

MERCER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Education Plan Report
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021

District Profile

Demographics

Mercer Area School District: Superintendent: William D. Gathers, Ed.D.

545 West Butler Street
Mercer, PA 16137
724-662-5100, extension 10

Assistant Superintendent: Ronald R. Rowe, Jr.
Coordinator of Special Education: Shirley A. Spiegel, M.Ed.

Planning Committee

NAME	ROLE
Mrs. Pat Acker	Community Representative
Mr. Greg Acre	Elementary School –Principal
Mrs. Chris Brown	Middle/High School-Special Education
Mrs. Jeanne Bacon	MASD School Board Member
Mr. Cedric Butchy	MASD School Board President
Mr. Nathan Crooks	Elementary School-General Education
Mr. Eric Maussar	Middle High/School-Assistant Principal
Mr. Justin Gadsby	Middle/High School-General Education
Dr. William D. Gathers	Superintendent
Mrs. Allyson Rust	Educational Specialist-Elem./MS Guidance
Mrs. Barb Hogue	District's Certified School Psychologist
Mr. And Mrs. Marshall Nych	Parents-Representing Elementary
Mrs. Kelly McEntire	Educational Specialist-HS Guidance
Mr. and Mrs. Jason Michaels	Business Representatives
Mr. Michael Piddington	Administrator-Middle/High Principal
Mrs. Tracy Rose	Business Representative
Mr. Kevin Reese	Elementary-Special Education
Ms. Mary Hogue	Student
Dr. Ronald R. Rowe	Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Joni Kostelnik	Elementary- General Education
Mr. Clifford Hughes	Student
Mrs. Nancy Thompson	Community Representative
Mrs. Jennifer Wamboldt	Parent-Representing Middle/High School
Mrs. Shirley Spiegel	MASD Coordinator of Special Education

Core Foundations

Special Education

Special Education Students

Total Number of Students Identified: 282

Method of Identification

Identify the District's method for identifying students with specific learning disabilities.

The Mercer Area School District uses a Regressed Discrepancy Model comparing measured ability and predicted achievement to confirm or rule-out a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), in combination with multiple and varying sources of student progress monitoring data.

Sources of Information utilized to help us make a valid diagnosis are as follows:

We look at student's performance, both current results, as well as historical, on assessments such as formative and summative, standardized, local (Northwest Evaluation Association-NWEA), and classroom-based.

Student's responsiveness to provided interventions data is obtained.

Input, including progress-monitoring data, from the classroom teacher, and title one teacher gathered both structurally, as well as in an unstructured manner is considered.

Student behavior data, within the many settings of the school, observed and reported, anecdotal and quantified is collected.

Parent information is included in the process of determining SLD, as is information from related service providers. This is sought out via questionnaires or interviews. Moreover, evaluations provided by parents and/or agencies providing a service are incorporated. Parent requests are honored and *aforementioned* information is included in the evaluation report.

Sources of Multiple - Confirming Data Sets address the following statements:

1. Whether or not a student has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD);
2. The process(es) utilized to determine eligibility, meaning whether there is a severe discrepancy between achievement and ability that is not correctable without special education/specially designed instruction and/or a related service, or whether the child does not respond or researched based interventions;

Discrepancy Model Criteria:

- ❖ **SEVERE DISCREPANCY** between INTELLECTUAL ABILITY and ACHIEVEMENT: The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance and/or achievement relative to same age peers, standards or intellectual development. *The student is not achieving adequately for the student's age or does not meet state –approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas when provided with learning experiences and scientifically based instruction appropriate for*

the student's age or state-approved grade-level standards and level of English Language proficiency: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem-solving.

- ❖ Data indicating that prior to the referral, or as part of the referral process, for an evaluation for a Specific Learning Disability, the student's general education instruction was indeed delivered by a qualified teacher, and if applicable, an English as a Second Language Instructor.
- ❖ Documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable-intervals, and can be with or without modifications through our Child Study Team (CST-Elementary Level) process, reflecting progress during/after instruction, and high school data are gathered from teachers through the guidance department and the Student Assistance Program (SAP). All assessment data collected is provided to the parents.
- ❖ Relevant behavior noted during the observation of the child in their various learning environments, such as classroom, unified arts, cafeteria, recess, etc. This data is utilized along with observations of the student in their academic settings to document the student's academic performance in the areas of difficulty. Noting the relationship of the behaviors, if any, to the student's academic functioning.
- ❖ Educationally medical findings, if any.
- ❖ The determination of the team concerning the effects of environmental, cultural, or economic background.
- ❖ Any additional data, such as psychological or psychiatric evaluations from outside agencies, as determined by the evaluation team.
- ❖ A statement for each item listed below to support the conclusions of the evaluation team that the findings are not primarily a result of:

Visual, Hearing, Motor Disability

Intellectual Disability

Emotional Disturbance

Cultural Factors

Environmental or Economic Disadvantage

Limited English Proficiency

Prior to a referral, the following occurs:

Screening Process: The Elementary Child Study Team (CST) collects student performance data and determines if the student is in need of speech/language services, academic or behavior interventions. Through the Elementary Student Assistance Program (ESAP) Team, referrals for guidance services, small group counseling, and if needed a referral for mental health services, are provided and monitored. Once the category is determined through a referral process completed by the classroom teacher and

other relevant personnel, the protocol to begin such services is followed. Note: All parents are part of the process for each category. Permission from the parent to evaluate is required for potential academic/behavioral, and speech/language services, as well as mental health services. The Middle/High School also has a Student Assistance Program (SAP) in place. Academic/behavioral, speech/language, and mental health concerns, which can lead to an evaluation, are monitored through the guidance department and/or special education office.

At both the Elementary and Middle/High School the screening process additionally includes a review of school records (attendance, elementary office referral forms (ORFs), or high school office referral forms for discipline, report cards, etc.), vision and hearing screening, curriculum and performance based assessment (PSSA, progress monitoring, NWEA assessment results, systematic observations of behavior, parent and teacher input, student interviews and interest surveys. Interventions are designed, as determined by the screening process, and put into practice, increasing in intensity and duration as appropriate based on student need.

Pre-referral Interventions may include, but are not limited to the following:

Team consultation with teachers and/or parents for problem identification, and the design of an intervention plan utilizing evidence-based practices, groupings, frequency, homework strategies, study skills, note-taking, increases in time, exposure to material, etc.

Tier I Interventions: To meet the needs of individual learners, differentiation of instruction and use of research-based interventions are offered; at the appropriate level of challenge, for each learner. Interventions vary, and can include an extension of time to complete a task, smaller groups, oral discussions/presentations, group collaboration, hands-on activities, pictures, graphs, larger text, movement or rhythmic experiences, written key words and phrases to support and scaffold instruction and text information, alternating between passive and active requirements/activities. Assessment that is universal is used to identify at-risk students, such as NWEA at the Elementary and Middle/High School.

Continuing collaboration with parents regarding an intervention plan that addresses the specific learning needs of the student takes place. Progress monitoring data for the interventions are collected.

Data Team meetings are held by the Administration and Teachers in both buildings.

Grade Level Team meetings and Cross-Curricular meetings are held at the Elementary and Middle/High School.

Tier II Interventions: Title One, AmeriCorps members assist with Tier II interventions. Students identified as at-risk through NWEA assessment are provided small group instruction, using research-based intervention strategies and instructional materials, with targeted interventions to address learning issues. Examples of research-based materials include are Wilson Reading Program, and Read Naturally, to name a few. During this process the school team collaborates with the parent(s) to discuss the progress of the intervention(s). Interventions are monitored in a variety of ways dependent on the

intervention, and can include Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), classroom-based assessment, progress monitoring (checklists, charting, graphing, etc.), and Study Island.

Screening assessments are given, as necessary, to assess academic ability of reading skills, math skills, and writing skills, as well as visual-motor development, behavior, attention, and social interaction.

Tier III Interventions: Tier III interventions are implemented when a student continues to fall significantly behind peers despite the Tier II interventions. This Tier can utilize the same staff and research-based materials, but with more intensity and longer duration. The interventions are targeted to match specific skill deficits identified in the earlier tiers, NWEA, targeted screenings, such as DRAs, and Progress Monitoring. Additional screenings may be utilized. The interventions are targeted to match specific diagnostic screenings utilized after earlier tiers.

Referral to a community-based professional by the parent, to a pediatrician, psychiatrist, or developmental - optometrist can be discussed by the team at any level of intervention.

Collaboration with parents continues, along with scheduled meetings.

Should a student continue to fall significantly behind peers in Tier III, a Multi-disciplinary Evaluation, requested by the parent, and/or the school district, is then appropriate.

ENROLLMENT

Review the Enrollment Difference Status. If necessary describe how your district plans to address any significant disproportionalities.

The data is publicly available via the PennData website. You can view your most recent report. The link is

<https://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/PublicReporting/DataataGlance/tabid/2523/default.aspx>

Not significantly disproportionate.

According to the data, there is no disproportionality in the identification of exceptional children with respect to race or ethnicity. Should an over-identification within an ethnic group emerge, an immediate investigation by the MASD would be conducted resulting in amelioration of the disproportion. Only proportionally stratified normed instruments are chosen by the MASD to eliminate bias.

Mercer Area School District's percentage of identified students closely mirrors the State averages across disability categories. Should the MASD discover any areas of disproportion in the future we would communicate with neighboring districts to determine if the over-identification is due to local/regional screenings/philosophies. If necessary, and where appropriate, collaboration with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV for further discussion and investigation may be warranted.

Non-Resident Students Oversight

- 1. How does the District meet its obligation under section 1306 of the Public School Code as host District at each location?**

2. **How does the District ensure that students are receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE)?**
3. **What problems or barriers exist which limit the District's ability to meet its obligations under Section 1306 of the Public School Code?**

The Mercer Area School District is committed to providing FAPE to any eligible student residing in the District. When the MASD is made aware of a student who is in need of Special Education, or thought to be in need of Special Education, the District procedures are followed/Chapter 14 procedures are initiated, as they would be for any other student. The evaluation process would be initiated and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), if required, would be generated, based on the Evaluation Report (ER). Programming, location, related service and Specially Designed Instruction would be addressed to ensure the student's educational performance is offered in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

MASD has not encountered any barriers, or obstacles that would limit its obligations under Section 1306 of the Public School Code.

Incarcerated Students Oversight

Describe the system of oversight the District would implement to ensure that all incarcerated students who may be eligible for special education are located, identified, evaluated and when deemed eligible, are offered a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The District complies fully with the requirements of the IDEIA and Chapter 14 regarding the identification, evaluation, placement, and provision of special education services to all school aged incarcerated youth in the Mercer County Correctional Facility. Eligible students are entitled to receive special education both when they are charged with a criminal offense and are awaiting trial and after they have been convicted of a criminal offense. Specifically, the District provides special education services to incarcerated school aged individuals by the following:

1. Comply with the Child Find obligations of IDEIA;
2. Utilize appropriate evaluation procedures and diagnostic/screening instruments to determine the eligibility and educational needs of inmates;
3. Implement, timely review and/or develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for eligible students in accordance with State and Federal laws and regulations, including compliance with Procedural Safeguards;
4. Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) provision by conformity within the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

The District provides Annual Public Notice under Section 14.121 and sends the Annual Notice to the Warden of the County Jail within our jurisdiction.

The Mercer County Correctional Facility will notify the District, in writing, when an individual becomes incarcerated that is of school age. The District will then send the facility an informational packet that will be completed by the incarcerated youth which

includes the following forms:

1. Demographic and educational background;
2. Choice of their course of study - General Education with Diploma or G.E.D.
3. Refusal of public education form
4. Permission to Request for Student Records from previous school(s).

Upon receiving completed forms, the District will contact the Midwestern Intermediate Unit #4 to provide cyber service education in order to instruct the incarcerated youth(s) in order to meet the provisions of FAPE.

Least Restrictive Environment

1. **Describe the District procedures, which ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including those in private institutions, are educated with non-disabled children, and that removal from the regular education environment only occurs when education in that setting with supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.**
2. **Describe how the District is replicating successful programs, evidence-based models, and other PDE sponsored initiatives to enhance or expand the continuum of supports/services and education placement options available within the District to support students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment (LRE). (Provide information describing the manner in which the District utilizes site-based training, consultation and technical assistance opportunities available through PDE/PaTTAN, or other public or private agencies.)**
3. **Refer to and discuss the SPP targets and the district's percentages in the Indicator 5 section-educational Environments. Also discuss the number of students placed out of the district and how those placements were determined to assure that LRE requirements are met.**

The Mercer Area School District adheres to the guidelines and procedures as outlined in Chapter 14 for servicing students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate. Coordinated within the general education setting are accommodations, modifications, Child Study Team intervention, ESAP, SAP, Community-Based Supports, and Leveled-Interventions, prior to any referral for multi-disciplinary evaluation/re-evaluation. Upon a student qualifying as eligible for Special Education services, the IEP Team begins to systematically discuss possible placements beginning with the incorporation of Special Education supports within the general education classroom. The Team reviews both the benefits and the non-benefits of each incremental level of restriction, including the consideration of any unanticipated consequences. An open discussion ensues of the student's needs, parental concerns, goals, and expectations, including the district's continuum of services including supplementary supports and aids. Before a student would receive services outside of the general education classroom, there must be a demonstration that education in that setting could not satisfactorily be met even with supplementary aids and services. IDEA's full requirement for identifying the supplementary aids and services a child will need will be specified in his or her IEP. This appears at §300.320(a) (4) and stipulates that each child's IEP must contain:

*A statement of the special education and related services and **supplementary aids and services**, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child—*

- (i) To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- (ii) To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- (iii) To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and non-disabled children in the activities described in this section [§300.320(a) (4)]

The IEP team considers what services the child needs and the detail with which the team specifies them in the IEP.

Supplementary aids and services are often critical elements in supporting the education of children with disabilities in regular classes and their participation in a range of another school activities. **IDEA's definition of this term** (at §300.42) reads: ***Supplementary aids and services*** means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

Speaking practically, supplementary aids and services can be accommodations and modifications to the curriculum under study or the manner in which that content is presented or a child's progress is measured. But that's not all they are or can be. Supplementary aids and services can also include:

- direct services and supports to the child, and
- support and training for staff who work with that child which always includes the parent/guardian

That's why the MASD IEP Team (which always includes the parent) determines what supplementary aids and services are appropriate for a particular child on an individual basis. Supplementary aids and services can include, but are not limited to the following:

Supports to address environmental needs (e.g., preferential seating; chair height; planned seating on the bus or van, in the classroom, at lunch, in the auditorium, and in other locations; altered physical room arrangement)

Levels of staff support (e.g., consultation, stop-in support, classroom companion, one-on-one assistance; type of personnel support: behavior specialist, personal care assistant, instructional support assistant, co-teaching, instructional coaches)

Planning time provided for collaboration by staff, which includes parents via meetings and conferences.

Child's specialized equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, standers, computers, software, voice synthesizers, augmentative communication devices, eye-gaze devices, Velcro-strips, pencil-grips, weighted equipment, wiggle seats, fidgets, headphones, resistance-bands, utensils/cups/plates, restroom equipment, furniture arrangements, seating arrangements, adjustments to sensory inputs (lights, sound, fabrics, etc.), environmental aids such as, acoustics, heating, ventilation)

Pacing of instruction (e.g., breaks, extended time, materials for home use, picture schedules, home set of materials, alternative presentation methods)

Presentation of subject matter (e.g., taped lectures, sign language, primary language, paired reading and writing, researched-based supplementary materials, provision of ESL services)

Materials (e.g., scanned tests and notes into computer, material on tape, shared note-taking, large print or Braille, Assistive-technology, such as, touch screens, iPads, kindles, netbooks, study guides, and specially adaptive computers)

Assignment modification (e.g., shorter assignments, taped lessons, instructions broken down into steps, allow student to record or type assignment, allow oral verses written responses)

Self-management and/or follow-through (e.g., student planner, dojo, Premier Literacy Software, parent/teacher communication journal, school website, calendars, teach study skills, functional skills presented in context of typical daily routines in general education setting)

Testing adaptations (e.g., read test to child, modify format, extended time, separate setting, small group, transcribing, scribing, alternative assessment)

Social interaction support (e.g., initial student-council support, orientation/tours provide Circle of Friends, use cooperative learning groups, teach social skills, social-emotional learning, counseling supports, Behavioral Improvement Plans (BIPs), modifications of rules/expectations)

Training for all staff to continue to develop and deliver Standards Aligned Systems (SAS). Also, bullying prevention lessons, suicide prevention ALICE training, ACT 126-mandated reporter training.

As said above, **considering the supplementary aids and supports that a child needs should take into account the academic, extracurricular, and nonacademic environments available to, and of interest to, the child.** MASD covers the gamut of

school settings where children might be engaged in learning, interaction, and development for every student receiving services.

The last two elements—*extracurricular and nonacademic*-- Consistent with the inclusive nature of the legislation, regulations have added the phrase “in extracurricular and nonacademic settings” to the definition of supplementary aids and services and, thus, enlarged the scope of where supplementary aids and services must be provided, as appropriate to the child’s needs.

When considering our students receiving services being educated in regular education settings, with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate, the fact that supplementary aids and services often play a decisive role in whether or not the child can be satisfactorily educated in the regular educational environment makes it all the more important that MASD provide those services. If the IEP team has determined that the child can be satisfactorily educated in the regular classroom, with the support of a given supplementary aid or service, those aids or services must be specified in the child’s IEP and must be provided to the child. (71 Fed Reg. 46588)

The MASD currently supports students at the Itinerant, Supplemental, and Full-time Levels. Prior to any student placement outside of the MASD, all district resources, including specialized services, evaluations, and consultation provided by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, have been completely exhausted. MASD has had students placed in Intermediate Unit operated multi-district programs, and currently has students placed in Approved Licensed Private Academic Schools. Regardless of the student’s program the District encourages participation with same age peers in the general education setting for nonacademic and extra-curricular activities. Decisions, by every member of the IEP Team, are data -based.

The Special Education Coordinator makes every attempt to attend each IEP meeting. If the Coordinator should become unavailable, the Certified School Psychologist, Principal, or Assistant Superintendent would then act as the LEA.

The Mercer Area School District boasts of highly qualified teachers and staff, who exhibit innovative forward thinking, in-turn offering insightful creative ways to solve problems, develop programs, and provide services that increase student participation in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This facet, in conjunction with timely Professional Development on inclusive practices, differentiated instruction, and meeting student’s needs within the various disability categories ensure the MASD students receive FAPE in the LRE.

The Mercer Area School District is aware of the need to increase the number of students in the regular education setting to reach the SPP target of 90-100% at the Elementary and the Middle School Levels. The elementary building level academic score for the school year of 2016-2017 was 88.4. The middle school building academic score was 56.5 for the same year. The District has been addressing this through more intensive teachers with administration meetings within grade-levels, content areas, cross-curricular with discussions focused on analyzing student performance data collected from NWEA assessments. Interventions are planned and monitored at each level. The High School is

also looking closely at student growth data to continue growth from the performance level achieved. The Mercer Area High School's academic score for 2016-2017 was 85.0. Professional Development is an on-going initiative throughout the District, providing teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals with the tools and strategies needed to instruct each student individually. Moreover, and more specifically to special education services, the target for the SPP is 65% for students if 80% or more are receiving services, 8% for 40% or less receiving services. All other settings would have a target of 3.3%. MASD is committed to making and/or superseding these targets set forth by the federal government for our 282 students receiving services of the total 1100. Currently, according to NWEA assessments given three times a year at the elementary level (K-6), and two times a year at the Middle/High School, students across the board in Special Education are showing steady academic growth. It is important to note that in addition to NWEA initial assessment of all students, those students, once identified as needing alternative curriculum, progress monitoring is assessed using Moby Max. This program, purchased specifically for K-6 students who required alternative curriculum to be successful in school, according to their IEP, also provides teachers with growth data. In alignment with the February 2018 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the MASD has been making preparations for the transition to the Future Ready PA Index next year. Starting 2018-19 SY the state will utilize Future Ready PA Index instead of SPPs to track student achievement and school district performance. It will include: ELA Acquisition, Career Readiness, Access to Advanced Coursework, and Chronic Absenteeism.

Behavioral Support Services

Provide a summary of the District policy on behavioral support services including, but not limited to, the school wide positive behavior supports (PBS). Describe training provided to staff in the use of positive behavior supports, de-escalation techniques and responses to behavior that may require immediate intervention. If the district also has School –Based Behavioral Health Services, please discuss it.

The Mercer Area School District uses researched-based positive behavioral supports and interventions to diminish and alleviate conflict by diffusing or de-escalating behavior with the goal of returning the student to a state of calmness. The effects of verbal de-escalation have proven to promote student growth and development, thus enhancing student learning, our ultimate outcome. In our experience, students find success when offered constructive, corrective feedback to address inappropriate behavior, verses criticizing and strict punishment. Positive measures form the basis of our behavioral support programs to ensure that all students are free from demeaning treatment, the use of aversive techniques and the unreasonable use of restraints. As an added incentive for the promotion of positive behavior, the Mercer Area Elementary School, in collaboration with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, has implemented our own School-Wide Positive Behavior (SWPB) program. The implementation of SWPB is as a preventive measure to address inappropriate behaviors, head-on at an earlier age.

Summarized School District Policy:

The Behavioral Management Policy of the District is a leveled policy, based upon increasing levels of behavioral concern requiring greater levels of intervention. It indicates how students with disabilities are to be disciplined and what behavior

interventions should be utilized. At all times, the least restrictive, most positive method tends to be used first. For example, verbal redirects are used prior to physical prompting. Initially, at Level I good classroom management strategies are employed. Initially, at Level I, a Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP), is not required to be attached to the IEP. At Level II, specific interventions designed for individual students are employed. Level II requires a Positive Behavior Support Plan (BIP) to be attached to the IEP. At Level III, very restrictive interventions are considered only after Level II interventions are determined to be ineffective. Aversive techniques, as defined by the law, are not be used (Chapter 14). Aversive techniques, restraints or discipline procedures may not be used as a substitute for a behavior management program. The following aversive techniques are considered inappropriate and may NOT be used by agencies in educational programs: (PA Standards 342.36)

1. Corporal punishment
2. Punishment for a manifestation of a student's disability
3. Locked rooms, locked boxes, other locked structures or spaces for which the student cannot readily exit
4. Noxious substances
5. Deprivation of basic human rights, such as withholding meals, water, or fresh air
6. Serial suspensions
7. Treatment of a demeaning nature
8. Electric shock
9. Method is implemented by untrained personnel
10. Methods which have not been outlined in the agency's plan

Level I:

Classroom management traditionally has been associated with discipline, control, or other terms that connote reducing unacceptable student behavior. Management is commonly viewed as a prerequisite to instruction, something that must be accomplished so that teaching can occur. Successful classroom management involves not merely responding effectively when problems occur, but also preventing problems from occurring by creating environments that encourage learning and appropriate behavior. Thus, comprehensive classroom management incorporates both proactive planning for and encouragement of productive behavior as well as reactive responding to unproductive student behavior. Proactive classroom management activities involve the establishment and maintenance of a productive learning environment that fosters high levels of student engagement and prevention of student disruptions. The effectiveness of behavior control strategies will be maximized when used in conjunction with preventive methods. Without proactive management methods, behavior-change interventions will have limited long-term effectiveness. Research evidence has revealed that engaging students at their instructional level will decrease negative behavior.

Level II:

The twin goals of behavioral intervention are:

1. Increase appropriate or adaptive behavior.
2. Decrease inappropriate or maladaptive behavior.

The underlying assumption of any behavioral intervention is that the students' behavioral problems represent either deficits in adaptive behavior, or excesses in behavior that prove maladaptive in the student's environment. If a student is unable to carry out a required task or behavior because of deficits in prerequisite skills, the task of instruction may be to develop the lacking skills. In contrast, a student may be capable of performing a certain target skill or behavior, but for some reason may not demonstrate the skill at a level commensurate with ability. In addition to basic acquisition or performance deficits consideration must be given to other potential interfering behaviors.

Level III:

These interventions are formal behavior programs, restrictive in nature, and may modify the student's rights during implementation. They specifically focus on restraining strategies and are considered more intrusive to personal freedom than either Level I or Level II interventions. Level III interventions may not be employed as punishment. Level III interventions may not be employed for the convenience of staff. Level III interventions may not be employed as a substitute for an educational program.

With respect to behavioral management, MASD strictly prohibits aversive or coercive techniques. Aversive techniques, restraints or discipline procedures may not be used as a substitute for a behavioral management program.

When an intervention is needed to address problematic behaviors, the types of intervention chosen for a particular student or eligible young child must be the least intrusive necessary. The utilization of positive reinforcement techniques toward the encouragement of appropriate behavior choices, ranging from positive verbal statements, to more tangible rewards specifically designed for good behavioral choices are chosen methods.

If an eligible student continues to exhibit inappropriate behavior that interferes with their ability to learn they must have a program of positive behavior support. Behavior support programs and plans must be based on a functional assessment of behavior and utilize positive behavior techniques. This positive behavior support plan will be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The positive behavior support plan is a plan for students with disabilities and eligible young children who require specific intervention to address behavior interfering with learning.

Restraints can be used; however, only after less restrictive measures have been exhausted. A restraint is only warranted when the student is acting in a manner as to be a clear and present danger to him or herself, to other students, and/or to employees. The use of any restraint, for a student receiving special services, would be listed in the positive behavior support plan, which is part of the child's IEP. The use of a restraint of an individual student or eligible young child must cause:

Mercer Area School District will notify parent in the use of a restraint. An IEP meeting must be held within ten (10) school days of the restraint, unless the parent agrees to waive the meeting.

The Mercer Area School District continues its participation with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV for implementing School Wide Behavior Support trainings. The District outlines the student expectations within the student handbook, which is distributed to every student. The student and his/her parents/guardians are required to sign that all parties understand and agree to abide by the expectations of the handbook. Several programs have been implemented in both buildings to encourage students and staff in displaying expected behaviors. On-going trainings, conferences, in-services, and assemblies, have been organized and scheduled to assist in reaching our targeted goals in regards to improving positive behaviors.

Adhering to the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the District will continue to provide professional development opportunities regarding confidentially accessing behavioral health supports. This ongoing process assists in making linkages with local mental health agencies and schools through building level teams. This partnership supports all those involved in strengthening our times and supports with community agencies and ultimately improve family/student outreach with mental health needs. The District will continue to seek research-based programs that support the social, emotional, and behavioral growth of our students.

Intensive Interagency/Ensuring FAPE/Hard to Place Students

- 1. If the LEA is having difficulty ensuring FAPE for an individual student or a particular disability category, describe the procedures and analysis methods used to determine gaps in the continuum of special education supports, services, education placement options available for students with disabilities.**
- 2. Include information detailing successful programs, services, education placements as well as identified gaps in current programs, services, and educational placements not available within the LEA. Include an overview of services provided through interagency collaboration within the LEA.**
- 3. Discuss any expansion of the continuum of services planned during the life of this plan.**

The Mercer Area School District does not have a significant problem in providing FAPE for any of our students. The District strives to provide a seamless delivery system for programming to ensure Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Presently all students with identified disabilities are placed in appropriate settings as delineated by the individual educational team as developed in the IEP and based upon the educational needs of the student. If an instance would arise in which the District would be unable to provide or secure an appropriate setting for an identified student, the District would immediately contact the Intermediate Unit for resources as well as possibly informing the interagency coordinator, and as warranted seek to schedule a Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) meeting as soon as possible.

The District collaborates with additional agencies to build service capacity both within and outside the district by means of teaming with any of the variety of agencies and service providers that may be involved with an individual student. The District is located within a geographical area that incorporates neighboring Butler and Lawrence Counties; and can if needed, secure additional services/programs. Additionally, the District collaborates with Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV staff/personnel in the providing services and training as well as consultation. The District would initiate, work to resolve, and locate an appropriate educational service/program/setting for any particularly hard to place students with disabilities by means of collaboration as determined by IEP Team.

The District collaborates with the local base service agencies, Children and Youth, Juvenile Probation, and District Magistrate that provide services for any of our students. The District attends scheduled agency meetings for any student with a disability, and shares information after obtaining written consent from the parents/guardians. Parents often bring to these agency representatives/personnel to the IEP meetings or request that they be included in the IEP Invitation. Some of these agencies could include, and/or have included, but are not limited to: The Bair Foundation, Children and Youth Services of Mercer and Crawford Counties, Kitestrings, Pathfinders, Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, Sharon Regional Health Systems, Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV TAC, Clarion Psychiatric Center, Glade Run (RTF,) Sarah Reed (RTF,) Paoletta Counseling, St. Stephens Academy (North site and Utica site), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Mercer County MH/MR, CASSP, Pittsburgh Children's Hospital, Watson Institute, PaTTAN, Mercer County Career Center (MCCC), McGuire Memorial School for students with disabilities, Western PA School for the Blind, and Early Intervention Programs.

Within our district, there is a comprehensive range of programs and services available for an identified student. These programs/services, which provide a wide array of programming opportunities, are operated by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV. Additional intensive programs are available for students through educational providers. Concerning the continuum of services and programs for students with disabilities, the IEP Team determines the decisions, during the student's IEP Meeting which is scheduled at least annually.

Currently, the Mercer Area School District has been successful in securing appropriate educational placements and services for our identified students as determined through the IEP process. There are no active interagency class members or students with disabilities on Instruction in the Home. Should the District experience any difficulty in securing an appropriate educational placement for an identified student, the District would initiate contact with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV. Together the Intermediate Unit IV, and the District would collaborate in order to bring together the necessary agencies to support the student and their family in order to conference and collaborate in addressing the needs of the student who is difficult to place. The interagency

coordinator would assist the District in inviting the various educational agencies and service providers that are necessary to address the specific needs of the student.

The District is aware of the provisions as set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding as well as the District's fiscal responsibilities to provide FAPE for all students living in the Mercer Area School District and/or for those students whose parents who reside within the District. The District has and will continue to work in a spirit of collaboration with the various Mental Health and Human Service providers/agencies to ensure a coordinated, seamless, delivery system of services for all students with disabilities. Meetings are attended by those responsible individuals/agencies, including the school, to assist in determining/providing funding (fiscal responsibility.)

The District will continue to adhere to the provisions as delineated in the various Basic Educational Circulars (BECS), and to apply and to apply available special education funds and district special educational resources in providing appropriate educational programs and services for all special education students.

Presently, the District is providing for the educational portion of the costs of those students with disabilities that have been placed by community agencies (Juvenile Probation, Children and Youth, MH/MR/ CASSP, etc.) in locations outside of the District for a variety of unique issues.

If the District would encounter any concerns that could not be resolved surrounding this issue, the District would contact the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV and/or the Interagency Coordinator for assistance and resolution.

Strengths and Highlights

Describe the strengths and highlights of your current special education services and programs. Include in this section directions on how the district provides trainings for staff, faculty and parents.

The mission of the Mercer Area School District is to provide a world-class education to all students.

We believe that together, through expanding relationships, the students, staff, parents, and community members of the Mercer Area School District create a collaborative, innovative educational system that:

1. Appreciates the diversity of our student population and fosters individual growth by allowing all students to strive for their personal best.
2. Promotes core values within our community, assisting in the development of moral, ethical, and compassionate people.

3. Provides students with the skills necessary to be critical thinkers and problem solvers, challenging them to become contributors to the future of their community, nation, and humanity.
4. Provides teachers and administrators with the skills necessary to engage future generations through the use of professional development and an emphasis on technology integration.
5. Provides open lines of communication to encourage and assist parents and caregivers in creating an atmosphere at home to aid the learning process.
6. Creates an educational system in which students, teachers, parents, and the community are accountable for each child's education in Mercer.
7. Provides a safe learning environment for the students and the staff, which boasts of an educational setting where respect for themselves and others is assured.

We Believe

1. Education is a shared responsibility among students, parents and family, school, and community.
2. All students must develop a sense of responsibility, accountability, and self-discipline in order to be successful.
3. Education is an on-going process in which students learn at different rates and in different ways. A variety of learning experiences and strategies is vital for each student's development.
4. All students are entitled to learn in a safe, nurturing, healthy environment, equipped with resources necessary for them to thrive.
5. Respect must be encouraged and demonstrated for self, others, and material possessions so that open communication and trust among students, teachers, administrators, staff, and community flourishes.
6. Learning is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes that are critical in preparing students for future challenges and opportunities.
7. All children are capable of learning and should be challenged to reach their highest potential.
8. Education is a key in shaping responsible, thinking citizens in an informed society.
9. The decision-making process pertaining to the educational programs, policies, and curriculum should address the developmental maturation of each level of education:

Pre-K
Primary
Intermediate
Middle
High school

10. Community involvement and open, regular communication is a critical component of educational excellence.

11. Learning needs to be relevant, rigorous, and reflective, and should prepare students to live successfully in an ever-changing global society.

12. Recognition of individual and group accomplishments is vital.

13. Technology is an important tool to be used in an individual's education and exploration of that individual's community and the world.

14. Education is a worthwhile investment that benefits both the individual and the community.

15. The school district is responsible for the effective use of the allocated community resources.

16. A variety of learning experiences and strategies is vital for each student's development.

17. Each individual is unique and needs positive self- worth to foster success.

Mercer School District has met AYP for consecutive years. In reviewing the results of the PSSA testing conducted for the special education student groups in the District, the District has exceeded the participation rates as compared to the state averages for the last four years of AYP tracking. Even though the achievement of making AYP has been part of our history, the District is also achieving according to the School Performance Profile (SPP) proficiency levels. MASD continues to provide professional development for the staff to meet the 100% levels. As aforementioned, Mercer Area School District's continuing goal for the 282 students currently receiving special services in regards to the SPP targets of the 1100 total (65% for 80% of the population, and/or 8% of 40% of the population) will be met or surpassed in alignment with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in February 2018, and in preparation for the transition to the Future Ready PA Index beginning 2018-2019. Professional Development is an on-going initiative throughout the District, providing teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals with the tools and strategies needed to instruct each student individually.

The District will continue to assess students utilizing the Diagnostic Reading Assessment-DRA (1-2) Title I (K-6) interventions, and the Northwest Evaluation Association Assessment- NWEA (K-11.) At Mercer Area Elementary, additional

performance information will continue to be collected and compiled through an ongoing process of analyzing PSSA and Keystone results as well as utilizing the software applications available for assessment including: Accelerated Reader, and PVAAS. Data will be reviewed and analyzed by grade level and subject area teams during professional development days and monthly meetings. This data will be then presented during scheduled Child Study Team (CST). CST recommends and/or can provide for intervention groupings during scheduled times throughout the day. These intervention groups are flexible in nature and the students may be reassigned as the need permits.

Additional after school homework clubs and tutoring groups have been available via AmeriCorps members. These clubs/groups are also flexible in nature and the students may be reassigned as the need permits. The RtII model, referred to as Child Study Team (CST) has become part of the established model throughout the elementary school grades K-6. Previously, an RtII teacher had been assigned to provide leadership and guidance for the staff. Trainings provided by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV and PaTTAN have provided the necessary trainings to implement this educational initiative. Now the teachers and administration, along with the Elementary Student Assistance Team works collectively to implement the RtII Model through the Child Study Team approach.

At both Mercer Area Middle School and Mercer Area High School, the administration and instructors will continue to assess and analyze NWEA data to monitor individual student progress. The District has been involved, in the past, with Eye on the Goal trainings and this information has helped when determining courses of study, scope and sequence, in order to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the standards, and presently PA Common Core. Our district aims to ensure our students are well prepared for the PSSA and Keystone State tests as well as continued educational or work opportunities. Changes in course offerings are continually revised, eliminated, or added to adequately prepare all of our students for required State mandated testing and life after school. Our School District Transition Coordinator is very involved in the process.

A selected number of our students take the PASA. The teachers who administer these tests attend professional development trainings offered by the District, Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, or on-line direct from the PASA center. Test administrators take a required proficiency test after viewing a webinar. The webinar covers each component of the tests as well as scoring specifics. Some staff members have attended trainings to become proficient in scoring the PASA exams. This has been helpful to our teachers in that they are more confident in regards to the nuances of this test and can be proactive in the preparation of their students to ease their anxiety when taking the test.

The Mercer Area School District serves students with disabilities in grades Kindergarten - 12 utilizing a wide range of services in order to appropriately meet their individual learning needs. The District addresses each individual student's specific needs on a case-by-case basis through the IEP Process.

The Mercer Area School District is dedicated in providing to all students, quality Standard Aligned Systems based educational programs and services. During the last

Cyclical Monitoring (2012-2013) conducted by the BSE (Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education,) the District was found to be in compliance in all categories throughout the monitoring process and no systematic corrective action in any of the categories was required. This information was then reported in the Executive Summary Letter from Mr. John Tommasini (Director of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, now retired) as "an outstanding achievement" and the District is to be "commended" for its attainment of such a "high level of compliance." Additionally, the District received specific compliance commendations in the following areas:

"The school district was commended for the transition of students from Elementary to Middle School, our student-centered Community Based Instructional Program, our organized and detailed record keeping, and the Facilitated Self-Assessment (FSA).

The school district is recognized for being pro-active with "Success by Six" programming which provides a six week summer program for students entering kindergarten, in the upcoming school year, who are considered "At risk" for educational, social, transitional, etc. needs.

The school district continues to employ a comprehensive progress-monitoring instrument.

To enhance the District's most recent Compliance Monitoring overall "Well Done" review, with the District receiving several commendations, we firmly remain committed to fulfilling the requirements of the current educational laws in order to provide appropriate educational programming for students with disabilities designed to help make all of our students successful. We are committed to maintaining a level of excellence in the following areas: "Success by Six," Transition from EI to School, transition from Elementary to Secondary, Transition from School to Life, Child Study Team Process, Parent Communication Materials, and Management of Confidential Records. Recommendations regarding the IEPs' measurable annual goals have been addressed in trainings provided by Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV staff. The District remains committed to the implementation of the recommendations and continual improvement regarding effective research-based educational programs/services. The MASD Coordinator of Special Education regularly attends all Special Services Contact Meetings at the MIU IV to receive information about current policies/law, available training opportunities, MIU IV support updates, and to engage in networking opportunities with other districts. Moreover, the Coordinator conducts monthly meetings with the entire MASD Special Education Department to ensure all guidelines are followed and services are rendered to each child, as per their Individualized Educational Plans. Paraprofessionals also receive on-going trainings throughout the school year, via the Coordinator.

Strengths:

- Evidence-based curriculum in reading, writing, and mathematics, aligned with Standard Aligned Systems and PA Common Core.
- Adoption of universal screening procedures.

- Collaborative teaming model at all levels.
- Positive relationships with school districts.
- Administrative support.
- Positive community and interagency relationships.
- Expertise of direct service staff with willingness to advance their skills.
- Parent survey indicates satisfaction with service models.
- Family participation in family support activities (i.e. Transition to Kindergarten Orientation for families and students, Open Houses, parent/teacher conferences, local parent trainings, Title I parent workshops.)
- Access to a wide variety of staff development and training opportunities including IEP Development, Indicator 13 Training, SWPBS, Safety Mechanics, Writing Measurable Annual Goals. Response to Instruction & Intervention training, Transition, Inclusive practices, Co-teaching, Psychologist training (Assessment, Coping Cats, Howie Knoff,) PaTTAN trainings, Higher Education Partnerships, Classrooms for the Future.
- Student Graduation rate within range.
- Student Drop out rate within range.
- High parent participation in IEP and other parent team meetings.
- Continuum of Services being provided.
- Highly Qualified Staff - Professional and Para-educators.
- Training for para-educators using the PDE's para-educator credential, locally or in conjunction with IU #4 and PaTTAN.
- Parent informational materials, which are comprehensive and professional in appearance.
- "Success by Six" programming.
- Child Study Team Process in conjunction with the Elementary Student Assistance Team.
- "School to Work" activities.
- Department of Education's commendation of Transition to Middle School.
- Department of Education's commendation for our Confidential Record Keeping
- Department of Education's commendation on our Facilitated Self Assessment (FSA)

The parents of special needs children have consistently expressed at the IEP Conferences their satisfaction with the academic programs and services provided by the District, as well as the progress their child has made throughout their educational experiences. Historically, there has been a high level of parent participation during IEP meetings as well as other team meetings. There are well established, positive relationships between the teachers and parents within the District as well as those interagency relationships that have developed between parents and other educational providers, agencies, and neighboring schools.

The District provides quality programs and services to all of its students. The District is very proud of the inclusion programs operated in each of its buildings and fully promotes inclusionary practices and effective teaching strategies in order to accommodate students with disabilities. As a result, the District maintains to be able to educate a high

percentage of special education students within the regular education setting. This is substantiated by the data from the past three years (2014-2014, 2015-2016, 2016-2017) provided in the Pennsylvania Department of Education Special Education Data Reports. This data demonstrates the District's commitment and effort toward this goal by the continual increase of its special education students being educated within the regular classroom setting for 80% or more. The IEP Team evaluates students' strengths and weaknesses individually. Decisions are always based upon the needs of the child and not on cost or location of the service and/or program. Some children, however, cannot be appropriately served in their regular school and class because of their unique needs and as a result are served in other settings as determined by the IEP Team.

Presently, the District provides special education programs/services in both of its buildings. Mercer Area Elementary provides Speech and Language Support, Deaf and Hearing Impaired Support, three Learning Support Classrooms, one Autistic/Emotional Support Classroom, and one Life Skills Support Classroom. Mercer Area Middle School provides two Learning Support Classrooms, one Autistic Support/Life Skills Support classroom, one Emotional Support classroom, Speech and Language Support, and Deaf and Hearing Impaired Support. Mercer Area High School provides one Autistic Support/Life Skills Support classroom, one Emotional Support classroom-both in conjunction with the Middle School, three Learning Support classrooms, Speech and Language Support, and Deaf and Hearing Impaired Support.

In addition to the District's teaching staff, twenty-one part-time para-educators, two-contracted CNAs, and one contracted LPN are assigned within the two buildings to assist in providing educational and/or medical supports. Additional inclusionary and related services and supports (Vision, Assistive Technology, Audio-logical, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy as well as area specific consultants (i.e. behavioral, traumatic brain injury) are provided by staff employed by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV within the building locations as needed and determined by the individual student's IEP Team. The District also contracts with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV as well as local educational providers as needed in order to provide appropriate, specific educational settings and programs for those low incidence students as well as those who require significant intensive programs and/or services which are not provided within the District.

In addition to the supports and programming offered by the District personnel, there is one Autistic classroom operated by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV located in the middle school wing of the Mercer Area Middle Senior High School.

Specific current strengths and highlights of the Special Education Program provided by the Mercer Area School District (in no particular order) include:

- The District Administration is well aware and very supportive of the Special Education Programs and services provided within their individual buildings. The elementary principal is directly involved in the ESAP/CST initiatives by attending scheduled meetings, scheduling intervention sessions, and monitoring individual student progress.

- The building principal also supports the School-Wide Positive Behavior Team at the elementary building. At the secondary level, the middle and high school principals are members of the SAP (Student Assistance Program) Team and monthly Leadership Teams. Throughout the District, collaborative teaming between teachers, staff, administrators, providers, and parents/guardians are encouraged and occur at all levels.
- The District encourages the utilization of appropriate research-based educational practices to improve and enhance current education programs and services. One such program is the "Co-Teaching Model" in which, Special Education Support and Regular Education Teachers work together in providing instruction in the content areas within the regular educational setting, thus integrating students with disabilities into the regular educational setting to the fullest extent appropriate. Common planning times and professional development are provided for those staff members participating in this research-based educational approach. To this end, the District continues to partner with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, PaTTAN, Slippery Rock University, and via the District Coordinator, Duquesne University to provide ongoing staff development and best educational practices in the areas of inclusion and co-teaching.
- The District recognizes the importance of providing a strong, structured education at an early age, and therefore provides effective early childhood programs. These programs include "Success by Six," a six week summer program for children considered to be "at risk" for academic, social, and/or transitional difficulty. Additionally, the District houses a "Pre-K Counts Program" for 13 pre-school age children as well as two Head Start Classrooms for 12 pre-school children. Four classrooms of all day kindergarten in our elementary building are offered in our district with student enrollment not exceeding 20 students per classroom.
- All of the Regular and Special Education teachers employed by the District are Highly Qualified. Individual Special Education teachers are also pursuing additional certifications through completion of either the Praxis, in a specific content area or areas, thereby, fulfilling the additional requirements for designation as highly qualified/certified. This affords the District greater flexibility in scheduling and in providing instruction for a variety of subject areas in the elementary, middle, and senior high settings within the District.
- The District provides staff (professional and paraprofessional) development through a coordinated program of activities scheduled on Act 80 days scheduled throughout the school year. Act 48 credit is offered to the certified staff. The educational emphasis has and continues to be in the areas of Data-Driven Decision Making, the implementation of "Study Island" (a software application), the utilization of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Assessments (Grades K-11), Reading Training provided by Harcourt at the elementary level and Sopris-West Language! at the secondary level, DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) Training (Grades K-2), Progress Monitoring and Measurable Goals (Special Education Grades K-12), and technology.

- All of the Para-educators employed by the District either have a post secondary degree or have passed the Paraprofessional Assessment developed by the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV. They are trained annually by means of scheduled staff development, web based computer training, programming/materials, offered by PaTTAN that ensure they have the required 20 hours of annual training.

- The Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV has and continues to provide the District with ongoing training in the areas of Transition, IEP Development, Effective School-Wide Behavior Intervention, Progress Monitoring, Response to Intervention, IDEAIA, Assistive Technology, Differentiated Instruction, UDL, Indicator 13/14, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, Functional Behavioral Assessment, Data Driven Decision Making: PVASS/eMetric/Office Discipline Referrals, Para-educator Series, Keystones to Opportunity modules, SAS Portal/CDT, Teacher Effectiveness, as well as a variety of topic of concerns/issues as they become necessary.

- The District's current graduation and drop-out rates for special needs students in reference to Indicators 1 and 2: Graduation and Drop-Out Rates (Ages 14-21) are within the state expectation range. The review of the Special Education Data Reports of the past three years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017,) indicates that the District has met the State Performance Plan target for both Graduation and/or Drop-out rates as it continues to strive towards the attainment of the 100% graduation and 0% drop-out goal. Parents of special needs students and the students themselves are provided with programming/counseling that stresses the importance of staying in school and graduating. The District participates in Cohort One of PAPOS and all of the transition coordinator reports indicate 100% participation. MASD continues to aim for a goal of no drop-outs to report of students with special needs for every graduating class.

- The District had received a Keys 2 Work Grant from the West Central Job Partnership. The grant makes provisions for job partnership, vocational assessment, and career assessment for students. A transitional course of study is provided for career and interest inventories for special needs students. Moreover, through our guidance department our 6th graders visit the Mercer County Career Center (MCCC), and have a scheduled Career's class, and our 10th graders attend a Business and Industrial fair each year.

- The District is committed to improving literacy and reading skills for all students in all grades. All of the teachers are working collaboratively to improve this goal. Curriculum materials and software applications have been purchased to assist in this process. Funding through IDEAIA, ARRA, and ACCESS have assisted in purchasing materials such as personal and classroom sound field systems, assistive technology equipment, computers, SMART Boards, software, Edmark Reading program, Moby Max, Sopris- West Language! materials and trainings, etc. for the special education programs.

- The District through a partnership with Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission and Sharon Regional Health System, provide services, as needed, for those students who require services that are not currently provided within the District.

- The District has a variety of information pertaining to Special Education available to parents through its website designed to afford access to student progress through Tyler Technologies (a software application providing scores on all class tests, homework assignments, class projects, class averages, general school information, and school contacts). Additional training and school information as well as events are also displayed through the District website, newsletters, brochures, calendar, and notices distributed and/or made available to families throughout the year.

- The District maintains positive and professional partnership with neighboring school districts, local colleges/universities, the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV. This allows for mutual information sharing regarding data analysis, staff development opportunities, maintenance and planning for programming needs, grant writing training, and the opportunities for collaboration in effectively serving students with special needs.

- The District remains dedicated to fulfilling the requirements of the current state and federal educational laws in order to provide high quality, appropriate educational programming and services for students with disabilities with the ultimate goal to ensure that all of our students are successful.

- The Mercer Elementary PEP (Parents as Educational Partners) is dedicated to working with our staff and families to provide funding for many "extras" such as homework folders, backpacks, books, computers, classroom technology such as Elmos, digital cameras, SMART BOARDS, playground equipment (balls, jump ropes, etc...), in-school opportunities such as Santa's Workshop, and SWPB assembly incentives, fundraising, and field trips that our students may not necessarily have without their assistance. The PEP association provided the elementary school with a generous donation that was used for the purchase of new playground equipment and provided volunteers to assist in the supervised installation. They provide funding via fund-raisers for our annual grade level field trips as well as assemblies. The PEP association provides volunteers at Kindergarten Registration, Santa's Workshop, and the School Spirit Items sales. They also provide "goodies" for the teachers and staff during National Education Week.

- The Mercer Area School District links with area businesses to promote education as well as transition services so that students can accomplish their post secondary school goals. Currently there are ten businesses opening their doors to our student to assist in the provision of Community Based Instruction (CBI).

- SAT prep classes are offered during the summer for students who are interested in college. Accommodations for these tests are also provided when approved by College Board.

- The District also coordinates with the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV Local Parent Task Force to provide parent education and training, which is part of the Task Force's Parent Toolbox series. The District also coordinates with the Mercer County Children's Aid Society with their monthly parent education and training.

- MASD employs a full-time certified school psychologist, one full-time, one three quarter time, and one half-time speech/language therapists.
- Mercer Area School District continues to experience parental satisfaction with the services and programs provided to students with special needs. Mercer Area School District promotes effective teaching strategies and cultivates inclusionary practices to ensure all individuals with disabilities are provided an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.
- Mercer Area School District is the only school district in Mercer County with a designated scholarship for students who have exceptional learning differences. The first recipient of the award was recognized June 2017.

Assurances

Special Education Assurances

The Local Education Agency (District) has verified the following Assurances:

- Implementation of a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available to the school district for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the school district.
- Implementation of a child find system to locate, identify and evaluate young children and children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the school district's jurisdiction. Child find data is collected, maintained and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for its effectiveness. The District implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies and individuals on at least an annual basis.
- Assurances of students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
- Compliance with the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education's report revision notice process.
- Following the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
- Assurance of funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

24 P.S. §1306 and §1306.2 Facilities

Facility Name	Facility Type	Services Provided By	Student Count
Mercer County Jail	Incarcerated	Mercer Area School District	0

Least Restrictive Environment Facilities

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Type of Service	Number of Students Placed
Mercer County Career Center	Neighboring Career Center	Secondary Learning Support	20
St. Stephens North Academy	Other private separate facility-non-residential	K-8 Emotional Support	1
St. Stephens Utica	Other private separate facility-non-residential	K-12 Emotional Support	3
McGuire	Approved Private School	Autistic Support	1
Western PA School for the Blind	Approved Private School-Residential	Blind & Visually Impaired-Multi-Disability	1

Special Education Program Profile

Program Position #1

Operator: School District- (JK, LS K-3, Total 27 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	5-8	12	0.24
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support	5-8	15	0.75

Program Position #2*Operator:* School District (AS, LSS, K-6, 26 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	6-11	10	0.2
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support	6-11	8	0.4
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Emotional Support	10	1	0.02
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Life Skills Support	6-11	7	0.35

Justification: The students in the Life Skills Support K-6 classroom are seen with students of similar age or individually. The parents are informed of the class age range and a waiver is signed. Student's needs are based on the IEP goals and LRE.

Program Position #3*Operator:* School District (KR, Autistic/Emotional Support (K-6)-17 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Autistic Support	8-9	1	0.08
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Autistic Support	6-11	3	0.38
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Emotional Support	6-11	3	0.15
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Emotional Support	6-11	3	0.06
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	10-11	2	0.04
Mercer Area	An	A	Supplemental	Learning	6-11	5	0.25

Elementary	Elementary School Building	building in which General Education programs are operated		Support			
Justification: The students in the Autistic Support K-6 classroom are seen with students of similar age or individually. The parents are informed of the class age range and a waiver is signed. Student's needs are based on the IEP goals and LRE.							

Program Position #4

Operator: School District (B.K. 3-4 LS, 20 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-3rd	8-9	12	0.60
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-4th	9-10	8	0.40

Program Position #5*Operator:* School District (J.I. 5-6 LS, 20 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-4th	9-10	11	0.55
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-5th	10-11	9	0.45

Program Position #6*Operator:* School District (H.B. ES (7-12)-17 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	12-17	8	0.16
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support	12-17	3	0.15
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School	A building in which General	Itinerant	Emotional Support	12-17	2	0.04

	Building	Education programs are operated					
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Emotional Support	12-17	4	0.2

Program Position #7

Operator: School District (K.Y., Speech/Language Therapist-(1st-6th+ AS/ES population @ the elementary) 3/4 Time Teacher, 45 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENT

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Speech/Language Support Support-sessions with same age peers	7-11	45	0.90

Program Position #8

Operator: School District (C.R Speech/Language Therapist (K-3^d) & (7th-12th) 1/2 Time Teacher, 27 students receiving S&L-8 @ Elementary and 19 @ Middle/High School)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Speech/Language Support Support-sessions with same age peers	5-9	8	0.16
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School	A building in which	Itinerant	Speech/Language Support	12-18	19	0.38

	building	General Education programs are operated					
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Program Position #9

Operator: School District (S.S., Speech/Language Therapist/ 59 students receiving S&L and 3 Hearing Impaired Services-62 Total Students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Elementary	An Elementary School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Speech/Language Support-sessions with same age peers	5-12	59	0.91
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Hearing Support	12-16	3	0.06

Program Position #10

Operator: School District (D.E. LS, (7th -12th grade)-17 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	12-17	5	0.1
Mercer Area Middle/High	A Middle/High	A building	Supplemental	Learning	12-17	12	0.6

School	School Building	in which General Education programs are operated		Support			
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Program Position #11

Operator: School District (K.C. LS, (8th-9thgrade)-26 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support-Middle School	12-14	3	0.06
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support-High School	15-17	9	0.18
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-High School	15-17	2	0.1
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-Middle School	12-14	12	0.6

Program Position #12*Operator:* School District (A.S.LS, (9th-10th grade) 20 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support-High School	14	9	0.18
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-High School	14	11	0.55

Program Position #13*Operator:* School District (C.B. -LS, (8th-12th grade)- 30 students)**PROGRAM SEGMENTS**

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support-High School	15-17	21	0.42
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Learning Support-High School	15-17	8	0.4
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which	Itinerant	Learning Support-Middle	12-14	1	0.02

		General Education programs are operated		School			
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Program Position #14

Operator: School District (A.E. Autistic Support/Life Skills Support (7th -12th grade)-13 students)

PROGRAM SEGMENTS

Location/Building	Grade	Building Type	Support	Service Type	Age Range	Caseload	FTE
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Itinerant	Learning Support	12-15	3	0.06
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Autistic Support	16-18	2	0.25
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Life Skills Support	13-18	7	0.35
Mercer Area Middle/High School	A Middle/High School Building	A building in which General Education programs are operated	Supplemental	Multi-Disability	18-19	1	0.13

Justification: The students in the Autistic Support/Life Skills Support 7-12 classroom are seen with students of similar age or individually. The parents are informed of the class age range and a waiver is signed. Student's needs are based on the IEP goals and LRE.

Special Education Support Services

Support Services	Location	Teacher FTE
Certified School Psychologist	Mercer Area School District-Elementary Building	1
Director of Special Education	Mercer Area School District-Central Admin	.50
Coordinator of Special Education	Mercer Area School District-Elementary Building	.50
PCA	Mercer Area Elementary	1
PCA	Mercer Area Elementary	1
PCA	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Area Elementary	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Middle School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Middle School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer Middle School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer High School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer High School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer High School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer High School	1
Paraprofessional	Mercer High School	1
PCA	Mercer High School	1
PCA	Mercer High School	1
Special Education Secretary	Mercer Area School District-Elementary Building	1

Special Education Contracted Services

Special Education Contracted Services	Operator	Amt of Time Per Week
Occupational Therapy	Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV	636.5 Minutes (1 ½ days)
Physical Therapy	Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV	858 Minutes (2 days)
Vision Therapy	Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV	3.75 Minutes (consult)

District Level Plan

Special Education Personnel Development

Autism

Description An increase of 5% of students with Autism included in general education

Person Responsible Administration

Start Date 7/1/2018

End Date 6/30/2021

Program Area(s) Professional Education, Special Education, Student Services

Professional Development Details

Hours Per Session	1.0
# of Sessions	3
# of Participants Per Session	100
Provider	MASD
Provider Type	Individual
PDE Approved	NO
Knowledge Gaining	This is an optional narrative for Special Education
Research and Best Practice Base	This is an optional narrative for Special Education
For classroom teachers, school counselors, and education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students.Empowers educator's to work effectively with parents and community partners.
For school or LEA administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on learning.
Training Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">School Wide Group PresentationSmall Group/Individual Presentations/DiscussionWebinars on TopicArticle/Research Data
Participant Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Classroom Teachers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals/Assistant Principals • Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents/CEO/Executive Director • Parents • School Counselors • Paraprofessionals • Other Educational Specialists
Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary –Primary (Pre K-Grade 1) • Elementary-Intermediate (Grades 2-5) • Middle (Grades 6-8) • High (Grades 9-12)
Follow-Up Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating lessons to meet varied student learning styles • Peer-to-peer lesson discussion
Evaluation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students in regular education classes • PENNDATA

Behavior Support

Description	Yearly district bus driver meeting agendas and sign-in sheets
Person Responsible	Transportation Coordinator/Special Education Coordinator
Start Date	7/1/2018
End Date	6/30/2021
Program Area(s)	Special Education

Professional Development Details

Hours Per Session	1.0
# of Sessions	3
# of Participants Per Session	25
Provider	MASD
Provider Type	School Entity
PDE Approved	NO
Knowledge Gaining	This is an optional narrative for Special Education

Research and Best Practice Base	This is an optional narrative for Special Education
For classroom teachers, school counselors, and education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowers educator's to work effectively with parents and community partners.
For school or LEA administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results
Training Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Wide Group Presentation
Participant Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals/Assistant Principals • Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents/CEO/Executive Director • Related Service Personnel
Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary –Primary (Pre K-Grade 1) • Elementary-Intermediate (Grades 2-5) • Middle (Grades 6-8) • High (Grades 9-12)
Follow-Up Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of student work, with administrator and/or peers
Evaluation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Office Referral Forms (ORF)(s) for bus reports.

Paraprofessional

Description District's documentation of a minimum of 20 hours completed yearly for the next 3 school years.

Person Responsible Special Education Coordinator

Start Date 7/1/2018

End Date 6/30/2021

Program Area(s) Special Education

Professional Development Details

Hours Per Session	2.0
# of Sessions	10
# of Participants Per Session	23
Provider	MASD, PaTTAN, MIU-IV

Provider Type	School Entity
PDE Approved	No, Yes, No
Knowledge Gaining	Paraprofessional Competency Goals
Research and Best Practice Base	This is an optional narrative for Special Education
For classroom teachers, school counselors, and education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment. Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students. Empowers educators to work effectively with parents and community partners.
For school or LEA administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with emphasis on learning. Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results.
Training Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of Workshops Live Webinar Offsite Conferences
Participant Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraprofessional
Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary –Primary (Pre K-Grade 1) Elementary-Intermediate (Grades 2-5) Middle (Grades 6-8) High (Grades 9-12)
Follow-Up Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom observation focusing on factors such as planning and preparation, knowledge of content, pedagogy and standards, classroom environment, instructional delivery and professionalism.
Evaluation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom observation focusing on factors such as planning and preparation, knowledge of content, pedagogy and standards, classroom environment, instructional delivery and professionalism.

Reading ESSA

Description Annual increase of 3% in PSSA Proficient or PVAAS growth results for each of the next 3 school years.

Person Responsible Administration

Start Date 7/1/2018

End Date 6/30/2021

Program Area(s) Professional Education, Special Education, Student Services

Professional Development Details

Hours Per Session	3.0
# of Sessions	3
# of Participants Per Session	100
Provider	MASD
Provider Type	School Entity
PDE Approved	No
Knowledge Gaining	This is an optional narrative for Special Education.
Research and Best Practice Base	This is an optional narrative for Special Education.
For classroom teachers, school counselors, and education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment.• Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students.• Provides educators with a variety of classroom-based assessment skills and the skills needed to analyze and use data in instructional-decision-making.
For school or LEA administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, ensuring that assessments, curriculum, instruction, staff professional education, teaching materials and interventions for struggling students are aligned to each other as well as to Pennsylvania's Academic Standards• Provides leaders with the ability to

	<p>access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on learning. • Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results.
Training Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Wide Group Presentation • School Whole group Presentation • Parent/Teacher Conferences
Participant Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Teachers • Principals/Assistant Principals • Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents/CEO/Executive Director • Parents • School Counselors • Paraprofessionals • Other Educational Specialists • New Staff
Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary –Primary (Pre K-Grade 1) • Elementary-Intermediate (Grades 2-5) • Middle (Grades 6-8) • High (Grades 9-12)
Follow-Up Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating lessons to meet varied student learning styles • Peer-to-peer lesson discussion
Evaluation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observation focusing on factors such as planning and preparation, knowledge of content, pedagogy and standards, classroom environment, instructional delivery and professionalism. • Student PSSA data • Classroom student assessment data.

Transition

Description	Documentation of attendance via IU
Person Responsible	Transition and Special Education Coordinator
Start Date	7/1/2018
End Date	6/30/2021
Program Area(s)	Professional Education, Special Education, Student Services

Professional Development Details

Hours Per Session	2.0
# of Sessions	4
# of Participants Per Session	1
Provider	IU
Provider Type	IU
PDE Approved	Yes
Knowledge Gaining	Update Transition requirements
Research and Best Practice Base	This is an optional narrative for Special Education
For classroom teachers, school counselors, and education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment.• Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students.• Provides educators with a variety of classroom-based assessment skills and the skills to analyze and use data in instructional decision-making.• Empowers educators to work effectively with parents and community partners.
For school or LEA administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, ensuring that assessments, curriculum, instruction, staff professional education, teaching materials and interventions for struggling students are aligned to each other as well as to Pennsylvania's Academic Standards.• Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results.

Training Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Webinar • Offsite Conferences • Brochures/Pamphlets
Participant Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom teachers • School Psychologist • Parents (Brochures/pamphlets given at IEP meetings)
Grade Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle (Grades 6-8) • High (Grades 9-12)
Follow-Up Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team development and sharing of content-area lesson implementation outcomes, with involvement of administrator and/or peers. • Analysis of student work, with administrator and/or peers.
Evaluation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observation focusing on factors such as planning and preparation, knowledge of content, pedagogy and standards, classroom environment, instructional delivery and professionalism.

Special Education Affirmations

The Mercer Area SD within Midwestern IU 4 affirms that the school district will comply with the requirements of 22 Pa. Code Chapter 14 and with the policies and procedures of PDE. PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, standards, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The school district understands that special education reports will be approved by PDE in accordance with the following criteria as set forth in 22 Pa. School Code § 14.104:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available to the school district for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the school district.
2. The school district has adopted a child find system to locate, identify and evaluate young children and children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the school district's jurisdiction. Child find data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for its effectiveness. The school district

- implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The school district has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
 4. The school district will comply with the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education's report revision notice process.
 5. The school district follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
 6. The school district assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

No signature has been provided

Board President

No signature has been provided

Chief School Administrator