

WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING PLAN FOR 2016-2017
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FY 2017

Introduction

The Worcester County Public Schools Special Education Staffing Plan for 2016-2017 ensures that personnel and other resources are available to provide a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) to each student with a disability in the least restrictive environment as determined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. In accordance with The Code of Maryland Regulations, COMAR 13A.05.02.13D; this staffing plan includes the following:

1. Evidence of public input;
2. Evidence of maintenance of effort within the meaning of 34 C.F.R. 300.231 and COMAR 13A.02.05;
3. Staffing patterns of service providers of special education and related services, including paraprofessionals;
4. The number and type of service providers needed to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each student with a disability in the least restrictive environment (LRE);
5. How the public agency will use the staffing plan to monitor the assignment of personnel to ensure personnel and other resources are available to provide FAPE to each student with a disability in the LRE;
6. The number of current vacancies by positions reported within the jurisdiction and how FAPE is provided when vacancies occur.

The special education staffing plan was developed based upon the following guiding principles:

- All children can learn and the academic achievement of all students will increase.
- Due to the unique needs of individual learners, children must be provided with positive learning opportunities that are supported, when necessary and appropriate, with special education and related services that are specifically directed at the individual education needs of students with disabilities.
- Special education programs and services must support ongoing school improvement efforts as developed in School Improvement Plans that are embedded in the Worcester County Bridge to Excellence Master Plan.
- A full continuum of special education and related support services must be available to students both inside and outside of the classroom as appropriate.
- All children must be provided access to the general curriculum and special education services provided in the least restrictive environment, as appropriate.
- It is vital that parents or guardians participate in a child's educational program and in the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program for their child. Parent involvement will be a regular part of the special education program and school activities.

- When making special education staffing decisions and determining special education teacher caseloads, priority must be placed on providing the services necessary to fully implement the IEP of every student with a disability.
- Special education teacher caseloads and staffing decisions should be based on providing the services a student needs in order to be successful, rather than on a specific category of disability or severity of disability.
- The special education services required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) are crucial factors in determining caseloads.
- There must be flexibility in special education staffing to address changes that may occur in a student's educational needs throughout the school year.
- Special education staffing must be compliant with Federal and State laws, regulations and policies governing special education.

Evidence of Public Input

Public Input and Budgetary Process in Worcester County Public Schools

Through a budget process, public input is sought annually in developing the fiscal year budget plan. Considerable planning, discussion, and collaboration went into developing the Worcester County FY 2017 Operating Budget. The importance of comments and input from staff, parents, and citizens was recognized. The annual budget was created through the input of our parents, School Improvement Advisory Committees, School Improvement Teams, Parent/Teacher Associations, students, teachers, administrators and interested citizens. Additionally, the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) comprised of parents, staff, and local agency representatives has provided input regarding the accomplishments, challenges and needs of the special education program. To ensure that all parents have an opportunity to participate in the budget process, a parent survey was sent to the home of every student in the Worcester County Public School System. Results of this survey were compiled and shared with school administrators, teachers and parents. In addition, the recommendations and comments of parents and staff were heard in public meetings conducted by the Board of Education and County Commissioners. Documentation of public input and summary of comments is provided on the Worcester County Public Schools website (<http://www.worcesterk12/parents-students/surveys/parent-survey>). The resulting FY 2017 Operating Budget reflects the Board of Education's commitment to seek the funds that are necessary (from local, state, and federal government, and other sources) for the continued support, development, and improvement of educational services provided to the students in the Worcester County Public School System. The published FY17 budget process calendar and timeline are as follows and can be found in Appendix B:

WORCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

FY 17 BUDGET CALENDAR

October 31

Parent Survey (online) opens for input

October 31 to November 18	Surveys are completed by parents
November 22 Complied	Survey Data Pulled from Online Survey Tool and
November 17	FY17 budget priorities representing a consensus of the Principal, SIAC, and parents submitted to the Finance Department
December 6 at 7 p.m.	Board of Education Meeting: Public Budget Input Session Parent Survey Data Presented to the Board and Public
December 1 to January 20	Budget formulation and Superintendents' review
January 20 to February 17	Board Review of Budget
February 7 at 10:00 a.m,	Board Budget Work Session
February 21 at 12:30 p.m.	Adoption of Proposed FY18 Operating Budget by the Board of Education
February 24	Budget due to County Administrator
March 7	Budget presentation to County Commissioners
May 2	County Commissioners' Public Budget Hearing
June 6	Approval of Budget by County Commissioners
June 20	Adoption of FY18 Operating Budget by Board of Education

Description of Efforts to Obtain Public Input

- In the fall of each year, principals meet with their School Improvement Advisory Committees (SIAC) to develop a budget that includes any proposed new services or positions for the Superintendent and Board review.
- The Superintendent then meets with each principal to clarify the needs of each school.
- Each proposed school budget is shared with the Superintendent and Board of Education in public session.

- A summary of school budgets and staffing requests is provided to the Supervisor of Special Education for review and comment. The Supervisor of Special Education compiles data from the Special Services Information System (SSIS) child count to calculate the projected number of special education students at each school. Data is also collected from the Child Find and Infants and Toddlers Facilitator regarding projected enrollment in early childhood and pre-k programs. The information is compared with current caseloads and staffing information and reviewed with the Chief Academic Officer and Superintendent. Special education staffing allocations are determined based on a comparison of this information and the school requests.
- Results of the parent survey are shared with the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) and input from them is gathered.
- Teachers' schedules are also reviewed annually to ensure that they have sufficient time to plan, provide instruction, evaluate student progress, collaborate with general education teachers and parents, and fulfill other administrative responsibilities. The teachers' Negotiated Agreement establishes minimum planning time.
- The special education supervisor and coordinator are available as resources throughout the school year to assist school teams in developing appropriate schedules to ensure that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are being fully implemented and that teachers are provided with adequate planning time and time to complete the paperwork IDEA mandates.
- The central office special education staff regularly visits schools throughout the year evaluating the needs of students and determining the need for additional/expanded programs.
- The Principals and Supervisor of Special Education continuously reassess staffing needs to ensure that a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided to all students with disabilities. Student/teacher ratios are monitored to ensure sufficient staff is in place to fully implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and support students with disabilities during high quality Tier 1 instruction. Adjustments in staffing are made as necessary to address identified concerns. Unique individual student needs are addressed on a case-by-case basis. Students are served in the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. A continuum of services is provided based on the needs of the individual student.
- Professional Learning is provided for highly qualified teachers in Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports to narrow the achieved gap for students with disabilities.

Evidence of Maintenance of Effort within the meaning of 34 C.F.R. §300.231 and COMAR 13A.02.05.

Maintenance of effort is monitored and demonstrated through budget documentation and financial reporting which confirm that audited expenditures for special education in the Worcester County Public Schools equal or exceed funds expended in the prior year. The approved FY16 unrestricted budget for special education, including fixed charges, was \$11,882,998. The approved FY17 unrestricted budget for special education, including fixed charges totals \$12,035,254.

Staffing Patterns of Service Providers

The special education programs relate to other programs and services within WCPS. All students have access to the general education curriculum at all levels and across various content areas. Special education teachers and general education teachers collaborate during curricular planning to

provide instructional and testing accommodations, and supplementary aids, supports and modifications to the curriculum. Students with disabilities are included and provided access to interventions and enrichment programs that are available to general education students. Schools implement the Response to Intervention (RTI) model in which students receive their core instruction in the classroom and tiers of support are provided to students who need more time and support. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies that strengthen the learning for all students. Through the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) barriers are removed in instruction and appropriate supports and accommodations are provided while maintaining rigor and a high level of expectation for all learners.

WCPS ensures that professional development of general education teachers incorporates skills and strategies to enable educators to make the curriculum and environment accessible for all students. The Bridge to Excellence Master Plan, the Worcester Strategic Direction and the Special Education Strategic Plan are all aligned with improving student achievement as the main focus.

Services are determined to ensure students are educated with non-disabled peers. WCPS believes that students who receive special education services should be educated with non-disabled peers in the general education setting to every extent possible. WCPS staffs a special education teacher at each grade level to provide special education services to those students within the general education setting. Typically the special education teacher is responsible for implementing the IEP including accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction. When making placement decisions regarding a student, the IEP team makes every effort to provide needed supports within the general education setting in order for the student to meet with success.

Team Teaching and Collaborative Instruction

General education and special education teachers are chosen for team teaching classrooms by their principal or individuals responsible for developing the master schedule. Principals are provided with the flexibility to place staff where they deem appropriate. In addition, at the high school level, special education teachers are typically paired with general education teachers based on their content knowledge background or “comfort” level. For example, if a special education teacher is proficient in the area of Algebra, then this teacher is usually placed in Algebra classrooms. In addition, these teachers are provided with co-planning time to plan and gather the necessary materials for their daily lessons and to review formative and summative data to make decisions about students. If co-planning time does not occur, the teams try to meet after or before school. Generally, both teachers receive the same curriculum instruction to support all students in the general education classroom. This means that they attend professional development opportunities together. Many times, principals attempt to have the same team teaching pairs work together yearly to establish continuity with each other and the content of the curriculum.

WCPS Service Delivery Models

To meet the needs of students with disabilities, Worcester County Public Schools provides a continuum of services and programs. The Individualized Education Program, (IEP) team, which includes the parent(s), determines the appropriate specialized and/or related services that are required to meet the needs of the individual student in the least restrictive environment.

Consultation (Indirect) Services

- Provide the general educator with guidance from the special education teacher and/or related service provider on appropriate strategies for instruction, behavior management, data collection, observation, and feedback in the general education setting.
- Facilitate service delivery through ongoing communication between general and special educators and related service providers.
- Assist in completing functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and developing a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) to address areas of concern.

Direct Services

Inside the general education setting:

- Direct special education instruction within the least restrictive environment of the general education classroom through co-teaching and collaborative instructional models.
- Direct support for individual students by the special education teacher, general educator and/or education assistant providing accommodations and/or modifications to the general education curriculum.
- Individualized or small group instruction to meet the academic and behavioral needs of the student, either within the general education classroom or with pull-out services for specific skill development and interventions.

Outside the general education setting:

- Direct intensive or multi-sensory instruction utilizing specialized strategies and techniques in a small group, self-contained environment with an alternative curriculum when necessary.
- More specific skill training in remediation of academic skill deficits or in the social, emotional, and behavioral areas.
- Supports that address behavioral difficulties that interfere with the student's learning or the learning of other students.

Special Education Services and Programs Provided in WCPS

Programs for Students Birth to Kindergarten

Services in the Natural Environment

- Working with the Worcester County Health Department and in collaboration with families, Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) provide special instruction and related services in the home, childcare centers, or at Head Start centers. Instruction focuses on meeting outcomes described in the student's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Itinerant Services

- Parents bring their child to their neighborhood school to receive services such as speech and language therapy.

Services at Head Start

- Children who attend Head Start receive services at their program sites. Children with more intensive needs can receive transportation to attend a half-day program at Head Start and a half-day program at the Early Intervention classroom in each of the five elementary schools.

Services in Pre-kindergarten or Kindergarten

- WCPS students in general education pre-k or kindergarten programs receive special instruction and/or related services during the school day. IEP goals and objectives become part of daily classroom routines and instruction. Services are provided inside or outside the general education classroom, in accordance with each child's IEP.

Programs for Students Ages 6-21

Services in Grades 1-12

- WCPS students in general education programs receive special instruction and/or related services during the school day. IEP goals and objectives become part of daily classroom routines and instruction. Services are provided in or outside the general education classroom, in accordance with each child's IEP.

Emotional Disability (ED) Program- High Roads Program

- The ED program is designed to provide academic, behavioral, social and therapeutic supports to increase students' availability for learning by enhancing coping skills. Key features of the program include a small structured therapeutic learning environment with individualized behavioral supports including individual or group therapy by a social worker.

Community Work Experience Transition Program

- Worcester County Public Schools, in conjunction with Stephen Decatur, Snow Hill, Pocomoke High Schools, and Cedar Chapel Special School, offers a comprehensive, two-tiered transition program for students with disabilities: Community Work Experience (CWE). The two programs provide secondary and post-secondary (18-21) students, who are eligible for special education services, a variety of activities that are geared toward future employability and independence.
- Based at Worcester Technical High School and Wor-Wic Community College (18-21), participants are given the opportunity to explore various career fields and develop numerous social, academic, and vocational skills in an age-appropriate, inclusive setting. Learners can participate in a number of career programs such as childcare, culinary arts, cosmetology, agricultural science, graphic arts, and carpentry. Students develop employability skills at a job site based on student interests, skills, and program of study. When consistent with student goals and interests, this experience integrates academic and occupational learning and comprises a structured “course of study” designed to lead to successful transition outcomes and future employment options. The post-secondary programs for 18-21 year old students are a collaborative effort of Wor-Wic Community College and the three lower shore school systems: Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset.
- Job coach services in Worcester County are provided to students that need support in employment opportunities, and are a part of transition services. Job coach interventions provide one-on-one or small-group support to students and employers in the job setting in the local community until more natural supports are developed. The increased supervision assists the student in developing appropriate work behaviors and

interpersonal communication skills. Many of our business partners hire our students at the end of the experience.

Separate Public Day School

- When the severity or nature of students' disabilities affects their performance and academic success within their community-based school setting, placement in a separate public day school may be appropriate, as determined by an IEP team. Cedar Chapel Special School, a separate public day school, provides programming, facilities, and specialized staff to meet students' needs.

Nonpublic Schools

- For the limited number of students whose needs exceed the services and programs provided by WCPS, the IEP team or another agency may recommend a nonpublic school approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The nature and severity of the student's disability, which has a significant impact on education performance may necessitate more intensive resources and may require a more therapeutic segregated setting in order for a student to receive an appropriate educational program.

Number and Type of Service Providers

Provider	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Special Education Teacher	80.6	81.6	83	
Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired	.5	.5	.5	.5
Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	.5	.5	.5	1.5
Speech-Language Pathologist	9.8	9.8	10.8	10.8
Physical Therapist	2	2	2	2
Occupational Therapist	2 + 1 COTA	2 + 2 COTA	2 + 2 COTA	3 + 2 COTA
Assistive Technology Teacher	1	1	1	1
Behavior Intervention Teacher	1	1	1	1
Early Childhood Behavioral Health Coach				1
Sign-Language Interpreter	2	3	3	3
Orientation and Mobility Teacher	contracted	contracted	contracted	contracted
Audiologist	contracted	contracted	contracted	contracted
Adaptive Physical Education	1	1	1	1
School Psychologist	4	4	4+1 intern	4
Birth to K Home Educator	1	1	1	1
Educational Assistants	104	108	94	93.5
Nurses (Special School)	2	2	2	2
Private Duty Nurses (Special School)	2	2	2	4
High Roads Middle/High Serving ED Students			contracted	contracted
Coaches in Special Education		3	3	2
General Education Staff Utilized for the Provision of FAPE				
School Administrators	35	35	35	35
School Counselors	23	23	23	23
Curriculum Resource Teachers	14	14	14	14
General Educators	832	869.5	842	858.7
Nurses	16	16	16	16.1

Process for Monitoring and Evaluating the Staffing Plan

Process for Monitoring Caseloads and Vacancies to Ensure Implementation of IEP to Address Concerns/Adjustments

Should a concern arise regarding staffing, a process is in place to address that concern. If additional special education staff or services appear to be needed to accommodate a child or program, the school administrator contacts the Supervisor of Special Education and staffing concerns are shared. The supervisor may conduct a school visit to review additional information. The information is compiled and reviewed with the Superintendent. After review, should additional staffing be warranted or a vacancy occurs, it is provided to the school, usually as a contracted position or a long-term substitute for the remainder of the year. A determination is then made when planning the next fiscal year budget as to whether the position needs to become a permanent position. If a permanent position is needed the position is advertised through a vacancy announcement and Human Resources processes are followed. We currently have a special education teacher vacancy at Worcester Technical High School that is being filled by a long-term substitute until a permanent position can be filled.

Process for Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Local Staffing Plan FY 2016

The effectiveness of the 2015-16 Staffing Plan was assessed by reviewing student achievement data, caseload information and input from school administrators and staff, department of special education staff, and appropriate stakeholders in the community. Information was gathered through the Parent Survey, SIAC groups, principals, IEP teams and parent groups.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Local Staffing Plan was effective as evidenced by the services provided. In 2015-16, students with disabilities were served in a manner likely to result in meaningful educational progress in the least restrictive environment. A very favorable ratio of special education staff to WCPS students with disabilities is provided. Special education staff has been included in general curriculum content professional development activities. No students were denied a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) due to a lack of highly qualified teachers or other service providers. No students were moved to other classrooms or other schools due to the unavailability of staff in 2015-2016.

WCPS has been focusing efforts on improving school readiness and increasing early intervention services. Additional staff was needed to address growing caseloads in early intervention. Recent KRA results show a school readiness gap for WCPS. Additionally, to narrow an achievement gap that exists among special education students in WCPS, three grant funded special education teachers were hired as instructional coaches to support teachers in implementing differentiated instruction, UDL, specialized instruction and behavior interventions.

The effectiveness of the staffing plan is reflected by the high percentage of special education students served in general education settings for 80% or more of the school day (LRE A). A review of the least restrictive environment data provided by MSDE demonstrates that Worcester County has exceeded the state target since the baseline year in 2004. Professional development is conducted to provide special educators, general education teachers, and paraprofessionals with the skills needed to appropriately serve students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The planning process for professional development includes integrating and selecting activities in accordance with the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan. Special education and general education teachers receive professional development and follow-up coaching on the use of research-based strategies to support students with disabilities in their Least Restrictive Environment. These strategies include Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, and co-teaching approaches. Resources and tools,

such as Goalbook Toolkit and Goalbook Pathways, are provided to support general and special educators in using Universal Design for Learning principles and differentiated instruction. This professional development, coaching and resources support teachers in delivering high-quality Tier 1 instruction to students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

Evaluation of the FY 2017 Plan

The evaluation of the FY 2017 Staffing Plan is the responsibility of the Supervisor of Special Education. The effectiveness of the plan is assessed on an ongoing basis by reviewing measures of student achievement, caseload information and input from school administrators and staff and appropriate stakeholders in the community. Information is gathered through parent forums, letters, emails, and written requests. No students are being moved to other classrooms or other schools due to unavailability of staff.

General and special education instructional staff members conduct a review of the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan. This information is used to assist in the evaluation of the Staffing Plan for FY 2016 and in the monitoring and evaluation of the Staffing Plan for FY 2017.

The Worcester County Public School System is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for every student. Recognizing that every student has unique learning needs; diversified learning strategies are provided in every classroom. Learning opportunities are enhanced with supplemental programs and services both inside and outside of the classroom. Special education and related services are made available to provide specialized instruction and therapies to ensure that students with disabilities are provided the same rigorous instruction as their non-disabled peers in order to be college and career ready upon graduation.

Time is built in within the plan to provide teachers, related service providers, and others the ability to consult with each other and families. Consultation occurs during team meetings, planning time, professional development and school activities.

A key element in the provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities is the availability of highly qualified teachers and support staff to implement each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The Worcester County Public School's staffing plan is a vehicle to ensure that appropriate personnel are available to deliver the services and instruction required to fully implement student IEPs. Ongoing professional development and training is provided for school personnel. These trainings and professional development opportunities include both the requirements and intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and professional learning goals that align with the Worcester County Public Schools Bridge to Excellence Master Plan.

Appendix A

Constituents Involved in Public Input Process

Special Education Staffing Plan

Name	Title
Dale, Dr. Jennifer	Coordinator of Instruction – Special Education
Morris-Wink, Mrs. Barbara	Special Education Advisory Committee Chairperson
Quinn, Dr. John	Chief Academic Officer
Record, Mrs. Rae N.	Supervisor of Special Education
Richardson, Mrs. Patti	Special Education Advisory Committee Parent
Siegel, Mrs. Tracey	Special Education Advisory Committee Parent
Simon, Ms. Kathy	Infants and Toddlers Facilitator
Taylor, Mr. Louis	Chief Operating Officer
Truitt-Drimal, Mrs. Stephanie	Special Education Advisory Committee Parent
Tolbert, Mr. Vincent	Chief Financial Officer
Wilson, Dr. Gerald B.	Superintendent of Schools
Sterrs, Carrie N	Coordinator of Public Relations
Wynne, Ms. Julie	The Judy Center, Snow Hill

Appendix B
WORCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

FY 17 BUDGET CALENDAR

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** Tentative dates that are subject to approval by County Commissioners*