

## BOARD BRIEF

Date: November 10, 2023

**BOARD INFORMATION:**   X  

**MEETING PREPARATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Amy Creed, Acting Executive Director of Specialized Instruction

**THROUGH:** Pierrette Finney, Ed. D, Chief Academic Officer  
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Michelle Rief, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Specialized Instruction Update

**ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence  
Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support  
Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

**SY 2023-2024 PRIORITY AREA:**

Academic Achievement  
Student Supports  
Staff Supports  
Recruitment and Retention

**SUMMARY:**

This Board Brief is an overview of Specialized Instruction programming and priorities for the 2023-2024 school year.

**DETAILS:**

ACPS provides services for students with disabilities, ages 2 to 21, who are found eligible to receive special education services. Special education services are provided in the least restrictive environment in the neighborhood school to the maximum extent appropriate for children with disabilities to be educated with children who are not disabled. Currently, ACPS is serving approximately 1,930 students, as seen in Figure A.

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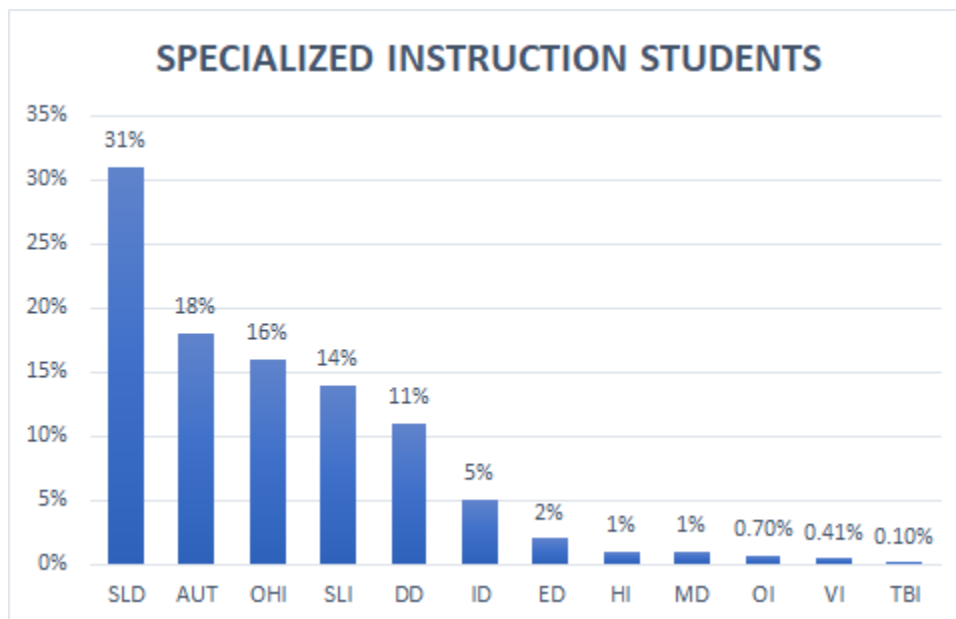


Figure A: Current breakdown of Specialized Instruction students in the division

ACPS is proud to offer a continuum of services for our students with disabilities. One service delivery option for students with disabilities is co-teaching, where students are served in the general education setting by two teachers; one general education teacher and one special education teacher. Both teachers are providing instruction on the standards but the special education teacher is ensuring that the students with disabilities receive specially designed instruction to support IEP goals. In the co-teaching model, both teachers work collaboratively to co-plan, co-teach and co-assess.

ACPS also provides services in citywide programs, which are an integral part of our continuum of services. Citywide programs provide highly individualized services for students who require intense & systematic direct instruction layered with social skills instruction and behavioral support. Instruction is highly specialized and provided by staff who receive specific training and mentoring in evidence-based interventions for students in these programs.

As students with disabilities progress from elementary to secondary levels, transition planning will become an essential component of a student's IEP. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 defines secondary transition as a coordinated set of activities designed to be within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic achievement and functional performance to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities. Transition planning is required to start for students at the age of 14 and should help facilitate planning and preparation for opportunities after high school including postsecondary education, career and technical education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Specialized Instruction priorities for the 2023-2024 school year include ensuring our students receive high quality specially designed instruction, building positive parent partnerships, ensuring transition supports are in place to increase the graduation rate and provide robust

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postsecondary options, and increasing staff retention. To ensure we are meeting our priorities, Specialized Instruction has:

- Partnered with GMU's Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) to help train teachers on evidence-based specially designed instructional strategies. GMU TTAC assists the VDOE in its work toward the goals of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Hosted parent open houses in October and November to connect with parents and share resources within and outside of ACPS. Additional workshops targeted to parent needs will be offered throughout the rest of the school year.
- Expanded the work of the transition team to include supporting students as early as elementary school in engaging with self-determination and self-advocacy skills and ensuring the work at the high school level is laser focused on supporting students with obtaining required standard and verified credits.
- Started a New Teacher Academy for all new special education teachers to ACPS. The New Teacher Academy, which meets monthly, provides teachers with the opportunity to discuss key tips and strategies, as well as review ACPS processes and procedures for special education. Teachers are given time to collaborate and celebrate their successes.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The school division is committed to ensuring high-quality specialized instruction services and supports for students with disabilities and their families.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this Specialized Instruction Updates Board Brief.

### **IMPACT:**

The work of Specialized Instruction will positively impact the school experience for students with disabilities, their families and the teachers who support them, which will ultimately improve student outcomes.

### **REFERENCES:**

N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A

### **CONTACT:**

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