

Special Education Disproportionality Presentation

School Committee Meeting

November 23, 2021

DESE Statement: Educational Equity

- **Equity:** Educational equity means that all students have access to the educational resources, opportunities, and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and/or family income to meet high expectations for cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional growth and development.

Adapted from *Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs*, <https://ccsso.org/equity> and National Equity project, <http://nationalequityproject.org/about/equity>

MA DESE District Standards and Indicators, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf#search=%22district%20standards%20indicators%22>

Working Toward Equity Involves....

- *“Interrupting inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and children”*

National Equity Project, “Why Equity?” <https://nationalequityproject.org/about/equity>

Requirements of IDEA: Equity Calculations

States have distinct equity calculation requirements under various sections of IDEA:

1. Significant Discrepancy - (State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report - SPP/APR - Indicators 4A & 4B)
2. Disproportionate Representation (SPP/APR Indicators 9 & 10)
3. Significant Disproportionality in Identification, Placement, and Discipline

Equity Calculations Explained:

- **Disproportionate Representation 20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(C), Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicators 9 and 10**

-Indicator B9: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification.

-Indicator B10: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.

Equity Calculations Explained:

- **Significant Discrepancy 20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A); 1412(a)(22), Part B SPP/APR**

-Indicator B4 – Indicator B4A: Percent of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with individualized education programs (IEPs).

-Indicator B4B: Percent of districts that have (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures, or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards.

Equity Calculations Explained:

- **Significant Disproportionality 20 U.S.C. 1418(d) and 34 CFR §§300.646-647**

Determine whether significant disproportionality based on race/ethnicity is occurring with respect to

- the identification of children as children with disabilities, including children with disabilities in accordance with particular impairments;
- the placement of children in particular educational settings; and
- the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions.

Significant Disproportionality Expectations:

Identified Districts Must:

- Identify factors contributing to significant disproportionality
- Conduct a review of Policies, Practices, Procedures (PPP) and publicly report on revisions
- Create an action plan and submit to DESE
- Reserve 15% of IDEA funds for Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)
 - Ages 3-21 as warranted
 - Students with or without disabilities as warranted

DESE: Responding to Disproportionality

1. Learn about significant disproportionality and your district's data snapshot
1. Develop the approach your district will take to analyzing and addressing significant disproportionality
1. Analyze data for students currently impacted and conduct a root cause analysis to identify contributing factors
1. Review your district's Policies, Practices, and Procedures (PPP) and assess how disproportionality may be impacted by the way your district implements its PPPs

DESE: Responding to Disproportionality Cont'd:

5. Synthesize results of Root Cause and PPP analyses to identify district next steps
6. Review Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CCEIS) and select services to use moving forward
7. Create an action plan for the strategic initiative(s) that will address contributing factors
8. Revise the district budget regarding use of IDEA funds
9. Begin implementing the action plan, publicly posting PPP revisions (if warranted) and implementing CCEIS

Belmont: Disproportionality Finding

Disproportionate identification of Black/ African American students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

School Year 2019-2020 - Belmont had:

- 15 Black/ African American students with Specific Learning Disabilities
- 120 students with Specific Learning Disabilities in total
- 152 total Black/ African American students in total
- 4,794 total students

(Per DESE Data)

Student Services Analysis (DESE Step #3):

Of the 15 Black/ African students with Specific Learning Disabilities:

- 10 of the 15 students were initially identified with a Specific Learning Disability in a Belmont elementary school
- 3 of the 15 students were initially identified with a Specific Learning Disability at the Chenery Middle School
- 2 of the 15 students were initially identified with a Specific Learning Disability in another district (also while in elementary school)
- 9 of the 15 students identified with a Specific Learning Disability were in MetCo
- 4 of the 15 students identified with a Specific Learning Disability had a first language that is not English

Disproportionality Workgroup Formed (DESE Step #2):

Led by: Jonathan Libby, Assistant Director of Student Services

Monthly meetings include members:

- Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
- Ken Kramer, Director of Student Student Services
- Heidi Paisner-Roffman, Principal- Wellington
- Danielle Betancourt, Principal- Butler
- Rosa Iniss, MetCo Director
- Lindsey Rinder, Director of English Language Education
- Chon'tel Washington, Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (*joined this school year*)

Disproportionality Workgroup Steps To Date:

- District liaison and consultation with DESE (Jonathan Libby). *DESE Step #1*
- DESE Professional Learning Community on Significant Disproportionality (Jonathan Libby & Rosa Iniss). *DESE Step #1*
- A Root Cause Analysis was conducted. *DESE Step #3*
- A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis was conducted. *DESE Step #3*
- Workgroup members participated in the DESE Significant Proportionality virtual conference in April of 2021. *DESE Step #1*

Disproportionality Workgroup Steps To Date Cont'd:

- Policies, Practices, and Procedures were reviewed for compliance with IDEA 34 CFR 300.646. All policies, practices, and procedures found to be in compliance. *DESE Step #4*
- District Equity Auditors asked to review Special Education Procedural Guidelines Manual through Equitable Mindsets, Practices and Consequences framework and make recommendations.
- Mandated Action Plan developed and approved by DESE in June of 2021. Details of the plan on the following slides. *DESE Steps #5-8*

Belmont's Significant Disproportionality Action Plan:

IDEA Budget Revised:

15% of the \$1,091,378 IDEA 240 grant (\$163,706) and the \$249,006 IDEA 252 grant (\$49,547) reallocated to address disproportionality. *DESE Step #7*

Reallocated Funds Used as Follows:

- Hire an Elementary Special Education Team Chair who is more knowledgeable about disability identification. This person works with parents and staff to ensure implementation of the evaluation process with fidelity, as well as provision of appropriate services and supports prior to disability identification. This position was added to a newly formed district funded Elementary Special Education Team Chair position beginning at the start of the '21-'22 school year.

Belmont's Significant Disproportionality Action Plan Cont'd:

- Evaluate and Further Develop general education MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports) to afford a broader range of instructional and curriculum supports/services, to prevent students from being referred to Special Education as the only means of receiving assistance.
 - Venture Educational Consultants retained Summer 2021 to begin work supporting all four Elementary Schools and CMS toward increasing both the breadth of our MTSS, as well as the fidelity of its implementation.
 - PD supporting both existing as well as additional MTSS towards above stated goals has been, and is being, identified and offered to staff.
 - PD to date: Leveled Literacy Intervention, Orton Gillingham, Targeted Training for Speech and Language Pathologists, Project Based Learning (Buck Institute), and Equity by Design

Belmont's Significant Disproportionality Action Plan Cont'd:

- MTSS Continued:
 - Contract with outside service providers and specialists to assist with special education evaluations toward the goal of freeing up more service and support time from our internal service providers and specialists.
 - Contract with BCBA agencies to augment the work of our internal counseling and support services to help develop and implement behavior support plans.

Update:

In October of 2021, DESE informed the Belmont Public Schools that we are no longer cited for significant disproportionality using data from the 2020-2021 school year.

The work continues, and the Action Plan will continue to be implemented. We remain passionate in our commitment to equity for all our students.