

# Hanover Special Education Program Review

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# Purpose of the Review

- Provide top-level analysis to identify areas of strength and areas that might need further study and planning for improvement.
- Respond to guiding questions generated by the Central Office Administration.

# Structure of the Review

- Visits to schools
- Interviews of key stakeholders
  - Administrative staff
  - Direct service staff
  - Parents
- Review of data
  - Publicly available data
  - District provided data

# Key themes

- In general, services and programs are functioning well, and most staff and families express confidence in the support provided to students with disabilities.
- Because of the impact of restructuring, the pandemic, leadership changes, and changes in the regulations, multiple stakeholders have expressed the desire to review and improve procedures and practices related to eligibility, transition, and specialized programs.
- The district has already identified these issues and is addressing them through both internal efforts and support from outside consultants.

# Findings

- The organizational structure of the department could be improved to support more consistent transitions and district-wide practices.
- A district-wide review of the eligibility process for special education would support both increased confidence in the process and more consistent practice.
- The current placement and usage patterns of paraprofessional staff indicate a need for review of job descriptions and decision-making regarding their role.
- The substantially separate programs are well respected but there is not a clear alignment from program to program between levels.
- Certain groups of parents are feeling the need to engage outside resources in order to support their students.

# Key Strengths

- Talented and committed staff
- Collegial and collaborative culture
- Effective use of outside consultants to refine programs
- Openness to feedback and focus on program improvement

# Key Recommendations

- Create special education administrator positions at all schools and create sufficient staff capacity so the oversight of out-of-district students can be assigned to someone other than the Director of Student Services.
- Review the eligibility process for special education to ensure consistent procedures and programming across the district.
- Support the transition process from school to school by providing more administrative oversight and the opportunity for information sharing by staff across buildings.

# Key Recommendations

- Continue to work with outside consultants to improve and align the substantially separate programs, including addressing the needs of students who do not require this level of programming and supporting the program management role of the lead teacher.
- Review the job descriptions for paraprofessional staff and create job descriptions that are consistent with current use.
- Engage with parents who have concerns about the programming for their children through information sharing and feedback sessions for school personnel, consultants and parents.



The time and thoughtfulness of the staff and parents of the Hanover Public Schools were enormously helpful in completing this review.

I look forward to hearing about the continued progress and success of the special education programs in Hanover.

