HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Renee A. Foose, Ed. D.
Superintendent
410-313-6674

March 24, 2016

Ms. Jessica Feldmark
Administrator
Howard County Council
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Ms. Feldmark:

As requested during the County Council/Board of Education Quarterly Meeting on March 16, 2016, please find enclosed documents from the Special Education Opportunities Review conducted in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) by the District Management Council (DMC), which began in August 2014 and concluded in January 2015.

The Opportunities Review was a multi-faceted process. Data review was one part of the process. The HCPSS provided data including student achievement, least restrictive environment, and staff counts. A second important component was the interview process. In September, staff from the DMC were on site at HCPSS and interviewed general educators, special educators, building administrators, central office administrators, related service providers, paraprofessionals, curriculum specialists, financial specialists, data specialists, and parents. Focus groups were also held.

A report was given to the Board of Education by DMC staff in January. A day long retreat was held to share the findings with HCPSS staff followed by an evening meeting with the parent community. The HCPSS identified eight recommendations based on information from the Special Education Opportunities Review. The first five recommendations deal specifically with English/language arts and math instruction.

Recommendation 1: Elementary Reading

Ensure all elementary struggling readers, including those with IEPs, receive systematic reading instruction and additional intensive intervention from highly qualified/highly effective teachers.

Recommendation 2: Secondary Reading

Ensure that all secondary students with disabilities who struggle to master grade level content receive additional time on task to address instruction gaps and support reading proficiency by a highly qualified teacher.

In response to recommendations 1 and 2, staff from HCPSS have done the following:

- Convened a multi-stakeholder group to systematically address K-12 reading/language arts.
- Developed a strategic plan to address reading by focusing first instruction, differentiated supports, and access.
- Provided professional learning to teachers and school-based leaders on first instruction including pedagogy, content knowledge, and classroom structures.
- Provided resources to teachers and school-based leaders including professional learning on monitoring student progress, a list and professional learning opportunities on recommended/endorsed interventions, and entry and exit criteria for recommended interventions.
- Used countywide benchmarks to review for equitable participation in high-level course work, and provided support to schools working to attain equitable participation.
- Provided professional learning around supporting diverse learners.
- Developed a communication plan to inform and engage parents and community members.

Recommendation 3: Elementary Mathematics

Students struggling in mathematics, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEP), require additional instructional time to access and master grade level standards, as well as to fill instructional gaps. Instruction should be provided by highly qualified teachers.

Recommendation 4: Secondary Mathematics

Examine high school course options that provide students struggling in mathematics additional instructional time.

In response to recommendations 3 and 4, staff from HCPSS have done the following:

- Convened a multi-stakeholder group to systematically address K-12 mathematics.
- Developed a 3 year strategic plan to improve mathematics teaching and learning by focusing first instruction, intervention, and access.
- Provided professional learning to teachers and school-based leaders on first instruction including pedagogy, content knowledge, and classroom structures.
- Used countywide benchmarks to review for equitable participation in high-level coursework, and provided support to schools working to attain equitable participation.

- Developed a communication plan to inform and engage parents and community members.

Recommendation 5: Staffing

Ensure all students who are struggling in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), and reading; including those with disabilities, will receive rigorous instruction and additional interventions by highly skilled, highly trained, and highly effective teachers.

In response to recommendation 5, staff from HCPSS employed the actions outlined in response to recommendations 1 – 4 and the following:

- Collaborated with the Office of School Administration and school leaders to align staff schedules to allow for a match between student need and teacher expertise.

Recommendation 6: Related Service Providers

Increase direct service time so that occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and psychologists work directly with students by decreasing inefficiencies.

In response to this recommendation, staff from HCPSS have done the following:

- Studied research-based practice of "cycling" services to more efficiently provide speech language service to students.
- Developed an electronic tool that allows staff to collect information regarding the number of new assessments and re-evaluations per provider.
- Developed an electronic documentation record for all providers to increase both their efficiency and consistency in COMAR required documentation.

Recommendation 7: IEP Efficiencies

Examine the current IEP process and associated task and implement efficiencies to provide increased time for special education teachers to support student learning.

In response to this recommendation, staff from HCPSS have done the following:

- Provided professional learning for special educators on writing standards based IEPs.
- Explored ways to leverage technology such as developing a parent portal so that families can easily access documents and developing a data collection tool to collect and monitor data pertaining to IEP goals and objectives.

Recommendation 8: Central Office

Redefine roles and responsibilities within the Department of Special Education and Student Services.

In response to this recommendation, staff from HCPSS has done the following:

- Developed an implementation plan addressing roles and responsibilities.

The HCPSS is actively engaged in cycles of continuous improvement. We will continue to develop and implement strategies focused on the recommendations of the District Management Council.

Sincerely,

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Board of Education Members
Linda Wise, Deputy Superintendent

Howard County Public School System
and
District Management Council

Special Education Opportunities Review

Howard County Public School System
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Special Education Opportunity Review

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Special Education Opportunities Review
Highlights for Sharing
Spring 2015

TAB 6 Board of Education Report
PreK-12 Mathematics Program - Implementation
March 24, 2016-

DMC PROJECT TIMELINE

January 8, 2015
Patty, Renee, Linda meet
to discuss draft DMC response

January 22, 2015
Staff retreat with DMC;
Parent Advocacy meeting with DMC
Develop draft recommendations to DMC for final report

January/February 2015
HCPSS receives DMC Final Report and plans for BOE Report

February 2015 TBD
BOE Meeting Presentation with DMC

March 2015
Establish workgroups
Develop stakeholder communication plan

April – June 2015
Elementary Reading Group – DMC Recommendation #1

Secondary Reading Group – DMC Recommendation #2
Elementary Math Group – DMC Recommendation #3
Secondary Math Group – DMC Recommendation #4
Staffing – DMC Recommendation #5
Related Service Providers – DMC Recommendation #6
IEP Process Efficiencies – DMC Recommendation #7
Central Office Leadership – DMC Recommendation #8

JUNE 2015
Board of Education Report – Status Update – Implementation Plans

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE: 2015 – 2016 SCHOOL YEAR
Secondary Math – DMC Recommendation #4 (second semester)
Related Service Providers – DMC Recommendation #6
IEP Process Efficiencies – DMC Recommendation #7
Central Office Leadership – DMC Recommendation #8

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE: 2015-2016 School Year and 2016-2017 School Year
Phase in Elementary Reading – DMC Recommendation #1
Phase in Secondary Reading – DMC Recommendation #2
Phase in Elementary Math – DMC Recommendation #3
Phase in Staffing – DMC Recommendation #5

DRAFT

List of Parents for DMC Retreat

Beth Benevides
Debbie Engle
Kelly Meissner
Andrea Holz
Ann Scholz
Kim McKay
Roger Thibaudeau
Judy Grosso
Carol Beatty
Linda Spencer
Nanette Schweitzer
Jessica Pearsall
Brenda Sackandy
Cheri Truitt
Marlon Guinn
Stacey Williams

District Management Council

PARENTS

Beth Benevides, Hussman Foundation
Debbie Engle, Special Education Community Advisory Committee
Kelly Meissner, Parents Place of Maryland
Andrea Holz, Family Support and Resource Center
Ann Scholz, Family Support and Resource Center
Kim McKay, ARC of Howard County
Roger Thibaudeau, Howard County Autism Society
Judy Grosso, Howard County Autism Society
Carol Beatty, ARC of Howard County
Linda Spencer, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)
Nanette Schweitzer, LDA
Kate Gerwin, National Alliance on Mental Illness
Jessica Pearsall, ARC of Howard County
Brenda Sackandy, Howard County Autism Society
Shari Truett, Howard County Autism Society
Marlon Guinn, Parent
Stacey Williams, University of Maryland

PARENTS – FOCUS GROUP

Kim McKay
Ann Scholz
Andrea Holz
Kelly Meissner
Beth Benevides
Roger Thibadeau

Contact:
Wallis Raemer
The District Management Council
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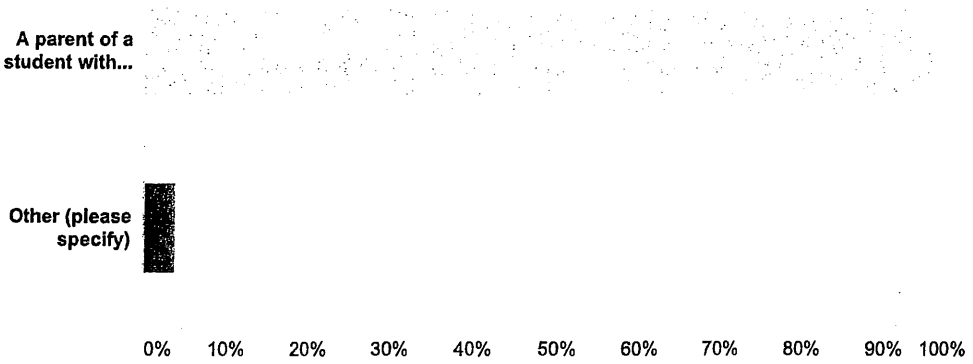
Fax: 617-491-5266
Cell: 617-512-4963
wRaemer@dmcouncil.org

Group	Time	Location	Names
	Tuesday, September 15, 2014		
H.S. ITLs	9:00-10:00	Board Rooms	Jeremy Snyder, Frank Weisberg, Susan Bannister, Christine Schmidt, Cathy Ferguson, Katie Keating, Brandon Gerry
M.S. ITLs	9:00-11:00	Board Rooms	Mikaela Lidgard, Kim Sampson, Kristin Terry, Faye Ebron, Joe Lichtfuss, Jill McGrath, Veronica Munroe, Michael Cometa
E.S. ITLs	10:00-11:00	Board Rooms	Lea Billingsley, Kasi, Klingbiel, Meredith Gebren, C'mon Walker, Dana Henry, Mary Tatum, Colleen Huelskamp
E.S. Sp. Ed. Teachers	10:00-11:00	Board Rooms	Mary Larocco, Katie Collins, Alicia Laboissonniere, Eric Pecukonis, Aleah Zinalebedini, Shayla Proctor, Ira Wright
M.S. and H.S. Sp. Ed. Teachers	11:00-12:00	Board Rooms	Colleen Spafford, Shannon Speake, Tiffanie Nunley, Sheryl Baker, Greg Chestnut, John Perfetto, Michael Colonna, Kara Brooks-Odom
Related Service Providers	11:00-12:00	Board Rooms	Joan Ogaitis, Jane Jung-Potter, Karen Lloyd, Judy Fox, Shannon Whalen, Emily Kinsler
Lunch	12:00-1:00		
Psychologists and Counselors	1:00-2:00	Board Rooms	Mark Cooper, William Eng, Kerri Morse, Chandra McKinght-Dean, Alicia Taylor, Mike Krouse, Bettina Hartgrove, Kevin Siliko
DSE IFs and Resource Teachers	1:00-2:00	Board Rooms	Terri Savage, Joyce Agness, Anne Hickey, Ellen Hill, Sonya Robinson, Jessica Yaniro, Laura Peter, Missie Baxter
E.S. Gen. Ed. Teachers	2:00-3:00	Board Rooms	Dennis McDonald, Benita Parham, Jameelah Jefferson, Jennifer Bezy, Joseph Quirk, Pam Benya, Dan Lamberth, John Seniura
M.S. Gen. Ed. Teachers	2:00-3:00	Board Rooms	Brian McDonald, Pete Ilenda, Rhonda McDonnell, Elease Martin, Robert Sullivan, LeRay Blanding, Laura Derreth, Jesse Mackey
H.S. Gen. Ed. Teachers	3:00-4:00	Board Rooms	Amy French, Michelle Howard, Alec Livieratos, Christine Boussy, Roland Heurich, Elizabeth Crawford, Larry Luthe, Kevin Cannon
Sp. Ed. co-teachers (community of practice teachers)	3:00-4:00	Board Rooms	Barbara Dougherty, Andrea Rovegno, Katherine Chandler, Laurie Buckland, Deborah Valencia, Karen Forte, Jeanette Bonomo
Parent Focus Group SECAC/FSRC	7:00-8:00	Board Rooms	Kim McKay, Ann Scholz, Andrea Holz, Kelly Meisner, Beth Benevides, Roger Thibadeau

	Wednesday, September 16, 2014		
E.S. Paras	9:00-10:00	Ascend 1	Anna Kim, Jill Snavely, Kenneth Kelly, Dounia Bounoua, Derek Jackson, Meghan Leibowitz, Curtis Ramsey
Secondary Paras	9:00-10:00	Ascend 1	Michelle Pappadia, Wayne Snyder, Geraldine Dorzin, Keith Williams, Yamenah Gills, Drema Bonavitacola, Phillip Cohen
Meeting TBD	10:00-11:00	Ascend 1	
	Lunch	BOE	
Curriculum Directors	12:00-1:00		Clarissa Evans, Caroline Walker, Kathy McKinley
E.S. APs	12:00-1:00		Danielle Shanks, Nigel LaRoche, Cheryl Santoni, Keith West, Connie Stahler, Liz Yankle, Dan Notari, Kathy Carter
E.S. Curriculum Coordinators	1:00-2:00		Fran Clay, Kay Sammons, Kim Eggborn, Amy Reese, Lisa Davis
Secondary A.Ps.	1:00-2:00		Choya Franklin, Mathias Bama, Brein Bashore, Amie Knox, Lisa Smith, Lucy Lublin, Stephanie Harden, Allen Cosentino
Secondary Curriculum Coordinators	2:00-3:00		Bill Barnes, Zeleana Morris, Mark Stout, Mary Weller, Carol Fritts,
Chief Accountability, data staff	2:00-3:00		Grace Chesney, Vasuki Rethinam, Yochanon Stein
and SSLT (DSE/DSS)	3:00-4:00		Patti Mackey, Debbie Misiag, Janet Zimmerman, Marcella Randall, Cindi Schulmeyer, Lisa Boarman, Restia Whitaker, Kerrie Wagaman **(IFs in 2 places?)**
Executive and Administrative Directors	3:00-4:00		Frank Eastham, Ebony Langford-Brown, Ron Morris, Eric Minus, Dave Bruzga
	Thursday, September 17, 2014		
Deputy Supt.	8:00-9:00		Linda Wise
Superintendent	9:00-10:00		Renee Foose
Exec. Dir. Of Sp. Ed. and Student Serv.	10:00-11:00		Patty Daley
Chief of Finance, Budget Staff	11:00-12:00		Camille Jones, Beverly Davis, David Phillips
	Lunch		
E.S. Principals	1:00-2:00		Jason McCoy, Bob Bruce, Michelle Leader, Pat Shifflett, Genee Varlack, Nancy Thompson, Ernesto Diaz, Kim Pratesi
Secondary Principals	2:00-3:00		Shiney John, Melissa Shindel, Rick Wilson, Robert Motely, Marcy Leonard, James Le Mon, David Burton, Addie Kaufman

Q1 I am:

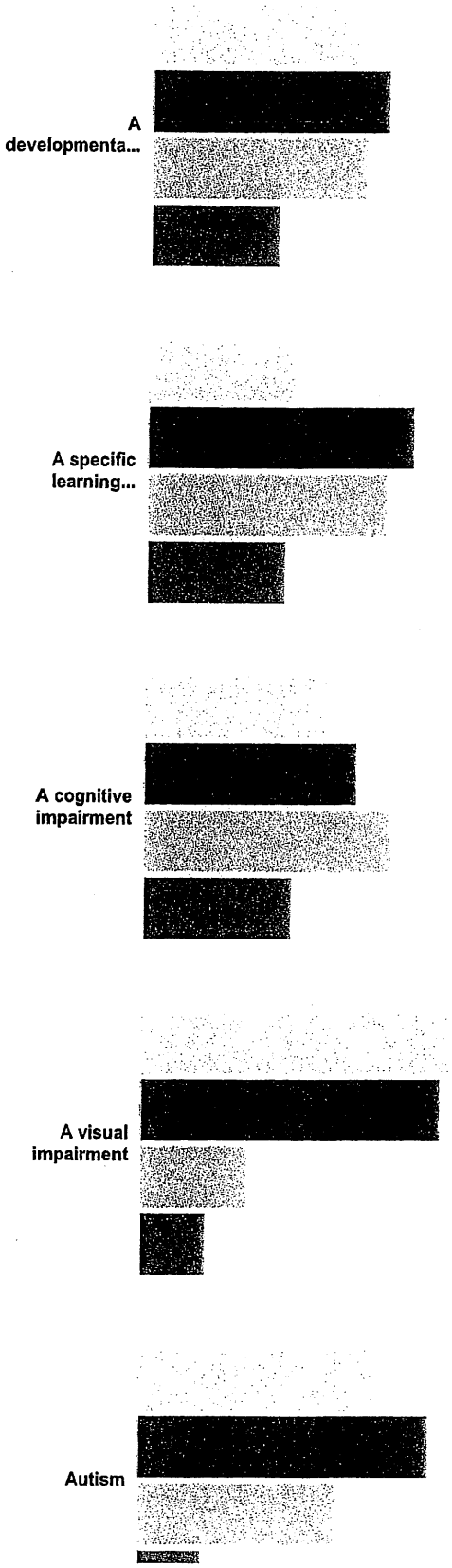
Answered: 288 Skipped: 14



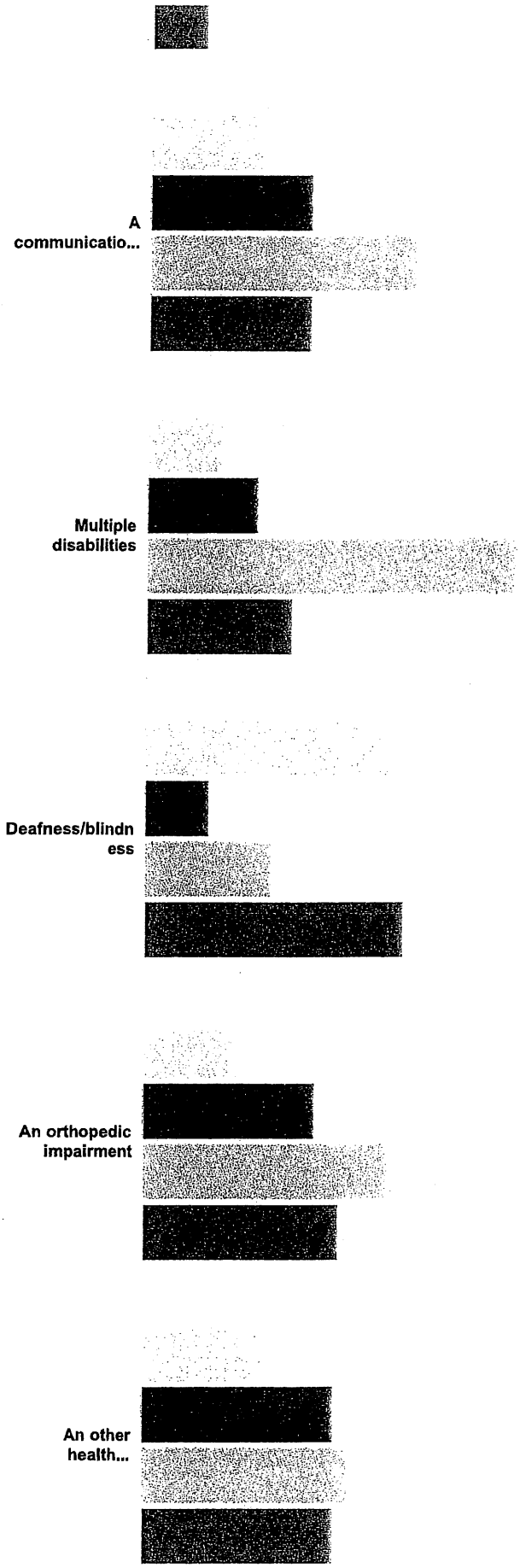
Answer Choices	Responses	
A parent of a student with special needs.	96.18%	277
Other (please specify)	3.82%	11
Total		**288**

Q2 My child has:

Answered: 273 Skipped: 28



Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey



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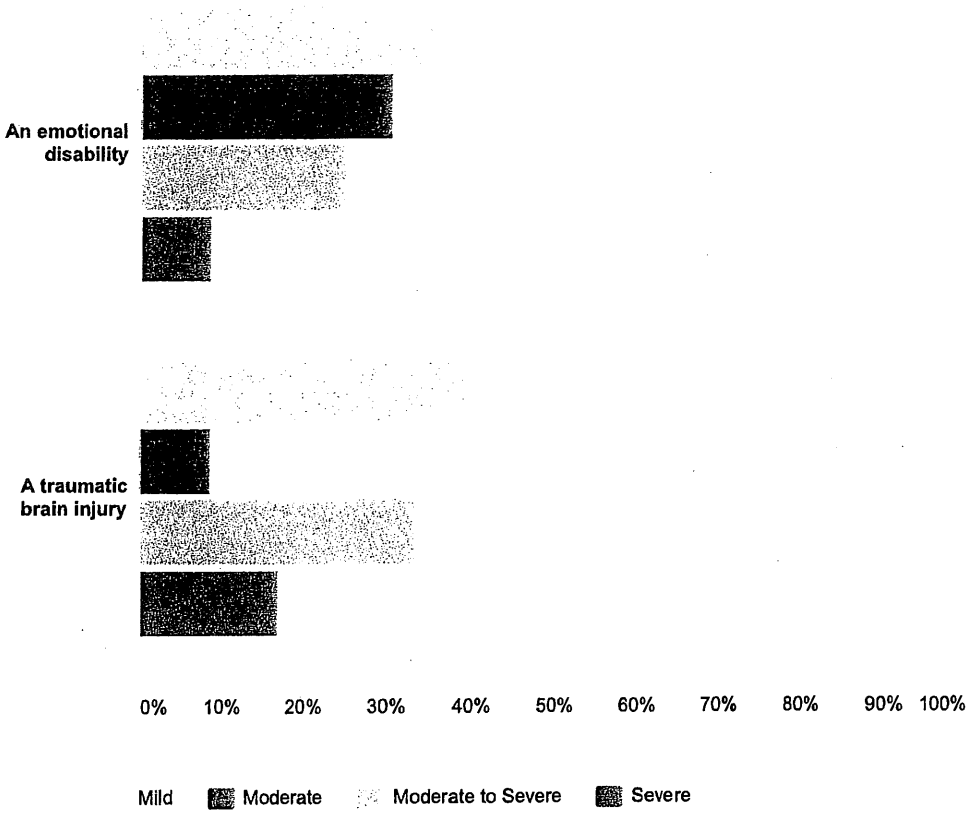
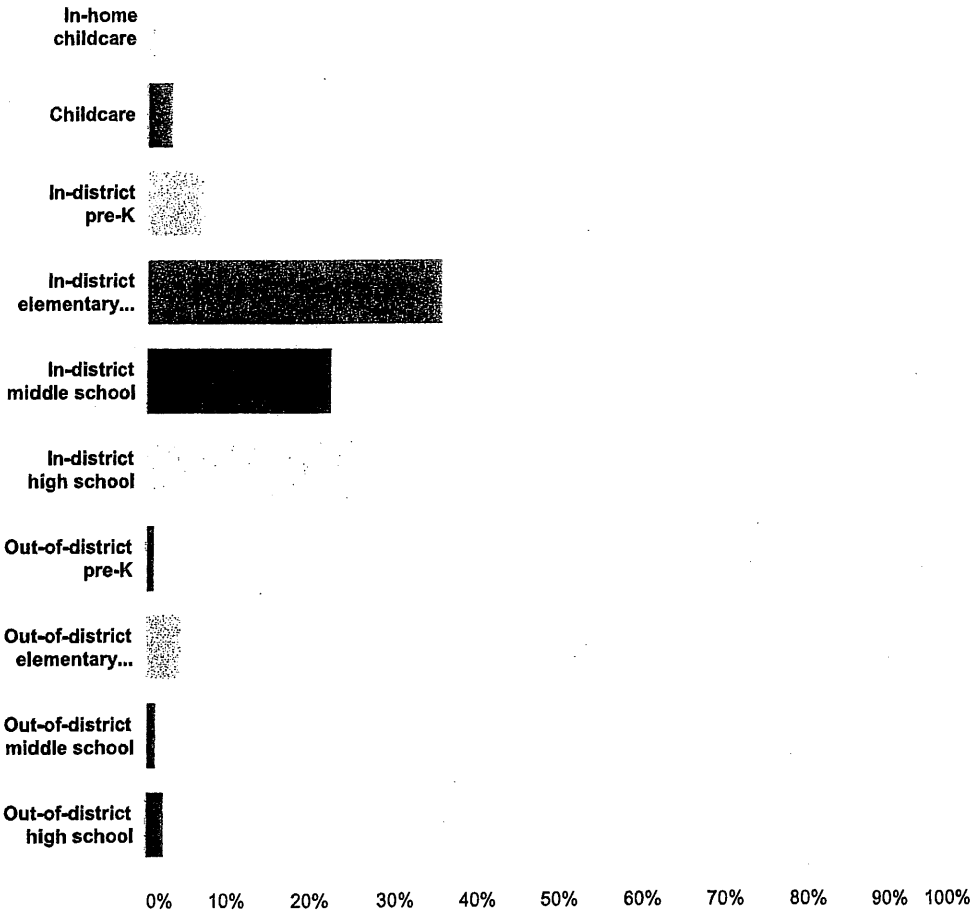


	Mild	Moderate	Moderate to Severe	Severe	Total
A developmental delay	**26.61%**	**29.84%**	**27.42%**	**16.13%**	
	33	37	34	20	124
A specific learning disability	**18.97%**	**33.62%**	**30.17%**	**17.24%**	
	22	39	35	20	116
A cognitive impairment	**23.26%**	**26.74%**	**31.40%**	**18.60%**	
	20	23	27	16	86
A visual impairment	**40.54%**	**37.84%**	**13.51%**	**8.11%**	
	15	14	5	3	37
Autism	**30.66%**	**36.50%**	**24.82%**	**8.03%**	
	42	50	34	11	137
A communication impairment (NOT speech only)	**16.22%**	**22.97%**	**37.84%**	**22.97%**	
	12	17	28	17	74
Multiple disabilities	**11.11%**	**15.87%**	**52.38%**	**20.63%**	
	7	10	33	13	63
Deafness/blindness	**36.36%**	**9.09%**	**18.18%**	**36.36%**	
	4	1	2	4	11
An orthopedic impairment	**13.79%**	**24.14%**	**34.48%**	**27.59%**	
	4	7	10	8	29
An other health impairment	**17.07%**	**26.83%**	**29.27%**	**26.83%**	
	7	11	12	11	41
An emotional disability	**36.11%**	**30.56%**	**25.00%**	**8.33%**	
	13	11	9	3	36

A traumatic brain injury	**41.67%**	**8.33%**	**33.33%**	**16.67%**	
	5	1	4	2	12

Q3 My child attends:

Answered: 296 Skipped: 6

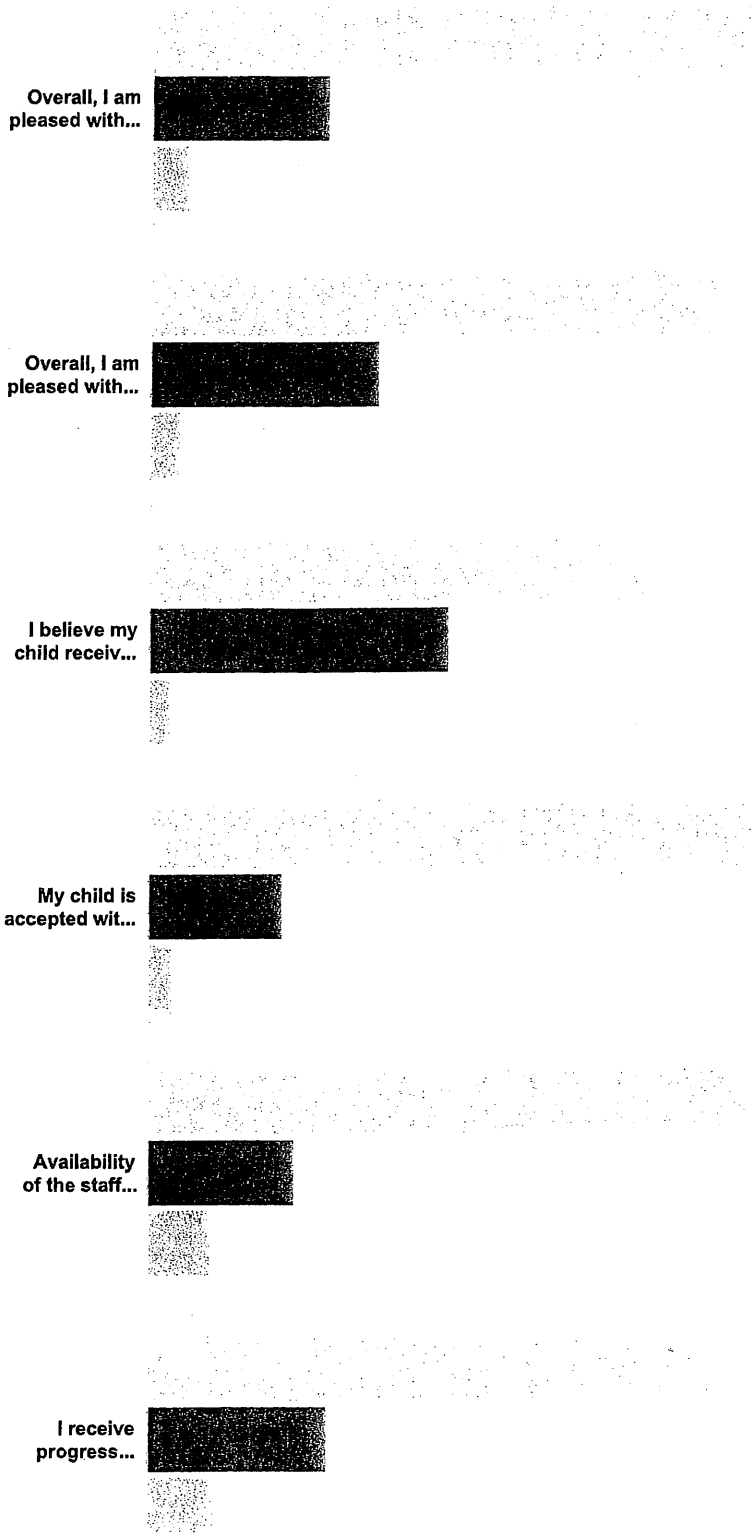


Answer Choices	Responses	
In-home childcare	1.35%	4
Childcare	3.04%	9
In-district pre-K	7.09%	21
In-district elementary school	35.47%	105
In-district middle school	22.30%	66
In-district high school	30.41%	90
Out-of-district pre-K	1.01%	3
Out-of-district elementary school	4.39%	13
Out-of-district middle school	1.35%	4
Out-of-district high school	2.36%	7

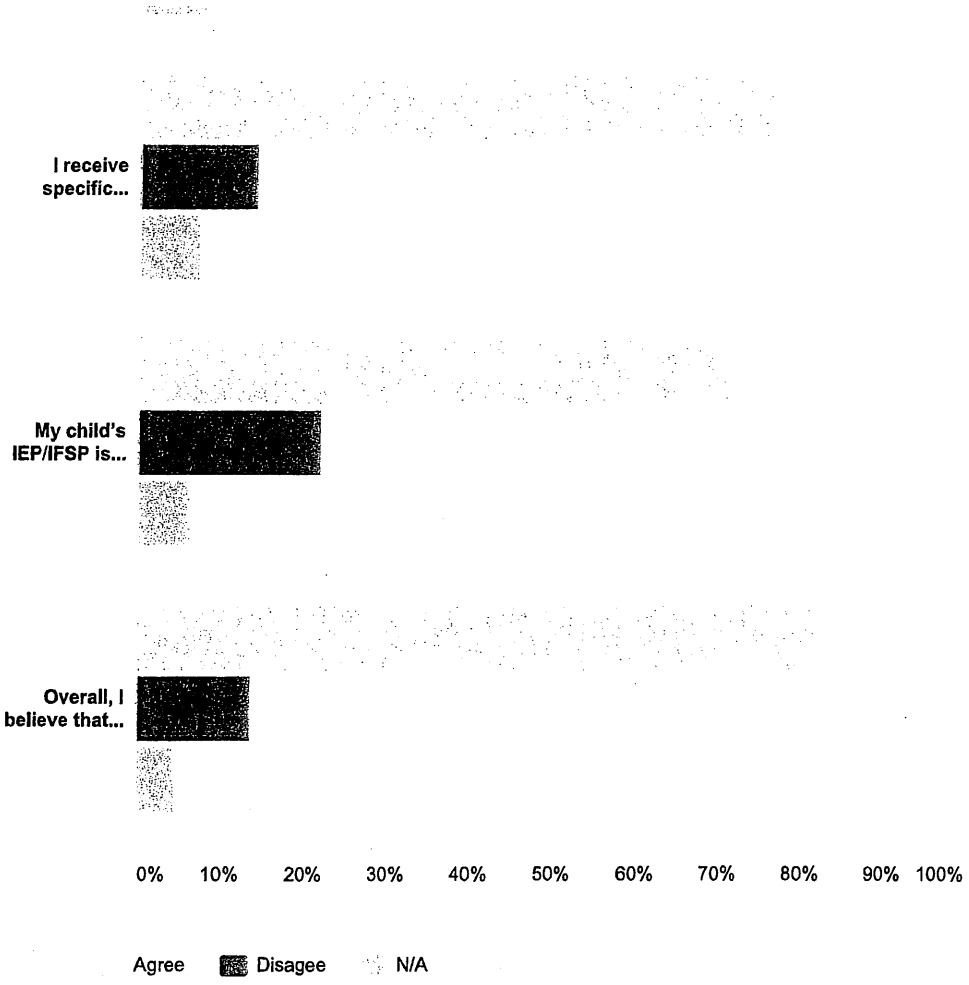
Total Respondents: 296

Q4 Which of the following statements concerning your child's education over the last 12 months do you generally agree with?

Answered: 256 Skipped: 47



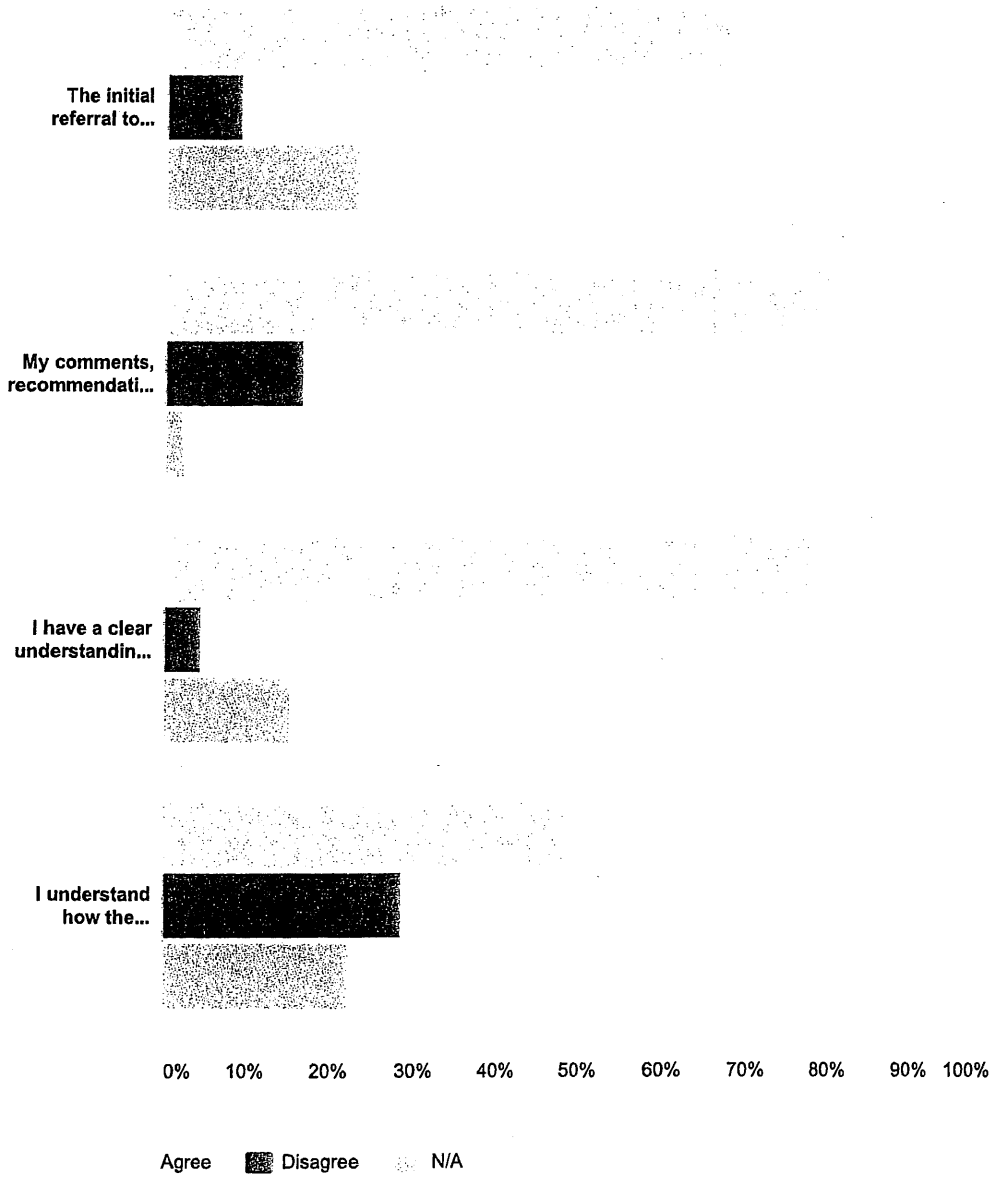
Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey



	Agree	Disagee	N/A	Total
Overall, I am pleased with the quality of my child's education as a student in the school district.	**74.30%**	**21.29%**	**4.42%**	
	185	53	11	249
Overall, I am pleased with the quality of the special education support and services my child receives.	**68.83%**	**27.53%**	**3.64%**	
	170	68	9	247
I believe my child receives the appropriate amount of special education services.	**61.69%**	**35.89%**	**2.42%**	
	153	89	6	248
My child is accepted within the school community.	**81.20%**	**16.00%**	**2.80%**	
	203	40	7	250
Availability of the staff and school schedule influences what services or the frequency of services my child receives.	**75.20%**	**17.48%**	**7.32%**	
	185	43	18	246
I receive progress reports and communication from my child's general education teacher.	**70.85%**	**21.46%**	**7.69%**	
	175	53	19	247
I receive specific information regarding progress towards meeting goals of the IEP at each progress marking period.	**79.44%**	**13.71%**	**6.85%**	
	197	34	17	248
My child's IEP/IFSP is implemented as specified in the document.	**72.13%**	**21.72%**	**6.15%**	
	176	53	15	244
Overall, I believe that my child benefits from the IEP/IFSP services, programs, and accommodations provided.	**82.11%**	**13.41%**	**4.47%**	
	202	33	11	246

Q5 Which of the following statements concerning the process of developing your child's IEP/IFSP do you generally agree with?

Answered: 252 Skipped: 50



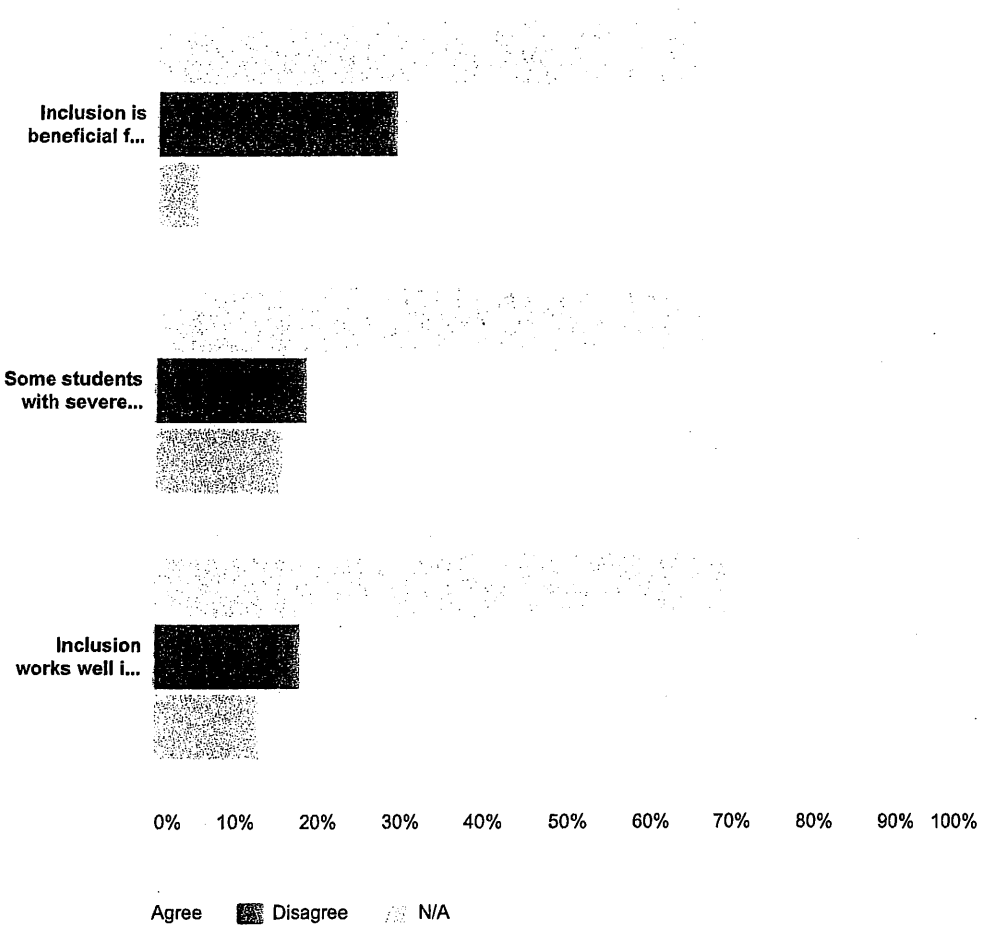
	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Total
The initial referral to infants and toddlers or special education was made at the appropriate time in my child's education.	**68.02%** 168	**8.91%** 22	**23.08%** 57	247
My comments, recommendations and/or concerns are considered when developing my child's IEP/IFSP each year.	**81.53%** 203	**16.47%** 41	**2.01%** 5	249

Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey

I have a clear understanding of why my child qualified for infants and toddlers or special education services.	**80.57%**	**4.45%**	**14.98%**	
	199	11	37	247
I understand how the IEP/IFSP team decides a student no longer needs special education services.	**49.39%**	**28.34%**	**22.27%**	
	122	70	55	247

Q6 Which of the following statements concerning inclusion for students on IEPs do you generally agree with?

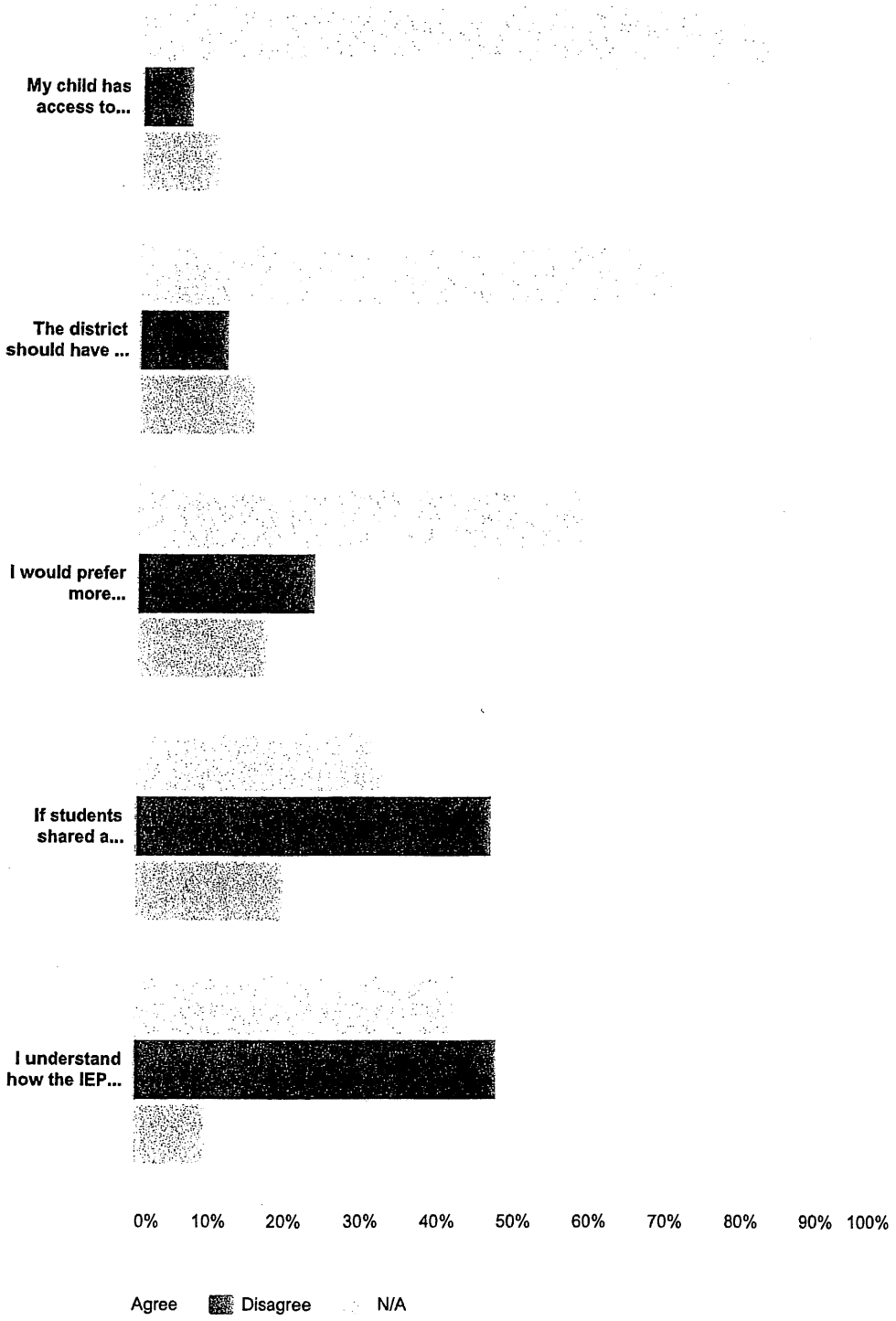
Answered: 259 Skipped: 52



	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Total
Inclusion is beneficial for all students with disabilities.	**65.98%**	**29.05%**	**4.98%**	
	159	70	12	241
Some students with severe disabilities might benefit from less inclusion than is the district's current practice.	**66.52%**	**18.26%**	**15.22%**	
	153	42	35	230
Inclusion works well in the district.	**69.96%**	**17.60%**	**12.45%**	
	163	41	29	233

Q7 Which of the following statements concerning paraprofessionals for students on IEPs do you generally agree with?

Answered: 245 Skipped: 57



	Agree	Disagree	N/A	Total

Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey

My child has access to paraprofessional support in at least one academic or social setting.	**83.33%**	**6.67%**	**10.00%**	
	200	16	24	240
The district should have a few more paraprofessionals.	**73.28%**	**11.64%**	**15.09%**	
	170	27	35	232
I would prefer more instruction from certified teachers and less from paraprofessionals.	**59.57%**	**23.40%**	**17.02%**	
	140	55	40	235
If students shared a paraprofessional, it would have a significant negative impact on their learning.	**33.33%**	**46.75%**	**19.91%**	
	77	108	46	231
I understand how the IEP team determines how much paraprofessional support a child requires.	**42.98%**	**47.66%**	**9.36%**	
	101	112	22	235

Q6 What aspects of special education (birth-21) in the district are you most pleased with?

Answered: 186 Skipped: 172

Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey

What aspects of special education (birth-21) in the district are you most pleased with?

Answer Options	Response Count
	180
answered question	180
skipped question	122

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Sep 19, 2014 9:00 PM	placement in some supported academic classrooms. placement in advanced math class meets child's skill level.
2	Sep 19, 2014 6:48 PM	Responsiveness of staff.
3	Sep 18, 2014 11:21 AM	The professional instructors, as well as the para educators, have a strong caring and compassionate nature which encourages students to try their best! They truly want the child to succeed.
4	Sep 17, 2014 2:39 PM	I am pleased that my daughter is included in her neighborhood school. I would not want my child's least restrictive environment to be in a separate school or regional program.
5	Sep 16, 2014 11:01 PM	Efforts at inclusion
6	Sep 16, 2014 10:15 PM	My child benefits greatly from inclusion in the classroom even though she has an [redacted] disability. However, I do not believe that inclusion is for all children.
7	Sep 16, 2014 4:51 PM	[redacted] both do a great job servicing their special needs kids. My child just entered 9th grade at [redacted], I will let you know how they do.
8	Sep 16, 2014 1:47 AM	The aspect of inclusion that allows my child to interact and learn with typical peers in a classroom and school setting. We are pleased with that on behalf of our "typical-peer" children as well who have the opportunity to learn from and with children with disabilities.
9	Sep 15, 2014 4:31 PM	Many years ago, the Infants and Toddlers program was research-based and designed to meet every child's specific needs.. I no longer know that is the case.
10	Sep 15, 2014 2:17 PM	It has been a constant struggle for us to just to ensure our child receives FAPE.
11	Sep 15, 2014 1:56 AM	willingness for the staff to work with parents input. Lots of available supports and services willingness to test and assess
12	Sep 15, 2014 1:06 AM	[redacted]
13	Sep 14, 2014 7:58 PM	Our new PALS special Ed teacher is wonderful. I love that I get detailed notes every visit.
14	Sep 14, 2014 6:50 PM	1. Early intervention Services

15	Sep 13, 2014 9:07 PM	In Howard County, I was very pleased with the special educators. The applied services immediately and if the IEP did not have that specific service, we hold a meeting to update the IEP. The general and special ed teachers worked together as a team and fully supported my son. The principal was supportive, caring and professional.
16	Sep 12, 2014 10:51 PM	None, as it relates to my child with a disability
17	Sep 12, 2014 5:45 PM	Small classes at [redacted] and hands on work opportunities most help my son with his educational needs.
18	Sep 12, 2014 12:09 PM	We have been pleased with how the elementary team worked with our son. They took the time to get to know him (and us) and found the right balance of push and accommodate that benefits him.
19	Sep 12, 2014 12:07 PM	Early childhood after that it goes downhill
20	Sep 11, 2014 7:46 PM	That the school is open to discussion, meeting with us, listening to our concerns and needs and works with us or tries to work with us.
21	Sep 11, 2014 1:09 AM	IEP process
22	Sep 10, 2014 7:03 PM	Exceptional teachers and MINC programs (previously at [redacted] and currently at [redacted]).
23	Sep 10, 2014 1:29 PM	I am pleased that our county has an aggressive inclusion program. I never would have been able to save my [redacted] child if we were not allowed to have him in regular classes from a young age, when he was still having substantial issues. I am not one of the folks who agrees with 100% inclusion it is not right for all children. However I have to say that without it, my child would be heading for a group home and working on life skills instead of collage. That being said the program is GROSSLY underfunded. My child has suffered substantial developmental and educational delays because schools are allowed to say class room teachers can meet the needs of Special Ed kids.
24	Sep 9, 2014 6:19 PM	The facility. [redacted] is a wonderful facility for helping/working with children with multiple developmental issues.
25	Sep 9, 2014 12:57 PM	The most support my son received was through Infants and Toddlers and Early Intervention services. He was born in [redacted]. Also, he made significant progress during his elementary school years at [redacted]. We were very pleased with the resources available at the location.
26	Sep 9, 2014 10:37 AM	Regular daily communications
27	Sep 8, 2014 3:20 PM	The data that has been collected over the past 3 years in the area of reading and the in-depth formal assessments that were completed for my child.
28	Sep 7, 2014 10:16 AM	Inclusion in all day school
29	Sep 7, 2014 2:19 AM	My son enjoys school and loves working with the general education teachers.
30	Sep 6, 2014 3:47 PM	I have been pleased at the willingness to put proper accommodations on paper when the County level Special Education staff has been involved.
31	Sep 6, 2014 1:11 PM	The appropriate goals set for the individual child.
32	Sep 6, 2014 12:13 PM	Very happen with inclusion.
33	Sep 6, 2014 2:07 AM	The quality and concern of the teachers. The amount of services available.

34	Sep 6, 2014 1:39 AM	I am please with the speech and occupational therapy services provided. I am also pleased with the inclusion practices but wish there was more support to make this much more effective.
35	Sep 6, 2014 12:24 AM	I like that there are seminars to support the regular subjects.
36	Sep 5, 2014 11:24 PM	Overall, Howard County has a supportive view point in providing special education services and tries to pursue best practices. Some special education staff have been great to work with and have really helped my child make progress and worked well with us as parents to support our child. However, there are a few spec ed staff members that we have encountered (in a range of positions) that are not easy to work with and/or have hindered progress.
37	Sep 5, 2014 9:26 PM	I am most pleased by the dedication and knowledge of the special educators (teachers, paras, student assistants) that work with my child. They work very hard to do what is best for the student with the resources that they are given. They show genuine care and I believe they want to help my child be successful.
38	Sep 5, 2014 5:46 PM	[redacted] School has done a phenomenal job with my son. The team has worked with my husband and I extremely well, fully respecting, asking for, and incorporating our input. They have been wonderful. They have been creative and flexible.
39	Sep 5, 2014 12:34 AM	extra therapies, o.t., speech
40	Sep 4, 2014 11:32 PM	overall communication and availability/support of school staff
41	Sep 4, 2014 9:11 PM	The inclusion of special ed students in all aspects of education.
42	Sep 4, 2014 9:04 PM	Special educators at [redacted]
43	Sep 4, 2014 8:43 PM	The team effort and support that they provide.
44	Sep 4, 2014 8:29 PM	My son's placement at [redacted] for 2 years was the best thing that ever happened to him.
45	Sep 4, 2014 7:54 PM	My child just transitioned to middle school from elementary school. In elementary school, he received a lot of support from the entire team and was very well looked after. Currently, I'm not at all happy with the transition to a different set of providers/teachers and the lack of communication from one school to the next. I feel like I'm starting over and my son is wasting his time at school while everyone gets organized and sets up meetings.
46	Sep 4, 2014 5:12 PM	being brought into a much smaller group for reading, which is the subject my daughter struggles with the most.
47	Sep 4, 2014 3:28 PM	Summer program
48	Sep 4, 2014 2:56 PM	Howard County needs educators that are more experienced and understanding of children with [redacted]. Our kids look "typical", so when they inevitably behave in an atypical manner, they need to be understood and dealt with patience. Some of them will need redirection or behavioral intervention, but the educators need to remember that the child is actually SOMEONE'S CHILD, the child is loved, the child is treasured--there needs to be more empathy (I dont think this is a global problem of all educators, it's limited to probably a few educators in every school)
49	Sep 4, 2014 1:42 PM	Diagnosis and access to service; opportunity for inclusion in neighborhood school; disability awareness within the school building.

50	Sep 4, 2014 12:52 PM	Quick response from the teachers and school regarding questions or concerns with my daughter's placement, classes, homework, organization needs, peer issues, accommodation needs, other executive functioning issues
51	Sep 4, 2014 12:34 PM	As a parent, I feel that the education team at my son's school values my input and truly wants to team with my family to execute the best possible plan to help my son reach his maximum potential. I hear those exact sentiments, both regularly and unsolicited, from nearly every member of his education team - from his para- and general-educators, right up through the principal of the school.
52	Sep 4, 2014 4:07 AM	This county's program seems to be the most effective program available for my son.
53	Sep 4, 2014 2:51 AM	The services my son has received at [redacted] have been excellent; he has done well with the social and academic supports.
54	Sep 4, 2014 2:30 AM	Our team communicates to us pretty well.
55	Sep 4, 2014 1:38 AM	Elementary level
56	Sep 3, 2014 10:30 PM	Support staff, make sure goals are met.
57	Sep 3, 2014 9:01 PM	The Infants and Toddlers program and the preschool Special education teams have been wonderful and and are very strong; the elementary special education team has proved to be somewhat weak...
58	Sep 3, 2014 6:22 PM	Every bit of the Special Education department/services & all the para-educators our daughter has had and currently has are wonderful!
59	Sep 3, 2014 5:28 PM	My child has just started. I do not have any aspects at this time.
60	Sep 3, 2014 4:34 PM	The support to families and students, the knowledge of therapists, the inclusion of students, the inclusion of families in the IEP process, the in-class support given to those who need it
61	Sep 3, 2014 4:23 PM	I have been very pleased with the ability of the teachers and their interest in my child being successful.
62	Sep 3, 2014 4:02 PM	I am pleased with the initial meetings and discussions regarding the IEP.
63	Sep 3, 2014 4:01 PM	[redacted] School
64	Sep 3, 2014 3:47 PM	Communication at IEP mtgs, understanding of sp ed teachers and team leaders of the importance of parental input.
65	Sep 3, 2014 3:30 PM	Between the ages of birth to 5/6 years old.
66	Sep 3, 2014 3:11 PM	It is a negative, stigmatizing experience for my child.
67	Sep 3, 2014 2:59 PM	None
68	Sep 3, 2014 2:52 PM	Since my child started in infant and toddlers and is now in High School I have seen if you advocate for your child the system will work but only if you self advocate. Elementary and Middle school were horrible but the team at [redacted] is just amazing. If we had them through out our journey in special ed it would have been so much different. [redacted] really wants the best for your child along with [redacted] and the guidance counselors. I am most pleased that we are finally in a school with a good team. It makes such a difference when they all work together with you. The teachers there too. Very accepting and we are all on the same page.
69	Sep 3, 2014 2:04 PM	The love and care of the actual individuals who work with my child.

70	Sep 3, 2014 1:56 PM	The attention and help that my child has recieved has been outstanding. All that have been involved with our time in special education are truly dedicated, caring, professional and loving people.
71	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 PM	Caring special educators Access to tools and resource materials for students and educatiors
72	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 PM	Every teacher, helper and anyone within the school system who works with my son have been and are such caring people. They involve us in his IEP and treat him with such respect. The chosen staff are just amazing.
73	Sep 3, 2014 1:43 PM	Inclusion, the IEP process, the special education teachers
74	Sep 3, 2014 1:33 PM	county has the strong program
75	Sep 3, 2014 1:16 PM	Inclusion and having enough ppl to assist my child.
76	Sep 3, 2014 12:52 PM	Communication between the family and the team.
77	Sep 3, 2014 11:53 AM	Quality of education, facilities, staff
78	Sep 3, 2014 9:09 AM	The amount of Paraeducator support our son receives.
79	Sep 3, 2014 8:48 AM	Elementary and middle schools did a great job. However high school is another story.
80	Sep 3, 2014 3:51 AM	Early childhood
81	Sep 3, 2014 2:23 AM	[redacted] has great facilities
82	Sep 3, 2014 2:20 AM	My son loves school, he is very happy to be with his age peers, instead of being isolated. He is getting a adaptive PE and very happy with it.
83	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 AM	Professionals
84	Sep 3, 2014 1:40 AM	Early detection; level of services and commitments from teachers and staff
85	Sep 3, 2014 1:36 AM	The EL and E-PL programs are outstanding for Ho Co and we're very fortunate our son qualified for them. This is a unique program and it has helped our son SO much. The ability to include his learning with typical peers, but also find IST time, is absolutely perfect for his learning style, and his progress shows it.
86	Sep 3, 2014 1:28 AM	Experienced, knowledgeable, qualified special education staff. The type of services and support offered to my child. Organized processes, met many hard working and caring individuals.
87	Sep 3, 2014 1:25 AM	Inclusion and the staff [redacted] rocks!
88	Sep 3, 2014 1:21 AM	office of special education information seminars
89	Sep 3, 2014 1:00 AM	There a special educator in classroom versus not in classroom
90	Sep 3, 2014 12:38 AM	good communication with our high school case manager
91	Sep 3, 2014 12:32 AM	I like that there are time limits set during the initial testing process. Overall the support from the Guidance Department is outstanding!!
92	Sep 3, 2014 12:16 AM	My child reach her goal. And pass the seventh grade with high grades. I think they did an excellence job teaching and supporting my child.
93	Sep 3, 2014 12:13 AM	It feels seamless in the classroom. The kids in my child's school just take it in stride, and often offer to help as well.
94	Sep 3, 2014 12:07 AM	Staff are welcoming to my child

95	Sep 3, 2014 12:06 AM	We just moved to the area, so my answers are based on the IEP support services we have received via the Department of Defense Dependent School (DODDS) system. Any N/A response is due to the fact that we have not leveraged our county's school's IEP support system to the extent required to provide significant input to this survey.
96	Sep 2, 2014 11:47 PM	I like the fact that my daughter have the inclusive with the pre-k in her new school district. I am pleased with the new SLP who is certified on prompt and I know she will get my daughter speech back.
97	Sep 2, 2014 10:27 PM	Development of the IEP - meetings to develop and implement have been very good
98	Sep 2, 2014 10:23 PM	I am please with the schools ability to assist in transition.
99	Sep 2, 2014 10:19 PM	The precise direction and attention my child is receiving in preK. They also are able to assist me with advice for home as well as tips and tools.
100	Sep 2, 2014 10:05 PM	Personal care and concern his teachers and special ed instructors have shown my son.
101	Sep 2, 2014 10:04 PM	I can't say my wife and I are pleased with any aspect of the special education program at this point. I have one child that's a year behind and needs to be reaccessed and another that has been moved to a different school because his home school's special education program lacked the proper resources for a positive learning environment.
102	Sep 2, 2014 9:29 PM	individual special education instructors
103	Sep 2, 2014 9:16 PM	I am pleased for the most part with communication with the special education teacher.
104	Sep 2, 2014 8:57 PM	Collaboration. When my child was in Elementary school, they collaborated very well. We shall see for Middle school.
105	Sep 2, 2014 8:39 PM	My childs special educatio teacher
106	Sep 2, 2014 8:38 PM	Psychological and Special Educational support team.

107	Sep 2, 2014 8:34 PM	I wasn't at all pleased with my son's special education until he started [redacted]. His team has been fantastic providing my son with the accommodations necessary for him to learn both academically and socially. Unlike the previous school, his team listens to me and treats my son and me with respect. They keep in constant communication and he did very well in the contained classroom with his teacher (1;1). [redacted] was extremely knowledgeable about all of [redacted] diagnoses and did a suburb job "reading" him. She responded quickly to his nonverbal cues and prevented him shutting down by taking him for a walk or stopping a subject that he was having difficulty with and changing to something else. She was always giving him positive reinforcement and knew exactly how to handle him. She obviously has had experience with children like my son and because of her varied ways to teach him and test his knowledge of the material made my son feel proud of his accomplishments. He bonded with [redacted] and tried his hardest to make her proud of him. Best of all, she taught [redacted] at HIS pace. She needs to be commended for truly caring about children like my son and the way she will go above and beyond to build their self-esteem and help them learn the material.
108	Sep 2, 2014 8:32 PM	Early identification of students needing services and referrals to appropriate service providers. Quality and responsiveness of IFSP service providers ([redacted] SLP, [redacted] OT and [redacted] PT).
109	Sep 2, 2014 8:26 PM	The support from multiple aspects of my child's education. OT to speech to reading etc.
110	Sep 2, 2014 8:19 PM	Attention
111	Sep 2, 2014 8:16 PM	We have encountered a few teachers who have tried to be helpful.
112	Sep 2, 2014 8:10 PM	Age 4 to 5th grade
113	Sep 2, 2014 7:57 PM	The Special education teachers at the elementary school, and now at the middle school have been so pleasant. They really listened at the IEP meetings.
114	Sep 2, 2014 7:50 PM	Access to a wide variety of support professionals, and a school management team that focuses on making sure SE students are successful.
115	Sep 2, 2014 7:45 PM	Services in RECC years were excellent, really tailored to child. As kids get older there is a movement to reduce services that is not connected to child's needs.
116	Sep 2, 2014 7:39 PM	Support that is received
117	Sep 2, 2014 7:33 PM	Each year I find that there are SOME members of the IEP team who really make the effort, look at my child and his specific needs, genuinely care and work with families in the best interest of the child, with open and honest communication.
118	Sep 2, 2014 7:32 PM	The availability to talk with staff who support my son. Their kindness and willingness to help
119	Sep 2, 2014 7:29 PM	The infants and toddlers program Pre-K program was the best. Low 3 to 1 student to teacher ratio was extremely helpful.
120	Sep 2, 2014 7:21 PM	I like the seminar classes in [redacted] in 9 and 10th grades. Why don't they offer it in 11th grade!!!!
121	Sep 2, 2014 7:13 PM	student to teacher ratio--however, I think this has more to do with our school's population and enrollment numbers over the strength of the special ed department.

122	Sep 2, 2014 7:13 PM	[redacted] school has far surpassed any expectations I had! [redacted] has been a God send! this school knows what inclusion means, and have been more than accommodating to our family. [redacted] is an amazing teacher. I feel my son is safe and happy in this school :)
123	Sep 2, 2014 7:09 PM	work programs
124	Sep 2, 2014 7:08 PM	His case manager was usually very effective
125	Sep 2, 2014 7:05 PM	The paraeducators I have dealt with do seem to care about my child.
126	Sep 2, 2014 6:49 PM	- The professionalism of the staff is remarkable. - Feedback is timely and informative. - The expertise and skillsets of the staff is outstanding. - The staff has anticipated potential issues, rather than function from a reactionary stance only.
127	Sep 2, 2014 6:49 PM	The support from pre-school age and elementary school was very good. Middle school has been more difficult.
128	Sep 2, 2014 6:40 PM	I am grateful for all the wonderful support my child has received throughout her educational career. I have been most pleased with services in elementary school.
129	Sep 2, 2014 6:38 PM	I believe in the general philosophy of the Office of Special Education. All students can learn and students learn best when they spend more time in the general education setting.
130	Sep 2, 2014 6:28 PM	Specialized instruction, inclusion
131	Sep 2, 2014 6:27 PM	The quality of the teachers and the communication they have with me.
132	Sep 2, 2014 6:27 PM	Was most pleased with the preschool and RECC program.
133	Sep 2, 2014 6:18 PM	The special educator tries to keep on topic with typical peers while bringing the work to the child's developmental level.
134	Sep 2, 2014 6:17 PM	Columbia
135	Sep 2, 2014 6:13 PM	The teachers and staff are very nice.
136	Sep 2, 2014 6:02 PM	We have generally been pleased with the quality and knowledge of special education teachers and speech-language pathologists.
137	Sep 2, 2014 6:01 PM	Teachers and all staff are very caring and work hard with my child.
138	Sep 2, 2014 5:58 PM	Once we pass the battle of getting the child diagnosed, obtaining an IEP was not as painful. The IEP team I work with in my child's school is easy to work with.
139	Sep 2, 2014 5:57 PM	The inclusion of my child, who is a non-diploma bound student into the general education curriculum.
140	Sep 2, 2014 5:56 PM	the time and attention the teachers and special education professionals give to each student.
141	Sep 2, 2014 5:56 PM	We have worked with many great special educators who are dedicated to the students.
142	Sep 2, 2014 5:55 PM	Communication
143	Sep 2, 2014 5:55 PM	Now in High School and looking back - Infants & Toddlers was our best experience.
144	Sep 2, 2014 5:53 PM	We are new to the district. I do not feel that my child has been in the district long enough for me to formulate an opinion.

145	Sep 2, 2014 5:52 PM	collaborative funding program, RECC program, and teachers/staff (are knowledgeable and well trained in [redacted])
146	Sep 2, 2014 5:50 PM	I was pleased with services in elementary school. Middle school thus far has been a nightmare.
147	Sep 2, 2014 5:46 PM	My experience with the special ed teachers at [redacted] where phenomenal!!! They really cared on the progress of my son. Their time and dedications was exceptional.
148	Sep 2, 2014 5:43 PM	My son being taught by a certified special ed teacher who had experience with [redacted], [redacted] and severe [redacted]. She was very alert to his body language and knew when to give him a break and/or stop teaching the current material and moving on to something else. In doing this, she kept his attention and prevented him from becoming withdrawn or raging.
149	Sep 2, 2014 5:40 PM	Early intervention is great. Late elementary to middle school is tough. The transition was difficult.
150	Sep 2, 2014 5:40 PM	The best thing that ever happened for my [redacted] son was when the elementary school vice principal began to handpick his classroom teacher. It wasn't necessarily the most senior teacher; it was the one who had the right personality to best reach him. The best thing that ever happened for my [redacted] son was when the middle school guidance counselor and psychologist arranged for him to have a study period. Because even though he's extremely bright, it does take him longer to do things. He had become overwhelmed by [redacted] until the study period was arranged for him.
151	Sep 2, 2014 5:39 PM	The time that the staff and faculty take to get to know our son and his needs. I believe that this is very school and person specific, and does not apply across the board in the school system.
152	Sep 2, 2014 5:39 PM	My son has had a wonderful Professionals and he moved from a MINC toddler to a middle school student who is in all GT classes. This school system made my child successful and independent.
153	Sep 2, 2014 5:38 PM	The proactive engagement of teachers to make my son's experience beneficial. The staff really take a personal interest in helping my son achieve his potential.
154	Sep 2, 2014 5:38 PM	I am generally pleased with the "special education system" so to speak, but I find that the current systems and personnel do relatively little to address the primary concern for parents of children on the [redacted], which is in the social interaction and social engagement area. My kids are going through school without developing deep friendships, and have been targets of bullies. We have even had teachers over-focus on our children's self-management in class on days when we and other parents have been invited to sit in. So much so that in one case, students were verbally admonishing our child who was doing very little but struggling to manage to sit still. I feel the teacher needs to be well aware that the student may have challenges, and while he/she may speak to the student about it, they should discourage the neuro-typical peer students from parroting the teacher's corrective remarks and guidance. Otherwise, so many people are barking corrections at the child that he becomes overwhelmed and the problem can't improve.

155	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	Positive focus on inclusive practices Thorough meeting and review process Quality of psychological testing (by some school psychologists) Open dialogue with parents and community members - Special Education leadership is available and willing to engage
156	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	The amount of time spent with my son individually by his teacher and the different therapists.
157	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	We are pleased with the strong reading and writing supports that our son has gained over the last three years. He went from being well below reading and writing level in Q1 of third grade to being on-grade-level reading and writing in Q3 of fifth grade. He also earned the Advanced Level in Reading on the Maryland School Assessment. As I understand from the counselor, that is somewhat rare.
158	Sep 2, 2014 5:32 PM	extra class at hs level to assist in hw and concepts learned that day...
159	Sep 2, 2014 5:32 PM	elementary
160	Sep 2, 2014 5:31 PM	I am pleased that my child has had the opportunity to attend top schools in the district. I was extremely pleased with the progress that he made at [redacted] School.
161	Sep 2, 2014 5:31 PM	I appreciate the needed supports my child finally received. The close-adult supervision has made it possible for my child to learn and excel both academically and socially.
162	Sep 2, 2014 5:30 PM	We are having a positive experience at [redacted] School, where all students are valued and treated like part of the community. The principal sets an inclusive tone and the staff follows the lead. Our student is challenged academically and active in all aspects of high school life.
163	Sep 2, 2014 5:29 PM	I like that my child feels fully included in her 5th grade class while still receiving special education services within the confines of her grade's pod. The school wide system of reading groups sets it up so that in my child's mind this is just her reading group (math group, etc) and no different from any other group.
164	Sep 2, 2014 5:28 PM	the availability of the regional program at [redacted] has probably made the difference between a successful, enriching educational experience and one in which my child barely "got by" -- the educators and administrators have been completely open and transparent about the IEP process and the classroom challenges, as well as being open and welcoming...we really couldn't have asked for a better experience for our child.
165	Sep 2, 2014 5:28 PM	My middle schoolchild was denied an IEP until he entered middle school. I have a younger son with the same issues and he has been denied an IEP at the same elementary school [redacted]). My middle schooler has has more support in middle school, but they are constantly trying to downgrade the IEP at [redacted]. Howard County does not support students with [redacted] well at all. I am very unhappy with the complete lack of support at [redacted] (his G/T math teacher wants to just get him out of her class because she does not understand his challenges and does not want any extra work. I am waiting for my son to transition to [redacted] where I feel he will finally receive support.

166	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	So far our middle school experience has been okay. Can't comment on high school yet. The fact that we had many of the same team members (paraeducators) in 7th and 8th grade has made for an easier transition into 8th grade.
167	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	continuity, individual care, availability of services
168	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	The attention received and the specialists that she encountered in elementary school
169	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	I am pleased with the individualized plan created for my child. It appears to be working but there is still a long way to go.
170	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	Collaborative funding
171	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	My ability to communicate one-on-one with my son's education providers
172	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	The majority of the Special Ed staff in the County are incredibly dedicated.
173	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	Our child's teachers are in constant contact with us regarding our child's progress, conduct and other issues. They take into account all of our concerns and desired outcomes for our child and incorporate them into the IEP and class schedule.
174	Sep 2, 2014 5:25 PM	I am pleased that I have not had to "fight" for my daughter to be included in her zone school with peers without disabilities; her placement was never questioned.
175	Sep 2, 2014 5:25 PM	The willingness of the team to think outside the box. Also to take my child's feelings and wishes into account when deciding a course of action. The communication we as parents have with the school is wonderful and I don't hesitate to contact them with there is an issue.
176	Sep 2, 2014 5:24 PM	I am pleased so far after just one week of school for my son who just started [redacted] School. So far this school seems to be much better equipped than his elementary school to track and help kids with learning disabilities. It remains to be seen if he can keep his academic progress going..
177	Sep 2, 2014 5:22 PM	That the professional is involved with our child's success in the program and monitors his progress with his teachers.
178	Sep 2, 2014 5:22 PM	The teachers and therapists are great and well informed. They always respond quickly to emails.
179	Sep 2, 2014 5:20 PM	I am new to the district and state, so I am not well-versed on the services yet. I hope to have a meeting soon.
180	Sep 2, 2014 5:20 PM	In home care.

Q3 If the district could make one or two changes to better meet the needs of students with special needs, we should ...

Answered: 186 Skipped: 110

Howard County Public Schools Special Education Parent Survey

If the district could make one or two changes to better meet the needs of students with special needs, we should ...

Answer Options	Response Count
	186
answered question	186
skipped question	116

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Sep 19, 2014 9:00 PM	provide feedback from school psychologist services. (My child receives [redacted] minutes weekly, but I don't know what transpires during those thirty minutes.)
2	Sep 18, 2014 11:21 AM	We had an excellent teaching staff working with our child. We were pleased with every aspect of her education.
3	Sep 17, 2014 2:39 PM	Make sure that general education teachers are responsible for educating our children and that principals should be held accountable to the central special education team.
4	Sep 16, 2014 11:01 PM	Realize that not every student will gain a diploma
5	Sep 16, 2014 10:15 PM	make sure that staffing is based not only on service hours, but understanding the degree of support that each child needs. Staff are often spread too thin because on paper the hours appear to be covered but in reality some child is missing out. In addition, prior to the first day of school, or shortly there after, parents and the special ed team should meet to discuss expectations so that the first month of school isn't wasted. Also, for those children where communication is an issue, it is important for the educators to realize that important information presented in class is not going to be filtered home by the child and further information is needed for completion of assignments (ie. class notes and details of assignments). It is very frustrating to be a parent who cares and always feel like you need more information.
6	Sep 16, 2014 4:51 PM	Provide all teacher who have a special needs child in their classroom additional support, a para or an intervention teacher. The teacher should not be without additional support in the classroom.
7	Sep 16, 2014 1:47 AM	Continue and strengthen the excellent course that the district is on. We moved here in part because of the specific services our child would receive and have been more than thrilled in what we have found in HCPSS. They celebrate our child, encourage his development and learning and are meeting him where he is. They have also emphasized that they do not (and we should not) underestimate our child. Please do not lessen the support for special needs services or turn away from the important principle of inclusion learning.

8	Sep 15, 2014 4:31 PM	Hire and train more special education resource teachers and paraprofessionals, especially at the middle school level. Decide inclusion based on student needs, not on availability of staffing as seems to be the current practice.
9	Sep 15, 2014 2:17 PM	Increase resources and provide staff with appropriate training and be held accountable. More transparency from the top down
10	Sep 15, 2014 1:56 AM	More one on one support in general ed classes for those special needs children. More modified testing and work
11	Sep 15, 2014 1:06 AM	Get students more help before they start failing and are turned off to school. My [redacted] son started shutting down in middle school, in 6th grade, but because he was still passing (C's and D's), he was considered to be doing OK. I spent $15,000 on psychologists, social skills groups, tutors and medicine each year, plus 2 hours a night helping with homework, so he would pass middle school. When we asked about [redacted], we were told that he wasn't failing so he wasn't eligible. Not until I fired the tutor, ended the social skills group, etc. and watched my son fail 2 semesters in 9th grade did they move him to [redacted]. By then he was anti-school. He has been at [redacted] 2 1/2 years and is finally doing better. It's such a shame he had to fall so far before he could get the help he needed.
12	Sep 14, 2014 6:50 PM	1. Increase speech and language support for special needs students needing this services
13	Sep 13, 2014 9:07 PM	Although my child needed the support of a nonpublic, it would have been great if there was a calming room at the local school to allow the time needed to help calm my child. Encourage the Nonpublic Services & Sp.Ed Compliance to focus on the needs of the child and [redacted] personal and subjective opinions about nonpublic schools. Her demeanor has been consistently condescending and because of her I will have every CIEP meeting tape recorded. While the teacher's are top--notch, the technology is not. I would LOVE to more UDL and use of smartboards.
14	Sep 12, 2014 10:51 PM	Consider how we can help this child live independently one day and not treat the child punitively when he or she manifests the symptoms of his or her disability.
15	Sep 12, 2014 5:45 PM	At a certain point, the HPCSS should abandon attachment to "curriculum" and focus on vocational and life skills for certain special needs students. Also, while curriculum is involved, much more emphasis on "mapping" curriculum to their vocational and life skills essences is a critical part of how teachers can help special needs children benefit from curriculum-based teaching. Teachers are currently not focused on doing this nor are they trained on how to do it. Please contact me if you desire more specifics here. [redacted]
16	Sep 12, 2014 12:09 PM	Provide [redacted] training to school administrators. If they don't "get" it, the teachers working for them don't feel like they have to either. I highly recommend some training at the middle school level as that has been a huge problem for us and it's only been two weeks.
17	Sep 12, 2014 12:07 PM	Realize that inclusion isn't for all! Have access to Smart Boards..
18	Sep 11, 2014 7:46 PM	If a child is newly diagnosed, the school or district would benefit parents by providing resources outside of the school i.e., parent support groups, special needs turtoring, special needs baby sitting, just as much info they can offer.

19	Sep 11, 2014 3:43 PM	The district needs to provide children with the [redacted] disability of [redacted] with intervention by fully certified orten-gillingham or OG based programs practitioners. If Howard County would not allow teachers to teach if they did not complete college and all other requirements, then the teachers providing intervention to our [redacted] students should be fully educated and certified in that intervention program.
20	Sep 11, 2014 1:09 AM	Provide a process to ensure that teachers are aware of and implement 504 plans before the child asks for the service.
21	Sep 10, 2014 7:03 PM	Make the ESY program longer during and change the school year to year-round attendance.
22	Sep 10, 2014 1:29 PM	1. More trained professionals working with SE kids. My child receives virtually NO time with a trained special educator to work on IEP objectives. It is left to class room teachers (with 20-30 kids) and Aids (with many different titles and usually no training). Ask parents questions about the services there children receive each year and have that data go to the county SE by school. 2.Stop resetting IEP goals before the schools are forced to admit they are not being met. Every report card it is the same thing. "making adequate progress to meet objective" even if it is not true. Than before the end of the cycle there is a new IEP meeting the goals are refined and we never see that the old goals were not met.

23	Sep 9, 2014 6:19 PM	education for students with [redacted] needs. We parents know our children better than anyone–we live with and take care of them all the time they are not in school. And for many of us, after our child is no longer in school, we'll be left with taking care of our developmentally disabled adult. And we'll have to try and teach them what they should have learned when they were in school. As my son has become older and been moved up into groups of middle and high schoolers, the biggest problem has been teachers that don't want to listen to student's parents. If you question them, they make the point that they've been teaching 30 or more years. The 30 years of teaching experience means they know what's best for my child to learn and how best to teach it. They know more about how my individual child learns than do I. They rely on methodologies learned years ago–using laminated cards/pictures, when today's technology (iPads and speech programs like Proloquo-2-Go) are forever changing how communication impaired students can learn and communicate. But instead of seeing how this new technology can improve the educational opportunities of individual students, teachers and speech therapists resist using the new technology and cling to antiquated teaching methodologies, and focus on a group of student's instead of the individual. They won't have to spend the rest of their lives taking care of my child as he becomes an adult. They won't have to live with the things he hasn't learned, because they didn't think it was necessary or because it didn't fit into their educational plan. I have a [redacted] year old son who's been in the HCPSS since he was [redacted] years old who can't communication and isn't potty trained. That's 12 years in school! And for the last three years it's been a constant struggle to get his speech therapist and teacher to grasp the concept that it's more important that my son be taught how to communicate his knowledge of the subjects being taught in class, than focusing mostly on learning to 'wait for a turn!" Teaching is important. But when speech therapists and teachers focus on teaching without providing a method for the student to express his/her knowledge of the material being taught–how can you know any teaching is happening? How can you test that a teacher is teaching if his/her students aren't being taught to communicate what's they've learned? When you choose to not teach a child to communicate, then there's no empirical way to test whether a teacher has taught the student anything. My second peeve is the lack of focus on teaching important life skill to special needs students. My son is [redacted] years old. He's been attending [redacted] for 12 years and he hasn't been taught to go the potty on a toilet yet. It's so very frustrating that the schedule of classes is more important than teaching my son how to communicate
24	Sep 9, 2014 10:37 AM	Add additional special educators

25	Sep 8, 2014 3:20 PM	create a program/school that meets the needs of students with [redacted]. My child has a high average/above average intelligence based on her formal assessments; however, she is grouped with students functioning well below her level because she needs instruction from a special educator who has to serve a variety of levels and needs at the same time. Students with [redacted] need an intensive specialized program to meet their reading decoding, fluency, and spelling needs. The current practice of this county is NOT meeting these students needs. If the county had regional programs for students with [redacted] and special educators trained on programs that meet [redacted] students needs, these students would learn how to read at their level/learning style, perform well on state assessments, maintain their engagement in school and the learning process, and overall feel better about themselves as learners.
26	Sep 7, 2014 10:16 AM	More intervention available at home and before schools starts. Also more continuity during the summer
27	Sep 7, 2014 2:19 AM	Make sure that special educators charged with writing and monitoring IEPs know how to use Tienet. I also think that special educators working in regional programs such as the [redacted] should be highly qualified teachers.
28	Sep 6, 2014 3:47 PM	I am very displeased that many individuals (general educators, special educators, paraprofessionals, psychologists, administrators, etc.) do not properly implement my son's IEP. I have the distinct impression that they either think one size fits all or that they will "fix" my son's problems with their style. In any case, they do not understand what is written in the IEP in many instances and it takes months (and even a whole year) of struggles for them to "get it". In the meantime, my son struggles emotionally and academically.
29	Sep 6, 2014 1:11 PM	understand the needs and accept [redacted] as a disability in the school system. There are specific programs and modifications used successfully for a child with [redacted] that do not change the curriculum. It would be beneficial for the child if these programs were implemented.
30	Sep 6, 2014 12:13 PM	Keep the inclusion going but realize that there are times it is not right for everyone. I think my child would benefit from a little more pull out but the team pushes inclusion.
31	Sep 6, 2014 2:07 AM	Increase staff for decrease ratios.
32	Sep 6, 2014 1:39 AM	Make one-to-one paraprofessionals available for those students that have [redacted] and need that one-on-one support for academic success, social skills training, transitions and to act as an advocate for students due to language and communication deficits.
33	Sep 6, 2014 12:24 AM	Involve the parents more.
34	Sep 5, 2014 11:24 PM	The facilitation of transitions between middle school and high school. The HS ITLs that we had to deal with were not interested in our child, but just seemed to be slogging through the process. Special ed staff should be trained on how to facilitate meetings and to work with parents in a collaborative and positive way. Nothing derails the IEP process more than patronizing coordinators that treat the parents like they do not know or have anything to contribute to the process and the dismissive attitude that all teenagers are alike. IEP stands for developing a plan for the individual, which means they should show interest in getting to know the child during the transition and building a positive relationship with the parents.

35	Sep 5, 2014 9:26 PM	My child has been in Spec, Ed since first grade and almost every year I see the school struggle to provide IEP services because they are not given enough staff members to support the IEP of each student. One person is spread over several students and that is not meeting the goals in my opinion. If you continue to focus on inclusion (and it has so many benefits for ALL students you should) more money needs to be spent to provide the staff to execute the IEPs that are written for what a student needs then have to be manipulated to what can actually be delivered because of student case loads. All students can benefit from the additional staff in an inclusion classroom.
36	Sep 5, 2014 5:46 PM	Focus on how the rest of the student body accepts/includes students with special needs. The staff and teachers for the most part have been wonderful but the students have not always been. My son has suffered from bullying. When he was younger (elementary school) and unable to articulate the inappropriate behavior to an adult he suffered terribly. Children were picking on him, teasing him, pushing him, and adults did not intervene. I assume the adults did not see what was going on. But as a young child my son was not able to express himself well enough or assert himself enough to bring it to their attention. Adults will have to be more vigilant and proactive, and certainly more reactive on behalf of students who cannot do this for themselves.
37	Sep 5, 2014 11:10 AM	Paperwork and processes need to be simplified. The IEP progress reports are in such a small font they are practically unreadable. The information also gets cut off; not helpful! Middle schools schedules need to allow for more seminars AND related arts classes!!
38	Sep 5, 2014 1:12 AM	The school administration and in-school counseling staff needs better training. They are punitive and unsupportive of children with behavioral issues. Kids with diagnosed [redacted] issues are punished harshly. I had to remind my school's administration on several occasions to follow the 504. My son was actually suspended (out of school) in 5th grade because he told another kid his artwork was ugly. He is non-violent, and has diagnosed [redacted] issues but the administration chose to use harsh punishment rather than effective intervention.
39	Sep 5, 2014 12:34 AM	they need to have a compassion and patience and more professional development, there is a level of intelligence, wit and brilliance these children have and understand like the theory of Howard Gardener each child learning style.
40	Sep 4, 2014 11:32 PM	lack of before/aftercare.
41	Sep 4, 2014 9:11 PM	Have summer school hours of at least 6 hours a day for the 4 weeks to benefit the students more during this time period.
42	Sep 4, 2014 9:04 PM	More education of guidance counselors on oppurtunities for children with special needs.
43	Sep 4, 2014 8:46 PM	Work with my child at his developmental level in all areas and be taught all subject be a highly qualified special education teacher and not taught by a para educator different information then what is taught in the general education classroom
44	Sep 4, 2014 8:43 PM	Be a little more conscious of the needs of any specific student. There is a tendency to generalize. Not all of the special educators understand the specific disability. ([redacted])
45	Sep 4, 2014 8:29 PM	Provide more training/information/workshops to general education teachers/personnel about special need students/services/IEP/504, etc.

46	Sep 4, 2014 7:54 PM	Ensure that bus drivers transporting special needs kids are the best of the best, or at minimum, nice people. These kids need kindness from people they see every day in their community. They should not fear them. And the same goes for parents who have enough on their plates. Thanks.
47	Sep 4, 2014 7:00 PM	The new Common Core approach has some benfits to children with [redacted] disabilities (seeing the material in a variety of different ways or approaching the same information through a variety of approaches). Ultimately, the increased writing requirement adds an additional layer of difficulty and the abstract thinking is also difficult for children who are concrete learners.
48	Sep 4, 2014 5:12 PM	continue to include children with [redacted] learning disabilities in the regular classroom setting, but have teachers be especially sensitive to bullying by other students. It's fine to have anti-bullying programs or presentations for the entire school, but I've still seen and heard of bullying happening in classrooms and it doesn't always get addressed by teachers.
49	Sep 4, 2014 3:28 PM	Supports at the beginning/end of each day to check that student has 1) written down homework assignments 2) packed all necessary materials/papers 3) turned in all homework. Also, a place on Aspen where parents could look up homework in the event their child has neglected to write it down.
50	Sep 4, 2014 2:56 PM	have a better screening process. some staff are highly uneducated people who have personalities that would be unsuitable for typical children let alone special kids. Some of these people are ill-mannered, use poor language skills, smell like smoke, dress in an unprofessional manner, and would be best suited for careers outside of education.
51	Sep 4, 2014 1:42 PM	Improve training of teachers so that students with special needs can be included successfully; hire special educators and paraprofessionals with content level expertise; hire more qualified paraprofessionals who understand effective teaching practices; provide more training of paraprofessionals (training should be mandatory)
52	Sep 4, 2014 12:52 PM	I am very pleased with my daughter's school and their sensitivity to her educational and emotional needs.
53	Sep 4, 2014 12:34 PM	I have a [redacted] year old son with [redacted] in a mainstream/inclusive classroom. While I understand that Common Core is a hot political topic right now, I have to say, it's ESPECIALLY frustrating to us as parents of a special needs child. Common Core makes typically easy concepts much harder for kids without special needs. With our children with special needs...it's that much harder. I would STRONGLY urge HCPSS to immediately phase out Common Core teaching strategies for children with learning disabilities and/or developmental disabilities. Not doing so is going to significantly impact their ability to keep pace with their peers.
54	Sep 4, 2014 4:07 AM	-Map! the curriculm down to its basic lief eelments -Understand and teach that the school setting might not be best for him. Or, perhaps said better, understand and teach to his motivations (which I will get 8n progresson)
55	Sep 4, 2014 2:51 AM	More social and academic supports for kids on the higher functioning end of the [redacted], who need a little more support to reach their academic potential. It would be helpful to extend support to the families who may need assistance with supporting their child's success outside of school.

56	Sep 4, 2014 2:30 AM	1) More training and communication across pieces of schools. For instance, not apparent that administrators (principals/etc) are always in tune with the special educators. 2) As special education population grows, so does the need for expertise. Given growth of [redacted] population, HCPSS would benefit from a 2nd [redacted] specialist to help with training/direction/etc.
57	Sep 4, 2014 1:38 AM	Hire more professionally trained permanent staff to provide help f2f or children with [redacted] needs. And make parent classes mandatory not an option. Its tough to see the teachers working so hard with limited impact in home. In home visits woukd help to ensure kids are safe and g as in more resources as prevention.
58	Sep 3, 2014 10:30 PM	Consider before and after care for special needs student
59	Sep 3, 2014 9:01 PM	-better communication with parents -consider personalities and peer dynamics when grouping for classes...my son has a variety of issues and feels socially ostracized in school...the fact that he is in a class for the third yr in a row with no friends (in another class) is doing him much harm.
60	Sep 3, 2014 6:22 PM	MORE para-educators & school psychologists/behavioral staff & therapies. I truly believe as every year passes, the schools world-wide are going to have to acknowledge that more and more special ed kids are coming into the system. For questions that I answered with a disagree or N/A are because I can't speak for other special needs kids as all their circumstances vary. We have received exceptional and excellent assistance from Howard County and that reputation in 2009 is why we moved here. Thank you!
61	Sep 3, 2014 5:28 PM	have more parent conferences
62	Sep 3, 2014 4:38 PM	ESY should be extended to full days during the summer months to accommodate working parents.
63	Sep 3, 2014 4:34 PM	provide special education teachers in the classroom who actually know the content of the class, do more out-of-classroom staff training, rather than in-class staff training
64	Sep 3, 2014 4:23 PM	There needs to be a better solution/approach for children who are still on the "diploma track" but have a significant gap between their learning level and grade level. The current approach of not modifying the work only results in frustration for the student and child. Accommodations aren't always enough. There should be more support for teachers in accommodating and modifying materials. It seems that each teacher does their own thing and some teachers are better than others.
65	Sep 3, 2014 4:02 PM	More communications with the parents. I am an involved parent and having advance classroom information, like a syllabus helps me to keep my child on task. I like the way [redacted] instructors are very respectful and accommodating.
66	Sep 3, 2014 3:47 PM	We need to train and maintain the general educator's use of accommodations and make sure they are followed. In regard to students with processing or written language issues- Foreign Language teachers need to understand the different ways to assess the individual learning needs of students and let them use all on-line and resources available to make them successful.

67	Sep 3, 2014 3:11 PM	1. the communication from special education at my child's school -- there should be a standard procedure at the beginning of the year of contact from sped. teacher. 2. sped. teachers at the elementary level should move grades with the children rather than new providers every year who are unfamiliar with child and needs -- back at square one every year.
68	Sep 3, 2014 2:59 PM	Be a better listener and stop guessing and making assumptions.
69	Sep 3, 2014 2:52 PM	1.Test earlier for learning disabilities as is done in Canada. 2. Monitor special ed teachers better. My childs special ed teacher wasn't pulling her for services. My child's general ed teacher helped me document the issue to get action but really that was not our job. 3. Keep current with teaching methods for [redacted] and other learning issue. 4. Train the staff in these methods - even the ones you do use the staff isn't trained. 5. You have some very good special ed people but you have some very lousy people too. Everyone seems to know who they are but yet you don't do anything.
70	Sep 3, 2014 2:24 PM	Look at the schools with students with more severe [redacted] needs and base staffing off of student needs not the whole school's total students=staff needed. People are getting hurt because there are not enough trained staff.
71	Sep 3, 2014 2:04 PM	Stop treating children as budget items. Give the children what they need, not the minimum you think you can or should give them. Above all LISTEN to the parents!!
72	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 PM	Create programs which are more supportive for students who fall in the middle of the [redacted] - the continuum from ALS, Primary Learner, and Inclusion leave many students hanging Do not wait for a child to be at the point of no return behaviorally to find the most appropriate placement, whether private or public - think of the needs of the child first and foremost at all times
73	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 PM	1. Special needs kids shouldn't be moved from school to school. That could be intimidating. 2. For my son OT has almost been eliminated even though he truly needs it. It shouldn't be based on what the School System thinks it's best but should be what's best for the child. 3. Inclusion in activities e.g. plays, concerts etc.
74	Sep 3, 2014 1:43 PM	Better training/sensitivity for GENERAL education teachers, especially on middle school and high school level. More co taught classrooms, especially in the honors and GT classes. Just because a child is in higher level classes, doesn't mean the child doesn't need the support.
75	Sep 3, 2014 1:33 PM	the general ed teacher should at least be aware of what kind of disability the student has, what limitation of the student would have in learning the class materials, and how to accommodate or adapt the materials for the student

76	Sep 3, 2014 1:16 PM	More experienced SLP's-- my daughter stutters a lot, and the amount of ST she receives is not sufficient without a very experienced SLP. My daughter stuttered when she was in the [redacted] program, but being that she had an excellent SLP, her stuttering nearly stopped. Now she stutters more than ever, she is more anxious more than ever, and she has a very difficult time getting her thoughts out intelligibly; it is clear that the quality and quantity of SLP services this county is providing to children is insufficient for the ones who truly need it and/or the SLP's you have put into schools are not experienced enough to handle these children. It has been a complete drop-off in terms of services, and if she does not improve, we will have to enlist private SLP services. I do not want to hear that special education services are being cut b/c this is unacceptable, and I have heard this from numerous parents. All I can say is thank God I do not have another special needs child.
77	Sep 3, 2014 12:52 PM	I'd like to know more specifically when my child has 1:1 attention from a para. After a problem is identified or before? Since it's the beginning if the school year I don't have names associated with members of the team.
78	Sep 3, 2014 11:43 AM	More direct programs to address social skills during lunch/recess/pe. This is not targeted enough. Also, more specific plans to have parent/teacher meetings at the beginning of the school year. A lot could be helped by front loading some meetings at the beginning of the year with the new team to ensure that everyone is on the same page and that Parents and school develop a plan for communication that works best for everyone. Parents could also provide input on strategies for the child. Also, principals should be graded on the quality of the SE provided in the school to ensure that they are motivated to place resources in that area.
79	Sep 3, 2014 11:32 AM	Allow touch math to be used as an alternate math program for all students
80	Sep 3, 2014 9:09 AM	More staff receiving better pay!
81	Sep 3, 2014 8:48 AM	Real transportation services instead of current moving of bodies from one place to another. More consistent school schedule. High schools need to make accommodations for students who take medicines that causes them to be extra tired in the am. School starts too early for high school students.
82	Sep 3, 2014 3:51 AM	Make more accommodations in the curriculum for kids with IEP, the current way sets the kids for failure. How do you read or give instruction to a 6th grader who had the reading ability or understanding of a kindergartener?
83	Sep 3, 2014 2:23 AM	More autism special services
84	Sep 3, 2014 2:20 AM	The OT and ST should be involved planning my sons daily activities with other classes like Art so on. I do not think he receives a good support from OT, which he needs most. We are fighting not to give away his therapy time. The district should find better therapists.Last year my childs special ed teacher was not good as well, the district should hire better special educators. We support my sons speech needs with music therapy, music therapy and art therapy should be a part of special ed curriculum. He is sitting in Art class without doing anything, the art teacher told me she does not have any time .
85	Sep 3, 2014 1:48 AM	More time available by professionals with students
86	Sep 3, 2014 1:40 AM	Provide more technology aides for students
87	Sep 3, 2014 1:36 AM	EXTEND THE [redacted] TO GO THROUGH 5th GRADE (or beyond!!) This is such a successful program for kids on the [redacted], can we extend it to go beyond 2nd grade?

88	Sep 3, 2014 1:28 AM	More support and services needed for social skills, such as lunch bunch for older kids too, para educator facilitating recess games, peer buddy, mentors (my child really responds to older kids), and social skills groups offered as an after school activity. Implement pilot classes that are taught differently, such as co-teaching.
89	Sep 3, 2014 1:25 AM	Help staff support students with more intense needs
90	Sep 3, 2014 1:21 AM	Include [redacted] testing as part of the county's educational and psychological testing done to determine learning disabilities. Provide a certified Orton-Gillingham reading program or tutor in all elementary schools. Allow open enrollment for special needs students.
91	Sep 3, 2014 1:00 AM	speech pathology
92	Sep 3, 2014 12:38 AM	Transition, transition, transition I find it odd that the school or district has not seen most situations from previous students in applying an approach to a current challenge
93	Sep 3, 2014 12:32 AM	When a child is given a "case manager" that person should be in at least one of the childs classes. My childs case manager did not have my child in any class last year. It appears the case manager spends a lot of time on the quartely progress reports. These reports are not user friendly at all. They should be easier to read & understand. That being said perhaps the time taken to fill them out quarterly could be spent with the children. I know its difficult in such a large school district but I wish there could be more face to face conversation with the teachers, case managers, parents on the childs progress.
94	Sep 3, 2014 12:16 AM	Have the teachers attend the IEPs more, then just passing the message through the case worker.
95	Sep 3, 2014 12:13 AM	Educate the class on the nature of the child's challenge (if the parents approve) so that they will not be nervous or afraid of the child. Let the kids ask questions, when appropriate, about the nature of the challenge.
96	Sep 3, 2014 12:07 AM	Some of the therapists and teachers are overly concerned with behaviors. They should know that some students are learning even when they are moving or when not making eye contact, etc. if they believe a student has to sit still before s/he can learn then nothing will get accomplished.
97	Sep 3, 2014 12:06 AM	Factor in the needs of new children joining the school at every grade level and not just the initial or youngest grade that the school covers, such as 6th and 9th grades.
98	Sep 2, 2014 11:47 PM	I would recommend more speech therapy with non-verbal kids. I would recommend more hours other than the hours in their IEP and also with the OT I would recommend they do more learning how to write thier names etc during OT. I am looking for stability as well. This is my daughter's 4th school. I am happy with this one because her SLP is so good and helpful and not lazy I think she is working for my child and will help increase my child's speech.

99	Sep 2, 2014 10:55 PM	Listen when a parentis telling you that a student with an IEP is struggling with a class. We were told for homework to "tough it out" which eventually led to our son hating the subject. We were able to reduce homework amount after persisting but why should it take so long? It was a strategy that was clearly established in Middle School as being effective and conducive to his learning. Also, we received very little if any communication from our sons special education case manager last year. Now we have her again this year. We got much more support directly from the teachers than our case manager. So, now we are looking at another year of little communication on our sons progress unless we ask specific questions. Why do we have the same case manager every year?
100	Sep 2, 2014 10:23 PM	i appreciate the paraeducators. The ones that my child has dealt with had very good training and real life experience to assist my child. His 1st grade teacher was AWECOME, however I do not think that her skills alone was the support my child or child like mines the support and attention that he needed. It would be great to have a certified teacher, but i know that dealing with a special needs child does require more than just the certification. Experience, patience, and stamina. I think there needs to be changes with the ESY that is offered. I seems like the older the child and the more of a delay would require more assistance. My son received great services and I am positive that each year the teachers and staff give it their all each year. However, his needs are growing unfortunately and I believe this needs to be taken in account.
101	Sep 2, 2014 10:19 PM	Not sure at this time.
102	Sep 2, 2014 10:05 PM	Add more special ed Professionals so one on one time is increased
103	Sep 2, 2014 10:04 PM	Include the parents in the decision making process (don't just say it to get them to IEP meetings) and listen early on. Get rid of isolation and restraint in schools. Unless this is really an emergency situation, this is unnecessary and doesn't foster a positive learning environment. This is school not jail.
104	Sep 2, 2014 9:29 PM	provide better training to elementary school administrators; many ES administrators are too slow to test students (particularly if the student is at a Title I school with many students in need of remedial services); even though all of my child's teachers in K-3rd had concerns about my child's academic progress, the administration refused to consider testing/ services until he had begun to fall behind his peers and until we initiated testing at [redacted]; I feel my child had 4 wasted years of education. We also spent an excessive amount of money on testing and tutoring. My child needed SE support during school hours in K-3rd.
105	Sep 2, 2014 9:16 PM	Provide more special education teachers to accommodate the special education students. Last year I initially encountered communication delays between the general education teacher and special education teacher because she had so much more responsibility. This affected my child's grade. I had to advocate for him to get his grades changed, etc. because the issue was the classroom needed some more modifications and he needed medication adjustments. Once those were identified, he had a successful year. Unfortunately, it took a lot of back and forth with me as the parent, to get these needs met.

106	Sep 2, 2014 8:57 PM	It seems that paraprofessionals are the ones implementing services more than the Sp Educator. If this is the case, they need to be a part of the IEP meetings. Sometimes, they provide more services than what is on the IEP (i.e. scribing). Therefore, I'm not sure what my child is able to do.
107	Sep 2, 2014 8:39 PM	Additional special education staff
108	Sep 2, 2014 8:38 PM	1) Special needs sensitivity training for teachers. 2) Better customized academic curriculum related to childs needs.
109	Sep 2, 2014 8:34 PM	GET RID OF THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT!! This DOES NOT work for all special needs children. My son is in a contained classroom. He is followed by multiple specialist at [redacted]. Each year the school system attempts to place him in a gen ed class. It is detrimental for my son. Period. He doesn't understand what the teacher is saying, he gets anxious from students touching him, he doesn't tolerate "too much talking", bright lights, the business of the open classroom causes him to completely shut down. He has many [redacted] issues and [redacted] along with [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] and becomes distraught when he's in a room with a lot of people. He becomes over-stimulated, unable to focus as he is extremely impulsive, gets very agitated if a student touches him or talks to him, has no idea what the teacher is saying. [redacted] departments have tested him extensively and found that my son needs a contained classroom with 1;1 teacher. He's to be taught at his level and at his pace. He's to be provided frequent breaks and information broken down in to small chunks. He can not write and is to use a laptop but I still saw work come home that required him to "write". He's [redacted]. HE CANT WRITE. He can read but has difficulty remembering what he read and in what order. His last [redacted] evaluation showed a drop in [redacted] and has [redacted]. I suggest stop trying to put our children in the general classroom as it is NOT beneficial to them at all. It is actually detrimental. Each child is different and has different needs, different ways of teaching and testing, they only need one friend. Dropping them in a classroom with normal children is devastating and frightening to them. It does not benefit them. It sets them back. And in my son's case, he could become a danger to others if someone touches him or "talks too much" or he becomes so overwhelmed because he cant understand what's going on, he will either shut down and rock and perform self-soothing techniques or he will rage. Neither is good. Keep him in his safe contained classroom. He will flourish there with the right teacher and the right technology. As far as learning social skills, put him in a small group and teach him those skills. It has worked for me for 11 years with the help of his specialists and his behaviorist, [redacted].. Prevention, NOT intervention is the KEY to my son's success and I believe if you asked other parents that have a child(ren) like mine, they would strongly agree.
110	Sep 2, 2014 8:32 PM	Take parent input more seriously at IEP meetings since it's the parents who know their child the best and better integrate their specific concerns and suggestions when formulating a students goals and objectives. Provide appropriate services to students who have already proven and documented their disabilities/needs from private reputable institutions such as [redacted] without requiring the school to conduct duplicate testing in order to receive those needed services.
111	Sep 2, 2014 8:26 PM	More daily communication home.
112	Sep 2, 2014 8:19 PM	Less bureaucracy, more action - particularly with infants and toddlers program

113	Sep 2, 2014 8:16 PM	(1) Add a GT/LD program. Follow [redacted] model. (2) Choose to emphasize teaching children a love of learning in elementary school rather than subject them to undue pressure and developmentally inappropriate instruction. Or, at least, provide that environment to students who are suffering in the standard classroom.
114	Sep 2, 2014 8:10 PM	More modification on individual teaching to kids with IEP.
115	Sep 2, 2014 7:57 PM	I think teachers and staff would benefit about learning more about [redacted], especially children with [redacted]. I also think interacting socially(working with peers, schedule changes, executive function problems) is just as important as academic problems. It feels as though my child is questioned for having an IEP even though he is a gifted student. I think individual teachers need training on understanding IEP's. I feel very strongly that the district needs to teach staff/teachers about [redacted].
116	Sep 2, 2014 7:45 PM	Expand primary learned program throughout elementary and create resource rooms in middle school.
117	Sep 2, 2014 7:37 PM	instead of always "preparing" him for the future, help him now. stop pulling back on service he clearly needs now because "thats not what it will be like in college". He is still in high school and will not get to college if he is not supported now!!!
118	Sep 2, 2014 7:33 PM	More highly qualified special ed teachers working directly with our children more of the time. This includes specific sp ed training, behavior training, etc... It is obvious that resources are stretched too thin and our children pay the price. Provide ongoing open and honest communication with families with a genuine interest in furthering the child's education.
119	Sep 2, 2014 7:32 PM	General Educators need to understand more about diverse needs and how special education works. Staff needs to understand that some students have behaviors they really can't control, and that they aren't trying to be 'bad.'
120	Sep 2, 2014 7:29 PM	Continue special needs bussing past pre-K for at least another 3-5 years would be helpful. Many special needs students aren't ready to ride the regular bus. OR provide adult assistant on the regular bus to eliminate any social difficulties w/peers (bullying in particular). For ESY make it a M-F full day program. Not a half day with only four days a week. That is a scheduling nightmare for working parents and difficult for students who need regular routines. Ensure that students have para educator in the classroom to help them be successful in school. Provide some kind of buddy system for students at risk for bullying. Provide more social programs or opportunities for special needs children to teach them how to make and keep friends.
121	Sep 2, 2014 7:24 PM	When a student could academically qualify for an honors or above class but can't make it because of "social", [redacted] issues. The special education team leader response is they can not staff it so the student cannot be in the class or is in the room failing. That same student is then in the reg classroom and at times being a target for underradar teasing.

122	Sep 2, 2014 7:21 PM	Testing should be done as early as possible when parents see there is a problem. I suspected a problem with my child in 3rd and 4th grade and [redacted] refused to test him. I moved to [redacted] when my child was in 5th grade and expressed the same concerns and the teacher agreed and they immediately tested my child who was found to have significant learning disabilities. I later found out that he had a [redacted] which was the problem .
123	Sep 2, 2014 7:13 PM	-Have paraprofessionals who have qualifying credentials to instruct special education students -Engage general education staff to be more in tune with special education student's need -Hold general education/special educators accountable for following IEP accommodations (particularly providing teachers notes to students who qualify.)
124	Sep 2, 2014 7:13 PM	Clone the staff at [redacted]
125	Sep 2, 2014 7:09 PM	work programs
126	Sep 2, 2014 7:08 PM	The aides who do the actual classroom support have typically been sub-par and treated this as more as a disciplinary role. [redacted] at [redacted] for example. They are there to support the child and my child would avoid her whenever possible. Very disappointed.
127	Sep 2, 2014 7:05 PM	1. Hire more qualified special educators that truly want to help children with special needs, as the number of professionals is too low to meet the growing needs of the children, and they will continue to fall further behind. 2. Determine a way to truly integrate special needs children into the community and build that community within the school. The children are still seen as outsiders and freaks.
128	Sep 2, 2014 6:53 PM	More staff to support students with special needs.
129	Sep 2, 2014 6:52 PM	Hire more staff. With the wide range of abilities/disabilities in each classroom there is too much down time during which students just sit around. Also, hiring more male staff would be beneficial, especially at the high school level.
130	Sep 2, 2014 6:49 PM	Train staff, vision teachers & supervisors, and accountability officers to show more empathy. Train staff to not make it a struggle for the student and/or parents to add new accomodations as a student progresses in their academic career and as course work becomes more visually challenging. We feel we have moved from to a "prove it" environment. And, we know other students in the same situation at other schools have always had (and never had to ask for)accomodations our daughter has been told she has to prove she needs. Don't place children in a situation that could fail them when they need the help.
131	Sep 2, 2014 6:40 PM	I think the level of satisfaction and support has significantly decreased with each stage of my daughter's education (more support in infants/toddlers program, less in high school). In general, I would like to see more support for [redacted] children on the [redacted]. They seem to fall through the cracks because they don't appear to require intensive support. As an example, I would like to see more support for hygeine issues in high school. Just because my daughter is much higher functioning than her [redacted] classmates doesn't mean that she is mature and adequately able to care for herself throughout the day. Thank you very much for allowing for parental input.

132	Sep 2, 2014 6:38 PM	Hold principals accountable for the learning and success of ALL students. I feel there is often a disconnect between the county philosophy and individual teacher and school practice. The district needs to communicate a philosophy and then make sure that each and every school is following that philosophy with integrity. If the district supports inclusion then they MUST support the student and the staff. They cannot simply throw the student to the gen. ed. teachers and say good luck which seems to be a more and more frequent practice. There must be co-planning time and para-professionals must get the training necessary to properly support the student(s) they are working with. I support the philosophy of inclusion that the Department of Special Education espouses -- taking into consideration the needs of the student, but I do not necessarily feel that those in general education and those at the school levels truly support that same philosophy. Until principals are held accountable for the day to day practices and the success of ALL students this will not change.
133	Sep 2, 2014 6:28 PM	get general educators to take more interest in the kids with IEPs and they shouldn't like these kids are the responsibility of the special educators alone. more social skills programs and opportunities in-school and some sort of out of school (things like BSAP math academy) where kids with IEPs and typically developing kids are involved in different activities.
134	Sep 2, 2014 6:27 PM	Not emphasize college education so much and encourage more vocational education.
135	Sep 2, 2014 6:27 PM	Have more accountability from the Administrators (principal) at the schools regarding the performance of the Special Ed students and their involvement and acceptance at the school.
136	Sep 2, 2014 6:18 PM	Have more special educators so that the ratio of student to educator was lower.
137	Sep 2, 2014 6:17 PM	Increase the therapy
138	Sep 2, 2014 6:13 PM	1. The students with special needs would benefit from having the same advisor and helper instead of changing it every year. It takes time to develop trust and relationships and by the time my child is comfortable the year is over. I 2. The curriculum should be modified so that students with special needs can use their interests with the curriculum requirements. Having my son read about certain subjects that are hard for him to grasp(abstract theory/concepts) is a waste of time and he doesnt gain anything from the material.
139	Sep 2, 2014 6:06 PM	More supportive staff at HS level
140	Sep 2, 2014 6:02 PM	The district should either reduce the power of special education instructional team leaders (ITLs) and empower special and general education teachers, or it should require that ITLs receive more training in once-rare disorders such as [redacted]. While ITLs often have years of experience, they also may have been outside the classroom for many years and may not have up-to-date information about [redacted] and [redacted] education. The district should make greater use of its behavioral experts and find out why school administrators are reluctant to contact the district's central office when it needs help managing the behavior of a student with a disability.
141	Sep 2, 2014 6:01 PM	Extend pre-k back to all 5 days a week every week. My child does best on a consistent schedule.
142	Sep 2, 2014 6:01 PM	Provide social skills assistance/guidance on playgrounds for children with social skills needs. Counseling/coaching for children with difficulties with emotional regulation.

143	Sep 2, 2014 6:00 PM	1.Hire more aids for the classroom 2. Teach the "teachers" about learning disabilities and hold them accountable. My child's teachers just call her names like "lazy" instead of understanding that she is not comprehending the information. They do not follow her iep all the time either (extra time on the exams, someone reading the exam to her-I actually had an aide that couldn't even really speak English be responsible for reading a test to her. My daughter did not understand a single word this aide said yet when I questioned why she was helping read when she (the aide) could barely speak coherent English I was told "that is the best we can do!"-Really?
144	Sep 2, 2014 5:58 PM	make diagnosis more available within state, specifically for non-state run pre-schools, make referral and follow ups easier for parents. in grade school, I wish there are more resources available after school to assist children with homework.
145	Sep 2, 2014 5:57 PM	The services I have been able to achieve have been because of my advocacy and insistence and I am not sure we would be in the same place today without that.
146	Sep 2, 2014 5:56 PM	unknown
147	Sep 2, 2014 5:56 PM	Meet the children where they are in mathmatics and not push them along doing grade-level work when they have no comprehension. This is especially important in the middle school years. Every year, I told our special ed team that my son was not comprehending the math. They kept telling me if he was diploma bound he had to do grade-level work. They put a calculator in his hand and moved on. They relied on access to a computer program a few minutes per week to back-map the missing skills. This did not work, yet every report card said "making sufficient progress to meet goal." As a result he fell farther and farther behind in math. He will leave HCPSS completely NOT college and career ready in math. This lack will affect the rest of his life. HCPSS should have done more to provide my son with a basic foundational education in mathmatics. His individual needs were not considered or met with regard to math, even though he had basic math goals in his IEP. In high school, math classes that are not Algebra II or up need to be offered. Every child is not on calculus track. By refusing to offer meaningful math classes to kids who are on the lower end of the curve in math, the system is refusing to provide a foundation that will make those students as "college and career ready" as they can be.
148	Sep 2, 2014 5:55 PM	Find structured reading/listening comprehension programs for High School kids who are reading or comprehending at lower levels, that capture their interest, and at same time help the students progress up levels, and then USE the program(s). There are no structured reading/list. comp. programs in our H.S., and no one provides this type of information, even to parents who would be willing to work on it at home, which is very frustrating. Develop additional programming for kids who are caught in the middle between diploma and ALS, i.e., diploma too high-level, ALS too low-level. Establish a parent support group for parents of H.S. kids that do not have autism. This survey is difficult given only choices are "agree" "disagree", when perhaps some of these issues would be answered as "somewhat content" or "moderately disagree" vs. having strictly "disagree" or strictly "agree".

149	Sep 2, 2014 5:53 PM	We are new to the district. I do not feel that my child has been in the district long enough for me to formulate an opinion.
150	Sep 2, 2014 5:52 PM	Increase the hours of RECC (preschool) to maybe 3 or 4 hour days to allow special needs kids more direct instruction and peer to peer interaction.
151	Sep 2, 2014 5:50 PM	I have a bright child with severe [redacted] disability. In middle school, my child is the same as a child with severe physical handicap or serious developmental delays. My child was given extra time for testing last year in a room where another child at times hit him during the test and another child ran around the room screaming. And this was done in the name of "inclusion". My bright 6th grader with [redacted] impairment was required to sit in this situation to receive extra time on the test rather than in the room with the class which would have been much less distracting. We're told that to get any services at all in middle school, this is what we have to deal with.
152	Sep 2, 2014 5:46 PM	Better the communication between teachers and parents. I understand that they have alot of students to deal with, but when you have a child with an IEP in the class it is important that the teacher follow and recognize the needs of that child. my experience was that eventhough a assistant was in the room, my son was always missing assignment and important info was not being double checked and scribed into planner. This is very frustrating for the parent.
153	Sep 2, 2014 5:43 PM	Stop trying to place all children with [redacted], etc with [redacted] in a general classroom. This has been attempted with my son and has never been successful. He is trying to learn social skills and succeed academically. This is too much for him. His specialists have all made specific recommendations to keep him in a contained classroom with 1:1 instruction. He doesn't tolerate a crowd, doesn't understand the teacher, is overstimulated by too much talking, other students touching him, lights, cant follow direction, etc. He receives absolutely no benefit by being placed in the gen ed class! So please stop!
154	Sep 2, 2014 5:40 PM	Better communication with families from direct staff. At all levels.
155	Sep 2, 2014 5:40 PM	It's the first week of middle school. I heard that one of the 6th graders who is [redacted] was taunted in the hallway by kids from a different feeder school, and he was left in tears. Bullying, taunting, and other mean behaviors are a special education issue. We need to be proactive to ensure our kids are experiencing a comfortable environment in the classroom, at recess, in the hallways, and on buses. They need to know exactly what to do if they get picked on or observe uncivil behavior. They need to be told, messages need to be reinforced by posters and announcements, and clear information needs to be provided to parents. (I am following up through our PTSA president.) We get handouts from all the teachers about the expected behaviors in the classroom. Now all the new students will be watching to see if the written rules reflect the reality, and if the respectful environment will extend to buses, hallways, and recess.
156	Sep 2, 2014 5:39 PM	Provide more opportunities for support for parents and children with special needs to interact and learn from each other.

157	Sep 2, 2014 5:39 PM	I am not pleased with the [redacted] special education team. They have committed testing violations, failed to communicate with me and only partially implemented parts of his small IEP (less than 2 hours of services per week). His case manager last year was not professional. For example she accidentally forwarded to me an email where she complained about my questions in writing. In addition, I feel the iep team does not welcome me as a team member. I complained several times to HCPSS about my concerns with the [redacted] special education team. We have a new case manager this year and I am hopeful that we will work together as one team.
158	Sep 2, 2014 5:38 PM	More speech therapists!
159	Sep 2, 2014 5:38 PM	My chief complaint about the way my oldest child on the [redacted] has been dealt with through school is that as he has gotten older, we are seeing less and less expected of him, and less and less homework coming home. Knowing this child is on a college track, it seems bizarre to me that he could get A's and B's with virtually no homework coming home, few if any signifcant papers to write, and minimal studying needed. The way I perceive it is that the school has moved my son's placement to classes where little is asked of him, so it makes it easier to accommodate his IEP-related needs, but what is lost in the process is his ability to grow intellectually by being challenged and stimulated. If that's not happening, then what is the point of it all?
160	Sep 2, 2014 5:38 PM	No disrespect intended, the school district appears concerned and cooperative provided an extra effort is not part of the equation. I discovered the hard way that students with learning disabilities tend either to be frowned upon by teachers due to the effort required to accommodate, become lost / neglected in the school system because the school district rests on the notable high assessment scores, and at times cooperation is slow, lacks, or difficult to receive. There are excuses rather than cooperation for reasonable requests that would assist student and parent.
161	Sep 2, 2014 5:34 PM	my daughter's 10th grade spanish teacher needs to be trained on IEPs. She did not give accomidatioins. She emailed the child..not the parents...after the child failed her final that she did not have time. My wife and I felt this teacher was poor, at best. My daughter was defeated by the teacher's actions and comments.
162	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	1) Listen to the parents more at IEP meetings. Parent "data" is equally important. Relevant "data" does not always present in numbers. Qualitative data regarding performance, mental health needs and struggles should be considered as well. 2) Not allow paraeducators to be service providers when the child needs and deserves a trained, certified professional.
163	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	The only change I would make would be to offer these services in more schools. Right now I have children in two different schools because my youngest son's needs for these services are not offered in our home school. I would much rather have them go to same school.

164	Sep 2, 2014 5:33 PM	I would just suggest that your office be more proactive in your outreach and communications with parents of multiples. Reach out to the state, get the hospital data, and quickly tell them that you are there for them. Chances are, they have preemies on their hands, they are overwhelmed, frustrated, exhausted, and need a calm, informed, steady, and helpful voice of advice to help keep their spirits up and to not worry so much about their current situation. Market and communicate the fact that they made a great decision to live in Howard County, and tell them that you are there for them with all the various services that you provide. The chances are very good that there is a delay in one, or both, especially if one has a much lower birth weight and height, as was the case with our family. I will call the office about some of the other ideas that we have.
165	Sep 2, 2014 5:32 PM	more patience with students less judgmental comments made by team members
166	Sep 2, 2014 5:32 PM	more inclusion for children, there appear to be classes specifically more heavily attended by IEP students and others with less. More frequent communications with concerns before a reporting period has ended or it's formalized in his report card, I would like to try and proactively address changes in my child's behavior rather than it showing up on a report card.
167	Sep 2, 2014 5:32 PM	improve secondary special education with better communication and more resources
168	Sep 2, 2014 5:31 PM	I do not agree with switching children out of a program that they started with. Due to a move within the same county. Especially when the child is making extreme progress. Inconsistency always disrupts children's learning. I was not very pleased with the decision made to move my son when he was making extreme leaps and bounds within the first year he attended [redacted]. His speech pathologist was able to meet one on one with him. Now presently at his new school the speech pathologist is only able to meet with him and another student from my understanding. The teacher last year shared she has to take two students at a time because of her work load. I don't understand how you can have an I.E.P written specific to a child and share that one-one time that's desperately needed with that child's speech pathologist with another student.
169	Sep 2, 2014 5:31 PM	accept a diagnosis more readily from an outside source, like the [redacted]. Not all schools in the county are equally addressing the needs of different learns as quickly as they should. It wasn't until my children moved from their elementary school to another elementary/middle school that they were given the supports they needed to level the academic and social playing field.
170	Sep 2, 2014 5:30 PM	We feel very lucky with our experience, but there is no accountability from school to school in regards to the attitude, acceptance and education of students with IEPs. It seems like the experience each child has is based largely on what school he attends, and the attitude of the principal and case manager & staff at that school.

171	Sep 2, 2014 5:29 PM	Always have one special educator per grade, never ever share a special educator among two grades, it leaves holes in the schedule that cause issues. Avoid two special educators sharing one grade (ex: one for math, one for reading) With too many staff behavior goals are mismanaged, and it also causes difficulties with staff communication for parents.
172	Sep 2, 2014 5:28 PM	I'm sure there is something that other parents might suggest but I can't think of any changes I would ask for in our case.
173	Sep 2, 2014 5:28 PM	Train general education and G/T teachers in understanding more about [redacted]. Welcome parents of challenged students into the classroom and on field trips.
174	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	Additional support in the classrooms, smaller class sizes if inclusion is continued. Seems that basic life skills are moved over too quickly and those students that don't grasp them suffer through the rest of the years without mastering the basics.
175	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	Help transferring students to have a plan in place prior to arrival in order to avoid delays in services and placement.
176	Sep 2, 2014 5:27 PM	Include them with the rest of the population as much as possible, especially as it relates to socialization. Restricting them to certain classes prohibits friendships with children across the intellectual range.
177	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	1. More BCBAs hired by the school district 2. ABA used throughout the education of the children, not just until 2nd grade, which is not supported by any research 3. [redacted] specific classes with teachers trained in [redacted] and ABA in grades higher than 2nd grade.
178	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	make more specialists (speech, ot, pt) available so that students can get the hours they really need to learn/improve/grow in these areas
179	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	More opportunities at the HS level for low level (remedial) academic classes. More flexibility at the middle school level to develop the IEP that best serves the student without regard to the state requirements. There was too much emphaisis for my son (now a certificate-bound student) to meet state requirements at the expense of maximizing his ability to learn content and skills that would best serve him in life.
180	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	My duaghter has a 504plan. I find that I have to continually educate the teachers about what accomodations are in the 504 plan. I dream of the day where each of her teacher would review the plan at the beginning of the year and maybe half way through. It would also be ideal if they also make suggestions if they think additional accomodations are needed or that one of the current accomodations need to be modified.
181	Sep 2, 2014 5:26 PM	The peer-to-peer teaching/mentoring is a great idea. If possible, expand that portion of the program. I am sure that our child responds well to "impressing" her peers a little more than her teachers!
182	Sep 2, 2014 5:25 PM	Later start time
183	Sep 2, 2014 5:25 PM	My daughter has a low-incidence need [redacted]); we would benefit from more and up-to-date training of the staff that work with her about strategies and development.
184	Sep 2, 2014 5:25 PM	Support children with extra tutoring afterschool to ensure they can pass the HSAs and PARCC exams that are required but most likely (in my child's case) never need except to graduate from a Howard County school.

185	Sep 2, 2014 5:24 PM	It took me YEARS of pleading with the administration to get them to agree to test my son. I felt like his issues were being written off as [redacted] when we (and he) knew it was something different. I wonder how things could have been had he gotten special ed services earlier (he didn't start til 4th grade). I wish school administration would listen to parents' concerns and gut instincts more often. I feel like the first time they really paid attention to me was when his MSA scores came back and they were Basic instead of Proficient. It's hard not to think that the scores had more influence/persuason than I ever did...
186	Sep 2, 2014 5:22 PM	Have a case worker at the county level assigned to move with the child from school to school as they age. Any issues during the summer or finding the appropriate school could be worked by this person. More, not less, access to special educators so these children have greater success in the classroom and smaller rate of retention.

Report

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
MEETING AGENDA ITEM

TITLE: Special Education Opportunities Review **DATE:** January 29, 2015

PRESENTER(S):

Nathan Levenson, President
District Management Council

Patricia A. Daley, Executive Director
Department of Special Education
and Student Services

Beth Benevides, Parent

Jonathan Davis, Principal
Bollman Bridge Elementary School

Shiney John, Principal
Thomas Viaduct Middle School

Scott Ruehl, Principal
Mount Hebron High School

VISION 2018 GOAL: ☒ Students ☒ Staff ☒ Families and Community ☒ Organization

1.2: Students have equitable access to a rigorous instructional program.
1.4: Students are engaged in the learning process.
1.5: Students meet or exceed rigorous performance standards
1.6: Meaningful measures of student outcomes are in place.
2.2: Staff members have access to learning experiences that support their professional growth.
2.3: Staff members are held accountable for and supported in meeting standards-based performance expectations.
3.3: HCPSS engages families and the community through relevant, timely, accessible, and audience-focused communications.
4.2: HCPSS hires and retains a talented, effective, and diverse workforce.
4.3: Resource and staffing allocations are aligned with strategic priorities.
4.6: Decisions are informed by relevant data in all operational areas.

OVERVIEW:

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) strategic plan, Vision 2018: Fulfilling the Promise of Preparation, established a mission to cultivate a vibrant learning community that prepares students to thrive in a dynamic world. Achieving this mission requires that HCPSS continuously seeks opportunities for improvement. HCPSS has partnered with the District Management Council (DMC) to conduct a Special Education Opportunities Review. The DMC is an organization that collaborates with public school district leaders to improve student outcomes, operational efficiency and resource allocation. The HCPSS provides special education and related services to more than 5,000 students from birth through age 21, with the number of students requiring services increasing each year. The Opportunity Review analyzed existing resources, identified best practices, and recommended budget neutral process improvements and opportunities to increase student learning.

RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE DIRECTION:

The DMC findings provide key opportunities for continuous improvement related to the elimination of achievement gaps and the delivery of services to struggling students, including students with disabilities.

SUBMITTED BY:

Patricia A. Daley,
Executive Director
Special Education and
Student Services

APPROVAL/CONCURRENCE:

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
Superintendent

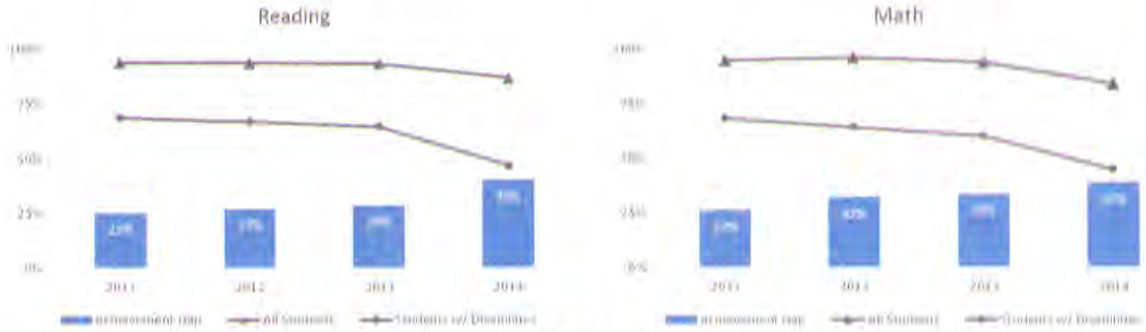
Linda T. Wise
Deputy Superintendent

I. Background

The HCPSS is a high performing district, with achievement levels exceeding the state average. During the recent transition to the new College and Career Ready Standards, overall student achievement in the HCPSS decreased slightly, which is a trend across the state due to the lag in transition to the standards. Students with disabilities in the HCPSS have been disproportionately affected by this transition, leading to a significant increase in the achievement gap between all students and students with disabilities.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 3rd Grade MSA Results

Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities



- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in third grade reading and math have widened by 15 and 12 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

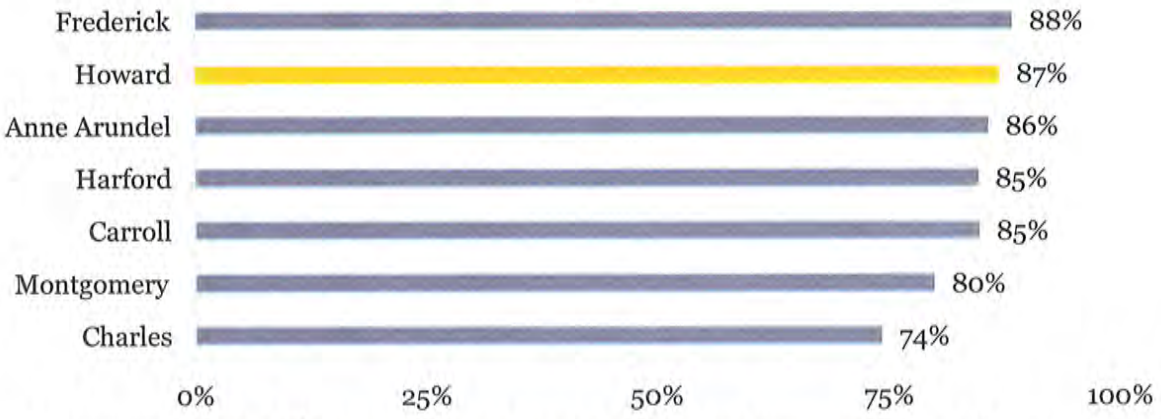
Howard County Achievement Gap, 8th Grade MSA Results

Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities

- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in eighth grade have followed a similar trend as the third grade scores, as reading and math have widened by 16 and 11 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

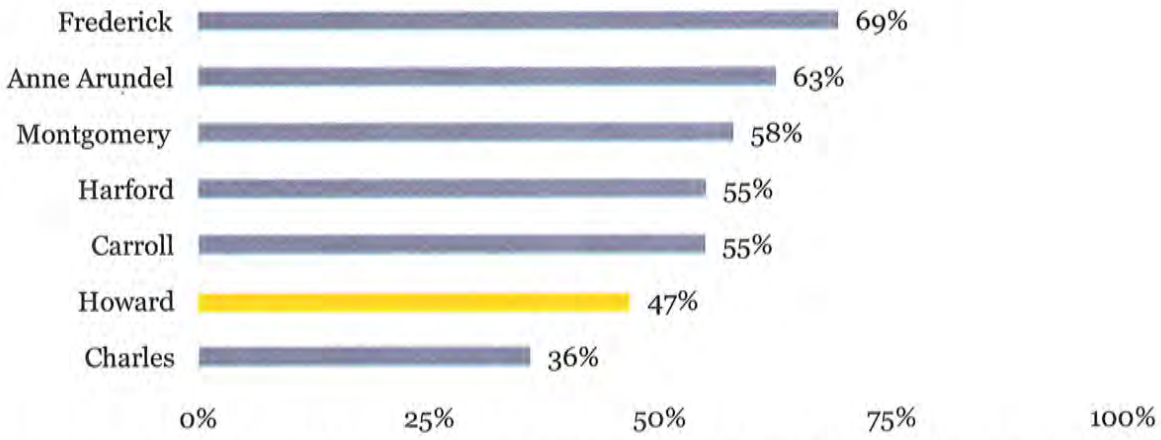
This report seeks to identify opportunities to reverse the growing achievement gaps for students with disabilities. When compared to similar districts in the state, a similar story is true. Overall the district performs at very high levels, but students with disabilities lag behind both their non-disabled peers, but also students with disabilities in other like districts.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, All Students 2014
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Howard County's 3rd graders performed better in reading than many similar districts last year.

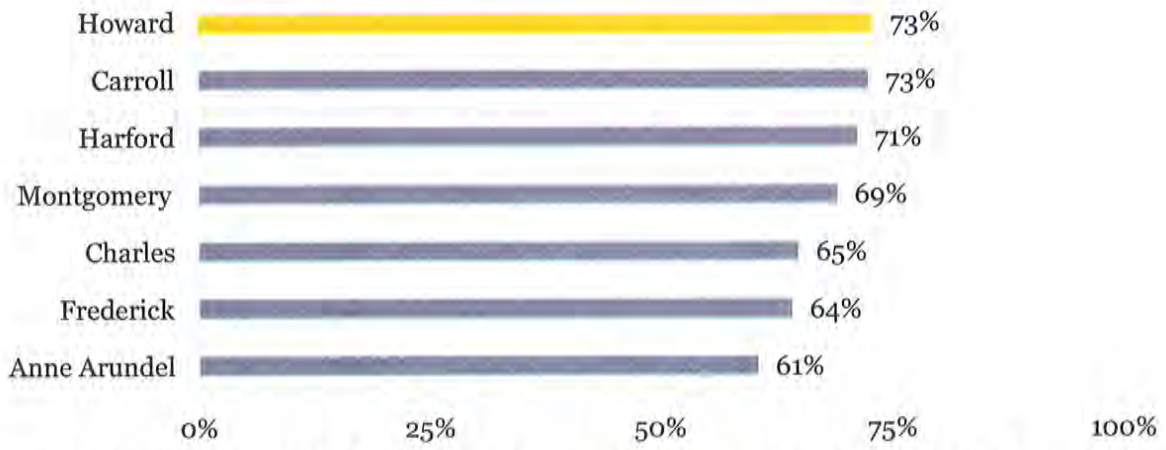
Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- The district had a significantly lower proficiency rate for students with disabilities than similar districts last year. Additionally, the comparison districts have higher rates of students living in poverty.

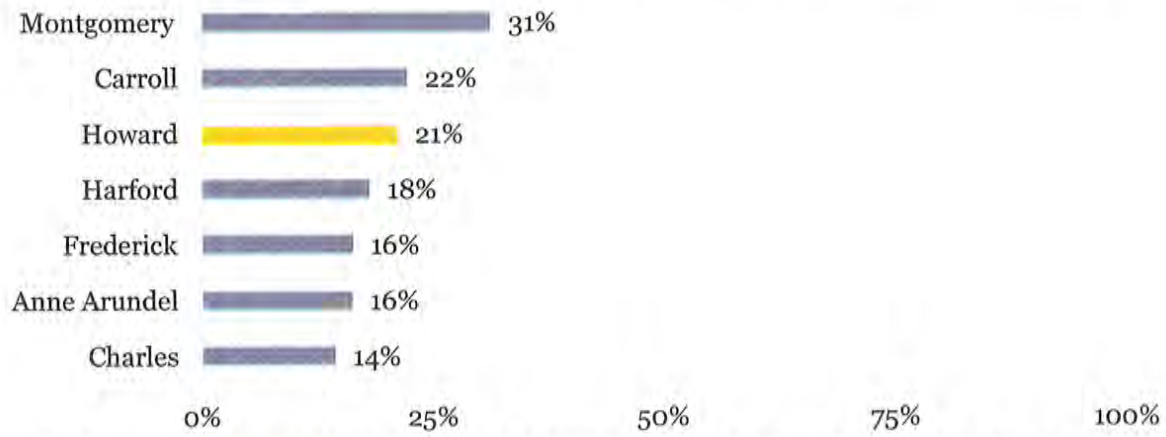
At the eighth grade level, a similar situation exists.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, All Students 2014
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Similarly, 8th graders in HCPSS outperformed students in most other similar districts in math last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- However, students with disabilities in the district did not outperform those students in similar districts. Nearly all students with disabilities achieved at low levels.

II. Process

The review focuses equally on the academic achievement of students and on the cost effective use of limited financial resources. The study is conducted under the framework of the continuous improvement model. It does not try to determine what is good or bad, but rather creates a road map to help move a district to the next level of performance. This process acknowledges that all systems can improve and that opportunities for improvement are built upon the district's current strengths, history, structure, and resources.

The review compares current practice in the district to best practices drawn from similar systems around the country. It also incorporates a number of well-tested analytical tools. In all cases, the evaluation recognizes that increasing student achievement, managing costs, continuing to comply with state and federal regulations, and respecting children, parents, and staff are all important. Addressing one, while ignoring the others, is not an option.

The review respects the reality that school districts are complex organizations tasked with a multitude of expectations, unfunded mandates, priorities, and responsibilities. Although a large variety of thoughtful ideas for improvement are possible, a short, targeted plan is more beneficial than a long laundry list of observations, options, and possible actions. To that end, a small number of high-potential, high-impact opportunities are recommended.

Not all opportunities can be addressed at once. Additionally, any of these opportunities would typically take 1-3 years of careful planning, research, communication, coordination, and roll-out, with a commitment from the leadership to provide focus and stability during the implementation process.

The research for this project included extensive in-person interviews, an online parent survey, a deep look at hard data, classroom visits, benchmarking against best practices and like communities, and other research.

III. Commendations

The District Management Council offered the following commendations:

1. The HCPSS is committed to providing an inclusive education for students with disabilities.

At all levels, special education teachers, general education teachers, and parents *indicated that including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a beneficial practice and is strongly embraced and widely implemented.*

This commitment to meeting the needs of students with mild to moderate—as well as some students with severe disabilities—in the general education setting has had the positive effect of providing most students with disabilities opportunities to be educated alongside their peers.

- Inclusion classrooms are offered at all grade levels in schools throughout the district. All of the classrooms visited included students with disabilities.
- *During interviews, teachers expressed that there is shared ownership of students, and there is a clear district message that "we teach all students."*
- In an online survey, 81% of parents of students with disabilities indicated that their students were welcomed into the school community.

2. The leadership in the HCPSS is "forward thinking" and the staff embrace a culture of continuous improvement.

Interviews indicated that the HCPSS prides itself on being "forward thinking," and the district has shown a commitment to continuous improvement. Staff indicated that the district is frequently asked to participate in state committees on curriculum and instruction initiatives. Additionally, staff expressed a genuine commitment to improving their practice with a focus on serving students more effectively.

3. The HCPSS has robust capacity and systems to collect and manage a variety of student and staff data.

The district recently completed an audit of its data systems and is currently in the process of updating its student information systems to be more comprehensive and accessible to the appropriate staff. By the end of the current school year, a learning management system for sharing student performance and local common formative assessment data for use by school improvement teams will be up and running. The district was able to easily and accurately provide large quantities of data for this review, easier than many like districts.

4. The HCPSS is proactive in seeking opportunities to improve its budget practices and to expand its capacity to analyze financial data.

The HCPSS has taken a series of proactive steps to improve its budget practices. First, the district rolled out a zero-based budgeting process last year to help ensure that its investments are aligned with demonstrated need across the district. Second, the budget department added analysts to conduct more rigorous financial analyses than in the past.

Third, the district has taken steps to analyze the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of major budget elements to ensure that it is providing high-quality services to students.

These and similar efforts have helped control overall spending in special education, which has grown at a slightly slower rate than overall district spending in the last four years.

5. **Students are identified for special education at a reasonable rate.**

Across the country, wide variation in identification rates of students with disabilities is common. Identifying a student for special education can have significant implications for his or her learning. In many districts the breadth of general education interventions plays a significant impact of identification rates. The district's strong commitment to serving all students in the general education classroom and commitment of general education teachers impacts the district's identification rate. In the district, students are identified for special education services at a rate that is below both the state and the national averages.

IV. Opportunities

The District Management Council identified the following opportunities:

1. **Consider providing more time on task for all students who struggle in order for them to master grade level content.**

Districts that have closed the achievement gap and significantly raised the achievement of students with special needs—and more broadly, the achievement of all struggling students—provide them with extra instructional time each day to master grade level content.

1a. Elementary Reading and Mathematics

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Ensuring that all students read on grade level is critical to their future success in school and beyond graduation.

Students who struggle to read on grade level need more time for reading instruction in order to catch up and keep up with their peers. Research has shown that this is true for both students with mild to moderate disabilities and students without Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who struggle to read on grade level. Careful planning and scheduling could help ensure that any reading intervention support is over and above the 90-minute core literacy block.

Currently in the district, there is not a consistent practice of providing students who struggle with any additional time on task. The approach to elementary reading varies significantly from school to school, but on the whole extra time to learn is not the norm. For instance, interviews indicated that some elementary schools prioritize pulling students out of individual work time during the core ELA block for supplemental reading instruction and others prioritize push-in for small group or 1-to-1 instruction. Neither approach provides extra time for students. Few—if any schools—consistently use an additional period to provide reading intervention to struggling students.

Inconsistent benchmarks or processes are used across the district to identify students who need additional time to read on grade level. There is no common definition of grade level mastery and no uniform way to identify struggling readers. Interviews indicated that schools typically use at least one or some combination of a classroom-focused improvement plan, program improvement process, or instructional intervention team process to identify students who are struggling. However, multiple focus groups indicated that there was not a clear benchmark or common assessment used for discussing student data during these processes. Rather, the data used to identify struggling students varies across schools, with many schools using primarily teacher-written assessments, and some using Fountas and Pinnell or Measures of Academic Progress.

1b. Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics

At the secondary level, the extra instructional time required increases significantly relative to the elementary level, up to one or even two hours per day to make up for prior lost years.

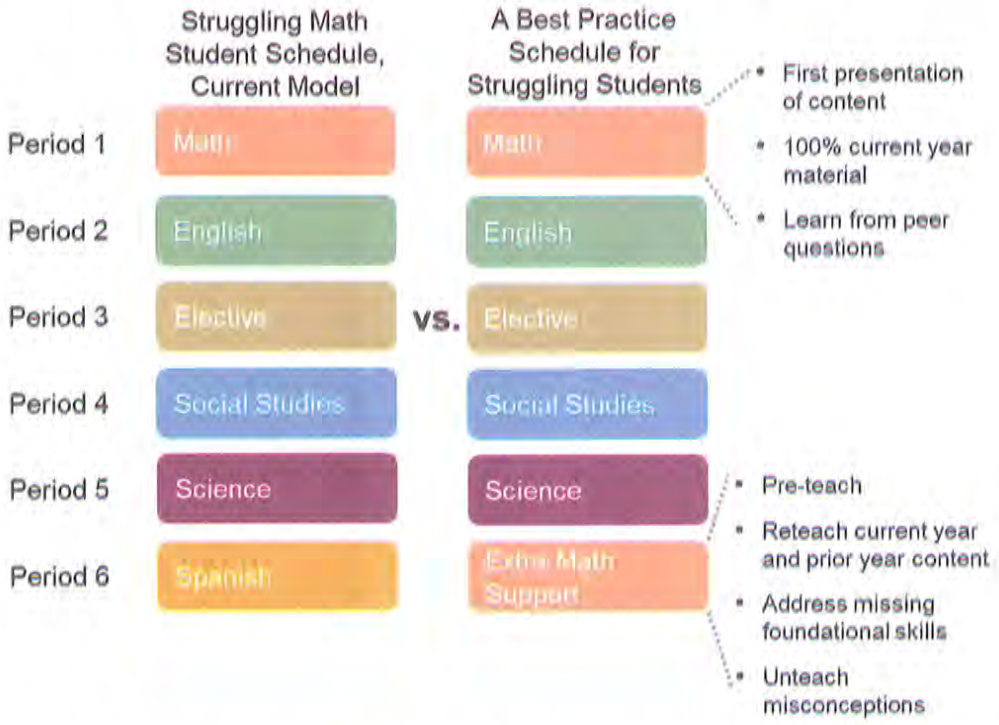
Providing extra time to pre-teach materials, re-teach the day's lesson, address missing foundational skills, and un-teach misconceptions is a best practice to supporting all students struggling in mathematics and ELA at the secondary schools.

Schools lack a consistent practice of providing additional instructional time in either ELA or mathematics at the high school level. Interviews indicated that there are no district wide formalized or systematized interventions for mathematics or ELA content at the high school level.

At the middle school level, many schools offer "seminars" in mathematics and ELA, however their use and purpose is not consistent across the district. Interviews indicated that these seminar courses are typically not structured to fill in learning gaps and build skills that the student might have missed in previous years, but they are primarily a repeat of the content from the student's core math or ELA class.

Schedules for Struggling Students in the Current and Best Practice Models

Current vs. Best Practice Struggling Student Schedule



Similar to elementary reading, clear benchmarks or a systematized approach to identify struggling students at both the middle and high school levels in ELA and mathematics are missing. Rather, schools rely on teacher-written assessments and teacher recommendations, sometimes from the previous year, to identify students who are falling behind.

1c. Implications for Current Practices

In the HCPSS, support for students with IEPs often occurs in the form of "increased adult intensity," rather than extended time; in this model, students are assigned multiple adults to support them at the same time (e.g., collaboration, co teaching, 1-to-1 support), instead of getting extended time on task. Shifting away from a high-intensity model of student support can maximize student learning and free up funds to support other opportunities to raise achievement.

In the HCPSS, "collaboration," two adults at once, is the most common form of special education service delivery:

- Approximately 75% of elementary inclusion special educators' direct service time is spent either in a co-teaching or push-in setting.
- Similarly, 81% of secondary inclusion special education teachers' direct service time is in a setting with a general educator present.

The district has placed co-teaching at the forefront of its efforts to help struggling students with special needs. National research, however, suggests that co-teaching seldom raises student achievement. In his 2009 review of educational research, John Hattie notes that no studies have shown student gains from co-teaching and that on average it actually produced less or equal learning than a class with a single teacher, while costing twice as much. This is because while co-teaching represents higher "intensity" of support (i.e., multiple adults providing support at the same time), it does not mean extended time on task with a content-strong teacher for the struggling student.

Interviews with teachers across the country who co-teach suggested that co-teaching, while promising in theory, is often executed poorly. Effective co-teaching requires a high level of collaborative planning between the general education and special education teachers, which requires daily common planning time. Teachers often express not having sufficient time to meet and plan lessons in their teams. Insufficient planning results in lack of consistency in the co-taught instructional delivery of content, as the two teachers may have different goals for the students. Providing common planning time, however, typically increases staffing requirements by 20% or more.

Similar challenges exist in the HCPSS. Interviews suggested that structures for common planning do not exist consistently across the district, which often renders the co-teaching model frustrating and ineffective. Many staff acknowledged that co-teaching was not being implemented with fidelity due to limited co-planning time and other demands that frequently pull either the general education teacher or the special education teacher out of the classroom.

2. Ensure that students who struggle receive instruction from instructors with subject-specific training during core classes and interventions.

Extra time on task is not sufficient for struggling students to master grade level material. The training and knowledge of the teacher also matters a great deal.

2a. Elementary Reading and Mathematics

For students who struggle, research indicates that the subject-specific training of the instructor has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of achieving grade level mastery. Effective teachers of reading have extensive training in the teaching of reading. Often, special educators have deep expertise in pedagogy but limited background in the teaching of reading. Districts that have made the most significant gains among struggling readers have done so by providing teachers skilled in the teaching of reading extra time with struggling students.

Paraprofessionals can play an important role in supporting many students with special needs, especially for behavioral and physical support; however, the overuse of paraprofessional support can often limit students' learning and independence, in addition to making the job frustrating for paraprofessionals. When students struggle in reading, it is generally more beneficial for their learning to spend extra time with teachers or interventionists highly skilled in the teaching of reading than with paraprofessionals, who generally do not have extensive training in the teaching of reading.

Interviews, classroom visits, and data from the schedule sharing all indicate that the background and training of staff providing elementary reading instruction vary significantly across the district. Staff in the focus groups explained that reading specialists or special education teachers could both lead reading instruction lessons, and paraprofessionals could provide reading instruction if the materials were prepared by a special education teacher..

As the data from the schedule sharing illustrates, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and student assistants are all providing a significant amount of core academic instruction in the HCPSS.

Special Education Teachers (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (141.0 FTE)[1]

Elementary Level Only

Academic topic	% time spent
Reading	39%
Math	31%
Writing	10%
Science	4%
Social Studies	4%
Total academic instruction	**88%**

- Special education teachers are spending nearly all of their direct service time providing content instruction, including 39% of that time on reading instruction.

Special Education Paraeducators (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (110.0 FTE)*

Elementary Level Only

Academic topic	% time spent
Reading	24%
Math	23%
Writing	12%
Social Studies	8%
Science	8%
Total academic instruction	**75%**

- Special education paraeducators are spending nearly three out of four hours of their time spent with students providing content instruction or support, including nearly a quarter of their time on both reading and on math.
- General education paraprofessionals did not share their schedules, but the district has many such staff, many involved in reading instruction.

Student Assistants (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (35.0 FTE)

Elementary Level Only

Academic topic	% time spent
Math	16%
Reading	11%
Writing	6%
Social Studies	4%
Science	4%
Total academic instruction	**41%**

- Student assistants spend significantly less of their direct service time on core instruction than paraprofessionals, but they are still spending two out of five hours of that time providing content instruction or support.

2b. Secondary English Language Arts and Mathematics

[1] Academic and non-academic support is equal to 100% of student support (direct service) time.

* This study only collected data on special education and early childhood paraprofessional staff. General education paraprofessional staff are not included in this analysis.

Just as the skill and training of the instructor is vital for the reading success of students at the elementary schools, this is just as true in secondary mathematics and English. Typically, a teacher who has engaged in extensive training and study of a subject is more likely to have intricate working knowledge of the subject and an ability to understand and explain the content to a struggling student in a way that will lead to mastery. For students with or without IEPs who struggle at the secondary level, research shows the content expertise of the instructor has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of mastering the grade level material.

Similar to the reading support at the elementary level, there is a wide variance in what types of staff are providing intervention and support for secondary ELA and mathematics. Both mathematics and ELA instruction can be provided to struggling students with or without an IEP in a variety of settings and by instructors with a variety of backgrounds including in a co-taught classroom, by a reading specialist or a special education teacher, or by a special education teacher and a paraeducator, among other combinations.

Special Education Teachers (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (231.0 FTE)

Secondary Level Only

Academic topic	MS	HS
Math	33%	22%
Writing	30%	12%
Reading	19%	17%
Science	6%	15%
Social Studies	5%	8%
Total academic instruction	**92%**	**74%**

- Special education teachers are spending most of their direct service time providing content instruction, including 33% of that time on mathematics and 49% on ELA instruction at the middle school level.

Special Education Paraeducators (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (102.0 FTE)

Secondary Level Only

Academic topic	MS	HS
Social Studies	26%	15%
Science	25%	17%
Math	16%	13%
Reading	10%	12%
Writing	5%	9%
Total academic instruction	**82%**	**66%**

- Special education paraeducators are spending nearly three out of four hours of their time spent with students providing content instruction or support, much of it in math and social studies. In many districts support is not provided in these subjects.

*These rates were calculated from the results of MSA and HSA tests for grades 6-8 and 11, then extended to the 6-12 enrollment.

3. **Consider shifting the roles of paraprofessional staff to emphasize providing nonacademic support, rather than content instruction, for students with mild to moderate disabilities.**

The district has invested significantly in providing paraprofessional support for students with disabilities. Interviews indicated that there are three main types of paraprofessional staff that provide services to students in the district: special education paraeducators, student assistants, and temporary employees. Extensive data was collected on how paraeducators and student assistants spend their time. The distinctions between each position are explained below, although each role performs similar functions overall:

- Special education paraeducators: provide support and sometimes instruction to small groups of students with disabilities
- Student assistants: provide predominantly 1-to-1, non-academic support to students, although it is not uncommon for them to provide instruction as well
- Temporary employees: contracted through outside agencies, primarily provide non-instructional supports to students
- The district also has a large number of general education paraprofessionals.

A benchmarking analysis compared the district's paraprofessional staffing levels, including special education paraeducators, student assistants, and temporary employees, to like districts across the nation.

Special Education Paraprofessional Staffing Levels
Paraeducators, Student Assistants, and Temporary Employees

		FTE per 1,000 students			
Role	**Current FTE**	**District**	**Like communities**	**Multiple**	**Scaled multiple**
Paraprofessional Staff*	760.5	14.3	8.0	1.8 x	2.7 x

*This includes special education paraeducators, student assistants, and temporary employees, but not general education paraprofessional staff.

The value in the "multiple" column indicates the ratio of the HCPSS' paraprofessional staffing level compared to the paraprofessional staffing rate of similar districts, adjusted for enrollment. The "scaled multiple" column shows the same ratio, except it controls for the district's low identification rate.

Two factors could be contributing to paraprofessional staffing levels that are significantly higher than similar districts. First, the district relies on paraprofessional staff to provide a significant amount of instruction to struggling students.

Second, the artificial stratification of paraprofessional staff into three distinct roles could be contributing to the higher-than-average staffing levels. Interviews indicated that oftentimes the roles and responsibilities of the three different paraprofessional positions were ambiguous or overlapping, which could cause multiple staff to be assigned to similar activities.

This analysis does not include any of the roughly 500 FTE of general education paraprofessionals that the HCPSS employs. However, as a comparison, many districts would have less than 200 FTE of general education paraprofessional staff, while some districts have close to 0 FTE.

4. Consider increasing the amount of time related service providers spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

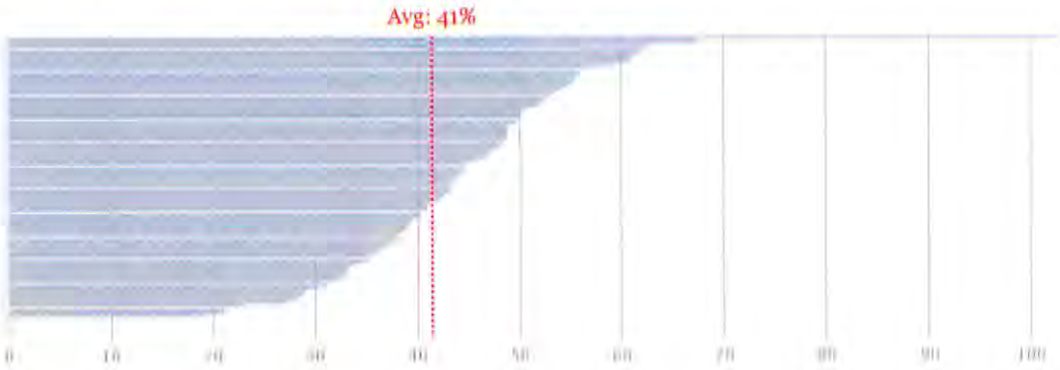
Taking a proactive role in managing related services could allow the district to free up funds to service more students without reducing a minute of service to students.

4a. Speech and Language Pathologists

Speech and language pathologists are an important component of many students' IEPs. They spend time working directly with students, while also participating in evaluations, report writing, and data analysis.

Speech and Language Pathologist Direct Student Support (105.5 FTE)

Direct service is calculated based on the percent of time spent with students in the contracted work week.



- On average, speech therapists spend 41% of the contracted work week serving students.

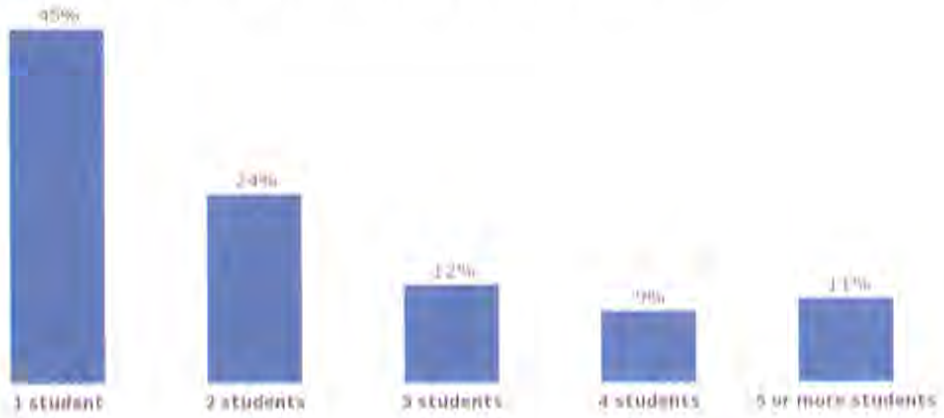
Speech and Language Pathologist Activities (105.5 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Therapy with students	41%
Total direct service	**41%**

Paperwork/ IEP/ IFSP writing	10%
Planning/ materials preparation	9%
Collaboration with colleagues (email, phone, in-person)	7%
Attend meeting (IEP/IFSP)	5%
Personal lunch	5%
Attend meeting (other than IEP/IFSP)	5%
Professional development	5%
Assessing/ observing students	3%
Travel	3%
Medicaid billing/ service documentation	3%
Parent counseling/ training	2%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	2%
IEP/ IFSP testing/ assessment	2%
Over reported	-2%
Total Indirect Service	**59%**

The average speech-language pathologist in the district serves 28 students. Nationally the typical caseload is over 50 students. The low caseload is a consequence of much time in meetings and doing paperwork, coupled with providing much service 1:1. Speech-language pathologists provide nearly half of their services 1:1.

Speech and Language Pathologist Group Size (105.5 FTE)



4b. Occupational Therapists

Much like speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists provide very important services to students with disabilities, but also have other responsibilities.

- Occupational therapists, on average, provide less than two days per week of services to students.
- The range of direct service time is quite large, with five individual practitioners indicating that they spent no time with students and one practitioner spending 60% of time with students.

4c. Physical Therapists

Physical therapists have quite similar schedules to those of occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists. The 12.4 FTE of physical therapists in the district provide an average of 35% direct service to students, with practitioners ranging from below 20% to above 50%. They also spend 26% of their time doing IEP paperwork or traveling.

The emphasis on small group sizes coupled with indirect service activities accounting for more than half of their week are two significant factors for why the HCPSS has more than twice the FTE of related service providers than like districts, when scaled for identification rate.

A benchmarking analysis comparing the district's related services staffing levels to like districts across the nation indicated that the HCPSS has significantly more than average number of related services staff.

Staffing Levels Compared to like Districts

	FTE per 1,000 students			
Role	**District**	**Like communities**	**Multiple**	**Scaled multiple**
Speech and language pathologists	2.0	1.4	1.5x	2.2x
Occupational therapists	0.8	0.4	1.9x	2.9x
Physical therapists	0.2	0.2	1.3x	1.9x

- The district has 1.5 times and 1.9 times the number of SLPs and OTs, respectively, as similar districts, even while similar districts typically serve about 40% more students with disabilities.

- When its identification rate is considered, the HCPSS has between double and triple the number of related service staff of like districts.

5. Consider expanding the roles and responsibilities of school- and central office-based administrators to more closely manage how special education staff use their time.

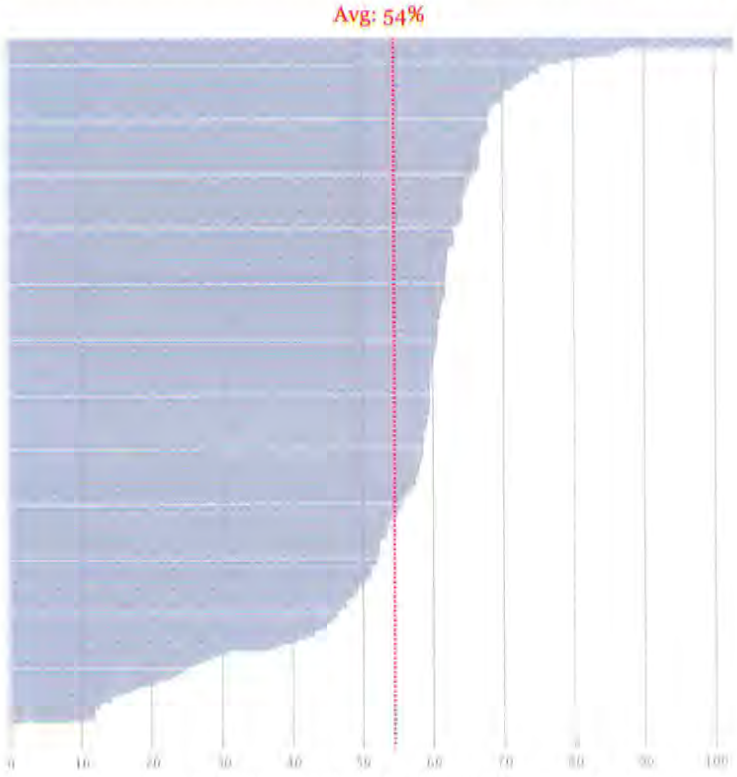
As the district moves to best practice service delivery models, district leaders can set explicit expectations for how services are provided, how much time in a day staff provide instruction and how many students are helped at once by a teacher. These service delivery, workload and group size guidelines are very common in general education, but less so in special education.

The HCPSS has a variety of administrator roles at both the school and district level (e.g., instructional team leaders, resource teachers, and instructional facilitators) that could be utilized to help implement the shift in how special education staff use their time and serve students.

5a. Special Education Teacher Time with Students

To the extent that special education teachers will be providing support for academic subjects, there is an opportunity to have them spend more time doing so. In the current scheduling, special education teachers spend, on average, 54% of their time working directly with students. As a point of comparison, a general education teacher might typically spend 75%-85% of their week providing direct service and in some districts special education teachers also spend 75% of their time with students. Re-thinking the schedule and non-teaching demands of special educators in the district could allow the teachers to spend more of their week helping students.

Special Education Teacher (Inclusion) Direct Service (396 FTE)



- Special education teachers in the HCPSS spend, on average, about 2.5 days per week with students.

All activities are important, yet few districts actively manage the distribution of this time for special education staff. For comparison, in general education all trade-offs between student time and indirect time are set by the district leadership, such as the number of courses taught by a high school mathematics teacher.

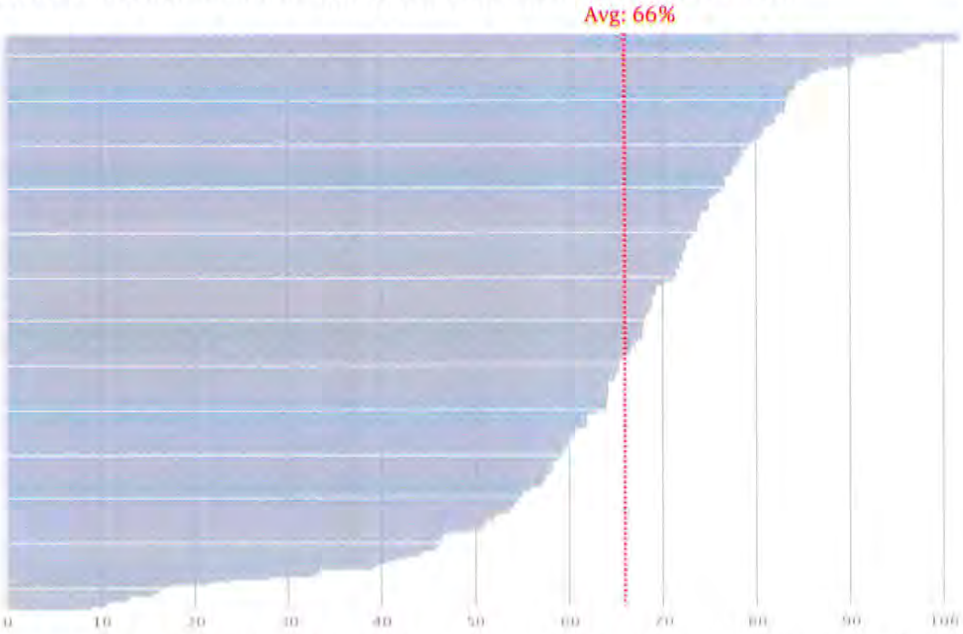
Special Education Teacher (Inclusion) Activities (396 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Student instruction or support	54%
Total direct service	**54%**

Planning/ materials preparation	14%
Collaboration with colleagues (email, phone, in-person)	7%
Paperwork/ IEP writing	6%
Personal lunch	6%
Attend school based meeting (other than IEP)	4%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	3%
Parent communication (email, phone, in-person)	2%
Student observation/ data collection	2%
Attend meeting (IEP)	2%
Professional development	<1%
Scheduling	<1%
Implementation of specialized methodologies	<1%
IEP testing/ assessment	<1%
Travel	<1%
Over reported	-3%
Total Indirect Service	**46%**

- Special education teachers spend about 2.5 days per week with students and about one day per week planning or collaborating with colleagues.

Special Education Paraeducator (Inclusion) Direct Service (212 FTE)



- Special education paraeducators in the HCPSS provide slightly more than three days per week of direct service to students.

Special Education Paraeducator (Inclusion) Activities (212 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Student instruction or support	66%
Total direct service	**66%**

Planning/ materials preparation	9%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	7%
Personal lunch	7%
Student transition/ escort	2%
Attend meeting	1%
Data collection	1%
Behavior intervention plan	<1%
Parent communication (email, phone, in-person)	<1%
Implementation of specialized methodologies	<1%
Travel	<1%
Under reported	5%
Total Indirect Service	**34%**

5b. Implementing the Shift

Implementing changes such as shifting staff schedules to spend more time with students will require focus and effort on the part of the district. To accomplish this, it can help to designate staff in the district to support scheduling and managing the daily activities of special education staff.

In the HCPSS there are a variety of special education leaders, both at the school and district level that could fill this role, including resource teachers, instructional facilitators, and secondary instructional team leaders. Interviews indicated that oftentimes the roles and responsibilities of each of these three groups are ambiguous or overlapping. While redefining these roles, the district could include a new expectation that some will manage the schedules and service delivery model.

V. HCPSS Implementation Plan

Based on identified opportunities and key findings, an implementation plan is being developed that focuses on 8 key areas to improve student learning outcomes, address efficiencies within current practices and processes, target customized learning experiences, and ensure the hiring and retention of highly skilled, highly trained, and highly effective staff.

1. Elementary Reading
   Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities, will achieve grade level reading proficiency. Highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective teachers will provide additional time on task to address instructional gaps and support the attainment of reading proficiency.
2. Secondary Reading
   Ensure all secondary students who struggle, including those with disabilities, will achieve grade level proficiency in reading. Highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective teachers will provide additional time on task to address instructional gaps and support reading proficiency.
3. Elementary Mathematics
   Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities, will achieve grade level proficiency in mathematics. Highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective teachers will provide additional time on task to address instructional gaps and support mathematics proficiency.
4. Secondary Mathematics
   Examine middle school and high school course options that provide students who are struggling in mathematics, including those with disabilities, additional instructional time.

5. Staffing
   Ensure all students who are struggling in mathematics, ELA and reading, including those with disabilities, will receive rigorous instruction and additional interventions by highly skilled, highly trained, and highly effective teachers.
6. Related Service Providers
   Increase direct service time that occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and psychologists work directly with students by decreasing inefficiencies.
7. IEP Process Efficiencies
   Examine the current IEP process and associated tasks and implement efficiencies to provide increased time for special education teachers to support student learning.
8. Central Office Leadership
   Redefine roles and responsibilities within the Department of Special Education and Student Services (DSESS) Central Office leadership staff and school-based administrators.

VI. Collaboration

The DMC and DSESS leadership met with system leaders and parent/community stakeholders to review identified commendations and opportunities as well as key areas of focus. The system leader stakeholder group included representatives from school administration, curriculum and instruction, and DSESS.

The parent community stakeholder group included representatives from the Special Education Community Advisory Committee (SECAC), The Arc of Howard County, Howard County Autism Society, Gifted and Talented Learning Disabled, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), University of Maryland Department of Special Education, and Parents Place of Maryland.

Collaboration with stakeholder groups across the district and community will be ongoing.

VII. Next Steps

The HCPSS embraces the opportunities for improvement efforts that will positively impact student achievement. As staff engage in a process of continuous improvement, actions will be taken to provide highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective teachers to ensure that all students have access to a rigorous instructional program.

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

January 29, 2015

Special Education Opportunities Review

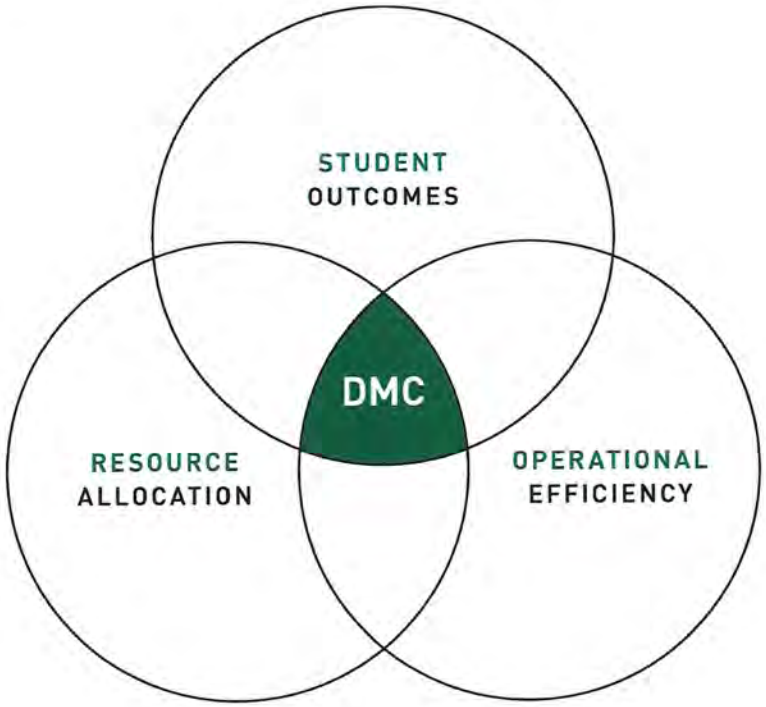
Patricia Daley, Executive Director Special Education and Student Services, HCPSS

Nathan Levenson, President, District Management Council

The District Management Council (DMC)'s mission is to achieve systemic improvement in public education.

DMC's Mission

The District Management Council was founded in 2004 to help address the most pressing and important challenges facing K-12 leaders.



DMC believes that strengthening the management capacity of school district leaders is essential for raising student achievement, improving operational efficiency, and allocating resources more effectively.

The special education and struggling students opportunities review had three goals.

Goals

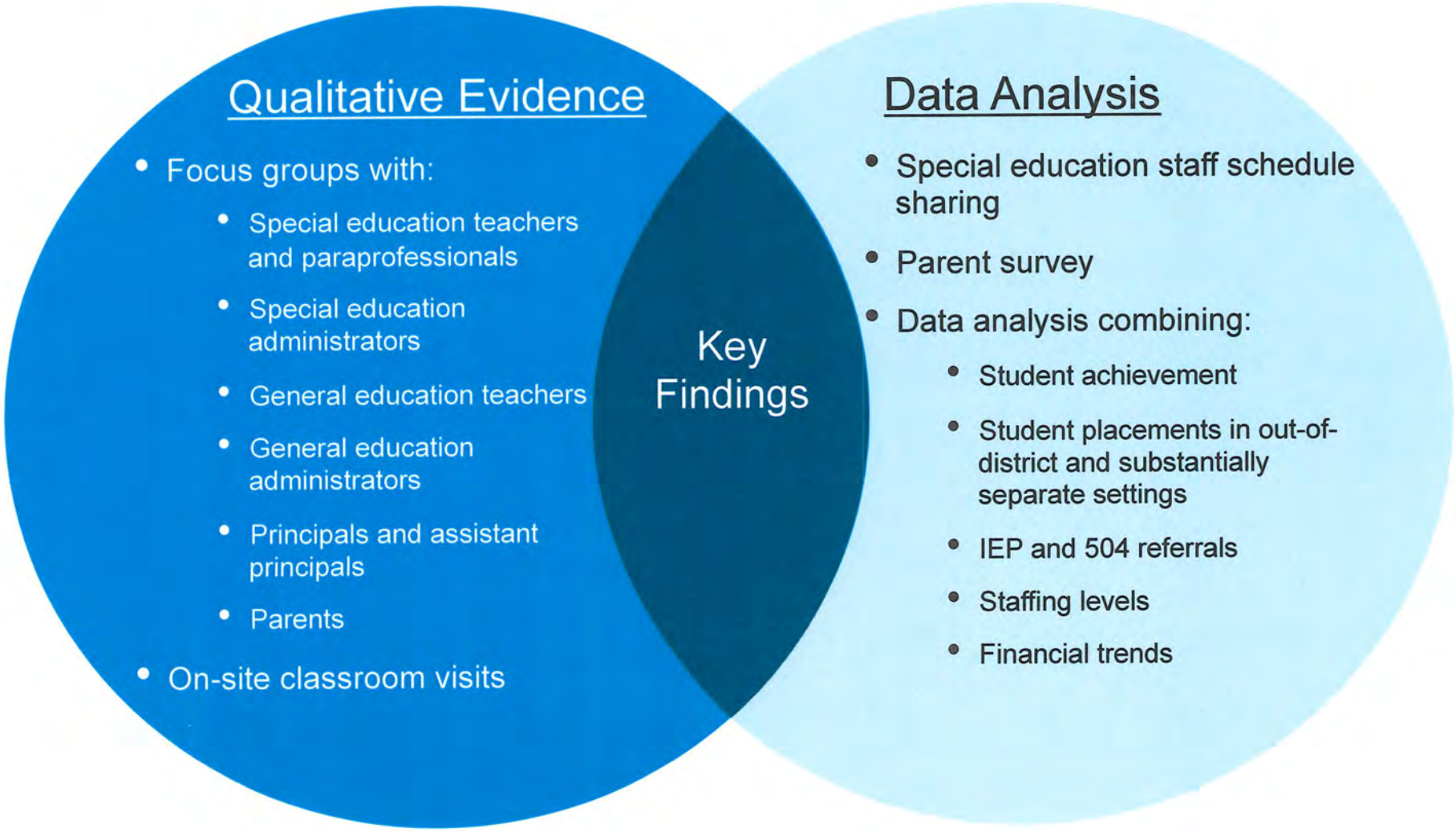
1. To gain a deep understanding of the current status of services for struggling students with and without an IEP.

2. To compare current practices to best practices.

3. To provide a short list of high leverage recommendations to improve student outcomes that are cost effective and consistent with district values.

The study combined significant qualitative evidence and robust data analysis to identify the highest leverage opportunities.

Methodology



The district has many strengths to be proud of within special education and the district as a whole.

Commendations

1. The district is committed to providing an inclusive education for students with disabilities.

2. The leadership in the district is "forward thinking" and the staff embrace a culture of continuous improvement.

3. The district has robust capacity and systems to collect and manage a variety of student and staff data.

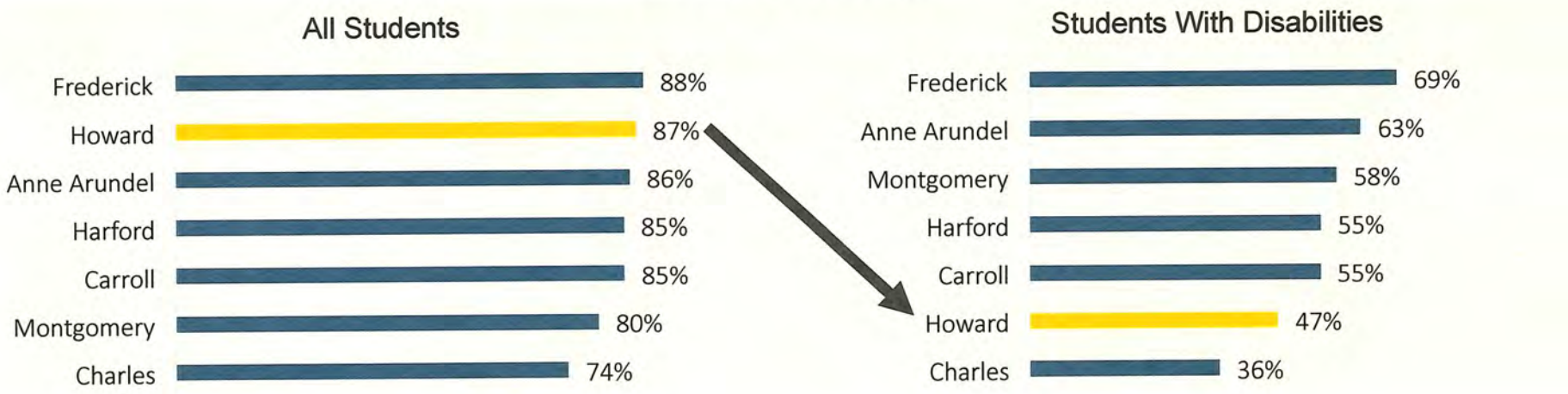
4. The district is proactive in seeking opportunities to improve its budget practices and to expand its capacity to analyze financial data.

5. Students are identified for special education at a reasonable rate.

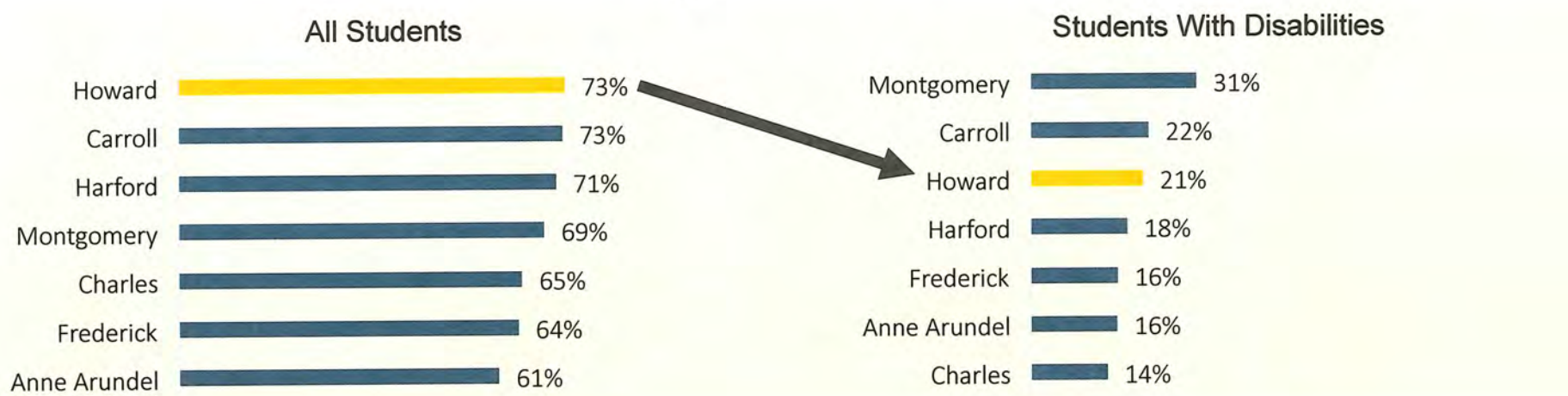
Students with disabilities in the district do not achieve at the same levels as in like communities.

2013-14 MSA Scores

Third Grade Reading

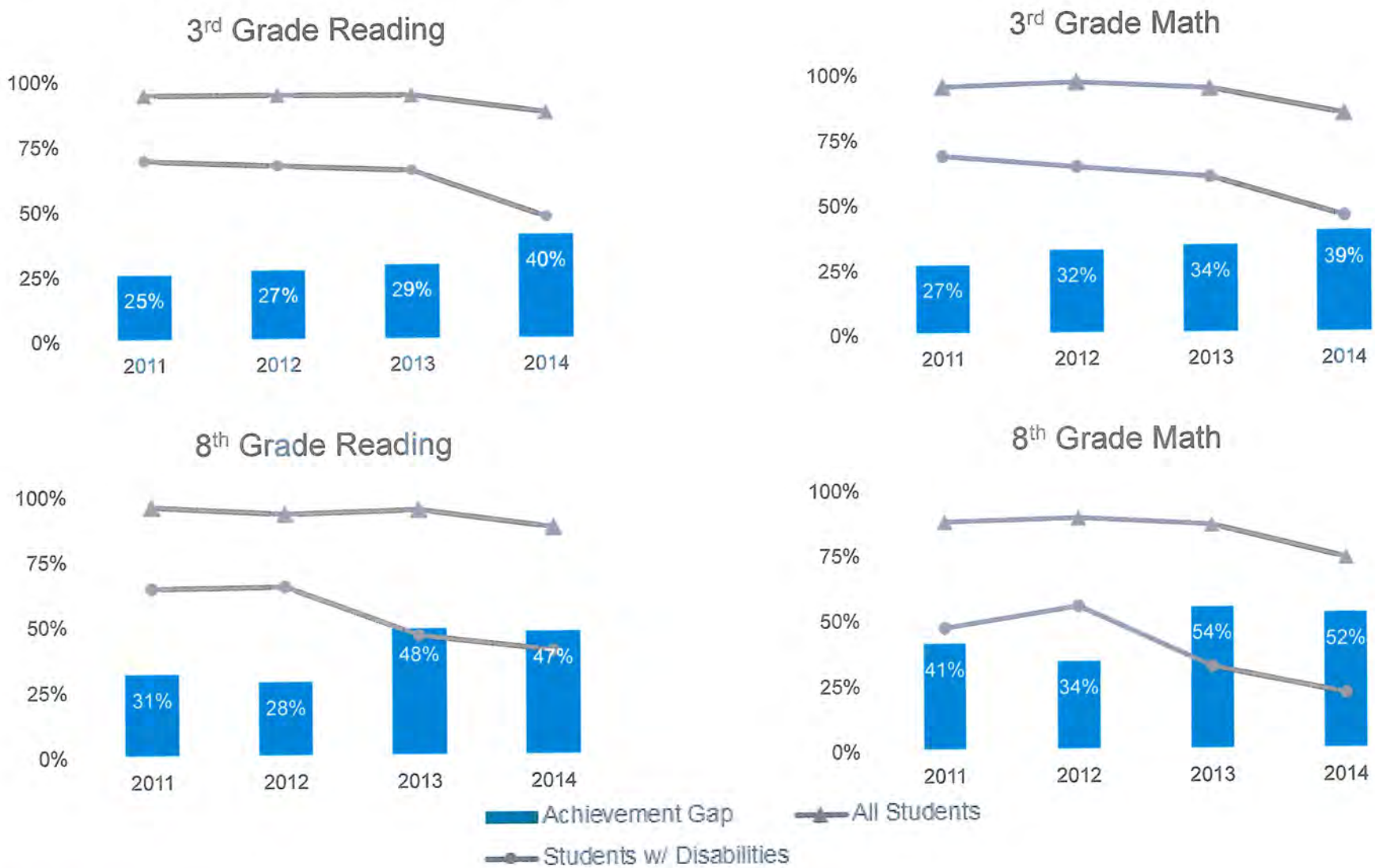


Eighth Grade Math



Students with IEPs have experienced significantly greater decreases in performance than students overall during the shift to Common Core.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 2011-2014



Six opportunities to improve outcomes for struggling students with and without disabilities were identified.

Opportunities

1. Consider providing more **time on task** for all students who struggle in order for them to master grade level content.

2. Ensure that students who struggle receive instruction from instructors with **subject-specific** training during core classes and interventions.

3. Consider shifting the **roles of paraprofessional staff** to emphasize providing nonacademic support, rather than content instruction, for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

4. Consider increasing the amount of time **related service providers** spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

5. Consider expanding the roles and responsibilities of school- and central office-based administrators to more closely **manage** how special education staff use their time.

Many struggling students get extra adults but not extra time.

Typical Intervention Strategy for Struggling Students

	Non-Struggling Student Schedule		Struggling Math Student Schedule
Period 1	Math		Math
Period 2	English		English
Period 3	Elective	vs.	Elective
Period 4	Social Studies		Social Studies
Period 5	Science		Science
Period 6	Spanish		Spanish

- Co-teaching
- Paraprofessional support
- Lower level curriculum

For many students "extra help" happens during core instruction or instead of core instruction

Consider providing more time on task for all students who struggle in order for them to master grade level content.

Best Practice Intervention Strategy for Struggling Students

1: EXTRA TIME

	Non-Struggling Student Schedule		Struggling Math Student Schedule		A Best Practice Schedule
Period 1					Math
Period 2					English
Period 3		vs.		vs.	Elective
Period 4					Social Studies
Period 5					Science
Period 6					Extra Math Support

- First presentation of content
- 100% current year material
- Learn from peer questions

- Pre-teach
- Reteach current year and prior year content
- Address missing foundational skills
- Unteach misconceptions

Extra time is a very inclusive practice.

Best Practice Schedule with Extra Time

A Best Practice Schedule

Math

English

Elective

Social Studies

Science

- In general education classroom
- With general education teacher
- General education curriculum

Extra Math Support

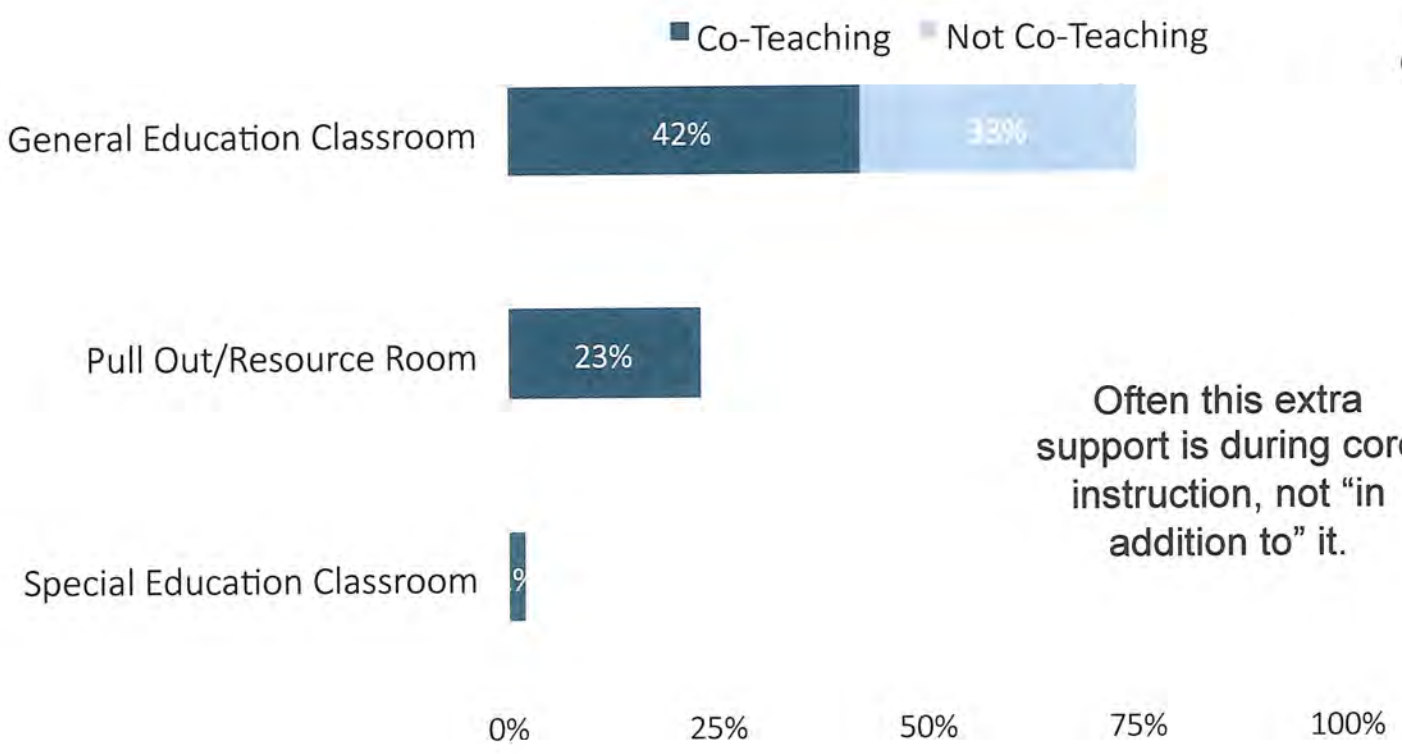
- In general education classroom
- With general education teacher or dual certified teacher
- Focuses on mastering grade level skills

Few struggling readers at the elementary level receive extra time to master this critical skill.

Instructional Setting, Inclusion Special Education Teachers

1: EXTRA TIME

Elementary Level



Two teachers in one classroom but no extra time.

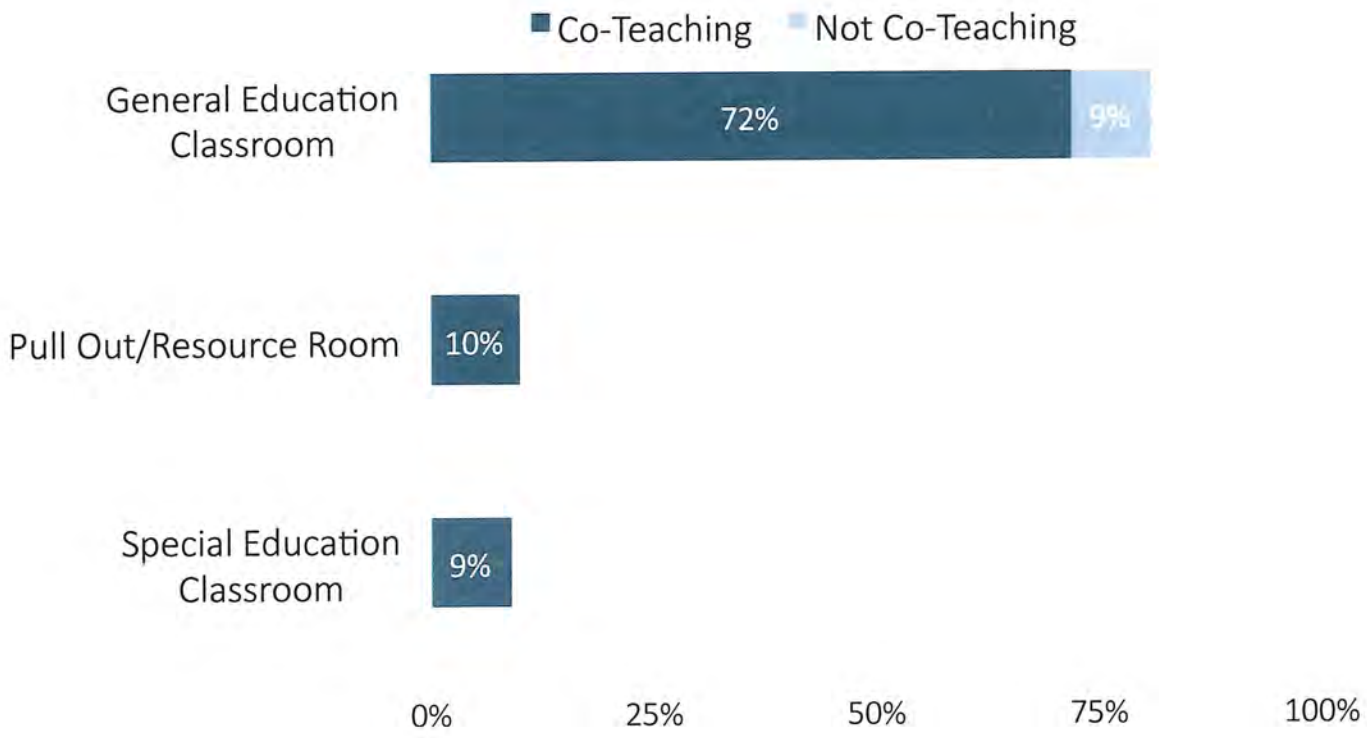
Often this extra support is during core instruction, not "in addition to" it.

At the secondary level, "collaboration" is the most common form of special education support, which does not provide extra time.

Instructional Setting, Inclusion Special Education Teachers

1: EXTRA TIME

Secondary Level



Two adults but no extra time.

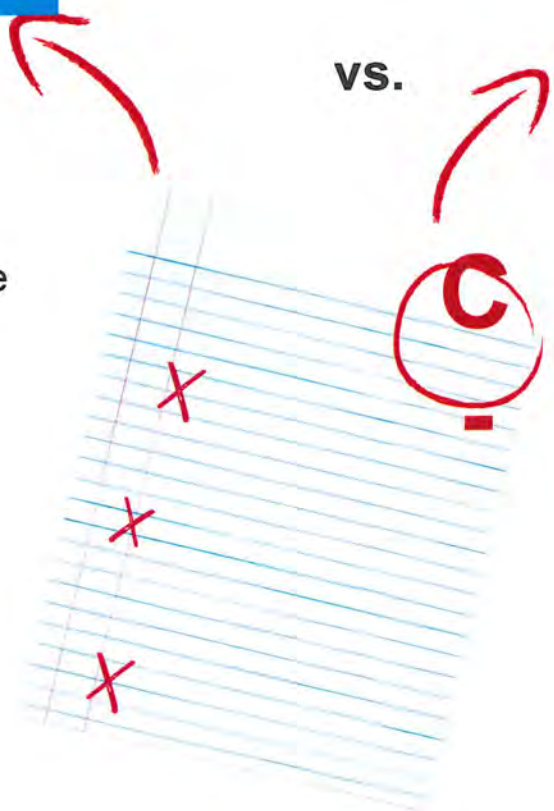
Ensure that students who struggle receive instruction from staff with subject-specific training during core classes and interventions.

Generalist vs. Content Strong Instructional Support

Generalist Support

- Review test questions and show correct answer
- Provide homework help
- Quiz in preparation for future tests

vs.



Content Strong Support

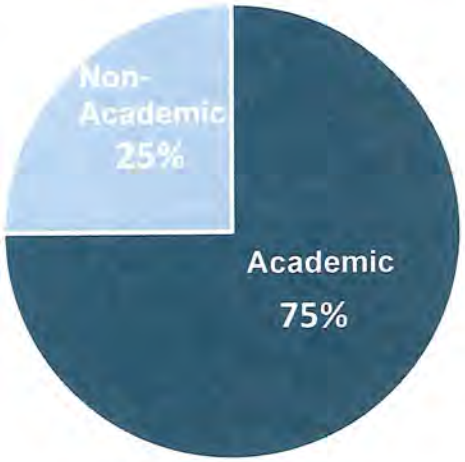
- Associate each incorrect answer with underlying concept
- Infer misunderstandings from incorrect answers
- Teach prior, fundamental skills
- Teach correct material using 2 or 3 different approaches

At the elementary level, some students receive extra help from content strong staff, but others do not.

Support Providers, Elementary Level

- Typical support providers at the elementary level include:
  - Reading teachers
  - Special education teachers
  - Paraprofessionals

Inclusion Paraprofessional Activities



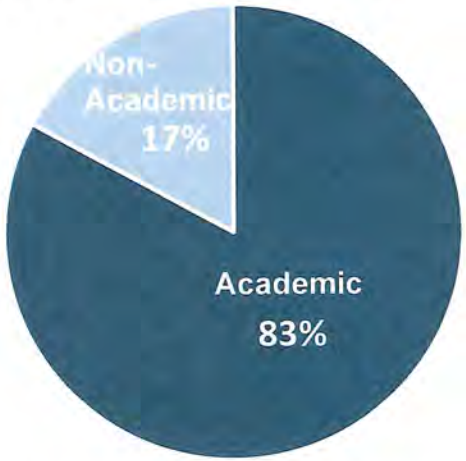
Academic topic	% time spent
Reading	24%
Math	23%
Writing	12%
Social Studies	8%
Science	8%
Total academic instruction	**75%**

No general education paraprofessionals were included in this study.

At the secondary level, most extra help does not come from content strong staff.

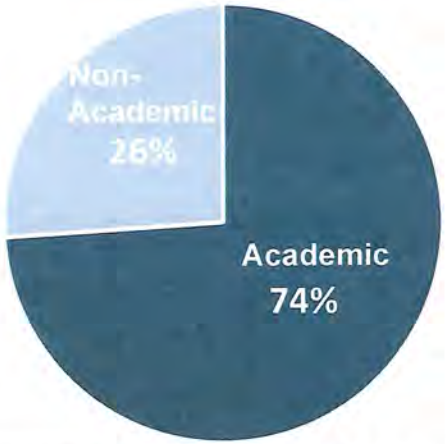
Topic of Support, Secondary Level

Special Education Teachers



Academic topic	MS	HS
Math	33%	22%
Writing	30%	12%
Reading	19%	17%
Science	6%	15%
Social Studies	5%	8%
Total academic instruction	**92%**	**74%**

Inclusion Paraprofessionals



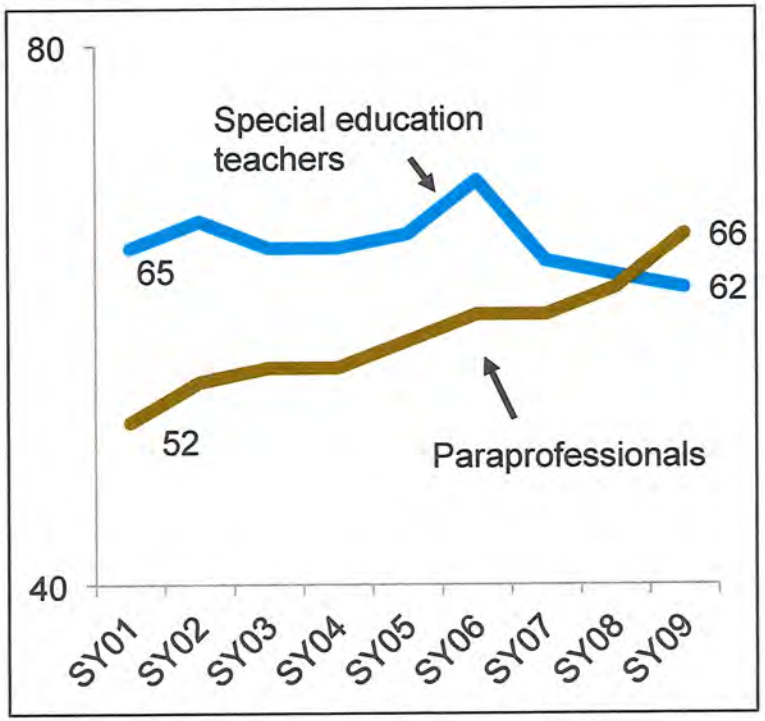
Academic topic	MS	HS
Social Studies	26%	15%
Science	25%	17%
Math	16%	13%
Reading	10%	12%
Writing	5%	9%
Total academic instruction	**82%**	**66%**

No general education paraprofessionals were included in this study.

Current district practices are very common but are not aligned with best practices for raising achievement of struggling students.

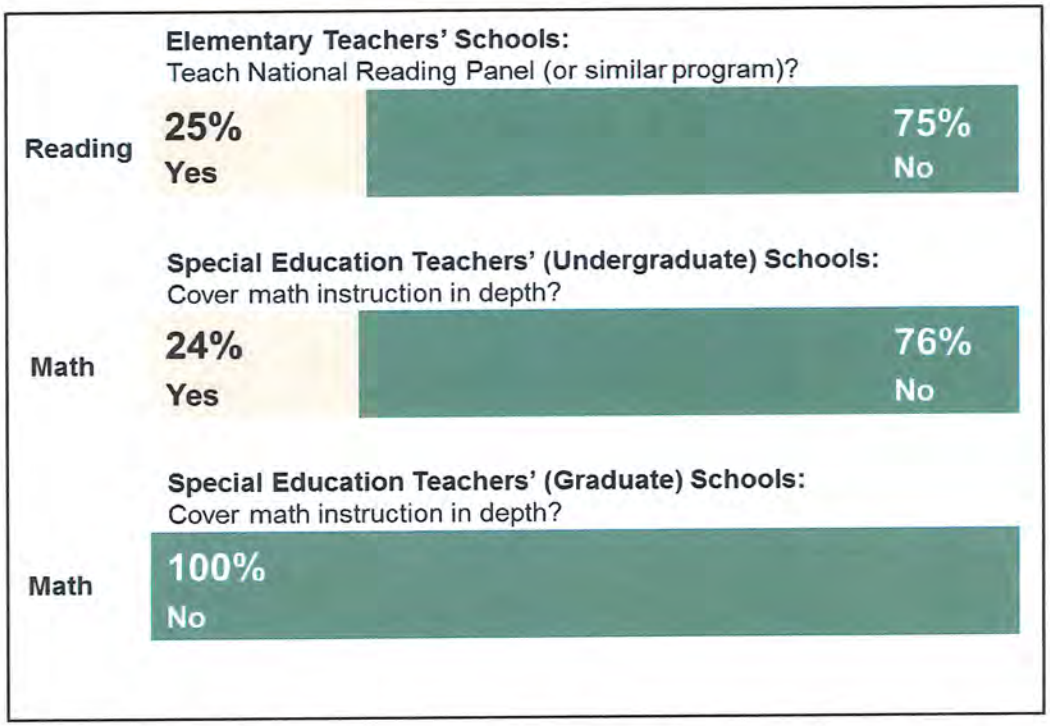
National Special Education Context

Special Education Teachers and Paraprofessionals per 1,000 Students



Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, "Shifting Trends in Special Education," 2011.

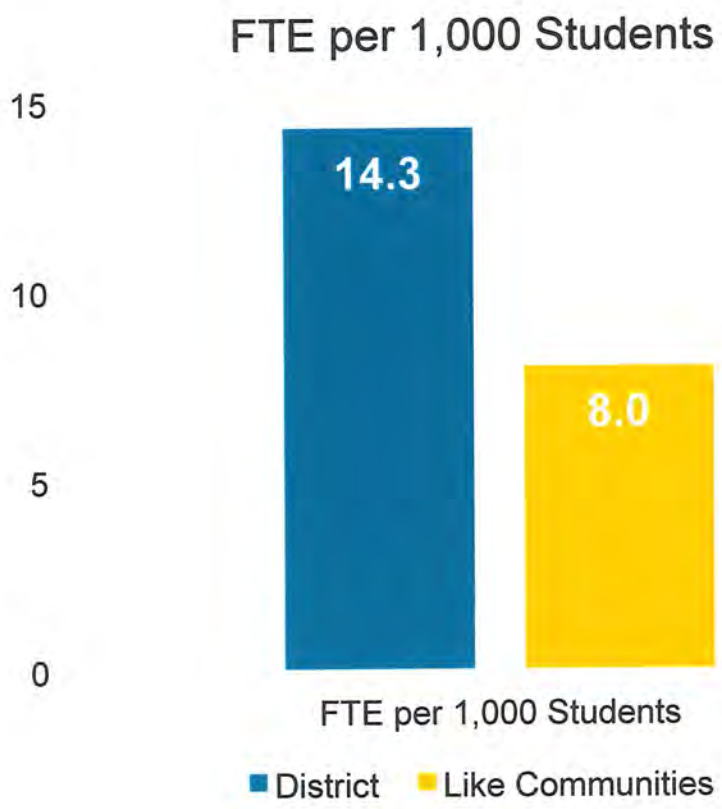
Selected Review of Teacher Prep Programs



Source: National Council on Teacher Quality, "Teacher Prep Ratings," 2013.

Consider shifting the roles of paraprofessional staff to emphasize providing non-academic support, rather than content instruction.

Special Education Paraprofessional Staffing Levels



More paraprofessionals…

- The district relies on paraprofessionals at a rate 1.8x that of similar districts
- The district could shift to staffing levels of like communities to free up resources for highly skilled reading and math specialists

Despite…

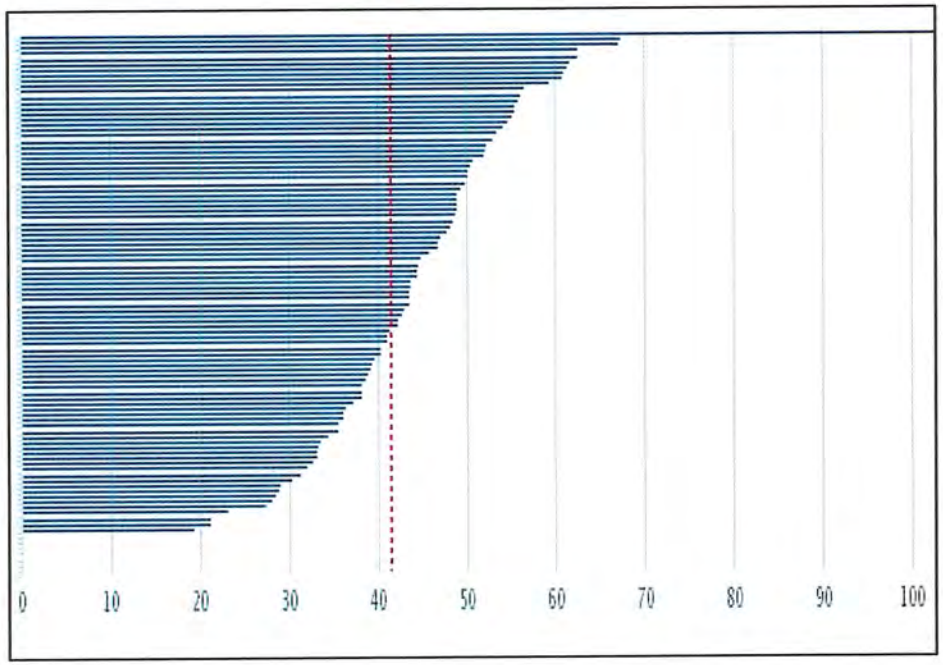
- Having fewer students with IEPs
- This analysis does not include the large numbers of general education paraprofessionals

Consider increasing the amount of time related service providers spend with students

Speech and Language Therapists, Activity Data

% of Time Spent with Students

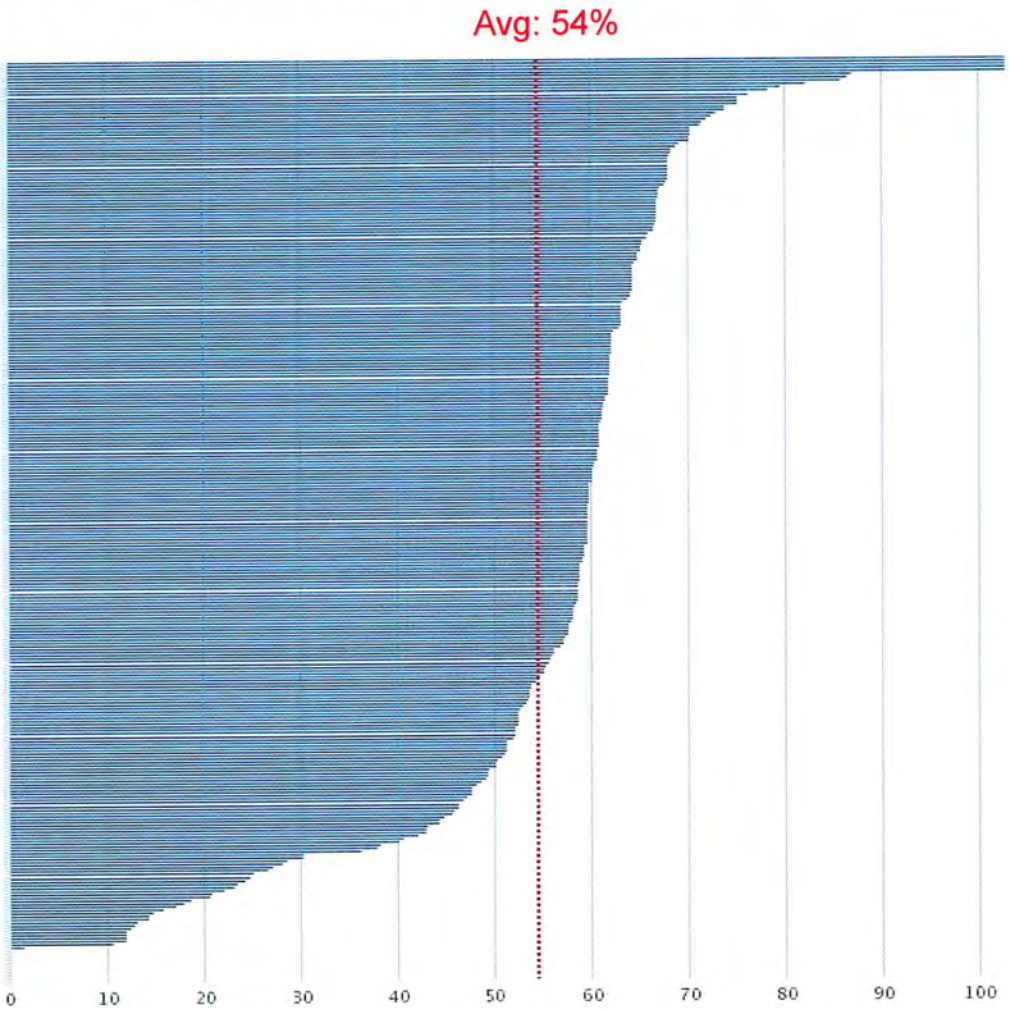
Avg: 41%



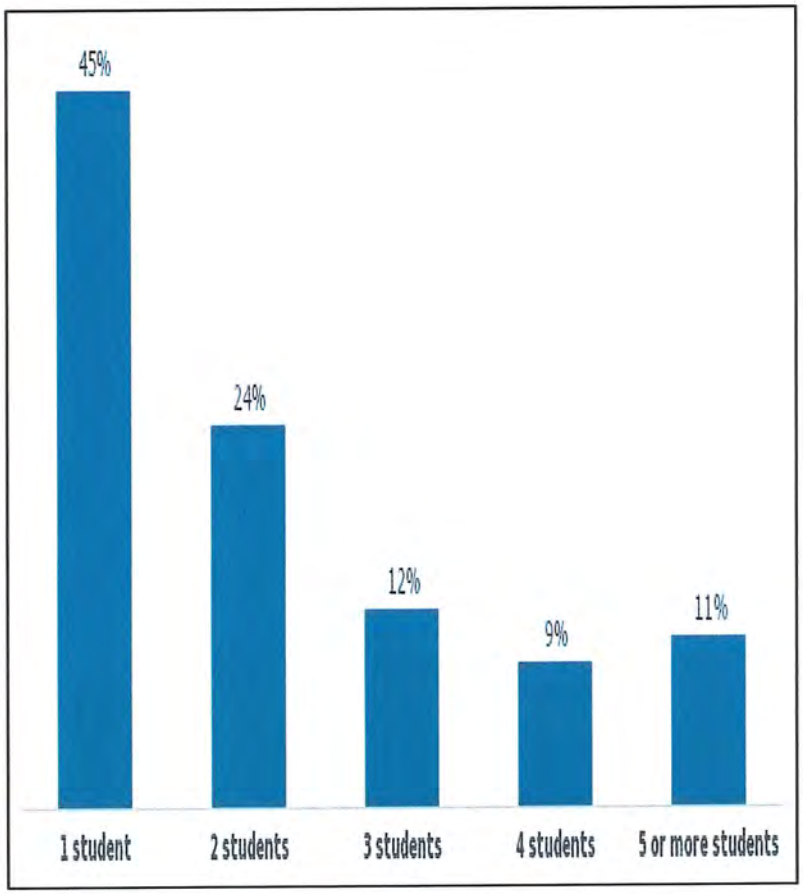
- HCPSS relies on SLPs at a rate 1.5x that of similar districts
- Similar patterns were found for OTs and PTs

Consider expanding the roles of school- and central office-based administrators to manage how special education staff use their time.

Special Education Inclusion Teachers
% of Time Spent with Students



Speech Therapists
Group Size



HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

HCPSS Beliefs and Core Values

"….No matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment."

Carol S. Dweck,

Mindset: The New Psychology Of Success

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

HCPSS Beliefs and Core Values

- Presuming Competence of all students, staff and families
- Implementing inclusive practices regardless of disability
- Students attending neighborhood schools; an emphasis on LRE

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

HCPSS Beliefs and Core Values

- Supporting co-teaching and collaborative planning for teachers
- Ensuring all teachers are skilled in teaching content and planning varied pedagogy
- Providing all students access to rigorous instruction taught by highly qualified teachers

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

HCPSS Implementation Plan

- Focuses on 8 key areas to improve student outcomes
- Addresses efficiencies within current processes
- Targets customized learning experiences for struggling students including those with disabilities
- Ensures the hiring, training, and retention of highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective staff

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

1. Elementary Reading

Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve reading proficiency
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support reading proficiency

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

2. Secondary Reading

Ensure all secondary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve grade level proficiency in reading
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support reading proficiency

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

3. Elementary Mathematics

Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve grade level proficiency in mathematics
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support mathematics proficiency

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

4. Secondary Mathematics

Examine middle and high school course options that provide students who are struggling in mathematics, including those with disabilities, additional instructional time.

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5. Staffing

Ensure all students struggling in mathematics, ELA and reading, including those with disabilities, receive rigorous instruction and additional interventions by highly skilled, highly trained, and highly effective teachers.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

6. Related Service Providers

Increase direct service time that occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and psychologists work directly with students by decreasing inefficiencies.

HOWARD COUNTY
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7. IEP Process Efficiencies

Examine the IEP process and associated tasks and implement efficiencies to provide increased time for special education teachers to support student learning.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

8. Central Office Leadership

Redefine roles and responsibilities within the Department of Special Education and Student Services (DSESS) Central Office leadership staff and school based administrators.

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Collaboration and Sharing

DMC and HCPSS Department of Special Education and Student Services leadership staff:

- Met with system leaders and parent stakeholders to share key ideas
- Sought parent and administrator feedback and ideas
- Will continue to share and collaborate with stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation process

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Next Steps:

- Collaborate and provide guidance to group leaders
- Receive monthly updates from each group leader
- Share information and updates with key stakeholders

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Principal and Parent Perspectives

Jonathan Davis, Principal,
Bollman Bridge Elementary School

"Let's push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives…"

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Principal and Parent Perspectives

Shiney John, Principal,
Thomas Viaduct Middle School

"Let's push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives…"

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Principal and Parent Perspectives

Scott Ruehl, Principal,

Mount Hebron High School

"Let's push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives…"

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Principal and Parent Perspectives

Beth Benevides, Parent

"Let's push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives…"

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Questions

District Management Council and
Howard County Public School System Retreat
January 22, 2015
9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Board Rooms A & B

Agenda

HCPSS Vision 2018 – Fulfilling the Promise of Preparation

System Vision	System Principles	System Goals
Every student is inspired to learn and empowered to excel.	We believe in… * Achieving **excellence** in all we do * Developing each student's **unique gifts** * **Engaging students** in relevant, experiential, and personalized learning * Cultivating **creative problem solving**, critical thinking, and innovation * Promoting integrity, civility, and **global citizenship** * Enriching learning by honoring **diversity** * Fostering a culture of **collaboration**, trust, and shared responsibility * **Removing barriers** to success	1. Every student achieves academic excellence in an inspiring, engaging, and supportive environment. 2. Every staff member is engaged, supported, and successful. 3. Families and community are engaged and supported as partners in education. 4. Schools are supported by world-class organizational practices.

Outcomes:
Each participant will:

- Learn about opportunities for improvement related to the DMC Report
- Discuss best practices in reading and mathematics
- Respond to key recommendations

I. Welcome – Dr. Foose
- Why are we here?

II. Key Findings of Special Education Opportunities Review – Nate Levenson
- Q & A

III. Responding to Opportunities Review – Patty Daley
- Highlights of key recommendations and best practice

BREAK (15 mins.)

IV. Planning for Action – Nate Levenson and Patty Daley
- Group activity #1: begin planning to implement recommendations for Elementary Reading Program and Secondary double time ELA and Math (90 mins.)

V. Planning for Action – Patty Daley
- Next steps to implement recommendations

VI. Summarizing Next Steps – Dr. Foose

Special Education Opportunities Review
Howard County Public School System

Highlights for Sharing
Spring 2015

The District Management Council
70 Franklin Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
Tel: 877-DMC-3500
Fax: 617-491-5266
www.dmcouncil.org

Introduction

The District Management Council (DMC) has conducted a Special Education Opportunities Review on behalf of the Howard County Public School System. The review focuses equally on the academic achievement of students and on the cost effective use of limited financial resources. The study is conducted under the framework of the continuous improvement model. It does not try to determine what is good or bad, but rather creates a road map to help move a district to the next level of performance. This process acknowledges that all systems can improve and that opportunities for improvement are built upon the district's current strengths, history, structure, and resources.

The review compares current practice in the district to best practices drawn from similar systems around the country. It also incorporates a number of well-tested analytical tools. In all cases, the evaluation recognizes that increasing student achievement, managing costs, continuing to comply with state and federal regulations, and respecting children, parents, and staff are all important. Addressing one, while ignoring the others, is not an option.

The review respects the reality that school districts are complex organizations tasked with a multitude of expectations, unfunded mandates, priorities, and responsibilities. Although a large variety of thoughtful ideas for improvement are possible, a short, targeted plan is more beneficial than a long laundry list of observations, options, and possible actions. To that end, a small number of high-potential, high-impact opportunities are recommended.

Not all opportunities listed in the document can be addressed at once. Additionally, any of these opportunities would typically take 1-3 years of careful planning, research, communication, coordination, and roll-out, with a commitment from the leadership to provide focus and stability during the implementation process.

The research for this project included extensive in-person interviews, an online parent survey, a deep look at hard data, classroom visits, benchmarking against best practices and like communities, and other research.

The Special Education Opportunities Review highlights many of the strengths in the district and pinpoints inter-related opportunities to increase student achievement and utilize scarce resources more effectively.

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COMMENDATIONS

The district has much to be proud of and many strengths that create a strong foundation for continuous improvement.

1. The district is committed to providing an inclusive education for students with disabilities.

At all levels, special education teachers, general education teachers, and parents indicated that including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a beneficial practice and is strongly embraced and widely implemented.

This commitment to meeting the needs of students with mild to moderate—as well as some students with severe disabilities—in the general education setting has had the positive effect of providing most students with disabilities opportunities to be educated alongside their peers.

- Inclusion classrooms are offered at all grade levels in schools throughout the district. All of the classrooms visited included students with disabilities.
- During interviews, teachers expressed that there is shared ownership of students, and there is a clear district message that "we teach all students."
- In an online survey, 81% of parents of students with disabilities indicated that their students were welcomed into the school community.

2. The leadership in the district is "forward thinking" and the staff embrace a culture of continuous improvement.

Interviews indicated that Howard County Public Schools prides itself on being "forward thinking," and the district has shown a commitment to continuous improvement. Staff indicated that the district is frequently asked to participate in state committees on curriculum and instruction initiatives. Additionally, staff expressed a genuine commitment to improving their practice with a focus on serving students more effectively.

3. The district has robust capacity and systems to collect and manage a variety of student and staff data.

The district recently completed an audit of its data systems and is currently in the process of updating its student information systems to be more comprehensive and accessible to the appropriate staff. By the end of the current school year, a learning management system for sharing student performance and local common formative assessment data for use by school improvement teams will be up and running. The district was able to easily and accurately provide large quantities of data for this review, easier than many like districts.

4. The district is proactive in seeking opportunities to improve its budget practices and to expand its capacity to analyze financial data.

Howard County Public Schools has taken a series of proactive steps to improve its budget practices. First, the district rolled out a zero-based budgeting process last year to help ensure

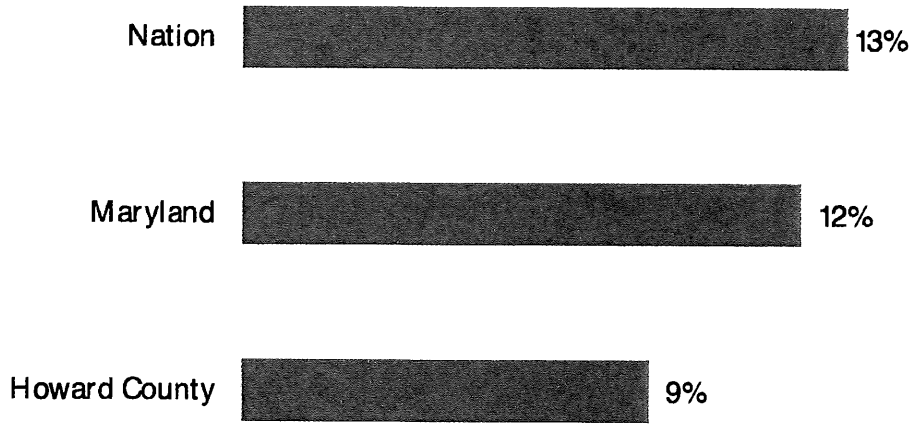
that its investments are aligned with demonstrated need across the district. Second, the budget department added analysts to conduct more rigorous financial analyses than in the past. Third, the district has taken steps to analyze the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of major budget elements to ensure that it is providing high-quality services to students.

These and similar efforts have helped control overall spending in special education, which has grown at a slightly slower rate than overall district spending in the last four years.

5. Students are identified for special education at a reasonable rate.

Across the country, wide variation in identification rates of students with disabilities is common. Identifying a student for special education can have significant implications for his or her learning. In many districts the breadth of general education interventions plays a significant impact of identification rates. The district's strong commitment to serving all students in the general education classroom and commitment of general education teachers impacts the district's identification rate. In the district, students are identified for special education services at a rate that is below both the state and the national averages.

Identification Rate for Students with Disabilities

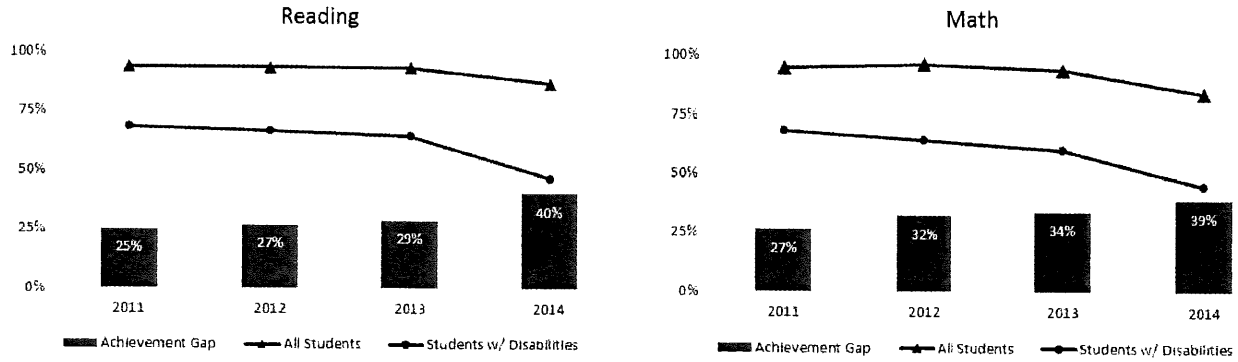


DISTRICT BACKGROUND

Howard County Public Schools is a very high-performing district overall, with achievement levels typically exceeding the state average. During the recent transition to the new Common Core State Standards, overall student achievement in Howard County Public Schools decreased slightly, a trend in the state since the state tests did not transition to the new standards until 2014-15. However, students with disabilities in Howard County Public Schools were disproportionately affected by this transition, leading to a significant increase in the achievement gap between all students and students with disabilities.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 3rd Grade MSA Results

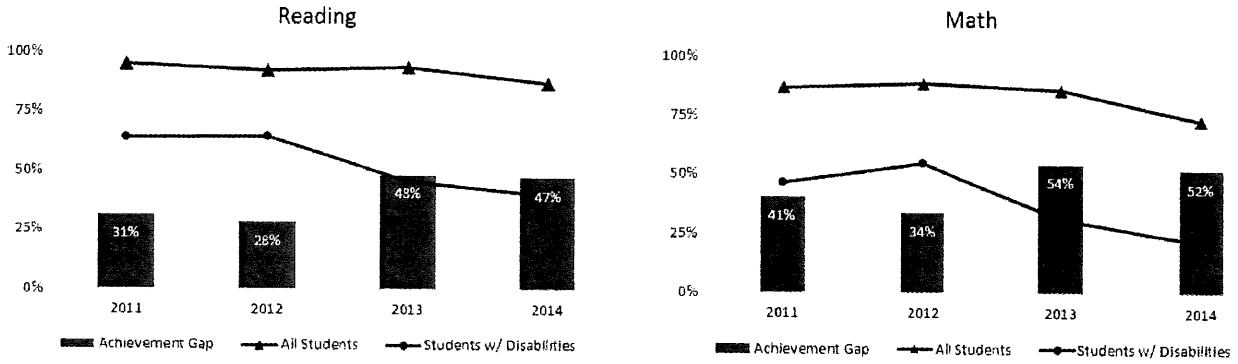
Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities



- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in third grade reading and math have widened by 15 and 12 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 8th Grade MSA Results

Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities



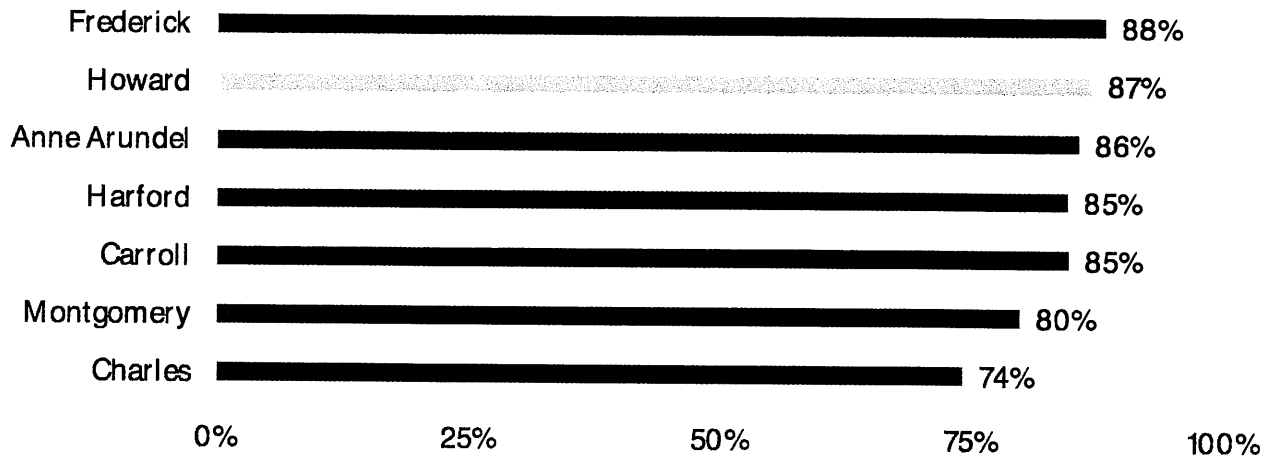
- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in eighth grade have followed a similar trend as the third grade scores, as reading and math have widened by 16 and 11 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

This report seeks to identify opportunities to reverse the growing achievement gaps for students with disabilities.

When compared to similar districts in the state, a similar story is true. Overall the district performs at very high levels, but students with disabilities lag behind both their non-disabled peers, but also students with disabilities in other like districts.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, All Students 2014

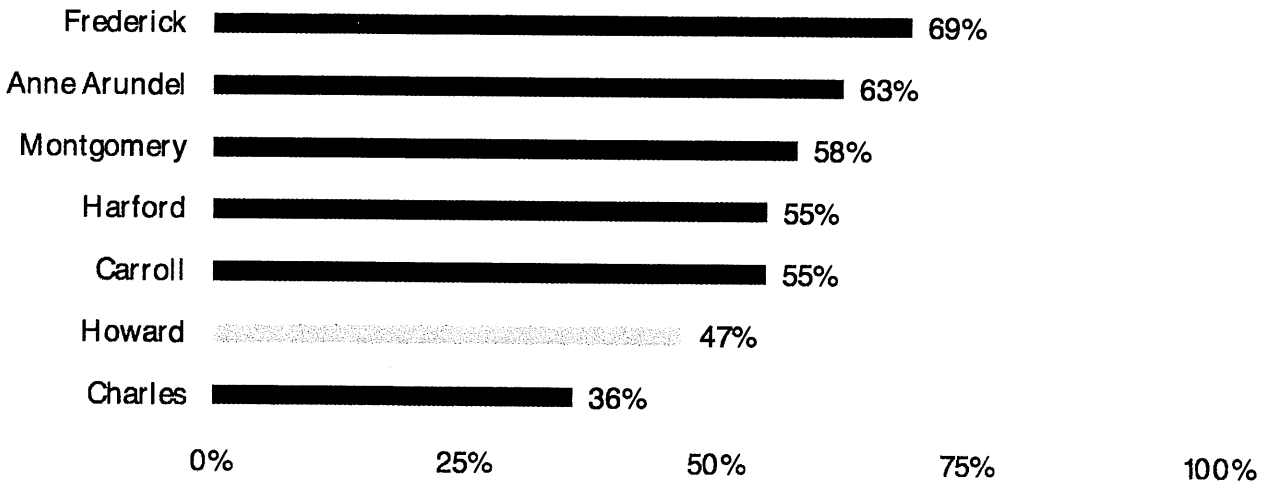
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Howard County's 3rd graders performed better in reading than many similar districts last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014

Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data

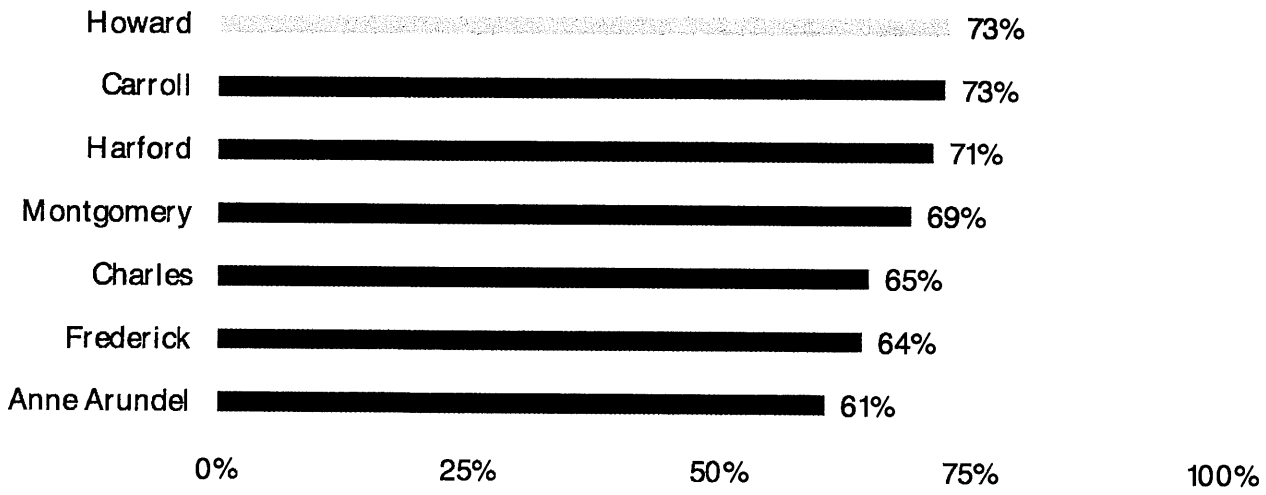


- The district had a significantly lower proficiency rate for students with disabilities than similar districts last year. Additionally, the comparison districts have higher rates of students living in poverty.

At the eighth grade level, a similar situation exists.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, All Students 2014

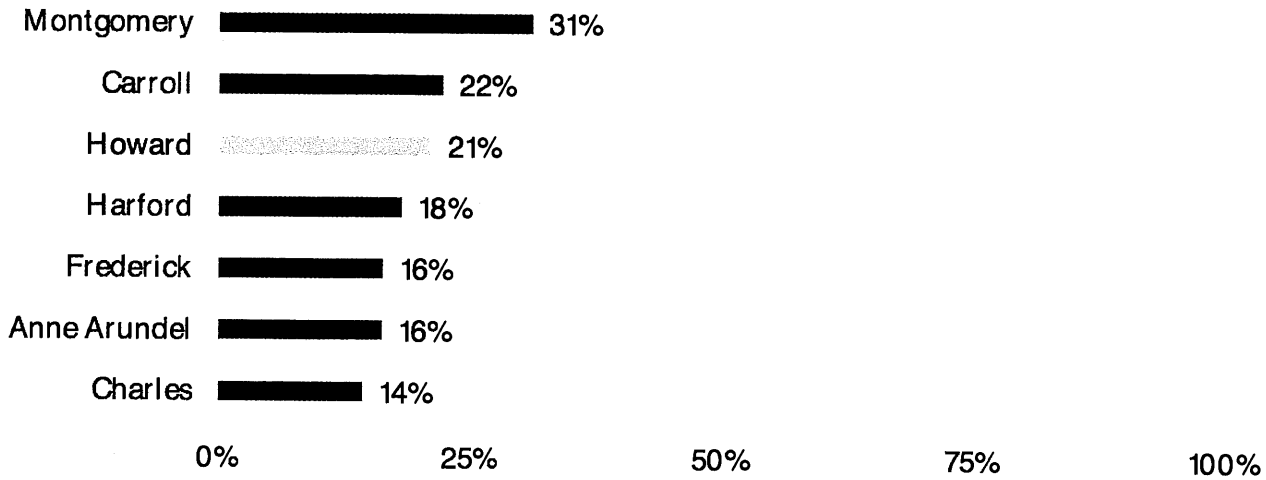
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Similarly, 8th graders in Howard County Public Schools outperformed students in most other similar districts in math last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014

Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- However, students with disabilities in the district did not outperform those students in similar districts. Nearly all students with disabilities achieved at low levels.

During our interviews many staff and leaders were aware of the district's overall high level of achievement, but many believed students with disabilities also excelled academically, which is not the case.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Consider providing more time on task for all students who struggle in order for them to master grade level content.

Districts that have closed the achievement gap and significantly raised the achievement of students with special needs—and more broadly, the achievement of all struggling students—provide them with extra instructional time each day to master grade level content.

1a. Elementary Reading

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Ensuring that all students read on grade level is critical to their future success in school and beyond graduation.

Students who struggle to read on grade level need more time for reading instruction in order to catch up and keep up with their peers. Research has shown that this is true for both students with mild to moderate disabilities and students without IEPs who struggle to read on grade level. Careful planning and scheduling could help ensure that any reading intervention support is over and above the 90 minute core literacy block.

Currently in the district, there is not a consistent practice of providing students who struggle with any additional time on task. The approach to elementary reading varies significantly from school to school, but on the whole extra time to learn is not the norm. For instance, interviews indicated that some elementary schools prioritize pulling students out of individual work time during the core ELA block for supplemental reading instruction and others prioritize push-in for small group or 1-to-1 instruction. Neither approach provides extra time for students. Few—if any schools—consistently use an additional period to provide reading intervention to struggling students.

On a related point, there are not consistent benchmarks or processes used across the district to identify students who need additional time to read on grade level. There is currently no common definition of grade level mastery and no common way to identify struggle readers. Interviews indicated that schools typically use at least one or some combination of a classroom-focused improvement plan (CFIP), program improvement plan (PIP), or instructional intervention team (IIT) process to identify students who are struggling. However, multiple focus groups indicated that there was not a clear benchmark or common assessment used for discussing student data during these processes. Rather, the data used to identify struggling students varies across schools, with many schools using primarily teacher-written assessments, and some using Fountas and Pinnell or MAP.

1b. Secondary Math and ELA

At the secondary level, the extra instructional time required increases significantly relative to the elementary level, up to one or even two hours per day to make up for prior lost years.

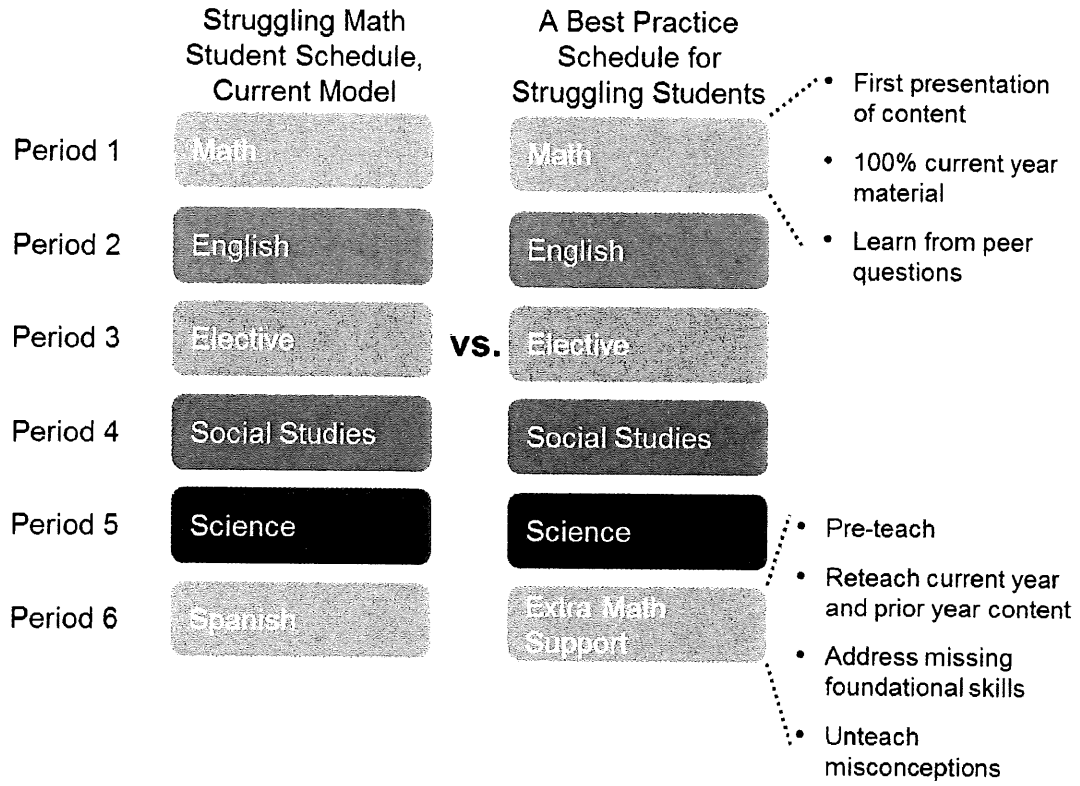
Providing extra time to pre-teach materials, re-teach the day's lesson, address missing foundational skills, and un-teach misconceptions is a best practice to supporting all students struggling in math and ELA at the secondary schools.

There is not a consistent practice of providing additional instructional time in either ELA or math at the high school level. Interviews indicated that there are no district wide formalized or systematized interventions for math or ELA content at the high school level.

At the middle school level, many schools offer "seminars" in math and ELA, however their use and purpose is not consistent across the district. Interviews indicated that these seminar courses are typically not structured to fill in learning gaps and build skills that the student might have missed in previous years, but they are primarily a repeat of the content from the student's core math or ELA class.

Schedules for Struggling Students in the Current and Best Practice Models

Current vs. Best Practice Struggling Student Schedule



Similar to elementary reading, there are not clear benchmarks or a systematized approach to identify struggling students at both the middle and high school levels in ELA and math. Rather, schools rely on teacher-written assessments and teacher recommendations, sometimes from the previous year, to identify students who are falling behind.

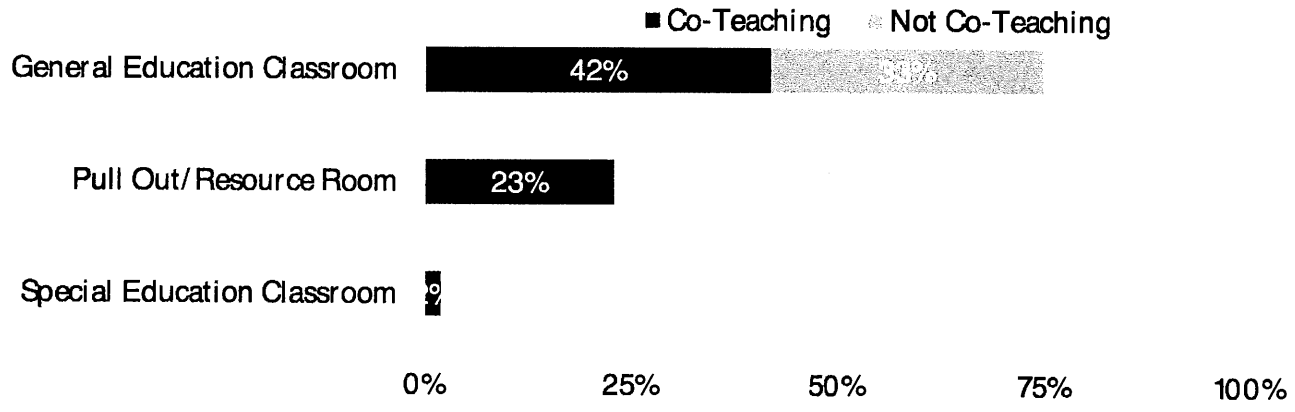
1c. Implications for current practices

In Howard County Public Schools, support for students with IEPs often occurs in the form of "increased adult intensity," rather than extended time; in this model, students are assigned multiple adults to support them at the same time (e.g., collaboration, co teaching, 1-to-1 support), instead of getting extended time on task. Shifting away from a high-intensity model of student support can maximize student learning and free up funds to support other opportunities to raise achievement.

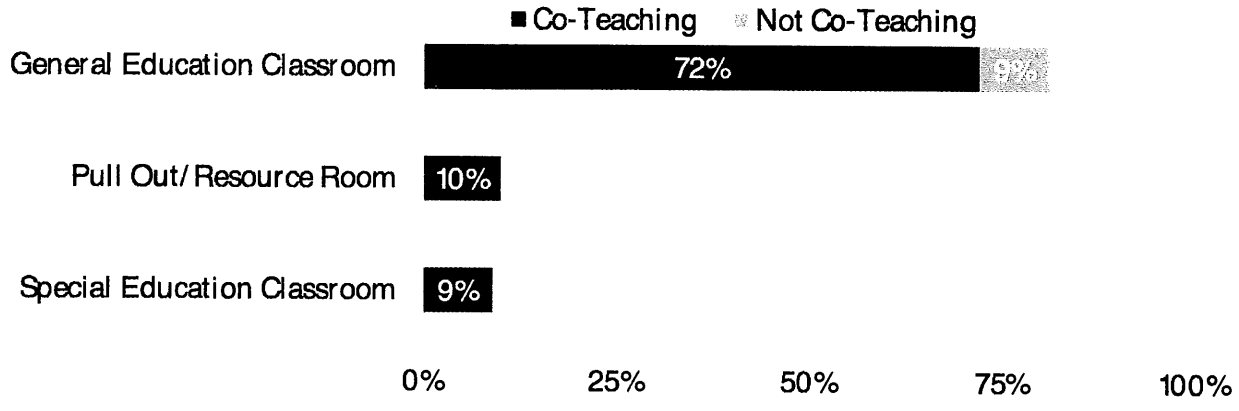
In Howard County Public Schools, "collaboration," two adults at once, is the most common form of special education service delivery:

- Approximately 75% of elementary inclusion special educators' direct service time is spent either in a co-teaching or push-in setting.
- Similarly, 81% of secondary inclusion special education teachers' direct service time is in a setting with a general educator present.

Percentage of Direct Service Time Spent by Inclusion Special Education Teachers
Elementary Level



Percentage of Direct Service Time Spent by Inclusion Special Education Teachers
Secondary Level



The district has placed co-teaching at the forefront of its efforts to help struggling students with special needs. National research, however, suggests that co-teaching seldom raises student achievement. In his 2009 review of educational research, John Hattie notes that no studies have shown student gains from co-teaching and that on average it actually produced less or equal learning than a class with a single teacher, while costing twice as much. This is because while co-teaching represents higher "intensity" of support (i.e., multiple adults providing support at the same time), it does not mean extended time on task with a content-strong teacher for the struggling student.

Interviews with teachers across the country who co-teach suggest that co-teaching, while promising in theory, is often executed poorly. Effective co-teaching requires a high level of collaborative planning between the general education and special education teachers, which requires daily common planning time. Teachers often express not having sufficient time to meet and plan lessons in their teams. Lack of planning results in lack of consistency in the pair's instruction of content, as the two teachers may have different goals for the students. Providing common planning time, however, typically increases staffing requirements by 20% or more.

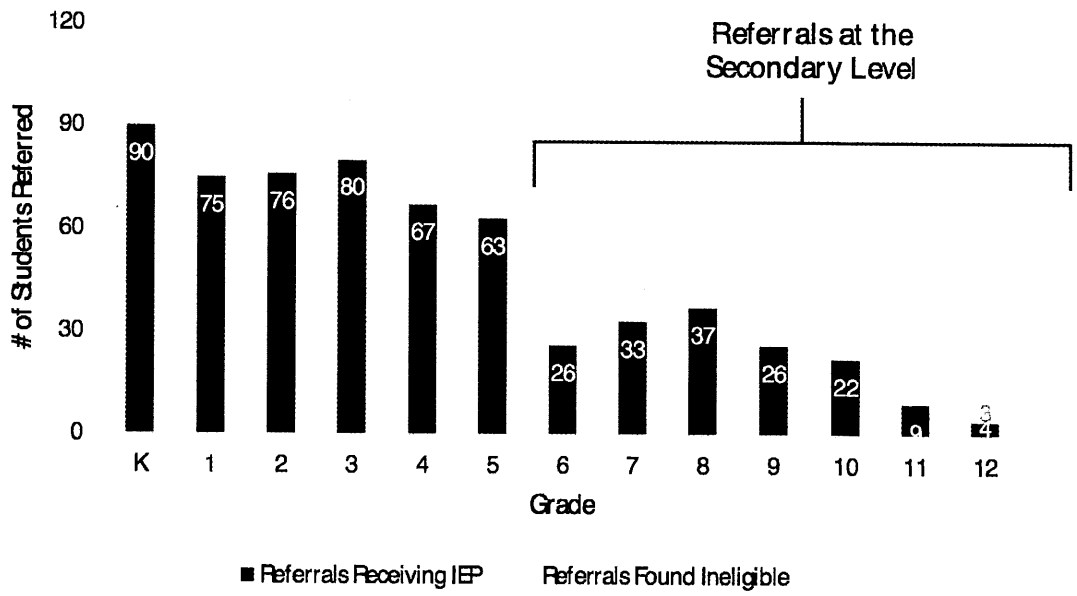
Similar challenges exist in Howard County. Interviews suggested that structures for common planning do not exist consistently across the district, which often renders the co-teaching model frustrating and ineffective. Many staff acknowledged that co-teaching was not being implemented with fidelity due to limited co-planning time and other demands that frequently pull either the general education teacher or the special education teacher out of the classroom. For instance, during DMC's classroom visits, three co-taught classrooms were observed to be missing either the special education teacher, the general education teacher, or both.

The need for more general education interventions

The IEP and 504 referral rates, especially at the secondary level—in addition to the achievement gaps—in Howard County Public Schools support the premise that current general education interventions need to be expanded.

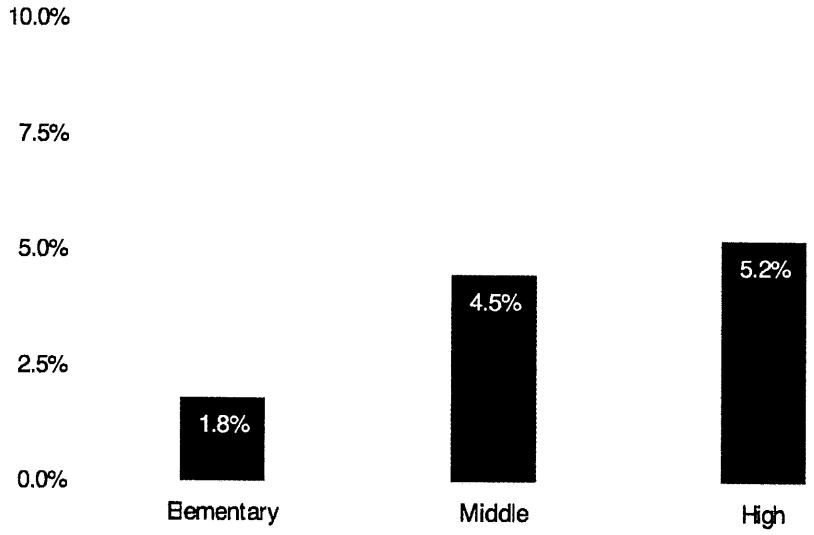
In most districts referrals to special education or requests for 504s peak around 3rd or 4th grade and diminish to nearly zero by the start of middle school. This is not the case in the district.

Students' Initial Referral to Special Education
By Grade Level



- The district refers a significant amount of students for IEPs at the secondary level.
- Only 46% of those students are found eligible for an IEP.

Percentage of Total Enrollment Receiving 504 Services
By Grade Level



- The rate at which students receive 504 services in high school is nearly three times the rate in elementary school.
- The rate at the high school is more than 4 times the national average.

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The IEP referral rate and the 504 identification rate both indicate that students in the district need greater support as they move into the secondary level, but the current model within general education does not provide this.

2. Ensure that students who struggle receive instruction from instructors with subject-specific training during core classes and interventions.

Extra time on task is not sufficient for struggling students to master grade level material. The training and knowledge of the teacher also matters a great deal.

2a. Elementary Reading

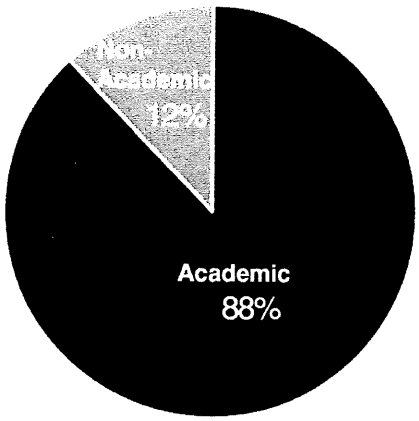
For students who struggle, research indicates that the subject-specific training of the instructor has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of achieving grade level mastery. Effective teachers of reading have extensive training in the teaching of reading. Often, special educators have deep expertise in pedagogy but limited background in the teaching of reading. Districts that have made the most significant gains among struggling readers have done so by providing teachers skilled in the teaching of reading extra time with struggling students.

Paraprofessionals can play an important role in supporting many students with special needs, especially for behavioral and physical support; however, the overuse of paraprofessional support can often limit students' learning and independence, in addition to making the job frustrating for paraprofessionals. When students struggle in reading, it is generally more beneficial for their learning to spend extra time with teachers or interventionists highly skilled in the teaching of reading than with paraprofessionals, who generally do not have extensive training in the teaching of reading.

Interviews, classroom visits, and data from the schedule sharing all indicate that the background and training of staff providing elementary reading instruction varied significantly across the district. Staff in the focus groups explained that reading specialists or special education teachers could both lead reading instruction lessons, and paraprofessionals could provide reading instruction if the materials were prepared by a special education teacher. There is not a consistent approach across the district, and during classroom visits DMC observed all three practices being implemented.

As the data from the schedule sharing illustrates, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and student assistants are all providing a significant amount of core academic instruction in Howard County Public Schools.

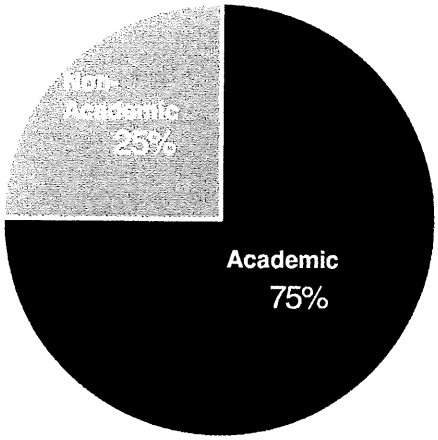
Special Education Teachers (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (141.0 FTE)[1]
Elementary Level Only



Academic topic	% time spent
Reading	39%
Math	31%
Writing	10%
Science	4%
Social Studies	4%
Total academic instruction	88%

- Special education teachers are spending nearly all of their direct service time providing content instruction, including 39% of that time on reading instruction.

Special Education Paraeducators (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (110.0 FTE)*
Elementary Level Only

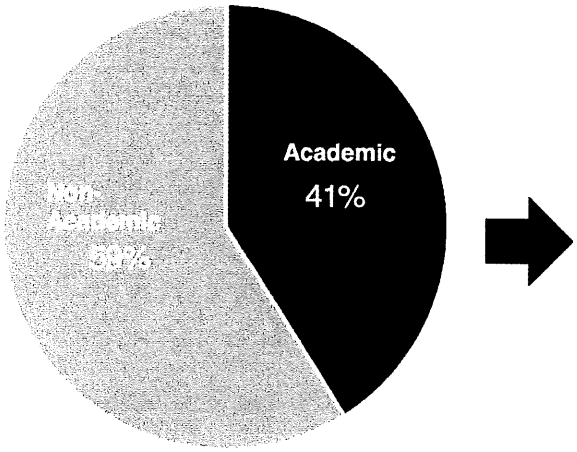


Academic topic	% time spent
Reading	24%
Math	23%
Writing	12%
Social Studies	8%
Science	8%
Total academic instruction	75%

- Special education paraeducators are spending nearly three out of four hours of their time spent with students providing content instruction or support, including nearly a quarter of their time on both reading and on math.
- General education paraprofessionals did not share their schedules, but the district has many such staff, many involved in reading instruction.

[1] Academic and non-academic support is equal to 100% of student support (direct service) time.
* This study only collected data on special education and early childhood paraprofessional staff. General education paraprofessional staff are not included in this analysis.

Student Assistants (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (35.0 FTE)
Elementary Level Only



Academic topic	% time spent
Math	16%
Reading	11%
Writing	6%
Social Studies	4%
Science	4%
Total academic instruction	41%

- Student assistants spend significantly less of their direct service time on core instruction than paraprofessionals, but they are still spending two out of five hours of that time providing content instruction or support.

2b. Secondary ELA and Math

Just as the skill and training of the instructor is vital for the reading success of students at the elementary schools, this is just as true in secondary math and English. Typically, a teacher who has engaged in extensive training and study of a subject is more likely to have intricate working knowledge of the subject and an ability to understand and explain the content to a struggling student in a way that will lead to mastery. For students with or without IEPs who struggle at the secondary level, research shows the content expertise of the instructor has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of mastering the grade level material.

Similar to the reading support at the elementary level, there is a wide variance in what types of staff are providing intervention and support for secondary ELA and math. Both math and ELA instruction can be provided to struggling students with or without an IEP in a variety of settings and by instructors with a variety of backgrounds including in a co-taught classroom, by a reading specialist or a special education teacher, or by a special education teacher and a paraeducator, among other combinations.

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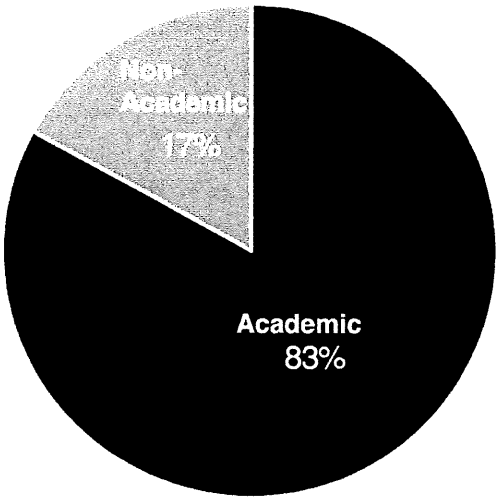
Special Education Teachers (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (231.0 FTE)

Secondary Level Only

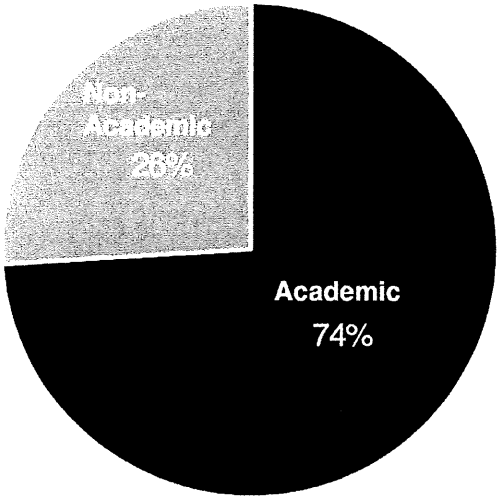


Academic topic	MS	HS
Math	33%	22%
Writing	30%	12%
Reading	19%	17%
Science	6%	15%
Social Studies	5%	8%
Total academic instruction	92%	74%

- Special education teachers are spending most of their direct service time providing content instruction, including 33% of that time on math and 49% on ELA instruction at the middle school level.

Special Education Paraeducators (Inclusion) Instructional Topic (102.0 FTE)

Secondary Level Only



Academic topic	MS	HS
Social Studies	26%	15%
Science	25%	17%
Math	16%	13%
Reading	10%	12%
Writing	5%	9%
Total academic instruction	82%	66%

- Special education paraeducators are spending nearly three out of four hours of their time spent with students providing content instruction or support, much of it in math and social studies. In many districts support is not provided in these subjects.

2c. Implications for current model

Co-teaching does not provide students with full access to a teacher with subject-specific training at the elementary or the secondary level. Although struggling students might be in the same classroom as a teacher with deep content knowledge, special education teachers and paraeducators are also providing a significant amount of their instruction.

Interviews also indicated that within the current co-teaching model some educators, including special education teachers and paraeducators, are lowering expectations for students with disabilities. Focus group participants shared that it is not uncommon for tests and curriculum to be modified, which often "takes the rigor out" of the assignment. For instance, multiple staff members mentioned that assessments are often cut in half for students with disabilities in co-taught classrooms. Providing students with full access to instructors with deep understanding of the standards and content will help combat the lowering of expectations for students with disabilities.

Increasing the role of general education staff is consistent with the district's commitment to inclusion. It would also serve the many students who are being referred to special education or getting 504s at the secondary level. More students can be helped in a more impactful way at no added cost.

3. Consider shifting the roles of paraprofessional staff to emphasize providing nonacademic support, rather than content instruction, for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

The district has invested significantly in providing paraprofessional support for students with disabilities. Interviews indicated that there are three main types of paraprofessional staff that provide services to students in the district, totaling more than 700 FTE: special education paraeducators, student assistants, and temporary employees. This study collected extensive data on paraeducators and student assistants. The distinctions between each position are explained below, although each role performs similar functions overall:

- Special education paraeducators: provide support and sometimes instruction to small groups of students with disabilities
- Student assistants: provide predominantly 1-to-1, non-academic support to students, although it is not uncommon for them to provide instruction as well
- Temporary employees: contracted through an outside agency, primarily help to ensure that students do not act out in class and often are staffed 1-to-1

The district also has a large number of general education paraprofessionals.

Two factors could be contributing to the significant investment in paraprofessional support. First, the district relies on paraprofessional staff to provide a significant amount of instruction to struggling students. Second, the artificial stratification of paraprofessional staff into three distinct roles could be contributing to the higher-than-typical staffing levels. Interviews indicated that oftentimes the roles and responsibilities of the three different paraprofessional positions were ambiguous or overlapping, which could cause multiple staff to be assigned to similar activities.

4. Consider increasing the amount of time related service providers spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

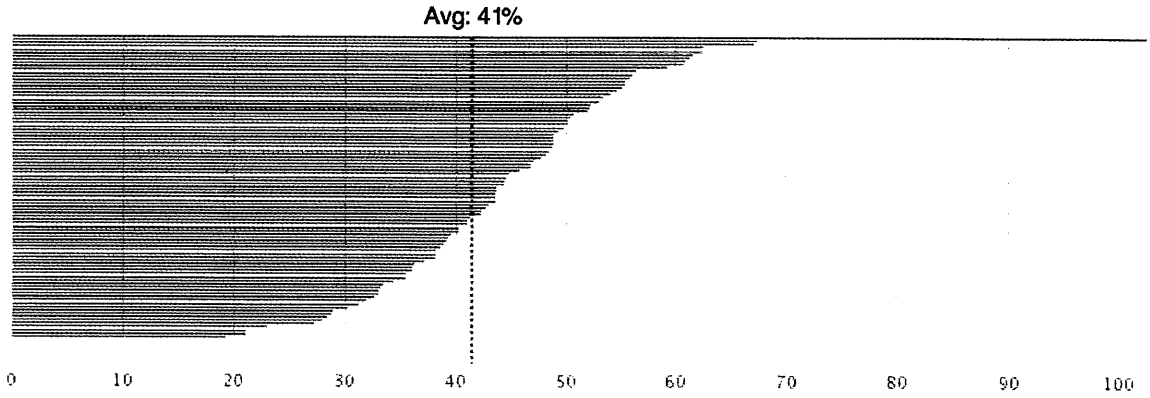
Taking a proactive role in managing related services could allow the district to free up funds to service more students without reducing a minute of service to students.

4a. Speech and Language Pathologists

Speech and language pathologists are an important component of many student's IEPs. They spend time working directly with students, while also participating in evaluations, report writing, and data analysis.

Speech and Language Pathologist Direct Student Support (105.5 FTE)

Direct service is calculated based on the percent of time spent with students in the contracted work week.



- On average, speech therapists spend 41% of the contracted work week serving students.

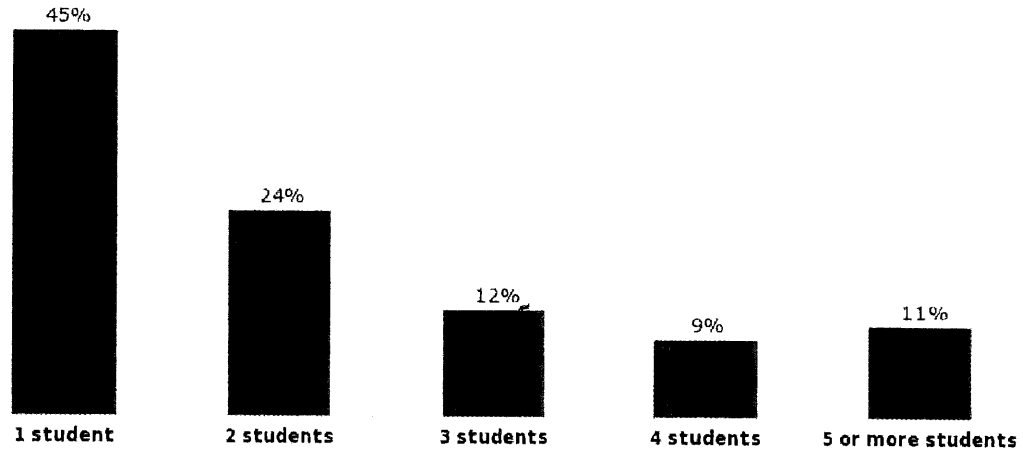
Speech and Language Pathologist Activities (105.5 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Therapy with students	41%
Total direct service	**41%**

Paperwork/ IEP/ IFSP writing	10%
Planning/ materials preparation	9%
Collaboration with colleagues (email, phone, in-person)	7%
Attend meeting (IEP/IFSP)	5%
Personal lunch	5%
Attend meeting (other than IEP/IFSP)	5%
Professional development	5%
Assessing/ observing students	3%
Travel	3%
Medicaid billing/ service documentation	3%
Parent counseling/ training	2%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	2%
IEP/ IFSP testing/ assessment	2%
Over reported	-2%
Total Indirect Service	**59%**

The average speech therapist in the district serves 28 students. Nationally the typical caseload is over 50 students. The low caseload is a consequence of much time in meetings and doing paperwork, coupled with providing much service 1:1. Speech therpaists provide nearly half of their services 1:1.

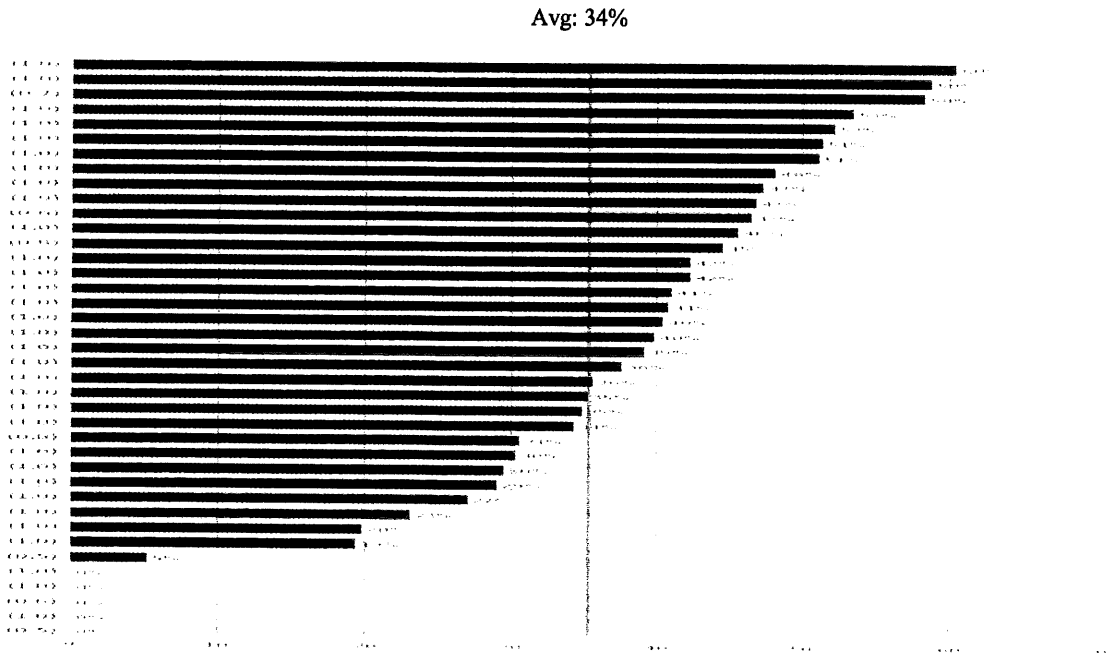
Speech and Language Pathologist Group Size (105.5 FTE)



4b. Occupational Therapists

Much like speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists provide very important services to students with disabilities, but also have other responsibilities.

Occupational Therapist Direct Student Support (40.2 FTE)



- Occupational therapists, on average, provide less than two days per week of services to students.
- The range of direct service time is quite large, with five individual practitioners indicating that they spent no time with students and one practitioner spending 60% of time with students.

4c. Physical Therapists

Physical therapists have quite similar schedules to those of occupational therapists and speech and language pathologists. The 12.4 FTE of physical therapists in the district provide an average of 35% direct service to students, with practitioners ranging from below 20% to above 50%. They also spend 26% of their time doing IEP paperwork or traveling.

5. Consider expanding the roles and responsibilities of school and central office-based administrators to more closely manage how special education staff use their time.

As the district moves to best practice service delivery models, district leaders can set explicit expectations for how services are provided, how much time in a day staff provide instruction and how many students are helped at once by a teacher. These service delivery, workload and group size guidelines are very common in general education, but less so in special education.

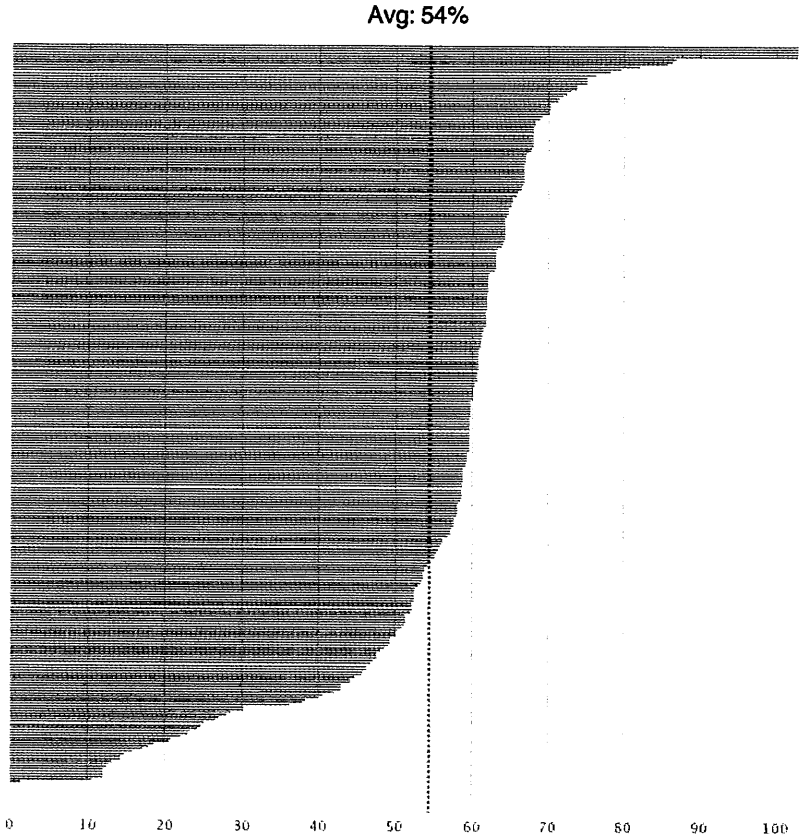
Howard County Public Schools has a variety of administrator roles at both the school and district level (e.g., instructional team leaders, resource teachers, and instructional facilitators) that could be utilized to help implement the shift in how special education staff use their time and serve students.

5a. Staff Time with Students

Special Education Teachers (Inclusion)

To the extent that special education teachers will be providing support in core academic subjects, there is an opportunity to have them spend more time doing so. In the current scheduling, special education teachers spend, on average, 54% of their time working directly with students. As a point of comparison, a general education teacher might typically spend 75%-85% of their week providing direct service and in some districts special education teachers also spend 75% of their time with students. Re-thinking the schedule and non-teaching demands of special educators in the district could allow the teachers to spend more of their week helping students.

Special Education Teacher (Inclusion) Direct Service (396 FTE)



- Special education teachers in Howard County Public Schools spend, on average, about 2.5 days per week with students.

All activities are important, yet few districts actively manage the distribution of this time for special education staff. For comparison, in general education all trade-offs between student time and indirect time are set by the district leadership, such as the number of courses taught by a high school math teacher.

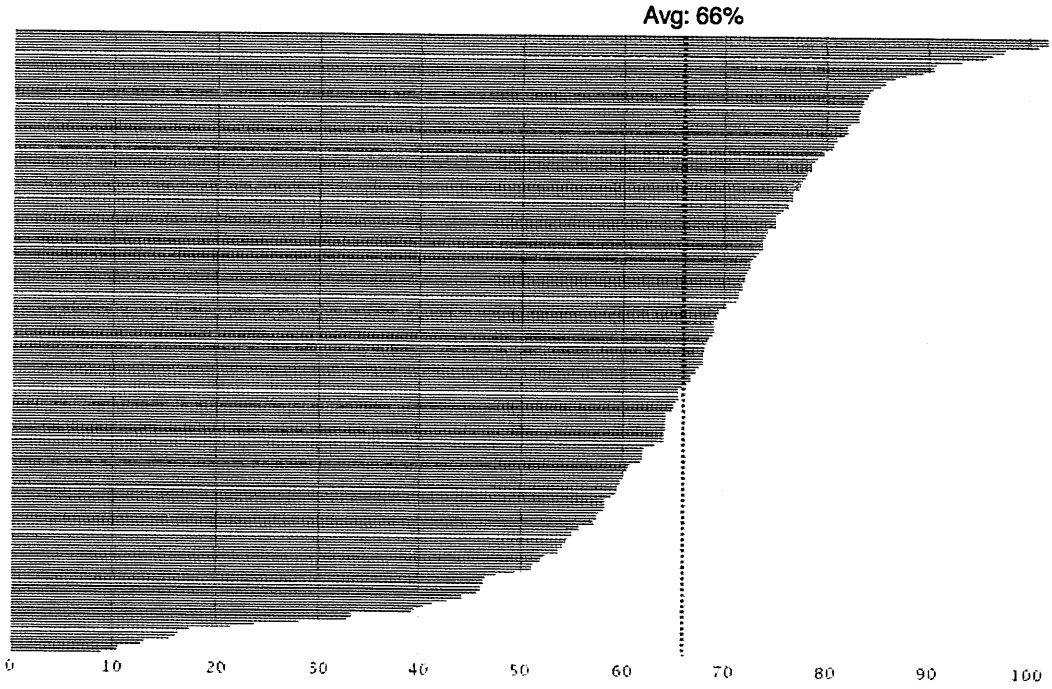
Special Education Teacher (Inclusion) Activities (396 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Student instruction or support	54%
Total direct service	**54%**

Planning/ materials preparation	14%
Collaboration with colleagues (email, phone, in-person)	7%
Paperwork/ IEP writing	6%
Personal lunch	6%
Attend school based meeting (other than IEP)	4%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	3%
Parent communication (email, phone, in-person)	2%
Student observation/ data collection	2%
Attend meeting (IEP)	2%
Professional development	<1%
Scheduling	<1%
Implementation of specialized methodologies	<1%
IEP testing/ assessment	<1%
Travel	<1%
Over reported	-3%
Total Indirect Service	**46%**

- Special education teachers spend about 2.5 days per week with students and about one day per week planning or collaborating with colleagues.

Special Education Paraeducator (Inclusion) Direct Service (212 FTE)



- Special education paraeducators in Howard County Public Schools provide slightly more than three days per week of direct service to students.

Special Education Paraeducator (Inclusion) Activities (212 FTE)

Activity	% time spent
Student instruction or support	66%
Total direct service	**66%**

Planning/ materials preparation	9%
Assigned school duties (i.e. bus duty, lunch duty, etc.)	7%
Personal lunch	7%
Student transition/ escort	2%
Attend meeting	1%
Data collection	1%
Behavior intervention plan	<1%
Parent communication (email, phone, in-person)	<1%
Implementation of specialized methodologies	<1%
Travel	<1%
Under reported	5%
Total Indirect Service	**34%**

5b. Implementing the Shift

Implementing changes such as shifting staff schedules to spend more time with students will require focus and effort on the part of the district. To accomplish this, it can help to have some staff in the district have the explicit role of supporting the scheduling and managing the daily activities of special education staff.

In Howard County Public Schools there are a variety of special education administrators, both at the school and district level that could fill this role, including resource teachers, instructional facilitators, and secondary instructional team leaders. Interviews indicated that oftentimes the roles and responsibilities of each of these three roles are ambiguous or overlapping. This is an opportunity to more explicitly define the expectations for each position. While redefining these roles, the district could include a new expectation that some will manage the schedules and service delivery model.

REPORT

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
MEETING AGENDA ITEM

TITLE: PreK-12 Mathematics Program **DATE:** March 24, 2016

PRESENTER(S): John SanGiovanni, Coordinator, Elementary Mathematics; Jennifer Novak, Acting Coordinator, Secondary Mathematics; Ebony Langford-Brown, Executive Director, School Improvement and Curricular Programs

VISION 2018 GOAL: ☒ Students ☒ Staff ☒ Families and Community ☒ Organization

OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this report is to provide information about how one of our most critical programs, mathematics, has been enhanced to encompass national standards, better align the program to Vision 2018, and ensure that all students graduate college and career ready. This will be accomplished through the three components of the PreK-12 Mathematics Instructional Plan: rigorous first instruction, high quality differentiated support, and increased access.

RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE DIRECTION:

In every mathematics classroom, ensure that teachers engage students in meaningful learning through individual and collaborative experiences that promote their ability to make sense of mathematical ideas and to reason mathematically. Continue to consistently increase the percentage of students, from all student groups, who successfully complete two years of college-level mathematics prior to graduation.

SUBMITTED BY:

Ebony Langford-Brown,
Executive Director, School Improvement and Curricular Programs

Caroline Y. Walker,Director,
Curricular Programs,
Elementary and PreK-12

William J, Barnes, Director,
Curricular Programs,
Secondary and PreK-12

APPROVAL/CONCURRENCE:

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Linda T. Wise,
Deputy Superintendent

Introduction

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) seeks to ensure that every student achieves academic excellence in an inspiring, engaging, and supportive environment. In every mathematics classroom, teachers must engage students in meaningful learning through individual and collaborative experiences that promote their ability to make sense of mathematical ideas and to reason mathematically (NCTM, 2014). To achieve this, there must be effective, consistent, and impactful implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards for Mathematics (MCCRS-M), with fidelity, and at the intended level of rigor. The purpose of this report is to provide information about how one of our most critical programs, mathematics, has been enhanced through a program plan process to encompass these standards, better align the program to *Vision 2018*, and ensure that all students graduate college and career ready.

Rationale

Some HCPSS students, especially those from historically underserved populations and/or those receiving special services (i.e., those who have IEPs, are English language learners, or are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMs)), are not attaining the highest levels of mathematics learning. In the Howard County Public School System, "effective teaching is the non-negotiable core that ensures that all students learn mathematics at high levels and...such teaching requires a range of actions at the district, school and classroom levels" (NCTM, 2014, p. 4). Access and equity are the cornerstones of a robust mathematics program. A responsive mathematics program provides opportunities for high-level mathematics instruction and supports when needed and considers the experiences students bring with them. HCPSS's goal is to consistently increase the percentage of students, from all student groups, who successfully complete two years of college-level mathematics prior to graduation.

The HCPSS has developed research-informed strategies to ensure that each and every student has an opportunity to access rigorous, college-level, mathematics courses prior to graduation. Implementation of the HCPSS Mathematics Program with fidelity is crucial in realizing the goals set forth in *Vision 2018* for students in Prekindergarten through Grade 12. The following outcomes are particularly relevant:

- Outcome 1.1 - The instructional program is rigorous, globally-relevant, and aligned with international and/or nationally recognized college and career readiness standards.
- Outcome 1.2 - Students have equitable access to a rigorous instructional program.
- Outcome 1.3 - Technology is leveraged so that students have access to learning experiences that meet their needs and interests.
- Outcome 1.4 - Students are engaged in the learning process.
- Outcome 1.5 - Students meet or exceed rigorous performance standards

- Outcome 1.6 - Meaningful measures of student outcomes are in place.
- Outcome 2.2 - Staff members have access to learning experiences that support their professional growth.
- Outcome 2.3 - Staff members are held accountable for and supported in meeting standards-based performance expectations.
- Outcome 3.3 - HCPSS engages families and the community through relevant, timely, accessible, and audience-focused communications.
- Outcome 4.2 - HCPSS hires and retains a talented, effective, and diverse workforce.
- Outcome 4.6 - Decisions are informed by relevant data in all operational areas.

It is important to communicate consistent messages when discussing mathematics instruction with all HCPSS stakeholders. To that end, creating an instructional plan for PreK-12 mathematics becomes essential for establishing consistency and quality. Creating shared goals and actions will connect the varied stakeholders involved in successful implementation of the mathematics program.

The PreK-12 Mathematics Instructional Plan

There are three primary components for the PreK-12 Mathematics Instructional Plan. The components are rigorous first instruction, high quality differentiated support, and increased access.

First Instruction

First (initial) instruction must be rigorous, aligned with evidence-based strategies, and implemented by highly-skilled mathematics teachers. All students deserve to receive high quality first instruction in mathematics in a clearly defined and structured setting to develop a solid foundation for substantial growth in knowledge and skills. Such a setting includes refined expectations for the math instructional block.

High-quality professional learning opportunities need to be provided to school-based instruction personnel. A comprehensive professional learning approach would include scheduling expectations for common planning time within teams during the Program Implementation Period (PIP), providing structure to PIP time, encouraging teamwork at the high school level, and building capacity of the mathematics team leaders (Mathematics Support Teachers (MSTs/MISTs), Teacher Development Liaisons (TDLs), etc.) It would also include the use of online elements.

Curriculum leaders assist teachers by defining, implementing, and monitoring expectations for high quality first instruction (fidelity of implementation). These expectations need to be reflected in standards-based grading and reporting, consistent processes for the use of assessment data,

and a communication model that engages all stakeholders (e.g., an HCPSS-produced math support website for students and their families).

Pedagogy

First instruction should feature effective, evidence-based pedagogy. In 2014, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) published *Principles to Action, Ensuring Mathematical Success for All*. This work is based upon classroom best practices and evidence from research on mathematics programs. *Principles to Actions* establishes guidance on what instructional practices and supporting elements are critical to overcoming the obstacles that currently prevent mathematical success for all students. The eight "Mathematics Teaching Practices" represent a core set of high-leverage practices and essential teaching skills necessary to promote deep learning of mathematics. These eight practices are:

1. **Establish mathematics goals to focus learning.** Effective teaching of mathematics establishes clear goals for the mathematics that students are learning, situates goals within learning progressions, and uses the goals to guide instructional decisions.
2. **Implement tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving.** Effective teaching of mathematics engages students in solving and discussing tasks that promote mathematical reasoning and problem solving and allow multiple entry points and varied solution strategies.
3. **Use and connect mathematical representations.** Effective teaching of mathematics engages students in making connections among mathematical representations to deepen understanding of mathematics concepts and procedures and as tools for problem solving.
4. **Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse.** Effective teaching of mathematics facilitates discourse among students to build shared understanding of mathematical ideas by analyzing and comparing student approaches and arguments.
5. **Pose purposeful questions.** Effective teaching of mathematics uses purposeful questions to assess and advance students' reasoning and sense making about important mathematical ideas and relationships.
6. **Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding.** Effective teaching of mathematics builds fluency with procedures on a foundation of conceptual understanding so that students, over time, become skillful in using procedures flexibly to solve contextual and mathematical problems.
7. **Support productive struggle in learning mathematics.** Effective teaching of mathematics consistently provides students, individually and collectively, with opportunities and supports to engage in productive struggle as they grapple with mathematical ideas and relationships.
8. **Elicit and use evidence of student thinking.** Effective teaching of mathematics uses evidence of student thinking to assess progress toward mathematical understanding and to continually adjust instruction in ways that support and extend learning.

This framework offers all HCPSS educators a common lens for collectively moving toward improved instructional practice and for supporting one another in becoming skilled at teaching in ways that matter to ensure successful mathematics learning for all students. See Appendices A and B for the Elementary and Secondary Lookfor Documents.

Content

Exemplary initial instruction must be rigorous and balanced. Balanced mathematics instruction pursues deep learning through conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application of mathematics to "real world" situations. For years, rote, procedural learning has been the norm in mathematics. This type of learning is ineffective for many students, especially those who have trouble understanding the larger mathematics concepts behind mathematical practices. In *Adding It Up: Helping Children Learn Mathematics*, The National Research Council (2001) described five strands of mathematical proficiency:

1. *Conceptual understanding*—comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations, and relations
2. *Procedural fluency*—skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately
3. *Strategic competence*—ability to formulate, represent, and solve mathematical problems
4. *Adaptive reasoning*—capacity for logical thought, reflection, explanation, and justification; and
5. *Productive disposition*—habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy.

Building from those proficiencies, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2013) has identified specific mathematics instructional shifts, with *rigor* defined as an "equal intensity of conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and applications."

- **Conceptual understanding**: comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations, and relations
- **Procedural Skill and Fluency:** skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately
- **Application:** application of mathematics understanding to solve real-world problems and connect to other mathematical concepts (e.g., the distributive property can be applied to find the area of an irregular polygon)

The PreK-12 Mathematics content standards convey a unified vision of the mathematical big ideas and reflect a progression of learning that is meaningful (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). These learning

progressions are organized by the following multi-grade content domains or conceptual categories:

- Counting and Cardinality (PreK-K)
- Operations and Algebraic Thinking (PreK-5)
- Number and Operations in Base Ten (K-5)
- Measurement and Data (PreK-5)
- Geometry (PreK-HS)
- Numbers and Operations--Fractions (3-5)
- The Number System/Number and Quantity (6-HS)
- Ratios and Proportional Relationships (6-7)
- Expressions and Equations (6-8)
- Functions (8-HS)
- Statistics and Probability (6-HS)
- Algebra (HS)

The Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMP) (NGA & CCSSO, 2010) describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on those "processes and proficiencies" that have had longstanding importance in mathematics education. The first of these are the NCTM process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections. The second are the strands of mathematical proficiency specified in the National Research Council's report *Adding It Up*: adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately), and productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy). Multiple practices are evident in exemplary initial instruction. These Standards include:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Rigor is another component that is reflected in the cognitive demand of the tasks used in the mathematics classroom. Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) model is employed to analyze the cognitive expectation demanded by standards, curricular activities, and assessment tasks (Webb,

1997). Initial mathematics instruction must balance the levels of Depth of Knowledge. The Depth of Knowledge levels are:

- Level 1 - Recall and Reproduction
- Level 2 - Skills and Concepts
- Level 3 - Short-Term Strategic Thinking
- Level 4 - Extended Thinking

Mathematics Instructional Time

At the elementary level, consistent instructional models for the 75-minute mathematics block must be implemented. Mathematically proficient students are not developed through lecture-based, whole-group instruction. Mathematics instruction must be engaging and differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners. The 75-minute mathematics block must include time for engaging differentiated instruction.

Number concepts are the foundation of elementary mathematics. These concepts are complex and interconnected. Fluency with number concepts and computation must be developed over the course of a full school year. Every mathematics class should begin with a number routine to develop these ideas.

Closure of each lesson is critical for student learning. Closure is an opportunity for students to share their ideas and observations. It is an opportunity for teachers to connect the concepts presented in the instructional activities to real-world examples. Closure can feature class discussion or independent journal activities. It can also be an opportunity for gathering formative assessment data. Every mathematics class should end with closure.

Instructional time must be maximized by minimizing tasks with little or no instructional value. Procedures for station rotations, material distribution, or homework review/grading must be streamlined and efficient. Appendix C describes the elementary instructional models in more detail.

At the secondary level, instructional models for support extend beyond the daily 50-minute mathematics block. The 50-minutes of initial instruction embed the practices described earlier. These include the use of effective formative assessment techniques that provide evidence for supporting students during classroom instruction. Differentiated approaches addressing specific student needs are an expected component of high quality mathematics instruction. Selection and implementation of worthwhile mathematical tasks provide students multiple access points to demonstrate understanding. Appendix D describes the secondary instructional models in more detail.

day/year. Job-embedded professional learning includes collaborative team planning focused on the development of common assessment instruments and scoring tools (Kanold et al., 2015).

Effective mathematics professional development is sustained and embedded within professional learning communities (Kanold-McIntyre et al., 2014). High-quality professional learning is only successful if it is acquired in such a fashion that it can then be readily implemented in the classroom. Sustained professional learning is focused and on-going. Professional learning for highly-skilled mathematics teachers should be similar to the components of effective professional development utilized with the Elementary School Model. These components include:

1. Professional learning is focused on a specific content or pedagogy topic
2. Preferred delivery of professional learning occurs through release of teaching duties
3. Content tool, book, and/or needed resource is provided with professional learning
4. Professional learning features intentional follow-up opportunities

Professional learning can be shared through a variety of means to ensure that teachers can access it at a convenient time and place. These include:

- learning modules developed by content offices and delivered through Canvas.
- face-to-face training led by content specialists after hours.
- "a la carte" course offerings through partnerships with local institutions (e.g., UMBC, McDaniel, MSDE, Towson).
- increased time for in-school professional learning.

Schools must work to create time structures, including dedicated blocks of grade or course-level collaborative planning time, embedded in the professional work week to ensure meaningful collaborative and professional learning practices are taking place.

The skills and knowledge developed through professional learning must be implemented in the classroom in order to positively impact student success in mathematics. Implementation accountability can be recognized and measured through:

- classroom observations.
- follow-up consultations with content specialists.
- student performance data.

In order to ensure that mathematics teachers develop the expertise to engage students in meaningful learning through individual and collaborative experiences that promote the ability to make sense of mathematical ideas and reason mathematically through highly-effective professional learning opportunities, the HCPSS will ensure school-based instructional staff:

1. Make the eight Mathematics Teaching Practices (NCTM, 2014) a focus and communicate that is expected for all mathematics classrooms to strengthen learning and teaching for all students.
2. Provide professional learning that makes the implementation of the Mathematics Teaching Practices a priority.
3. Observe lessons or engage in classroom walkthroughs, using the Mathematics Teaching Practices (teachers) and Standards for Mathematical Practice (students) as the focus.

Content sessions focus on the mathematics content in the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards domains. Content sessions also feature the progression of skills and concepts and the correction of misconceptions. Possible content and pedagogy professional learning sessions would include:

Content Professional Learning	**Pedagogy Professional Learning**
Number Concepts and Relationships (counting, place value, comparison)	Identifying and Using Rigorous Tasks
Whole Number Computation (addition, subtraction, basic fact recall, multi-digit computation)	Questioning and Purposeful Discourse
Whole Number Computation #2 (multiplication, division, basic fact recall, multi-digit computation)	Implementing Standards for Mathematical Practice
Fractions (fractions as numbers and computation with fractions)	Differentiating Mathematics Content
Measurement and Data (linear measurement, area, perimeter, volume, graphing, line plots)	Routine, Retention, and Growth Mindset
Geometry	Formative Assessment and Meaningful Feedback
Ratios and Proportional Relationships	Mathematics Leadership
Expressions and Equations	Fostering Professional Learning Communities
The Number System	Developing High-Quality Assessments
Statistics and Probability	Planning with Learning Targets in Mind
Functions	
Modeling	

Professional learning focuses on acquiring and implementing in three levels.

- Level 1 – Attended Content/Pedagogy Professional Learning
- Level 2 – Implemented Content/Pedagogy Professional Learning
- Level 3 – Sustained Implementation of Content/Professional Learning

Professional Learning Plan

Program Implementation Period (PIP) time can be leveraged in various ways to support teacher learning of mathematics content and pedagogy. PIP topics are aligned with the School Improvement Plan and supported with input from school administration. PIP time can be structured as a collection of fully programmed modules developed collaboratively with curriculum and instruction offices. These 30-45 minute modules should be offered in series so that professional learning is developed over longer periods of time giving teachers ample opportunity to acquire, apply, and reflect on content and pedagogical learning.

HCPSS will also make use of the Canvas Learning Management System to support professional learning. An initial strategy is to embed professional learning video clips or vignettes within grade level courses. These resources can support teachers' understanding of the mathematics content, concept progressions, and effective teaching practices.

Recognition for Professional Learning

Highly-skilled mathematics teachers access professional learning opportunities and implement what they have learned with their students. They are engaged, motivated, and recognized for their work. This recognition may be:

- used to signify more attractive candidates for Mathematics Support Teacher and coach positions
- used to signify instructional leadership for other positions including tutoring and summer school
- recorded as artifacts for Domains 1a (Demonstrates Knowledge of Content & Pedagogy) and 4e (Growing and Developing Professionally)
- leveraged for CPD credits during certificate renewal.

Leadership

School-based administrators also need professional learning to allow them to support high leverage mathematics instruction. Administrators should have discussions about the mathematics program at their school and the strengths and needs of the instructional staff. A key element of developing leadership for school based administrators has been the Principals' Curriculum and Instruction Meeting. This fall, principals and assistant principals received professional learning on student and teacher mathematics practices.

Highly-skilled mathematics teachers must be developed and supported by mathematics leaders. Mathematics leaders include support teachers, coaches, and Instructional Team Leaders (ITLs).

The role of the elementary Mathematics Support Teacher (MST) or secondary Mathematics Instructional Support Teacher (MIST) is to:

- provide professional learning for classroom teachers and school-based administrators
- support mathematics planning
- coach instructional staff on best practices
- support data collection, review, and conversations
- supervise mathematics interventions including tutoring at the elementary level.

The role of the site-based mathematics ITL is to:

- support instruction
- attend professional learning
- act as a liaison between the mathematics office and classroom teachers in buildings without a MST, MIST, or Coach
- participate in unique learning opportunities to develop leadership and content capacity.

Accountability

Efforts to develop and support highly-skilled teachers include high quality monitoring of instruction through self-reflection, peer-reflection, and the informal and formal observation processes. Highly-skilled teachers crave specific and timely formative feedback about instructional practice (Reeves, 2011). This feedback, coupled with resulting changes, improves the quality of instruction and positively impacts student achievement.

In order to support structures of high quality feedback, curriculum offices, school administrators, Math Support Teachers, Math Instructional Support Teachers, Instructional Mentors, and teachers should:

- Engage in collaborative, informal observations focused on one of the 8 Math Teaching Practices (NCTM, 2014) or one of the 8 Standards for Math Practices (CCSS, 2010).
- Engage in self-reflection or peer-reflection during collaborative team planning time using recorded lessons.
- Engage in the following Top Ten High Leverage Collaborative Team Actions (HLTA, Kanold, et al, 2015)
    - Agree on the expectations and intent of the common essential learning standards and process standards (mathematical practices) for the unit.
    - Identify and discuss student use of high-cognitive-demand tasks as part of the instruction during the unit.
    - Develop high quality common assessment instruments (tests) for the unit.
    - Develop accurate scoring rubrics and proficiency targets for the common assessment instruments.
    - Develop high-quality, common unit homework assignments and protocols.

- Develop student proficiency in each CCSS Mathematical Practice through in-class, high-cognitive-demand mathematical tasks.
- Use in-class formative assessment processes effectively.
- Use a lesson-design process for lesson planning and collective team inquiry.
- Ensure evidence-based student goal setting and action for the next unit of study.
- Ensure evidence-based adult goal setting and action for the next unit of study.

Hiring highly-skilled teachers and providing them with ongoing opportunities for high-quality professional learning to improve first instruction will ensure that most students achieve mathematics success in the classroom. However, a small subset of students will still require additional interventions to fully develop mathematics knowledge and skills.

Differentiated Support

For those students needing additional support, HCPSS-identified, research-based interventions are selected, implemented, and monitored by a highly-skilled teacher. Curriculum leaders will set clearly defined entrance and exit criteria and provide intense professional learning for intervention teachers. Seminars/interventions are taught by someone certified in the content area of the seminar/intervention. A variety of intervention models are being developed to support the differentiated needs of students. Intervention models include seminar classes, before/after school intervention classes, summer school academic intervention, and self-paced or hybrid online modules built in Canvas. Ensuring that instructional staff and administrators are able to use student-level data to match a learner's strengths and needs to an effective intervention is crucial for intervention success. Teachers and administrators examine a variety of data to determine which interventions are most appropriate for students. Data points include MAP performance data, classroom performance, and PARCC performance data. Students are assessed formally and informally as they receive the interventions to monitor performance and to determine when students are ready to exit.

The three-part professional learning plan will:

1. understand how to effectively use evidence from MAP and formative assessment techniques
2. develop rich understanding of mathematics content progressions and misconceptions so that instructional response is most effective
3. improve capacity to use data, NWEA's Learning Continuum, and math learner profiles to identify student strengths and needs for personalized learning.

Enhanced Understanding and Development Assessment Tools

Understanding of assessment tools is critical for effective use. Understanding of these tools includes the purpose of the assessment, how it functions, how it is aligned to curriculum content, the reporting options, and procedures for implementing.

- Foundational understanding of assessment tools and the purpose of formative assessment will be provided through Canvas courses. Face-to-face follow-ups will also be available.
- The courses will provide foundational understanding of MAP and mathematics formative tasks.
- The courses will provide understanding about the reports generated by these tools.
- Engage in the following Top Ten High Leverage Collaborative Team Actions (Kanold, et al, 2015)
    - Develop high quality common assessment instruments (tests) for the unit.
    - Develop accurate scoring rubrics and proficiency targets for the common assessment instruments.
    - Develop high-quality, common unit homework assignments and protocols.

Professional learning will also support the development of common, team-developed assessments and common, district-created assessment items. Participating in item development reinforces essential adult learning during the planning process (DuFour & Eaker 1998). Professional learning also supports the collaborative development of common scoring instruments and item diversity across the DOK levels.

Mathematics Content Progressions and Misconceptions

Mathematics concepts are interconnected. One has to understand counting, addition, skip-counting, and repeated addition before working with multiplication. An individual also needs to understand the many representations and problem situations of multiplication before working with multi-digit multiplication, multiplication with fractions, or multiplication with decimals. Understanding of concept progressions is critical to building upon previous learning and connecting mathematics ideas for long-term retention.

Formative assessment yields information about a student's progress through the progression. It identifies what a student knows as well as the ideas that are needed to move the student forward. It identifies the prerequisite skills and concepts students need to learn the targeted standard (comparing numbers to 1,000 with relational symbols). This standard is developed by understanding how to compare numbers to 100, then 199 using relational symbols. Students then develop comparison with models and representations before moving to the comparison of numbers to 1,000 with symbols.

Teachers must understand the misconceptions that students have and how to address them. Students may not be able to overcome misconceptions that are inadvertently reinforced or simply addressed with "more of the same" instruction.

Professional learning for content progressions and misconceptions will:

- incorporate LMS courses and face-to-face sessions
- feature sessions that focus on content progressions so that differentiation is intentional and aligned with student understanding
- describe mathematics misconceptions, why they occur, and how they are corrected..

Interventions

When utilizing data to match student strengths and needs to a successful intervention, instructional staff and administrators must consider the following:

- What are the interventions already in place?

The HCPSS has established a variety of intervention programs for students struggling with mathematics. At the elementary level, students in 16 elementary schools have access to beyond school day math tutoring overseen by the Elementary Mathematics Office. At 10 elementary schools, students can also receive beyond school day academic interventions through the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant-funded Bridges programs. Students at all elementary schools are also eligible for selection for Academic Intervention Summer School, based on academic underperformance and/or extended school year time in their IEPs. Students can also attend the BSAP Math Academy on Saturdays to receive additional assistance strengthening their skills and becoming more confident of their mathematical abilities.

Students at all middle schools may also be chosen for the Academic Intervention Summer School program if they are showing mathematical underperformance. Parents concerned about summer slide, the effect that students often lose some academic knowledge and skills over the summer, can also opt for the Comprehensive Summer School K-9 Summer Institute and High School programs, which can provide additional academic instruction during the summer months. Unlike Academic Intervention Summer School, these programs are not free, but tuition reduction and scholarships are available. Students at all middle schools and high schools can also attend the Academic Intervention Beyond School Day program and receive additional assistance in mathematics and/or reading/English language arts. Middle school students underperforming in mathematics can also receive additional instruction through mathematics seminars, in addition to their on grade level mathematics courses. Additionally, all schools are encouraged to use technology and differentiated staffing to personalize instruction for students struggling in mathematics.

In deciding which interventions are appropriate for which students, instructional leaders and administrators need to review student-level data to determine the student's strengths and needs and balance the benefits of additional instructional time with the possible negative impact of redundant interventions and loss of other instructional time. It is important to look at the whole child and all possible approaches to strengthening their mathematics skills and knowledge. Some students benefit more from beyond school day interventions, while others would do better with more personalized instruction, making use of technology to independently practice skills to develop mathematical fluency.

- What should intervention look like?

There are some features that are common to all successful mathematical interventions, whether administered during or beyond the school day. They should be based on student-level data. One size does not fit all. Some students lack conceptual understanding, while others need to develop greater fluency with mathematical practices. The student needs to be invested in their success. Teachers need to set performance goals with their students and track progress to make visible the connection between perseverance, practice, and performance. Interventions should be focused on major elements of mathematics instruction and content needs to be consistent and cohesive between the classroom instruction and the interventions. Student progress needs to be monitored both to underscore the importance of growth mindsets but also to determine if a different approach might produce greater or faster gains. Interventions must address mathematical concepts, procedures, and real-world applications so that students can learn how to choose the right tools to tackle mathematics-based problems. Perhaps most importantly, interventions need to be provided by a highly-effective teacher who has a solid mathematics foundation and a wide repertoire of instructional approaches to help all types of learners.

- What measures will we use to assess the effectiveness of interventions?

Evidence gathered from formative and summative assessments focused on measuring the specific knowledge and skills taught can provide the most immediate feedback about the success of mathematics interventions. The goal of such interventions, however, is to produce sustained growth in mathematical understanding and skills. The MAP and PARCC assessments are important tools for gauging student growth over longer periods of time and with more complicated mathematical tasks. It is also important to capture the student's perceptions of their own growth and whether they feel more confident on their abilities and motivated to continue to challenge themselves with more difficult mathematical content.

- How do we ensure consistency?

The Elementary and Secondary Mathematics Offices utilize central office and school-based staff (MSTs, MISTs, Math Coaches) to ensure that consistent expectations are communicated across the HCPSS, both for first instruction and interventions. Mathematics curricular staff also work with other curricular offices and school administration to ensure that the appropriate level of rigor is present in all mathematics programs.

Students enrolled in the Academic Intervention and other mathematics programs, such as the BSAP Saturday Math Academy, receive mathematics support that is aligned to research-informed best practices and instruction aligned to state curriculum.

The Elementary and Secondary Offices of Mathematics, working collaboratively with all special support programs (BSAP, Summer School, Academic Intervention, Bridges) align all curriculum resources to ensure that those programs support mathematics teaching and learning with fidelity. Professional learning must be provided to staff supporting these programs and mathematics leaders must monitor interventions and assist staff where adjustments are necessary. Procuring existing and developing resources is necessary to improve upon teacher knowledge.

A highly-skilled mathematics teacher should provide instruction in these special support programs and all interventions. In the absence of such a staff member, other supports and interventions must be considered. Additionally, Learnzillion, an innovative instructional resource for PreK-8, may be used to increase access to rigorous tasks, personalized learning opportunities, flipped classroom opportunities, and compacted coursework.

Access

Central office and school-based staff need to collaborate to identify, develop, support, and communicate to all stakeholders College and Career-Ready Pathways that provide access to two years of college-level mathematics or prepare students for apprenticeships and other entry-level career opportunities prior to high school graduation. In order to achieve this goal of multiple pathways to college-level mathematics courses, HCPSS will need to create opportunities for curriculum condensing, enhance communication with all stakeholders (including strengthening articulation practices with fidelity), and design multiple on-ramps with appropriate supports (e.g., what to do to account for skipping content).

To reach this target without additional supports, students will need to take Algebra I in middle school. At the elementary level, students need to be enrolled in above-level or G/T mathematics instruction by fifth grade. While 78% of HCPSS graduates entering college are ready for credit-bearing mathematics coursework, not all student groups show such high levels of mathematics readiness.

Student placement into grade 4 grade mathematics courses is a strong predictor of access to college-level mathematics by the end of high school. Students placed in "on grade level" course progressions in grade 4 are less likely to graduate having successfully completed two college-level courses. There is an overrepresentation of students who are African-American, Hispanic, eligible for free and reduced-price meal services (FARMs), or receiving special education services in "on grade level" 4th grade courses and an underrepresentation of the same student groups in Advanced Placement mathematics courses in high school. Student performance on nationally normed assessments (MAP, SAT, ACT, and PARCC) reflects significant gaps in achievement, resulting in the perpetuation of opportunity gaps.

Defining HCPSS College-Level Mathematics Courses

College level mathematics courses offered in our current program of study include:

Trigonometry (Honors)	Mathematical Analysis (Honors)	Pre-Calculus (GT)[1]	AP Statistics[2]
AP Calculus A/B[3]	AP Calculus B/C	Discrete Math (GT)	Differential Equations (GT)
Business Calculus (GT)			

[1] Pre-Calculus (GT) combines Trigonometry and Mathematical Analysis

[2] AP Statistics will likely satisfy a prerequisite for business and social science majors

[3] AP Calculus is a prerequisite for most STEM field majors

Accessing College-level Mathematics

Currently, "on grade level" refers to the mathematics course progression defined by MSDE and validated by the American Mathematics Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. This progression includes the K-8 grade-specific courses (Math 4, Math 5, Math 6, etc.) followed by Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II in grades 9-11. COMAR regulations are undergoing revisions to define college-level mathematics courses as the rigorous math courses that students access after Algebra II (in grade 12 for students following the on grade level pathway). Currently, students on the on grade level progression are usually able to take only one college-level mathematics class before graduating, in grade 12.

Students enrolled in the "above grade level" course trajectory access course content one or more grade levels above the state standard and are likely to successfully complete two years of college level mathematics prior to high school graduation. Students in this course trajectory are typically one year ahead of their peers following the on grade level pathway (e.g., a student would take

grade 5 mathematics in grade 4, Algebra I by grade 8, and Algebra II by grade 10). In order to make this pathway available to all students, there are a number of strategies for increasing early access to trajectory benchmarks. In this instance, trajectory benchmarks are defined as a) above grade level by the end of grade 5 (Grade 6 Math), b) above grade level by the end of grade 8 (Algebra I), or c) above grade level by the end of grade 12 (two college level courses).

Accessing Apprenticeships and Other Pathways to Careers
Students in a career pathway will focus on career preparation and refine their plan for employment, education, and training beyond high school high school. Identifying these pathways is a critical first step.

MSDE, in partnership with statewide industry advisory groups, has identified Career Clusters that represent core business functions across broad industry areas in Maryland. These clusters include: Arts, Media, and Communications, Business Management and Finance, Construction and Development, Consumer Services, Hospitality, and Tourism, Health and Biosciences, Human Resources Services, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology and Transportation Technologies.

The Howard County Public School System offers twenty different Career Academies across the Career Clusters. The HCPSS Career Academies help students plan for and pursue further education and careers. Each high school student has the opportunity to enroll in an academy and to earn four or five credits while studying the career field in-depth. Enrolling in an academy allows a student the opportunity to explore a wide range of career options and to apply both academic and technical skills in a career area. Each HCPSS Career Academy incorporates the Standards for Mathematical Practice as the students apply their mathematics knowledge, skills and abilities to solve real-world problems. From the engineering academies, to the computer programming academy, to the construction academy, to the science/health academies, students apply mathematical practices to authentic projects while using critical thinking and creative problem solving.

Using Data, Math Learner Profiles, and Student Goal Setting
Across the mathematics program, additional professional learning for grading must take place. Elementary mathematics teachers will improve upon the following process:

- Collect and record AOB data
- Improve AOB identification process
- Revise elementary math learner profile
- Use learner profiles to identify specific needs and learning behaviors
- Calibrate data discussion process.

Secondary mathematics teachers will improve upon the following processes:

- Collect and record AOB data
- Improve AOB identification process
- Improve quality and consistency of assessment scoring
- Calibrate data discussion process

Monitoring the following measures will be essential to see the impact of the recommendations:

1. Successful participation in "above grade level" trajectories at the end of grade levels
2. Performance on MAP, SAT, ACT, PARCC, AP
3. Enrollment in AP courses
4. Students graduating college ready
5. Effectiveness of professional learning efforts
6. Quality of classroom instruction
7. Effectiveness of improved placement and articulation practices
8. Student and family feedback.

Engaging students effectively in goal-setting processes through the use of formative feedback "literally double[s] the speed of learning" (Popham, 2008). In PreK-12 mathematics, highly-skilled teachers support students' setting of goals and recording progress towards those goals. Administrators must be well-versed in facilitating data discussions focused on growth in mathematics programming. School learning targets must focus on both student growth and the reduction of achievement and opportunity gaps.

Intervention and Acceleration Opportunities

Pathway development of strategic opportunities for intervention and acceleration for students is crucial. The Offices of Elementary and Secondary Mathematics must develop personalized curriculum resources to enable teachers to accelerate instruction so that students can successfully complete course trajectories leading to the ability to take two college-level mathematics courses before graduating from an HCPSS high school.

In the elementary grades, there are not always separate sections to accommodate students who are working above grade level in mathematics. Often, students are provided with some differentiated support as part of heterogeneous mathematics instruction. It will be essential to meet learners where they are rather than by the class into which they are placed.

In the middle grades, efforts to maintain mathematics instruction by grade level cohorts, rather than course level cohorts, limit opportunities for differentiation. In middle school, there are too few opportunities for students wishing to accelerate mathematics learning. To remedy this, online learning modules must be developed so that students wishing to accelerate can receive

access to content as soon as the student is ready, instead of waiting for summer school or other instructional opportunities. Additionally, the default mathematics course sequence for middle school students could be altered so that students take an accelerated math 7 that would provide them with the mathematical basis to access Algebra I by grade 8. A smaller subset of students needing additional support could enroll in Math 8 (on-grade level), if they were not ready for Algebra. Schedules featuring concurrent course offerings could provide for ongoing flexible grouping of students.

Outreach and Advocacy for Students and Families

Communication is an essential element of ensuring students are college and career ready. HCPSS must communicate information in a user-friendly fashion to internal stakeholders, as well as to families, and the community. Families should be acutely aware of the mathematics course projections and staff and administrator efforts to engage families in placement discussions should take place annually.

Differentiated professional learning for teachers, counselors, and leaders (school-based and central office) should be enhanced so that all stakeholders understand and promote a common vision for mathematics instruction. School student services offices must be well versed in articulation practices and mathematics course progressions while serving as catalyst for acceleration once students present as ready. Next steps include:

1. Enhance articulation procedures within schools and between secondary schools and their feeders
2. Correct instructional level placements for students with learner profiles that suggest an opportunity for acceleration. Expanded review for primary grades
3. Design parent communication components

Enhanced, evidence-based articulation practices must be developed to guide the placement of students into subsequent mathematics courses, both for current students and those new to the school Improved tools and resources to support accurate instructional placements for students, placements supported by math learner profiles and clearly articulated course content progressions, must be developed and implemented with fidelity. Articulation practices should be standardized with specific goals written to reduce the variance of placement.

On-ramps and Opportunities

Providing students access to advanced mathematics courses supports the goal to ensure that students graduate college and career ready. It is essential that students have access to on-ramps and instructional opportunities for acceleration. The table below shows potential actions to support student acceleration into more advanced mathematics courses:

Actions for Acceleration	• Placement in highly-skilled mathematics classrooms that feature small group instruction • Systems exist to empower parents as advocates for student acceleration • Before and After School Tutoring • Saturday Academies • Summer School • Curriculum Compactions • Personalized learning options (LMS courses, DreamBox, Learnzillion, etc.) • Math Mentors for Elementary School Students
Acceleration Non-negotiables	• Taught by highly-skilled teachers • Targets critical mathematics concepts and major content strands (number, computation, fractions)

Conclusion

The Howard County Public School System is committed to ensuring that every student achieves academic excellence in an inspiring, engaging, and supportive environment. To achieve this, there must be effective, consistent, and impactful implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards for Mathematics with fidelity, and at the intended level of rigor. Through the steps detailed above in the areas of first instruction, intervention, and access, equitable mathematics instruction can address the strengths and needs of all learners and provide a solid foundation of knowledge and skills that will support future success in college and careers.

Elementary Mathematics Classroom Look For Tool

Domain 2: Classroom Environment

2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport ❑ Builds classroom community ❑ Provides opportunities for student collaboration ❑ Shows rapport and understanding of each student as an individual	Comment:
2b Establishing a Culture for Learning ❑ Supports students in exploring tasks without taking over student thinking[2] ❑ Gives students time for productive struggle[7] ❑ Helps students realize that confusion and errors are a natural part of learning[7] ❑ Praises students for their efforts and perseverance rather than the right answer[7]	Comment:
2c Managing Classroom Procedures ❑ Establishes routines and procedures for mathematics ❑ Establishes opening number routines ❑ Establishes a structure for small group instruction ❑ Establishes procedures for closure ❑ Promotes effective and efficient transitions that build student independence	Comment:
2d Managing Student Behavior ❑ Establishes expectations for the classroom community ❑ Develops expectations with students for cooperative group instruction ❑ Creates opportunities for students to self-evaluate their participation	Comment:
2e Organizing Physical Space ❑ Organizes the classroom space for collaborative and independent learning ❑ Ensures students have familiarity with and access to tools for math ❑ Provides activities and space for independent time and early finishers	Comment:

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Superscripts identify mathematics teaching practices. Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All (NCTM, 2004)
Distributed 9.29.15 Principals' Curriculum and Instruction Meeting

Elementary Mathematics Classroom Look For Tool

Domain 3: Instruction

3a Communicating with Students ❑ Uses varied representations[6] ❑ Communicates mathematical purpose[1] ❑ Makes explicit connections[4] ❑ Uses accurate mathematics vocabulary	Comment:
3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques ❑ Asks questions that build understanding[5] ❑ Asks students to use representations to explain their thinking[3] ❑ Asks students to explain why their procedures worked[6] ❑ Engages students sharing of mathematical reasoning[4] ❑ Selects and sequenced student strategies[4] ❑ Allows for sufficient wait time[5]	Comment:
3c Engaging Students in Learning ❑ Uses rich tasks with multiple entry points, varied tools, representations[2] ❑ Encourages students to use varied strategies[7] ❑ Provides students with opportunities to use their own reasoning[6] ❑ Provides opportunities for practice of procedures[6]	Comment:
3d Using Assessment in Instruction ❑ Gathers evidence of student understanding during instruction[8] ❑ Interprets student thinking to assess mathematical understanding, reasoning, and methods[8] ❑ Makes in-the-moment decisions on how to respond to students with questions that probe, scaffold, and extend[8]	Comment:
3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness ❑ Adjusts pacing and structure of lesson as needed ❑ Adjusts representations, tools, and/or tasks during instruction ❑ Provides support for students working with below grade level mathematics	Comment:

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Superscripts identify mathematics teaching practices. Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All (NCTM, 2004)
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Appendix B: HCPSS' Mathematics "Look-Fors" – Secondary

Department of School Improvement and Curricular Programs
Principals' Curriculum and Instruction – September 29, 2015
HCPSS Mathematics "Look-Fors"

School _____ Teacher(s) _____ Course/Period _____

[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	

☐ [redacted]	
☐☐ [redacted] ☐ [redacted] ☐ [redacted]	☐

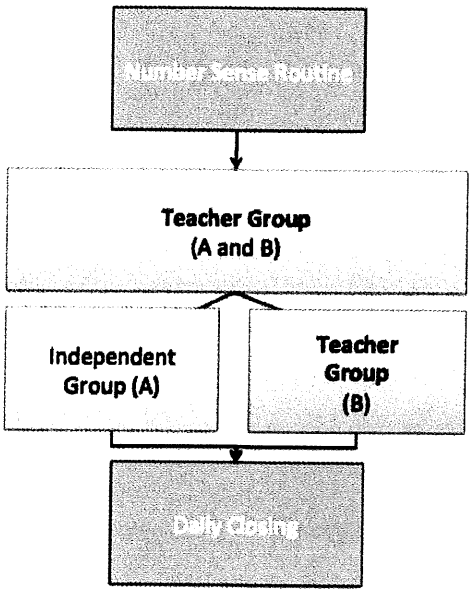
Additional Comments:

Non-evaluative Visitor _____ Date _____

Appendix C: Instructional Models (Elementary)

Small-Group Rotation Model A

This instructional model is for the 75-minute mathematics class. Model A is preferred for teachers without assistants or co-teachers. Instructional resources for each specific component of the model are provided on Canvas.



Number Sense Routine (15 minutes): Each mathematics class begins with a routine to develop our students' number sense. They are focused on major number concepts from the grade level including number relationships, computation, and fractions. These routines are engaging and student-centered. They make use of quantitative reasoning (SMP 1), viable arguments (SMP 3), using tools strategically (SMP 4), and precision (SMP 6).

Teacher Group (25 minutes): After the routine, the teacher shifts instruction to content focus of the day. The lesson makes use of a high-quality task (TP 2) that develops student understanding of the mathematics relative to conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, or application. During this group, the teacher launches the task, students engage in the task, and then the group is brought back together to debrief their learning. The teacher monitors student progress and makes decisions about students who need additional instruction, independent practice, or enrichment.

Independent Group (25 minutes, concurrent with below): Students who demonstrate understanding of the instructional focus work independently to practice the skill or concept. They may also be working with review or extension of previously learned concepts.

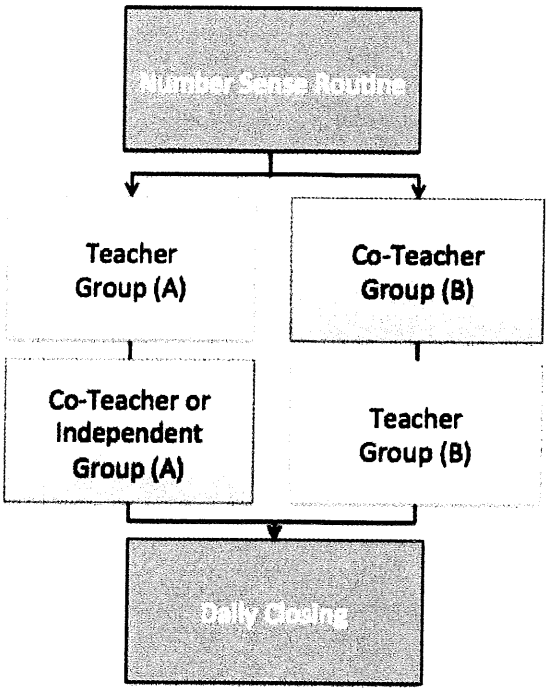
Teacher Group (25 minutes, concurrent with above): Students who demonstrate incomplete understanding or misconceptions about the instructional focus work with the teacher for additional instruction.

Closing (10 minutes): The daily closing is an opportunity for the class to come together to debrief the learning for the day. It is an opportunity for discussion and assessment. Teachers can make use of different strategies for closing including independent reflection activities such as journaling.

Appendix C: Instructional Models (Elementary)

Small-Group Rotation Model B

This instructional model is for the 75-minute mathematics class. Model B is preferred for classrooms with one or more staff members though single-teacher classrooms can also make use of the model. In these cases, the second group is entirely independent. Instructional resources for each specific component of the model are provided on Canvas.



Number Sense Routine (15 minutes): Each mathematics class begins with a routine to develop our students' number sense. They are focused on major number concepts from the grade level including number relationships, computation, and fractions. These routines are engaging and student-centered. They make use of quantitative reasoning (SMP 1), viable arguments (SMP 3), using tools strategically (SMP 4), and precision (SMP 6).

Teacher Group A (25 minutes): After the routine, the teacher shifts instruction to content focus of the day. The teacher group lesson makes use of a high-quality task (TP 2) that develops student understanding of the mathematics relative to conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, or application. During this group, the teacher launches the task, students engage in the task, and then the group debriefs their learning. The teacher monitors student progress and makes decisions about students who need additional instruction, independent practice, or enrichment. Students in this group will rotate to the other group after 25 minutes.

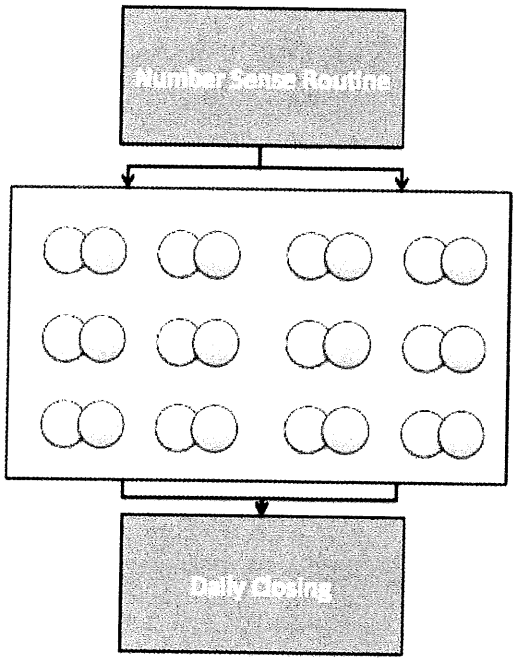
Teacher Group B (25 minutes): After the routine, approximately half of the class proceeds to this group. In this group, students work on related skills and concepts. It may be an opportunity for reteaching or enrichment. This group may focus on a major concept from the grade level such as basic fact acquisition, problem solving, or communicating one's reasoning. After 25 minutes, these students rotate to the teacher leading group A. This group may be independent if it is a single-teacher classroom.

Closing (10 minutes): The daily closing is an opportunity for the class to come together to debrief the learning for the day. It is an opportunity for discussion and assessment. Teachers can make use of different strategies for closing including independent reflection activities such as journaling.

Appendix C: Instructional Models (Elementary)

Collaborative Model

This instructional model is for the 75-minute mathematics class. This model makes use of small group (2-4 students) collaborations. Instructional resources for each specific component of the model are provided on Canvas.



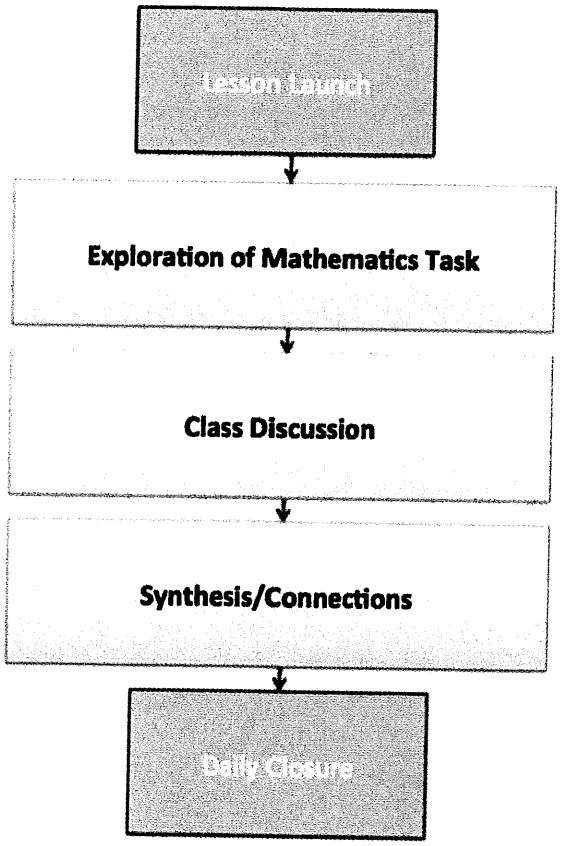
Number Sense Routine (15 minutes): Each mathematics class begins with a routine to develop our students' number sense. They are focused on major number concepts from the grade level including number relationships, computation, and fractions. These routines are engaging and student-centered. They make use of quantitative reasoning (SMP 1), viable arguments (SMP 3), using tools strategically (SMP 4), and precision (SMP 6).

Collaborative Exploration (50 minutes): After the routine, the teacher shifts instruction to content focus of the day. In this model, students will work with a rich problem or investigation. Students work with one or two partners after the teacher sets the stage and gives directions for the task. Students then explore the problem to develop and apply their strategies for solving it. During this time, the teacher circulates to gather evidence of student learning and understanding. The teacher may choose to work with one or two students on a related concept or to provide differentiated support for the task. The class comes together to share strategies and solutions for the problem. In some cases, this sharing and debriefing is the closing for the lesson. In other cases, students may work with similar tasks to practice and apply the newly attained concept. After this practice, the lesson then moves to closing.

Closing (10 minutes): The daily closing is an opportunity for the class to come together to debrief the learning for the day. It is an opportunity for discussion and assessment. Teachers can make use of different strategies for closing including independent reflection activities such as journaling.

Appendix D: Instructional Models (Secondary)

Model 1: Task-Focused Lesson



Lesson Launch

Teacher sets the stage for learning. Students engage with pre-requisite learning or are introduced to a task and/or key question, aligned with a measureable objective(s) and planned learning target(s) (TP.1).

Exploration of Math Task

Students make sense of the task independently and then work in small groups to begin to develop and communicate problem solving strategies (TP.2, TP. 3, TP.7). The teacher monitors student work (TP.8), selects and sequences strategies and key questions for whole group discussion (TP.5).

Class Discussion

Students share strategies and question/critique reasoning of others (TP.4). In this stage, the teacher structures discussions to address misconceptions using probing questions, gallery walks, flexible grouping, etc. (TP.4, TP. 5, TP.6, TP.7, TP.8) Students may be given opportunities to revisit their own work to improve/enhance work once initial strategies are discussed.

Synthesis/Connections

Students generate resolution for the task and make connections to the underlying mathematics (TP.3, TP.4, TP.6, TP.8). Students are able to make connections between various strategies (TP.3, TP.6).

Daily Closure

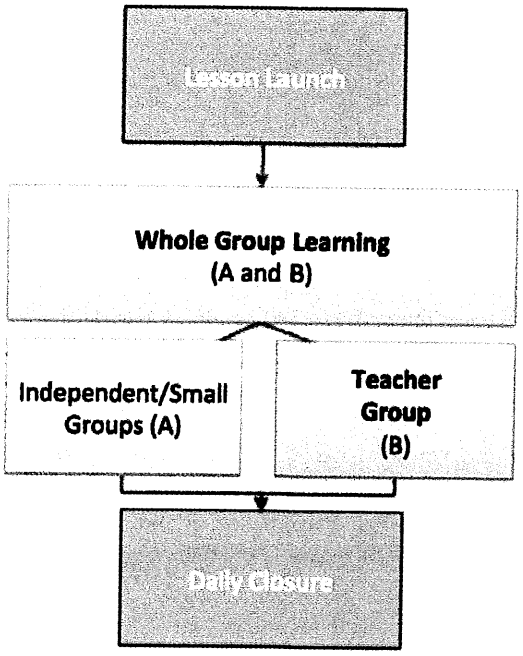
Students summarize their current understanding and reflect on their learning.(TP.5,TP 8)

Appendix D: Instructional Models (Secondary)

Model 2: Whole Group to Small Group Lesson

Lesson Launch

Teacher sets the stage for learning. Students engage with pre-requisite learning or are introduced to a task/key question, which is aligned with a measureable objective(s) and planned learning target(s) (TP.1).



Whole Group Learning

Students engage in new learning as a whole group. Teacher provides opportunities for independent thinking, pair or small group reflection and formative assessment. (TP.4, TP.5 TP.6, TP.8)

Independent/Small Groups and Teacher Group

Teacher uses formative assessment data to strategically group students. Teacher works closely with targeted students to address misconceptions and/or support pre-requisite knowledge. Independent/small groups engage in tasks that promote reasoning and problem-solving. (TP.2, TP.7, TP.8)

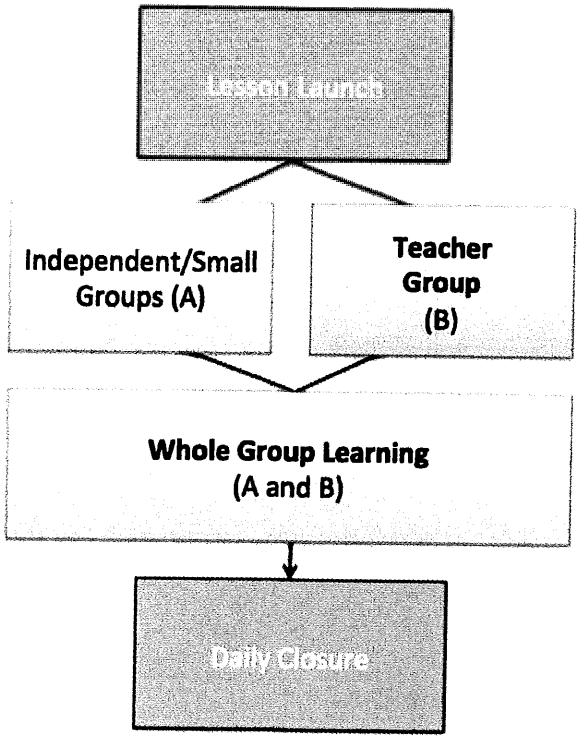
Daily Closure

Students summarize their current understanding and reflect on their learning.(TP.5,TP.8)

Model 3: Small Group to Whole Group Lesson

Lesson Launch

Teacher sets the stage for learning. Students engage with pre-requisite learning or are introduced to a task/key question, which is aligned with a measureable objective(s) and planned learning target(s) (TP.1).



Independent/Small Group and Teacher Group

Teacher uses formative assessment data to strategically group students. Teacher works closely with targeted students to address misconceptions and/or support pre-requisite knowledge.

Independent/small groups engage in tasks that promote reasoning and problem-solving. (TP.2, TP.7, TP.8)

Whole Group Learning

Students engage in new learning as a whole group. Teacher provides opportunities for independent thinking, pair or small group reflection and formative assessment. (TP.4, TP.5 TP.6, TP.8)

Daily Closure

Students summarize their current understanding and reflect on their learning.(TP.5,TP 8)

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