Franklin West Supervisory Union: Aligning Staffing with Student Needs and Enrollment
April 14, 2015
Franklin West Supervisory Union
Aligning Staffing with Student Needs and Enrollment

Managing staffing levels in any district is a complex task, often made more difficult by limited availability of key data and further complicated by shifting enrollment patterns, changing IEPs, and the constraints of building master schedules. In many districts these complexities lead to a gap between the intended staffing, scheduling, and student support policies of the district and the reality of daily school practices. Through the use of a web based data collection, analysis, and rule based planning tool, dmPlanning, districts can have the actionable data to effectively and efficiently manage staffing, scheduling, and student support models based on Supervisory Union determined guidelines.

By capturing a detailed understanding of current staff and student schedules, the analysis highlights opportunities to maximize student learning, while creating greater equity for teachers and schools, all in a more cost effective manner. The enclosed report examines:

1. Special education, remediation, and intervention staffing patterns, workloads, and service delivery models
2. General education class size and course offerings

With this information, the Supervisory Union can thoughtfully allocate resources and free up funds for strategic priorities while enhancing or maintaining the level of student support.
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Franklin West Supervisory Union
Special education and intervention staffing patterns, workloads, and service delivery models

Background and methodology

The District Management Council (DMC) has been working with Franklin West Supervisory Union to better understand how staff service struggling students and to fully understand the many demands on their time. The goal is to create a baseline and common knowledge of how struggling students are being served across the Supervisory Union. This information will allow Supervisory Union leaders to consider more effective service delivery models and better manage staffing, as well as provide the opportunity to create common guidelines for service delivery and building assignments across the Supervisory Union. These efforts will create greater equity among staff and ensure all students are receiving the most effective and cost effective support possible. The research will, hopefully, also help facilitate discussions on the best service delivery models and approaches to raising student achievement.

Building a baseline for how staff spend their time and serve struggling students included a number of important steps. The methodology used to conduct this study was as follows:

1. **Determine staff to be included in the study**

   DMC worked with Supervisory Union leadership to decide which staff should be included in the study. Study participants included all staff who work with struggling students, both with and without an IEP. The following 10 roles were included in the survey:
   
   - Enrichment Teachers
   - Guidance Counselors
   - Literacy Specialists/Coordinators
   - Math Specialists/Coordinators
   - Special Education Paraprofessionals
   - Special Education Teachers
   - Speech and Language Pathologists
   - Speech and Language Pathologist Assistants
   - STEM Coaches
   - Technology Integrationists

2. **Interview Supervisory Union staff to understand roles and responsibilities**

   As the next step, DMC interviewed Supervisory Union leaders including the Superintendent, the Director of Support Services, the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and the school principals. The interviews allowed DMC to gain a deeper understanding of current
pedagogical approaches and how the Supervisory Union currently serves and supports struggling students.

Additionally, through the focus group interview process, DMC helped codify the primary activities staff perform on a day-to-day basis and built an understanding of the responsibilities for staff members across the Supervisory Union. Focus groups also provided staff with an opportunity to provide any additional feedback and insights into current practices within the Supervisory Union. This inclusive process was beneficial to both staff and Supervisory Union leaders, and created a starting point for learning more about how struggling students are served across the Supervisory Union.

3. **Collect typical weekly schedule from each staff member**

All selected staff who work with struggling students were requested to share their actual schedule for the week of 1/26/2015. Staff received an email invitation to share their schedule through an online tool, dmPlanning, and were provided one week to complete the process. Technical support was offered both via email and over the phone to all staff.

Nearly all staff members who were asked to share their schedules did so. Of the 107 staff members who participated, only 6 did not complete the process and no schedules were excluded because the data was not adequate. Fully, 94% of requested staff schedules are included in this analysis.

4. **Analyze the data**

All schedules were entered into a database and analyzed in a number of ways. The analysis helps answer questions such as:

- How much time is devoted to supporting students, attending meetings, doing paperwork, and other tasks?
- What topics are being supported?
- How many students are being supported at a time?
- How much variation or consistency is there between staff with like roles?

5. **Identify potential opportunities and financial impact**

A great deal of data was collected. DMC mined the data for actionable opportunities for raising achievement, increasing equity, and improving staffing decisions. This report outlines a short list of the most impactful opportunities.
INTRODUCTION

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Social studies, English, and science cannot be mastered without strong reading skills. Even today’s math instruction is word problem-intensive. Ensuring that students who struggle with reading receive immediate and intensive intervention from staff skilled in the teaching of reading, is integral to future success. If a student cannot read on grade level by third grade he or she is four times less likely to graduate by age nineteen than a child who does read proficiently by that time. Understanding the foundational importance of reading support, the study focused on deeply understanding current district resources, and how they align to the National Reading Panel and What Works Clearinghouse’s best reading practices.

This review takes a close look at how struggling students are supported through general education, structured interventions, and special education services. A struggling student is broadly defined and includes students who are reading below grade level, with and without a disability and may also be an English language learner as well. These student sub-groups often have common challenges, such as struggling with reading comprehension, skills deficits from previous grades, or they learn and process information more slowly than their peers.

The key question is how can the district increase reading proficiency for all struggling students with current resources? Through a coordinated approach of focusing on expanding the reach of your most skilled teachers in general education, intervention, or special education, districts can increase the academic impact on struggling students without added expense. Providing high quality instruction with highly skilled staff for all students who struggle, not just students with special needs, is achievable by reallocating current resources.

In addition to reallocating current resources, another key element for change is a district’s culture or academic ecosystem. Through interviews with Supervisory Union leaders and staff it was evident that Franklin West Supervisory Union has a dedicated and determined staff, focused on student support. While leadership and staff are passionate about their work and focus on student achievement, a shift in the culture on who is best qualified to support struggling students is fundamental to executing these changes. By shifting the understanding and expectation that students who struggle to read should be supported by teachers with extensive training in the teaching of reading, significant gains in proficiency among struggling readers can be achieved.

After taking a deep look at current practices, several opportunities have emerged to more closely align district priorities and best practices. This includes:

1. What training and background knowledge is required to best support struggling readers;
2. Expanding the reach of the most skilled special education teachers;
3. Revising the roles and responsibilities of special education paraprofessionals;
4. Increasing the amount of time speech and language staff spend with students;

Students with severe cognitive disabilities or virtually no fluency in English do have more specialized needs.
5. Staffing consistently to existing class size targets and managing low enrollment courses at the high school.

**Noteworthy Commendation**

Finally, a special note of commendation. Franklin West excels in class size management at both the elementary and secondary level. Currently, the Supervisory Union is managing to current class size policies and current enrollment with great precision.
OPPORTUNITIES

1. Consider what training and background knowledge is required to best support students struggling to read, both without IEPs and with mild to moderate disabilities.

K-8 Reading Instruction

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Writing, social studies, and science cannot be mastered without strong reading skills. Even modern math is full of word problems; reading and math success are highly correlated. For students who struggle with the foundational skill of reading, research indicates that the skills, training, and background of the reading instructor is the largest indicator of that student’s likelihood of achieving grade level mastery. Often when students struggle to read and are placed on an IEP, they receive support from a special education teacher. It is not uncommon for special educators have deep expertise in pedagogy but limited background in the teaching of reading. Districts who have seen significant gains among struggling readers, both with and without IEPs, have placed those students under the instruction of teacher deeply skilled and recently trained in the teaching of reading.

Franklin West Supervisory Union (FWSU) understands the significance of reading, and dedicates significant resources to support struggling readers in grades Kindergarten through 8. Recently, FWSU has begun implementing Vermont’s Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model to provide a more organized and consistent approach to supporting struggling students. While Franklin West has acknowledged they have begun this shift in their approach to supporting struggling students, currently there is no consistent approach to interventions across the Supervisory Union. For struggling readers in Tiers 1 and 2, sometimes support is provided to students by literacy specialists pushing into the classroom and working in small groups daily, while at other schools students are often pulled 3 times per week for support from a literacy specialist or a paraprofessional. During staff interviews, it was indicated that there are limited staffing resources available for literacy specialists providing intervention to struggling learners. For example, if a student in grade 2 and a student in grade 5 are pulled at the same time, literacy specialists prioritize working with the younger students, leaving the 5th grade student to receive help from a paraprofessional. This sentiment was also echoed in focus groups with special educators, who indicated that there is not enough resources in order for MTSS model to be viable.

Within the Supervisory Union’s K-8 grades, less than one third of students with IEPs scored proficient on the state reading exam. In 2013, only 7% of students with IEPs in grade 4 could read on or above grade level. Additionally, the achievement gap between students with and without IEPs has remained consistent over the past 5 years with an average of 55 percentile points.
**Comparison of Passing Rates on the State Reading Assessment (2009-2013)**

*Grades 3-8 Reading General Education vs. Special Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General Education Students</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1a. Reconsider the Role of Special Education Teachers**

While students in Tier 1 and 2 primarily receive intervention instruction from literacy specialists or classroom teachers, typically students with disabilities receive this instruction from special education teachers or paraprofessionals. The stated service delivery model of the Supervisory Union is primarily inclusion with special educators pushing into classroom to help support students according to their IEP goals. However, in focus groups, special educators stated that there was essentially no set service delivery model and there is no consistent way IEPs are written. Furthermore, it was indicated by central office leadership that there is still a cultural struggle of shifting away from “difficulty means IEP”.

Districts that have made the most significant gains among struggling readers have done so by providing subject specific trained teachers to support struggling students. Currently, students who need the most amount of support are being served by special education teachers and paraprofessionals whom are not always content experts with subject specific training. This correlates with the schedule analysis, which suggests that special education teachers are integral in reading and math support at the K-8 level. K-8 special education teachers working with students with IEPs in resource rooms and general education classrooms spend 89% of their direct service time delivering academic instruction and support. There is a heavy emphasis on supporting students in reading, with 53% of their academic support time dedicated to reading instruction.
1b. Limit the Role of Special Education Paraprofessionals

The current elementary support model suggests that students with IEPs also receive an intense level of support from paraprofessionals. Through interviews, Supervisory Union leadership expressed that a paraprofessional’s role is to support instructional practices within the classroom, provide remedial support as directed by the special education teacher, and support behavior issues.

The schedule analysis indicated that special education paraprofessionals dedicate 65% amount of their time to academic support, with 27% percent of this time dedicated to the explicit teaching of reading.
Special Education Paraprofessional Instruction
K-8 Level Only

Further, staff indicated that in a classrooms where teachers are not strong at supporting struggling learners, the paraprofessional would have a similar role as the teacher, working with students to differentiate materials, re-teach lessons, and often carry out lesson plans to small groups of students. It is not uncommon for a general education teacher to assume that students with additional adults assigned to support them are “taken care of,” and instead focus their attention on those who have no additional adult support. Therefore, there is an opportunity in the Supervisory Union to decrease the level of academic instruction provided by paraprofessionals and instead, develop a support model in which struggling learners, both with mild to moderate needs and without IEPs receive help from teachers trained in the teaching of reading.

The Supervisory Union is currently dedicating a substantial amount of resources to support struggling learners across their schools. Staff discussions indicate that the current model of intensive special education teacher and paraprofessional support, often leads to students not being seen as part of the general education classroom. Interviews with staff further indicated that many general education teachers do not feel confident in their skills of supporting students with mild to moderate needs, and often the paraprofessional staff directly support and modify the materials appropriately.

1c. Literacy Specialists and Coordinators

In districts with high functioning inclusion models, the literacy coaches play a large role in training and supporting general education staff regarding best instructional practices for struggling readers. Typically these staff members have deep understanding in both the teaching of reading, and effective pedagogical practices. Through focus groups, it was stated that literacy
specialists view themselves as more “part time” interventionists for general education students rather than teacher coaches. In addition, when literacy specialists push into the classroom, they are often working with a small group of students off to the side of the classroom rather than modeling instructional practices to the entire classroom.

A better utilization of literacy specialist time could help facilitate a more inclusive model, helping general education teachers feel confident in their ability to support struggling readers both with and without IEPs. Currently, literacy specialists dedicate 36% of their week to supporting students, 29% of their week to supporting teachers, and 35% of their week to various other indirect responsibilities.

**Literacy Specialist/Coordinator Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% time spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student instruction or support</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total direct service</strong></td>
<td><strong>36%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher support activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% time spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson modeling/team teach</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with colleagues (email, phone, in-person)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/staff development</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total teacher support activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indirect service activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% time spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning/materials preparation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meeting (other than IEP/EST)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal lunch</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection/analysis</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork/report writing</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned school duties (i.e. bus or lunch duty, recess, etc.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating/monitoring reading initiatives</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meeting (EST)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional management/supervision</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under/over reported time</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total indirect service</strong></td>
<td><strong>35%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Supervisory Union is making a significant investment in supporting struggling learners academically. The investment is focused primarily by employing a large number of special education teachers and paraprofessionals, and a small portion of the literacy specialist team time is dedicated to student reading support.
FTE Dedicated to the Academic Support of Struggling Students²
K-8 Level Only

This current investment of staff represents a sizable pool of resources which could be shifted to provide content strong staff for remediation and intervention efforts as well as supporting students with mild to moderate needs.

**Benchmarking Analysis**

Several benchmarking analyses were performed, comparing the Supervisory Union’s staffing levels to districts nationwide, based on the parameters of per pupil spending, poverty level, and student enrollment. First, the Supervisory Union staffing levels for special education teachers was compared to other high spending districts across the nation. For the purposes of this analysis, the staffing levels were at similar levels of communities with similar levels of spending. When compared to districts of high spending, the Supervisory Union had nearly three times the number of special education paraprofessionals (multiple of 2.8).

A second analysis was performed with adjustments made to hypothesize how staffing levels would compare if the Supervisory Union was benchmarked against medium spending districts across the county. Under these circumstances, the staffing levels for special education teachers compared to like communities with medium spending yielded little difference, with 1.3 times as many staff. Comparing special education paraprofessional staffing levels to districts with medium spending concluded that the district had over four times the number of special education paraprofessionals (multiple of 4.2).

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² FTE dedicated to the academic support of struggling students was calculated by multiplying the FTE for each role by the percentage of time in a contracted work week on supporting students with academics.
### Staff Levels Compared to Like Districts
(Per 1,000 Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending Level</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Like Communities</th>
<th>Multiple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special education teachers</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education paras</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Staffing Levels of Paraprofessionals Compared to Districts with Similar “All Inclusion” Models
(Per 1,000 Students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Like Communities</th>
<th>Multiple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special education paras</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the Supervisory Union were to reduce staffing levels for either special education teachers or special education paraprofessionals, a sizable pool of funds could be shifted to provide content strong staff for remediation and intervention efforts as well as supporting students with mild to moderate needs.
2. Consider expanding and strengthening centralized leadership and management of special education and Response to Intervention efforts.

The Supervisory Union has an opportunity to capitalize on the recent state level shift (Vermont Act 156), by clarifying roles and responsibilities of the central office to provide more guidelines regarding struggling learners (both with and without IEPs) to school based teams. Overall, the size of central office is typical to other districts of similar size. However, as a Supervisory Union with a small central office, it is often difficult to oversee and effectively manage every aspect of implementation, therefore building tighter connections and communication between central office and school based leadership will be crucial. Strengthening these responsibilities and actively communicating the role of central office in supporting struggling learners could allow important processes such as early student identification, response to intervention, and IEP criteria and guidelines to be centrally managed.

Interviews with staff indicated that despite the new MTSS guidelines outlined by the central office, there is a lack of consistent implementation across schools, grades, and classrooms. A stronger, more centralized approach to managing both the MTSS guidelines, and special education support model would benefit staff and students. A strong response to intervention model would not only create a clear process for staff to follow when students struggle, but also ensure that students are receiving adequate Tier 1 and 2 interventions before being referred for special education services. Through staff interviews, it was indicated that caseloads have been growing exponentially and that often literacy specialists feel that a significant portion of students are misdiagnosed with a “literacy problem” and instead need emotional support, which detracts from other students’ intervention time.

Districts with strong RTI models often see that a coordinated effort at the elementary schools, limits identification at the middle and high school grades. Early intervention and remediation at the elementary schools is an essential step for students to achieve grade level master early in their educational experience. Data provided by the Supervisory Union indicated that in SY2013-2014, 30% of special education evaluations were conducted at the high school. In districts with clear response to intervention practices, it is highly uncommon to see students identified at the middle or high school level. Of those high school students, 21% were deemed eligible for special education services. This is most likely symptomatic of limited elementary RTI practiced being implemented in the day to day classroom activities. More tightly managing the identification process and response to intervention efforts, could lead to more thoughtful remediation, and early identification of struggling learners prior to reaching the secondary grades.
Revising the role and responsibilities of the central office may also lead to more equitable caseload distributions and special education support delivery models across staff groups. Interviews indicated that special education teachers were often responsible for deciding which students they support, and generally it was just “who has time”. Schedule analysis indicated that the current caseload distribution ranges from 11 to 29 across special education teachers, with an average of 16 students. While caseloads may vary based on student need, interviews suggest that this variable is often not a consideration.

Capitalizing on the recent state level shifts and expanding and strengthening the centralized special education department could lead to more effective and immediate identification of struggling learners, and more thoughtful caseloads and IEPs that are best for students.
3. Consider expanding the reach of your most skilled special education teachers by increasing the amount of time spent providing direct instruction to students.

To the extent that special education teachers are going to be supporting students, there is an opportunity to ensure the most skilled in the teaching of reading are providing the instruction for a greater portion of their week.

Based off of current schedules shared, special education teacher spend, on average, 44% of their time working directly with students. In comparison, a general education teacher might typically spend 75%-85% of their week providing direct service and in some districts special education teachers also spend 75% of their time with students. Re-thinking the schedule and non-teaching demands of special educators in the Supervisory Union could allow the teachers to spend more of their week helping students.

Special Education Teacher Direct Student Support

Elementary and Secondary Levels

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3 Direct service is the percentage of time dedicated to student support out of the staff contracted work week.
During the time that special education teachers are supporting students, they primarily do so in an individualized, 1:1 setting. Currently, special education teachers in the K-8 grades spend 59% of their time supporting students 1:1. This aligns with the focus groups, where staff mentioned that often they write IEP goals for group sessions, but scheduling 1:1 is the easier and more routine path.

**Special Education Teacher Group Size**  
*K-8 Level Only*

Research is clear, such as John Hattie’s Visible Learning, Tom Kane’s Measures of Effective Teaching, or TNTP’s the Widget Effect, that the skill of the teacher is dramatically more impactful than the adult to student ratio (class size or group size). While smaller groups may be desirable, their cost often prevents districts from serving all struggling students with highly skilled, trained, and effective teachers. Many districts have achieved dramatic gains in reading proficiency with groups of five students, if grouped by similar needs. By capitalizing on special education teachers with strong background in teaching reading, and emphasizing more time with students and more time in groups of 5, the Supervisory Union could also see gains in student achievement.
4. Consider revising the role of the special education paraprofessionals from instructional support to supporting students with health, safety, behavior, or severe needs.

Paraprofessionals play an important role in supporting many students with special needs, especially for behavioral and physical support, however, the overuse of paraprofessional support for students with mild to moderate disabilities can often limit students’ learning and independence. Through interviews and focus groups, a disparity between how central office and staff view paraprofessionals’ roles was uncovered. While central office staff indicated that a paraprofessional’s role should help facilitate a student’s independence, interviews with staff confirmed that paraprofessionals often play a role in delivering instruction to students (e.g., paraprofessionals are asked to implement lesson plans). While this approach to instructing students is well-intentioned, it has unintended consequences – students who are supported by paraprofessionals may in reality experience less time and attention from content-strong teachers, and becoming reliant on the support of a paraprofessional – rather than facilitating independence.

There is an opportunity to shift the primary responsibility of special education paraprofessionals from instructional support staff, to a focus on the integration of students with severe needs into the inclusion model.

Schedule analysis indicates that paraprofessionals in spend 77% amount of their work week supporting students.

**Special Education Paraprofessional Direct Student Support**

*Elementary and Secondary Levels*

![Graph showing average 75.3% of paraprofessional time spent supporting students.]

Further, when special education paraprofessionals are supporting students, it is primarily in a 1:1 support model, reinforcing the sentiments heard in focus groups. While it is well intentioned that paraprofessional staff are meant to facilitate the independence of students with mild to moderate needs, this level of 1:1 support often creates a dependence on an intense amount of adult support. Currently 49% of the time paraprofessionals are with students, they are supporting them in a 1:1 model.
In districts with strong inclusion models for students with mild to moderate disabilities, the paraprofessional does not play a role supporting them academically. The primary responsibility of special education paraprofessionals is to support students with more severe needs, especially in a fully inclusive model that the Supervisory Union embraces. Additional responsibilities of special education paraprofessionals also include managing the health and safety of special education students, and supporting school duties such as bus and lunch duty. Often districts have found success in shifting behavior supports away from the paraprofessionals to behaviorists to proactively create behavior improvement plans for students.

It is not an uncommon theme for districts with fully inclusive model to employ 1:1 paraprofessionals for the general education classrooms to support students with severe needs. However, the current staffing levels of paraprofessionals is most likely further creating problems of special education silo-ing, since the paraprofessionals staff indicate a prioritization of individualized support for all special education students, especially those with mild to moderate needs. In districts with full inclusion models, these students would ideally be receiving that academic support for general education teachers or reading specialists.

**Benchmarking Analysis**

An analysis was conducted comparing special education paraprofessional staffing levels to districts with a similar all inclusion model. The median number of paraprofessionals in districts with this service delivery model is 15.6 FTE per 1,000 students. In comparison, Franklin West Supervisory Union has 33.4 FTE per 1,000 students, or 2.1 times more special education paraprofessional staff.
Refining the support delivery model to that of similar communities, where paraprofessionals only support students with severe needs, and do not support students with mild to moderate needs in academic issues, could assist the Supervisory Union in achieving staffing levels of similar communities.
5. Consider increasing the amount of time speech and language staff spend with students, while also closely managing group size through thoughtful scheduling.

Speech and language pathologists are an important component of many students’ IEPs. They spend time working directly with students, while also participating in IEP writing, testing, and data analysis.

On average, the direct service time was 55% of the contracted work week, with direct student support time ranging from 50-63%.

As a point of comparison, a speech and language pathologist might be expected in some districts to spend 75% of their week providing direct service.

**Speech and Language Pathologist Direct Student Support**

*Elementary and Secondary Levels*

Additionally, staff indicated that there was a minimal effort or emphasis placed on scheduling. In general, grouping only happened when students with similar areas of need happened to be in the same classroom.

The schedules shared aligned with trends discussed during staff interviews. Staff discussed that student grouping typically only happens when students share a classroom and similar area of need. Research published by ASHA (The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) revealed that an effective teaching environment can be created with 2 students per teacher if the disability is severe and 3 students to 1 teacher for more typical needs. The research warns
against groups of more than 5 students. Currently, speech and language pathologists support the majority of their students in a 1:1 setting.

- Current practices show that 76% of the direct service time is 1:1 support.
- The average group size is 1.3 students.

**Speech and Language Pathologist Group Size**

*Elementary and Secondary Levels*

An analysis comparing the Supervisory Union’s speech and language staff to similar districts across the nation indicated the Supervisory Union has over 2.5 times more than the average number of speech and language pathologists in medium spending districts and over 2 times more than the average in high spending districts.

Rethinking the method for assigning speech and language pathologists to students could free up limited resources without reducing support to students.

**Speech and Language Pathologist Staff Levels Compared to Like Districts**

*(Per 1,000 Students)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Like Communities</th>
<th>Multiple</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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Franklin West Supervisory Union
General education class size and course offerings

Background and Methodology

The goal is to help the Supervisory Union establish a baseline for how students and staff are scheduled today in order to create more strategic guidelines for staffing allocation and class size in the future. This information will also help Franklin West Supervisory Union provide more equitable allocation of resources across schools. This portion of the study involved five steps:

1. Define which staff and subjects to be included in the study.

All general education staff who teach math, science, social studies, English, foreign languages, fine arts, physical education, and other electives were selected to participate in this portion of the review.

2. Collect data on current staffing, class size, and course offerings.

DMC collected data on current practices in elementary schools for both classroom teachers and specials teachers. Using a list of teachers’ names, grade level taught, and the student enrollment by classroom, DMC calculated the total grade level enrollment, the number of classes per grade level, actual class size, and the current average class size for each grade. This data set also identified which classrooms are blended grades. All data is from the 2014-2015 school year.

For secondary schools, DMC requested school-level data regarding student enrollment for each course section offered, and the current FTE by department. This data set is from the 2014-2015 school year.

3. Collect data from school and Supervisory Union leaders on schedules and staffing procedures.

Written questionnaires were distributed to school principals to gain a deeper understanding of current staffing patterns and staffing guidelines. Follow up phone interviews were made to some principals in order to clarify their answers. From these questionnaires and follow up phone interviews, DMC developed a deep understanding for typical student and staff schedules at each school, what constitutes a full teaching load, and clarity on unique electives offered at each school.

4. Set hypothetical class size guidelines to spur conversation.

Through phone interviews and independent research, DMC established that the current class size guidelines for each distinct school district within the Supervisory Union. For Fairfax School District, Kindergarten has a maximum class size of 19 students, grade 1 has a maximum of 21
students, and grades 3-12 generally have a maximum class size of 25 students. Georgia School District has a maximum class size of 20 students for K-2 and a maximum of 25 students for grades 3-8. Finally, Fletcher School District has a maximum class size of 20 student for Kindergarten and a maximum of 25 students for grades 1-6. These Supervisory Union class size guidelines were taken into account when setting hypothetical class size targets and guidelines in the study. The guidelines in the report are not DMC recommendations, but rather an illustrative tool for initiating discussion. The Supervisory Union can (and should) debate and test different class size guidelines and review their impact on staffing needs and student experiences.

5. Identify potential opportunities and financial impact based on straw man guidelines.

DMC analyzed how staffing required at each school would change if these hypothetical class size guidelines were applied consistently across the Supervisory Union’s schools. It is expected that Supervisory Union leadership will develop and test additional guidelines.
OPPORTUNITIES

1. Consider more precisely staffing all high school departments based on existing class size targets.

The districts are effectively managing staffing allocations for middle level grades based on district-set class size guidelines and no opportunities were found. Outlined below is the current range in core class sizes at the high school and potential opportunities based on data from the 2014-2015 school year.5

Current average class sizes for core classes by department
(SY 2014-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Current avg. class size</th>
<th>Current class size range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1 – 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>3 – 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9 – 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>11 – 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>14 – 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current overall average</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.2</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the class size analysis, there is an opportunity to manage class sizes more effectively within the Mathematics department. This opportunity allows for class sizes to move toward the class size target of 25 students without changing course offerings, allowing for potential savings of 1.3 FTE to be shifted toward other initiatives.

Potential FTE for repurposing for Mathematics department
(SY 2014-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Current avg. class size</th>
<th>Current FTE</th>
<th>Projected avg. class size</th>
<th>Projected FTE</th>
<th>Potential FTE for repurposing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Note that to capture a snapshot in time of current practices, only classes that are either full year, or from semester 1 or quarter 1 were used in the analysis.
2. Consider managing low enrollment courses by consolidating classes or decreasing the frequency of offering.

Across the high school, there is a wide range of low enrollment sections. Outlined below is a snapshot of current low enrollment courses and number of sections offered.

**Low enrollment course offerings by department**
(SY 2014-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course name</th>
<th>Number of sections</th>
<th>Current enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Art</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind Ensemble</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Acting Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Photography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concert Band</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Exploration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro to Culinary Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three strategies to handling low enrollment courses. The first strategy is to reduce to the frequency of when the courses are offered and only offer the course if the minimum enrollment levels are met. By offering “Intro to Culinary Arts” for a quarter, then “Career Exploration” the second quarter, as opposed to both at the same time, the high school could boost class enrollment and be more efficient with its staff allocation.

A second strategy could be to stagger the offerings for typically low enrollment courses every other year. Scheduling course offerings this way would allow the high school to keep the courses that are in high student demand, while also freeing up resources for other initiatives.

Finally, as a third strategy, combining low enrollment courses with related courses could help increase class enrollment closer to the average class size target.

Rethinking the current structure of course offerings could potentially free up 2.7 FTE within the high school to be used towards priority initiatives.
3. Consider staffing elementary classrooms more precisely based on existing class size targets.

Within Franklin West Supervisory Union, all three districts hold similar guidelines for class size policy at the K-8 level. For grades K-2, overall, the minimum average per grade cluster is 14 students and the maximum is 20 students. For grades 3-8, the minimum average per grade cluster is 14 students and the maximum is 25 students.

Overall, the K-8 schools are effectively managing staffing allocation to adhere to these district-set class size policies, however there is an opportunity at Georgia Elementary and Middle School to adjust their class size targets for Kindergarten and grade 1.

Potential FTE for repurposing at Georgia Elementary and Middle School
(SY 2014-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Current avg. class size</th>
<th>Current FTE</th>
<th>Projected avg. class size</th>
<th>Projected FTE</th>
<th>Variance in FTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By adjusting the class size targets at Kindergarten and grade 1 to be more aligned to the school’s average class size, Georgia School District could potentially realize 2.0 FTE to be shifted toward other initiatives.

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6 Note that the maximum number of students for Kindergarten and grades 1-2 is slightly lower for Fairfax School District. Kindergarten has a maximum of 19 students per grade cluster, and grades 1-2 have a maximum of 21 students per grade cluster.