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Access to Achievement:

Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

District Overview

Rush-Henrietta Central School District (RHCSD) is situated within Henrietta, Monroe County, New York. Henrietta's community has a population that totals 51,588 residents while serving as education's backdrop creating an environment that students engage throughout academically, socially, as well as emotionally. In the 2023-2024 academic school year, K-12 grades include an aggregate of 5,460 students. The student body includes 51% male as well as 49% female which is a statistic that evinces a near equal apportionment among genders. Whites comprise 51%, Asians 19%, Blacks or African Americans 13%, Hispanics or Latinos 9%, also multiracial individuals 8%.

Among the total enrollment, RHCSD provides support and services to students with disabilities which comprises 744 students, approximately 14% of the entire student population. This statistic is important since it stresses the district pledge to instruct students through accommodating needs aligned to the federal, state, and local requirements. The group of young students is flourishing because more than 1200 staff members are engaged in providing instruction and support.

In 2022, following the return to in-person learning, state assessment data indicated a significant achievement gap for students with disabilities in the district. The data collected during this baseline year pointed to disparities within educational outcomes for students with disabilities. This emphasis triggered quick focus along with response. With Dr. Barbara Mullen's appointment to be the new Superintendent of Schools came an urgency for addressing these gaps. Dr. Mullen, with her wide-ranging background in special education committed to the creation of equitable educational settings for understanding challenges for students with disabilities. The Superintendent provided a level of resources and support directed to the concept of "Access to Achievement", to address the gaps and strengthen inclusive practices. This initiative directly supports SPP/APR Indicator 3B (Participation and Performance on State Assessments) and Indicator 3C (Proficiency Rates for Students with Disabilities), reinforcing both compliance and improvement outcomes.

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(Prepared in collaboration with the Rush-Henrietta Central School District, 2025)

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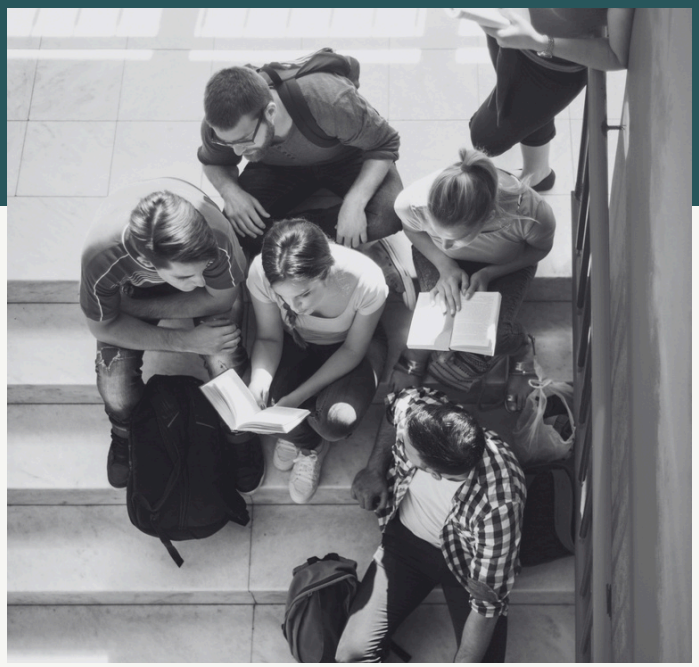
Access to Achievement Concept Implementation

Aligned with NYSED's Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities, the Next Generation Learning Standards, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching (Domains 1–3), the Access to Achievement plan centers on program access, instructional strategies and support, and measurable progress for all learners. This approach emphasizes both systemic redesign and instructional improvement, ensuring that the programmatic framework, policy, and practice is purposefully aligned to meet the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students with disabilities.

The district has focused on strengthening internal departmental systems, expanding access to services, and development of professional learning environments fostering shared accountability and continuous growth.
The following sections outline three interconnected areas of implementation: Defining District Department Roles and Responsibilities, Professional Learning, and the Continuum of Services. Each represents a strategic component of the Access to Achievement framework. These focus areas demonstrate the district's commitment to aligning compliance requirements with meaningful improvement efforts, building a cohesive infrastructure that supports student success and fulfills state and federal expectations under IDEA and the SPP/APR accountability system.



Defining District Department Roles and Responsibilities

The district initiated a comprehensive Special Education Redesign to clearly define departmental roles, responsibilities, and foundational pillars. The redesigned structure establishes four core areas of focus—Achievement, Compliance, Preschool /Related Services—ensuring that each pillar contributes to a unified system of support for students with disabilities. Department goals and responsibilities were aligned with the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicators, the Performance Improvement Plan, and the district's broader strategic priorities. This alignment guarantees that program development, compliance, and service delivery remain coherent and data-driven across all levels. Additionally, the district broadened the Continuum of Services to expand access and ensure that students receive instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) possible. The key lesson learned throughout this process was that compliance and improvement intersect—when initiatives are intentionally aligned with SPP/APR Indicators, the result is both regulatory fidelity and measurable gains in student achievement.

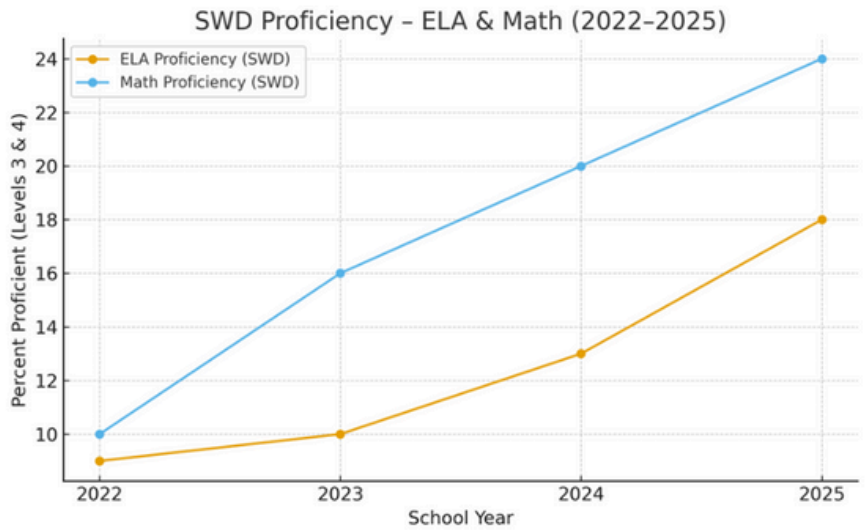
Professional Learning

The district recognized that sustainability could only come with a shared understanding. The Department of Special Education then provided professional learning grounded in awareness- and prevention to each role-specific group to build a system-wide common language and understanding of roles and practices. Increased collaboration between general and special education staff was cultivated through joint sessions emphasizing Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and the Continuum of Services Framework. This collective learning approach continued to support educators to effectively implement instructional and behavioral strategies and build school-based capacity. By fostering ongoing reflection and collaboration, professional learning became the mechanism to increase staff confidence and ensure access and appropriate placement.

Continuum of Services

The district expanded and refined the Continuum of Services to ensure that students with disabilities have equitable access to programs that meet their individual learning and behavioral needs. Program models were extended across grade levels to support appropriate placement decisions in alignment with Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) expectations. This expansion not only improved service availability but also strengthened collaboration between schools and the central office to maintain consistency in placement decisions and instructional quality. The enhanced continuum reflects a system that is responsive, inclusive, and aligned with both state regulations and district priorities. The continuum supports the district's effort by ensuring that every student can access the necessary support to thrive academically and socially.

ELA & Math Proficiency Growth (SWD) – 2022–2025 trend lines



Additional Outcomes (SPP/APR Alignment):

Indicator 3B: SWD participation on state assessments are developing to meet the state target of 95% by 2025. (SY23-24 -4th grade 93.24% / 8th grade 84.62%)
Indicator 3C: SWD proficiency rates improved in ELA and Math since baseline.
Indicator 5: LRE data reflect an 11% increase in inclusion (80%+ of day in Gen. Ed.).

Conclusion

The implementation of the Access to Achievement concept has reaffirmed the district's belief that sustainable progress is built upon the intersection of compliance, access through the Continuum, and professional development. Throughout this initiative, the Rush-Henrietta Central School District (RHCSD) recognizes that awareness before prevention and intervention is foundational. Awareness ensures all students, particularly those with disabilities, first receive equitable access to rigorous, standards-based instruction before additional support is introduced.

The district's journey underscores that authentic improvement arises not from data collection alone, but from the collaborative conversations that translate data into targeted, student-centered actions. A sustained leadership commitment has been instrumental in ensuring fidelity of implementation. Supporting leadership through consistent coaching, monitoring, and reflection fostering a culture of shared accountability. The district emphasizes the value in creating a climate of compassion with comprehension. System-wide recognition and student capabilities have strengthened the district's resolve to provide every learner with the resources and support to thrive.

The Rush-Henrietta Central School District demonstrates that alignment with NYSED frameworks, combined with inclusive instructional design and data-driven decision-making, can significantly improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Over the course of four years, RHCSD has narrowed achievement gaps, increased inclusion metrics, and achieved measurable gains on the New York State Assessments, directly supporting SPP/APR Indicators 3B (Performance and Participation), 3C (Proficiency), and 5 (LRE). These achievements reflect not only compliance with state and federal requirements but a deeper commitment to continuous improvement and equity-driven practice.
Through intentional alignment, collaborative professionalism, and a steadfast belief in each student's potential, the Rush-Henrietta Central School District continues to model what is possible when systems of compliance evolve into systems of excellence.