



WestEd's Review of Special Education Programs and Services

Davis Joint Unified School District
Final Report

WestEd Team

Program Team:

- Dona Meinders
- Ann Hern
- Dustin Bindreiff
- Tina Tranzor
 - Tori Ballew
 - Kimberly Salomonson
 - Zach Smith



Mixed Method Research Design

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Quantitative Data:

- Enrollment
- Achievement
- Compliance
- Personnel



Qualitative Data:

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Surveys



Data Collection

Surveys and IEP Reviews:

- Administrator Survey (n=6)
- Parents of Students with IEPs (n=215)
- School Staff Survey (n=351)

- IEPs Reviewed (n=22)

Onsite school visits:

- 17 elementary classes
- 12 middle school classes
- 9 high school classes

Focus groups and interviews held:

- 15 small group interviews
- 32 focus group interviews
- 14 individual interviews

Setting the Stage for Next Steps

Discoveries and Recommendations from the Data Review



Evidenced-Based Practices

Where Should Efforts be Focused

The single most consistently significant predictor of academic achievement for students with disabilities, despite the local education agency (LEA), grade level, and content area, is the performance of general education students.

(Kimber W Malmgren, Beverly J Trezek & Peter V Paul (2005) Models of Classroom Management as Applied to the Secondary Classroom, The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 79:1, 36-39, DOI: [10.3200/TCHS.79.1.36-39](https://doi.org/10.3200/TCHS.79.1.36-39))

For students with an IEP, including students identified in each disability category, greater participation in a general education setting is a strong predictor of academic growth and improved outcomes as measured by statewide assessments*

(Doutre, S.M., Ripma, T., Barrett, T., Williams Valentine, T., Caparas, R. and Willis, J. (2021). *California special education governance and accountability study*. WestEd.)

*Frequent progress monitoring with formative assessments is critical to the ultimate improvement of results for all students on the statewide assessments. This will allow for identifying and addressing areas where students need additional instruction-re-teaching, support, or accommodations.

Findings - Five Themes

Theme 1: VISION - Systems Alignment and System of Support

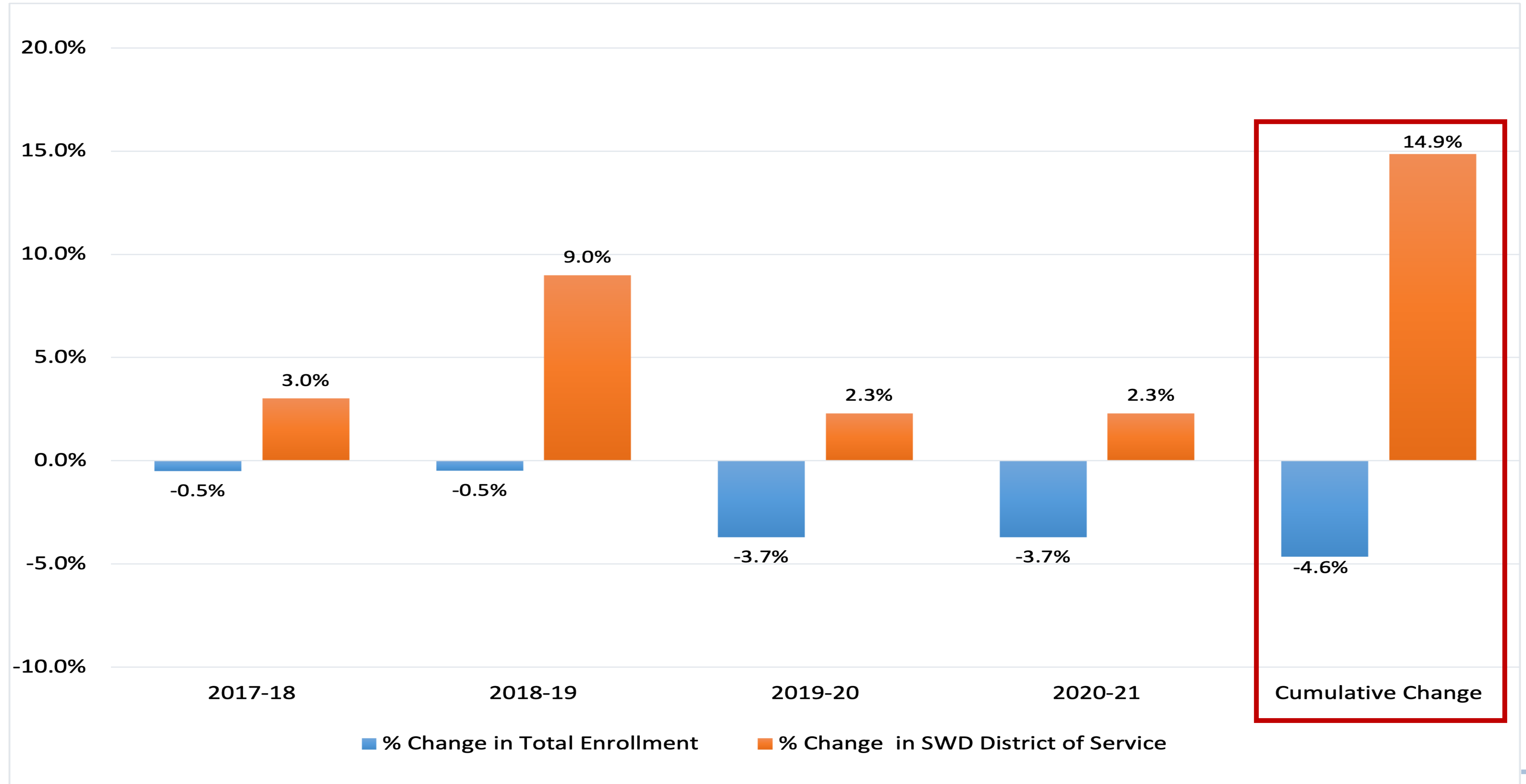
Theme 2: STRUCTURES - Student Enrollment and Comparison Analysis

Theme 3: PROCESS – Policy, Procedures, and Communication

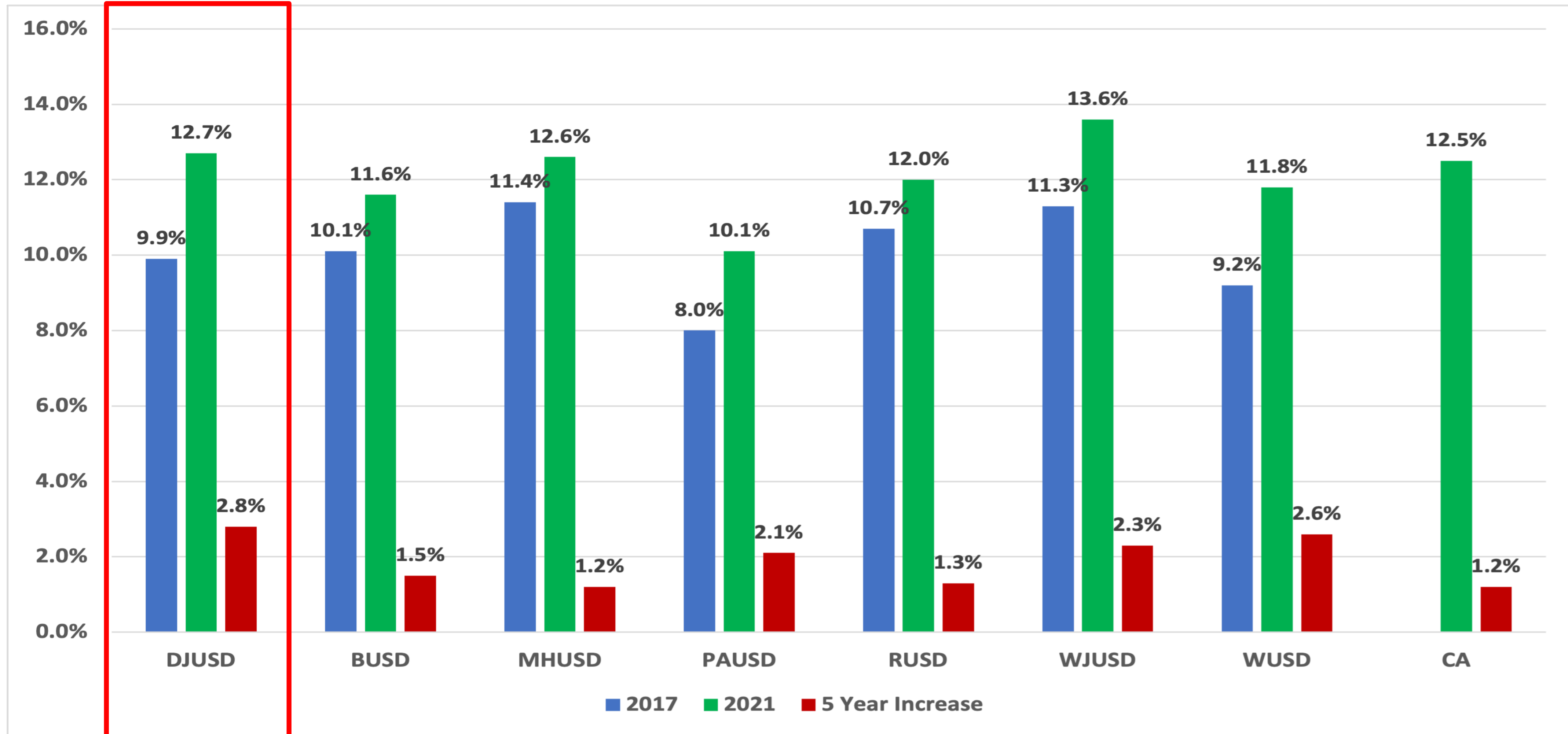
Theme 4: INSTRUCTION – Increasing Access and Achievement

Theme 5: CULTURE - Improving Equity, Climate, and Capacity

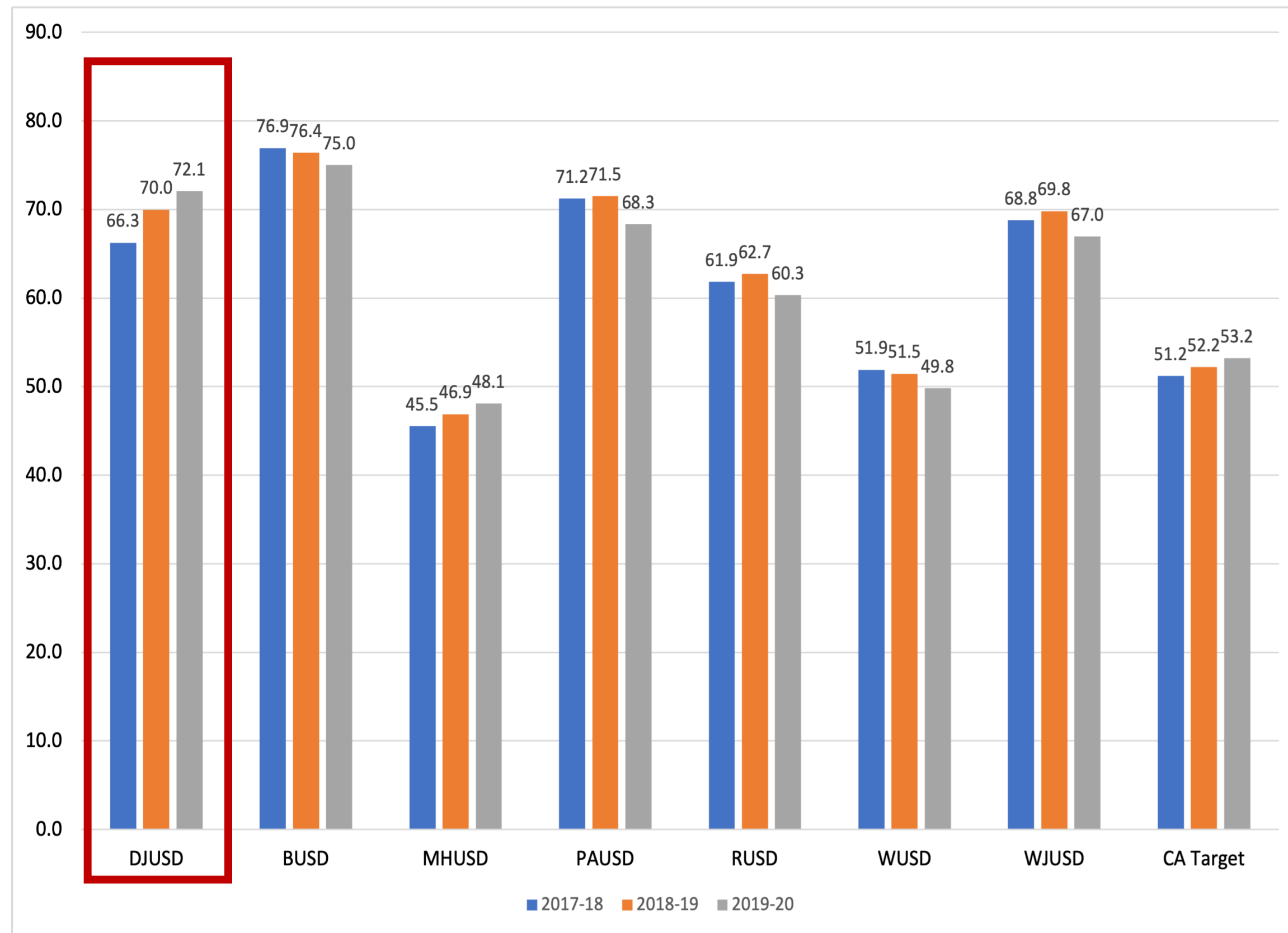
PPSD percentage change in total enrollment and in enrollment of students with disabilities, FY2018 through FY2020



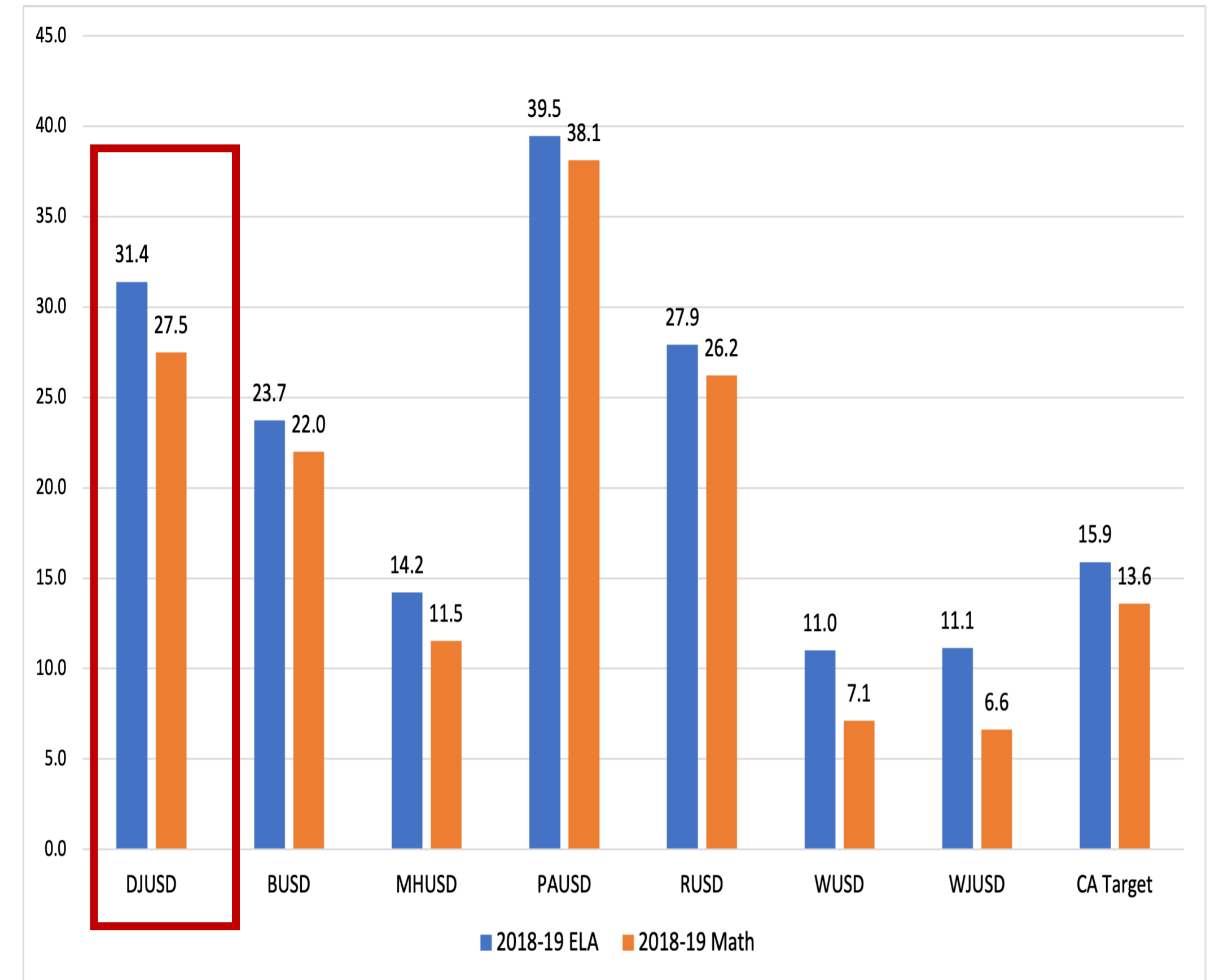
Percent Increase in Percent of Students with Disabilities in Relation to Total District Enrollment Over a Five-Year Period



Percent of Inclusion in General Education More than 80% of the Day Comparison with Peer Districts and CA State Average



State Assessment Data for Students with Disabilities compared with the Peer Districts and CA State Average



Theme 1: VISION - *System Alignment and System of Supports*

Key Discoveries for Theme 1

A district-wide, consistent vision of Inclusive Education is lacking thus creating confusion about the overall goal for included students

A lack of high-quality pre-referral interventions has led to an ineffective tiered intervention system

The provision of interventions, data collection, and progress monitoring for struggling learners in the general education classroom is inconsistent

There is a lack of an aligned, system-wide MTSS implementation

Key Recommendations for Theme 1

- Update and re-engage the District's mission, vision, values, and goals to reflect DJUSD's commitment to Inclusive Education within the strategic planning process
- Demonstrate commitment to improving outcomes for all students by establishing, clearly communicating, and following through with the District's mission and vision under the MTSS framework
- Create or re-engage an MTSS district leadership team to develop, articulate, and implement a district-wide, sustainable MTSS framework
- Ensure clear alignment across all levels of the MTSS system during development, implementation, and sustainability

Theme 2: STRUCTURE - *Student Enrollment, and Comparison Analysis*

Key Discoveries For Theme 2

The percentage increase in students with disabilities over the last five years is 14.9% while overall total enrollment has decreased by 4.6%

Increase in percent of students identified with a disability as part of the overall enrollment has increased from 9.9% in 2017 to 12.7% in 2021. This is the largest increase of the peer districts and the state average

Recruiting and retaining special education staff has risen to a critical need since the pandemic causing shortages in some areas

Key Recommendations for Theme 2

- Annually review disability data trends to make proactive programmatic decisions and mitigate over-identification
- Analyze the roles and responsibilities of all instructional staff and related service personnel to properly align these positions within a system of supports
- Develop a routine analysis of special education expenditures to identify optimization areas and proactively manage special education maintenance of effort
- Proactively plan for reducing staffing shortages and increasing retention of staff



Theme 3 PROCESS - *Policy, Procedures, and Communication*

Key Discoveries For Theme 3

Staff lack clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a comprehensive special education procedural guide that defines policies and procedures

There is no common understanding of Specialized Academic Instruction or how it supports inclusive education

There is a lack of alignment between pre-referral interventions and the referral process for special education

Bi-directional communication is lacking for both staff and parents

Key Recommendations for Theme 3

- Update the special education department's vision and mission to align with the District's re-designed vision and mission and the processes for implementation of MTSS
- Establish a special education district improvement team that uses data to design a strategic plan and engages in bi-directional communication with site teams, district departments, and the Board on efforts, results, and next steps
- Ensure the special education district improvement team reviews, updates, communicates, trains, and implements a policy, procedure, and protocol manual on an ongoing basis
- Define Specialized Academic Instruction for staff and administrators and describe what it looks like across various settings
- Train all staff on their roles in the special education process and clearly define where and how special education supports fit within the MTSS process

Theme 4: INSTRUCTION – *Increasing Access and Achievement*

Key Discoveries for Theme 4

Inclusion data indicates the percent of students with IEPs spending more than 80% of their day in general education is well above the state target but decreasing over the years

Percent of preschool children who are included in regular early childhood programs has been above the state target (except for FY 2020) but this data has also been decreasing

Time for collaboration and co-planning between general and special education staff is limited or non-existent but is critical for quality inclusive education

Percent of students with IEPs who have met the state standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics is well above the state average and most of the peer districts

Graduation rate for students with IEPs is above all of the peer districts and just under the state target

Key Recommendations for Theme 4

- Engage all staff in facilitated discussions to examine their beliefs on inclusion and establish common definitions, values, and goals
- Update DJUSD's collaborative plan for becoming a highly inclusive and welcoming educational community where all students can learn in the least restrictive environment
- Develop general education and special education staff skills for supporting the learning needs of students in the general education environment
- Review the continuum of services for students with IEPs to ensure that the appropriate level of supports are available and based on student needs while still allowing for the maximum amount of time in general education classrooms
- Continue to implement, expand, and support co-teaching as a service-delivery model with a specific emphasis on secondary environments
- Ensure dually identified students have the supports and services to meet both their English language and special education needs

Theme 5: CULTURE - *Improving Equity, Climate, and Capacity*

Key Discoveries for Theme 5

Many staff reported feeling overwhelmed and burned out after the years of pandemic challenges with limited support for their mental health challenges

44% of classrooms observed had evidence of clear classroom management policies and procedures and evidence of students being positively reinforced

There has been an increase in extremely challenging behavior on the part of a few of the students with IEPs in general education classes

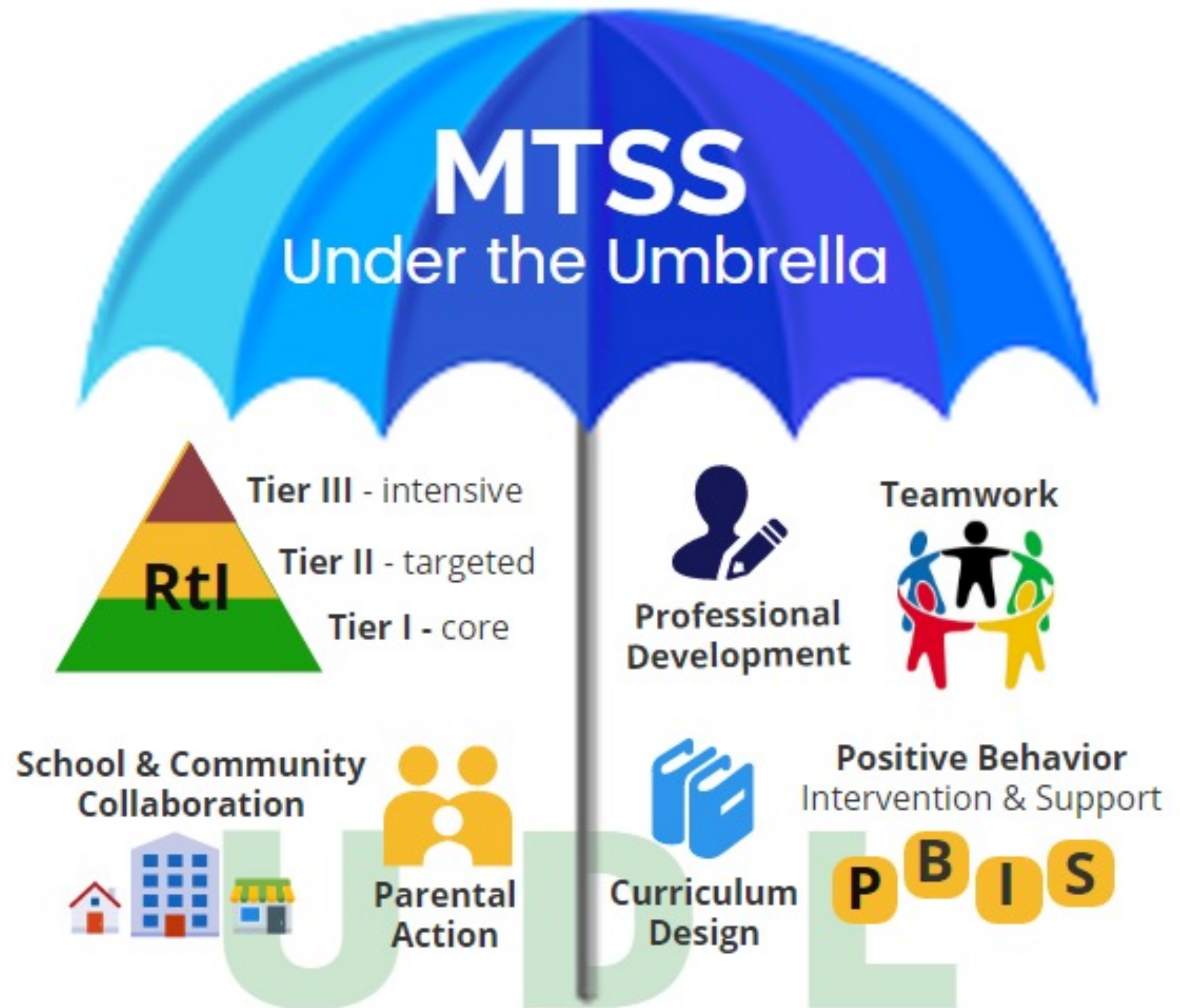
DJUSD is not disproportionate in the representation of any specific racial or ethnic group in special education but the percent of student who are being identified who are African American and Hispanic should be monitored

Professional development opportunities for staff were frequently mentioned as lacking and as a high need area for building staff capacity to support students with diverse needs

Key Recommendations for Theme 5

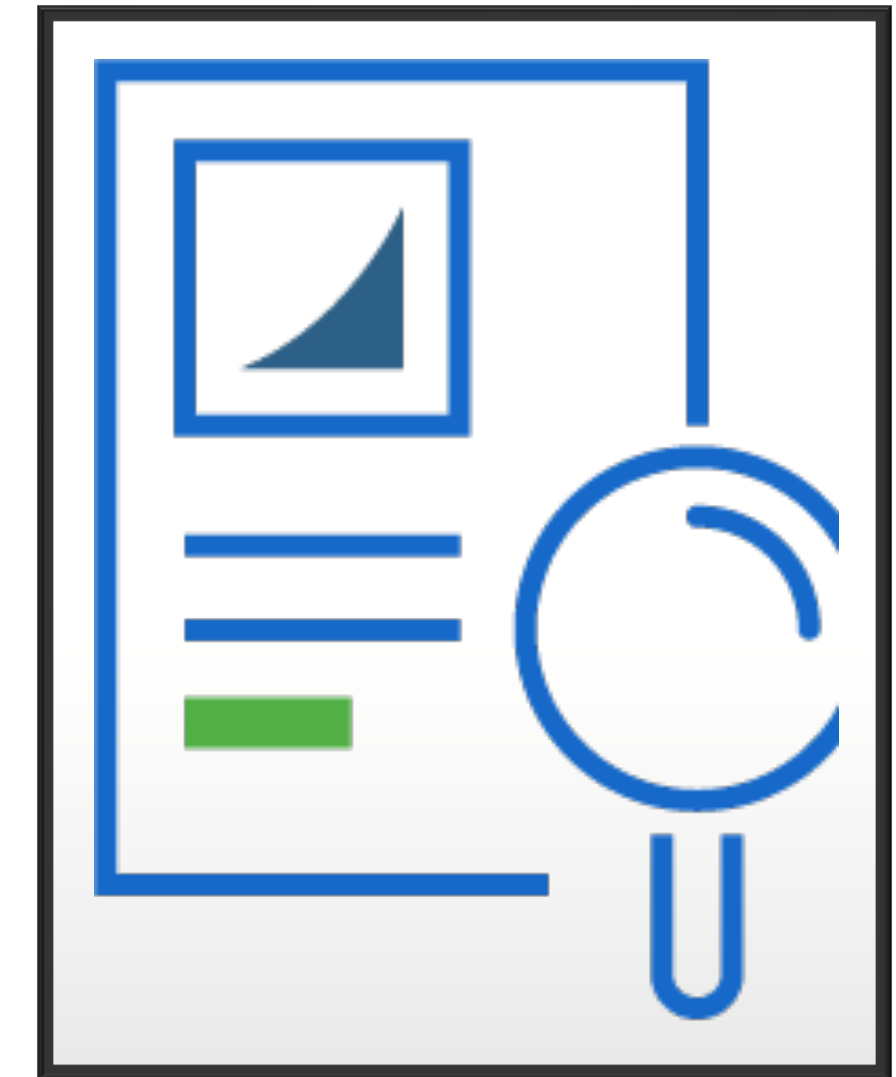
- Strengthen the intentional focus on a positive, supportive climate and culture across the district
- Examine the district-wide processes for behavioral supports and develop consistent behavioral strategies and interventions across the tiered system of supports
- Provide intentional and specific professional development on content relating to supporting students with disabilities in the classroom, and provide real-time, ongoing opportunities for practice so that teachers can build both their understanding and frame of reference for what an inclusive classroom means
- Target professional development content towards inclusion models that provide real-time, ongoing coaching opportunities for teachers to build their understanding and application of an inclusive environment
- Ensure the successful development of new special education teachers through mentorship and coaching for the first two years of their tenure

The California Department of Education's definition of Multi-Tiered System of Supports provides a basis for understanding how California educators can work together to ensure equitable access and opportunity for all students to achieve the California State Standards.



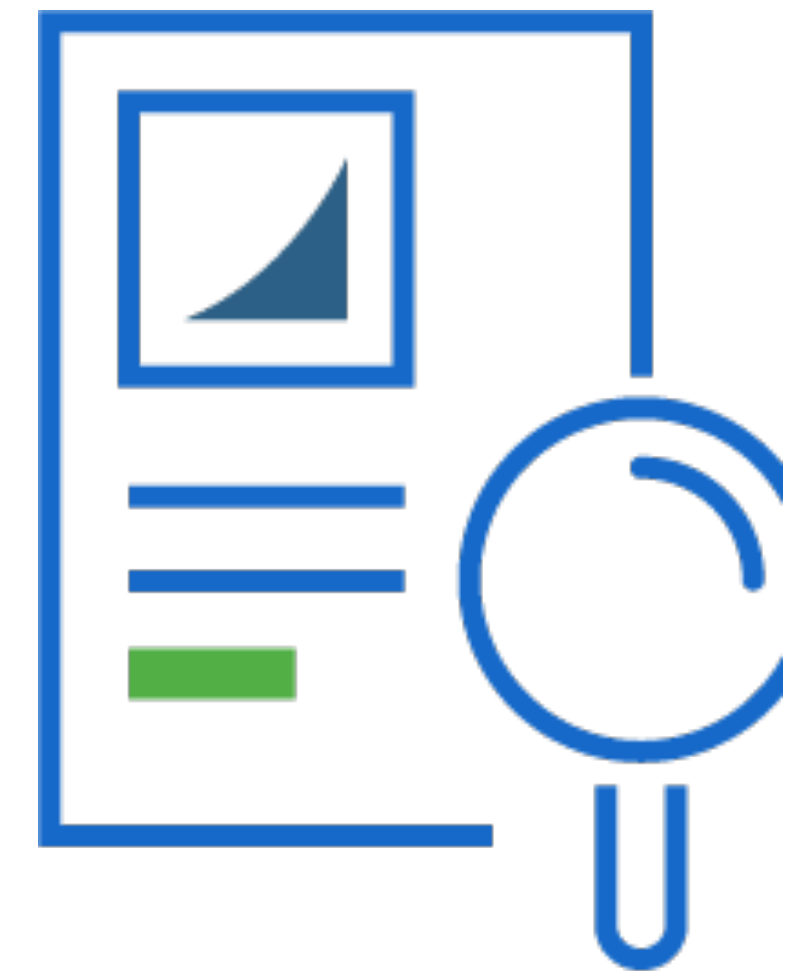
Recommended Next Steps

- Conduct a review and analysis of WestEd report and findings
- Create an MTSS Executive Leadership Team and School Cohort Team
- Prioritize aligning the system versus triaging special education
- Update and re-engage the District's mission, vision, values, and goals to reflect DJUSD's commitment to Inclusive Education within the strategic planning process
- Engage all staff in facilitated discussions to examine their beliefs on inclusion and establish common definitions, values, and goals.
- Build staff capacity to support all diverse learners through Universal Design for Learning
- Create guidance on stakeholder engagement



Recommended Next Steps (continued)

- Use an MTSS assessment to determine foundational readiness for systems change around key areas
- Expect all sites have MTSS improvement teams (or some identified team) who is reviewing prioritized data minimum monthly
- Align the system of supports around the data the district wants to improve for system coherence
- Build instructional capacity to strengthen Tier 1 quality
- Build the intervention systems within Tier 2 & Tier 3 as well as the entry and exit criteria and processes
- Build a cycle of continuous improvement focused on an MTSS framework



WestEd's DJUSD Special Education Review Report Clarification

Survey for:

- Input on any areas of clarification or correction
- Recommendations for next step priorities
- [Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LYCSX6B](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LYCSX6B)





Thank you!

Dona Meinders

dmeinde@wested.org