



BROOKFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REVIEW

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Table of Contents

- Introduction 5
- Approach and Methodology 5
- Evaluation Domains and Questions 5
- Data Sources 6
 - Documents and Reports 6
 - Student Review 6
 - In-Depth Student Review 6
 - Classroom Observations 6
 - Staff and Parent Surveys 7
 - Individual and Group Focused Interviews 7
- Domain 1: Resources 8
 - Special Education Budget Expenditures 8
 - Staffing and Utilization 12
 - Prevalence of Students with Disabilities 14
 - Interview and Survey Data 16
 - Materials 17
 - Staff 18
 - Time 19
 - Professional Development 21
- Domain 2: Organizational Structures and Processes 22
 - Specialized Special Education Programs 22
 - Time with Non-Disabled Peers 23
 - Out of District Placement 25
 - Special Education Processes 25
 - Special Education Leadership 27
 - Intervention System 28
- Domain 3: Student Learning 31
 - IEP Review 31
 - IEP Indicator 1: Gap Analysis of Present Level of Performance 32
 - IEP Indicator 2: Levels of Support- Supplemental Instruction, Accommodations, Modifications 32
 - IEP Indicator 3: Goals and Objectives 33

IEP Indicator 4: Supports and Services	33
Classroom Observations	33
General Education Settings.....	33
Special Education Settings	34
In-Depth Student Review	34
Student Achievement Data.....	35
Domain 4: Communication and Collaboration	38
Commendations and Recommendations	40
Domain 1—Resources.....	40
Commendations.....	40
Recommendations	40
Domain 2—Organizational Processes.....	41
Commendations.....	41
Recommendations	42
Domain 3—Student Learning.....	43
Commendations.....	43
Recommendations	43
Domain 4: Communication and Collaboration	44
Commendations.....	44
Recommendations	44
Appendix A: 2021-22 Data Used to Identify Comparison Districts	46

List of Tables

Table 1. Overall per Pupil Expenditures and Student Enrollment.....	8
Table 2. Percent of Total Expenditures Allocated to Special Education Costs, 2019-2022	9
Table 3. Special Education and Total Expenditures, 2020-21	9
Table 4. Total Special Education Expenditures, 2020-21	11
Table 5. Full-Time Equivalent Staff by Category, 2022-23 and 2021-22'	12
Table 6. Number of Students with Disabilities per Staff Member (Special Education Teachers and Paraeducators), 2022-22 to 2022-23	13
Table 7. Number of Special Education Hours per Week to Staff, 2021-22	14
Table 8. Prevalence Rate of Students with Disabilities, 2019-20 to 2022-23	14

Table 9. Special Education Prevalence Rates by Disability Category, 2020-21.....	15
Table 10. Brookfield Students with Disabilities Spending 79-100% of Time with Nondisabled Peers (ages 6-21), 2018 -19 to 2021-22	24
Table 11. Number and Percent of Total Student Population in Out-of-District Placement, (2019- 2022). 25	
Table 12. Number of Students in SRBI Systems, 2022-23.....	29
Table 13. Demographic Composition of Brookfield Public Schools, All Students, 2018-19 to 2021-22	30
Table 14. IEP Review Rubric, Scoring Ranges for Indicators	31
Table 15. Percent of Students Meeting and Exceeding Achievement Standards (Levels 3 and 4) on Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts, Brookfield Public Schools, Comparison Districts and State of CT, by Special Education Status, 2015-16 to 2022'	36
Table 16. Percent of Students Meeting and Exceeding Achievement Standards (Levels 3 and 4) on Smarter Balanced Assessment in Math, Brookfield Public Schools, Comparison Districts and State of CT, by Special Education Status, 2015-16 to 2020-22	36

This report has been produced at the request of Brookfield Public Schools and contains information intended for use by Brookfield leaders for the purpose of program improvement. Information in this report should not be shared with other parties without consent from Brookfield Public Schools, in consultation with Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).

Introduction

In winter 2022, Brookfield Public Schools (Brookfield) leaders requested a program review of special education services and practices to review the utilization of resources, organizational structures, student learning, and collaboration and communication. The district also requested that the review consider patterns and trends regarding independent educational evaluations (IEEs), student records, and the district's intervention system as it relates to special education referrals.

This report presents data and analysis about special education services and practices in Brookfield following the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) framework for program reviews. This report provides feedback that can be used to lead program change and/or validate program progress. CREC team members conducted the data collection portion of the program review from March to May 2023.

Approach and Methodology

CREC has developed an approach to program reviews that has the continuous improvement of programs and services for students as its goal. The review process is intended to:

- Assess the quality of an educational institution's programs across key domains,
- Determine priority need areas; and
- Detail recommended goals and activities that will change practices and improve outcomes for students.

CREC began this program review by meeting with district leadership and a stakeholder group to review needs and goals, confirm the scope of data collection, establish a communication structure, and plan on-site and virtual logistics. CREC team members then carried out activities to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data including student achievement, survey results, classroom observations, document reviews, and file reviews. CREC team members triangulated and synthesized the data according to the evaluation questions to determine commendations and recommendations.

Evaluation Domains and Questions

Four overarching domains and the related evaluation questions frame this review.

1. **Domain 1: Resources**—To what extent does the district use resources to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of students with disabilities including staff utilization and structures?
2. **Domain 2: Organizational Structures and Processes**—To what extent is the instructional core (a) built on a foundation of equity and inclusion, (b) are processes implemented per federal and local requirements, (c) are instructional practices effective for students with disabilities, and (d) is the district's intervention system contributing to special education identification?
3. **Domain 3: Student Learning**— To what extent are students deriving educational benefits from special education programs and services, including the district's evaluation process and practices?

4. **Domain 4: Communication and Collaboration** —How effective are communication and collaboration between and among (district) leadership, staff, and families of students with disabilities?

Data Sources

Qualitative and quantitative data described below were collected and analyzed in order to answer the evaluation questions. Any data used from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) are only as accurate as the district's reporting at the time the state requires the data.

Documents and Reports

CREC reviewed documents and reports from Brookfield Public Schools and the CSDE. These documents and reports include but are not limited to program descriptions, academic programming materials, communications with staff and families, staff rosters, student enrollment information, student demographics, student achievement indicators, and district fiscal information.

Student Review

CREC selected a random sample of 39 students enrolled in special education across grade levels for the record review. All of the students had individual education plans (IEPs) that were reviewed utilizing an established protocol designed to assess educational benefit.¹ The sample was representative of the district's student population in special education by race, ethnicity, disability, gender, and grade.

In-Depth Student Review

From the random sample of 39 students, a subset of four (4) students representing various grades and disabilities was selected for in-depth reviews. In addition to a student record and/or IEP review, the students were observed during classroom instruction, their work products were analyzed, and their teachers and families were interviewed. Data from classroom observations of the in-depth students was used to assess special education programming and implementation, determine patterns and trends in independent educational evaluations (IEEs), and understand the context of communication and collaboration for these students, families, and teachers.

Classroom Observations

Thirty-five (35) general and special education classrooms in Brookfield were observed for 15 to 30 minutes. Classrooms were chosen to ensure that a variety of general and special education classes were seen:

- Sixteen (16) general education classrooms
- Nineteen (19) special education classrooms, including resource rooms and intensive needs programs

¹ [State Education Resource Center IEP Rubric](#)

Learning environments were reviewed for student engagement, instructional practices, and utilization of resources.

Staff and Parent Surveys

CREC administered two separate, confidential, online surveys for staff and parents in April 2022. Questions focused on gathering information about the four evaluation questions. One-hundred and thirty-eight (138) staff out of a total staff of 420 responded to the survey. Survey responses comprised of the following:

- 12 (8.7%) Special Education Teachers
- 56 (40.6%) General Education Teacher
- 28 (20.3%) Paraeducators
- 9 (6.5%) Administrators
- 21 (15.2%) Mental Health and Related Services
- 12 (8.7%) Instructional Support (interventionists, instructional coaches, specialists, other)

Staff respondents were able to select multiple grades. Grade distribution for survey responses was as follows:

- 36.2% Grades PreK - 3
- 28.3% Grades 4 - 5
- 23.2% Grades 6 - 8
- 29.7% Grades 9 - 12

The largest proportion of respondents (31.2%) indicated they had worked in the district for 16+ years. The smallest proportion of respondents (13.8%) reported they had worked in the district for 11 - 15 years.

Two-hundred and thirty (230) parents responded to the survey² and of those respondents, 102 (44.3%) identified as a parent of a student with an IEP and 59 (25.7%) reported their child had a 504 plan. There was relatively even grade distribution across parent survey responses, with the exception of grade 12 and ages 18-22 respondents, who were least represented. Over 40% (42.6%) of parents reported that their child had been in Brookfield Public Schools for four to eight years, and 25.7% of parents reporting their child had been in Brookfield public schools for more than eight years.

Individual and Group Focused Interviews

Input from 112 staff and 51 parents was obtained through 30 focused interviews conducted in March and April 2023. The focused interviews were designed to solicit feedback about the four domains and evaluation questions. The following were interviewed:

- 29 Special Education Teachers (PreK - 12+)

² Brookfield distributed a link to the parent survey to one or more parent(s)/guardian(s) of approximately 2,600 students.

- 28 General Education Teachers
- 28 Paraeducators
- 12 Administrators - district and building level
- 8 Related Service Providers (OT, PT, SLP, BCBA)
- 7 Mental Health Professionals (School Psychologists, Social Workers, School Counselors)

Domain 1: Resources

Evaluation Question—*To what extent does the district use resources to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of students with disabilities including staff utilization and structures?*

Special Education Budget Expenditures

Considering the proportion of overall spending devoted to special education needs in the district provides a context for efficiency and effectiveness when compared to overall per pupil expenditures for all students in the district. Brookfield spends slightly less overall per pupil in the school district, as compared to three (3) comparable districts and the state.³ Expenditure data for the 2021-22 school year for comparison districts were unavailable at the time of this report.

Table 1. Overall per Pupil Expenditures and Student Enrollment, 2019-2022⁴

District/ State	2021-22		2020-21		2019-20	
	Expenditures	Enrollment	Expenditures	Enrollment	Expenditures	Enrollment
Brookfield	\$19,098	2,665	\$18,322	2,601	\$16,995	2,563
Guilford	unavailable	3,136	\$20,702	3,105	\$19,123	3,259
Monroe	unavailable	3,345	\$18,255	3,179	\$18,334	3,345
New Fairfield	unavailable	2,132	\$20,251	2,132	\$18,709	2,186
State	unavailable	513,513	\$19,134	513,079	\$17,629	527,829

Table 2 shows the most current data available from CSDE on the percent of the total Brookfield budget that is spent on special education services over three (3) school years. Brookfield’s rates are higher than

³ See Appendix A for data regarding identified comparison districts.

⁴ From [Profile and Performance Reports, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

two comparison districts and comparable to the state rate.

Table 2. Percent of Total Expenditures Allocated to Special Education Costs, 2019-2022⁵

District/ State	Percent of Total Budget for Special Education		
	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Brookfield	24.4%	24.5%	24.8%
Guilford	25.8%	25.7%	25.1%
Monroe	21.9%	20.5%	22.5%
New Fairfield	23.8%	22.6%	22.3%
State	unavailable	24.5%	25.1%

Table 3 presents the difference in the proportion of total expenditures spent on special education in the 2020-21 school year with and without out-of-district placement costs of tuition and transportation. Even with out-of-district tuition and transportation costs removed, Brookfield spends more proportionately on special education than two (2) comparison districts. At the time of this report, 2021-22 data were not available publicly for all districts. However, for the 2021-22 school year, Brookfield’s Educational Financial System (EFS) reports total special education expenditures of \$11,787,442. Including special education tuition and transportation, this is 24.5% of Brookfield’s total education expenditures. Without special education tuition and transportation, it is 19.3% of the district’s total expenditures.

Table 3. Special Education and Total Expenditures, 2020-21⁶

District/ State	Special Education Budget	Total Budget	Percent Special Education	Percent Special Education Minus Out-of-District Tuition and Transportation Costs
Brookfield	\$11,787,442	\$48,132,354	24.5%	19.3%

⁵ From Educational Financial System (EFS): DR1 and DR3

⁶ From [Profile and Performance Reports, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

District/ State	Special Education Budget	Total Budget	Percent Special Education	Percent Special Education Minus Out-of-District Tuition and Transportation Costs
Guilford	\$16,652,926	\$64,922,250	25.7%	19.1%
Monroe	\$12,093,221	\$58,889,171	20.5%	16.5%
New Fairfield	\$9,859,239	\$43,600,801	22.6%	18.3%
State	\$2,483,741,733	\$10,140,925,949	24.5%	\$1,766,254,187

Table 4 includes a breakdown of expenditures within the special education budget for the 2020-21 school year. Overall, there were no significant differences in the categories of special education expenditures as compared to comparison districts and the state.

Table 4. Total Special Education Expenditures, 2020-21⁷

Type	Brookfield		Guilford		Monroe		New Fairfield		State	
	Total (\$)	Pct of Total (%)	Total (\$)	Pct of Total (%)	Total (\$)	Pct of Total (%)	Total (\$)	Pct of Total (%)	Total (\$)	Pct of Total (%)
Teacher Salaries	\$3,644,455	31%	\$5,608,514	34%	\$4,403,940	36%	\$4,276,535	43%	\$738,230,523	30%
Instruct.-Aide Salaries	\$1,674,475	14%	\$1,741,131	10%	\$32,133	0%	\$1,359,714	14%	\$268,682,212	11%
Other Salaries	\$893,935	8%	\$465,768	3%	\$1,884,097	16%	\$1,700	0%	\$243,600,030	10%
Employee Benefits	\$1,741,055	15%	\$2,340,823	14%	\$1,670,155	14%	\$1,409,474	14%	\$342,167,259	14%
Purchased Services Other Than Transport.	\$696,066	6%	\$1,105,965	7%	\$1,205,668	10%	\$320,053	3%	\$140,912,573	6%
Special Education Tuition	\$2,354,555	20%	\$3,862,850	23%	\$2,148,576	18%	\$1,671,921	17%	\$560,801,312	23%
Supplies	\$62,381	1%	\$108,563	1%	\$61,398	1%	\$163,426	2%	\$15,290,162	1%
Property Services	\$931	0%	\$19,166	0%	\$9,128	0%	\$660	0%	\$9,652,136	0%
Purchased Services for Transport.	\$716,926	6%	\$1,378,553	8%	\$674,111	6%	\$648,088	7%	\$156,686,234	6%
Equipment	\$644	0%	\$21,592	0%	\$1,781	0%	\$6,919	0%	\$6,204,846	0%
All Other Expenditures	\$2,018	0%	\$-	0%	\$2,235	0%	\$750	0%	\$1,514,446	0%
Total	\$11,787,441	100%	\$16,652,925	100%	\$12,093,222	100%	\$9,859,240	100%	\$2,483,741,733	100%

⁷ From [Special Education Expenditures, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

Staffing and Utilization

In most districts, staffing and utilization comprise a large portion of school and district resources. Table 5 compares Brookfield’s full-time equivalent (FTE) staff with three (3) comparison districts, using data from CSDE. Upon verifying these data with Brookfield, the district provided information via their internal database called MUNIS, and are in italics in Table 5. The district shared that the human resources consultant reported inaccurate data to the CSDE at the time.

Brookfield increased its FTE staffing by 12.6 positions in the 2022-23 school year over last year. The largest increase was in Other Staff/Non-instructional Services/Support, comprised of additional positions for health and student safety staff. The only category that decreased staffing was in general education teachers by 0.4 FTE position. Brookfield did not see a significant decline in overall student enrollment or increase in special education prevalence over these two school years.

Table 5. Full-Time Equivalent Staff by Category, 2022-23 and 2021-22^{8, 9}

Category	Staff Type	2022-23					2021-22				
		<i>Brook - MUNIS</i>	Brook	Guilf	Monr	New Fairf	<i>Brook - MUNIS</i>	Brook	Guilf	Monr	New Fairf
General Education	Teachers and Instructors	<i>177.0</i>	182.5	221.5	200.3	153.6	<i>177.4</i>	175.5	222.0	201.0	159.4
	Paraeducators	<i>12.5</i>	21.0	10.8	27.0	3.2	<i>10.0</i>	24.0	2.3	25.0	2.8
Special Education	Teachers and Instructors	<i>36.7</i>	28.2	40.0	39.7	30.0	<i>36.7</i>	30.2	39.0	35.0	32.0
	Paraeducators	<i>65.0</i>	60.0	72.0	70.5	64.9	<i>65.0</i>	60.0	88.5	70.5	63.3
Admins, Coordinators and Dept. Chairs	District Central Office	<i>5.0</i>	8.0	4.0	6.0	7.0	<i>5.0</i>	9.0	5.0	3.0	8.0
	School Level	<i>15.0</i>	11.0	19.2	15.0	10.4	<i>15.0</i>	11.0	19.6	17.0	10.8
	Instr. Specialists Who Support Teachers	<i>10.0</i>	9.5	20.4	10.8	7.0	<i>9.0</i>	10.9	18.4	10.4	6.0
	Counselors, Social Work and School Psych	<i>22.0</i>	18.0	25.6	22.4	15.6	<i>19.5</i>	18.5	25.6	20.6	17.6
	Other Staff Non-Instr	<i>77.3</i>	109.5	153.7	130.1	112.5	<i>71.3</i>	106.5	152.6	130.1	109.9

⁸ From [FTE Staffing, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

⁹ From Brookfield Public Schools, MUNIS HR/Payroll Database and Position Control

Category	Staff Type	2022-23					2021-22				
		Brook - MUNIS	Brook	Guilf	Monr	New Fairf	Brook - MUNIS	Brook	Guilf	Monr	New Fairf
	Services/ Support										

Brookfield reports that student and staff enrollment in four (4) different schools that provide services to students with disabilities across the district, inclusive of its preschool programs. Table 6 shows the ratio of students with disabilities to staff over the past two years. Data in Table 6 show that there is a lower student to staff member ratio in the elementary schools as compared to the middle and high school. The only school where student to staff ratio decreased over this time is Huckleberry Hill Elementary School, serving students in grades 2-4. These data reflect a caseload approach to staffing and assume all students' needs are relatively equal. However, students with disabilities have vastly different needs and an analysis of special education hours per staff member gives a more accurate representation of staff resources, as reflected in Table 7.

Table 6. Number of Students with Disabilities per Staff Member (Special Education Teachers and Paraeducators), 2022-22 to 2022-23¹⁰

District/School	2022-23	2021-22
Brookfield	4.06	4.13
Brookfield High School	6.17	6.71
Whisconier Middle School	4.25	4.61
Huckleberry Hill Elementary School	2.87	1.96
Center Elementary School	2.27	2.50

Table 7 provides an analysis of special education hours per week per special education staff member, inclusive of certified and noncertified staff. These data rely upon IEP development by staff members and are not state-verified or publicly reported. Inconsistencies occur in IEP development across schools and teams, which often make these data difficult to analyze. This highlights a need for calibrated and consistent special education decision-making, interpretation, and IEP writing across the district. However, these data indicate the middle and high schools would have to provide special education

¹⁰ From Enrollment, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education and From Brookfield Public Schools, MUNIS HR/Payroll Database and Position Control

services in excess of the number of school hours per week, with the given staffing from 2021-222.

Table 7. Number of Special Education Hours per Week to Staff, 2021-22¹¹

District/School	2021-22
Brookfield	31.6
Brookfield High School	48.3
Whisconier Middle School	52.0
Huckleberry Hill Elementary School	13.9
Center Elementary School	12.4

Prevalence of Students with Disabilities

Although there are minor increases over time, Table 8 shows that Brookfield’s identification rate is similar to three (3) comparison districts’ rates, and below the state’s prevalence rates from 2020 to 2023. Table 9 shows the percentage of Brookfield’s students with disabilities by disability category compared to state and similar districts for 2020-21.

Table 8. Prevalence Rate of Students with Disabilities, 2019-20 to 2022-23¹²

District/ State	2022-23 ¹³		2021-22		2020-21		2019-20	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Brookfield	378	14.8%	387	14.7%	364	14.0%	383	14.5%
Guilford	442	14.0%	398	12.7%	381	12.2%	368	11.3%
Monroe	507	14.9%	466	14.0%	419	13.1%	412	13.1%
New Fairfield	375	17.5%	326	15.8%	314	15.4%	318	15.1%
State	88,060	17.2%	80,946	16.3%	79,058	15.9%	79,348	15.6%

¹¹ From Brookfield Public Schools, MUNIS HR/Payroll Database and Position Control and Brookfield Public Schools’ Frontline: IEP

¹² From [EdSight, Students with Disabilities, Primary Disability: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

¹³ From [EdSight, Enrollment Dashboard: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

Table 9. Special Education Prevalence Rates by Disability Category, 2020-21¹⁴

Disability Category	District/State	N	Overall Prevalence (%)	Within Special Education Prevalence (%)
All Disabilities	Brookfield	387	14.7%	100.0%
	Guilford	398	12.7%	100.0%
	Monroe	466	14.0%	100.0%
	New Fairfield	326	15.8%	100.0%
	State	80,946	16.3%	100.0%
Autism	Brookfield	54	2.1%	14.0%
	Guilford	45	1.4%	11.3%
	Monroe	63	1.9%	13.5%
	New Fairfield	43	2.1%	13.2%
	State	11,195	2.3%	13.8%
Emotional Disturbance	Brookfield	28	1.1%	7.2%
	Guilford	38	1.2%	9.5%
	Monroe	22	0.7%	4.7%
	New Fairfield	16	0.8%	4.9%
	State	5,240	1.1%	6.5%
Intellectual Disability	Brookfield	9	0.3%	2.3%
	Guilford	20	0.6%	5.0%
	Monroe	18	0.5%	3.9%
	New Fairfield	11	0.5%	4.9%
	State	2,798	0.6%	3.5%
Learning Disability	Brookfield	151	5.7%	39.0%
	Guilford	127	4.1%	31.9%

¹⁴ From [EdSight, Students with Disabilities, Primary Disability: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

Disability Category	District/State	N	Overall Prevalence (%)	Within Special Education Prevalence (%)
	Monroe	204	6.1%	43.8%
	New Fairfield	134	6.5%	41.1%
	State	30,172	6.1%	37.3%
Other Disabilities	Brookfield	15	0.6%	3.9%
	Guilford	32	1.0%	8.0%
	Monroe	21	0.6%	4.5%
	New Fairfield	28	1.4%	8.6%
	State	5,603	1.1%	6.9%
Other Health Impairment	Brookfield	79	3.0%	20.4%
	Guilford	108	3.5%	27.1%
	Monroe	88	2.6%	18.9%
	New Fairfield	64	3.1%	19.6%
	State	16,582	3.3%	20.5%
Speech Language Impairment	Brookfield	51	1.9%	13.2%
	Guilford	28	0.9%	7.0%
	Monroe	50	1.5%	10.7%
	New Fairfield	30	1.5%	19.6%
	State	9,356	1.9%	11.6%

A comparison of prevalence rates with other data such as staffing ratios by caseload or workload provides some insight to trends in the district. Brookfield’s prevalence rates increased by 14 students over four (4) years.

Interview and Survey Data

A review of materials, staff, time, and professional development yields some insight into allocation of resources and are discussed in the following sections.

Materials

Staff focus group responses were inconsistent regarding the availability of adequate materials. Special education teachers and related services personnel across all four buildings shared they have been told to purchase their own materials, as the budget had been frozen early in the school year by their special education Supervisors. Evaluation protocols, scoring software, and test kits were specifically noted in limited supply, and some teachers and related service staff needed to create an evaluation schedule to know when they could borrow certain materials. This made it difficult to evaluate students in a timely manner and appeared to decrease these staff members' feelings as valuable professionals.

Yet in other focus groups, staff commented on being able to purchase materials and the school administration supporting the purchases. Staff also shared they don't all have the same curricular material as general education teachers, particularly the special education teachers that are co-teaching or supporting students in general education classrooms where they are expected to utilize these materials. In particular, core classroom reading curriculum materials in elementary and middle schools were noted to be in limited supply. The district's Business and Operations Office responded to this finding that requests for materials from special education have been approved.

During observations in special education settings, the review team took note of a number of literacy program materials at the elementary levels. Some examples included Spire, Edmark, Lexia, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), and Milestones. However, evidence of implementation of these programs was not observed. While the district made an investment in the acquisition of these materials and provided professional learning, it does not appear that ongoing training or accountability was developed for implementation according to a review of the district's professional development plan or as reported by staff. It is not apparent that training has continued past the 2019-2020 school year, in which the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted school and district efforts. Staff in the district's specialized special education programs noted inconsistency in materials. They noted the building administration supporting some resources for their programs, but in the upper grades, it appears that materials for these programs were not available.

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 58% - I have adequate materials to support students with IEPs in my classroom.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 50% - All special education services identified in my child's IEP or 504 have been provided.
- 54% - Special education staff provide accommodations, modifications, and specially designed instruction as indicated on my child's IEP or 504.
- 54% - General education staff provide accommodations, modifications, and specially designed instruction as indicated on my child's IEP or 504.

Staff

In the 2022-23 school year, the district hired a special education position solely for the purpose of facilitating PPTs using federal grant funds under the American Rescue Plan (ARP/IDEA) designated for students with disabilities, in order to alleviate the amount of time special education Supervisors were in meetings. This was intended to allow the special education Supervisors more time to observe students and staff, problem solve with administration, and respond to requests for assistance in a timely and thorough manner. This position began in March 2023 and is grant-funded for the 2023-24 school year.

Through focus groups, staff and parents emphatically expressed the need for additional paraeducators to assist with implementing student IEPs. There was a consistent theme across parents and staff that students are not receiving the required paraeducator support indicated in their IEPs, despite the school's best efforts. Parents and staff both indicated a belief that paraeducators are pulled from students and classrooms with little to no notice, often to cover other students or classrooms. This phenomenon is likely due to school administration arranging substitute coverage for teacher and paraeducator absences. Additionally, there were three (3) paraeducator positions supported by the district that were vacant at various times in 2022-23. As of May, 2023 the district shared the following numbers of staff absence as a count of days: 2,600 teacher, 715 paraeducator, 432 ABA paraeducator. However, filling these absences with substitutes has yielded the following fill rates: 70% teacher days, 43% paraeducator days, 25% ABA paraeducator days. Also, when students with significant behaviors escalate, staff are usually pulled to address it, which means other students don't get seen or their services are cut short. Although infrequent, this situation occurred most at the elementary levels. Staff reported in cases where paraeducators are not available, special education teachers are adjusting schedules to accommodate those students and therefore, other students' needs are not being adequately addressed. This was observed twice in one school, and once in another school. A number of staff perceived these directives had come from the Director of Student Services to the special education Supervisors and shared at PPTs or staffing meetings, without explanation or rationale.

Staff focus groups shared themes of confusion and frustration regarding appropriate programming recommendations for paraeducator supports for students. A number of staff and parents shared that when the request for paraeducators was mentioned at a PPT, the response was often that the student did not need one, or that the student would receive a shared paraeducator despite the level of need. Most focus group participants believe these responses were efforts to save money and not in the interest of looking at student safety or outcomes, or IEP compliance. However, some staff members recognized that many students with IEPs often received 1:1 paraeducator support and noted concern that this was over-servicing students and actually creating barriers to their growth. The parent survey revealed that 71.1% of parents who had children with IEPs felt their child could be challenged more, and 50% felt their child's special education services and program were preparing them for the future.

The district has specialized special education programs as part of its continuum of services for students with disabilities. Students in these programs require higher levels of support, instruction, and services. The special education teachers in these programs noted that they are expected to simultaneously provide adult support for individual students in these programs, in addition to carrying out the special education teacher expectations for all students in these programs. Previously, these students would have a paraeducator providing individual assistance. Staff from these programs did share the related services team members for these programs were instrumental in supporting the students and the staff, although they were also limited in their time and often addressing issues that impeded their scheduled services to students.

Typically, a workload analysis of special education hours relative to the number of special education staff would yield some context about this year's and next year's need for additional staff more so than a caseload analysis. However, due to the required change in data systems from a purchased system named Frontline to the state's online IEP system (CT-SEDs) in this school year, these data are not accessible nor reliable. In this instance, the review team analyzed these data based on 2021-22 school year data. These data revealed staff at the middle and high school levels had the highest rates of special education service hours to deliver per week at an average of 50.15 hours per special education staff member. In contrast, the elementary schools had significantly less special education service hours to deliver per week at 12.4 for Center Elementary School and 13.9 hours at Huckleberry Hill Elementary School per special education staff member. This may be an indication of the elementary schools being overstaffed and the middle and high schools being understaffed. However, this could also be due to the inconsistencies in writing IEPs and capturing accurate service needs. A review of staff survey open-ended responses indicates the majority of respondents across all grade levels prioritize hiring more paraeducators to meet the needs of students and be in compliance with IEPs. This could be an indication that staff have not discussed, planned for, nor received training in other methods of supporting students that do not require additional adult supports for students with disabilities to be successful.

Focus group participants highlighted building staff as a strength in special education. While some parents expressed dissatisfaction with their child's school teams, the majority were pleased with their special education teachers, related service providers, and paraeducators. Most staff also believed special education colleagues and paraeducators were highly dedicated to students and go to great lengths to support students. Although there was no dedicated planning time, the staffs' ability for teamwork and collaboration were noted across all focus groups as an asset.

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 19% - There is adequate staff to support students with IEPs in my classroom.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 50% - All special education services identified in my child's IEP or 504 have been provided.

Time

Overall, staff at all levels cited concerns about sufficient common meeting time. A small number of focus

group respondents shared they have some collaboration time set aside weekly to discuss issues at the middle school level. These meetings sometimes included a full complement of administration, school psychologist, case manager, and other related services providers. Staff also stated that due to staffing absenteeism this year, many team members were not able to attend consistently.

An analysis of special education hours required by IEPs per week in the 2021-22 school year revealed a substantial discrepancy between the middle and high schools and the elementary schools (Table 7). Breaking down these hours per special education staff member including special education teachers and paraeducators indicates that the middle and high school could not accommodate the required number of special education hours in IEPs in a given week. These data should be interpreted cautiously, as they rely upon IEP development by staff members and are not state-verified or publicly reported. Inconsistencies occur in IEP development across schools and teams, which often make these data difficult to analyze. This highlights a need for calibrated and consistent special education decision-making, interpretation, and IEP writing across the district.

At the high school, staff shared frustration about a new process for scheduling special education services. Prior to this year, students were spending the entire 80-minute class period with their special education teacher, regardless of the time allocated in the IEP. In most cases, IEP special education services called for 30 minutes of academic support, which indicates that students were being over-served for special education supports by attending their academic support class for 80 minutes. In these cases, students now attend their special education services only for the allotted IEP time, and then report to a study hall for the remainder of the period. This appears to have been done to reflect actual implementation of the IEP, and in consideration of the growing size of academic support groups as well as the mix of grades in these groups. The high school convened an Academic Support Committee to gather feedback on this issue and make recommendations. Staff expressed the smaller groups and grouping by grade levels was beneficial, however, they felt rushed to address IEP goals and objectives in light of the support students needed for assignments from their classes. The purpose of Academic Support at Brookfield High School is to explicitly address IEP goals and objectives, while support with classroom assignments and projects should be addressed by general education teachers. There are instances where classroom assignments and projects can be used to naturally address IEP goals and objectives, however, this did not appear to be the shared understanding by staff.

Student feedback varied. Some students liked going to study hall after academic support and although it was confusing at first, it is no longer an issue. The majority of students did not like transitioning to a study hall because it was disruptive to their work flow and they become unfocused. Others shared that study hall is not structured enough for them to be productive and they don't know who to go to for assistance in study hall. A few students noted they did not like to focus only on goals and objectives in academic support, and prefer to get assistance on their school work. In focus groups and interviews, a few parents expressed concern that this updated model was not effective and their child no longer wanted to attend special education services as it placed a stigma on them when returning to a study hall. Feedback also shared that some parents would prefer their academic support time be longer or that their child stay in academic support for the whole period.

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 36% - I have adequate time to support students with IEPs in my classroom.
- 23% - I have sufficient collaboration time with colleagues to discuss and plan for students with disabilities.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 50% - General education and special education staff work together to ensure that my child's IEP or 504 is implemented with fidelity

Professional Development

Professional development was viewed as a resource. In the staff survey, 59% of respondents shared they received adequate professional learning to support students with IEPs in their classroom, with 19.6% of those respondents being general education teachers and 10.9% being paraeducators. There was no record for this year of any joint training between special education and general education staff, despite the district having a rate of 76.3% of its students with disabilities in the general education setting for 79 - 100% of their day in the 2021-22 school year. In the 2022-23 school year, the district's professional development priorities were curriculum writing, technology integration, and implementation of the state's IEP system, CT-SEDS.

Staff expressed a need for joint special education and general education training specifically in literacy to address at-risk students and students with disabilities. Special education staff cited limited or no training for implementation of reading programs but were expected to implement with fidelity. Interviews with district staff revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was explicit and ongoing literacy training for all teachers through grade 8, including special education. Notably, there have been a number of special education staff who joined the district since the COVID-19 pandemic that would have not received this training.

While special education staff noted IEP training in the 2022-23 school year specific to the state's new IEP system, none of those trainings occurred with general education colleagues. This was cited as a source of concern amongst staff, also expressing the need for school administrators to partner in these trainings.

Related services and paraeducators stated inconsistency in attending professional development. Related services staff noted some professional development supported by the district, but that they often had to seek out their own professional development and sometimes it was not reimbursed by the district. Paraeducators noted professional development designed for behavior technicians and shared the fact that there was no accountability for learning, implementation, or follow up. The perceived purpose of the training was to keep paraeducators busy during professional development days.

A review of the district's professional development arranged by special education leadership in the 2022-23 school year revealed the following:

- Targeted supports for quality IEP training and the state's new IEP system including a shared

folder for staff, visual aids and graphics, a training manual, and four (4) training sessions or presentations.

- Specific training targeted at educational benefit, progress monitoring and reporting, speech support in schools, special education case law, language disability evaluations, and new procedures such as staffing meetings and quality data files
- Paraeducator training from Autism Partnership Foundation for behavior technician - 40 hours virtual, asynchronous
- Paraeducator training from Cooperative Education Services (CES) on roles and responsibilities, effective communication, executive function and positive behavior support, and instructional strategies - in person, three (3) sessions, separately for elementary and secondary levels

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 59% - I have received adequate professional learning to support students with IEPs in my classroom or that I work with.
- 63% - Students with IEPs could be more meaningfully included in my classes, if I had some training.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 61% - Staff is appropriately trained and able to provide my child's specific program and services.
- 43% - My child's teachers, special education or general education, provide resources for me to support my child at home.

Domain 2: Organizational Structures and Processes

Evaluation Question — *To what extent is the instructional core (a) built on a foundation of equity and inclusion, (b) are processes implemented per federal and local requirements, (c) are instructional practices effective for students with disabilities, and (d) is the district's intervention system contributing to special education identification?*

Specialized Special Education Programs

Brookfield has two (2) services and programs across the district for students whose needs cannot be met primarily through a resource room, co-teaching, or fully inclusive setting. The Exceptional Learning Center (ELC) was established many years ago and is currently serving students with significant cognitive disabilities, grades K - 8. A life skills program serves students in grades 9 - 12. There is one special education teacher with an average of seven (7) students assigned to these services. Students are typically assigned a paraeducator as well. Students may spend more time in a self-contained special education classroom to focus on academic skills, communication, social skills, daily living, and independence. A board certified behavior analyst (BCBA) consults to the team and students may receive a more intensive and integrated plan for related services. The Social Emotional Enrichment Program is for students with significant social and emotional needs in grades 2 - 8. There is also one special education teacher with an average of seven (7) students. The Brookfield Public Schools preschool program has three (3) teachers total, two (2) special education teachers with an average caseload of 16

students in the beginning of the year, which grows throughout the year since enrollment is rolling admissions according to student's birthdate, and one (1) regular education teacher.

Brookfield Public Schools does not have an in-district program for students ages 18-22 who required continued special education services past graduation for secondary transition purposes. The district pays for tuition and transportation to send these students to programs outside of the district. There were less than 10 students reported to need these services for the 2022-23 school year.

Staff of the district's specialized special education programs were part of focus groups and interviews. They shared that in the 2022-23 school year, when calculating the amount of adult staff needed to support students in these settings, the certified special education teacher is considered to also part of the support that paraeducators provide. If a student requires one-to-one adult support, the special education teacher is considered to be part of that support. This is not a sustainable model of adult supports. The special education teachers should have a role separate and beyond that of paraeducators in order to design, plan, implement, and monitor individual student programs and these services as a whole. Oftentimes, these programs require many more tasks than that of resource room or inclusion special education teachers which requires more time and attention which is not realistic to also assign the special education teacher to support students in a paraeducator capacity. Additionally, these programs do not appear to have any core curricular or instructional resources. Staff noted doing their own research for lessons, making their own materials, and preparing entirely outside of the school day as they were acting in a paraeducator capacity throughout the school day or trying to collaborate with team members. While there are no single curricula or material for these services, teachers should be referencing a core set of resources as they work with students. Staff also shared that in the 2022-23 school year, many resources are paid for out of their own personal finances, particularly at the high school. Where outings to the community should be occurring frequently, they have subsided this school year as the staff claim they were notified by the special education leadership there is no budget provided for students to participate. Staff shared their perception that any materials they receive are for individual students noted in their IEPs, but resources for the program to provide appropriate instructional, employment or life skills lessons and experiences are not supported by the special education department at the district level. Upon following up, the Superintendent and district financial leadership shared they have not placed any financial restrictions on the program.

Time with Non-Disabled Peers

A basic requirement of federal and state special education rules is that students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate. One way to examine LRE placement is to look at the amount of time that students with disabilities spend being educated with their non-disabled peers. Table 10 shows Brookfield's data reflecting the percent of students with IEPs in what is considered "regular classroom placement", as categorized by federal level definitions of placement settings.

The percentage of students with disabilities spending 79 - 100% of their school day in a regular

classroom setting increased over four (4) school years for all disability categories with the exception of the Emotional Disturbance disability category, which saw a decrease in regular class placement over two years. It is possible that with the development of the Social Emotional Enrichment Program, the amount of time students in that program spent in the regular classroom setting decreased below 79% of their day. The least percent of students spending 79 - 100% of their school day in a regular classroom setting were those identified to have autism.

Table 10. Brookfield Students with Disabilities Spending 79-100% of Time with Nondisabled Peers (ages 6-21), 2018 -19 to 2021-22¹⁵

Disability	2021-22		2020-21		2019-20		2018-19	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Disabilities	280	76.3	255	74.1	245	67.3	256	69.6
Autism	26	51	27	52.9	21	39.6	23	46.9
Emotional Disturbance	16	57.1	21	72.4	*	*	*	*
Intellectual Disability	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning Disability	131	86.8	121	85.2	120	76.4	123	74.1
Other Disabilities	*	*	0	0	*	*	*	*
Other Health Impairment	67	84.8	48	76.2	48	70.6	53	79.1
Speech Language Impairment	36	92.3	38	92.7	37	94.9	37	92.5

* Data suppressed to ensure confidentiality

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 63% - Students with IEPs could be more meaningfully included in my classes, if I had some training.
- 70% - Brookfield uses practices to support meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities into their classes.
- 80% - I am a general education teacher and students with IEPs are meaningfully included in my classes.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 80% - My child is accepted in the school community

¹⁵ From [EdSight, Students with Disabilities, Time with Nondisabled Peers: CSDE](#)

Out of District Placement

Brookfield’s out of district placement data over four (4) years demonstrates a net increase of students receiving their education outside of the public schools as determined by the students’ planning and placement teams (PPTs). Brookfield pays the cost of tuition and transportation for these students. Based upon a review of internal documents, Brookfield reports that 21 students are currently placed in out of district settings that are not for secondary transition purposes. Of these students, those identified with an emotional disturbance had the highest rate of outplacement followed by students with autism, with 63% of students being in grades 9 - 12.

Table 11. Number and Percent of Total Student Population in Out-of-District Placement, (2019-2022)¹⁶

	2021-22 ¹⁷	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
N	13	15	14	11
Tuition per pupil	unavailable	\$118,136	\$133,103	\$152,193
% of all SWD	3.4%	4%	3.66%	2.86%

Special Education Processes

According to focus group interviews and IEP reviews, special education staff are aware of the process needed to determine special education eligibility, but the process is not followed with fidelity. The file review demonstrated inconsistent interpretations of the state-required eligibility checklists, reading and math worksheets, and articulation of how certain disabilities impact a student’s needs. Staff across the district perceive there to be an increase in special education referrals that did not go through the intervention process and were the result of parental referrals. District data reveal almost 8% of students receiving interventions are referred to special education. The exception is at the high school where 64% of students receiving interventions are referred to special education.

Staff focus groups for teachers shared that their caseloads were determined by the special education Supervisor in the beginning of the school year. Time is set aside to review the case load with teachers and ask questions, learn about the student’s needs, and plan for them. At the elementary level, caseloads are determined by grade level unless there is a large discrepancy where some students may be assigned to a different special education teacher to keep caseloads relatively equal. At the secondary level, staff were unsure how caseloads were determined as they are not involved in the process and believed it relied heavily on student and staff schedules. Although that was not the norm, special education staff at all levels shared instances of students being added to their caseload without prior

¹⁶ From [Per Pupil Expenditures for Outplaced Students, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

¹⁷ From [Profile and Performance Report, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

notification or an understanding of what the student needs were,. These instances serve to support rationale for school building administrators to be present at PPTs in efforts to ensure timely communication. A review of Brookfield’s caseload lists revealed average caseloads ranged from 13 to 19 students, with the exception of the Exceptional Learning Center (ELC) and Social Emotional Enrichment Program having an average of seven (7) students on their caseload.

Related services providers have higher caseloads than special education teachers. A review of district data reveals beginning of the year caseload ranges for the following:

- Speech and Language Pathologists = 19 - 31 students
- School Psychologists = 8 - 21 students, with an additional 25-35 evaluations
- School Social Workers = 8 -22 students
- Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists = 24 - 28 students
- Special Education Teachers = 13 - 19 students

Focus groups and interviews were held with related services staff members. Some shared that they do not get a caseload list in the beginning of the year, but that they have to read through IEPs to figure out what was needed. Communication and collaboration was inconsistent, with some related services staff members sharing frequent and meaningful communication with teams, while others shared very limited communication or that it only occurred if they initiated it. There was inconsistency across all schools that there is no communication from special education leadership, and a perception that special education leadership and building administrators do not communicate. A few shared specific examples of discrepancies in IEPs and how the services were actually being provided. Due to confidentiality, specific examples cannot be shared within this report.

Paraeducators are not informed of their caseloads prior to the first day of school, as their contractual obligations begin on the first day of the school year for students. Paraeducators have two (2) professional development days during the school year that are scheduled and reserved for professional learning. Paraeducator focus groups were consistent that this is often confusing and frustrating, taking more time than needed to “learn” the student once school starts rather than providing information ahead of time. The special education teacher provides information about assigned students and in some instances, they are able to conference ahead of time. In many instances, paraeducators are switched or pulled without notice. Some paraeducators referred to a process in the past where they met with their supervisor on monthly basis. However, there is currently no structure like that and information comes from the “top down.” Paraeducators consistently shared most of the communication about students comes from the special education teacher and in some cases, the related service providers. Most of the paraeducators shared that they do not have access to the IEP outside of what a special education teacher may give them, and they believed this was due to confidentiality concerns. Most paraeducators shared that when they do have a concern, special education and general education teachers are easily accessible and willing to communicate with them.

Paraeducators overwhelmingly shared that they felt undervalued and not recognized, specifically by anyone in special education leadership. Specific examples shared were that special education leadership

does not address them by name or make eye contact, does not observe them working with students or check in with them, nor asks them questions or acknowledges them. They did share that they felt appreciated by their teachers and have very supportive teams at the student level.

Special Education Leadership

Brookfield has a Director of Special Education and two special education supervisors that operate as central office staff and special education leadership. The district's current Director began the position in April 2022.¹⁸ The two special education supervisors were responsible for 378 students with disabilities in the 2021-22 school year and are assigned to schools according to elementary grades and secondary grades, inclusive of those buildings' special education programs. The largest proportion of time is spent in meetings comprised of both PPTs and a district practice called "staffings." Staffings are team time to collaborate prior to the PPT to review data, progress and parent input, prepare graphs and reports to send to parent prior to meeting, analyze evaluations, prepare agenda items, assign roles and responsibilities, and prepare for any procedural needs during the meeting. These staffings are expected to occur prior to an eligibility meeting, prior to a PPT where changes will be made, and prior to an annual or reevaluation PPT. The Director has shared with staff members across the district that staffings do not predetermine recommendations, but rather ensures the team's preparation for the PPT and to foster communication between team members. During focus groups, staff shared that staffings were inconsistent and while they try to have them, scheduling and time demands don't always allow it. In parent focus groups, some parents noted that the team came to the PPT with recommendations, services, and other elements of the IEP decided upon with little discussion or room for flexibility. While few parents stated they felt ignored, many parents in focus groups felt their input was considered and respected at PPTs.

Staff focus interviews shared that special education supervisors are difficult to reach to ask questions or strategic problem-solve at the building levels, but recognize them to be responsive. The district established a position called an IEP Compliance Teacher to assist with the PPT caseload and alleviate time for Supervisors to address other aspects of their leadership. The IEP Compliance teacher began facilitating PPTs in March, 2023 and has had over 50 PPTs as of the writing of this report. Building principals are rarely involved in special education process and practices in their buildings. Most decisions about special education are made by special education leadership.

It is commonplace for principals to be notified of PPT decisions that impact staffing, schedules, and other school routines after the recommendations have been made and without any input. Limited access and time among building principals and special education supervisors prevent any strategic or proactive problem-solving in the buildings for special education. At the middle and high school levels, the building administration oversees scheduling special education services and paraeducators, and attends PPTs in some instances when the special education Supervisor cannot. Communication between the middle and high school administration and special education Supervisor appears to be more consistent and involved than the elementary level.

¹⁸ The Director of Student Services gave notice of resignation on or about May 18, 2023, effective June 30, 2023.

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 50% -The process used in my school to identify students suspected of having a disability is consistent and effective.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 38% - I believe special education leaders work with the school to ensure my child's plans are implemented.
- 86% - I believe school leadership should have more involvement in special education in the building.

Intervention System

A district's system of intervention could be informative as it relates to special education referrals and identification. In focus groups, the elementary and middle school staffs expressed having an intervention system, knowing how it worked, and feeling it had fidelity. Feedback was that there are regular meetings and individual students are discussed, although related services staff are not always able to attend and the meetings could be structured better to make more use of the time. Many staff expressed frustration with students needing intervention but not having enough personnel to accommodate the number of students in need, particularly at the point of reviewing mid-year data. Another source of frustration was students receiving intervention for a longer length of time with little or no improvement, then moving on to referral for special education, only to be referred back to the intervention process or situations where students receive interventions repeatedly throughout their time in the school. These schools have dedicated certified teachers in math and reading specifically to provide interventions to students.

The high school staff reported a weak intervention system, noting that the team primarily consists of the school psychologist, school counselors and interventionists and no general education staff were normally in attendance due to coverage issues. General education teachers get reports to complete for the team to consider next steps but follow through is difficult. It was stated that due to lack of resources, it is difficult to provide interventions to students and therefore, many times they do get referred to special education. Although the high school has a reading and math specialist, they are providing services to students with IEPs and therefore are not able to provide interventions to other students.

Both the middle and high school stated their intervention systems have separated academic and social emotional needs, as the needs for behavioral, social and emotional supports have increased. Both schools noted that it is very difficult to structure and implement the intervention system for social emotional needs due to lack of resources and time for the team to discuss these students.

In 2021, Brookfield Public Schools updated its Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) handbook and implemented its system of tiered interventions. The system and corresponding handbook was developed with facilitation by an outside consultant and broad stakeholder input including administrators, teachers, and related services staff. A review of the handbook articulates the district's Mission and Core Values, as well as the expectations and protocols for schools to follow when determining a student to be in need of interventions. Each school keeps an internal roster of students receiving intervention services. Data in Table 12 reflect the students receiving interventions for the 2022

- 23 school year as of May, 2023. In grades K - 8, almost 8% of students receiving intervention services are referred for special education evaluation. The rate is significantly increased at the high school, with 64% of students in intervention being referred for special education. Improvements in the district's intervention system at the high school could likely decrease referrals to special education.

Table 12. Number of Students in SRBI Systems, 2022-23

School	Received Interventions	Discontinued Interventions	Referred to Special Education	Average weeks
Center Elementary	72	*	6	25
Huckleberry Hill Elementary	88	9	8	29
Whisconier Middle School	104	26	8	21
Brookfield High School	14	*	9	13

*Data suppressed if fewer than six (6) students

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 38% -There is a tiered intervention system in my school.
- 28% - My school's intervention system has prevented students from needing special education eligibility.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 30% - My child received formal intervention services that were not part of a special education program
- 76% - Of the parents that replied yes, their child received formal intervention services, it did not prevent them from needing special education.
- 11% - I am unsure if my child received formal intervention services that were not part of a special education program.

Table 13 shows the demographics of Brookfield students over time. Data for special education students should be disaggregated and analyzed regularly to ensure that students are not being over- or under-identified in ways that are not reflective of the overall student population.

Table 13. Demographic Composition of Brookfield Public Schools, All Students, 2018-19 to 2021-22¹⁹

Total Student Population	2022-23		2021-22		2020-21		2019-20		2018-19	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Asian	189	7%	198	8%	203	8%	195	7%	205	8%
Black or African American	74	3%	75	3%	70	3%	58	2%	72	3%
Hispanic/Latino of any race	397	15%	371	14%	312	12%	303	12%	325	12%
Nat. Hawaiian/Pacific Islldr	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Two or More Races	30	1%	30	1%	28	1%	25	1%	26	1%
White	1,851	72%	1,903	73%	1,926	75%	2,024	77%	1,984	75%
Total	2,563	100%	2,601	100%	2,563	100%	2,623	100%	2,630	100%

*Data suppressed if fewer than six (6) students

¹⁹ From [EdSight, Enrollment Dashboard. Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

Domain 3: Student Learning

Evaluation Question— *To what extent are students deriving educational benefits from special education programs and services, including the district’s evaluation process and practices?*

Reviewing data about staffing, prevalence rates, and fiscal resources only provides a portion of the information to know whether the district is effective and efficient for students with disabilities. Student outcomes data complete the picture of how effective and efficient special education is in Brookfield.

IEP Review

Thirty-nine (39) IEPs were reviewed using the State Education Resource Center (SERC) educational benefit rubric to determine if Brookfield’s IEPs are calculated to provide educational benefit. *Educational benefit* means that an IEP must be “reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.”²⁰ Table 14 summarizes the rubric indicators with scoring ranges and Brookfield’s score within each indicator.

Table 14. IEP Review Rubric, Scoring Ranges for Indicators²¹

Indicator	Scoring Range				Brookfield
	Promising Practice	Progressing	Emerging	Unacceptable	
Gap Analysis of Present Level of Performance	8-9	5-7	2-4	0-1	3
Levels of Support: Supplemental Instruction, Accommodations, Modifications	12-15	8-11	4-7	0-3	5
IEP Goals and Objectives	8-9	5-7	2-4	0-1	5
Types of Support and Placement	8-9	5-7	2-4	0-1	4
Overall ²²	37-42	22-36	8-21	0-7	17

²⁰ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0040059920914259?journalCode=tcxa>

²¹ Based on State Education Resource Center IEP Rubric <https://ctserc.org/documents/resources/IEP-Rubric.pdf>

²² The sum of discrete indicator scores are not intended to sum to the overall scoring range, given the nature of the holistic rubric scoring process and the overlapping indicator scoring in each domain.

IEP Indicator 1: Gap Analysis of Present Level of Performance

Emerging practices in this indicator convey that the assessment process relies heavily on standardized assessments and focuses on aspects of the disability. The assessment process references the general education curriculum or assessments but does not provide a full picture of how well the student is performing in the general education curriculum. The information recorded in the IEP provides some broad understanding but is vague.

The present levels of performance are the foundation upon which the remainder of the IEP should be built. If it is not informative, complete, or relevant then the rest of the IEP is subject to be inaccurate and found not to provide an educational benefit. Information should include standardized assessment data as well as curriculum-based measures and progress monitoring data.

Many IEPs in Brookfield's IEP sample contained a student's standardized assessment data from special education evaluations or progress monitoring and did not reference general education curriculum progress. Additionally, statements about the impact of a student's disability on their progress and participation were weakly written and in most instances only restated that the student needed small group special education supports and modifications. In a few cases, the data contained in the present levels of performance were not aligned with the student's disability area or areas of concern.

It should be noted that there were a few well-written present levels of performance and impact statements, most frequently in the areas of communication, motor skills, or social/emotional/behavioral. Most staff used a qualitative approach to determine whether students were making progress through teacher observation, and IEPs reflected what students previously could not do and now were able to.

IEP Indicator 2: Levels of Support- Supplemental Instruction, Accommodations, Modifications

Emerging practices in this indicator convey there is loose alignment between the gap analysis in current levels of performance and specially designed instruction. Supplemental instruction, accommodations/ assistive technology support growth and learning but are recorded with vague or unclear details on when, how, and where they are to be implemented. The plan includes a vague description of supports that are needed to support educators in implementation and in many cases, there was no description.

Most of the IEPs contained generic accommodations. While they minimized barriers for the student, there were few IEPs that outlined how or when certain accommodations should be used; most IEPs stated "all settings for the duration of the IEP". Other areas of concern were the lack of describing how assistive technology should be used when the student's concerns, goals, and objectives would have supported it in the IEP. Some IEPs contained explicit statements of what specially designed instruction was to occur and which missing skills or concepts it would address. In cases where paraeducator support was noted in the IEP, there was no explanation of how it aligned with a student's area of concern or what support the paraeducator was intended to provide. This was apparent across all schools in the district.

IEP Indicator 3: Goals and Objectives

Progressing practices in this indicator convey that goals and objectives were written in specific, measurable and observable language. Many goals and objectives were a re-statement of expectations in the general education curriculum. There are general details about the design and delivery of specialized instruction in some IEPs. There are measures to track student growth but many opportunities to measure growth are isolated to occurring in special education settings or related services rooms. However, there was a pattern of measurement in that mastery of goals occurred only through mastery of objectives or measurements of progress were generic and vague. When this occurred in half of the IEPs sampled, a lack of accurate progress monitoring and measurement lended itself to weak statements in the present levels of performance. In many instances, the supplemental instruction and modifications are embedded in the goals.

IEP Indicator 4: Supports and Services

Emerging practices in this indicator conveys services and supports are mostly aligned with the IEP goals, but not in direct alignment with general education expectations. The IEP uses a focus on special education programming and controlled tasks and settings for learning in lieu of natural environments.

There was less indication of related services and general education alignment in that most students' related services were addressed in isolation. In about half of the IEPs sampled, there was no indication of how students would generalize these skills in natural environments or how these skills would be measured outside of the related services setting. General education involvement was less obvious in these services.

Classroom Observations

The program review team observed 16 general education settings, and 19 special education settings for student engagement, instructional practices, and utilization of resources. Overall, the review team observed maximum use of instructional time and full use of materials available across all settings. Routines were established, classrooms were organized, and there appeared to be predictable expectations for students. These practices lend themselves to the highly efficient use of time as a resource.

General Education Settings

Observations of 16 general education settings revealed most students with disabilities were seated alongside typical peers. Student engagement in the general education classrooms was high, with some demonstrating compliance without much engagement in that they were following teacher instructions, mirroring the rest of the class but did not offer any insightful reflection or deepening knowledge. Classrooms designated for co-teaching were obvious and intentional with both teachers interacting in an instructional capacity with all students. However, in instances where special education teachers were in the room but not co-teaching, they reflected a paraeducator support role.

In the majority of general education classrooms, students with IEPs received their instruction from the

classroom teacher. However, there was no evidence of specially designed instruction or differentiated instruction for students in general education classrooms in these observations. When questioned in focus groups and interviews, most staff noted that special education teachers and paraeducators do a lot of modifications. There were a few general education teachers across the district who stated that they implement modifications according to student IEPs, due to paraeducators being pulled from their classes frequently. In classrooms where paraeducators were present, they were typically seated directly next to the student. This practice was observed to impede opportunities for communication between the teacher and student, and the student with peers, even when the teacher was the primary instructor for the student. Teachers relied on paraeducators to prompt students through lessons and assignments.

Special Education Settings

The CREC review team observed students in 19 special education settings including self-contained settings and resource rooms. Observations revealed that in most settings, people and space in the room were utilized to the maximum extent, and staff was able to spend the maximum amount of time on instructional activities. Students followed routines with minimal or no prompting. In a few settings, although paraeducators were eager to be helpful, they instead were observed to interfere with the student's learning. This further lends itself to paraeducator support in IEPs being articulated clearly in terms of the paraeducator's purpose and role in efforts to prevent dependence when it can be detrimental to students' progress.

The majority of students were actively engaged in the activity as evidenced by answering the teacher's questions, or demonstrating understanding orally, in writing or with manipulatives. All observations (100%) revealed that instruction was directly correlated to IEP goals and objectives, either as a step toward achieving the goals and objectives or directly addressing the goal or objective and both guided and independent practice were appropriately scaffolded.

Explicit instruction is a high leverage practice by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) based upon research and analysis of student outcomes. Building prior knowledge is an attribute of explicit instruction. In the special education settings, most observations confirmed teachers explicitly demonstrating connections to prior knowledge, lessons, or activities so the student can connect what they have learned previously to new learning. Immediate affirmative and corrective feedback is another attribute of explicit instruction and was observed in many observations, with teachers correcting misunderstandings in an attempt to reduce practice errors.

There were some instances where it was difficult to discern what the learning objectives were or what the teacher had intended for student outcomes. Students asked many clarifying questions and were not able to demonstrate new learning, however, the teacher continued the lesson and students were compliant.

In-Depth Student Review

Parent and staff focus groups and interviews provided insights and context to the patterns and trends for independent educational evaluations (IEEs), along with the IEP review. The CREC program review

team additionally conducted an in-depth review of four (4) students to further investigate the pattern of IEEs. Due to confidentiality, specific student information cannot be shared, yet trends and patterns evolved.

District records reveal 16 IEEs conducted in the 2019-20 school year through March, 2023. The most frequent IEEs were conducted for cognitive, achievement, and behavioral purposes. A comparison of district and independent evaluations revealed that independent evaluations included more assessments conducted in an area of need and more interpretation or elaboration on results to garner recommendations. They also integrated information from areas of evaluation to assist with interpretation and recommendations. Many evaluations conducted by the district did not include recommendations, but stated that the PPT would review the evaluation and make recommendations. Also, district evaluations were conducted in isolation by the respective appropriate personnel and reports did not demonstrate a triangulation of information between areas. The district evaluations and IEEs reviewed appeared to all evaluate a student in the same areas of suspected need.

The district appears to use the term “independent educational evaluation” to apply to any evaluation that takes place outside the district regardless of whether the parents requested it, a district evaluation was conducted, or it was part of a PPT recommendation. Understanding the origin of an IEE can be an important distinction as it can give insight to a district’s lack of resources and/or a parental dissatisfaction with the district’s evaluations. In Brookfield, IEEs occurred for both reasons. In some instances, the IEP and parents shared that an IEE was conducted because the PPT needed more information about student concerns and was not able to make certain decisions without additional information. In these cases, an outside evaluation was often proposed by the district even if the school team had conducted evaluations.

In other cases, the parents requested the IEE in disagreement with the district’s evaluation or claiming the district’s evaluation was not comprehensive enough. Parent focus groups and interviews shared they had requested IEEs because they didn’t believe the district’s evaluation was of high quality or thorough enough. Some experienced a change in diagnosis or additional information that the district did not recognize in their evaluations, which eventually led to changes in the IEP that would not have happened without the IEE.

Student Achievement Data

Tables 15 and 16 demonstrate student performance on statewide assessments over five (5) years, with students with disabilities compared to the performance of all students.

Table 15. Percent of Students Meeting and Exceeding Achievement Standards (Levels 3 and 4) on Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts, Brookfield Public Schools, Comparison Districts and State of CT, by Special Education Status, 2015-16 to 2022^{23, 24}

District/State	2020-21		2018-19		2017-18		2016-17		2015-16	
	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD
Brookfield	15.4	*	27.7	74.1	22.0	*	23.4	71.5	22.5	74.6
Guilford	30.9	81.7	28.6	88.0	30.8	88.2	31.8	83.9	40.1	86.9
Monroe	23.1	84.7	33.1	89.4	34.1	84.4	35.0	85.4	30.3	84.7
New Fairfield	28.0	75.3	23.7	80.4	30.6	82.3	20.7	*	19.0	*
State	15.1	55.5	16.9	62.5	16.2	61.8	15.2	60.1	15.6	61.6

*Data not available

Table 16. Percent of Students Meeting and Exceeding Achievement Standards (Levels 3 and 4) on Smarter Balanced Assessment in Math, Brookfield Public Schools, Comparison Districts and State of CT, by Special Education Status, 2015-16 to 2020-22

District/State	2020-21		2018-19		2017-18		2016-17		2015-16	
	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD	SWD	Not SWD
Brookfield	10.0	52.8	24.0	69.1	13.3	66.2	20.0	66.9	20.4	67.2
Guilford	21.7	74.5	21.7	84.8	19.2	85.5	26.7	81.7	22.0	76.7
Monroe	16.9	67.0	23.1	80.4	23.8	73.2	21.7	74.8	22.3	72.6
New Fairfield	21.3	72.3	18.8	74.0	23.5	*	17.6	*	19.4	*
State	10.7	45.5	54.2	12.6	11.7	52.5	11.0	50.9	10.2	49.0

*Data not available

²³ In 2019-20, all statewide academic assessments were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, no results are available. In 2020-21, school learning models changed throughout the school year and many students learned remotely for a significant part of the year. In light of these significant variations, the [2020-21 results are reported separately](#) with specialized considerations and analyses.

²⁴ From [Smarter Balanced Achievement Achievement/Participation, EdSight: Connecticut State Department of Education](#)

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 82% - Students with IEPs in my class/on my caseload are making progress.
- 53% - I know how my students with disabilities score on state or district achievement tests.
- 42% - There is a process available if students with IEPs are not making progress or need additional help.
- 65% - Services provided to special education students are effective in helping them make progress and meet expectations.
- 82% - I understand how my students' IEPs align with general education standards, functional life skills expectations, and/or social emotional and behavioral expectations.
- 36% - Most of my students with IEPs/on my caseload receive the standard special education programming and services.
- 36% - Each student with an IEP get very unique and different services, depending on their need.
- 28% - The services and programs for students with IEPs is effective and appropriate for them.
- 86% - I feel confident about my work with students that have special education services and/or students on my caseload.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 50% - My child's services and special education program are preparing them for their future.
- 71% - I believe my child could be challenged more.
- 50% - I am satisfied with my child's overall special education program and services.
- 57% - My child's IEP or 504 is meeting their educational needs.
- 53% - Data on my child's progress is used to inform instruction and that data is shared with me.

Domain 4: Communication and Collaboration

Evaluation Question 4 - *How effective are communication and collaboration between and among (district) leadership, staff, and families of students with disabilities?*

A common theme across staff and parents was the disconnect respondents experienced with the Director of Student Services, who began in this position April 2022.²⁵ Some staff noted they had never seen the Director in their building or classroom and had not attended any PPT or staff meetings. This added to their frustration when special education practices and procedures were being changed without notice or context and what staff felt like were “coming down from the top”. Staff consistently noted a lack of communication and understanding between their work and the Director’s expectations, as well as a lack of relationships between the Director and special education staff. Most parents expressed not knowing who the Director of Student Services was or how to reach her. Although many parents were satisfied with their school based special education teams, some parents felt strongly that the Director of Student Services was ineffective, did not communicate, and made decisions that were not in the best interest of children.

A review of district documents reveals a “Welcome Back” meeting for special education leadership and special education staff in Fall 2022. The agenda includes an introduction to new staff, discussion of departmental goals, a review of professional development for the year, a visit to the shared special education folder of materials, a review of PLC/team meeting schedules, and an overview of training in the state’s new IEP system. Additionally, the high school also had an opportunity to begin discussions about the use of academic support time. There was a letter to parents from special education leadership outlining a number of updates including new staff, transitioning to the state’s IEP system, annual review dates assigned in the beginning of the year, parent coffees with special education leadership, and changes to the high school’s academic support class. Special education leadership did an update at the October 3, 2023 SEPTO meeting for parents. Staff shared that special education leadership have attended faculty meetings this year. A review of the district’s website shares a monthly special education newsletter from the Director that speaks about topics such as extended school year, introduction to new staff, material from staff trainings, the state’s new IEP, and celebrations of staff and students in the schools. District-provided data shows a range of 442-842 newsletter views over the nine (9) months beginning May 2022.

The district has a number of special education guidance documents housed electronically such as an Extended School Year brochure, expectations for staffing meetings and quality data files, FERPA/FOIA Request for Records procedures, IEE Guidelines for Brookfield, IEP Responsibilities, PPT agendas, LEA Checklist, 504 Manual, and a Special Education Resource Guide for Brookfield. Some resources were developed years ago and have undergone recent updates, while others are new to the district. The district has also implemented a meeting prior to a PPT called a “staffing” where the team comes together to discuss the PPT agenda, student performance, and changes that may need to be made at the PPT.

²⁵ The Director of Student Services gave notice of resignation on or about May 18, 2023, effective June 30, 2023.

Staff survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 87% - I am a paraeducator and I can easily communicate with my students' general education teachers.
- 84% - I am a paraeducator and I can easily communicate with my students' special education teachers.
- 47% - Communication between general educators, special educators, paraeducators, related service staff and pupil service personnel staff is effective.
- 65% - I have the information I need from team members prior to a PPT.
- 72% - My input is valued at PPTs.

Parent survey data (strongly agree and agree)

- 86% - I have the opportunity to communicate with my child's teachers as needed to discuss questions, concerns and ideas.
- 64% - I hear from all team members at my child's IEP, 504, or parent meetings.
- 54% - I believe my child's team members communicate with each other on a regular basis.
- 48% - I have the opportunity to communicate with special education leadership as needed.
- 42% - I believe school leadership partners with the special education team in my child's best interests.
- 60% - IEP, 504 and parents meetings provide me with information on my child's educational programs and progress that is easily understood.
- 66% - IEP, 504 and parent meetings are scheduled at times and places that meet my needs.
- 58% - I receive information before a PPT or 504 meeting so I know what is going to be discussed.
- 61% - In my child's school, administrators and teachers encourage my involvement and value my concerns and recommendations.

Commendations and Recommendations

Domain 1—Resources

Key findings:

- Stakeholders agreed there is little time for meaningful planning and collaboration regarding students.
- Staff reported their requests for some resources could be met through their building administrator. However, when requesting resources through special education leadership, they cited being told to purchase their own resources, with test protocols, scoring tools, and evaluation kits being of greatest need.
- Special education paraeducators were identified as the highest needed resource, followed by more time for collaboration.

Commendations

1. Building leadership demonstrates a desire to support the purchase of special education resources when possible.
2. There is a robust collection of literacy resources in resource rooms. Combined with training, monitoring fidelity, and partnership with building reading specialists, there is potential for the district to improve the literacy rates of students with disabilities in a targeted way.
3. The district, board, and town invest in special education as it is 24% of its local budget.

Recommendations

1. Build relationships, conduct needs assessments, and engage in strategic problem solving with building administrators and staff prior to making changes in procedures or practices for recommending paraeducators at PPTs. Support these changes with research and an explicit purpose for these changes. Prioritize work around building capacity for everyone to agree on appropriate levels of paraeducator support. Training and support should consist of professional development in inclusive practices, outlining roles and responsibilities for certified staff working with students with IEPs, and a decision-making process grounded in student need.
2. Analyze the relationship between classroom teachers, special education teachers, and paraeducators in the context of meaningful inclusive practices before making further changes in staffing. Explicitly discuss and establish clear understanding of expectations, roles, and responsibilities in working with students with IEPs. If a significant change in practice is required, there should be a strategic plan that outlines how this change will occur in a supported approach. Expand on training in educational benefit as a collaborative partnership with general education staff, administration, and special education teams.
3. Prior to purchasing any additional curriculum materials for special education, an accounting of special education teachers that co-teach, support students in the general education classroom, or are the primary subject teacher should be completed. Special education teachers should be counted in the purchasing of core curriculum materials if they are associated with supporting

students in the general education curriculum, and should be a universal practice. An inventory of testing protocols, scoring guides, and test kits should be developed with a cycle of updating or refreshing materials on an annual basis. This should also drive professional development around evaluation practices as tests get updated and research evolves.

4. Conduct a time study at the building and program level for special education and related services staff to determine the allocation of time in the school day spent in categories not directly delivering student services. Categories should include responding to crises, conducting evaluations, meetings/PPTs, performing school-wide duties, covering for other staff in their absence, and collaborating with outside providers.
5. Design professional development in a coordinated fashion across special and general education staff, including building administrators and related service professionals where appropriate. A needs assessment from staff can indicate priority areas. A cycle of implementation and fidelity checks should be built into any professional development to address adjustments needed, identify student performance changes, and align expectations across all staff.
6. Provide professional development for administrators that go beyond special education foundational knowledge, but address their role as a building leaders for students with disabilities. Calibrate this role with the special education supervisors to ensure efficient leadership practices and supports. Establish roles and responsibilities associated with building leadership that are distinct from special education leadership.
7. Review the high school's Academic Support model to clarify expectations and the roles of special education teachers, general education teachers, and paraeducators. Clarify expectations beginning with the middle school across staff, students, and parents.

Domain 2—Organizational Processes

Key findings indicate:

- The new position IEP Compliance Teacher started facilitating PPTs in March 2023.
- Special education Supervisors spend the majority of their time in staffing meetings and PPTs, limiting their ability to be proactive problem solvers in the schools
- Building leaders are not actively engaged in the PPT process yet are responsible for implementing IEP recommendations that effect staffing, schedules, and resources
- The district's intervention system is more consistent at the elementary and middle school levels. Many students receiving interventions in the beginning of the school year continue to receive them throughout the school year.

Commendations

1. The district has great potential for its Exceptional Learning Center (ELC) to provide a greater educational benefit for students and implement current best practices, given its staff and parent dedication and support from building administration.

2. The district added an IEP Compliance Teacher position to manage PPTs in March 2023, although more time is needed to get established once there is a full complement of special education leaders in place.
3. The district developed a handbook for its intervention system, named “Scientific Research-Based Interventions” with broad stakeholder input and posted it publicly in 2021.

Recommendations

1. A multi-year special education strategic plan should be aligned with the district goals for students with disabilities. This plan should be built with feedback from staff and parents, have transparency and include indicators of success over time. Budgeting in successive years would align with the strategic plan to ensure adequate resources are allocated, including professional development. As intended to when the transition to a special education Supervisory model was made several years ago, building leaders should engage with the special education strategic plan for coherence and a systemic approach to improvement. A focus on both compliance and student outcomes should be included in the plan, with measurable indicators of success.
2. Consider more frequent departmental meeting and communication structure to allow more interaction between special education leadership and building staff and universal messaging. These meetings should regularly review a strategic plan for special education in the district and updates on progress throughout the year. Meetings could be held with a rotating agenda to accommodate the staggered release times between the buildings.
3. Establish clear guidelines including adult support into a student’s IEP, in contrast to the practice of adult supports universally available in classrooms for any student who needs assistance. This information will be critical to understand staffing needs, trends in student needs, and staff needs for assistance.
4. Analyze the roles and responsibilities of special education leadership, building leaders, and the IEP compliance teacher. As the district has over 350 students with IEPs, the current practice is not efficient or effective with two special education Supervisors being the primary and often the sole administrative decision maker. This practice appears to present frustration and discord in lieu of teamwork and feelings of self-efficacy. While the IEP compliance teacher may be a beneficial use of resources, this position needs to be reviewed frequently to ensure it is operating with fidelity and not experience other responsibilities that will deteriorate its effectiveness. It is important that building administrators attend PPTs.
5. Although not a special education recommendation, the impact of a multi-tiered system of support cannot be understated in the support of at-risk students or students referred for special education. The district should re-ignite its intervention system including data teams at the district and school level, training for the process and structure of an intervention system at different grade levels and for different needs, a communication plan that includes regular intervention meetings and sharing information with those not in attendance, fidelity to the district’s protocols, progress monitoring expectations, and communication with parents. With district’s transition back to the Director of Instruction model for the 2023-24 school year, this is a timely opportunity to update and renew the system. While elements of an intervention

systems are stronger in the elementary and middle schools, the system should be calibrated to ensure students are receiving a similar experience at all levels. As the district shifts its districtwide benchmarking system, the opportunity to organize and commit to a robust multi-tiered system of supports is ideal.

6. The district's specialized special education programs require an in-depth evaluation of staff, resources, and professional development. Staffing, budgeting, and professional development for adults supporting students in these programs should be recorded and analyzed separately from the remainder of special education services in the district. This allows for accurate budgeting and staffing as students move through the grade levels, and ensures staff are implementing the most up-to-date best practices. The district originally requested an in-depth review of these programs but upon input from the stakeholder group, pursued a larger districtwide special education program review. It is now an ideal time for the district to engage in an in-depth review of its specialized special education programs (ELC, Life Skills, SEL, and out of district placements).

Domain 3—Student Learning

Key findings indicate:

- There was limited evidence of differentiation across instructional environments for students with unique learning needs.
- IEPs rely heavily on special education assessments to determine students' current levels of functioning.
- Paraeducators are heavily relied on in instructional settings.
- The district's intervention system at the high school is likely not preventing students from being referred to special education to the extent it could be.
- The Director of Instruction position was not filled in 2022-23. This position will be filled in 2023-24.

Commendations

1. The district has a foundational structure and knowledge of its intervention system as result of significant work by leadership and staff in 2021. This structure can be built upon to provide current best practices.
2. Special education staff care deeply about student progress and advocate for student needs in a collaborative approach with general education teachers and related services providers.
3. The majority of parents are satisfied with their child's progress.

Recommendations

1. Roles and responsibilities for special education teachers, general education teachers, and paraeducators need to be recalibrated. The district should study and re-ignite its own expectations of universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and specially designed instruction and set expectations for implementation. Beyond this, the role of paraeducators in instructional settings has much greater potential than currently utilized.

2. The current districtwide data system needs the ability to internally disaggregate data in subgroups. These data should be analyzed at the district, building, grade/department and classroom levels with regularity. Staff from all areas of student involvement should comprise the team. SRBI Coordinators should receive updated professional development and the ability to ensure the system is being maintained, with administrators supporting fidelity of implementation.
3. The district's intervention system should be updated to current standards aligned with multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) which is composed of a system for both academic needs and social-emotional needs. Combined with a regular district and school data team structure, the updated system should garner better outcomes for students in need of intervention for either area of need.

Domain 4: Communication and Collaboration

Key findings indicate:

- The district's electronic collection of guidance documents is readily available to staff via a shared Google drive.
- Some parents in the district are in strong disagreement with the Director of Special Education and have shared their negative perception publicly throughout this school year

Commendations

1. Brookfield staff are collaborative and strongly dedicated to students with disabilities.
2. Brookfield staff generally have positive relationships with families, are pleased with the level of communication they receive from their child's teacher, and are generally satisfied with their child's special education programming.

Recommendations

1. Establish agreed-upon expectations for common planning and collaboration time consistent across all buildings. These should not be only in preparation for PPTs, but to discuss ongoing student performance, adaptations needed in instruction, and preparation for any students with disabilities to be successful. Building principals should have ownership of scheduling these.
2. The Director should establish regular school-based visits throughout the year to observe students and staff, build relationships, meet with special education teams, and have a deep understanding of the daily routines expected in schools. There should also be regular meetings with the building leadership regarding special education concerns at the building level.
3. Change is inevitable. Follow the tenets of change management including preparation, implementation, and monitoring the change. Ensure any changes to practice are prepared for ahead of time, with communication about the need for the change and what is expected to improve because of it. Set reasonable timelines for implementation and report on progress. Allow space for questions and feedback about the change, acknowledging that there may need to be adjustments.
4. As intended when the special education Supervisor model was implemented, school leaders

should be involved in all PPTs, unless prior discussion with the Supervisor determines it is not necessary. This will alleviate the reactive approach to PPT recommendations that disrupt staffing, schedules, and school routines. As the instructional leader, the school principal can provide insight to curricular expectations in light of individual student needs, support special education teachers in their building, promote a school-wide inclusive culture and related practices, and assist in appropriate and supportive reinforcement or consequences for students with challenging behaviors.

The district's efforts to implement recommendations as a result of this study are likely to reinforce a culture of collective responsibility for all students by all adults. A systematic approach over time will result in increased positive student outcomes and firmly establish a positive culture in the schools.

Appendix A: 2021-22 Data²⁶ Used to Identify Comparison Districts

	Brookfield		Guilford		Monroe		New Fairfield	
	N	% of Total	N	% of Total	N	% of Total	N	% of Total
Female	1,261	48.5	*	*	*	*	1,062	49.8
Male	1,340	51.5	1,613	51.4	1,689	50.5	1,070	50.2
Non-binary	0	0	*	*	*	*	0	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	*	0	0	*	*	*	*
Asian	198	7.6	148	4.7	174	5.2	29	1.4
Black or African American	75	2.9	*	*	97	2.9	34	1.6
Hispanic or Latino of any race	371	14.3	268	8.5	494	14.8	350	16.4
Native Hawaiian or Oth Pacific Islldr	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Two or More Races	30	1.2	170	5.4	130	3.9	62	2.9
White	1,903	73.2	2,507	79.9	2,442	73.0	1,647	77.3
English Learners	103	4.0	46	1.5	43	1.3	82	3.8
Eligible Free or Reduced-Price Meals	539	20.7	376	12.0	334	10.0	317	14.9
Students with Disabilities	381	14.6	405	12.9	480	14.3	348	16.3
Total Students	2,601		3,136		3,345		2,132	
Per Pupil Expenditure (2020-21)	\$18,322		\$20,702		\$18,255		\$20,251	
N Schools	4		7		7		6	
District Grade Range	PK-12		PK-12		PK-12		PK-12	
DRG	B		B		B		B	

²⁶ [EdSight District Profile and Performance reports, 2021-22](#)