

January 18, 2023

Dear GJUESD board members,

My name is Erin Mundy-McCook, I am in my fourth year serving the district as a school psychologist at Lake Canyon and Marengo Ranch Elementaries.

Our district has made it clear that MTSS is a critical component of our schools to support students of all needs academically, behaviorally and emotionally. A key element of effective MTSS, especially for academic concerns, is to identify student needs and provide targeted intervention with fidelity. The Beyond SST program, in which the district has invested, requires teachers to provide intervention, data track and progress monitor in order to move forward with the MTSS process, or refer for Special Education assessment. This is also a critical step required by California Law which I evaluate before finding a student eligible for having a disability requiring special education support. Unfortunately, in the last several years it has been clear that while our school teams understand this need, we simply do not have the personnel or time needed to provide those interventions.

A pattern we are seeing emerge is that students who have not received intervention but continue to struggle get passed on to Special Education assessment. Many of these students do not qualify for Special Education support and then we still do not have the capacity to provide them the intervention they need through General Education. Thus, these students are passed onto the next grade without receiving the instruction they need. Unfortunately, the educational gaps that students are facing as a result of chronic absenteeism have only increased since we have returned to school in person. Here is some data to consider..

- According to the California School Dashboard in the 2021-22 school year, 46% of our district students were chronically absent.
- At LC and MRE in the 2019-20 year 15% of students who I assessed did not qualify for a special education category but did show need for substantial academic support outside of the Tier 1 instruction. During the 2021-22 school year that number was up to 36%. As of 1/10/23 that number is at 38%

If we are not able to provide targeted intervention with efficacy to all students showing academic difficulty, we will continue to be in this cycle of overtesting students for Special Education services, not qualifying students due to lack of instruction/intervention, and passing students on to the next grade while they fall further behind. I implore you to please hire intervention teachers at each site whose job it is to work directly with students reading, writing, and math. This is a critical requirement of the MTSS process that we are now not able to meet with the available resources.

Thank you for your time.