

## CHAPTER 3 – SPECIAL EDUCATION

### METHODOLOGY

In addition to compiling data and documents about the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District's (LCISD) special education program, six (6) schools were selected for site visits. In each of the schools, McConnell & Jones LLP (MJ) conducted interviews with the principal, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, regular education teachers who have special education students in their classes, and special education support staff. MJ also performed walkthroughs on each campus to the different special education instructional settings such as inclusion classes, resource rooms, Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE skills) classrooms, Intensive Behavior Classes (IBC), Structure Integrated Learning Classrooms (SILC)/Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS), and Social Integration Program (SIP) classes.

MJ selected for site visits and interviews, six schools from the red, blue, and maroon tracks. The schools consisted of two elementary schools, a middle school, a junior high school, and two high schools MJ also conducted interviews with a districtwide group of special education teachers, a districtwide group of special education support staff, the director of Special Programs who oversees Special Education, the assistive technology specialist, the superintendent, and a group of parents of children with disabilities. MJ also addressed the special education program in districtwide interviews with principals and with elementary, middle school/junior high and high school teachers.

### BACKGROUND

With the increase in total student enrollment, LCISD's special education population increased from 2,202 in 2012-2013 to 2,722 in 2016-2017, as shown on the following page in **Exhibit 3-1**. Throughout this five-year period, between 8.3 and 8.8 percent of the district's students were in special education.

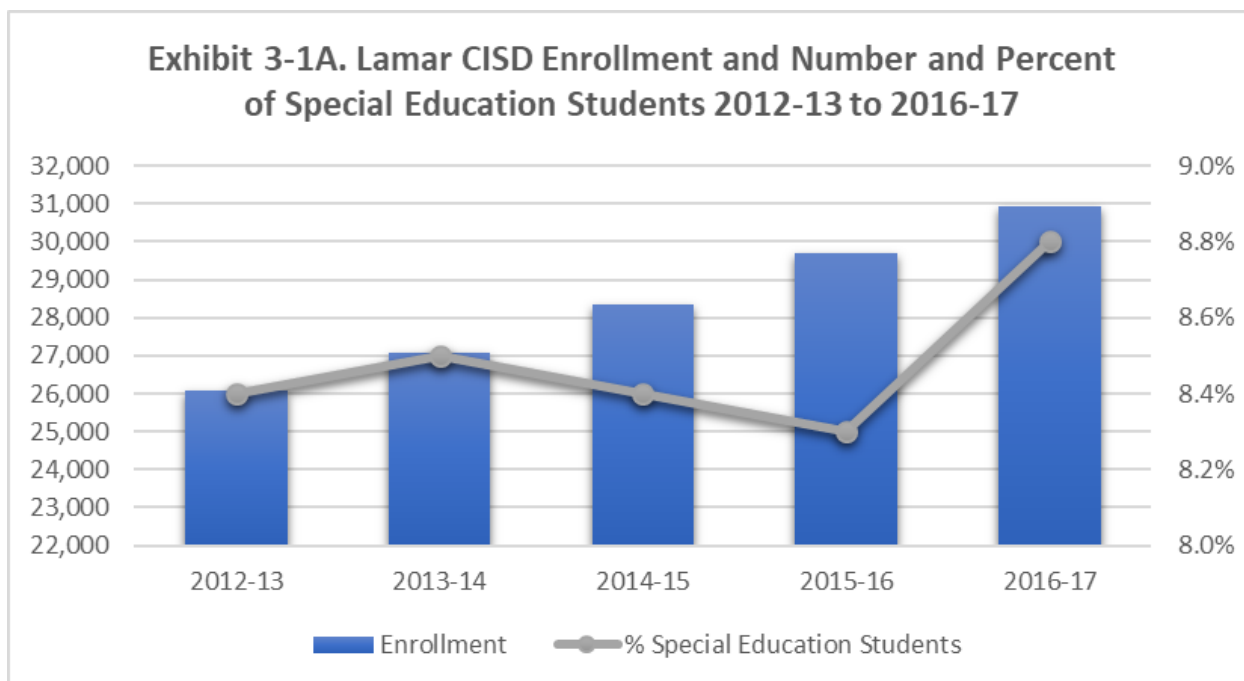
### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- LCISD special education students' performance on state assessments in 2015-2016 exceeded the performance of special education students in Region 4 and the state.
- By moving from a program to a campus support focus, the Special Education Department streamlined communications with campuses, created a single contact point, and increased both support and monitoring efficiency.
- The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee has increased parent involvement, parents' knowledge of special education, and communication with district administration.
- RtI implementation varies across campuses, lacking consistency and fidelity. This situation also results in a large number of referrals to special education and a large percentage of referrals that do not qualify for special education services.
- A disproportional number of African American and Hispanic students are referred to special education and subject to a range of disciplinary actions.
- Inclusion is not consistently implemented within and across grade levels, resulting in large classes at the junior high and high school levels.

**Exhibit 3-1**  
**LCISD Enrollment and Number and Percent**  
**of Special Education Students**  
**2012-2013 to 2016-2017**

Year	Enrollment	Number of Special Education Students	Percent of Special Education Students
2012-2013	26,064	2,202	8.4%
2013-2014	27,079	2,296	8.5%
2014-2015	28,332	2,390	8.4%
2015-2016	29,692	2,469	8.3%
2016-2017	30,829	2,722	8.8%

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017. 2016-2017 data is as of April 3, 2017.



Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.

The percentage of special education students varied across campuses, as shown in **Exhibit 3-2** and **Exhibit 3-3**. The percentage of SPED students varies by school and school level because of where particular SPED programs are located. Not all schools have the full array of SPED programs. Consequently, some SPED students do not attend the elementary or secondary schools within their neighborhood but go to a school outside their zone that has a program they need. For example, Long Elementary with 16.4 percent SPED students offers a PPCD, SILC/PASS and SIP programs. Jackson Elementary with 11.7 percent SPED students has a Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) and a Life Skills program. Only 14 elementary campuses have PPCD programs and only 10 elementary campuses have Life Skills programs.

**Exhibit 3-2**  
**Percent of Special Education Students by Grade Level**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
<b>Special Education Students Percentage Range</b>				
Elementary Schools	4.2% to 16.3%	5.3% to 12.0%	3.3% to 12.9%	2.2% to 14.3%
Middle Schools	5.5% to 10.1%	6.4% to 12.9%	5.7% to 12.9%	6.2% to 12.7%
Junior High Schools	5.7% to 13.5%	5.1% to 12.7%	6.5% to 12.7%	6.6% to 11.5%
High Schools	5.8% to 10.7%	5.7% to 10.6%	6.3% to 10.5%	6.6% to 12.3%
Percent of special education students in LCISD	8.8%	8.3%	8.4%	8.5%
<b>Number of Schools Where the Percentage of Special Education Students Is Above District Percentage</b>				
Elementary Schools	15	9	10	11
Middle Schools	2	2	3	2
Junior High Schools	3	2	2	2
High Schools	2	2	2	2

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.

**Exhibit 3-3**  
**LCISD Total Enrollment, Number and Percent of Special Education Students by Campus**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

Campus	2016-2017			2015-2016			2014-2015			2013-2014		
	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%
<b>High Schools</b>												
Foster High	2063	128	6.2%	2279	170	7.5%	2130	156	7.3%	1953	145	7.4%
Fulshear High	400	30	7.5%									
George Ranch	2524	146	5.8%	2402	138	5.7%	2215	139	6.3%	2060	135	6.6%
Lamar High	1597	170	10.6%	1545	152	9.8%	1513	134	8.9%	1527	144	9.4%
Terry High	1946	209	10.7%	1881	200	10.6%	1787	188	10.5%	1688	207	12.3%
<b>Junior High Schools</b>												
Briscoe JH	1039	78	7.5%	1279	96	7.5%	1191	84	7.1%	1103	85	7.7%
Lamar JH	887	108	12.2%	877	103	11.7%	860	99	11.5%	796	69	8.7%
Leaman JH	753	43	5.7%									
George JH	905	122	13.5%	1059	134	12.7%	1036	132	12.7%	1032	119	11.5%
Reading JH	1269	73	5.8%	1186	61	5.1%	1163	76	6.5%	1123	74	6.6%
<b>Middle Schools</b>												
Wertheimer	456	40	8.8%	680	54	7.9%	613	52	8.5%	517	32	6.2%
Wessendorf	397	39	9.8%	420	54	12.9%	456	59	12.9%	458	50	10.9%
Navarro	506	51	10.1%	487	58	11.9%	504	54	10.7%	528	67	12.7%
Polly Ryon	678	37	5.5%	625	40	6.4%	560	32	5.7%	530	42	7.9%
<b>Elementary Schools</b>												
Adolphus	725	72	9.9%	703	64	9.1%	574	53	9.2%	477	29	6.1%
Arrendondo	700	62	8.9%	642	67	10.4%						
Austin	619	60	9.7%	587	44	7.5%	572	47	8.2%	575	62	10.8%
Beasley	377	34	9.0%	386	26	6.7%	420	28	6.7%	418	21	5.0%
Bentley	599	54	9.0%									
Bowie	646	72	11.1%	637	57	8.9%	642	68	10.6%	663	59	8.9%

Campus	2016-2017			2015-2016			2014-2015			2013-2014		
	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%	Total	SPED	%
Campbell	603	49	8.1%	625	45	7.2%	701	56	8.0%	731	51	7.0%
Dickinson	547	42	7.7%	555	35	6.3%	560	38	6.8%	564	39	6.9%
Frost	500	64	12.8%	426	51	12.0%	404	40	9.9%	395	24	6.1%
Hubenak	788	53	6.7%	1215	75	6.2%	1087	64	5.9%	911	64	7.0%
Huggins	931	81	8.7%	756	59	7.8%	637	51	8.0%	557	50	9.0%
Hutchison	684	58	8.5%	709	57	8.0%	793	66	8.3%	778	49	6.3%
Jackson	401	47	11.7%	420	41	9.8%	394	43	10.9%	394	48	12.2%
Long	624	102	16.3%	605	66	10.9%	603	78	12.9%	587	84	14.3%
McNeill	850	58	6.8%	844	45	5.3%	838	38	4.5%	772	31	4.0%
Meyer	717	69	9.6%	622	46	7.4%	682	61	8.9%	636	58	9.1%
Pink	604	59	9.8%	632	54	8.5%	607	46	7.6%	648	48	7.4%
Ray	631	56	8.9%	622	50	8.0%	595	54	9.1%	596	52	8.7%
Seguin	308	13	4.2%	370	20	5.4%	389	13	3.3%	403	9	2.2%
Smith	439	56	12.8%	487	50	10.3%	528	51	9.7%	543	68	12.5%
Thomas	855	70	8.2%	831	67	8.1%	1007	69	6.9%	943	86	9.1%
Travis	591	66	11.2%	644	65	10.1%	665	78	11.7%	669	62	9.3%
Velasquez	678	73	10.8%	684	48	7.0%	686	63	9.2%	655	60	9.2%
Williams	936	55	5.9%	856	52	6.1%	801	52	6.5%	744	53	7.1%
<b>Special Sites</b>												
A.L.C	84	9	10.7%	60	10	16.7%	60	10	16.7%	56	6	10.7%
JDC	45	10	22.2%	46	15	32.6%	49	15	30.6%	36	12	33.3%
FBCAS	14	4	28.6%	8	0	0.0%	10	*	*	13	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30916</b>	<b>2722</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>29,692</b>	<b>2,469</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>28,332</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>27,079</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>8.5%</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.

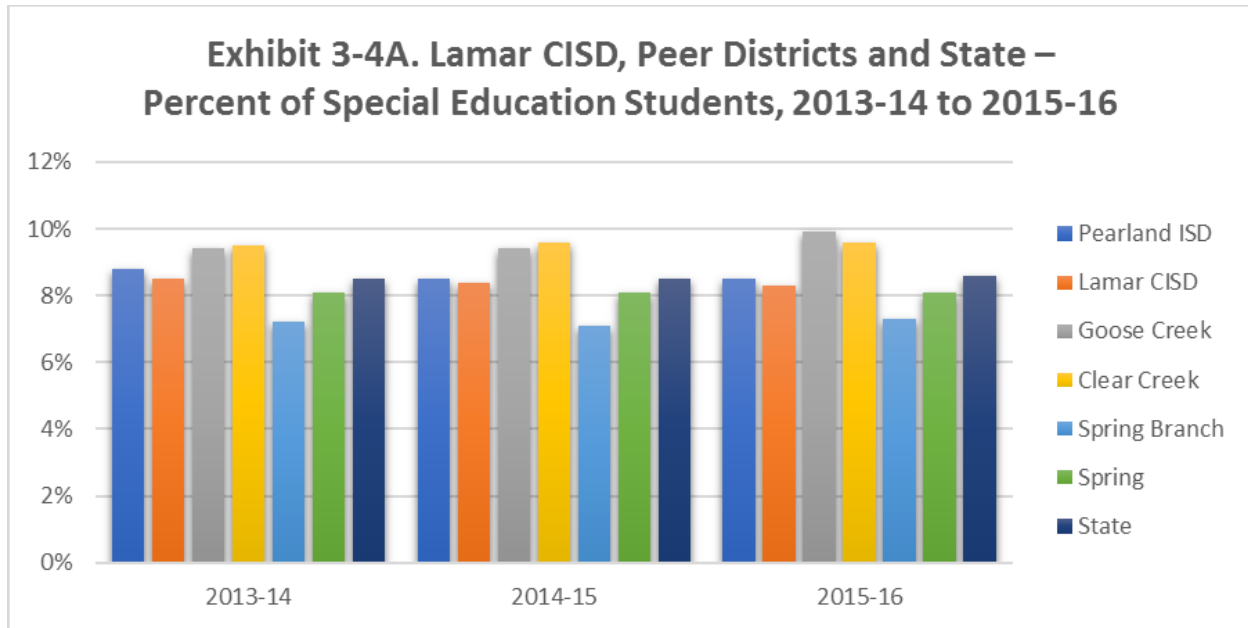
\* Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03. Therefore, columns with \* do not add to the displayed totals.

LCISD occupied the third lowest position among its peer districts in the percentage of special education students during 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 and the second lowest in 2015-2016 (**Exhibit 3-4**). LCISD's percentage of special education students was lower than the state average throughout this period. Please note that **Exhibit 3-4** uses TEA-Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) data for LCISD and its peers for consistency purposes. TAPR data on LCISD may differ from the LCISD data presented in other exhibits because the two sources represent different collection times.

**Exhibit 3-4**  
**LCISD, Peer Districts and State – Percent of Special Education Students**  
**2013-2014 to 2015-2016**

Districts	Percent of Special Education Students		
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Pearland ISD	8.8%	8.5%	8.5%
<b>LCISD</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
Goose Creek	9.4%	9.4%	9.9%
Clear Creek	9.5%	9.6%	9.6%
Spring Branch	7.2%	7.1%	7.3%
Spring	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%
<b>State</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.



**Exhibit 3-5**, shows the disability categories of LCISD students over a four-year period. The most prevalent disabilities include learning disabilities, speech impairment, autism, emotional disturbance, and intellectual disabilities. Over the 2013-2014 to 2016-2017 period, the percentage of students with a learning disability declined from 28.6 to 23.0 percent; the percent of students with an intellectual disability increased from 10.3 to 12.7 percent; and the percent of students with autism increased from 11.1 to 16.1 percent.

**Exhibit 3-5**  
**LCISD Number and Percent of Students by Disability**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

Disabilities	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017***	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Orthopedic Impairment	22	1.0%	20	0.8%	21	0.9%	20	0.7%
Other Health Impairment	338	14.7%	366	15.3%	385	15.6%	405	14.9%
Auditory Impairment	26	1.1%	24	1.0%	28	1.1%	26	1.0%
Visual Impairment	29	1.3%	28	1.2%	28	1.1%	29	1.1%
Deaf-Blind	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Intellectual Disability	237	10.3%	259	10.8%	266	10.8%	345	12.7%
Emotional Disturbance	253	11.0%	260	10.9%	249	10.1%	270	9.9%
Specific Learning Disability	656	28.6%	638	26.7%	626	25.4%	626	23.0%
Speech Impairment	424	18.5%	439	18.4%	454	18.4%	499	18.3%
Autism	256	11.1%	314	13.1%	364	14.7%	439	16.1%
Traumatic Brain Injury	9	0.4%	12	0.5%	14	0.6%	8	0.3%
Non-categorical Early Childhood	36	1.6%	29	1.2%	30	1.2%	52	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,296*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,469</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 3, 2017.

\*Total in 2013-14 in this exhibit is 2,287 and is missing three students

\*\*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03. Therefore, columns with \*\* do not add to the displayed totals.

\*\*\*Data in the 2016-2017 column are as of April 3, 2017.

In 2016-2017, 89.3 percent of LCISD’s students with disabilities attend their home campuses. Attendance of the home campus varies by disability (**Exhibit 3-6**) as some of the programs for students with certain disabilities are available only on selected campuses. Among the more common disabilities, nearly all (99.8 percent) students with learning disabilities, 96.0 percent of students with speech impairments, and 95.8 percent of students with other health impairments attend their respective home campus. However, only 73.6 percent of students with autism attend their home campus. Students with autism who experience significant cognitive delays or behavioral challenges may have to attend a centralized program on other campuses. They may attend a Life Skills program that is available on 22 campuses or SIP that is available on nine campuses.

**Exhibit 3-6  
Number and Percentage of Special Education Students in District and Those  
Attending Their Home Campus by Disability  
2016-2017**

Disabilities	Special Education Students Attending Their Home Campuses		LCISD Total Number of Special Education Students	
	N	%	N	%
Orthopedic Impairment	17	85.0%	20	0.7%
Other Health Impairment	388	95.8%	405	14.9%
Auditory Impairment	23	88.5%	26	1.0%
Visual Impairment	19	65.5%	29	1.1%
Deaf-Blind	*	*	*	*
Intellectual Disability	298	86.4%	345	12.7%
Emotional Disturbance	229	84.8%	270	9.9%
Specific Learning Disability	625	99.8%	626	23.0%
Speech Impairment	479	96.0%	499	18.3%
Autism	323	73.6%	439	16.1%
Traumatic Brain Injury	7	87.5%	8	0.3%
Non-categorical Early Childhood	20	38.5%	52	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,431</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, as of April 3, 2017.

\* Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03. Therefore, columns with \* do not add to the displayed totals.

Special education students receive education services in a variety of instructional settings that allow them to be in the least restrictive environment. As shown in **Exhibit 3-7**, the most common instructional settings are a resource room, a self-contained unit, mainstreaming, and no instructional setting for speech only students. Following the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) mandate to provide educational opportunities to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and, preferably in a regular education setting, LCISD increased the percentage of students with disabilities being educated in more inclusive settings.

Between 2013-2014 and 2016-2017, LCISD increased the percent of students with disabilities being mainstreamed from 22.6 in 2013-2014 to 32.3 in 2016-2017, an increase of 9.7 percent. It also increased the percentage of speech only students from 18.1 in 2013-2014 to 19.1 in 2016-2017, an increase of 1.0 percent. During the same period, LCISD decreased the percent of students in resource rooms from 37.2 in 2013-2014 to 30.3 in 2016-2017, a decrease of 6.9 percent. The percent of students in self-contained units also decreased from 17.4 in 2013-2014 to 14.9 in 2016-2017, a decrease of 2.5 percent.

**Exhibit 3-7  
LCISD Students by Instructional Arrangement  
2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

Instructional Arrangement	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Speech only students (00)	416	18.1%	455	19.0%	469	19.0%	520	19.1%
Homebound (01)	16	0.7%	40	1.7%	14	0.6%	17	0.6%
Hospital class (02)	12	0.5%	43	1.8%	13	0.5%	12	0.4%
Vocational adjustment class/ program (08)	*	*	11	0.5%	–	–	–	–
Mainstream (40)	519	22.6%	517	21.6%	671	27.2%	880	32.3%
Resource room (41/42)	854	37.2%	823	34.4%	787	31.9%	824	30.3%
Self-contained, mild/ moderate/severe (43/44)	400	17.4%	405	16.9%	444	18.0%	406	14.9%
Full-time early childhood (45)	10	0.4%	22	0.9%	12	0.5%	25	0.9%
Residential nonpublic school program (50)	*	*	*	*	–	–	–	–
Non-public day school (60)	*	*	*	*	*	*	–	–
Residential care and treatment (81/82/83/84/85)	53	2.3%	71	3.0%	58	2.3%	38	1.4%
Residential care and treatment-separate (86)	10	0.4%	*	*	–	–	–	–
Off home campus-self- contained (95)	*	*	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,296</b>		<b>2,390</b>		<b>2,469</b>		<b>2,722</b>	

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 3, 2017. \* Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03. Therefore, columns with \* do not add to the displayed totals.

In addition to a range of instructional settings, LCISD offers a number of special education programs and approaches to facilitate and enhance the academic success of special education students. These include:

- **Intensive Behavior Class (IBC):** a program for K-12 students with extreme emotional or mental illness. Students are placed in an IBC after all options on the home campus have been tried and failed.
- **Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS):** an inclusionary behavioral approach that provides behavior education to special education students through PASS trained teachers and paraprofessionals primarily in a mainstreamed classroom where special education students can benefit from experiences with their appropriately behaved peers and from participation in the general curriculum.
- **Structure Integrated Learning Classroom (SILC):** SILC supports special education students who struggle socially in a regular education/mainstream setting with intense training in social skills and the setting of social and behavioral goals.
- **Social Integration Program (SIP):** SIP is a centralized classroom for students K-12 who require specialized teaching strategies, including a modified curriculum, and ongoing development of social and behavior skills.
- **Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE) Skills:** A centralized classroom setting for students K-12 using a Life Skills curriculum that is based on the general education TEKS. Instruction focuses on the prerequisite skills needed to master the TEKS for a specific grade level.

- **Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD):** The self-contained centralized classroom program is for children with disabilities ages 3 to 5. The PPCD offers intensive specialized teaching strategies, including a modified curriculum and ongoing development of social, communication, and behavior skills. The goal of the program is to help the child acquire behaviors that will enhance learning and develop oral language and age-appropriate self-care skills.
- **Resource:** A pull-out service delivery model specific to the student’s disability. Students work on their Admission Review Dismissal (ARD)-specified individualized goals and objectives allowing them to progress at their own level and pace.

**Exhibit 3-8** summarizes the number of programs in the district and the number of special education teachers and paraprofessionals in 2016-2017 associated with each program. In 2016-2017, 227 special education teachers and 263 paraprofessionals or a total of 490 staff are associated with these programs.

**Exhibit 3-8**  
**Special Education Staff by Program**  
**2016-2017**

Program	Program by Grade Levels	Teachers	Para-professionals	Total Staff
IBC	2 HSs, 3 JHs, 1 MS, 3 ES, 2 special sites	15	24	39
SILC/PASS	4 HSs, 5 JHs, 3 MSs, 8 ES	26	39	65
SIP	1 HS, 1 JH, 1 MS, 6 ESs	13	29	42
PPCD	14 ESs	16	42	58
Life Skills	4 HSs, 4 JHs, 2 MSs, 10 ESs, 2 Special Sites	36	73	109
Resource	5 HSs, 5 JHs, 4 MSs, 24 ESs, 4 Special Sites	121	56	177
<b>Total</b>		<b>227</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>490</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017. Data does not include vacancies (substitutes).  
\*HS refers to high school; JH refers to junior high; MS refers to middle school; ES refers to elementary school.



Exhibit 3-9 on the following page shows the availability of programs and program staff by campus.

**Exhibit 3-9  
LCISD Special Education Actual Staffing by Setting and by School  
2016-2017**

Campus	IBC			SILC/PASS			SIP			PPCD			Life Skills			Resource				
	Current Staff*		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE		
	T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para			
<b>High Schools</b>																				
Foster High	1	2	2	2	2	3									3	6	6	7	3	8.5
George Ranch				2	2	3	1	1	1.5						2	4	4	10	0	10
Lamar High				2	2	3									3	6	6	10	0	10
Terry High	2	4	4	2	3	3.5									3	6	6	12	0	12
Fulshear High																		3	0	3
<b>Junior High Schools</b>																				
Briscoe JH	1	2	2	1	1	1.5	1	3	2.5						1	2	2	3	2	4
Leaman JH				2	0	2												4	0	4
George JH	1	2	2	2	3	3.5									1	3	2.5	7	0	7
Lamar JH				1	2	2									2	5	4.5	6	0	6
Reading JH	1	2	2	1	2	2									1	3	2.5	3	1	3.5
<b>Middle Schools</b>																				
Polly Ryon	1	2	2	1	2	2												2	1	2.5
Navarro				1	2	2												3	3	4.5
Wertheimer				1	1	1.5	1	2	2						1	2	2	2	1	2.5
Wessendorf															1	2	2	2	2	3
<b>Elementary Schools</b>																				
Adolphus				1	2	2				1	2	2	2	4	4	1	2	2		
Arrendondo	2	4	4	1	2	2										3	2	4		
Austin										1	3	2.5	1	2	2	1	2	2		
Beasley																1	1	1.5		
Bentley										2	5	4.5				1	1	1.5		
Bowie	1	2	2	1	2	2										3	2	4		
Campbell							1	3	2.5	1	2	2				1	1	1.5		
Dickinson				1	2	2							1	3	2.5	1	2	2		
Frost				1	2	2				1	3	2.5	1	2	2	2	2	3		
Hubenak							1	3	2.5	1	3	3				2	0	2		
Huggins				1	2	2										3	2	4		
Hutchison	1	2	2	1	2	2										2	2	3		
Jackson										1	2	2	2	4	4	1	1	1.5		
Long				1	3	3	2	4	4	1	3	2.5				4	1	4.5		
McNeill							2	4	4							1	2	2		
Meyer										1	3	2.5	1	2	2	2	1	2.5		
Pink													1	2	2	2	0	2		
Ray										1	2	2	1	2	2	1	3	2.5		
Seguin										1	2	2				0	1	0.5		

Campus	IBC			SILC/PASS			SIP			PPCD			Life Skills			Resource		
	Current Staff*		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE	Current Staff		Total FTE
	T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para		T	Para	
Smith										1	3	2.5	2	4	4	1	1	1.5
Thomas							1	2	2	1	3	2.5				3	1	3.5
Travis							3	7	6.5							2	3	3.5
Velasquez										2	6	5				2	0	2
Williams													2	5	4.5	1	2	2
<b>Special Sites</b>																		
ALC	3	0	3													1	1	1.5
Carters																		
BTTC													2	1	2.5			
1621																1	1	1.5
FBAC																2	2	3
Transition	1	2	2										2	3	3.5	2	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>149</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.

\*T refers to Teacher; Para refers to paraprofessional staff.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) data from the Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) comparing LCISD to its peer district shows that LCISD had the third lowest percentage of special education teachers among its peer districts and the third lowest with regard to the ratio of special education students to special education teachers (**Exhibit 3-10**). LCISD had 143.5 FTE special education teachers in 2015-2016. Its special education teachers comprised 8.3 percent of its total teacher population, 0.5 percent below the state average of 8.8 percent. The percentage of special education teachers in the peer districts ranged from 6.4 in Spring ISD to 11.8 in Goose Creek ISD. Although included as a peer district, Goose Creek ISD seems an outlier. Please note that **Exhibit 3-10** uses TAPR data for LCISD and its peers for consistency purposes. TAPR data on LCISD may differ from the LCISD data presented in other exhibits because the two sources represent different collection times.

**Exhibit 3-10**  
**Number and Percent of Special Education Teachers in LCISD, Peer Districts and State**  
**2015-2016 School Year**

Districts	Number of Special Education Students	Number of Special Education Teachers	Percent of Special Education Teachers	Teacher to Students Ratio
Pearland ISD	1,785	109.7	8.4%	1:16.3
<b>LCISD</b>	<b>2,410</b>	<b>143.5</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>1:16.8.0</b>
Goose Creek	2,340	178.5	11.8%	1:13.1
Clear Creek	3,947	215.3	8.8%	1:18.3
Spring Branch	2,564	149.5	6.8%	1:17.2
Spring	2,977	147.4	6.4%	1:20.2
<b>State</b>	<b>453,955</b>	<b>30,567.0</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>1:14.9</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.

Among its five (5) peer districts, LCISD has the third lowest number of special education students. LCISD occupies the third lowest position with regard to its special education students' annual and longitudinal dropout rates in grades 9 to 12 and graduation rate (**Exhibit 3-11**).

LCISD has the second highest attendance rate among its peer districts. LCISD special education students' attendance and graduation rates are slightly higher than the statewide average for special education students; its annual and longitudinal dropout rates are lower than the state average.

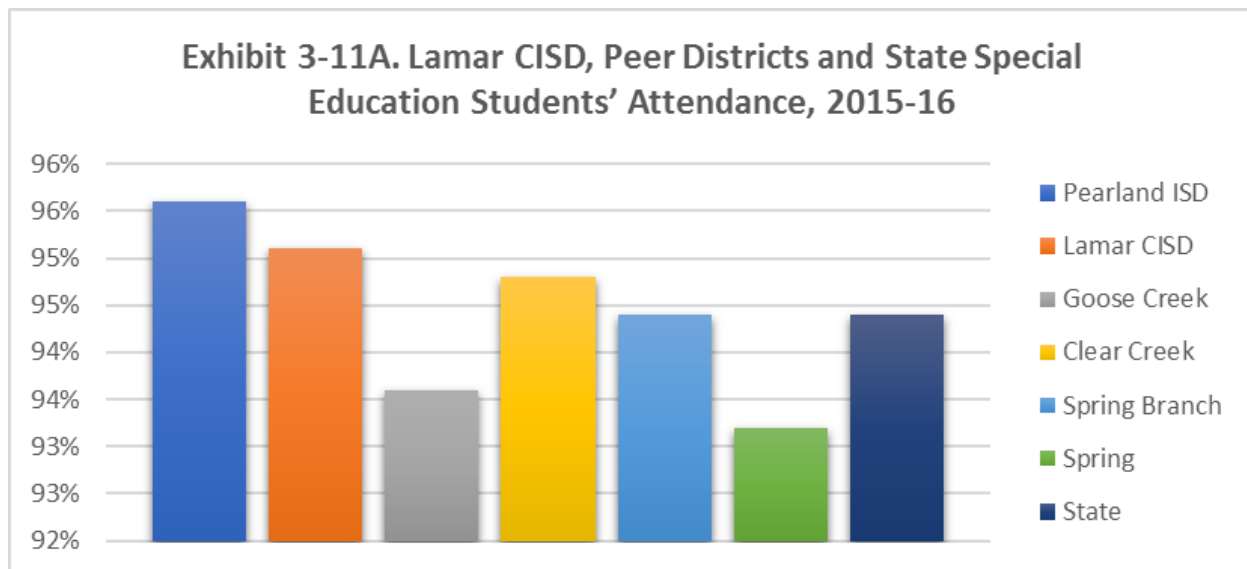
The percent of LCISD's special education students who graduated under the Recommended High School Program/Distinguished Achievement Program (RHSP/DAP) is the second lowest among its peers at 18.8 percent; it is also lower than the state average of 25.0 percent. Spring ISD (52.6 percent) and Goose Creek ISD (41.7 percent) have twice to almost three times the percentage of special education students who graduated under RHSP/DAP than does LCISD.

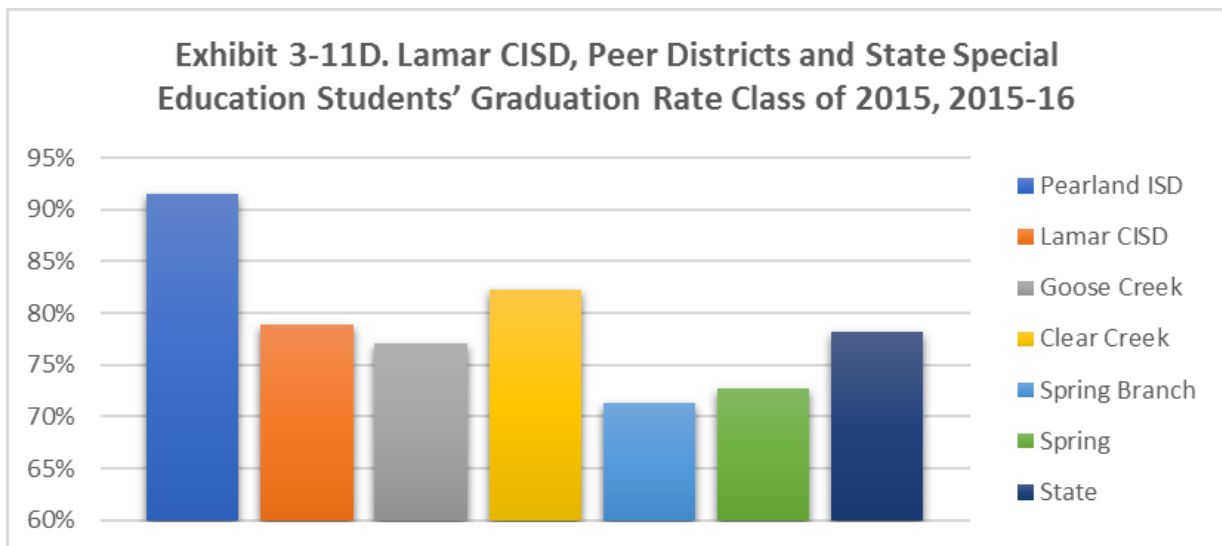
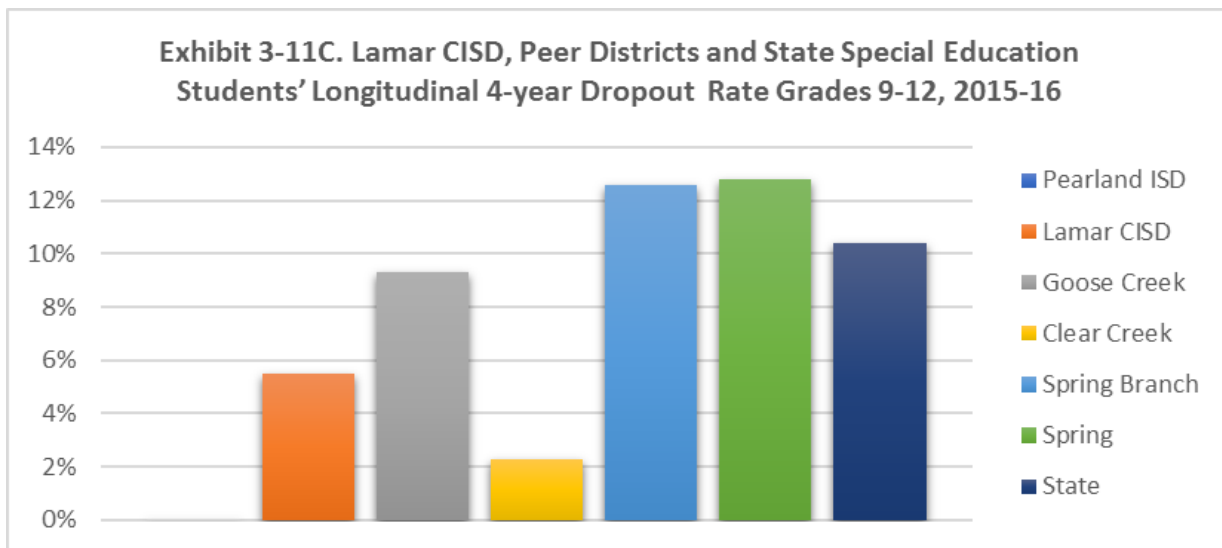
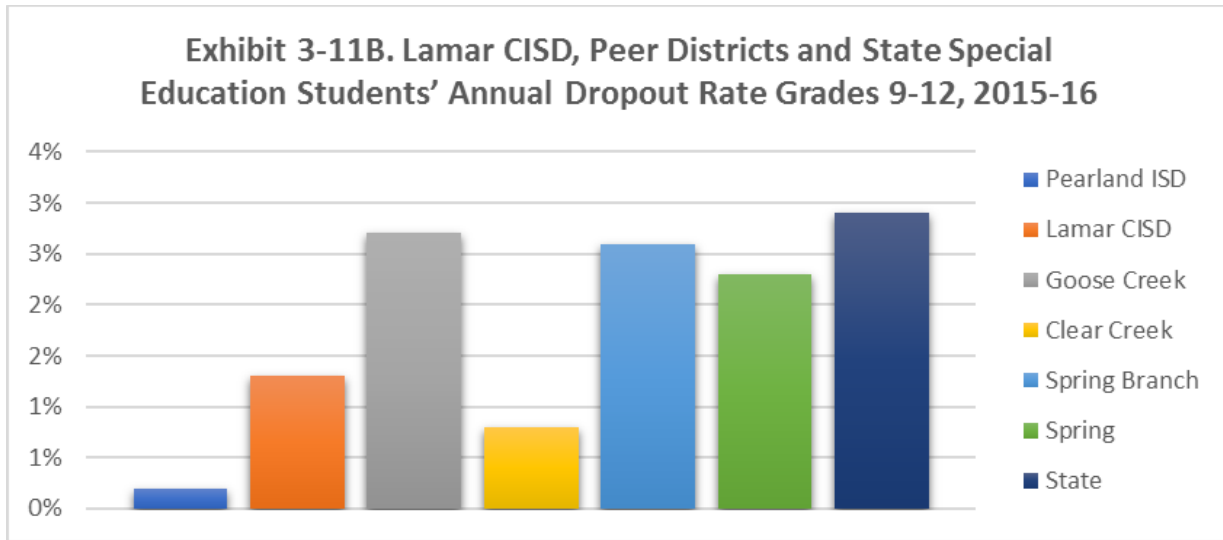
**Exhibit 3-11**  
**LCISD, Peer Districts and State Special Education Students' Attendance, Dropout and Graduate Rates**  
**2015-2016**

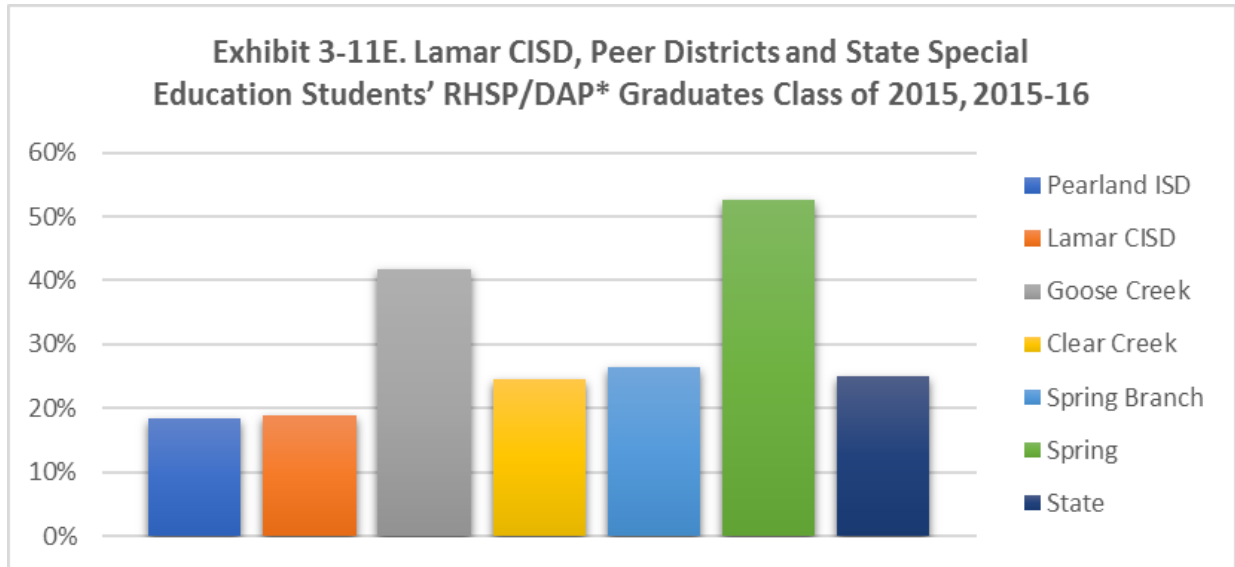
Districts	Attendance	Annual Dropout Rate Grades 9-12	Longitudinal 4-year Dropout Rate Grades 9-12	Graduation Rate Class of 2015	RHSP/DAP* Graduates Class of 2015
Pearland ISD	95.6%	0.2%	0.0%	91.5%	18.5%
<b>LCISD</b>	<b>95.1%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
Goose Creek	93.6%	2.7%	9.3%	77.1%	41.7%
Clear Creek	94.8%	0.8%	2.3%	82.3%	24.6%
Spring Branch	94.4%	2.6%	12.6%	71.3%	26.4%
Spring	93.2%	2.3%	12.8%	72.7%	52.6%
<b>State</b>	<b>94.4%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>78.2%</b>	<b>25.0%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, 2015-2016.

\*RHSP/DAP refers to Recommended High School Program and Distinguished Achievement Program.







\*RHSP/DAP refers to Recommended High School Program and Distinguished Achievement Program.

LCISD improved its special education program accountability rating from 2014-2015 (Needs Assistance) to 2015-2016 (Meets Requirements). In 2015-2016, the special education programs of LCISD and two of its peer districts received a “Meets Requirements” rating compared with two other peers that received a “Needs Assistance” rating and a third peer that received a “Needs Intervention” rating. In 2014-2015, only one peer district, Pearland ISD, received a “Meets Requirements” accountability rating. Three districts, including LCISD were rated “Needs Assistance” and two peer districts received a “Needs Intervention” rating. In 2013-2014, TEA deployed a different accountability rating system for special education programs. LCISD and three other peer districts “Met Standard” (Exhibit 3-12).

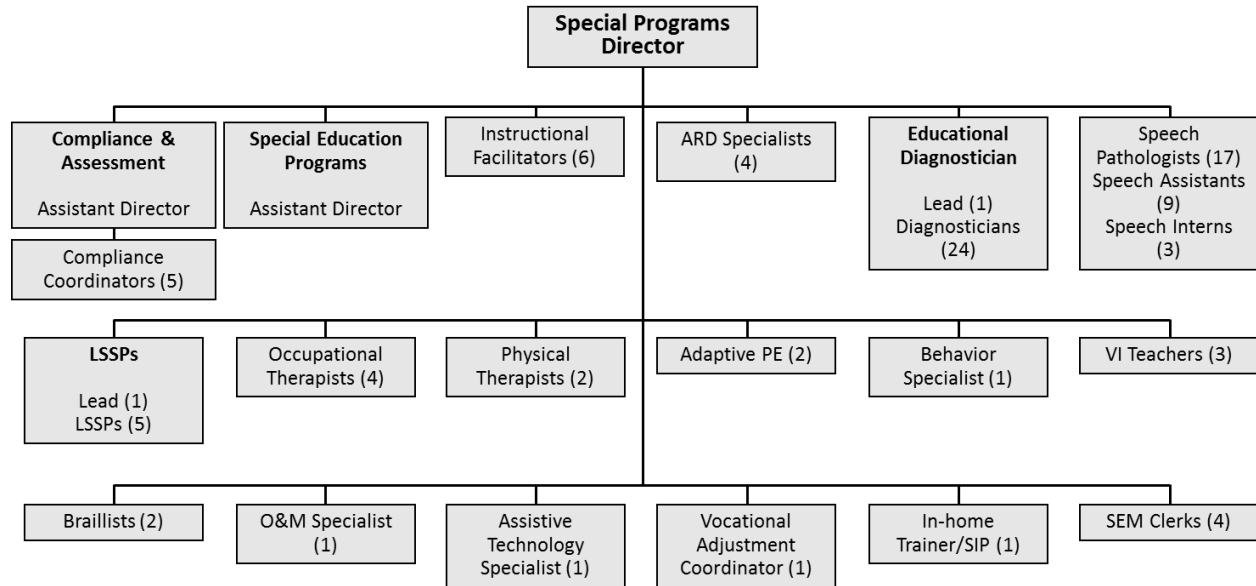
**Exhibit 3-12**  
**LCISD and Peer Districts: Special Education Accountability Ratings**  
**2013-2014 to 2014-2015**

Districts	Texas Education Agency – Special Education Accountability		
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Pearland ISD	Met Standard	Meets Requirements	Meets Requirements
<b>LCISD</b>	<b>Met Standard</b>	<b>Needs Assistance</b>	<b>Meets Requirements</b>
Goose Creek	Routine Follow-up	Needs Assistance	Needs Assistance
Clear Creek	Met Standard	Needs Assistance	Meets Requirements
Spring Branch	Met Standard	Needs Intervention	Needs Assistance
Spring	Non-compliance follow-up	Needs Intervention	Needs Intervention

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.

Exhibit 3-13 presents the current Special Education Department organizational chart.

**Exhibit 3-13**  
**LCISD Special Education Organization Chart**  
**2016-2017**



Source: LCISD, Special Programs, April 2017.

## BEST PRACTICES

Best practices are methods, techniques, or tools that have consistently shown positive results, and can be replicated by other organizations as a standard way of executing work-related activities and processes to create and sustain high performing organizations. When comparing best practices, similarity of entities or organizations is not as critical as it is with benchmarking. In fact, many best practices transcend organizational characteristics.

McConnell & Jones LLP (or the review team) identified 14 best practices against which to evaluate the Special Education Program of LCISD. **Exhibit 3-14** provides a summary of these best practices. Best practices that LCISD does not meet result in observations, which we discuss in the body of the chapter. However, all observations included in this chapter are not necessarily related to a specific best practice.

**Exhibit 3-14**  
**Summary of Best Practices – Special Education**

Best Practice Number	Description of Best Practice	Met	Not Met	Explanation
1.	Special education students perform well on state assessments.	X		The percentages of LCISD’s special education students in 2015-2016 who performed at the “Level II Satisfactory Standard or Above” in all grades and content areas was higher than their peers in Region 4 and the State. Although small, a higher percentage of LCISD special education students performed at the Advanced Standard and met the postsecondary readiness standard than their regional and state peers. See <b>Accomplishment 3-A</b>
2.	Support services to special education students and staff are efficiency structured and have a campus focus with streamlined communications and one point of contact.	X		To respond to the growing number of students with disabilities and address specific needs, LCISD restructured its service model. Its special education coordinators became the campus contact persons for special education matters and it beefed up its professional and clerical staff. This has improved monitoring, has allowed professional support staff to spend more time on campus and has enhanced the cohesiveness of the campus special education teams. See <b>Accomplishment 3-B</b>
3.	The effective implementation of the RtI tiered interventions result in the identification of students who may have a disability and who qualify for special education services.		X	LCISD refers a large number of students to special education and a high percentage of the students referred do not qualify. See <b>Observation 3-1</b>

Best Practice Number	Description of Best Practice	Met	Not Met	Explanation
4.	The process of identifying students with potential disabilities, and the methods and assessments the district uses control for students' ethnic and racial characteristics. The percentage of students identified as having disabilities from different ethnic or racial groups is proportional to their percentage in the overall student population.		X	The percentages of African American and Hispanic students in special education and those with a learning disability are greater than their representation in the overall LCISD student population. <b>See Observation 3-2</b>
5.	The district's assistive technology (AT) function is well organized and managed with clearly articulated AT processes and procedures.	X		LCISD moved in 2016-2017 from a team managed ineffective assistive technology effort to a well-organized and centralized program managed by a highly trained AT specialist. The program provides a formal evaluation and referral process and procedures and AT maintenance and repair, increasing the number of students using assistive technology. <b>See Accomplishment 3-C</b>
6.	Inclusion is consistently implemented across all campuses and grade levels. It involves a special education teacher who is content proficient and a regular education teacher who is knowledgeable about special education. The special education teacher stays in the classroom for the entire period. Both teachers act as a collaborative team meeting regularly to plan and develop lessons and activities and function in the classroom as instructional partners.		X	Although inclusion is available on all campuses it varies across and within grade levels. It is less effectively implemented at the elementary and middle school levels involving special education teachers and paraprofessional staff staying in the classroom for part of the class period. Implementation at the junior high and high school level more commonly follows the elements of effective delivery. <b>See Observation 3-3</b>
7.	The number of students in inclusion classes is determined to allow effective classroom management, instruction and support for both regular education and special education students.		X	Inclusion classes at the junior high and high school levels include a large number of special education students growing the total class size to 30 or more. Class size is typically determined by the number of special education teachers available per content area and the number of regular education teachers in certain content areas, such as biology and math. <b>See Observation 3-4</b>



Best Practice Number	Description of Best Practice	Met	Not Met	Explanation
8.	The district requires regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes to take special education staff development in order to become more knowledgeable about special education legal and program requirements, instructional strategies and interventions appropriate for students with disabilities.		X	Regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes are not required to take any special education staff development; it is optional. Consequently, regular education teachers lack basic knowledge of special education affecting their ability to work with students with disabilities. See <b>Observation 3-5</b>
9.	The special education staff development program offers a range of sessions from a basic overview of special education laws, processes and procedures, instructional settings, the impact of disabilities on instruction, and behavior management to sessions that are content-related and address interventions and effective instructional strategies.		X	The special education staff development program does not offer basic special education staff development such as an overview of disabilities and how these impact instruction; development of Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), and the development of IEPs for inclusion instructional settings. The program also lacks staff development that is content-based, addresses instructional strategies and interventions, and articulates expectations. See <b>Observation 3-6</b>
10.	Teachers and support staff monitor the academic performance of special education students on an ongoing basis during each grading period, and address in a timely manner any potential academic problems that may lead to student failure.		X	In addition to initial and annual ARD meetings, LCISD campuses also convene ARD meetings for special education students who failed academically during a grading period. These “failure ARDs” have increased the number of ARDs and the demands on administrators, teachers and support staff. See <b>Observation 3-7</b>
11.	The district’s discipline policy and program address issues concerning students with disabilities such as alternative discipline consequences, individualized intervention plans, and discipline adaptations and modifications. The district partners with parents of students with disabilities in finding ways to assist their child in complying with the code of conduct.		X	Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the range of the district’s disciplinary actions. See <b>Observation 3-8</b>

Best Practice Number	Description of Best Practice	Met	Not Met	Explanation
12.	The district has a multi-year coherent and sequential staff development program for first-year special education teachers.		X	About one-third of the special education teachers who left LCISD between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 left within three years. About one-half left within five years of teaching at LCISD. See <b>Observation 3-9</b>
13.	Parents of children with disabilities have opportunities to provide input to the special education program in an advisory capacity.	X		LCISD has a special education advisory committee composed of district staff and parents. Parents are encouraged to communicate their concerns and questions about the program and services. The committee meets quarterly to present parents' concerns and questions and provide input. Parents are invited to the committee's quarterly meetings that also include guest speakers on special education topics. See <b>Accomplishment 3-D</b>
14.	The special education website provides relevant program information and updates to parents.	X		The LCISD special education website provides detailed information and resources to parents. It includes links to forms and documents, and descriptions of child find and referral processes, programs, the parent advisory committee, and staff contact information. See <b>Accomplishment 3-E</b>

Source: McConnell & Jones LLP's Review Team.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### ACCOMPLISHMENT 3-A

LCISD special education students' performance on state assessments in 2015-2016 was higher than the performance of Region 4 and State special education students in all grade levels and core content areas with the exception of Grade 7 reading where its performance equaled the region's and Grade 8 reading where it performed slightly below the state and region special education averages.

The percentage of LCISD special education students who performed at "Level II Satisfactory Standard or Above" on state assessments in 2015-2016 exceeded Region 4 and State special education student averages in all core content areas and grade levels with the exception of Grade 8 reading where its performance was slightly below state and region special education rates. It matched the region rate in Grade 7 reading (**Exhibit 3-15**).

**Exhibit 3-15**  
**LCISD, Region 4 and State Special Education Student Performance**  
**on STAAR and End-of-Course by Grade**  
**2015-2016 School Year**

	LCISD All Students	LCISD Special Education Students	Region 4 Special Education Students	State Special Education Students
<b>Grade 3</b>				
Reading	82%	49%	45%	46%
Math	87%	60%	48%	49%
<b>Grade 4</b>				
Reading	84%	52%	43%	42%
Math	84%	52%	45%	43%
Writing	74%	40%	38%	37%
<b>Grade 5</b>				
Reading	87%	51%	45%	46%
Math	93%	67%	56%	56%
Science	81%	49%	44%	43%
<b>Grade 6</b>				
Reading	81%	41%	32%	32%
Math	84%	47%	41%	40%
<b>Grade 7</b>				
Reading	80%	32%	32%	30%
Math	77%	41%	34%	33%
Writing	78%	30%	28%	28%
<b>Grade 8</b>				
Reading	89%	44%	46%	45%
Math	91%	50%	44%	42%
Science	85%	45%	38%	35%
Social Studies	78%	31%	30%	29%

	LCISD All Students	LCISD Special Education Students	Region 4 Special Education Students	State Special Education Students
<b>End of Course</b>				
English/Reading I	70%	29%	26%	25%
English/Reading II	75%	30%	26%	26%
Algebra I	79%	44%	37%	39%
Biology	92%	59%	53%	52%
U.S. History	95%	59%	57%	56%
<b>All Grades</b>				
Reading	81%	40%	36%	35%
Math	85%	51%	43%	43%
Writing	76%	35%	32%	32%
Science	86%	51%	45%	44%
Social Studies	88%	46%	43%	42%
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>39%</b>

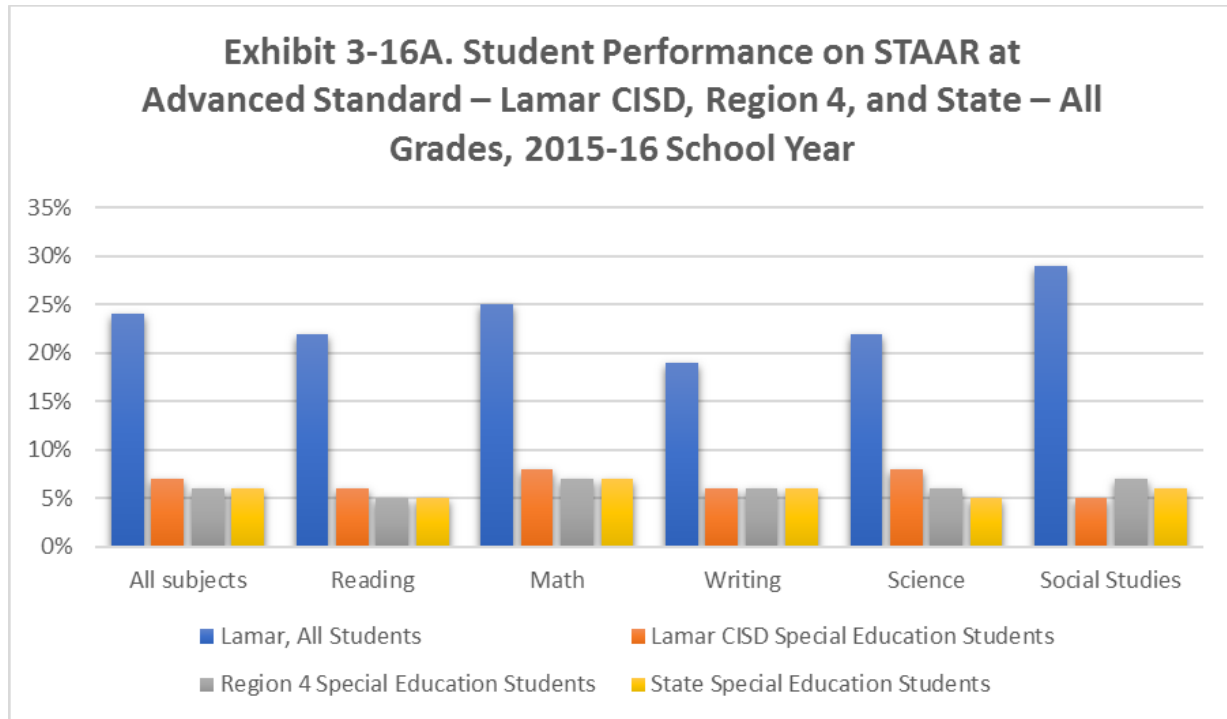
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, at Level II Satisfactory or Above, 2015-2016.

Although a small percentage of special education students performed at the Advanced Standard on state assessments in 2015-2016, LCISD special education students also exceeded State and Region 4 averages in all subjects, reading, and math and matched the regional and state averages in writing, as shown in **Exhibit 3-16**.

**Exhibit 3-16**  
**Student Performance on STAAR at Advanced Standard – LCISD, Region 4, and State – All Grades**  
**2015-2016 School Year**

	Lamar All Students	LCISD Special Education Students	Region 4 Special Education Students	State Special Education Students
All subjects	24%	7%	6%	6%
Reading	22%	6%	5%	5%
Math	25%	8%	7%	7%
Writing	19%	6%	6%	6%
Science	22%	8%	6%	5%
Social Studies	29%	5%	7%	6%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, at Postsecondary Readiness Standard, 2015-2016.



Although a small percentage of LCISD special education students met the postsecondary readiness standard, their percentage exceeded that of Region 4 and the State in all subjects (**Exhibit 3-17**).

**Exhibit 3-17  
Student Performance on STAAR at Postsecondary Readiness Standard –  
LCISD, Region 4, and State – All Grades  
2015-2016**

	Lamar All Students	LCISD Special Education Students	Region 4 Special Education Students	State Special Education Students
Two or more subjects	54%	11%	9%	9%
Reading	54%	11%	10%	10%
Math	54%	14%	11%	11%
Writing	50%	11%	8%	8%
Science	57%	15%	12%	11%
Social Studies	59%	17%	13%	12%

*Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, at Postsecondary Readiness Standard, 2015-2016.*

**ACCOMPLISHMENT 3-B**

**The Special Education Department restructured its support services to have a campus rather than a program focus, thereby streamlining communications by having one point of contact and increasing efficiency.**

Since 2014-2015, the Special Education Department has restructured both the organization of its leadership positions and its related services to respond to the growth of the population of students with disabilities and address specific needs. In 2014-2015 campuses had to contact any of the eight members of the program leadership team and staff or the director of Special Programs. The leadership team that managed all special education programs consisted of, in addition to the director; five special education coordinators, one of whom supervised the assessment staff, one special education supervisor; an autism specialist; a lead speech pathologist;

and a 504/dyslexia coordinator. This model of operation generated many complaints. Campus administrators and staff were concerned that they received inconsistent information from different district leadership staff. They were not sure who to contact when there was a concern. They complained about lack of support and lack of guidance at the district level and the unresponsiveness of the director of Special Programs who would not return phone calls from campus staff.

As a result of these concerns on the part of campus administrators and staff and the TEA accountability reports, the program director instituted several organizational changes in 2015-2016. Each of the special education coordinators, in addition to managing specific programs, was also assigned to specific campuses as the contact person for any special education matters. To allow the coordinators to support the campuses assigned to them, the lead speech pathologist took over the monitoring of most related services. This operational model encountered implementation difficulties. Having credentials in behavior rather than in curriculum and instruction, coordinators lacked the knowledge and experience to support campuses efficiently with regard to general special education issues. The coordinators felt overworked, and the effectiveness of communication between principals and coordinators varied depending on the relationship between the individuals. Coordinators also experienced a lack of planning time and failed to meet special education timelines (indicator 11) for TEA reports.

To address these operational difficulties, the Special Education Department added four instructional facilitators to provide instructional support to teachers in specialized programs. The department also added six Special Education Management System (SEMS) clerks to reduce the time that secondary diagnosticians were spending on clerical responsibilities such as scheduling ARDs, notifying parents and staff of ARDs, and providing paperwork to parents and staff. It also added a Public Education Management Information System (PEIMS) clerk to address special education PEIMS data, ensure it is current, and oversee referral documentation. Prior to adding a PEIMS clerk, the department had to rely on the district’s PEIMS coordinator, who did not always have time to assist. In addition, the department struggled with obtaining the referral data for the TEA Indicator 11 report required by the state. The Special Education Department also added 19 other district and campus positions to meet student population growth, as shown in **Exhibit 3-18**.

The organizational changes implemented in 2016-2017 strengthen and streamline support for campuses and address student population growth. To increase support to campuses, the five special education coordinators became special education compliance coordinators whose role is to ensure that the district provides Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students. The department also added two instructional facilitators to support the self-contained classroom teachers and an assistive technology specialist to support a growing number of requests for assistive technology assessments. The department added a lead diagnostician and a lead Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP) position to support the district’s growing assessment team and new assessment staff throughout the school year. In addition, the department changed the special education supervisor and special education autism coordinator positions to create two assistant director positions to provide better administrative support to campuses.

**Exhibit 3-18**  
**Special Education Professional Support Staff**  
**2014-2015 to 2016-2017**

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
<i>Special Education Director</i> <i>5 Special Education Coordinators</i> <i>1 Special Education Supervisor</i> <i>1 Autism Specialist</i> <i>1 Lead Speech Pathologist</i>		<i>Special Education Director</i> <i>1 Assistant Director of Compliance and Assessment</i> <i>1 Assistant Director of Special Education Programs (vacant)</i> <i>1 Lead Speech Pathologist</i> <i>Compliance Coordinators</i>
<i>26 Speech and Language Pathologists and Assistants</i>	<i>4 Instructional Facilitators</i> <i>5 Speech Pathologists</i>	<i>2 ARD Specialist</i> <i>1 Lead Diagnostician</i>

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
24 Educational Diagnosticians 6 Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP) 3 Occupational Therapists 2 Physical Therapists 1 Adapted PE Teacher 3 Teachers for the Visually Impaired 1 Orientation and Mobility Specialist 1 Intervention Specialist 1 In-Home Trainer 1 Vocational Adjustment Teacher	2 Educational Diagnosticians 2 LSSP Interns 1 Occupational Therapist 4 ARD Specialists 6 SEMS Clerks 1 PEIMS Clerk 1 Assessment Data Specialist	1 Lead LSSP 1 Diagnostician 2 Instructional Facilitators 1 Assistive Technology Specialist 1 Adapted PE Teacher 2 SEMS Clerks

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, May 2017.

Professional support staff interviewed at elementary, middle, junior high and high school campuses indicated that moving from an organizational model of districtwide program coordinators to the assignment of coordinators to specific campuses has streamlined communications and contacts. Under the new structure, there is one point of contact so it is clear to campus staff who they should go to if they have any questions or concerns. Previously, it was not clear who should be contacted.

Having a single point of contact has also promoted consistency by eliminating the provision of inconsistent information when multiple support staff members were contacted. This model has improved monitoring, acting like a quality control mechanism, and alleviated the responsibilities of the principal and assistant principal. The new model allows professional support staff to spend more time on campus, which helps in building a closer relationship with their respective campuses and campus administrators, adding cohesiveness to the campus teams, and setting expectations. Communication is more streamlined and services are more efficient.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT 3-C

#### **LCISD re-established, re-organized, and centralized its assistive technology (AT) function and developed AT processes and procedures.**

Assistive technology is federally defined as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. It does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such a device. The goal of assistive technology is to help students access the curriculum, master an IEP goal/objective, increase student independence and participation, and result in increased self-confidence and demonstration of competencies.

In 2011-2012, LCISD dissolved the AT specialist position and managed assistive technology until 2016-2017 through a team effort assisted by an outside consultant who did the AT evaluations. Most AT has been speech/communications related. Usually the AT recommendations were broad; rarely was a specific product recommended. The team effort was ineffective as it created a piecemeal system. LCISD staff did not have a clear understanding of assistive technology.

In 2016-2017, the district reestablished the AT specialist position, restructured the program, and centralized it. The AT specialist has four years of AT training from Region 4 and is certified as an AT professional. The AT specialist is the focal point of contact for all AT needs to whom all referrals come. The AT program has a formal evaluation and referral process. Steps in the process include:

- **REFERRAL** – The Assistive Technology Referral Form (**Exhibit 3-19**), a scanned signed parental consent, and a copy of the Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED) are emailed to the AT specialist. The referral form asks for student information, reason for referral, and information on who made the referral. The form also lists six areas of educational need and concern as well as the instructional arrangement of the student. Typically, the referral comes from the diagnostician who then meets with the AT specialist.

**Exhibit 3-19**  
**Assistive Technology Referral Form**

<b>ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY REFERRAL</b>		
<i>Student Name:</i> _____	<i>Date of Referral:</i> _____	
<i>School:</i> _____	<i>Due Date of AT Evaluation:</i> _____	
<i>Age:</i> _____	<i>Teacher:</i> _____	
<i>Grade:</i> _____	<i>Referring Staff:</i> _____	
<i>Disability:</i> _____		
<i>Reason to refer:</i> _____		
<hr/>		
<b>Area of educational need and concern:</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Communication</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Auditory</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Vision/Mobility</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reading</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Writing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Computer Access</i>
<b>Current class placement:</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inclusion</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Resource</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Life skills</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>PPCD</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>SIP</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Pass/SILC</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other (Specify)</i>		
Does the student currently use assistive technology?		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes (Specify)</i>	
<i>Signature of the referring staff</i> _____		
<i>Position of the referring staff</i> _____		

*Source: LCISD Special Education Department, April 2017.*

- The AT specialist reviews the student’s Special Education records including health records.
- The AT specialist determines if other specialty service providers need to be involved in the evaluation and if so, they are informed of the case.
- All staff and parents involved with the student are given a questionnaire about AT or are contacted to discuss AT. A special education teacher, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or parent can make AT recommendations.
- Observations and evaluations are scheduled.
- Observations and evaluation are completed.
- Trials of equipment may occur and data collected depending on time frame. Trials are needed to determine if the device/equipment increases the student’s functional capabilities. Trials are conducted over a period that may range from two weeks to six months.
- Data is analyzed by the professional staff involved and a report is prepared.
- Parents receive a draft report for their review prior to the ARD meeting.
- The report is reviewed at the ARD meeting and recommendations and accommodations are discussed.
- The recommended equipment/materials are made, ordered, or programed.



- The assistive technology is implemented in the student’s instructional setting.
- The assistive technology is documented in a student and equipment spreadsheet. Previously there was no list of AT equipment by student, so there was no inventory tracking and control.
- Training on the assistive technology is provided to the staff, student, and parents.
- The student’s use of the assistive technology is monitored with consultation and maintenance available.

Most self-contained classrooms on 28 campuses have students using assistive technology. The number of students using assistive technology has increased in the past three years. In 2016-2017, 184 students have received assistive technology, as shown in **Exhibit 3-20**.

**Exhibit 3-20**  
**Number of Special Education Students Receiving Assistive Technology by Disability**  
**2016-2017**

Disability	Number of Students
Orthopedic Impairment	11
Other Health Impairment	27
Auditory Impairment	11
Visual Impairment	15
Deaf-Blind	*
Intellectual Disability	34
Emotional Disturbance	*
Specific Learning Disability	13
Speech Impairment	*
Autism	60
Traumatic Brain Injury	*
Non-categorical Early Childhood	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.

\* Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

To help staff integrate assistive technology into instruction, the AT specialist initiated an after school AT training program for teachers, speech therapists, and occupational therapists. The AT specialist also trained parents on how to use the equipment. The AT specialist observes how teachers use the equipment in the classroom and provides consultation to them, as needed. She also works with students on optimizing the use of the equipment. The AT specialist can fix the AT equipment as well as create some of the equipment. She spends between 20 and 30 percent of her time on repairs. The AT program has a closet with equipment and with software products. The AT specialist tracks assistive technology by campus and student. She visits each campus for half a day and has covered 18 campuses in 2016-2017.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT 3-D**

**The LCISD Special Education Parent Advisory Committee has increased the number of parents involved, is educating parents on special education issues, and is bringing parent input to district administration.**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC) is in its second year. It was established by the Director of Special Programs as a result of several parents filing Due Process Hearing requests and TEA complaints in 2014-2015. The parents were encouraged to take ownership of the committee with the Director of Special

Programs serving as a resource to the parents. Previously, LCISD did not have a special education parent advisory committee. The committee is comprised of a LCISD elementary school principal, the PPCD coordinator, and eight parents. The parents on the committee have children with a range of disabilities at different grade levels.

The goal of the committee is to work collaboratively to “ensure opportunities for a successful education experience for all students, especially those with disabilities.” The committee reaches out to parents of children receiving special education services through flyers that are distributed to teachers and they, in turn, send them home with the students. The flyers encourage parents to contact SEPAC’s parent representatives with any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding the special education program. The flyers also invite the parents to attend SEPAC meetings. To encourage parents’ attendance, the district provides free childcare.

The committee meets on Fridays before the quarterly board meeting. During the committee meeting, all questions received from parents are reviewed and an agenda is prepared. The quarterly meetings convened in the Lamar Administration Building Board Room are open to all parents whose children receive special education services. Attendance at the quarterly meetings has ranged from 12 to 25 parents.

The meetings have a guest speaker on a topic of interest to parents. Topics presented at quarterly meetings include an overview of LCISD’s special education program, the ARD process, progress in special education program changes, and how to be a parent advocate. For example, the May 2017 quarterly meeting had a presentation and workshop by Ana Esparza of Region 4 on Positive Behavior Intervention. The purpose of the workshop was to “help families understand the reason for behavioral assessments” and focus on “behaviors that serve a specific purpose for a student.” The workshop discussed using positive consequences versus punishment to change behavior and explained how IDEA 2004 addresses positive behavior interventions.

SEPAC acts in an advisory capacity to the district special education leadership team bringing to them information on parent concerns and questions. The minutes from the committee meetings involving parent questions and comments are posted on Facebook. The LCISD Special Programs website has a page with information on SEPAC and a list of upcoming meetings.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENT 3-E**

#### **LCISD’s updated Special Programs website provides detailed information and resources to parents.**

The updated Special Programs website under which Special Education is included is targeted at parents. It provides information on the program, the program’s vision and mission statement, and a brief review of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the type of disabilities covered. The website has links to forms and documents such as:

- Lamar Special Education Operating Guidelines
- 2016 Parents Guide to the ARD Process in English and Spanish
- 2016 Procedural Safeguards in English and Spanish
- Special Ed Classroom Video Surveillance Request Form
- Revocation of Special Education Services Information
- Texas Transition and Employment guide in English and Spanish; and a link to the
- Texas Education Agency for any question on information regarding special education

The website provides a description of the child find process and procedures the district implements, including a description of the steps involved in a campus initiated referral for special education testing and the step-by-step process followed in case of a parent request for evaluating a child for special education services. The Child Find webpage also includes links to Child Find in English and Spanish and a contact name for early childhood screenings.

The website provides descriptions of the array of special education programs LCISD has. These include: the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD), Inclusion, Intensive Behavior Class (IBC), Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS)/ Structure Integrated Learning Classroom (SILC), the Social Integration Program (SIP), Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE) Skills, and the Adult Transition Program (ATP).

The website has a webpage dedicated to the SEPAC, explaining its role, method of operation, and inviting parents to attend its quarterly meetings and provide input in the form of questions, comments and suggestions.

The website also provides names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of key special education staff including the assistant director of assessment and compliance and six coordinators.

## DETAILED OBSERVATIONS

### OBSERVATION 3-1

**LCISD’s process and methods for evaluating special education placements have not been consistently and effectively implemented leading to a high rate of inappropriate referrals to special education.**

According to the *LCISD Special Education Handbook*, referring student for special education testing is one outcome of the Response to Intervention (RtI) process. The campus Problem Solving Team (PST) refers a student for special education testing after the student has not responded to interventions growing in intensity that “were implemented with fidelity and appropriately targeted the student’s difficulty.” LCISD has a step-by-step referral process with a timeline for processing the referral (within 15 school days), completing the evaluation process following parent consent (within 45 school days), and scheduling an ARD/IEP meeting to discuss the evaluation results (with 30 calendar days).

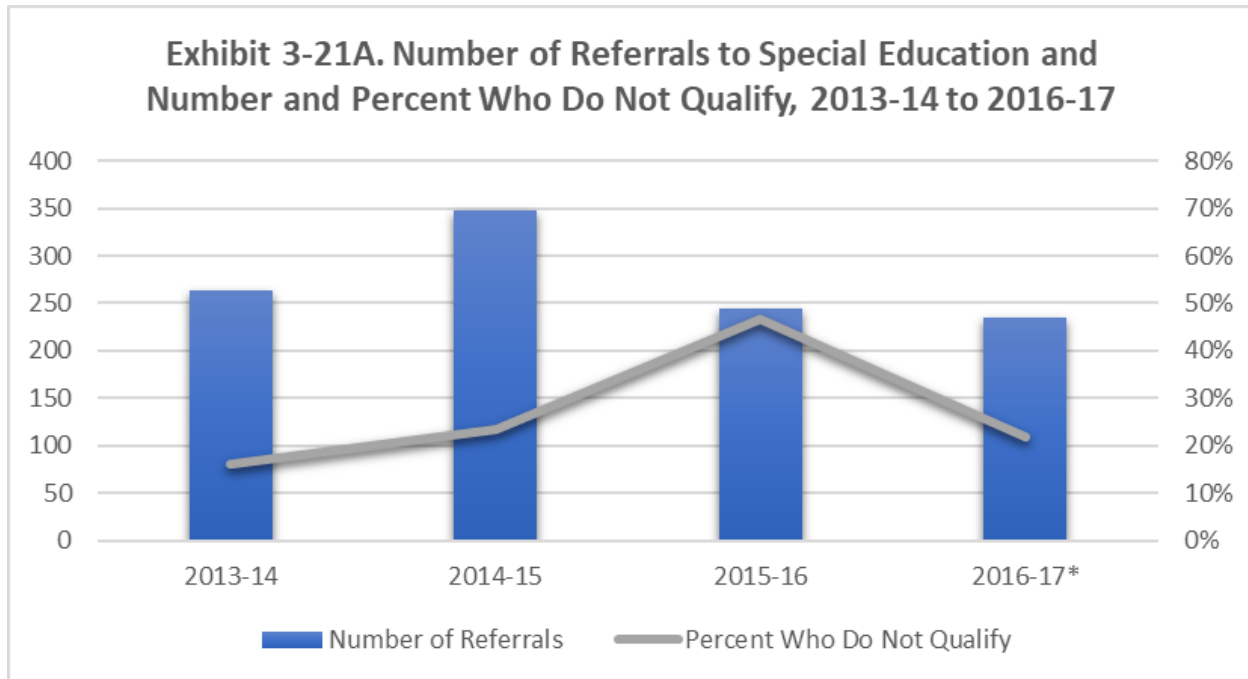
LCISD has had a large number of referrals to special education (**Exhibit 3-21**). The number of students referred ranged annually from 235 to 348 from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017. The percentage of referrals that do not qualify (DNQ) for special education services ranged from 16.0 percent in 2013-2014 to 21.7 percent through April 2017, and peaked in 2015-2016 with nearly one-half of the students referred not qualifying for special education services. In response to the large number of DNQs in 2015-2016, LCISD established a district level Referral Review Committee (RRC). The RRC is composed of the assistant director of Assessment and Compliance and/or the lead diagnostician, the lead LSSP, and four or more assessment staff. The RRC meets weekly and allows campus level referral staff to take part in the review of referrals.

**Exhibit 3-21**  
**Number of Referrals to Special Education and Number and Percent Who Do Not Qualify**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

Year	Number of Referrals	Number Who Do Not Qualify	Percent Who Do Not Qualify
2013-2014	263	42	16.0%
2014-2015	348	81	23.3%
2015-2016	244	114	46.7%
2016-2017*	235	51	21.7%

*Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.*

*\*By April 2017, 374 referrals were made; 235 students were tested and 51 did not qualify for special education services.*



An important measure of the effectiveness of implementation of the RtI process is the number of students referred to special education that are determined eligible for the services. The RtI program is not implemented consistently and with fidelity across campuses. This has resulted in referrals that do not qualify for special education services.

Crystal City ISD implemented a RtI process that both reduced the number of referrals to special education and the number of DNQs. Crystal City’s RtI intervention process, named the Student Assistance Team (SAT), is a coordinated process of effective interventions that also encourages parental involvement. The system promotes collaboration among parents, students, and school and district level instructional, support, and administrative staff members before a student is referred for a special education assessment. The SAT referral system includes three processes.

- In **Process I**, the referring teacher recognized the student's academic/behavior problem, reviewed the student's permanent record and work samples, completed an observation checklist, and contacted a parent. The teacher implemented interventions based on the review of records and parent input. If interventions were successful, the process ended. If unsuccessful, the teacher proceeded to Process II.
- In **Process II**, the referring teacher met with the School Assistance Team to review Process I information. Each school had a School Assistance Team composed of two teachers, a counselor, and one administrator. The team recommended additional intervention strategies. If the strategies were successful, the process stopped. If not, the teacher proceeded to Process III.
- In **Process III**, the team reviewed all information on the student’s progress and interventions and recommended additional interventions or contacted a parent. It reviewed eligibility guidelines to special programs and made a referral to an appropriate special program.

The Student Assistance Team considered four options before deciding to intervene. These options included implementing school modifications for a pre-determined amount of time; initiating a 504 referral process; referring the student to the dyslexia committee; or initiating the special education referral process. During the first year of implementation, the number of referrals to special education decreased by 55 percent and of the 30 students referred 28 students qualified for special education services.

### RECOMMENDATION 3-1

**Develop and implement procedures that will reinforce appropriate and effective implementation and documentation of Response to Intervention on each campus, train teachers and staff in the process, monitor implementation, and track the rate of inappropriate referrals to special education.**

In addition to the recommended procedures identified in Recommendation 2-5, the director of Special Programs should integrate into the RtI process formal procedures to track referral rates to special education and the number of referrals that were determined eligible for special education services. This tracking will provide campus RtI leaders with information on how accurate they were in identifying students with potential disabilities. The director of Special Programs jointly with the Referral Review Committee should conduct in-depth reviews of referrals determined not eligible for special education. The reviews should result in the identification of possible causes and lead to refinement of interventions and their application.

### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### ANTICIPATING TOMORROW

As the district grows, it should reduce referrals to special education and increase qualified referrals. Forecasting student population growth to 48,754 in 2025 and assuming a similar percentage of students receiving special education services (8.5 percent; an average over a five-year period: 2012-2013 to 2016-2017), LCISD's special education student population will grow by more than 52 percent to 4,144 in 2025 from 2,722 in 2016-17. The importance of refining the referral process by increasing the number of qualified referrals will increase with the growth of the population of students with disabilities in need of special education services. A refined referral process will result in a more efficient use of resources.

## *Identification*

### OBSERVATION 3-2

**African American and Hispanic students are over identified as needing special education and as having a learning disability.**

The disproportionate identification of African American and Hispanic students for special education has been a long standing concern. Studies have shown that most students, 73 to 90 percent, referred by a teacher to special services evaluations are found eligible for these services. Multiple studies have also shown that a child's racial or ethnic background has a strong correlation to the probability of being inappropriately identified as disabled.

Misidentifying African American and Hispanic students as disabled has long-term academic and social consequences, according to research. Students receiving special education services tend to remain in the program. The academic program in which they will participate is likely to be less rigorous and involves lower expectations and thus restricts their academic and post-secondary opportunities. Consequently, such students are denied the high-quality and life-enhancing education to which they are entitled. Their placement may stigmatize them and limit their social contacts with students with no disabilities.

The percentage of LCISD African American and Hispanic students identified as having disabilities has been higher than their proportion in the total student population (**Exhibit 3-22**). The percentage of White students identified as having disabilities has been lower than their percentage of the total LCISD student population. During the 2013-2014 and 2016-2017 period, between 23.4 and 26.2 percent of White students were in special education while their proportion in the overall student population ranged between 27.1 to 28.3 percent.

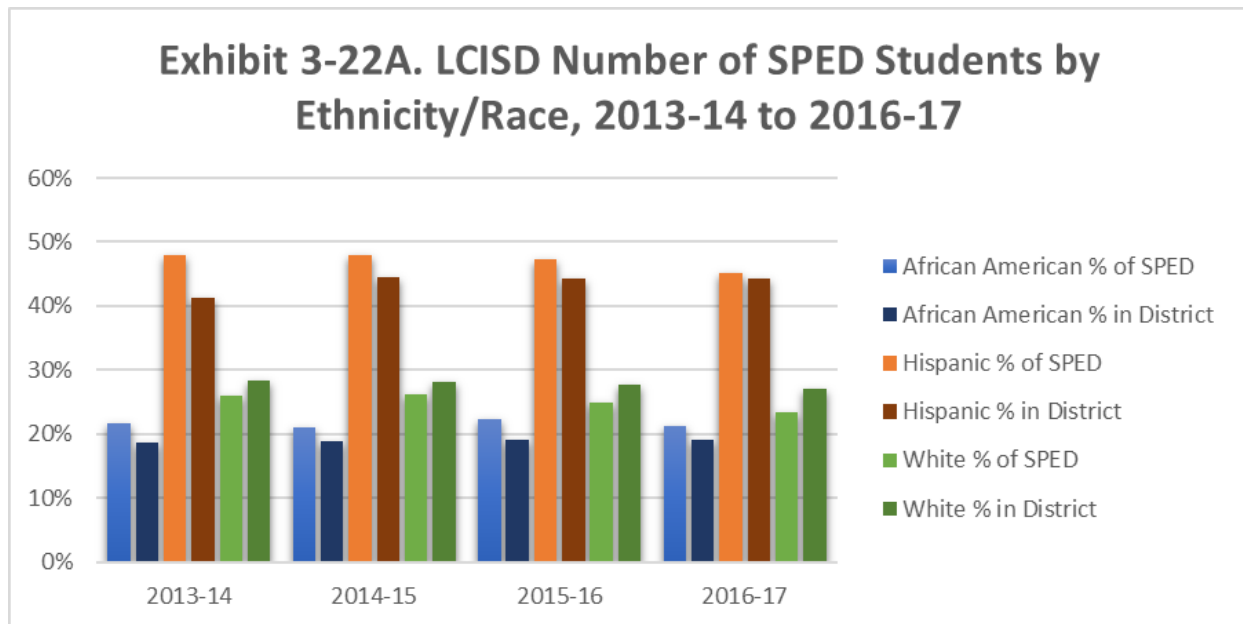
During that period, between 21.1 and 22.3 percent of the special education students were African American. African American students constituted between 18.6 and 19.2 percent of the LCISD student population. Similarly, while between 45.1 and 48.0 percent of special education students were Hispanic, they comprised between 41.3 and 44.6 percent of all LCISD students. Note that the percentage of Hispanic students with disabilities decreased in 2016-2017 to 45.1 percent from 48.0 percent in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 and that the Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) 2016 report assessed the over identification of African American and Hispanic students as a low-level concern,

**Exhibit 3-22**  
**LCISD Number and Percentage of Students by Ethnicity/Race and by Disability**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	Number of SPED Students*	Percent of SPED Students	Percent in District
<b>2013-2014</b>			
Total Number of SPED Students	2,296		
African American	498	21.7%	18.6%
Hispanic	1,102	48.0%	41.3%
White	597	26.0%	28.3%
<b>2014-2015</b>			
Total Number of SPED Students	2,390		
African American	505	21.1%	18.8%
Hispanic	1,148	48.0%	44.6%
White	626	26.2%	28.1%
<b>2015-2016</b>			
Total Number of SPED Students	2,469		
African American	551	22.3%	19.1%
Hispanic	1,168	47.3%	44.3%
White	618	25.0%	27.7%
<b>2016-2017</b>			
Total Number of SPED Students	2,722		
African American	577	21.2%	19.2%
Hispanic	1,227	45.1%	44.2%
White	638	23.4%	27.1%

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April-May, 2017.

\*Total Number of SPED Students includes special education students of all races/ethnicities but exhibit shows only data for African American, Hispanic and White students.



Hispanic and African American students were also over-identified as having a learning disability. As shown in **Exhibit 3-23**, about 53 to 57 percent of students identified as having a learning disability from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017 were Hispanic. The percentage of Hispanic students at LCISD during this period ranged from 41.3 to 44.6 percent. Similarly, the percentage of African American students identified as having a learning disability exceeded their percentage in the LCISD student population. Between 23.3 and 26.8 percent of the students identified as having a learning disability were African American while their percentage in the LCISD student population ranged from 18.6 to 19.2 percent. The percentage of White students identified as having a learning disability was substantially lower than their portion of the LCISD student population.

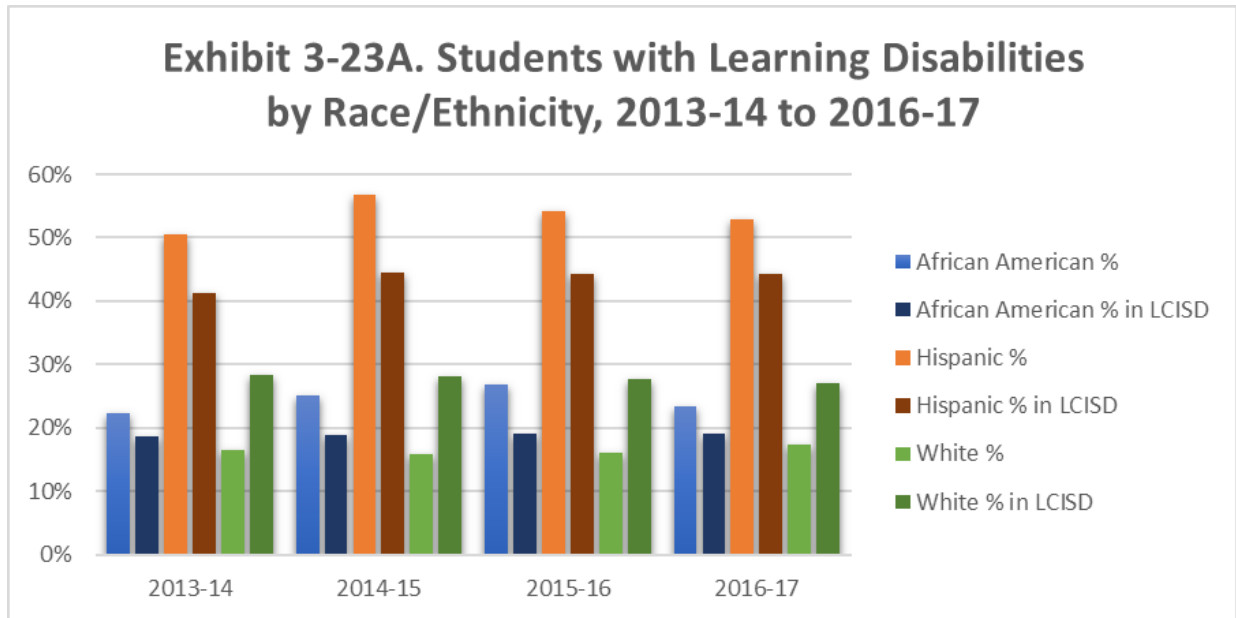
**Exhibit 3-23**  
**Students with Learning Disabilities by Race/Ethnicity**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017		
	N	%	% in LCISD	N	%	% in LCISD	N	%	% in LCISD	N	%	% in LCISD
African American	162	24.7%	18.6%	160	25.1%	18.8%	168	26.8%	19.1%	146	23.3%	19.2%
Hispanic	366	55.8%	41.3%	362	56.7%	44.6%	340	54.3%	44.3%	331	52.9%	44.2%
White	109	16.6%	28.3%	101	15.8%	28.1%	100	16.0%	27.7%	109	17.4%	27.1%
Total*	656			638			626			626		

Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April-May 2017.

\*Total refers to students identified with a learning disability across all ethnic/racial groups. Exhibit shows only data for African American, Hispanic and White students.





Research considers disproportionality typically as resulting from systemic flaws in a school’s or districts instructional structure. A National Education Association report titled *Truth in Labeling: Disproportionality in Special Education* identified a series of practices that positively impact disproportionality. These include: increasing the academic language proficiency of English Language Learners; ensuring quality early childhood opportunities; providing early intervention services; implementing a Response to intervention process; implementing school wide positive behavior support programs; increasing access to culturally responsive, school-based mental health services; enhancing classroom management skills; using authentic, culturally responsive assessment techniques; developing culturally responsive teaching skills; utilizing culturally responsive curriculum; and strengthening parent/family involvement and community partnerships.

To address significant issues of disproportionality, Rapids Parish of Louisiana established a Steering Committee composed of representatives of regular education and special education parent groups and community members, to create awareness of the issue of proportionality, identify target schools where early intervention services should be implemented, use RtI and culturally appropriate assessment practices to appropriately identify students with disabilities, and implement positive behavior support programs districtwide.

The Rapids Parish school district developed a five-year action plan that addressed disproportionality, its contributing factors, and achievement and behavior gaps. The processes implemented in the district led to a reduction in the number of referrals to special education evaluations and to a decrease in the number of African American students identified as having a learning disability, an intellectual disability, or emotional disturbance.

**RECOMMENDATION 3-2**

**Implement procedures that address effectively academic and behavior issues of African American and Hispanic students to avoid over identification of these student groups for referral to special education.**

The director of Special Programs should initiate an analysis of racial/ethnic disproportionality patterns districtwide and by campus and evaluate the awareness of teachers and support staff of these patterns. The director should review the monitoring processes and procedures that teachers and support staff use to determine whether student demographics are included. The Academic administrator and Curriculum and Instruction staff should conduct a review of the curriculum for areas that exclude or fail to resonate with certain groups of students who cannot make connections between the academics and their lives.

The director of Special Programs jointly with the Staff Development coordinator should prepare or provide staff development preparing teachers and members of campus Problem Solving Teams to work effectively with a student population with diverse needs. The staff development should address high-frequency problem areas such as classroom management, differentiation, and culturally responsive practices.

The director of Special Programs jointly with the Academic administrator should develop and implement rigorous academic interventions when a sign of disproportionality is detected. The interventions should provide small group or individual support to students affected and student performance should be closely monitored to determine the interventions' effectiveness.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### **ANTICIPATING TOMORROW**

As the district grows, it should develop and use a process to monitor on an ongoing basis the referral of African American and Hispanic students to special education. The process should increase awareness of administrators, teachers, and staff of ethnic/racial disparities in referrals to special education. The district should also develop and incorporate in the RtI and referral processes a procedure guarding against disproportional referrals. In addition, the district should provide district wide training on how to address these disparities effectively and make this training mandatory for all new teachers, support staff, and administrators. Finally, the district should monitor and review referrals to ensure the district's referral procedures are effective in addressing these disparities.

## ***Inclusion***

### **OBSERVATION 3-3**

**Although all LCISD campuses implement inclusion, the extent of implementation varies greatly impacting its effectiveness.**

The LCISD Special Programs website defines inclusion as supporting students with disabilities in chronologically age-appropriate regular education classes at their home schools. Students receive the specialized instruction their individualized education program (IEP) specifies within the context of the core curriculum and regular education class activities.

Inclusion support is offered in designated academic areas through a special education teacher and/or paraprofessional consulting with the regular education teacher "to assist in the implementation of individual educational plans and/or modifications within the regular education classroom. Based on the needs of the student, this support may be provided via consultation with the regular education teacher, and/or with the teacher or paraprofessional working directly with the student in the classroom. The amount of time for this service is an ARD Committee decision based on the needs of the student." Thus, inclusion changes the location of the delivery of special education services from self-contained classrooms or pull-out strategies by bringing the services into the regular education classroom.

Inclusion service delivery models include different strategies ranging from consultation to support facilitation to co-teaching. Under the consultation model, the regular education and special education teachers meet or communicate to plan, implement, and monitor instructional strategies targeted at special education students. The support facilitation approach involves two or more teachers assigned to a group of students with one of the teachers taking responsibility for a small group of students or for a single student. Co-teaching typically involves two teachers with each being responsible for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for all students in the classroom for the entire class period. Under the co-teaching model, both teachers have to be content certified.

All LCISD campuses, except for the Alternative Learning Center, have inclusion classes with special education teachers and paraprofessionals providing support (**Exhibit 3-24**). In total, LCISD has 119 special education teachers and 95 paraprofessionals providing support in inclusion classes. In 2015-2016, LCISD provided inclusion training through Region 4 to teams consisting of both general and special education teachers involved in inclusion classes.

**Exhibit 3-24**  
**Number of Special Education Teachers and Paraprofessionals in Regular Education Classrooms by Grade Level**  
**2016-2017**

Grade Level	Number of Special Education Teachers	Range of Special Education Teachers	Number of Special Education Paraprofessionals	Range of Special Education Paraprofessionals
Elementary Schools	41	0-3	38	0-5
Middle Schools	10	2-3	9	1-5
Junior High Schools	23	3-6	21	0-9
High Schools	45	3-13	27	0-11
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>		<b>95</b>	

*Source: LCISD, Special Education Department, April 2017.*

Inclusion is most effectively provided when it involves the following:

- a special education teacher, not a paraprofessional;
- the special education teacher is proficient in the content area and the regular education teacher is knowledgeable about special education;
- the special education teacher stays in the classroom for the entire period;
- the regular education teacher considers and accepts the special education teacher as an equal partner in the classroom;
- the regular education and special education teachers function as a collaborative and well-coordinated team; and,
- the regular education and special education teachers meet regularly to plan and develop lessons and activities and act in the classroom as instructional partners.

The effective delivery of inclusion is also facilitated when the number of special education students and the total number of students in the inclusion class is manageable.

While inclusion delivery in LCISD varies across and within grade levels, implementation at the junior high and high school level more commonly encompasses the elements of effective delivery.

**Inclusion on Elementary Campuses**

Inclusion is implemented in different ways across grade levels and campuses, as determined by student needs. The implementation of the inclusion model at the elementary level is based on the number of inclusion setting minutes specified in the student’s IEP, in response to student needs. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals stay in the classroom for the IEP specified time. At the elementary level, support in the regular education classroom can be provided either by a special education teacher or by a paraprofessional. Whether a special education teacher or paraprofessional comes into the regular education classroom is determined either by the needs of the special education students as defined in their IEPs or by the availability of the special education teacher.

The special education teachers and paraprofessionals keep an inclusion log with data by date and student on the number of minutes they provided services to each student. Data from the inclusion log is reviewed in ARD meetings. At Arredondo Elementary, special education teachers go into inclusion classrooms in grades 3 to 5 while paraprofessionals serve the lower grades.

At Williams Elementary, regular education teachers are assigned to inclusion classes on an annually rotating basis. The students' IEPs determine the length of time a special education teacher or paraprofessional stays in the classroom. Consequently, special education teachers and paraprofessionals may stay in the classroom for the entire period or for part of the period. Administrators, teachers, and paraprofessional staff interviewed estimated that paraprofessionals typically stay in the classroom for 30 minutes; class periods range from 30 to 90 minutes.

Scheduling is complex as regular education teachers arrange their lessons to optimize the time the special education teacher can spend in the classroom. Planning by the regular education and special education teachers for inclusion classes varies across campuses. In some elementary campuses, regular education and special education teachers have a common planning time or meet after school. In campuses where the regular education and special education teachers do not have a common planning time, not all respective teachers and paraprofessionals get together to plan the lessons or the frequency of planning sessions varies.

Typically, the regular education and special education students use the same materials. Additional materials may be used if specified in students' IEPs. The special education teachers have access to the regular education teacher's lesson plans and adapt them. The special education teachers and paraprofessionals work with students in small groups or one-on-one; more along the support facilitation approach. For example, at Williams Elementary the special education teacher, although typically staying at the back of the classroom working with small groups, may step in and simplify what the regular education teacher is presenting. The groups may include both special and regular education students.

### **Inclusion on Middle School Campuses**

Co-teaching is not implemented at the middle school level, primarily due to the involvement of paraprofessionals who are not certified to teach. When special education teachers are in the classroom, there is a greater likelihood of co-teaching to some extent. At the middle school level, both special education teachers and paraprofessionals provide support in inclusion classes. In some middle schools, both stay in the inclusion classroom for the whole period while in others, special education teachers stay for the entire period while paraprofessionals stay for part of the period. Paraprofessionals stay a minimum of 40 minutes and spend seven periods a day in inclusion classrooms.

Paraprofessionals including those from IBC and PASS classrooms come into the inclusion classrooms when the special education teachers have to be in Resource. The principal pairs regular and special education teachers to enhance collaboration. Both have a common conference/planning time for reading and math. For science and social studies, the regular and special education teachers meet after school to plan lessons.

The number of special education students in inclusion classes ranges widely from 3 to 11. Inclusion class sizes also vary and can range from 17 to 25 students, according to teachers. The special education students in inclusion classes use the same materials as the regular education students; additional materials may be provided if specified in a student's IEP.

### **Inclusion at Junior High Campuses**

At the junior high level, the co-teaching model is more commonly implemented as inclusion classes have special education teachers but not paraprofessional staff. Special education teachers stay in the classroom for the entire period. The special education teachers support inclusion classes in multiple content areas and with multiple regular education teachers, making planning for classes and their ability to master the content and thus their ability to co-teach a challenge.

The regular and special education teachers have a common planning time and meet weekly, typically as a department to develop lesson plans and review student performance data and instructional strategies. Some of the special education teachers interviewed support inclusion classes taught by three to five different regular education teachers. Being paired with multiple regular education teacher's impacts consistency.

All the students in inclusion classes use the same materials. Additional materials may be used if specified in the student's IEP. For example, in seventh grade, special education students can use calculators in math while regular education students cannot. While the challenge for the special education teachers consists of providing services to students in multiple content areas, the regular education teachers' knowledge of special education varies, according to the special education teachers. The regular education teachers may not realize that special education students operate at a lower level and cannot move at the same academic pace. Teachers in inclusion classes may group students by level of ability.

### **Inclusion on High School Campuses**

The co-teaching model is implemented more commonly at the high school level. The extent and format of co-teaching, according to special education teachers varies across campuses. It depends on the dynamics between the regular education and special education teachers and on the understanding or perception on the part of the regular education teachers of the role of the special education teacher in the inclusion classroom. Appropriate pairing of regular education and special education teachers is highly important.

Co-teaching is also more likely to be implemented when special education teachers have content expertise. To encourage co-teaching, Terry High School does an in-service at the start of the year on co-teaching as an expectation. Following the co-teaching model helps special education teachers gain mastery in respective content areas.

At the high school level the inclusion classes have a special education teacher who stays for the entire period. No paraprofessional staff participates in the inclusion classes unless the classes include a large number of students. At Terry High School, special education teachers in inclusion classes spend the entire day with regular education teachers. At Lamar Consolidated High School, each content area also has one paraprofessional who helps in the large inclusion classes. When helping in inclusion classes the paraprofessionals also stay for the entire period. The paraprofessional typically works with small groups of students or one-on-one.

In some of the inclusion classes at Terry High School, teachers use the parallel or station teaching approach. Under the station teaching approach teachers divide content and students into groups. Each teacher provides instruction to one group of students and then repeats the instruction to a second group. A third station gives students an opportunity to work independently on a related task. This allows students to benefit from a lower teacher-students ratio and maximizes the equal status of students and also of teachers.

Under parallel teaching, both teachers teach at the same time, but they divide the class into two groups to decrease teacher-students ratio and get more students to participate. This approach has also been proven to be an effective classroom management strategy. The number of special education students in high school inclusion classes ranges from four to 14 with the largest classes being Algebra I and Biology. The regular and special education teachers are paired based on content area knowledge or interest. This pairing helps assign special education teachers only to one content area which makes it easier for them to master the respective content. Previously, the special education teachers worked in multiple content areas.

The regular and special education teachers plan together weekly within their content areas. They also meet informally. The special education teachers use the curriculum and adapt it, as needed. They prioritize on which students to focus. Inclusion class sizes range from 22 to 33 students. The classes may include up to 10 special education students, according to regular education teachers. The large number of special education students in the inclusion classes makes entering data in the inclusion log on the minutes spent with each student during class a lengthy process that can take 20 or more minutes, according to teachers' estimates. This may reduce the time special education teachers can spend co-teaching or devoting to helping students.

Teachers complained that the inclusion log format is not efficient and suggested that efficiency could be improved if a checklist were used instead. Regular education teachers complained that because inclusion classes have two teachers, one teacher is often pulled out to do other things. The special education students in the inclusion classes graduate with a standard high school diploma.

*Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE)* developed by the Florida Inclusion Network in 2007 and updated in 2013 is a district self-assessment tool to determine the effectiveness of their inclusion practices. The tool consists of 30 indicators representing specific inclusive educational practices. The practices are based on peer-reviewed research, current literature, and national best practices. The indicators and their associated evidence of practice examples are an excellent presentation of best practices in inclusive education. The assessment tool states the indicator, provides concrete evidence of practice examples for each indicator, and asks the raters to assess implementation status and specify data sources and supporting evidence.

Key research on effective inclusion practices points to the following classroom-level variables that facilitate inclusive education: systematic support, collaboration, effective classroom practices, and a flexible curriculum design approach (i.e. universal design for learning) that offers all learners full and equal opportunities to learn. A systemic approach requires connecting with other organizational best practices, visionary leadership, and administrative support on the part of district and campus administrators where they publicly articulate and support inclusion, build consensus, and encourage stakeholder involvement.

Administrator leadership at the district and campus levels, positive attitude toward inclusion, and support are essential to implementing an effective inclusion and collaborative teaching program for both special and regular education students. Training is crucial and is provided to build the capacity to support all students in inclusive settings. Training of both special and regular education teachers is ongoing and individualized for the unique needs of specific students and classrooms.

Districts redefine roles of teachers by developing a single job description for all teachers that emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility for educating all children without distinction between students with and without disabilities. Collaboration is enhanced through the scheduling of common planning time and the recognition that no one teacher can be expected to have all the expertise required to meet the needs of all students in a classroom. Working as a team, teachers and support staff use a variety of instructional models including consultation, parallel teaching, supportive teaching, complimentary teaching, and co-teaching.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3-3**

**Develop an inclusion blueprint that incorporates best practices, defines expectations, and provides planning and implementation guidelines, and specifies resources to enhance consistency and effectiveness.**

The director of Special Programs should establish an Inclusion Taskforce to develop an inclusion model for the district. The Inclusion Taskforce should include the executive directors of Elementary Education and Secondary Education, the Academic administrator, the director of Student Support Services, representatives of elementary and secondary principals, and representatives of inclusion regular education and special education teachers. The taskforce should analyze the current delivery of inclusion services in the district, assess implementation at different grade levels, and identify areas for change and improvement.

The taskforce may consider using a self-assessment tool like the Florida *Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) District-Level Self-Assessment* tool. Based on this analysis and using research-based best practices, the taskforce should develop an inclusion blueprint for the district. The blueprint presented in an inclusion guide will define the expectations associated with inclusion, clearly describe the components, classroom structure, size, resources, regular education teacher's knowledge of special education and special education teacher's content knowledge, teaching approaches, and the instructional/support team's planning and classroom delivery. The inclusion guide will address how campuses can modify their current inclusion processes and procedures for setting up inclusion classes to meet the inclusion blueprint specifications.

The director of Special Programs in collaboration with the Academic administrator and the Staff Development coordinator will set-up training for campus administrators, regular education and special education teachers on implementing the inclusion blueprint. The director of Special Programs will evaluate the inclusion classes to determine the extent to which they meet the inclusion blueprint and assess their instructional effectiveness vis-à-vis student performance.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

## ANTICIPATING TOMORROW

As the district grows, it should continue to monitor and refine the inclusion blueprint to enhance effective instruction for all students in inclusion classes. With the expectation that the number of students with disabilities will increase by about 60 percent by 2025 as part of the forecasted high growth in the overall student population in the district, the number of inclusion classes at all grade levels will increase. Having an effective and efficient inclusion system in place tailored to each grade level will help the district estimate with confidence resources needed with regard to the qualifications of both the special education and regular education teachers assigned to inclusion classes. For example, the district may give preference in hiring of special education teachers for the secondary level to teachers with dual certifications; that is in special education and in a specific content area. The district may also seek secondary level regular education teachers with special education knowledge. Having an effective and efficient inclusion system in place may also benefit the district in addressing inclusion-related operational and management issues with regard to expectations, common planning time, and class size, use of paraprofessional staff in inclusion classes, scheduling, documentation, and the development of an “inclusion culture.”

## OBSERVATION 3-4

### **The size of inclusion classes at the secondary level negatively impacts their effectiveness.**

LCISD’s staffing guidelines specify the students-teacher ratio for special education as 10:1 at the elementary level and 15:1 at the secondary level. Paraprofessionals have a 5:1 ratio. The guidelines specify class sizes per regular education teacher as 22:1 for grades K-4 and 26:1 in Grade 5. In middle school the students to teacher ratio is 20:1. Junior high class sizes are 21:1 and high school class sizes are 21.5:1. The LCISD staffing guidelines do not address the total size of inclusion classes or the number of special education students inclusion classes should contain.

Inclusion class size at LCISD is primarily determined by the number of special education teachers available on the campus and the number of regular education teachers in specific content areas. One of the factors impacting the effectiveness of inclusion classes is the number of special education students participating in the inclusion class because the number of special education students increases the size of the inclusion class. While the size of inclusion classes at the elementary level typically do not exceed 22 and are commonly below 20 with two to three special education students in these classes, there are some exceptions. For example, at Williams Elementary, the science lab inclusion class has between 26 and 35 students. At Ryon Middle School, inclusion classes may have between three and 11 special education students bringing the inclusion class size to range from 17 to 25 students.

Large inclusion classes are more common at the junior high and high school levels. Inclusion class sizes are challenging on some campuses. For example, at Lamar Junior High School, some inclusion classes may have 12 special education students, and the overall class size may reach 30 students. Science and social studies inclusion classes tend to be large at Lamar Junior High because there is only one teacher for these content areas. According to the Lamar Junior High principal, the campus has 54 special education students in inclusion classes and is understaffed. The principal estimated that the campus is short 4.5 special education teachers. At the high school level, inclusion classes can exceed 30 students.

Inclusion classes at Lamar Consolidated High School range from 22 to 33 students. At Terry High School, the average inclusion class has 28 to 33 students. About one-third of the students in inclusion classes are special education students. The inclusion classes also have a large number of students who are English Language Learners. Principals as well as regular education and special education teachers indicated that a large inclusion class size, especially an inclusion class with a large number of special needs students, negatively impacts the instruction of all students.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3-4**

**Establish guidelines capping the number of special education students in regular education inclusion classes based on the type of class or course, type and intensity of student needs, and regular education teacher experience.**

The director of Special Programs jointly with the executive directors of Elementary Education and Secondary Education and the chief officer of Human Resources should conduct a brief survey of regular and special education teachers in inclusion classes with regards to class size, class management, instructional practices, and variables impacting effectiveness. The survey should be supplemented with a detailed analysis of inclusion class size data. The analysis should address the number of special education and regular education students in inclusion classes, by grade level, campus, and content area at the secondary level.

The director of Special Programs should also obtain data from similar districts on inclusion class sizes and on the guidelines they have pertaining to the size and composition of inclusion classes. The results of the analysis should be used to develop inclusion class size guidelines. The guidelines should take into consideration grade level, course content, and range of disabilities and intensity of student needs. In developing the class size guidelines, a staffing level analysis should be conducted with regard to the staffing required for their implementation.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### **ANTICIPATING TOMORROW**

As LCISD grows, it should refine inclusion class size guidelines and develop a multi-year plan estimating human resources needed for class size implementation. Offering inclusion class sizes that allow effective instruction of all students is highly important as the number of inclusion classes will increase and the number of students both those with disabilities and those without disabilities participating in inclusion classes will increase. To adhere to the inclusion class size guidelines, the district needs to develop a multi-year plan estimating the number of inclusion classes it will have each year by grade level, content area, campus, and number of special education teachers assigned to inclusion classes. The plan, updated annually, will impact district recruitment and hiring of special education teachers. It will also have an impact on the volume of special education staff development provided to regular education teachers who will be assigned to inclusion classes.

## ***SPED Staff Development for Regular and Special Education Teachers***

### **OBSERVATION 3-5**

**Regular education teachers involved in inclusion classes have discretion with regard to taking special education professional development. Consequently, regular education teachers involved in inclusion classes may not have any special education training.**

LCISD's Special Education Department offers a range of staff development on special education issues ranging from inclusion, standards based IEP, basic behavior management techniques, working with students with specific disabilities (e.g. Autism), STAAR Alternate 2, assistive technology, paraprofessional trainings for different special education instructional settings, instructional software, etc. While some of the staff development is specific to certain special education instructional or support staff, the list does not include any information regarding whether specific sessions are appropriate for non-special education teachers.

The list also does not identify any sessions specifically developed for regular education teachers or for regular education teachers of inclusion classes. The Special Education Department does not have any materials regarding special education trainings that are distributed to regular education teachers. The department's website is



targeted at parents and does not offer any information to regular education teachers regarding special education staff development.

As LCISD does not require regular education teachers who have special education students in their classes to take special education staff development, many regular education inclusion teachers at all grade levels have not participated in any special education staff development. For the most part, campuses do not provide staff development specifically designed for regular education teachers who teach inclusion classes, although Arredondo Elementary offers sessions on special education for regular education teachers as part of the start of year staff development.

Elementary principals and special education teachers indicated that the regular education teachers do not take special education staff development. Some Williams Elementary regular education teachers who have inclusion classes indicated that they have not taken any special education related staff development.

Elementary regular education teachers would like staff development on differentiation, co-teaching, and understanding the instructional implications of specific disabilities. They would like to have staff development on an overview of special education, special education vocabulary, modifications to respond to IEP requirements, and extra materials for their special education students. The current staff development offered to regular education teachers needs to address behavior management focused on students with disabilities, especially on students with emotional disturbance impairments.

Middle school special education teachers who work in inclusion classes also echoed the need for regular education teachers to take behavior management staff development with a focus on students with disabilities as well as staff development on inclusion, the IEP process, the nature of different disabilities and their impact on learning, and special education documentation/paperwork.

At the junior high school level, some of the regular education teachers reported that they have not participated in any special education staff development. They too echoed the need for staff development on an overview of the disabilities, effective instructional strategies for each disability, and manipulatives for different content areas, legal issues, paperwork, and things they can and cannot do in inclusion classes.

High school principals were not aware of any special education staff development or staff development on the co-teaching model for regular education teachers who have inclusion classes. Similarly, some high school inclusion teachers indicated that they have not taken any special education related staff development and see a need for staff development on inclusion strategies. Among a group of 12 regular education teachers of inclusion classes interviewed at Terry High School, only one teacher had staff development on special education. These teachers indicated that the core content staff development they receive does not address how instructional strategies and materials can be adapted for special education students. Regular education teachers saw the benefit of receiving staff development on inclusion, the co-teaching model, and how to modify materials and instructional strategies for special education students.

Research on best practices considers training of both regular education and special education teachers involved with inclusion education crucial for building the capacity to support all students in inclusive settings. Research has identified training, or its lack, as a hindrance to inclusive classrooms. Training of both special and regular education teachers needs to be ongoing and individualized to the unique needs of specific students and classrooms. The training must include ways to differentiate instruction and learn collaboration techniques.

Studies have shown that both regular and special education teachers recognize that knowledge barriers exist in inclusive classroom settings and that regular education teachers do not feel equipped to work with students having special needs. Some special education teachers may also be at a disadvantage in middle level classes if they are not content experts. While teachers agree in principle with the goals of inclusion, many do not feel prepared to work in inclusive settings. Both regular and special education teachers expressed the need for ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance skills related to effective classroom instruction, management within the classroom, communication, and collaboration with colleagues.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3-5**

**Establish special education professional development requirements for regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes.**

LCISD senior administration should make it a requirement for regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes to participate in special education staff development. The director of Special Programs should create a training program for these regular education teachers and publicize it districtwide and on the website.

The program should address the core special education laws, processes, procedures, documents, and instructional and behavior management strategies. The special education training program should be integrated into the beginning of year staff development as well as include opportunities throughout the school year for teachers to be exposed to more in-depth knowledge.

The director of Special Programs should also consider bringing regular and special education teachers together for staff development on inclusion class strategies, the role of the regular education teacher as the main content area teacher, and the effective implementation of co-teaching.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### **ANTICIPATING TOMORROW**

The district should evaluate and refine a staff development program for regular education teachers who teach inclusion classes. Following the establishment of special education training requirements for regular education teachers and the development of a training program, LCISD should review and refine the program annually to ensure that it benefits regular education teachers in inclusion classes. Refining the staff development program may include the formulation of a sequential staff development program spread over two to three years and the availability of specialized sessions, such as sessions for new teachers or instructional strategies for students with specific disabilities.

With expected increases in the number of students with disabilities, the number of inclusion classes, and the number of regular education teachers teaching inclusion classes, LCISD should consider using multiple delivery media for staff development such as online, webinars, and on the job training with the support of coaches; a method used in Conroe ISD.

### **OBSERVATION 3-6**

**The LCISD special education staff development program has gaps.**

Special education teachers receive staff development both from the district and from the Special Education Department. The staff development provided by the district is geared toward regular education and does not address special education or include special education content applications. The campus-based staff development, according to districtwide interviews with special education teachers, includes all teachers, both regular education and special education and is focused on paperwork and administrative tasks teachers must perform. It primarily addresses how to keep folders on regular and special education and does not address instruction.

The staff development that the Special Education Department offers is implemented in large part through meetings for different staff categories (i.e. teachers, counselors, diagnosticians, LSSPs, OT/PT, O&M, VI, etc.), instructional settings (i.e. SIP teachers, PPCD teachers) or disabilities (autism, dyslexia). The department also offers staff development on inclusion, the IEP, and behavior management. It offers very few content based sessions. A review of staff development offered in 2015-16 and 2016-17 identified content-related sessions such as Moving with Math (a math software program), Phonics Boost Training, and Leveled Literacy Intervention Training.

In multiple districtwide and campus-based interviews, special education teachers and paraprofessionals identified gaps in special education staff development. These gaps have been identified across grade levels and campuses. Some of the gaps were also identified by principals. The major gaps identified focused on the need for more content-based staff development, staff development on instructional strategies and interventions, and staff development on expectations. Some teachers, especially at the secondary level, see the need for staff development on effective intervention strategies and on consistency in instructional strategies.

Other gaps in the current special education staff development program include an overview of disabilities and how these impact instruction; training on the implementation and use of instructional software programs such as iReady, and how to implement them; on development of Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs); and the development of IEPs for inclusion instructional settings. Both teachers and administrators also expressed the need for staff development on streamlining processes and increasing consistency across campuses and grade levels. For example, areas identified included streamlining accommodations across campuses; streamlining IEP development to make it less challenging; and making special education forms including the inclusion log uniform across campuses.

A review of the special education staff development for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 showed only two sessions for paraprofessionals, titled: Life skills/SIP Paraprofessional Training and Inclusive Instructional Support for Paraprofessionals. Special education paraprofessionals at all grade levels identified the need for professional development on how to plan and work with special education teachers. Some also wanted staff development on the IEP process.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3-6**

**Increase the focus of the special education staff development program on content, instructional strategies, and interventions.**

The director of Special Programs jointly with a team of special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators across grade levels should identify and articulate the issue areas that a comprehensive special education staff development program should address. They should give consideration to areas in which the program needs to improve and to the expected high growth that will increase the population of students with disabilities.

Based on their identification of issue areas and their prioritization, the team should review the current special education staff development program and identify gaps. In planning the staff development program for 2017-2018 and beyond, the Special Education director and assistant director, jointly with the Staff Development coordinator, should plan to include sessions that address these gaps.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### **ANTICIPATING TOMORROW**

LCISD, as it grows, should conduct an annual special education staff development needs assessment and adjust the staff development program accordingly. The Special Education Department should incorporate in its operations an annual needs assessment at the end of each school year. The needs assessment should include a teacher evaluation of the staff development sessions in which they participated during the respective year. The staff development program prepared for the following year should take into account data from the needs assessment.

## ***ARD Meetings***

### **OBSERVATION 3-7**

**Convening “failure ARD” meetings at the end of each grading period has increased the number of ARD meetings and demand on administrator, teacher, and support staff time.**

Typically, school districts convene initial ARD meetings for students with disabilities when they start receiving special education services. Subsequently, these students have an annual ARD meeting to review and update their IEP. Occasionally, a second ARD meeting may be convened during the year to address significant changes in accommodations and interventions. In addition to the annual ARD meeting, LCISD convenes ARD meetings at the end of grading periods for special education students who failed academically during that grading period.

The number of “failure ARDs” convened in 2016-2017 ranges widely according to elementary, middle school, junior high, and high school principals interviewed. The number of “failure ARDs” convened in 2016-2017 ranged from 0 to 35. Based on information principals provided, these ARD meetings last between 30 and 60 minutes, or 45 minutes on average. The ARD meetings involve the principal, a special education and a regular education inclusion teacher, diagnostician, parent, and other related support service staff members, as appropriate.

Convening “failure ARDs” has increased time demands of administrators, teachers, and service providers. Assuming that an ARD meeting takes on average 45 minutes and involves four school staff members who spend a total of five hours to prepare, a “failure ARD” meeting will take eight person hours. Based on these assumptions, campuses that convened 10 to 35 “failure ARDs” in 2016-2017 spent between 80 and 280 hours on preparing for and conducting these meetings.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3-7**

**Monitor the performance of special education students on an ongoing basis to identify potential for academic failure during a grading period and use interventions and instructional strategies to address it, thereby eliminating “failure ARDs.”**

With the goals of eliminating the use of “failure ARDs,” the director of Special Programs, jointly with a team of elementary and secondary special education teachers, regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes, and support staff, should review current procedures for monitoring special education students’ performance during a grading period and assess their adequacy in identifying potential academic failure. As needed, the team should modify the procedures to increase early detection of potential failure and specify instructional strategies and interventions that have proven effective in addressing these areas. To facilitate ongoing monitoring, the team should consider adding frequent tracking benchmarks and assess the effectiveness of the interventions and instructional strategies.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### **ANTICIPATING TOMORROW**

With the expectations that “failure ARDs” will not be continued, this observation does not have long-term consequences.

## Behavior Management and Discipline – SPED Students

### OBSERVATION 3-8

#### LCISD’s disciplinary actions are applied disproportionately to special education students.

Disparities in application of disciplinary procedures have been widely documented for nearly four decades. Multiple studies have shown disproportionality in school discipline practice by race/ethnicity, economic status, gender, and disability. A 2002 study showed that students with disabilities who were African American, Hispanic, and American Indian were 67 percent more likely to be classified as “dangerous” and removed from school by a hearing officer than White students. A 2003 study showed that economically disadvantaged African American male students who were receiving special education services had the highest suspension rates of any student subgroup.

LCISD implements four behavior management approaches including Capturing Kids Hearts, Fred Jones, Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI), and Restorative Practices. These behavior management approaches are described in detail in Observation 2-11 in Chapter 2: Educational Service Delivery.

In 2015-2016, LCISD administration worked to identify factors and behaviors contributing to the disproportional numbers of special education students being disciplined and initiated procedures to address this issue. While the percentage of special education students disciplined in 2016-2017 decreased for some forms of discipline or was unchanged for other forms of discipline, the overall rates of special education students disciplined remained disproportionate to their percentage in the student population.

Between 2013-2014 and 2016-2017, the percentage of special education students receiving In-School-Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), expulsion, and placement in a disciplinary Alternative Learning Center (ALC) has been disproportionate to the percentage of disciplined students in LCISD as a whole.

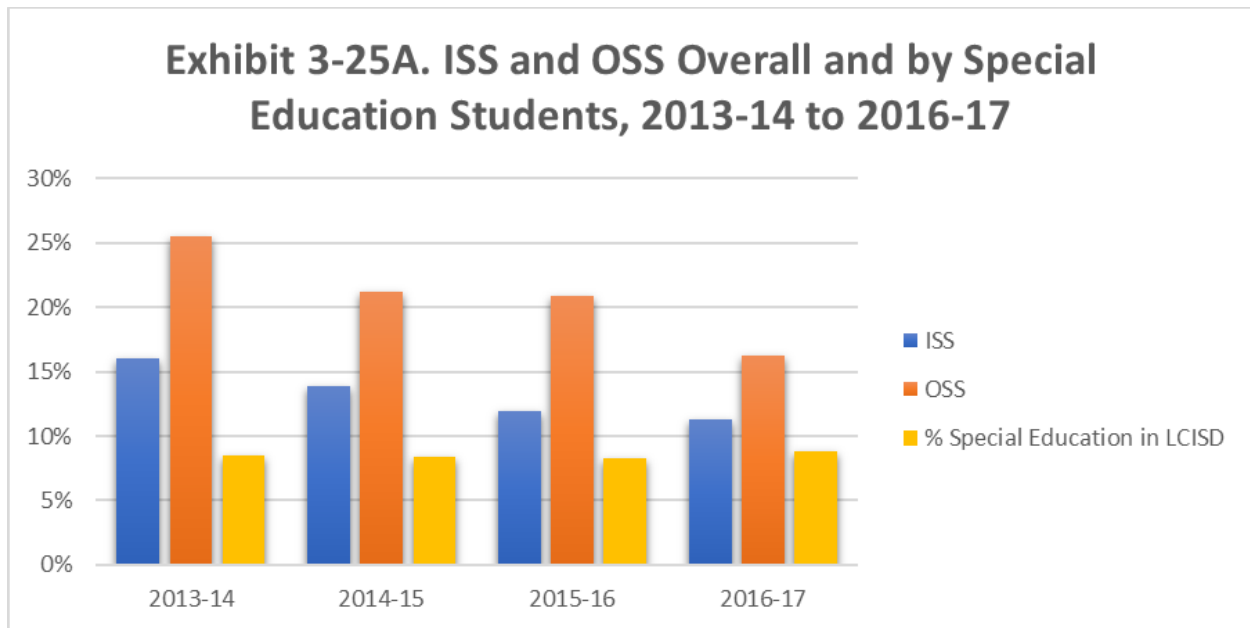
As shown in **Exhibit 3-25**, while special education students comprised between 8.3 and 8.8 percent of LCISD’s population from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017, between 11.3 and 16.0 percent of students receiving ISS and between 16.3 and 25.5 percent of students receiving OSS were special education students. Although in 2016-2017 the percentage of special education students who received ISS or OSS decreased from its 2015-2016 level, it remained disproportionate to their percentage in the student population.

**Exhibit 3-25**  
**ISS and OSS Overall and by Special Education Students**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total ISS	6,850	83.2%	6,394	79.6%	5,332	74.8%	1,986	74.2%
Total OSS	1,385	16.8%	1,640	20.4%	1,794	25.2%	692	25.8%
<b>Total ISS and OSS</b>	<b>8,235</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,034</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,126</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,678</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Special Education</b>								
ISS	1,094	16.0%	887	13.9%	632	11.9%	224	11.3%
OSS	353	25.5%	348	21.2%	375	20.9%	113	16.3%
<b>Total ISS and OSS</b>	<b>1,447</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>12.6%</b>
% Special Education in LCISD		8.5%		8.4%		8.3%		8.8%

Source: LCISD ISS and OSS, April 12, 2017.

\*Data available only for first half of 2016-2017: August-December 2016.



Although LCISD had 21 expulsions in 2013-2014, 22 in 2014-2015, and 9 in 2015-2016, and fewer than five special education students were expelled during each of these years, the percentage of special education students expelled exceeded their percentage among students expelled relative to their percentage in the student population.

The percentage of special education students placed in the ALC was disproportionate to their percentage in the LCISD student population (**Exhibit 3-26**). Between 11.3 and 12.3 percent of students placed in the ALC were special education students while they comprised between 8.3 and 8.8 percent of the LCISD student population. The disparities in ALC placements for special education students also hold in the first half of 2016-2017.

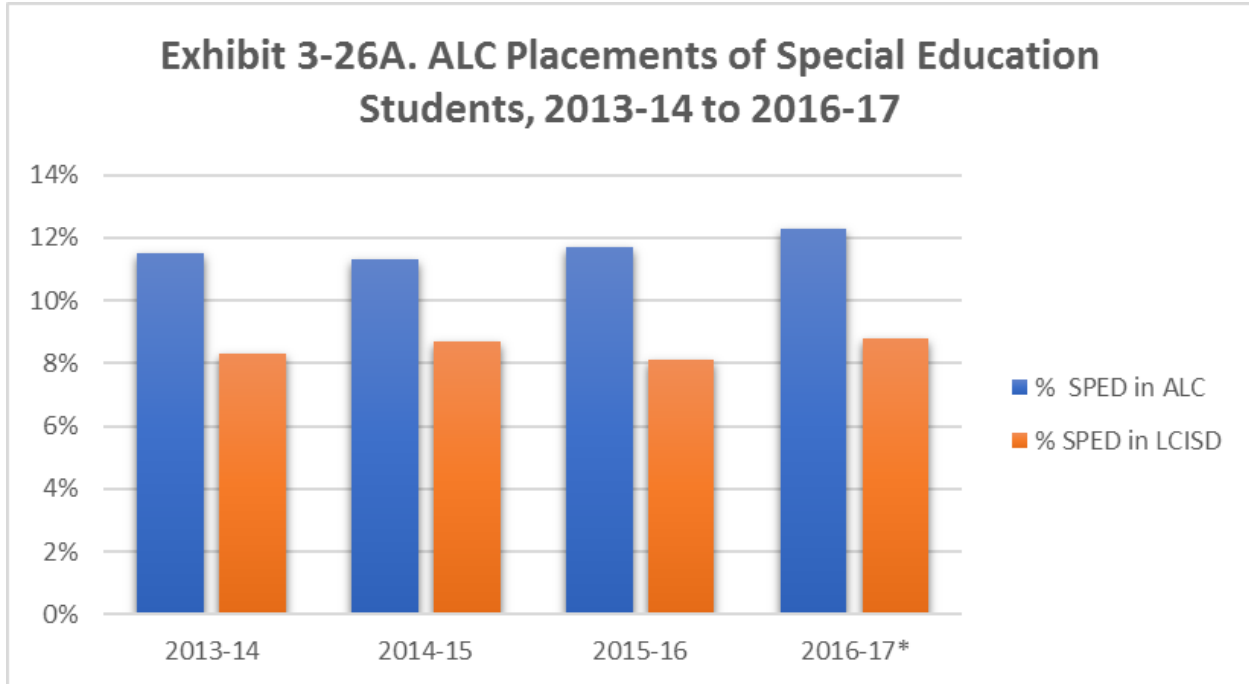
**Exhibit 3-26**  
**ALC Placements Overall and for Special Education Students**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total number of ALC placements	331	100.0%	444	100.0%	376	100.0%	106	100.0%
Mandatory placements	150	45.3%	203	45.7%	117	31.1%	44	41.5%
Discretionary placements	181	54.7%	241	54.3%	259	68.9%	62	58.5%
Special Education	38	11.5%	50	11.3%	44	11.7%	13	12.3%
SPED/ESL	9	0.3%	7	1.6%	5	1.3%	**	**
% Special Education in LCISD		8.5%		8.4%		8.3%		8.8%

Source: LCISD, ALC End-of-Year Charts 2013-2014 to 2016-2017. LCISD 2016-2017 Data, March 2017. TEA, Texas Academic Performance Reports- 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016.

\*Data available only for first half of 2016-2017: August-December 2016.

\*\*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.



LCISD special education students have also been disproportionately represented from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017 at the Fort Bend County Alternative School (FBCAS), a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) that LCISD offers jointly with Needville ISD and Katy ISD. Between 13.6 and 19.6 percent of LCISD students placed in FBCAS were special education students, about double their percentage in the LCISD student population (Exhibit 3-27).

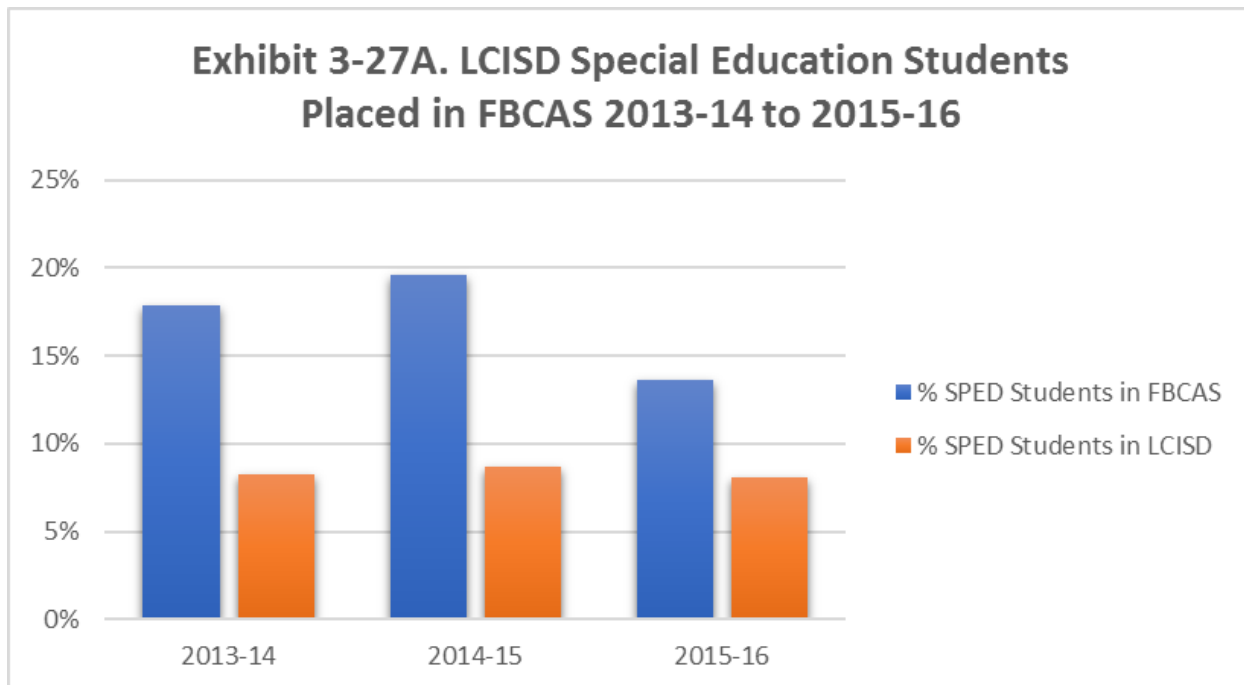
**Exhibit 3-27**  
**LCISD Special Education Students Placed in FBCAS**  
**2013-2014 to 2016-2017**

	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Number of LCISD Students in FBCAS	39		46		44		28	
Special Education	7	17.9%	9	19.6%	6	13.6%	*	*
% Special Education in LCISD		8.5%		8.4%		8.3%		8.8%

Source: LCISD, April 20, 2017.

\*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to FERPA 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

\*\*Data available only for first half of 2016-2017: August-December 2016.



Removing students from the classroom for disciplinary reasons has significant negative academic outcomes and may result in lower academic achievement or academic failure, academic disengagement, truancy, retention, increased contact with the juvenile justice system, and dropout. Research has shown that when the education of students with special needs is disrupted by long absences such as expulsion, the likelihood of them dropping out is higher than the likelihood among regular education students. They are also more likely to never graduate from high school, remain unemployed, and be economically dependent.

Parkway School District in Missouri has a comprehensive and detailed discipline policy and program reflecting both federal, state, and district legal and operational requirements. To create and maintain safe and violence free schools, the district has a code of conduct and standards of conduct that clearly delineate consequences of violation of the code. Students learn about the code of conduct and master the school rules. The discipline policy addresses procedural safeguards; continuation of services when a student is placed out of his/her classroom; discipline appeals; principal and superintendent suspension procedures; manifestation determination including purpose and intent; legal requirements, and a manifestation determination facilitation guide; and roles and responsibilities of staff.

Parkway’s discipline policy and program also address issues relevant to students with disabilities such as alternative discipline consequences, individualized intervention plans, and discipline adaptations and modifications. Families of students with disabilities have the opportunity to discuss the code of conduct when it is a concern for their child and act as partners in finding ways to assist their child in maintaining it. Students whose disability prevents them from understanding or complying with the code of conduct have in their IEP document an individualized intervention plan that addresses this issue and has the potential to prevent behavior problems. The individualized intervention plan is monitored and assessed for effectiveness and is modified as needed.

**RECOMMENDATION 3-8**

**Identify and implement behavior management strategies that have been proven effective in reducing the need for disciplinary actions for all students and for special education students.**

The director of Special Programs with the diagnosticians and LSSPs, the executive directors of Elementary Education and Secondary Education, and the director of Research, Accountability, and Assessment should:



- Review the discipline policies and procedures initiated in 2015-2016, assess their effectiveness, and modify them as needed.
- Analyze and disaggregate disciplinary actions data by disciplinary action categories, school, grade level, and special education students.
- Review the district's discipline policies and code of conduct and identify compliance issues pertaining to special education students.
- Review the district's behavior management programs and strategies and assess their effectiveness in addressing behavior of special education students.
- Identify positive discipline programs that have proven effective with students with disabilities. These programs should include research-based strategies and practices that focus on increasing positive behaviors rather than just decreasing undesirable behaviors and have proven effective in managing special education student behavior and reducing disciplinary actions. Studies have shown that schools implementing effective strategies experienced reductions in discipline referrals by 20 to 60 percent; improved academic engagement, and higher student performance.
- Adopt discipline approaches that are aligned with effective practices in supporting positive student behavior and in addressing special education discipline disparities.
- Integrate those approaches into a coherent system wide special education discipline management plan. The discipline implementation plan should incorporate best practices, a training program, monitoring strategies, and annual data analysis to review changes in disciplinary actions.

### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### ANTICIPATING TOMORROW

As the district grows, it should address and reduce disparities in disciplinary actions involving students with disabilities. It should increase awareness of administrators, teachers, and staff of disparities in disciplinary actions concerning students with disabilities; address discipline disparities concerning students with disabilities through the identification and implementation of behavior management strategies that have proven effective in decreasing discipline problems with this student population. The district should also provide districtwide training on how to address these disparities effectively. Finally, it should review disciplinary actions annually to ensure the district's behavior management strategies are effective in addressing these disparities.

### *Sped Teacher Turnover*

#### OBSERVATION 3-9

**A high percentage of special education teachers leave the district within three (3) years.**

During the three-year period of 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, 596 teachers left LCISD. About nine percent or 53 of those who left were special education teachers. Of the 53 special education teachers who left the district, 26 or 49.1 percent were inclusion/resource teachers; 10 or 18.9 percent were teachers in the Social Integration Program (SIP); nine or 17.0 percent were in the Positive Approach to Student Success and in the Structure Integrated Learning Classroom (PASS/SILC) program; and five or 9.4 percent were in the LIFE Skills program (**Exhibit 3-28**).

SIP is a program for students K-12 who required specialized teaching strategies, including a modified curriculum, and ongoing development of social and behavior skills. The PASS/SILC program supports special education students who struggle socially in a regular education/mainstream setting. LIFE skills focuses on the prerequisite skills needed to master the TEKS for a specific grade level.

About one-third of the special education teachers, who left LCISD between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, left within three years after taking a special education teaching position. More than 11 percent left within the first year, 17.0 percent left within 12 to less than 24 months; thus, 28.3 percent left within the first two (2) years. About one-half of teachers who left between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, left within five (5) years of teaching at LCISD.

**Exhibit 3-28**  
**Special Education Staff Leaving LCISD in 2013-2014 to 2015-2016**

Years in District	SPED Inclusion/ Resource	SIP	PASS/ SILC	LIFE Skills	IBC	VI Teacher	PPCD	Total
Less than 1 year	4	1			1			6
1 year but less than 2 years (12 months but less than 24 months)	2	3	3	1				9
2 years but less than 3 years (24 months but less than 36 months)	2							2
3 years but less than 4 years (36 months but less than 48 months)	2	1		1		1		5
4 years but less than 5 years (48 months but less than 60 months)	1	2					1	4
5 years but less than 6 years (60 months but less than 72 months)				2				2
6 to less than 10 years (72 but less than 120 months)	4	2	5					11
10 years or more (120 or more months)	11	1	1	1				14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>53</b>

Source: LCISD, Human Resources, April 2017.

\*SIP refers to Social Integration Program; PASS refers to Positive Approach to Student Success; SILC refers to Structure Integrated Learning Classroom; LIFE Skills refers to Learning in Functional Environment; IBC refers to Intensive Behavior Class; VI refers to Visual Impairment; and PPCD refers to Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities.

LCISD supports its first year teachers through a mentoring program and through staff development. Concerns raised about the district’s staff development for first year teachers in Chapter 2, **Observation 2-8**, also apply to special education first year teachers. First year special education teachers face greater challenges than regular education teachers, especially in the instructional area and the large volume of documentation (paper work) they have to provide.

Eduphoria does not have a special education component. Special education teachers are expected to modify the curriculum and tailor it to their students’ needs. Several special education teachers in districtwide group interviews indicated that they do not get any guidance on how to teach the TEKS and do not have any tools besides textbooks. The staff development they receive is not special education specific, concrete, or leveled.

The LCISD Special Education Department offers special education staff development including sessions targeted at teachers in different instructional settings such as Life Skills 101, SIP Staff Development, Implementing PASS/SILC, IBC Teacher/Para Staff Development, The Contained Behavior Classroom: Procedures and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, etc. However, it does not have a coherent longer-term staff development program for new special education teachers with a sequential series of sessions that build on each other.

As stated in Chapter 2, **Observation 2-8** teacher turnover is costly; the average cost to recruit, hire, prepare and lose a teacher is estimated at \$50,000. Teacher turnover also carries economic and educational costs ranging from costs incurred for advertising, recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and training new teachers; lost investment in professional development, improved skills, and curriculum knowledge; overburdening experienced teachers with needs of inexperienced colleagues; and lost continuity and stability for students. The costs are likely to be higher for special education teachers, as they are harder to recruit.

### RECOMMENDATION 3-9

**Develop a special education teacher support program for first-year teachers with a longer- term and coherent professional development program focused on special education instructional settings.**

The director of Special Programs jointly with the district's Staff Development coordinator should develop a three-year staff development program for new special education teachers. The program should incorporate the different special education instructional settings and programs. The staff development program should emulate the Alief ISD model described in Chapter 2, **Observation 2-8**.

### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

### ANTICIPATING TOMORROW

As the district grows, it should incorporate into the district's longer-term new teacher retention program, professional development and support strategies targeted at special education new teachers. The considerable costs involved in the recruitment, hiring, and training of first year special education teachers will increase significantly with the high-growth rate that LCISD is forecasted to experience. Based on the current special education teacher to special education students' ratio of 1:12, LCISD will have 63 percent or 90 more special education teachers in 2025 when its special education students is estimated at 4,144. LCISD's number of special education teachers will grow from 227 in 2016-2017 to 345.3 in 2025. Retaining its new special education teachers will increase in importance because of the volume of special education teachers the district will need, the investment in their training, and the cost association with their recruitment.

The number of special education teachers the district will hire merits the development of a multi-year staff development program for first year special education teachers and refining the special education teacher hiring strategies based on retention analyses. The multi-year staff development program for special education new teachers and the tracking/assessment of its effectiveness will follow the recommended structure and assessment of the multi-year staff development program for all new teachers. The multi-year staff development program for new teachers and the tracking/assessment of its effectiveness are described in detail the Anticipating Tomorrow section following **Recommendation 2-8** in Chapter 2.

## ANTICIPATING TOMORROW – SUMMARY AND OTHER TOPICS

The Anticipating Tomorrow suggestions presented were developed as a result of the issues identified in the LCISD management and performance review of the special education program and are backed by best practice research.

Suggestions regarding how the district can address and manage in a well-planned and systematic way its forecasted growth with regard to its special education student population include the following:

- Reduce referrals to special education and increase qualified referrals. (Observation 3-1)
- Develop and use a process to monitor on an ongoing basis the referral of African American and Hispanic students to special education. (Observation 3-2)
- Continue to monitor and refine the inclusion blueprint to enhance effective instruction for all students in inclusion classes. (Observation 3-3)
- Refine inclusion class size guidelines and develop a multi-year plan estimating human resources needed for class size implementation. (Observation 3-4)
- Evaluate and refine a staff development program for regular education teachers who teach inclusion classes. (Observation 3-5)
- Conduct an annual special education staff development needs assessment and adjust the staff development program accordingly. (Observation 3-6)
- Address and reduce disparities in disciplinary actions involving students with disabilities. (Observation 3-8)
- Incorporate into the district's longer-term new teacher retention program, professional development and support strategies targeted at special education new teachers. (Observation 3-9)

The LCISD Special Education Department should develop a long-term operations plan that addresses the areas highlighted above. The long-term operations plan will provide a framework for ensuring that the department is cognizant of the impact the forecasted growth of the special education student population will have on its operations and services, resources it needs to meet this growth, and strategies it should develop and apply to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and services.

**FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY**

RECOMMENDATION		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
<b>CHAPTER 3: SPECIAL EDUCATION</b>								
<b>3-1</b>	Develop and implement procedures that will reinforce appropriate and effective implementation and documentation of Response to Intervention on each campus, train teachers and staff in the process, monitor implementation, and track the rate of inappropriate referrals to special education.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>3-2</b>	Implement procedures that address effectively academic and behavior issues of African American and Hispanic students to avoid over identification of these student groups for referral to special education.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>3-3</b>	Develop an inclusion blueprint that incorporates best practices, defines expectations, and provides planning and implementation guidelines, and specifies resources to enhance consistency and effectiveness.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

RECOMMENDATION		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
3-4	Establish guidelines capping the number of special education students in regular education inclusion classes based on the type of class or course, type and intensity of student needs, and regular education teacher experience.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3-5	Establish special education professional development requirements for regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3-6	Increase the focus of the special education staff development program on content, instructional strategies, and interventions.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3-7	Monitor the performance of special education students on an ongoing basis to identify potential for academic failure during a grading period and use interventions and instructional strategies to address it, thereby eliminating "failure ARDs."	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

RECOMMENDATION		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
3-8	Identify and implement behavior management strategies that have been proven effective in reducing the need for disciplinary actions for all students and for special education students.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3-9	Develop a special education teacher support program for first-year teachers with a longer- term and coherent professional development program focused on special education instructional settings.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL-CHAPTER 3</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>