



## Office of Student Support Services

### Feedback Findings to Support the Development of Strategic Goals

#### **Introduction:**

The Office of Student Services (OSS) programs are dedicated to ensuring equitable access and success through strong instructional models and data-driven cultures. This dedication is in service of students, those with disabilities and those who have advanced learning needs. As such, we are charged with the essential focus on accountability and ownership to align strategies with impact that maximize our available human and financial resources. OSS will model and deliver on our strategy of change management (Kotter, et al.), while collaborating with constituents on our change approaches, e.g., SEPAC, administrators, and teams. We have identified key impact indicators and are organizing around continuous improvement cycles. In collaboration with stakeholders and partners, we have synthesized our current state and recommendations for moving forward in support of the Superintendent's goals and findings. We are developing an intentional mindset and leveraging the DataWise model to develop strategies that improve the conditions for students.

#### **OSS Findings:**

OSS plays a direct role in supporting instructional practices and services that remove barriers to learning for students while creating bridges to enrichment. As such, OSS will quickly address backlogs, redesign our support model, and process development to enhance our talent, team, and tools to create growth and establish a culture of continuous improvement. The collective culture must reflect social, emotional and academic support through enhanced integration and attunement with students and their families. The theory of change is a direct result of entry findings, evidence-based practices, and a review of DART data that supports the alignment of system resources.

1. Advanced Academics: Acceleration and enrichment is dependent upon identification, opportunity, and support<sup>1</sup>. For students from historically marginalized backgrounds, systems often require them to be "twice as good," while preserving barriers to access and success in their path<sup>2</sup>. Equity analysis data, development of new pathways, and a redesign of these systems will take time, but OSS will collaboratively build on the groundwork and apply urgency to implementing meaningful wins this year. One possibility is to organize these efforts through the MTSS framework for academics. MTSS enhancements for Advanced Academics strengthens the framework and positions professional growth and development opportunities that increase collaboration and breaks down silos. Professional learning communities and collaborative teams

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<sup>1</sup> MDRC, "Lessons from MDRC's Postsecondary Research: Toward Better College Completion Rates" (New York: MDRC, 2020); Alexander Mayer and Kate Tromble, "Understanding What Works in Postsecondary Education" (New York: MDRC, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Fulcher Dawson, Melissa S. Kearney, and James X. Sullivan, Comprehensive Approaches to Increasing Student Completion in Higher Education: A Survey of the Landscape (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020).



can develop action plans to enhance intensive and individualized supports and ensure that teams are equipped with evidence-based approaches that remove barriers preventing disenfranchised students from participating and succeeding in accelerated learning plans<sup>3</sup>. Intelligence testing will inform cognitive ability assessments through a system and pathway that delivers on enrichment and accelerated learning.

a. Measures of Success

- i. 2019 Districtwide MCAS ELA: 59% Not Meeting Expectations;
- ii. 2019 District Wide MCAS Math: 48% Not Meeting Expectations;
- iii. Parent and educator perception data;
- iv. Equitable balance among focal groups and peers; and
- v. Program participation targets.

b. Collaborative Action Plan

- i. We will model policies on advanced academic and gifted/talented that defines board's position, e.g., entry characteristics, screening process based on fixed data;
- ii. Advanced academics promising scholarship profile will be developed based on an instructional infrastructure that meets students at their ability;
- iii. An evaluative process will be developed through a composite of achievement and intelligence assessment, and Parent/Teacher/Learner statements;
- iv. Alignment for instructional materials will be achieved for rigor and personalized acceleration through adaptive teaching and technologies.

2. Special Education – A cultural shift is needed to shift Covid reaction and response to proactive learning systems and fully optimize time and effort<sup>4</sup>. Prior to the pandemic, MADOE was cited for the overidentification of Black Males for behavioral disorders. We will change these odds. OSS will enhance the use of data to set expectations and the implementation of instruction in relation to compliance support teams. Teams need to re-engage as collaborative problem solvers while shifting clerical items to technicians<sup>5</sup>. This is based on the Unit A Workload Report and feedback from department leaders. Adjusted work loads/ clarity of roles and processes will allow for improved consultation with instructional staff, related service providers and parents/caregivers. Making these shifts in roles enables educators to focus on applying their particular strengths to benefit students. Specialization of roles also simplifies professional development for special education teachers so that teachers can develop deeper skills in one

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<sup>3</sup> Bulgakov-Cooke, D., Lenard, M., & Singh, J. M. (2018). Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Status Report, Wake County Public School System: Cary, NC.

<sup>4</sup> Connor, D.J. "I don't like to be told that I view a student with a deficit mindset": Why it Matters that Disability Studies in Education Continues to Grow. *Can. J. Disabil. Stud.* 2020, 9, 20–41.

<sup>5</sup> Kauffman, J.M.; Ahrbeck, B.; Anastasiou, D.; Badar, J.; Felder, M.; Hallenbeck, B.A. Special Education Policy Prospects: Lessons from Social Policies Past. *Exceptionality* 2021, 29, 16–28.



area rather than having to master many different skills and specialties. This will make instructional leadership and curriculum materials more transparent and transformational.

- a. Measures of Success
  - i. Progress on students exiting from MRE;
  - ii. Proportional participation of students in LRE: Current LRE Education Environments of Ages 5 – 21;
    1. Full Inclusion 75%
    2. Sub Separate: 11%
    3. Residential 9%
  - iii. MCAS Special Education Data ELA: 16% Not Meeting Expectations;
  - iv. MCAS Special Education Data Special Education Data Math: 15% Not Meeting Expectations;
  - v. Number of students with disabilities accessing and persisting in AP coursework, and CTE tracks – Current positive exit data: Post-school Outcomes for Students with IEPs - 84.6%;
  - vi. Graduation Rate for Students with IEPs – Currently at 78.4%.
  - vii. Dropout Rate for Students with IEPs – Currently at 1.7%;
  - viii. Preschool Outcomes for Students with IEPs, Current data:
    1. Within Age Expectations for SEL: 41%;
    2. Within Age Expectations for Early Literacy: 41%;
    3. Within Age Expectations for Behavior: 58%; and
  - ix. Parent Involvement Survey demonstrating positive satisfaction rates.
- b. Collaborative Action Plan
  - i. Deliver effective Tier 1 instruction since higher performance of general education students correlates to higher performance of general education students with disabilities (NAPE).
  - ii. Ensure that content-strong staff provide interventions and support
  - iii. Coaching for instructional support teams that have a deep understanding and mastery of what they teach becomes even more important.
  - iv. In collaboration with the DEI Officer, we will build and scale data models that articular subgroup needs and drive thinking away from barriers to learning, i.e., ableist thinking.
  - v. IDEA resources have been set aside and is dedicated to an action plan for overidentification
3. Section 504 Plans: 504 Plans are of critical need in response to behavioral needs exacerbated by the pandemic. There is a crucial need to close the pre-referral gap through extensive professional development and by equipping teachers with the tools they need to support them and the students in their care. There are extensive transactional intersections between the system and families. Streamlining and substance is needed to create deeper service models and reduce unnecessary and superfluous compliance burdens. There is confusion in the response system. It needs to be reengineered to reassert the principal’s role in the process and fully empower subordinates and other staff at each site location. Family voice and awareness needs



greater support in order to streamline coordinated health plans<sup>6</sup>. Students have had difficulty achieving grade-level standards and are still in need of more time for instruction in order to catch up and keep up with their peers. Using a tiered intervention approach, this additional time will be used to pre-teach materials, reteach the day's lesson, address missing foundational skills, and correct misunderstandings.

- a. Measures of Success
  - i. Number of FTE supports for 504;
  - ii. Distributed and balanced ratio for programmatic support based on compliance requirements; and
  - iii. Perception data on conditions and culture.
  
- b. Collaborative Action Plan
  - i. Dynamic scheduling will be used to successfully close the achievement gap and significantly raise the achievement of students with and without special needs by preserving and protecting extra instructional time each day in addition to core content instruction time.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Craft strategic goals that complement the Superintendent's vision of success in response to community needs.
2. Establish a culture of continuous improvement and deliberate development by delivering an infrastructure for data use, accountability and fidelity of the implementation.
3. Develop corresponding strategy performance dashboards and scorecards.
4. Adopt and leverage anti-racist and anti-abilist practices to provide a compilation of teaching strategies to advance educational equity.
5. Further improve OSS division operation efficiency that supports service delivery and deepens family engagement.
6. Develop a cadence for strengthened coaching and growth development with clear goals and growth targets.

### **Conclusions:**

OSS is on a journey to cultivate and strengthen instructional models with highly visible metrics (scorecard). Our data-driven culture will center on measurement of student progress and the effectiveness and alignment of instructional and support practices. We will approach this through a durable MTSS process that organizes differentiated services for advanced academics, special education, and all 504 plan students. Our resources, both human and fiscal, will be aligned to our interim metrics and long-term accountability data. This reshaping compels us to consistently engage with the parents and partner communities to reinforce our shared commitment to action, assessment, and adjustment with a robust focus on evidence.

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<sup>6</sup> Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),† Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).