

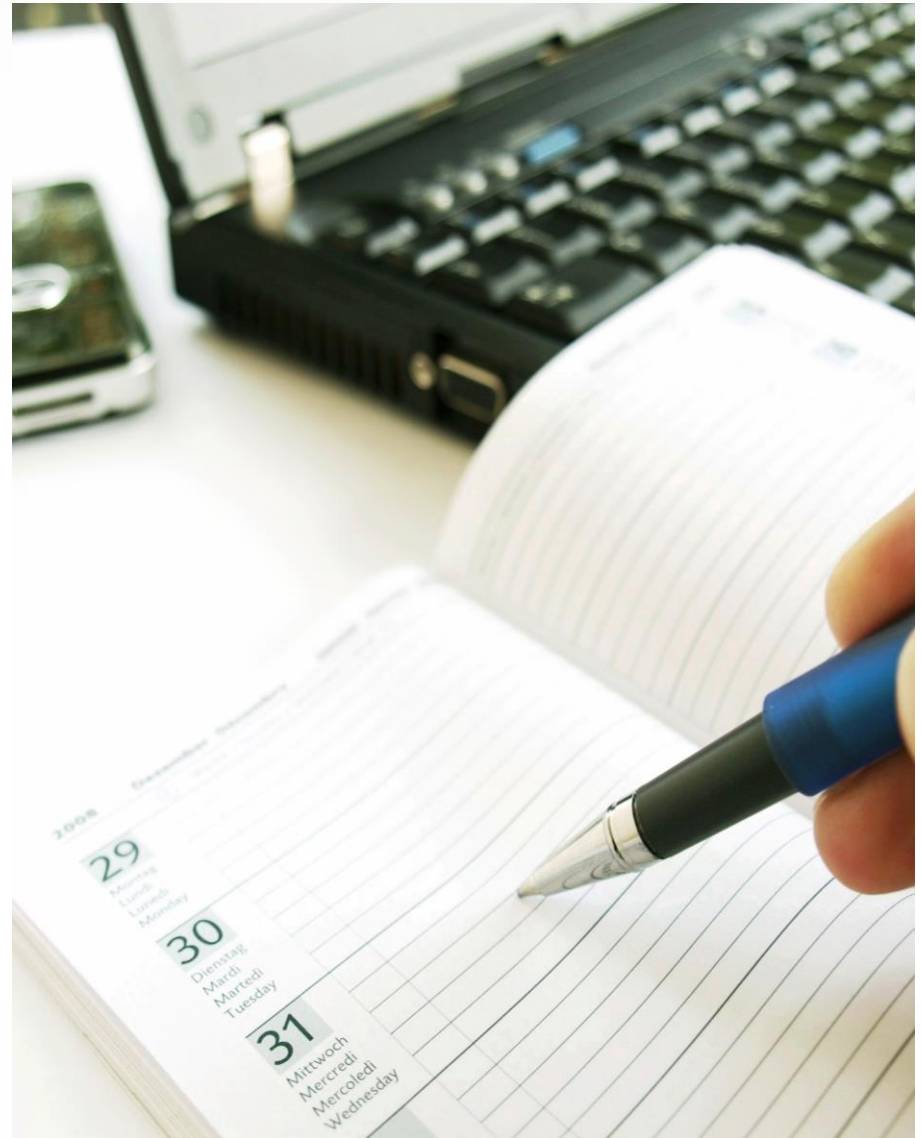
# Chappaqua Central School District: Special Education Review

Presentation to the Board of Education

January 26, 2022

# Agenda

- Introductions
- RFP Study Questions and Approach  
– 10 minutes
- Commendations and  
Recommendations – 10 minutes
- Q&A – 15-20 minutes



## Core Project Team

# Introduction of Core Project Team

## Matthew Korobkin, Project Director

**Background** – Former Special Education Officer for Strategic Planning and Evaluation, Office of the Secretary of Education, Delaware Department of Education; former special education teacher.

**Expertise** – Special Education strategic planning, policy creation, and implementation; organizational leadership and design; creation of accountability systems; stakeholder engagement

**Project Roles** – Project oversight; Facilitation; Stakeholder outreach



## Barbara Gantwerk, Subject Matter Expert

**Background** – Retired Assistant Commissioner of Education, New Jersey Department of Education; former State Director of Special Education, New Jersey Department of Education.

**Expertise** – Program reviews, compliance, continuum of services, professional development, group facilitation

**Project Roles** – Conducting interviews and focus groups



# Introduction of Core Project Team - continued

## **Jerry Petroff, Ph.D, Subject Matter Expert**

**Background** – Professor and Executive Director at the Center on Sensory and Complex Needs, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ); former administrator at the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Expertise** –Classroom observations, special education pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, data analysis, client engagement.

**Project Roles** – Conducting and providing interrater reliability on classroom observations.



## **Megan McCormick, Project Support**

**Background** – Former Director of Special Education in New York State, strategic planning, program quality review, learning assessment processes, and education policy

**Expertise** – Project management, data analysis, client engagement

**Project Roles** – Project coordination, research, and data analysis for program reviews



# CCSD RFP Study Questions: What did CCSD want to know?

The study examined the following questions posed by CCSD within its Request for Proposals (RFP):

1. Does CCSD's special education program foster effective teacher pedagogy, support, and professional development to support students with IEPs?
2. Are the district's continuum of services effectively organized to support a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for students with IEPs?
3. Does special education programming at CCSD effectively support the academic, functional, and transition outcomes of students with IEPs, thus preparing students with IEPs for college, career, and/or other post-graduation plans?
4. Does the CCSD effectively leverage Response to Intervention (RtI) for support all learners, including students who may later be identified as having a disability?
5. Does CCSD leverage its financial resources to effectively and efficiently support FAPE and LRE for students with IEPs?
6. Does CCSD effectively organize and utilize its human capital resources to effectively provide FAPE and LRE for students with IEPs?
7. Does CCSD effectively maintain an efficient and effective record-keeping system for its special education department that promotes compliance, student outcomes, accuracy, and confidentiality?
8. Do CCSD administrators and teachers effectively foster supportive, transparent, and accessible relationships with parents and other key stakeholders?



# Approach: Data Collection and Triangulation



Three core components of data collection:

- **Outcome analysis**: The longitudinal analysis of student outcomes, achievement trends, and growth patterns.
- **Organizational and Program Analysis**: The systemic organizational and program factors that have an impact on program effectiveness and special education student outcomes
- **Research and Practice Literature**: The analyses of studied, published best practices.

# Approach: Project Kick-off

- June 16, 2021 – 3-hour virtual meeting (virtual due to COVID-19 conditions)
- 60 community members invited through invitations sent by Director of Special Education (50+ attendees)
  - Central Office Cabinet Members
  - All building principals
  - All building assistant principals
  - Special education case managers
  - CSE Chairpersons
  - Parents
  - School counselors



# Approach: Project Kick-off

- Conducted SWOT analyses key areas aligned to district RFP questions.
- Initial SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) findings align with PCG-identified special education program strengths, opportunities for improvement, and recommendations

# Approach: Focus Groups and Interviews

- From August 2021 to November 2021, PCG conducted two sets of focus groups:
  - Organizational focus groups/interviews and
  - Student file review focus groups.
- During interviews and focus groups, we shared with all participants that we would maintain their anonymity. Specifically, we would not include personally identifiable information about them in the report unless we had their permission. **Under these conditions, participants shared information with candor.**

# Approach: Student-Centered File Review Focus Groups

- From October through November 2021, PCG conducted student-centered file review focus groups that allowed for further discussion about school-based practices and included a review of a variety of student documents, specifically eligibility documentation, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and student progress reports. Including topics:
  - special education management,
  - student identification,
  - programs and services,
  - curriculum and instruction,
  - staffing, and parent engagement

# Approach: Classroom Visits

- During October 2021, PCG conducted 58 classroom visits across all six schools. PCG's classroom visits sought evidence of the presence and implementation of:
  - Specially Designed Instruction;
  - Elements of Universal Design for Learning;
  - Student Accommodations;
  - Approaches to Co-Teaching and Consultation Teaching; and
  - Differentiation and Inclusion.

# Approach: Staff and Parent Electronic Surveys

- PCG collaborated with the District to facilitate an electronic survey process that would result in the highest possible rate of return.
  - An announcement notice was drafted by CCSD's communication department and families were reminded to participate. All potential participants were informed of the purpose of the survey and were provided with instructions for accessing the survey online.
- The staff survey was administered on October 12, 2021 and was open for two weeks. All educators, including general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and building administrators, received a link to the electronic survey from CCSD. Reminder emails were sent to all CCSD educators.
- **A total of 109 CCSD staff members completed the online survey**—this comprised of 29 special education teachers, 46 general education teachers, 5 paraprofessionals, 6 related service providers, 8 student support service personnel, and 2 building administrators.
- **A total of 104 parent surveys were completed**—this comprised the following parents: 11 preschool parents; 30 grades K-5 parents; 32 grades 5-8 parents; 25 grades 9-Post graduate parents; and 6 out of district placement parents. Reminders about the survey were sent via the CCSD Communications Office.

# Commendations

# Commendations: Special Education Services

## Strengths

- Educator Commitment.
- Deeply Engrained Belief in “Full Inclusion.” Out of District Placement Rates Consistent with Neighboring Peer Districts.
- Physical School and Classroom Environment.
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Effective Integrated Co-teaching (ICT).
- Reading as a Related Service.
- Drop Out Rate.
- College Matriculation.
- Scores and Achievement Gaps on Standardized Assessments.



# Commendations: Support for Teaching and Learning

## Strengths

- Highly Talented Staff and Retention.
- Mentorship Program.
- Wilson Trained Special Education Teachers.
- Professional Development.





# Commendations: Parent Engagement

## Strengths

- Highly engaged parents.
- CCSD Special Education Website.
- Responsiveness. Parent Trainings.



# Recommendations

Derived from areas of opportunities.

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (1) Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- **MTSS framework.** Build on CCSD's current RTI and processes.
- **Districtwide leadership team.** Develop an MTSS cross-departmental district-level leadership team.
- **Expectations.** Establish, communicate, support, and monitor clear expectations for MTSS, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility
- **Guard rails.** Determine what expectations will be required district-wide and which will be a school-based decision.
- **Consistent school-based MTSS teams.** Require all schools to consistently operate a school-based MTSS team.
- **Professional development.** Provide MTSS professional development for all school-based staff. Have central office staff develop turn around trainings for school-level staff, so a unified voice is heard throughout the district.



# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (1) Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- **Written guidance.** Create an electronic user-friendly, and accessible MTSS manual for school teams and for parents to understand
- **Electronic dashboard.** Develop a transparent and widely accessible district-wide early warning dashboard
- **Academic Intervention Services (AIS).** Start Academic Services earlier in the year. Address concerns around quality of services.
- **Behavioral Supports.** Ensure students have access to behaviorists when it is determined appropriate (e.g. Board Certified Behavior Analyst).

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (2) Identification Practices

- **CPSE Exits.** Ensure formal written protocols and a consistent understanding among teachers and administrators around the process, in regulation, of declassifying preschool students prior to becoming school-age (kindergarten).
- **Monitoring.** Based on the areas of practice identified through the above activities, identify data to be collected and monitored, along with any practices to be monitored, to support consistent implementation across CCSD and to identify schools needing additional support or intervention. Monitor disability categories by race to ensure there are not patterns of over/under identification by race or disability category, especially in the disability classifications of Emotional Disability (ED) or Multiple Disabilities (MD).

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (3) IEP Development

- **Written procedures.** Include in CCSD's written special education guidance standards and examples for IEP development processes that are appropriate and consistent across the district.
- **Monitoring IEPs.** Establish and implement a process for periodically reviewing student IEPs for their consistency with expected standards.
- **Collaboration.** Foster positive CSE collaboration by creating more planning time between general education and special education teachers

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (4) Inclusive Practices: Planning, Guidance, and Implementation

- **Review district's "full inclusion" definition and ensure that all staff understand its meaning.** Ensure that educators do not see "full inclusion" as mainstreaming and/or integration into the general education classes, as indicated in the staff survey.
- **Implementation guide.** Develop a clearly articulated district/school implementation guide based on the inclusive education framework with expected guidance, procedures and practices.
- **Scheduled time for collaboration.** Establish written guidance for the use of inclusive master school schedules.
- **Master Schedules.** Ensure master schedules are not limiting students from receiving special education services.

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (5) General Education Classroom Composition, Collaborative Teaching, Co-Teaching, and Learning Centers

- **Collaborative Teaching.** Draft guidance for collaborative and consultative teaching to support students with disabilities that are consistent with best practices and meeting mandates in New York Regulations. Ensure that students are not limited to receiving a 2-hour maximum of service when in fact their IEP team agrees that additional services are required to meet their needs, Ensure that middle school schedules aren't dictating the quantity of CT services.
- **Inclusive Co-taught instruction.** Draft guidance for the delivery of co-taught instruction based on the most effective model for instruction purposes and use of the special educator in addition to meeting mandates in New York Regulations.
- **Professional development.** Provide professional development on collaborative teaching, co-teach to ensure teachers engage in a true instructional partnership. Provide planning time for general education and special educators and others to become true collaborative partners.
- **Learning Centers (Resource Rooms).** Provide resource rooms at elementary schools for students who may require pull-out services or supplemental services in an environment that meets their needs and their IEPs.





# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (6) Out of District Placements

- **Parent outreach.** Talk with parents and CSE teams who sought or obtained an out of district placement to better understand their motivations and CCSD program gaps.
- **School assessment.** Visit or obtain other information about the most common out of district placements to ascertain how these resources are different from any currently available for any student in CCSD schools. Place special emphasis on students at middle school levels – specifically focusing on how programming offered at out of district placements within neighboring school districts can be replicated in CCSD.

# Leadership:

## (7) Inclusive Education Vision and Planning

- **Renewed guiding vision and mission of “Full Inclusion”.** Clearly articulate “full inclusion” in a manner that all can understand the vision and mission – from leadership to educators. Ensure educators do not mistake mainstreaming or integration as inclusion.
- **Clear expectations.** Communicate to schools, parents, and the broader community that CCSD expects and will take steps to ensure (1) students with disabilities make the greatest amount of progress possible in the general education curriculum (or modified curriculum per IEPs) through rigorous and high quality standards-aligned instruction, and specially designed instruction and interventions, along with differentiated instruction, accommodations, and modifications; (2) inclusion is not merely mainstreaming or integrating; (3) inclusion can still be achieved when students, especially students with complex disabilities, receive additional specialized services and supports outside the general education classroom; and (4) partnerships with families are critical for trusting and collaborative partnerships.
- **Strategic plan.** Develop a long-range strategic plan based on the above recommendations as well as other relevant information.

# Leadership:

## (8) Cross-Departmental Collaboration

- **Increase Collaboration with Office of Curriculum and Instruction.** Establish a schedule for routine, collaborative meetings between the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the Special Education Office, and the Office of Pupil Personnel Services to ensure that special education and curriculum are functioning in lock-step.
- **Collaboration between Office of Special Education and Office of Diversity, Equity, and Wellness.** Collaborate on matters such as the identification of racial minorities with disabilities to ensure students are not being overidentified.
- **Collaborative work.** Use these collaborative partnerships to establish consistent and integrative approaches to support improved instruction for various purposes by creating cross-functional workgroups.
- **Key performance indicators (KPIs).** Set goals for all cross-departmental initiatives and establish KPIs with targets to measure the extent to which they are beneficial or require modification.

# Leadership:

## (9) Special Education Leadership Presence in Schools

- **Administrator Visibility in schools.** Ensure Special Education Director and Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services are known faces in buildings; establish opportunities for staff within buildings to meet/collaborate.



# Human Capital:

## (10) Professional Development

- **Special Education Planning.** Include special education in the district's existing professional development planning.



# Systems and Structures:

## (11) Special Education Policy and Procedure

- **Standard Operating Procedures Manual.** As stated earlier, create an interactive, web-based CCSD special education manual to support user-friendly and transparent access to procedures/practices relevant to the management and operations of special education.
- **Assistive Technology.** Ensure that students with devices, especially speech generating devices, have access to Assistive Technology Professionals in addition to the supporting Speech and Language Pathologist, to provide staff training, student training, parent training, and ensure ongoing functionality within the child's Special Education program.
- **Budget.** Engage in a special education budgeting process that allows for a building-by-building breakdown of special education expenditures.

# Systems and Structures:

## (12) Record Keeping

- **IEP Accuracy.** To build community trust, implement the recommendations in this report and publicly report at least twice per year on progress made or obstacles/delays encountered.
- **Board Mandates.** Ensure board has the required documentation on the provision of services for children with IEPs in the form of a list.

# Family and Community Engagement:

## (13) Enact Report Recommendations

- **Implement and publicly report recommendation progress.** In order to build community trust, implement the recommendations in this report and publicly report at least twice per year on progress made or obstacles/delays encountered. Ensure this information is shared with key stakeholders including the Special Education PTA.



# Family and Community Engagement:

## (14) Website

- **Content.** At least annually, review and update materials posted on the CCSD website regarding special education process.

# Family and Community Engagement:

## (15) Family Engagement Vision

- **Collaborative vision.** Create a core belief vision statement of agreed-upon ideals. Share it with other stakeholders to build family engagement support across the District.
- **Parent Training Engagement and Communication.** In consultation with representatives of parent support groups, develop a training plan for families in the areas of IEP process, role of the child study team, helpful hints for parents at home, and how families can take an active and collaborative role at IEP meetings. Ensure a communications plan exists to ensure the widest possible audience.

**Questions?**

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# Appendix

# Commendations and Opportunities for Improvement

- Special Education Services
- Support for Teaching and Learning
- Parent Engagement

# Special Education Services

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Educator Commitment.</b> The District has committed educators (teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers) dedicated to supporting students with IEPs. Many of the staff PCG consultants met shared their enthusiasm for working in CCSD.</li> <li>• <b>Deeply Engrained Belief in “Full Inclusion.”</b> All staff PCG encountered have a belief that students with IEPs should be participating with their typically developing peers to the maximum extent.</li> <li>• <b>Out of District Placement Rates Consistent with Neighboring Peer Districts.</b> CCSD’s placement rate is consistent with peers.</li> <li>• <b>Physical School and Classroom Environment.</b> The culture and climate of each of the Chappaqua schools visited were clean, secure, well-designed and appointed, and reflected a welcoming student friendly atmosphere.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Multi-Tiered System of Supports.</b> There is inconsistent use of an MTSS or Rtl framework to support struggling learners or special education referral data and conflicting beliefs on how the process can potentially support the needs of struggling students who may be identified in the future as students with disabilities. It is predominately found at the elementary schools; minimally followed in the middle schools; and is not followed at the high school.</li> <li>• <b>Outdated and Under-utilized Rtl Handbook.</b> CCSD has an Rtl handbook that is over a decade old and is inconsistently used and/or referenced.</li> <li>• <b>Academic Intervention Services (AIS).</b> AIS reading and math occur later in the year and the district has challenges filling the roles. They are sometimes used as supplemental instruction for students with IEPs; however, AIS frequently occurs before the start of school.</li> </ul>

# Special Education Services

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Universal Design for Learning (UDL).</b> Although many teachers did not know it by name, several were engaged in core UDL concepts.</li> <li>• <b>Effective Integrated Co-teaching (ICT).</b> In classrooms where ICT was being conducted, it appeared to be effective and well planned.</li> <li>• <b>Reading as a Related Service.</b> Teachers and parents pleased by the programming provided through this service.</li> <li>• <b>Drop Out Rate.</b> Exceptionally low dropout rate for students with IEPs.</li> <li>• <b>College Matriculation.</b> Exceptionally high rate of students with IEPs matriculating into college.</li> <li>• <b>Scores and Achievement Gaps on Standardized Assessments.</b> Students with disabilities as a cohort are improving in their overall scores (as proficient) and narrowing the achievement gap with general education students in Grade 3 Math and ELA; Grade 4 Math and ELA; Grade 5 ELA; Grade 7 ELA; and Grade 8 ELA. Proficiency decreased in the areas of Grade 5 Math; Grade 6 ELA and Math; Grade 7 Math and Grade 8 Math.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IEP/CSE Process.</b> The process lacks consistency across the District because staff feel messages and communication styles have changed with leadership changes in the Special Education Office, and the newly created Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel.</li> <li>• <b>CPSE Exit Process.</b> There are no formal written protocols and an inconsistent understanding among teachers and administrators around the process of declassifying preschool students prior to becoming school-age (kindergarten).</li> <li>• <b>Inconsistent alignment in IEPs from Present Levels Statement to Needs and to Goals.</b> Staff inconsistently write Present Levels and Needs thus sometimes missing opportunities to create goals that address specific needs. It was also identified that the goals CSE teams frequently write are skill based while the instruction is content based, which sometimes creates an inherent mismatch between the instruction and the goals.</li> <li>• <b>Inconsistent Definition of “Full Inclusion.”</b> Based on survey results, some educators see it as mainstreaming and/or integration into the general education classes. Others see it as meeting the unique learning needs of students and providing them adequate supports</li> <li>• <b>Limited Continuum of Services.</b> With an emphasis on maximizing the time spent in a general education classroom, some students with unique learning needs may not be getting access to learning supports and strategies that they need in order to be successful.</li> </ul>

# Special Education Services

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Continuum Challenges Impact Modifications.</b> There are intensive modifications required by some students that resulted in them being instructed often by paraprofessionals or special ed teachers separately in the classroom. This was also the result of insufficient time for students to receive learning center, resource support or the special ed teacher being in the class for a limited amount of time</li><li>• <b>Out of District Placements at the Middle School Years.</b> Challenges with the continuum may be driving out of district placement rates.</li><li>• <b>Consultant Teacher Model and Time Limits.</b> CSEs function under a limit of 2 hours of special education services.</li><li>• <b>Middle School Schedule Influences Services.</b> CSEs frequently feel restricted by schedule and make special education and related service decisions around schedule instead of student need.</li><li>• <b>Middle School Encore and Students with IEPs.</b> Middle school pull-out often occurs during the arts, music, and band; thus requiring students with IEPs to miss important courses essential to middle school students.</li><li>• <b>Learning Centers (Resource Rooms) Not Available at Elementary Schools.</b> Students who may require services in resource room settings do not have access in elementary schools.</li></ul>



# Special Education Services

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Specialized Behavior Supports for Students with IEPs.</b> For some students with behavioral issues, there was no BIP prepared as they believed the program addressed behavioral issues. The district contracts out for some behavioral services but does not have any behavioral specialists available to teachers and teams.</li><li>• <b>Transition.</b> Transition goals frequently lack the use of quantitative data, no use of career inventories to inform transition goals at high school; students leveraging services such as vocational rehabilitation or Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) may have these items noted but not within the transition section of their IEP.</li><li>• <b>Scores and achievement Gaps on Standardized Assessments.</b> scores decreased and gaps widened in the following areas: Grade 5 Math; Grade 6 ELA and Math; Grade 7 Math; Grade 8 ELA.</li></ul>

# Support for Teaching and Learning

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Highly Talented Staff and Retention.</b> CCSD is one of the highest-paying districts in the region and generally does not have recruitment or retention challenges. Teachers and administrators shared that rigorous tenure process leads to a highly talented staff.</li> <li>• <b>Mentorship Program.</b> New teachers and administrators appreciate the mentorship program.</li> <li>• <b>Wilson Trained Special Education Teachers.</b> The district made a considerable investment to train its special education teachers in the Wilson Reading method.</li> <li>• <b>Professional Development.</b> On the whole, the staff appreciate the PD offerings of the district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Standard Operating Procedures Guide.</b> The district does not have a standard operating procedures guide.</li> <li>• <b>Special Education Administrator Presence in Schools.</b> Administrators and teachers would like increased opportunities for the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services and the Special Education Director to visit their schools.</li> <li>• <b>Consistent Communication from Special Education Department.</b> Due to turnover, teachers and building administrators feel the directives they have received from the Special Education Department have been inconsistent.</li> <li>• <b>Mentorship Program.</b> New teachers and administrators would like to see more special education instructional supports as part of the mentorship program.</li> <li>• <b>Professional Development.</b> Teachers would like more professional development to support the needs of complex learners (e.g. behavioral supports; supporting students with Autism; supporting students with emotional challenges).</li> <li>• <b>Interdepartmental Collaboration.</b> The Special Education Department needs to renew its close connection to the Office of Curriculum and Instruction.</li> </ul>

# Support for Teaching and Learning

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Special Education Budget.</b> The district does not have special education budgets by building or by setting (e.g. ICT, CT, Resource) at the building level. In addition, the detailed budget does not include a breakdown by service provider (e.g. OT, PT, Speech), and costs for special education instructional materials.</li><li>• <b>Record Keeping.</b> During file review focus groups, inaccuracies were found regarding service-minutes for special education.</li><li>• <b>Board Receipt of Redacted IEPs.</b> Board members receive whole redacted IEPs when the requirement set forth in Part 200.2(a) 4 indicates that the Board of Education is responsible for data reporting which only makes mention of the collection and maintenance of lists of number of students served via special ed and number of students not served.</li></ul>

# Parent Engagement

## Strengths

- **Highly engaged parents.** The parents of CCSD students are highly engaged and care about their child's school and their child's academic outcomes.
- **CCSD Special Education Website.** The CCSD Special Education Department webpage contains a lot of useful information for parents.
- **Responsiveness.** Most surveyed parents believe the district responds within a reasonable timeframe.
- **Parent Trainings.** CCSD offers several opportunities for parent trainings through the district and the Special Education PTO.

## Opportunities for Improvement

- **CCSD Special Education Website.** Some information on the CCSD Website is dated and needs to be updated.
- **Parent Training Awareness.** Surveyed parents overwhelmingly said they were not aware of the trainings.
- **Communication about Student Progress.** Many parents shared they want more information on student progress relative to their IEP.
- **Service Delivery.** Many parents expressed concern for a lack of time their child has with the Consultative Teacher.
- **Full Inclusion.** Some parents felt that they appreciated the full inclusion philosophy but that their child was excluded because of the lack of appropriate services.

# Recommendations

# **Learning Environment and Specialized Services**

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (1) Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- **MTSS framework.** Build on CCSD's current RTI and processes to develop a unified and clear structure of MTSS for academic achievement, positive behavior, and social/emotional growth for all students. Create guides to explain how the intervention models, such as RTI, PBIS, etc., complement each other. Move from an RtI Model to an MTSS Framework, including both academic as well as behavior needs in the three-tiered triangle.
- **Districtwide leadership team.** Develop an MTSS cross-departmental district-level leadership team, including senior leadership, school principals, and representatives from every educational unit (e.g., special education, curriculum, and instruction, building leadership). Schedule meetings at least monthly to review, update, operationalize, and monitor the fidelity of MTSS implementation. Establish comparable school-based leadership teams to oversee MTSS implementation at each school.
- **Expectations.** Establish, communicate, support, and monitor clear expectations for MTSS, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility across departments and schools, aligning them with relevant standards and guidelines.
- **Guard rails.** Determine what expectations will be required district-wide and which will be a school-based decision. Incorporate the expectations into administrator, principal, teacher, paraprofessional, and related-service personnel evaluations.
- **Consistent school-based MTSS teams.** Require all schools to consistently operate a school-based MTSS team to support problem-solving, data-based decision making at all tiers to support academic advancement and positive behavior, and consistency between schools. Ensure principals schedule time for teams to implement the problem-solving process, meet and review progress monitoring and intervention data, be empowered, and be held accountable for adjusting school schedules to provide the necessary supports for all struggling students.
- **Professional development.** Provide MTSS professional development for all school-based staff. Have central office staff develop turn around trainings for school-level staff, so a unified voice is heard throughout the district.



# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (1) Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- **Written guidance.** Create an electronic user-friendly, and accessible MTSS manual for school teams and for parents to understand the MTSS process and to document procedures/practices relevant to the management/operation of MTSS in CCSD. Include protocol for collecting progress monitoring data and assessing student growth; what constitutes adequate progress and associated lengths of time to allow for progress, and requirements for initiating a special education evaluation when such progress is not shown. Ensure a common understanding and buy-in around the district for the need for MTSS, why and how it is implemented, what desired targets it is intended to meet, and what progress CCSD is making toward achieving the goals. Maintain the manual by updating it regularly as there are changes to policy or practice.
- **Electronic dashboard.** Develop a transparent and widely accessible district-wide early warning dashboard to monitor student intervention data use and growth for academics and behavior to enable leadership at the central office and schools to review MTSS implementation and student growth, identify patterns, solve problems, and make data-informed decisions. Review and expand upon rubrics currently in use to have a universal set of documents that are relevant based on grade levels and types of schools.
- **Academic Intervention Services (AIS).** Start Academic Services earlier in the year. Address concerns around quality of services. Schedule services so they occur during the school day. Determine whether a student with an IEP needs AIS or additional supplemental support via pull-out in a resource room setting. Clearly define AIS as a Tier 2 Intervention if that is how it is being leveraged. If student with IEP needs more intensive services than AIS, consider other supplementary instruction to support students.
- **Behavioral Supports.** Ensure students have access to behaviorists when it is determined appropriate (e.g. Board Certified Behavior Analyst). For students with Autism and/or complex disabilities, a behaviorist can play a critical role in conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment, creating a Behavioral Intervention Plan, and providing targeted, individualized behavioral protocols for students (e.g. Applied Behavior Analysis; Token Economies; Reinforcement Plans when appropriate).





# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (2) Identification Practices

- **CPSE Exits.** Ensure formal written protocols and a consistent understanding among teachers and administrators around the process, in regulation, of declassifying preschool students prior to becoming school-age (kindergarten).
- **Monitoring.** Based on the areas of practice identified through the above activities, identify data to be collected and monitored, along with any practices to be monitored, to support consistent implementation across CCSD and to identify schools needing additional support or intervention. Monitor disability categories by race to ensure there are not patterns of over/under identification by race or disability category, especially in the disability classifications of Emotional Disability (ED) or Multiple Disabilities (MD).

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (3) IEP Development

- **Written procedures.** Include in CCSD's written special education guidance standards and examples for IEP development processes that are appropriate and consistent across the district. Guidance would include but not be limited to Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) and data use within; student needs; IEP goals; and progress reporting. Include a procedure for discussing additional material and human resources than those currently available to meet a particular student's needs, including those needed for students who would otherwise be placed out of district.
- **Monitoring IEPs.** Establish and implement a process for periodically reviewing student IEPs for their consistency with expected standards. Consider using a school-based process, which would include an impartial CCSD facilitator to review, analyze and discuss IEPs with teachers and related service providers.
- **Collaboration.** Foster positive CSE collaboration by creating more planning time between general education and special education teachers; ensuring adequate time and coverage for staff participating in CSE meetings; and transparent processes around timelines, data, and information sharing with parents to enhance trust and partnership among all CSE members.

# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (4) Inclusive Practices: Planning, Guidance, and Implementation

- **Review district's "full inclusion" definition and ensure that all staff understand its meaning.** Ensure that educators do not see "full inclusion" as mainstreaming and/or integration into the general education classes, as indicated in the staff survey. Set an orientation as meeting the unique learning needs of students and providing them adequate supports. Ensure this definition includes the appropriate supports needed for students with complex disabilities; ensure that it does not preclude them from services and supports needed for them to succeed or create official and/or unofficial time-limits for the receipt of special education services (e.g. 2 hour cap for CT when student may need more as part of his/her program).
- **Implementation guide.** Develop a clearly articulated district/school implementation guide based on the inclusive education framework with expected guidance, procedures and practices. Determine the role of schools to adapt the framework to their unique needs versus CCSD requirements. This process could also include CCSD's advance approval for a school to adapt the framework with deviations CCSD defines as significant.
- **Scheduled time for collaboration.** Establish written guidance for the use of inclusive master school schedules, which establish common planning time for collaborative teaching, co-teaching, and other activities for general educators with special education and other personnel. Develop various scheduling models that schools could use and/or adapt.
- **Master Schedules.** Ensure master schedules are not limiting students from receiving special education services. In particular, at the middle school, ensure that schedule is not pulling students from the arts, band, or foreign language to receive special education services.



# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (5) General Education Classroom Composition, Collaborative Teaching, Co-Teaching, and Learning Centers

- **Collaborative Teaching.** Draft guidance for collaborative and consultative teaching to support students with disabilities that are consistent with best practices and meeting mandates in New York Regulations. Ensure that students are not limited to receiving a 2-hour maximum of service when in fact their IEP team agrees that additional services are required to meet their needs, Ensure that middle school schedules aren't dictating the quantity of CT services.
- **Inclusive Co-taught instruction.** Draft guidance for the delivery of co-taught instruction based on the most effective model for instruction purposes and use of the special educator in addition to meeting mandates in New York Regulations. Based on the developed guidance, provide intensive professional development and follow-up coaching and modeling to give co-teachers the information and support they need to be true partners in the planning and delivery of classroom instruction.
- **Professional development.** Provide professional development on collaborative teaching, co-teach to ensure teachers engage in a true instructional partnership. Provide planning time for general education and special educators and others to become true collaborative partners.
- **Learning Centers (Resource Rooms).** Provide resource rooms at elementary schools for students who may require pull-out services or supplemental services in an environment that meets their needs and their IEPs.



# Learning Environment and Specialized Services:

## (6) Out of District Placements

- **Parent outreach.** Talk with parents and CSE teams who sought or obtained an out of district placement to better understand their motivations and CCSD program gaps.
- **School assessment.** Visit or obtain other information about the most common out of district placements to ascertain how these resources are different from any currently available for any student in CCSD schools. Place special emphasis on students at middle school levels – specifically focusing on how programming offered at out of district placements within neighboring school districts can be replicated in CCSD.

**Leadership**

# Leadership:

## (7) Inclusive Education Vision and Planning

- **Renewed guiding vision and mission of “Full Inclusion”.** Clearly articulate “full inclusion” in a manner that all can understand the vision and mission – from leadership to educators. Ensure educators do not mistake mainstreaming or integration as inclusion.
- **Clear expectations.** Either in the renewed vision/mission or other documentation, communicate to schools, parents, and the broader community that CCSD expects and will take steps to ensure (1) students with disabilities make the greatest amount of progress possible in the general education curriculum (or modified curriculum per IEPs) through rigorous and high quality standards-aligned instruction, and specially designed instruction and interventions, along with differentiated instruction, accommodations, and modifications; (2) inclusion is not merely mainstreaming or integrating; (3) inclusion can still be achieved when students, especially students with complex disabilities, receive additional specialized services and supports outside the general education classroom; and (4) partnerships with families are critical for trusting and collaborative partnerships.
- **Strategic plan.** Develop a long-range strategic plan based on the above recommendations as well as other relevant information.



# Leadership:

## (8) Cross-Departmental Collaboration

- **Increase Collaboration with Office of Curriculum and Instruction.** Establish a schedule for routine, collaborative meetings between the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the Special Education Office, and the Office of Pupil Personnel Services to ensure that special education and curriculum are functioning in lock-step.
- **Collaboration between Office of Special Education and Office of Diversity, Equity, and Wellness.** Collaborate on matters such as the identification of racial minorities with disabilities to ensure students are not being overidentified. Ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities is not being excluded from the “inclusion” definition within the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Wellness.
- **Collaborative work.** Use these collaborative partnerships to establish consistent and integrative approaches to support improved instruction for various purposes by creating cross-functional workgroups.
- **Key performance indicators (KPIs).** Set goals for all cross-departmental initiatives and establish KPIs with targets to measure the extent to which they are beneficial or require modification.



# Leadership:

## (9) Special Education Leadership Presence in Schools

- **Administrator Visibility in schools.** Ensure Special Education Director and Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services are known faces in buildings; establish opportunities for staff within buildings to meet/collaborate.



# Human Capital

# Human Capital:

## (10) Professional Development

- **Special Education Planning.** Include special education in the district's existing professional development planning. Ensure that supporting the needs of students with IEPs, IEP writing, and other essential components of special education are part of CCSD's mentoring process. Include professional development opportunities that address complex disabilities.

# Systems and Structures

# Systems and Structures:

## (11) Special Education Policy and Procedure

- **Standard Operating Procedures Manual.** As stated earlier, create an interactive, web-based CCSD special education manual to support user-friendly and transparent access to procedures/practices relevant to the management and operations of special education and to which school staff can be held accountable for implementing. Streamline resources so that school teams can easily access relevant information and use embedded hyperlinks to provide information for staff as needed. Update the manual on a routine basis. Include criteria, procedures, and practices for each area in the manual relevant to the implementation of these recommendations, e.g., criteria for child find; MTSS progress criteria to support the referral of students for special education evaluations; inclusive instruction; revised continuum of services; transportation protocol; etc. Make this an internal and external facing document.
- **Assistive Technology.** Ensure that students with devices, especially speech generating devices, have access to Assistive Technology Professionals in addition to the supporting Speech and Language Pathologist, to provide staff training, student training, parent training, and ensure ongoing functionality within the child's Special Education program.
- **Budget.** Engage in a special education budgeting process that allows for a building-by-building breakdown of special education expenditures.

# Systems and Structures:

## (12) Record Keeping

- **IEP Accuracy.** To build community trust, implement the recommendations in this report and publicly report at least twice per year on progress made or obstacles/delays encountered.
- **Board Mandates.** Ensure board has the required documentation on the provision of services for children with IEPs in the form of a list; instead of providing redacted IEPs. Within its capacity to arrange for the appropriate special education programs and services to be provided to a student with a disability as recommended by the committee on special education, the district can provide a list that includes the following information instead of redacted IEPs: a brief summary that includes recommendations and service details that warrant or incur a cost to the district; however, the student ID or other personally identifiable information cannot be listed.



# **Family and Community Engagement**

# Family and Community Engagement:

## (13) Enact Report Recommendations

- **Implement and publicly report recommendation progress.** In order to build community trust, implement the recommendations in this report and publicly report at least twice per year on progress made or obstacles/delays encountered. Ensure this information is shared with key stakeholders including the Special Education PTA.



# Family and Community Engagement:

## (14) Website

- **Content.** At least annually, review and update materials posted on the CCSD website regarding special education process (CSE and CPSE), instructional models, related services, and supplementary aids and services. Ensure this information is clearly accessible and comprehensive and accessible to parents with diverse linguistic needs and sensory limitations.

# Family and Community Engagement:

## (15) Family Engagement Vision

- **Collaborative vision.** With representatives of parent support groups as well as other CCSD diverse representatives, have discussions about family engagement, specific to special education. Based on these discussions, create a core belief vision statement of agreed-upon ideals. Share it with other stakeholders to build family engagement support across the District.
- **Parent Training Engagement and Communication.** In consultation with representatives of parent support groups, develop a training plan for families in the areas of IEP process, role of the child study team, helpful hints for parents at home, and how families can take an active and collaborative role at IEP meetings. Ensure a communications plan exists to ensure the widest possible audience.



**Solutions that Matter**