



# What District Leaders Need to Know About Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in a Cost Effective Manner

CAPPS Spring Conference  
March 2026



# NATE LEVENSON



## **SUPERINTENDENT**

Closed the achievement gap in Arlington, MA

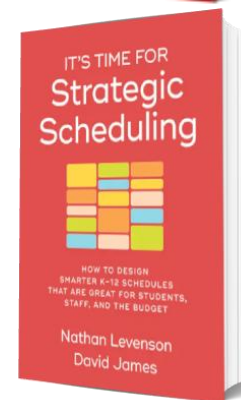
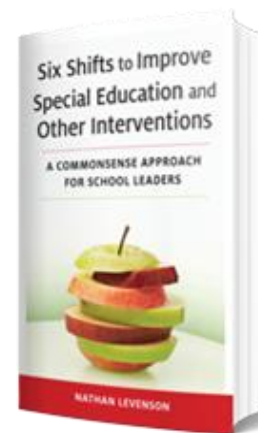
## **CONSULTANT**

Served over 400 districts in over 30 states

Bold yet practical

## **AUTHOR**

6 books and 50+ whitepapers and articles



# Proven Great Results





**Proven Great Results**

# Small Semi-Rural District

Harvard, MA

*“Students with  
disabilities  
outperformed  
general education  
students in the  
state”*



# Small Semi-Rural District

Harvard, MA

*“Students with  
disabilities  
outperformed  
general education  
students in the  
state”*

# Mid-Sized Suburban District

Arlington, MA

*“Closed the gen ed  
– special ed  
achievement gap in  
math and ELA by  
nearly 40 points”*





## Small Semi-Rural District

Harvard, MA

*“Students with disabilities outperformed general education students in the state”*



## Mid-Sized Suburban District

Arlington, MA

*“Closed the gen ed – special ed achievement gap in math and ELA by nearly 40 points”*



## Large Urban District

Columbia, MO

*“Went from no growth to record setting growth including for students living in poverty”*

# Some service delivery models lead to higher achievement with fewer staff

Number of Special Education Teachers Required to Teach 100 Students

Double Time

1.5

# Cost Effective Special Education that's good for kids, staff and the budget

1 The right services

2 Effective time management

3 Believing more isn't better



## Turn and Talk

1. In what ways is special education spending in your district an effective and cost-effective investment in student outcomes?
2. How might this be improved?



# THREE BEST PRACTICES



**FOCUS  
ON CORE  
INSTRUCTION**



**EXTRA  
TIME TO  
LEARN**

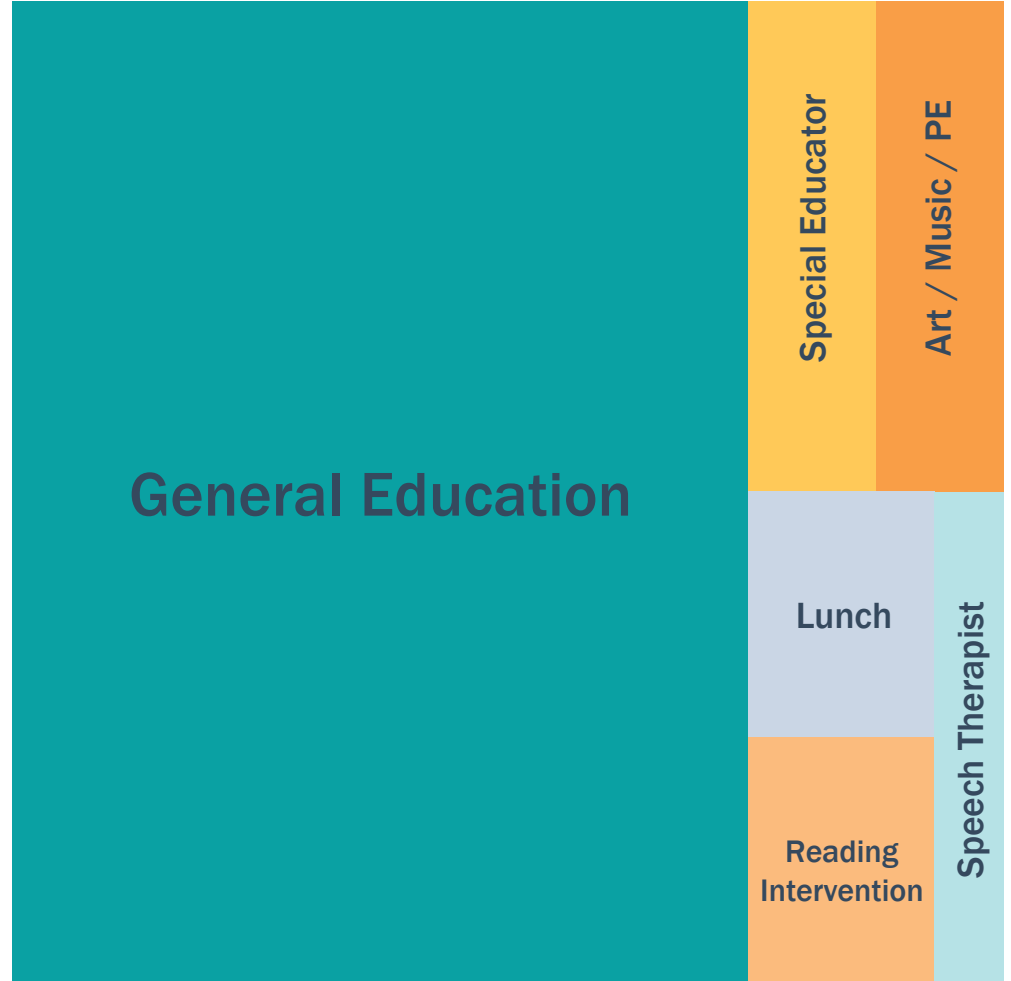


**CONTENT  
STRONG  
TEACHING**



View Research: [www.newsolutionsk12.com/resources](http://www.newsolutionsk12.com/resources)

# GENERAL EDUCATION MATTERS MOST!



# Students who struggle often get less core instruction



## TYPICAL STUDENT

READING

MATH

LUNCH AND RECESS

ART

SCIENCE

SOCIAL STUDIES

# Students who struggle often get **less** core instruction



## STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

READING

SPEECH THERAPY

MATH

SPECIAL ED READING

LUNCH AND RECESS

ART

SCIENCE

SOCIAL STUDIES

# Most students who struggle need extra time to learn



# Effective intervention requires dedicated time



## BEST PRACTICE ELEMENTARY SCHEDULE

READING

MATH

INTERVENTION

LUNCH AND RECESS

ART

SCIENCE

SOCIAL STUDIES

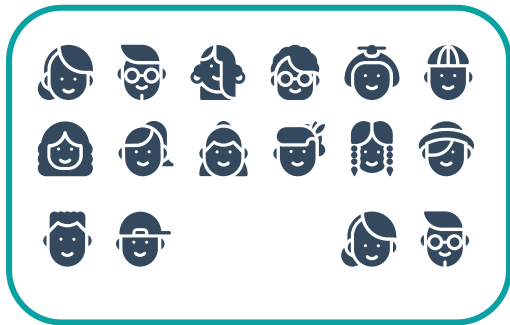
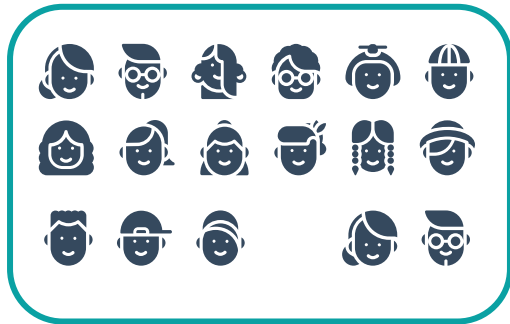
# Grouping by area of need makes intervention easier for staff and more impactful for students

ACROSS FOUR CLASSROOMS,  
FIVE STUDENTS ARE STRUGGLING WITH PHONICS



# Grouping by area of need makes intervention easier for staff and more impactful for students




ACROSS FOUR CLASSROOMS,  
FIVE STUDENTS ARE STRUGGLING WITH PHONICS



INTERVENTIONISTS SHOULD GROUP  
ALL FIVE STUDENTS WITH  
COMMON NEEDS

# Which group would you want for your child?

## SMALL GROUP

-  Marissa struggles in **comprehension**
-  John struggles in **phonics**
-  Jose struggles in **fluency**

OR

## SLIGHTLY BIGGER "SMALL GROUP"

-  John struggles in **phonics**
-  Katie struggles in **phonics**
-  Rachel struggles in **phonics**
-  Aliyah struggle **phonics**



AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

# Too few struggling students get extra time to learn

## NON-STRUGGLING STUDENT SCHEDULE

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH



AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

# TOO FEW STRUGGLING STUDENTS GET EXTRA TIME TO LEARN

## NON-STRUGGLING STUDENT SCHEDULE

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

## STRUGGLING MATH STUDENT

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

# TOO FEW STRUGGLING STUDENTS GET EXTRA TIME TO LEARN

## NON-STRUGGLING STUDENT SCHEDULE

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

## STRUGGLING MATH STUDENT

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

- CO-TEACHING
- PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPPORT
- LOWER-LEVEL CURRICULUM

AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

# Too few struggling students get extra time to learn

## NON-STRUGGLING STUDENT SCHEDULE

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

## STRUGGLING MATH STUDENT

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

SPANISH

## BEST PRACTICE STUDENT

MATH

ENGLISH

ELECTIVE

SOCIAL STUDIES

SCIENCE

EXTRA MATH  
SUPPORT

# Intervention is targeted direct instruction

1

PRE-TEACH

2

RE-TEACH CURRENT YEAR CONCEPTS

3

RETEACH PRIOR YEAR CONTENT IN THE MOMENT

4

ADDRESS FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

5

UNTEACH MISCONCEPTIONS



# Who provides the instruction is paramount



**Research is clear, the effectiveness of the teacher is the single largest driver of student achievement**  
(excluding socioeconomic status)

# Content strong teachers are much more effective in accelerating learning

1

HAVE FORMAL TRAINING IN THE CONTENT THEY TEACH

2

HAVE A LOVE AND APTITUDE FOR THE SUBJECT MATTER

3

CAN SEE A WRONG ANSWER AND INFER THE ERROR

4

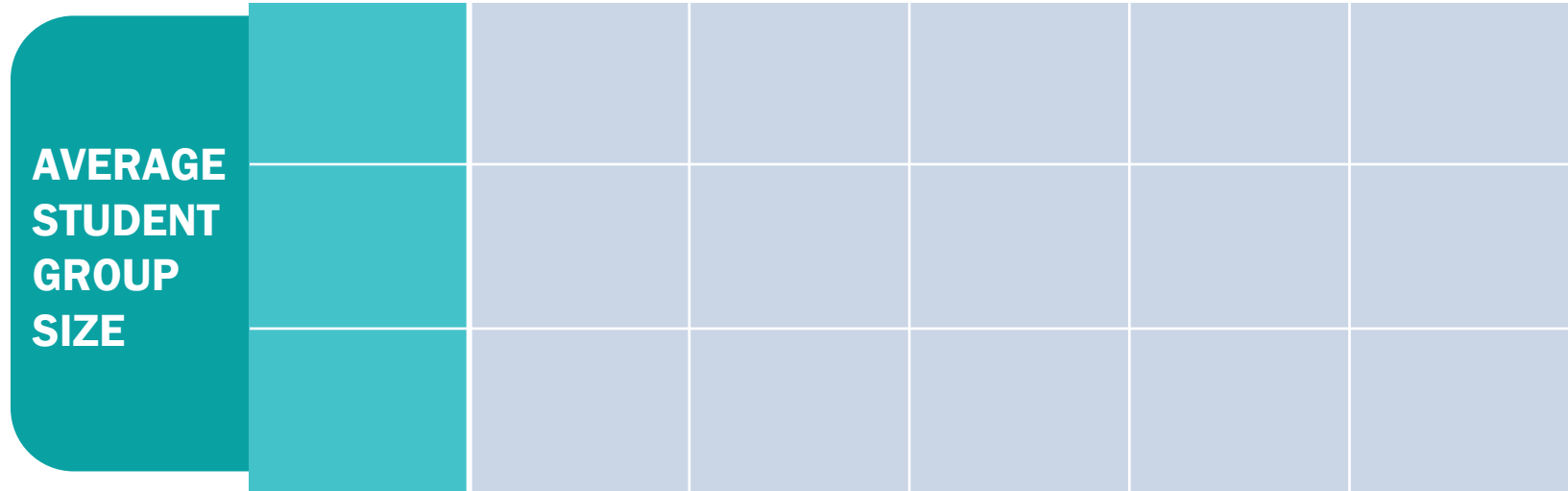
CAN TEACH A CONCEPT 3 OR MORE WAYS





**Few Schools Proactively Manage  
Intervention Staff**

# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff



# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4					
	5					
	6					

# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

		GROUPS TAUGHT PER DAY				
AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4					
	5					
	6					

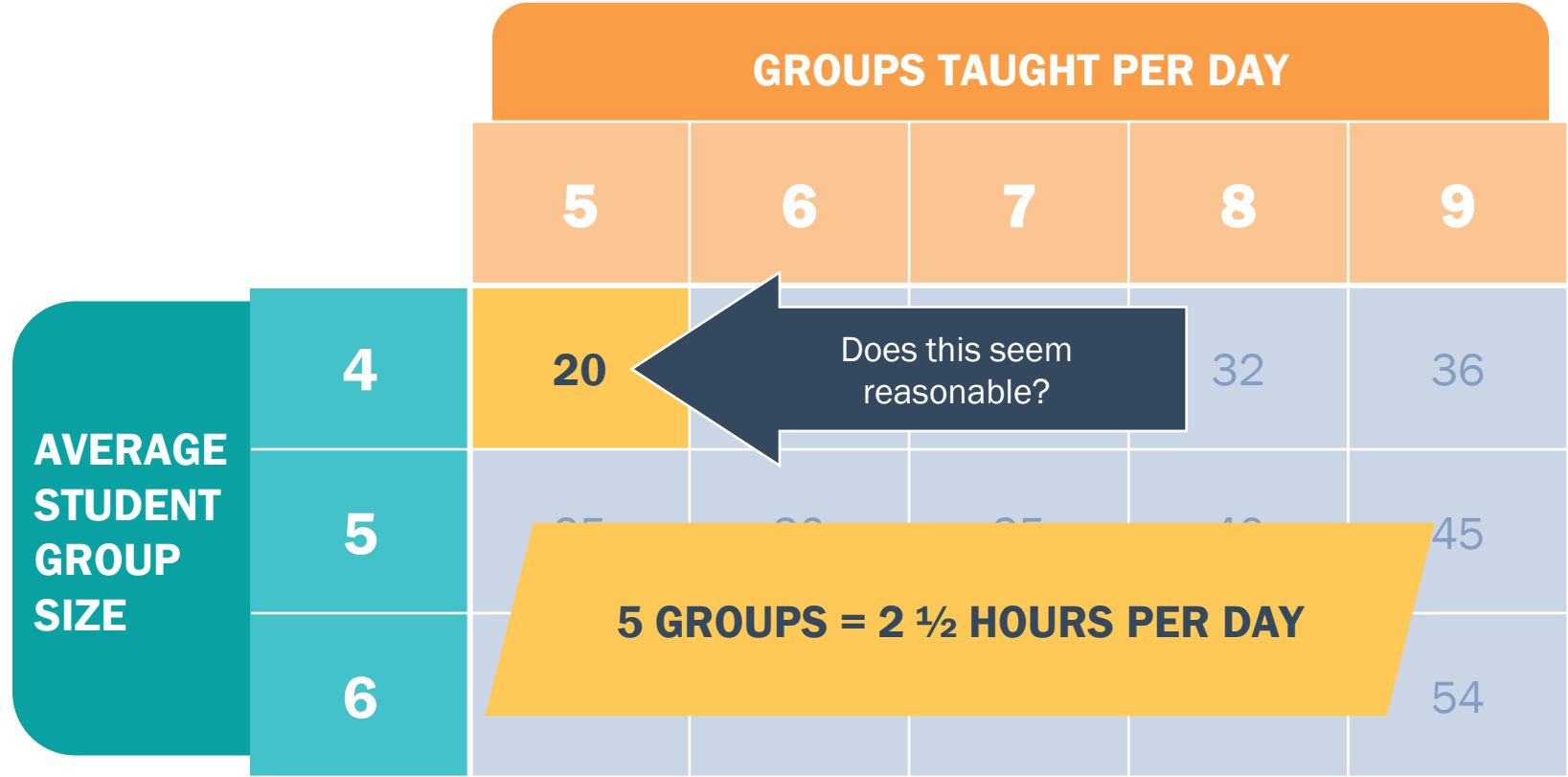
# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

		GROUPS TAUGHT PER DAY				
		5	6	7	8	9
AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4					
	5					
	6					

# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

		GROUPS TAUGHT PER DAY				
		5	6	7	8	9
AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4	20	24	28	32	36
	5	25	30	35	40	45
	6	30	36	42	48	54

# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff



# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

		GROUPS TAUGHT PER DAY				
		5	6	7	8	9
AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4	20	24	28	32	36
	5	25	30	35	<b>40</b>	45
	6	30	36	42	48	54

Twice as many students served per teacher

# Few schools proactively manage intervention staff

		GROUPS TAUGHT PER DAY				
		5	6	7	8	9
AVERAGE STUDENT GROUP SIZE	4	20	24	28	32	36
	5	25	30	35	40	45
	6	30	36	42	48	<b>54</b>



# QUESTIONS?





# THANK YOU!



[www.newsolutionsk12.com](http://www.newsolutionsk12.com)