Capstone Presentation

Reducing Disproportionate Identification of Black and African American Students with SLD
Nadene Moll, Director of Special Education PreK-8

Relevant District Population Data

Pre-Pandemic about 7500 students. Now just over 6800

- 1 Pre-K (190 students)
- 8 Elementary Schools (K-8 - about 4600 students)
- 1 High School (2048 students)

Additional relevant population data:

- Metco- 291 students grades K-12
- Steps to Success- 121 K-8 and 136 BHS = 257

2019 Special Education Data

- 1277 Students in Special Ed age PreK- 22

- 468 Black/African American students in the district

- Of those 468 kids, about 35% of them are
  on IEPs (rr 2.30)

- Next highest category is Hispanic students at 26%
  (risk ratio 1.73)

- All other ethnicities have a rr below 1.

How do we serve special ed students?

- Integrated PreK programs
- Learning centers K-8
- 4 district-wide programs (or versions of them) preK-22 (LAHB, TLC, ALC, RISE)

*rr = risk ratio

Data Analysis

Data analysis of disproportionately identified students

(2020-21 students n= 53)

- 45% identified when in K - 2
- 7 of the students moved in with SLD dx
- 32% identified with an SLD in all three areas
- More than half of the students are in either STS or METCO
  - Resident 27; 16 Steps to Success
  - Metco 26
- Higher number of students coming from certain K-8 schools
- 45% of students did not receive a math intervention (could have received math from CST)

Why Now?

Previous strategies have not effectively reduced the disproportionate identification of African American and Black students in the SLD category : risk ratio over 3.0 in 2017-2019,will likely be in 2020 as well

(In contrast- we changed the communication recipe and are no longer at risk)

What's changed already?

- Phonics instruction (Fundations) is finally in place in grades k-2
- District finally settled on an elementary math curriculum but instruction has been disjointed during the pilot phases

Possible Root Causes of Overidentification

Elementary Schools:

- Every school has its own structures and practices
- Black and Brown students disproportionately fall in the approaches/below expectations in reading assessments- the % does not change significantly year to year
- Inconsistencies in Tier 1 instruction across the district, within buildings, at grade levels, etc. ; Little accountability for lack of consistent practices
- Underuse of trauma-informed instruction
- Unclear understanding of diagnostic criteria of qualifying for SLD -- ETFs and evaluators
- No pathways for communication between K-8s and HS around literacy instruction

   High School

- No general education literacy support for students at BHS
- Lack of reading data for students at the high school level (unless they are already receiving special education services).
- Lack of tier 1 & 2 supports
- Lack of structures for learning, pd, applied practice to support the adults that we are hoping in turn support the students to be successful in the general education environment

Theory of Action

GIven these conditions:

- Robust, classroom-based instruction in literacy and math in grades k-2
- Consistent grade level screening tools to progress monitor
- High fidelity, high quality interventions in areas of need for to students who require additional instruction
- Timely identification of students who are not responsive to those interventions
- Review of intervention data by teams who are well trained in the identification of SLD and evidence-based interventions

Special education teams will more accurately identify which students have an SLD vs. which students require additional instructional opportunities

District Teams Involved in Action Plan

Educator(s)	Role
General education classroom teachers, intervention specialists, and curriculum leaders	Identification of math and literacy screening tools
Math and Literacy department heads and specialists	Development and rollout of math and literacy screening measures across K-2 classrooms districtwide over a two-year period
School leaders and curriculum leaders	Standardize classroom instruction in literacy and math across elementary schools over a two-year period
Literacy and Math specialists and coaches	Provide PD to Child Study Team members to increase accurate identification of struggling students and appropriate targeted interventions (year 1 /year 2)
Special education directors	Provide PD to Team Facilitators and special education evaluators to ensure common understanding of identification criteria for SLD

Early evidence of Change by Spring 2021-22

- All K-2 classrooms will complete the same literacy and math screenings

- At- risk students will be quickly referred to time-limited math and literacy interventions, and will be referred for special education evaluation in the absence of a robust response to two cycles of intervention.

- CST and consults with classroom teachers will be used to provide feedback to classroom teachers re: continued Tier 1 instruction in math/literacy

Target Areas

Screening Targets:
- Literacy screening measures will be identified across elementary schools in grades K-2, and classroom teachers will be trained in how to conduct screenings.
- Math screening measures will be identified across elementary schools in grades K-2, and classroom teachers will be trained in how to conduct screenings.

Intervention Targets:
- Math and literacy department chairs will outline Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, assign interventionists, and delineate the intervention referral process for grades k-2.

Professional Development Targets:
- Educational Team Facilitators will review the process of identifying SLD and will create composite cases as exemplars.
- Child Study Teams will be trained in how to interpret classroom screening data and the process of referral for math and literacy intervention.
- Educational Team Facilitators will train their building-based special education evaluators in accurate identification of SLD
- New-to-Brookline teachers in k-2 will be trained in screening measures
- Teacher observations will be conducted to ensure fidelity of screening process and provide feedback regarding Tier 1 interventions