



# Findings Report: Raising Achievement of Students Who Struggle

Hamden Public Schools

Board of Education Meeting

November 10, 2020



District Management Group | Helping Schools and Students Thrive

## Agenda

### **DMGroup Introduction**

**Project Overview & Methodology**

**Executive Summary**

**District Context**

**Commendations & Opportunities for Consideration**

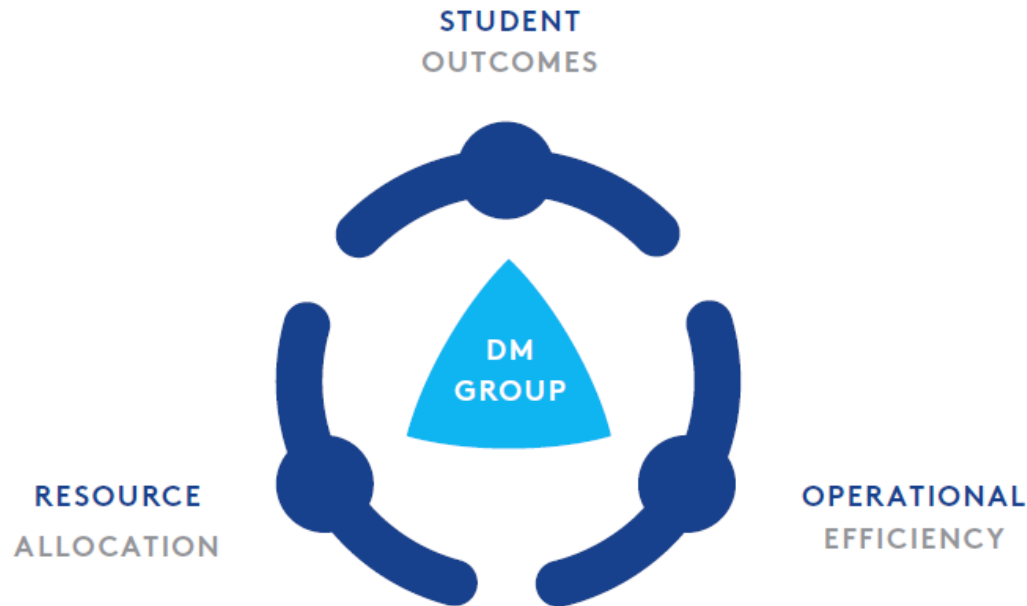
**Guiding Coalition Prioritization**

**Next Steps**



The District Management Group's mission is to achieve systemic improvement in public education.

## DMGroup's Mission





















**We believe that a district must focus on meeting all 3 of these objectives to achieve lasting results for students**



Since our founding in 2004, DMGroup has helped hundreds of school districts across the U.S. to address their most pressing needs.

## Selected DMGroup Partners

<p><b>All Sizes of Districts</b></p>	 <p>Franklin West Supervisory Union</p> <p>1,700 students Rural</p>	 <p>5,000 Suburban</p>	 <p>6,800 Suburban</p>	 <p>10,600 Gateway</p>	 <p>55,000 Urban</p>	 <p>100,000 Urban</p>
<p><b>Nationwide Experience</b></p>	 <p>Arizona</p>	 <p>Minnesota</p>	 <p>Texas</p>	 <p>South Dakota</p>	 <p>Maryland</p>	 <p>Connecticut</p>
<p><b>All Types of Districts</b></p>						 <p>TOGETHER WE CAN</p>



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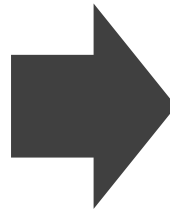


As a reminder, the Guiding Coalition should play a key role in guiding this work by helping to create a vision for change and communicating to stakeholders.

## Role of the Guiding Coalition



- Provide direction and materials for the guiding coalition
- Present best practice research
- Provide project management support
- Synthesize recommendations into district-developed plan



- Champion the effort of defining ideal service delivery model and guidelines
- Provide diverse perspectives based on the guiding coalition's members' experiences
- Provide content expertise
- Finalizes options for consideration by leadership team



# The opportunity review combined significant qualitative evidence and data analysis to build an understanding of current service delivery models.

## Methodology

### Qualitative Evidence

- Classroom observations
- Interviews with district leaders
- Focus groups with:
  - Parents
  - Board members
  - Staff
  - Administrators

### Key Findings:

Highest leverage opportunities

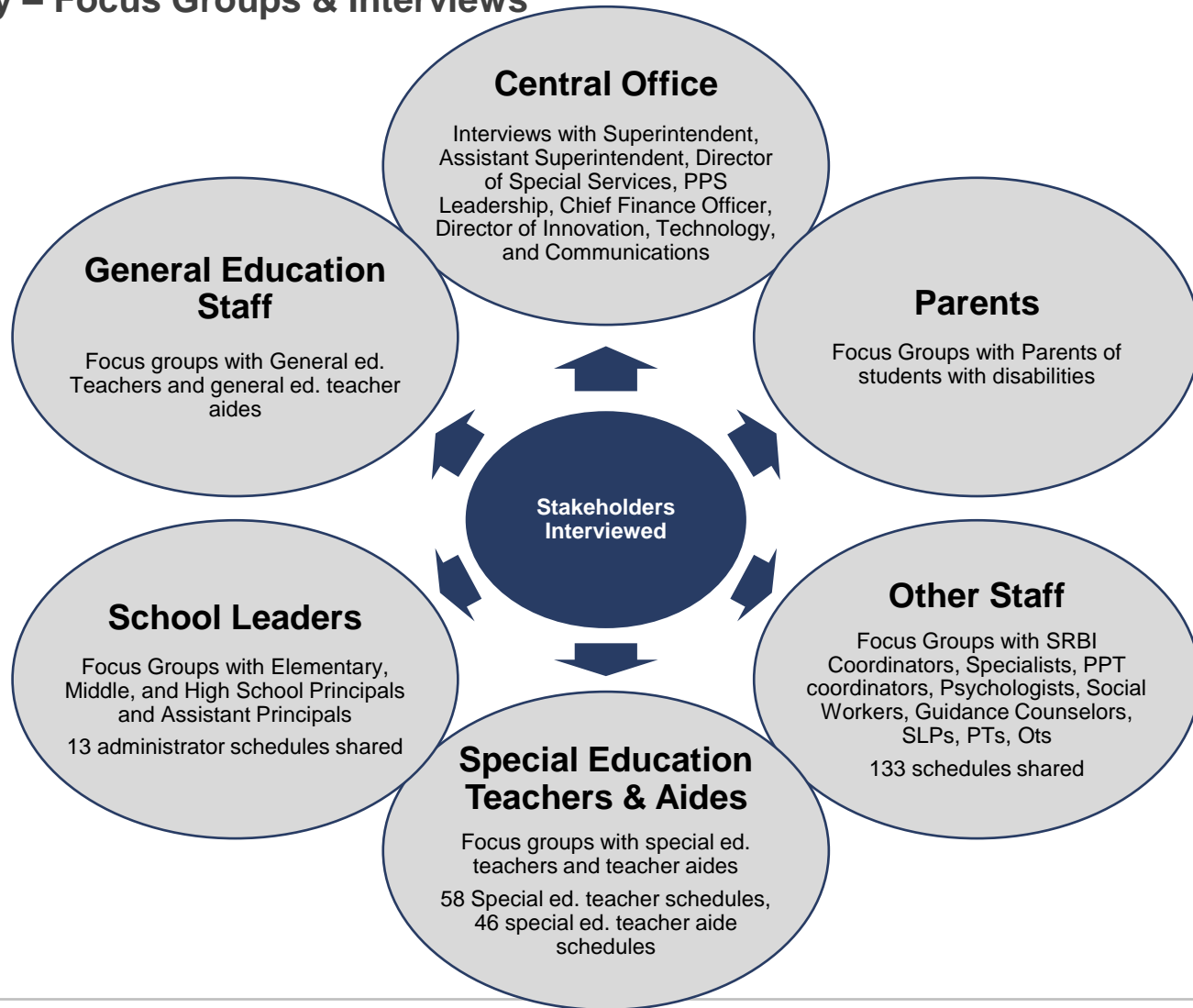
### Data Analysis

- State data to compare IEP rates, staff allocations, exam scores, etc.
- Staff schedule sharing (occurred the week of December 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- Data analysis to address these key issues:
  - What percentage of service to struggling students is push-in vs. pull-out or co-teaching?
  - How much time is devoted to supporting students directly?
  - What topics are being supported?
  - How many students are being supported at a time?



# DMGroup conducted over 25 interviews and focus groups and collected 250 schedules from special education staff.

## Methodology – Focus Groups & Interviews





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# Executive Summary

- Hamden Public Schools seeks to provide high quality, cost-effective services for students with disabilities. The district has a focus on ensuring better outcomes for students without raising the cost of services.
- Hamden has many areas of strength to build upon, including:
  - Hamden administrators and staff are passionate and committed to supporting students.
  - Student-centered instruction coupled with strong SEL supports were present in all the elementary classrooms visited.
  - Hamden has implemented a robust SRBI program at the elementary level.
- However, there are areas that Hamden needs to address in order to improve services and ensure better outcomes for students. District leaders, staff, and the Hamden community may consider:
  - Ensuring that general education teachers deliver strong, differentiated Tier 1 instruction.
  - Expanding existing intervention practices to grades 5-8.
  - Focusing the role of special education teacher aides toward health, safety, behavior, or severe needs supports.
  - Increasing the amount of time mental health support staff serve students.
  - Aligning the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting students.

**The above recommendations are built on the premise that Hamden can do more and better for students without a significant increase resources or staff**



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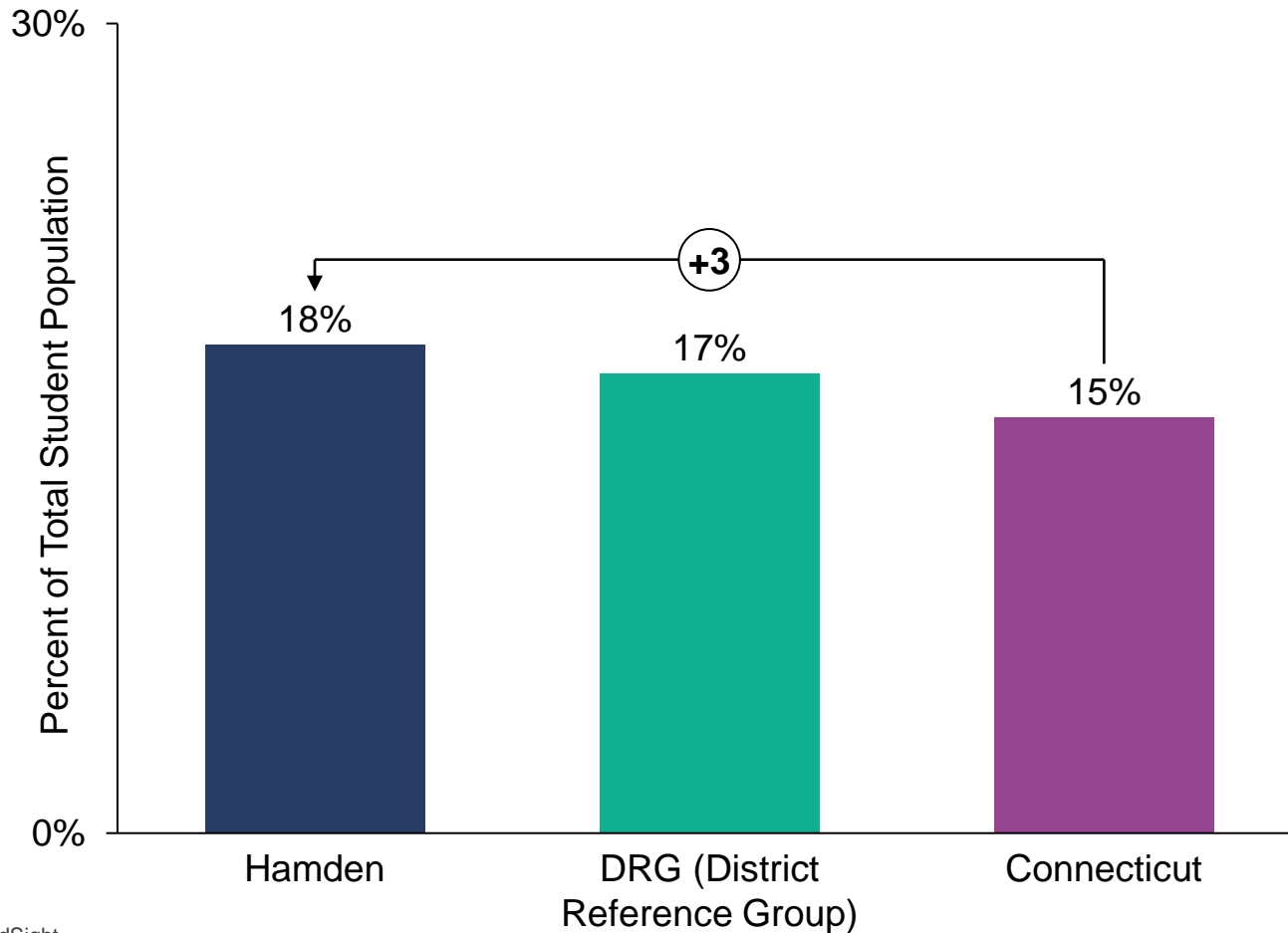
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About 18% of Hamden students are identified with a disability; this is higher than the state average.

### Students with Disabilities SY 2018-2019



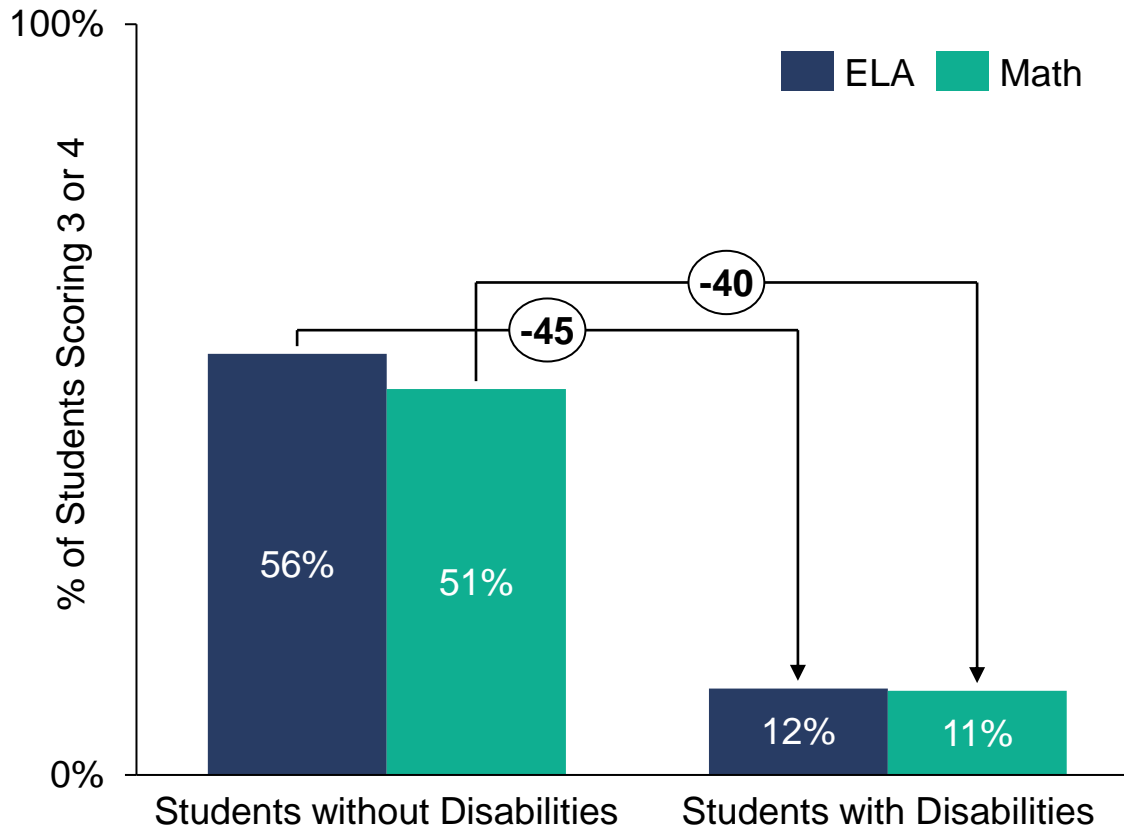
Source: EdSight.

DRG: Connecticut District Reference Group Includes Bloomfield, Bristol, East Haven, Groton, Killingly, Manchester, Middletown, Naugatuck, Plainfield, Putnam, Stratford, Torrington, Vernon, Winchester, Norwich Free Acad., Gilbert School



# Ultimately, fewer than one out of five Hamden students with disabilities demonstrates proficiency on the state assessment.

## Hamden ELA and Math State Exams by Disability (All Grades) 2018-2019



***Students without disabilities are 80% more likely than their peers with disabilities to demonstrate proficiency on the CT state assessment.***

Source: EdSight



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# Hamden Public Schools has multiple areas of strength but also opportunities to consider in order to improve supports for struggling students.

## Commendations

- Hamden administrators and staff are passionate and committed to supporting students.
- Student-centered instruction coupled with strong SEL supports were present in all the elementary classrooms visited.
- Hamden has implemented a robust SRBI program at the elementary level.

## Opportunities

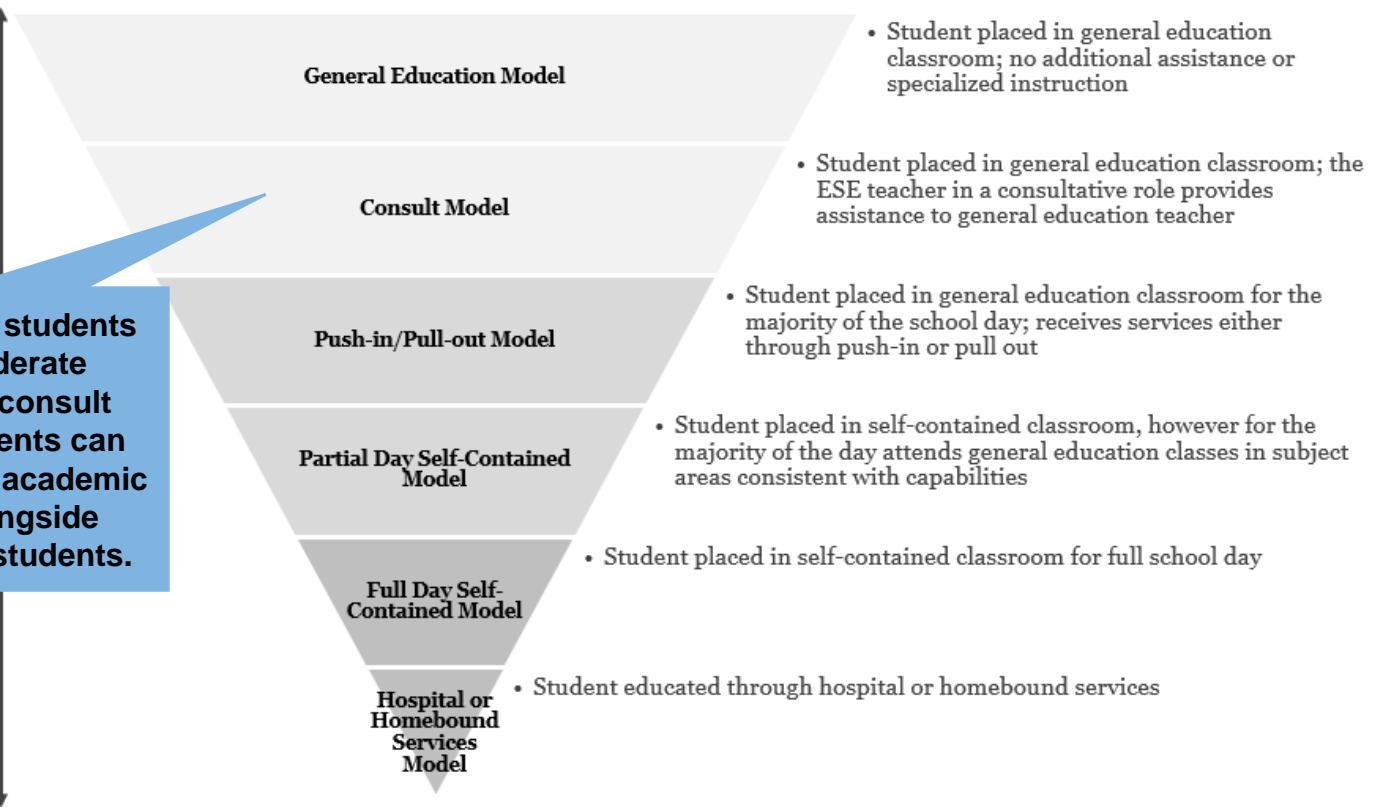
- Ensure that general education teachers deliver strong Tier 1 instruction and are well-equipped to differentiate for all students in their classrooms.
- Expand existing intervention practices in grades K-4 to ensure that students in grades 5-8 have access to adequate supplemental instruction.
- Focus the role of special education teacher aides toward support for students with health, safety, behavior, or severe needs.
- Increase the amount of time mental health support staff serve students directly by shifting clerical responsibilities to other roles.
- Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# Above all else, Hamden needs to establish a district vision for how it supports struggling students, and then create a corresponding continuum of services.

## Continuum of Services

Most Inclusive



Teachers can serve students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in the consult model, where students can take part in focused academic interventions alongside general education students.

Most Restrictive

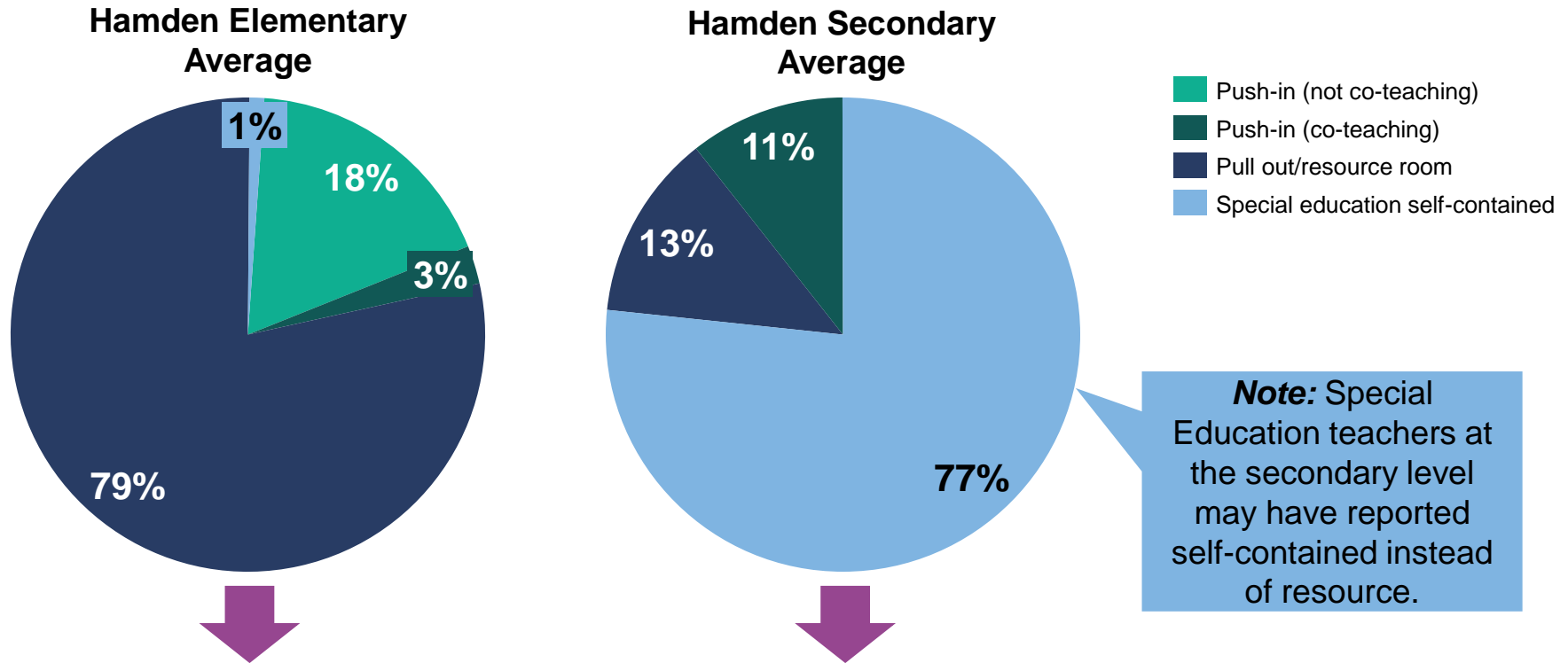
- **Clear guidelines** should be established to define **when students can be provided services** to ensure that services do not detract from core instruction from general education teachers.
- **A common vocabulary and language** used throughout the district can help solidify the continuum of services and vision.





# Currently, special education teachers rely heavily on support models that are not aligned with inclusive practices.

## Percent of Time with Students by Instructional Setting *Special Education Teachers (including Resource and PK)\**



Special education teachers who serve students with mild-to-moderate disabilities reported a **majority of time** serving students **outside of the general education classroom**.

\*This analysis refers only to practitioners supporting students with mild-to-moderate disabilities.  
Source: Hamden Public Schools Staff (Schedule Sharing Data)



# Hamden has five opportunities to consider in order to improve supports for struggling students.

## Opportunities for Consideration

1

Ensure that general education teachers deliver strong Tier 1 instruction and are well-equipped to differentiate for all students in their classrooms.

2

Expand existing intervention practices in grades K-4 to ensure that students in grades 5-8 have access to adequate supplemental instruction.

3

Focus the role of special education teacher aides toward support for students with health, safety, behavior, or severe needs.

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Increase the amount of time mental health support staff serve students directly by shifting clerical responsibilities to other roles.

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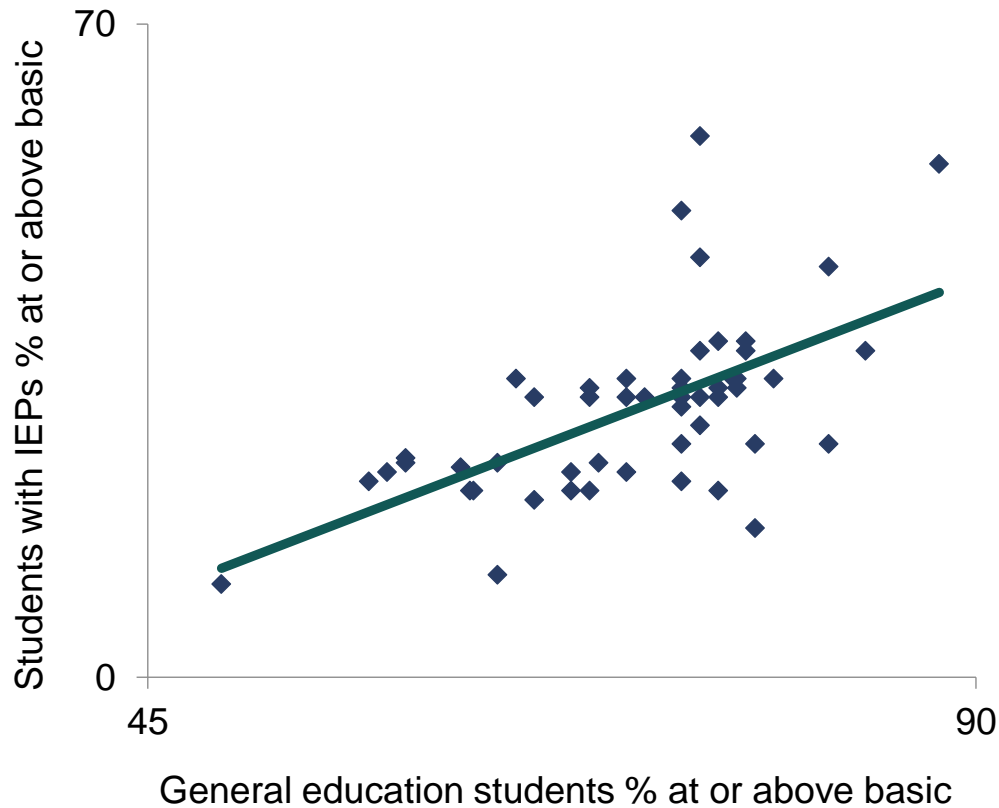
Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# Having a strong core curriculum in place helps all students, including struggling students.

## Best Practice: NAEP Grade 4 Reading Performance by State % at Basic or Above

1 TIER 1 INSTRUCTION



**Higher performance of general education students is highly correlated to higher performance of students with disabilities nationwide.**

**The same correlation holds true for districts within a state.**

Source: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011 Reading Assessment



# Staff noted that many general education staff don't see special education students as part of their responsibility.

## Quotes from Focus Groups

"It is **difficult for teachers to differentiate** and keep to the curriculum pacing."

- *Counselor*

"There is a division between **"your kids" [special ed students]** and **"my kids" [general ed students]**. There's also pushback to support [special education students] even at an admin level."

- *District Leader*

"General education teachers do not know **how to support special education students**. We [Paraprofessionals] end up [supporting students] with academics and behavior."

- *Paraprofessional*

"Some general education teachers believe that special education students are **not their responsibility**, and that students need support beyond what can be provided."

- *Special Education Teacher*



"Our staff need more support... **Principals don't have background [knowledge]** in all of these [special education] areas."

- *Principal*

As a next step, there are a few options district leadership could pursue to strengthen coaching supports and improve Tier 1 instruction.

## Future Considerations

1 TIER 1 INSTRUCTION

### Hamden may consider...

- Establish **philosophy and vision** for supporting students who are behind, including:
  - Clear mapping where and how **Tier 1 instruction** supports that philosophy
  - More universal & consistent language used to discuss services throughout Hamden
- Identifying **who should lead coaching in Hamden, and:**
  - **Limit their additional duties** so they can focus on coaching
  - Ensure that coaches are **holding staff accountable for differentiating**
- Developing a **replicable coaching cycle – focused on student-centered learning and differentiation** – that can be implemented across all grade levels and classrooms.
- **Establishing criteria** for which students belong in the general education setting and which students would benefit from a different level of support.
  - Provide training and guidelines for students to progress between levels of support



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## Opportunities for Consideration

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Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# DMGroup has identified four areas of intervention (SRBI) best practices.

## Best Practice: 10 Best Practices for Intervention

2

SRBI

### Organizational Structure

- 1 Clearly articulated school intervention vision and process
- 2 A school-level leader of intervention

### Data & Assessments

- 3 A cohesive, school-level data team with clear roles & protocols
- 4 Classroom level data is easily accessible for teachers

### Supplemental Interventions

- 5 Clear menu of defined interventions available at school
- 6 Interventions are short-term and remain connected to general education
- 7 Interventions are supplemental to core academic instruction
- 8 Student progress is monitored at defined intervals

### Content-strong Interventionists

- 9 Interventionists may be general educators, specialists, or other educators with appropriate training and demonstrated skill
- 10 Ongoing coaching, training, and professional development is provided to interventionists



# Though there is a solid foundation for intervention at the elementary (K-4) level, there is inconsistent intervention programs for students grades 5-8.

## Hamden's Alignment with Intervention Best Practices

	Elementary (K-4)	Intermediate (5-6)	Middle (7-8)
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>SRBI coordinators provide materials</b> for all students at all grade levels.</li> </ul>	Inconsistent	Missing
<b>Data &amp; Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Intervention eligibility</b> is based on exams.</li> <li>✓ SRBI Coordinators have a <b>data dashboard to analyze student growth.</b></li> </ul>	Inconsistent	Missing
<b>Supplemental Interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ SRBI coordinators determine the <b>type of intervention for students.</b></li> <li>✓ SRBI coordinators also <b>monitor students' progress.</b></li> <li>✓ K-4 classrooms have <b>SRBI blocks.</b></li> <li>✓ Intervention <b>groups are created based on data.</b></li> </ul>	Inconsistent	Missing
<b>Content-strong interventionists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Teachers deliver Tier 2</b> intervention unless tutors are trained.</li> </ul>	Inconsistent	Missing





As a next step, there are a few options Hamden can pursue to provide students with targeted, effective interventions.

## Future Considerations

2

SRBI

### Hamden may consider...

- **Establishing a philosophy and vision** for supporting students who struggle across the district and understanding **where SRBI supports that philosophy.**
- **Confirm & expand existing system** for intervention to middle school grades.
- **Utilize content specialists** (subject-area teachers or specialists) to lead interventions and providing them with guidance.
- **Incorporating an SRBI block into the schedule** where students can receive intervention from content specialists.



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## Opportunities for Consideration

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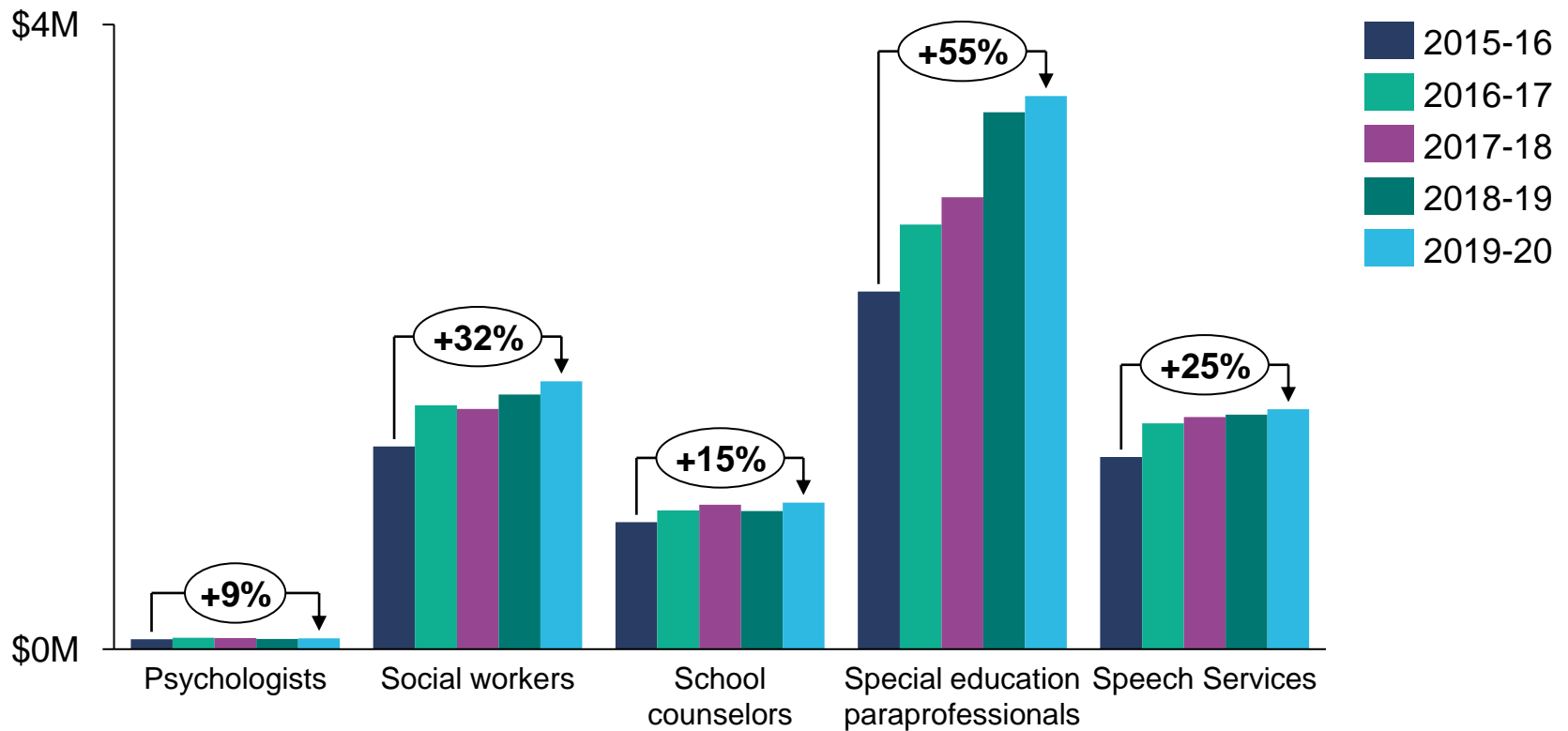
Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# Hamden increased its overall spending on special education paraprofessionals at higher rates than other roles since 2015-2016.

## Budget Expenditures on Non-Teacher Roles by Year SY 2015-16 to SY 2019-20

3 PARAPROFESSIONALS



Source: Hamden district data



# Paraprofessionals can best leverage their expertise by supporting students' health, safety, behavior, or severe needs.

## Best Practice: Potential Role of the Paraprofessional

3 PARAPROFESSIONALS

### Common Paraprofessional Responsibilities:

- Behavior support, **with direction from a highly trained expert**
- Supporting inclusion for students with severe needs
- A wide range of personal supports for students with severe needs
- Lunch duty, recess duty, bus duty, student escort

- Academic support to struggling students

### Best Practice Paraprofessional Responsibilities:

- Behavior support, **with direction from a highly trained expert**
- Supporting inclusion for students with severe needs
- A wide range of supports for students with severe needs
- Lunch duty, recess duty, bus duty, student escort

### Best Practice Academic Support Staff:

- Classroom teachers
- Specialists
- Special education teachers with content expertise



# Although aides should focus on providing student support, most special education paras are devoting more than 50% their time on instruction.

## Responsibility Breakdown by Time *Special Education Paraprofessionals (All Levels)*

Activity	Elementary Average	Middle School Average	High School Average
Student Support	26%	20%	40%
Student Instruction	51%	53%	34%
<b>Direct Service Time</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>74%</b>

Planning/materials preparation	3%	3%	8%
Personal Lunch	9%	8%	6%
Assigned school duties	9%	8%	3%
Collaboration with Colleagues	2%	1%	0%
Track/manage/collect data	1%	0%	0%
Under/over reported	0%*	7%*	10%*
<b>Total Time Spent on Additional Responsibilities</b>	<b>24%**</b>	<b>28%**</b>	<b>27%**</b>

\* Staff reported more less their contracted work day in schedule sharing.  
 \*\*Rounding up leads to total of 101%  
 Source: Hamden Staff Schedule Sharing



# As next steps, Hamden might consider refining the role of paraprofessionals to focus more on student health and less on instruction.

## Future Considerations

3 PARAPROFESSIONALS

### Hamden may consider...

- **Establishing a philosophy and vision** for supporting students who struggle across the district and understanding how **paraprofessionals support that philosophy.**
- Identifying which types of student needs will continue to be best addressed with **paraprofessionals, prioritizing health, safety, behavior, or severe needs of students.**
- **Reviewing and refining paraprofessional staffing allocation** process and developing a plan for updating IEPs accordingly.
- Developing guidelines for role and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, possibly moving towards specialized roles that are **less focused on instruction.**
- Reducing reliance on paraprofessionals **over time** by managing positions through attrition, so that changes can be handled via **retirements** or individuals **choosing to leave** the district.



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## Opportunities for Consideration

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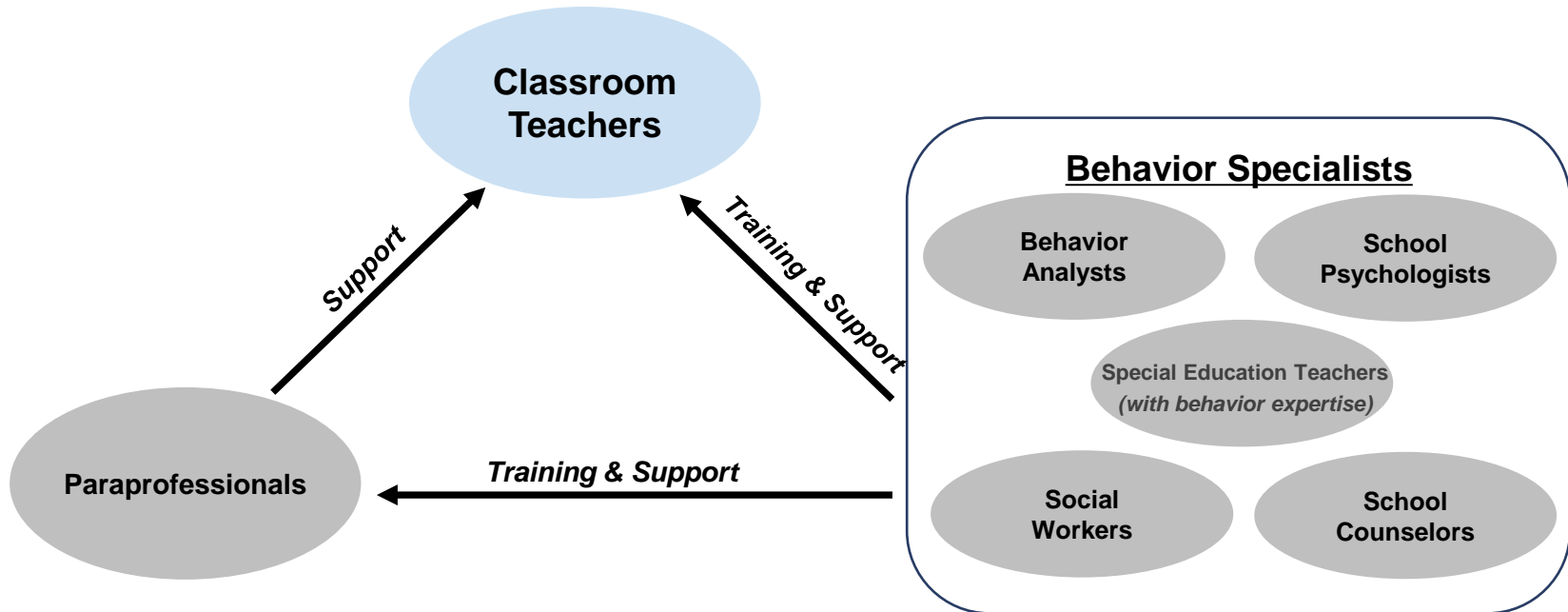
Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# Multiple staff roles should collaborate to proactively address social, emotional, and behavioral needs in different classroom settings.

## Best Practice: Training & Support Structure for Classroom Teachers

4 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL



### Key Considerations:

- Assess resources available in the district for providing social, emotional, and behavioral supports.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for all staff supporting students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Consider the systems and structures needed to ensure all resources are aligned.





# Hamden has a strong foundation for providing social, emotional, and behavioral support, but many are overwhelmed with meetings and paperwork.

## Current Practice: Systemic Strengths and Areas for Improvement

4 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Hamden has a strong foundation for providing social, emotional and behavioral supports



But mental health support roles are devoting more time to duties than to supporting students' needs.

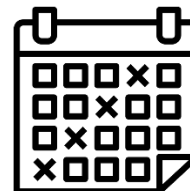
- ✓ Key roles in place
- ✓ Knowledgeable and committed staff
- ✓ SEL programs in place:
  - RULER
  - Second Step curriculum
  - PBIS



PPT Meetings



Writing IEPs and Evaluations

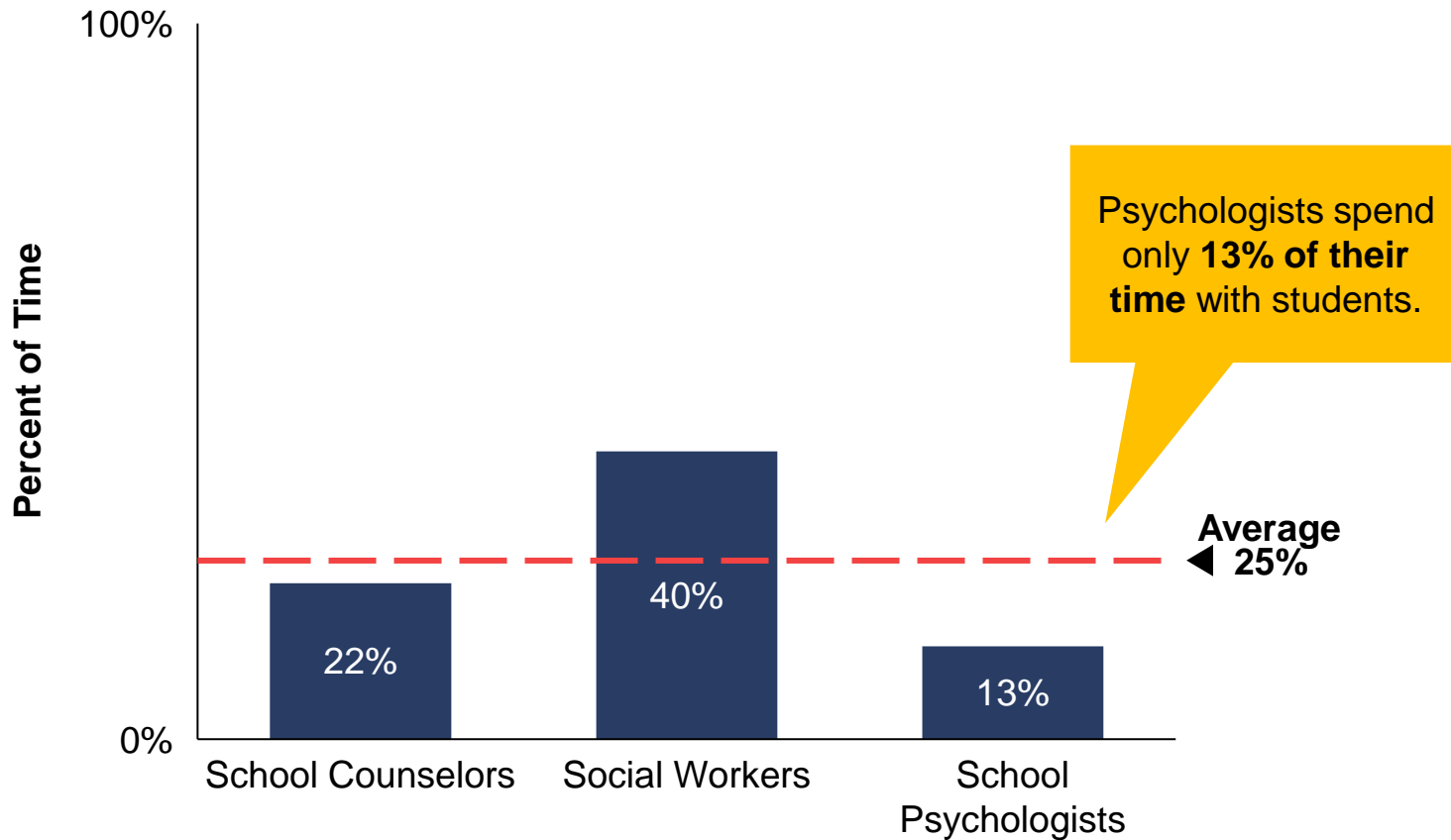


Scheduling



# On average, staff in social emotional support roles spend about a quarter of their time each week directly supporting students.

## Percent of Time with Students *Mental Health Support Staff (All Levels)*



Source: Hamden Public Schools Staff (Schedule Sharing Data)



To expand its level of social, emotional and behavioral supports, the district should reconsider the roles of its mental health support staff.

## Future Considerations

4 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

### Hamden may consider...

- **Establishing a philosophy and vision** for supporting students who struggle across the district and determine **where social, emotional, and behavioral support fit into that philosophy and vision.**
- Rethinking current roles and responsibilities for mental health support staff so that these roles can **proactively support students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs.**



# Hamden has five opportunities to consider in order to improve supports for struggling students.

## Opportunities for Consideration

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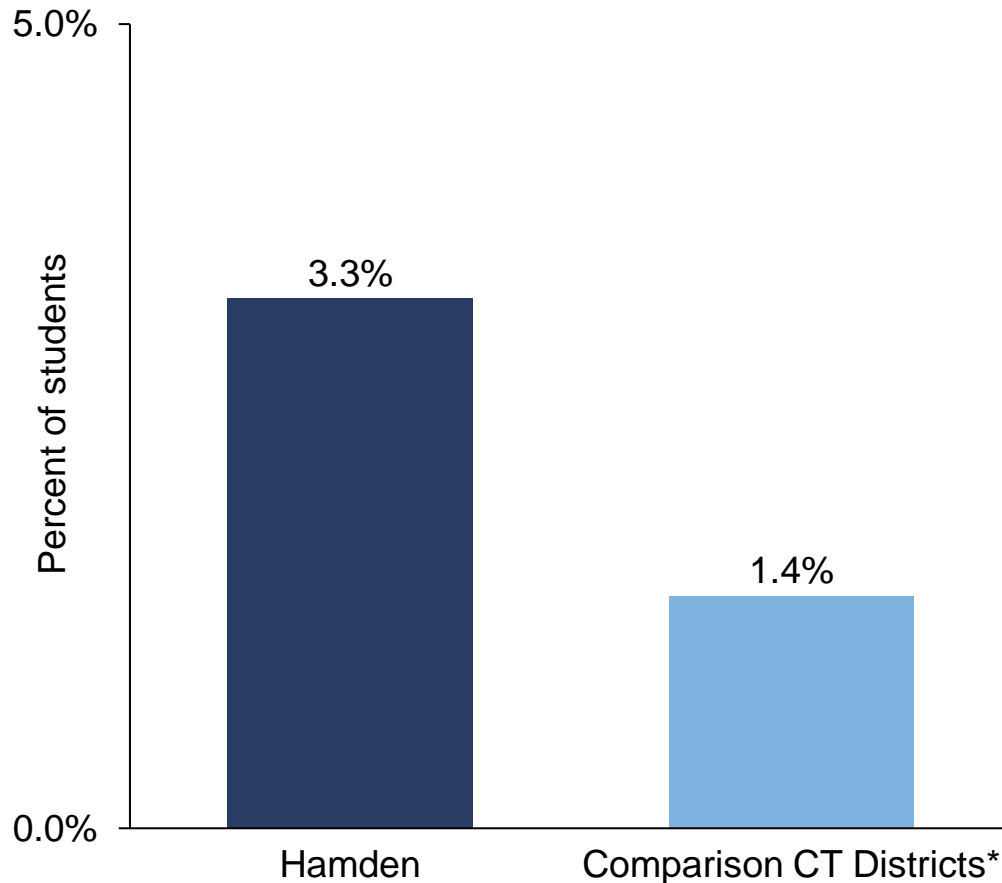
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Align the supports for severe needs to the district's philosophy for supporting struggling students and its continuum of services.



# Hamden places more students in self-contained classrooms and settings than other Connecticut districts.

## Students in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms



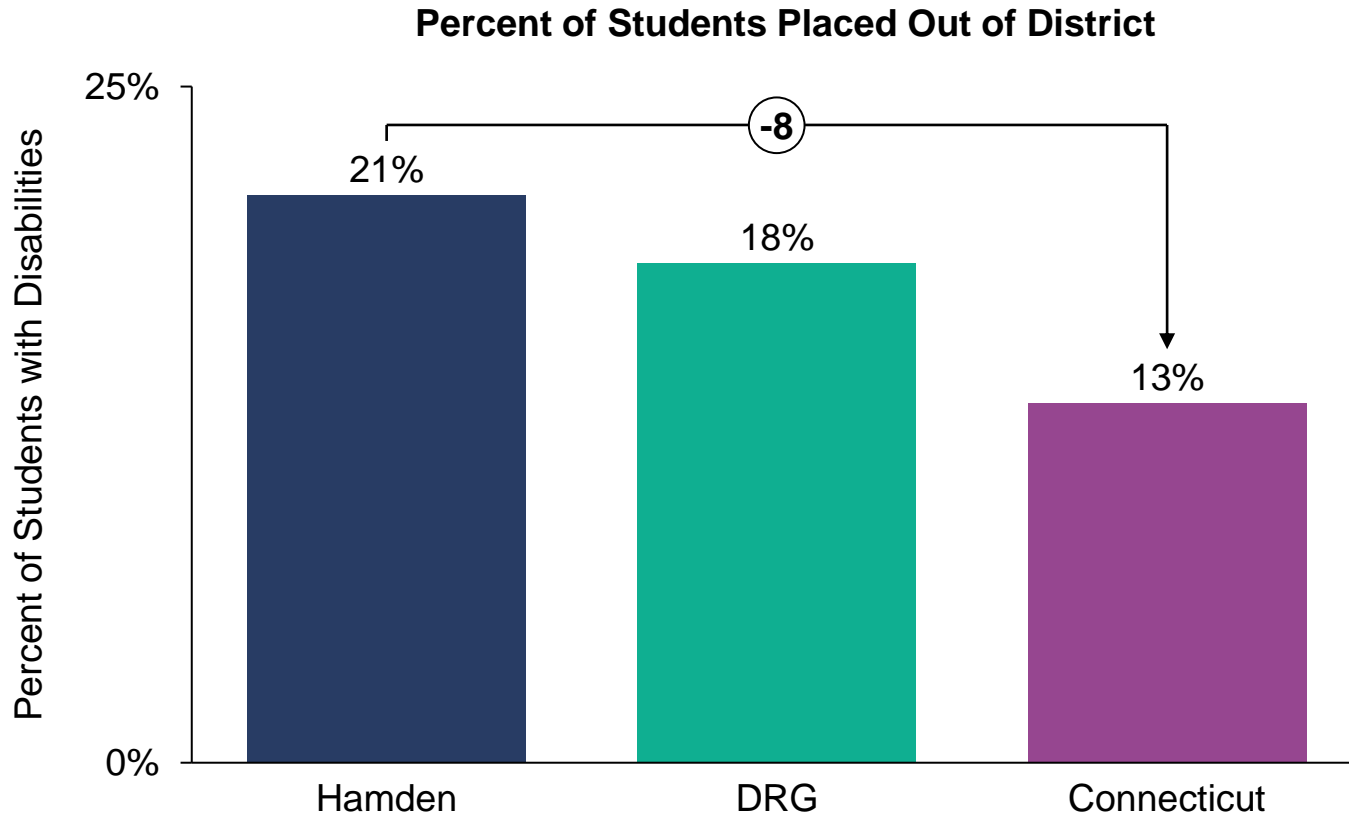
***Hamden has more than twice as many students in self-contained special education classrooms (IICs) as other Connecticut districts.***

\*Note: Comparison CT districts is a group of 4 districts DMGroup has done similar work with in CT over the last two years. Average enrollment for these districts is about 6,000, with about 16% students with disabilities.



# Even with 20 IICs and ALCs, Hamden still places a greater percent of special education students out of district than their DRG or the state of Connecticut.

## Out of District Placements SY 2016-2017



Source: EdSight.

DRG: Connecticut District Reference Group Includes Bloomfield, Bristol, East Haven, Groton, Killingly, Manchester, Middletown, Naugatuck, Plainfield, Putnam, Stratford, Torrington, Vernon, Winchester, Norwich Free Acad., Gilbert School

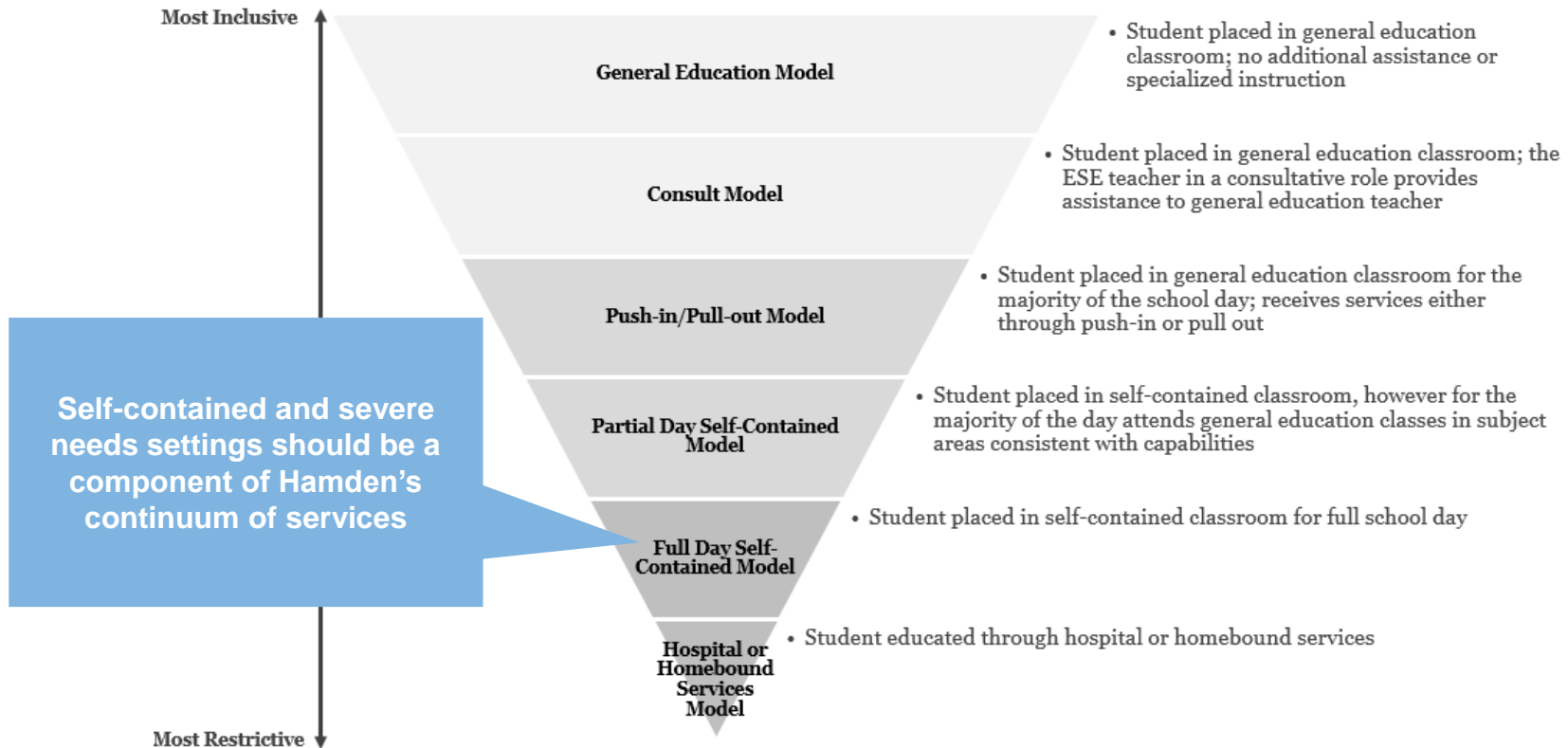


# There is no quick solution to reducing spending on supports for severe needs; the starting point needs to be district philosophy and continuum of services.

## Best Practice: Continuum of Services

5

IIC & OOD



Self-contained and severe needs settings should be a component of Hamden's continuum of services

Clear guidelines should be established to define when and where students should be provided services



# Hamden should establish their philosophy and then consider how IICs and OOD placements fit into this vision for supporting students who struggle.

## Future Considerations

5

IIC & OOD

### Hamden may consider...

- **Establishing a philosophy and vision** for supporting students who struggle across the district and understanding **where IICs, ALCs, and OOD placements fit into that philosophy.**
- **Conduct an initial review of all IIC and ALC students** to ensure they are in their Least Restrictive Environment, or even whether they could spend part of their day in a less restrictive setting.
- **Creating clear guidelines** to establish entry and exit criteria for OOD placements.
- Setting midpoints throughout the year to track and review OOD placements.





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**The Guiding Coalition considered the below questions about the impact and feasibility of implementing these opportunities.**

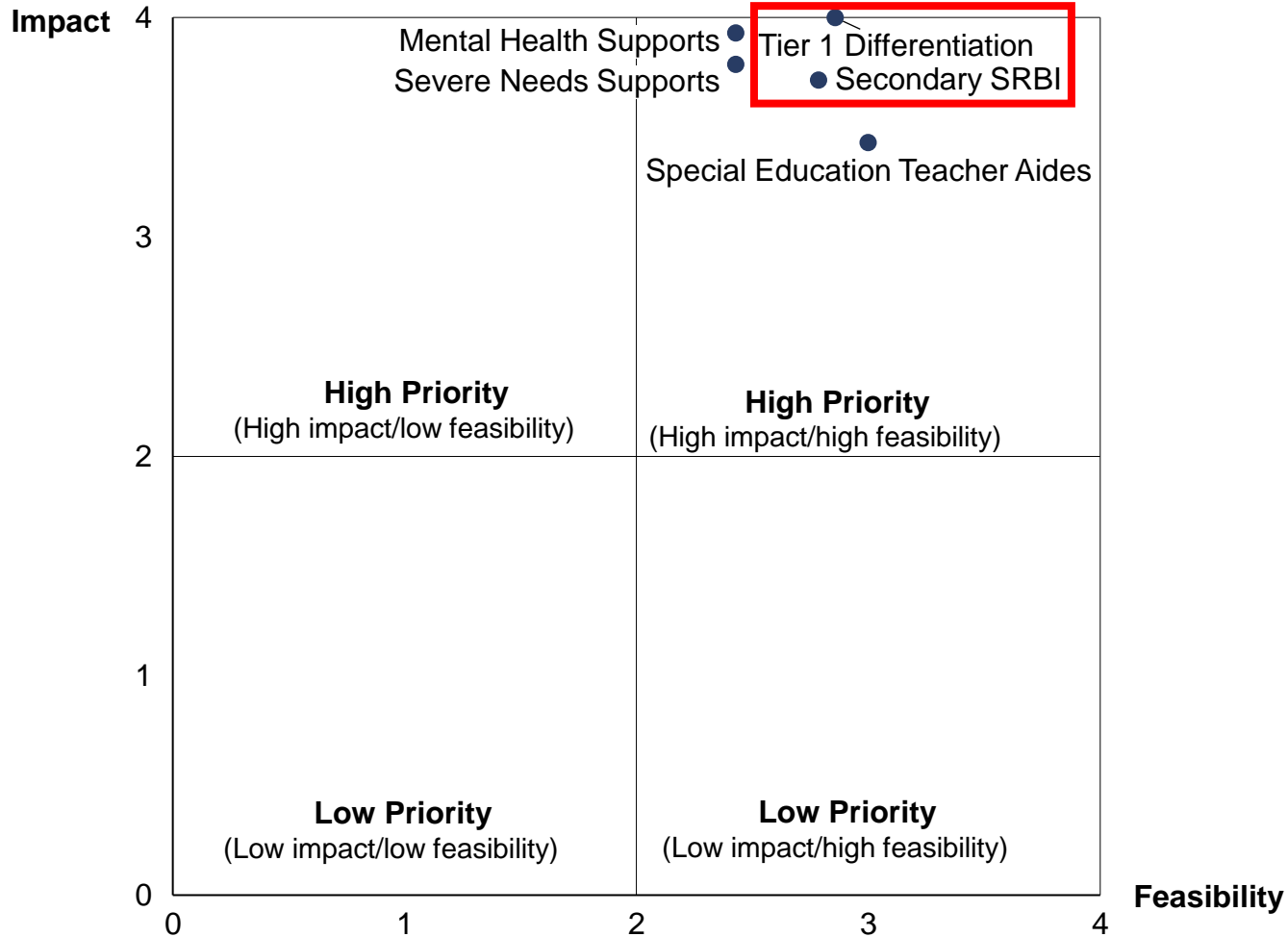
### **Guiding Coalition Discussion**

- 1. Which opportunities did you find to be the highest impact?  
What makes these opportunities more impactful than others?**
- 2. Which opportunities did you find to be the most feasible?  
What makes these opportunities more feasible than others?**
- 3. Which 1-2 opportunities do you think Hamden should prioritize  
in the next year?**



# The Guiding Coalition identified Tier 1 differentiation is high impact and high feasibility, followed closely by Secondary SRBI.

## Opportunity Prioritization Impact and Feasibility Scoring



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# Hamden is working to implement changes to the identified opportunities.

## Next Steps

- HPS Leadership working to implement changes to opportunities.





## District Management Group

Helping Schools and  
Students Thrive

If you have any comments or questions about the contents of this document, please contact District Management Group:

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