

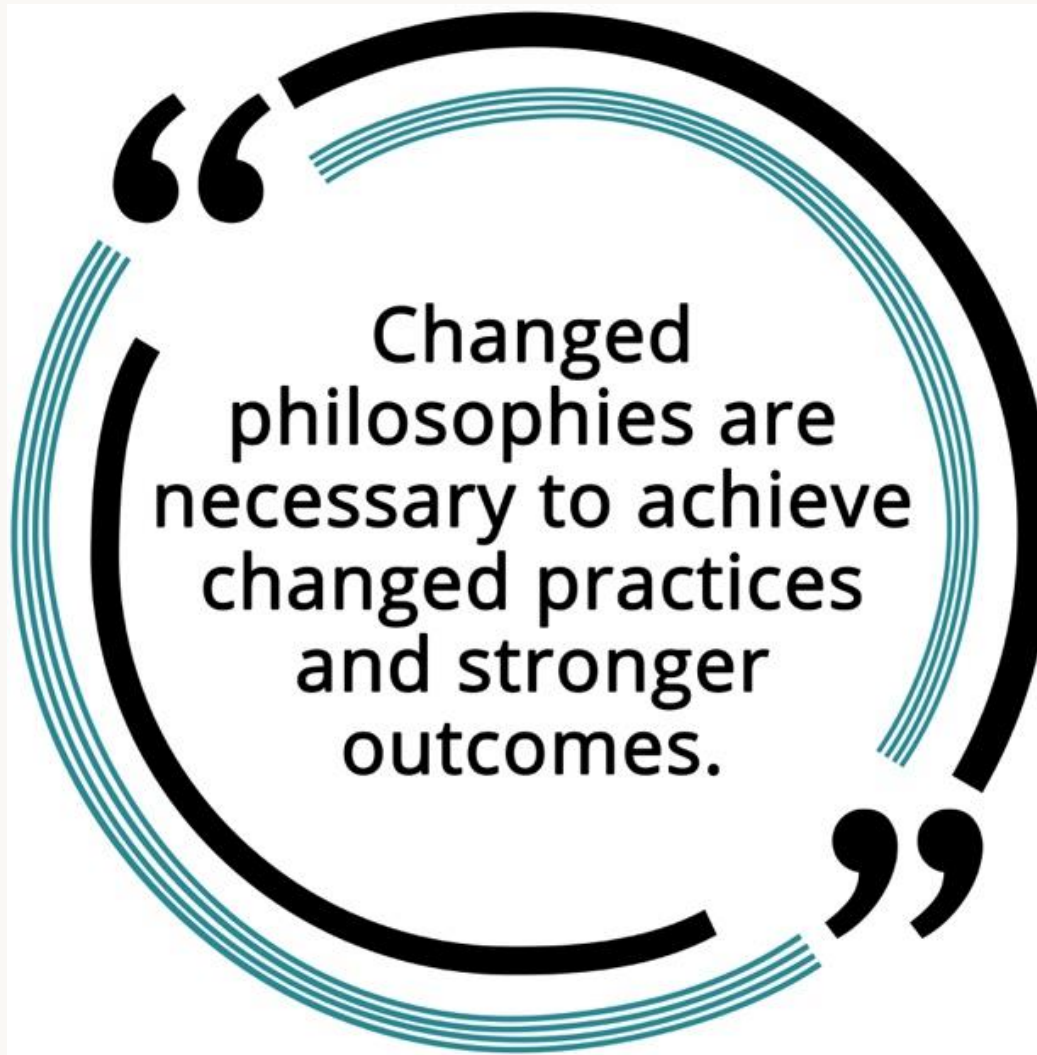
# **A Review of Services for Students with Disabilities**

**Keller Independent School District**



**STETSON**  
& ASSOCIATES, INC.

Completed February 2020



**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS**

# Updated Philosophies and Practices

- **Students receiving special education services are not “special education” students.** They are general education students who require varying levels of special education support. Educators must demonstrate shared ownership for the success of all students.
- **Ninety percent (90%) of students with a disability have the cognitive ability to meet the same standards and graduate using the same criteria as nondisabled peers** (The Hechinger Report, 2017). Higher expectations and greater instructional rigor are required.
- **All students must receive strong, Tier One instruction within a system-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).** The absence of good instruction in the general education classroom or discomfort with increasing diversity in our schools cannot be the reason for referral to special education and an emphasis of ‘pull-out’ settings as a remedy.

# Updated Philosophies and Practices

- **The active engagement and accountability of school administrators is a “must.”** More clarity is needed at the administrative and instructional levels regarding current quality standards for all learners and accountability for decisions regarding students receiving special education services must be required. *Site-based decision making does not supersede federal and state requirements.*
- **Instructional skill building is essential for all teachers and teacher leaders.** Teachers who provide special education services may need to strengthen their content knowledge and general educators may need to recognize that the diversity in our classrooms represents the new norm and that many students who will never qualify for special education services actually present the same or greater needs.
- **An evaluation of services for students with disabilities is never solely about the quality of services provided – or not provided – by a single department.**

- Keller ISD's enrollment of students with disabilities is approximately 4,131 or 11.7% of the total student population.
- The student with a disability-to-special education teacher ratio for Keller ISD (17.7:1) is higher than the state (16:1) and region (15:6) ratios and higher than five of eight comparison districts.
- The special education teacher turnover rate for Keller ISD (11.7%) is lower than the state (16.5%) and lower than the region (15.2%) and lower than seven of the eight comparison districts.
- Keller ISD's Percent Budgeted for Special Education (16.04%) is higher than the state (14.85%) and lower than five of the eight comparison districts.

# A Brief Snapshot

- Keller ISD's **graduation rate (73.2%)** for students with disabilities is below the state cutoff of 80% and the State rate of 77.9%. Keller ISD's graduation rate for students with disabilities is below seven of the eight comparison districts. Two of eight comparison districts did not meet the state target for graduation of students with disabilities.
- The district is **in compliance** with the requirement for students with disabilities (ages 3-5) to spend 30-100% with their general education peers (Keller ISD 30.4%) and with the dropout rate which is 0.8% for the district in comparison to the state rate of 1.9%.
- Compliance status for the district reflects **priorities for improvement** in three areas: the participation rate on the STAAR-Alt, the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirement for percent of students spending 80% or more of their time in the general education classroom, and the percent of students who spend more than 40% of their time outside of the general education classroom.

# A Brief Snapshot

**INHIBITING**

*Influences*

**POSITIVE**

*Influences*

1. Keller ISD leaders express strong commitment to reviewing current practices and implementing recommendations designed to improve services and outcomes for students with disabilities.
2. Department leadership has recently focused on improved communication, increased clarity regarding procedures and increased trust relationships with parents and Keller ISD educators.
3. Keller ISD has placed increasing attention to expanded inclusive options and has made early strides toward improved social inclusion.
4. Keller ISD's teacher turnover rate is significantly lower than the state and region and this is a positive indicator in supporting retention and satisfaction of experienced staff.







1. Strong satisfaction among Keller ISD faculty members regarding the quality of services for students with disabilities in contrast to current student outcome data.
2. Beliefs incompatible with current research of effective practices literature and experience.
3. Need for a culture of shared responsibility for all learners versus a traditional, silo approach to services for students with disabilities.
4. Decisions are often based on programs, places and disability labels versus individual student needs.



5. Instructional and behavioral practices need to be updated to meet current quality standards in in-class and specialized support.
6. The current Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is not fully implemented and is inconsistent across schools thus placing a disproportionate emphasis on special education services as the response for struggling students.
7. Need for enhanced districtwide systems to ensure a robust program of professional learning, requisite consistency of practice from school to school to ensure equity and excellence and smooth student transitions from level to level.

**KISD can boast of many strong leaders and educators and an engaged community of parents. There is much to be accomplished but Keller ISD possesses the leadership, skills and resources to make significant and positive changes for all students.**



**KELLER ISD**  
*intentionally exceptional*