

School Wide – Special Education

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Program Overview and Update

Special Education Population Data

There are currently 88 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) enrolled at MWA, approximately 8.5% of the total MWA student population. There are 7 students currently under a pending initial IEP evaluation, 4 new enrollments for semester 2. Due to initial IEP assessments, Semester 2 to end of year assessments, and new student enrollments, MWA is projected to move out of “small schools” (schools that serve under 100 students with IEPs) by the end of the school year (a projected increase from 8% to approximately 9.5-10% of the overall student population).

MWA serves students with the following Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligibilities: intellectual disability, speech and language impairment, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, autism spectrum disorder, and specific learning disability (SLD). Students with SLDs make up 65% of student’s primary disability category, followed by other health impairment (OHI) primary eligibility category of 15%.

The SPED department has held 82 IEP meetings since the start of the school year (there have been 76 school days as of the board meeting).

Chronic Absences		
SPED	General Education	ELD
27.3%	20.2%	20.1%

MWA SPED Program

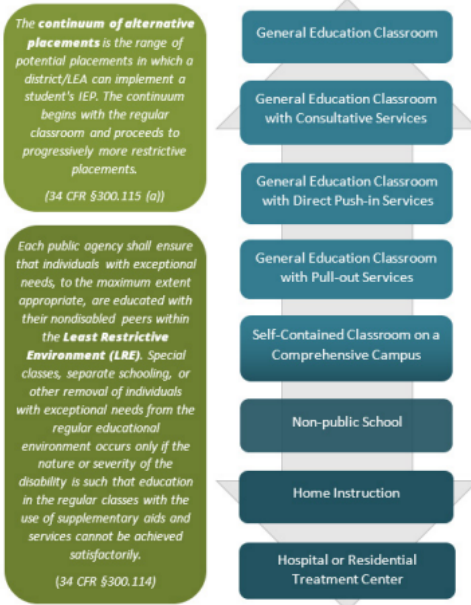
MWA it in its 4th year being a member of the El Dorado Charter SELPA and serving as its own Local Education Agency (LEA) for special education. MWA provides a continuum of special education services including push-in support for general education courses and pull-out specialized academic instruction. Pull-out academic support takes place during an academic elective period in the Upper School and during Flex period in both the Middle School and Upper School. Students are also pulled out of the general education for speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nursing services, and adaptive physical education. Many students with IEPs also receive counseling and educationally related mental health services through the MWA social workers and our contracted psychological services provider, FPA on site. Some families receive parent counseling services as part of their student’s IEP; this is currently done through a contracted non-public agency.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Continuum of Placements

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all students with disabilities have access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). ***The intent of the IEP is to meet the unique needs of a student in order to allow meaningful access to FAPE at MWA and prepare for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. In some cases, a student may experience significant emotional, behavioral and/or academic challenges that impede access to education benefit in the current program and setting (MWA). When this occurs, an IEP team must consider the full continuum of services and placement to ensure meaningful access to FAPE based***

on the individual needs of the student. The continuum begins with the general education setting and progressively becomes more restrictive with each placement. **Currently, MWA has two students placed at nonpublic schools and counseling enriched placements** based on student’s individual social emotional and behavioral needs that exceeded the learning environment and program at MWA.

CONTINUUM OF ALTERNATIVE PLACEMENTS



Behavior Support

Since becoming its own LEA in 2019-2020, MWA has sought to increase the continuum of special education services in order to serve students with higher academic, behavioral and social emotional needs in the LRE. This year, *MWA added a full-time behavior specialist to support special education and the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) of behavior supports in the general education (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 behavioral needs and interventions).* A MTSS framework is crucial for ensuring appropriate and timely attention to the range of challenges experienced by students. This approach is critical to supporting students in the LRE.

Behavior Specialist (Ms. Edwards) has focused on introducing and establishing Tier 1 behavior systems, supports and protocols for all students. This has included teacher coaching on classroom management, classroom management professional development trainings for all staff. The behavior specialist has focused on creating Tier 2 supports including the creation of curriculum and training for social groups and skill building groups. Tier 3 supports have included check in/check out systems for individual students, behavior observations, data tracking and collaboration with dean of students and holistic services department. **For special education students, the behavior specialist has focused on behavioral observations, direct behavior intervention service minutes for students with behavioral service IEP minutes, writing and implementing behavior intervention plans (BIP), and collaborating with board certified behavior analyst (BCBA) for functional behavior assessments (FBAs).** Additionally, MWA has had an all faculty and staff SELPA led behavior support training by our program specialist focused on the verbal de-escalation prevention-intervention-postvention cycle.

SPED Academic Instruction

Students are pulled out for specialized academic instruction during resource or support period. In the upper school (US), students with academic deficits are pulled out for a period of the day in lieu of an elective course and work on reading, math, writing, and general education remediation. During flex period, students who only need homework, access to general education support, or executive functioning support are served in a tutorial/homework support period (200 minutes). Students who have academic and HW support needs are enrolled in both Flex Period and Support Period during the core day (425 minutes weekly). This year we have expanded our support for higher needs students in the US to have two support periods (out of 6) and have modified math curriculum instruction based on individual student need for a student whom general education Algebra or modified Algebra instruction was not an offer of FAPE.

In the middle school (MS), students with IEPs are pulled out for Flex Period (180-200 minutes weekly). Many students are pulled out for additional reading intervention services minutes during advisory or another period during the day. Students with significant learning needs and on modified curriculums are supported in the general education environment with a shared instructional aide and pulled out from English and GE courses for reading and phonics instruction.

Special Education Academic Achievement Data and Interventions

In 2020, MWA was identified for a performance improvement plan (PIP) for students with IEPs in math and ELA. Students with IEPs were under performing their general education peers on the SBAC math and ELA assessment. As part of the PIP process, MWA analyzed reading, math and assessment data, determined what interventions were already in place, and identified key root causes. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year (during COVID closure), the SPED PIP team made recommendations based on the findings. Due to the pandemic, the CDE dropped the PIP plans for the 2021-22 school year. However, MWA's special education department continued the work that the PIP team had proposed. In 2021-22, the SPED department shifted its focus from supporting students in the general education and primary goal of access to general education curriculum to addressing academic skill gaps in SPED so that students could access general education curriculum more independently and develop the skills needed to be successful in high school and post-secondary pathways. SPED piloted an online reading program called Mindplay, started reading intervention groups in the middle school using a variety of curriculums and novel study in the upper school. The implementation was inconsistent in large part due to a lack of curriculum and teacher vacancies, but it was important to the SPED department to start to work on the root causes (lack of phonics and targeted research-based reading intervention) to improve reading outcomes for students with IEPs.

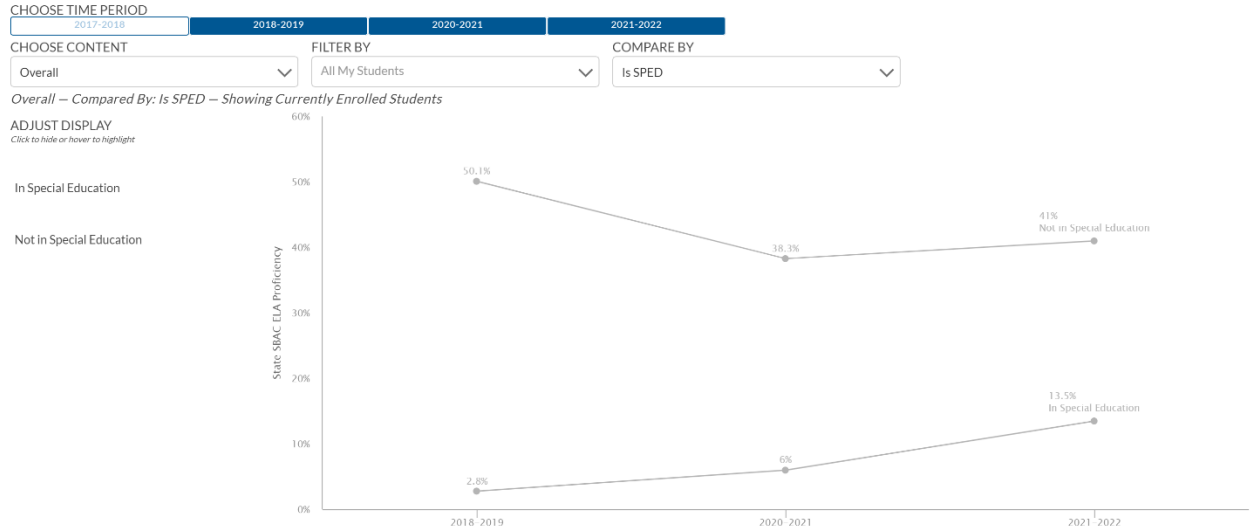
This school year, the SPED department purchased a reading and writing curriculum with a focus on using research-based curriculum and implementing reading intervention with fidelity to continue addressing this gap. While we are no longer under the PIP, we continue to monitor assessment data and put interventions in place that support the success of SPED-designated students.

Statewide Standardized Assessments 2021-22

SBAC ELA Proficiency 2021-22		
SPED	General Education	ELD
13.5%	41.0%	6.1%

State SBAC ELA Proficiency

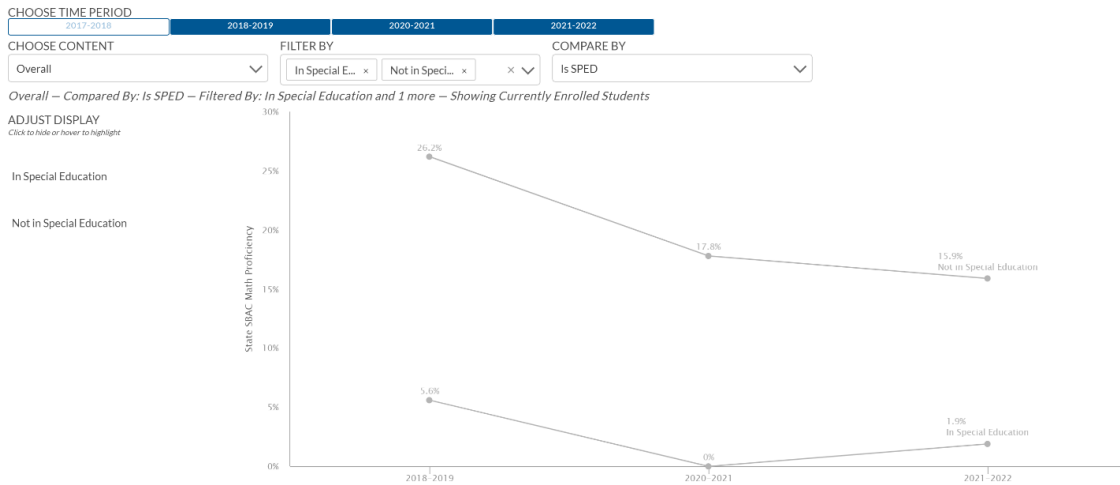
Percent of students scoring a level 3 or 4 on the state SBAC ELA exam



SBAC Math Proficiency 2021-22		
SPED	General Education	ELD
1.9%	15.9%	1.0%

State SBAC Math Proficiency

Percent of students scoring a level 3 or 4 on the state SBAC Math exam



ELPAC Proficiency 2021-22		
SPED		General Education (ELD)
40.5%		73.1%

ELPAC Proficiency

Percent of students who scored at Level 3 or above on ELPAC



Special Education Focus Areas 2022-23

Curriculum and Instruction: Our focus this year in special education has really been on maximizing time spent during resource on addressing academic skill gaps.

Writing: SPED is piloting a writing intervention curriculum called Rewards Writing in 7th grade resource. Rewards Writing provides direction instruction and focused practice to build essential writing skills for students in grade 5-12. It is easy to follow, systematic, explicit instruction with short, approachable lessons. The lessons focus on critical sentence writing skills, sentence writing fluency, word choice and vocabulary, and sentence revising strategies. Since starting Rewards Writing in 7th grade, we have been able to implement this curriculum with good fidelity due to the quick nature of the lessons and the ease of implementation of the curriculum for SPED staff. We will continue to monitor the progress of this writing intervention for its effectiveness with the possibility of expanding to different grade levels.

Math Intervention: The special education department this year started a new curriculum for math intervention called Transmath. Transmath is a math intervention curriculum that targets middle and high school students who lack the foundational skills necessary for entry and/or success in algebra and who are more than two years below grade level in math. Transmath curriculum focused on improving math skills by emphasizing fewer topics in greater depth.

Several SPED staff and teachers have participated in the IXL professional development trainings and are beginning to implement the IXL program and tools with more fidelity in resource. By using IXL in

resource, teachers can assign specific skills for students to work to address individual skill or small group skill gaps.

NWEA MAP Math at or above 50 th percentile Fall 2022		
SPED	General Education	ELD
6%	24.7%	4.9%

NWEA MAP Math Growth Percentile Fall 2022		
SPED	General Education	ELD
51.6%	59%	59.3%

SBAC Interim Assessment Blocks (IAB) Math Proficiency Fall 2022		
SPED	General Education	ELD
43.1%	62.6%	54.2%

Successes

- Reading Intervention:** This year we have implemented reading programs in special education. In the MS we are using two reading programs for students with IEPs. Sonday, an Orton-Gillingham based program, has been introduced for our students in the middle school who have significant phonological awareness and basic reading skill gaps. This is a research based multi-sensory structured phonics, reading, writing, and spelling program for beginning readers who are in need of reading intervention. While our students with IEPs who are reading at around the 3rd grade level, are working on Rewards, a research-based, short-term, and specialized program for adolescent students in grades 4–12 who struggle reading long, multisyllabic words and comprehending content-area text. With explicit, systemic, teacher-led instruction, this intervention gives students new skills to unlock grade-level content-area text. These reading intervention programs are implemented in small groups 3-4 times a week for 30 minutes each. In 5th and 6th grade students are working on reading in small groups with books from Reading A-Z and Read Naturally. In 7th grade and 8th grade, these targeted reading intervention programs are paired with novel study. Student are grouped heterogeneously based on their reading level and reading novels in small groups to focus on reading comprehension, fluency, oral reading, vocabulary and implementation of reading strategies.

SBAC Interim Assessment Blocks (IAB) ELA Proficiency Fall 2022		
SPED	General Education	ELD
31.6%	73.8%	48.9%

- Behavior Support:** With the addition of a behavior specialist there has been an increase in proactive behavior support, observations of classrooms and students and training teachers on student safety plans, behavior intervention plans, and accommodations. Having a behavior specialist on campus lends to real time support and trouble shooting behavioral challenges for students with IEPs. The behavior specialist’s observations and interventions in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 have increased MWA’s ability to provide MTSS general education behavior interventions and support and our fidelity to Child Find.

- **Expansion of specialized academic instruction in the upper school.** Last year, SPED piloted offering additional support for students who are struggling with completing assignments, executive functioning during Flex Period. Offering special education support during Flex Period in the high school in addition to our traditional pull out elective support period (resource period) has really enabled the upper school SPED department to offer a wider continuum of services that is more individualized to our Wave Makers needs. This year, we were also able to support one of our highest needs Wave Maker who is on a modified curriculum and schedule with multiple resource periods during the day in addition to Flex Period by offering individualized modified math instruction (online 1:1 tutoring with an education specialist) as student was not able to access modified Algebra curriculum in the general education.
 - Resource Support Period focused on addressing reading, writing, and math skill gaps.
 - Flex Period focuses on addressing student’s access to general education high school curriculum, executive functioning, study habits, and homework support.

Challenges

- **Staffing Challenges and SPED Vacancies:** The SPED department has been significantly impacted by the teacher and staffing challenges. SPED has 3 teacher vacancies currently and one instructional aide vacancy. Teacher staffing challenges make expanding MWA’s special education program offerings and balancing student services, caseload limits, and educational settings extremely difficult.
- **Schedule Limitations**
 - **Intervention times MS:** Because students in the middle school move in cohorts, the MS special education primary instruction block is built into the Flex period time where all students are receiving interventions. The benefit of pulling out students for their specialized academic instruction time during Flex period is that students are able to participate in the general education for the majority of their academic instruction. The downside is not having enough time to support students who have significant reading, math, executive functioning deficits and require more time for targeted instruction. This year, Flex period was reduced for 5th and 6th grade to 180 minutes Monday-Thursday and 200 minutes for 7th and 8th grade.
- **Growing SPED Population Sizes:** As more students are identified throughout their time at Making Waves, the groups of students with IEPs per grade increases. This leads to significantly large size groups of students by 8th grade and high school. This impacts SPED’s ability to maintain fidelity to small group instruction with flex period. This is further compounded by staffing challenges and vacancies.
- **Increase of High-Need Students:** There has been an increase of students with high mental health support needs and significant behavioral challenges. There have been increased rates of suspensions for students with IEPs due to these factors. To date, there have been 10 suspension incidents and 2 recommendations for expulsion this academic year for students designated as SPED. All of the suspension related incidents were violations of MWA school code of conduct, handbook, or educational code violations. There have been challenges with creating and updating school wide systems to reflect the post Covid behavioral challenges, establishing and maintain functional based preventative strategies based on school data.

Office Discipline Referral Rate YTD 2022-23		
SPED	General Education	ELD
8%	5.6%	6.6%

- ***Like their general education peers, students with IEPs suffered significant learning loss and challenges from the pandemic. Students with IEPs who were typically entering MWA 3+ grade levels behind in reading and math in 5th grade, are now entering 5+ grade levels behind.*** There is an increased number of students who missed significant portions of phonics and basic reading and math instruction during the pandemic. This is true too for students who had not been identified prior to the pandemic closure. The need for direct, small group reading intervention and instruction in both special education and general education students in need. There are many struggling general education readers who are not yet identified under SPED who may have a true learning disability OR may have significant learning loss and need targeted instruction so that they do not require special education services.

Trends in Special Education

There has been an increase in other health impairment eligibility for special education due to an increase in mental health and behavioral challenges amongst the student population. These behavior and attention deficits are impacting their educational progress so significantly that they are eligible for special education services under other health impairment. Similarly, there has been a significant increase in mental health diagnosis of students including depression and anxiety that are so severe that it is impacting educational progress (other health impairment or emotional disturbance). Another trend in special education, is the qualification of students for significant math discrepancies due to math learning gaps that were only exacerbated by COVID closures and learning loss. ***Criteria for special education is set by standardized measures that do not consider school-wide trends or learning loss post-pandemic. As a result, many students are scoring in the low to low average range for math calculation and qualifying for special education under specific learning disability.***

MWA is working toward expanding its continuum of learning environments, but being a single school site and staffing challenges make it increasingly difficult to serve all of our Wave-Maker's needs. There has been an increase in change of placements for students whose mental health and behavioral needs are so significant that MWA is no longer able to offer Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) at the MWA school site. ***MWA and the board should anticipate this trend going forward for the foreseeable future. Currently there are 2 non-public school placements, but would anticipate that number doubling by 2023-24 AY. These placements can have a significant impact on special education and the school's budget for transportation and academic costs*** (the majority of educational related mental health services is covered by medical or the SELPA's ERHMS pool).

Focus Areas Semester 2

Post-Secondary Transition Plans

The SPED department is focused on expanding transition planning services and plans in collaboration with the College and Career Center (CCC). MWA offers significant post-secondary transition supports and services as part of the Wave Maker transition plan. Students with IEPs participate in the CCC transition and CAP transition. However, there are students with more significant developmental and adult post-secondary transitions. SPED and the CCC hope to establish and develop relationships with the Regional Center and CCCOE to support adult transition programs for our Wave-Makers with adult support needs post MWA. Another area in which SPED and the CCC can continue to collaborate is around our post-secondary transition planning supports for SPED students who are not interested in a four-year university or community college post-secondary plan.

MWA Diploma and Certificate of Completion Graduation Pathways

SPED also seeks to work with the CCC and executive leadership to update and build out the MWA graduation pathways to incorporate new state CA diploma pathways for students with disabilities. Currently MWA has an A-G diploma track and a limited number of students on a certificate of completion.

The CDE established guidelines for a new high school diploma pathway (Section 51225.31) exclusively for students with significant cognitive disabilities in alignment with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ***It is important to note that this new diploma pathway will only apply to a narrow sub-group of students with significant cognitive disabilities who take the California Alternative Assessment (CAA) and who taken or plan to the statewide coursework minimum requirements for graduation*** (modified to alternative achievement standards). ***This diploma pathway does not constitute a change of placement.*** The CDE is working on identifying and developing alternative coursework and performance tasks for students who are not eligible for the alternate assessment but struggle to complete state and local graduation requirements necessary to receive a regular high school diploma. The 2022 budget earmarked IDEA funds for this research and development and anticipates proposing alternate means in the 2024 legislature.

In the meantime, ***MWA will research the available CA diploma options, the newly proposed CDE special education CA diploma pathway (described above), and examine best practices for students with IEP. We will get input from relevant stakeholders including the SELPA and CDE's updated guidelines.*** MWA currently has students enrolled in non-public school placements that do not offer A-G courses. Those students work toward a MWA diploma but are not UC/CSU-eligible at graduation.

Conclusion

For semester 2 the focus in special education will continue to be on instruction and addressing academic skill gaps during resource support period and Flex period with increased fidelity. SPED will continue to focus on small group reading interventions through Rewards and Soliday reading programs and monitor student reading growth and progress. While there has been some progress in reading and ELA performance outcomes for students with IEPs, there has been limited progress in math interventions.

Despite significant staffing challenges, MWA continues to seek ways to programmatically expand our school's continuum of learning environments (LRE) and special education services to better support our student's individual needs.