

Special Education Budget Questions FY25

<p>What are the opportunities to bring services in house rather than contracting out (Paras, Speech, OT, PT, Behavioral)?</p>	<p>Throughout the year, we examine opportunities for reducing contracted speech providers and hiring District SLPs based on student need, and hiring District behavioral support rather than contracting out services. We continue to utilize contracted OT/PT providers as they provide the most efficient opportunity for related services.</p> <p>Additionally, the proposed addition of District owned special education transportation vehicles will provide efficiencies.</p> <p>On-going training for District paraprofessionals as Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) will afford the opportunity for District paraprofessionals to address the needs of our students in grades ELP-12+. We are currently providing RBT training for in-district paraprofessionals.</p> <p>Additionally, BCBA and BCaBA services support contracted RBTs and as we develop District RBTs we may have the ability to bring in additional District BCBA and BCaBA District supports.</p> <p>The new paraprofessional contract may provide opportunities to reduce contracted services for paraprofessionals and hire district paraprofessional employees.</p>															
<p>What programs can be created in Darien to reduce the growth of outplacements/unilateral agreements?</p>	<p>Our general and special education programs are consistent with best practices in Specially Designed Instructional(SDI). We utilize Scientifically Researched Based Instruction (SRBI) in multisensory reading instruction, early mathematics, and social and emotional learning that is provided in inclusive practices in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>Ongoing Professional Development supports current training for general and special education teachers and related services providers to ensure best practices and methodology in supporting all learners is implemented across all domains.</p>															
<p>IEP-Placed Out-of-District Student Classifications</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">Classification</th> <th style="width: 15%;">ELP-Grade 5</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Grade 6-8</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Grade 9-12+</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Programs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Intellectual Disability</td> <td>1</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>State-approved Day Programs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Multiple Disabilities</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>5</td> <td>State-approved Day and Residential Programs</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Classification	ELP-Grade 5	Grade 6-8	Grade 9-12+	Programs	Intellectual Disability	1		1	State-approved Day Programs	Multiple Disabilities			5	State-approved Day and Residential Programs
Classification	ELP-Grade 5	Grade 6-8	Grade 9-12+	Programs												
Intellectual Disability	1		1	State-approved Day Programs												
Multiple Disabilities			5	State-approved Day and Residential Programs												

Hearing Impaired				
Emotional Disability		1	4	State-approved Day and Residential Programs
Autism	1	2	4	State-approved Day and Residential Programs
Other Health Impairment (OHI) / OHI ADD/ADHD	1	2	10	State-approved Day and Residential Programs
Specific Learning Disability (SLD) / SLD Dyslexia			1	State-approved Day Transition Program
Speech & Language Impairment (SLI)				

Unilaterally Placed Out-of-District Student Classifications

Classification	ELP-Grade 5	Grade 6-8	Grade 9-12+	Programs
Intellectual Disability				
Multiple Disabilities				
Hearing Impairment	1			Non State-approved Day Programs
Emotional Disability				
Autism	1	2	1	Non State-approved Day Programs
Other Health Impairment (OHI) / OHI ADD/ADHD	1	2	6	Non State-approved Day and Residential Programs
Specific Learning Disability (SLD) / SLD Dyslexia	11	2	10	Non State-approved Day Programs
Speech & Language	2		4	Non State-approved Day and

Impairment (SLI)				Residential Programs
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Explain the difference between the proposed Director of Special Education K-12+ and the Assistant Superintendent of SESS

[SESS Dept](#)

Why is our identification rate so much higher than our peers?

The two categories above the DRG average for identification rate include Speech & Language and Other Health Impairments.

[DRG Comparison](#)

Highlighted figures represent higher levels than DRG averages.

Why are we not looking at teacher caseloads?

Caseloads at the middle school among Special Education certified staff are the lowest in the DRG.

	Darien	New Canaan	Westport	Weston	Wilton	Ridgefield	Average
IEP %	17.04%	11.86%	12.9%	12.92%	18.34%	17.35%	14.97%
Teacher to IEP Ratio	1:9.60	1:12.0	1:12.0	1:11.6	1:14.6	1:11.1	1:11.6

Caseloads at Darien High School are within the DRG average.

	Darien	New Canaan	Westport	Weston	Wilton	Ridgefield	Average
IEP %	20.64%	14.22%	14.89%	12.74%	17.55%	13.5%	15.78%
Teacher to IEP Ratio	1:13.9	1:15.3	1:12.2	1:14.0	1:15.4	1:14.7	1:14.0

Would the BOE consider engaging a third party consultant to evaluate our special education programs and how they compare to others in our DRG across various metrics (such as on-boarding process, quality of services, enrollment percentage, costs), especially in light of our 19% IEP enrollment rate vs. 15% in our DRG (12.5% in New Canaan)?

This would be a BOE decision to hire a third party consultant. Districts across the State have contracted with outside consultants, typically the recommendations have been unsustainable.

In response to the enrollment rate question please see the below chart:

District	IEP Prevalence Rate 2012-2013	IEP Prevalence Rate 2022-2023	Percent Change
New Canaan	9.50	12.55	32.1%
Westport	10.12	14.13	39.6%
Wilton	12.11	17.42	43.8%
Darien	12.70	18.77	47.8%
Weston	9.18	13.75	49.8%
Easton	8.44	13.51	60.1%
Ridgefield	8.63	17.32	100.7%

*2023-2024 Data have not been released.

It was noted on Saturday that by law, a parent can opt for as many PPTs as needed. Can you provide an average number per year, as well as the high and low numbers in the range? Would more robust service at the outset reduce the number of PPTs?

Connecticut State Regulation requires that the PPT convene for a variety of procedural reasons. PPTs can convene as frequently as necessary in order to ensure the student receives an appropriate program. It is difficult to average the number of PPTs per family as they vary based on need and programming. 2-3 PPTs annually would be a reasonable average in grades ELP-12+.

- Initial Referral PPT Meeting (PPT 1)
- Determine Eligibility PPT Meeting (PPT 2)
- Diagnostic Placement
- Annual Review
- Three-year Reevaluation
- Program Review
- Review Interim Assessments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manifestation Determination
<p>Are other districts struggling with how to provide time for administrators to attend PPTs? Are they adding staff?</p>	<p>The higher identification rate in Darien adds to the number of PPT's in Darien compared to our peers; however, in the last five years other districts that have added staff due to increasing special education needs include Weston, Norwalk, Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan & Fairfield.</p> <p>The ratios of administrators to students with IEPs was considered in the planning of the proposed administrative restructuring. Further discussion of these data are included within that presentation.</p> <p>Darien SESS Dept. Leadership attend the monthly DRG A Special Education Leadership meetings to share current trends in special education, which contributed to the design of the proposed administrative restructuring.</p> <p>We continue to evaluate efficiencies in providing time for administrators and staff to attend PPT meetings.</p>
<p>Account 143001: Tuition-Non-public school (+\$1.5m; +24%): please provide details on "same institution" tuition increases vs. enrollment.</p>	<p>30% of the increase is related to rate increases for existing placements/settlements 50% are new placements/pending agreements 20% are new transition program costs for students</p>
<p>Accounts 141001 and 143001 totaling \$8.1 million: how many students receive out-of-district tuition payments?</p>	<p>There are 87 students projected in the \$8.1 million tuition budget.</p>
<p>Following up on a question by Mr. Maroney - The presentation seemed to indicate that ELP is effectively using staff time as relates to evaluations and service to students. Is this a model for the other schools?</p>	<p>During the 2023-2024 school year and in previous years, Fridays were used for scheduling PPTs, 504s and other meetings as the program has been a 4 day program. This model would not work for the other elementary and secondary levels as students in grades kindergarten through grade 12 attend school 5 days a week, with staff providing instruction Monday through Friday. Educationally, it is recommended for our young learners enrolled in ELP to have access to a high quality program that meets 5 days per week. *See ELP Presentation</p>
<p>Consulting Services - there is a \$1.1M item in the description for "ABA/BCBA" - what is this related to? Can you please provide a more detailed breakout?</p>	<p>The District contracts with two vendors to provide BCBA support for 12 students at Ox Ridge, Hindley, MMS and DHS. These services are approximately \$300,000. Additionally, the district contracts with two providers to provide ABA support to 11 students. This support costs approximately \$800,000.</p>

Caseload for Special Education Staff

[Caseloads](#)

Why is our identification rate so much higher than our peers?

The two categories above the DRG average for identification rate include **Speech & Language** and **Other Health Impairments**.

[DRG A Prevalence rates](#)

Ten Year historical IEP's

Student Group ▲		Total	Students with Disabilities	Students without Disabilities
School ▲	School Year ▲	Student Count*	Student Count*	Student Count*
District-level	2013-14	4,929	557	4,372
	2014-15	4,932	594	4,338
	2015-16	4,884	623	4,261
	2016-17	4,828	651	4,177
	2017-18	4,818	682	4,136
	2018-19	4,769	725	4,044
	2019-20	4,765	807	3,958
	2020-21	4,682	802	3,880
	2021-22	4,754	873	3,881
	2022-23	4,700	882	3,818

of IEPs by year for the past 5-10 years specifically related to literacy issues

Year	# of IEPs with Learning Disabilities
FY23	255
FY22	258
FY21	222
FY20	203
FY19	180

FY18	182
FY17	194
FY16	185
FY15	177
FY14	159

Learning Disabilities includes other areas than Dyslexia. SLD /Dyslexia is included and not disaggregated in the LD category in this chart.

I am hoping to better understand how we measure the success of our Special Education services. Understanding that individuals are measured on their IEP goals, would it be fair to ask the percentage of students meeting their goals? How do we know that our program is meeting the needs of our students?

Assessing the success of our special education services is a critical and important part of the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process for each student. Given that, by regulation and design, students' goals and objectives, along with the criteria by which they are measured, are individually crafted, analyzing them statistically as a collective group would likely not provide information responsive to this question. Generally, PPTs are charged with analyzing the performance and success of each student based on their achievement in mastery of their goals and objectives in their IEPs, grade level report cards, and progress monitoring. The SESS Department also evaluates the success and effectiveness of specialized programs by evaluating the ability of the programs to be responsive to the individual needs of each student, making adjustments to program structures and supports when necessary.

Provider caseloads of our SE staff. Hours may be more telling than the number of students here. Are there wide ranges among providers? How are caseloads assigned for SETs, SLPs, OTs, Psychs, BCBAs?

Prior to the beginning of each school year, the administration of each building thoughtfully assigns balanced caseloads to special education teachers (SETs). At the elementary level, the administration considers the total frequency, intensity, and duration of services per student when assigning SET caseloads. At the middle school, SET caseloads are assigned by grade and team, and administrators similarly consider the unique composition of each caseload to ensure balance. The high school assigns SET caseloads by student grade, again considering the total composition of each caseload and the students' schedules to create balanced schedules. In addition, when assigning caseloads, administrators consider students' schedules, appropriate groupings for services, provider expertise, and provider/building schedules.

Once SET caseloads have been assigned, related service provider caseloads are built utilizing a similar framework of considering the total frequency, intensity, and duration of services per student, grade/team/schedule of the student, expertises of the providers, and often, ensuring consistency, year over year, when appropriate (e.g., a school psychologist often will loop with their caseload).

	<p>Throughout the school year, as new students qualify for special education, the building administration considers the student's needs and schedule first when assigning service providers, with every effort made to reduce disruptions to established instructional periods.</p> <p>SET and related service provider caseloads vary both by number of students and hours of service. For example, a case manager in an elementary specialized program may case manage five students while a case manager of eleventh grade students accessing learning centers or co-taught classes may case manage 20 students. The total composition of caseload hours per provider is consistent with the contractual requirements outlined in the Darien Education Association (DEA) collective bargaining agreement.</p>
<p>How many PPTs are chaired by administrators (e.g., Principals, Assistant Principals, Assistant Principals (SESS), Central Office)?</p>	<p>In Darien, Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings for in-district students are generally facilitated by building-based administrators, and PPT meetings for out-of-district students are generally facilitated by central office administrators.</p> <p>The ELP Program Director facilitates all PPT meetings for students in ELP. At the elementary level, the target distribution of PPT meeting facilitation includes SESS Assistant Principals facilitating 60% of meetings, with the Principal and second Assistant Principal equally splitting the remaining 40%. At the middle school, the Principal facilitates PPT meetings for students in 8th grade, with one assistant principal facilitating PPT meetings for grade 7 and one assistant principal facilitating PPT meetings for grade 6. This aligns with their grade alignment for supporting all students. At the high school, the three assistant principals divide, alphabetically, the facilitation of PPT meetings across grades 9-12+. At all levels, central office administrators participate in a variety of meetings, either as consultants to the team or as facilitators.</p>
<p>I would love to get a better idea of the classifications of LDs (even if just the buckets of literacy and math) so that we can get a sense of how/if we need to adjust curriculum in any way or potentially create programs to reduce number of outplacements (i.e. for Dyslexia?).</p>	<p>For background, the State of Connecticut allows PPTs to determine eligibility for students under the disability category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) if the student is not achieving adequately for the student's chronological age or meeting State-approved grade-level standards in <u>one or more</u> of the following areas when provided with learning experiences appropriate for the student's age or State-approved grade level standards: Mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving, oral expression, written expression, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, fluency, or basic reading skills (See CT ED 629 here).</p> <p>For the past three years, the percentage of students classified under SLD has hovered around thirty percent. In the 2022-2023 SEDAC report (2023-2024 report has not yet been released), 271 students in</p>

Darien are identified with SLD, representing the second largest percentage of classified students, second to Other Health Impairment (OHI).

Notably, in January of 2015, a significant change to the Connecticut State Regulations added Dyslexia as a subgroup of SLD (statutory language below).

Not later than January 1, 2015, the Department of Education shall add "SLD - Dyslexia" under "Specific Learning Disabilities" in the "Primary Disability" section of the individualized education program form used by planning and placement teams for the provision of special education and related services to children requiring special education and related services.

Thus, this question is challenging to answer based on data collected in the CT-SEDS Oct. 1 Child Count (previously SEDAC). The Child Count/SEDAC reporting does not disaggregate the variable ways a student may qualify as a student with SLD.

District data does not indicate an increase in outplacements or unilateral placements due to Specific Learning Disability classifications.

Outplacements/Unilateral Placements:
Has the district seen an increase stemming from specific educational classifications?

As presented during the presentation on November 28, 2023, the number of students in outplacement or unilateral placement settings within the District has decreased during the past 5 years. The majority of IEP outplacements are recommended for social, emotional, and/or behavioral reasons. The majority of students at unilateral placements are students with Specific Learning Disability classifications. A small increase in the number of IEP outplacements for students requiring residential therapeutic settings is noted in the data.

Looking Forward: Is there a strategic 3-5 year plan for professional development?

The SESS Department plans professional learning in alignment with Goal Four of the District's Strategic Plan and in collaboration with both the Curriculum and Instruction Department (e.g., Instructional Rounds) and the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC). SESS Department Professional Learning is designed to engage staff in developing their ability to implement high-quality, research-based instructional methodologies, clinical practices, and related services.

Special Education - please provide historical Special Education cost as % of total

Fiscal Year	Total Special Ed	Total Budget/Actuals	% of Budget
FY25**	\$29,596,312	\$121,529,006	24.35%
FY24*	\$27,282,712	\$114,866,891	23.75%

FY23	\$25,456,692	\$109,896,649	23.19%
FY22	\$25,889,224	\$105,929,760	24.44%
FY21	\$24,566,644	\$102,913,879	23.87%

****Superintendent's Proposed Budget**
***December Forecast**

<p>What are the scope of services tracked?</p>	<p>As outlined in the Memorandum (see here), all special education services and related services are tracked.</p>
<p>The timeframe for inputting service provision data?</p>	<p>ELP/Elementary: The special education teacher(s) and related service provider(s) attendance forms will be reviewed by the designated building administrator on a six-day cycle.</p> <p>Secondary: The special education teacher(s) and related service provider(s) track attendance during each session through Aspen.</p>
<p>Verification methods used by providers for time logging?</p>	<p>Educators and related services providers abide by Standards of Conduct and Codes of Ethics (National Education Association, here; National Association of School Psychologists, here; American Speech Hearing Association, here, etc.). As such, it is our expectation that the data provided by staff are accurate.</p>
<p>Cross-referencing of service entries with student attendance and payroll?</p>	<p>The building-based administration and Central Services administration verify all payroll memorandums. Special Education Service Delivery Forms are not formally cross checked against student attendance or payroll databases.</p>
<p>Frequency and process of system audits, and remediation strategies for unprovided services?</p>	<p>Special Education Service Delivery Forms are not audited through formalized internal auditing mechanisms.</p>

	<p>The Memorandum outlines the remediation strategies for unprovided services:</p> <p><i>If during the administrative review, a significant interruption in service is noted, the administrator and/or the provider will notify the parent as to reason for the missed sessions and the schedule for make-up sessions and/or develop a mutually agreeable plan for the provision of services in a timely manner. A significant interruption in service is defined by 4 to 5 missed consecutive sessions, and/or missed sessions that result in the student not receiving services consistent with the frequency and duration of the IEP recommended service(s).</i></p>
<p>Implementing real time validation for immediate data entry</p>	<p>Building administrators and service providers are responsible for ensuring the implementation fidelity of all services. Special Education Service Delivery Forms are not audited through formalized internal auditing mechanisms.</p>
<p>Conducting regular system audits to promptly identify and rectify discrepancies?</p>	<p>Building administrators and service providers are responsible for ensuring the implementation fidelity of all services. Special Education Service Delivery Forms are not audited through formalized internal auditing mechanisms.</p>
<p>Integrating the system with other educational and administrative databases for thorough data verification</p>	<p>Building administrators and service providers are responsible for ensuring the implementation fidelity of all services. At the elementary level, Special Education Service Delivery Forms are not able to be compared to a database as Aspen is not used in this capacity. At the secondary level, the tracking of services can be monitored through Aspen.</p>
<p>Provide training for service providers on accurate data entry</p>	<p>Training regarding the tracking of services is provided by building-based administrators.</p>
<p>Establish clear protocols for addressing and rectifying service provision lapses?</p>	<p>Addressing and rectifying service provision lapses can be complicated. The processes for addressing missed services are outlined in the Memorandum (an example is below); however, the actual remedy is student dependent, and is agreed upon with the parent.</p> <p><i>“The related service provider(s) attendance forms will be reviewed by the designated building administrator bi-weekly. If during the administrative review, a significant interruption in service is noted, the administrator and/or the provider will notify the parent as to reason for the missed sessions and the schedule for make-up</i></p>

	<p><i>sessions and/or develop a mutually agreeable plan for the provision of services in a timely manner. A significant interruption in service is defined by 4 to 5 missed consecutive sessions, and/or missed sessions that result in the student not receiving services consistent with the frequency and duration of the IEP recommended service(s)."</i></p>
<p>Requirement for supervisory approval to log services after a certain length of time after the provision of services</p>	<p>ELP/Elementary: The special education teacher(s) and related service provider(s) attendance forms will be reviewed by the designated building administrator on a six-day cycle.</p> <p>Secondary: The special education teacher(s) and related service provider(s) track attendance during each session through Aspen.</p> <p>If these requirements are unable to be met, an administrator will meet with the service provider to ensure future compliance.</p>
<p>Attestation requirements and the formality of such attestation</p>	<p>Educators and related services providers abide by Standards of Conduct and Codes of Ethics (National Education Association, here; National Association of School Psychologists, here; American Speech Hearing Association, here, etc.). As such, it is our expectation that the data provided by staff are accurate.</p>
<p>Processes to prevent, deter or detect "pencil whipping."</p>	<p>Educators and related services providers abide by Standards of Conduct and Codes of Ethics (National Education Association, here; National Association of School Psychologists, here; American Speech Hearing Association, here, etc.). As such, it is our expectation that the data provided by staff are accurate.</p>