

BOARD STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

January 17, 2023

Call to Order

President Cohen called the Study Session of the Shoreline Board of Directors to order via Zoom at 6:00 p.m. on January 17, 2023.

Roll Call

Present: Sarah Cohen, President; Emily Williams, Vice President; Sara Betnel, Director; Meghan Jernigan, Director; Rebeca Rivera, Director

Absent: Luke Smith, Shorecrest Student Representative and Helen Murphy, Shorewood Student Representative

The following topic was discussed:

Special Education Program Overview

Trish Campbell, Executive Director of Student Services, presented.

Ms. Campbell gave an overview of special education, how it is structured, and shared data specific to Shoreline School District.

The purpose of special education is ensuring all students with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. This is emphasized as the main charge to make sure students are prepared for life after leaving the District.

The transition plan is part of the Individual Education Program (IEP) where teams work with families and students when they are 16, to develop a plan for what post-secondary life will be.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) is a set of organized and planned instruction activities which adapt the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of our students. Special education teachers are the only people that can design and monitor instruction. Others can deliver it.

The six pillars of special education were shared, expanding on appropriate evaluation. Unique to public schools is the core tenet that we deliver a free and appropriate education to every student. If a student is eligible and requires specially designed instruction, the school team will develop an IEP having all the things necessary for the student to receive FAPE.

Ms. Campbell emphasized the LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) and the importance here at Shoreline when looking at inclusion. It is important we are serving students in the appropriate LRE and not overly containing them in special ed settings. The more time they have in the general LRE setting, the more access to the rigorous core content their typically developing peers have.

Parent participation is a key element of designing an IEP. Parents will be involved in all the steps for their child and have the right to be part of the decision making. Their participation is critical to making sure the best services are available for students. A specific focus of our area or region is having active ways for parents to access parent participation.

Procedural safeguards are the rules governing special education and given to parents at the IEP meeting. They contain information on discipline and how students can access rights if they have concerns, conflicts or are not pleased with the special education services.

Ms. Campbell explained the “three prong test”. *Students eligible for special education services must meet all three of the following criteria:*

1. Have one of the 13 IDEA (2004) eligible disabilities
2. The student's disability(ies) adversely affects their educational performance
3. The student requires specially designed instruction (SDI)

Director Rivera asked what adversely affecting educational performance means, and what is the degree to which that is decided. Ms. Campbell said that is something that is debated amongst professionals and is why the three prong test is important looking at these pieces of criteria. The school team determines if the student's disability is impacting their ability to access schooling. We want to see teams that have worked through interventions and supports before going to evaluation. By the time the evaluation meeting takes place, that adverse impact should be pretty clear.

Director Betnel asked if the requirement on a slide stating students must be invited to IEP meetings from ages 16 and up is a legal requirement or our own determination. Is there any reason not to involve students in this earlier? Ms. Campbell explained once age 16 comes around we are starting to talk about the transition plan, looking at post-secondary options and having students at the table helps support developing an authentic transition plan. Some educators have worked on student-led IEP meetings where they lead in developing their own plan for learning. It is a person-centered plan where students take ownership for their own learning the older they get. Often students will attend meetings in earlier years, and that is up to the parent to determine. Younger students can absolutely come to their IEP meeting.

Ms. Campbell reviewed Shoreline's special education department and the services available in all our schools which include: communication, fine motor/sensor, gross motor/sensory, hearing, and vision. The District is struggling to find a full-time teacher of the deaf and continues to look to fill that position.

Ms. Campbell shared several slides of race/ethnicity and demographics data specific to Shoreline's special education program. She wrapped up the presentations with ongoing work and celebrations before asking for questions from the group.

Director Betnel asked who initiates the IEP process. Ms. Campbell said it can be anyone, a parent or a general education teacher, for example. A multidisciplinary team will review the data and discuss and support a decision on whether we need to do some more interventions, put more support in place for the student, or if we will do a special education evaluation.

Director Betnel referred to the 13 IDEA categories discussed in the presentation and asked if there is anything Washington State identifies as a category beyond the 13 and is there any category that receives universal screening without request for identification. Ms. Campbell is pretty sure they are the same as the federal categories. Any time a student is looked at with the idea of evaluation or observations towards an evaluation, or an assessment considered an evaluation, parents would have consent before that is completed. We would never look to do an evaluation or observation that may be part of an evaluation without parent consent. There are early screeners, such as an early literacy screener, that is part of the school team of general education and special education members to determine how they're going to support that student in early reading.

In the general education space, we have state testing and universal assessments, but those aren't part of the special education evaluation system. They would not identify a student as requiring a special education evaluation.

Director Betnel asked if behavior is one of the 13 IDEA categories. It would be under EBD (Emotional Behavioral Disorder). There is also behavior as part of SDI, and behavior can also be an area seen in an IEP requiring specially designed instruction.

Director Betnel noted that the District has concerted areas of staffing and support centered on behavior specifically. In trying to understand better how that is identified, what's the student population being identified in that way to see if there is a relationship there to biases in the system? She would like to get a better picture of how we understand behavior and how staff receives and responds to behavior. How do the student breakdowns presented compare to other districts in our area, state or nationally? Ms. Campbell will need to dig into that to look more broadly.

Director Rivera asked, in regards to Latinos where we see larger disproportions in the breakdowns shared, with a further breakdown; are those disproportions showing in the least restrictive environments as well? Are there fewer of these students going into general ed for more of the day? Also, looking at the disproportionate number of male students in special ed, is there even further disproportion of Latino boys? Lastly, what are the ways the District is currently working to identify students as special ed in those disproportionate categories – what steps are being taken?

Ms. Campbell shared one of the steps being taken right now is multi-tiered systems of support that builds teams and looks at data, then reviews the data to determine interventions needed for students. It's a cycle of inquiry on data and intervention. It puts together a plan for intervening before moving into the special education evaluation. We need to be sure we are evaluating students that require services.

Director Rivera asked if there are processes for looking at not only biases, but also differences in culture and also trauma. Ms. Campbell responded that this would be in the area of the SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) work which is an all-student initiative to make sure we have healthy SEL and our comprehensive counseling plan assists all students with trauma-informed supports that are embedded in all schools.

Director Williams asked what the language access looks like for parents and students in the process. When changes are made along the way, what does that look like for a parent in terms of notifications and how they can navigate that process and have dialogue along the way? Ms. Campbell explained we have interpretation services that support parents at meetings and if documents need to be translated, we do that as well. We are legally mandated to collaborate with parents in the special education process supporting student needs. We value that work with parents so we need to find ways to help parents access information.

A follow up question asked about what the notification looks like for a parent if there are changes in service or frequency. That is the parent participation part and we are unable to make changes to an IEP without parent participation through that process. There are phone calls, emails, letters sent home to connect with families to enter them into the process.

Director Williams asked what does it look like for a parent or student to opt out of special ed if they felt it didn't benefit them? What does that look like legally and what are the rights of students and parents in that process?

Parents have the rights through the whole process from consent to perform an evaluation, consent to the initial IEP, and when a student is eligible the parent consents to begin those services. Their consent is there every step of the way. If a parent decides they don't want services for their student any longer they can revoke services. There is a process where we

work with the family and parents meet with someone at the school. Ideally, we don't get to this point as there is collaboration and discussion along the way to be sure the services are right for the student and the student and parent have a voice in the process. If the parent decides to revoke services, that is their right.

President Cohen asked Ms. Campbell to talk a little about the financing of special education, noting it is a bit more of a patchwork than some other areas. How does that work in Shoreline right now? Ms. Campbell said she and Jennifer Farmer could work together to dig into some of these, but can share more globally about the program. We are funded by federal and state dollars as well as levy dollars. Because special education is not fully funded, we lean on local levy dollars to support services we need for our students. The determination level talked about earlier where we meet criteria ensures federal and state funds are received. We are in good shape there. The three funding sources are needed to fully fund all our students and the services they require and we're mandated to have those services in place for students.

President Cohen asked if there are students who receive some or all special education services off site. Ms. Campbell explained that a handful of students receive their services at a nonpublic agency. When we are unable to meet special education needs, students may receive services in a partner agency school that supports all of their needs. There are some more complicated pieces of special education where evaluation services are provided for local private schools. If the child lives in the Shoreline boundary area and requires an evaluation, we are required to perform that evaluation. Those students could access services through the Shoreline School District. Are we compensated for that? Yes. We have a portion of our special education funding that goes towards those services.

A conversation ensued concerning group homes and Fircrest in our boundary area regarding accessing special education services. Fircrest is an 18 years and older facility, and if students require services, then our school team would support that student's educational needs and IEP services. Funding is more complicated but we are compensated for students at Fircrest. Students living in a group home receive services like all other students. The District works with families, parents and the group home facility to support the student's needs.

Further discussion brought the focus to overidentifying students as well as ensuring students needing services are not overlooked. This is not specific to special education, but more of the continuum of services. This could begin as a small intervention that is just starting, to an actual decision to evaluate, and then to a special education evaluation. It is a whole team working together. This includes general education needs being identified to support students where needed.

Director Betnel asked if moving to full inclusion may address these points as well as over-identification and potential under-identification. Ms. Campbell talked about moving to differentiation in the classroom and universal design for learning. One of the key components when we're moving towards inclusion is all classroom teachers have all they need to support all learners in the classroom on the whole continuum. Those are the things we will work on over time. We want to be sure we are moving methodically and strategically with teachers, planning and collaborating to make those moves.

Director Betnel asked about other districts who have full inclusion and have been doing this for a long time. What do you see around how that impacts identification service delivery as well as student outcomes? Ms. Campbell noted that we do see student outcomes grow when students receive more rigorous instruction in the general education setting. She cannot speak to the first part of the question as all the research has not been done to be able to speak to this fluently. We are in the first stages of this and there is a lot of work to be done as we take each step

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methodically, strategically, and in high collaboration to be successful. Part of this process is to do some of that research as a team and connect with partners across the nation who have been doing this work and lean on what they have learned and build from there.

Ms. Campbell thanked the group for the opportunity to present and will follow up with the questions that were not answered as well as any that may be sent to Superintendent Reyes.

Adjournment: 7:11 p.m.

Sarah Cohen, School Board President

Attest: March 7, 2023

Dr. Susana Reyes, Secretary
Shoreline Board of Directors

All documents referenced in the minutes may be viewed in the Superintendent's Office during normal business hours.