GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on May 14, 2024, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street W., Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE
Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario
Kim McKinley, Trustee
Mary-Ann Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex County
Martha Vukov, Community Living Essex County
Chelsey Lackovic, Windsor Council of Home and School Association
Sarah Yang, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise
Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association
Nancy Armstrong, Trustee

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE
Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Program and Services
Kristie Sweet, Supervising Principal of Special Education
Michelle Lowes, OPC Elementary Representative
Teresa Williams, OPC Secondary Representative
Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services

ABSENT
Louise Cervini, Indigenous Representative
Tina Szymczak, Inclusion Action in Ontario

RECORDER
Melissa Beaton

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. **Land Acknowledgement**

   We acknowledge that we are on land and surrounded by water, originally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples who have travelled this area since time immemorial. This territory is within the lands honoured by the Wampum Treaties; agreements between the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-e-naa-bay), Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-oh-show-nee), Lenni (Len-eh) Lenape (Le-naw-pay) and allied Nations to peacefully share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Three Fires Confederacy, Ojibwe (Oh-jib-way), Odawa (Oh-dah-wah), Potawatomi (Paw-taw-watt-ohme) and Huron/Wendat (Wen-dat) Peoples.

We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

3. **Approval of Agenda**
   Moved by: J. Conrad
   Seconded by: C. Lackovic
   That SEAC Approve the Agenda for May 14, 2024.   The motion was carried.

4. **Approval of Minutes**
   Moved by: T. McCarthy
   Seconded by: M. Fuduric
   That SEAC approve the Minutes of April 9, 2024.   The motion was carried.

5. **Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes**
   There was no new business as a result of the minutes.

6. **Special Education Presentation**
   - Draft Equity Plan
     C. Howitt joined us virtually and was grateful for the opportunity to share the Draft Equity Plan with the committee. The GECDSB is committed to providing a learning and working environment that actively promotes and supports the dignity, worth and human rights of all. They took charge this year to develop the plan and were joined by 25-30 members to help create the base document. They looked at the data, i.e., work force, student census, employee system and what other boards have done, with a focus on understanding the students that we serve. The working plan centers on the overarching goals of Affirming Identities, Building Staff Capacity, Building Relationships and Connectedness, Valuing Representation and Securing Accountability. Each goal has objectives, tasks to meet those objective and key indicators; what will be monitored and measured and what will this tell us. Consultation with Directors Council, a full presentation to Principals and Vice-Principals, they have met with members of the community, committees, education advisory committees, GSA and student senate. The plan may be updated based on the feedback provided. Dr. Howitt welcomed feedback and questions from the committee and asked for any input by the end of the month.
   - Guidelines on the Non-Use of Discriminatory Slurs and Epithets
     Presented by C. Howitt. These guidelines are intended to support staff to understand their unequivocal obligation never to utter, read, quote or otherwise use or enable the use of a slur or epithet, and to identify and respond to harmful conduct in the form of the use of slurs and epithets in GECDSB schools.
     Letters have gone home to staff and parents. A Words Matter presentation was developed and presented in small groups to every student in the system. Feedback has been good, and we are pleased with the conversations that students are having. This will be debuted at the commencement of the 2024-2025 school year. Dr. Howitt welcomed feedback and questions.

7. **Special Education Updates**
   - RISE Review Presentation

C. Mills presented the findings of the Equitable Access and Effective Support for Students: Program Review of the Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Program conducted by York University G. Parekh, K. Underwood (Metropolitan University), A. Allen (University of Windsor), N. Ineese-Nash (Metropolitan University), M. Kyaga, R. Collis and A. Gordon. Please refer to the presentation attached.

Mr. Mills welcomed questions and feedback from the committee members to take back to the Senior Team for further discussion.

SEAC Members feedback:
- Common concern RISE track limits opportunity. Did they consider there is not one big picture, doesn't fit a single box. Have they gone through the reasons why RISE could affect future opportunities and families don't realize that? That's not always the goal.
- What is the overall breakdown of those in RISE?
   In partially integrated programs, such as RISE, over three quarters (83%) of students fall into the categories of multiple exceptionalities (31%), mild intellectual disability (26%) and learning disability (26%). Students identified with a developmental disability or a language impairment both accounted for 6% each, and with autism at 3%. Please note that categories falling below 15 students were included in 'other'.
- Liked the idea of a co-teaching model between a special education and regular classroom teacher. Co-teaching, specialized SALT teachers go into the classroom, go into RISE, teachers are often segregated within the school. Really liked that idea.
- Concern about students going 'faster' to catch up. We need to give them time or they may shut down in the regular classroom.
- SEAC member supported Math and English specialist teachers.
- Educators need to understand special education, differentiation, all educators need to have capacity built, not just supporting kids in RISE, we want to support all students.
- "Catching up" is not a good way to look at it, develop their best skill set to help each student shine in whatever area they can excel in. Building the foundation.
- All students need to feel valued and supported. Concerned that if RISE is gone, if we put more on the classroom teacher how do they do more? I can not imagine behaviours and lack of support staff.
- The behaviour team is not available to every school every day, staff shortages, multiple students impacted. Regardless of training, not intensive enough for a teacher. You have to have trained individuals in those situations as well. This may cost a whole lot more; we don't have to do that. Concerned about burnout for teachers, mental health, anxiety and stress without additional supports.
- Concerns about other students with behaviours affecting those in homeroom class.
- Need to have the pathway open, see the value, don't want to take the choices away, will work towards it. Focus on how to support that. We've noticed less kids coming for reading support, putting in good pedagogy for Universal Design. Ensuring what we are doing in the classroom supports all kids in the classroom.

- Accommodations and not modifications, especially for learning disability.
- Concern was noted that one of the researchers has a bias about self-contained classrooms.

- Special Education Plan Review (Standards 5, 10 & 13)
  Standard 5: The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee
  Standard 10: Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning
  Standard 13: Staff Development

  Feedback/revisions were collected to apply to the 2024-2025 plan.

8. New Business
There was no new business.

9. Association Reports
- S. Yang, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise – the next FASD support group is May 21st for FASD Awareness Day Discussion, the flyer will be shared with the committee.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario – a flyer was shared with the committee members on Autism Ontario Updates May 2024. Workshop opportunities for parents are available and there are still two weeks left to apply for bursaries. A request was made to have the May SEAC minutes as soon as possible.
- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – summer program information is out and available on their website. Offering summer camp starting July 8, 2024, Barton Reading and Spelling, Social Skills, among others. The LDA scholarship applications are due at the end of this week for University of Windsor and St. Clair College. The 5th Annual LDA Parent Conference is May 29, 2024, being held on Zoom at no cost. Upcoming paint night fundraiser May 23, 2024, with proceeds going to their youth group and kids' clubs.

10. Distribution
- 2024-25 Core Education Funding
- Letter from M. Overholt Special Education Budget

11. Adjournment at 2:56 p.m.

NEXT MEETING, June 11, 2024

Board Meeting Minutes available on GECDSB website.

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

Ministry SEAC website

Equitable access and effective support for students: Program Review of the
Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Program

Parekh, Underwood, Allen, Ineese-Nash, Kiyaga, Collis & Gordon (2024)

Research Process & Team

In fall of 2023, a team of researchers were assembled from across three universities to review the Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) program within the Greater Essex County District School Board. The review process included three-data sources to enable triangulation of findings: 1) a review of available information on RISE as well as a review of the academic literature around students' intersectional experiences in special education; 2) interviews and focus groups with families, educators and students around their experience in and outside of RISE; and 3) system data, provided through the GECDSB's IT Department.

The report describes the review process and is organized around recommendations for the Greater Essex County District School Board.

Co-leads: Gillian Parekh, Kathryn Underwood, Andrew Allen, Nicole Ineese-Nash
Graduate research assistants: Mugabi Kiyaga, Ryan Collis, Angelique Gordon
Special thanks: Gail Kiss & Chris Mills

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Interpretation of and response to findings:

From our interviews and focus groups with participants, it is clear that the RISE program is overwhelmingly valued by the community. We heard from many participants that students were receiving important supports through the RISE program and that educators were able to engage in effective pedagogical practices. However, we also uncovered some important structural concerns that warrant further investigation and attention. As such, our findings are nuanced and any response to this report must ensure that it centres the best interest of the child.

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EXAMINING THE STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF RISE (Interview/Focus Group data)

1. Evidenced opportunities and consequences of tying student support directly to a partially integrated special education program structure.

   - *1.1 Enhance awareness and ensure implementation of accommodations*

   - *1.2 Professional development opportunities for educators*

   - *1.3 Resource allocation*

2. Varied perspectives on the purpose and aims of RISE.

   - 2.1 *Develop and Communicate the Purpose of RISE*

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EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RISE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (Interview/Focus Group data)

3. Mixed Results Reported for Students' Academic Skills and Achievement in RISE.

- *3.1 Develop a framework that sets out program expectations and documents assessment, pedagogical strategies, reporting practices and timelines for the RISE Program*

- *3.2 Support recruitment of teachers with Literacy and Mathematics specializations to inform pedagogy in RISE*

- *3.3 Maintain high expectations for student learning*

- *3.4 Employ differentiated instruction and universal design strategies*

# EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RISE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (System data)

4. A trend analysis shows that participation in RISE is highly correlated to elementary and secondary program pathways, which can shape access to postsecondary education.

5. Approximately 1/5 of students entering RISE will leave and join the regular class before end of Grade 8.

- *5.1 Track program and pathway information and share with families.*

6. Secondary School Pathways are fairly distinct, particularly for Mathematics.

7. Students in RISE were more likely to pursue courses and programs that have more limited opportunities to complete an OSSD as well as access to postsecondary education.

- *7.1 Access to Guidance Counsellors with high expectations and knowledge on elementary/secondary/postsecondary pathways.*
- *7.2 Encourage and support students to pursue more challenging pathways.*
- *7.3 When planning for students' programs and pathways, consider the implications on students' future access to postsecondary education.*

8. Even when controlling for achievement, participation in RISE is related to greater barriers for students' secondary and postsecondary options.

- *8.1 Investigate and remove potential barriers*

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Figure 5. Relationship between Grade 9 & 12 English Courses, first and last taken, Student Information System, Grade 12 students (June 2023)
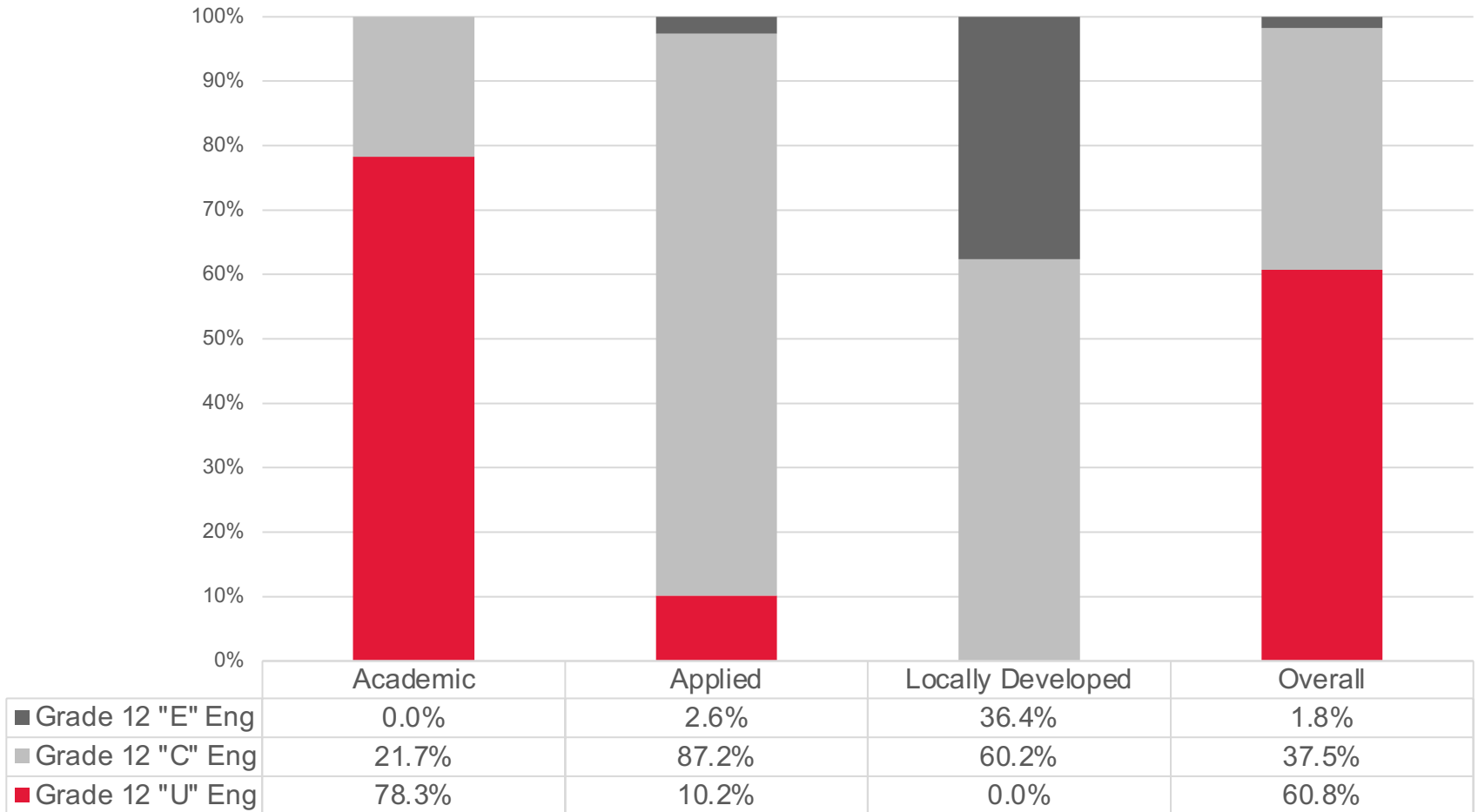
	Academic	Applied	Locally Developed	Overall
■ Grade 12 "E" Eng	0.0%	2.6%	36.4%	1.8%
■ Grade 12 "C" Eng	21.7%	87.2%	60.2%	37.5%
■ Grade 12 "U" Eng	78.3%	10.2%	0.0%	60.8%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding. Proportions of students taking ESL/ELD courses were not included in the figure above.

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Figure 6. Relationship between Grade 9 & 11/12 Math Courses, first and last taken, Student Information System, Grade 12 students (June 2023)
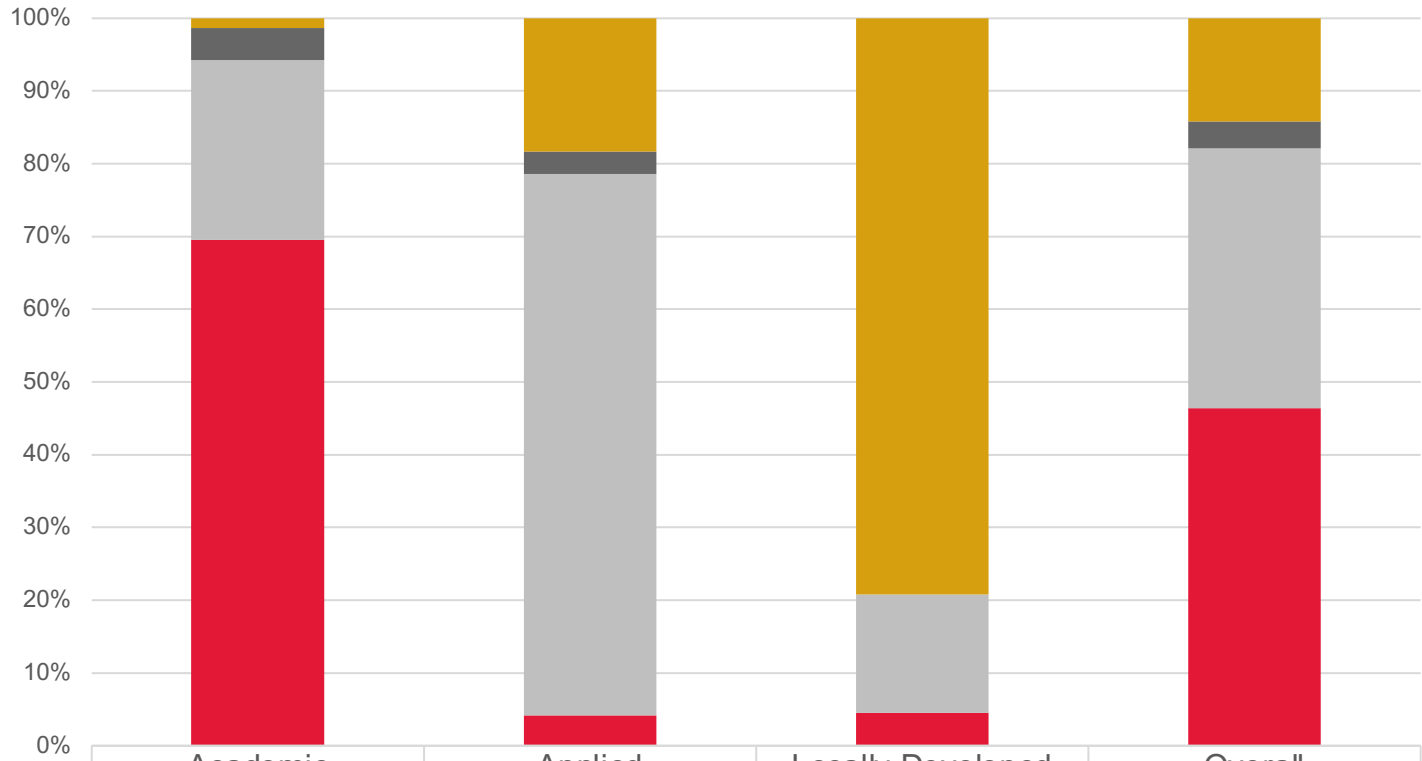
	Academic	Applied	Locally Developed	Overall
■ Grade 11/12 "E" Math	1.3%	18.3%	78.7%	14.2%
■ Grade 11/12 "M" Math	4.4%	3.1%	0.0%	3.7%
■ Grade 11/12 "C" Math	24.7%	74.4%	16.2%	35.7%
■ Grade 11/12 "U" Math	69.5%	4.2%	4.5%	46.4%

* Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding. Proportions of students taking de-streamed courses were not included in the figure above due to timing of implementation.

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Figure 7. First Grade 9 English Course to be completed across programs, Student Information System, Students in Grade 12 (2022-23)
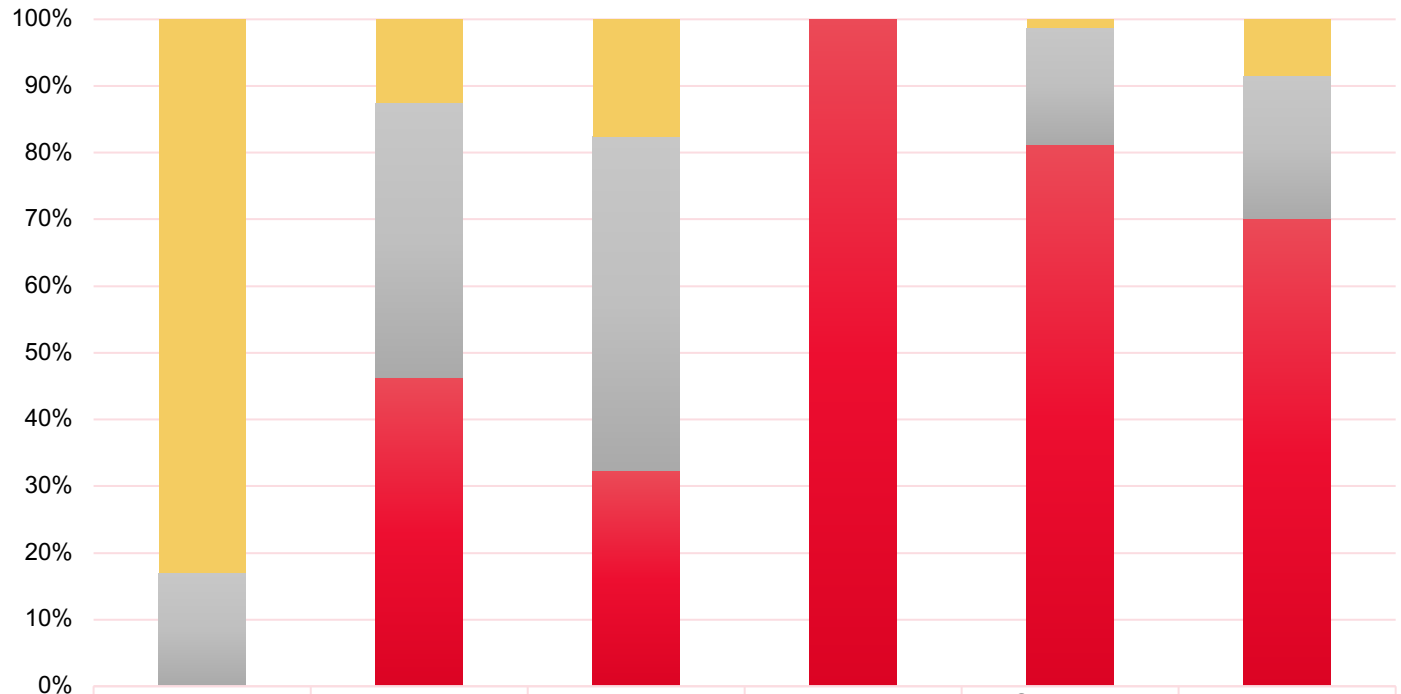
	RISE	IEP Only	IPRC+IEP	Gifted	Students Outside of Special Education	Overall System
Locally-Developed English	75.3%	12.2%	15.4%	0.0%	1.1%	7.1%
Applied English	15.4%	39.8%	43.8%	0.0%	14.7%	18.0%
Academic English	0.0%	44.8%	28.3%	100.0%	68.2%	58.7%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding. Proportions of students taking ESL/ELD courses were not included in the figure above. There were no students enrolled in RISE that went on to take Grade 9 English in ESL/ELD.

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Figure 8. First Grade 9 Math Course to be completed across programs, Student Information System, Students in Grade 12 (2022-23)
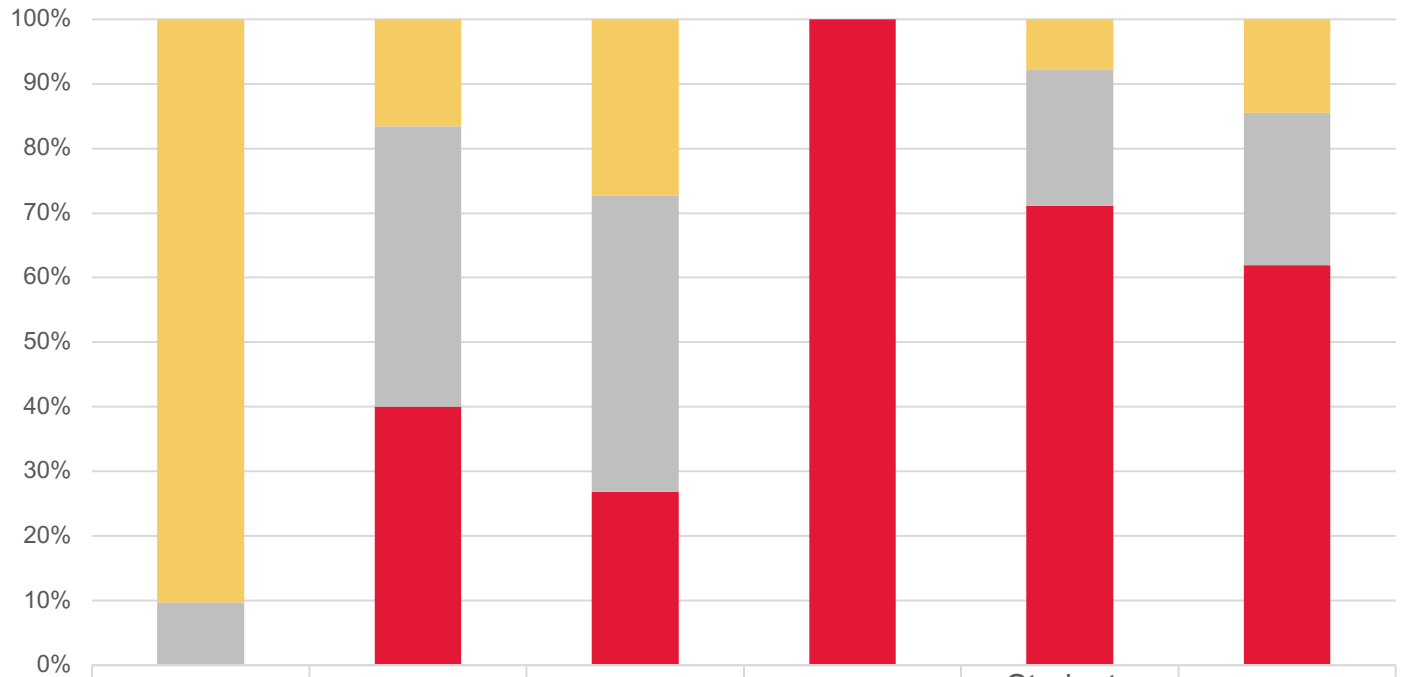
	RISE	IEP Only	IPRC+IEP	Gifted	Students Outside of Special Education	Overall System
Locally Developed Math	81.32%	16.02%	24.58%	0.00%	7.09%	13.07%
Applied Math	8.79%	41.99%	41.25%	0.00%	19.42%	21.20%
Academic Math	0.00%	38.67%	24.17%	100.00%	65.27%	55.72%

* Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding. Proportions of students taking de-streamed courses were not included in the figure above due to timing of implementation.

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Figure 9. Entry into MAPS/STEPS, Student Information System, Students in Grade 12 (2022-23)
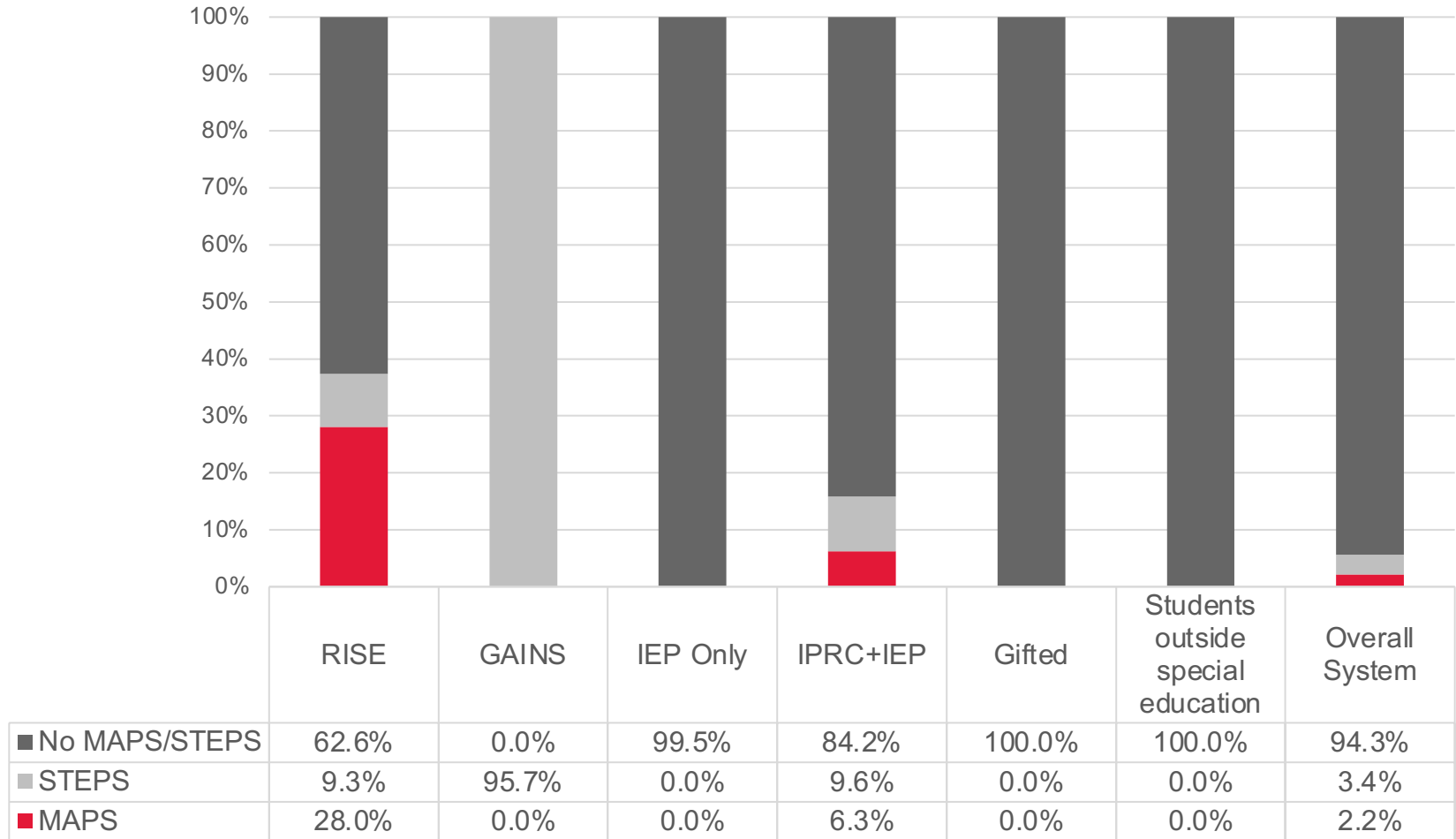
	RISE	GAINS	IEP Only	IPRC+IEP	Gifted	Students outside special education	Overall System
No MAPS/STEPS	62.6%	0.0%	99.5%	84.2%	100.0%	100.0%	94.3%
STEPS	9.3%	95.7%	0.0%	9.6%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
MAPS	28.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding.

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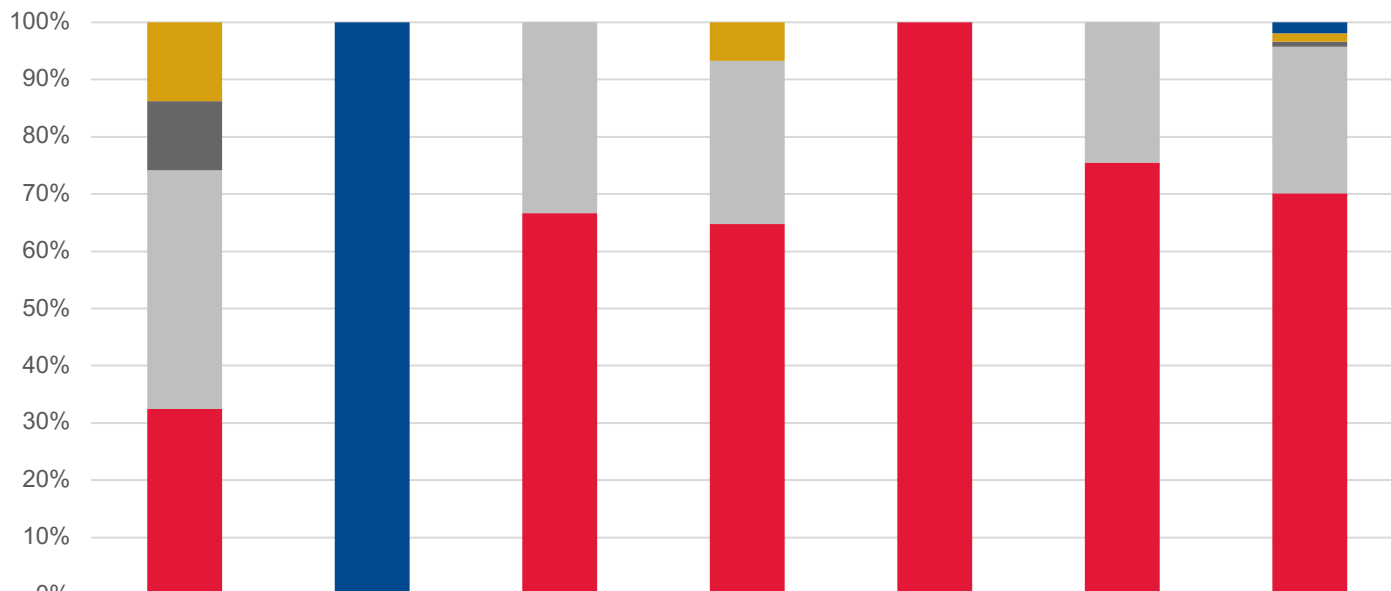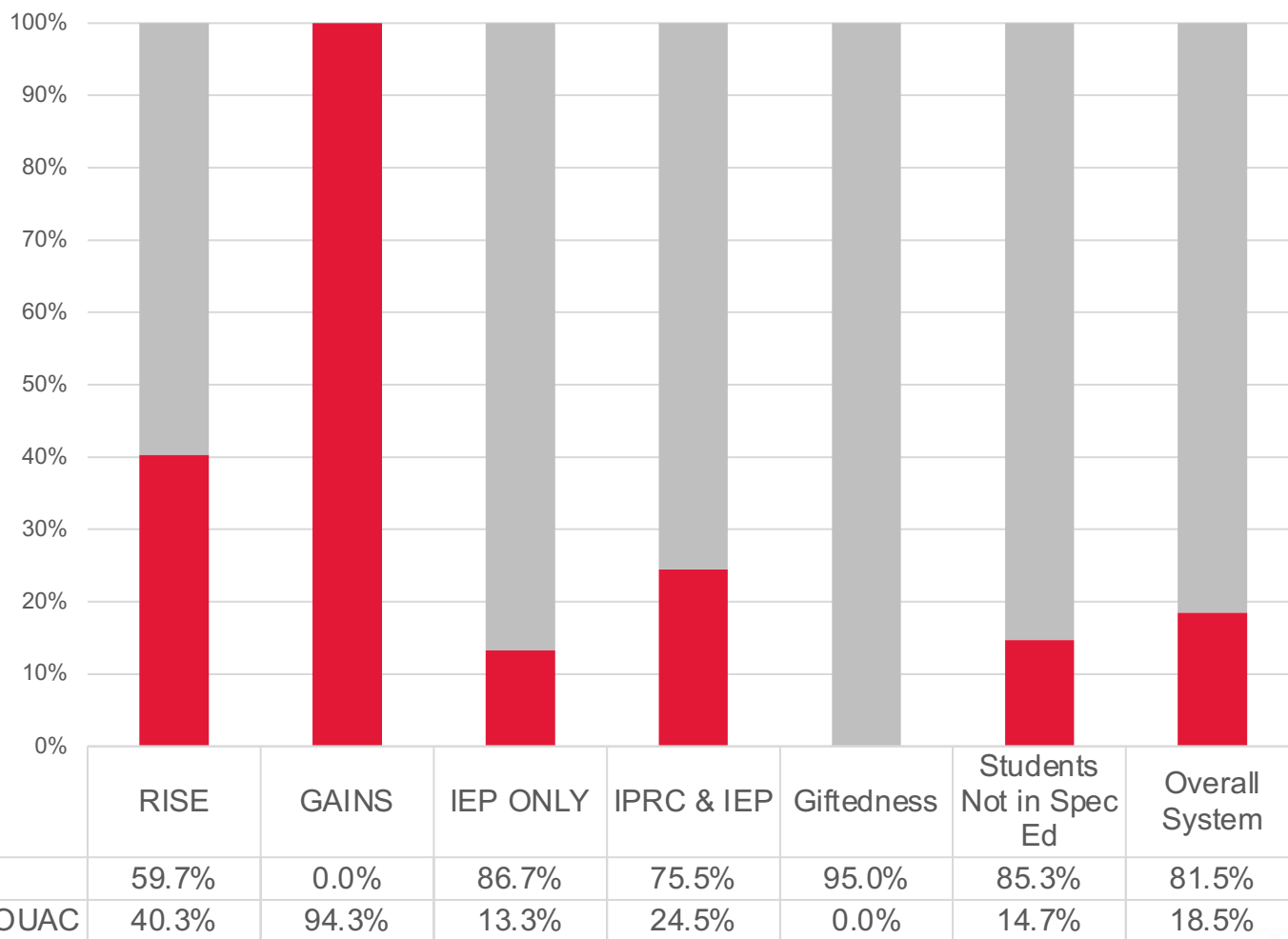# Figure 10. Graduation Status across Program, Student Information System, Students in Grade 12 (2022-23)

	RISE	GAINS	IEP Only	IPRC+IEP	Gifted	Students outside special education	Overall System
■ Pursuing COA	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
■ OSSC No Grad in 4 yrs	13.7%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
■ OSSC Grad in 4 yrs	12.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
■ OSSD No Grad in 4 yrs	41.8%	0.0%	33.2%	28.3%	0.0%	24.5%	25.6%
■ OSSD Grad in 4 yrs	32.4%	0.0%	66.3%	64.2%	95.0%	75.5%	70.1%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding.

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Figure 11. Intention to apply to Postsecondary Education, Student Information System, Students in Grade 12 (2022-23)

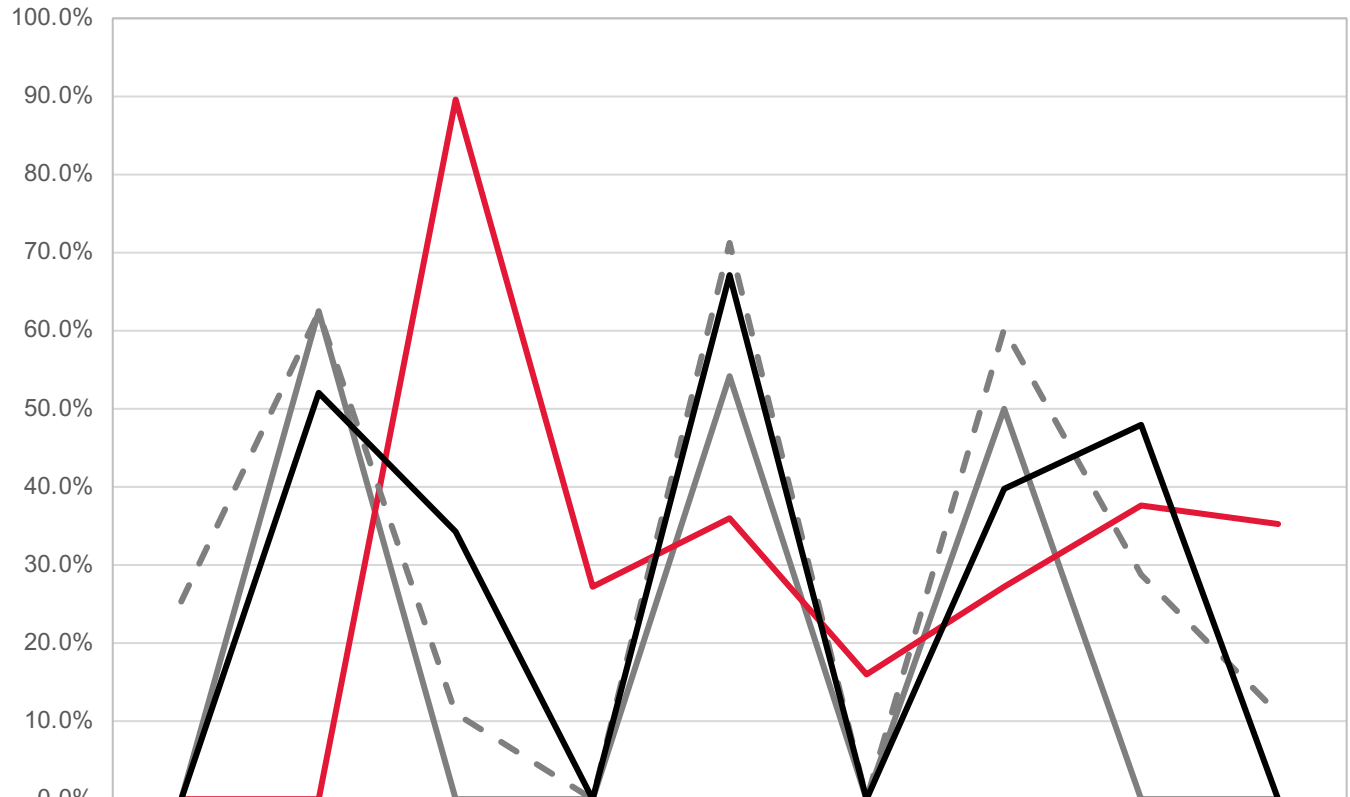|	RISE	GAINS	IEP ONLY	IPRC & IEP	Giftedness	Students Not in Spec Ed	Overall System
■ OUAC/OCAS	59.7%	0.0%	86.7%	75.5%	95.0%	85.3%	81.5%
■ Neither OCAS or OUAC	40.3%	94.3%	13.3%	24.5%	0.0%	14.7%	18.5%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding.

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EXAMINING PATHWAYS WHILE CONTROLLING FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Pathways are sometimes assumed to be entirely reflective of student achievement. The following analysis controls for student achievement, as determined through students' Grade 6 Math EQAO scores, to explore any potential relationship RISE may have to student pathways. Due to low numbers, the only category in which there were enough students to safely report were students who were deemed eligible to participate in the assessment (e.g. not exempt) and who had scored a level 1 or below.

Figure 12 includes the proportion of students who took Grade 9 Mathematics courses (across three academic levels), the proportion of students who participated in MAPS, graduated with an OSSD and OSSC in four years, as well as the proportion of students flagged as intending to apply to postsecondary education for all students who scored a level one or below on their Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics assessment.

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Figure 12. Trajectories of RISE for students achieving Level 1 or below Grade 6 EQAO Math, Student Information System, June 2023

	Academic Math	Applied Math	Locally Developed	MAPS	OSSD Grad in 4 yrs	OSSC Grad in 4 yrs	OUAC/OCAS	OCAS	No PSE
IEP Only	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	54.2%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
RISE	0.0%	0.0%	89.6%	27.2%	36.0%	16.0%	27.2%	37.6%	35.2%
Students outside of Special Education	25.3%	62.3%	11.0%	0.0%	71.2%	0.0%	60.3%	28.8%	11.0%
IPRC+IEP	0.0%	52.1%	34.3%	0.0%	67.1%	0.0%	39.7%	48.0%	0.0%

* Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and included as '0'. As several reports have been merged for this figure, neither columns nor rows will add to 100.

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RISE AND THE WORK OF FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS (Interview/Focus Group data)

9. RISE perceived as 'only option' for support.

- *9.1 Diversify support options*

- *9.2 Engage families in the decision-making process*

- *9.3 Improve support and recognition for RISE educators*

- *9.4 Foster a community of practice*

- *9.5 Value the roles of all educators in the system*

10. Families are engaging in extensive labour and conecting to external services to support their children

- *10.1 Engage families as partners in the care and education of children*

- *10.2 A greater emphasis on sharing assessment information, and the potential pathways from RISE, is needed*

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RISE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS (Interview/Focus Group data)

11. Partially integrated, partially segregated – discussions around the need for a safe space.

- *11.1 Promote inclusive practices*

- *11.2 Identify and address incidences of disability discrimination*

- *11.3 Provide comprehensive training for educators on creating inclusive, trauma-informed safe spaces*

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WHO DO THESE STRUCTURES AFFECT? EXAMINING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (System & Census Data)
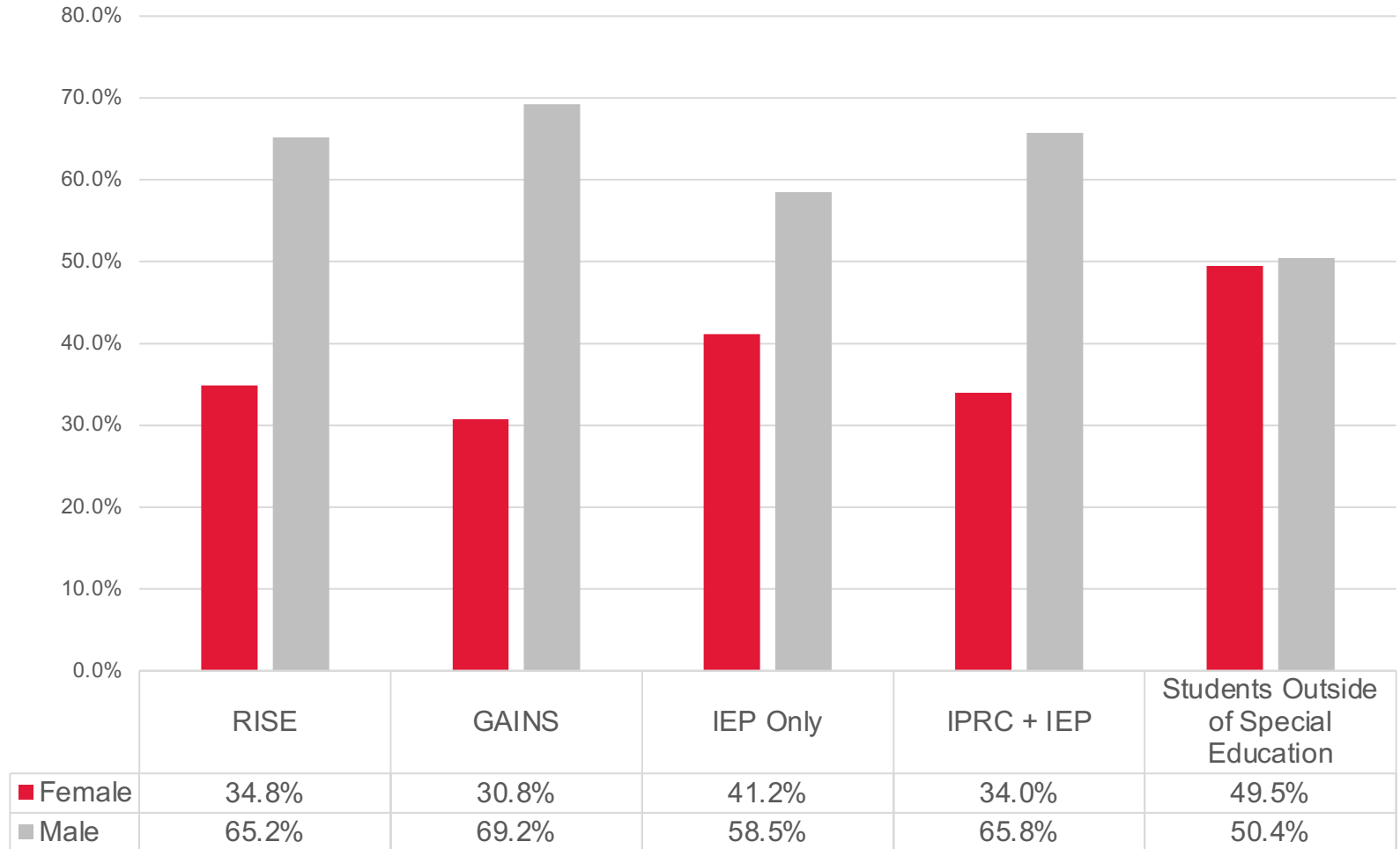
12. Overall demographics suggest that students in RISE, and for most identified special education categories, are more likely to be white, male, speak English as a first language, and have always lived in Canada.

- *12.1 Ensure equitable access to special education*
- *12.2 Further examination of the data.*
- *12.3 Capture socioeconomic status in future data collection*
- *12.4 Adopt culturally responsive support and resources.*

13. A need to address and challenge deficit understandings of disability

- *13. 1 Embrace sociocultural perspectives on disability and difference*
- *13.2 Recognise and respond to intersectional experiences*
- *13.3 Adopt differentiated instruction and universal design for learning (UDL) in all classrooms*

Figure 13. Gender across elementary program/setting, Student Information System, as of June 2023

	RISE	GAINS	IEP Only	IPRC + IEP	Students Outside of Special Education
■ Female	34.8%	30.8%	41.2%	34.0%	49.5%
■ Male	65.2%	69.2%	58.5%	65.8%	50.4%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding, and exclusion of 'Non-Specific (N)' or 'Specified' (S) gender categories due to low numbers. Gifted was also removed due to low counts.
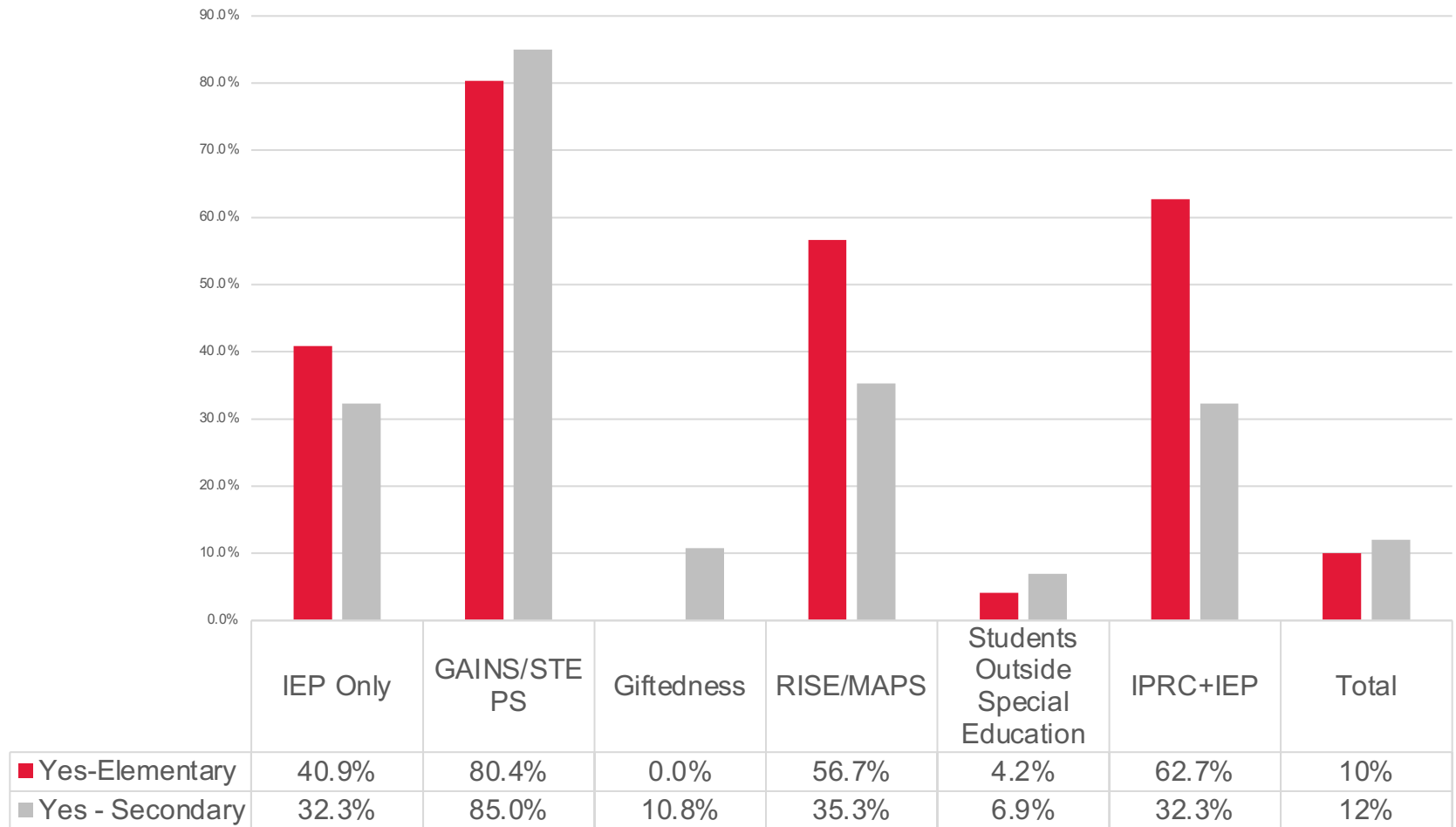
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Table 3. Students self-identified racial identity within special education, elementary & secondary, Student Census, 2023

	Black	East Asian	Latin	Middle Eastern	Mixed	Indigenous	Other	South Asian	SE Asian	Not Known	White	Total
Proportion within racial group	15.2%	3.6%	8.5%	7.8%	16.1%	22.0%	16.4%	5.7%	10.2%	21.9%	18.0%	15.0%
Proportion in special education	4.9%	0.8%	1.0%	6.0%	7.9%	1.1%	1.4%	3.4%	1.4%	14.4%	57.7%	100.0%
Overall Proportion	4.9%	3.5%	1.7%	11.6%	7.4%	0.7%	1.3%	8.8%	2.0%	9.9%	48.2%	100%

*Important to note that, due to low numbers, this table reflects participation in special education overall, not specific to RISE. As such, we recommend further future analysis examining program participation when more data is available.
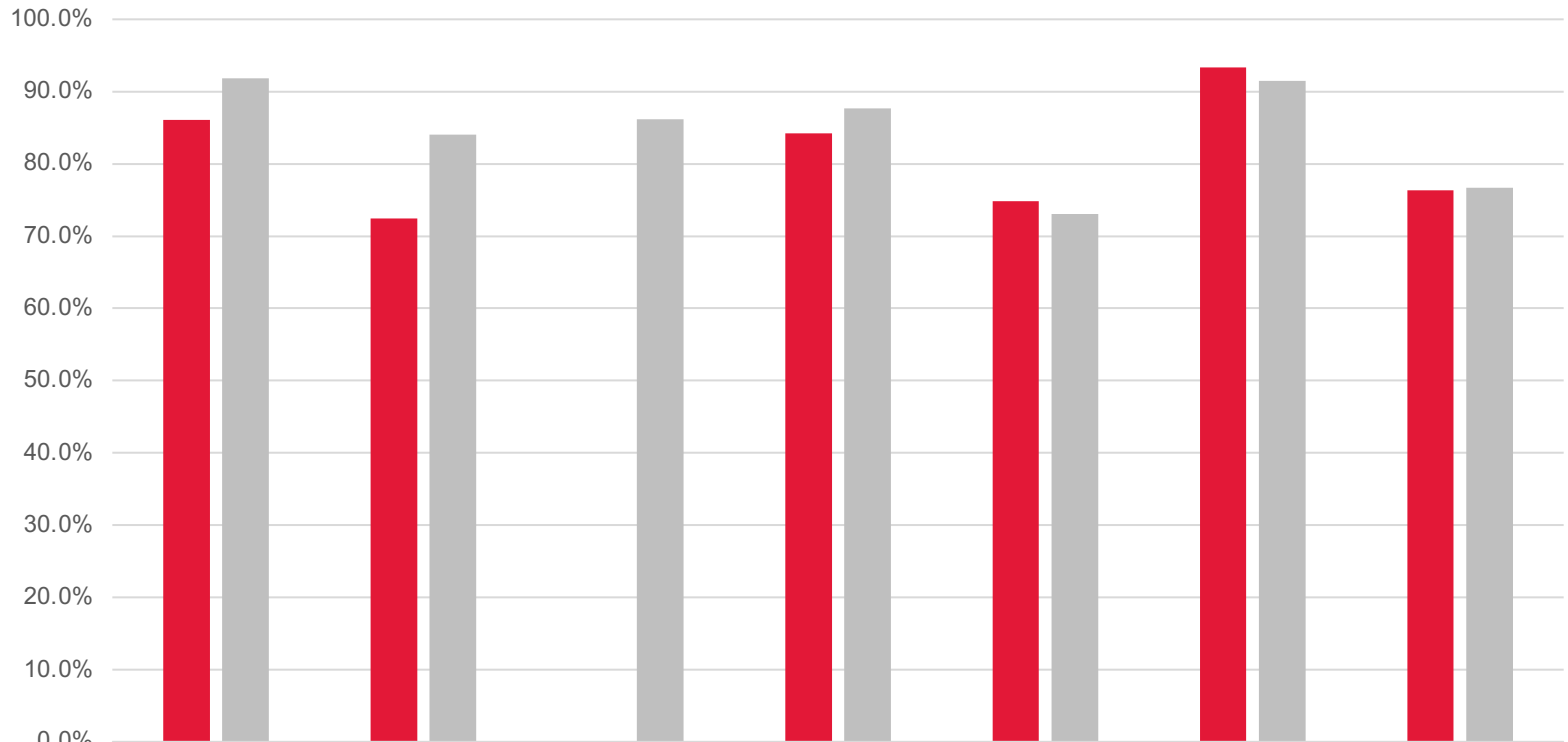
*Please also note that rows may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding

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Figure 15. Students self-identified disability identity, elementary & secondary, Student Census, 2023

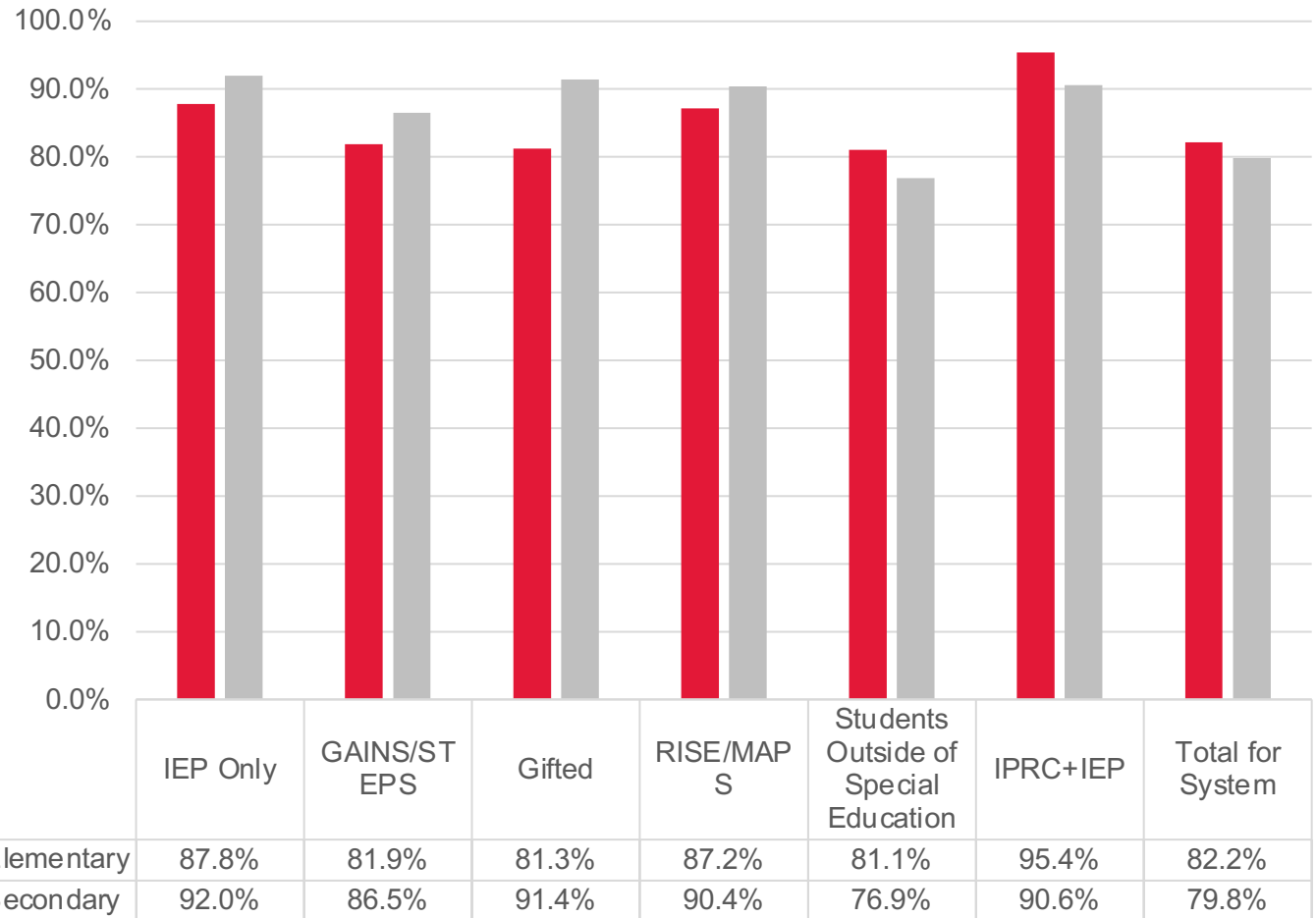|	IEP Only	GAINS/STEPS	Giftedness	RISE/MAPS	Students Outside Special Education	IPRC+IEP	Total
Yes-Elementary	40.9%	80.4%	0.0%	56.7%	4.2%	62.7%	10%
Yes - Secondary	32.3%	85.0%	10.8%	35.3%	6.9%	32.3%	12%

Please note that cells with counts below 10 were suppressed and columns may not add to exactly 100 due to rounding.

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Figure 16. First Language "English", Student Information System, as of June 2023

	IEP Only	GAINS	Giftedness	RISE	Students outside Special Educatio	IPRC+IEP	Total
Elementary	86.1%	72.4%	0.0%	84.2%	74.8%	93.3%	76.3%
Secondary	91.8%	84.0%	86.2%	87.7%	73.1%	91.4%	76.7%

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Figure 17. Students' length of time in Canada, Student Information System, as of June 2023

	IEP Only	GAINS/STEPS	Gifted	RISE/MAPS	Students Outside of Special Education	IPRC+IEP	Total for System
■ Always been in Canada - Elementary	87.8%	81.9%	81.3%	87.2%	81.1%	95.4%	82.2%
■ Always been in Canada - Secondary	92.0%	86.5%	91.4%	90.4%	76.9%	90.6%	79.8%

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Guidance around system change

Depending on how the GECDSB chooses to respond to the findings and recommendations emerging from the review of RISE, there may be interest in moving towards a more inclusive model of education. If so, there are other school districts that have shared their experiences and recommendations.

Overall, successful systems change requires time and investment:

Any restructuring of the RISE program should be done with consideration of the impact on current students, families, and educators. The literature indicates that shifting to an inclusion model requires approximately 3-5 years (Porter, 2010), and requires an investment of resources - financial, human, and/or technological.

Should the GECDSB consider moving towards a more inclusive model of support, Porter (2010) has outlined the steps required to ensure a successful transition (next slide).

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Steps to system change (directly cited from Porter, 2010, p.64)

1. We need to make a plan for transition and change and accept that this will take at least 3-5 years to do properly.

2. School staff must know how to make their schools and classrooms effective for diverse student populations, and so we need to invest in training for existing teachers and school leaders as well as for new teachers.

3. Understanding that teachers need support to accept and meet this challenge, we need to work with them and their associations to develop supports they need.

4. We need to start by creating positive models of success – classrooms, schools and communities that do a good job and can share their success and strategies with neighbors.

5. We need to identify a cadre of leaders and innovators at all levels and assist them in building networks where they can produce and share knowledge unique to their communities.

6. We need to identify and share "best practices" from research and knowledge that is already available and can be enriched and enhanced by local experience.

7. We need to understand that innovations and changes that will make a difference will require resources. That means money and people." (pg. 64)

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Additional recommendations for broader system change

- Consider a co-teaching model with shared leadership
- Foster collaborative practices across educational settings
- Commit to anti-discrimination and anti-oppressive approaches to education that include strategies to address ableism and disability-related discrimination.

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