BOARD LEARNING SESSION | 30 MINUTES

CAMBRIDGE-ISANTI SCHOOLS

EVERY STUDENT. EVERY DAY.

# Special Education: The Why Behind the Work

**Beyond numbers. Beyond labels.**

**Toward access, progress, and independence.**


CAMBRIDGE
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SCHOOLS
Welcome!
YOU ARE NOW ENTERING
THE
MYSTICAL WORLD
OF
ACRONYMS
IDEA
IEP
FAPE
LRE
MDE
MARSS

# Special Education Isn't Optional. How We Deliver It Matters

**IDEA**
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Eligible students receive individualized special education and related services.

**LRE**
Least Restrictive Environment
Students learn with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

**FAPE**
Free Appropriate Public Education
Services must be designed to enable appropriate progress based on individual circumstances.

**IEP**
Individualized Education Program
A legally required plan describing goals, services, supports, and how progress is measured.

**What this means for our district:** *We cannot make decisions based solely on convenience, staffing preferences, disability labels, or a one-size-fits-all model.*

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# The Special Education Process

KEY STEPS, TIMELINES, AND PARENT DECISIONS

Guided by IDEA, Minnesota Rules, and MDE Guidance

## 1 Request for Evaluation



A parent/guardian or district staff member submits a written request for a special education evaluation.

## 2 District Response to Request



Within **15 school days**, the district must notify the parent in writing whether we will conduct an evaluation.

**15 school days**
(Minn. R. 3525.2700)

## 3 Parent Consent for Evaluation



The district cannot start the initial evaluation until written parent/guardian consent is provided.

## 4 Evaluation Conducted



Once consent is received, the district completes the initial evaluation and provides a copy of the evaluation report to the parent.

**30 school days after consent**
(Minn. R. 3525.2550, (Minn. R. 3525.2710)

## 5 Eligibility IEP Meeting



If the student is eligible, the district holds an initial IEP team meeting **within 30 calendar days** of determining eligibility.

**30 calendar days** after eligibility
(34 C.F.R. § 300.323)

## 6 Prior Written Notice & Proposed IEP




After the meeting, the district provides Prior Written Notice and a copy of the proposed IEP at least **14 calendar days** before the proposed effective date (or within a reasonable timeframe).

**At least 14 calendar days**
(Minn. R. 3525.3600)

## 7 Parent Consent for Initial Services



Special education services begin only after the district receives written parent/guardian consent to the initial IEP.

The passage of 14 days does not authorize initial services. Written parent consent is required.

## Ongoing Timelines

After the initial IEP, the district continues to review, update, and reevaluate as required by IDEA, Minnesota Rules, and MDE guidance.

### Annual Review
(All Students with an IEP)

- The IEP is reviewed at least annually (meeting date to meeting date).
- Changes to the IEP are implemented upon receipt of parent consent or after 14 calendar days from notice.

**At least annually**
(34 C.F.R. § 300.324; Minn. Stat. 125A.091)

### Reevaluation
(All Students with an IEP)

- The IEP team considers the need for a reevaluation at least every three years and completes it when necessary.
- Timelines for completing reevaluations follow the same 30 school day timeline after consent, as applicable.

**At least every 3 years**
(Minn. R. 3525.2710)

### Other Key Timelines

- **Provide prior written notice** when the district **refuses a parent request**: Within 14 calendar days (Minn. R. 3525.3600).
- **Secondary transition planning**: Addressed in the IEP during grade 9 (Minn. Stat. 125A.08; Minn. R. 3525.2900).
- **Notification of transfer of rights**: Before the student turns 17 (34 C.F.R. § 300.320; § 300.520).
- **Services continue until age 22**: Services end on the student's 22nd birthday (Minn. Stat. 125A.03).

# Why an IEP is a starting point—not the finish line

## PLAN

Individualized goals and services

## TEACH

Specially designed instruction

## CHECK & ADJUST

Use progress data to improve

**The right measure is not only “Did we deliver the service?” but “What did the student learn?”**

# Cambridge Isanti:
# More students served; overall enrollment slightly lower

**1,236 → 1,369**

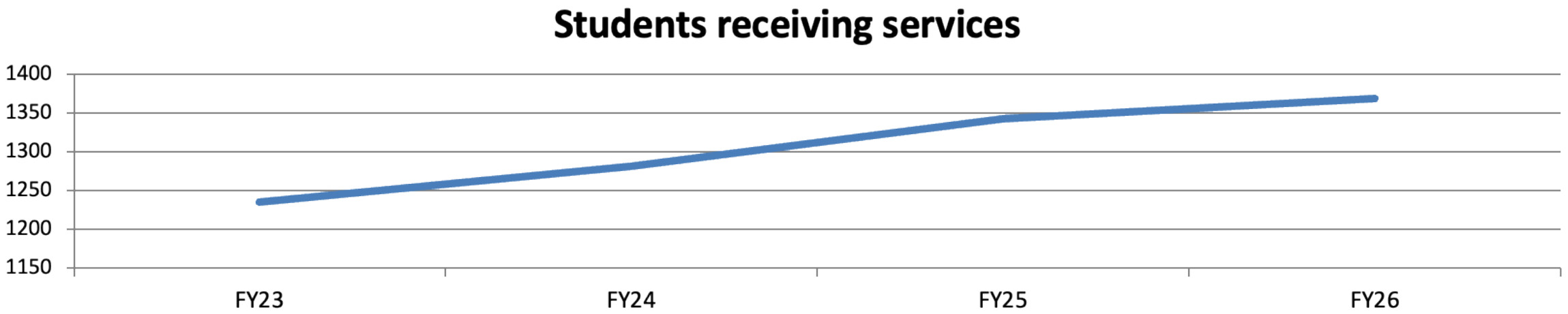
Students receiving IEP/IFSP/IIIP services

**+10.8%**

Growth in students receiving services

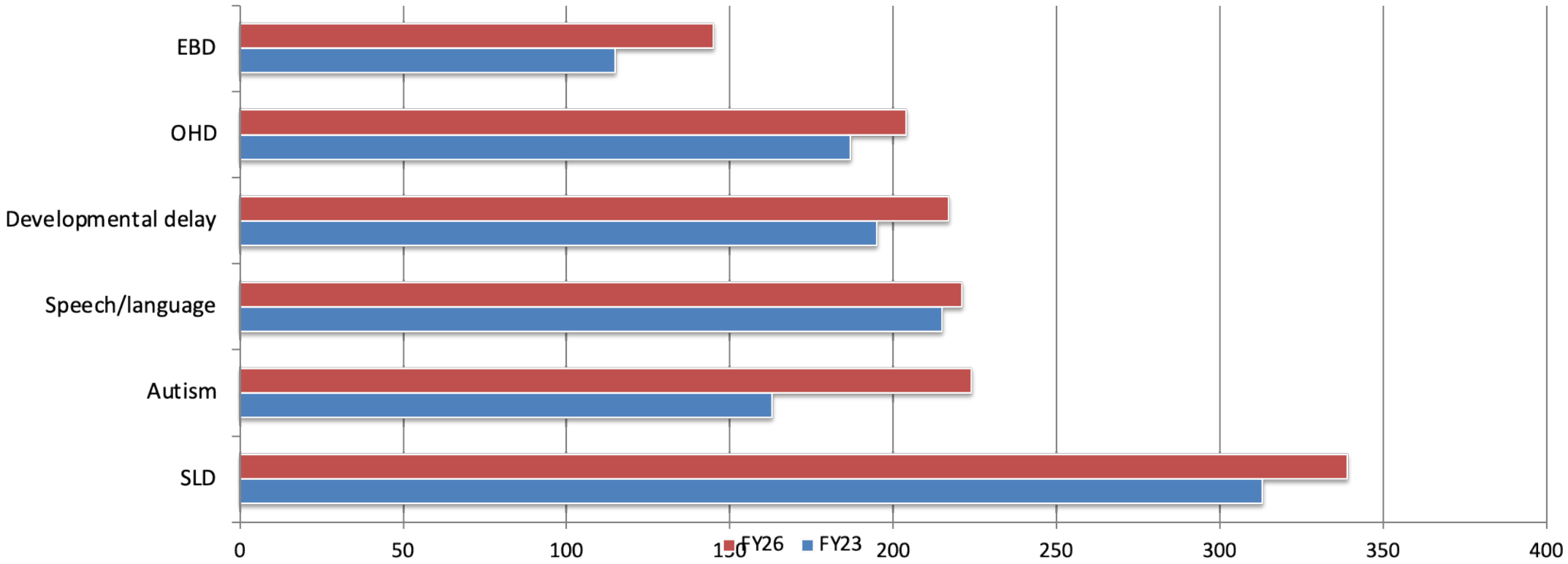
**−1.0%**

Change in overall district enrollment




Board takeaway: Demand for individualized services is growing even as total enrollment is not.

# Student needs: more than one disability profile




What stands out:  SLD is largest (339); autism increased by 61; EBD increased by 30.


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HANG ON TO YOUR SEATS!
AS WE SHIFT TO
slido
LINK
LET'S TALK
COMMUNITY
QUESTIONS!

PROGRAM FOUNDATION

# Student Services extends beyond IEPs

## Section 504 Legislative & Operational Framework

### Civil Rights Protection

Guarantees equal access to general education for students with documented physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities.

### General Education Access

Unlike IEPs providing specialized instruction, 504 plans deliver classroom accommodations, environmental modifications, and testing adjustments.

### Multi-Profile Dynamic

Serves an increasing number of learners presenting with overlapping health, executive function, sensory, and anxiety-based access barriers.

**Board takeaway: Section 504 plans ensure compliance and equal access within general education without requiring specialized IEP placement and specially designed instruction.**

THE WHY BEHIND THE WORK

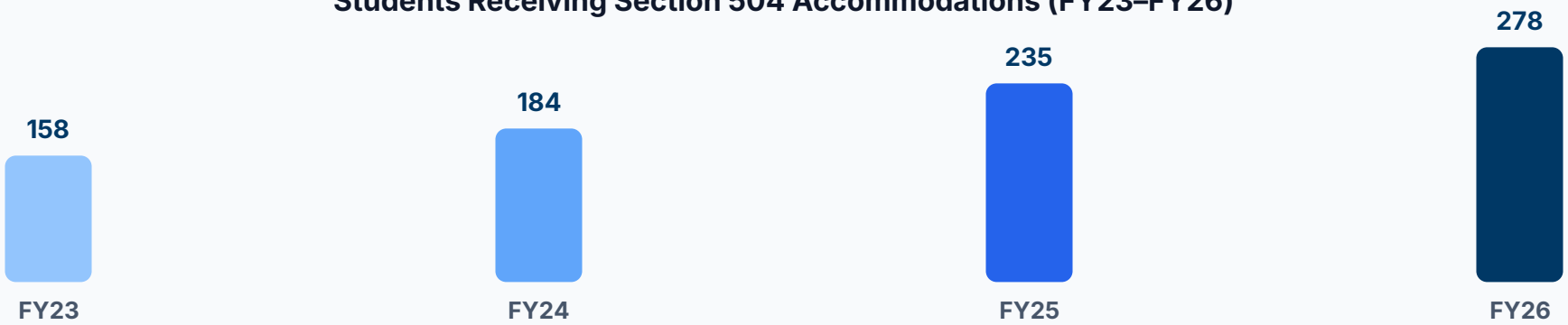
# Significant growth in total 504 accommodation plans

**158 → 278**
Students receiving 504 accommodations

**+75.9%**
Growth in active Section 504 plans

**-1.0%**
Change in overall district enrollment

**Students Receiving Section 504 Accommodations (FY23–FY26)**




**Board takeaway: Demand for general education accommodations is accelerating substantially faster than total district enrollment trends.**

# Our Next Chapter: Moving From Services to Student Outcomes

**Instruction:** Are we using effective, evident-based curriculum and specially designed instruction?

**Data:** Are we consistently measuring progress and changing instruction when students aren't learning?

**Access and independence:** Are our service models helping students in core instruction, build relationships, and become less dependent on adult support when appropriate?

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# Our Focus This Year

BUILDING A STRONGER SYSTEM OF SUPPORT TOGETHER

In partnership with Teaching & Learning (T&L) and aligned to the MnMTSS Framework

## 1 Special Education Curriculum Audit



- Completed review of current curriculum and instructional resources
- Identified strengths and areas for growth (gaps)
- Next: Develop an action plan to address gaps and ensure access to evidence-based instruction

## 2 Scope & Sequence Alignment



- Partnering with T&L to develop a scope and sequence that aligns to special education
- Identifying must-have standards, skills, and instructional priorities
- Using the alignment to drive focus, consistency, and improved outcomes across grade levels

## 3 EduClimber Implementation



- Exploring EduClimber districtwide
- Building staff capacity and providing ongoing support
- Using data to inform instructional decisions and monitor student progress

## 4 Staff Communication & Professional Learning



- Partnering closely with T&L on newsletters to all staff
- Coordinating professional learning
- Aligning with the MnMTSS Framework to support all staff (General Education to Special Education) and every student

## 5 Vertical Alignment



- Facilitating cross-grade level discussions (EC–High School)
- Aligning data, assessments, and instructional practices
- Building consistency across the continuum of services

## 6 Universal Access & 504 Supports



- Engaging in district discussions around universal access
- Exploring proactive supports to address the increase in 504 plans
- Strengthening systems to ensure every student can access learning environments with appropriate supports

## 7 Guiding Questions for Removing from Core



- Developing clear, data-driven guiding questions
- Ensuring consistent decision-making across the district
- Keeping students in core whenever possible with appropriate supports

**Aligned Systems. Collaborative Practices. *Brighter Futures.***

# Special Education Department Celebrations

**Ukeru Implementation:**
Positive staff feedback, students responded well. Supports staff safety. Looking to pilot our district center based programs and strongly considering bringing it districtwide.




**Disproportionate Monitoring:**
Cambridge-Isanti is currently working with MDE on Indicator 4, which examines disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates among Hispanic students receiving special education services.

These indicators are important areas to monitor and provide opportunities to strengthen our practices, improve consistency, and ensure equitable outcomes for all students.

# When asked at the next community outing….. what I hope you take away:

**"Why does the district spend so much time and money on special education?"**

**Special education is a legal obligation, decisions are individualized, services must be appropriate and effective, and the district is accountable for both compliance and student progress.**

# Thank you for supporting EVERY student!