



Sara M. Bonser  
Superintendent of Schools

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The Honorable Dan Huberty  
Texas House of Representatives  
Committee on Public Education  
*Submitted by email to [education@house.texas.gov](mailto:education@house.texas.gov)*

Dear Chairman Huberty:

Plano ISD is responsible for providing a high-quality public education to more than 50,000 students in our area. Our schools are routinely named the number one reason new residents move to Plano, and we thrive on these high expectations from our community. With this letter, we are providing input on the Public Education Committee's [Interim Charge 3](#) as it relates to our experiences in Plano ISD.

***Interim Charge 3:*** *Monitor the progress of the TEA's compliance with the Corrective Action Response required by the United States Department of Education, the implementation of the state's Special Education Strategic Plan, and the state's compliance with other federal requirements regarding special education, including maintenance of state financial support for special education. Recommend solutions to barriers the agency, school districts, students with disabilities, and parents face in accessing a free and appropriate public education and in meeting the milestones of the plan and any measures needed at the state level to ensure that students with disabilities are being located, fully evaluated, and appropriately identified for special education instruction and services.*

In response to Interim Charge 3, Plano ISD requests additional state funding to address two critical needs our district is currently facing:

1. A necessary expansion of our intensive behavioral and therapeutic services. In January of 2020, Plano ISD established our INSPIRE program for elementary students, and in August of 2020 we expanded the program to include middle school students. Our data showed an undeniable need to open this type of program, with the need for behavioral and therapeutic services continuing to grow and necessitate further expansion. More details on this below.
2. In response to the Corrective Action Plan released in 2018, Plano ISD has seen a substantial increase in request for initial evaluations. Although the district did receive grant funding for students receiving initial evaluations, we face the challenges of finding qualified evaluators and additional funding for students in need of three year re-evaluations. More details on this below.

## **(1) INSPIRE/Behavior Program**

The number of students with more intensive behavioral and therapeutic needs is increasing in Plano ISD, and in districts across the DFW metroplex. Representatives from special education departments in Allen ISD, Frisco ISD and Plano ISD met in late 2017 to discuss program needs for a proposed collaborative mental health facility. Additional input was sought and provided to Plano ISD staff by Sharon Azar, a professional Behavior Consultant.

After meeting with representatives, Plano ISD chose to implement INSPIRE in response to the increasing behavioral challenges across the district. Plano ISD's data demonstrate the following trends and needs in our district:

### **Eligibility**

- 13% increase in students identified as having autism (AU) over the past 3 years
- 30% increase in students identified as having emotional disturbance (ED) over the past 3 years

### **Code of Conduct**

- Violation of the school code of conduct and fighting/mutual combat are the two most frequently assigned discretionary disciplinary action reasons for students with disabilities.
- The student group with the most discretionary disciplinary action reasons are students with learning disabilities (LD), other health impairments (OHI), emotional disturbance (ED), and autism (AU).

### **Restraints**

- Restraints for students with ED increased by 93%
- Restraints for students with LD increased by 90%
- Restraints for students with AU increased by 60%
- Restraints for students with OHI decreased by 42%
- Restraints for students with ID increased by 81%

### **Workers Compensation**

Worker compensation claims and costs for injuries incurred through work with students with disabilities are increasing. In 2017-2018, there were approximately 487\* WC claims which cost the district \$337,264, an increase from 2013-2014 where approximately 434\* claims were submitted and cost the district \$206,567 (\*these numbers include all claims by special education staff and are not solely reflective of student-inflicted injury to staff).

The district currently has students in non-public day treatment and residential programs, which costs the district approximately \$600,000 per year in tuition and fees.

Current and historical data demonstrate an increasing need for the expansion of the Plano ISD continuum of behavioral services and supports to include an intensive, therapeutic environment for students with autism, emotional disturbance, and other students (primarily learning disabilities) whose disability manifests in ways that prevent students from benefiting from existing behavioral /social-emotional services and supports.

**Rationale for Program Proposal/Benefit to District:**

Student aggression and complexity/severity of need is increasing across the district.

Our goal is to create a safe, educational environment where students with the most significant social, emotional, behavioral, academic, functional, and communication needs can stabilize to the degree that they are able to reintegrate back into the school community. When defining safety, we equally prioritize the safety and needs of students in the program, staff, and the broader school community in which the programs function. Smaller staffing ratios and a different location alone are not sufficient to meet the needs of our most challenged students. In order to meet the complex needs of students who are demonstrating these levels of challenges, we must provide the necessary structures and resources to affect meaningful changes in the educational experience of students in centralized programs.

We need to have sufficient support to manage any physical crisis safely. For our students with the highest level of intensity of aggression to self or others, that means 5-6 staff per crisis event on average. This ratio allows for 4-5 people to physically manage the student and 1 person to document and observe for the safety of both staff and the student.

When evaluating the continuum of programming options in the district, we found 4 areas of need: 1) to better level/organize students served by centralized units; 2) have an option for students in campus-based centralized classrooms exhibiting behavior that presents a significant danger to themselves, other students, and staff; 3) support for students with LD or OHI who demonstrate problem behavior; and 4) support for students with ED who are 18+ but need more support to transition to employment/independent living. The INSPIRE program allows us to address all four areas of identified need.

**Cost for Program Staff**

Position	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Principal	1	85,000
Office Manager	1	40,000
Nurse	1	60,000
Clinic Assistant	1	28,000
SPED Teacher (K-6) (\$75,000)	3	195,000
SPED Assistant-Structured (\$30,000)	6	180,000
Elementary Team Leader	1	75,000
SPED Teacher (7-12) (\$75,000)	6	450,000

SPED Assistant-Structured (\$30,000)	10	300,000
Secondary Team Leader	1	75,000
PE Teacher	1	75,000
PE Assistant	1	30,000
Behavior Support Specialist (BIS) (\$75,000)	2	150,000
In Home Parent Trainer-Assistant (IHPT) (\$30,000)	2	60,000
SPED Counselor (\$70,000)	1	70,000
LSSP (\$70,000)	1	70,000
Speech Language Pathologist	1	70,000
Social Worker (\$55,000)	1	55,000
Occupational Therapist (.5) & Music Therapist (.5) (\$70,000)	1	70,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>\$2,138,000</b>

#### Cost for Materials

Type	Cost
Protective equipment-blocking pads (large & small) and bite guards	\$2600
Safety protection jacket for every classroom and support staff (35-40)	\$11,198
Classroom reinforcers & school store	\$3000
Staff wellness	\$1,000
Curricular materials & resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach Town</li> <li>• VBMAPPs</li> <li>• ULS &amp; News 2 U</li> <li>• Social Skills curricula</li> <li>• AIM zones of Regulation</li> </ul>	\$25,000

Operating & travel Budget	\$10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$52,798</b>

**(2) Initial and Re-evaluations**

As previously stated, Plano ISD has seen an increase in initial testing for students since the release of the Strategic Plan in 2018. Overall, the district has faced challenges in hiring qualified evaluators to meet that demand. Although the district did receive grant funding to help with initial evaluations and compensatory services, students who were initially identified are now approaching their three year re-evaluation. This critical timeline creates a greater demand on budgetary and staffing needs. The grant is specifically designed to help cost in regard to initial evaluations - not these necessary three year re-evaluations. As we approach re-evaluation timelines, it would be beneficial to Plano ISD to be able to use this money in securing either current staff or contracted providers to complete this work.

Thank you for your consideration of the information contained herein. Plano ISD strives to provide all of our students with a high-quality education and opportunities to grow and learn. We appreciate the opportunity to be a resource for how we can better serve our special education students and look forward to working together to address these issues.

Sincerely,



Sara Bonser  
Superintendent of Schools  
Plano ISD