

# Inclusion for All: One District's Journey to Special Education Reform Spokane Public Schools

Director of Teaching and Learning, Becky Ramsey  
Principal, Chase Middle School, Heather Chase



# Our Team

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## Becky Ramsey

- Director of Special Education 2018-2022
- Current Director of Teaching and Learning
- School Administrator
- Special Education Teacher

## Heather Chase

- Principal at Chase Middle School
- Former Assistant Principal
- Math Teacher

"The evidence is clear that disabilities do not cause disparate outcomes, but that the system itself perpetuates limitations in expectations and false belief systems about who children with disabilities can be and how much they can achieve in their lifetime."

Washington State Governor's Office of Education  
Ombuds, November 2014



DREAM.  
ACCESS.  
OPPORTUNITY.

# Spokane Public Schools

## "Excellence for Everyone through Equity"

29,000 Students

5,000 Staff  
members

Second Largest  
Employer in  
Spokane  
Washington

Political Landscape

41% Students of  
Color

53% Free and  
Reduced Lunch

16% Special  
education

3% 504

7% ELL

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# EQUITY THROUGH INCLUSION

Improved  
Student  
Outcomes

School  
Board

Teachers  
and  
Support  
Staff

Central  
Office

Principal

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# School Director Role

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1. Responsible school district governance
  2. Communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning
  3. Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success
  4. Holding the district accountable for student learning
  5. Engagement of the community in education
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Standard 1. d. Provide responsible school district governance by adopting policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student achievement.



- Equity Resolution June 2020
  - "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Spokane Public Schools will prioritize resources and training to ensure high levels of inclusion for students with disabilities"
  - Equity Policy 1350, approved September of 2021



Standard 2. a. Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations by articulating the conviction that all students can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances or resources.



- Board Adopted Priority Goals 20/21 and 21/22
  - Prioritize resources and training to ensure high levels of inclusion for students with disabilities - goal of 80% of students 80% of the time
  - Continue inclusionary practices pilot and invest professional development and resources that includes the creation of a multi-year plan to improve inclusion rates by June 2021



Standard 2. c. Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations by adopting a collaboratively developed district plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students



- 2022-2028 Strategic Plan Guiding principals
  - equity
  - being student-centered
  - **inclusion**
  - innovation
  - trust & collaboration
- Priority Three: Student Supports and Transitions
  - SPS will invest in supporting students as they transition through grade levels and schools, to ensure their success during these milestone years. SPS will also invest in increasing inclusion...

Standard 3. e. Create conditions district-wide for staff and student success by adopting and monitoring an annual budget that allocates resources based on the district's vision, goals and priorities for student learning.

- Budget Priorities helped support lower caseloads and class size K-12
- Allocation of ESSR funds to support districtwide professional development



Standard 5. a. Engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

- Disability Advocates
  - Inclusion Conference in Spokane
  - Every Student Counts Alliance from 2016 Discipline Reform
  - County Funds for Inclusion Series in 2020
- Strategic Planning Process
  - Community engagement reflected the board's direction
  - Diverse stakeholders

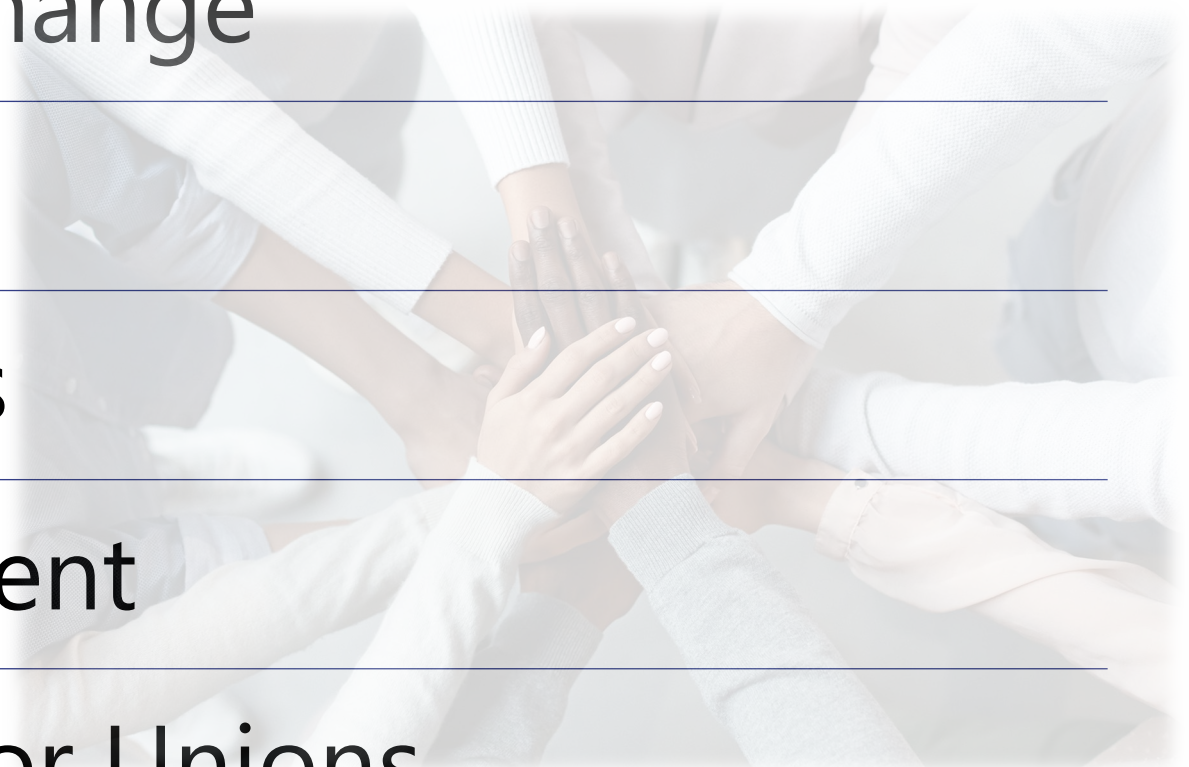




# Central Office Special Education Director Role

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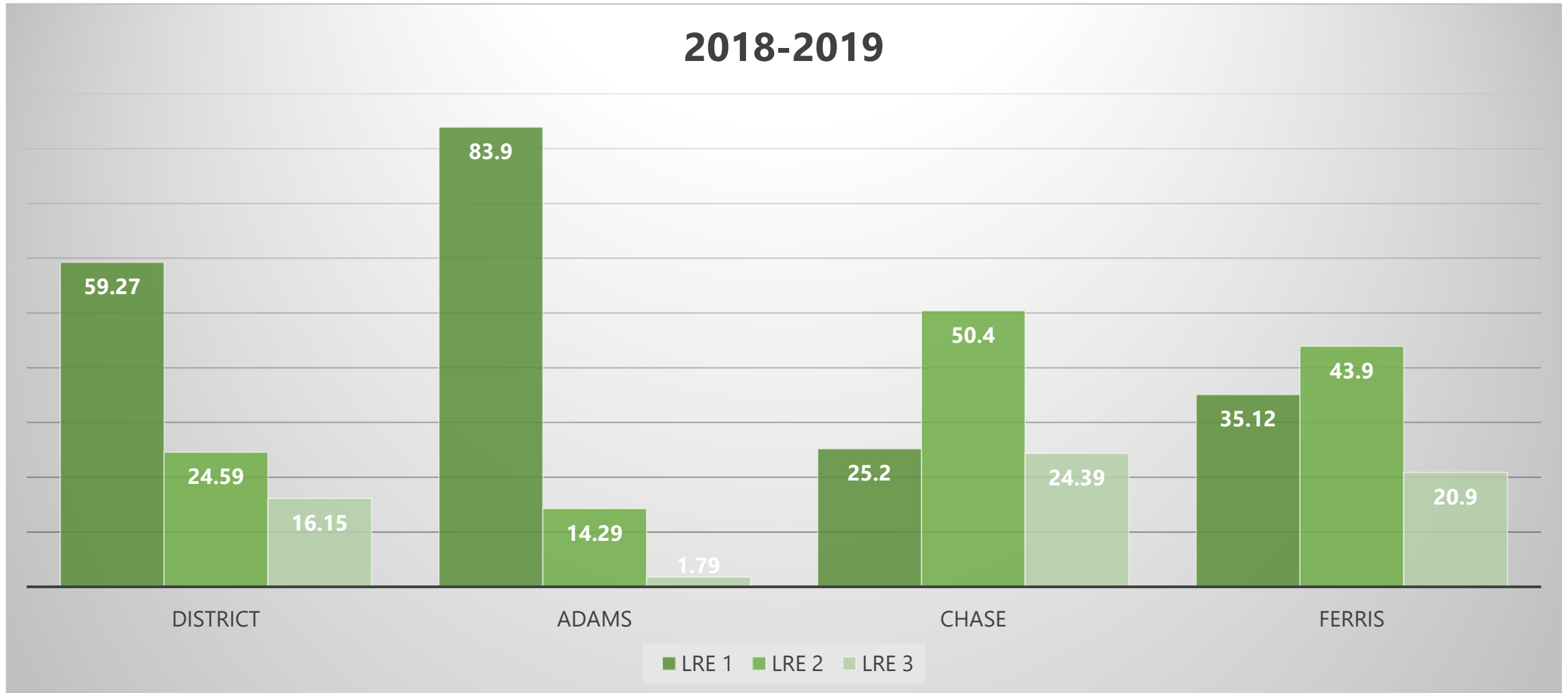
1. Districtwide Systems Change
2. District Workgroups
3. Allocation of Resources
4. Professional Development
5. Collaboration with Labor Unions



# First Steps

- 2016 Parent Advocacy sparked Spokane Public Schools to conduct a Special Education Review through the Urban Collaborative
- 2019 State of Washington launches Inclusionary Practices Pilot Project based on statewide data.
- Spokane was awarded grant funding based on initial data to include some of the lowest Least Restrictive Environment LRE 1 percentages in the state.
- Schools were selected based on “Feeder Patterns” for two middle schools to include 6 sites from two different areas of the district.

# The Beginning Pre- 2019 data



# District Level Steps

1. Developed an Inclusionary Practices Workgroup

2. Identified three main goals or outcomes needed to improve inclusion rates and achievement rates for students with disabilities.

3. Identified Professional Development Programming

4. Developed long-range inclusion plan

5. School board developed and adopted an Equity Policy

6. Continued Implementation of Long-Range Inclusion Plan



# Inclusionary Practices Workgroup

- Workgroup developed to include multiple stakeholders 63 members included:
  - Special and General education teachers
  - Administrators
  - Parents
  - Classified staff
  - Labor partners
  - Community Advocates
- Developed a shared baseline knowledge of inclusionary practices
  - Research articles, IDEA, Co-Teaching, Team-Teaching, UDL
- Created recommendations for the School Board and District Leadership
  - General Education By-In
  - Training for all staff
  - No excuses- all teachers teach all kids
  - More staffing

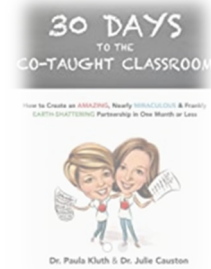
# District Level Goals



Improve collaboration between special education and general education staff.



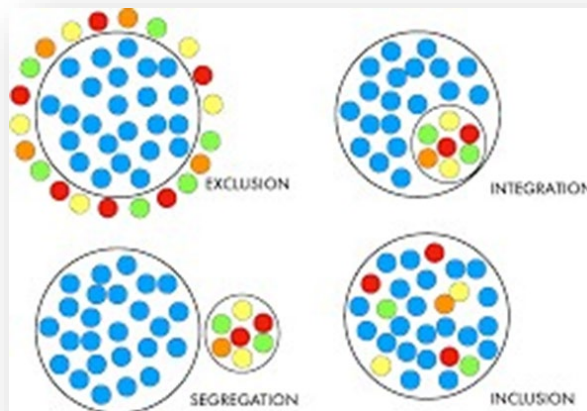
IEPs should be written to reflect standards-based IEP goals. Students need to be working towards grade level standards with accommodations and support.



Increase professional development for both special education and general education teachers and administrators to focus on inclusionary practices both UDL and Co-teaching.

# Long Range Inclusion Plan (2021-2025)

- Action Steps
  - Districtwide professional development and implementation
  - School based professional development and implementation
  - Collaboration and planning time
  - Staffing and caseload reductions
  - Standards based IEP's and grading for equity



ACTION STEP: District wide Professional Development Focus and Implementation		
2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» K-3 Foundational Literacy supports with focus on explicit instruction and tier 2 supports. Core reading adoption pilot.</li> <li>» UDL training for all teaching staff to launch the school year and throughout PLID days.</li> <li>» UDL training woven into all content trainings for the 2022 Summer Institute.</li> <li>» Training for general staff related to differentiation and abilities throughout the year.</li> <li>» Training for all sped staff on inclusionary practices</li> <li>» Trainings are offered at a variety of times (school day, afterschool, Saturdays) allowing staff time to access them.</li> <li>» Tier 3 Reading Adoption for Special Education.</li> <li>» Pilot Don Johnson accessibility software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Continued focus on Core Literacy instruction for K-3.</li> <li>» Full implementation of Dyslexia screener and RTI model for reading instruction.</li> <li>» Implementation of Tier 2 and 3 reading instruction.</li> <li>» Continue with menu of training options for all staff.</li> <li>» Implementation of Elementary Special Programs recommendations.</li> <li>» SEPAC focus on Inclusion and parent engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Elementary RTI Model Focus and Implementation Districtwide. PLID day focus.</li> <li>» Implementation of Elementary Special Programs recommendations.</li> <li>» Continue with training options for staff.</li> <li>» SEPAC focus on Inclusion and parent engagement</li> </ul>
ACTION STEP: School Based Professional Development Focus and Implementation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Full Implementation Schools: (Adams/Chase/Ferris/Garry/Shaw/Rogers/Glover) Move forward with Co-teaching training and full implementation. Inclusion rate goal 70%</li> <li>» Partial Implementation Schools: (LC, NC, Sac) Provide ongoing training to veteran co-teachers, and initial training to new teams. Inclusion goal 65%.</li> <li>» Beginning Implementation Schools: (Shadle, Flett, Yasuhara, Salk) Provide initial 30 days to co-teaching training for staff interested in co-teaching. Schools determine which courses to start with. Inclusion goal 60%.</li> <li>» All teachers who coteach will receive initial training prior to the start of their implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Full Implementation Schools: Full implementation of inclusionary practices. Inclusion rate goal of 75%.</li> <li>» Partial Implementation Schools: Provide team teaching/ co-teaching options and access to general education core classes and reduction in resource room classes. Inclusion rate goal 65%.</li> <li>» Co-teaching/Team teaching/Consultation model training and focus on all secondary schools with afocus on equitable access for all students.</li> <li>» Elementary schools focus on inclusion for students in special programs (DI, BI, MHOH).</li> <li>» Elementary begins to implement recommendations from elementary inclusion model.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All Secondary Schools provide a continuum of services with access to general education for core instruction for all resource students. Inclusion rates 80%.</li> <li>» Continued access to professional development for staff.</li> <li>» Elementary focus on professional development related to supporting students with intellectual disabilities.</li> </ul>

# Collaboration with Labor Partners

- Inform Labor Union early of any systems changes
- Partnership with Washington Education Association and OSPI for Inclusionary Practices Project.
- Include union partners in workgroups and discussions.
- Workgroup recommendations presented to School Board for approval.
- Workgroup recommendations informed the Collective Bargaining Process.



# Staffing and Resources

- Reviewed both special education caseloads and general education class size K-12 and determined that both needed to be reduced to support both general education and special education services.
- Optional conversion of Paraeducator time to Certificated Teacher time at the Secondary level to support inclusion in general education classrooms.
- Middle School Neighborhood Model- embedded special education teacher in each neighborhood.
- Elementary to Middle School Move-up IEP process to support inclusion.



# Professional Development Needed and Implemented

**2019–2020**

**Six out of 54 schools**

- Co-Teaching (30 days to the co-taught classroom, BER Introduction to Co-Teaching)
- History of inclusion-why now?

**2021–2022**

**54 of 54**

- UDL for all teaching staff
- UDL for Administrators
- Early Literacy Training for all K-5 teachers
- Continued Co-Teaching training
- Districtwide Summer Book Studies
- Implementation of the neighborhood model in middle schools

**eleven out of 54 schools**

- Inclusive education Professional Development Series
- Katie Novak training for 11 building leads
- Continued Co-teaching training
- Goalbook training for special education teachers

**2020–2021**

**New SPS University Model**

- Coteaching
- UDL
- Restorative Practices
- Mental Health and Trauma Informed Practices
- MTSS
- Literacy Focus

**2022–2023**

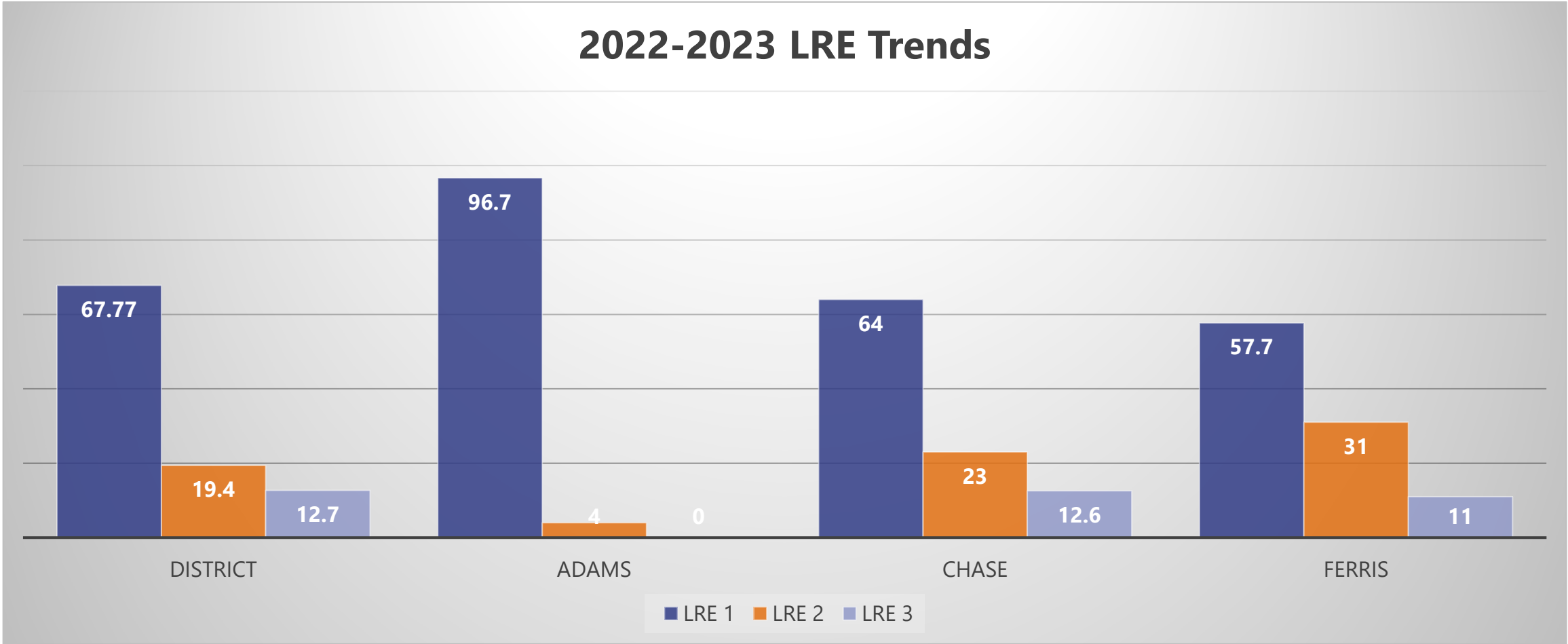
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# SPS University

- Personalized Professional Development Roadmap
  - Credentials for all staff members designed to support their unique PD Path.
  - Badges that support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through 100, 200, 300, 400 level courses.
  - All certificated staff will take Universal Design for Learning, Restorative Practices, MTSS, and Mental Health and Trauma Informed Practices.
  - Core content courses in Literacy, Math, Science, and Social Studies instruction will focus on principles of UDL and Inclusion for all students.



# Current Districtwide Data



# Principal and Teacher Role

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1. Building Level Systems

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2. Allocation of Resources

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3. Building Consensus

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4. Professional Development

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5. Continuous Review of Student Outcomes



# Chase Middle School

*All Belong, All Learn, All Lead*

DREAM.  
ACCESS.  
OPPORTUNITY.

# 2017-2018 Data Pull-Out Resource Classes Student Not Receiving Instruction Towards Common Core State Standards

ELA students  
with IEPs .53  
years growth

Math students  
with IEPs .19  
years growth

# WHY: What does the research say?

- LaRock and Chiang surveyed special education teachers about their beliefs of teaching common core state standards.
  - “The results showed that while the majority of these teachers echoed the general belief that the Common Core State Standards are beneficial for students without disabilities, they did not believe that they are beneficial for students with disabilities” (LaRock & Chiang, 2018, p. 1-2).
- This mindset leads to teachers not exposing students with IEPs to the Common Core State Standards.
- How can we expect students to pass SBAC when they haven’t been exposed to the curriculum?

# In the Beginning: What Did Teachers Say?



Students moving from Elementary to Middle School were significantly behind in reading, writing, and math.



Teacher focused on instruction at the student's lower level, instead of exposing students to grade level content.



Historical data indicated students with IEP's were not making enough gains by the end of high school to leave career or college ready.



**Solution:** Rewrite IEP goals to focus on Standards Based Goals and provide students instruction aligned to grade level standards.

# 2018-2019 Plan: All Special Education Teachers Provide Instruction on Grade Level Standards

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Required a shifting of mindsets. Not every teacher believed their students should or could learn the grade level state standards.

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**Most** Special Education teacher **have not** been trained in the grade level standards in math and ELA – they are not a content specialist.



## 2018-2019 Data: Expectation that CCSS were being taught in pull-out resource classes.

### ELA students with IEPs 1.31 years growth

- Students were taught the common core state standards

### Math students with IEPs .43 years growth.

- Students were not regularly taught the common core state standard

# 2019-2020 Plan: Co-Taught ELA & Math Classes

Provided a continuum of services for all students.

The Special Education teacher was co-teaching the grade level standards in the co-taught general education class.

The Special Education teacher would teach the same standard with appropriate modification to their pull-out resource class.

Provided an opportunity for special education teachers to learn the curriculum alongside a content specialist.

Provided a special education teacher to modify grade level curriculum when needed.

# Example Teacher Schedule

TEACHER	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4	PERIOD 5	PERIOD 6
ELA Teacher	Acc Eng 7	Eng 7 Co-taught	Eng 7 Co-taught	Eng 7 Co-taught	Prep	Acc Eng. 7
Special Ed. Teacher	PCOP	Eng 7 Co-taught	Eng 7 Co-taught	Eng 7 Co-taught	Prep	7th Resource Eng.

# 2020-2021 Plan

Maintain co-taught classes.

PD on online teaching.

Universal Design for Learning.

# 2021-2022 Plan



Co-Teaching in math, ELA, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade science.



Common Prep by grade and content (7<sup>th</sup> grade math, 8<sup>th</sup> ELA).



UDL Virtual Coaching.



Grading for Equity Book Study.

# Chase SBAC Data

Fall 2021 7th Grade Math SBAC	Spring 2022 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math SBAC
Level 4 11%	Level 4 19% + 8 points
Level 3 20%	Level 3 26% + 6 points
Level 2 29%	Level 2 22% - 7 points
Level 1 40%	Level 1 31% - 9 points

# Chase Middle School Results

	Not Met Standards	Nearly Met Standards	Met Standards	Exceeded Standards
Washington	36%	26%	19%	17%
Spokane Schools	38%	25%	19%	16%
Chase Middle School	31%	22%	26%	19%



# 2022-2023 School Year

- Co-Teaching in ELA, math, and science
  - 9 teaching teams
  - 19 co-taught classes
  - Two content specialists
  - Content specialist & Learning specialist
- Common Preps by content (except science)
- Responsibility Centered Discipline
- MAP Testing



# Considerations for Successful Co-Teaching

## Support of Administration

- Common Preps
- Training

## Content Knowledge of Special Education Teacher

- Trainings
  - Content and how to use the curriculum

## Disability awareness for general education teachers

- Slow processing doesn't mean not engaged

# Essential Components of Co-Teaching

- Co-Planning
- Co-Teaching
- Co-Assessing

# Teacher Voice

*“Jumping to last year, the first year of co-teaching. Something new, another change, more apprehension, and a mind shift. At first I wasn’t sure if some of my students who would typically be in a Resource class could manage being in a Gen Ed co-taught class. I knew the students who would be in my resource would struggle. I worried they would struggle to the point of giving up. I thought they could not do some of the math, how could they when they are missing so many foundational skills? However, over time I realized this was the best place for them. They were finally getting to be involved in their own learning. They were becoming better thinkers and problem solvers. I was able to see students who came to me with multiplication goals fly through and understand linear equations. One student who had a telling time goal became one of our top students. They were thriving. Would they master the content in the same way and same time as their peers? Not all of them, but they were still capable of learning the same information. Before I knew what was happening, I had a complete mind shift. I knew my student were capable of learning, I just didn’t realize how much they could learn in the same amount of time as their typically developing peers. For the first time in my teaching career I was able to see first hand what was meant by least restrictive environment with students with disabilities. “*

*Special Education and Co-Teacher*