



### I. WORKGROUP MEMBER NAMES, ROLES AND/OR TITLES, ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

1. Amy Riley	Program Manager
2. Marcy Doud	Assist. Sup./ Lead of Committee
3. Brenda Natala	ECSE Supervisor/ Co-Lead of Committee
4. Larry Wren	Special Ed. Supervisor
5. Leslie Hitchens	Special Ed. Supervisor
6. Amy Johson	Special Ed. Supervisor
7. Hai-Yen Vo	Special Ed. Supervisor
8. TJ Larson	Special Ed. Coach
9. Barb Easton	Special Ed. Coach
10. Gina Paton	ECSE Coordinator
11. Chamomile Link	Parent
12. Jackie Kelly	Family Engagement

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), was involved with monthly updates and input regarding the special education sub-committee’s work.

### II. MEETING DATES AND TIMES

- January 14, 2021                      April 12, 2021
- February 9, 2021                      April 20, 2021
- March 18, 2021                      May 3, 2021 (PI/PT focus group)

### III. WORKGROUP PURPOSE STATEMENT

Determine how Special Education programs and their locations can be better aligned to improve the experiences and needs of students and their families.



#### IV. ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES (FINDINGS)

##### **What is the legal requirement of the District to provide a continuum of services within the District and by school?**

PER MN STATUTE 125A.03 SPECIAL INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY.

- For purposes of state and federal special education laws, the phrase "special instruction and services" in the state Education Code means a free and appropriate public education provided to an eligible child with disabilities. "Free appropriate public education" means special education and related services that:
  - (1) are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
  - (2) meet the standards of the state, including the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B or C;
  - (3) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education; and
  - (4) are provided to children ages three through 21 in conformity with an individualized education program that meets the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, subpart A, sections 300.320 to 300.324, and provided to infants and toddlers in conformity with an individualized family service plan that meets the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, subpart A, sections 303.300 to 303.346.
- (b) Notwithstanding any age limits in laws to the contrary, special instruction and services must be provided from birth until July 1 after the child with a disability becomes 21 years old but shall not extend beyond secondary school or its equivalent, except as provided in section [124D.68, subdivision 2](#). Local health, education, and social service agencies must refer children under age five who are known to need or suspected of needing special instruction and services to the school district. Districts with less than the minimum number of eligible children with a disability as determined by the commissioner must cooperate with other districts to maintain a full range of programs for education and services for children with a disability. This section does not alter the compulsory attendance requirements of section [120A.22](#).

In essence, St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) needs to provide a continuum of specialized services for students ages birth to 21. Costs to provide such services are at the public school district's expense. Each district is required to provide a continuum of services (full range of programs) and if they are unable to do so because of size, they may cooperate with other districts or intermediates.

##### **How does SPPS' data on students in specialized programs align with local and national data?**



### What is the trend of students needing specialized programs?

The percentage of students in special education within SPPS is 16.4% and statewide the percentage is 16.7%. Based on a report from the Council of Great City Schools and their member districts, the percentage of students from age 6-21 who are in special education is 9.7% and SPPS is at 13.8%. It appears that SPPS has an over representation to like districts nationally, however, we must caution the data due to discrepancies in self reporting as well as states having different criteria for qualifying for special education.

In MN, the Federal Setting identifies where a student receives special education services. In accordance with the student’s needs, special educators must provide special education services in the least restrictive environment (general education). The chart below explains the Federal Settings:

Federal Setting I	Special education services primarily within the regular class. Outside of the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day.
Federal Setting II	Special education services primarily within a resource setting. Outside of the regular classroom (typically a resource room) between 21–60 percent of the school day.
Federal Setting III	Special education services primarily within a special class. Separate classroom more than 60 percent of the school day.
Federal Setting IV	Special education services in a public separate-day school facility.

All schools are able to provide special education services for Federal Setting I & II. Federal Setting III programs are at specific schools. This [guide](#) provides the location of the Federal III ECSE, ASD, DCD, and EBD programs.

When comparing the district’s and statewide December 1st child count which includes the Federal Setting, students in SPPS who are in a more restrictive setting are comparable to the state average. At this time, the Council of Great City School does not have comparable Federal Setting data.

### What are the enrollment trends (historical and current) regarding the number of students who need a more restrictive program.

In general, students in special education reside throughout the district, however, there are more students who reside on the east side of the district in comparison to the west side. There are clusters of students which are aligned with low poverty areas within the district. This enrollment trend also aligns with students who need a more restrictive setting (Federal Setting III) for special education services. District boundaries for Area A, B, and C have greater clusters of students who need a more restrictive special education setting.



The district does not have formal data on students who need a Federal setting III program and who are transported outside of their area due to either parent choice or building/ program capacity. Informal data indicates that on a yearly basis, Supervisors are placing students outside of Area A, B, and C due to building/ program capacity. By placing a student out of the area, they are no longer allowed to attend school with their siblings and/or neighborhood peers.

Parents report that if their child is in need of a Federal III program, they have limited school choice in comparison to families who do not have a child who needs a specialized program. Parents also report the difficulty in navigating conferences, school events, and overall parental engagement when they have children at multiple schools because their child has special needs.

The past anecdotal history indicates that when space is needed for Federal III programs or an additional classroom, a priority in decision making is identifying buildings with low enrollment. Building acoustics, sensory rooms, parental enrollment interests, space for related service and instructional pathways appear to not be part of the decision making.

Pathways that are available for students in general education, such as aerospace, are not available for students who need a Federal Setting III program. Farnsworth lower (prek -4) does not have a Federal III program, however, Farnsworth Upper has a Federal III program.

This narrative is also true for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). As the district moved to full day 4 year old programming, it required the ECSE program to offer the full continuum of specialized services within a full day. If an ECSE student needs a more restrictive program, it appears that space is identified apart from alignment from the K-12 specialized programming.

Students who do not need a specialized program, however, they have a physical disability are routed to specific schools due to the lack of lift buses available to support school choice.

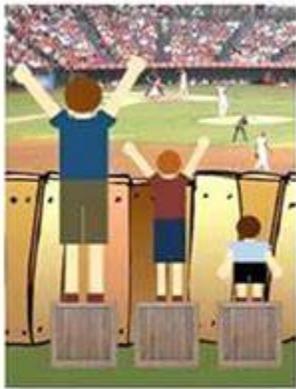
Parents and staff indicated that not all buildings are accessible for students with disabilities. Also that new construction did not consistently include considerations for students with disabilities nor did it consistently improve accessibility to all areas within a building. The district was unable to provide any accessibility building level data to address this concern.

Parents and staff also shared that the current space, such as changing/ toileting space, is not private, often in the nurse's room (by sick students), not large enough for a student and 2-3 adults with the student, and does not have a sink or toilet.

## **V. RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE**

### **Overall Theme**

## EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

***In looking at this visual, sometimes ADA accommodations for construction/ access are at the equitable level. At this level, there is still an impact on the student with a disability. For example, Murray's smaller gym area. There is equitable access, but it requires students in wheelchairs to go outside in the winter to access this area of the gym. We would recommend that construction and programming addresses the inequity of systemic barriers and removes them so there is not an impact to the student with a disability.***

### **The Special Education Sub-Committee is Recommending:**

#### **Access**

- Developing an aligned pathway plan from ECSE to grade 12 for specialized or Federal Setting III programs that includes:
  - dedicated and appropriate space within area schools for Federal Setting III programs to support enrollment
  - equitable access to educational (aerospace, language, etc.) and career and college pathways
  - Specialized programs that need specific equipment have the equipment in the space. Example: DHH programs have audiology booths onsite.
- Restructuring Federal Setting III programs to align with student's needs and support pathway access.
- Not limiting school choice to students who need a lift bus, but not a specialized program.

#### **Facilities/ Space/ Construction**

- Completing an accessibility analysis of every building and space to make recommendations for future construction and programming.
- All new construction eliminates system barriers to accessibility (gyms, classrooms, stages, lunchrooms, etc)
- PI/PT educator on each of the construction planning teams.

- Areas identified in each building with permanent large signage for areas of rescue.
- Every building has 1-2 private changing/ toileting spaces that includes a toilet and sink and adequate space for wheelchair and adults who assist. Also a Hoyer lift attached to the ceiling in at least one of the bathrooms.
- Labs (science, FACS, etc) have a wheelchair spot for tables and sink accessibility.
- Dedicated sensory room/ motor room in every building.
- Dedicated storage area for specialized equipment.
- All buildings are accessible for students and staff that have physical, visual, and hearing disabilities. (ie. acoustics, braille, visuals, lighting)
- Dedicated small group therapy or testing space.
- Federal Setting III classrooms align with kindergarten size classrooms and includes
  - a sink
  - ceiling swing
- Dedicated small classrooms for pull out special ed. services (10-15 students public and nonpublic students).
- Accessible playground space and structures for every building. Fencing around all playground areas.
- Dedicated space for 7-8th grade adaptive sports that is more centrally located in the district.
- Parking lots include two slots by the main entrance for itinerant special educators.
- All external doors have accessibility buttons that are present and working.
- Redesign and upgrade of Bridge View School

#### **Itinerant/ Home Visit Staff**

- Develop a safety alert system for itinerant staff and ECSE home/community visit staff for when the buildings and/or community is on lock down.
- Plan for expansion of hoteling/ office space for staff (West and East side option).
- Dedicated space for family groups, professional development and on site individualized services (West and East side option).
- Dedicated transportation for home visits/ assessment (Curbie).

#### **ECSE**

- Classrooms align with Pre-K rooms and include sink, and ceiling swing.
- Dedicated space for 4 year old programs within the school buildings and within an early learning hub.
- Furniture, toilets and classroom design are age appropriate.
- Indoor developmentally appropriate gross motor space
- West and East Hub for Birth to 3 year old programs, including space for community partners (i.e. Head Start)
- Dedicated bus (mobile option) for home based services and assessments

### **VI. INTERSECTIONS WITH OTHER WORKGROUPS - consider the following:**

- a. How does your focus area intersect with other Envision Workgroup focus areas?** Since students in special education are in every building, every program, and throughout the age bands, we have a significant impact on other workgroups. The greatest intersect is with:

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1. **College and Career Paths** - Pathways need to be accessible to all students, including students with significant special education needs.
  2. **Early Learning** - Any expansion or changes within Early Learning impact ECSE. The district is required to provide equitable programs throughout the continuum of special education services.
  3. **Enrollment** - Nondiscriminatory enrollment and placement of students who need a specific program greatly impacts special education. Enrollment for equal access to pathways and/or high interest schools needs to be considered for all students. Lack of enrollment and space availability has a history of influencing the location of specialized programs.
  4. **Facilities Utilization/Alignment Workgroup** - Students in special education, especially students who need wheelchairs and/or other equipment require more classroom space. The district is required to have a continuum of specialized programs that require space. Accessibility and access to general education spaces is required by law. Construction and future planning must consider students with disabilities to ensure equal access.

- b. **What information will you need from other workgroups to complete your work?** It would be important that the special education department reviews all recommendations to ensure that there is consideration for students with disabilities. There is limited building accessibility data. An accessibility study should occur prior to finalizing building specific decisions regarding special education pathways for specialized programs.
- c. **What information from your workgroup is relevant to share with other workgroups?** The list of recommendations should be shared with other workgroups.

## VI. LIST OF DATA SOURCES

[Link to table 204.50 NCES disability rates](#)

[CGCS rates and risk ratios](#)

[Specialized program definition issue](#)

[Bolt Envision SPPS folder](#)

[SPPS \(internal only, no comparison\) risk ratios](#) on Bolt

### MDE- ECSE Data

- A 15 percent drop in statewide enrollment in Early Childhood Special Education programs which serve children from birth to age 5.
- Early Childhood Special Education Part C (serving birth to three year olds) experienced a 20 percent drop in enrollment.
- Early Childhood Special Education Part B 619 (serving three to five year olds) experienced a 12 percent drop in enrollment.
- A 12 percent drop in enrollment across Voluntary Prekindergarten and School Readiness Plus school-based prekindergarten programs.
- A 9 percent drop in statewide kindergarten enrollment overall for Districts and Charters:
- 31 percent had an increase in kindergarten enrollment

- 5 percent had no change in kindergarten enrollment
- 63 percent saw a decrease in kindergarten enrollment •
  - Highest loss was 68 percent where the average loss was 17 percent • Anecdotal evidence indicates that School Readiness and Early Childhood Family Education have experienced a drop in enrollment
- A 26 percent drop in early childhood screenings occurred between the school year 2018-2019 to 2019-2020.
- A 30-35 percent drop in referrals to school districts through the Help Me Grow.

**VII. SUGGESTED PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND INDICATORS TO TRACK PROGRESS**

- New construction accessibility checklist that incorporates recommendations.
- Accessibility analysis and a plan with deadlines of completion.
- Yearly checklist completed by head engineer that all accessibility mechanics are in working order.
- A long term facility plan that incorporates planning for specialized programs as identified in the recommendations.

**VIII. OTHER COMMENTS: RECOMMENDATIONS/FINDINGS**

<b>Recommended Specialized Classrooms by Area</b>						
<b>Elementary School</b>						
Area	ASD/DCD Current Number of Classrooms	ASD/ DCD Recommended Number of Classrooms	EBD Current Number of Classrooms	EBD Recommended Number of Classrooms	ECSE Current Number of Classrooms	ECSE Recommended Number of Classrooms
A	5	6	1	1	3	4
B	10	8	1	1	3	3
C	6	9	2	2	3	4
D	1	2	0	1	0	1
E	5	6	3	2	2	3

F1	9	8	2	2	5	4
F2	2	2	0	1	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>

<b>Middle School</b>				
Area	ASD/DCD Current Number of Classrooms	ASD/ DCD Recommended Number of Classrooms	EBD Current Number of Classrooms	EBD Recommended Number of Classrooms
A	3	4	1	2
B	3	4	1	1
C	4	5	2	2
D	1	2	1	1
E	2	3	1	1
F1	2	4	2	2
F2	2	3	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

<b>High School</b>				
Area	ASD/DCD Current Number of Classrooms	ASD/ DCD Recommended Number of Classrooms	EBD Current Number of Classrooms	EBD Recommended Number of Classrooms



A	4	4	2	2
B	4	4	2	2
C	2	4	1	2
D	2	2	1	1
E	3	3	2	2
F1	3	3	3	3
F2	3	4	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>