



***Summary of the
Educational Services Analysis:
A Presentation to the
Board of Education***

November 13, 2018



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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. The District's Pre-School Program**
- 6. Organizational Structure and District Coordination of Programs and Services**



Organization of the Presentation

The report, and this corresponding presentation, are organized with respect to two main areas:

Organizational Considerations

Continuum of Supports

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



Methodology



Interviews

- **Confidential interviews (N=216) with central office staff, school-based leaders, certified special and general education teachers, para-professionals, related service providers, parents, and board members.**
- **Questions were catered to the interviewees' particular areas of expertise and relevance to the areas under review.**



Intersecting Interview Questions

Culture of student “ownership”

Resources (including Professional Development) and Materials

Differentiated Interview Questions

**Do you have time to meet with your co-teaching dyad partner?
(special education teacher).**

Have you felt part of the PPT process? (parent).



Methodology (cont.)

Non-evaluative site visits to all schools and programs and out of district placement site (CES)

Comparative Analyses (e.g., District Reference Groups)

Document Reviews (e.g., 100 IEPs, Workload analyses)



Programmatic Orientation

A Fluid Continuum of Supports

INTERVENTIONS

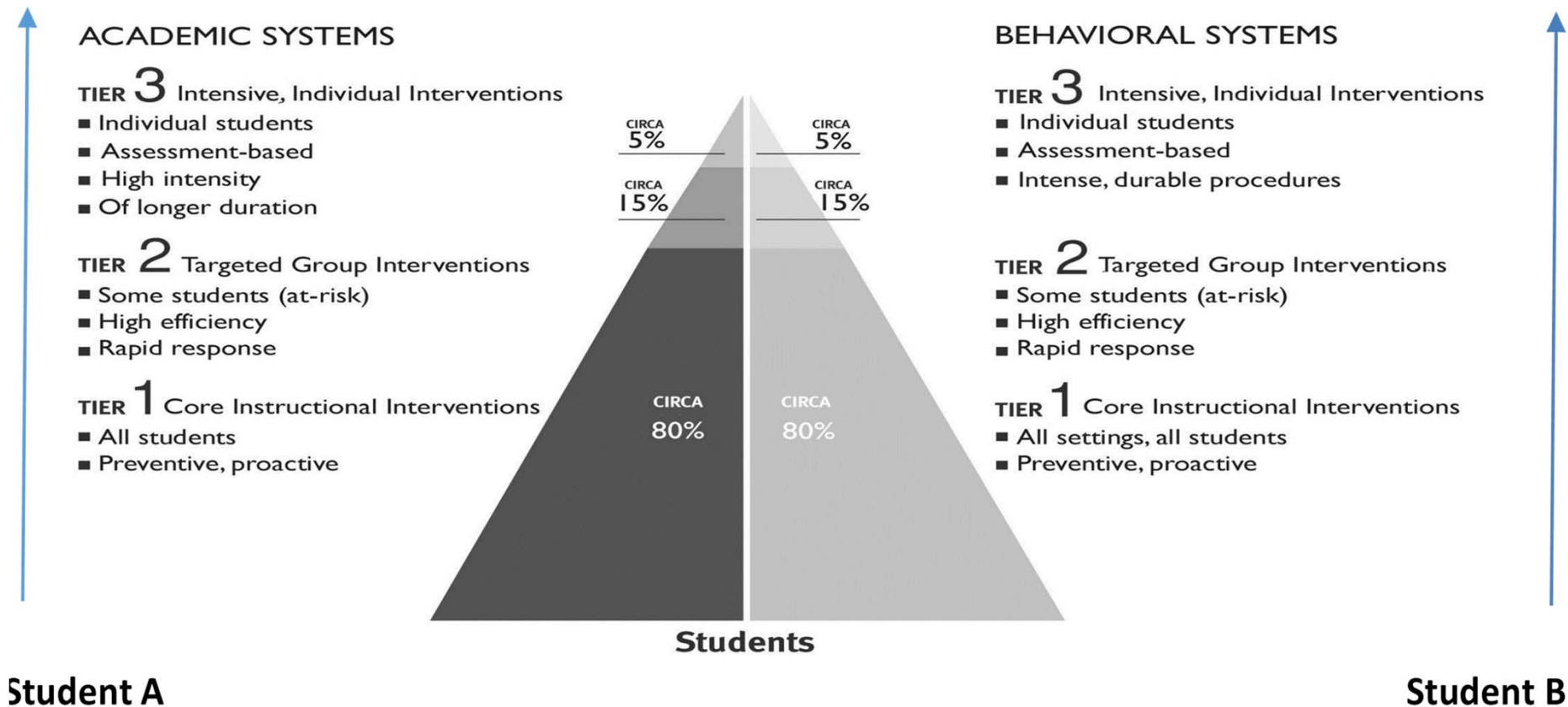
Tier 1 Supports \longleftrightarrow Special Education

EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

General Education \longleftrightarrow Out of District



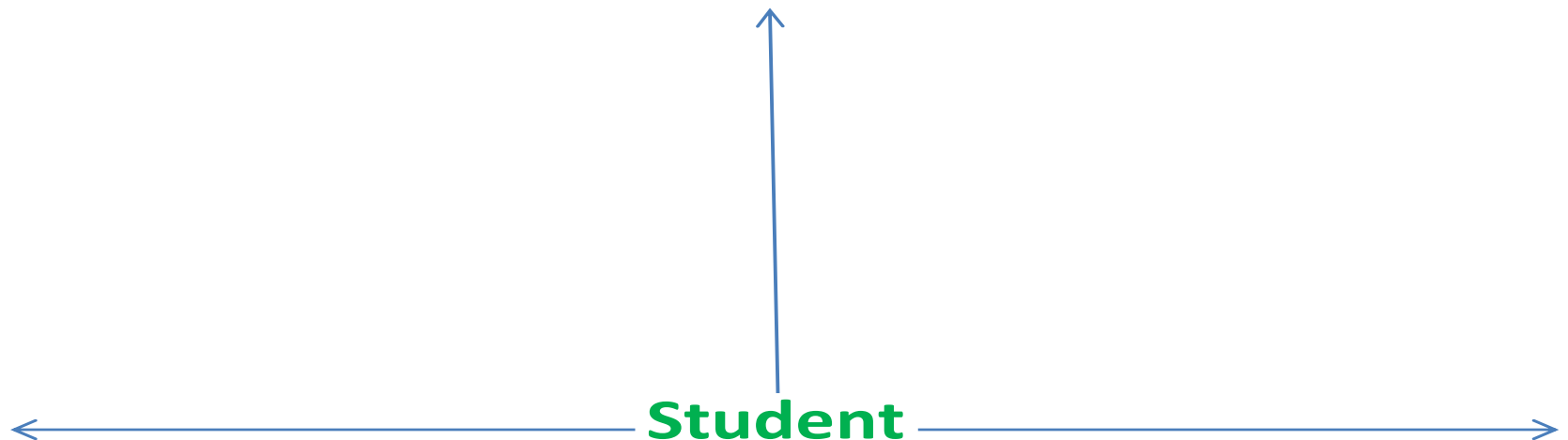
Programmatic Orientation (cont.)





Programmatic Orientation (cont.)

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



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

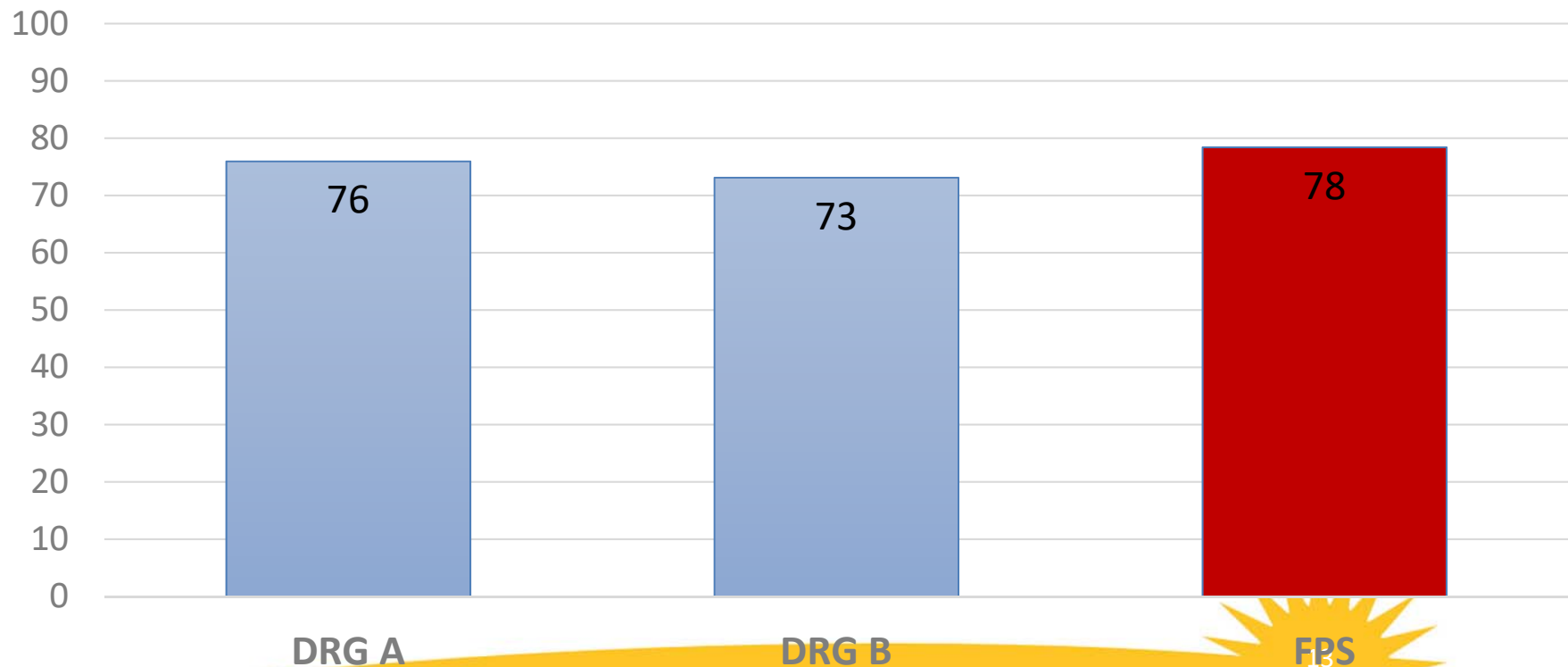


Organizational Considerations

Findings

- In general, there is healthy sense of “student” ownership across the District, which is corroborated by data pertaining to Least Restrictive Environment

The Percentage of SWDs Spending At Least 80% of Their Day in General Education





Findings (cont.)

- Interviewees expressed appreciation for the Professional Development (PD) offerings as well as the resources and materials available to them to support student learning.
- There was consistent recognition and appreciation of the support from the Executive Director of Special Education and Special Programs (the Director), and the efforts he is making to build bridges to all stakeholders.
- Too many individuals responsible for the coordination and facilitation of the PPT processes and meetings at the secondary level, which is affecting the consistency of implementation of student programming.
- In response to the need for additional training with respect to facilitating PPT teams to ensure consistency across the District, leadership has recently instituted Elementary Program Facilitators.



Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

Availability Ratio Index (ARI): 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 (1,247) K-12 SWDs (as per the most recent data).

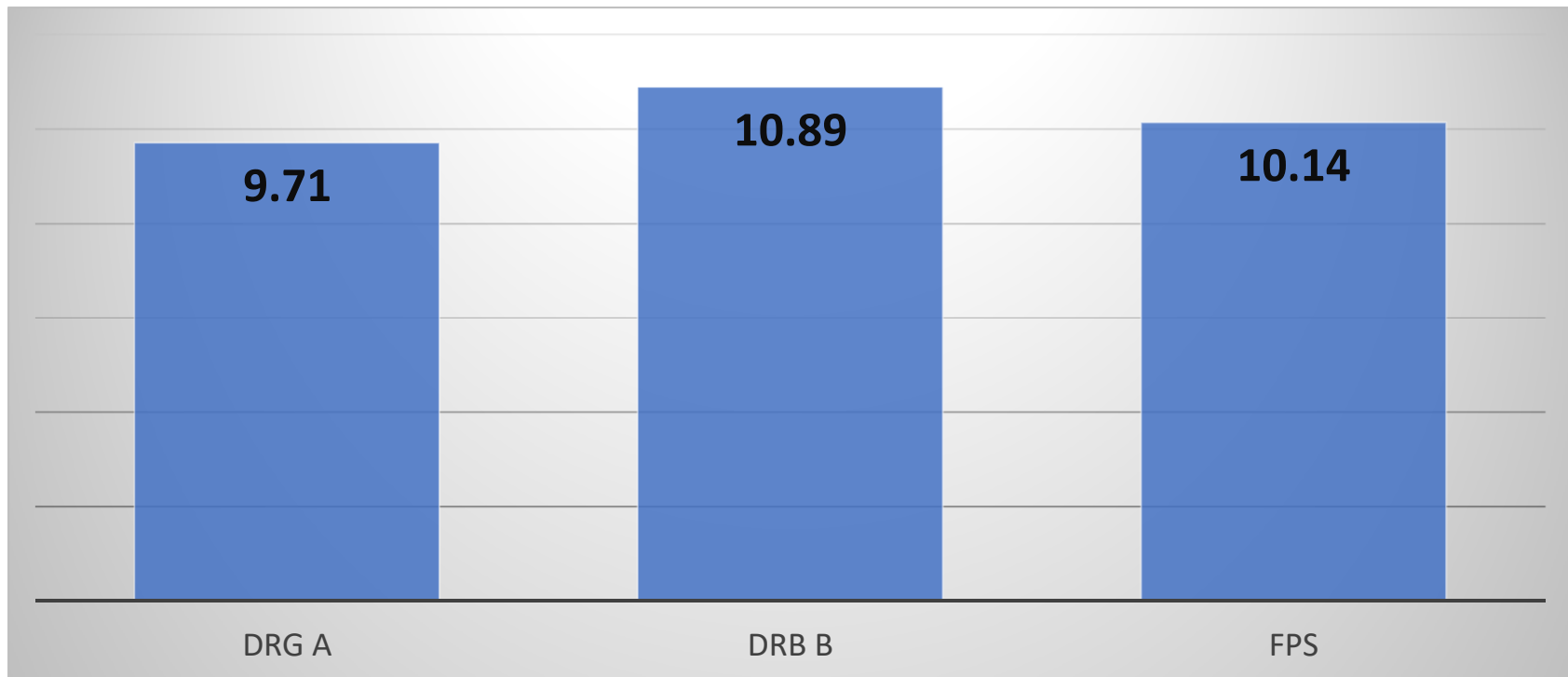
- From a quantitative perspective, the six (6) full time equivalent (FTE) central office administrative staff (the Executive Director of Special Education and Special Programs and five coordinators) is staffed to expected limits.



Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

- **Certified special education teachers:** Currently, the District's ARI of 10.14 compares with the DRGA ARI of 9.71:1 and DRG ARI of 10.89:1. The ARI for FPS was 10.92 at the end of the 17-18 ASY.

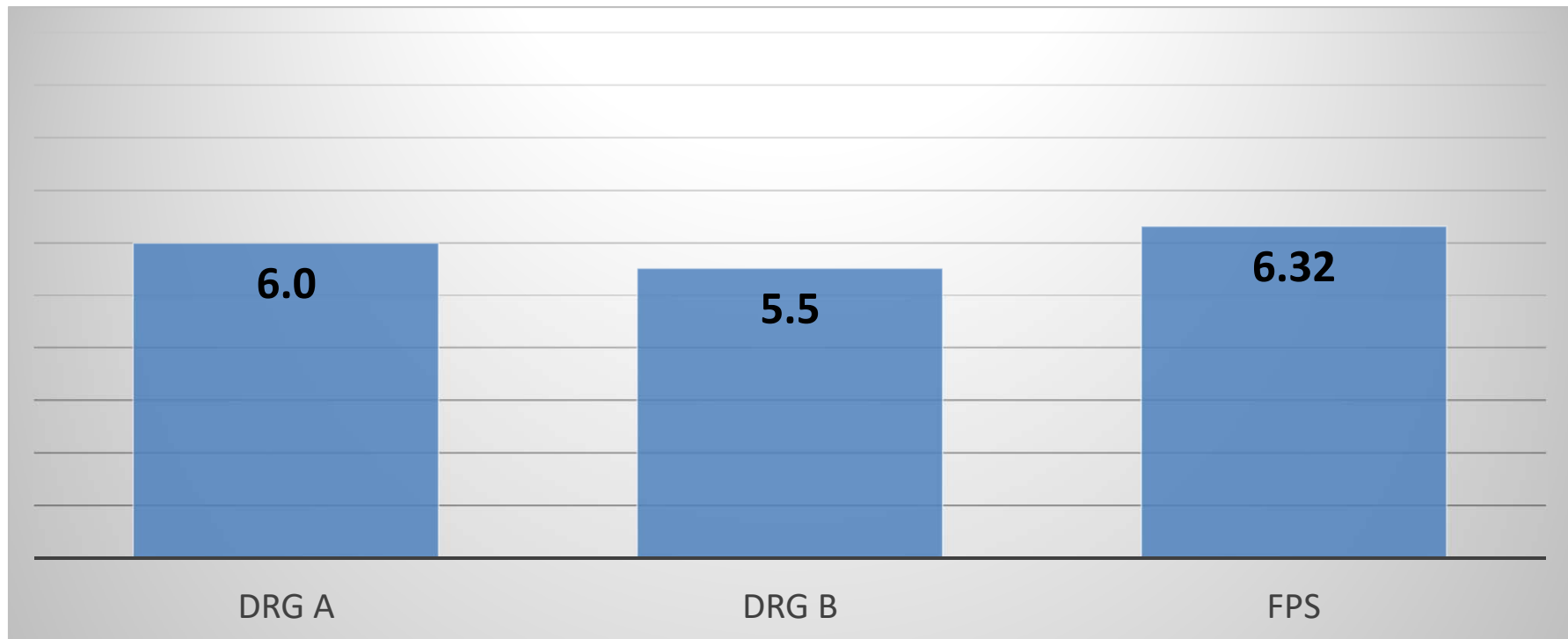




Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

- **Para-professionals (special through special education):** Currently, the District's ARI of 6.32:1 and compares with the DRGA ARI of 6.0:1 and DRGB ARI of 5.5:1; that is, it less generously staffed by comparison.

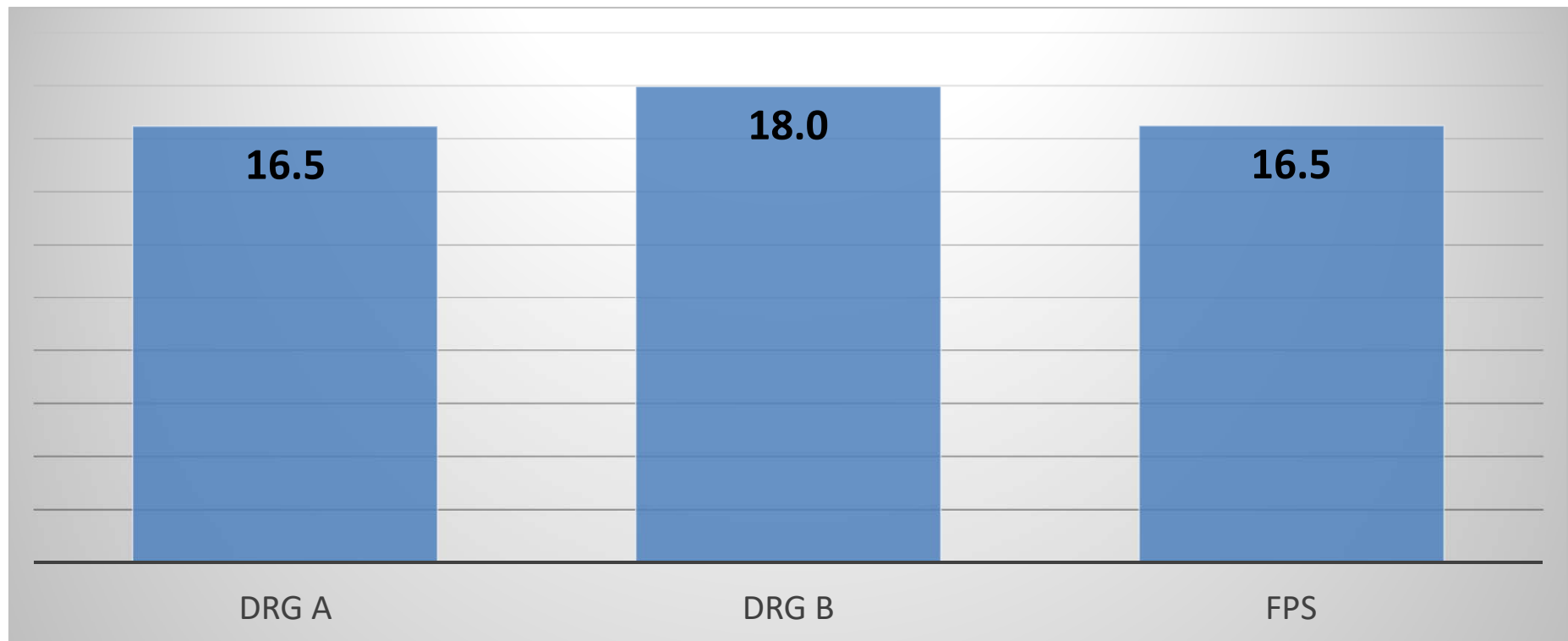




Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

- Behavioral health providers (comprising school psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors): The ARI of 16.5 compares to the DRGA ARI of 16.5 and DRG ARI of 18.0.





Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

- **Physical Therapy Staff:** The 3.9 FTE in PT equates to an expected ARI of 320:1; efficiency data that looks at direct service time, individual treatments, and other student-direct time is within expectations.

Service group	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Totals	%s	Caseload	Weighted	Units
individual	0	2.5	0	3	0	5.5	0.85	9.00	27.00	13.00
consult	0	0.25	0	0.25	0	0.5	0.08			SRBI
direct	0	2.75	0	3.75	0	6.5	0.57			0
testing	0	1.5	0	0	0	1.5	0.13			
meetings	0	0.25	0	0	0	0.25	0.02			
other	0	1	0	1.25	0	2.25	0.20			
travel	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	1	0.09			
Total Hours	0	6	0	5.5	0	11.5	1.00			



Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

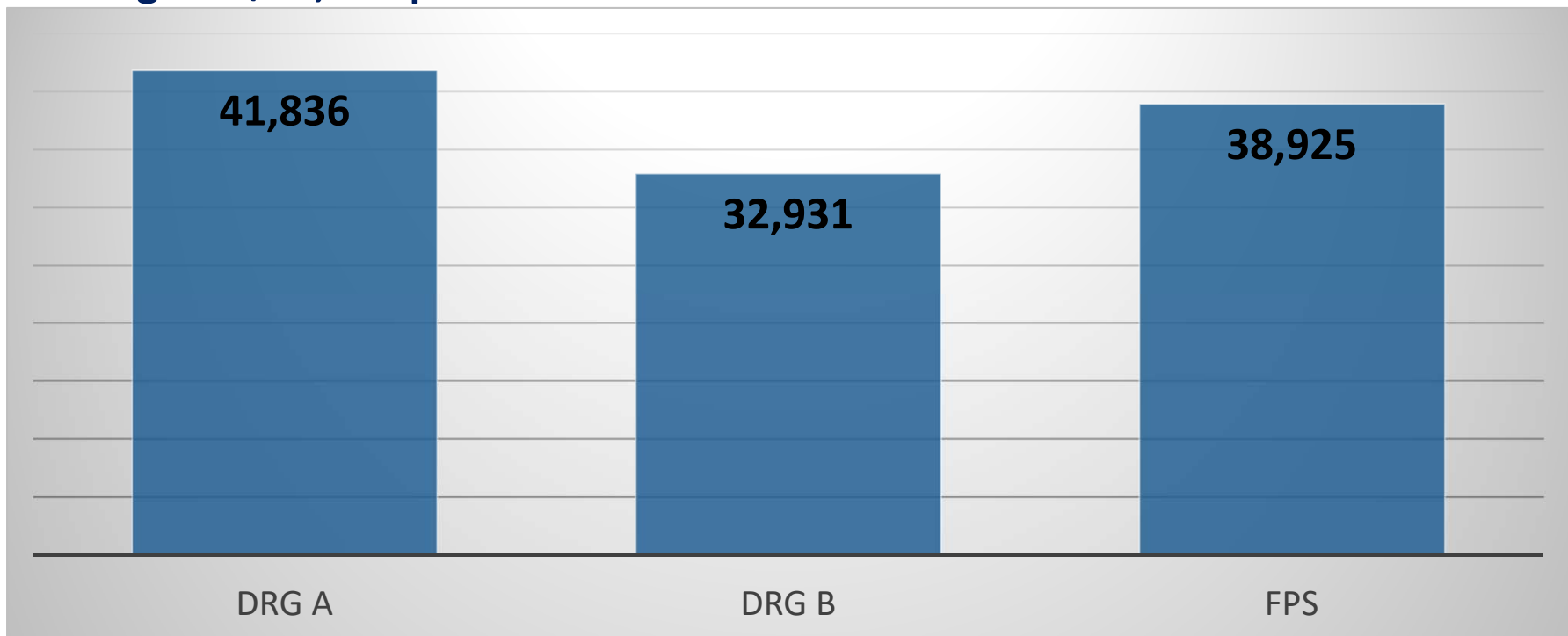
- **Speech-Language Pathology Staff:** The 30.5 (budgeted) FTE equates to an ARI of 40.1:1, which compares to an expected ARI of 70:1. The S-LPs are working efficiently with respect to direct service time (62%, comparing to a standard of 55-60%); however, the percentage of individual treatments of 54% is higher than expected. The average service minutes per week of 64 warrants attention as does the percentage of pull-out services in reference to best practices in service delivery.
- **Occupational Staff:** The 10.75 FTE OT an ARI of 116:1, compares to an expected ARI of 170:1. The percentage of direct services is high (78% suggesting good efficiency); however, the percentage of individual services is also very high (78%), which is consistent with a medical model.



Organizational Considerations

Findings (cont.)

- The District's expenditures devoted to special education of 25% (of the total operating budget) compares to a DRGB average of 21% and a DRGA average of 23%. Alternatively, expenditures per SWD of just under (\$39,000) is lower by comparison to the DRGA (of \$42,000 per SWD) but is higher than the DRGB average of \$32,600 per SWD.





Organizational Considerations

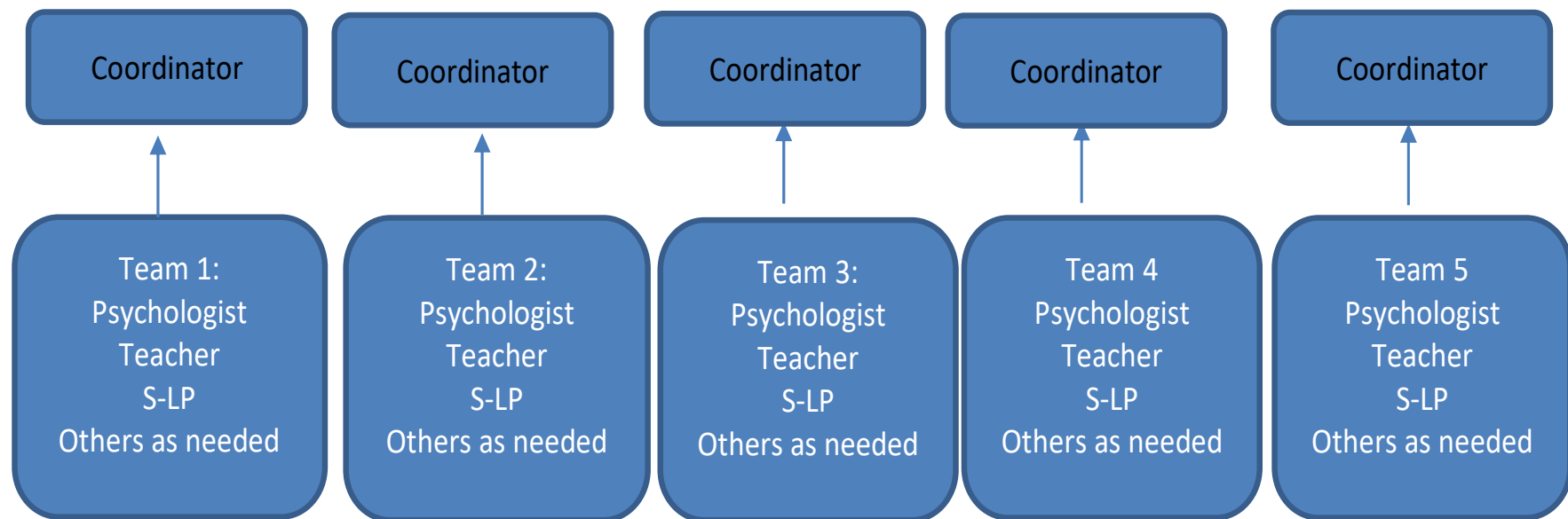
Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

- **Consider creating central diagnostic teams to equalize access to services.**



Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Model 1 (Level-Based)



Advantages: Because this model is level-based, it allows for specializations where the evaluators can be assigned to populations that they feel most comfortable with.

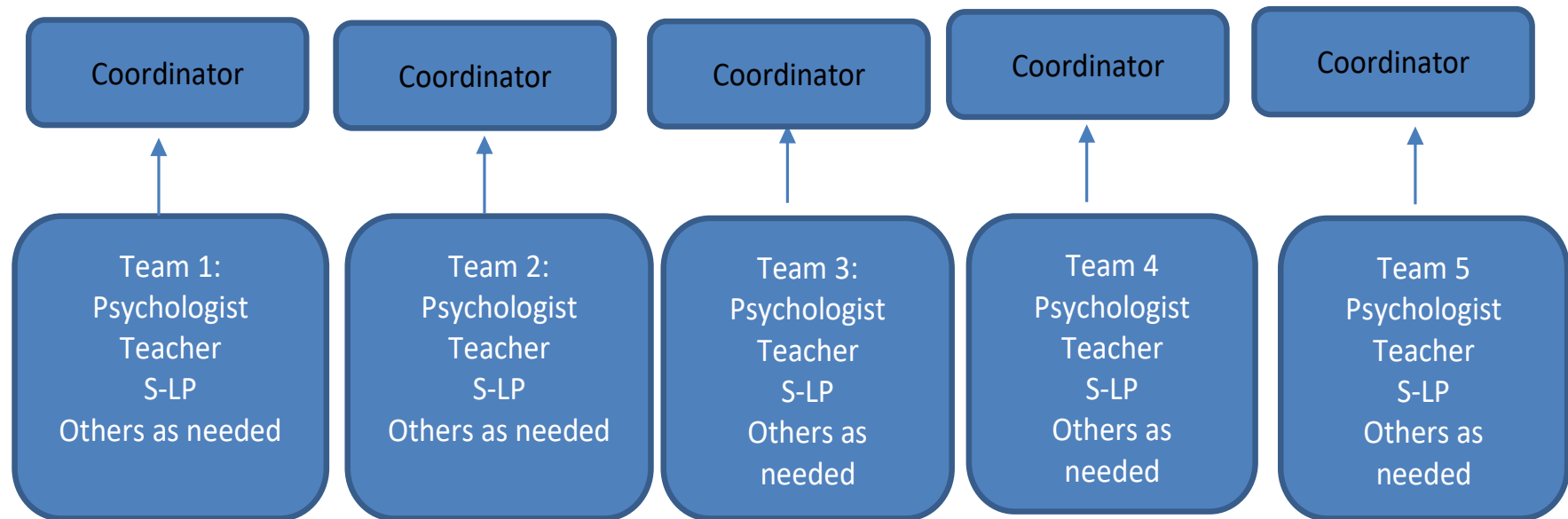
Disadvantages: Because this model requires different diagnostic teams to conduct testing as the students age, it is not as seamless as other models.



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Model 2 (Campus-Based)



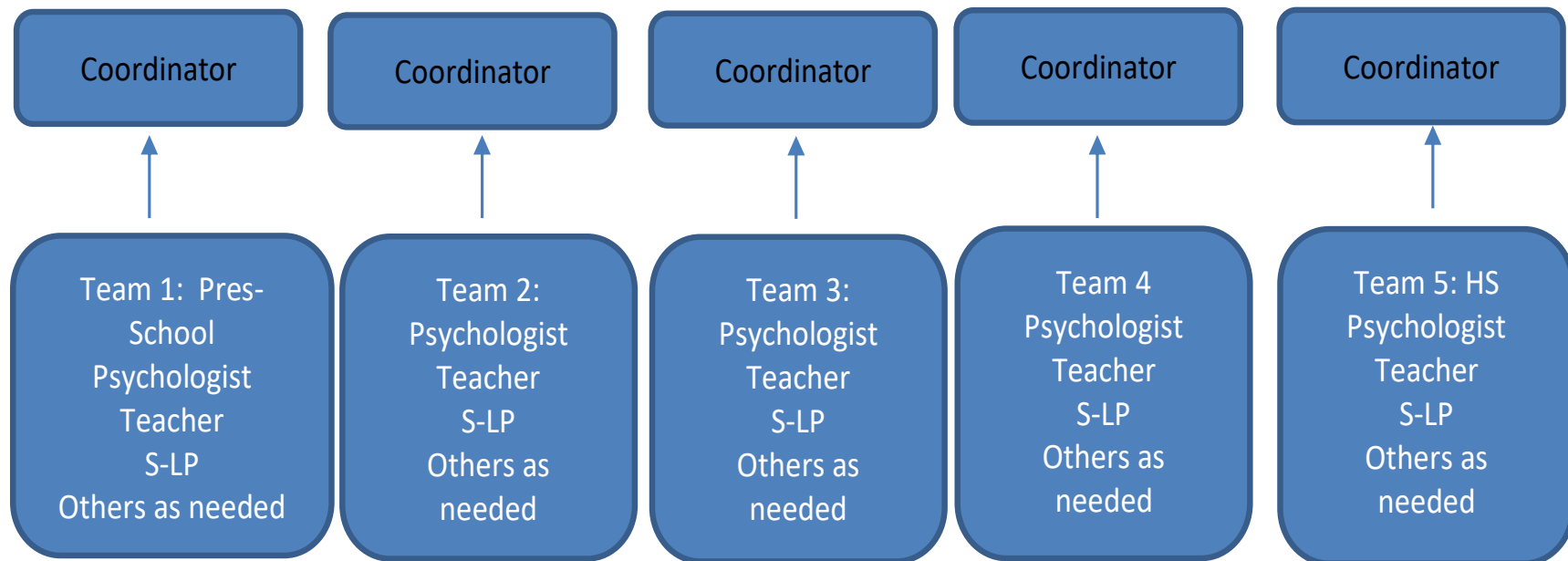
Advantages: Because this model is campus-based, the teams “follow” the child, which allows excellent vertical articulation and connectivity to parents and guardians.

Disadvantages: This model requires teams to address the needs of students from Pre-K through graduation, and thus requires expertise in testing and educational considerations across multiple grades.



Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Model 3 (Hybrid)



Advantages: Teams 2-4 will be able “follow” the child from grades K-8, which allows excellent vertical articulation and connectivity to parents and guardians.

Disadvantages: This model may provide a challenge for the pre-school (Team 1) and the High School teams with respect to vertical articulation given the three teams they will need to collaborate with.



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

- **Various re-organization of the coordinator model may also support the central diagnostic model. We recommend that model that is chosen align, to the greatest extent possible, with the central diagnostic model.**



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Level Model 1

6 Coordinators

- ✓ **2 Pre-School/Elementary School Coordinators**
- ✓ **Middle School Coordinator**
- ✓ **High School Coordinator**
- ✓ **Walter Fitzgerald Campus**
- ✓ **Out of District Coordinator**



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Level Model 2

- ✓ 2 Pre-School/Elementary School Coordinators
- ✓ Middle School Coordinator
- ✓ High School Coordinator
- ✓ Walter Fitzgerald Campus
- ✓ Related Service Coordinator
- ✓ Out of District Coordinator

Advantages: As with the Central Diagnostic Team model, this allows specialization where the coordinators can oversee populations that they have expertise.

Disadvantages: This model may impact vertical articulation given that the coordinators can only follow students for a finite amount of time.



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

Campus Models

- ✓ **5 Campus/Feeder Areas**
- ✓ **Out of District Coordinator**
- ✓ **Related Services Coordinator**

- ✓ **5 Campus/Feeder Areas including Out of District**
- ✓ **Related Services Coordinator**

Advantages: This model allows for excellent vertical articulation because the coordinators “follow” the child from pre-school to graduation.

Disadvantages: This model requires expertise spanning Pre-K through High School for the coordinators.



Organizational Considerations

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

- Further codify entrance and exit guidelines for speech-language services as part of an overall plan to determine the best way to deliver these services in view of current and prospective needs.
- As part of long-term strategic planning, bringing occupational therapy services “in-house” could be done much more economically and efficiently, especially with a blended certified-assistant model.
- Consider establishing school-based Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA).

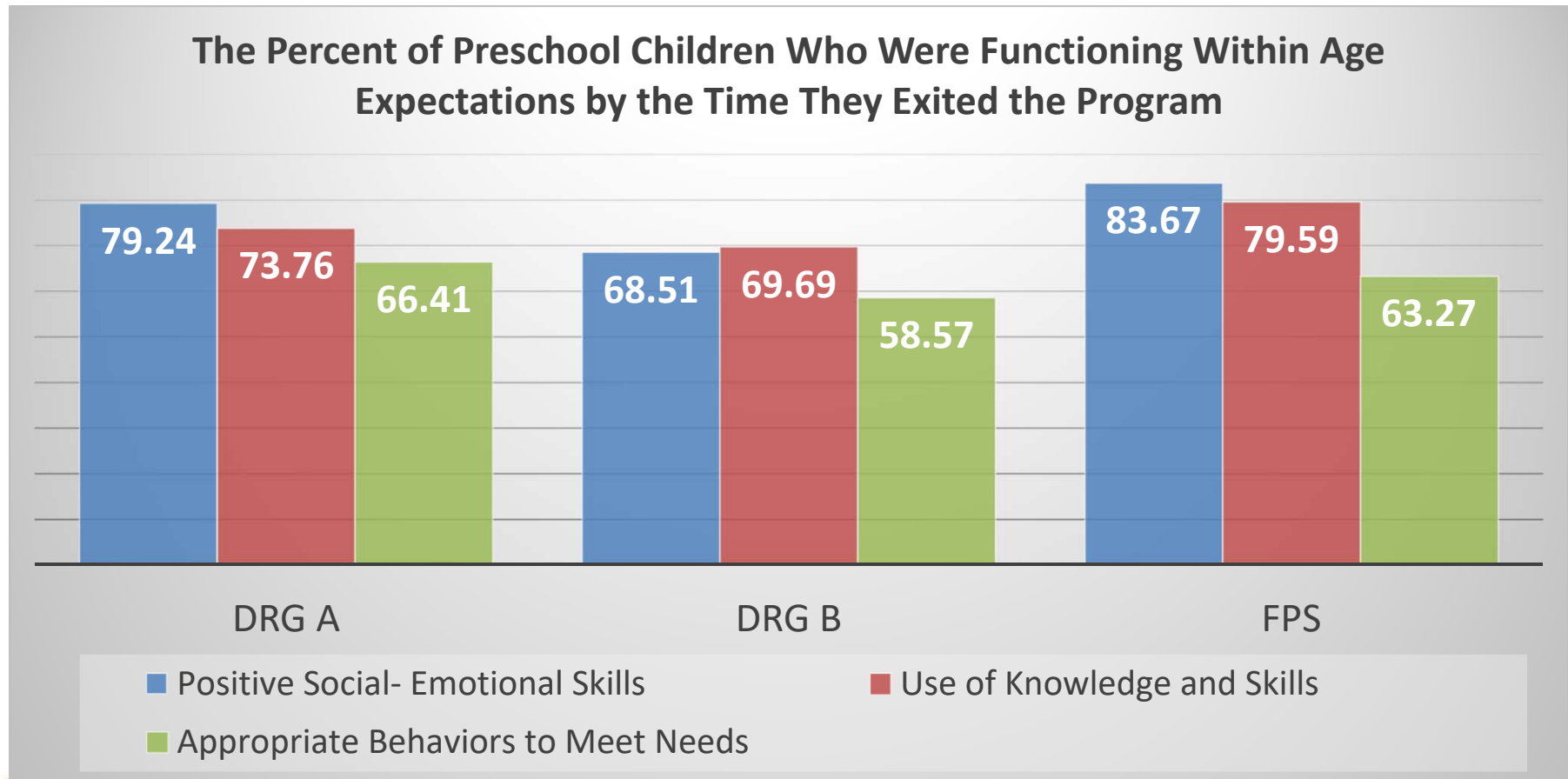


Continuum of Supports



Findings

- Across many comparative parameters, students in pre-school are demonstrating excellent outcomes.





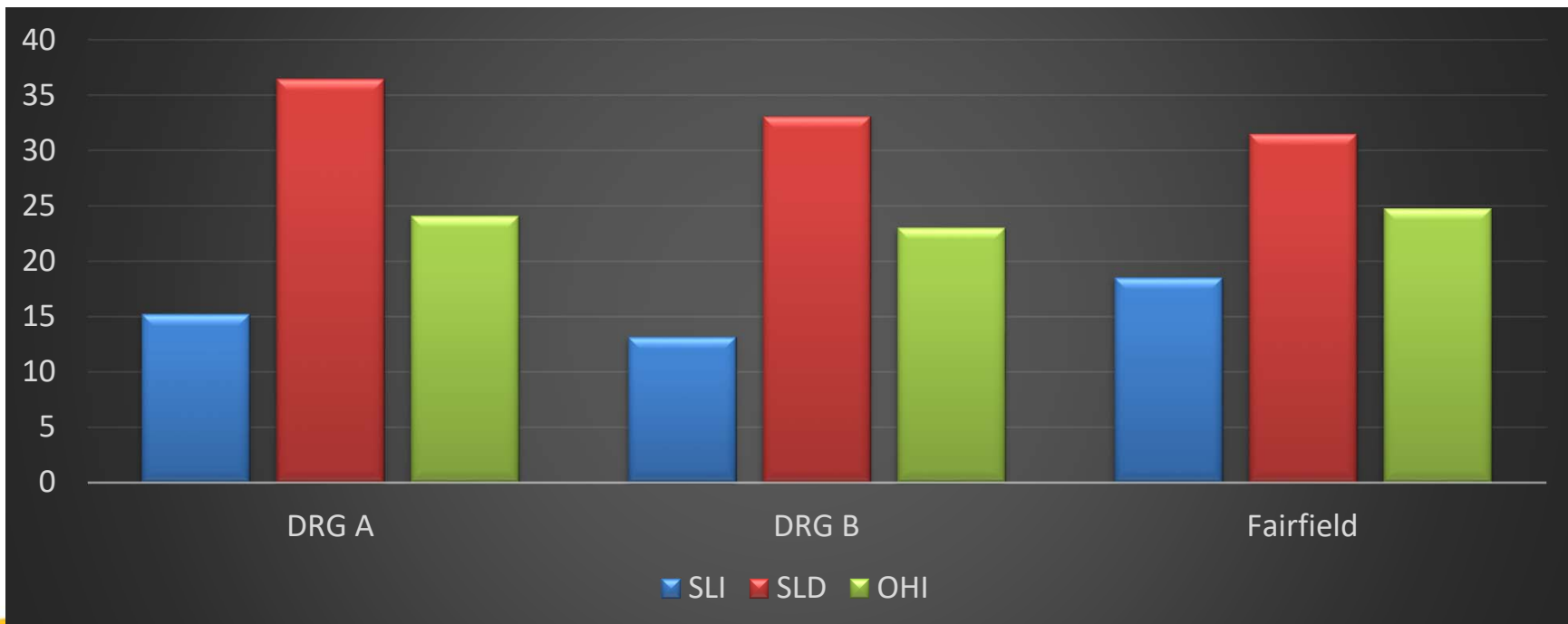
Continuum of Supports



Findings (cont.)

- Despite perceptions that SRBI is a “work in progress” the District has invested a great deal of resources to improving the process. The data suggest that early intervening services are working well.

Incidence of low needs-high needs disabilities:

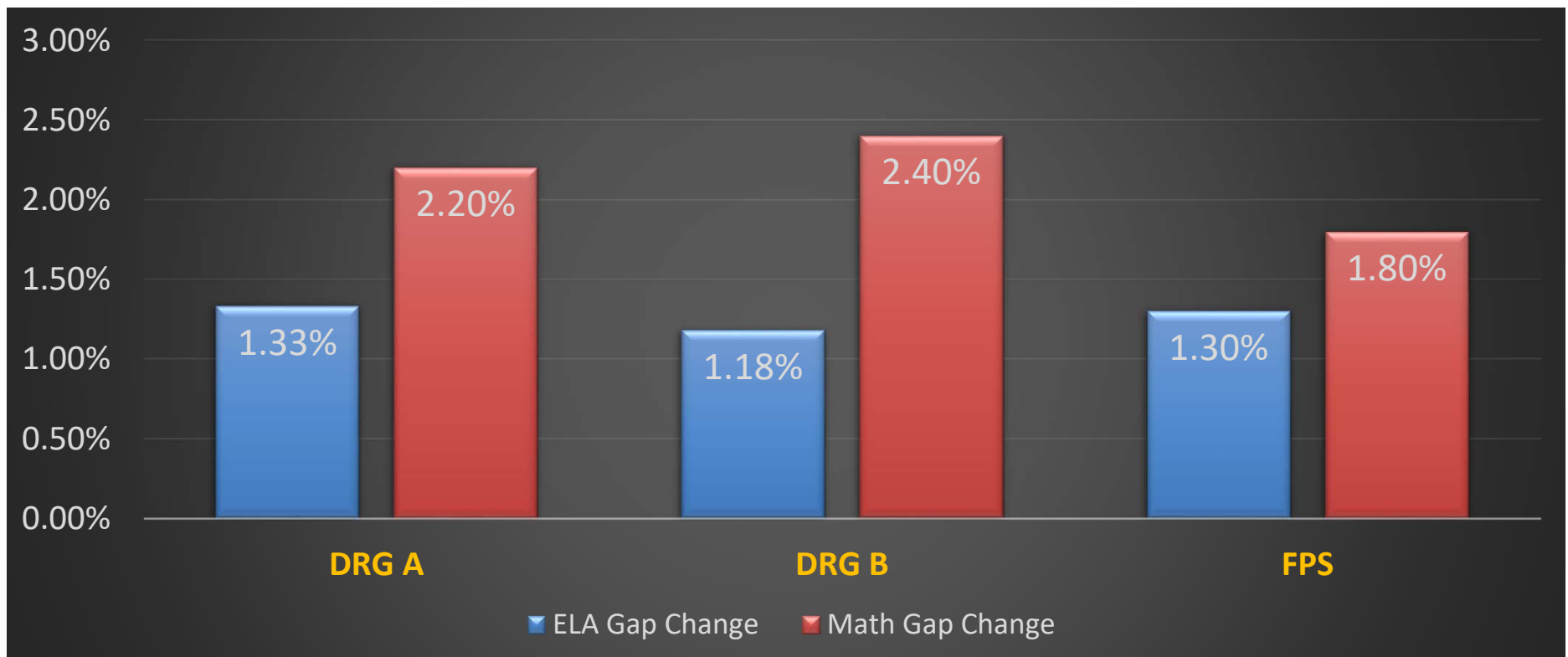




Continuum of Supports

Findings (cont.)

A 3-year longitudinal review (spanning ASY 14-15 through 16-17) suggests the achievement gap in ELA is comparable to DRGs A and B and the gap in math is less than that of the other DRGs.





Continuum of Supports

Findings (cont.)

- A review of IEPs does suggest a need for more explicit linkage of goals to and Grade Level Expectations as well as linkage of needs as identified in Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance to the content areas addressed.
- As mentioned earlier, the District is doing extremely well with respect to keeping students in general education for at least 80% of their school day. However, this statistic may be somewhat misleading to the degree that pure co-teaching models are not occurring as much as staff may prefer.
- The District's graduation rate of 80.4% for the SWD cohort is higher by comparison to the current DRGB average of 77%. It is notable that the District is currently reviewing its procedures for issuing high school diplomas to SWDs.



Continuum of Supports

Findings (cont.)

- Respondents expressed that staff made significant efforts to serve SWDs in programs within the District, and that every effort was put forth in attempts to avoid placing students in Out of District Placements. Currently, approximately 5% of the District's SWDs are in out of District placements as part of the PPT process, which is within expectation.
- There are 30 students who are in out of district (lateral) placements because of settlement agreements; this represents 30% of the entire out of district population, which is high in our experience. With respect to budgetary considerations, the District is allocating approximately \$9.37 Million (before excess cost reimbursement) towards OODs, \$2.4 Million of which is for settlement agreements. However, the overall cost of \$95,000 per student is lower by comparison to DRGB and DRGA districts.



Continuum of Supports

Areas of Opportunity (cont.)

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

Student A

ACADEMIC SYSTEMS

TIER 3 Intensive, Individual Interventions

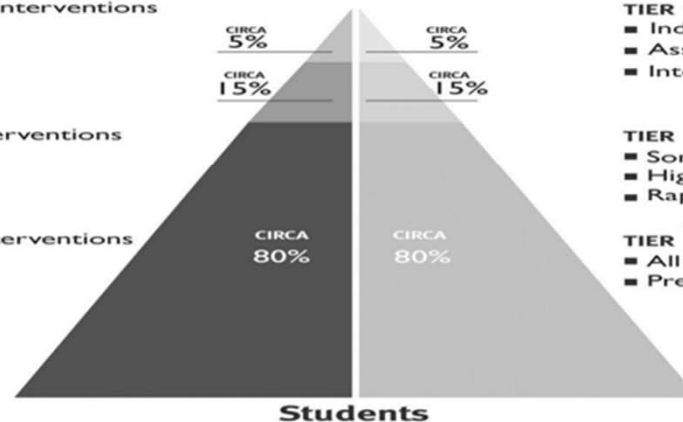
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- High intensity
- Of longer duration

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.**
- **Continue to focus on ensuring co-teaching remains a viable option within the Continuum of Services.**
- **To supplement the successes currently occurring at the high school with respect to the integration of general and special education students in extra-curricular activities, the District may wish to establish a credit-bearing peer mentorship program at the secondary level.**
- **Continue to reflect on bringing students back/keeping them in the District with respect to personnel, physical plant, and fiscal capacities.**



In Summary

As excerpted from the report: The authors postulate that the following areas may be of most immediate value in that they have both programmatic and fiscal implications as part of the District’s strategic planning, and to further support what is many ways an already strong program:

Organizational Considerations

- 1. Consider re-organizing the administrative structure within the Special Education Department.**
- 2. Consider creating central diagnostic teams to equalize access to services and vertical articulation (i.e., these teams will “follow” the child).**
- 3. Develop a long-range plan to utilize the specialists in speech-language pathology and occupational therapy in a more efficient and effective manner in view of current and prospective needs.**



In Summary (cont.)

Continuum of Supports

- 1. Continue to make co-teaching a featured aspect of the continuum of supports.**
- 2. Re-visit the out of district placements with respect to the number of sites and “bring in” expertise to ensure SWDs may be appropriately programmed for within the Fairfield Public Schools.**





QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION