Projectlife Services

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Phase 1 Findings and Next Steps (Community Summary)

The Milton School District is currently conducting a phased review of its daily operations, student support, and special education systems at Milton Elementary School and Nute Middle High School. This work was initiated to better understand how current systems are functioning under increased student need and staffing strain, and to identify practical improvements that support both students and educators.

This summary provides an overview of what has been identified and what work is underway, based on Phase 1 discovery findings.

Purpose of the Phase 1 Review
Phase 1 was designed to examine **systems**, not individual staff or specific student cases. The focus was on understanding patterns related to:

- Service delivery and instructional access
- Discipline and exclusionary practices
- Tier 1 classroom supports
- MTSS structures and alignment
- Leadership routines, communication, and follow-through
- Use of data to guide decision-making

The goal was to establish a clear picture of current conditions before implementing changes.

Key Patterns Identified
Across both schools, several consistent patterns emerged:

1. High Commitment, Uneven System Support
Educators, paraprofessionals, and administrators demonstrate strong care and dedication to students. At the same time, systems have grown more complex faster than the structures designed to support them. As a result, consistency across classrooms and settings varies.

2. Tier 1 Supports Are Not Yet Functioning as Prevention at Scale
When Tier 1 classroom practices are inconsistent, situations are more likely to escalate. This increases reliance on reactive responses and places added pressure on Tier 2, Tier 3, and special education systems.

3. Special Education Is Absorbing System Gaps
Inclusive and push-in service models are strongly valued. However, implementation has outpaced readiness in some areas. Special education staff and paraprofessionals are frequently drawn into broader system stabilization efforts, which can reduce the consistency and effectiveness of specialized instruction.

4. Exclusionary Discipline Increases Under System Strain

Data and staff experience indicate that exclusionary discipline is often used in response to cumulative system stress rather than serious safety incidents. This pattern is most visible when expectations, roles, and follow-through are unclear in real time.

5. Role Clarity and Communication Need Strengthening
Unclear decision-making pathways and inconsistent communication contribute to variability in how situations are handled and followed up. This places an additional burden on individual staff and reduces predictability for students.

These patterns are system-level signals, not indicators of individual failure.

Work Currently Underway (Phase 2 Focus Areas)
Phase 2 of the work focuses on practical, observable improvements, not onnew initiatives.

Current and upcoming efforts include:
Strengthening Tier 1 Classroom Practice

- Professional development focused on MTSS in practice, not theory
- Real-time coaching and support for teachers
- Clear guidance on prevention, re-teaching, and re-entry practices

Reviewing Discipline and Exclusionary Practices

- Analysis of discipline trends and decision points
- Alignment of discipline practices with stated restorative and instructional goals
- Clarifying expectations for staff during escalation and follow-through

Supporting Leadership and Coaching Structures

- Working with administrators on leadership routines, communication, and coaching behavior
- Clarifying roles, decision-making authority, and follow-up responsibilities
- Reducing reliance on individual problem-solving through shared systems

Using Data to Guide Improvement

- Reviewing trends related to discipline, staffing, service delivery, and student need
- Identifying where supports activate inconsistently or too late
- Using data to inform system adjustments rather than assign blame

Reviewing Screening and Specialized Supports

- Examining how students are identified for additional or specialized support within an MTSS framework
- Reviewing screening, diagnostic, and referral practices
- Strengthening early identification and consistent follow-through

What This Work Is Intended to Do
This work is intended to:

- Improve consistency and predictability for students
- Strengthen prevention so fewer situations escalate
- Support educators with usable, aligned systems

- Reduce reliance on reactive and exclusionary responses
- Build sustainable practices that can be maintained over time

This work is not focused on assigning blame, responding to isolated incidents, or implementing quick fixes.

Moving Forward

System improvement requires deliberate pacing, particularly during leadership transitions. The district is committed to improving clarity and communication as this work progresses, while protecting student privacy and staff integrity. The focus moving forward is on building systems that operate reliably, so that values around inclusion, access, and student well-being are consistently reflected in daily practice.