Respectfully submitted by,
Lynette Abruzzo, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and the Strategic Planning Committee
# Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 4  

District Mission Statement .......................................................................................... 4  

Our Vision ...................................................................................................................... 4  

The Goal ....................................................................................................................... 4  

The Committee ........................................................................................................... 5  

The Process .................................................................................................................. 5  

Committee Members .................................................................................................. 6  

Beliefs Statement ....................................................................................................... 7  

Five Pillar Model ........................................................................................................ 7  

Rubric Features .......................................................................................................... 8  

   I.  Program Assessment, Development & Implementation ........................................ 8  
   II. Family Engagement ............................................................................................... 11  
   III. Data Driven Decision Making .......................................................................... 11  
   IV. Strategic Partnerships ......................................................................................... 12  
   V.  Education Opportunities and Learning Environment ....................................... 12  

Commendations .......................................................................................................... 13  

   Program Assessment, Development & Improvement and Data-Driven Decision Making ........................................................................................................ 13  
   Family Engagement & Strategic Partnerships ......................................................... 14  
   Professional Development and Training ................................................................. 16  

Action Item ................................................................................................................ 17  

   I.  Programmatic Assessment, Development and Improvement ............................ 17  
      Summative Information from Data Review ......................................................... 17  
      School Visit Summary ......................................................................................... 20  
      Special Classes ................................................................................................... 20  
      Integrated Settings ............................................................................................. 21  
      Mainstreaming Opportunities .......................................................................... 21  
      Related Services at the Secondary Level ........................................................... 21  
      Positive Behavior Support Program ................................................................. 21  
      Reading Support ............................................................................................... 22
INTRODUCTION:
The Garden City School District began the process of developing a special education strategic plan during the 2019-20 school year. The plan is designed to identify overall goals and guide the direction of the special education department over a three-year period. The plan is intended to remain a fluid document allowing for the implementation of reform to ensure alignment with department and district goals.

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT:
The Garden City School District seeks to create an environment for learning which enables each student the opportunity to grow as an individual, as well as, a group member while striving to achieve the optimal level of academic, social, and personal success. Students will thrive in a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate, individualized, and challenging. Our goal and responsibility is to help each student develop an enthusiasm for learning, a respect for self and others, and the skills to become a creative independent thinker and problem solver.

THE VISION:
Inspiring and Challenging our Students to Accomplish Their Personal Best Students will:
  • Foster a curiosity for learning.
  • Engage in productive cognitive struggle.
  • Find their individual passions, creativity, and strengths.
  • Grow increasingly self-confident.
  • Develop appreciation for multiple disciplines and the larger world.
  • Collaborate, communicate, and adapt.
  • Build respectful relationships.

THE GOAL:
The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to define the structure of programs for students with special needs in order that they may access standards-aligned content, high quality learning environments, individualized support and resources in the least restrictive environment with priority placed on integration with general education peers and collaboration with parents and the community.

The goal of the committee is to make recommendations for:
  • Program development and improvement
  • Collaboration with parents, teachers, and administrators
  • Community Partnerships
  • Training
THE COMMITTEE:
The strategic planning committee was comprised of multiple stakeholders including administrators, teachers, aides and parents. Three sub-committees were formed to begin the process of identification of department needs and development of goals.

Subcommittees:
1. Program Assessment, Development & Improvement and Data -Driven Decision Making
2. Family Engagement & Strategic Partnerships
3. Professional Development & Training

The committees initially met as a large group to establish the focus and define the focus of each subcommittee. Subsequently, each subcommittee met separately to focus on their individual committee work. During each session, members discussed the current status of programs in the district, researched relevant data and began to draw conclusions. The plan outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the committee work.

THE PROCESS:
The process was designed as a multistep approach, to assist the special education department through guided and focused discussions that would support long- and short-term planning. The Committee adopted a 5-pillar model as the framework for the plan. The members formed 3 separate committees to review data, identify program strengths, identify long and short-range goals and explore resources. The committees utilized a rubric adapted from: Assessing and improving special education: A program review tool for schools and districts engaged in rapid school improvement. [The Center on School Turnaround]. San Francisco: WestEd.

The review process involved the following steps:
1. Utilizing the rubric to identify areas that meet the highest standard, acceptable standards and areas in need of improvement.
2. Reviewing the data and drawing conclusions about program strengths and needed improvements.
3. Identification of actions for addressing the needed improvements and development of a special education program quality improvement plan
4. Recommendations for short- and long-term action plans.
**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillars</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Group Leaders</th>
<th>Group Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pillar I</td>
<td>Program Assessment, Development &amp; Improvement</td>
<td>To identify areas of growth and improvement of special education programs to align with district goals and priorities</td>
<td>Jean Ricotta, Chris Hartigan, Mandi, Stefankiewicz</td>
<td>Lynnette Skrivanek, Melina Mendelson, Colleen McAlea, Sandy Schneider, Stacey Esmond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pillar III</td>
<td>Data-Driven Decision Making</td>
<td>To identify pathways to strengthen partnerships with parents and community to support students with disabilities in an inclusive environment</td>
<td>Eleni Chronas, Eric Nezowitz</td>
<td>Danielle Warnke, Joanne Pelletieri, Allison Vitucci, Mrs. Heaney</td>
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<td>Pillar II</td>
<td>Family Engagement</td>
<td>To identify areas of growth and improvement for training of parents, administrators, teachers and support staff</td>
<td>Eileen Vota, Keri Hand</td>
<td>Gina Tornincaso, Kim Babjak, Donna Cornelius, Katherine Squires, Mrs. Dickey, Robin Holman</td>
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BELIEFS STATEMENT:

Students with Disabilities Need:

- **Challenges:**
  - Evidence that learning is taking place and students continue to work toward their personal best
- **Positive Approaches to Learning**
  - Positive strategies
  - Focus on individual strengths
  - Celebration of achievement
- **Differentiated Instruction**
  - Designed to address individual needs in all settings
- **Inclusive Learning Environment**

Five Pillar Model:
The committee adopted a 5 Pillar framework to define and guide the development of the strategic plan.

Pillar I: Programmatic Assessment, Development, and Improvement:
Committee members conducted a review of programs offered in Garden City Schools to identify areas to ensure alignment with department and district goals.
Pillar II: Family Engagement:

Committee members gathered information including trends in SEPTA membership and participation in events focused on the collaboration between families and staff in order to assess and make recommendations for expanded family engagement.

Pillar III: Data Driven Decision Making:

Committee members reviewed data from multiple sources including New York State report card, graduation rates, post school plans, survey results interviews with neighboring school district and trend data.

Pillar IV: Strategic Partnerships:

Committee members reviewed community programs and partnerships with education programs in order to make recommendations that support sustained collaborative relationships with community organization which would enable students with disabilities have access to a range of community activities.

Pillar V. Professional Development:

Committee members reviewed current professional development and training opportunities for administrators, teachers, support staff and parents to determine gaps and redundancies in current offerings. The committee discussed the need to develop a multi-year professional development plan, to ensure continuity of programs, services, and address core instructional methods.

Rubric Features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT, DEVELOPMENT &amp; IMPROVEMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program Features</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Highly qualified instructional staff and specialized support personnel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Features</td>
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</table>
| **Staff wide expertise in social-emotional and behavioral needs** | A program with staff wide expertise in students’ social-emotional and behavioral needs:  
1. Increases appropriate identification of students with disabilities  
2. Reduces inappropriate disciplinary responses and disproportionality  
3. Helps reduce stigma | 1. Trend data on mandated counseling  
2. Trend data on behavioral plans  
3. Professional development plans  
4. Staff Survey  
5. Mental Health Committee data |
| **Student access to the general curriculum** | A program providing students with access to the general curriculum:  
1. Establishes the expectation that all children can learn and achieve to high standards  
2. Prepares all students for postsecondary experiences  
3. Supports disability awareness and acceptance  
4. Supports students’ development of executive functioning and “soft skills” for college and career readiness | 1. Programs to support inclusion  
2. Post school plans  
3. A review of the general education support classes |
| **Positive learning environment**         | **A program that ensures a positive learning environment:**  
1. Supports student achievement by providing a safe, supportive learning environment  
2. Increases quality of instruction | 1. Student and/or family surveys; feedback from group discussion  
2. Graduation rates  
3. A review of extracurricular clubs, activities, and sports inclusion opportunities |
| **Student engagement**                   | **A program with student engagement:**  
1. Increases student achievement  
2. Increases graduation rates  
3. Promotes student self-determination  
4. Supports college and career readiness | 1. Staff surveys, feedback from focus groups  
2. Graduation rates  
3. A review of extracurricular clubs, activities, and sports inclusion opportunities |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Features</th>
<th>Connection to program</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective early childhood transition from preschool (CPSE) to school-age services CSE.</td>
<td>A program providing effective early childhood transition from CPSE to CSE: 1. Promotes and supports school readiness. 2. Prepares family, child, and staff for child’s transition. 3. Facilitates transition from one program to another.</td>
<td>1. Number of children with disabilities included in general education classroom(s) 2. Level of family engagement in school activities 3. Family reports of satisfaction with supports through child’s transition to school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective secondary transition</td>
<td>A program with effective secondary transition: 1. Prepares students for life after high school: employment, community integration, postsecondary education or training. 2. Supports development of self-advocacy or self-determination skills.</td>
<td>1. Number of students employed and/or enrolled in further education or training after high school 2. ACCES-VR; OPWDD eligibility 3. Indicator 13 4. Indicator 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally competent practice</td>
<td>A program using culturally competent practices: 1. Supports effective school staff interaction with children, families, and community service providers. 2. Increases appropriate identification of students with disabilities.</td>
<td>1. Use of translation and interpretation services for all students and families who need it 2. Evidence of bilingual CSE evaluations 3. Demographic study results 4. Professional development plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Approach</td>
<td>A program that takes a team approach: 1. Supports a seamless approach to providing services. 2. Reduces gaps in services and supports. 3. Supports effective transitions from grade-to-grade through school years.</td>
<td>1. Survey data 2. Review of District transition planning practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Features</td>
<td>Connection to program</td>
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| Creativity                           | *A program that embraces creativity:*  
1. Addresses the unique needs of each child and youth. | 1. Survey Data |
|                                      | **II. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**                                                              |             |
|                                      | **Program Features**                                                                   |             |
| Family support and engagement        | *A program with family support and engagement:*  
1. Promotes and supports students’ school readiness.  
2. Strengthens and encourages parent participation in child’s educational program.  
4. Links learning opportunities between home and school. | 1. Survey Data  
2. SEPTA Membership 2017-2019  
3. SEPTA Grants  
4. Review of Parent Workshops |
|                                      | **III. DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**                                                   |             |
|                                      | **Program Features**                                                                   |             |
| Data Driven Decision Making          | *A program using data-driven decision-making:*  
1. Fosters prioritization of outcome driven goals and behaviors.  
2. Ensures that decisions are evidence based. | 1. Documentation of student performance  
2. Student outcomes/performance data; district/school outcomes/ performance data. |
## IV. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

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<tr>
<th>Program Features</th>
<th>Connection to program</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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| Family Partnerships | *A program that builds community partnerships:*  
1. Fosters community opportunities and relationships outside of family and school.  
2. Fosters community awareness and understanding of special needs. | 1. Survey data  
2. Number of community organizations and businesses involved with work exploration, job coaching mentorships, extended learning opportunities  
3. Participation in national programs (e.g., Best Buddies, Special Olympics). |

## V. EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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<tr>
<th>Program Features</th>
<th>Connection to program</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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| High-quality professional learning | *A program with high-quality professional development:*  
1. Supports recruitment and retention of personnel (special education and related services).  
2. Helps all stakeholders be aware of each other’s role. | 2. District-level professional development plan |
Commendations:

Program Assessment, Development & Improvement and Data-Driven Decision Making

The committee program assessment identified strengths in the current programs and practices. Garden City School District employs highly qualified instructional staff and specialized support personnel. All perspective employees participate in a rigorous interview process in order to select the most qualified staff. New staff are paired with mentors to orient them regarding policies and practices of the Garden City School District. Employees continue to participate in specific professional developments in their discipline areas and/or in designated areas of interest. Professional development opportunities are typically created and presented by Garden City staff. Curriculum development within disciplines and through interdisciplinary teams is also encouraged.

Committee review rated with high standards for student engagement, based on attendance, graduation rate, and post-secondary plans. Over 90% of students graduate with an Advanced Regents diploma, including many students who are classified or have 504 plans. Graduates attend high quality, competitive colleges and universities. Students are awarded a plethora of merit-based scholarships. There is a continued need to explore CTE classes/vocational training for students who may not be bound for a 4-year college or for students seeking additional work-based learning experiences to assist with post-secondary planning. Future connection with graduates to determine college graduation rates and job placement should be explored.

Student integration in clubs and activities is part of the culture in Garden City. The secondary schools have individual Best Buddies programs and Challenger basketball leagues and participate with other local chapters for events. The High School also participates in a Unified basketball league, which integrates general education students and students who are classified through a team interactive sport. The High School has implemented the Promoting Acceptance and Interpersonal Relationships in Schools (PAIRS) program, to create a social learning environment within the school day, help students learn and practice pro-social behaviors in a naturalistic setting, integrate classified students into the general population.

Staff and administration receive specialized training and supports for responding to mental health issues to ensure that the highest level of intervention support is available, including in nonacademic settings and during out-of-school time. The District has formed a Mental Health Committee to provide training and explore pathways to support the mental health and social emotional needs of students and families. The elementary and high schools have developed mindfulness rooms to support staff and students during times of stress and anxiety. Secondary schools also incorporate Makerspace activities to provide ongoing innovation, problem-solving skills, and creative reasoning.

In order to support ongoing accessibility to the curriculum, the District employs a full-time Assistive Technology specialist who conduct evaluations, and trials of programs to support students in a general education environment. The District, in collaboration with SEPTA and PTA, is expanding implementation of the Redcat FM amplification system.
The Redcat is a classroom wide amplification system designed to support students with attentional issues. There are currently 3 Redact devices in the District with plans to add 2 more.

Prior to the development of the Strategic Planning Committee, the District began reviewing and assessing the current delivery of related services at the secondary level. By nature of the scheduling structures, there was an unintended increase in the delivery of related services, namely for speech and language therapy. As the school district visits commenced as part of the strategic planning process, committee members were able to gather information related to delivery models in other districts. For most of the districts visited, the models called for a decrease in the provision of related services at the secondary level. As the focus for students at the secondary level is generalization and application of skills, committee members learned of an increase in consultative supports to general education teachers and special educators in some of the district models. As a result, the District has begun to explore and recommend a combination of direct support in combination of consultative support to teachers of individual students for the School Year 2020-2021. This allows for both targeted skill development as well as support to staff in understanding the nature of language disabilities and the strategies necessary to ensure the accessibility of content within the classroom setting.

**Family Engagement & Strategic Partnerships**

A program with family support and engagement promotes and supports student’s school readiness by strengthening and encouraging parent participation in their children’s educational program. The goal of the committee was to identify the opportunities to link learning opportunities between home and school and the level of involvement in the school community and organizations that foster continued collaboration between parents and schools. Research has shown that family involvement is positively correlated with math skills, literacy, and social-emotional skills in young children. 122 Families participated in the parent survey which was sent to all the parents with students with disabilities both in district and out of district. Overall, the survey indicated the School District and staff build connections with school aged families. Parents perceive themselves as partners and can provide input in the development of their child’s IEP. Parents believe their child has opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities with students without disabilities.

Every year, the District provides transition meetings/presentations to the parents of students with disabilities who are transitioning from CPSE to CSE, from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school. This year, support staff provided 4 additional workshops to parents throughout the year on topics such as understanding the role of mental health professionals in the school setting, helping your anxious child, and managing parent-child conflict. In addition, one of the workshops offered at the January 30, 2020 Parent University was focused on Self-Direction and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).
The committee also reviewed information related to participation in the District parent associations and the various contributions of these associations to the school community. PTA and SEPTA work in collaboration to bring speakers to engage families and to provide additional learning opportunities. In October 2018, the PTA and SEPTA arranged for a screening of the film *Angst*, a film about anxiety, at Stratford Elementary School which was followed by a panel discussion. In February 2020, the two associations offered another community event which took place at Garden City High School in which an author was brought in as a guest speaker to discuss the importance of cultivating empathy in children. SEPTA also partnered with Garden City Schools to present a screening and panel discussion of *Intelligent Lives*, a film in which viewers gain perspective on the meaning of intelligence, and the opportunities that can exist for participation in higher education and meaningful employment for people of all abilities. In addition to these collaborative efforts, the committee reviewed the contributions of SEPTA through grants to the district and schools for the purchase of materials, curriculum, furniture, technology and programs which not only foster more inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities, but support continued access, learning and growth for all students. The funds procured through these grants have provided flexible seating in general education classes, materials for the Makerspace which is accessible to all students, as well as the purchasing of materials for the Social Thinking curriculum used school-wide. The funds provided through these grants have also provided dance programs for all students, as well as opportunities to expand the in school pre-vocational experiences of some students.

To determine the quality of the strategic partnerships, the committee examined the opportunities for community partnerships outside of family and school, and the opportunities to foster community awareness of special education and students with disabilities. The Annual Support Services Fair is one way in which the District brings both community and other agencies/resources/institutions and parents together to foster linkage to resources. Every year, the fair has grown in participation of both vendors and parents. In January 2020, 45 different vendors participated, and 58 parents were in attendance. Currently, a local eatery and local supermarket have been part of the pre-vocational and vocational programs. The committee discussed expanding connections to local businesses to support in these and other programs in the district.

Finally, the committee also reviewed opportunities for inclusive experiences for students. Currently, there are clubs, such as Best Buddies and the PAIRS program, which support these experiences. At the lower level, there are planned opportunities for social interactions and experiences during lunch and recess as well that are modeled after the Best Buddies philosophy. The Athletic Director coordinates various sporting events throughout the year such as Burning Bases (kickball competition), Rolling Thunder (Bowling tournament), and the Challenger Basketball tournament in which students with disabilities compete against neighboring district teams. Staff and students volunteer to coach/support the athletes. Parents attend and show their support during The Challenger Basketball tournament.
**Professional Development & Training**

Effective professional development takes place in a variety of forms, by individuals studying and working on their own, in pairs, in groups that include school staff, and through staff development for large groups or the whole district. The district new teacher mentor program provides new teachers with specific professional development to support their growth. New goals for the program is that the mentor and mentee meet for 45 hours to discuss best practices of instruction. Monthly workshops occur for both the mentor and mentee. The Special education department plays a significant role in providing professional development with regards to working with students with disabilities. This year there were 112 workshops provided to teachers on varying topics. There were 18 workshops related to special education topics. In the school year 2019-2020, there were 9 workshops provided to the paraprofessionals.

As the District continues to foster the vision of inspiring and challenging students to accomplish their personal best the strategic planning committee surveyed administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents. The surveys encompassed questions developed by the subcommittee to gather information from the various stakeholders to assess current practices and identify areas to strengthen. This work is the fundamental to providing students with program opportunities and increasing student achievement.
Action Item

I. Programmatic Assessment, Development, and Improvement

Summative Information from Data Review:

The Program Assessment, Development and Improvement committee reviewed 11 program features designed to identify area that need improvement.

Garden City School District employs highly qualified instructional staff and specialized support personnel. Special education teachers who are not dually certified are completing requirement to secure certification. Staff have been provided training in databased decision-making, including using data to improve instruction for all students. Staff development is ongoing in this area. Classroom teachers collaborate and co-teach with related service providers and specialized instructional support personnel. Professional Development (PD) is available to staff, and there are training opportunities for all staff and families. During the 2019-20 school year a Flexible professional development plan was initiated. This plan provided the opportunity for staff to provide training to colleagues in the area of expertise. This staff development supported learning across all areas including mental health, technology, and curriculum. Additionally, staff training is provided annually in the area of behavior management, IEP development and Committee on Special Education regulations and practices.

Administration and school staff are aware of connections between mental health, physical health, and school success, and they work to address needs of students. Supports include academic, social-emotional, and behavioral health. Students, families, and all staff know of availability of mental health supports in school and community. The mental health committee will continue to expand this area. The District currently employs 4 full time equivalent (FTE) social workers, 10.4 FTE school psychologists (.9 FTE is dedicated to the nonpublic schools located within the boundaries of the Garden City School District). The committee identified the need for addition mental health support at the primary and elementary level. Student behavioral needs have continued to increase district-wide due to more special needs indicated by the increase in classification rate. The District utilizes 2.4 (FTE) behavior consultants employed through outside agencies. These behavior consultants focus on the students with the highest need and develop behavior plans and support the IEP recommendations. The increase in the number of behavior plans provides limited opportunity for behavior consultant to provide training and support to building staff. There is an increase in assistive technology needs, with one district designee. They are unable to service children school-wide or act as a resource to all the classroom teachers. Behavioral consultants could be a beneficial resource for Instructional Support Teams, as the team identifies strategies to address youngsters’ needs proactively.
Students have access to rigorous curriculum with full continuum of services in general education setting. Students have access to all co-curricular activities with supports as needed. High-quality implementation of Universal Design for Learning is evident. IEPs include goals to increase amount of time students spend in general education settings. Case manager communicates with classroom teachers, other instructional staff, and related service providers. Teacher aides are employed in the district and provide management support. The district does not currently employ Teaching Assistants. Teaching assistants could provide additional opportunities for instructional support, as was observed during school visits to other districts. Assistants could more effectively support children with explicit teaching, reinforcement of skills and targeted small group work thereby supporting access to the general education curriculum. The impact of the utilization of Teaching Assistants was evident in many of the special class programs of the school districts visited where they were able to facilitate meaningful engagement in small group and individual support in classrooms with students with significant cognitive, learning and emotional needs.

A positive learning environment encourages student achievement by providing a safe, supportive environment, which increases quality of instruction. An evidence-based approach to creating a positive learning environment is in place, along with positive behavioral supports. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are implemented with fidelity. Families engage as partners in schoolwide programs. School leadership and all school staff are invested in the success of all students. Administrative guidelines and policies related to intentionally creating a positive learning environment are in place. When supports are clearly identified; responsibility for positive learning environments is shared with families.

Student engagement increases student achievement, high school graduation rates and supports college and career readiness. All students are included in all school activities. There are embedded and intentional opportunities for students with and without disabilities to interact in academic and non-academic settings. The committee identified 81 opportunities which include clubs and sports for students with disabilities to participate in at the secondary level. According to survey results, 89% of parents report that their child has the opportunity to participate in school sponsored events. On the primary and elementary level all students are included in all activities. All students are held to high expectations for regular attendance. Engagement of students with disabilities in schoolwide activities is evident. Staff advocate and plan for student inclusion and engagement opportunities.

Meeting the needs of student with disabilities requires planning and creativity. Programs are developed to meet the needs of individual students. Special education services are integrated into general learning activities. Demonstration of proficiency through multiple means is a component of all learning activities. The District employs a full time Assistive Technology Specialist to ensure equal access for all students. Students utilize a variety of support including iPads, Chromebooks reading and writing software programs. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in multiple ways. Problems and challenges are addressed on a case-by-case basis as they arise. As students need for technology expands the current allocation of a full-time assistive technology specialist and fulltime assistive technology
aide will need to be reviewed to determine if this adequately meets the needs of students.

There continues to be a need to improve transition from preschool to school-age services. Additional parent workshops would provide parents with tools and strategies to support their child’s development. Communication at the preschool level presented with 83% of the parents feeling they could contact their preschool chair. The subcommittee recommends conducting a review of parent information particularly in the early childhood stages and development of a staff and parents subgroup to develop items such as informational brochures, website information and opportunities to connect with young families prior to the transitional meeting from CPSE to CSE.

The District approaches most aspects of student learning and support through a team approach. At the secondary level, all students are encouraged to attend annual reviews—knowledge of self and learning style will improve self-advocacy and potential for academic success. A limited number of families access the support of post-school agencies. These agencies provide benefits of the service in addition to studies in college. Post-secondary planning should include increasing the number of families that meet with Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) to determine eligibility. ACCES-VR begins with the presumption that all individuals with disabilities can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and should have opportunities to work in jobs integrated within their communities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors guide individuals through service programs they need to reach their employment goal. Additional parent webinars/parent training on the importance of ACCES-VR should be explored.

The demographics have also begun to change in Garden City, based on the NY State report card there is an increase in the population of English Language Learners (ELL). School staff actively engage in welcoming diverse students and families through outreach and by providing translation and interpretation services. Some schoolwide activities honor cultures within the school community. The committee identified the need to expand resources that are available in different languages and staff education about inclusion of different cultures. The committee determined the need for additional programmatic supports for family integration into the community, with continued professional development for teachers and staff on how to support and educate students with significant language barriers. Continued monitoring of ELL students regarding language barrier versus learning needs is also indicated.

A team approach supports improved student achievement and effective transitions from grade-to-grade through school years. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff all have input as to how to support students. Families and students are respected as essential team members. Survey results indicated that 93% of parents have opportunities to communicate with their child's teacher \ case manager on a regular basis to discuss questions or concerns. Some preparation and support is available for families and students in their roles as team members.
Administration supports team recommendations and assists in providing adequate resources for programming. Committee discussion suggested the need for schedules that include common planning time to ensure the differentiation of content for youngsters with special needs.

**School Visit Summary:**
The overall purpose of the external district visit was to assist the strategic planning committee in identifying continuous improvement goals in the area of programmatic development by learning about the continuum of services and programs offered by neighboring districts. A District administrator and/or psychologist attended the visits to neighboring visits, which included Oyster Bay-East Norwich Central District, Herricks Union Free School District, Roslyn Union Free School District, Plainedge Union Free School District, and North Shore School District.

**Special Classes**
Each district visited offered a continuum of services ranging from related services, resource room, integrated setting to various special class ratios. The ratios of their special classes varied based on the unique needs of their students, and often varied within particular districts from building to building, and from grade band to grade band. The 6:1:2, 8:1:2, 8:1:3, 9:1:3 and 10:1:3 ratios in each of the districts had an ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) structure to them, and were supported by consulting BCBAs from agencies. One district also ensured that the teachers had training in ABA. All of the districts utilize Teaching Assistants both in their special classes, or to support part-time ICT programs at the lower levels at times when the special education teacher is not assigned to the class. This allows for increased opportunities to target support to students, as well as flexibility in the design of their ICT models and programs. One district visited assigns a full-time speech therapist to the primary 8:1:3 classes as their AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) program is embedded within the class. This same district also offered two variations of the 8:1:3 program at the middle school level, distinguishing between an intensive level and a higher level. Students in the higher level 8:1:3 have opportunities to participate in less restrictive special classes at the middle school in areas of personal strength.

Other special class ratios across the districts included 12:1:1, 12:1:2 and regents track 15:1:1 class. All of the districts develop programs specific to student needs which allows them access to participate in less restrictive settings when appropriate. At the secondary level, each district offers pre-vocational and vocational experiences for students through class offerings, and in combination with agency support, and/or access to Barry Tech. Two of the districts have developed PAES labs (Practical Assessment Exploration System) within their high schools which allows students exposure to a broad range of hands-on, generalizable work skills. It provides a simulated work environment with strict procedures for each assigned role and task. This also
allows for the developing individualized pre-vocational experiences. Two of the districts visited offer alternative high school programs. One district visited did not offer special classes for regent track students at the high school level, and supported students through their ICT program in combination with additional supports.

**Integrated Settings**

All of the districts visited offer integrated co-teaching settings. However, none of the districts offered full-time ICT programs at the primary/elementary level. As referenced earlier, Teaching Assistants are used to support students in the ICT program for content or times of the day when the special educator is not assigned to the class. At the secondary level, the co-teachers are concentrated to specific subjects. Most districts reported that ICT students are provided an additional support or skills period in their day. In terms of planning, each district shared different levels of planning for the co-teachers. One district shared that the General Education and Special Education pairings are long-term, and that they offer curriculum-writing during the summertime. Other districts shared time built into the day for planning. One district offers special education teachers an entire day at the start of the year to plan, no additional duty assignment (providing them 4 periods of prep a day), plus an additional hour a month outside of the school day for planning for which they are compensated.

**Mainstreaming Opportunities**

All of the school districts discussed opportunities for students to move between programs and classes throughout the day based on consideration of students’ abilities and strengths, as well as for electives and specials. In addition, all of the districts offer inclusive opportunities through social activities and clubs (such as Best Buddies, Peer Partners, Peer Mentors, etc.).

**Related Services at the Secondary Level**

Each of the district sees a significant decrease in related services at the secondary level. Two districts offer services on a 6-day cycle, with only pull-out options. Students are offered services during lunch, elective or workshop classes. One district shared that they were exploring introducing 30-minute sessions in the 2020-2021 school year on a weekly schedule. The focus in this district is in providing more consultation between the speech and language pathologists and teachers to support the classroom teachers with strategies to effectively breakdown language as opposed to direct services to students. One district shared that many parents request that the service is dropped at the secondary level.

**Positive Behavior Support Program**

While many of the districts utilized social-emotional curriculums in some of their buildings, the school districts visited were not implementing district-wide positive behavior intervention systems. One of the districts currently has a committee in place focused on identifying a program to implement in the following school year and were looking at programs like Rulers of Positive Action.
Reading Support
Each district addressed the reading needs of students in different ways. Two of the districts utilized Orton Gillingham (OG) based programs at the lower level. One of the districts provides a special class for reading, instructed by a special education teacher with training in OG programs, for students who require explicit instruction in decoding/encoding. This same district also offers Wilson through an extended school day program for 30 minutes 3 to 5x’s a week. As the needs are addressed at the lower level, they do not require to support in reading at the secondary level. One district maintains a special education teacher as a certified Wilson trainer to support the development of skills of staff. Another district offers reading through classes in which they integrate web-based support, like Read 180 and System 44.

Training for General Education Teachers
Training was generally reported to be based on needs. Teachers have opportunities to attend conferences, attend BOCES workshops on behavior, or are provided training on differentiation and co-teaching.

Short-term Goals-Deliverable by June 2021
1. To develop and implement a multi-tiered system of support that includes high quality instruction followed up with flexible models of intervention based on individual student need.
2. Review the current Response to Intervention (RTI) model and expand the model to include multi-tiered system of support including positive behavior support and consistent practices across the District.
3. Create a committee comprised of staff and parents to develop informational brochures, website information and opportunities to connect with families prior to the transitional meeting from CPSE to CSE.
4. Develop parent webinars/parent training on the importance of ACCES-VR.

Multi-Year Goals- Begin 2020-2021 and implement in subsequent year(s)
1. Addition of a full-time social worker at the elementary level.
2. Addition of teaching assistants to support classroom instruction and access to general education curriculum.
3. Create elective classes on the secondary level to include students with disabilities.
4. Develop a menu of researched-based resources that are designed to support Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention environments for English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics and other subjects for teachers.
On-Going Goals

1. Expand social emotional learning integration/curriculum.
2. Implement a consistent Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) framework at all grade levels (elementary, middle and high) to proactively promote the social emotional learning of all students.
3. Promote a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning that places, at the core of the learning environment, the belief that all students have the opportunity to grow academically and behaviorally.
4. Plan and implement a program that allows students with disabilities to access general education environments for academic as well as social mainstreaming opportunities.
5. Develop and expand content area concentration of special education teachers in both special classes and integrated co-taught classes at the secondary level.
6. Explore Career Technical Education (CTE) classes/vocational training for students who may not attend college or for students who want to enrich their high school education.
7. Explore expansion of in-house pre-vocational programs, and research cost of Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) lab.
8. Develop a plan for future connection with graduates to determine college graduation rates and job placement.
9. Expand time for co-planning for co-taught teams to support differentiation for all students.
II. Family Engagement

Summative Information from Data Review:

In reviewing the elements of the rubric, and supporting evidence, the subcommittee concluded that the district’s current levels of family support and engagement is acceptable. Nevertheless, this remains an area in which the District can continue to grow. The subcommittee first focused on existing opportunities for partnerships between parents and schools, and as a group determined that strengthening the parent/teacher associations, particularly SEPTA, would be the vehicle to improve levels of engagement.

The Committee reviewed the history of general membership for SEPTA and found a significant decrease in parent membership and an increase in staff membership of the last three years. During the 2017-2018 school year, there were 539 parent members, and 339 staff members. In the 2019-2020 school year, parent membership went down to 437, while staff membership increased to 429. There are about 25 attendees on average at the general membership meetings. SEPTA circulate a monthly membership newsletter, 18% of parent members open the newsletter, and 13% of members that are staff open the newsletter. The Committee reviewed the various resources provided to all students through SEPTA grants (flexible seating, sensory pathways, etc.). Most SEPTA grants serve to enhance accessibility for both general education and special education.

The Committee examined the various parent workshops/trainings presented by either SEPTA and/or school staff and identified limited parental participation in these offerings. Results of the parent survey indicated that only 49% of the 122 respondents indicated that they participated in any of these workshops. The survey elicited from parents’ topics of interest for future parent workshop. These topics range from mental health, social emotional to specific disabilities. The Committee reviewed opportunities to present and prepare families of students with disabilities for transitions and identified presentations which are currently offered include transition CPSE to CSE transition, Elementary to Middle School, and Middle to High School. While elementary schools provide a brief overview of the special education programs during the second-grade parent orientation presentation, there is no formal presentation regarding the primary to elementary transition as it relates to special education.
Short-term Goals-Deliverable by June 2021
1. In the school year 2020-2021, a committee consisting of both staff and parents will be created to review and discuss results of the climate survey as well as relevant trends and topics to guide development of joint SEPTA/PTA/School workshops that would appeal to wide-ranging audience.
   a. The committee should be established September 2020, and should consist of at minimum, a district level administrator, building level administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher, ENL teacher, support staff member (psychologist or SW) PTA representative, SEPTA representative, and additional parent.

2. Meet with special education staff at the start of the year to discuss and review resources/materials offered through SEPTA grants and ask that they highlight and present information to parents as part of Back-to-School Night presentations.

3. Work with building principals and staff to incorporate reminders of events in their communications with families, on their Google Classrooms, etc.

Multi-Year Goals- Begin 2020-2021 and implement in subsequent year(s)
1. Develop a series of joint workshops delivered to parents and staff to reach a larger audience, with opportunity for virtual participation, with a goal of initiating the first joint presentation in January 2021 and forward.
2. Expand collaboration between PTA/SEPTA/School by creating joint newsletters 3-4 times a year.
3. Develop and deliver a primary to elementary transition presentation to families of students with disabilities in January/February of 2021.
4. Identify a ‘teacher’ representative for SEPTA at each building. Increase collaboration by having the teacher representatives attend general membership meetings and communicate/present information at their special education department meetings.

On-Going Goals
1. Continue to expand on opportunities for meaningful participation and engagement with all families.
2. Expand family engagement and integration opportunities for ELL population.
3. Continue to strengthen SEPTA/School/Parent collaboration.
### III. Data-driven Decision Making

**Summative Information from Data Review:**

In an effort to increase the achievement of students with disabilities, the district has invested time, training and personnel into the process of collecting, analyzing and using data to make decisions about programming that will maximize the achievement of students with disabilities in the areas of reading and math. Over the past 5 years this support has included, staff developers in math and ELA, program consultants for special education and staff training. The District uses research-based data collection tools and methods and groups of teachers, psychologists, coaches and related service providers meet throughout the year to review the progress monitoring data to group and instruct students. These meetings have led to meaningful discussion about programs, materials and student needs that lead to achievement. Evidence of this will show in an increased return of students to a less restrictive environment, an increase in participation in the general education setting and more students being able to be exited from special education services. This demonstrates a commitment to not only providing services to students with disabilities but remediating and strengthening students' ability to independently access the general education curriculum.

**Short-term Goals - Deliverable by June 2021**

1. Develop a consistent district wide response to intervention system that embeds behavioral and academic support into core instruction (Tier 1), pre and/or post lesson intervention to respond quickly to challenges (Tier 2), and an intensive system of supports that compliments core instruction with sufficient flexibility to adapt to the needs of student groups.
2. Develop and implement a “Data Team” model at each school to consistently collect and analyze student academic and behavioral data for the purpose of continually adjusting instruction in the learning.
3. Identify and implement the use of a screening tool for dyslexia at the primary level.
4. Create a committee to review current support for families of English Language Learners
5. Confirm that all District correspondence is sent to families in the preferred language.

**Multi-Year Goals - Begin 2020-2021 and implement in subsequent year(s)**

1. Provide teacher support to improve integration of English Language Learners into the school environment and enhance staff understanding of the specific needs of this population.
2. Conduct ongoing review of the RTI practices to ensure consistency across all District buildings.

**On-Going Goals**

1. Develop a system to streamline data tracking from multiple data sources to support in RTI process and support progress monitoring.
IV. Strategic Partnerships

**Summative Information from Data Review:**

The Committee met to review and assess the existing opportunities to build community partnerships, particularly as it relates to community opportunities outside of family and school, as well as overall community awareness and understanding of special education and students with disabilities. The Committee reviewed various sources of information to assess the quality of programs and to identify the areas for expansion and growth. Information reviewed included the number of students participating in vocational experiences/programs and how many of the work-based learning opportunities are provided within the District/community.

While some of the local businesses have been involved with the District, the Committee discussed the untapped resources for support/collaboration as well as opportunities for mentorship and work-based learning. In addition, the Committee discussed developing stronger relationships with institutions of higher learning that lie within the District, or closely neighbor the District, to identify ways in which educational, artistic, athletic programs of students with disabilities can be further developed.

The Committee also reviewed opportunities for inclusive experiences. The Committee examined levels of participation in programs such as Best Buddies and the Promoting Acceptance & Inclusion through Recreation in Schools Program (PAIRS) at the secondary level, as well as opportunities that exist at the primary, elementary and Middle School level, as well as the successes of the Annual Community Support Services Fair and Parent University presentations.

**Short-term Goals-Deliverable by June 2021**

**Fall 2020:** Identify team (administrator/parent) to begin outreach to local universities (Hofstra, Adelphi, Molloy, Nassau Community College) to explore partnerships for resources, education, work-based opportunities.

**2020-2021 School Year:** Develop a task force to identify local businesses that are interested in offering a acknowledgements/awards/certificates to students at moving-up ceremonies related to student projects or contests centered on inclusive experiences.

**Spring-2021:** Incorporate 2 more local businesses in High School vocational training program.

**Multi-Year Goals- Begin 2020-2021 and implement in subsequent year(s)**

**University Partnerships.**

1. **2020-2021 School Year:** Outreach to local universities (Hofstra, Adelphi, Molloy, Nassau) to explore partnerships for resources, education, work-based opportunities. Discuss and develop a plan with at least one institution for both experiential situations (stage crew gets go behind the scenes at university theater, an experience in the gymnasium, etc.), as well as opportunities for ongoing support and learning for students (interns/volunteers in educational programs to provide targeted supports).

2. **2021-2022 School Year:** Provide at minimum two opportunities for university visits with focused experiences for students.

3. **2022-2023 School Year:** Develop a pre-vocational or vocational experience for students at one of the local institutions.
### Partnerships with Local Businesses:

1. **Fall 2020-2021**: Develop small task force to outreach to local businesses to first explore interest in creating opportunities for projects/essays focused on the importance of inclusivity for which the business would present a certificate/award.
   a. Initially presented at moving up ceremonies (5th to 6th, 7th to 8th, and Graduation).
2. **Fall 2020-2021**: Canvass local business interest in providing additional work-based learning opportunities for GC students (both students in vocational programs, or additional internship opportunities for all students).

### Community Awareness of Special Education:

1. **2020-2021**: Work with HS to explore process for developing Middle School Chapter for Best Buddies.
2. **2020-2021**: Support Staff at primary and elementary levels to explore the development of similar structures and opportunities at their grade levels.

### On-Going Goals

1. Develop and strengthen partnerships with local businesses and expand on local opportunities for work-based learning experiences.
2. Develop and strengthen partnerships with local colleges/universities.
V. Professional Development

Summative Information from Data Review:

The District schools are adaptive and forward-looking, designing innovations based on the latest research on child development, neuroscience, and effective teaching—and what works in education. The current pandemic has made technology an integrated part of the district’s landscape and made sure that teachers know how to use it in order to improve learning. There are impressive pockets of excellence in District own schools and classrooms. The District is poised to learn so much from those around us, and to pioneer own homegrown approaches to powerful learning. The district has implemented professional development opportunities that foster faculty driven goals for growth. Teachers are provided with the ability to attend choice workshops. The plan to promote instructional rigor through professional development that supports classroom teachers in developing strategies to meet the needs of all learners will continue. The faculty survey (teacher and paraprofessional) reflected professional development interests in a variety of topics ranging from use of specific technology devices to behavioral strategies.

A total of 105 teachers and support staff responded to the survey. When asked to engage in opportunities for professional growth by consulting with special education or related services staff in your school building the responses 83% of staff rely on the internal support systems. When asked about What tools do you feel you need to be more successful in working with students with disabilities, 65% of the responses indicated more planning time to work with special education colleagues.

In an effort to increase the achievement of students with disabilities, the district has invested time, training and personnel into the process of collecting, analyzing and using data to make decisions about programming that will maximize the achievement of students with disabilities in the areas of reading and math. The district has committed to providing students with a strong foundation in phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and phonics in grades K-2 using the Fundations program. The survey indicated the need to increase professional development in the area of additional reading strategies.
### Short-term Goals-Deliverable by June 2021

**Fall 2020**
1. Provide staff development for general education staff focused on special education inclusive of the CSE process.
2. Develop a committee to analyze research based best practices for professional development.
3. Develop a district model for professional development and protocols
   - Options to explore:
     a. Protocols for Professional Learning
     b. Discussion Protocols
4. Identify personnel to deliver professional on topics indicated in the teacher and paraprofessional survey.
5. Train lead personnel in the best practice models and protocols for professional development.

**Spring 2020**
1. Develop a course catalog of workshops for special education topics.
2. Develop a series of mini workshops with trained personnel.

### Multi-Year Goals- Begin 2020-2021 and implement in subsequent year(s)

1. Develop professional development surveys to provide feedback.

### On-Going Goals

1. Continue to build on professional development opportunities in the area of literacy.
Summary:
The Office of Pupil Personnel Services began the process of developing a strategic plan to provide a high quality, safe and inclusive educational program that support students with special needs to reach their full academic and behavioral potential in preparation for life and success in college and career through specialized services provided, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate, in the general education learning environment. The plan began with a needs assessment to establish what was working well as well as identify areas of concern and growth. This document outlines a three-year plan to address the areas of need. This plan is designed to remain fluid to allow for changes as the needs of the District evolve. The summary document provides information needed to move forward with enhancing existing programs and services within the District and continuing to strive to address the needs of students with disabilities and support their families.

Thank you to the committee members who worked to complete this project within a year. Thank you to the staff and families who participated and participated in the surveys that guided the committee recommendations. Thank you to the members of SEPTA who participated and shared important data and perspective. Finally, thank you to Dr. Sinha for providing guidance and support throughout this project.