

# Special Education Staffing Methodology

The Special Education Staffing Methodology has two dimensions:

- I. Funding support for special and general education teachers
- II. Funding support for educational assistants.

In 2000, a Design Team developed the special education funding formula as directed and accepted by the Federal Court while the state was under the Felix Consent Decree.

## I. Funding Support for Special and General Education Teachers

Attachment A provides a formula for generating special and general education teacher units. After calculation of the total number of weighted students, special and general education teacher units are derived by dividing by the following:

- Pre-K-2        20 weighted students:     1 teacher
- Grades 3-12 26.15 weighted students: 1 teacher

### A. Instructional Arrangement

The first dimension of the Special Education Staffing Methodology is the instructional arrangement of each student with a disability. These instructional arrangements represent options along the least restrictive environment continuum. Such arrangements are part of the array of services that the Department of Education (DOE) provides for students who are eligible under IDEA.

- **General education class/Early childhood setting:**
  1. Ages 3-5: Early childhood setting designed primarily for children without disabilities
  2. Ages 6-20: General education class more than 80% of the school day
- **General education and special education class:**
  1. Ages 3-5: Special education setting part time: Rest of the time at home or in early childhood setting designed primarily for children without disabilities
  2. Ages 6-20: General education class between 40% - 80% of the school day

- **Special education class:**
    1. Ages 3-5: Program designed primarily for children with disabilities
    2. Ages 6-20: General education class less than 40% of the school day
  - **Special education/related services provided in the home as required by the student's IEP- Not solely for medical reasons**
  - **Special education school** (greater than 50% of the school day):
    - Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind\*
- \*Funded separately by the legislature
- **Alternative placement:**
    - Public Day Treatment Program
    - Private Day School placed by the DOE at public expense
    - Public Residential Facility
    - Private Residential Facility

## B. Levels of Support

The second dimension of the Special Education Staffing Methodology is the intensity of specially designed instruction received by the student.

- **Intermittent Support:** The student receives specially designed instruction/supports for at least one period per week or less than 5 hours per week or at least 1 of 6 periods when a period is less than 60 minutes.
- **Targeted Support:** The student receives specially designed instruction/supports for at least one period per day or 5 to 12.5 hours per week or 2 of 6 periods.
- **Sustained Support-** The student receives specially designed instruction/supports for at least half of each school day or 12.5 to 24 hours per week or 3-4 periods.
- **Intensive Support** - The student receives specially designed instruction/supports for the full school day or 25 to 30 hours per week or 5 of 6 periods.

## C. Special Education Staffing Allocation Formula

The Special Education Staffing Allocation Formula, found in Attachment A, is based on general and special education student weights across the dimensions described in A and B above:

1. Where special education services are delivered along the least restrictive environment (LRE) continuum and
2. The amount or intensity of time a student requires specially designed instruction.

The following four weight categories are found in Attachment A:

1. **Intermittent Support** - (one of six periods or less than 5 hours per week) - a weight of 2.0 shared between general and special education.
2. **Targeted Support** - (two of six periods or 5 to 12.5 hours per week) - a weight of 3.0 shared between general and special education.
3. **Sustained Support** - (at least half of each school day or three to five of six periods or 12.5 to 24 hours per week - a weight of 4.0 shared between general and special education.
4. **Intensive Support** - (the full school day or six of six periods per day or 25 to 30 hours per week) - a weight of 5.0 shared between general and special education.

## **II. Support for Educational Assistants**

Court directives within the Felix Consent Decree required a staffing ratio of one educational assistant to each special education teacher.

---

### **Other Considerations - Staffing Allocation Guidelines**

#### **Relationship Between General and Special Education**

The Special Education Staffing Methodology provides a means for the allocation of special education staff, as well as a means to support the general education class environment. Students with disabilities will generate a special education and general education teacher count. For example, a student whose placement is in the general education class who receives specially designed instruction for at least one period per day would generate a weighted count of 1.5 for the general education teacher and 0.5 for the special education teacher.

#### **Resource Allocation Projections**

The Information Resource Management Branch (IRMB) of the DOE will provide student enrollment projections to the schools by the end of December of each year. Following receipt of the enrollment projections, the school principal and the IRMB staff will interact to determine whether there is justification for enrollment projection changes, based on fluctuating enrollments, unique program changes within the school, and/or other factors based on the needs of students requiring specially designed instruction. Because staffing allocations will be provided directly to the schools, the principal must work collaboratively with the school staff when making staffing and resource decisions so that the needs of the students with disabilities are addressed throughout the entire school year.

## **Support for Preschool Special Education**

Preschool special education programs need to be sufficiently staffed to meet the needs of and promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. Sufficient staff is necessary to provide frequent personal contact, meaningful learning activities, and immediate care as needed.

The increase in enrollment or class size throughout the year as a result of students with disabilities, who turn 3 years of age, is another factor that must be considered. The data collected and reviewed for school years 1998-2000 showed an average increase in preschool enrollment of 115% from September to June.

Smaller group sizes and lower staff-child ratios have been found to be strong predictors of indicators of quality such as positive interactions among staff and children and developmentally appropriate curriculum. Following are additional recommendations regarding the allocation of preschool special education staff:

1. The Information Resource Management Branch of the DOE needs to make preschool projections that are consistent with the historical trends of preschool enrollments and which account for student growth throughout the school year.
2. Each school with a minimum enrollment of 4 preschool students will be allocated a 1.00 F.T.E. preschool special education teacher position.
3. Preschool age students need to be counted as part of the total school enrollment in order to provide for appropriate planning for facilities and support staff enrollment at the school level.

## **Support for Low Incidence Populations**

Special consideration is needed for students with low incidence disabilities. Programs for these students often require low adult-student ratios. Special attention to the needs of students with low incidence disabilities must be included within each school's resource allocations in order to meet IEP needs and required services. For example, resource allocations should take into account the intensive services needed by these students such as sign language and Braille instruction.

## **School Flexibility in Utilizing Personnel**

Based on the various service delivery models, schools have the opportunity to configure their staff to meet the needs of their special education students.

**Note: School staff generated by the Special Education Staffing Methodology, are to be utilized to deliver the specially designed instruction/supports to students with disabilities receiving special education and related services.**

Schools must ensure that the agreed-upon specially designed instruction contained in each student's IEP is being delivered. With the Special Education Staffing Methodology and the flexibility provided to the schools, it is anticipated that schools will be able to make staffing adjustments to meet the IEP needs of their students with disabilities without additional District funds. However, each District must have the proper mechanisms in place to accommodate staffing requests based on extraordinary student and school needs.

## **Training Support**

In order for the Special Education Staffing Methodology to be appropriately implemented, training must be provided for school principals and other school staff. This training should include content such as provisions of the IDEA, fluctuations of the intensity of service levels, and the full continuum of service delivery options for students with disabilities.