

Significant Disproportionality

Feedback from Exit Tickets and Small Group Discussions

Session 11: July 31, 2024

Maryland's methodology for identifying significant disproportionality

- **Appreciation for very rigorous standard/methodology**
- Different standard for gen-ed and special ed is a problem
- Use of lagging data is a problem
- Consider limiting flexibility for LEAs with decreasing risk ratios; continue intensive TA until LEA is below 2.0 in all schools
- Periodic review of methodology is worthwhile

Why has significant disproportionality increased in Maryland?

- Societal issues
- **Post-pandemic challenges**
- Budget shortfalls
- **Staffing shortages**
- Student mental health needs
- Discipline is the primary driver of increases
- **Strategies used to respond to behavior are not addressing underlying student needs**
- Not considering additional support needed for ELL
- **Need more oversight about the implementation of services**
- **Over-referrals to special education** (with new concerns about the impact of new literacy policy and current strategies being used to address behavior concerns)
- Implicit and explicit biases of evaluation tools and staff
- Mistrust between schools and families

Assessment of current MSDE supports for LEAs

- Do not feel there are any supports currently being implemented (MSDE just identifies LEAs that are significantly disproportionate)
- Supports must be insufficient/ineffective because rates have increased
- LEAs need differentiated support

Specific steps for MSDE to help LEAs reduce significant disproportionality

- MSDE recommendations on local codes of conduct
- Look at common root causes and **develop a statewide approach**
 - o **Set standards and disseminate best practices and monitoring**
 - o **Develop standardized eligibility determination checklists for all disability categories**
 - o Lists of evidence-based interventions
 - o Offer more training on interventions
- Help general educators develop a better understanding of disability vs. student needs not related to disability
- Ways to support students who have needs (lack of exposure, opportunity, interrupted instruction) but don't require specialized instruction
- Work with IHEs to support their role in training administrators, counselors, and general educators
- Restorative practices: guidance and training
- Get beyond silo of special education to involve school administrators, school resource officers, school psychologists, etc.
- Provide models for innovative uses of CCEIS funds (e.g., related service providers spending dedicated time in early grades providing support to students and helping educators with universal design)

- Put supports and assistance in each school building that has significant disproportionality
- Partner with organizations that are already doing the work to support schools
- Administrative support around the paperwork burden for teachers
- Develop MSDE capacity to support LEAs rather than relying on outside consultants for each LEA
- Approach solutions using implementation science

Identifying root causes to inform strategies/actions

- Willingness to believe in root causes like bias/racism
- Ensuring that goals and strategies address identified root causes
- **Look for structural causes** (training, staffing, funding, etc.), not just individual beliefs and attitudes
- **Belief systems**
- **Students who are identified because they need “help”** (then have IEPs without SDI/supports)
- **Local codes of conduct**
- Is PBIS part of the problem of over-referrals? (Consider Restorative Practices)
- Culturally competent TA, support, coaching with fidelity

Structural changes that consider cultural diversity

- Embrace diversity
- State standards for EBP for staffing, eligibility determinations, placement decisions/options
- Training
- Retention strategies
- Statewide coaching model
- Create mechanisms for collaboration across districts
- Community involvement
- Teacher/staff workforce diversity
- Expectations for all students/Focus on opportunities for students
- Authentic family engagement (including families as equal partners) to address mistrust and breakdown in relationships