

# **DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**



## **STUDENT MISSION PLEDGE**

**I will finish my program of study and become college and career ready!**

# **STAFFING PLAN 2022-2023**

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**DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
STAFFING PLAN  
2022-2023**

**Approval**

**This plan was reviewed and approved during the  
July 21, 2022 Dorchester County Board of Education Meeting**

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**Superintendent of Schools**

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**President, Dorchester County Board of Education**

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**SECAC Chairperson**

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

## **PHILOSOPHY**

We believe that every staff member is accountable for the learning of all children, including those with and without disabilities. All students are entitled to every facet of the educational process and to the respect that comes from successful interaction in a school system with high expectations.

We believe that all students can learn and have the right to an education. We accept each student as an individual, yet work to realize the universal goals of education. As a department we are committed to universal design for learning, thereby utilizing instructional methods that meet every child's unique learning style so they may become lifelong learners and valued members of their communities. Patience, compassion, and knowledge of each individual student, combined with academic competence, instructional know-how, and commitment to the field of Special Education are the bed rock upon which our mission is built.

We believe a child-centered service delivery system will result from coordination and innovative use of present resources and support for evolving programs. Communication and collaboration between staff, students, families and community will empower all students to reach his or her maximum potential. As this effort is accomplished, the entire school population will realize the benefits of an improved education setting.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## MISSION

***Our mission** is to make accessible through our best individual and collective efforts, the curricula as they have been set forth by the Federal and State governments as well as Dorchester County Public Schools to all students. In so doing, it is our intent to progress each student, with their individual educational needs, towards the universal goal of becoming independent, lifelong learners.*

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STAFFING PLAN 2022-2023**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dorchester County Public Schools' (DCPS) mission is to assure that every child will learn by providing rigorous educational programs that challenge and engage all students. DCPS is committed to providing school environments that are safe, friendly, and nurturing. The school system is also committed to having an exceptional faculty and staff who are committed to providing a student-centered climate.

DCPS provides students with disabilities access to educational services provided by qualified personnel and the resources necessary to ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment, as determined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team. 51.85% of children with disabilities aged 3-5 LRE is in the Regular Early Childhood setting most of their day. 79.46% of students with disabilities aged 6-21 LRE is greater than 80% of the day in general education. Therefore, the majority of students with disabilities ages 3 -21 are in regular education classrooms or preschool settings of the day, therefore, it is essential that special education teachers and related service personnel be appropriately allocated and available to support students and teachers. While the overall student population will be used to determine specific staff in special education, individual student and school needs will be taken into consideration through the IEP process.

On an annual basis the school system must prepare a staffing plan that delineates how special education staff is assigned to schools. This plan discusses the sources of data, the sources of input, and the procedures used to determine the numbers and types of service providers needed in order to provide FAPE, as required by COMAR. In developing an annual special education staffing plan, DCPS complies with all federal and state requirements.

## **ASSURANCE**

DCPS Staffing Plan is consistent with procedures delineated by the Maryland State Department of Education for the purpose of ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities. The following elements are required in the Staffing Plan:

- 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 special education and related services, including paraprofessionals

- The number and type of services providers needed to provide a FAPE to each student with a disability in the least restrictive environment (LRE)
- How DCPS 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
- Post the staffing plan on the local school website.

## EVIDENCE OF PUBLIC INPUT

Public input into the DCPS Special Education Staffing Plan is sought annually prior to submission of a staffing plan to the Board of Education for approval. Input is obtained through meetings with key staff members at individual schools to review caseload projections and staffing needs, and School Improvement Teams. Additionally, the Office of the Superintendent provides notification of the Budget Approval Schedule to the community through the DCPS Website. The Annual Calendar is sent in August to each parent of students in the DCPS. The calendar includes the dates that the Board of Education meets and offers public hearing and work sessions regarding the operating budget. Additionally, the Supervisor of Special Education meets regularly with the Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC) to receive input. The Staffing Plan is presented to the Board of Education at a regular board meeting and available to MSDE to review as part of the Local Application for Federal Funds (LAFF) requirements.

**Staffing Plan** – the yearly schedule for the development of the staffing plan

<b>Month</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>September</b>	Caseload submission/analysis SECAC Meeting
<b>November</b>	Draft submission of budget/staffing needs for coming school year SECAC Meeting
<b>December</b>	Caseload submission/analysis Board Work Session includes Public Comments on Budget
<b>February</b>	SECAC Meeting
<b>May</b>	Review of Staffing Needs with School Principals
<b>June</b>	SECAC Meeting – Proposed Special Education Staffing Plan reviewed
<b>July</b>	Board of Education – Public Meeting and Staffing Plan approval Approved Special Education Staffing Plan listed on the DCPS Website
<b>August</b>	Final review of staffing plan with individual schools

## **EVIDENCE OF MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT**

The Supervisor of Special Education and the Finance Department work collaboratively to ensure that Part B funds are used to supplement and increase special education services to students with disabilities and are not used to displace state or local funds. The Special Education and Finance Department 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.

## **STAFFING PATTERNS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS**

### **Special Education and System-Wide Plans**

The DCPS Master Plan is a comprehensive, integrated countywide strategic plan that identifies the school system's goals, strategies, and evaluation methods for determining the achievement of the goals and objectives. Along with this plan, the Special Education Department identifies target objectives and strategies that will assist the Special Education Department in meeting the MSDE State Performance Plan (SPP) expectations.

In all schools, special educators are considered for assignment based on the number of students per teacher as well as identified individual student needs. When the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities is determined to be the general education classroom with supports, special education staffing is assigned using both teachers and/or instructional assistants. Additionally, physical management support staff are utilized to assist students with disabilities that require extensive assistance due to their disabilities. These staff members are assigned to schools according to the physical management needs of the students. The number of these support staff can vary greatly during the course of a school year due to students with disabilities with high physical management needs moving into or out of the county.

Programs for students requiring the most intensive level of services located in a public school program, such as students with emotional conditions, may be regionally located. Additional classroom supports involving personnel for these regionalized programs are determined by the needs of the students as discussed and determined through the IEP process.

Collaboration with general education, linkages to school improvement plans, and school-wide initiatives are all considered when preparing the staffing plan. As required by IDEA, whatever programming is appropriate to meet student needs as identified on an IEP will be part of the continuum of services offered by DCPS.

DCPS is the lead agency for the Dorchester County Infants and Toddlers Program. This program is staffed in the same manner as the Special Education Department. Staff assigned to this interagency program who are delivering services in the natural environment are based on formulas



that are derived from direct and periodic hours outlined in infants and toddlers' Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs). In addition to hours of instructional service, IFSP management and report preparation, IFSP team meetings and meetings with parents, and travel time for personnel providing services in homes and community programs is taken into consideration.

Services are configured to ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the LRE with nondisabled peers, as appropriate based on their IEPs. Services for students with IFSPs are provided on a year-round basis in natural environments, as appropriate based on their IFSPs. The current DCPS LRE data indicated 51.85% of children with disabilities aged 3-5 LRE is in the Regular Early Childhood setting most of their day, which exceeds the State Target. 79.46% of students with disabilities aged 6-21 LRE is greater than 80% of the day in general education which exceeds the State Target. Presently, 100% of students with IFSPs received services in the natural environment, exceeding the state target.

### **Staffing Guidelines**

The number of Special Education Staff is assigned to individual schools based on a variety of factors. The number of students served by an individual service provider will vary based upon the need of the students, the location of the services, and other duties required of service providers, such as case management, data collection, consultation and IEP planning with general educators, planning time, service coordination, assessments, meetings, travel time for itinerant staff, etc. Related service providers supporting students' needs as determined by the IEP process may include: Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, School Psychologists, Interpreters, Instructional Assistants, Assistive Technology Specialists, Teachers of the Hearing Impaired, Audiologists, and Vision Teachers. Most likely service hours will vary throughout the year depending upon student needs. Related services are provided by both full-time employees and contracted personnel. Services are configured to ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment with nondisabled peers, as appropriate based on their IEPs.

Students with disabilities that are medically fragile receive their medical services through the school health center. DCPS contracts with the Dorchester County Health Department for School Nursing Services.

Counseling and Mental Health Services for students with disabilities are coordinated with various community-based agencies as well as the Wellness Centers that are operated by the Dorchester County Health Department. Additionally, school guidance counseling services are available to all students with disabilities.

## Continuum of Services

Continuum of Service	Teacher Student Ratio
Up to 5 hours of service provided by special education staff	1:15
More than 5 hours and up to 15 hours of service provided by special education staff	1:10 or 1:15 with *IA
More than 15 hours of service provided by special education staff: Elementary Middle/High	1:10(1:13 with *IA) 1:12(1:15 with *IA)

\*Instructional Assistant

## Related Services

### Special Education Instructional Services

Program/Service	Staffing
Speech/Language Therapy	1:50
Psychologist	1:500-700
Occupational and Physical Therapy	1:50
Vision	1:10
Hearing	1:10
Audiology	1:60
Assistive Technology	Per need
Child Find	Per need
Early Identification and Assessment of Students with Disabilities	Per need
Counseling Services	Per need
Orientation and Mobility Services	Per need
Medical Services for Diagnostic or Evaluation	Per need
School Health Services	Per need
Social Work Services in Schools	Per need
Parent Counseling and Training	Per need

**The Special Education Department recommends the following for School Year 2022-2023:**

<b>School</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	<b>Speech Pathology Positions</b>	<b>Teaching Positions</b>	<b>Instructional Assistants</b>	<b>Physical Management Support</b>
<b>Elementary</b>						
<b>Choptank</b>	395	Classroom – 23 Speech - 36	.8 SLP	3 (1 FTE Title I funded)	3	2
<b>Hurlock</b>	360	Classroom –16 Speech – 26	.6 SLP	3	2	2
<b>Maple</b>	387	Classroom– 23 Speech – 33	.6 SLP	4	2	2
<b>Sandy Hill</b>	399	Classroom – 25 Speech – 32	.6 SLP	4	3	2
<b>Vienna</b>	159	Classroom – 6 Speech – 7	.2 SLP	2		
<b>Warwick</b>	319	Classroom – 10 Speech – 18	.4 SLP	2	2	
<b>Middle</b>						
<b>South Dorchester School</b>	211	Classroom-12 Speech – 12	.4 SLP	2	1	1
<b>North Dorchester</b>	425	Classroom – 35 Speech- 21	.4 SLP	4	1	1
<b>Maces Lane</b>	535	Classroom – 46 Speech – 37	.4 SLP	5	2	1
<b>High</b>						
<b>Cambridge-South Dorchester</b>	732	Classroom-57 Speech - 34	.6 SLP	6	2	2
<b>North Dorchester</b>	548	Classroom –39 Speech – 11	.2 SLP	4	1	1
<b>Dorchester Career and Technology Center/ Pathways Program</b>		Pathways – 9 Speech – 9	.2 SLP	1	3	

<b>County wide Programs</b>			
<b>High Road Classrooms for Elementary, Middle, and High School - Regional</b>			The High Road Classrooms contract provides for the staffing. The staffing for the classroom is comprised of one special education teacher, two instructional assistants, one social worker, and an educational director.
<b>Dorchester County Infants &amp; Toddlers</b>			2 Speech Pathologist 2 Early Intervention Teachers
<b>New Directions Learning Academy</b>	Serves Middle & High		1 Special Education Teacher
<b>Student/Staff Supports</b>			
<b>FSS/Assistive Technology</b>		1	
<b>FSS Parent Partner</b>		.6	– Family Support Services (FSS) Resource Center Partner
<b>Coaches</b>		1 Early Childhood 1 Elementary 1 Secondary	
<b>School Psychologists</b>		6	– Each school has an identified school psychologist.
<b>Related Service Providers</b>			
<b>Speech Therapists</b>		6	– Each school has an identified Speech Pathologist to provide services to eligible students. 1 Instructional Assistant to cover teleservices
<b>Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Audiologist, Hearing Teacher, Vision Teacher</b>			Related Services are provided to students with disabilities in Dorchester County Public Schools as needed through the Mid-Shore Special Education Consortium. DCPS purchases these services through a Consortium Agreement with Talbot, Queen Anne’s, and Caroline Counties. Each Board of Education pays a proportional amount and services are shared.
<b>Administrative Staff</b>			
<b>Administrative Staff</b>		1 Supervisor 1 Elementary Coordinator 1 Secondary Coordinator 1 CCEIS Coordinator	
<b>Clerical Staff</b>		1 Administrative Assistant 1 Medical Assistance Administrative Assistant	
<b>Computer Technician</b>		1 Computer Technician	

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

DCPS provides a continuum of special education instruction and services to students with disabilities. The Special Education Department’s goals are to provide: special education instruction in the least restrictive environment according to students’ IEPs, screening and assessment services, consultation and supports to special and general education teachers in instructional techniques, behavioral interventions, assistive technologies, professional development, inclusive practices, co-teaching, and development of IEPs. Special education services and related services are provided in all schools in Dorchester County Public Schools. Students with disabilities have access to all extracurricular activities. Early childhood service providers foster development in younger children through excellence in education and partnerships with staff, families, and community members. Year round services in infants and toddlers and extended school year services for children are provided.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Service Description</b>
<b>School Based Instructional Services (Continuum in the Least Restrictive Environment)</b>	The DCPS provides a continuum of special education instruction and a wide range of services to school age students with disabilities in their home school or in a regional feeder program. Program objectives are to provide special education instruction in the least restrictive environment in both general and special education settings according to students’ IEPs, screening/assessment services for students referred by parents and teachers to school-based IEP teams, and consultation and support to special and general education teachers as it related to instructional techniques, learning strategies, behavioral intervention, professional development, inclusive practices, and development/implementation of IEPs.
<b>Services for students who are participating in the Alternate Assessment</b>	Elementary age students with disabilities who are participating in the alternate assessment are provided with structured learning opportunities that incorporate specific interventions that address both academic and functional educational skills. Services are provided in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent possible with an emphasis on meaningful inclusion. The goal of this service is to facilitate the student’s integration into the school environment and the community. Secondary students with disabilities who are working on the alternate framework and need independent living skills, transition planning, functional academics, and vocational skills are provided services in accordance with the IEP in either small structured instruction settings or in the general education classroom as appropriate. Students with disabilities have access to all extracurricular activities. These services are provided in the home school.
<b>Preschool Services</b>	Preschool services are available to serve students who are age three to five who have a disability. Services are provided according to the IEP in a variety of settings. Three-year-old children with disabilities may be served in a school-based classroom, in their home, or a community preschool program. Four-year-old students with disabilities receive their special education and related services in Pre-K classrooms with their typically developing peers or in a community-based preschool program. Kindergarten students receive their IEP services within a general education classroom.
<b>Pathways to Independence</b>	Pathways to Independence is a program designed for students 18-21 years of age and targets the vocational needs of students with disabilities who have already completed their four years of high school and have participated in the alternate assessment. The focus will be on developing and honing the job readiness skills that are needed to be successful in the world of work.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Service Description</b>
<b>Programs for Students with Emotional Disabilities</b>	The majority of students with emotional disabilities receive their services in their home schools, but some receive services in a regional program due the intensity of services required. The goal of the regional programs is to provide the student with academic and behavioral supports in order to assist the student with skills that would enable them to return to their home school.
<b>Early Intervention Services (EIS)</b>	The Dorchester County Infants and Toddlers Program is a multidisciplinary, interagency program that provides services to infants, toddlers, and their families. This program serves children age birth to four years of age who have developmental delays or are at risk for a developmental delay. Services are provided in natural environments on a year-round basis. Early intervention services are designed to address needs in the areas of physical, cognitive, communication, social/emotional, or adaptive development. The Infants and Toddlers Program provides services in natural environments – the child’s home, childcare settings, and the community.
<b>Alternative Learning Service - New Directions Learning Academy</b>	New Directions Learning Academy is a specially designed learning center for students with behavioral concerns. The Special Education Teacher in the New Directions Learning Academy provides direct support for students with disabilities and collaborates with the sending school’s special education case manager.
<b>Parent services – The Family Support Services Resource Center</b>	The purpose of the center is to provide the skills and knowledge that will enable families of children, birth to 21, including those with disabilities and professionals to function as equal partners in the education decision making process and to assist families in accessing service for their children. A parent partner and an educator coordinate the activities of this program.
<b>Assistive Technology Services</b>	The Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist provides support services to parents, staff and students with disabilities. The AT specialist may provide consultation on equipment, professional development, purchasing information, and maintains a resource lending center.
<b>Special Education Teacher Mentor Support</b>	These special education Core Team members support special education staff district wide by providing instructional support, assisting with assessments, mentoring new special education teachers, assisting with professional development and ensuring compliance with special education regulations.
<b>School Psychology Services</b>	School psychology services are provided to all students with disabilities in DCPS. These services include but are not limited to: observation and assessment, IEP and IFSP team participation, counseling, behavior management planning, consultation with DCPS staff and parents, and educational planning.
<b>Speech and Language Pathology Services</b>	Speech-Language Pathologists provide services to children identified through the Infants and Toddlers Program as well as students identified as having a disability through the special education process. Services are provided to assist identified students to access the general education curriculum through learning effective communication skills.
<b>Physical Therapy Services</b>	Physical Therapists provide services to children identified through the Infants and Toddlers Program as well as students identified as having a disability through the special education process. Physical Therapist work with students to facilitate normal movement for gross motor skills, building accessibility, and assist with the selection of adaptive equipment.
<b>Occupational Therapy Services</b>	Occupational Therapists provide services to children identified through the Infants and Toddlers Program as well as students identified as having a disability through the special education process. Occupational Therapists assist students to improve fine motor, sensory motor, oral motor, and/or self-help skills.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Service Description</b>
<b>Audiology Services</b>	The Audiologist provides services to children identified through the Infants and Toddlers Program as well as students identified as having a disability through the special education process. The Audiologist's services include: hearing screening, audiological assessment, hearing aid evaluations, support with assistive technologies, and consultation to staff and parents.
<b>Services for students with Hearing Impairments</b>	The itinerant teachers of students who are deaf or hard-of hearing provide assessments as well as direct and indirect special education services to students with significant hearing losses and deafness. Staffing is based upon the number of service hours with allowances for planning, travel time, meetings, data collection, and consultation. Some students are identified as needing intense services because of having a cochlear implant or needing to develop a functional communication system such as American Sign Language. Students receive direct instruction from a certified teacher of the deaf with inclusion in general education as appropriate. Additional services are provided to students in these programs by audiologists, educational interpreters, speech-language pathologists, and the assistive technology resource team, when appropriate.
<b>Services for students with Visual Impairments including Blindness</b>	Itinerant teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired provide assessment, consultation, and individualized instruction in specialized skills and techniques for blindness and low vision. Areas of instruction include braille, the use of specialized technology, study and organizational skills, self-advocacy, and activities of daily living. Orientation and mobility instruction is provided by specially trained orientation and mobility instructors in school and community settings. Vision services, including orientation and mobility, are provided to children birth to 21 in home, school, and community settings in order to foster the greatest degree of independence possible for each student. Staffing is based upon the number of service hours with allowances for planning, travel time, meetings, data collection, and consultation.
<b>Interpreting Services</b>	An Interpreter is provided to a student who is deaf to facilitate instruction and communication between the student and the teaching staff and the student's peers.
<b>Services provided by Instructional Assistants</b>	These staff members work under the direction of special education teachers to assist with providing instruction and support to students with disabilities.
<b>Physical Management Support Services</b>	These staff members assist students with disabilities who have more intensive cognitive, medical, emotional, and/or physical disabilities. These staff members are hired on an as needed basis to assist students with accessing the least restrictive environment.
<b>Administrative Services</b>	The Special Education Department at the Central Office supervises all special education services and programs including the Dorchester County Infants and Toddlers Program to ensure that these programs meet compliance with the laws and regulations that pertain to students with disabilities. This department also: monitors and evaluates special education services, develops and maintains budgets, observes special education staff, works collaboratively with general education staff, provides professional development, and is responsible for the overall functioning of services to students with disabilities.
<b>Clerical &amp; Medical Billing Services</b>	Two positions assist with the day to day operation of the Special Education Department at the Central Office and the Medical Assistance Billing process.
<b>Medical Services</b>	A Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) is required to support the medical needs of a student with a disability. Through the student's health and safety plan, a CNA is needed in order for the student to access the school and participate in the educational program.
<b>Information Technology Services</b>	An Information Technology staff member supports the technology for the Special Education Department as well as maintains the department's inventory.

## **PROCESS FOR MONITORING CASELOADS TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF IEPS & TO ADDRESS STAFFING CONCERNS**

Data collection conducted throughout the school year provides information needed to monitor and evaluate the current caseloads and staffing plan. This data is used to identify and respond to concerns about adequate staffing from parents, special educators, general educators, and principals. Opportunities for community input are available through the Special Education Community Advisory Committee (SECAC) and the public responses to the current Staffing Plan.

As a part of the process for monitoring caseloads, the following will be done throughout the school year:

<b>September</b>	Special Education Staff are asked to update caseload information charts that are generated from the SSIS database and send this information to the Special Education Department at the Board of Education. The caseload data is reviewed by the Special Education Department and if required, changes are made as appropriate to address changes in caseloads.
<b>October</b>	Caseload lists are resubmitted and then reviewed by the Special Education Department prior to the October Census. Information on the caseload lists includes annual review dates and evaluation review dates.
<b>December</b>	Special Education Staff are asked to update caseload information charts that are generated from the SSIS database and send this information to the Special Education Department at the Board of Education. The caseload data is reviewed by the Special Education Department and if required, changes are made as appropriate to address changes in caseloads.
<b>January</b>	The Special Education Department reviews SSIS data and determines projected staffing needs in preparation for the development of the upcoming fiscal year's staffing plan. Plans are made for meeting with building principals about their staffing needs prior to the writing of the staffing plan.
<b>March</b>	Special Education Staff is asked to update caseload information charts that are generated from the SSIS database. The caseload data is reviewed by the Special Education Department and if required, changes are made as appropriate to address changes in caseloads.
<b>April</b>	Staffing plan is prepared.
<b>May</b>	List of students transitioning from 5 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades are prepared by case managers in preparation for team planning meetings. Students leaving high school to the Pathways classroom at DCTC also are reviewed.
<b>June</b>	Proposed staffing plan is prepared and reviewed with SECAC. Special Education Staff is asked to update caseload information charts. The caseload data is reviewed by the Special Education Department and if required, changes are made as appropriate to address changes in caseloads.
<b>July</b>	Staffing plan is submitted to the Board of Education.



Special educators and general educators work collaboratively to provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities. Instruction can be delivered to students with disabilities by the general education teacher with the special education teacher providing consultation or modification of materials. Co-teaching is also utilized to provide services to students with disabilities. This model allows for general education and special education to share the responsibility of instruction whether students are receiving large group or small group instruction. Professional development activities are provided to staff through the Special Education Department as well as through each school's School Improvement Planning process. To ensure all students are able to access the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible, special education staff is included in countywide professional development opportunities, as well as training specific to students with disabilities and special education issues.

As students' IEPs are developed throughout the school year, changes may occur in the staffing plan in order to implement the IEPs. The Special Education Department coordinates with building administrators to make any adjustments to the staffing plan that are needed to address the students' needs. If changes cannot be made at the school level to address the staffing concern, then the Supervisor of Special Education with the approval of the Director of Leadership and School Improvement may request a temporary employee, or request an additional teacher or paraprofessional from the local school budget, or request an additional teacher or paraprofessional from the federal budget. If the staff changes needed cannot be funded by the federal or local budget, then the request is submitted to the Director of Administrative Services who takes the request to the Board of Education for approval.

If there are staffing concerns due to the provision of related services, the Supervisor of Special Education will address the concern. DCPS participates with the Mid-Shore Special Education Consortium to share the resources and costs associated with the provision of some related services, specifically occupational therapy, physical therapy, audiology, hearing and vision services and clinical services to students with emotional disabilities. If a staffing change needs to occur to address increased student need or to fill a vacancy, the Supervisors of the participating counties meet and discuss how to collaboratively address the need.

When staffing needs change for speech pathology, related services that are provided directly by DCPS, the Supervisor of Special Education works with contract agencies to fill the vacancy until a permanent employee can be hired by DCPS. If a vacancy occurs in a teaching position, a long-term substitute is hired. Substitutes are hired when instructional assistants or physical management support staff is absent in order to ensure that students' needs as identified on IEPs are addressed.

## **EVALUATION OF THE STAFFING PLAN**

The ongoing evaluation of the staffing plan is the responsibility of the Supervisor of Special Education. Prior to the preparation of this current staffing plan, the Supervisor of Special Education reviewed the plan for its strengths and weaknesses. DCPS' LRE data continues to improve. In every LRE area evaluated by MSDE, DCPS meets or exceeds the state target. The plan incorporated enough time for educators and related service providers to meet with each other and consult with families. In fact, in most schools, the ratio of students to teachers is less than the ratio used in the staffing plan. DCPS did not receive any complaints or have any hearings that caused appointments or reallocation of staff. Regular review of the caseload data, ongoing communication with building administrators, and dialogue with special education staff are some of the methods for reviewing the effectiveness of the staffing plan. The staffing plan will be reviewed monthly at team planning meetings (Supervisor and Coordinator of Special Education meet and discuss staffing as well as other departmental issues) and at the SECAC meetings. Additionally, the staffing plan is reviewed at the Core Team Meetings. Core Team members include: School Psychologists, Assistive Technology Specialist, Specially Designed Instruction Coaches, and the Coordinator of Special Education and the meetings are facilitated quarterly by the Supervisor of Special Education. The staffing plan will be updated as changes occur.