

To: Board of Education
Dr. Eric Olson, Superintendent
From: Alicia Schmeisser, Director of Student Services
Date: March 16, 2023
Re: Presentation of Student Services Action Plan

An Action Planning Committee was created in the Fall of 2022, composed of representatives from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. The first meeting of the committee was held on October 14 and 15, 2022. 27 people were in attendance.

At the October 14, 2022 meeting, Dr. Olson and Ms. Schmeisser gave a state of the district presentation to provide information regarding the school district and more specifically regarding the same for our student services.

Introductions were made with self-introductions of each person and the stakeholder group they were representing. The committee then developed the ground rules upon which they worked. Dr. Olson gave an overview of the process that was to be used for strategic planning and the work began.

The first task of the committee was to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. The committee was asked to brainstorm what came to mind to each of them as to what the district is doing well. Strengths were defined as assets that exist within the district and among the stakeholders. The items were all read by the facilitator and saved. A list was then generated.

Weaknesses were defined as liabilities that exist within the district and among the stakeholders. The committee was divided into groups, and each group was assigned a recorder who listed the areas of weakness that members of the group perceived. Again, a list was generated of these areas for growth.

The next session began on Saturday morning, October 15, where committee members reviewed the complete list of Strengths and Weaknesses. The committee then completed the SWOT Analysis by dividing again into groups. Two groups were asked to identify Opportunities and two groups were asked to identify potential Threats. Opportunities were described as favorable or advantageous combinations of circumstances that provide the district with the chance to explore new directions. Threats were possible dangers that could threaten the viability and future success of the district.

The committee was divided into new groups and shared the opportunities and threats as assigned. Each group reported out to the whole committee. A summary of the SWOT analysis can be found below with the lists of perceived strengths and with weaknesses; and identified opportunities and threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Teachers</p> <p>Amazing staff/student ratio</p> <p>Support staff</p> <p>Staff open to collaboration with outside/private resources</p> <p>District is well-resourced</p> <p>Great IEP intake process</p> <p>Everyone is invested in student success (here for the same reasons)</p> <p>Staff is hard working!</p> <p>Curriculum resources</p> <p>Collegiality</p> <p>Student Focused teams</p> <p>Collaborative Teams</p> <p>Technology is available</p> <p>PD opportunities</p> <p>Supportive administrators</p> <p>Data informed decision making</p> <p>Supportive parent community</p> <p>Access to assessment tools</p> <p>Co-teaching</p> <p>Dedicated staff with years of experience</p> <p>collaborative teams</p> <p>support staff and related services</p> <p>supportive families who advocate for their child(ren)</p> <p>quality facilities</p> <p>inclusive committees with all stakeholders</p> <p>resources available for students and staff</p> <p>access to a wealth of technology including technologists</p> <p>full day kindergarten!</p> <p>Relationships with students</p> <p>Parent communication</p> <p>Collaboration between related services and special education teachers</p> <p>Many interventions</p> <p>Expertise of staff</p> <p>Identifying needs of students</p> <p>Creating appropriate IEPs</p> <p>Facilitating IEP meetings</p> <p>Problem solving</p>	<p>Excess of resources (too much to focus on, so fidelity is a challenge)</p> <p>When curriculum/agendas/initiatives are rolled out, there is no follow through</p> <p>Do not have a true model for teach, coach, consult</p> <p>Piloting programming/curricular resources is underutilized as a practice within the District</p> <p>Executive functioning curriculum is sitting on a shelf “collecting dust”</p> <p>Not enough time to implement a curriculum.</p> <p>Teachers will default to what they know</p> <p>Retaining special education staff</p> <p>Special Education teachers do not have time to meet and problem solve students (on an ongoing basis); Need more time than “green” Wednesdays; special education teachers have to join general education meetings</p> <p>Contract focuses on contact time with students</p> <p>Special education teachers are using plan time to complete IEP paperwork preparing for meeting</p> <p>Special education needs time for diving into instruction</p> <p>New teachers may not have the time to collaborate with job-alikes</p> <p>Staff must have difficult conversations in special education, which is easier for veteran teachers (in comparison with new teachers)</p> <p>New teachers worry about reaching out for help, because they may perceive that help indicates skill or performance deficits.</p> <p>The quality of in-services for TAs and the training they are offered</p> <p>Easier to advocate as a veteran teacher, and that newer teachers may feel</p>

<p>Great Teachers Dedicated teacher assistants Curricular resources Coaches Parent support Great kids Financial support Data literacy Board support Knowledgeable staff Willingness to improve Background knowledge of things that haven't worked Knowledgeable Related services Administration support Structures already in place History from staff who have been here People want the district to succeed Staff Resources (reading interventions and tech) Meeting students' minutes among busy schedules Teamwork/collaboration among sped team Teamwork/collaboration with many grade level teams/classroom teachers Identifying student need Providing a specialized program within the district Providing related services within the district and having most of those staff members hired full time Variety of tier 3 curriculum and resources Knowledgeable staff with leadership potential Willingness across stakeholders to partner and collaborate A collective desire to strengthen and grow in consistency and practice across multiple settings, areas of entitlement to services, age groups, and continuum of services Recognizing the similar goals and outcomes desired, even when there may be different visions on how to achieve those outcomes Sped Teachers Teachers Assistants</p>	<p>intimidated or unsure how to share their voice Expectations have continued to grow in education over the years, bringing additional challenges to the profession Pendulum has swung back and forth between Transition meets look different from Jefferson to the 5 various elementary school buildings Time for pre-meetings would be valuable for all schools and teams Instructional Classrooms in the buildings are currently serving students grades K-5, which is inappropriate When do TAs have time to collaborate with special education teachers and with general education teachers and Encore staff Developing a master schedule that is conducive to support students Parents may not understand the benefit of accepting help/support with regards to functional skills Clarity with what OT services may include (does it include toileting?) Clarity of transitions from preschool to kindergarten. (how do write "academic" goals for kindergarten) Instructional classrooms students do not have options for science + social studies ("inclusion is not sitting in a room") Students with emotional disabilities do not currently have D64 support. How do we strength all district transitions (ie. preschool to kindergarten, 5th grade to middle school, and 8th grade to HS). D64 should offer a "true" self-contained classroom for students. Checks and balances with consistencies regarding processes/systems that all staff, all building teams have access and knowledge to apply</p>
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Administrators	Inconsistency in the application of the continuum of services model per building
Resources	Communication between staff, admin to staff, including inconsistent in delivery, and engagement
Professional development	While we have a continuum of services there are gaps in it (For example: need for specific programming)
Related service providers	Prioritize Training (Teacher and TA training, background, time for trainings, opportunity for application of skills/training)
Curriculums	Time/Schedules
Parent support	Allocation of our time (Schedules, piecemealed)
Team orientation	Inability to deal with “twice exceptional” students
Building culture	Staff flexibility
SEL	Rejection of data
IEPS / goal setting	Animosity between staff and admin
Data collection	Inconsistency in support provided
Multidisciplinary communication	Ownership with communication with staff when there are gaps in information
Abundance of resources	lack of sharing
Many sped teachers	Separation between special education and general education
Teachers are connected to students	Prioritization of professional development / Wednesday dedicated time
Access to outside resources	Lack of cohesion within buildings within departments
Buildings are mostly accessible	Following specific protocols
Small preschool class size in preschool	Learning Loss: with new hired staff, new admin (specifically hired during covid)
Access to programs and interventions	Resources (instead of going through a process, fast track it)
Continuum of services	Consistent allocation of resources based on student need, rather than parent request
Access to numerous AT and BCBA's	Home school model versus programming model outcomes impacts (Splitting of resources to each school)
Multiple social workers/guidance counselors in each building	Board of Directions - % or % rating on sped services is “enough” - not individuals but collectively
Gen Ed and sped teachers work well together	
Sped Teachers	
Very qualified assistants	
Access to different/ numerous curricula	
Co-teaching possibilities	
Access to specialists (hearing itinerant, OT/ PT, etc.)	
Students rarely feel excluded	
Willingness to attempt different strategies	
Procedures in place to support staff and give them direction	
Flexible thinkers	
Great advocates for students	
Thriving community	
Longevity of staff	
High level of collaboration	
Available admin who are visible in their buildings	
Clear MTSS process	
Dedicated teachers	
Access to instructional resources	

<p>Access to a variety of functional tools</p> <p>Access to professional development</p> <p>Access to a variety of assessments</p> <p>District coaches</p> <p>Opportunities to collaborate with other staff</p> <p>Online IEP system</p> <p>BCBAs</p> <p>Coordinators</p> <p>Assistive technologist</p> <p>Parent involvement and collaboration</p> <p>Intervention curriculum - many</p> <p>Support for staff</p> <p>Parent support</p> <p>Students ready to learn</p> <p>Resources and training available to staff</p> <p>Collaboration among team members</p> <p>Accessibility of Administration (SPED Directors)</p> <p>Individual Assistive Technology for Students</p> <p>1:1 Communication</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Consideration of Student Needs</p> <p>SLC Program at Washington</p> <p>PT3</p> <p>Jefferson School (blended and structured for pre-k)</p> <p>Overall Willingness to Improve</p> <p>Community Involvement</p> <p>Pizza Day (🍕)</p> <p>Strong Fiscal Footing</p> <p>Extensive Resources: staff, curriculum, physical space, prep time, personnel supports</p> <p>Staff that have been with us for a long time</p> <p>Extensive guidance in Handbook</p> <p>Explicit Policies and Procedures for some areas</p> <p>staff that love kids</p> <p>Manageable caseload sizes for teachers and related service</p> <p>large continuum of services at most buildings</p> <p>lots of opportunities for professional development</p> <p>Staff: coaches, coordinators, related services, teachers, wealth of knowledge</p>	<p>In 25 years all stakeholders have never come together - either the board pulls admin or the admin pulls the board</p> <p>Lack in cohesive progression and collaboration towards one goal - leads to seesaw/whack-a-mole rather than collective "lift"</p> <p>Swayed by community, teacher, membership, leadership, admin, etc.</p> <p>No entry/exit criteria for instructional classrooms</p> <p>Restrictive end of continuum lacks a full self-contained program</p> <p>Students are not able to stay within a classroom full day (ie: art, PE, etc)</p> <p>Lack of programming on continuum (no specialty programs outside of SLC)</p> <p>In house therapeutic programs</p> <p>20 students in therapeutic settings</p> <p>Fiscal responsibility and cost of students in therapeutic settings</p> <p>Are we allocating our money appropriately? There are more TAs than SPED teachers</p> <p>Most vulnerable students are given to least experienced staff members</p> <p>Lack of modified or alternative curriculums for sci/ss</p> <p>Resources for students with emotional and behavioral needs</p> <p>No adapted PE, music therapy, pet therapy, art therapy</p> <p>Lack of space in some buildings for additional classrooms, motor rooms, sensory room, etc. and tools</p> <p>General trust from top to bottom by both parents and community</p> <p>Lack of cohesiveness throughout community</p> <p>Lack of transparency on both sides of school and community (Available programs, supports, therapies, etc.)</p>
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<p>Resources: curriculum, technology, access to quality PD, opportunities to grow professionally</p> <p>Community: parent and family partnerships</p> <p>Students Who are Prepared to Learn</p> <p>Quality staff, Incredible Resources</p> <p>Dedicated Time for Professional Growth</p> <p>Department Collaboration Time</p> <p>Supportive Parents</p> <p>Community Support</p> <p>Great Connections to local high schools and colleges</p> <p>Extensive Middle School Elective Programming</p> <p>Wide Variety of Extracurricular Activities</p> <p>Small class sizes</p> <p>Many related services/staff</p> <p>Curriculums</p> <p>PD opportunities</p> <p>Fully staffed</p> <p>Dedicated parents and staff</p> <p>Curriculums available</p> <p>Intervention/curriculum coach</p> <p>SLC program</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>Caseload numbers</p> <p>BCBAs</p> <p>Overall resources available</p> <p>Opportunities for PD and trainings</p> <p>Accessibility of related services</p> <p>Early childhood</p> <p>Services at all schools</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Collaboration (most of the time)</p> <p>Classroom/space</p> <p>Curriculum (most of the time)</p> <p>TA support</p> <p>Team collaboration/communication</p> <p>ESY program</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <p>Care/ compassion</p> <p>Buildings are better equipped to help people with physical limitations ie: ADA restrooms</p>	<p>Clear descriptions and information in IEPs (Report levels appropriately, Placement above student abilities)</p> <p>Having hard conversations/Communication breakdowns</p> <p>Designing a program that fits the need of each individual student and not fitting a student into a program</p> <p>Intervention hand off to SPED</p> <p>Fidelity of process in intervention and SPED</p> <p>Overqualification of students</p> <p>Inability to provide intervention in all academics which creates a deficit that qualifies for an IEP</p> <p>Scheduling impacting services</p> <p>Middle school schedule</p> <p>Co-teaching scheduling (Co-planning, Full co-taught classrooms/periods)</p> <p>Best buddies type continuation in all areas and schools</p> <p>Staff development and PD in the general education staff to support students w/SPED (Accommodations, Modifications, Understanding of responsibilities Ownership)</p> <p>Limitations due to pandemic</p> <p>Staffing for assessment accommodations of small group/1:1</p> <p>Allocation of staff</p> <p>Reactive rather than proactive</p> <p>Consistent transportation services</p> <p>Proactive training (prior to day one of employment with students) and support for all staff on IEPs, best practices in special education, UDL, etc.</p> <p>Political/societal impact</p> <p>Continuum of Services</p> <p>Lack of consistency in implementation between buildings</p> <p>Lack of “rungs” for behavior program, science/social studies</p>
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<p>Encore programming Therapies: OT, PT, hearing Knowledge of providers Using data to help determine how to best help students be successful Communication Partnership w parents Data collection for goals Staff connection/relationships with students Student centered and strength-based approach Staff responsiveness financial resources dedicated staff involved parents curriculum variety flexibility community resources hardworking students technology educated parents physical space/flexibility Number of curricular resources Caseload size Partnership with families Committed staff Supportive Board of Education Facilities that support learning (classroom and other spaces for students) Inclusive school cultures Sense of inclusion at middle school Staff Curriculum Resources- availability Families- collaborative Technology - Caseload size Coordinator support AT support</p>	<p>Instructional being at every site leads to too wide of students being in room, can't provide authentic services Lack of consistency between jefferson continuum, elementary/middle, and district 207 continuum MTSS/SPED (Lack of collaboration time between stakeholders, Differences in trainings for curriculum and instruction: PD not married with coaching due to too many PD initiatives and options, Psychologist role in District 64) High turnover rate with newer staff for teachers and SPED admin Ability of Highly Qualified Sped teachers to service students at an individual level Giving students the same thing even if they have different needs due to time constraints Number of students with IEPs and 504 in the Gen ed classroom can overwhelm general education teachers Co-teaching: not enough staff, plan time, disparities between buildings Continuum not same building to building Social Studies and Science does not have a continuum of services (only general education) "Squeaky wheel gets the oil" for staff and parents Lack of staff (sped teacher, assistants) Too high of classes Lack of behavioral continuum "rung" for students with behavioral struggles Instructional Programs serve too large of a student population Professional Development: marrying PD with coaching Students can be misidentified as behavioral needs due to lack of teaching/training/education Not a rep from the high school here, partnering with high school</p>
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	<p>Inconsistent continuum options between d64 and d207</p> <p>Collaboration Time between intervention, general education, and Special Education</p> <p>Intervention and SPED used to be more integrated, a lot of the strategies and curriculum are the same for both but the trainings for interventionists and special education teachers are much different</p> <p>Students can stay in interventions without moving forward</p> <p>Embrace: not everyone is completing things correctly, not everyone has access to view students</p> <p>Lots of resources (curriculum), but not all is used</p> <p>Interventionists receive more trainings and PD of teaching and curriculum, SPED teachers have less explicit training in curriculum and instruction due to more “hats” to wear</p> <p>Inflexibility with allocation of resources (sped and gen ed interventions can’t mix)</p> <p>**Role of psychologists: could take more of a role with groups and MTSS, can only focus on</p> <p>Strong gen ed teachers don’t always want to work with SPED students</p> <p>Not having support available outside of only literacy and math</p>
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OPPORTUNITIES

Use technology
Use community resources
Contact and collaborate with surrounding Districts with models we would like to achieve
Neighboring districts that have the organizational model, definitions of programs (that D64 aligns with)
University Outreach for Programs/Camps
Colleges and Universities offering “trainings” or “programs” for students
For Example: camp for reading
Opportunities for funds
Niles/Park Ridge park districts
MNASR
Partnering with Charities
Provide opportunity for PD (TAs)
Collaboration with outside resources
Our District Attorney
Time to engage in meaningful conversation to learn
Sharing information
Continuing education/updates to internal teams
Parental involvement with WFH parents
Park District
Programming (MNASR) mirroring a beyond the bell type program
Possibly using after school/summer as opportunities to offer students access to intensive reading curriculum while at the same time providing Wilson Reading System Level 1 certification to willing staff.
After school program
Funds or payments for students
Example: Students with Dyslexia who do not qualify for and IEP; but could use the “beyond bell” model or program to provide support
Summer institute program

THREATS

D64 history and inability to move forward
Impact of prior decisions/thoughts
Political and cultural impacts
D64 is very conservative
D64 culture and connections
Parental influence
Parents push to get services that students may not need and district folds
Parents pay for private evals to have what they want and feel district needs to implement it regardless of district data/process
Disconnect when moving towards MTSS model with outside private sources (ie: private neuro eval, private OT, etc)
“More is better” philosophy by most stakeholders
Transparency of weaknesses to community opens vulnerability and potential for legality concerns
Union strength and culture
Creates delicacy to the conversations to get to solutions
Open and honest conversations unable to take place
Lack of ability of free flow dialogue
Footprint - we are limited in space and ability to expand
Board making decision based on the conservative culture or in fear of response of community
Staff burnout and lack of growth mindset
SPED vs gen ed - “that is not my job” or “those are sped students”
Teaching strategies not consistent with best current practices - stuck in old practices
Social media
Potential Hiring Shortages: hiring the best staff available
Staff Turnover for Admin, teachers, tas

Partnerships with other Districts + Special Education Cooperatives

The self-contained model was a recurring theme on our weakness list; why don't we observe programs that exist elsewhere to be able to replicate those models and embed them into our District.

Discussed the clustering of programs to provide students with a larger peer group and targeted instruction; Further exploring our building structures and how to structure programming

This would support the development of an emotional disability program

Partnerships with Lakeview (transportation company) to provide further opportunities and more fluid programming for students

Discussed expanding opportunities for students through targeted programming, while taking into consideration the student's home school and strengthening/maintaining connections

Expand collaboration with Student Learning on Curriculum Adoptions + Reviews

7 year curriculum review cycle exists for general education curriculum; the span of students needs makes looking at a single curricular resource so challenging; could we provide release time to look at curricular resources

Partnership with D207 + Maine South to expand tutoring and/or connections with our D64 students

Within the district

Union Bargaining
Current Contract
Meeting with teams
Prep time for SPED vs gen ed
IEP writing days
Lack of SPED teacher representation on bargaining committee
Money
Community Buy In, especially if we want to spend more money or regionalize programs
Riffs between groups within the union (SPED vs gen ed vs specials)
Shifting politics and inclusion

<p>Surrounding districts</p> <p>Investigating other programs, procedures, and supports</p> <p>Surrounding early childhood/day care centers</p> <p>Schedule consultation company</p> <p>Community resources for SEL/behavior support</p> <p>PD support from therapeutic schools</p> <p>Student mentors - middles to elementary school (during or after school) and/or within buildings (e.g., class to class buddies or Cover Dens)</p> <p>Local community mentors (e.g., police, fire, business owners) for students</p> <p>Present to classes</p> <p>Participate in lunch bunches</p> <p>Provide field trip opportunities</p>	
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2023-2026 GOAL SETTING

The final task of the day for the Action Planning Committee was to develop goal areas for the next 3 years. This was done as a brainstorming activity. Each committee member was asked to silently write suggested outcomes for District 64 on a sheet of paper, listing as many outcomes as they wished with only one outcome per line. Each committee member was given 5 minutes to share his/her list with another committee member to see if there were any similarities in the lists. The committee then worked in small breakout groups to sort their individual lists. Each group also recorded how many people included the same item in their individual lists. The entire committee came back together as the whole committee to report out their results.

The reporter for each group reported items from their list and they were recorded on a spreadsheet. It was noted how many times each item was mentioned within all the groups. Each group took turns identifying items from their lists until all items were exhausted. The items were then sorted into groups of similar items. Based on the items in each column, a goal statement was identified for each column using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timed) Goal criteria.

The result of the activity identified the following 4 proposed goals for 2023-2026. The senior administrative team has been meeting to redefine these goals and objectives, which will be presented to the committee at our January 28 meeting.

Goal # 1 seek to improve consistency and high leverage practices	Goal #2 Expand learning opportunities for staff and community	Goal #3 Clarify and expand the continuum of services	Goal #4 Foster a culture of trust through relationships
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The committee understood at the completion of the first retreat that further steps would be taken in the journey to complete the Student Services Action Plan Plan for 2023-2026.

The Administrative Team met throughout November, December, and January to refine and develop the goals, objectives, and action plan. This work was driven by the items and ideas identified by the committee.

In addition to the senior administrative meetings, Superintendent Dr. Eric Olson and Director of Student Services, Ms. Schmeisser met with special education middle school students to gain feedback and input from the students in order to give them a voice in this plan. Students provided feedback on the identified goals, their importance, and where the work is most needed.

Upon completion of the work, the Strategic Planning Committee met again on January 28, 2023 to review the proposed Action Plan. The committee discussed the plan at length, providing feedback and final structural decisions. The committee decided that the goals would not be listed in order of priority or rank, as the members felt strongly that each goal was equally important. These goals identified through the work of the committee are also aligned with recommendations of the Special Education Audit conducted by *Atlantic Research Partners* in May of 2022. Committee members left the January session feeling very excited and positive about the process and the work to come.

2023-2026 Student Services Action Plan

Clarify and expand the continuum of services	Seek to improve consistency and methods for greater student growth	Expand learning opportunities for staff and community	Foster a culture of trust through relationships
Expand philosophy, structures, programs, roles, and criteria	Design a framework for calculating minutes and services across all schools	Continue to differentiate training to meet the unique needs of like roles	Support staff in the development of collective efficacy
Continue to refine co-teaching philosophy and practices	Seek ways to maximize District’s expansive resources	Expand parent and community learning opportunities	Expand family communication and involvement

Explore strategies for maximizing inclusion (e.g. flexible placing, flexible grouping, etc.)	Establish a process for reviewing grade-level proficiency data	Expand professional development to include extended coaching opportunities	Seek to increase staff longevity in student services roles
Complete a comprehensive review of early childhood program	Implement a curriculum review cycle	Ensure consistency process for developing, understanding, and implementing an IEP	Continue to increase inclusion awareness among students, staff, and families
Explore models of instructional programs across the District	Establish a consistency process for transitions between settings and programs	Review and expand a framework for standardized, onboarding, training, and mentoring of new staff	

This presentation includes special education teacher Karen Hess. Board member Carol Sales served on the committee as well.