

Rocklin Unified School District Review of Special Education Supports and Services

Final Report

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April 15, 2015



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Overview

The Rocklin Unified School District (RUSD) serves over 11,600 students in seventeen K-12 schools comprised of eleven elementary schools, two middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, one alternative high school and the Rocklin Independent Charter Academy (RICA). RUSD is located in the city of Rocklin, California that is a growing suburban and semi-rural area east of Sacramento.

Purpose

RUSD contracted with WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (CPEI) to evaluate current special education instructional practices to determine how the district can enhance its provision of special education instruction. This process included collecting, analyzing, and organizing data, and making recommendations regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of its special education supports and services. Particular attention was given to assessing the following areas to generate recommendations for effectiveness and efficiency of the overall program that will not compromise the quality of services provided.

- Fiscal - appropriateness of expenses, and fiscal accountability.
- Effectiveness of current organizational structures, policies and procedures
- Program structure and design
- Related services, out of district placements, and contracted services
- Pre-referral processes
- Communication - review of communication processes and procedures both internal
- Professional development - review the training and professional development offerings

Reviewer

The WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (CPEI), located in Sacramento, CA, has directed numerous research and program evaluation projects leading to systemic change facilitation through training and technical assistance to individual organizations. Our work focuses on the implementation of mandates in both Part B and C of IDEA legislation. Specific activities that address the needs of children with disabilities and those at risk for additional services and supports include the development of statewide evaluation of programs and systems, workforce development training and technical assistance for professionals supporting positive special education outcomes; addressing the issue of highly qualified personnel through the development of resource tools; creating alternative assessments linked to state content standards resource development to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and communities; addressing the needs of families; online module development and Webinars illustrates a deep understanding of the complexity of multiple systems and expertise in identifying systemic solutions for states as well as local districts and counties.

District Data Overview

The WestEd review team collected and organized various data points from state and district sources in order to develop a RUSD profile, including comparisons to other districts in the areas of special education and student achievement.

Enrollment

The WestEd review team selected California districts of similar size and structure to use as comparison throughout the study. Figure 1 reports the total enrollment and percent of students with disabilities in RUSD compared with districts of comparable size and structure.

Figure 1. Enrollment from Comparison Districts 2013-14

District Name	Total Enrollment	English Learners	Reduced Meals	SWD 0-22	SWD Percentage of Overall enrollment
Carlsbad Unified	10,993	8.3%	17.5%	990	9.0%
Las Virgenes Unified	11,137	5.9%	6.5%	1,324	11.9%
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	13,634	14.3%	23.1%	1,683	12.3%
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	11,700	7.0%	3.1%	1,011	8.6%
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	11,341	8.6%	25.2%	1,287	11.3%
Rocklin Unified	11,611*	4.5%	19.1%	1,239	10.67%

Source: California Department of Education Dataquest 2013-14

**Excludes Rocklin Academy Charter enrollment. The District is the provider of special education services for the Maria Montessori Charter Academy*

It is of note that RUSD is forth-largest district in total enrollment and third in number and percentage of students with disabilities within this group of districts.

WestEd reviewed the academic status for RUSD as compared to districts of similar size and structure across California by reviewing the Academic Performance Index (API) which measures the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures for 2013. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores of the districts, which provide a measure of academic performance on standardized tests, were also compared. The gap between the performance of students with disabilities (SWD) and students without disabilities is reported. As California schools are moving to a new statewide assessment, scores for 2014 were not available.

Figure 2. Select District API Scores 2012-2013

District Name	2013 API*	SWD	Gap
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	865	667	198
Las Virgenes Unified	897	742	155
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	840	677	163
Carlsbad Unified	876	691	185
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	925	765	160
Statewide*	790	616	174
Rocklin Unified	891	733	158

**Source: California Department of Education Dataquest 2012-13*

RUSD ranks right in the middle of this group of comparison districts for API scores for their total population as well as their students with disabilities subgroup.

Figure 3 shows the Adequate Yearly Progress scores for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for the 2012-13 school year for the districts.

Figure 3. Select District AYP Scores 2012-2013

District Name	2013 AYP ELA	SWD	Gap	2013 AYP Math	SWD	Gap
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	76.0%	45.6%	30.4%	72.2%	43.2%	29.0%
Las Virgenes Unified	82.2%	57.5%	24.7%	80.4%	55.3%	25.1%
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	68.7%	39.2%	29.5%	68.2%	43.4%	24.8%
Carlsbad Unified	76.8%	47.1%	29.7%	76.3%	50.1%	26.2%
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	87.5%	64.8%	22.7%	87.8%	62.7%	25.1%
<i>State Target</i>	95.0%	89.0%		95.0%	89.1%	
<i>State Actual</i>	56.5%	34.9%	21.6%	59.5%	37.1%	22.4%
Rocklin Unified	76.6%	52.9%	23.7%	79.2%	52.6%	26.6%

Source: California Department of Education Dataquest 2012-13

Again, RUSD was in the middle of the group of districts for the overall scores for AYP and for students with disabilities (SWD) subgroup. RUSD has one of the smallest gaps between overall scores and the SWD subgroup scores for English Language Arts but is second to the highest in the gap for mathematics. RUSD is above the state target in all areas.

The WestEd review team also reviewed the state and federally mandated Special Education Annual Performance Report (APR) measures for the selected districts. Scores from key indicators are included here. Figure 4 includes the district results for students with disabilities for graduation, dropout, and post secondary goals written into the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Figure 4. Select District Special Education APR Scores 2013

District Name 2012-13	Graduation SWD	Drop Out	% With Post- Secondary Transition Goals
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	83.6%	6.4%	74.7%
Las Virgenes Unified	91.5%	4.2%	99.6%
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	73.6%	13.2%	74.6%
Carlsbad Unified	67.3%	10.9%	85.6%
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	94.7%	0.9%	78.6%
<i>State Target</i>	98.1%	<22.1%	100%
<i>State Actual</i>	61.8%	15.7%	93.5%
Rocklin Unified	81.7%	6.5%	83.1%

Source: California Department of Education CASEMIS Data 2012-13

RUSD ranks fourth of these districts in the graduation and in drop out rate for students with disabilities and third in the percentage of students with post secondary goals identified in their

individual education programs (IEPs). However, RUSD is below the state target for graduation and percent of post-secondary transition goals in their IEPs, and above the state target for the numbers of students with IEPs who drop out. In each case, RUSD's performance is better than the state actual with the exception of the percentage of students with post secondary transition goals written into the IEP.

Figure 5 compares the amount of time students with disabilities participate in the general education environment, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Figure 5. Select District LRE Scores 2013

District Name 2012-13	LRE A. >80%	LRE B. <40%	LRE C. Separate School
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	50.5%	17.5%	4.6%
Las Virgenes Unified	47.0%	11.5%	2.0%
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	59.9%	24.7%	4.2%
Carlsbad Unified	68.5%	10.7%	2.8%
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	56.9%	11.1%	3.4%
<i>State Target</i>	<i>>76%</i>	<i><9%</i>	<i><3.8%</i>
<i>State Actual</i>	<i>49.2%</i>	<i>24.6%</i>	<i>4.4%</i>
Rocklin Unified	59.6%	18%	2.7%

**Source: California Department of Education CASEMIS Data 2012-13*

RUSD is *above* the state targets for students with disabilities in general education classes 80 percent of the time or more (Indicator A) and for Indicator C (Percentage of students educated in a Separate Facility) but is lower than the state target for Indicator B (40% or less time in a self-contained special education class). When compared with the similar districts, RUSD is third for Indicator A (which should be a higher number), fifth for Indicator B (which should be a lower number) and second for Indicator C for the percentage of students who are in separate schools (which should also be a lower number).

Methodology

WestEd implemented a mixed-methods approach to better understand the quality of activities that contribute to higher and more meaningful student outcomes. This approach provided a breadth and depth of data collection procedures (both quantitative and qualitative) and allowed for multi-level analyses. WestEd worked with the district staff to recruit a purposive sample of individuals from the following stakeholder groups from all schools across the district:

- General education teachers
- Special education teachers
- Speech and Language Pathologists
- Psychologists
- Instructional Assistants
- Assistant principals
- Parent focus groups

Classroom observations, IEP reviews, and survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) to determine similarities and differences among respondents and across evaluation areas. Focus group and interview data were independently compiled and analyzed, and summarized in the final report. Focused coding techniques were then used to connect themes when possible, and to delineate potential sub-themes within the broader topics.

Data for this evaluation was collected using the following approaches:

- Structured **classroom observations** focused on the use of evidence-based practices in the classroom.
- Key **interviews** with district administrators, site administrators, special education teachers, and general education teachers, captured a depth of knowledge not highlighted in surveys and document/data analysis.
- A series of staff **focus groups** (including parents, general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants, related service personnel, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, and site administrators) gleaned a variety of perspectives from staff throughout the district.
- A **review** of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) was added to gauge the extent of supports outlined in the IEP.
- Online teacher and parent **surveys** examined practitioner perceptions and beliefs regarding quality of service delivery.
- **Data/document analysis** explored special education growth and compared data to other similar school districts and program staffing and expenses.

Findings

Overall Findings

Identified Areas of Strength

The WestEd review of Rocklin Unified School District (RUSD) identified several areas of improvement which were divided into key theme areas and are described in the Key Findings section. The team also noted areas of strength which include:

1. Positive attitudes toward staff and students:

- Interviews and focus groups revealed an overall positive attitude toward site level special education practices across the district. Classroom observations revealed a very positive climate and included a high level of interaction between adults and students.

2. Strong desire to improve supports and services for students with special needs:

- All respondents indicated a high degree of desire to work to improve the overall program within RUSD. There was very high participation in the study by all stakeholders and there was an overwhelming degree of willingness to support changes across the district.

Key Findings

The WestEd Review team reviewed, analyzed and organized the responses of the interviews, focus groups, classroom observations and IEP reviews into overarching themes. Four common themes emerged from the review and analysis of findings, and are ordered by frequency of finding. A summary of the findings for each theme is presented along with specific quotes from participants when appropriate. The common themes include the need for:

- An overall district **culture and climate** of inclusiveness, ownership and high expectations for all students,
- Updated special education **Policies and Procedures**,
- Improved **Communication** from the Special Education Department, and competent and consistent special education leadership, and
- Specific and aligned **Professional Development** offerings related to serving students with disabilities.

Comments from various stakeholders are offered in the body of the report to emphasize the theme areas.

1. Culture and climate

- Each of the groups who provided input to the review mentioned that there was a high degree of satisfaction with their school but there was also a high degree of mistrust and dissatisfaction with the district office and district office staff. There was also a great deal of variance in how students and parents felt they were treated when moving between sites. Most respondents agreed that there was a basic belief that all staff wanted all students to succeed but ideas and strategies on how to actually improve programs and services varied greatly.
- There was an overall “site-centric” attitude that “we make it work at our site without help from the district.” However, this attitude has led to varied degrees of support and resources from site to site. Some sites have embraced all of their learners in an inclusive culture and provide interventions and supports in a variety of ways, while other sites feel that having separate special education programs and staff are the only way to provide interventions and supports to any struggling learner. Some principals and staff were clear that the students with IEPs were an integral part of their campus and were provided multiple supports, accommodations, and services within the overall school site and within general education classes, while others were clear that there were separate locations and services for students with IEPs. It must be noted that the “site-centric” culture also extends to general education functions such as Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2), the provision of differentiated instruction, 504 Plan ownership, etc. that could negatively impact the provision of special education. Please see Recommendations section for reference to Multi-tiered System of Support.
- Classroom observations provided a snapshot of program offerings across the district and revealed a high level of well-organized and well-run programs both within general education and special education. The observations also revealed a high level of variance in the degree of ownership and supports for students with IEPs and of the special education programs and services from site to site. Accommodations and specialized instruction within general education were not readily apparent or were being provided by the special education staff only, and while classrooms were orderly and well managed, specific behavioral supports or reinforcements were not observed in most classrooms.

Specific responses from Board Members, District Office and Site Administrators include:

- *“We were a fast growing district with new schools opening – lots going on but perhaps we have not paid close attention to special education; we have not made it a priority.”*
- *“The Special Education Director is not part of cabinet, like other Directors and we have had three or four Special Education Directors in a short time; staff turnover is an issue. We need to be able to support the Special Education Director in a better way.”*
- *“There is not much ownership at some of the sites of the Special Education program or students and this is not good. Some administrators think that Special Education is a pain and don’t want to deal with it.”*
- *There is a divide – sites don’t have much respect for the district office Special Education department and staff feels the teachers don’t understand what they have to do; seems like a them and us - Wish it wasn’t.”*
- *“No RtI system and the SST process is different at every site – whatever the principal wants to do; not a lot of interventions in general education.”*

- *“It seems like we need a least restrictive environment (LRE) for students who are less severe; we segregate too much.”*
- *“The Program Specialists used to attend the principal meetings and this was a great way to build relationships and understanding between us. We don’t do that anymore and the relationship has deteriorated.”*

Specific responses from School Psychologists and Related Service staff include:

- *“Overall, special education teachers are caring and engaged and work hard to support students with disabilities. A common sentiment is that the teachers are strong, but lack the support they need to be effective.”*
- *“We have great staff but challenges (lack of support, large class sizes) make them run away.”*
- *Individual teams at the schools are strong (psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP), teachers both general and special education), very committed to the students but frustrated to do the job.”*

Specific responses from General Education Teachers include:

- Overall, a majority of general education teachers who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that general education teachers have high expectations for students on IEPs and welcome them into their classrooms; and teachers also feel that their site administrator is supportive of students with disabilities receiving instruction in general education classrooms.
- The responses in the survey are reflected by the statements made during the focus group meetings, where several teachers asserted strong support for the special education teachers at their site but stated that special education teachers are overwhelmed and under-supported by the district:
- *“Special education teachers are positive; they are trying to do their best with what they have.”*
- *“Special education teachers have not been able to provide the training and support for general education teachers, not for lack of ability, but no time or support to make it happen effectively and consistently.”*
- *“Provide more support of general education teachers in meeting the needs of Special Education students. They place demands on General Education teachers but do not support them in meeting the demands.”*
- *“We need to have a clearly designed co-teaching program that is based off of research. All participants should be trained in co-teaching.”*

Specific responses from Special Education Teachers include:

- Focus group members expressed frustration with district office planning, preparation and communication for establishing and maintaining special education programs at school sites, noting that the district seems to have a business model rather than an educational model. More specifically, it was viewed that programmatic decisions, including those made in IEP meetings were based on cost, not on individualized student need. The lack of stability in district office leadership in special education is seen as an important negative factor. Teachers spoke of little continuity among elementary, middle and high school programs, no opportunity to plan IEP development, goals, and placement for students transitioning to a new school, necessitating amendments and updating goals and objectives throughout the first month of school and beyond. The use of three-hour instructional assistants is repeatedly cited as a serious impediment to communication, training and retention of these critical staff members.

- The culture and climate of a school site has an enormous impact on the success of students with disabilities. While there are examples of inclusive practices in some schools, focus group members spoke of a lack of ownership of students with IEPs by general education staff members and site administrators. Students with disabilities are often considered the responsibility of special educators and the special education is teacher expected to handle all their educational needs.
- *“We are concerned with district leadership. There is no clear vision for the role of special education or the responsibilities of general education staff members concerning students with IEPs. There has been no common message from the district leadership regarding the expectation for all students to be included in all aspects of the general education community.”*
- *“There is an expectation that special education will provide instructional assistants for class work and field trips in general education classes.”*

Specific responses from Speech and Language Specialists include:

- Speech and language therapists also expressed frustration in their relationship with district special education staff citing unprofessional behavior, educational decisions being made outside IEP process, and hostile emails from a district program specialist.
- *“I don’t feel like we are supported to do our job. We are not treated like professionals. This is why we loose staff all the time. We have a bad reputation.”*

Specific responses from Instructional Assistants include:

- Strengths were noted as the dedication of their immediate staff including special education teachers, support personnel and other IAs at their site. It was expressed that teachers are advocates for their students and work hard to support them, often without district-level support or resources. Additionally, the move to align self-contained programs K-6 at one site has been a positive change, however, the communication, planning and resource allocation from the district was challenging.
- *“Most of the teachers are advocates for their students but sometimes not supported by District Office staff. The teachers try to do things to support students above and beyond.”*

Specific responses from Parents include:

- While most parents expressed satisfaction with the culture and climate of their school in terms of inclusiveness for students with disabilities, some shared concerns and the need for change and staff training:
- *“The students are in portables in the back of the school and the schools don’t embrace the students as their own. We feel like step children.”*
- *“They call the funds allocated for special needs encroachment funds – it makes it sound like our children are encroaching on them, our children are students and should not be viewed as the drain on the budget. These are in documents on the website and it makes it sound like us against them.”*
- *“Why is there only inclusion available at one site in the district and you have to fight to get into it?”*

Specific responses from Students include:

- Students indicated that they were often bullied and teased about being in special education classes.
- *“I struggle to find friends to hang out with. There is bullying and teasing. School is too clicky; and they belief that because you’re in special education you’re stupid and can get away with not working as much.”*

- *“I feel supported at our high school but I was bullied and teased all through elementary school. I felt like I didn’t want to go to school at all. I wish I could share with the younger students now that it gets better. Your disability doesn’t define you, you define your disability”*

2. Policies and procedures

- There was agreement among all of the respondents that there was a lack of overall policies and procedures in place to ensure consistency of the availability of special education supports and services that lead to efficient, effective and sustainable practices at school and classroom levels across the district. While there was some evidence of written policies and procedural manuals in existence, there is a lack of knowledge, understanding and use of these. Decisions seem too often to be made in a reactive rather than a proactive manner and are not consistently applied across the district. This is true for staffing decisions, program locations, program placements, staff expectations and decision-making authority. Site staff frequently indicated that they were able to work out services and issues when it was just their site team at the IEP meeting, but that these were more difficult when the district office staff participated. Respondents frequently cited that parents who complained or had an advocate were provided services that were not available to others. There was no clear, consistent direction or approach or decision-making process for how services were provided. As noted previously, written and aligned policies and procedures were not broadly evident (district-wide) concerning RTI2 which affects referrals for special education support and may negatively impact the provision of special education supports and resources.
- The same concern was expressed in relation to staffing decisions. Respondents felt it was not clear that staffing assignments and allocation of hours were made with program or student needs in mind, but rather in a cost-cutting mode. The inability to find and retain quality staff was often mentioned as an outcome of the lack of guidelines for staffing decisions, support for staff, low pay and poor communication.

Specific responses from Board Members, District Office and Site Administrators include:

- *“We don’t have institutionalized process and protocols; may be due to the growth but having the process in place is necessary now while the district is larger.”*
- *“Took back a number of students from the COE and PCOE and didn’t go through processes and communication; 3 hour instructional assistant positions are not the best for staff or students.”*
- *“The processes are antiquated and the systems are not efficient – need to have systems and processes in place.”*
- *“There needs to be a clear role of the Program Specialists and a chain of command for decisions; district office special education administration and personnel need to meet with principals and improve communication.”*
- *“We need a systemic process – consistency across the district for interventions, and access to Special Education - using data to support decisions. Across the district there are a lot of interventions in place but different at each site; there is not district-plan for how this plays out across the district”*
- *Invest in the instructional aides - three-hour schedules won’t retain them in the district; six-hour schedules would be better so they can be trained.”*

Specific responses from School Psychologists and Related Service staff include:

- Lack of reliable and consistent support from the district is a repeated concern. School psychologists state that they have their findings and placement recommendations challenged in IEP meetings in front of teachers and parents, and that Program Specialists do not have the level of legal knowledge required to do the job effectively.
- *“Program specialists are not knowledgeable and don’t check in to brainstorm options. We are educating her and not getting support. I get all my support from the principal.”*
- *“Sometimes we are asked to “soften” evaluation results so parents do not get offended.”*
- Along with a lack of support from the district is the lack of clear and consistent policies and procedures and a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- Participants in the focus group for school psychologist asserted that the program specialists undermine the role of the psychologist and that placement decisions are made based on program availability, and that psychologist recommendations are not taken into consideration regarding placement and movement and support.

Specific responses from General Education Teachers include:

- Several statements were made in regards to the lack of collaboration between general education and special education teachers; there were many statements regarding the lack of collaboration time:
- *“Collaboration time within the contract day varies by site...there is a lack of time, lack of support and consistent expectation make it challenging for general and special education teachers and staff to collaborate effectively.”*
- Some of the strongest statements made by teachers during the focus groups were in regards to the policies and procedures as well as communication; teachers expressed concern about how difficult it is to get students the support and services they need:
- *“Some students do not get the help they need.”*
- *“SST, but there are not enough additional supports to help the student. Sometimes we are told to wait until next year before asking for intervention.”*
- *“Psychs may have too many students to test and SST may hold the referral.”*

Specific responses from Special Education Teachers include:

- Focus group members expressed frustration with district office planning, preparation and communication for establishing and maintaining special education programs at school sites, with no established policies and practices to support educational decisions, no procedures manual and a history of oral policies versus well-considered procedures. The lack of stability in district office leadership in special education is seen as an important factor. Teachers spoke of little continuity among elementary, middle and high school programs, no opportunity to plan IEP development, goals, and placement for students moving to a new school, necessitating amendments and updating goals and objectives throughout the first month of school and beyond. The use of three-hour instructional assistants is repeatedly cited as a serious impediment to communication, training and retention of these critical staff members.

Specific responses from Speech and Language Specialists (SLPs) include:

- In terms of policies and procedures, SLPs expressed concerns regarding how caseload decisions are made; *(SLP shortages) has been a long-time issue for SLPs. Caseloads seem to be overloaded and consideration is not given to the intensity of need, rather to where the SLP is located*; how district policies and practices impact speech and language therapist recruitment and retention *(Expectations for these contracted employees are different than for district employees i.e. reports, working outside hours)*; and special

education policies and procedures that are outdated, poorly understood, and inconsistently implemented. (*Lack of leadership in district; on 4th special education director in 5 years; outdated procedures manual-not updated or accurate*).

Specific responses from Instructional Assistants include:

- Although the district has not made a formal policy to move to three hour IAs, adjustments to date have been problematic on many levels. First, IA turnover has been increasing due to the fact that they are all looking for full time work and benefits, thus they leave at the first opportunity. This makes it difficult to retain staff, effectively train IAs to be a true support to students, fragments supports on a daily basis. This also limits opportunities for collaboration with each other and the teachers to which they are assigned. They are unable to obtain relevant information on goals, instructional strategies and upcoming lesson plans, therefore ineffective.
- *“We are the ones who support students in classes and yet there is no time to talk with the teachers –either the case manager or the general ed teacher. We feel like we should be included in the trainings as well as we have to carry out many of the strategies.”*

Specific responses from Parents include:

- The comments in the survey are more representative of the focus group responses where the majority of the participants expressed concerns about the lack of clear, consistent policy and procedures related to programs and staffing, and poor communication with district office special education staff, as expressed by one parent:
- *“When it comes to teachers and staff they are excellent when it comes to playing a part in my child's education. District is a different story. The District's constant personnel changes only hinders the overall continuity of the IEP meeting(s) which sets children and teacher /staff up for failure.”*
- This lack of clear policy and procedure related to program and staffing, and poor communication, has led some parents to seek counsel and initiate litigation to secure the services they think their child needs.
- *“Unless we have an advocate we won't get the services we need. Taking cases to due process will force the district to make changes. We are getting together through social media – to meet others who also have issues.”*

3. Professional Development

- There was a high degree of agreement from respondents concerning the lack of knowledge and ability of staff on ways to support the diverse needs of learners with disabilities as well as all learners who struggle. There was also agreement that there was lack of training for general education staff on anything related to special education and that there had been little mention of accommodations, modifications or ways to support diverse learners during the trainings for implementation of Common Core State Standards.
- Special education staff and parents cited a lack of professional development for special education staff on innovations or evidenced-based practices for students with disabilities in general or on any specific strategies for the various types of disabilities.

Specific responses from Board Members, District Office and Site Administrators include:

- *“Staff needs to understand more about special education and that it is not a place for all students who have needs to go.”*
- *“There is a lack of training for general education teachers, Instructional Assistants, and Principals, they need content training about what we need to do to help students academically and behaviorally; also need training around tolerance for all staff including toward parents who have children with disabilities.”*
- *“We could provide teachers better ways to support all students as part of the overall training of the district.”*
- *“Special education staff did not participate in the district professional development with the rest of the staff and felt left out.”*
- *“For the students with autism, new to the campus this year, about 25% of the staff are positive, seeing those students as ours and intent on making it work, but approximately 75% have concerns regarding their ability to effectively work with them and feel ill-prepared.”*
- *“Train Principals on Rti Intervention programs, and train aides and teachers on good practices; offer school wide awareness of students with disabilities and end the “Separation - those are not our students.”*

Specific responses from General Education Teachers include:

- While a high percentage of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities were receiving instruction aligned with Common Core State Standards and were receiving the support they need to be successful, the number one area identified as needed for professional development is on providing accommodations and/or modifications and the second highest area identified as a need is Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems, with Supporting Students in Inclusive Settings as the third area of need.
- 53% of teachers who responded to the survey disagree or strongly disagree that there are sufficient opportunities for general education teachers to learn how to address the instructional needs of students with disabilities, and 46% disagree or strongly disagree that they get support to address the needs of students who are struggling in their classroom.
- Teachers expressed that general education teachers are unaware of how to make accommodations or to work with students with disabilities and that there has been no training provided. In addition, the lack of general education intervention options at many sites may drive referrals for special education assessment.
- They stated the need for training in serving students with diverse needs with both general and special education staff involved.

Specific responses from Instructional Assistants (IAs) include:

- Instructional Assistants are also concerned about the lack of training. There is no induction of new IAs at the district level to orient them to their new position. There are little to no opportunities for professional growth through ongoing district training to improve job performance. Training for IAs is “on the fly.” A number of IAs agreed that they were provided a job description upon hire, but nothing beyond.
- *“We used to have good training programs but not for years. We were being told we had to do behavior support. We have not had any other support to train us to properly support students when they are being changed or medical issues”*

Specific responses from Parents include:

- *“Why is staff not trained on the new technologies? I have to look it up myself and train my teacher. Seems like they should be the ones to have this knowledge.”*

4. Communication

- Communication was an area of concern that was frequently cited by all respondents. Many respondents expressed concern related to a lack of response by the district office staff to emails, phone calls and requests. District office staff indicated that there was not enough time to do their work and to respond to all of the emails and calls. Concerns were also expressed by parents related to lack of communication about what was happening with their specific child. Many of the parents indicated that they just wanted to be kept in the loop of what was happening with their child and wanted to know what they could do at home to support their child.
- There were also concerns from parents and staff concerning lack of two-way communication about the program direction and the district overall. Parents indicated a desire to have ongoing forums for discussion and two-way communication regarding program direction, parent concerns and discussion between parents and staff on current practices. Staff indicated that there was a need for more ways to be able to discuss needs, issues and trends and not just read these in emails that have been forwarded by the district office staff.

Specific responses from Board Members, District Office and Site Administrators include:

- *Any due process has been about communication issues, which could have been averted; communication is the most fundamental issue.*
- *Issues and phone calls are related to communication, i.e., lack of communication with families and within the department*
- *Build some relationships with parents. Program Specialists communication is not strong with parents and we need to establish better communication patterns*

Specific responses from School Psychologists and Related Service staff include:

- Communication between school psychologists and program specialists are also a concern.
- In response to the question “How effective is the communication between the district office and sites as it relates to supporting students with disabilities?” the answer is “Terrible.”
- *“Program Specialists don’t respond to emails and questions and appear to have shallow knowledge of special ed law; special ed leadership does not listen and/or does not respond to proposals/concerns.”*

Specific responses from Special Education Teachers include:

- Focus group members expressed frustration with district office planning, preparation and communication for establishing and maintaining special education programs at school sites.
- The use of three-hour instructional assistants is repeatedly cited as a serious impediment to communication of these critical staff members.
- In terms of special education leadership, there is a great deal of frustration with the communication between teaching and related services staff with program specialists and the director of special education. Focus group members report little or no support from the

department with mixed messages, delayed or no response to questions, decisions made outside the IEP meeting or in spite of professional judgment and fiscal decisions overriding decisions based on student need.

Specific responses from Speech and Language Specialists (SLPs) include:

Additionally, communication between therapists and program specialists was poor. Most often cited was and inconsistent and untimely communication.

- Not answering emails
- Not knowing the answer to questions from SLPs
- Very different answers from different district support staff.

Specific responses from Instructional Assistants include:

- An area of concern addressed by all IAs attending the focus group was a lack of communication from the Special Education Department at the district-level. This lack of communication promotes a misunderstanding and lack of clarity of their job roles and responsibilities. During the discussion, they were unable to come to agreement on the delineation of duties and pay differential between a “1”, a “2” and a “3” classification. Similarly, they were unable to define the IAs that receives substitutes and those that don’t. This raised concerns that teachers and IAs remaining at the site were unsupported and possibly IAs were left alone with students creating legal compliance issues. There is a lack of process from site to site in obtaining IA substitute support. Many of the IAs were unable to obtain email accounts as a result of being three-hour IAs. Even so, IAs with email accounts received very little information specific to their work or notifications of professional development opportunities.
- *“When we were moved to a new site with the reorganization we were not told about any of it. We don’t hear about things on our own campus. My teacher forwards information to me.”*

Program Management and Staffing

As with most programs and supports that are part of K-12 education, personnel comprise the vast majority of program expenses. Routine review of staffing levels, assignments, and effectiveness is an important part of ensuring that special education services are cost effective and of high quality. For this portion of the review, we focused attention on organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, staffing levels, and program policies and procedures.

Management and Related Clerical Support

The Special Education Department has one Administrator plus three Program Specialists with supervision responsibilities for the areas of Services/Speech and Language, Pre-school, Occupational Therapy, Adaptive Physical Education and Workability, one Health Service Supervisor and a Workability Coordinator. There are also two classified positions that support the central office, including one Administrative Assistant I and one Administrative Assistant II.

The Special Education Department organization structure is similar to those of the comparison districts; however several of the comparison districts have an Assistant Director position to support the special education program. Furthermore, while the level of district office classified support is comparable to that of other districts, several districts have a data or fiscal analyst to support program financial and staffing analysis and monitoring. Based on the complexity of the District's special education program, including recent policy changes regarding the realignment of classroom locations and program take backs targeted leadership focus, it would be helpful to ensure policies are truly translated into practice.

Program Specialist and Other Program Coordinators

RUSD currently has three Program Specialists and there is wide variation throughout the state with regard to the level of Program Specialist staffing, in part, because the role of the program specialist varies. As shown in Figure 6, the District's staffing for Program Specialist level is higher than the county's, i.e., the District's staffing for Program Specialist is richer than the countywide level (not counting others that provide support, but are not designated as program specialist), RUSD's staffing level is third highest staffing level amongst the comparison districts but below the statewide staffing level.

Given the current structure of work, Program Specialists are fully engaged and requiring more duties than would be practical. They are expected to provide direct supervision of certain staff, provide training and support to sites and principals, lead challenging IEPs, deal with parent concerns as well as provide the linkage between the district office and the sites. A consideration that should be made when reviewing the workload of Program Specialist is the role of the site administrator who might be able to assume some of these duties.

Figure 6. Program Specialist Support

District Name	Pupils per Program Specialist ¹
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	2,835
Las Virgenes Unified	3,712
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	4,545
Carlsbad Unified	5,497
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	5,850
Placer County*	4,384
Statewide*	2,983
Rocklin Unified	3,870

Dataquest counts number of staff assigned to each assignment code therefore, one person may be assigned to more than one assignment which may affect the accuracy of the data shown for the statewide and county calculation

Source: *Dataquest Pupil Services Staff by Type 2013-14, publically available staff lists/organization charts, District provided data

Pupil Services

RUSD's staffing level for Psychologist is higher than two of the comparison districts as shown in Table 7. RUSD has approximately one Psychologist per 1,019 pupils. By comparison, districts statewide have approximately one Psychologist per 1,265 pupils statewide and 948 countywide.

Figure 7. Psychologists Support

District Name	Pupils per Psychologist
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	900
Carlsbad Unified	999
Las Virgenes Unified	1,012
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	1,049
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	1,392
Placer County	948
Statewide	1,265
Rocklin Unified 2013-14	1,019

Dataquest counts number of staff assigned to each assignment code therefore, one person may be assigned to more than one assignment which may affect the accuracy of the data shown for the statewide and county calculation

Data does not include outside contractors or vacant positions

Source: Dataquest Pupil Services Staff by Type, 2013-14, District data

If RUSD were staffed closer to the statewide level, it would have approximately 2 FTE fewer psychologists.

Similarly, RUSD's Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) staffing levels are above state, county and the majority of the comparison district levels. As shown in Figure 8, RUSD averages one SLP per 764 pupils, compared to the statewide average of one SLP per 1,214 pupils. Keeping in mind the statewide statutory requirement of 55 pupils per SLP for K-12 and 40 per SLP for preschool, RUSD should review its SPL staffing ratios to ensure it is staffing at or near the statewide caseload

¹The Program Specialist counts include staff assigned to charter schools

targets. Additionally, the District has .48 FTE of classified Speech and Language Pathology Assistant support not reflected in the comparison ratios.

Figure 8: Pupil Services Support-Speech and Language Pathologists 2013-14

District Name	Pupils per Speech and Language Pathologist
Palos Verdes Unified	557
Carlsbad Unified	733
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	909
Las Virgenes Unified	1,114
Santa Monica Malibu Unified	2,835
Placer County	899
Statewide	1,214
Rocklin Unified 2011-12	764

Dataquest counts number of staff assigned to each assignment code therefore, one person may be assigned to more than one assignment which may affect the accuracy of the data shown for the statewide and county calculation

Does not include outside contractors or vacant positions

Source: Dataquest Pupil Services Staff by Type, 2013-14, District data

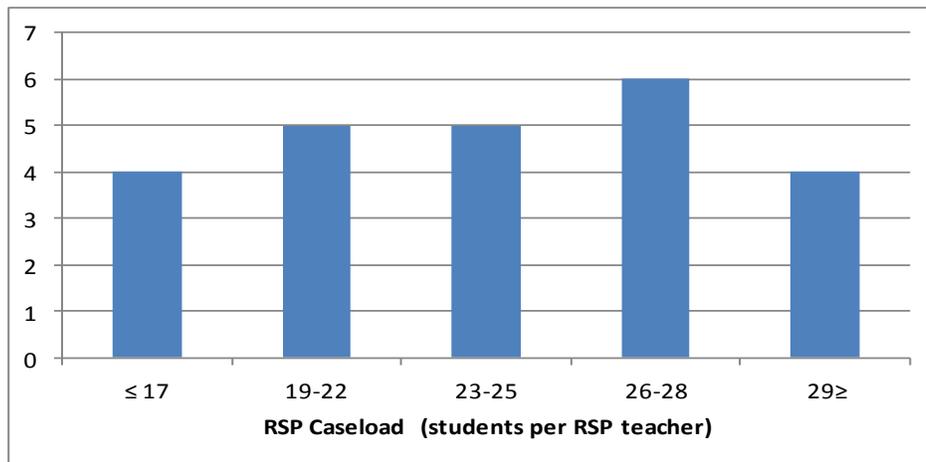
One possible factor that may explain the staffing level of SLP is that RUSD has experienced a drop in pupils with a primary disability of Speech and Language Impairment (see Figure 8) during the past five years. As fewer pupils require services, adjustments in staffing should be made to ensure that the program is operating optimally. RUSD is currently utilizing outside contractors to provide speech and language services and if RUSD were to staff more closely to the statewide requirement of not more than 55 pupils per SLP, it might be able reduce its reliance on contracted services by as much as 1.3 FTE. Contracted services are more costly when compared to a district’s total employee compensation. Furthermore, there is more local control over the employee evaluation process and work assignments.

Teachers

Based on a review of the Resource Specialist Program (RSP) and self-contained staffing levels, we found that RSP caseload levels are slightly lower than expected and that K-12 self-contained caseloads are near expected averages. State statutory requirements are that Resource Specialists have no more than 28 students.

As shown in Figure 9, nearly 60% of RUSD’s RSP teachers have caseloads of 25 or less pupils. For 2014-15, the average RSP caseload is approximately 27.8 pupils, but this range varies by grade span. The average elementary caseload is 28.7 pupils per RSP teacher, the middle school caseload average is 29.7 pupils per RSP and the high school average caseload is 24.5 pupils per RSP. It is common to find that RSP teachers with low caseloads maintain average workloads because of assistance provided to general education. In such instances, while the teacher may be identified as RSP, it makes programmatic and financial sense to fund this time from non-special education resources.

Figure 9: 2014-15 Caseloads of RSP Teachers



Source: District provided data, December 2014

Instructional Assistants

Virtually every interview mentioned concerns about the continued increase in the numbers of instructional assistants. RUSD has policies in place to support effective and efficient assignment and supervision of instructional assistants as well as guidelines that provide some general guidance to IEP teams as they consider recommending the assistance of an instructional aide for a student. Based on interviews, review of district data, and recent IEPs, it seems like these policies are not enacted or enforced.

Figure 10: Instructional Assistant Staffing Guide by Type

Class Type	Instructional Assistant Staffing
Resource Specialist Program	6 hours/ 1FTE- RSP Teacher
Special Day Class-non severe	6 hours/classroom (can be two 3 hour positions)
Special Day Class- severe	12 hours/classroom (one 6 hour position and two 3 hour positions)

Source: District-Provided Data

RUSD’s instructional assistant staffing guideline, as shown in Figure 10 includes instructional assistant support for every RSP classroom, which exceeds the minimum legal requirement that states that, “at least 80% of the resource specialists within a local plan shall be provided with an instructional aide.”² RUSD utilizes 3 hour/day instructional assistant positions to staff many of its classrooms. Our review notes that more than 33% of all instructional assistant positions are 3 hours or less per day. This staffing practice provides a level of cost management for health benefits and pension costs for RUSD but has a downside, which is a high level of employee turnover. Too much employee turnover can be costly, in both real costs, e.g., costs associated with hiring and training as well as loss of program continuity and productivity.

² Education Code Section 56362(f)

Figure 11: Instructional Assistant Assignments 2014-15

Type Classroom Assignment	# of FTE
RSP	14.9
SDC-non-severe	13.3
SDC-severe	28.5
1:1	20.3

Source: District provided data

Figure 11 reflects that there are approximately 77 FTE instructional assistants working in classroom assignments. Overall, the level of instructional assistant support is high when compared to general staffing guidelines. For instance, if RSP classroom instructional assistants were staffed closer to the minimum legal requirement there would be approximately 3.4 FTE fewer RSP instructional assistants. Staffing levels are due in part due to the type of programs that RUSD supports. Aide-intensive programs include classrooms for pre-school and severe needs pupils. Arguably, the alternative to these programs may be higher-cost private placements or contracted services; therefore, on the whole, while the observed staffing levels add to the costs for services, the costs may be even higher when provided by others.

However, a culture has developed that tends to equate program quality with quantity of staff and services. Based on observations and interviews, it appears possible to operate high quality and effective programs that are less reliant on instructional aide support, but doing so requires a change in mindset as to what constitutes a quality program. Making such a shift requires significant understanding and buy-in by a wide spectrum of stakeholders including teachers, parents, and administrators.

Therapist and Specialist

A general guideline for caseloads for Occupational Therapist (OT) and Physical Therapist (PT) is 20 to 35 pupils per therapist. The District's caseload for OTs is higher than expected with average caseloads of 57 pupils/OT. The District should be monitoring the caseloads of OTs to ensure that they are not yielding to parent or teacher requests for additional services.

RUSD currently uses outside contractors to provide (PT) services and the average caseload is 26.5 pupils/PT. While providing PT services are necessary based on the requirements written into IEPs, contracting with non-public agencies might not be the most efficient means of providing services to students. Generally, contracted services are more costly when compared to a district's total employee compensation. Furthermore, there is more local control over the employee evaluation process and work assignments.

When considering the caseloads for Adaptive Physical Education (APE), a general guideline for caseloads is 45 to 55 pupils. The District's has 1 FTE of ADE and the caseload is 93 pupils/APE, which far exceeds recommended guidelines.

Program Management and Staffing Findings and Recommendations

- While RUSD's Special Education Program is organized in a similar fashion to the comparison districts there has been a significant amount of employee turnover in key positions such as Department Director and Program Specialist. This presents a challenge for new employees to become familiar with RUSD's culture and climate and a challenge for existing employees to develop relationships and trust with new leadership.

- We found that there are staffing levels at several position types that could be reduced or funded from non-special education resources, provided that program models are modified to accommodate reassignments and/or restructuring that allows for maintaining program quality. The following are specific positions that should be considered:
 - Psychologist – Psychologist caseload varies with some reporting a portion of their time spent supporting general education behavior, serving as elementary site 504 Coordinator, and other counseling needs. If RUSD were staffed more comparably to other districts and the countywide average, it would have approximately two fewer Psychologists. There are many strategies that can be used to achieve this reduction in force, including allowing phasing in this reduction through attrition or identifying alternative ways to fund the non-special education duties of Psychologist.
 - Speech and Language Specialist – RUSD is well above comparable district staffing levels for Speech and Language Specialist. This level of staffing may exist because staffing levels have yet to align to reduced identified rates. RUSD should closely review staffing assignments and consider reductions of up to 1.3 contracted positions over time.
 - Instructional Aides – RUSD’s staffing of instructional assistants continues to increase. RUSD has approximately one instructional assistant FTE for every 16 students with disabilities, with over 77 FTE of instructional assistants, 26% of which are assigned to individual students. This level of support includes all RSP and self-contained classrooms. Given the proportion of students served in RSP and minimum staffing level requirements, a more reasonable level would be one aide per 18 students. If this were the case, RUSD would reduce the level of aides by approximately 10% or 8 FTE. As with all the reductions identified within this recommendation area, achieving this type of reduction requires rethinking the current approach to program services.

Fiscal Review

RUSD, like virtually every other district in California, has a significant gap between special education income and expenditures. Of the over \$15.1 million budgeted to support the program in 2014-15, approximately \$7.8 million, or nearly 52% of the program costs, were paid from state and federal funding for this purpose. The remaining \$7.3 million was paid from local revenue sources also referred to as local contribution and carryover balances. A large portion of this gap is due to the underfunding of special education, especially by the federal government. Other factors that have contributed to this imbalance include:

Increases in salary, benefits, staffing ratios, and other personnel costs at a rate exceeding revenue growth

Growth rate of Students with Disabilities (SWD) is higher than the overall enrollment growth rate

Growth in the number of higher-cost, low-incidence disabilities, such as autism

The relatively high cost for and reliance on contracted services

Unlike other programs, the state distributes funding for special education programs to Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) rather than directly to school district, The SELPAs are generally regional consortia of school districts and/or county offices of education (COEs). Each SELPA is responsible for ensuring that within its local area state and federal requirements for special education are met.

Each SELPA has a local plan specifying how the above requirements are met, how the SELPA is organized and managed, and how funding is used to support the local plan. The state allocates the vast majority of funding for special education services based on the number of students in attendance at the member districts of each SELPA, as to avoid creating incentives that could lead to over identification of SWDs. Each SELPA has an allocation formula for distributing the funding received for the special education-related needs of the SELPA. The District is part of the Placer County SELPA, along with 14 districts, three charter schools and the county.

Revenue

As noted earlier, the state distributes most revenue for special education based on average daily attendance (ADA). From the mid-1990s to the 2013-14, RUSD added over 5,800 students. Typically, there are revenue increases associated with enrollment growth, however some of the RUSD's enrollment growth coincided with the economic crisis. Cuts in state funding for general education more than likely offset any revenue increases due to enrollment growth and resulted in challenging fiscal decisions.

Figure 12 shows the breakdown of revenues by type from 2011-12 to 2014-15. In 2014-15, RUSD estimates it will receive approximately \$7.8 million in special education related income, of which 23% is from state sources, 26% coming from federal sources and the remaining 51% is from local sources.³

³ Through the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), Congress expressed intent to provide funding up to 40% of the national average expenditure per student for each SWD, which in California is approximately 40% of the overall cost of special education. According to the

While there appears to be a significant decrease in the amount of state funding in 2013-14, the majority of the change is attributed to how revenue is recorded and transferred due to the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). LCFF has impacted how districts in California receive funding, i.e., most state categorical programs were eliminated and the majority of state funds are unrestricted. Moreover, there are associated changes in how districts record revenue i.e., transfers of revenue limit sources to applicable restricted resources such as special education have been eliminated because revenue limit funds have been replaced by LCFF funds.

Prior to LCFF, each fiscal year RUSD transferred a portion of its revenue limit funds based on the ADA generated by SWD to the Special Education Program. The revenue limit transfer was nearly \$1.5 million in 2011-12 and 2012-13. Subsequent to the implementation of LCFF, RUSD no longer makes the revenue limit transfer rather; it has backfilled the revenue limit transfer with a local contribution to the Special Education Program.

Figure 12: Special Education Revenue 2011-12 through 2014-15 estimated

Special Education Revenue	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 est.
Federal Sources	\$1,894,647	\$1,826,194	\$1,939,390	\$1,998,362
State Sources	\$3,649,507	\$3,197,855	\$1,944,977	\$1,804,474
Local Sources	\$3,132,139	\$3,812,708	\$3,646,512	\$4,030,419
Other Financing Sources	\$554			
Total Special Education Revenue	\$8,676,847	\$8,836,757	\$7,530,879	\$7,833,255

Source: District provided data, Special Education Revenue 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 estimated

RUSD supplements revenues, shown in Figure 13, with local contributions to fully fund special education program. While this “gap” has grown significantly since 2011-12 it is important to note (see paragraph above) that part of the increase, nearly \$1.5 million is due to accounting methodologies associated with the shift to the LCFF. However, when compared without the increase due to the implementation of LCFF, the local contribution has increased 89%, which suggests a growing imbalance between program revenue and expenses. A significant portion of the increase is attributable to increased costs for staff compensation (salary and benefits), special education contracted services and the build out of RUSD’s Mental Health Services. As shown in Figure 13, RUSD estimates it will contribute \$6.9 million for this purpose in 2014-15.

Figure 13: Local Contributions 2011-12 through 2014-15 estimated

Contributions	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 est.
Special Education Program	\$2,869,004	\$4,011,589	\$6,522,139	\$6,949,302
Special Education Transportation	\$12,122	\$25,360	\$10,150	\$20,000
Total Contributions	\$2,881,126	\$4,036,949	\$6,532,289	\$6,969,302

Source: District provided data, Special Education Expenses 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15

Third Party Billings

RUSD also generates revenue from third-party agencies for health-related services provided to SWD. This type of reimbursement is referred to as Medi-Cal and School-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (SMAA) reimbursement.

Legislative Analyst Office, approximately \$2 billion, or over \$3,000 in additional funding per SWD, would be required to reach this target.

RUSD currently works with the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools of Schools, Region 3 Local Educational Consortium for its Medi-Cal billing and SMAA billing. As shown in Figure 14, revenues from Medi-Cal reimbursements have increased with the exception of 2012-13. While RUSD participates and invoices for the SMAA program the revenue from claims has been deferred and because of the unstable nature of the SMAA funding RUSD does not budget for SMAA revenue until the reimbursement checks have been received.

Figure 14: Third Party Billing 2011-12 through 2014-15 estimated

Type Of Reimbursement	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 est.
MAA	\$-	\$-	Pending	Pending
Medi-Cal	\$38,172	\$ 0	\$76,932	\$95,142

Source: District provided data 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 estimated

The revenue generated by the reimbursement programs is used to supplement RUSD provided services and programs. RUSD’s Medi-Cal Collaborative Committee meets to determine how to allocate 67% of the Medi-Cal income received by RUSD. While not in play at this time due to the deferral of funds RUSD has a plan in place for distributing SMAA revenue which includes distributing 50% of the MAA revenue to sites based on the number of time survey participants at each site and the Special Education Program is allocated 25% of the of MAA revenue. Reimbursement programs, like MAA and Medi-Cal, depend on employees taking the time to file claims. RUSD and its employees are commended for their continued efforts in generating revenue that contributes to the overall support of RUSD’s programs.

Program Expenses

Spending to provide special education services is budgeted at approximately \$15.1 million in 2014-15, an increase of more than 33% since 2011-12. During this period of time, AB 114 required a shift in how local education agencies provide mental health services for SWD. Districts are now responsible for ensuring that SWD, as designated by their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) receive mental health services and as such, districts now receive revenue to offset the cost of these services. This shift has contributed in part to the overall expenditure growth of the Special Education Program. Figure 15 provides a breakdown of program expenses by type over time.

As is the case with most programs operated within a school district, compensation for staff (salary and benefits) accounts for the vast majority of expenses. Approximately 74% of the budgeted program expense for 2014-15 is related to staff compensation (i.e., salary and benefits). When considering the growth in the cost of staff compensation it important to note that there are costs that increase on the natural each year for staff compensation, e.g., annual increases for salary costs due to step/column and collective bargaining agreements. Therefore, it is not unexpected that staff compensation expenditures for 2014-15 are budgeted at a higher level than the prior year. However, our review noted that the increase in expenditures for staff compensation year over year is higher than expected when considering costs related to annual compensation increases. Factors that have likely contributed to the increased costs are; RUSD is growing and the current growth rate of SWD is higher than the overall enrollment growth rate, additional staffing resources needed to accommodate students returning to RUSD from County program, building out the mental health program, local policies and practices related to program services.

Based on the amount budgeted, services and other operating services account for the next largest expense area. While this represents an average reliance on outside providers to deliver program services, there has been an increase in budgeted expenditures of 116% since 2011-12. Significant areas of expenditure growth include contracted educational services, legal services and services

from non-public agencies/schools. Our review noted that planned use of Mental Health Service Program carryover funds in 2014-15 accounts for approximately \$113,000 or 25% of the increase when comparing 2013-14 to 2014-15.

The amount budgeted for other outgo (special education services provided by the County) has been reduced by nearly 36% between 2013-14 and 2014-15. The reduction is due to a decrease in the number of students receiving services in County program. The estimated decrease in cost is offset in part by the increased cost of compensation related to additional staff to service students in RUSD provided programs and contracting with outside services as noted above.

The indirect cost is an important factor in accurate program cost accounting and serves the purpose of recovering costs of general management that are agency-wide, e.g., payroll, human resources and purchasing. Our review noted that the amount budgeted for indirect cost in 2014-15 has increased by more than 62% when compared to 2013-14 expenditures. Two factors have contributed to the increase; 1) RUSD's approved indirect cost rate has increased from 5.4% in 2013-14 to 7.57% in 2014-15 2) the 2014-15 overall Special Education Program costs increased.

Figure 15: Special Education Program Expense by Type from 2011-12 through 2014-15

Type of Expense	2011-12	% Of Expense	2012-13	% Of Expense	2013-14	% Of Expense	2014-15 Est.	% Of Expense
Certificated Staff	\$4,591,727	40.5%	\$5,209,659	42.2%	\$5,820,934	41.8%	\$6,149,092	40.6%
Classified Staff	\$2,099,182	18.5%	\$2,260,160	18.3%	\$2,505,037	18.0%	\$2,880,322	19.0%
Benefits	\$1,634,492	14.4%	\$1,774,635	14.4%	\$1,980,442	14.2%	\$2,181,625	14.4%
Books and Supplies	\$42,361	0.4%	\$79,387	0.6%	\$82,096	0.6%	\$245,411	1.6%
Services/Other Operating	\$647,150	5.7%	\$688,524	5.6%	\$877,861	6.3%	\$1,399,168	9.2%
Capital Equipment	\$0		\$0		\$4,011		\$0	
Special Education Trans	\$12,122	0.1%	\$25,360	0.2%	\$10,150	0.1%	\$20,000	0.1%
Other Outgo	\$1,884,931	16.6%	\$1,853,261	15.0%	\$2,067,697	14.8%	\$1,323,998	8.7%
Indirect Cost	\$432,555	3.8%	\$456,312	3.7%	\$582,664	4.2%	\$945,118	6.2%
Total Expenditures	\$11,344,520	100%	\$12,347,298	100.0%	\$13,930,892	100.0%	\$15,144,734	100.0%

Source: District provided data, Special Education Program Expense for 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014

The 2014-15 budget estimate amount for "books and supplies" for 2014-15 is nearly 200% higher than the prior year. While this appears to be a significant increase, approximately \$85,000 or more than 50% of this budgeted amount is from prior year carryover of Medi-Cal Program and the Mental Health Service Programs. When using carryover funds, careful consideration needs to be given to actions and services to ensure sustainability of program, as this type of funding is one-time in nature.

While it can certainly seem that the Special Education Program is an unusually high program expense of RUSD, this is the case for virtually every district. Therefore, the real question is whether or not RUSD's spending on special education is proportional to other districts. As shown in Figure 16, special education expenditures accounted for 16.3% of RUSD's overall spending, below the average proportion of spending experienced by comparable districts.

Figure 16: Percentage of Program Expenditures by Type and Goal 2012-13

% Of Total Expenditures by Type/Goal 2012-13				
District	Regular Education K-12	Special Education	Other, General Education, K-12	Supplemental Education, K-12
Rocklin Unified	77.6%	16.3%	1.5%	0.8%
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	74.2%	21.9%	1.8%	0.2%
Carlsbad Unified	69.7%	25.8%	1.2%	2.2%
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified	69.3%	25.1%	2.5%	0.6%
Las Virgenes Unified	70.6%	26.0%	0.9%	
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	68.6%	27.6%	0.8%	0.1%

Source: Ed-Data website, General Fund and Charter School costs by Program reported by goal 2012-13 (most current year of state data available)

A number of factors can contribute to differences in special education expenses such as, program models that affect staffing decisions; policies and procedures that affect program offerings; and the culture of RUSD with regard to general education intervention and relationship to special education. In subsequent sections, this report explores such factors.

One factor that was noted during the review was that all districts in the comparison group with the exception of RUSD receive funding for transportation for severely disabled and orthopedically impaired pupils. RUSD provides transportation services for SWD as included in their IEPs, but the cost of the services are included within RUSD's home-to-school transportation costs. This is likely a primary reason RUSD's % of total expenditures is lower than the comparison group.

Non-Public Schools

RUSD supplements its special education with services with non-public schools and agencies (NPS/A). Most students placed at an NPS are receiving support for autism or emotional disturbance. Based on RUSD provided reports, RUSD had 13 students receiving services from an NPS as of January 2015. As shown in Figure 17, the number of students receiving NPS services has increased each year, which has resulted in an increase in the cost of NPS services of more than \$70,000 or more than 20% since 2011-12. RUSD has had to increase its reliance on NPAs for services such as speech, occupational therapy, and nursing services which has resulted in a significant cost increase, more than 284%, which is nearly triple the cost of NPA services in 2011-12.

Figure 17: Non-Public Schools 2011-12 through 2014-15 estimated

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 est
# of Students Receiving NPS Services	8*	10*	9*	13
NPS Expenses	\$ 344,140	\$ 329,471	\$ 318,610	\$ 414,492
NPA Expenses	\$ 140,101	\$ 256,923	\$ 343,218	\$ 539,068
Total NPS/NPA	\$ 484,249	\$ 586,394	\$ 661,828	\$ 953,560
Average Cost per NPS Student	\$ 43,018	\$ 32,947	\$ 35,401	\$ 31,884

Source: District-Provided Data—NPS expense 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 estimated and NPS Utilization data 2013-14 and 2014-15 est. *Dataquest NPS Utilization data 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14

NPS/A programs generally support RUSD's most complex and high-need students, which depending on the numbers of students and staff competencies may be more cost effectively operated by RUSD.

RUSD currently operates several programs that are alternatives to NPS placements at a lower cost than the NPS/A services. When compared to other districts, there is validation for RUSD's proactive efforts to create programs as alternatives to NPS/A. As shown in Figure 18, among the comparison group of six districts, RUSD has one of lowest NPS unitization rates and ranks fifth when comparing incidence of NPS utilization per 1,000 students.

Figure 18: Non Public Schools 2013-14 Utilization per 1,000 Enrolled Students

District	2013-14 NPS /1000 students
Las Virgenes Unified	0.36
Rocklin Unified	0.78
Carlsbad Unified	1.36
Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified	2.05
Livermore Valley Joint Unified	2.27
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified	3.44

Source: Dataquest NPS count and enrollment data 2013-14

RUSD is commended for creating programs that are alternatives to NPS placements, but continued effort will be necessary to maintain and potentially expand high-quality NPS alternatives.

Pupil Count Analysis

The state's current special education program funding model was overhauled more than ten years ago from a structure that tied funding based on prevalence and types of disabilities served to one that is now largely based on the presumption that incidence and types of disabilities do not vary significantly from district to district. Hence, funding is based on the number of students overall from which each district must determine, as a member of its SELPA, how best to meet the needs of those students within the SELPA.

Given the manner in which funding is provided to support SWD, there is a deliberate negative financial incentive to identifying students who should receive special education services if their needs can be met adequately and appropriately through other programs. As a result, it is useful to analyze the trends and current composition of the population receiving special education program services.

As shown in Figure 19, since 2009-10, RUSD's enrollment has increased 6.68%, from 10,835 students in 2009-10 to 11,611 students in 2013-14. During this period, the cumulative change in the number of SWD is slightly lower than the overall enrollment growth rate. It is fairly common to find that the growth rate in the population of SWD often exceeds the rate of growth of the overall student population, and this appears to be the case for RUSD since 2011-12. If the trend of students receiving special education services continues to grow both in numbers and proportionality at a rate, which outpaces the overall growth this will contribute, further the imbalance between program costs and revenues.

Figure 19: Enrollment to SWD 0-22 Comparison 2009-10 through 2013-14

Year	Total Enrollment*	SWD 0-22	% SWD	% Change in enrollment	% Change in SWD
2009-10	10,835	1,157	10.68%		
2010-11	11,095	1,143	10.30%	2.40%	-1.21
2011-12	11,345	1,169	10.30%	2.25%	2.27%
2012-13	11,597	1,215	10.48%	2.22%	3.93%
2013-14	11,611	1,239	10.67%	0.12%	1.98%
Cumulative Change				6.68%	6.62%

Source: California Department of Education Dataquest 2009-10 through 2013-14 and SELPA provided data
 *excludes charter enrollment data

It is also important for program planning purposes to consider the incidence of disabilities by type over time. Such an analysis can point to areas where RUSD may need to consider creating or phasing out programs and potential areas of over identification. Figure 20 provides a breakdown of the incidence of disabilities by type and reflects that from 2009-10 to 2013-14 the percentage of SWD is fairly flat. However, it is important to note that the overall number of students served had increased overtime as noted in Figure 19 above. During this same period, the percentage of SWD with a primary disability of Autism has increased as compared to the total population and while a relatively small portion of the total population, students with a primary disability of Autism accounts for approximately 12% of the special education population and an even greater percentage of program costs.

Figure 20: Incidence of Disabilities Age 0-22 by Type 2013-14

2013-14 Age 0-22 Incidence of Disability by type	Intellectual Disability	Speech and Language Impairment	Emotionally Disturbed	Other Health Impairment	Specific Learning Disabled	Autism	Other*	TOTAL
2013-14 Placer County	0.51%	3.35%	0.35%	0.93%	3.33%	1.25%	0.60%	10.32%
2013-14 Statewide	0.70%	2.58%	0.39%	1.14%	4.52%	1.36%	0.62%	11.31%
2013-14 Rocklin Unified	0.45%	3.48%	0.42%	0.96%	3.48%	1.28%	0.60%	10.67%
2009-10 Rocklin Unified	0.40%	3.92%	0.50%	0.56%	3.54%	1.15%	0.61%	10.68%

* Includes Hard of Hearing, Deaf, Visual Impairment, Orthopedically Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Disabilities and Established Medical Disability

Source: California Department of Education Dataquest and SELPA provided data

Figure 20 also provides a comparison of the incidence of disabilities by type for the District as compared to the county and state. RUSD’s overall identification rate is below the statewide average but is above the countywide rate. While RUSD’s rate of Autism identification has increased over time, the rate remains below the statewide rate. Most of the observed differences are found in RUSD’s identification of students with Other Health Impairment and Speech and Language Impairment. RUSD’s SWD with a primary disability of Other Health Impairment has increased by nearly 71% but remains below the rate for the state. Although RUSD has experienced a recent decline in the proportion of students with a primary disability of Speech and

Language Impairment, its rate is still higher than the statewide rate. Districts with high rates of students with a primary disability of Speech and Language Impairment often find that they are yielding to parent or teacher requests for additional services, which are lacking in general education interventions and often results in students that are referred to special education.

Fiscal Findings

While it not unexpected that the overall cost to run the Special Education Program has increased over time due to the overall growth of RUSD it appears that a trend is emerging that reflects the growth rate in the population of SWD is exceeding the rate of growth of the overall student population. Other factors that are contributing to increased program costs

Historical under funding of the program

Increases in salary, benefits, staffing ratios, and other personnel costs at a rate exceeding revenue growth

Growth in the number of higher-cost, low-incidence disabilities, such as autism

The relatively high cost for and reliance on contracted services, such as NPS and NPA and legal

Additional programs/classes to accommodate students returning to the District from the County program

Building out the mental health program

And most importantly local policies and practices related to program services such as:

- Over staffing in several areas such as, Instructional Assistant, Speech and Language pathologists and Psychologist
- RUSD's percentage of incidence of disabilities reflects that from 2009-10 to 2013-14 the percentage of SWD is flat. However, it is important to note that while the percentage of identification is flat, the overall number of students served had increased over time. Additionally, there appears to be an emerging trend where both the number and percentage of SWD outpaces overall enrollment. Most of the observed differences are found in the District's identification of students with Other Health Impairment (OHI), which increased by nearly 71% and Speech and Language Impairment (SLI), which decreased by more than 11%.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Although the recommendations below have been organized into four individual “themes” it is also critical to address them all collectively within a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to create positive and sustainable systemic change. MTSS is described within the context of each theme, but is the overarching process to improving support to all students.

1. Climate and culture

- Implement a district-wide system for academic, social-emotional and behavioral interventions and supports for struggling students by utilizing an overarching framework for integrating and aligning supports such as multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
 - Create a district culture and climate of inclusiveness aligned to the overall District Vision and the Strategic Plan by ensuring that high expectations and ownership of all students by all staff is a cornerstone of the belief system.
 - Ensure current process for site alignment to district strategic plan includes the expectation for addressing the needs of all learners within the context of the district and site plans.
 - Review implementation of the Local Control Action Plan (LCAP) for the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that includes plans for addressing the needs of students with disabilities as a part of the overall plan.
- Recruit a Special Education Director with experience and a demonstrated ability to develop quality systemic programs that are effective, efficient and maintain budget solvency to create a culture of authentic stakeholder involvement and communication.

2. Policies and procedures

- Develop district-wide policies and structures for identifying students who are struggling academically by developing processes to discuss and identify strategic supports, instructional strategies and differentiation within general education to better support all learners. In addition to supplementary supports and interventions, which accelerate students toward grade level standards, there should be ongoing collaborative, grade-level discussions where teachers are reviewing data to determine where additional supports and interventions are necessary (See MTSS above).
 - Continue to increase inclusive options (such as co-teaching) for all students in special education by developing systemic structures to build and support inclusive

education and their full participation in the academic and social culture of the school.

- Develop policies and procedures that include compliance procedures, program development and service delivery descriptions, personnel staffing ratios and responsibilities, and referral and placement processes. Include all relevant stakeholders in the development of the policies and practices.

3. Professional Development

- Create a district culture and climate of inclusiveness through alignment to the District Strategic Plan by providing on-going, joint (general and special education) professional development that includes high expectations and ownership of all students by all staff. By providing staff with joint training, the message and belief in a unified special education/general education system, conveyed by district leadership, is reinforced and contributes to high quality teaching leading to improved results for all students (see MTSS above).
- There is a need for differentiated, focused and relevant professional development based on identified needs of staff. Professional development should focus on supporting students with diverse needs in academics and behavior. Needs identified for professional development include:
 - Focused strategies to support students who struggle academically such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, higher order thinking skills, and specific tailoring of instructional strategies to address student needs.
 - Training and coaching on strategies to improve collaborative discussions between general education and special education educators. This professional development should include the utilization of data to identify student needs, and identifying focused and targeted supports and intervention strategies.

4. Communication

- Create formal communication structures and relationships within the district and with families including involvement in decision-making, ongoing meetings and opportunities for dialogue, and expectations for responding to communications and concerns (see MTSS above).
 - Provide strategies and processes for increasing engagement and involvement with families and community members.
 - Review all communication processes to ensure that there are processes for ongoing information sharing, two-way communication and input, and time allocated within job roles and responsibilities for responding to emails and phone calls in a timely manner

NOTE: RUSD will need to determine which recommendations will be prioritized in terms of implementation as not every recommendation can be commenced immediately. Additionally, consideration must be placed on the varied amount of time allocated for full implementation of each recommendation. For example, developing and adopting policies and procedures will take a shorter amount of time for MTSS implementation (which will require ongoing refinement across years). A comprehensive, thoughtful implementation is advisable as opposed to a rushed, ill-

conceived plan. Below is a graphic, which broadly illustrates this point in no particular order.

MTSS

Short term: Begin analysis of district initiatives and priorities to determine needs and next steps. Determine a long range timeline which includes steps toward full implementation, points of reference/task completion and monitoring levers.

Long term: Although the process of MTSS implementation can begin immediately, it is a district continuous improvement process that is ongoing.

CLIMATE AND CULTURE	POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNICATION
<p><u>Short term:</u></p> <p>Continue Director search, begin planning for district-wide student supports for struggling learners and review alignment of Strategic Plan, site plans and LCAP.</p> <p><u>Long term:</u></p> <p>Creating an inclusive climate and culture involving all stakeholders will evolve over time with consistent and constant messaging and focus</p>	<p><u>Short term:</u></p> <p>Beginning to develop formal policies and procedures is an initial step that includes structures for identifying students, tiered supports, creating inclusive options and compliance.</p> <p><u>Long term:</u></p> <p>This is a process that develop a product over time involving many staff members. It is important to note that policies and procedures must be reviewed periodically to remain current.</p>	<p><u>Short term:</u></p> <p>Develop and begin planning an aligned professional development plan across the district that involves joint general education and special education professional development as well as job-specific professional development along with collaborative discussions among staff based on student data and identification.</p> <p><u>Long term:</u></p> <p>Monitor the effectiveness and usefulness of the professional development through improved student outcomes and adjust.</p>	<p><u>Short term:</u></p> <p>Communicate an action plan for next steps as a result of this review, begin planning for a formal, two-way communication structure, provide strategies for increasing stakeholder engagement, and identify electronic, immediate forms of communication to reach out to stakeholders.</p> <p><u>Long term:</u></p> <p>Monitor what is being communicated, what is not being communicated and how information is being communicated in all modes. Make adjustments as necessary.</p>



Appendices

Appendix A

Online Survey Results

Parent Survey Results

The online parent survey was emailed to the parents of all RUSD students receiving the special education services. Overall, 250 surveys were completed and the results are included here:

- 250 respondents
- Respondents represented all RUSD sites with the exception of Victory High school.
- All grade levels were represented:
 - 16 –Preschool
 - 129 – Elementary
 - 41 – Middle School
 - 59 – High School
- Summary of responses to survey questions:

Question regarding IEP	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree
I understand the process of developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP).	15%	85%
My child receives all the services written in his/her IEP.	20%	72%
My child is making progress on his/her IEP goals.	22%	73%
My child's school has clear guidelines to help me know what to do if I have concerns about IEP meetings.	27%	68%
My ideas and suggestions are considered at my child's IEP meetings.	22%	74%

Question regarding involvement and communication	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree
School personnel are responsive to my questions and concerns.	10%	88%
I am pleased with the communication between my child's school and myself.	18%	88%
School personnel ask me about my child's interests and strengths.	18%	84%
The school and/or district personnel have helped me to understand my child's disability.	34%	63%
District special education staff are responsive to my questions and concerns.	21%	74%
Teachers follow through on commitments regarding my child.	12%	79%

My child's school asks for my opinion about how well my child is doing with their special education services.	36%	62%
My child's special education teacher communicates with me concerning my child's progress.	23%	75%
School personnel ask me about my concerns for my child.	27%	69%
I feel welcome at my child's school.	9%	88%

Question regarding Programs and Services	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree
I know whom to call about my child's programs.	11%	87%
I know whom to call about my child's services.	14%	83%
The school and/or district personnel have helped me to understand my child's disability.	36%	58%
Overall, I am satisfied with the special education services my child receives.	20%	78%
My child feels safe at school.	10%	88%

Question regarding Environment and Activities	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree
My child is educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.	10%	87%
I am satisfied with the amount of time my child is educated in the general education class.	12%	83%
I am satisfied with the school activities in which my child participates (e.g., assemblies, after school activities and field trips).	15%	81%
The learning environment for my child is excellent	18%	74%
My child's school shows respect for my culture as it relates to my child's education.	7%	80%

Question regarding Staff Impact	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree
My child's teachers have high expectations for his/her achievement.	10%	82%
Adults who work in my child's school treat my child with respect.	6%	86%
Teachers have a positive influence on my child's behavior.	8%	86%
Teachers have built strong relationships with my child.	11%	80%

Special Education Teacher Survey Results

The online survey was emailed to the all of the RUSD special education teachers. Overall, 27 surveys were completed and some of the results are included here:

- 27 respondents
- Respondents represented all RUSD sites with the exception of Rocklin Elementary, Rukula, and Sunset Ranch schools.
- All grade levels were represented:
 - 4% - Preschool
 - 34% – Elementary
 - 26% – Middle School
 - 37% – High School
- Types of programs/services represented by respondents:
 - 0 - General Education
 - 39% – Resource Room
 - 61% - Self-Contained (Special Day Class)
 - 0 – Separate Facility
- Currently co-teaching:
 - 15% - Yes
 - 85% - No
- Number of years teaching special education:
 - 26% - 1-5years
 - 22% - 6-10 years
 - 30% - 11-15 years
 - 22% - more than 15 years

Summary of responses to survey questions:

Question regarding Instruction:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
At my school, students with disabilities receive instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards.	8%	92%
At my school, students with disabilities and other struggling students receive the support they need to be successful.	19%	81%
Teachers at my school use student achievement data to influence decisions about instruction.	12%	84%
Teachers at my school communicate with parents concerning their child's progress.	8%	85%

Question regarding IEPs:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
General education teachers at my school have high expectations for all students, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).	19%	81%
General education teachers at my school welcome students with IEPs in their classrooms.	23%	77%
Teachers at my school consider parents suggestions during the IEP meeting.	0%	100%
Our school has clear guidelines to help parents know what to do if they have concerns about IEP meetings.	12%	85%

Question regarding General Education:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
My site administrator is supportive of students with disabilities receiving instruction in general education classrooms.	4%	93%
There are sufficient opportunities for general education teachers to learn how to address the instructional needs of students with disabilities.	57%	43%
I meet at least monthly with general education teachers to plan instruction based on evidence in student work.	47%	50%
General education teachers are respectful of the needs of students with disabilities.	23%	77%
There are sufficient opportunities for special education teachers to learn about general education curriculum and general education instructional programs.	43%	54%

Responses to the prompt: "I would like to receive professional development in the following areas (select up to five):"

Topic	Special Education Teachers	General Education teachers
Accommodating Students	8%	50%
Classroom Management	0	12%
Co-Teaching	31%	9%
Cross Communication and Collaboration	8%	5%
Data Analysis for Guiding Instruction	15%	14%
Differentiated Instruction	8%	26%
Evidence-based Instructional Strategies	27%	24%
Flexible Grouping	4%	9%
Mathematics Instruction	42%	7%
Partnering with Families	4%	16%
Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports	38%	41%
Post-Secondary Transition	12%	8%
Reading and Language Arts Instruction	35%	13%
Reading in the Content Areas	4%	16%
Response-to-Intervention	15%	20%
Standards-based Functional Skill Development	19%	17%
Supporting Students in Inclusive Settings	46%	28%
Students as Self-Advocates	38%	N/A

General Education Teacher Survey Results

The online survey was emailed to the all of the RUSD general education teachers. Overall, 103 surveys were completed and some of the results are included here:

- 103 respondents
- Respondents represented all RUSD sites with the exception of Cobblestone Elementary.
- All grade levels were represented:
 - 0 - Preschool
 - 44% – Elementary
 - 19% – Middle School
 - 37% – High School
- Currently co-teaching:
 - 25% - Yes
 - 76% - No
- Number of years teaching special education:
 - 17% - 1-5years
 - 21% - 6-10 years
 - 26% - 11-15 years
 - 37% - more than 15 years

Summary of responses to survey questions:

Question regarding Instruction:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
At my school, students with disabilities receive instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards.	3%	86%
At my school, students with disabilities and other struggling students receive the support they need to be successful.	18%	80%
Teachers at my school use student achievement data to influence decisions about instruction.	6%	89%
Teachers at my school communicate with parents concerning their child's progress.	3%	95%

Question regarding IEPs:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
General education teachers at my school have high expectations for all students, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).	5%	95%
General education teachers at my school welcome students with IEPs in their classrooms.	9%	87%
Teachers at my school consider parents suggestions during the IEP meeting.	1%	92%

Question regarding General Education:	Strongly Disagree /Disagree	Strongly Agree /Agree
My site administrator is supportive of students with disabilities receiving instruction in general education classrooms.	4%	94%
There are sufficient opportunities for general education teachers to learn how to address the instructional needs of students with disabilities.	53%	48%
I meet at least monthly with teachers to plan instruction based on evidence in student work.	16%	83%
I receive support from district special education staff (education specialists, district special education director, district office teachers, resource teachers, consulting teachers) for integrating students with IEPs into general education classes and activities.	46%	53%
I receive support to address the needs of students who are struggling in my classroom.	35%	65%

Responses to the prompt: "I would like to receive professional development in the following areas (select up to five):"

Topic	Special Education Teachers	General Education teachers
Accommodating Students	8%	50%
Classroom Management	0	12%
Co-Teaching	31%	9%
Cross Communication and Collaboration	8%	5%
Data Analysis for Guiding Instruction	15%	14%
Differentiated Instruction	8%	26%
Evidence-based Instructional Strategies	27%	24%
Flexible Grouping	4%	9%
Mathematics Instruction	42%	7%
Partnering with Families	4%	16%
Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports	38%	41%
Post-Secondary Transition	12%	8%
Reading and Language Arts Instruction	35%	13%
Reading in the Content Areas	4%	16%
Response-to-Intervention	15%	20%
Standards-based Functional Skill Development	19%	17%
Supporting Students in Inclusive Settings	46	28%
Students as Self-Advocates	38%	N/A

Appendix B

IEP Reviews

As part of the data analysis, the WestEd Team review IEPs to determine the level of completeness, assessment information, alignment of goals to needs and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) where appropriate, accommodations and modifications included, LRE statement, description of related services, and transition goals (where appropriate). IEPs were selected by a stratified random sampling method so that IEPs from all of the sites and different types of program could be sampled.

- 60 IEPs were reviewed
- IEPs represented all RUSD sites
- Disability categories represented in the IEPs sampled (note: many of the students had more than one disability category listed)
 - 11 - Autism
 - 7 - Emotional Disturbance
 - 8- Intellectual Disability
 - 5 - Orthopedic Impairment
 - 5 - Other Health Impairment
 - 24 - Specific Learning Disability
 - 18 - Speech and Language Impairment
 - 2 - Visual Impairment
 - 1 - Other – Established
- All grade levels were represented:
 - 10% - Preschool
 - 41% – Elementary
 - 17% – Middle School
 - 26% – High School

Specific responses:

	Yes	No
Does the IEP contain progress monitoring	88%	12%
Does the Present Level of Academic Function (PLAF) include current information on the child’s strengths ?		
Does the Present Level of Academic Function (PLAF) include current information on the child’s needs related to the child’s disability ?	97%	3%
Does the Present Level of Academic Function (PLAF) include current information on the child’s How disability affects participation in general curriculum ?	77%	27%
Does the Present Level of Academic Function (PLAF) include current information on the child’s parent concerns ?	85%	15%
Does the IEP contain any necessary accommodations for the state assessments ?	55%	45%

	Yes	No	Grade level not tested
Does the IEP contain district benchmark assessment results?	43%	22%	35%
Does the IEP contain state assessment results?	28%	45%	27%
Does the IEP contain curriculum based measure results?	18%	60%	22%
Do the goals and objectives address all areas of need identified in PLAF?	72%	28%	
Are all the goals based on needs identified in PLAF?	90%	10%	
Are the goals are aligned to the Common Core State Standards?	49%	51%	
Is at least one goal in each identified academic area written to a grade level standard?	53%	47%	
Are other prerequisite skill goals written out of grade level but are based on PLAF?	95%	5%	
Do the goals describe what the behavior will look like when the goal is reached?	90%	10%	
Do the goals reflect growth that can be accomplished throughout the year?	97%	3%	
Are there at least 2 objectives per each goal?	76%	24%	
Objectives contain behaviors/skills to be performed by the student?	97%	3%	
Are the objectives measurable?	87%	13%	
Does the IEP contain frequency and duration of related services?	100%	0	
Does the IEP contain how the related services will be provided?	98%	2%	
Does the IEP contain who will provide the related services?	100%	0	
Are mental health services identified as a related service?	7%	93%	
Number of times each Related Services Identified in the IEPs:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 - audiology • 13 - counseling services • 19 - occupational/physical therapy • 0 - parent counseling/ education • 2 - psychological/mental health services • 42 - speech-language therapy • 21 - Transportation 			

Does the IEP contain a statement that reflects amount of time removed from peers without disabilities?	98%	2%
Does the IEP provide a statement describing any services that will not be delivered with non-disabled peers in the general education setting?	88%	17%
Does the IEP provide a statement as to why services will not be delivered with non-disabled peers in the general education setting?	80%	20%

Transition Services (where appropriate):	Yes	No	Student under the age of 16
An appropriate measurable post-secondary goal(s) that cover(s) education or training, employment, and, as needed, independent living?	20%	15%	65%
Transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet her/his post-secondary goals?	17%	18%	65%
The transition services include courses of study that will reasonably enable the student to meet her/his post-secondary goals?	17%	18%	65%
Includes annual IEP goal(s) related to the student's transition service needs?	28%	7%	65%

Appendix C

Classroom Observations:

As part of the data analysis, the WestEd Team conducted classroom walkthroughs in seven of the Rocklin schools to observe the .

- 41 classrooms were observed
- All grade levels were represented:
 - 2 - Preschool
 - 17 – Elementary
 - 5 – Middle School
 - 7 – High School
- Type of setting:
 - 15 - General education classroom
 - 24- Special education classroom
- Type of class:
 - 12 - General education
 - 1 - Co-taught
 - 2 - Inclusion
 - 7 - Resource
 - 18 - Special day class
- Type of class:
 - 6 - Resource Math
 - 15 -General Education - Co-Taught
 - 8 - Resource
 - 2 - Student Skills for Transition (SST)
 - 1 - Cross Categorical Behavioral Resource room (CCB)
 - 8 - Life Skills

Student Engagement – classes were monitored during the observation for the amount of time the students in the class were actively engaged in the lesson. results here indicate the percentage of time that at least 80% of the students were actively engaged

Student Engagement	Percentage of time at least 80% of the students in the class were actively engaged in the lesson
0-25%	43%
26-50%	4%
51-75%	18%
76-100%	36%

Instructional Assistants – type of activity the instructional assistants in the classroom were involved in during the observation.

Instructional Assistants	Percentage of times observed in each classroom (multiple responses possible per class)
Assisting student with academic tasks individually	75%
Assisting student with non-academic tasks individually	40%
Completing paperwork	35%
Preparation of paperwork	40%
Engaging in a personal activity	10%
No assisting adult in the classroom	40%

Evidence of research-based practices for supporting students with disabilities:

Peer assisted learning	Percentage of times observed in each classroom (multiple responses possible per class)
Cooperative groups	60%
Pairs	43%
Peer tutoring	0
Stations or centers	8%
Student led demonstration	0

Classroom Climate:	Percentage of times observed in each classroom (multiple responses possible per class)
Positive interaction between adults/students	80%
Social skills actively taught, practiced, and reinforced	2%
Rituals and routines contribute to orderliness	10%
Transitions smooth and timely	8%

Principles of Universal Design for Learning observed in classrooms:

UDL Principles	Percentage of times observed in each classroom (multiple responses possible per class)
Multiple ways of engagement	15%
Choices for participation	5%
Varied level texts	0
Embed lessons with technology	10%
Choices for strategies	0
Culturally relevant	5%
Multiple ways of representation	15%
Visual + Auditory	45%
Modeling	0
Integration of Technology	15%
Oral	25%
Demo	10%
Written	15%
Technology	15%



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