Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students With Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement
About Moving Your Numbers

Moving Your Numbers: Improving Learning for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Reform, examines how school districts with vastly different demographics increase the performance of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners as part of whole-district reform efforts. Case studies of featured districts, as described in the full report, provide evidence that students with disabilities, like all other students, can learn at higher levels when adults focus their collective efforts on improving instructional practice, consistently implement core work across the district, and use assessment and accountability as a lever for ongoing system and student learning and improvement.

Moving Your Numbers identifies six essential practices that must be in place to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Evidence suggests that these six practices, when used in an aligned and coherent manner, are associated with higher student achievement. These practices are use data well, focus your goals, select and implement shared instructional practices (individually and collectively), implement deeply, monitor and provide feedback and support, and inquire and learn.

Moving Your Numbers was initiated and is supported through the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) under the leadership of Dr. Martha Thurlow, NCEO Director; Rachel Quenemoen, NCEO Senior Research Fellow; and Dr. Laurene Christensen, NCEO Research Associate. Dr. Deborah Telfer, Director, School of Education and Allied Professions Grant Center, University of Dayton, coordinates the development and review of Moving Your Numbers on behalf of NCEO. NCEO was established in 1990 to provide national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Photographs used in this publication have been provided courtesy of the districts featured and the Ohio Department of Education.

Additional case studies of featured districts will be added to the Moving Your Numbers website as they are developed. Go to www.MovingYourNumbers.org for the complete report and additional tools and resources, and to submit success stories.

NCEO is supported primarily through Cooperative Agreements (#H326G050007, #H326G11002) with the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Additional support for targeted projects, including those on ELL students, is provided by other federal and state agencies. The Center is affiliated with the Institute on Community Integration in the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.
“We believe we’re here to educate all kids and we take it personally when someone isn’t succeeding,” said Tim Onsager, in his third year as superintendent of the Stoughton Area School District (SASD). “For our work to be sustainable, it can’t be person dependent. We all hold each other accountable for student success,” he added. Located in south central Wisconsin, SASD serves approximately 3,300 children across three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The movement away from programs driving teaching and learning, to a focus on the district-wide implementation of comprehensive services to ensure each child’s success, began about eight years ago and has led to a major rethinking and restructuring of what all adults do at every level of the district. Once a district with high rates of special education identification and low graduation rates for students with disabilities, SASD now embeds services for all children, including those who need the most support, into the day-to-day instructional process used at each school. Similarly, related services providers (e.g., school psychologists) are embedded in the school operation, working alongside students, teachers, and administrators to support the delivery of high-quality instruction in the regular environment.

Special education identification rates dropped from almost 19 percent in 2004-05 to 9.8 percent in 2009-10. At the same time, graduation rates improved for all students – from about 85 to 97 percent – with the most dramatic improvement evident for students receiving special education services – from 68.6 to 97 percent.

This increase was the result of focused attention prompted, in part, by the district receiving a focused monitoring visit from the state education agency because of its low graduation rates for students with disabilities. Being identified for focused monitoring, according to Schneider, was “one of the best gifts because it led to further focused work and improvements,” he said.

A Ferocious Belief
Fox Prairie Elementary School Principal Mike Jamison began his career as a school psychologist. “Ten years ago, Stoughton had the highest incidence rate in the state, based on people thinking placement in special education was the only way to help kids,” he said. “Now, our focus is on how to meet the instructional needs of all children and the regular education teachers have a ferocious belief in being responsible for all kids; they want to own all their students,” said Jamison.

Focus Your Goals. In 2003, SASD participated in an external evaluation conducted by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Professor Dr. Elise Frattura. The study, which focused on student services and special education, revealed low achievement and high dropout rates for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students of color. She noted the crisis in the area of math with SASD students performing at levels significantly below state and county averages. In 2002-2003, Frattura also found that:
A large percentage of students were segregated and isolated from the core curriculum and instruction;

There was an inconsistent philosophical premise from which to create cohesive and proactive learning environments for all students;

There was a need for a cohesive system of schools versus the autonomy of individual sites;

Support to students who struggled was arranged in a reactionary manner; and

There was an all or nothing approach with many students falling within our educational cracks (Frattura, E., Stoughton Area School District Board of Education Presentation, September 7, 2010).

In response to Frattura’s feedback, the district began to put the puzzle pieces in place to create a cohesive district-wide structure – from central office to all schools – that would support improved learning for all students and align curriculum and assessment, professional development, policy and procedures, and funding sources around the four strategic drivers of (1) data utilization, (2) academic achievement, (3) climate and culture, and (4) communication and partnership.

In 2010, a participatory study1 was conducted by Frattura as a follow-up to the work completed by the district based on the results of the 2003 evaluation. At the conclusion of the study, Frattura reported that:

“The leadership, teachers, students, and families of Stoughton Area School District know how to create solutions that are efficient, sophisticated, powerful, and amenable to action, evident through their current successes in student achievement. Understanding that it is the students at the margins or, more accurately, those who are marginalized who are not successful leads us to the moral purpose of public education and what kind of commitment to such purpose is present at each level of the school district. This is the time to build the lateral and vertical capacity through connected teaching and learning networks for all learners. The strength of the administration and teachers is undeniable. Now that strength to build capacity through accountability for all learners must be front-and-center for all educational leaders at all levels…” (Frattura, 2010).

Key actions taken by SASD between 2003 and 2010 included:

Developing a district infrastructure to support a unified approach to meeting the instructional needs of all children;

Establishing a district-wide service delivery leadership team and school-based leadership teams;

Providing for increased planning time for general educators and learning strategists (aka special education teachers);

Providing opportunities for dialogue and shared learning across the district around the district’s goals;

Proactively merging and intentionally using resources to meet student needs and making hiring decisions aligned with the district’s goals;

Developing/implementing a comprehensive professional development plan aligned with the district’s approach and goals; and

Increasing transparency and communication within and across the district.

Gaining focus around core work was facilitated by the development of a common philosophy grounded in the work of Frattura and her colleague Colleen Capper who advocate for a social justice approach to transforming schools. Their

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1 Participatory research is a research methodology in which people directly impacted by the problem under investigation are engaged as equal partners in all stages of the research process.
approach, Integrated Comprehensive Services (ICS), provided a vehicle around which adults across SASD could come together to develop shared understanding and responsibility for supporting the progress of every child. Dr. Kurt Schneider, Director of Student Services, explains: “We went from having no common philosophy to creating a unified message and embedding what was a separate office for special education within the Department of Teaching and Learning.” The job of the special education director, prior to Schneider’s joining SASD “was largely focused on procedural safeguards,” he added.

Now, SASD has a limited number of strategies aligned with four goal areas that drive the work across the system. For example, in the area of academic achievement, SASD organizes, trains, and communicates progress using the following strategy: “We will ensure that all students are high performing learners by engaging them in rigorous standards-based curriculum, assessment, and research-based instruction for the 21st century.” Embedded in this strategy is a commitment to ramping up the rigor in what and how content is delivered to all students. Closing the gap, therefore, involves closing the gap between marginalized subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities) and their typically developing peers. Closing the gap also involves raising the performance level of all SASD students in ways that allow them to reach significantly higher levels of achievement as compared to national standards.

Accomplishments include increasing state assessment scores by at least 10 percentage points in both reading and math from 2005-06 to 2008-09, and earning SASD the distinction of being the largest district in Wisconsin with an increase greater than 10 percentage points in reading during that same period of time. Additional accomplishments included increasing Advanced Placement (AP) options for all students, increasing ACT results, and being recognized by ACT for academic performance in science.

Use Data Well. Another district goal area involves data utilization and the district-wide strategy of driving instructional improvement and facilitating communication with district stakeholders by supporting and expecting staff to access and utilize student data effectively. Frattura’s 2010 report to SASD’s board of education noted that while achievement for all students remained the same or improved with the exception of isolated grade levels (e.g., Wisconsin Knowledge & Concepts Examinations, or WKCE, 8th grade math results moved from 35 to 86.1 percent), the achievement of students with disabilities improved by 10 to 20 percent across the board over the past eight years. (Frattura, E., September 7, 2010).

SASD’s commitment to effective data use resulted in the use of data teams at each school and district level, coupled with the reassignment of long-time employee Randi Johnson as the district Data Utilization Specialist. Johnson’s role is to facilitate the effective use of relevant content is delivered to all students. Closing the gap, therefore, involves closing the gap between marginalized subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities) and their typically developing peers. Closing the gap also involves raising the performance level of all SASD students in ways that allow them to reach significantly higher levels of achievement as compared to national standards.

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Stoughton Area School District

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**Strategy:** We will ensure all students are high performing learners by engaging them in rigorous standards-based curriculum, assessment, and research-based instruction for the 21st century.

- Refine the implementation practices of **Integrated comprehensive services (ICS)** in order to increase the academic achievement of diverse populations.
- Sustain implementation of standards-based curriculum cycle that includes **program evaluation** to ensure quality programming toward student achievement.
- Define the **essential learning targets** for each course so that curriculum, instruction and assessment will be closely aligned and well articulated to enhance student achievement.
- Based on Essential Learning Targets and results to student performance data, design, implement, and monitor interventions to improve student achievement (RtI).

(Source: Stoughton Area School District Strategic Plan, 2009.)

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Stoughton Area School District

**DATA UTILIZATION**

**Strategy:** We will drive instructional improvement and facilitate communication with District stakeholders by supporting and expecting staff to access and utilize student data effectively.

- Employ a **Data Utilization Specialist**
- Apply **common assessments** to all EC-12 curricular areas.
- Train **Building Consultation Teams** to purposefully use a variety of date with respect to student performance goals.
- Establish three **collaborative groups** in the areas of Reading (1st Grade), Algebra, and Social Studies.

(Source: Stoughton Area School District Strategic Plan, 2009.)

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Integrated Comprehensive Services (ICS):

**FOUR CORNERSTONES**

1. **Focusing on Equity**
2. **Equitable Structures: Location and Arrangement of Educational Services**
3. **Access to High-Quality Teaching & Learning:**
   - Curriculum and Instruction
   - Building Teacher Capacity
4. **Implementing Change: Funding and Policy**


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data for district-wide instructional decision-making. Johnson, who exemplifies the district’s “no excuses” mindset to meeting the needs of each and every student, commented “in the past, I was known as the indignant one. We needed to do a better job for all children, and confronting our problems started with an honest look at the data,” she added.

Success, as defined by Johnson, means “every child participates at grade level in all classes, graduates, and has the ability to fulfill postsecondary plans.”

Data use has permeated the district. “Data use has been an area of growth for us and there has been phenomenal work done to use state-level data, conduct data reviews, and identify themes and gaps,” explained Jason Model, 7th grade Learning Strategist at River Bluff Middle School. “Because a child has a label doesn’t mean he can’t excel; the key is being in regular education with a content area teacher,” added Model.

Data use involves not only the review of state assessment data, but progress monitoring data collected frequently over the course of the school year, such as Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, which is administered at the elementary level three times per school year. Infinite Campus, a district data system that allows for easy access to data and promotes consistency in the use of data across the district, is seen by district and school personnel as a tool that will continue to support improved capacity in data utilization. Prior to putting a foundation in place for systematizing data use across the district, “we didn’t have a uniform process in place; people would self-report graduation data and it was about 30 percent off,” explained Schneider. “It’s the responsibility of the district to allow people to look at data and demystify the process of gauging how kids are doing,” he added.

Judy Singletary, Director of Curriculum & Instructional Services, agrees: “We have data teams at every building looking at local data. Team structures that incorporate data use, along with tools provided and expectations set by the district, are resulting in more consistent data use across the district. Data walls, like the ones used at Kegonsa and Fox Prairie elementary schools are used by teams of regular education teachers, learning strategists, reading specialists, related services personnel, educational assistants, and building principals to monitor the acquisition of learning targets by all children. The “wall” is used to gauge the performance of each child, noting whether each child exceeds expectations, meets expectations, approaches expectations, or does not meet expectations. Rather than focus on the individual teacher, ownership has shifted to the team and the degree to which the instruction and/or intervention being used is effective in supporting the learning progress of each student.

River Bluffs Middle School Principal Patricia (Trish) Gates believes that “the next edges of growth include becoming more sophisticated users of data. The principal’s role is critical in improving outcomes for all children. Principals have to sequence actions; the district has to set parameters and provide the leadership. I know it can be done,” she said.

Fred Trotter, Principal of Kegonsa Elementary School, agrees, stating “the district empowered and stretched principals to be the instructional leaders. It’s night and day from my previous principalship in another district to my experience in Stoughton. Here it’s about how to support teachers,” he added.
As s e t t h i n k i n g: i t ’ s A b o u t s e r v i c e D e l i v e rY

Use of ICS as a reform strategy has led the district to rethink policies and practices in fundamental ways. “We’ve spent a lot of time defining asset thinking as compared to deficit thinking,” explained Schneider. Fonda Lewis, 2nd Grade Teacher and District Mentor, said “we’ve moved from using a deficit model and being full of excuses to having no excuses and focusing on what we can do to ensure each child succeeds.”

Jamison’s son, now 23, was identified as having a learning disability (LD) and placed in a middle school resource room for children with LD. “As a parent, I felt it was safe. But, when he went to high school, the way he viewed himself and the world he felt he could be a part of shrunk. High school was an awful experience for him.” About that time, the district began to rethink its approach to the traditional pull-out model and decided, as Jamison expressed, that “it was something good for adults, but not for kids.”

Other parents of SASD students echo Jamison’s sentiments. Laurel Gretebeck and Cindy Polizzi believe their children experienced success and were accepted because they were in regular education environments with non-disabled peers. “If ever a wish I had it’s for students to be accepting on their own,” said Cindy P. “Kurt includes all of us and makes us a part of the team. We’re not excluded.”

Similarly, Deb Notstad describes the doors that were opened for her son Adam because of the district’s commitment to including all children. Notstad’s son Adam, now 21, operates his own business called AdamCan Recycling and is, in every way, a contributing member of the community. Although Adam is nonverbal, he makes presentations at local community and business events using his iPad2, and can activate his can-crushing device through his wheelchair.

A No-Barrier Zone. Jenny Masten – Adam’s sister – is a teacher in an area district. She, Anna Iverson, and others have spearheaded the development of an Inclusive Dream Park for the city of Stoughton, which would provide a barrier-free recreational space for all members of the community, including children and adults with disabilities, senior citizens, and others. The park is being intentionally designed to eliminate traditional age barriers and inter-generational gaps, and will be fully wheelchair and walker accessible. Stoughton City Parks and Recreation Director Tom Lynch is working with the Dream Park committee, SASD, and local businesses to increase understanding for parents of students with disabilities. “We need to include them in everything; it’s clearly the right thing to do and there is still a gap,” said Lynch.

Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices. Expanding and engaging the larger community in the inclusion of all its members is fully embraced by the SASD leadership team. For example, Network Engineer Dan Burkhelter, described by his colleagues as the man behind the curtain, sees his job as being about finding ways to support each child’s progress and that sometimes means finding or adapting devices that allow children to access the general curriculum. Similarly, Becky Fjelstad, Director of Human Resources, believes “we’re all in this together. I’m looking for specific traits in prospective employees that support our philosophy and approach to implementing the work. We’ve connected and aligned the work to resource use,” she added. Director of Transportation Rob Riley moved a bus stop to accommodate a student with a physical disability so she could ride the “regular” school bus with peers from her neighborhood. “Ten years ago we had 130 students in special education that we transported to and from their assigned school. Now, they receive services where they would normally go to school,” said Riley.

Stoughton High School Principal Mike Kruse explained that he is most proud of having reached the point at which he can say “this is how we do business with kids being accepting of other kids. To change thinking is like turning a big freight liner around in mid-stream; it’s hard.” The high
school went from operating 34 pull-out classrooms four years ago to having no pull-out classrooms scheduled beginning with the 2012-13 school year.

High school Science Teacher and Science Team Advisor Cindy Carter says, “it’s almost like a one-room schoolhouse here – kids help the kid next to them and are also OK receiving help.” Students with significant cognitive disabilities also have a different social experience here; it’s authentic, explained Katie Wilkin, Learning Strategist assigned to the math department.

**Learning Targets.** Engaging everyone, including students, in supporting higher levels of learning has been aided by the district’s work to develop learning targets for each grade level that delineate what all learners are expected to know, be able to do, produce, or perform in a given year (Learning Targets: Knowing where we’re going, SASD, 2011). “The learning targets provide the basis for guiding formative and summative evaluation, providing feedback to students and parents, and designing, implementing, and monitoring interventions,” explained Singletary. Two Inclusion Support Teacher positions were created to support the alignment of formative and summative assessment with essential/big ideas, and to advise school-level teams on how to differentiate instruction to meet learner needs. “Our overriding question was how do we change the delivery mode but ensure the standard is the standard for all kids,” explained Amy Ruck, one of the Inclusion Support Teachers.

**Implementing deeply** the ICS approach provided a vehicle for consistently communicating expectations, and assigning staff at all levels to better support the collaborative design and delivery of instruction aligned with learning targets. At the high school level, Learning Strategists like Wilkins and Stephen Stokes are assigned to Department/content area teams that enable them to work as part of a teacher team and gain expertise in specific content areas. Stokes, for example, is assigned to the Science Department where he was involved in helping to redesign the science curriculum. “Consistency is huge. At the beginning, I was all over across content areas,” said Stokes. “Since learning strategists are in regular classrooms as part of our departments, they’ve become advisors to entire departments and the students see them not as a special education teacher, but as a teacher,” said Carter. “All of us work with all kids,” she added.

At the elementary level, cross-categorical alignment of learning strategists assigned to support the instructional process for students with disabilities, students identified as talented/gifted, and students who are English Language Learners (ELL) has allowed for greater integration of services/supports while strengthening collaboration across roles. School psychologists and speech-language pathologists work with teachers to co-implement instruction for all students. At Sandhill Elementary School, School Psychologist Abby Fritz works alongside Title 1 Learning Strategist Jennifer Hopper and classroom teachers to align intervention to student needs and conduct daily formative assessment. Third grade teacher Andrea Wilke, who works closely with Fritz and others says, “I believe in having all kids supported in my classroom; we’re using adults better.”

At Kegonsa Elementary School, School Psychologist Samantha Rogers fulfills a similar role. “Sam is key; she’s visible in the classroom and serves as a co-teacher in many ways. It’s an investment for the district to do that,” remarked 1st Grade Teacher Julie Alexander. “The district has made a conscious effort to fund a school psychologist and SLP in each school,” explained Schneider.

Laura Borsecnik, Talented & Gifted Learning Strategist, believes the challenge is to help people think about differentiation and what it looks like in the classroom. Borsecnik, who works at River Bluff Middle School, explained that “it’s never been about what’s good for TAG kids. We’ve gone away from making instructional decisions based on label. Whether we reach up or down, it’s all the same work.”
Integrating service delivery around learning targets has “allowed us to develop a common vocabulary and support the transition from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning,” said Fox Prairie Elementary School Kindergarten Teacher Mary Tullis. “Instead of pulling kids out, one of the Learning Strategists comes into my room every morning to support reading. Kids don’t lose time walking to another room. The attitude of adults is critical; expectations are critical and we constantly remind each other what’s best for children,” said Tullis. Tara Hutchins, 4th Grade Teacher at Fox Prairie, agrees with Tullis. “I’ve changed how I teach, from whole group to learning stations, to better differentiate and meet the needs of each child,” she explained.

**Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support.** Fox Prairie team members concur in their assessment that the changes and shifts that have been made are about organizing the system and the adults in ways that support all students, especially students with disabilities and other struggling learners, as well as those already exceeding. Fox Prairie Learning Strategist Sara Durtschi explains: “We continue to get better in being more systematic about how to provide intervention supports. We need to build the system for how we make decisions so it’s not person dependent. Everyone needs to be replacable.”

Karla Cornell, 8th Grade Teacher at River Bluff, credits the gains made by staff in using data more effectively in helping them monitor student progress, as well as the degree to which instruction and intervention is effective. “The software package provided by the district allows students to quantify their own lexile scores so kids can access data on iPads and see their own growth,” she explained.

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**Stoughton Area School District**

**BELIEFS**

_The values we hold as a school district_

We believe that...

- Each student has the right to the opportunities to reach his/her full potential.
- Knowledge increases life’s options and has the power to enhance the quality of life.
- The family is the primary influence in the development of the individual.
- Learning is enhanced in a safe, disciplined and cooperative environment.
- Learning is a life-long process and is the key to understanding and managing change.
- All individuals can learn, but at different rates and in different ways.
  - Educating students is our highest priority.
- Individual potential to learn is increased by the cooperative efforts between the student and the school, family and community.
  - For all individual learning is achievable, observable and measureable
  - Each individual has the right to a safe learning environment.
- Each individual has the responsibility to respect the rights and differences of others.
- Effective schools work in strong partnership with all parts of the community to establish and accomplish mutual goals.
- Each individual within a community has the responsibility to become a productive and contributing member of society.
  - All people have worth and deserve respect.
  - Personal responsibility for learning increases success.
- Excellence can be achieved through consistent effort and continuous improvement.

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Structures are in place at all levels to support team monitoring and to provide a forum for team members to provide feedback to each other on what’s working well and what needs tweaked or replaced. While the process that teams use varies somewhat across buildings, all schools in the district are working to systematize the team process with data playing a pivotal role in guiding instructional decision-making. In addition to a district-wide team comprised of six representatives from each school, grade level teams in each school meet weekly to review the progress of all children. These teams include the teachers at that grade level and one contact person (e.g., a school psychologist). Teams comprising grade bands (e.g., 1st/2nd grade team, 3rd-5th grade team and including learning strategists) meet to focus on curriculum, learning, and planning. At River Bluff Middle School, two learning strategists are assigned to each grade-level team and meet and work with that team to review student progress.

A Pupil Services Team (PST+) meets after core meetings and provides a forum for grade
levels to attend and talk about children. Issues range from problems affecting one or more grade levels, such as students not turning in homework, to child-specific issues. Rather than referring children to special education, consultation teams, with representation from regular classroom teachers, learning strategists, specials (music, art, physical education) teachers, and grade-level representatives, also meet to review the progress of individual children.

The Lifting Up of Schools

SASD believes in “growing” its own capacity to meet the needs of all children in regular environments. “Judy brought the notion that you have to grow your own capacity by giving a real voice to your own staff,” explained Schneider. Consequently, 60 of SASD’s teachers—representing each building and level—work as part of a strategic leadership team to facilitate the district’s capacity to deliver high-quality instruction to each child. “We’re lifting schools up by ferreting out good examples of what high quality instruction looks like and providing support for struggling teachers,” said Singletary. “I can tap teachers on the shoulder and ask, ‘would you be willing to share your craft?’ and they’re honored to be asked,” she said. Classroom teachers are expected to plan and teach for all students, and to plan up front each lesson so everyone can participate.

Inquire and Learn. This willingness to share in the responsibility for teaching and supporting all children is evident on multiple levels and “people across the district hold other people across the district accountable for student learning,” observed Singletary. Sandhill Elementary Principal Cheryl Price explained: “until we had collaborative discussion across districts and between the district and all schools, rather than being isolated in individual buildings, we weren’t able to move students forward and gain a deeper understanding of what it meant to implement at a deep level. The work we do now is the hardest work I’ve ever seen teachers have to do, but this is a passion,” said Price.

The district continues to work to systematically put common high-leverage strategies, such as the use of collaborative teams, in place in all schools to increase consistency in practice and shared learning on

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**LEADING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ELISE FRATTURA**

**WHAT’S ICS?**
Intended Comprehensive Services (ICS) is about taking the best of what we know is good practice from special education, gifted education, and other areas and making it available to all children as part of the core instructional program. For example, in gifted education, an emphasis is placed on critical thinking skills; in special education, we work on building relationships with individual children. These are practices that should be embedded as part of the core instructional program for every child. ICS is about proactively rebuilding the entire system and getting instruction right the first time for all children. It’s not about moving special education back into the confines of regular education, nor is it about moving children back into an unchanged core and saying that’s OK.

**WHY SERVICES AND NOT PROGRAMS?**
We know that the more a child is pulled out the farther behind he/she gets and we can’t remedy this with a reaction to failure. People sometimes get stuck on the need for small-group instruction. Small-group instruction can be provided without creating separate systems, and can be offered as part of the core instructional program for any/all children. ICS is about reallocating staff to meet the needs of every learner, not about diminishing teacher capacity. To that end, ICS is not a co-dependent model and is not based on co-teaching. Instead, it’s about building collaborative teaching and promoting the sharing of expertise among all adults in the system.

Green Bay Public Schools assistant high school principal Michael Friif says “the biggest hurdle we have to get past is the belief that students are the problem and programs are the solution.” Services are about preventing failure; they start with how kids learn, assume universal access, and are tied as part of the core to teaching and learning. Services assume a range of learner skill and are transportable in that they’re delivered to the child where that child is and normally would attend school irrespective of his/her label. Programs, on the contrary, typically cluster children within a deficit model that attempts to remediate or “bring kids up” to a certain level. Within a program model, children are expected to synthesize learning across various content areas and settings. A service delivery focus puts the oneness on the adults for synthesizing information and content across areas in ways that best supports the progress and learning of each child.

**WHAT IS THE DISTRICT’S ROLE IN PROMOTING HIGHER LEVELS OF LEARNING FOR ALL CHILDREN?**
The district’s role is critical in that it has to set the vision for a unified approach to teaching all children, use data to leverage improvement, and help all adults understand the non-negotiables of the instructional process. The district must build the infrastructure and make sure the right staff are in the right place, always organizing around teaching and learning, not departmental or programmatic functions. Every decision the district makes should be aligned with and intentional in supporting this vision and approach, including decisions about policy and funding. Even though specific funding is earmarked for special populations, all funds should be used proactively to support students, rather than to segregate them. The days of schools within the district “reporting up” to central office should be over. Instead, central office should be functioning in a supportive role. A social justice leader understands this at a visceral level and for that kind of leader education is about building a pluralistic society by honoring each other’s differences. District leaders should build the capacity of the district in a manner that is socially just.

ICS was developed by Elise Frattura and Colleen Capper. For more information on social justice leadership, Dr. Frattura recommends the book School Leaders Our Children Deserve: Seven Keys to Equity, Social Justice, and School Reform by Dr. George Theoharis, Associate Professor, Syracuse University School of Education.
the part of adults across the district. Kegonsa 2nd Grade Teacher Lisa Gutche credits the district’s unified focus and commitment to PD centered on meeting student needs with helping teachers and other adults at all levels of the system continually improve their practice, “allowing us to work together not only at the school level, but also with counterparts in other schools.”

Fostering collective inquiry and ongoing learning on a district-wide basis is a function of the district’s commitment to continuous improvement. Schneider or Singletary facilitated meetings for all principals in the past. “The meetings are back because principals want them. You just can’t send people away; you have to be involved and have to be really focused in building instructional leadership on an ongoing basis,” said Schneider. “We had schools we historically didn’t expect to do well and they had the greatest gains,” Singletary added.

“All students have the right and all adults have the responsibility to meet the needs of every child in regular education; it’s the goal of all adults to make that happen,” said Trish Gates. “The more we meet the challenges of including all children, the more it informs our own practice. Inclusion isn’t something we do only for students with disabilities. It’s our mission to support the inclusion of every child,” she said.

While the district believes its work is far from done, they’re proud of their teachers, administrators, related services providers, and all other adults that continue to come together around meeting the needs of children. “All adults in all buildings are responsible for all children. It’s not a thing you have to do; it is evidence of our core beliefs,” said Singletary.

Advice from Stoughton Area School District

1. Develop a unified message around a common philosophy and use it to align and drive the work across the system.
2. Organize around a distributed leadership model and involve everyone.
3. Demystify the process of identifying student needs by using data effectively.
4. Integrate services and eliminate silos.
5. Focus on student learning.
6. Align hiring decisions with the district’s goals.
7. Provide continual staff development and support and train everyone.
8. Stick with it even when it’s clunky – stay the course.

Supplementary information related to SASD’s ongoing improvement efforts can be found by clicking on the Additional Resources tab. For additional information about the SASD, contact Tim Onsager, Superintendent, 320 North Street, Stoughton, WI, 53589; 608.877.5000 (phone).
Available MOVING YOUR NUMBERS Publications:

• Administrator Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement.

• District Self-Assessment Guide for Moving Our Numbers: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: A Synthesis of Lessons Learned from Districts Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: Five Districts Share How They Used Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of Regional Providers in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of SEAs in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Parent/Family Companion Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Teacher Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

For More Information on Moving Your Numbers, Contact NCEO or Visit: movingyournumbers.org

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