
Special Education Program Overview & Initiatives 2020-2021

Darien Public Schools - Special Education & Student Services
December 8, 2020

Shirley K. Klein, Assistant Superintendent, SESS

Laura Straiton, Program Director, ELP
Kristin O'Reilly, Program Director, Elementary SESS
Scott McCarthy, Ph.D., Program Director, Secondary SESS

Department Structure

Shirley K. Klein
Assistant Superintendent
Special Education and Student Services (SESS)
Grades PK - 12+

Laura Straiton
Program Director
Early Learning Program (PK)

School Psychologists
Special Education Teachers
Speech/Language Pathologists
Paraprofessionals

Kristin O'Reilly
Program Director
SESS Grades K - 5

Kathryn Natale
Facilitator - Hindley

Carolyn Hoette
Facilitator - Tokeneke

Shira Schwartz
Facilitator - Royle

Christine Pochetti
Facilitator - Ox Ridge

Joanne Vorndran
Facilitator - Holmes

Scott McCarthy
Program Director
SESS Grades 6 - 12+

Theresa Fox
Department Chair - MMS

Cristina Brás Taylor
Department Chair - DHS

Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAC	Alternative/Augmentative Communication
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
ACE	Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia
ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AIM	Academic and Individual Management
ALC	Alternative Learning Center
AT	Assistive Technology
BCBA	Board Certified Behavior Analyst
CORE	Creating Opportunities for Restructuring Education
CT ELDS	Connecticut Early Learning & Development Standards
DBT	Dialectical Behavior Therapy
DLC	Developmental Learning Center

Acronym	Definition
DTT	Discrete Trial Training/Teaching
ELP	Early Learning Program
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
GET	General Education Teacher
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
OT	Occupational Therapist
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PT	Physical Therapist
PMT	Psychological/Physical Management Training
PPT	Planning & Placement Team

Acronym	Definition
PROMPT	Prompts for Restructuring Oral Muscular Phonetic Targets
PRT	Pivotal Response Training
RDI	Relationship Development Intervention
SDI	Specially Designed Instruction
SET	Special Education Teacher
SLP	Speech/Language Pathologist
ToHI	Teacher of the Hearing Impaired
TVI	Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Program Overview - Continuum of Services



General Education

General Education with Speech Therapy as a Special Education Service

- ELP Itinerant Services
 - K-12 Students Receiving Speech Services Only
-

General Education with Special Education Teacher Supplemental Services

- ELP Integrated Program (16, 20, and 22.5 Hour Services)
 - K-12 SET Services in General Education Classroom
 - Grades 6-12 Co-taught Classes
-

Special Education Teacher (SET) Supplemental Services

- K-12 Resource Room / Learning Center
 - Grade 6-12 Direct Reading Instruction
 - Grade 6-8 AIM Program
 - Grade 9-12 CORE Program
-

Modified Content Classes

- Grade 6-8 Alternative Learning Center (ALC-2)
 - Grade 9-12 Comprehensive Classes
-

Specialized Programs

- K-5 Developmental Learning Centers (DLC 1, 2 & 3)
- Grades 6-8 Alternative Learning Center (ALC-1)
- Grades 9-12+ Excel Program

Early Learning Program - Program Overview

The Darien Early Learning Program (ELP) is an integrated preschool for children ages three to five, in which children with learning differences and children with typically developing skills learn from each other in a nurturing environment.

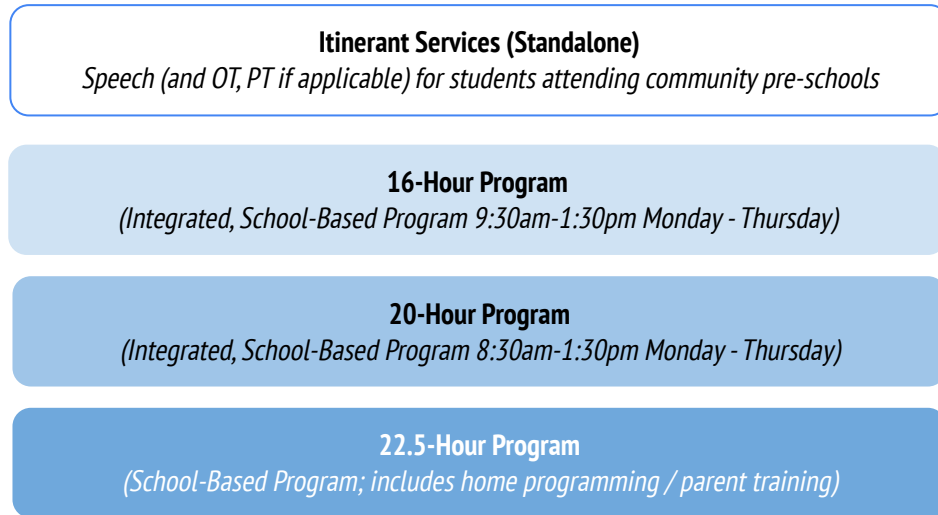
Play-based learning provides opportunities for children to be purposeful, creative, inquisitive, flexible, and reflective.

Goals of ELP:

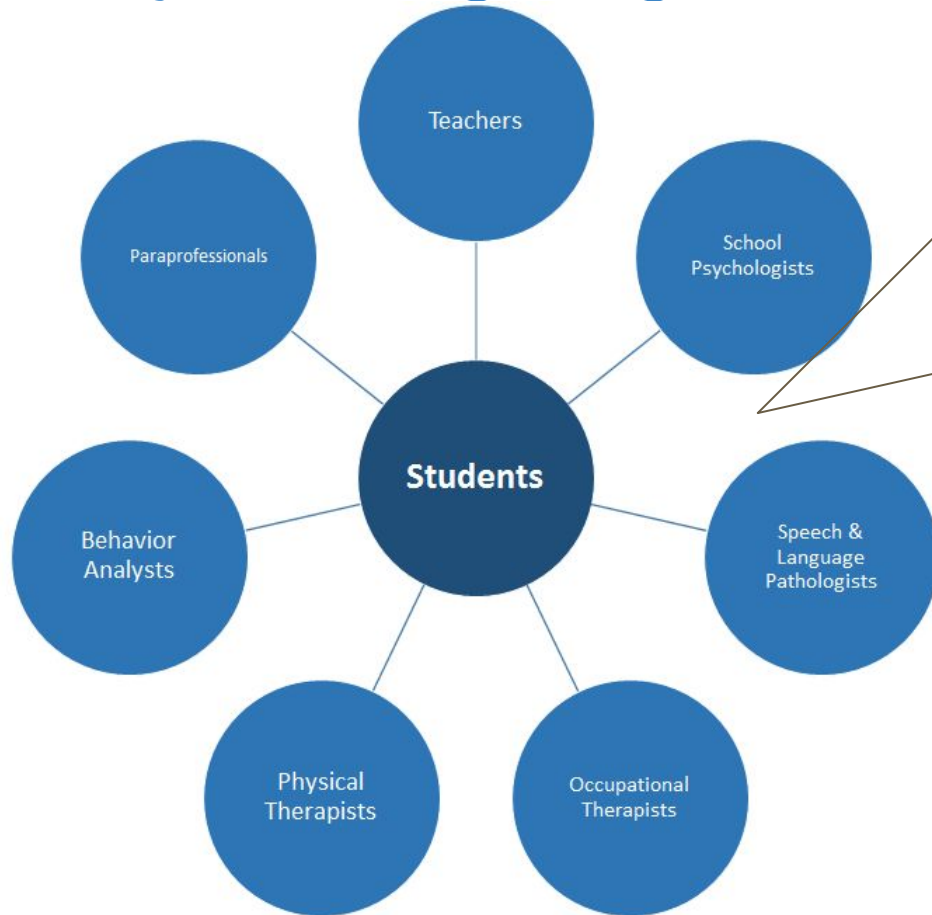
- Early intervention is essential in helping young children meet or make progress toward developmental milestones through specialized services and supports.
- Students participating in Darien's ELP have a unique opportunity to learn from each other in an integrated setting comprised of diverse learners, which supports their cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, language, and physical development.

Early Learning Program - Continuum of Services

Referrals to ELP are made through the Connecticut Birth to Three System, by parents, and by pediatricians. The Darien ELP team evaluates the child in the area of suspected disability and develops an IEP if determined eligible. ELP Classrooms are located at Tokeneke, Ox Ridge and Royle.



Early Learning Program - Staff



Professional Development Highlights

- CT ELDS
- Early Detection of Literacy Differences
- Project-Based Learning
- Developmental Teaching
- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia (ACE)
- Second Steps
- Responsive Classroom
- Social Thinking
- Touch Math
- Handwriting without Tears
- Behavior Support Methodologies
- Beckman Oral Motor Protocol
- PROMPT Approach
- Augmentative/Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Assistive Technology (AT)
- Paraprofessional Registered Behavioral Technician (RBT)
- Physical / Psychological Management Training (PMT)

Early Learning Program: Highlights, Looking Ahead

Highlights

- Ongoing professional development with Dr. Margie Gillis, and LiteracyHow specialists, developing early reading and literacy skills of young learners, using the coaching method. (Building teacher's' tool boxes, methods and strategies)

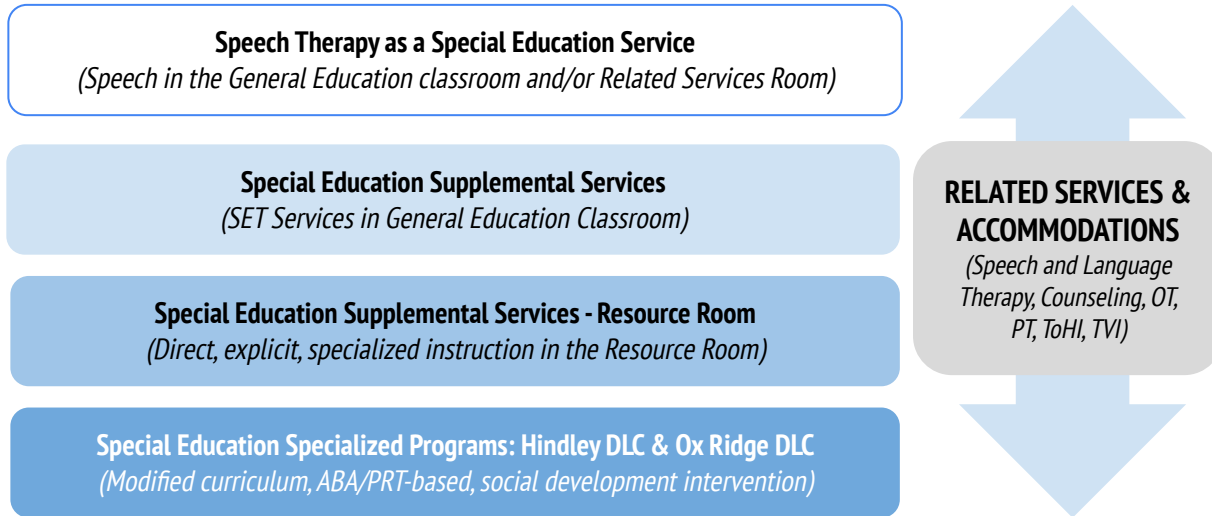
ELP: Looking Ahead

- Early Reading and Literacy development with Dr. Margie Gillis.
- Instructional technology: Seesaw and google classroom
- Paraprofessional staff development training: Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)
- Best Practice Progress Monitoring using the CT-DOTS

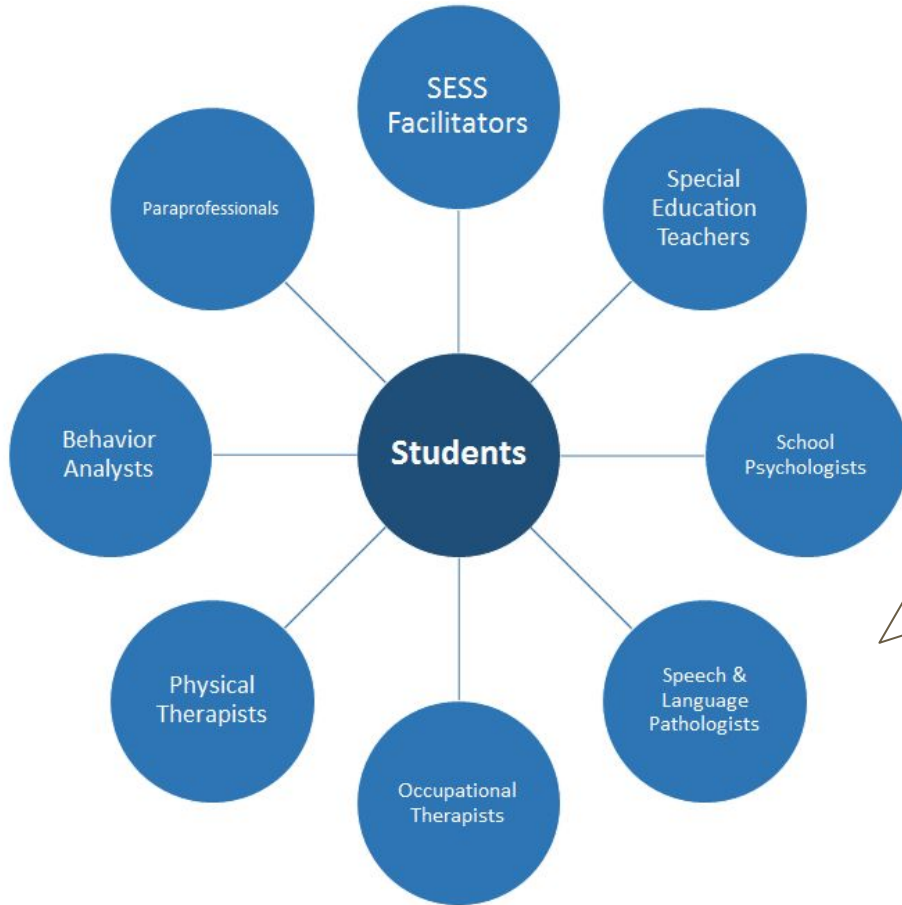
Continuum of Services - Elementary Schools

Specialized instruction at the Elementary Schools is delivered in Grades K - 5. Students access several program options within a continuum of services designed to meet their individual needs. Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs) develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) with goals/objectives developed to ensure students access and progress in the general education curriculum.

IEPs are designed to align to Common Core standards, ensure attainable goals and meaningful progress, provide services responsive to students' evidenced needs, and promote independence across domains.



Elementary Schools - Special Education Staff



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Literacy: Orton-Gillingham, Wilson Reading Systems, SPIRE Reading Program, Visualizing & Verbalizing, Seeing Stars, Writing Support, Structured Literacy

Mathematics: Touch Math, Do the Math, Math in Focus

Language & Communication: PROMPT Approach, Beckman Oral Motor Protocol, Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC), Picture Exchange Communication (PECS)

Social/Emotional/Behavioral: Executive Functioning, Physical & Psychological Management Training (PMT), Responsive Classroom, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Elementary 2020-2021 SESS Highlights

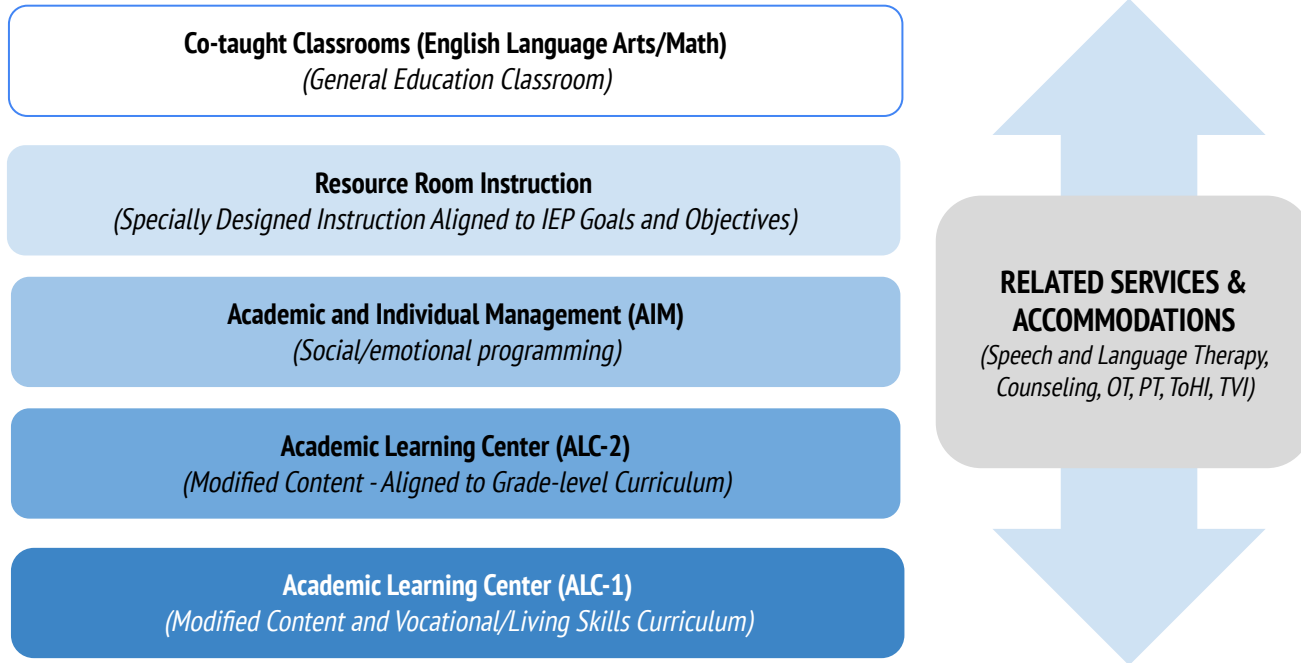
- Utilization of distance learning platforms (e.g., SeeSaw, Zoom Breakout Groups) to facilitate social skills groups, SET push-in services, and the delivery of related services
- COVID update on Grouping & Looping (staff & students)
- ELP-to-DLC, DLC-to-MMS program and transition planning
- Wilson Introductory and Level 1 Certification
- Continued work with Dr. Marilyn Friend on elementary school special education models
- Community-based collaboration

Elementary SESS: Looking Ahead

- Needs Assessment: Elementary AIM/CORE opportunity
- Skill development and opportunities for generalization
- IEP data collection systems
- DBT: Bi-monthly team meetings with administrators and school psychologists across buildings
- Special Education Assistant Principal Proposal

Continuum of Services - Middlesex Middle School

Specialized instruction at Middlesex Middle School is delivered across grades 6-8. 17 special education teachers, 3 speech and language pathologists, 3 school psychologists, and 1 social worker support students along with assistive technology, behavior analysts, vision and hearing supports.



MMS 2020-2021 SESS Highlights

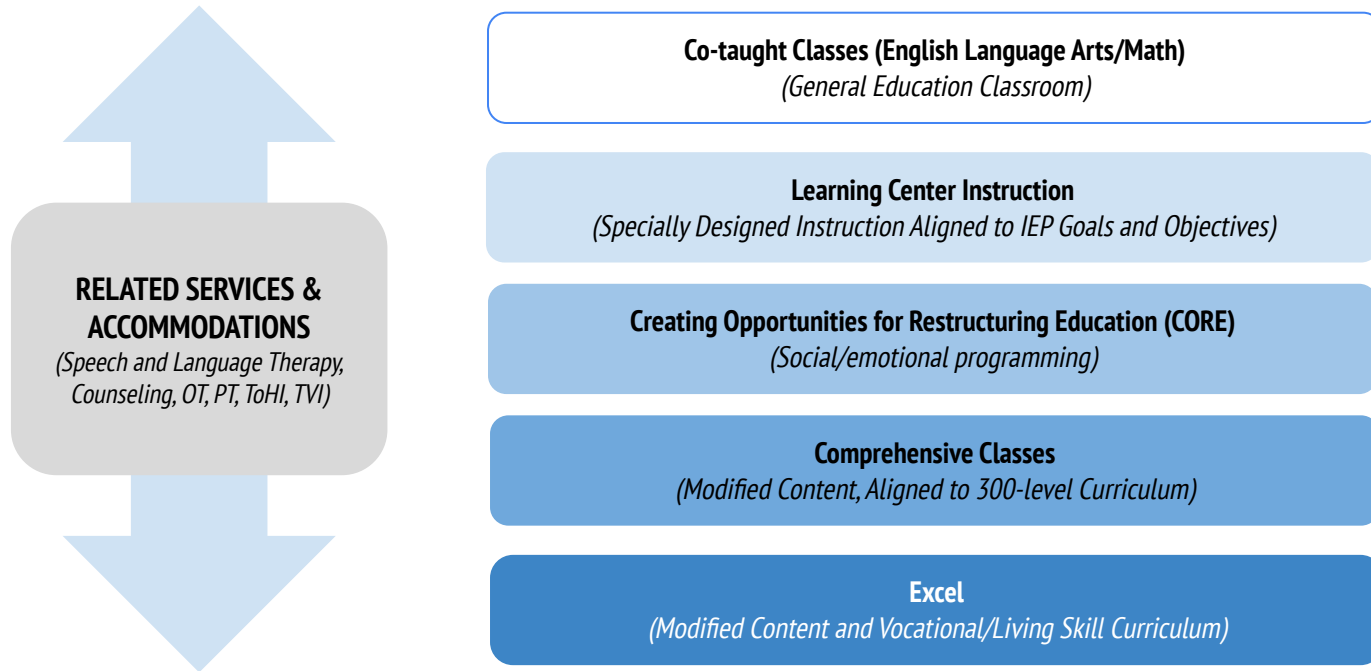
- Ongoing co-teaching professional development with Dr. Marilyn Friend, including in-class/remote coaching with MMS special education department chairperson
- Utilization of distance learning platform functions (e.g., Zoom Breakout Groups) to facilitate grouping models (e.g., parallel lessons)
- Continued development of mini-lessons aligning to posted lesson objectives in all instructional models
- Utilization of PLCs for cross-curricular preparation for pre-teaching of content in resource rooms
- Creative approximation of “community outings” and vocational programming in ALC classrooms

MMS SESS: Looking Ahead

- DBT: Continued implementation at MMS in group formats
- Needs Assessment: ALC-2 Modified Content Course Structure
- Group Counseling and Social Skills Cohort Opportunities

Continuum of Services - Darien High School

Specialized instruction at Darien High School is delivered grades 9-12+. Fifteen special education teachers, 2 speech and language pathologists, 3 school psychologists, and 1 social worker support students along with assistive technology, behavior analysts, vision and hearing supports.



DHS 2020-2021 SESS Highlights

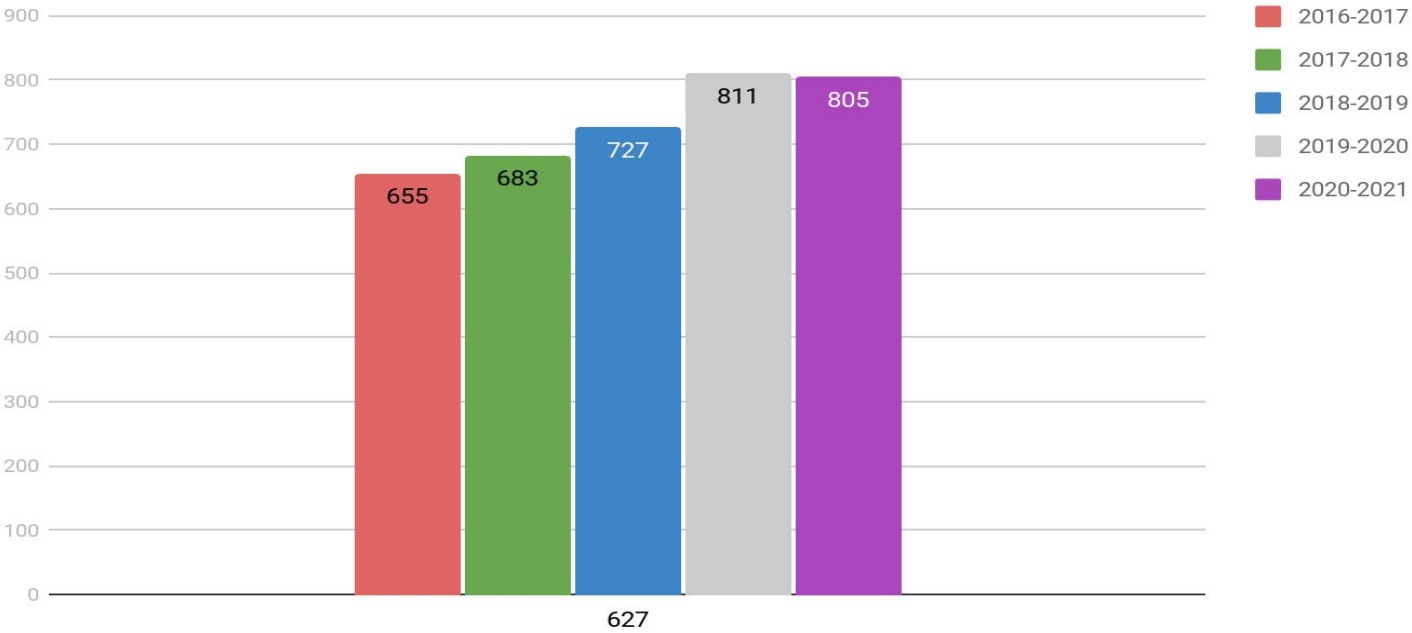
- Ongoing co-teaching professional development with Dr. Marilyn Friend, including in-class/remote coaching with DHS special education department chairperson
- Utilization of distance learning platform functions (e.g., Zoom Breakout Groups) to facilitate grouping models (e.g., parallel lessons)
- Creative approximation of “community outings” and vocational programming in Excel classroom
- Community job site visits to twice per week (Library, Food Bank, Grocery Stores, etc.) when permitted
- Select staff trained in Person-centered Futures Planning
- Healthy Relationships Curriculum in collaboration with Abilis
- Unified Sports program and Best Buddies

DHS SESS: Looking Ahead

- DBT: Continued implementation at DHS and Fitch in group formats, and “pilot” of staff implementation in learning centers
- Needs Assessment: Addressing the emotional functioning of students with school refusal/avoidance
- Implementation of Person-centered Futures Planning Meetings

District Data - Students with IEPs (PK-12+)

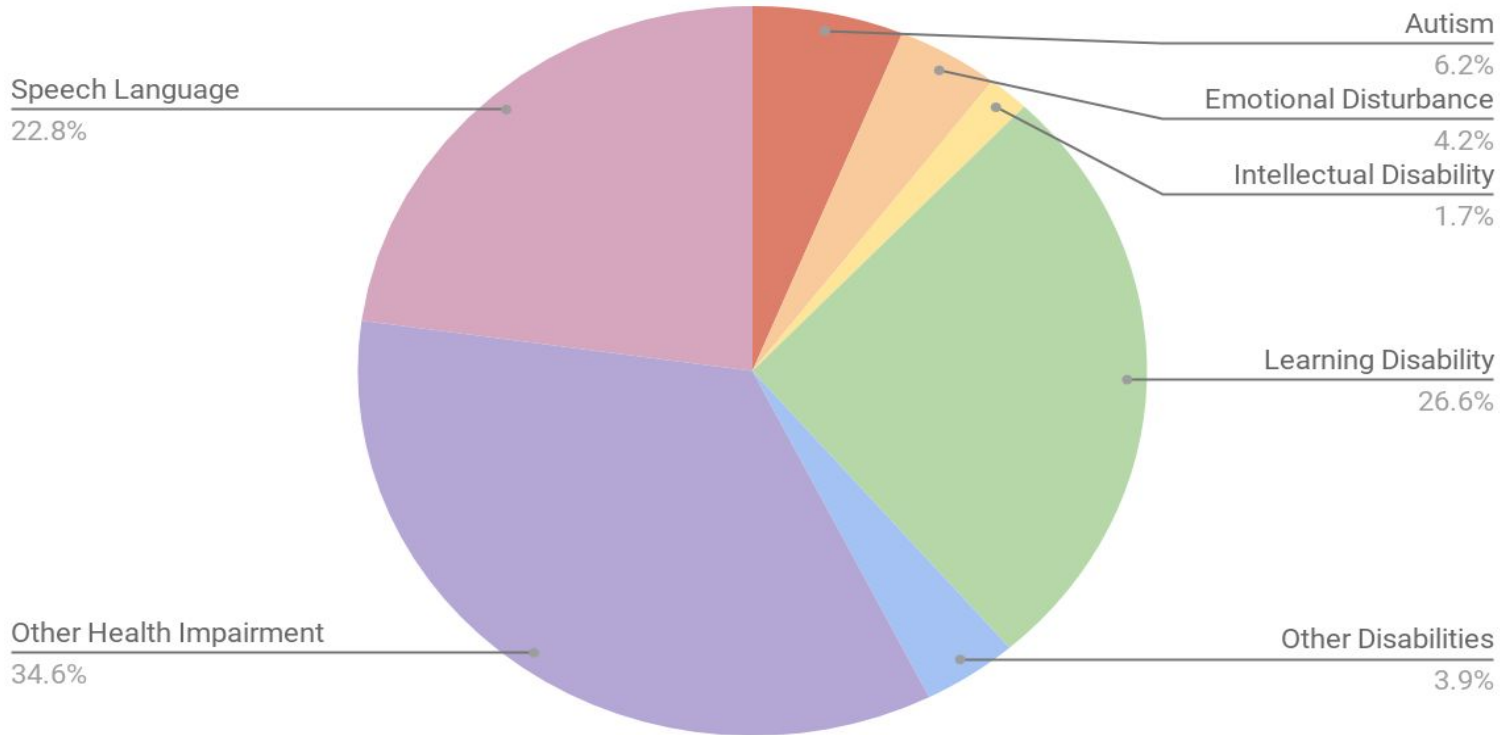
Year-to-Year Change in Population of Students with IEPs



*Note: 2020-2021 data has not yet been officially released

District Data - Educational Classifications

Darien Public Schools - Prevalence within Special Education



— Questions —
