

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES
 - III.A. September 3, 2015 – Regular
- IV. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
- V. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
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- VIII. COMMITTEES
 - VIII.A. Finance
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- IX. INFORMATION ITEMS
 - IX.A. DMC Report
 - IX.B. Communication with Community
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - The Board welcomes public participation. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than fifteen (15) minutes. People who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related
- XI. ACTION ITEMS
 - XI.A. Personnel Report
 - XI.B. Gallup Student Poll
- XII. OTHER
- XIII. ADJOURNMENT



Raising Student Achievement and Making Best Use of Limited Resources

New Fairfield Public Schools

September 2015

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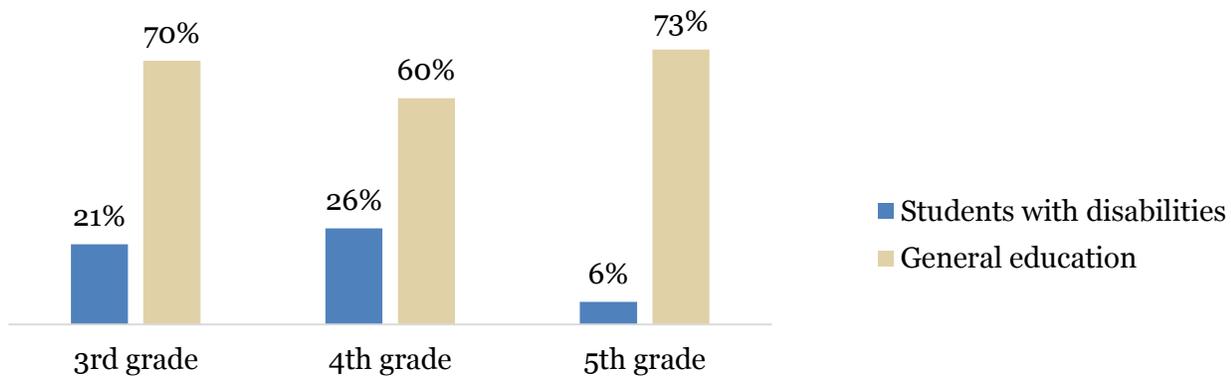
Project Overview

The District Management Council (DMC) has partnered with New Fairfield Public Schools to better understand how struggling students – both with and without disabilities – are supported in the district. The study is a follow up to a review that DMC completed during the spring of 2012. The 2012 review not only highlighted the many strengths of the district, but also - in the spirit of continuous improvement - identified a short list of opportunities to improve supports for struggling students.

The 2012 review found that many students in the district struggled in reading, and students with disabilities achieved at far lower levels than their non-disabled peers.

Elementary Reading Goal or Above (CMT, 2010)

School districts in the U.S. have grappled with the same dilemma of how to respond effectively



with students who are not performing successfully in classrooms, especially with students having difficulty learning to read. In less-successful cases, when students begin falling behind their peers in the classroom, the typical first step is to place them in the lowest reading group, thereby slowing down the pace of instruction. Students with IEPs will often receive reading instruction from their special education teachers or paraprofessionals, who do not necessarily have extensive training in the teaching of reading. These students typically fall further and further behind. The data in the district suggested that special education supports were not effective for the majority of students with special needs.

In contrast, best-practice districts ensure that both core and intervention reading instruction is provided by teachers skilled in the teaching of reading, regardless of whether or not a student has an IEP in order to better align supports to best practices and increase the achievement of all students.

At the secondary level similar challenges exist. Most students with disabilities are not mastering grade level content and their extra help comes from staff who typically do not have deep content expertise.

DMC recommended two critical shifts in service delivery in the 2012 review:

1. Expand reading supports for elementary students who struggle from teachers skilled in the teaching of reading
2. At the secondary level, increase time on task with content-strong teachers for students who struggle in math and English

Over the past several years, the district has made significant progress in implementing the first shift at the elementary level and creating opportunities for students at the middle school to receive additional support from highly skilled teachers of reading and content-strong teachers. With the goal of providing reading instruction from teachers who are highly skilled and trained in the teaching of reading, NFPS has added reading staff at all schools.

Purpose of this report

The goal of the current 2014-15 study is to understand the progress the district has made in supporting struggling students since the 2012 study. Reviewing progress to date provides an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned and plan for any needed course corrections. The process will highlight the district's successes as well as identify pain points and areas for continued improvement, in three key areas:

- **Status of implementation:** The difference between the success and failure of a plan often does not lie in its conception or merit, but in its execution. The current 2014-15 study will provide the district with detailed information needed to understand and assess implementation of the two major recommendations from the 2012 study.
- **Staff roles, responsibilities, and assignments:** The study will also provide in-depth information about how staff members spend their time. Detailed staffing information will allow the district to create common guidelines for service delivery and building assignments across the district. These efforts will contribute to greater equity among staff and ensure all students are receiving the most effective and cost-effective support possible.
- **Continuous improvement of the teaching and learning plan:** The research will also help facilitate ongoing discussions on best-practice service delivery models and approaches to raising student achievement, building off of the 2012 study. Again in the spirit of continuous improvement, this fine-grain level of data will allow the district to fine-tune its approach at this critical stage in implementation.

Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this study was as follows:

1. Determine staff to be included in the schedule sharing

DMC worked with district leadership to decide which staff should be included in the study to better understand how they spend their time supporting students and with other responsibilities. Study participants included all staff who work with struggling students, both with and without IEPs. The following 11 staff roles were included in the survey:

- Behavior specialists
- Instructional coaches
- Occupational therapists
- Paraprofessionals
- Physical therapists
- Reading teachers
- School psychologists
- Social workers
- Special education teachers
- Speech and language therapists
- Substance abuse counselors

2. Collect typical weekly schedule from each staff member

All selected staff who work with struggling students were requested to share their actual schedule for the week of April 28th for the high school and the week of May 19th for all other schools. Staff received an email invitation to share their schedule on an online tool, dmPlanning®, and were provided one week to complete the process. Technical support was offered via email and phone.

The majority of all staff who were asked to share their schedules did so. Of the 86.8 staff FTE who were invited to share their schedules, 77 participated and only 5.8 FTE were excluded because of insufficient data. Fully, 82% of requested staff schedules are included in this analysis.

3. Analyze the data

All schedules were entered into a database and analyzed in a number of ways. The analysis helps answer questions such as:

- How much time is devoted to supporting students, attending meetings, doing paperwork, and other tasks?
- What topics are being supported?
- How many students are being supported at a time?
- How much variation or consistency is there between staff with like roles?

4. Interview district personnel to understand roles and responsibilities and the current state of opportunity implementation

DMC interviewed district leaders and staff including the superintendent, school leaders, academic leadership, Pupil Personnel Services leaders, special education and general education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related services providers. The interviews allowed DMC to gain a deeper understanding of how the district currently serves and supports students who struggle, including students with disabilities.

Interviews also provided staff with an opportunity to describe the work they do every day. Staff shared insights into current practices within the district, highlighting both areas of success and potential areas for improvement. This inclusive process was beneficial to both staff and district leaders.

5. Identify potential opportunities

A great deal of data was collected through the schedule sharing and focus groups. DMC analyzed this information from this collective work to create actionable opportunities for raising achievement, increasing equity, and improving staffing decisions. This report outlines a short list of the most impactful opportunities.

Next Steps

As the district continues to move forward on implementing these opportunities, it will be important that the appropriate systems and structures exist to ensure success of the work. To help enable this success, several key implementation considerations have been outlined in this report, which serve as the recommended next steps for the district.

Background

The 2012 study and the current 2014-2015 study both focus on the critical areas of elementary reading and secondary English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Mastering these foundational skills can set students up for success long after they leave school. As the district implements its plan to support struggling students in these areas, the first step is to understand the district's current performance to identify student need.

Elementary reading

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Writing, social studies, and science cannot be mastered without strong reading skills. Even modern math is full of word problems; reading and math success are highly correlated. Based on the work of the National Reading Panel (NRP), the What Works Clearinghouse, and the experience of best-practice districts, a proven plan for teaching reading to struggling students includes:

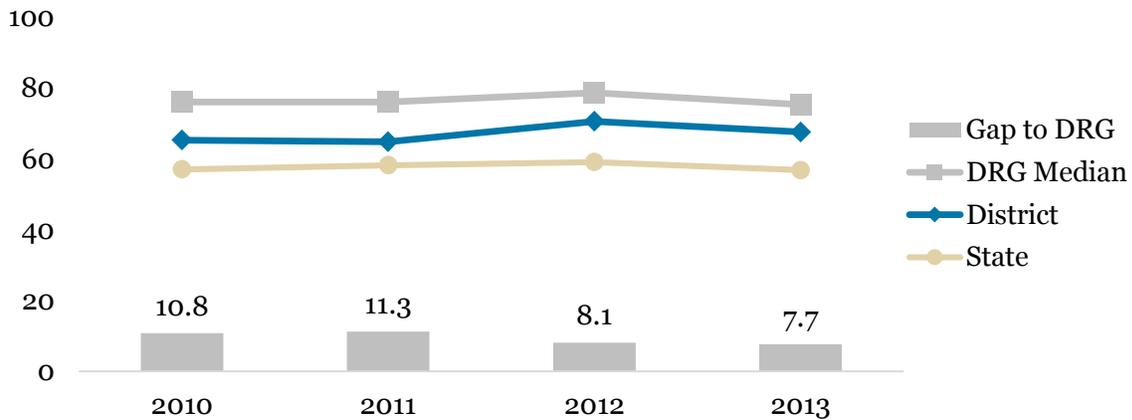
1. Balanced instruction in the five areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as part of a 90-minute/day literacy block.
2. Explicit instruction in phonics in the early grades and comprehension in the later grades.
3. Clear and rigorous grade-level expectations for reading proficiency (e.g., specific DRA scores expected of all students at the beginning, middle and end of each grade level).
4. Frequent measurement of student achievement and growth, influencing instruction and intervention (at minimum three times per year, preferably more).
5. Early identification of struggling readers, starting in kindergarten.
6. Immediate and intensive additional instruction for struggling readers, averaging 30 minutes a day and using more than one strategy.
7. Remediation and intervention that are seamlessly connected to each day's full class instruction.
8. A skilled teacher trained in reading instruction.

New Fairfield Public Schools' current approach to elementary reading is working for most students. The district consistently outperforms the state in terms of student achievement on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), by approximately 10% points. However, the district does not outperform other districts in the state that are of similar size and community demographics. Figure below compares the district to its District Reference Group (DRG) in terms of student attainment of the Goal level.

Note: District Reference Groups are determined by the Connecticut State Department of Education and are defined as "classification system in which districts that have public school students with similar socioeconomic status (SES) and need are grouped together."

Achievement Comparison, 3rd Grade Reading CMT (2010-2013)

District Data vs. District Reference Group (DRG)



Note: The CMT and CAPT Goal level reflect grade-level standards. It is more demanding than the Proficient level, but not as high as the Advanced level.

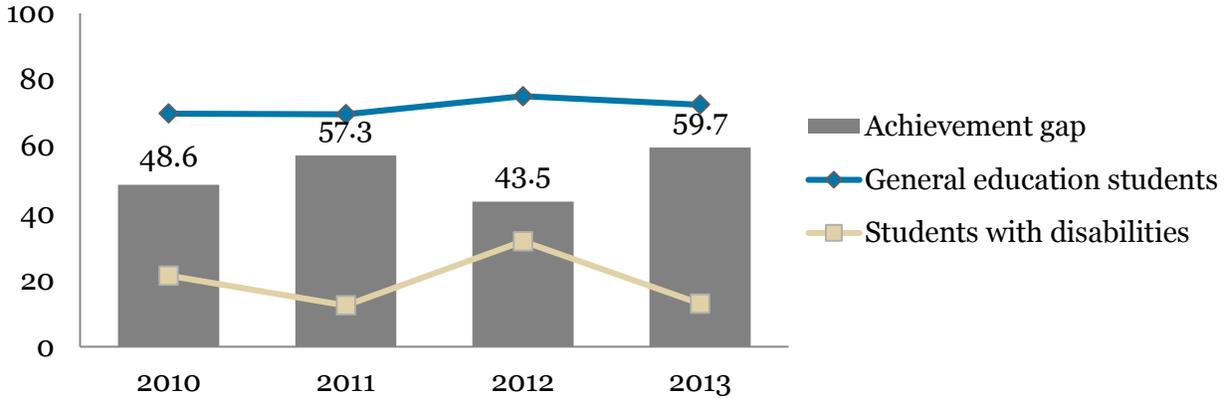
- In 2013, New Fairfield Public School underperformed its peer districts by nearly 8% points in the critical area of 3rd grade reading
- 68% of students achieved the Goal level or better, suggesting that almost one in every three students struggle to read

While Goal level reflects grade-level standards, with the transition to Common Core and Smarter Balance assessments the numbers of students who struggle may be understated using current achievement results.

Students with IEPs are far more likely to struggle in reading than students without IEPs. This trend is typical of virtually all districts in the nation. However, the district has not made significant progress in narrowing the gap.

Achievement Gap, 3rd Grade Reading CMT (2010-2013)

3rd Grade Students without IEPs vs. Students with IEPs



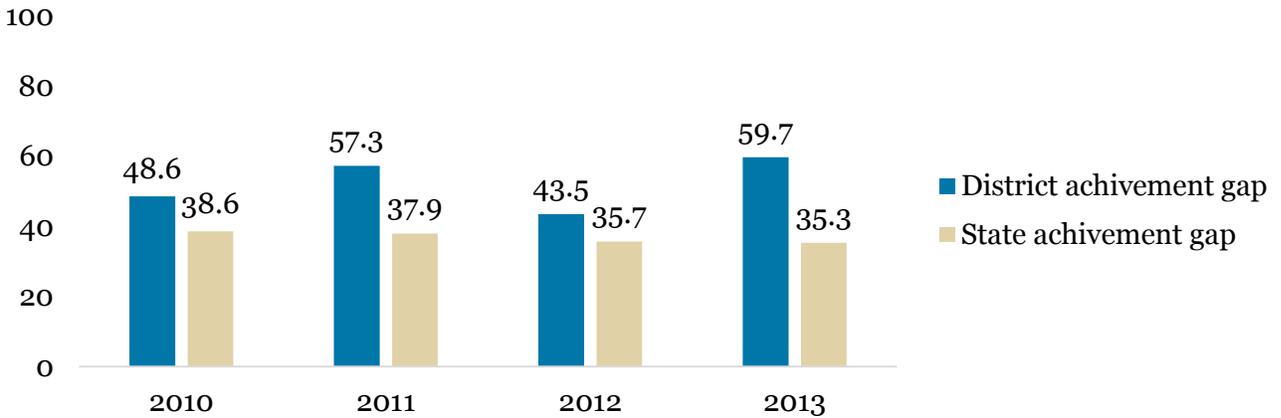
Note: The figures above are based on analysis of publically-available data given the small sample size of students with disabilities and must be confirmed with internal district data.

- In 2013, 13% of students with disabilities earned Goal or above in 3rd grade reading
- Since 2010, there has been an achievement gap of at least 40 points, increasing to almost 60 points in 2013

Furthermore, the district’s special education achievement gap is greater than the state’s.

Achievement Gap, 3rd Grade Reading CMT (2010-2013)

% Point Achievement Gap between Students without IEPs and Students with IEPs (Goal or Above)



- The district’s achievement gap between general education students and students with IEPs has been greater than 40 points since 2010 and at least 5 points larger than the state

Secondary ELA and math

Helping secondary struggling students reach and exceed grade-level expectations is a unique challenge: by the time these students reach middle or high school they often have significant gaps in key foundational concepts, perhaps hold misunderstanding about some material, and must master even more complex content.

At the secondary level, struggling students most often receive additional support in one of a few ways:

- **During core instruction:** Struggling learners may receive additional support from a teaching assistant, paraprofessional, special education teacher, co-teaching, etc. while staying in the same classroom as their peers.
- **Instead of core instruction:** Struggling students, for example, may not be assigned a regular English and/or math class and be taught in a “replacement” class, typically with a special education teacher who has no formal training on the subject or a low level general education class that covers less content with less rigor.
- **As homework help:** Struggling students may receive additional supervised time to complete assignments, but this time is focused on assignment completion rather than pre-teaching and teaching content and un-teaching any misconceptions to ensure students have a deep understanding.

In each case, the struggling student receives different, but not more instructional time. Additionally, in each case the extra help is typically provided by staff without deep expertise, training, and mastery of the content.

One alternative strategy for supporting struggling students is to provide extra time in core subjects, called “double-time” instruction. Double-time is defined as an extra period (typically an additional 30-45 minutes) in a core subject every day, and is most commonly offered in ELA and math. In the double time model instruction is provided by a content-strong teacher, typically a general education math or English teacher.

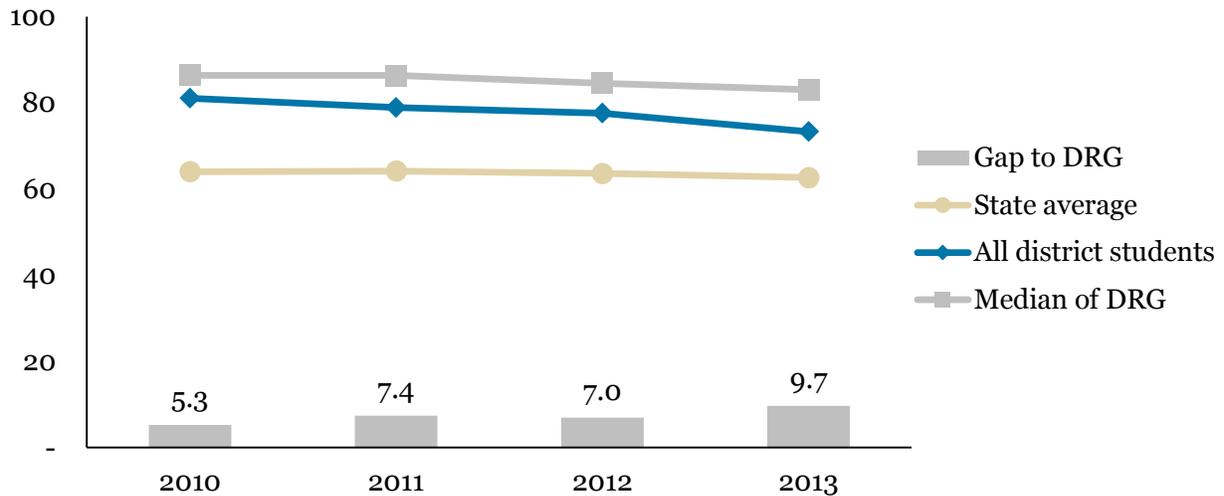
Best practices for implementing this approach include:

1. Make general education the preferred setting with content strong staff.
2. Embrace standards based education.
3. Provide extra time, a lot of extra time.
4. Maintain same standards as general education.
5. Make extensive use of student achievement data which influences instruction.
6. Believe that students with special needs can achieve at high levels.
7. Foster collaboration between special education and general education.
8. Embed study skills in core classes.

Similar to the elementary level, the current secondary level at New Fairfield outperforms the state, but underperforms the median of the Districts Reference Group (DRG). Figure below compares the district to its DRG in terms of student attainment of the Goal level.

Achievement Comparison, 6th-8th and 10th Grades Math CMT and CAPT (2010-2013)

District Data vs. State Average and District Reference Group (DRG)

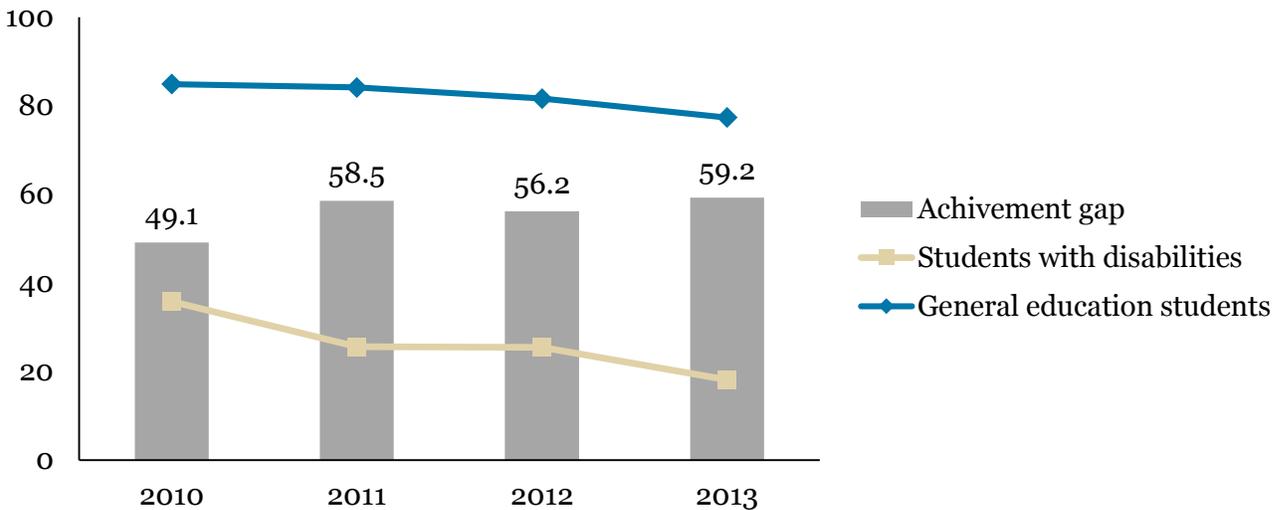


- In the most recent publically-available state assessment, 73% of all secondary students earned Goal or better, suggesting that almost one in every four students struggle with math at the secondary level
- The district outperformed the state proficiency rate of 63%, however it underperformed the DRG rate of 83%
- Similar trends exist at the secondary level in ELA

When data are examined to compare outcomes of students with and without IEPs, a significant gap is evident. While proficiency rates of general education students have remained consistently high since 2010, proficiency rates for students with IEPs have decreased.

Achievement Gap, 6th-8th and 10th Grades Math CMT and CAPT (2010-2013)

Secondary Students without IEPs vs. Students with IEPs



Note: The figures above are based on analysis of publically-available data given the small sample size of students with disabilities and must be confirmed with internal district data.

- Proficiency rates for students with IEPs ranges from 18% to 36%, meaning the gap with general education ranged from 49% in 2010 to 59% in 2013
- Analysis of secondary ELA scores showed similar trends

Given the current number of students who struggle to read and the increasing rigor of the Common Core, this study takes a deeper look at how core instruction and interventions are delivered across the district to help all struggling students (with or without IEPs) meet standards.

After interviews and data collection, this study has identified the following commendations and opportunities. The opportunities outline high-impact actions the district can take to address the district’s need to raise the achievement of struggling learners while controlling costs. Successfully addressing these opportunities and raising student achievement will require consistent and thoughtful implementation, as well as regular monitoring to ensure effectiveness.

Commendations

New Fairfield Public Schools has many practices worthy of commendation. As the district continues to implement its new approach for supporting struggling students, they will provide a strong foundation for continuous improvement.

1. District leadership has embraced a bold teaching and learning plan to support all students who struggle.

New Fairfield Public Schools is committed to serving students through a spirit of continuous improvement and subscribes to the following core principles, which align to the best practices described above:

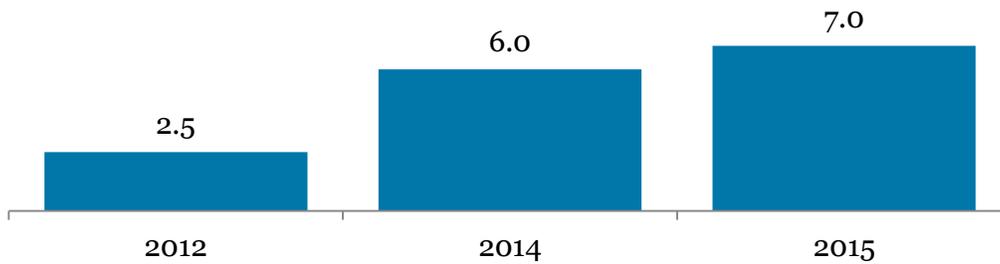
- Collaboration of staff, administrators, parents, and the community is key to success
- All students can achieve high standards given time and support
- Every administrator is an instructional leader
- Every student will be taught by highly effective teachers
- Data guide instruction and interventions
- Everyone contributes to do whatever it takes to ensure each student thrives in the NFPS

In keeping with the core principles, the District leadership has outlined an ambitious plan to ensure that all students receive the support they need in order to read and achieve on grade level. The teaching and learning plan seeks to ensure that all struggling students, with and without IEPs, receive *extra* support. At the elementary level, struggling students will receive support from a teacher who is both highly skilled and trained in the teaching of reading. At the secondary level, teachers with deep content knowledge will provide additional support to students.

2. The district has made significant progress in expanding support for students who struggle to read, especially at the elementary level.

Over the past years, the district has made progress at the elementary level implementing its plan to support struggling students. Through attrition of some special education positions, NFPS leaders have worked diligently to reallocate funds to create reading interventionist positions. Since the first review, the district has doubled its number of reading teacher positions.

Reading Teacher FTE



- Since 2012, NFPS has added 4.5 FTE reading teacher positions at the elementary level
- NFPS has also added one reading teacher at the high school
- Though not included in figure, NFPS has also added a reading coach at the middle school

3. Scheduling changes at the elementary and middle school have added extra instructional time for students with their content-strong teachers.

At the elementary school significant changes to the master schedule have been made for the 2015-16 school year to ensure that more time can be provided to struggling students. This master schedule will allow support staff time to be better scheduled, as there are more opportunities for intervention and extra instruction. It also ensures that all students receive a minimum of a 90 minute literacy block. In total, the new master schedules accomplish all the key goals of New Fairfield:

- Uninterrupted ELA and Math periods
- Intervention/Enrichment period for all students, every day
- At least 90 minutes literacy and 60 minutes math daily, K-8
- Common planning time and data team time for all teachers
- Student equity in the number of minutes of instruction received
- Mindful of special education scheduling (allow enough pull out period through the day)
- 45 minutes prep minimum for all teachers
- 30 minutes lunch for all teachers (uninterrupted, duty free)

At the middle school, key changes to the schedules allowed for additional instructional time. The schedule has been revised to ensure that students receive additional remediation and intervention support provided by content-strong core teachers in all subjects.

The middle school has also added time with content-strong teachers through “Excel” periods. Every cycle, each class meets for an additional Excel period with the class teacher, thus every eight days, for example, students get an extra period of math. This additional time is used to provide targeted support to students. Instruction for struggling students focuses on re-teaching material.

Looking toward the 2015-2016 school year, leadership at the middle school continues to refine the master schedule to maximize students’ abilities to receive necessary enrichment and intervention.

4. Staff members demonstrate passion for their students’ academic, social, and emotional successes.

Staff members in the New Fairfield Public Schools are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities thrive. Being an educator of students with disabilities is a demanding job, especially during times of tight budgets and rising expectations. Most staff members are committed to working in New Fairfield Public Schools and improving outcomes for all students. They have confidence in their colleagues and take great pride in their students. Above all else, educators across the district expressed a genuine desire to do what is best for their students.

5. The district leadership has a sincere desire to reflect on their practices and improve the level of service provided to students with special needs.

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, nearly all participants welcomed the chance to reflect on their practice and search for ways to improve. Leaders were not defensive nor did they shy away from discussing shortcomings. Nearly all expressed pride in their district, but also a deep desire to improve.

6. The district identifies students for special education services at a reasonable rate.

Identifying a student for special education can have significant implications for his or her learning and the school district’s budget. In the district, students are identified for special education services at a rate that is lower than both the state and the national averages. In interviews, staff also indicated pride and satisfaction with recent efforts to manage the identification process more closely and effectively

Identification Rate for Special Education

As of July 2014



Opportunities

As noted above, there are a number of commendations for New Fairfield Public Schools. In the spirit of continuous improvement, though, several opportunities have also been identified. It should be noted that some of these opportunities have been informed by the time study collected in spring of 2014. As the District received an advance copy of these findings, work is already underway to address these opportunities and, as also noted below, in several cases significant progress has been made.

1. Continue to expand reading supports for struggling students at the elementary level.

2. Continue to expand supports for students who struggle in math and English at the secondary level.

3. Ease the burdens on special educators by ensuring that the new support from reading teachers and content-strong teachers is in place of other supports, not in addition to existing efforts.

4. Increase the amount of time speech and language staff spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

5. Refine building allocations and IEP process-related responsibilities to increase the amount of counseling support social workers and school psychologists provide to students.

1. Continue to expand reading supports for struggling students at the elementary level.

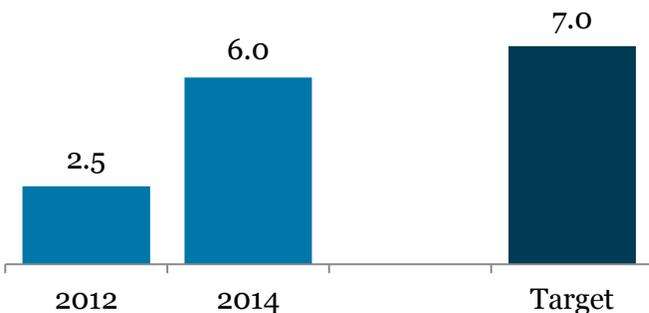
1a. Ensure all struggling students receive support from teachers who are highly skilled in the teaching of reading.

Research has shown overwhelmingly that early intervention in reading can change the trajectory of a student's life; getting low-income students to read at grade level by third grade closes the graduation gap with their wealthy peers and all but assures that they will graduate on time. For any student it is the gateway to all other learning. If students are still struggling to read at the end of third grade, it can be a lifelong challenge.

For students who struggle in reading, research indicates that the specific training of the instructor has significant bearing on the student's likelihood of achieving grade level mastery. Typically, a teacher who has engaged in extensive training and study of a subject is more likely to have intricate working knowledge of the topic and an ability to understand and explain the key skills to a struggling student in a way that will lead to mastery. Often, special educators have deep expertise in pedagogy but limited background in the teaching of reading. Districts that have made the most significant gains among struggling readers have done so by providing struggling students with teachers skilled in the teaching of reading.

Since 2012, the district has made changes to staffing and service delivery based on the premise that effective instruction from teachers highly skilled at and trained in reading will raise the achievement of struggling students. At the elementary level, the staffing model has started to realign to provide additional support from reading teachers. Setting a target of one highly-effective reading teacher for approximately 15% of elementary students (total enrollment, not just students who struggle to read), DMC estimated that the district would need 7.0 teachers of reading to provide supplemental support to all students who struggle. This typically results in a caseload of 30 – 40 struggling readers per 1.0 FTE reading teacher.

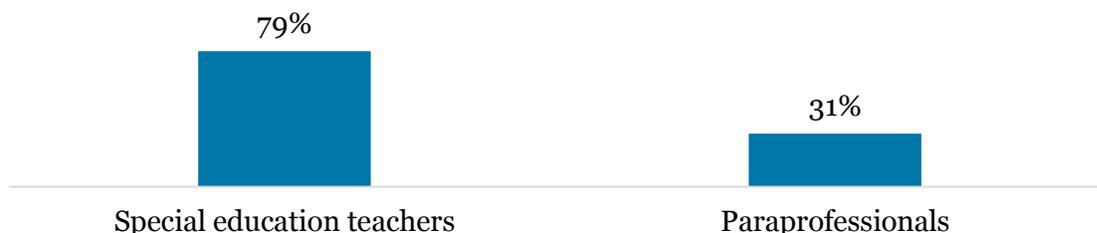
Reading Teacher FTE



Despite the additional support from reading teachers, other teachers who may not be highly skilled in the teaching of reading – such as special education teachers and paraprofessionals – continue to provide significant academic – including reading support – to students.

% of Special Education Teacher and Paraprofessional Time Spent on Academic Instruction

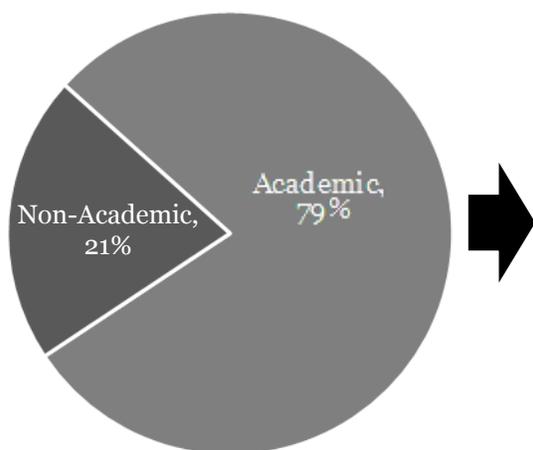
Elementary Level Only



Special education teachers play an important role in supporting students with disabilities, however they may or may not have had significant training in teaching reading and may or may not be highly-skilled in the practice. In New Fairfield Public Schools, as special education teachers at the elementary level spend almost 80% of their time supporting students in reading, it is key to ensure that the strongest teachers of reading are the ones providing reading instruction to struggling students and/or that training is provided to these staff.

Special Education Teachers Instructional Topic (10 FTE)

Elementary Level Only



Academic topic	Elementary
Reading	32%
Math	26%
Writing	20%
Total academic instruction	79%

Note: Academic and non-academic support is equal to 100% of student support (direct service) time; may not sum due to rounding.

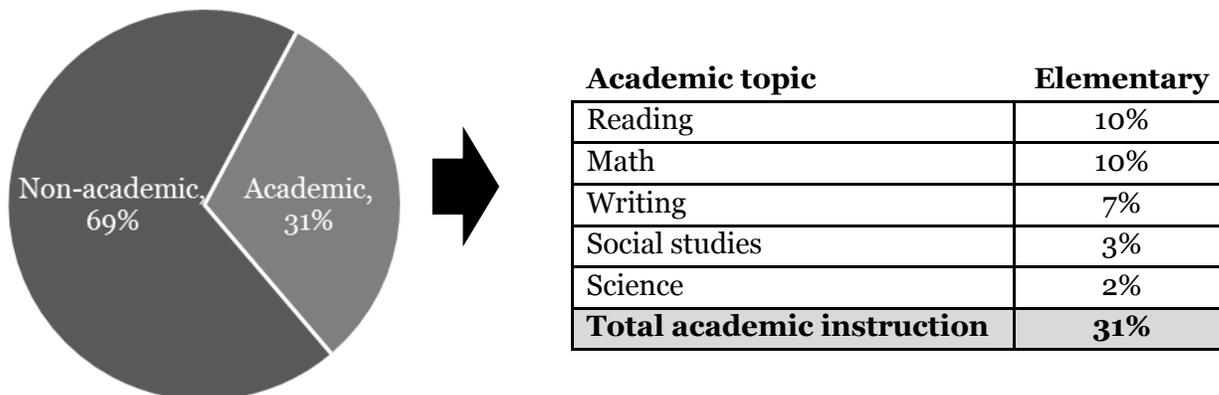
Interviews with special education teachers and reading teachers confirmed the data. Special educators explained that students frequently receive reading from their special education teacher, as reading support was written into the students’ IEPs. Additionally, this support from special education teachers is sometimes in addition to support from the reading teacher.

Paraprofessionals also provide academic support to students, although this has been significantly reduced in recent years. In interviews, paraprofessionals explained that they provide more behavioral and non-academic support than in years past.

- “I used to do a lot of reading with students but more and more other teachers are doing that. I am mostly responsible for behavior.”

Paraprofessionals Instruction Topic (12.2 FTE)

Elementary Level Only



Although the district has added new reading teacher positions, some struggling students continue to receive reading intervention and support from staff members who may or may not always be highly-skilled reading teachers. While making changes to the staffing model is an important – and difficult – first step, it alone is not sufficient to change student outcomes. Ensuring effective implementation will increase the likelihood that the new reading teacher positions have the expected and desired impact on student achievement. It will also ease the burden on staff and build buy in for the new approach.

1b. Ensure students receive additional instructional time provided by highly-effective reading teachers.

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

In New Fairfield Public Schools, interventions for struggling students are often provided during the core reading block, not in addition to core instruction. This is true for both students with and without disabilities.

It should be noted that the district has recently made significant efforts to address this opportunity. An important change for upcoming school years is the creation of new master schedules at the elementary schools. These schedules allow for dedicated intervention times, so that struggling students can receive additional instruction without being pulled out of core instruction. Going forward, the district should continue to ensure all schedules are thoughtfully designed to similarly allow for this instruction.

1c. Maximize the time reading teachers spend with students and the number of students supported at any given time.

Building off of recent efforts, the district has an opportunity to maximize the impact of the new reading teachers. Currently, implementation and logistical challenges prevent reading teachers from being fully utilized in their role. Furthermore, the service delivery model has not fully shifted in line with the changes in staffing. By more tightly managing implementation and logistics, including the time reading teachers spend with students and the number of students they support, the district can boost the effect of reading teacher support.

Time with students

As the district shifts its service delivery model to ensure that reading support is delivered by highly-effective reading teachers, it will be important to ensure that these reading teachers maximize their time spent with students. On average, reading teachers spend just over half of their time directly serving students.

Reading Teacher Activities

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

Coaching/ staff development	11%
Attend meeting	8%
Planning/ materials preparation	8%
Personal lunch	6%
Creating/ monitoring reading initiatives	5%
Conducting or scoring assessments	0%
Under reported	8%
Total indirect service	46%

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

- The percentage of time reading teachers spent with students is 54% of the contracted work week
- As a point of comparison, a general education teacher might typically spend 75%-85% of their week working directly with students
- The district's reading teachers reported spending significant time on coaching and staff development as well as in meetings and prepping materials

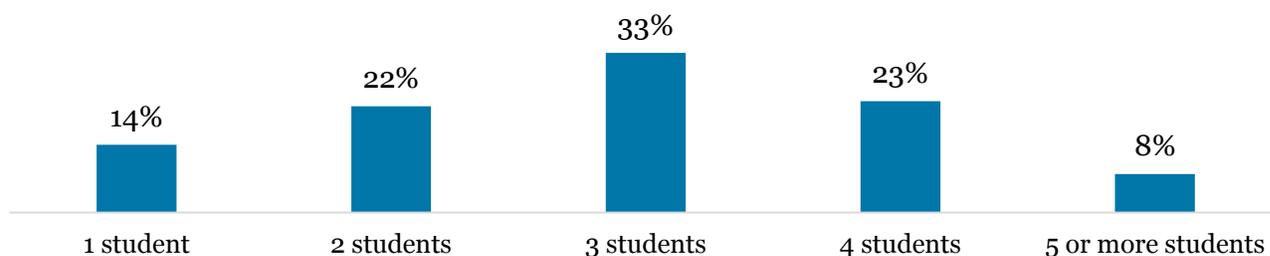
All activities are important, but if the goal is to provide struggling students with support from reading teachers, it is critical for district and schools leaders to ensure that other responsibilities are focused and prioritized so they do not limit specialists' reach with students. Re-thinking the schedule and non-teaching demands of reading teachers in the district could allow these experts to spend more of their week helping students.

Group size

Research has shown that in comparison to intervention group size, the training and background of the instructor, the length of intervention time provided, and the type of instruction presented during intervention, are more significant factors for increasing student achievement.¹ As a result, proactively managing intervention group size becomes a mechanism by which a district can expand the reach of its highly skilled teachers of reading. Studies by the What Works Clearinghouse have shown that small instructional groups of up to five students have been as effective as one-on-one instruction.² Similarly, the National Institute of Health has shown that groups of three students can be as effective as one-on-one instruction, and that even groups of up to ten students can provide benefits, although with smaller outcomes on achievement. (Notably, this study did not test or include groups of 4-9 students).³ More specifically, the RTI Action Network recommends utilizing groups of 5-8 students for the majority of struggling of students (~15% of all students receiving 30 minutes of additional instruction 5x a week), and recommends smaller groups of 1-3 students for only students with severe reading disabilities (approximately ~3% of all students).⁴ In keeping with this research, an average group size of five students is recommended, as it allows students to succeed while providing interventions in a manner which maximizes available resources.

That said, New Fairfield Public School's schedule analysis and interviews with staff indicate that the district prioritizes small group sizes for reading intervention in accordance with Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). Additionally, the scheduling challenges likely make grouping students with similar needs even more challenging for reading teachers. Schedule analysis showed that 14% of reading teachers' time was spent on one-on-one instruction with nearly 70% of their time with groups of three students or fewer with an average group size of 2.9.

Current Reading Teacher Group Size



Increasing time with students for reading teachers and bringing group size in line with what the research suggests, could greatly increase the reach of the district's reading teachers. A best practice scenario that increases time spent with students and group size could more than double the services provided in a typical week.

Reading Teacher Student Support Level in a Typical Week

	Current levels	Best Practice
% of reading teacher time spent with students	54%	75%
Implied reading teacher hours spent with students per week	19.8	27.5
Average group size	2.9	5.0
Student hours per week	57	138

Note: Hours per week calculation based on the contracted work week for an elementary teacher in the district of 36.67 hours.

2. Continue to expand supports for students who struggle in math and English at the secondary level.

2a. Continue to shift instructional support for struggling students to content-strong teachers in math and English.

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

While the middle school has created some opportunities for all students to receive extra help from content-strong teachers, there is an opportunity to expand the programming, especially for students with IEPs. Currently at the middle school, students have two opportunities for extra help with content-strong teachers.

1. Excel periods are an additional, content-specific, period built into students' schedule every day with the core content teacher. Students have one Excel period each cycle (every eight days). The Excel periods are meant to provide time for students' re-teaching, pre-teaching, and targeted support on core skills.
2. Professional Learning Community, or "PLC" time, is a longer portion of time when students engage in more project-based learning and receive support from content-strong teachers.

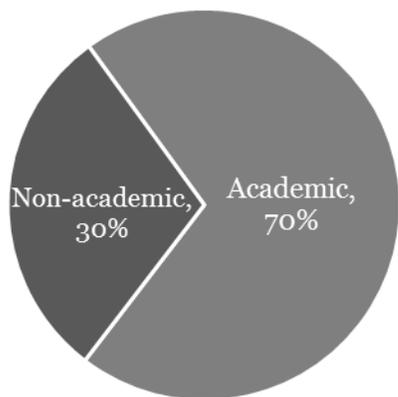
Interviews in the spring of 2014 suggested that many students with IEPs, however, receive instruction from special educators during Excel and PLC time or are often times pulled out to work with paraprofessionals.

Additionally, at the high school level, students with IEPs are scheduled into directed study classes instead of a study hall, the typical programming for students without IEPs. Interviews suggested that these directed study classes are often overseen by special educators or paraprofessionals who may or may not have content expertise. Interviews also suggested that these classes are not content-specific so often function more as "homework help" because the teachers have to address students' struggles in multiple content areas simultaneously.

At the secondary level, special education teachers spend significant time providing academic support to students, primarily in math and reading.

Special Education Teachers (Inclusion) Instructional Topic

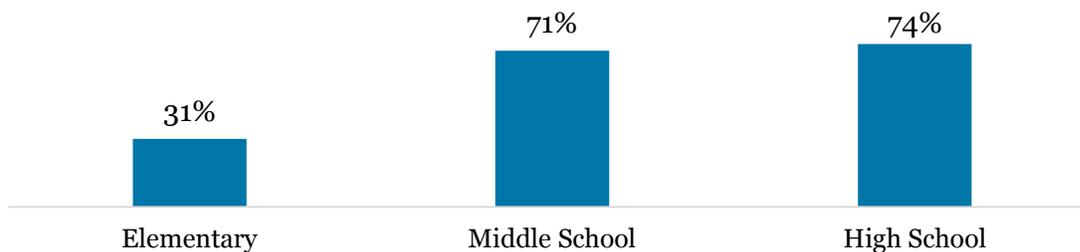
Secondary Level Only



Academic topic	Middle	High
Reading	31%	28%
Math	32%	22%
Social studies	4%	7%
Science	6%	5%
Writing	6%	3%
Total academic instruction	78%	64%

Schedule analysis shows that the district has largely made the transition from academic support being provided by paraprofessionals to reading teachers at the elementary level. At the secondary level, however, the district has not made as significant a shift. While paraprofessionals at the elementary level reported spending only approximately 30% of their time delivering academic instruction, paraprofessionals at the middle school and high school level reported spending more than twice that, at 71% and 74% of their time, respectively.

% of Paraprofessional Time Spent on Academic Instruction by Level

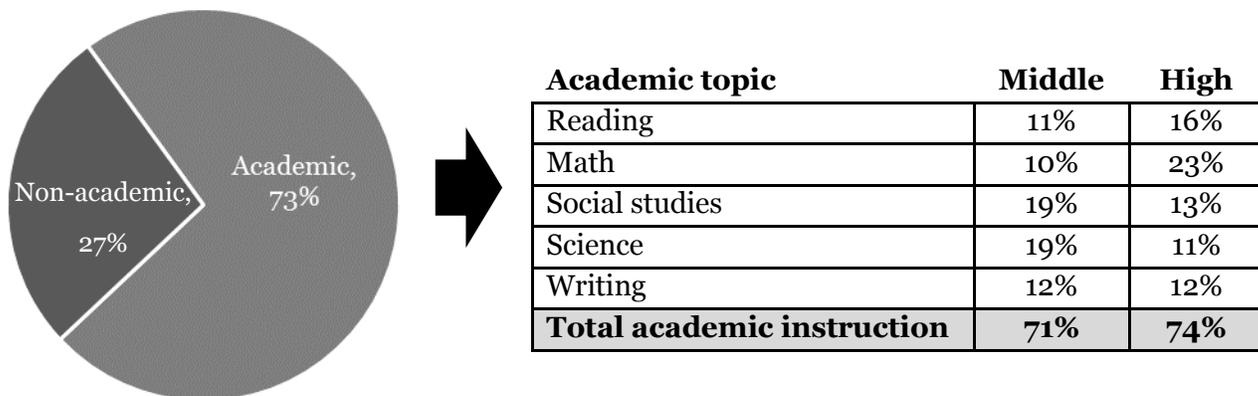


Paraprofessionals at the secondary level shared during our interviews that providing academic support is a major component of their work. Given the focus on academic support, the paraprofessionals have specialized – either focusing on English/social studies or math/science. Even with this focus, paraprofessionals reported feeling overwhelmed by how much content they were expected to cover and support students, sharing:

- “I am pushing into academic classes to support students and there is so much content to cover. When am I supposed to find time to read the novel for 12th grade ELA?”

Secondary Paraprofessional Instructional Topic

Secondary Level Only



Paraprofessionals can play an important role in helping many students with disabilities participate in the general education classroom. They also play a critical role in supporting some students with severe disabilities. However paraprofessional support can sometimes be harmful to student achievement, independence, and socialization, particularly for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. Research suggests that struggling students benefit most from instruction provided by staff with subject-specific training. Given that most paraprofessionals are not trained as teachers, it is not reasonable to expect them to provide academic support in critical core content areas, such as reading, science and math.

Given this, the district has an opportunity to further shift paraprofessional support to content-strong interventionists at the secondary level. This work may include:

- Ensuring that the middle and high schools have sufficient staffing of content-strong interventionists
- Working with secondary paraprofessionals and principals to revise the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for paraprofessionals in supporting struggling students
- Providing scheduling and implementation support as needed

The district could strengthen its current supports for students who struggle at the secondary level by providing consistent content-strong supports to all students who struggle, both with and without IEPs. These content-strong teachers could be drawn from both special education and general education but would need deep mastery of the subject in which the student is struggling.

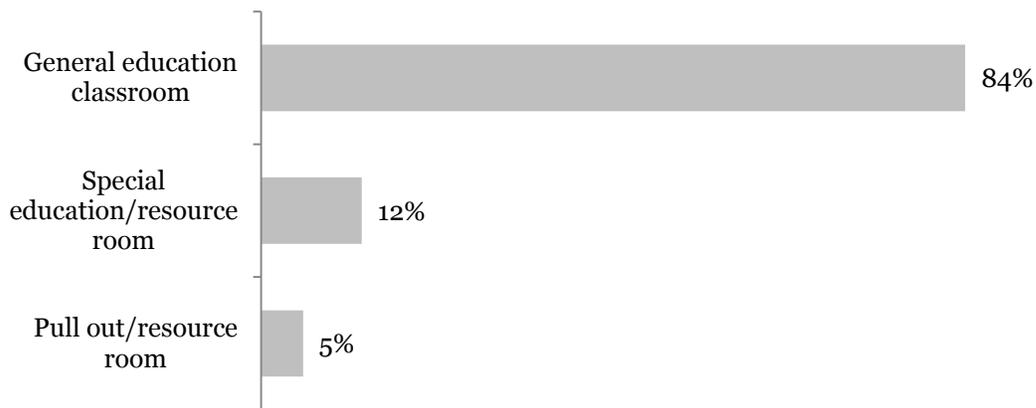
2b. Consider shifting the district’s theory of action from intensity of support to extra time with content-strong staff.

In New Fairfield Public School, support for students with IEPs often occurs in the form of “increased intensity,” rather than extended time; in this model, students are assigned multiple adults to support them at the same time (e.g., collaboration, 1-to-1 support), instead of getting extended time on task. Shifting away from a high-intensity model of student support can maximize student learning and free up funds to support the use of additional content-strong teachers and additional time for learning.

In the district, co-teaching and push-in support are common forms of special education service delivery; approximately 84% of special educators’ direct service time is spent pushing into a general education class-room, often times co-teaching.

Percentage of Direct Service Time Spent by Special Education Teachers

Secondary Level



National research, however, suggests that co-teaching seldom raises student achievement. In his 2009 review of educational research, John Hattie notes that no studies have shown student gains from co-teaching and that on average it actually produced less or equal learning than a class with a single teacher, while costing twice as much.⁵ This is because while co-teaching represents higher “intensity” of support (i.e., multiple adults providing support at the same time), it does not mean extended time on task with a content-strong teacher for the struggling student.

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

During interviews, special education and general education teachers shared about the challenges they face with co-teaching. Special educators often do not have time in their day to collaborate with the general education teacher. They explained that, “because I can’t plan with the general educator, there is often times not a clear role for me in the classroom. I wind up working with students when I can and redirecting them, not really teaching.”

Since the co-teaching model does not provide extended time on task for students and is difficult to execute effectively, there is an opportunity for the district to reassess the model and reallocate funds to support a model that provides additional time with content-strong teachers.

Providing extended time on task with content-strong teachers would reduce the need for special education teachers to support students academically. This strategy generally yields higher achievement in districts that have employed it. Using this strategy, the district could more adequately support students academically and financially this would be a cost savings, or cost neutral option.

3. Ease the burdens on special educators by ensuring that the new support from reading teachers and content-strong teachers is in place of other supports, not in addition to existing efforts.

Changes to service delivery models must go hand in hand with changes to current staff's roles and responsibilities. By adding reading teachers at the elementary level and content-strong teachers at the secondary level, the district has an opportunity to *shift* some academic support responsibilities to the new interventionists from other roles, such as special education teachers who may not be content experts. In other districts that have made significant changes to how struggling students are supported, elementary reading teachers and content-strong teachers have taken the responsibility for providing most of the academic intervention to students. In these districts, special education teachers provide targeted instruction related to other IEP goals, work with general education teachers to improve their own pedagogical practices within the core classroom, and provide support for students with more severe needs.

The schedule sharing data from special education teachers illustrates that the role of a special education teacher has not been redefined in light of adding reading teachers at the elementary level. Special education teachers continue to provide high levels of reading and math support even with new content-strong interventionists.

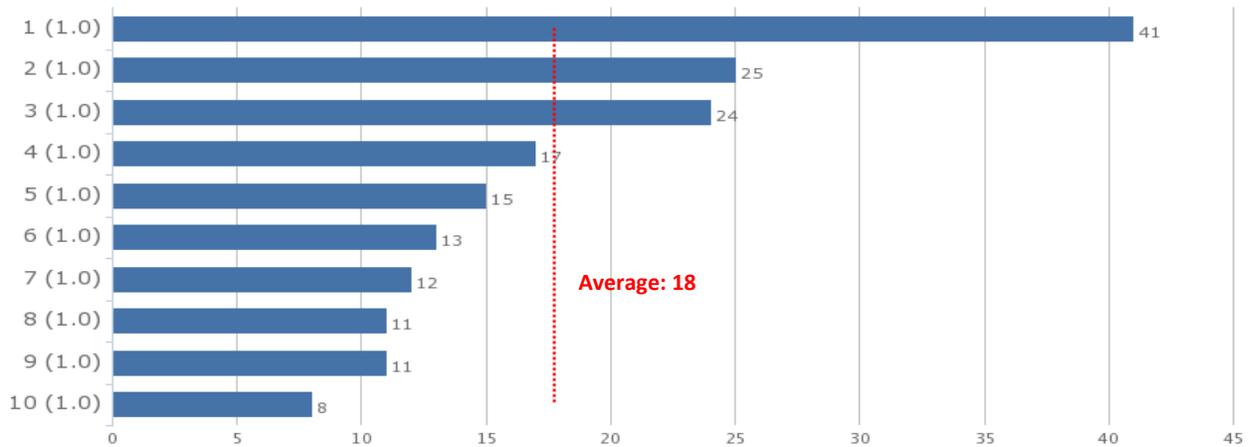
- Elementary special education teachers spend nearly 80% of their time with students providing academic instruction – primarily in the area of reading – to students with and without IEPs and secondary teachers spend 70%.
- In interviews, staff reported that some students receive academic instruction from both a special educator *and* a reading and/or math interventionist.

Special education teachers believe that they are expected to cover the same amount of student need with fewer teachers, making them feel stretched too thin. While the district reduced the special education staffing levels, it did not reduce the number of students the teachers served. Additionally, schools continued to allocate special education teachers by grade level and not student need. Given the reduction in special education teachers, this has meant that some teachers are expected to cover multiple grades. Building and meeting schedules seem to assume a one special education teacher per grade model, however. These logistical challenges and schedule limitations exacerbate the overwhelmed feeling shared by special education teachers.

- Some reported that they “have to be in two places at the same time”
- Assignments by grade – as opposed to student need – has also contributed to staff feeling overworked (“The grade I serve is needier than the other grades, but I serve all the students myself!”)
- Staff shared that their hectic schedules leave little time for collaborating with their general education and special education colleagues.
- Many special education teachers reported that they create their own schedules and caseloads, in collaboration with their colleagues, but with limited direction from central office staff.

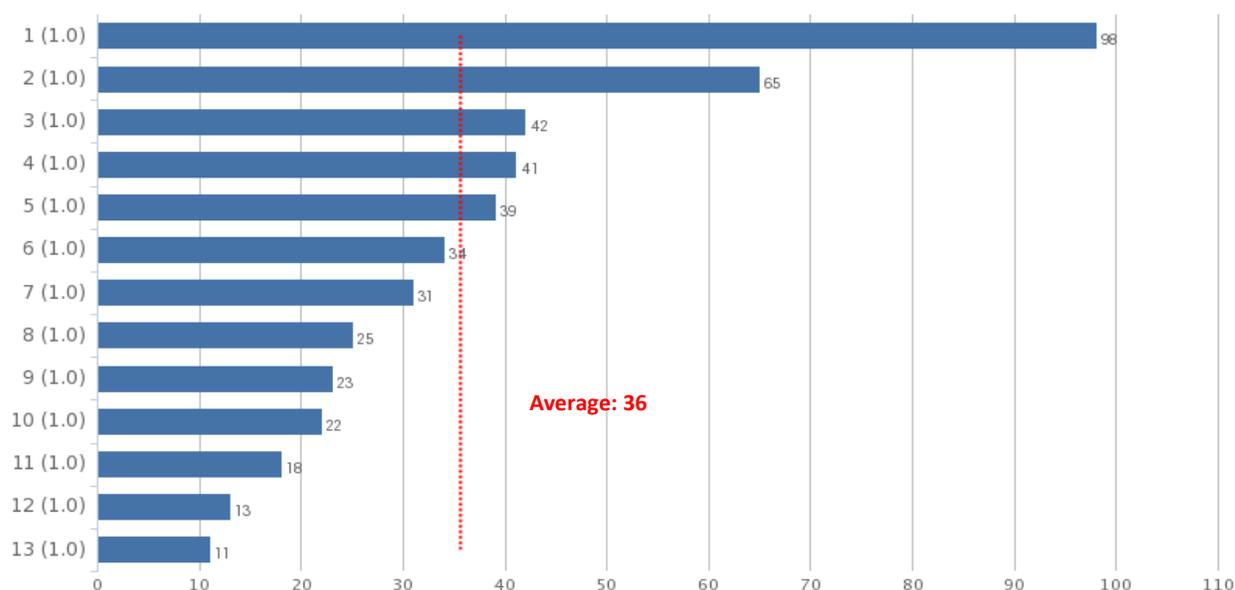
Special education teachers continue to provide high levels of academic support. In the spring of 2014, 25 special education teachers provided supports to approximately 275 students with IEPs suggesting a caseload of approximately 11 students per teacher. A caseload of 11 students would be well below the national median that is closer to 25 students, with many high-performing schools averaging 35 students per special education teacher. In contrast, data from the schedule sharing tells a different story. The actual average caseload calculated from the schedules shared by elementary special educators is 18 students, and ranges from 8 to 41 students. At the secondary level, caseloads are 36 students on average –which is twice as high as the elementary level – with a range of 11 to 98.

Elementary Special Education Teacher Reported Caseload



Note: If teachers with the largest and smallest reported caseloads are excluded, the average caseload becomes 16.

Secondary Special Education Teacher Reported Caseload



Note: If teachers with the largest and smallest reported caseloads are excluded, the average caseload becomes 32.

Interviews suggested several possible drivers for the higher-than-expected caseloads:

- Special educators are providing services to students with and without IEPs
- The co-teaching model at the secondary level means that special education teachers support a high numbers of students at one time (both students with and without IEPs)
- Scheduling and other logistical challenges may cause students to receive support from more than one special education teacher.

District Benchmarking

Although the district’s special education teacher and paraprofessional staffing levels are smaller than previous years due to attrition, the district does still employ more special education teachers and paraprofessionals than like communities. As a result, easing the burden on special education teachers should be possible through the proactive management of staffing, scheduling, and coordination of appropriate staff responsibilities.

Staffing Levels Compared to Like Communities (per 1,000 students), Adjusted for Identification Rate

	NFPS	Like Communities	Multiple
Special Education teachers	9.1	5.5	1.7X
Paraprofessionals	14.8	7.4	2.0X

Note: Like communities are districts with similar enrollment, poverty, and spending levels.

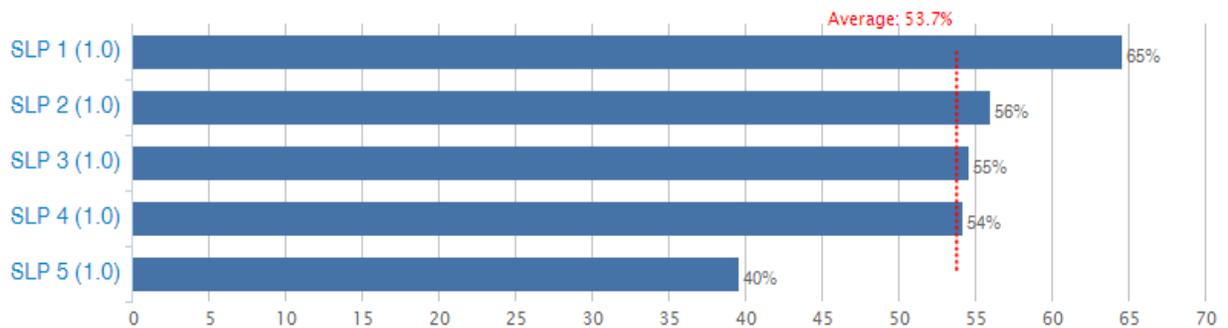
4. Increase the amount of time speech and language staff spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

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

Time with students

The amount of time spent with students is an important metric for service providers. On average, speech and language therapists in the district work with students 54% of the contracted work week and ranges from 40% to 65%. As a point of comparison, an SLP might be expected in some districts to spend 75% of their week providing direct service. The data suggests a potential opportunity for SLPs to increase direct service with students.

Speech and Language Pathologist Direct Student Support



During interviews, therapists discussed several barriers to spending more time with students. Most notably, they mentioned the difficulty in scheduling services. Staff members review the needs of students at the beginning of the year, divide up caseloads, and then build their own schedules independently. The manual scheduling can be difficult to create, especially when trying to manage the constraints across different schools (e.g., different lunch/recess times, literacy blocks). Additionally, meetings and frequent changes to daily school schedules add to the complexity of the SLPs' schedules. Staff shared that schools have all designated certain days of the week and times for PPT meetings, but meetings are often scheduled outside of the specified windows, causing the practitioners to have to juggle their schedules to ensure that students receive their services.

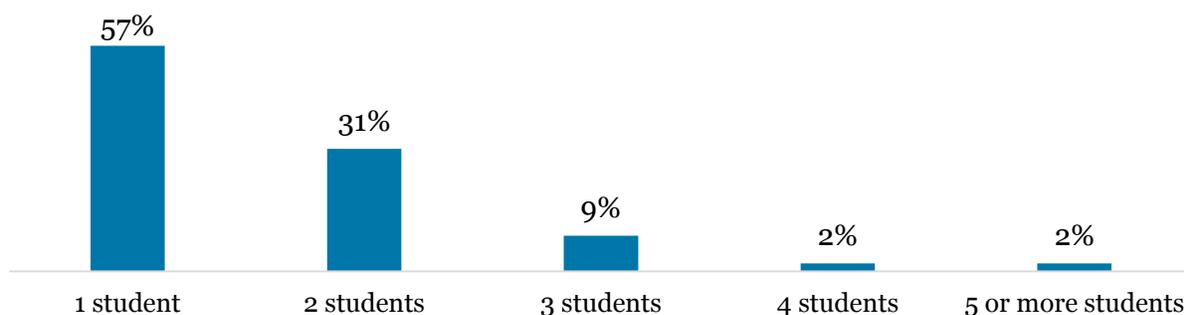
Speech and Language Pathologist Activities

Activity	% time spent
Therapy with students	54%
Total direct service	54%
Personal lunch	7%
Attend meeting (other than IEP)	5%
IEP testing/ assessment	4%
Planning/ materials preparation	4%
Paperwork/ IEP writing	3%
Assigned school duties (i.e. busy duty, lunch duty, recess, etc.)	3%
Attend meeting (IEP)	3%
Collaboration with colleagues	3%
Travel	3%
Parent communication	1%
Student observation	1%
Underreported	9%
Total indirect service	46%

Group Size

Group size is another important metric when managing speech and language pathologists staffing. The schedules shared aligned with trends discussed during staff interviews. Staff discussed the challenge of student grouping given the demands and complexity of manual scheduling. Current practices show that 57% of the direct service time is 1:1 support (55% at the elementary level and 65% at the secondary level). Additionally, the overall average group size is very low, at 1.2 students.

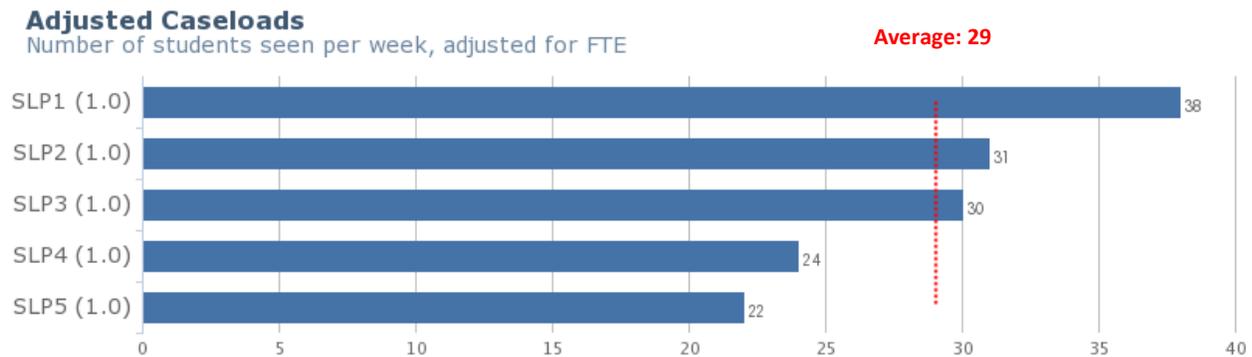
Speech and Language Pathologist Group Size



Caseload

A third important metric for managing speech and language pathologists staffing is caseload. Data from the schedule sharing showed that the average caseload for SLPs in the district was 29 students, which is well below the national average of 53 students.

Speech and Language Pathologist Adjusted Caseload



Using data to monitor SLP's time spent with students, group size, and caseload can help create more efficient schedules and thus maximize the impact of the practitioners. Maximizing impact may free up funds for the district to shift towards additional reading teachers at the elementary level and/or content-strong teachers at the secondary level.

District Benchmarking

Currently, the district has more speech and language pathologists than like communities. Taking into consideration the factors discussed - time with students, group size, and caseload – the district can proactively manage how to utilize these staff as to best serve students.

Staffing Levels Compared to Like Communities (per 1,000 students), Adjusted for Identification Rate

	NFPS	Like Communities	Multiple
Speech and language pathologist	1.8	1.2	1.5X

5. Refine building allocations and IEP process-related responsibilities to increase the amount of counseling support social workers and school psychologists provide to students.

During interviews, school and district staff expressed that the social and emotional needs of students, particularly secondary students, are growing. For social workers and school psychologists especially, this is placing ever-greater demands on their time. The district can help free up staff time to provide more counseling to students by refining their roles, responsibilities, and building allocations.

5a. Streamline the IEP process-related responsibilities to increase the amount of time psychologists can spend with students

Psychologists play an important role in supporting students both with and without IEPs in the district. They provide direct counseling support to students, particularly at secondary level. Psychologists also serve in a “consultation” role during the IEP process, observing and evaluating students and serving as part of IEP teams.

The IEP process is an important responsibility for psychologists all across the country, however, how much time psychologists dedicate to the process varies significantly between districts. To the extent that the IEP process can be streamlined, this is valuable time that could be directed toward counseling services to students. Currently, psychologists spend 46% of their time on IEP process-related activities.

Psychologist Activities

Activity	% time spent
Counseling/crisis intervention	17%
Total direct service	17%

Attend meeting (IEP)	15%
Assessment/ testing	11%
Test scoring/ interpretation	10%
Paperwork/ IEP writing	6%
Student observation	4%
Total IEP due process activities	46%

Attend meeting (other than IEP)	12%
Parent communication	5%
Collaboration with colleagues	4%
Personal lunch	3%
Planning/ materials preparation	3%
Travel	2%
Agency coordination of supports and services	1%
Underreported	7%
Total indirect service	37%

- On average, psychologists spend 17% of their time directly serving students; in contrast, psychologists in other districts may spend 30% or more of their time providing counseling support
- Outside of the IEP process, roughly one-third of their time is spent on other indirect service activities, particularly attending meetings

A key part of the IEP process is conducting evaluations. Based on the estimated number of evaluations needed per year, a psychologist that provided no counseling services would conduct approximately 33 evaluations per FTE per year.

Psychologist Time Devoted to Direct Service, Evaluations, and Other Activities

School psychologists (FTE)	4.4
Direct service	17%
FTE devoted to IEP management	3.6

Evaluations

3 Year evaluation	92
Initial referrals	30
Total number of evaluations per year	121

Estimated evaluations per full time psychologist if providing no counseling	33
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Note: Figures are estimates.

While no national data exists, compared to a study done in Massachusetts, the typical psychologist conducts 75 evaluations per year (while also counseling students 30% of the week) and a broad array of DMC clients suggests 85 -125 evaluations a year to be typical if no counseling is provided.

The district has an opportunity to potentially streamline the IEP process and increase the number of evaluations per staff member, freeing up time for psychologists to provide additional counseling support to students. Refining the mix of indirect responsibilities such as meetings and paperwork would allow psychologists to dedicate more time to counseling students as well. By roughly doubling the number of evaluations per psychologist from 33 to 66, the district could free up the equivalent of 1.8 FTE devoted to counseling support. This represents approximately 320 counseling days per year, which is more than twice the amount of support psychologists currently provide.

5b. Refine social worker staffing allocations based on student need to increase the counseling support for secondary students

Social workers also play an important role in providing counseling support to students. This is particularly true at the secondary level, where the need is typically greater. Social workers all shared in interviews that they felt the level of need in the district was rising, explaining “students are under more and more pressure to succeed. As college going expectations get clearer and more intense, there are more and more students who need support.”

Currently, social workers are allocated on a one-per-building basis. As a result, the ratio of students per social worker is much higher at the middle and high schools.

Social Worker FTE by School

School	FTE	Students per Social Worker FTE
Consolidated School	1.0	564
Meeting House Hill School	1.0	566
New Fairfield Middle School	0.7	1,250
New Fairfield High School	1.0	990

Note: The social worker at the middle school also dedicates 0.3 FTE to the alternative program at the high school, which is not included in this analysis.

In interviews, social workers at the middle and high schools expressed feeling stretched-too-thin. Social workers feel as though they are being “pulled and torn in so many directions” including supporting a growing number of students, participating in IEP meetings, providing social skills work given the rise of autism, interfacing with an engaged parent community, and sitting on a number of school committees. One social worker even shared “I stopped making a schedule for myself because it is useless.”

Given the higher student-to-staff ratios and the greater level of student need at the secondary level, the district has an opportunity to shift some support to the middle and high schools. This may include splitting staff between one or more school buildings. Using student need – as opposed to a one-per-building staffing practice – to determine staff allocation can increase equity for staff and better meet student need.

Implementation Considerations

To achieve the New Fairfield Public Schools vision and implement the opportunities successfully, New Fairfield Public Schools needs a well-coordinated system across district leaders and staff to effectively manage schedules, staffing and IEPs. To help enable this success, several key implementation considerations have been outlined below. These considerations serve as immediate next steps for the district, as it will be important these systems are in place in order for the opportunities to be fully realized.

1. Ensure that district leadership and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting students

There is no perfect organizational structure or one approach that works everywhere – the best structures are those in which roles and responsibilities are clear. In situations where roles are unclear, it is often for one of the four common reasons (below). By understanding which of these underlying reasons is contributing to the lack of clarity, organizations are able to properly address the fundamental issue:

1. Roles and responsibilities can be blurry
2. They can overlap
3. There can be a gap in responsibilities
4. Or staff can have different formal and informal roles

When roles and responsibilities become clear in the district, each individual should be able to answer all five of the following questions easily and consistently. These questions serve as a good ‘test’ to ensure that roles have been revised thoughtfully and effectively:

1. What decisions can I make?
2. When do I have meaningful input?
3. How do I interact with other leaders?
4. What results am I ultimately responsible for?
5. How will I be evaluated?

Currently at NFPS there is a lack of clarity in special education roles both at the central office and school level. Before any of these opportunities can be fully implemented it is important that this be first addressed. To accomplish this objective, staff should work together to achieve a better understanding of their collective roles in support of students. More specifically, they should look to accomplish the following goals:

1. Clarify the roles and responsibilities between key central office special education positions.
2. Ensure central office special education staff are effectively supporting schools.
3. Review team structure at school level to ensure the proper coordination for struggling students.
4. Create systems of accountability to ensure best practices are followed.

2. Develop clear and consistent guidelines for creating IEPs to ensure appropriate supports for students

Clear and well documented IEPs are critical to ensuring that struggling students receive the supports they need, and the services provided are consistent across the district. As part of this work, a large sampling of IEPs was reviewed. That review revealed inconsistencies in how IEPs were written, and a need to improve the clarity in services provided. To help address these issues, the following section outlines the key types of information that should be included in each IEP, once a student has been determined eligible to receive services. For each type of information, best practices and proposed next steps have also been provided, to help guarantee the district can ensure they achieve these recommendations.

2a. Establish the specific area of need

Best Practices

- It is important for IEPs to be specific regarding which area(s) the student needs additional instruction. No IEP should simply note that ‘general academic support’ is necessary.
- It is possible that a student requires additional instruction across multiple areas – in this case, each area should be listed separately.

Recommended Next Steps

- The district should ensure that the areas of need that students receive additional instruction in is consistent and specific across all IEPs. Potential areas to choose from include:
 - Reading instruction
 - Writing instruction
 - Math instruction
 - Social & Emotional instruction
 - Behavioral instruction
 - Speech and Language
 - For Speech and Language, it should be specified what sub-areas require additional instruction, to allow for proper scheduling / grouping.
 - Potential sub-areas of need include: Articulation, Voice, Language, Pragmatics

2b. Specify Service Provider(s) / Implementer(s)

Best Practices

- The IEP should always indicate which role(s) will provide additional instruction to the student for each area of need but not a particular person.
- Services should be provided by content strong experts (e.g. staff trained in reading should providing reading instruction) in a consistent manner, such that students with similar needs receive the similar instruction.
- If multiple roles can provide the instruction, then a choice of provider should be indicated such as special education teacher/teacher of reading.
- Paraprofessionals should never be listed as the provider of academic instruction.

Recommended Next Steps

- The district should ensure specific guidelines exist that specify which staff should provide services, depending on the area of need.
- As an example, the following represents guidelines for select areas of need:

Example Rubric: Service Provider Guidelines for Areas of Need

Area of Need	Recommended Service Provider
Reading Instruction	Teacher of Reading and/or Special Education Teacher
Math Instruction	Teacher of Math and/or Special Education Teacher

2c. Determine Duration of Services Provided

Best Practices

- Clear criteria and guidelines should be developed and followed to help determine the number of minutes a student should receive services, based on his/her area and degree of need.
- In many districts the typical student with a mild to moderate disability receives 150 to 225 minutes of instruction per week.
- When determining the time, the following guidelines / restrictions should be adhered to:
 - The time recommended for pullout services should typically not exceed the total amount of minutes available each day that can be provided without having to pullout from core reading or math instruction.
Note: The total number of minutes is the sum of the following periods: intervention (I/E), sciences, social studies, and specials.
 - If in-class services are recommended, the time specified in the IEP should not exceed the number of minutes that subject area is offered.

Recommended Next Steps

- The district should consider developing a rubric / guidelines that provides recommended service durations depending on the area and degree of need.

2d. Choose Setting for Services

Best Practices

- Pullout should not reduce core instruction in reading or math.
- Supplemental instruction can be very effective and cost effective as pullout.

Recommended Next Steps

- In keeping with the district's theory of action, the preferred setting depending on student need should be established. This will help establish consistency in the quality of service provided across the district.
- It should also be noted that recent changes to NFPS master schedules for the 2015-16 school year at the elementary levels, will ensure that pullout does not occur during core instruction, in keeping with best practice.

2e. Determine Grouping of Students

Best Practices

- If additional instruction can be provided in groups, the maximum group size should be consistent across the district for each area of need and grade level.
- Support staff schedules should be thoughtfully designed to ensure these recommended group sizes are targeted, and to ensure as many students can be served by support staff, in the most appropriate manner.

Recommended Next Steps

- The district should ensure consistent criteria is established to help determine whether a student should receive individual vs. small group instruction.
- The district should also ensure the maximum group size, associated with each area of need, is established to create consistency in service quality across all schools.

Example Rubric: Group Sizes

Grades	Area of Need	Max Group Size	Max Grade Span
K – 2	Language	2	1
3 – 5	Language	4	2
K – 5	Reading	5	1
6 – 12	ELA & Math	15	N/A

Note: Grade span indicates how many grades apart student within the group can be. For example, a grade span of 1 means a kindergartener can be grouped with a 1st grader, but not a 2nd grader.

3. Thoughtfully manage the development of staff schedules to align with master schedules, IEP guidelines, and staff roles

Creating schedules is as much art as science, and requires an individual with experience and knowledge in scheduling to properly design them. As discussed, a good schedule can have a huge impact on the district, and conversely, a poorly designed schedule uses staff time ineffectively and does not best support students. Thoughtful schedules will allow the district, which has more than sufficient staffing, to meet best practices and serve students.

Districts that consistently schedule effectively often have one individual that serves as the scheduling ‘expert’. This person works directly with principals to help ensure that the master school schedule meets district’s goals and implements the service delivery model with fidelity. This person also assists with scheduling of support staff, to ensure that these staff are used most effectively across the district. These “micro schedules” can ease the burden on special education staff and ensure effective service to students. “Micro schedules” are detailed and nuanced staff schedules driven by IEPs and student need – not grade level or teacher preference. By creating “micro schedules” for special education staff, New Fairfield Public Schools can clarify roles and responsibilities, ease the burden on staff, and meet student need more efficiently and effectively.

Depending on the capacity of this individual and the skills of others in the district, the scheduling expert may serve primarily as a resource to help train and answer scheduling questions, or actually create schedules for staff in the district.

¹ Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., Roberts, G. (2012). *Intensive interventions for students struggling in reading and mathematics: A practice guide*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

² Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., and Tilly, W.D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide*. (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>.

³ Vaughn, S., Denton, C., & Fletcher, J. (2010). Why Intensive Interventions Are Necessary For Students With Severe Reading Difficulties. *Psychol Sch.*, 47(5), 432-444. doi:10.1002

⁴ Harlacher, J., Sanford, A., & Walker, N. (2015). Distinguishing Between Tier 2 and Tier 3 Instruction in Order to Support Implementation of RTI.

⁵ Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.