

FY 2007 QUESTION NUMBER: 17

QUESTION:

What are the recommendations of the special education staffing plan committee? Which ones were funded in the budget and why?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: 1-26, 4-14, and 4-31, F-26, *The Citizens Budget FY 2007-12*

ANSWER:

The FY 2007 Special Education Staffing Plan Committee recommended the following improvements and priorities to be considered for the *Superintendent's FY 2007 Recommended Operating Budget*.

FY 2007 Staffing Plan Committee Recommendations			
Priority Order	Description	FTEs	Amount
1	Hours-based Staffing Model in Middle School	137.12	\$ 6,254,403
2	Itinerant Resource Teachers	12.00	776,190
3	Transition Support Teachers	3.00	185,229
4	Non-teaching Resource Teachers Special Education (RTSE)	44.80	3,019,206
5	Paraeducator Training		12,000
6	HFA/Asperger's Class	2.75	92,125
6A	Study Emotional Disabilities Services		624,375
7	Speech Pathologist Caseload and Training	6.00	410,070
	Total	205.67	\$11,373,598

In alignment with the recommendations of the Department of Special Education Strategic Planning Task Force that met during the 2004–2005 school year, the FY 2007 Special Education Staffing Plan Committee identified an hours-based staffing model as its highest priority for the FY 2007 budget and recommended that the model be field tested in all middle schools at a projected cost of \$6,254,403. Of the six additional recommendations made by the committee, two focused specifically on training—\$776,190 for 12.0 itinerant resource teacher positions and \$12,000 for training to be provided to special education paraeducators. In addition, the committee recommended \$185,229 for 3.0 transition teacher positions and \$3,019,206 to fund 44.8 nonteaching special education resource teacher (RTSE) positions to provide oversight for the special education departments in each middle and high school.

The Office of Special Education and Student Services (OSESS) considered these recommendations along with information regarding projected student enrollment, current staffing for special education programs and services, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) mandates, requests and feedback from school-based administrators and teachers, program and

student data, and *Our Call to Action Pursuit of Excellence—Strategic Plan for the Montgomery County Public Schools* priorities during the development of the FY 2007 special education budget initiatives. After extensive review, the following special education initiatives were included in the Superintendent’s Recommended FY 2007 Operating Budget.

Description	FTEs	Amount
Hours-based Staffing in two Middle Schools	15.310	\$ 714,527
Increased Staffing for Secondary LAD Programs	58.125	2,535,347
On-line IEP System	1.500	515,753
TOTAL	74.935	\$3,765,627

**Amounts include benefits*

The first two initiatives, hours-based staffing and increased staffing for secondary learning and academic disabilities classes are consistent with the recommendations of the FY 2007 Special Education Staffing Plan and were selected because they provide critical staffing to all secondary schools rather than just a few. The hours-based staffing model will be field tested in two middle schools that did not make adequate yearly progress due to the performance of special education students during FY 2005, to determine whether hours-based staffing is effective and feasible for systemwide implementation. The additional secondary learning and academic disabilities (LAD) positions are being provided to reduce the caseloads of secondary LAD teachers and to ensure that each middle school has at least three special education teachers and each high school has at least four special education teachers to provide services across all grade levels. This staffing approach puts additional resources in classrooms to maximize student success.

The third initiative provides funds for the development of a new Web-based Individualized Education Program (IEP) system including annual maintenance and support contract, training, and staff to operate/manage the system. The new IEP system is required to meet new state mandates for reporting special education data that are used to obtain funding for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It will provide remote, flexible, and secure access to special education documents for staff and parents; a workflow component to facilitate compliance with all pertinent federal and state mandates; and a prompt capacity to ensure timely action at critical points in each stage of the IEP process.

The FY 2007 budget also includes \$1,450,281 for 25.0 general education teachers to lower class size for the inclusion of students with disabilities in high schools. This initiative also is consistent with staffing plan recommendations, and although these positions are in the K-12 budget rather than special education, they will be used to address the needs of high school students with disabilities in general education classes.

MCPS considers the availability of trained personnel as a key element in the provision of a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. Because of the extensive training already in place and the critical need for resources to be provided to students and classrooms, it was determined that for this year, all special education initiatives other than the Web-based IEP system would be for direct, classroom support. A comprehensive and cohesive plan for staff training and development has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Special Education Services (DSES), the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs

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(OCIP), and the Office of Organizational Development (OOD) to support this goal. The training recommendations of the FY 2007 Special Education Staffing Plan Committee that could not be funded in this year's budget will be reconsidered during the next budget cycle.