



New Jersey  
Special Education  

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ANNUAL SUMMIT

# Self-Reflective Leadership

Sue Gamm, Esq.



# Area of Study

How to continuously improve instruction and support for students with disabilities – through self-study, stakeholder engagement, and internal/external program assessment.

# Sue Gamm, Esq.

**48 years:** Chicago Public Schools' chief officer for specialized services, OCR attorney/division director, special educator, and consultant (including 15 years with PCG)

**Have supported 65+ districts/SEAs in 30 states/DC** through –

- **Studies** to improve instruction and support for students with low achievement/SwD, and sped disproportionality
- **Drafting** MTSS and special education guidance

**Author & PD** at national, state and local conferences

# LESSONS LEARNED



- Must reflect on instruction and systemic/school-based support to improve outcomes for students with disabilities
- Special education alone cannot fix special education



A cartoon illustration of a detective. He has a large, prominent nose, a grey beard, and is wearing a brown trench coat and a checkered hat with a red bow. He is holding a magnifying glass over his right eye, which is enlarged to fill most of the frame. The background is white.

## COMPONENTS OF REFLECTION

- ✓ Qualitative Data
- ✓ Quantitative Data
- ✓ Interviews & Focus Groups

# QUANTITATIVE DATA



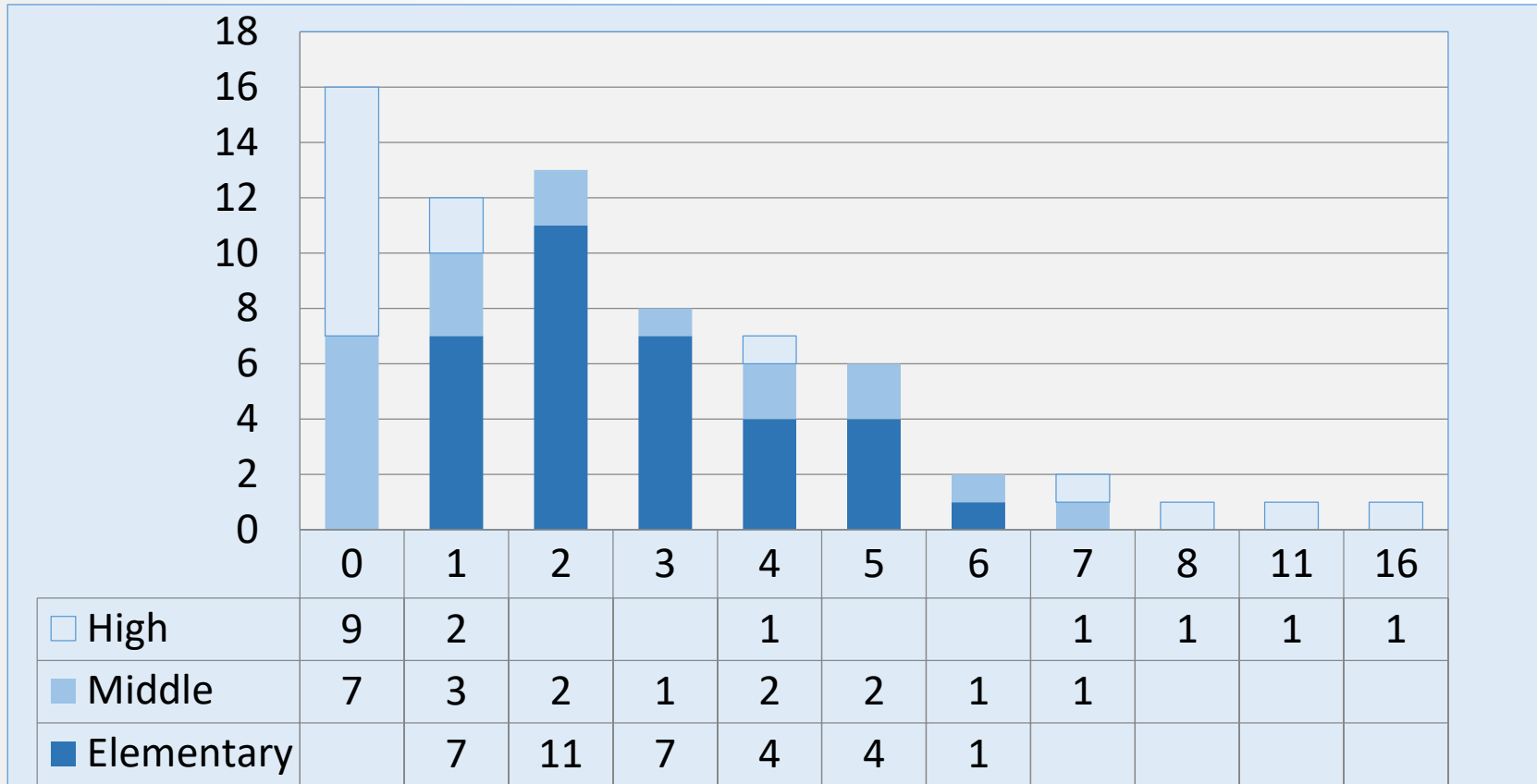
# Demographics (local, state & national)

- Percent by disability area\* & 504
- Risk ratios by race/ethnicity & by English learners
- Educational settings\*
  - General education:  $\geq 80\%$ , 40%-79%,  $< 40\%$
  - Separate schools (in/out-of-district)
- Configuration of services by program
  - Number of students in each & total
  - Number of classes by type & by school, etc.

\*<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/static-tables/index.html>



# Ex: Number of Specialized Classes/School by Grade Level



Elementary Schools: 54 schools & 94 classes  
 Middle Schools: 19 schools & 32 classes  
 High Schools: 17 schools & 44 classes  
 10 specialized programs

# Achievement

- Percent of SwD scoring at least proficient\*
- Attendance
- Suspension: disability compared to no disability (over 10 days, groups of days, ISS, etc.)
  - Use of risk ratios

\*<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/static-tables/index.html>

# Risk Ratios

What's likelihood that: e.g., black students have ED compared to all other students?

$$\frac{\# \text{ black students w/ED} \div \# \text{ all enrolled black students}}{\# \text{ all other students w/ED} \div \# \text{ all others enrolled}}$$

## English learners:

$$\frac{\# \text{ ELs (w/SLD)} \div \# \text{ all enrolled EL students}}{\# \text{ all nonELs (w/SLD)} \div \# \text{ not-EL enrolled}}$$

# Risk Ratio Analysis

A quotient of “1” = perfect proportion

i.e., black students are just as likely as other students to .....

As quotient increases, overrepresentation increases

**RR of “2” = cause for concern**

The smaller the quotient, underrepresentation increases

**RR of 0.25 = cause for concern**

**Investigate concerns**

A large stack of papers and folders is shown, with a magnifying glass placed over it. The stack is composed of numerous sheets of paper, some of which are yellowed, suggesting age or frequent use. The magnifying glass is black with a circular lens, and its handle is visible. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window, and the foreground is a white surface. On the left side of the image, there is a vertical bar with a gradient of colors: blue, teal, green, and orange.

# QUALITATIVE DATA

# Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS)/NJTSS

- Written framework
- Training
- Implementation
- Monitoring

## Location, Referral, Identification & Evaluation:

Look at procedures, standards, guidance, etc.

NJ requires LEAs to provide/document effectiveness of interventions used prior to the referral of a student for a determination of eligibility for special education and related services. N.J.A.C.6A:14-3.3(a)3i; 6A:14-3.3(b)

**Absent solid NJTSS/MTSS foundation, what's confidence special education referrals/eligibility determinations are reliable?**

**Instructional Support.** For early childhood/school-aged students, what are district initiatives/training to improve:

- **Inclusivity.** Instruction with support of special educators & paraprofessionals
- **Separate Classes/Schools.** Instruction aligned with core curriculum for students taking regular state & aligned with alternate standards
- **Instruction for ELs with IEPs**
- **Assistive Technology.** Access to/usage of assistive technology
- **Post-Secondary Transition.** Transition activities and services for post-secondary success, including access to community-based work experiences

**Configuration of Special Education.** Briefly describe each program, placement criteria, etc.

## **Professional Development (PD)**

- **Structure for PD.** Number of days available for staff development (school-based and district-wide), any mandatory PD for special ed/other personnel, e.g., principals, during week/substitutes, etc.
- **Content.** PD available for special/general educators, paraprofessionals, and related service providers; how content is determined, etc.
- **Collaborative PD.** Extent to which general, special & EL administrators collaboratively manage PD.



- Special education written standard operating procedural manuals – electronic on internet?
- IDEA state performance plan outcomes and IDEA compliance determination
- Compliance issues
- Examples of regular data reports
- Parent involvement
- Accountability



# Interviews & Focus Groups

- District leadership
- General education administrators
- Special education administrators
- General education teachers
- Special education teachers
- Related service personnel
- Paraprofessionals
- Parents, advocacy, community-based organizations
- Union representatives
- State board of ed representatives

**PROBES**



# MTSS Framework – General Overview

- Data collection & use (progress monitoring & problem solving)
- Academic interventions
- Behavior support
- EL support
- Guidance for special ed evaluation referral

## Eligibility

- 504
- Special education
- EL/special education

# Placement & Instruction

- Inclusive vs separate class & school
- Instruction/intervention in general/special classes
- Behavior support/intervention
- Progress monitoring
- Assistive technology
- Scheduling
- Class size
- Personnel shortages
- Secondary transition & community-based instruction
- Professional development
- Parent engagement
- School choice

## Collaboration & Support

- Interdepartmental
- Within special education department
- School level: principal leadership, sped/gen educators/related services providers & paraprofessionals

## Operational Issues

- Compliance/dispute resolution
- Transportation
- Fiscal issues – Medicaid reimbursement, high costs

## Accountability

# Putting the Pieces Together





# Compile

- Quantitative data
- Qualitative data
- Information from interviews and focus groups
- Any survey data

Extensiveness of written summary depends on resources

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## General Structure

- Implementation plan/map resources
- Written guidance
- Training
- Data/reports
- Monitoring/accountability

## NJTSS

- Have board policy/vision
- Establish/improve leadership team
- Attend to achievement & behavior
- Address English learners
- Relationship of NJTSS to sped/504 referral

## Demographic Review

- Identify/investigate outlier data
- Attend to disproportionality

## Inclusive Education

- Configuration of services & placement
- Early childhood education
- First teaching & effective support/instruction
- English learners

## Special Classes

- Rigor & quality of instruction
- Equity
- Address English learners

## Transition

- Access to community-based training

## Parent Involvement

## Collaboration

## Fiscal Issues



**FINAL  
THOUGHTS**

## Internal Review

- **Self assessment of MTSS** [http://www.florida-rti.org/gtips/docs/self\\_assessment\\_of\\_mtss\\_\(sam\).pdf](http://www.florida-rti.org/gtips/docs/self_assessment_of_mtss_(sam).pdf)
- **Comprehensive Integrated Three-Tiered Model of Prevention** <http://www.ci3t.org/measures>
- **Inclusive Schools – 10 Steps to Implementing Effective Inclusive Practices**  
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academics/10-steps-to-implementing-effective-inclusive-practices.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

## Eternal Review

### Bottom Line

- Must involve general education
- Need leadership buy-in



# Contact Information

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