

# Program Review of Ipswich Special Education Programs for Students with ASD and Dyslexia

Completed by Academic Discoveries LLC

PPS Presentation to School Committee

2.3.22

# WHAT was the review?

- We contracted with Academic Discoveries LLC to examine the service delivery continuum for students with ASD and Dyslexia
- We chose this group because the principal evaluator, Dr. Nadine Ekstrom, brings expertise at multiple special education levels including training for DESE and tenure as Executive Director of EDCO Consortium
- Not a required review



# WHY was it undertaken?

- Desire for unbiased feedback regarding Best Practices in meeting the needs of our students
- Provide input regarding whether we are achieving what we intend in programmatic offerings
- Avoid any confirmatory bias that the program is effective simply “because we say so”
- To continue parent trust in our professionalism

# Rationale for Particular Focus

- ASD -most vulnerable population. Services are highly individualized.
- Dyslexia -newly- issued (2021) DESE Guidance on meeting the needs of Dyslexic students.



# Components of the Review

- Observations
- Record review
- Interviews including parents, students, related service providers, SEPAC and School Committee representatives, sampling of general ed and special ed teachers, and the administrative leadership team
- Literature review regarding most effective interventions for students in these disability categories

# Essential Questions

- Examining how IPS provides a learning environment to address student needs in the two populations
- Asking if services are being provided in least restrictive setting
- Investigating whether supports are effective in enhancing performance of the specific populations
- Ensuring that interventions sufficiently address presenting student needs and develop student skill sets, yet also challenge students and develop independence in order to provide for later success in the community



# Recommendations - Dyslexia

- Praised quantity of highly trained staff and their level of training throughout the District
- Noted District's programming alignment with both DESE guidance and literature best practices
- Recommended developing graphs /charts for understanding student reading capabilities and how needs are addressed in tiered supports
- Encouraged partnering with medical professionals for mutual understandings when medical and educational terms differ
- Urged annual training for all staff in supporting Dyslexic students
- Advocated gen ed protocols for archiving general ed student interventions

# ASD Recommendations

- Stated “IPS could be recognized as a model district in supporting students with autism in a public school setting”
- Praised staff training, inclusivity and individualization, and high expectations for students
- Noted that, although detailed transition plans are provided to families, parents could benefit from additional training in understanding the plans
- Suggested making information about the breadth of programming available online
- Recommended a flow chart delineating how transitioning is planned for beyond age 22



# Next Steps and Deliverables- Dyslexia

- ✓ Systemwide PD on Dyslexia was offered in two separate sessions (Elementary and Secondary) in October 2021, as well as follow-up on Professional Development Day with Dr. Melissa Orkin of Crafting Minds, who participated in creation of the DESE guidelines, and who has served as Director of the Tufts University Center for Reading and Language Research
- ✓ Development is currently underway regarding charts and graphs which can help families in understanding student reading progress
- ✓ Preliminary research completed on Aspen modules which may have the capacity of archiving general education intervention progress

# Next Steps and Deliverables - ASD

- ✓ Outreach to physician groups is planned for April in coordination with Northshore Educational Consortium Directors' Group
- ✓ We are planning a soft launch next week for a Google site linked with the HS homepage that will include information regarding staff, co-teaching, program continuum, post-22 transition, and additional community connections resources