



# ADDRESSING DISPROPORTIONALITY OF HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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# INTRODUCTION

A member district in California seeks to understand effective strategies and interventions to reduce special education (SPED) disproportionality as it relates to the identification of Hispanic students with specific learning disabilities (SLDs). In this report, Hanover research (Hanover) examines root causes of this disproportionality and discusses evidence-based strategies for reducing the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students with SLDs. These sources include publicly available Significant Disproportionality Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) Plans, academic studies, and recommendations from educational experts. Hanover also profiles California district strategies in CCEIS plans for reducing Hispanic SLD-identification disproportionality.

Hanover divides this report into three sections:

- **Section I – Root Causes of Disproportionate Identification** discusses the factors that may lead to the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students for SPED.
- **Section II – Reducing Disproportionate Identification** details developing a culturally responsive MTSS framework; distinguishing between language challenges and learning disabilities; providing culturally responsive professional development; and improving communication with linguistically diverse families.
- **Section III – District Profiles** outlines the strategies and actions listed in four California district CCEIS plans to reduce disproportionality in Hispanic SPED identification.

For simplicity and consistency in this report, Hanover uses “Hispanic” to refer to individuals identifying as Hispanic and Latino/a/x. This reference aligns with terminology used in the California Department of Education [data reporting](#).

## KEY FINDINGS



The implementation of a culturally responsive MTSS framework for English Language Learners (ELLs) is a common strategy employed by districts to reduce the percentage of Hispanic high school students identified with SLDs. Core elements of culturally responsive MTSS frameworks include screening measures tailored to students’ linguistic needs and abilities, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, and cultural proficiency and bias training for teachers working with ELLs.

- An example of such a framework is Project Lectura para Excelencia y Éxito (Project LEE), a U.S. Department of Education-funded program based in Portland, Oregon, which uses MTSS frameworks to fit ELL cultural and linguistic needs through a model emphasizing pre-teaching and background knowledge; language modeling; the use of visuals; systematic instruction; and culturally responsive teaching.



Culturally responsive professional development is designed to change the attitudes and biases of instructional staff in order to better support and evaluate students. According to ASCD, culturally responsive professional development should begin by building trust with educators and acknowledging challenges in an honest and inclusive way, as well as by engaging personal culture and beginning to build cultural competence. Following these steps, the trainings should confront issues of social justice, support teachers in understanding how to transform their instructional practices, and then engage the larger school community to build a welcoming and equitable environment for all students and their families.



**In addition to professional development supporting culturally responsive instruction, educators must also be able to distinguish between challenges associated with learning a second language and challenges that may indicate a learning disability.** For example, if a student is unable to orally retell a story, it may be that they do not comprehend the story due to a lack of understanding and background knowledge in English, as opposed to potential memory or sequencing deficits that would denote a learning disability. An understanding of these differences and an ability to assess students accordingly should result in appropriate student supports and a decrease in special education referrals.



**District and school staff must focus on improving communication with culturally and linguistically diverse families.** Professional development should emphasize cross-cultural communication strategies with Hispanic families to help reduce cultural gaps and biases that often lead to disproportionate SPED referrals. Communication strategies include having staff and teachers develop personal connections with parents and caregivers; always having Spanish-language materials available; and visibly celebrating Hispanic cultures throughout the district, schools, and classrooms.



**California districts with publicly available CCEIS strategies to reduce the disproportionate percentage of Hispanic students with an SLD include plans to create and implement a culturally responsive MTSS framework.** Districts highlight the importance of improving Tier II interventions for students in order to identify students who need additional support but should not be referred for special education services. These districts also plan to improve culturally responsive professional development for school staff and improve communication strategies with Hispanic families to increase their participation in the school community.



# SECTION I: ROOT CAUSES OF DISPROPORTIONATE IDENTIFICATION

In this section, Hanover discusses the factors that may contribute to the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students for SPED, including language proficiency, socio-economic status, and a lack of consistent academic and pre-referral interventions. This section also discusses the extent of the disproportionate identification (i.e., over- and under-representation of Hispanic SPED students).

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DISPROPORTIONATE IDENTIFICATION

The scholarly literature across the past decade identified various factors that contribute to the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students in SPED. For example, administrators, staff, and teachers often do not have the training or resources to determine whether Hispanic students have learning disabilities or are academically behind due to language difficulties. In Figure 1.1, Hanover outlines findings from scholarly literature related to three common factors resulting in the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students in SPED.


**Figure 1.1: Disproportionate Identification Factors and Description**

FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to a 2011 study, “the disproportionate identification of African-American and Hispanic students with learning disabilities is accounted for by the lower average SES of these racial/ethnic subgroups.”<sup>1</sup></li> <li>A student from a low socio-economic home might have parents who are either uneducated or under-educated, and are not able to give their child the proper assistance they need in completing assignments or other school work. They also might not engage in the necessary intellectual interactions leading to the development of cognitive skills appropriate for the child’s academic achievement. Children from low socio-economic backgrounds might also not be in environments that encourage or function as a supportive network that facilitate knowledge and skills that are necessary for school. Consequently, behavioral patterns that might be more often observed in children with low socio-economic status could easily be assessed as a mental disability.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>INITIAL REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once a student is referred to special education, school staff use different measures to obtain standardized test scores to determine whether students are eligible for special educational services. A nonverbal or performance-based test requires only limited language skills, and therefore can result in scores indicating average to above average cognitive ability. On the other hand, a language-based achievement test may be much more difficult for these students. Therefore, a very typical profile of a student acquiring a second language may reveal a high nonverbal score with poor performance in the language-based areas of reading, writing, speaking, or listening.</li> <li>The profile of this type of student is indicative of a discrepancy between scholastic aptitude and achievement and may result in placement in an educational program for learning disabilities based on existing federal eligibility criteria. For English language learners, their real learning potential may be masked by their inability to learn due to language differences.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Contents quoted verbatim from: Shifrer, D., C. Muller, and R. Callahan. “Disproportionality and Learning Disabilities: Parsing Apart Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Language.” *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 44:3, June 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Ajayi, A. “Race, Poverty, and Disproportionate Representation of Minorities In Special Education.” Equality.Org, May 2, 2019. <https://equality.org/race-poverty-and-disproportionate-representation-of-minorities-in-special-education/>

<sup>3</sup> Contents quoted verbatim with some alterations from: Fletcher, T.V. and L.A. Navarrete. “Learning Disabilities or Difference: A Critical Look at Issues Associated with the Misidentification and Placement of Hispanic Students in Special Education Programs.” *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 30:1, 2010. p. 36. Accessed from Sage Journals.

FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
<p><b>DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND DISABILITY</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language minority students are identified later and in higher proportions than their native-English-speaking peers, being underrepresented in special education in Kindergarten and Grade 1, but overrepresented by Grade 3.</li> <li>Non-native English speakers who are not recognized by the school or their teacher as being limited in English proficiency, or those who appear to have achieved fluency in English (social proficiency) but still struggle with academic proficiency, may be most at risk of being misdiagnosed with a learning disability.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>A 2019 study examining child study team (CST) members working with a large Hispanic ELL population participated in semi-structured interviews to determine the role their efficacy beliefs exert during assessment of linguistically diverse students. The study found that school employees are still confused about the proper placement of ELLs. Overwhelmingly, staff members noted that they did not feel competent when making decisions regarding ELLs. Therefore, staff members placed the children into special education each time.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Due to a lack of cultural proficiency, administrators, staff, and teachers often treat cultural differences between Hispanic students and White students as deficits. Additionally, educators often show bias against the language and speech patterns of lower-income minority students.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>In evaluating students for SPED, biases towards Hispanic students “may manifest as the examiner’s attitude or personal expectations for the student. Biases might not only be exhibited by the examiner; the educator might also have certain expectations for the student based on his or her background.”<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>

## EXTENT OF DISPROPORTIONATE IDENTIFICATION OF HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SPED

**The disproportionate identification of Hispanic students in special education often depends on a district’s demographic composition.** For example, a 2015 study using a model accounting for socio-economic status, academic ability, and behavior found that Hispanic students were 29 percent *less* likely than White students to be identified with SLDs.<sup>8</sup> A 2019 study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) expanded on these findings, suggesting that Hispanic students are overrepresented in SPED when they attend majority-White schools but are underrepresented in SPED in majority-minority schools.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the study found that Hispanic students are often over- or under-identified for SPED based on socio-economic status.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Contents quoted verbatim from: Shifrer, Muller, and Callahan, Op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Becker, G.I. and A.R. Deris. “Identification of Hispanic English Language Learners in Special Education.” Research Article. Education Research International, Hindawi, May 19, 2019. <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/edri/2019/2967943/>

<sup>6</sup> Dudley-Marling, C. and K. Lucas. “Pathologizing the Language and Culture of Poor Children.” *Language Arts*, 86:5, May 2009. p. 368. Accessed from ResearchGate.

<sup>7</sup> Ajayi, Op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan, P. et al. “Minorities Are Disproportionately Underrepresented in Special Education: Longitudinal Evidence Across Five Disability Conditions.” *Educational Researcher*, 44:5, June 2015. p. 6. Accessed from ResearchGate.

<sup>9</sup> Elder, T.E. et al. “Segregation and Racial Gaps in Special Education.” National Bureau of Economic Research, February 2021. p. 1. <https://www.educationnext.org/segregation-racial-gaps-special-education-new-evidence-on-debate-over-disproportionateity/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

## SECTION II: REDUCING DISPROPORTIONATE IDENTIFICATION

In this section, Hanover identifies evidence-based strategies and best practices for reducing the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students with SLDs, including developing a culturally responsive MTSS framework; distinguishing between language challenges and learning disabilities; providing culturally responsive professional development for administrators, teachers, and staff; and improving communication with linguistically diverse families.

### DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MTSS FRAMEWORK

**By creating a culturally responsive MTSS framework for ELLs, some districts reduce the number of Hispanic students identified with SLDs.** MTSS is “a systemic, continuous-improvement framework in which data-based problem solving and decision-making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students.”<sup>11</sup> While an MTSS framework typically focuses on either academics or behavior, it comprises three tiers of student support with increasingly intensive interventions:

- Tier I includes whole-class instruction and universal screeners;
- Tier II provides targeted interventions to approximately 15 percent of students identified as needing assistance; and
- Tier III offers individualized interventions for approximately 5 percent of students with intensive or chronic challenges who are not supported by Tier II programming.

In 2016, The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) funded three programs to improve ELLs’ reading and language in a tiered, culturally responsive framework. These programs included Project Elite from the Language and Learning Institute of The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at the University of Texas at Austin, Project Ellipses from the American Institutes of Research, and Project Lectura Para Excelencia y Éxito (Project LEE) from Portland State University. These culturally responsive programs include professional development, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and screening measures tailored to students’ linguistic needs and abilities.<sup>12</sup> Project LEE also utilizes the PLUSS framework, which includes:<sup>13</sup>

- P: Pre-teaching language and vocabulary and priming background knowledge;
- L: Language use and modeling;
- U: Using visuals and graphic organizers;
- S: Systematic and explicit instruction; and
- S: Strategic use of native language and culture.

Although these programs serve elementary school students, most features are applicable for culturally responsive MTSS frameworks for high schools. Figure 2.1 outlines several features of these programs, including academic instruction, progress monitoring, and professional development.

<sup>11</sup> “Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).” Colorado Department of Education. October 2016.

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/whatismtssarticle>

<sup>12</sup> “Multitiered Systems of Support for English Learners.” U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.mtss4els.org/>

<sup>13</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Ibid.

**Figure 2.1.: Best Practices in Creating A Culturally Responsive MTSS Framework**

#### **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION**

- Teachers know their students well and establish strong relationships with them and their families;
- Teachers have high expectations of all students, providing them with needed supports to reach their potential;
- Teachers use linguistic scaffolds to ensure access to rigorous curricula and instruction;
- Curricula and instruction validate literacy practices and funds of knowledge from students' homes and communities;
- Provide ELLs the opportunity to develop academic oral language while simultaneously teaching literacy and other content areas;
- Teach vocabulary across content areas;
- Provide instruction and/or instructional support in the primary language as needed; and
- Provide appropriate interventions for ELLs who need support beyond Tier I instruction.

#### **PROGRESS MONITORING**

- Implement purposeful and appropriate assessment practices taking into account ELs' primary language, English-language proficiency, and ongoing linguistic and academic progress;
- Utilize curriculum-based measurement to determine risk and monitor progress across tiers with ELs as part of a school site or district's comprehensive MTSS model; and
- Employ an ecological approach when evaluating ELs' possible learning difficulties and to develop appropriate and culturally responsive supports.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR, STAFF, AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Develop a partnership with an instructional leader in the schools who works closely with teachers of ELLs to build capacity through professional development including:
  - Coaching;
  - Classroom observations;
  - Demonstrations;
  - Virtual support;
  - Data and planning meetings;
  - Professional development with modeling; and
  - Mini-workshops (virtual- mini lessons on strategy, mini videos for anytime learning; i.e. making connections, inferencing).
- Create opportunities for teachers of ELLs to provide input in the dissemination of the professional development plan to build relationships and establish buy-in;
- Provide opportunities for discussion around refining ELL best instructional practices and establishing next steps.

Source: U.S. Department of Education<sup>14</sup>

A review of several California districts with publicly available CCEIS Plans or articles about their CCEIS Plans shows that these districts generally include culturally responsive MTSS frameworks as a strategy to reduce disproportionality in identifying Hispanic students with an SLD. For example, Santa Barbara Unified School District recently announced it will create a culturally responsive MTSS framework before placing Hispanic students in SPED (see Figure 2.2).<sup>15</sup> While the district plans to use the MTSS framework for elementary school students, the strategies are applicable to high school students.

<sup>14</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Brown, J.E., L. Cavazos, and L.R. Grimaldo. "Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for English Learners." U.S. Department of Education. pp. 6-7, 31-32, 36. [https://ncela.ed.gov/files/uploads/2017/Culturally\\_and\\_Linguistically-Slide\\_View.pdf](https://ncela.ed.gov/files/uploads/2017/Culturally_and_Linguistically-Slide_View.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Smith, D. "Significant Disproportionality of Latinx Students in Special Ed." *The Santa Barbara Independent*, November 11, 2020. <https://www.independent.com/2020/11/11/significant-disproportionality-of-latinx-students-in-special-ed/>



Figure 2.2: SBUSD Culturally Responsive MTSS Framework



### Spotlight: Santa Barbara Unified School District

According to a November 2020 publication, Hispanic students in Santa Barbara USD are 3.43 times more likely to be identified as having a learning disability as compared to their white peers. The district identified several action steps, including a focus on MTSS and a culturally responsive system for interventions, expanding professional development, and revising district protocols for referring EL students for SPED evaluations.<sup>16</sup>

Specifically related to MTSS, the district plans to focus on strengthening and expanding Tier II supports, which includes “building a separate system for non-native English-speaking students that focuses on affirming their native language and culture rather than seeing them as a barrier to learning.” The goal of this initiative is to create a support system for struggling EL students that is separate from any existing support systems for English-speaking students.

Source: *Santa Barbara Independent*<sup>17</sup>

For other districts, the integration of an MTSS framework to support EL students has demonstrated success. For example, a 2018 internal study by the Wake County Public Schools System (NC) of their culturally responsive MTSS plan found that the percentage of Hispanic high school students eligible for special education in two cohorts between the 2014-2015 and 2017-2018 academic years declined by 1 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. These percentages were even higher for elementary school students, with student eligibility for special education in both cohorts declining by 1.6 percent over the same period.<sup>18</sup>

## DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN LANGUAGE CHALLENGES AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

**While some characteristics of ELLs and students with learning disabilities often appear similar, there are several significant differences between the two populations.** For instance, an ELL student who does not write may lack confidence in their abilities. In contrast, a student with a learning disability may lack the physical ability and skills to write.<sup>19</sup> Indicators of possible underlying learning disabilities among ELLs often share one of the following characteristics:<sup>20</sup>

- Behaviors that occur when using *both* the student’s first language and English;
- Speech, language, or literacy errors that cannot be attributed to the differences between the student’s first language and English, limited English vocabulary, or little knowledge of American culture; and
- Behaviors that do not show improvement with improved English-language skills or with additional visual input or instruction in the student’s first language.

Figure 2.3 on the following page displays information from the U.S. DOE comparing indicators of a potential learning difference due to a second language with indicators of a possible learning disability.

<sup>16</sup> “Significant Disproportionality,” Santa Barbara Unified School District. November 2020. Accessed from: <https://santabarbara.novusagenda.com/AgendaPublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=7844&MeetingID=267>

<sup>17</sup> Smith, D. Op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Bulgakov-Cooke, D. and M. Singh. “Multi-Tiered System of Support, 2016-17 to 2017-18.” Wake County Public School System, December 2018. pp. 25-26. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606973.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Perras, C. “Language Acquisition Difficulty or Learning Disability? How to Differentiate and Support English Language Learners with a Learning Disability.” LD@school. <https://www.ldatschool.ca/language-acquisition-difficulty-or-learning-disability/>

<sup>20</sup> Bullets adapted from: “Tools and Resources for Addressing English Learners with Disabilities.” U.S. Department of Education, November 2016. pp. 2-3. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap6.pdf>

**Figure 2.3: Comparison of Language-Based Indicators and Disability-Based Indicators**

LEARNING BEHAVIOR MANIFESTED	INDICATORS OF A LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE DUE TO 2 <sup>ND</sup> LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	INDICATORS OF A POSSIBLE LEARNING DISABILITY
<b>Oral Comprehension and Listening</b>		
Student does not respond to verbal directions.	Student lacks understanding of vocabulary in English but demonstrates understanding in L1.*	Student consistently demonstrates confusion when given verbal directions in L1 and L2,* possibly due to processing deficit or low cognition.
Student needs frequent repetition of oral directions and input.	Student understands verbal directions in L1 but not L2.	Student often forgets directions or needs further explanation in L1 and L2 at home and school, possibly due to an auditory memory difficulty or low cognition.
Student delays responses to questions.	Student may be translating question in mind before responding in L2, with gradual improvement over time.	Student consistently takes a longer time to respond in L1 and L2 with no change over time, possibly due to a processing speed deficit.
<b>Oral Fluency and Speaking</b>		
Student lacks verbal fluency (e.g., pauses, hesitates, omits words).	Student lacks vocabulary, sentence structure, and/or self-confidence.	Speech is incomprehensible in L1 and L2, possibly due to hearing or speech impairment.
Student is unable to orally retell a story.	Student does not comprehend stories due to a lack of understanding and background knowledge in English.	Student has difficulty retelling a story or event in L1 and L2, possibly due to memory or sequencing deficits.
Student does not orally respond to questions or does not speak much.	Student lacks expressive language skills in English, possibly due to being in the silent period of 2 <sup>nd</sup> language acquisition.	Student speaks little in L1 or L2, possibly due to a hearing impairment or processing deficit.
<b>Phonemic Awareness and Reading</b>		
Student does not remember letter sounds from one day to the next.	Student initially demonstrates difficulty remembering letter sounds in L2—since they differ from the letter sounds in L1—but with repeated practice makes progress.	Student does not remember letter sounds after initial and follow-up instruction—even if they are common between L1 and L2—possibly due to a visual or auditory memory deficit or low cognition.
Student is unable to blend letter sounds to decode words in reading.	The letter sound errors may be related to L1, but with direct instruction, the student makes progress over time.	Student makes letter substitutions when decoding not related to L1, student cannot remember vowel sounds, and/or student may be able to decode sounds in isolation but is unable to blend sounds to decode whole word, possibly due to a processing or memory deficit.
Student is unable to decode words correctly.	The sound is not in L1, so the student is unable to pronounce word once decoded.	Student consistently confuses letters or words that look alike, and/or makes letter reversals or substitutions that are not related to L1, possibly due to a processing or memory deficit.

LEARNING BEHAVIOR MANIFESTED	INDICATORS OF A LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE DUE TO 2 <sup>ND</sup> LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	INDICATORS OF A POSSIBLE LEARNING DISABILITY
<b>Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary</b>		
<b>Student does not understand passage read, although she may be able to read with fluency and accuracy.</b>	Student lacks understanding and background knowledge of topic in L2 and/or is unable to use contextual clues to assist with meaning, but improves as L2 proficiency increases.	Student does not remember or comprehend what was read in L1 or L2 with no improvement over time, possibly due to a memory or processing deficit.
<b>Student does not understand key words or phrases and has poor comprehension.</b>	Student lacks understanding of vocabulary and meaning in English.	Student's difficulty with comprehension and vocabulary is seen in L1 and L2.

\*L1 refers to a student's primary language, and L2 refers to a student's second language (English).

Source: U.S. Department of Education<sup>21</sup>

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Providing culturally responsive professional development may change the attitudes and biases of instructional staff when evaluating students; it may also change perceptions of cultural differences potentially seen as learning deficits. Developing cultural responsiveness is vital, and professional development in school districts should reflect the traits they expect teachers to possess with students. Professional development can help employees become more culturally responsive to diversity in race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability status, and other areas.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, professional development should utilize and promote four key aspects of cultural responsiveness, as shown in Figure 2.4.

**Figure 2.4: Components of Cultural Responsiveness**

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
<b>Awareness</b>	Being aware of one's own individual biases and reactions to people who are of a culture or background significantly different from one's own
<b>Attitude</b>	Delineating the difference between being aware of cultural differences and actively analyzing one's internal belief systems
<b>Knowledge</b>	Understanding the disconnect between one's beliefs and values about diversity and inclusion and one's actions
<b>Skills</b>	Integrating cultural responsiveness into one's routine behaviors (e.g., communication and body language)

Source: HumanServicesEdu.org<sup>23</sup>

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world's largest professional human resources society, "a good training program addresses invisible and subtle differences between people of different cultures."<sup>24</sup> Because district employees differ in many cultural attributes, districts must inclusively deliver professional development. Facilitators should use diverse methods and resources during professional development and ask participants to share their perspectives on discussed topics.<sup>25</sup> Asking participants to

<sup>21</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with modifications from: Ibid., pp. 6-8.

<sup>22</sup> "Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice." National Association of Social Workers, 2015. p. 8.  
<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7dVckZAYUmk%3D&portalid=0>

<sup>23</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: "Understanding Cultural Competency." HumanServicesEdu.Org.  
<https://www.humanservicesedu.org/cultural-competency/>

<sup>24</sup> [1] "About SHRM." Society for Human Resource Management. <https://www.shrm.org/about-shrm/pages/default.aspx> [2] Chebium, R. "How to Create an Effective Cross-Cultural Training Program." Society for Human Resource Management, January 7, 2015.  
<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/010215-cross-cultural-training.aspx>

<sup>25</sup> Leonard, K. "5 Strategies for Dealing With Diversity in the Workplace." Houston Chronicle, February 4, 2019.  
<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/5-strategies-dealing-diversity-workplace-18106.html>

address complex aspects of culture such as prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination can improve staff knowledge and attitudes toward diversity.<sup>26</sup>

In creating and facilitating culturally responsive professional development, ASCD outlines five phases of professional development initially designed for rapidly changing school districts. These phases can be adapted to help administrators, staff, and teachers understand Hispanic families' and students' needs and improve communication to help reduce disproportionate identification of Hispanic students with SLDs. As outlined in Figure 2.5, these practices include understanding diverse cultures; acknowledging racial and social inequities; and engaging all constituencies.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 2.5: Five Phases of Professional Development**

DESCRIPTION	DISTRICT EXAMPLE
<b>1: Building Trust</b>	
<p>The first priority in the trust phase is to acknowledge this challenge in a positive, inclusive, and honest way. School leaders should base initial discussions on the following assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inequities in diverse schools are not, for the most part, a function of intentional discrimination.</li> <li>▪ Educators of all racial and cultural groups need to develop new competencies and pedagogies to successfully engage our changing populations.</li> <li>▪ White teachers have their own cultural connections and unique personal narratives that are legitimate aspects of the overall mix of school diversity.</li> </ul> <p>School leaders should also model for their colleagues inclusive and nonjudgmental discussion, reflection, and engagement strategies that teachers can use to establish positive learning communities in their classrooms.</p>	<p>School leaders in the Apple Valley Unified School District (CA) invested considerable time and resources in creating a climate of openness and trust. They implemented four days of intensive work with teams from each school, including principals, teacher leaders, union representatives, parents, clergy, business leaders, and community activists from the NAACP and other organizations. Through this work, Apple Valley educators and community leaders established a climate of constructive collaboration that can be directed toward addressing the district's new challenges.</p>
<b>2: Engaging Personal Culture</b>	
<p>The central aim of the second phase of the work is building educators' cultural competence—their ability to form authentic and effective relationships across differences. Researchers found that three factors have a major effect on students' motivation and performance: their feelings of belonging, their trust in the people around them, and their belief that teachers value their intellectual competence. This research suggests that the capacity of adults in the school to form trusting relationships with and supportive learning environments for their students can greatly influence achievement outcomes.</p>	<p>In the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township (IN), clear data showed gaps among ethnic groups in achievement, participation in higher-level courses, discipline referrals, and dropout rates. In response, district teachers and administrators engaged in a vigorous and ongoing process of self-examination and personal growth related to cultural competence.</p>
<b>3: Confronting Social Dominance and Social Justice</b>	
<p>The central purpose of this phase is to construct a compelling narrative of social justice that will inform, inspire, and sustain educators in their work, without falling into the rhetoric of shame and blame. School leaders and teachers engage in a lively conversation about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, and other dimensions of diversity and social dominance.</p>	<p>Roseville Area School District leaders examined how issues of privilege, power, and dominance might be functioning in their schools to shape educators' assumptions and beliefs about students and create inequitable outcomes.</p>

<sup>26</sup> "What Is Cultural Competence & How Is It Measured?" Diversity Officer Magazine. <https://diversityofficermagazine.com/cultural-competence/what-is-cultural-competence-how-is-it-measured-2/>

<sup>27</sup> Howard, G.R. "As Diversity Grows, So Must We." Educational Leadership, March 2007.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/As-Diversity-Grows,-So-Must-We.aspx>

DESCRIPTION	DISTRICT EXAMPLE
<b>4: Transforming Instructional Practices</b>	
In this phase, schools assess and, where necessary, transform the way they carry out instruction to become more responsive to diversity. For teachers, this means examining pedagogy and curriculum, as well as expectations and interaction patterns with students. It means looking honestly at outcome data and creating new strategies designed to serve the students whom current instruction is not reaching. For school leaders, this often means facing the limits of their own knowledge and skills and becoming colearners with teachers to find ways to transform classroom practices.	At one elementary school in Loudon County Public Schools (VA), teacher members of a culturally responsive teaching (CRT) team have designed student-based action research projects. They selected individual students from their most academically challenged demographic groups and then used the principles of CRT to plan new interventions to engage these students and track their progress.
<b>5: Engaging the Entire School Community</b>	
To create welcoming and equitable learning environments for diverse students and their families, school leaders must engage the entire school community.	East Ramapo Central School District's (NY) broad-based diversity initiative engaged all groups and constituencies in the school district community. For example, the district provided workshops to help classified employees acknowledge their powerful role in setting a welcoming tone and creating an inclusive climate for students, parents, and colleagues in school offices, lunchrooms, hallways, and on the playground.

Source: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development<sup>28</sup>

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

**District and school staff may need to take additional steps to enable proper communication with culturally and linguistically diverse families, including Hispanic families.** The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) notes cross-cultural communication “minimizes the confusion and frustration that people can experience when they enter an environment where not only their language, but also their attitudes, values, and behaviors differ from those of others.”<sup>29</sup> Cross-cultural communication considers cultural influences on the ways people communicate and helps ensure educators and families of all backgrounds understand each other. For example, translating all written information into the native languages of families the district serves (e.g., Spanish) and including classroom signs in different languages help improve cross-cultural communication.<sup>30</sup> Figure 2.6 on the following page shows additional specific recommendations from the IES to strengthen two-way and cross-cultural communications with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

<sup>28</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with some modifications from: Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Garcia, M.E. et al. “Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education Part 3: Building Trusting Relationships With Families and Community Through Effective Communication.” U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, September 2016. p. 6. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL\\_2016152.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2016152.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 2.6: Two-Way and Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families**

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES	CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Translate materials to the home language.</li> <li>▪ Use bilingual staff members to help provide a direct link between families and the school community.</li> <li>▪ Be open to hosting school meetings in a location where families feel comfortable (e.g., community centers or local businesses).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin the conversation on a personal level rather than starting with a formal progress report. Allow personal life to be mixed with the discussion of academics.</li> <li>▪ Show respect for the whole family, instead of paying attention to the child who is the focus of the conference.</li> <li>▪ Use indirect questions or observations rather than questions asking for information about the child at home (for example, "Some parents prefer to have an older child help with homework..." rather than, "Do you or someone else help the child with her homework?").</li> <li>▪ Discuss student achievements in the context of all students, suggesting how the child contributes to everyone's well-being.</li> <li>▪ Explain goals and expectations of the school and help parents and family members find ways in which they are comfortable supporting their children's learning.</li> <li>▪ Create a sense of common purpose and caring using the pronoun "we" rather than "you" and "I."</li> </ul>

Source: Institute of Education Sciences<sup>31</sup>

Additionally, Common Sense Education lists eight ways districts and schools can improve communication with Hispanic families specifically, as listed below.

**Figure 2.7: Eight Ways to Improve Communication With Hispanic Families**

<b>1</b> <b>WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT</b>	<p>Creating a nonjudgmental environment where families feel comfortable and feel like part of the community is essential. Think about what families see and hear when they get to the school. Is anyone making them feel guilty about what they do or do not do? Is it clear that you are creating a space for them?</p>
<b>2</b> <b>HAVE FOOD AND CHILDCARE AVAILABLE AT EVENTS</b>	<p>Parents with younger kids, single parents, and immigrants who do not have any family members nearby to help can only attend events if they can bring their kids with them. In addition, especially when working with lower-income families, providing food is very important. If families don't have to make dinner, they are more likely to attend parent night. Having food that they enjoy and makes them feel at home is a plus.</p>
<b>3</b> <b>ALWAYS HAVE SPANISH RESOURCES AVAILABLE</b>	<p>Even if many Hispanic parents are bilingual or speak English only, many immigrants do not speak English well enough to fully understand what you are communicating or to feel comfortable talking to you. Whether it's a handout, a presentation, or simply a text message, make sure you always have well-written translations or interpreters available. If you have a large Spanish-speaking population in your school, consider inviting members of the school or guests who speak Spanish to present.</p>

<sup>31</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Ibid., pp. 5–13.

4	RECOGNIZE PARENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS	<p>David Linhares, community school coordinator at the Hoover Family Center in Redwood City, California, says, "The simple fact of acknowledging the work that parents already do helps families feel like partners in their child's education. This leads to greater trust in the school and makes parents more open to engaging in school activities. Another simple way to do this is to recognize families with certificates or diplomas after parent workshops or in a parent volunteer group. This can instill a sense a pride around education and their relationship to their own educational abilities."</p>
5	USE STUDENT EVENTS AS A CHANCE TO CONNECT	<p>Whether it's a play, a presentation, or a music concert, if kids are part of the activity, parents are more likely to attend. Take a few minutes before or after the event to connect with families, answer questions, and share important information. You can also send videos of the event afterward to connect with families on the communication platforms you use.</p>
6	EMPOWER THE MOST INVOLVED PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS	<p>The parent or caregiver who is the first to volunteer, speaks at every meeting, and has an opinion on most things can be your best ally. Parent ambassadors can help you mobilize other parents and spread information. Their interest, energy, and understanding of the day-to-day life of their community can help you boost engagement and even get some of the work off your plate.</p>
7	CELEBRATE HISPANIC CULTURE	<p>Go beyond Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrate Hispanic people and culture year round. Whether it's culture-affirming class projects, the selection of books in the library, or special guests and school-wide events, teachers and administrators can strive to make choices that reflect, recognize, and celebrate the Hispanic students and families they serve every day.</p>
8	ENGAGE PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS AS COMMUNITY PARTNERS	<p>As Omar Escalera, principal of Robert Frost Elementary School in Pasco, Washington, explains, "Having the understanding that the traditional school setting was never designed with students of color in mind, it is my responsibility to create spaces that meet the academic, social, emotional, and cultural needs of Latin@s. By having parents and students actively participate in the creation and planning of extracurricular activities, we create programs that are owned by the community and not by the school site. These are community programs that extend far beyond the reach of a traditional school setting."</p>

Source: Common Sense Media<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Reveron, V. "8 Ways to Build Stronger Relationships with Latinx Families." Common Sense Education, September 12, 2019. <https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/8-ways-to-build-stronger-relationships-with-latinx-families>



## SECTION III: DISTRICT PROFILES

In this section, Hanover details the strategies and actions listed in California districts' CCEIS plans designed to address and reduce disproportionality in Hispanic SPED identification, which include goals and intended outcomes, target populations, and timelines for specific action items.

While the examined CCEIS plans with measures targeting the reduction of Hispanic SPED student disproportionality generally focus on elementary school students, high schools can adapt most strategies and actions for addressing Hispanic SPED student disproportionality.

To provide an overview of benchmarked district demographics, Figure 3.1 details the following features of the four benchmarked districts examined below.

**Figure 3.1: District Overview**

DISTRICT	TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT	% MINORITY	% ELL	% SPED	% IN POVERTY	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
Fremont Unified School District (FUSD)	35,777	89%	15%	10%	5%	\$127,374
Miller Creek School District (MCSD)	1,984	35%	9%	14%	4%	\$106,344
Milpitas Unified School District (MUSD)	10,318	95%	24%	9%	7%	\$125,644
Sunnyvale School District (SSD)	6,575	77%	31%	11%	5%	\$130,538

Source: Hanover Peer Generator<sup>33</sup>

### FREMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Fremont Unified School District (FUSD) reports several factors leading to the disproportionate identification of Hispanic students for SPED, including a lack of consistent interventions, especially in Tier 2; limited opportunities for staff development in curriculum implementation; and limited targeted pre-referrals. Figure 3.2 on the following page outlines these areas in further detail.

<sup>33</sup> Figure contents adapted from: "Dashboard - Peer Generator." Hanover Research Digital.  
<https://hanoverresearch.secure.force.com/customerportal/ToolDetail?toolId=a0r1T00000oYCnuQAG&active=dl&embed=t>



**Figure 3.2: FUSD-Root Causes for Disproportionality in Identifying Hispanic Students with SLDs**

ROOT CAUSE	DESCRIPTION WITH SUPPORTING DATA	SUPPORTING DATA
<b>Limited access to consistent academic interventions and lack of Tier II interventions</b>	There is a need for MTSS, PBIS, and Tier II intervention. In the absence of a systemic approach to intervention, Hispanic students with academic challenges are disproportionately referred for special education assessments. There are differing approaches to intervention as well as varying needs across schools based on their populations. More consistency is needed in an intervention approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal survey</li> <li>Classroom teacher survey</li> <li>Review of student files</li> <li>Psychologist interviews</li> <li>Student file reviews</li> </ul>
<b>Limited opportunities for ongoing staff development in implementation of curriculum, program, and interventions</b>	Due to factors such as time constraints and multiple initiatives at work in a [large] district, training and staff development is not always prioritized. There are financial and opportunity constraints which make it challenging to find enough time in a workday to conduct meaningful systemic professional development. Professional development time is limited to two days prior to the opening of the school year and a teacher workday at the end of the year. During the school year, PD is offered, however, it is optional. There are multiple priorities in school districts such as FUSD and trying to address them all through PD is a challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal survey</li> <li>Classroom teacher survey</li> <li>Psychologist interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Limited system-wide provision of targeted pre-referral interventions</b>	The District lacks a systematic, consistent intervention system available prior to referral for a special education assessment. Sites have responded to student need by developing intervention systems of their own. However, there is not a universal approach or a consistent thread of intervention across the District. Intervention varies from site to site. Echoing what quantitative and qualitative data shows across all three areas of disproportionality, the District must create and maintain MTSS and PBIS programs in order to address these needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal survey</li> <li>Parent interviews</li> <li>Psychologist interviews</li> <li>Student file reviews</li> </ul>

Source: Fremont Union School District<sup>34</sup>

To reduce the number and percentage of identified Hispanic students with SLDs, FUSD plans to use “a system of academic and behavioral supports.”<sup>35</sup> Figure 3.3 outlines the details for achieving this goal.

**Figure 3.3: FUSD-Utilizing A System of Academic and Behavioral Supports to Reduce Identification of Hispanic Students with SLDs**

<b>MEASURABLE OUTCOME</b>	By September 30, 2022, the District will implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS) to address academic and behavioral deficits in the general education setting for students in the target population at selected sites. Utilizing a system of academic and behavioral supports will reduce identification of Hispanic students with specific learning disability to meet the statewide maximum ratio threshold of 3.0. FUSD is currently at a ratio of 5.42.
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<sup>34</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from: “Significant Disproportionateity Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services Plan (CCEIS).” Fremont Unified School District, December 16, 2020. pp. 29-30.

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/fremont/Board.nsf/files/BW7QDF63A1F4/\\$file/FUSD%20CCEIS%20Plan%202020%20Final.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/fremont/Board.nsf/files/BW7QDF63A1F4/$file/FUSD%20CCEIS%20Plan%202020%20Final.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

ROOT CAUSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited access to consistent academic and Tier II interventions.</li> <li>▪ Limited opportunity for staff development and implementation of curriculum, program and interventions.</li> <li>▪ Limited system-wide provision of targeted pre-referral interventions.</li> </ul>
TARGET POPULATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First grade non-identified cohorts of students from selected school sites who have been referred for SSTs due to academic concerns. Sites were selected based on their student population and patterns of need. Grade level was determined based on data collected suggesting that most Hispanic students are identified with SLD in the first grade.</li> <li>▪ Target schools have been identified based on data demonstrating that a relevant sampling of target population students can be found at these sites.</li> </ul>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct a staff survey at selected sites to obtain a baseline for staff mindset and areas of needed professional development.</li> <li>▪ Select a screening tool (or expand the use of an existing screening tool) and develop a progress monitoring system to track student success; provide training to staff in use of this tool.</li> <li>▪ Using the staff survey results, design and implement professional development for administration and certificated staff in academic intervention strategies.</li> <li>▪ Support the [target] school sites in developing a daily schedule incorporating MTSS throughout the school day.</li> <li>▪ Support sites in developing and maintaining a data collection system.</li> <li>▪ Target schools will incorporate family and students in making decisions about the best ways to support students both academically and behaviorally.</li> </ul>
STAFF RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Director of Elementary Education</li> <li>▪ Director of Federal and State Programs</li> <li>▪ CCEIS/MTSS Program Manager (New Position)</li> <li>▪ Director of Special Education</li> </ul>
TIMELINE	Beginning January 2021
DATA SOURCES/PROGRESS EVALUATION METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minutes of collaborative meetings at target schools</li> <li>▪ Results of a Survey of Target School Staff</li> <li>▪ Zoom attendance reports for the hours of PD</li> <li>▪ Review of collected baseline data for the target population and progress monitoring data for students in the target population at selected sites</li> <li>▪ Progress monitoring of target population</li> <li>▪ Review of special education referrals for students in the target population</li> </ul>

Source: Fremont Unified School District<sup>36</sup>

## MILLER CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

According to a January 2020 report from Miller Creek School District (MCSD), the district plans to address disproportionality in identifying Hispanic students with SLDs by achieving the following three goals by September 2022:<sup>37</sup>

- Increasing participation on the part of Hispanic students and families: Hispanic families will represent 20 percent of the entire school participation in school activities, parent surveys, and SARC as measured by sign-in sheets, surveys, and committee members;
- Providing an early intervening reading program that will increase the benchmark data for Hispanic students an average of 10 percent; and
- Developing an MTSS to reduce the number of Hispanic students qualifying for special education by 1 percent.

<sup>36</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 31-33.

<sup>37</sup> Bullets quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: "Significant Disproportionality Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services Plan (CCEIS)." Miller Creek School District, January 2020. pp. 22-25. Accessed from Google Search.

Figure 3.4 details the goals, strategies, and timeline outlined by the district to address and improve cultural dissonance issues surrounding Hispanic families and Hispanic students with SLDs.

**Figure 3.4: MCSD-Addressing and Improving Cultural Dissonance Issues Surrounding Hispanic Families and Hispanic Students with SLDs.**

MEASURABLE OUTCOME	By September 2022, Miller Creek School District will address cultural dissonance issues to demonstrate an increased participation on the part of Hispanic students and families. Hispanic families will represent 20 percent of the entire school participation in school activities, parent surveys, and SARC as measured by sign in sheets, surveys, and committee members.
ROOT CAUSE	There is limited participation of Hispanic families at school sites as evidenced by focus groups, few responses to surveys, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism.
TARGET POPULATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target Group: 40 students</li> <li>Hispanic (20%)</li> <li>African American (3%)</li> <li>White (72%)</li> <li>Asian (3%)</li> <li>2 or more Races (5%)</li> </ul>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr Watson will conduct professional development on racial and educational equity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training for teacher leaders and administrators that raises racial consciousness and allows for explicit conversations about race.</li> <li>Provide professional development that helps educators understand the historical context of educational inequities and to identify systems that perpetuate inequitable access and outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Implement parent racial equity seminar series Race Works led by Dr. Lori Watson in order to create a culture of understanding and acceptance within the school community.</li> <li>Community Engagement, Parent Webinar Series, Facing History and Ourselves in order to engage families in a broader discussion on racism in our community.</li> <li>Development of District and Site Based Equity Committees to train staff on developing a more inclusive culture and climate.</li> <li>Each school has two classified personnel in the front office. Hire one of these positions as a bilingual staff to allow for easier engagement of our Spanish speaking community.</li> </ul>
STAFF RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Superintendent</li> <li>Site-based Administrator</li> <li>Instructional Coaches</li> <li>Members of the Work Equity Committee</li> <li>Members of the District Working Equity Committee</li> </ul>
TIMELINE	By September 1, 2021
DATA SOURCES/PROGRESS EVALUATION METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agendas, minutes, participant reflections for District Equity committee</li> <li>Agendas, minutes, outcomes, participant reflections for Equity Working committee at school sites</li> <li>An increase in participation at school sites: school activities, parent surveys, and SARC as measured by sign in sheets, surveys, and committee members</li> </ul>

Source: Miller Creek School District<sup>38</sup>

## MILPITAS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

According to the CCEIS plan at Milpitas Unified School District (USD), the district plans to address disproportionality in identifying Hispanic students with SLDs by achieving the following goals:<sup>39</sup>

- 90 percent of targeted students will report that they have a stronger relationship with their teacher and principal as measured by pre-survey results in March 2021 and post-survey results collected in May 2022;

<sup>38</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Bullets quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: "Significant Disproportionality Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services Plan (CCEIS)." Milpitas Unified School District. pp. 33-41. Accessed from Google Search.

- Teachers will complete diversity training and planning to increase their ability to develop and align curriculum and materials that reflect their cultures and ancestral histories. Measurements will include teacher and learner surveys, examples of lessons, and identification of personalized materials that reflect learner backgrounds;
- 100 percent of targeted English Learners will improve their English Language proficiency and literacy by more than one level as measured by yearly ELPAC assessments, iReady, DRA, writing assessments, and quarterly classroom learning walks;
- By June 2021, conduct an equity walk and update of board policies in alignment with California Education Code as measured by publication on the Milpitas Unified School District; and
- The district will build a culturally responsible MTSS framework that will provide appropriate levels of academic, social-emotional, and positive behavioral intervention support that will lead to a reduction of 5 percent in suspension rates as measured by disciplinary records.

Figure 3.5 details the strategies, target population, intended outcomes, and timeline for providing teacher diversity training and increasing staff members' abilities to create culturally aligned curricula. The activities, population, timeline, and evaluation methods for the other measurable outcomes can be found in the district's CCEIS report.

**Figure 3.5: MUSD-Teacher Diversity and Training to Increase Their Abilities to Create Culturally Aligned Curricula**

MEASURABLE OUTCOME	By October 31, 2021, teachers will complete diversity training and planning to increase their ability to develop and align curriculum and materials that reflects their cultures and ancestral histories. Measurements will include teacher and learner surveys, examples of lessons, and identification of personalized materials that reflect learner backgrounds.
ROOT CAUSE	Cultural Dissonance
TARGET POPULATION	<p>Target Group 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hispanic (82.5%)</li> <li>■ African American (5%)</li> <li>■ White (5%)</li> <li>■ Pacific Islander (2.5%)</li> <li>■ 2 or more Races (5%)</li> </ul> <p>Target Group 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hispanic (12%)</li> <li>■ African American (64%)</li> <li>■ White (4%)</li> <li>■ American Indian (8%)</li> <li>■ Pacific Islander (8%)</li> <li>■ 2 or more Races (4%)</li> </ul>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Continue "Culture of We Leaders" Professional Development and provide 18-20 hours of targeted professional development related to implicit bias for K-2 teachers and principals at the eight participating schools.</li> <li>■ The Mindful Leaders Project will train teachers to use intrapersonal mindfulness and self-regulation skills to notice implicit bias within themselves and the school system and begin to change biased ways of thinking and acting. This will be measured by surveys at the start and end of training.</li> <li>■ Connect the aspects of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Framework to implicit bias. For example, "taking responsibility to reduce students' social-emotional stress from stereotypes and microaggressions."</li> <li>■ Reflect on the possible stereotypes that target students encounter and determine observable actions that can be taken to overcome the bias such as providing positive racial and ethnic messages and classroom materials that can overcome</li> </ul>

	stereotypes perpetuated by our broader society. Observable actions would be looked for during classroom walkthroughs.
STAFF RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Development Department will coordinate the plans for training with the Mindful Leaders Project.</li> <li>Dr. Niki Elliott and the staff of Mindful Leaders Project provide professional development.</li> </ul>
TIMELINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Late March/early April 2021, Wednesday afternoon keynote address (90 minutes to 2 hours).</li> <li>June 7 - 11, 2021, 9:00 - 12:00 daily professional development online.</li> <li>Mid August 2021, 2-4 hour recharge professional development.</li> <li>September 2021 - October 2021, one hour a week coaching for each participant for 8 weeks.</li> <li>November 2021 - September 2022, Continue communities of practice (COP) with a focus on meeting the needs of all students.</li> </ul>
DATA SOURCES/PROGRESS EVALUATION METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agendas, sign in sheets for professional development</li> <li>Pre and post survey administered to training participants measuring intrapersonal mindfulness and self-reported improvements in self-regulation. The survey will also measure changes in knowledge and skills related to implicit bias.</li> <li>Quarterly progress reports on chronic absenteeism</li> <li>Quarterly progress reports on behavior fractions/reports/suspensions</li> <li>Teacher self-reflections during COP meetings</li> </ul>

Source: Milpitas Unified School District<sup>40</sup>

## SUNNYVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

To address Hispanic student disproportionality in SPED, Sunnyvale School District lists two measurable outcomes to reduce Hispanic SPED referrals by 10 percent, including identifying Tier I and II supports, and training Kindergarten staff and Hispanic parents on foundational reading skills.<sup>41</sup> Figure 3.6 outlines the district's plan to identify Tier I and II supports, while Figure 3.7 describes the activities, staff responsible, timeline, and data evaluation methods for achieving each objective.

**Figure 3.6: SSD Plan-Identifying Tier I and II Supports to Reduce Hispanic Student SPED Referrals**

MEASURABLE OUTCOME	By September 2022, the district will develop a culturally responsive MTSS framework by identifying Tier 1 and Tier II appropriate levels of academic, behavioral, and social emotional intervention support that will reduce the number of special education referrals by 10 percent and demonstrate measurable increases in reading scores.
ROOT CAUSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of consistent pre-referral Tier I and Tier II supports for English Language Learners/Hispanic students.</li> <li>The processes for pre-referral and class-based intervention are not aligned across sites, which results in inconsistent expectations of classroom-based support. This also contributes to referrals to special education before exploring Tier One and Tier Two supports.</li> </ul>
TARGET POPULATION	Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 students new to SSD and two identified elementary school sites. Sites are identified based on scores on the ELA CAASPP, percentile of Hispanic students, disproportionality, and number of students identified as eligible for special education under SLD.

Source: Sunnyvale School District<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 35-37.

<sup>41</sup> "Board of Education Regular Board Meeting." Sunnyvale School District, December 10, 2020. pp. 195-196.  
<https://www.sesd.org/cms/lib/CA01902799/Centricity/Domain/4/12.10.20%20Packet.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from Ibid., p. 195.

**Figure 3.7: Description of Activities to Identify and Provide Tier I and II Supports**

ACTIVITY	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	DATA SOURCES/PROGRESS EVALUATION METHODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update/modify the current Kindergarten/Transitional Kindergarten screening tools (Early Literacy Assessment/Kinder Literacy Assessment) to identify a student's basic knowledge on entry to SSD. This will include, but will not be limited to, information on a student's exposure to concepts and information from students who attended Sunnyvale School District's State Preschool.</li> <li>Develop a secondary tool to delve deeper to identify specific foundational reading gaps for specific students, based on outcome of primary screener.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Superintendent-identified specialist in reading intervention</li> <li>Preschool Instructional Coach</li> <li>Coordinator of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</li> </ul>	Complete forms and training by Fall 2021	Creation of the updated tools and staff training sign-in sheets
Develop MTSS interventions across all sites in response to identified reading needs. This will include specific strategies, flow charts, and measurable goals to evaluate effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical Manager of Behavioral Services</li> <li>MTSS team</li> <li>Superintendent-identified specialist in reading intervention</li> </ul>	Complete by Summer 2021	Finite interventions that are research based as reflected in the MTSS handbook
Train staff and implement interventions across sites in response to an identified reading need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site administrators</li> <li>Instructional coaches</li> <li>Classroom teachers</li> </ul>	Beginning Summer 2021 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmark scores</li> <li>Teacher feedback</li> <li>Implementation</li> </ul>

Source: Sunnyvale School District<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Figure contents quoted verbatim from: Ibid., 196-197.

# ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

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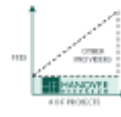
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