
Princeton Special Education Audit Findings

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Purpose

- Comprehensive review of Special Education Department
- Focus on 7 key systems
 - Staff climate, schedules, recruiting staff, the onboarding process, staff collaboration, ongoing professional development, and curriculum and instruction.
- Goal: Improve outcomes and sustainability

Data Collection

The data collection process included the following:

- Staff Surveys
- Listening Sessions
- Document Reviews
- Classroom Observations
- Analysis of HR and Student Achievement Data

Summary of Findings: Surveys

The audit of the Princeton Public Schools Special Education Department highlighted key areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

- Strong commitment to student success
- Dedicated special education staff
- Staff shortages impact morale
- Inconsistencies in onboarding and gaps in professional development
- Staff climate reflects concerns about workload and support, impacting retention and morale.
- Scheduling challenges
- Curriculum alignment and instructional consistency require targeted improvements.

Summary of Findings: Listening Sessions

- Staff demonstrate strong commitment and collaboration
- Student needs continue to increase in complexity
- Staffing shortages impact service delivery
- Resource limitations strain program sustainability
- Targeted recommendations address current challenges
- Strategic action supports stronger outcomes and staff retention

Summary of Findings: Curriculum and Materials

- Tools for identifying student skill need are not yet used consistently across the system.
- Though some sites and some roles have more access to diagnostic tools and evidence-based intervention materials than others there is no clear scope & sequence nor a clear plan for consistent materials as students transition between sites.
- Some teachers are left to identify their own student skill gaps and materials.

Summary of Findings: Staff Development

- District staff development time offers opportunities for stronger alignment
- Special education teachers benefit from general education training
- Additional role-specific professional learning will strengthen practice
- Time can better support legally required tasks and instructional priorities
- Building-level meetings present opportunities for focused work

Recommendations

Staffing & Workload

- Focus on low-cost, high-impact system improvements
- Increase clarity around special education roles and expectations
- Use meeting and staff development time more strategically
- Protect duty-free prep and lunch time
- Strengthen staffing stability and scheduling
- Build district wide behavior support capacity

Recommendations

Scheduling & Service Models

- Refine co-teaching models to align with student needs
- Develop site schedules that balance service delivery and least restrictive environment
- Conduct biannual reviews of schedules and workload to guide staffing decisions

Behavioral & Classroom Supports

- Clarify roles in behavior support across staff
- Strengthen behavioral support spaces to meet program needs

Recommendations

Professional Development & Training

- Strengthen administrator capacity to support special education improvement
- Provide role-specific professional learning for SPED staff within contract hours
- Use district staff development days more flexibly and intentionally
- Clearly identify required SPED training and invite participation as appropriate
- Allow SPED staff to prioritize mandated responsibilities when needed

Recommendations

Professional Development & Training

- Add 30 minutes weekly for para and case manager collaboration
- Review student and classroom needs
- Build student independence
- Provide coaching and feedback
- Dedicate one day during Back-to-School Week for para training: Review IEPs, meet case managers, prepare materials
- Create clear onboarding with key resources: Roles guide, handbook, behavior management

Recommendations

Special Education/ General Education Collaboration

- Provide SPED 101 training for general education staff
- Add IEP Snapshot to eduCLIMBER for easy Gen Ed access
- Review diagnostics and processes to identify student skill gaps
- Identify scope, sequence, and evidence-based materials used across sites for:
Math, Reading, Writing, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Life Skills (OTECA),
Executive Functioning
- Offer training and coaching to ensure faithful use of materials

What has been done in 2025-26 in response to this Special Education Audit?

Staffing & Workload

- Students with similar needs have been grouped together for better use of space and resources
- Utilizing paraprofessionals differently
- Instructional models that work best for individual students has been examined and changed
- Increase clarity around special education roles and expectations as well as general education roles and responsibilities
- Use meeting and staff development time more strategically
- Protect duty-free prep and lunch time

What has been done in 2025-26 in response to this Special Education Audit?

Scheduling and service models:

- Focus on Least Restrictive Environment, Exposure to the General Education Curriculum while also giving second and sometimes third scoops of instruction in the area of need
- This falls into our MTSS model and actually give kids more instruction in the areas they struggle with
- Building are having solid discussions on Tier 1/Core instruction
 - interventions, modifications and accommodations
 - Accessing MTSS Specialists through RRSEC

Control Spaces: Development of appropriate spaces for setting III programs, DCD spaces, and break spaces both in general education and special education settings

What has been done in 2025-26 in response to this Special Education Audit?

Professional Development for Teachers and Paraprofessionals

- New Teacher Training - specific to special education for a great portion
 - Teacher and paraprofessional training provided each year by RRSEC
- Staff Development Days-giving time for special education specific topics and directed time for due process requirements
- Due Process time carved out with support from Coordinator and Director of Student Services
- Time for Collaboration with teachers
- Monthly Special Education Meetings in each building- some more
- Paraprofessionals having access to IEPs and training on specifics- also started training with bus drivers on this
- Monthly collaboration time with paraprofessionals- added 30 min a month
- Building Student Independence - Utilizing the Para Matrix provided by RRSEC

What has been done in 2025-26 in response to this Special Education Audit?

- IEPs have all been uploaded to EduCLIMBER and hopefully into Skyward in the future
- Using Fastbridge or STAR and Lexia scores to identify gaps
- Curriculum, scope and sequence and evidence-based materials, training and coaching:
 - Partnering with Director of Teaching and Learning and Assessment and Special Programs Coordinator
 - Starting with Reading and Math
 - Evidence-based
 - Some training has been provided, but need to include more follow up training