

October Regular Meeting – Tax Levy and Budget Adoption Information Concerning Special Education Staffing Resources

This memo provides a multi-year perspective on special education staffing, focusing on Special Education Assistants (SEAs) and cross-categorical teachers in particular.

The following are the key points in our examination of special education staffing:

The combined FTE resources in the special education staffing categories of cross-categorical teacher and SEA have not decreased over the past four years.

Due to Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements, it would be unusual to see a reduction of expenditures in these staffing categories.

The table below shows a shifting of resources between Special Education Assistants (SEA's) and Cross-Categorical teachers over time. This was an intentional strategy to respond to staff feedback and reduce cross categorical teacher caseloads in order to focus on the importance of high quality instruction related to IEP goals and student needs. The June Preliminary budget makes reference to this in staffing notes on Page 46.

The table below focuses on Special Education Assistants (SEA's) and Cross-Categorical teachers specifically, eliminating all other categories. Therefore, the totals presented are a sub-set of the tables presented in the June and April Preliminary Budget documents. Also, to maintain comparability, the table below is based on fall actual staffing levels each year.

Fiscal Year	Special Education Assistants (SEA)	Special Education Teacher
2014	318.06	337.66
2015	333.05	331.76
2016	341.65	326.04
2017	292.53	351.50
2018	289.24	356.46

The Department of Student Services closely monitors the needs of students with disabilities and the school-based resources required to implement their individualized education programs (IEPs). We are working very closely with several schools around maximizing the use of their resources to match student needs. Since the finalization of the 2017-18 budget book process in early March, Student Services has already provided a total of 9.00 additional special education teacher allocation and 681.51 SEA hours (approximately 20 full-time staff) to schools. These were FTE included in the April and June Preliminary budgets but held in reserve at the district level until needed by a school or schools.

Our strategy to provide more certified teacher FTE vs. SEA FTE may raise a concern that we are left with unmet student needs at schools. Student Services purposely carries over a portion of IDEA Flow Through funding as a contingency plan for possible additional staffing during the subsequent school-year. Based on the current levels of carry-over, and existing funding in IDEA Flow Through, we have up to \$650,000 available to address current and future resource needs (\$48,000 cost per SEA FTE). We are confident that this amount is more than adequate to meet potential needs. Student Services has a step-by-step process for analyzing site-based resource needs in which each is thoroughly reviewed on an individual basis. There are several schools currently in review and we expect additional teacher, special needs nurse, or SEA resources will be distributed in the coming week(s). Our team is working daily to respond to school needs as they arise.

Student Services requires schools to carry a minimum amount of teacher allocation (base) and allows the principal some discretion to convert “flex special education teacher” to SEAs. The number of SEAs varies from year to year as principals make site based decisions based upon the needs of their students. While the number of SEA allocation has decreased, we have increased the number of special education teachers resulting in caseloads that are smaller than they have ever been.