Evaluation of Services for Students with Disabilities and Those Requiring Intervention

Arlington Public Schools

Final Report

November 2019

Arlington Public Schools

PCG | *Education*

Arlington Public Schools
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Acknowledgement

The PCG team thanks the many individuals who contributed to this review of APS's services for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports. Their efforts were critical to our ability to obtain a broad and detailed understanding of the system so that we could present the best possible proposals for improving special education and related services for APS's students. This review would not have been possible without the support of APS staff in the Department of Teaching and Learning and Planning and Evaluation. The project team organized all components of the data collection efforts, provided all the documents and data we needed in order to do our work, and organized all of the logistics for our onsite data collection activities. PCG also thanks the many APS staff members with whom we met. Their commitment to the work they do was evident through their comments and earnest feedback. They work passionately to support students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports and ensure APS serves these students in the best possible manner.

The parents of students with disabilities, the Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC), and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) members provided information in a meaningful manner and deserve special recognition. We were impressed by their thoughtfulness and commitment to improving the opportunities provided to students with disabilities in APS.

Public Consulting Group, Inc.

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I. Purpose of the Study and Methodology

Arlington Public Schools (APS) contracted with the Public Consulting Group (PCG) to provide a comprehensive assessment of services to students with disabilities and those receiving intervention supports. The assessment involved an examination of the effectiveness and efficacy of APS policies, procedures and practices concerning: the use of Intervention Assistance Teams (IATs) and the implementation of Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS), special education services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and supplementary aids and services provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). This review builds upon the previous 2013 evaluation, also completed by PCG, and focuses on both the current, overall effectiveness of these programs and the progress made toward recommendations from the prior evaluation.

This report describes the current state of these initiatives and is designed to guide APS toward continuous improvement. It examines the following evaluation questions:

1. **Evaluation and Identification Practices**. How, and to what extent, does APS evaluate and identify students who may require additional supports, services, interventions, and accommodations?
2. **Delivery of Services, Accommodations, and Instruction**. How, and to what extent, does APS provide services, accommodations, and instruction for students based on identification of needed services?
3. **Resource Allocation**. How, and to what extent, are resources organized to consistently implement the processes for: a) Evaluating and identifying b) Providing services, accommodations, and instruction?
4. **Academic Rigor and Engagement.** How, and to what extent, are students identified with an IEP or 504 Plan challenged and engaged?
5. **Social and Emotional Learning**. How, and to what extent, are students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports supported to develop socially and emotionally?
6. **Access and Equity**. How, and to what extent, do students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports have the opportunity to engage in the school experience equitably?
7. **High Quality Staff**. How, and to what extent, are students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports serviced by high-quality staff and service providers across all settings?
8. **Parents and Family Engagement**. How, and to what extent, is support available for parents and families of students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports?

All areas of the report are focused on improving instructional outcomes and providing an inclusive culture for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports. It begins with the student-centered focus of teaching/learning and progresses to examine the ways in which APS operates to support this essential function. It is intentionally structured in this manner in order to group interrelated topics together.

Methodology

Over the course of the 2018-19 school year, PCG conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of the IAT, ATSS, 504 Plan, and IEP services for students.

The findings and recommendations related to programs, policies, and practices resulted from a comprehensive analysis of several data sources. Sources included **1) Data and Document Analysis, 2) Focus Groups and Interviews, 3) Student File Review Focus Groups, 4) Student Shadowing, 5) Staff and Parent Surveys.** These components drew from **Research and Practice Literature** to inform the findings and recommendations. PCG used publicly available achievement and financial information to

compare key APS statistics against local district/division, state, and national data. Details of each data source are included below.

Data and Document Analysis

Population Trends, Programs, and Achievement and Outcomes Analysis

Population and program placement trends are significant equity indicators of the extent to which there is overrepresentation of any group. They also provide important information about the distribution of the placements and services, and access to the least restrictive environment. Population trends were analyzed to show, where possible, changes over time by grade level/age, race/ethnicity, gender, disability categories, level of service, and combinations of variables. Student performance data were analyzed to provide a comparative examination of performance by both students with and without disabilities.

Data included in the report also compare students with IEPs to their nondisabled peers on several indicators where publicly available data made comparisons possible.

Staffing Analysis

In partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools, PCG has compiled special education staffing ratios from approximately 70 school districts (very large to very small) nationwide. APS's staffing ratios were incorporated into these data to consider APS staffing information in a broader context. Staffing comparison data have been used to evaluate the extent to which staff roles, responsibilities, and training are aligned to APS's expectations.

Document Review

PCG reviewed over 100 documents for information related to district and school structures, programs, policies, and practices. Documents reviewed were in the following general categories:

- Organizational structure, staffing, and resource allocation
- Description of academic programs, services, interventions, and activities
- Documents regarding instruction and professional learning
- District procedures and guides, including improvement plans
- Compliance and due process complaints
- Fiscal information
- VDOE reports
- Measures concerning accountability

Throughout the report, PCG has used the most current data available. All national data are from the 2016-17 school year, which is the most up-to-date publicly available data set. In cases where comparisons are made to national data, 2016-17 APS and state data are used. For data displays that only include APS information, 2017-18 data are used. These data were provided to PCG in September 2018 and represent the student body at the end of the previous school year.

Focus Groups

In November 2018, PCG spent six days onsite conducting two sets of focus groups: 1) organizational focus groups/interviews, and 2) student file review focus groups. Nearly 300 stakeholders participated.

PCG worked closely with APS to determine the best outreach and communication methods for focus group and interview participation. PCG provided a sample schedule and list of positions required to participate. In order to ensure adequate and wide-ranging participation from across the organization, APS's Department of Planning and Evaluation coordinated with school principals and central office leadership.

In coordination with the Arlington Special Education Committee (ASEAC) and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA), the Department also sent an email request to parents inviting them to participate in an evening focus group. There were dedicated focus group sessions for parents of students with IEPs, parents of students with 504 Plan, and parents of students who participated in ATSS. Parents were offered the opportunity to participate in focus groups in their native language.

Student focus groups were held at two high schools. Two groups were held at each school, one for students with IEPs and one for students with 504 Plans. Student participants were selected by the schools with guidance from the Office of Planning and Evaluation. In total, we spoke with 20 students with IEPs and 24 students with 504 Plans. The goal of the session was to better understand the typical student experience. As such, focus group questions did not focus on specific disabilities nor did PCG access student records as part of these conversations.

Within this report, no focus group or interview participants are personally referred to, and no quotation is attributed to an individual. In some cases, position titles are referenced when necessary for contextual reasons.

Organizational Focus Groups and Interviews

In order to gain an understanding of how programs for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports operate broadly within APS, organizational focus groups and interviews were designed to include a range of stakeholders. Focus groups generally consisted of 10-12 participants, while interviews ranged from 1-3 participants. Except in rare circumstances, supervisors did not participate in the same focus group or interview sessions with their staff members, in order to give all staff an opportunity to speak candidly and honestly. Most focus groups occurred in person over a three-day time period in November 2018. Due to scheduling conflicts, some interviews were conducted over the phone or were conducted in person during a subsequent onsite time.

APS focus groups and interviews included a variety of central office staff, school-based staff, and family and community organization participants.

Central office staff included representatives from the following departments/offices:

- Office of the Superintendent
- Department of Administrative Services
- Department of Facilities and Operations
- Department of Finance and Management
- Department of Human Resources
- Department of Information Services
- Department of Planning and Evaluation
- Department of School and Community Relations
- Department of Teaching and Learning
    - Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
    - Office of Curriculum and Instruction
    - Office of Early Childhood
    - Office of Special Education
    - Office of Student Services

Field based staff included representatives from the following groups:

- School Administrators
- Special Education Teachers
- General Education Teachers
- Related Service Providers

- Social Workers
- Counselors
- Nurses

Family and Community representatives included:

- Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC)
- Arlington Inclusion Task Force
- Parents/Families
- School Board Members
- Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA)
- Student Services Advisory Committee (SSAC)

Students

- High school students with IEP
- High school students with 504 Plans

Student File Review Focus Groups

PCG conducted a series of student-centered file review focus groups that allowed for conversation about school-based practices, review of a variety of student documents (e.g., IAT/ATSS documentation, eligibility forms, IEP records, 504 Plans, student progress reports.). Through this records review, PCG addressed a number of themes related to student identification and eligibility, programs and services, curriculum and instruction, and staffing, while addressing specific process questions about the development of intervention plans, 504 Plans, and IEPs and their implementation. APS participants included special education teachers, general education teachers, counselors, nurses, school administrators, and related service providers and individuals who both knew, and did not know, the student. Parent representatives also participated in select student file review focus groups.

Student records were selected at random by PCG and included a cross-section of schools, ages, gender, and disability categories. It also included a combination of students who were English Learners (EL) and those receiving Gifted Services. A total of 48 student records were reviewed: 24 IEPs, 8 504 Plans, and 16 IATs.

The matrix provided below identifies specific data files and documents that were reviewed for each case study session. APS staff printed relevant documents associated with the selected students. All participants signed confidentiality statements in order to participate in these groups.

Exhibit 1. Student File Review Documentation

	Students with IEPs	Students with 504 Plans	Students with IAT Plan
If within 3 years, referral for evaluation/IAT documentation	X	X	X
Latest evaluation summary and eligibility determination summary	X	X	
Interventions & progress monitoring data			X
Latest IEP	X		
Latest 504 Plan		X	
IAT plan and revisions			X
Attendance	X	X	X

2017-18 progress reports to parents	X	X	X
2011-12 report card	X	X	X
Statewide & benchmark assessment data	X	X	X
Suspension records and any evidence of manifestation determinations	X	X	X
Functional behavior assessment, and/or behavior intervention plan	X	X	X
14 years & above: transition assessment inventories & transition plan	X		
EL: Information related to language proficiency	X	X	X
EL: ESOL/HILT Checklist	X	X	X

Student Shadowing Observations

In February 2019, PCG conducted Student Shadowing Observations in six schools, spending roughly one day per site. Students were shadowed for one day each. As decided in conjunction with APS, the focus of the Student Shadowing was on students with IEPs. Approximately 3-5 students per school were shadowed across a range of settings. The areas of observation included: Safe and Accessible Environment; Functions and Elements of Explicit Instruction; and Specially Designed Instruction.

The goal of the Student Shadowing was two-fold:

- To document, for each student, the access that he/she had to high quality instruction, the fidelity of IEP implementation, the continuity of services, and the overall experience as a student receiving special education services.
- To assess the degree to which the student's schedule is followed, how the student receives his/her services, how lessons are differentiated, and how integrated the student is within the larger school environment (e.g., lunchroom, recess, elective classes).

Students were selected at random by PCG and included a wide cross-section of grades/ages, gender, and disability categories. The sample also included a combination of students with disabilities who were English Learners and those receiving Gifted Support. Students included in the Student File Review Focus Groups discussion were excluded from the Student Shadowing Observation list. APS staff provided electronic copies of each student's most recent evaluation and IEP as well as student's schedules to PCG in advance of each visit.

Staff and Parent/Family Surveys

An online survey process was implemented to collect data on stakeholder perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of services for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports. PCG collaborated with APS to disseminate five surveys:

1. Staff Survey
2. Parents of Students with IEPs
3. Parents of Students with 504 Plans
4. Middle and High School Students with IEPs
5. Middle and High School Students with 504 Plans

Survey Items

Survey items were drawn from the research and practice literature and clustered to acquire data from each stakeholder group. To the extent possible, staff and parents were asked parallel questions to gauge how perceptions about the same topic differed.

The surveys administered during the 2013 review were used as a starting point. APS reviewed each survey item to verify their current relevance, added items where appropriate, and updated the rating scale of some items. The survey incorporated five-point rating scales, yes/no questions and included open-ended text areas. For reporting purposes, the five-point rating scale was consolidated into three categories: agree (which includes strongly agree and agree); disagree (which includes strongly "disagree" and "disagree"); and don't know or not applicable (where this option was provided to respondents). A similar approach was applied for questions with satisfied (which includes very satisfied and somewhat satisfied); dissatisfied (which includes very dissatisfied and somewhere dissatisfied); and don't know or not applicable (where this option was provided to respondents).

Survey Process

APS worked collaboratively with the PCG team to facilitate a survey process that would result in the highest possible rate of return. All surveys were opt-in. In order to test the survey delivery method and respond to any questions about the survey prompts, the Department of Planning and Evaluation conducted a pre-test with select stakeholders, including students and parents. PCG then adjusted some survey language and scale ratings based on the feedback provided.

In order to encourage participation, all potential participants were informed of the purpose of the survey and provided with instructions for accessing the survey online. Below is a summary, by stakeholder group, of the initial invitation method, reminders issued, response rates and languages offered for each survey.

	Initial Invitation Method	Reminder(s)	Response Rate	Languages Offered
Parents of Students with IEPs (PK- Grade 12+)	APS mailed invitation to 3,968 parents via standard mail	Two e-mail reminders from APS E-mail reminder from ASEAC and SEPTA to their listservs	A total of 533 parents who received an invitation to complete the IEP Parent survey, completed it online, representing a response rate of 13.4%.	English & Spanish
Parents of Students with 504 Plans (PK- Grade 12+)	APS mailed invitation to 923 parents via standard mail	Two e-mail reminders from APS E-mail reminder from ASEAC and SEPTA to their listservs	A total of 117 parents who received an invitation to complete the 504 Parent survey, completed it online, representing a response rate of 12.6%.	English & Spanish
All Students with IEPs (Grades 6-12+)	APS mailed invitation to 2,092 students via standard mail	Verbal reminders from students' case carriers	A total of 220 students who received an invitation to complete the IEP Student survey, completed it online,	English

			representing a response rate of 10.5%.	
All Students with 504 Plans **(Grades 6-12+)**	APS mailed invitation to 680 students via standard mail	Verbal reminders from students' counselor	A total of 63 students who received an invitation to complete the 504 Student survey, completed it online, representing a response rate of 9.3%.	English
School-Based Staff **(See below)**	APS e-mailed invitation to all school-based staff	Two e-mail reminders from APS	A total of 1,178 APS staff members, out of the 3,606 who received the survey, completed it online, representing a response rate of 32.6%.	English

There were no students who responded to the survey using augmentative and alternative communication. If a student required accommodations to access the survey, the case carrier/counselor offered this support. The survey could also be taken at home so that students could receive support from parents as needed.

A wide variety of staff were invited to participate in the survey. The following positions were included together to simplify the data reporting:

- Administrator
- Special education teacher
- Classroom teacher
- ESOL/HILT teacher
- Elective/specials teacher (PE, art, music, FLES, CTE, librarian, etc.)
- Instructional coaches (literacy coach, math coach, reading specialist, RTG, etc.)
- Counselor
- Paraprofessional (teacher assistant, including COTA, PTA)
- Special Education/Student Services itinerant staff (special education coordinators, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse counselors, behavior specialists, autism specialists)
- Related Service Provider (OT, PT, SLP, Therapist)
- Other[1]

Survey Analysis

Selected survey responses appear within the main body of the report to support discussion of select topics. Survey results alone did not drive the findings and recommendations in this report. PCG triangulated data from the all of the data sources to develop the final conclusions.

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[1] If staff selected "Other," they were prompted to enter their specific position. The following positions were entered: Security, Assistant Classroom Teacher, LEA, Resource Assistant/ Security (2), STC/Program Coordinator, Homeless Liaison, World Languages Assistant, PEP Coordinator, SPED Department Lead, Assistant Classroom Teacher, STC/Program Coordinator, Gifted Services, Specials Assistant, SPED Assistant Intervener, Bilingual Family Liaison-Interpreter, Resource Teacher, Sped Coord/Sped Teacher, Bilingual Liaison/BLFR, OT/PT Coordinator, Resource Assistant (2), K Montessori, Teacher Assistant, Co-teacher, Reading Teacher, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, SPED ED TESTING, Music Teacher, Elementary ESOL/HILT Resource Teacher, Secretary, Spanish Interpreter, ASL Interpreter, Native Language Support, Special Educator and Reading Specialist, Instructional Assistant, Librarian, Teacher of the Deaf, Bilingual Parent Liaison Resource Assistant, SPED Coordinator & Lead SLP, ESOL/HILT Resource Teacher, Bilingual Liaison, SPED Admin Assist, School Testing Coordinator.

Research and Practice Literature

PCG reviewed recent special education research to highlight best practices on several topics, including:

- Organizational and financial structures, such as interdepartmental coordination procedures and staffing structures, that support effectiveness in large special education programs and school-based budgeting;
- Special education referral and eligibility practices that support districts in identifying students in a timely manner through an appropriate assessment process;
- Instructional practices, including district policies and results, and the use of technology to facilitate maximum access to the general education curriculum; and
- Appropriate progress monitoring to allow districts to identify successes and adjust swiftly when students are not progressing.

PCG also drew upon our own knowledge of other districts' policies and procedures when making recommendations for best practice.

PCG Foundational Approach

PCG's approach to its work with state, county, and district organizations is as a thought partner. That is, we act as an outside agent, with an objective perspective, who works alongside educational entities to identify challenges and provide recommendations for improvement. We follow a mixed methods Collaborative Program Evaluation model that is systematic, based upon both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and produces credible and valid data that proactively informs program implementation, determines gaps, and offers recommendations for the continued improvement of the program.[2] We value the importance of developing trust, open communication, and fostering collaboration between the review team and program staff.

Our philosophy for improving student outcomes in schools and districts is driven by the U.S. Department of Education's Results Driven Accountability (RDA) framework and rooted in key tenets of the Schoolwide Integrated Framework Transformation (SWIFT) model.

Results Driven Accountability

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) recognized that the educational outcomes of children and youth with disabilities have not improved as much as expected even with intensive federal regulatory oversight and funding provided to address closing achievement gaps. The Department subsequently announced movement toward prioritizing improvement of outcomes for students with disabilities, from a one-size-fits-all, compliance-focused approach to general supervision to a more balanced system that looks at results and outcomes.[3] This approach is consistent with the IDEA, which requires the primary focus of monitoring to be on improving educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities and ensuring that states meet IDEA program requirements. RDA fulfills these requirements by bringing into focus the educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities while balancing those results with the compliance requirements of IDEA.[4] When providing guidance to school districts, PCG offers recommendations that strike this balance as well.

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[2] Donis-Keller, C., Meltzer, J., and Chmielewski, E. (2013). The Power of Collaborative Program Evaluation, A PCG Education White Paper. Available from http://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/media/1272/pcg_collaborative_evaluation.pdf

[3] April 5, 2012, RDA Summary, U.S. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/rda-summary.doc

[4] *Id.*

Schoolwide Integrated Framework Transformation (SWIFT) Model

Based on research related to the improvement of achievement and social/emotional outcomes for students with disabilities, the SWIFT model has received recognition by and support from OSEP.[5] SWIFT refocuses existing traditional educational approaches to general and special education and expands inclusiveness for students covered by Title 1, those from low-income backgrounds and English Learners (ELs).

According to researchers and practitioners at the University of Kansas, and as validated by members of the PCG review team's experience working with districts nationally, there are six critical issues facing public schools, especially chronically low-performing schools, which have suppressed academic and social/emotional outcomes for students and must be addressed to reverse this trend: 1) fragmented support "silos" and lack of family partnership with schools; 2) achievement gaps between subgroups of students based on social, language and/or disability characteristics; 3) lack of student engagement and behavior that impedes learning; 4) lack of implementation of both systems level and student-level evidence-based interventions with fidelity; 5) lack of knowledge sharing and resource availability; and 6) lack of sustainability and replication of successful schoolwide models of inclusive education.[6]

SWIFT's five core domains for school and district improvement are backed by research and growing evidence that addressing the above six issues is critical for improving outcomes for SWDs. The domains include a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which provides interventions and support for students at varied levels of intensity and focuses on the importance of good first teaching, and a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) curriculum and instruction. It aims to build school capacity to provide academic and behavioral support to improve outcomes for all students through equity-based inclusion. The domains, in detail, are:

- **Administrative Leadership**. A deeply engaged administrative leadership that is committed to transformative inclusive education.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).** Use of a MTSS where all academic and behavioral instruction is delivered through a schoolwide data-driven system utilizing universal design at all grade levels.
- **Integrated Educational Framework**. A strong and positive school culture creates an atmosphere in which everyone feels like they belong. To the extent possible, all students participate in the general education curriculum instruction and activities of their grade level peers. Schools embrace ways to redefine roles of paraeducators and teaching assistants to support all students.
- **Family/Community Partnerships**. Family and community partnerships are formed, and families are actively engaged in both the organizational makeup of the school as well as their child's education.
- **Inclusive Policy Structure & Practice**. District-level support and integrated policy structure are fully aligned and remove barriers and misconceptions surrounding implementation.

In addition, PCG emphasizes the need for intentional support that takes into consideration students' linguistic and cultural diversity. Districtwide and schoolwide practices based on these components provide a practitioner-focused, research-based, and federally recognized approach to improving academic/social emotional outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and other students who have not achieved at or above expected levels of proficiency.

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[5] The SWIFT Center's work was supported by a $24.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to support SWIFT implementation in states and school districts across the country and remains one of the leading frameworks for school improvement. See for more information see the SWIFT website at http://www.swiftschools.org

[6] Swift Schools. http://www.swiftschools.org/sites/default/files/SWIFT%20FIT%20Technical%20Adequacy%20Report.pdf

Terminology

There are several terms used throughout this report that require definition and clarification within the APS context. APS is also in the process of revising/updating some terminology used to reflect changing national trends.

Respectful Disability Language

Historically, APS has used the umbrella term "students with special needs" to refer to students requiring services through the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT), Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), a Section 504 Plan, or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This term is considered outdated by the Disability Rights Movement and does not reflect the growing movement to objectively acknowledge, communicate, and respectively report on people with disabilities.

To reflect these changes, APS has committed to using Respectful Disability Language.[7] This means that APS will use the term "students with disabilities" to refer to students with Section 504 Plans and IEPs. Students requiring services through MTSS/ATSS will be termed "students requiring intervention supports." This shift occurred mid-way through this program evaluation. As such, PCG has eliminated the use of "students with special needs" throughout the report where possible, except for in cases where the term was used as a direct citation from the original scope of work, recommendations from the previous evaluation, re-administration of the 2013 survey questions, or literature that uses this term.

"Special education" refers to the provision of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the receipt of special education/related services through an IEP.[8] The National Center on Disability and Journalism notes that the term "special education" is still widely used when referring to public school programs, though some organizations have started to use "exceptional student services" or "specialized instruction." APS uses the term "special education."

Section 504

Throughout the report, Section 504 is frequently referred to as "504," inclusive of all processes covered by this regulation. The "504 Plan" is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.[9]

Parents

In the context of this report, a parent is defined as a natural or adoptive parents of a child, a guardian, a parent acting in the place of a parent (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare) or a surrogate parent. The term "parent" is inclusive of families as well.

Virginia Specific Language

The federal data reporting category of "emotional disturbance" is known as "emotional disability" in Virginia. The term "emotional disability," even when data exhibits include national comparative data, is used throughout the report.

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[7] http://www.aucd.org/docs/add/sa_summits/Language%20Doc.pdf

[8] https://ncdj.org/style-guide/#S

[9] https://www.washington.edu/doit/what-difference-between-iep-and-504-plan

Professional Learning

With the introduction of the Professional Learning Framework, APS has replaced the term "professional development" with "professional learning." PCG uses "professional learning" throughout the report, except for in cases where the term was used as a direct citation from the original scope of work or in 2013 survey questions re-administered for this program evaluation.

Arlington Tiered Systems of Support

The provision of instruction/interventions and support to students within a framework of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) improves educational outcomes for *all* students, including those with Section 504 Plans and IEP, and these and others who are English Learners (EL) and/or gifted/talented.[10] In Arlington, this framework is known as the "Arlington Tiered System of Support," or "ATSS." PCG uses the term "MTSS" when referring to literature on tiered interventions and uses "ATSS" when describing APS's specific framework.

Gender Data

PCG recognizes that APS is working toward adopting a policy for transgender students and that future data collection regarding gender could include additional reporting categories. Current data collection at the APS and at the federal level is binary, with comparative data available for male and female only. As such, these categories are used throughout this report.

Acronyms

An index of acronyms used throughout this report is provided below and in the Appendix.

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act

APS Arlington Public Schools

ASEAC Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee

AT Assistive Technology

ATSS Arlington Tiered System of Supports

CLT Collaborative Learning Teams

DD Developmental Delay

ED Emotional Disability

EI Early Intervention

EL English Learner

ELA English Language Arts

ECSE Early Childhood Special Education

ESOL/HILT English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training

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[10] See the Council of the Great City School's document, *Common Core State Standards and Diverse Students: Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* that outlines the key components of an integrated, multi-tiered system of instruction, interventions, and academic and behavioral supports needed by school districts in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The document is applicable also to school districts in states that have not adopted these standards.

ESSA Every Student Succeeds Act

FAPE Free Appropriate Public Education

FERPA Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

IAT Intervention Assistance Team

ID Intellectual Disability

IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IAT Intervention Assistance Team

IEP Individualized Education Program

KPI Key Performance Indicator

LEA Local Education Agency

LRE Least Restrictive Environment

MTSS Multi-Tiered System of Supports

OCR Office for Civil Rights

OSI Office of Specialized Instruction

OHI Other Health Impairment

PBIS Positive Behavior Intervention Support

PL Professional Learning

PRC Parent Resource Center

PCG Public Consulting Group

Section 504 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

SEPTA Special Education Parent Teacher Association

SEL Social-Emotional Learning

SIS Student Information System

SLI Speech/language Impairment disability

SLD Specific Learning Disability

SOL Virginia Standards of Learning

SOPM Standard Operating Procedures Manual

SPP State Performance Plan

SSC Student Support Coordinator

SST Student Support Team

SWD Students with Disabilities

UDL Universal Design for Learning

WABE Washington Area Boards of Education

Members of the PCG Team

PCG's team members include:

- Dr. Jennifer Meller, Project Director. Former Director in Specialized Services for the School District of Philadelphia.

- Anna d'Entremont, Subject Matter Expert. Former COO of a Boston, MA charter school and program officer for an organization supporting 85 new small high schools across New York City.

- Will Gordillo, Subject Matter Expert. Former Executive Director of Exceptional Student Services in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach County School Districts.

- Dr. Christine Donis-Keller, Senior Research and Evaluation Specialist.

- Matthew Scott, Project Manager and Researcher.

II. Strategic Initiatives and District Context

Overview

Arlington County is a diverse, dynamic, and professional community located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The County has one school district, Arlington Public Schools (APS), which is the 13th largest among Virginia's 132 school divisions and educates over 27,000 students from early childhood through age 21. The most recent decade in APS history has been one of increasingly significant student growth, totaling nearly 9,000 students, or 49% growth.[11] APS students come from 122 nations and speak 100 languages, representing the following demographic composition: White (46.9%), Hispanic (28.0%), Black/African American (10.0%), Asian (9.1%), Multiple (5.7%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.3%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.1%). Approximately one-third (32.1%) of enrolled students are economically disadvantaged. English learners represent 29.9% of the population, 14.3% of students receive special education services, and 2.5% have 504 Plans.[12]

APS is recognized as one of the top performing school divisions in the state according to 2018 overall reading and mathematics advanced/proficient assessment rates, in both cases exceeding state averages,[13] and has received a wide range of accolades, including the prestigious Medallion of Excellence Award presented by the U.S. Senate, and Productivity and Quality Awards for Virginia and the District of Columbia. The 2017 Washington Post Challenge Index ranked all APS high schools in the top three percent in the U.S; for the eighth year in a row, all APS high schools have made the list. Fifteen APS schools received 2016 Virginia Index of Performance awards for advanced learning and achievement. Further, since 2009, APS has decreased its dropout rate by almost two-thirds, or 52%. More than 95% of APS students earn one or more high school credits during middle school. APS offers a range of programs and services designed to address the complex educational, health-related, and social-emotional needs of its diverse student population and to prepare them for postgraduate success. APS frequently attracts families who move to the area specifically for its reputable programming.

The APS culture is one built on the notion of continuous improvement and transparency. As evidenced by the multiple program reviews occurring each year and the comprehensive Annual Report, APS is accustomed to self-reflection and actively strives to improve its programming. The APS website contains readily accessible data and offers a wide range of resource for parents and the community about new and ongoing initiatives.

Although APS recognizes the need to strengthen systems to ensure student academic success, especially for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports, it faces challenges in five key areas.

1) Reducing the opportunity gap by increasing academic rigor and inclusive opportunities

The opportunity gap for students with disabilities in APS has persisted for the past several years. In the 2017-18 school year, 55% of students with disabilities passed the Standards of Learning (SOL) in Reading, compared to the 85% pass rate of their non-disabled peers. The Mathematics SOL scores were similar: a 55% pass rate for students with disabilities and 84% for all other students. Further, of the 61.0% of all students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma, only 23.1% were students with disabilities. APS has continued to lag behind state expectations for students with disabilities educated in the general education environment at least 80% of the time and has not met the state target for the past three years.

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[11] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Diversity-in-APS-Report-4page-accessible.pdf

[12] http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/divisions/arlington-county-public-schools#desktopTabs-3

[13] http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/divisions/arlington-county-public-schools#desktopTabs-1

2) Implementing a comprehensive intervention support system for all students

APS's recently finalized revised strategic plan for 2018-24, a holistic approach to educating all students, reflects its core focus areas: Multiple Pathways to Success for All Students; Healthy, Safe, and Supported Students; Engaged Workforce; Operational Excellence; and Strong and Mutually Supportive Partnerships. As APS begins to enact the recommendations in this report and the tenets of the strategic plan, serious consideration needs to be given to the level of autonomy schools can and should have when supporting programming for students and how district-wide initiatives such as the redesigned Student Support Process (SSP) will be implemented with fidelity. Achieving the goals established in the strategic plan will require an acceleration of the academic and social-emotional initiatives underway.

3) Developing trusting and productive relationships with the parent and family community

APS has an active parent and family community and offers many community engagement opportunities. A frequent theme that emerged with participants in the parent focus groups and in the parent surveys was that school staff working with their children are nurturing, caring, and supportive. Yet, an undercurrent of distrust of APS as a whole remains. Building stronger and more trusting relationships with the parent community, particularly for non-native English speakers or disenfranchised, will require even greater transparency and a concerted effort.

4) Providing consistent services in all schools

APS operates under a site-based management model, which has a significant impact on the consistency of programming from school to school district-wide. Striking a balance between school level decision making and the cohesiveness and standardization required to ensure high quality service delivery in all schools will require finesse and a nuanced approach.

5) Leadership changes

As of the finalization of this report in Fall 2019, APS is facing significant changes in leadership in three key positions: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, and Special Education Director. As new personnel start in these positions, it will be critical that they understand the intent of this report and organize the human capital and financial resources necessary to carry out the recommendations provided here.

Strategic Initiatives

APS has launched several new initiatives in the past few years to begin to address some of the areas of growth. The following section describes the vision of these initiatives and how APS is preparing to put its strategic initiatives into operation.

Strategic Mission and Vision
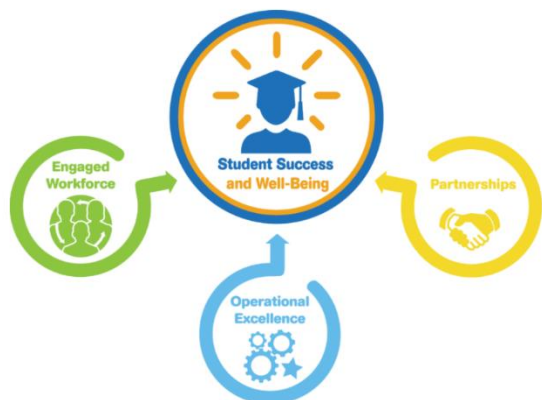
In the fall of 2017, APS initiated a strategic plan development process with broad stakeholder engagement. The work of developing the strategic plan was driven by a 24-member steering committee consisting of parent, staff, student, and community perspectives. On June 7, 2018, the School Board adopted the Mission, Vision, Core Values and Goals of the 2018-24 APS Strategic Plan. The new plan serves as a framework for the School Board and Advisory Committees, school and department plans, and individual work plans. Performance objectives to measure district-wide progress were adopted on October 4, 2018. The plan reflects the APS's mission to ensure all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments and is supported through the following core values: excellence, equity, inclusivity, integrity, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship. The 2018-24 Strategic Plan consists of the following five goals:

1. **Multiple Pathways to Success for All Students**. Ensure that every student is challenged and engaged while providing multiple pathways for student success by broadening opportunities, building support systems and eliminating barriers. APS will eliminate opportunity gaps so all students achieve excellence.

2. **Healthy, Safe, and Supported Students**. Create an environment that fosters the growth of the whole child. APS will nurture all students' intellectual, physical, mental, and social-emotional growth in healthy, safe, and supportive learning environments.

3. **Engaged Workforce.** Recruit, hire, and invest in a high-quality and diverse workforce to ensure APS is the place where talented individuals choose to work.

4. **Operational Excellence.** Strengthen and improve system-wide operations to meet the needs of Arlington's growing and changing community.

5. **Strong and Mutually Supportive Partnerships** Develop and support strong connections among schools, families, and the community to broaden opportunities for student learning, development, and growth.

The overarching focus of APS's strategic work for the next six years is on **Inclusion**, **Excellence**, and **Innovation**.[14] Equity and inclusivity are expectations at all schools and in all environments. Throughout the Strategic Plan, APS has established performance objectives that specifically address these areas for students:

Student Success

- Increased achievement for all reporting groups on district and state assessments shows progress toward eliminating the opportunity gap.
- All students will make at least one year's worth of growth as measured by federal, state, and/or district assessments.
- Historically over-represented and under-represented groups accessing services will be proportionate with student need and demographics.

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[14] https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/

- All graduates will have engaged in at least one experience that demonstrates productive workplace skills, qualities, and behaviors and may include a work-based experience (internships, externships, formal job shadowing, etc.). (Virginia Profile of a Graduate)
- At least 80% of students with disabilities will spend 80% or more of their school day in a general education setting

Student Wellbeing

- Key findings on student surveys, including the Your Voice Matters and Youth Risk Behavior Surveys will show a reduction in bullying, violence, sexual harassment, and substance use.
- Key findings on student surveys, including the Your Voice Matters and Youth Risk Behavior Surveys will show an improvement in mental health measures and access to mental health resources.
- Each school will report 95% implementation of the Whole Child indicators in the areas of safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.
- All students can identify at least one school-based adult who supports and encourages their academic and personal growth.
- Disproportionality in suspension rates by race/ethnicity, students identified with a disability, and English Learners will be reduced and overall suspensions will not increase.

Understanding that APS, as well as the profession of education as a whole, is constantly evolving and growing, each year the Strategic Plan will be reviewed by staff, parents, and community members to determine annual performance toward goals and to make any adjustments to the goals, desired outcomes, objectives, or strategies that may be needed.

Teaching and Learning Framework

During the 2017-18 school year, the Department of Teaching and Learning conceptualized and launched the Teaching and Learning Framework, a coordinated vision for providing high quality instruction for students and robust professional learning opportunities for staff. The Framework provides an overview of the expected teaching and learning experiences for each APS classroom; the curriculum templates that provide the "knows and dos", assessments, and resources for each unit; and the professional learning experiences that provide opportunities for collaboration and learning together across APS.[15]

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[15] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TL-Framework-for-Website.pdf
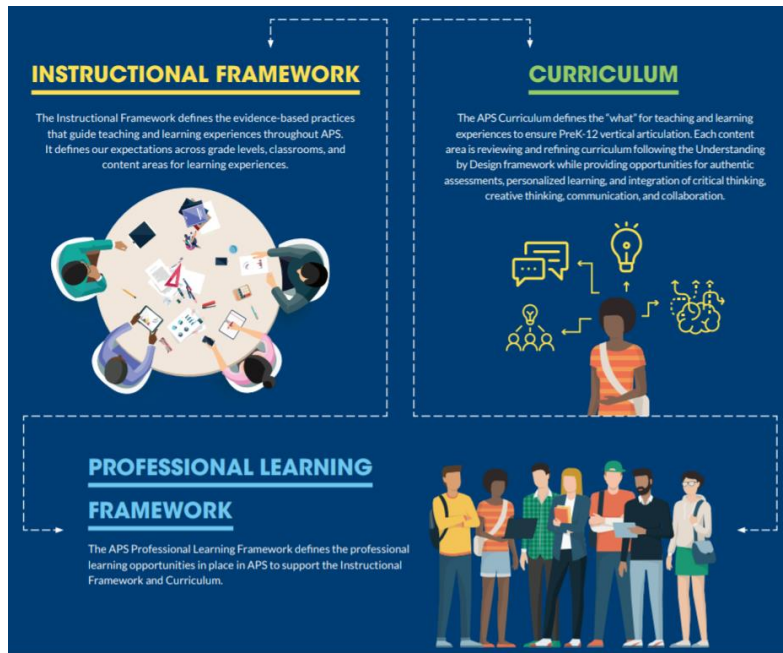
The roll out of the Teaching and Learning Framework occurred in earnest at the start of the 2018-19 school year. While the impact in schools is yet to be fully realized, it was evident from focus group participants that this framework is a welcomed guide and resource for staff.

The Professional Learning Framework, in particular, was cited as a core tool to be used to reinforce instructional consistency between schools and calibrate school walkthroughs. APS uses the Canvas platform as the learning management system and has built out a series of online courses and resources for teachers. Currently, teachers have access to professional learning sessions through multiple means, including face-to-face, blended learning modules, and online learning modules. All teachers were provided with information on how to access their professional learning networks on Canvas. There are some options for paraeducators to participate, but they are limited at this point. The Department of Teaching and Learning is working to provide more options moving forward.

Inclusion

For inclusive education to succeed, school districts must take action to publicly articulate the new vision, build consensus for the vision, and lead all stakeholders to active involvement. A major part of developing an inclusive, shared vision and mission involves forging a school culture that genuinely values all learners and fosters integrated learning opportunities for all students to thrive. APS has established a bold commitment to inclusive practices, evidenced by its Strategic Plan, district vision and core values, and the Teaching and Learning Framework. The notion of inclusion is bedrock to the future direction of APS and is not limited to inclusion for students with disabilities. By articulating this vision and dedication to inclusion, APS will be able to more effectively direct the change effort and increase the chances of achieving it.

APS's vision underscores the type of community it wants to have – an inclusive one "that empowers all students to foster their dreams, explore their possibilities, and create their futures."[16] The 2018-24 Strategic Plan also emphasizes that a core value of APS is inclusivity, a commitment to strengthening the community "by valuing people for who they are, nurturing our diversity, and embracing the contributions of all students, families, and staff."[17] And the Instructional Framework, within the larger Teaching and Learning Framework, is built on "fostering inclusive environments" and providing "access for all learners."[18] APS defines inclusive education as both a vision and a practice…

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[16] https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/

[17] *Id.*

[18] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TL-Framework-for-Website.pdf

of welcoming, valuing, empowering, and supporting the diverse academic, social/emotional, language, and communication learning of all students in shared environments and experiences for attaining the desired goals of education. Inclusion is a belief that everyone belongs, regardless of need or perceived ability, and that all are valued and contributing members of the school community (Villa and Thousand, 2016). Inclusive practice is an approach to teaching that recognizes the diversity of students, enabling all students to access course content, fully participate in learning activities, and demonstrate their knowledge and strengths.[19]

Because the Strategic Plan and the Teaching and Learning Framework were launched at the start of the 2018-19 school year, APS is in the nascent stages of determining how the inclusion vision will be realized. One step has been to establish a set of courses on Canvas, under a specific section on Inclusion. Additional courses on specially designed instruction and co-teaching were a priority for development during the 2018-19 school year. Current courses are included in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 2. 2018-19, Professional Learning Framework Inclusion Courses

Building the Infrastructure of Teaching and Learning	Content Knowledge	Enhancing Teaching and Learning
ATSS Overview	Assistive Technology	Courageous Conversations
Co-Teaching Models	Creating Sensory Safe Spaces	Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning: SEED I and II
Equity and Excellence	Executive Functioning	Assets vs. Deficits
Understanding Dyslexia	Implementing IEPs	Delivering Specially Designed Instruction
Understanding English Learners	Inclusive Practices for English Learners (ELs)	FACE: Race, Class, Equity, and Family Engagement
Understanding Gifted Learners	Fundamentals of Sheltered Instruction	
Student Support Processes: Student Study, 504 Plans and IEPs	Supporting ELP Level 6 Students	
Universal Design for Learning		
Why Inclusive Practices? What are Inclusive Practices?		
Young Scholars: A Focus on the Gifted Gap		

Another step APS has taken toward realizing this vision is to undertake a review of policies related to inclusion. APS launched a community engagement process in January 2019. As a result, APS implemented a Transgender & Gender Nonconforming Student Policy and Policy Implementation Procedures, and the following new policies under development: 1) Inclusion Policy, and 2) Equity Policy. The Inclusion Policy is broader than inclusion of students with disabilities. It is designed to embrace multiple aspects of diversity and inclusion. The final policies were submitted to the School Board in spring 2019 but have not yet been finalized or approved.

Student Support Process

Starting in the 2018-19 school year, APS began mapping out a coordinated approach to enhancing students' learning and social emotional wellbeing, the Student Support Process (SSP). The purpose was

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[19] *Id.*

to align the ATSS (Collaborative Learning Teams [CLTs], IAT), special education, and 504 processes to better support student needs. By consolidating these processes, APS believes it can: streamline repetitive meetings and improve efficiencies; build consistent practices across schools and levels; build capacity within staff to fluidly move within these processes to support students; decrease the amount of time teachers are pulled from classrooms for meetings; and reduce the need for families to come to schools for multiple meetings.

The first part of this shift occurred in the 2017-18 school year when the Office of Special Education and Office of Student Services were shifted under the Department of Teaching and Learning. This enabled better cross-communication and coordination between offices and a coordinated approach to academic and social-emotional supports for students. This realignment stemmed from the recommendation in the 2013 report to: "Maximize collaboration between personnel in the Departments of Instruction and Student Services and within Student Services to facilitate the coordination of all APS resources to support teaching and learning."[20] Additionally, APS is redesigning the 504 Coordinator and Special Education Coordinator roles so as to provide more comprehensive support to schools. The new position, which will be established for the 2019-20 school year, will be called a Student Support Coordinator (SSC). More information about this role and the development of a revised Student Support Manual can be found in subsequent chapters.

Summary and Implications

APS has established its long-term vision and commenced important foundational initiatives over the past 1-2 years. It will be critical for APS, especially its new leadership team, to maintain this course in order to both implement the recommendations contained in this report, realize its vision, and carry forward with system improvements.

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[20] 2013 Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs

III. Student Support Processes

A. ATSS Practices (including IAT)

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Vision. There is an established vision for ATSS and strong awareness and support for this vision amongst APS staff.	**Accountability.** No established accountability or metrics for principals to encourage ATSS adoption.
Coordinator Position. The ATSS Supervisor position is viewed as supportive and providing effective guidance.	**Referral.** Many PLCs did not have a systematic way of identifying students to move to IAT team review**.**
Collaboration. There is strong collaboration across the Department of Teaching and Learning to implement ATSS.	**Social-Emotional Interventions**. School-wide behavior frameworks are at the discretion of each school. Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior interventions viewed as lacking.
Universal Screening. Implementation of universal screening.	**Math Interventions.** Guidance related to math interventions is limited.
Reading Interventions. Reading interventions are centralized and standardized.	**Technology.** Updates to Synergy could better improve utility.
Elementary Schools. ATSS is most robust at the elementary level.	**Inconsistent Practices.** ATSS implementation continues to be a school-based decision, leading to inconsistent practices across buildings.
Centralized Forms. Recent move to web-based forms in effort to standardize practice.	**Naming**. There is ongoing confusion between IAT and ATSS and the role of and differences between each one at the school-level.
	Communication with families. Families do not appear to have a strong understanding of ATSS.
	Secondary Schools. Implementation weakest in the middle and high schools.
	District-level Policies and Procedures. Lack of school board policies and procedure manual on ATSS have contributed to inconsistencies.
	Progress Monitoring. Schools appear to be inconsistent in their use of data to inform student support decisions.

Introduction

The Department of Teaching and Learning uses a tiered system of support framework to better address the academic and social emotional needs of all students in APS. This framework is known as the Arlington Tiered System of Support, or ATSS. While intervention supports are offered as a core component of the general education curriculum, successful implementation of ATSS will reduce unnecessary referrals to special education.

The ATSS framework uses a data decision-based model to identify students who may need remediation or extension and create timely action plans. The Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) is the formal process used to design intervention strategies to improve and monitor student academic performance and behavior under the ATSS framework. APS introduced the IAT process during the 2005-06 school year. PCG reviewed IAT implementation successes and areas for improvement in the previous 2013 review.

The current ATSS framework was adopted by APS based on the 2013 review recommendations. Specifically:

Expand on the current IAT process to make it more reflective of a comprehensive and research-based MTSS framework to ensure all students receive the instruction and interventions they need to support academic and social/emotional learning, and to achieve at a higher level of performance.

This section assesses implementation consistency of APS's ATSS framework, and the overall efficacy of the IAT process. The section also reviews the extent to which ATSS aligns to state and federal guidance for Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The assessment is based on research pertaining to MTSS, documents provided by APS, and data from interviews, focus groups, a staff survey, and four IAT case study review sessions.

Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS) Framework

The provision of instruction/interventions and support to students within a framework of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) improves educational outcomes for **all** students, including those with Section 504 Plans and IEP, and these and others who are EL and/or gifted/talented.[21] The framework focuses on prevention and the early identification of students who may benefit from instructional and behavioral interventions, as well as acceleration that remove barriers to learning.[22] When implemented as intended, MTSS leads to increased academic achievement by supporting rigorous core instruction and strategic/targeted interventions, and improved student behavior. Furthermore, the framework has been successfully used to support a reduction in disproportionate special education referrals of students based on race, gender, socioeconomic or English learner subgroups. In Arlington, this framework is known as the Arlington Tiered System of Support, or ATSS.

Reflecting on the growing recognition of MTSS as a system wide framework for supporting student achievement and positive behavior, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), includes MTSS as a permissible usage of Title I funds. The Act defines MTSS as "a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision-making."[23] MTSS provides an overall framework for structuring and coordinating the provision of core instruction along with the additional behavioral supports, such as

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[21] See the Council of the Great City School's document, *Common Core State Standards and Diverse Students: Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support* that outlines the key components of an integrated, multi-tiered system of instruction, interventions, and academic and behavioral supports needed by school districts in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The document is applicable also to school districts in states that have not adopted these standards.

[22] MTSS reflects the merger of response to instruction/intervention (RTI^2), which typically focuses on academic achievement, and a system used to focus on improving positive behavior support.

[23] Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized in 2015.

behavior modifications or mental health supports, some students require so that all are successful. MTSS is centered on a tiered system of support, where every student receives high quality core instruction, known as Tier 1. Some students need supplemental instruction, which is referred to as Tier 2, and a small cohort of students receive the most intensive intervention and supports, known as Tier 3. Movement among these tiers should be fluid. A student with acute needs does not need to progress through the tiers to get individualized support, and a student who needs extra support should not miss general instruction that is provided in Tier 1.

Under the MTSS framework, core instruction is evidence-based, rigorous and of high quality. By utilizing a universal design for learning system, learning differences are considered proactively rather than reactively. The instruction is culturally relevant, linguistically appropriate, and is implemented with integrity for all students. The framework is based on a presumption that some students require additional instruction in order to achieve grade level standards. Increasingly intensive tiers of academic and social/emotional support are targeted to meet student needs based on data-based problem-solving and decision-making; instruction is adjusted to continually improve both student performance and the rate at which it progresses. Furthermore, the process is used to assess (using student responses to the instruction) the effectiveness of the tiered instruction/interventions being implemented. Many states have established intervention systems that align to the core tenets of the MTSS process and branded them accordingly. In Virginia, MTSS has been adopted as the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS).

Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)

As noted on the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website: VTSS "is a data-driven decision making framework for establishing the academic, behavioral and social-emotional supports needed for a school to be an effective learning environment for all students."[24] The VTSS approach is systemic, requiring the use of evidence-based, system-wide practices that are implemented with fidelity, and frequent progress monitoring to enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students.

VTSS's theory of action (pictured below) assumes that the process of integrating data, practices, and systems will positively affect student outcomes. The essential elements of an effective VTSS framework with a school division and school are:

- Aligned organizational structure
- Data-informed decision-making
- Evidence-based practices
- Family, school, and community partnerships
- Monitoring student progress, including universal screening
- Evaluation of outcomes and fidelity
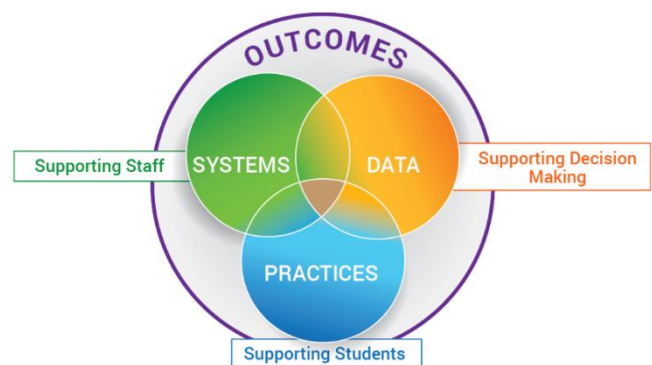
School divisions in Virginia are supported by Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports Research and Implementation Center at the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for School-Community Collaboration (VTSS-RIC). The goal of VTSS-RIC is to "build state and local capacity for sustained tiered system of academic, behavioral, social-emotional supports that are responsive to the needs of all students."[25] The center offers professional

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[24] http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/virginia_tiered_system_supports/index.shtml

[25] https://vtss-ric.org/

learning and on-site coaching to school divisions across the Commonwealth through a cohort model. APS is not currently participating as a cohort member.

Awareness of ATSS

In general, staff appear to be aware of the ATSS framework. Focus group participants expressed a general understanding of the model and most noted attending professional learning on the topic. Of both classroom and special education teachers, 75% agreed they "feel knowledgeable of what the ATSS framework is." Elementary school level teachers had the highest levels of agreement with that statement, while high school level had the lowest.

Exhibit 3. Staff Survey by Role: I feel knowledgeable of what the ATSS framework is.
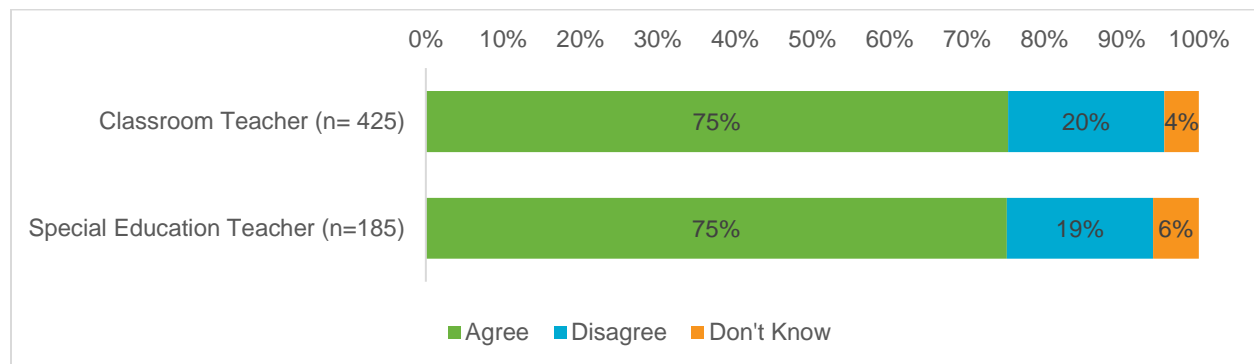
Exhibit 4. Staff Survey by Role and Level: I feel knowledgeable of what the ATSS framework is.
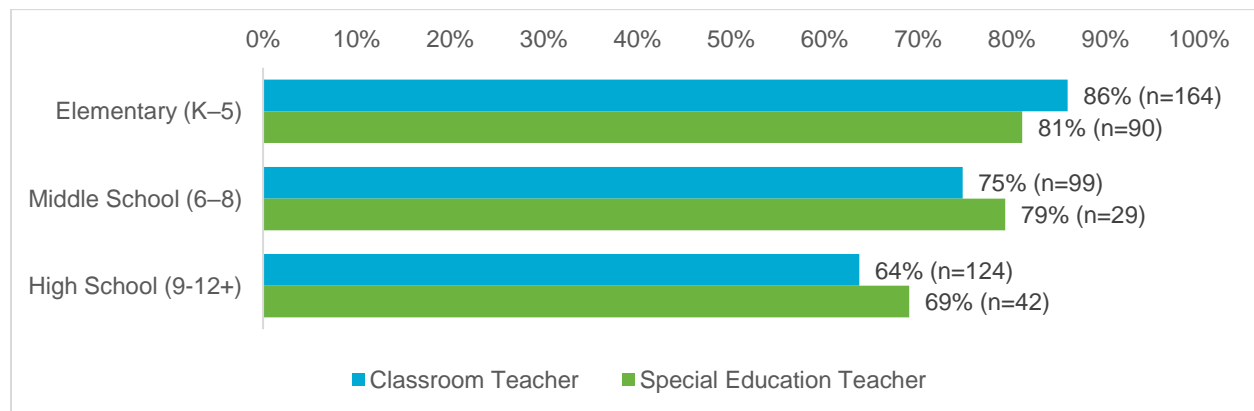
District Leadership

The Department of Teaching and Learning is charged with the responsibility for providing guidance, professional learning, and implementation support for ATSS. Following PCG's previous report, an ATSS Supervisor level role was created five years ago. This position is responsible for the district-wide success of ATSS. Initial responsibilities included creating and coordinating a five-year implementation plan. In addition, the Coordinator provides tools and resources that schools need for implementation and works with content offices to ensure interventions are content and pedagogically appropriate. Focus groups members noted this position played a critical role in driving ATSS progress to date.

However, there is the perception among stakeholders that accountability for ATSS is lacking. The ATSS Supervisor can provide the vision, plans, tools and resources but cannot hold schools accountable for implementation. There is no written school board policy for ATSS, nor are there established requirements

or accountability metrics for principals. For example, there are frequent walk-throughs by district staff in schools. Numerous checklists are used for these walkthroughs, yet none are specific to ATSS. As one stakeholder noted, "We have so many things going on in APS. Many initiatives that are struggling to compete." There are documented best practices that have been in place for three years. Communication of these best practices occurs in person through a combination of site-based and online training.

The creation of the Coordinator position is a clear strength for APS. Creating an effective intervention and pre-referral system, though, requires dedicated support from senior-level leadership, universal expectations, and accountability structures to ensure a seamless and integrated framework that is clear to both central office leadership and school leadership teams. Without accountability, it is difficult to consistently and effectively operate APS's intervention framework.

School-based Structures

It is the expectation that schools use their Collaborative Learning Teams (CLT) to address Tier 1 or core instruction. CLTs are professional learning communities (PLC), typically organized by grade. In some schools, the terms CLT and PLCs appear to be used interchangeably.[26] PLC meeting frequency is set by the principal, with most schools meeting 1-2 times per week. To every extent possible, special education teachers, ESOL/HILT teachers, gifted teachers, reading and math specialists try to attend these meetings.

During the time allotted for CLT, work teams identify students who need additional remediation or extension beyond core time. CLT work teams determine initial in-class interventions and collect additional data on student progress. If students do not respond to attempted interventions, a referral to IAT is made. A flow chart entitled "ATSS Process within the CLT Framework" details step-by-step decision-making guidance for CLTs as they work through the intervention process.

Given that CLTs have numerous responsibilities, such as on curriculum, pacing, and creating formative assessments, the time spent on intervention support in these meeting varies by building and by team and in some instances is limited. Nearly one-third of classroom and special education teachers who responded to the survey stated that their team did not use the ATSS framework during their PLC or CLT meeting. While 77% of elementary school classroom teachers responded in the affirmative to this statement, less than half of all high school classroom teachers did. The majority of elementary school teachers (81%) said that their PLC or CLT monitors the progress of students who are receiving intervention versus 51% of high school classroom teachers.

In addition to the CLT referral, students may be referred to IAT by a family member or other person on behalf of the student. The person who requests the IAT meeting fills out the IAT referral form and submits it to the school's IAT Chair. Once the referral form is submitted, District guidance dictates that the IAT meeting must occur within 10 days. An IAT process flow document guides IAT teams through the decision-making process. In addition, the document outlines required timeframes, team members, procedures and identifies the types of students who should be referred. Although this guidance exists, fidelity to the process appears to vary by school.

Each school has an assigned IAT chair. This role of the IAT chair is to facilitate the IAT process and ensure fidelity of IAT plan implementation. Currently the individual in this role varies by school, leading to inconsistent practices. The intention for the 2019-20 school year is that the new Student Support Coordinator (SSC) will be responsible for that role in every building.

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[26] Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many refer to the school or district as a PLC. Each PLC is organized into a series of high-performing collaborative teams (CLTs) which meet on a weekly basis to focus on student learning. See: http://www.allthingsplc.info/mobile/blog/view/23/whatrsquos-the-difference-between-a-plc-a-collaborative-team-and-a-task-force

IAT team composition appears to be different in each building. District written guidance states that, at a minimum, the IAT chair, an administrator and referring teacher attend the IAT meeting. Other attendees may include reading or math specialists, school counselors, ESOL/HILT teachers, or other relevant staff based on student need. Some student file review participants referenced frequent inclusion of these individuals, while others noted additional individuals were rarely if ever included. Some schools reported consistently convening a full team, like an IEP meeting. At other schools, the IAT team typically consisted of a counselor and one teacher.

Parents are invited to and included as part of the IAT team meeting. APS has a standardized letter template that should be sent out to parents informing them of the meeting. This appeared to be a consistent practice in the IAT files reviewed by PCG. Currently, this letter and other IAT documents are not translated into Spanish or other languages as a standard practice. However, IAT file review participants noted that parents rarely attend unless the meeting was requested by the parent. Of those parents who attended the IAT parent focus group, none were aware their child either currently has or previously had an IAT plan nor were any familiar with the team. All assumed the focus group was related to special education.

Elementary and middle school survey respondents reported encouraging parents to participate as partners with greater frequency than those in high school.

Exhibit 5. Staff Survey by Role and Level: Parents are encouraged to participate as partners during IAT meetings to discuss their children's educational needs.
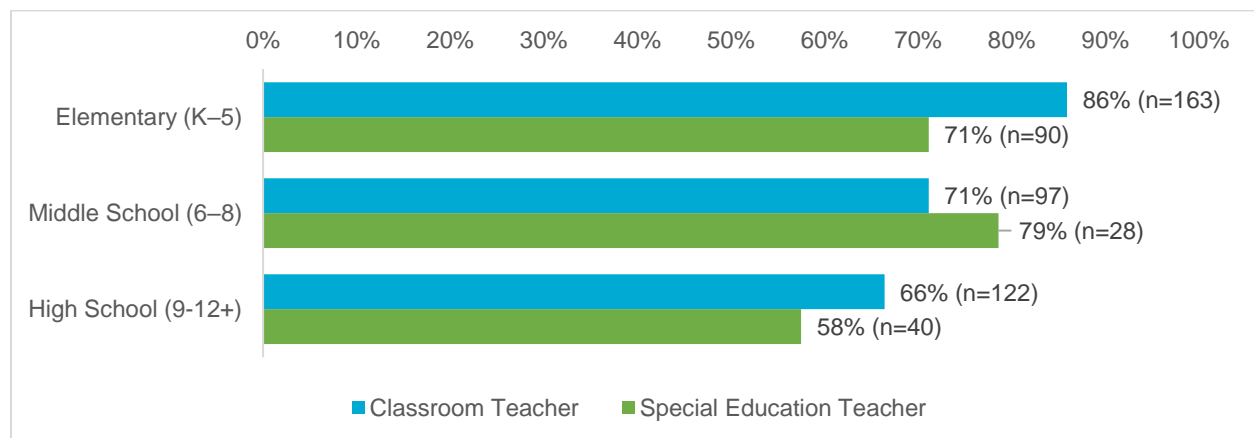
It is the expectation that IAT team members bring data on current student performance and any previous intervention(s) attempted. Data can include, but is not limited to, various forms of formative and summative assessment, behavioral or social emotional data, teacher observations, anecdotal records, ESOL/HILT Checklist, data provided by parents, and student attendance. Teachers in the student file review focus groups referenced finding this data collection time-consuming and perceived it as a roadblock to getting needed help for a student.

APS implemented this two-step process in efforts to streamline the student study process. Students receive interventions in the classroom setting through CLT decision-making first so that IAT is focused on those students who require more targeted supports. This approach appears to vary by school. File review participants indicated the number of IAT meetings per year varied significantly by school. One participant noted there were only three IAT meetings last year across the whole school. Whereas, another participant shared that her school had so many that they are now taking a deep look at Tier 1 instruction.

Over the past few years, APS has added approximately 6-7 more school-based psychologists and social workers. These positions have not been assigned to specific schools but have allowed staff to be at their

assigned schools for more days per week for an average of 3-4 days per week. This additional time allows for greater flexibility to support small group instruction for students who may need Tier 2 and Tier 3 SEL/Behavior support, support families, and consult with teachers. It was noted that this additional allocation of staff has been very helpful to provide support for students and families. Intervention Blocks

Intervention blocks have been adopted in the schools to provide a dedicated and structured time for intervention support.

- All 23 elementary schools have built into their master schedule additional instructional blocks of time to support Tier 2 and Tier 3
- All 5 middle schools have also built into their master schedule additional instructional blocks of time to support Tier 2 and Tier 3
- High schools are encouraged to use their Patriots/Generals/ or Warriors time to provide additional targeted support. Student focus groups participants viewed this block as a time to do homework, relax and, in some instances, seek out additional support for teachers. Limited reference was made to more structured use of this block.
- In all instances, the invention block appeared to be focused on providing academic interventions for reading and math.
- At the middle school level, file review participants noted the intervention block was frequently viewed negatively by students as peers who did not need intervention were participated in enrichment activities, such as play basketball, during this time.

Support for Positive Behavior

Support for positive behavior cited in literature refers to a comprehensive, systemic, three-tiered approach to establishing the social, cultural, and behavioral supports needed by all students to achieve both social and academic success. [27] The most effective implementation integrates supports for positive behavior with supports for academic success.

There is currently no district-wide tiered approach to behavior management. Instead, the adoption of a school-wide behavior framework is at the discretion of each building principal. Most APS elementary schools have adopted Responsive Classroom (19 total) as a Tier 1 strategy. One school uses Positive Behavior supports, one school has adopted Conscious Discipline and two elementary schools have nothing in place. Universally, focus group participants indicated wanting more support for Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior interventions. However, in March 2019, APS completed "A Social-Emotional Learning Reference Guide."[28] This guide provides resources for school teams.

Staff survey responses indicated that roughly half of all teachers do not believe that their school effectively implements social emotional interventions. Less than half of all teachers believe the intervention block or flexible instructional blocks of time at their school address the social emotional needs of their students.

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[27] See, for example, the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support; and Florida's Positive Behavior Support site http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/.

[28] https://www.apsva.us/student-services/

Exhibit 6. Staff Survey by Role: My school implements highly effective social emotional and behavioral interventions.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Classroom Teacher (n= 422)	56%	29%	15%
Special Education Teacher (n=186)	54%	38%	8%
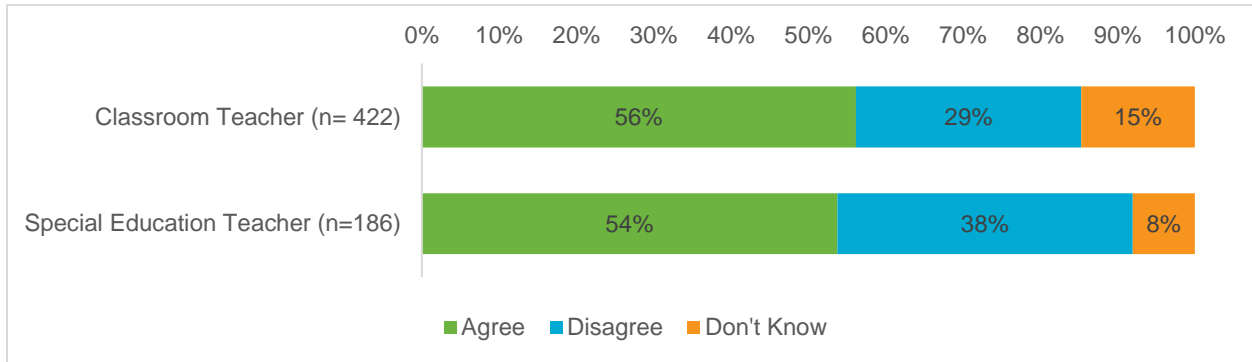
Exhibit 7. Staff Survey by Role and Level: My school implements highly effective social emotional and behavioral interventions.

	Classroom Teacher	Special Education Teacher
Elementary (K–5)	57% (n=162)	54% (n=90)
Middle School (6–8)	54% (n=99)	45% (n=29)
High School (9-12+)	56% (n=125)	50% (n=42)
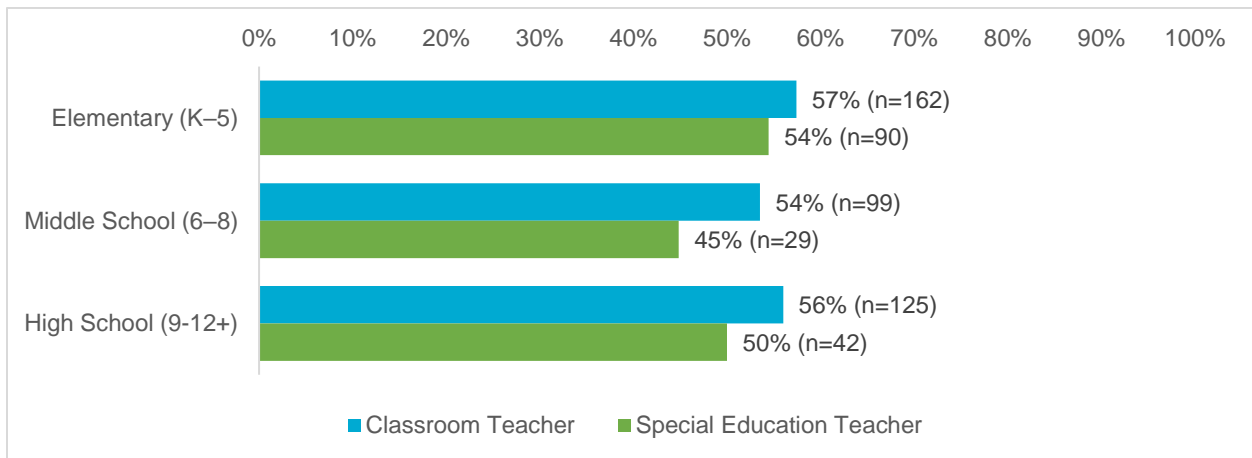
Exhibit 8. Staff Survey by Role: The intervention block or flexible instructional blocks of time at my school are able to address the social emotional needs of students.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Classroom Teacher (n= 421)	45%	37%	18%
Special Education Teacher (n=182)	45%	37%	18%
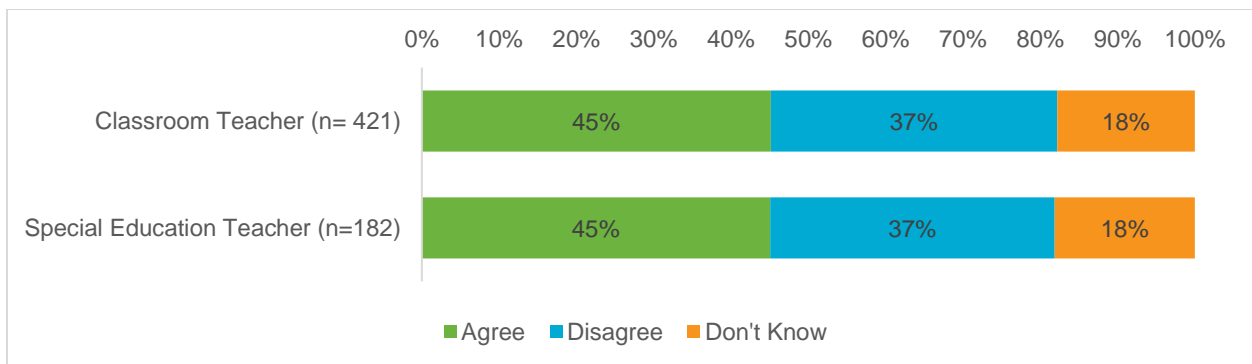
Exhibit 9. Staff Survey by Role and Level: The intervention block or flexible instructional blocks of time at my school are able to address the social emotional needs of students.
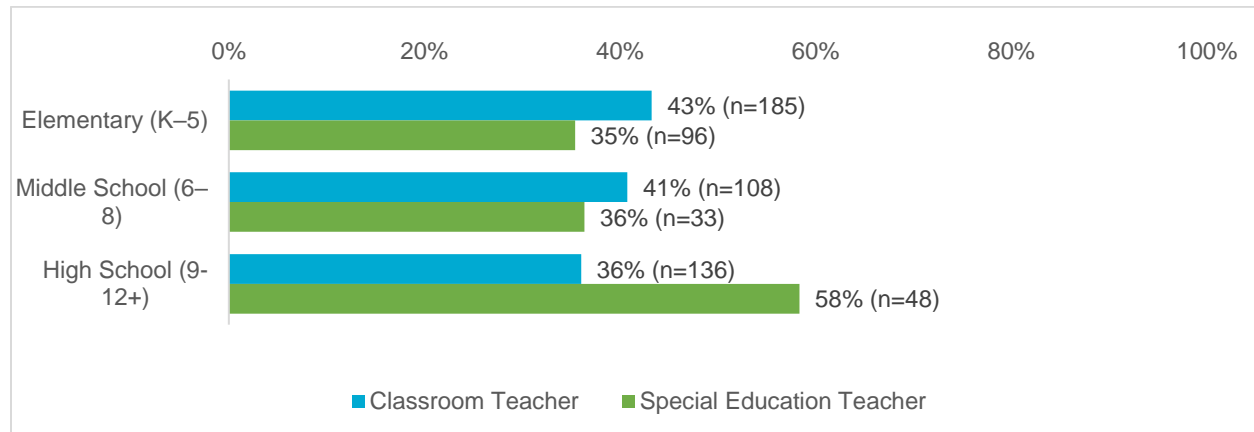
Bullying

Though this was an area in which PCG asked specific questions of focus group participants, data collected did not seem to support a conclusion that bullying is or is not a systemic concern in APS. Systemwide data are not available on any incidents related to bullying. There are ongoing efforts underway in APS, however, to develop a more robust system for bullying prevention and monitoring and a continued effort to bring awareness to this topic as noted by the resources available on the Student Services' website.[29]

Universal Screening & Referral Process

This section assesses the effectiveness of APS practices regarding the identification of students requiring intervention strategies to improve their academic performance or behavior, or who have teachers who could benefit from instructional supports.

Universal Screening

According to the National Center on RtI, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, "Universal Screening" is defined as screening for all students. The process involves:

> Brief assessments that are valid, reliable, and evidence-based… conducted with all students or targeted groups of students to identify students who are at risk of academic failure and, therefore, likely to need additional or alternative forms of instruction to supplement the conventional general education approach… Screening is conducted to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening tests are typically brief, conducted with all students at a grade level, and followed by additional testing or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status. In screening, attention should focus on fidelity of implementation and selection of evidence-based tools, with consideration for cultural and linguistic responsiveness and recognition of student strengths. [30]

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[29] https://www.apsva.us/student-services/bully-prevention/

[30] http://www.rti4success.org/categorycontents/universal_screening

In the previous review, APS did not have a universal screening tool or related practices. Schools now reference use of universal screening data to identify student needs. Many focus group participants noted the extensive amount of data now available to them. PALS is now administered three times per year for grades K-5 as a literacy screener and progress monitoring tool.[31] APS has also adopted the following universal screeners: Reading Inventory (6-8), Math Inventory (5-8), and quarterly benchmarks that align to the SOLs. Most focus group and case study review participants at the elementary level were familiar with universal screening and its application in APS. However, use of this data as a tool to identify students who may require services and support through the IAT process did not appear to be an adopted practice across all schools based on the files reviewed.

Referral Practices

While documented procedures for the referral of students to IAT exist, focus group participants commented that implementation practices continue to vary by school. One file review participant noted their uncertainty about what "triggered" an IAT meeting. Another shared that in their school it was "really just for social-emotional issues" as academic issues can typically be resolved through teachers on their own or through CST. Others expressed the belief that most IAT referrals came from teachers who struggled with classroom management or quality Tier 1 instruction. Parent focus group participants continued to remain vocal about the variation of referral practices between schools. While some participants viewed the IAT process as a "hoop to jump through" to get to Child Study, this belief was noticeably less widespread than the last review.

In nearly every IAT file reviewed, there appeared to be underlying social-emotional issues that impacted the student's academic performance. Yet, few plans had interventions to address these needs and case managers reported being at a loss for how to best address these concerns. For example, in one case, the student's IAT meeting was triggered by behaviors that had resulted in multiple in-school suspensions. The plan had been in effect for over a year, yet there was no behavioral plan or behavioral goals in the IAT plan. It did not appear that a social worker had been included in the process. Other cases followed a similar trend. File review participants in every session expressed wanting more guidance and training with how to best address student's growing social/emotional needs.

Use of Interventions

One of the core elements of MTSS is the provision of research-based, increasingly intensive interventions that are targeted to student needs:

> An intervention is a specific skill-building strategy implemented and monitored to improve a targeted skill (i.e. what is actually known) and achieve adequate progress in a specific area (academic or behavioral). A scientifically based intervention refers to specific curriculum and educational interventions that have been proven to be effective for most students and the research has been reported in scientific, peer-reviewed journals. A modification, on the other hand, is a change that actually lowers the standards of what is expected to be known.[32]

Since the last review, APS has worked to further build out and standardize available interventions. The following is a list of in-class support suggestions created by APS.

- ELA Elementary Intervention Protocol for Grades K-5

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[31] PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) is the state-provided screening tool for Virginia's Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) and is used by 99% of school divisions in the state on a voluntary basis.

[32] Alliance for School-based Problem-solving & Intervention Resources in Education (ASPIRE) at www.illinoisaspire.org/central/download.php?dID=51.

- ELA Secondary Intervention Protocol for Grades 6-12
- Social and Emotional Reference Guide (Draft)
- Math Intervention Protocol (Not yet developed)
- English Learner Considerations and Intervention Protocol
- Graphic Organizers
- Universal Design for Learning
- Co-Teaching
- Extensions and differentiation resources[33]

There is the general belief that ATSS implementation is stronger at the elementary level than at the middle or high school level. Last year an English Language Arts intervention protocol was released. The ELA Elementary and Secondary Intervention Protocols are both rich and detailed resources to help teachers understand to most appropriate supports for struggling readers. The Protocols include a "Learning Differences: Language Acquisition vs. Learning Difficulty Reference Chart" for English Language Learners.

There are plans to develop a similar protocol for math. There is the perception among school-based stakeholders that there are not enough inventions for math. APS district staff noted that an inventory of math inventions does exist. However, unlike in ELA, current interventions are strategy focused instead of program-based.

Lack of clarity as to what constituted a research or evidence-based intervention was evident during the case study review. Participants referenced the new protocol, yet still noted the difficulty of developing appropriate interventions specific to a students' needs. Participants reported often feeling like interventions were arbitrarily selected based on the group brainstorming and available schedules. This challenge was most evident at the secondary school level. Interventions and accommodations were often comingled. In some cases, the IAT Plan reviewed read more like a 504 Plan to file review participants. One file review participant noted that in their school "the majority of IATs eventually go to 504 or IEP," and that IATs are most frequently the first step of a parent-initiated request for 504 Plan.

Most teachers report familiarity with the academic interventions at their school. High school classroom teachers are the least likely to believe that their school implements highly effective reading (35%) or math (40%) interventions.

Exhibit 10. Staff Survey by Role: I am familiar with the academic interventions at my school.

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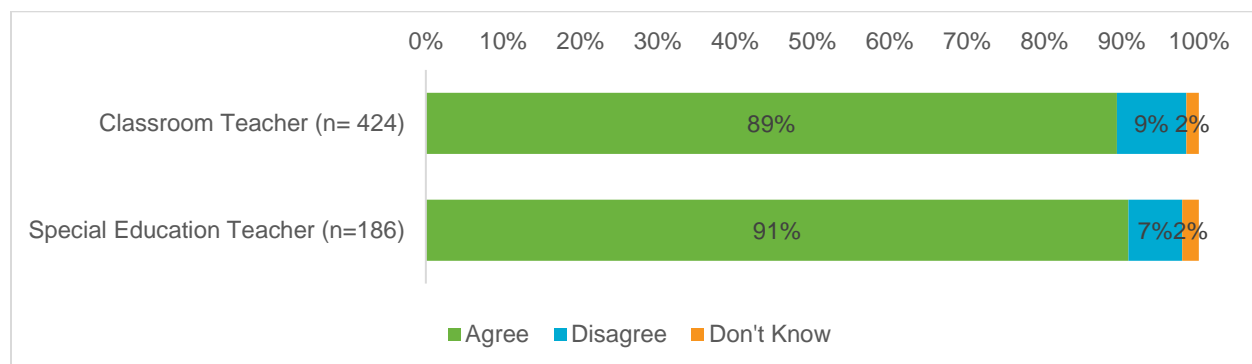
[33] This list was provided to PCG from APS

Exhibit 11. Staff Survey by Role and Level: My school implements highly effective reading interventions.
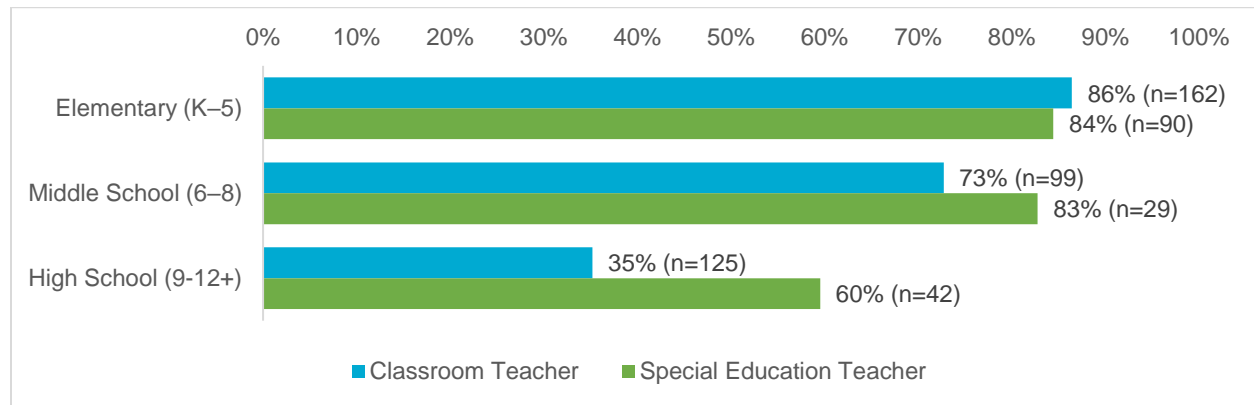
Exhibit 12. Staff Survey by Role and Level: My school implements highly effective math interventions.
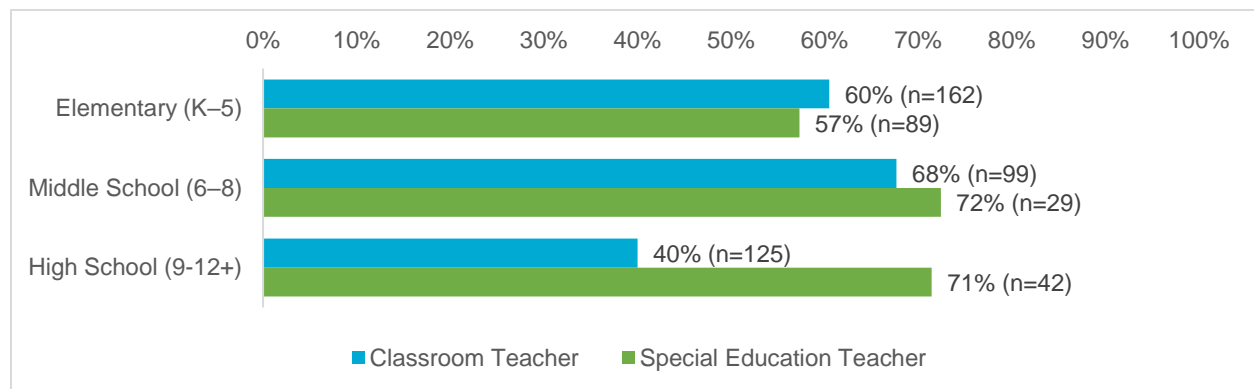
Progress Monitoring

According to the National Center for RtI[34]:

> Progress monitoring needs to pay attention to the fidelity of implementation and selection of evidence-based tools, with consideration for cultural and linguistic responsiveness and recognition of student strengths. Data obtained from progress monitoring help staff assess whether students are making an adequate rate of progress and it provides information for problem solving around what may not be working for individual students or groups of students. In some instances, the problem may be the integrity or fidelity with which instruction or the intervention is delivered. District protocols can provide guidance for defining progress-monitoring requirements for instruction and interventions.

APS's IAT procedures provide information regarding the need to collect data before, during, and after the intervention's implementation. Since the last review, APS has made efforts to provide additional guidance related to progress monitoring. AIMSweb is used to track interventions at some schools, though it is not consistently used across APS.

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[34] National Center for RtI website: https://rti4success.org/essential-components-rti/progress-monitoring

Exhibit 13. Staff Survey by Role: There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring at my school with identified methods, tools, and frequency.
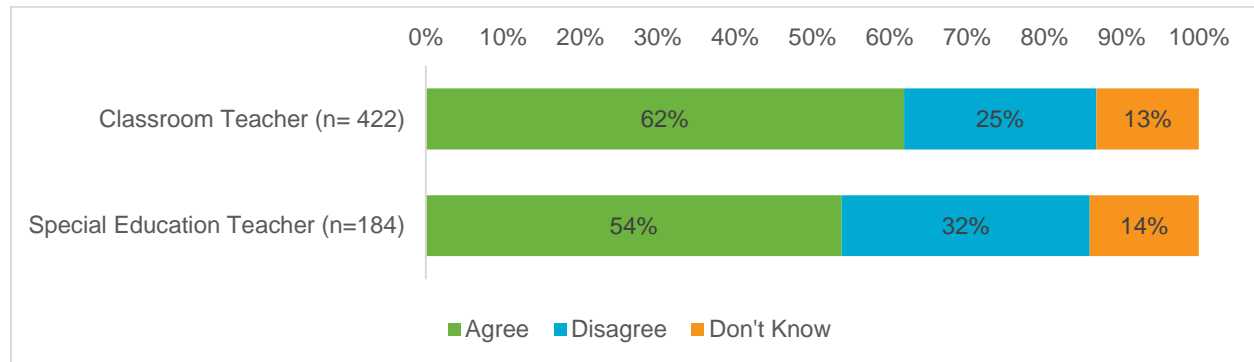
Exhibit 14. Staff Survey by Role and Level: There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring at my school with identified methods, tools, and frequency.
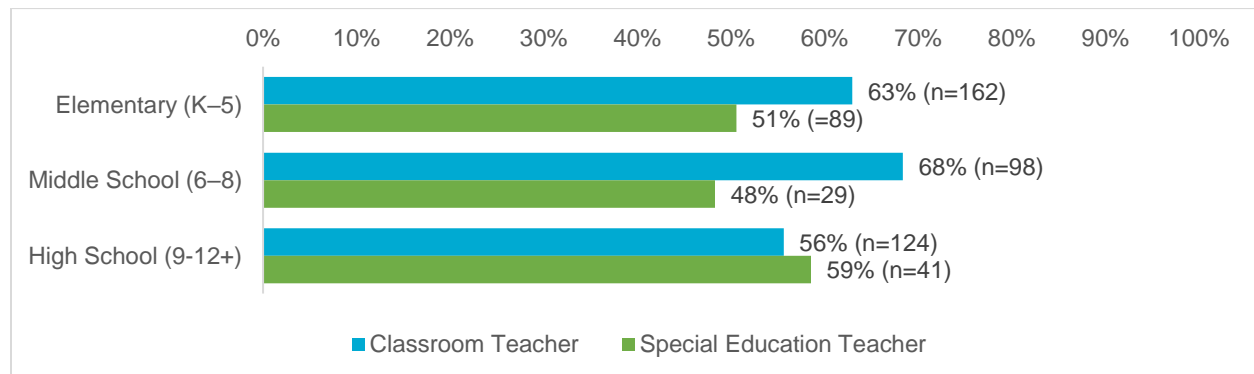
Implementation of Progress Monitoring

Case study review discussions of IAT plans, and student records reviewed during the process, reflected the following:

- Unlike in the last review, most file review participants were aware of the term progress monitoring and its purpose.
- Schools continue to be inconsistent in their use of progress data.
- Many of the IAT reviewed did not have deadlines or scheduled dates to revisit the IAT plan and review progress data. Focus group participants noted that IATs will often continue in place until the school year ends or someone elevates it to the next step.
- There was minimal evidence of follow-up meetings in most files reviewed. File review participants noted follow-up meetings were not common.
- Some IAT plans referenced the use of longer-term data sources such as quarterly grades or attendance.

Focus group participants confirmed that there is a tendency for the IAT to assume that a student has benefitted from the supports provided, and that no additional action is required. When IATs do meet to review a student's plan, data were not a predominate factor in determining whether the use of interventions achieved the desired results. For example, for elementary level case review records, one of three actions typically occurred when IATs met to review student progress: 1) continue current interventions, 2) terminate the plan, or 3) refer the student for a special education evaluation. Reportedly, these decisions tended to be the result of professional judgment rather than data.

Standard IAT Documents and Electronic Documentation

- In the previous review, there was no standard protocol for the development of IAT plans. As such, the quality of the IAT plan varied greatly from school to school. APS has attempted to standardize the form by moving to a web-based process on Synergy. The IAT files were significantly stronger than five years ago; however, there was still significant inconsistency among schools. Focus group participants noted that file content differs from school to school, including the forms used to document an IAT plan, and wanted greater standardization and a "common language" for IAT plans.
- Data and reporting are not consistently managed or maintained. Focus groups noted a desire for greater retention of follow up reports and monitoring data so that the file could be used more effectively to inform 504 Plans or IEP decisions.
- Synergy is inconsistently used. Some school staff are using the online reporting system, while other file review participants were not aware of it. Synergy reportedly has "bugs," which has contributed to staff frustration and part of the reason why it has not been used consistently.
- School teams are not required to document IAT meetings/processes/outcomes or to enter/track interventions on Synergy to monitor fidelity.
- IAT files reviewed had no evidence of monitoring data.
- Classroom teachers in the file review focus group did not think they had access to IAT files. At some schools, they do not receive copies of the IAT plan.
- Synergy only allows one intervention to be selected, which means that sometimes school staff have to capture other important information in the notes section. Some interventions do not lend themselves to the Synergy template.
- Focus group members did not consider the Synergy template to be parent friendly and believed it to be too similar to a special education compliance document.

Summary and Implications

In the past five years, there has been significant progress in providing interventions to students who may need additional supports. APS has set the vision for and implemented a tiered framework known as ATSS, that is supported through the IAT process. The district level ATSS Supervisor position is a strength for APS. School-based staff reported understanding and valuing ATSS. However, there is the perception among stakeholders that accountability for ATSS remains lacking. The ATSS Supervisor can provide the vision, plans, tools and resources but cannot hold schools accountable for implementation fidelity. Creating an effective intervention and pre-referral system requires dedicated support from senior-level leadership, universal expectations, and accountability structures to ensure a seamless and integrated framework that is clear to central office leadership, school leadership teams and parents.

B. Referral and Eligibility Practices

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Evaluation Process. Most staff believe evaluations conducted through the special education process are sufficiently comprehensive to identify students' specific strengths and needs. **Parent Understanding of IEP.** Most parents feel that APS staff explained special education services in an understandable way. **ESOL/HILT Checklist.** A comprehensive ESOL/HILT checklist exists to help staff differentiate between a language or a learning need. **Ease of 504 Eligibility Process.** In general, parents found the eligibility process for Section 504 to be straightforward and collaborative.	**IEP Referrals by Subgroup:** Students who are identified as economically disadvantaged are more likely to be found eligible for special education services. **504 Referrals by Subgroup:** Students who are identified as economically disadvantaged or an English Learner are less likely to be referred and found eligible for a 504 Plan than their peers. **504 Referrals by School:** There is significant variability of 504 Plans referral rates amongst secondary schools. **504 Referrals by Grade:** There is a significant spike in referrals to a 504 Plan in the 11th grade.

Student Study and Referral for Eligibility

The charts in the section analyze data related to student referral and eligibility. The section first analyzes overall student referral rates for special education, and then analyzes the same data aggregated by different populations of students. Where relevant, referral versus eligibility rates for different student populations are compared. This section documents a similar analysis for Section 504 referrals.

Special Education Referral and Eligibility

During the 2017-18 school year, 889 students ages 6-21 were referred for special education. Of those referred, 494 (55.6%) were found eligible. Referral rates are highest for students in Pre-K and slightly spike for grade 2. Referral rates are the lowest at the high school. Data are not currently captured in a way that enables determination of how many referrals came from students who participated in the IAT process versus direct referral to the Student Support Team.

Exhibit 15. Number of APS Students (age 6-21) Referred, Evaluated, and Found Eligible for Special Education, 2017-18
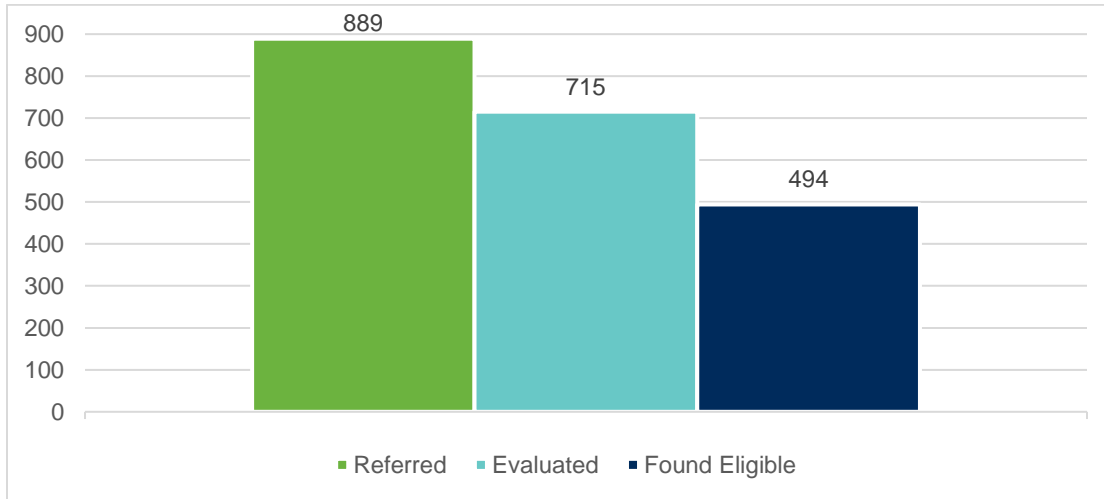
Exhibit 16. Number of Students Referred for Special Education by Grade, 2017-18
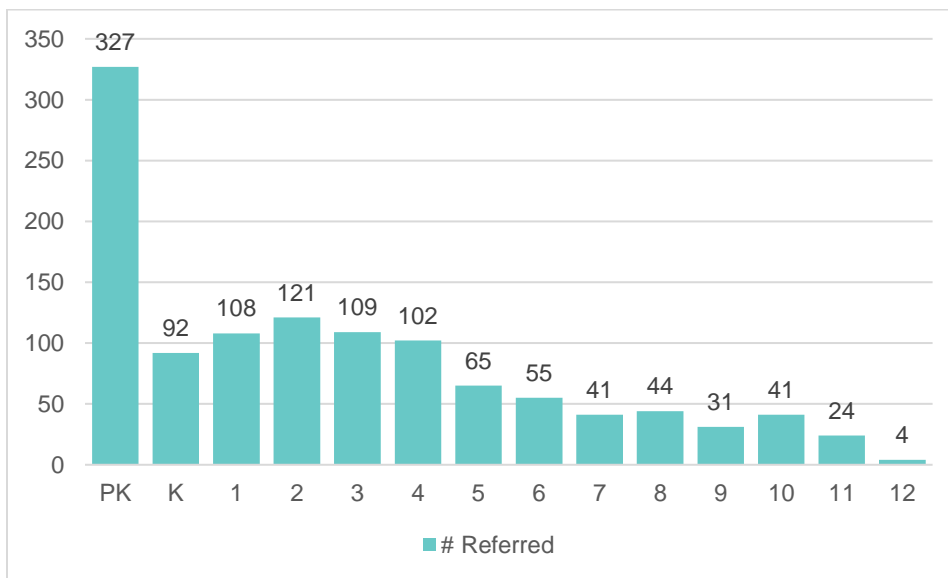
Exhibit 17. Who initiated the IEP process at APS?
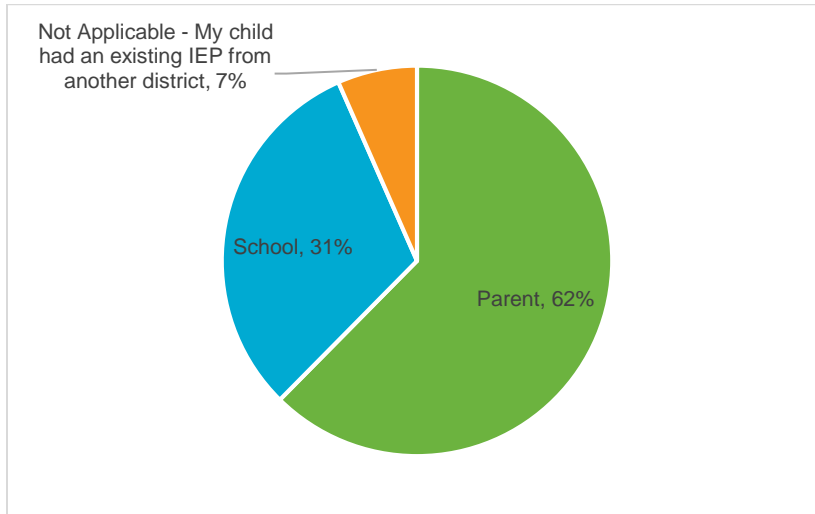
Sixty-two percent of parents who responded to the parent survey stated that the parent initiated the IEP process. APS does not track referral source data to report on the actual districtwide distribution.

Special Education Eligibility

Overall, 57.8% of APS students in grades Pre-K to12, who were referred for special education and evaluated, were found eligible. The following grades had higher rates of initial eligibility findings compared to the all-district rate: Pre-K (60.9%), 1st (63.9%), 2nd (59.5%), 5th (60.0%), 6th (58.2%), 9th (64.5%).

Exhibit 18. Percent of Students Referred for Special Education and Found Eligible by Grade, 2017-18
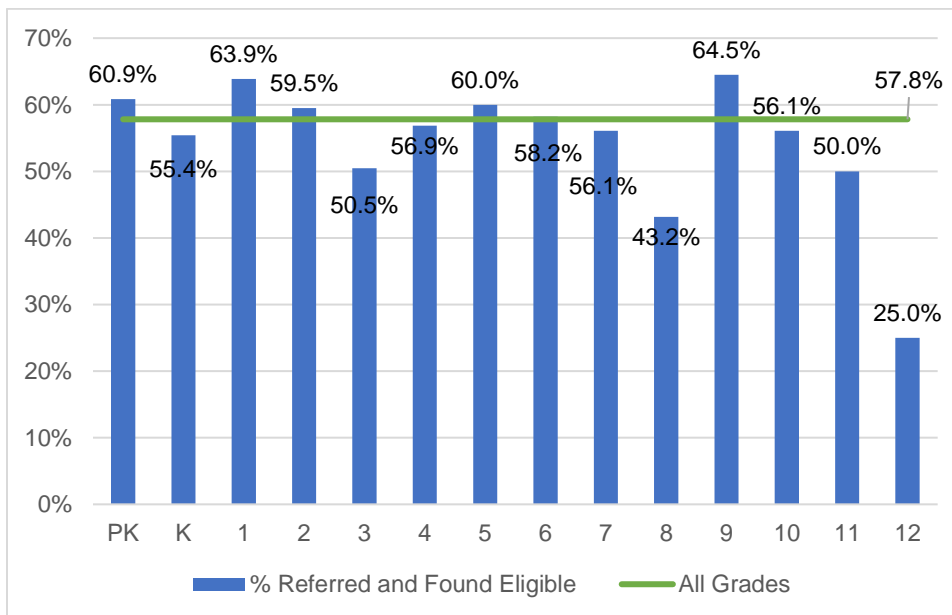
Gender

Female students accounted for 41.8% of those referred for special education, compared to 58.2% for male students. Of the 499 students found eligible for special education, 59.1% were male, compared to 40.9% female. While these figures do not mirror APS's population, they are aligned to national trends.

Exhibit 19. Percent of APS Male vs. Female Students (Age 6-21) Referred for Special Education, 2017-18
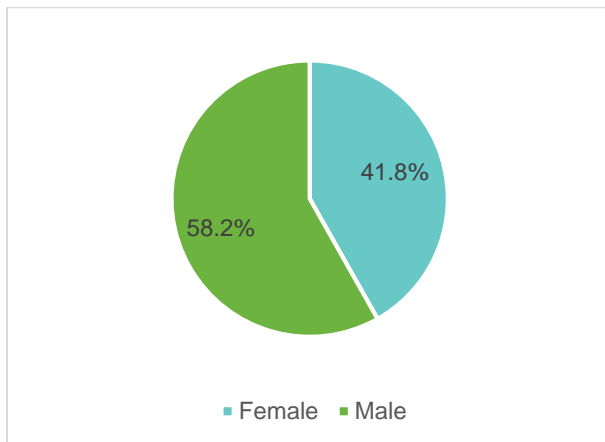
Race and Ethnicity

White students accounted for 46.0% of all referrals, compared to 31.9% of Hispanic students, and 11.2% of Black or African American students. At 45.7%, white students comprised the largest group of students found eligible for special education, compared to 32.5% of Hispanic students, and 11.8% Black or African American Students. Asian students make up a larger overall population (9.2%) in APS than those referred (4.7%). Hispanic student referral rates (31.9%) are higher than the overall APS population (28.2%).

Exhibit 20. Percentage of APS Students (Age 6-21) Referred for Special Education by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18[35]

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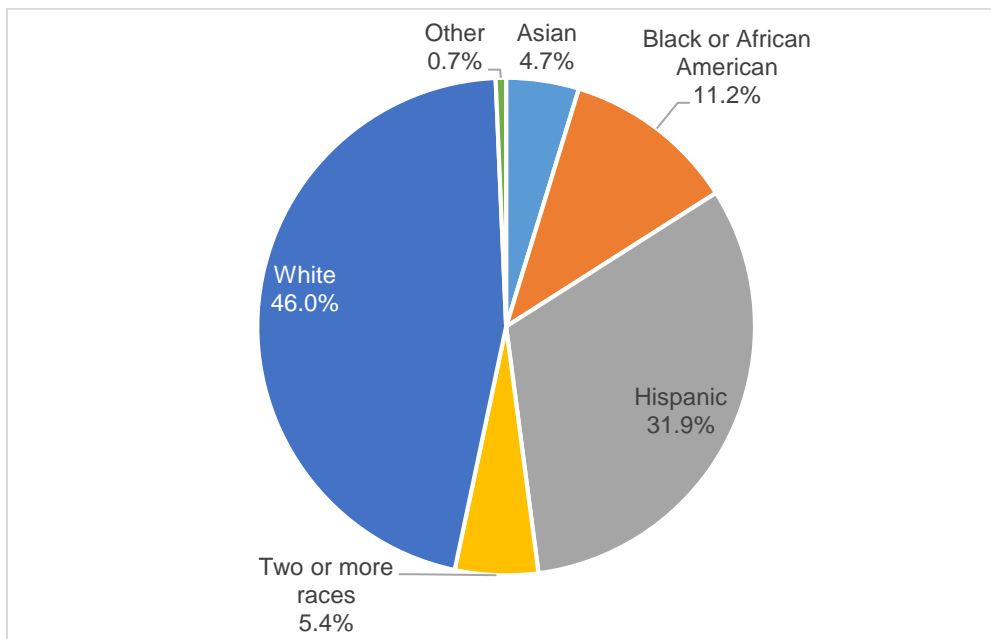
[35] Other race category includes American Indian or Alaskan Naïve and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

English Learner Status

Students identified as EL at APS accounted for 28.5% of students referred for special education evaluation. Of those students found eligible for special education, 30.0% were English Learners. This number is in line with district averages, where 30% of the overall student population is identified as EL.

Exhibit 21. Percent of EL Students Referred for Special Education vs. Non-EL Students, 2017-18
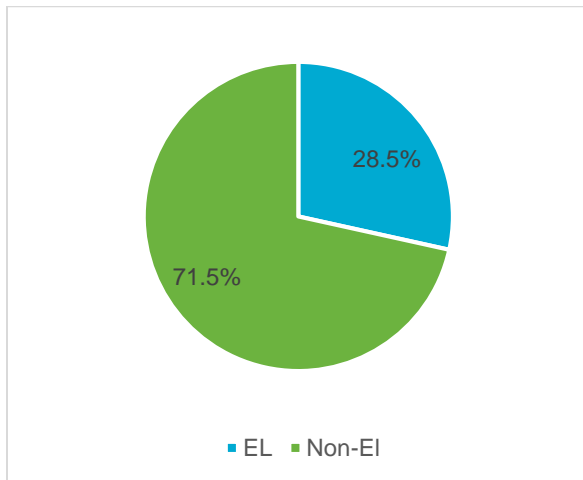
Gifted Status

Students identified as gifted accounted for 11.0% of students referred for special education evaluation and 10% of students found eligible. In comparison, a quarter of all students in the APS are identified as gifted.

Exhibit 22. Percent of Gifted Students Referred for Special Education vs. Non-Gifted, 2017-18
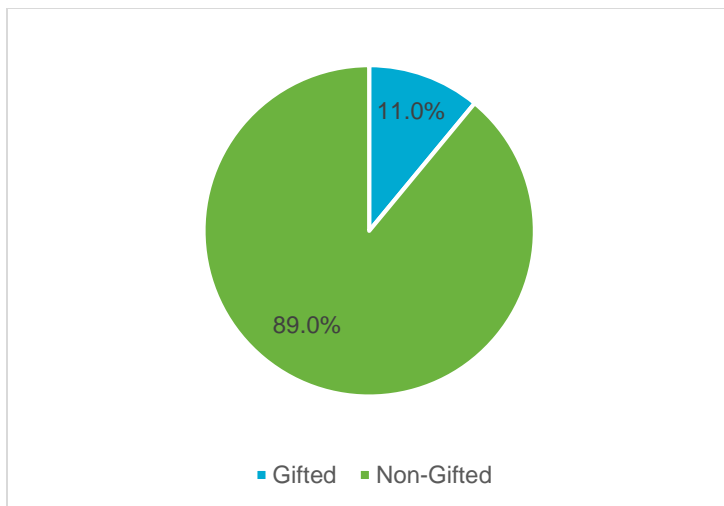
Economically Disadvantaged Status

During the 2017-18 school year, 36.1% of students referred for special education evaluation were economically disadvantaged, as identified by participation in Free and/or Reduced Lunch. Students who were identified as economically disadvantaged accounted for 39.2% of students found eligible for special education. These numbers are slightly higher than the overall district student population, where 32% of students are considered economically disadvantaged.

Exhibit 23. Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Referred for Special Education vs. Non-Disadvantaged, 2017-18

36.1%

63.9%

■ Disadvantaged ■ Non-Disadvantaged
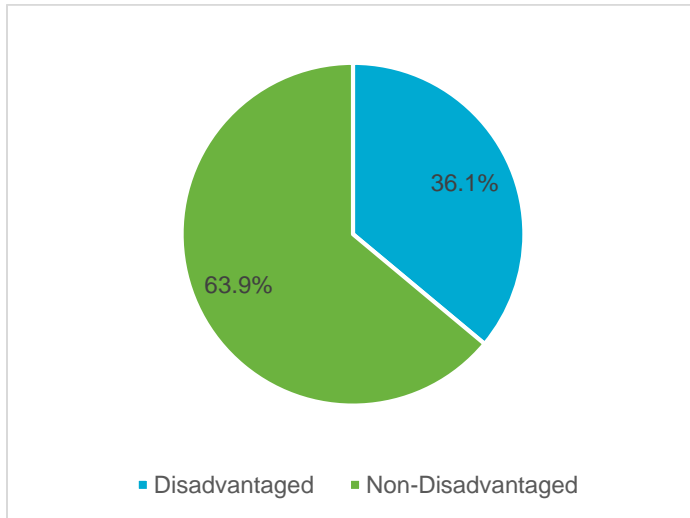
Use of ESOL/HILT checklist for English learners

Staff responses indicated that the ESOL/HILT checklist could be more frequently and effectively used in making special education referral and eligibility decisions for English learners.

Exhibit 24. If a student is dually identified as an English learner and having a disability, an ESOL/HILT teacher is consulted and participates in meetings.

	Always/Most of the Time	Sometimes	Rarely/Never	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=59)	36%	10%	12%	42%
Elementary (K–5) (n=517)	62%	10%	7%	21%
Middle School (6–8) (n=250)	61%	10%	5%	24%
High School (9-12+) (n=337)	54%	8%	5%	33%
All Grades (n=1357)	56%	10%	6%	27%

■ Always/Most of the Time ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely/Never ■ Don't Know
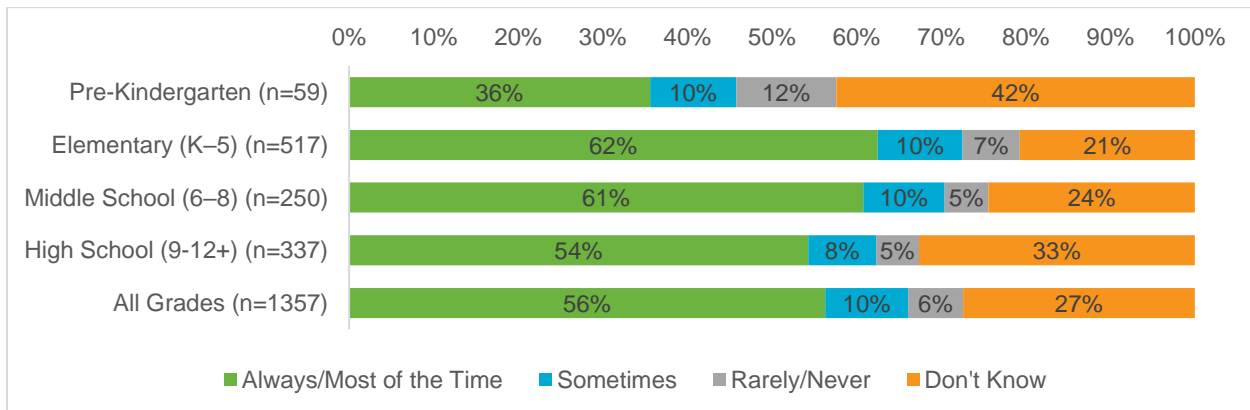
Exhibit 25. The ESOL/HILT checklist is utilized in the referral process for English learners.

	Always/Most of the Time	Sometimes	Rarely/Never	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=59)	34%	8%	5%	53%
Elementary (K–5) (n=518)	48%	10%	6%	36%
Middle School (6–8) (n=251)	45%	4%	5%	45%
High School (9-12+) (n=334)	35%	4%	2%	58%
All Grades (n=1355)	42%	7%	5%	46%
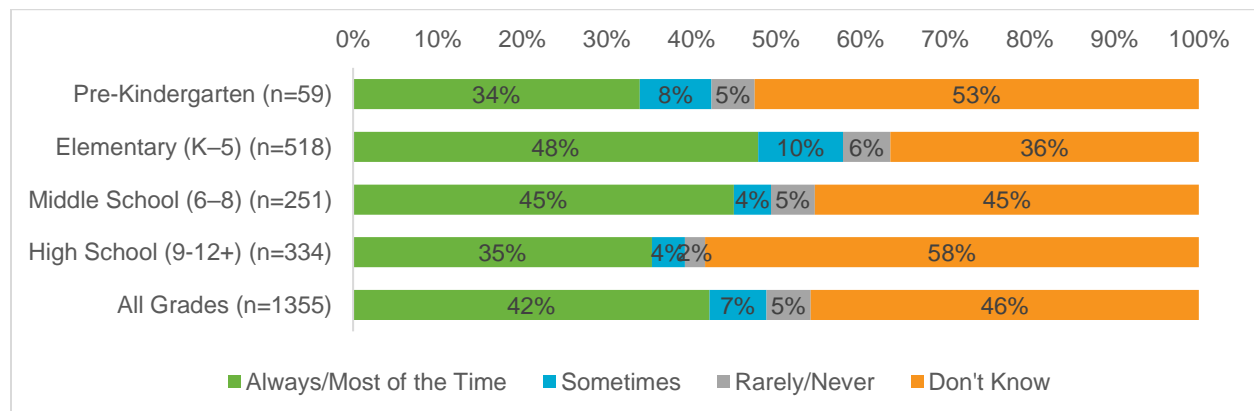
Exhibit 26. The ESOL/HILT checklist is helpful to me in making decisions or plans for students who are struggling.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=57)	32%	12%	56%
Elementary (K–5) (n=517)	53%	12%	35%
Middle School (6–8) (n=251)	46%	9%	45%
High School (9-12+) (n=336)	42%	9%	49%
All Grades (n=1352)	46%	10%	44%
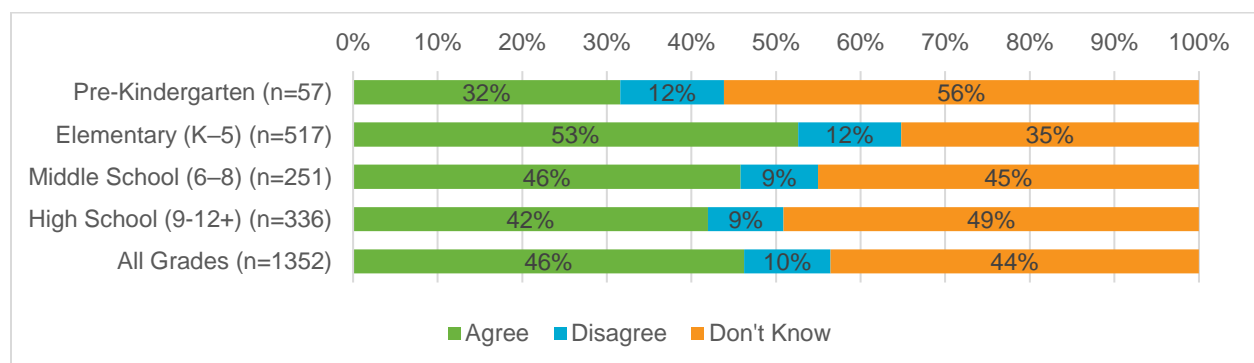
Parent Open Ended Comments

Most parent opened-ended survey responses referenced the challenges they believe they faced getting their child appropriately identified for services. A few comments included:

- We fought for more than a year to have him found eligible for an IEP. It didn't help because teachers were inflexible, and he felt alienated and stupid.
- You can spend thousands of dollars having your child independently tested, but APS is not obliged to consider ANY of that data in determining eligibility or services. APS can base their decisions solely the data that they collect, much of it qualitative. Then, at both the eligibility and IEP meetings, APS and parents are supposed to be "a team." However, when it comes down to determining eligibility or what services a child will receive, every APS staff person in the room gets a "vote," while the parent gets a single vote. So basically, whatever a parent says, or whatever data they bring, doesn't ever really matter or count.
- Students who could otherwise be categorized as "twice exceptional" do not get acknowledged if the disability recognition comes first.
- I am concerned because my son is said to be on grade level, he will not get any services for his dyslexia until he starts to fail.

Section 504 Referral and Eligibility

During the 2017-18 school year, 347 students were referred for a 504 Plan. Of those referred, 92.2% were found eligible. There is a spike in referrals for students enrolled in grade 11. Focus group

participants attributed this increase to a request for accommodations for the SAT or later needs in college.

Exhibit 27. Number of APS Students Referred for 504 Plan, 2017-18
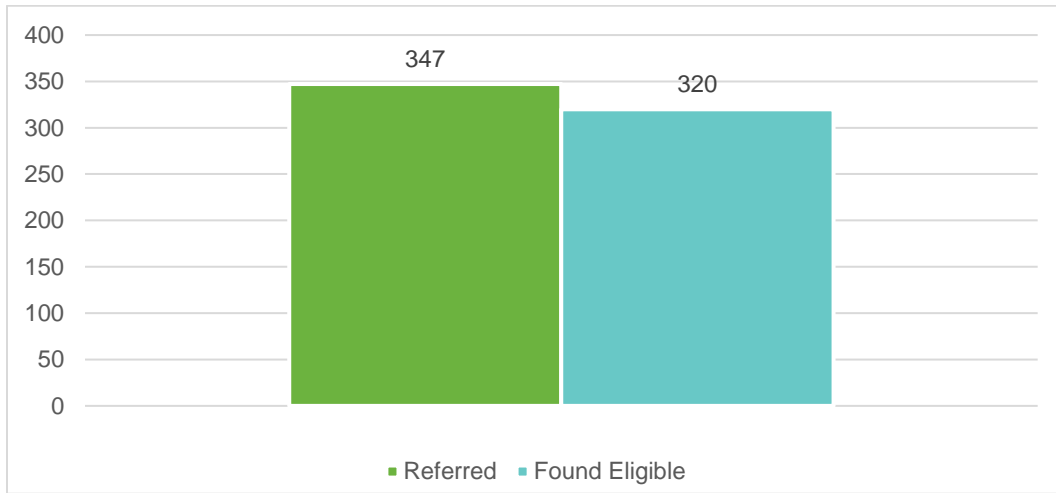
Exhibit 28. Number of Students Referred for 504 Plan by Grade, 2017-18
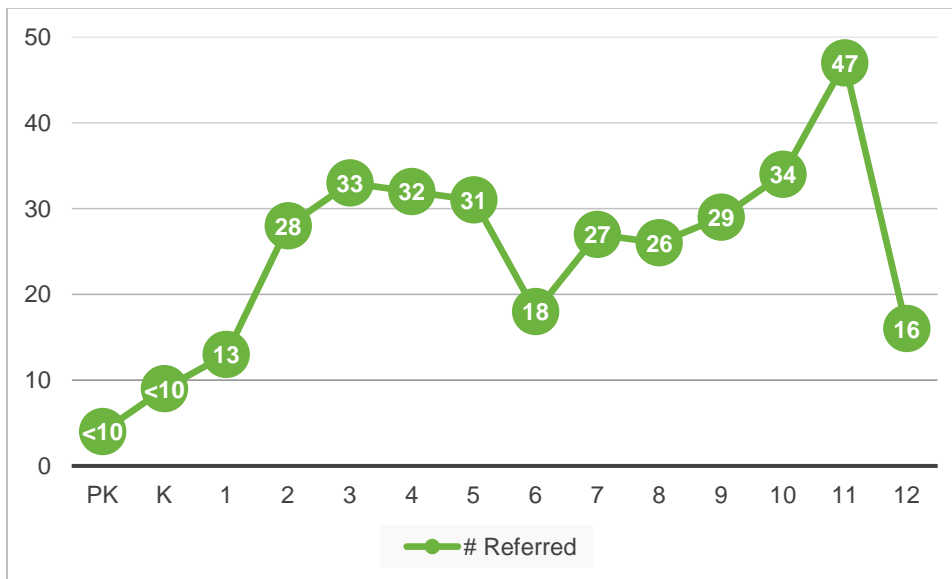
Exhibit 29. Percent of Referrals by Grade Level (MS and HS only), 2017-18
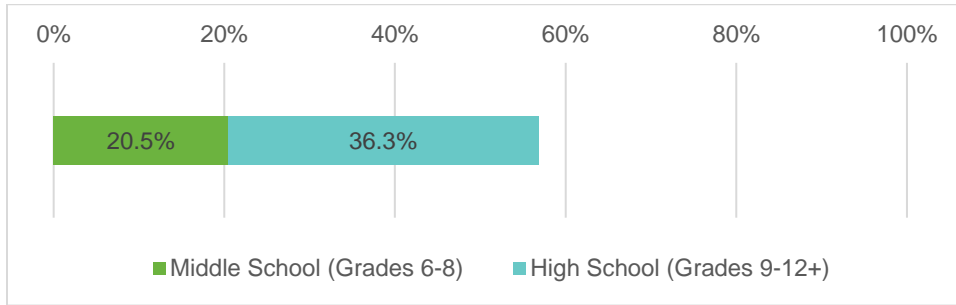
Section 504 Eligibility

Overall, 92.2% of students referred for a 504 Plan were found eligible. The following grades had eligibility rates higher than the all-district rate: Pre-K (100%), K (100%), 2 (96.4%), 5th (96.8%), 6th (94.4%), 11th (97.9%). Parent focus group and open-ended survey responses generally noted that they found the 504 eligibility process to be straightforward and collaborative.

Exhibit 30. Percent of Students Referred for a 504 Plan and Found Eligible by Grade, 2017-18
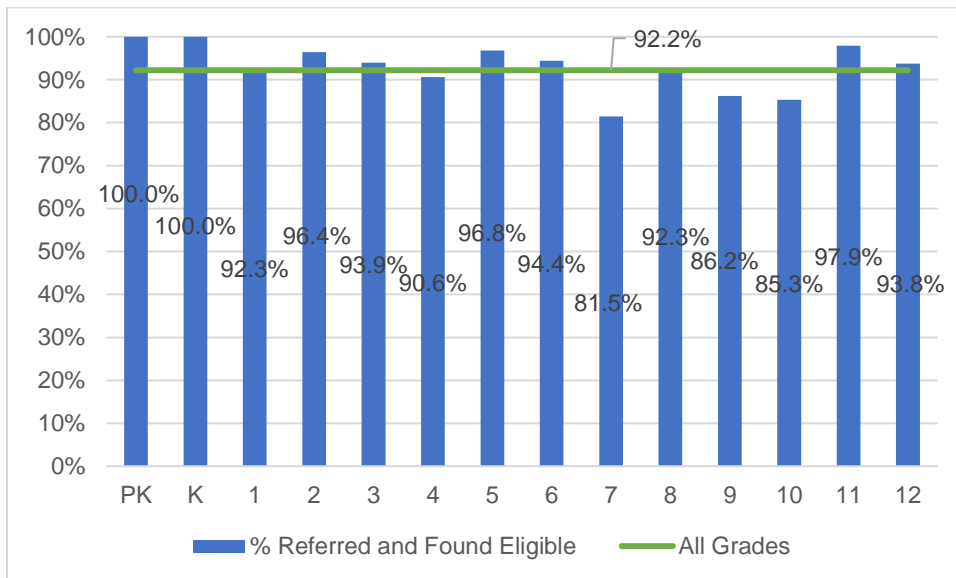
Disability Type

Of the students found eligible for a 504 Plan, 47.9% were identified as having ADHD, 24.0% had a Behavioral/Emotional Disability, 18.6% had a Medical disability.

Exhibit 31. Percentage of APS Students Found Eligible for 504 Plan by Disability, 2017-18
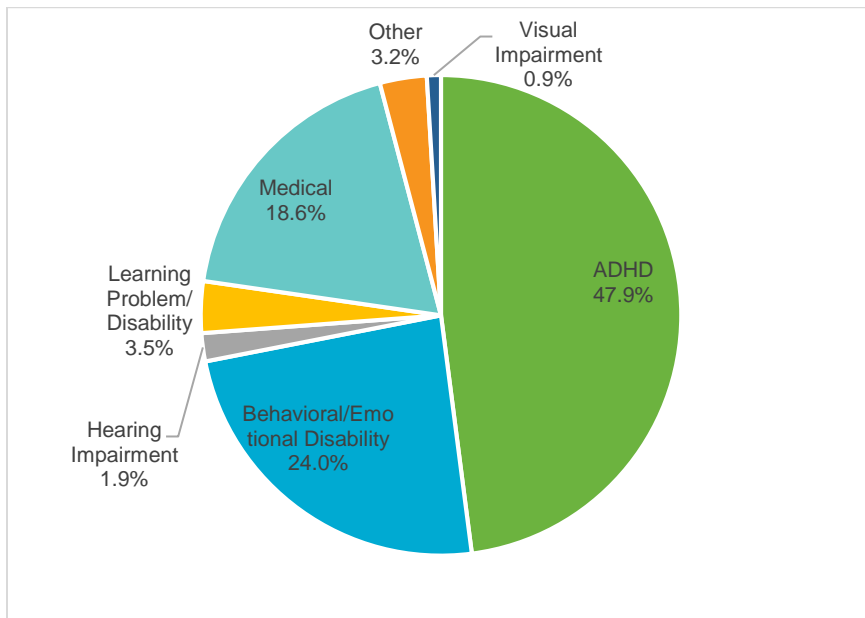
Gender

Male students at APS account for 56.2% of referrals for a 504 Plan, compared to 43.8% of female students. Eligibility distribution nearly identically matched referral distribution.

Exhibit 32. Percentage of APS Students Referred for 504 Plan by Gender, 2017-18
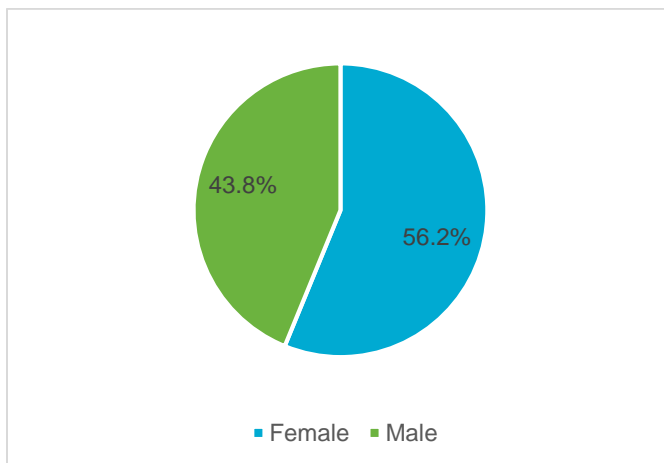
Race and Ethnicity

White students accounted for 65.7% of students referred for a 504 Plan compared to 16.1% of Hispanic students, and 7.5% of Black or African American students. Referral and eligibility rates were well-aligned. These numbers do not align to the overall district population (White: 45.9%, Hispanic: 28.2%, Black or African American: 10%, and Asian: 9.2%).

Exhibit 33. Percentage of APS Students Referred for 504 Plan by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18
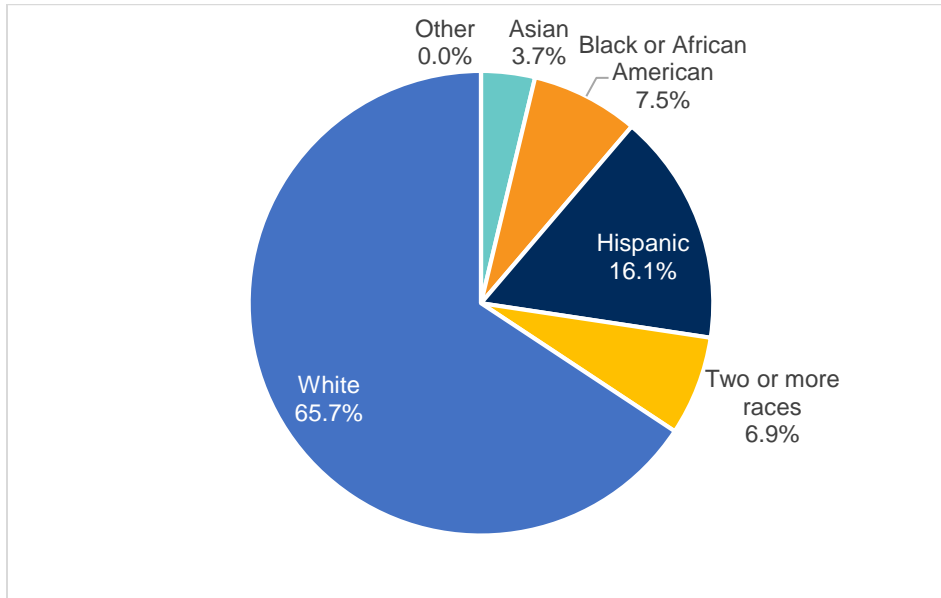
English Learner Status

Students identified as English Learners accounted for 6.3% of students referred and only 5.9% found
eligible for a 504 Plan. These numbers do not align to the overall EL population in APS (30%).

Exhibit 34. Percent of EL Students Referred for a 504 Plan vs. Non-EL Students, 2017-18
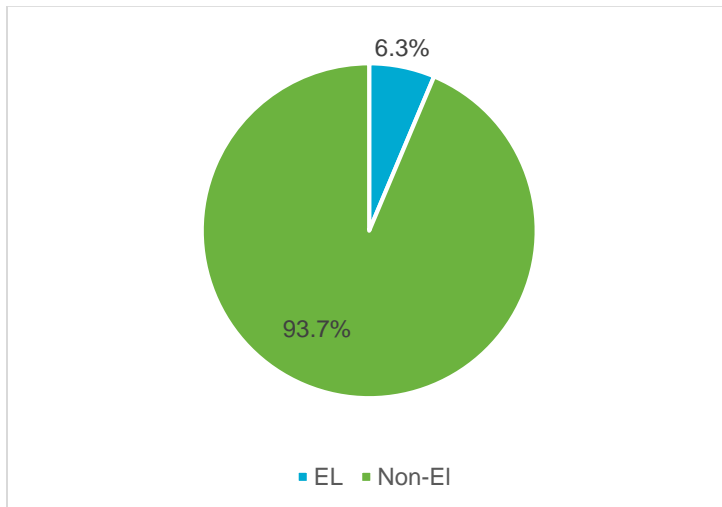
Gifted Status

During 2017-18, students identified as gifted accounted for 29.1% of students referred for a 504 Plan.
They accounted for 27.5% of those found eligible for a 504 Plan. This percentage exceeds APS's overall
gifted rate of 25%.

Exhibit 35. Percent of Gifted Students Referred for 504 Plan vs. Non-Gifted, 2017-18

Pie chart: Gifted 29.1%, Non-Gifted 70.9%
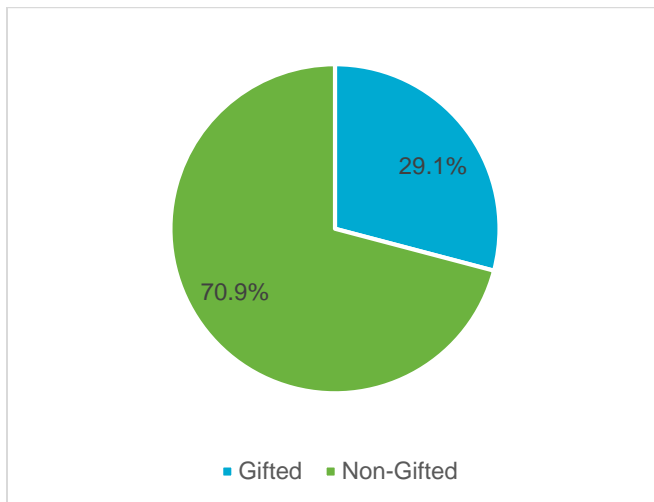
Economically Disadvantaged Status

Overall, 8.4% of students referred and 7.5% of students found eligible for a 504 Plan during 2017-18 were identified as disadvantaged, as indicated through their participation in Free and/or Reduced Lunch. These numbers are well-below the overall district population, where 32.1% of students are identified as disadvantaged.

Exhibit 36. Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Found Eligible for 504 Plan vs. Non-Disadvantaged, 2017-18

Pie chart: Disadvantaged 7.8%, Non-Disadvantaged 92.2%
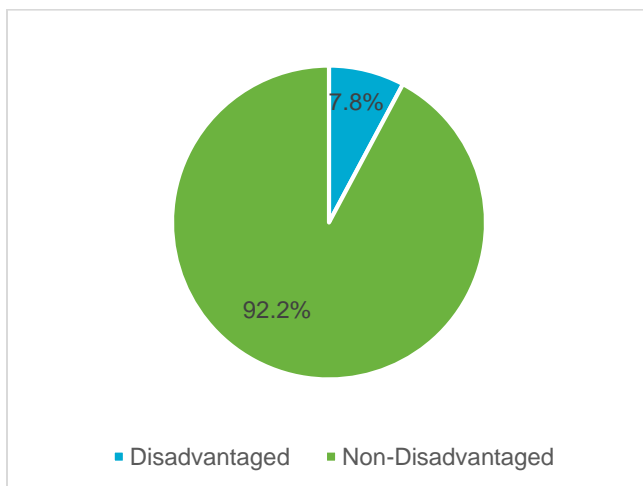
Summary and Implications

Referral rates shed light into District practices that may impact how students are found eligible for services. There was some variability among IEP distribution rates particularly for students identified as economically disadvantaged. There was a larger number of discrepancies for students with 504 Plans that warrant a deeper review of referral and eligibility policies and practices in APS. Data that indicate the need to further review are highlighted below:

- **IEP race/ethnicity.** Asian students make up a larger overall population (9.2%) in APS than those referred (4.7%). Hispanic student referral rates (31.9%) are higher than the overall APS population (28.2%)
- **IEP economically disadvantaged.** Students who were identified as economically disadvantaged accounted for 39.2% of students found eligible for special education. These numbers are slightly higher than the overall district student population, where 32% of students are considered economically disadvantaged.
- **Section 504 race/ethnicity.** 65.7% of students referred for a 504 Plan were White. White students account for 45% of the overall district population.
- **Section 504 economically disadvantaged.** Students identified as economically disadvantaged only accounted for 8.4% of 504 referrals, compared to the overall district average of 32%.
- **Section 504 variability by grade and school.** The largest number of students referred for a 504 Plan was in the 11th grade, with referral rates substantially higher at some high schools than others.
- **Section 504 Gifted.** Students identified as gifted accounted for 29.1% of students referred for a 504 Plan. This is higher than APS's population, where 25% of students are identified as gifted.
- **Section 504 English Learner.** Only 5.9% of students with a 504 Plan are English Learners. 30% of all students in APS are English Learners.

C. Special Education: Administration and Implementation

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Teaching and Learning Framework. Development and implementation of framework supports the vision for inclusion. **Pre-K Inclusive Options.** APS has comprehensive, inclusive Pre-K programs. **Countywide Programs.** APS has a wide range of countywide programs at select schools to support students in need of specialized programs. **Assistive Technology (AT).** APS has a knowledgeable AT team with clear policies and procedures, uses the SETT Framework to guide the assessment process of students, and provides access to low- and high-tech devices based on need. **Enhanced Policies, Procedures and Support for EL SWDs.** The APS Educational Checklist and Suggested Adaptations Guide was expanded, along with the investment in a cadre of HILT resource teachers available, to support EL SWDs in the general education setting. **Post-Secondary Transition.** APS has a variety of post-secondary transition programs that offer students opportunities to prepare them for the workforce or further education. **Caring and Supportive Staff.** Parents noted how special educators act with kindness and serve as advocates for students with disabilities. **Policies and Procedures.** A new Student Support Manual is replacing the special education manual and is being implemented in the 2019-20 school year.	**Early Childhood.** Continued need to improve EC outcomes and expand continuum of services. **Implementation Guide for Inclusion**. Beyond the Teaching and Learning Framework, APS does not have a clearly articulated implementation guide, use common terminology, or provide guidance or expectations around scheduling for inclusive practices. **Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset**. These concepts are not readily known to staff or put into practice consistently for all students, especially those with disabilities. **Inconsistent Practices**. Service delivery is inconsistent and have great variability between schools. **Staff Knowledge and IEP Implementation**. Staff knowledge varies between schools and programs, leading to variances in IEP implementation. **Data**. Staff do not consistently review State Performance Plan (SPP) data, or other district specific data relevant sources, to determine patterns and trends, monitor implementation strategies, or help inform continuous improvement efforts. **Goal Progress**. There is no systematic way for schools and the central office to track progress made toward IEP goal mastery or trend analysis available on goal progress across schools and/or student types. **Access to Advanced Courses**. Limited access for students with disabilities to advanced courses. **Performance on Standards of Learning**. Students with disabilities in APS perform higher than the state average on reading and math Standards of Learning (SOLs) but below district and state averages for students without disabilities. **Support for English Learners**. Pursuant to the recent Department of Justice settlement agreement, APS needs to fulfill the requirements specific to students with disabilities. **Support for Twice Exceptional Learners**. Schools need additional support understanding

how to provide services to meet the needs of twice exceptional learners.

Parent and Family Engagement. The relationship between school staff and parents is fractured in some schools and supports for non-native English-speaking parents require strengthening.

Accountability. There does not seem to be an established system of accountability that aligns with APS policies and procedures and sets a vision for high expectations, greater consistency, compliance, and results.

Post-Secondary Transition. Parents need greater understanding of IEP transition goals and diploma options.

Introduction

This section of the report is devoted to results, how APS is supporting teaching and learning for students with IEPs, and how APS provides specialized instruction, related services, and supplementary aids/services that enable students with disabilities to receive the educational benefits to which they are entitled.

While compliance indicators remain important, under the new Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) framework, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has sharpened its focus on what happens in the classroom to promote educational benefits and improve outcomes and results for students with disabilities. This change is based on data showing that the educational outcomes of America's children and youth with disabilities have not improved as expected, despite significant federal efforts to close achievement gaps. The accountability system that existed prior to the new one placed substantial emphasis on procedural compliance, but it often did not consider how requirements affected the learning outcomes of students.[36] This shift is having a great impact in guiding the priorities of special education department nationwide, including in APS. Districts nationwide need both to raise the level of and access to high levels of rigor, and also to generate a culture of academic optimism.[37]

These issues have become even more significant with the March 27, 2017 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District.*[38] In this decision, the Court updated its prior standard for determining a school district's provision of an appropriate education for students with disabilities. This case centered on the importance of establishing ambitious and challenging goals that enable each student to make academic progress and functional advancement and advance from grade to grade. Progress for a student with a disability, including those receiving instruction based on alternate academic achievement standards, must be appropriate in light of his/her circumstances. Furthermore, yearly progress must be more demanding than the "merely more than de minimis" standards that had been used by some lower courts. The Court made it clear that IDEA demands more. In Endrew, the Supreme Court reached a balance between the standard established by the 10th Circuit and other circuits (more than de minimis) and the higher standard promoted by Endrew's parents (goal of providing students with disabilities opportunities to achieve academic success, attain self-sufficiency, and contribute to society that are substantially equal to the opportunities afforded children without disabilities).

The Endrew decision's most significant impact in the classroom can be seen in: (1) the design and development of rigorous Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); (2) the implementation of students' IEPs with fidelity; and (3) increased progress monitoring of IEP goals.

The recommendations in this report serve to bolster the OSEP's recent shift toward improving instructional outcomes.

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[36] April 5, 2012, RDA Summary, U.S. Department of Education. www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/rdasummary.doc

[37] Hoy, W. K., Tarter, C. J., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2006). Academic optimism of schools: A force for student achievement. Working Paper. The Ohio State University. http://www.waynekhoy.com/school-academic-optimism/

[38] Supreme Court of the United States. Retrieved from https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/16pdf/15-827_0pm1.pdf

State Performance Plan (SPP) and Results Driven Accountability (RDA)

The United States Department of Education (USDE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has established State Performance Plan (SPP) requirements that include 17 indicators. Based on requirements set by OSEP, each state is required to develop annual targets and monitor Local Education Agency (LEA) performance on each special education indicator. The state must report annually to the public on its overall performance and on the performance of each of its LEAs according to the targets in its SPP. Both states and LEAs receive one of the following "determinations" annually: 1) meets the requirements and purposes of the IDEA; 2) needs assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA; 3) needs intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA; 4) needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA. Annual determinations dictate the amount of oversight or monitoring a state or LEA may receive the following year. APS received a "Meets Requirements" determination for both 2015-16 and 2016-17.[39]

IDEA Part B Indicators

- Indicator 1: Graduation Rate
- Indicator 2: Dropout Rate
- Indicator 3: Assessment (Participation and Performance)
- Indicator 4: Rates of Suspension
- Indicator 5: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Age 6-21
- Indicator 6: Preschool LRE, Age 3-5
- Indicator 7: Preschool Outcomes
- Indicator 8: Parent Involvement
- Indicators 9, 10: Disproportionate Representation Due to Inappropriate Identification
- Indicator 11: Timely Initial Evaluations
- Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition
- Indicator 13: Secondary Transition
- Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes
- Indicators 15, 16: Dispute Resolution
- Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

OSEP has been criticized in past years that the SPP indicators are heavily focused on compliance and have limited focus on results for students with disabilities. As a result, in 2013, the Department announced its intention to change this practice and to include test scores, graduation rates, and post-school outcomes as the basis of the new Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) structure. The intent of RDA is to strike a balance between the focus on improved results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities, while still adhering to the compliance requirements of IDEA. RDA is designed to be transparent and understandable and to drive the improved academic and functional achievement for students with IEPs. The SPP indicator data collected takes on additional importance now that OSEP has moved to the RDA framework, as there are points associated with both a "Part B Compliance Matrix" and a "Part B Results Driven Accountability Matrix." Taken together, these scores constitute an RDA Determination and conclude whether districts and, ultimately states, meet IDEA requirements. For the past two years APS received an RDA determination of "Meets Requirements" with an 88% score for 2015-16 and 93% for 2016-17.

This section provides context for special education programming by reporting special education prevalence rates based on various subgroups of students, including analysis by disability type, race/ethnicity, and gender. Specifically, it addresses data pertaining to the overall percentage of students with IEPs based on total student enrollment and disability area, comparisons to state and national data, and composition by race/ethnicity. This information provides an overall background for understanding the

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[39] Retrieved from the VDOE's 2016 State Performance Plan Revision:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/special_ed_performance/division/2016-2017/index.shtml

disparate characteristics of students who receive special education services. Data from the SPP indicators are also presented to benchmark APS against state and national averages in specific areas.

It should be noted that comparative data, especially when looking at different state and national figures, should be interpreted with caution. These data are the best available comparisons, but varied state eligibility criteria may contribute to differences in percentages of students served in special education, as noted in an April 2019 U.S. Government Accountability Office report.[40]

Incidence Rates

As reflected in the figure below, the percentage of APS students with IEPs ages 3-21 remained the same between 2015-16 to 2016-17 at 14.2%, a decrease from 14.8% during 2014-15. These rates have trended above the statewide and national averages for these three years.

Exhibit 37. Percentage of APS students with IEPs Compared to State and National Incidence Rates, 2014-15 to 2016-17[41]
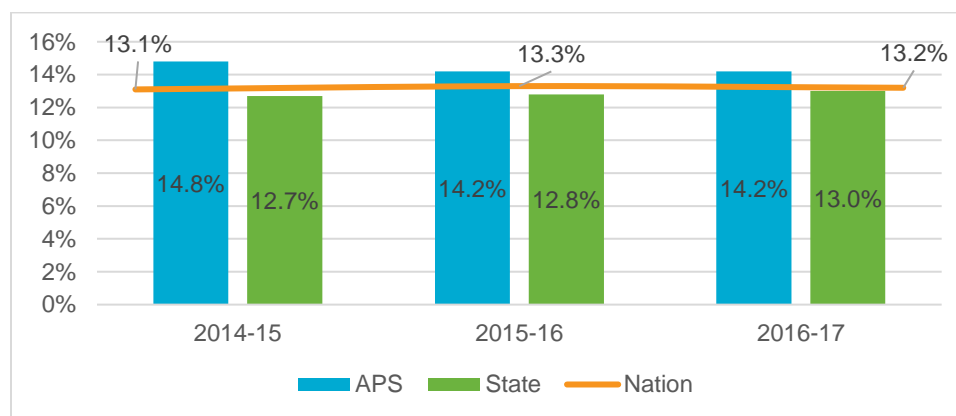
APS and Comparable District Incidence Rates

PCG utilized the Washington Area Board of Education (WABE)[42] guide to identify 7 other Virginia school divisions to compare APS' incidence rate. As indicated by the exhibit below, during 2017-18, APS' incidence rate (14.1%) was higher than the state average (12.9%), and higher than the following school divisions: Alexandria City (11.0%). Falls Church (13.8%), Loudoun County (11.0%), Manassas City (12.1%), Prince George's County (12.0%), and Prince William County (12.2%).

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[40] https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-348

[41] State and Nation data retrieved from Grads360 SPP-APR Reports available at: https://osep.grads360.org/#program/spp-apr-resources; APS SWD Data Retrieved From VDOE December 1 Child Count Reports.

[42] The Washington Area Board of Education (WABE), previously known as the Metropolitan Area Boards of Education, was first established in 1971 as a means for area school divisions to share information, study common problems, and enhance cooperation among educational organizations. Each year, the group surveys its members to publish the annual WABE Guide. This guide enables local school systems to learn about each other by reporting comparable information in a standardized format. In addition, the WABE Guide is meant to be used by citizens as a source for consistent, reliable educational data. Retrieved from https://www.fcps.edu/about/budget/wabe-guide

Exhibit 38. APS IEP Rates Compared to Other Virginia School Divisions and State (ages 6-21), 2017-18

Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services by Grade

PCG analyzed grade level trends for the number of students receiving special education services between 2014-15 to 2017-28. Special education incidence rates by grade have followed similar trends over the past four years, with Pre-K serving the largest number of students. The large number of students served in Pre-K compared to other grades is due to Pre-K serving multiple age groups (ages 3-5). There is a sharp decline in students enrolled in kindergarten, compared to Pre-K, because not every student is the appropriate age to enroll in kindergarten following Pre-K, resulting in a smaller number of students enrolled in K. After grade 4, the number of students enrolled in special education begins to decline, likely attributed to students exiting special education.

Exhibit 39. Number of Students (Age 3-21) Receiving Special Education Services by Grade, 2014-15 to 2017-18
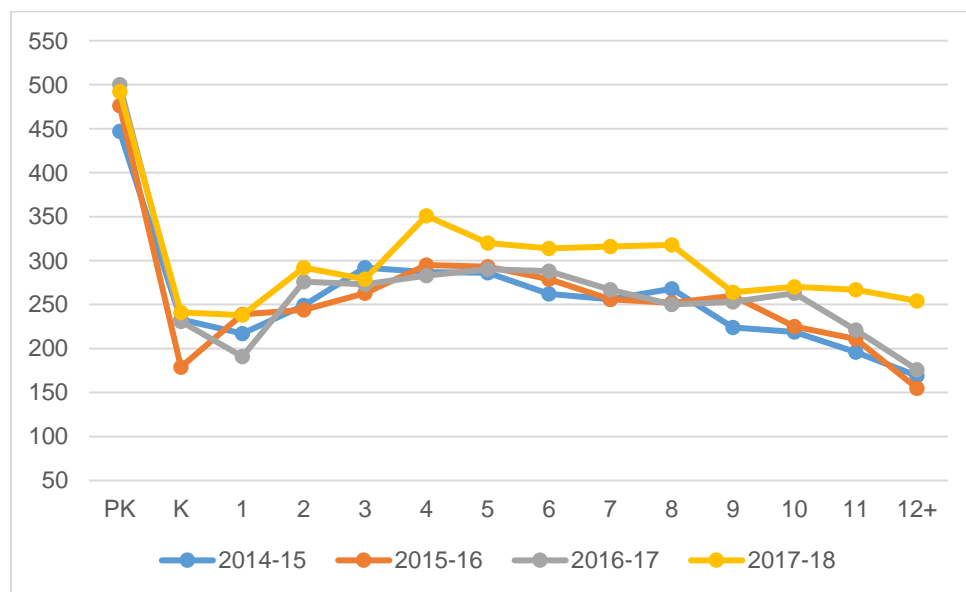
Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset

As we constantly seek to increase educational attainment and student achievement, particularly for students with disabilities, in the United States, it is critical that we not only look at the effect of research-based instructional practices or socioeconomic status on academic achievement, but also at any other factors that may potentially have a positive impact. The current achievement levels for students with disabilities nationwide are still behind that of their counterparts, which suggests that providing schools with extra funds and an aligned curriculum alone will not raise student achievement. As educational leaders are being held more responsible for academic growth, it is necessary not only to adequately identify those factors but to understand how a culture of academic optimism can cultivate a growth mindset.

Academic Optimism

Dr. Wayne Hoy and his colleagues suggest that connecting three important characteristics of schools can produce a potent and positive influence on academic achievement, even in the face of low socioeconomic status, previous performance, and other demographic variables such as school size or minority enrollment.[43] Hoy's definition of "academic optimism" is grounded in social cognitive theory and positive psychology. It embraces the following characteristics:

- ***Academic emphasis*** – the extent to which a school is driven by a belief system that includes high expectations for students to achieve academically

- ***Collective efficacy of the faculty*** – the belief that the faculty can make a positive difference in student learning

- ***Faculty's trust in parents and students*** – faculty, administrators, parents, and students cooperate to improve student learning*;* trust and cooperation among parents, teachers and students influences student attendance, persistent learning, and faculty experimentation with new practices

The shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that the students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in the effort- in brief, a school-wide confidence that students will succeed academically. A school with high "academic optimism" believes that faculty can make a difference, students can learn, and achieve high levels of academic performance. Findings from research showed that there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' academic optimism and students' academic achievement.

Growth Mindset

Dr. Carol Dweck's research on fixed versus growth mindset complements Dr. Hoy's work. Dweck's research supports that in a fixed mindset, students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and "that's that," and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never challenging themselves in order to prevent others from thinking they are not smart. In a growth mindset, students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching, and persistence. They believe everyone can get smarter if they work at it. Teachers who believe in a growth mindset that all students can learn, support the academic optimism's construct. As teachers and students begin to believe that hard work, perseverance, and belief can change the student growth trajectory, a paradigm shift will take root within each school leading to maximum

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[43] Hoy, W. K., Tarter, C. J., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2006). Academic optimism of schools: A force for student achievement. Working Paper. The Ohio State University. http://www.waynekhoy.com/school-academic-optimism/

student and teacher success.[44] Students who believe (or are taught) that intellectual abilities are qualities that can be developed (as opposed to qualities that are fixed) tend to show higher achievement across challenging school transitions and greater course completion rates.[45]

A culture of "academic optimism" in special education will create an environment where growth mindset can be cultivated. This supports the academic optimism's construct and sets high expectations for the instruction, support and services delivered to students with disabilities, which will lead to greater student achievement. The development of a growth mindset is critical for all students, students who struggle and students who are high achievers.

District Practices

APS stakeholder groups, including parents, noted that the expectations for students with disabilities can vary greatly between schools, grades, and teachers. Some expressed that students with disabilities are routinely exposed to high levels of rigor and that supports are in place to help them achieve. Others noted that, in some cases, work is simplified for these students and does not challenge their thinking in new or interesting ways. The concepts of academic optimism and growth mindset, particularly for students with disabilities, did not appear to be commonly understood, used as a framework, or referenced in APS documentation. The Teaching and Learning Framework does, however, emphasize that teachers can and should engage students and provide "multiple pathways for learning and assessment focused on critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration to meet their needs, interests, and goals through personalized learning experiences."[46]

The majority of staff (76%) across all grades believe that teachers in their school have high expectations for students with disabilities.

Exhibit 40. Staff Survey: Teachers in this school have high expectations for students with disabilities.
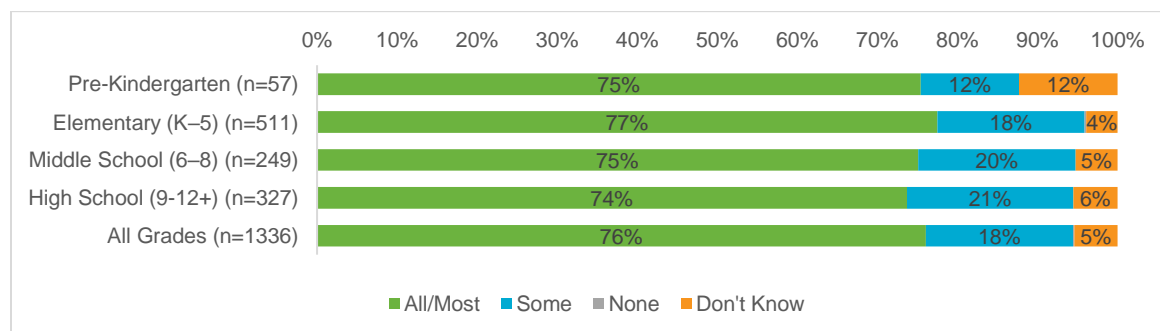
While still a high percent (66%) of parents overall agree that teachers and related service providers have high expectations for their children all or most of the time, it is 10 percentage points less than the staff response. Further, there are variances across grade levels (a high of 77% for PreK and a low of 51% for middle school).

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[44] Dweck, Carol. S. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Constable & Robinson Limited, 2012.

[45] Yeager, David Scott; Dweck, Carol S. Mindsets that Promote Resilience: When students Believe that Personal Characteristics Can Be Developed, Educational Psychologist, v47 n4 p302-314 2012.

[46] Teaching and Learning Framework: https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TL-Framework-for-Website.pdf

Exhibit 41. Parent IEP Survey: Teachers and related service professionals (OT, PT, SLP, Therapists) have high expectations for my child.

	All/Most	Some	None	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=43)	77%	5%		19%
Elementary (K–5) (n=220)	68%	11%	3%	18%
Middle School (6–8) (n=104)	51%	18%	4%	27%
High School (9-12+) (n=133)	67%	14%	2%	17%
All Grades (n=522)	65%	13%	3%	20%

■All/Most ■Some ■None ■Don't Know
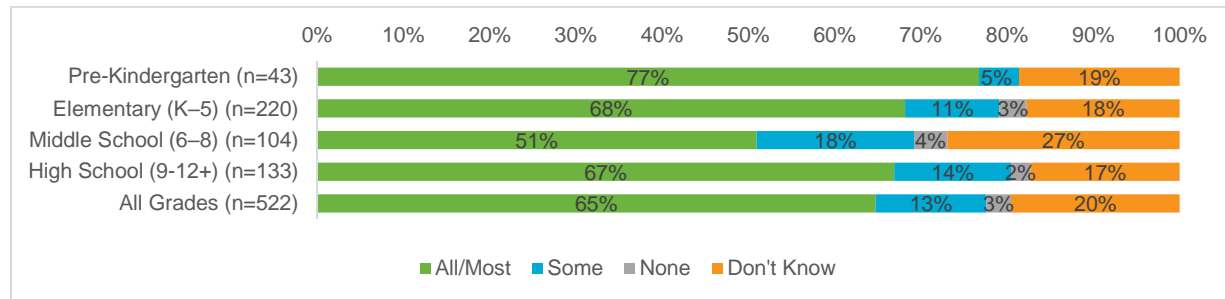
A lower percent of parents (44% overall) believe that paraprofessionals have high expectations all or most of the time.

Exhibit 42. Parent IEP Survey: Paraprofessionals (Assistants or Aides) have high expectations for my child.

	All/Most	Some	None	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=42)	64%			36%
Elementary (K–5) (n=216)	44%	8%	2%	46%
Middle School (6–8) (n=104)	31%	10%	3%	57%
High School (9-12+) (n=130)	47%	10%	2%	41%
All Grades (n=514)	44%	8%	2%	46%

■All/Most ■Some ■None ■Don't Know
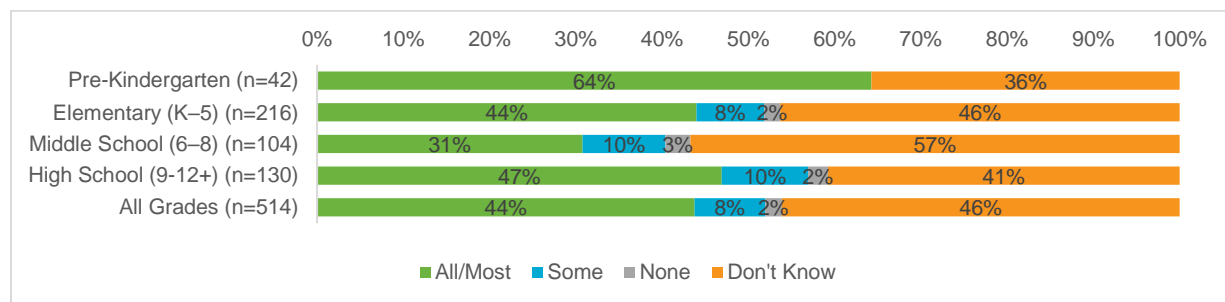
Early Childhood

Most 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities learn best when they attend early childhood programs alongside their peers without disabilities to the greatest extent possible. These settings provide both language and behavioral models that assist in children's development and help all children learn to be productively engaged with diverse peers. Studies have shown that when children with disabilities are included in the regular classroom setting, they demonstrate higher levels of social play, are more likely to initiate activities, and show substantial gains in key skills — cognitive skills, motor skills, and self-help skills.[47] Participating in activities with typically developing peers allows children with disabilities to learn through modeling, and this learning helps them prepare for the real world. Researchers have found that typically developing children in inclusive classrooms are better able to accept differences and are more likely to see their classmates achieving despite their disabilities. They are also more aware of the needs of others. The importance of inclusive education is underscored by a federal requirement, which requires that the extent to which young children (three to five years of age) receive the majority of their services in regular early childhood programs, i.e., inclusively or in separate settings, be included as a state performance-plan indicator.

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[47] Book Chapter: How Do Children Benefit from Inclusion?.(http://archive.brookespublishing.com/documents/gupta-how-children-benefit-from-inclusion.pdf)

Early Childhood Educational Setting

Exhibit 43. Percentage of Students (ages 3-5) by Educational Setting for APS and State SPP Targets, 2014-15 to 2016-17[48]
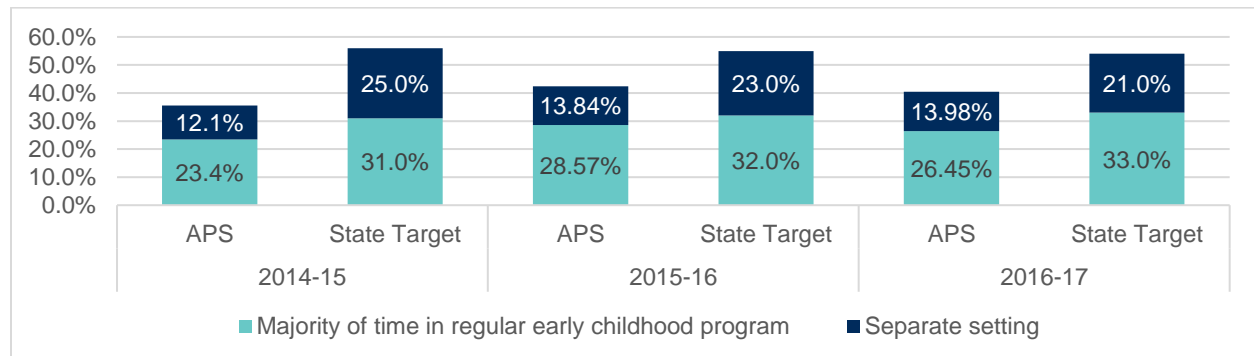
- **Majority of time in regular early childhood program**. For the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years, APS has not met the state target related to early childhood students with IEPs educated in the regular early childhood program. APS was below the state target by 7.6 percentage points in 2014-15, 4.4 percentage points in 2015-16, and 6.5 percentage points in 2015-16.
- **Separate setting.** For the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years, APS met the state target related to early childhood students with IEPs educated in separate settings. While the target was met annually, it should be noted that APS's rate of early childhood students educated in separate settings increased from 12.1% in 2014-15 to 14% in 2016-17, while the state target decreased by 4 percentage points.

Incidence Rate by Economically Disadvantaged Status

Exhibit 44. Students with IEPs vs. Students without IEPs by Economically Disadvantaged Status (ages 3-5), 2017-18
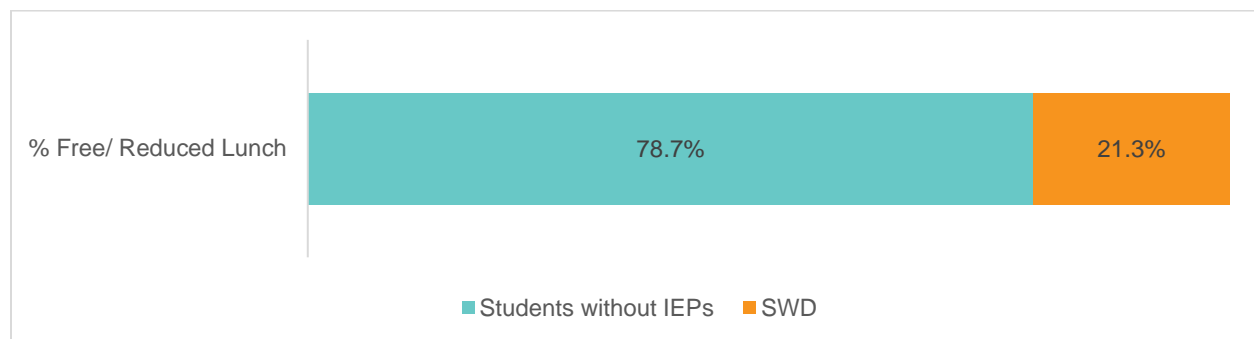
In 2018, 50.9% of APS pre-school students ages 3-5 participated in free and/or reduced lunch. Of the students participating in free and/or reduced lunch, 21.3% had an IEP compared to 78.7% of students without an IEP.

Incidence Rate by Race/Ethnicity

The information below reflects data for APS early childhood students who received special education services, by race/ethnicity, to consider the extent to which there is disproportionality.

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[48] VDOE: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/index.shtml

Exhibit 45. Percent of APS Students with IEPs (ages 3-5) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18
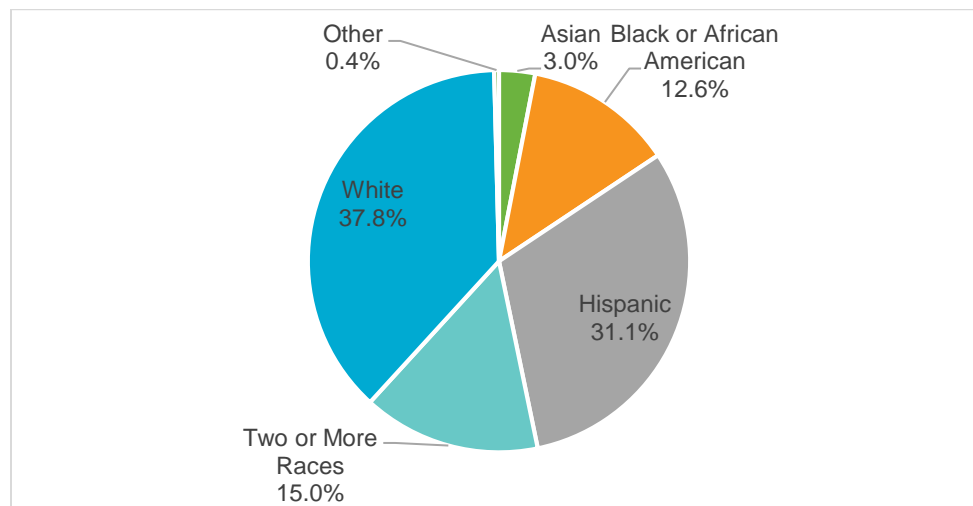
Exhibit 46. Percent of APS Students without IEPs (ages 3-5) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18
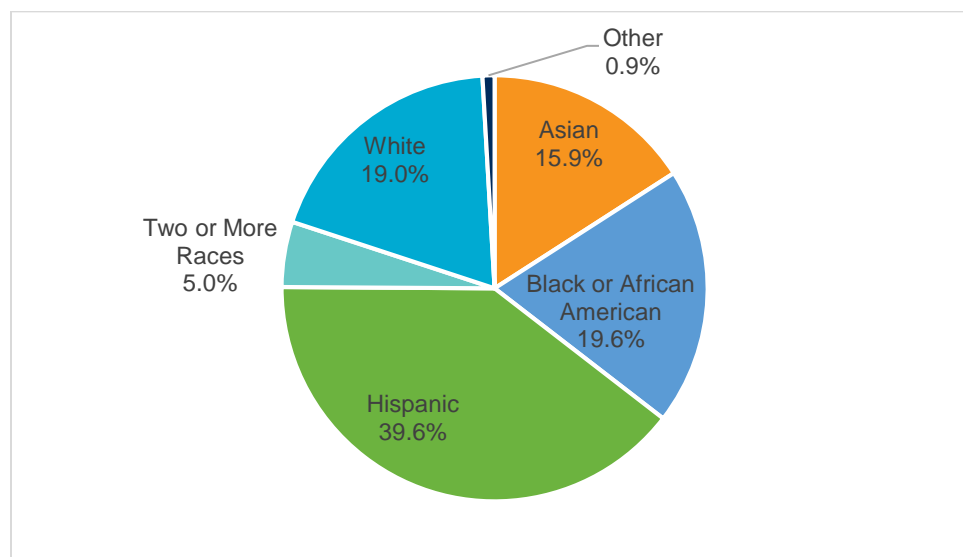
Of early childhood students with IEPs, the majority are White (37.8%) or Hispanic (31.1%).

Achievement Outcomes for Students with IEPs

One of the indicators in Virginia's SPP relates to the achievement of young children with disabilities in three areas: 1) appropriate behavior, 2) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and 3) positive social/emotional skills. In each of these three areas, calculations are made on the percentage of children in the following two areas: (1) children who entered an early childhood program below developmental expectations for their age but who have substantially increased developmentally by age six when they exit a program, and (2) children functioning within expectations by age six or have attained those expectations by the time they exit the program.

Summarized below are APS's performance ratings in three categories for each of the two reported areas (substantially increased skills and functioning within standards). The figures show the percentages of children meeting standards and each of the state's targets. An analysis of these data follows the exhibits.

Exhibit 47. Outcomes for Preschool Students with Disabilities: Indicator 7a Positive social emotional skills (including social relationships). APS and State Targets, 2014-15 to 2016-17[49]

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
	% entered below age expectations			% functioning within age expectations		
■ APS Performance	92.5%	90.4%	91.4%	52.8%	51.3%	52.5%
■ State Target	89.7%	89.8%	89.9%	57.5%	57.6%	57.7%
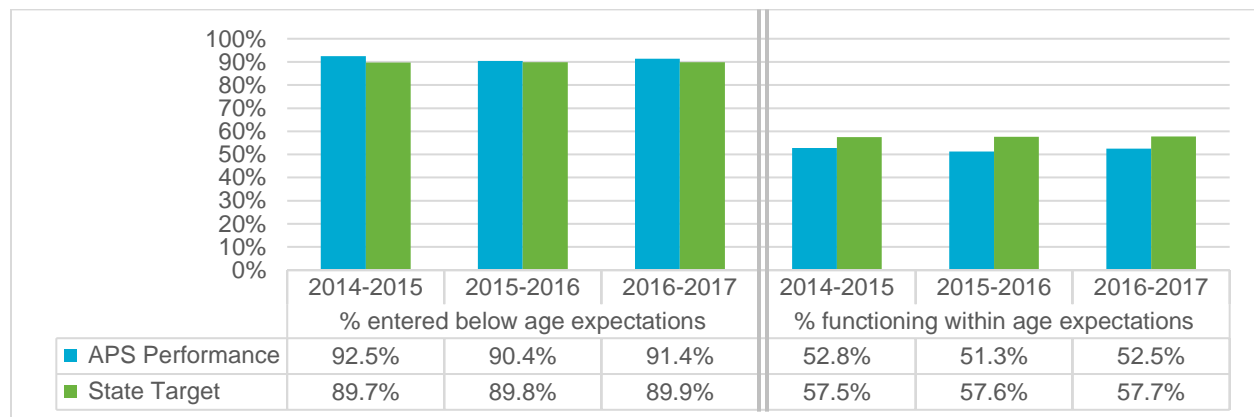
Exhibit 48. Outcomes for Preschool Students with Disabilities: Indicator 7b- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy). APS and State Targets, 2014-15 to 2016-17

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
	% entered below age expectations			% functioning within age expectations		
■ APS Performance	91.7%	91.4%	90.1%	61.1%	57.6%	58.2%
■ State Target	93.6%	93.7%	93.8%	46.6%	46.7%	46.8%

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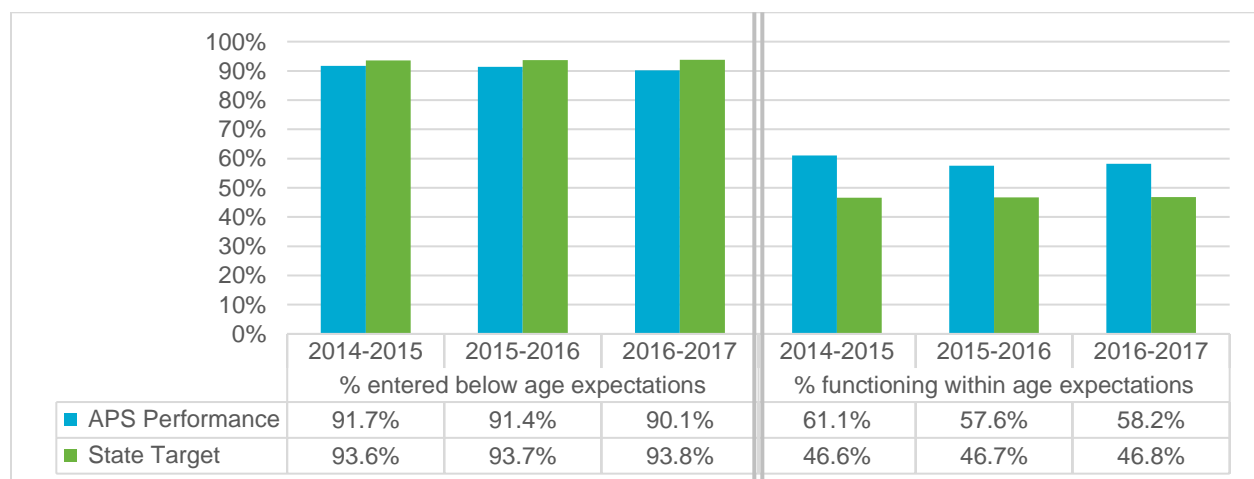
[49] VDOE: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/index.shtml

Exhibit 49. Outcomes for Preschool Students with Disabilities: Indicator 7c- Use of appropriate behavior to meet their needs. APS and State Targets, 2014-15 to 2016-17

	% entered below age expectations			% functioning within age expectations		
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
APS Performance	89.8%	90.0%	89.5%	66.7%	62.8%	61.6%
State Target	90.6%	90.7%	90.8%	64.9%	65.0%	65.1%
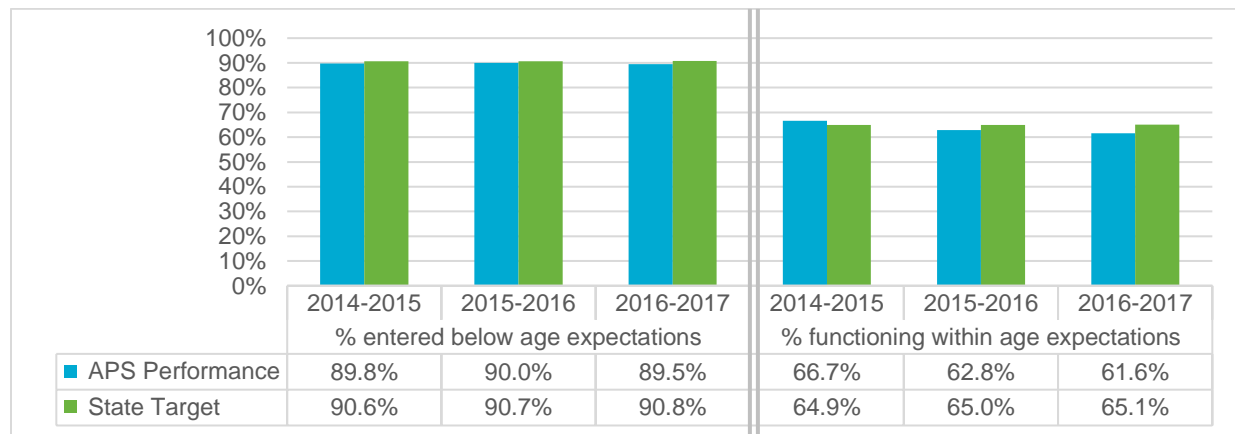
Substantially Increased Skills

For APS children who entered an early childhood program below developmental expectations for their age but who substantially increased developmentally by age six when they exited the program, the following statistics describe 2016-17 rates of APS children meeting standards to state targets based on the state's SPP report.

a. **Positive Social/Emotional Skills**. 91.4% met standards, which was 1.5 percentage points above the state's target.
b. **Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills**. 90.1% met standards, which was 3.7 percentage points below the state's target.
c. **Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs**. 89.5% met standards, which was 1.3 percentage points below the state's target.

For the past three years APS met the state target for Positive Social/Emotional Skills, however, did not meet state targets for Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills and Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs.

Functioning Within Age Expectations

For children who were functioning within expectations by six years of age or had attained those expectations by the time they exited the program, the following data compare the percentages of children in APS meeting the standards in 2015-16 to state performance target percentages for that year.

a. **Positive Social/Emotional Skills**. 52.5% met standards, which was 5.2 percentage points below the state's target.
b. **Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills**. 58.2% met standards, which was 11.4 percentage points above the state's target.
c. **Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs**. 61.6% met standards, which was 3.5 percentage points below the state's target.

For the past three years, APS consistently met the state target for Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills, however, did not meet the state target for Positive Social/Emotional Skills. For year 2014-15, APS met the state target for Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs, however, for years 2015-16 and 2016-17, APS did not meet the state targets.

Early Childhood Programming

APS has several models for educating young children inclusively within early childhood classes, and in specialized classes. The Office of Early Childhood Education coordinates the following programs and partners with the Office of Special Education to support students with disabilities enrolled in them.[50]

Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)

The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) is a full-day, high quality Pre-K program for four-year-old children. It is located at 15 elementary schools (35 classrooms) and free to all eligible students. A student's family must meet income eligibility guidelines to enroll. This program follows curriculum, which is research based, developmentally appropriate and has been shown to increase academic and social success for students. Children engage in enriching educational experiences, explore learning materials and new ideas, and build their skills as they prepare to enter kindergarten. The Pre-K curriculum fosters the development of literacy and math skills and builds social-emotional foundations for lifetime learning. Each class has up to 18 children with a certified teacher and full-time instructional assistant. There is no information on APS's website as to whether or not students with disabilities can receive services in this setting; however, APS central office staff participating in the focus groups explained that students with disabilities can be enrolled in VPI.

Primary Montessori

A full day Montessori Pre-K program is offered at 6 elementary schools (18 primary classrooms) and is for students ages three to five. Two-thirds of the available slots are for students whose families meet income eligibility guidelines. Tuition for three-and four-year-old children is charged on a sliding fee schedule based on family income. Any Arlington family may apply for this program**.** While there is no specific reference to students with disabilities participating in Montessori programs, PCG noted during school visits that the program is inclusive and enrolls students with IEPs. Further, as noted on the APS website regarding supports to diverse learners:

> Montessori schools support all children in working at their own unique and appropriate pace to reach their fullest potential. Because work is individualized, there is no limit to how far children can go in their studies. For children with special learning needs, the attractive hands-on Montessori learning activities are helpful learning tools because they present one isolated concept at a time and allow students to experience one success after another. And in a classroom that has children of mixed ages and varying abilities, a non-competitive community develops, in which everyone both learns from others and also contributes to the good of the whole. Multi-age, mixed ability groups help children celebrate their own successes without comparing themselves to others.

Community Peer Pre-Kindergarten Program (CPP)

The Community Peer Pre-Kindergarten Program (CPP) program is designed to support general education experiences for younger students with disabilities. Pre-K children without identified disabilities ages 2 years 6 months through 4 years from the Arlington community can participate in one of the preschool Special Education Programs alongside students with disabilities.

The toddler programs provide play-based instruction to target all developmental areas with a focus on communication, interactions with peers and adults as well VPI program and differentiated to meet students' needs. CPP provides Pre-k students with and without disabilities opportunities to learn together and grow in all developmental areas.

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[50]Program descriptions taken from the APS website: https://www.apsva.us/early-childhood-prek/

The CPP program is growing and expanding in the 2019-20 school year, CPP classes will be in piloted in seven schools and two toddler programs. The three- to five-year old program will be a 50:50 split between peers and students with disabilities. The toddler program will have three peers to start and six to eight students with disabilities. In past years, CPP was available at between four to five schools and averaged between two and four peers in each class. *Integration Station (IS)*

Integration Station (IS) has several Pre-Kindergarten special education programs that serve students ages 2-5 who have disabilities. IS is co-located with The Children's School (TCS) in Ballston and provides an integrated educational program for 2-5-year-old children with disabilities. The collaboration between APS/IS and TCS has provided students with disabilities opportunities to integrate with students without disabilities for over 20 years. IEP teams determine placement within this program.

In addition, a special education program for toddlers and a pre-kindergarten multi-intervention program for students with autism (Mini-MIPA) are a part of the IS program. The focus of the MIPA program is on increasing communication, independent life skills, social skills, and academic performance. Students who are receiving special education support due to autism may be candidates for the MIPA program. The program provides a highly structured environment and research-based academic and behavioral interventions for autism. The program uses a variety of strategies to prepare students to transition to less restrictive settings. Students in the toddler and Mini-MIPA programs experience a range of integrated opportunities based on their needs.

IS also includes the Community-Based Preschool Support Program serving students with disabilities in community-based settings like private Pre-Kindergartens, Head Start and child-care centers across the county. Together TCS and IS serve over 200 children consisting of infants, toddlers and pre-kindergarteners.

In all of the classrooms, educational goals are individualized to each student based on their needs. The program is designed to maximize every student's potential in all areas of development. Particular attention and focus is given to communication, adaptive skills and social-emotional engagement as these areas are the biggest predictors of success in future schooling and in life beyond school.

Exhibit 50. Number of Early Childhood Special Education Programs by School & Program Type, 2018-19 school year[51]

Programs	Two-Year Old Toddler Program	Preschool Multi-Intervention Program for Students with Autism (Mini-MIPA)	Three- to Five-Year Old Program	Total Early Childhood
Abingdon ES			1	1
Arlington Traditional ES		1		1
Ashlawn ES	1		1	2
Barcroft ES			1	1
Barrett ES		1	2*	3
Carlin Springs ES	1		3*	4
Claremont ES	1			1
Discovery ES			1*	1
Drew Model ES	1		3*	4
Glebe ES			1	1

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[51] Data from 10/26/18. Programs with one or more of the ECSE classes, denoted with an asterisk, are co-taught with VPI, Montessori or APS community partnerships with The Children's School, Little Beginnings and Head Start.

Hoffman-Boston ES	1	1	4*	6
Jamestown ES	1		1	2
Key ES			1*	1
Long Branch ES		1		1
Oakridge ES			1	1
Randolph ES			2*	2
Taylor ES			1	1
Tuckahoe ES			1	1
The Children's School	2*	1	3*	6
Little Beginnings			1*	1
Head Start			1*	1
Total	**8**	**5**	**29**	**42**

Regarding the assignment of placements for young children with disabilities, APS tries to assign these students to their home schools whenever possible. The IEP team considers group size, age ranges and IEP goals when recommending an appropriate placement.

Child Find

The Child Find process is a part of the Office of Special Education. Children with suspected delays, such as in the areas of cognition, communication, hearing, vision, social-emotional skills, and/or motor skills, are referred to a student study committee to determine whether the child requires assessment for consideration of eligibility for special education services. Because the Child Find office coordinates registration, APS is able to control for space allocations in all of the EC programs. This office also assists in the transition of students served under Part C (birth to two) by coordinating a series of transition evenings in the spring from the toddler program into the school age program. The Child Find Team consists of two coordinators. As a whole focus group participants did not highlight any specific concerns related to Child Find.

Transition to Kindergarten

In order to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for students with disabilities to kindergarten, Pre-K teams invite the kindergarten school team to come and observe students at their current setting and write the IEP together. During focus group sessions, parents noted that, on a whole, this process works well.

Future Goals

Parent and school staff focus group participants shared that APS is actively working to develop more inclusive early childhood programs. Future goals, as provided by staff from the Office of Early Childhood, include:

- Expanding the continuum of services for students and co-taught models with the VPI and Montessori models
- Increase community partnerships (such as those with The Children's School, Little Beginnings and Head Start)
- Ensuring programs have curricular alignment and include access to the same resources, such with the OWLs program, Words Your Way, Numbers Plus, Everyday Math, etc. If it is a Montessori program, then alignment with the Montessori methodology.
- Intentionally developing clusters of EC programs at specific sites so that a more robust continuum can be offered.

- Developing ATSS for EC so that students are not over-referred for a special education evaluation. They would like to develop a developmental play group to send struggling learners first for intervention to provide support and reduce referrals.

Many of these initiatives are already underway. APS staff have begun aligning curriculum, assessments, and materials. For the past several years, PreK Special Education has received the same VPI curriculum, assessment, and materials and the same professional learning opportunities.

Parents and staff noted the positive experiences of families whose children have participated in these programs. Despite the breadth of these early childhood programs and services to meet the needs of students with disabilities, APS has inconsistently met the State preschool outcomes in the past three years. While the percentage of APS early childhood students with disabilities educated in separate settings was less than the state average from 2014-15 to 2016-17, APS did not meet the state target for the majority of time spent in the regular early childhood program. APS's goals appear to be on target to address these areas of growth and should be accelerated to the extent possible in the coming years.

School-Aged Programming

Special education is defined under IDEA as specially designed instruction to:

- Address the unique needs of a student that result from his/her disability; and
- Ensure the student's access to the general education curriculum, so that he/she can meet the educational standards that apply to all students.[52]

IDEA, which is supplemented by Virginia provisions, establishes standards for the provision of students with disabilities who need special education and related services, including their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) based on an IEP. A complex system of procedural safeguards governs this process.

Research has consistently reported a positive relationship between inclusive and effective instruction and better outcomes for students with disabilities, including higher academic performance, higher likelihood of employment, higher participation rates in postsecondary education, and greater integration within communities. Also, research reports that the inclusion of students with a range of disabilities in general education classes benefits the achievement of their nondisabled peers.[53] Inclusive education is effective when conditions, such as the following, are in place: differentiated instruction, thoughtful scheduling, appropriate and adaptive materials, flexible groupings, and well-trained special and general educators and related service personnel who collaborate and co-plan.

All but a small percentage of students with an IEP take a regular state assessment. When special educators teach students from as many as four grades in one class, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for them to focus on each grade's standards with any depth or effectiveness. When schools are organized in an inclusive manner, they are better able to support students with various disabilities and enable more to attend the school they would otherwise attend if not disabled; that is, their home school. This model enables more students with disabilities to attend school within their community, supports a more natural proportion of students with disabilities in each school, and reduces transportation time and costs.

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[52] IDEA regulation at 34 CFR 300.29.

[53] See Kalambouka, A., Farrell, P., Dyson, A., and Kaplan, I. (2007, December). The impact of placing pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools on the achievement of their peers. Educational Research, *49*(4), 365-382.

This section of the report explores the extent to which APS has supported the provision of special education and related services in a manner that is aligned with this research. How teachers effectively educate students with varying learning differences in inclusive learning environments is a reflection of the overall quality of the instruction of students with disabilities.

PCG included this same preface in the 2013 program evaluation and has chosen to include it here to reinforce the critical nature of inclusive education and progress made toward it in APS.

Incidence Rates by Primary Disability Area

As is reflected in the figure below, APS had a slightly higher rate of students with autism (12.7%) compared to the state (12.0%) and nation (9.2%). APS had a higher rate of students with a health impairment (23.8%) compared to the state (22.2%) and nation (15.8%). APS's rate of emotional disability (8.1%) was higher than the state (6.4%) and nation (5.7%). APS had a lower incidence rate when compared to the state and nation for the following disability categories: intellectual disability (3.9%), specific learning disability (32.9%), and speech or language impairments (10.8%).

Exhibit 51. Percentage of APS Students with IEPs by Disability Area Compared to State and Nation (age 6-21), 2016-17[5455]

	Autism	Emotional Disability	Intellectual Disabilitiy	Other Health Impairment	Specific Learning Disability	Speech or Language Impairment	Other
APS	12.7%	8.1%	3.9%	23.8%	32.9%	10.8%	6.9%
State	12.0%	6.4%	6.1%	22.2%	37.0%	12.2%	4.1%
Nation	9.8%	5.7%	7.1%	15.8%	39.6%	17.2%	4.6%
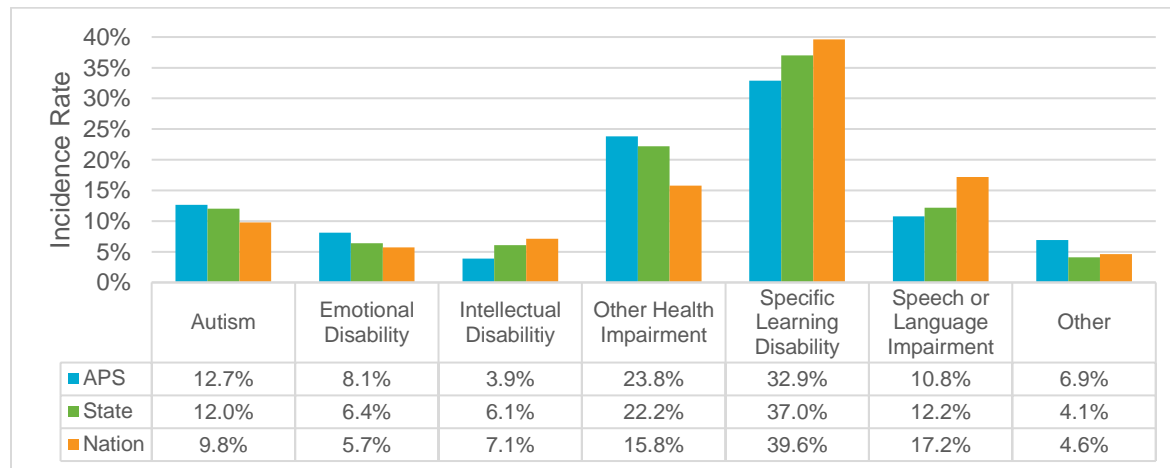
Overall Incidence Rates by Gender

Overall, 65.4% of all APS students with IEPs were male, and 34.6% were female. For comparison, during 2017-18, 51.5% of APS students were male and 48.5% were female. The percentages for students with IEPs are aligned with the national data, wherein roughly two-thirds of students receiving special education services were male (67%) and one third (33%) were female.[56]

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[54] State and Nation data retrieved from Grads360 SPP-APR Reports available at: https://osep.grads360.org/#program/spp-apr-resources; APS SWD Data Retrieved from VDOE December 1 Child Count Reports.

[55] The area of "other" incorporates the following disability areas: sensory, physical, neurological, and multiple disabilities.

[56] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 25th Annual (2003) Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, vol. 1, Washington, D.C., 2005.

Exhibit 52. Percent of APS Male vs. Female Students with IEPs (ages 6-21), 2017-18
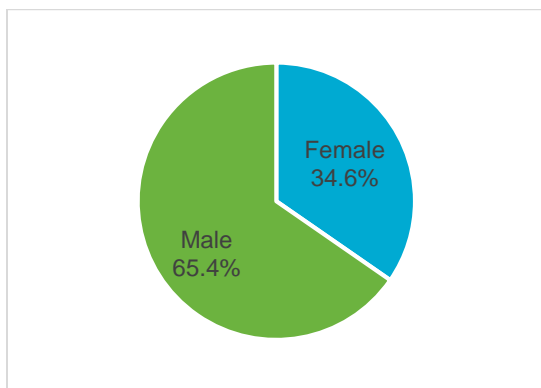
Exhibit 53. Percent of APS Male vs. Female Students with IEPs (age 6-21) by Disability, 2017-18[57]
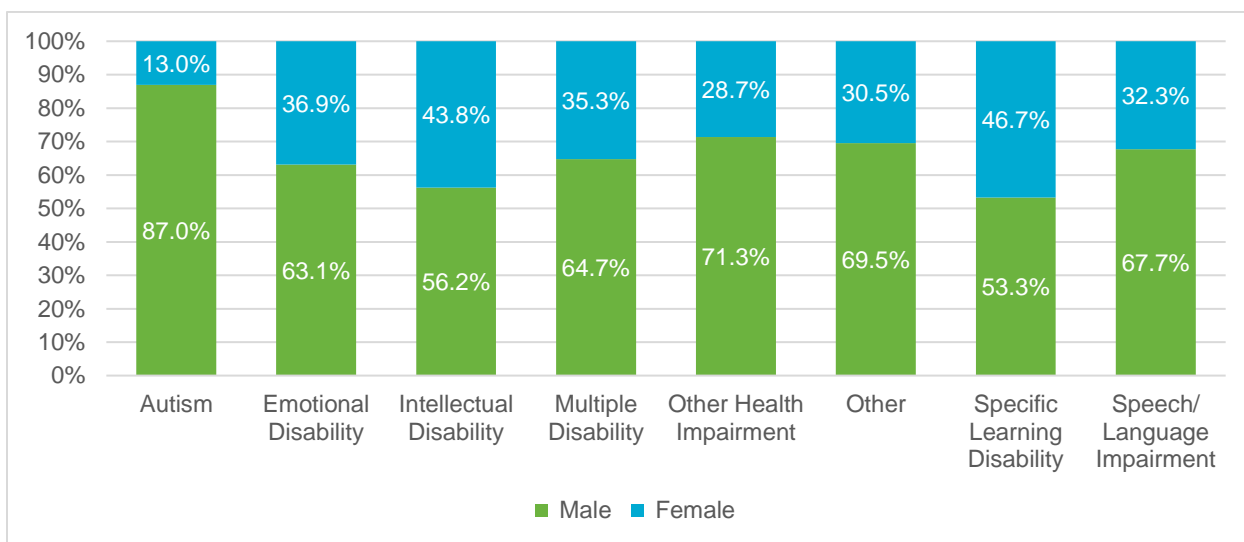
Male students comprised the majority of students identified in all disability categories. The following disability categories had higher percentages of males than the overall IEP average: autism (87.0%); other health impairment (71.3%), speech or language impairment (67.7%).

Incidence Rates by Race/Ethnicity

The information below reflects data for APS students who received special education services, by race/ethnicity, to consider the extent to which there is disproportionality.

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[57] The Other category includes: DB, DD, HI, MD, OI, TBI, VI.

Exhibit 54. Percent of APS Students with IEPs (ages 6-21) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18[5859]
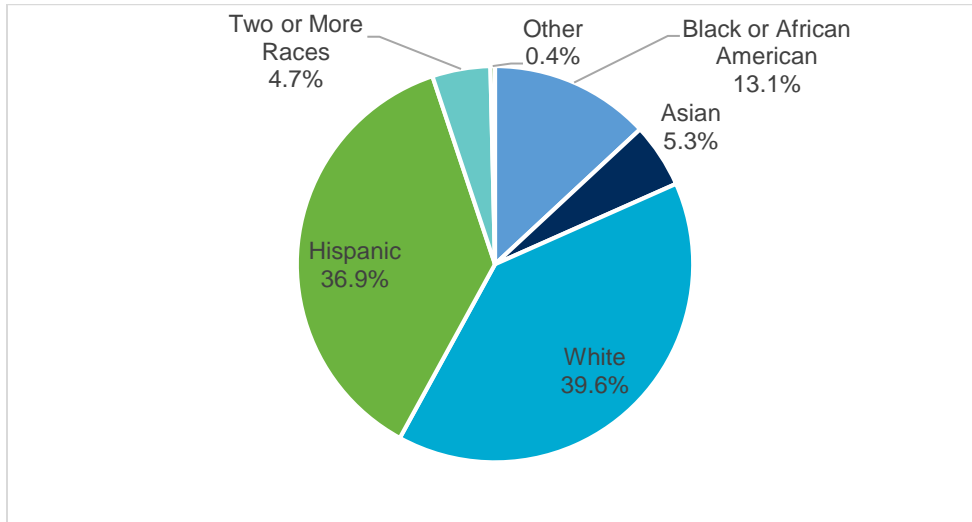
Exhibit 55. Percent of APS Students without IEPs (ages 6-21) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18
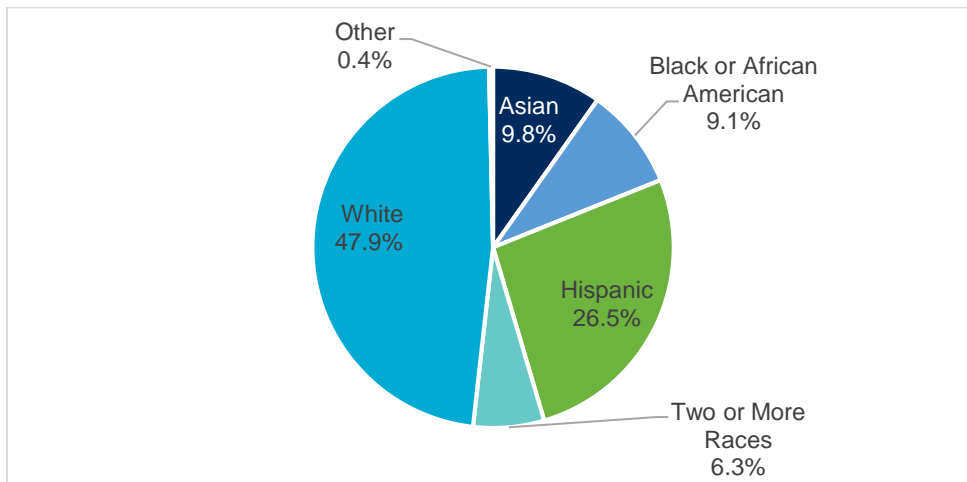
Of the total number of students ages 6-21 with an IEP:

- 39.6% were White
- 36.9% were Hispanic
- 13.1% were Black or African American
- 5.3% were Asian
- 4.7% were Two or More Races
- 0.4% were Other

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[58] Data source: APS end of year headcount, provided to PCG in September 2018.

[59] Other race category includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

As points of comparison: White students accounted for 46.6% of the total student population; Hispanic students accounted for 28% of the total student population; and Black or African American students accounted for 9.7% of the total student population.

Exhibit 56. Percent of APS Students with and without IEPs (ages 6-21) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18[6061]
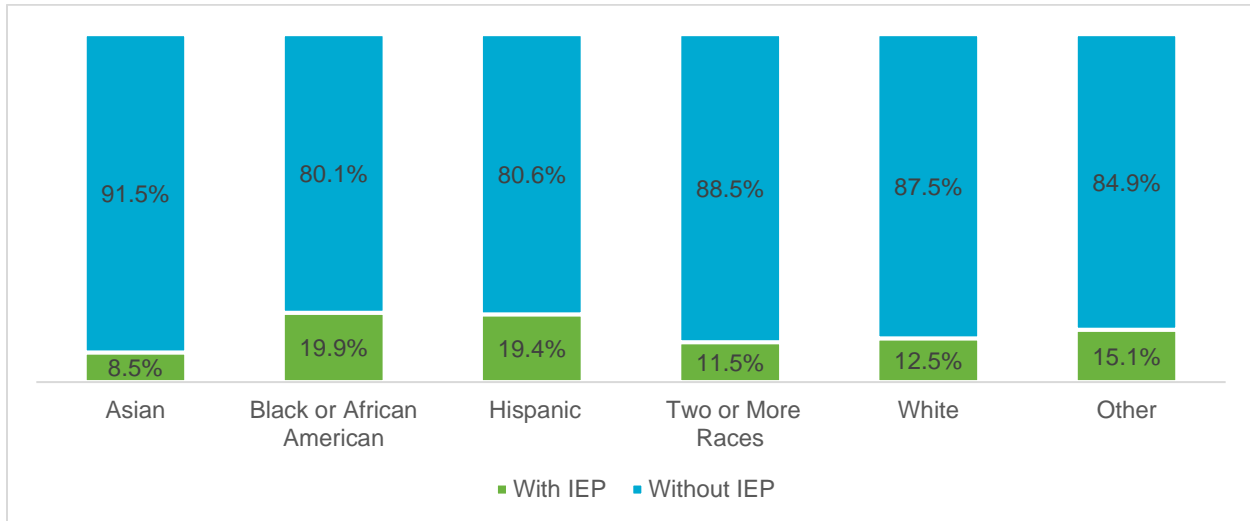
Of all:

- Students who are Asian, 8.5% had IEPs.
- Students who are Black or African American students, 19.1% had IEPs.
- Students who are Hispanic, 19.4% had IEPs.
- Students who are Two or More Races, 11.5% had IEPs.
- Students who are White, 12.5% had IEPs.
- Students who are Other, 15.1% had IEPs.

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[60] Data source: APS end of year headcount, provided to PCG in September 2018.

[61] Other includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Exhibit 57. Percent of APS Students (age 6-21) by Disability Area and Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18[626364]

	Autism	Emotional Disability	Intellectual Disability	Other Heath Impairment	Specific Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Multiple Disability	Other
■ Other	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
■ White	50.1%	43.4%	24.8%	48.9%	28.0%	41.1%	50.4%	39.7%
■ Two or more races	8.7%	8.4%	2.5%	3.8%	3.3%	6.0%	4.2%	2.9%
■ Hispanic	24.5%	29.8%	45.5%	27.9%	49.3%	36.6%	26.9%	43.1%
■ Black or African American	8.5%	16.5%	16.5%	14.4%	14.5%	9.1%	11.8%	7.5%
■ Asian	7.9%	1.9%	10.7%	4.4%	4.5%	6.9%	6.7%	6.9%

Data indicated the prevalence of disability types varied by race. Key differences, displayed in the graph above, include:

- White students represented 50.1% of students with autism but only 24.8% of those with intellectual disabilities and 28.0% of those with specific learning disabilities. White students were more often identified with autism (50.1%) or under the category other health impairment (48.9%) than other race/ethnic groups.
- Hispanic students were more often identified with an intellectual disability (45.5%) or specific learning disability (49.3%).

Disproportionate Representation in Special Education by Race/Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education has been an important topic of concern for many years. According to a review in Exceptional Children: "the disproportionate representation of minority children is among the most critical and enduring problems in the field of special education".[65] Disproportionality refers to a group's representation in a particular category that exceeds expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category. Students from some certain racial/ethnic groups, particularly Black or African American students, have historically been disproportionately identified as in need of special education, placed in more restrictive settings, and subjected to higher rates of exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspension and expulsion.[66]

Disproportionality can exist in various forms:

- National, state and district levels over-identification of students as disabled, or under identified as gifted/talented.
- Over-representation in classification, placement and suspension.

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[62] Data source: APS end of year headcount, provided to PCG in September 2018.

63 The area of "Other" races includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

[64] The area of "other" disabilities incorporates the following disability areas: sensory, physical, neurological, and multiple disabilities.

[65] Skiba et al., 2008, p. 264

[66] NASP Position Statement: Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality in Education, 2013.

- Under-representation in intervention services, resources, access to programs and rigorous curriculum and instruction.
- Higher incidence rates for certain populations in specific special education categories, such as cognitively impaired or emotionally disabled.
- Excessive incidence, duration, and types of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions experienced by minority students.[67]

Researchers have recognized that disproportionality produces inequitable opportunities to learn. While special education services can provide access to additional educational opportunities, they can also serve to "stigmatize children and marginalize them from general education… [and there is] ample evidence indicating that groups who are disproportionately represented in special education are negatively affected by factors such as stigmatization, lowered expectations, fewer opportunities to learn, substandard instruction, and isolation from the general education environment." [68] Lower expectations can lead to diminished academic and post-secondary opportunities for students with disabilities.

Significant Disproportionality Indicators

States must collect and examine data for each of their districts annually to determine if significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity is occurring with respect to:

- the identification of children as children with disabilities, including identification of children with particular disabilities;
- the placement of children in particular educational environments; and
- the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions/expulsions.

These data are collected and reported under Indicators 4, 9, and 10 of the SPP. If significant disproportionality is identified, states must: (1) provide for the review and, if appropriate, revision of policies, procedures, and practices; (2) require APS to reserve the maximum amount of funds (15%) to be used for CCEIS; and (3) require APS to publicly report on the revision of policies, procedures, and practices.[69]

APS was found to be in compliance with Indicators 4, 9 and 10[70] for the previous three years 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity and Disability

One of the most useful, informative, and proactive methods used to calculate disproportionality "is the risk ratio, which compares one racial/ethnic group's risk of receiving special education and related services to that of all other students."[71] The risk ratio can be used to calculate disproportionality at both the state and district levels. The risk ratio tool tells school personnel how the risk for one racial/ethnic group compares to the risk for a comparison group.[72] It can be used to assess:

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[67] Effectively Utilizing Data To Inform Decision-Making (Disproportionality), LRE Training Module Office of Special Education New Jersey Department of Education 2015/2016 School Year

[68] *Id.*

[69] IDEA Data Center (May, 2014). Methods for Assessing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: A Technical Assistance Guide (Revised), Westat, Rockville, MD, Julie Bollmer, Jim Bethel, Tom Munk, and Amy Bitterman.

[70] Retrieved from the VDOE's 2016 State Performance Plan Revision:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/special_ed_performance/division/2016-2017/spp-app/arlington.pdf

[71] Bollmer, J. Bethel, et al. (2007). Using the Risk Ratio to Assess Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education at the School-District Level. The Journal of Special Education, Vol 41, Issue 3, pp. 186-198.

[72] Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Special Education: A Multi-Year Disproportionality Analysis by State, Analysis Category, and Race/Ethnicity, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, February 2016.

- How much more likely is it for Black or African American students to be classified disabled compared to all other students
- How much more likely is it for Black or African American students with disabilities to be suspended for more than 10 days compared to all other students with disabilities
- What the likelihood is that a student from a particular racial or ethnic group will be classified as disabled, be given a specific disability classification, or placed in a most restrictive environment
- What the likelihood is that a student with a disability from a particular racial or ethnic group will be suspended for more than 10 days

As a concept, "risk" looks at the general enrollment data for each racial group along with the number of students from that group who were identified for a specified category and calculates the likelihood that a student from that racial group would be found in that particular category. The general risk equation is as follows:

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Number of children from racial/ethnic group in disability category}}{\text{Number of enrolled children from racial/ethnic group}} \times 100$$

As shown below, a risk ratio greater than 2.0 or a racial/ethnic group indicates over-representation, while a risk ratio less than 1.0 indicates under-representation.

PCG conducted a risk ratio analysis of APS data to identify areas where disproportionate over-identification of students with disabilities based on disability, race, and discipline may be occurring. This tool can be used to inform ongoing analysis and monitoring.

Exhibit 58. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity and Disability (Ages 6-21), 2017-18

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Two or More Races	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Other
Autism	0.76	0.85	0.04	0.83	1.47	0.00	1.15	0.59
Emotional Disability	0.00	0.20	1.84	1.09	1.41	0.00	0.88	0.00
Intellectual Disability	0.00	1.20	1.84	2.14	0.39	0.00	0.38	0.00
Other Health Impairment	1.49	0.45	1.57	0.99	0.61	2.55	1.09	1.73
Specific Learning Disability	1.39	0.47	1.58	2.49	0.52	0.95	0.44	1.29
Speech/ Language Impairment	0.00	0.73	0.94	1.48	0.98	3.50	0.80	0.79
Multiple Disabilities	0.00	0.72	1.24	0.94	0.67	0.00	1.16	0.00

In APS:[73]

- Hispanic students were almost two and half times more likely to be identified as having a specific learning disability, and twice as likely to be identified as having an intellectual disability.
- Black or African American students were almost twice as likely to be identified as having an emotional disability, and an intellectual disability, and almost one and a half times more likely to be identified with a health impairment and specific learning disability.

Exhibit 59. Risk Ratios for Students with Disabilities Suspended 1-10 Days by Race/Ethnicity (Ages 6-21), 2017-18

	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Two or More Races	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Other
Risk Ratio	5.15	0.14	4.28	1.56	1.06	0.00	0.69	3.99
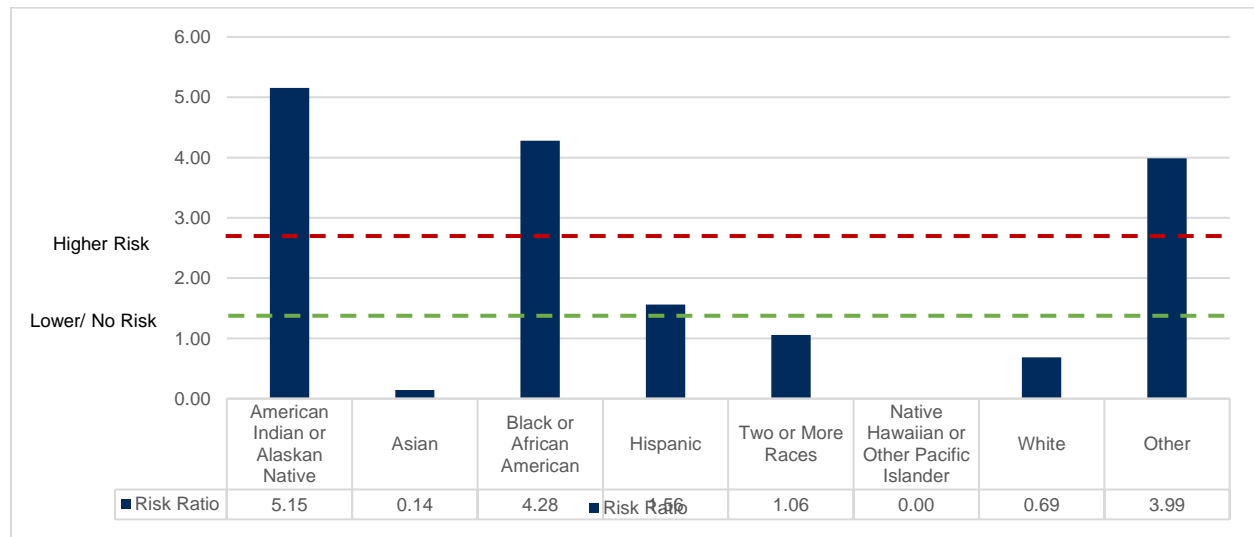
In APS:

- Black or African American students with IEPs were 4 times as likely to be suspended for 1-10 days.
- Hispanic students with IEPs were 1 and a half times as likely to be suspended for 1-10 days.

Incidence Rate by Economically Disadvantaged Status

Exhibit 60. Students with IEPs vs. Students without IEPs Participating in Free and/or Reduced Lunch (ages 6-21), 2017-18
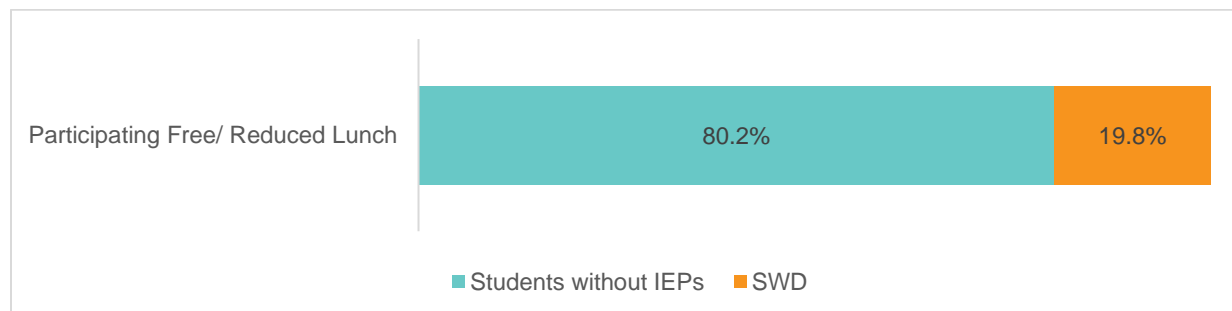
During 2018, 31.3% of APS students overall qualified for free and/or reduced lunch. Of these students, 19.8% were students with disabilities.

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[73] Data source: APS end of year headcount, provided to PCG in September 2018; Other includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Effective Teaching & Maximized Learning in the Least Restrictive Environment

Creating an environment in which every student, including those with and those without disabilities, can learn and succeed individually, and the way in which a school community supports all students, is at the core of inclusion.[74] Research has consistently shown a positive relationship between effective and inclusive instruction and better outcomes for students with disabilities, including higher academic performance, higher likelihood of employment, higher participation rates in postsecondary education, and greater integration into the community. The 10-year National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS 2) described the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of a nationally representative sample of more than 11,000 youth ages 13 through 16 who were receiving special education services in grade 7 or above when the study began in 2001. The study found that, while more time spent in general education classrooms was associated with lower grades for students with disabilities compared to their nondisabled peers, students who spent more time in general settings were closer to grade level on standardized math and language tests than were students with disabilities who spent more time in separate settings.[75] Additional studies have confirmed this finding, in that students with disabilities who are in general education classrooms more than 80% of the school day and have increased exposure to the core curriculum have improved academically on state mandated tests.[76] Research also shows that including students with a range of disabilities in general education classes does not affect the achievement of their nondisabled peers.[77]

Students with disabilities in inclusive environments also gain additional benefits that extend beyond academics. They develop friendships with nondisabled peers, learning appropriate behaviors and communication skills from them and understanding how to navigate social situations.[78] And when in classes with nondisabled students, those with disabilities benefit from the enriched educational experience and are often held to a higher academic expectation both from their peers and their teachers. Inclusive schools with school-wide behavioral supports help to establish high expectations throughout the community. This consistency and structure is critical for students with disabilities but is also important for all students.

For families, inclusion allows for students and their families to not only be a part of the school community but often helps them to be a part of the neighborhood as well. For students without disabilities, having disabled peers in their classroom gives them the opportunity to appreciate and to learn about those who are different. It can prepare them for an inclusive society and how to be respectful and accepting.

Despite the clear benefits of inclusion, implementation in districts across the country, and in APS schools, varies. The following section describes the current state of inclusive practices within APS, starting with an analysis of educational setting data followed by supports for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

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[74] http://inclusiveschools.org/together-we-learn-better-inclusive-schools-benefit-all-children/

[75] Review of Special Education in the Houston Independent School District, Thomas Hehir & Associates Boston, Massachusetts, page 25, retrieved at http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/7946/HISD__Special_Education_Report_2011_Final.pdf.

[76] Roden, L., Borgemenke, A, & Holt, W. (2013). Improving the Academic Achievement of Students with Disabilities. National Forum of Special Education Journal, Vol. 24, No. 1.

[77] See A. Kalambouka, P. Farrell, A. Dyson, & I. Kaplan. (2007, December). The impact of placing pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools on the achievement of their peers. Educational Research, 49(4), 365–382.

[78] Id.

Educational Environment Rates for School-Age Students with Disabilities

The data in this section reflect the educational settings of APS school-aged students overall, by disability areas, and race/ethnicity.[79] In addition, District data are compared to state and national data, and State Performance Plan (SPP) targets for the three educational setting categories monitored by ED's Office of Special Education Programs and VDOE for students age 6-21.[80] The department also requires each state to monitor and set targets in their SPP for educational settings in which students with IEPs are educated.

Overall Educational Setting Data for APS and State

Longitudinal data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 indicates APS students with disabilities were educated more frequently in an inclusive general education setting and less frequently in a separate setting. While the majority of students are educated in an inclusive general education setting, between 2014-15 to 2016-17, APS did not meet state targets for educating students in the general education setting more than 80% of the time, but did, however, meet state targets for students educated less than 40% in the general education setting.

- **General Education Setting more than 80% of the time**. APS's 2016-17 rate of 63.3% was 5.7 percentage points below the state target of ≥69.0%. In 2014-15 and 2015-16, APS was 10 percentage points less than the state target.

- **General Education Setting less than 40% of the time.** APS has met the state target for students served in general education less than 40% of the time each of the past three years. From 2014-15 to 2016-17, the percentage of students served in this category decreased. Though APS did not meet the state targets over this time, the decline in number of students served in this setting should be noted.

- **Separate Setting**. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, APS did not meet the state target of 3.0%, for students served in this setting.

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[79] VDOE Part B – Child Count and Ed Environment – The child count and educational environment data are the unduplicated, actual counts of all children and students with disabilities served under IDEA, Part B, by age group and disability category, according to their educational environment, as noted on the VDOE website: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/index.shtml.

[80] VDOE follows this federal guidance on how to report students by education environment: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served: A. Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day; B. Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; and C. In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements. (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A)) https://osep.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/14795

Exhibit 61. Percent of Students (ages 6-21) with IEPs by Education Setting for APS & State SPP Targets, 2014-15 to 2016-17
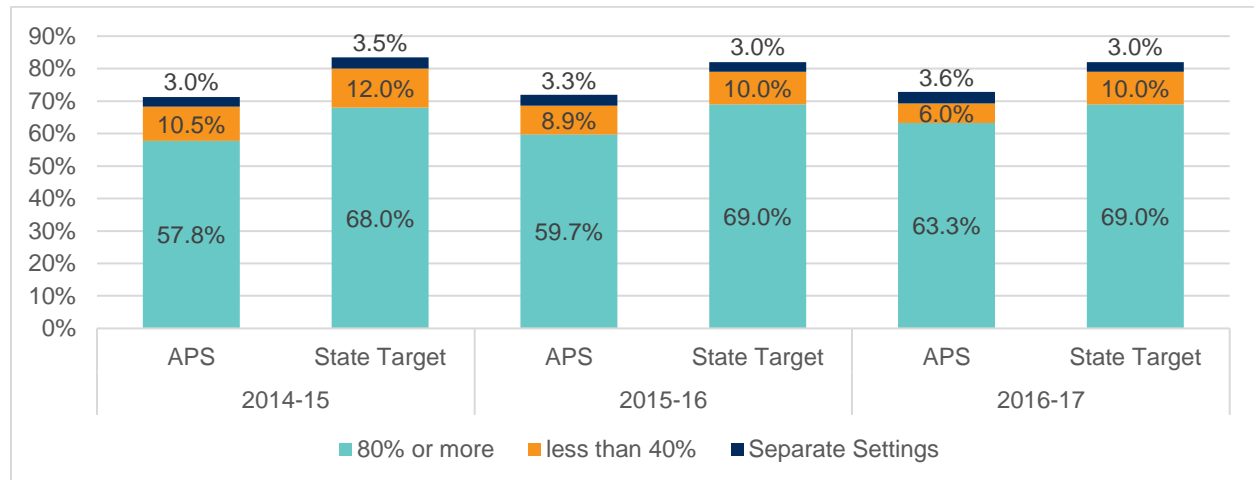
Overall Educational Setting Data for APS and Comparable Districts

PCG chose several other districts that were part of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) to compare educational setting data. These districts included Ann Arbor, MI; Alexandria, VA; Chapel Hill-Carrboro, NC; Cambridge, MA; Cleveland Heights, OH; and Madison, WI. The Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) is a national coalition of multiracial school districts that have come together to understand and eliminate opportunity/achievement gaps that persist in their schools[81]. MSAN districts share similar demographic information to APS such as size, location in proximity to small/mid-size cities, connections to major research universities, and a history of high academic achievement. MSAN districts were also used as comparisons in the 2013 report.

When comparing educational setting data to seven peer districts, the percentage of APS students enrolled in the most inclusive setting (greater than 80% of the time in a general education setting) (59.7%) was lower than Alexandria City, Ann Arbor, Chapel-Hill Carrboro, and Madison. The percentage of APS students enrolled in the most restrictive environment (less than 40% of time in a general education setting) (8.9%) fell in the middle of the comparison district group. The percentage of APS students enrolled in a separate setting was higher than four of the comparison districts.

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[81] Minority Student Achievement Network website: http://msan.wceruw.org/about/index.html

Exhibit 62. Percentage of Students by Educational Setting (Age 6-21) for Comparable Districts[82], 2017-18

	Arlington Public Schools, VA	Alexandria City, VA	Ann Arbor, MI	Chapel Hill - Carrboro, NC	Cleveland Heights, OH	Fairfax County, VA	Madison, WI	Prince William County, VA
■ Separate	3.3%	3.9%	1.8%	0.5%	6.4%	4.1%	0.3%	3.2%
■ <40%	8.9%	4.7%	7.8%	9.9%	18.0%	11.5%	6.9%	11.4%
■ 79-40%	28.1%	25.4%	22.5%	12.2%	39.6%	30.8%	17.6%	20.3%
■ >80%	59.7%	66.0%	67.9%	77.4%	36.1%	53.7%	75.2%	65.2%
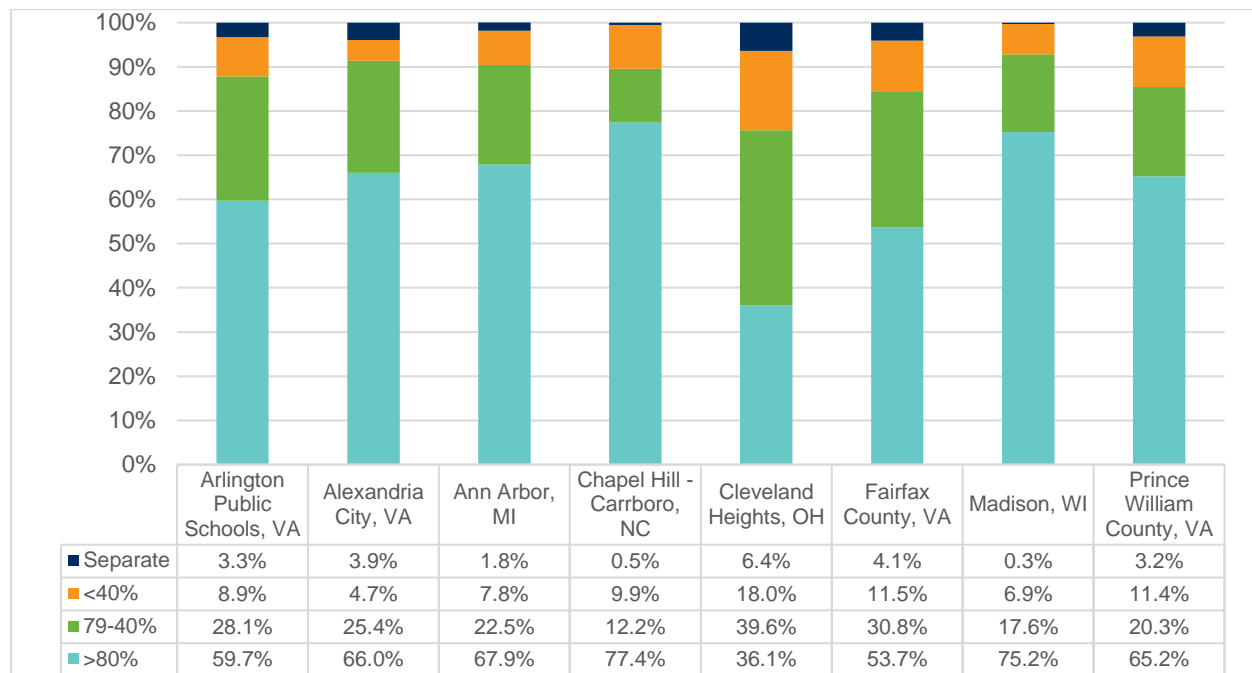
Educational Setting by Primary Disability Area

The charts below provide data on the APS students by primary disability area and educational setting.

- **General Education Setting more than 80% of the time**. Students with primary disabilities of the following are educated at a higher percentage in the full inclusion setting than the overall APS average of 65.7%: speech or language impairment (94.4%), orthopedic impairment (84.6%), developmental delay (81.8%), visual impairment (81.3%), other health impairment (79.0%), hearing impairment (75.5%), emotional disability (71.9%). Primary disabilities of autism, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities, specific learning disability, and traumatic brain injury had a lower percentage of students educated in this setting than the APS average. Only 4.1% of students with an intellectual disability were educated in general education more than 80% of the time. In addition, 50% of students with autism were educated in this full inclusion setting.

- **General Education Setting less than 40% of the time.** Students with an intellectual disability comprised the largest portion of students educated in this setting at 53.7%, followed by students with the following disabilities: multiple disabilities (35.6%), specific learning disability (34.6%), autism (29.5%), and students with an emotional disability (25.3%).

- **Separate Setting**. Disability types with the highest percentage of students served in a separate setting included multiple disabilities (26.3%), intellectual disability (16.5%), and autism (8.1%).

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[82] Data for comparison districts was obtained through each district's APR report available through their corresponding state's website. Alexandria , Fairfax County, Prince William County: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/special_ed_performance/division/2017-2018/index.shtml; Ann Arbor, MI: https://www.mischooldata.org/SpecialEducationEarlyOn3/AnnualPublicReporting/AnnualPublicReportingSummary.aspx; Chapel Hill-Carrboro, NC: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/leaperformancearchive/ ; Madison, WI: https://apps4.dpi.wi.gov/spedprofile

Exhibit 63. Percentage of APS Students (ages 6-21) by Primary Disability Area and Educational Setting 2017-18[8384]

	Autism	Dev. Delay	Emotional Disability	Hearing Impairment	Intellectual Disability	Multiple Disabilities	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Heath Impairment	Specific Learning Disability	Speech or Language Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury	Visual Impairment
≥80%	50.0%	81.8%	71.9%	75.5%	4.1%	16.9%	84.6%	79.0%	63.1%	94.4%	42.9%	81.3%
40-79%	29.5%	13.6%	25.3%	20.4%	53.7%	35.6%	15.4%	19.3%	34.6%	5.0%	35.7%	12.5%
<40%	12.4%	4.5%	2.7%	4.1%	25.6%	21.2%	0.0%	1.4%	2.1%	0.6%	21.4%	6.3%
Separate	8.1%	0.0%	5.8%	0.0%	16.5%	26.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

■≥80% ■40-79% ■<40% ■Separate

Percentage of Students by Disability Category: District, State, and Nation Comparisons in Inclusive Settings

The chart on the following page provides data on APS students by disability area and the two most inclusive educational settings: ≥80% and 40-79%.

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[83] Data source: APS end of year headcount, provided to PCG in September 2018

[84] APS adheres to the VDOE guidance on evaluation and eligibility for the special education process (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/). However, there are some practices that appear to be specific to APS regarding specific disabilities, i.e., the inclusive or "umbrella" use of the multiple disabilities category. APS is in the process of refining additional resources to provide guidance for this area.

Exhibit 64. Percentage of APS Students (age 6-21) with SLD, OHI, and ED by Educational Setting[85]

	APS	State	Nation	APS	State	Nation	APS	State	Nation
	Emotional Disability			Other Health Impairment			Specific Learning Disability		
■ 40-79%	25.6%	18.3%	17.5%	19.6%	20.3%	20.6%	34.9%	24.0%	22.2%
■ ≥80%	71.6%	48.5%	47.2%	78.8%	70.4%	66.4%	62.8%	71.7%	70.8%
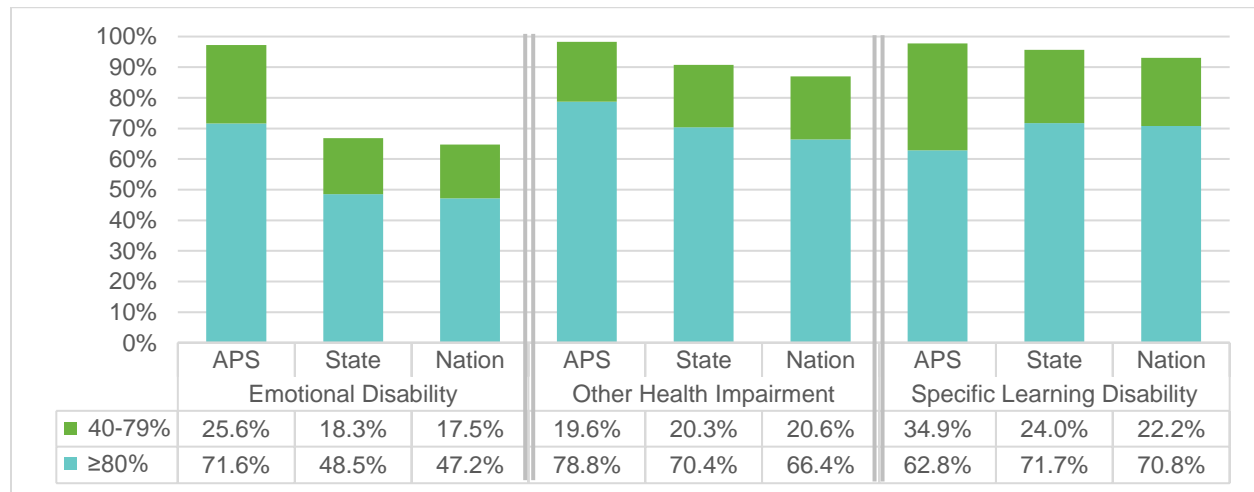
- **Emotional Disability.** Compared to the state and national rates, APS educated a substantially higher percentage of students with an emotional disability in the general education setting for more than 80% of the time. APS rate was 71.6% compared to 48.5% and 47.2% in the state and nation respectively.

- **Other Health Impairments**. APS students with health impairments were educated at a higher rate (78.8%) in general education for more than 80% of the time, compared to the state and nation, 70.4% and 66.4% respectively.

- **Specific Learning Disability**. APS students with a specific learning disability were educated at a lower rate (62.8%) in the full inclusion setting (more than 80% of the time) than the state rate or nation, 71.7% and 70.8% respectively.

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[85] Data Source: APS data provided to PCG in September 2018, based on last day headcount for SY2017-18. State and National Data FFY 16: https://osep.grads360.org/#report/apr/2015B/publicView?state=VA&ispublic=true

Exhibit 65. Percentage of APS Students (age 6-21) with Autism, ID, and MD by Educational Setting[86]

	Autism			Intellectual Disability			Multiple Disabilities		
	APS	State	Nation	APS	State	Nation	APS	State	Nation
■ 40-79%	29.5%	22.4%	18.0%	53.7%	30.0%	26.3%	35.9%	16.3%	16.8%
■ ≥80%	50.0%	40.7%	39.4%	4.1%	11.5%	17.0%	16.2%	8.1%	13.7%
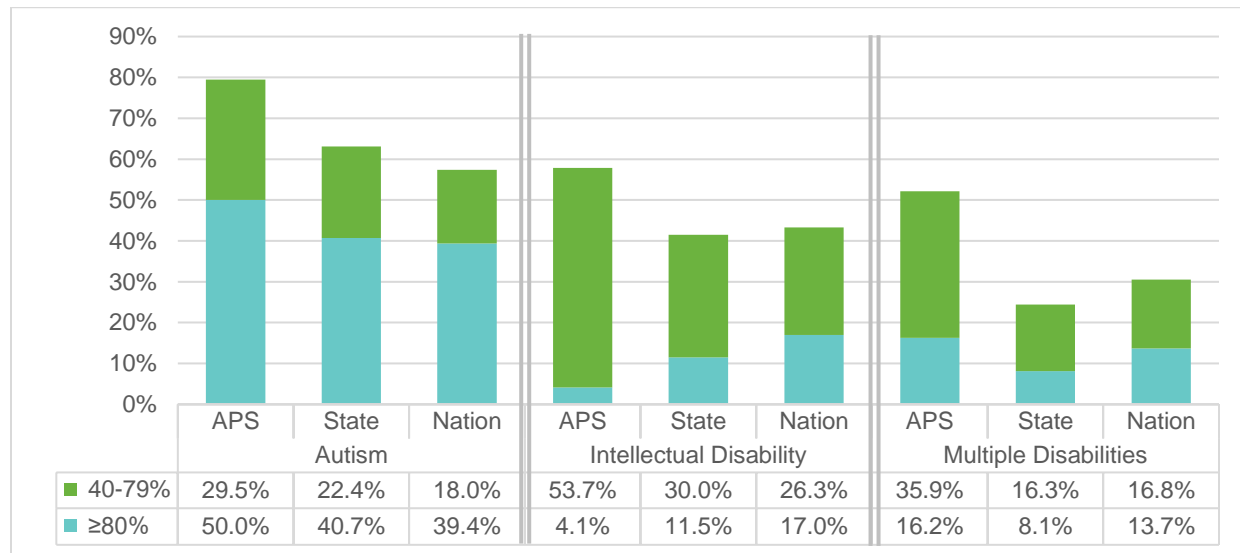
- **Autism**. Compared to the state and nation, APS had more students with autism educated in the general education classroom for 80% of the time. Additionally, APS had more students educated in the 40-79% setting at 29.5% than the state (22.4%) or nation (18.0%).

- **Intellectual Disability**. Of APS students with an intellectual disability, 4.1% were educated in general education for 80% or more of the time compared to 11.5% and 17.0% in the state and nation respectively. APS had a higher percentage of students being educated in the 40-79% setting (53.7%) compared to the state (30.0%) and nation (26.3%).

- **Multiple Disabilities**. APS students with multiple disabilities were educated for more than 80% of the time in general education at a higher rate when compared to the state and nation, 16.2%, 8.1%, and 13.7% respectively. Additionally, APS had a higher rate of students educated in the 40-79% setting (35.9%) than the state (16.3%) and nation (16.8%).[87]

Separate Settings

The graph below shows the percent of APS students with disabilities who were educated in separate settings, disaggregated by disability type. Students with a primary disability of autism, multiple disabilities, intellectual disability, and emotional disability constituted the largest portion of students educated in separate settings with 33.6%, 28.2%, 18.2%, and 15.5% respectively. Students with other health impairments and specific learning disabilities represented a smaller portion of the students in a separate setting.

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[87] APS prefers to use the multiple disabilities category to include students with an intellectual disability (ID). This may be why ID incidence rates appear much lower for APS as compared to state and nation averages.

Exhibit 66. Percent of APS Students (ages 6-21) with an IEP Enrolled in a Separate Setting, by Disability Type, 2017-18[88]
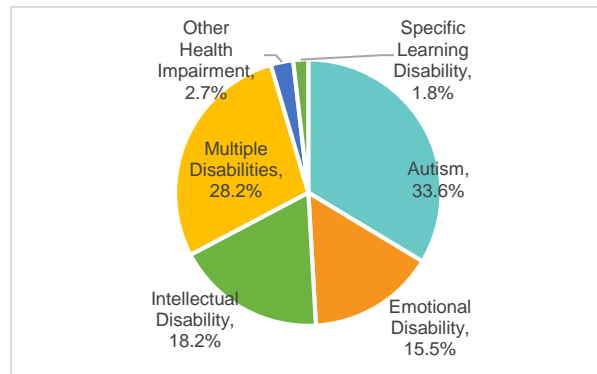
Exhibit 67. Percentage of APS Students (ages 6-21) with Disabilities by Separate Setting, 2017-18[89]
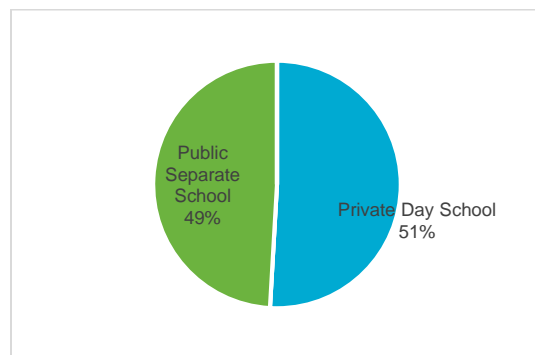
Of students in a separate setting, 49% are in a public separate school and 51% in a private day school. Students educated at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program, formerly known as the Stratford Program, are included in the public separate school setting category. [90]

Educational Setting by Race/Ethnicity

White, Two or More Races, and Asian students with disabilities had the highest rate of inclusion in the general education setting for more than 80% of the time at 78.0%, 67.2%, and 66.2%respectively. These averages were above the APS average for all students with disabilities (65.7%). Hispanic and Black or African American students with disabilities had the lowest rate of inclusion in the general education setting at 60.0, 56.4%, and 53.9% respectively. These averages were below the APS average for all students with disabilities. Asian students were educated in separate settings at a higher rate (6.6%) compared to the APS average (3.0%).

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[88] Data Source: APS data provided to PCG in September 2018, based on last day headcount for SY2017-18.

[89] For students in a separate setting, n=110. Data pulled for this evaluation included all active APS students as of the last day of school for the 2017-18 school year. If a student was receiving ISP services and was enrolled in APS on this date, then the student would have been included.

[90] The Stratford Program was recently renamed the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program.

Exhibit 68. Percentage of APS Students with Disabilities (ages 6-21) by Race and Educational Setting, 2017-18[91]

	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic	Two or more races	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Other
■Separate	0.0%	6.6%	2.9%	2.6%	3.4%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%
■<40%	10.0%	3.5%	5.5%	6.4%	4.0%	0.0%	3.0%	7.1%
■40-79%	30.0%	23.7%	37.8%	34.5%	25.4%	25.0%	16.3%	28.6%
■≥80%	60.0%	66.2%	53.9%	56.4%	67.2%	75.0%	78.0%	64.3%
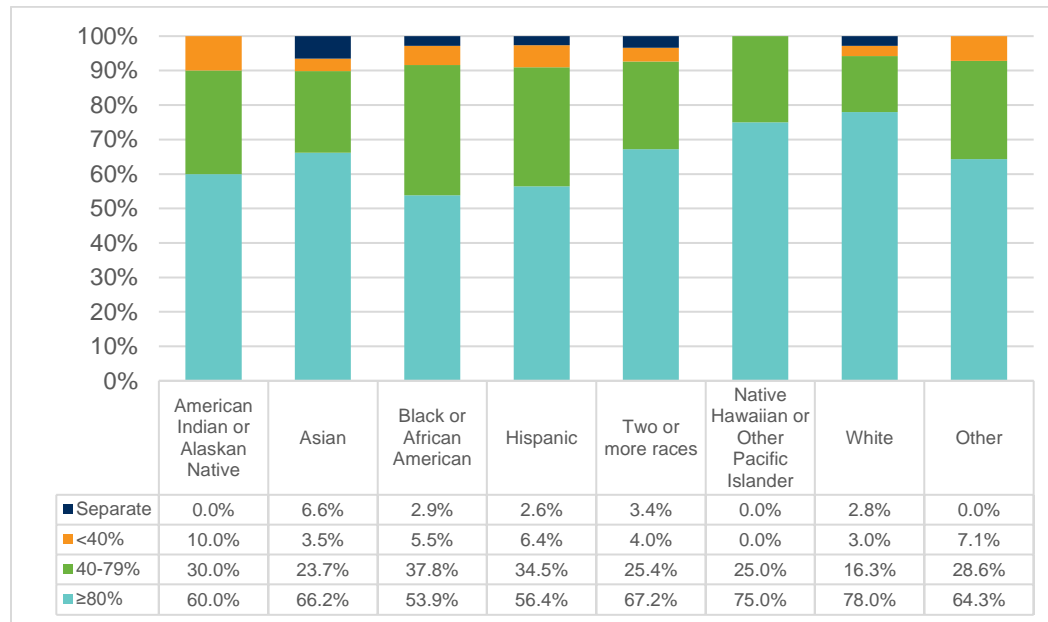
Supporting Instruction and Inclusion in the General Education Setting

Researchers note that when students with disabilities are included in the general education setting they have better academic outcomes, stronger peer relations, and a higher self-esteem.[92] Developing an inclusive culture that is fully accepting and successfully functioning across a district, and in individual school buildings, requires coordinated vision and leadership. There is no place called inclusion— "inclusion is not a student, a classroom, or a school. Rather, inclusion is a belief that ALL students, regardless of labels, should be members of the general education community."[93]

For all students, including those with IEPs, to meet high academic standards and fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics, their instruction must be flexible, yet challenging, and incorporate scaffolds and accommodations to overcome potential learning barriers. As noted in current literature, it is essential that that the curriculum be designed to enable all students to successfully access and engage in learning without changing or reducing instructional goals.[94] To meet the needs of all diverse learners in the classroom, it is important to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction, Accommodations and Modifications, and Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) based to the support access and success of the learners. Implementing a balanced mix of appropriate supports while maintaining the integrity of the curriculum can be challenging but is needed to support diverse learners. It must be remembered that the "I" in IEP stands for

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[91] Other category includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

[92] Braunsteiner, Maria-Luise & Mariano-Lapidus, Susan (2014). A perspective on inclusion: Challenges for the future. Global Education Review, 1 (1). 32-43.

[93] Pratt, C. (1997). There is no place called inclusion. The Reporter, 2(3), 4-5, 13-14. Accessed at: https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/There-is-No-Place-Called-Inclusion

[94] http://www.readingrockets.org/article/universal-design-learning-meeting-needs-all-students; https://www.cec.sped.org/Publications/CEC-Journals/TEACHING-Exceptional-Children/TEC-Plus/Universal-Design-for-Learning-in-Action-The-Smart-Inclusion-Toolkit

individualized and that the rate of learning for students with disabilities may be different, but not less. These students often need more time to master concepts through specialized approaches that are proven to be effective based on their instructional needs, measured performance, and recognized disability.

With the shift to inclusive philosophies and integrated practices, special education personnel have begun to recognize that their roles are not static but based on individual student needs. The emphasis now is on increasing the quality and amount of in-class support offered inside the general education classroom. In addition, services in traditional "pull-out" classrooms are changing. Although fewer students with disabilities now require services in these specialized settings, these classrooms must be re-conceptualized to provide highly focused and more effective interventions and support.[95]

PCG looked for evidence related to quality inclusive practices in the following areas:

1) Clear and Consistent Vision and Vocabulary
2) Strong Tier 1 Instruction
3) Effective In-Class Support Practices and Use of High Yield Strategies
4) Communication and Collaboration Among Educators
5) Staffing and Scheduling
6) Effective Use of Resources
7) Social Inclusion

Clear and Consistent Vision and Vocabulary

APS released its Teaching and Learning Framework for the 2018-19 school year. The four quadrants of the Instructional Framework – fostering inclusive environments, assessing, planning, and teaching – establish a strong foundation for how APS will operate moving forward. The framework addresses the needs of ALL students and is a significant step toward creating an inclusive culture. Having the Strategic Plan and the Teaching and Learning Framework prioritize the notion of inclusion will have a positive impact on APS's ability to implement inclusive practices.

According to focus group participants, inclusion has been a "hot topic" this year. In the first half of the 2018-19 school year, APS conducted training on the Instructional Framework and walk-through "blitzes" to review with teachers how their classroom practices aligned to the Framework. APS looked at inclusion trends across schools and those with the lowest inclusion rates started receiving some central office support. Co-teaching practices have ranged in effectiveness in the past. The Professional Learning portion of the Teaching and Learning Framework begins to set the stage for what teachers should know and establishes performance standards.

Overall, many focus group participants concurred with the statement that APS "still has a lot of work to do in this area." Inclusion has meant different things across schools in the past, so the idea of defining what inclusive practices will mean in APS was encouraging to many focus group participants. Nearly all principals cited their deep commitment to inclusion as a philosophy. They noted, however, that it is a "cultural mindset" issue that prevents staff from believing in it and cited challenges they, as building leaders, have faced with trying to develop an inclusive culture in their schools. Parents are waiting to hear more details as to what this will mean for their children with IEPs.

It should be noted that the Teaching and Learning Framework was released during the 2018-19 school year, only a few weeks before PCG conducted focus groups and interviews. At the time of this data collection, few staff had a deep understanding of its implications or the direction that APS would be going with it.

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[95] https://stetsonassociates.com/new-models-of-support/

Strong Tier One Instruction

Focus group participants described renewed coaching and supports focused on Tier 1 core instruction as part of the roll out of the Teaching and Learning Framework. Many requested guidance and/or a clear policy for how to group students in co-taught classes. There is a perception among many staff that co-taught classes have a disproportionate number of students with IEPs, are English learners, or generally in need of substantial academic support. Further, they cited the need for more professional learning opportunities on differentiation for all teachers, particularly for general education teachers.

Staff Survey

On the staff survey, 45% of staff overall agree that current professional learning opportunities on special education and teaching students with disabilities is sufficient, while nearly 60% agree that professional learning opportunities on differentiation is adequate. This is relatively consistent across grade levels.

Exhibit 69. Staff Survey: General education teachers have sufficient professional development on special education and teaching students with disabilities.
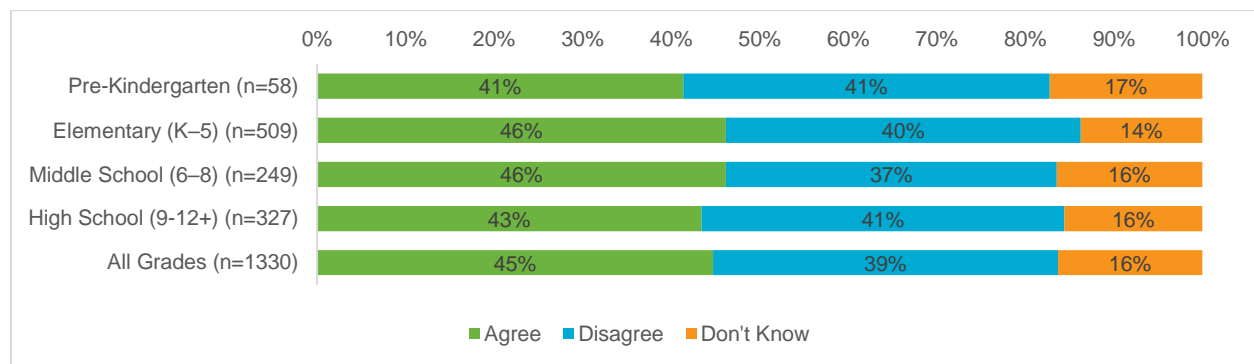
A higher percent (59% overall) agree that general education teachers have sufficient professional learning opportunities on differentiating instruction.

Exhibit 70. Staff Survey: General education teachers have sufficient professional development on differentiating instruction.
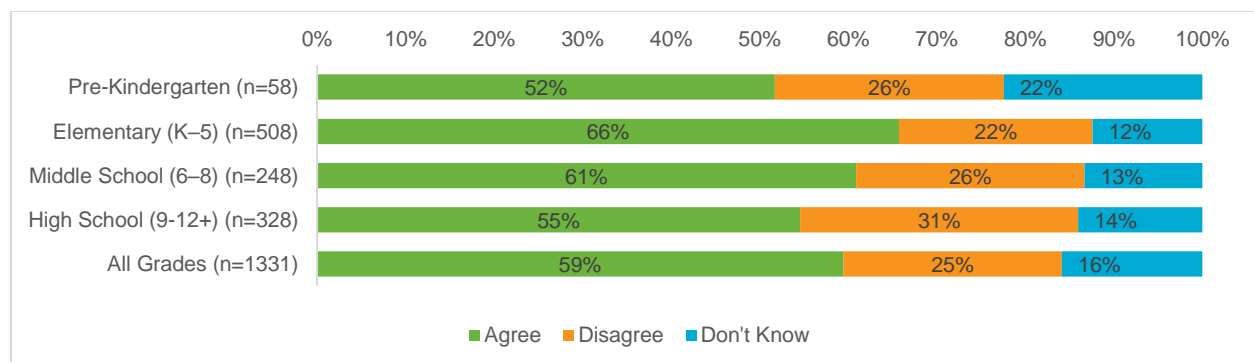
Effective In-Class Support Practices and Use of High Yield Strategies

Focus group participants widely pointed to the opportunity to improve supports and services provided to students with disabilities in general education classes. APS staff noted that the enactment of the Teaching and Learning Framework is a progressive start to serving more students with disabilities inclusively but acknowledged that state data still show that further strides are required in order to, at minimum, meet the state LRE target.

Overall, focus group participants were not able to articulate which co-teaching approach they were using in their schools, why that particular method was chosen, or alternate approaches for collaboration and shared teaching between special educators and general educators. Participants primarily described providing push-in services that relied on the "one teach-one assist method."[96] Some school staff described using "team-teaching" but acknowledged it is far more common for special education teachers to sit next to the student(s) with disabilities that they are supporting, with no evidence of co-planning or shared service delivery taking place. Teaching staff widely requested standard guidance around co-teaching and inclusive practices, in addition to information on effective and structured ways to engage paraprofessionals. There also appears to be confusion around the difference of specialized instruction vs. accommodations, particularly in the general education environment.

APS has offered some training on co-teaching approaches. Principals indicated that there are variances with co-teaching approaches though– some indicated co-teaching is done for the entire period, some indicated push-in was standard. They also shared that, in general, co-taught sessions rarely occur for advanced courses, as it is difficult to staff.

Perhaps as a result of the Teaching and Learning Framework, there seems to be a growing acknowledgement that a variety of co-teaching approaches, standards, and training may be needed moving forward. Recently the Office of Special Education has started providing feedback on the accessibility of lessons, how scaffolds can be designed to support differentiated instruction, and on the variety of co-teaching approaches. Staff noted the value of these supports.

Staff Survey

A high percent of staff (42%) report that students with IEPs in the school always receive instruction and supplementary aids and services in general education classes to the maximum extent appropriate, with an additional 34.4% reporting that this occurs most of the time.

Exhibit 71. Staff Survey: Students with IEPs in the school receive instruction and supplementary aids and services in general education classes to the maximum extent appropriate.
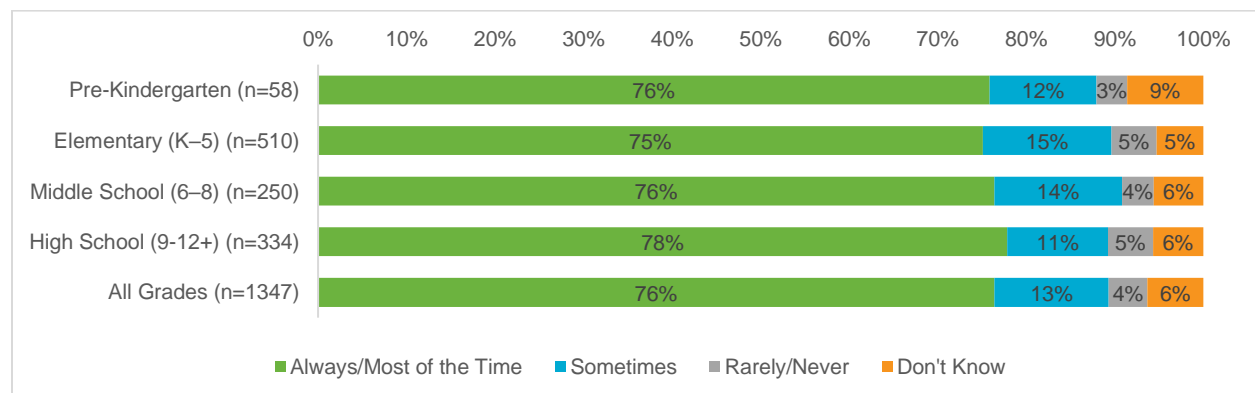
Communication and Collaboration Among Educators

Focus group participants said that improving the communication and collaboration among educators, especially between special educators and general educators, is a critical issue for inclusion. The following themes emerged:

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[96] Dr. Marilyn Friend's Co-Teaching Framework includes six approaches: 1) One Teach, One Observe; 2) Station Teaching; 3) Parallel Teaching; 4) Alternative Teaching; 5) Teaming; 6) One Teach, One Assist. Of the six models, Dr. Friend identifies three as high-yield strategies: Alternative Teaching, Parallel Teaching, and Station Teaching. Co-Teaching Approaches. Retrieved from: http://marilynfriend.com/approaches.htm

- Content teachers know the material and pedagogy; however, they need help from special education teachers with differentiating instruction. They believe co-planning and co-delivery would improve this.
- Teachers are not operating as colleagues. The model is not well defined or training deeply provided to support it. Special education teachers do not expect to be in a teaching role in general education setting.
- There is no consistency in keeping special education teachers in assignments. This inconsistency makes it difficult for teaching teams to plan together or develop build confidence in each other's practice. Some teachers "burn out" because they are working with partners that they believe do not pull their weight; this notion was noted by both special education and general education teachers.
- Special education teachers, general education teachers, and paraeducators would benefit from joint training and having the time together to start building their relationships and expectations for co-teaching. One school reported that it made time to train all teachers assigned to teach together and to set expectations. Teachers then had to find time to work together and to schedule ongoing collaboration. As a result, this did not occur. At another school, there are new co-teaching teams in the process of starting to work together. There is a learning curve, so it takes time to develop an effective and strong team.

Staff Survey

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of staff survey respondents agree that the IEP process in the school always or most of the time involves general education and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations.

Exhibit 72. The IEP process in the school involves general education and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations.
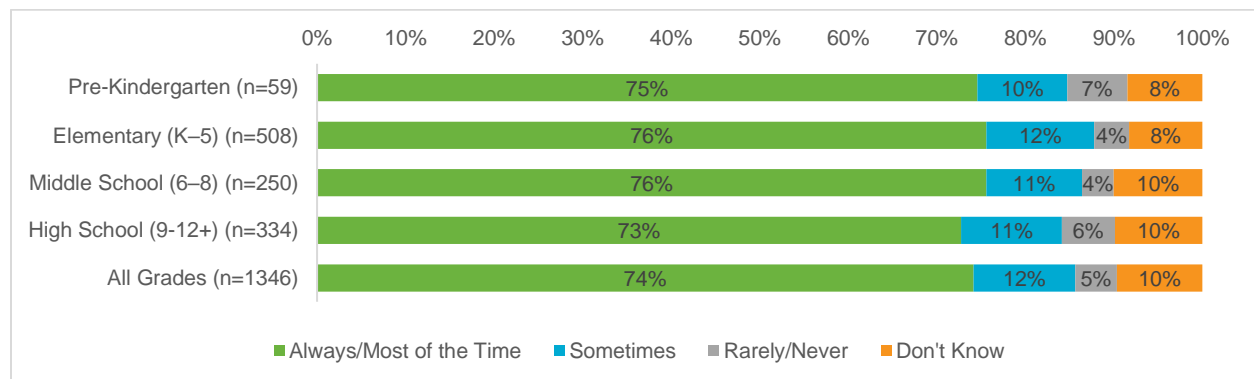
Staffing and Scheduling

A well-crafted master schedule enables a school to accomplish many objectives. It aligns student learning with school and district performance goals. It synthesizes stakeholder collaboration and best practices through the use of efficient processes. It promotes rigorous instructional opportunities for **all** learners while strategically deploying finite resources for maximum impact.

Focus groups participants noted that in every school the master schedule is completed by the building principal. Principal skills around, knowledge of, and expertise in developing master schedules ranges from novice to expert. Mentoring programs exist for newer principals and additional guidance is provided by the Office of Special Education when schools have questions about, or face challenges with their master schedule development. Most special education coordinators do not participate in creating master schedules at the school level but serve as an as-needed resource when questions arise.

The majority of principals indicated they schedule for co-teaching and that the relationship between the special education teacher and general education teacher (co-teaching teams) is a priority in scheduling. They also consider the role of the instructional assistant. Other participants indicated that staffing and scheduling decisions are not made in a way that works for all children. Additionally, some principals reported that their schools have been "flat staffed," which they believe has made making revisions to the schedule challenging. There do not appear to be guidelines, such as the ones from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), that guide the development of master schedules in APS schools and that buildings approach this process differently. The master schedule is also an essential tool for principals to encourage inclusive practices and create learning opportunities for students with disabilities. An At-A-Glance Guidance document, produced by the CEC, provides succinct recommendations on how to develop this type of schedule. This guide is included in the Appendix.

On the staff survey, 38% of respondents across grades agree that general and special education teachers have sufficient time to collaborate with each other.

Exhibit 73. Staff Survey: General and special education teachers have sufficient time to collaborate with each other.
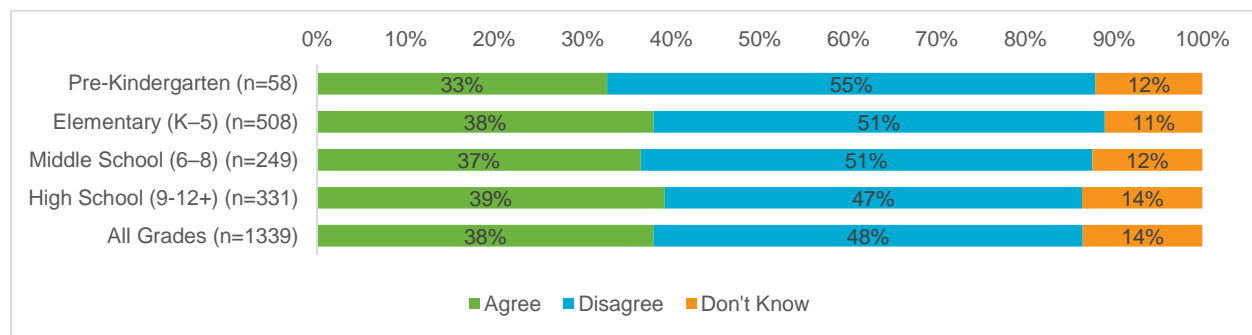
Effective Use of Resources

There was also a general perception among focus group participants that APS does not have enough teachers to implement the full range of co-teaching models with fidelity. Many also stated that the increase of resources committed to professional learning opportunities and job embedded coaching would help move inclusive practices forward.

Social Inclusion

During the student shadowing, PCG observed positive social interactions between students with disabilities and other students in their classes, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and at recess. It appeared as if the students shadowed were welcomed by their peers and included in a wide range of social activities. More information about the student experience can be found in subsequent chapters.

Survey Results

The parent IEP survey asked respondents to evaluate the extent to which their children with disabilities are able to participate in school-sponsored activities and how supported they are in them. A high 88% across all grades agree this is the case all or most of the time.

Exhibit 74. Parent IEP Survey: My child has the opportunity to participate in school-sponsored activities such as assemblies, field trips, clubs, and sporting events.
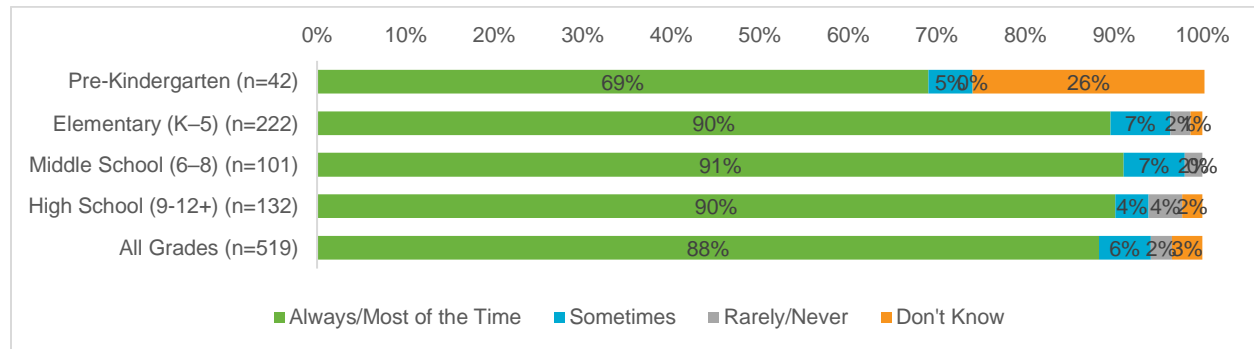
When asked about their child being supported when participating in school-sponsored activities, a lower percentage (67%) overall agreed.

Exhibit 75. Parent IEP Survey: My child is supported when participating in school-sponsored activities such as assemblies, field trips, clubs, and sporting events.
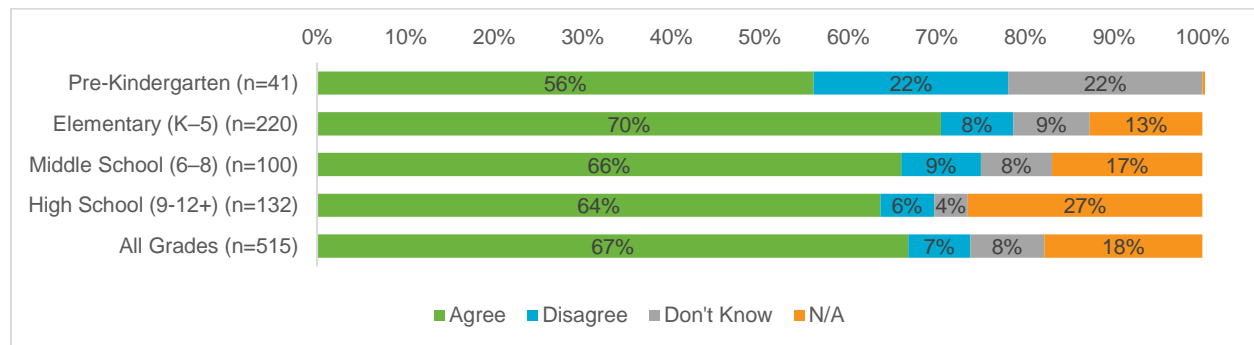
Supporting Instruction in Specialized Programs and Separate Schools

All APS schools provide special education and specially designed instruction for students with disabilities; however, only select schools house countywide programs. There are several types of countywide programs.[97]

Interlude. The focus of the Interlude program is on improving social and emotional functioning in students who have significant interfering behaviors due to psychological or behavioral disorders. Students who are receiving special education support due to an emotional disability or significant behavioral issues, but whose academic skills are at or near grade-level, may be candidates for Interlude. The program provides a therapeutic environment designed to foster increased self-regulation, improved self-concept, positive relationship skills, and academic success. Supplemental curriculum emphasizes resiliency, self-regulation, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. The team-oriented approach draws upon academic, therapeutic, family and interagency resources to develop educational plans to serve the needs of the students.

Communications Classes. The focus of the Communication classes is on increasing and enhancing expressive and receptive language skills. Students who are receiving special education support due to significant language impairments that are not associated with significant cognitive impairments may be candidates for the Communications classes. These classes use a total communication approach with

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[97] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/countywide-programs/

access to assistive technology. Instruction is based on grade-level standards, and does not include explicit instruction for adaptive skills, such as feeding or toileting skills. The goal of the communication program is to determine the mode(s) of communication that will allow each student to achieve academic success. Students are then given opportunities to practice the skills they have learned throughout the school day. Once a student is able to successfully communicate using the skills they have learned, they can return to their previous school setting.

Functional Life Skills Program (FLS)

- **Elementary:** The focus of the FLS program, elementary level, is on establishing basic academic skills, increasing daily living skills, communication, motor/mobility skills, and sensory development. Students who receive special education support due to cognitive or intellectual disabilities, sensory impairments, orthopedic impairments, or other health impairments, may be candidates for the Functional Life Skills program. The program provides highly individualized educational programming with intensified related services. FLS, elementary level, utilizes a variety of research supported curricula and practices, such as the Unique Learning curriculum for academic and pre-vocational skills. As one component of instruction, Unique Learning provides individualized assessment, monitoring, and lessons in the critical skill areas of reading, writing, math, science and social studies. The team-oriented approach draws upon a variety of strategies and interventions to develop educational plans to serve the needs of the students. The elementary FLS program is housed in three elementary schools.

- **Secondary:** The FLS program, secondary level, is designed to provide students with opportunities and experiences for developing and refining academic and adaptive skills as they move toward greater independence. FLS, secondary level, utilizes a variety of instructional resources, including the Unique Learning for academic and vocational skills. In addition, FLS, secondary utilizes the Life Centered Career Education curriculum, developed by the CEC, and designed primarily for students with severe disabilities (i.e. cognitive disabilities, traumatic brain injury, multiple disabilities, severe and profound disabilities) who require specialized instruction in the following skill areas: self-help, personal/social, daily living, functional academics, and job/vocational. The curriculum is designed to be used in natural settings with connections made for concrete applications of skill development. Community-based experiences play a large role in the program as students practice skills in real life settings. Students in the FLS program usually participate in the state-wide Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) assessment. However, each student's IEP team determines whether students participate in the SOL curriculum or the Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOL) curriculum, as well as how the individual student will participate in state-wide assessments. Each APS middle and high school, as well as the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program, provides an FLS program.

Multi-Intervention Program for Students with Autism (MIPA). The focus of the MIPA program, for grades K-5, is on increasing communication, independent life skills, social skills, and academic performance. Students who are receiving special education support due to autism may be candidates for the MIPA program. The program provides a highly structured environment and research-based academic and behavioral interventions for autism. The program uses a variety of strategies to prepare students to transition to less restrictive settings. Examples of curricula used in MIPA classes include the STAR Program (*Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research*) and the *Links Curriculum*.

Secondary Program for Students with Autism (SPSA). This program is for students in grades 6-12 who are identified to receive special education services due to autism and who are working on grade-level (or higher) curriculum may access specially designed classes which address social skills and executive functioning. This programming focuses on the development of interpersonal and organizational skills, while encouraging a challenging academic experience. Students integrate into

general education classes per services on their IEPs and are instructed on grade-level SOL curriculum. Supplemental curricula can include *Unstuck and On-Target!: An Executive Function Curriculum to Improve Flexibility for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, and the *PEERS Curriculum for School-Based Social Skills Training for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder*.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program. The Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program, formerly known as the Stratford Program, provides a highly individualized, supportive environment for students with significant disabilities within a smaller school setting with a low student-to-staff ratio throughout the program. Students in the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program require intensive, explicit instruction in functional academic and vocational skills, as well as community-based educational program. Instruction is provided primarily in a self-contained special education setting with opportunities for inclusion and interaction with non-disabled peers on-site, at the H.B. Woodlawn Program. Specific classes within the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program follow the Functional Life Skills (FLS) or Multi-Intervention Program for Autism (MIPA) curricula. Students who require FLS or MIPA in a small school setting with a low student-to-staff ratio, may receive those programs at Eunice-Kennedy Shriver. In addition to instruction in functional academics and adaptive skills, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program provides specific training to prepare students for participation in post-secondary settings, such as sheltered workshops, semi-sheltered enclaves, supported work, and competitive job placement. Individual student programs are developed to achieve maximum social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth while acquiring the related skills necessary to function in the community as independently as possible. Students may participate in the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program up to age 22 (as of September 30).

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program is designed for students with deafness or significant hearing impairment who require a specialized language rich program. It is taught by a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (TDHH) with support from a speech-language pathologist and audiologist. The goal of the program is to improve the language and communication skills of students and provide full access to the general education curriculum. Sign Language, spoken English, and/or visual aids are used to support students in general education classes. The program serves students Pre-K through 8th grade. Early childhood students attend Patrick Henry Elementary, where the elementary program is located. The middle school location is at Thomas Jefferson Middle school. High school students are provided any necessary supports in the APS school or program they choose to attend.

The following chart shows where the countywide programs are located.

Exhibit 76. Number of School-Aged Special Education Programs by School & Program Type, 2018-19 school year[98]

Programs	Interlude	Communications	Functional Life Skills	Multi-Intervention Program for Students with Autism (MIPA)	Secondary Program for Students with Autism (SPSA)	Deaf/ Hard of Hearing
Ashlawn ES			1			
ATS						
Barcroft ES						
Barrett ES			1	2		
Campbell ES	3					
Discovery ES			1			

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98 Data from APS (6/24/19). Mini-MIPA Pre-K program is included in the early childhood program chart.

Drew Model ES				1		
Glebe ES						
Henry ES		2				3
Hoffman-Boston ES				1		
Jamestown ES				1		
Long Branch ES				1		
McKinley ES				1		
Oakridge ES				1		
Taylor ES				2		
Reed						
Gunston MS	1		1			
Jefferson MS	1		1		2	1
Kenmore MS	1		1	1		
Swanson MS	1		1			
Williamsburg MS	1		1			
H-B Woodlawn					2	
Wakefield HS	2		2	2		
Washington-Lee HS	3		2		2	
Yorktown HS	2		2		1	
Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program				2		
Career Center						
Total	**15**	**2**	**14**	**15**	**7**	**3**

Stakeholder Feedback

Focus group participants shared that improving teacher quality has made an impact in self-contained classes. There is still a general widespread concern regarding the rigor of self-contained classes when it comes to pacing and ensuring that it mirrors the general education setting. School staff offered examples of situations in which they believe parents advocated for their children to move from a self-contained setting to a general education setting with supports, and that it was a challenge for these students to succeed with the academic requirements. School staff noted the tension that IEP teams feel when it comes to deciding how and where these students will be served, in particular, balancing high expectations with the realities of a student's needs.

Among focus group participants, there was also a shared sentiment that APS needs to do a better job supporting countywide programs and the students who attend them. There is a stigma around these programs, not enough pride in them, and limiting general understanding of the benefits they offer students.

APS strives to serve all students, to the extent possible, in district schools; however, there are occasionally circumstances that require the placements in out of district private day and contract schools. Three APS Special Education Coordinators serve as the case carrier for these students, writing IEPs in collaboration with the private/contract school and attending IEP meetings.

Staff Survey

Just over half of respondents (55%) across grades agree that students in self-contained classes who take SOL assessments always or most of the time receive instruction aligned to the standards of learning. Another 40% responded that they did not know.

Exhibit 77. Staff Survey: Students receiving special education services in self-contained classes who take Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments receive instruction aligned to the Standards of Learning.
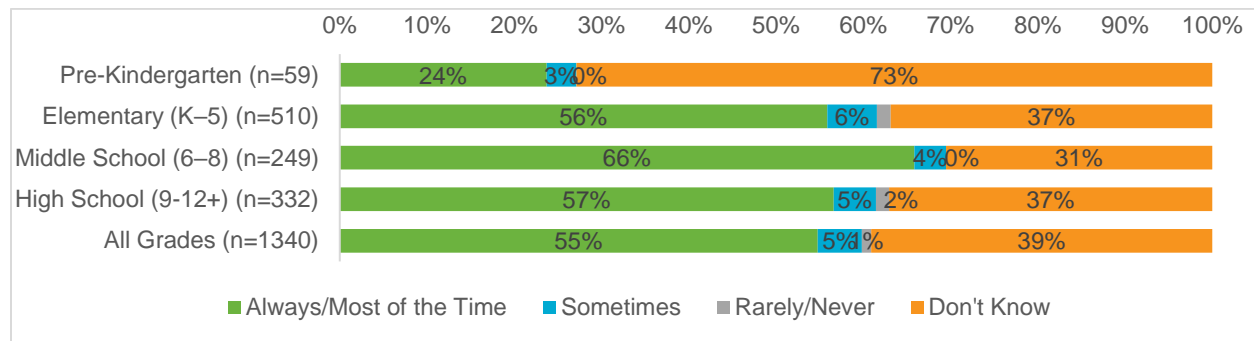
Course Participation and Achievement Outcomes

During the 2017-18 school year, 60.3% of all students in grades 6-12 were enrolled in at least one of 358 advanced courses[99] offered by APS. Students with IEPs in grades 6-12 accounted for 6.2% of students enrolled in advanced courses.

Exhibit 78. Number of Advanced Courses Offered at APS, by School, 2017-18

School	No. of Advanced Courses
Arlington Community High School	3
Career Center	15
Gunston Middle School	7
H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program	48
Jefferson Middle School	10
Kenmore Middle School	6
Langston Highschool Continuation	4
Swanson Middle School	9
Wakefield High School	65
Washington-Lee High School	118
Williamsburg Middle School	7
Yorktown High School	66
Total	358

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[99] Advanced Courses were identified by APS and include advanced/accelerated courses offered to students in grades 6-12.

Exhibit 79. Advanced Course Participation, Students with IEPs vs. Students Without (Grades 6-12), 2017-18
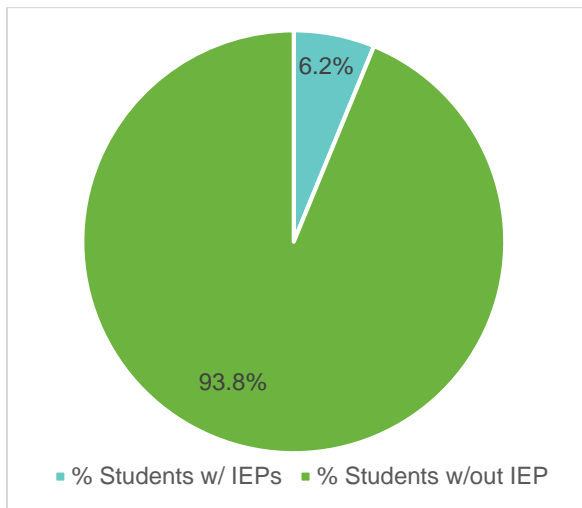
Of all students with an IEP in grades 6-12, 23.2% enrolled in at least one advanced course offered by APS compared to 67.5% of students without an IEP.

Exhibit 80. Percentage of Student with IEPs Grades 6-12 Enrolled in Advanced Courses vs. Students Without Disabilities, 2017-18
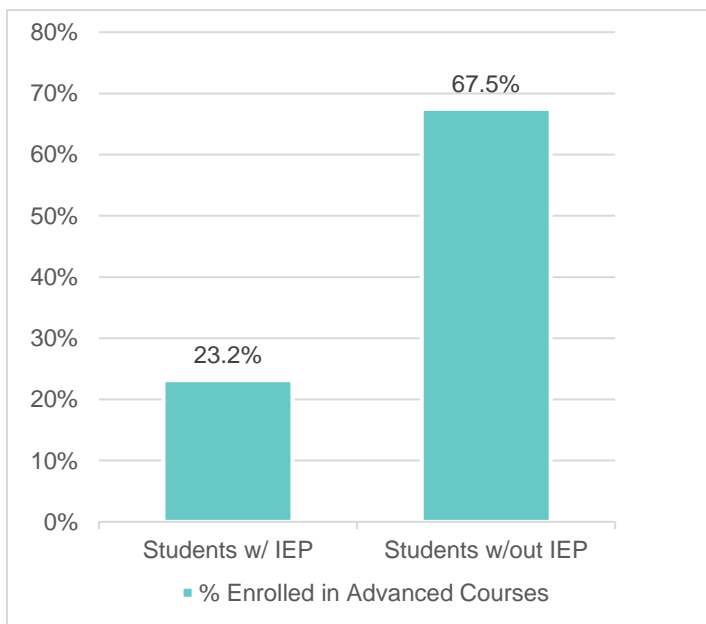
The following race/ethnicity categories had student participation levels at or above the all district average of 60.3%: Asian (63.7%), Two or More Races (74.6%), and White (75.7%). Black or African American (46.4%), Hispanic (38.0%), and Other[100] (46.3%) had participation rates below the all district average.

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[100] Other includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Exhibit 81. Percentage of All APS Students Grades 6-12 Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18.
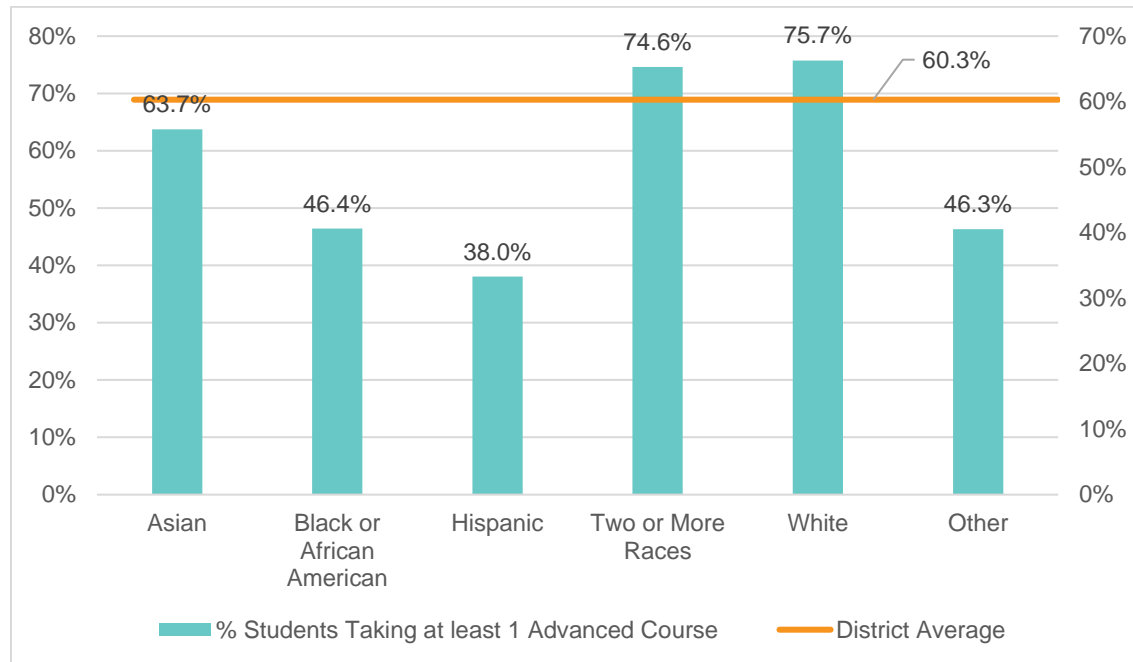
Students with disabilities accounted for 6.2% of all students enrolled in advanced courses. Students with disabilities in the following race/ethnicity groups had enrollment trends higher than the all-district average: Other[101] (15.8%), Hispanic (7.9%).

Exhibit 82. Percentage of APS Students with an IEP Enrolled in Advanced Courses vs. Students Without an IEP (Grades 6-12), by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18.

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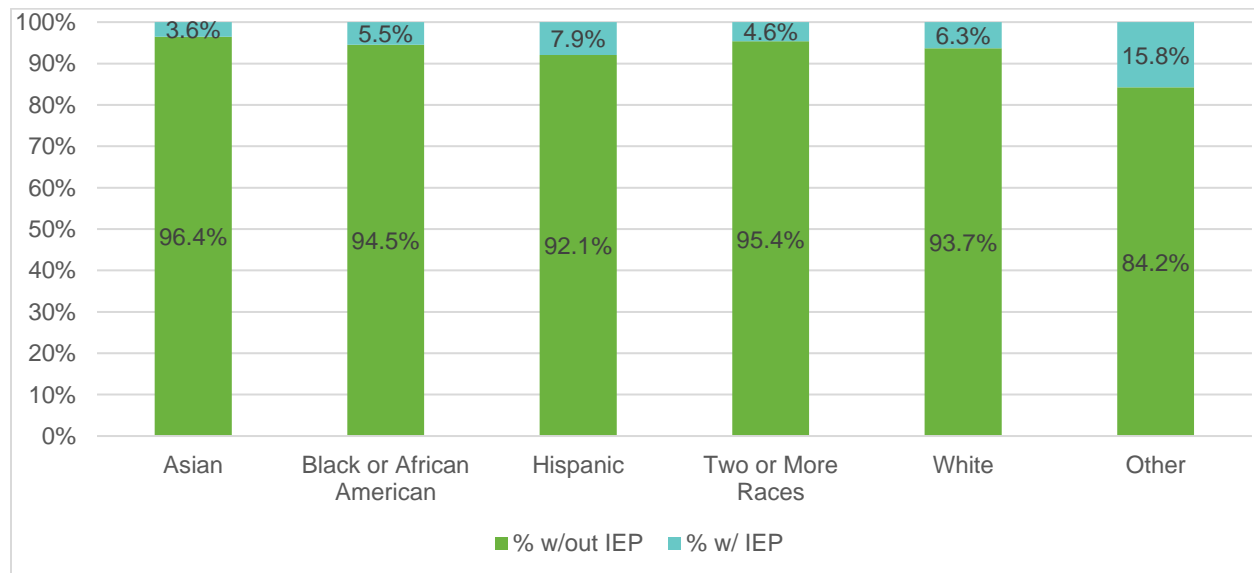
[101] Other includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Of students with IEPs enrolled in advanced courses, 58.2% were White, 23.9% were Hispanic, and 6.9% were Black or African American.

**Exhibit 83. Percentage of Students with IEPs Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18.**
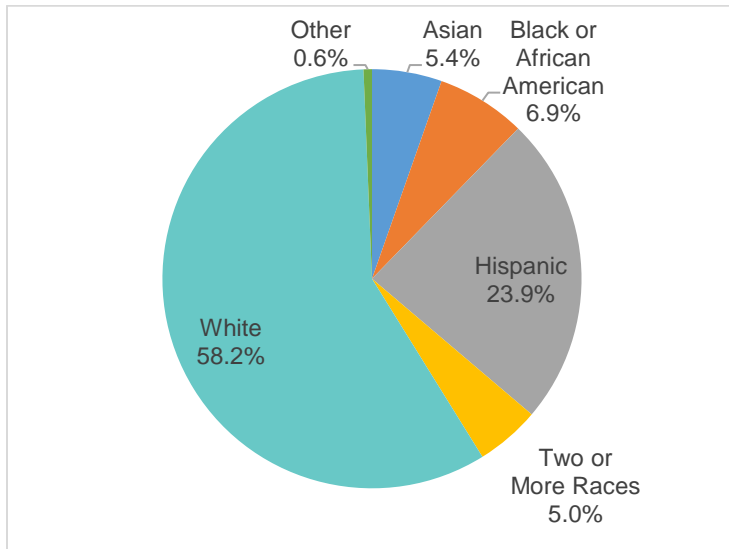
Of students with disabilities enrolled in advanced courses during the 2017-18 school year, 34.3% had an Other Health Impairment, 25.0% had a Specific Learning Disability, 17.2% Emotional Disability, and 15.5% had Autism.

Exhibit 84. Percentage of Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Disability Category, 2017-18.
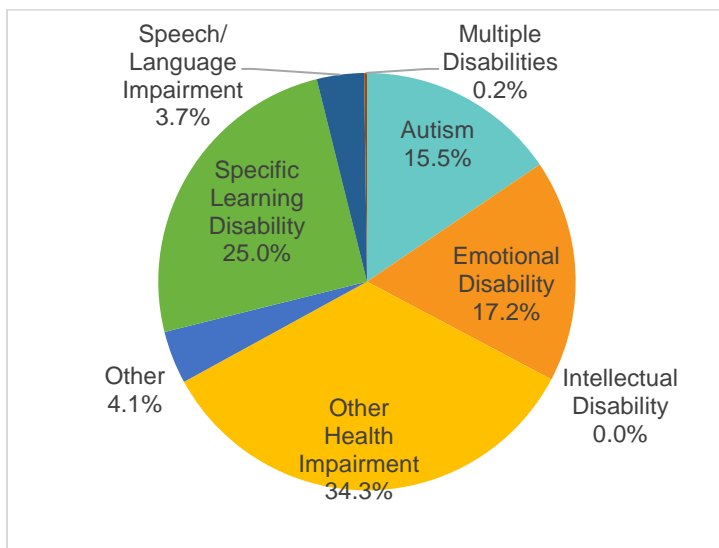
The data exhibits below pertain to student achievement on the statewide Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in reading/ELA and in math. The figures compare the performance of students at APS with state averages for students with IEPs and those without, documenting the achievement gap over time.[102]

Reading

Grade 3. Over the past four years, APS students without IEPs have performed above the state average for students without disabilities. A higher percentage of students with IEPs in APS passed the grade 3 SOL compared to the state average for students with disabilities. In 2017-18, the percentage of APS students with IEPs meeting standards declined 11.3 percentage points over the prior year. The achievement gap between APS students with disabilities and those without is evident by the average 30+ percentage point difference for the past four years.

Exhibit 85. SOL Performance: Grade 3 Reading, 2014-15 to 2017-18
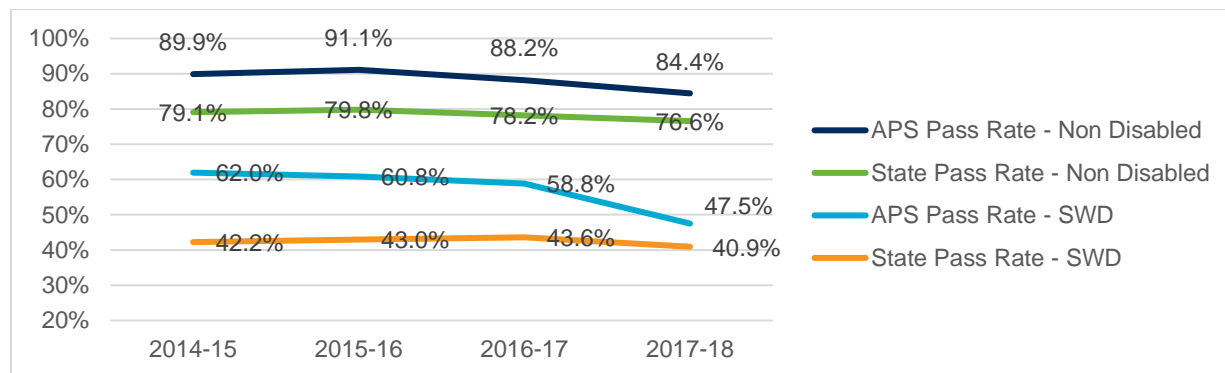
Grade 8. Similar to the Grade 3 trends, APS students without IEPs have performed above the state average for students without disabilities over time. More students with IEPs in APS met grade level standards compared to the state rates. The achievement gap between students with and without IEPs was more pronounced in grade 8 with a four-year average difference of 43.9 percentage points between APS students without disabilities and students with disabilities. In 2017-18, the achievement gap between APS students with disabilities and those without was 40.6 percentage points.

Exhibit 86. SOL Performance: Grade 8 Reading, 2014-15 to 2017-18
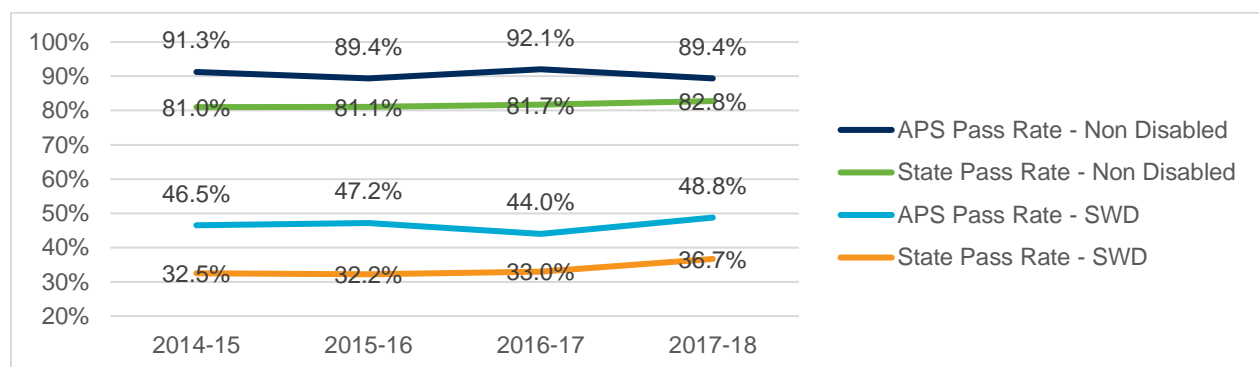
Grade 11. The performance gap between APS students without IEPs and the state average closed in Grade 11, with APS students without IEPs performing at the state average. Over the past four years, the

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[102] APS SOL scores obtained through: https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex/f?p=152:1:15124976360225. PCG looked at passing rates for grade levels that corresponded to the grade level SOL, for example for Grade 8 reading, only pass rates for students enrolled in Grade 8 were included.

performance of APS students with disabilities trended downward, moving closer to the state average for students with disabilities. In 2017-18, APS students with disabilities met grade-level standards closer to the state average, compared to 15 percentage points higher in 2016-17. The achievement gap between APS students with and without IEPs closed by half from grade 8, with a larger number of students with disabilities meeting grade level standards. The four-year average difference between APS students without disabilities and those with disabilities was 25.1 percentage points.

Exhibit 87. SOL Performance: Grade 11 Reading, 2014-15 to 2017-18
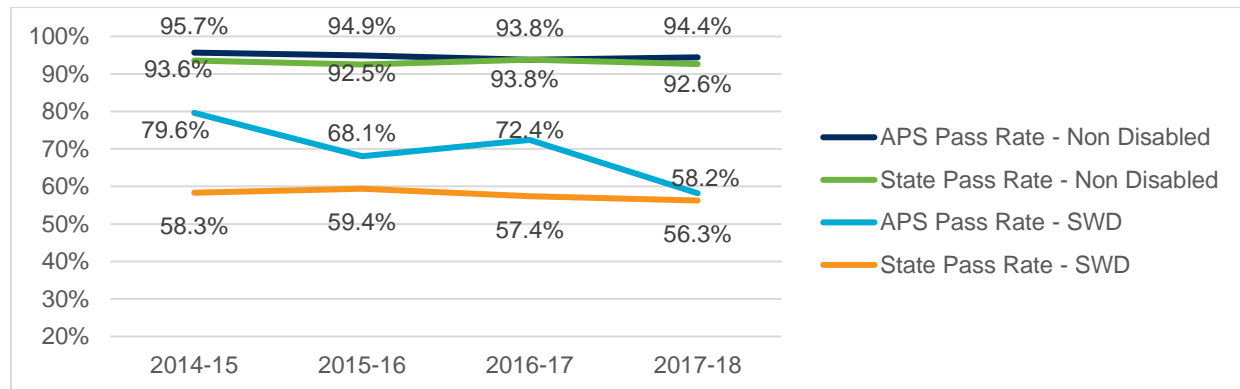
Math

Grade 3. Similar to the trends in reading scores, APS students without IEPs have performed above the state average for students without disabilities over time. APS students with IEPs consistently met grade level standards at a higher rate than the state average, with the percentage of students passing the grade 3 SOL for 2017-18 declining 5.8 percentage points, moving closer to the state average. The achievement gap between students with disabilities and those without in APS widened, from 33.8 percentage points in 2014-15 to 39.6 points in 2017-18.

Exhibit 88. SOL Performance: Grade 3 Math, 2014-15 to 2017-18
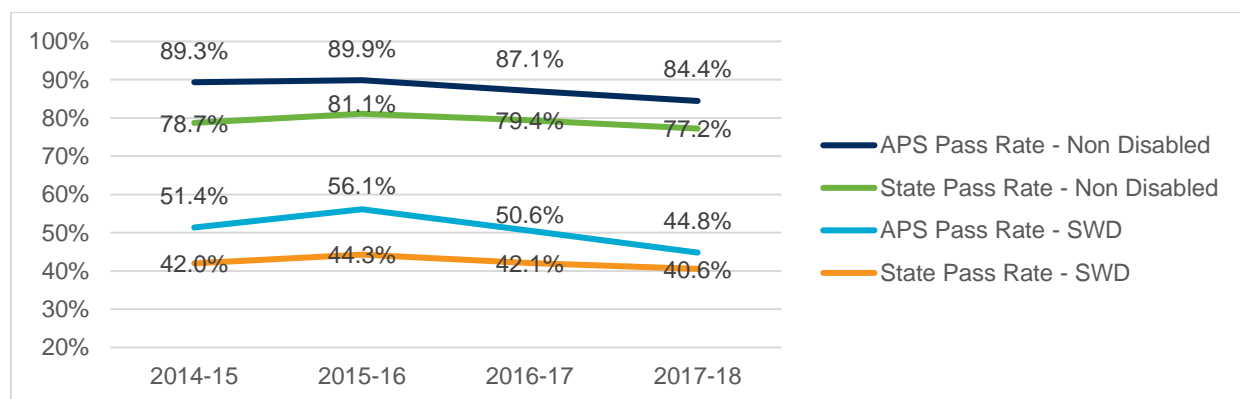
Grade 8. Between 2014-15 to 2016-17, APS students without IEPs performed above the state average for students without disabilities, with pass rates declining by 28.7 percentage points in 2017-18. Between 2014-15 to 2016-17, APS students with IEPs consistently performed above the state average, with pass rates declining 11.1 percentage points in 2017-18, bringing APS pass rates below the state average. The four-year average achievement gap between students with disabilities and those without for eighth graders in APS was 42.5 percentage points.

Exhibit 89. SOL Performance: Grade 8 Math, 2014-15 to 2017-18[103]
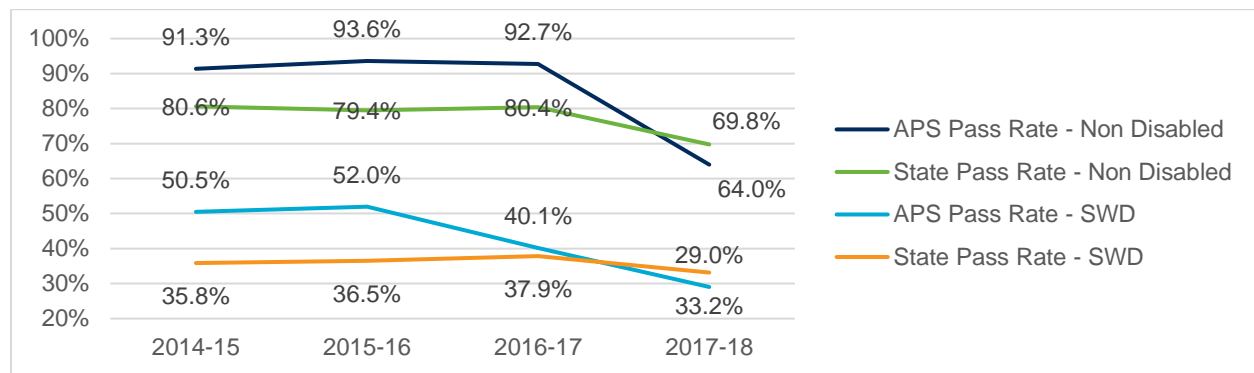
Implementation of Special Education Supports and Services

According to the National Center for Intensive Intervention, fidelity refers to how closely prescribed procedures are followed and, in the context of schools, the degree to which educators implement programs, assessments, and implementation plans the way they were intended. When interventions and assessments are implemented with fidelity, intervention teams can make more accurate decisions about an individual student's progress and future intervention needs. In addition, fidelity of implementation to the data-based individualization (DBI) process, across multiple students in a school, helps to ensure that staff have the necessary resources and processes in place to support strong implementation for individual students.[104] Fidelity of implementation within the context of the IEP implies that all special education services documented in a student's IEP must be delivered by the persons specified. Further, the delivery of special education services must be documented and must match the frequency, duration, and location specified in the student's IEP.

It is important that ownership and accountability for the fidelity of implementation of the IEP engages everyone so that it becomes a shared responsibility (e.g., OSE staff, building administrators, special education chairs/leads, case managers, special education and general education teachers, related services personnel, parents).

Service Delivery

Focus group participants offered a range of feedback around service delivery and the fidelity of IEP implementation. Overall, they noted the strength of programming available for students with IEPs in APS. We heard many stories of how parents specifically moved to APS in order to access the range of services available. Ongoing consultation with schools and related services providers is done frequently to ensure that best practices are used, and students are treated individually based on need and not a cookie-cutter approach. And though they are based in schools, related service providers were positively called out for providing consistent practices across APS.

Various concerns about the delivery of services also emanated from the focus groups. Three major themes emerged on this topic: inconsistency of practices, site-based management, and staff knowledge. Relevant survey questions are also included under each theme.

Inconsistency of Practices. Participants believe that there needs to be better system in place to ensure consistency of service delivery across schools. Some schools are deemed "successful," and some are

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[103] Data displayed are grade 8 results from grade 8 students completing the grade 8 math SOL. This chart does not include students at other grade levels who took the grade 8 SOL, or grade 8 students who may have completed a different math SOL/ end of course (EOC) assessment.

[104] National Center on Intensive Intervention. https://intensiveintervention.org/implementation-support/fidelity-resources

not. Some schools are successful one year but not the next. Consistency of IEP meeting practices, individual services, and placements across schools were identified as a challenge. Many parental concerns stem from the belief that IEPs are not being implemented the way they are written or on a routine basis. They said that some schools value parent voice and listen, while others do not. Conversely, school teams shared that accommodating the demands of vocal parents leads to greater inconsistencies in services.

On the staff survey, a high percentage (76%) across all grades indicated that they believe their schools deliver highly effective special education programs. This was consistent across all grade levels.

Exhibit 90. Staff Survey: My school delivers highly effective education programs and services for students with IEPs.
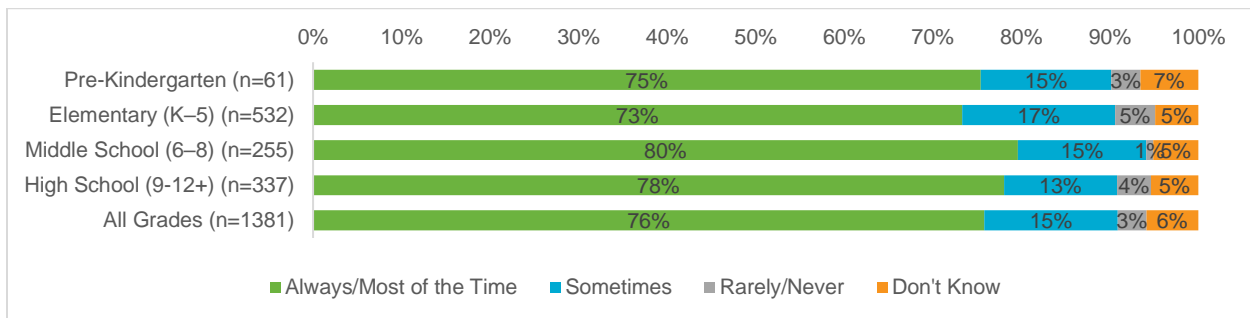
The vast majority (83%) of staff across all grades agree that special education/related services, accommodations and/or modifications identified in their students' IEPs are provided as written.

Exhibit 91. Staff Survey: The special education/related services, accommodations, and/or modifications identified in my students' IEPs are provided as written.
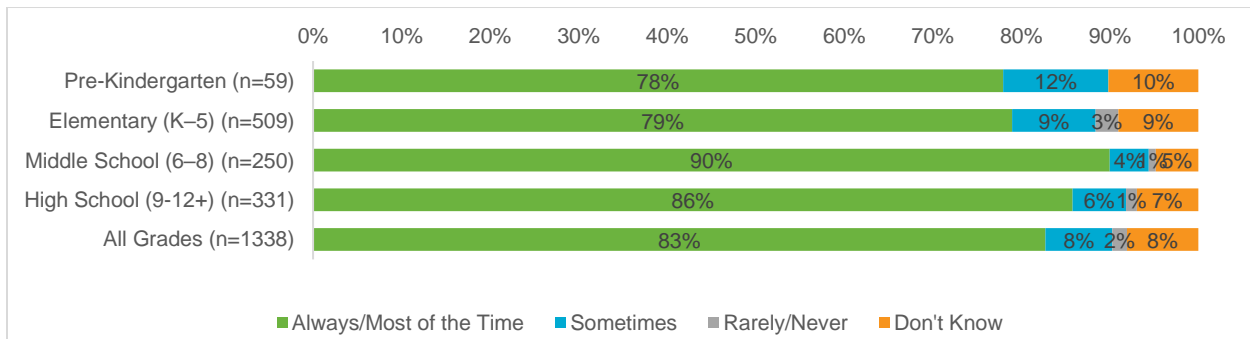
On the parent survey, 81% across all grades agree that they are satisfied with their child's overall special education services.

Exhibit 92. Parent IEP Survey: I am satisfied with my child's overall special education services.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=43)	93%	7%	
Elementary (K–5) (n=224)	80%	18%	2%
Middle School (6–8) (n=103)	81%	18%	1%
High School (9-12+) (n=132)	82%	18%	0%
All Grades (n=525)	81%	18%	1%
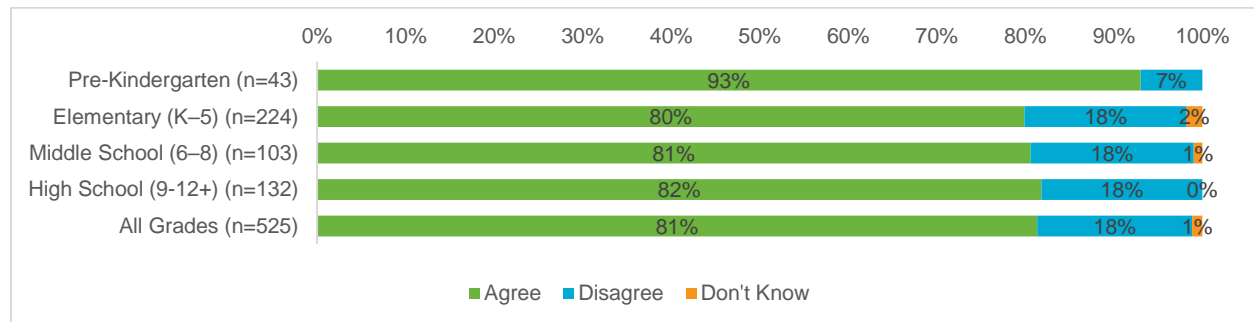
Site-based Management. Services are perceived to be school dependent. Focus group participants noted that there are "huge" discrepancies across different buildings; it depends on what school "you feed into or are placed at." PCG also observed these variances when conducting student shadowing. APS has operated under a site-based management philosophy in which principals have wide range autonomy to determine services and programs best suited for their buildings. As a result, attempts to standardize procedures across schools have been met with resistance. There are differences in schools and services between North and South Arlington because of affluence, education, advocacy, and expectations. There is a belief that principals are given "free-reign" to do what they want at the school level. There do not appear to be known special education metrics, or "non-negotiables" for schools/principals/vice principals for accountability and consistency of practice.

Staff Knowledge. Focus group participants noted that special education knowledge varies from person to person and has a significant impact on his/her ability to deliver high quality services. Some staff implement services well and are getting results. Other staff require a coaching plan to support them. Trying to find enough qualified special teachers, according to some, is an "insurmountable challenge." In some cases, the available staff cannot provide the high level of specialist knowledge required to serve students with unique needs. As a result, some staff report that they believe students are receiving "subpar services." Having enough qualified staff to cover service hours from a compliance perspective is "tough," as one participant noted, and even if schools can cover hours, this does not mean that the staff can help students make progress. Not all teachers are knowledgeable about students' accommodations or understand how to implement them. Teachers generally do not know until the first day of school who the students are in their classrooms and what they are going to have to support. Sometimes schedules are the only way how teacher find out who they will work with and serve. This appears to be a reactive, instead of a proactive, approach.

Supportive Staff. Focus group participants and parents who participated in the survey noted how supportive, caring, and kind special educators in APS are. They also said that special education teachers:

- Are responsive and address needs/requests quickly and professionally
- Clearly want to help children be successful and do all they can to address their specific needs
- Provide nurturing and positive, inclusive environments

The following two charts compare, according to parents, how aware they believe general education and special education teachers are of their children's learning needs. Across all grades, 74% of parents think their children's general education teachers are aware of these needs, while 88% believe their children's special education teachers are aware.

Exhibit 93. Parent IEP Survey: My child's general education teacher(s) are aware of his/her learning needs.
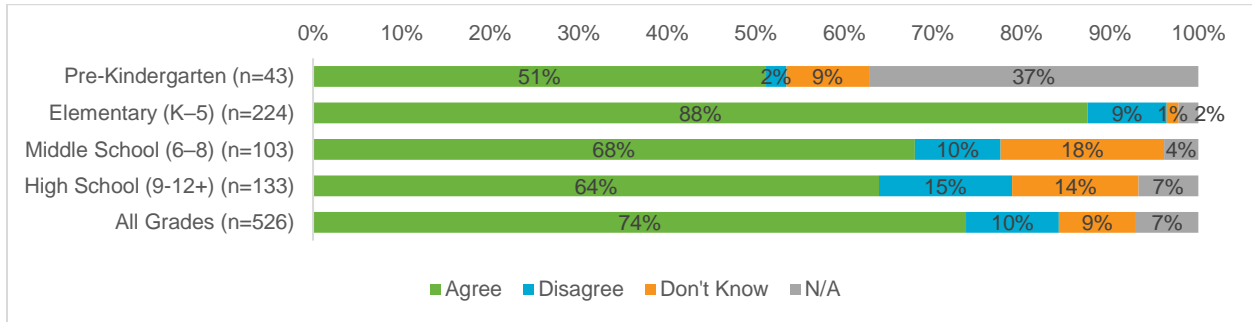
Exhibit 94. Parent IEP Survey: My child's special education teacher(s) are aware of his/her learning needs.
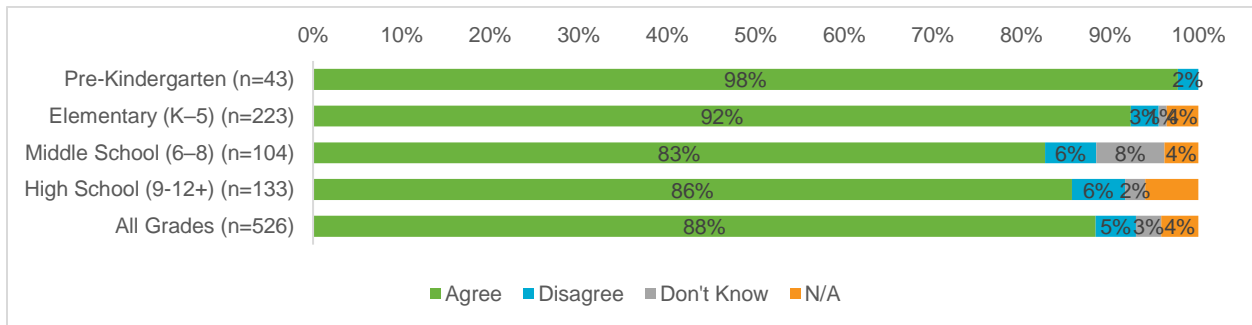
The three charts below show the variance between how knowledgeable parents believe general education teachers, special education teachers, and related service providers are about their children's disabilities. Across all grades, 66% of parent think general education teachers are knowledgeable while 82% believe special education teachers are.

Exhibit 95. Parent IEP Survey: My child's general education teacher(s) are knowledgeable about my child's disability.
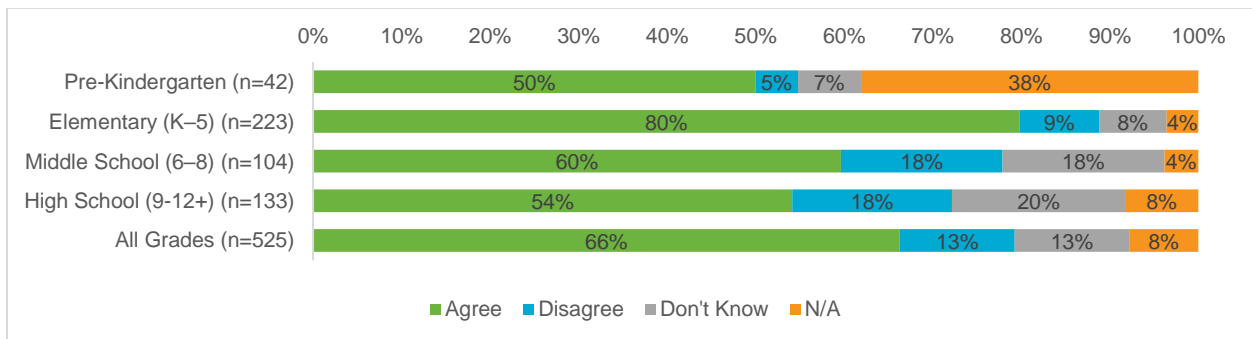
Exhibit 96. Parent IEP Survey: My child's special education teacher(s) are knowledgeable about my child's disability.
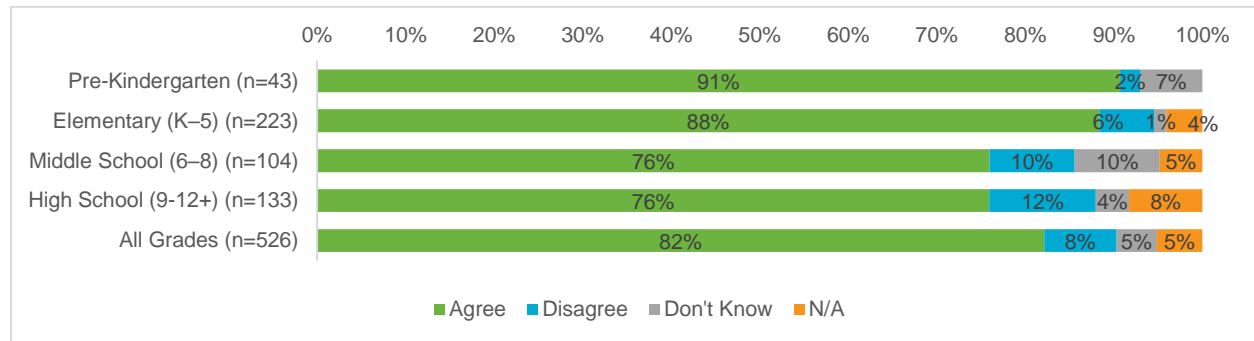
Regarding the delivery of services, 67% of parents responded that all or most of the special educations and related service providers are skilled at providing these supports.

Exhibit 97. Parent IEP Survey: Special educators and related service professionals (OT, PT, SLP, Therapists) are skilled in providing the services and support my child needs.
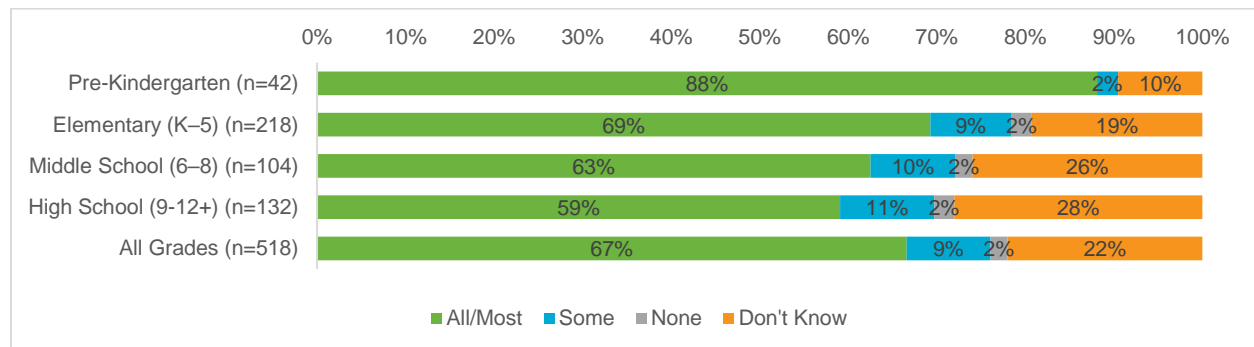
Across all grades, 80% of parents believe their children's academic program is preparing them for the future. This percentage was consistent across all grade levels, with 81% of high school parents, 82% of middle school parents, 82% of elementary school parents, and 83% of Pre-K parents agreeing with this statement.

Exhibit 98. Parent IEP Survey: My child's academic program is preparing him/her for the future.
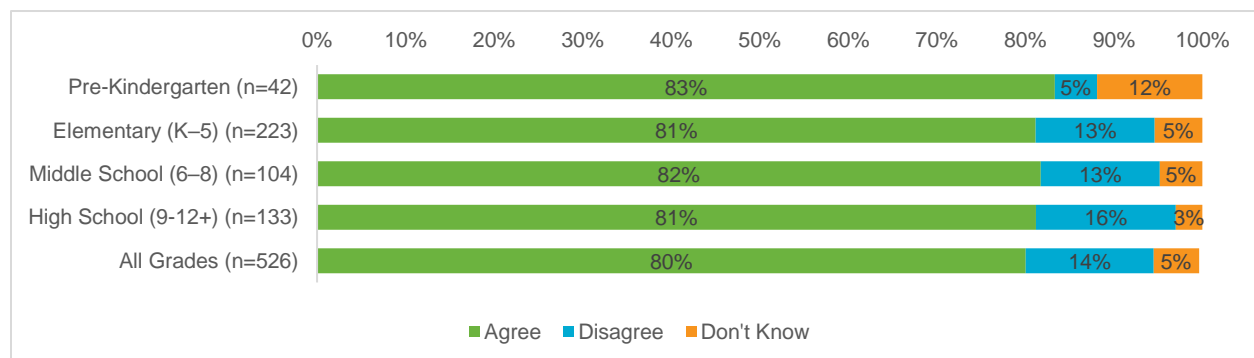
IEP Process and Documentation

The information in this section primarily comes from student file review focus groups, where IEPs and other related documentation (e.g., evaluation and progress reports, report cards, etc.) were discussed with case carriers and used as artifacts to better understand IEP practices in APS.

IEP Team and Participation

Focus group participants described strengths and opportunities for improvement regarding the IEP development process and meetings. Though practices vary by school, overall parents noted that they receive the invitations with enough advance notice so they can participate in the meeting. It is common for IEP teams to have call-in participants, including parents, in order to ensure all necessary team members can contribute. In the parent IEP survey, nearly 90% of parents indicated that a general education teacher comes to his/her child's IEP meetings.

Conversely, case carriers noted that at times it is difficult to get feedback from general education teachers, and they rely on personal relationships/connections to obtain the information they need to write or revise the IEP. Gifted teachers are not consistently invited to participate in IEP meetings for twice exceptional students, and there is a general perception that the IEP development process is different depending on where students live, staff knowledge levels, and staff awareness of the process.

Local Education Agency (LEA) representatives, typically principals and assistant principals in APS, come to the role with varying backgrounds related to special education. Some special education teachers stated that they come to IEP meetings "overly prepared" because the LEA in their building does not have in depth knowledge or expertise. OSE has provided LEA training for new principals and APs, lead teacher, and directors of counseling from July-December 2019. All administrators in LEA positions were encouraged to re-attend every three years. The training is designed to cover compliance and regulations so that the LEA has a basic background on procedural matters. Moving forward, an APS attorney will be providing LEA training.

Teachers who have worked in APS for several years stated that there used to be a procedure manual that was routinely used and was a good tool for establishing consistent practices. Since this manual is several years old, teachers said that it is no longer used as a guide and that a new one is needed. (APS has released the comprehensive Student Support Manual, inclusive of special education guidance, for the start of the 2019-20 school year.)

Parent and Family Engagement

For several years, APS has made a survey available for parents and families to complete after an IEP meeting to gauge satisfaction. The survey has been administered in different ways over the past few years. At one point, schools had the option of sending it to parents following the IEP meeting. It was reported that schools were selective about when they had parents complete it and some did not send it at all. More recently OSE sent it out electronically to parents who participated in IEP meetings over the last several months, though many parents reported that they did not receive it. Because of a technical glitch with the emailed surveys, some parents expressed nervousness about the anonymity of the survey and how APS would use the findings and therefore did not complete it. District officials shared that the optional nature of the survey, the differing means of distributing it, and the fact that many parents reported not receiving it have resulted in inconsistent data that are not helpful to improving the IEP process.

Focus group participants also shared that interpreters are accessible and readily used during IEP meetings for parents of students who are non-native English speakers. Also, Bilingual Family Liaisons have access to the IEPs and serve as liaisons, advocates, and interpreters on behalf of the parent to help them fully participate in the education of their children. Though these supports are in place to help non-English speaking families, some focus group participants expressed concerns with these outreach efforts. Specifically, bilingual parents shared that interpreters translate literally, without sufficient context, and that

schools at times question their request for the translator. Further, it was shared that it is not common practice for APS to translate the IEP or other related documents into other languages.

APS district officials noted challenges around engaging non-English speaking parents and expressed a desire to further strengthen outreach efforts. Litigation around IEP translation as a civil rights matter prompted the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to detail their position about access to IEPs, specifically:

> Under Title VI, all vital documents, including a student's IEP, must be accessible to LEP [Limited English Proficiency] parents, but that does not necessarily mean that all vital documents must be translated for every language in the district. For example, a timely and complete oral interpretation or translated summary of a vital document might suffice in some circumstances. A district must, however, be prepared to provide timely and complete translated IEPs to provide meaningful access to the IEP and the parental rights that attach to it. This is because a parent needs meaningful access to the IEP not just during the IEP meeting, but also across school years to monitor the child's progress and ensure that IEP services are provided.

Through this letter, ED, citing civil rights law, impresses upon school districts the importance of translated IEPs as a means of access. Recent technology advances have made the translation of documents more readily available. This is an area that could bring tremendous benefit to APS' non-native English-speaking parent community.

Present Levels, Goals, and Accommodations

Focus group participants shared general insights about the development of Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFPs) and goal writing. In summary, there is no consistent way of writing PLAAFPS or goals across grades or schools. Expectations vary based on feedback from the principals/assistant principal or Special Education Coordinator and feedback is often subjective. For example, there are no articulated guidelines as to what the "Arlington way" is.

In the student file review focus group sessions, participants observed the following:

- Without data and numbers in the PLAAFPs, it is difficult to know what to address for the student.
- It is helpful to the next case carrier if all previous testing is listed in the summary of testing and then connected to pertinent areas of the PLAAFPs.
- There is wide variation among participants on what constituents a meaningful and measurable goal, and how to write one. In some cases, participants thought the goals in the reviewed IEPs were appropriate and on target for the student. In other cases, they thought the goals lacked specificity or connection to the core learning standards.
- Some special educators said they have been told to include more quantitative information so that goals can be substantiated.
- Generally, special educators believe they can add objectives to any student's IEP but that they are required to do so for students taking the alternate assessment.
- Some would find a goal template or goal bank helpful to ensure the goals they develop are standards based. Others expressed concern that this would cause some teachers to "copy and paste" goals.
- Similarly, there are varying opinions on standardizing accommodations. One school's principal provided a list for teachers, but this has led to IEPs having the same accommodations for every student.
- When entering goals into Synergy, the system automatically defaults each one to a start date of July 1. This date can be manually overridden, however, participants shared that they often see goal dates that were not corrected.

- Understanding how to mesh goals with the curriculum is complicated, and teachers need training on how to do this well.
- At times it is challenging to meet the demands and opinions of all participating in the IEP meeting, especially when crafting goals. Some staff believe there is pressure from parents to add subparts to the goals, or to change them altogether.

On the staff survey, 81% of staff believe that their students IEP goals and objectives are aligned with the general education curriculum all or most of the time.

Exhibit 99. Staff Survey: My students' IEPs include goals and objectives that are aligned with the general education curriculum.
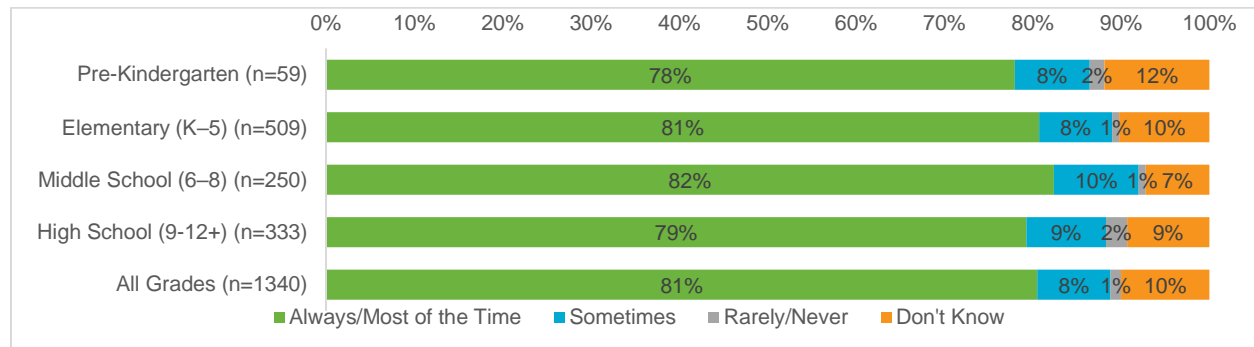
Service Hours and Placement

Among focus group participants, there was disparate understanding about how service hours are determined, and placements are decided. In some cases, participants thought students were being "over-serviced," both in receiving more service time than reflected on the IEP or the IEP noted more service hours, per the IEP team decision, than the special educator thinks may be necessary. In other cases, they shared stories of parents who have engaged outside providers to "fill in the gaps."

School staff shared that there is often confusion and inconsistency when it comes to calculating service hours on the IEP. Some IEPs reviewed during the student file review focus groups had service hours by day, while others had service hours by week or month. Practices on how to calculate and list service hours vary by school, according to focus group participants. Staff also cited challenges around the complexities of covering service time with the current staff in their building. One special education teacher said that even though her school was not able to meet all of the service time for the students in her building, they were deemed "overstaffed" according to budgeted position allocations. Further, special educators noted that the availability of staffing in the building has an impact on the amount and level of services written into an IEP.

Parents expressed frustration regarding the availability of information about programs and services, especially when the IEP team is considering a placement outside their child's neighborhood school. Many said they have relied on informal networks of other parents/families to navigate the school options.

Goal Progress

PCG initially requested district-wide data on goal progress in order to understand to what extent students with IEPs have met/mastered IEP goals. Due to the limits of the IEP system, district-wide data were not available to fulfill this request. Instead, with the assistance of case carriers in several schools, PCG looked at progress made by a small sample of randomly selected students. In total 54 student files were manually reviewed by case carriers: 24 at the elementary level, 19 at the middle school level, and 11 at the high school level.

There was a wide variance between the number of goals on each IEP. On the low end, there was one student with one IEP goal, while on the high end, there was one student with 15 goals. There was a total of 307 goals on the IEPs of the 54 students. Of these, case carriers categorized progress made on each goal in the last IEP cycle, with totals as follows:[105]

- Mastered = 24 goals (8%)
- Sufficient progress = 120 goals (39%)
- Emerging skill = 110 goals (36%)
- Insufficient progress = 11 goals (4%)
- Not yet introduced = 2 goals (<1%)
- Not yet demonstrated = 4 goals (1%)
- No applicable = 2 goals (<1%)
- Data not reported = 15 goals (5%)

This analysis is high level and meant to illustrate progress for a small sample of students.

On both the staff survey and the parent IEP survey, there were several questions about progress reporting, the process of sharing progress reports with parents, and the extent to which respondents felt students were making progress on IEP goals.

As shown in the exhibit below, 57% of all staff believe that the school's report card effectively communicates the progress of students with IEPs always or most of the time, while 29% report they do not know.

Exhibit 100. Staff Survey: The school's report card (or other progress report) effectively communicates the progress of students with IEPs.


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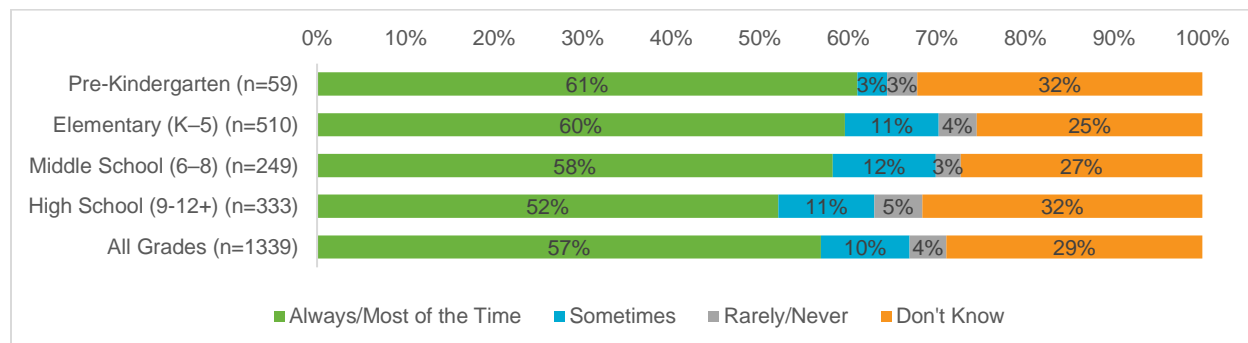
[105] Percentages are rounded and therefore may not equal 100.

Across all grades, 68% of staff responded that there is a consistent approach to progress monitoring in their school, including a schedule and methods for monitoring the progress of students receiving special education services. This is consistent across all grade levels, except for a 74% agreement rate for middle school staff.

Exhibit 101. Staff Survey: There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring in this school – there is a schedule and methods/tools for monitoring the progress of students receiving special education services
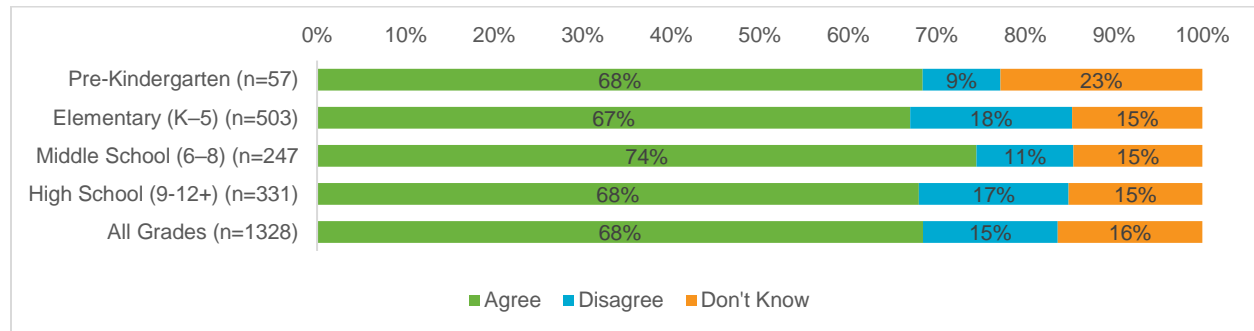
The following are notable data points from the exhibits listed:

- 70% of middle school parents report that they are satisfied with their children's academic progress in school, compared to 84% at Pre-K, 76% at elementary school, and 71% at high school.
- Across all grades 79% of parents believe their children are developing skills that will enable him/her to be as independent as possible.
- 86% of parents across all grades are satisfied with their children's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations related to their children's disabilities. This rate was higher for Pre-K (95%) and for high school (89%).
- 67% of parents across all grades believe their children are making progress on all or most of their IEP goals.

Exhibit 102. Parent IEP Survey: I am satisfied with my child's academic progress in school.
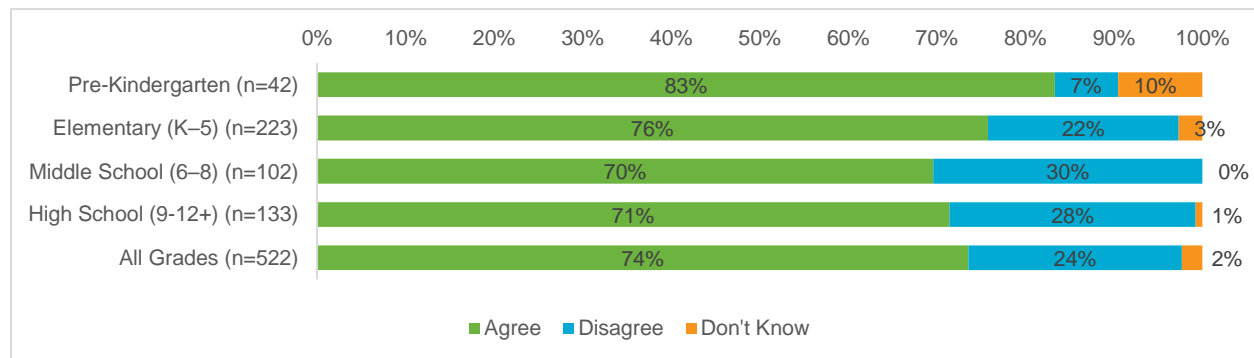
Exhibit 103. Parent IEP Survey: My child is developing skills that will enable him/her to be as independent as possible.

| Grade	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=42)	81%	7%	12%
Elementary (K–5) (n=223)	79%	18%	3%
Middle School (6–8) (n=102)	78%	19%	3%
High School (9-12+) (n=133)	77%	20%	2%
All Grades (n=522)	79%	17%	3%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Don't Know
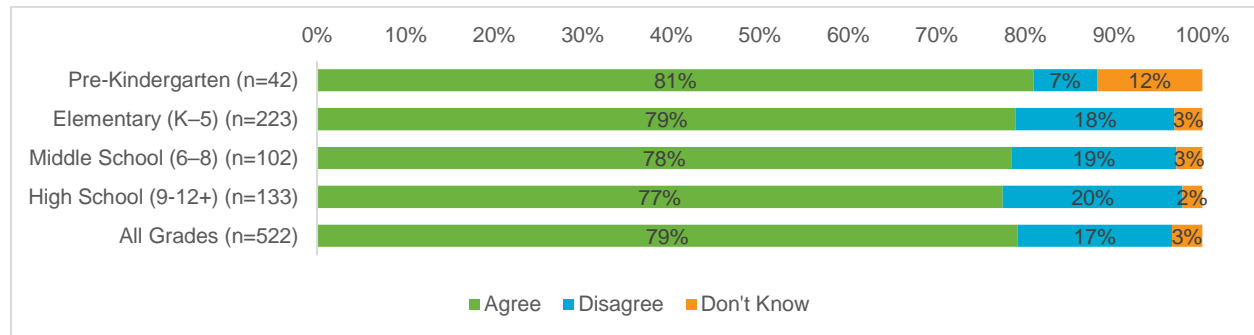
Exhibit 104. Parent IEP Survey: I am satisfied with my child's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations relating to my child's disability.

Grade	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=42)	95%	5%	
Elementary (K–5) (n=222)	83%	12%	5%
Middle School (6–8) (n=102)	82%	11%	7%
High School (9-12+) (n=133)	89%	5%	6%
All Grades (n=522)	86%	9%	5%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Don't Know
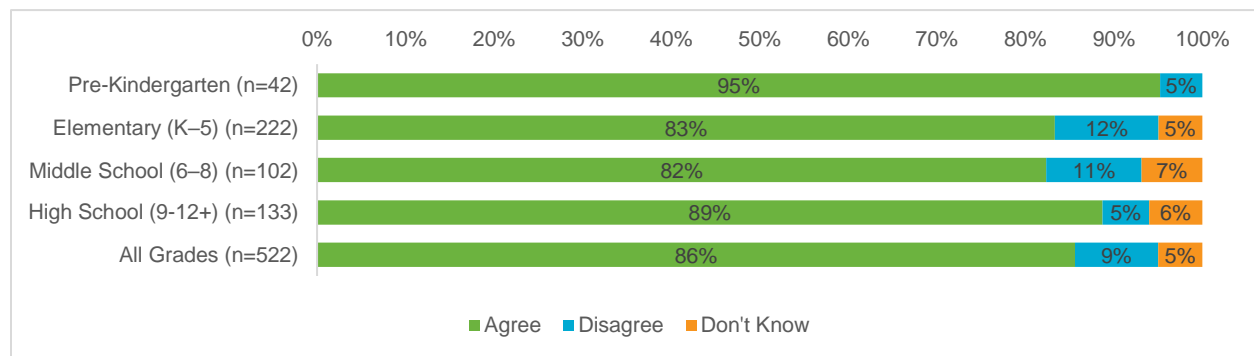
Exhibit 105. Parent IEP Survey: My child is making progress on his/her IEP goals.

Grade	All/Most	Some	None
Pre-Kindergarten (n=42)	71%	29%	
Elementary (K–5) (n=220)	68%	30%	2%
Middle School (6–8) (n=102)	66%	27%	7%
High School (9-12+) (n=130)	66%	31%	3%
All Grades (n=516)	67%	30%	3%

■ All/Most ■ Some ■ None
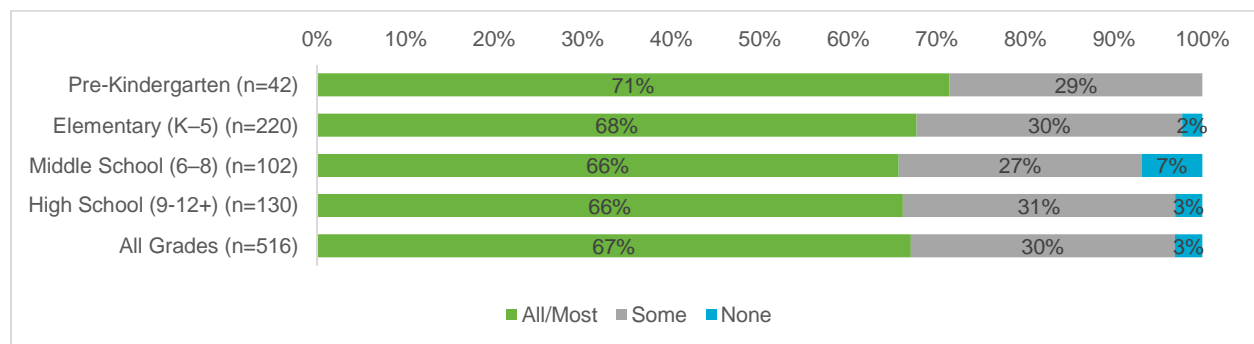
Assistive Technology

The Assistive Technology (AsTech) team is part of Arlington Public School's Office of Special Education. IDEA requires that assistive technology be *considered* at every student's IEP meeting. The IEP team discusses whether the provision of an assistive technology device or service is required for the student to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). If the IEP team decides there is a need for assistive technology that cannot be met within the knowledge base and technology already available at the school, the team makes a referral to the AsTech team. The AsTech Team then conducts an assessment and makes recommendations to the IEP team.

APS uses the *SETT Framework* to guide the AsTech assessment. This framework considers the following:

- the **STUDENT's** abilities and needs,

- the student's learning **ENVIRONMENT**,

- the **TASK** required that are difficult for the student, and

- the **TOOLs** that would enable the student to meet IEP goals and access accommodations.[106]

Following an assessment, there may be a trial period with a recommended assistive technology device or accommodation. The IEP team members keep data to determine if the recommended support is meeting the established needs of the student. If the IEP team reaches consensus and the need is substantiated, through the AsTech Team, the Office of Special Education provides the device and/or services. The AsTech team monitors cases as needed.

During the 2016-17 school year, there were 60 new referrals for assistive technology. During the 2017-18 school year, there were 88 assistive technology assessments requested and completed.

Access to Devices

Devices fall in the following three categories:

- No tech – includes pencil grips, raised lined paper, and highlighting tape;

- Low tech – includes battery-operated toys, simple switches which run a toy or speak, and voice-recorded communication devices such as a CheapTalk; and

- High tech – refers to computers, software, electronic keyboarding devices, such as a Forte, and computerized voice output devices.[107]

During the 2018-19 school year, AsTech is providing devices and support for 381 students in APS, including 145 students who use high tech communication systems.

Exhibit 106. Assistive Technology Devices, 2018-19 school year[108]

DEVICE NAME	# OF STUDENTS
High-Tech Communication Devices	
iPad with Communication App (LAMP Words for Life, Speak for Yourself, Proloquo2Go, GoTalk, and/or Verbally)	137
High Tech Speech Generating Device (Accent 800, Accent 1000, Dynavox Indi, NOVA Chat 10)[109]	8
PECS Communication System	
PECS Book (large, small, Activity Binder)	128
Mid-Tech Communication Devices[110]	
Twin Talk	18
On-the-Go with 7 levels	10

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[106] https://assistedtechnology.weebly.com/sett-framework.html

[107] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/assistive-technology/

[108] Data provided by APS as of 2/14/19.

[109] APS owns 5 of these AAC devices and the other 3 are personally owned/provided by the student's family

[110] Some mid-tech communication devices that are assigned may also be used by a class/teacher/SLP with more than 1 student. Only one student is reflected in this count however. As such, the number of students with access to an AAC device may be underrepresented in these counts.

32 Message Communicator	9
Basic Talk 4	1
Big Talk (single, triple)	9
Button Talk	4
Cheap Talk (4, 8)	10
Communication Tote	1
Big Mack	7
Eye Talk	2
Go Talk Button	5
Go Talk 9+	1
Little Mack	1
Little Step-By-Step	4
Mini-Com	2
One-Step	4
Picture Frame Communicator	1
Pixon Project Kit	1
Put-em-arounds	6
QuickTalker 23	2
Small Talk	7
Talking Brix	3
TOTAL Devices in use in APS	**381**

Per APS policy, a device can be taken home if the student requires the device at home to support his/her IEP goals and/or accommodations. If the device is damaged at school, the school pays for the repairs or replacement of the device. If the device is damaged at home, the student's family is responsible for paying for the particular device. Parents and caregivers are given a home loan form for all devices that are taken home.

Training

During 2017-18 school year, AsTech specialists completed more than 115 trainings with staff, students, parent, and community groups. Topics included: Overview of Assistive Technology, Assistive Technology/Accessible Resources for Struggling Readers and Writers, Core Vocabulary and Communication Devices, Computer and iPad Accessibility, and AIM-VA. Training is extended to families with students with devices, and to the students themselves, as well.

Trainings are offered by the AsTech Team members and/as needed by vendors from whom products are purchased. All members of the IEP team are invited to participate in these trainings, which are usually held at the schools attended by the students who use the technology. AsTech members inform IEP team members of trainings in the area, Parent Resource Center (PRC) events and online professional development opportunities.

The AsTech team approaches their work from the perspective of supporting inclusion and implementing Universal Design for Learning, specifically working with ATSS with literacy software (Read & Write), educating teachers about resources available in APS and how to use them with students to differentiate instruction and supporting teachers and students to learn about and use built-in accessibility features in personal learning devices.

Stakeholder Feedback

Some parent focus groups shared that it takes several months to get AT evaluations scheduled and that access to communication devices, or the parents' preferred communication method, has been lacking.

Further, in 2016, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) filed a complaint with the Department of Justice under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) seeking communication supports for five non-speaking students with autism in Arlington. These students use a method called the Rapid Prompting Method, or RPM, defined as spelling words by pointing to letters on a letter-board held by a trained communication partner.[111] APS is monitoring the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) position that RPM is not recommended due to prompt dependency and the lack of scientific validity, as well as guidance from other national and international organizations to determine next steps.[112]

Related Services

Focus group participants did not share major concerns about the provision of related services, aside from the general concern that, similar to national trends, there are routine staff shortages in this area. Many shared that related service providers are flexible, routinely consult with special and general educators, and offer consistent best practices.

Support for English Learners

The English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT) program in APS serves students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including those with disabilities (known as dually identified students). The ESOL/HILT office collaborates with APS staff to guide, support and monitor instruction that develops academic language and content knowledge to accelerate progress for these students.

English learners with disabilities are a diverse group of students with unique educational needs. The 2015 "Dear Colleague" letter released by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice emphasizes that state and local education agencies "must ensure that all [English learner] students who may have a disability, like all other students who may have a disability and need services under IDEA or Section 504, are located, identified, and evaluated for special education and disability-related services in a timely manner" (p. 24). Once appropriately identified, English learners with disabilities must receive the specific language and disability-related services that meet the student's individual needs.[113] APS has undertaken several district-wide initiatives, detailed below, to provide targeted support for this population.

Overall Incidence Rates for EL Students

According to 2017-18 data, 14.8% of students in APS were English learner (EL) students. Of that number, approximately 33.9% had an IEP. The majority of EL students with IEPs (48.3%) were those with a specific learning disability. Another 18.0% of this population had a health impairment, and 9.9% had a speech/language impairment.

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[111] https://autisticadvocacy.org/2016/03/asan-files-ada-complaint-on-communication-access-in-schools/

[112] https://www.asha.org/policy/PS2018-00351/

[113] https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/CCSSO%20ELSWD%20Guide_Final%2011%2011%202017.pdf

**Exhibit 107. EL Students by Disability, 2017-18**
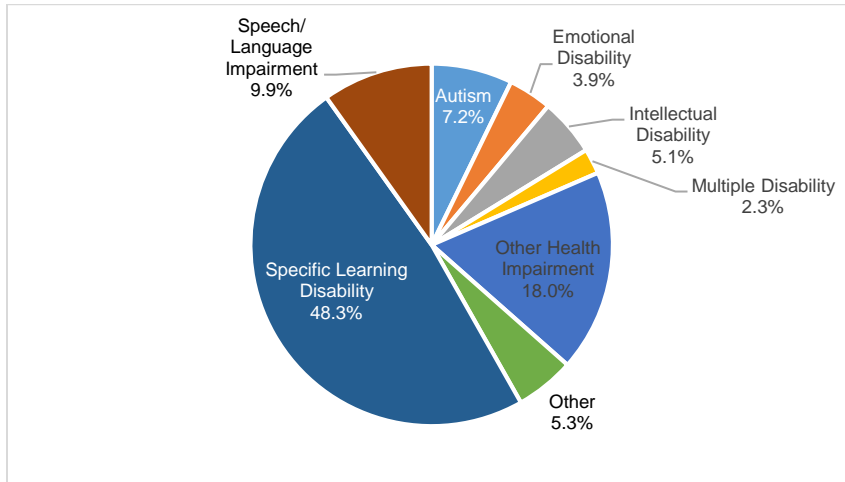
Exhibit 108. Percentage of EL Learners and non-EL Learners, by disability, 2017-18
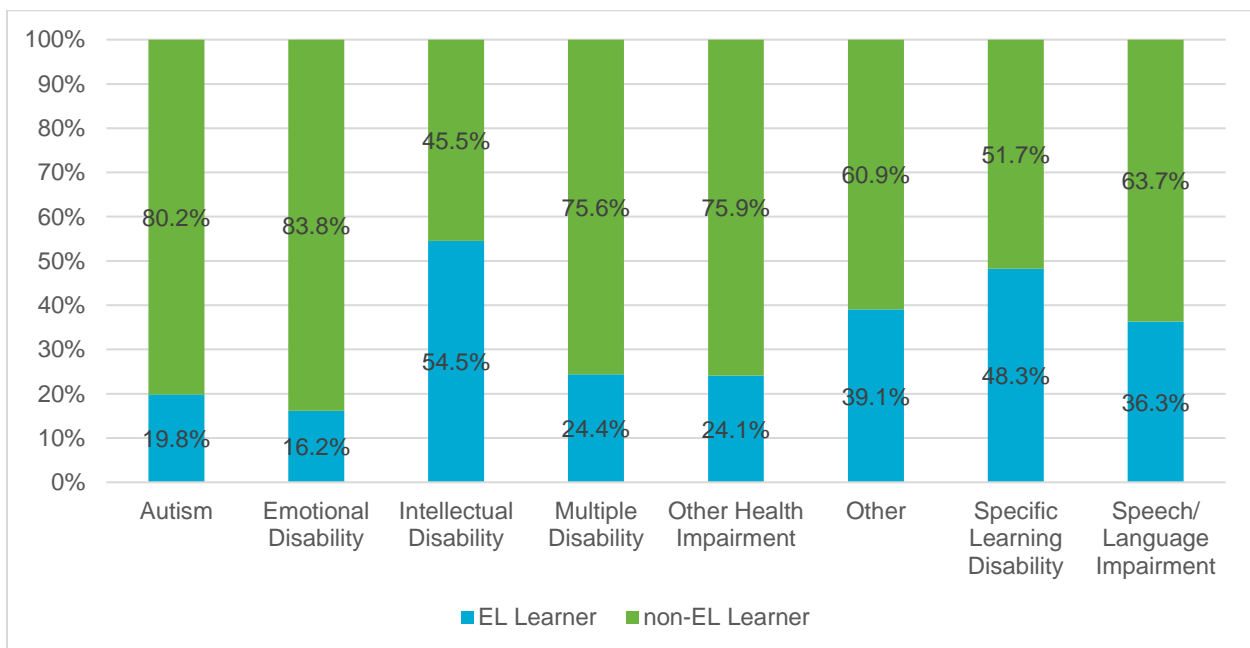
Exhibit 109. Number of English Learners with an IEP by Grade, 2017-18
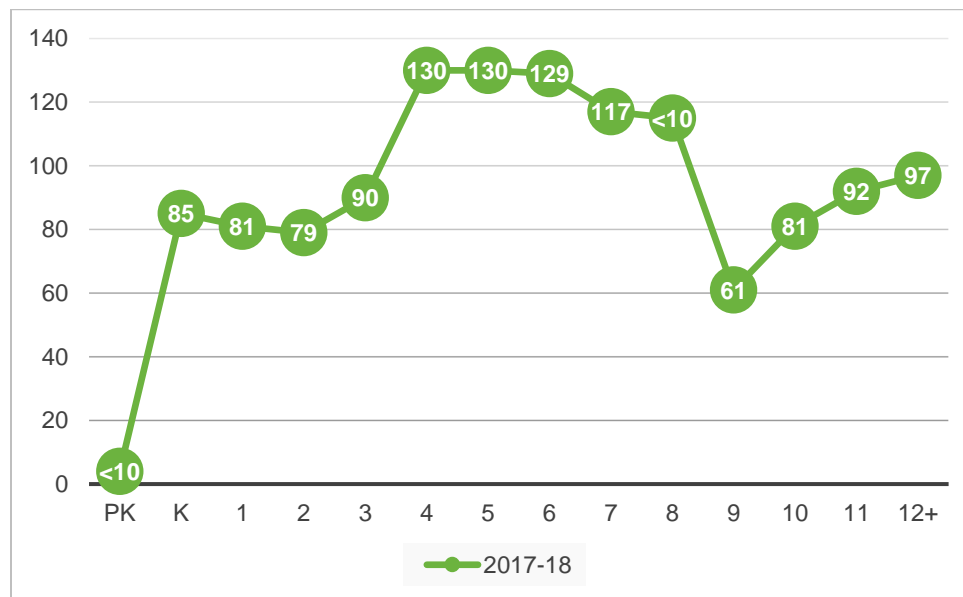
District Initiatives

Starting in the 2017-18 school year, through a joint effort with OSE, three elementary HILT Resource teachers have been assigned to assist several elementary schools with: 1) improving the inclusion rate for students identified as English learners with disabilities, and 2) working to reduce over-identification of English learners in Special Education. These focus areas were selected specifically in response to data analysis of trends over the past three years and the current year's data. These staff support teachers and teams, build capacity of staff members, and provide technical assistance to staff that improve outcomes for EL students. They are also actively involved when an EL is struggling, helping the school team understand, and be considerate of, the factors that impact EL students.

APS also employs a cadre of HILT Resource Teachers at the secondary level. Their focus is to support dually identified students eligible for **both** EL and special education services/supports. There is at least one HILT Resource Teacher assigned to every middle and high school in APS, based on a staffing formula. Their role is to help build the capacity of school staff by assisting other teachers to scaffold and structure lessons, co-teach subject areas, provide professional learning opportunities, push in to classrooms to support students and to be a voice for students using their expertise in various meetings and consultations with staff.

The ESOL/HILT Department has also assigned a specialist to explore the needs associated with ELs in early childhood classes, with the plan to present relevant and practical professional learning opportunities. In addition, consideration is being given to adding an ESOL representative to the Child Find Team as a standing member to ensure that second language development considerations are discussed for students acquiring English as a second language. After enhancing APS' Educational Checklist and Suggested Adaptations: An Intervention Guide for Second Language Learners Experiencing Academic Difficulty, a more comprehensive informational resource packet has been made available to all elementary and secondary teachers and staff. This packet contains a variety of tools that will help staff identify areas of learning difficulty and then utilize the practical tools contained within to help support the student and increase achievement and language acquisition.

APS has also identified several challenges related to supporting dually identified students. One is to reduce the number of Long-term English learners,[114] especially those with disabilities, which has been and continues to be a challenge. Addressing this issue has been a focus area for the 2018-19 school year. Another is that based on the APS's review of data, it has become evident that a high number of ELs are identified for special education prior to first grade age, with the majority happening before the child enters first grade. Another increase occurs between the third and fourth grade years. This too requires more in-depth study and a determination of how best to serve these students. Finally, having HILT Resource Teachers push into classrooms to co-teach continues to be a challenge. Part of the difficulty comes because the other teachers and sometimes administrators are unsure of the role of the HILT Resource Teacher and how to best support them in their role of enhancing learning and achievement. It is also apparent that there is little (if any) collaborative planning time scheduled to facilitate joint efforts to prepare for the delivery of instruction.

District Training

The ESOL/HILT office organizes several types of training each year to support teachers who working with dually identified students, specifically:

- **ESL Pop-Up Trainings (Elementary) and ESL Power Trainings (Secondary)** began during SY 2017-18 and continue to date. Members of the ESL Department visit individual schools for a given hour and invite staff to come and ask any questions they may have, whether they are general education teachers, special education teachers and/or ESL teachers. This appears to have been a positive and powerful practice. In 2017-18, there were about eight trainings. In 2018-19, there were seven. For 2019-20, APS is anticipating about the same number of trainings.
- **SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Training** opportunities are provided through various methods, including specifically scheduled training dates, a partnership college class in association with George Mason University, and monthly sessions.
- **HILT Resource Teachers** meet monthly as a team for professional learning opportunities and share with each other successes and challenges. The following formal and informal trainings have been provided to them over the past three years:

    1. Woodcock Johnson IV Tests of Achievement - Review of Reading Tests
        - *What do the tests measure, what do the results indicate about the student's learning strategies to employ in classrooms knowing the student demonstrates weakness in the area?*
    2. Resources, Technology and Strategies for Use with ELs with Disabilities
        - *Integration of Mobile Technology into Antecedent-Based Practices for Students with Emotional Behavioral Difficulties: Practical Issues*
    3. The Wonder of the IEP Goal!
        - *Articulation of the process by which an IEP goal is determined, components of a well-written goal, roles in ensure IEP goal is being addressed and measured, ways in which ELs needs can/should be addressed within the creation of goals.*
    4. Dyslexia or Second Language?
        - *Foundational understanding of Dyslexia-discussion and study centered on the Language Magazine Article: Dyslexia and the English Learner Dilemma*
    5. Long Term Learners
        - *Discovery of who they are, what they have in common and engage in various analyses to explore what support(s) could be implemented and when should that happen*

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[114] Long-term English learner (or LTEL) is a formal educational classification given to students who have been enrolled in American schools for more than six years, who are not progressing toward English proficiency, and who are struggling academically due to their limited English skills (https://www.edglossary.org/long-term-english-learner/).

Exhibit 110. Parent IEP Survey: My child's English proficiency needs are addressed in addition to his/her special education needs.
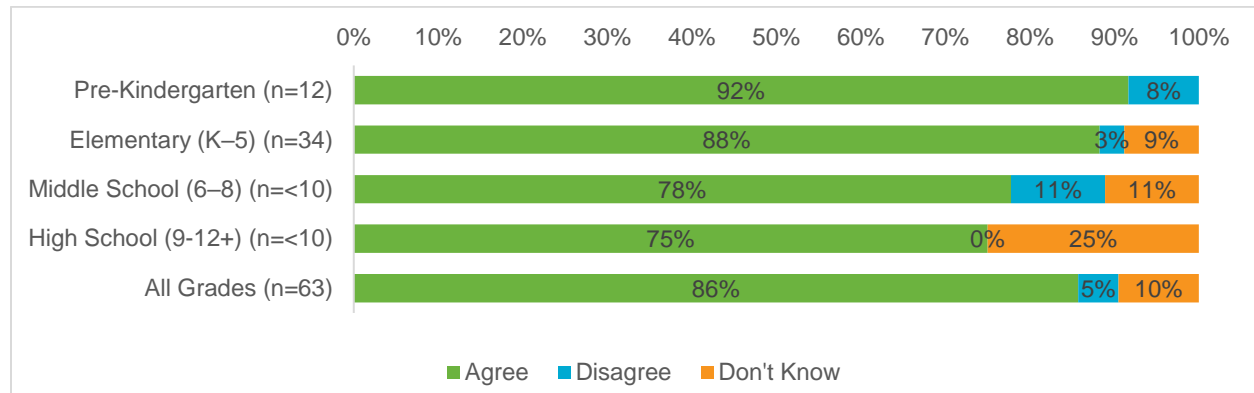
Department of Justice Settlement

In May 2019, APS agreed to the terms of a settlement agreement and to comply fully with provisions to address and resolve the noncompliance issues raised by the United States Department of Justice regarding APS's legal obligations under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1701 et seq. ("EEOA"). This agreement is the result of a thorough investigation into aspects of APS's program for EL students, which were alleged to be inadequate.[115]

As cited in the settlement agreement, the compliance issues identified by the United States pertain to APS's obligations to:

(1) ensure that parents and guardians knowingly consent or refuse to enroll their children in EL services during the EL identification and placement process;

(2) provide sufficient translation and interpretation services for Limited English Proficient ("LEP") parents;

(3) provide ELs with sufficient language services and adequate access to grade-level curricula at Thomas Jefferson Middle School (TJMS) and other secondary schools that used the same EL program as TJMS;

(4) staff its EL program at TJMS with enough qualified teachers;

(5) train its principals on how to evaluate teachers of ELs;

(6) provide sufficient materials to implement its EL program at TJMS;

(7) ensure that ELs are not over-identified as needing special education services based on their language barriers in elementary schools and are not denied timely evaluations for suspected disabilities at TJMS;

(8) adequately monitor current and former ELs at TJMS; and

(9) properly evaluate its EL program at TJMS and other schools.

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[115] https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/BC9JEC4CCCD1/$file/C-3%20Proposed%20Settlement%20Agreement%20with%20JSDOJ.pdf

While the settlement agreement pertains to EL students more broadly, it contains specific requirements around the provision of special education identification and services for EL students. The specific requirements, as summarized, include:

- No EL with a disability will be denied ESL solely due to the nature or severity of the student's disability; nor will that student be denied special education services due to his/her EL status.
- Notification of parents of ELs with disabilities in writing in a language they understand that their child is entitled to both ESL and special education services.
- Employing reasonable measures to train its special education and ESL-Certified Teachers who work with EL students with disabilities on how to provide services to ELs with disabilities, particularly disabilities affecting language acquisition and written and oral language processing and expression.
- Maintaining a list of staff members at each school who have knowledge and experience regarding EL needs, services, and language and cultural backgrounds, and the intersection of EL and special education services. To the extent practicable, the District will ensure that at least one person from this list is present at all special education meetings for ELs.
- Utilizing the APS Student Support Manual to ensure that ELs are not over-identified as needing special education services based on their language barriers in elementary schools, and to ensure that ELs are not denied timely evaluations for suspected disabilities at TJMS.
- Ensuring that all IEP teams consider the language needs of all EL students with a disability as such needs relate to their IEPs.
- Informing all principals and special education staff that IEP and Section 504 team meetings involving eligibility determinations, determining or changing services, and re-evaluations for each EL student with a disability must include an ESL-endorsed teacher.
- Ensuring that schools secure at least the input of this ESL-endorsed teacher if s/he cannot attend the meeting.
- Providing an equal opportunity for ELs to apply for and participate in the TJMS's specialized programs, including but not limited to honors and advanced-level classes and programs.

The Settlement Agreement will remain in effect until 60 days after APS submits its complete report due on July 1, 2022.

Support for Twice Exceptional Students

Overall Incidence Rates by Gifted Status

During 2017-18, 9.4% of students with an IEP were identified as gifted learners.

Exhibit 111. Percentage of APS Student's with an IEP Identified as Gifted, 2017-18
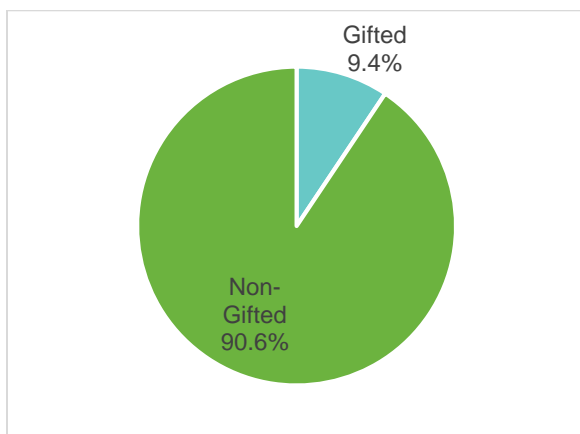
Each school board must review and approve a comprehensive plan for the education of the gifted. The plan must provide specific explanations of the school division's implementation of the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students. A key component of this plan includes addressing the needs of twice exceptional (2e) learners, or gifted students who have the potential for high achievement and are eligible with one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria.[116]

The goal of Gifted Services within APS is noted in the 2017-2022 local plan, specifically:

> Arlington Public Schools (APS) Gifted Services provides enriched and accelerated learning experiences that are designed to meet the unique learning profile of a broad range of advanced learners in grades K-12. Through a continuum of advanced academic services, students engage in complex subject matter, preparing them for more challenging and rigorous classes as they advance in grade level. Students identified for APS Gifted Services exhibit exceptional performance capability in academic, intellectual, and creative endeavors. In order to meet their needs and develop to their potential, these learners require a differentiated curriculum.

> The unique characteristics of individual students should determine the type and level of support services the students receive. Students who are twice exceptional (2e) are provided with accommodations or modifications through a special education Individual Education Plan (IEP) team, a 504 [Plan], or accommodations and support provided by the classroom teachers in response to their individual needs.[117]

Further, APS lists specific focus areas/goals in the plan specific to 2e learners.

- Increase identification of students who are twice exceptional (2e) and receive ESOL/HILT services.
- Develop communication systems to support needs of twice exceptional (2e) students during transition years, in particular, grades 5 and 8.
- Continue to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities in differentiating curriculum and instruction for a broad range of gifted learners K-12 to include twice exceptional learners, ESOL/HILT, and students from diverse linguistic, cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds.
- Continue to expand on work of Twice Exceptional (2e) Committee in identifying and supporting accommodations for twice exceptional learners.
- Work collaboratively with school counselors to provide information and resources on topics such as: culturally diverse gifted learners, twice exceptional learners, underachieving gifted learners.
- Collaboration with the Department of Special Education and Student Services to provide support for twice exceptional (2e) learners.

Instructional and social-emotional support is provided using the following framework:

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[116] https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/twice-exceptional-students

[117] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Final-Local-Plan-for-Website-2017-2022.pdf

Exhibit 112. APS Twice Exceptional Instructional and Social Emotional Support Framework

APS believes that 2e service delivery must:

- be provided in a least restrictive environment, across all levels and course offerings;

- be appropriate to the student's needs and flexible in delivery within individual student's schedules;

- be consistently provided across schools and grade levels; and

- include IEP service hours and accommodations in all classes

Stakeholder Feedback

Focus groups reported that optional training is offered for 2e learning through the Gifted Office and is focused on accommodations that are appropriate for twice exceptional learners and those with 504 Plans. It was not clear how often this training was provided or for what audience. A VDOE training was available last year as well. The goal of the training was to explain how to raise expectations for all learners and to scaffold where appropriate for the needs of individual children. The challenge that schools have is understanding and implementing the training that is offered.

While messaging and awareness of 2e learners has improved, participants also reported that there are ongoing challenges with helping staff understand that a student can be both gifted and have a disability and how best to serve them. Challenges also exist at the high school level where twice exceptional students occasionally receive less support from case carriers because of their higher academic functioning, as case managers have demanding caseloads with students who require more significant attention. During the 2018-19 school year, a parent group sent a letter to the APS School Board regarding concerns at the high school level, specifically around students with disabilities being reportedly counseled out of taking advanced classes or not having access to IEP accommodations in these classes.

Parents and students also provided feedback on supports for 2e learners in the surveys and focus groups. The following themes emerged as areas of improvement:

- There needs to be better integration between students with autism and gifted services.
- There is a tendency to overlook the needs of 2e kids.
- APS needs to "really, truly" implement "personalized learning," especially for gifted students who are challenged with ADHD or weaknesses with executive functioning.

- Students with disabilities receive supports, but there generally are no plans to help 2e students achieve their potential as gifted students.
- Ideally 2e students would be able to seek out more complex and challenging work (not faster or a heavier homework load) in some courses, especially at the secondary level.

The Gifted Office routinely reviews reports disaggregated by gender, twice exceptionally, and race/ethnicity. The reports are color coded and analyzed to determine where success and gaps exist in order to develop improvement strategies. The Office meets monthly with special education administrative staff and disseminates a 2e newsletter with practical strategies and tips. APS has a group subscription for approximately 50 people to have access to the 2e newsletter. Teachers can share this information. It cannot be posted to the APS website because it is created by an external entity.

Several years ago, a twice exceptional committee was started by a high school staff member who supported twice exceptional students. The committee created a website to help disseminate information on the program and met for three years. The committee has since stopped meeting.

Exhibit 113. Parent IEP Survey: My child's gifted learning needs are addressed in addition to his/her special education needs.
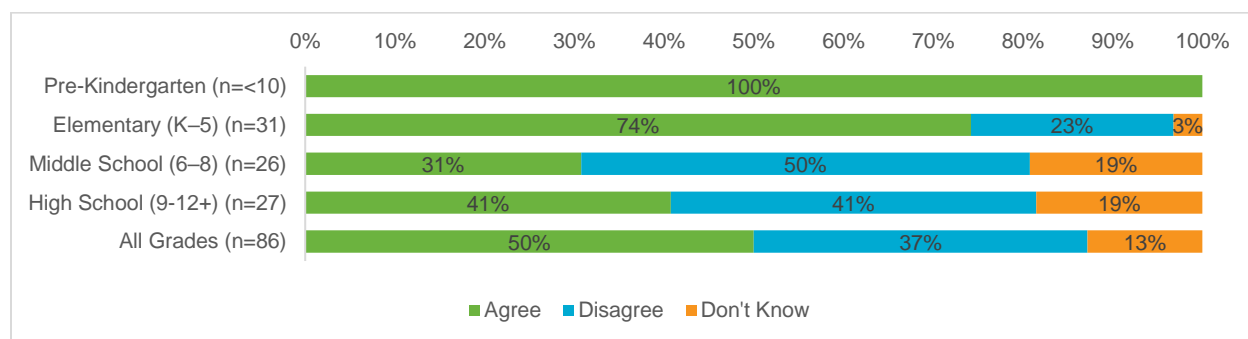
Dispute Resolution and Due Process

As part of the IDEA, families and students are afforded due process rights in the event they believe they are not receiving a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Families and students can submit a complaint to the VDOE, which then is investigated. They may also request mediation, a process in which a neutral third-party mediator works to problem-solve with the family and the school division. Furthermore, families may choose to file a due process complaint, a legal process through which the family's arguments are heard by a hearing officer who acts as a judge. In addition to IDEA due process rights, families may also file a complaint with the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. Many of these complaints focus on the rights of students receiving 504 Plans under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act; however, other issues regarding civil rights may also be relevant through this channel.

In addition to these processes, APS has another dispute resolution practice, as described on the APS website.[118] The Special Education Review Committee (SERC) provides an impartial forum in which to consider student needs and available resources. The process of SERC is consistent with the spirit of the reauthorization of the IDEA as it encourages the early resolution of disputes. It is meant to supplement, not supplant, IDEA procedures such as state mediation or due process. Staff or parents may refer concerns about a student identified with disabilities or some other aspect of the special education process

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[118] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/special-education-review-committee-serc/

to SERC. The purpose of SERC is to support the Office of Special Education in providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities.

The following steps comprise the SERC process.[119] The process begins with the completion of a referral form, which are managed by the Special Education Coordinators. Referrals for SERC are then submitted to the Supervisor of Special Education.

- Membership of the SERC team is based on the nature of the concern(s). The Supervisor acts as the chairperson for the SERC meeting. In addition to the Supervisor, and the ad hoc members of SERC, the parent/guardian(s) of the student and representatives of the school-based IEP team are invited to attend the meeting.
- The Supervisor sets a date and time for the SERC meeting, and notifies the family and school.
- Prior to the SERC meeting, members review the written referral and submitted information and/or observe the student, if appropriate to the referral concern.
- At the SERC meeting, the requesting party is asked to present the concern. In situations where there is disagreement between the school and family, the non-requesting party will have an opportunity to present and respond to the concerns.
- SERC members explore the concerns collaboratively with the IEP team and family.
- The chairperson summarizes the meeting in a written memo, which includes recommendations to the IEP team.

APS receives approximately 20-30 SERC referrals a year. None of the SERC cases have resulted in further mediation or a due process complaint.

APS has had a low number of due processes cases. The numbers below are actual hearings, complaints, or legal cases that were managed through the entire process and involved an outside agency such as the VDOE or OCR attorneys. Many more legal matters were filed but either withdrawn or resolved in other ways.

	VDOE Due Process	OCR Complaint	VDOE State Complaint
2018-19	2	1 (APS found compliant)	2 (APS found compliant on all)
2017-18	1	0	1
2016-17	0	4 (APS found compliant on all)	8 (APS found compliant in 7 of 8)
2015-16	0	4 (APS found compliant in 3 of 4)	1 (APS found compliant)
2014-15	0	0	3 (APS found compliant in 1 of 3)
2013-14	1	3 (APS found compliant on all)	2 (APS found compliant on all)
2012-13	1 (APS found compliant)	2 (APS found compliant on all)	3 (APS found compliant in 1 of 3)

The following series of questions from both the staff and parent surveys relate to conflicts and the manner in which they were addressed.

[119] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/special-education-review-committee-serc/

Exhibit 114. Staff Survey: Have there been disagreements between the parents and the school regarding special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation for any students with IEPs that you work with?


	Yes	No	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=58)	41%	31%	28%
Elementary (K–5) (n=499)	39%	21%	40%
Middle School (6–8) (n=245)	44%	13%	43%
High School (9-12+) (n=318)	38%	22%	39%
All Grades (n=1310)	41%	19%	40%
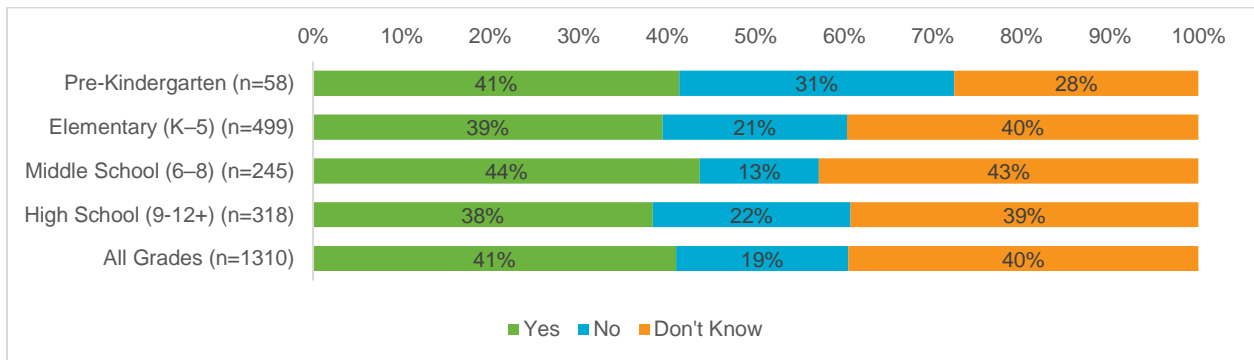
Across all grades, 41% of staff report that there have been disagreements between the parents and the school regarding special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation for students with IEPs with whom they work.

For the following statements, staff were asked to reflect on their most recent disagreement, if they had experienced one, with their child's school or APS.

Exhibit 115. Staff Survey: APS representatives treated families with respect.

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All
Pre-Kindergarten (n=22)	77%	14%	9%
Elementary (K–5) (n=181)	78%	20%	2%
Middle School (6–8) (n=95)	93%	7%	
High School (9-12+) (n=120)	86%	13%	1%
All Grades (n=501)	85%	14%	2%
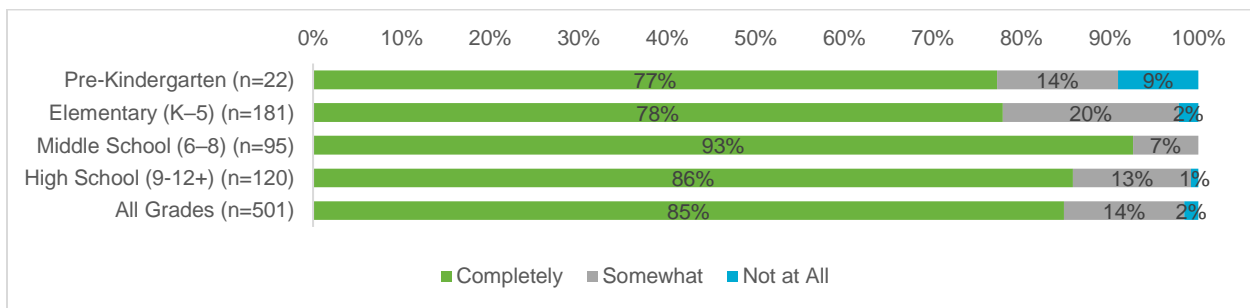
Of staff across all grades, 85% agree that APS completely treated families with respect.

Exhibit 116. Staff Survey: APS representatives treat me with respect.

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All
Pre-Kindergarten (n=22)	64%	32%	5%
Elementary (K–5) (n=181)	70%	27%	3%
Middle School (6–8) (n=95)	82%	13%	5%
High School (9-12+) (n=120)	74%	23%	3%
All Grades (n=500)	74%	22%	3%
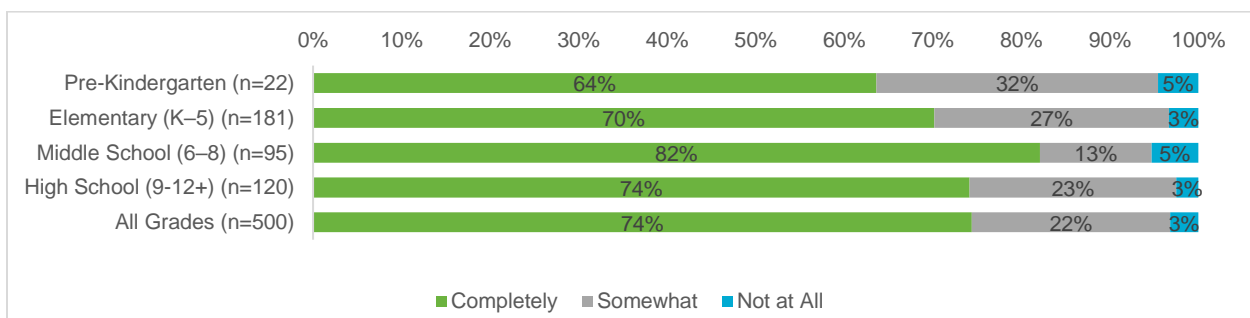
Of staff across all grades, 74% agree that APS completely treated them with respect.

Exhibit 117. Staff Survey: Conflicts were efficiently and effectively resolved.
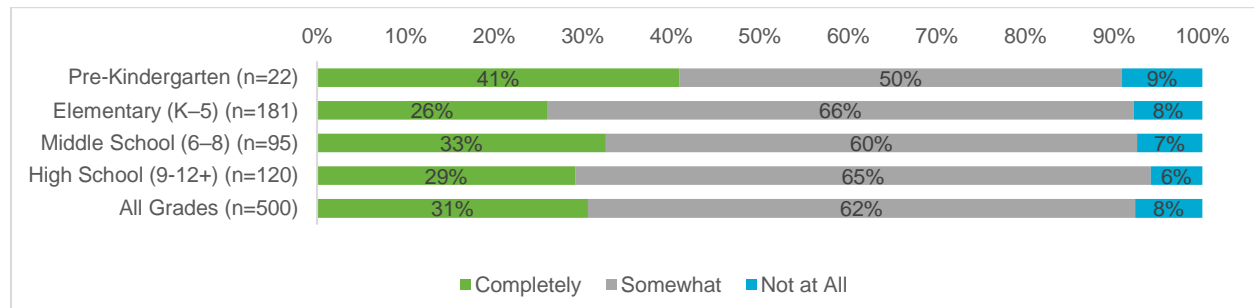
When asked if conflicts were efficiently and effectively resolved, 62% of staff report that they were somewhat resolved.

Exhibit 118. Staff Survey: I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.
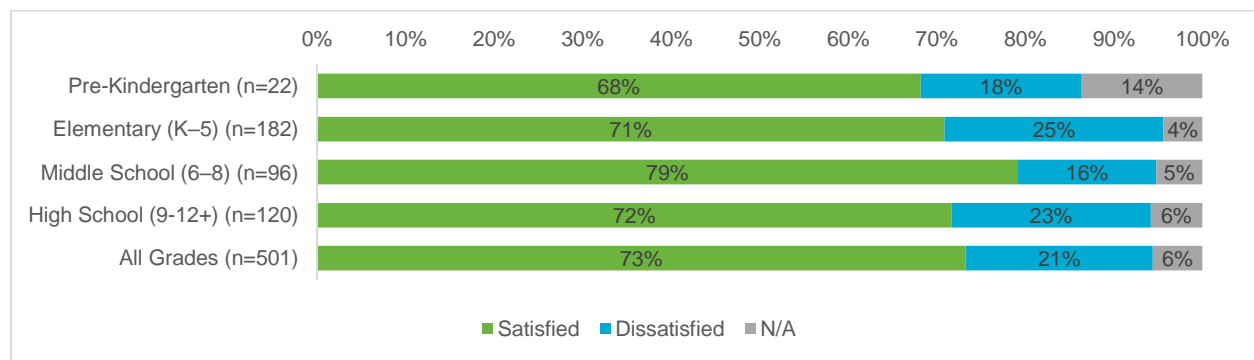
The majority of staff (73%) report that they were satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.

Exhibit 119. Staff Survey: If the disagreement was escalated to the district, I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreement.
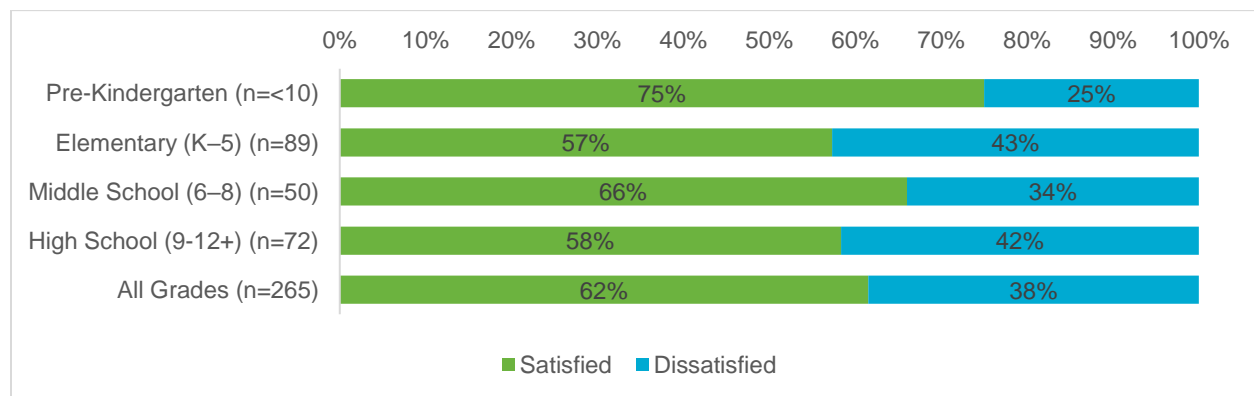
Of those staff who reported having a disagreement that was escalated to the APS central office, 62% were satisfied with the resolution.

Exhibit 120. Parent IEP Survey: Do you know where to go to get help if you have disagreements with APS or your child's school regarding his/her special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=43)	37%	37%	26%
Elementary (K–5) (n=227)	57%		8%
Middle School (6–8) (n=103)	65%	28%	7%
High School (9-12+) (n=133)	66%	27%	7%
All Grades (n=549)	59%	31%	9%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know
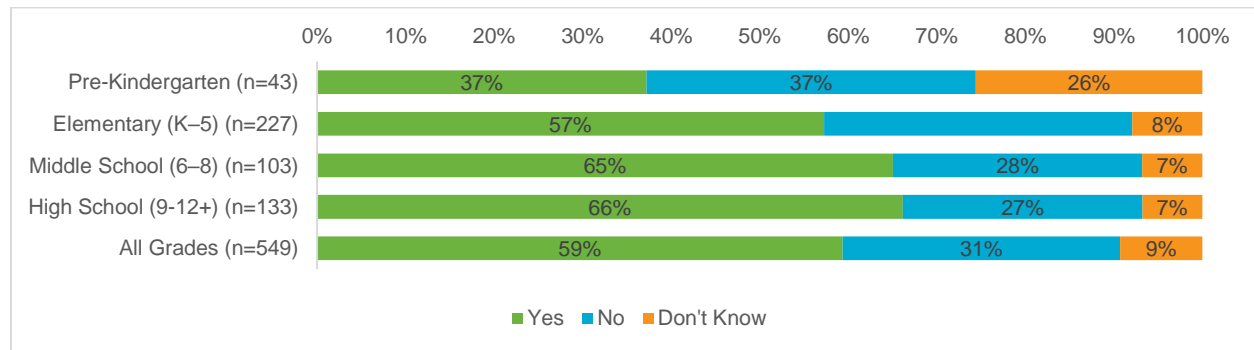
Of parent respondents, 66% of high school parents and 65% of middle school parents know where to go to get help if they have disagreements with APS or their children's schools. These rates were lower at the elementary level (57%) and Pre-K (37%).

Exhibit 121. Parent IEP Survey: Have you ever had disagreements with your child's school regarding his/her special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Pre-Kindergarten (n=43)	21%	74%	5%
Elementary (K–5) (n=228)	40%	58%	1%
Middle School (6–8) (n=103)	44%	51%	5%
High School (9-12+) (n=133)	50%	48%	2%
All Grades (n=544)	42%	56%	2%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know
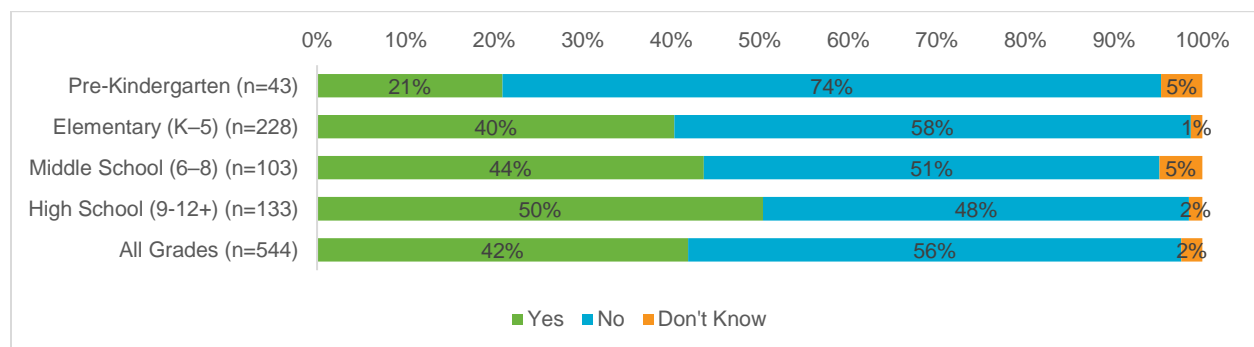
For the following statements, the 42% of parents who responded that they have had disagreements with their children's schools regarding his/her special education program were asked to reflect on their most recent disagreement.

Exhibit 122. Parent IEP Survey: During disagreements, APS representatives treated me with respect.

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All
Pre-Kindergarten (n=<10)	38%	50%	13%
Elementary (K–5) (n=84)	52%	32%	15%
Middle School (6–8) (n=40)	55%	40%	5%
High School (9-12+) (n=62)	65%	34%	2%
All Grades (n=202)	56%	36%	8%

■ Completely ■ Somewhat ■ Not at All
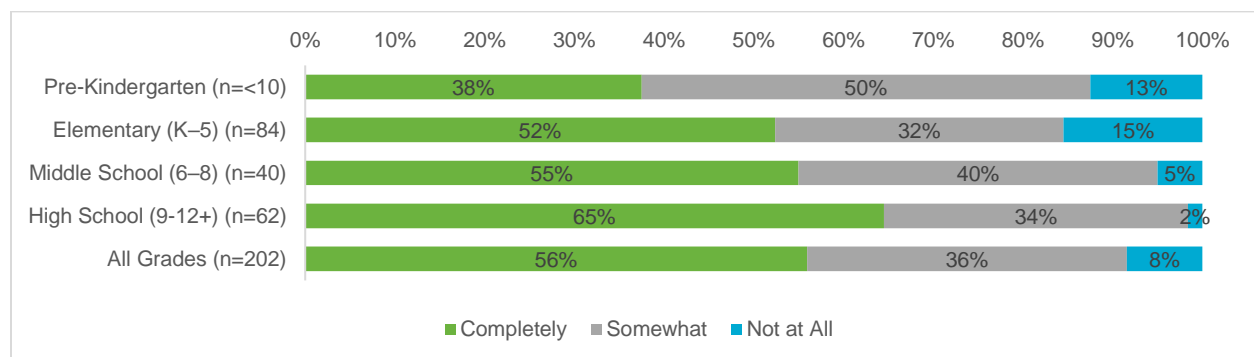
Across all grades, 56% of all parents indicated that they were completely treated with respect.

Exhibit 123. Parent IEP Survey: I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreement.
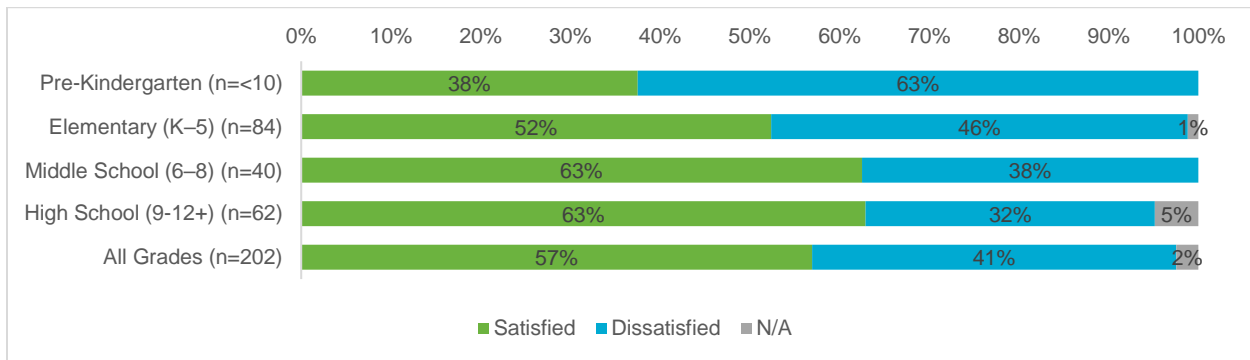
Over half of parents (57%) reported that they were satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreement.

Exhibit 124. Parent IEP Survey: If the disagreement was escalated to the district/central office, I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreement.
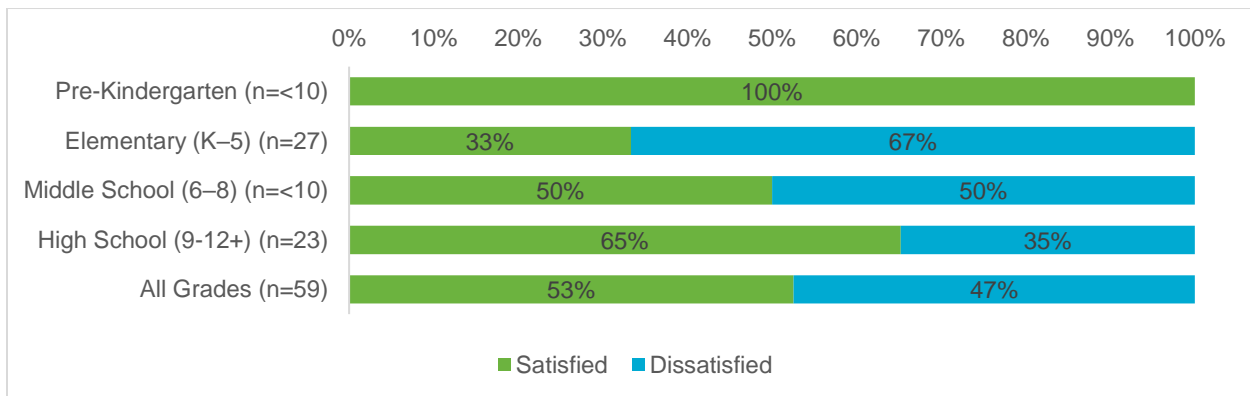
Of those parents who reported having a disagreement that was escalated to the APS central office, 53% were satisfied with the resolution.

Transition Between Grades/Schools

Stakeholder Feedback

Most school-based focus group participants reported that they believe matriculation and vertical transitions generally work well, and that receiving schools are, for the most part, prepared to accept incoming students and implement their IEPs. Meetings are scheduled for students matriculating/transitioning from Pre-K to kindergarten, elementary to middle, middle to high school. However, many also explained that parents often serve as the intermediary to ensure staff at their child's new school or in a new grade are prepared to provide services and accommodations immediately.

Some also shared that these transition meetings can occur at the tail end of the school year, which sometimes necessitates, for students with complex needs, multiple summer meetings to ensure the receiving school is prepared for the students' first day of school.

During school visits/student shadowing, the students' printed schedules from Synergy matched the actual schedules provided to PCG, thus indicating that APS has a process for checks and balances to ensure that schedules and IEPs are aligned.

Survey Results

Parents were asked survey questions about student transitions from grade to grade within their school and from building to building.

The majority of parents (71.7%) indicated that their child had not transitioned between school levels within the last school year. Of those whose children had, the greatest percent (8.9%) was from early childhood to kindergarten.

Exhibit 125. Parent IEP Survey: My child has transitioned between the following school levels within the last school year.
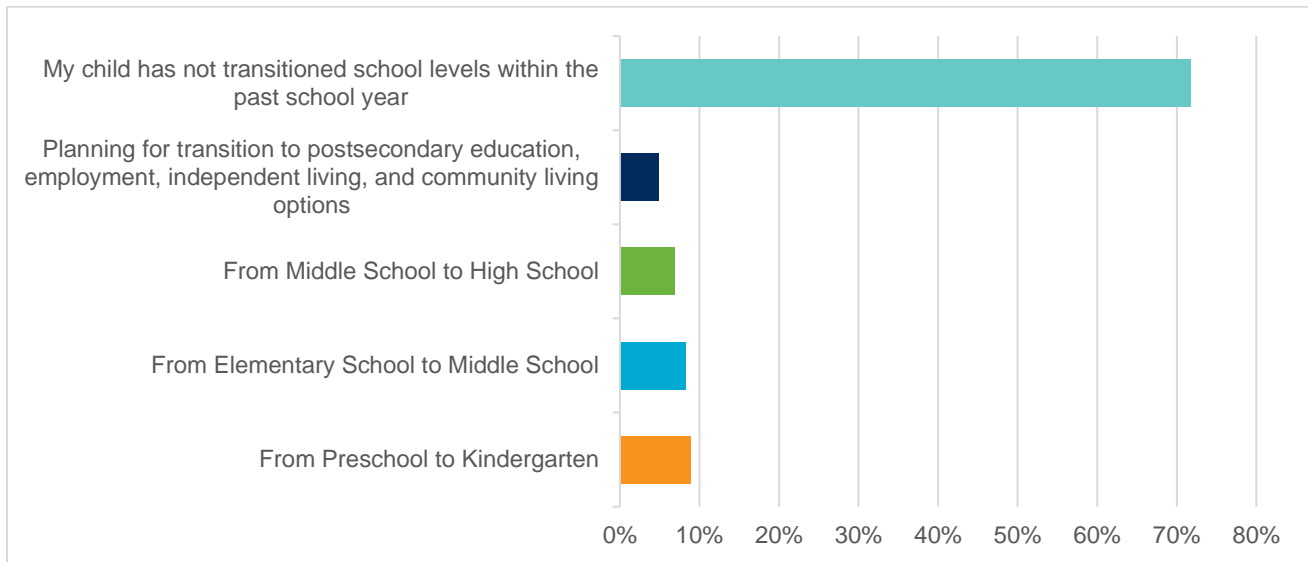
Parents of children who transitioned within the last year were then asked to rate whether or not they were satisfied with the experience. Nearly two thirds (65.6%) indicated that they were satisfied.

Exhibit 126. Parent IEP Survey: I am satisfied with the planning for my child's recent transition from one school level to the next.
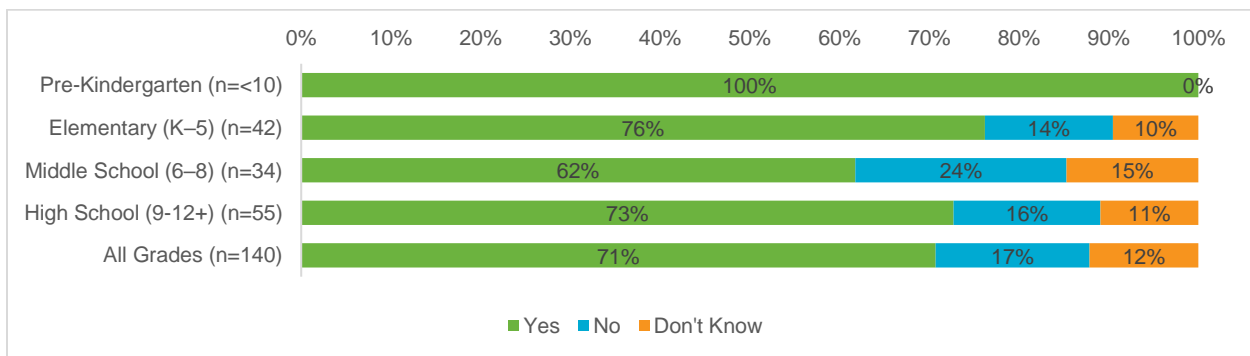
Post-Secondary Transition

Transition services consist of coordinated activities for a student with a disability that are:

- focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate their movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

- based on the individual student's needs, considering their strengths, preferences, and interests; and

- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.[120]

A student's IEP must include post-secondary goals and transition services before they enter secondary school, but no later than the first IEP to be in effect when they reach age 14 (or younger, if the IEP team decides that it is appropriate).

Postsecondary Outcomes

Indicator 14 establishes targets for the percentage of former APS students with IEPs engaged in three education and/or work activities within one year of leaving high school.

The exhibit below shows District outcomes of former students compared to SPP targets. APS has met and exceeded the state targets in all three categories in 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17.

Exhibit 127. Indicator 14. Postsecondary Outcomes, 2014-15 to 2016-17[121]
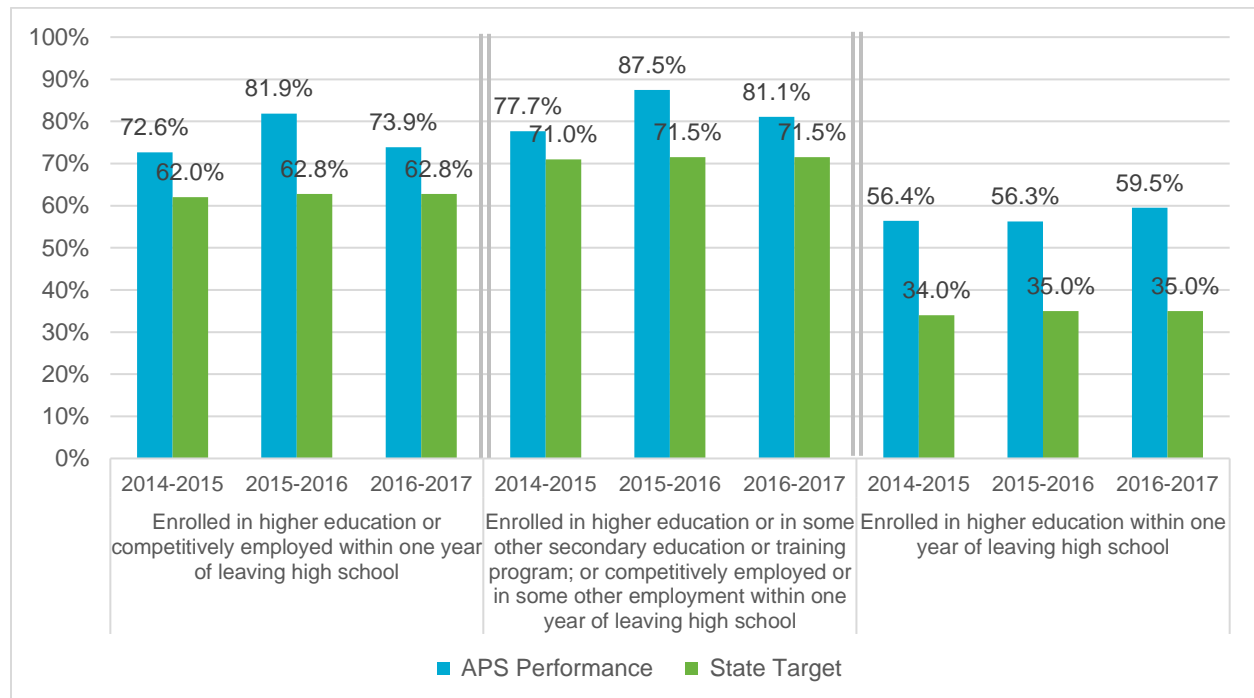
Staff Support and Resources

Transition Coordinators work with each high school, high school program, and middle school to assist students as they move through the schools and into adult life. Staff are assigned to specific schools and programs as follows:

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[120] IDEA Regulations Secondary Transition. (2007, February 2). Retrieved from A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth With Disabilities
https://www.apsva.us/special-education/transition-services/
[121] VDOE: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/index.shtml

Exhibit 128. Transition Support Staffing, 2018-19 school year

School(s) Assigned	Transition Coordinator	Transition Assistant
Wakefield	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
Washington Lee	1.0 FTE	0.5 FTE
Yorktown	1.0 FTE	0.5 FTE
Arlington Career Center, Arlington Mill Community High School, Langston High School Continuation Program, Contract Services, and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program	1.0 FTE[122]	
Alternative Programs and Job Development		1.0 FTE

The Parent Resource Center (PRC) serves as a resource for parents to access transition information. Areas in which coordinators provide or make connections to supports include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Self-determination/-advocacy development and procedures for requesting accommodations in post-secondary education and employment settings
  - e.g., classroom lessons re: *I'm Determined* and preparing for life after high school (budgeting, apartment searches, etc.)

- Post-secondary education and career planning
  - e.g., identify students for the Pathway Connection Program at NOVA; organize Transition Fair; assist with college applications and FAFSA/scholarship support; collaborate with Career and College Counselor regarding colleges, outside opportunities, and programs

- Vocational evaluation and training and resume building/interview skill development
  - e.g., Arlington Employment Center for part-time jobs for students with IEPs; find and supervise job sites for students in the Life Skills class

- Explanation of diploma options
  - e.g., assist with identifying students for the Pathway to Baccalaureate Program & completing the application

- Independent living support and community participation
  - e.g., travel training for Life Skills students

- Adult service agency referrals
  - e.g., support completion of social security paperwork

APS provides several programs and resources to support students with their post-secondary transition planning.[123]

The Career Assessment Program for Students with Disabilities – is a highly individualized set of interest inventories, standardized tests, and exploration activities designed to build a comprehensive picture of a student's interests, aptitudes, employability behaviors, and career-decision making skills.

School-Based Transition Assessments – are both formal and informal activities, offered at each high school, conducted to assist students with transition planning in the areas of post-secondary education/training, employment, and/or independent living.

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[122] 1.0 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Transition Coordinator shared between programs/schools listed.

[123] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/transition-services/

Functional Life Skills Programs – for students with disabilities, in each middle and high school, provide various skill development activities to increase career/technical integration, social competence, community integration, personal growth, health/fitness, domestic living, and functional academic skills.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program – a community based educational program that provides a supportive environment for students with significant disabilities who require functional skills. Services are provided primarily in a self-contained special education setting with opportunities for interactions with students at the H.B. Woodlawn Program. In addition to functional academics, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program also provides a range of various employment preparedness training options in an effort to meet the needs of the whole child. Students' programs are developed around goals to achieve maximum social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth and acquiring the related skills necessary to function in the community as independently as possible.

Program for Employment Preparedness (PEP) – a transition program, located at the Arlington Career Center and launched in school year 2014-15, that expands upon former APS programs known as ***Supported Work and Training*** (SWAT) and ***Experience Based Career Education*** (EBCE). This program incorporates Virginia's Standards for Workplace Readiness, is multi-tiered, and creates a targeted approach to meeting the transitional needs of students. PEP provides students with experiences and learning opportunities based on current business trends and needs so that students may gain relevant skills for obtaining employment in today's market, including the requisite social skills necessary to secure and maintain long-term, meaningful employment. The program is designed for students to receive internship/ apprenticeship experiences and may lead to trade certifications, licenses, college credit, networking connections, and/or employment directly upon graduation. The referral process for the PEP program must begin with the Transition Coordinator at the comprehensive high school. The PEP Program Coordinator then reviews all transition coordinator referrals, taking into account student's age, attendance record, student conduct (school and community), year in school, and prior job training experience.[124]

The APS website provides detailed information for families around transition services, including quick links to several documents. There is a comprehensive guide from 2007 titled "The Transition Book", along with a "Diploma Options" handbook in English and Spanish and VDOE guidance on the transition process. Though "The Transition Book" was created 12+ years ago, it clearly explains the transition process and resources. APS is in the process of updating this guide. A final release date for the revised guide has not been determined.

Transition Coordinators also collaborate with other community agencies in the provision of transition services. Some of these include: the Arlington County Department of Human Services, Aging and Disability Service Division, Mental Health Programs and Services, Employment Center, Arlington County Therapeutic Recreation Office, Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Project PERT (Post-Secondary Education/Rehabilitation and Transition), Northern Virginia Community College, the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, Inc. and the Northern Virginia Transition Coalition.

Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Career, Technical and Adult Education (CTAE) prepares youth and adults, including those with disabilities, for a wide range of high-wage, high-skill, high-demand careers by providing students with college and career ready employable, job specific, technical skills. The philosophy of CTAE is to provide lifelong learning opportunities to students of all ages residing in Arlington.[125]

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[124] https://careercenter.apsva.us/programs/pep/

[125] https://www.apsva.us/ctae/

Career Technical Education (CTE) courses for Arlington students are made up of these program areas: business and information technology; computer science; education and training; family and consumer sciences; health and medical sciences; marketing; Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM); technology education/engineering; and trade and industrial programs.

Students can participate in CTE programming in several ways:

- **All middle schools and high schools** offer core CTE courses.

- **Arlington Career Center** offers additional, unique courses that are not available in the comprehensive high schools or programs.

- **Dual enrollment** is an enrichment opportunity allowing high school students to earn college credits for courses taken through NOVA while still being enrolled in high school. Dual enrollment students are enrolled in both high school and NOVA.

- **FBI-Cyber STEM Pathway Certificate** is offered to students interested in cyber security.

APS receives Perkins grant funding, part of which is dedicated to supporting the enrollment of students with disabilities in CTE courses and work-place experiences (such as internships, job shadowing opportunities, and co-op courses) and helping them build workplace readiness skills. APS monitors the progress made by students with disabilities in CTE as part of the grant requirements. There are no specific courses or programs for students with disabilities; all CTE coursework is open to all students and they are supported in these courses based on individual need. Some courses require taking a level one before taking an upper level course.

Stakeholder Feedback

Though VDOE regulations require IEP teams to begin transition planning at age 14, some noted that this does not always occur with fidelity. The Transition Guide states transition planning needs to begin at age 16 (which is the federal regulation requirement). Focus group participants asked that revisions to the Guide clarify the age requirement in alignment with Virginia regulations. Further, they expressed some frustration and confusion at the lack of consistency with transition planning and had questions about when it was supposed to begin in earnest for students.

Parents stated that they believe students with IEPs are "pigeon-holed" to two-year colleges and are not made aware of the full continuum of post-secondary options. They fear the transition process, do not feel informed about future options for their children, and lack clarity around the requirements for graduation. Some noted that they have received more transition information from parent liaisons and the PRC than from school or other district staff.

Focus group participants offered the following recommendations for improvement:

- Teach students about how to self-advocate and teach parents how to support their children with independence
- Make transition goals meaningful
- Provide additional guidance on how to access four-year colleges

Exhibit 129. Parent IEP Survey: Has your child received an assessment to help develop age-appropriate postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and where appropriate independent living skills?
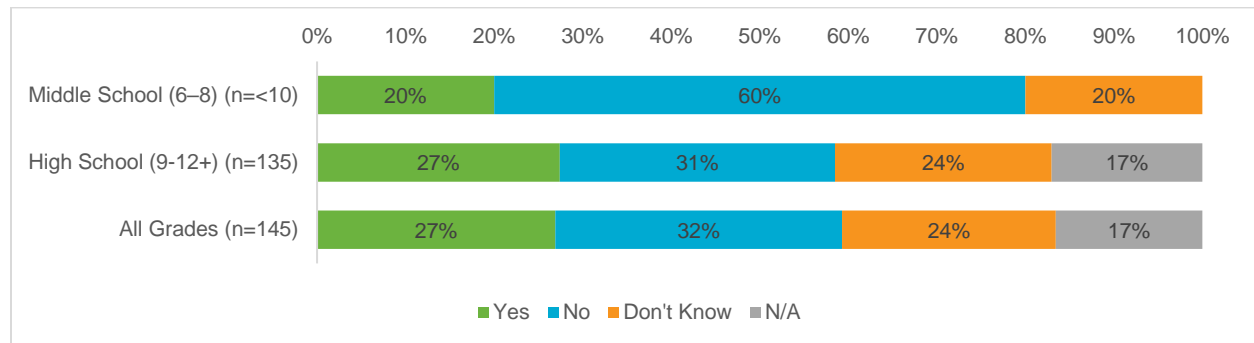
Across middle school and high school parent respondents, 27% indicated that their children had received an assessment to help develop age-appropriate post-secondary goals.

Exhibit 130. Parent IEP Survey: Has the IEP team developed appropriate individualized goals related to postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and community participation, as appropriate?
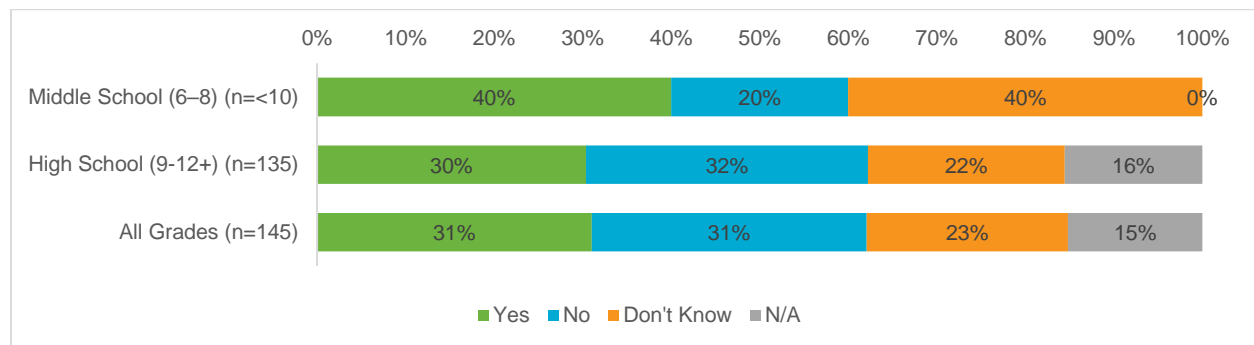
Of middle school parent respondents, 40% agreed that the IEP team developed appropriate and individualized post-secondary goals for their children. This rate was lower (30%) at the high school level.

Exhibit 131. Parent IEP Survey: Has the IEP team discussed transition to adulthood during the IEP meeting, e.g., career interests?
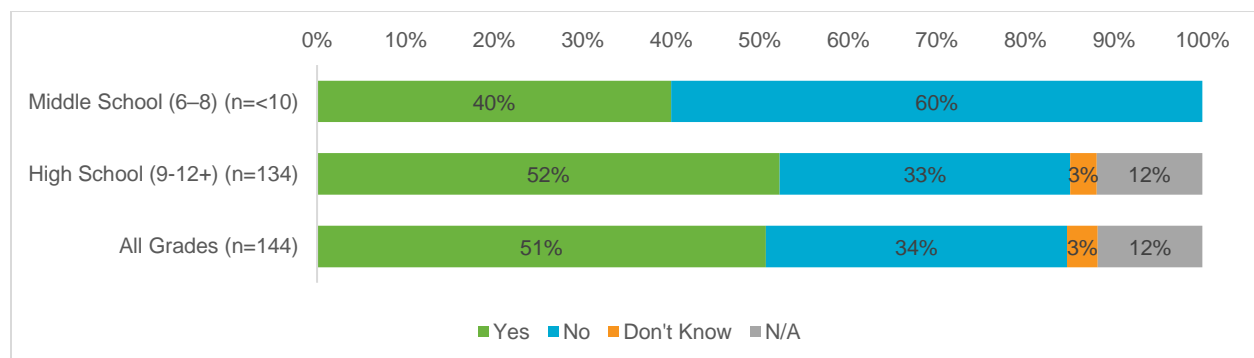
At the high school level, just over half of parents (52%) responded that the IEP team has discussed transition to adulthood during the IEP meeting. This rate was lower (40%) at the middle school level.

Exiting Special Education

Special education has sometimes been criticized as "a one-way street" down which "it's relatively easy to send children ... but they rarely return."[126] There is very little current research to address this issue, and the extent to which students who are declassified in one year are in subsequent years qualified for another disability area. Students qualified for speech/language services tend to be declassified (i.e., exited from special education) at the highest rate, generally during the middle school years. According to one federally funded longitudinal study, students with the following characteristics are more likely to exit, i.e., be declassified, from special education:

> Behaviors and attributes associated with cognitive and social functioning appear to be stronger for declassified students. For example, declassified students are consistently rated higher than students continuing in special education with respect to persistence, cooperation, being well organized, using computers, sensitivity to others, and creative, performance, and athletic skills.[127]

Researchers estimate that the overall exit rate is 7.5%.[128] APS data show a slightly lower percentage of students returning to general education, with rates from 4.2% in 2015-16 to 4.7% in 2017-18. An even smaller percent (less than 1%) transition from an IEP to a 504 Plan annually. PCG did not identify a specific reason why APS percentages are lower than national averages. This could be attributed to the fact that schools and IEP teams need further guidance around how to provide transition supports for students after an IEP ends.

Exhibit 132. Special Education Exit Data, 2015-16 to 2017-18 school years[129]

School Year	Students Returned to Regular Education	Parent Withdrawal/Self-Withdrawal	Transitioned to a 504 Plan
	Number of Students	Number of Students	Number of Students
2015-16	134	14	13
2016-17	182	10	20
2017-18	177	15	13

Of the students who return to general education, the majority are those with speech language impairments.

Exhibit 133. Number of Students with IEPs Returned to Regular Education, by Disability Type, 2015-16 to 2017-18 school years[130]

Primary Disability or Code	15-16	16-17	17-18
Autism	3	10	7
Deaf-Blindness	-	-	-
Deafness	-	-	1
Developmental Delay (2-6 yrs.)	13	25	16
Emotional Disability	5	7	6
Hearing Impairment	2	1	1
Intellectual Disability	-	-	-
Multiple Disabilities	-	-	-
Orthopedic Impairment	2	-	-
Other	-	-	1
Other Health Impairment	25	17	27
Specific Learning Disability	22	25	16

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[126] Declassification – Students Who Leave Special Education, A Special Topic Report from the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study, September 2005, retrieved from http://www.seels.net/designdocs/SEELS_Declass_FINAL.pdf.

[127] *Id.*

[128] https://www.cabinetreport.com/special-education/stats-show-that-few-special-ed-students-fully-re-enter-general-education

[129] Data provided by APS.

[130] *Id.*

Speech or Language Impairment	62	97	101
Traumatic Brain Injury	-	-	1
Visual Impairment	-	-	-
Total	**134**	**182**	**177**

The percent of students with IEPs returning to a full-time general education setting represents less than 3% of the total special education population.

Stakeholder Feedback

We heard from various sources concerns that students qualify for special education and "never get out." Many noted a willingness to want to support students in other ways but lacked an understanding of how best to initiate this process or what resources it would take to do so. There does not appear to be a defined process regarding how a student might be considered for exiting special education, an understanding of what supports might be needed to make this transition effective, or a clear transitional support structure for those who do exit.

Graduation and Drop Out Rates

Graduation Rates of APS Students with IEPs and Those Without Compared to State Averages

For the past five school years, students with IEPs at APS had higher graduation rates than the state average for students with disabilities. Graduation rates for students with IEPs were aligned with the state average for students without disabilities. In 2018, APS's on time graduation rate for students with disabilities was slightly higher than the graduation rate for students without disabilities.

Exhibit 134. Percentage of APS and State Students with and without an IEP Graduating from High School during 2014 through 2018[131]

Exhibit 135. Percent of Students with IEPs at APS and Comparable Divisions Graduating from High School, 2018
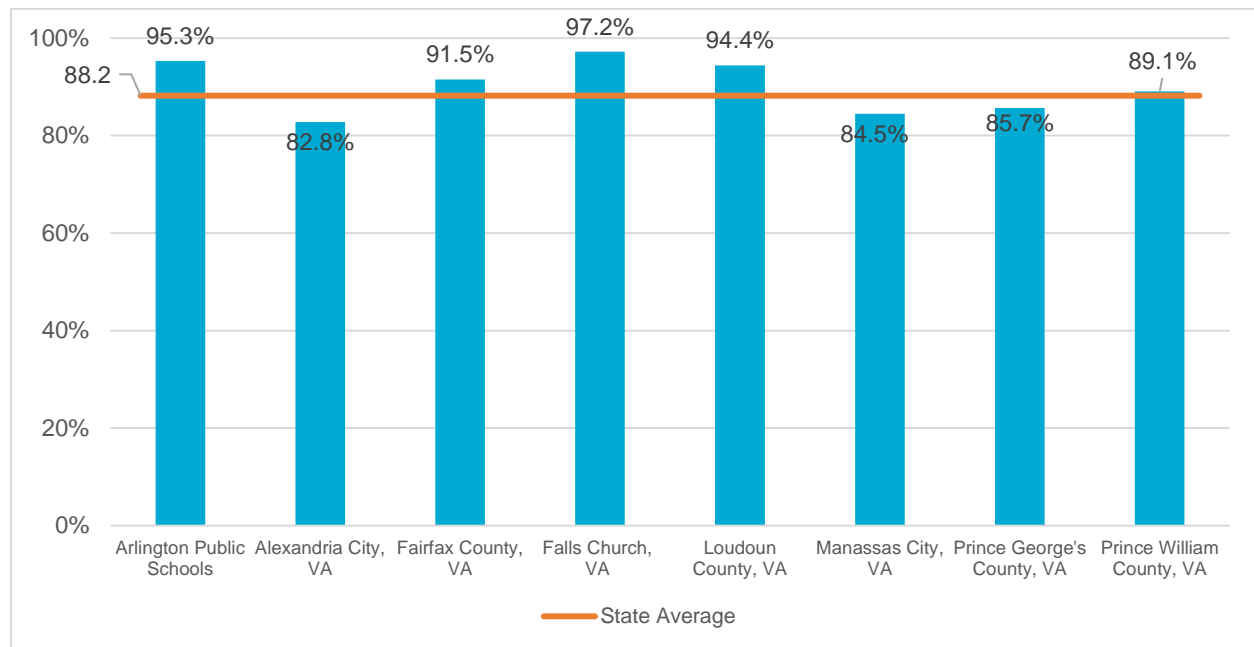
Dropout Rate of Students with IEPs Compared to Students Without IEPs and State Averages

APS's dropout rate for students with disabilities in 2018 was 6.1 percentage points lower than the state average for students with disabilities. APS's dropout rate for students with disabilities in 2018 decreased 3.2 percentage points from 2017, falling below the dropout rate for their non-disabled peers. Between 2014-17, APS's dropout rate for students with disabilities was lower than the state dropout rate for students with disabilities, however higher than the APS dropout rate for students without disabilities.

Exhibit 136. Dropout Rate of Students with IEPs at APS Compared to Students without IEPs and State Averages, 2014-18[132]

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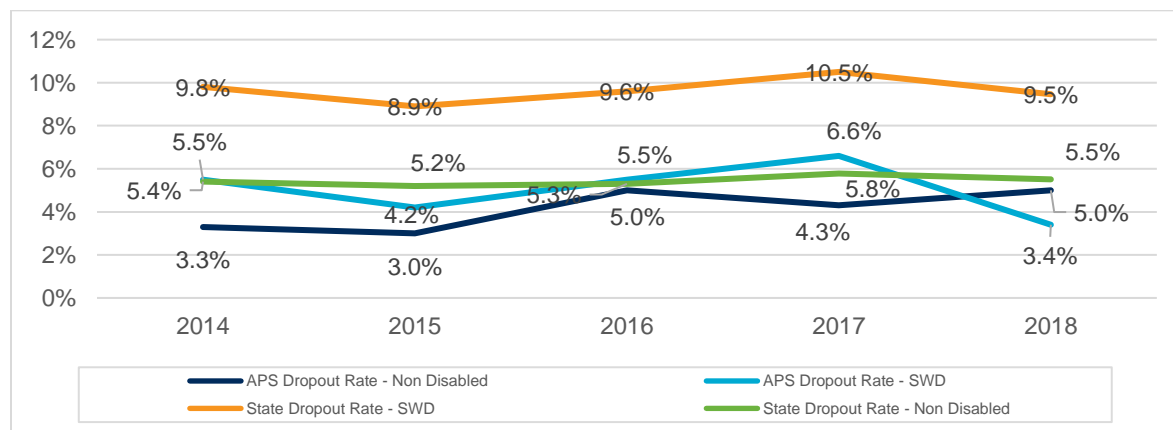
[132] Virginia Cohort Reports: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml.

Exhibit 137. Drop-out Rate of Students with IEPs at APS and Comparable Divisions, 2018
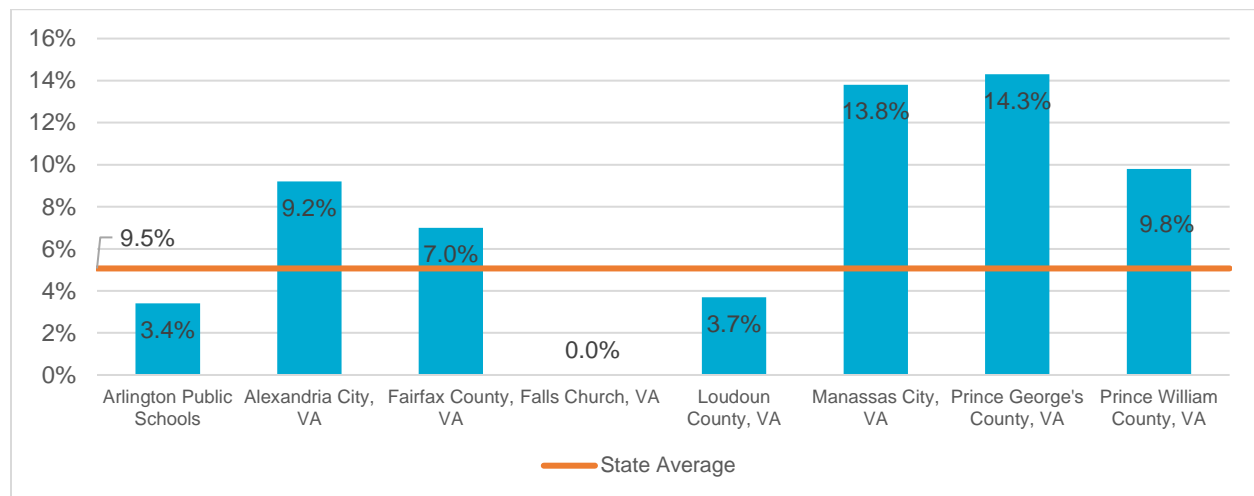
Restraint and Seclusion

While the restraint and seclusion of K-12 public school students is rare nationwide, it disproportionately affects students with disabilities.[133] As such, the analysis of restraint and seclusion practices in APS are contained in this section about students with IEPs.

Virginia Context

In 2015, the Virginia legislature passed a law directing the VDOE to adopt regulations governing the use of restraint and seclusion. In broad terms, restraint is defined as restricting a student's ability to freely move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head. Seclusion is defined as involuntarily confining a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.[134] Restraint or seclusion should never be used except when a child's behavior poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others.

These regulations were required to contain definitions, notification and reporting, criteria and restrictions for use, prevention, and follow up, and be consistent with:

- VDOE's 2009 Guidelines for the Development of Policies and Procedures for Managing Student Behavior in Emergency Situations
- Fifteen Principles – US ED's 2012 Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document[135]

Once finalized and adopted, these regulations will apply to all students and school personnel in Virginia's public elementary and secondary schools. The regulations were approved by the Governor and were published in the Virginia Register of Regulations on February 18, 2019. The regulation is currently in the proposed stage; a public comment forum was open from February 18, 2019 to April 19, 2019.

Should the regulations be approved as they currently stand, school divisions must create policies in line with these regulations which include a statement of intent to use positive behavioral supports to reduce the use of restraint and seclusion, provisions for the appropriate use of restraint and seclusion, and detail how the school division will comply with these regulations. These policies and procedures must be made

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[133] GAO, K-12 Education: Federal Data and Resources on Restraint and Seclusion, GAO-19-418T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2019).

[134] https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699795.pdf

[135] http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2016/02-feb/agenda-items/item-g-presentation.pdf

available to the public and posted on the school division's website. School divisions are not required to use seclusion or restraint in their schools, but those that opt to do so will be required to follow the finalized and adopted regulations.

Reporting Requirements

Every 2 years, ED collects and publicly reports restraint and seclusion data from nearly all public school districts and schools as part of its Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).[136] The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) uses CRDC data in its enforcement of various federal civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability. Districts self-report and certify the data. For districts of any size, if data are missing, districts are required to provide an explanation and submit an action plan for reporting the required data in the next CRDC.

In June 2019, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released an audit report on the inaccuracies in federal restraint and seclusion data. In short, the report found that for school year 2015-16 (the most recent data available), 70% of the more than 17,000 school districts in the U.S. reported zero incidents of restraint and zero incidents of seclusion. The analyses concluded that CRDC data do not accurately capture all incidents of restraint and seclusion in schools. Though the study focused on districts of student populations greater than 100,000, documents reviewed as part of the audit indicated that the misreporting of zeros occurred in smaller districts as well. The analysis raises questions about whether the confirmed instances of misreported zeros to the CRDC are indicative of a more pervasive pattern of underreporting of restraint and seclusion in U.S. public schools. The report provides several recommendations for ED. Districts nationwide should expect to see additional follow up and monitoring of restraint and seclusion data from ED in the near future.

District Practices

APS does not currently have an established board policy or guidance on restraint and seclusion. Focus group participants shared numerous, detailed examples of instances in which students were restrained or secluded in separate rooms in APS schools. There were also reports that seclusion rooms in schools vary in terms of size and that the approach to using them is different. APS does not currently track data pertaining to the use of seclusion and restraint or monitor how many times these approaches are used for students with disabilities.

Evidence-based Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training is offered every month. Any staff member can attend CPI training; however, APS prioritizes attendance for staff who work with students that need this support or are part of a school's crisis team. After staff complete it, they must take a refresher and then a re-training the following year. School staff requested additional training on how to do restraints properly and safely and how to use seclusion rooms.

Summary and Implications

APS has a strong foundation on which to build and further strengthen its special education program. Students with disabilities in APS outperform the state proficiency averages for reading and math SOLs and maintain a higher graduation rate than their peer students with disabilities statewide. The Teaching and Learning Framework establishes a vision for inclusion and begins to identify resources to support its implementation. Yet, in order for APS to develop a consistent, high quality special education program in *every* school, further close the opportunity gaps, and prepare students with disabilities for post-secondary success, it must begin to operate as a school system, rather than a system of schools. School leadership

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[136] Except for Puerto Rico, districts in US territories are not required to participate in the CRDC. Similarly, districts are not required to provide information for tribal schools operated by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Education. Schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity are also not required to participate, according to Education.

need clear guidance around what they can expect to receive in terms of support from OSE and what decisions they have the authority to make (versus policies or procedures to which they must abide). Special educators need robust professional learning opportunities and training, a keen understanding of and coaching support to implement specially designed instruction and interventions with fidelity for all students with IEPs, and a consistent approach to data collection, progress monitoring, and trend analysis review. By establishing a system of accountability that aligns with its policies and procedures and sets a vision for high expectations, greater consistency, compliance, and results, APS will create a robust special education program.

D. Section 504

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Increased Awareness. School staff and parents are generally more aware of the 504 process since the 2013 review and actively use 504 Plans to support students. **Policy and Procedure Manual.** School staff referenced the usefulness of the original 504 manual and that it has been updated routinely. As a result, staff believe policies and procedures related to Section 504 have been clearly established. **Knowledgeable and Supportive Staff.** On a whole, parents commented that the staff with whom they worked were knowledgeable about their children's needs and compassionate toward them. **Parent Voice.** A large percentage (90%) of parent respondents indicated that they felt they were a valued member of the 504 team and that their opinions were respected. **Electronic Documentation.** 504 Plans are now consistently developed electronically, allowing APS to run reports on which students have 504 Plans and what type of accommodations they receive.	**Disparate Identification Practices.** Over two-thirds of students with 504 Plans are White. Nearly one-third are also identified as gifted. Identification rates are higher at the secondary level. **Inconsistency of Service Delivery.** How accommodations are decided and implemented vary from school to school. There is a perception that policies and procedures are adhered to inconsistently. **Monitoring Fidelity of 504 Plan Implementation.** There is no consistent method for tracking the efficacy or implementation of accommodations or a routine approach to sharing information with parents. **Health Plans.** There is confusion among school staff as to when a student should receive a health plan and/or a 504 Plan and who provides the health accommodations listed. **Plan Access.** Access to 504 Plans seemed to vary by school and staff member.

Introduction

As was noted in the previous PCG report, Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, such as school districts. Generally, Section 504 applies to students with a <u>physical or mental impairment</u> that <u>substantially limits</u> a <u>major life activity</u>. These terms are not limited to lists of specific impairments and major life activities, and eligibility is to be broadly construed:

- There is not an exhaustive list provided for physical or mental impairments "because of the difficulty of ensuring the comprehensiveness of such a list."[137]
- The non-exhaustive list of major life activities includes items such as: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, working, etc.
- The term "substantially limits" is not defined and is expected to be construed broadly in favor of expansive coverage to the maximum extent permitted under the law."[138]

Since 2008, Section 504 has applied the expanded coverage required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) amendment. Accordingly, when determining a student's eligibility under Section 504, the process must exclude consideration of the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures that the student is using to accommodate his/her physical impairment, e.g., medication, academic or behavior support.

Section 504 requires recipients to provide to students with disabilities appropriate educational services designed to meet the individual needs of such students to the same extent as the needs of students without disabilities are met. An appropriate education for a student with a disability under the Section 504 regulations could consist of education in regular classrooms, education in regular classes with supplementary services, and/or special education and related services.[139]

The following section details the administration and implementation of Section 504 in APS.

Characteristics of Students with 504 Plans

Based on a comparison of state and nation data from the 2013-14 school year,[140] APS's incidence rate for students with a 504 Plan was 2.5%, 1 percentage point higher than the state average (1.5%), and 0.7 percentage points higher than the nation average (1.8%).

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[137] Protecting Students with Disabilities, Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities, Office of Civil Rights, January 19, 2012 at https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html.

[138] Office of Civil Rights, Questions and Answers on the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 for Students with Disabilities Attending Public Elementary and Secondary Schools at http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-504faq-201109.html.

[139] Protecting Students with Disabilities, Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities, Office of Civil Rights, January 19, 2012 at https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html.

[140] The most recent state and nation data available.

Exhibit 138. Percentage of APS Students with 504 Plans Compared to State and National Incidence Rates, 2013-14
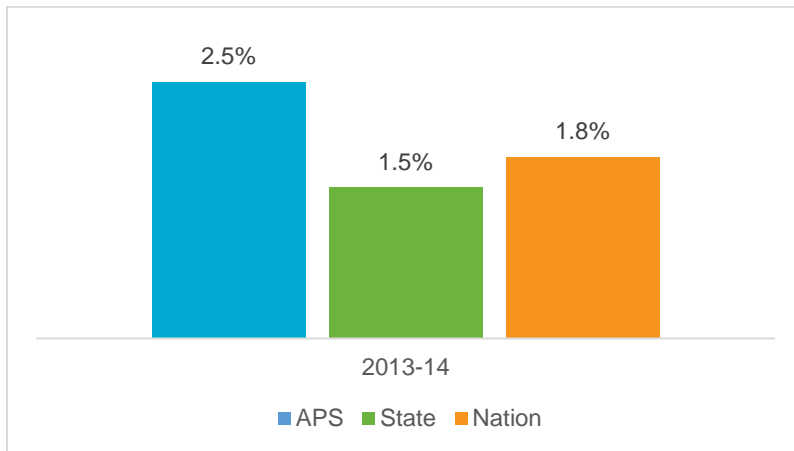
As noted in the 2013 PCG report, the percentage of APS students with 504 Plans in 2010-11 was 1.0%. During the 2017-18 school year, 3.7% of students at APS had a 504 Plan.

Overall Number of Students with 504 Plans by Grade

The highest number of students with 504 Plans is in grade 11, followed by grades 8, 10, and 12. Of all students with a 504 Plan, 43% are enrolled in grades 9-12.

Exhibit 139. Number of Students with 504 Plans by Grade, 2017-18
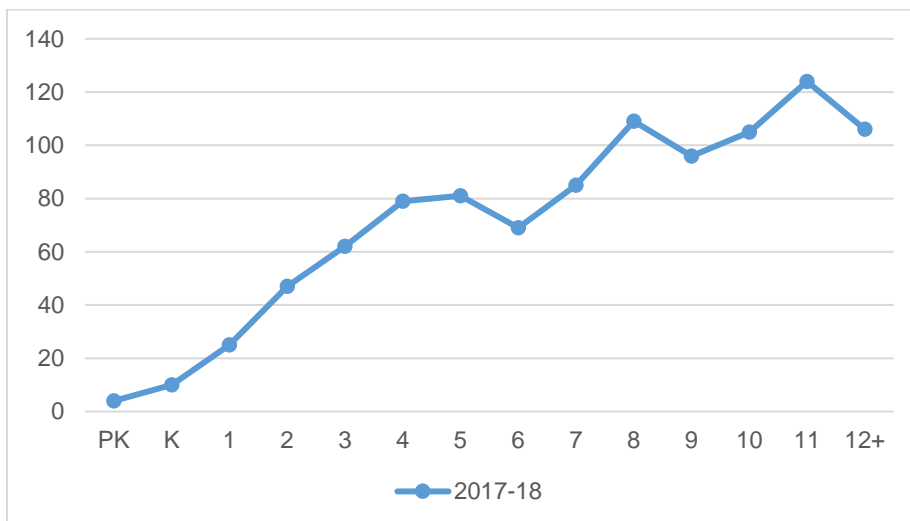
Incidence Rate by Economically Disadvantaged Status

Overall, 7.8% of students with a 504 Plan participate in free and reduced lunch compared to APS's all-student participation average of 33.9%.

Exhibit 140. Students with 504 Plans vs. Students without Participating in Free and/or Reduced Lunch (ages PreK-12), 2017-18
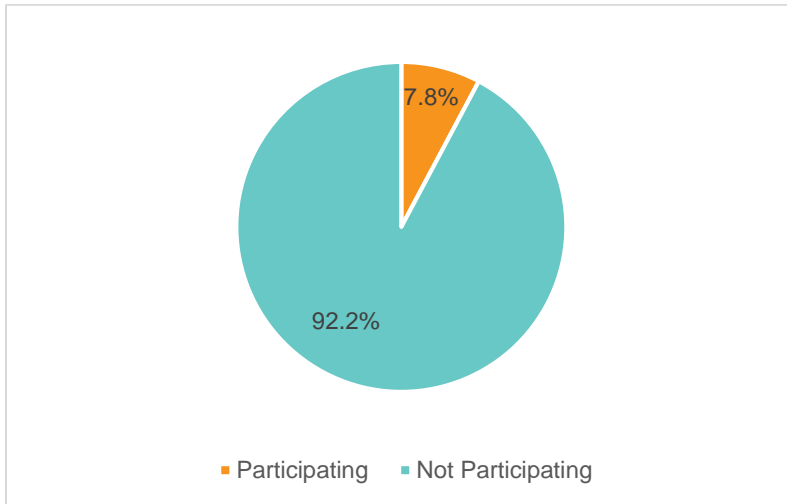
Overall Incidence Rates by Gender

Male students accounted for 65.4% of students with a 504 Plan, compared to females who accounted for 35.6% of students with a 504 Plan. For comparison, during 2017-18, 51.5% of APS students were male and 48.5% were female.

Exhibit 141. Percent of APS Male vs. Female Students with 504 Plans (Grades K-12), 2017-18
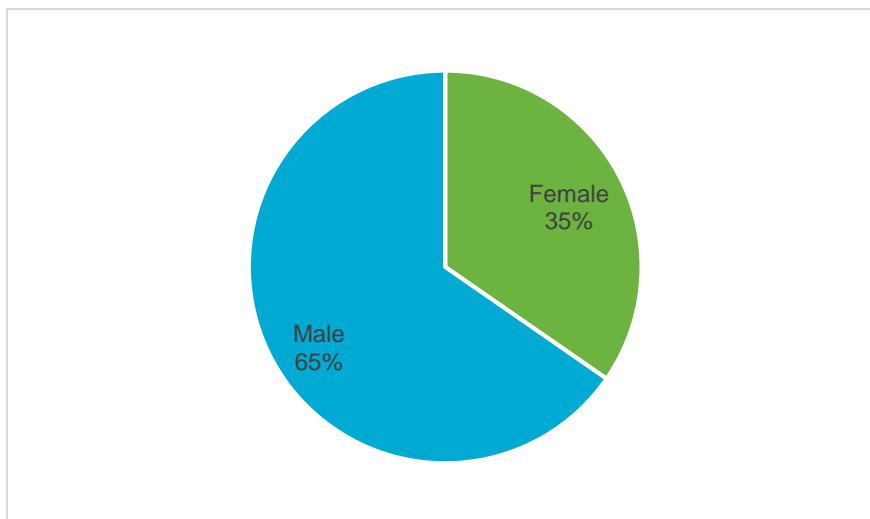
Incidence Rates by Race/Ethnicity

The majority of students with 504 Plans are White (70.2%), followed by Hispanic students (13.9%). Overall, 5.9% of White students at APS have a 504 Plan.

Exhibit 142. Percent of APS Students with 504 Plans (Grades K-12) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18[141]
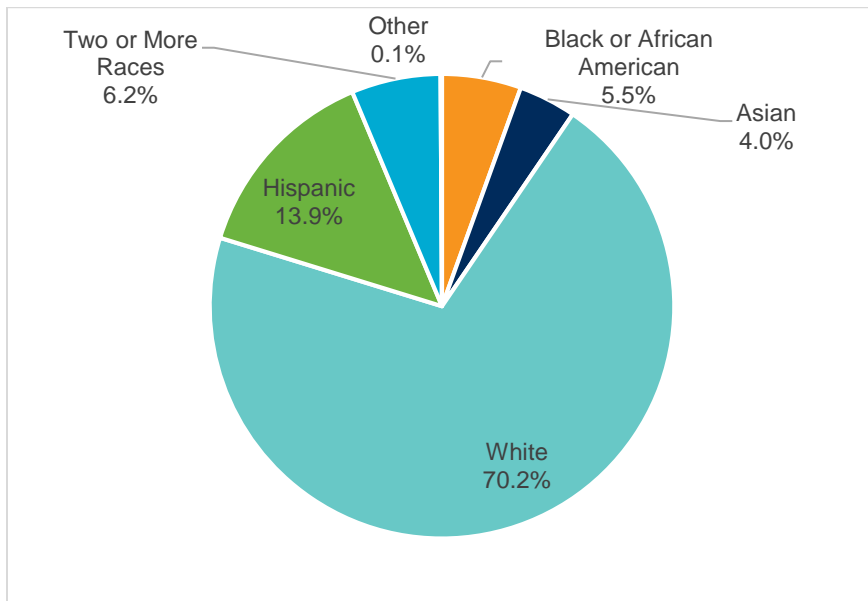
Exhibit 143. Percent of APS Students with and without 504 Plans (Ages 6-21) by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18
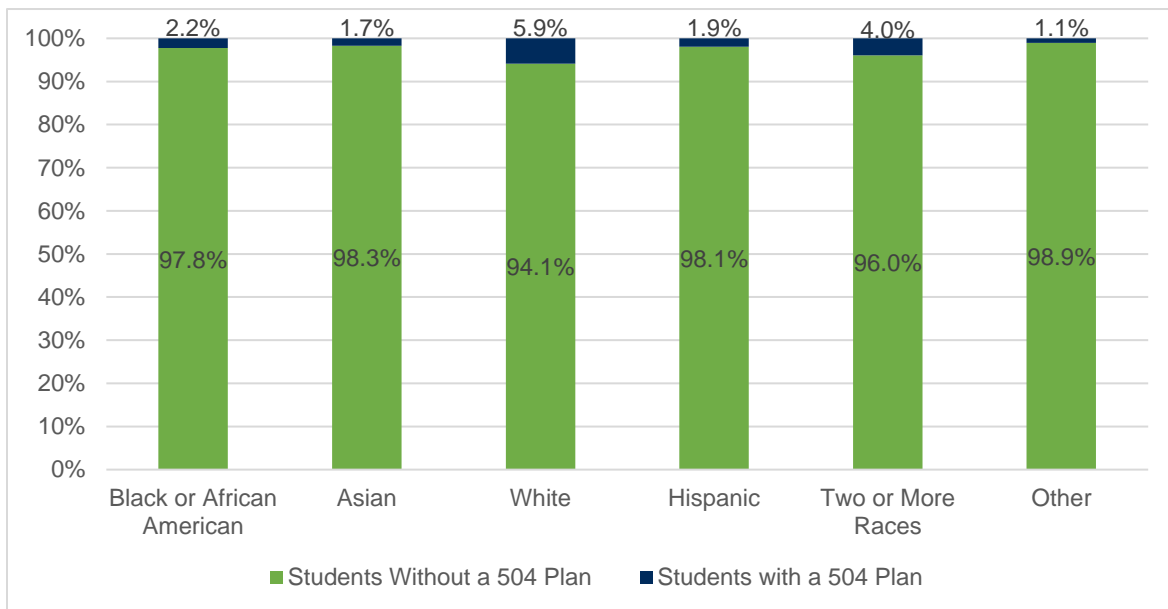
Overall Incidence Rates for EL Students with 504 Plans

EL students accounted for 5.5% of all students with a 504 Plan.

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[141] Other race category includes American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Exhibit 144. Percent of APS Students with and without a 504 Plan by EL Status, 2017-18
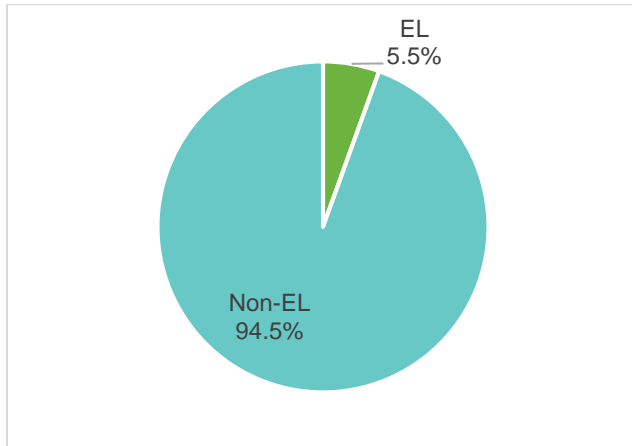
Overall Incidence Rates for Gifted Students with 504 Plans

Nearly a third of students, 32.2%, with a 504 Plan are identified as gifted. In comparison, a quarter of all students in APS are identified as gifted.

Exhibit 145. Percent of APS Students with and without 504 Plans by Gifted Status, 2017-18
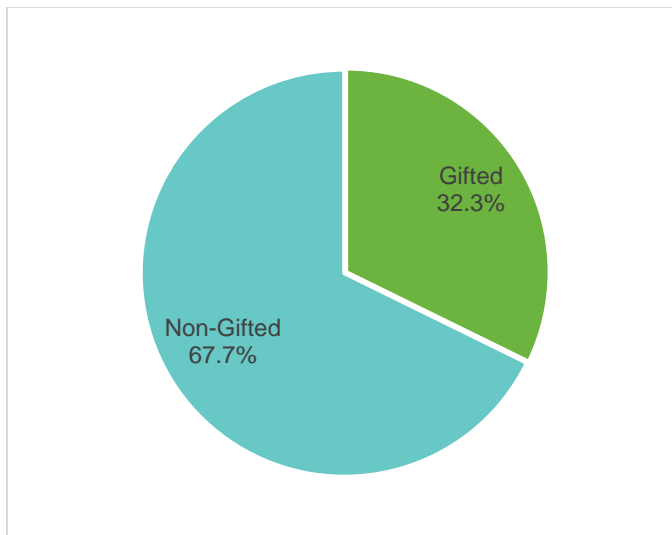
Advanced Course Participation

In 2018, APS offered 358 Advanced Courses across 12 schools. Overall, 60.3% of students in grades 6-12 were enrolled in at least one advanced course. Of all students enrolled in an advanced course at APS, students with a 504 Plan accounted for 6.8% of course participation.

Exhibit 146. Percent of Students with a 504 Plan vs. Students Without Participating in Advanced Courses, 2017-18
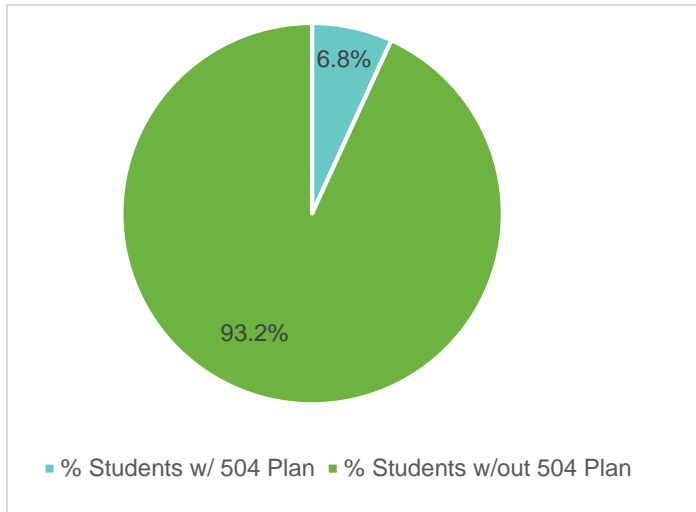
Of all students with a 504 Plan in grades 6-12, 73.6% were enrolled in at least one advanced course, compared to 59.5% of students without a 504 Plan.

Exhibit 147. Percentage of Students with a 504 Plan Enrolled in Advanced Courses vs. Students Without a 504 Plan (Grades 6-12), 2017-18
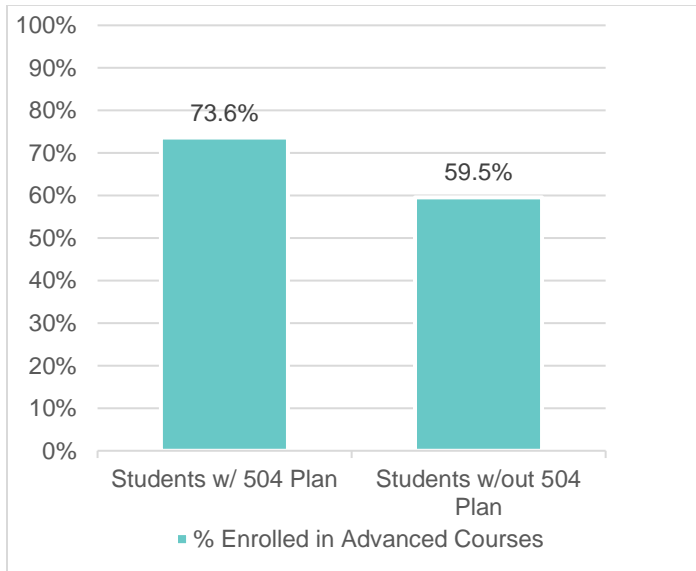
Implementation of 504 Services and Supports

504 Plans and Individual Health
Care Plans (IHCP)

A **Section 504 Plan** is a legally binding
document designed to assist an eligible
student by setting out the services
he/she will need in order to participate
in the general education program.
Services are those things that are
added to accommodate the effects of a
disability (e.g., transportation for a
student in a wheelchair).

Students with health conditions
sometimes require a treatment or
emergency plan, known as an
Individual Health Care Plan or **Health
Alert,** to be implemented in the school
setting. This document reflects the
student's medical needs and details
how to deal with what might happen
with a student medically while the
he/she is in school.

The goal of 504 Plans is for eligible students to be
educated, with the services, accommodations, or
educational aids they might need, in regular classrooms.
Once developed, a 504 Plan is a legally binding document
between the school district and the student. Teachers and
other school staff must implement the designated services
and strategies identified on a student's plan. While there is
no legal requirement to review a 504 Plan each year, APS
has adopted the best practice of conducting meetings
annually with parents.

Plan Development and Annual Meetings

Initial Plan Development. Once the 504 eligibility team
has determined that a student has a physical or mental
impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, a
team meeting with an interdisciplinary set of teachers,
counselors, social workers, etc. and parents is held. The
team composition should vary by student need and should,
according to APS guidance, include the Section 504
Coordinator/Student Support Coordinator. At the
elementary level, an administrator is the case manager for
504 Plans. At the secondary level, the student's school
counselor is the case manager.

Focus group participants shared that this meeting is
structured and that there is a standard narrative used to
walk parents through the plan development. Some shared
concerns about how parents who are non-native English speakers or from other countries can be
overwhelmed by the process.

Annual Meetings. Focus group participants shared that 504 meetings occur once per school year. The
APS 504 Manual also notes that it is an expectation that 504 teams conduct these meetings annually.
The majority of the plan review meetings occur at the beginning of the school year. Parents reported that
school teams are generally proactive with scheduling these reviews and are open to holding additional
meetings as needed. Many indicated that the 504 team helped them understand the process and listened
to make sure their child's needs were being met and clearly documented. Several offered
recommendations related to the frequency of 504 meetings: 1) that a review meeting be held twice per
year, once at the beginning and another in the second half of the year, and 2) that there should be a
required transition meeting for school level (elementary to middle school, for example) changes to
prepare both school teams and students.

Focus group participants explained that school psychologists or social workers may attend reviews for
students with diagnoses of ADHD or other mental health/cognitive issues, as appropriate to the student's
concerns, though this may need to occur with more consistency.

Health Plans. Nurses manage the development of the Health Plan and serve as case managers for
these plans. They send questionnaires homes to parents to obtain initial information. They then seek
authorization from the student's doctor and complete standardized templates and forms that align with the
treatment for each condition. Nurses reported that they work with students to increase their level of

independence and autonomy in managing their condition. In the summer, nurses contact parents, as
needed, to get more information and possible triggers on students' conditions before school starts.

Though some staff focus group participants were able to describe the difference between a 504 Plan and
a Health Plan, there reportedly is confusion about when a student with a medical Health Plan can or
should be considered for a 504 Plan.

Survey Results

The following section includes survey data from the Parent 504 Survey specific to the development of the
504 Plan and annual meetings.

**Exhibit 148. Parent 504 Survey: In planning for my child's most recent Section 504 Plan, I was a valued
member of the team and my opinion was respected.**
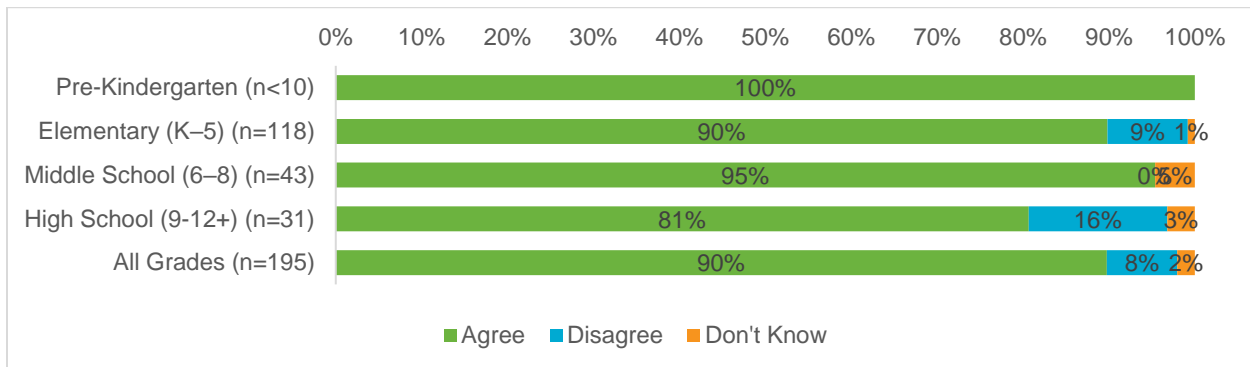
A large percentage (90%) of parent respondents indicated that they felt they were a valued member of
the 504 team and that their opinions were respected. There were variances by grade level, with 100% of
Pre-K parents indicating agreement and a lower 81% of high school parents.

**Exhibit 149. Parent 504 Survey: My input was taken into consideration when developing and reviewing my
child's 504 Plan.**
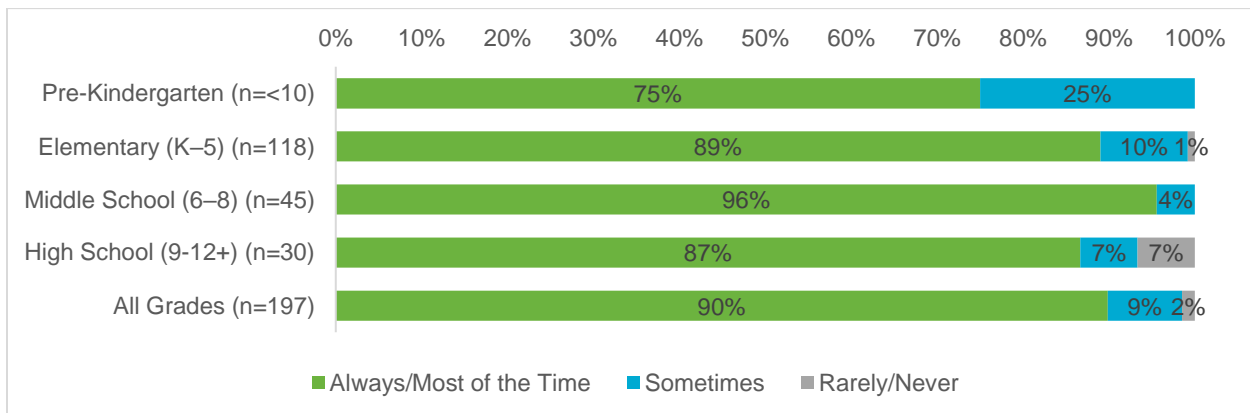
Most parents of students in middle school (96%) indicated that their input was taken into consideration
developing and reviewing 504 plans. These rates were the lowest at the Pre-K level (75%).

Exhibit 150. Parent 504 Survey: I understand what is discussed at Section 504 meetings.
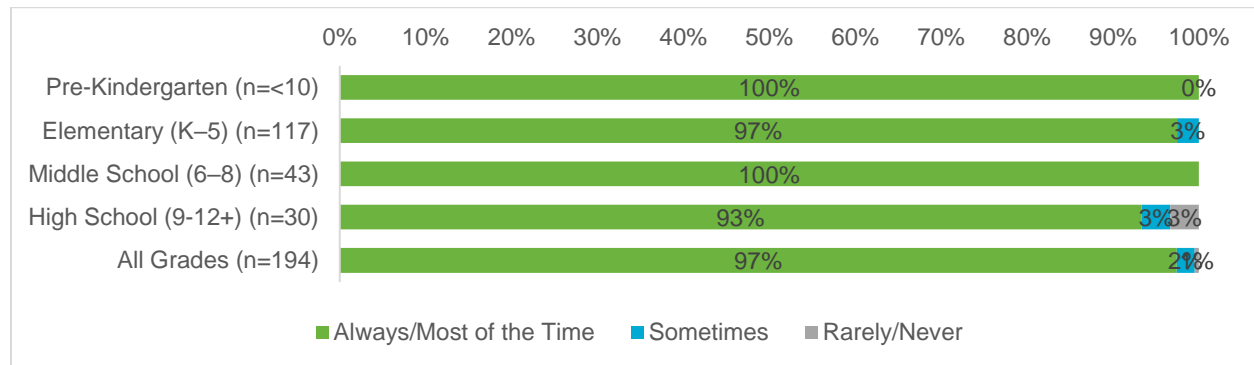
Across all grades, a high percentage of parent respondents (97% for all grades) always/most of the time understand what is discussed at 504 meetings. These rates only dip slightly at the high school level (93%).

Exhibit 151. Parent 504 Survey: I feel comfortable asking questions and expressing my concern at Section 504 meetings
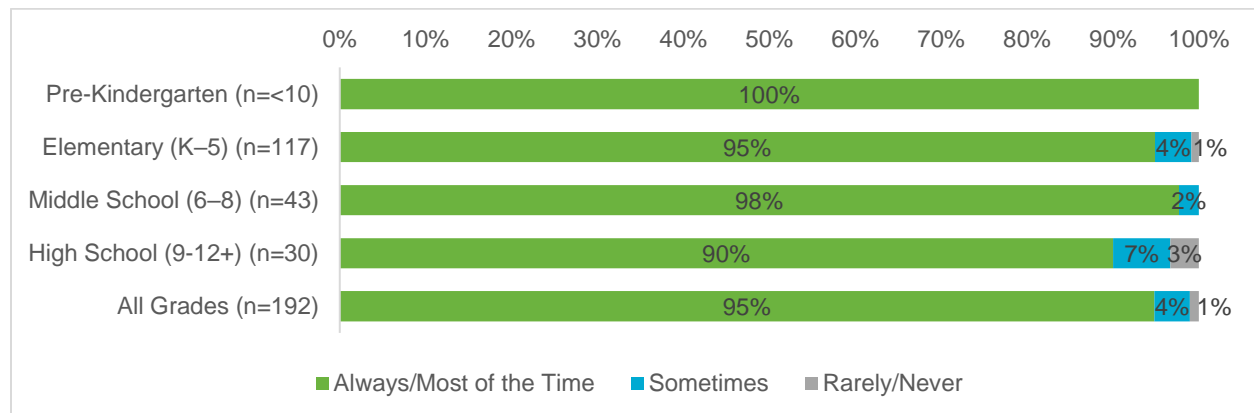
Similar to the previous charts, parents indicated, at a high rate, that they always/most of the time feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns at 504 meetings. The all grades percent was 95%, with the highest rate for Pre-K (100%) and the lowest at high school (90%).

Service Delivery

Accommodations, Related Services, and Assistive Technology. Focus group participants shared that, overall, teachers and other school staff implement the accommodations included in 504 Plans. PCG did not hear of any situations in which a student's 504 Plan was not being implemented; however, parents shared their worry that substitute teachers might not be aware of a student's required accommodations when the teacher is out and that they were uninformed about the plan was implemented. Though not an exhaustive list, the most frequently cited examples of accommodations included:

- Extended time (for testing, reading, etc.)
- Adaptive physical education
- Auditory books
- Preferential seating
- Extra transition time between classes
- Access to the counselor

Extended test time was cited as one of the primary accommodations included on 504 Plans across APS. School staff reported that managing extended test time for advanced placement courses specifically is overwhelming. They are also reportedly seeing more students with 504 Plans for allergies.

Several parent focus group participants noted that there are differences across schools in how accommodations are decided. Some shared concerns that, in some cases, teachers and administrators do not understand dyslexia or ADHD so they do not know how to develop relevant and appropriate accommodations.

Related service providers may be asked to consult with the 504 Team to identify ways in which students can access the curriculum. Related services can be provided through 504 Plans, but focus group participants noted that this rarely happens. Similarly, students may occasionally receive access to assistive technology through a 504 Plan. One example is for speech-to-text translation for students with hearing impairments. Use of AT as a 504 Plan accommodation did not appear to be a widespread practice.

Plan Access. Access to 504 Plans seemed to vary by school and staff member. Some said they receive hard copies at the beginning of the school year and had to sign that they received them. Others said it was not an easy task to track down plans for students in their classes. APS recently moved to using Synergy to document 504 Plans, and it is expected that electronic access will be available as annual plans are created in the system.

Health Plans. School staff raised concerns about how specific medical accommodations (such as monitoring glucose levels for students with diabetes) are handled. Nurses are Arlington County employees and not responsible for ongoing implementation of 504 Plans. Principals sometimes have to designate a person in the schools to monitor intensively when health related issues arise. This was noted as a widespread tension.

Funding. In APS, if the 504 Team determines that a student requires a device or item, funding can either come from the Student Services budget or from the school budget. Staff noted the budgetary challenges of providing accommodations, related services, or assistive technology when there is no dedicated funding for Section 504.

It should be noted that Section 504 is an unfunded mandate. School divisions must develop local processes for addressing student needs that incur costs, such as devices or equipment, as well as staffing needs which arise due to student needs.

Survey Results

The following section includes survey data from the Staff Survey specific to service delivery.

Exhibit 152. Staff Survey: My school delivers highly effective supports for students with Section 504 Plans.
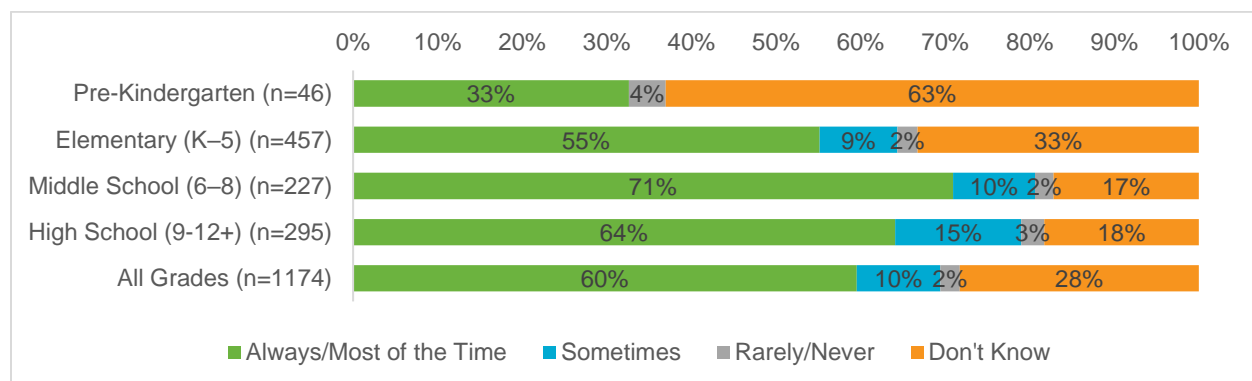
For all grades, 60% of staff report that their schools deliver highly effective supports for students with 504 Plans. The rate was higher at the high school level (64%) and lower at the elementary level (55%).

Exhibit 153. Parent 504 Survey: Is your child consistently receiving all of the accommodations and modifications that are listed on his/her Section 504 Plan?
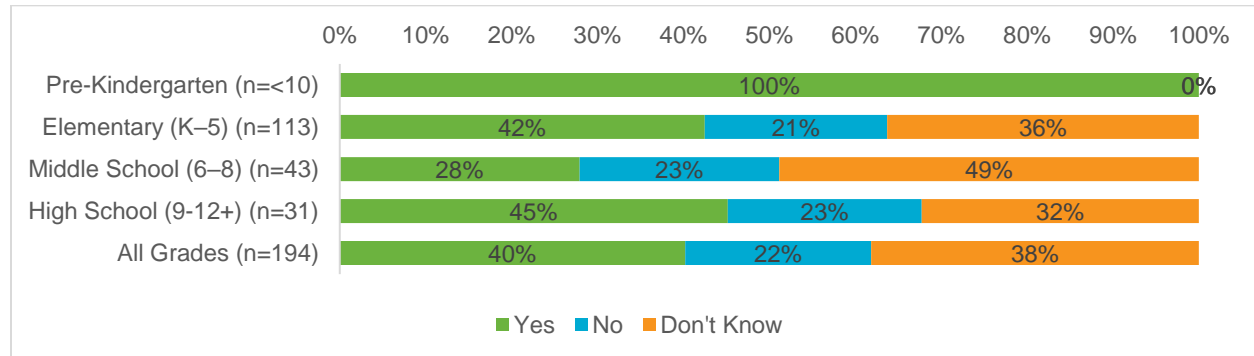
Across all grades, 40% of parents responded that their children were consistently receiving all of the accommodations listed in the 504 Plan. Another 22% reported that this was not the case, and another 40% reported that they did not know.

Exhibit 154. Parent 504 Survey: I am satisfied with my child's overall Section 504 program.
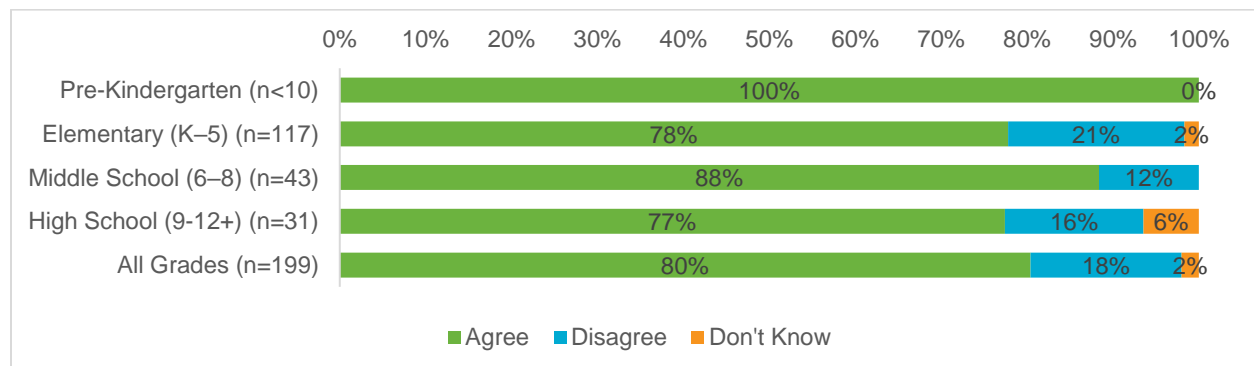
Across all grade levels, the majority of parents (80%) responded that they were satisfied with their children's overall 504 program. This high percentage was similarly reflected across each grade level.

Exhibit 155. Parent 504 Survey: My child's 504 Plan provides the support he/she needs to be successful.
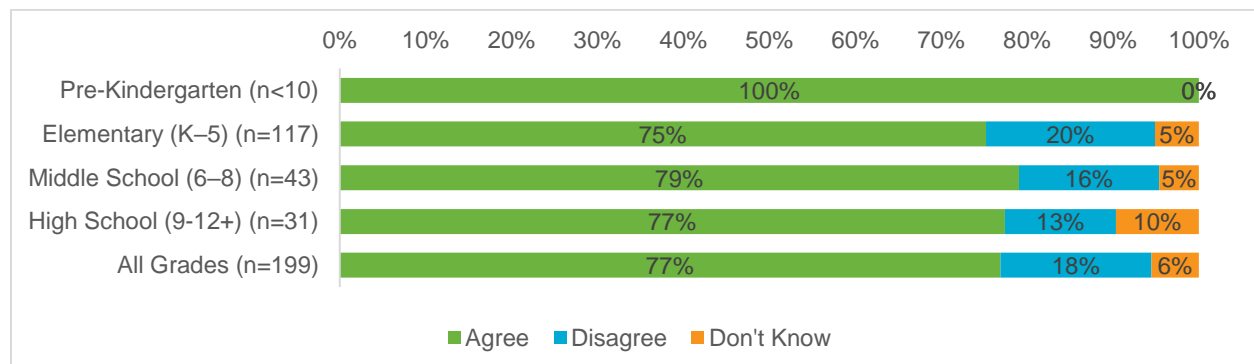
A high percentage of parents in all grades (77%) indicated that their children's 504 Plans provide them with the support they need to be successful. This was relatively consistent in each of the grade levels.

Exhibit 156. Parent 504 Survey: I am satisfied with my child's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations relating to my child's disability.
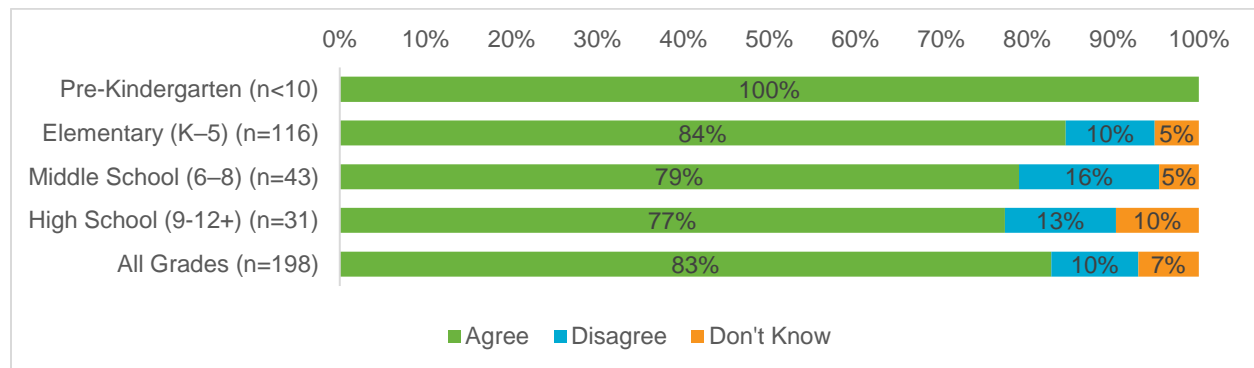
Across all grades, 83% of parents agree that they are satisfied with their children's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations relating to their disability.

Exhibit 157. Parent 504 Survey: My child's teachers have high expectations for my child.
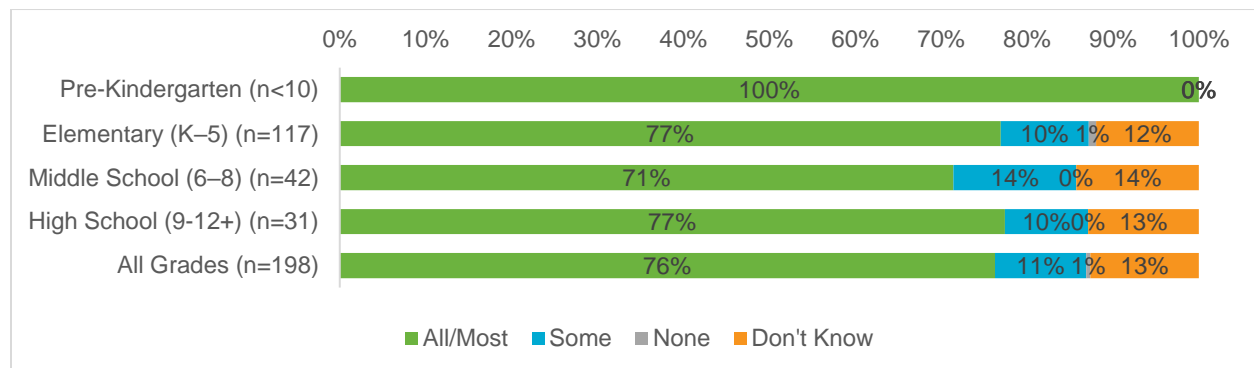
Across all grades, 76% of parents believe that their children's teachers have high expectations for their children all or most of the time.

Plan Efficacy and Communication

School staff reported that they actively seek the input of parents around 504 Plan development and aim to be as responsive as possible to parental requests/inquiries. Parent focus group participants agreed that schools are generally responsive when they reach out with requests or concerns and that they often hear back quickly. Some noted that this is a strength of staff.

There were two common themes among parents participating in focus groups and those who responded to the online survey, the request for: 1) more communication around 504 Plans, and 2) more information on the impact and effectiveness of the 504 accommodations on their children's education.

Parents commented that they:

- are unclear about how frequently they will hear from the school, whether it is their responsibility to initiate that conversation, etc.;
- would like more frequent check-ins to follow up on the plan;
- want to know how the 504 Plan is being implemented, how their children are doing with the accommodations, and how effective the accommodations are (so if adjustments are needed, they can be made quickly);
- have to reach out to individual teachers to get a progress update; and

- are not sure if all teachers have access to and read the 504 Plans.

When parents are proactive about asking for updates, they said that they do receive them. Parents noted some specific instances in which staff were proactive and communicated with them. This was often person specific though, and did not appear to be a school or district expectation.

Parents offered the following recommendations:

- to the extent possible, hold a mid-term review and/or progress update. This should be a district expectation and not something the parent initiates.
- provide some communication that students' teachers have read the 504 Plan and information about how they are providing the accommodations
- help us understand how to help our children with using their accommodations

It should be noted that there are no state or federal guidelines regarding the development of a 504 Plan, nor are there requirements regarding plan implementation monitoring or communication under Section 504. However, given 504 Plans are designed to provide specific, targeted support to students needing accommodations and require the financial investment of APS to implement, a routine review of their effectiveness, on a per student basis, would be beneficial.

Survey Results

Included below are Staff and Parent 504 survey results regarding plan efficacy and communication.

Exhibit 158. Staff Survey: There is sufficient communication between teachers, nurses, and other staff to implement Section 504 Plans.
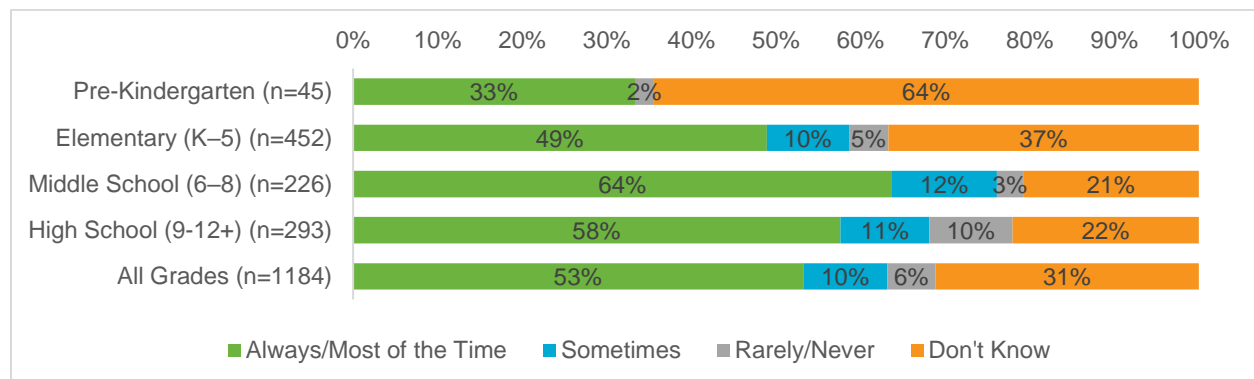
At the middle school level, 64% of staff indicated that there is sufficient communication between teachers, nurses, and other staff to implement 504 Plans. This percentage was lower at the Pre-K level (33%) and at the elementary level (49%) and high school level (58%).

Exhibit 159. Parent 504 Survey: Teachers/school staff have communicated effectively with me about my child's Section 504 Plan.
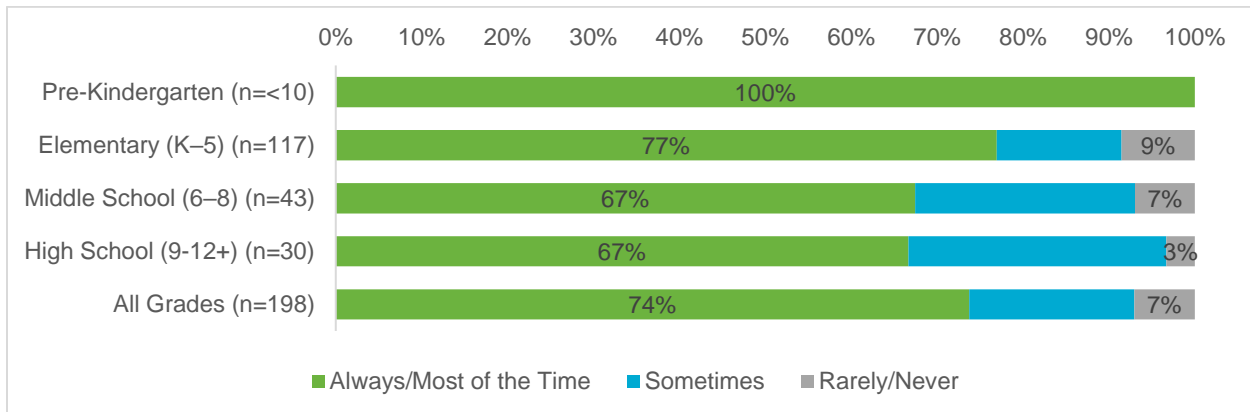
Regarding communication, 74% of all parents responded that teachers/school staff have communicated effectively about their students' 504 Plans always or most of the time. This varied by grade level, however, with 77% agreeing at elementary level and 67% agreeing at the middle school and high school levels.

Exhibit 160. Parent 504 Survey: I am getting adequate information about the implementation of my child's accommodations.
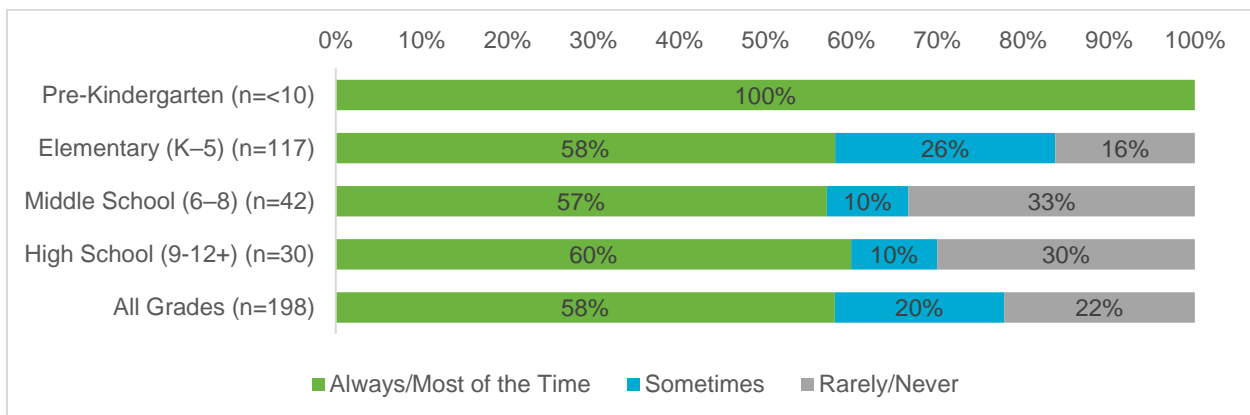
On the parent survey, just over half of respondents (58%) from all grades indicated that they always or most of the time receive adequate information about the implementation of their children's accommodations. Another 20% responded that this sometimes occurs.

Exhibit 161. Staff Survey: There is effective communication and collaboration among staff at my school and parents when students with Section 504 Plans transition from one level to another (for example, elementary to middle, middle to high, high to postsecondary).
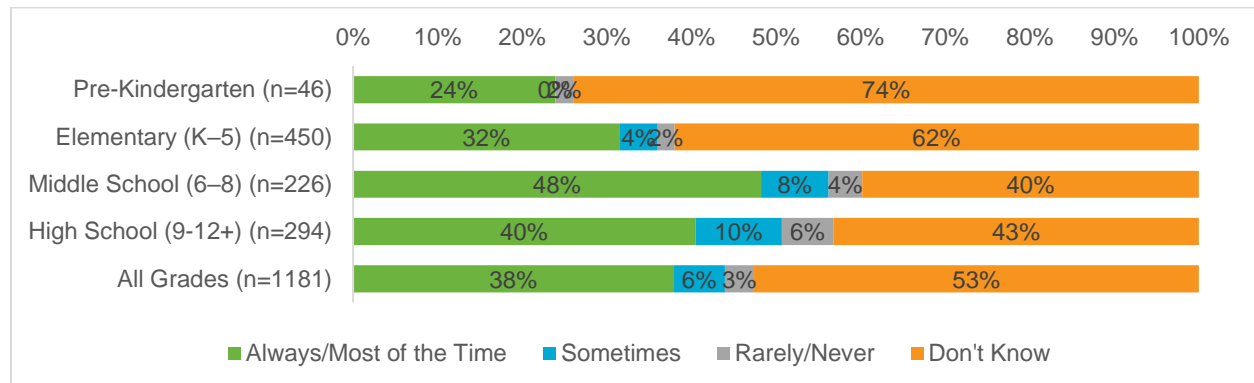
Over half of staff respondents (53%) indicated that they did not know if there was effective communication and collaboration among staff and parents when students transitioned from one school level to the next. This rate varied by school level.

Exhibit 162. Staff Survey: The Section 504 process in the school involves parents and school staff as partners in making recommendations.
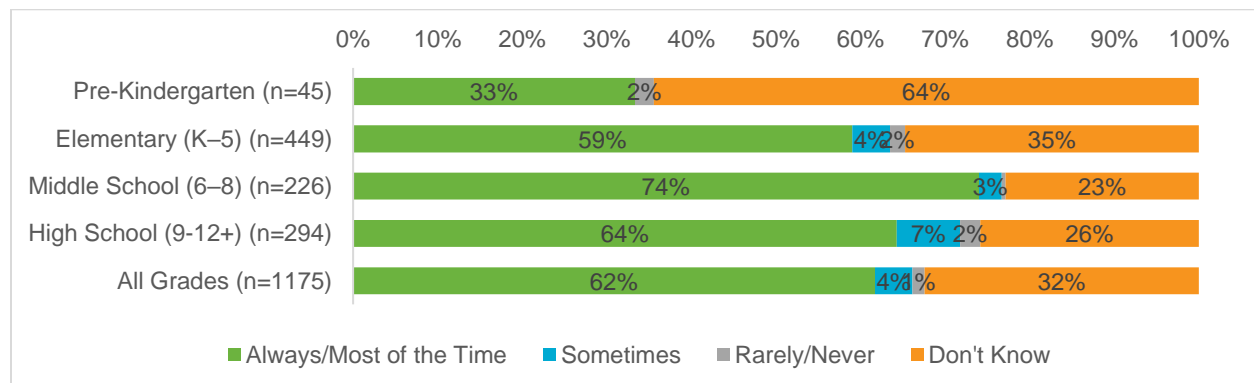
Of staff respondents, across all grades 62% indicated that the school involves parents and school staff as partners in making recommendations. This was lowest at the Pre-K level (33%) and highest at the middle school level (74%).

Exhibit 163. Parent 504 Survey: In implementing my child's Section 504 Plan, I am a respected partner with my child's teachers and other support providers.
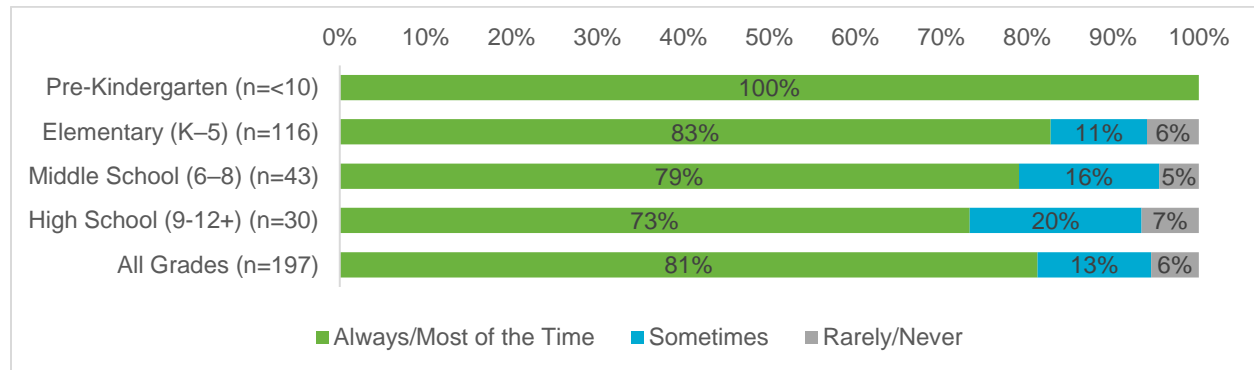
When asked if they are treated as respected partners, 81% of parents indicated that they are always or most of the time. This percentage was lower (73%) at the middle school level.

Exhibit 164. Parent 504 Survey: School staff respond to my concerns in a reasonable period of time.
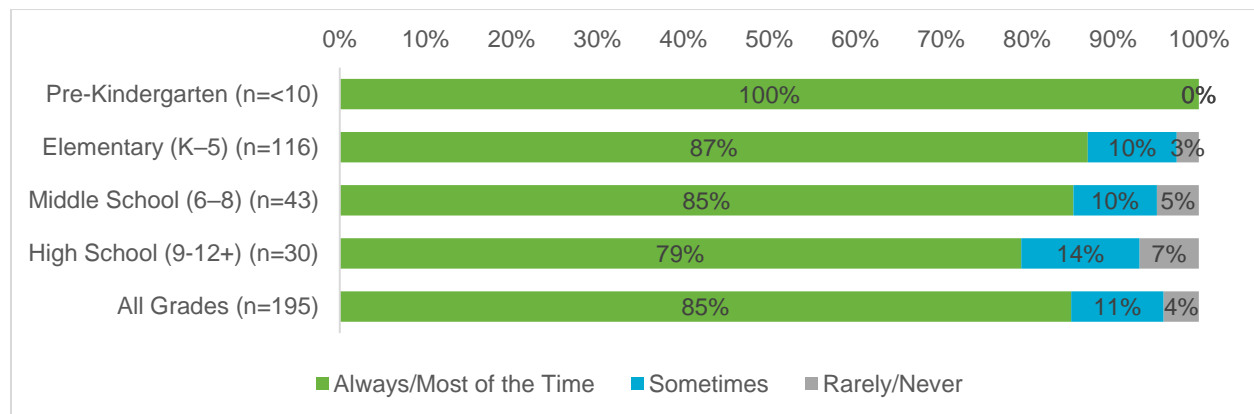
A high percent (85%) of parent across all grades responded that school staff respond to their concerns within a reasonable amount of time. This rate was higher at elementary (87%) and lower at high school (79%).

Staff Knowledge and Understanding of Student Needs

Focus group participants noted that the majority of school-based staff are committed to supporting the needs of students with 504 Plans. On a whole, parents commented that the staff with whom they worked were knowledgeable about their children's needs and compassionate toward them. Specifically, parents shared the following examples:

- School staff are respectful and discrete about my son's condition
- Teachers and counselors were excellent… open, honest, responsive, and coordinated
- My daughter is receiving support from teachers and counseling staff as needed and is being held to high standards that reflect her actual intelligence and not her limitations.
- Teachers are flexible and willing to be creative to solve problems.
- The teachers are fantastic, knowledgeable, and care about my child. They work very hard to accommodate him to make sure he is successful.
- They are caring, show interest in helping my child succeed and maintain high standards. Teachers are aware of my child's accommodations and make every effort to help.

Survey Results

Included below are Staff and Parent 504 survey results related to staff knowledge and understanding of student need.

Exhibit 165. Parent 504 Survey: My child's teachers are aware of his/her needs.
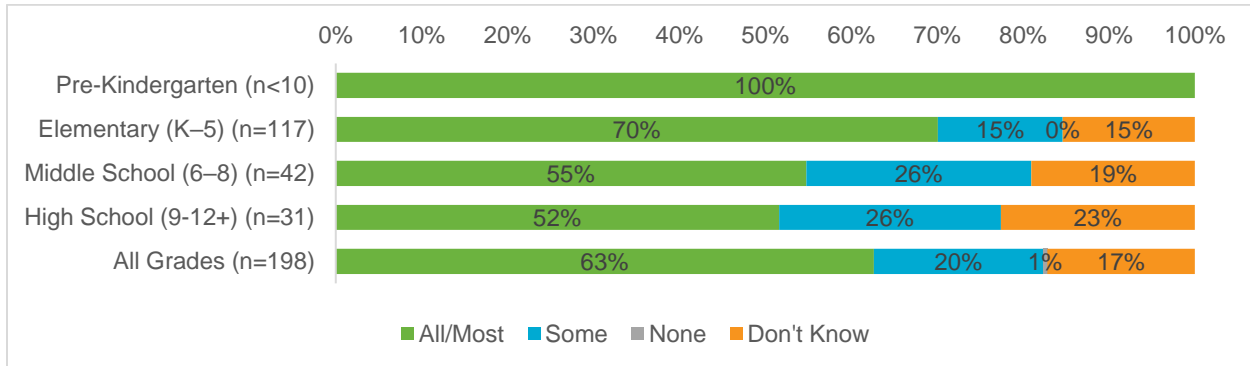
Just over half of parents at the high school (52%) and middle school (55%) indicated that all or most of their children's teachers are aware of their needs. At the elementary level, this rate was higher at 70%.

Exhibit 166. Parent 504 Survey: My child's teachers are knowledgeable about my child's disability.
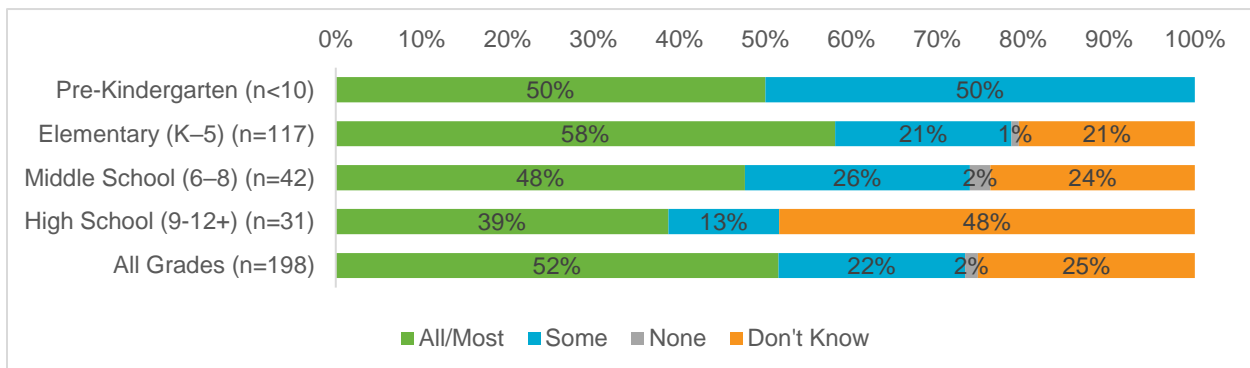
Similarly, over half (52%) of parents across all grades reported that all or most of their children's teachers were knowledgeable about their disabilities. The rate was higher for elementary (58%) and significantly lower for high school (39%).

Exhibit 167. Parent 504 Survey: School staff who work with my child are skilled in providing the services and support he/she needs.
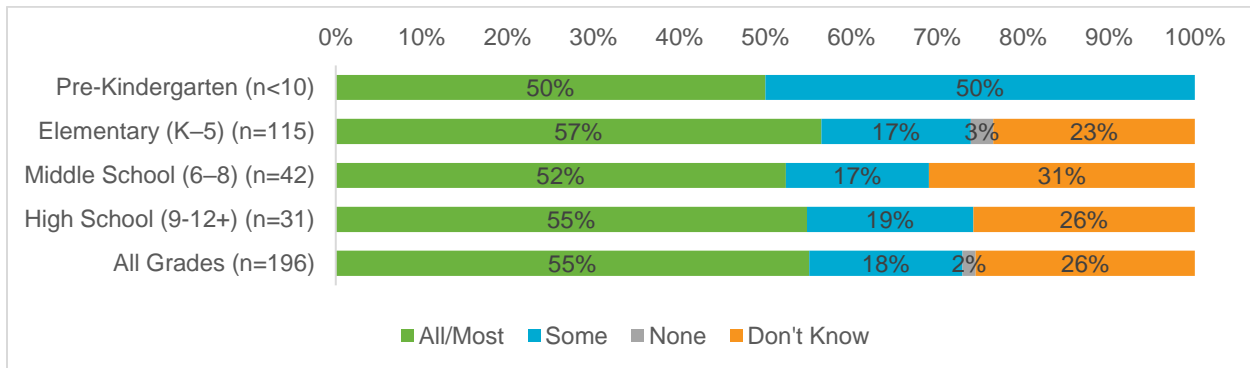
Across all grades, 55% of parents indicated that all or most of the school staff who work with their children are skilled in providing the services and support he/she needs. Another 18% responded that some of the school staff working with their children are skilled in these areas.

Exhibit 168. Staff Survey: General education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping the students with Section 504 Plans in their classrooms.
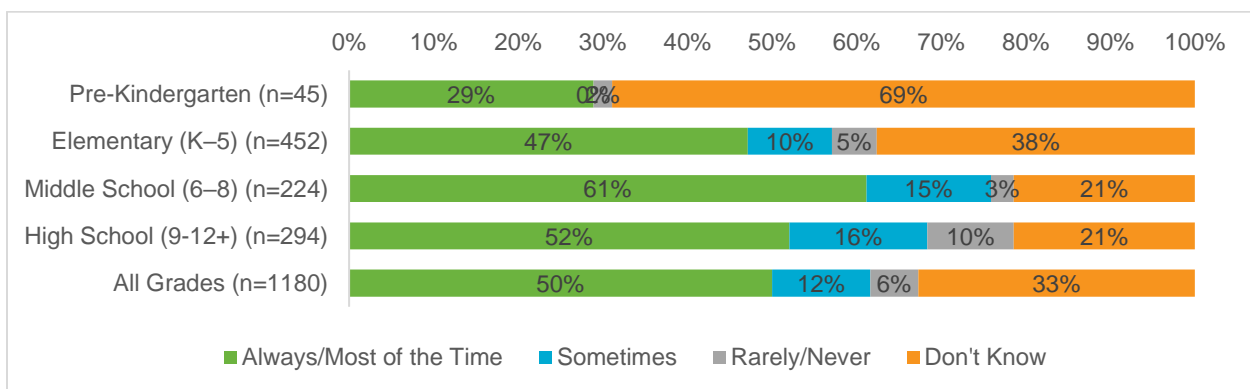
Half of all staff (50%) report that they believe general education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping students with 504 Plans in their classrooms always or most of the time.

Exhibit 169. Staff Survey: My school's administration provides support to staff when facing challenges related to teaching or service delivery for students with Section 504 plans.
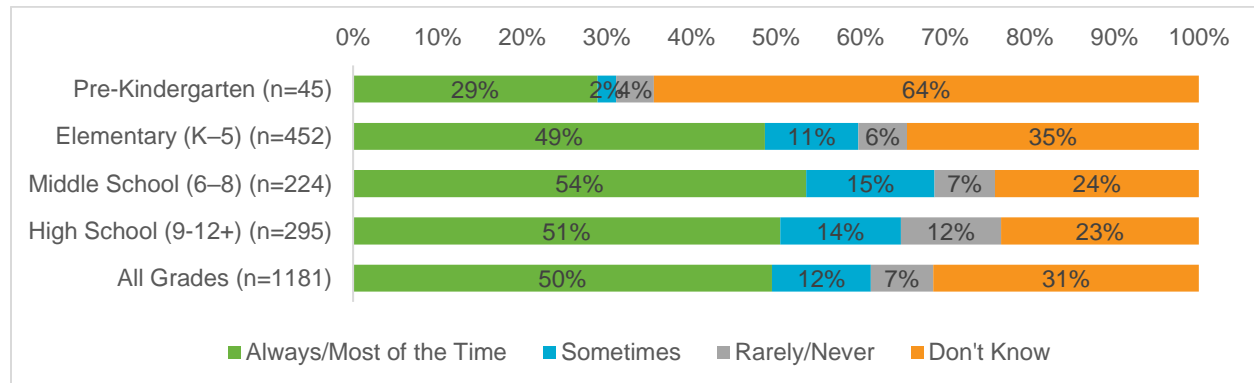
Similarly, half of all staff (50%) report that their school's administration provides support to staff when facing challenges related to teaching or to service delivery for students with 504 Plans.

Professional Learning

Focus group participants noted a general increase over the past few years in the amount of professional learning opportunities offered specific to Section 504. This has contributed to school teams having a better understanding of their roles and functions with the 504 process.

Though this has helped with providing a basic and broad understanding of Section 504, many cited variabilities among staff's understanding of Section 504 (leading to an inconsistency in practice). They also cited a need for more in depth training, specifically on:

- what should or should not be included in a 504 Plan
- what accommodations are appropriate
- deeper understanding of the law
- the distinction between 504 Plans and Health Plans
- referral processes for 504 and special education
- how to use Synergy to document and access 504 Plans

Classroom teachers requested dedicated training, as they said they receive most of their knowledge through their building's 504 coordinator. Online learning modules on key concepts and requirements of Section 504 would be beneficial to those who interact with students, such as teachers, paraprofessionals, librarians, so that those staff gain confidence in their ability to recognize, refer, and respond to student needs, as related to Section 504.

Nurses provide a 10-minute back-to-school training for school staff on the signs of anaphylactic shock and how to administer Epinephrine.

Survey Results

Included on the following page are Staff survey results related to professional learning.

Exhibit 170. Staff Survey: The district provides useful professional development related to meeting the needs of students with Section 504 Plans.
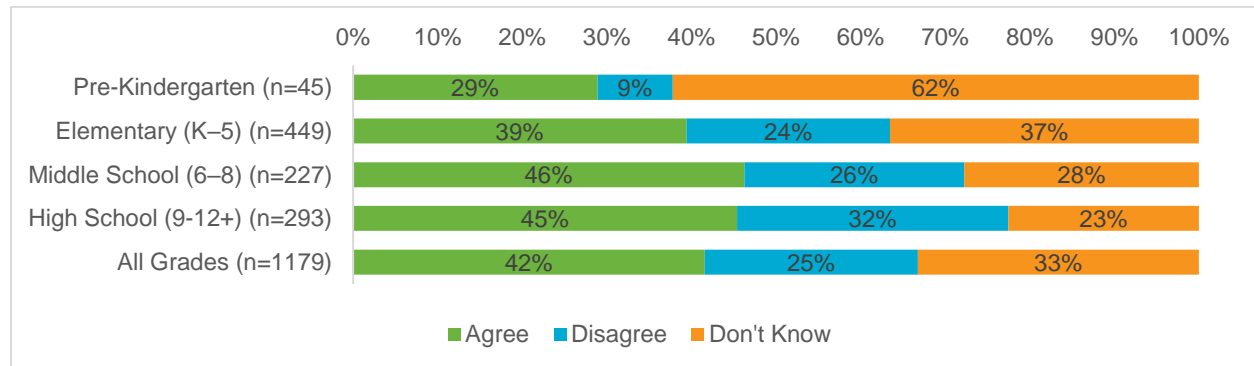
Of responding staff across all grades, 42% agree that APS provides useful professional learning opportunities related to meeting the needs of students with 504 Plans. These percentages were similar across grade levels, with 45% at high school, 46% at middle school, 39% at elementary school, and 29% at Pre-K.

Exhibit 171. Staff Survey: The training sessions I have attended have been helpful to me in supporting the learning of students with Section 504 Plans.
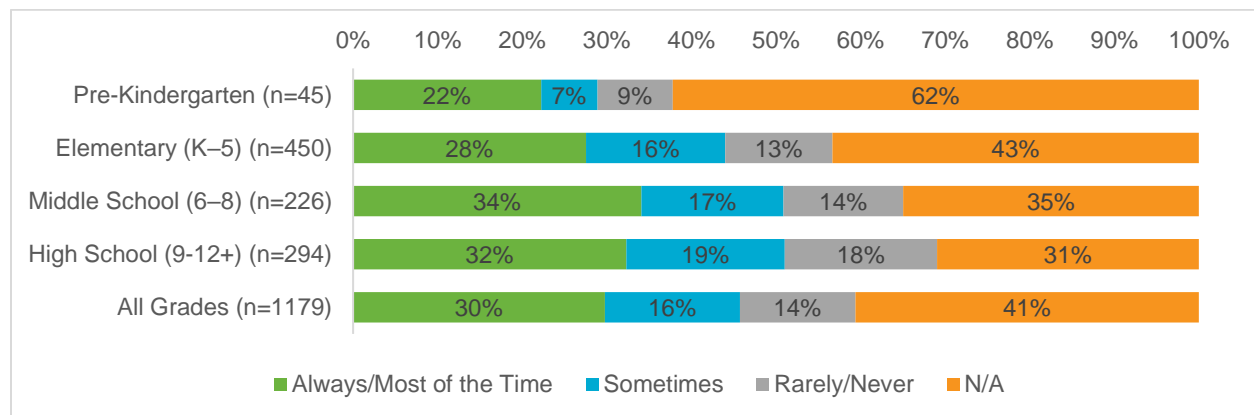
Across all grades, 30% of staff report that the training sessions they have attended have been helpful to them in supporting the learning of students with 504 Plans. Of note is that 41% indicated that this type of trainings session is not applicable to them.

Electronic Documentation and Policies/Procedures

Focus group participants were aware of the Section 504 manual posted on APS's website and said it is a helpful document that it is regularly updated.[142] This manual will be revised for the 2019-20 school year as part of the overall Student Support Manual update. As a result of the manual, staff believe policies and procedures related to Section 504 have been clearly established, yet there is a perception that they are adhered to inconsistently.

As of the 2018-19 school year, 504 Plans are now stored electronically in Synergy. APS now has the ability to run reports on which students have 504 Plans and what type of accommodations they receive. It

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[142] https://www.apsva.us/student-services/section-504/

was reported that only 504 coordinators and some school-based positions have access to them in Synergy. There have been some concerns with the roll out of the new online system. Staff are hopeful that the "bugs" can be worked out so they can more easily navigate plan development electronically.

Conflict Resolution

Survey Results

Included below are Staff and Parent survey results related to conflict resolution, specific to Section 504.

Exhibit 172. Staff Survey: APS representatives treated families with respect.
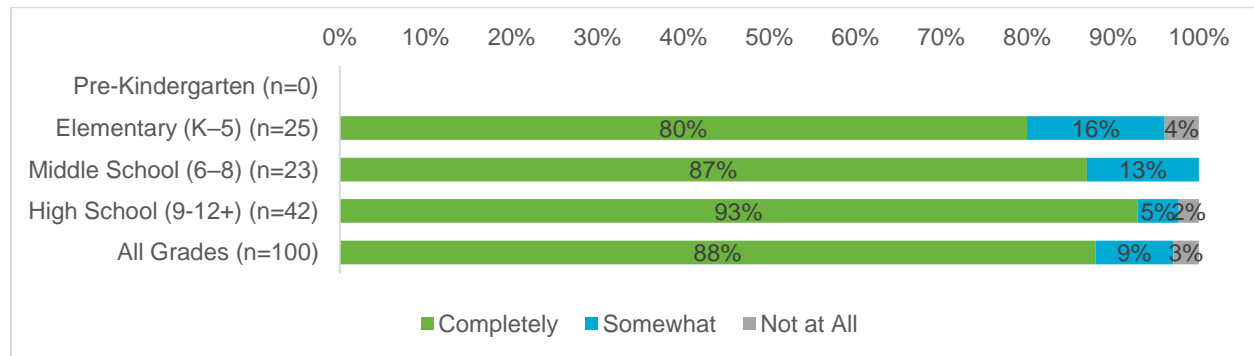
Specific to 504, 88% of all staff report that APS representatives completely treated families with respect.

Exhibit 173. Staff Survey: I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.
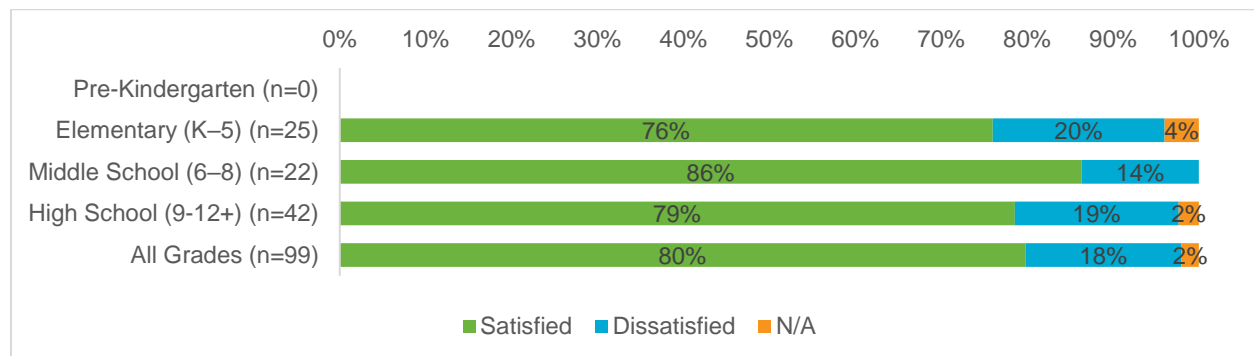
Specific to 504, 80% of all staff report that they are satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve any disagreements.

Exhibit 174. Staff Survey: I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreements.

Legend: ■ Satisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ N/A

Pre-Kindergarten (n=0)			
Elementary (K–5) (n=25)	44%	20%	36%
Middle School (6–8) (n=22)	59%	18%	23%
High School (9-12+) (n=42)	52%	26%	21%
All Grades (n=99)	53%	22%	25%
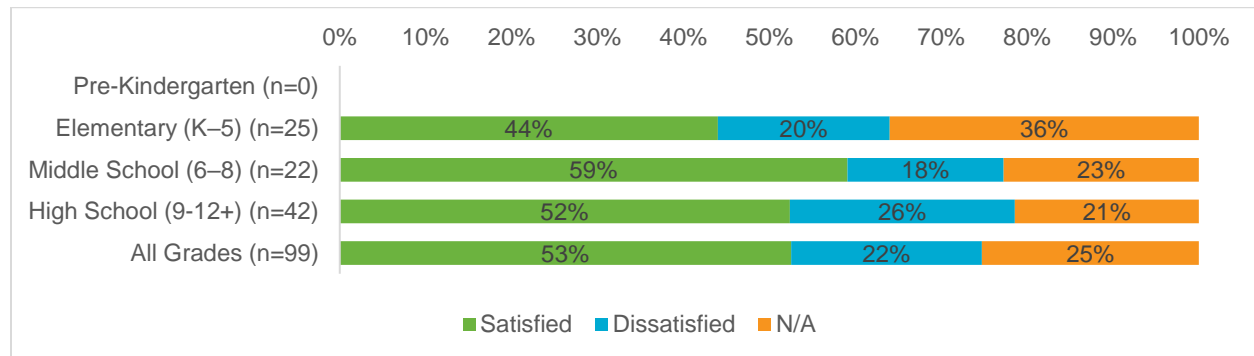
Specific to 504, 53% of all staff report that they are satisfied with how APS attempted to resolve any disagreements.

Exhibit 175. Parent 504 Survey: Do you know where to go to get help if you have disagreements with APS or your child's school regarding his/her 504 needs, eligibility, accommodations, or implementation?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

Pre-Kindergarten (n=<10)	33%	67%	0%
Elementary (K–5) (n=118)	46%	37%	17%
Middle School (6–8) (n=42)	57%	24%	19%
High School (9-12+) (n=31)	58%	26%	16%
All Grades (n=202)	50%	33%	17%
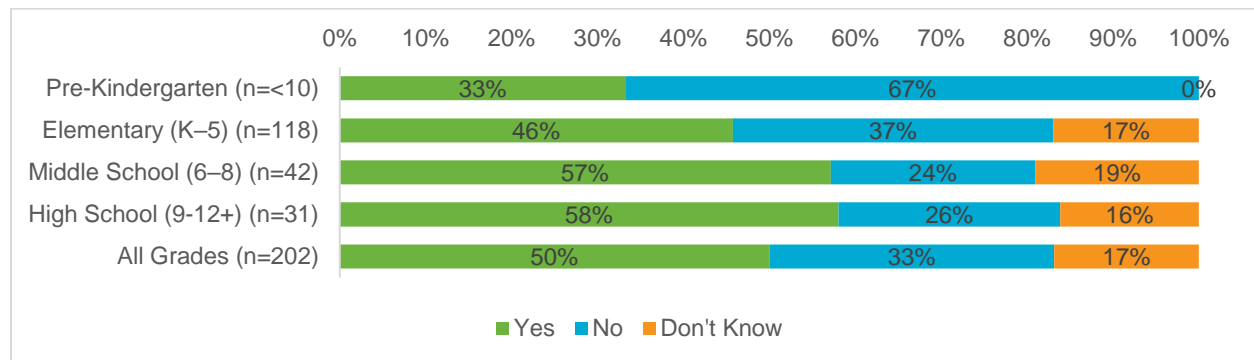
Fifty percent (50%) of parents across all grades report that they know where to go for help if they have disagreements with APS or their children's school specific to 504. Of the other 50%, 33% do not know where to go for assistance and 17% do not know.

Exhibit 176. Parent 504 Survey: Have you had disagreements with APS regarding your child's 504 needs, eligibility, accommodations, or implementation?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

Pre-Kindergarten (n=<10)		100%	
Elementary (K–5) (n=118)	24%	70%	6%
Middle School (6–8) (n=42)	26%	71%	2%
High School (9-12+) (n=31)	19%	77%	3%
All Grades (n=201)	23%	72%	4%
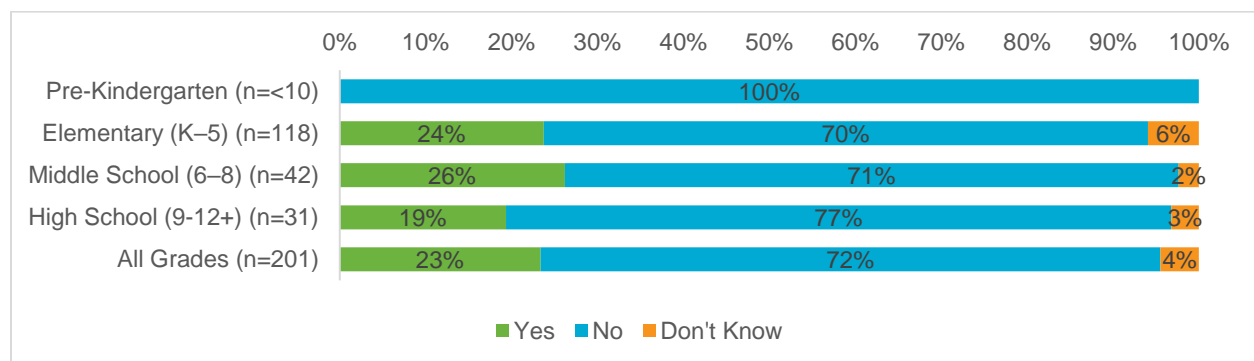
Nearly a quarter (23%) of all parents report that they have had disagreements with APS regarding their children's needs under 504.

Summary and Implications

APS has made some positive strides with implementing the Section 504 recommendations from the 2013 PCG report. Specifically, APS added an electronic tracking system through Synergy and developed a policy and procedure manual that is known and utilized by staff. There is also a greater awareness of how Section 504 can be used to support students, with the percentage of students receiving 504 support increasing from 1.0% in 2010-11 to 2.5% in 2017-18.

Yet, additional opportunities for growth exist. The previous report noted that participants believed the appropriate consideration and usage of Section 504 was limited, with consideration for eligibility most often occurring when parents brought in outside evaluations. There was also concern that this circumstance frequently involves relatively high performing students and that similar advocacy does not exist for lower performing students with less involved parents. During this 2019 review, PCG found that while APS has developed more robust eligibility processes and staff more frequently considers using the 504 Plan as an appropriate support mechanism, it is still most common for parents to seek external evaluations to initiate the 504 evaluation process, especially at the secondary level. There continue to be inconsistencies across schools as to how accommodations are determined and provided, who has access to 504 Plans, and communication with parents as to the efficacy of their children's accommodations. There needs to be a more in-depth examination of the differences (and overlap) between Health Plans and 504 Plans and clear and specific guidance on how to improve the handling of medical needs, given the serious concerns about how these accommodations are handled.

APS can build on its established foundation in several ways. With the predominance of white students with 504 Plans, APS needs to review its eligibility practices and analyze student demographic data, at the school and grade levels, to determine which students have qualified for 504 Plans and what trends exist in these identification patterns. Monitoring the fidelity of 504 Plan implementation and sharing routine updates with parents are core components of ensuring students receive the appropriate, consistent supports to help them succeed. Further, given there is no dedicated 504 funding, it is critical that plans be reviewed periodically to assess their effectiveness and allocation of committed resources. APS also needs to establish, for a wide-range of school-based staff, mandatory professional learning opportunities. These should address, in part, understanding what effective accommodation implementation through a 504 Plan is.

IV. District Organization and Operations

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
90 Day Progressive Plans. Each school is required to have a 90 Day Plan that shows alignment between school goals and the APS Strategic Plan. Most school plans set goals for and monitor the academic progress of subgroups, initiatives related to social-emotional wellbeing, and parent/family engagement.	**90 Day Progressive Plan Goals.** Not all school plans have goals specific to all subgroup populations or action items to ensure high expectations for all students, coupled with appropriate supports, are included.
Student Support Process. The Department of Teaching and Learning provides oversight, coordination, and direction to the redesigned Student Support Process.	**Office of Special Education Organizational Structure.** There does not appear to be an intentional organizational design or a focus on organizing in the most effective manner to support schools and families.
Student Support Coordinators. APS has developed a new position designed to enable a more coordinated support process for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention.	**Cross-Departmental Collaboration.** Additional opportunities exist for cross-departmental communication and information sharing, as collaboration between offices has reportedly decreased.
Portfolio of Offices under the Department of Teaching and Learning. APS has a unified department that coordinates the work of ATSS, Special Education, and Student Support Services, allowing for both a focus on academics and coordinated support for all students.	**Planning Factors.** Planning Factors are not designed to support inclusive practices.

Technology and Access to Data. Inconsistent use of information systems to document supports for students, specifically interventions, 504 Plans, and IAT plans. This has resulted in an inability to produce accurate reports to drive decision making. |
| **Finances.** APS has benefited from a growing local economy and a cost sharing model with Arlington County. Focus group participants frequently indicated APS is well resourced. | |
| **Dedicated Staff.** Focus group participants frequently praised the level of dedication of APS teachers and staff and support available for students. | |

Introduction

This section provides information about APS' support for the teaching and learning of students with disabilities and those requiring intervention. The section is organized in the following manner: Organization, Collaboration, and Communication, Human Capital, Transportation, Finance, and Technology Use.

Organization, Collaboration, and Communication

School District Overview

APS is currently led by an Interim Superintendent, under the direction of five elected school board members. The Interim Superintendent will lead APS during the 2019-20 school year while a national search is underway for a permanent superintendent. School Board members serve overlapping four-year terms and hold meetings twice a month.

The graphic below depicts APS' Executive Leadership team and functional structure. Under the current structure, support for students with disabilities and those requiring interventions is delivered through the Department of Teaching and Learning.

Exhibit 177. APS Organization Chart
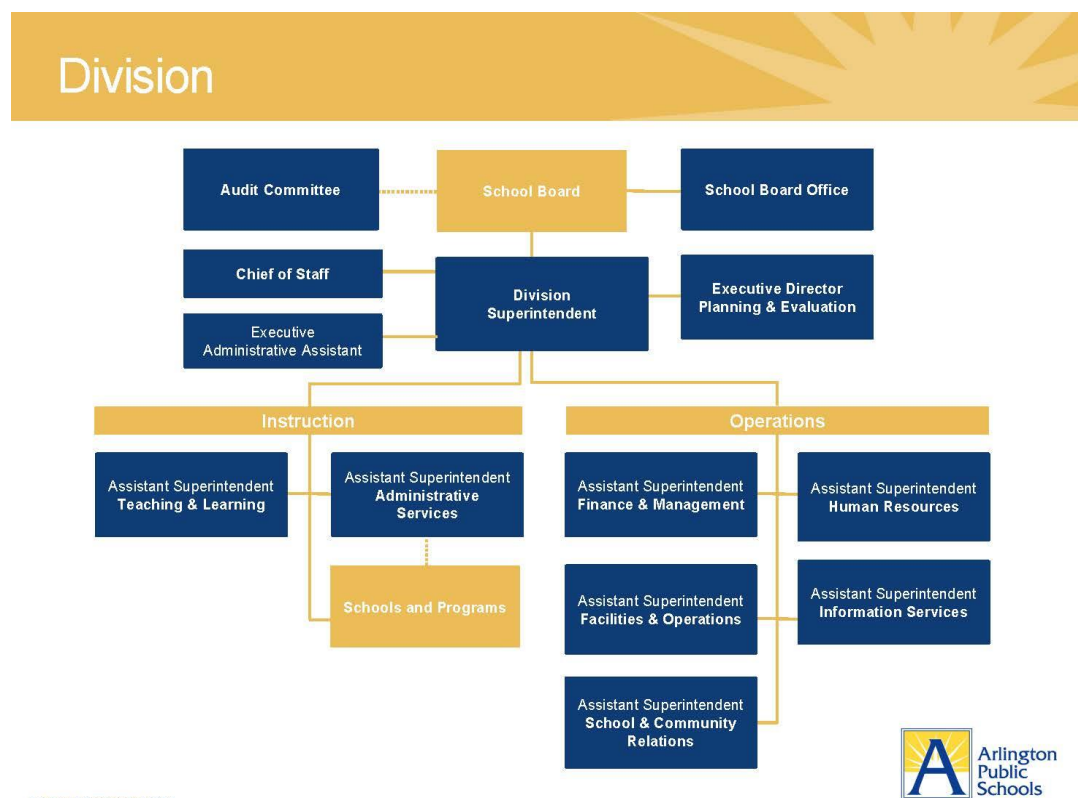
School Leadership and Site Based Management

APS operates under a site-based management (SBM) philosophy whereby schools, and their respective building principals, have significant budgetary and programmatic autonomy, including for special education and Section 504 programming. Traditionally in the United States, SBM has aimed to involve parents and teachers in decision making; improve decisions through devolution from central office to the

site and increase job satisfaction and professionalization of teachers and enhance student performance.[143] Under this model, principals are given autonomy on the hiring of school employees, the development of school-based programs, and budgeting- including, to some extent, the spending of special education dollars, and are held accountable for successfully meeting goals and objectives. SBM appears to be a relatively ingrained tenet of APS's operations and management structure, though there reportedly had not clearly been a point in time, or proactive determination, about how this decentralization should operate within APS.

One of the greatest tension-points between SBM and central office administrators in districts across the nation often happens at the school level. On one hand, school leaders want support from the central office on program, policy, and compliance matters. On the other hand, these same leaders want to maintain their autonomy to deliver an instructional program to meet the needs of students within their buildings. To compound matters, many of the school leaders charged with making site based special education and student support decisions often lack any formal special education training, special education credentialing, or experience in the legalities of Section 504. It has been noted that SBM and special education and 504 policies have fundamentally different assumptions. SBM assumes local school autonomy while special education and 504 policies were "constructed with traditional governance and bureaucratic assumptions for top-down control, tight coupling, and accountability."[144] Striking the right balance between school autonomy and effective accountability measures is complex work.

These conflicting assumptions exist in APS and manifest in various ways. The following themes on this topic emerged during focus groups and interviews. Though some site leaders and District administrators spoke to the benefits of the flexibility that comes with SBM, the vast majority of focus group participants, representing staff at various levels and positions, as well as parents, expressed concern about the unintended consequences of a decentralized system of schools with the autonomy to select their own methods and resources for providing special education services and instruction in core content areas. They worried that the result of this level of local control has caused inequities, inefficiencies, and inconsistency of services across schools.

90 Day Progressive Plans

APS requires each school to submit a 90 Day Progressive Plan, which establishes the school's annual priorities and goals and resources committed to them. Each plan must show alignment between its school goals and the goal areas of the strategic plan for the current school year and include school performance priorities, annual performance goals, and timelines for actions and responsible parties. APS uses a Progressive Planning Model to document progress made on the annual plan; this occurs every 90 days (at the 30, 60, 90, and 120-day mark of each school year) and is documented on the APS website.[145]

The Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services works with principals to ensure the development of the plan aligns with APS's process. These plans are based on the school leadership team's assessment of the school's student data and aligned with the goal areas of APS's 2018-24 strategic plan. The development process includes the participation of the school's advisory committee. The plan focuses on school performance priorities that are based on summative performance data for all students, including subgroups, such as students with disabilities. Improving the academic achievement of students with disabilities is mentioned across many of the schools' annual performance goals. Of the plans reviewed, most schools had performance priorities for improving math and reading for all students.

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[143] Guerra, Jackson, Madsen, Thompson, & Ward, 1992.

[144] Marshall, C. and Patterson, I. (2002). 'Confounded policies: Implementing site-based management and special education policy reforms.' Educational Policy, 16(3), 351—86.

[145] APS website: https://www.apsva.us/school-locations/school-management-plans/

Though goals specific to students with disabilities are not required for each school plan, it is commendable that most schools have them. Many also have annual performance goals focused on other important initiatives that support the whole child, such as Restorative Practices at Yorktown, Zones of Regulation at ATS and Henry, Responsive Classroom training at Discovery, and initiatives to reduce stress and anxiety in students at McKinley. Schools should be encouraged to establish additional methods by which progress made by students with disabilities can be quantifiably measured and that goals are equitable and appropriately set high expectations for all students.

Governance Meetings

Monthly Administrative Council meetings are organized and led by the Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services and include key administrative leaders and principals. The Administrative Council meetings are typically informational in nature and sometimes contain professional learning topics. Special Education is featured on the agenda a few times per year to allow for information sharing and updates on policies and procedures. In addition to the Monthly Administrative Council, school level principal groups meet once a month. Each group has a principal chair that coordinates the meeting and agendas. The Director of Special Education typically attends these meetings 2-3 times per year to share information or respond to questions. Information sharing in these methods is an important step in helping to build consistency in District practices for teaching students with disabilities and those who require intervention. APS should consider expanding the frequency and participation of the Office of Special Education, Student Support Services, and ATSS in these meetings.

Department of Teaching and Learning

Students with disabilities and those requiring interventions are primarily supported through offices under the Department of Teaching and Learning. Led by the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, the Department of Teaching and Learning provides leadership in curriculum and instruction as well as student services, working to ensure that every student in APS is safe, healthy, challenged, supported, and engaged.[146] Previously, the Department of Student Services oversaw Pupil Services and Special Education, with each major unit led by a director, who reported directly to the Department's Assistant Superintendent. In 2018, the Department of Student Services was brought under the Department of Teaching and Learning to support joint professional learning opportunities and a cohesive focus on all students. As depicted in the organizational chart below, the Department of Teaching and Learning includes the following units: Career, Technical and Adult Education; Early Childhood and Elementary Education; Secondary Education; Curriculum and Instruction; Student Services; and Special Education.

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[146] APS Teaching and Instruction website: https://www.apsva.us/instruction/

Exhibit 178. Department of Teaching and Learning Organizational Structure
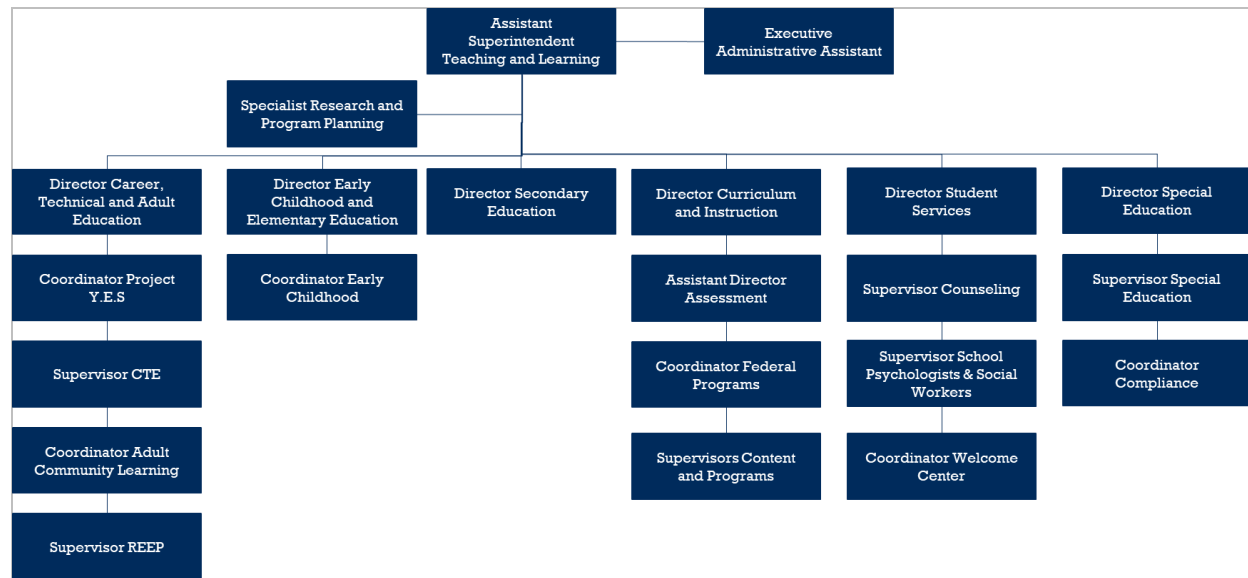
During the 2017-18 school year, the new Department of Teaching and Learning was charged with:

- Creating a common vision, goals and leadership for all instructional leaders and staff;
- Providing consolidated social-emotional supports for all students;
- Developing a Professional Learning Framework for all licensed staff that supports inclusion, the needs of the whole child, engaging and authentic learning experiences, curriculum, personalized learning, and the profile of a graduate;
- Creating more seamless support and collaboration in instructional programs to provide greater support for teachers and staff;
- Constructing an Intervention Protocol for English Language Arts providing guidance on evidence-based interventions for students; and
- Implementing a centralized PreK-12 options and transfers application process.[147]

Office of Special Education

The Office of Special Education is one of six offices under the Department of Teaching and Learning. The Office of Special Education provides support for students with disabilities, parents, administrators, and school staff in the evaluation, identification, placement, instruction and transitional services. The office is tasked with maintaining system-wide implementation of federal and local mandates, while site-based leadership within each school provides the primary authority for adhering to timelines, implementing procedures, and monitoring a student's IEP.

In 2018, the Office of Special Education moved under the Department of Teaching and Learning. The Department is led by a Director of Special Education. The Director provides direct supervision to the following positions: Special Education Supervisor, Compliance Specialist, Speech-Language Pathologists, Parent Resource Center Coordinator, Child Find Coordinators, Integration Station Coordinator, and Special Education Coordinators. The Office of Special Education employs around 200 related service providers and support staff.

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[147] 2017-18 Annual Report, https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PKMreport-2018-FINAL-updatedlores.pdf

Exhibit 179. Office of Special Education Organizational Chart
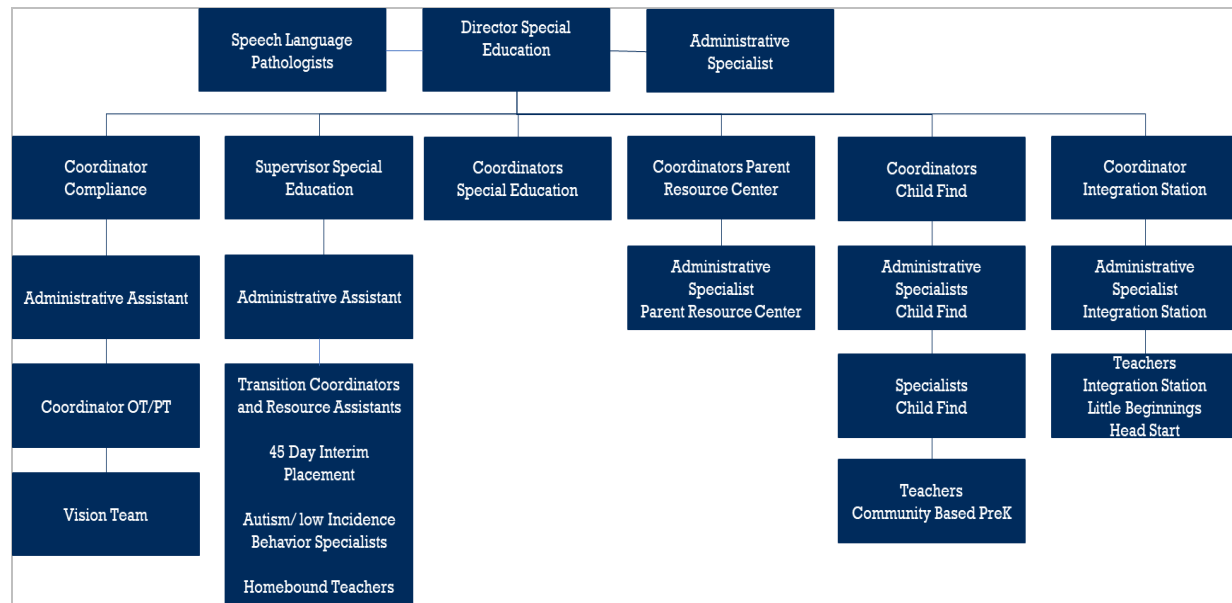
Office of Special Education Organization and Supports to Schools

Schools are supported through the Office of Special Education in two primary ways: 1) provide support for technical advice and instructional guidance; 2) provide support for compliance. The following support staff provide guidance and leadership in achieving those functions.

Special Education Coordinators. Special Education Coordinators have traditionally provided direct support to 2-3 schools, ensuring compliance in student study referrals, initial eligibility, and reevaluations, providing direct professional learning opportunities, holding meetings with special education teachers, and work with new teachers in classrooms through instructional coaching. Coordinators serve as the primary point of contact for issues that arise in the school. This position is changing for the 2019-20 school year with the introduction of the Student Support Coordinators.

Compliance Specialist. The Compliance Specialist Coordinator manages legal processes when complaints arise to the level of VDOE, OCR or any other governing agency. The position also supports training and education related to legal requirements for parents, staff and students regarding IDEA and VDOE Regulations. Currently, the Compliance Specialist also oversees OT/PT and vision services.

Special Education Supervisor. The Special Education Supervisor serves as the primary instructional specialist for the Office of Special Education. They provide direct support and professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff working with students with disabilities. The Special Education Supervisor provides direct supervision of the following positions: Transition Coordinators and Resource Assistants; the Behavior Team consisting of Autism Specialists (2), Behavior Specialists (2), Low-incidence specialists (2); Homebound Teachers; and two administrative assistants.

The Office of Special Education is staffed to ensure compliance with special education regulations. It is unclear how this office will be able to drive instructional improvements for students with disabilities or a focus on inclusive practices without the coaching or other specialized instructional staff required to initiate this change. Special Education Coordinators may have been partially responsible for this in the past, but with the shift to the SSC position, there appears to be a gap in staff dedicated to the important task of coaching and supporting teachers with improving specially designed instruction and effectively supporting

students in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, in the current structure, the Director of Special Education has many direct reports. This structure slows down decision making and does not allow the Director the time and opportunity to develop a strategic vision for the work at hand. There does not appear to be an intentional design to the organizational structure or a focus on organizing in the most effective manner to support schools and families.

Office of Student Services

Led by a Director of Student Services, the Office of Student Services provides system-wide services in school psychology, social work and counseling. Office of Student Services staff members provide assessments of students being referred for special education services, reevaluate identified students with disabilities in accordance with Federal and state regulations, and serve as consultants to schools for instructional issues, behavior management, and social/emotional development.

As with the Office of Special Education, the Office of Student Services was brought under the Department of Teaching and Learning in 2018. The Director of Student Services directly manages two supervisors who collectively oversee school psychologists, social workers, and counseling services. Currently three school psychologists serve as 504 coordinators who conduct initial 504 eligibility screenings and meetings. School counselors, who are directly supervised by the building principal, serve as the case manager for 504 Plans.

Exhibit 180. Office of Student Services Organizational Chart
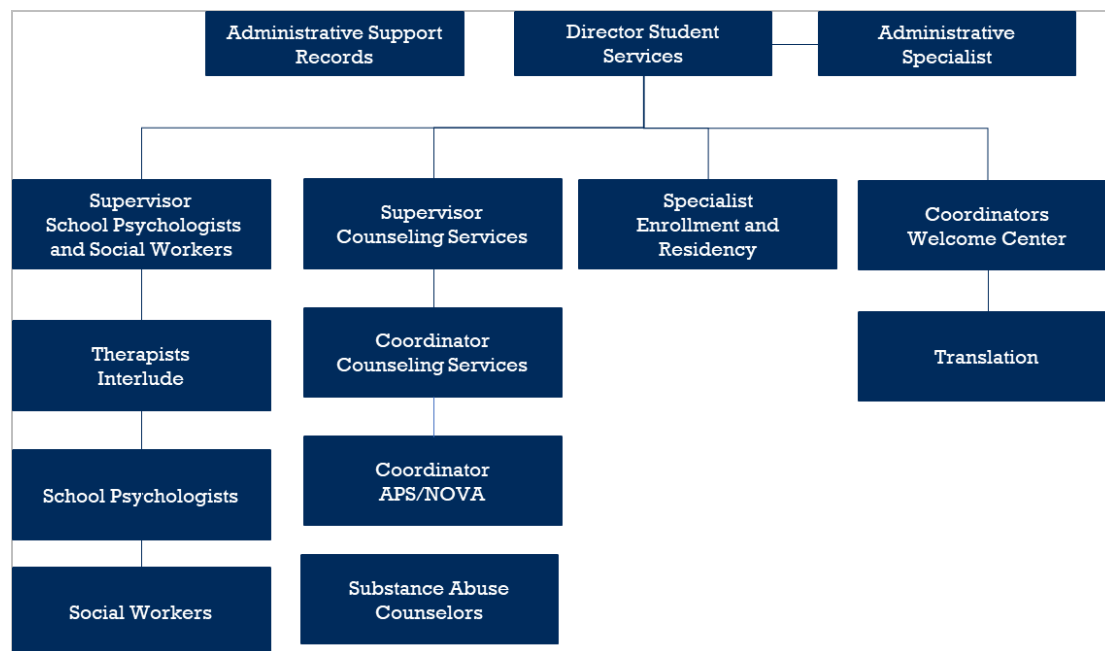
Office of Curriculum and Instruction

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction provides leadership in the development of curriculum and the implementation of best practices as well as evaluation of the overall instructional program. This includes the required content and skills which students must learn and be able to do in each of the content areas, aligned with national and state standards. Staff works with schools on implementation of instructional practices and methods of assessing student learning.

ATSS

The Supervisor of ATSS position was created 5 years ago, reporting to the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The position provides direct support to schools through the introduction of needed tools, resources, and professional support to implement ATSS. The ATSS Supervisor also collaborates with content offices to ensure interventions are content and pedagogically appropriate.

Exhibit 181. Office of Curriculum and Instruction Organizational Chart
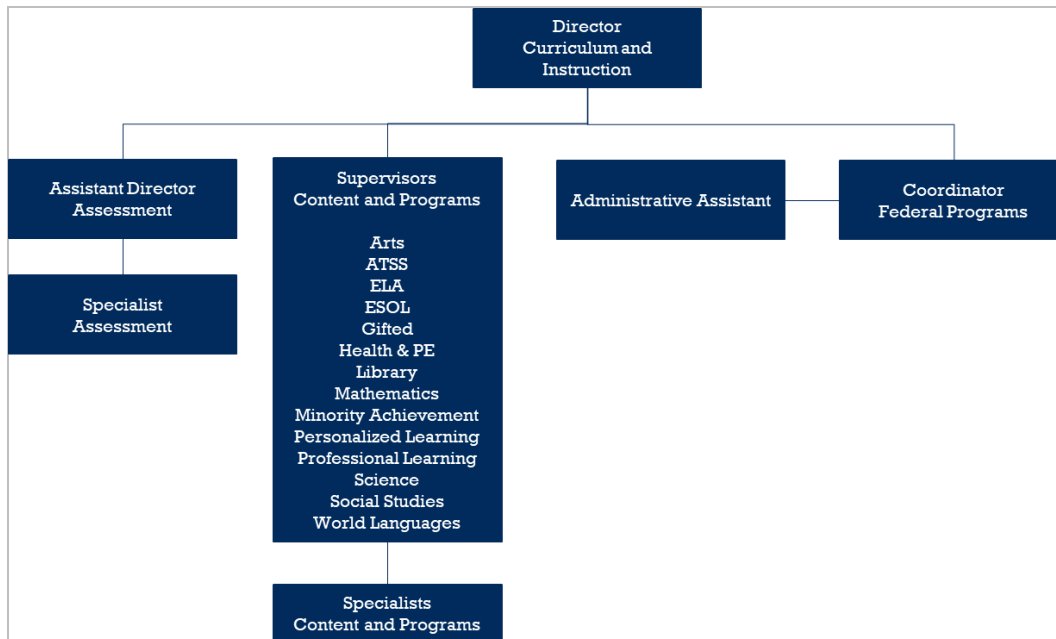
Interdepartmental Communication and Collaboration

Under the current organizational structure, students with disabilities and those requiring intervention are supported through three different offices under the Department of Teaching and Learning. Interdepartmental communication and collaboration are critical in ensuring these student populations are supported in a clear and consistent manner, across schools and programs. Focus group participants indicated several ways communication and collaboration occurred:

- Monthly Special Education Coordinator meetings
- Monthly Supervisor meetings
- Monthly Directors meetings
- Special Education Liaisons aligned with content offices
- Collaboration with ATSS Supervisor and content offices around appropriate content and interventions
- Joint professional learning sessions

There are also many concrete examples of how the realignment/merging of these offices under the Department of Teaching and Learning has yielded positive outcomes. Specifically, they jointly:

- Developed the Social Emotional Learning Reference Guide (developed by the Office of Special Education, Office of Student Services, Office of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Department of Administrative Services),
- Wrote the transgender youth PIP (developed by the Office of Student Services as well as multiple offices within the Office of Curriculum and Instruction)

- Developed the Student Support Processes (by many within all offices of the department),
- Created the Teaching and Learning Framework
- Partnered on developing high-level family and community engagement activities
- Coordinated to support summer school (Offices of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office the Special Education

These examples illustrate only some of the many positive initiatives undertaken in a more cohesive manner under the Department of Teaching and Learning. It was noted that the Office of Special Education continues to operate in a siloed manner.

Student Support Coordinator

In 2018, the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning brought together a group of department stakeholders for a student support visioning process. The visioning process specifically explored the Special Education Coordinator and 504 Coordinator roles to identify where responsibilities could be combined into a Student Support Coordinator role. Under this model, Student Support Coordinators will consider all options and support for students with disabilities, 504 Plans, and ATSS, bringing a holistic perspective to the student-study teams. The creation of the SSC role was part of the overall plan to consolidate the Student Support Process by the end of the 2018-19 school year, with training occurring over the summer and full implementation during the 2019-20 school year. The Department of Teaching and Learning has created a detailed guidance document regarding the role of and expectations for the SSCs.

Focus group participants were generally aware about the change in role and believed the integration of 504 and special education responsibilities would create a better method for consistent communication, increased support for students and parents, and more efficient meetings. Many focus group participants expressed concerns regarding how the change will be implemented, specifically in how additional professional learning for expanded responsibilities will be provided, the supports available for the revised coordinator role, and whether this approach will truly bring about consistency in services and supports across schools.

APS has been diligently working to ensure that this change is well supported and that schools see an immediate, positive impact from the SSCs. The following actions have been taken to prepare for the 2019-20 roll out:

- Created a Canvas course specifically for this training that all staff will enroll in
- Held 10 trainings during the summer of 2019 for principals and assistant principals on this process (trainings were mandatory)
- Created a standard power point that all principals will deliver to their staff on the first day back
- All LEAs will go through a new, mandatory LEA training this summer
- Every SSC went through 504 training during the summer of 2019
- All new SSCs attend two days of on-boarding training during the summer of 2019
- Every SSC will be at the Syphax Center on Mondays next year during the 2019-20 school year to receive on-going training

Human Capital

According to the APS FY 2019 Budget Book, the total salary and benefits expenditures comprise approximately 77.8% of the total combined funds budget.[148] This statistic aligns with national trends. The process of building such a highly qualified workforce in APS, specifically to support students with

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[148] APS FY 2019 Budget Book. p. 103.

disabilities is a continuous effort. Concerns about school-based staffing was a consistent theme throughout focus groups and interviews. Issues expressed varied from filling vacancies with qualified staff to retaining high quality teachers.

This section provides information about current recruitment/hiring and retention practices and provides comparable staffing ratio data to illustrate how APS compares to other districts nationwide.

Staffing Allocation Model

A large part of the schools' budgets is calculated according to formula, commonly referred to as "planning factors." APS allocates funds using formulas based on enrollment projections to ensure funding equity among schools and programs. All Arlington schools receive a similar level of support for those resources subject to the formulas. The purpose of planning factors is to provide a base level of equity and consistency for personnel, equipment and supplies to meet instructional goals and to adequately deliver instruction, to provide predictability regarding budgetary planning and to assure compliance with state standards. When school starts in September, changes in the actual enrollment when compared to what had been projected are reviewed for any staffing changes. A contingency fund in the Human Resources Department funds additional staffing required based on the planning factor application. More detail on planning factors can be found at the end of this chapter.

Recruitment/ Hiring Practices

Retaining qualified and effective staff is key to the success of any school division, especially one as large and diverse is APS. There was considerable feedback from focus group participants regarding recruitment practices at APS as it relates to special education related positions. Some of the themes that emerged included recruitment support, the impact of planning factors on staffing, and the quality of long-term substitutes while positions remain vacant. The following is a summary of focus group participants' concerns related to recruitment and hiring.

- **Geographic Area.** The broader Arlington/DC metro area is known to have a high transiency rate, given the concentration of military and other government appointments there. Further, the area has a high cost of living and limited affordable housing for teaching or other school-based staff. Commuting to APS from outlying areas is strenuous due to traffic conditions impacting hiring and staff retention for those who live outside of the immediate area.
- **Job Demands.** Focus group participants noted that, like other school districts nationally, many demands are placed on APS special education staff. Recruiting staff willing, able, and qualified to take on these jobs is becoming increasingly complicated.
- **Recruitment Support.** Currently, principals review resumes and conduct interviews for special education related vacancies. Focus group participants indicated this created competition amongst buildings for recruiting qualified staff.
- **Special Educator Substitutes.** There is not a sufficiently large pool of qualified substitutes to substitute for absent teachers, particularly in a long-term situation.
- **Related Service Provider Vacancies.** Recruiting related service providers remains a challenge, with not enough qualified staff (with Virginia specific educational experience) to fill existing positions. APS occasionally utilizes contractors to fill some positions; however, focus group participants indicated vacancies still exist.

The Human Resources Department attends recruitment fairs in various states, including states who have dual endorsement programs and nationally ranked special education programs. Focus group participants indicated APS has had successes recruiting in upstate New York and North Carolina.

Staff Retention

Nationally, the reasons teachers leave special education jobs include poor job satisfaction, stress, an expansive workload, and a lack of support from administrators. These themes are well noted in the current literature and research studies and are often cited as factors that contribute to the high attrition rate—over 13%—of special educators nationally.[149] This rate is nearly double that of general education teachers. Similarly, concerns about special education staff turnover and retention practices in APS were mentioned across many focus group conversations. Themes included:

- **Lack of Training.** Staff expressed that a lack of relevant training made their jobs more challenging. Additionally, staff expressed a lack of consistent information from central office.
- **Rotating Staff.** There is a strong perception that staff frequently rotate, including related service providers, leading to issues around inconsistent service delivery and staff training.
- **High Caseloads**. High caseloads/work demands were expressed as a concern amongst staff. It was specifically cited that planning factors do not take into account the specific needs of the child, or support for co-teaching.

Special Education and Related Services Staffing Ratios and Allocations

Staff are allocated based on student need and principal discretion to support the provision of special education and related services. Virginia state code, through its Standards of Quality (SOQ), requires divisions to maintain very specific caseload requirements. This section compares APS staffing ratios to other school districts across the country. It does not, however, provide caseload comparisons to other school divisions in Virginia, as this information is not publicly available.

Information used to compare APS staff ratios to other school districts was provided through several surveys conducted by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, and was supplemented by data from reviews conducted independently, or with the Council of Great City Schools and Public Consulting Group over the past five years.[150] Data from 70 other school districts provide a general understanding of districts' staffing levels in the following areas: special educators, instructional assistants, speech/language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. Appendix C. APS Staffing Ratios Compared to Other Districts contains detailed information for each surveyed school district. The data do not give precise district comparisons, and the results need to be used with caution. At times, district data are not uniform (e.g., including or excluding contractual personnel, varying methods for collecting and reporting student counts) and are impacted by varying levels of private and public placements, where personnel outside a district provide special education/related services to a group of district students. However, these data are the best available and are useful to better understand staffing ratios for school districts. APS provided detailed staff ratios by school for special educators, speech/language pathologists, psychologists, counselors, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. When informative, relevant information is referenced below.

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[149] National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services. https://specialedshortages.org/about-the-shortage/

[150] Sue Gamm, Esq. compiled and continues to maintain this list. She grants PCG permission to use the data in reports.

Special Education Teachers and Instructional Assistants

This section provides information about APS special education teacher and instructional assistant ratios compared to other school districts, and feedback about their availability and use. Staffing ratios and other data regarding related-services personnel are summarized below.

Exhibit 182. Average Number Students with IEPs for Each Special Educator and Paraprofessionals[151][152]

Areas of Comparison	Special Educators	Paraprofessionals
Number of APS Staff FTE	415.7	270
APS Student w/IEP-to-Staff Ratio	9.2:1	14.1:1
All District Average Ratios	15:1	15:1
APS Ranking Among Districts	5th out of 70 reporting districts	37th out of 70 reporting districts

As reported in Appendix C, APS has an overall average of 9.2 students with IEPs (including those with speech/language needs only) for each special educator. This average is lower than the 15-student average of all districts in the survey. APS has the 5th lowest state ratio among the 70 reporting school districts. APS has an overall average of 14.1 students with IEPs for each paraprofessional, which is less than the all-district average of 15.1 students but lower that the median 13.6 paraeducators per student, making APS 37th of the 70 reporting districts.

Related Service Providers

This section provides information about APS student services personnel (Psychologists and Social Workers[153]) and related service provider staffing ratios compared to other school districts, and feedback about their availability and use. Staffing ratios and other data regarding related-services personnel are summarized below.

Exhibit 183. Average Number Students with IEPs for Each Related Service Provider[154][155]

Areas of Comparison	Psychologists	Speech/ Language	Social Workers	OTs	PTs
Number of APS Staff FTE	37.9	36.6	32.3	24.4	5.8
APS Student w/IEP-to-Staff Ratio	100.6:1	104.1:1	118.0:1	156.2:1	657.1:1
All District Average Ratios	169.3:1	118.6:1	230.6:1	405.9:1	1,028.0:1

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[151] As noted, information used to compare APS staff ratios to other school districts was provided through a survey conducted by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, which was supplemented by data from reviews conducted independently, or with the Council of Great City Schools and Public Consulting Group. Districts included in Appendix C collect and report data using different methods and different points of time, therefore student headcounts and staffing totals may vary.

[152] APS student headcount data obtained from 2017-18 VDOE School Quality Report: http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/

[153] APS Psychologists and Social Workers are Student Services Personnel with staffing ratios tied to the overall student enrollment.

[154] As noted, information used to compare APS staff ratios to other school districts was provided through a survey conducted by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, which was supplemented by data from reviews conducted independently, or with the Council of Great City Schools and Public Consulting Group.

[155] APS staffing ratio calculations based on data provided by APS to PCG.

APS Ranking Among Districts	11th out of 64 reporting districts	38th out of 69 reporting districts	21st out of 46 reporting districts	12th out of 68 reporting districts	24th out of 68 reporting districts

- **Psychologists**. There is one psychologist for an average of 100.6 students with IEPs compared to the surveyed district average of 169.3 students, ranking APS as 11th of the 64 reporting districts.
- **Speech/Language Pathologist**. There is one speech/language pathologist (SLP) for an average of 104.1 students with IEPs compared to the surveyed district average of 118.6 students, ranking APS as 38th of the 69 reporting districts.
- **Social Workers**. There is one social worker for an average of 118.0 students with IEPs compared to the surveyed district average of 230.6 students with IEPs, ranking APS as 21st of the 46 reporting districts.
- **Occupational Therapists (OT)**. There is one OT for an average of 156.2 students, compared to the surveyed district average of 405.9 students, ranking APS as 12th of the 67 reporting districts.
- **Physical Therapists**. There is one physical therapist for an average of 657.1 students, compared to the surveyed district average of 1,028.9 students, ranking APS as 24th of the 68 reporting districts.

Transportation

Per APS board policy, transportation to school is provided to students in grades Pre-K through 12 living beyond a one-mile walking distance from elementary schools and a one and one-half mile walking distance from middle and high schools. Students who require special transportation arrangements as identified in their IEP or 504 Plan are also transported. In 2018, APS had 189 vehicles, 57 of which served students with disabilities, and operated 154 routes, 98 of which were provided to students with disabilities. In 2018, 822 students were eligible for specialized transportation, with 62% riding in the morning, and 58% riding in the afternoon.[156]

Parent Survey

Parents of students with IEPs were asked a few questions regarding special transportation services at APS. Overall, 25.8% of parents indicated their child was eligible for special transportation, and 64.8% percent of parents indicated their child was not eligible.

Exhibit 184. Is your child eligible for special transportation?

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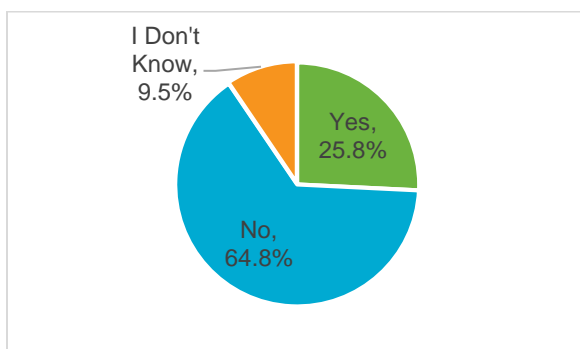
[156] Fall 2018 figures obtained from: https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Updated-Transportation-101_032019.pdf

Of the parents who indicated their child was eligible70.7% indicated their child accesses special transportation, while 29.3% indicated no. Respondents indicated the following reasons why their child does not access apical transportation:

- **Proximity to School.** Many parents indicated they live close to their neighborhood school and can drop their child off, or their child can walk to school.

- **Route Schedule.** Parents indicated that the length of route time was a barrier for their child to ride the bus.

- **Other Transportation.** Parents indicated their child preferred to ride the bus with their peers, or there were other transportation options.

Exhibit 185. Does your child access special transportation?
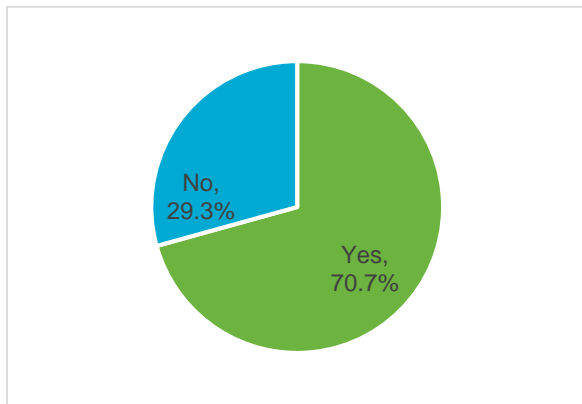
In 2019, the Department of Transportation Services conducted a Bus Transportation Service Review to address the growing transportation challenges APS faces including: enrollment growth, budgets, staffing, traffic congestion, and route planning for students with disabilities. The review was conducted in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC), a joint advisory body of the Arlington County Board and the Arlington School Board.

The following themes emerged from focus groups:

Transportation Routing. APS utilizes a door to door model for transporting students with disabilities who are eligible for specialized transportation. An automated routing software is used for routing students; however, it is not used for routing students with disabilities because of the door to door nature of services. There is a challenge in determining the number of riders consistently given that not all students with transportation accommodations use special transportation, and there is currently no method for anticipating who will ride or not. As indicated in focus groups and parent surveys, some students who are eligible for specialized transportation opt for riding non-specialized transportation.

School-Based Special Transportation Training. Focus group participants indicated additional training related to special transportation for staff completing IEPs would be beneficial. Some concern was expressed with the accuracy of information inputted into the special transportation section of a student's IEP.

Transportation Staff Training. Drivers go through an extensive process to get their Commercial Driver's License, in addition to training while driving. Attendants supporting students on special transportation receive training on awareness of students with disabilities. There is concern with the quality of training for transportation staff. Focus group participants indicated it is challenging to get the right training resources for transportation staff.

Medicaid Billing. APS currently does not bill for reimbursement of transportation services for students with disabilities.

Equipment. APS uses a variety of vehicle types to transport students with disabilities, including taxicabs, with a total of 57 buses to transport students with disabilities.

Finance

As with many school districts across the country, APS has seen expanding costs for special education. While many school districts struggle to maintain funding for quality programming, APS has benefited from a local growing economy and a cost sharing model between APS and Arlington County. The following section reflects fiscal data pertaining to special education spending.

APS District Expenditures

APS maintains the following funds for the maintenance and allocation of district resource: The School Operating Fund, Food and Nutrition Services Fund, Grants and Restricted Programs Fund, Community Activities Fund, Children's Services Act Fund, Capital Projects Fund, and Debt Service Fund. The School Operating Fund is the largest fund in the school system and accounts for the day to day operations of APS, including allocating funds to the schools. The following departments are funded under the School Operating Fund: the School Board Office; the Superintendent's Office; the Department of Teaching and Learning; School and Community Relations; Administrative Services; Human Resources; Finance and Management Services; Facilities and Operations; and Information Services. Around 82.4% of funds from the School Operating Fund are directly allocated to schools and instructional support.

Between Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 to 2019, total expenditures for APS increased 18.7% ($100,710,342). Between 2018 to 2019 expenditures were anticipated to grow 3.9%. Much of the growth in expenditures is attributed to the significant growth APS has seen over the past decade, resulting in increased staffing to meet growing enrollments.

Exhibit 186. School Operating Fund Expenditures, FY 2015 – 19[157]

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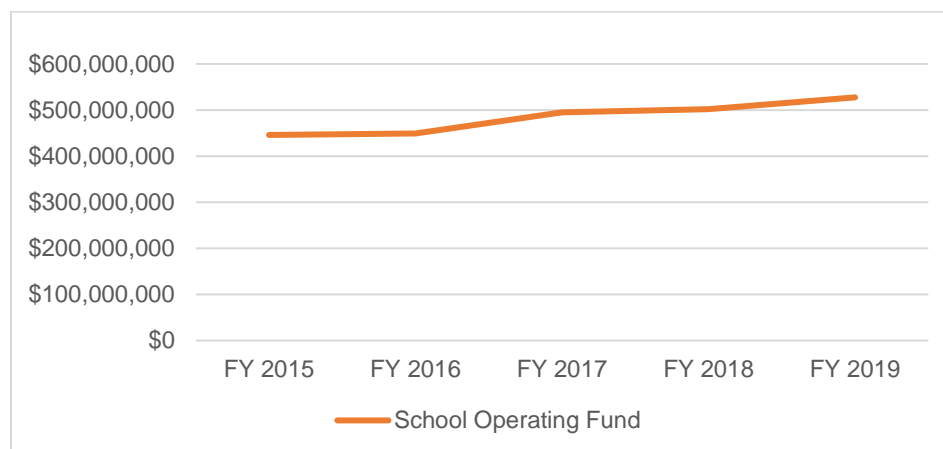
[157] Finance data obtained from APS Budget Books available at: https://www.apsva.us/budget-finance/

Special Education District Expenditures

Administrative Costs

Administrative special education costs in APS account for a relatively small share of APS's total annual budget. In FY 2019, APS allocated $16,721,567 to the Office of Special Education, approximately 3.2% of the School Operating Fund budgeted expenditures. [158] Over the past five years, APS' total special education administrative expenditures have grown 30.5% ($3,911,119), slightly higher than APS's total expenditures over the same time period (18.7%). Between 2017 and 2018, administrative expenditures increased 10.3%. The largest increases in expenditures were salaries and employee benefits.

Exhibit 187. Office of Special Education Expenditures (FY 2015 to FY 19)
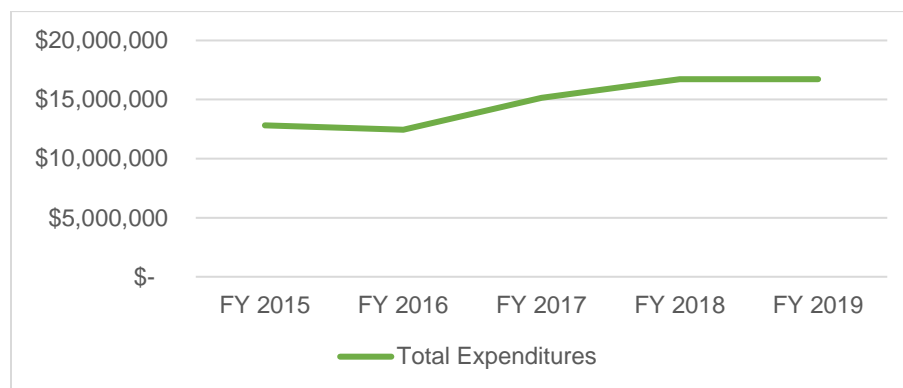
IDEA Grant

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal funds under Part B, of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are available for preschool and school-age special education programs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to children and youth with disabilities.

IDEA grant dollars are held in a separate fund called Grants and Restricted Programs, along with other grant and federally restricted monies. IDEA grant dollars are mostly allocated to fund positions that support students with disabilities, including support specialist positions in the areas of behavior support, Autism, and compliance. For FY 2019, the following school-based positions were funded through the IDEA grant:

Position	FTE
Clerical	1
Instructional Assistants	51.5
Teacher	1
Total	53.5

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[158] *Id.*

In FY 2019 the following System-Wide Support positions were funded through the IDEA grant:

Position	FTE
Clerical	5
Coordinator	1
Instructional Assistants	1
Specialist	1.8
Teacher	16.9
Total	25.7

In FY 2019, APS's IDEA grant totaled $4,872,742. Federal revenues supporting special education have relatively kept on pace with APS' increase in enrollment for students with disabilities. APS has historically had a carryover, also referred to as a roll-forward, for unused IDEA grant money.

Exhibit 188. APS IDEA Grant (FY 2015 to FY 19)
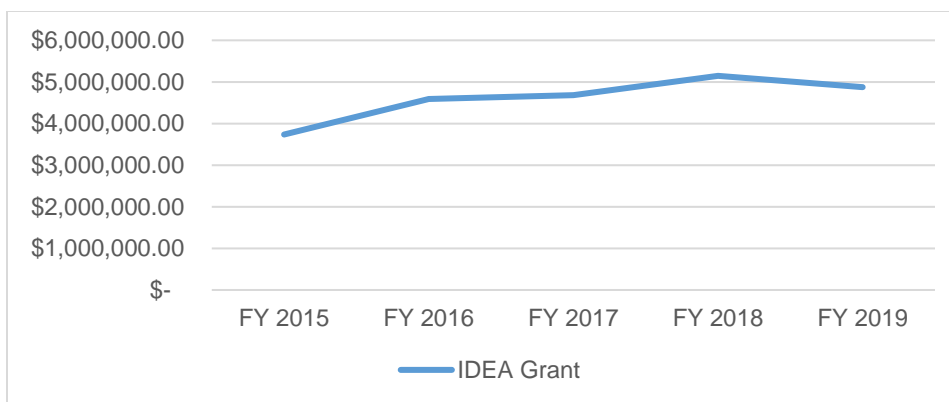
Annually, starting in February, a review of IDEA grant allocations takes place. The process involves ASEAC membership, along with the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning.

Planning Factors

Yearly, the Department of Finance and Management Services publishes a Planning Factor guide.[159] The planning factor guide outlines staffing ratios per position, based on student enrollment, at each school level (elementary, middle school, and high school). The guide also outlines a funding formula for materials, equipment, and furniture. To support students with disabilities, a separate planning factor formula is used based on the number of students identified with an IEP, the type of disability a student has, and enrollment in self-contained or Countywide Programs. System-wide planning factors also exist for Related Services positions.

School principals are responsible for allocating the dollars they receive from APS in a manner that meets the needs of their students and programs. Given this spending is happening at the building level, there are differences in how funds are spent to support special education.

Planning factors have existed at APS for more than 20 years; however, there are more students accessing the general education environment in recent years. Focus group participants indicated that the current planning factor model does not support greater inclusion through a co-teaching model. While

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[159] APS Planning Factor Guide: https://www.apsva.us/budget-finance/planning-factors/

planning factors exist to support students with specific disability types, focus group participants indicated that the current planning factor model does not account for the specific needs of students.

Data and Technology Use

Information management systems specifically designed for managing IEPs and 504 Plans help districts increase efficiencies in special education processes, while ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. These systems can play an integral part in answering critical questions around special education programming such as referral and eligibility practices, incidence rates, inclusion levels, accommodations, related services, and timeliness of special education evaluations. While the information stored in these systems is vital on its own, appropriate use, access, and dissemination of key information helps districts gain better insight into how well they are doing.

APS uses Synergy to electronically case-manage IEPs, IATs, and 504 Plans. Generally, staff indicated positive feedback regarding the system, with the exception of experiencing occasional bugs while accessing or inputting information. As previously discussed, APS recently started using Synergy to document 504 Plans. As a result, many staff members indicated inconsistencies in access and use of the system to view plans, and document accommodations and interventions. Data collected during on-site file case studies supported focus group statements around inconsistent use of the system for documentation for both 504 and IAT Plans. Additionally, focus group participants indicated that data was not always collected in a way that allowed for easy reporting.

Summary and Implications

Over the past five years, APS has experienced many organizational changes specifically impacting students with disabilities and students requiring intervention. These changes have included significant growth in student enrollment (4.8% between 2016-17 to 2018-19), including increases in students with disabilities (9.6% over the same time period),[160] consolidation of the Office of Special Education (OSE) under the Department of Teaching and Learning, and changes in key leadership positions. Additionally, APS will implement the consolidation of 504, IAT, and Special Education support functions at the school level into a Student Support Coordinator role utilizing current staff.

Under the current structure, OSE operates with a lean staff to meet the objectives of the office. The OSE organizational structure appears to be primarily supporting processes, procedures, and compliance district-wide, with programmatic initiatives and instructional support for differentiated instruction being initiated and implemented at the school level. Given the site-based management model in APS, OSE is not currently structured to provide instructional support or best practices to schools. Instructional initiatives are primarily led through the Department of Teaching and Learning; however, there is no requirement for schools to implement initiatives, and no method for evaluating effectiveness. The comprehensive Student Support Coordinator (SSC) role appears to focus primarily on building consistency in process and procedures with limited focus on providing cohesive and intentional support to teachers on differentiated instruction, co-teaching, or other instructional initiatives to support students.

While other school divisions have struggled with decreasing budgets over the years, APS has benefited from a growing local economy and cost sharing model with the County of Arlington. Although APS has seen increases in expenditures due to increased student enrollment, APS is overall well-resourced with teacher to student ratios (for teachers supporting students with disabilities) lower than comparative districts (based on available data) (9.2:1). Nationally, there is no consensus on the ideal student to teacher ratio for supporting students with disabilities, primarily because staffing decisions should be made

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[160] Data obtained from Arlington's School Quality Report available at: schoolquality.virginia.gov

based on programmatic and instructional priorities and practices and the supports required for providing students FAPE. The State of Virginia maintains caseload staffing requirements for disability categories and time a student receives special education.[161] Current APS planning factors appear to align with Virginia caseload staffing requirements.

To meet APS's strategic goal of at least 80% of students with disabilities spending 80% or more of their school day in a general education setting[162], effective, high-yield co-teaching practices will be needed. To implement these practices district-wide, an effective teacher allocation and scheduling model will need to be in place. APS' planning factors currently do not account for inclusive practices. APS has not identified, prioritized, or required high-yielding co-teaching strategies across schools. A vision and implementation plan will need to be developed in order to inform planning factors.

Over the course of the next school year, APS will have a new, or interim, Superintendent, a new Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Director of Special Education. These changes in key leadership positions provide APS an opportunity to establish a strategic direction for the Office of Special Education and optimize its organizational structure to support strategic initiatives.

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[161] https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter81/section340/

[162] APS Strategic Plan: https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/StrategicPlanTri-foldFINAL-10-26-18-front-back-print-short-side-1.pdf

V. Parent and Family Engagement

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Engaged parents. ASEAC, SEPTA, and the Arlington Inclusion Task Force are active partners in the APS's special education initiatives and serve as strong advocates for students and their families. **Resources and information.** The Parent Resource Center (PRC) provides useful information and workshops for parents of students with disabilities including a comprehensive manual, the Special Education Family Resource and Information Guide. Awareness among parents of students with IEPs is high (91.3%). **Special Education Parent Liaison Program**. It provides families with insider knowledge and support at the school level from people who have navigated the special education system. **Training and Information Sessions.** Most parents who attend APS training and information sessions indicate that it was helpful for them (83.3% of parents of students with 504 Plans and 94.9% of parents of students with IEPs). **Increased Outreach.** APS staff continue to seek out new methods to share information with APS families (e.g., telenovela on the IEP process). **Plans to Support Students.** Overall parents report that they are considered partners in the development of IEPs (87.5%) and implementation of 504 Plans (81.2%).	**Access for Families Whose First Language Is Not English.** APS provides translation and interpretation services, but families feel that they do not have the information or services needed. **Expectations and Services.** A large proportion of parents of students with IEPs do not know or think none or only some teachers have high expectations for their child. **Communication.** Parents report that communication breakdowns exist between school and home and district and home at all levels of schooling about IEP implementation, transitions, and student progress. **Equity.** Parents report that special education services are not consistently available to all students and their families. They report that a gap exists between families that have access to external resources (such as testing) and can advocate for and obtain services for their children while others who rely on APS systems receive less support. **Pace of Change.** Parents see limited change in the delivery of services/ addressing their concerns over multiple years. They sought updates on the previous 2013 review of special education and have sought legal recourse as a means to leverage measurable changes.

Introduction

Parents are a child's first teacher and are important partners as their children progress through school. Their vital role is acknowledged in IDEA which requires parental input in writing IEP goals, the provision of related services, and placements. IDEA also requires collaboration with parents and students with disabilities to design and implement special education services. As part of this review, several research questions specifically examine the parent's role and satisfaction with special education processes and service delivery within APS. The review sought to examine three topics related to parent and family engagement:

- **Information and communication:** The extent to which parents are provided with useful information and communication throughout the process, have the ability to find consistent and reliable information about each process, and the extent to which the resources (literature, documentation, etc.) support the process;

- **Parent voice:** The extent to which stakeholders feel that their input is solicited, heard, and included, what resources are used to facilitate communication with parents of students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports (e.g., interpreters, language line, Parent Resource Center);

- **Plans to support students:** The extent to which stakeholders (parents, families, students, caregivers) feel specific IAT plans, 504 Plans, and IEPs, and related processes support the student, provide appropriate placements, services, interventions and accommodations;

The data presented below are drawn from focus groups and surveys conducted with parents across APS.

Information and Communication

The APS School and Community Relations Department is responsible for the official distribution of information to central office staff, school-based, staff, and parents and the wider community. The exhibit below shows the range of ways in which APS provides information to stakeholders through a variety of media including traditional print materials to social media to AETV broadcasts. To promote greater community access, materials are translated into 5 or more languages and the website has a translation feature that allows access in 15 major languages.

Exhibit 189. Methods for communicating with community (in English and Spanish on website)[163]

Information related to special education is accessible through the website, and programs or stories may be featured in communications such as the video good news stories, school-talk messages, and the many other communication venues employed by the department. Staff cited an example of a 10-minute video developed for the APS Dyslexia Conference in fall 2018, which provided information and resources

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[163] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NEW-Communications-Brochure-2-19-combined.pdf

about the disability and offered viewers the student perspective. Information is also provided at the school level through principal letters, and information nights. At the time of our data collection, the Department of School and Community Relations was surveying parents in order to collect information about how to more effectively communicate about special education to the APS community.

The School and Community Relations team reported working with the Parent Resource Center on communication to families receiving special education services to target specific messages as needed. They also report collaborating on future videos including "What is an IEP" and other resources.

Parent Resource Center

APS provides resources specific to special education through its Parent Resource Center. The Parent Resource Center (PRC) is a 20-year old resource and information center for families, staff and community members housed at the APS central office. The PRC's stated mission is "to provide parents the support and information they need as they work with the school system to identify and meet their child's unique learning needs."[164]

The PRC provides a wide range of resources including a lending library of print, audio and DVD resources, a parent newsletter, parent training workshops, sibling workshops, and the *Family Resource and Information Guide* which provides step-by-step support to families in navigating the special education process, working with school staff, and accessing community resources. The center has three full-time staff who also provide one-on-one support to families. The direct support provides families with a safe and confidential avenue to share their concerns and seek support. Parents contact PRC staff about a wide variety of concerns including placements, transitioning to APS and special education, specific disability categories, and community programs that are available. The PRC staff help families access information to make informed choices and support parents advocacy for their children. One staff is bilingual and supports Spanish-speaking parents. Staff report that APS has been supportive of the PRC

The PRC enjoys collaborative relationships throughout APS including work with the bilingual family assistance facilitators at each school, the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) coordinator, as well as parent groups such as SEPTA and ASEAC (see below). In addition to the wealth of information provided in the physical office, and through outreach activities in the community, staff are examining ways to provide more information to families online.

As measured on the two parent surveys, awareness of the PRC varies by stakeholder group. Parents of students with IEP demonstrated greater awareness (91% are aware of the PRC) than parents of students with 504 Plans (59%)

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[164] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/

Exhibit 190. Parent Survey: Are you aware that APS has a Parent Resource Center for parents of students with disabilities?
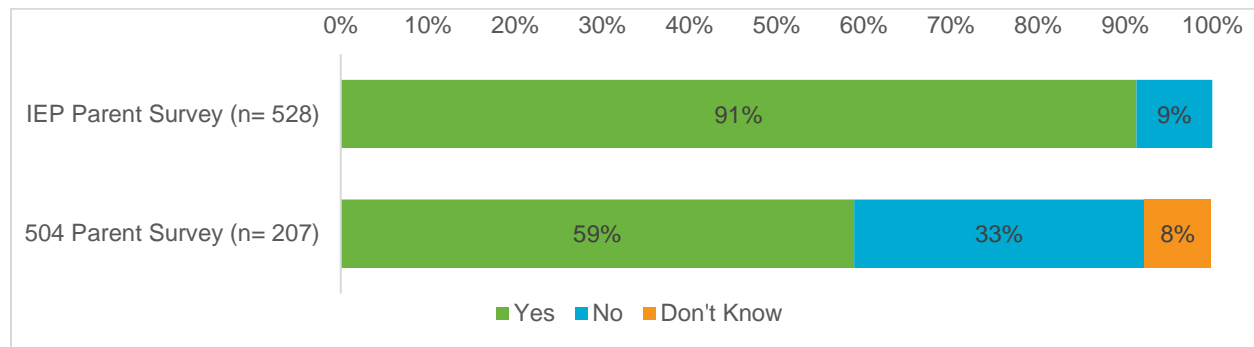
*This survey question did not offer parents of students with IEPs a "don't know" option.

Use of the resources provided by the PRC was more even among the two groups of parents. Half of parents of students with IEPs (50%) and 45% of parents of students with 504 Plans reported using resources from the PRC.

Exhibit 191. Parent Survey: Have you ever used resources from the Parent Resource Center?
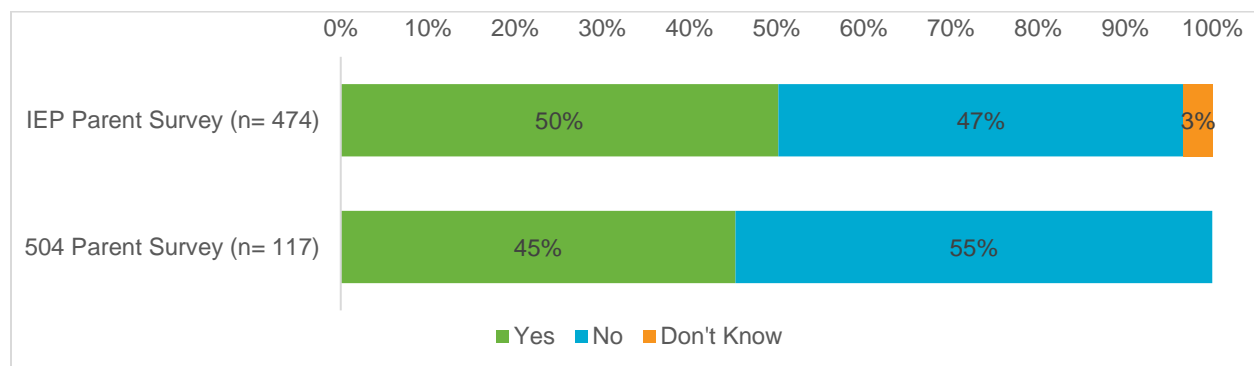
** This survey question did not offer parents of students with 504 Plans a "don't know" option.

Parent Liaisons

The Special Education Parent Liaison program is a program of SEPTA administered in partnership with the PRC. In fall 2018, almost every school in APS had at least one liaison and many had more than one. Liaisons support and encourage the flow of information between each of the schools, the PRC, SEPTA and the community. They also serve as points of contact for families interested in connecting with another parents of children with disabilities in individual schools.[165] As described by SEPTA and PRC leadership, liaisons provide an important bridge to parents as an approachable and accessible resource, particularly to families who are new to APS. Liaisons participate in training offered at the PRC on special topics including sessions with the Director of Special Education. These parent volunteers are able to share their experiences with particular schools, knowing the "culture of how that school works" and how to navigate resources parents might need as well as testing and therapy, whatever information is needed to support families and children.

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[165] https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/special-education-parent-liaisons/

Parent Training and Information

Parents who responded to the survey were asked whether they had attended APS- sponsored training and information sessions about special education. Most parents of students with IEPs were aware of these opportunities (81%) but only on third had attended an event in the past year (32%). A large majority of parents who attended an event agreed that it was helpful to them (95%).

Among parents of students with 504 Plans, awareness of APS-sponsored opportunities for parent training or information sessions about Section 504 supports was much lower (28%) with the largest proportion of parents responding that they were not aware. Only 9% of parents of students with 504 Plans attended parent training or information sessions in the past year. Among those that attended, the majority agreed that the session was helpful to them (83%).

Parent Voice

APS is fortunate to have a very active core of parents of students receiving special education services. These parents are not only engaged with the education of their individual student, but also dedicated significant time to participate in district-level processes and policies through two groups: The Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA).

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC)

ASEAC is established by law, with its role and duties mandated by the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia as defined by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The 22-members of the ASEAC are majority parents of students with disabilities but also includes other parents, community members, a teacher-member, and students. Members are appointed by the school board and are described by the VDOE as "extensions of local school boards since members are appointed by them."

VDOE regulations state that ASEAC's official role is to:

1. Advise the local school division of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
2. Assist in the development of long-range plans designed to provide needed services for children with disabilities;
3. Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
4. Submit periodic reports and recommendations to the school board;
5. Assist the school division in interpreting educational plans to the community for meeting the needs of children with disabilities;
6. Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the school board; and participate in the review of the school division's annual plan.[166]

ASEAC meets once per month to pursue the annual agenda for the Committee and related subcommittees as well as to hear public comments. All meetings are open to the public. Typically, attendees include parents, teachers, and community members. PCG staff attended one meeting as part of our data collection.

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[166] ASEAC site: https://www.apsva.us/special-education-advisory-committee/; VDOE site:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_advisory/special_ed/local_sped_advisory_committees/products/guide/guide.pdf

The 2017-18 Recommending Year Report to the Advisory Committee on Instruction from ASEAC contained two primary recommendations regarding the implementation of special education services in APS.[167] The first focused on improvement of the consistency and uniformity of special education services implementation across the county. The recommendation included sub recommendations to a) Develop comprehensive written guidance that provides clear direction on policies, procedures and expected practices; b) Standardize School Improvement Plans to use a common template and specifically address special education goals; and c) Personnel Accountability to hold school-level personnel accountable for expected results related to the provision of special education services. The second recommendation was to require general education teachers and building administrators to attain core competencies in the education of students with disabilities and include competencies in differentiated learning and education of students with disabilities in annual teacher and school administrator evaluations.

The report notes alignment of the recommendations with APS strategic plan and references recommendations made in the 2013 *Final Report: Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs* submitted by PCG.

ASEAC leadership was deeply engaged with both the 2013-14 and the 2018-19 special education reviews by PCG.

Special Education Parent-Teacher Association (SEPTA)

Arlington SEPTA was organized in spring 2010 and was the first special education PTA in the Commonwealth of Virginia. SEPTA is a separate 501c3 organization affiliated with the National PTA and the Virginia PTA and operates with its own board of directors. SEPTA is district-wide and reaches across all schools.

Arlington SEPTA serves in several roles in the community. First, it provides training and workshop opportunities for parents and families in order to raise awareness and acceptance of disabilities. SEPTA also hosts social events for families and holds events throughout the year to connect parents. Forging parent networks through events, parents note, is particularly helpful to parents who are non-native English speakers.

Secondly, SEPTA supports APS teachers and administrators to achieve the best outcomes for students with disabilities by providing mini-grants for educators. The demand for mini-grants has grown, and the website highlights "mini-grants focused on improving functional and academic skills for students with disabilities" that include:[168]

- Lego based Social Skills
- Field trips (community engagement)
- Sensory Items
- School improvement projects (garden, artwork)
- Resource materials (special books or materials for specific activities or projects)
- Materials for demonstration to school or district staff
- Professional learning opportunities in specific cases

Individual educators approach SEPTA with their requests.

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[167] https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ASEAC-ACI-Recommending-Year-2017-2018-1-1.pdf

[168] https://www.arlingtonsepta.org/mini-grants/

SEPTA also annually recognizes outstanding administrators, educators, aide/assistants or support staff, schools or programs, volunteers, student advocates, and student allies annually through its excellence in supporting special education awards.

In addition to their English-language materials, SEPTA offers resources in Spanish including a link to their Spanish language website, "Espacio Hispanico." SEPTA has a Spanish-speaking leader along with an individual who can support families that speak Mongolian. SEPTA has plans to develop a telenovela to provide information about how to navigate special education. The presence and reach of SEPTA is growing through their social media activity which uses listservs, Facebook and Twitter. They report having nearly 1,000 people on their listserv which also allows members to post as well as receive notifications.

Arlington Inclusion Task Force

The Arlington Inclusion Task Force is an "informal, unincorporated" association that works closely with SEPTA (which hosts their webpage) and ASEAC and draws members from both groups. The task force was established in 2014 to promote awareness of best practices in inclusive education and to support APS' efforts to prioritize inclusion for all students.[169] The task force continues to provide resources and advocacy for inclusionary practice in APS by meeting with School Board members, central office staff, and school-level personnel, as well as developing connections with other inclusion groups across the state.

Access for Non-English-Speaking Parents

APS offers many resources in multiple languages and interpretation services are available during IEP and other meetings as requested. The few parents who responded to questions related to interpretation on the survey indicated satisfaction with scheduling and interpretation. However, as noted in other sections, the measures APS and schools have taken may fall short of the goal of providing access to all families as highlighted by focus group participants.

A parent focus group conducted in Spanish confirmed some of these concerns. For example:

- Parents shared that written translations are often literal and not understandable.
- *"When I signed for IEP I was misinformed, and I thought I was getting him support but misunderstood that this was about a disability. Interpreters are not good. They use the liaison for this purpose and they do not have the skills necessary to interpret."*
- *"I did not have the understanding of the IEP process. A translator came who was a liaison who was not adequately prepared or trained to do so skillfully. This IEP experience exposed me to gaps on how non-English speaking parents are supported. Sometimes in schools it appears that children are provided access to services based on whose child this is."*
- *"Many times, they do not get us capable translators, or use liaisons or question whether they need a translator as per request. Language line is inadequate, translations are literal and not [sufficient]."*
- *"There is a lot of information that goes out of APS that goes out to selected parents. Now we are receiving info regarding the Parent Resource Center in Spanish, not before. They are beginning to reach out in these ways."*

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[169] https://www.arlingtonsepta.org/inclusion-task-force/

APS Responsiveness

While parents have multiple venues to share their concerns about special education in APS including school board testimony and public comment at ASEAC meetings, many parents noted that change within APS have been slow to materialize and that issues with consistency in the provision of special education services persist despite many years of advocacy. In late fall 2018, a group of parents sought legal recourse through a complaint, "Complaint and Request for Review of Accountability of Special Education in Arlington Public Schools" to the VDOE to leverage state level oversight to generate changes within APS.

Plans to Support Students

The study sought to gauge parent perceptions of their level of engagement with the process of developing plans and the communication and feedback they receive from their child's school about their child's progress. While some of this information is presented in other sections of the report, it is consolidated here to focus specifically on parent's perspectives.

IEP

Among parents of children with IEPs, a large majority indicated on the survey that they feel engaged with the IEP process: 88% report that they are a respected partner in the development of their child's IEP (always or most of the time). Parents also felt comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns at IEP meetings (93% always or most of the time) and report that they understood what is discussed (96% always or most of the time). Parents indicated that school staff both communicate effectively about their child's IEP (93% always or most of the time) and respond to their concerns in a reasonable period of time (88% always or most of the time). There was little variation in responses by level of schooling.

Exhibit 192. Parent Survey: In developing my child's IEP, I am a respected partner with my child's teachers and other service providers (for example, speech therapists, physical therapists, etc.)
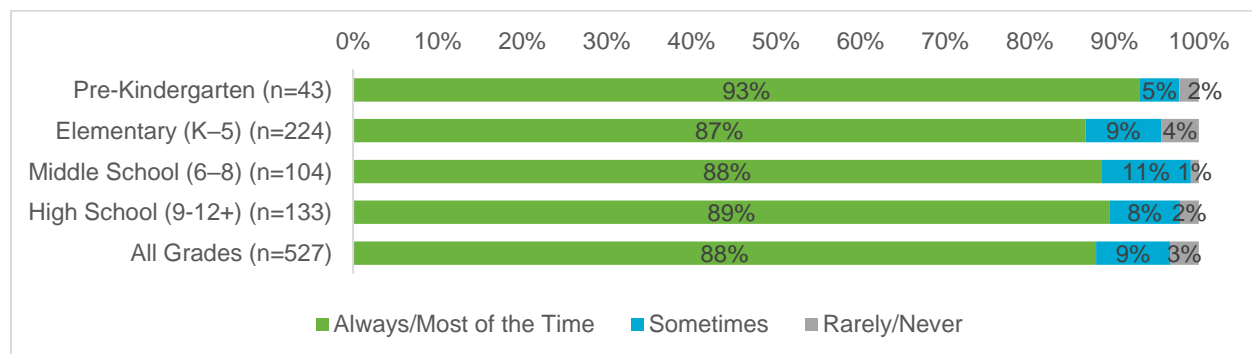
Exhibit 193. Parent Survey: I understand what is discussed at IEP meetings.
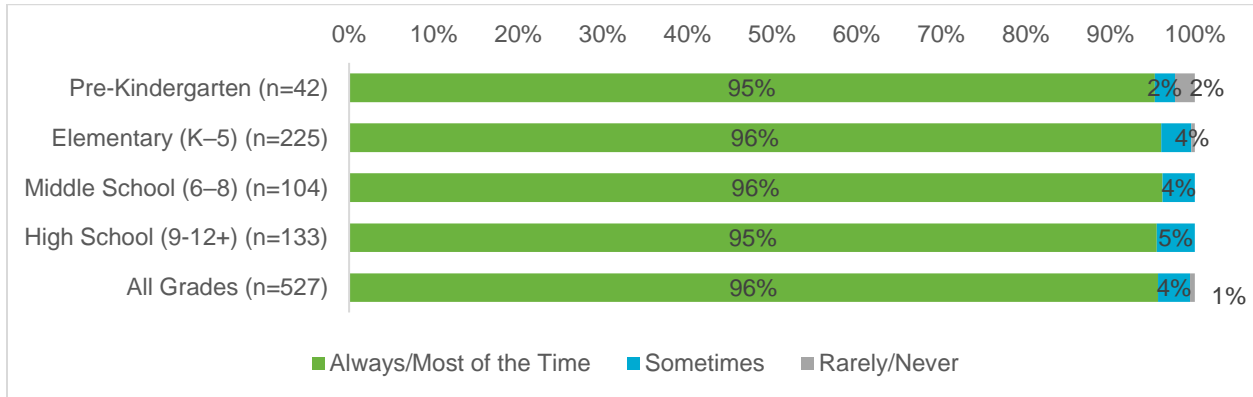
Exhibit 194. Parent Survey: I feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns at IEP meetings.
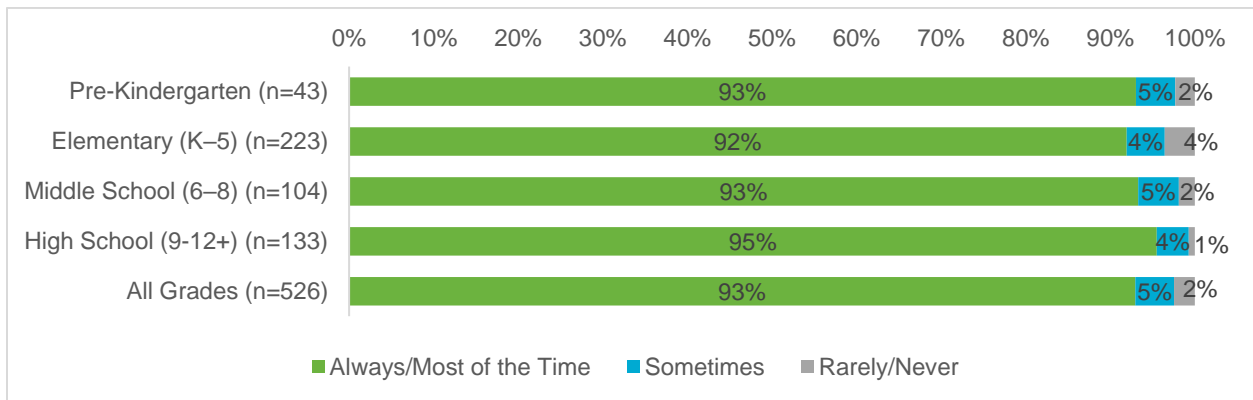
Exhibit 195. Parent Survey: Teachers/school staff have communicated effectively with me about my child's IEP.
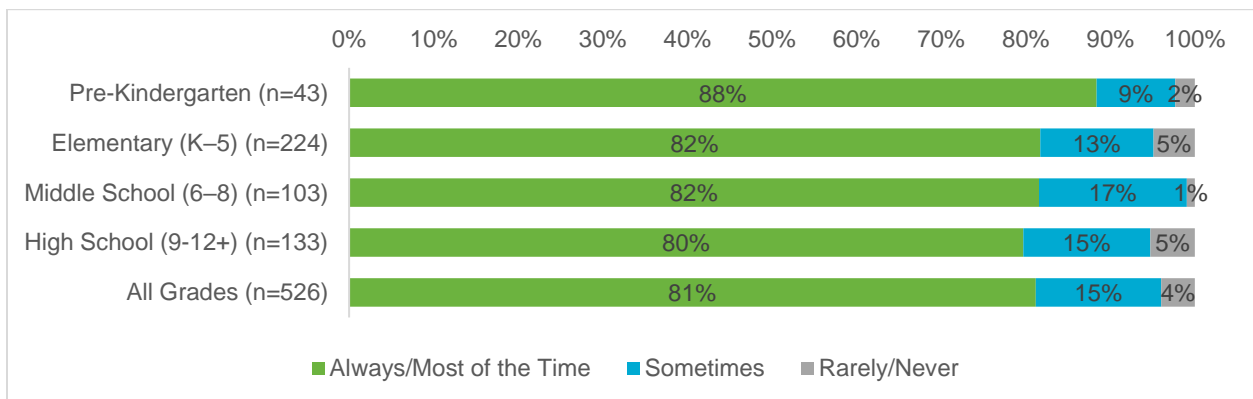
Exhibit 196. Parent Survey: School staff respond to my concerns about my child's IEP in a reasonable period of time.
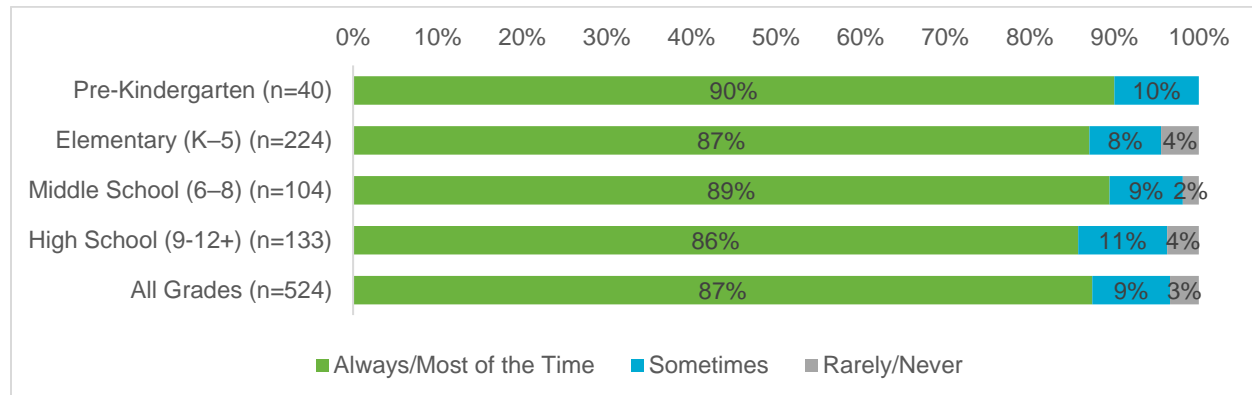
While the majority of parents of students with IEPs report that that they are satisfied with the amount of information they receive regarding their student's performance (71% agreed), a large proportion do not feel well-informed (28% disagreed). Middle school parents had the lowest level of agreement (66%).

Exhibit 197. Parent Survey: I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about my child's performance.
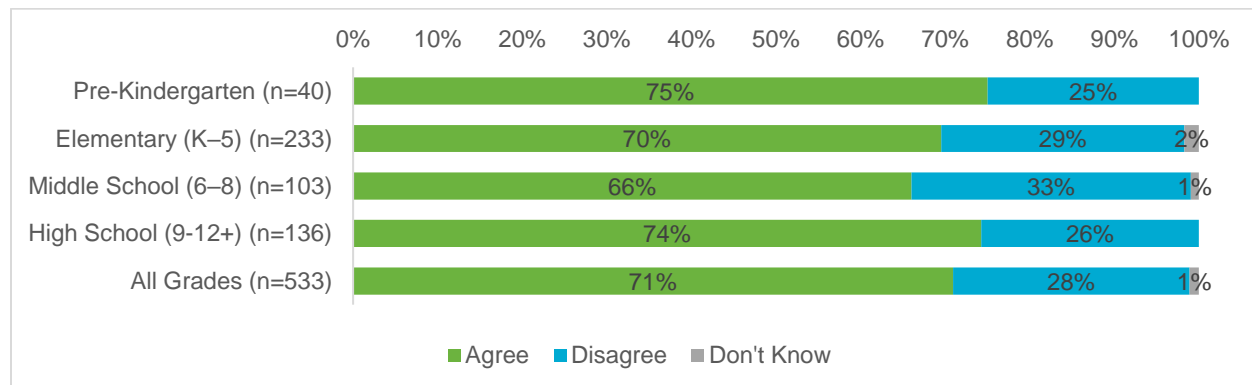
Parents' overall perception is that teachers and related service professionals have high expectations for their children :65% indicated all or most of them do. Middle school parents were less positive where only half agreed that all or most of their child's teachers have high expectations (51%, see Exhibit 41). Overall, fewer parents' agreed that paraprofessionals have high expectations: 44% agreed all or most paraprofessionals have high expectations while a similar percentage responded that they don't' know (46%, see Exhibit 42).

Section 504

Parents of students with 504 Plans were asked similar questions about their participation and communication regarding their child's plan. The majority of parents reported that they feel that they are a respected partner in the development and implementation of their child's 504 Plan (81% always or most of the time, Exhibit 163). Parents understood what was discussed at Section 504 meetings (97% most of the time or always, Exhibit 150) and felt comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns (95% always or most of the time, Exhibit 151). Parents indicated that school staff communicate effectively about their child's Section 504 Plan (74% always or most of the time), and school staff respond to their concerns in a reasonable period of time (85%, Exhibit 164). Overall, 58% of parents reported that they receive adequate information about the implementation of their child's accommodations (Exhibit 160) but

22% report that they rarely or never do. Overall, parents of prekindergarten students were more positive. Otherwise there was limited variation by school level.

The perception of the majority of parents of children with 504 Plans at all school levels is that teachers have high expectations for them (76% all or most of them, Exhibit 157).

Summary and Implications

Since PCG's review in 2013, outreach and communication from APS to support families of children with disabilities have continued to develop. Recommendations from the previous report included providing more parent friendly and informative materials at the school sites, using innovative ways to build parent confidence and advocacy skills through "mock IEP meetings," and developing a guide for parents outlining the IEP process, terminology and frequently asked questions in document and video format with similar guides for 504 and IAT. Many of these recommendations have been implemented.

APS parent organizations, ASEAC and SEPTA, continue to be engaged partners with APS. Together with the Parent Resource Center and the Special Education Parent Liaison program, they provide families with information, resources, and an outlet to share their voice in APS. Training and information sessions are perceived of as helpful but parent awareness of these opportunities in uneven. Parents of children with IEPs are more likely to know about and attend APS events designed for parents of students with disabilities.

The majority of parents of students with 504 Plans and IEPs see themselves as partners in the development and implementation of students' plans and report that they are satisfied with the information they receive on their child's progress, but there is still a significant proportion of parents who do not feel informed or that they have access to APS processes and services. A large proportion of parents perceive that their child's teachers do not have high expectations for them, or they don't know if they do.

Parents acknowledge improvement in APS' outreach efforts but there are opportunities for growth in all areas to assure that information systematically made available to all families using multiple channels and in multiple languages. APS may also wish to examine school-level outreach efforts to ensure that parents receive appropriate information and feel that they have access to resources and services.

VI. Student Experience

Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Support from Teachers and Case Carriers. In focus groups, high school students described case carriers and teachers who support them academically and socially as needs arise. **Postsecondary Plans.** The majority of students with IEPs have talked with someone about what they want to do after graduating from high school (87%). **School Climate and Culture.** Approximately 70% of students with IEPs and 80% of students with 504 Plans report that other students treat them fairly, and they feel welcomed, valued and respected in school most or all of the time. **Independence.** The majority of students with IEPs (73%) and 504 Plans (73%) report that they are getting the skills that will help them be independent as possible after high school.	**School Climate and Culture.** While the majority of students with IEPs report that they are able to participate in afterschool activities, that others treat them fairly, and they feel welcomed in school, nearly 30% report that this is not their experience. **Students' Participation in IEP and 504 Process**. Students' participation in IEP meetings (44%), awareness of goals (59%), accommodations (56%), and progress toward goals (47%) is limited. Students participation in Section 504 meetings (44), awareness of the content of their plans (59%) was similarly limited. **High Expectations**. More than a third of students with IEPs report that only some or none of their teachers have high expectations for them or that they don't know (35%). **Understanding and Support.** A large proportion of students do not feel understood or supported: among students with IEPs, 37% report that some or none of their teachers understand and support them or that they don't know; and 44% report that some or no teachers talk with them about their progress. Among students with 504 Plans, 34% report that some or none of their teachers understand or support them or that they don't know. In focus groups students described ongoing self-advocacy as many teachers are not aware of or not providing accommodations.

Introduction

As the primary stakeholders of services provided by APS, the study sought to examine the students' perspectives regarding their educational experiences with IEPs and 504 Plans. Middle and high school students provided feedback by responding to surveys (students with IEPs and students with 504 Plans) as well as through four focus groups conducted at two high schools in APS. PCG also conducted student shadowing visits to schools across APS to observe the daily experiences of students with IEPs.

Self-Advocacy

In focus groups and on the survey, students were asked a series of questions about their access to information about special education services they are receiving and their level of participation in the process.

IEP

Overall, student awareness is mixed with regard to the IEP process. For example, 57% of students report that APS staff have explained to them why they need special education services in a way they understand, while 27% report that they "don't know." Less than half of students reported attending their recent IEP meeting (44%). Slightly more than half of students reported that they are aware of the content of their IEP in terms of goals (59%) and accommodations (57%). However, less than half of students reported that they receive information regarding their progress on their IEP goals (47%).

Exhibit 198. Students understanding, awareness participation in IEP process.
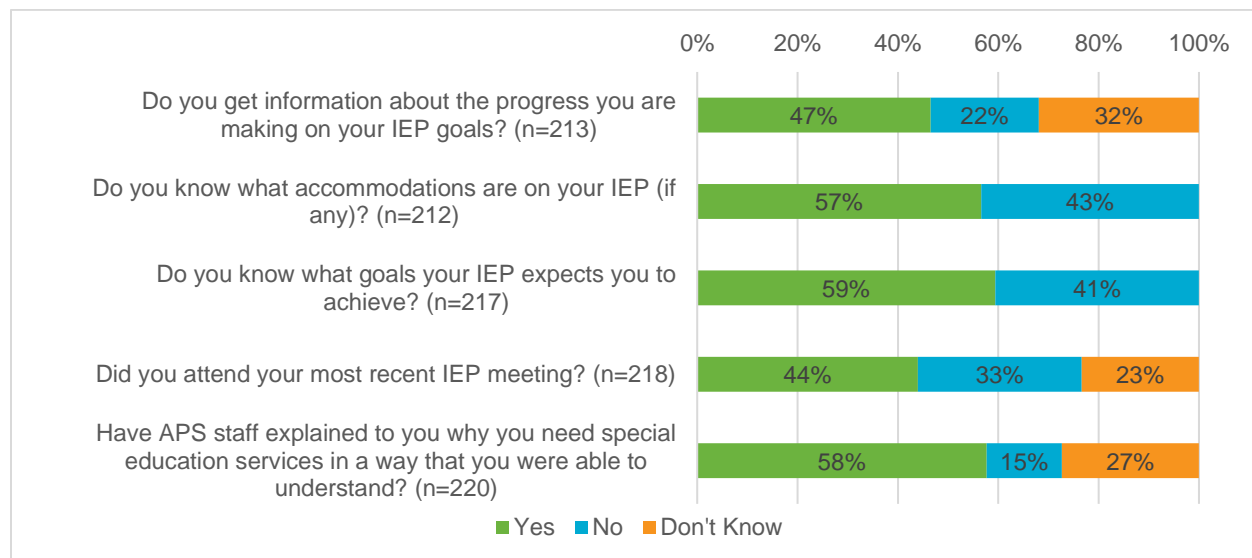
Among the high school students with IEPs who participated in focus groups, all confirmed that they understood their disability and why they have an IEP, and many participated in their IEP meetings and started doing so in middle school. Several students confirmed that the meetings helped them understand their accommodations better, and that their opinions were solicited and valued.

On surveys, students' responses were less positive. Overall, only 49% of students who attended their IEP meeting feel that their views and comments are "completely" respected and taken into consideration by their IEP team while another 39% indicated that their views were "somewhat" taken into consideration.

Exhibit 199. Student voice in IEP process.

At your most recent IEP meeting, did you feel that your views and comments were respected and taken into consideration by the IEP team? (n= 90): Completely 49%, Somewhat 39%, Not at All 8%, Don't Know 4%

■Completely ■Somewhat ■Not at All ■Don't Know
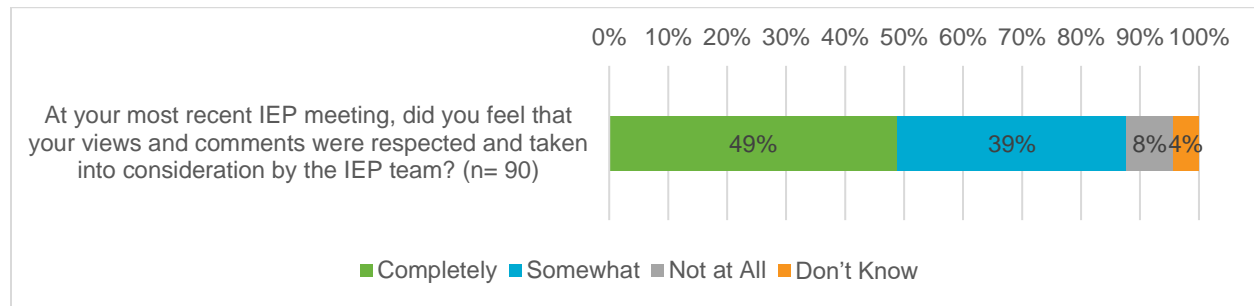
Less than half of students who completed the survey (45%) reported that they feel comfortable asking questions at their IEP meetings.

Students' opinions were mixed about whether their school was providing the services delineated on their IEP. Only 53% of students reported that they received those services most of the time or always.

Exhibit 200. Student awareness of IEP

Do you receive the services on your IEP? (n=214): Always/ Most of the Time 53%, Sometimes 26%, Rarely/Not at all 21%

I feel OK about asking questions about my IEP at meetings. (n=212): Always/ Most of the Time 45%, Sometimes 24%, Rarely/Not at all 31%

■Always/ Most of the Time ■Sometimes ■Rarely/Not at all
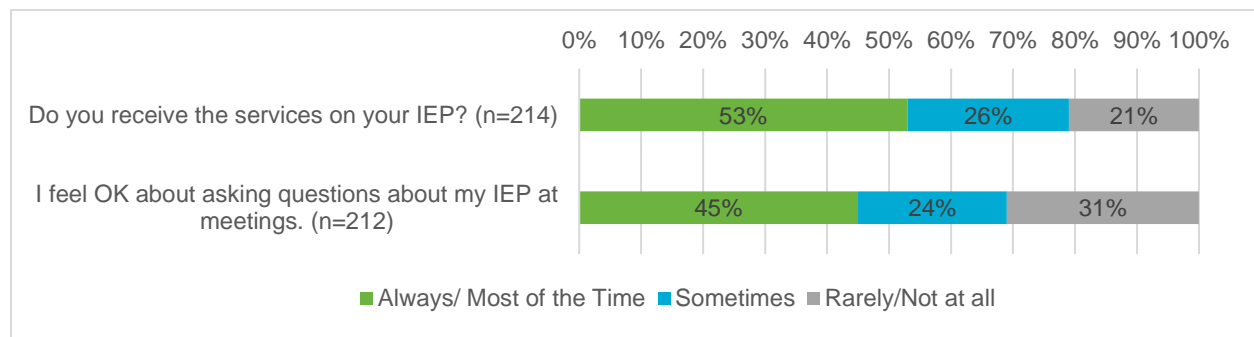
Students were asked whether school staff talk with them about their IEP. Thirty-five percent indicated that some staff do and another 30% indicated that most or all of them do.

In focus groups, students described having positive and proactive relationships with their case carriers whom many considered an important support and advocate.

Exhibit 201. School staff talk with me about my IEP.

School staff (for example, teachers, transition coordinators, and speech therapists) talk with me about my IEP. (n=207): All/Most of Them 30%, Some of Them 35%, None of Them 9%, Don't Know 26%

■All/Most of Them ■Some of Them ■None of Them ■Don't Know
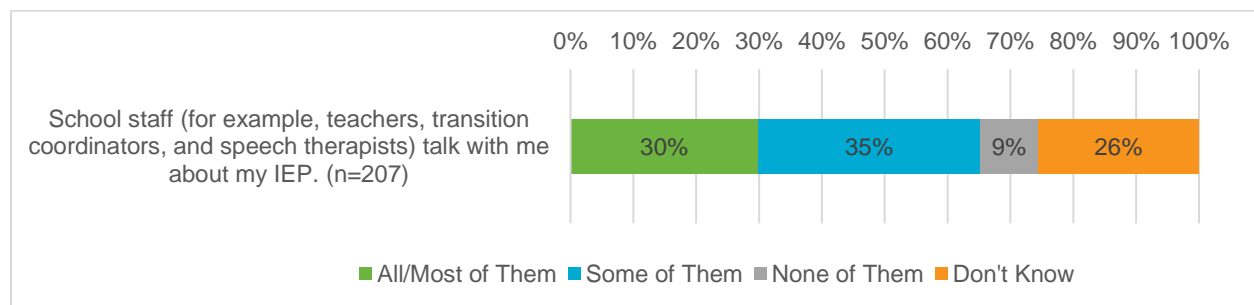
Section 504

Students with 504 Plans reported a high level of awareness of why they are receiving 504 accommodations (84%), but less awareness of whether they are receiving all the supports and accommodations written into their 504 Plan (61%) and only 59% had seen their 504 Plan. Less than half of students attended the most recent Section 504 meeting (44%).

Exhibit 202. Students understanding, awareness participation in 504 process.
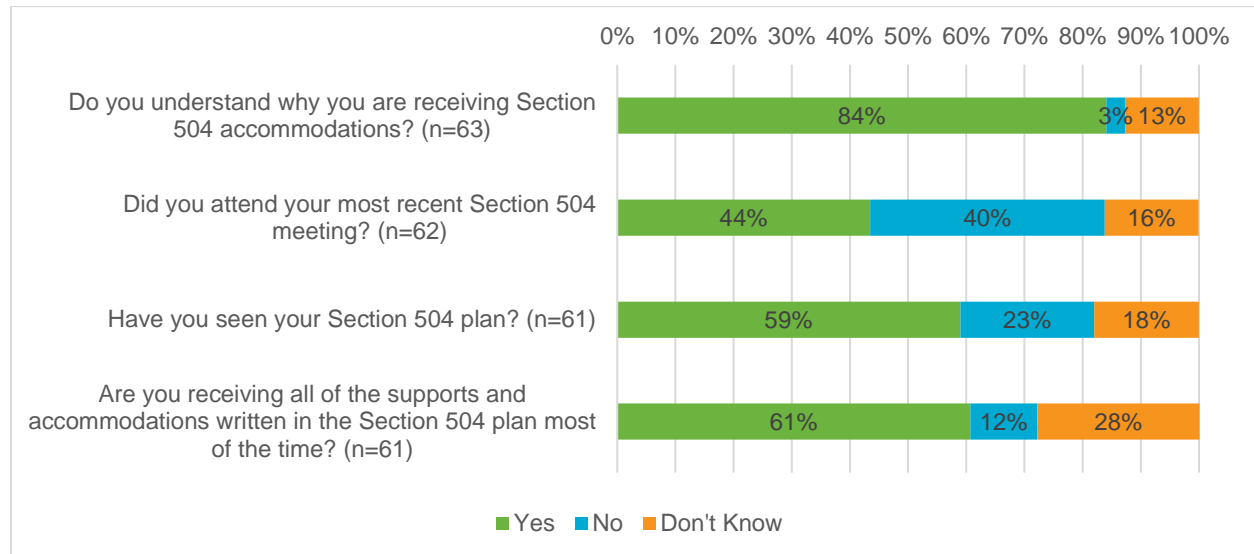
Among students with a 504 Plan who responded to the survey, only 44% reported attending their recent Section 504 meeting. Among those who attended these meetings, 80% reported they feel OK about asking question always or most of the time, and that the information they provided is considered (81%).

Exhibit 203. Student voice in 504 process.[170]
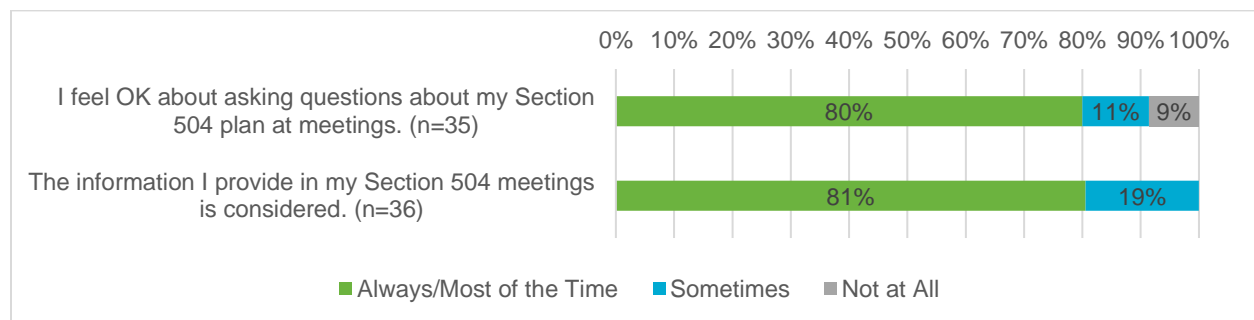
School Culture and Climate

A positive school climate is defined as providing a safe and supportive environment for students, staff and families.[171] Research on school culture and climate affirms several critical features that promote successful and positive student experiences. While federal legislation protects the rights of individuals

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[170] Does not include response from students who indicated that they do not attend their 504 meetings.

[171] Stephen Kostyo, Jessica Cardichon, and Linda Darling-Hammond. 2018. *Building a Positive School Climate: Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real: State Strategies to Close the Opportunity Gap.* https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/essa-equity-promise-climate-brief

with disabilities, subtle forms of discrimination may operate within schools through adult and student attitudes and behaviors in ways that undermine students with disabilities' sense of safety and support. This, in turn, can result in negative school experiences. It is incumbent upon all school staff to ensure that schools are open and inclusive environments wherein all students may experience positive academic and social growth.

In order to understand students' perspectives, students with IEPs and 504s were asked a series of questions about school culture and climate on surveys and in focus groups. PCG also conducted a set of student shadowing visits to observe students with IEPs' interactions in classrooms, as well as hallways, lunchrooms, gyms, and on the playground across multiple schools and multiple grade levels across APS.

IEP

Students with IEPs were asked about teachers' expectations and the supports they provide. Combining the "most of them" and "all of them" responses, student reported that the majority of their teachers have high expectations for them (65%), talk with them about their progress in school (55%), understand and support them (64%), and provide the help students need to do well in school (72% always and most of the time). However, their responses indicate that students with IEPs believe that a large proportion of teachers do not.

Exhibit 204. Support for students with IEPs.
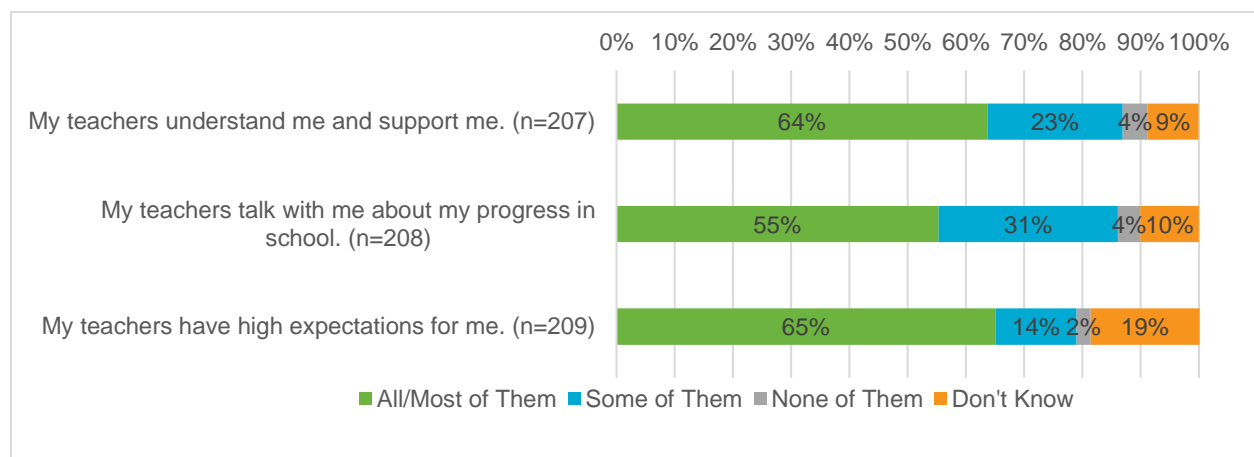
The majority of students with IEPs agree that they were getting skills that will help them be as independent as possible after high school (73% when combine "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree"). In terms of additional supports, 28% of students agreed that they needed help with their behavior.

Exhibit 205. Support to succeed in school.
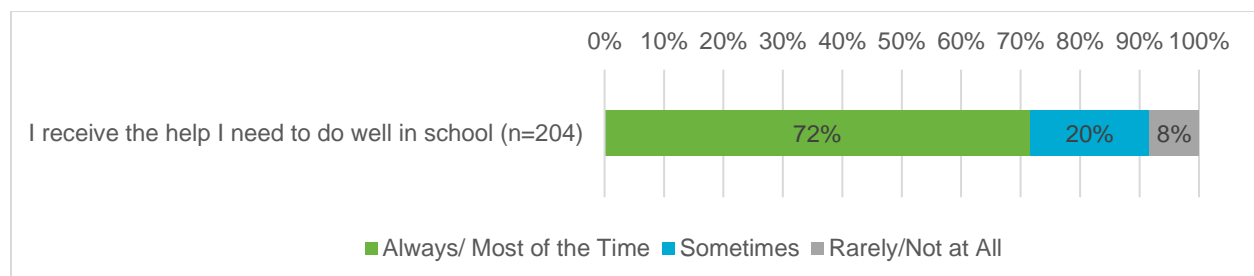
Exhibit 206. Students with IEPs rating of independence and behavior.
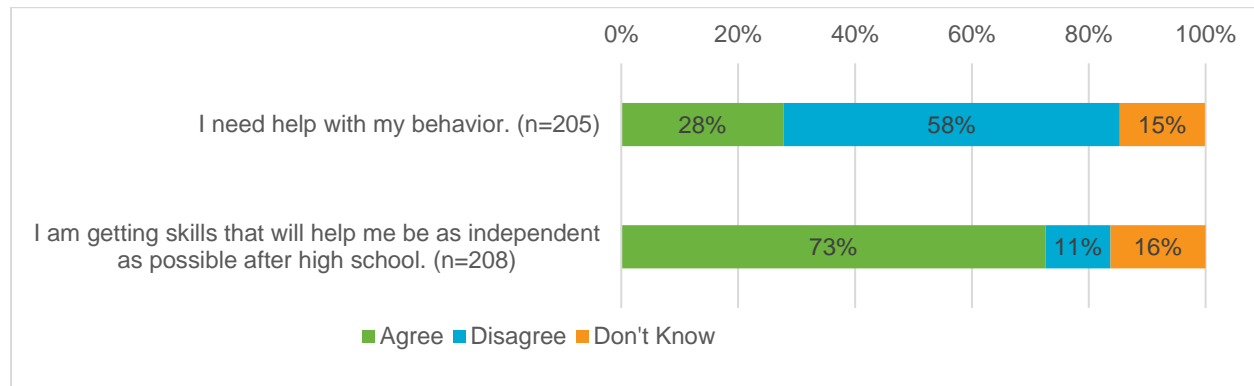
Students were asked their opinion about what their school does well to help them in an open response format. Many echoed the topics covered in the question above noting that teachers support their independence, managing their behavior and general academic support. For example, students offered the following comments regarding this support:

- *"They ask me if I understand a topic. If I do not understand, they help me."*
- *"I think they help me when they notice that I am moving a little slower than all the other kids."*
- *"They teach me. They help me during lunch. They help me after school."*

Students were also asked what else their school could to help them. Many students identified academic and social areas in which they wanted greater support. Others noted organizational issues related to the delivery of special education services in the building. For example, one student commented on both their teacher's openness to their specific needs and the seeming lack of accountability for paras and/or plans in place to provide substitutes when assistants are absent.

- "*It would be great to have special education aides who can help me and show up for class. I have some that are absent two times a week. I get the idea that not all the teachers are really patient. With a person like me with learning issues, it takes me a long time to do things. Not every teacher gets that, and that is not helpful for me."*
- Another commented, *"The biggest challenge is substitutes."*

Focus group participants also noted the challenge of working with substitute teachers who may not trust students when they share their accommodations.

Students discussed learning how to advocate for their accommodations. One student said that he keeps his IEP in his wallet to share with teachers who are unaware of his accommodations. One student explained his transition to high school,

- *"In the past I had an IEP [but it was] easy for me…[I] didn't use extra time, or smaller testing rooms. In HS, it got difficult, to the point where I realized it's difficult because I'm not using my accommodations–I'm trying to get better at using [the study period]; growing in my advocacy; [but] I need help with that—I need to find the balance, need to use it, didn't' know how to."*

The majority of students with IEPs report that they are included and feel welcomed in their schools. For example, 68% report that they are able to be in afterschool activities or clubs if they want always or most of the time. In addition, students feel that that others treat them fairly (74% "always and "most of the time"); and they feel welcomed in school (73%). However, only 57% report that they somewhat or strongly agree with the statement, "I like school" always or most of the time.

Exhibit 207. Perceptions of school climate and culture –students with IEPs.
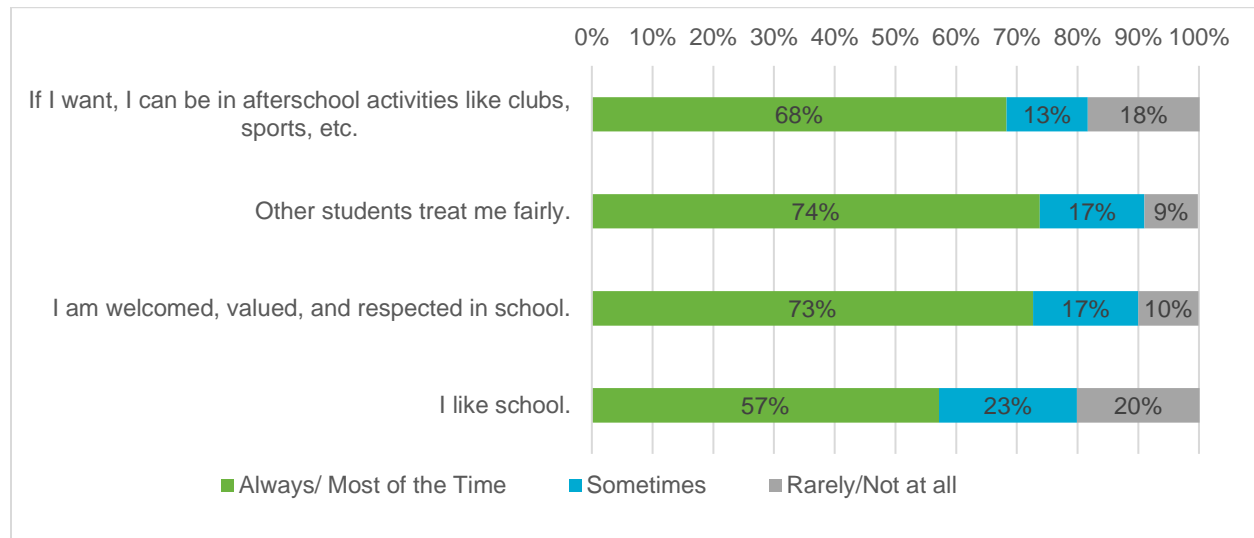
PCG's student shadowing observations provided another window on inclusion. Overall, PCG observers saw students with IEPs who were in inclusive settings having positive interactions with peers and participating in their classes.

Section 504

Overall, students' perception of the support they receive from their teachers is mixed. For example, nearly half of students report that *none* of their teachers talk to them about the progress they are making related to their 504 plan (46%) or they don't know (16%). The majority (58%) report that all or most or all of their teachers are providing the help they need related to their 504 Plan, and 66% feel that all or most of their teachers understand and support them.

Exhibit 208. Support for students with 504s.[172]

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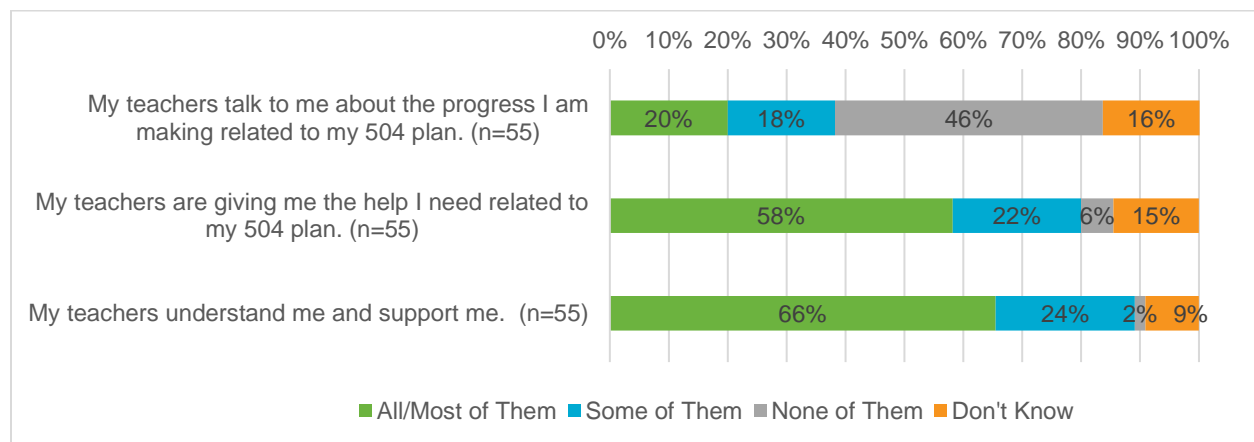
[172] It should be noted that teachers often speak with students about their progress but this may be connected directly to the Section 504 plan.

Students overall felt that they were getting the skills that would help the be independent after high school (73% agree). In terms of additional support, 26% of students agreed that they need help with their behavior. Three quarters of students (75%) indicated that they were receiving the help they need to do well in school.

Exhibit 209. Additional support for students with 504 Plans.[173]
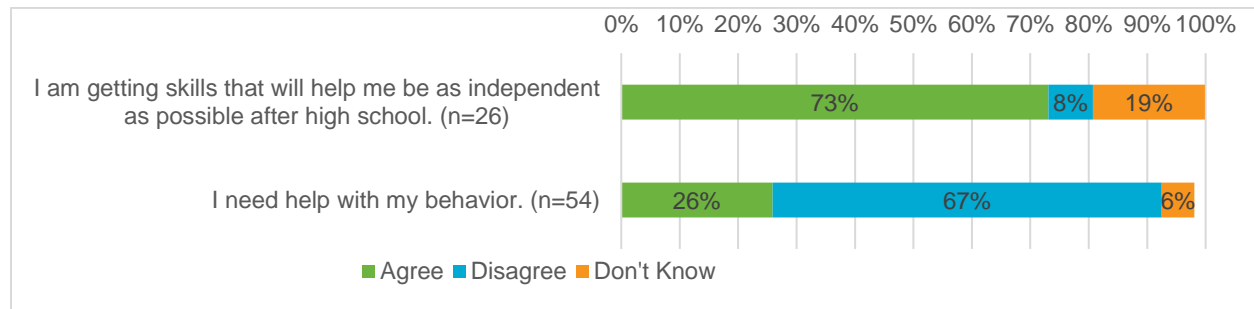
Exhibit 210. Academic support for students with 504 Plans.
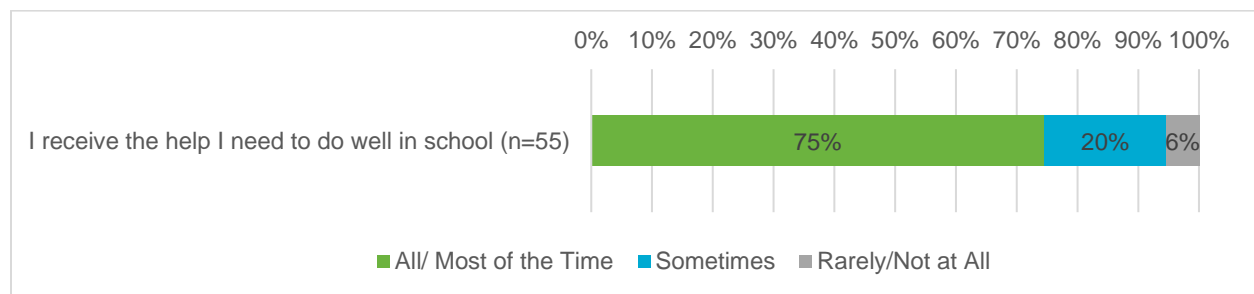
Students were asked to elaborate on the supports they receive on the survey. Many students noted that they were given their accommodations, and that teachers checked in with them to make sure things were going well. For example,

- *"They support and help me when I need it. They are considerate about my 504."*
- *"Teachers generally always have time or will make time to talk and figure out solutions to problems."*

Students were also asked to identify how they thought their school could help them more. While many students indicated that they did not need schools to do more, or they did not know any additional support to request, several comments focused on providing information to teachers about accommodation and having teachers honor them. These included:

- *"Reminding teachers that I have accommodations at the beginning of the year. Allowing me to have the option of not having accommodations all of the time. Better organization overall."*
- *"Not all teachers are accommodating. I had a difficult teacher last year."*
- *"Making it easier to get my accommodations in class without having to ask for them each time"*
- *"I'm not good at using my voice and asking questions so I would like for them to say I'm allowed to go somewhere else for my tests instead of me asking."*

In focus groups, students with 504 Plans also discussed their accommodations and learning about how to ask for them when teachers do not seem familiar with their plan. Others noted that teachers are mostly

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[173] 26 high school students completed the survey. The question was branched for high-school students.

aware. Finally, students in focus groups at both schools noted that they had had discussions with counselors about accommodations in higher education settings.

A final set of questions asked students about whether they feel included and welcome at school and whether they like school.

Exhibit 211. Perceptions of school culture among students with 504s.
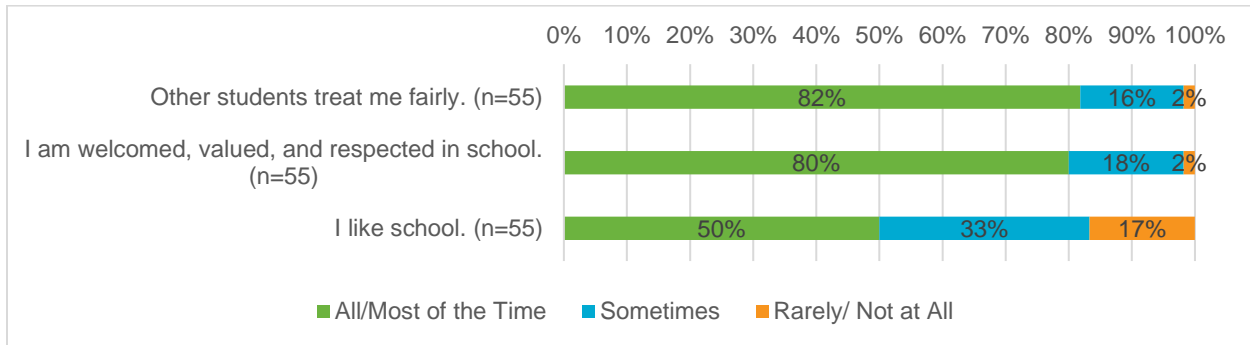
More information

Students were asked if there were any areas in which they would like more information. Students with IEPs and 504 Plans' responses are below. Across both groups, the most selected areas were: Life after high school and learning and homework strategies. Students with Section 504 Plans were also interested understanding the Section 504 process.

Exhibit 212. Topics students would like more information about
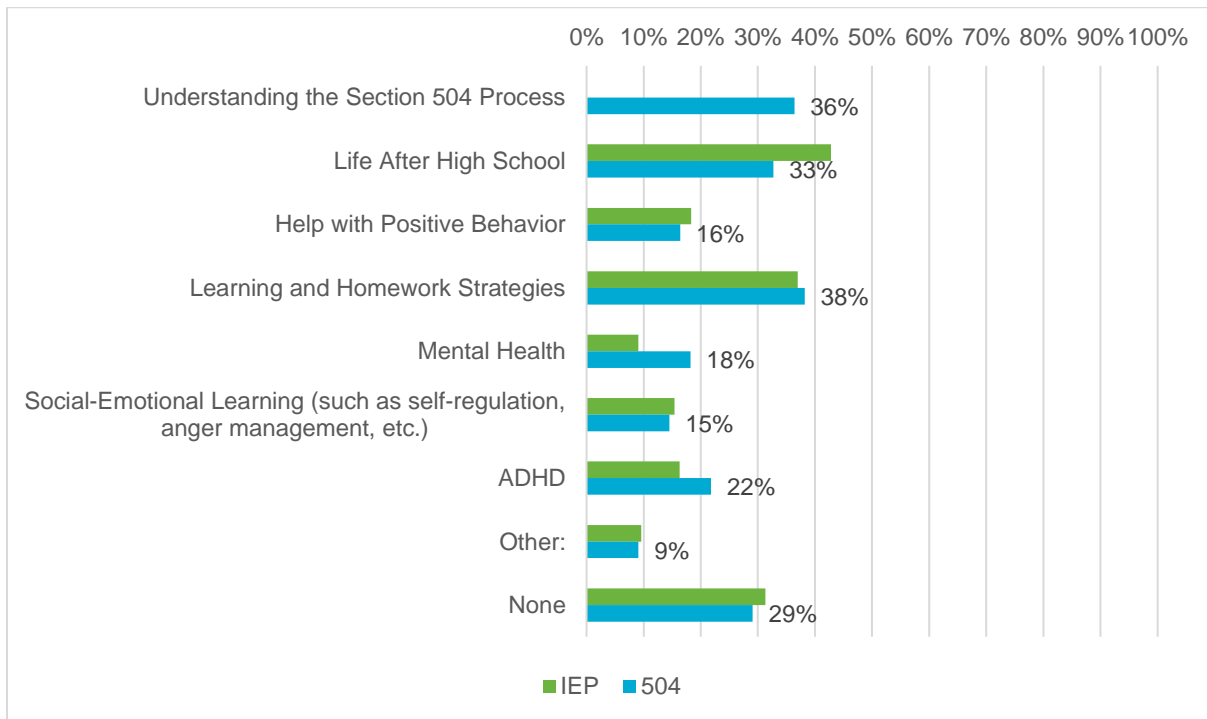
Peer Training

Focus group participants did not share any feedback regarding the availability of peer training provided to specifically to support students with disabilities, though some references were made to support groups for siblings of students with disabilities.

Summary and Implications

Asking middle school and high school students about their experiences in APS school provides a range of insights about student's self-advocacy, school practices, and school climate and culture. First, most students indicated that they feel welcomed in school, are able to participate in after school activities, and are treated fairly by peers. The majority also report that they are developing the skills that will help them be independent after high school and have spoken with school staff about postsecondary plans. Many have participated in meetings to develop their IEP or 504 plans, feel comfortable asking questions during those meetings, feel that their opinion was considered, are aware of their accommodations and advocate for themselves as needed to inform teachers. They report responsive case carriers, and the majority note that teachers understand and support them.

There are, however, a large proportion of students who report a different experience. These students report that they do not feel welcomed in school, have not participated in the development of their IEP or 504 Plan, do not have conversations with staff about their plan, including their accommodations, or progress toward their goals. These students also do not feel understood or supported by their teachers.

As noted above, for students to thrive at school, they need to be provided with a safe and supportive environment. These findings present APS with opportunities to revisit school culture and climate at each school to ensure that all students feel welcome and all students feel they have a voice that is heard and considered. Staff within each school should examine operating cultural norms and practices to promote awareness of ways in which staff and students open or close academic and social opportunities for students with disabilities and seek strategies to ameliorate the negative impact of these differential experiences of school can have. These conversations will necessarily integrate recommendations made elsewhere in this report regarding examining special education practices and school data to inform next steps.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section addresses implementation of the 2013 recommendations, limitations of this study, areas for further study, and recommendations for this report.

Implementation of the 2013 Recommendations

Focus group participants cited numerous examples of specific actions taken on the 2013 recommendations but noted that progress has been slow and the approach not systematic. APS reportedly did not have an overarching implementation plan, though certain departments, including IT and Teaching and Learning, developed a project plan for recommendations impacting their departmental work. The 2013 recommendations were grouped in the following categories: 1) Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS), 2) Inclusive Education, 3) Organization & Collaboration, 4) Operating Standards, 5) Accountability, 6) Parent, Family & School Partnerships.

PCG has adapted the following Implementation Evaluation Scale to assess the degree to which the 2013 priority recommendations were fulfilled. Ratings for each priority recommendation are included below.

Exhibit 213. Implementation Evaluation Scale[174]

0- No progress. Not being implemented at this time. No students or families benefit from this practice or activity.

1- Beginning. Just beginning to discuss this practice, strategy, or activity. There is a definite interest and organizational activities have begun. Few students or families are involved or benefit.

2- Intermittent or **Inconsistent**. This practice, strategy, or activity is in the earliest implementation stages; progress is being made and plans are moving forward. The practice, strategy, or activity may be implemented in some classrooms or schools but not frequently or with consistency. Some students and families are involved or benefit.

3- Emerging. Concerted efforts are being made to fully implement this practice, strategy, or activity. Many students and families benefit or participate.

4- Consistent. Implementation is district-wide and available. This practice, strategy, or activity is consistently implemented. Most or all students and families benefit or participate.

5- Consistent and Data Driven. Data from this practice, strategy, or activity is used to make decisions about needed services, changes in programs, plans and strategies, and is utilized in the district's emerging, short-term and long-range planning efforts, changes to board policy, procedures, practices, or professional learning opportunities.

PCG has assigned an implementation rating to each of the 2013 recommendations. All recommendations received a rating of either two or three.

Ratings of 2- Intermittent or **Inconsistent**

> **2) Inclusive Education**. Actualize APS's vision as a diverse and inclusive school community, committed to academic excellence and integrity, by maximizing inclusive and effective instruction, intervention and support for all students, including those with special and dual needs. These students include those who are ELLs and/or receive support through MTSS[175], a Section 504 Plan, and/or an IEP. Lay a foundation for this work by expanding the district's courageous conversations involving

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[174] Adapted from 2015 Wisconsin Transition Improvement Plan (WiTIP)
https://www.witip.org/documents/TIP_ImplementationAndEvaluationRatings_24Nov2015.pdf

[175] 2013 Recommendations reference MTSS, as this pre-dated ATSS.

race and ethnicity to include students with disabilities. Have conversations with stakeholders and school board members about the district's current configuration of services for students with disabilities, their performance over time, and the district's fortitude to embark on a journey to provide services in a more inclusive manner. APS will in turn become known as a leader in the state and nation for improved outcomes for students with special needs.

5) Accountability. Establish a system of accountability that reflects APS's vision of high expectations for all learners and a service delivery model that is proactive rather than reactive – and inclusive in nature.

Ratings of 3- Emerging

1) Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Expand on the current IAT process to make it more reflective of a comprehensive and research-based MTSS framework to ensure all students receive the instruction and interventions they need to support academic and social/emotional learning, and to achieve at a higher level of performance.

3) Organization & Collaboration. Establish a system of accountability that reflects APS's vision of high expectations for all learners and a service delivery model that is proactive rather than reactive – and inclusive in nature.

- *Advisory Committees*. Establish a principle of universal design for every curriculum based/focused advisory committee whereby participants and recommendations are expected to address all students, including students with special needs and students who are also ELLs.
- *APS Strategic Plan*. Incorporate components relevant to MTSS, Section 504 and special education/related services in the APS Strategic Plan.
- *School Improvement Plans*. Based on a common template, have schools include in their school improvement plans aggressive implementation activities for MTSS and inclusive education practices based on APS's Standard Operation Procedures Manual (SOPM).
- *Monitoring*. Develop user-friendly reports and other standard mechanisms to monitor SOPM implementation and any impact on student growth. Use this information to modify the SOPM and related practices, target resources, and support progress.
- *Personnel Accountability*. Hold personnel accountable for expected results through incentives and consequences that encourage fidelity in the implementation of standards.
- *Programmatic Evaluations*. Incorporate a universal design model for all future programmatic evaluations so that they address relevant issues pertinent to students with special needs, including those who are ELLs.
- *Data*. Use valid and reliable data to regularly review patterns and trends to monitor SOPM implementation and to inform follow-up action.

4) Operating Standards. Produce electronic Standard Operating Procedure Manuals (SOPM) to post policies, procedures and expected practices for MTSS, Section 504 and special education/related services with links to additional information and resources. Include expectations for ELLs regarding their identification and provision of services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Post the SOPMs on various pages of APS's website to maximize their accessibility to APS personnel and the community. Support implementation of MTSS and Section 504 through new electronic record systems and enhance APS's IEP system with a few modifications. In coordination with professional learning activities referenced in Recommendations 1 through 3 above, plan differentiated training for stakeholders, including parents, regarding the SOPMs and new/modified electronic record systems.

6) Parent, Family & School Partnerships. To promote strong parent, family and school partnerships: increase parent awareness and use of the Parent Resource Center; develop one-page information guides and use the public television system to enhance parent understanding of the MTSS, Section 504 and inclusive education/special education processes; and increase communication between task forces and stakeholders to enhance their effectiveness.

Study Limitations and Areas for Further Study

This study has the following limitations:

1. Data collection for this report was conducted during the 2018-19 school year. This report represents a specific point in time.

2. PCG recognizes that APS continued to evolve and make changes over the course of the year, especially around the strategic plan adoption and inclusion policies. Data collection was completed in the fall of 2019 and these key initiatives had not yet been fully adopted or rolled out.

3. The recommendations provided in this report are specific to APS. While they are based on best practice, they were designed to be applied specifically in the APS context.

In the appendix, PCG has mapped the original research questions to the sections in the report that address them. There are some topics in the list of research questions that did not emerge in depth during our data collection and would warrant additional study by APS. One of these topics was around bullying. Another was around social-emotional supports specific to students with IEPs.

2019 Recommendations

PCG saw ample evidence that APS has a solid foundation on which to build. APS has many notable strengths, including its strategic commitment to inclusion, its passionate and knowledgeable staff, and its willingness to undertake this review as part of a continuous improvement cycle. Additionally, there were indications that APS implemented, at least in part, many of the recommendations set forth in the previous 2013 review.

However, without a sense of urgency and an unrelenting commitment to enacting the recommendations in this 2019 report, APS will not achieve the type of high-quality programming for ALL students, especially those with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports, that we know it desires. Initiating change, the kind of change that will fundamentally improve outcomes of all students, and especially those with disabilities, requires focus, a strong vision from the superintendent and enacted by senior leadership staff, an appropriate allocation of resources, mandated professional learning, and clear, non-negotiable, accountability measures. This type of reform requires the involvement and commitment of every staff person and a willingness to establish high expectations for ALL students.

Given the changes in district leadership anticipated in the next few months, PCG strongly encourages APS to actively engage a wide range of stakeholders with the action planning process and to develop a detailed and transparent implementation plan to which it will hold itself accountable. Doing so will position APS for an upward trajectory.

The following recommendations are considered priority recommendations. Each are interrelated and will require a significant investment on the part of APS to undertake. Implementation of these recommendations will set the foundation for all other action steps that emerge from this report. Addressing each component is necessary to ensure that instruction and services for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention supports are appropriate and meaningfully delivered, that human capital and physical materials are available to provide identified instruction/services, expectations

are clear, training is available, and APS leaders and staff are accountable for their practices. When these issues are addressed, programming will be more appropriate and effective.

Recommendations were drawn from the following key findings that emerged as consistent themes across all research areas.

1. District culture limits the ability of those charged with special education, Section 504 and ATSS oversight to implement and enforce priority practices.
2. Site-based management has resulted in significant variations in service delivery between school buildings.
3. APS has a highly active and engaged parent community. However, this engagement, when coupled with site-based management, leads to increased inconsistencies among schools.
4. Rapid enrollment growth and changes in leadership make the need for documented district-wide policies and universal professional learning opportunities even more critical.
5. While the new professional learning framework is promising, it is still "choice" based. Principals and school-based staff need additional quality, ongoing baseline training to serve in their roles.

The action steps listed under each recommendation below are organized in a manner that provides a comprehensive view of the activities required to initiate change. Although components of the action steps can be implemented within a shorter timeframe, full-scale implementation of the recommendations may take three-to-five years.

Guiding Principles

PCG has provided specific recommendations in five areas contained within this report: ATSS, Referral and Eligibility, Special Education, Section 504, and District Operations and Organization. Recommendations for parent and student engagement are incorporated under each of these sections.

Each set of recommendations are further categorized by the type of initiative, or guiding principle, required to complete it – developing the vision with district and school-based leaders, standardizing and implementing activities, creating data, monitoring, and accountability measures, offering professional learning opportunities, and engaging parents and students. The following overarching considerations for each guiding principle should be made when developing the plan for, and implementing, the recommendations.

Vision and Leadership

Change requires a vision and the engagement of district and school leadership to carry it forward. When implementing the recommendations categorized under Vision and Leadership, APS should embed the following expectations into each one:

Academic Optimism. Build, promote and support a district wide culture that will help instill a value for academic optimism and growth mindset so that all the adults in the building share the responsibility for the achievement of every student, including those with disabilities. Presume that all students are competent and able and should be exposed to the highest levels of rigor.

Uncompromised Instructional Focus. Create an expectation regarding instruction that clearly communicates to school ls, and the broader community that a key focus of the Department of Teaching and Learning is to ensure that students with special needs make significant progress, to the greatest extent possible, in the general education curriculum, receive rigorous standards-aligned instruction, and experience the high quality delivery of interventions, differentiation, accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction in every class.

Standards and Implementation

Without developing standards and establishing a core set of expectations, implementation of all initiatives will continue to be inconsistent across schools. The following guidance should be included for each set of recommendations related to standards and implementation.

Strategy to Execution Action Plan. Develop a detailed and transparent action plan to guide the implementation of the recommendations in this report and institute routine and public progress updates.

Written Expectations. Establish written expectations and incorporate all content information and expectations district and school personnel need to implement the Student Support framework. Consider including the following as the Student Support framework evolves.

Public Access
- Provide public access to the revised manual by posting the document on the APS webpage
- Provide links to available on-line resources.
- Train staff on the manual
- Regularly update it with current information and resources.

Content. Include criteria, procedures and practices for each area relevant to the implementation of these recommendations, e.g., criteria for child find; progress monitoring; referring students for a special education evaluation; inclusive instruction for preschool children; support for on-going needs of preschool

children and school-aged students who are referred but are not evaluated or not qualified for services; expectations and tools to facilitate communication to teachers regarding the IEP specified needs of students in each of their classes; participation of general education teachers in IEP meetings; role of general/special education personnel in various circumstances, etc.

Collaboration with Stakeholders. Collaborate with preschool personnel, principals, other school-based groups, and ASEAC and SEPTA representatives to consider information and resource links that would be useful for each relevant group to include in the manual.

Parents/Families. In collaboration with local parent and advocacy groups, plan face-to-face training and on-line modules to provide parents an understanding of the information in the manual. If feasible, publish a modified document appropriate for parents and supplement it with one-page brochures to further access to this information. Ensure training is accessible to parents with diverse linguistic needs and sensory limitations.

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

The common phase – "what gets measured, gets done" – applies for these recommendations and the actions APS needs to undertake. By establishing accountability metrics and creating data systems to monitor progress made, APS continue to improve its services for students with disabilities and those requiring intervention.

Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting. Develop key performance indicators (KPIs), data collection systems, and analysis to enable the superintendent and the senior leadership team, school level leadership teams, and department personnel to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Review and expand upon rubrics currently in use to have a universal set of documents that are relevant based on grade levels, student demographics, and types of schools.

Monitoring & Accountability. Reinforce the expectation that principals are responsible for overseeing ATSS, special education, Section 504 in their buildings, and that central office leadership hold principals accountable. Establish accountability factors relevant to central office personnel for their respective roles/responsibilities, in addition to expectations for other school-based staff. Evaluate the effectiveness, fidelity, and results of the implementation of the recommendations in this report, and include the following in the assessment:

Data Checks. Using KPIs, have the Department of Teaching and Learning host regular data conversations with school administrators and teachers to discuss results, anomalies, follow-up activities, and outcomes.

Fidelity Assessments and Walk-Throughs. Review current walk-through tools used to monitor instruction and interventions in general education and special education classes to see how students are being taught and how consistent instruction is across schools for students with disabilities. Initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring to improve practices.

Timely Communication and Feedback. Design feedback loops at all levels to inform future work. Use this process to provide timely feedback to leadership teams about barriers that are beyond the control of local schools, and where these entities may require additional assistance.

Performance Evaluations. To the extent possible, modify performance evaluations to include components relevant to the implementation of ATSS, special education, and Section 504 programming when personnel have had access to training and materials necessary to carry out their expected roles.

Central Office Support. Be clear about the role of the central office in supporting the learning of students receiving intervention, special education, and Section 504 supports. Schools must be responsible and

accountable for the teaching and learning process while the Department of Teaching and Learning's role is to provide adequate resources, clear guidance, and professional development, and support schools in the consistent and effective implementation of programs and services. Examine the current level of accountability in place for non-negotiable aspects of its ATSS, special education, and Section 504 policies and procedures to support the consistent implementation of district-level processes that have the greatest impact on student outputs, outcomes, and results. Determine what policies and procedures should be set by the central office and which schools have the authority to establish.

Professional Learning

Quality teaching in all classrooms and skilled leadership in all schools will not occur by accident. It requires the intentional design and implementation of professional learning. High quality professional learning must be sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused (not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences) to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and teacher's performance.

Continued implementation of these components will be paramount:

Professional Learning. Adjust the District's Professional Learning Framework to address essential areas included in this report, ensuring the plan is targeted to different audiences, e.g., general educators, special educators, related service personnel, paraprofessionals, parents, etc. Ground training in the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning[176] and embed the following components:

Mandatory Annual Trainings. Because of the importance of principal leadership and the need for consistency between schools, establish a robust training plan for principals and other school-based administrators. Determine which trainings principals and other school-based administrators are required to attend each year and develop a process to ensure this happens.

Cross-Functional Teams. Cross-train individuals from different divisions/departments to maximize their knowledge and skills, and provide direct support, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to principals and teachers.

High-Quality Trainers. Ensure that all trainers are knowledgeable and effective. Identify and use exemplary school-based staff in addition to others.

Access to Differentiated Learning. Differentiate professional learning according to the audience's skills, experience, and need. Ensure that professional learning is engaging and differentiated based on individual skills, experience, and need. Have professional learning and technical assistance continue for new personnel and those needing additional support.

Multiple Formats. Use multiple formats (e.g., videos, webinars, and narrative text) and presentation approaches (e.g., school-based, small groups). Continue to build out blended learning opportunities so that all staff can more easily access the content.

Exemplary Implementation Models. Identify and share district-wide best practices that demonstrate high expectations and effective implementation to ensure they include students with IEPs, ELs, students who are twice exceptional, etc. Encourage staff to visit exemplary schools and set aside time for that to happen.

Annual Survey. Conduct an annual survey to measure teachers' instructional beliefs and practices and analyze by school and role. Develop a plan for each school site to improve its results over time. Use survey data to design and prioritize professional learning.

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[176] Retrieved from http://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU

Community Partnerships

"It takes a village to raise a child" is a popular proverb with a clear message: the whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. In addition to the vital role that parents and family members play in a child's education, the broader community also has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all students. Parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs.

School Climate and Culture. Develop and implement strategies to improve school climate and culture so that all students feel welcome and engaged with teachers and other students.

Evaluate Family Engagement Annually. Evaluate the implementation and impact of family engagement activities specific to the Student Support Process. Review the action taken to strengthen trusting relationships and connections to student learning.

Summary of Recommendations

By implementing these recommendations with fidelity, APS will accomplish the following goals:

1. Set an overall district-wide vision for providing high quality services to students with disabilities and those requiring intervention
2. Create a culture that promotes the successful inclusion and integration of students with disabilities and other underserved, at-risk and economically disadvantaged students
3. Enhance parent and community engagement by creating warm, respectful and welcoming environments and be flexible in accommodating the spectrum of family needs
4. Strengthen links between school and home to help culturally and linguistically diverse parents help their children learn and gain equal access to all APS educational programs and services
5. Develop measures to drive key strategies for positive changes in behavior, processes, and culture, while encouraging continuous improvement and innovation

ATSS

Goal: Expand on the current ATSS framework to make it more consistently operational in every school, thereby ensuring all students receive the instruction and interventions they need to support academic and social/emotional learning, and to achieve at a higher level of performance.

Core Strategies and Action Steps

✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vision and Leadership	Standards and Implementation	Data, Monitoring, and Accountability	Professional Learning	Parent and Family Engagement

Vision and Leadership

1   **ATSS Leadership Teams.** Establish leadership teams at the central office and school levels to support ATSS planning and overseeing implementation activities. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for teams at each level. Have each team embed in its primary planning document how they will oversee ATSS implementation through data collection and review, monitoring for consistent implementation, identifying training and technical assistance needs, indicators for school walk-throughs, and incentives/consequences when expectations are not met (absent reason).

2   **Universal Design for Learning**. Embed universal design for learning (UDL) principles into the ATSS framework. To participate with success in the general curriculum, a student with special needs may need additional services, such as instructional supports, accommodations, scaffolding, assistive technology, and other services. With a universal design for learning (UDL) approach, information is presented in varied ways, allowing multiple avenues of learning and expression. Provide district-wide training on how UDL operates in practice across all settings and for all students.

Standards and Implementation

3   **ATSS Delivery.** Review and continue to build on the existing ATSS service delivery model to ensure:

    3.1 All student services are organized in a multi-tier approach addressing both academics and behavior at elementary and secondary level.

    3.2 Data are consistently collected and analyzed data to assess student baseline levels and to make decisions about student progress.

    3.3 Academic and behavioral interventions selected and implemented are evidence-based.

    3.4 There is guidance to support the implementation of all evidenced-based interventions.

    3.5 That the procedural integrity of interventions is measured and monitored.

    3.6 All ATSS requirements and processes, when implemented at the school- and district-level, are be scalable and sustainable over time.

4   **Social Emotional Learning**. Establish goals and universal expectations that schools will provide social emotional learning (SEL) as part of its ATSS work, including the use of an SEL curriculum, community wraparound services, etc. Conduct ongoing professional learning on the Social-Emotional Learning Reference Guide and continue to build out SEL resource for school-based staff, parents/families, and students.

5   **Secondary Schools.** Continue to develop resources specific to tiered models of intervention support for secondary schools (such as the Intervention Guidance Document for Secondary English Language Arts) and offer professional learning opportunities designed for secondary school-based staff.

6   **Written Guidance**. Continue to build out the Student Support Manual and update at least annually. Develop metrics to measure implementation at each school and determine what decisions school-based teams can make versus what activities APS is requiring each school to do.

7   **Terminology.** Provide professional learning opportunities for all staff on the Student Support Manual, specifically on the ATSS, CLT, etc. terminology and framework intersection. Ensure the APS website is updated with this information.

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

8   **Data Review.** Regularly collect, analyze, report, and follow up on student academic/behavior-related data. Disaggregate student-level data by special need areas, race/ethnicity, EL, socio-economic disadvantage, school, school grade levels, as feasible and appropriate, to inform decision-making for the following issues:

    8.1   Representation of students in various special needs and disability areas to identify over/underrepresentation and establish follow-up activities.

    8.2   Performance data to identify instructional gaps. Benchmark progress of students with an IEP against their general education peers.

    8.3   Determination of when students should be considered for Tier 2 or 3 interventions or referral to special education.

9   **Progress Monitoring**. Establish criteria for how progress on interventions will be monitored and on initiating a referral for special education services when sufficient progress is not made after providing the appropriate interventions. Determine what is an APS expectation for progress monitoring and what will be a school-based decision.

10 **Walk-through Protocols.** Review existing walk-through protocols to ensure that they include sufficient indicators relevant to differentiated instruction and ATSS implementation. Conduct walk-throughs at least monthly to monitor the extent to which school practices conform to the guidance provided in the Student Support Manual, and initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring as necessary to improve practices.

11 **Electronic Record Systems**. Verify that Synergy has fields available to capture specific data needed to monitor ATSS and add additional ones as needed. Develop user-friendly reports by school, grade level, class, program, and other categories to inform decision-making at all APS levels. Establish criteria for when and how data are entered and review district-wide and school-based reports at least monthly.

12 **Clear Expectations for ATSS.** Develop a well-articulated and communicated tiered support structure in which schools retain the ability to make decisions specific to their school population (e.g., which reading intervention to select from a list of 2-3 pre-vetted APS selections) but within "guardrails" established by the central office (e.g., each school must use an evidence-based reading intervention). Differentiate level of support based of how individual schools are meeting defined benchmarks. If individual schools are not meeting agreed upon expectations (i.e., a school's special education referral rate is exceeding the district average, for example, or progress on interventions are not consistently documented), the central office would increase its level of involvement and directives to the school. Give more autonomy and flexibility to schools that are performing well on defined expectations.

Professional Learning

13 **Professional Learning.** As part of the Teaching and Learning Framework, incorporate the following topics specific to ATSS:

     13.1   Student Support Manual, including PLCs, CLTs, and the overall ATSS framework

     13.2   Data Collection and Progress Monitoring

     13.3   Academic Interventions

     13.4   Social Emotional Learning and Interventions

     13.5   Universal Design for Learning

     13.6   Culturally Relevant Teaching

     13.7   Other Topics as Referenced in Recommendations

Parent and Family Engagement

14 **Family-Friendly Guides.** Develop family-friendly reference guides about ATSS and intervention supports available to struggling students.

15 **Translated Materials.** Provide translated documents for parents/family members.

Referral and Eligibility

Goal: Ensure that the referral processes for struggling students are appropriate and comprehensive. Review data frequently to assess eligibility patterns.

Core Strategies and Action Steps

		✓	✓	
Vision and Leadership	Standards and Implementation	Data, Monitoring, and Accountability	Professional Learning	Parent and Family Engagement

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

16   **Analyze and Address Disparate Identification Practices.** Develop a process to review recent eligibility documentation for students who qualified for IEPs and those who qualified for 504 Plans. Create useful reports that will help APS collect and analyze the necessary data in order to analyze discrepant patterns in the types of students eligible for services under Section 504 and IDEA.

    16.1   Disaggregate the data by sex, race, ethnicity and school.

    16.2   Examine the referral and eligibility data for over/under representation to determine causal factors and inform the development of strategies to address discrepancies.

    16.3   Use a facilitator for school-based personnel to review together random files for students with similar characteristics to identify any patterns and trends, including the extent to which students had received documented progress monitored research-based general education interventions, and their achievement growth after receiving an IEP or access to accommodations after receiving a 504 Plan.

    16.4   Identify policies and procedures that may be standing in the way or need to be developed and implemented for the proper identification of minority students.

    16.5   Communicate and disseminate the necessary information to parents of minority and EL students so that they also fully understand how to seek a diagnosis that will allow their child to access additional equitable services/supports under Section 504 or IDEA.

    16.6   As part of the review, determine if/how refining APS eligibility criteria would be useful to better inform the eligibility determination process.

17   **Disproportionality.** Monitor the identification of students with IEPs in a racial/ethnic subgroup to ensure that it is not at least two times more likely than peers to be identified as having a disability area, (i.e., risk ratios). Benchmark initial referrals and eligibility determinations by race/ethnicity in the areas of concern. Twice yearly, track whether the use of ATSS is reducing racial/ethnic disparities in initial referrals and eligibility determinations in these areas. For students who appear to be underrepresented in a disability, provide teachers with information regarding their characteristics to support the appropriate referral of students with these characteristics for an evaluation of their eligibility and any need for special education services.

18   **Track Data.** Monitor the results of APS activities to determine if they are having any impact on the identification of students in areas of concern, and to take follow-up action as appropriate. Use district-wide and school-based instructional leadership teams for this purpose.

Professional Learning

19 **Professional Learning.** As part of the Teaching and Learning Framework, incorporate the following topics specific to Referral and Eligibility:

     19.1   Root Cause Analysis

     19.2   Culturally Relevant Teaching and Assessment Practices

     19.3   Referral and Eligibility Process for ELs

     19.4   Referral and Eligibility Process for Gifted Learners

     19.5   Eligibility Requirements under IDEA and Section 504

     19.6   Other Topics as Referenced in Recommendations

Special Education

Goals: Actualize APS's vision as a diverse and inclusive school community, committed to academic excellence and integrity, by maximizing inclusive and effective instruction, intervention and support for all students, including those with special and dual needs. These students include those who are ELLs and/or receive support through ATSS, a Section 504 plan, and/or an IEP.

Lay a foundation for this work by expanding APS's courageous conversations involving race and ethnicity to include students with disabilities.

Have conversations with stakeholders and school board members about APS's current configuration of services for students with disabilities, their performance over time, and the District's fortitude to embark on a journey to provide services in a more inclusive manner.

Begin the process of providing special education services in more inclusive educational settings to students with disabilities to ensure more equitable access to school choice and high-quality instruction.

Core Strategies and Action Steps

✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vision and Leadership	Standards and Implementation	Data, Monitoring, and Accountability	Professional Learning	Parent and Family Engagement

Vision and Leadership

20 **Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset.** Set high expectations in the provision of rigorous instruction, supports and related services delineated in IEPs so that students have the necessary tools they need to access high quality instruction. Guide the design of intentional structures and utilization of resources that will help foster greater collaboration across disciplines, grade levels, and areas of specific expertise. Develop and implement protocols for fidelity checks on IEP delivered versus prescribed services (e.g., co-teaching, instructional and testing accommodations/modifications, specially designed instruction, related services, etc.).

21 **Inclusive Practices Planning, Guidance, and Implementation.** Select and use a structured framework that will help promote and support the implementation of best practices for inclusive education including the provision of high yield co-teaching and specially designed instruction. Develop a clearly articulated district/school implementation guide for inclusive practices and determine what role schools will have in adapting it to their needs versus what will be required by APS. Create guidance around developing inclusive master school schedules (which includes common co-teacher planning time) and assist schools with implementing it. Develop supportive structures that allow effective co-teaching teams to create efficiency and partnership build investment.

Standards and Implementation

22 **Early Childhood.** Expand the continuum of services for students and co-taught models with the VPI and Montessori models. Intentionally develop clusters of EC programs at specific sites so that a more robust continuum can be offered. Continue to build curricular alignment and resource availability between all early childhood programs and those specifically serving students with disabilities. Develop an early intervening (ATSS) model for EC so that students are not over-referred for a special education evaluation.

23 **Equity and Access to Advanced Placement for Students with Disabilities.** Develop a coherent plan across grade levels and schools to enable a higher proportion of potentially qualified students with disabilities to benefit from advanced academic studies/courses. Provide guidance to IEP teams, school-based staff, and parents about how students with disabilities can access advanced placement courses, with the appropriate supports and accommodations. Analyze current barriers to access for students with disabilities and develop a plan to mitigate these challenges. Establish a goal to increase current enrollment of students with disabilities in advanced placement courses and monitor enrollment data on a quarterly basis.

24 **Twice Exceptional.** Provide schools with the guidance, training, and support necessary to better understand how to implement viable programming and strategies for twice exceptional students to:
- nurture the student's potential;
- support development of compensatory strategies;
- identify learning gaps and provide explicit instruction;
- foster social and emotional development; and
- enhance their capacity to address their mixed ability needs.

25 **English Learner (EL) Students with Disabilities.** Build staff capacity to meet the needs of EL students with disabilities by using data to identify eligible students, address their needs, deliver instruction, use evidenced-based strategies, differentiate support and interventions, monitor progress and communicate/collaborate on the provision of the necessary supports. Pursuant to the Department of Justice settlement agreement, fulfill all requirements specific to students with disabilities.

26 **Special Education Policies, Procedures and Guidance**. Expand the special education resources available to users/stakeholders to support IEP development, implementation, and compliance as follows:
- Create IEP Writing and Best Practices Guide reflecting IEP development process
- Create translated versions of the Parent Resource Information Guide and make it available in the primary home languages of the community at large
- Develop and implement IEP stakeholder engagement plan using the survey result information to improve practices
- Implement the facilitated IEP process for potentially complex meetings to enhance collaboration, communication and the successful drafting of the student's IEP.
- Create IEP development, implementation and compliance auditing protocol and checklist
- Set IEP self-auditing expectations for schools, require submission and/or onsite review of sample records and monitor results to inform strategies

27 **Restraint and Seclusion.** Finalize and approve APS's guidance on restraint and seclusion, ensuring it meets the requirements of VDOE's guiding regulations. Develop a centralized data collection system, train appropriate staff on how to collect and track data, and monitor trends monthly. Provide additional district-wide training on appropriate and safe de-escalation practices, ensuring they are aligned to each school's positive behavior framework.

28 **Transition Meetings**. Develop district-wide strategy to transition meetings for students with IEPs so that teachers understand incoming students' needs. Focus specifically on grade level transitions.

29 **IEP Access.** Include mechanisms to ensure that general education and special education teachers have read and acknowledged student plans and have specific plans to address them in their classroom. Develop procedures to ensure access is providing in a timely manner to appropriate staff when students change classes, grades, or schools.

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

30 **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Data.** Establish a standing district committee to review LRE data and trends by school in order to inform the development of district/school specific strategies that will help address meeting the SPP LRE Targets set forth by the state.

31 **Progress Monitoring with Data Collection**. Develop easily accessible reports by school and case carrier that enable APS to monitor the progress of students toward meeting their IEP goals. Analyze the data on a routine basis to determine what coaching/professional learning opportunities could be offered to special educators, general educators, and paraeducators in support of their students' IEP goals.

32 **State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators.** Develop formative reports to assess progress toward meeting SPP indicators, review with relevant stakeholders, and set internal goals for how to meet and/or exceed Virginia targets for each one.

33 **Standards of Learning (SOL) Performance.** As part of the 90-day progressive plan review, set goals at each school for subgroup populations and develop a specific plan to encourage the academic growth of students with disabilities.

34 **Clear Expectations for Special Education.** Establish clear expectations around the role of the Office of Special Education by developing a well-articulated and communicated tiered support structure in which schools retain the ability to make decisions specific to their school population but within "guardrails" established by the central office. Differentiate level of support based of how individual schools are meeting defined benchmarks. If individual schools are not meeting agreed upon expectations (i.e., a school's attendance rate for students with disabilities is exceeding the district average, for example), OSE would increase its level of involvement and directives to the school. Give more autonomy and flexibility to schools that are performing well on defined expectations.

Professional Learning

35 **Professional Learning.** As part of the Teaching and Learning Framework, incorporate the following topics specific to Special Education:

    35.1   Inclusive Practices and High Yield Co-Teaching Strategies

    35.2   IEP Implementation for General Educators

    35.3   Transition and Post-Secondary Goal Planning

    35.4   Measuring Goal Progress

    35.5   Other Topics as Referenced in Recommendations

Parent and Family Engagement

36 **Program Descriptions.** Review and update materials posted on the APS website regarding special education programs and available supplementary aids and services at least twice a year. Ensure this information is clearly accessible and available to parents in their preferred language.

37 **Post-Secondary Transition.** Provide additional training and resources for parents regarding the transition process, specifically around the development of post-secondary goals and diploma options.

38 **Student Engagement.** Develop and implement strategies to ensure that students are active participants in the planning and implementation of their IEPs, including support and coaching for their role as self-advocate.

Section 504

> **Goal**: Improve processes and protocols to address disparities in Section 504
> identification practices and ensure equitable access to supports.

Core Strategies and Action Steps

	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vision and Leadership	Standards and Implementation	Data, Monitoring, and Accountability	Professional Learning	Parent and Family Engagement

Standards and Implementation

39 **504 Plan Effectiveness.** Establish protocols for how and when feedback on the effectiveness of accommodations will be monitored and shared with parents (e.g., more frequently for students with new 504 plans or changes to accommodations). Have 504 Teams collect data by student on the efficacy of accommodations provided to share, at minimum, at the annual review.

40 **Plan Access.** Determine which staff should have access to 504 Plans in each school. Verify that they all have the appropriate online access to view the plans and communicate that all staff are expected to view plans for their students at least annually. Include mechanisms to ensure that teachers have read and acknowledged student plans and have specific plans to address them in their classroom. Develop procedures to ensure access is providing in a timely manner to appropriate staff when students change classes, grades, or schools.

41 **Health Plans.** Clarify to staff through written guidance and during training and technical support, the differences between health plans and Section 504 plans, and the importance of Section 504 procedural requirements and safeguards for students with disabilities who have medical conditions and are in need of educational or related aids and services.

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

42 **504 Plan Service Delivery Checks.** Conduct routine checks on the implementation of 504 accommodations by randomly selecting student files at various schools and conducting onsite reviews.

Professional Learning

43 **Professional Learning.** As part of the Teaching and Learning Framework, incorporate the following training topics specific to Section 504:

43.1 Health Plans versus 504 plans

43.2 504 Accommodations

43.3 Synergy Data and Reports

43.4 Other Topics as Referenced in Recommendations

Parent and Family Engagement

44 **Parent Guidance.** Provide guidance to parents around what to expect with the 504 process and communication they will receive specific to 504 Plan implementation.

45 **Student Engagement.** Develop and implement strategies to ensure that students are active participants in the planning and implementation of their 504 Plans, including support and coaching for their role as self-advocate.

District Organization and Operations

Goal: Establish clear expectations and align staffing and technology resources to support APS's inclusive vision

Core Strategies and Action Steps

✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vision and Leadership	Standards and Implementation	Data, Monitoring, and Accountability	Professional Learning	Parent and Family Engagement

Vision and Leadership

46 **OSE Vision.** Develop a guiding philosophy on inclusion and a long-range strategic plan for OSE. Create an expectation regarding instruction that clearly communicates to schools, and the broader community, that a key focus of OSE is to ensure that students with special needs make significant progress, to the greatest extent possible, in the general education curriculum, receive rigorous standards-aligned instruction, and experience the high quality delivery of interventions, differentiation, accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction in every class.

47 **OSE Organizational Structure.** Reorganize the OSE office by function, reducing the number of direct reports to the director and adding instruction coach positions specifically focused on supporting special educators with specially designed instruction.

48 **Cross-Departmental Collaboration**. Establish a schedule for routine, collaborative meetings between OSE and the leadership of other departments under the Department of Teaching and Learning, including the individuals necessary to share information, problem-solve, and resolve issues. Establish a consistent, collaborative, and integrative approach towards improvement by jointly setting goals for initiatives and creating cross-functional workgroups. Set goals for all cross-departmental initiatives and determine key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress made on them.

Standards and Implementation

49 **90 Day Progressive Plan Goals.** Verify that all school plans have goals specific to all subgroup populations or action items to ensure high expectations for all students, coupled with appropriate supports, are included.

50 **Conduct an In-Depth Analysis of Staffing Allocations.** Conduct a staffing levels audit to ensure current staffing ratios are appropriate to achieve the inclusion goals set forth in the Strategy Plan and to meet the SPP LRE targets. Create a workgroup with representatives from school and central office leadership (including Special Education and Finance) to evaluate the current Planning Factors funding model and assess the extent to which current staffing supports the intended outcomes of effective service delivery and the continued enhancement of co-teaching. Review personnel ratios and caseload data included in this study, reallocate or add resources to ensure that APS expectations regarding the provision of specially designed instruction and related services are reasonably capable of being met. Make the revised formula transparent and evaluate needed changes for the short and long term. Review on an annual basis.

Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

51 **Student Support Coordinators (SSC).** Conduct an analysis on the effectiveness of the SSC role after the first year of implementation. Adjust the role as needed in order to continue to provide appropriate and high-quality support to schools.

52 **Planning Factors.** After determining APS' approach to inclusive practices and conducting an in-depth staffing review, adjust the planning factors to ensure allocations meet required staffing and best support students with special needs in a variety of settings**.**

53 **Technology Support.** Establish expectations about the use of Synergy to document interventions and 504 Plans and complete fidelity checks (i.e., data reports) around usage to ensure consistent usage. Ensure appropriate staff have easy access to electronic plans, including IAT plans, IEPs, and 504 Plans.

Professional Learning

54 **Professional Learning.** As part of the Teaching and Learning Framework, incorporate the following training topics specific to District Organization and Operations:

54.1 Resource Allocation and Scheduling to Support Inclusive Practices

54.2 Synergy Data and Reports

54.3 Other Topics as Referenced in Recommendations

From Strategy to Execution

The secret to successful strategy execution is in translating strategies into actions. Further, tracking progress made on an organization's strategy execution is integral to understanding whether it will reach its desired future state. From our experience, the most challenging part of a comprehensive program evaluation for a school district is moving from the recommendations to a concrete action plan, then to a change in practice. These steps require significant focus, in addition to organization, communication, and collaboration across departments. Implementing change across often siloed and independent departments, with differing priorities and reporting structures, requires out of the box thinking and a commitment to approaching issues and solutions in a new light.

While there are different approaches that school districts take to managing this process, the most successful ones create a structure that is sustainable, with internal and external accountability measures and strong cross-departmental advocates. PCG recommends a five-step Strategy Execution process, which we have found results in grounded, sustainable change within an organization.

The following section describes how PCG envisions supporting APS with each component of our *Strategy Execution Process.*

Exhibit 214. PCG's Strategy Execution Process

| Structure Milestones for Initiatives | Develop a Tracking System with KPIs | Communicate Objectives | Monitor Status and Review Outcomes | Make Plan Adjustents as Necessary |
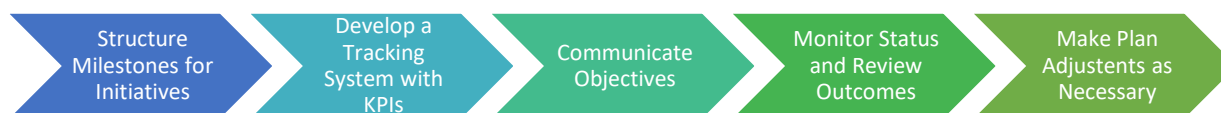
Structure Milestones for Initiatives

Action plans must include concrete, measurable milestones that can be assessed on a regular basis. These milestones break down initiatives into manageable steps and timelines. This structure is essential, especially given the school year cycle and the urgency by which APS would like to move these critical initiatives forward. At minimum, given the nature of the initiatives, progress toward milestones should be reviewed monthly through the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

Develop a Tracking System with KPIs

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must be established for each measurable milestone. Reviewing these KPIs will help APS assess where each initiative stands. By monitoring these KPIs frequently, APS will be able to assess barriers and adjust plans early in the process if needed. It is often the case that defining metrics or KPIs is the step that allows teams to recognize challenges within the theory of action that undergirds their action plan.

Communicate the Objectives

To implement new policies and procedures, organizational changes, or new approaches, stakeholders need a solid grasp of the initiatives, the objectives, and the benefits the plan will bring to bear. Communicating progress made on each key initiative is equally important to ensuring continued support from those impacted by the changes, as well as the associated stakeholders.

Monitor Progress and Review Outcomes

Action plans are more likely to succeed when staff are deeply involved with the implementation process and there are standing monthly status checks on progress made toward established objectives. It is also critical at this point to celebrate real progress and hold individuals who have not "delivered" accountable.

Make Plan Adjustments as Necessary

An action plan is not an unchangeable document. It is a fluid plan that should be revised and updated as the APS environment changes and grows. Openness to revising the action plans will enable APS to adjust to shifting fiscal and regulatory realities as well as changing priorities. If APS's core leadership team sees progress on certain initiatives falling short of expectations, a reevaluation of the original objectives and approach may be needed. However, it is also important to assess the causes of discrepancies between actual and planned results.

VIII. Appendix

Appendix Contents:

A. Research Questions
B. 2013 Recommendations
C. Data by School
D. Staffing Chart
E. Survey Questions
F. Resources
G. PCG Staff Biographies

A. Research Questions

These research questions were included in the Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued by APS and are included verbatim from that document below.

Research Questions/Sub-Questions							
		II. Student Support Processes			III. District Org. & Ops.	IV. Parent Eng.	V. Stud. Exp.
	A. ATSS	B. Referral & Eligibility	C. Special Education	D. Section 504			
Goal 1: Evaluate and identify students who may require additional supports, services, interventions, and accommodations.							
1a. To what extent are APS policies and practices relating to evaluation and identification: consistent with federal and state regulations governing students with special needs and consistently implemented across and within schools?	x	x					
1b. To what extent are the processes for IAT plans, special education, and 504 plans clearly communicated to all stakeholder groups? (appropriate forms of communication, translation/interpretation, etc.)	x	x	x	x		x	
1c. To what extent do LEA reps (school administrators) understand federal statutes and regulations (for example: IDEA, 504, ADA)?	x	x	x	x			
1d. To what extent are professional learning communities (PLCs) utilizing the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework to analyze student data, determine strengths and areas of need, and respond to the data?	x						
1e. To what extent are PLCs progress-monitoring students who are receiving interventions?	x						
1f. To what extent do PLCs include special education teachers to help review data for students with special needs and inclusively plan for the needs of all students?	x						
1g. To what extent do related service providers (SLP, OT, PT, etc.) consult with classroom teachers (general education and special education)?	x	x	x				
1h. To what extent are related service providers' schedules accommodated to provide time for consultation?			x				
1i. To what extent are the processes for MTSS, IAT plans, special education, and 504 plans efficient and effective for all students and families?	x	x	x	x		x	x
1j. How clear and consistent is the process for seeking additional academic and/or social-emotional support, services, interventions, and accommodations for their child, from a parent perspective?	x		x			x	
1k. To what extent is APS fulfilling Child Find obligations for students ages 2-21, inclusive?			x				

1l. What is the level of understanding among APS staff of responsibilities for Part C to Part B transition or special education ages 3 - 5?			x				
1m. To what extent does the student study process take into consideration cultural and language differences, including referral to student study?	x	x					
1n. To what extent are students with English learning needs being appropriately assessed to determine language acquisition needs and/or potential disability?	x	x					
1o. To what extent are students being appropriately screened to determine giftedness and/or potential disability?	x	x					
1p. What is the extent to which an initial student study meeting results in (look at variation across schools): a 504 plan, an IEP plan, another student study, and student ineligible?	x	x					
1q. To what extent do secondary students who get identified for services have a previous history of referral to student study or IAT?	x	x					
Goal 2: Provide services, accommodations, and instruction for students based on identification of needed services							
2a. What is the extent to which: 504 plans and IEPs identify specific needs, services, accommodations, and/or goals; IEPs include standards-based goals or other relevant goals aligned to the Standards of Learning (SOLs) or Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOLs); IAT plans include evidence-based strategies or program to address student needs; IEP goals align with the student's PLAAFP (Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance) and accommodations; IEPs and 504 plans are written to support seamless transitions between grade levels and into post-secondary opportunities; evidence exists that all identified specific services, accommodations, and/or goals were received by the student; the service delivery process is flexible and meets the changing needs of the child (increase/decrease)?	x	x	x	x			
2b. To what extent do teachers, staff, and administrators understand their role in implementing 504 plans and IEPs?			x	x			
2c. To what extent are teachers across all subject informed of the student's accommodations in accordance with their 504 or IEP plan?			x	x			
2d. What transitional supports are in place for students who have been exited from special education?			x				
2e. What processes and supports are in place to facilitate seamless transitions between school levels (e.g., classroom readiness, teacher training, transfer of records)?			x	x			

2f. What processes and supports are in place to facilitate transition to adult services?			x				
2g. To what extent are peers trained to support students with special needs?							x
2h. To what extent are teachers, parents, and peers adequately trained to use, support, and model students' text-based alternative or augmentative communication AAC systems?			x				
2i. To what extent do students in self-contained special education programs: receive high quality, rigorous instruction; use high quality curricular materials that match the needs of the students?			x				
2j. To what extent are students with special needs provided appropriate accommodations during testing?			x	x			
2k. What models of service delivery are implemented in APS, and to what extent do master schedules allow for flexible models of service?			x				
2l. To what extent do schools conduct follow-up IAT meetings to review progress and determine next steps?	x						
2m. To what extent do schools implement the IAT plan?	x						
2n. How are schools and teachers held accountable to ensure that the needs of students with special needs are met, across content areas and course levels (e.g. regular, intensified, etc.)?	x	x	x	x			
2o. To what extent are students' needs met in their home school?	x	x	x	x			
2p. To what extent are students with disabilities restrained or secluded?			x				
2q. To what extent do students with disabilities receive instruction in content areas in general education settings (by disability type)? What is the level of consistency across schools?			x	x			
2r. How has inclusive instruction changed since the last evaluation? (rate of inclusion, co-teaching practices, professional development available, etc.)			x				
2s. What is the ratio of students with and without disabilities in general education settings?			x				
Goal 3: Resources are organized to consistently implement the processes for: Evaluating and identifying students who may require additional supports, services, interventions, and accommodations; Providing services, accommodations, and instruction for students based on identification of needed services							

3a. To what extent do the following factors impact the level of service, implementation of services and accommodations, and placement of students with special needs: caseloads (number of students) and workloads (intensity of services per student); training, experience, and qualifications (principals, teachers, assistants); scheduling flexibility (student, staff, school); professional development (APS, outside); resources and support (e.g. instructional specialists), including availability materials (assessments, curricula, technology); resource alignment with state standards; instructional space (physical space); time (instructional, planning, consultation); transportation?			x		x		
3b. Do planning factor formulas provide adequate staff support to meet the needs of students?					x		
3c. How are special education allocations used at the schools? To what extent are special education allocations used to directly instruct students with IEPs?					x		
3d. To what extent is technology being used and is it being used appropriately? (Use of technology in assessments for students, use of technology for assistive communication, technology as an accommodation)?	x		x	x			
3e. How effectively does APS ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies?		x	x	x			
Goal 4: Students identified with an IEP or 504 are challenged and engaged.							
4a. To what extent do special education and general education classrooms that serve students with special needs reflect challenging and engaging instruction?			x	x			
4b. To what extent are language and disability needs for dually identified students (English learners with a disability) supported in the classroom?			x	x			
4c. To what extent are gifted services needs and disability needs for twice exceptional students (gifted students with a disability) supported in the classroom?			x	x			
Goal 5: Students with special needs are supported to develop socially and emotionally							
5a. How effectively is APS fostering self-advocacy skills in students with special needs?							x
5b. To what extent are teachers aware of and able to identify social-emotional needs in students?	x		x	x			
5c. To what extent are evidence-based interventions being used to support students with social-emotional concerns?	x						
5d. To what extent are students supported when they return to school following a mental health crisis?	x						

Question							
5e. How effective is current professional development in addressing social-emotional needs, and what additional professional development is needed?	x	x	x	x			
5f. To what extent is the intervention block being used to address the social-emotional needs of students?	x						
5g. Do students in countywide programs have equal access to guidance lessons that are provided in the general education classroom?			x				
5h. What is the frequency of bullying against students with disabilities?	x						
5i. To what extent are parents and students satisfied by the resolution of bullying incidents?	x						
5j. To what extent do APS staff follow up after a bullying incident to ensure behavior has changed?	x						
Goal 6: Students with special needs have the opportunity to engage in the school experience equitably.							
6a. What is the representation of student groups (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, English learner, economically disadvantaged) among identifications with IEPs, 504 plans, and IAT plans?	x	x	x	x			
6b. How do students with special needs compare to their peers in terms of: Enrollment in challenging courses (for example: accelerated MS math courses, intensified, AP, IB, dual enrollment), arts courses, and world language courses; gifted referral, identification, and services; Disciplinary actions (both in- and out of school suspensions, detentions, etc.); Specialized programs (e.g. Arlington Tech, immersion, Arlington Traditional School, Montessori, H-B Woodlawn, etc.; participation in and support for participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities (including ADA); Field trips, after-school activities, school plays?	x	x	x	x			
6c. What is the level of understanding among school staff on how to discipline students with disabilities?			x				
6d. To what extent are staff trained in implementing a social-emotional and behavioral framework, e.g. responsive classroom, conscious discipline, PBIS?	x						
Goal 7: Students with special needs are serviced by high quality staff and service providers across all settings							
7a. To what extent is APS able to recruit and retain a diverse population of highly-qualified/dually certified special education and general education staff including teachers, teaching assistants, and related service providers?					x		

7b. To what extent are there appropriate professional learning opportunities and ongoing coaching supports and other resources to support special education and general education teachers, instructional assistants, related service providers, social workers, and psychologists in areas such as inclusion, co-teaching, social-emotional support, classroom management, dually identified students, twice exceptional students, etc.? (availability and participation)	x		x	x	x		
7c. What PD is provided/scheduled annually to keep teachers, administrators, and other staff up-to-date with requirements, processes, and research?	x		x	x	x		
7d. How is implementation of professional development monitored?	x		x	x	x		
7e. To what extent are teachers and staff trained in Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) techniques.			x				
7f. To what extent are parents offered training that parallels training offered to staff?						x	
Goal 8: Support parents and families of students with disabilities.							
8a. To what extent do stakeholders (parents, families, students, caregivers) feel specific IAT plans, 504 plans, and IEPs, and related processes: supported the student; provided the student with the appropriate placement/services, interventions, and accommodations, and considered all possible options; provided parents with useful information and communication throughout the process? Allowed for questions; empowered stakeholders with a voice in the decisions?	x	x	x	x		x	x
8b. What are stakeholders' perceptions about IAT plans, 504 plans, IEPs, and ADA accommodation requests, including: Clarity in processes/meetings (including SERC, MDRs, etc.); the ability to find consistent and reliable information about each process; The extent to which the resources (literature, documentation, etc.) support the process?	x		x	x			
8c. To what extent do stakeholders feel that their input about their child is solicited/heard/included, particularly during student support processes?			x			x	
8d. Do parents know what to do when there is a problem at their school?	x		x	x		x	
8e. To what extent are the following resources used to facilitate communication with parents of students with special needs: interpreters, language line, Parent Resource Center?			x			x	
8f. Do all parents understand their student's path to graduation and/or post-secondary educational settings and opportunities?			x			x	

8g. How well-informed are parents of the required evaluative data needed by post-secondary educational settings for continued eligibility for consideration of accommodations?			x					
Goal 9: Students with special needs are academically successful.								
9a. To what extent do students with special needs: Graduate (include diploma types); Drop out; Participate in and pass various assessments (benchmarks and progress on screeners, VAAP, grade-level SOL assessments; AP and IB courses; algebra I, world language courses); Pass courses (pass rates); attendance; Repeat SOL assessments to earn verified credit; Able to read with proficiency upon existing APS; Earn locally verified credits?			x	x				
9b. To what extent are annual IEP goals met/mastered?			x					
9c. To what extent are students making meaningful progress toward grade-level expectations?			x	x				
Goal 10: Students with special needs thrive socio-emotionally.								
10a. To what extent do students with special needs advocate for themselves?								x
10b. How informed and engaged are students in the identification/reevaluation process and plan generation?								x
10c. Do students with special needs feel safe, supported, welcomed, a part of the school community?			x	x				x
Goal 11: Seamless transitions between grade levels and to postsecondary opportunities								
11a. To what extent do students with special needs transition seamlessly between grade levels, between schools/placement, to post-secondary opportunities?			x				x	x

B. 2013 Recommendations

Overall Recommendations & Detailed Explanation of Six High Priority Areas

PCG's review of APS services for students with special needs included 20 recommendations that were enumerated throughout the report.[177] These have been reorganized and restructured to form 11 overall recommendations, including six that have the highest priority for implementation. The six priority areas pertain to: a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), inclusive education, organizational structure and collaboration, operating standards, accountability, and parent, family and school partnerships. The five remaining recommendations pertain to transition activities/services, related services, transportation, Student Support and DHS collaboration for nursing services, and Medicaid reimbursement.

Six Priority Recommendations

The recommendations below reflect the six high priority areas for implementation relating to PCG's evaluation of APS services for students with special needs. When planning implementation activities, ensure there is an alignment between standards for expected MTSS and inclusive education practices with training and accountability measures. In other words, ensure that all standards are linked to training and accountability; that all training provisions are linked to standards and accountability; and that all accountability measures are linked to standards and training. Support these components with: technology; an effective organization and physical/human resources; and parent, family and school partnerships. The schema below shows the intersection of these components.

Intersection of Components to Support MTSS & Inclusive Education
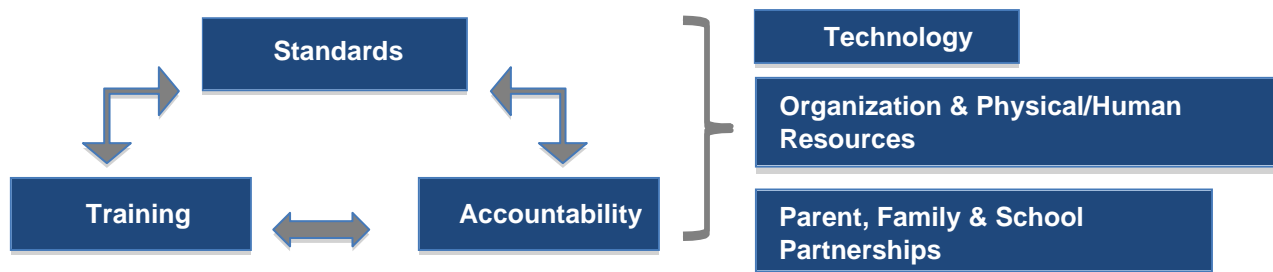
1 Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Expand on the current IAT process to make it more reflective of a comprehensive and research-based MTSS framework to ensure all students receive the instruction and interventions they need to support academic and social/emotional learning, and to achieve at a higher level of performance. With leadership of the Department of Instruction and the support of Student Services and stakeholders, establish a written vision and standards for practices that provide clear, non-negotiable expectations; and develop a comprehensive phased-in implementation plan that includes preschool

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[177] For the purposes of this report, students with special needs refer to students involved with MTSS, with Section 504 plans and/or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Students with disabilities refer to students with Section 504 plans and IEPs. Special education refers to the provision of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the receipt of special education/related services through an IEP.

through secondary grade levels. Ensure that in the delivery of professional development all staff members who need training receive it and are able to demonstrate its use. Establish communication processes to inform parents about the inclusive education initiative, and to obtain implementation feedback from parents and school personnel for follow-up action.

a. **Leadership & Engagement.** Because MTSS is based in the provision of instruction and intervention, including the foundation of a core curriculum that is implemented with fidelity, charge the Department of Instruction with responsibility for leading the development and implementation of this initiative. Have all departments with responsibility for instruction and providing related support to schools engaged in these activities and add their expertise.[178] In addition, engage other stakeholders, including those from schools, parents, and community members. Incorporate this initiative into an existing or new Board committee/council.

b. **Standards.** With stakeholders, build on current standards to promote common language for implementing MTSS and for professional development to include the following: [179]

   a) **Universal screening and progress-monitoring tools** appropriate for elementary, middle, and high schools, and use of benchmark data to identify students for the MTSS process in all schools, incorporating elements relevant for ESOL/HILT students.

   b) **Core curriculum expectations** and use of **universal design for learning** (UDL).[180]

   c) Three levels of **increasingly intensive research-based interventions,** including reading, math and behavior that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and that are available short and long term.

   d) **Interventions that are research-based**, specific enough to **monitor for fidelity** at multiple grade levels, and appropriate for differing content levels.

   e) **Progress monitoring,** including the calculation of targets for student progress when provided with appropriate research-based interventions, and on initiating a referral for special education services when sufficient progress is not made after providing the appropriate interventions.

   f) **Scheduling,** including best practice models for facilitating use of the broadest range of intervention providers.

   g) **Standardized forms** and other documentation.

   h) **Professional development,** including expectations for providing and requiring staff participation.

   i) **Active student involvement** in the IAT process, including progress monitoring and planning.

   j) **Electronic communication tools** and other methods for collaborating with parents/families and providing them access to information.

   k) **MTSS interface with referral** for special education and Section 504 evaluations.

c. **Data.** Regularly collect, analyze, report, and follow up on student academic/behavior-related data. Show the connection between this data and its use to show student academic progress and evidence of personnel performance. Disaggregate student-level data by special need areas,

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[178] It is expected that Student Services representatives would have a major role in this process given their knowledge and skills.

[179] See the Virginia Department of Education's Responsive to Intervention website at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response_intervention/index.shtml - and the Council of the Great City Schools' Common Core State Standards and Diverse Students: Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and the websites referenced at the end of the document at http://www.cgcs.org/domain/87.

[180] Through a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach, curriculum is initially designed with the needs of all students in mind, so that methods, materials, and assessment are usable by all. See National Center on Universal Design for Learning at www.udlcenter.org/.

race/ethnicity, ELL, economic disadvantage, school, school grade levels, as feasible and appropriate, to inform decision-making for the following issues:

1) **Representation of students** in various special needs and disability areas to identify over/ underrepresentation and establish follow-up activities.

2) **Performance data** to identify instructional gaps. Benchmark progress of students with an IEP against their general education peers.

3) **Attendance** to identify students and schools with high absence rates to ensure that schools are taking expected steps to increase their attendance.

d. **Districtwide Implementation Plan.** Develop a phased-in three to five-year implementation plan. Address needs for dual identified (ELLs with an IEP), students with disabilities, students who are gifted and twice exceptional students (gifted students with an IEP); identify staff accountable; establish roles and responsibilities; provide for differentiated professional development and parent training; establish demonstrable outcomes; and include the following components:

1) **Research-based Interventions.** Based on a menu of research-based multi-tiered interventions for reading, math and social/emotional learning, establish a two to three-year timeline for each school to have access to sufficient resources and training for their students.

2) **Districtwide & School-based Teams.** Have districtwide and school-based teams facilitate implementation based on parameters set by the Leadership Team and standards. See *New Teacher Teams Support Integrated Comprehensive Services.*[181]

3) **Fiscal.** Determine the fiscal implications of enabling schools to retain special educators as "interventionists" to provide support for all students if the need for these teachers is reduced because there are fewer students who need special education services.

4) **Time Frame.** Establish an aggressive but reasonable overall time frame, e.g., five years, for implementation and individualize transition of students back to their home schools, ensuring that appropriate supports and services are in place.

e. **Professional Development.** As part of the professional development program referenced in the Districtwide Implementation Plan, incorporate the following:

1) **Professional Learning Standards.** Professional development based on national professional learning standards, such as Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.[182]

2) **Core Content & Reading Instruction.** Plan for how special educators will become more knowledgeable about core curricular content and reading instruction to become both highly qualified and effective teachers. Include, as appropriate, general educators and ESOL/HILT teachers.

3) **Dual Identified/Twice Exceptional Students.** Information relevant to ELLs, including Sheltered English Instruction Protocol (SIOP) training and reinforcement. For ELLs, reinforce use of the Sheltered English Instruction Protocol (SIOP).

4) **Engage Stakeholders.** Inclusion of the following/other relevant groups when planning learning opportunities: principals; general, special and gifted educators; special education assistants; ESOL/HILT teachers; clinicians; administrators; and parents. Differentiate instruction for varying knowledge/skills and ensure that sessions clearly identify and address the knowledge/needs of the intended audience.

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[181] Source: https://www.dropbox.com/s/7hpo5vlxpnviqtc/%20New%20Teacher%20Teams%20to%20Support%20Integrated%20Comprehensive%20Services.pdf

[182] http://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU

5) **Access to Training.** Utilize a broad range of training models, such as the following:

   a) **Multiple formats** (e.g., videos, webinars, narrative text, distance learning) and presentation models (e.g., school-based, small groups, etc.) that are differentiated, based on current levels of staff knowledge and skills.

   b) **APS's website** to present access to training materials for various stakeholders.

   c) **Cross-functional teams** with individuals who directly support schools in order to provide primary training to the broadest spectrum of administrative and instructional staff, so they can help provide direct support, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to principals and teachers.

   d) **Cross-school opportunities** to discuss inclusive instructional challenges and issues, to emphasize consistency across APS schools, and to visit exemplary MTSS practices. (Note: identify exemplary schools for this purpose.)

   e) **Trainers** who are staff members and others having the experience and knowledge to be part of a professional development faculty.

   f) **Modified walk-through protocols** to include the standards, monitor the extent to which school practices conform to the guidance, and initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring as necessary to improve practices.

   g) **Certification.** Ensure that in the delivery of professional development all staff members who need training receive it and are able to demonstrate its use. Mandate components of essential training and provide a certificate of demonstrated performance.

f. Communication & Feedback

1) **Internal.** Establish a timely communication and feedback process to share solutions to MTSS implementation barriers. Several problem areas are likely to require a targeted group of knowledgeable people to resolve implementation issues as they arise. For example, schools often have difficulty providing services with existing staff and would benefit from feedback from individuals able to analyze the situation, give meaningful suggestions, and recommend different staffing arrangements.

2) **Parent/Families.** With input from parent groups, develop electronic and written materials and other modes of communication to explain MTSS to families, its progress, and how parents can have input in and be involved with the process.

f. **CLASS Observation Protocol.** Review the CLASS observation protocol to ensure that it includes sufficient indicators relevant to differentiated instruction and MTSS implementation and that observers have the knowledge and training necessary to assess these areas. Consider adding more fields to the observation data collection system, e.g., tier(s) and type of intervention, to support more detailed analysis.

g. **Electronic Record Systems.** Develop an electronic record system with user-friendly reports to support MTSS implementation in a manner that is similar to APS's electronic IEP system. Use all relevant data stored in these systems to prepare reports by school, grade level, class, program, and other categories to inform decision-making at all APS levels.

h. **Use of Federal/State Funds.** Investigate availability of state funds; and how funds under Title I and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) funds under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may be used to support MTSS, i.e., Response to Intervention (RtI), in public schools.[183]

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[183] Implementing RTI Using Title I, Title III, and CEIS Funds; Implementing RTI Using Title I, title III and CEIS Funds: Key Issues for Decision-makers at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/rti.html.

2. Inclusive Education

Actualize APS's vision as a diverse and *inclusive school community*, committed to academic excellence and integrity, by maximizing inclusive and effective instruction, intervention and support for all students, including those with special and dual needs. These students include those who are ELLs and/or receive support through MTSS, a Section 504 plan, and/or an IEP. Lay a foundation for this work by expanding APS's courageous conversations involving race and ethnicity to include students with disabilities. With leadership of the Department of Instruction and the support of Student Services and stakeholders, establish a written vision and standards for practices that provide clear, non-negotiable expectations; and develop a comprehensive implementation plan that includes preschool through secondary grade levels. Ensure that in the delivery of professional development all staff members who need training receive it and are able to demonstrate its use.

a. **Courageous Conversations.** Engage in courageous conversations with stakeholders and school board members about APS's current configuration of services for students with disabilities, their performance over time, and the District's fortitude to embark on a journey to provide services in a more inclusive manner and become known as a leader in the state and nation for improved outcomes for students with special needs.

b. **Leadership & Stakeholders.** Because of the nature of the paradigm shift necessary to achieve success, which includes the active involvement of general education, it is important that the initiative be viewed as an "educational" initiative rather than a "special education" initiative. Have a senior staff member in the Department of Instruction lead an implementation team, including representation from Student Services, ESOL/HILT, principals to guide the implementation process. Engage the support of ASEAC, SEPTA and university partners and their resources. Establish specific stakeholder groups as needed to consider such areas as preschool and other grade level inclusive practices, high school course offerings, etc.

c. **Standards.**[184] Establish a written vision and standards for inclusive education practices that provide clear, non-negotiable expectations in areas that include:

1) **Responsibility of school principal and personnel for all students** in the school, including students in countywide programs. (Change the name of "countywide programs" to maximize the effective inclusion of students with disabilities in all aspects of the school's academic and nonacademic programs and extracurricular activities to one that would not imply that the programs are not an integral part of each school in which they are located, e.g., specialized or clustered programs.)

2) **Support for the most integrated, cohesive, and comprehensive services** for students with disabilities in the schools and classrooms they would attend if they did not have a disability and the use of a **universal design for learning** to maximize access to core instruction in the classroom level, including the use of **assistive technology** and **differentiated instruction** at all grade levels. Establish an expectation that textbooks for general education classes/teachers will be ordered and provided for any special program classes/teachers as well.

3) **Use of MTSS** (as it is developed with effective academic and social/emotional interventions, progress monitoring, problem-solving, goals intended to close achievement gaps, etc.) for students with an IEP. Ensure standards include use of **reading and other interventions** effective for the use of students with an IEP and dually identified students.

4) **Culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate** instruction, including a revised ESOL/HILT checklist that is user-friendly, research-based and field-tested with school-based personnel.

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[184] The use of the term "standards" is not intended to refer to a "cookie-cutter" practice approach. Rather, it refers to core elements that research has shown are more likely than not to lead to success if implemented with fidelity. It is expected that these practices would be implemented in a manner that takes into account local school factors and uniqueness.

5) **Progress Monitoring.** Establish standards for monitoring student performance, including the frequency of monitoring and its documentation to reflect teaching effectiveness and learning growth. Establish standards developed for the MTSS process so that these standards provide for at least if not more frequent monitoring and comprehensive documentation for students with an IEP.

6) Research-based **co-teaching** methodology for all grade levels, including early childhood.[185]

7) Research-based practices for including **students with severe disabilities**. See *Students with Severe Disabilities and Best Practice.[186]*

8) Research-based standards for the functional life skills and other **special programs**, including students' access to the core curriculum.

9) **Flexible grouping** for instruction/services that are not dependent on a student's "program" or disability area, e.g., access to social skills instruction.

10) **Scheduled common planning time** for general/special educators and professionals to have structured opportunities to share information about students. Have special educators assist general educators to understand how to best provide targeted and appropriate supports based on student needs.

11) **Creative use of scheduling** to ensure needed flexibility for true co-teaching to occur.

12) **Master schedule** by which students with special needs and those receiving ESOL/HILT services are to be scheduled first to ensure individual needs are better met.

13) **Access to rigorous secondary school required & elective courses,** including the use of co-teaching and supplementary aids/services. Communicate with parents/ students the availability of such supports for students. Expect staff to encourage students to enroll in these courses.

14) **Active student involvement** in the IEP process, including student-led IEP meetings, progress monitoring and planning (Transition planning for students with an IEP begins in grade 8 or at age 14, whichever comes first**.)**

15) **Parent/School Communication System** to enable parents and teachers to share information easily.

d. **Districtwide Implementation Plan.** Develop an implementation plan, building on components for MTSS. Address needs for ELLs, students with disabilities, and students who are twice exceptional (gifted students with an IEP); identify staff accountable; establish roles and responsibilities; provide for differentiated professional development and parent training; establish demonstrable outcomes; and include the following components:

1) **Research-based Interventions.** Based on a menu of research-based multi-tiered interventions for reading, math and social/emotional learning (including those for preschoolers, and ELLs), establish a two to three year timeline for each school to have access to sufficient resources and training for their students.

2) **Effective Models.** Establish various effective scheduling models for co-teaching and planned collaboration.

3) **Tie the planning process to MTSS** (academic and social/emotional) to minimize

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[185] For co-teaching resources, see Dr. Marilyn Friend's Co-Teaching Connection website at http://www.marilynfriend.com/index.htm, and the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities' website, Co- Teaching: General and Special Educators Working Together at http://nichcy.org/schoolage/effective-practices/coteaching.

[186] https://www.dropbox.com/s/5aee10stykr8o4b/Students%20with%20Severe%20Disabilities%20%26%20Best%20Practice.pdf

fragmentation, enhance cohesiveness and reinforce the framework as applying to improved outcomes for all students.

4) **Districtwide & School-based Teams.** Have districtwide and school-based teams facilitate implementation based on parameters set by the Leadership Team and standards. See *New Teacher Teams Support Integrated Comprehensive Services.*[187]

5) **Time Frame.** Establish an aggressive but reasonable overall time frame, e.g., five years, for implementation and individualize transition of students back to their home schools, ensuring that appropriate supports and services are in place.

e. **Professional Development.** As part of the professional development program referenced in the Districtwide Implementation Plan, incorporate the following:

1) **Professional Learning Standards.** Professional development based on national professional learning standards, such as Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.[188]

2) **Core Content & Reading Instruction.** Plan for how special educators will become more knowledgeable about core curricular content and reading instruction to become both highly qualified and effective teachers. Include ESOL/HILT teachers, and general educators as needed.

3) **Knowledge Required for Inclusive Instruction.** With knowledgeable representatives of general/special educators identify knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to teach effectively in inclusive settings. Also, ensure training is aligned with core curricular standards for all students and that instruction is not based on a "special education curriculum with its own scope and sequence." Through a survey or other method, identify gaps in content core curricular knowledge of special educators, especially at the secondary school level, and aggressively develop courses and/or other methods for personnel to obtain this information.

4) **Dual Identified Students.** Information relevant to ELLs, including Sheltered English Instruction Protocol (SIOP) training and reinforcement. For ELLs, reinforce use of the Sheltered English Instruction Protocol (SIOP).

5) **Engage Stakeholders.** Inclusion of the following/other relevant groups when planning learning opportunities: principals; general, special and gifted educators; special education assistants; ESOL/HILT teachers; clinicians; administrators; and parents. Differentiate instruction for varying knowledge/skills and ensure that sessions clearly identify and address the knowledge/needs of the intended audience.

6) **Paraprofessionals.** Incorporate relevant training for paraprofessionals.

7) **Access to Training.** Utilize a broad range of training/technical assistance models, such as the following:

a) **Multiple formats** (e.g., videos, webinars, narrative text, distance learning) and presentation models (e.g., school-based, small groups, etc.) that are differentiated, based on current levels of staff knowledge and skills.

b) **APS's website** to present access to training materials for various stakeholders.

c) **Cross-functional teams** with individuals who directly support schools in order to provide primary training to the broadest spectrum of administrative and instructional staff, so they can help provide direct support, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to principals and teachers.

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[187]

https://www.dropbox.com/s/7hpo5vlxpnviqtc/%20New%20Teacher%20Teams%20to%20Support%20Integrated%20Comprehensive%20Services.pdf

[188] http://www.learningforward.org/standards#.UMvVD7Yt0kU

    d) Cross-school opportunities for discussion to identify exemplary inclusive education practices and personnel to be able to become professional developers and arrange visits to observe model inclusive education practices.

    e) Trainers who are staff members and others having the experience and knowledge to be part of a professional development faculty.

    f) Modified walk-through protocols to include the standards, monitor the extent to which school practices conform to the guidance, and initiate technical assistance, professional development, coaching, and mentoring as necessary to improve practices.

f. Paraprofessional Support. Implement activities to support paraprofessionals and enable them to maximize their assistance to students and teachers. Develop models to enhance communication both among paraprofessionals, and between paraprofessionals and assigned teachers to bolster their effectiveness in the classroom and enhance their professional learning. As part of this process incorporate the following activities.

    1) Professional Learning. Create a more robust and paraprofessional-centric professional learning program that includes, but is not limited to: inclusion and differentiation; training in best practices for working with students on the autism spectrum; training in positive interventions and social skills; training in continuum of services and inclusive classroom work; training in crisis intervention and bullying; knowledge of assistive technology resources and usage; knowledge of Spanish, math, and reading techniques; understanding of an IEP, accommodations and goals, and progress monitoring. Explore relationships with local colleges and universities to create college study opportunities that would provide paraprofessionals with skills and knowledge to supplement APS training. A degree program with potential full-time teaching in APS may be a goal of this collaboration.

    2) Family Communication. Provide opportunities for paraprofessionals to assist their assigned teacher with family communication.

    3) Access to IEPs. Ensure access to assigned students' IEPs.

    4) Monthly Meetings. Schedule monthly meetings for paraprofessionals within specific groups as well as schedule system-wide meetings through which paraprofessionals can network, share best practices and resources, and listen to invited guest speakers.

    5) Planning Time. Schedule planning time with the paraprofessional and assigned special and regular education teachers.

    6) Collaboration. Support models for teachers and paraprofessionals to share knowledge and problem-solve, e.g., using a website with links to an online chat room, professional development topics and dates, and other relevant resources.

    7) APS High School Course Offerings. Review APS's course offerings and access for students with disabilities, including ELLs, and consider the expansion of non-traditional course offerings, and creative strategies to enable more students with disabilities to access and be successful in rigorous courses.

g. Assistive Technology. Track assistive technology referrals to ensure there are timely assessments and follow-up. Conduct an assistive technology survey to determine the extent to which students who need services have them and are using them as intended. Collaborate with Instructional Technology to determine whether it is economically feasible to provide schools with a set of the most frequent assistive technology devices, including those relevant for students with Section 504 and involved with the MTSS process. This approach was used by the Scottsdale Public Schools (AZ) and received positive feedback for its effectiveness and positive outcomes.

h. CLASS Protocol & Data. Review the CLASS observation protocol and revise it to ensure that it includes sufficient indicators relevant to differentiated instruction, MTSS implementation and inclusive education standards, and that observers have the knowledge and training necessary to assess these areas. Add to the CLASS protocol areas to address: access to the core curriculum;

differentiated instruction; accommodations and modifications; use of effective interventions for reading and math; use of data; monitoring student progress; and co-teaching. Also, add to the observational data collection fields for student disability and program type to support more detailed analysis. Ensure that all observers have expertise in the area of special education, MTSS and 504 and have reviewed student IEPs, IATs or 504s.

i. **Communication**

1) **Internal.** Establish a timely communication and feedback process to share solutions to inclusive education implementation barriers. Several problem areas are likely to require a targeted group of knowledgeable people to resolve implementation issues as they arise.

2) **Parents/Families.** With input from the Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC), the Parent Resource Center (PRC) and other relevant parent groups, develop electronic and written materials and other modes of communication to explain inclusive education to families, its progress, and how parents can have input in and be involved with the process. Ensure that this information is accessible to parents who have limited English proficiency or have difficulty reading.

3. Organization & Collaboration

Maximize collaboration between personnel in the Department of Instruction and Student Services, and within Student Services, to facilitate the coordination of all APS resources to support teaching and learning.

a. **Instruction & Student Services.** The recommendations for the implementation of an MTSS framework and for inclusive education instruction and support, which are culturally and linguistic appropriate, requires collaborative teamwork by Instruction and Student Services personnel. Have the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services establish a communication and management protocol designed to carry out the recommendations referenced in this report.

1) **MTSS.** Have the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction provide the leadership for MTSS. MTSS is an inclusive initiative and incorporates students with disabilities and ELLs. Having Instruction lead the effort visibly communicates that the framework is based in general education, is designed to improve teaching and learning, and is not designed as a path to special education eligibility.

2) **Inclusive Education.** Have Student Services and relevant Instruction personnel support the effort. Although Student Services will likely provide the bulk of support needed to formulate planning and support for inclusive education, the leadership of Instruction is necessary to communicate that this model relies on general educators to differentiate instruction and collaborate with their special education/related services peers.

3) **Protocol.** Execute a protocol that establishes expectations for how personnel from Instruction and Student Services will communicate and share information, develop materials, cross-train their personnel, provide technical assistance and professional development, link information on their websites, monitor and take follow-up action, etc. In addition, include an expectation for consistent and collaborative systemic planning between the Special Education and ESOL/HILT offices to develop/monitor the implementation of standards for ELL/special needs identification, service delivery and related professional learning development activities.

4) **Planning.** Develop/execute plans to improve academic achievement and positive behavior outcomes through strategies including but not limited to support for: instruction and professional learning; district and school-based teams that review student data and activities designed for improvement; and principals and staff members.

5) **Websites.** Expand access to reading information by linking all APS webpages, including those relevant for ESOL/HILT, to Instruction, Special Education and Section 504 sites. Add to current information as new resources for reading interventions and other areas are developed through MTSS and inclusive education implementation. Include all manuals, checklists, guidance documents and forms. To the extent possible, have information available in Spanish and other high use languages. Put the Bridge Manual on APS's website and link it to all relevant departmental webpages.

b. **Student Services.** Implement organizational changes to Student Services to provide a more reasonable supervisory scope of responsibility and more focused support for schools to achieve the outcomes desired for inclusive schools. These recommendations are provided to trigger a lively discussion about ways in which the organization may improve its support of schools to enhance educational outcomes for students with disabilities. It is anticipated that representatives from the Department of Instruction, schools and parents will participate to discuss needs, goals and the best way to meet them. After the revised organization is established, produce an organizational chart that includes all personnel in the organization, including administrative assistants, clericals, etc., and numbers in each organizational group, to facilitate a better understanding of the Department's structure. Produce a communication flow chart for whom to call for specified purposes. Distribute the information broadly to central office/school personnel, parents, and the community; and establish a link to the information on the APS website.

1) Special Education Services

a) **School Liaisons.**[189] Assign an appropriate number of personnel to serve as liaisons between the Department of Student Services and the schools they support to have timely and sufficiently frequent consultations with principals/designees about their service delivery model, planning for improved instruction, oversight of special education, and be a resource for matters requiring a high level of expertise. Have the liaisons be the primary contact for all of each school's special education and Section 504 issues. Consult with a representative group of principals, key instruction administrative personnel who understand school operations, and the budget office to determine the amount of time each school requires for sufficient support and the overall number of liaisons required. The primary work of the school liaisons would be to focus on teaching and learning and support for inclusive instruction. For this process to work effectively, the liaisons' role should not include attendance at all routine eligibility and other special education meetings; instead, limit involvement to eligibility and other meetings that are particularly difficult and require a higher level of expertise otherwise available at the school.

b) **Research-based Content Specialists.**[190] Have a group of individuals who continuously research and share information, provide back-up support for liaisons, and oversee professional development activities for critical areas, such as:

- Pre-K education;
- Identifying, assessing and instructional strategies/interventions for ELLs with disabilities;
- Intensive interventions for academic, social, emotional and/or communication needs;
- Differentiated instruction, co-teaching and other inclusive education supports;
- Curriculum and instruction aligned with alternate assessment standards; Assistive technology;
- Low vision/blind and low hearing/deaf support; Postsecondary transition activities and

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[189] The term "school liaison" is used as a generic term only for purposes of describing this personnel area.

[190] The term "research-based content specialist" is used also as a generic term only for purposes of describing this personnel area.

support; etc.

Ensure that this group is able to provide support to the school liaisons (and school staff when necessary) and support vertically and horizontally consistent standards-based practices. Have these content specialists communicate research-based interventions that are not based on a student's disability category or specialized program but on a constellation of learning characteristics, strengths and needs that students bring. Such an approach will enable research-based instructional strategies to reach all students with relevant characteristics – not just those with a specific disability label. As these content specialists share their knowledge with school liaisons, the liaisons will be better able to address more school-based issues and any special program issues in their assigned schools directly.

    c) **Operations.** Have the above groups of personnel share their operational responsibilities using estimates about the time necessary to perform these operational duties and other responsibilities to determine the full-time equivalent staff required and their respective roles.

2) Pupil Services

    a) **Related Services Personnel.** Group support for all personnel who provide direct services to students under Pupil Services, i.e., counselors, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse and attendance specialists, and homeless.

      i. **Personnel to Student Ratios.** Ensure the use of appropriate ratios for related services personnel to student and the equitable allocation of personnel to schools.

      ii. **Professional Development & Materials.** Ensure related services personnel are included in all professional development activities and have access to appropriate and up-to-date materials.

      iii. **Personnel Evaluations.** Have principals evaluate related service providers who support students at their schools, and have Pupil Services administrators coordinate the results and resolve differences of opinion between principals and with Pupil Services. There is a relatively small number of Pupil Services supervisory personnel available to evaluate related services providers and observe each at his/her assigned schools. For this recommendation to be implemented effectively, provide principals with sufficient training to conduct the evaluations and have Pupil Services supervisors address any specific aspects of the evaluation process that requires their expertise. In addition, have Pupil Services supervisors provide additional support to principals on a case-by-case basis, e.g., the principal is unsure about a provider's abilities and/or performance.

    b) **Program Support.** Group individuals responsible for hearing/vision screening, attendance, homeless, home instruction, medical and psychological transfers and student records.

c. **Procedural Support & Compliance.** Have a group of individuals who support the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services with expertise in Section 504, IDEA, and related requirements. Enable this group to have access to data to identify compliance trends and patterns of concern. With the support of others, have this group be responsible for drafting written guidance to promote common language and practices; support professional development; and coordinate compliance activities.

d. **Supervision of Various Groups.** Based on the results of these groupings, work with Human Resources and Budget to determine the scope of supervisory and other responsibilities to determine position titles and the number of administrative positions required to perform expected responsibilities.

e. **Implementation Plan.** To facilitate a well-managed and orderly transition, develop and execute

a comprehensive implementation plan, including the following components.

1) **Central Office.** Include sufficient initial and ongoing training to ensure personnel have the knowledge they need to carry out their responsibilities. Develop a process for obtaining feedback to identify any issues that may arise and to provide additional support when needed. Include consideration of how Student Services personnel will be integrated into Instruction activities and strategic planning.

2) **Schools.** To enable schools to facilitate most Section 504, special education eligibility and other meetings and take on the LEA representative role, incorporate in the plan important considerations from school and parent stakeholders.

3) **Written Guidance.** Ensure that there is written guidance, e.g., comprehensive Student Services manual, that promotes a common language and understanding of standards and expectations.

4) **Professional Learning.** Include in the plan a comprehensive professional learning component to explain the basis for changes at the central office and school levels and enables all personnel to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

5) **Time Frame.** The time frame for implementation should be aggressive but provide sufficient time for preparation.

f. **Staff Ratios.** Review the ratios for related services personnel and the process for determining student need for these services. As part of this review, include an analysis of caseload and workload, and related state requirements. Ensure there are clear and objective standards in place as well as a process for oversight and accountability for results. Include these standards in the APS Student Services manual.

g. **DHS & Student Services Communication.** Facilitate better communication between DHS and Student Services for nursing services by hosting monthly meetings. Review and address communication and any other issues to minimize coordination problems relating to the dual agency interaction. Work toward a plan to incorporate nurses and nursing staff in the classroom when able to support health education activities.

4. Operating Procedures

Produce electronic standard operating procedure manuals (SOPM) to post policies, procedures and expected practices for MTSS, Section 504, special education/related services, and requirements for ELLs with disabilities, with links to additional information and resources. Post the SOPMs on various pages of APS's website to maximize accessibility.

a. **Section 504 Manual.** Expedite the review and revision of all documents necessary to implement APS's Section 504 Procedural Manual revised Section 504 and take additional steps to maximize their operation.

1) **Training.** Continue training for current and future principals and other relevant school-based personnel, ensuring that it addresses areas of concern listed in the PCG report and that it is meaningful to participants. Additionally, enhance outreach to parents to provide them information regarding the Section 504 revised standards and their implementation, and to encourage them to visit the Parent Resource Center.

2) **Progress Monitoring.** Ensure that student progress data is collected and shared effectively and regularly with parents and with students on a regular basis.

3) **Implementation.** Ensure that APS's revised Section 504 standards are implemented appropriately for all students. Track Section 504 eligibility rates and determine whether the rates for ELLs become more proportionate to ELL student enrollment. Take steps to ensure that the supplementary aids and services listed in Section 504 plans are implemented consistently and that staff members have time to collaborate as needed to coordinate and

share information about student needs and progress.[191] Finally, take steps to ensure that students, especially those at the high school level, are engaged as appropriate in the development and implementation of their Section 504 plan.

4) **Electronic Section 504 Record System.** If economically feasible, develop an on-line system to support the Section 504 process, which would be similar to but not as complex as the electronic IEP system.

5) **Section 504 Webpage.** Provide a link to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education's website.

b. **Online Special Education SOM.** Develop a comprehensive special education SOPM that establish all requirements necessary for the operation of special education and implementation of IEP-required services. Provide links to in depth information and resources, including other relevant manuals (e.g., Bridge), checklists, guidance, memorandums and forms. Ensure staff is available to update the PPIM regularly with current information. Include the areas described below.

1) **Contents.** In the order that the special education process occurs, i.e., referral, evaluation, eligibility, development of IEP, etc., address the issues highlighted in this report:

a) **Eligibility.** Establish local operational criteria for determining a student's disability in areas reflecting over and under representation to ensure criteria provides sufficient guidance for decision-making. Revise eligibility forms to reflect these criteria to document whether assessment data and information show that a student meets all criteria for the disability under consideration. For students who are ELL, include sections that would support the documentation of information relevant to a student's language usage and its relationship to the disability criteria.

b) **Consent.** When a parent does not consent to a child's receipt of initial special education services, the record should indicate that the student is eligible for services but that the parent refused to consent. Consider whether this is an issue that must be addressed in the electronic IEP system.

c) **IEP Requirements.** Establish clear standards for the documentation of meaningful present levels of performance, consideration of student strengths and student academic/developmental/functional needs; and for how this information is aligned with measurable annual goals/objectives or benchmarks. Explain the relationship between the resource/self-contained nomenclature based on the 15-hour per week distinction, and Federal/State educational setting percentages of time students are educated in general education classrooms.

d) **Educational Setting.** Provide a thorough description of Federal/State requirements relating to the provision of special education/related services in the least restrictive environment and research-based practices designed to promote inclusive education. Provide a clear explanation of Federal/State educational setting criteria and the calculation for determining the percentage of time a student is educated in the general education setting.

e) **Co-Teaching.** Establish an expectation that co-teaching parameters be included in an IEP when the team intends for a student to receive services through this service configuration.

f) **Related Services.** Specify clear and objective standards for the provision of related services for students with disabilities to benefit from their education.

g) **Test Accommodations.** Clarify that accommodations are not "subject" specific but are

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[191] The recommendation regarding collaboration for Section 504 services applies also for students receiving MTSS interventions and/or students with IEPs.

related to the content being accommodated. Describe how to document a student's accommodations so that school test coordinators can easily find and interpret them.

h) Progress Monitoring. Establish standards for monitoring student performance, including the frequency of monitoring and its documentation to reflect teaching effectiveness and learning growth. Establish standards developed for the MTSS process so that these standards provide for at least if not more frequent monitoring and comprehensive documentation for students with an IEP.

i) Issues Pertaining to Students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans

    i. Nurse Participation in Meetings. Establish standards for the participation of nurses in MTSS, Section 504 and IEP meetings for students with health issues to ensure issues are fully discussed and understood and to maximize informed communication between school teams and parents about health matters.

    ii. Transportation. Develop standards for specialized transportation, including the reasonable amount of time required to establish new routes for students with disabilities.

j. Issue Pertaining to Students with Special Needs. Establish standards for encouraging parents to attend MTSS, Section 504 and IEP meetings and facilitating meaningful participation, especially for parents who are limited English proficient.

2) SOPM Links & Updates. Provide links to in-depth information and resources, including other relevant manuals (e.g., Bridge), checklists, guidance, memorandums and forms, e.g., in the Section 504 Manual address language considerations for ELLs and reference the Bridge Manual; and in the Bridge Manual reference APS's Section 504 Procedural Manual. Ensure staff is available to update SOPMs regularly with current information.

3) Staff & Parent/Families Training.

a) Staff. Plan differentiated training for all stakeholders, e.g., principals, general/special educators, related service providers (including nurses), etc., regarding the SOM(s) and new/modified electronic record systems. Have nurses provide training to school personnel about health resources in the community and their work.

b) Parents/Families. In collaboration with ASEAC, SEPTA, and the PRC, plan face-to-face training and on-line modules to provide parents an understanding of the information in the special education SOPM. If feasible, publish a modified document appropriate for parents and supplement it with one-page brochures to further access to this information. Ensure training is accessible to parents with diverse linguistic needs.

c. ELLs with Special Needs. In all SOPMs involving students with special needs, ensure that information is culturally and linguistically appropriate, and incorporate the following provisions:

a) ESOL/HILT Checklist. With knowledgeable stakeholders, revise the ESOLT/HILT checklist so it is user-friendly, research-based and field-tested with school-based personnel and ESL/special education services to dual-identified students.

b) Bridge Team. Establish an expectation that each school is to have a Bridge Team that functions as described in the Bridge Manual; and that principals provide the support needed.

c) Training. Communicate the changes using influential school-based personnel who can explain how the new process will improve outcomes for ELLs.

d. Electronic IEP System. Improve usage/effectiveness of APS's data systems through the following minor software changes:

1) Integration with SIS. Fully integrate SIS with the IEP system (and MTSS/Section504 systems if developed) to eliminate manual entry of duplicate information.

2) **Minimize Paper Usage.** Ensure all relevant information is entered into the IEP system (and MTSS/Section504 systems if developed) so there is little or no supplemented information on paper.

3) **Expanded Text Boxes.** Allow for expanded IEP text boxes so that space is not limited arbitrarily and provide for more dropdown menus to facilitate consistent data entry and analysis.

4) **IEP Form.** Expedite modification of the IEP form so that it provides: clear documentation for each special education and related service; the specific amount of time for each service; and the location in which each service is to be provided. Remove the optional nature of the "location" of services field.

5) **Educational Setting.** Electronically compute and show the percentage of time a student with an IEP receives instruction in general education classes and identify the particular Federal/State educational setting the percentage reflects.

   a) **Education Setting & Service Documentation.** Expedite modification of the IEP form so that it provides a clear documentation for each special education and related service and the specific amount of time and the location/class in which the service is to be provided.

   b) **Educational Setting Calculation & Documentation.** Electronically calculate and show in the IEP form that is printed the overall percentage of time the student is intended to be educated in a general education classroom and the federal educational setting categories.

   c) **Percentage of Time in General Education.** Electronically compute and show the percentage of time a student receives instruction in general education classes and identify which Federal/State educational setting the percentage reflects.

   d) **Location of Service.** Make the location of service field mandatory.

6) **Goal Bank.** Establish an electronic bank for measurable IEP goals and allowable accommodations.

7) **Eligibility & Parental Non-Consent**. Enable the IEP system to show that a student was found eligible for special education services but his/her parent refused or failed to consent to initial services. In this case, the student will not receive services because the parent did not provide consent.

8) **Test Accommodations Access by Student Testing Coordinators.** Provide Student Testing Coordinators (STCs) permission to access the electronic IEP system to access student test accommodation information.

9) **IEP-at-a-Glance.** Develop a districtwide IEP-at-a-glance in the IEP system that would be generated by teachers with the click of a button.

10) **Health Plans & ADHD Data**
   e) **Health Plans.** Add fields to the SIS to identify students with a health plan, the plan's date, and access to the plan for individuals with permission to do so.
   f) **ADHD Data**. Collect and add a data field for the category of ADHD for students with OHI and for students with Section 504 plans and use the data to track prevalence rates, including racial/ethnic composition, performance, and service-related information.

c. **Reports.** Use all relevant data stored in the IEP system to prepare user-friendly reports by school, grade level, class, program, and other categories to inform decision-making at all APS levels.

5. Accountability

Establish a system of accountability that reflects APS's vision of high expectations for all learners and a service delivery model that is proactive rather than reactive – and inclusive in nature.

a. **Advisory Council for Instruction.** Establish a principal of universal design for every curriculum-based/focused advisory committee whereby participants are expected to address all students, including ELLs, and students engaged in MTSS, and students with Section 504 plans and IEPs. To accomplish this purpose, the various committees need access to information and individuals with knowledge about these subgroups of students and issues relevant to areas under review.

b. **APS Strategic Plan**

   1) **Differentiated Instruction & MTSS.** To improve implementation of APS's Strategic Plan for relating to differentiated instruction and early detection of learning gaps, and its vision of a diverse and inclusive school community, supplement the Strategic Plan with consideration of the MTSS and inclusive education recommendations noted above. When standards related to MTSS and inclusive education are completed, initiate biweekly central office, cross-functional data review meetings to identify exemplary and troubling school trends. Produce and review on a regular basis a profile that shows districtwide progress towards implementation of goals. Have schools include in their school improvement plans an aggressive MTSS implementation process that is based on District expectations, using a common template. Include reporting performance data and other data relevant for MTSS (including the number of students who are on track to graduate) and expected targets for improvement, including targets for students with Section 504 Plans and IEPs.[192]

   2) **Inclusive Education Targets & Progress Monitoring.** Supplementing the Strategic Plan with appropriate outcome and other measures for inclusive education, including district and differentiated school targets to increase the number of students with an IEP educated in general education classes at least 80% of the time (with appropriate support in their home schools; and decrease the number of students with an IEP educated more than 60% of the time in separate classes. Establish reasonable school-based targets for this area.

c. **School Improvement Plans.** Using a common template, have schools include in their school improvement plans activities designed to move aggressively toward the provision of special education services within an inclusive school model based on district expectations and resources. Establish set protocols for the reporting progress based on expected targets and activities for improvement.

   1) For **cross-categorical and countywide programs**, collect and analyze data by race/ethnicity, performance over time, and disciplinary referrals to identify exemplary practices and inform APS's planning process.

   2) Establish a process for reviewing each student in **private schools**, the type of services they are receiving, their cost, and what it would take for APS to provide comparable or better support within district schools.

d. **Monitoring.** Ensure child find and assessment procedures are followed for students, including ELLs, who may be qualified for IAT, Section 504, and IEP services, and that the services are provided as expected. Develop a variety of strategies to monitor SOPM implementation and its impact on student learning. For example, establish responsibility for monitoring the implementation of standards for the transition of students between grade level schools to ensure appropriate services are planned and provided in a timely manner. Establish walkthrough protocols and develop user- friendly reports to monitor student performance and implementation of standards. Use this information to modify practices, target resources, and support progress.

e. **Personnel Accountability.** Hold personnel accountable for expected results through incentives

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[192] See the many resources available on the RtI Action Network website at http://www.rtinetwork.org.

and consequences that encourage the implementation of standards for practice and fidelity. Make clear each principal's role and responsibility for *all* students in his or her school. Ensure that their evaluations include the important areas for the timely and compliant implementation and oversight of differentiated instruction, MTSS, 504 and special education standards. Establish exemplars with training for evaluating such areas as co-teaching and other supports for inclusive instruction, including areas relevant for ELLs with an IEP.

f. **Programmatic Evaluations.** Incorporate a universal design model for all future programmatic evaluations so that they address relevant issues pertinent to MTSS and students with disabilities, including ELLs. In this way, APS can set in motion a process to ensure that evaluations are inclusive of all subgroup populations and their respective needs and avoids unanticipated consequences resulting from a lack of consideration.

g. **Data.** Use valid and reliable data to regularly review patterns and trends to monitor SOPM implementation and to inform follow-up action.

　　1) **Data Clarity & Accuracy.** Identify and address concerns around data clarity and establish a central data source for all Student Services metrics. Ensure all departments know how special education data is captured and classified to avoid potential misrepresentation of data. As additional data is available for students involved with MTSS or a Section 504 plan, ensure individuals have sufficient understanding about its usage.

　　2) **Disaggregation of Data.** Disaggregate student performance and discipline data by subgroups that include students involved with MTSS, and students with Section 504 plans and IEPs. Further sort this data by race/ethnicity, and ELL. Use this information to identify achievement gaps, modify practices, target resources, and support achievement. Develop systems for the regular disaggregation of special education student-level performance data to identify instructional gaps.

　　3) **Cross-categorical & Countywide Programs**. Collect and analyze performance and suspension data over time for students in cross-categorical and countywide special education programs overall, by race/ethnicity, grade levels and schools, to identify exemplary practices, assess school improvement, and inform APS's planning process.

　　4) **Case Studies.** Based on data analyses, periodically conduct case study reviews at school sites for students representative of data reflecting high-risk characteristics to inform future practices. Based on these reviews, determine if different or new standards, training, or other activities are needed.

　　5) **Students with an IEP Placed in Private Schools.** Review the following for each student placed by APS in a private school to receive an appropriate education: type of services received; achievement growth; placement cost; and whether APS could provide comparable or superior instruction/services at a similar or reduced cost.

6. Parent, Family & School Partnerships

To promote strong parent, family and school partnerships: increase parent awareness and use of the Parent Resource Center; develop one-page information guides and use the public television system to enhance parent understanding of the MTSS, Section 504 and special education processes; and increase communication between task forces and stakeholders to enhance their effectiveness.

a. **Parent/Family School Collaboration.** Establish standards developed with the PRC, ASEAC and SEPTA for expectations regarding parent/family school collaboration. Base these standards on research applicable to this subject, such as: *Fostering Parent and Professional Collaboration Research Brief,* Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, National Parent Technical Assistance Center; and *Encouraging Meaningful Parent/Educator Collaboration: A Review of*

Recent Literature, Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education.[193][194] As part of this process, consider tensions between parent expectations and legal standards and how this collaboration can move to improved communication. Once the standards are established, collaborate with the PRC, ASEAC and SEPTA for broad distribution.

b. **Parent Resource Center (PRC).** With parent and family stakeholders, meaningfully explore ways to increase parent awareness and use of the PRC. For example, have staff distribute information about the PRC at special education and 504 meetings IEP and offer words of encouragement to parents to support their involvement.

c. **Parent Guide.** Develop one-page informational guides for parents about the MTSS, 504 and special education processes, key terminology, and frequent questions. Consider using methods, such as webinars, videos, etc., to broaden information sharing.

d. **Mock Meetings.** Utilize the public television system to hold "mock" MTSS, Section 504 and IEP meetings so that parents are able to maximize their effective participation.

e. **Task Force Activities.** Provide consistent information to APS staff and ASEAC about task force activities and incorporate their findings and recommendations into special education team meetings several times each school year. Solicit feedback from staff regarding the information and any related needs for professional learning. Without the task forces/committees becoming too large, rotate inclusion of principals and special/general educators from a cross-section of schools to obtain a broader perspective of needs and recommendations. Develop additional task forces as issues under discussion require greater feedback and study to support implementation.

Additional Recommendations

1. **Post-secondary Transition.** Bring together representatives from ASEAC, SEPTA, representatives (including ESOL/HILT) from each middle and high school who are knowledgeable about transition services, and central office representatives from the Student Services and the Career, Technical and Adult Education departments to discuss challenges and barriers to meaningful and effective postsecondary transition activities and support, including those for students with Asperger's and students with Section 504-only disabilities. Provide research for the group to review, such as information available from the National Center for Secondary Transition and the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition, as well as information about the automotive program and how the needs of students with an IEP are addressed.[195][196] Based on this discussion, identify immediate and long-range steps, including protocol for guiding research-based practices. Also, determine whether access to transition coordinators at the middle school level is financially feasible. In addition:

   a. **Professional Development.** Identify professional development needed for general and special educators to meet the post-secondary transition needs of students with an IEP and dually identified students; and

   b. **MAPS.** Review and determine the efficacy of using Making Action Plans (MAPS) for student

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[193] http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/assets/files/Parent%20and%20Professional%20Collaboration%20Research%20Brief%20-%20Final.pdf

[194] http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/exemplar/artifacts/Encouraging%20Meaningful%20Collaboration.pdf

[195] http://www.ncset.org/

[196] http://www.nasetalliance.org/

centered transitional planning.[197]

    c. **Student-led Meetings.** Review literature related to student-led meetings (MTSS, 504, IEP) to support self-advocacy skills and increased student involvement in their educational planning.[198]

2. **Related Services.** Review the ratios for related services personnel and the process for determining student need for these services. Establish a monitoring process to ensure implementation of APS standards for eligibility decisions.

3. **Transportation.** Improve transportation services for students with disabilities by taking the following actions:

    a. **Database.** Develop a special transportation database for school personnel to complete special transportation forms online and link fields to the SIS. This linkage not only ensures strong communication between schools and the transportation department, but having an online form ensures that the schools get essential information from parents, including address changes, alternative drop-off locations, and emergency contact information.

    b. **Vans.** To reduce reliance on the use of taxis, investigate the costs and benefits of using vans instead. If the use of vans could provide a cost-effective mode of transportation, take the necessary follow-up steps.

    c. **Planning.** To facilitate effective transportation planning, have Student Services forecast program expansions (e.g., private and APS schools) during meetings with Transportation Department personnel to provide them with as much notice as possible and to facilitate cost-effective transportation services.

4. **Student Services & DHS Communication.** To support the provision of nursing services, have Student Services initiate monthly meetings with Department of Health Services representatives. Review and address communication and any other issues to minimize coordination problems relating to the dual agency interaction. Work toward a plan to incorporate nurses and nursing staff in the classroom when able to support health education activities.

5. **Medicaid Reimbursement.** Determine the potential for Medicaid reimbursement for nursing and APS related services. Service logging can be completed and submitted electronically, which can make the process more cost-effective while providing a higher rate of return. For nursing services specifically, work with DHS representatives to identify which agency would re-coup costs for DHS nurses providing services to APS students.

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[197] MAPS, or Making Action Plans, is a planning process used by teams to help students plan for their futures. It is directed and guided by the student and family and is facilitated by the team members.
http://www.wiu.k12.pa.us/cms/lib6/PA14000132/Centricity/Domain/12/MAPS.pdf

[198] See Student-led Individual Education Plans at http://www.pacer.org/tatra/resources/POD/studentlediep.asp.

C. Data by School

School	SWDs	Students w/ 504 Plans	General Ed Students
PK- Grade 12+	15.7%	3.7%	80.5%
Abingdon Elementary School	14.9%	1.7%	83.4%
Arlington Community High School	3.6%	3.6%	92.8%
Arlington Science Focus Elementary	10.1%	2.5%	87.4%
Arlington Traditional Elementary	13.1%	2.4%	84.5%
Ashlawn Elementary School	17.6%	2.9%	79.5%
Barcroft Elementary School	18.1%	1.6%	80.3%
Barrett Elementary School	21.6%	1.6%	76.8%
Campbell Elementary School	23.8%	2.5%	73.6%
Career Center	30.5%	9.5%	59.9%
Carlin Springs Elementary School	18.4%	0.6%	81.0%
Claremont Elementary School	14.1%	2.7%	83.2%
Discovery Elementary School	12.8%	4.4%	82.7%
Drew Model School	17.5%	0.8%	81.7%
Glebe Elementary School	14.2%	2.2%	83.6%
Gunston Middle School	15.4%	4.3%	80.2%
H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program	15.0%	6.0%	79.0%
Hoffman-Boston Elementary School	17.4%	0.2%	82.4%
Jamestown Elementary School	15.5%	2.3%	82.2%
Jefferson Middle School	20.1%	3.2%	76.8%
Kenmore Middle School	21.9%	3.5%	74.6%
Key Elementary School	12.0%	1.5%	86.5%
Langston High School Continuation	29.4%	4.2%	66.4%
Long Branch Elementary School	14.1%	2.1%	83.8%
McKinley Elementary School	9.1%	3.0%	87.9%
Nottingham Elementary School	13.7%	4.5%	81.7%
Oakridge Elementary School	10.0%	0.9%	89.1%
Patrick Henry Elementary School	17.2%	1.4%	81.4%
Randolph Elementary School	18.2%	0.6%	81.2%
Reed Preschool	95.1%		4.9%
Eunice Kennedy Shriver Program	100.0%		
Swanson Middle School	13.6%	5.2%	81.2%
Taylor Elementary School	13.8%	2.7%	83.5%
Tuckahoe Elementary School	13.4%	4.0%	82.5%
Wakefield High School	17.0%	3.9%	79.1%
Washington-Lee High School	13.0%	6.2%	80.8%
Williamsburg Middle School	12.7%	6.4%	80.9%
Yorktown High School	15.0%	8.9%	76.2%

■SWDs ■Students w/ 504 Plans ■General Ed Students

D. APS Staffing Ratios Compared to Other Districts[199][200]

Rank	% IEPs	Special Educators	Paraeducators	Speech/Lang Pathologists	Psychologists	Social Workers	Nurses	Occupational Therapists	Physical Therapists
Percentage of Students with IEPs of Total Enrollment & Students with IEPs to Staff Ratio in Ascending Order									
1	7.7%	6.1	4.3	25.6	30.5	25.6	58.0	64.0	128.0
2	7.7%	6.8	5.3	43.7	54.5	39.6	60.1	75.0	171.4
3	8.6%	8.5	6.1	44.3	64.0	56.0	64.0	103.3	218.7
4	8.7%	9.0	6.5	46.2	77.7	61.4	67.4	112.0	241.1
5	9.0%	9.2	6.6	49.8	79.3	66.7	67.7	125.0	267.0
6	9.1%	9.5	7.1	57.2	89.0	68.9	68.2	139.4	282.4
7	9.5%	9.6	7.2	58.8	89.9	72.9	75.0	140.5	292.9
8	9.7%	9.8	7.5	59.9	93.3	73.1	82.0	142.7	348.5
9	10.1%	9.9	8.3	60.0	99.6	73.3	83.1	147.6	349.7
10	10.3%	10.3	8.3	62.5	100.0	75.0	85.3	153.5	354.0
11	10.4%	10.4	8.5	62.6	100.6	77.7	88.5	153.8	367.4
12	10.5%	10.8	8.6	64.7	101.8	86.0	88.9	156.2	383.8
13	10.6%	10.8	9.7	67.1	109.4	87.1	89.1	163.0	449.1
14	10.9%	10.8	9.7	70.8	110.3	88.8	92.3	170.6	462.0
15	11.0%	11.0	9.8	71.0	110.3	94.7	92.4	172.1	492.0
16	11.2%	11.0	10.2	73.0	112.1	95.6	93.3	173.1	523.2
17	11.3%	11.2	10.3	73.4	112.5	109.9	93.5	179.2	537.7
18	11.3%	11.2	10.4	73.7	114.2	110.8	95.4	186.0	555.7
19	11.4%	11.5	11.1	73.8	116.3	115.5	98.4	186.0	596.0
20	11.6%	11.5	11.6	76.2	117.2	117.2	100.2	198.7	599.0
21	11.7%	11.7	11.7	76.8	120.6	118.0	109.4	204.9	614.4
22	11.7%	11.8	12.2	77.0	122.8	123.5	110.6	209.5	620.2
23	11.7%	11.8	12.2	78.5	122.8	127.4	114.1	210.5	639.4
24	12.0%	11.8	12.3	80.4	122.8	133.1	115.3	218.7	657.1
25	12.1%	11.8	12.5	80.8	124.2	142.2	118.6	225.0	659.3
26	12.1%	12.1	12.5	83.0	124.9	156.3	118.7	231.0	662.3
27	12.3%	12.4	12.6	83.1	126.4	157.1	119.8	239.8	676.2
28	12.7%	12.8	12.6	83.2	127.3	159.7	120.3	241.4	678.5
29	12.7%	12.8	12.9	84.2	129.0	165.0	124.0	258.5	702.7
30	12.9%	12.9	13.0	95.0	129.8	188.1	125.6	264.8	723.7
31	13.1%	13.0	13.0	95.6	136.7	220.5	126.4	299.5	760.8
32	13.3%	13.1	13.2	96.5	137.5	249.0	127.0	309.5	761.8
33	13.5%	13.2	13.2	97.1	140.5	279.7	128.6	325.2	772.0
34	13.7%	13.3	13.3	97.3	142.2	300.0	133.3	325.7	818.6
35	13.8%	13.3	13.5	97.7	144.2	302.5	136.7	331.2	822.3
36	14.0%	13.4	13.7	99.4	149.9	311.2	147.5	331.3	869.1
37	14.0%	13.7	14.1	102.1	151.7	333.4	151.4	365.7	875.0
38	14.0%	13.8	14.1	104.1	154.7	383.9	152.7	367.4	885.0
39	14.1%	14.1	14.4	104.3	159.3	486.8	162.4	374.0	900.0
40	14.1%	14.2	13.7	104.7	165.6	494.7	164.9	384.0	903.3
41	14.1%	14.2	14.4	105.4	169.4	524.5	172.6	387.8	953.0
42	14.1%	14.3	15.0	106.4	177.6	651.3	184.3	407.5	991.1
43	14.4%	14.3	15.3	107.6	178.7	672.7	185.9	412.5	1011.3
44	14.5%	14.8	15.9	110.7	194.2	704.7	194.2	415.8	1016.4
45	14.7%	15.2	16.4	111.1	198.2	1395.0	216.7	416.8	1034.4
46	15.0%	15.4	16.6	111.1	208.3	2287.0	220.0	424.3	1100.0
47	15.1%	15.7	16.7	111.5	209.8	2981.0	241.1	431.0	1104.3
48	15.3%	16.0	17.3	111.9	212.9		244.3	438.5	1109.2
49	15.3%	16.3	17.5	114.4	218.7		244.7	439.7	1133.6
50	15.5%	16.5	17.6	114.9	225.0		265.3	442.9	1169.3
51	15.8%	16.8	18.4	115.9	231.1		386.0	469.9	1221.6
52	16.1%	17.1	19.0	127.4	233.0		397.4	473.0	1262.0
53	16.2%	17.3	19.0	130.1	240.3		402.9	494.5	1309.0
54	16.2%	18.1	19.3	132.7	242.6		697.0	498.2	1326.0
55	16.6%	18.2	19.4	133.4	265.2		699.6	524.5	1444.7
56	17.2%	18.3	20.2	136.1	285.9		833.5	546.9	1487.1
57	17.4%	19.5	20.6	136.5	286.8		2981.0	550.0	1630.0
58	17.6%	19.8	20.8	139.4	295.0		3245.0	615.6	1650.0
59	17.8%	20.3	21.1	139.8	299.5		3313.0	643.3	1684.3
60	18.2%	20.4	22.1	144.0	318.5			693.4	1739.7
61	18.3%	20.6	22.7	157.1	336.9			706.7	1785.6
62	18.8%	21.0	23.9	171.1	376.4			712.6	1848.6
63	18.8%	21.4	25.3	191.4	395.8			772.0	2023.0
64	20.0%	21.9	25.3	262.3	422.1			809.2	2186.1
65	20.0%	22.6	25.4	264.7				1028.8	2473.5
66	20.8%	23.5	26.3	313.9				1512.5	2573.2
67	20.9%	23.7	26.3	340.3				1684.3	2657.5
68	20.9%	23.8	30.9	410.0				1987.3	5962.0
69	21.0%	28.0	32.6	596.2					
70	24.8%	36.1	55.2						
Avg.	14.0%	14.5	14.9	118.6	169.3	230.6	175.6	405.9	1022.2

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[199] Sue Gamm, Esq. compiled and continues to maintain this list. She grants PCG permission to use the data in reports.

[200] Districts collect and report data using different methods and different points of time, therefore student headcounts and staffing totals may vary. APS student headcount data obtained from 2016-17 VDOE School Quality Reports: http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/

APS Staffing Ratios: Special Education Teacher, Paraprofessional, Speech-Language therapist, and Psychologist

Ratios for Special Educator, Paraeducator, Speech/Lang, and Psychologist	State	Total Enrollment	Incidence		Special Educator			Paraeducator			Speech/Lang			Psychologist		
			% SpEd	SpEd Enr	Number	Sped	All	Number	Sped	All	Number	Sped	All	Number	Sped	All
Agawam Public Schools	MA	4,347	15.1%	656	39	16.8	111.5	100	6.6	43.5	15	43.7	289.8	3	218.7	1449.0
Alexandria City Public Schools	VA	15,105	11.6%	1,754	162	10.8	93.2	151	11.6	100.0	28	62.6	539.5	20	89.0	766.8
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	43,443	11.4%	4,950	431	11.5	100.8	224	22.1	193.9	65	76.2	668.4	22	225.0	1974.7
Anchorage School Dist	AK	48,154	14.1%	6,779	716.8	9.5	67.2	786.4	8.6	61.2	65	104.3	740.8	44.7	151.7	1077.3
Arlington Pub Sch	VA	26,975	14.1%	3,811	415.7	9.2	64.9	270	14.1	99.9	36.6	104.1	737.0	37.9	100.6	711.7
Austin Pub S D	TX	84,676	9.5%	8,062	772.5	10.4	109.6	824	9.8	102.8	70.5	114.4	1201.1	34.6	233.0	2447.3
Baltimore City Publ Sch	MD	82,824	15.5%	12,866	1,121	11.5	73.9	620	20.8	133.6	92	139.8	900.3	NA	NA	NA
Baltimore County P Sch	MD	107,033	11.3%	12,127	1025.4	11.8	104.4	2305	5.3	46.4	187.5	64.7	570.8	85.3	142.2	1254.8
Boston Public Schools	MA	54,966	21.0%	11,534	1200	9.6	45.8	800	14.4	68.7	147	78.5	373.9	48	240.3	1145.1
Bellevue SD	WA	18,883	10.3%	1,947	82.7	23.5	228.3	118.6	16.4	159.2	17.4	111.9	1085.2	17.3	112.5	1091.5
Bridgeport	CT	20,300	12.9%	2,618	204	12.8	99.5	254	10.3	79.9	25	104.7	812.0	33	79.3	615.2
Buffalo Public Schools	NY	46,583	16.6%	7,744	753	10.3	61.9	439	17.6	106.1	109	71.0	427.4	62	124.9	751.3
Cambridge Publ Schools	MA	6,000	20.0%	1,200	176	6.8	34.1	103	11.7	58.3	20	60.0	300.0	22	54.5	272.7
Carpentersville	IL	19,844	15.8%	3,139	227	13.8	87.4	380	8.3	52.2	43	73.0	461.5	28	112.1	708.7
Chicago Public Schools	IL	397,092	13.7%	54,376	4,649	11.7	85.4	4,228	12.9	93.9	390	139.4	1018.2	261	208.3	1521.4
Cincinnati Pub Schools	OH	51,431	17.4%	8,928	457	19.5	112.5	801	11.1	64.2	62	144.0	829.5	57.7	154.7	891.4
Clark Cty School Dist	NV	309,476	10.4%	32,167	2,247	14.3	137.7	1,346	23.9	229.9	299	107.6	1035.0	180	178.7	1719.3
Cleve Hts-UnivHtsCty	OH	6,000	18.3%	1,100	83	13.3	72.3	58	19.0	103.4	7	157.1	857.1	8	137.5	750.0
Compton Unified SD	CA	26,703	11.2%	2,981	126	23.7	211.9	118	25.3	226.3	5	596.2	5340.6	14	212.9	1907.4
DeKalb 428	IL	6,249	14.1%	879	58	15.2	107.7	205	4.3	30.5	9	97.7	694.3	7.5	117.2	833.2
DesMoines Public Schls	IA	31,654	15.3%	4,854	493	9.8	64.2	358.5	13.5	88.3	37.3	130.1	848.6	11.5	422.1	2752.5
D.C. Public Schools	D.C	48,991	17.6%	8,603	669	12.9	73.2	653	13.2	75.0	90	95.6	544.3	78	110.3	628.1
Davenport Comm Sch	IA	15,302	12.1%	1,857	188	9.9	81.4	287	6.5	53.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Deer Valley Unified SD	AZ	36,086	9.1%	3,289	190	17.3	189.9	229	14.4	157.6	49	67.1	736.4	108	30.5	334.1
Denver Public Schools	CO	78,352	11.7%	9,142	592	15.4	132.4	528	17.3	148.4	94	97.3	833.5	98	93.3	799.5
ESD 112	WA	13,764	14.4%	1,987	55	36.1	250.3	158	12.6	87.1	20	99.4	688.2	12	165.6	1147.0
Elgin U-46	IL	40,525	13.1%	5,304	252.8	21.0	160.3	288.5	18.4	140.5	71.9	73.8	563.6	20	265.2	2026.3
Everett Pub Schools	WA	6,100	17.2%	1,049	74	14.2	82.4	51	20.6	119.6	4	262.3	1525.0	5	209.8	1220.0
Fort Worth	TX	79,885	7.7%	6,144	520	11.8	153.6	450	13.7	177.5	73	84.2	1094.3	31	198.2	2576.9
Greenville County	SC	70,282	14.1%	9,894	463	21.4	151.8	376	26.3	186.9	93	106.4	755.7	25	395.8	2811.3
Houston Indepen SD	TX	200,568	8.7%	17,489	1,625	10.8	123.4	1,145	15.3	175.2	158	110.7	1269.4	NA	NA	NA
Kalamazoo Pub Schools	MI	12,100	13.8%	1,667	70	23.8	172.9	79	21.1	153.2	15	111.1	806.7	NA	NA	NA
Kent Pub Schools	WA	27,196	11.3%	3,069	148.7	20.6	182.9	318	9.7	85.5	32.3	95.0	842.0	25	122.8	1087.8
Lake Washington	WA	26,864	11.7%	3,145	155.1	20.3	173.2	241.5	13.0	111.2	32.6	96.5	824.0	24.7	127.3	1087.6
Kyrene School District	AZ	17,910	8.6%	1,544	141	11.0	127.0	124	12.5	144.4	27	57.2	663.3	14	110.3	1279.3
Lakota Local	OH	18,500	9.7%	1,800	126	14.3	146.8	120	15.0	154.2	39	46.2	474.4	18	100.0	1027.8
LAUSD	CA	521,880	12.7%	66,236	5,331	12.4	97.9	6,466	10.2	80.7	496	133.4	1051.2	514	129.0	1016.3
Lincoln	NE	1,060	12.1%	128	21	6.1	50.5	21	6.1	50.5	5	25.6	212.0	2	64.0	530.0
Madison Pub Schls	WI	27,185	14.0%	3,808	347	11.0	78.3	448	8.5	60.7	86	44.3	316.1	49	77.7	554.8
Marlborough Pub Sch	NJ	4,835	24.8%	1,198	141	8.5	34.3	115	10.4	42.0	7	171.1	690.7	4	299.5	1208.8
Memphis City	TN	110,863	15.0%	16,637	912	18.2	121.6	655	25.4	169.3	53	313.9	2091.8	58	286.8	1911.4
Miami-Dade	FL	376,264	10.6%	40,012	2,500	16.0	150.5	1,226	32.6	306.9	209	191.4	1800.3	206	194.2	1826.5
Milwaukee	WI	78,533	20.9%	16,406	1281	12.8	61.3	988	16.6	79.5	169	97.1	464.7	136	120.6	577.4
Montgomery Cty Sch	AL	146,812	11.7%	17,226	1,588	10.8	92.5	1,398	12.3	105.0	293	58.8	501.1	97	177.6	1513.5
Naperville 203	IL	17982	11.0%	1,978	150	13.2	119.9	237	8.3	75.9	33	59.9	544.9	22	89.9	817.4
New Bedford	MA	12,692	20.9%	2,655	204	13.0	62.2	205	13.0	61.9	26	102.1	488.2	9	295.0	1410.2
Northern Valley RHSD	NJ	2,303	17.8%	410	28	14.6	82.3	30	13.7	76.8	1	410.0	2303.0	3	136.7	767.7
Oak Park Sch Dist 97	IL	5,400	16.2%	875	78	11.2	69.2	90	9.7	60.0	14	62.5	385.7	8	109.4	675.0
N. Chicago (in Dist.)	IL	3,803	16.1%	614	39	15.7	97.5	27	22.7	140.9	8	76.8	475.4	5	122.8	760.6
Oakland Unified SD	CA	33,312	16.2%	5,401	404	13.4	82.5	175	30.9	190.4	47	114.9	708.8	43.5	124.2	765.8
Pittsburgh Pub Schools	PA	28,000	18.2%	5,096	359	14.2	78.0	252	20.2	111.1	40	127.4	700.0	16	318.5	1750.0
Portland Public Schools	OR	46,596	14.0%	6,513	355	18.3	131.3	535	12.2	87.1	92	70.8	506.5	56	116.3	832.1
Prince William County Schools	VA	90,930	10.1%	9,148	774	11.8	117.5	362	25.3	251.2	67	136.5	1357.2	32	285.9	2841.6
Providence	RI	23,695	18.8%	4,460	340	13.1	69.7	339	13.2	69.9	40	111.5	592.4	28	159.3	846.3
Renton	WA	14,343	14.7%	2,108	129	16.3	111.2	294	7.2	48.8	20	105.4	717.2	15	140.5	956.2
Rockford Pub S	IL	28,973	14.0%	4,065	336	12.1	86.2	334	12.2	86.7	49	83.0	591.3	24	169.4	1207.2
Round Rock	TX	43,000	7.7%	3,313	369	9.0	116.5	171	19.4	251.5	41	80.8	1048.8	29	114.2	1482.8
San Diego Unified SD	CA	132,500	12.3%	16,300	1,100	14.8	120.5	1,300	12.5	101.9	196	83.2	676.0	129	126.4	1027.1
Saugus	MA	3,012	15.3%	462	28	16.5	107.6	29	15.9	103.9	6	77.0	502.0	NA	NA	NA
Sch Dist of Philadelphia	PA	168,181	20.0%	33,686	1,535	21.9	109.6	610	55.2	275.7	99	340.3	1698.8	100	336.9	1681.8
Scottsdale	AZ	26,544	10.9%	2,891	246	11.8	107.9	230	12.6	115.4	39.4	73.4	673.7	28.4	101.8	934.6
Shelby County (Memphis)	TN	114760	12.7%	14,556	852	17.1	134.7	768	19.0	149.4	55	264.7	2086.5	60	242.6	1912.7
St. Paul	MN	38,086	18.8%	7,152	523	13.7	72.8	536	13.3	71.1	97	73.7	392.6	19	376.4	2004.5
Sun Prairie Area S Dist	WI	6,656	10.5%	697	62	11.2	107.4	93	7.5	71.6	14	49.8	475.4	7	99.6	950.9
Tacoma Pub Schl	WA	32,412	12.0%	3,894	172.5	22.6	187.9	223	17.5	145.3	33.6	115.9	964.6	27	144.2	1200.4
Tucson Unified SD	AZ	56,000	14.5%	8,092	409	19.8	136.9	419	19.3	133.7	61	132.7	918.0	54	149.9	1037.0
Washoe County Dist	NV	63,310	13.5%	8,551	472	18.1	134.1	325	26.3	194.8	77	111.1	822.2	37	231.1	1711.1
Williamson Cty Schl	TN	31,292	9.0%	2,824	213	13.3	146.9	400	7.1	78.2	34	83.1	920.4	23	122.8	1360.5
West Aurora SD	IL	12,725	13.3%	1,688	120	14.1	106.0	101	16.7	126.0	21	80.4	606.0	13	129.8	978.8
Worcester	MA	24,825	20.8%	5,172	254	20.4	97.7	366	14.1	67.8	38	136.1	653.3	NA	NA	NA
Averages			14%		15	111		15	116		119	874		169	1246	

APS Staffing Ratios: Social Worker, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy

Ratios for Social Workers, Nurses, OTs & PTs	State	Total Student Enrollment	Total Special Ed	Social Worker Number	Ratio To: SpEd	Ratio To: All	Nursing Number	Ratio To: SpEd	Ratio To: All	Occupational Therapy Number	Ratio SpEd	Physical Therapy Number	Ratio SpEd
Agawam Public Schools	MA	4,347	656	NA	NA	NA	8	82.0	543.4	3	218.7	3	218.7
Alexandria City Public Schools	VA	15,105	1,754	24	73.1	629.4	19	92.3	795.0	4	438.5	1.5	1169.3
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	48,154	6,779	NA	NA	NA	112.8	60.1	426.9	21.9	309.5	7.8	869.1
Anchorage School Dist	AK	43,443	4,950	30	165.0	1448.1	58	85.3	749.0	12	412.5	3	1650.0
Arlington Pub Sch	VA	26,975	3,811	32.3	118.0	835.1	NA	NA	NA	24.4	156.2	5.8	657.1
Austin Pub S D	TX	84,676	8,062	21	383.9	4032.2	68	118.6	1245.2	19	424.3	13	620.2
Baltimore City Publ Sch	MD	82,824	12,866	193	66.7	429.1	78	164.9	1061.8	20	643.3	5	2573.2
Baltimore County P Sch	MD	107,033	12,127	48.7	249.0	2197.8	179.8	67.4	595.3	65.2	186.0	27	449.1
Boston Public Schools	MA	18,883	1,947	4	486.8	4720.8	13.2	147.5	1430.5	5.3	367.4	5.3	367.4
Bellevue SD	WA	54,966	11534	NA	NA	NA	100	115.3	549.7	67	172.1	17	678.5
Bridgeport	CT	20,300	2,618	38	68.9	534.2	28	93.5	725.0	7	374.0	2	1309.0
Buffalo Public Schools	NY	46,583	7744	48.5	159.7	960.5	NA	NA	NA	75	103.3	29	267.0
Cambridge Publ Schools	MA	6,000	1,200	16	75.0	375.0	0	NA	NA	16	75.0	7	171.4
Carpentersville	IL	19,844	3,139	36.5	86.0	543.7	27.5	114.1	721.6	22	142.7	6	523.2
Chicago Public Schools	IL	404,151	50,566	355.7	142.2	1136.2	334	151.4	1210.0	115	439.7	35	1444.7
Cincinnati Pub Schools	OH	51,431	8,928	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	469.9	5	1785.6
Clark Cty School Dist	NV	309,476	32,167	NA	NA	NA	173	185.9	1788.9	68	473.0	29	1109.2
Cleve Hts-UnivHtsCty	OH	6,000	1,100	7	157.1	857.1	5	220.0	1200.0	2	550.0	1	1100.0
Compton Unified SD	CA	26,703	2981	1	2981.0	26703.0	1	2981.0	26703.0	1.5	1987.3	0.5	5962.0
DeKalb 428	IL	6,249	879	8	109.9	781.1	7	125.6	892.7	3.4	258.5	1.3	676.2
DesMoines Public Schls	IA	31,654	4,854	25.8	188.1	1226.9	58.4	83.1	542.0	7	693.4	4.8	1011.3
D.C. Public Schools	D.C	48,991	8,603	90	95.6	544.3	127	67.7	385.8	48	179.2	16	537.7
Davenport Comm Sch	IA	15,302	1,857	NA	NA	NA	7	265.3	2186.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Deer Valley Unified SD	AZ	36,086	3,289	NA	NA	NA	37	88.9	975.3	19	173.1	4	822.3
Denver Public Schools	CO	78,352	9,142	74	123.5	1058.8	77	118.7	1017.6	25	365.7	12	761.8
ESD 112	WA	40,525	5,304	56	94.7	723.7	59.5	89.1	681.1	25.2	210.5	4	1326.0
Elgin U-46	IL	13,764	1,987	NA	NA	NA	5	397.4	2752.8	6	331.2	3	662.3
Everett Pub Schools	WA	6,100	1,049	2	524.5	3050.0	11	95.4	554.5	2	524.5	3	349.7
Fort Worth	TX	79,885	6,144	NA	NA	NA	106	58.0	753.6	16	384.0	10	614.4
Greenville County	SC	70,282	9,894	20	494.7	3514.1	132	75.0	532.4	14	706.7	4	2473.5
Houston Indepen SD	TX	200,568	17,489	26	672.7	7714.2	25	699.6	8022.7	17	1028.8	8	2186.1
Kalamazoo Pub Schools	MI	12,100	1,667	5	333.4	2420.0	2	833.5	6050.0	4	416.8	3	555.7
Kent Pub Schools	WA	27,196	3069	2.2	1395.0	12361.8	NA	NA	NA	12.8	239.8	4.8	639.4
Lake Washington	WA	17,910	1,544	NA	NA	NA	4	386.0	4477.5	2	772.0	2	772.0
Kyrene School District	AZ	26864	3145	NA	NA	NA	23.6	133.3	1138.3	19.3	163.0	3.3	953.0
Lakota Local	OH	18,500	1,800	6	300.0	3083.3	14	128.6	1321.4	8	225.0	2	900.0
LAUSD	CA	521,880	66,236	94	704.7	5552.5	164	402.9	3174.3	250	264.8	45	1487.1
Lincoln	NE	1,060	128	5	25.6	212.0	2	64.0	530.0	2	64.0	1	128.0
Madison Pub Schls	WI	27,185	3,808	68	56.0	399.8	38	100.2	715.4	34	112.0	13	292.9
Marlborough Pub Sch	NJ	4,835	1,198	9	133.1	537.2	10	119.8	483.5	4	299.5	2	599.0
Memphis City	TN	110,863	16,637	55	302.5	2015.7	68	244.7	1630.3	11	1512.5	9	1848.6
Miami-Dade	FL	376,264	40,012	NA	NA	NA	206	194.2	1826.5	65	615.6	23	1739.7
Milwaukee	WI	146,812	17,226	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	112	153.8	61	282.4
Montgomery Cty Sch	AL	78533	16,406	140	117.2	561.0	101	162.4	777.6	30	546.9	13	1262.0
Naperville 203	IL	17982	1978	27	73.3	666.0	29	68.2	620.1	4	494.5	3	659.3
New Bedford	MA	12,692	2,655	67	39.6	189.4	30	88.5	423.1	11	241.4	3	885.0
Northern Valley RHSD	NJ	2,303	410	3.7	110.8	622.4	3	136.7	767.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Oak Park Sch Dist 97	IL	3,803	614	10	61.4	380.3	NA	NA	NA	3.6	170.6	1.6	383.8
N. Chicago (in Dist.)	IL	5,400	875	12	72.9	450.0	8	109.4	675.0	7	125.0	1	875.0
Oakland Unified SD	CA	28,000	5,096	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pittsburgh Pub Schools	PA	33,312	5315	19	279.7	1753.3	30.8	172.6	1081.6	12	442.9	2	2657.5
Portland Public Schools	OR	46,596	6,513	10	651.3	4659.6	NA	NA	NA	20	325.7	9	723.7
Prince William County Schools	VA	90,930	9,148	4	2287.0	22732.5	NA	NA	NA	22	415.8	9	1016.4
Providence	RI	23,695	4460	35	127.4	677.0	NA	NA	NA	11.5	387.8	4.5	991.1
Renton	WA	14,343	2,108	0	NA	NA	17	124.0	843.7	15	140.5	3	702.7
Rockford Pub S	IL	28,973	4,065	26	156.3	1114.3	32	127.0	905.4	12.5	325.2	4.5	903.3
Round Rock	TX	43,000	3,313	NA	NA	NA	1	3313.0	43000.0	10	331.3	3	1104.3
San Diego Unified SD	CA	132,500	16,300	NA	NA	NA	129	126.4	1027.1	40	407.5	10	1630.0
Saugus	MA	3,012	462	4	115.5	753.0	5	92.4	602.4	2	231.0	1	462.0
Sch Dist of Philadelphia	PA	168,181	33,686	NA	NA	NA	280	120.3	600.6	20	1684.3	20	1684.3
Scottsdale	AZ	26,544	2,891	NA	NA	NA	31	93.3	856.3	13.8	209.5	3.8	760.8
Shelby County (Memphis)	TN	114760	14556	66	220.5	1738.8	79	184.3	1452.7	29.22	498.2	12.84	1133.6
St. Paul	MN	38,086	7,152	92	77.7	414.0	33	216.7	1154.1	36	198.7	12	596.0
Sun Prairie Area S Dist	WI	6,656	697	8	87.1	832.0	1	697.0	6656.0	5	139.4	2	348.5
Tacoma Pub Schl	WA	32,412	3,894	NA	NA	NA	1.2	3245.0	27010.0	19	204.9	11	354.0
Tucson Unified SD	AZ	56,000	8,092	26	311.2	2153.8	53	152.7	1056.6	10	809.2	4	2023.0
Washoe County Dist	NV	63,310	8,551	NA	NA	NA	35	244.3	1808.9	12	712.6	7	1221.6
Williamson Cty Schl	TN	12,725	1688	19	88.8	669.7	7	241.1	1817.9	11	153.5	7	241.1
West Aurora SD	IL	30,942	4,093	NA	NA	NA	37	110.6	836.3	22	186.0	5	818.6
Worcester	MA	24,825	5,172	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	431.0	5	1034.4
Averages					333	2786		332	3006		410		1030

E. Survey Protocols

Special Education Survey - APS Staff

PCG Education has been contracted by Arlington Public Schools (APS) to conduct an evaluation of the district's Special Education (IEP) services, Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) services, services provided to students with Section 504 plans, and the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS). The purpose of the evaluation is to identify program strengths and areas for improvement.

Your answers are confidential. Confidential means that PCG staff have access to information about who took a given survey, but this information is never available to anyone at APS. Survey results will be aggregated—that is, individual survey results will be combined together and presented as a group. For any groups of less than 10 respondents, responses will not be reported at the group level but will still be included in district-level results.

The participation link emailed to you is unique to you and will allow you to start the survey now, and complete it at a later dater (up to the survey closing date).

Thank you for participating in this survey; your comments are important

Sec
1.1 School you serve

( ) Abingdon Elementary School	( ) Claremont Elementary School	( ) Kenmore Middle School	( ) Stratford Program
( ) Arlington Community High School	( ) Discovery Elementary School	( ) Key Elementary School	( ) Swanson Middle School
( ) Arlington Science Focus Elementary	( ) Drew Model School	( ) Langston High School Continuation	( ) Taylor Elementary School
( ) Arlington Career Center (Tech, Academy, HILT, PEP)	( ) Glebe Elementary School	( ) Long Branch Elementary School	( ) Tuckahoe Elementary School
( ) Arlington Traditional Elementary	( ) Glebe Elementary School	( ) McKinley Elementary School	( ) Wakefield High School
( ) Ashlawn Elementary School	( ) Gunston Middle School	( ) New Directions	( ) Washington-Lee High School
( ) Barcroft Elementary School	( ) H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program	( ) Nottingham Elementary School	( ) Williamsburg Middle School

( ) Barrett Elementary School	( ) Hoffman-Boston Elementary School	( ) Oakridge Elementary School	( ) Yorktown High School
( ) Campbell Elementary School	( ) Jamestown Elementary School	( ) Patrick Henry Elementary School	
( ) Carlin Springs Elementary School	( ) Jefferson Middle School	( ) Randolph Elementary School	

1.2 School level you serve (select all that apply)

[ ] Pre-Kindergarten

[ ] Elementary (K–5)

[ ] Middle School (6–8)

[ ] High School (9-12+)

1.3 Which of the following best describes your position?

( ) Administrator

( ) Special education teacher

( ) Classroom teacher

( ) ESOL/HILT teacher

( ) Elective/specials teacher (PE, art, music, FLES, CTE, librarian, etc.)

( ) Instructional coaches (literacy coach, math coach, reading specialist, RTG, etc.)

( ) Counselor

( ) Paraprofessional (teacher assistant, including COTA, PTA)

( ) Special Education/Student Services itinerant staff (special education coordinators, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse counselors, behavior specialists, autism specialists)

( ) Related Service Provider (OT, PT, SLP, Therapist)

( ) Other: : _____

1.3a What is your content area (select all that apply):

[ ] Elementary classroom (core content)

[ ] English Language arts

[ ] Mathematics

[ ] Social Studies

[ ] Science

[ ] Arts

[ ] Career and Technical Education (CTE)

[ ] Health and Physical Education (PE)

[ ] World Languages

1.4 Do you work with students in the following populations

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1.4a Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)	( )	( )	( )
1.4b Students with intervention plans through Intervention Assistance Team (IAT)	( )	( )	( )
1.4c Students with intervention plans through the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS)	( )	( )	( )
1.4d Students with 504 Plans	( )	( )	( )

Section 2 - Your Experiences
Special Education Processes and Services

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
2.1 My school delivers highly effective education programs and services for students with IEPs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.2 Before making a referral to special education, the school makes every attempt to meet the unique needs of students either through the ATSS framework or through the IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.3 If a student is dually identified as an English learner and having a disability, an ESOL/HILT teacher is consulted and participates in meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.4 The ESOL/HILT checklist is utilized in the referral process for English learners.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.5 The ESOL/HILT checklist is helpful to me in making decisions or plans for students who are struggling.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.6 Our school has a well-defined and systematic process for implementing interventions prior to referral.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
2.7 The evaluations conducted through the special education process are sufficiently comprehensive to identify students' specific strengths and needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.8 The results of special education evaluations are shared with me in ways that provide meaningful insights into students' educational needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.9 The IEP process in the school involves general and special education teachers as equal partners in making recommendations.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.10 Students with IEPs in the school receive instruction and supplementary aids and services in general education classes to the maximum extent appropriate.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
2.11 Students receiving special education services in self-contained classes who take Standards of Learning (SOL)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

assessments receive instruction aligned to the Standards of Learning.					
2.12 My students' IEPs include goals and objectives that are aligned with the general education curriculum.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.13 The special education/related services, accommodations, and/or modifications identified in my students' IEPs are provided as written.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.14 The school's report card (or other progress report) effectively communicates the progress of students with IEPs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.14 There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring in this school—there is a schedule and methods/tools for monitoring the progress of students receiving special education services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication and Support

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know

2.16 There is effective communication between general education and special education staff about the needs and progress of students receiving special education services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.17 There is effective communication between general education and related services staff (OT, PT, Speech/Language, etc.) about the needs and progress of students receiving services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.18 Enough time is available for general and special education teachers to collaborate in planning and delivering instruction to students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.19 General education teachers follow established standards for co-teaching or collaborative instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.20 Special education teachers follow established standards for co-teaching or collaborative instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
2.21 General education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping the students with IEPs in their classrooms.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.22 I receive the support I need from the administration when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with IEPs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.23 Paraprofessionals are effectively utilized to support the learning and progress of students with disabilities.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
2.24 The training sessions I attended have been helpful to me in supporting the learning of students with disabilities.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.25a APS provides effective transition services from Preschool to Kindergarten	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.25b APS provides effective transition services from Elementary School to Middle School	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.25c APS provides effective transition services from Middle School to High School	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.25d APS provides effective transition services in planning for transition to post-secondary education, employment, independent living, and community living options	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication with Parents and Parent Involvement

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
2.26 Parents are given the opportunity to participate as full partners during meetings to discuss their child's educational needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.27 Parents are encouraged to participate in making decisions about their children's educational programs and services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.28 The school effectively responds to the needs and concerns of parents of children with IEPs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Support for Instruction and Services for Students in Special Education

	All	Most	Some	None	Don't Know
2.29 Teachers in this school have high expectations for students with IEPs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.30 General and special education teachers have sufficient time to collaborate with each other.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.31 Our school has sufficient guidance in the selection and use of intensive reading interventions for students reading below grade level.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.32 Our school has sufficient guidance in the use of positive behavior supports for students with behavioral issues.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.33 General education teachers have sufficient professional development on special education and teaching students with disabilities.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.34 General education teachers have sufficient professional development on differentiating instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.35 Teaching assistants have sufficient professional development on providing instructional interventions to students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.36 Teaching assistants have sufficient professional development on providing positive behavior interventions to students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.37 Our school has sufficient guidance and support on implementing a systematic IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.38 There is sufficient communication and collaboration between general education teachers and parents to help special education students make an effective transition into our school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.39 There is sufficient communication and collaboration between special education teachers and parents to help special education students make an effective transition into our school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Conflict Resolution

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.40 Have there been disagreements between the parents and the school regarding special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation for any students with IEPs that you work with?	( )	( )	( )

For the following statements, please reflect on your most recent experience with a parent disagreement at your school or APS..

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All

2.40a APS representatives treated families with respect.	( )	( )	( )
2.40b APS representatives treated me with respect.	( )	( )	( )
2.40c Conflicts were efficiently and effectively resolved.	( )	( )	( )

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
2.40c I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.40d If the disagreement was escalated to the district, I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Sec
ATSS and IAT...

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.1 I am familiar with the academic interventions at my school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.2 I am familiar with the behavior/ social-emotional interventions at my school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.3 My school implements highly effective reading interventions.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.4 My school implements highly effective math interventions.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.5 My school implements highly effective social emotional and behavioral interventions.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.6 My school consistently follows a well-defined and systematic Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.7 There is a consistent approach to progress monitoring at my school with identified methods, tools, and frequency.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know

3.8 Students unable to read grade level text are routinely provided differentiated instruction for the core curriculum.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.9 My school conducts follow-up IAT meetings to discuss student progress and determine next steps.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.10 Academic assessment data is used to determine the type of interventions students need.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.11 I feel knowledgeable of what the ATSS framework is.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.12 I know where to access resources, trainings and other related materials to support the needs of my students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.13 During my professional learning community (PLC) or collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings, my team uses the Arlington tiered system of support (ATSS) framework to analyze student data, determine strengths and areas of need, and respond to the data.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.14 My PLC or CLT monitors the progress of students who are receiving interventions on a regular basis.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.15 My PLC/CLT includes special education teachers to help review data for students with special needs and inclusively plan for the needs of all students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.16 My PLC or CLT uses data to determine when to intervene immediately when a student needs additional support.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.17 The intervention block or flexible instructional blocks of time at my school are able to address the social emotional needs of students.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication and Support.

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
3.18 There is ongoing communication among staff who directly work with a student involved in the IAT process regarding his/her needs and progress.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.19 My school's administration provides support to staff when facing challenges related to teaching of students involved with the IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
3.20 The training sessions I have attended on various interventions have been helpful to me in supporting the learning of students involved in the IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication with Parents and Parent Involvement

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
3.21 Parents are encouraged to participate as partners during IAT meetings to discuss their children's educational needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.22 Parents are respected, equal partners in making decisions about their children's educational programs and services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.23 The school effectively responds to the needs and concerns of parents involved with the IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All	Most	Some	None	Don't Know
3.24 Teachers in this school have high expectations for students involved with the IAT process.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.25 General education teachers have access to focused professional development on differentiating instruction.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Conflict Resolution

	Yes	No	Don't Know
3.26 Have there been disagreements between the parents and the school regarding the educational programs provided to the students that you work with who receive interventions?	( )	( )	( )

For the following statements, please reflect on your most recent experience with a parent disagreement at your school or APS. .

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All
3.26a APS representatives treated families with respect.	( )	( )	( )
3.26b APS representatives treated me with respect.	( )	( )	( )
3.26c Conflicts were efficiently and effectively resolved.	( )	( )	( )

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
3.26d I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.26e I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 4 - Your Experiences with Section 504 Supports
Section 504 Services and Processes

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know

4.1 My school delivers highly effective supports for students with Section 504 Plans.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.2 My school consistently follows a well-defined and systematic process for implementing interventions (when appropriate) prior to referral for a Section 504 evaluation/supports.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.3 The evaluations conducted through the Section 504 process are sufficiently comprehensive to identify students' specific strengths and needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.4 The results of Section 504 evaluations are shared with me in ways that provide meaningful insights into students' educational needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.5 The Section 504 process in the school involves parents and school staff as partners in making recommendations.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.6 Parents of students with Section 504 Plans are encouraged to participate in making decisions about their children's educational programs and supports.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.7 The services and/or accommodations in my students' Section 504 Plans are implemented with fidelity.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Communication and Support

	Always	Most of the time	Sometime	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
4.8 There is sufficient communication between teachers, nurses, and other staff to implement Section 504 Plans.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.9 There is effective communication and collaboration among staff at my school and parents when students with Section 504 Plans transition from one level to another (for example, elementary to middle, middle to high, high to postsecondary).	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.10 General education teachers are provided with sufficient information and support for helping the students with Section 504 Plans in their classrooms.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.11 My school's administration provides support to staff when facing challenges related to teaching or serving students with Section 504 Plans.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
4.12 The district provides useful professional development related to meeting the needs of students with Section 504 Plans.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
4.13 The training sessions I have attended have been helpful to me in supporting the learning of students with Section 504 Plans.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Conflict Resolution

	Yes	No	Don't Know
4.14 Have there been disagreements between the parents and the school regarding 504 eligibility, placement, goals, services or implementation for students that you work with who have Section 504 Plans?	( )	( )	( )

For the following statements, please reflect on your most recent experience with a parent disagreement at your school or APS. .

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at all
4.14a APS representatives treated families with respect.	( )	( )	( )
4.14b APS representatives treated me with respect.	( )	( )	( )

4.14e Conflicts were efficiently and effectively resolved.	( )	( )	( )

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
4.14c I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.14d I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 5 - Professional Development Needs
5.1 Please select up to five professional development topics you are most interested in.

[ ] Differentiated instruction

[ ] Using data for decision-making

[ ] Social skills

[ ] Progress monitoring

[ ] Behavioral strategies

[ ] Strategies for working with dually identified (English learners with disabilities)

[ ] Strategies for working with twice exceptional (Gifted students with disabilities)

[ ] Writing IEP goals

[ ] ADHD

[ ] Autism

[ ] Transition planning

[ ] Section 504 child find

[ ] Section 504 evaluations

[ ] Section 504 Plan development

[ ] Section 504 in general

[ ] Other: _____

Thank

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

APS Survey of Parents of Children with IEPs

PCG Education has been contracted by Arlington Public Schools to conduct an evaluation of the district's special education program. If you have more than one child with an IEP, please complete a separate survey for EACH of your children.

PCG guarantees confidentiality in several ways. PCG staff have access to individual survey responses, but this information is not connected to anyone's name and is never available to APS staff. Survey results will be summarized at the district level and also by group (for example, by grade level). If there are fewer than 10 responses from any particular group, those responses will not be reported at the group level, but will still be included in the district-level results.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your comments are important.

Section 1 – About You and Your Child

1.1 Your Child's Age

( ) 2   ( ) 3-5   ( ) 6-10   ( ) 11-13   ( ) 14-17   ( ) 18-22

1.2 Please identify the grade your child is currently enrolled:

( ) Pre-Kindergarten   ( ) 4th   ( ) 9th

( ) Kindergarten   ( ) 5th   ( ) 10th

( ) 1st   ( ) 6th   ( ) 11th

( ) 2nd   ( ) 7th   ( ) 12th+

( ) 3rd   ( ) 8th

1.3 Please identify the school your child currently attends:

( ) Abingdon Elementary School

( ) Arlington Community High School

( ) Arlington Science Focus Elementary

( ) Arlington Career Center (Tech, Academy, HILT, PEP)

( ) Arlington Traditional Elementary

( ) Ashlawn Elementary School

( ) Barcroft Elementary School

( ) Barrett Elementary School

( ) Campbell Elementary School

( ) Carlin Springs Elementary School

( ) Claremont Elementary School

( ) Discovery Elementary School

( ) Drew Model School

( ) Glebe Elementary School

( ) Glebe Elementary School

( ) Gunston Middle School

( ) H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program

( ) Hoffman-Boston Elementary School

( ) Jamestown Elementary School

( ) Jefferson Middle School

( ) Kenmore Middle School

( ) Key Elementary School

( ) Langston High School Continuation

( ) Long Branch Elementary School

( ) McKinley Elementary School

( ) New Directions

( ) Nottingham Elementary School

( ) Oakridge Elementary School

( ) Patrick Henry Elementary School

( ) Randolph Elementary School

( ) Stratford Program

( ) Swanson Middle School

( ) Taylor Elementary School

( ) Tuckahoe Elementary School

( ) Wakefield High School

( ) Washington-Lee High School

( ) Williamsburg Middle School

( ) Yorktown High School

1.4 Please identify in which grade level your child first received special education services and received an IEP:

( ) Child Find (prior to Pre-Kindergarten)
( ) Pre-Kindergarten
( ) K-2
( ) 3-5
( ) 6-8
( ) 9-12+

1.5 Your child's primary disability type as identified on his/her IEP

( ) Autism
( ) Deaf-Blindness

( ) Developmental Delay (children aged two through six years who have delays in physical, cognitive, communicative, social emotional, and/or adaptive development)

( ) Emotional Disability (such as anxiety disorder, mood disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, or schizophrenia)

( ) Hearing Impairment (including Deafness)

( ) Intellectual Disability

( ) Multiple Disabilities (combination of any of the following: intellectual disability, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment or autism, intellectual disability, deafness, etc.)

( ) Orthopedic Impairment (such as cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns which cause stiffness or constriction)

( ) Other Health Impairment (such as ADD/ADHD, epilepsy, asthma, or diabetes)

( ) Specific Learning Disability (such as dyslexia, information-processing problems, oral language difficulties, reading difficulties, written language problems, or mathematical disorders)

( ) Speech or Language impairment

( ) Traumatic Brain Injury

( ) Visual Impairment (including Blindness)

( ) Don't Know

	Yes	No
1.6 Do you know who your child's case carrier/ case manager is?	( )	( )
1.7 Are you aware that there is a special education coordinator who serves your child's school who is available for support/questions?	( )	( )
1.8 Is your child formally identified as gifted?	( )	( )
1.9 Do you speak a language other than English at home?	( )	( )
1.10 Did you move into Arlington Public Schools from another division or school system?	( )	( )

1.11 Who initiated the IEP process at APS?

( ) Parent   ( ) School   ( ) Not Applicable - My child had an existing IEP from another district

1.12 Did your child receive an IEP prior to enrolling in Arlington Public Schools?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

1.13 Was Arlington Public Schools' reputation for providing special education services one of the reasons you moved here?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know   ( ) Not Applicable

1.14 Is your child eligible for special transportation?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) I don't Know

1.15 Does your child access special transportation?

( ) Yes   ( ) No

1.15a Please indicate why your child does not access special transportation.

Section 2 – Your Participation and Your Child's IEP

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at all	Not Applicable
2.1 Did APS staff explain to you why your child needed special education services in a way that you were able to understand?	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.2 Are you offered a copy of your parental rights (procedural safeguards) from APS at every special education meeting?	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.3 If you had questions about your parental rights, did someone from APS answer them?	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.4 Do you receive notice of an IEP meeting at least once a year?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.5 Was the IEP meeting scheduled at a time and place convenient for you?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.6 Were you provided a draft IEP prior to the IEP meeting?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.7 Were you asked for input on your child's most recent IEP prior to the meeting?	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.8 At your child's most recent IEP meeting, did the team discuss receiving special education services in the general education class to the maximum extent appropriate?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.9 Did you receive the APS feedback survey after the IEP meeting?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.10 To your knowledge, is your child's IEP being implemented as written?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.11 Is your child consistently getting the number and amount of services that are listed on his/her IEP (for example, speech two times a week for 30 minutes)?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.12 Have you ever supplemented the special education services APS provides your child with outside services (therapies, tutors, etc.)?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.13a Do you get quarterly progress reports on how your child is meeting his/her IEP goals? (If your child was identified within the past year and you have not received the first progress report please select Not Applicable)	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.13b Do you get semi-annual progress reports on how your child is meeting his/her IEP? (If your child was identified within the past year and you have not received the first progress report please select Not Applicable)	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Not Applicable

2.14 My child's progress report effectively communicates his/her progress. (If your child was identified within the past year and you have not received the first progress report please select Not Applicable)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.15 Are you receiving enough information regarding your child's progress from the following groups:

	Yes	**No**	**Don't Know**	**Not Applicable**
General Education Teachers	( )	( )	( )	( )
Special Education Teachers	( )	( )	( )	( )
Related Service Providers	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Don't Know**
2.16 I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about my child's performance	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.17 How frequently do your child's general education teachers communicate with you about your child formally and informally (eg email, conversations, etc.)?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.18 How frequently do your child's special education teachers communicate with you about your child formally and informally (eg email, conversations, etc.)?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.19 How frequently do your child's related service providers (OT, PT, SLP, Therapists) communicate with you about your child formally and informally (eg email, conversations, etc.)?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.20 Does APS offer opportunities for parent training or information sessions about special education?	( )	( )	( )
2.21 In the past year, have you attended parent training or information sessions offered by APS?	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
2.21a The parent training or information sessions that I have attended have been helpful to me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.21b How did you learn about the training/ information session (please select all that apply)?

[ ] My child's school   [ ] The Parent Resource Center   [ ] Other parents   [ ] School Talk   [ ] Other:

2.22 Are you aware that APS has a Parent Resource Center for parents of students with disabilities?

( ) Yes   ( ) No

2.22a Have you ever used resources from the Parent Resource Center?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

2.23 Please indicate any training and/or topics that you would like more information about (please select all that apply).

[ ] Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC)	[ ] Understanding the Special Education Process	[ ] Dyslexia
[ ] Social-Emotional Learning	[ ] Special Education PTA	[ ] Twice Exceptional
[ ] Behavioral Strategies	[ ] Transition Planning	[ ] Learning Disabilities
[ ] Mental Health	[ ] APS Parent Resource Center	[ ] Multi-sensory Instruction
[ ] Learning and Homework Strategies	[ ] Autism	[ ] Other:
[ ] Complaint Resolution	[ ] ADHD	

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.24 Has your child received an assessment to help develop age-appropriate postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and where appropriate independent living skills?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.25 Has the IEP team developed appropriate individualized goals related to postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and community participation, as appropriate?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.26 Has the IEP team discussed transition to adulthood during the IEP meeting, e.g., career interests?	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.27 If you speak a language other than English at home, are you offered an interpreter for IEP meetings (regardless of whether you request one)?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

2.27 If you speak a language other than English at home, are you offered an interpreter for IEP meetings (regardless of whether you request one)?

( ) Yes   ( ) No, and I need one.   ( ) No, but I do not need one.

2.27a Is an interpreter provided at IEP meetings you attend?

( ) Yes   ( ) No, and I need one.   ( ) No, but I do not need one.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.27b Are your IEP meetings with an interpreter scheduled in a timely manner?	( )	( )	( )

2.27c Are the interpreter services provided at the IEP meeting effective — do they help you understand all the information you need to know?	( )	( )	( )

Section 3 – Your Satisfaction with Your Participation and Your Child's Services and Progress

Satisfaction with Your Participation

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.1 The information I provided about my child was considered in planning and writing his/her most recent IEP.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.2 In developing my child's IEP, I am a respected partner with my child's teachers and other service providers (for example, speech therapists, physical therapists, etc.)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.3 I understand what is discussed at IEP meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.4 I feel comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns at IEP meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.5 Teachers/school staff have communicated effectively with me about my child's IEP.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.6 School staff respond to my concerns about my child's IEP in a reasonable period of time.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Satisfaction with Your Child's Program

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.7 I am satisfied with my child's overall special education services.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Not Applicable
3.8 My child's general education teacher(s) is/are aware of his/her learning needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.9 My child's special education teacher(s) is/are aware of his/her learning needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.10 My child's general education teacher(s) is/are knowledgeable about my child's disability.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.11 My child's special education teacher(s) is/are knowledgeable about my child's disability.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.12 My child's therapists, e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech-language pathologist, are aware of his/her learning needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Not Applicable - My child does not need help with English language proficiency
3.13 My child's English proficiency needs are addressed in addition to his/her special education needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.14 My child's gifted learning needs are addressed in addition to his/her special education needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	None of them	Don't Know
3.15 Teachers and related service professionals (OT, PT, SLP, Therapists) have high expectations for my child.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.16 Paraprofessionals (Assistants or Aides) have high expectations for my child.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.17 Special educators and related service professionals (OT, PT, SLP, Therapists) are skilled in providing the services and support my child needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.18 Paraprofessionals (Assistants or Aides) are skilled in providing the services and support my child needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know

3.19 My child's academic program is preparing him/her for the future.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
3.20 A general education teacher comes to my child's IEP meetings.	( )	( )	( )

Satisfaction with Your Child's Participation and Progress

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.21 I am satisfied with my child's academic progress in school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.22 My child is developing skills that will enable him/her to be as independent as possible.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.23 I am satisfied with my child's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations relating to my child's disability.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	None of them

3.24 My child is making progress on his/her IEP goals.	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
3.25 My child has the opportunity to participate in school-sponsored activities such as assemblies, field trips, clubs, and sporting events.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Not Applicable
3.26 My child is supported when participating in school-sponsored activities such as assemblies, field trips, clubs, and sporting events	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.27 Please indicate if your child has transitioned between the following school levels within the last school year:

( ) From Preschool to Kindergarten

( ) From Elementary School to Middle School

( ) From Middle School to High School

( ) Planning for transition to postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and community living options

( ) My child has not transitioned school levels within the past school year

3.27a I am satisfied with the planning for my child's recent transition from one school level to the next.

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

Section 4 – Conflict Resolution

	Yes	No	Don't Know
4.1 Do you know where to go to get help if you have disagreements with APS or your child's school regarding his/her special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation?	( )	( )	( )
4.2 Have you ever had disagreements with your child's school regarding his/her special education eligibility, placement, goals, services, or implementation?	( )	( )	( )

For the following statements, please reflect on your most recent disagreement with your child's school or APS.

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at all
4.2a During disagreements, APS representatives treated me with respect.	( )	( )	( )

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable

4.2b I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreement.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.2c If the disagreement was escalated to the district/ central office, I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreement.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 5 – Additional Comments

5.1 What do you think your child's school does well to help your child?

5.2 What do you think your child's school can do to help your child more?

APS Survey of Students with IEPs

Please complete this survey to give information about your experience as a student with an IEP. No one in the school district will see your answers – they are private. Thank you for participating in this survey, your comments are important.

Secti
1.1 Your Age

( ) 10

( ) 11

( ) 12

( ) 13

( ) 14

( ) 15

( ) 16

( ) 17

( ) 18-22

1.2 Your School

( ) Arlington Community High School

( ) Arlington Career Center (Tech, Academy, HILT, PEP)

( ) Gunston Middle School

( ) H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program

( ) Jefferson Middle School

( ) Kenmore Middle School

( ) Langston High School Continuation

( ) New Directions

( ) Stratford Program

( ) Swanson Middle School

( ) Wakefield High School

( ) Washington-Lee High School

( ) Williamsburg Middle School

( ) Yorktown High School

1.3 Your Grade

( ) 6th

( ) 7th

( ) 8th

( ) 9th

( ) 10th

( ) 11th

( ) 12th

1.4 Do you speak a language other than English at home?

( ) Yes

( ) No

1.5 Your Disability

( ) Autism

( ) Deaf-Blindness

( ) Emotional Disability (such as anxiety disorder, mood disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, or schizophrenia)

( ) Hearing Impairment (including Deafness)

( ) Intellectual Disability

( ) Multiple Disabilities (combination of any of the following: intellectual disability, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment or autism, intellectual disability, deafness, etc.)

( ) Orthopedic Impairment (such as cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns which cause stiffness or constriction)

( ) Other Health Impairment (such as ADD/ADHD, epilepsy, asthma, or diabetes)

( ) Specific Learning Disability (such as dyslexia, information-processing problems, oral language difficulties, reading difficulties, written language problems, or mathematical disorders)

( ) Speech or Language impairment

( ) Traumatic Brain Injury

( ) Visual Impairment (including Blindness)

( ) Don't Know

Section 2 - Your Participation in the IEP Process
Please select one response for each question

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.1 Have APS staff explained to you why you need special education services in a way that you were able to understand?	( )	( )	( )

2.2 Did you attend your most recent IEP meeting?	( )	( )	( )

2.2a At your most recent IEP meeting, did you feel that your views and comments were respected and taken into consideration by the IEP team?

( ) Completely

( ) Somewhat

( ) Not at all

( ) Don't Know

2.3 Do you have most of your classes in general education (in classes also attended by students without IEPs)?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Don't Know

	Yes	No
2.4 Do you know what goals your IEP expects you to achieve?	( )	( )
2.5 Do you know what accommodations are on your IEP (if any)?	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all

| 2.6 Do you receive the services on your IEP? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.7 If you feel you are not receiving an accommodation or service that you are supposed to, do you ask someone for help?	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.8 Have you been suspended from school?	( )	( )	( )
2.9 Do you get information about the progress you are making on your IEP goals?	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.10 Have school staff talked to you about what you want to do after you graduate from high school?	( )	( )	( )
2.11 Have school staff talked to you about your career interests?	( )	( )	( )

2.12 Are you learning things in high school to help you with your goals after you graduate high school?	( )	( )	( )

2.13 Since you turned 18, are you offered a copy of your rights from APS at least once each year?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Don't Know

2.13a Does someone from APS answer any questions you may have about your rights?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Not Applicable

Section 3 - Your Exper

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
3.1 I feel OK about asking questions about my IEP at meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	None of them	Don't Know

3.2 School staff (for example, teachers, transition coordinators, and speech therapists) talk with me about my IEP.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.3 My teachers have high expectations for me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.4 My teachers talk with me about my progress in school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.5 My teachers are giving me the help I need.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.6 My teachers understand me and support me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Please indicate your level of agreement/satisfaction with the statements below.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.7 I am getting skills that will help me be as independent as possible after high school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.8 I need help with my behavior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all

3.9 I receive the help I need to do well in school	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.10 If I want, I can be in afterschool activities like clubs, sports, etc.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.11 Other students treat me fairly.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.12 I am welcomed, valued, and respected in school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.13 I like school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 4 - Additional Comments

4.1 Please indicate any area you would like more information about (select all that apply).

[ ] Life After High School

[ ] Help with Positive Behavior

[ ] Learning and Homework Strategies

[ ] Mental Health

[ ] Social-Emotional Learning (such as self-regulation, anger management, etc.)

[ ] ADHD

[ ] Other:: _____

[ ] None

4.2 What do you think your school does well to help you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4.3 What do you think your school can do to help you more?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5 - Optiona

Responses to the following questions are optional.

5.1 Your Gender

( ) Male

( ) Female

( ) Non-binary

( ) Other: _____

( ) Prefer not to say

5.2 Do you identify as transgender?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Prefer not to say

5.3 Your Race/ Ethnicity

[ ] American Indian/Alaska Native

[ ] Asian

[ ] Black/African American

[ ] Hispanic or Latino

[ ] Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

[ ] White

[ ] Other

[ ] Prefer not to say

Thank you!
Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

APS Survey of Parents of Children with Section 504 Plans

PCG Education has been contracted by Arlington Public Schools to conduct an evaluation of the district's Section 504 program. If you have more than one child with a Section 504 Plan, please complete a separate survey for EACH of your children.

PCG guarantees confidentiality in several ways. PCG staff have access to individual survey responses, but this information is not connected to anyone's name and is never available to APS staff. Survey results will be summarized at the district level and also by group (for example, by grade level). If there are fewer than 10 responses from any particular group, those responses will not be reported at the group level, but will still be included in the district-level results.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your comments are important.

Section 1 – About You and Your Child

1.1 Your Child's Age

( ) 2   ( ) 3-5   ( ) 6-10   ( ) 11-13   ( ) 14-17   ( ) 18-22

1.2 Please identify the grade your child is currently enrolled:

( ) Pre-Kindergarten   ( ) 4th   ( ) 9th

( ) Kindergarten   ( ) 5th   ( ) 10th

( ) 1st   ( ) 6th   ( ) 11th

( ) 2nd   ( ) 7th   ( ) 12th+

( ) 3rd   ( ) 8th

1.3 Please identify the school your child currently attends:

( ) Abingdon Elementary School   ( ) Claremont Elementary School   ( ) Kenmore Middle School   ( ) Stratford Program

( ) Arlington Community High School	( ) Discovery Elementary School	( ) Key Elementary School	( ) Swanson Middle School
( ) Arlington Science Focus Elementary	( ) Drew Model School	( ) Langston High School Continuation	( ) Taylor Elementary School
( ) Arlington Career Center (Tech, Academy, HILT, PEP)	( ) Glebe Elementary School	( ) Long Branch Elementary School	( ) Tuckahoe Elementary School
( ) Arlington Traditional Elementary	( ) Glebe Elementary School	( ) McKinley Elementary School	( ) Wakefield High School
( ) Ashlawn Elementary School	( ) Gunston Middle School	( ) New Directions	( ) Washington-Lee High School
( ) Barcroft Elementary School	( ) H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program	( ) Nottingham Elementary School	( ) Williamsburg Middle School
( ) Barrett Elementary School	( ) Hoffman-Boston Elementary School	( ) Oakridge Elementary School	( ) Yorktown High School
( ) Campbell Elementary School	( ) Jamestown Elementary School	( ) Patrick Henry Elementary School	
( ) Carlin Springs Elementary School	( ) Jefferson Middle School	( ) Randolph Elementary School	

1.4 Please identify in which grade level your child was **first** identified for Section 504 accommodations:

    ( ) Child Find (prior to Pre-Kindergarten)
    ( ) Pre-Kindergarten
    ( ) K-2
    ( ) 3-5
    ( ) 6-8
    ( ) 9-12+

1.5 Your Child's Type of Disability

    ( ) Academic (such as ADD/ADHD or learning disability)
    ( ) Medical (such as allergies, asthma, arthritis, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, drugs and alcohol, epilepsy, or obesity)
    ( ) Don't Know

1.6 Do you speak a language other than English at home?

    ( ) Yes   ( ) No

1.7 Who initiated the 504 process?

( ) Parent   ( ) School   ( ) Not Applicable - My child had an existing Section 504 Plan from another district

Section 2 – Your Participation and Your Child's 504 Plan

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at All	Not Applicable
2.1 Did APS staff explain to you why your child was receiving Section 504 accommodations?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.2 Did APS staff explain to you the difference between a Section 504 Plan and an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.3 **Prior** to the process of obtaining a Section 504 Plan, was your child's school responsive to your concerns about your child's needs?	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.4 **During** the process of obtaining a Section 504 Plan, was your child's school responsive to your concerns about your child's progress and performance?	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know

2.5 Do you receive a copy of your parental rights (procedural safeguards) from APS at least once each year?	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not Applicable
2.6 If you had questions about your parental rights, did someone from APS answer them?	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.7 Did you have the opportunity to take part in the development of your child's most recent Section 504 Plan?	( )	( )	( )
2.8 Are you invited to a Section 504 reevaluation meeting at least every three years?	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

2.9 Is your input taken into consideration when developing and reviewing your child's Section 504 Plan?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
2.10 Is other information (such as a doctor's note) taken into consideration when developing and reviewing your child's Section 504 Plan?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.11 Does APS offer opportunities for parent training or information sessions about Section 504 supports?	( )	( )	( )
2.12 In the past year, have you attended parent training or information sessions about Section 504 supports offered by APS?	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know

2.12a The parent training or information sessions that I have attended have been helpful to me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2.12b How did you learn about the training/ information session (please select all that apply)?

[ ] My child's school   [ ] The Parent Resource Center   [ ] Other parents   [ ] School Talk   [ ] Other:

2.13 Are you aware that APS has a Parent Resource Center for parents of students with disabilities?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

2.13a Have you ever used resources from the Parent Resource Center?

( ) Yes   ( ) No

2.14 Please indicate any training and/or topics that you would like more information about (please select all that apply).

[ ] Understanding the Section 504 Process   [ ] Mental Health
[ ] Social-Emotional Learning   [ ] ADHD
[ ] Behavioral Strategies   [ ] Transition Planning
[ ] Learning and Homework Strategies   [ ] Other

2.15 Are you offered an interpreter for 504 meetings (regardless of whether you request one)?

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

2.15a Is an interpreter provided at 504 meetings you attend?

( ) Yes   ( ) No, and I need one.   ( ) No, but I do

	Yes	No	Don't Know

2.15b Are your 504 meetings with an interpreter scheduled in a timely manner?	( )	( )	( )
2.15c Are the interpreter services provided at the Section 504 meeting effective — do they help you understand all the information you need to know?	( )	( )	( )

Section 3 – Your Satisfaction with Your Participation and Your Child's Services and Progress

Satisfaction with Your Participation

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.1 In **planning** my child's most recent Section 504 Plan, I was a valued member of the team and my opinion was respected.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.2 In **implementing** my child's Section 504 Plan, I am a respected partner with my child's teachers and other support providers.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.3 I understand what is discussed at Section 504 meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.4 I feel comfortable asking questions and expressing my concerns at Section 504 meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.5 Teachers/school staff have communicated effectively with me about my child's Section 504 plan.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.6 School staff respond to my concerns in a reasonable period of time.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.7 I am getting adequate information about the implementation of my child's accommodations.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Satisfaction with Your Child's Program

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.8 I am satisfied with my child's overall Section 504 program.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.9 My child's 504 plan provides the support he/she needs to be successful.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.10 I am satisfied with my child's physical safety/safeguards and accommodations relating to my child's disability.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	None of them	Don't Know
3.11 My child's teachers are aware of his/her needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.12 My child's teachers are knowledgeable about my child's disability.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.13 My child's teachers have high expectations for my child.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.14 School staff who work with my child are skilled in providing the services and support he/she needs.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Yes	No	Don't Know
3.15 Is your child consistently receiving all of the accommodations and modifications that are listed on his/her Section 504 Plan?	( )	( )	( )

3.16 Please indicate if your child has transitioned between the following school levels within the last school year:

( ) From Preschool to Kindergarten

( ) From Elementary School to Middle School

( ) From Middle School to High School

( ) My child has not transitioned school levels within the past school year

3.16a I am satisfied with the planning for my child's recent transition from one school level to the next.

( ) Yes   ( ) No   ( ) Don't Know

Section 4 – Conflict Resolution

	Yes	No	Don't Know
4.1 Do you know where to go to get help if you have disagreements with APS or your child's school regarding his/her 504 needs, eligibility, accommodations, or implementation?	( )	( )	( )
4.2 Have you had disagreements with APS regarding your child's 504 needs, eligibility, accommodations, or implementation?	( )	( )	( )

For the following statements, please reflect on your most recent disagreement with your child's school or APS.

	Completely	Somewhat	Not at all
4.2a During disagreements, APS representatives treated me with respect.	( )	( )	( )

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable
4.2b I was satisfied with how the school attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.2c If the disagreement was escalated to the district, I was satisfied with how the district attempted to resolve the disagreements.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 5 – Additional Comments

5.1 What do you think your child's school does well to help your child?

5.2 What do you think your child's school can do to help your child more?

APS Survey of Students with 504 Plans

PCG Education has been contracted by Arlington Public Schools to conduct an evaluation of the district's Section 504 program. Please complete this survey to give information about what works well and any areas for improvement. No one in APS will see your answers – they are private. Thank you for participating in this survey. Your comments are important.

Section 1 - About You
1.1 Your Age

( ) 10

( ) 11

( ) 12

( ) 13

( ) 14

( ) 15

( ) 16

( ) 17

( ) 18-22

1.2 Your School

( ) Arlington Community High School

( ) Arlington Science Focus Elementary

( ) Arlington Career Center (Tech, Academy, HILT, PEP)

( ) Gunston Middle School

( ) H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program

( ) Jefferson Middle School

( ) Kenmore Middle School

( ) Langston High School Continuation

( ) New Directions

( ) Stratford Program

( ) Swanson Middle School

( ) Wakefield High School

( ) Washington-Lee High School

( ) Williamsburg Middle School

( ) Yorktown High School

1.3 Your Grade

( ) 6th

( ) 7th

( ) 8th

( ) 9th

( ) 10th

( ) 11th

( ) 12th

1.4 Do you speak a language other than English at home?

( ) Yes

( ) No

1.5 Your Disability Area

( ) Academic (such as ADD/ADHD or learning disability)

( ) Medical (such as allergies, asthma, arthritis, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, drugs and alcohol, epilepsy, or obesity)

( ) Don't Know

Section 2 - Your Participation in the Section 504 Process
Please select one response for each question

	Yes	No	Don't Know
2.1 Do you understand why you are receiving Section 504 accommodations?	( )	( )	( )
2.2 Did you attend your most recent Section 504 meeting?	( )	( )	( )
2.3 Have you seen your Section 504 Plan?	( )	( )	( )
2.4 Are you receiving all of the supports and accommodations written in the Section 504 Plan most of the time?	( )	( )	( )
2.5 Do you receive a copy of your rights from APS?	( )	( )	( )

2.6 Does someone from APS answer any questions you may have about your rights?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Not Applicable

Section 3 - Your Experience at S
Please indicate your level of agreement/satisfaction with the statements below.

	Always	**Most of the time**	**Sometimes**	**Not at all**	**Not Applicable - I don't Go to Section 504 Meetings**
3.1 I feel OK about asking questions about my Section 504 Plan at meetings.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.2 The information I provide in my Section 504 meetings is considered.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of them	**Most of them**	**Some of them**	**None of them**	**Don't Know**
3.3 My teachers talk to me about the progress I am making related to my 504 Plan.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.4 My teachers are giving me the help I need related to my 504 Plan.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.5 My teachers understand me and support me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all	Not Applicable
3.6 My school nurse gives me the help I need.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
3.7 I am getting skills that will help me be as independent as possible after high school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.8 I need help with my behavior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
3.9 I receive the help I need to do well in school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.10 Other students treat me fairly.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.11 I am welcomed, valued, and respected in school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

3.12 I like school.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Section 4 -

4.1 Please indicate any area you would like more information about (select all that apply).

[ ] Understanding the Section 504 Process

[ ] Life After High School

[ ] Help with Positive Behavior

[ ] Learning and Homework Strategies

[ ] Mental Health

[ ] Social-Emotional Learning (such as self-regulation, anger management, etc.)

[ ] ADHD

[ ] Other:: _____

[ ] None

4.2 What do you think your school does well to help you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4.3 What do you think your school can do to help you more?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5 - Optional Demographic Information

Responses to the following questions are optional.

5.1 Your Gender

( ) Male

( ) Female

( ) Non-binary

( ) Other: _____

( ) Prefer not to say

5.2 Do you identify as transgender?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Prefer not to say

5.3 Your Race/ Ethnicity

[ ] American Indian/Alaska Native

[ ] Asian

[ ] Black/African American

[ ] Hispanic or Latino

[ ] Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

[ ] White

[ ] Other

[ ] Prefer not to say

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

F. Resources

Exhibit 215. Council for Exceptional Children At-A-Glance Guide: Important Guidelines for Scheduling[201]

Scheduling Guidelines	Description
Put students with disabilities in the master schedule first.	All the administrators who have been successful in scheduling co-teaching & inclusion report that this is mandatory. Trying to retrofit students with disabilities into an already created schedule simply will not work. By putting them in the master schedule first, the rest of the schedule can fall into place. It is important to do this correctly right from the beginning and that starts with the Master Schedule.
Resist the urge to increase the student-teacher ratio.	Part of the benefit of co-teaching is that it reduces the student-teacher ratio. Having two credentialed teachers in the room is not license to double the number of students. However, if the typical class is 30, the co-taught class might be capped at 32, just slightly higher than the typical class. Remember though that this class has a number of students with identified disabilities in it. That alone warrants keeping the numbers low.
Recognize that general education teachers should only have one co-teaching "dance partner."	Content area teachers are less likely to truly co-teach (co-plan, co-instruct, co-assess) if they have multiple partners across the day. To encourage real planning together, general educators should have just one partner with whom they collaborate for co-teaching, even if they have multiple preps or if that partners comes in at different times throughout the day.
Recognize that special education teachers can only have 2-3 "dance partners" for co-teaching.	While best-case scenario would have a general and special education teacher able to co-teach all day long, this is not typically an option. Special service providers work with multiple teachers. Be aware, however, that they will not be able to truly co-teach (co-plan, co-instruct, co-assess) with more than two new co-teachers at a time (a third can be added over time). They may assist in classes through in-class support in addition to their co-teaching, but it won't be at the same level of involvement as true co-teaching.
Limit the class proportion of students with special needs to no more than 30% of the class.	When those who create the master schedule see two credentialed teachers in one room, especially when one of them is credentialed in special education, the tendency is often to place all students with special needs in those classes. Even those schedulers who are aware of the need to avoid going over the 30% rule will sometimes rationalize that only 30% of the class has IEPs and identified disabilities, the others are students who are on 504 Plans, are English Language learners, and struggling students with no label, or have other needs. This results in a class that resembles a de facto special education class, not the inclusive heterogeneous class it was designed to be. Co-teachers in this type of scenario often report feeling like they are being "dumped on" and are not able to be effective with the range of needs.
Ensure that those who schedule also know the guidelines and will continue to follow them throughout the year.	Make sure that anyone who has access to scheduling students is aware of the need for heterogeneity in the class. Often, we find that while those administrators who have been trained in co-teaching assure us that no classes have more than 30% of students with special needs, the co-teachers show us rosters with 60-80% of the class with IEPs or other special needs. In researching the issue, we find that other individuals, such as counselors who weren't in on the co-teaching training, have inadvertently been scheduling new students into these classes.
Incorporate the proactive feedback of	Special education teachers typically know the students on their caseloads and can help to determine what types of classes (self-contained, co-taught, monitor only) they

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teachers, especially special education teachers.	need to have. They can also provide insight into what types of teachers may work best with particular children. But in addition, ask for teachers' feedback on what classes or grades they may prefer. Many special educators are given their schedules without being consulted, and learn belatedly that they are to co-teach in a math class when their strength is in language arts, while a colleague who majored in math is being assigned the language arts class! Input from teachers can help assure that they are best able to support students and keep up with the general education content.
Avoid over-scheduling special educators to the point that they cannot be effective. Select one of four strategies for focus: by subject matter, by grade, by professional learning community (PLC), or by caseload.	Ask any general education content teacher if he is interested in having 5 different preps and he's respond to that, while he may be qualified to teach those different classes, if he had to do so, he would be spread too thin to be effective. Yet, that is exactly what is regularly done to special educators. Instead, provide some structure by allowing special educators to specialize by subject matter (e.g., I support the Math teachers while you support in English), by grade (e.g., I support K-2, while you support 3-5), by professional learning community (e.g., I support the Tigers cluster, while you support the Eagles), or by caseload (e.g., I "loop" with one group of students for 5th, 6th, and 7th grades over the next three years, while you "loop" with your own caseload).
Keep in mind the additional job responsibilities of special educators and build them into the schedule (assessing, IEP meetings, monitoring, adapting materials).	While all teachers need planning time, special educators need planning time and a separate time for activities that cannot be done at home. We strongly advocate for special educators to have both a planning time (for individual planning, as well as planning with co-teaching partners), as well as an additional time when they are not scheduled with students. Don't call it planning as others teachers will be upset to think that special educators get two planning periods. Instead, use another term, e.g., Monitoring/Facilitative Support/Consultation/IEP/Assessment, etc. This additional time will ensure that special educators are able to assess students, have IEP meetings, make curricular adaptations, and so forth, which will ensure that students get their needs met. Though it may seem antithetical to take teachers away from students in order to meet their needs, we feel in this case the students will benefit more by teachers having the time to prepare their supports than if they were merely running between classes.
Consider the physical placement of co-teachers and their respective classrooms.	The closer co-teachers' actual classrooms are, the more easily and often they can communicate. This proximity will also increase their ability to do small group instruction during their co-taught lessons. Consider giving them a webcam to chat virtually if they are not in close proximity.
Create time for co-planning into the schedule.	This is nonnegotiable if you want co-teaching to work (yes, it's our "sacred cow") ... without a doubt, out #1 option is that teachers have a common planning time or period built into the schedule from the beginning. As you build your schedules, have this need at the forefront. As you determine when each co-teaching team will be teaching kids together, also figure out when they will be planning together. Please do not try to squeeze in planning time as an afterthought; it will never happen and when it gets lost in the shuffle, the result will be ineffective co-teaching.

G. PCG Staff Biographies

Dr. Jennifer Meller, Associate Manager at PCG, leads the firm's efforts in providing districts with comprehensive special education program evaluations and technical assistance in the areas of staffing, stakeholder engagement, compliance, finance, data use, and best instructional practices for students with disabilities. A special education subject matter expert (SME) at PCG, Dr. Meller's experience is built upon her practitioner-oriented background and education policy work across several dozen states across the US. Currently, Dr. Meller focuses on engagements that support districts and state departments of education with special education with identifying and implementing best practices. She also assists districts in several states with implementing IEP special education technology systems that are both procedurally-compliant and outcomes-focused. She designed and has administered PCG's national survey on the use of IEP systems and regularly authors thought leadership pieces about special education. Prior to joining PCG, Jennifer was the Director of Operations in the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Specialized Instructional Services, where she focused on implementing student-focused data management systems, oversaw several multi-million dollar federal grants, and was responsible for policy and compliance. Jennifer earned an Ed.D. in Educational and Organizational Leadership and an MS.Ed. in Higher Education Management, both from the University of Pennsylvania. She also has a B.A. in English from Dickinson College.

Will J. Gordillo, Senior Associate at PCG, currently supports projects focused on ELA and mathematics implementation throughout the United States. More specifically, he works to provide professional development that supports a successful transition to new standards with a focus on addressing the needs of students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Mr. Gordillo provides implementation and leadership support to PCG as a subject-matter expert in the areas of special education and gifted education. He addresses the presenting needs of his education clients as a thoughtful partner with a focus on business development, consulting services, targeted program reviews and technical assistance, program design and implementation, blended professional development and instructional coaching as well as special education instructional leadership, coaching, and mentoring. Prior to joining PCG in 2015, Mr. Gordillo most recently served as Executive Director responsible for exceptional education for Palm Beach County school district, the 11th largest school district. He also previously led special education for Miami Dade County Public Schools, the 4th largest urban school district in the nation. As the special education leader, he was responsible for day-to-day management and operation including, fiscal and federal compliance for the provision of special education, Section 504, gifted education and psychological services. Mr. Gordillo earned his Master's Degree in Reading K-12 at the University of La Verne and his Bachelors in Special Education at Florida International University. He has completed postgraduate studies at Nova Southeastern University leading towards certification in Educational Leadership.

Anna D'Entremont, Senior Consultant with PCG, brings over 15 years of education management experience to this project. She has worked with numerous state agencies and districts across the county to support initiative development, strategic planning and program review. Most of this work focuses on special education. Prior to joining PCG in 2008, Anna was the Director of Operations of the Edward W. Brooke Charter School in Boston, MA. In this role, she served as co-director and the operational leader of a high-performing K-8 urban charter school. Anna also worked as a Program Officer at New Visions for Public Schools, where she managed a diverse portfolio of initiatives designed to support and develop innovation in 85 new small high schools across New York City. Anna began her career as a bilingual kindergarten teacher for the Houston Independent School District and as an elementary school ESL teacher in the DC Public Schools. She is also a Teach for America alumna, completed graduate coursework in the Teaching of ESL at the University of St. Thomas, and received her Ed.M. in Education Policy from Teachers College, Columbia University, in Education Policy.

Dr. Christine Donis-Keller, a Senior Associate at PCG, has worked in the field of education and evaluation research for over 20 years and specializes in understanding how the cultural norms and

organization of schools and districts impact student experiences. Her work has focused on evaluating schools and districts as culturally distinct communities and documenting the daily experiences of students, teachers, and administrators with the context of their organization through investigative techniques of participant-observation and formal and informal interviews. Recent projects include the evaluation of implementation and impact of a district-wide arts initiative in Hartford Public Schools, an evaluation of a 21st Century Community Learning Center for middle school students in Jersey City, NJ, and the impact of a Family and Community Engagement grant project in Bridgeton, NJ. Additional work includes an impact evaluation of a statewide project to support charter schools' transition to the state standards in Florida, and the impact evaluation of the statewide Tennessee Academic Specialists Program which provided coaching support in the state's lowest performing schools. She leads work at PCG developing research protocols, systematic data collection strategies, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to measure program effectiveness. Prior to joining PCG, Christine worked at research centers at New York University and University of Southern Maine and consulted with organizations including the National Association for State Boards of Education and the Institute for Educational Leadership. Dr. Donis-Keller received her doctorate in the sociology of education from New York University. She has published reports on theme high schools, the four-day school week, school district reorganization, and professional development.

Matthew Scott, Consultant at PCG, providing project support and coordination for PCG Education clients, specifically special education consulting services. Mr. Scott brings 10 years of education management experience specializing in accreditation, strategic planning, program quality review, learning assessment processes, and education policy. Prior to joining PCG, Mr. Scott spent 7 years as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Regulatory Affairs for a specialized graduate school. In this capacity, Mr. Scott oversaw a portfolio of strategic growth and regulatory initiatives, including an initial institutional accreditation effort, new program development, enrollment management, and state approval processes. Mr. Scott began his career as a student advisor and leadership development professional for the University of the Pacific. Mr. Scott earned a M.A in Educational Administration and Leadership from the University of the Pacific, and a B.A. in Political Science from California State University, Long Beach.

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