

**To:** School Board Members  
**From:** Staff  
**Date:** April 18, 2023  
**Subject:** Responses #4 to FY 2023/24 Funding Request Questions

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The following questions were asked by School Board members during the FY 24 Budget Development process. Staff have provided responses in this memo and will follow up on any outstanding questions with a later memo.

- 1. At the February Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meeting, it was mentioned that, like non-identified students, special education students are experiencing a greater intensity of need. Which of these new positions is going to meet this need? How is the division planning to meet these needs? How is this need reflected in the budget draft?**

The FY 24 budget includes the complete special education budget, not just the information presented at the work session. It is important to look at both the school-based staffing as well as the multi-school and central office supports.

- ACPS has kept the staffing ratios as some of the best in the Commonwealth
- ACPS has created structures to not only support students needing consistent evidenced based approaches (A-B-C BASE Models) but also low ratios for Generalists
- ACPS continues to implement ratios for Psychologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists
- Over 150 Teaching Assistants are outside of any State requirements

- 2. At the Intervention Division PLC (Professional Learning Communities), it was shared that a common practice is for interventionists to provide services to students without IEPs (Individualized Education Plans), and often they are told not to give services to students with IEPs. How does this budget ensure that students are getting specialized instruction to meet the opportunity and achievement gaps?**

This budget provides the infrastructure to implement services that can address this need.

- The average caseload for a full time interventionist depends on the size of the intervention team, goals of the school, and needs of students
- The average special education teacher caseload at the elementary level is 9.6 students with IEPs and the secondary level is 9.9 students with IEPs
- That means, the staffing is there for special education to serve students with IEPs
- DPLC and base school special education staff are working on answering "How can we better utilize the resources we have to provide these services?" ACPS has empowered base schools to do this work.

- 3. As part of the preparation for the school board discussion on MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports), schools were asked what portion of students need intervention and receive interventions. Have special education teachers been asked if they have students with unmet needs? Teachers report they have students needing specialized instruction and accommodations that aren't getting those needs met.**

Parents and teachers are both asked if students have unmet needs annually in IEP meetings. This is what is put into each IEP.

- In the Spring for the past several years, special education teachers and related services staff are asked what unmet needs are being experienced at their school. ACPS designs an intervention institute each Summer (except for the pandemic) to address those needs.
- Additionally, DPLC and Lead Teacher meetings are used as well as direct conversations with teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities (i.e. BASE, specialists, additional assistance, contract services, support with IEPs, placements, behavior challenges, etc.).

- 4. It was mentioned that the early education programs need to have 50% or more non-disabled peers to be considered a true inclusion class. Is this ratio the same for K-12? What portion of our special education students are in classes with 50% or more general education peers? How is this addressed in the budget proposal?**

No. The regulations are different for K-12 ratios for class/program composition.

- By School: 20 Point Average for each special education teacher
  - If children with disabilities in a single building receive academic content area instruction from multiple special education teachers, the teachers' caseloads shall be determined by using a building average.
- By Classroom: No more than 14 children shall be assigned to a single class period if there are similar achievement levels and one subject area and level are taught. No more than 10 students shall be assigned to a single class period when there are varying achievement levels.
  - When special education personnel provide services in a general education classroom based on the IEP goals of at least one child in that classroom, the special education caseloads do not include children with disabilities who incidentally benefit from such services.

5. How does data continually inform staffing decisions? How many students in Albemarle County Public Schools have IEPs? What is the breakdown of disability, race, ethnicity, and gender? What is the breakdown of the proportion of students with IEPs compared to the general education population? What is the average caseload of special education teachers? How does that vary by special education program and school?

The average special education teacher caseload at the elementary level is 9.6 students with IEPs and the secondary level is 9.9 students with IEPs. Special educators of K-12 BASE programs have 8 students with IEPs as the student needs are more challenging. A full-time Special Education Generalist typically has a slightly higher caseload, as the average calculation suggests, typically between 12 - 15 students.

	Student Count (PK-12)		Students with Disabilities	
	<b>13548</b>		<b>1732</b>	
Asian	735	5%	54	3%
Black/African American	1545	11%	323	19%
Hispanic/Latino	2107	16%	273	16%
Multi-Racial	979	7%	132	8%
White	8151	60%	945	55%
Economically Disadvantaged	4014	30%	737	43%
English Learners	1513	11%	170	10%
Students with Disabilities	1732	13%	1732	100%

Further detailed information can be found on the ACPS Equity Dashboard website: <https://www.k12albemarle.org/our-departments/community-engagement/equity-tables>