

SPED Procedural Manual and Policies Audit Findings

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Preview

This slide deck will cover the following:

- Purpose and Goals
- Methods Implemented
- Major Findings
- Results
- Major Recommendations
- Next Steps

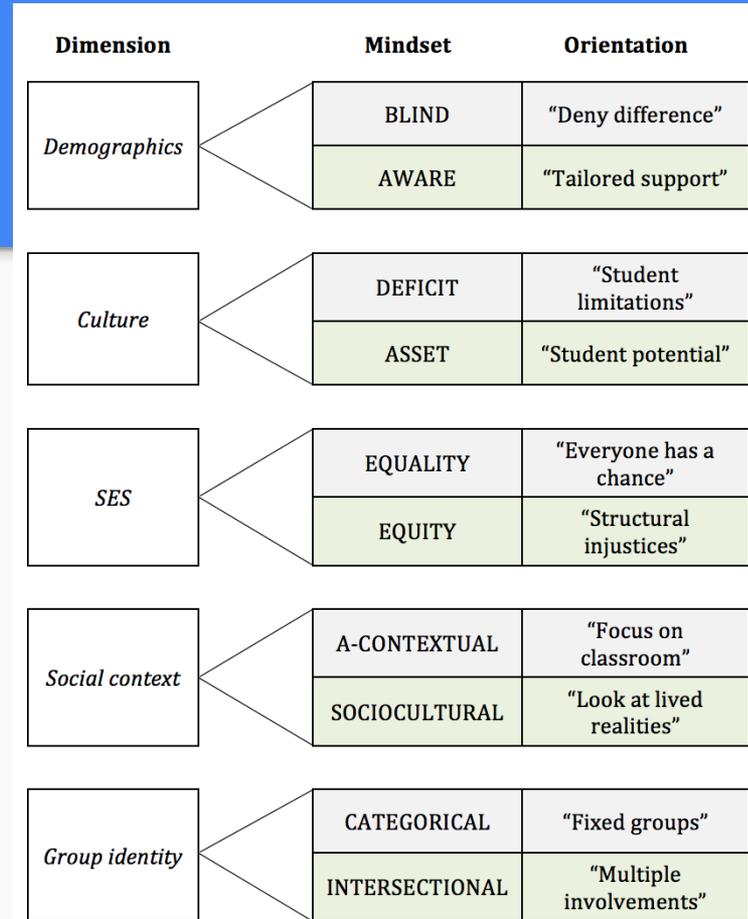
Purpose and Goals

- Identify biases and inequities in the Special Education Procedural Manual - and determine how these policy and procedures are implemented in practice
- Provide recommendations for more equitable policy language based on these findings
- Determine and analyze whether the Special Education Procedural Manual aligns with the Equitable Mindsets, Practices, and Consequences framework
- Make recommendations for improvement in Special Education policies, practices, and student learning achievement, and transitioning experiences

Methods

The contents of the Manual were assessed and analyzed through the Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework.

We used this framework as a lens and metric to evaluate, for each section in the Special Education Procedural Manual, which topics in equity were explicitly included, excluded, and addressed in the report.



Methods - Extended Equity Analysis Framework

Dimension	Mindset	Orientation	Explanation	Consequence
<i>Demographics</i>	BLIND	"Deny difference"	Do not recognize role of student background	Curriculum & instruction applied uniformly
	AWARE	"Tailored support"	Understand student background informs learning	Curriculum & instruction differentiated
<i>Culture</i>	DEFICIT	"Student limitations"	Reliance on stereotypes about who can achieve	Diverse students taught with less rigor and lower expectations
	ASSET	"Student potential"	Identify and build on each student's strengths	Diverse students receive challenging and meaningful curriculum
<i>SES</i>	EQUALITY	"Everyone has a chance"	View societal systems as basically fair or just	Low academic performance explained with "blame the victim" approach
	EQUITY	"Structural injustices"	See society as benefitting some and disadvantaging others	Low academic performance analyzed through lens of systemic realities
<i>Social context</i>	A-CONTEXTUAL	"Focus on classroom"	View schools and classrooms as closed systems of learning	Students' everyday interactions outside of classroom ignored
	SOCIOCULTURAL	"Look at lived realities"	View academic success as product of totality of students' daily lives	Students' lives in local context taken into account
<i>Group identity</i>	CATEGORICAL	"Fixed groups"	Emphasis on "type" of learner based on "group" membership	Use of common descriptions about how various "groups" perform
	INTERSECTIONAL	"Multiple involvements"	See individuals with multiple and intersecting group involvements	Educators study how individuals respond to specific situations

The framework encompasses **five interrelated mindsets** essential to understanding and explaining educational practice related to opportunity gaps in inequitable systems, processes, policies, and practices.

Methods - Document Request

We collaborated with Jonathan and Ken in our request for the following supplementary documentation:

1. Summaries of TEAM Meetings (Not received)
2. Sample of Vision Statements (Received)
3. Sample of Transition Plans (Received)
4. Sample IEPs (Received)
5. Data and Records collected and used in determining Eligibility and IEP Development (Not received)
6. Quant Data on those who transitioned out of Special Ed. (Not Received)
7. Images of Restrictive Environments and Classrooms (Not received)

Major Findings - 4 Categories

1. Overall Equity Language and Goals
2. Parental Role and Participation
3. TEAM Members, Meetings, and Decisions
4. Documentation and Data

Results - Parental Role and Participation

Parental input and participation is not clearly prioritized, specially outlined. It should be actively embedded in every section of the Special Education Procedural Manual (i.e. Scheduling TEAM Meetings, Eligibility Proceedings, and Evaluations, IEP Development).

- a. Parents should be key members of Teams. In the case they are not available, they should have opportunities to instate a family or guardian representative to participate in all Team proceedings.
- b. Parental roles should be prioritized and clearly elucidated in each section

Results - TEAM Meetings, Members, Decisions

- b. Meeting Times / Flexibility - It does not appear that Team meetings protect sufficient time with flexibility in order to make equitable decisions. In particular in Special Education Eligibility and Evaluation decisions.
- c. There is no indication that TEAM members are encouraged to or required to establish a history of positive interaction and relationships with students and families. These positive and reciprocal dynamics should be invested in and improved.

Results - Documentation and Data

- We observed no indication of educators or Special Education staff recording and assessing student data related to topics in equity (i.e. students' culture/community, race, economic circumstance, societal factors, external evaluation) in determining external and/or internal factors responsible for students academic achievement and learning.
- Due to the unavailability of these critical records, it is not possible to determine whether the Special Education department has employed an overall equitable process or meets conclusive equitable standards across particular sections in the Manual.

Results - IEE and IEP Development

- We observed there is no process to ensure parents receive letter from Administrator of Special Education outlining the requirements for requisition an IEE.
- IEP Vision statements are avoidant of other contributing factors to behavior, places burden on students to manage factors out of their control, and lack student voice.
- We noticed an emphasis on parent statements being “focused and concise” leaving parent input and voice being disregarded.

Results - Transitioning, Placement, Etc.

- We noted great opportunities for students to asset-frame themselves and their needs however there is a lack of consideration for disciplinary measures and/or a positive behavioral support system
- The language and process around integrated classrooms place a responsibility on student to create successful interactions with teachers and peers
- Lack of data that suggest why students are moved to another district how are needs framed,

Major Recommendations

- Team Selection, Proceedings, and Chairperson - We recommend that all steps be taken to ensure the most appropriate persons including TEAM Members, Chairperson, and external evaluators are assigned to students' Teams.
- Team members and leaders should be properly vetted, have a strong and reciprocal relationship with students and parents, an understanding of students potential and existing conditions
- Teams essentially should be able to address and express each of the equity mindsets and consequential practices expressly outlined in this report (Equitable, Aware, Asset-framed, and Context - Centered).

Major Recommendations

Data (Documentation and Records) Collection, Sharing, and Usage:

- A majority of data that would reflect equitable decision-making processes across Belmont Special Education is not readily available. This data, in particular those records involved in “Eligibility and Historical Review” proceedings, should be efficiently exchangeable between the school teachers (building administration) and the Special Education department.
- There does seem to be a gap between where these documents exist and are shared. It’s not clear that these original records are organized in a way that SpED staff can locate or share them; our auditors did not have access to them.

Next Steps - Ongoing Audit

Student Interviews and Surveys

Staff Interviews and Surveys

Family Focus Groups

Meetings with Leadership

Complete report will be shared in the New Year.