



**A Clinical and Education
Services Analysis
for the
The Grand Rapids Public Schools:
Executive Summary for
Center-Based Programs**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The leadership of the Grand Rapids Public Schools commissioned this comprehensive review of specific components of its special education delivery system. This analysis employed proprietary methodology from a pre-established paradigm (i.e., a Clinical and Educational Services Analysis), which triangulates information gleaned from qualitative and quantitative information with pre-established benchmarks relating to school-based practices to achieve this broad operational objective. This executive summary serves to encapsulate the primary findings pertaining to the center-based programs in the District including programs supporting students with Emotional Impairments.

More specifically, the qualitative analyses comprised: (1) a series of interviews with related service providers, educators, paraprofessionals, and administrators; (2) a review of documents (i.e., IEPs, Functional Behavioral Assessments, and behavior plans) to ascertain the effectiveness of educational-therapeutic interventions; (3) an understanding of the methods in which special education services are delivered to students in reference to best practices, student outcomes, and Least Restrictive Environment; and (4) site visits to selected programs. Quantitative analyses included: (1) a multidimensional descriptive statistical analyses of the District's instructional, related services, and support personnel in reference to staffing configurations, workloads, service delivery models, and programmatic trends; and (2) a financial review relating to the historical and current costs associated with the provision of special education services including transportation.

Results of this analysis are considered with respect to the aforementioned areas and revealed the following areas of strength: (1) a dedicated, committed, and capable instructional, administrative, related services, and non-certified staff; (2) a commendable partnership with KISD that affords a variety of resources, cost-sharing, and programmatic enhancements for the center-based programs; and (3) an exemplary program in the Ken O'Sha program with respect to LRE, best practices, and fiscal perspectives. Primary areas of programmatic challenges, which include corresponding recommendations to address these areas, are: (1) a lack of consistency and uniformity with respect to the methods (e.g., level systems) in which students with Emotional Impairments at the alternative programs are addressed with a corresponding absence of processes to bring them back to their neighborhood schools; (2) District-wide professional development opportunities that are perceived to be inapplicable for many of the center-based staff; and (3) inefficiencies with respect to administrative and programmatic structure at specific center-based programs (e.g., Lincoln) in conjunction with re-visiting the need for the number of nurses and certified therapy staff.