

Special Education 2025- 2026 Update

The 50th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Beginning in 1971, a U.S. District Court case in the District of Columbia, *Mills v. Board of Education*, ruled it unlawful to deny exceptional children, including those with mental and learning disabilities publicly funded educational opportunities. Court cases like this led to the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act which was signed by President Gerald Ford on November 29th. The federal legislation required states that accept federal money to provide equal access to children with disabilities. Additional protections were added in 1986 to support parents and educators in creating an education plan for children with disabilities. In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and improved access for all children with developmental delay. Through the years, the act has been enhanced to improve services and standards throughout the educational system.

The district is grateful to and for our dedicated administrators, chairpersons, faculty, support staff, and clerical staff in the Special Education Department.

Dobbs Ferry Special Education: Our Commitment

Dobbs Ferry is committed to providing personalized, high-quality support that honors the strengths and needs of every student with a disability.*

Through a continuum of services, strong instructional practices including a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), and strong family partnerships, we create inclusive environments where students:

- Access meaningful instruction;
- Build independence and confidence;
- Achieve academic and social growth; and
- In the least restrictive environment.

Our mission is to ensure all learners are prepared for success in school and life beyond graduation.

**Federal law (IDEA) requires that students are provided a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).*

NYS Special Education & Shared Student Outcomes

New York State's special education framework (*Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities*) is rooted in equity, inclusion, and high expectations for all learners.

The shared goal for all students is to develop:

- Critical thinking and communication;
- Independence and self-advocacy;
- Collaboration and problem-solving; and
- Strong academic and functional skills

Outcome: Students who are confident, capable, and prepared for college, career, and life.

These skills and outcome align with the International Baccalaureate *Learner Profile* and the NYS *Profile of a Graduate*.

At its core, special education removes barriers and creates individualized, inclusive pathways that support student success.

NYS Continuum of Services for Students with Disabilities

New York State recognizes a continuum of special education services requiring districts to provide compliant, individualized supports in the least restrictive environment.

Least Restrictive

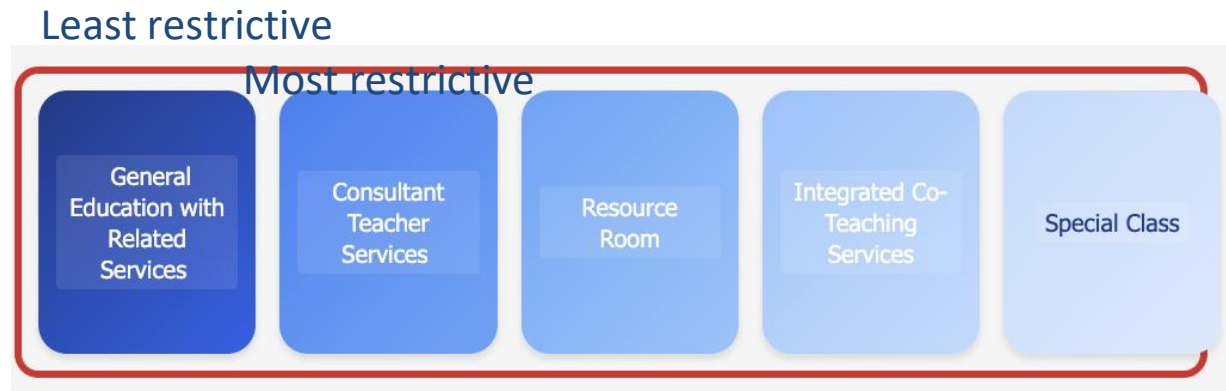
Most Restrictive



Dobbs Ferry Continuum of Services

Dobbs Ferry provides a comprehensive continuum of special education services designed to meet the individualized needs of students while ensuring access to the least restrictive environment.

This continuum reflects our commitment to equity, inclusion, and compliance with New York State requirements for FAPE.



Special Education Population Snapshot

Students with Disabilities comprise 14%* of Dobbs Ferry's K-12 population, representing 203 of 1449 students.**

**Springhurst Elementary
School**
88 students

**Dobbs Ferry Middle
School**
43 students

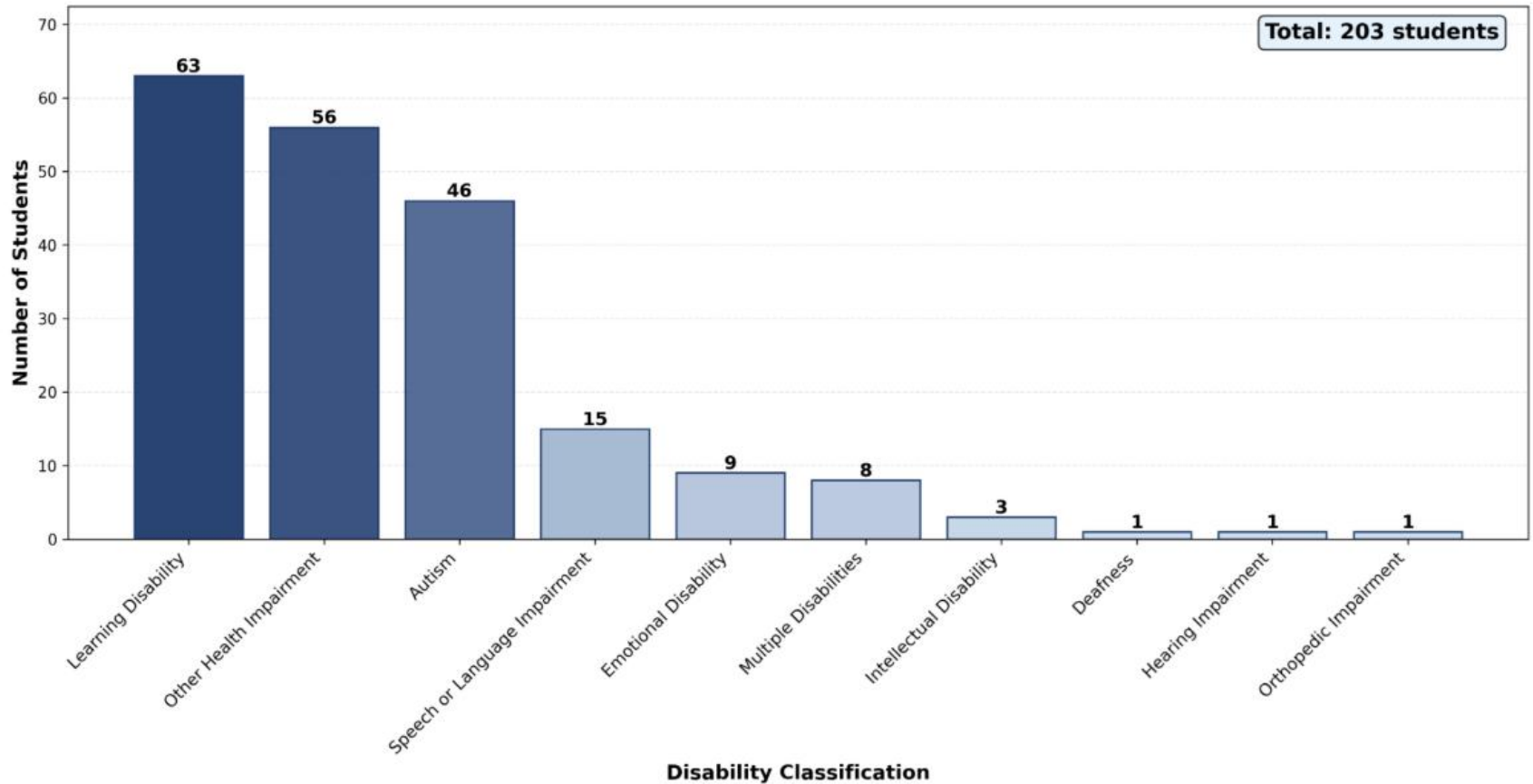
**Dobbs Ferry High
School**
51 students

Out of District
21 students

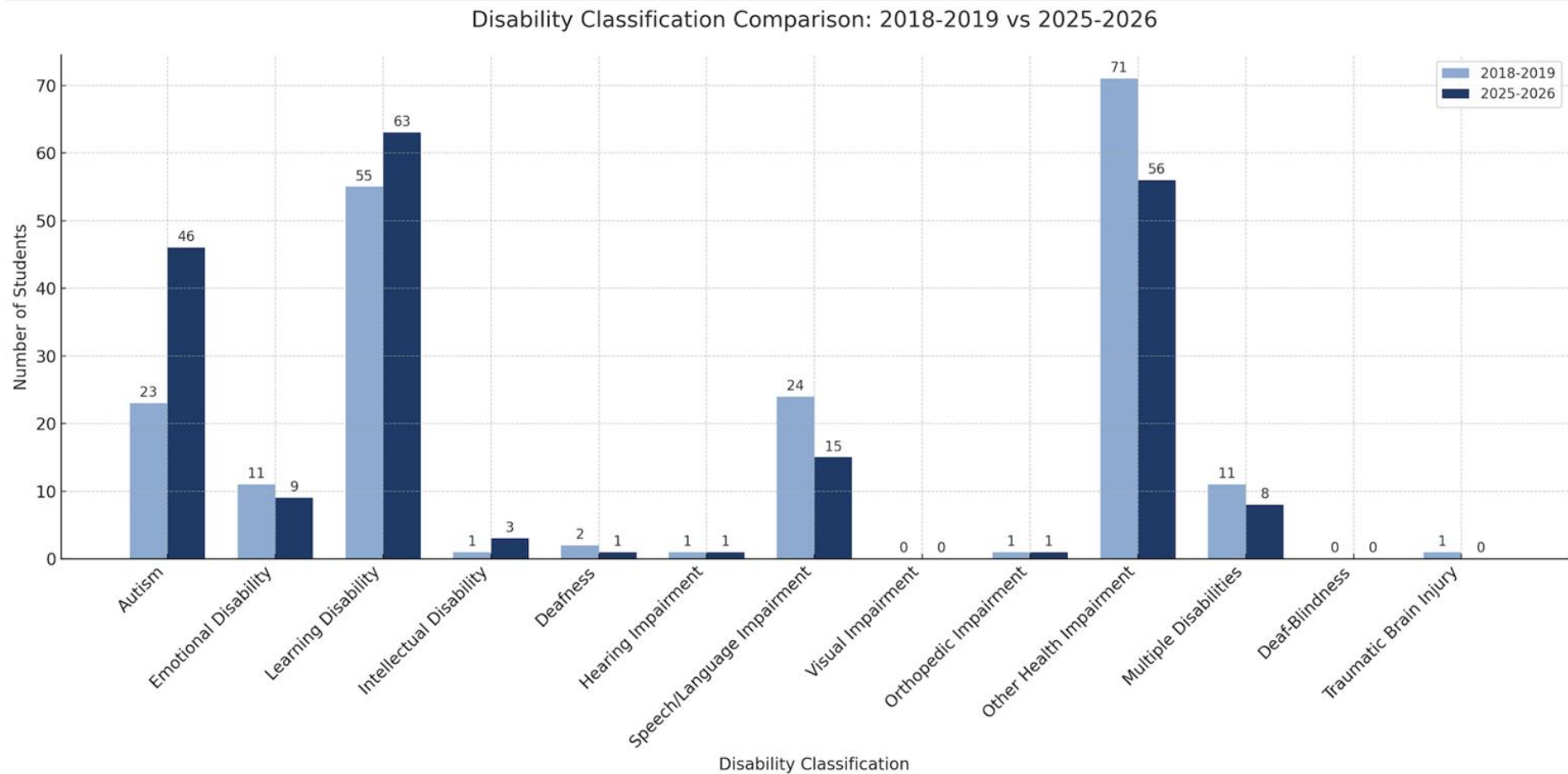
*NYS Avg for 2024-25 is
20%

**As of 10/5/25

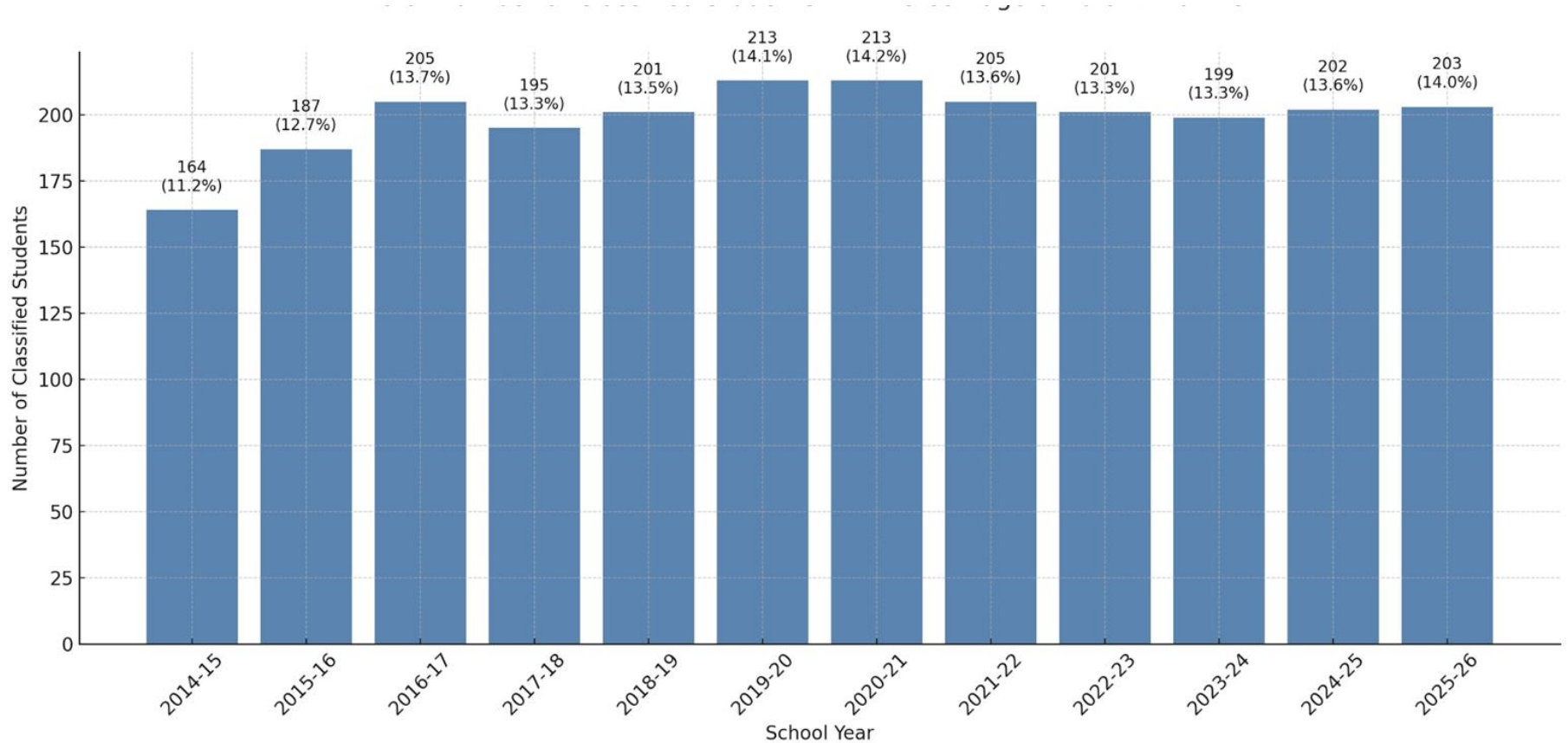
Disability Classifications 2025-2026



Disability Classifications Comparison 2018-19* vs 2025-26



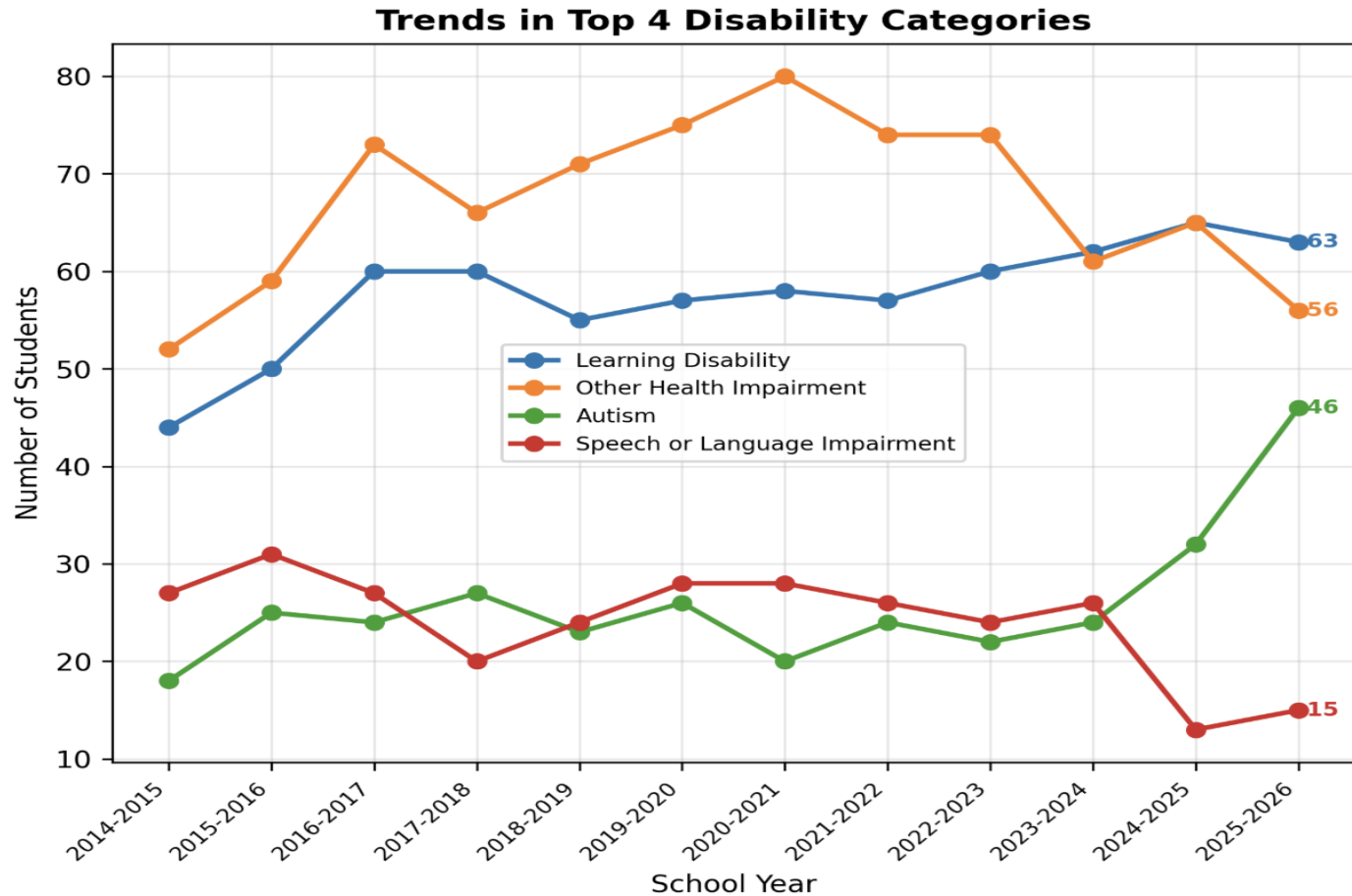
Total Number of Classified Students with Percentage of Total Enrollment



Understanding Our Population Growth

- Current enrollment of Students with Disabilities: 203
- +23% growth since 2014-2015 (164 → 203 students), but overall classification rate has remained stable.
 - 2014-15 Total Enrollment = 1,460
 - 2025-26 Total Enrollment = 1,449

Critical Shifts in Student Profiles



Classification Trends

Autism: +156% (18 → 46 students)

- Reflects national trend in identification (1 in 31 children according to the CDC in 2022)
- Students require intensive specialized support

Other Health Impairment: ADHD: +25% (52 → 65 students)

- 11.4 % of children have a diagnosis (according to the CDC in 2022)
- These students can succeed in the general education WITH the right supports

Learning Disability: +48% (44 → 65 students)

- 70-80% of these students respond to early intervention in K-2
- Many students can succeed in the general education WITH targeted support.

Understanding the Full Picture

Our students have increasingly diverse and complex learning needs.

The types of support our students need have evolved significantly:

- More students require intensive behavioral and social-emotional support;
- More students need specialized programmings;
- More students need executive function and organizational support; and
- More students benefit from early intervention and tiered supports.

This evolution shapes how we design services and allocate resources

Strengthening our Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

- MTSS ensures students receive the right support at the right time.
- Interventions intensify based on student need and response to instruction.
- Special education is considered only when sustained needs persist despite high-quality intervention.

Our Commitment:

All students receive evidence-based MTSS support before special education is considered.

Classification is reserved for students requiring specialized instruction beyond general education.

From Intervention to Inclusion

- MTSS creates a structured process to identify the right level of support for every learner.
- When students respond to targeted interventions, we can support them successfully in *general education* settings.
- This directly increases access to the **Least Restrictive Environment** while maintaining appropriate supports.

MTSS → Targeted Support → LRE Placement

Inclusive Service Models

128 of 203 students (63%) have profiles that respond well to inclusive service models.

Our district implements two inclusive models designed to:

- Appropriately support individual student needs within the general education environment
- Maximize meaningful time with peers
- Uphold FAPE and prioritize the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Inclusive Service Models

Maximizing Access to the Least Restrictive Environment

- **Consultant Teacher Services (CT)**- Push-in support and/or general education teacher consultation. Primary goal is to support students who need targeted support to access classroom content but can follow the general education curriculum with support. (less restrictive)
- **Integrated Co-Teaching Services (ICT)**- A general education and a special education co-plan and co-teach full lessons. Primary goal is to provide real time differentiated instruction to students who require consistent embedded supports. (more restrictive)

Strategic use of both models maximizes students' access to peers and grade level-curriculum while providing individualized support.

Special Education Programs at Springhurst

Our continuum supports 88 students across the full range of needs:

Least Restrictive (General Education with Supports):

- Related services (Speech, OT, PT, Counseling, Teacher of Deaf)
- Consultant Teacher Services (Direct and Indirect)
- Integrated Co-teaching Services
- Specially Designed Reading

More Intensive (Specialized Settings):

- Primary Special Class 8:1:1 (Grades K-2)
- Primary (K-2) and Intermediary (3-5) Special Class 12:1+1

Special Education Programs at Middle School

Our continuum supports 43 students across the full range of needs:

Least Restrictive (General Education with Supports):

- Related services (Speech, OT, PT, Counseling, Teacher of Deaf)
- Consultant Teacher Services (Direct and Indirect)
- Resource Room
- Integrated Co-teaching Services
- Specially Designed Reading

More Intensive (Specialized Settings):

- Special Class 15:1 - English, Math, Science, Social Studies

Special Education Programs at High School

Our continuum supports 51 students across the full range of needs:

Least Restrictive (General Education with Supports):

- Related services (Speech, OT, PT, Counseling, Teacher of Deaf)
- Resource Room (Content Lab - ELA/SS and Math/Science)
- Integrated Co-teaching Services
- Specially Designed Reading

More Intensive (Specialized Settings):

- Special Class 12:1- Math, ELA
- Special Class 15:1
- Special Class 12:1+1

Moving Forward

Our Strategic Priorities:

- Expand specialized services for students with complex needs
- Strengthen early intervention through MTSS
- Optimize service delivery in LRE
- Build capacity across all staff
- Align our programs and practices with the *Portrait of a Graduate and the IB Learner Profile*
- Update Special Education *District Plan* and *Parent Handbook*