



***Summary of the
Educational Services Analysis:
A Presentation to the
Oxford Academy and Central Schools
Board of Education***

May 7, 2019



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Presentation Overview

The primary purposes of this presentation to the Board are to:

- 1. Review the methodology of the study**
- 2. Present pertinent information for contextual purposes**
- 3. Provide key Findings**
- 4. Provide corresponding Areas of Opportunity**
- 5. Provide a forum for discussion**



Specific Areas of the Review

- 1. Related Services**
- 2. Utilization of Para-Professional Supports**
- 3. Out of District Placements**
- 4. Continuum of Services**
- 5. Organizational Structure and District Coordination of Programs and Services; and**
- 6. District Finances Related to Recoupment of Medicaid and Special Education Transportation**



Organization of the Presentation

The reports, and this corresponding presentation, are organized with respect to three main areas:

Organizational Considerations

Continuum of Supports

Financial Parameters (Transportation and Medicaid)

Each will be considered with respect to *Findings and Areas of Opportunity*



Methodology



Interviews

- Confidential interviews (N=32) with central office staff, school-based leaders, certified special and general education teachers, non-certified staff, related service providers, and BOCES staff.
- Questions were catered to the interviewees' particular areas of expertise and relevance to the areas under review.

Non-evaluative site visits to District Schools and Programs and BOCES Comparative Analyses

Document Reviews



Programmatic Orientation

A Fluid Continuum of Supports

INTERVENTIONS

Tier 1 Supports ←————→ **Special Education**

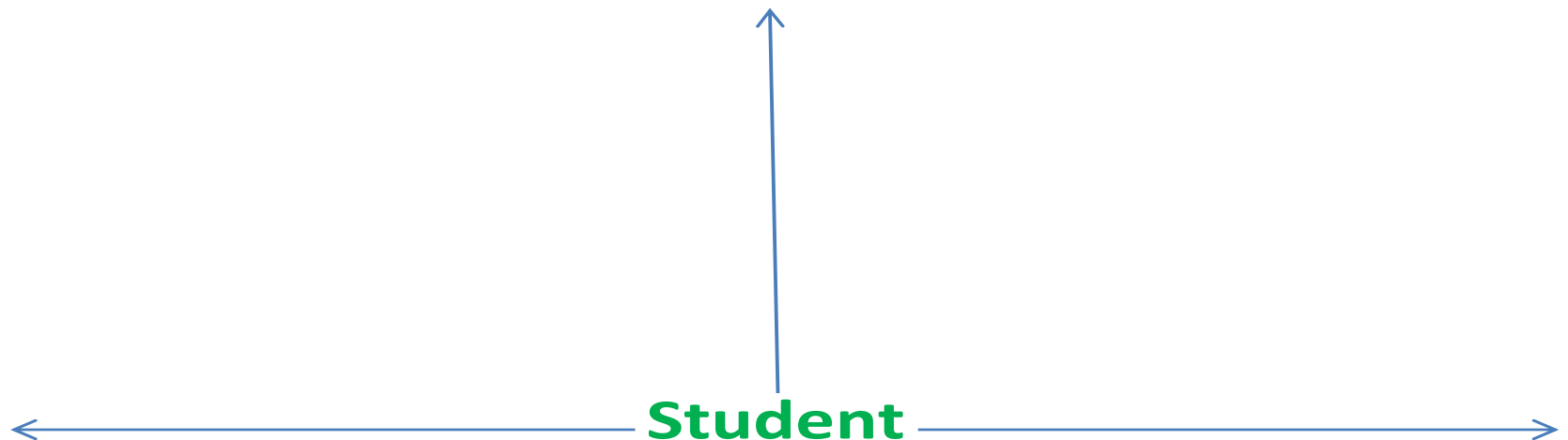
EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

General Education ←————→ **Out of District**



Programmatic Orientation (cont.)

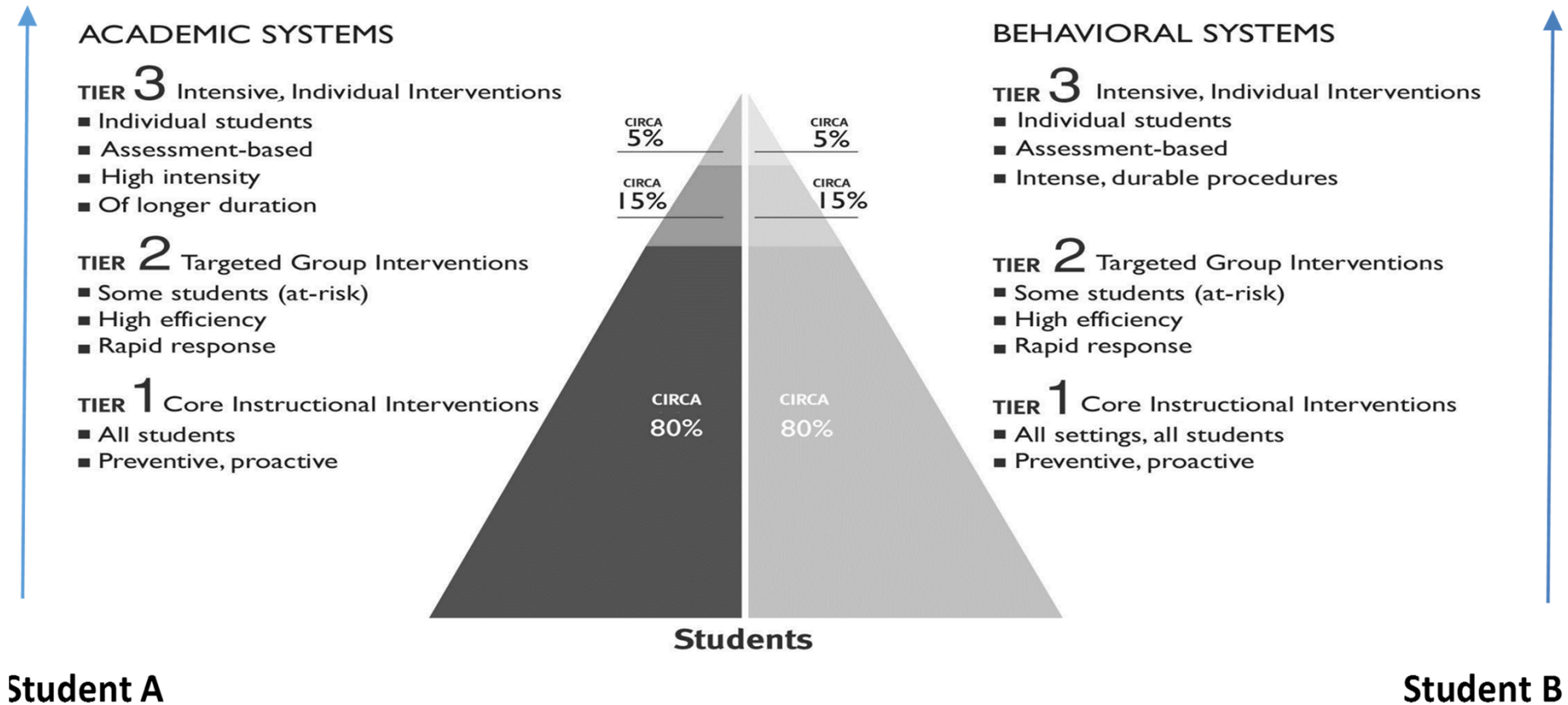
Vertical Alignment: consistent, uniform, and robust programming across programs and schools



Horizontal Alignment: meaningful inclusion opportunities & achievement within grade-level



Programmatic Orientation (cont.)

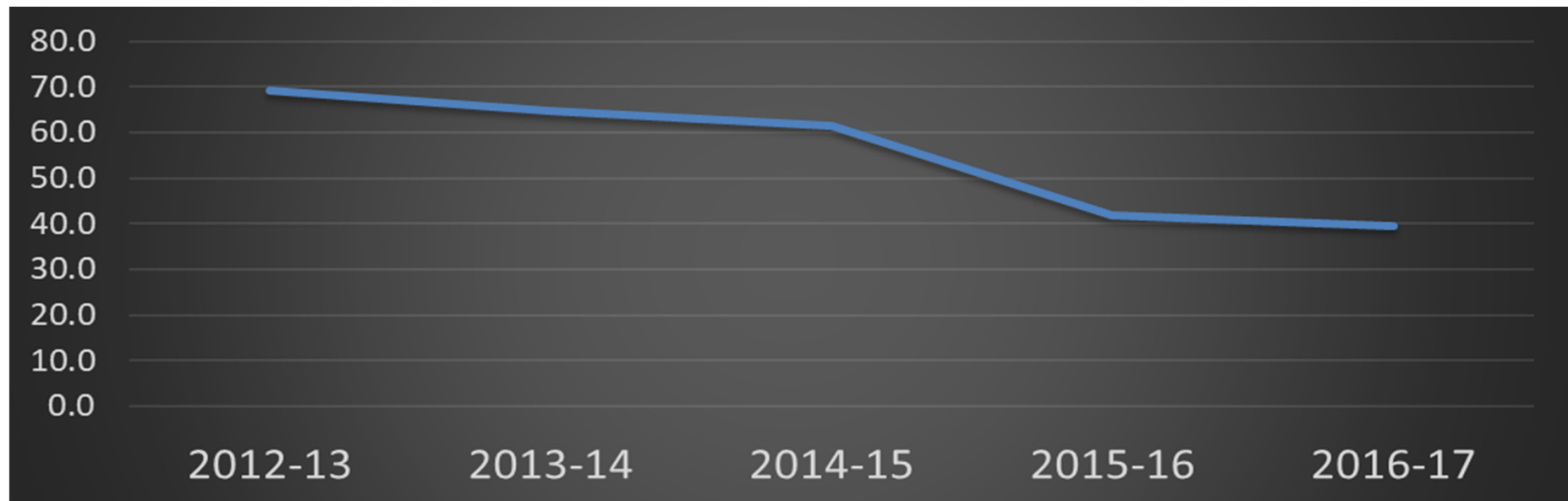




Organizational Considerations

Findings

- The perceptions of those interviewed were that the District had made positive progress on the issue of adult ownership of students with disabilities; yet, there remained variability in that ownership and that there did not exist a pervasive culture of ownership.
- To the degree that inclusionary practices are correlated with ownership, it is interesting to note that there is a downward trend with respect to Least Restrictive Environment.





Organizational Considerations

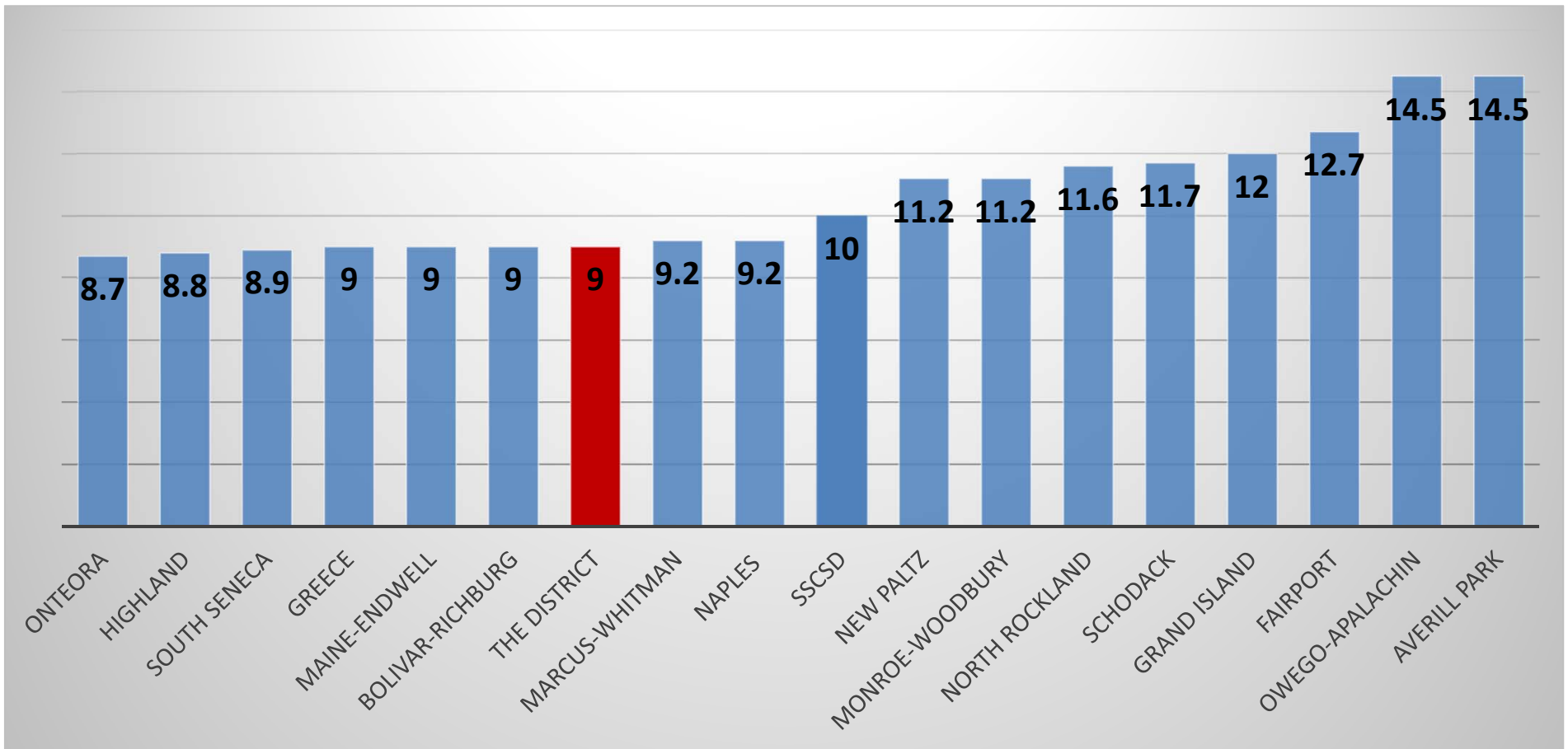
Findings (cont.)

- Parents are seen as partners, and the CSE processes are viewed as effectively run.
- Certified staff reported being very satisfied with respect to instructional resources and materials (e.g., instructional technology). However, they did express an interest to increase PD opportunities in certain areas (e.g. collaborative instructional models, pedagogical intervention and differentiation strategies, paraprofessional training).
- The ratio of SWDs to administration overseeing Special Programs is 157:1, and is in-line with expectations.
- The personnel under review available to support SWDs was gauged by benchmarking the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members to this overall in-District special education population of (90) K-12 SWDs (as per the most recent data).



Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

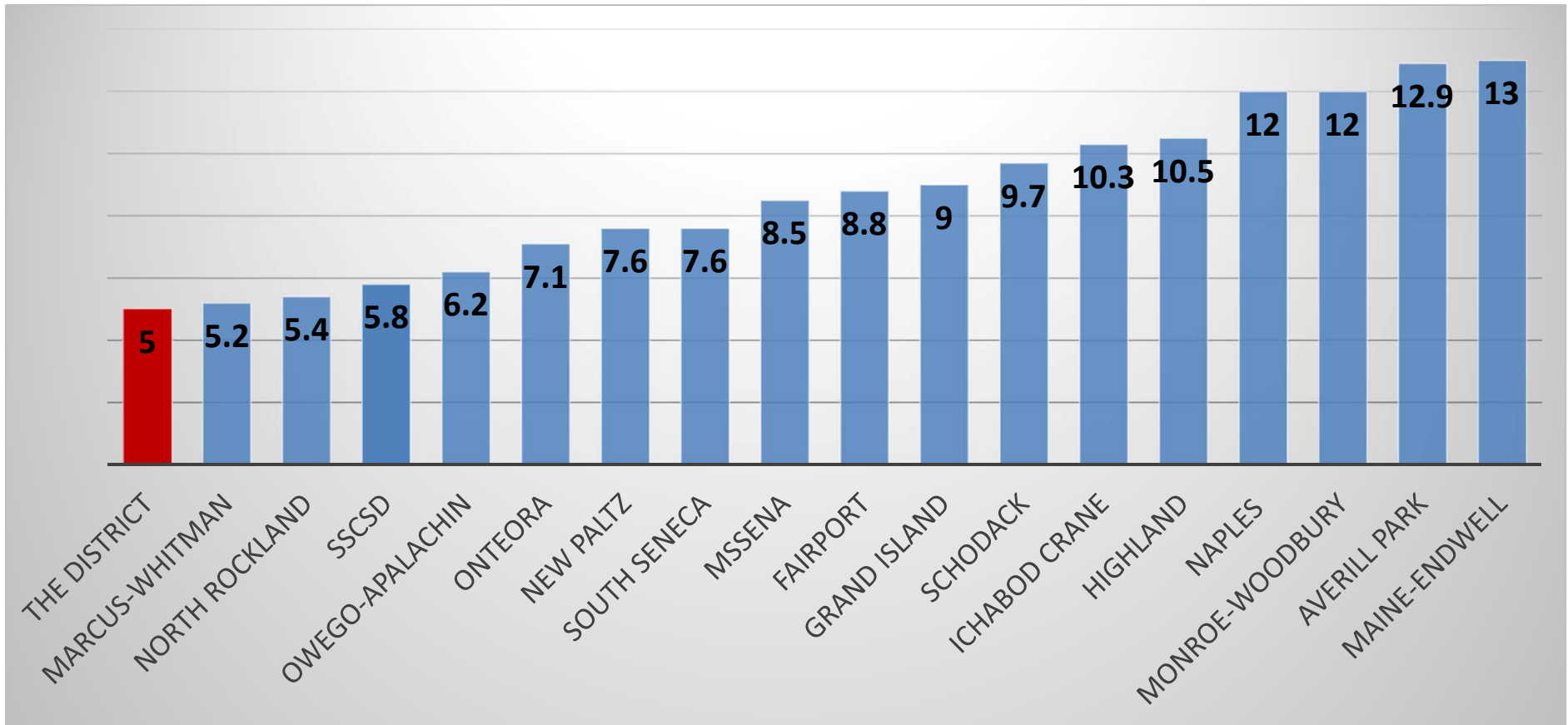
Certified Special Education Teachers ARI





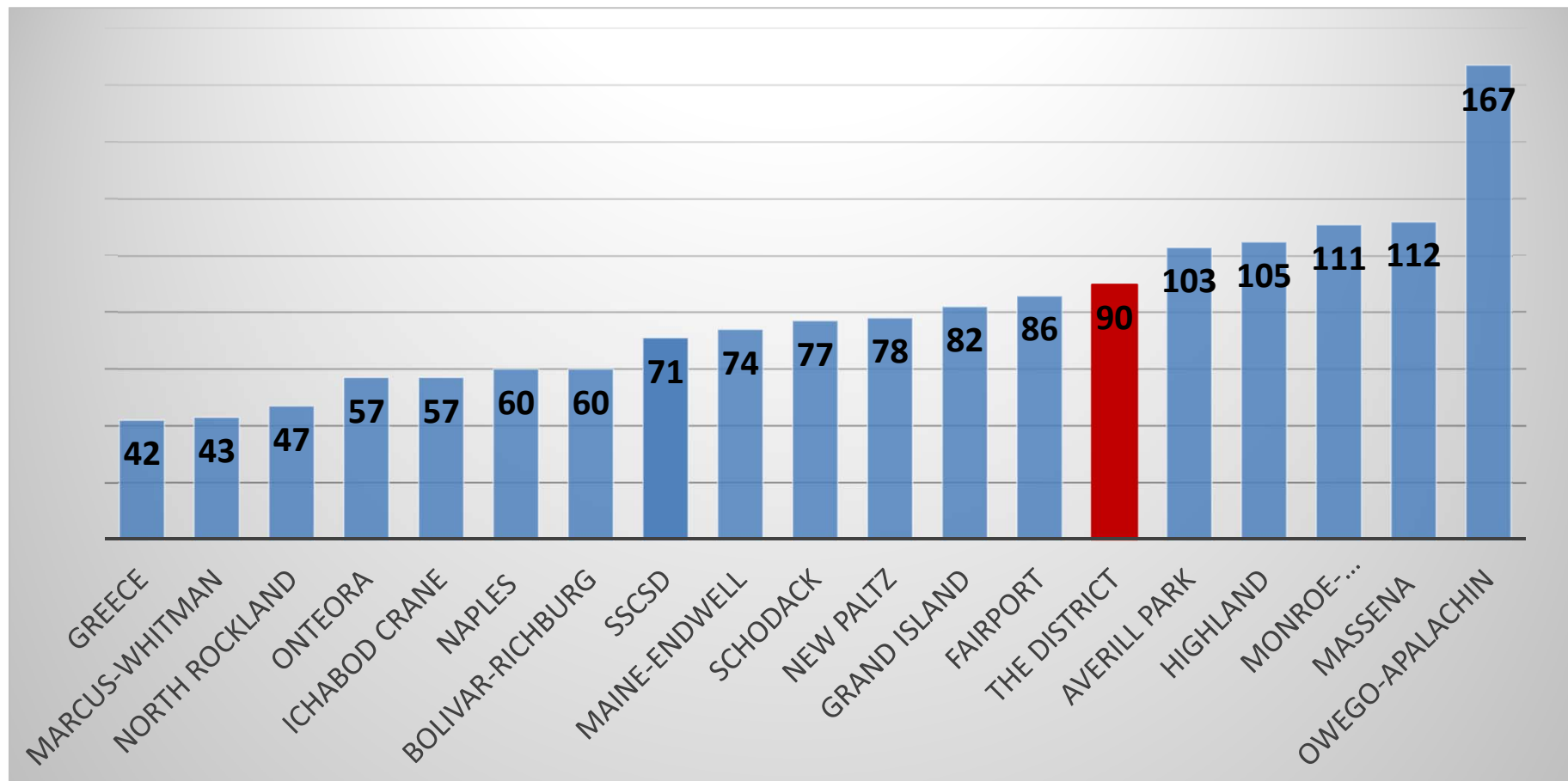
Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

Non-Certified Special Education Staff ARI



Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

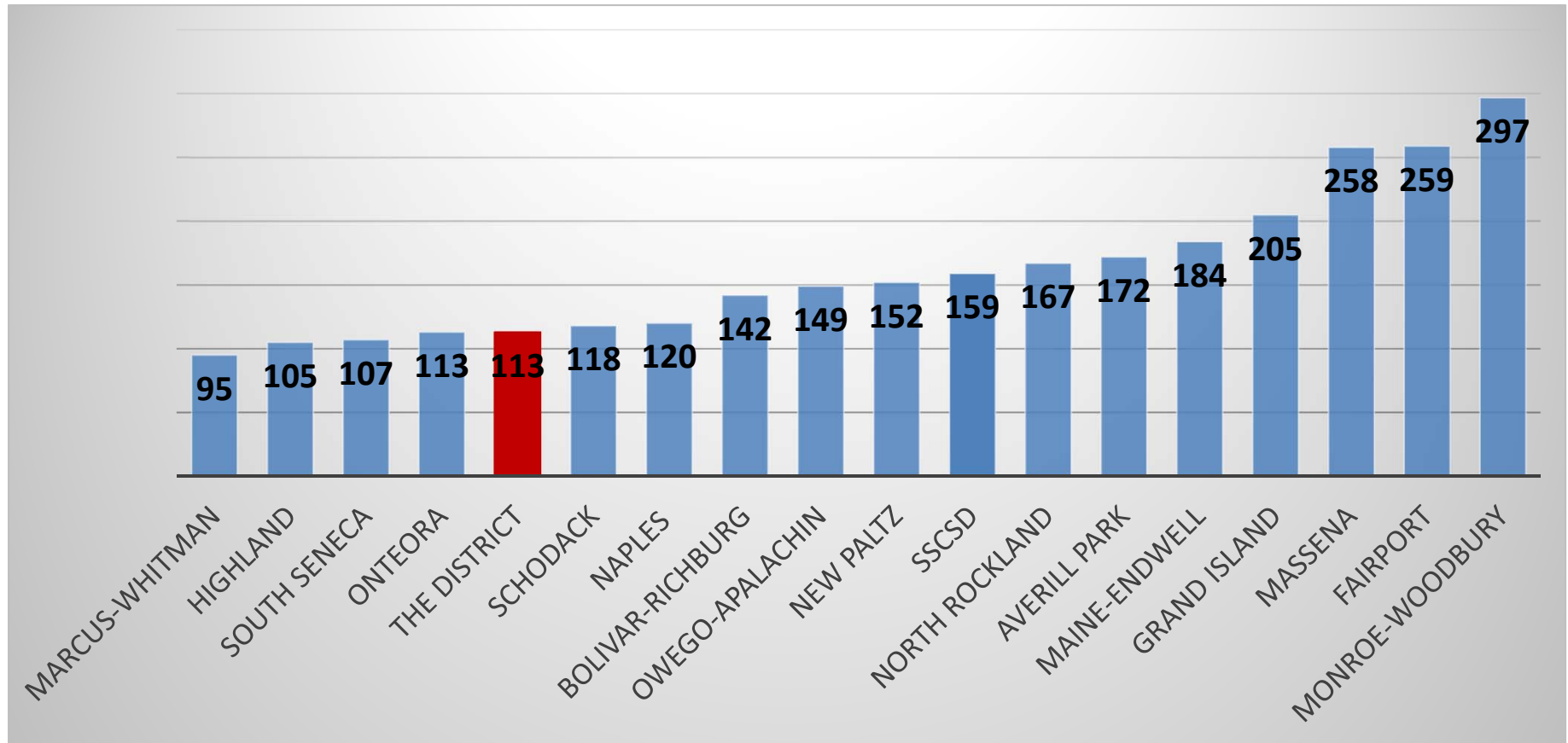
Speech-Language Staff ARI





Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

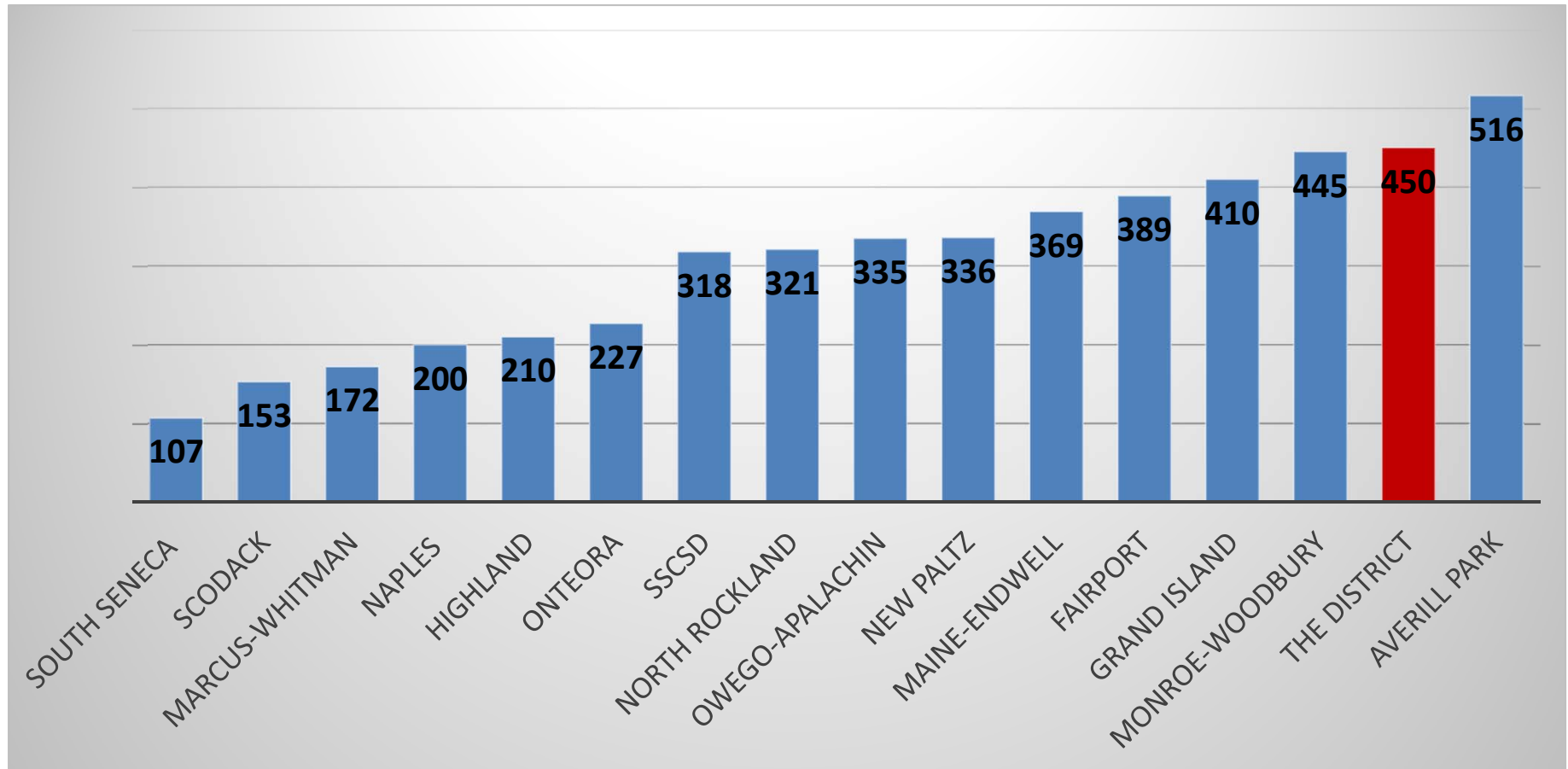
Occupational Therapy Staff ARI





Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

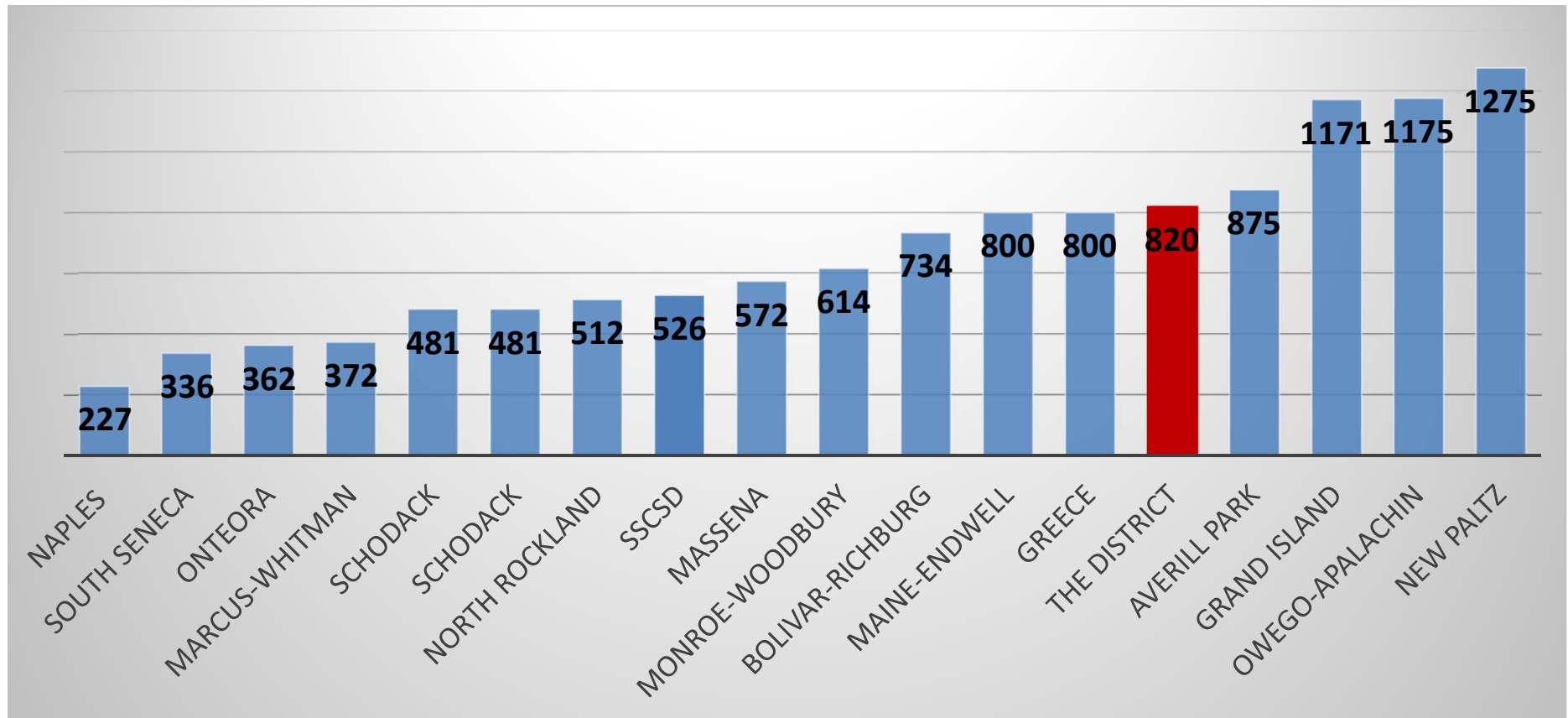
Physical Therapy Staff ARI





Organizational Considerations Findings (cont.)

Psychology Staff ARI (all students)

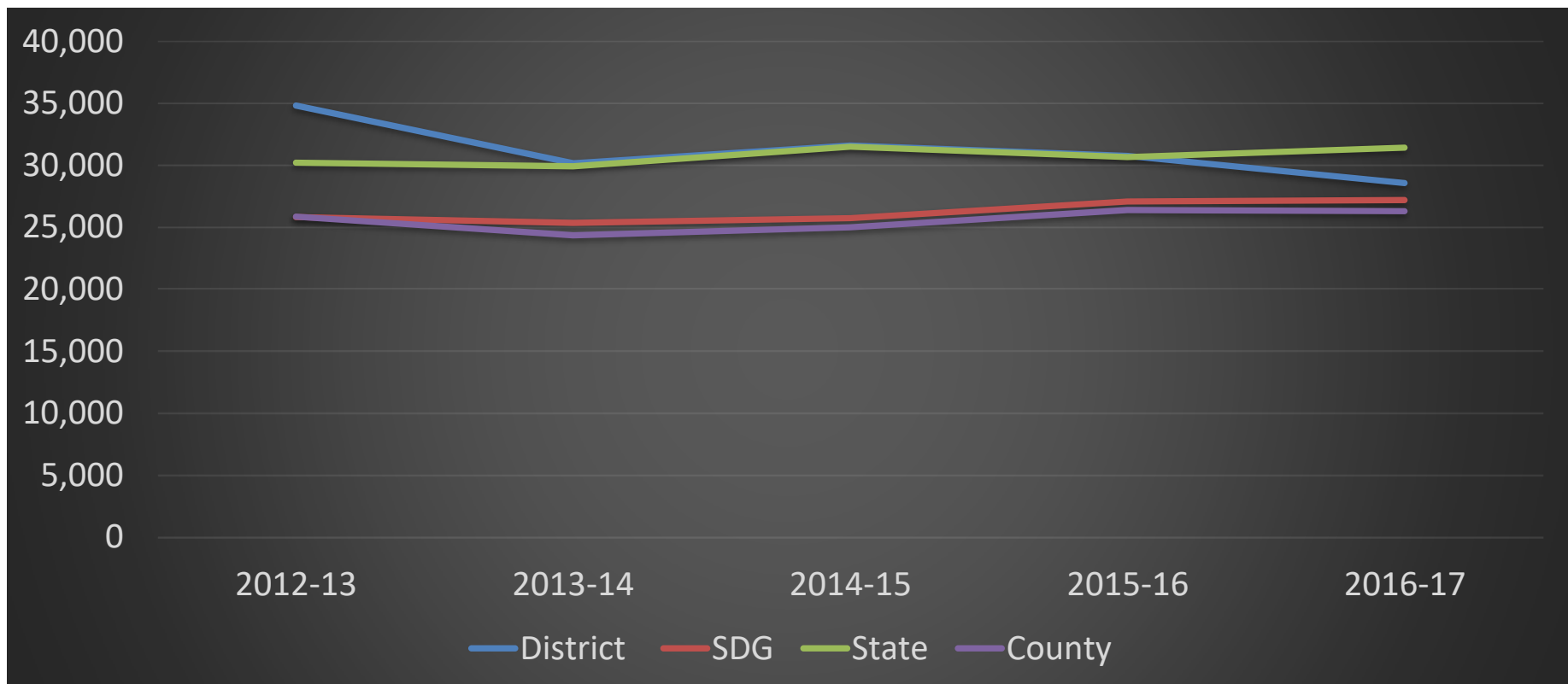




Organizational Considerations **Futures** Discover A Better Way Forward™

Findings (cont.)

- As indicated below, as per the 2016-17 school year, the per student expenditures of just over \$28,500 was below the State average (of \$31,400), but above the County and SDG averages (of \$26,300 and \$27,200, respectively). As a 5-year trend, the District has decreased its spending by over \$6,200 per student.





Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity

- To promote harmony, develop a unified vision, and enhance the working environment among general and special education departments across the District, leadership may consider the following:
 - ✓ Develop Professional Learning Communities at all schools that involve the integration of special education and regular education personnel
 - ✓ Create a mission statement explicitly containing elements of general and special education and make this visible to personnel at all schools;
 - ✓ If contractual parameters allow, expand the teacher evaluation process to include the ownership issue, to recognize those teachers who take ownership of all students, and to provide specific Professional Improvement Plans to those who do not; and
 - ✓ As new teachers are hired in the District, provide all principals with an operational hiring guide, thus ensuring all teachers understand the ownership standard of their jobs.



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

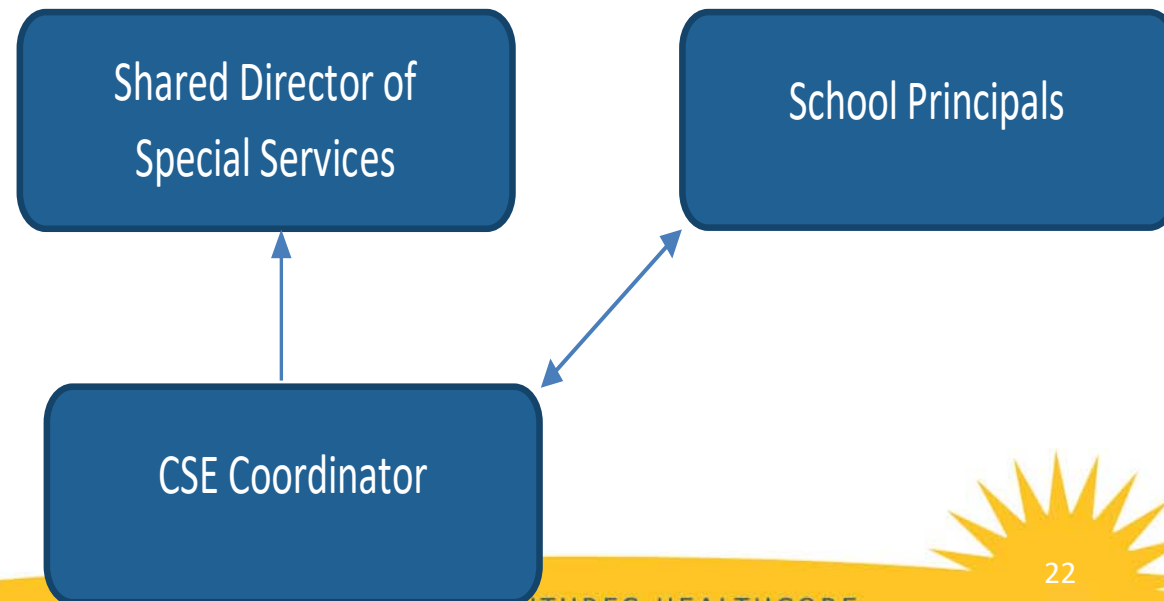
- **Maximize District PD resources, via a unified PD curriculum for both general and special education teachers to work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students (i.e., with or without disabilities).**
- **Re-visit the establishment of descriptions in “user-friendly” formats that further define the in-District continuum of programs so that students have access to consistent frameworks and curriculum as they progress from grade to grade and from school to school. This would span the forthcoming discussion of ensuring ICT models are included to programs supporting students with intensive needs.**



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

- Consider ways to re-structure the Department of Special Programs to more effectively support all stakeholders (as per below). Irrespective of the model, building capacity for the school principals is considered essential.



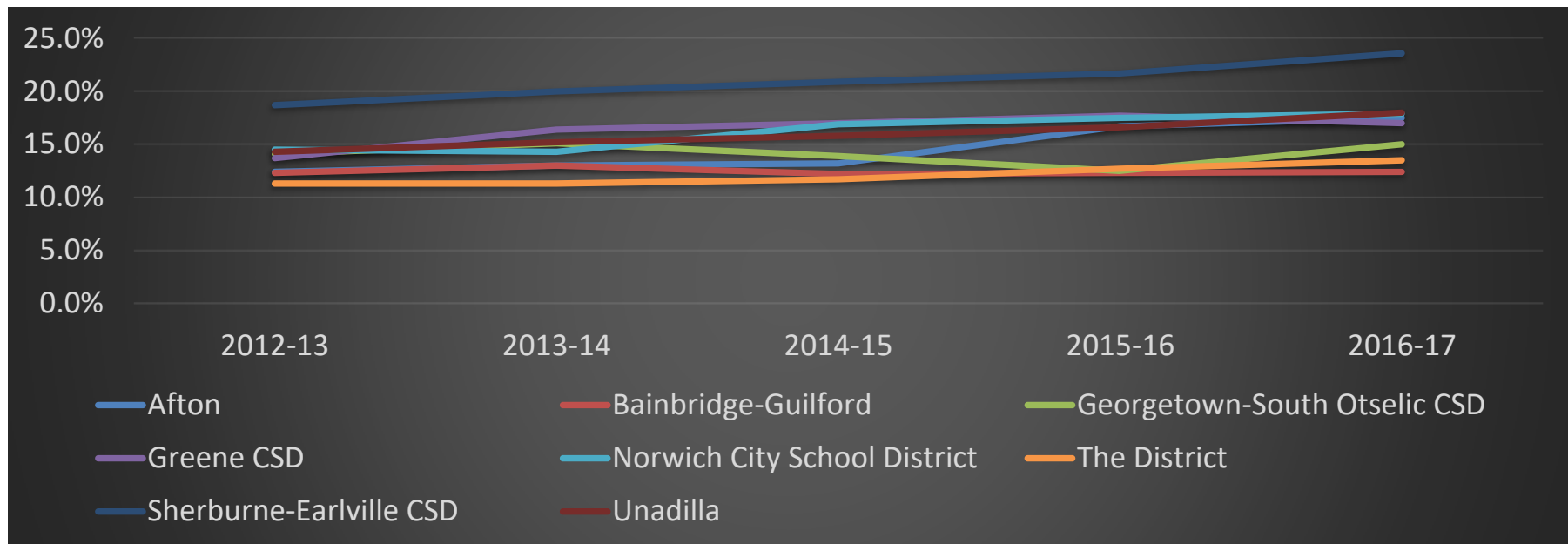


Continuum of Supports



Findings

- Interviewees reported the District's Rtl initiative to be a "work in progress." However, the District had made significant changes to improve the Rtl process that have been viewed positively (e.g., assigning a lead administrator).
- The District's special education population of 13.5% is lower than State, County, and Similar District Group averages.



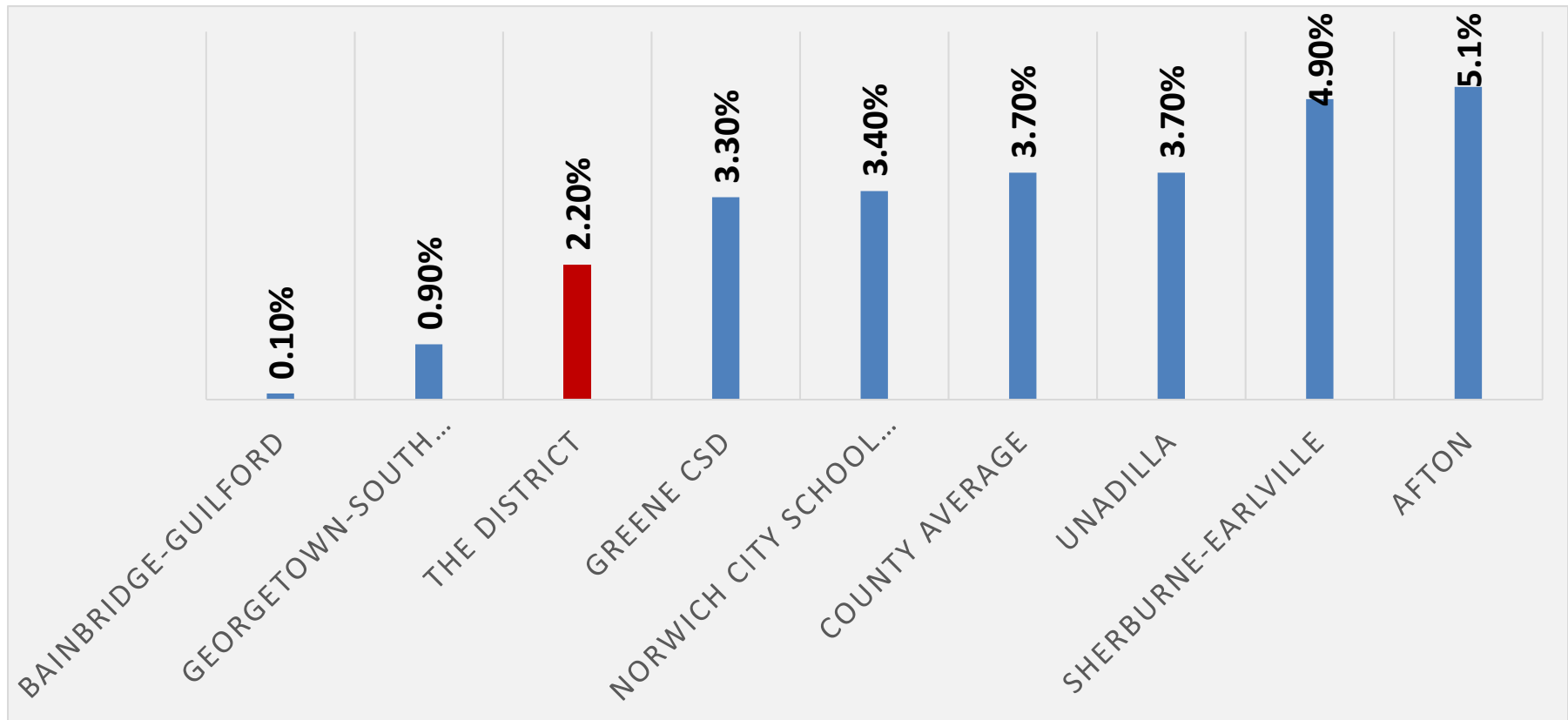


Continuum of Supports



Findings (cont.)

- The District's SWD population has increased 2.2% in the past five years, which is 1.5% lower than the County Average.



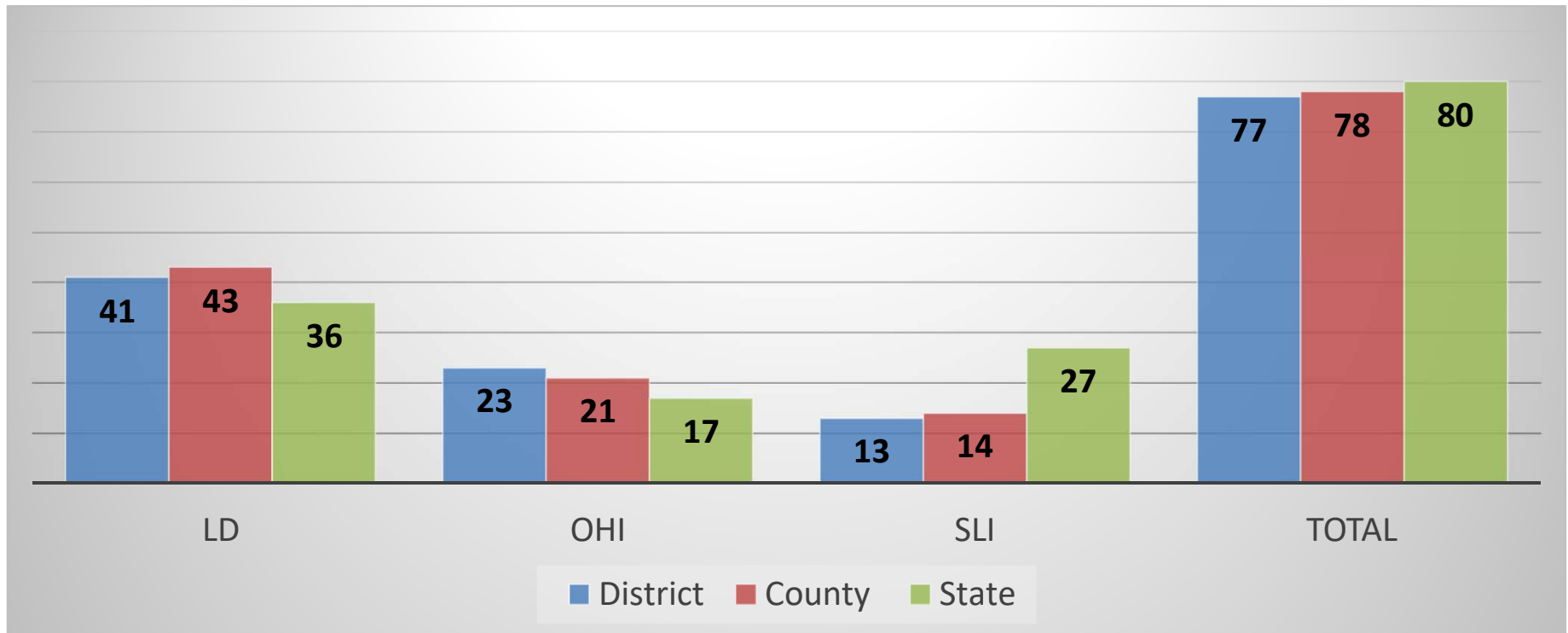


Continuum of Supports



Findings (cont.)

- There was not a disproportionate number of SWDs classified with the three primary areas of high-incidence, low needs disabilities (i.e., learning disabilities, other health impairment, or speech-language impairment) in comparison to State or County averages.



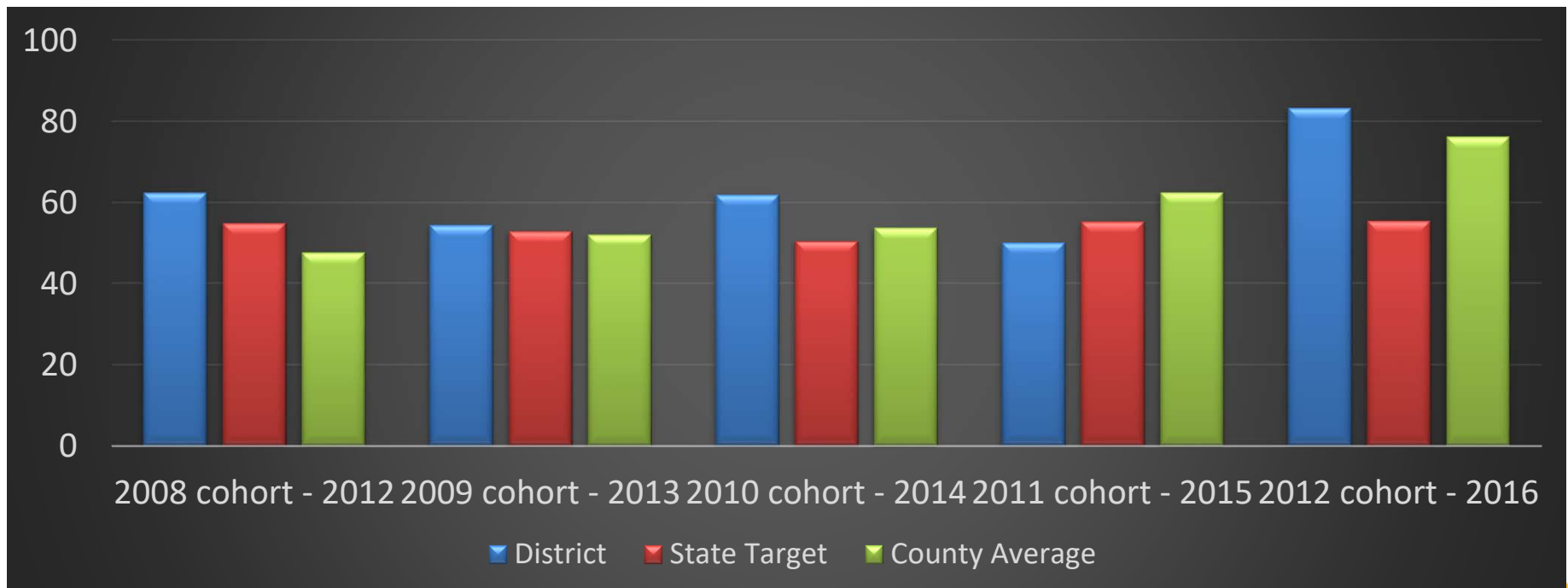


Continuum of Supports



Findings (cont.)

- In keeping with federal mandates, the District does provide a continuum of services that included: integrated co-taught classes, direct consultant teacher models, resource rooms (and self-contained options 15:1 and 12:1:1).
- The SWD cohort graduation rate compares favorably.





Continuum of Supports



Findings (cont.)

- Across the past 5 reporting years, the District's SWD cohorts achieved targets in ELA and Math in 2 out of 10 possible opportunities (the H.S. cohort was too small to report during this time frame). This 20% rate is among the lower half of the Districts in the County. Alternatively, this also suggests that SWDs have been accurately identified as SWDs who have been over-identified may artificially inflate student performance.

	3-8 ELA Target Met	3-8 Math Target Met
ASY 2012-2013	Yes	Yes
ASY 2013-2014	No	No
ASY 2014-2015	No	No
ASY 2015-2016	No	No
ASY 2016-2017	No	No



Continuum of Supports

Findings (cont.)

- As of the academic year 2017-2018, there were 20 K-12 SWDs receiving special education services outside of the District. This constitutes approximately 18% of the entire K-12 SWD population, which compares to an expected average of 15%.
- One of the major factors in considering the ODP population is the constellation of the high-needs disabilities. The District's high needs students, which is 21% of the total SWD population, is just over the State average of 19% and at the County average of 21%.



Continuum of Supports

Areas of Opportunity

Once more systematic and operational, employ RtI methodologies as a “step down” from an IEP.

Student A

ACADEMIC SYSTEMS

TIER 3 Intensive, Individual Interventions

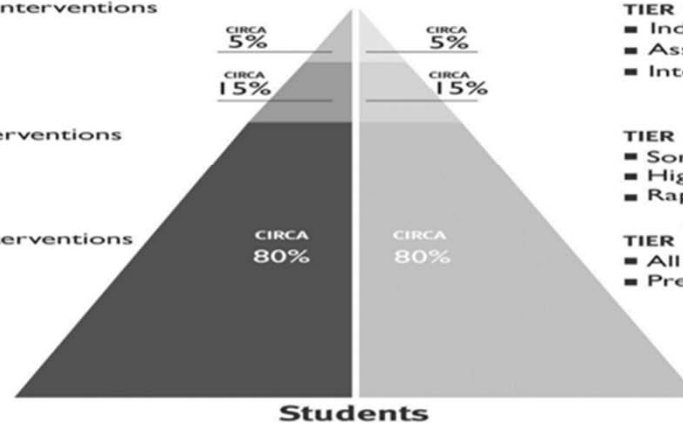
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- High intensity
- Of longer duration

TIER 2 Targeted Group Interventions

- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

TIER 1 Core Instructional Interventions

- All students
- Preventive, proactive



Student B

BEHAVIORAL SYSTEMS

TIER 3 Intensive, Individual Interventions

- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- Intense, durable procedures

TIER 2 Targeted Group Interventions

- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

TIER 1 Core Instructional Interventions

- All settings, all students
- Preventive, proactive



Continuum of Supports

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

- Continue to work with staff on writing IEPs that are internally consistent, measurable, and attached to student needs.
- Re-visit the co-teaching model (ICT) to ensure it remains a viable element in the District's continuum of services. Referring to the leadership capacity, it will be essential for special education leadership and the principals to collaborate on: (1) requisite professional development for the co-teaching dyads; (2) effective scheduling of students; and (3) on-going problem solving.
- Consider a credit-bearing peer mentorship program at the secondary level that will ensure that the peer interactions are systematic, meaningful, and interactive.
- Continue to reflect on students who might be candidates for in-District programs with respect to personnel, fiscal, and physical plant capacities.



Financial Review Findings

MEDICAID

- District management relies on: (1) BOCES to identify those students who are Medicaid eligible and for entering their service data into their Medicaid billing software; and (2) Public Consulting Group (PCG) to determine and submit the annual Medicaid Cost Settlement Report on behalf of the District. However, it is notable that neither the BOCES nor PCG has any responsibility to assist the District in maximizing their Medicaid revenue.
- Based upon the data provided, the District Medicaid revenue has continued to increase over the past several years; from \$12,500 in 2014-15 to \$ 43,335+ YTD. There is an opportunity to capture additional Medicaid revenues.
- In 2017-18, the District received \$190,254 in IDEA Grants. Based upon our review of the grant documents provided, it appears that all of the funds expended were for the benefit of students with disabilities. No expenditures appear to have been made for otherwise Medicaid eligible staff or services.



Financial Review Findings (cont.)



TRANSPORTATION

- For school transportation purposes, the District is considered to be relatively lightly populated. As such, transportation efficiency may be determined by other than student loading, such as school bell schedules (tier time), school distances, drive time traffic and District policies relative to student ride time and/or earliest pick up or latest acceptable drop off times.
- Our review did not indicate any current or recent school transportation performance issues.
- Although transportation budgets have increased yearly, transportation expenditures have been less than budgeted over the past several years.



Financial Review Findings (cont.)

TRANSPORTATION

- District transportation has averaged approximately 4.11% of the total District budget over the past two (2) years. For similar school districts, a ratio of 5% or less is considered cost effective by industry standards. Therefore, the District transportation operation is considered to be relative cost effective.
- Drivers are currently paid by the route, as opposed to an hourly rate. Current driver wages average \$ 15.72 per hour with a high of \$ 25.34 and a low of \$ 10.40. The current wages are relatively low by current industry standards.
- Transportation management does not currently utilize computer routing software. All route data is stored on excel spreadsheets or in some cases, hand written sheets.
- Although all of the District buses have a GPS, terrain and geographic conditions prohibit the signal strength and saturation from the current cell towers to cover all of the District area.



Financial Review Findings (cont.)

TRANSPORTATION

- **With respect to efficiencies:**
- ✓ **The large bus (regular transportation) routes are operating at approximately 66% of their scheduled load to capacity; typically 74-78% is considered highly efficient. However, given the geographic size of the District and the current route lengths and times, increasing efficiencies would result in significantly longer routes and student time on vehicles.**
- ✓ **The Small Bus routes are operating at approximately 98% of their scheduled load to capacity. Typically 74-78% is considered highly efficient; therefore, we conclude that the Small Bus operation is highly efficient.**
- ✓ **The Specialized Transportation routes are operating at approximately 83% of their scheduled load to capacity. Typically an average student load of 4.7+ and a Load/Capacity Ratio of 74-78% is considered highly efficient. Therefore, we conclude that the Specialized Transportation operation is highly efficient.**



Financial Review

Areas of Opportunity

MEDICAID

- The BOCES should bill monthly for all Medicaid eligible services for all Medicaid eligible students.
- District management may wish to review their monthly Medicaid reimbursement submissions with the BOCES in order to determine both the timing as well as the amounts submitted for Medicaid reimbursement, as compared to the total number of Medicaid eligible students and the total amount of Medicaid eligible services provided.
- District management may wish to review their annual Cost Settlement submissions with PCG in order to determine both the timing as well as the amounts submitted for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Management may wish to cross reference both students eligible for free and reduced lunch with those Medicaid eligible. Identification of additional eligible students for each program will benefit both programs, as well as the District.



Financial Review

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

MEDICAID

- District management may wish to review the services being provided to Medicaid eligible foster care students residing within the District and for whom they are financial responsible (students in foster care).
- Every parent of a special needs child should be presumptive Medicaid eligible and should be asked to sign the Parental Authorization Form for Medicaid reimbursement. This will eliminate the need to contact the parent in the future if the child is found, at a later date, to be Medicaid eligible and is receiving Medicaid eligible services. In the event that they become Medicaid eligible, the requisite authorization for billing would already be on file.



Financial Review

Areas of Opportunity

TRANSPORTATION

- **The acquisition and utilization of computer routing software would provide all of the requisite information for transportation management to both effectively manage the overall routing and scheduling and to maximize routing efficiencies.**
- **As part of their new transportation facility, District management may wish to consider obtaining the engineering necessary to install a cell tower and area repeater stations to provide adequate signal strength and saturation across its service region. This would also improve overall communications for municipal safety departments as well.**
- **Given this relatively high dependence on the BOCES for services, the District may wish to review the programs and services being offered and investigate the possibility of offering joint (collaborative) programs and services with its neighboring school districts.**



Financial Review

Areas of Opportunity

Medicaid

- Special education staff should continue to follow up with those parents who have either refused or have not yet signed the Medicaid Parental Authorization Form.
- As part of the special education in-take process, all parents should be asked to sign the Parental Authorization Form for Medicaid reimbursement. In the event that they become Medicaid eligible, the requisite authorization for billing would already be on file. The Medicaid eligibility determination should be integrated into the special education in take process.
- Management may wish to cross reference both students eligible for free and reduced lunch with those Medicaid eligible. Identification of additional eligible students for each program will benefit both programs, as well as the District.



In Summary

As excerpted from the report:

It is hoped that the recommendations provided within this document support the District's leadership in providing excellent services to all students. There are clearly many celebrations that include an essentially effective (e.g., high graduation rates) special education program that is being delivered in an efficient manner (i.e., relative low expenditures). The authors postulate that the following areas may be of most immediate value in that they have both programmatic and fiscal implications and are offered for consideration as part of the District's strategic planning.



In Summary (cont.)



Organizational Considerations

- 1. Revisit, develop, and implement a comprehensive District plan for the enhancement of “ownership” of SWDs as a District expectation on the part of all staff; including such components as professional development, recruitment, assessment and retention practices.**
- 2. Implement strategies, including departmental meetings, among others, for the enhancement of communications and collaboration between District level and building level staff regarding special education issues.**
- 3. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the support and provision of integrated (e.g. special educators and general educators) professional development, including opportunities of relevance to paraprofessional staff.**
- 4. Develop and utilize clearly articulated written program descriptions, as well as, written eligibility and exit guidelines. These should include special instructional programs, related services and paraprofessional supports.**



In Summary (cont.)



Continuum of Supports

- 1. Continue the District initiative to implement a comprehensive (K-12) Response to Intervention (RtI) program. This should include continued professional development, refinement and finalization of the district RtI Plan, establishment of tiered interventions in literacy, numeracy and behavior, monitoring and documentation of individual student achievement data.**
- 2. Review and enhance the District's continuum of special education services; exploring such inclusive options as Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT), so as to enhance least restrictive placement of SWDs and increase horizontal and vertical articulation of programs.**
- 3. Review staffing and case/work load assignments so as to maximize equity, efficiency and effectiveness; addressing student achievement, as well as, meeting IEP minutes of service.**
- 4. Explore the potential of a "keep-in, bring-back" initiative as an alternative to placement of SWDs in out-of-district special education programs.**



QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION