FourPoint
Education Partners

Rialto Unified School District
Special Education Review
August 2023

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology
- Current State Findings
  - Leadership
  - Systems and Structures
  - Learning Environment and Specialized Services
  - High Expectations
  - Family and Community Engagement
  - Human Capital
- Recommendations

KEY INSIGHTS

- Students with disabilities are, first and foremost, general education students who must be educated in the least restrictive environment possible.

- Improving outcomes for students with disabilities begins with high-quality Tier 1 instruction and classroom management. Many students—with or without an identified disability—require a range of academic and behavioral supports.

- 11% of Rialto Unified School District's students qualify for special education services as of May 2023.

- The district has an explicit commitment to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education experience and to providing all learners with the supports they need to succeed.

- For students with disabilities to thrive in Rialto, there is a pressing need to move from inclusion by name to practice and to improve the district's general education academic offerings.

- A relatively new Lead Agent of Special Services is building a team to address many of the barriers to effective service provision for students with disabilities.

- For their work to succeed, additional structures and systems related to data, communication, and performance management are needed.

FOURPOINT'S SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Improved Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

- Leadership
- Systems & Structures
- Learning Environment & Specialized Services
- High Expectations
- Family & Community Engagement
- Human Capital

REVIEW COMPONENTS AND LOOK FORS

Leadership
- Shared Accountability
- Team Building
- Student-Centered Decision Making
- Collaboration

Systems & Structures
- Vision and Strategic Plan
- Equitable Funding and Staffing
- Policy and Procedures
- Data Quality, Culture, and Capacity

Learning Environment & Specialized Services
- Access to General Curriculum
- High-Impact Instruction
- Positive Behavior Supports & Social-Emotional Learning
- IEP Development
- Individualized Supports
- Coordinated Early Childhood, School-to-School, & Post-Secondary Transition

High Expectations
- Growth Mindset
- Presumed Competence
- Culturally Relevant Practices
- Positive Learning Environment
- Student Engagement

Family & Community Engagement
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Resource Center and Training
- Access
- Community Partnerships

Human Capital
- High-Quality Staff
- High-Quality Professional Learning
- Equitable Recruitment Practices
- Staff Wellness and Self-Care
- Flexible Career Pathways and Staff Retention

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

- This review focused on systems, processes, and procedures *across departments* that contribute to the success of students with identified disabilities.

- The FourPoint team held interviews and focus groups with approximately 215 district staff and stakeholders during a four-day site visit in April 2023. This included:

  - District administrators

  - Special Services department staff and providers

  - Principals and assistant principals

  - Teachers

  - Paraeducators

  - Parents and community members

  - Students

- The FourPoint team also completed a review of available state and district data and reports.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY (continued)

- FourPoint also visited 14 schools and observed 84 classrooms using a Focused Classroom Walkthrough tool. Observed classrooms included general education classes operating with an inclusion framework and Special Day Class settings.

- Finally, FourPoint administered surveys that collected staff feedback on their experiences educating students with disabilities.

  - The school leader survey (principals and assistant principals) had 34 respondents.

  - The teacher and related service provider survey had 427 respondents. For brevity, this respondent group is referred to throughout the report findings as "educators." More information about the makeup of this respondent group is below.

Respondent Type	Count	Percentage
Special Education Teachers	68	16%
Other Classroom Teachers	253	59%
Instructional Coaches/PD Specialists	32	7%
Paraprofessionals	22	5%
Related Service Providers (e.g., psychologist)	52	12%
Total	**427**	**100%**

RATING DEFINITIONS

The review team assigned ratings to each component based on its assessment of qualitative and quantitative data from the district.

Rating	Definition
	Rating of 1 – The district displays little to no best practice in this area. Significant work is needed to implement best practice.
	Rating of 2 – The district has one to two best practices already in place, but still has significant work needed to implement best practice.
	Rating of 3 – The district has several best practices in place and with some adjustments can become a model for other districts.
	Rating of 4 – The district represents best practice in this area and is a model for other districts.

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CURRENT STATE: LEADERSHIP

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Shared Accountability • Leaders communicate common vision and values and embrace the idea that holding all students to high expectations is the shared responsibility of all staff. • Leaders empower students, staff, parents/families, and the community to share responsibility for student outcomes. • Leaders model reflection by testing assumptions, learning from data, and adjusting instructional practices accordingly. • Leaders emphasize that building a shared responsibility for student learning is an ongoing, continuous process.	◐	• Shared responsibility for student success is included in the district's Foundation for Excellence, and the district has made inclusion an explicit expectation for schools and staff. • Survey results indicate that collective responsibility for school success is filtering to school leadership but isn't consistently filtering down within schools. • While inclusion and collective responsibility are named goals, Rialto does not have a clear strategy in place for achieving them, in part due to its focus on school agency. • Decentralizing responsibilities for special education services has led to inconsistencies and compliance concerns across Rialto schools. • Achievement data supports the notion that a decentralized approach, so far, has not been successful. Student achievement metrics are unacceptably low across the board.

CURRENT STATE: LEADERSHIP

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Team Building • In partnership with staff and community stakeholders, leaders create a vision for team collaboration and partnerships. • Leaders develop a plan for communicating the vision with staff, families, and the community to gain support. • Leaders equip staff with effective team communication strategies. • Leaders model the norms of collaboration.	(pie chart, ~25% filled)	• A revamped Special Services team is currently focused on addressing compliance issues, though would like to take a more proactive approach to improving instruction and service provision for students with disabilities. The team is currently establishing new norms, systems, and practices. • The outsized role of advocates in Rialto Public Schools makes it challenging for the Special Services team to establish new norms or move forward proactively. • Communication was consistently cited by virtually all stakeholders as a major challenge for the district.
Student-Centered Decision Making • Leaders create a culture of data-centered decision making using formative assessment. • Leaders share beliefs with staff that all students have potential to succeed, and that all staff are responsible for providing appropriate supports and services. • Leaders equip staff to develop student-centered classrooms. • Classrooms allow student input and participation in decision-making process.	(pie chart, ~50% filled)	• Though the district has a stated goal of providing a student-centered instructional approach, few structures are in place to understand and address students' needs.

CURRENT STATE: LEADERSHIP

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Collaboration • Leaders intentionally design schedules and provide PL opportunities that promote collaboration between educators, related services providers, and paraprofessionals. • Leaders support meaningful collaboration with families. • Leaders use positive verbal and nonverbal communication. • Staff are trained to apply collaboration strategies. • SPED leaders are part of the district leadership team and collaborate with other departments.	◐	• The Special Services department is not well coordinated with other central office departments. • In surveys, while school leaders recognized the district's vision for collaboration, both school leaders and educations were less likely to report it occurring in practice. • Time constraints and a lack of understanding of the co-teaching approach is also negatively impacting collaboration at the campus and classroom levels.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Shared responsibility for student success is included in the district's Foundation for Excellence, and the district has made inclusion an explicit expectation for schools and staff.

- Rialto's Foundation for Excellence has an indicator targeting collective responsibility for school success. School goals are expected to be aligned to these indicators, suggesting that an expectation for shared responsibility is at least filtering to school leadership.

- The district has an explicit focus on inclusion, particularly for three traditionally marginalized subgroups: English learners, students with disabilities, and African American students. Schools are being asked to identify the actions that they will take to improve outcomes for these student groups and are being held accountable for those actions.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Survey results indicate that collective responsibility for school success is filtering to school leadership but isn't consistently filtering down within schools.

- Most school leaders agree that *district* leaders: communicate common mission and values and embrace the idea that holding all students to high expectations is the shared responsibility of all staff (90%); inspire students, staff, parents/families, and the community to share responsibility for student outcomes (90%); and emphasize that building a shared responsibility for student learning is an ongoing, continuous process (87%).

- In contrast, far fewer educators agree with similar statements regarding *school* leaders. Only 58% of educators agree that school leaders communicate common mission and values and embrace the idea that holding all students to high expectations is the shared responsibility of all staff. Only 47% of educators agree that school leaders inspire students, staff, parents/families, and the community to share responsibility for student outcomes. And only 56% of educators agreed that school leaders emphasize that building a shared responsibility for student learning is an ongoing, continuous process.

Survey Results: Percentage of school leaders and educators who agree or strongly agree with the following statements.

	School Leader Survey			Educator Survey		
Percent Agree/Strongly Agree	90%	90%	87%	58%	47%	56%
Statement	District leaders communicate common mission and values and embrace the idea that holding all students to high expectations is the shared responsibility of all staff.	District leaders inspire students, staff, parents/families, and the community to share responsibility for student outcomes.	District leaders emphasize that building a shared responsibility for student learning is an ongoing, continuous process.	School leaders communicate common mission and values and embrace the idea that holding all students to high expectations is the shared responsibility of all staff.	School leaders inspire students, staff, parents/families, and the community to share responsibility for student outcomes.	School leaders emphasize that building a shared responsibility for student learning is an ongoing, continuous process.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

While inclusion and collective responsibility are named goals, Rialto does not have a clear strategy in place for achieving them, in part due to its focus on school agency.

- The Foundation for Excellence reportedly drives the district's performance management system, including principal evaluations, but it's unclear how its strategies and indicators are tied to many other plans and strategies (e.g., strategic plan, Local Control Accountability Plan, focus school plan, etc.).

- District and school stakeholders named a few universal "non-negotiables" for schools: implementing the district's curriculum and tiered interventions, implementing School Support Teams, and implementing an inclusive special education model.

- The district's theory of action for school improvement is built around the idea of "agency," meaning that schools have the autonomy and responsibility to implement programs and operate in a way that best meets the needs of their students.

- Many stakeholders shared that the concept of agency has gone too far and/or is not properly understood. One challenge that was noted, for example, is that it is very hard to keep track of what is taking place at each school and provide appropriate supports.
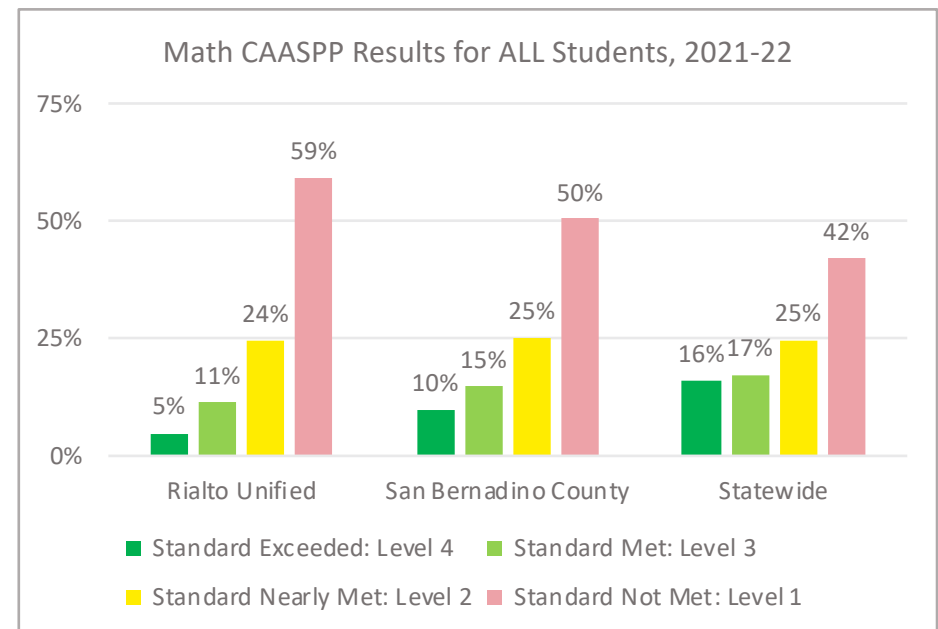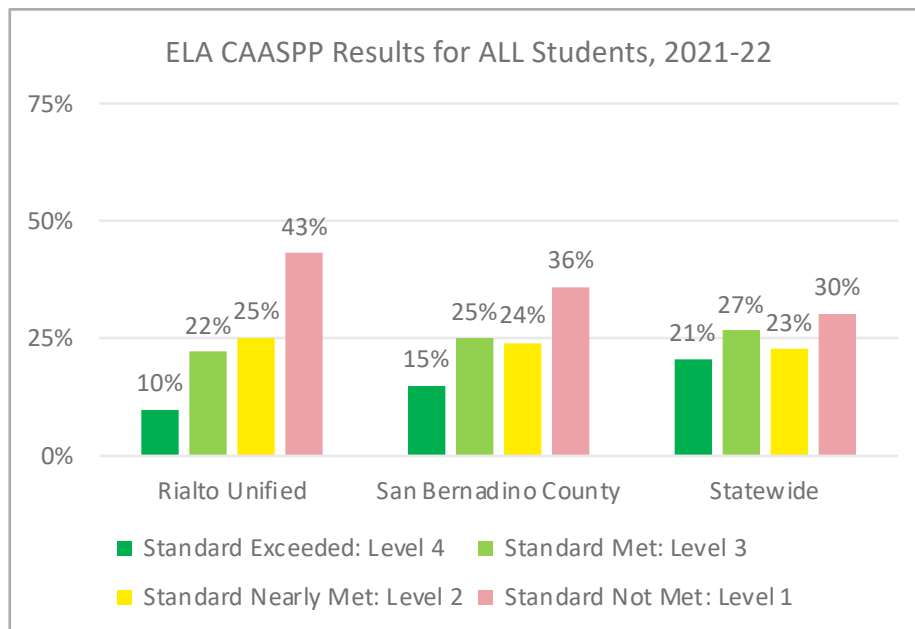
FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Decentralizing responsibilities for special education services has led to inconsistencies and compliance concerns across Rialto schools.

- According to stakeholders, special education was once very centralized, with most decisions and processes administered by the Special Services team. Over time, there was a push for principals and schools to take greater ownership of students with disabilities on their campuses, resulting in a more distributed leadership model and Special Services having a limited support and accountability role.

- This structure has reportedly led to wide variation in the provision of special education across the district – IEP meeting facilitation, program staffing, tracking of service minutes are all said to vary from school to school. Elementary principals noted ironically that special education is the area in which they have the most agency because "we can do whatever we want."

- Despite it being a district expectation, the rollout of inclusion, especially the co-teaching model, was done with very little central office direction or support, leading to "bumpy" implementation. One district staff member shared, "it feels like co-teaching is like trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube. It was launched with no clear definition, plan, or support. It needs to be rebranded under the UDL banner, and done thoughtfully this time."

- Most central office and school leaders recognized that a decentralized approach for special education is problematic and that a middle ground is needed.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Achievement data supports the notion that a decentralized approach, so far, has not been successful. Student achievement metrics are unacceptably low across the board.

- In 2021-22, 43% of all Rialto students were well below the standard in ELA and 59% were well below the standard in math. Only a third of students met or exceeded the standard in ELA, and just 16% met or exceeded the standard in math.

ELA CAASPP Results for ALL Students, 2021-22

	Rialto Unified	San Bernadino County	Statewide
Standard Exceeded: Level 4	10%	15%	21%
Standard Met: Level 3	22%	25%	27%
Standard Nearly Met: Level 2	25%	24%	23%
Standard Not Met: Level 1	43%	36%	30%

Math CAASPP Results for ALL Students, 2021-22

	Rialto Unified	San Bernadino County	Statewide
Standard Exceeded: Level 4	5%	10%	16%
Standard Met: Level 3	11%	15%	17%
Standard Nearly Met: Level 2	24%	25%	25%
Standard Not Met: Level 1	59%	50%	42%

For students with disabilities, achievement rates are even lower.

- Just 7% of students with disabilities met or exceeded the standard in ELA and just 5% met or exceeded the standard in math – well below both San Bernadino County and the state as a whole.
- Over three-quarters (79%) of Rialto students with disabilities were well below the standard in ELA, and 86% were well below the standard in math.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

A revamped Special Services team is currently focused on addressing compliance issues, though would like to take a more proactive approach to improving instruction and service provision for students with disabilities. The team is currently establishing new norms, systems, and practices.

- A new Special Services lead agent joined the district in fall 2022, who has primarily been focused on backfilling positions, hiring for new roles in the department, and creating and implementing a new alternative dispute resolution process.

- In Spring 2023, the number of Program Specialists grew to five. The intent of that role is to serve as a ready resource for parents and to provide robust support to schools to ensure that they perform evaluations and reevaluations in a timely manner, conduct effective IEP meetings, and effectively deploy staff and service providers to meet IEP requirements and the needs of students with disabilities. So far, their work has mostly focused on cleaning up compliance-related issues in the district.

- The district continues to have two special education instructional specialists to support improved instruction for students with disabilities. Prior to the recent onboarding of Program Specialists, these team members focused largely on compliance-related tasks.

- The department is still working to fill a coordinator role, despite a year-long search and recommending at least one candidate to the board.

- Eight school psychologists reportedly exited the district in the past year; rebuilding that team has been a significant undertaking.

- The Special Services team is working on creating new norms, systems, and practices – addressing an area of need identified by Special Services and other district staff.

- Staff within the Special Services division raised questions about parity and equity, particularly between the roles of behaviorists, therapeutic behavior specialists, and emotional health therapists. Clarity and consistency of roles and connections between them were identified as areas of need. For example, some staff noted that eliminating regular Special Services meetings has made it more challenging to build relationships and coordinate across the team.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

The outsized role of advocates in Rialto Public Schools makes it challenging for the Special Services team to establish new norms or move forward proactively.

- It is not unusual for parent advocates to participate in IEPs to help families navigate complex special education systems and to ensure that children receive the services they need to be successful in school. In Rialto, three advocates have an uncommon role – expanding their advocacy to the district level.

- These advocates have a unique vantage from which to see common district challenges. While their expertise is valuable – and highly valued – they hold an outsized role in the prioritization and operations of the Special Services division.

- Special Services staff report having their jobs threatened by advocates – something they take seriously given at least one's reportedly close relationship with a member of the Rialto board. They also described instances that could be characterized as workplace harassment.

- Advocates have provided lists of improvements that they expect Special Services staff to make, attempting to direct the priorities and operations of the department.

- Advocates receive special attention from senior district leaders – signaling their importance and that their requests should be attended to.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Communication was consistently cited by virtually all stakeholders as a major challenge for the district.

- Communication challenges were noted between central office departments, between central office and schools, and between central office, schools, and families.

  - In surveys, less than half (45%) of school leaders agreed with the statement, "District leaders equip school administrators with effective team communication strategies."

- Stakeholders consistently described the district as reactive, rather than proactive, in all areas, including the provision of special education services. According to one teacher: "The squeaky wheel – which in our case usually means a student with an advocate – gets catered to and then we get slammed for being a team and trying to follow a process."

> "Communication from the district is horrific. We find out something a day before it's supposed to happen. There are too many people making decisions about programs without really understanding them or how they are connected. All the churn prevents us from fulfilling our mission."
>
> - Teacher

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Though the district has a stated goal of providing a student-centered instructional approach, few structures are in place to understand and address students' needs.

- Action step 1.1.2 of the new strategic plan addresses a "culturally and linguistically responsive, student-centered approach to instruction" and the Foundation for Excellence references using multiple sources of data to shape a collective purpose.

- A cross-departmental group of central office staff have begun looking at data for a select group of struggling students to jointly identify and address their individual challenges. Many view this as an effective practice, though admittedly on a smaller scale than is needed to effect system-wide change.

- The district administers iReady across all schools and uses the data to monitor student achievement and progress, but there is no common formative assessment aligned to the district's curriculum.

- Senior district administrators said that they analyze data during principal meetings with a special focus on the three prioritized subgroups. One administrator, however, said that the focus has been more on analyzing the data and less on what actions to take as a result, although this is beginning to change.

- In surveys, only half of educators (52%) agree that school leaders create a culture of data-centered decision making using formative assessment, while a quarter (26%) disagree. Meanwhile, two-thirds of school leaders (65%) agree that district leaders create a culture of data-centered decision making using formative assessment, while 19% disagree.

> "How are we centering the child? A lot of our decisions are based on adults and not focused on children."
>
> - Principal

- Only half of school leaders (48%) agree that *district* leaders equip staff to develop student-centered classrooms, and only a third of educators (36%) agree that *school* leaders equip staff to develop student-centered classrooms.

- Less than half of educators (44%) report that classrooms allow student input and participation in decision-making processes.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

The Special Services department is not well coordinated with other central office departments.

- Special Services is located in a different facility than the rest of the instructional services team, making informal and frequent communication and collaboration challenging.

- About half (48%) of school leaders surveyed reported a sense that special education leaders are part of the district leadership team and collaborate with other service areas.

- The involvement of Special Services leadership and staff in academic services or school-based meetings was often characterized as being reactive – i.e., being involved in escalated behavior issues (regardless of a student's disability status) or to troubleshoot when something has gone wrong. Many Special Services team members expressed a desire for more collaborative, proactive conversations and strategies related to improved instructional practice and supports for students with disabilities.

In surveys, while school leaders recognized the district's vision for collaboration, both school leaders and educations were less likely to report it occurring in practice.

- Most school leaders (71%) reported that district leaders create a vision for team collaboration and partnerships; however, only half (52%) reported that district leaders model the norms of collaboration.

- Reported collaboration was even lower at the school level; less than half (47%) of educators agreed that *school* leaders create a vision for team collaboration and partnerships, while slightly less (43%) agreed that school leaders model the norms of collaboration.

FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP

Time constraints and a lack of understanding of the co-teaching approach is also negatively impacting collaboration at the campus and classroom levels.

- Many educators and school administrators acknowledge that they don't understand what co-teaching entails and do not have common planning or other professional learning opportunities to enable general and special education teachers to work together and effectively implement the model.

- Special education teachers are frequently assigned to support multiple general education teachers, reducing their ability to form strong relationships and jointly plan.

- Secondary principals shared that they have limited support in developing school schedules allowing for staff collaboration, as well as the provision of services and supports to students with disabilities, generally.

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CURRENT STATE: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Vision & Strategic Plan • SPED initiatives are embedded in the district's strategic plan. • The SPED department has a clearly articulated and well-communicated vision, mission, and action plan, and schools have specific goals that are aligned to the plan. • District engages in a continuous improvement review process at least every 5 years to assess the effectiveness of its SPED program. • Central office staff across departments and school-based leaders are held accountable for consistently implementing SPED policies and procedures.	(pie chart icon showing about one-quarter filled)	• Action steps in Rialto's strategic plan address MTSS, Student Study Teams, co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and Universal Design for learning, though schools do not have direction or support for how to implement these initiatives with fidelity. • The new leadership of Special Services is passionate about improving instruction, services, and outcomes for students with disabilities but has not yet communicated its vision and plan going forward. • Currently, special education advocates appear to serve as the de facto accountability mechanism for special education. • Contributing to the lack of support and accountability for implementing special education services and programming and other non-negotiables is the fact that principals are supervised and coached by support providers who also have full-time responsibilities in other areas, have varied approaches to the supervisory role, and generally do not focus on helping principals grow as instructional leaders.

CURRENT STATE: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Data Quality, Culture, & Capacity • Benchmark, goal progress, and continuous progress monitoring provide timely information for programmatic and student-centered decision making. • Dashboards are easily accessible to monitor identification rates, placement levels, and discipline rates by school and grade. • District uses an electronic case management system to document provision of all SPED services, track IEPs for compliance, and provide access to indicators and other data for monitoring and trend analysis. • School and district staff are well versed in State Performance Plan indicators, have easy-to-use reports to monitor them, and conduct data reviews of progress. • Staff receive training on how to use data systems.	(pie chart, approx. one-quarter filled)	• Rialto district leaders are aware of – though currently not meeting many – state special education performance indicators. • The district's special education data systems are cumbersome, require a significant amount of manual manipulation, do not generate accurate data, and, as a result, appear to be affecting compliance with IEPs and state and federal mandates. • Data-quality issues are not limited to the Special Services division and are an area of urgent need.

CURRENT STATE: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Policy & Procedures • An electronic, user-friendly SPED policy manual for school teams and families exists on a publicly available site and is updated annually. • Internal guidance and procedures are documented, accessible to all staff, and updated regularly.		• Program Specialists are developing a special education policy manual for school teams and families, as well as internal guidance and procedures to share with staff. • There is the perception among educators and parents that the district significantly under-identifies students for special education services, although data do not support this perception.

CURRENT STATE: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Equitable Funding & Staffing • The equitable distribution of school-based special education funding is based on the resources used to serve SWDs and accounts for varying costs that depend on type of disability, placement, and student need. • Administrators take proactive steps to coordinate funding of SPED services within the larger school program. • IDEA grant expenditures are tracked and intentionally tied to specific programmatic goals. • Staffing ratios support an inclusive instructional service delivery model and can be adjusted mid-year to accommodate changes in student need.	(pie chart, approximately 1/4 filled)	• Educators and leaders questioned the rationale behind student and program placement decisions, and their ability to fully support students with disabilities in classrooms and schools. • Staff reported conflicting information about staffing of special education programs. • Stakeholders consistently called for a need to reexamine staffing of moderate-to-severe special day classes. • According to elementary principals, school staffing models disincentivize co-teaching. • Rialto spends less on the direct provision of special education instruction than its peer districts and state averages. • The district was unable to provide financial data that allowed for an analysis of whether financial resources are distributed equitably across schools.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Action steps in Rialto's strategic plan address MTSS, Student Study Teams, co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and Universal Design for learning, though schools do not have direction or support for how to implement these initiatives with fidelity.

- School leaders shared that they do not fully understand how the district's many plans are connected or what they are responsible for doing. They tie their work most closely to the Foundations of Excellence and other accountability measures, such as improving outcomes for the three target student subgroups.

- In surveys, three-quarters of school leaders (74%) reported that special education initiatives are embedded in the district's strategic plan.

The new leadership of Special Services is passionate about improving instruction, services, and outcomes for students with disabilities but has not yet communicated its vision and plan going forward.

- School administrators noted that Special Services leaders are accessible and are trying to make changes, but principals also shared wanting more information on the department's vision and implementation priorities.

- Only one-quarter (26%) of school leader survey respondents agreed that the special education service area has a clearly articulated and well-communicated mission and action plan, and that schools have specific goals that are aligned to the plan.

- Administrators also shared that Special Services has a lot of work ahead, with one saying: "Everything else in the district has at least pretend systems. There are none for special education."

- Special Services leaders and staff were exceedingly open to this review and hope to use its findings and recommendations to create a plan for their department.

Currently, special education advocates appear to serve as the de facto accountability mechanism for special education, pushing schools to communicate more effectively with parents and standardize high-quality processes for IEP meetings. Because advocates support individual students, however, the resulting actions taken by schools and the district are neither systemic nor coherent.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Contributing to the lack of support and accountability for implementing special education services and programming and other non-negotiables is the fact that principals are supervised and coached by support providers who also have full-time responsibilities in other areas, have varied approaches to the supervisory role, and generally do not focus on helping principals grow as instructional leaders.

- There are four support providers at the secondary level and six at the elementary level. Each support provider has other job responsibilities (e.g., categorical programs, secondary curriculum and instruction).

- All support providers meet together regularly, but there is neither a coaching framework nor a comparison of schools and techniques across providers.

- In general, providers do not support schools with anything related to special education, as principals typically look to the Special Services department for direction and support for this area.

- Support providers and program specialists will be expected to work together in support of schools, but, like the program specialist role, these relationships and processes are under development.

- The focus of support providers reportedly varies depending on who is in the role and where they sit in the organization. Principals shared that support providers help them to advocate for central office support, communicate district priorities or activities, serve as compassionate listeners, and/or "help schools with everything." Providers appear to help principals navigate central office, but there is no particular focus on helping principals grow as instructional leaders (a best practice for the principal supervisor role).

- Principals shared a need for more support in improving teaching and learning and trying to reduce the need for and/or influence of advocates in the delivery of special education services. Despite the push for agency, they feel that they don't "get full grace as instructional leaders, understanding of our role, or necessary support." While they believe that the district has improved and has potential to continue to do so, clear systems and processes are needed to realize its full potential.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Rialto district leaders are aware of – though currently not meeting many – state special education performance indicators.

- Rialto is currently in the most intensive tier of the California Department of Education's compliance and improvement monitoring process, not reaching 9 out of 14 targeted indicators in its 2022-23 report.

- While Rialto did meet benchmarks for proportionate evaluation rates, timeliness of evaluations, and several school-age Least Restrictive Environment indicators, it did not meet targets for 14 of 25 indicators in the state's 2020-21 annual performance report.

- Special Services leadership are well versed in the annual performance indicators and contributing factors for not reaching all targets. They are complying with the CDE's requirement that they develop and monitor progress of plans for meeting benchmarks in the future, though their ability to do so relies on the combined efforts of district and school leaders.

- While Rialto is meeting state targets in some areas, data indicate that some are still cause for concern, as detailed in the Learning Environment & Specialized Services section that follows. For example, while the district does not meet the threshold for disproportionate discipline – a risk ratio of 3 in California – suspension rates for special education students and, to an even greater degree, for Black students, are significantly higher than the suspension rates for other student groups.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

The district's special education data systems are cumbersome, require a significant amount of manual manipulation, do not generate accurate data, and, as a result, appear to be affecting compliance with IEPs and state and federal mandates.

- Special education data is stored, tracked, and reported through multiple systems (Web IEP, Cal-PASS, District ACCESS), often with inconsistent information. Special Services staff spend significant time maintaining data in various platforms and cross referencing them in an attempt to maintain accurate information.

- According to Special Services staff, case carriers (special education teachers) routinely make errors when entering and uploading information and documents into the system. They pointed to a need for more training, especially for new SPED teachers, and school-level points of contact to reduce entry errors and make sure student records are complete and up to date.

- In surveys, only 61% of school leaders reported that staff receive training on how to use data systems, and only 52% report having easy access to information about special education identification rates, placement levels, and discipline rates by school and grade.

- The Special Services team is not notified if students leave the district and must manually check to make sure student lists are correct when running and receiving reports. Entry errors also lead to inaccuracies in student rosters, service documentation, and tracking, which has direct implications for IEP compliance.

- The IEP tracking system (Web IEP) does not include a tickler function that automatically lets case carriers know when IEPs are past due or upcoming. That work falls to the Special Services team.

- Without operational data systems, staff are unable to adequately track progress against district, school, or student goals or make student-centered decisions. For example, the district did not have – or was unable to access – requested data related to initial referrals to special education, triennial assessments, and Part C to Part B referrals, all of which are needed to be able to effectively monitor essential systems and processes.

- Special Services staff want an improved, streamlined system that will allow them to effectively track, monitor, and use data to stay in compliance and better serve students. Those who are familiar with it name SEIS as a much better match for the district's needs.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Data-quality issues are not limited to the Special Services division and are an area of urgent need.

- Instructional data quality was characterized by district and school staff as "atrocious." School and district leaders appear to make the most use of iReady assessment data, though those data do not align to the taught curriculum. There is an expectation that principals observe classrooms, but the use of this data appears to vary widely by school.

- Some teachers noted that the Beyond SST platform, which is used to collect data about tiered interventions provided to students, is a solid foundation. But they noted that many teachers don't understand the Student Success Team process or their role in it and don't have enough structures in place at the school to implement SSTs consistently.

- Human Resources data systems also appear to be lacking. Following reports of high turnover and a dearth of qualified candidates for instructional and student support positions, FourPoint conducted a review of application system data; however, position counts were missing – reportedly representing hundreds of openings over the past five years – for many positions, primarily instructional support.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Program Specialists are developing a special education policy manual for school teams and families, as well as internal guidance and procedures to share with staff.

- They expressed concerns with being able to effectively help school-based staff get up to speed on procedural guidance with limited opportunities for district-wide professional development and their limited participation in school-based training.

- There is general consensus that a manual will not alone resolve current challenges related to standardizing special education processes and procedures.

There is the perception among educators and parents that the district significantly under-identifies students for special education services, although data do not support this perception.

- Concerns include being slow or unwilling to provide an IEP for a student or minimizing a disability to reduce the services to be provided.

- For parents, this results in feeling they are being mis-served and leads them hiring advocates, forcing the district into a defensive and reactionary posture.

- For teachers, there is the feeling that they are not being supported to manage student behaviors that are a result of under- or unidentified disabilities.

- Despite these perceptions, the district's identification rate for students with disabilities is similar to that of the State.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Educators and leaders questioned the rationale behind student and program placement decisions, and their ability to fully support students with disabilities in classrooms and schools.

- Educators and administrators raised questions about the placement of programs – and students – in schools.
- School administrators say that they are rarely made aware of student placement decisions and that placement decisions are made by the central office without regard to whether the school is able to provide the services outlined in IEPs.
- Administrators were unaware of a rationale for program placement other than the availability of space on a campus.
- As noted previously, the district's co-teaching model was rolled out without adequate resources or support, hindering inclusive practices in classrooms and schools.

Staff reported conflicting information about staffing of special education programs.

- Personnel staff shared that special services staff are allocated to schools based on the location of students and services outlined on their IEPs.
- Some Special Services staff and educators shared that school administrators have a heavy hand in determining how special education classrooms are staffed, particularly in the number of aides assigned.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Stakeholders consistently called for a need to reexamine staffing of moderate-to-severe special day classes.

- Teachers, paraeducators, and administrators all pointed to insufficient staffing of classes serving students with moderate to severe needs across the district. According to these stakeholders, the number of instructional aides is incompatible with the needs of students and the services documented in their IEPs.

- Teachers reported that rather than instructional aides, high school classrooms have been staffed with workability aides, who are often called off site or asked to handle other assigned duties, and who are not experienced (or technically responsible) for CPR or toileting, or to attend to other basic needs of students, let alone to support them with instruction.

- Instructional aides reported that they have seen increased student needs over time and no longer have the ability to tend to all needs in their classrooms. One reported spending most of her days triaging the (often violent) behaviors of one or two students, with the rest of the class (and teacher) receiving little to no support.

- These challenges are reportedly exacerbated by the district's priority for returning students to the district from County operated programs—reassuming responsibility for the most vulnerable students without appropriate staffing supports in place.

- Teachers also reported that, because they are working with the highest need students, they are also called on to complete an extraordinary amount of documentation, making it impossible for them tend to instructional planning.
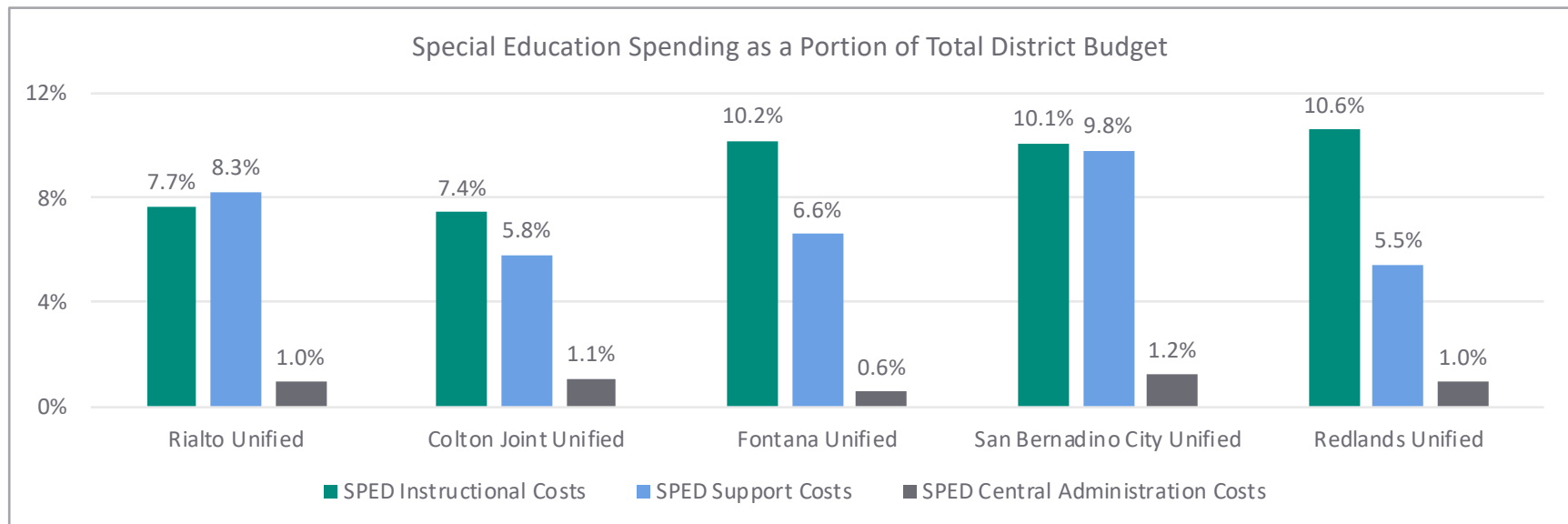
According to elementary principals, school staffing models disincentivize co-teaching.

- In surveys, 39% of school leaders *disagreed* that staffing ratios support an inclusive instructional service delivery model and can be adjusted mid-year to accommodate changes in student need.

- Principals noted that the second teacher in the classroom "counts against" schools' teacher-student ratios. As a result, schools with co-teaching receive additional students, making class sizes larger.

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Rialto spends less on the direct provision of special education instruction than its peer districts and state averages.

- The district spends a smaller portion of its budget on nearly all categories of special education instruction compared with the state as a whole and most of its peers. This is driven primarily by lower spending – both as a portion of total budget and per enrolled student with disabilities – on separate classrooms, resource specialist instruction, classified special education staff, and other specialized instructional services.

- In one area of instruction, Rialto spends more than all of its peers: supplemental aids and services for students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

- In contrast, Rialto spends a greater portion of its budget than most of its peers, and more per student than all of its peers, on special education support costs – the costs of peripheral services necessary to maintain instructional programs. It is the only one of its peers to spend more on these support costs than on direct instructional spending.

- The district spends an average portion its budget on special education central administration costs.

Special Education Spending as a Portion of Total District Budget

District	SPED Instructional Costs	SPED Support Costs	SPED Central Administration Costs
Rialto Unified	7.7%	8.3%	1.0%
Colton Joint Unified	7.4%	5.8%	1.1%
Fontana Unified	10.2%	6.6%	0.6%
San Bernadino City Unified	10.1%	9.8%	1.2%
Redlands Unified	10.6%	5.5%	1.0%

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

The district was unable to provide financial data that allowed for an analysis of whether financial resources are distributed equitably across schools.

- FourPoint requested from the district per-pupil spending by school for the past five years but received only districtwide per-pupil expenditure figures; however, analysis using district demographic data and per-pupil expenditure figures generated by Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab indicate that the district is not systematically driving resources to schools based on greatest need.

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology
- **Current State Findings**
    - Leadership
    - Systems & Structures
    - **Learning Environment & Specialized Services**
    - High Expectations
    - Family & Community Engagement
    - Human Capital
- Recommendations

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Access to General Curriculum • District has a robust MTSS framework that is consistently implemented and appropriately supportive of struggling learners. • Teachers utilize collaborative planning and instruction that includes application of UDL principles and formative assessment. • Staff have access to and training on a wide range of instructional technologies and software resources for use across a variety of settings (in person, hybrid, virtual). • All students have access to rigorous curriculum, with a full continuum of services and programs, in the general education setting. • Teachers use student data to select and implement evidence-based teaching and learning strategies.	(pie chart, approximately one-quarter filled)	• Stakeholders expressed concerns that the value of inclusion isn't universally understood or held across Rialto schools. • RUSD is not using a robust or rigorous curriculum. While teachers are expected to use a set of instructional materials, central office and school leaders acknowledge that implementation is inconsistent across classrooms and schools. • Although used in some classrooms, there is no evidence of a systematic approach to literacy across Rialto. • Standards-based report cards and grading aligned to priority standards will be implemented across all elementary schools in 2023-24. • Teachers do not have access to formative assessment data aligned to the district curriculum that they can use to inform instruction. • Rialto has established a Student Study Team process to identify and determine efficacy of academic, social, or behavioral interventions for students. • The district's Multi-Tiered System of Supports – the backbone of the SST process – is emerging, with behavioral interventions currently much more clearly defined and better supported through staff and other resources than academic interventions.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Access to General Curriculum *(continued)* • Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities based on high-leverage practices.		• Rialto leaders and staff recognize a need for better-articulated and implemented academic interventions. • Implementation of both academic and behavioral interventions are reportedly inconsistent across schools. • Despite educators' best efforts, a lack of clear instructional direction, structure, and support has resulted in low academic outcomes for all students, and especially students with disabilities.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Positive Behavior Supports & Social Emotional Learning • Positive behavioral supports are a part of school culture. • Students learn tools and replacement behaviors for how to engage in the classroom and school productively. • Students feel safe in the learning environment. • Teachers use appropriate language and apply trauma-informed practices and appropriate de-escalation strategies. • Expectations, routines, and procedures are culturally responsive, age appropriate, and posted and modeled in the classroom and school. • Schools implement, and students are taught, restorative practices as alternatives to punitive disciplinary practices.	(half-filled circle)	• Classroom observation data suggest that Rialto's investments in PBIS are paying off. • While general classroom management practices are promising, approaches to discipline are yielding less positive results. • Rialto suspends students with disabilities, as well as Black students, at higher rates than other students and suspends all three of its target groups at higher rates than all of its peers. • Suspension rates have increased in Rialto while declining in its peer districts. • Observations also suggest that teachers can do more to facilitate interpersonal relationships and increase student social-emotional competence.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
High-Impact Instruction • When planning for instruction, educators use principles from Universal Design for Learning (Focused Classroom Walkthrough). • In whole-group settings, educators use best-practice strategies to promote student engagement and high-level thinking (Focused Classroom Walkthrough). • In whole-group settings, educators use strategies that accelerate student learning (Focused Classroom Walkthrough).	◐	• Stakeholders consistently cited a need to focus on Tier 1 instruction. • Though it is explicitly named in the district's strategic plan, Universal Design for Learning was not named as a priority focus area by administrators or teachers. Classroom observation and survey results reveal limited use of UDL principles when planning for high-impact instruction to support all students' access to and progress in grade-level standards. • Classroom observations reveal limited evidence that best-practice strategies were used to deliver high-impact instruction to increase access to and progress in grade-level standards. • Strategies that accelerate learning were infrequently seen in observed RUSD classrooms. • Despite educators' best efforts, a lack of clear instructional direction, structure, and support has resulted in low academic outcomes for all students, and especially students with disabilities.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
IEP Development • IEPs include goals designed to increase the amount of time students spend in general education settings. • IEP teams use formative assessment to collect baseline data and monitor goal progress. Staff complete IEP documents to meet compliance requirements. • Services are consistently delivered and documented according to required timelines. • All IEP team members participate actively to make informed decisions. • Students are active participants in their IEPs.	◑	• There is general agreement that each school has its own process for writing and monitoring implementation of IEPs. • The recently hired Program Specialists are intended to help increase consistency and quality in IEP development, as well as compliance with their administration.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Individualized Supports • Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially designed instruction and adjust delivery as needed. • The Assistive Technology (AT) evaluation team matches the appropriate AT/Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools to student need and trains staff on implementation. • Appropriate classroom accommodations and modifications are provided so students can access grade-level content. • There are opportunities for teachers and related service providers to model skills to students. • Related services and behavior supports are individually designed, implemented, and monitored to align to student need and desired outcomes.	◐	• Stakeholders shared that accommodations, modifications, and behavior supports are inconsistently implemented across the district.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Coordinated Early Childhood, School to School, & Post-Sec Transition Activities • Schools use a student-centered planning approach and incorporate family input. • Schools have a formal articulation process to share relevant instructional information with teachers and providers at receiving schools. • Families are provided the support needed to connect their children to appropriate transition services. • Multiple providers are involved in transition planning, when appropriate. • SWDs are engaged in service learning/community-based instruction linked to the general curriculum and student interest.	◑	• Processes and procedures for admissions, eligibility, and interventions for preK and transitional kindergarten students with disabilities are concerning. • RUSD's secondary transition programming for students ages 18-22 faces significant challenges. • Stakeholders also shared general concerns about transition planning and practices.

CURRENT STATE: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Coordinated Early Childhood, School to School, & Post-Sec Transition Activities *(continued)* • Transition planning and exploration of postsecondary opportunities begin when students enter high school. • Skill and interest inventories are conducted for SWDs to inform postsecondary planning. • SWDs are provided appropriate instruction in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.		See previous slide.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Stakeholders expressed concerns that the value of inclusion isn't universally understood or held across Rialto schools.

- School leaders are instrumental in setting the vision and tone for inclusion at the school level. Some are said to have fully embraced the inclusion of students with disabilities; others reportedly see their campuses as inclusive, though students with disabilities are mostly served in special day classes, apart from the general population; and another segment has yet to make any shifts towards inclusion.

- In surveys, only about one-third of educators (34%) and school leaders (36%) reported that their school provides high-quality inclusive programs and activities based on high-leverage practices.

- Parent focus group participants reported that their children are not included in field trips, general education classes, or iReady assessments, making it difficult to gauge their academic progress. Some parents expressed concerns about their children being bullied in mainstream classes and most agreed that neurodivergence and other disabilities are not well understood by school leaders, staff, and students.

- Only 57% of special education teachers and 64% of educators as a whole agreed that all students are included in all school activities, while roughly one-quarter of each group (23-24%) *disagreed*.

- Despite strong flags from educators and parents, school leaders do not perceive a lack of inclusion – 96% of school leaders reported that all students are included in all school activities, and none disagreed.

- More is needed to build a general awareness of the abilities and needs of students with disabilities – and to make a case for inclusive education settings.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

RUSD is not using a robust or rigorous curriculum. While teachers are expected to use a set of instructional materials, central office and school leaders acknowledge that implementation is inconsistent across classrooms and schools.

- The district defines its curriculum as the purchased textbooks and programs (e.g., Wonders for elementary literacy).

- Currently, there is not a resource that demonstrates alignment of instructional resources with the benchmark skills defined in the Literacy, Numeracy, and Future Ready Foundation for Excellence document, although administrators noted that this work is in progress to support implementation of standards-based report cards next school year in elementary schools.

- Currently, there are no plans to create detailed pacing documents or use a curriculum-aligned formative assessment that helps educators determine which standards or subskills should be taught by quarter.

- Senior district leaders shared that there is an expectation that all schools implement the curriculum with fidelity, but also acknowledged that "some schools do and some don't" and there does not appear to be strong support or monitoring to ensure that all schools improve implementation.

- Principals shared that some teachers really struggle to scaffold Wonders for mild-to-moderately disabled students. As a result, students often act out because they are not being engaged effectively through the curriculum.

- In surveys, only a little over half of educators as a whole (57%) and special education teachers (54%) agreed that all students in their school have access to rigorous curriculum, with a full continuum of services and programs, in the general education setting. Among school leaders, two-thirds (68%) agreed.

- The LCAP mentions standards-aligned special-education-alternative instructional materials, but it is unclear if that strategy has yet to be implemented and supported with appropriate training, including ongoing sustained support.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Although used in some classrooms, there is no evidence of a systematic approach to literacy across Rialto.

- The effective use of a structured literacy approach is one of the most effective strategies for ensuring that all students will read on grade level by third grade.

- Wonders, the ELA program used by Rialto elementary teachers, does include the foundation skills of structured literacy and many schools appear to supplement Wonders with other phonics programs. It is unlikely, however, that all teachers are implementing a systematic approach to structured literacy because Wonders offers significantly more content than can be taught in a year and—absent guidance—teachers must make decisions about what to address and what to leave out.

- Critical reading and writing components are missed when teachers pick and choose what to teach. Also, a program may cover the "what"—all foundational standards—without effectively implementing instructional sequencing for important literacy skills.

- Rialto middle and high schools—which serve significant numbers of English learners—also need a structured literacy approach to support reading comprehension and writing.

- In addition to its Reading Specialists, RUSD has reportedly paid for approximately 240 teachers to attend University of Southern California training on reading instruction. According to district administrators, the fruits of that investment have not yet been seen.

> "We have an epidemic of non readers that must be addressed."
>
> - District leader

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Standards-based report cards and grading aligned to priority standards will be implemented across all elementary schools in 2023-24.

- Rialto USD is moving towards standards-based grading and report cards, which will result in some new expectations, including identifying essential standards and "cleaning up pacing guides." A district committee is identifying the essential standards and developing a rubric for teachers and there are implementation teams at each school, but each school will determine its curriculum, pacing, and formative assessments.

- According to one senior district leader, this will be "transformational because everyone will have a common understanding about what children should know." Standards-based grading is also expected to help in developing and implementing IEPs.

- Aligning feedback and grading to essential standards can be a powerful way to ensure all students get access to and have success with the general curriculum.

- Absent clear pacing guides and aligned formative assessments, however, standards-based report cards are unlikely to promote teacher efficacy or student achievement.

Teachers do not have access to formative assessment data aligned to the district curriculum that they can use to inform instruction.

- There are a few common assessments but none that assess student mastery of the taught curriculum:
  - iReady in math and reading is administered three times per year K-8
  - A writing performance task is administered once in elementary and twice per year in secondary
  - Interim block assessments are administered in high school four times per year.

- In surveys, just 57% of educators and 64% of school leaders agreed that teachers use student data to select and implement evidence-based teaching and learning strategies.

- Special Services program and instructional specialists believe that common formative assessments would help ensure all students have access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Rialto has established a Student Study Team process to identify and determine efficacy of academic, social, or behavioral interventions for students.

- Teachers track interventions – and results – in the Beyond SST platform. If students do not respond to Tier I and II interventions after 6-10 weeks, the SST team can consider identifying higher-tier interventions and/or referring for a special education evaluation.

- General education teachers noted that the SST process is very helpful in identifying students in need of support and identifying and tracking interventions.

- As with other initiatives in the district, there appears to be uneven implementation of the SST process across schools.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

The district's Multi-Tiered System of Supports – the backbone of the SST process – is emerging, with behavioral interventions currently much more clearly defined and better supported through staff and other resources than academic interventions.

- Currently, only 27% of educators and 39% of school leaders report that their school has a robust MTSS framework that is consistently implemented and appropriately supportive of struggling learners. More than a third of each group – 38% of educators and 36% of school leaders – *disagree* that this is the case.

- A cross-department team was convened to articulate and coordinate tiered social, emotional, and behavioral interventions and supports – the behavioral component of an MTSS framework. These have been cataloged in a document titled "Tiered Support Framework." In interviews, few central office or school-based staff were familiar with the document, and school-based staff expressed confusion about how and when to access various supports.

- Rialto has invested heavily in staff to support students' social and emotional well being. This is particularly important as students continue to recover from the impacts of the COVID pandemic. Several stakeholders shared their belief that investments in staff and behavioral interventions have helped to reduce disproportionate discipline of minority students.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Rialto leaders and staff recognize a need for better-articulated and implemented academic interventions.

- Central office leaders recognize that articulating and strengthening implementation of academic interventions and supports is an important area of need. They have begun working on a similar articulation (Foundations for Excellence Support Intervention Services in Math and ELA) to complete their MTSS framework.

- RUSD has made significant investments in training reading specialists, though they are reportedly deployed inconsistently across elementary schools without a clear rationale. Further, only one reading specialist is reportedly assigned to each middle and high school, despite large proportions of students at those levels struggling with reading.

- According to district staff, reading specialists are often an untapped resource for supporting students with disabilities with reading goals. They expressed a need for specialists to be more engaged in relevant IEP meetings to help inform reading goals and identify supports for meeting them.

Implementation of both academic and behavioral interventions are reportedly inconsistent across schools.

- It was noted that approaches to curriculum, classroom management, and tiered interventions for both academics and behavior vary widely by school and even classrooms within schools.

- School leaders and staff consistently mentioned that interventions lacked structure, that they were unclear on how to access them, or how to proceed if they did or did not work. Secondary teachers especially noted a lack of interventions for upper-grade students.

- Behavioral specialists, emotional health therapists, and therapeutic behavioral specialists indicated that they are leveraged differently in schools depending on the principals' understanding of their role. Special Services staff reported serving as the default for discipline issues, regardless of students' IEP status.

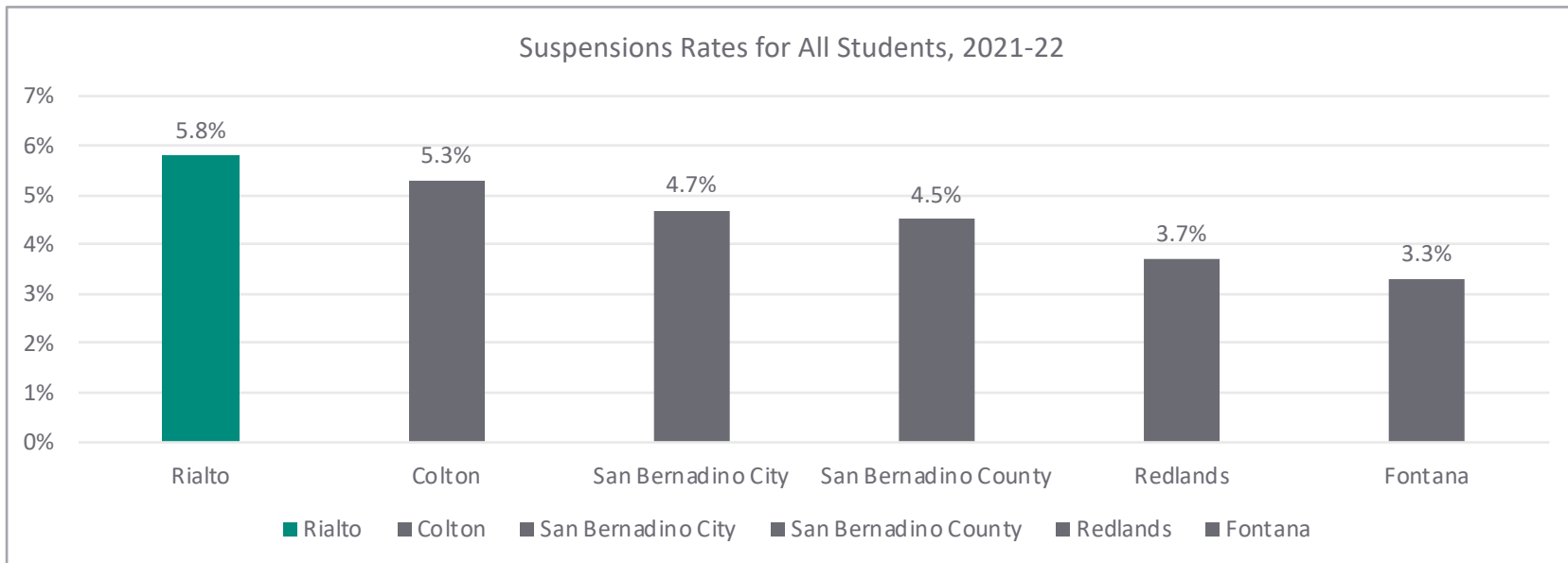# FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Classroom observation data suggest that Rialto's investments in PBIS are paying off.

- All students – including and perhaps especially students with disabilities – benefit from consistent, organized, respectful learning environments. In Rialto, the teaching and modeling of school-wide expectations for student behavior and systems to recognize and reward positive behaviors have resulted in safe, well-managed classrooms conducive to learning.

- In surveys, 86% of school leaders and 70% of educators reported that positive behavioral supports are a part of school culture.

- Orderly classroom management was demonstrated in 93% of classrooms observed.

- Communicated rituals and routines for student behavior and participation in the learning process were observed in 82% of classrooms; encouragement, effort, and persistence in following expected behaviors in 60%; and students following the expected behaviors in over 90%.

- These observations suggest that routines and procedures had been positively stated, explicitly taught, and practiced throughout the school year.

- In observed classrooms, students demonstrated respect for teaching staff as they routinely demonstrated the expected behaviors.

- At the same time, in surveys, somewhat fewer – two-thirds of educators (63%) and school leaders (61%) – agreed that expectations, routines, and procedures are culturally responsive, age appropriate, and posted and modeled in the classroom and school.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

While general classroom management practices are promising, approaches to discipline are yielding less positive results.

- In surveys, less than half of educators (43%) and school leaders (43%) reported that teachers use appropriate language and apply trauma-informed practices and appropriate de-escalation strategies.

- Less than half of educators (41%) along with two-thirds of school leaders (64%) reported that their school implements, and students are taught, restorative practices as alternatives to punitive disciplinary practices.

- The district has a higher suspension rate than the county as a whole and all peer districts.

Suspensions Rates for All Students, 2021-22

District	Rate
Rialto	5.8%
Colton	5.3%
San Bernadino City	4.7%
San Bernadino County	4.5%
Redlands	3.7%
Fontana	3.3%

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Rialto suspends students with disabilities, as well as Black students, at higher rates than other students and suspends all three of its target groups at higher rates than all of its peers.

- While is does not meet the threshold for disproportionate discipline rates of students with disabilities – in California, the risk ratio is 3 – the district suspends students in two of its three target groups – students with disabilities and Black students – at significantly higher rates than students as a whole.

Rialto Suspension Rates, 2021-22

Group	Rate
All Students	5.8%
English Learners	5.8%
Students with Disabilities	8.9%
Black Students	11.9%
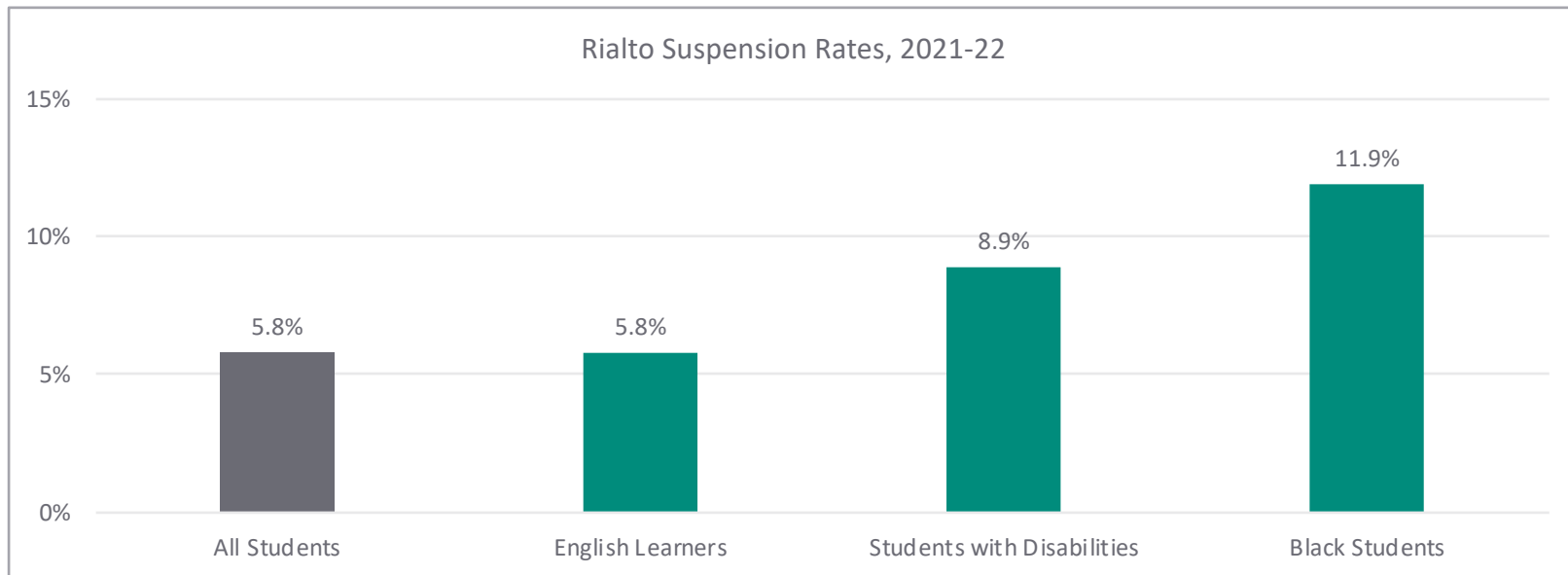
- Rialto's suspension rates for *all* of its target groups – students with disabilities, English learners, and Black students – are higher than the county's and all of its peer groups.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Suspension rates have increased in Rialto while declining in its peer districts.
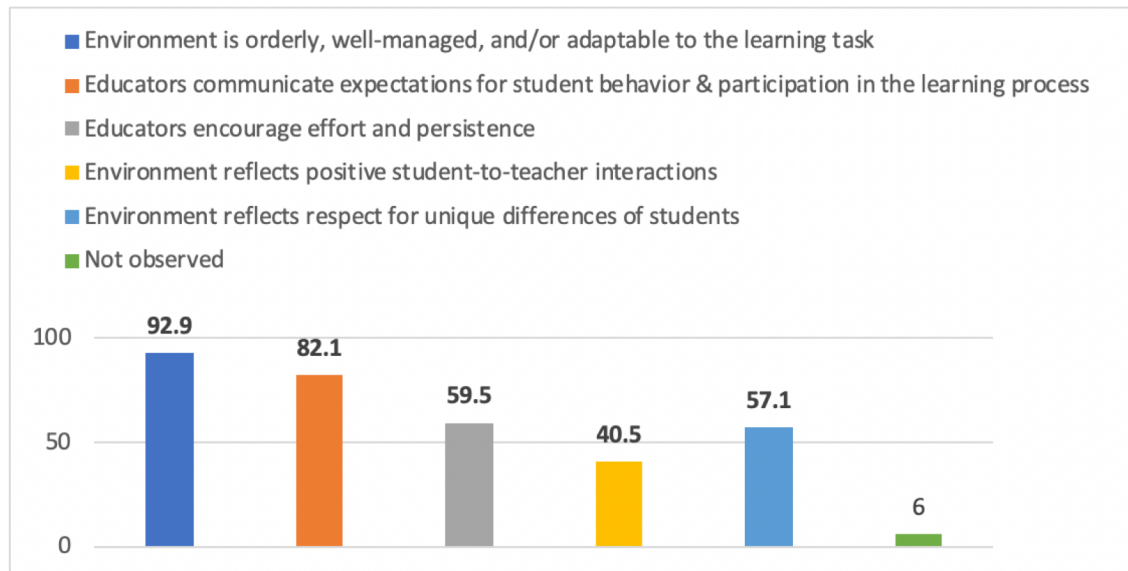
- In 2019, SB 419 extended a 2014 ban on suspensions and expulsions for willful defiance to apply to all students through grade 8 beginning in SY2019-20. The ban resulted in a significant Statewide decline in the number of suspensions for defiance-only offenses over the next several years. During this period, Rialto's peer districts have all decreased their suspension rates for students with disabilities, and all but one decreased their suspension rates for Black students, while Rialto's suspension rates for both groups – as well as for English learners and students as a whole – increased significantly. As a result, while Rialto has not always led its peers in suspensions, its increases during a period of decline for others have pushed it into the lead.

- Like its peers, Rialto's suspension rate for defiance-only offenses declined significantly from its peak in 2018-19; however, suspensions for drug-related and violent offenses increased significantly over the same period.

- Concerningly, if the district's internal discipline data is accurate, Rialto schools have continued to suspend some Black and Hispanic middle school students – including students with disabilities and English learners – for disruption/defiance-only offenses in both 2019-20 and 2022-23 despite the state ban.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Observations also suggest that teachers can do more to facilitate interpersonal relationships and increase student social-emotional competence.

- Positive student-to-teacher interactions were noted in 41% of observed classrooms; respect for students' unique differences – e.g., allowing students movement in the space and flexible learning settings within the classroom – were observed in 57% of classrooms. Boyd Elementary, a potential exemplar, demonstrated respect for students' individual differences in 100% of the observed classrooms.

- Students demonstrated positive student-to-student interactions in 37% of observed classrooms. Boyd Elementary and Carter High School were the positive exceptions.

- Students demonstrated respect for others' points of view in only 7% of observed classrooms.*

Classroom Walkthrough Data: Learning Environment

■ Environment is orderly, well-managed, and/or adaptable to the learning task
■ Educators communicate expectations for student behavior & participation in the learning process
■ Educators encourage effort and persistence
■ Environment reflects positive student-to-teacher interactions
■ Environment reflects respect for unique differences of students
■ Not observed

*Observation findings do not suggest that students demonstrated negative student-to-student interactions or that they did not demonstrate respect for others' points of view. Instead, students were provided with few opportunities to interact during the time of the observation.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Stakeholders consistently cited a need to focus on Tier 1 instruction.

- Many respondents noted that Tier 1 remains a significant challenge with inconsistent and often ineffective classroom management routines and lack of rigorous and engaging instruction leading to student behaviors that then require intervention. That said, classroom observations found well-managed classrooms.

- There is concern among central office leaders and staff that teachers and principals currently do not have sufficient capacity to provide effective Tier 1 instruction. They also believe that, for inclusion to be implemented effectively, behavior specialists who can support all tiers will be needed to help with tiered interventions.

- District staff shared a belief that math and reading programs are not being implemented by teachers with fidelity or rigor.

- While principals are appreciative of Reading Specialists, they noted that they often don't have access to this support, as specialists often serve as substitutes in their schools.

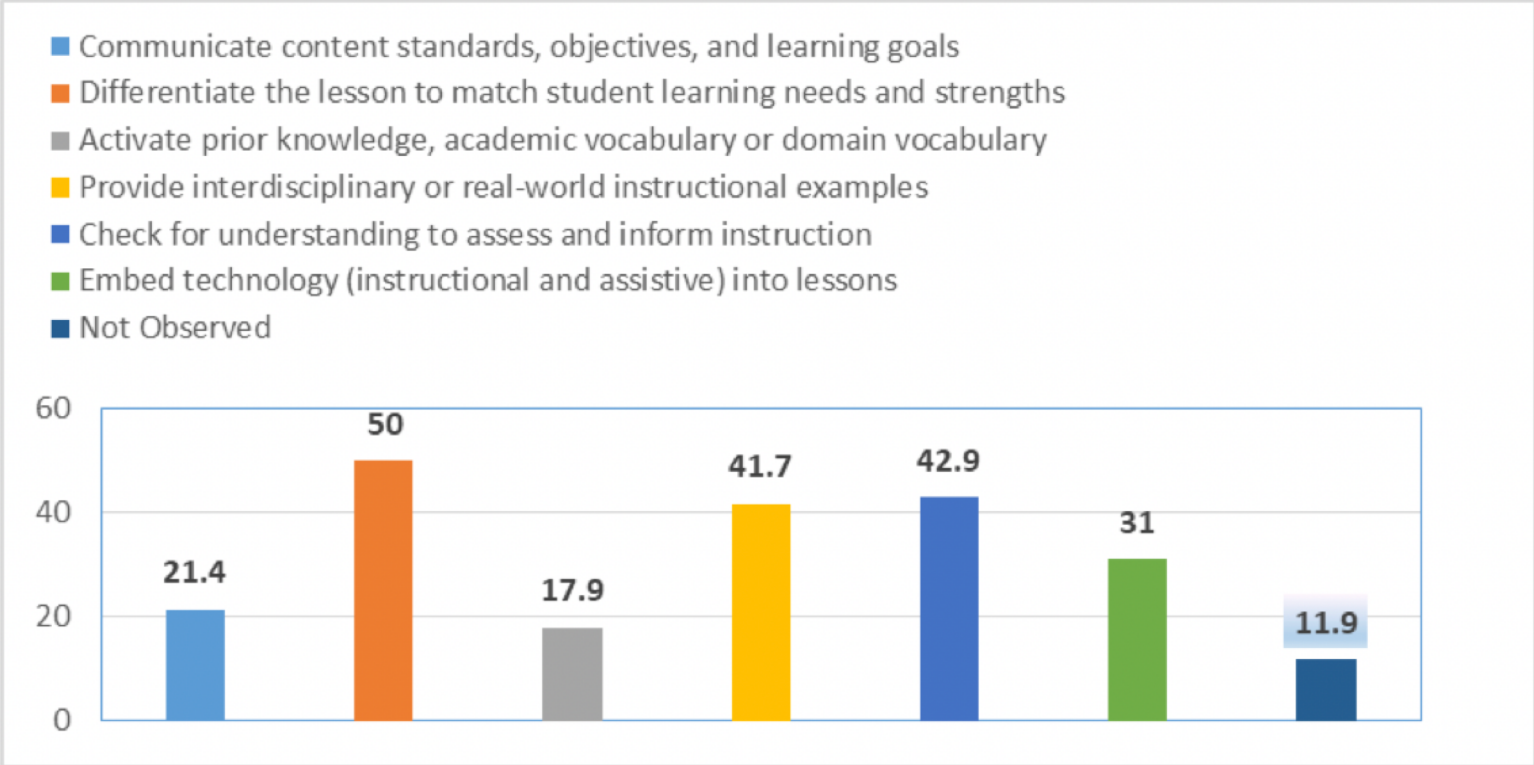- According to elementary principals, "we need to focus on instruction."

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Though it is explicitly named in the district's strategic plan, Universal Design for Learning was not named as a priority focus area by administrators or teachers. Classroom observation and survey results reveal limited use of UDL principles when planning for high-impact instruction to support all students' access to and progress in grade-level standards.

- Only 39% of both educators and school leaders report that teachers utilize collaborative planning and instruction that includes application of UDL principles and formative assessment.

- Lessons aligned to California Common Core State Standards in 85% of observed classrooms, but teachers communicated learning objectives/targets aligned to the standards to students in 21% of classrooms.

- Teachers were infrequently observed providing immediate, specific feedback on the learning objectives/targets.

- Educators differentiated the lesson to match student learning needs and strengths in half of the classrooms observed; opportunities for students to show what they learned in varied ways (e.g., unique thoughts and ideas, projects or illustrations, etc.) were observed in one-quarter (26%) of classrooms. Boyd and Dollahan Elementary teachers used this strategy more frequently (67% of observed classrooms), and their students demonstrated differentiation in learning products in over 50% of observed classrooms.

- Educators activated prior knowledge, academic vocabulary, or domain vocabulary in 18% of observed classrooms. Carter High School educators used this strategy in 66% of classrooms.

- Interdisciplinary or real-world instructional examples were seen in 42% of observed classrooms and embedded instructional or assistive technology were observed in 31%. Here, too, Boyd Elementary School could serve as a district model, with this strategy observed in nearly all classrooms.

- Educators checked for understanding to assess and inform instruction in less than half (43%) of classrooms observed. Rather than checking for conceptual understanding, most checked for understanding of the activity students were to work on during the period.

- Boyd, Dollahan, and Trapp Elementary Schools and Carter High School have implemented inclusion in most, if not all, classrooms and demonstrated the highest percentage of UDL principles across all observed district schools.

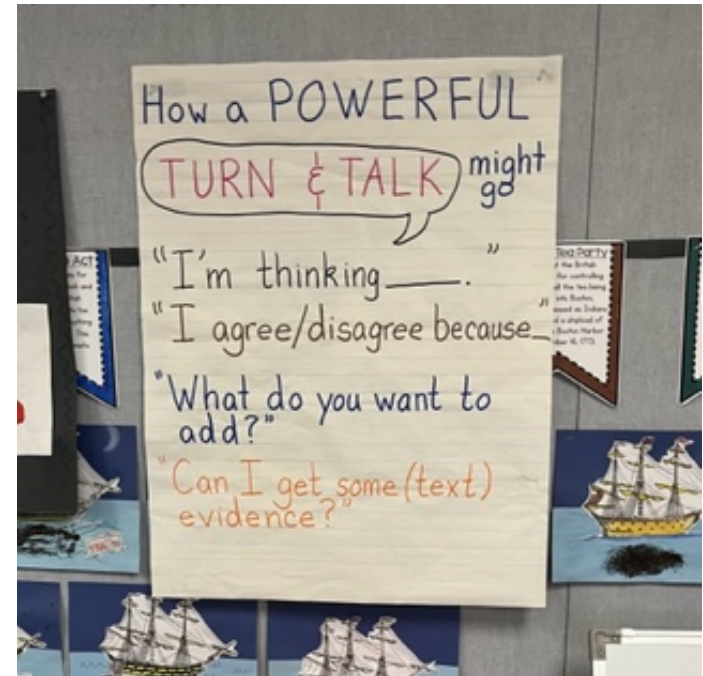# FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Classroom Walkthrough Data: Universal Design for Learning Principles

- ■ Communicate content standards, objectives, and learning goals
- ■ Differentiate the lesson to match student learning needs and strengths
- ■ Activate prior knowledge, academic vocabulary or domain vocabulary
- ■ Provide interdisciplinary or real-world instructional examples
- ■ Check for understanding to assess and inform instruction
- ■ Embed technology (instructional and assistive) into lessons
- ■ Not Observed

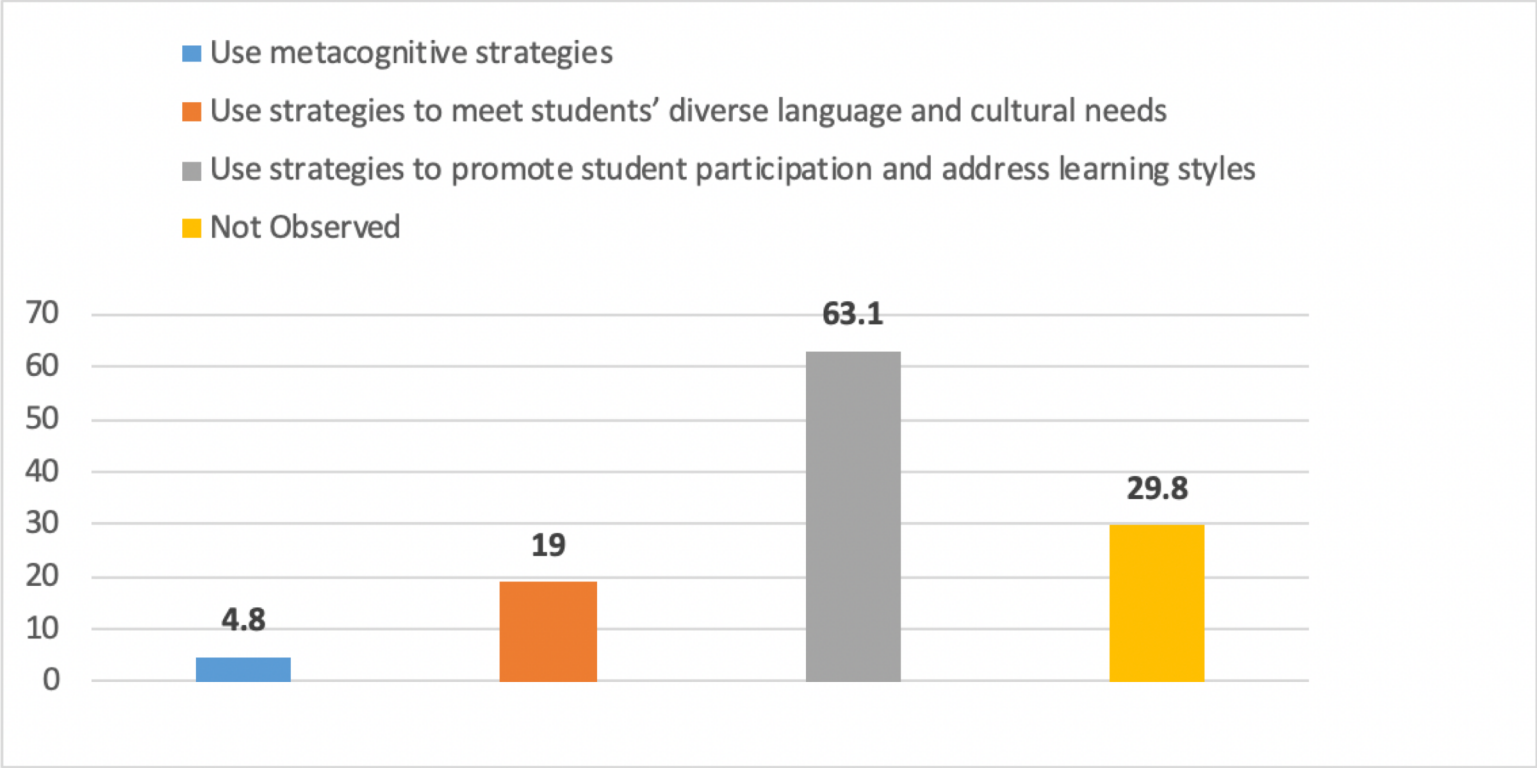# FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Classroom observations reveal limited evidence that best-practice strategies were used to deliver high-impact instruction to increase access to and progress in grade-level standards.

- Educators rarely (5% of observed classrooms) used metacognitive strategies to empower students to think about their thinking, reflect on how they learn, and learn how to approach tasks so they can better participate in them. Student engagement in metacognitive tasks was observed in virtually none of the observed classrooms.

- Educators used strategies to meet students' diverse language and cultural needs infrequently (19% of observed classrooms).

- Students with disabilities benefit from strategies to support engagement and high-level thinking in the learning process. Classroom observations reveal:

  - Limited sensory and visual supports (e.g., real-life objects, manipulative, illustrations, diagrams, color-coded distinctions, body movements, facial expression, gestures, and hand motions).

  - Limited use of techniques like scaffolding of skills to reach the learning goals; chunking to tackle long sections of reading text; or mnemonics to remember essential steps in a process.

  - Limited use (17% of observed classrooms) of cue, questions, and advanced organizers.

- Educators were observed using strategies to promote student participation and address learning styles in about two-thirds (63%) of classrooms. Most provided each student with text, technology, or a handout to focus students and increase physical participation, though educators at Trapp Elementary used strategies to engage students in thinking and talking about the lesson in 97% of the observed classrooms. Here, too, Boyd, Dollahan and Trapp Elementary Schools could serve as district models of this strategy.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

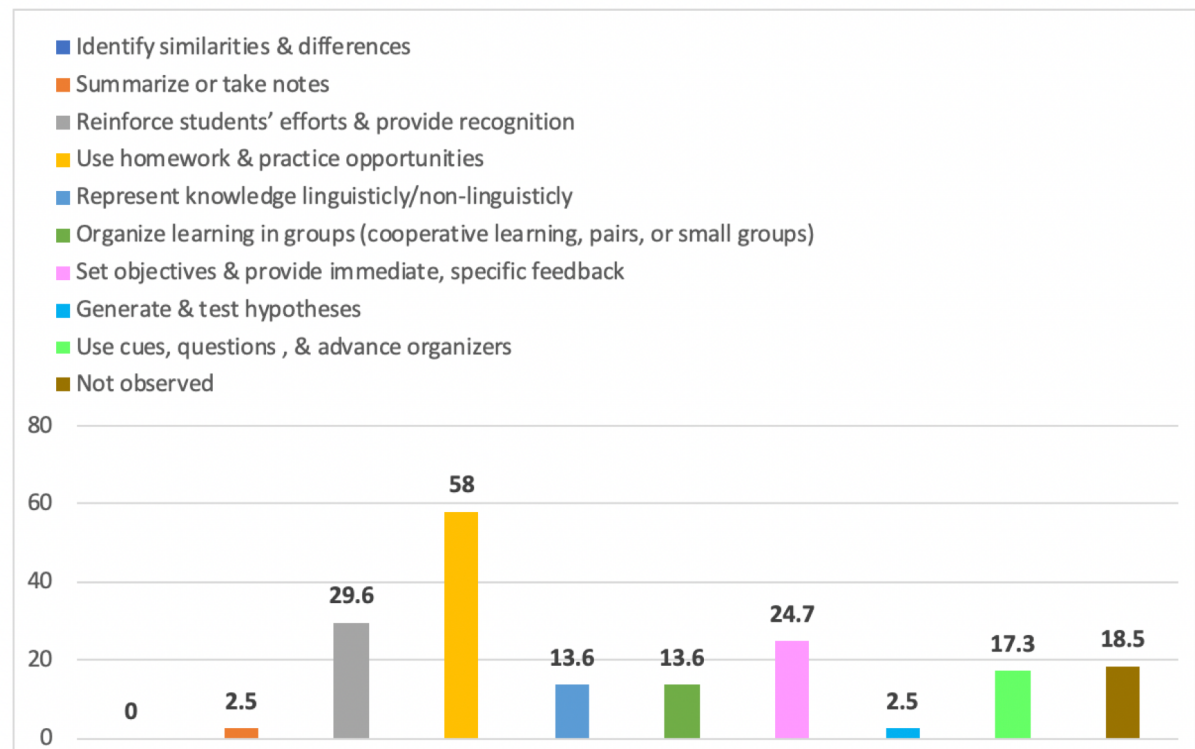**Classroom Walkthrough Data: Best Practice Strategies for Engagement and High-Level Thinking**

- Use metacognitive strategies
- Use strategies to meet students' diverse language and cultural needs
- Use strategies to promote student participation and address learning styles
- Not Observed

4.8 | 19 | 63.1 | 29.8

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Strategies that accelerate learning were infrequently seen in observed RUSD classrooms. Educators used strategies that accelerate learning, including the Marzano high-yield strategies, infrequently. For example, educators:

- Organized learning in groups (e.g., pairs or small groups) in 14% of observed classrooms.

- Prompted students to engage in dialogue about learning in 13% of observed classrooms and conduct a peer assessment of learning (e.g., critiquing the perspective of others) in 25%.

- Used cues, questions, & advance organizers in 17% of observed classrooms.

- Used homework and practice opportunities in 58% of observed classrooms, though feedback on practice – an important component –in 25% of observed classrooms.

- Asked students to summarize or take notes in 2% of observed classrooms.

- Asked students to generate and test hypotheses in 3% of observed classrooms.

- Asked students to represent knowledge linguistically and non-linguistically in 14% of observed classrooms.

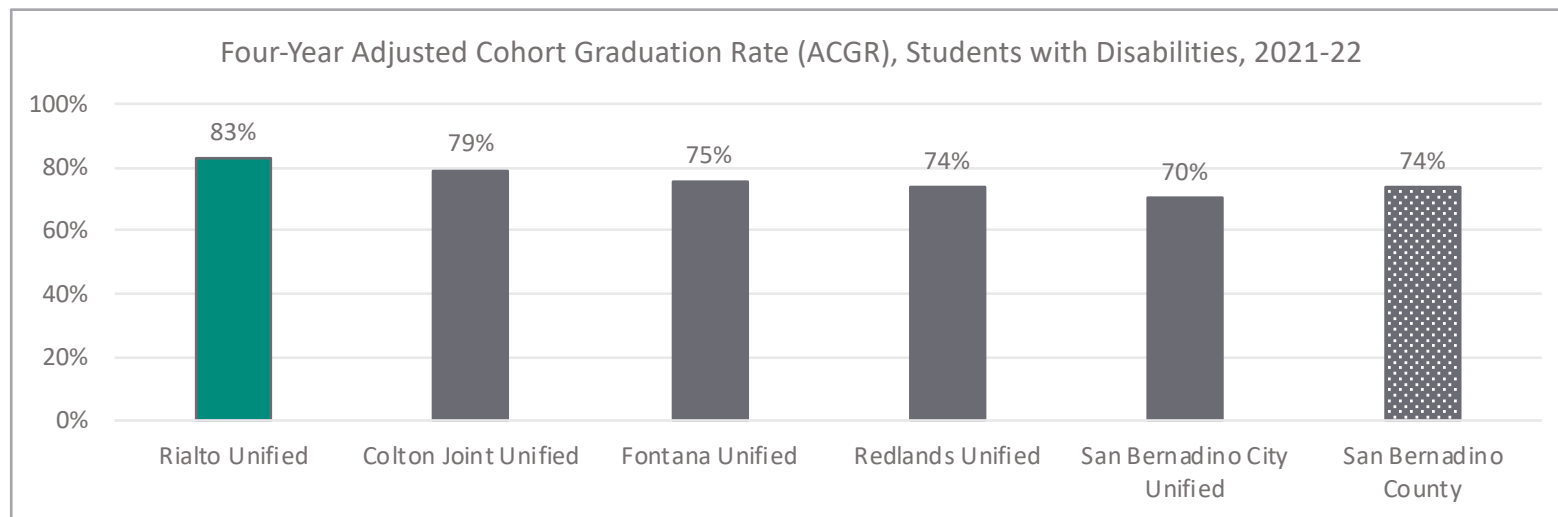- Reinforced students' efforts and provided recognition in 30% of observed classrooms.

Classroom Walkthrough Data: Strategies that Accelerate Learning

Legend:
- Identify similarities & differences
- Summarize or take notes
- Reinforce students' efforts & provide recognition
- Use homework & practice opportunities
- Represent knowledge linguisticly/non-linguisticly
- Organize learning in groups (cooperative learning, pairs, or small groups)
- Set objectives & provide immediate, specific feedback
- Generate & test hypotheses
- Use cues, questions, & advance organizers
- Not observed

Values: 0, 2.5, 29.6, 58, 13.6, 13.6, 24.7, 2.5, 17.3, 18.5

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Despite educators' best efforts, a lack of clear instructional direction, structure, and support has resulted in low academic outcomes for all students, and especially students with disabilities.

- Rialto's achievement rates for students with disabilities are lower than the county as a whole and at or below all peer districts in both reading and math.

- Despite these low outcomes, 82.8% of all students with disabilities graduate from high school with a diploma – a higher rate than all of Rialto's peer districts and the county as a whole. Interviews with parents, and validated in various interviews with district personnel, indicate that some of these graduates with disabilities graduate without being able to read.

Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), Students with Disabilities, 2021-22

District	Rate
Rialto Unified	83%
Colton Joint Unified	79%
Fontana Unified	75%
Redlands Unified	74%
San Bernadino City Unified	70%
San Bernadino County	74%

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

There is general agreement that each school has its own process for writing and monitoring implementation of IEPs.

- Interviews with program specialists and administrators confirm that schools develop and manage their IEP development processes without central office oversight and use their own methods for counting minutes towards IEP goals.

- Only half (50%) of teachers responding to the survey agreed that services for students with disabilities are consistently delivered and documented according to required timelines, while one-quarter disagreed.

- Students are not engaged in the development of their IEPs. In surveys, only about one-quarter of educators (26% of all educators and 27% of special education teachers) and school leaders (22%) reported that students with disabilities in their school are engaged in the development of their IEPs and understand their goals and accommodations. Greater portions of all groups – 34% of educators, 32% of special education teachers, and 43% of school leaders – *disagreed*.

- Community advocates referenced inconsistencies – and a general low level of quality – across IEP meetings. They also raised concerns that case carriers recycle student goals instead of tailoring them for the specific strengths and needs of each student.

- To ensure that their students receive IEPs with appropriate services for their students' needs, many parents enlist the help of advocates. This raises equity concerns, including that advocate-supported students are perceived to receive more support than those who cannot afford to or do not wish to retain their services.

The recently hired Program Specialists are intended to help increase consistency and quality in IEP development, as well as compliance with their administration.

- Specialists described working with teachers to plan for IEP meetings and modeling facilitation practices. So far, these efforts have occurred on a case-by-case basis. Specialists cite limited opportunities for professional development with special educators as a barrier for system-wide support and quality improvement.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Stakeholders shared that accommodations, modifications, and behavior supports are inconsistently implemented across the district.

- While most educators (71%) and school leaders (90%) responding to the survey reported that all students in their school have *access* to grade-level curriculum, fewer (54% of educators and 75% of school leaders) reported that appropriate classroom accommodations and modifications are provided so students can access grade-level content.

- Only half of educators (50% of educators as a whole and 54% of special education teachers) and one-third of school leaders (64%) responding to the survey reported that related services and behavior supports in their school are individually designed, implemented, and monitored to align to student need and desired outcomes, while one-quarter of each group (25-26%) disagreed.

- Applied behavioral analysts reported that, while they work with educators to develop behavior plans, implementation is sporadic. Stakeholders expressed concerns that there are not currently enough ABAs to adequately support students and teachers on behavior issues, although improved schoolwide approaches to behavior problems are also needed.

- Administrators generally appreciated the supports they receive from Special Services instructional specialists, though shared that until recently, those team members have been too focused on compliance issues to fully support campuses with designing appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications for students.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Processes and procedures for admissions, eligibility, and interventions for pre-K and transitional kindergarten students with disabilities are concerning.

- Despite a stated policy of accepting all students irrespective of disability, staff and advocates raised concerns that students are unable to enroll until they are potty trained.

- Stakeholders reported that parents of students seeking enrollment who were suspected of a disability were told that their children must get assessed prior to enrollment or be required to engage in several weeks of SST interventions prior to special education assessment, even when explicitly requested by families. Putting preschool students through several weeks of SST team study and intervention may run afoul of IDEA requirements that students suspected of disability are required to be treated with all the program and procedural safeguards (including child find and timely assessments) as if they have actually been assessed as eligible. Further data regarding referral sources, and the number of students referred, identified, and appropriately served is an area for further review.

- According to the California Department of Education's 2020-21 Annual Performance Report for Rialto, the rate of timely IEPs for students transitioning from IDEA Part C (infant services) to Part B (school-age services) was 21.43% - falling far short of the 100% target. Early intervention staff indicated that they "almost never" receive requests for transition as required for the transition from C to B. This process should begin at age 2.5, with an assessment and warm handoff process.

- These reports raise questions about interagency collaboration between the district and the local Regional Center. It is also unclear as to the sources of preschool referrals other than those from the Regional Center.

- Rialto also fell short of Least Restrictive Environment targets for its preschool students with disabilities on its 2020-21 Annual Performance Report.

- Across interviews, stakeholders shared the importance of young children succeeding in school and intervening with special needs early. Conversations regarding eligible students being enrolled without discriminatory scrutiny are being had across departments. This bodes well for future improvements in this area. Accountability for resolution is critical as preschool enrollment sets the tone for district-family relationships.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

RUSD's secondary transition programming for students ages 18-22 faces significant challenges.

- John Milar High School is the district's continuation program for students aged 18-22. It serves about 200 students who come from other high schools, many after their first semester of senior year. A third (33%) of Milar students are identified as students with disabilities, many receiving services for mild-to-moderate disabilities.

- Within Milar, the ATP Aspire adult transition program serves about 45 students receiving services for moderate-to-severe disabilities, split among four teachers. The program's goal is to prepare students to enter the workforce; it uses the Transition Curriculum, focused on basic math and reading as well as life and social skills.

- The ATP Aspire program had an additional (fifth) teacher who focused on students with significant behavior needs. That teacher reportedly left 1.5 years ago and was not replaced. According to school staff, dispersing students with significant behavior needs across the other four teachers creates significant challenges; teachers must often remain on campus with these students when their class goes off site with workability aides, curtailing their ability to lead instruction during community-based lessons.

- Program staff cited additional challenges, including a need for clarity on their budget to aide in program planning, inconsistent attendance of aides, lack of a substitute pool for aides, need for another van, and inability to house vans on campus (requiring aides to transport vans to and from other facilities). An additional challenge is the state of Milar's facility, which is old, unattractive, and sets a negative tone for the students it serves.

- Staff also shared concerns about the quality of opportunities provided to students at two job sites – Walmart and the 99 Cent Store – and the general management of those programs.

FINDINGS: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Stakeholders also shared general concerns about transition planning and practices.

- According to advocates and parents, transition goals do not play to the individual interests and strengths of students. One shared: "90% of the time, we see the same goal: Student will look up three colleges and what it will take to join those colleges. They don't even know how to read." Parents also expressed concerns that, rather than being encouraged to pursue their personal or professional interests, their students are being prepared for undesirable jobs.

- Some shared a concern that students are being forced to graduate at 18, though they are eligible for services until age 22.

- In surveys, few educators (18%) and school leaders (32%) agreed that families of high school students with disabilities are provided the support they need to connect their children to appropriate transition services. Similarly, few educators (18%) and school leaders (29%) agreed that high school students with disabilities are provided appropriate instruction in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning. Many educators, school leaders, and even special education teachers reported that they were unsure about these services.

> "My child goes to support classes instead of electives. Instead of art, he's picking up trash and clearing off tables at the park. What does that tell me? The expectation for SPED kids is that they are gong to pick up trash at the park."
>
> - Parent

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology
- Current State Findings
  - Leadership
  - Systems & Structures
  - Learning Environment & Specialized Services
  - High Expectations
  - Family & Community Engagement
  - Human Capital
- Recommendations

CURRENT STATE: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Growth Mindset • Staff believe that intelligence exists in every student and can be developed with appropriate supports. • Staff praise student effort and process, not results. • Staff display completed student work and share work is in progress. • Growth mindset visuals are posted throughout the school environment. • Staff encourage students to share mistakes and learnings. • Educators use grading rubrics for process and outcomes. • Staff provide students with frequent and specific feedback. • Staff support a consistent mode of communication (e.g., assistive technology) for each student.	◐	• There are mixed feelings among stakeholders about the extent to which educators and administrators have high expectations for students with disabilities. • Classroom observations found that teachers use instructional strategies to promote a growth mindset among students, but work is needed to impact student achievement.

CURRENT STATE: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Presumed Competence • All students have access to rigorous grade-level curriculum. • In the absence of conclusive evidence, teachers assume that all students can participate (with appropriate supports) in an age-appropriate general education curriculum and form meaningful relationships. • Schools use appropriate assessments to measure and show what students can do with the proper supports.	◐	• Classroom observations found that educators' learning tasks did not demonstrate a "presumed competence" or high level expectations for students. • Classroom observations found that student tasks reflected relatively low levels of rigor and students experienced limited opportunities to demonstrate learning through high-level thinking tasks. • Survey results similarly show limited opportunities for students to access and participate in rigorous coursework or demonstrate the ability to engage with more challenging material.

CURRENT STATE: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Culturally Relevant Practices • Teachers approach their students and instruction with an asset-based mindset. • Teachers make authentic connections between academic learning and students' prior knowledge, native language, culture, and values. • Curriculum includes content representative of all students. • Staff educate themselves about students' communities, cultures, and histories. • Teachers recognize how their own identities and experiences affect their beliefs and actions and engage in self-assessment to better understand how their biases and perceptions influence teaching practices. • Tools and supports to address behaviors (racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, unearned privilege, Eurocentrism, etc.) are available and accessed by staff.	◑	

CURRENT STATE: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Positive Learning Environment • School leadership and staff are invested in the success of all students. • Processes exist for collecting and using perception data from key stakeholders.		
Student Engagement • All students are included in all school activities. • All students are held to high expectations for attendance. • All students, with and without disabilities, have embedded opportunities to interact with each other in academic and non-academic settings. • All students are actively engaged in their own learning. • All students are included in decision-making processes. • Students with disabilities are engaged in the development of their IEPs and understand their goals and accommodations.		• The Divergent Games were widely praised by parents and teachers as a model for including students with disabilities in a high-profile and fun activity, but some administrators expressed concerns about prioritizing a showcase event over fundamental issues of teaching and learning for students with disabilities. • Classroom observations found that students had few opportunities to engage with peers in academic and non-academic settings. • Specific communication about what Rialto students are to know and be able to do is needed if students are to take control of their own learning. • Strategies to better engage Rialto's students with disabilities in their own learning are needed.

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

There are mixed feelings among stakeholders about the extent to which educators and administrators have high expectations for students with disabilities.

- According to one district administrator, principals and teachers have high expectations for students with disabilities, but "many need to develop the skill to make sure that students have the scaffolding to access grade-level standards through coaching and professional development."

- In surveys, 66% of educators and 61% of school leaders reported that, in the absence of conclusive evidence, teachers in their school assume that all students can participate (with appropriate supports) in an age-appropriate general education curriculum and form meaningful relationships, while somewhat larger majorities (71% of educators and 70% of school leaders) reported that staff in their school believe that intelligence exists in every student and can be developed with appropriate supports.

- Secondary teachers interviewed said that Rialto "doesn't have high expectations for our students with disabilities" and that these students are not getting the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in alternative ways.

- As noted previously, many stakeholders noted a need for disability awareness and the full inclusion of students in classrooms and campuses.

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Classroom observations found that teachers use instructional strategies to promote a growth mindset among students, but work is needed to impact student achievement.
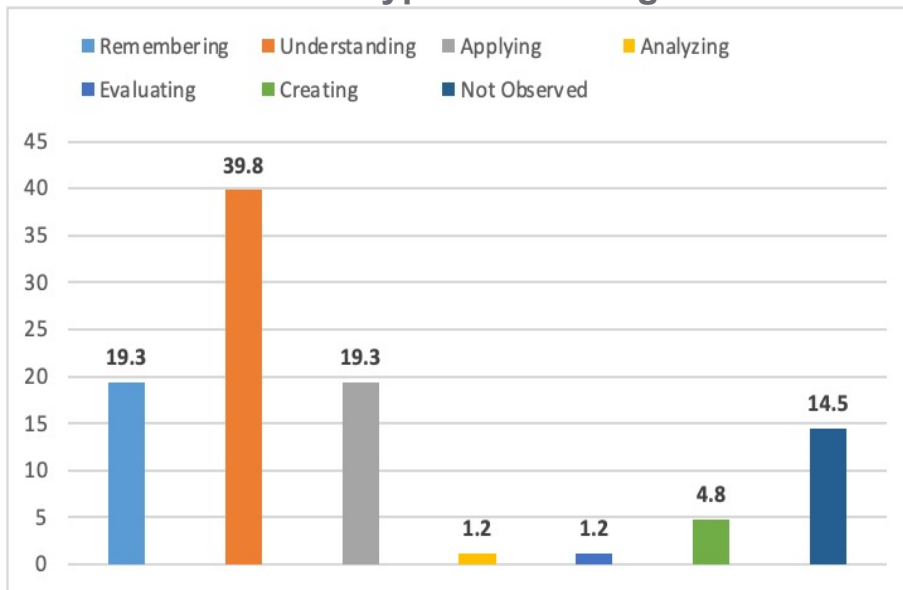
- Educators encouraged effort and persistence to students for following expected classroom routines and behaviors to promote student engagement in the learning process in 60% of observed classrooms. Elementary educators demonstrated the use of these strategies in 71% of observed classrooms.

- Students demonstrated perseverance in the learning task in about half (49%) of observed classrooms. Students at Boyd Elementary showed this behavior in 77% of the observed classrooms.

- Educators set objectives and provided immediate, specific feedback on student progress in 25% of observed classrooms.

- Student work was hanging on walls in many observed classrooms, and in surveys, 79% of educators and 91% of school leaders reported that staff in their school display student work. However, rubrics defining processes and outcomes were not observed during walkthroughs. About half (55%) of educator survey respondents report that educators in their school use grading rubrics for process and outcomes.

- About two-thirds of educators – and somewhat similar percentages of school leaders – reported in surveys that staff in their school praise student effort and process, not results (67%); encourage students to share mistakes and learnings (68%); and provide students with frequent and specific feedback (63%).
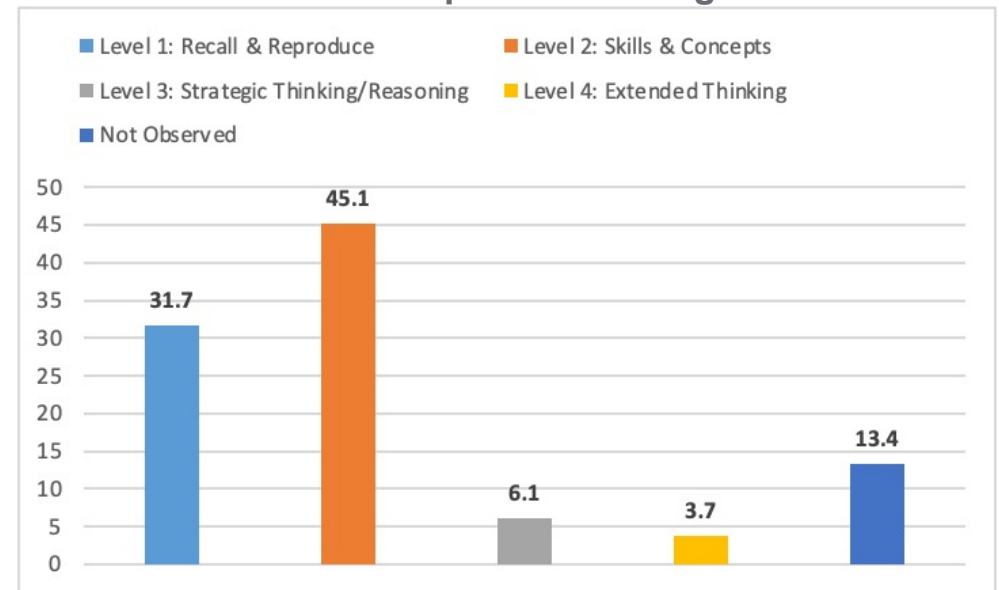
FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Classroom observations found that educators' learning tasks did not demonstrate a "presumed competence" or high level expectations for students.

- Observations found few student opportunities to interact with the grade-level learning standards in ways that challenge students to think at high levels.

- In most classrooms observed, instruction typically occurred at the lowest levels of rigor (Bloom), with 20% and 40% of classrooms asking students only to "remember and understand."

- The required depth of student understanding (Webb) was found to be at Level 2: Skills and Concepts in 45% of classrooms observed and Level 1: Recall and Reproduce in 32%.

- Students at Boyd, Trapp, and Carter were engaged at a Depth of Knowledge Level 3: Strategic Thinking/Reasoning more frequently compared to other observed schools. Depth of Knowledge has been a focus at Carter High School.

Bloom's Type of Thinking

Legend: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating, Not Observed

- Remembering: 19.3
- Understanding: 39.8
- Applying: 19.3
- Analyzing: 1.2
- Evaluating: 1.2
- Creating: 4.8
- Not Observed: 14.5

Webb's Depth of Thinking

Legend: Level 1: Recall & Reproduce, Level 2: Skills & Concepts, Level 3: Strategic Thinking/Reasoning, Level 4: Extended Thinking, Not Observed

- Level 1: Recall & Reproduce: 31.7
- Level 2: Skills & Concepts: 45.1
- Level 3: Strategic Thinking/Reasoning: 6.1
- Level 4: Extended Thinking: 3.7
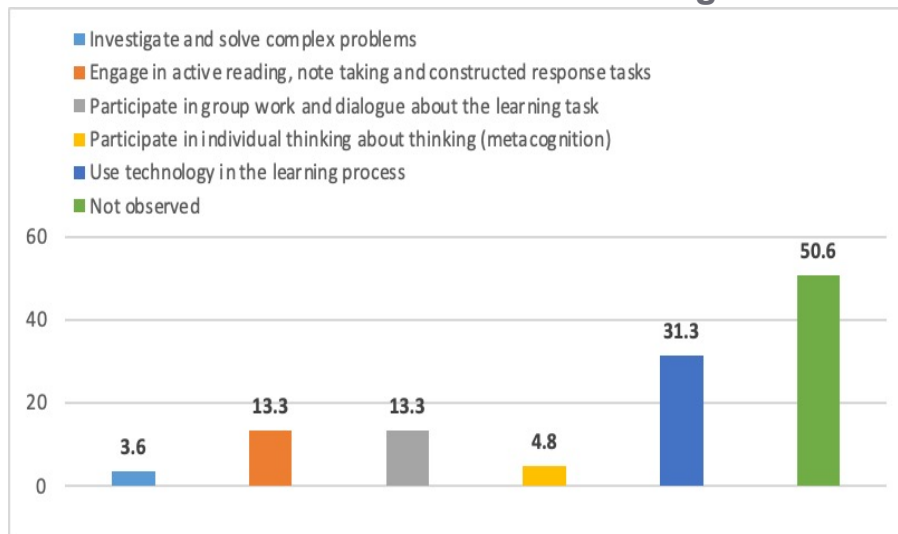- Not Observed: 13.4
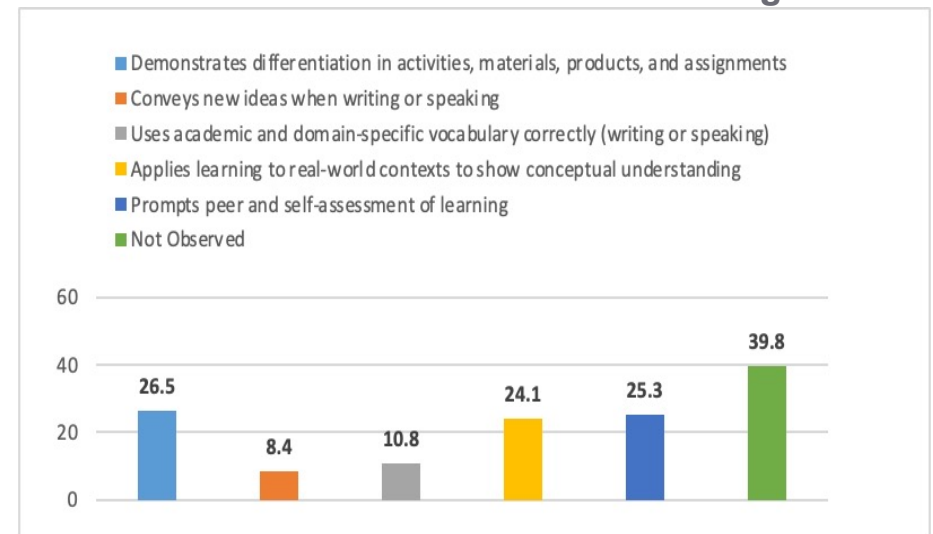
FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Classroom observations found that student tasks reflected relatively low levels of rigor and students experienced limited opportunities to demonstrate learning through high-level thinking tasks. For example, Rialto students rarely:

- Investigated and solved complex problems and use technology (4% of observed classrooms) .
- Participated in thinking about thinking (metacognition) (less than 5% of classrooms) .
- Participated in group work and dialogue about the learning task (13% of classrooms).
- Engaged in active reading, noting, and constructed response tasks (13% of classrooms) .
- Used homework and practice opportunities allowing them to apply the knowledge (58% of classrooms).
- Conveyed new ideas when writing or speaking (8% of observed classrooms).
- Applied learning to a real-world context to show conceptual understanding (24% of classrooms). Carter High was the exemplar (31% of classrooms).
- Use academic and domain-specific vocabulary when writing or speaking (11% of classrooms). Boyd Elementary students demonstrated learning this way in 67% of observed classrooms.
- Prompted peer and self-assessment of learning (25% of classrooms). Once again, Boyd was a model in this area.

Student Interaction with Learning Task

- Investigate and solve complex problems
- Engage in active reading, note taking and constructed response tasks
- Participate in group work and dialogue about the learning task
- Participate in individual thinking about thinking (metacognition)
- Use technology in the learning process
- Not observed

3.6　13.3　13.3　4.8　31.3　50.6

Student Demonstration of Learning

- Demonstrates differentiation in activities, materials, products, and assignments
- Conveys new ideas when writing or speaking
- Uses academic and domain-specific vocabulary correctly (writing or speaking)
- Applies learning to real-world contexts to show conceptual understanding
- Prompts peer and self-assessment of learning
- Not Observed

26.5　8.4　10.8　24.1　25.3　39.8

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Survey results similarly show limited opportunities for students to access and participate in rigorous coursework or demonstrate the ability to engage with more challenging material.

- In surveys, only 59% of educators as a whole and 55% of special education teachers reported that rigorous course of study is accessible to all students in their schools.

- Only 57% of educators as a whole and 61% of special education teachers report that their school uses appropriate assessments to measure and show what students can do with the proper supports.

- Only 55% of educators as a whole and 61% of special education teachers report that staff in their school support a consistent mode of communication (e.g., assistive technology) for each student.

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The Divergent Games were widely praised by parents and teachers as a model for including students with disabilities in a high-profile and fun activity, but some administrators expressed concerns about prioritizing a showcase event over fundamental issues of teaching and learning for students with disabilities.

- Questions were raised as to whether the funds and staff time could be devoted in other ways.

Classroom observations found that students had few opportunities to engage with peers in academic and non-academic settings.

- Students were observed participating in group work or in dialogue with others about the learning task in 13% of observed classrooms.

- Rarely were students asked to share their perspectives or listen to understand the perspective of others. At no time were students asked to critique the perspective of others.

- Students demonstrated positive student-to-student interactions in approximately one-third (37%) of observed classrooms and demonstrated respect for others' points of view in only 7% of observed classrooms.

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Specific communication about what Rialto students are to know and be able to do is needed if students are to take control of their own learning.

- Educators were infrequently observed (21% of classrooms) communicating learning objectives/targets aligned to standards to students and rarely posted learning standards, objectives, or targets in student-friendly terms. Students in most classrooms were observed focusing on compliantly completing a task rather than acquiring new skills or knowledge.

- Few educators (24% of observed classrooms) provided immediate, specific feedback on the learning objectives/targets to support students.

- FourPoint did not see opportunities at the start of the lesson for students to self-reflect on the learning target and their background knowledge, take a diagnostic assessment, or view exemplars, rubrics, etc., to help foster self-reflection and goal-setting.

FINDINGS: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Strategies to better engage Rialto's students with disabilities in their own learning are needed.

- In surveys, only one-quarter of educators agreed – and one-third *disagreed* – that students are active participants in their IEPs.

- Only 37% of educators as a whole and 34% of special education teachers agreed that all students are actively engaged in their own learning, while an equal portion of each group disagreed. (Meanwhile, a greater portion of school leaders – 60% – agreed.)

- Classroom observations showed that Rialto educators planned for some differentiation in the lesson to match student learning needs (50% of observed classrooms), but student choice and voice in the way in which learning would be differentiated (i.e., learning topics, options for how to complete assignments, and products to demonstrate learning, etc.) was rarely observed (26% of observed classrooms).

- Educators reinforced student effort and provided recognition in just over one-quarter (29%) of observed classrooms.

Note: One teacher at Trapp Elementary provided students with specific actions to encourage student efforts.

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology

- **Current State Findings**

  - Leadership

  - Systems & Structures

  - Learning Environment & Specialized Services

  - High Expectations

  - **Family & Community Engagement**

  - Human Capital

- Recommendations

CURRENT STATE: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Communication • Staff communicate and work effectively with families. • Staff support families through their child's transition between grade levels. • Families receive required notifications and invitations, and they attend meetings. • Staff are skilled in communicating effectively with families about their child's disability.		• In focus groups, parents shared that a lack of communication and transparency has broken their trust with the district. • School leaders have a rosier view of family engagement and communication than do educators. • Both administrators and educators report that staff do not receive training on working with families. • Special Services is establishing channels for improved communication and collaboration with families.

CURRENT STATE: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Collaboration • Families are included in development of school materials, with attention paid to language and culture. • Families of SWDs are active in the parent-teacher organization. • Family input and needs are collected through a variety of data-collection tools. • Families of SWDs are involved with school community activities. • Concerns of families are resolved in a timely manner. • The district has a special education family advisory group.	(pie chart, one quarter filled)	• While the district does administer an annual survey for families of students with disabilities and is attempting to gather more information about common challenges through RAPPSS meetings, opportunities for school-level input and inclusion appear limited. • Educators perceive greater challenges in family inclusion and collaboration than school leaders.
Resource Center & Training • A family resource center, with staff skilled in special education, is available to all families. • Staff receive training on working with families. • Training for families on the IEP process is provided.	(pie chart, one quarter filled)	• The Special Services team is building capacity to provide more resources and training to families, though additional or school-based supports may also be beneficial.

CURRENT STATE: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Access • Families receive IEP documents in their native language. • Families receive information in multiple formats. • Virtual IEP meetings and electronic signature functionality are available.	◑	• While language supports are available for families, opportunities exist to make IEP meetings and information easier to access.
Community Partnerships • District forms partnerships with community colleges, local businesses, and nonprofit organizations to create work-based training and employment opportunities for students. • District leverages community partnerships and expertise to complement the academic curriculum with real-life experiences. • District understands the community resources to support families.	◑	• Rialto has created several partnerships with local businesses to support transition programming, though their quality has been questioned by staff and families. • Special Services has included a list of community resources on its revamped website.

FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In focus groups, parents shared that a lack of communication and transparency has broken their trust with the district.

- Parents described a general lack of information about special education processes and procedures, having emails and phone calls to school site administrators and educators go unreturned, not having information about specialists working with their children – who and for what purpose, attempting to share information with educators and administrators about their child's behaviors and needs (e.g., eloping) and not being listened to, and their general frustration with being ignored and excluded from their child's life in school. While several called out specific administrators, teachers, and school psychologists who they believe treated them as partners, were responsive to their outreach, and had the interests of their children in mind, these staff members were described as the exception to their typical experience.

- Parents also shared that they do not feel they have a full sense of the supports and services that are available to their students – and that schools or the district intentionally minimizes services on their students' IEPs to align to the offerings at a particular school site (which vary by campus) instead of the needs of their child.

School leaders have a rosier view of family engagement and communication than do educators. Majorities of school leaders report that:

- Staff communicate and work effectively with families (78% of school leaders compared with 63% of educators).

- Staff support families through their child's transition between grade levels (87% of school leaders compared with just 53% of educators).

- Staff are skilled in communicating effectively with families about their child's disability (65% of school leaders and 51% of educators).

FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Both administrators and educators report that staff do not receive training on working with families.

- Only 12% of educators as a whole and 9% of special education teachers responding to the survey reported that staff receive training on working with families, while majorities (61% and 63%, respectively) *disagreed*.

- As on other measures, school leaders responding to the survey reported somewhat higher rates, but only 30% reported that staff receive training on working with families, while 35% disagreed.

Special Services is establishing channels for improved communication and collaboration with families.

- The department has established a regular meeting series for families of students with disabilities to share information about relevant topics and have a venue for families to gather and connect with one another and Special Services staff – the Rialto Advancement of Parent Perspectives on Special Services (RAPPSS). Parent focus group attendees who participated in meetings in 2022-23 described these sessions as "empowering" – they appreciated learning about resources or strategies for supporting their children and having open conversation with district leads and staff.

- Several parents indicated that advocate attendance at these meetings made them less effective, sharing a belief that it was inappropriate for advocates (who do not have children in the school district) to attend meetings hosted for parents, that advocates had on multiple occasions ignored the intended agenda and instead used it as an opportunity to voice their concerns and perhaps even market their services to attending families.

- Parents who had not attended were disappointed about missing out on the opportunity and wished that they had received information about the meetings. The Special Services team has already set dates and times for in-person and virtual meetings for the 2023-24 school year. Information about the events is posted on its website.

- Special Services has also revamped its website, including staff photos, general information about Special Education and related processes, a way to initiate an Alternate Dispute Resolution, and a list of parent resources, among other items. The hope is that program specialists can serve as a point of contact for parents, providing them with resources or working internally to resolve any challenges they face.
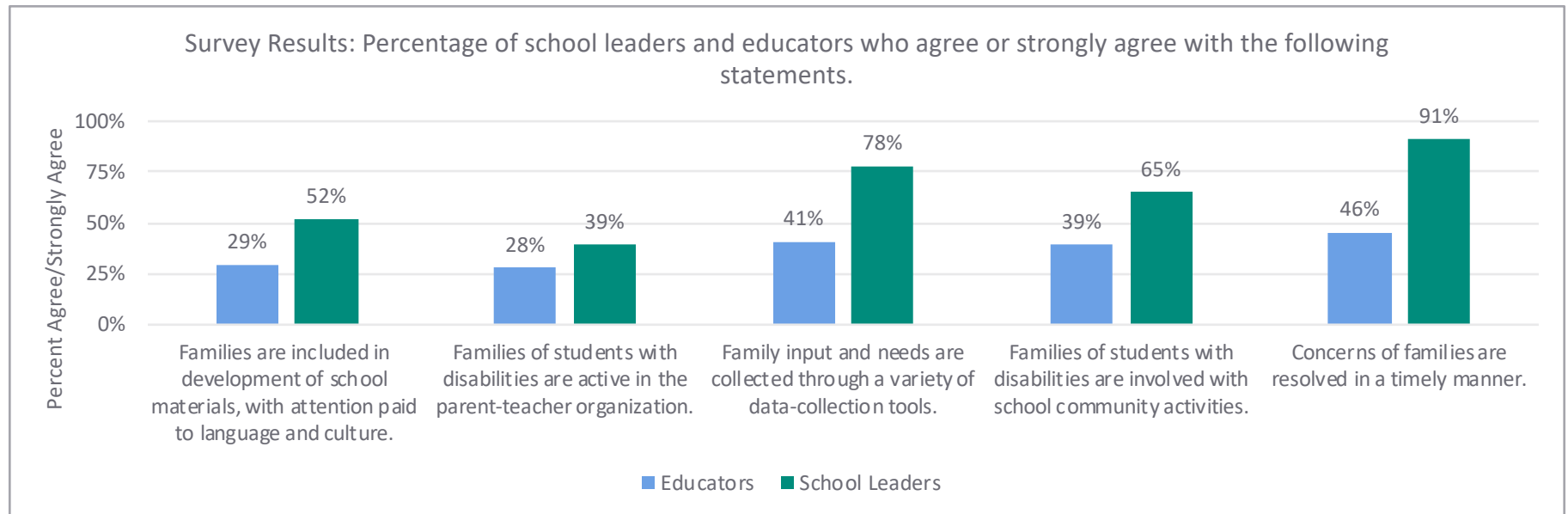
FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While the district does administer an annual survey for families of students with disabilities and is attempting to gather more information about common challenges through RAPPSS meetings, opportunities for school-level input and inclusion appear limited.

- Parent focus group participants shared a general perspective that they are unwelcomed and unheard at their children's campus. Many expressed a desire to volunteer in or visit their child's school, but that multiple administrative hurdles prevented them from doing so. "It feels like they are trying to keep parents out," one shared.

- While several parents called out the Divergent Games as an opportunity to celebrate their children, others shared that they saw this as a one-off exercise in inclusion and hoped for greater inclusion on an ongoing basis.

FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Educators perceive greater challenges in family inclusion and collaboration than school leaders.

- Most school leaders responding to the survey reported that family input and needs are collected through a variety of data-collection schools (78%) and that concerns of families are resolved in the timeline manner (91%), while less than half of educators (41% and 46%) agree.

- Similarly, one-third of school leaders (65%) reported that families of students with disabilities are involved in school community activities, while just over a third (39%) of educators agreed.

- Less than one-third of educators (29%) and half of school leaders (52%) responding to the survey reported that families are included in development of school materials with attention paid to language and culture.

- Less than half of educators (44%) reported that school leaders support meaningful collaboration with families.

- The two groups had a somewhat similar – though low – perception of participation in the parent-teacher organization for families of students with disabilities; just 28% of educations and 39% of school leaders reported that these families actively participate.

Survey Results: Percentage of school leaders and educators who agree or strongly agree with the following statements.

FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Special Services team is building capacity to provide more resources and training to families, though additional or school-based supports may also be beneficial.

- Families can access information about special education through the Special Services division. Through the program specialist role, the department is building capacity to better serve families at the district level.

- Training for educators and administrators on working with families is provided on a case-by-case basis via a coaching model; opportunities for district-wide training is limited.

- The IEP process is a named topic for RAPPSS meetings; a standalone training is not routinely provided.

- According to advocates and parents, the primary way for parents to learn about the IEP process and their rights within it is for a lengthy parent rights document to be read aloud during an IEP meeting, which school staff reportedly sometimes try to dissuade parents from electing.

While language supports are available for families, opportunities exist to make IEP meetings and information easier to access.

- The Special Services division has an interpreter on staff and access to additional interpretation services to support families' language access during meetings and to translate IEP materials into families' native language.

- Parents report receiving information via the district's communication channels, including text messages and voicemails. They shared that they do not see or receive Special Services resources or announcements at their campuses and that they often miss information sent via the district-wide platform due to the volume of information shared through those channels.

- According to Special Services team members, virtual IEP meeting attendance and electronic signature functionality are being rolled back after the pandemic, potentially creating a hardship for families.

FINDINGS: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Rialto has created several partnerships with local businesses to support transition programming, though their quality has been questioned by staff and families.

- Some families raised concerns about the opportunities their children have for real-life experiences (see Learning Environment & Specialized Services section).

Special Services has included a list of community resources on its revamped website.

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology
- **Current State Findings**
    - Leadership
    - Systems & Structures
    - Learning Environment & Specialized Services
    - High Expectations
    - Family & Community Engagement
    - **Human Capital**
- Recommendations

CURRENT STATE: HUMAN CAPITAL

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
High-Quality Staff • Staff hold full credentials/licensure and advanced degrees, micro credentials, or skills in specific content areas. • Staff are experts in working with students with and without disabilities. • Staff collaborate with specialized instructional support personnel as needed.	◐	• Like districts across the country, Rialto Unified is facing a shortage of qualified candidates for educator and support personnel roles. • Rialto has more ineffective, inexperienced, and not fully credentialed teachers than its peers. • The distribution of inexperienced and ineffective staff across Rialto schools is uneven. • Surveys indicate low confidence in staff expertise. • Walkthrough and student achievement data and parent reports also suggest areas of growth for Rialto educators. • Staffing challenges appear to be negatively impacting the provision of individualized instruction for students with disabilities. • To help address shortages in 2022-23, the district has contracted for health aide services and made all instructional aide positions 6 to 8 hour roles.

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
High-Quality Professional Learning • Administration prioritizes PL through effective scheduling. • PL activities meet the needs of staff in their roles. • PL activities are embedded and include classroom observations and peer observations. • PL is aligned with evidence-based and promising practices, and with state mandates. • Support staff receive appropriate training to support student academic and behavioral needs. • PL includes a balance of instructional and special education specific topics. • Universal and targeted supports and coaching include synchronous and asynchronous opportunities through virtual, face-to-face, or blended formats.	◑	• Surveys highlight significant concerns – particularly among educators – about the quality and availability of professional learning opportunities. • A lack of professional development time is a significant impediment to proactive, systemic improvements to the delivery of special education services in the district. • Despite known scheduling challenges and abysmal ratings from educators on the quality of and access to professional learning, surveys indicate little concern from school leaders.

CURRENT STATE: HUMAN CAPITAL

Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Equitable Recruitment Practices • District advertises for diversity through professional organizations, and job listings and websites contain affirmative action policy statements. • District targets recruitment activities to underrepresented populations. • District offers compensation (or other benefits) for participation in diversity recruitment and community outreach endeavors.	◑	• Personnel leaders expressed a commitment to finding high-quality educators and support personnel for Rialto roles and are planning to employ new recruitment strategies in the 2023-24 hiring cycle. • Clearer, more easily accessible employment information may reduce application and recruitment barriers. • A majority of school leaders is actively involved in the interview process – particularly for special education teachers.
Staff Wellness & Self-Care • Individual and collective self-care is encouraged and contributes to an overall culture of well-being. • Schools/district sponsor resources or activities for staff. • Adopted policies encourage wellness and support a healthy school and district environment.	◑	• Staff wellness and self care do not appear to be a focus in Rialto USD.

CURRENT STATE: HUMAN CAPITAL

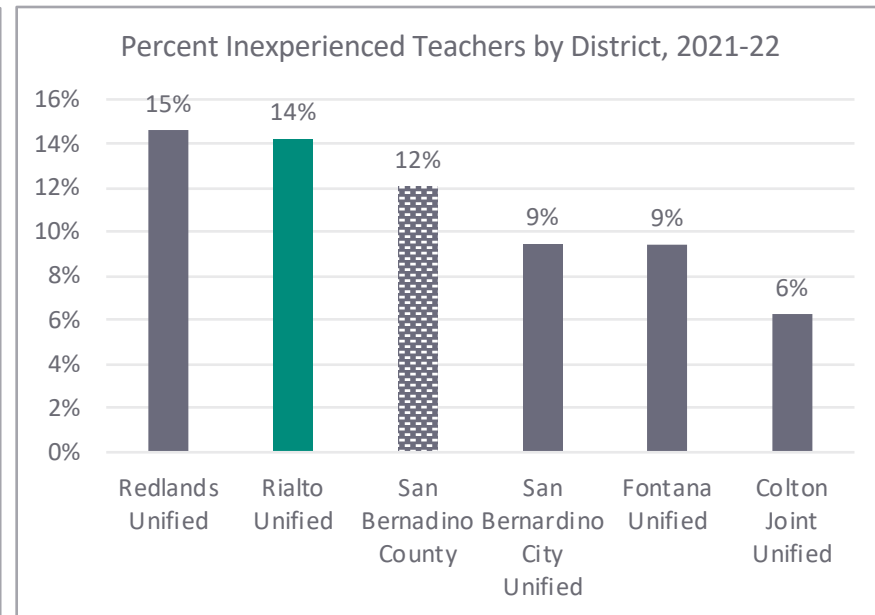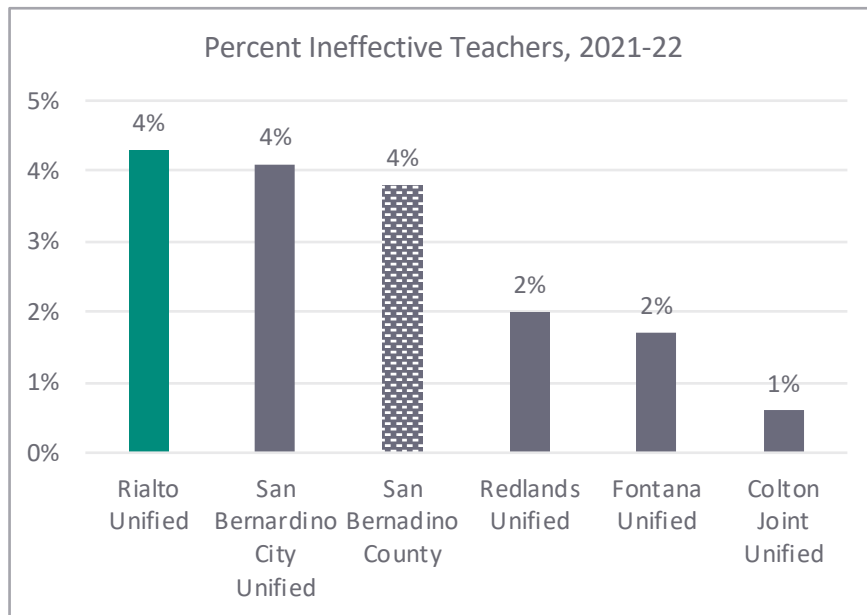| Best Practice Indicators	Rating	Evidence
Flexible Career Pathways & Staff Retention • Opportunities for growth, additional training, and career advancement are publicized. • Mentorship programs are available for all staff. • There is an ongoing staff evaluation process that incorporates multiple data points. • Staff are involved in student-centered activities or participate in at least one school or district committee. • Difficult-to-staff schools have an incentive pay structure that rewards new teachers with a graduated sum of money for each year they return.	(pie chart, one quarter filled)	• Mentorship is not widely available to staff. • While retirement incentives have been offered in the past, the district does not currently offer any incentives to potential or existing special education teachers.

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Like districts across the country, Rialto Unified is facing a shortage of qualified candidates for educator and support personnel roles.

- According to district staff, Rialto has experienced more turnover than usual in its special educator workforce and is challenged to find high-quality candidates to fill open positions. During March interviews, staff reported unfilled general education and special education vacancies.

- The district is also experiencing rapid rates of turnover among paraeducators and has been challenged to fill positions for instructional aides, health aides, bilingual aides, and behavioral support assistants.

Rialto has more ineffective, inexperienced, and not fully credentialed teachers than its peers.

- Rialto has a greater proportion of ineffective teachers than all its peer districts and more inexperienced teachers and teachers not fully credentialed than all but one of its peers.

Percent Ineffective Teachers, 2021-22

District	Percent
Rialto Unified	4%
San Bernardino City Unified	4%
San Bernadino County	4%
Redlands Unified	2%
Fontana Unified	2%
Colton Joint Unified	1%

Percent Inexperienced Teachers by District, 2021-22

District	Percent
Redlands Unified	15%
Rialto Unified	14%
San Bernardino County	12%
San Bernardino City Unified	9%
Fontana Unified	9%
Colton Joint Unified	6%

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

The distribution of inexperienced and ineffective staff across Rialto schools is uneven.

- The proportion of inexperienced teachers varies widely across Rialto's schools, particularly across its elementary schools, where as little as 5% (representing just one teacher) and as much as one-third of teachers (34%) are inexperienced. Milor High School also has a large proportion of inexperienced teachers within its small staff (5 of 17 teacher FTEs or 29%).

- The proportion of teachers who are not fully credentialed also varies across schools, from zero (at one-quarter of the district's schools) to 5, representing up to 12% of the school's teachers.

- Most Rialto schools have between zero (again, about one-quarter of schools) and 5% of teachers who were rated ineffective, although a handful of schools fall outside of that range. Two elementary schools in particular – both among those with the highest proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students – have much higher percentages of ineffective teachers: 21% of teachers at Charlotte Warner Elementary (representing 9 teachers) and 15% of teachers at Henry Elementary (4 teachers) were rated ineffective.

Surveys indicate low confidence in staff expertise.

- Less than half of school leaders (48%) and just over one-third of educators as a whole (35%) agree that staff in their school are experts in working with students with and without disabilities. Thirty percent of school leaders and 37% of educators *disagree.* Results for special education teachers were similar: only 39% believe that staff in their schools are experts in working with students with and without disabilities, while 34% disagree.

- While more than three-quarters of school leaders (78%) perceive that staff collaborate with specialized instructional support personnel as needed, only half of educators (53% of educators as a whole and 54% of special education teachers) agree.

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Walkthrough and student achievement data and parent reports also suggest areas of growth for Rialto educators.

- Parent focus group participants called for more educators with "heart" who are committed to supporting their children and developing their strengths.

Staffing challenges appear to be negatively impacting the provision of individualized instruction for students with disabilities.

- Several aides and special education teachers reported that understaffed moderate-to-severe classrooms result in a focus on basic care (i.e., managing behaviors, toileting), instead of instruction, for those students.

- Turnover among educators, instructional aides, and other support personnel impact relationships between staff and students, and among staff.

- There is some confusion about role of workability aides, and more clarity is needed around how they should be supporting students in classrooms.

- Special educators and paraeducators report feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.

- Others shared accounts of disruptions in the provision of services on students IEPs due to a lack of qualified staff.
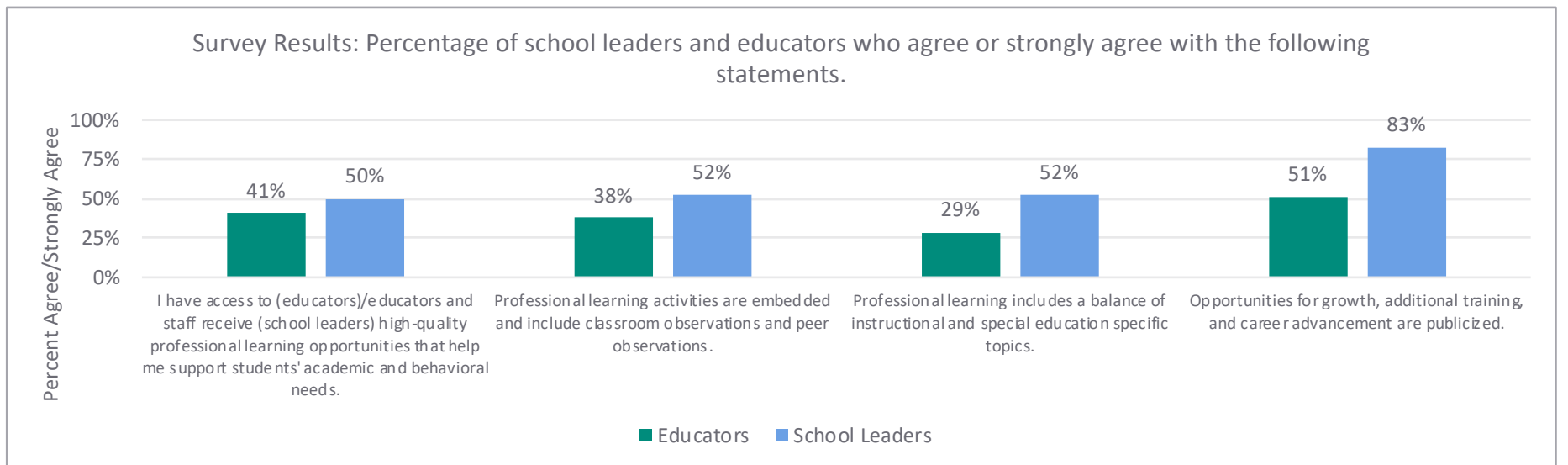
To help address these shortages in 2022-23, the district has contracted for health aide services and made all instructional aide positions 6 to 8 hour roles.

- They hope that by making all positions at least 6 hours, aides will be less likely to have to cobble together multiple employment opportunities or leave the district for full-time positions elsewhere.

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Surveys highlight significant concerns – particularly among educators – about the quality and availability of professional learning opportunities.

- Only half of school leaders and less than half of teachers reported that educators and staff have access to high-quality professional learning opportunities that help them support students' academic and behavioral needs and that professional learning activities are embedded and include classroom observations and peer observations, while one-third of educators *disagreed*.

- Less than one-third of educators (29%) and only 22% of special education teachers reported that professional learning includes a balance of instructional and special education-specific topics, while *42% of educators as a whole and half of special education teachers (51%) disagreed*. Among school leaders, half (52%) agreed, while one-third (35%) disagreed.

- School leaders also have more positive perceptions of communications around professional learning; only half (51%) of educators reported that opportunities for growth, additional training, and career advancement are publicized, while a large majority of school leaders (83%) believe they are.

Survey Results: Percentage of school leaders and educators who agree or strongly agree with the following statements.

	Educators	School Leaders
I have access to (educators)/educators and staff receive (school leaders) high-quality professional learning opportunities that help me support students' academic and behavioral needs.	41%	50%
Professional learning activities are embedded and include classroom observations and peer observations.	38%	52%
Professional learning includes a balance of instructional and special education specific topics.	29%	52%
Opportunities for growth, additional training, and career advancement are publicized.	51%	83%

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

A lack of professional development time is a significant impediment to proactive, systemic improvements to the delivery of special education services in the district.

- The district controls only two days of professional development for teachers; any other dedicated time is directed by school leaders.

- A shortage of substitute teachers prevents Special Services from reaching more staff during daytime PD offerings; an inability to pay teachers to attend out-of-school-time PD means they cannot access large groups of teachers after school, either.

- Special Services has reportedly offered virtual trainings throughout the year to make attendance easier for site-based staff.

- Instructional specialists and program specialists have offered to provide training during school-based windows and are sometimes (though not consistently) invited to do so. Most of their supports appear to be offered through coaching or consultations with individual school staff; often in response to a specific challenge.

- Onboarding supports are also reportedly limited in scope, and it is unclear how much involvement, if any, Special Services has in new teacher orientation sessions.

Despite known scheduling challenges and abysmal ratings from educators on the quality of and access to professional learning, surveys indicate little concern from school leaders.

- Three-quarters of school leaders (74%) agreed that the statement "administration prioritizes professional learning through effective scheduling" and none disagreed.

- Nearly as many (70%) reported that professional learning activities meet the needs of staff in their roles.

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Personnel leaders expressed a commitment to finding high-quality educators and support personnel for Rialto roles and are planning to employ new recruitment strategies in the 2023-24 hiring cycle.

- A new Lead Agent was hired in Personnel to focus on recruitment in Spring 2023. A former principal, the new lead described several recruitment strategies that the department will deploy for 2023-24 recruitment, including attending university job fairs, promoting Rialto and open positions through wide-scale advertisements, phone and mail campaigns, electronic marquis, etc., and repeating successful internal job fairs.

- The department is also working to tap parents and recent graduates for paraeducators roles.

- Personnel leaders recognized that recruitment is no longer a seasonal event and are exploring year-round recruitment strategies to help to build up the bench of candidates for district positions.

- Beyond recruiting, the HR team is also exploring ways to better support potential personnel in the application process, making sure that minimum requirements for various positions are widely understood, hosting sessions for required testing, and providing them with support in completing applications and preparing for interviews.

Clearer, more easily accessible employment information may reduce application and recruitment barriers.

- While most school leaders responding to the survey reported that employment information was easily accessible (70%) and the district website was easy to navigate when searching for open positions (83%), educators found the website to be less clear and user-friendly.

- Only half of educators (48%) reported that, when searching for open positions, the district website was easy to navigate and that the district website had clear, easily accessible information about HR and the job application process.

A majority of school leaders is actively involved in the interview process – particularly for special education teachers.

- Well over half of all educators (60%) and three-quarters of special education teachers (73%) responding to the survey reported that when they applied for their current position, the principal led or was actively involved in the interview process.

FINDINGS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Staff wellness and self care do not appear to be a focus in Rialto USD.

- No staff wellness or self care programs were reported by staff.

- Teachers and paraeducators report struggling to stay afloat in intense work conditions.

Mentorship is not widely available to staff.

- Only one-third of school leaders (35%) and even fewer educators (just 18%) report that mentorship programs are available for all staff, while twice as many educators (39%) *disagree*.

While retirement incentives have been offered in the past, the district does not currently offer any incentives to potential or existing special education teachers.

OUTLINE

- Review Framework and Methodology
- Current State Findings
    - Leadership
    - Systems & Structures
    - Learning Environment & Specialized Services
    - High Expectations
    - Family & Community Engagement
    - Human Capital
- Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pulling from all available plans and the Foundation for Excellence, work with principals and educators to create a document and graphic that clearly defines the goals, measures, strategies, and action steps for Rialto programs, departments, and special initiatives. Embed the vision and priorities for the Special Services division within that consolidated document. Create a communication strategy for the consolidated plan/graphic, including by introducing it at district and school-based professional learning sessions.

2. Clearly define a limited number of non-negotiables that schools are expected to implement with fidelity and create systems for assessing implementation and impact. Consider starting with:

   - Implementation of essential standards by quarter
   - Formative assessments aligned to essential standards
   - Structured literacy, including equitable and strategic deployment of literacy specialists
   - A comprehensive MTSS program (behavior, socio-emotional, and academics)
   - IEP development; application of modifications, adaptations, and supports; and monitoring
   - Co-teaching
   - Professional Learning Communities
   - A process (sometimes called Data Consults) in which a central office administrator meets 3-4 times per year with each school's Instructional Leadership Team to discuss implementation and impact of non-negotiables.

3. Develop an instructional framework that incorporates UDL principles. Select 1-2 strategies from the framework to focus professional development and coaching for educators and administrators. Consider as a starting point: educators setting and clearly communicating learning objectives and providing immediate and specific feedback on student progress.

4. When possible, negotiate additional days for educator and administrator professional learning, including time for collaboration. Best practices suggest about 10 days of professional development per year and 90 minutes of collaboration time per week.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Restructure the central office to improve implementation of non-negotiables and support for schools:

    - Create 2-3 Support Provider positions (1-2 for elementary and one for secondary) whose sole responsibilities are to support, coach, and supervise principals in becoming instructional leaders.
    - Develop a Cluster Support Model around the Support Providers (1 team led by each Support Provider) to enable them to help allocate needed staff—including SEL and mental health professionals—and supports to schools. Each cluster's team is the primary conduit of information and support from the central office to schools.
    - Have the Special Service Program Specialists and Instructional Specialists serve on cluster support teams.

6. Improve communications across central office departments by focusing central office leadership meetings on addressing implementation of non-negotiables, informing and consulting on departmental work, and proactive decision-making about school supports based on Support Provider and cluster support teams' work with schools.

    - Develop action plans across all departments.
    - Task the deputy superintendent or a chief of staff role with coordinating strategy "cross-over" conversations and holding regular implementation check-ins.
    - Empower Support Providers to serve as the communication liaison between principals and central office.
    - Evaluate and adjust existing meeting structures as needed to ensure that key roles are able to meaningfully contribute to conversations and decisions about priority program areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Conduct an audit of all district data systems to identify (1) which are able to produce reliable and accessible data for school and district staff, (2) which systems should be replaced, and (3) where improved training and reporting is needed to improve the use of existing systems.

    - As an immediate step, explore adoption of SEIS for the Special Services department to allow the district to better monitor IEP completion and compliance and outcomes for students with disabilities.

    - Identify a lead data person at the district who can help to identify key metrics for each division and develop data reports to assist with district and school decision making.

8. Develop a comprehensive Special Education Procedural Handbook, designed to inform all stakeholders about the legally compliant and uniform process to be used districtwide. Include stakeholder personnel in the development and review as well as your SELPA director and special education specialty counsel. Train to the document, and retrain often to ensure implementation. Specific definition of case management and administrative designee responsibilities are clearly indicated.

9. Create a workgroup responsible for defining and monitoring processes and procedures for admissions, eligibility, and interventions for preK and transitional kindergarten students with disabilities. Provide mandatory training to all staff involved in the process to create a universal understanding of policies, procedures, and practices. Create and communicate a point of contact for families with any questions about the eligibility or admissions process.

10. Similarly create a workgroup responsible for planning, budgeting, and implementing the secondary transitions programming. Establish a budget and clear objectives for the ATP Aspire program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Create a district-wide disability awareness campaign to help students and adults better understand and integrate students with disabilities into their school communities. This can include special events or recognition of individual disabilities, recommended books or resources for reading lists and libraries, as well as other district-wide recognition events (e.g., the Divergent Games).

12. Develop a set of strategies or resources to help build a universal understanding of inclusion at the school and classroom levels – What is it? Why is it important? What does it require? Look like? Consider identifying and showcasing best practices from Rialto schools so that others may see inclusion in action and adopt similar strategies.

13. Continue efforts to partner with families to understand and address their individual and collective needs, including by:

    • Widely promoting the 2023-24 RPASS meetings via the district website, posted flyers at schools, student handouts/take homes, at parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, back-to-school nights, automated notification systems, etc.

    • Providing resources to parents of students with a potential or identified disability on school campuses – information about the IEP process, points of contact at central office for questions or concerns, etc.

    • Continue to build out the Special Services website with information and resources for families, including a parent FAQ that directs parents to specific staff members to ask questions or receive more information.

    • As part of RPASS meetings, have families help identify resources that would be useful to have at schools and/or on the website (e.g., a recorded webinar of the IEP process or parent rights that could be viewed on demand) and develop and disseminate those broadly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Address recruitment and retention of special education teachers and aides by:

    - Gathering specific educator/new hire feedback on the application process, including potential improvements to the RUSD website.

    - Consider additional recruitment strategies including a comprehensive social media strategy and teacher and aide referral incentive programs.

    - Tracking effectiveness of various recruitment strategies and doubling down on those that yield the best results.

    - Focusing on educator and paraeducator retention, gathering exit information from those leaving the district to understand why and identify systemic issues that need to be addressed to better retain staff. Also, consider introducing mentorship programs, staff wellness programs, and staff recognition programs as ways to support teachers and improve morale and school culture.