



Special Education Strategic Plan

Special Education Task Force:

The Special Education Task Force was formed as a result of the Vista School Board of Trustees direction to research, discuss, and develop recommendations to redesign the special education program structure to be of higher quality and more fiscally sound.

Strategic Plan Development Process

The Strategic Plan development was a collaborative effort that included representatives from all constituency groups including parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, instructional assistants, site administrators, district office administrators, and community members. These representatives composed the Special Education Task Force, meeting monthly over an eight-month period from October 2017 through May 2018. The primary goal of the Task Force was to review research-based best practices in special education that promote high quality teaching and learning and revise the current VUSD Strategic Plan.

The Service Priorities outlined within the Strategic Plan serve as guideposts for ensuring equitable access to high quality instruction, meaningful inclusion, and improved learning outcomes for students with special needs. Based upon the focus areas and strategies identified within each service priority, the Special Education Program Implementation Guide will be revised to provide clarity regarding the District's inclusive service delivery model and support schools with the implementation of evidenced-based practices that will serve as a model of educational excellence and innovation in special education programming.



Service Priorities

1. **Intervention**
2. **Instructional Program**
3. **Leadership and Staffing**
4. **Communication**
5. **Program Monitoring**

Our Special Education Staff is committed to providing specialized academic and behavioral support and services to students with exceptional needs in order to fully engage them in high quality learning environments that challenge and prepare them to be well-rounded, active members of a global society.

Special Education Task Force Representatives

1. Carol Jimenez Parent
2. Eve Lorentzen Parent
3. Angel Yharte Parent
4. Michelle Ohnstad Parent
5. Marie Hoveln CSEA President
6. Beth Ewing Lead Instructional Assistant
7. Arlis Coleman Instructional Assistant
8. Leticia Robles District Interpreter
9. Becky Romney Gen. Ed. Teacher
10. Rita McCarthy Gen. Ed. Teacher
11. Diane Smith Gen. Ed. Teacher
12. Jacqueline Diem Sp. Ed. Teacher
13. Jill Schmidt Sp. Ed. Teacher
14. Loretta Feldt Sp. Ed. Teacher
15. Sheila Gromm Sp. Ed. Teacher
16. Katie Smith Sp. Ed. Teacher
17. Alison Garner School Psychologist
18. Susie Setran Speech Pathologist
19. Krista Bernsten Principal
20. Rachel Schmidt Principal
21. Chris Altona Principal
22. Dr. Leslie Taylor Sp. Ed. Coordinator
23. Jana Hegg Sp. Ed. Supervisor
24. Tamatha Parker Sp. Ed. Supervisor
25. Laurie Leigh Sp. Ed. Supervisor
26. Steffanie Rupp Inclusion TOSA/Behavior Specialist
27. Dr. Kyle Ruggles Ex. Director Student Services
28. Dr. Sharmila Kraft Ex. Director, Elementary Curriculum and Instruction
29. Dr. Susan Ford Interim Director of Alternative Programs
30. Rebecca Nobriga Ex. Director Special Education
31. Steve Davis TOSA Measurement and Monitoring



*Facilitated by Dr. Melinda Pierson,
Special Education Department Head
for Cal State Fullerton*



Special Education Service Priority 1 Intervention

Establish a consistent, coherent process for providing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports to create systematic change through intentional design of quality first instruction and redesign of services and supports that quickly identify and match the needs of all students.

Focus Area 1: Quality First Instruction for Inclusive Education

Strategy 1: Collaborate with general education staff to implement and monitor Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction strategies to support all learners.

Strategy 2: Collaborate with district and site MTSS teams to utilize formative and summative assessments to guide effective instruction and school wide intervention.

Focus Area 2: Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)

Strategy 1: Clearly define and reinforce the role of special education staff within the MTSS system.

Strategy 2: Research, purchase and train special education staff on evidenced-based intensive intervention curriculum and instructional strategies to support language, literacy and numeracy.

Strategy 3: Support the implementation of the district-wide MTSS through ongoing professional development with administrative and instructional staff.



Special Education Service Priority 2

Instructional Program

Instructional programs will focus on sustainable interventions that reflect best practice and ensure students with disabilities have equitable access and opportunity to engage in high quality instruction within an inclusive school environment.

Focus Area 1: Inclusive Education

Strategy 1: Build upon the continuum of services to ensure equitable access to districtwide programming with multiple pathways for high school completion.

Strategy 2: Clearly define the inclusive service delivery model to ensure that the supports and interventions identified within individualized education programs (IEPs) are aligned to the unique needs of the student and build upon the student's strengths, interests and preferences.

Strategy 3: Revise current Special Education Implementation Guide to support pedagogy and programming within an inclusive service delivery model.

Focus Area 2: Balanced Academic and Positive Behavioral Support Program

Strategy 1: Provide timely effective behavior intervention and supports to both general and special education students.

Strategy 2: Support sites to effectively analyze and utilize multiple measures of data to inform instructional practices and readily target intervention to meet individual student needs.

Strategy 3: Create a growth mindset culture amongst teachers and students that fosters perseverance and resilience to support all students in becoming confident learners and critical thinkers.

Focus Area 3: Professional Development

Strategy 1: Develop a coherent and integrated model of professional development with a focus on inclusive practices for both general and special education teachers and instructional assistants.

Strategy 2: Identify exemplars of inclusive programming to allow for modeling and coaching of inclusive practices within the integrated model of professional development.

Special Education Service Priority 3

Leadership and Staffing

Refine leadership and staffing models to promote student-centered environments that demonstrate greater levels of inclusion, increase site capacity to address the needs of their diverse learners, and ensure fiscal responsibility.

Focus Area 1: Leadership

Strategy 1: Revise Special Education Implementation Guide to support schools and staff in developing internal systems of accountability and foster inclusive cultures at their sites.

Strategy 2: Support site-based leadership teams in utilizing and analyzing special education data to maximize effective staffing and prioritize equitable access to course selection as part of the master schedule development process.

Focus Area 2: College and Career Readiness

Strategy 1: Develop a comprehensive database of post-secondary outcome data to monitor student achievement and guide future program development.

Strategy 2: Increase students' voice in the IEP process by actively engaging students in both college and career technical education exploration.

Focus Area 3: Staffing

Strategy 1: Create elementary and secondary staffing ratio model for instructional assistants to effectively support the inclusive programming and minimize disruption to student learning.

Strategy 2: Create policies and procedures to support site implementation of the instructional assistant staffing model.



Special Education Service Priority 4 Communication

Implement effective communication strategies across the district to build positive relationships, foster collaborative environments, and maintain a laser focus on student-centered decisions and actions for parents and staff.

Focus Area 1: Fostering Collaborative Communication with Parents

Strategy 1: Consistently and proactively communicate information in both English and Spanish to increase parent knowledge, participation and involvement in the IEP process.

Strategy 2: Utilize a Strengths-Based approach to IEP development and implementation.

Strategy 3: Integrate site-based opportunities for parents to be meaningfully included and engaged in their student's education.

Focus Area 2: Principals as Partners in the IEP Process

Strategy 1: Increase awareness of the district's continuum of services to include policies, procedures and placement criteria for specialized programs within the district.

Strategy 2: Provide annual professional development for site administrators to support their ability in serving effectively as LEA representatives in the IEP process.

Focus Area 3: Attract and Retain Highly Qualified Instructional Assistants

Strategy 1: Develop a comprehensive training module for instructional assistants to increase foundational knowledge and build capacity to support all students in an inclusive environment.

Strategy 2: Improve systems of communication to ensure instructional assistants are informed of student needs and meaningfully involved in the IEP process.

Strategy 3: Ensure instructional assistants have access to technology necessary for facilitating targeted instruction to students in the general education setting.



Special Education Service Priority 5 Program Monitoring

Develop efficient program monitoring procedures that will ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, maintain legally defensible IEPs, and promote equitable access to inclusive academic and behavior programs throughout the district.

Focus Area 1: Student-Centered Planning

Strategy 1: As a means of improving post-secondary outcomes for all students, IEP planning will promote self-determination in grades Pre-K through Adult Transition.

Strategy 2: The IEP process will actively involve students in collecting assessment information, developing goals, and evaluating their progress towards meeting IEP goals.

Focus Area 2: Placement and Services

Strategy 1: As a means of ensuring equitable access to learning in the least restrictive environment (LRE), clearly defined policies, procedures and placement criteria will be developed for specialized programs within the district.

Strategy 2: Develop a comprehensive model for transition across the grade spans that minimizes disruption in students learning.

Focus Area 3: Program Monitoring

Strategy 1: The Special Education Self Review (SESR) process will be revised to ensure districtwide use of formative assessment measures within the IEP development process.

Strategy 2: Special education programming will be monitored to ensure all students, including English language learners, receive targeted instruction in language and literacy.

Strategy 3: Develop annual graduation and post-secondary data monitoring system to guide site-based decision-making and ensure equitable access to alternative pathways of achievement.

