



Addressing the challenges around Special Education and the backlog in student evaluations is a shared priority for me and the Board. We have a great team, and everyone has special education as a top priority. This is the first of periodic updates that I will be providing during my tenure.

What We've Done

Since my first day on the job, we've devoted hours and resources toward providing the services that students need and parents expect. This is no small task. We recognize and share the growing frustration as we've struggled to keep up and we're working diligently to fix the situation.

Support and Professional Development

My first week on the job I met with Dr. Frances Stetson who authored the Stetson Report. We're working with Dr. Stetson and her team to provide "Step-by-Step for Inclusive Schools" training to the Central Office Special Education team and campuses throughout the spring and summer. The training began in February and is designed to address four broad categories:

- Systems Issues around a Common Vision and Vocabulary for School Improvement and Inclusion
- Improved Instructional Quality
- Staffing and Models of Support that Reinforce Student Success
- Collaboration and Planning Among Stakeholders

Every principal is required to attend the training along with their campus teams, which include at least one of each: Special Education teacher/chair, general education teacher, other special populations teacher–ESL/Bilingual and may also include a counselor or essential areas/electives teachers. All learning sessions have an on-site follow up and technical assistance support with campus teams to improve implementation.

March 24, 2023

An Update on Special Education

Data

Another growth opportunity we encountered early on was increasing the reliability and functionality of our data. We quickly assigned a project manager to build and deploy a dashboard to bring together district and campus level data including initial, annual and completed ARDS, pending and completed evaluations and referrals, all in one place. By the end of January, we had a new and powerful tool that improves our tracking and responsiveness.

Staff Recruitment

Filling vacancies to increase our capacity to conduct evaluations is another key component of our strategy. We have launched an aggressive recruitment effort to hire Educational Diagnosticians and Licensed Specialists in School Psychology. This includes providing up to a \$20,000 annual incentive for meeting high-quality evaluation targets and timelines as well as increasing the stipend for Special Education Teachers to at least \$5,000 next year.

This is a brief summary of our efforts to overcome the challenges surrounding Special Education.

Next Steps

I continue to meet regularly with Dr. Stetson to receive updates and suggestions on how we increase the capacity throughout the district to better serve our students.



Matias Segura
Austin ISD Interim Superintendent

I want to thank you all for the grace you've extended to me, the board and the team as we work to improve. We hold the same high expectations of ourselves as you have of us and are committed to meeting them. We will not resolve everything in six months but we have developed a plan we believe in and are committed to tracking and sharing our progress with you."

