



# Special Education

May 18, 2026



# Purpose:

**This presentation provides:**

- . An overview of the Special Education & Intervention Service Delivery Review**
- . A summary of the district's 2025–2026 IDEA LEA Determination**
- . Key findings related to instructional practices and student outcomes**
- . Initial priorities for district improvement planning**



# Special Education & Intervention Service Delivery Review

# Framing the Work

This review provides a comprehensive, multi-source analysis of our special education and intervention system:

- Achievement, placement, and demographic data
- 98 classroom snapshot observations (K-8)
- Staff, administrator, and family input
- Review of district documents & programs
- Review of service delivery models by special educators and service providers



## Special Education & Intervention Service Delivery Review

Somerville Public Schools - Grades K-8

March 2026

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# Key Findings - Strengths

**Somerville Public Schools demonstrates a strong foundation for inclusive practices, with established structures and a clear commitment to supporting diverse learners.**

- **Strong commitment to inclusive practices**
- **Implementation of intensive, research-based interventions by special educators**
- **Foundation for collaborative teaching between general education and MLE staff**
- **Increased Emphasis on early literacy and tiered reading supports**
- **Positive classroom environments**
- **Educator commitment to diverse learners and leadership openness to improvement**
- **Strong foundation for continued program improvement**

# Key Findings - Opportunities for Growth

The review identifies several areas of growth, largely centered around consistency across classrooms and schools, that can be synthesized into the following core themes\* :

- **Instructional practices related to scaffolding, differentiation, and strategies to access to grade level content are not consistently implemented**
- **MTSS is well defined, but implementation is inconsistent across schools**
- **Curriculum adaptation is not consistently applied to support diverse learners**
- **Greater clarity, alignment, and consistency are needed across district practices and service delivery**

*\*Seven areas of growth identified in the report, consolidated into four core themes*

# Instructional Practices

- **Consistent use of scaffolding and differentiation was not evident across classrooms**
- **Access to grade-level content was not consistently evident in instruction**
- **Curriculum adaptations and differentiated instructional practices to support the individualized learning needs of students were not consistently evident within substantially separate classrooms.**
- **Despite strong inclusive structures and high inclusion rates, achievement gaps remain for students with disabilities**

# MTSS Infrastructure is Robust, Variable in Practice

- **MTSS is well defined in district documentation; screening tools, intervention structures, and problem-solving teams are established, but implementation is inconsistent across schools**
- **Stakeholders raised concerns regarding consistency of intervention implementation and clarity of tiered supports**
- **Interventions are not consistently matched to student need**
- **Problem-solving structures are in place, but not consistently used to inform instruction**

# Curriculum Adaptation

- Curriculum adaptation is not consistently applied across classrooms and settings
- Students experience different levels of rigor depending on classroom or placement
- Grade-level standards are not consistently maintained across instructional settings
- Modifications sometimes reduce access to core content rather than support it

# Alignment, Clarity and Roles

- **Staff reported variability in roles, expectations, and implementation across schools and settings**
- **Expectations for instructional practices vary across classrooms and schools**
- **Alignment between general education and specialized instruction is inconsistent**
- **Professional learning and guidance are not consistently aligned to support implementation**



SY 25-26 LEA Determination

# SY 24-25 LEA Determination

Last years LEA Determination, placed Somerville in Needs Assistance.

As a result, we engaged in a process with DESE to conduct a root cause analysis and create an action plan to address issues identified in our determination, which was submitted at the beginning of March.

We chose to look at student achievement and determined that we need to build coherence through professional learning:

- By June 2027, the district will complete a coherent, sequenced professional learning plan across all district wide, school based and department based professional development days focused on instructional practices that strengthen access to Tier 1 Instruction and support the generalization of skills for students with disabilities.

# SY 25-26 LEA Determination

This years LEA Determination placed Somerville in Meets Requirements.

- Overall score: 83% (29/35 points)
- Strong compliance indicators
- Exceeded state target for inclusion/LRE
- No findings of significant disproportionality

Percentage (%)	Determination Rating	
83%	Meets Requirements (MR)	

  

Scoring		
	Total Possible Points Available	Points Earned
Performance	16	11
Compliance	16	15
Other Considerations	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>

# Student Outcomes Remain an Area of Focus

The Special Education Department recognizes that student outcomes remain an important area of focus, even as the district’s LEA Determination improved to Meets Requirements this year.

- MCAS proficiency rates for students with disabilities remain below state targets
- Gaps persist across ELA and Mathematics
- Review findings help identify system-level factors contributing to these outcomes

Assessment Results Reading MCAS				
Proficiency Percentage of 4th Grade Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	17.05%	24%	1	1
Proficiency Percentage of 8th Grade Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	12.31%	15%	1	
Proficiency Percentage of High School Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	12.64%	30%	1	
Assessment Results Math MCAS				
Proficiency Percentage of 4th Grade Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	11.49%	15%	1	0
Proficiency Percentage of 8th Grade Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	9.23%	11%	1	
Proficiency Percentage of High School Children with Disabilities Against Grade Level Standards (Indicator 3B)	4.94%	19%	0	

The Special Education Department remains committed to building on the work completed this year through our collaboration with DESE to ensure students receive the supports and services they need to make meaningful progress.





# Our Work Going Forward

# Priorities for Continued Growth :

The findings from both the Special Education Review and LEA Determination action planning process highlighted common themes that will guide the district's continued improvement efforts:

- **Strengthen Professional Learning**
- **Ensure Consistent MTSS Implementation**
- **Improve Instruction in Sub-Separate Settings**
- **Increase Communication and System-Wide Consistency**

# Strengthening Tier 1 Instruction Through Inclusive Practices

Findings from both the Special Education Review and LEA Determination action planning process highlighted the need for greater consistency in instructional practices, access to grade-level curriculum, and implementation across classrooms and schools.

As a result, the district's improvement efforts will focus on strengthening Tier 1 instruction through inclusive instructional practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

- Increase access to grade-level curriculum for all learners
- Strengthen scaffolding and differentiation across classrooms
- Build consistency in instructional practices districtwide
- Support educators in proactively designing instruction that reduces barriers to learning
- Strengthen student engagement and access through high-quality Tier 1 instruction

# Building Coherence Through Professional Learning

## Aligned Professional Learning

- Districtwide professional learning focused on strengthening Tier 1 instruction and instructional access
- Shared expectations for scaffolding, differentiation, and access to grade-level curriculum for general education and sub-separate settings
- Consistent instructional language and practices across schools and settings

## Embedded Support & Coaching

- Coaching and mentoring through EmpowerEd
- Additional support for coaches, interventionists, and CPT leaders
- Opportunities for administrators and educators to reinforce learning within existing district and school-based structures
- Ongoing alignment between general education, specialized instruction, and intervention systems