



Memorandum

To: Members, South Orange and Maplewood Board of Education
Dr. Brian G. Osborne, Superintendent

From: Nate Levenson, District Management Council

Date: 11/18/2013

Re: Update on the district's engagement with District management Council (DMC)

DMC's focus in South Orange and Maplewood this year has been on achieving the following objectives:

- I. **Inclusion:** Support the district in designing and implementing a best practice-based approach to support struggling students (with or without IEPs) in an inclusion setting
- II. **Elementary Reading:** Support struggling readers at the elementary level by designing and implementing a best practice based Reading program
- III. **Budgeting:** Develop a strategic budgeting process for special education

The key observations and activities related to each of the stated objectives are outlined below:

I. Inclusion

DMC conducted an extensive study analyzing the services outlined in the IEPs at the elementary level on a student-by-student basis in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the academic support services that students with special needs currently receive at the elementary level in the district.

The key findings were as follows:

1. Struggling students receive extensive in-class support:

The following table represents the current number of elementary students with special needs who receive in class support in any content area, broken out by grade:



Number of students with IEPs (not in self-contained classrooms) per grade receiving in-class supports*

Grade	Clinton	Jefferson	Marshall	Seth Boyden	South Mountain	Tuscan
K	0	0	7	0	2	1
1	3	0	5	1	5	2
2	10	0	7	5	7	4
3	18	16	0	6	5	8
4	7	23	0	12	7	6
5	14	25	0	17	7	11
Total	52	64	19	41	33	32

*Note: Figures calculated using 2012-2013 data

Number of students per teacher providing in-class supports

	Clinton	Jefferson	Marshall	Seth Boyden	South Mountain	Tuscan
Special Education Teachers	6.2	11	3	5.6	7.2	6.2
Student per Teacher	8.4	5.8	6.3	7.3	4.6	5.2

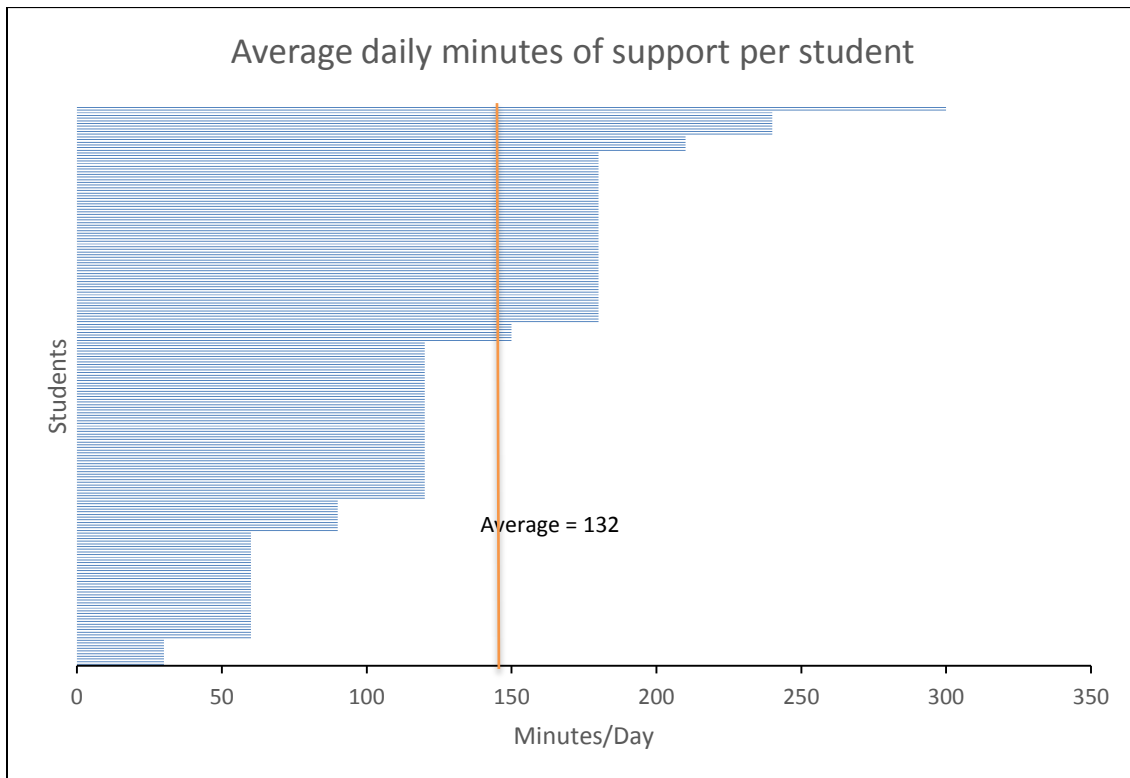
Currently, a total of 185 students across all schools receive between 1.5 to 5 hours of in-class support each day i.e. 7.5-25 hours of support per week (the rest receive up to 1.5 hours of service each day). This translates to about 25-80% of the school day.

On an average, the district provides approximately 132 minutes per day of in-class support to students with special needs that are not in substantially separate classrooms.

Current student IEPs do not provide guidance on the amount of in-class support time the district should provide to best support the student. While there is no national database describing the number of minutes of in-class supports provided to students per day, 45-60 minutes of in-class support is typical in many school districts with similar student demographics and per pupil spending. The high level of in-class support is



uncommon when compared to like districts (in terms of student demographics and per pupil funding) in DMC's experience.



*Each bar represents a student with an IEP (not in self-contained classroom) being provided in-class support services

2. There is a degree of overlap in the supports provided to struggling students:

Multiple subjects: In all elementary schools across the district, 123 students are provided in-class support for Science, Social Studies or both in addition to one or more of Reading, Writing or Language Arts supports. While in-class support for Science and Social studies is more common at the secondary level, it is not a common practice at the elementary level, where the focus generally tends to be on Reading and Math.

While the in-class services currently provided in the district are in accordance with the IEPs in each school, there is variation from school to school in the prevalence of



providing support across multiple subjects. This highlights a lack of district wide strategy in terms of supporting students with special needs within the general education classroom.

The table below shows the number and percentage of students in each elementary school that receive one or both of Science and Social Studies support in addition to Reading, Writing and Language Arts:

School	Students receiving one or both of Science and Social Studies support in addition to Reading, Writing and Language Arts	% of total students receiving in-class supports
Clinton	37	65%
Jefferson	25	33%
Marshall	6	15%
Seth Boyden	13	27%
South Mountain	18	35%
Tuscan	24	50%
Total	123	38%

Extensive in-class Language Arts support: DMC found some instances of students receiving in-class supports for two or more of Reading, Writing and Language Arts. This too varies by school.

Overlapping pull out and in-class support: With the new extra time model for Reading support (in grades K to 2 at the time this data was pulled), where all struggling students receive 30 minutes of extra instruction a day, students still receive in-class Reading, Writing or Language Arts support. This leads to overlapping supports.

3. The district makes a significant investment in providing in-class support

In order to provide the in-class service delivery model for students with special needs in the elementary schools, a total of 34.7 special education teachers (FTEs) were employed (in the school year 2012-13). Assuming a total cost of \$100,000 per year for a special



education teacher who provides in-class support to struggling students, this translates to a **total cost of \$3.5 million for providing in-class supports to students with special needs at the elementary level.**

DMC also conducted an analysis to assess the incremental cost of providing in-class support in different subjects based on the special education staff required to support the level of in-class support services for each subject.

Cost of providing in-class supports by subject

Language Arts	Mathematics	Social Studies	Science	Reading	Writing
\$855,385	\$947,692	\$428,462	\$451,538	\$255,385	\$209,231

Note that these cost numbers are based on the number of students that are currently provided these supports across different school (per their IEPs) with the assumption that they are grouped efficiently.

Another way to look at the practice of providing support across multiple subjects to most students is to consider the investment in providing supports to students in excess of 450 minutes per week (i.e. 90 minutes per day) across all content areas combined. This accounts for \$1.2 million (of the total of \$3.5 million) in class elementary support.

Tools for analysis of current and future inclusion models

DMC has provided a series of tools to help the district leadership understand current service delivery models and test what if scenarios as well.

DMC also helped develop tools for the district to be able to determine staffing allocations in each school based on IEP requirements for in-class supports. These will help ensure that the appropriate staff is available in each school

Next steps for refining and improving inclusion

- **Create guidelines for inclusion supports based on student needs and best practices:** Based on the list of current inclusion practices analyzed by DMC, the district will draft guidelines for duration, content areas and groups for in-class support for students with IEPs



- **Integrate the new reading program and the inclusion model:** As the strengthened K-3 reading program will provide students with IEPs with more reading support in the general education setting, the district will incorporate a model for inclusion that takes new additions to the K-3 reading program into account (e.g., in terms of service delivery, content of IEPs, etc.)
- **Determine measures for assessing effectiveness:** Once the model for inclusion has been defined, the district will identify methods for assessing the effectiveness of the new inclusion model. This may involve monitoring the formative assessment scores of all students receiving in-class supports or other similar monitoring tools.

II. Elementary Reading

DMC's primary focus in the district last year was designing and preparing to implement the district's reading program at the elementary school level. The program was launched in grades K-2 in school year 2012-13 and further expanded to grade 3 (grade 4 in some schools) in school year 2013-14. This year's work focuses on ensuring a strong implementation and further expansion. This includes.

- **Ensuring common entry and exit criteria.**

It was decided that all struggling students, with and without IEPs, will receive reading intervention support if they score below the agreed-upon benchmark (based on DRA and Teachers' College assessments)
- **Creating intervention schedules.**

It was agreed that students will not be pulled out of core reading or math instruction for any intervention. Additionally, DMC is providing scheduling support to schools to ensure that they can accommodate the reading intervention block in their regular schedules.
- **Reading intervention programs and materials.**

The district leadership, with stakeholder input, will choose one reading program to be used district-wide going forward.
- **Formalize staffing requirements in each school.**



In addition to the specifics of the Reading program, the district (in collaboration with DMC) is utilizing formative assessment results in each school, combined with district developed guidelines for work load and group size to determine requirements for academic interventionists (who provide reading support) in each school. DMC has helped the district create an excel tool for the purpose that utilizes inputs around group size, teacher contractual time and number of struggling students to determine staffing needs. This ensures that the reading program is staffed efficiently and equitably across all schools.

III. Budgeting

South Orange & Maplewood School District is working with DMC to develop a special education financial management system. DMC has been working with the district over the past year to create a system to easily and timely collect the information required to thoughtfully budget and manage special education and to provide technology tools to analyze the required data such that decision making is more data driven, child centered, and transparent. Work to date includes:

- **Map the current and desired process.**

DMC has engaged in conversations with the Special Education Director and Business Manager to discuss the data required for planning, budgeting, and allocating staff. Through these conversations, DMC has started to extensively review existing budget and planning documents, which will help inform decisions about what information is required to build thoughtful plans and budgets.

- **Refine and implement a system to match staffing needs to student needs.**

DMC worked with district leadership to establish the roles of staff who participated in a time allocation study the past few weeks. The survey is designed to help the district and DMC learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities of staff and gain a full understanding of current roles, responsibilities, and time commitments. Staff were invited to participate in a survey using an online tool, dmPlanning, and filled out an online form to enter their typical weekly schedule, receiving technical support from the DMC team. 77% of special education staff participated in this schedule collection effort.



DMC is in the process of analyzing the resulting data, and will share the results with the district and subsequently with the board, allowing the district leadership to better understand how staff spends their time across the district and within specific buildings. The information will empower district leaders with the information to make informed staffing allocation decisions and potentially redirect resources towards the reading program.

- **Develop and implement a system to monitor and manage other special education expenses such as contracted services, transportation and tuitions.**

DMC is working with the district to institute a process to periodically update spending and forecast yearend balances on transportation, special education tuition, and other non-staff expenses so as to ensure effective planning and budgeting. DMC is in the process of reviewing all contracted services over \$10,000 a year.