

Madison Metropolitan School District

Special Education Review, December 2019–
March 2021

WestEd

The Improve Group

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Executive Summary, Including Overarching Findings and Recommendations

This evaluation looked at multiple questions about how students who receive special education in Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) are served. It also looked at the progress that MMSD has made on the goals of a special education improvement plan (Madison Metropolitan School District 2016–2019 Special Education Plan; written by the Department of Student Services, “the Plan”) that has been implemented since 2016.

The original timeline of this evaluation had work wrapping up in June 2020, but the timeline was extended to March of 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in hopes that we (the evaluators) could conduct school visits. It is undeniable that the pandemic has caused learning to be disrupted for public school students across the country, and students who were already struggling, and students with disabilities, have been significantly impacted. As MMSD transitions to post-pandemic learning models, it is especially critical that the findings and recommendations in this report be taken seriously.

MMSD is a well-resourced school district. The recommendations in this report should be able to be implemented with existing staff as long as coordination and collaboration are improved.

This executive summary is designed to share the overarching, sometimes paraphrased for readability, findings and recommendations in the report so that it can be used as a stand-alone high-level summary of take-aways. A comprehensive report follows, for those who want or need to know more details. Finally, The Appendix provides many additional data tables and deeper analysis, for those who desire even more information.

Overarching Findings

- Students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, are not achieving or graduating at levels the district can celebrate.
- The district’s instructional and administrative infrastructure is not conducive to improved outcomes for students with disabilities.
- The district has many strengths upon which to build. These strengths are outlined throughout this report.
- While much progress has been made on the Plan, and many of the goals have been met, doubling down on it, in collaboration with general education partners, is necessary, especially in light of recent leadership turnover and the fallout from the global pandemic.

Recommendations: Overall

- Renew efforts to address the unmet goals of the Plan by acknowledging areas of shared responsibility, allowing MMSD to double down on the most persistent challenges and barriers to implementation. Consider the use of implementation science to boost efforts.
- Reframe the work of improving outcomes for students with disabilities to reflect a district-level vision that improving outcomes for these students is a shared responsibility. There needs to be collective political will to push better implementation and use of existing resources, instead of adding more resources without shared vision and explicit purpose. Students with disabilities are, foremost, students of MMSD; almost all of the recommendations in this report are shared responsibilities—not only the responsibility of the Department of Student Services.

Additional recommendations are shared below, grouped by the goal areas of the Plan, and listed in the order of their priority within each goal area, rather than in the numeric order of their corresponding findings. There is not a 1:1 relationship between findings and recommendations below, as we believe the overall recommendations and the recommendations below address the most significant findings; and in following these, MMSD will be squarely on the path to address them all.

Recommendations: Service Delivery for Students with Disabilities

Evaluation questions: What additional professional development, administrative support, resources, policies and procedures, or assessments would be useful for the district or schools to provide to teachers and administrators in order to accelerate the learning of students with disabilities and significantly improve outcomes (academic, graduation rates, behavioral)? What additional professional development, administrative support, resources, or assessments would be useful for the Intensive Intervention, Alternative, and Specialized Program staff to accelerate the learning of students with disabilities and significantly improve outcomes (academic, graduation rates, behavioral, social-emotional support)?

- School leaders and chiefs, should fully implement the Special Education Service Delivery Review in the collaborative spirit that it prescribes to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided equitable access to high-quality instruction across all schools/programs, to accelerate learning, and to significantly improve outcomes (Finding 6).
 - Take steps to make inclusion meaningful, and valued as an asset, in MMSD. High-leverage mechanisms for achieving this are in leadership, co-planning, and co-teaching (Finding 5).
 - What this looks like is co-planning instruction for all, inclusive practices, from the bottom – up, general and special education teachers, PSTs and instructional coaches, PSTs and special education administrators with

Principals, and district-level special education administrators with Chiefs and others (Findings 5 and 6).

- Universal Design for Learning¹ (UDL) is recommended as a mechanism to coordinate service delivery planning and help make core instruction accessible to all. Principal leadership is needed. Grade-level teams or content teams, with special education, can identify learning targets and learning objectives, and can use UDL to provide onramps to instruction. UDL can help students meet the learning objectives.
- Prioritize professional development for site administrators and general educators on special education. Consider increased use of coaching to support principals in understanding special education in the context of the school's larger systems (Finding 7).
 - To facilitate successful IEP teams, support general educators and site administrators to review and understand a child's IEP prior to the IEP meeting.
- Make program guidance more accessible and easier for site administrators to use (Findings 6 and 7).
 - Pair the excellent written guidance documents with pragmatic and easy-to-use resources that are more streamlined for busy principals and special education staff and more cohesive organization of guidelines and resources.
- Continue the availability and support of research-based tools for delivering specially designed instruction (Findings 2 and 3).
- Adopt flexible, child-centered decision-making about service delivery post-COVID-19 (Finding 2).

Recommendations: Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

Evaluation questions: What adjustments, systems, or practices should be made to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided equitable access to high-quality instruction across all schools/programs? What evidence-based instructional practices could be included to improve the learning outcomes of students with disabilities? What resources or professional learning do staff identify as important for improving the learning outcomes of dually identified students? What instructional practices improve the learning outcomes of dually identified students?

These curriculum, instruction, and PD recommendations are not just about special education; this is really about addressing the equity issues in the district, overall.

- Adopt UDL as the framework to make curriculum, instruction, and professional development accessible to all and to improve outcomes for students, from struggling to gifted. UDL is recommended as a mechanism to coordinate the work and help make core instruction accessible to all. Grade-level teams or content teams, with special

¹ See the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST: <http://www.cast.org/>).

education, can identify learning targets and learning objectives, and use UDL to provide onramps to instruction. UDL can help all students, including English learners (ELs) and advanced learners (ALs), meet the learning objectives. Instructional planning is a must for such a diverse group of students as in MMSD (Finding 4).

- Assistive technology should be a proactive consideration in the development of MTSS and UDL. Special education assistive technology experts and the district's instructional technology experts should work hand in hand to plan accessible instruction and materials proactively.
- Instruction, guided by UDL should also be guided by the foundational framework of Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships, created by Dr. Bill Daggett of the International Center for Leadership in Education². Dr. Bettina reinforces the importance of rigor and relationships in her model for Black Excellence described in her book, *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*.
- Fully implement Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to improve student outcomes and facilitate academic and social/emotional success. Embed future plans to improve outcomes for students with disabilities within the context of the districtwide framework. Consider revising the districtwide framework to prioritize full implementation of MTSS and UDL (Finding 3).
 - Utilize UDL and MTSS as the primary equity initiatives, as both of these frameworks are “blank slates” that can be used to deliver culturally responsive instruction and trauma-informed practices. Culture is deep and wide. UDL can be a way to provide antiracist, culturally responsive teaching. “[B]y incorporating a range of learning strategies to address multiple perspectives, values, entry points, and opportunities for acquiring and demonstrating knowledge, educators can amplify the benefits of diversity.”³
 - MTSS implementation steps, from the Wisconsin RTI Center: ⁴ “MTSS PD—moving from training to implementation, five factors that facilitate sustained implementation of a culturally responsive multi-level system of support in Wisconsin.
 - Culturally responsive multi-level system of support is aligned with school goals, policies, vision, mission, and other programs.
 - Implementation teams are systematic and effective and play an active role in supporting implementation.
 - Teams regularly use data to plan and make changes.
 - Involve and support new personnel.
 - Continued efforts to re-energize.”
- Make a strong commitment to early literacy, including information and PD on strategies to help students who display early attention and reading problems, and Dyslexia.

² <https://leadered.com/rigor-relevance-and-relationships-frameworks/>

³ <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/culturally-responsive-teaching-and-udl/>

⁴ <https://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/>

Students are coming into the system behind, and they do not catch up (Outcome Findings 1 and 2).

- Focus on meaningful implementation of standards, a coherent core instructional program, and a comprehensive approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Outcome Finding 3). The current PD on LETRS is a great opportunity to drive some of the recommendations in this report, such as this one.
- Training of Special education assistants (SEAs) should be enhanced so that there is a more comprehensive training delivered, including education re IEPs. SEAs spend a large amount of time directly with students and their job is very challenging. They need more support and training in order to be most effective. Training could be designed to train SEAs over a period of time, beginning with learning about the children they will connect with immediately (Finding 6).
- School administrators, teachers, and SEAs need information and training on supporting students who have challenging behaviors, including Autism. Focus should be on research-based methods, such as those of Dr. Ross Greene⁵ or Mona Delahooke⁶, and how these fit into existing multi-tiered systems of support (C&I, PD Finding 6, Service Delivery Findings 8, 7, Program Finding 1).

Recommendations: Data Use and Accountability Systems

Evaluation questions: What is the current organizational structure of the Department of Student Services? Does the current structure function to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

- As part of implementation of MTSS, increase the use of formative assessment in general and special education settings (Finding 3).
- Implementing other recommendations in this report will allow special educators to better implement the IEP (Finding 4).
- Adjust district-level coordination and collaboration, as well as roles and responsibilities within the Department of Student Services, so that principals are held accountable and have the support and training they need in order to take responsibility for students with disabilities (Finding 7).
- Take steps within district-level leadership to embrace shared accountability for improving outcomes for students with disabilities and address the district-level silos that are barriers to achieving the goals of the Plan (Finding 6; Collaboration and Communication Finding 5).

⁵ <https://drrossgreene.com/>

⁶ <https://monadelahooke.com/>

Recommendations: Disproportionality

Evaluation goal: Identify factors contributing to the disproportionate identification of students of color with disabilities and make recommendations for actions that significantly disrupt this pattern.

- There is a need to increase staff cultural competence and dismantle racist practices. Dr. Love calls this the need to create new narratives and combat stereotypes.
- Many researchers recommend that staff become engaged in transformative practices. Dr. Alyssa Parr of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement⁷ has summarized these as: creating opportunities for staff to reflect critically on oppressive treatment of students; providing scaffolds so staff can make meaning from antiracist concepts or frameworks, at their own pace; and providing antiracist contexts from which individual staff can be supported to disrupt patterns of racism (Outcome Finding 5; Service Delivery Finding 5; Disproportionality Finding 4).
- Focus on adopting *antiracist and culturally responsive instructional practices* (the forth prong in Dr. Love's Black Excellence model). Antiracist, culturally responsive instructional practices are best and most authentically driven through MTSS and UDL. Staff who are engaged in their own transformation are better able to engage in the antiracist and culturally responsible teaching practices that are needed.
- Double down on use of existing frameworks such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices, to (1) fully implement them; (2) ensure that they are culturally responsive and trauma-responsive to sharpen the equity focus and systemic nature of the work; and (3) ensure that they are aligned with/part of the MTSS (Outcome Finding 5; Service Delivery Finding 8; Disproportionality Findings 2 and 3). See the behavior PD recommendation in the section above.
- Review actual disciplinary practices against the requirements of the Behavior Education Plan (BEP) to address inconsistencies and to identify and address bias and patterns of racism; update the BEP accordingly to continue to reduce suspensions; provide training and support needed (Outcome Finding 5; Service Delivery Finding 8; Disproportionality Findings 2 and 3).
- Conduct a root cause analysis at each school and at the district level. We recommend the use of a nationally available, no-cost resource created by WestEd and the IDEA Data Center: The Success Gaps Toolkit ⁸(Outcome Finding 5; Service Delivery Finding 8; Disproportionality Findings 2 and 3).

⁷ <https://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/People/akparr.html>

⁸ <https://ideadata.org/toolkits/>

Recommendations: Recruiting, Hiring, Retention, and Placement of High-Quality Staff

Evaluation questions: How does the Department of Student Services allocate human resources? How has that changed over time? Are there sufficient instructional supports available to K–12 students with disabilities? What instructional supports do comparison districts (districts similar in size and demographics) have?

- Recruitment of special education teachers and related services providers needs to be more aggressive and earlier to increase hiring of qualified staff and decrease reliance on provisionally licensed staff; bilingual hires should be prioritized to improve outcomes for English learners (ELs) with disabilities (Staffing Finding 2 and 3).
 - Form partnerships with colleges and universities in the region to identify and hire top candidates prior to their graduation.
- Systematize the hiring of special education staff within the Human Resources Department so the process can withstand changes in HR personnel (Staffing Finding 2).
 - Include a process for schools to be involved in the hiring of their SEAs (Staffing finding 3).
- Conduct screening, interviewing, and hiring of special educators with input from experienced special education administrators (Staffing Finding 2).
- Add criteria for knowledge and beliefs about special education to the process for screening, interviewing, and hiring of principals and assistant principals (Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 7; Data Use and Accountability Systems Findings 4, 6, and 7; Collaboration and Communication Finding 5).
- Address inequitable placement of inexperienced, provisionally licensed staff to rectify challenges that are caused by the revolving door of inexperienced, provisionally licensed teachers being hired and assigned to the same schools year after year. Work toward changes that would facilitate placing the staff who are most qualified at the schools with the student needs that are most challenging. This includes placement of bilingual staff where they are needed most to improve outcomes for ELs with disabilities (Staffing Findings 2 and 3).
- To retain special education staff, especially cross-categorical teachers, make sure there is time set aside to train them on completing required documentation AND delivering specially designed instruction. Consider the use of stipends and mentors outside of the instructional day.

Recommendations: Collaboration and Communication

- Create opportunities, including time, training, and structure, and expectations for collaboration between general and special education. Special education and English learners staff can play a strong collaborative role in MTSS and UDL, but need structures and a vision for collaboration and teaming (Finding 4).

- The Department of Student Services, in collaboration with others in MMSD who are responsible for parent and family engagement, should improve engagement and communication with parents from diverse linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds who have children with disabilities (Finding 3).
- Improve partnership with BIPOC families and increase efforts to engage the voices of students in their own education, as recommended by Dr. Bettina Love, in her Black Excellence model.
- Address the districtwide leadership and structural barriers to improving outcomes for students with disabilities, as described in this report (Finding 5).
 - Assure that district level special education administration is at the table when decisions are being made.
- Improve collaborative structures and processes so that ELL staff and advanced learning staff are consistently part of the IEP process and attend the IEP meetings of EIs and ALs with disabilities.
- Focus on a few key strategies to make the IEP process more welcoming and understandable to parents. (Examples: make sure IEP pages are numbered and dated, and acronym-free (Finding 3).

About This Study

Purpose

Our study fits into a cyclical evaluation and strategic planning routine in Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD). In 2015, MMSD sought information from an outside consultant about how well it was serving students with disabilities; created a plan (the Madison Metropolitan School District 2016–2019 Special Education Plan; “the Plan”) to address areas of need; and embarked on a process of implementing the Plan. In 2019, we were asked to conduct a culturally responsive and equity-focused evaluation to provide formative and summative insights to the MMSD, including the Department of Student Services, and the community, to help them understand progress on stated priority areas and the impact of the Plan on student outcomes, and to provide them with deep, actionable recommendations for needed program improvements and systems-level improvements. The evaluation was based on meaningful engagement of diverse communities and stakeholders in understanding implementation, outcomes, and impact.

MMSD sought to answer questions about how students with disabilities are doing in the district, and, relatedly, how well the district has implemented the Plan. A detailed outline of the evaluation questions and the goals of the Plan is provided in the Methodology section, Table 1.

Our Approach

MMSD, Dane County, and the state of Wisconsin have some of the highest racial disparities in educational outcomes, as well as economic, housing, and employment indicators for people who are Black/African American in the country. MMSD strives to be a progressive, inclusive district. Racial disparities are a primary area of focus in MMSD and have been for a number of years because opportunity gaps are significant, and the district is committed to addressing them. Therefore, MMSD requested an equity-focused evaluation. In some cases, making comparisons with other school districts is helpful. In collaboration with the district, we selected Green Bay, Kenosha, Oshkosh, and Racine as school districts to use for comparison.

We have framed our thinking within the following context:

1. In consideration of research-based practices, a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an educational framework that guides instructional design to provide flexibility and access for students, regardless of their diverse learning needs. The principles of UDL, which are based on research in learning sciences, offer educators strategies for building flexibility into learning, which allows students to engage with content and show what they know in many ways.
2. Dr. Bettina Love was a keynote speaker in the district in recent years. Following is a model shared with MMSD staff from Dr. Love’s book *We Want to Do More Than Survive*:

Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom, Beacon Press, 2019. We believe this model is useful for framing our findings and recommendations in a way that aligns with MMSD's continued focus on ending racial disparities in education. In consideration of equity, Dr. Bettina Love's Black Excellence Multi-Prong Approach⁹:

- Partnering with family and student voice
 - Focus on rigor and relationships
 - New narratives and combating stereotypes
 - Antiracist, culturally responsive teaching
3. The report is organized around the five major areas of the Plan. We start with a general section on student outcomes and proceed with the Plan areas of service delivery for students with disabilities; curriculum, instruction, and professional development; data use and accountability; disproportionality; recruiting, hiring, retention, and placement of high-quality staff; and collaboration and communication. Each area of the Plan has its own section in this report; and the sections are concluded with a text box listing the Plan area, goals, and a general statement of the status of those goals.

Important Context

Just 2½ months into the evaluation, as we had just completed parent focus groups, COVID-19 began spreading through the United States, affecting school districts significantly. MMSD shifted to virtual learning, and district staff worked from home for the remainder of the 2019–20 school year and most of the 2020–21 school year. Because the district is so rich in the data it collects, we were able to rely more heavily on quantitative data, and we shifted the remainder of our qualitative data collection to virtual methods, successfully using Zoom to conduct interviews and focus groups. Hoping that we could eventually conduct in-person classroom observations, we stretched out the timeline of the evaluation, but as months went by and MMSD stayed in a virtual learning model, it became clear that we would not be able to conduct school visits or classroom observations. While nothing can fully replace observations conducted in schools and classrooms, we believe that the findings we have captured are accurate. As of March 2021, MMSD is starting to slowly return to in-person learning.

Since the Plan was implemented in 2016, the Strategic Framework¹⁰ under which the district operates has shifted. In the five years since the inception of the Plan, significant turnover of district leadership, structural reorganization, and shifts in administrative philosophy have occurred, resulting in a climate in which conditions have not been conducive to implementing the Plan. At the start of the review, in the middle of the 2019–20 school year, the following factors were influencing the climate in the district:

⁹ <https://madison365.com/madison-you-have-to-build-something-better-dr-bettina-love-fires-up-mmsd-back-to-school-rally/>

¹⁰ <https://news.madison.k12.wi.us/framework>

1. recent cabinet and superintendent turnover,
2. a small group of parents speaking out that the district was segregating students with disabilities, and
3. a heightened interest, among members of the MMSD School Board (the Board), in the details of special education.

The concerns about segregation of students resulted from news that the district had purchased a building in which students with intensive emotional and behavioral needs were served in a unique program. The district had previously rented the building, and the program in question was not new. In addition to these factors, there had been some restructuring of the Department of Student Services, and some emerging work on rolling out a new way of allocating special education staff and resources. So, in addition to evaluating the impact of the Plan, we focused on these factors and issues.

Methodology

WestEd and The Improve Group evaluated the impact of special education services and the Plan, in relation to guidance provided, using a culturally responsive mixed-methods design to determine the extent to which the six primary strategies included in the Plan have been implemented, progress toward goals, and the levels of satisfaction of key stakeholders. Through this process, WestEd and The Improve Group gathered information pertaining to guidance provided, implementation, areas of strength, opportunities for growth, and suggestions and recommendations for improvements related to the priorities and actions outlined in the Plan.

WestEd and The Improve Group collaborated to design this evaluation. We have strived to conduct an evaluation that informs MMSD of the fidelity of implementation of special education services and the actions outlined in the Plan, as well as of program effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction, and that provides recommendations for improved effectiveness of services for students with disabilities. We divided the evaluation into five phases: inception; design and planning; data collection; analysis; and sharing and reflection. Each is discussed in the following sections.

Inception Phase

We established norms of communication, conducted a kick-off meeting, and agreed on the questions the evaluation would seek to answer in relation to the Plan goals, as shown in Table A1 of the Appendix. The evaluation began with the establishment of norms of collaboration in December, 2019; and the kick-off meeting took place in person in MMSD on January 7, 2020.

Design and Planning Phase

Pre-interviews

In the design and planning phase, we conducted pre-interviews with two district leaders and five parent who are viewed as leaders in the community, to understand the contexts in which we would work. The Improve Group interviewed five parents of students who receive special education services in MMSD. Two of these parents were Latinx, two were African American, and one was Hmong. These parents provided insights to ensure that the evaluation of the program would be responsive and inclusive of diverse communities. In some cases, they also provided feedback about the special education program; their insights are part of this document. With information gained from the inception phase and the pre-interviews, we designed the details of the evaluation process, including protocols to be used with qualitative data collection, such as focus groups with parents. Together, WestEd and The Improve Group interviewed the Executive Directors of Student Services and Staff and Student Supports and an Assistant Director of Special Education.

Staff Survey

Because the pandemic forced the district into a distance learning model, we were unable to conduct school visits, during which we typically collect input from staff, so we shifted to an online survey of staff. Districtwide, 923 staff participated in the survey. Fifty percent of the survey respondents were general educators, 20% were special educators, and the remaining respondents included related services providers, SEAs, PSTs, principals and assistant principals, nurses, counselors, and “other.” Many of the “other” respondents reported that they were SEAs. While principals were well represented among the respondents (21), we only had seven responses from assistant principals. As a result, we conducted an additional focus group that included assistant principals. We had fairly good representation across all MMSD schools. Survey respondents ranged from newer staff to highly experienced staff, with 60% of respondents reporting that they had worked in education for 11 or more years, and 43% having worked in MMSD for 11 or more years.

Data Collection Phase

Parent Focus Groups

Parent focus groups were designed using The Improve Group’s Community-Responsive Approach, which is tailored to facilitate meaningful engagement with stakeholder groups that reflect the diversity of the district. Incentives were provided to parents, to recognize the critical expertise that these community members bring to this work. Spanish-speaking and Hmong-speaking facilitators were made available.

The Improve Group drafted outreach language and a screener survey, and revised them with WestEd, for recruitment of the focus groups. Once the recruitment materials were approved, MMSD disseminated an announcement of the focus groups, with a link to the screener survey, to its listserv. In order to participate in the focus group, participants needed to be a parent or guardian of a child or youth, age 3 to 21, who receives special education (i.e., has an IEP) through MMSD. Targeted outreach to Hmong and Latinx families was also conducted, and relevant translated materials were distributed.

The Improve Group conducted four parent focus groups in Madison, in multiple locations, to increase accessibility. Of those three, one was in Spanish. A Hmong interpreter was available at one of the other focus groups, which was open to Hmong speakers; however, Hmong interpretation was not required. A total of 22 parents participated, across the four focus groups. WestEd also completed two virtual parent focus groups, with a total of 12 participants. The Virtual Focus Group Participant Characteristics section of Appendix A provides further detail on the participants.

Parent Survey

A total of 690 parents responded to the online survey, which was administered early in the pandemic, over a three-week period in April 2020. When survey results were broken out by reported race/ethnicity, about half of the respondents were white (53%), with smaller percentages of Black (18%), two or more races/ethnicities (12%), Asian (8%), and Hispanic/Latino (5%) respondents. Given the equity focus of this evaluation, we broke out the parent survey responses by the race and ethnicity of the parent. Responses from Asian parents were spread across most of MMSD's schools. Responses from Hispanic/Latino parents came from fewer than half of the schools in MMSD. (See more survey details in the Appendix.)

Staff Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with five different groups of staff, over Zoom, for about 60 minutes each to help us to gain perspectives on strengths and areas for improvement in serving students with disabilities in MMSD.

Staff Interviews

Ten individual interviews were conducted over Zoom. Nine were with individuals, and one was with the pair of consultants used by the Department of Student Services. These interviews were conducted for us to gather a deeper knowledge and understanding of practices or procedures that contribute to the successes of students with disabilities in MMSD schools. The interviews included questions about the organizational structure of the Department of Student Services, progress on the goals of the Plan, and topics informing our evaluation questions. Each interview took about 60 minutes.

Staff Survey

When it became clear that onsite school visits were unlikely, because of the pandemic, an online staff survey was created and administered to gather input from staff. The survey was administered in April 2020. Nine hundred twenty three staff responded.

Table 1. Summary of Data Collection

Data Collection	Numbers of Participants	Locations and Dates
Pre-interviews (8)	Parents (5) District administrators (3)	January & February 2020, phone January 7, 2020, Doyle Admin. building
Parent focus groups (6)	In-person: Parents (22) Virtual: Parents (12) (Special education advisory)	March 9 & 10, 2020, in person May 11, 2020, virtual May 12, 2020, virtual
Staff focus groups (5)	Assistant Principals and PSTs (9) Intensive Intervention Program and Intensive Support Team (7) Special education teachers (5) Teaching and Learning Team (8)	May 6, 2020, virtual
Interviews with key staff (5)	Assistant Sup., Teaching & Learning (1) Retired principals/consultants (2) Executive Dir., Student Services (1) Assistant Directors of Special Education (7)	May 6, 2020, virtual December 14, 2020, virtual Various dates throughout project April 2020 (various dates), virtual
Student focus group (1)	Students (4)	December 9, 2020, Zoom
Parent survey (1)	690	April 2020
Staff survey (1)	923	April 2020
Extant data collection from MMSD and DPI	N/A	Quantitative analysis over the course of the evaluation

Analysis Phase

Extant Data Analysis

We conducted quantitative analyses of dozens of data sources, provided by MMSD or found on the district and state DPI websites. The district selected four school districts to use for comparison of certain relevant statistics: Green Bay, Kenosha, Oshkosh, and Racine. We conducted literature reviews on various topics for this evaluation. Footnotes, references and

suggested resources are provided in this report, and, in some cases, additional information has been provided to the district. For evidence supporting recommendations and findings by Plan area, we looked at:

- Program guidance and its relationship to fidelity of implementation of the program
- Fidelity of implementation of Plan goals, compared to guidance provided
- Effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of the program (quantitative evaluation)
- Level of satisfaction of stakeholders (qualitative evaluation)
- Recommendations to improve program effectiveness

Sharing and Reflection Phase

We have found that reports require buy-in from stakeholders if their recommendations are to be followed. As a result, our evaluation approach incorporates regular staff input throughout the evaluation. We have worked collaboratively with MMSD to determine the type of report that best suits district needs, and we have provided MMSD with opportunities to review drafts of this report. We strive to produce reports that are pragmatic and accessible, so that they are useful for district leaders and staff, yet understandable to multiple audiences. We plan to present the findings in ways and places that are useful to various stakeholders. We are available to help establish and prioritize plans for implementation of recommendations.

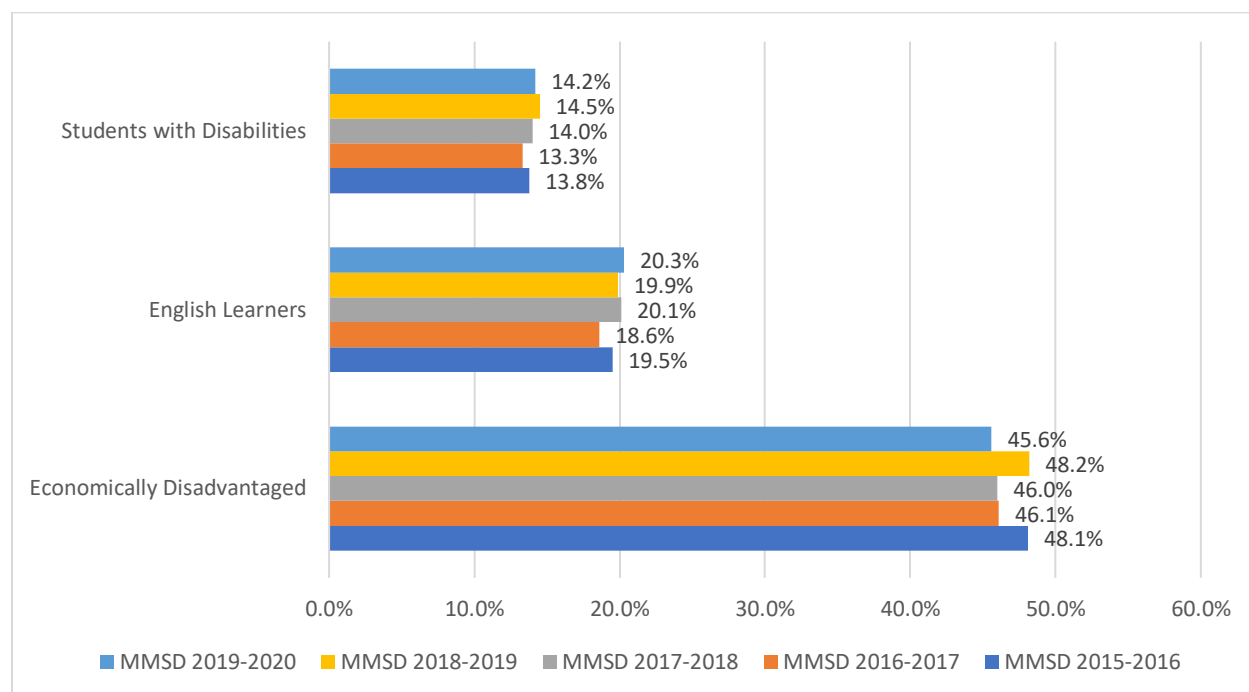
Student Demographics

According to the MMSD 2020–2021 Budget Book ¹¹ (updated October 16, 2020), MMSD had 27,410 students enrolled, from PreK through age 21, in 2019–20. As of December 1, 2019, about 3,974, or 14.5%, of these students were receiving special education services. The percentages of students receiving special education services in similar urban school districts, December 1, 2019, in Wisconsin range from 13% in Kenosha to 17% in Racine. The state average is 14.5%.

During the 2019–20 school year, 42% of the students in MMSD identified as white, which was lower than the state average of 69%. Nine percent of students identified as Two or More Races (also referred to as Multi-racial in this report) and nine percent of students identified as Asian, which was more than double the state average (4%). Twenty-two percent (22%) of students identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 18% of the student population identified as Black or African American, which were much higher percentages than the state averages for these two demographic groups (12% and 9%, respectively).

¹¹ <https://budget.madison.k12.wi.us/budget-information-2020-21>

Figure 1. MMSD Student Demographic Trends, 2015–2020



Source: District data.

English learners (ELs) comprised 28% of MMSD’s student population, a significantly higher percentage than the state average of 6%. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district was 49% of the district population, which is higher than the state average of 41%. Figure 1 shows demographic trends for students in special education, English learners, and students who are economically disadvantaged. A figure on student demographic trends by race/ethnicity is included in the Appendix.

Academic Outcomes

This section describes outcome data for three- and four-year-old children with disabilities and school-age students with disabilities. It presents the results of an analysis of a sampling of outcome measures.¹² Students in MMSD take a variety of state and district assessments. Each assessment is summarized on the district’s assessment webpages. Students with disabilities participate in most assessments. Students with intellectual disabilities or significant developmental disabilities in grades 3–11 take the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment instead of Wisconsin Forward. We have not included DLM data in this report. Because, starting in mid-March 2020, the pandemic interrupted the normal school year, most regular assessments were

¹² A comprehensive set of data tables and analyses of the results of each assessment discussed in this section can be found in the Appendix.

not given in 2019–20. With the exception of preschool outcomes, all analyzed assessment data are from the previous school year, 2018–19.

Preschool Outcomes

School districts are required to collect and report outcome data for three- and four-year-old children with disabilities. Table 2 shows MMSD preschool outcome data for 2018–19.

Outcome Finding 1: Children receiving early childhood special education are coming into kindergarten with lower literacy proficiency than the average student, and they are not catching up.

Table 2. Outcomes for MMSD Preschoolers with Disabilities, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2017–2020

	Green Bay 19–20 18–19 17–18	Kenosha 19–20 18–19 17–18	MMSD 19–20 18–19 17–18	Oshkosh 19–20 18–19 17–18	Racine 19–20 18–19 17–18	State Average 19–20
Outcome A: Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)						
1A. Of those preschool children who entered the preschool program below age expectations in Outcome A, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program. State Target: At or above 79.50%.	77.94 67.96 74.07	83.55 71.43 74.67	60.48 71.60 76.80	51.67 56.60 62.06	62.84 63.70 63.75	67.35
2A. The percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome A by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program. State Target: At or above 75.00%.	48.18 42.72 52.09	74.87 66.47 69.60	51.04 54.45 57.81	49.38 64.71 56.96	55.33 53.33 57.37	60.57
Outcome B: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy)						
1B. Of those preschool children who entered the preschool program below age expectations in Outcome B, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or	78.34 75.25 73.11	83.71 83.54 80.80	65.22 67.61 71.13	69.86 67.53 67.12	68.28 72.78 77.01	71.01

	Green Bay 19–20 18–19 17–18	Kenosha 19–20 18–19 17–18	MMSD 19–20 18–19 17–18	Oshkosh 19–20 18–19 17–18	Racine 19–20 18–19 17–18	State Average 19–20
exited the program. State Target: At or above 81.25%.						
2B. The percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome B by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program. State Target: At or above 62.00%.	42.73 42.23 33.95	65.45 65.29 62.25	47.92 50.79 51.65	50.62 58.82 50.63	45.69 45.00 48.08	50.18
Outcome C: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs						
1C. Of those preschool children who entered the preschool program below age expectations in Outcome C, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program. State Target: At or above 80.50%.	83.94 71.11 71.42	82.26 77.88 80.31	67.11 71.71 72.56	54.72 60.78 68.75	65.07 68.70 75.17	70.57
2C. The percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome C by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program. State Target: At or above 82.50%.	64.09 53.88 59.53	79.06 76.47 79.41	58.33 65.45 67.29	64.20 72.94 65.82	61.42 63.89 69.94	68.54

Source: <https://sped.dpi.wi.gov/spedprofile>

Preschoolers with disabilities in MMSD are generally falling short of the state average on six statewide outcome measures, but they perform similarly to peers in similar school districts.

The numbers in the columns for each school district shown in Table 1 are the percentages of preschoolers with disabilities who meet the particular outcome item, from the most recent school year (2019–20) and the previous two school years (2018–19 and 2017–18, respectively). MMSD’s percentages of students meeting these outcomes have been consistently decreasing in each of the last three years, as is generally true for Oshkosh and Racine. The percentages of students meeting these outcomes have generally been increasing in Green Bay and Kenosha.

In 2019–20, MMSD did not meet any state targets for preschool outcomes, and fell short of state averages in all six measures. About 50–70% of MMSD preschoolers met the various outcomes. Compared to the other four school districts, the percentages of MMSD preschoolers meeting these outcomes are generally lower, but MMSD is not the lowest district on every item. Following is a comparison by item:

- Item 1A: Three out of four comparison districts had a higher percentage than MMSD. Two exceeded the state average. One met the state target.
- Item 2A: Two out of four had a higher percentage than MMSD. One exceeded the state average and came close to meeting the state target.
- Item 1B: All four had a higher percentage than MMSD. Two exceeded the state average, and one met the state target.
- Item 2B: Two out of four had a higher percentage than MMSD. Two exceeded the state average, and one met the state target.
- Item 1C: Two out of four had a higher percentage than MMSD. Those two exceeded the state average and the state target.
- Item 2C: All four had a higher percentage than MMSD. One district met the state average, and none met the state target.

In 2018–19, MMSD’s preschool outcomes were generally better than in previous years.

Outcome Finding 2: Young students with disabilities come into the district behind their peers and, throughout their K–12 experience, are not achieving at levels the district can celebrate.

Literacy Screening (PALS)

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)¹³ is a reading readiness assessment given by all MMSD educators of PreK, Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade students in their classrooms. PALS fulfills the state requirement for a reading readiness assessment. It identifies students who meet minimum competency in early literacy skills and students who do not, and it provides indications for specific instruction and for which students may need intervention.

The PreK PALS assessment that is used in MMSD’s 4K program is different than the K–2 PALS because it does not have a summed score or any sort of benchmark for identifying early literacy progress indicators. This assessment does not have summed scores or benchmarks, so the district is not currently using this data as a measure of preschool achievement, but the district is initiating an early literacy task force and discussing ways in which this data and other potential early childhood literacy indicators can be put to use.

Seventy-four percent of all MMSD students in primary grades met PALS proficiency requirements in 2018–19 (see Table A4). In the same year, only 42% of students with disabilities met proficiency requirements. Examination of three years of data shows a decline in the percentages of proficient students, from 76% in 2016–17 and 75% in 2017–18. The trend

¹³ https://assessment.madison.k12.wi.us/files/assessment/uploads/PALS/pals_overview_18-19.pdf

for students with disabilities is also downward; the percents of students with disabilities meeting proficiency were 44% in 2016–17, 47% in 2017–18, and 42% in 2018–19.

Breaking the data out into smaller groups, we found that, in 2018–19, although a high percentage (57%) of BIPOC students, overall, scored proficient, only 29% of students with disabilities of the same ethnicity scored proficient. About 15% fewer students, with or without disabilities, from low-income families scored proficient than their counterparts, with or without disabilities, who were not from low-income families. Predictably, English learners with disabilities did not perform as well on this measure; about 34% scored proficient. Fifty-four percent of advanced learners with disabilities scored proficient—almost the same proficiency rate as for all students who were not advanced learners.

See the PALS tables on pages A6 through A7 in the Appendix for more information.

Wisconsin Forward Exam (Forward)

The Wisconsin Forward Exam (Forward)¹⁴ is the state-mandated assessment that replaces the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination and the Badger Exam. It consists of subtests in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, and asks students questions that are aligned with the State of Wisconsin standards. Students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 take ELA and Mathematics assessments. In grades 4 and 8, students are assessed in all four subjects. Detailed tables of Forward results can be found in the Appendix beginning on page A-9.

Summary of Forward Assessment Results

In 2018–19, very few students with disabilities demonstrated proficiency on the Forward assessment s. The data shows that the income level of a student’s family is often a significant factor in the student’s achievement. On each Forward assessment, about two-thirds of low-income students with disabilities scored below basic, while one-third of students with disabilities who were **not** low-income scored below basic. Within each racial/ethnic group, students without disabilities scored 30 to 50 points lower than students without disabilities. Two percent or fewer of Black or African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, and students of two or more races scored proficient or advanced. The remaining students in these groups scored basic or below basic.

Grades K–5 Forward ELA and Mathematics Results

In 2018–19, only 11.5% of MMSD students with disabilities in grades K–5 scored proficient on the Forward Mathematics assessment, and only 8.9% students with disabilities scored

¹⁴ https://assessment.madison.k12.wi.us/files/assessment/uploads/Forward/Forward_overview_20-21.pdf

proficient on the Forward ELA assessment. When disaggregated by income 7% of low-income students with disabilities are proficient in math and 3% are proficient in ELA. Of the comparison school districts, MMSD had a higher percentage of students with disabilities who were proficient on the ELA and Mathematics assessments than all but one of the comparison districts (Oshkosh). The percentages of students with disabilities scoring in the proficient range in all five districts were lower than the state average for the Forward ELA assessment, and only Oshkosh exceeded the state average for the percent of students with disabilities scoring proficient on the Forward Mathematics assessment.

Grades 6–8 Forward ELA and Mathematics Results

On the Forward ELA examination, middle school proficiency rates (proficient and advanced) for all students fell, from previous years, to 34%. Proficiency rates for students with disabilities also fell, to 7%. Only 3% of low-income students with disabilities are proficient in math and ELA in grades 6-8.

A bright spot: Students with disabilities who are not EL in grades 6–8 scored about the same on the Forward Mathematics assessment as their EL peers without disabilities (Figure A9).

Another bright spot: Advanced learners with disabilities scored higher than MMSD’s general population of middle school students who were not advanced learners. Advanced learners with disabilities scored relatively high, but 40% of MMSD students overall scored below basic on this assessment. (Table A21.)

Another thing that stands out about MMSD’s statewide assessment data are that MMSD has a much greater number of students with disabilities who did not participate in the Forward exam than other school districts in the state do, per the individual school district special education profiles on the DPI website¹⁵. Compared to the state average, MMSD had three times the number of students, with or without disabilities, who were not assessment ed. Some schools have higher rates of parents opting out of statewide assessment than others. District administrators assume this is related to a higher number of parents with preferences against certain kinds of assessments. Over time, teachers and administrators in those schools may also have developed attitudes about statewide achievement measures being flawed or unnecessary.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment consists of Reading and Mathematics assessments that have been aligned to the Common Core State Standards and normed nationally. These assessment s are considered to be benchmark assessments—assessment s that provide a “point in time” measure of where a student is academically, compared to where

¹⁵ <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/educators/local-performance-plans/profile>

the average student is expected to be, based on national norms. It shows where a student starts, as a baseline of student achievement, and measures growth over the year.

The MAP assessments are given to all students in 3rd through 8th grades. Exceptions include English learners who have a language proficiency of DPI Level 1 or 2, and any student for whom, through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, it is determined that the assessment is not appropriate.

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, students with disabilities scored significantly lower than their non-disabled peers on the MAP Math assessment in 2016–17 through 2018–19.

Table 3. MMSD Student Proficiency on MAP Math, 2016–2019

	MMSD All Average 2016–17	MMSD All Average 2017–18	MMSD All Average 2018–19
Advanced	14.62%	15.28%	16.49%
Proficient	29.30%	30.39%	29.62%
Basic	29.57%	29.46%	28.56%
Minimal	26.51%	24.87%	25.32%

Source: District data.

Table 4. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on MAP Math, 2016–2019

	Students with Disabilities Average 2016–17	Students with Disabilities Average 2017–18	Students with Disabilities Average 2018–19
Advanced	3.51%	3.68%	4.27%
Proficient	11.79%	11.01%	10.24%
Basic	22.33%	23.90%	22.38%
Minimal	62.37%	61.41%	63.11%

Source: District data.

In 2018–19, 46% of all MMSD students scored proficient or advanced, while 15% of students with disabilities scored proficient or advanced, on the MAP Math assessment. The three-year trend, from 2016–17 through 2018–19, shows that the number of students, with and without disabilities, scoring advanced rose, while the numbers of students scoring advanced and proficient (combined), basic, and minimal were mostly flat. The percentage of students with disabilities who scored proficient declined, from 11.79% to 10.24%, over the last three years, but the percent of students with disabilities scoring advanced rose: from 3.51% to 3.68% to 4.27% over the three years. When the proficient and advanced scores are added together for each year, they present a flat, but encouraging, trend.

By race/ethnicity, MAP Math percentiles for all students in 2018–19 range from the 25th percentile for Black students to the 66th percentile for white students. Percentiles for students with disabilities fall into a similar pattern and range, but with scores that are one half to two thirds lower than those of these students’ non-disabled peers, from Black students at the 11th percentile to white students at the 37th percentile.

By low-income status, the same trend is visible for MAP Math as for the Forward Mathematics assessment. While the scores of students with disabilities were about half the scores of their non-disabled peers, non-low-income students with disabilities performed about as well as low-income students without disabilities. Students with disabilities who were also English learners scored in the 17th percentile. Students without disabilities who were English learners scored in the 39th percentile. Students with disabilities who were advanced learners scored in the 51st percentile, a higher percentile than students without disabilities who were not advanced learners.

Students with disabilities scored significantly lower than all students on the MAP Reading assessment.

As shown in Table 4, in 2018–19, 27% of MMSD students scored proficient on the MAP Reading assessment, and 15% scored advanced—with slightly more than half of students assessed falling into the basic or minimal categories. As shown in Table 5, 9% of students with disabilities scored proficient and 3% scored advanced on the same assessment, with 69% of students with disabilities scoring in the minimum range and 19% scoring in the basic range. The overall proficiency trend for students with disabilities is flat; the percentage of students scoring advanced fell while the percentage of students scoring basic rose.

Table 5. MMSD Student Proficiency on MAP Reading, 2016–2019

	MMSD All Average 2016–17	MMSD All Average 2017–18	MMSD All Average 2018–19
Advanced	14.34%	14.65%	14.73%
Basic	27.48%	28.24%	27.63%
Minimal	30.92%	29.71%	30.60%
Proficient	27.26%	27.40%	27.04%

Source: District data.

Table 6. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on MAP Reading, 2016–2019

	Students with Disabilities Average 2016–17	Students with Disabilities Average 2017–18	Students with Disabilities Average 2018–19
Advanced	4.12%	3.94%	3.31%
Basic	18.59%	18.93%	19.27%
Minimal	68.72%	68.84%	68.80%
Proficient	8.57%	8.29%	8.62%

Source: District data.

In 2018–19, the range of percentiles on the MAP Reading assessment for students with and without disabilities by race/ethnicity followed a similar pattern as for the MAP Math assessment, ranging from the 32nd percentile for Black/African American students without disabilities to the 69th percentile for white students. The percentiles for students with disabilities ranged from Black or African American students scoring in the 14th percentile to white students scoring in the 39th percentile. Students with disabilities who were low-income, EL, or AL students fell into the same patterns on the MAP Reading assessment as they did on the MAP Math assessment. For a complete analysis of achievement data, see the Appendix.

(Strength) In general, students in MMSD, including students with disabilities, scored higher than their counterparts in comparison districts and statewide on the ACT.

Students’ readiness for college or careers is measured in a variety of ways, including the ACT and Aspire assessments. One member of the district’s Teaching and Learning Team (T<) provided examples of how the district measures college and career readiness.

“[W]e use the ACT to assess students’ college readiness. We look at the percent of students with 3.0 grade point average or better. On the back end, we look at IDEA indicators, such as indicator 14, and the Post-School Outcomes survey.”—T< member

ACT + Writing (ACT)

The ACT + Writing (ACT) ¹⁶ is a state-mandated assessment given to 11th grade students by an assessment proctor. State data includes four curriculum-based assessments that measure

¹⁶ https://assessment.madison.k12.wi.us/files/assessment/uploads/ACT/act_overview_18-19.pdf

students’ education achievement in English, mathematics, reading, and science, plus a writing assessment. MMSD administers ELA and STEM subtests, as well. The ACT provides a measurement of college and career readiness. The score from this assessment will, in most cases, be able to be reported to colleges and technical colleges to support student applications and admissions. The ACT is given to all students in 11th grade. Exceptions or modifications are given to any student for whom, through the IEP process, it is determined the assessment is not appropriate.

We looked at three years of scores for all students and for students with disabilities taking the ACT in MMSD. The composite national percentiles for all students were 57 in 2016–17, 73 in 2017–18, and 55 in 2018–19. For students with disabilities, composite national percentiles for the same years were 35, 50, and 39. Why the 2017–18 scores are uncharacteristically high is unknown.

A comparison of 2018–19 scores of all students and students with disabilities by race/ethnicity shows that the two groups were not far apart. Asian students were the only race/ethnicity group for which all students scored significantly higher, with a composite national percentile of 52.28, than students with disabilities, with a composite national percentile of 24.25. The rest of the comparison shows students with disabilities having average composite national percentiles almost as high as the corresponding group of all students of the same race/ethnicity. The percentiles range from the 67th percentile for all white students to the 24th percentile for Asian students with disabilities.

Student groups with composite national percentiles above the 50th percentile are students with disabilities who were not low-income (51), students with disabilities who were AL students (59), all students who were not low-income (64), all students who were not EL students (60), and all AL students (72). (See Tables on pages A42 and A45.)

Table 7. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Composite Score¹⁷ on ACT, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Composite Score	14.8	15.4	14.4	13.7	14.3	14.8

Source: WI DPI Dashboard.

The state of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, has a dashboard where we retrieved some of the assessment data presented in this report.

¹⁷ The Composite Score is different than the Composite National Percentile in that the Composite Score is an average of the composite of each individual student’s scores; the Composite National Percentile is where the Composite Score falls in national norms.

ACT Aspire

The ACT Aspire assessment ¹⁸ is a state-mandated, computer-based assessment given to all 9th and 10th grade students, with exceptions or modifications made for any student for whom, through the IEP/504 process, it is determined that the assessment is not appropriate. ACT Aspire includes four curriculum-based assessments that measure students’ education achievement in English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. It provides a measurement of being on track for college and career readiness. From the ACT website: “ACT Aspire scale scores range from 400 up, depending on the subject and grade. Top scores are 442–460, depending on the assessment and the grade. This scale is unique to ACT Aspire, and clearly differentiates ACT Aspire from other scoring scales. The ACT Aspire score scale runs from 3rd grade to 10th grade for English, math, reading, and science. Raw scores on the ACT Aspire assessments are computed using the sum of the points an examinee earns across the multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and constructed-response items on the assessment form administered.”

Students’ average composite scale scores are compiled to provide a single score for each Wisconsin school district and a state average, for the purpose of comparison and trend analysis. MMSD and all of the comparison districts have similar composite scale scores for all students for 2018–19. The score for MMSD and the average score for the state are 427.6 and 427.1, respectively. Comparison districts’ scores range from 423.1 (Racine) to 428.1 (Oshkosh). When results are broken out by race/ethnicity, EL, AL, and income status, the same patterns can be observed for ACT Aspire as for other assessments. In looking at three years of data, MMSD’s Aspire scores are flat for students with disabilities and for all students (Table A46).

Table 8. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Composite Scale Score on Aspire, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Composite Score: Scale Score	417.7	417.8	416.1	413.9	415.4	417.3

Source: WI DPI Dashboard.

As shown in Table 8, in 2018–19, MMSD’s students with disabilities had a higher overall composite score on Aspire than the comparison districts and the state average.

Aspire English: Comparing results for all students with results for students with disabilities by race/ethnicity, MMSD’s American Indian or Alaska Native students with disabilities scored almost as high (422.25) as the average for their non-disabled peers (424.44). The scores for other race/ethnicity groups of students with disabilities ranged from 412.69 for Black or African American students to 425.34 for white students. A similar pattern and range exists for all students, but with scores that ranged from five to 10 points higher. We observe the same

¹⁸ https://assessment.madison.k12.wi.us/files/assessment/uploads/Aspire/act_aspire.pdf

patterns for low-income students, EL students, and AL students as we have for the other assessment results analyzed for this report. Students with disabilities who are also low-income score very low (414.99). Students with disabilities who are not low-income score higher than all students who were low-income. Reading results are similar.

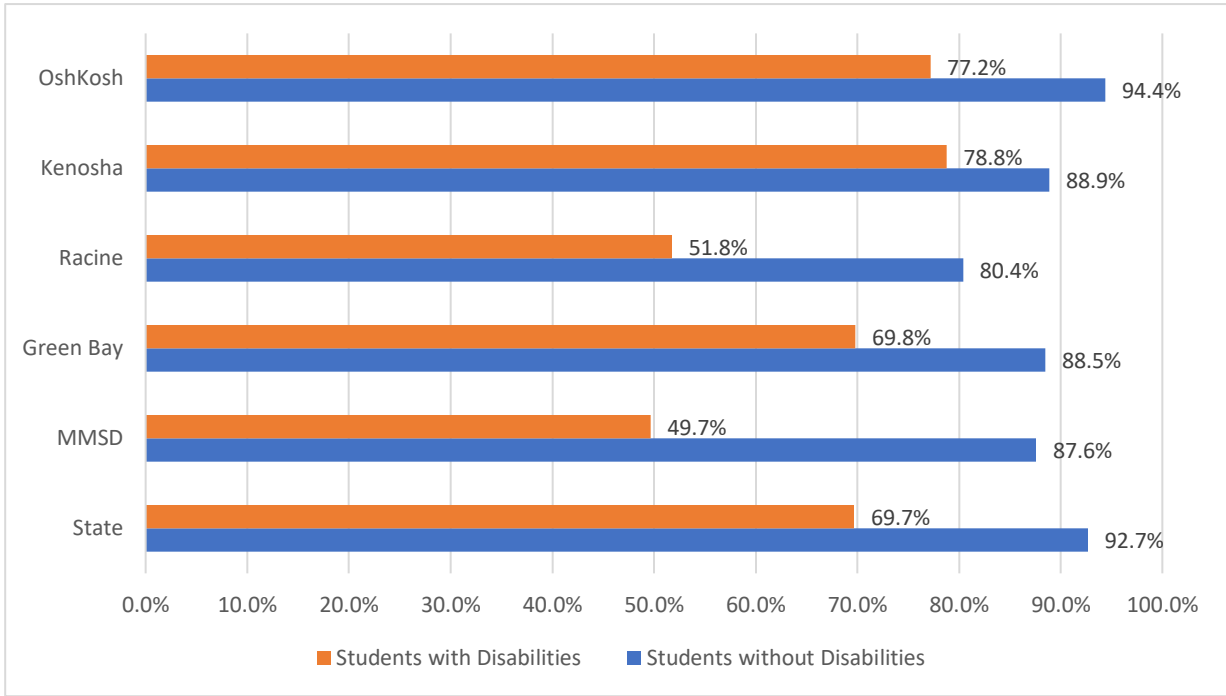
Aspire Math and Science: For the most part, the Aspire math and science scores follow the same patterns as described in all of the MMSD assessment analyses, with the exception of a slight upward trend from 2016–17 to 2018–19 for all students and for students with disabilities on both assessments.

Outcome Finding 3: Students with disabilities are not graduating in four years at levels the district can celebrate.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has made a formal determination that MMSD is in need of improvement, partially due to its low graduation rate and its high dropout rate¹⁹ for students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities. As shown in Figure 2, in 2018–19, only half of MMSD’s students with disabilities graduated with their four-year cohort, while 88% of students without disabilities graduated in four years. Racine also has a very low graduation rate for students with disabilities, but graduation rates for students with disabilities are significantly higher in Wisconsin’s other similar urban school districts. While MMSD falls slightly below the state average graduation rate for students without disabilities, it falls 20 points below the state average for students with disabilities. MMSD ranks in the 11th percentile for graduation, meaning that it did better than or equivalent to 11% of Wisconsin school districts, and that 89% had higher graduation rates for students with disabilities.

¹⁹ Dropouts are reported as annual events for grades 7 through 12. “Dropout” means a student who (1) either exited during the school term or exited prior to the start of that school term but completed the previous school term and (2) who did not re-enroll by the third Friday of September of the following school term. The “dropout rate” is the number of students who dropped out during the school term divided by the total expected to complete that school term in that school or district. “Total expected to complete the school term” is the sum of students who completed the school term plus dropouts.

Figure 2. MMSD Four-Year High School Completion Rate, Compared to Other Districts and the State Average, 2018–2019



Source: WI DPI Dashboard.

Students with disabilities are allowed to take extra time to graduate if they have not yet met graduation requirements and/or IEP goals. MMSD has better outcomes for students with and without disabilities if these students continue to work toward graduation past the traditional four-year mark. In 2018–19, 386 students graduated having taken an additional year, or even two or three years. Most of these students (216) were students with disabilities. The racial/ethnic breakout of these fifth- through seventh year graduates is shown in the following section on outcomes for BIPOC students. Income does not seem to be a significant factor in the graduation rates beyond the four-year cohort. Eighty-five of the 216 students with disabilities who needed extra time were low-income. Thirty-six were English learners. Details of these results can be found in Table A1.

Outcome Finding 4: (Strength) Students with disabilities have positive post-school outcomes.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. School districts are required to collect data on a sampling of students with disabilities one year after graduation or leaving high school.

We examined the post-school outcome data that MMSD collects on a sampling of students with disabilities one year after graduating or dropping out. The data are collected via an interview that district personnel complete with the graduate or their parent. We looked at three years of recent data: 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18. The data shows that students are faring well in the metrics of successful transitions. A high percentage of former MMSD students with disabilities are engaged in meaningful work or postsecondary education. Postsecondary outcomes are a strength that is noted in Service Delivery Finding 1.

In 2017–18, the district sampled 301 young people and received 202 responses to their requests to conduct interviews, which is a high response rate, compared with the rates in other Wisconsin school districts. Forty-three percent had completed at least one year of some type of college or other formal postsecondary education. One percent had completed at least one term of some other postsecondary education or training, and 13% had at least 90 days of other employment. Broken down by gender and race/ethnicity, data showed that females were doing better than males, and that white students were doing slightly better than minority students, with attending postsecondary education. Broken down by disability, data showed that more than half of surveyed students who had learning (62%) or low-incidence (61%) disabilities had attended some college, and that less than half of surveyed students with emotional/behavioral (40%) or intellectual (24%) disabilities had attended some college.

Ninety-one percent of respondents reported they were or had been employed. Eighty percent of those were working at least half time and for at least minimum wage. Thirty-eight percent in total reported that they had been working 20 or more hours a week, earning minimum wage or higher, for 90 or more days. A higher percentage of females than males had some higher education and competitive employment. A higher percentage of minority students than white students were competitively employed, but a higher percentage of white students than minority students were engaged in higher education. A lower percentage of students with emotional/behavioral disability (74%) were employed than students with other disabilities, but 90% of those who were working were working 20+ hours a week, and 97% were earning minimum wage or greater. Many of the students who were not doing paid work were volunteering.

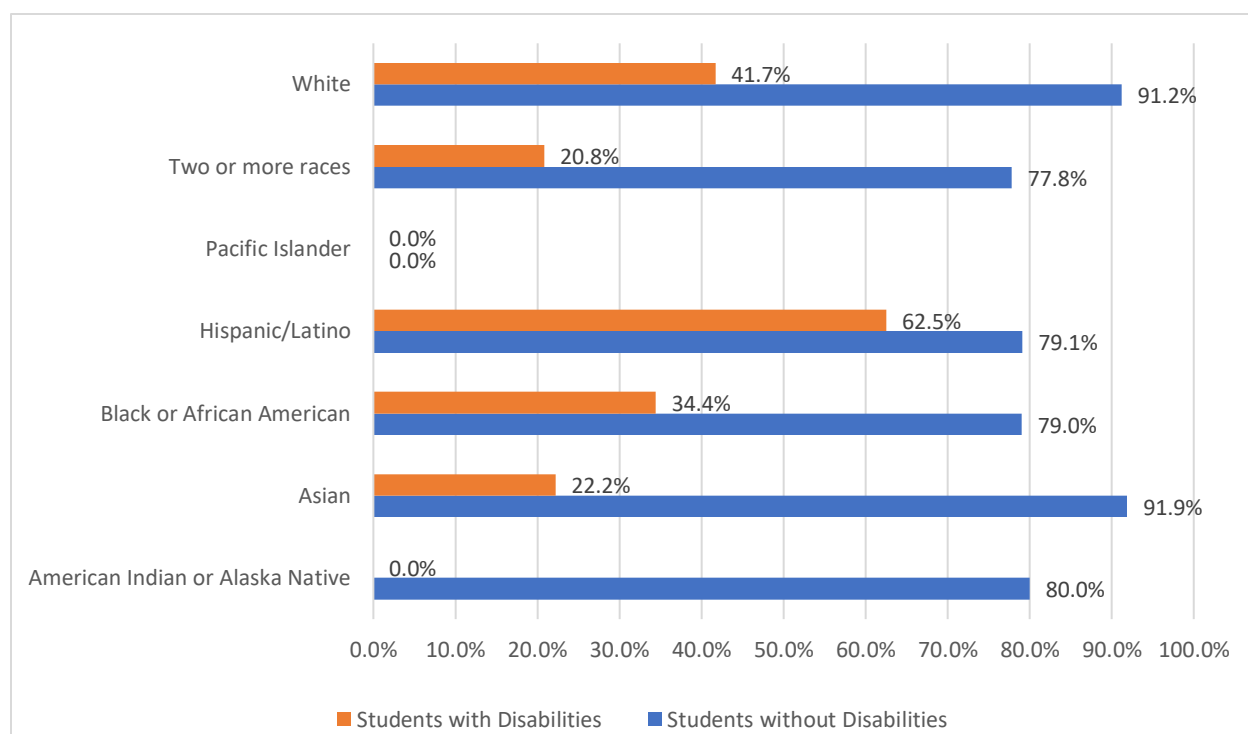
Surveyed students were asked to reflect on their K–12 experience and share what they wished had been different. Common themes included that students with disabilities need more information in high school about options other than postsecondary education, such as military service and apprenticeships, and that these students wish they had had more hands-on opportunities, real-life skills training, money management, FAFSA assistance, help with independent living, assistance exploring options, and bridges to help transition to college.

Outcome Finding 5: There is a clear need to improve outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students with disabilities in MMSD.

Graduation and Dropout Rates for BIPOC Students

When data are broken out by race and ethnicity, stark racial disparities in high school completion are evident. As shown in Figure 3, students with disabilities who are two or more races, Asian, or Black/African American graduate in four years at significantly lower rates than their non-disabled peers.

Figure 3. MMSD High School Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Bright spot: Figure 3 shows **all** MMSD graduates in 2018–19, regardless of how many years they took to graduate. More BIPOC and white students graduate when they are supported with targeted programming and more time.

Table 9. Four-, Five-, Six-, and Seven-Year Graduation Cohorts, Students With and Without Disabilities, by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	American Indian /Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Two or more races/ ethnicities	white
4 Year	6	179	523	499	200	960
SwoD	6	170	386	453	165	870
SwD		9	137	46	35	90
5 Year		21	82	36	18	84
SwoD		14	34	27	3	49
SwD		7	48	9	15	35
6 Year		11	29	15	9	33
SwoD			11	10	4	5
SwD		11	18	5	5	28
7 Year	1	5	14	4	5	19
SwoD		1	8	1	1	2
SwD	1	4	6	3	4	17

Source: District data.

Table 8 shows numbers of MMSD students with and without disabilities graduating in 4, 5, 6, and 7 by race/ethnicity. Abbreviations: students without disabilities (“SwoD”), and students with disabilities (“SwD”).

Table 10. MMSD High School Dropout Rate, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Students without Disabilities	1.1%	1.5%	1.8%	2.5%	0.8%	1.1%
Students with Disabilities	2.4%	2.5%	3.9%	5.1%	1.7%	3.3%

MMSD is in the 18th percentile for all dropouts in Wisconsin, meaning 82% of Wisconsin school districts have lower dropout rates for all students. The state target for students with disabilities dropping out is 2% or lower. MMSD exceeds the state target. Compared with other urban school districts in Wisconsin, Green Bay, Racine, and Oshkosh all have even higher dropout rates for students with disabilities than MMSD does. Green Bay and Racine have higher dropout rates for students without disabilities than MMSD does.

Strengths and Potential Areas of Improvement (Design and Implementation) for the Intensive Intervention, Alternative, and Specialized Programs in Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

For this review, we looked at outcomes in the LEAP, Primary Steps, School Based Alternatives, NEON, Foundations Central, Replay, and Restore programs but some data are not presented due to the small numbers of students. A complete list and descriptions of Intensive Intervention, Alternative, and Specialized Programs can be found in the Appendix. There is also an intensive support team (IST) that is described, to some degree here. The IST is “a cross section of teachers, student services staff, clinical coordinators, and administrators to help respond to students with intensive needs” (MMSD website).

Intensive Intervention Program Finding 1: Students with compounded behavioral issues need progressive approaches to special education and transition strategies. These need to be maintained and supported.

The Assistant Directors of Special Education were interviewed individually for this evaluation. Their insights inform the findings throughout the report. A few Assistant Directors of Special Education explained how the collaboration among teachers, case managers, and families makes the Replay and Restore programs good examples of how to help students in need of intensive intervention.

“In our Replay and Restore programs, we have a lot of collaboration on differentiating and supporting those kids of different ages who have been expelled or adjudicated. Expulsion programs serve both boys and girls. Kids are coming out of an environment that has a lot of pitfalls for them—then they have to return to those home buildings where they had pitfalls. [At the program,] they only get one shot at this preventative expulsion abeyance program, and have to get sent back to their home schools. They just want to stay.”—Interview participant, administration

Assistant Directors of Special Education note that students with social-emotional/behavioral problems who receive evidence-based interventions perform better at school.

Students with behavior issues have better transitions to less restrictive environments after they receive support facilitated by the IST through one of the alternative or intensive intervention programs.

“With all students with disabilities and those who receive interventions, the way we do business, we are making progress with both groups. Most students are coming for behavioral intervention. There is a safety concern with themselves or others, requiring a small-group program. We can work with kids in different capacities and see a reduction in behavior issues. When [the kids] transition back, we can see the kid[s] be more successful and support the kids.”— Interview participant, administration

Partnering with the community is key in supporting students who receive intensive special education services.

Intensive intervention programs are assets in MMSD. These programs allow students with significant needs to be served well within the district, and successfully transitioned back into regular schools rather than placed in costly programs outside the district where they may remain for years. While these programs are challenging to staff and to run, they are meeting an important need. Some Assistant Directors of Special Education recognized that the community has assets, such as families, social workers, and county staff, that enable the IST and intensive intervention programs to work holistically with the students, including attending to students’ mental and physical health.

“Most students are coming for behavioral intervention. We have one adult for every two kids; we work with families, too. It is a collaborative relationship—student services intervention team—social worker, nurse, psych, OT, Program Support—all district employees. They incorporate the county staff and take point on the coordination. We create broader partnerships—community mental health supports, bringing them into the program.”— Interview participant, administration

College Readiness Measures for Students in Intensive Intervention Programs (IIPs)

ACT Assessment Results in IIPs: The only IIP in which students took the ACT in 2018–19 was Restore. The composite scores for these students, especially the writing, ELA, and English scores, were significantly lower than the scores of students with disabilities who were served in less restrictive environments. Scores on math, science, and STEM were a bit higher, but still lower than those of peers with disabilities who were partially served in the regular classroom.

We cannot draw any conclusions about how these students are faring by race/ethnicity, because the numbers are too small. The majority of students in Restore are Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Multiracial. Hispanic/Latino students scored higher than students of other races/ethnicities on all sub-assessments, on average. There are not enough white students or students of other races/ethnicities in Restore to report on their results.

Intensive Intervention Program Finding 2: Graduation rates for students in intensive intervention programs are a strength.

Foundations Central is a collaboration between MMSD and the Workforce Development Department of the Urban League of Greater Madison. Foundations Central serves students who have been identified with special education needs, who have dropped out or stopped attending school for a variety of reasons, and who are between the ages of 18 and 21. Students complete their high school education via IEP portfolio or by earning 22 credits needed for completion. Instructional support is provided by certified MMSD cross-categorical teachers.

Restore is a voluntary program that, upon successful completion, serves as an alternative to the expulsion process. Restore offers full-day academic and social/emotional programming within a restorative framework. This program includes opportunities for credit attainment and employability skills for high school students. Off campus individual supports are provided for students unable to participate in small group programming.

We looked at the 2018–19 graduation data for students in Foundations Central and Restore. These two programs have excellent outcomes for students who were not likely to finish high school any other way. Students who attend these programs have dropped out, then reenrolled; they graduate from these programs as 5th-, 6th-, or 7th-year seniors. In 2018–19, 22 additional graduates from Foundations Central: 19 in their 5th year and 3 in their 6th year. In 2018–19, there were two graduates in Restore, both on IEPs, low-income, Hispanic/Latino, and English learners.

Service Delivery for Students with Disabilities: Strengths

Service delivery is essentially instructional design for students with disabilities. This section explores the strengths and areas for improvement in service delivery.

Service Delivery Finding 1: Certain postsecondary transition programs are strong, and postsecondary outcome data are strong, yet postsecondary transition services, overall, still need work.

Special education administrators, teachers, and parents all desire a clear transition plan between schools and grades, and from high school to adulthood.

A review of documents and data illuminated the following program strengths. In some ways, postsecondary transition services are a strength in MMSD. DPI found that 100% of the district's IEPs for students 16 and up contained secondary transition plans, placing MMSD in the 100th percentile on this measure. The Campus Connect program and Project Search are two secondary transition programs that are bright spots. Campus Connect serves students aged 18–21 with disabilities, allowing them to have concurrent enrollment in MMSD and Madison Area Technical College. Students can complete a certificate program or gain two years of liberal arts course credit to transfer to a four-year college. Project Search, which began in MMSD 25 years ago, is a partnership with The Search Institute and employers, such as the University of Wisconsin Hospital system, in which students have job preparation classes and intern in jobs to learn about the jobs and the expectations of the workplace. They get to rotate to become familiar with different positions, and are fully integrated in the hospital and clinic as staff members. There is a separate partnership with Dane County to help transition students with autism and/or intellectual and/or behavioral disabilities to adulthood. The county gradually steps in to provide job coaching and other services leading up to a student's 21st birthday or graduation. When students with disabilities graduate, many are employed or enrolled in postsecondary education, or both, and postsecondary surveys of students show that many of the students have maintained paid positions and/or enrollment in higher education a year after their graduation.

Although transition programs are described as a strength in this section, areas for improvement are discussed in the following Service Delivery Finding 9 section. We asked parents about postsecondary transition in our online survey. In terms of postsecondary transition, the majority of surveyed parents (54%) did not know whether their child's school has clear supports in place to support the child's successful transition from high school to adulthood, as guided by the child's IEP. When survey results were broken out by the ages of students, 27% of survey respondents were parents of high school-aged students. Parent survey details can be found in the Appendix.

Service Delivery Finding 2: The commitment to inclusion is a strong and long-standing component of MMSD culture.

The vast majority of preschool (3–5) and school-age (6–21) students with disabilities in MMSD are served in the regular early childhood classroom for most of their week. MMSD meets or exceeds all state targets for serving students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Within the district, there is some disproportionate placement of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students with disabilities in more restrictive settings. This means that more of these students are receiving special education services within a special education classroom for more of their day, and spending less of their day with their non-disabled peers, than White and Asian students are. We analyzed MMSD’s LRE data for 2018-19²⁰. Fifty-seven percent of preschoolers with disabilities spend at least 10 hours per week, and the majority of hours, in regular early childhood programs with non-disabled peers. Twenty-two percent are also in regular early childhood programs for at least 10 hours per week, but spend the majority of hours in a special education setting. The remainder of preschoolers with disabilities are served at home or in other settings with less time in regular preschool settings.

The vast majority of school-age children with disabilities in MMSD also spend the majority of their school day in the regular classroom with non-disabled peers. Seventy-seven percent spend 80% or more of their time in the regular classroom. Fifteen percent spend 40–79% of their time in the regular classroom, and six percent spend less than 40% of their time in the regular classroom. Only 1% spend their time in restrictive settings (residential or correctional facilities or private schools).

Most surveyed parents (85%) were satisfied with the amount of time their child is in the general education class, and most parents (88%) also agreed that their child is educated with the child’s non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. Eighty-nine percent of staff who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that students receiving special education services are provided with instruction that is aligned with state standards.

When survey findings were broken out by race/ethnicity, significantly lower percentages of Asian and white parents than parents in other racial/ethnic groups strongly disagreed or disagreed with the aforementioned statements about inclusion, and a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino parents agreed or strongly agreed compared with parents of other races. Specifically, fewer than 10 percent of Asian and white parents strongly disagreed or disagreed with survey prompts about inclusion, while, on average, 18 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents responded that they strongly agreed with the same prompts.

²⁰ While data for 2019-20 is available we have chosen not to use it in most cases because it may not be typical due to the pandemic.

Service Delivery Finding 3: Programming at the district level is inclusive and intentional.

MMSD's commitment to inclusion includes a focus on keeping students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools and having a continuum of services available to serve them. MMSD special education administration has been focused on helping schools build capacity to be flexible to meet the ever-changing needs of students with disabilities, rather than taking a rigid programmatic approach. About 90% of MMSD students attend their neighborhood/home school. While the district has always been committed to inclusion, physical barriers to accessibility in older school buildings have been addressed in the past 10 years, making inclusion even more possible.

A few members of the T< explicitly noted that the district strives to be inclusive and intentional when placing students in special education services, based on their needs.

"We have an inclusive philosophy balanced with [an] array of services. With early childhood special education services, the strength is services provided in the home, preschools, childcare, in the least restrictive environment. There is a purposeful look at an individual student's need, to determine the location of services." — Interview participant, administration

Most surveyed staff (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that students who receive special education are educated within grade-level general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. Most surveyed staff (90%) also agreed or strongly agreed that general education teachers are welcoming and respectful of the needs of students receiving special education services who are in their classrooms. Virtually all surveyed staff (98%) agreed or strongly agreed that special education staff are respectful of the needs of students receiving special education services. Most surveyed staff (86%) agreed that special and general education teachers have high expectations for students who receive special education.

When survey results were broken out by role, significantly higher percentages of special education teachers than staff in other roles disagreed that general education teachers are welcoming and respectful of the needs of students receiving special education services who are in their classroom (14%) and that general education teachers have high expectations for students receiving special education services (18%).

Some staff ($n = 37$) commented on inclusivity as a strength. Examples of their comments follow.

“Our school is a very accepting and welcoming place for all students. Our community is very accepting of students with disabilities, and most people want all of our students to be included as much as possible. Our regular education teachers do their best to collaborate with special education teachers to meet the behavior and academic needs of students.”

“Our practices are predominantly inclusive.”

“A fairly high percentage of spec ed students report that they feel valued and that they belong at our school.”

“I can only speak to my school. What we do well is include students with disabilities in regular classrooms as much as possible.”

Inclusion is a strength of MMSD’s early childhood special education services, as it is for the school-age population.

Most of the preschool-age children with disabilities in MMSD receive their special education services within the regular preschool environment. MMSD is in the 84th percentile in Wisconsin for this measure.

MMSD transitioned 100% of its eligible toddlers into early childhood special education services on time by their third birthday, putting them in the 100th percentile on this measure.

The district has many mental health services that help to broaden the continuum of support.

Special education administrators recognize the value of having complementary services to education, such as mental health support to help students achieve their potential.

“A lot of work with mental health services districtwide, bringing licensed therapists into eight different neighborhood schools. See us reaching out more and creating a broader offering for kids. Five years ago, we were a full-inclusion model—or pull-out. This has changed—individual schools are doing more to serve their kids and broadening the continuum of support, to include not just co-taught classes. Even kids who came to intervention, the level of need was so great—because the building had reached the end of their rope. (We) See more resource models being implemented, and even some self-contained that the schools, (are) able to keep kids in less restrictive settings, stay in their buildings.”— Interview participant, administration

Parents in focus groups noted staff and elementary school special education programs as strengths of the special education programs and services.

In focus groups and in survey responses, parents noted that they found many things about the special education services in MMSD positive, especially at the elementary level. Eighty-three percent of parents agreed, and 23% disagreed, that the learning environment for their child meets their expectations. While most parents reported that they felt included in the parent community at their child's school, 16% reported that they did not.

Parents feel that elementary-level programs have stronger supports for special education than middle school– or high school–level supports.

Some parents compared the quality of the special education programs across levels and concluded that the elementary level is the strongest.

“Elementary schools are small schools, so they are small groups, and teachers are really focused on children.”—Parent

“This year is really hard for me. Last year in elementary school I felt a lot more connected to everything, where this year has just been like a nightmare for me.”—Parent of a middle schooler

“I’ll just say [it] was way easier in elementary school. That was my experience for all of my kids, all of my bio, adopted, and foster kids.”—Parent

Some parents commented that the practice of allowing one good teacher, case manager, or related services provider to stay with a child for multiple years is beneficial to the continuous improvement of students.

*“I noticed that some of the support staff moved to the middle school. I thought that was really cool that the same support staff that [children] worked with in elementary school then moved up to the middle school.”
—Parent*

*“Yeah, [it’s been positive having the same staff for two years,] because they know your child, and you know them, and they know you. And I think that would be more confusing to switch every year. The school season, it goes so fast, and then bam, they’re with somebody else. That’s a little more confusing to me than knowing, ‘Hey, oh, I know this person, and they know my tics.’”
—Parent*

Service Delivery Finding 4: The Department of Student Services produces informative written resources.

We observed that, in general, MMSD's Departments of Student Services and Student and Staff Support are reflective and forward thinking, and that they produce reflective, informative, and well-researched written resources. A large amount of thorough and well-researched written guidance is available to staff and site administrators, but in some cases they could be more pragmatic or accessible as a quick source of guidance as stand-alone documents. We were unable to answer our questions about how much these resources are used, how schools make sense of them, and whether schools know how to connect the dots between how these written resources are related to each other.

For example, the ***Special Education Service Delivery Review (SES DR)***, Department of Student Services, June 2017, is a review process designed to support schools in implementing the MMSD Strategic Framework and the Plan, with a spotlight on special education practices. Although it focuses on the needs of students receiving special education services, its content and outcomes have implications for every student, across all types of education. This review process is designed to be initiated by program support teachers (PSTs), a role similar to a lead special education teacher in a school and led or co-led by PSTs and central office administrators. Principals are described in the SES DR as "necessary contributors and thought partners."

Built into it is a comprehensive set of related guidance and resources, including a description of the continuous review of specialized instruction. A key strength of this guidance is that it emphasizes that the special education placement process has teams creating goals and programming before making placement decisions. It also includes a listing of the Department of Student Services vision, mission, and belief statements and theory of action. The review process has goals and matrices for self-assessment of teacher collaboration, and high-quality systematic instruction "look-fors," such as building-level high-functioning collaboration and MTSS for academics and behavior (structures and processes). The SES DR also has sections for analyzing the data collected in the review, big-picture planning, and action steps.

The SES DR is highly relevant and thorough, but we were not able to determine how often this review process is used, and to what degree principals are contributing as thought partners. As a data source beyond the results of an SES DR, the Department of Student Services has a process in place to review IEPs, including the key data points of service delivery (service, location, and provider of service). Also, since the SES DR is designed to be a way to address and improve a continuum of services within a high-functioning MTSS, we were not able to determine how useful this tool is in schools.

Determining Special Education Placement in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Department of Student Services, Winter 2015, is an excellent tool that expertly outlines how special education

placement aligns with MTSS. Its theme of flexible and fluid movement among various levels of support, as students need support, echoes what we know to be best practice. The graphic on page 7 of this resource is especially informative. We did not hear anything about this resource in our interactions with staff. It would be good to know how much training and discussion across district- and school-level leaders has taken place on this document; how much the teacher team toolkit is used; how much of the vision of service delivery outlined on page 16 has been realized; and how this resource is distributed and used.

Service Delivery for Students with Disabilities: Areas for Improvement

Service Delivery Finding 5: BIPOC students are more likely to be served in less inclusive settings than their white counterparts.

BIPOC students come into kindergarten from early childhood special education settings in which these students are also less likely to be included in regular early childhood settings.

Black/African American students with disabilities are more likely to spend most of their day in special education settings, while white students with disabilities are more likely to spend most of their day in general education settings. When examining the distribution of school-age students with disabilities who are educated with their non-disabled peers 40–79% of the time (LRE setting B) by race/ethnicity, we found that:

- A significantly higher percentage of Black/African American students with disabilities were placed in setting B (37%), compared to the overall percentage of Black/African American students with disabilities (29%).
- A significantly lower percentage of white students with disabilities were placed in setting B (24%), compared to the overall percentage of white students with disabilities (33%).
- A significantly higher percentage of Black/African American students with disabilities spend less than 40% of their day in classes with non-disabled peers (LRE setting C) (47%), compared to the overall percentage of Black/African American students with disabilities (29%).
- A significantly lower percentage of Hispanic/Latino students with disabilities were placed in setting C (14%), compared to the overall percentage of Hispanic/Latino students with disabilities (22%).
- A significantly lower percentage of white students with disabilities were placed in setting C (21 percent), compared to the overall percentage of white students with disabilities (33%).

Service Delivery Finding 6: Program guidance is not translating as well as intended to fidelity of implementation.

Service delivery and applicable guidance are not fully embraced by all sites.

In our evaluation we noted themes of ineffective co-teaching models, limited engagement in standards-based curriculum, poor provision of scaffolds/differentiation, and misalignment of specially designed instruction with schedules and staffing. The Plan documented a need for an “intentional collaborative service delivery planning process which will align specially designed

instruction with current schedule or location to ensure all students with disabilities are consistently provided the necessary instructional opportunities and rich, supportive inclusive environments to realize their potential” (p. 3, the Plan). There is a need to ensure that students with disabilities have access to instruction in their grade-level standards. At the same time, special educators shared their concern that they do not feel they have leverage when students refuse to complete work. There is pressure on special educators to not issue failing grades to students, and this sometimes causes them frustration that students can do whatever they want and still get a diploma. A collaborative, instructional design process for students with disabilities addresses the issues of use of people, time, and resources to implement IEPs.

The Plan has attempted to encourage a service delivery planning process that is collaborative at the building level. The SESDR, as written, is an excellent process. As an attempt to improve service delivery, it has been utilized for years by the Department of Student Services, with varying success, depending on the degree to which site-based decision-making is allowed to override it. Based on our analysis, we believe that the themes misted in the paragraph above, which could be addressed through this process, continue to be problems in MMSD. These symptoms of poor service delivery planning are barriers to improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

“I agree with the lack of support in the elective. So [my child is] forced to choose a music elective, but there’s no staff to be in this music elective. So he’s failing because it’s sensory. He doesn’t want to play an instrument. He doesn’t want to sing. But those are his two options. So he sits with a cello in between his legs for an hour. I’m like, he shows up, he participates. And, you know, there’s nobody to help him, either, because there’s just not staff in that room. It’s the teachers.”—Parent

The persistence of these problems is strong evidence of a need to continue working on the goal of improving service delivery for students with disabilities, with emphasis from leaders on shared accountability for improving the planning of service delivery. Service delivery planning has not improved sufficiently in our opinion, or in the opinions of special education administrators. We believe that service delivery planning has not become regular practice, at least partially because it is a collaborative practice that requires the principal as a collaborative partner, and that requirement has not been articulated as a districtwide priority in the past five years. Principal training is necessary, and the school instructional design process and the special education service delivery process should be reviewed to see whether they need adjustment based on lessons learned during the pandemic and the need to continue with flexible learning models, such as distance and hybrid learning plans.

Service Delivery Finding 7: The quality of instructional supports varies by grade level, school level, and school.

Special education administrators, teachers, and parents all noted concerns that instructional supports for students with disabilities vary significantly from school to school. Qualitative data supports the finding that there are continued issues with follow-through on implementation of service delivery guidance. Use of resources and training is not consistent across the district. Needed alignment or curriculum and instruction across the district is not present, nor is an intentional focus on the critical components of instructional design. A few special education assistant directors mentioned that inconsistencies across school levels make their work supporting students a challenge.

“Middle schools each have different intervention programs. That makes it hard for us to support kids from different locations—[it] creates a challenge—trying to keep them current on what is happening in their building. Or, we keep changing intervention programs and curriculum.”— Interview participant, administration

When asked, in the staff survey, whether they have access to a repository of modified or adapted curricula aligned with district scopes and instructional resources in core subjects, 40% of respondents answered “don’t know”, 36% answered “no”, and 26% answered “yes.”

Many parents believe that inconsistencies at the grade and school levels during the implementation of their children’s IEPs generate setbacks for the children. As students get older, the quality of support decreases, mainly when they leave elementary school. Some parents feel that the higher student-to-teacher ratios in middle and high school contribute to lower-quality support.

“It’s a burden on the parents to manage those relationships and [that] understanding of the different needs of the students. They’re constantly waiting to hear back about the IEP. There’s an inconsistency between schools in terms of how they handle special education services.”—Parent

“Everything is wonderful in elementary and middle school, maybe because of the size inclusive education (was better). Teachers are more assertive helping students navigate. They make sure conventional people include those with special needs. It works well; it seems to work. But when they get to high school, there is a break in continuation of the quality. They are not inclusive; they don’t receive special help to navigate the bigger school. But not everyone has the same level. We have a huge high school, with typical children, and then we have this other group of kids that are segregated. Kids get isolated.”—Parent, during pre-interview

According to a few parents, although some schools have staff who are knowledgeable and who are capable of building relationships with the families and hearing their voices, this is not consistent across the schools.

“Very dependent on who the cross-categorical teacher is, and the school. When there is a great match, variable nature of what happens at individual schools—even on the admin level—it works best when you have parents’ input, and you can call John. This doesn’t work for all the other kids.”—Parent

Providing consistent and comprehensive special education services could create more equitable access and instruction.

While, overall, MMSD has high rates of inclusion, Black students with disabilities are served in the regular classroom at lower percentages than white students with disabilities, especially students with the disability category of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) in high school and students with intellectual disabilities (ID) in elementary school. Percentages are much more evenly distributed for students with specific learning disabilities. This is a service delivery issue, but it is also a disproportionality issue. The following Disproportionality section contains more analysis of LRE data by race/ethnicity.

Accelerating the pace of learning and exiting students from special education services when they no longer need it is a goal of special education, but, from our review of district data, we learned that very few MMSD students—fewer than ten—exit from special education in any given year. Staff indicated that they are reluctant to consider exiting students because the district lacks a system of support other than special education (MTSS). Staff worry that their students will struggle and fail because supports are not sufficiently provided in general education.

Special education leaders are worried about how to mitigate the effects of the learning that has been disrupted by COVID-19, while not having to provide compensatory services to a child who is already receiving a full day of school and could become overwhelmed by the additional services. Moving forward, there will be a need to be flexible and to make responsible decisions about service delivery. Some families will prefer to stay in distance learning, for various reasons. Some of the learning models created to deal with the pandemic should remain as options. Parents are concerned about the potential for arbitrary restrictions coming from the district.

Parents made suggestions to provide extracurricular activities and that better support students with disabilities.

Several parents suggested that, often, extracurricular activities do not exist for, or are not inclusive of, students with special needs, and identified such activities as essential for their children's development.

"[Having extracurricular activities,] they can express themselves and do it in an environment that's comfortable with people that like them."—Parent

"Maybe supports for the extracurricular activities, so that all families feel included, might be good."—Parent

Service Delivery Finding 8: Student behavior and staff concerns about student behavior require a systemic equity-focused approach.

A behavior education plan (BEP) was established seven years ago to try to address increasing staff and administrative concerns about student behavior problems disrupting the learning environment. As a result of, student misbehavior, there is an undercurrent of staff not feeling safe, as shared in our focus groups and survey, saying that other students are not safe, and complaining that they do not have time to provide all of the services outlined in students' IEPs, because they are spending time responding to student misbehavior. Staff fears works against the focus on equity and inclusion, as pressure builds to place disruptive students in restrictive settings, and as a disproportionate number of these students are students of color. This undercurrent is especially strong across non-certified staff, such as special education assistants (SEA), who are often working closest to students, do not always have adequate training, and do not have the benefit of highly functioning Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The district is well resourced, so it has added 4 million in personnel resources: staff to implement PBIS, psychologists and social workers to help address behavioral challenges. The district has also been adding school-based mental health providers. However, the mindset and systems that are needed to make PBIS function are not in place. Due to the pandemic, we were not able to determine whether there has been a systemic approach to having these added resources in place. We suspect that much more work is needed for MMSD to have the systemic approach needed to implement culturally and trauma informed PBIS.

Some staff are frustrated by the Behavior Education Plan and do not feel safe at school.

Some staff perceive that the BEP leaves staff in a frustrating position, and sometimes may contribute to putting them at risk of injury. In focus groups, some special educators indicated that the behavior education plan needs to be rebuilt from the ground up, with input from the people who spend their days with students. They believe that it was rolled out too quickly and

is not implemented well. Some special educators shared that there is no follow-through from administrators on behavior issues, or that, if there is follow-through and parents balk, the district backs down. Some shared that SEAs get the brunt of misbehavior, and are sometimes hurt by students, making it hard to keep these staff members on staff. Some special educators said they do not feel safe at school, and spoke of experiencing physical harm and the resulting PTSD. Some complained that principals do not follow up with staff who were harmed, and cited a pervasive and callous attitude, among some leaders and colleagues, that “this is the job you signed up for.”

“Special ed has been hurt very badly by the behavior education plan. They made it easier for kids to hurt us without any kind of consequences. A huge issue is that staff are getting hurt. We are being hurt by the same kids multiple times a day, day after day, week after week, month after month, and the BEP is supporting the kids being able to hurt us. Nothing is being done about that. The needs are getting so much more significant.”—SE Teacher

Continuity of services is needed to maintain student improvement.

Special education teachers mentioned that students receiving special education services need continuity of services to maintain their progress.

“The district removes services when students are doing well [with the services], but then the district wants to remove the services the student still needs. They [district] don’t understand the student is doing well because of the services. Major disconnect when kids get what they need in alternative, but then they go back to high school, and then they don’t get the services anymore. Then parents ask, why can’t you provide those services?”—SE Teacher

Service Delivery Finding 9: Transition from grade to grade, as well as postsecondary transition, continues to be an area of concern, with some bright spots. Guiding transitions is an area of continued need.

Special education administrators, teachers, and parents all desire a clear plan for students transitioning between schools and grades, and from high school to adulthood.

Bright spot: A review of district documents found a document called ***Students Moving Across Levels (SMAL)***, which provides guidelines for special educators to use to transition students to the next grade. Two consultants who were brought into MMSD in 2015, Sue Gamm and Judy Elliot, had noted that transition was a problem and that the SMAL guidance was available but was not used consistently. Over the last two years, many more staff have implemented the SMAL process, including a process in which the district provided special education and related

services staff with three days of paid time specifically to help coordinate successful transitions. In this process, each special education teacher who has transitioning students contacts the family, reviews the IEP and the previous teachers' recommendations, and orients the new support team. One parent noted that meet-and-greets helped with their child's transition.

"One thing that I think it's good the district did is that they started doing some of the, like, meet-and-greets before the school year started. They piloted (it at) a few schools. I think that that is really important, so the kids can just make a connection with one teacher, at least, that they're going to have, or [with] the building. Or, when kids are transitioning to a different level, I think that's really important."—Parent

Bright spot: *The Secondary Transition Guide*, Department of Student Services, currently in its third edition, is another guidance document that is well written and that needs a continued focus on implementation. Special education administrators have plans in place to focus on helping staff implement the newest guidance.

Parents note that a lack of plans for transition (from grade to grade, as well as from high school to postsecondary) makes transition difficult for students and adds to inconsistency.

"What [are] their [the district's] transition plans for students between grades and between schools? Because, as far as I can determine, there is no transition plan. It's dependent on their specific caseworker at a given moment, and when we started at the new high school, there was absolutely . . . it appears that there was absolutely no sharing of information, except the IEP, which no one read."—Parent

"[The] transition leaves us feeling disconnected. You'll see when you move from elementary to middle and middle to high. That's so challenging."
—Parent

"One other [area for improvement] is the postsecondary transition out of high school. I found the teachers are informing parents of the options . . . but I don't feel like they have enough knowledge themselves, so they were on their own."—Parent

There is a need for adequate standards and coordination between alternative schools and high schools to improve instructional quality. Fewer than half of surveyed staff (41.84%) agreed with the prompt "Students receiving special education services receive sufficient supports to successfully transition from grade to grade, from school to school, and from high school to adulthood." Almost half (47.56%) disagreed with the prompt.

Service Delivery for Students with Disabilities Plan Goals:

Implement a collaborative **Service Delivery** planning process as a component of comprehensive school instructional design to ensure all students with disabilities are provided with high-quality instruction and effective special education/related services in the most inclusive educational environments.

Implement improved processes to successfully transition students with disabilities from grade to grade, from school to school, and from high school to adulthood.

Status:

Progress has been made by the Department of Student Services; however, service delivery for students with disabilities is a shared responsibility. With a limited core and non-functional MTSS, there may not be enough supports for students with disabilities. Further, in the absence of the aforementioned, special education staff can become more siloed/isolated, and limited in what they can accomplish, no matter how many resources are added.

In this section on **curriculum, instruction, and professional development**, we address the following evaluation questions: What adjustments, systems, or practices should be made to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided equitable access to high-quality instruction across all schools/programs? What evidence-based instructional practices could be included to improve the learning outcomes of students with disabilities? What resources or professional learning do staff identify as important for improving the learning outcomes of dually identified students? What instructional practices improve the learning outcomes of dually identified students?

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Strengths

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 1: Prevention activities (“early intervening”) are a priority.

The special education department is taking advantage of flexibility in the federal special education law called Coordinated Early Intervening Services, voluntarily contributing 15% of its federal IDEA funds toward preventing inappropriate referrals to special education by helping to fund reading intervention efforts. The Department of Student Services has invested heavily in early literacy by funding eight or nine reading interventionists at elementary schools with higher levels of disproportionality than other schools, including funding a coordinator of multisensory reading to address dyslexia. Dyslexia is not, in itself, a disability that entitles a child to special education, but if it is not addressed, it can lead to children being identified as needing special education under other disability areas, such as specific learning disabilities. This funding is also used to train general education reading interventionists and special educators in the Orton-Gillingham method, an evidence-based reading intervention for individuals or small

groups of students, and in a packaged, highly effective reading curriculum called the Sunday System, which is based on the Orton-Gillingham method.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 2: Specially designed instruction is defined and supported.

The MMSD Department of Student Services provides and supports a defined set of evidence-based reading and math interventions differentiated by level, such as Orton-Gillingham, Sunday System, Passport, and REWARDS, plus other specially designed instruction. For more information see the following links²¹.

Professional development opportunities for special educators are rich and plentiful.

The professional development (PD) offered for special education staff is an area of strength in MMSD. Per the Plan, PD has been an area of focus in the district. Various groups, such as nurses, psychologists, and speech language pathologists (SLPs), have regular training and meetings to learn and plan together. Examples of regular training on specially designed instruction (pre-pandemic) include PD on how to conduct the aforementioned evidence-based reading and math interventions, and on the IEP process, including the role of the Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative, addressing challenging behaviors through the IEP process, and more. The 2019–20 schedule included a PD event practically every day, and more than one event on many days. Some events were an hour or two, and some were all-day events.

MMSD has generous provisions for PD for special education assistants (SEAs). The SEAs' contracts pay for five days of PD. There is an option for SEAs to be paid for additional PD they attend outside of the work day. All SEAs have an additional 25 hours of optional PD. Optional the PD is co-designed by the SEA, the applicable Assistant Director of Special Education, and the school principal. SEAs were also given four optional hours to work with the special education teachers who direct their work at the beginning of the year to review IEPs and plan programming. New SEAs receive one day of orientation. Topical PD sessions are offered for SEAs throughout the year.

²¹ [SDI Programs in MMSD supported by Student Services](#), [MMSD Literacy System of Supports](#), [MMSD Math System of Supports](#), [K-5](#), [MMSD Math System of Supports](#), 6-8

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Areas for Improvement

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 3: Lack of a functional Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in schools contributes to less-than-adequate outcomes for struggling learners, especially BIPOC learners, and disproportionate referrals to special education.

This section brings to light whole-school issues that significantly impact special education. When the IDEA was most recently reauthorized, in 2004, many requirements were added that focus on having systems in place to intervene early and to use what is now referred to as a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to provide high-quality instruction to all students, preventing unnecessary referrals to special education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). MTSS incorporates aspects of Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to form an integrated and data-driven system of supports designed to ensure that all students have academic and social/emotional success at school. From mtss4success.org:

- “MTSS differs from RtI in most states because it is designed to help integrate and streamline the provisions for multiple services to students in need, such as:
 - Title 1 funding
 - Other national funding
 - Statewide improvement processes and funding
 - Continuous schoolwide improvement processes and funding
 - Systems change processes and funding
 - Data collection processes and funding
 - Differentiated accountability
 - Lesson study
 - Student study teams, problem solving teams, etc.
- MTSS differs also because most states designed it to include:
- Behavior interventions; MTSS integrates academics and behavior
- All struggling students, not just the most needy students
- Multiple meanings and purposes of RtI, usually focusing on one”

When the IDEA was last reauthorized, it contained a significant emphasis on providing special education services that are focused on results for students with disabilities. Therefore, over time, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has begun to focus more on student outcomes and less on compliance. This focus on student outcomes is the basis of OSEP’s Results-Driven Accountability, and the field of special education has been changing accordingly. Many resources to support implementing IDEA’s MTSS requirements can be found at <http://www.ideapartnership.org/>.

We did not find evidence of a high-functioning MTSS. A previous evaluation of special education conducted by Educational Futures, and work done by consultants Elliot and Gamm in 2015, noted that MTSS was not in place and really needed to be. Unfortunately, MTSS has not been a consistent priority in MMSD in the intervening years, and we did not observe that much had changed since 2015. Judy Elliott's 2/11/16 memo says, "The District, in general, is not currently aligned (e.g., Central Office support, coordination across offices and personnel that support schools) or intentionally focused on the critical components of MTSS." We found that this statement continues to be accurate. In fact, more and more of the district's budget for curriculum, instruction, and professional development is being spent on interventions, because the need for curriculum, instruction, and professional development has grown. It is impossible for a school to intervene its way out of a weak core instructional program.

Implementing a high-quality service delivery model in the absence of a MTSS is nearly impossible. Special education leaders and staff in focus groups shared their concerns with us about there being little uniformity across schools in terms of curriculum, instruction and professional development. A few Assistant Directors of Special Education mentioned that where schools have implemented MTSS, the legal requirement to provide evidence of the need for special education is being better addressed; consequently they've mitigated the overidentification of students for special education.

"We know we have to provide several interventions before referring [students] to special education. That mentality has helped with problem-solving before referring. Our MTSS has made gains. Communication with principals that we are overidentifying students. People understand the need to gather data first."— Interview participant, administration

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 4: The research-based approach Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is not being used, and differentiation is not part of instruction to the degree needed.

We observed a lack of differentiated instruction and no Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach in place. Without consistent lesson design, such as UDL, differentiation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is extremely difficult to achieve. The Department of Student Services has provided PD on this topic, and has even brought in Dr. Tom Hehir from Harvard for a summer institute for general and special educators focused on UDL. However, with the amount of turnover in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, and with top leaders expressing limited interest in UDL, use of UDL hasn't gained much traction beyond special educators.

Curriculum, Instruction, and PD Finding 5: General educators are not clear on expectations and lack sufficient knowledge or skills to provide students with disabilities equitable access to high-quality instruction.

Only 61% of staff who responded to the survey agreed that general education teachers at their school have the knowledge and skills to accommodate the needs of students in their classrooms who receive special education, and 71% agreed that general educators provide necessary accommodations or modifications for students receiving special education services.

Parents were asked about their child's access to the general education environment and their child's experiences in general education. As mentioned earlier, the majority of parents agreed that their child is educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate; that they are satisfied with the amount of time their child is in general education; that general education teachers know how to implement the IEP; that teachers and support staff are used effectively; and that school site administrators are responsive to their concerns. However, only 66% of parents agreed that there are sufficient instructional supports available to their child; 75% agreed that general educators understand how to implement their child's IEP; 72% agreed that general and special educators and support staff are utilized effectively at their child's school; and only 51% agreed that their child's school supports the successful transition of the child from school to school.

Curriculum, Instruction, and PD Finding 6: Parents and staff have identified specific training or skills they need, including expertise in specially designed instruction targeted toward specific student needs, time for professional development, and time for collaboration.

Some members of the T< believe that the quality and outcomes of the program would improve if staff with skills matching students' needs were included.

A few members of the T< recognized a mismatch between student needs and the staff skills required to address those needs. The state's move to cross-categorical licensing of special education teachers, along with a dramatic rise in use of provisionally licensed staff, has contributed to a decline in the number of staff with skills to meet students' needs.

"The adults in the buildings have limited knowledge of his identified need. I've heard this often—we don't align student needs to adult skill sets. We don't have enough experts in areas of need."— Interview participant, administration

Parents mentioned that, because many students may be impacted by trauma, or may even be traumatized at school, training for staff on trauma-informed practices is important.

Several parents mentioned that staff, especially special education teachers and assistants, lack the training to help their children. These parents suggested more investment in PD.

“One of the things that I’d like to see is... the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a bunch of great resources on trauma-informed care... give your teachers time to take that training in a meaningful way.”—Parent

“Some kids that do have trauma then have emotional-behavioral issues at school. They may end up having an IEP based off of that. So I feel like that’s important, trauma training.”—Parent

“There was one time that they had to . . . escort [my child] out of school . . . and there’s trauma that has happened to him within the school. [He] doesn’t trust anybody now.”—Parent

Special education administrators are also concerned about time for PD. They said that they would like to know how the MMSD Department of Student Services is ensuring that it is informing all parts of the district on key actions needed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, and that they are interested in prioritizing PD efforts to focus on systems change. MMSD has not offered any PD to general education teachers on special education in many years—nine or ten years, according to some administrators.

Staff survey participants recommended making collaboration and co-teaching a priority ($n = 37$) and having more alternative and differentiated environments for supporting students ($n = 31$), such as intervention spaces, quiet/calming rooms, and small, highly supportive environments to support students with the most challenging behaviors.

Besides the need for more time to collaborate, challenges cited most frequently in staff survey comments include lack of training/PD opportunities, especially for SEAs ($n = 48$); lack of staff collaboration ($n = 25$); and variation in the quality of services across schools, grades, and individual teachers ($n = 29$). Concerns about collaboration centered on lack of time to collaborate, lack of (mostly general educators’) willingness to collaborate, and the need for explicit PD on co-teaching, to improve its effectiveness. Commonly cited examples of variability in quality include transitions from grade to grade; inconsistent provision of services, such as variability from 9th grade to 10th grade; and drastic LRE shifts between levels, such as between middle school and high school.

PD recommendations by survey participants ($n = 60$) frequently focused on support and training for SEAs, training and resources to help bilingual staff get their special education licenses, PD for appropriate staff on IEPs and the rights of students with disabilities and their families, and

how to make specific adaptations to curriculum for students, tailored to specific student needs/limitations.

“The district needs to provide PD to all staff. We need PD on IEPs, and what they mean. We need PD on differentiating our curriculum in order to support our special education students. We need PD on the rights that [these] special education students and their families have. We need more special education teachers in schools, and we need administration to step up and treat these kids as if they were their own.”-Teacher

Table 11. Needed PD Topics Selected by Respondents to the Staff Survey

Answer Choices	Percentage
Classroom Management	12.92%
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	25.53%
Social-Emotional Learning	33.59%
Trauma Informed Practices	48.18%
Collaborative Planning	20.67%
Co-Teaching	22.64%
Data Analysis for Guiding Instruction	15.05%
Differentiating Instruction	26.90%
Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies in Mathematics	25.08%
Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies in Reading	27.96%
Partnering with Families	18.09%
Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)	18.39%
Standards-Aligned Functional Skill Development	18.39%
Supporting and Accommodating Students with Disabilities	33.89%
The IEP Process (including writing effective IEP goals and general and special education teacher responsibilities)	14.59%
Other (please specify)	9.73%
Total	658

As shown in Table 10, survey respondents indicated needs for various types of PD. Special educators also shared examples of factors that affect teachers' abilities to do their jobs:

- Special ed teachers need more planning time to do paperwork
- Clunky software for IEP—needs improving
- Let special ed teacher be special ed teacher—co-teach, collaborative planning. Co-teach we have slipped away from special ed teacher taking the lead on the needs of special ed kids
- Space to do our work
- Smaller caseloads at the HS—with firm ceiling
- Time to do job
- Lower caseload to manage
- Ability with the IEP based on needs
- Safety, accountability, behavior: There needs to be accountability—there also needs to be accountability for behavior

There is a current need for staff to receive professional development on how to work with students with behavioral issues.

A few assistant directors of special education indicated that they believe that providing staff with PD on how to work with students with special needs could prevent these students' failure in the system.

"We need to have a renewed effort in professional development for what that can and should look like. I see regression of our services in that area for students with behavioral issues. Those students are behind also and make them harder to catch up. Focus early on what is happening and how we can practice inclusive practices [. . .] We need to do behavior plan and change instructional plan for engagement."— Interview participant, administration

Teachers suggested adapting the special education services to each student's needs, to improve student success.

Some special education teachers mentioned that the program should change its current strategy of using pre-determined service parameters with students, to one with more customization, to offer better support to students.

"There is not enough time to meet the required instructional service minutes. The building drives the services, not the students' needs. Needs are a pre-determined amount of time: 'if you have this disability, you get these many minutes.'"—SE Teacher

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Finding 7: School principals need to learn more about special education and engage in the program processes.

Under the previous Superintendent, principals have had high levels of autonomy and low levels of accountability. This has impeded development of MTSS, and has fostered wide variation in special education practices, as well as in instructional practices in schools.

Principals have not had recent or consistent training in special education. In 2016, the Department of Student Services was able to provide principals with such PD at three of their principal meetings; there have been no dedicated PD sessions since then. In past years, the Executive Director of Student Services was more involved in the principal screening and hiring process, to evaluate principals' knowledge of and willingness to learn about their responsibilities for the administration of special education in their buildings.

According to special education assistant directors, school principals should be knowledgeable on special education and should participate in the program processes to improve student

outcomes. At the kick-off meeting and in our interviews with them, special education administrators shared with evaluators their desire for principals and assistant principals to gain greater knowledge about special education in order to improve the success of students with disabilities in their schools. Additionally, these staff noted that principals' disconnection from the program often leads them to minimize the levels of services that students need.

"I never realized how important principal knowledge of special education law , and special education in general, makes the difference. Those that have the knowledge, their school runs more smoothly than those that don't focus on special education. Knowledge of special education is [the] #1 indicator of a successful school."— Interview participant, administration

The Executive Director of Student Services has hired two former principals as consultants to help build principal capacity and streamline the hiring of special educators. These consultants note that principals are very interested in having opportunities to learn more about how to use all of the resources in their schools to design and deliver instruction. This is encouraging, as it is needed in order for the principals to fully implement MTSS and improve special education.

Like Assistant Directors of Special Education, parents also felt that leadership needs to learn more about special education and engage in the program processes.

"Get different administrators, people with a better understanding of the laws."—Parent

Staff survey respondents expressed high levels of disagreement with prompts asking whether there are sufficient PD opportunities for site administrators and general educators to learn about meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Fewer than half of survey respondents agreed with each of these prompts about adequate resources.

Overall, when survey results were broken out by role, a significantly lower percentage of special education teachers than other staff agreed or strongly agreed with each of the PD-related prompts in the survey. However, for almost all of the PD items, none of the respondents who identified as special education teachers strongly disagreed.

Special education teachers also noted that principals lack knowledge about special education.

Special educators expressed concerns that principals and district administrators sometimes minimize what the IEP team believes to be needed services. For example, they described some principals saying, "Oh no, we can't provide that," and expressed frustration that, as a result, an IEP that they have drafted with the IEP team is not valid because it is "squeezed down and not based on needs," and that they are not allowed to document that rationale anywhere. Special

educators reported that, when needs are identified but are not met because the district or the principal minimizes services, they feel they are not giving students what they need, and they feel as though their hands are tied because they are discouraged from advocating for the services.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development Plan Goals:

Expand Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategy for curriculum and lesson design that ensures access for students with disabilities to rigorous standards-based content.

Create a repository of modified or adapted curricula aligned with district scopes and instructional resources in core subjects.

Increase professional learning opportunities for special education teachers and assistants on evidence-based interventions for reading, writing, math, and social-emotional skills/behavior.

Provide professional development for instructional staff, including all principals, districtwide, on the principles and practices of inclusive education.

Status: These goals should continue. Professional learning for special educators and SEAs has increased significantly. The other three goals continue to be areas of need. UDL, and especially PD for general educators and principals, require a commitment and support the superintendent and cabinet.

Disproportionality Strengths

This section on **disproportionality** describes situations in which BIPOC students are disproportionately represented in one or more aspects of education, such as being in special education, being identified with a specific disability, placement in LRE, and disciplinary incidents (suspension or expulsion). DPI monitors Wisconsin school districts for disproportionality in these areas. This section undertakes the evaluation goal: *Identify factors contributing to the disproportionate identification of students of color with disabilities and make recommendations for actions that significantly disrupt this pattern.*

Disproportionality Finding 1: MMSD administrators and staff are taking steps to address the significant disproportionality.

At the September 6, 2019, meeting of the Departments of Student Services and Student and Staff Support, the following was discussed:

Core values of the district: excellence, belonging, racial justice, voice, focus, and creativity. MMSD is committed to taking responsibility for the way current policies and practices serve to reproduce inequities, and taking action to close the gaps in opportunity that lead to racialized outcomes for children and youth of color. (Department of Student Services PowerPoint presentation, 2019)

During the 2020–21 school year, special education administrators conducted an in-depth review of 25% of the IEPs of black and white high school students with emotional and behavioral disorders, to look at the role of implicit bias in special education documentation. Much of what they found is discussed in the following Disproportionality Areas for Improvement section; however, the act of conducting the review, and then acting on the findings, is a strength to be commended and encouraged. Going forward, the Student Services administration has already outlined steps to address the issues of implicit bias found in the IEPs.

Going forward—administrators’ initial thoughts on writing antiracist IEPs:

IEPs that purposefully contain language that focuses on skills, especially academic skills, and identify strengths on which to build future success will lead to disability-related needs and goals that focus on academic and SEL [social-emotional learning] skill building and ultimately to services that proactively address skill building as the primary focus and responsibility of the special education teacher.

Skills-based, strengths-focused, future-oriented IEP language supports the dismantling of racist stereotypes and the construction of equitable opportunity within the school culture and environment. Black students will feel more supported and connected in the school environment, resulting in greater academic success (Department of Student Services PowerPoint presentation, 2021).

Suspension and expulsion rates of BIPOC (and White) students are declining.

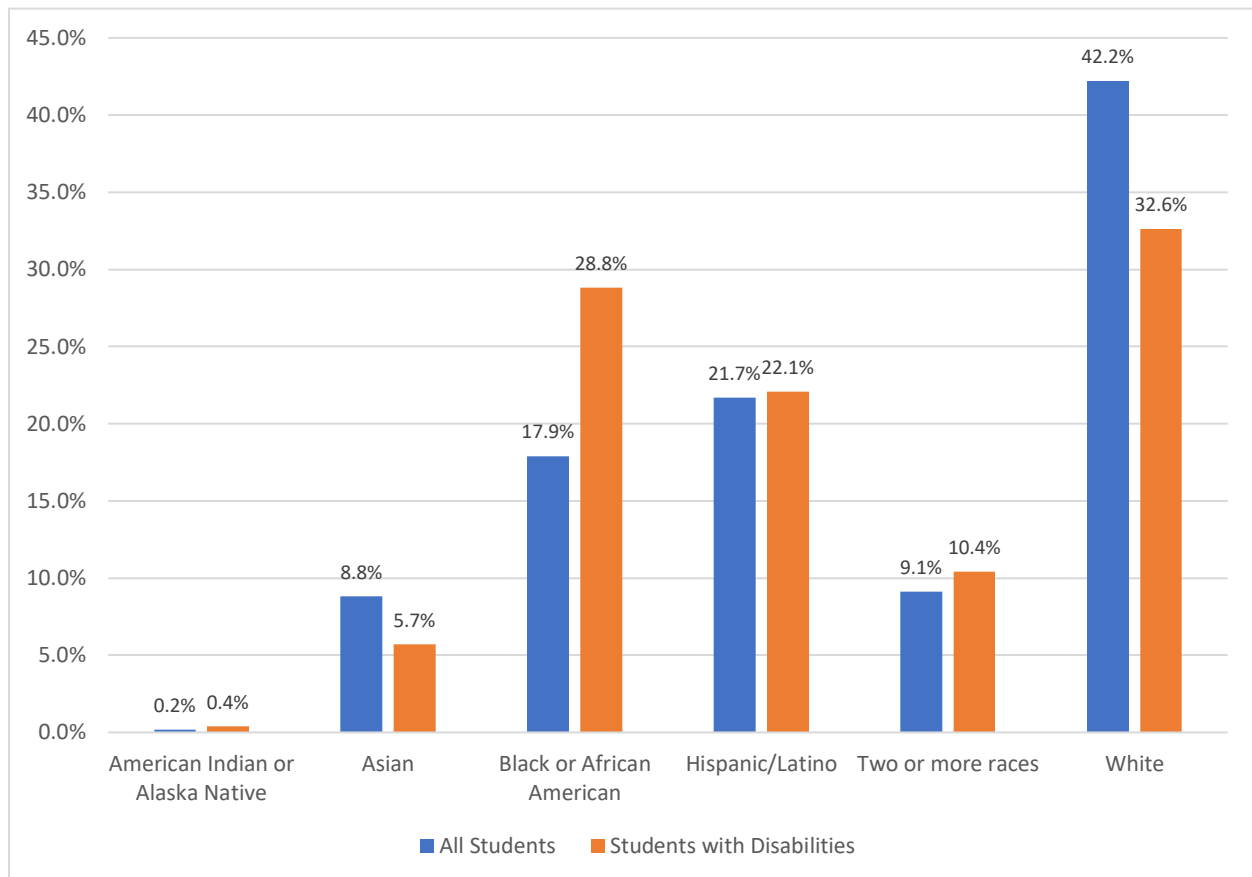
In our analysis of discipline data, we observed a slight reduction in the suspension rates of Black students over the last five years (Table A90). While we did not analyze expulsion data we know that the district has dramatically decreased expulsion rates and students with disabilities who would have been expelled in the past are now provided a full day comprehensive program.

Disproportionality Areas for Improvement

Disproportionality Finding 2: There is significant disproportionality in MMSD's identification and placement of brown and Black students in special education and in Black students with disabilities experiencing disciplinary removals (suspension or expulsion).

While administrators and staff are taking steps to address disproportionality, much remains to be done. MMSD has been found to have significant disproportionality in the identification of Black or African American students for special education, and is also struggling with disproportionate identification of American Indian/Alaska Native students; these are common disparities in many schools in the United States. Under Wisconsin's weighted risk ratio, Black students generally are about two times more likely than students in all other racial or ethnic groups to be identified as having a disability. In terms of specific disability categories, MMSD disproportionately identifies Black students and multiracial students as having EBD, and disproportionately identifies Black students as having an intellectual disability or a specific learning disability, at more than three times the rate at which these students are represented in the general population. Black students are identified as having an Other Health Impairment (OHI) at more than two times the rate at which these students are present in the student population.

Figure 4. Percentage of MMSD Students with Disabilities (Age 6–21) by Race/Ethnicity vs. Percentage of All Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Figure 4 compares the percentages of students in the total MMSD enrollment by race/ethnicity (blue) with the percentages of students with disabilities by race/ethnicity (orange) in 2018–19. This bar graph calculates the percentage of the total special education population occupied by each racial/ethnic group. By contrast, table A80 calculates the percentage of students in each racial/ethnic group who are in special education.

We analyzed multiple years of MMSD’s race ethnicity data (Figure A13). The percentages of students with disabilities by race/ethnicity have remained fairly stable over time. The proportion of students with disabilities who are Hispanic/Latino has risen slightly, while the proportion of students with disabilities who are white has fallen slightly. Of students receiving special education in 2018–19, 33% were white, 29% were Black, 22% were Hispanic/Latino, 10% were two or more races/ethnicities, 9% were Asian, and 0.4% were American Indian/Alaska Native. This data shows that African American and American Indian/Alaska Native students are disproportionately identified for special education in the district.

Using 2020–21 data, MMSD special education administrators looked at placement in the general education environment for 80% or more of the day, by race/ethnicity and disability, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They found that Black students with EBD were far less likely to be served in the regular classroom than their white counterparts in high school and, to respectively lesser extents, also in elementary and middle school. The pattern for Black and white students with OHI is similar. The starkest difference for black and white students with intellectual disabilities is at the elementary level, where only half as many black students as white students are served in the regular classroom. With all four of the most common disability areas (SPL, SLD, EBD, OHI), the smallest differences in the percentages of Black and White students served in the regular classroom for 80% or more of their day were found at the middle school level.

Similar patterns exist for students spending less than 40% of their day in regular education. Black students with EBD are twice as likely as their white peers to spend less than 40% of their day in the regular elementary classroom; again, the difference is smaller in middle school and larger in high school. The pattern for students with an OHI is similar. Most elementary-age Black students with intellectual disabilities spend less than 40% of their day in the regular classroom, while most of their White peers spend most of their day in the regular classroom.

In the same analysis, MMSD looked at behavioral referrals by race/ethnicity and disability for the partial 2019–20 school year (until the pandemic sent students home). They found that the number of behavioral referrals for Black students with disabilities far outpaced the number of behavioral referrals for White students with disabilities. Comparing Black students with EBD or OHD to their White peers, there were twice as many behavioral referrals in elementary school (2,892 vs. 1,176), four times as many in middle school (2,329 vs. 528), and six times as many in high school (1,124 vs. 176)—even though Black students only make up 18% of the MMSD enrollment. White students with intellectual disabilities and specific learning disabilities had very few behavioral referrals, but their black peers in each category had many behavioral referrals, especially in middle school, where these students had 185 and 719 referrals, respectively. Black elementary students with an intellectual disability had 204 behavioral referrals, while their white peers had zero. Black elementary students with a specific learning disability had 286, while their white peers had 19.

Disproportionality Finding 3: Black students with and without disabilities are disproportionately suspended in MMSD, and students who are suspended for five or more days in a school year are disproportionately students with disabilities.

DPI has identified MMSD as having significant disproportionality in the frequency of black students on IEPs experiencing all disciplinary removals (in-school suspensions of less than or equal to 10 days, and out-of-school suspensions of less than or equal to 10 days).

We examined five school years of suspension data in MMSD (2016–17 through 2020–21). We looked at numbers of students with five or more days of in-school or out-of-school suspension in a given school year. We chose the five-day threshold based on the standards that more than five days absent from learning has a negative impact on learning. We did not look at expulsion data because MMSD’s rates of expulsion are relatively low overall.

Looking at all enrolled students, in 2019–20, 13,218 students were suspended in school for fewer than five days in total. Of these, 11,084 were not in special education and 2,134 were students in special education. The lowest total number of in-school suspensions in the five-year period was in 2018–19 (13,062). The number of students suspended in school for five or more days dropped from a high of 49 in 2016–17 to a low of 18 in 2019–20. Of these 18 students, 14 were on an IEP and four were not.

Looking at all enrolled students, in 2019–20, 13,200 students were suspended out of school for fewer than five days in total. Of these, 11,082 were not on an IEP and 2,118 were on an IEP. The total number of students suspended for fewer than five days increased from a low of 13,026 in 2018–19. The number of students suspended out of school for five or more days peaked at 72 in 2018–19, and was 36 in 2019–20. Of these 36 students, 30 were on an IEP and six were not.

As determined by a one-way ANOVA,²² Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial students had significantly higher rates of suspension, in comparison to white students. In 2019, African American students comprised 50% of the total number of students with out-of-school suspensions, and 41.3% of in-school suspensions, in the district. White students comprised 28.1% of the total number of students with out-of-school suspensions, and 27.3% of in-school suspensions, in the district. Approximately 16% of out-of-school suspensions and 26% of in-school suspensions were for Hispanic/Latino students. The data shows that African American students comprise the largest percentages of out-of-school and in-school suspensions in the district. The data also shows that girls are almost as likely to be suspended as boys, and that students who are from low-income families are much more likely to be suspended than their peers who are not from low-income families.

Over time, there has been a steady reduction in in-school and out-of-school suspensions, of all lengths of time, of Black or African American, multiracial, and white students. There has been a rise in the number of Hispanic/Latino students suspended out-of-school for less than five days—from 2,925 in 2016–17 to 3,033 in 2019–20. By race/ethnicity, in-school suspensions (of any length) of students of most racial or ethnic categories have gone down. The exception is an upward trend in in-school suspension of any length for Hispanic/Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

²² Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical technique that is used to check whether the means of two or more groups are significantly different from each other.

Furthermore, in terms of students with disabilities, Black/African American students with disabilities had suspension rates that were significantly disproportionate (more than two times) to rates of suspension than White students. Hispanic/Latino students with disabilities were also more likely to be suspended than students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

The BEP seeks to reduce the use of suspension and restricts the use of suspension as a disciplinary tool, to be used only for students with multiple acts of physical aggression. As a result, only a small fraction of MMSD students are suspended, in or out of school, for five or more days during a school year. There appears to be a slight downward trend, since 2016–17, in the numbers of students who are suspended for five or more days, in or out of school. However, we cannot rely on 2019–20 to tell us much because it was virtual in the last quarter, and in 2020–21, which was all virtual. Students were beginning to come back to face-to-face learning.

Looking at suspensions of students on IEPs and not on IEPs, the numbers of students suspended for five or more days are still small—10 to 25 students per year. More than twice as many students on IEPs as students not on IEPs were suspended out of school for five or more days. In-school suspensions of five or more days were more evenly distributed across students with and without disabilities. It is encouraging to see that, in general, trends show movement in the right direction on addressing these issues.

Detailed data tables can be found in the Appendix.

Factors That Contribute to the Disproportionate Identification of Students of Color

Disproportionality Finding 4: Districtwide systems- and program-level issues contribute to the lack of progress of BIPOC students in the special and general education programs.

Parents who participated in focus groups believe that staff's lack of cultural competence affects BIPOC experiences with special education services.

Students of color are often identified as having behavioral issues before a learning need is identified. A few parents articulated a concern that children of color with behavioral issues tend to be classified as problematic instead of first having their learning needs explored.

"I would say that if you're anywhere on the borderline of anything—I mean, you do not get noticed unless you're a behavior problem, and I would say that if you are black or a person of color, you are going to be noticed first for that behavior problem, but not necessarily for special ed."—Parent

Thirty-five parents noted a need for better and more frequent communication. Many of their comments were related to communication when there are language or cultural barriers. Two examples follow.

"Better communication and follow-through from the IEP teachers, especially if there is a potential language/cultural barrier. I am glad this is [my child's] last year at [] Elementary, and I am looking forward to meeting his new IEP teacher next year!"—Parent

"They should take into account people[s] linguistic background when deciding which evaluation forms to use. In our case, we were not satisfied with the work the interpreter provided. There was a communication barrier between the interpreter and our child. They should have gotten the parents involved early in the process."—Parent

Implicit bias has been found in the IEPs of Black students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

MMSD special education staff wanted to review IEPs of black and white students to look for differences that signaled implicit bias. They randomly selected about 50 IEPs, evenly divided by black and white students with EBD. When they looked only at whether strengths were listed in the IEPs, they found no differences between IEPs for Black students and IEPs for White students. However, when they compared what kinds of strengths were listed, IEPs for White

students contained far more references to academic skills, while IEPs for Black students focused on strengths in athletics or physical skills.

Beliefs described by the MMSD special education administrators who worked on this analysis include:

“Negative and biased language used within the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Performance section leads to disability-related needs and goals that are poorly defined and not focused on skill building. Subsequent services, then, do not adequately address skill building and focus instead on response to behavior.

Negative and biased IEP language reinforces racist stereotypes within the school culture. It further disengages students of color who are already struggling in the current school environment and alienates their families” (Power Point Presentation made by the Department of Student Services, December, 2020).

The existence of institutional racism in MMSD is recognized as a factor contributing to poor outcomes for BIPOC students, including those with disabilities.

A few Assistant Directors of Special Education mentioned that institutional racism leads staff to hold low expectations for BIPOC students, which results in poor student performance. There is a need to increase staff cultural competence and dismantle racist practices. MMSD staff need to become engaged in transformative practices.

“We have some institutional racism. Some staff members don’t agree that all students can achieve at all levels.” — Interview participant, administration

“We have Black Excellence—putting achievement for African Americans at the forefront, emphasizing equity and excellence. The community recognized [that] we are established as a priority, but we don’t have data to show we are moving all African American students [in special and regular education]. We need to keep thinking about that piece and make more progress.” — Interview participant, administration

Race/Ethnicity bias and limited capacity to work across cultures hinder relationships that are necessary to help students with disabilities who are from diverse backgrounds.

Some T< members commented that staff capacity to build and maintain relationships with diverse students and their families is limited. Some team members indicated that they believe that the general lack of staff cultural competency in MMSD leads to the imposition of monocultural standards upon students and families, and that this imposition harms relationship building and may result in students and families becoming alienated and withdrawn as time passes.

“Understanding of cultural backgrounds is limited. Linguistic assets are limited, especially with special education. They will resort to majority culture and monolingual standards. Bias around race exists. Important to build relationships with families, implement outreach to families when they’re young; as kids get older, those relationships disintegrate. How do we maintain those relationships with families, understand their perspectives?”—T+LT member

Disproportionality Plan Goals

Apply improved monitoring systems and implement five actions to reduce/eliminate factors contributing to disproportionality within special education (improve access to timely evidence-based reading interventions, improve student support and intervention team practices, require re-evaluation for transfer students with certain disabilities, improve the quality of initial evaluations, and ensure appropriate educational environments with the service delivery process).

Status:

While the Department of Student Services has made progress implementing all five action steps listed, these efforts must continue, along with MMSD globally needing to address the districtwide, systemic root causes of disproportionality.

Department of Student Services and Special Education Administrative Structure

This section on **data use and accountability systems** includes information on the current organizational structure of the Department of Student Services and addresses the following evaluation questions: What is the current organizational structure of the Department of Student Services? Does the current structure function to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

MMSD wanted an objective look at the administrative structure of the Department of Student Services, and wanted to know whether the current structure functions to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This information is in its own section because it is relevant to all of the Plan goals. Findings about structure are also incorporated into the relevant sections.

The organizational structure of the Department of Student Services and its position within the larger structure of the entire school district have shifted throughout the duration of this project, from December 2019-April 2021. During this time period, the district operated under an acting superintendent, selected a new superintendent who ultimately turned down the job,

reverted to being led by an acting superintendent, and finally selected Dr. Carlton Jenkins, who began in August 2020.

At the onset of the project, work that had been categorized under the heading of student and staff supports was removed from the responsibilities of the Executive Director of Student Services and made into its own department, with its own executive director. The work of the Department of Student and Staff Support included school psychology, counseling, social work, health, discipline, and the intensive support team (IST). Having these functions split away from the Department of Student Services made for some awkwardness and inefficiency. Now, under Dr. Jenkins, this work has been moved back into the Department of Student Services. Since the work of these two divisions is inextricably intertwined, we believe that this structure is more efficient and comprehensive than having the two areas split apart.

Currently, MMSD has an Executive Director of Student and Staff Support, a Director of State and Federal Programs, and seven Assistant Directors of Student Services who report to the Executive Director of Student Services.

Table 12. Responsibilities of Assistant Directors of Student Services, 2020–2021

Position	Responsible for:
Assistant Director 1	Professional development and multiple areas of leadership in communications, technology, curriculum, instruction and professional development, and bilingual staff, plus PSTs (8) for bilingual assessment, PD, technology, and transportation.
Assistant Director 2	Half of early childhood (EC) and east side elementary schools, Extended School Year, 6 EC itinerant teachers, and 11 elementary PSTs.
Assistant Director 3	Half of EC and west side elementary schools, 8 EC itinerant teachers, 14 EC PSTs, and 10 elementary PSTs.
Assistant Director 4	Middle schools, LEA Representative PD, private/parochial and homeschooled students w/disabilities, Speech/Language, Students Moving Across Levels, Summer School Liaison, and 7 PSTs.
Assistant Director 5	Half of high schools, Assistive Technology, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Audiology, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Off-Campus PLC (EBD), Vision, 3 PSTs for related services, and 2 middle school PSTs.
Assistant Director 6	Half of high schools, Accelerated Licensure for Special Educators with Forward Madison, Campus Connect, Employment Supports, Extended School Year HS, Grow Our Own, Project Search, 10 PSTs, and employment specialists or transition teachers.
Assistant Director 7	Intensive Intervention Programs (Foundations Central, Hospital School, LEAP, NEON, Next Steps, Olin-based Instruction, Primary Steps, Replay, RESTORE, School-based Alternatives), 5 related services providers, 26 teachers, and 18 special education assistants.

The Director of State and Federal Programs has responsibility for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) compliance, foster placement, migrant services, American Indian/Alaskan Native education, private/parochial services (non-special education), and the Transition Education program for homeless students and services for homeless students. She has six professional positions and two administrative support positions reporting to her.

The Executive Director of Student and Staff Support has seven coordinator and assistant director positions reporting to him, with multiple lead staff. These positions include the Assistant Director of Integrated Health (responsible for attendance, school counseling, mental health, psychology, social work, and student support teaming, with lead staff in seven areas) and the Coordinator of Intensive Support & Critical Response (with the eight IST members and four Building Bridges staff). Universal Systems (including social-emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching, culture and climate, PBIS, and Restorative Justice) and Progressive Discipline are also within this department, with coaches for universal systems and Restorative Practices.

The Role of Program Support Teachers

Program support teachers (PSTs) play a critical role in the structure of special education. They conduct initial evaluations and act as the LEA representative in initial evaluations, to help ensure that the initial evaluation process is followed and that students are only identified as needing special education if they meet eligibility criteria. They support principals and assistant principals in understanding special education, and help them solve problems related to special education. They also coach and mentor the special education staff in the building.

According to district records, PST allocation is based on a combination of factors, including size of building, historical need, new special education staff, and new principal. Generally, high schools get 1.00 full-time equivalency (FTE), and elementary get .5, but the elementary FTE may range between .3 and .8, depending on the size and complexity of the school. Most PSTs are special education teachers; some are speech/language pathologists.

The Department of Student Services has a comprehensive and fairly current set of job descriptions for every role in the department, including special education. According to district records, there are about 46 different job descriptions, including one for each of nine categories of special education teacher, and 12 for related services providers and teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, such as speech and language pathologists, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, and teachers of the visually impaired.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Strengths

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 1: Reflective practice and data-driven decision-making are positive aspects of the leadership of special education in MMSD, and instructional planning is informed by data.

Some T+LT members highlighted that the district uses data to create standards-aligned instruction.

“We provide standards-aligned instruction, including high-quality Tier 1 core. Standards-based IEP. Have work to do.”— Interview participant, administration

MMSD is creating its own IEP system. A user guide is embedded in each field. It will import WIDA (standards for English language development) factors to help staff accurately create IEPs for English learners with disabilities, and it will populate trendlines on proficiency for data included in sections about present levels of functioning. The system is designed to offer real-time guidance to staff as they complete each element of the IEP.

As mentioned in the previous Service Delivery section, MMSD has a partially automated process in place for reviewing IEPs, which looks at special education services and cross-references time of day, location of services, and service provider.

MMSD also has progress monitoring tools for academics and behaviors. The Fast tool is being used to monitor student progress in literacy and math. All behavioral incidents are tracked in the eduClimber system. Student support and intervention teams (SSITs), as well as the school's PBIS or behavior team, review behavioral and academic weekly. MMSD uses both a standard protocol for determining first-level interventions and individual problem solving for those students who need more individualized interventions.

The district has a team of people who focus on having data available to MMSD staff and the community. The special education department has received high ratings from DPI for timely and accurate data reporting. However, our analysis found some substantive errors in the data on students' educational environments. This is the documentation of the setting in which the student is served, to comply with the LRE requirements of IDEA.

MMSD, like most school districts, serves children with disabilities who have significant behavioral challenges, including physical aggression. At times, there is the potential that, due to these behaviors, the student, other students, or staff could be harmed. Seclusion and restraint are two procedures that are restricted by state and federal special education law that are sometimes part of a child's IEP when other effective strategies cannot be found. MMSD has been working hard to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint, and district data indicates that use of these strategies has significantly decreased.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 2: Data shows that many required procedural safeguards are in place and working.

The following sections describe some of the special education procedural requirements that are in place and working.

The process for referring a student for evaluation to determine eligibility for special education is clear.

MMSD has an excellent system for tracking the details when a student is referred for evaluation to see whether the student is eligible for special education. The district tracks:

- Student ID
- Referral date and week of the school year
- Referral school number and name
- Age and grade at time of referral
- Referral source

- Demographics: gender, ethnicity, free/reduced-price lunch status, English proficiency status
- Type of referral
- Outcome (placed or not placed in special education)
- Primary and any secondary disabilities, if placed
- Notes

We reviewed two years of referral data from this system: the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. Table 12 provides a summary.

Table 13. Students Referred for Special Education Evaluation

	Number of referrals, percent of the total referrals	Number placed/ Percent of students referred who were placed	Number not placed/percent of students referred who were not placed	Important context
2019–20	Total 894/3% Asian 35/3.9% Black 244/.27% Hispanic/Latino 197/22% Multiracial 103/12% White 312/35%	Total 607/68% Asian 27/77% Black 151/62% Hispanic/Latino 144/73% Multiracial 72/70% White 211/68%	Total 255/29% Asian 8/23% Black 80/33% Hispanic/Latino 44/22% Multiracial 28/27% White 95/30%	31 referrals were “in process” presumably due to the pandemic. Use caution when drawing meaning from referral data for this year. A number of students were not placed due to moves.
2018–19	Total 977/3.6% Asian 61/6% Black/255/26% Hispanic/Latino 220/23% Multiracial 103/11% White 334/34%	Total 637/65% Asian 49/80% Black 170/67% Hispanic/Latino 145/66% Multiracial 73/71% White 199/56%	Total 339/35% Asian 12/20% Black 85/33% Hispanic/Latino 74/34% Multiracial 30/29% White 135/40%	1 referral was incomplete. “Moved” was listed only a few times as the reason a student was not placed.

Source: District data

The first column of Table 13 shows the total number of students referred for a special education evaluation, followed by the number of students referred, by race/ethnicity, followed by the percentage of the total referrals each racial/ethnic group represents. The second column shows the total number of students placed in special education, then the number of students placed, by race/ethnicity, and the percent of referred students of that same race who were placed in special education. The third column presents the same information for students not placed. The total number of students enrolled in MMSD in 2019-20 was 27,410. And in 2018-19

it was 26,914. Many of the students found eligible for special education in these two years, especially older students, were found eligible under the disability of OHI—139 in 2018–19 and 142 in 2019–20—mirroring state trends. OHI was the most common disability, followed by EBD. Many of the non-placements of Black and Hispanic/Latino students were due to parent refusal or to parents stopping the evaluation process. We did not include American Indian/Alaska Native due to small n sizes.

Trends in the data, but not captured in the table include:

- For preschoolers, parents are the primary referral source. PSTs and school psychologists are the source of referrals from early intervention to preschool/school-age services. In K–12, about ½ of referrals come from parents, 1/3 from speech language pathologists, and 1/3 from classroom teachers.
- A disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic/Latino students are referred.
- Generally speaking, students of color who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were referred by staff, while white students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were referred by parents.
- There were a number of referrals for students aged 14 and up. This trend was also found in the Education Futures report from 2014. Typically when we see large numbers of older kids being referred for the first time, it is parents trying to get their child qualified for special education so that the child can get accommodations in high-stakes testing and in college.

Complaints, Mediations, and Due Process Hearings Are Rare

In our review of district and state documents, we found that MMSD has a very low level of special education formal complaints and mediations—none in most years, or, at most, one of each—and has had no due process hearings in more than ten years. The 2018–19 school year was an exception, with five corrective action plans ordered by DPI, stemming from formal complaints. These were linked to underprepared teachers.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Areas for Improvement

DPI makes determinations annually about how well school districts are complying with the IDEA. MMSD is in Year 2 of receiving a Needs Improvement Determination. Also, in the federal ESSA determinations, MMSD receives comprehensive support and improvement for low performance and low graduation rate. About half of MMSD’s schools have been identified under ESSA as needing additional targeted support.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 3: Key data are not consistently available for understanding effectiveness of instruction and determining if a student needs intervention or change in instruction.

Formative assessment is an important component of high-quality instruction, but is not practiced consistently in MMSD.

MMSD has some progress monitoring activities in place, as previously described, but very little formative assessment is happening in classrooms. The assessments used in the district, such as MAP, Forward, and ACT, are mostly summative, with MAP having somewhat of a benchmark function. When this project started, the district had a plan to get some outside help to look at

building a more comprehensive assessment system with common benchmarks across schools. The current status of that plan is unknown.

Surveyed staff shared their beliefs about school site use of data and accountability systems. Fifty-nine percent of surveyed staff agreed that site administrative staff use accountability systems and data routines in schools to determine when additional supports, guidance, or immediate adjustments are needed to ensure successful outcomes for students with disabilities. Most survey respondents also agreed that general educators (70%) and special educators (66%) have access to high-quality student data to inform their practices. Sixty-eight percent of surveyed staff agreed that site administrative staff use accountability systems and data routines in schools to monitor student progress on learning goals.

Pre-referral interventions could be more effective with increased consistency.

We noted parents' and staff's persistent concerns about inconsistencies, across schools, in how student support intervention teams operate, and about the fidelity of implementation of pre-referral interventions. This concern was also noted in the Education Futures report in 2014.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 4: There are persistent concerns about the inconsistent implementation of the IEPs.

Access to student services guidance documents could be improved to support their use.

There is not a single place where all special education procedures can be found. The MMSD Student Services website includes a table of contents, listing and linking about 20 key guidance documents on topics such as procedures for transfer students and parent revocation of special education services. Some topic areas are only placeholders. The Special Education Staff Only portion of the website has additional training resources (training slides and recorded training sessions in Zoom, guidance about dates, forms, and a section for manuals/handbooks and guidelines), and a long, alphabetized section by topics of interest. The Student Services Department has makes available implementation memos, guidance documents, around Extended School Year (ESY), specialized transportation, professional guidance on the IEP process, etc. in various places. The current online IEP system, OASys, has a user guide which provides additional guidance.

In focus groups, parents repeatedly mentioned that implementation of the IEP has been inconsistent or not followed, and many expressed their dissatisfaction with the implementation of the IEP, saying it can be cumbersome and confusing. Two related quotes are shared in this section. More quotes are provided in the Appendix.

“I had a 24-page IEP. [My child’s] case manager had a 12-page IEP. The portal, campus portal, one [. . .] had 36 pages. It took them two weeks to figure out which one was the right IEP.”—Parent

“I’m two years into [my child] having an IEP. He was diagnosed in 4th grade with sensory processing disorder. The IEP did not get implemented until the end of the year. It started in 5th grade, so we’re in our second year of a fully implemented IEP. I mean, and this year, having to revise it four times, and I feel like we still don’t have it right, or where they’re just not implementing it. And who do I then turn to?”—Parent

Parents noted a need for general educators to better understand how to implement the IEP.

While 86% of surveyed parents agreed that their child’s general education teacher attends the IEP meeting, only 76% agreed that the general education teacher knows how to implement the IEP.

Surveyed staff had different opinions about students who are included in the general education environment receiving the support they need through collaboration or direct support from a special educator or paraprofessionals, with 57.19% agreeing and 40.43% disagreeing with the prompt. When survey results were broken out by role, a significantly higher percentage of special education teachers than other roles strongly agreed or agreed with all of these IEP prompts, as determined by a one-way ANOVA.

Teachers and special education administrators also noted concerns about implementation of IEPs and wide variation in instructional and inclusive educational practices from school to school.

A general concern expressed in comments from special educators is that there is not enough time for them to meet the instructional service minutes of the IEP. They expressed a belief that the school building structures and practices—not the students’ needs—drive the services.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 5: Parents desire more transparency and clearer communication with the IEP team.

In focus groups and survey comments parents repeatedly asked for more direct and regular communication, including a more efficient way to communicate with the whole IEP team in between IEP meetings. Some conveyed a wish that there was a way to message the whole IEP team through the Campus portal app. They expressed that receiving and responding to emails with multiple team members seemed inefficient to them—both for themselves and for teachers.

“I strongly suggest that MMDS review its practices for reviewing progress for students receiving services and also ensure that there is regular communication with the parent(s) or guardian(s). There has to be a partnership between school and home to adequately support a student with disabilities, and without communication, there is no partnership. School staff see what is happening at school, and should be initiating that communication regarding school-related issues.”—Parent

“It would be less stressful if there was a way to communicate with the whole team. Not just by connecting a whole bunch of emails.”—Parent

“I have emailed the teachers. Some of them respond to me. Others . . . the time goes by and they do not respond. I wanted to meet with one of the teachers to find out why my son was not doing well in his class, and they never answered a message.”—Parent

“One of the parents is doing a lot of outreach and calling, and they’re not getting calls back. For another one, another parent was talking about their child in high school and . . . With so many teachers, every classroom is very different, so it’s a lot of coordination.”—Parent

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 6: Special education services are not as effective as they could be, due to lack of essential leadership coordination.

Feedback from a variety of sources indicates that the current organizational structure of the district is siloed, which impacts the quality of special education services.

The administration of special education is not aligned with the district-level administration of school leadership; therefore, the Executive Director of Student Services is not empowered to be a proactive leader on behalf of students with disabilities in MMDS. The district does not have an articulated alignment of the Executive Director of Student Services with the Chiefs responsible for groups of schools; and student services and special education are not represented in the Superintendent’s Cabinet. Chiefs and the leader for student services need to be able to collaborate on big-picture planning and decision-making so that the needs of students with disabilities are considered. Special education leaders and PSTs have not been included in the school improvement process, although poor outcomes for students with disabilities are often major indicators that a school is in need of improvement. If the district wants to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and address the schoolwide and districtwide factors contributing to disproportionality and poor outcomes for students with disabilities, the administration of student services and special education must be allowed a place at the table and empowered to lead proactively.

Essential coordination between departments is lacking, creating barriers to the success of students with disabilities and to achieving the goals of the Plan.

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of Multilingual and Global Education are two departments that lack the communication with the Student Services Department that is necessary to meet the Plan goals. Poor implementation of co-teaching, and failure to advance the instructional practices of UDL, are symptoms of the observed disconnect between the Curriculum and Instruction and Special Services departments. During our attempts to engage parents of students with disabilities, we found insufficient district supports and networks for reaching families with diverse language backgrounds, even families who speak Hmong or Spanish—the two most spoken languages, other than English, in the district. This is an area where better collaboration is needed with the Office of Multilingual and Global Education.

Staff survey results also indicate that there are some concerns about the structure of school district administration and its effectiveness to support the needs of students receiving special education services.

Almost half of survey respondents (46%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that district administration is structured to provide an appropriate level of leadership to school sites to support the needs of students receiving special education services. Broken out by the role of the respondent, 55% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed were general educators, and 22% were special educators. Whether respondents were referring to special education administration or to the overall organization of the district-level administration is unclear. Seventy-four percent of survey respondents agreed that they know whom to call when their site has a need for assistance with a student receiving special education services.

More interaction between staff at different levels of the program would help meet the needs of students with disabilities.

At the kick-off meeting, special education administrators expressed concern that they were spending too much time reacting to crises and were unable to find enough time to be proactive. Each Assistant Director has a subset of schools, and additional areas of work, that they are assigned to lead. For example, one oversees special education in the district's 12 middle schools, including policies around promotion/non-promotion to eighth grade, and is also responsible for speech language pathologists, special education in private and parochial schools, and at-risk policies. A few people mentioned that crossover between district-level leadership of all kinds and school staff, and between schools, is rare, which is a setback to fulfilling the needs of students with disabilities.

“I think it is just important, you know—how do you establish a good relationship between the Central Office and the buildings, you know, that’s part of the issue that we’re talking about here, right, is, like, buildings. We want to do our thing, central office, you know, we have this constant push and pull between how much should central office dictate versus how much should the buildings dictate.” — Interview participant, administration

Data Use and Accountability Systems Finding 7: The current systems and practices do not support principals to take responsibility for students with disabilities.

Clarity on expectations about special education roles and responsibilities in buildings would improve student outcomes.

A few members of the T< perceived a lack of consistent and clear expectations for each position’s responsibilities for oversight and service of students with disabilities across schools.

“Interested in hearing that principals know what the expectations are for students—with principals, adding an SEA is always the answer. I would like principals to lead their special education teachers in setting expectations, collecting data, communicate problem-solve around programming.” — Interview participant, administration

There is not a strong thought partner for principals on special education issues; this contributes to barriers to the success of students with disabilities and to achieving the goals of the Plan. Through qualitative input from school staff, we learned that assistant directors do not seem to be spending enough time building relationships with principals, attending principal meetings, etc. Some principals do not trust their assistant director and go straight to the Executive Director. The role of PSTs is also not clearly focused on partnering with principals. While both assistant directors and PSTs play the role of the principals’ thought partner for special education to some degree, neither is focused on partnership with principals as much as is needed. We previously noted a finding that principals do not know enough about special education. We also noted that the relationships between principals and their Assistant Directors are not consistently strong or vital. This lack of a thought partner for them certainly contributes to the identified problem.

“Principals do not respect the role of the Assistant Director. They often go around them and go directly to John with granular issues.” — Interview participant, administration

One member of the T+LT expressed a belief that refining and clarifying the roles of PSTs, Assistant Directors, and principals, and how these roles relate and function as a team, could help improve student outcomes. We believe that there needs to be a shift in power dynamics to more fully engage principals and assistant principals as the instructional leaders for students with disabilities. This shift should have three components: (1) require building administrators to be the LEA rep in IEP meetings more often—maybe all the time; (2) engage in purposeful efforts to build the relationships between principals and assistant directors; and (3) increase the coaching role of PSTs.

Data Use and Accountability Systems Plan Goals:

Utilize accountability systems and data routines in schools to monitor student progress on learning goals and determine when additional supports, guidance, or immediate adjustments are needed.

Implement improved accountability systems to monitor and immediately correct procedural compliance issues.

Status: Much of this is in progress. Increased use of the data and accountability systems is still needed.

Recruiting, Hiring, Retention, and Placement of High-Quality Staff Strengths

This section on **recruitment, hiring, retention, and placement of high-quality staff** includes our findings for the following evaluation questions: *How does the Department of Student Services allocate human resources? How has that changed over time? Are there sufficient instructional supports available to K–12 students with disabilities? What instructional supports do comparison districts have?*

Staffing Finding 1: Staff are dedicated, caring, and responsive.

Surveyed staff ($n = 130$) commented on the dedicated and caring staff in schools as specific strengths.

“Staff are genuinely invested in doing whatever they can to meet student needs.”

“Strengths are special education staff that are very dedicated and caring.”

“Awesome special education staff who work so hard and so long, often to the detriment to their own health and their family life.”

Well-trained and qualified staff are a noted strength—yet not all staff are well trained and qualified.

Surveyed staff ($n = 42$) commented on the well-trained and qualified staff.

“We are very fortunate to have super qualified and talented special education teachers at our school right now. I think, overall, at our school, we have very dedicated special education assistants.”

“Highly qualified staff (CC teachers, Related Services, SEAs) working incredibly hard for their students.”

“We have very qualified ASL interpreters and DHH Teachers.”

Assistant Directors of Special Education identified community and staff knowledge, and a commitment to serve students with special needs, as strengths.

The knowledge, commitment, and relationships of special education staff are strengths of the program, even though there is also a concern—discussed in the following section—about the challenge of recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality, fully certified staff. In focus groups,

many staff shared that those working in special education at the district level and in most schools are knowledgeable. Staff capacity to build and maintain relationships within the program enables the use of this knowledge.

“Good support at district. Ex.: processes—compliance with IEP deadlines, etc. We have clear processes in place and help people (help desk) to help teachers to understand and know processes.”— Interview participant, administration

“Principals who invest the time in plan, teachers and resources are doing a great job in service delivery.”— Interview participant, administration

“Assigned building leader to support the special education teacher in building and implementation of services delivery. The stronger the person is in special education knowledge, the more it helps the building to provide quality services.”— Interview participant, administration

Staffing Finding 2: MMSD is taking some proactive measures to address the serious challenges to hiring high-quality staff, but these are not enough to fix the problems.

Recruiting, Hiring, Retention, and Placement of High-Quality Staff Areas for Improvement

Recruiting, hiring, placing, and retaining fully certified special educators continues to be a significant challenge for MMSD. At the start of our review, there were more than 80 provisionally licensed special education staff in the district; that had grown from 41 in 2018–19. These staff have obtained a provisional license, usually indicating that they are preparing for full licensure, but in the meantime, they are significantly underprepared to do the jobs they are hired to do. The number of provisionally licensed educators has been growing.

MMSD has two programs that are designed to help address this problem. One, **Grow Your Own**, is intended to help general educators to obtain a special education certification. The program pays them back \$1,000 for any required three-credit class, toward their special education licensure, in which they have earned a B grade or higher. As of the start of this review, there had been 40 participants since the program began in 2016. Twenty-eight had completed the requirements to serve as cross-categorical teachers, with 10 still in process and two preparing to be occupational therapists. There is also a separate program called **Accelerated Licensure Special Education (ALSE)**. ALSE is a partnership between MMSD and the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Education. Through a preparation program collaboratively designed by the district and the university, ALSE helps to support special educators working under a provisional license. This allows MMSD to work with the university to

produce teachers who are trained in MMSD priorities, such as antiracist practices, inclusive practices, collaboration, and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. The 2019–20 cohort includes 16 teachers, who are expected to graduate from the two year program in August 2021. Both programs are funded through a partnership with Forward Madison. In addition to the serious problems caused by a dearth of licensed special education teachers hired, certain aspects of the teacher hiring process create barriers to hiring fully licensed special educators. These barriers include limited capacity in the Human Resources Department; failure to recruit, advertise, and hire early enough; a bottleneck created by slow administration of a video component which is part of the candidate screening; and candidates being screened and interviewed without input from anyone with special education expertise. With special education being a preexisting area of shortage, these internal barriers only serve to exacerbate an already serious problem.

Surveyed staff had consistently low levels of agreement with statements concerning recruiting, hiring, and retaining special education staff.

Sixty percent of surveyed staff responded that they did not believe there are enough teachers to serve English learners with disabilities, and 80% responded that there were not enough certified special education teachers to serve as substitute teachers. The district does offer support to assist staff members, such as paraprofessionals, in becoming certified special education teachers, beyond the two programs described above. However, when asked whether their school offers a career track for special education assistants to become special education teachers, 59% of respondents said they did not know about the supports.

Special education assistant directors shared that the quality and outcomes of the program would improve with increased efforts to hire, train, and retain teachers and assistants.

The Assistant Directors of Special Education recognize the need to support and train new personnel in the program. Some stated that they believe that training of current and new staff would make a substantial difference in student outcomes. Many also identified a lack of safety measures to protect teachers, and low levels of accountability for students who engage in physical violence against staff and students, as contributing factors for staff turnover.

“There is a true lack of staffing equation that impacts SPED—a true disconnect between day to day in schools versus the staffing formula. The equation needs to be funds broken down to micro-districts, so each [assistant director] has a clear idea of what is going on with the funding. There is a disconnect between needs and equations.”— Interview participant, administration

“New or provisional licensed teachers. Higher rate of turnover with paraprofessional[s]. Paraprofessional[s are] critical. Students and families are feeling less secure in skills and knowledge of staff working with them every day, because of turnover.”— Interview participant, administration

“In the last six years, we have lost 75% of our staff, and we used to have the most stable specialized staff in the district.”—SE Teacher

Some district-level administrators shared a concern that principals are conveying a bias against teachers.

“When there is a problem, the principal asks what the teacher could have done differently to prevent it. Teachers talk about leaving; paraprofessionals leave; and administrators wonder why the district is not worried about teacher retention. They assert that the Grow Your Own program is a ‘drop in the bucket,’ compared to what is needed.”- Interview participant, administration

Special Education Assistant Directors recommend better wages for special education staff, to enhance the morale of these staff and their capacity to serve students.

“Better paid Special Education Assistants (SEAs) and cross-categorical teachers provide professional development, and work on retention.”— Interview participant, administration

Staffing Finding 3: Placement of staff could be better differentiated by student and school need.

This section addresses the evaluation questions, *“How does the Department of Student Services allocate human resources? How has that changed over time?”* and *“Are there sufficient instructional supports available to K–12 students with disabilities?”*

The most qualified staff are not routinely assigned to the schools with the greatest needs.

Urban school districts have better student outcomes when they place their highest-quality staff in the schools that have students with the greatest need. MMSD Special Education Assistant Directors identified a mismatch between the quality of supports and the needs of students in low-performing schools. They recommend providing staff who are more qualified and experienced to low-performing schools with more students with disadvantaged backgrounds.

“Schools that traditionally are low achieving and have a higher population of color, [more] poverty, and less education before coming to school are staffed by new teachers and new administrators and/or burned-out educators, and we expect miracles. We need to prioritize staffing to challenging schools.”— Interview participant, administration

In our interviews with school and district administrators we learned that some schools consistently hire inexperienced and provisionally licensed special education teachers and have lots of turnover of special education teachers, while others seem to be better at hiring higher quality staff and better at retention. Special education administrators see the same problems related to hiring practices and placement of special education staff in the same school buildings year after year. We also understand that special education assistants (SEAs) are hired through the HR Department with little to no input from the schools or special education administrators.

More bilingual staff are needed to improve services for students with disabilities who are from diverse cultural backgrounds.

MMSD has multiple bilingual psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists, and PSTs. There is a small team of bilingual related services professionals that is part of the Department of Student Services, as well as bilingual school-based staff. While there are sufficient bilingual staff to complete evaluations of students who are not proficient in English, some Assistant Directors of Special Education, teachers, and parents believe that schools should provide more bilingual supports to improve student outcomes.

*“Parents and students can’t get special education support in Spanish.”—
Interview participant, administration*

Allocation of Staff and Resources

District budget documents show that staffing and benefits budgeted for student services staff for 2020–21 are \$42,412,551.30 and \$19,365,271.08, respectively, totaling \$62,431,396.

Table 14 shows the previous three years of revenue and expenditures for special education in MMSD, and the proposed revenue and budgeted expenditures for the current year.

Table 14. Special Education Expenditures and Revenues, 2017–2021

	2017–18 Actuals	2018–19 Actuals	2019–20 Actuals	2020–21 Proposed
Revenues	\$24,551,079	\$24,831,060	\$25,377,802	\$27,653,514
Expenditures	\$75,198,518	\$78,455,880	\$80,429,214	\$84,487,834

Source: MMSD 2020–21 Budget Book.

Resources Finding 1: Special education resources available in MMSD are greater than those available in similar districts.

Table 15. Resources Available in MMSD and Comparison School Districts

District	2020–21 SE Aid	Enrollment	Percent SwD	Number SwD, Est.	Aid per SwD
Green Bay	\$60,359,022	20,391	14.5%	2,957	\$20,412.25
Kenosha	\$57,444,706	21,233	12.7%	2,697	\$21,299.48
Madison Metro	\$106,510,726	26,917	14.5%	3,903	\$27,289.45
Oshkosh	\$35,164,047	9,911	15.5%	1,536	\$22,893.26
Racine	\$67,459,719	17,862	17.2%	3,072	\$21,959.54

Source: WI DPI website.

Table 15 shows, for MMSD and for each of the four comparison school districts, the Special Education Aid (DPI calls this “prorated special education and school-age parents aid computation”, also known as Fund 27, project 11), as of 2/15/2021; the total number of students enrolled in the district, and the percentage and the estimated number of students receiving special education. We have used this information to calculate a *per student with a disability* (Aid per SwD) amount of special education aid available for staff and instructional resources. This calculation is a rough proxy for available resources. We have not included the federal IDEA funds that districts receive, which would increase each district’ special education aid by about 5%. And school districts vary in the amount of general funds they use to provide additional support for special education.

Table 16. Student Services Staffing, 2020–2021

Expenditure Category	FTE
Special education administration	7
Braillist, SE Assist VI, O & M Teacher	2.975
Sign Language Interpreter	16.38
Occupational Therapy Assistant	7.123
Nursing staff	1.73
Bilingual special education assistant	13.97
Special education assistant	229.67
Special education assistant early childhood	1.5
Special ed assistant float, MF	8.59
Miscellaneous	12.94
Early Childhood special education teacher	12.5
Bilingual Cross Categorical Teacher	8.5
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher & Audiologist	6
Interventionist—literacy	0.5
Occupational Therapist	30
PE Teacher	0.1
Physical Therapist	9.7
PST Early Childhood	5.3

Expenditure Category	FTE
PST Cross Categorical	39
PST Related Services	14.4
Speech Language Clinician	68
Cross Categorical SE Teacher	320.70
Cross Categorical SE Teacher, Transition, Hospital	4
Lead Psychologist, Lead Social Worker	2.3
Teacher of Visually Impaired	2.75
Long term substitutes, various positions	5.95
Coordinator Multi-sensory reading	1
Assistant Director Alternative Learning Programs	1
Misc. admin assistant, clerical	7.04
Totals	832.60

Source: District documentation

Resources Finding 2: Parents and staff have mixed feelings when asked if students with disabilities have sufficient instructional supports.

Although, by most measures, MMSD is a well-resourced school district, some of the district's dysfunctions contribute to staff feeling as though they are "stretched too far" and "putting out fires". Sixty-seven percent of surveyed staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that their school has a sufficient number of special education teachers, but more than half of surveyed staff responded that they believed that their school does a good job retaining qualified regular and special education teachers.

The special education department has been piloting a new allocation process designed to better meet the unique and shifting needs of schools. The department has developed a student formula, weighted by the primary disabilities of students in a school, which has added more than 22 FTE teachers, as well as additional psychologists and social workers, into the system. This process is being implemented systematically by feeder patterns in the district. This implementation was happening at the same time as this study, as well as during the pandemic and its resulting virtual education environment. Therefore, we do not believe that staff and parent comments have taken these changes into account.

Comparison districts use strategies different from MMSD to better meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Some special education assistant directors speculated that comparison districts hire highly skilled teachers, and that these districts change interventions depending on a student's performance.

“Hiring teachers that are certified and highly skilled in delivering instruction and interventions that need to be done in service delivery/instructional design plan in all schools that has schedules and used resources well. Using UDL practices, team teaching, research-based instruction that is monitored, and stepping in when not progressing as should. Having access to curricular materials that are differentiated at grade level. Full continuum of services is available in every building.”— Interview participant, administration

Related Services Personnel

More than half (56%) of surveyed staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that current levels of related services personnel at their schools are adequate to serve the needs of students with disabilities. Based on concerns about student mental health, we hypothesize that these responses are referring to school-based mental health staff, such as psychologists and social workers, rather than speech language pathologists and occupational and physical therapists.

Some, but not most, parents feel that there are insufficient resources—specifically, staff, teachers, and materials.

Sixty-seven percent of surveyed parents agreed that sufficient instructional supports are available to their child. Twenty-five percent responded that they disagreed, and 8% responded that they did not know.

In focus groups, many parents mentioned the need for more staff, including caseworkers, special education teachers and assistants, and principals. Some also expressed beliefs that the district could provide more support materials, mainly to be used at home.

“We were way more well-staffed last year in elementary school than [in] middle school. And I feel like my child is slowly losing himself, when he should be finding himself . . . because of the struggle where there’s not enough support anywhere, as far as just the behavioral staff that’s there just to assist the caseworkers that are busy with other students.”—Parent

Sixty-six parents provided narrative feedback, along with their survey responses, on the theme of adding more staff. The most common topics were:

- More staff.
- Provide more support for teachers—general and special education—by hiring more SEAs to help manage caseloads of kids with IEPs and larger class sizes.
- Not enough SEAs for the amount of students.
- There are not enough special education teachers, and they are spread too thin.

Some staff believe that increased availability of resources could help with outcome improvement.

A few T< members mentioned a need to increase resources for special education services. They also suggested hiring more teachers and providing them with the resources necessary for them to succeed in helping students.

“Getting the resource allocation piece—shoring up training on compliance and restraint, seclusion, [the requirement for] Highly Qualified Teacher needs around SEAs going well. Hiring staff earlier—HR piece—how we support brand new cross-categorical teachers, needs help. Traditional mentoring might not serve them well. Now that we’ve been forced into virtual, how do we leverage these opportunities we are learning from COVID-19? Face-to-face training and use of subs does not work.”— Interview participant, administration

Surveyed staff expressed concern that some staffing is inadequate.

Many surveyed staff ($n = 174$) listed inadequate staffing as a challenge for serving students with disabilities in MMSD; inadequate staffing was the most commonly shared challenge. Many staff comments went beyond simply “we need more staff,” to concerns that there are not enough staff to meet the minutes of service required by the IEP, and needs for bilingual special education staff, highly qualified staff, and better retention of staff. We emphasize that these staff comments are from more than a year ago, before the effects of the new allocation process could start to be felt, and before the pandemic. However, it is still important to understand the perspectives of these comments.

Following are some representative quotes from staff members:

“We are understaffed and need many more bilingual staff (both teachers and assistants). Due to insufficient number of SEAs, students have been grouped to accommodate schedules rather than their individual needs.”

“Constant turnover of staff. Staff are treated with disrespect and therefore leave. Students have 4–6 case managers over the course of their high school experience. Also the hiring of unlicensed teachers and unlicensed SPED teachers.”

“There is not enough staff to cover the many needs we have in our school. Some children need an adult at all times. Those kids get coverage first. Kids with less urgent coverage needs tend to get left without enough help. It happens daily and is even worse when we don’t have a sub.”

“There are not enough special education teachers and special education assistants to meet the required minutes of support in students’ IEPs.”

“There is simply not enough staff support for these students, and it gets worse every year. If we want a model of inclusion, we need adequate staffing. As class sizes increase and teachers’ workload increases, these students are being left behind because special ed support is also decreasing.”

When asked to comment on how MMSD could improve its special education programs and services, survey participants most frequently advised hiring more frontline staff, such as CC teachers and SEAs ($n = 185$). Representative quotes include:

“More special education staff. More options for student programming. More responsive decision-making when schools refer students for alternative programming.”

“Hire staff of color—remove or adjust the current systems and barriers that make this difficult.”

“MMSD is very top-heavy. We need more adults available in the classroom, and the first place to trim the fat is our central office. Building-based teachers have a difficult time believing that central office staff have their best interest in mind since, each time we hear from them, they are providing us with another task to do (which is usually a spreadsheet or form that pulls us away from working with students).”

“Employ fewer people at the district level and more in the schools, working with kids. Rather than constantly deciding for teachers what to teach and when, they need to join us in teaching the children. Kids need more interaction with adults, in smaller groups than we can currently provide.”

Other surveyed staff ($n = 70$) expressed concerns that special education staff’s workloads may be preventing them from adequately supporting students with disabilities.

“Students with disabilities in MMSD do not receive adequate support. CC teachers have too large caseloads with too many needs—which leads to students’ needs not being met. There is also not enough SEA support, further causing student needs to not be supported.”

“I don’t think students are getting the appropriate amount of support. In schools like ours, there are three teachers divided among so many grade levels, classrooms, and students; students only get their minimum needs met as outlined in their IEP. Special education teachers need more time to adjust their support of students and general education teachers so that their instruction doesn’t simply exist as pull-out groups working on IEP goals. Students also need support in the classroom, with classroom activities, and there isn’t time for the special education and general ed teacher[s] to collaborate on this, and the special ed teacher is pulled too many other ways to do any instruction in the classroom. This is a far cry from where things were when I began teaching in MMSD, when a 5th grade class would have two other specialists (an English Learners or special ed teacher and an SEA) in the room at the time. While two people may have been necessary, these valuable

human resources are spread far too thin to teach in classrooms, much less even collaborate with classroom teachers.”

“Online learning is not equitable for students with IEPs, when an SEA is out without a sub, students’ IEPs aren’t met.” (COVID Lessons Learned)

“The allocation process for special education staffing is faulty. There [are] not enough special ed teachers and assistants to support all IEP students to help meet their goals. Students not receiving adequate special education services creates many behavioral challenges and learning frustrations for students.”

Survey participants ($n = 69$) recommended reducing caseloads or re-evaluating the caseload and weighting system used to allocate special education staff to schools.

“Change the way you weight caseloads. Seven students with high needs have the equivalent programming of 12 students with mild to moderate needs.”

“Change our weighting system of students so that the kids who need someone directly with them to co-regulate throughout most of the day to be safe are not counted the same, so they do not use up all the resources at one school.”

“Recognize that not all IEPs are equal and that students with significant needs should be weighted higher to allow more support. Multiple students at our school require one-to-one support, due to significant needs of the student. This is not recognized when providing allocation for SEAs.”

“Smaller caseloads.”

Recruiting, Hiring, Retention, and Placement of High-Quality Staff Plan Goals:

Revise hiring processes for both special education teachers and assistants to ensure appropriate staffing levels and qualification/skills.

Create a process to increase the number of high-quality special education and bilingually certified teachers.

Research, identify and implement a successful model for the equitable distribution of special education and related services staffing/resources.

Status: A new weighted allocation process has been piloted and is being rolled out. With it, additional teaching and support FTE have been added. While this should address many areas of need, two challenges remain: (1) the process still needs major overhaul to hire and place high-quality special education teachers; (2) meaningful inclusion is almost impossible without MTSS and UDL—cries of “we need more staff” will continue until these systemic supports are in place and utilized.

Collaboration and Communication Strengths

Although none of the evaluation questions specifically fall under the topic of **collaboration and communication**, this section addresses some of the evaluation findings that have a basis in this topic.

Collaboration and Communication Finding 1: The Department of Student Services makes genuine efforts to engage stakeholders.

The MMSD Department of Student Services Vision is:

“All students will live, work and thrive as contributing and valued members of our community.”

The MMSD Vision, as outlined in its current Strategic Framework ²³

“Every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student for college, career and community.

We approach this commitment with a belief that all of our fates are linked. More than half of our 27,000 students are students of color, including 21% who identify as Latinx and 18% who are African-American. Over a quarter are students who are learning English, coming from homes where nearly 100 different languages are spoken. Fourteen and a half percent are students with disabilities. These bright and beautiful children are the future of Madison. Every single child must thrive if we are all to thrive, and we want them all to graduate with the knowledge, skills and mindsets needed to make their dreams come true.”

There is a desire among special education administrators to better connect with parents who are not typically engaged.

Special education administrators know that they need to do a better job reaching families, especially families that are currently not engaged positively with school personnel—including many Black or African American families, and families with linguistic or cultural diversity. One of their ideas for doing this is creating personal invitations for families to engage with the school in a way that works best for them. Parents shared that marginalized parents may be more responsive if principals and staff reach out to personally invite them to events.

²³ <https://news.madison.k12.wi.us/vision>

A special education parent advisory group, with about 12 consistent participants, meets every six weeks. There is also a staff advisory group, and sometimes the parent and staff advisory groups meet as a single group. The Executive Director of Student Services sends out a monthly newsletter to families and staff about special education. The district also has advisory groups regarding English learners, American Indian students, and Black or African American students.

Parents and staff agree that school personnel are responsive to parents' questions and concerns.

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements about their child's school's communication regarding the child's education, 90% of surveyed parents agreed or strongly agreed that school personnel are responsive to their questions and concerns. Seventy-four percent of surveyed parents agreed that school personnel have helped them to understand how their child's disability affects learning and which specially designed instruction is helpful; 24% disagreed. Parents of Asian students were generally more positive than the other parent groups, with the majority of these respondents ($n = 28$) strongly agreeing with each of seven statements about communication.

Staff survey responses on this topic mirror parents' responses. Eighty-three percent of staff agreed that general and special educators at their school communicate with all parents concerning students' academic progress.

Staff commitment and communication were often mentioned in focus groups as the main strength of the program.

Many parents appreciated teachers' dedication to the advancement of students.

"I feel really connected because of my teachers. I like the regular communication with the teacher and special education teacher; they text me every day. They're really open to the suggestions that I have."—Parent

In focus groups, some parents noted that the teachers and staff they worked with have excellent communication skills. Fifty-seven survey participants provided positive comments with a theme of clear communication and responsive staff.

"For me, it's that really solid note-booking, through all the grades, with the case manager, having a relationship with the principal. So, I don't know for you guys. We even text with our teachers. It's written in our IEP."—Parent

"[My teacher] always emails me back immediately. I can call. They give that to me... we haven't texted, but I think that they would, for sure, be down for that if I asked for it."—Parent

Surveyed staff ($n = 27$) commented on positive teacher-student relationships.

“Focus on developing relationships.”

“[Students’] teachers care about and build relationships with them.”

“Case managers work hard to develop strong relationships with spec ed families and students.”

Ninety-three surveyed parents commented positively about supportive and understanding teachers and staff. The following example represents the overall tone.

“My son’s IEP case manager is [] at [] Middle School. [] goes above and beyond to work very closely with my son (even since MMSD has moved to online learning—by devoting very generous amounts of time to videoconferencing with my son), to make a strong, positive connection with my son; to follow closely his educational needs; to teach him in positive, effective ways; to help my son achieve and feel good about achieving; and to help my son develop life and learning skills that will serve him in good ways for the rest of his life. I am deeply impressed by how good [] is at his job and by how invested he is in the welfare and progress of his students, and I’m very grateful to him, to [] Middle School, and to MMSD.”—Parent

Collaboration and Communication Finding 2: Parents feel welcome at their child’s school.

The quality of staff knowledge, relationships, and processes varies by school.

As discussed in the following section, time for collaboration is an area for improvement in MMSD. However, some surveyed staff commented that collaboration among staff is an area of strength. Examples include:

- “Collaboration between all service providers for a student (teachers, SLPs, physical and occupational therapists, SEAs) so everyone is on the same page and to be able to be consistent.”
- “The collaboration between the special ed teachers and classroom teachers.”
- “Collaboration amongst IEP teams; having the PST support people. As an SLP, I very much value the time spent with special education colleagues.”

Collaboration and Communication Areas for Improvement

Parents noted that special education teachers' relationships with parents are an area for improvement.

Some parents mentioned that, often, special education teachers do not consider them as resources.

"Pay attention to what the parents are saying, because we've been researching this during our kids' whole lives. Stop arguing with us about it . . . No teacher can know all of the strategies for every single condition they might encounter. But I don't think it's unreasonable for teachers to take the information that parents are providing and read it."—Parent

Some parents expressed a feeling that their own skills, as well as their children's skills, are often underestimated, which shows up in the form of lower expectations.

"The correspondence they send to us is not as parents of [children in] special education should be treated. They look down at us, and they think that we don't know what we're talking [about], and we don't know how to read what the IDEA says."—Parent

While most surveyed parents responded positively to prompts about the process of identifying their child as a student with a disability, and expressed satisfaction with the IEP process, 16% of parents responded that they do not believe their child's IEP is implemented as written, and almost 4% said they do not know. Also, 16% disagreed that their child was making progress on his or her IEP, and 5% said they do not know. These percentages of parents responding negatively are relatively low, and, as previously described, MMSD has very low levels of formal conflict with parents. However, we noted the following related themes in parent responses:

- Parents report that they have to fight hard to get what they need for their children. Some principals talk down to them. They expressed the same sentiment that special education administrators expressed, that there needs to be better hiring and better training of principals.
- Parents will bypass whoever might have said no to an IEP team decision, and go directly to the executive Director of Student Services to intervene. Staff and parents understand that this practice should not be the routine way that conflicts are resolved. Parents want special education administrators to understand the law and have a new frame of working with families to plan how to close learning gaps.
- Parents want SEAs to get training, to get time with special education teachers, and to be able to attend IEP meetings.
- Parents do not believe their voices are considered by IEP team members as important.

- Parents would like families of students with disabilities to be brought together—to connect, and to hear about things that are working.
- Parents would like there to be someone who helps them advocate for their child, someone whose interest is aligned with parents, and who is dedicated to family and community engagement.
- Parents would like inclusion demonstration sites to train general educators.

Collaboration and Communication Finding 3: Improved engagement and communication is needed with parents from diverse linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds who have children with disabilities.

District infrastructure and networks for communicating with parents from diverse cultures need improvement in order to be effective for reaching parents from diverse linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds who have children with disabilities.

When survey results were broken out by race/ethnicity, a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino parents (6.67%) strongly disagreed with the statement “I understand the process of developing an IEP,” as determined by a one-way ANOVA (than parents of other races). Additionally, significantly higher percentages of Asian parents (than parents of other races) agreed or strongly agreed that their child’s school demonstrated appropriate practices for identifying their child as a student with a disability; that their child’s IEP is implemented as written; and that their child is making progress on his or her IEP goals. Specifically, more than 50 percent of Asian parents strongly agreed with all of these survey items.

Latinx parents noted the evaluation of English learners for special education as an area for improvement.

Some Latinx parents who speak Spanish as a first language were initially told by school staff their children were not in need of special education services. This may be partially attributed to evaluation staff having difficulty with the complexity of the evaluation or a shortage of special education staff who speak Spanish available to conduct the evaluation. Additionally, the current siloed nature of the Office of Multilingual and Global Education and the Office of Special Education may be a factor in these barriers.

“[M]y son started the program when he was very young, when he was in second grade. At first, they told me that the child had nothing, that he was fine, and that they considered he didn’t need anything.”—Parent

“No, just a few. I think it is only the school’s translator. Occasionally you can find a teacher who speaks Spanish, but that is not common.”—Parent, when asked whether there are Spanish-speaking people in the child’s school

BIPOC parents of students receiving special education identified difficulty in navigating the special education system.

BIPOC parents of special education students expressed that they feel an extra burden, as they have to navigate cultural or language barriers. These parents were especially concerned for parents without the resources to advocate for their children. More cultural and linguistic liaisons are needed.

“My wife and I have some extra time to devote to pushing back on what services [our child] gets, but I can’t imagine somebody who doesn’t have the resources or is working two jobs to be able to advocate for their child, because I know how much time we spend doing that.”—Parent

“There is a lot of misinformation. Language and communication don’t work; we don’t know all the resources; the social workers are not sharing ideas with us. Most of us don’t know that [when the child turns] age 18 we stop receiving benefits from the county. Teachers don’t tell parents the options they have in the long term. We have to learn these things when it is too late. This year there have been a lot of meetings about the transitions from middle school. In these meetings [there are] a lot of agencies that can help us. If I didn’t know about this . . . imagine those who don’t have access to this.”—Parent, during pre-interview

MMSD’s efforts for reaching parents who are limited-/non-English speakers are insufficient.

Although our survey reached about 200 BIPOC parents, we did not reach many parents for whom English is a second language, even though we had the survey, and the invitation to participate in the survey, translated into Hmong and Spanish, and we had fluent Hmong and Spanish speakers ready to make phone calls. We found that the district does not have organized networks of staff and community leaders with ways of reaching parents with limited English proficiency. There were not individual staff or networks of staff who function as language or cultural liaisons with strategies for reaching even parents who speak the high-incidence languages of Spanish and Hmong.

Collaboration and Communication Finding 4: Increased time, structure, and expectations for collaboration are needed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

There is an existing need for more collaboration among general and special education teachers.

Some special education teachers expressed a belief that more collaboration would improve student outcomes. However, special education teachers also mentioned that such collaboration is currently very difficult to achieve because they lack time to engage in it.

“There is a lack of collaboration time between and among special education teachers; also a lack of time. They are competing for the little bits of time in their day—meeting or mandated paperwork?”—SE Teacher

More than half of surveyed staff (53.63%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that time is allotted for collaboration between general and special education teachers to plan for students with disabilities who are included in general education. Special education teachers reported that they were frustrated with a lack of time to plan meaningful instruction with their general education peers.

Collaboration and Communication Finding 5: There are districtwide leadership and structural barriers to improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

One of the Plan’s strategies for improving collaboration and communication was to revise the roles/responsibilities of assistant directors, PSTs, and other Department of Student Services staff to improve communication and alignment with the Plan goals and priorities. We feel that we would be remiss if we did not share our observation that some factors in the overall approach to running the district are not conducive to implementing the Plan, and are, in our opinion, barriers to improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

Working in silos affects the program’s capacity to provide comprehensive support to students.

Some T< members recognized that the current siloed structure hinders the program’s ability to provide holistic supports to students with disabilities. We observed a lack of meaningful collaboration between the Department of Student Services and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, between the Office of Multilingual and Global Education and the Department of Student Services, and between MTSS and special education personnel.

“The most recent allocation model is closer to our desired state and how to think about allocation. I would like to think about it more comprehensively. A problem is siloing—we forget to pull up and do a comprehensive approach.”—Interview participant, administration

“A lot of this [system-failure] stems from leadership fragmentation—MTSS lives within a [department] within T&L. We don’t have a comprehensive assessment system, don’t have assessments; looks good on paper, but we are not organized well and led that way. We need to build data routines in schools and systems.”— Interview participant, administration

The School Board is an obstacle for holding schools accountable.

More than a few administrators shared that they believe that the Board’s micromanagement is hindering the special education team’s capacity to hold schools accountable for student outcomes. We understand, from multiple sources, that Board members have, at times, gone outside of their high-level leadership roles and meddled in areas of staff responsibility, funneling excess attention on a particular topic, thereby causing the strategic improvement work to go off course.

“Implementation of the plan the Board has gotten in the way. Rather than letting John and Team do their work—they micromanage, asking for paras, there is an idea that SE is in crisis = they are too much in the weeds. They get in the way and create an inaccurate narrative—the Board is a problem. Micromanaging. Parents complaining results in a new agenda item. The work is more hopeful and better than the Board portrays.”—Interview participant, administration

Collaboration and Communication Plan Goals:

Improve family partnerships and communication with stakeholders, including parents/families, administrators, teachers, and special education assistants.

Improve teaming and collaboration practices both among special education staff and with general education colleagues.

Revise the roles/responsibilities of assistant directors, program support teachers and other Student Services staff to improve communication and alignment with the Special Education Plan goals and priorities.

Status: While progress on these goals has been made, there continue to be needs to improve collaboration and communication.

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Additional Resources

Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 2 (<https://www.cesa2.org/>) provides advocacy and free resources for parents in its 74 member school districts in southern Wisconsin, including MMSD.

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The Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support (WI FACETS) is the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center for Wisconsin. Its mission is to provide

and broaden opportunities that enhance the quality of life for children and adults with disabilities and their families, with emphasis on support for underserved families in the community. It provides information on special education and IEPs and referrals to agencies and resources, parent support groups, parent and youth leadership development, and trainings. (877) 374-0511 or <http://www.wifacets.org/>

The Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiatives has coordinators who are parents of children with disabilities, and who can help families navigate the IEP process. They can also provide parent training.

About the Evaluators

WestEd

WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency that partners with education and other communities throughout the United States and abroad to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has more than a dozen offices nationwide, from Massachusetts, Vermont, Georgia, and Washington, DC, to Arizona and California, with headquarters in San Francisco. WestEd's Special Education Policy & Practice team partners with federal, state, and local clients to transform education systems to create deep and lasting impact for children with disabilities and their families. More information about WestEd is available at [WestEd.org](https://www.wested.org). The team members from WestEd who contributed to this evaluation were:

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The Improve Group

The Improve Group is a woman-owned, full-service evaluation, research, and strategic planning consulting firm based in St. Paul, Minnesota. We are committed to helping local, national, and international organizations make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure their investments lead to meaningful, sustained impact. That commitment is connected to our vision, which is that mission-driven organizations will effectively develop more resilient, equitable, and thriving communities.

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Suggested citation: Dodge, C., Lai, K. (2021). *Madison Metropolitan School District Special Education Review*. WestEd.

Appendix

Table A1. Evaluation Questions by Plan Area and Plan Goals

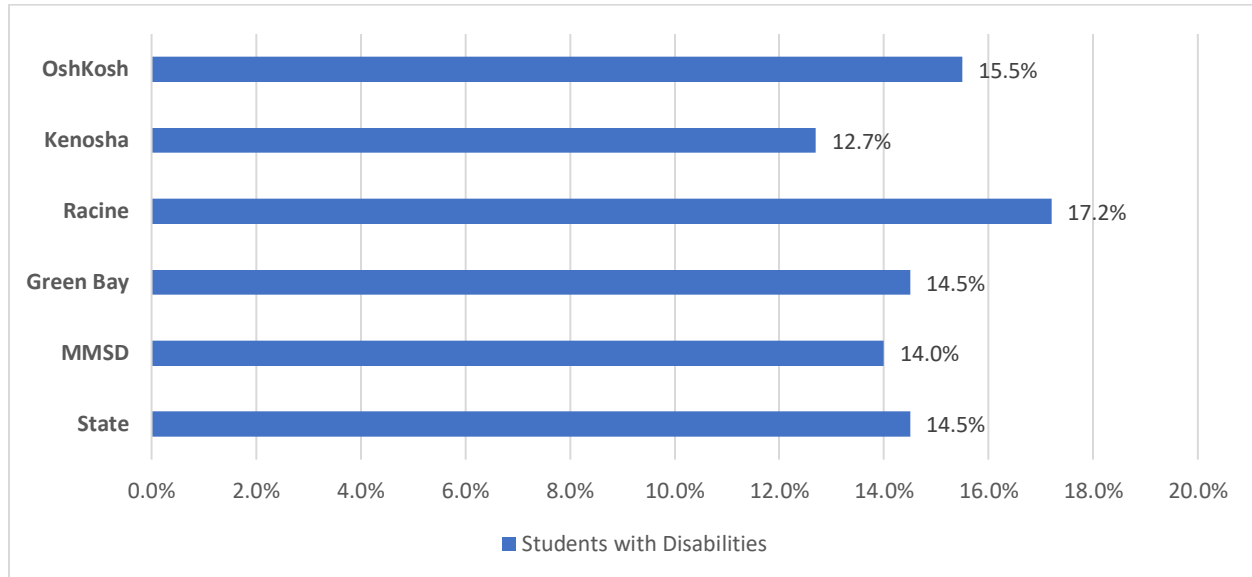
Plan Area	Plan Goals	Evaluation Questions
Student Outcomes (not specifically a plan area)		What are the academic and social-emotional/behavioral outcomes of our programs?
		What percentage of students with disabilities are meeting or exceeding grade-level standards in K–12? How do the current rates of proficiency compare to prior years?
		Are there subgroups of students with disabilities that are performing at or below grade level with greater frequency than other subgroups?
		What are the high school graduation rates for students with disabilities? How does this compare across subgroups?
		What postsecondary readiness measures are used? Are these measures sufficient? How are students with disabilities performing on these measures?
		How do students dually identified as EL and/or AL compare to other students with disabilities and their peers on district benchmark assessments and other outcomes?
		How has their performance changed over time?
		What are the strengths and potential areas of improvement improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
		What are the strengths and potential areas of improvement (design and implementation) for our Intensive Intervention, Alternative, and Specialized

Plan Area	Plan Goals	Evaluation Questions
		Programs in improving outcomes for students with disabilities?
Service Delivery for Students with Disabilities	Implement a collaborative Service Delivery planning process as a component of comprehensive school instructional design to ensure all students with disabilities are provided with high-quality instruction and effective special education/related services in the most inclusive educational environments. Implement improved processes to successfully transition students with disabilities from grade to grade, school to school and from high school to adulthood.	What additional professional development, administrative support, resources, policies and procedures, or assessments would be useful for the district or schools to provide to teachers and administrators in order to accelerate the learning of students with disabilities and significantly improve outcomes (academic, graduation rates, behavioral)? What additional professional development, administrative support, resources, or assessments would be useful for the Intensive Intervention, Alternative, and Specialized Program staff to accelerate the learning of students with disabilities and significantly improve outcomes (academic, graduation rates, behavioral, social-emotional support)?
Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development	Expand Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategy for curriculum and lesson design that ensures access for students with disabilities to rigorous standards-based content. Create a repository of modified or adapted curricula aligned with district scopes and instructional resources in core subjects. Increase professional learning opportunities for special education teachers and assistants on evidence-based interventions for reading, writing, math, and social-emotional skills/behavior. Provide professional development for instructional staff, including all principals, districtwide, on the principles and practices of inclusive education.	What resources or professional learning do staff identify as important for improving the learning outcomes of dually identified students? What instructional practices improve the learning outcomes of dually identified students? What adjustments, systems, or practices should be made to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided equitable access to high-quality instruction across all schools/programs? What evidence-based instructional practices could be included to improve the learning outcomes of students with disabilities?
Data Use and Accountability Systems	Utilize accountability systems and data routines in schools to monitor student progress on learning goals and determine	What is the current organizational structure of the Department of Student Services? Does the current structure

Plan Area	Plan Goals	Evaluation Questions
	when additional supports, guidance, or immediate adjustments are needed. Implement improved accountability systems to monitor and immediately correct procedural compliance issues.	function to meet the needs of students with disabilities?
Disproportionality	Apply improved monitoring systems and implement five actions to reduce/eliminate factors contributing to disproportionality within special education (improve access to timely evidence-based reading interventions, improve student support and intervention team practices, require re-evaluation for transfer students with certain disabilities, improve the quality of initial evaluations, and ensure appropriate educational environments with the service delivery process).	Identify factors contributing to the disproportionate identification of students of color with disabilities and make recommendations for actions that significantly disrupt this pattern.
Recruiting, Hiring, Retention, and Placement of High-Quality Staff	Revise hiring processes for both special education teachers and assistants to ensure appropriate staffing levels and qualification/skills. Create a process to increase the number of high-quality special education and bilingually certified teachers. Research, identify and implement a successful model for the equitable distribution of special education and related services staffing/resources.	How does the Department of Student Services allocate human resources? How has that changed over time? Are there sufficient instructional supports available to K–12 students with disabilities? What instructional supports do comparison districts (districts similar in size and demographics) have?
Collaboration and Communication	Improve family partnerships and communication with stakeholders, including parents/families, administrators, teachers, and special education assistants Improve teaming and collaboration practices among both special education staff and with general education colleagues. Revise the roles/responsibilities of assistant directors, program support teachers and other Student Services staff to improve communication and alignment with the Special Education Plan goals and priorities.	

MMSD Student Demographics

Figure A1. Percentage of MMSD Students with Disabilities, Compared to Other Districts and the State Average, 2018–2019



Note: Slight difference in the percentage of SWD in MMSD is due to use of WI DPI dashboard, rather than district data—the counts are at different times of year.

Table A2. Four-, Five-, Six-, and Seven-Year Completion Rates, 2018–2019

Row Labels	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic Latino	Multi racial	White	(blank)	Grand Total
4 Year	6	179	523	499	200	960		2367
5 Year		21	82	36	18	84		241
6 Year		11	29	15	9	33		97
7 Year	1	5	14	4	5	19		48
Grand Total	7	216	648	554	232	1096		2753
Row Labels	Not Low-Income					Low-Income		
4 Year						1369		998
SwoD						1261		789
SwD						108		209
5 Year						166		75
SwoD						100		27
SwD						66		48

6 Year	64	33
SwoD	22	8
SwD	42	25
7 Year	32	16
SwoD	9	4
SwD	23	12
Row Labels	Not EL	EL
4 Year	1788	579
SwoD	1519	531
SwD	269	48
5 Year	182	59
SwoD	86	41
SwD	96	18
6 Year	75	22
SwoD	20	10
SwD	55	12
7 Year	40	8
SwoD	11	2
SwD	29	6
Row Labels	Not EL	EL
4 Year	1901	466
SwoD	1592	458
SwD	309	8
5 Year	240	1
SwoD	127	
SwD	113	1
6 Year	97	
SwoD	30	
SwD	67	
7 Year	48	
SwoD	13	
SwD	35	

Table A3. MMSD Four-Year High School Completion Rate, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Students without Disabilities	92.7%	87.6%	88.5%	80.4%	88.9%	94.4%
Students with Disabilities	69.7%	49.7%	69.8%	51.8%	78.8%	77.2%

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

Table A4. MMSD Student Proficiency on PALS, 2018–2019

	District Total	District Percentage
Met	8623	74.22%
Not Met	2995	25.78%

Table A5. MMSD Student Proficiency on PALS, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Met	75.91%	75.39%	74.22%
Not Met	24.67%	25.21%	25.78%

Table A6. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on PALS, 2018–2019

	District
Met	42.47%
Not Met	57.53%

Table A7. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on PALS, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Met	44.16%	46.55%	42.47%
Not Met	55.84%	53.45%	57.53%

PALS Subgroup Data

Table A8. MMSD Student Average Scores on PALS by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	57.29	28.67
Asian	60.47	44.84
Black or African American	46.64	33.05
Hispanic/Latino	49.74	34.03
Two or more races/ethnicities	55.68	35.10
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	50.50	NA
White	64.98	50.68

Table A9. MMSD Student Average Scores on PALS by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	49.07	34.12
Not Low-Income	64.86	52.08

Table A10. MMSD Student Average Scores on PALS by English Learners (EL) Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	51.98	35.34
Not EL	59.20	41.99

Table A11. MMSD Student Average Scores on PALS by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	66.00	54.02
Not AL	54.71	38.90

Forward Results

Grades K–5 Forward Results

In general MMSD’s K–5 students with and without disabilities scored slightly higher on the WI Forward Mathematics assessment than they did on the ELA assessment. While just over one third (38%) of MMSD students scored proficient or advanced on the Forward ELA assessment in 2018–19, only 11% of students with disabilities scored proficient or advanced. These scores

have been relatively flat over three years, for all students and for students with disabilities. The percentage of students in MMSD as a whole who scored in the proficient range on both the math and ELA assessments is lower than the percentage averaged for the state. The same is true for students with disabilities in MMSD on both assessments.

Grades K–5 Forward ELA Results Broken Out by Groups

The results of the Forward assessment of ELA skills for students with disabilities in grades K–5 show that a third of white students and 20% of Asian students score proficient or advanced. Two percent or fewer Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, and students of two or more races/ethnicities score proficient or advanced. The remaining students in these groups score basic or below basic. Ninety seven percent of students with disabilities are not proficient with 16% at the basic level and 81% at the below basic level. The same trend exists with the K–5 ELA assessment as shared earlier about the Math assessment —students with disabilities who are not low-income score about the same as students without disabilities who are low-income. So, low income seems to be a factor as significant as disability. Income is a significant factor in levels of proficiency on the Forward assessment s. When looking at scaled scores on the K–5 Forward ELA assessment , low-income students with disabilities score, on average 100 points lower than students who are not low-income and who do not have disabilities. Three percent of students with disabilities who are low-income scored in the proficient range.

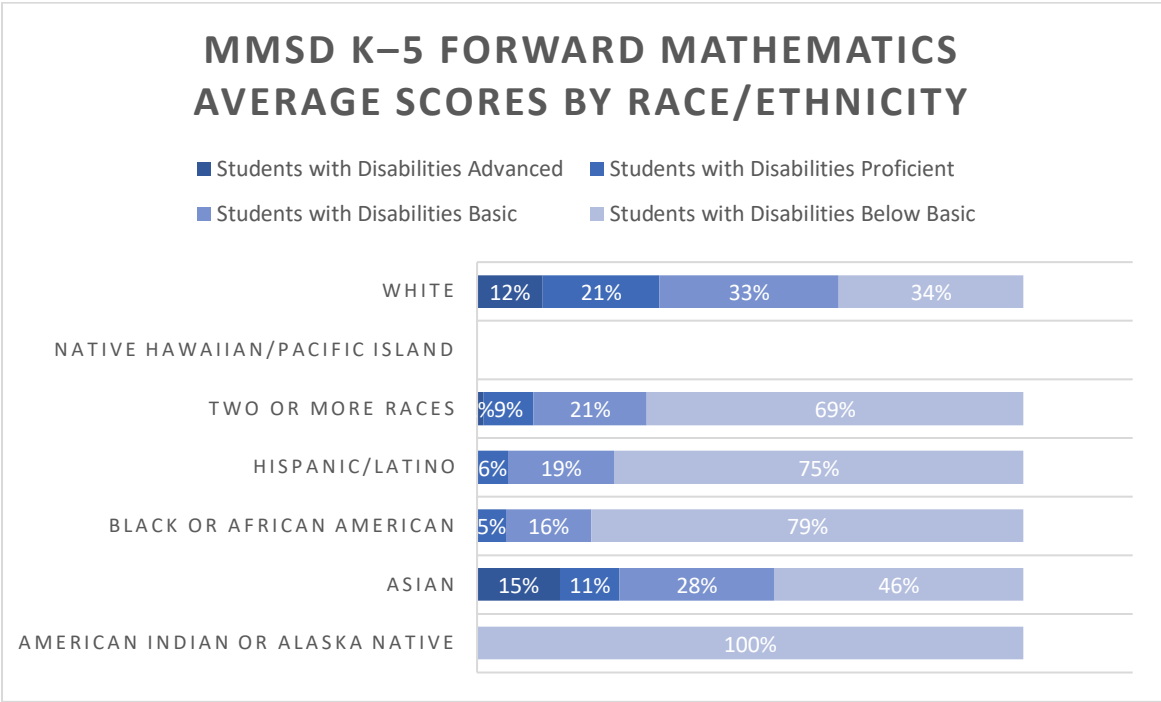
Grades K–5 Forward Mathematics Results

While slightly more students with disabilities scored in the advanced range, the percent of students scoring proficient and basic actually fell over three years; and the percentage of students scoring below basic in Math has increased from 63% to 70% over three years. Scores for students without disabilities in MMSD are flat across the three years examined.

Grades K–5 Forward Mathematics Results Broken Out by Groups

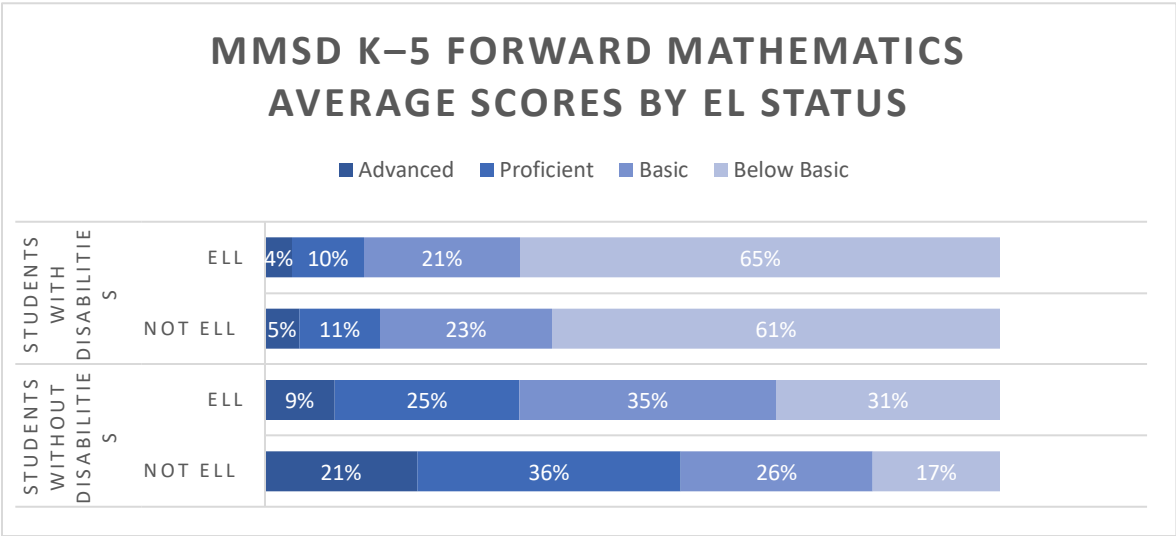
Students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), with disabilities, are generally scoring below basic on the K–5 Forward Mathematics exam. White and Asian students score in the basic or proficient range. Students with disabilities who are not low-income have a greater number of students proficient than low-income students **without** disabilities.

Figure A2. MMSD Grades K–5 Student with Disabilities Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Figure A3. MMSD Grades K–5 Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by EL Status, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Figure A4. MMSD Grades K–5 Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by Income, 2018–2019

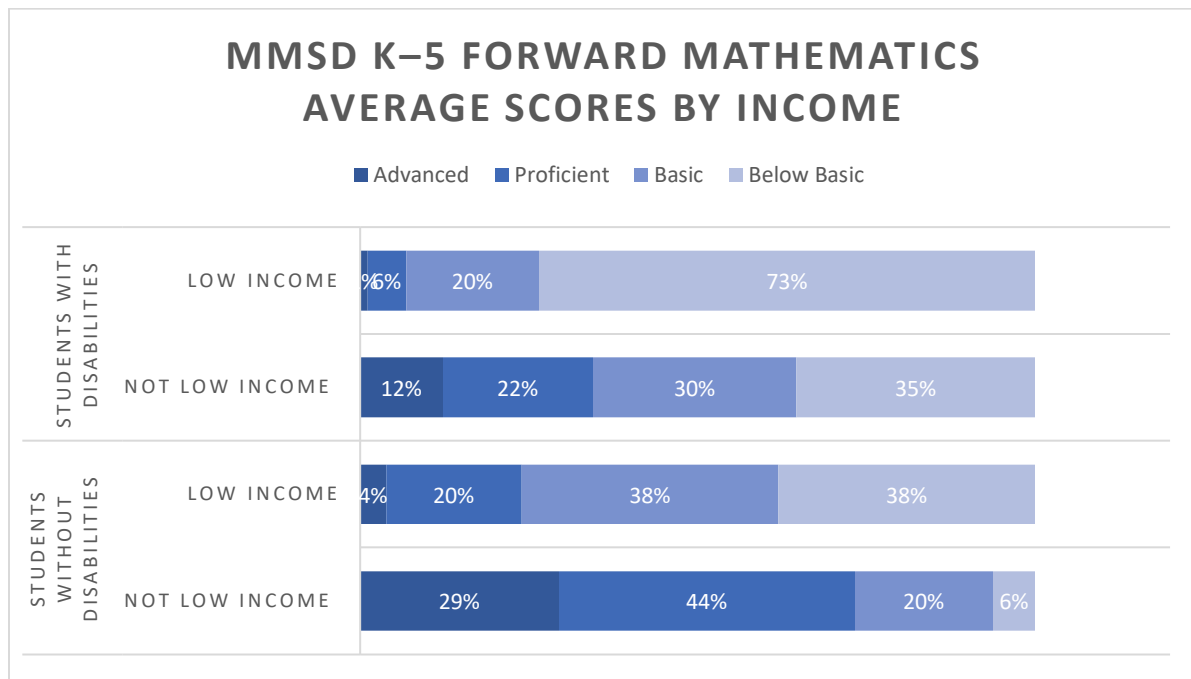
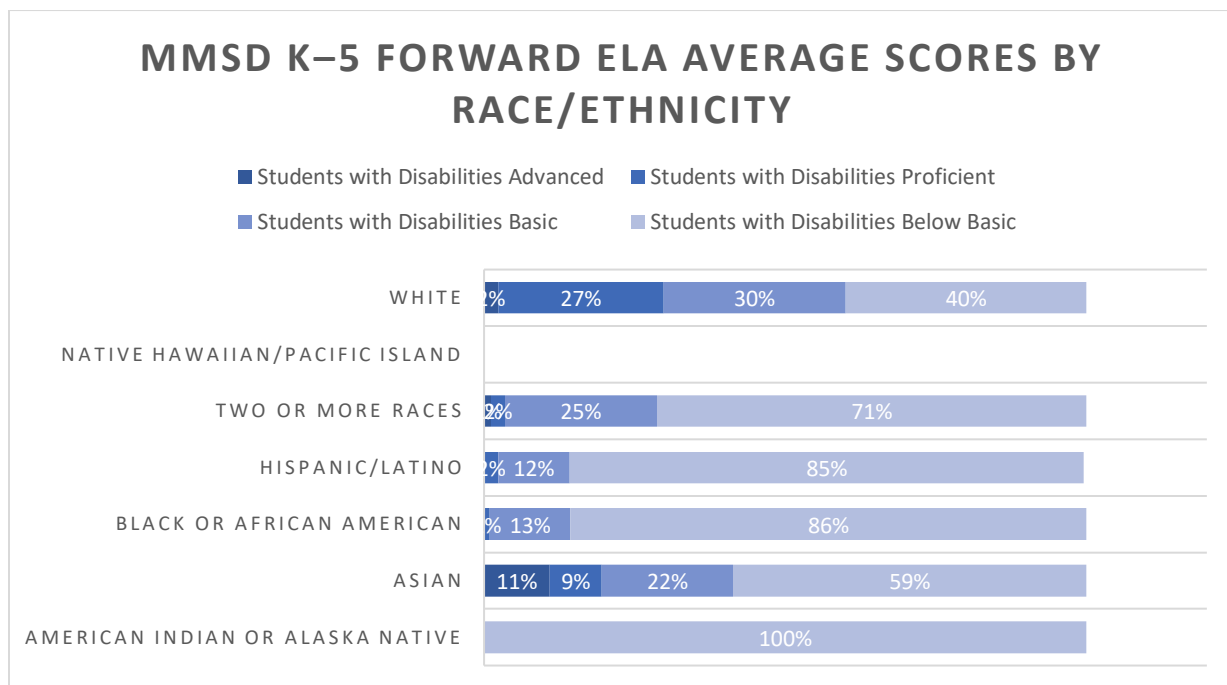


Figure A5. MMSD Grades K–5 Average Scores on Forward ELA by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Students who are American Indian/Alaska Natives have the lowest scores of the subgroup on the K–5 Forward ELA assessment , and are performing significantly lower than their peers without disabilities. The gaps between the performance of other racial or ethnic groups with and without disabilities are the smallest between Black or African American students with and without disabilities primarily because the scores are low for students in both categories. The largest difference overall is between white students without disabilities and America Indian or Alaska native students with disabilities. The number of students who are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders is too small to report on.

Table A12. MMSD Grades K-5 Numbers of Students Proficient on Forward All Subjects by Advanced Learner Status, 2018–2019

	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies	Grand Total
Advanced	12	34	17	20	83
Not AL		7	3	7	17
AL	12	27	14	13	66
Proficient	72	82	30	36	220
Not AL	35	42	22	21	120
AL	37	40	8	15	100
Basic	153	183	88	49	473
Not AL	110	148	65	39	362
AL	43	35	23	10	111
Below Basic	555	498	141	171	1365
Not AL	482	436	126	149	1193
AL	73	62	15	22	172
Total	792	797	276	276	2141

Figure A6. MMSD Grades K–5 Average Scores on Forward ELA by Income, 2018–2019

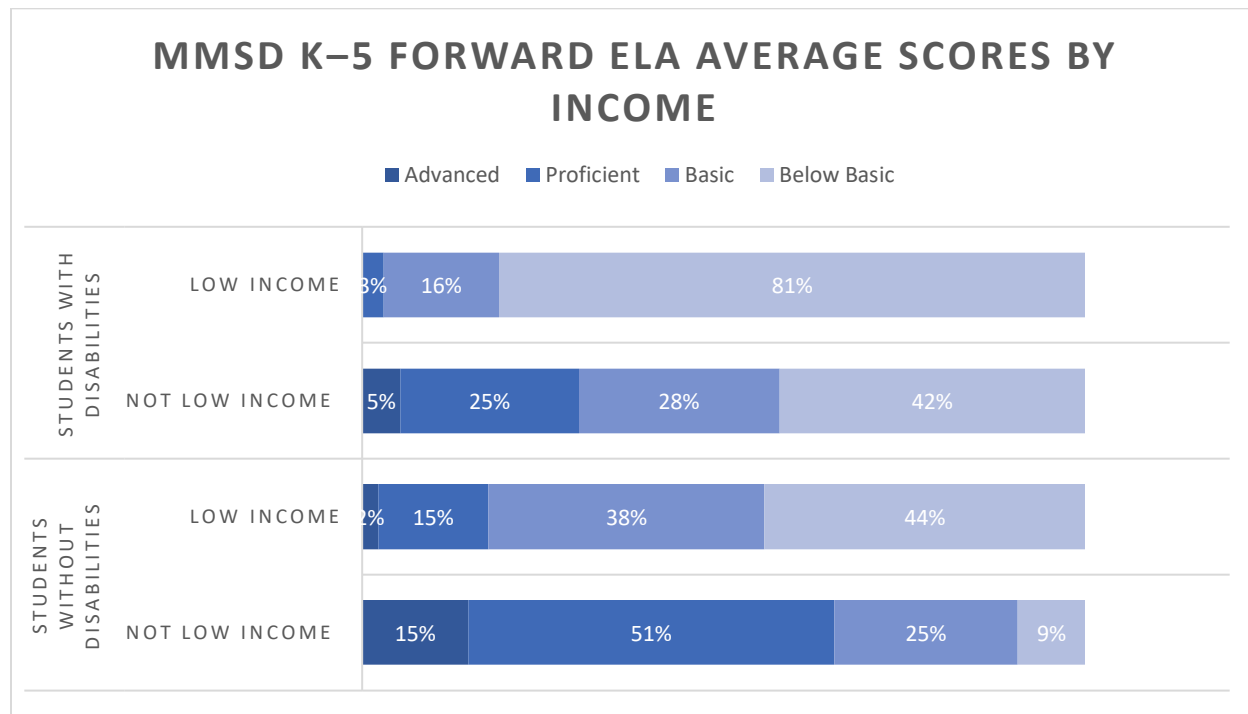


Table A13. MMSD Grades K–5 Student (All) Proficiency on Forward ELA, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Proficient	45.6%	39.7%	32.2%	23.3%	42.3%	41.6%
Not Proficient	53.3%	56.9%	67.2%	75.9%	57.3%	58.3%
Not Assessment ed	1.1%	3.4%	0.6%	0.8%	0.4%	0.1%

Table A14. MMSD Grades K–5 Student with Disabilities Proficiency on Forward ELA, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Proficient	11.6%	8.9%	8.3%	4.6%	7.1%	10.7%
Not Proficient	84.4%	79.3%	87.8%	92.6%	90.5%	87.9%
Not Assessment ed	4.0%	11.8%	3.9%	2.8%	2.3%	1.4%

Table A15. MMSD Grades K–5 Student Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Proficient	48.1%	43.3%	36.8%	24.2%	40.8%	47.4%
Not Proficient	51.0%	53.7%	62.7%	75.0%	58.9%	52.4%
Not Assessment ed	1.0%	3.0%	0.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.2%

Table A16. MMSD Grades K–5 Student with Disabilities Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Proficient	14.4%	11.5%	9.0%	5.7%	9.8%	15.5%
Not Proficient	81.6%	76.4%	87.5%	91.2%	87.8%	83.1%
Not Assessment ed	4.0%	12.2%	3.5%	3.1%	2.4%	1.4%

Grades 6–8 Forward Results

Grades 6–8 Forward Mathematics Results

Table A17. MMSD Grades 6–8 Student Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, 2018–2019

	District Total	District Percentage
Advanced	400	8%
Proficient	1312	26%
Basic	1376	27%
Below Basic	2017	40%

Table A18. MMSD Grades 6–8 Student Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Advanced	7%	7%	8%
Proficient	28%	28%	26%
Basic	26%	28%	27%
Below Basic	39%	38%	40%

In middle school proficiency rates (proficient and advanced) for all students drop to 34%. Proficiency rates for students with disabilities also drop to 7%. Trends are flat.

Table A19. MMSD Grades 6–8 Student with Disabilities Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, 2018–2019

	District
Advanced	1%
Proficient	6%
Basic	16%
Below Basic	77%

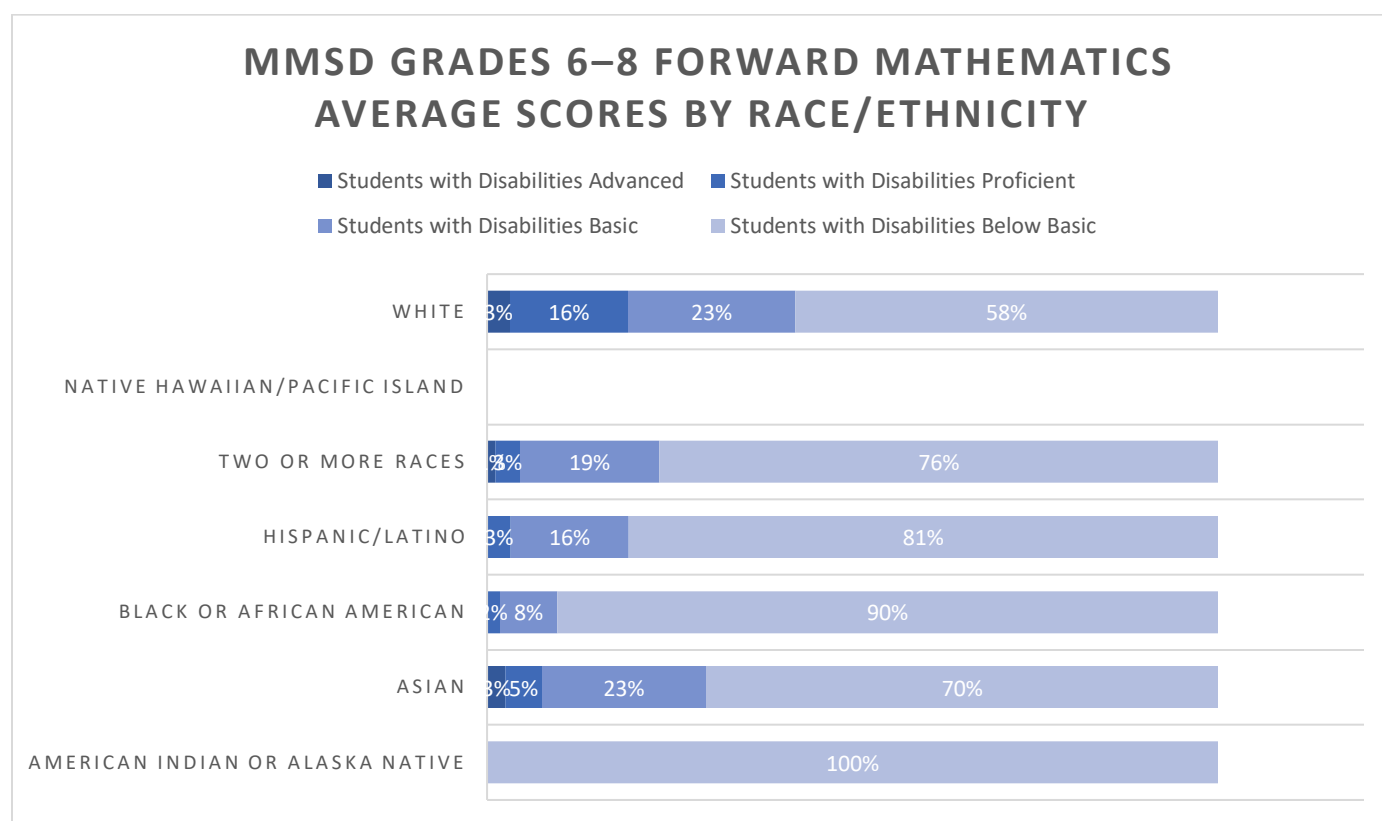
Table A20. MMSD Grades 6–8 Student with Disabilities Proficiency on Forward Mathematics, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Advanced	1%	1%	1%
Proficient	7%	6%	6%
Basic	15%	16%	16%
Below Basic	77%	78%	77%

On the Forward **Mathematics** assessment for grades 6–8, proficiency rates (proficient and advanced) for all students drop to 34%. Proficiency rates for students with disabilities also drop to 7%. Trends are flat.

BIPOC students, with and without disabilities in MMSD, score significantly below white students with disabilities on the Forward Mathematics exam for grades 6–8, with the exception of Asian students without disabilities. Seventy-seven percent of MMSD students with disabilities score below basic; students with disabilities who are low-income, or American Indian/Alaska Native, or Black or African American generally score among the lowest of all subgroups.

Figure A7. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

Table A21. MMSD Grades 6-8 Numbers of Students Proficient on Forward All Subjects by Advanced Learner Status, 2018–2019

	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies	Grand Total
Advance	6	8	13	3	30
Not AL	1		8	2	11
AL	5	8	5	1	19
Proficient	43	46	25	34	148
Not AL	17	23	18	25	83
AL	26	23	7	9	65
Basic	166	125	68	48	407
Not AL	127	96	62	41	326
AL	39	29	6	7	81
Below Basic	567	592	158	173	1490

	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies	Grand Total
Not AL	491	509	146	161	1307
AL	76	83	12	12	183
Total	782	771	264	258	2075

Figure A8. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by Income, 2018–2019

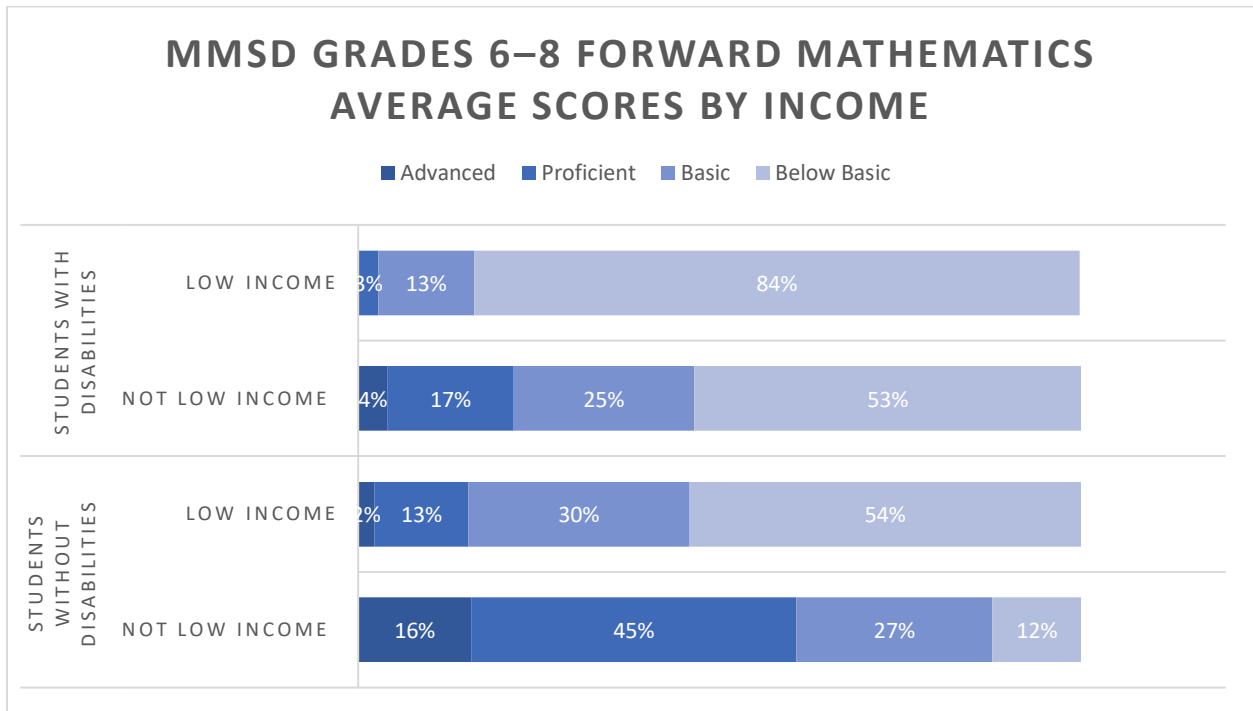
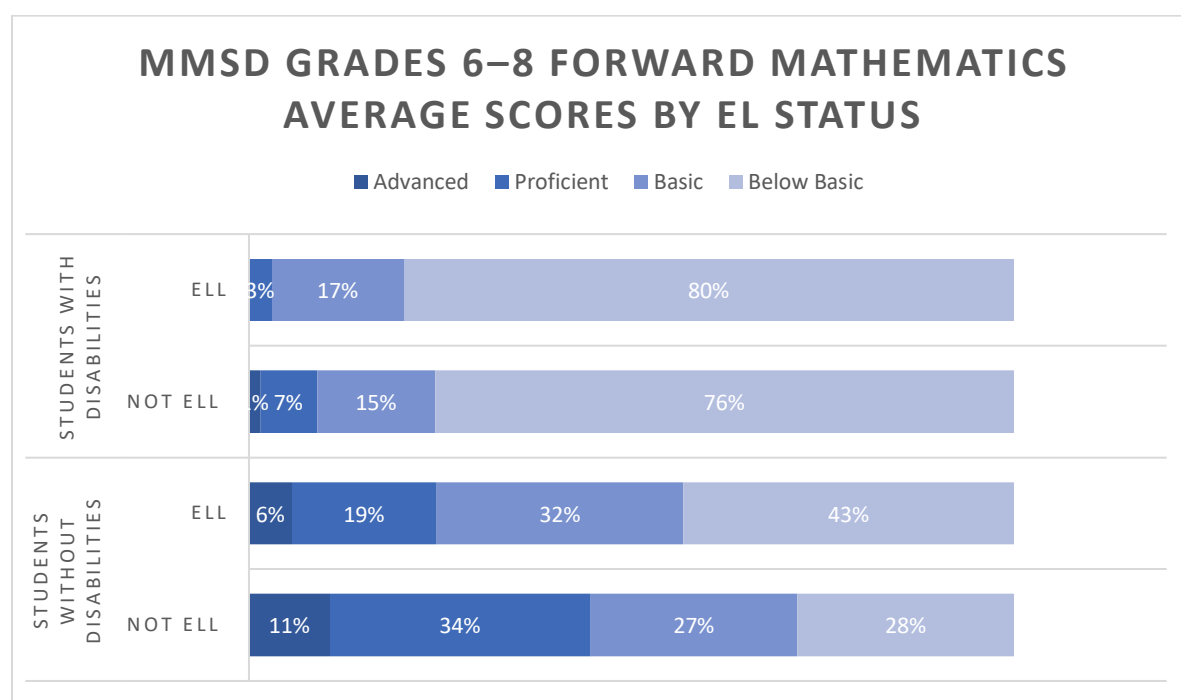


Figure A9. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward Mathematics by EL Status, 2018–2019



Grades 6–8 Forward ELA Results

Table A22. MMSD Grades 6-8 Student (All) Proficiency on FORWARD English Proficiency, 2018-2019

	District Total	District Percentage
Advanced	408	8%
Proficient	1319	26%
Basic	1541	30%
Below Basic	1811	36%

Table A23. MMSD Grades 6-8 Student Proficiency on FORWARD English Proficiency, 2016-2019

	MMSD Average 2016-2017	MMSD Average 2017-2018	MMSD Average 2018-2019
Advanced	10%	9%	8%
Proficient	26%	26%	26%
Basic	32%	31%	30%

	MMSD Average 2016-2017	MMSD Average 2017-2018	MMSD Average 2018-2019
Below Basic	33%	34%	36%

Table A24. MMSD Grades 6-8 SwDs Proficiency on FORWARD English Proficiency, 2018-2019

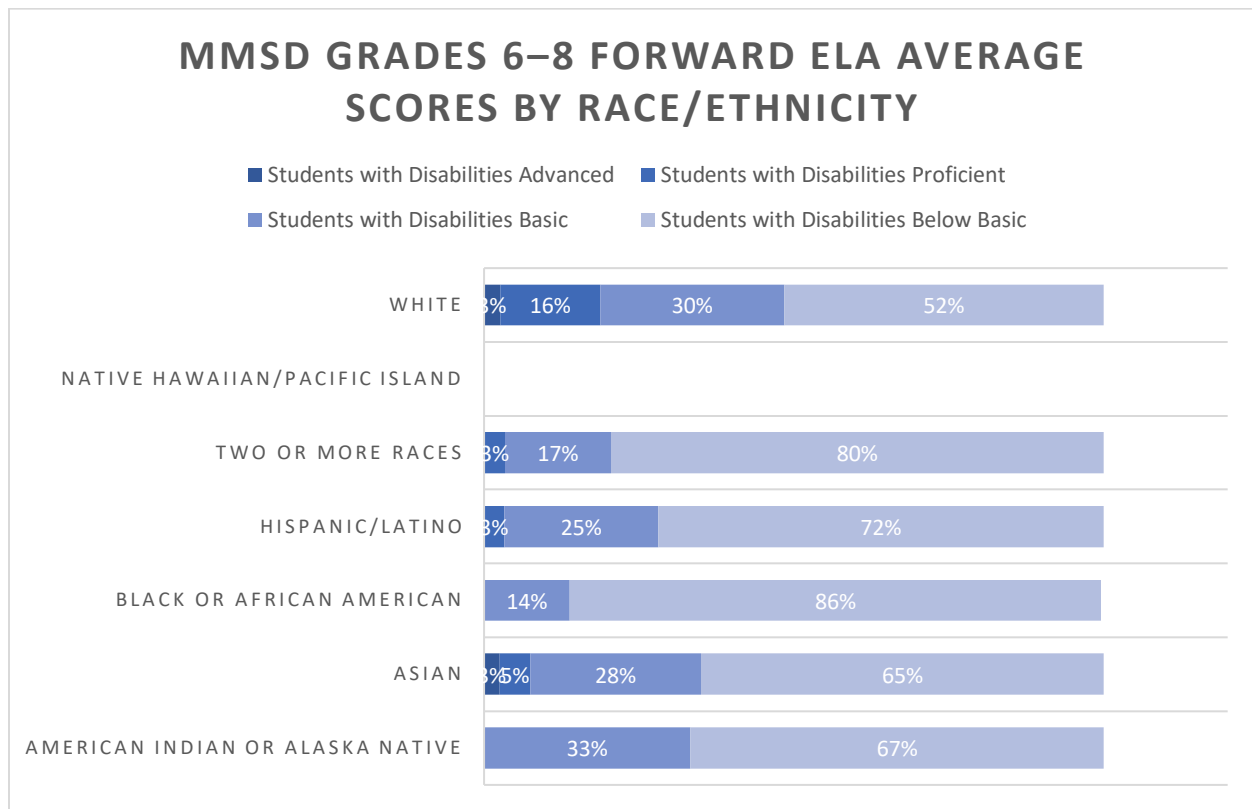
	District
Advanced	1%
Proficient	6%
Basic	22%
Below Basic	72%

Table A25. MMSD Grades 6-8 SwDs Proficiency on FORWARD English Proficiency, 2016-2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016-2017	SwD MMSD Average 2017-2018	SwD MMSD Average 2018-2019
Advanced	1%	1%	1%
Proficient	5%	6%	6%
Basic	23%	19%	22%
Below Basic	71%	75%	72%

On the Forward ELA examination, middle school proficiency rates (proficient and advanced) for all students drop to 34%. Proficiency rates for students with disabilities also drop to 7%. These results are basically the same as the math results, but on the ELA assessment, a lower percentage of students score in the basic category (22%)— making them farther from that proficient category; and a greater portion of students scored in the below basic category. Three year trends are basically flat. An almost identical pattern exists for low-income students. Only three percent of low oncome students with disabilities score proficient on the Forward Mathematics assessment for grades 6–8. Students with disabilities who are not low-income do as well as students without disabilities who are low-income. More than half of students without disabilities who are not low-income score proficient or advanced.

Figure A10. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward ELA by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019



Source: District data.

The same pattern exists with low-income students as described in other sections. In fact, a greater number of students with disabilities, not low-income, score proficient and a smaller percentage score below basic than non-disabled peers who are low-income. MMSD students with disabilities, whether they are English Ls or not, score about the same on the ELA assessment for grades 6–8. Fewer than 10% are proficient. Seventy two percent of students with disabilities score below basic regardless of EL status.

Figure A11. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward ELA by Income, 2018–2019

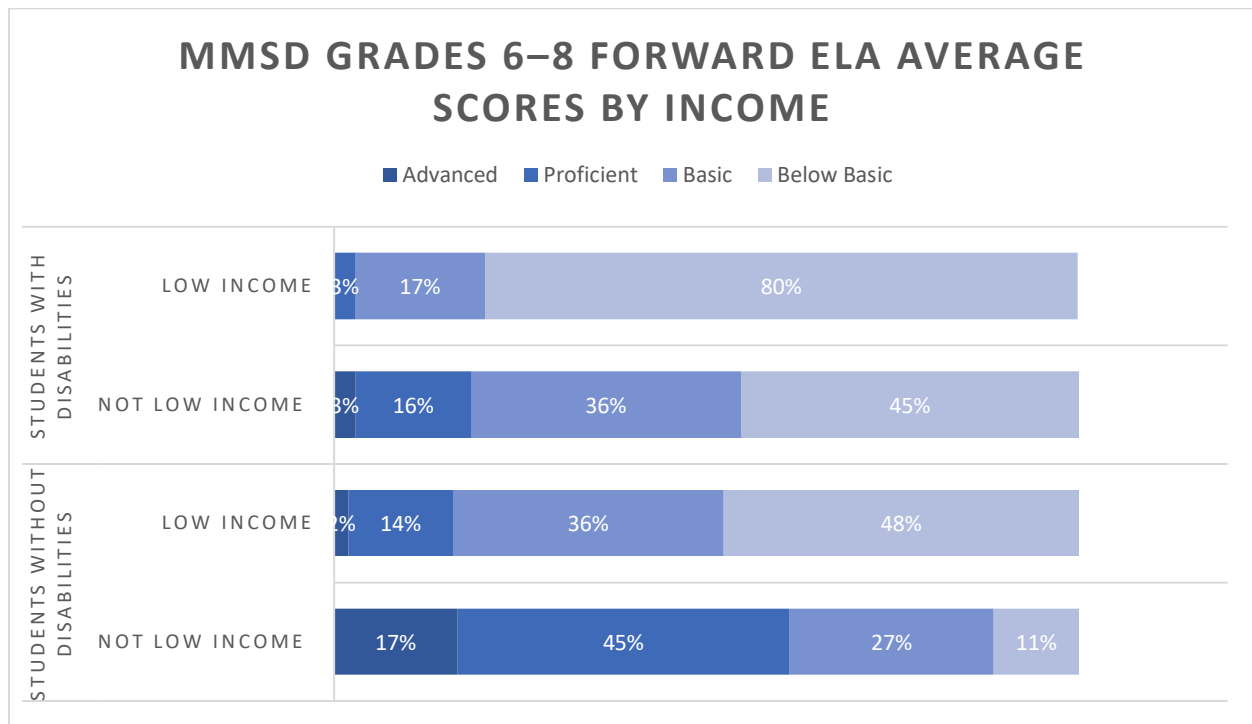
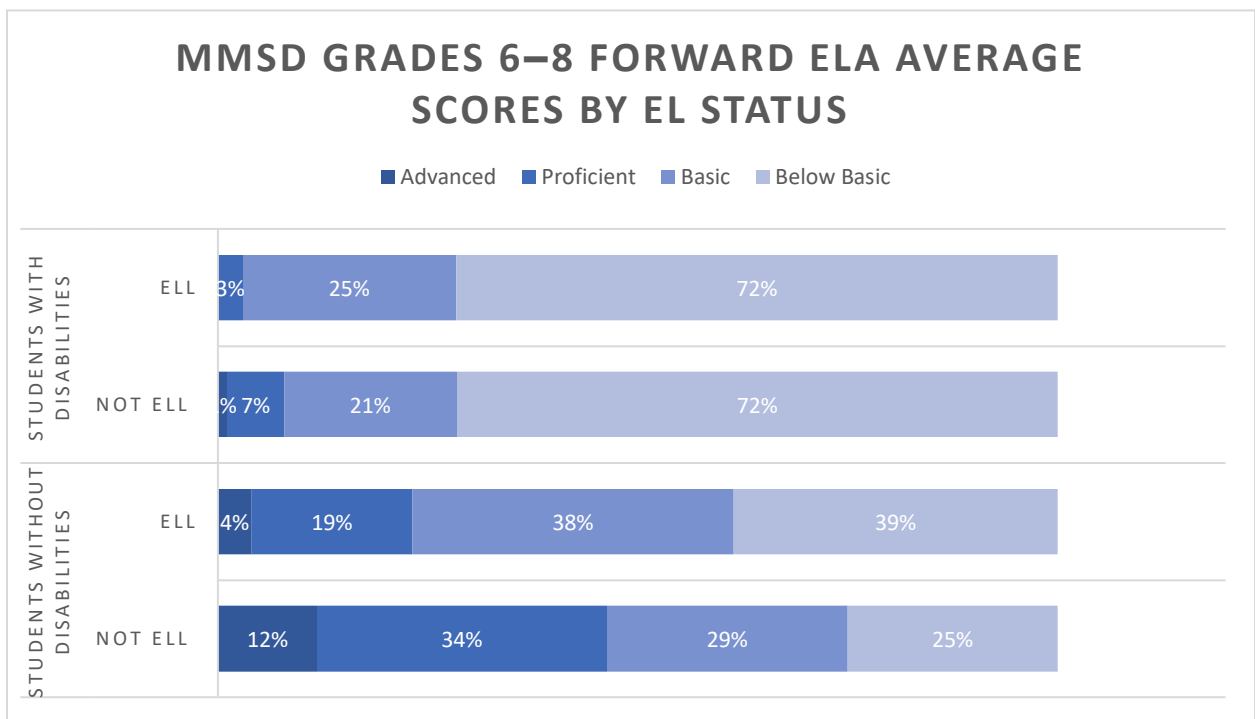


Figure A12. MMSD Grades 6–8 Average Scores on Forward ELA by EL Status, 2018–2019



Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

MAP Math Proficiency

Table A26. MMSD Student Proficiency on MAP Math, 2018–2019

	District Total	District Percentage
Advanced	4872	16.49%
Proficient	8750	29.62%
Basic	8437	28.56%
Minimal	7480	25.32%

Table A27. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on MAP Math, 2018–2019

	District
Advanced	4.27%
Proficient	10.24%
Basic	22.38%
Minimal	63.11%

MAP Math Subgroup Data

Table A28. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Math by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	43.29	17.62
Asian	53.73	26.99
Black or African American	24.75	10.99
Hispanic/Latino	33.29	14.09
Two or more races/ethnicities	46.62	19.94
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	42.20	NA
White	65.68	36.71

Table A29. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Math by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	30.74	14.26
Not Low-Income	65.73	37.74

Table A30. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Math by English Language Learner (EL) Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	39.165	17.41
Not EL	51.73	22.26

Table A31. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Math by Advanced Learner (AL) Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	77.63	51.02
Not AL	39.18	17.31

MAP Reading Proficiency

Table A32. MMSD Student Proficiency on MAP Reading, 2018–2019

	District Total	District Percentage
Advanced	4787	14.73%
Basic	8981	27.63%
Minimal	9948	30.60%
Proficient	8790	27.04%

Table A33. MMSD Student with Disabilities Proficiency on MAP Reading, 2018–2019

	District
Advanced	3.31%
Basic	19.27%
Minimal	68.80%
Proficient	8.62%

MAP Reading Subgroup Data

Table A34. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Reading by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	55.56	22.06
Asian	51.52	23.49
Black or African American	31.78	13.94
Hispanic/Latino	36.59	16.89
Two or more races/ethnicities	50.95	21.42
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	53.90	NA
White	69.24	39.28

Table A35. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Reading by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	35.36	16.74
Not Low-Income	68.66	39.80

Table A36. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Reading by EL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	40.65	18.02
Not EL	56.62	25.25

Table A37. MMSD Student Average National Percentiles on MAP Reading by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	75.75	53.34
Not AL	41.26	19.34

ACT + Writing (ACT)

Table A38. MMSD Student Average Composite Score on ACT, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Composite Score	20.2	21.1	18.2	17.3	19.0	20.2

Table A39. MMSD Student Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Composite Score: National Percentile	57.37	73.28	54.52

Table A40. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Composite Score: National Percentile	35.03	49.94	39.39

ACT Subgroup Data

Table A41. MMSD Student Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	46.38	41.00
Asian	52.28	24.25
Black or African American	34.95	34.45
Hispanic/Latino	39.06	29.83
Two or more races/ethnicities	51.46	37.76
White	67.13	52.71

Table A42. MMSD Student Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	37.54	30.04
Not Low-Income	64.33	50.85

Table A43. MMSD Student Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT by EL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	37.91	26.83
Not EL	59.79	41.95

Table A44. MMSD Student Average Composite National Percentiles on ACT by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	72.38	59.13
Not AL	49.25	36.46

ACT Aspire

Aspire Composite Scale Score

Table A45. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Score on Aspire, Compared with Other Districts and State Average, 2018–2019

	State	MMSD	Green Bay	Racine	Kenosha	Oshkosh
Composite Score: Scale Score	427.6	427.1	423.7	423.1	425.5	428.1

Table A46. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Composite Score: Scale Score	427.0	426.9	427.1

Table A47. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Composite Score: Scale Score	417.83	417.62	417.78

Subgroup Data

Table A48. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	426.33	419.25
Asian	429.35	418.64
Black or African American	418.22	414.14
Hispanic/Latino	421.35	416.10
Two or more races/ethnicities	426.90	416.21
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	429.33	NA
White	431.40	422.04

Table A49. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	420.40	415.12
Not Low-Income	431.54	422.59

Table A50. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire by EL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	422.03	416.13
Not EL	428.82	418.27

Table A51. MMSD Student Average Composite Scale Scores on Aspire by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	434.87	427.67
Not AL	423.82	416.61

Aspire English Scale Score

Table A52. MMSD Student Average Scale Score on Aspire English, 2018–2019

	District	State
English Scale Score	429.28	

Table A53. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire English, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
English Scale Score	430.08	429.73	429.28

Table A54. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Score on Aspire English, 2018–2019

	District	State
English Scale Score	418.30	

Table A55. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Scores on Aspire English, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
English Scale Score	419.70	418.69	418.30

Aspire Subgroup Data

Table A56. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire English by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	424.44	422.25
Asian	431.44	422.09
Black or African American	418.51	412.69
Hispanic/Latino	422.95	416.69
Two or more races/ethnicities	428.81	416.24
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	434.67	NA
White	435.10	425.34

Table A57. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire English by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	421.51	414.99
Not Low-Income	434.92	424.82

Table A58. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire English by EL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	423.19	417.00
Not EL	431.36	418.64

Table A59. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire English by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	438.54	428.35
Not AL	425.65	417.23

Aspire Reading Scale Score

Table A60. MMSD Student Average Scale Score on Aspire Reading, 2018–2019

	District	State
Reading Scale Score	422.16	

Table A61. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Reading Scale Score	423.11	422.85	422.16

Table A62. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Score on Aspire Reading, 2018–2019

	District	State
Reading Scale Score	413.84	

Table A63. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Reading Scale Score	414.71	415.05	413.84

Aspire Subgroup Data

Table A64. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	418.63	415.50
Asian	424.51	416.30
Black or African American	414.35	411.16
Hispanic/Latino	417.64	412.81
Two or more races/ethnicities	421.59	412.16
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	423.67	NA
White	426.19	417.42

Table A65. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	416.49	411.73
Not Low-Income	426.25	418.24

Table A66. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading by EL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	417.94	412.61
Not EL	423.59	414.16

Table A67. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Reading by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	429.10	420.85
Not AL	419.35	413.02

Aspire Mathematics Scale Score

Table A68. MMSD Student Average Scale Score on Aspire Mathematics, 2018–2019

	District	State
Math Scale Score	427.42	

Table A69. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Math Scale Score	426.61	427.19	427.42

Table A70. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Score on Aspire Mathematics, 2018–2019

	District	State
Math Scale Score	417.83	

Table A71. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Math Scale Score	416.97	417.48	417.83

Aspire Subgroup Data

Table A72. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics by Race/Ethnicity, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
American Indian/Alaska Native	424.11	421.50
Asian	430.96	420.00
Black or African American	418.31	413.99
Hispanic/Latino	421.59	415.84
Two or more races/ethnicities	426.53	416.37
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	430.67	NA
White	432.15	422.69

Table A73. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics by Income, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
Low-Income	420.96	415.01
Not Low-Income	432.08	423.29

Table A74. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics by EL Status, 2018–19

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
EL	422.58	416.39
Not EL	429.10	418.23

Table A75. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Mathematics by AL Status, 2018–2019

	All Students	Students with Disabilities
AL	436.05	427.86
Not AL	424.13	416.56

Aspire Science Scale Score

Table A76. MMSD Student Average Scale Score on Aspire Science, 2018–2019

	District	State
Science Scale Score	426.36	

Table A77. MMSD Student Average Scale Scores on Aspire Science, 2016–2019

	MMSD Average 2016–17	MMSD Average 2017–18	MMSD Average 2018–19
Science Scale Score	425.71	425.73	426.36

Table A78. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Score on Aspire Science, 2018–2019

	District	State
Science Scale Score	417.78	

Table A79. MMSD Student with Disabilities Average Scale Scores on Aspire Science, 2016–2019

	SwD MMSD Average 2016–17	SwD MMSD Average 2017–18	SwD MMSD Average 2018–19
Science Scale Score	417.14	417.78	417.79

Racial and Ethnic Makeup of Special Education Enrollment

Table A80. MMSD Percent of Student Enrollment Served in Special Education by Race/Ethnicity, 2020–2021

Number of Students	Demographic	Number in Special Education	Percent of the Total Population
26,010	All	3,806	14.6
10,702	White	1,116	10.4
4,661	Black	1,121	24.1
5,981	Hispanic/Latino	945	15.8
2,398	Multiracial	400	16.7
66	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	12	18.2
2,186	Asian	212	9.7

Source: Department of Student Services PowerPoint Presentation on Antiracist IEPs, 2020.

Discipline Data

Table A81. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS, 2016–2021

		School Year					Total
		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403
	5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132
Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A82. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS, 2016–2021

		School Year					Total
		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
	5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A83. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (ISS & OSS), 2016–2021

			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension		13432	13641	12944	13150	11831	64998
	5 or more days of suspension		131	166	154	86	0	537
Total			13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A84. MMSD Total Students with 0 Days of Suspension (ISS & OSS), 2016–2021

		School Year					Total
		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
Total suspensions	0	12586	12828	12059	12420	11831	61724
	1	463	469	514	451	0	1897
	2	210	186	195	158	0	749
	3	116	93	105	70	0	384
	4	57	65	71	51	0	244
	5	45	50	44	34	0	173
	6	28	40	32	16	0	116
	7	19	28	21	10	0	78
	8	8	14	16	4	0	42
	9	13	11	18	9	0	51
	10	5	10	7	4	0	26
	11	2	4	6	3	0	15
	12	6	2	5	0	0	13
	13	0	3	1	1	0	5
	14	2	0	0	0	0	2
	15	1	1	1	1	0	4
	16	0	0	2	1	0	3
	17	0	0	0	2	0	2
	18	0	0	0	1	0	1
	19	0	0	1	0	0	1
	20	1	1	0	0	0	2
	22	0	1	0	0	0	1
	24	0	1	0	0	0	1
	26	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Suspensions Broken Down by Demographics

Table A85. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS by Year and Special Education Status, 2016–2021

Special Education Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	11509	11584	11045	11082	10101	55321
		5 or more days of oss	8	21	17	6	0	52
	Total		11517	11605	11062	11088	10101	55373
Yes	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	2023	2158	1981	2118	1730	10010
		5 or more days of oss	23	44	55	30	0	152
	Total		2046	2202	2036	2148	1730	10162
Total	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
		5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A86. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS by Year and Special Education Status, 2016–2021

Special Education Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	11495	11588	11051	11084	10101	55319
		5 or more days of iss	22	17	11	4	0	54
	Total		11517	11605	11062	11088	10101	55373
Yes	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	2019	2190	2011	2134	1730	10084
		5 or more days of iss	27	12	25	14	0	78
	Total		2046	2202	2036	2148	1730	10162
Total	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403

Special Education Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
		5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A87. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (OSS & ISS Combined) by Year and Special Education Status, 2016–2021

Special Education Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	11460	11538	11005	11062	10101	55166
		5 or more days of suspension	57	67	57	26	0	207
	Total		11517	11605	11062	11088	10101	55373
Yes	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	1972	2103	1939	2088	1730	9832
		5 or more days of suspension	74	99	97	60	0	330
	Total		2046	2202	2036	2148	1730	10162
Total	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	13432	13641	12944	13150	11831	64998
		5 or more days of suspension	131	166	154	86	0	537
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A88. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS by Year and Race/Ethnicity, 2016–2021

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
American Indian/Alaska Native	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	45	40	40	36	32	193
	Total		45	40	40	36	32	193

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016– 17	2017– 18	2018– 19	2019– 20	2020– 21	
Asian	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	1226	1204	1145	1122	1010	5707
	Total		1226	1204	1145	1122	1010	5707
Black or African American	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	2529	2557	2429	2418	2115	12048
		5 or more days of oss	17	49	44	21	0	131
	Total		2546	2606	2473	2439	2115	12179
Hispanic/Latino	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	2925	2998	2905	3026	2734	14588
		5 or more days of oss	4	4	11	7	0	26
	Total		2929	3002	2916	3033	2734	14614
Multiracial	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	1216	1238	1173	1209	1070	5906
		5 or more days of oss	7	5	9	3	0	24
	Total		1223	1243	1182	1212	1070	5930
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	6	6	7	9	8	36
	Total		6	6	7	9	8	36
White	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	5585	5699	5327	5380	4862	26853
		5 or more days of oss	3	7	8	5	0	23
	Total		5588	5706	5335	5385	4862	26876
Total	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
		5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A89. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS by Year and Race/Ethnicity, 2016–2021

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
American Indian/Alaska Native	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	45	40	40	36	32	193
	Total		45	40	40	36	32	193
Asian	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	1226	1204	1144	1122	1010	5706
		5 or more days of iss	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total		1226	1204	1145	1122	1010	5707
Black or African American	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	2513	2587	2449	2429	2115	12093
		5 or more days of iss	33	19	24	10	0	86
	Total		2546	2606	2473	2439	2115	12179
Hispanic/Latino	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	2926	2997	2910	3027	2734	14594
		5 or more days of iss	3	5	6	6	0	20
	Total		2929	3002	2916	3033	2734	14614
Multiracial	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	1216	1241	1181	1211	1070	5919
		5 or more days of iss	7	2	1	1	0	11
	Total		1223	1243	1182	1212	1070	5930
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	6	6	7	9	8	36
	Total		6	6	7	9	8	36
White	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	5582	5703	5331	5384	4862	26862
		5 or more days of iss	6	3	4	1	0	14
	Total		5588	5706	5335	5385	4862	26876
Total	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
		5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A90. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (OSS & ISS Combined) by Year and Race/Ethnicity, 2016–2021

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
American Indian/Alaska Native	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	45	40	40	36	32	193
	Total		45	40	40	36	32	193
Asian	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	1226	1203	1144	1122	1010	5705
		5 or more days of suspension	0	1	1	0	0	2
	Total		1226	1204	1145	1122	1010	5707
Black or African American	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	2469	2494	2375	2387	2115	11840
		5 or more days of suspension	77	112	98	52	0	339
	Total		2546	2606	2473	2439	2115	12179

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016 –17	2017 –18	2018 –19	2019 –20	2020 –21	
Hispanic/Latino	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	2914	2984	2893	3019	2734	14544
		5 or more days of suspension	15	18	23	14	0	70
	Total		2929	3002	2916	3033	2734	14614
Multiracial	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	1205	1225	1163	1202	1070	5865
		5 or more days of suspension	18	18	19	10	0	65
	Total		1223	1243	1182	1212	1070	5930
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	6	6	7	9	8	36
	Total		6	6	7	9	8	36
White	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	5567	5689	5322	5375	4862	26815
		5 or more days of suspension	21	17	13	10	0	61
	Total		5588	5706	5335	5385	4862	26876

Race/Ethnicity			School Year					Total
			2016 –17	2017 –18	2018 –19	2019 –20	2020 –21	
Total	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	1343 2	1364 1	1294 4	1315 0	1183 1	6499 8
		5 or more days of suspension	131	166	154	86	0	537
	Total		1356 3	1380 7	1309 8	1323 6	1183 1	6553 5

Table A91. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS by Year and Low-Income Status, 2016–2021

Low Income Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	6933	6875	6890	7104	11831	39633
		5 or more days of oss	3	4	4	4	0	15
	Total		6936	6879	6894	7108	11831	39648
Yes	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	6599	6867	6136	6096		25698
		5 or more days of oss	28	61	68	32		189
	Total		6627	6928	6204	6128		25887
Total	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
		5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A92. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS by Year and Low-Income Status, 2016–2021

Low Income Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	6932	6874	6891	7107	11831	39635
		5 or more days of iss	4	5	3	1	0	13
	Total		6936	6879	6894	7108	11831	39648
Yes	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	6582	6904	6171	6111		25768
		5 or more days of iss	45	24	33	17		119
	Total		6627	6928	6204	6128		25887
Total	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403
		5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A93. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (OSS & ISS Combined) by Year and Low-Income Status, 2016–2021

Low Income Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	6919	6864	6884	7100	11831	39598
		5 or more days of suspension	17	15	10	8	0	50
	Total		6936	6879	6894	7108	11831	39648
Yes	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	6513	6777	6060	6050		25400
		5 or more days of suspension	114	151	144	78		487
	Total		6627	6928	6204	6128		25887

Low Income Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
Total	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	13432	13641	12944	13150	11831	64998
		5 or more days of suspension	131	166	154	86	0	537
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A94. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS by Year and EL Status, 2016–2021

English Learner Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	9735	9893	9380	9485	11636	50129
		5 or more days of oss	28	64	66	30	0	188
	Total		9763	9957	9446	9515	11636	50317
Yes	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	3797	3849	3646	3715	195	15202
		5 or more days of oss	3	1	6	6	0	16
	Total		3800	3850	3652	3721	195	15218
Total	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
		5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A95. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS by Year and EL Status, 2016–2021

English Learner Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	9717	9931	9416	9502	11636	50202
		5 or more days of iss	46	26	30	13	0	115

English Learner Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
	Total		9763	9957	9446	9515	11636	50317
Yes	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	3797	3847	3646	3716	195	15201
		5 or more days of iss	3	3	6	5	0	17
	Total		3800	3850	3652	3721	195	15218
Total	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403
		5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A96. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (OSS & ISS Combined) by Year and EL Status, 2016–2021

English Learner Indicator			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
No	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	9641	9804	9308	9440	11636	49829
		5 or more days of suspension	122	153	138	75	0	488
	Total		9763	9957	9446	9515	11636	50317
Yes	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	3791	3837	3636	3710	195	15169
		5 or more days of suspension	9	13	16	11	0	49
	Total		3800	3850	3652	3721	195	15218
Total	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	13432	13641	12944	13150	11831	64998
		5 or more days of suspension	131	166	154	86	0	537
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A97. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of OSS by Year and Gender, 2016–2021

Gender			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
Female	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	6628	6674	6302	6421	5803	31828
		5 or more days of oss	9	25	32	9	0	75
	Total		6637	6699	6334	6430	5803	31903
Male	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	6904	7068	6724	6779	6028	33503
		5 or more days of oss	22	40	40	27	0	129
	Total		6926	7108	6764	6806	6028	33632
Total	oss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of oss	13532	13742	13026	13200	11831	65331
		5 or more days of oss	31	65	72	36	0	204
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A 98. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of ISS by Year and Gender, 2016–2021

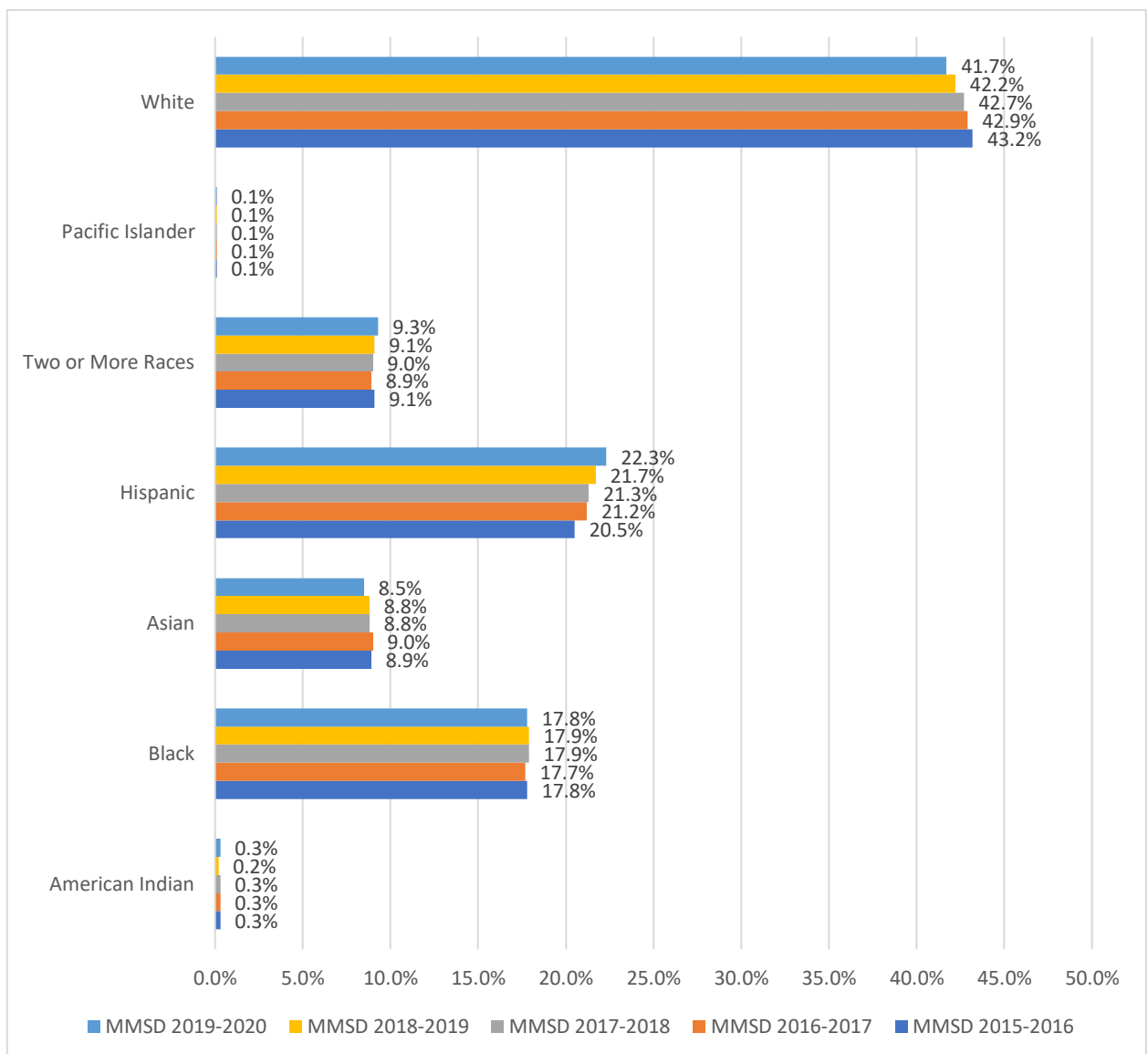
Gender			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
Female	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	6624	6691	6324	6424	5803	31866
		5 or more days of iss	13	8	10	6	0	37
	Total		6637	6699	6334	6430	5803	31903
Male	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	6890	7087	6738	6794	6028	33537
		5 or more days of iss	36	21	26	12	0	95
	Total		6926	7108	6764	6806	6028	33632
Total	iss_5_or_more	less than 5 days of iss	13514	13778	13062	13218	11831	65403
		5 or more days of iss	49	29	36	18	0	132

Gender		School Year					Total
		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
	Total	13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Table A99. MMSD Total Students with Five or More Days of Suspension (OSS & ISS Combined) by Year and Gender, 2016–2021

Gender			School Year					Total
			2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	
Female	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	6599	6633	6268	6401	5803	31704
		5 or more days of suspension	38	66	66	29	0	199
	Total		6637	6699	6334	6430	5803	31903
Male	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	6833	7008	6676	6749	6028	33294
		5 or more days of suspension	93	100	88	57	0	338
	Total		6926	7108	6764	6806	6028	33632
Total	total_suspensions_5_or_more	less than 5 days of suspension	13432	13641	12944	13150	11831	64998
		5 or more days of suspension	131	166	154	86	0	537
	Total		13563	13807	13098	13236	11831	65535

Figure A13. Racial/Ethnic Trends of MMSD Student Enrollment, 2015–2020



Source: District data

MMSD's Intensive Intervention Programs

Elementary

LEAP is a special education program designed to serve students in 1st through 5th grade who are identified with an emotional behavioral disability and are experiencing significant emotional and/or behavioral challenges and who have not been successful in their home school despite numerous and varied interventions. 3 locations housed in Marquette, Olson, and Randall Elementary School buildings. **Primary Steps** can provide up to a full day of services to students with educational disabilities and co-occurring mental health challenges who are in first through fifth grade. Steps is a partnership between MMSD and Family Service of Madison (FSM). IIP's Steps Program focuses on teaching skills for managing emotions and coping with stress in addition to academic core instruction. Steps is an off-site community based program.

Middle

LEAP is a special education program designed to serve students in 1st through 5th grade who are identified with an emotional behavioral disability and are experiencing significant emotional and/or behavioral challenges and who have not been successful in their home school despite numerous and varied interventions. 3 locations housed in Marquette, Olson, and Randall Elementary School buildings.

Primary Steps can provide up to a full day of services to students with educational disabilities and co-occurring mental health challenges who are in first through fifth grade. Steps is a partnership between MMSD and Family Service of Madison (FSM). IIP's Steps Program focuses on teaching skills for managing emotions and coping with stress in addition to academic core instruction. Steps is an off-site community based program.

School based alternatives—SBA

Neon New Educational Options & Networking like SBA, only off campus

High School and 18–21+ Programs

Foundations Central is a collaboration between MMSD and the Workforce Development Department of the Urban League of Greater Madison. Foundations Central serves students identified with special education needs who have dropped out or stopped attending school for a variety of reasons and are between the ages of 18 and 21. Students' complete their high school education via IEP portfolio or by earning 22 credits needed for completion. Instructional support is provided by certified MMSD cross categorical teachers.

Other Programs and Supports: **Restore** is a voluntary program that, upon successful completion, serves as an alternative to the expulsion process. Restore offers full-day academic and social/emotional programming within a restorative framework. This program includes

opportunities for credit attainment and employability skills for high school students. Off Campus Individual Supports are provided for students unable to participate in small group programming. **AFCH school program (Hospital School)** serves the educational needs of school-age students who are receiving treatment at American Family Children’s Hospital. Three full time teachers provide for a wide range of academic needs in a supportive and nurturing environment. Regardless of ability, skill level, social/emotional status, or physical condition, the school is able to offer individualized programming tailored to meet the needs of the students. Close contact is maintained with local schools/districts to exchange information, materials and provide feedback on progress.

Project Search began in 1996 for students who have an open DVR case in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics, and State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Students are learning great work skills and intern totally immersed in the culture of the hospital and clinics.

Virtual Parent Focus Group Participant Characteristics

Table A100. Focus Group Participants by Race/Ethnicity

	Total Participants	American Indian, Native American, or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African-American	Hispanic /Latino	White, non-Hispanic	Prefer not to say	Additional race/ethnicity
FG 1	10	-	1	5	1	2	1	1
FG 2 (Spanish-language)	4	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
FG 3	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	-
FG 4	6	-	1	2	1	4	-	-

Table A101. Focus Group Participants by Gender

	Total Participants	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
FG 1	10	8	2	1
FG 2 (Spanish-language)	4	4	-	-
FG 3	2	2	1	-
FG 4	6	3	3	-

Figure A14. Parent quotes about the IEP process:

“... I come in and just watch on the recess or whatever, and a lot of times, even though they know I do this, my child’s IEP isn’t being implemented. I see that all over the place and the individual teachers still seem to think that they can just choose to not follow the IEP.”—Parent

“In terms of what isn’t working, we have training for teachers on how to approach IEP. So, thinking about how educators can use the IEP better.”—Parent

“... when we started at the new high school ... it appears that there was absolutely no sharing of information except the IEP, which no one read. Or the parts that some people read then, into the year, they decided that they were not seeing the need for it. So, we’re not offering the services prescribed by the previous year’s teachers at a different school.”—Parent

“One school runs IEPs differently than a whole other school runs IEPs ... everything is different. Inconsistencies as well in staff ... who reports to your child, who knows your child and then the next year you start over. You have to retrain everybody all over again. There’s no consistency ... To have that carry over because it’s like you have to start over at the beginning of the year all over again of learning this child.”—Parent

MMSD Parent and Staff Surveys

Parent Survey Results

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Special Education Parent Survey

1. Total number of responses: n= 690 respondents
2. Breakdown by race/ethnicity of parents. (We had 315 responses that either came in before we added this question, or the respondent skipped the question: n= 194 respondents)
3. Some info on the schools that are represented well to represented poorly in the number of responses: n= 686 respondents

Table A102. Racial and Ethnic Categories Reported by Parents

	Percentage
White	52.63%
Hispanic/Latino	4.76%
Asian	7.77%
Black	17.54%
Two or More Races/Ethnicities	11.78%
Total	399*

**Some parents skipped this survey question, and the initial version of the survey was missing this question, so many parents did not have the opportunity to share this information.*

Table A103. Represented well (n > 15)

• Spring Harbor Middle
• Glendale Elementary
• Hamilton Middle
• Leopold Elementary
• Olson Elementary
• Huegel Elementary
• Toki Middle
• Chávez Elementary
• East High
• La Follette High
• West High
• Memorial High

Table A104. Represented Poorly (n < 2)

• Lindbergh Elementary
• Innovative and Alternative Education
• Capital High
• Innovative and Alternative Education

Table A105. Percentage and Number of Total Responses by School

	Percentage	Total
Innovative and Alternative Education	0.00%	0
Capital High	0.00%	0
Lindbergh Elementary	0.15%	1
Innovative and Alternative Education	0.15%	1
Lapham Elementary	0.58%	4
Mendota Elementary	0.73%	5
Shabazz City High School	0.73%	5
Emerson Elementary	0.87%	6
Marquette Elementary	0.87%	6
Nuestro Mundo Community School - Nuestro Mundo, Inc.	0.87%	6
Orchard Ridge Elementary	0.87%	6
Shorewood Hills Elementary	0.87%	6
Wright Middle	0.87%	6
Daycare	0.87%	6
Lowell Elementary	1.02%	7
Badger Rock Middle	1.02%	7
Lake View Elementary	1.17%	8
Lincoln Elementary	1.17%	8
Sandburg Elementary	1.17%	8
Preschool	1.17%	8
Falk Elementary	1.31%	9
Hawthorne Elementary	1.31%	9
Midvale Elementary	1.31%	9
Schenk Elementary	1.31%	9
Cherokee Middle	1.31%	9
Jefferson Middle	1.31%	9
Home	1.31%	9
Sherman Middle	1.46%	10
Whitehorse Middle	1.46%	10
Crestwood Elementary	1.60%	11

	Percentage	Total
Elvehjem Elementary	1.60%	11
Kennedy Elementary	1.60%	11
Randall Elementary	1.60%	11
Gompers Elementary	1.75%	12
Muir Elementary	1.75%	12
Franklin Elementary	1.90%	13
Thoreau Elementary	1.90%	13
Sennett Middle	1.90%	13
O'Keeffe Middle	2.04%	14
Allis Elementary	2.19%	15
Stephens Elementary	2.19%	15
Van Hise Elementary	2.19%	15
Black Hawk Middle	2.19%	15
Spring Harbor Middle	2.33%	16
Glendale Elementary	2.48%	17
Hamilton Middle	2.48%	17
Leopold Elementary	2.62%	18
Olson Elementary	2.62%	18
Huegel Elementary	2.77%	19
Toki Middle	3.50%	24
Chávez Elementary	4.08%	28
East High	4.37%	30
La Follette High	5.25%	36
West High	5.83%	40
Memorial High	8.02%	55
Total		686

Table A106. Parent Survey Q4. Please select the racial/ethnic category that best describes you:

	Percentage
White	52.63%
Hispanic	4.76%
Asian	7.77%
Black	17.54%
Two or More Races	11.78%
Total	399

Table A107. Parent Survey Q5. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
My child's school demonstrated appropriate practices for identifying my child as a student with a disability.	5.24%	10.16%	40.16%	40.16%	4.29%	630
I understand the process of developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP).	2.69%	2.22%	42.16%	52.30%	0.63%	631
My ideas and suggestions are considered during my child's IEP meetings.	3.66%	4.46%	38.22%	52.39%	1.27%	628
My child's IEP is implemented as written.	4.92%	12.38%	42.86%	36.03%	3.81%	630
My child is making progress on his/her IEP goals.	4.60%	12.06%	48.25%	30.16%	4.92%	630

Table A108. Parent Survey Q6. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school's communication regarding your child's education.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
School personnel are responsive to my questions and concerns.	3.34%	7.19%	39.63%	49.50%	0.33%	598
School personnel ask me about my child's strengths.	3.18%	7.02%	41.97%	46.82%	1.00%	598
School personnel ask me about my child's needs.	4.02%	8.21%	40.70%	46.40%	0.67%	597
School personnel have helped me to understand how my child's disability effects learning and what specialized instruction helps.	7.51%	16.69%	38.56%	35.23%	2.00%	599
My child's special education teacher and other members of the IEP team, when appropriate, communicates with me concerning my child's progress.	6.02%	9.20%	36.45%	47.66%	0.67%	598
I know whom to call when I have a question or concern about my child's special education services.	4.34%	5.18%	36.89%	52.42%	1.17%	599
Overall, I am pleased with the communication between my child's school and myself.	6.04%	11.41%	36.24%	45.13%	1.17%	596

Table A109. Parent Survey Q7. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
My child is educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.	3.26%	3.26%	40.72%	47.25%	5.50%	582
I am satisfied with the amount of time my child is educated in the general education class.	3.96%	7.06%	41.14%	43.72%	4.13%	581
My child's General Education Teacher(s) understand how to implement the IEP.	5.85%	12.91%	39.41%	35.28%	6.54%	581
My child's General Education Teacher(s) participates in my child's IEP meeting.	3.28%	5.69%	45.17%	41.21%	4.66%	580
General Education teachers, Special Education teachers, and support staff are utilized effectively in my child's school.	6.21%	11.55%	40.34%	31.90%	10.00%	580
School site administrators are responsive to my questions and concerns regarding my child's IEP.	5.53%	7.60%	41.45%	34.54%	10.88%	579
There are sufficient instructional supports available to my child.	7.63%	17.85%	36.74%	29.81%	7.97%	577
My child's school supports the successful transition of my child from grade to grade.	5.34%	8.09%	39.93%	33.39%	13.25%	581
My child's school supports the successful transition of my child from school to school.	5.02%	5.88%	27.34%	24.57%	37.20%	578
My child's school has clear supports in place to support the successful transition from high school to adulthood, as guided by my child's IEP.	4.16%	6.76%	17.85%	17.50%	53.73%	577

Table A110. Parent Survey Q8. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
I am satisfied with the in-school activities in which my child participates (e.g., general education classes, assemblies and field trips).	3.37%	7.27%	50.89%	34.93%	3.55%	564

I am satisfied with the after-school activities in which my child participates (e.g., student clubs, sports, music).	5.69%	10.14%	32.03%	20.64%	31.49%	562
The learning environment(s) for my child meet(s) my expectations.	6.75%	15.99%	47.96%	25.40%	3.91%	563
My child's school shows respect for my culture as it relates to my child's education.	3.01%	6.73%	44.78%	36.11%	9.38%	565
My child feels safe at school.	5.31%	10.09%	46.73%	32.74%	5.13%	565
I feel welcome at my child's school.	3.19%	6.19%	47.61%	40.88%	2.12%	565
I feel included in the parent community at my child's school.	5.86%	10.48%	45.83%	29.66%	8.17%	563

Parent Survey Q9. What is working well for your child who is receiving special education services in Madison Metropolitan School District?

Supportive and Understanding Teachers and Staff (n=93)

- When they had school the SEA help and teachers being readily available.
- They way all the staff care of him - all teachers, classroom assistant and other staff in the school.
- [Teacher]. At JMM has been the key to my child's success. Without him I'm not sure We would be as happy at JMM. He has made the difference for our child HS experience . Alec has helped bridge the gap between holding my child accountable and working with classroom teacher to understand what his needs are and that they are being met. The last 3 year with _ has helped our son to be able to move on to graduate and soon attend college. _ is the difference that kids with IEP's need in HS to succeed and reach their goals.
- My son's IEP case manager is [Teacher] at Wright Middle School. Tim goes above and beyond to work very closely with my son (even since MMSD has moved to online learning - by devoting very generous amounts of time to video conferencing with my son), to make a strong, positive connection with my son, to follow closely his educational needs, to teach him in positive, effective ways, to help my son achieve and feel good about achieving, and to help my son develop life and learning skills that will serve him in good ways for the rest of his life. I am deeply impressed by how good _ is at his job and by how invested he is in the welfare and progress of his students, and I'm very grateful to him, to Wright Middle School, and to MMSD.

Clear Communication and Responsive Staff (n=57)

- Communication with his teacher and Case Manager.
- Great communication.

- Everybody that is involved in his IEP have always look out for the best interest of my child and communicated effectively with me.
- The communication with our daughter's teachers and support staff has been superb.
- Fantastic staff and communication for his IEP and day-to-day well-being.

One-on-one/ Individualized Attention (n=21)

- Individualized therapy, continuity of therapists and teachers.
- The one on one learning opportunities.
- Dedicated daily one-on-one time with the special education teacher.
- Individualized help and group practice.

IEP Team and Goals (n=22)

- The IEP and outlined goals.
- Having an IEP does allow for my child to get extra help from the CC Teacher WHEN my child contacts the teacher. However, it is clearly listed in the IEP that THEY, the CC Teachers are to be checking in with my children. At least having the IEP gives me the validation that when I call to insist on their help, they have to comply.
- Her IEP team members are very supportive and have shown a genuine interest in her as a person, which then helps them understand her needs better. They listen to parent feedback and readily engage in dialogue about what would work best for her, where she's doing well, etc.

Parent Survey Q10. In your opinion, how could the Madison Metropolitan School District improve its special education programs and services? Provide specific recommendations.

More Staff (esp. Support Staff) (n=66)

- More Staff
- Provide more support for teachers--general and special education--by hiring more EAs and SEAs to help manage caseloads of kids with IEPs and larger class sizes.
- Not enough SEAs for the amount of students.
- There are not enough special education teachers, they are spread too thin

IEP Process and Implementation (n=36)

- Require all teachers who have IEP students to familiarize with the IEP and student to an appropriate degree and have periodic check-ins with IEP manager and/or parents.
- Every member of the child's special ed team must read and contribute to the IEP - at times in the past, nobody had even seen the IEP until the IEP meeting (that has been much better the past couple of years but still it isn't read). I'm becoming a professional at reading IEPs, but it would help if pages were dated and numbered!

- By following IEP goals, i.e. when 15 minutes is allotted for special education 3x per week then all 45 minutes should be accounted for, not 10 minutes 2x per week. I do understand that this is easier said than done.
- Following through with implementing the IEPs.

Better and More Frequent Communication (n=35)

- Better communication and follow through from the IEP teachers, especially if there is a potential language/cultural barrier. I am glad this is his last year at Hawthorne Elementary and I am looking forward to meeting his new IEP teacher next year!
- They should take into account people linguistic background when deciding which evaluation forms to use. In our case we were not satisfied with the work the interpreter provided. There was a communication barrier between the interpreter and our child. They should have gotten the parents involved early in the process.
- I strongly suggest that MMDS review it's practices for reviewing progress for students receiving services and also ensure that there is regular communication with the parent(s) or guardian(s). There has to be a partnership between school and home to adequately support a student with disabilities, and without communication, there is no partnership. School staff see what is happening at school, and should be initiating that communication regarding school related issues.

More special education/IEP training for staff (n=23)

- SEAs that are trained properly for the children they will be spending time with and moving SEAs through the grade levels with the children they help. It's quite difficult to get a new SEA each year and we were lucky for 7th and 8th grade but we hope we can keep the same SEA for our child through his 7 years at Memorial.
- more funding; increased training and pay for SEA's to increase retention. SEA's are a vital part of the school day so training and retaining seem imperative.
- The district should recognize dyslexia as a unique learning disability and all teachers should be trained to identify it in students. The special ed teacher assigned to our student is not experienced in education methods at the elementary school level. The district should have better standards for special ed teacher qualifications.
- Sensitivity training. My son was not included in pictures from a school event that he attended and also a class picture. The only two disabled kids in the class were the only ones missing. Educating staff that even if a child cannot speak verbally that including them is so important!!

Staff Survey Results

- 1.Total number of responses: n= 923 respondents
2. Number of staff responses, by role, if possible: n=919 respondents

	Percentage	Total
Assistant Principal	0.76%	7
Counselor	0.65%	6
EC Teacher	0.76%	7
General Education Teacher or Content Teacher	49.95%	459
Hearing Teacher	0.44%	4
Interpreter	0.54%	5
Nurse	1.85%	17
Occupational Therapist	0.98%	9
Physical Therapist	0.98%	9
Principal	2.29%	21
Program Support Teacher (PST)	3.05%	28
School Psychologist	3.37%	31
Social Worker	2.72%	25
Special Education Paraprofessional	3.81%	35
Special Education Teacher	20.67%	190
Speech and Language Specialist	3.59%	33
Vision Teacher	0.11%	1
Other: (Please list)		83
Total		919

3. Number of staff responses by school, if possible: n=911 respondents

	Percentage	Total
Shabazz City High School	0.33%	3
Innovative and Alternative Education	0.44%	4
Wright Middle	0.44%	4
Badger Rock Middle	0.55%	5
Franklin Elementary	0.66%	6
Schenk Elementary	0.77%	7
Marquette Elementary	0.88%	8
Orchard Ridge Elementary	0.88%	8
Shorewood Hills Elementary	0.88%	8
Capital High	0.88%	8
Innovative and Alternative Education	0.88%	8
Spring Harbor Middle	0.99%	9

	Percentage	Total
Lindbergh Elementary	1.10%	10
Nuestro Mundo Community School - Nuestro Mundo, Inc.	1.10%	10
Van Hise Elementary	1.10%	10
Allis Elementary	1.21%	11
Crestwood Elementary	1.21%	11
Lake View Elementary	1.21%	11
Lapham Elementary	1.21%	11
Randall Elementary	1.21%	11
Whitehorse Middle	1.21%	11
Gompers Elementary	1.32%	12
Jefferson Middle	1.32%	12
Lincoln Elementary	1.43%	13
Muir Elementary	1.43%	13
Other (please specify)	1.43%	13
Hawthorne Elementary	1.54%	14
Stephens Elementary	1.54%	14
Elvehjem Elementary	1.65%	15
Mendota Elementary	1.76%	16
Kennedy Elementary	1.87%	17
Thoreau Elementary	1.87%	17
Black Hawk Middle	1.87%	17
O'Keeffe Middle	1.87%	17
Midvale Elementary	1.98%	18
Huegel Elementary	2.09%	19
Olson Elementary	2.09%	19
Sherman Middle	2.09%	19
Toki Middle	2.09%	19
Emerson Elementary	2.20%	20
Falk Elementary	2.31%	21
Sandburg Elementary	2.41%	22
Cherokee Middle	2.41%	22
Glendale Elementary	2.52%	23
Lowell Elementary	2.52%	23
Hamilton Middle	2.52%	23
Doyle Administration	2.52%	23
Chávez Elementary	2.63%	24
Leopold Elementary	2.63%	24
Sennett Middle	2.85%	26
La Follette High	4.28%	39

	Percentage	Total
West High	5.49%	50
East High	5.82%	53
Memorial High	6.59%	60
Total		911

Staff Survey Q8. Please respond to the questions below regarding Special Education Services at your school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know	Total
Students who receive special education are educated with grade level, general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible.	1.43%	9.62%	45.72%	40.62%	2.61%	842
Instruction, materials, assessment, etc. are modified as needed to make them accessible for students with disabilities	1.90%	15.07%	51.36%	28.94%	2.73%	843
Students included in general education environments receive the support they need through collaboration or direct support from a special educator or paraprofessional.	8.92%	31.51%	41.38%	15.81%	2.38%	841
Current levels of related service personnel (school psychologists, speech and language specialists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.) are adequate to serve the identified needs of students with disabilities.	22.80%	33.85%	29.22%	10.57%	3.56%	842
Students receiving special education services receive sufficient supports to successfully transition from grade to grade, school to school and from high school to adulthood.	10.37%	37.19%	35.88%	5.96%	10.61%	839
Time is allotted for collaboration between general and special education teachers to plan for students with disabilities who are included in general education.	19.74%	33.89%	34.24%	7.25%	4.88%	841

Staff Survey Q9. Please respond to the questions below regarding pre-referral and identification at your school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable / Don't Know	Total
High-quality pre-referral interventions are provided by general education teachers to students who are struggling in general education.	6.30%	23.76%	42.79%	15.27%	11.88%	825
An effective tiered-intervention system is in place at my school to support students who are struggling.	6.44%	29.40%	43.99%	11.54%	8.63%	823
Students who qualify for special education services are identified in a timely manner.	10.19%	29.85%	40.66%	9.10%	10.19%	824
The process through which students with disabilities are identified is efficient.	11.18%	31.96%	37.18%	7.53%	12.15%	823

Staff Survey Q10. Please respond to the questions below concerning instructional practices at your school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable / Don't Know	Total
Students receiving special education services are provided instruction aligned with the State Standards.	1.86%	8.30%	60.22%	18.96%	10.66%	807
General education teachers provide necessary accommodations or modifications for students receiving special education services.	2.23%	20.69%	56.26%	15.12%	5.70%	807
General education teachers at my school have the knowledge and skills to accommodate the needs of students who receive special education that are in their classrooms.	4.35%	28.20%	46.09%	14.66%	6.71%	805
General education and special education teachers at my school communicate with all parents concerning students' academic progress.	0.87%	10.16%	57.37%	25.90%	5.70%	807

Staff Survey Q11. Please respond to the questions below concerning school site and district leadership:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know	Total
District administration is structured to provide an appropriate level of leadership to school sites to support the needs of students receiving special education services.	15.16%	30.70%	33.96%	6.89%	13.28%	798
School site administration at my school provides leadership to support the needs of students receiving special education services.	3.89%	17.82%	51.57%	20.20%	6.52%	797
I know whom to call when our site has a need for assistance with a student receiving special education services.	4.89%	15.81%	52.20%	22.08%	5.02%	797

Almost half of respondents (46%) disagree/strongly disagree that district administration is structured to provide an appropriate level of leadership to school sites to support the needs of students receiving special education services. It is not clear whether respondents are referring to special education administration or the overall organization of the district-level administration. Seventy four percent do know whom to call when our site has a need for assistance with a student receiving special education services. For those who responded disagree or strongly disagree for this item, 55% were general education teacher and 22% were special education teachers. When comparing the two groups' response rates, special education teachers were more likely to respond positively to this item, according to a one-way ANOVA.

Staff Survey Q12. Please respond to the questions below concerning school site use of data and accountability systems:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/ Don't Know	Total
Site administrative staff uses accountability systems and data routines in schools to monitor student progress on learning goals.	2.03%	11.94%	52.22%	15.76%	18.04%	787
Site administrative staff uses accountability systems and data routines in schools to determine when additional	3.05%	18.53%	44.92%	14.09%	19.42%	788

supports, guidance, or immediate adjustments are needed to ensure successful outcomes for students with disabilities.						
General education teachers have access to high-quality student data to inform their practices.	2.93%	16.67%	56.49%	13.49%	10.43%	786
Special education teachers have access to high-quality student data to inform their practices.	2.03%	13.71%	52.79%	13.45%	18.02%	788

Staff Survey Q13. Please respond to the questions below concerning the climate at your school: (Ratings: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree; Not Applicable/Don't Know)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/Don't Know	Total
General education teachers are welcoming and respectful of the needs of students receiving special education services who are in their classroom.	1.03%	7.59%	43.89%	45.05%	2.45%	777
Special education staff is respectful of the needs of students receiving special education services.	0.26%	1.68%	39.61%	58.06%	0.39%	775
General education teachers have high expectations for students receiving special education services.	1.29%	14.16%	49.42%	30.12%	5.02%	777
Special education staff have high expectations for students receiving special education services.	1.16%	10.44%	46.52%	39.05%	2.84%	776
Teachers at my school regularly communicate with parents concerning students' academic progress	0.51%	7.34%	51.48%	35.14%	5.53%	777

Staff Survey Q14. Please respond to the questions below concerning recruiting, hiring, and retaining special education staff at your school:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable/Don't Know	Total
My school has a sufficient number of certified special education teachers.	30.33%	36.25%	22.37%	4.50%	6.56%	778
My school has a sufficient number of certified special education teachers to serve as substitute teachers.	49.55%	30.76%	5.92%	0.51%	13.26%	777
My school has a sufficient number of certified special education or general education teachers to serve English language learners.	25.13%	34.92%	23.58%	3.35%	13.02%	776
My school encourages teachers to become dually licensed (e.g., bilingual and special education, regular and special education).	6.46%	19.12%	29.84%	7.36%	37.21%	774
My school offers professional learning opportunities for special education assistants to participate in the district's special education alternative learning programs.	5.14%	12.34%	32.39%	8.61%	41.52%	778
My school offers a career track for special education assistants to become special education teachers.	5.65%	11.94%	19.64%	3.47%	59.31%	779
To my knowledge, professional learning opportunities are embedded into hiring, on-boarding, training and orientation plans for teachers and principals.	4.25%	9.40%	40.03%	4.63%	41.70%	777
My school does a good job retaining qualified regular and special education teachers.	11.07%	27.03%	39.51%	14.54%	7.85%	777

Staff Survey Q15. Please respond to the questions below concerning professional development. At my school, there are sufficient professional development opportunities for:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable /Don't Know	Total
Site administrators to learn about the academic needs of students with disabilities.	3.27%	17.60%	32.47%	5.32%	41.34%	733
General educators to learn about the academic needs of students with disabilities.	7.23%	35.20%	38.20%	7.09%	12.28%	733
Site administrators to learn about the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students with disabilities.	3.68%	16.78%	35.33%	8.05%	36.15%	733
General educators to learn about the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students with disabilities.	6.15%	31.42%	44.13%	8.74%	9.56%	732
Site administrators to learn about principles and practices of inclusive education.	2.74%	12.04%	38.85%	7.80%	38.58%	731
General educators to learn about principles and practices of inclusive education.	6.16%	26.27%	48.29%	8.62%	10.67%	731
Special educators to learn about the general education curriculum.	6.70%	23.67%	40.63%	12.72%	16.28%	731
Site administrators to learn about specific categorical areas (autism, EBD, etc.)	4.37%	19.37%	26.88%	5.32%	44.07%	733
General educators to learn about specific categorical areas (autism, EBD, etc.)	12.13%	44.41%	25.61%	4.36%	13.49%	734
Special educators to learn about specific categorical areas (autism, EBD, etc.)	2.86%	17.71%	35.56%	11.72%	32.15%	734
Site administrators to learn about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategy for curriculum.	3.81%	10.90%	25.75%	6.27%	53.27%	734
General educators to learn about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategy for curriculum.	9.95%	25.07%	29.29%	5.72%	29.97%	734

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable /Don't Know	Total
Special educators to learn about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategy for curriculum.	5.74%	15.85%	28.42%	7.24%	42.76%	732
Site administrators to learn about evidence-based interventions for reading, writing, math, and social emotional skills/behavior.	3.97%	13.56%	32.05%	6.44%	43.97%	730
General educators to learn about evidence-based interventions for reading, writing, math, and social emotional skills/behavior.	9.15%	29.51%	39.75%	7.24%	14.34%	732
Special educators to learn about evidence-based interventions for reading, writing, math, and social emotional skills/behavior.	4.37%	17.49%	42.21%	9.29%	26.64%	732
Special educators to effectively implement Specialized Intervention programs.	5.90%	21.26%	34.43%	8.50%	29.90%	729
Special educators to effectively implement Intensive Intervention programs.	6.68%	26.60%	27.15%	8.05%	31.51%	733
Special educators to effectively implement Alternative Intervention programs.	7.81%	27.12%	24.66%	6.71%	33.70%	730
Site administrators to learn about processes to successfully transition students with disabilities.	3.96%	13.39%	28.28%	5.05%	49.32%	732
General educators to learn about processes to successfully transition students with disabilities.	10.81%	38.44%	25.17%	4.65%	20.93%	731
Special educators to learn about processes to successfully transition students with disabilities.	3.57%	17.31%	36.81%	8.10%	34.20%	728

Overall, when broken out by role, a significantly lower percentage of Special Education Teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the items above, in comparison to other staff. However, none of the respondents who identified as Special Education Teachers responded with strongly disagree to almost all the items above.

Staff Survey Q16. Do you have access to a repository of modified or adapted curricula aligned with district scopes and instructional resources in core subjects?

Answer Choice	Percentage
Yes	25.75%
No	36.16%
Don't know	39.59%
Total	730

Staff Survey Q17. I would like to receive professional development in the following areas (select up to five):

Answer Choices	Percentage
Classroom Management	12.92%
Positive Behavioral intervention and Supports	25.53%
Social Emotional Learning	33.59%
Trauma Informed Practices	48.18%
Collaborative Planning	20.67%
Co-Teaching	22.64%
Data Analysis for Guiding Instruction	15.05%
Differentiating instruction	26.90%
Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies in Mathematics	25.08%
Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies in Reading	27.96%
Partnering with Families	18.09%
Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	18.39%
Standards-aligned Functional Skill Development	18.39%
Supporting and accommodating students with disabilities	33.89%
The IEP process including writing effective IEP goals and general and special education teacher responsibilities	14.59%
Other (please specify)	9.73%
Total	658

Staff Survey Q18. In your opinion, what is working well for students receiving special education services in Madison Metropolitan School District? Please describe specific strengths.

Dedicated and Caring Staff (n=130)

- Staff are genuinely invested in doing whatever they can to meet student needs.
- Strengths are special education staff that are very dedicated and caring.

- Awesome special education staff who work so hard and so long often to the detriment to their own health and their family life.

Well Trained and Qualified Staff (n=42)

- We are very fortunate to have super qualified and talented special education teachers at our school right now. I think overall at our school we have very dedicated special education assistants.
- Highly qualified staff (CC teachers, Related Services, SEAs) working incredibly hard for their students
- We have very qualified ASL interpreters and DHH Teachers.

Inclusivity (n=37)

- Our school is a very accepting and welcoming place for all students. Our community is very accepting of students with disabilities and most people want all of our students to be included as much as possible. Our regular education teachers do their best to collaborate with special education teachers to meet the behavior and academic needs of students.
- Our practices are predominantly inclusive.
- A fairly high percentage of spec ed students report that they feel valued and that they belong at our school.
- I can only speak to my school. What we do well is include students with disabilities in regular classrooms as much as possible.

Collaboration Among Staff (n=29)

- Collaboration between all service providers for a student (teachers, SLP, PT, OT, SEA's) so everyone is on the same page and to be able to be consistent.
- The collaboration between the special ed teachers and classroom teachers
- Collaboration amongst IEP teams, having the PST support people. As an SLP, I very much value the time spent with the S/L and AT PST support people.

Positive Teacher-Student Relationships (n=27)

- Focus on developing relationships.
- Their teachers care about and build relationships with them.
- Case managers work hard to develop strong relationships with spec ed families and students.

Staff Survey Q19. In your opinion, what challenges exist for students receiving special education services in Madison Metropolitan School District? Provide describe specific challenges.

Inadequate Staffing (Especially a Lack of SEAs and Bilingual staff) (n=174)

- Not enough special ed staff and SEAs in our building.
- We are understaffed and need many more bilingual staff (both teachers and assistants). Due to insufficient number of SEA's, students have been grouped to accommodate schedules rather than their individual needs.
- Constant turnover of staff. Staff are treated with disrespect and therefore leave. Students have 4-6 case managers over the course of their high school experience. Also the hiring of unlicensed teachers and unlicensed sped teachers
- We are severely lacking in bilingual CC teachers and SEAs. We have none to support our DLI students at West.
- There is not enough staff to cover the many needs we have in our school. Some children need an adult at all times. Those kids get coverage first. Kids with less urgent coverage needs tend to get left without enough help. It happens daily and is even worse when we don't have a sub.
- There are not enough special education teachers and special education assistants to meet the required minutes of support in students IEPs.
- There is simply not enough staff support for these students, and it gets worse every year. If we want a model of inclusion, we need adequate staffing. As class sizes increase and teachers workload increases, these students are being left behind because special ed support is also decreasing.

Students' IEPs/Need are Not Met (Due to Large Caseloads of Existing Staff) (n=70)

- Students with disabilities in MMSD do not receive adequate support. CC teachers have too large of caseloads with too many needs - which leads to students needs not being met. There is also not enough SEA support further causing student needs to not be supported.
- I don't think students are getting the appropriate amount of support. In schools like ours, there are three teachers divided among so many grade levels, classrooms, and students, students only get their minimum needs met as outlined in their IEP. Special education teachers need more time to adjust their support of students and general education teachers so that their instruction doesn't simply exist as pull-out groups working on IEP goals. Students also need support in the classroom with classroom activities, and there isn't time for the special education and general ed teacher to collaborate on this, and the special ed teacher is pulled too many other ways to do any instruction in the classroom. This is a far cry from where things were when I began teaching in MMSD, when a fifth grade class would have two other specialists (an ELL or Special Ed teacher and an SEA) in the room at the time. While two people may have been necessary, these valuable human resources are spread

far too thin to teach in classrooms, much less even collaborate with classroom teachers.

- Online learning is not equitable for students with IEPs, when an SEA is out without a sub students' IEPs aren't met.
- The allocation process for Special Education staffing is faulty. There is not enough Special Ed. teachers & assistants to support all IEP students to help meet their goals. Students not receiving adequate special education services creates many behavioral challenges & learning frustrations for students.

Lack of Training/Professional Development Opportunities for Staff (n=48)

- Retaining good SEAs and giving adequate training to SEAs who need more training in areas.
- Many of the special education instructors are not competent in the content, so they are learning alongside the students and are therefore not as helpful to the student.
- Not a lot of special ed teachers certified in specific subjects.

Variability in Quality of Services Across Schools/Grades/Individual Teachers (n=29)

- There is too much variability for students based on their case managers; so much changes year to year depending on case manager. There are challenges to consistently identify students who need special education since every school handles that process differently. The lack of consistency is a huge issue when looking at procedural differences in schools as some kids get interventions with fidelity, other referrals are more parent-driven, etc.
- The transition from grade to grade. For example, I have students every year that have had one on one instruction at the middle school level, but then at the high school level, we just throw them in to regular ed classes to see how they will do. When they haven't been in a regular ed setting for a few years, they don't do well.
- There are not enough supported classes for students to make transitions from 9th grade where lots of support is available to 10th grade where almost all support disappears.

Lack of Collaboration (n=25)

- No collaboration time for special education teachers together. Very little time for consult between reg ed, spec ed and related services. We need to meet outside contract time to make it happen.
- Lack of time & lack of willingness for some staff to plan together and make differentiation work. Too much has to happen on the fly by support staff while the classroom teacher does their normal lesson.
- We need explicit professional development on co-teaching; it is not a practice that is happening with fidelity, and that is because the education piece needs to happen. I have a proposal drafted for co-teaching PD for reg. ed. and spec. ed. teachers for the summer (though I understand the reality of the summer/may be virtual). This

practice, when used with fidelity, is not only beneficial for students with IEPs but for ALL students.

Staff Survey Q20. In your opinion, how could the Madison Metropolitan School District improve its special education programs and services? Provide specific recommendations.

Hire More “Frontline” Staff (SpEd/CC/SEAs) (n=185)

- More special education staff. More options for student programming. More responsive decision making when schools refer students for alternative programming.
- Hire staff of color - remove or adjust the current systems & barriers that make this difficult
- MMSD is very top-heavy. We need more adults available in the classroom and the first place to trim the fat is our central office. Building based teachers have a difficult time believing that central office staff have their best interest in mind since each time we hear from them they are providing us with another task to do (which is usually a spreadsheet or form that pulls us away from working with students).
- Employ fewer people at the district level and more in the schools, working with kids. Rather than constantly deciding for teachers what to teach and when, they need to join us in teaching the children. Kids need more interaction with adults, in smaller groups than we can currently provide.

Reduce/Re-Evaluate Caseloads and the Weighting System(n=69)

- Change the way you weight caseloads. 7 students with high needs have the equivalent programming of 12 students with mild to moderate needs.
- Change our weighting system of students so that the kids who need someone directly with them to co-regulate throughout most of the day to be safe are not counted the same, so they do not use up all the resources at one school.
- Recognize that not all IEPs are equal and that students with significant needs should be weighted higher to allow more support. Multiple students at our school require one-to-one support due to significant needs of the student. This is not recognized when providing allocation for SEAs
- Smaller caseloads

More Professional Development (especially for SEAs) (n=60)

- Provide more support and training for SEA's they are the ones who need the information the most and aren't getting it.
- As a bilingual DLI teacher I would LOVE the opportunity to get my Special Education license. This has been a dream of mine since I decided to go into education. However, the district and the UW required me to pay for my own credits to obtain

my bilingual license which put me into deep financial strain. It would be amazing if the district could support teachers to receive more training.

- The District needs to provide PD to all staff. We need PD on IEPs, and what they mean, we need PD on differentiating our curriculum in order to support our special education students. We need PD on the rights that this special education students and their families have. We need more special education teachers in schools, and we need Administration to step up and treat these kids as if they were their own.
- Provide more training on how to specifically make adaptations to curriculum for students who have limited communication/motor skills.

More Collaboration/Co-Teaching (n=37)

- Increase staff. Make collaborative planning time a priority. Off-site administration does not contact or directly support site staff. When support is requested, emails are not responded to in a timely manner or at all
- More planning time/collaboration time
- Go back to co-teaching with regular Ed and Special Ed teachers working and teaching together. We used to do that and do it well. But that has been replaced with pull outs for Special Ed.

More Alternative and Differentiated Environments/Programs (n=31)

- Incorporate more intervention spaces for grade levels. Case managers receiving their own spaces to execute learning. More case managers to accommodate needs of all students
- Specific quiet/ calming rooms for every grade level
- We need more small, highly supportive environments for our most challenging students...those with mental illness, trauma, and behavioral challenges. There are some children who are not being served well in the public schools because their needs are so high and their behaviors can be disruptive to learning and even dangerous to those students and teachers with whom they interact. Some kids are so traumatized that they are unable to interact with other students and teachers safely.