Summary
Special Education in SAU 64
Milton School District
December 2025

I. OVERVIEW OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW ACTIVITIES

Purpose of Review

A request for an independent review of the Milton School District's special education programming originated from questions raised by the District office regarding the following critical areas:

- Alignment of special education programming to the general education curriculum;
- Inclusionary practices and extent to which students with disabilities have full access to the general education curriculum;
- Instruction and interventions being provided to students with disabilities;
- The prevailing process for supervision and oversight of building level special education programs, including school district employees and contracted service providers;
- Roles and responsibilities of all district staff and contracted services; and
- Stakeholder perspectives.

The initial inquiry was focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of the current infrastructure in special education, program design, and substantiated impact upon student performance and development.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & DISTRICT-WIDE THEMES

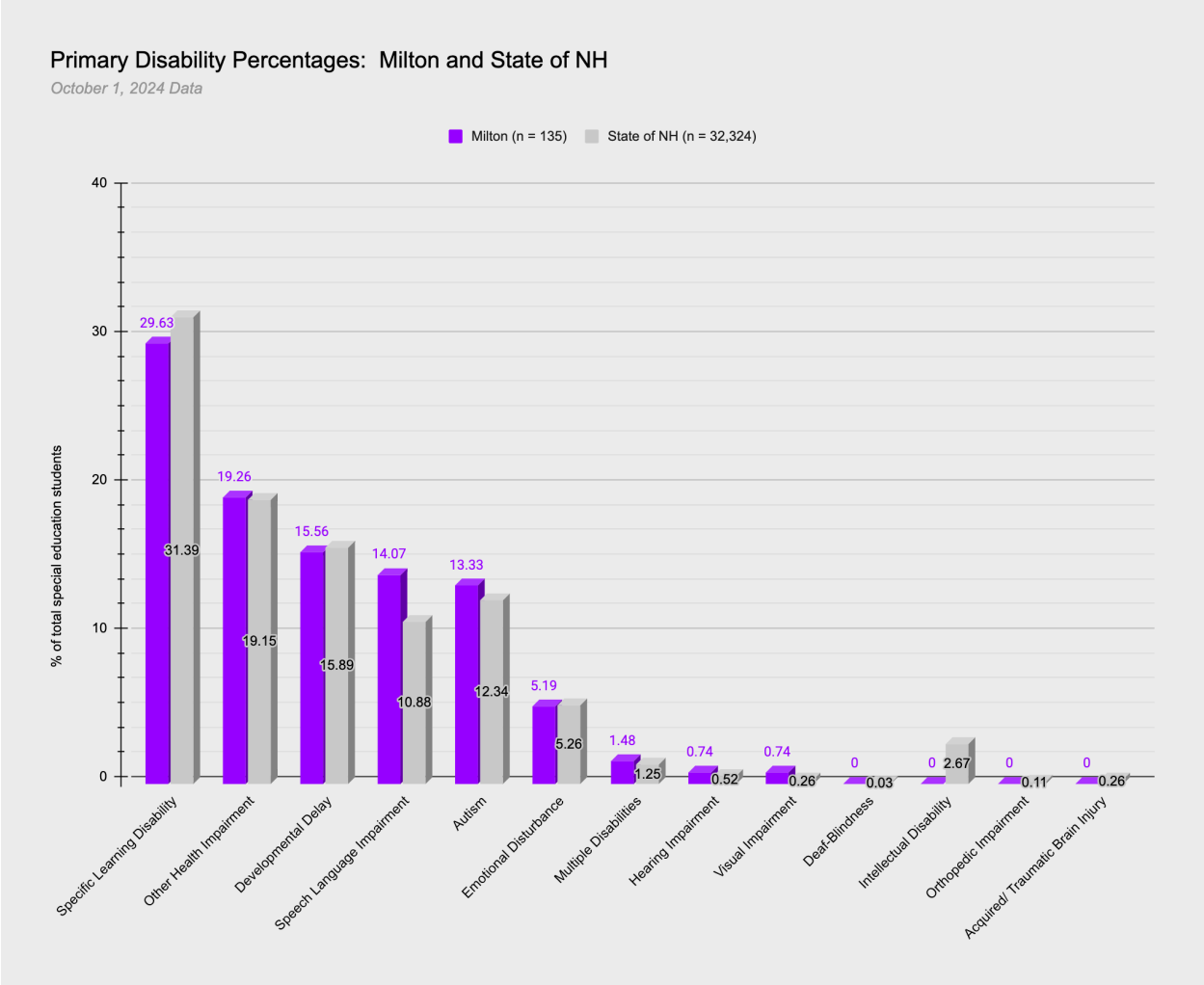
The Program Review of the Milton School District's special education programming was conducted from July through December 2025 in collaboration with the District administration and administration and staff at Milton Elementary School ("MES") and Nute Middle and High School ("Nute"). This Summary presents a brief overview of district wide themes identified through interviews, focus group discussions, district documentation review, and data collection activities.

CELEBRATIONS & STRENGTHS

Interviews and focus group discussions with Milton's educators highlighted a commitment to meeting the needs of individual learners. The discussions celebrated the Spring 2025 NEASC Accreditation, MES Academic Curriculum Work, and an overall desire for improvement and creation of a culture in which everyone is valued.

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

From school years 2022-23 through 2025-26, the District's average total enrollment was approximately 511 students and the average special education enrollment was 138.5, resulting in an average of 27.16% special education students. Based on the October 1, 2025 counts, Milton School District had a total of 514 students enrolled, including 120 identified special education students (23.86% students). The October 1, 2024 state average for special education students was 19.87%. As of December 12, 2025, October 1, 2025 Statewide Census by Disability is not yet available. Comparison of Milton vs. State of New Hampshire 2024 data is as follows:



DISTRICT WIDE THEMES

A. STAFFING PATTERNS - During the last 5-7 years, the District has experienced a substantial turnover across special education positions. Multiple changes in the following positions: paraprofessionals, special education teachers, related service providers, and Director of Special Education, along with vacancies, have directly impacted service delivery, created inconsistency for students and educational staff, and resulted in financial impacts from filling vacancies with contracted service staff. Additional staffing-related concerns include:
    - Sufficiency of staffing to meet the needs of students with disabilities
    - Duties and responsibilities, as well as availability and accessibility, of the Director of Special Education

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION - Multiple stakeholders identified the need for roles and responsibilities in special education (i.e. district administration, building administration, special education teachers, interventionists, school counselors, school nurses, paraprofessionals, and administrative assistants) to be clarified to support positive outcomes for students and successful parent engagement.

C. COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, CULTURE & CLIMATE - In tandem with roles and responsibilities, communication between and across stakeholders was identified as an area of significant concern. Concerns included limited to no communication, lack of transparency, and limited professional dialog, all of which have a direct impact on trust and collaboration.

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES - Several areas pertaining to knowledge of Policies and Procedures, compliance with NH Special Education Rules, and foundations for daily practice, were brought forward as areas of concern.

E. SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS & SERVICE DELIVERY - An intensive review of the District's continuum of services for students with disabilities is needed for children ages 3 through 22 (i.e. preschool program, inclusionary practice, push in model, NECC Partner classroom). Post-secondary transition planning for students with IEPs, and vertical alignment of curriculum and instruction were also identified as items of importance.

F. IEP IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES - Staff identified questions and concerns pertaining to curriculum material access, alignment between general and special education, student access limitations based on master schedules, and supporting students with social emotional/behavioral skill needs.

G. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING - Staff expressed the need for professional development to support students with disabilities.

H. PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT – Staff and parents expressed concerns about the need for improvement in communication, parents having a voice in their child's education, feeling welcome, opportunity for IEP team participation, and understanding of the special education process.

III. IMPROVEMENT / EVOLUTION OF SAU 64 SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICES

Based on the major themes that emerged through the Special Education Review, the improvement and evolution of the District's special education practices will focus on the following through the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

A. STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Strengthen recruitment of staff to support adequate staffing with appropriate qualifications and expertise to meet the diverse needs of students with exceptionalities
- Provide support and relevant professional learning for all teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals

- Secure staffing to provide special education and related services
- Secure special education administration support
- Leverage staff meetings, early release, teacher workshop time for training and PD

B. ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT/ ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- *Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations for all stakeholders (i.e. administrators, educational staff, parents/legal guardians)*
    - Defining staff roles and responsibilities within special education and the multitiered systems of support for academics and behavior (MTSS-A and MTSS-B)
    - Development of an organizational chart for the District's special education programming

C. KNOWLEDGE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES/ COMPLIANCE WITH NH SPECIAL EDUCATION RULES AND IDEA

- Review and revise the district's special education standard operating procedures, decision making processes, and forms to ensure compliance with state and federal rules and laws
- Review and revise system for scheduling of IEP team meetings
- Provide coaching, mentorship and ongoing professional development (PD) for special education staff to build capacity
- Provide LEA representative training to administrators
- Communicate criteria for eligibility, services and programs to all staff
- Review transition process and protocols between grades and MES and Nute

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING/ SERVICE DELIVERY

- Review the District's continuum of services for students with disabilities (ages 3 - 22)
- Review master schedules at MES and Nute to maximize opportunities to access students for services
- Develop inventory of specially designed instruction materials and supplies for special education programming. Identify curriculum, supply, and equipment needs
- Integrate special education systems work with MTSS-B

E. FAMILY SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT / COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Strengthen school-parent partnerships and family engagement; review collaboration with community partners (e.g. pediatrician's offices, mental health providers, early supports and services, area agencies)

- Expand family support and engagement in the special education process
- Connect with Community Partners to strengthen collaboration for students and families.

Multiyear strategic planning for the improvement and evolution of the District's special education practices will begin during the spring of 2026 and will continue through summer 2026 into the 2026-27 school year.