

FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

191 S East Street Frederick, Maryland 21701

SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING PLAN SFY 2023

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ASSURANCE

The Frederick County Public School (FCPS) system Special Education Staffing Plan is consistent with procedures outlined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for the purpose of ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities. The following Required Elements of a Staffing Plan are included:

- Evidence of public input.
- Evidence of maintenance of effort within the meaning of 34 CFR.
- §300.231 Maintenance of Effort, and COMAR 13A.02.05, Maintenance of Effort
- Staffing patterns of service providers of early intervention, special education and related services, including paraprofessionals.
- The number and type of service providers needed to ensure FAPE to each student with a disability in the least restrictive environment (LRE) or natural environment.
- The ways in which the public agency will use the staffing plan to monitor the assignment of personnel to ensure personnel and other resources are available to provide FAPE for each student with a disability in the LRE.
- The number of current vacancies by positions reported within the jurisdiction and how FAPE is provided when vacancies occur.

Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Students with Disabilities
70	45,800	5268

EVIDENCE OF PUBLIC INPUT

The FCPS budget represents a sincere effort to reflect the desires of the community. In prioritizing funding allocations, the Board of Education (BOE) considers feedback received at public budget forums in December and February and via written or e-mail communication.

The public had an opportunity to express their views on the BOE operating budget to the BOE in December, 2021, as well as an additional opportunity to express their opinions to the County Council during a public hearing in February, 2022.

Public input for the Special Education Staffing Plan was also sought through the use of the following:

- Publication of the Staffing Plan on the FCPS Special Education website for the 2021-2022 year
- Review with the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC), September 2022.

EVIDENCE OF MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT

Under the oversight of the Superintendent, Dr. Cheryl L. Dyson, the Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Michael Markoe, and the Accounting Services Office ensure that Part B Special Education funds are used to supplement and increase special education services to students with disabilities and are not used to displace State or local funds. These two offices also ensure that local and State funds expended for the current year are at least equal to or greater than those of the most recent year for which expenditure reports are available. Maintenance of Effort is documented in the expenditure summary. When developing the operating budget, the BOE and FCPS staff carefully consider the following:

- Recruitment and retention of highly qualified employees
- Strategies to improve academic achievement for all students

- Increased enrollment impact
- Technology needs
- Efficient use of resources
- Areas of need as identified through the FCPS Strategic Plan
- LRE, considerations of improving the special education continuum, and expansion of existing programs that have proven to be successful

STAFFING PATTERNS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Special Education in System Wide Plans

Using the FCPS Strategic Plan and the Department of Special Education vision as the framework, FCPS develops an action plan with goals and objectives as the working document to ensure that the department reaches its annual goals.

The department vision states:

“Through ongoing collaboration with our local and state stakeholders, including parents, staff and students, the Office of Special Education serves FCPS by supporting systematic instructional programming focusing on eliminating the achievement gap, developing social competencies, nurturing independence, and preparing students with disabilities to become contributing members of a global society.”

In an effort to implement ongoing progress monitoring, FCPS uses the Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR) guide to conduct annual audits in which individual student files are randomly selected and reviewed for specific compliance requirements. School-based staff is directed to use an Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Feedback (M&E) form to self-monitor the implementation of the IEP process for all identified students.

Staffing Guidelines

Staffing allocations are determined to ensure that FCPS is able to provide FAPE to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). FCPS continually strives to include general education in the collaborative provision of instruction to students. As of September 8, 2022, FCPS supported 5268 students with disabilities. This count is used to determine federal funding; however, the count changes daily due to factors such as student mobility, students initially determined eligible for services and students who are exited from services for a variety of reasons. Additionally, the Frederick County Infants and Toddlers Program provides services for 752 children between the ages of birth through three who receive special education services through an Individualized Family Service Plan.

It is important to note that FCPS must be sensitive to existing caseloads and work expectations in order to maintain the high quality of service that is provided to our students. Teachers and related service providers work to balance instruction and compliance responsibilities. A substantial amount of time is required for staff to develop meaningful, comprehensive and compliant Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), Section 300.130 through 300.144 and FCPS Regulation 400- 69, FCPS special education teachers and related service providers support parentally placed students in private school locations who have been determined eligible for services through an Individualized Service Plan (ISP). Just as they do for FCPS enrolled students with IEPs, school based special education staff and related service providers provide services and supports for students with ISPs. FCPS uses a caseload-based model to determine staffing allocations each fiscal year. Other factors considered in these allocations include the number of students at each location with more severe disabilities.

Caseload-Based Staffing Model for Special Education Teaching Staff Special Education Services K-12

Currently, 294.0 have been allocated to special education teachers in the general education setting and 80.0 have been allocated to special education teachers in the specialized programs in order to ensure FAPE for all students during the 2022-2023 school year. Projected staffing allocations for special education services K-12 for SY 2023-2024.

Program	Staffing	Anticipated Caseload
Elementary Schools	1 teacher	15*
Middle Schools	1 teacher	20*
High Schools	1 teacher	20*

*On average, caseload of each teacher

Based on individualized student needs, staffing allocations are determined to provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment. A wide array of programs is provided along this LRE continuum, which are specifically designed to meet the needs of all student populations.

Specialized Program Staffing

Projected staffing allocations for specialized program staff for SY 2022-2023

Program	Staffing (as indicated per class or program) SEIA= special education instructional assistant	Recommended/Projected Number of Students
Infants and Toddlers Program	5.0 FTEs; 1 program assistant	125 Average caseload is 25 students per provider
Child Find	1.0 SLP Child Find 11 month 2.0 SLP Child Find 12 month 1.0 SLP-PPPS Grant funds 3.0 Special Educator Teacher Specialist 12 month 1.0 Child Find Psychologist 1.0 Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator	

Non-Public Schools	1.0 Non-Public Coordinator 1.0 Special Education Teacher Specialist 0.3 School psychologist	99
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Program	Staffing (as indicated per class or program) SEIA= special education instructional assistant	Recommended/Projected Number of Students
Pre-kindergarten-CF all staff student ratios for all programs Inclusive 3-5-Year-Old <u>35 classes</u>	1 Coordinator 1 dually certified teacher, 3.0 SEIAs (AM session for 3-year-old students) 1 dually certified teacher, 2.0 SEIAs (PM session supporting 4/5-year-old students)	Student ratios for 3's and 4's: 7 students without an identified disability selected via the peer lottery & 7 students with an identified disability warranting classroom services as placed via Child Find *ideal ratios are 7/7 with the note that classrooms may become highly enrolled
<u>Expressions I, II, III, & IV:</u> 12 primary/elementary classes 3 middle school classes 3 high school classes	3 Coordinators for Elementary 1 Coordinator for Middle Coordinator for High 1 teacher, 3 SEIAs 1 Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) per 20 students in the program	Elementary: 9-11 Middle: 9-11 High: 9-11
<u>Pyramid:</u> 9 elementary classes 6 middle school classes 9 high school classes	2 Coordinators for Elementary 2 Coordinators for Middle 3 Coordinators for High teacher, 2 SEIAs therapists per program location 3 therapists in 1 Elementary program 1 Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) per 20 students in the program 1 Behavior Support Specialist per program 1 SEIAs in Support room at Elementary Level	Elementary: 9-11 Middle: 10-12 High: 10-12
<u>Learning for Life:</u> 4 elementary classes 6 middle school classes 13 high school classes	1 Coordinator Elementary: 1 teacher, 2 SEIAs Middle: 1 teacher, 3 SEIAs High: 1 teacher, 3 SEIAs	Elementary: 9-12 Middle: 10-12 High: 12-15

<u>Heather Ridge School</u>	3 teachers, 1 teacher specialist, 3 therapists itinerant SLP as needed (currently 12 students) 3 SEIAs .5 School Psychologist 1 Administrator	18 HS 4 MS 22 w/IEPs
<u>Rock Creek School</u>	13.0 teachers 2.0 SLPs 1.0 school social worker 41 SEIAs .33 School Psychologist 2 Administrators 2 Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs)	80

Program	Staffing (as indicated per class or program) SEIA= special education instructional assistant	Recommended/Projected Number of Students
<u>SUCCESS Program</u>	1 Coordinator, 4 teachers 0.5 SLP 21 SEIAs	55
<u>Career & Technology Center</u>	1 teacher, 5 SEIAs	116 students with IEPs
<u>Blended Virtual Program</u>	2 Elementary special educators 4 Middle School Teachers 5 High School Teachers 2 instructional assistants per level and 2 program assistant across levels	155 students with IEPs

Special Education Instructional Assistants

FCPS employs approximately 699.1 benefited Special Education Instructional Assistants (SEIAs) to support the needs of students with disabilities; including those with IEPs or 504 Plans. SEIAs support the needs of school-based programs in their entirety and often implement a variety of interventions for both general and special education students.

Child Find

Child Find staffing consists of:

- 3.0 Special Education Teacher Specialists

- 3.0 Child Find Speech-Language Pathologists (2.0- 12 Month FTEs, and 1.0- 11 Month FTE)
- 1.0 School Psychologist
- 1.0 contractor SLP providing services to Parentally Placed Private School Students

	SY 13-14	SY 14-15	SY 15-16	SY 16-17	SY 17-18	SY 18-19	SY 19-20	SY 20-21	SY 21-22
# of Referrals	524	467	489	514	672	659	633	561	648
# of Meetings Scheduled	762	753	800	780	900	1182	1264	1154	1420
# Meetings Held	595	641	656	665	775	987	1009	786	1247

Non-Public Placements

For students requiring more comprehensive services and supports that are unable to be provided by FCPS' current continuum of services, non-public placements may be considered. FCPS supports 99 students in non-public placements. Funding is provided for FCPS students who require support offered through Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD), as well as other locations such as the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents-Baltimore (RICA). FCPS has a partnership with Sheppard Pratt Health System to implement a Type II nonpublic for elementary students. The RISE program is located at Hillcrest Elementary School. Sheppard Pratt provides the staff for this program.

School Psychologists

There is strong research linking mental illness, trauma and behavioral difficulties with poor academic achievement and negative school behavior. School psychologists work diligently to respond to and support ongoing challenges and complexities attributed to increased mental health needs, trauma, behavioral, academic and crisis intervention needs of students. They work with both general education and special education students.

Related Service Providers

Students in FCPS have specific needs requiring a variety of services ranging from consultative to those provided in self-contained settings outside of the student's community school. Special education coordinators, teacher specialists, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and itinerant service providers work closely with school IEP teams to assist them in developing programs in community schools to meet the needs of students. Schools are provided adequate staff to ensure that all students are able to access the general education curriculum and receive services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate.

The Augmentative Communication and Technology (ACT) Team

The ACT Team supports students in the areas of communication, written language, computer access,

reading, math, activities of daily living, mobility, environmental control, vision, hearing, and optimum positioning. Special education teachers and speech language pathologists are assigned to this team. This team supports instructional technologies and augmentative communication devices utilized by students to develop communicative competence and technology skills required for our 21st Century learners. The team works comprehensively to meet the assistive technology needs of the FCPS students.

Behavioral Specialists

Behavioral Specialists support the mental health needs of the students in our school system. Behavioral Specialists work with both general education and special education staff in the implementation of behavioral intervention plans for students with significant behaviors impacting their ability to access their instructional programs. In addition, they provide crisis intervention for students. Behavioral specialists will assist with planning for instruction and ongoing progress monitoring for students. Opportunities to provide collaborative, systemic professional development will continue to be implemented on an ongoing basis.

Interpreting Services (sign language)

Interpreting Services are offered to any FCPS student who requires this service to access his/her educational day as well as participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this service is available to faculty, staff, students' family members or community stakeholders, also known as consumers, who attend a school-related event and require this service to fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of that event. There are 37 FTEs for Educational Interpreters and 1.0 FTE for Coordinator of Interpreting Services, 5 FTEs for interpreters are vacant at this time. These vacancies are filled currently with contracted services and the existing Educational Interpreters are supporting the vacancies whenever possible. Compensatory services are being documented through the IEP process.

Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provide specialized instruction to eligible students aged 3-21 years who require services as a result of blindness, visual impairment(s), deafness, or hard of hearing. Direct or consultative services from these highly skilled staff may be provided to students in addition to ongoing consultation with general education teachers and special education case managers. Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) provide direct service for visually impaired students. COMS provide instruction to individuals who are blind or visually impaired in safe and effective travel through their environment.

There are 5.0 FTEs allocated to support students who are blind or have vision impairments and 1.0 FTE to support these students in their orientation and mobility skills. There is a 1.0 Braille Transcription Specialist allocated to support Braille transcription in the school system. There is currently 1.0 vacancy for teachers of the visually impaired. This vacancy is filled with 1 contracted employees from the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) to ensure FAPE is provided for students who are blind or visually impaired.

There are 4.0 FTEs to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing. There is a 1.0 vacancy for

teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Occupational (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) services

Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) services are provided to Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) students via in kind services through Frederick County Government, specifically the Frederick County Developmental Center (FCDC). For the 2022-23 fiscal year, 17.69 FTEs and 6.46 FTEs are allocated to provide OT and PT services for FCPS, respectively. Factors such as increased student population, increased assessments, and workload requirements, along with compliance indicators, are considered when staffing adjustments are recommended to the Frederick County Executive. The FCPS works collaboratively with FCDC for staffing considerations to meet the needs of the school systems' students with disabilities.

School Therapists

The School Therapists support the mental health needs of the students in our school system. School Therapists support students with significant emotional and behavioral needs in the seven FCPS Pyramid Programs (K-12), Heather Ridge, and Rock Creek School. Licensed clinical social workers and licensed clinical professional counselors serve as school therapists and provide direct counseling services, push in services to the classroom to students as outlined in their IEPs. School therapists collaborate with families and private professionals to better serve the mental health needs of students.

Speech Language Pathologists

Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) support students with speech and language impairments in all FCPS schools. There are 79.5 FTEs allocated to support these services during the 10-month school year, although 1.0 FTE from the 79.5 is allocated for SLP Teacher Specialist, 4.0 SLPs from the 79.5 are itinerant positions that provide support for Child Find meetings and assessments, bilingual assessments, services to some students in Head Start programs, and other school-based services and support as needed and 2.0 FTEs are allocated for SLPs who are exclusively within the ACT Team. In total, there are 72 remaining FTE SLPs who provide speech/language services to identified students in all 70 FCPS schools in FCPS. Information regarding speech language caseloads is collected yearly and reviewed monthly and quarterly to make decisions regarding staffing allocations for speech language pathologists. Various factors are taken into consideration when allocating staff. These include caseload numbers, student services hours, overall workload, specialized program needs, and additional indirect responsibilities.

Speech Student Count Trend Data

School Year	Total Speech Students
School Yr 2014	2372
School Yr 2015	2406
School Yr 2016	2446
School Yr 2017	2675

School Yr 2018	2706
School Yr 2019	2873
School Yr 2020	2825
School Yr 2021	2941
School Yr 2022- Current	3007 (as of 9/15/22)

There are currently 9.0 FTEs that are filled by contractor SLPs and 1.0 FTEs that are currently vacant. Currently there are schools with increases in identified students for speech/language services that exceed the expected caseload numbers (and subsequently FTE) for the SLPs at these affected schools. Speech/Language services for these situations are being partially provided by FCPS itinerant SLPs in order to provide FAPE for students in schools. Ongoing hiring for direct hires and procurement of contract SLPs continues to attempt to meet SLP staffing needs.

Projected staffing allocations for related service providers for SY 2022-2023

Related Service Provider	Staffing
Augmentative Communication and Technology (ACT) Team	5.0 Team Leaders 2.0 technology user support specialists 2 technology SEIAs
Hearing Interpreting Services (Sign Language)	4.0 FTEs 1.0 FTE- Coordinator of Interpreting Services 37 FTE- Educational Interpreters
Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy	Contracted services provided through Frederick County Health Department
School Therapists/Social Workers	19.0 FTEs
Speech/Language Therapy	79.5 FTEs
Travel Training (Orientation and Mobility)	1.0 FTEs
Vision	5.0 FTEs (inclusive of O&M specialist services) and 1.0 Braille Transcriber
Adapted Physical Education	2 Adapted PE Teacher Specialists 3 Adapted PE Itinerant Teachers

Use of staffing plan to monitor the assignment of personnel/resources to provide FAPE:

Departments engage in ongoing monitoring of student data for numbers of identified students, services provided, etc., and changes to staffing are determined based on that updated data. The Department of Special Education has reviewed staffing ratios and instructional delivery models, in accordance with Board directives, to determine how best to serve increased numbers of students in the LRE. Staffing

needs for the 2022-2023 School Year were addressed in the budget request submitted by the Department of Special Education.

The FCPS uses general and special educators, related service personnel, paraprofessionals, contractual service providers, building administrators, and central office staff members to provide special education and related services to students with disabilities. The roles and responsibilities for the provision of FAPE with respect to school-based staff members are described below:

School Administrators

Responsible for providing general supervision of special education in the school, chairing IEP team meetings, and overseeing the instructional program for all students in the building. The administrator assumes responsibility for staff assignments and responsibilities and is involved in pre-referral meetings. In their role as the IEP team chairperson, principals have the authority to allocate school system resources.

Special Educators

Provide specially designed instruction and case management to students with disabilities. Special educators also participate in IEP meetings, conduct educational assessments, provide input for the development of IEPs, and ensure that regulatory requirements are met for their students. Special educators provide direct specially designed instruction, instructional accommodations, and testing accommodations. Special educators are the conduit of communication to meaningfully engage parents/guardians of students with disabilities in the teaching and learning of their children with disabilities and in the IEP process.

General Educators

Participate in a multi-tiered system of supporting collaborative decision-making and pre-referral meetings. General educators provide direct instruction; implement universal design for learning strategies, differentiated instruction, instructional accommodations, and testing accommodations. They attend IEP meetings, as appropriate, and team with special educators to provide co-taught instructional services.

Vacancies by Position

Staff	Vacancies	Provision of FAPE
School Psychologist	1.0	3.0 Contracted School psychologist
Interpreters	5.0 FTE	Agency contracted service interpreters are supporting the remaining vacancies.

Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TD/HH)	1.0 FTE	Current staff are dividing the caseload. Working with contract agency to fill position.
Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)	1.0 FTE	1.0 contract TVI from MSB, 1.0 contract O&M specialist from MSB, current staff are diving caseload.

Speech Language Pathologist	1.0 FTE Community Based SLP	BHES-filled by contractor NFES- filled by contractor YSES- filled by contractor GTJHS- filled by contractor CCMPCS- filled by contractor Child Find- filled by contractor 2.0 Blended Virtual- filled by contractor Private School/ISP- filled by contractor
Special Education Teachers	20 FTE (as of 9.8.22)	All positions being supported by long term substitutes as well as case management support through central office staff. 3.0 Contractors

504 Plans

504 Plans provide for instructional/access accommodations for students in the general education environment based on substantial limitations in major life activities indicated by their disability. Based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, no individual with a disability shall be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination within his or her educational program. Implementation of this civil rights law is unfunded by the federal government and wholly funded by the FCPS. Office of Special Education. Support of student 504 plans may include consultation and collaboration, ongoing progress monitoring and provision of specialized equipment and/or materials of instruction for students to provide access to their instructional program. FCPS has 2464 students with 504 plans (Elementary - 477, Middle - 706, High - 1281).

EVALUATION OF STAFFING PLAN

The 2022-2023 Special Education Staffing Plan was shared with the Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC) in September 2022. Members of the SECAC include school-based staff, parents and representatives from community agencies. The SECAC reviews the Staffing Plan annually. The plan is posted on the FCPS website and is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Supervisors of Special Education, with a request for feedback and input to be considered.

Special education staffing is evaluated at multiple levels within the school system to ensure that systemic needs are identified and addressed. The Department of Special Education is supervised by the Deputy Superintendent who meets regularly with special education staff and instructional directors. In addition, weekly meetings are held for the purpose of collaboration among divisions, including elementary, secondary, and curriculum and technology. Each forum provides an opportunity to identify needs and assign appropriate resources.

The ultimate goal of the Department of Special Education is to provide supports, resources and specialized instruction to educate students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment. Ongoing and effective collaboration between general and special education teachers, consistent analysis of available resources, and allocation of supports are critical to achieving this goal.