

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Partnership Overview

Central School District (Central) and The Ability Challenge (ABC) entered into an engagement in Fall 2022 to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of its special education program. In light of the COVID pandemic, Central District leadership recognized the need to assess the District's progress, identify opportunities for growth and how to build on existing initiatives. This evaluation examined both quantitative and qualitative information from a variety of sources, such as data and document analysis, surveys, focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, and more. In addition to gathering information from a variety of sources, a diversity of voices (e.g., students, educators, service providers, families, administrators, community partners, and others) are reflected in this review and come through in the final deliverables.

Purpose of Report

ABC's model for building authentically inclusive school communities is grounded in our Quality Special Education Framework. The Framework outlines research-based core competencies leaders and educators need to demonstrate to develop and maintain high-quality inclusive programs that supports the needs of all learners, especially those with disabilities and other diverse learning needs.

ABC engaged in a structured data collection process, aligned to the Quality Special Education Framework, that gathered a diverse range of information from school stakeholders, including educators, students, families and more. We then examined and analyzed the data to identify trends, including areas of strength and opportunity for the District.

Using this approach, we set out to answer the following questions:

- What are Central's biggest strengths and areas of opportunity in how special education is currently being implemented across schools?
- To what degree are special education students being served adequately by the District?
- What are the recommended next steps for the District to address the identified areas of opportunity?

This Report summarizes the findings of this assessment and presents the data in a format that is both immediately actionable and meant for deeper Districtwide reflection. The purpose of the report is not to go deep on any one particular topic or competency, but



rather, to present a snapshot view of your District’s inclusive practices from which strategic improvement can begin.

Overview of Findings & Recommendations

#	Element	Score	Analysis
1	<p>CULTURE OF INCLUSION AND COLLABORATION</p> <p><i>Leaders set and hold staff accountable for a bold, clear, inclusive vision and aligned practices. Educators believe that all students can learn and grow and deeply value an inclusive, collaborative school environment.</i></p>	3.47	Proficient
2	<p>STUDENT CENTERED CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION</p> <p><i>Leaders manage the implementation of evidence-based, standards-aligned, culturally-responsive curriculum with clear outcomes and sequenced units of study. Educators facilitate meaningful and supportive relationships with students and deliver instruction that provides access to grade-level content for diverse learners.</i></p>	2.74	Fair/ Emerging
3	<p>SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF AND SERVICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION</p> <p><i>Leaders are familiar with special education laws and understand why the experiences of students with disabilities are central to decision making in many contexts. Educators understand how disability impacts learning, and they deliver integrated support that meets each student's needs.</i></p>	3.03	Fair/ Emerging
4	<p>EQUITABLE SYSTEMS FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Leaders allocate resources and put in place effective systems to manage the execution of quality special education programming in their context. Educators are knowledgeable about and implement those systems paying close attention to data and adjusting course as needed.</i></p>	2.70	Fair/ Emerging
5	<p>MEANINGFUL FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p><i>Leaders prioritize building meaningful partnerships with families and provide resources to staff to make those partnerships happen. Educators enter into effective, reciprocal relationships with families centered on empathy and cultural competence.</i></p>	2.89	Fair/ Emerging

KEY	Starting Out 1.00-1.79	Developing 1.80-2.59	Fair/Emerging 2.60-3.39	Proficient 3.40-4.19	Mastered 4.20-5.00
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Main Take-Aways

Detailed take-aways and recommendations are embedded in each section of the report. We have also highlighted the most salient take-aways below:

- The **Central community is its greatest asset**. Leaders and teachers believe in the foundational mindsets for authentic inclusion (e.g., believe that students can achieve). Students are thoughtful, curious, and eager to learn and families are incredibly dedicated to ensuring their children get the services they need.
- While the District has a stated vision for inclusion, staff and members of the Central community are **not clear about what that vision is**, nor do they understand the District's action plan for achieving that vision.
- There is also a **disconnect between staff perceptions and practice**, which may be due to a lack of knowledge about evidence-based practices that support all learners, differences in their understanding of what is required and expected across roles, and a failure of existing systems to support high-quality special education programming.

High-Leverage Recommendations

The following recommendations represent the highest-leverage opportunities to improve the quality of Central's special education program:

- Develop a **clear action plan** (with timelines, owners, measurable goals, etc.) that directly and explicitly **ties the vision for inclusion to Districtwide initiatives**. Ensure that each staff member is clear about what the vision is, how it lives in practice, and how they will be held accountable for ensuring they act consistently with that vision. Return to the vision regularly and across initiatives.
- Build on the District's priority standards work by building out **curriculum maps** with **clear learning outcomes** aligned to the priority standards and a **scope and sequence** for the year. Provide all educators with **professional learning** on promising practices in **data-driven instruction** and strategies for differentiating for students in Tier I and intervention settings.
- Develop **clear expectations for developing quality IEP documents** and provide staff with **training to build their skill** in crafting IEPs that include: an accurate description of the student's present levels of performance, standards-aligned goals that reflect student strengths and needs, and appropriate specialized instruction and services to provide the student access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment.
- Clarify and update a **Districtwide continuum of services** based on data around student needs. Engage in **work with principals** to support ownership, planning, and implementation of the direct and indirect components of those services (e.g., bolster



specialized instruction through teacher training and coaching, implement counseling as a related service for students who would benefit).

- Create a list of District **expectations for family engagement** that can be used to frame each school's family engagement processes and set a standard for what parent partnerships look like, feel like, and sound like in Central. Add information about how each school will be held accountable for meeting these expectations and follow up in a consistent manner.

SAMPLE



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS BY ELEMENT

The following section highlights factual findings by element. Each element has the following components:

- **Key Takeaways:** This section identifies any overarching trends or notable findings that may be actionable for the school.
- **Primary Source Data:** This section presents figures, quotations or other primary source data that either supports the key takeaways or adds relevant information for the school's review and planning.
- **Recommendations:** Possible next steps and suggestions for improvement based on national trends, evidence-based strategies, and expert review.
- **Considerations:** Questions or considerations to use to dive deeper into data and/or to develop insight and action. As ABC intends for this report to provide as much information as possible that can be used to improve inclusive environments for diverse learners, we hope you use the content from this section to engage your team in further work around these issues.

Additional terms and definitions include:

- **Elements:** Five main themes that undergird all quality special education programming according to ABC's Quality Special Education Framework.
- **Success Indicators:** Research-based qualities and systemic factors necessary to meet each of the Framework's five elements.
- **Score:** Data collected from the assessment is presented in a numeric form from 1 - 5 based on an aggregation of one or more data sources.
- **Analysis:** Scores are further noted with a descriptive notation (e.g., Mastered) and color coordinated to show the relative strength or area of challenge emerging from the review.