also, if both the general education teacher and special educator or learning coach are talking at the same time, it is impossible for the student to listen to two people at once. Concentrating on their special education service provider limits their ability to concentrate on core instruction. Therefore, the student misses some of the whole class lessons while they are getting support from the special educator. This invisible divide can unintentionally create a "your kids" vs "my kids" mindset between special education and general education. Some teachers shared they feel this division of responsibility in the district, but would rather have a more collaborative approach:

- "Since the learning coach is in the classroom for the kids with IEPs, I'm in there for the kids without IEPs who need extra support." – *Staff Member*

- "If I could wave a magic wand and change one thing to better support students, I would want to see general educators and content strong teachers providing intervention to students with disabilities." – *Special Education Teacher*

Additionally, if students are pulled from core instruction to work with special education teachers or learning coaches, they are missing important grade-level instruction, which can cause them to fall further behind.

While study skills, learning center, and study hall periods are additional time in the day, they are largely not subject-specific and not always staffed by content-strong teachers. These classes often default to homework help or test prep more than direct instruction of prior skill gaps.

Fortunately, the secondary schedules already have time built directly into the day for extra time support through the study hall and study skills blocks. However, this time would be more impactful if it was refocused for subject-specific (math, reading, or writing), intervention courses that emphasized direct and explicit instruction. These courses would be semester- or quarter-long graded (or pass/fail) classes taught by teachers with deep content expertise. They should be credit-bearing at the high school level and given a course code so they can be scheduled like any other class. Further, these classes should be open to both students with and without disabilities.

This would allow teachers to provide direct instruction on specific skill gaps, misconceptions, and time to re-teach or pre-teach material based on the grade-level curriculum.

IEPs must support best-practice intervention

Many districts that roll out or expand best practice interventions, unintentionally exclude students with special needs from them. As new interventions become available at the elementary and secondary levels that incorporate extra time, direct instruction from content-strong staff, most students without disabilities are quickly assigned to these services. Students with disabilities too often continue to receive the supports written into their IEPs prior to the existence or availability of the new, best-practice interventions. As intervention options change, so must IEPs. Of course, the IEP team should make the decision if the new options for intervention are more appropriate for each specific student.

Opportunity 4: Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of learning coaches in the district to better align with their training, skills, and strengths

Districts that have significantly narrowed the achievement gap recognize that **paraprofessionals play a critical role** in supporting students with disabilities, particularly in promoting inclusion, managing behaviors, and ensuring student health and safety. Paraprofessionals are essential for supporting students with significant needs, including those requiring one-on-one or intensive behavioral support.

However, it is also widely recognized in the research that paraprofessionals are not typically equipped with the deep content expertise needed to deliver high-quality academic instruction to students with mild to moderate disabilities. Too often, paraprofessionals are tasked with providing academic support beyond their training — a practice unlikely to accelerate learning or help close achievement gaps. Research is clear that students with academic challenges make far greater progress when receiving instruction from content-strong staff who can:

- Teach concepts in multiple ways

- Identify and fill in missing foundational skills

- Correct misconceptions in real-time

- Break down complex material into accessible steps

For example, in most cases, students who struggle to read are more likely to catch up if instruction is provided by a skilled teacher of reading rather than a paraprofessional who often has less training in reading instruction. Additionally, most gap-closing schools assign more students to a teacher-led reading group than one led by a paraprofessional, thus creating a cost-effective means to provide teacher-led intervention and services.

Higher-performing districts assign and deploy paraprofessionals differently. Rather than defaulting to traditional ratios or past staffing patterns, they create systems that:

- **Clearly define roles and responsibilities** based on training, expertise, and student needs

- **Allow staff to specialize** — focusing on areas where they are strongest and most impactful

- **Empower staff choice where possible** — recognizing that some paraprofessionals may prefer supporting behavior and inclusion, while others might thrive in roles supporting health and safety, etc.

- **Avoid over-reliance on paraprofessionals** for delivering academic interventions better suited to content-strong teachers

Overall, the most effective school systems match staff skills to student needs, ensuring that all students receive support from adults best positioned to help them succeed. For paraprofessionals, this means focusing on the areas where their impact is greatest — inclusion, behavior, and support for students with significant disabilities — while ensuring that academic instruction, particularly for students with mild to moderate disabilities, is led by content-strong teachers.

Learning coaches play a vital role in the district — but unclear expectations have created challenges in aligning their work to their strengths.

The district benefits from a dedicated team of learning coaches (the district's title for paraprofessionals), many of whom have been with the district for a great number of years and serve as a consistent, valued element of the support model for students with disabilities. Their longevity and strong relationships with students and staff are clear strengths of the system.

Currently, the district maintains a **learning coach-to-student with disabilities ratio of approximately 1:4**. Learning coaches are tasked with a wide range of responsibilities — supporting student behavior, promoting inclusion, monitoring health and safety needs, and providing academic support and modifying assignments. In some cases, learning coaches are also responsible for delivering IEP service minutes.

While their role is broad by design, the way learning coaches are currently deployed reflects the district's effort to meet diverse student needs. However, the combination of tasks — particularly the academic support component — creates challenges in consistently aligning responsibilities to the strengths, training, and expertise of the learning coaches.

There is no widely available or accepted national or state benchmark on appropriate paraprofessional-to-student ratios, making it difficult to gauge whether the district's current **1:4 ratio** is typical or excessive. However, as noted in a recent report, "Both New Hampshire and Vermont have consistently led the country in their paraprofessional-to-student ratios, rising above other states by 15 to 20 paraprofessionals per 1,000 students consistently" *(National Council on Teacher Quality, 2024)*. This suggests that regional norms and current asks of paraprofessionals — rather than student needs or staffing best practices — may be driving current staffing levels.

Many learning coaches as well as other stakeholders shared that **lack of content expertise limits their ability to provide academic support**:

- "We are taking the classes with the kids – we're learning the material and taking notes as we go. If we're not in the classroom, we don't know what's going on and can't help." — *Learning Coach*

- "Lots of IEPs write in the learning coach to work with students, but our learning coaches are not necessarily trained, so how impactful or specialized is that?" — *Teacher*

Beyond content knowledge, **the absence of clear expectations and defined roles creates confusion** about how learning coaches should best support students:

- "We don't get training, and there aren't clear expectations on what we should be doing or how much or how little we should be helping kids. It's not clear what's expected of us. I would like to see a lot more communication between gen ed teachers, special education teachers, and learning coaches. It seems quite disconnected at times."— *Learning Coach*

- "Our learning coaches are often getting pulled to cover other spaces and then can't provide the student support that is scheduled. That lack of consistency is an issue." — *Special Education Teacher*

- "I would say a lot of the time it's left up to the learning coaches or the special education teacher to modify work. I would have thought the gen ed teachers would modify their work. So if the special educators aren't able to modify given all that's on their plates, learning coaches end up modifying the work more often than not. We're often on our own, we're not getting that collaboration." — *Learning Coach*

Learning coaches also shared frustration with not being able to **specialize or focus** in the areas they feel strongest:

- "We used to deeply know the strengths and weaknesses of learning coaches, and we would be asked, "Where do you think you fit?" In recent years, I haven't been asked where I wanted to go or how I could best support." – *Learning Coach*

- "I would love to learn more and have additional training and resources to best support our kids. That way I can really specialize and focus on an area." – *Learning Coach*

While many stakeholders, alongside those in the role, shared that the learning coaches have a great commitment to supporting students and seeing them succeed, learning coaches themselves recognize they are often tasked with responsibilities that exceed what their role was intended to cover. As one learning coach reflected, "We have a lot of dedicated learning coaches that do the job to the best of their ability and read between the lines to get done what needs to get done. We probably take on more than what our job descriptions say, though willingly."

This willingness to step up — while admirable — highlights a system-level issue where role clarity is lacking, and learning coaches are regularly placed in positions that stretch beyond their training or original scope of work. Going forward, the district can clarify the roles and responsibilities of learning coaches to ensure their work is aligned with their training, strengths, and the areas where they have the greatest impact. This could include centering their role on behavior support, inclusion, and student safety, while ensuring that academic instruction and modifications are led by staff with appropriate content expertise. Creating space for learning coaches to share their interests and specialize where appropriate may also improve role clarity, build staff confidence, and better align support to student need.

Once roles and responsibilities are clarified, the district can consider reviewing staffing levels over time to ensure that the number of learning coaches is aligned with student needs and the redefined scope of their work. The focus of this review would be on staffing appropriately for the needs of students and ensuring the right staff are delivering the right supports.

Opportunity 5: Continue to embrace the inclusive nature of the community classrooms while further refining services and supports for students with challenging behavior

Districts are tasked with supporting students across a wide range of needs through various in- and out-of-district services and supports. Serving students with more significant needs, often through categorical or specialized classrooms, is an important part of the special education services a school district provides.

Best practice programs strike a careful balance between inclusion, individualization, and specialization. They are most impactful when they are designed with a clear and narrow focus, serving students with similar profiles of need. This approach benefits both students and staff — allowing teachers and paraprofessionals to develop specialized skills and deliver more targeted support, while reducing the complexity of managing vastly different student needs within a single setting. These programs are often described as "categorical programs" — focused, intentional, and staffed by educators with expertise aligned to the needs of the students they serve.

For small districts, achieving this level of focus can be challenging. Limited enrollment often results in "cross-categorical" programs, where students with a wide range of significant needs — academic, behavioral, emotional, or physical — are placed together. While sometimes necessary, this model increases demands on staff and makes it harder to develop and apply specialized strategies that truly meet each student's needs.

Across all models, best practice districts prioritize:

- **Staffing specialized programs with teachers and paraprofessionals who have deep skills in the areas most needed by the students they serve** — particularly in supporting students with challenging behavior.

- **Providing clear structures, expectations, and professional development** focused on behavior support strategies.

- **Regularly reviewing the purpose and design of specialized programs** to ensure they remain aligned with current student needs and district demand for different types of programs.

- **Balancing inclusion and specialized support**, ensuring that students in these programs have meaningful access to general education peers and experiences, while still receiving the intensive, individualized support they require.

Ultimately, the goal is to create programs that are inclusive in spirit, specialized in design, and sustainable for staff — ensuring students with significant needs, especially those with challenging behaviors, are well-supported within their community.

The district's community classrooms have evolved in recent years, reflecting a shift toward greater inclusion — but their purpose and structure remain in transition.

Historically, the district's "Expedition Classrooms" functioned as fully self-contained spaces designed primarily to support students with significant behavioral or emotional challenges. These classrooms served as separate environments where students received most or all of their instruction outside of general education settings.

More recently, the district has worked to re-envision these programs as "Community Classrooms" — creating spaces intended to offer targeted support when needed and increasing students' readiness to learn, while maintaining students' primary placement in general education. This shift reflects a commitment to increasing inclusion and providing students with more opportunities to learn alongside their peers.

At the elementary level, this change has begun but is still evolving. The former self-contained model has shifted to a space students can access as needed, rather than being based there full-time. However, staffing and structure have not fully caught up to this change, and the space is not consistently staffed or operating as intended.

At the Academy level, the Community Classroom still serves primarily students with significant behavioral or emotional needs in a self-contained space, similar to the original model. However, the parameters have widened slightly — and now include students with academic disabilities as well — expanding the range of student needs served in the space.

While the shift toward a more inclusive Community Classroom model reflects a thoughtful goal, significant challenges have surfaced in practice — particularly around staffing, student groupings, and readiness to support students with the most complex behavioral needs.

Currently, the district does not have specialized staff trained in behavior intervention or trauma-informed practices embedded in the Community Classrooms. Special educators, learning coaches, and other staff are doing their best to fill the gap, but the lack of specific expertise is creating strain. As one special educator shared, "This year, the Community Classroom is a reboot of an old program. We weren't prepared to start it. And we still started it anyway. We need a behaviorist. We need someone who specializes in trauma. We shouldn't be mixing high-trauma students with severe disabilities, and we are."

At the elementary level, staffing inconsistencies have made it difficult to operate the model as intended. One teacher reflected, "I had asked if the Community Classroom was going to be manned at all times, and I was assured that it was. That has not been the case." As a result, the space is not always available as a flexible support, which, coupled with a lack of preparation for general educators in supporting students transitioning out of the expedition classroom, has had a negative impact on students:

- "We opened the Community Classroom this year, but we weren't prepared to do that. Our kids who transitioned from the Expedition Classroom have been really struggling. Our gen ed teachers don't know how to differentiate, provide alternate resources, etc. Our students are being presented with information that is above the level they are at. And then, the district response is to put a learning coach in there to help them access work, but that work is still

multiple levels above where they're at. And then the learning coaches end up doing a lot of the work for the students." – *Staff Member*

At the secondary level, similar challenges persist. Due to student needs and staffing inconsistencies, the space continues to operate largely as a self-contained setting. One general educator shared, "Kids feel like they've been put in the 'dumb class.' It doesn't feel like it's the least restrictive environment for them." Another added, "The Community Classroom is a disaster. It's in its fourth year, and there's been a complete turnover with staff. It's a huge drain of resources — it's not positive."

Another challenge is the cross-categorical nature of the classrooms. Students with vastly different needs — academic, behavioral, emotional — are being served together, making it difficult for staff to provide the level of targeted support each student requires. One staff member explained, "These classrooms are very cross-categorical. We have kids with ASD in the same room with kids with behavioral outbursts."

The cumulative effect raises concerns about the model's sustainability and its ability to meet student needs. As one teacher summarized, "I'm not sure if our students in the Community Classroom are getting an accessible education. I'm not sure how effective that is and what the learning outcomes are there. And whether or not it's in the best interest of the district to have it rather than spending the money to place those students in locations that are appropriate for what their needs are."

Without specialized staffing, clear program focus, and stronger general education support, the Community Classrooms risk becoming a holding space rather than a pathway to meaningful inclusion and growth for students with significant needs.

Practices to Consider

Going forward, the district can continue to refine the Community Classroom model by focusing on staffing, specialization, and ensuring all staff are equipped to support students with complex needs — particularly those with significant behavioral challenges.

Key practices the district can consider include:

- **Hiring and placing staff with the skills, experience, and aptitude needed to support the specific students in the Community Classroom.** This may include staff with expertise in behavior intervention, trauma-informed practices, or specialized content knowledge, depending on the student profiles served. There is a need for flexibility, with staffing expertise assigned to the program shifting year to year based on the students served.

- **Differentiating staff assignments based on student needs whenever possible.** If the Community Classroom must remain cross-categorical due to district size, the district could work toward aligning staff strengths to specific student needs within the space — for example, ensuring that students with intensive behavioral needs are supported by staff with deep behavioral expertise, while academic support is provided by content-strong educators. Many of these assignments would be for a few hours a day, not all day long.

- **Continuing to move toward a model where more students are supported within general education classrooms,** with the Community Classroom serving as a targeted support rather than a default placement. As outlined in Opportunity 1, ensuring general education teachers are prepared, confident, and supported to meet a wider range of student needs will be critical to achieving this goal.

For students with on-grade-level achievement but challenging behaviors, the class should be for just part of the day, with core instruction received in the general ed setting as much as possible. For students with more significant disabilities, the classroom would provide modified curriculum, and inclusion in the general education setting would happen during specials and other non-academic times.

This dichotomy is easier to manage if there are two separate classrooms, each with a more narrow focus.

Over time, refining staffing and program design in this way can help ensure the Community Classroom is a specialized, purposeful space — one that truly supports inclusion, improves student outcomes, and remains sustainable for staff.

Additional Areas for Consideration

The five opportunities above represent the most impactful areas for focus. That said, other opportunities surfaced that are worth elevating for further discussion.

Review Current Contracted Services

The district's current spending on contracted services is notably high for a district of its size. While this may reflect necessary supports and no particular categories of spending stood out among the rest, it could be worthwhile to review all services more closely to better understand their impact, alignment with district priorities, and overall cost-effectiveness. A deeper review might help identify areas where adjustments or efficiencies could be explored over time.

Strengthen Communication Channels

Several stakeholders (families, general educators, and special educators) shared that clear and consistent communication has been a challenge within the district. They shared that expectations are not always made clear, and folks don't always feel in the loop. Strengthening communication between leadership, staff, and families will be critical to building trust and ensuring alignment, particularly as the district considers making substantial changes to programs, staffing, or service delivery models. Clear and transparent communication will help ensure that changes are well-understood and supported at all levels.

Increase Data Sharing with the School Board

School boards have a fiduciary responsibility to manage district resources well, including a review of special education spending once a year. In a small district where "Everybody knows everybody," maintaining student privacy is both important and challenging. Historically, the district has prioritized student privacy over data sharing. A more balanced approach should be developed in which boards can do their duty and privacy laws are maintained. In many smaller districts, when the board needs to be apprised of pertinent information, the use of executive sessions (with only the board, superintendent, and key invited leaders) would be where financial reviews of special education spending on high-cost students are held since they are not publicly held meetings. Public meetings should be used to discuss policy, budget, negotiations, and supervising the superintendent only – not students and their specific circumstances.

Next Steps

These opportunities, as a set, represent a practical path forward to dramatically improve student outcomes. It builds on current strengths and respects past and current efforts already underway. It also respects and acknowledges the pressures general education teachers are feeling from the aftermath of the pandemic. While every opportunity would be beneficial, collectively, they represent a great deal of work and change. It is unlikely that the district has the bandwidth to move forward and implement every recommendation over the next few years. It is better to do a few things well, than many things not so well. Further prioritization is recommended.

Suggested next steps are:

- Share and discuss findings with district leadership

- Share and discuss findings with guiding coalition

- Facilitate a prioritization meeting and discuss initial steps for implementation

Appendix

Supporting Research on Special Education and Students Who Struggle Academically Best Practices

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