Staffing Study Report

Judson Independent School District
January 23, 2025

Purpose

To determine if the district is making optimal use of available resources to provide services to students with disabilities embedded in effective research-based practice
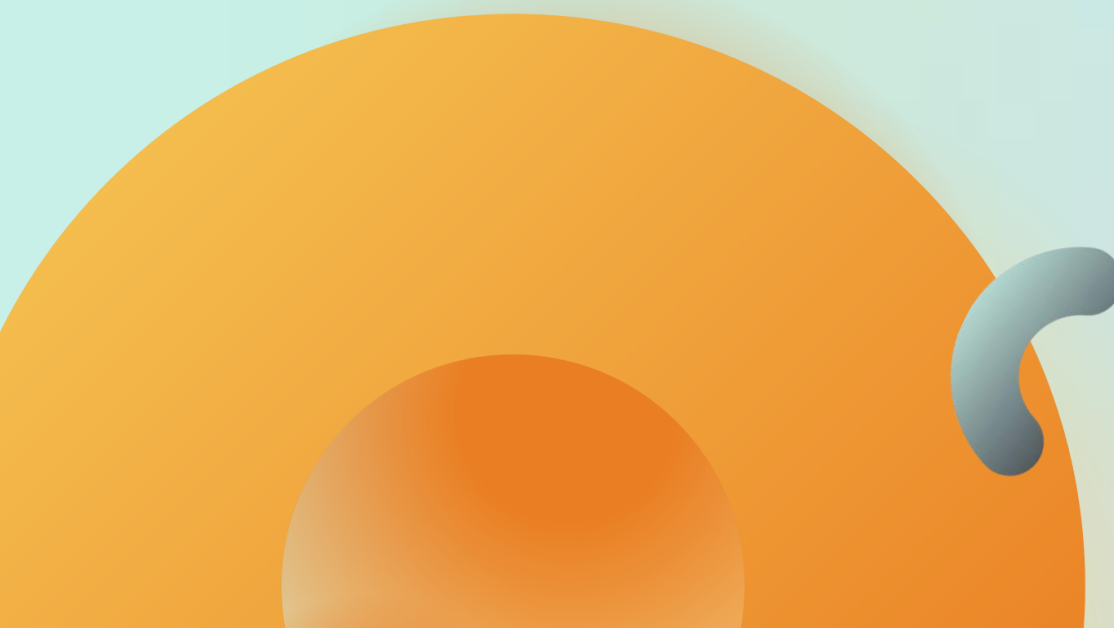
Four Critical Elements

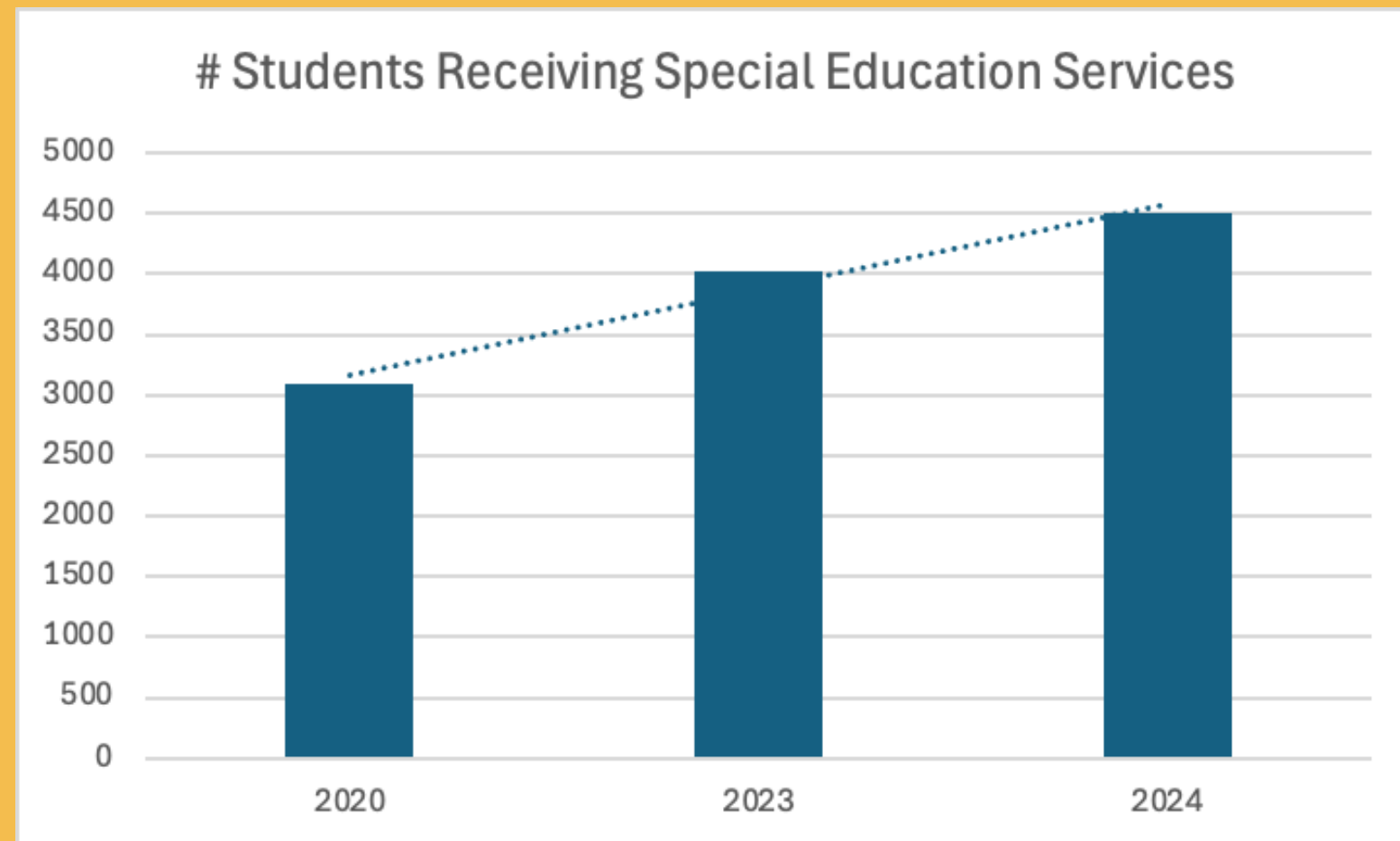Sufficiency

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Appropriateness

Methodologies

- Comparable District Study
- Surveys of Instructional Staff
- Key Staff Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Classroom Observations
- District Data Reviewed

Unique Factors

- The number of students receiving special education services has grown from 3,100 (2020 RDA) to 4,018 served (2023 RDA). The number is currently closer to 4,500 students.

- The district is close to several military installations.

  - Population tends to be mobile

  - A number of medically involved students because of access to military medical facilities.

Findings

Sufficiency

- Comparative data and low staffing ratios indicate the district is sufficiently staffed with special education teachers and paraprofessionals

- The department has a solid organizational structure and delineates roles and responsibilities

- Clear lines of communications

- Special education staff is visible and easily accessible

- The executive director and her staff are well-regarded

Sufficiency

- There is sufficient appraisal staff and speech-language pathologists to support campus-based efforts in providing services for students with disabilities.

- The pay structure is one reason the district may be sufficiently staffed with special education teachers, educational assistants, appraisal staff, and SLPs. The district has diligently addressed compensations for special education teachers and educational assistants.

Efficiency

- The district has a higher percentage of students with Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disabilities than the state and the Region 20 average.

- Special education staffing recommendations are based on ratios and rely on various categorical options for students with disabilities. Assigning teachers and educational assistants to programs could lead to inefficient staff use. The district is moving away from this practice and is using a non-categorial approach to assigning staff.

Efficiency

- There is a heavy reliance on Resource and self-contained ECSE settings.

- Resource classes were "stacked," with the special education teacher providing instruction in numerous courses within the content areas

- Child Find—Students are typically eligible as SI and ARD committee recommendations often fail to consider the full continuum of services available.

- There are efforts to move students from self-contained ECSE settings to more inclusive environments.

Effectiveness

- Students with disabilities did not meet minimum performance standards for STAAR 3 – 8 in all subject areas, they did not meet minimum performance standards for EOC passing rates in three subject areas and did not meet state graduation target. STAAR passing rates have improved over the past three years.

- The lack of strong collaborative teaching approaches results in the ineffective use of special education teachers and poorer outcomes for students with disabilities.

Appropriateness

- There is a need for more training and resources specific to collaborative teaching.

- There is a need for more collaboration time between special education and general education teachers.

Recommendations

- Continue efforts to utilize a non-categorical approach to staffing that is part of the student-centered scheduling process.

- Continue to refine practices using a student-centered scheduling process in all schools.

- Provide clear guidance and communication to staff members regarding the continuum of support available for students with disabilities.

- Improve practices for evaluating students with disabilities, especially those with Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disabilities, to ensure the accurate identification, appropriate placement, and effective support services.

Recommendations

- Continue the district's efforts to revise and improve Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to build consensus and understanding district-wide.

- Ensure service providers are trained in research-based practices for serving high-needs students, such as those identified with autism, significant behavioral needs, and social-emotional needs.

Recommendations

- Increase the effectiveness of in-class support models to improve services for students with disabilities.

- Provide consistent training to special education teachers in targeted instructional techniques, including systems for ongoing progress monitoring to ensure smaller gaps in performance between typically developing peers and students with disabilities.

Recommendations

- Continue to connect best practices for students with disabilities with best practices for all students such as multilevel instruction, flexible grouping, use of instructional technology, activity-based learning, peer tutoring models, and positive behavioral supports.

- Provide information and resources to principals regarding creative ways to increase teachers' planning time and use that time more effectively