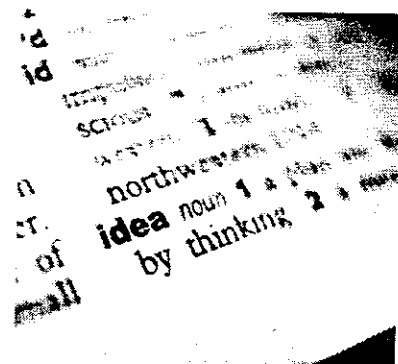




September 3, 2003



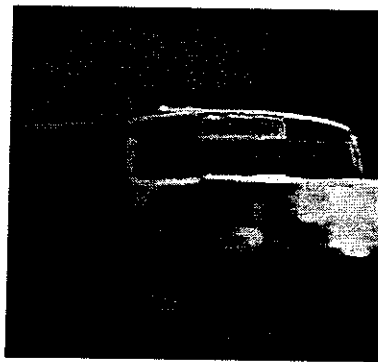
Special Education

❖ Referrals

❖ Centers

❖ Staffing

Final Report



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Special Education Services

This report discusses the efficiency and effectiveness of certain elements of the special education program in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). This report is organized into the following sections:

- A. Referrals
- B. Centers
- C. Staffing
- D. Additional Considerations for the District
- E. Fiscal Impact Summary Chart

The results of the review, recommendations for cost savings, implementation strategies, and the fiscal impact of the recommendations are provided for sections A through C; section D discusses additional issues identified during the course of our review that fell outside the scope of work; and section E presents a fiscal impact summary showing all savings for each recommendation contained in this report.

This report contains recommendations that we believe will improve an already excellent special education program and allow FCPS to continue providing high quality services but at a lower cost. The following points summarize the key messages from this report:

- Our focus was not on effective FCPS programs and services, although we do acknowledge some of these. Instead, we focused on those specific areas where we believed opportunities for increased effectiveness and/or efficiency exist. This report is not a comprehensive review of special education, and should not be considered in that context.
- FCPS needs to develop district-level pre-referral intervention strategies that are consistently applied across all schools. We believe this will result in fewer inappropriate referrals to special education, and strengthen regular education teachers' ability to intervene effectively with a more diverse student population.
- FCPS has closed some special education centers, but 21 centers are still used and 15 of these serve primarily emotionally disturbed students. These centers do not represent best practice delivery systems for these students, and FCPS student achievement data does not support their use as a major instructional arrangement. We are recommending the closure of two centers every other year, ultimately reducing the number of centers to five. School-based models with adequate support and resources should be phased in during this time to improve student achievement and provide programs and services in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- FCPS has recently made efforts to stabilize staffing levels and expenditures in special education, but the expenditure growth over the past five years still exceeded 63 percent. The current staffing formula and approach to staffing have contributed to excessive resources allocated to special education. The Office of Special Education is evaluating the use of an alternate staffing formula, but has not projected savings from its use. We are recommending a more stringent application of an alternate staffing formula that will maximize the district's flexibility and lower costs – without affecting the quality of programs and services provided.
- The Office of Special Education uses data from many sources, and much of these data were not readily available or in a usable format for purposes of this study. While there are district

initiatives underway to consolidate and improve special education data management, the lack of a complete data set at the school level precludes effective accountability of student achievement.

The professional staff in the Department of Special Services requested that comparisons in this review be made between special education and general education in FCPS, instead of among FCPS and other districts. The review team agreed that this made sense, since there are few large districts in the nation that resemble FCPS demographically. Moreover, trend comparisons should be more meaningful to board members, district personnel, parents, and community members because similar data and consistent measures of effectiveness were used.

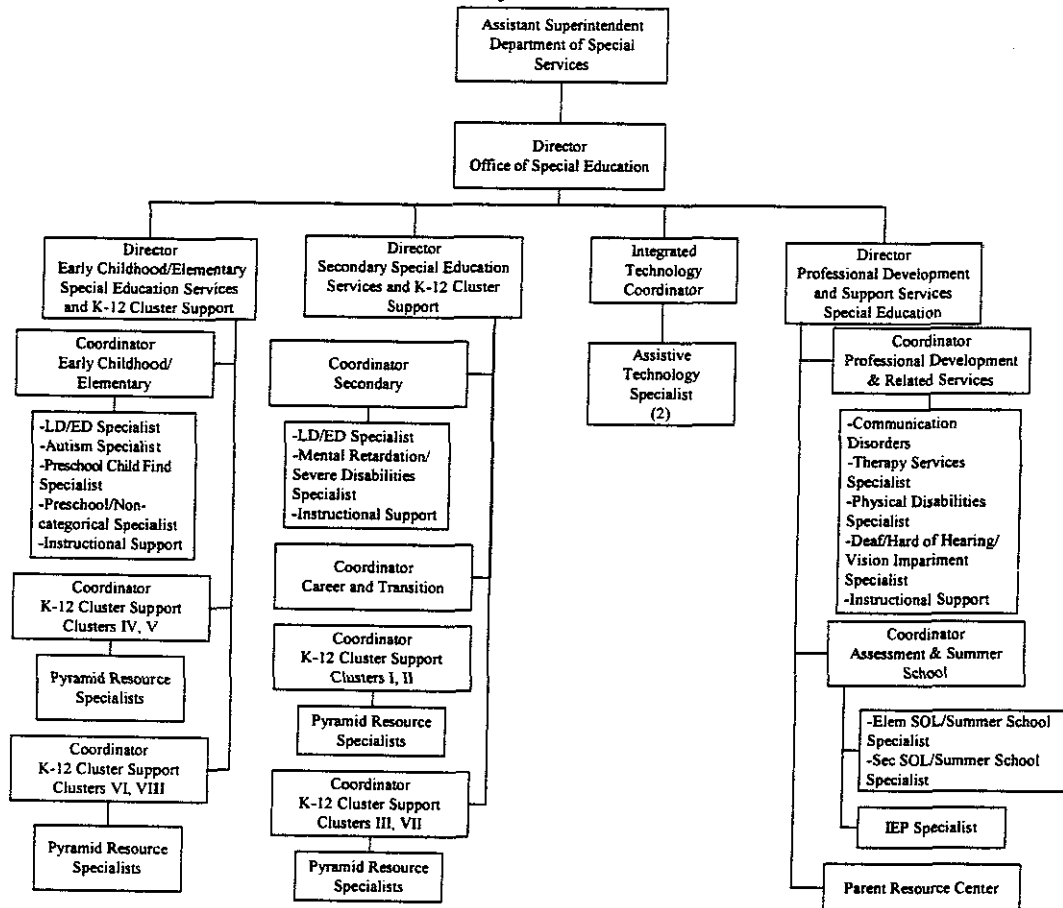
Background

Special education services in Fairfax County Public Schools fall under the supervision of the Department of Special Services. The department is led by the Assistant Superintendent of Special Services who directly supervises the Director of Special Education, the Director of Student Services, the Director of Alternative School Programs and the Director of Program Support Services. The remaining employees in the Office of Special Education work in one of four areas:

- Early Childhood/Elementary and Cluster Support
- Secondary Special Education and Cluster Support
- Integrated Technology
- Professional Development and Support Services

Exhibit I depicts the organization chart and lines of authority within the Office of Special Education.

Exhibit I
FCPS Special Education Organization Structure
June 2003



This review is not a comprehensive review of special education, but there are several exemplary practices worthy of mention. FCPS provides outstanding programs in special education, and in many respects is an innovator in special education instruction. FCPS is to be commended for its many exemplary practices and achievements, which include the following:

- Over 88 percent of special education graduates received standard or advanced diplomas in 2002.
- FCPS exceeded statewide Standards of Learning (SOL) achievement results for students with disabilities on the majority of tested areas over the past three years.
- In the FY 2003 Virginia Alternate Assessment Program, 91 percent of students with disabilities participating passed at the proficient or advanced level in all content areas. Pass rates in single content areas ranged from 91 to 96 percent.
- The overall results of a longitudinal study indicated 93 to 96 percent of FCPS graduates were employed or participating in post secondary education or other meaningful activities. This was the first comprehensive U.S. school district follow-up study on graduates with disabilities and was highlighted in a national transition report funded by U.S. Office of Special Education.

- To track student achievement and progress over time, FCPS piloted a computerized version of the Northwest Reading Assessment. The pilot includes selected general and special education students who failed or were at risk of failing SOL tests. Pilot sites are Forest Edge Elementary School, Holmes Middle School, Mt. Vernon High School, and special education centers Mt. Vernon Center and Burke School.
- FCPS was featured as an exemplary model of culturally competent assessment practices in an award-winning instructional video, *Portraits of the Children: Culturally Competent Assessment*, produced by the National Association of School Psychologists, the US Office of Special Education and the Council for Exceptional Children.
- FCPS established collaborative partnerships for teacher training with four major universities, supporting the preparation of highly qualified special education teachers and paraprofessionals consistent with No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requirements.
- FCPS provided research-based staff development training on positive behavioral supports and school-wide behavior models, including the responsive classroom model and, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University, the Prevent, Act, Resolve (PAR) model at selected sites.
- FCPS provides training, resources, and direct consultation support for parents through the Parent Resource Center staff and other Department of Special Services (DSS) staff. The district also collaborates with parents and community members through the school board-appointed Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities.
- FCPS was featured in award-winning national video production funded by the U.S. Department of Education which highlights exemplary special education services and practices, and celebrates 25 years of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Growth in Special Education at FCPS

Special education programs require more resources than the regular program because of the additional needs that special education students have. Controlling special education expenditures is a challenge since school systems can always do more and are usually pressured to do so, whether supported by revenues or not. However, ongoing effective monitoring of expenditures, resource levels, and overall program growth is essential since special education can potentially consume a school district. FCPS growth in special education expenditures and resource levels from FY1998 to FY 2002 is at a pace that, if left unchecked, could impair the system's financial stability and the effectiveness of its other academic programs. The negative financial impact of this trend will be magnified if future state appropriations to public education remain flat or decline.

FCPS has recently made some progress in meeting a school board target related to inclusive schools and has expanded the capacity of all schools to serve a broad range of students with low incidence disabilities in their neighborhood schools. The number of students assigned to special education centers has declined from 7.5 percent of the total unduplicated special education population in FY 1998 to 5.2 percent in FY 2003. However, FCPS still has a relatively high number of students in restrictive placements as part of their continuum of services. Management has made significant efforts in recent years to reduce more restrictive placements; these changes have affected four sites previously designated as centers. Franconia Center will close effective July 1, 2003. Three former centers were

converted so that the provision of special education service is a part of total general education school program led by the general education principal with the support of an assistant principal funded by special education. These conversions occurred at sites formerly designated as Fairhill Center, Mantua Center, and Marshall Road Center. The school system should continue these efforts since a relatively large number of special education centers remain and are serving students who may be able to be served in less restrictive instructional settings.

In the course of conducting this review, we were able to identify four points of concern related to the rapidly rising special education costs in FCPS. These points of concern involve four variables whose interaction has resulted in a very costly system of providing education to the district's more than 23,000 special education students. Any of these variables operating in isolation would increase costs, but only to a limited degree. The problem for FCPS is that none of the variables operate in isolation. Instead, each interacts with the others creating a cumulative effect of increasing special education costs at an unusually high rate. The four points of concern related to special education costs include:

- **More Students**
The number of students in special education is rising at a rate higher than the general education population.
- **More Services**
Special Education services – the basis for determining staffing – are increasing at a faster rate than the increase in special education students.
- **More Personnel**
District formulas for special education teaching and assistant positions result in caseloads well below the maximum caseloads prescribed by the state in some disability areas—especially in its special education centers. Exceptions to the FCPS staffing formula have increased staff even more.
- **More Expensive Services**
The cost of educating a special education student is now 82 percent higher than cost of educating a general education student. The per student cost of special education is also increasing more rapidly than the per student cost of general education.

In examining the three areas selected by the board for review (Referrals, Centers, and Staffing), the review team remained focused on these four points of concern. Recommendations for cost savings target reductions in students, services, personnel, and/or per student expenditures.

More Students

FCPS' total student membership for FY 2003 is 163,719. According to district enrollment figures, approximately 23,314 of these students are being served through the FCPS special education program for some portion of the school day. The percent of students in the special education program for FY 2003 was 14.2 percent of total enrollment. There are no national or state data available for the same time period. However, national and state data for earlier years show that the district's rate is about the same as the Virginia prevalence rate and is slightly higher than the national special education prevalence rate of approximately 12.8 percent.

From FY 1998 through FY 2003, FCPS' total student membership increased from 150,857 to 163,719, or about 8.5 percent. During the same time period, special education membership increased at more than double the rate of total membership (21.6 percent, from 19,179 to 23,314). The overall prevalence, or percent of students in special education, has increased from 12.7 percent of total student enrollment to

14.2 percent, which means that 1 out of every 7 students in FCPS is in special education. **Exhibit 2** presents special education and total student membership and percent of students in special education from FY 1998 through FY 2003.

Exhibit 2
FCPS Membership – Special Education and Total Students
FY 1998 through FY 2003

Year	Special Education		Total Students		Percent of Students in Special Education
	Membership	Annual Increase in Membership	Membership	Annual Increase in Membership	
FY 1998	19,179	-	150,857	-	12.7%
FY 1999	20,423	6%	151,418	0.4%	13.5%
FY 2000	21,302	4%	154,523	2%	13.8%
FY 2001	21,871	3%	158,331	2%	13.8%
FY 2002	22,162	1%	161,385	2%	13.7%
FY 2003	23,314	5%	163,719	1%	14.2%
Total Increase		21.6%		8.5%	

Source: FCPS and Special Education Enrollment, Office of Special Education; Superintendent's Proposed Budget, FY 2004; Countywide Memberships History and 10-Year Projections, FY 2004-08 Capital Improvement Program, Office of Facilities Planning Services.

Because special education is a federally mandated program, school districts and states are required to report the number of special education students to the federal government each year. The count, which is reported on December 1 of each school year, is commonly called the "December 1 Count." The December 1 count varies slightly from the district's own enrollment figures because it is a snapshot of enrollment taken on a specific day in the school year. However, it is possible to compare the district to the state when the December 1 counts for both are used. **Exhibit 3** shows that from December 1, 2000 to December 1, 2003, the number of special education students in the state rose 4.6 percent while the number of special education students in FCPS rose 6.4 percent, a difference of almost 1.8 percentage points. The most recently reported annual increase is even more significant. The increase in the percent of special education students in FCPS from 2001 to 2002 was almost twice that of the state (5.1% for the district versus 2.7% for the state). Any increase in the number of students in special education increases overall costs exponentially because the average special education student in FCPS receives more than one special education service.

Exhibit 3
December 1 Count of Special Education Students
State and Fairfax County for 2000, 2001, and 2002

Year	Fairfax County		Virginia	
	Enrollment	Percent of Increase	Enrollment	Percent of Increase
2000	21,692	-	161,915	-
2001	21,964	1.3%	164,878	1.8%
2002	23,088	5.1%	169,303	2.7%
Total Increase 2000-2003	1,396	6.4%*	7,388	4.6%*

Source: Virginia Department of Education website; Virginia Department of Education revised December 1 Count for 2002.

*Percents of increase are rounded so 3-year increase is not an exact total.

More Services

In FY 2004, over 48,000 special education services will be provided to over 23,000 students, or an average of 2.05 services per student (*Superintendent's Budget, FY 2004*). The number and type of services each student in special education receives is based on the student's unique needs and the disability or disabilities, as determined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. Special education students commonly have more than one disability label and receive more than one service. **Exhibit 4** shows special education membership, number of services, and services per student for FY 1998 through FY 2004. According to this information, the number of special education services has increased at a much faster rate (39%) than the number of special education students (23%). The increase from FY 2000 to FY 2001 was due to a change in reporting methodology for Career and Transition Services. With the exception of this year, the number of services per student has remained consistent over the period.

**Exhibit 4
FCPS Special Education
Membership and Services**

Service	Special Education Membership	Services Provided	Services per Student
FY 1998	19,179	34,762	1.81
FY 1999	20,423	37,572	1.84
FY 2000	21,302	39,133	1.84
FY 2001	21,871	44,880	2.05
FY 2002	22,162	45,310	2.04
FY 2003	23,314	47,494	2.04
FY 2004 (projected)	23,570	48,303	2.05
Percent Increase from FY 1998 to FY 2004	23%	39%	13%

Source: FCPS and Special Education Ethnic Enrollment, Office of Special Education; Fairfax County Public Schools, Superintendent's Proposed Budget, FY 2004.

The presence of multiple disability labels and additional services affects special education costs in several ways. When a student has an additional disability label, he or she may qualify for an additional service. As the number of services increases, three things may happen:

1. *The amount of time in special education may increase.* A student's IEP will often require additional time in special education to address each additional service.
2. *The Level of Service will likely be Level 2 instead of Level 1.* If a student receives additional services and his time in special education increases, his Level of Service will go from Level 1 (less than 50% of the school day in special education) to Level 2 (more than 50% of the school day in special education).
3. *The number of staff may increase.* Staffing ratios in Virginia require more staff for Level 2 students than for Level 1 students. Additional staff may also be required for related services.

The three events described above are logical and appropriate for many students. Students who have serious and/or multiple disabilities would be expected to receive more than one special education service, spend more time in special education, and benefit from a low student to staff ratio. For example, a student with autism might also have a speech impairment and mild mental retardation. This student could receive three separate services as directed by the IEP. Because of the three services, the student would probably spend most of the school day in a special education class with just a few other students, be taught by a teacher and one or two instructional assistants, and receive speech therapy. The

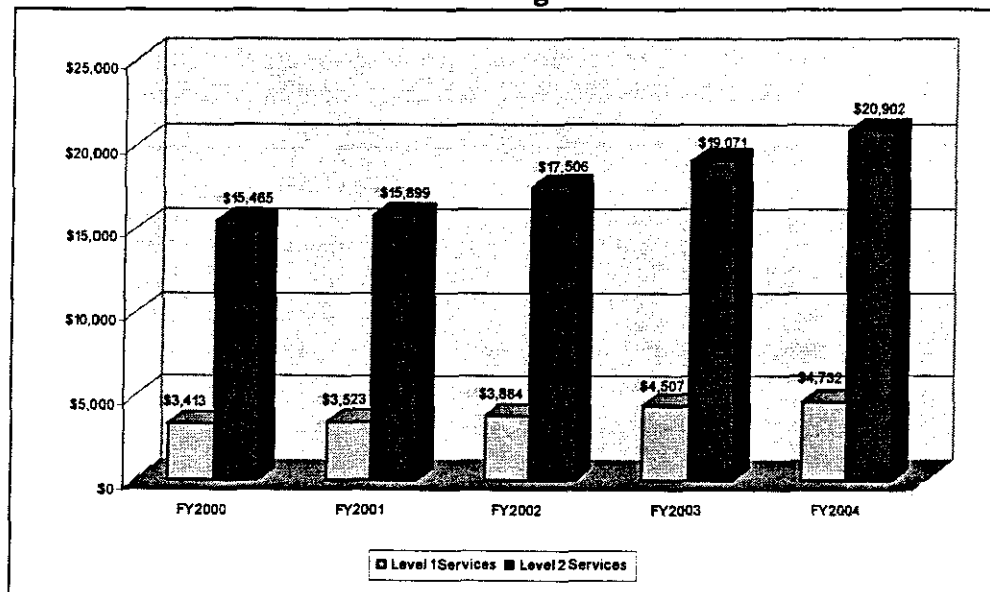
individual needs would require an intensive program, the student would be a Level 2 student, and the cost of the special education services would be significant. In fact, the projected per student cost of a Level 2 autism service for FY 2004 is \$28,041.

The need to provide more than one service for students with milder disabilities is less compelling. For example, if a student is identified with a learning disability in reading and he also has Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), he or she could receive either one service or two, depending on whether the ADHD interferes with his progress in school and he is labeled as *other health impaired*. If the IEP team makes the decision that both disabilities negatively impact the student's progress in school, then certainly the student should have both disability labels and receive the appropriate services in each area. However, if the only academic problem is a difficulty with reading and if the mild ADHD could be managed in a general education class with some modifications and accommodations, the student would not need two services or more time in special education.

However, as reflected in the average number of services per student, IEP team recommendations to provide multiple services to special education students are common in FCPS. This IEP team practice seems to be part of the district's culture. Often there is significant pressure from parents for additional special education services, due in part to their concern about their child's ability to pass the Standard of Learning Tests. In addition, since principals and teachers are aware that Level 2 students are usually allocated more staff per student than Level 1 students, it might be tempting to increase the number of services in order to increase the number of personnel. The pressure to increase special education staff may be more pronounced if the school has few support services for struggling students not in special education.

Because they require more instructional time and increased staffing, Level 2 services are more expensive than Level 1 services. **Exhibit 5** shows the difference between the average cost per service for Level 1 and Level 2 services from FY 2000 through FY 2004 (projected). The average cost per Level 2 service for 2004 is \$20,902, while the average per service cost for a Level 1 service is \$4,732, a difference of \$16,170. The cost of Level 1 services range from \$2,764 for a speech impairment service to \$19,872 for a hearing impairment service. Level 2 services range from \$16,426 for a learning disability to \$42,830 for a physical disability.

Exhibit 5
FCPS Budgeted Cost per Service for Special Education Students: Level 1 and 2
FY 2000 through FY 2004



Source: FCPS Superintendent's Proposed Budget, FY 2004.

Understanding the impact of a staffing and budgeting process that is based on services instead of students is difficult. While states must meet certain federal guidelines when implementing IDEA, each state is free to design its own special education staffing system. In Virginia, the number of special education services is used to determine maximum caseloads for special education classes. The staffing models are described in more detail in Section C of this report. Depending upon the particular location of the students and the composition of services received by those students, more students and more services lead to more personnel.

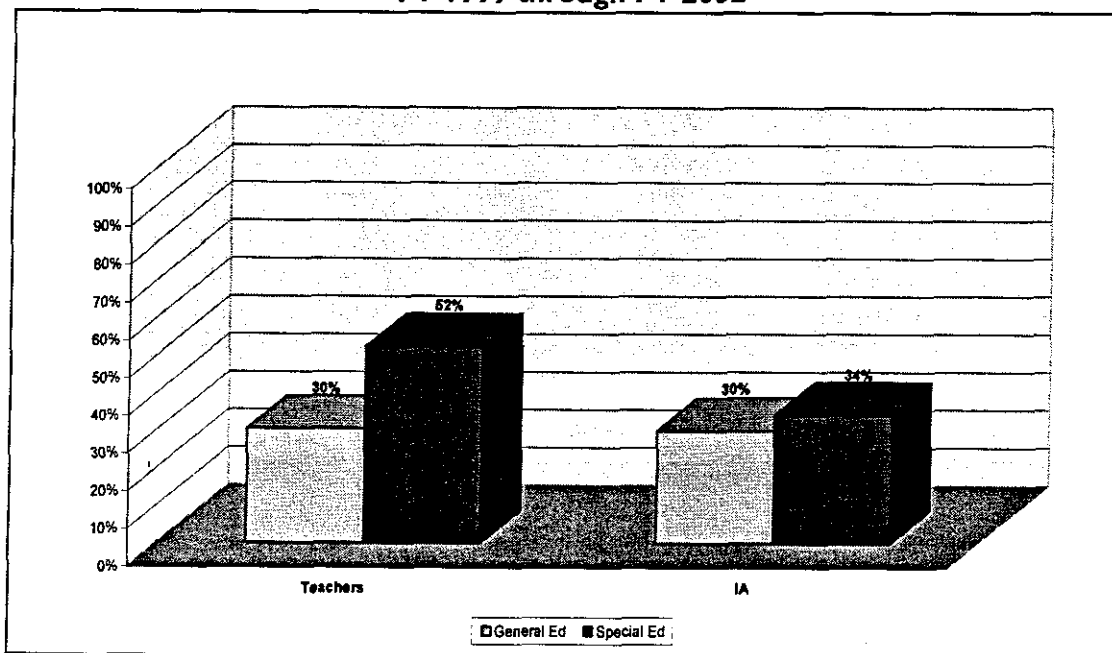
More Personnel

Although about 14.2 percent of FCPS students are in special education, approximately 22.6 percent of FCPS employees work in special education. Special education classes require more staff resources than general education; however, many special education services are not full-day programs like regular education. Special education faculty positions include Teachers, Instructional Assistants (IA), Public Health Training Assistants (PHTA), Attendants, Technicians and Safety/Security Assistants. IA's and PHTA's have similar levels of responsibility; however, a PHTA is assigned personal care duties in addition to instructional services. Attendants provide only personal care. Technicians are employees working as sign interpreters and therapy assistants, and Safety/Security Assistants work in the most restrictive environments providing physical intervention and support when necessary.

While special education personnel in each of these categories has increased faster than the same categories in general education, we will discuss only teachers and instructional assistants, since cost savings related to these positions are the focus of our discussion in the staffing section of this report (Section C). **Exhibit 6** shows that from FY 1999 to FY 2002, expenditures for special education instructional assistants increased more than 34 percent, to over \$20 million. During the same time period, expenditures for general education instructional assistants increased 30 percent, to slightly more than \$15 million. From FY 1999 to FY 2002, expenditures for special education teachers rose 52

percent, to over \$48 million, while general education teacher expenditures rose only 30 percent, to about \$508 million.

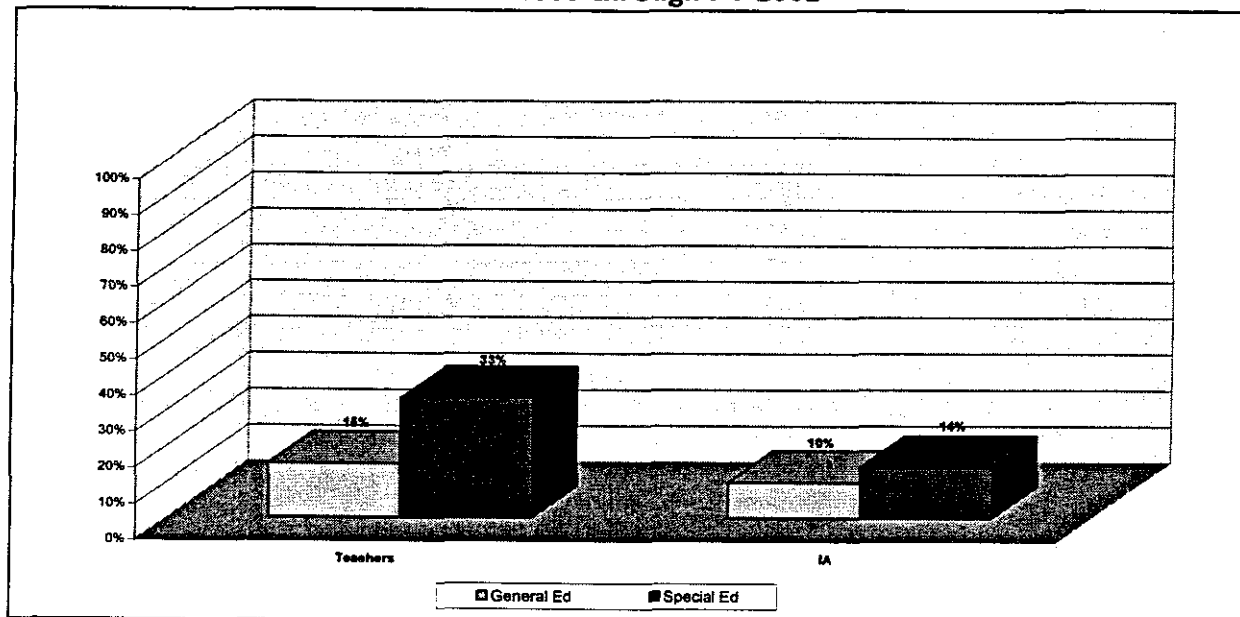
Exhibit 6
Fairfax County General Education and Special Education
Increase in Expenditures For Teachers and Instructional Assistants
FY 1999 through FY 2002



Source: Office of Special Education, "Five-Year Financial and Staffing Data," February 2003.

The increase in expenditures for teachers and instructional assistants is directly related to an increase in the number of positions. As presented in **Exhibit 7**, from FY 1999 to FY 2002 special education teaching positions increased 33 percent, from 2,183 to 2,904; while general education teaching positions during the same time period increased only 15 percent, from 8,852 to 10,171. During the same time period, the number of special education instructional assistants increased 14 percent, from 931 to 1,061, while the number of general education instructional assistants increased 10 percent, from 707 to 776.

Exhibit 7
Fairfax County General Education and Special Education
Increase in Number of Positions for Teachers and Instructional Assistants
FY 1999 through FY 2002



Source: Office of Special Education, "Five-Year Financial and Staffing Data," February 2003.

In April 2003, the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) special education employees was 4,338, or about 5.37 students per FTE. This ratio, which is calculated using the number of permanent positions allocated in the annual budget, has decreased annually since FY 1998, when the ratio was 5.55. The decreasing ratio of employee FTEs to students indicates that special education staff has increased more quickly than the special education student membership. Increased personnel costs are one of the key factors related to higher special education costs at FCPS.

More Expensive Services

Costs for special education in FCPS are rising faster than the number of students in special education. Special education enrollment has increased at a rate of 3.7 percent per year over the past five years. Special education expenditures have increased at a rate of 10.1 percent per year. In FY 2002, FCPS spent \$239,692,201, or 16.6 percent of its total operating fund budget, on special education services. During FY 2002, the special education prevalence rate was 13.7 percent. The program's expenditures have increased at a greater rate than membership each year. Since FY 1998, expenditures for the special education program have increased 64 percent, from \$162,374,277 to the current budgeted amount of \$265,872,316. Although expenditures have increased 64 percent during this time period, special education membership has only increased 22 percent, from 19,179 to 23,314. **Exhibit 8** lists membership, expenditures and the annual increase in each year for FY 1998 through FY 2003.

Exhibit 8
Special Education Membership, Expenditures and Yearly Increases
FY 1998 through FY 2003

Year	Membership	Annual Increase in Special Education Membership	Expenditures	Annual Increase in Special Education Expenditures
FY 1998	19,179	-	\$162,374,277	-
FY 1999	20,423	6.5%	\$176,291,104	8.6%
FY 2000	21,302	4.3%	\$198,525,795	12.6%
FY 2001	21,871	2.7%	\$223,779,749	12.7%
FY 2002	22,162	1.3%	\$239,692,201	7.1%
FY 2003	23,314	5.2%	\$265,872,316*	10.9%
Increase from FY 1998 to FY 2003		21.6%		63.7%

Source: Office of Special Education, FCPS and Special Education Ethnic Enrollment; Office of Special Education, "Five-Year Financial and Staffing Data," February 2003

*Projected in FY 04 Budget

Actual expenditures in special education increased \$77,317,924 from FY 1998 to FY 2002. The primary contributing factors were increased expenditures for special education teachers and other personnel. For example, 57.5 percent, or \$44,464,745, of the increase was incurred for special education teachers. Other rapidly increasing costs included special education instructional assistants, instructional support teachers, and instructional specialists. **Exhibit 9** lists the expenditure categories with the highest percent of increase over the period.

Exhibit 9
Special Education Program Expenditures and Percent of Increase
For Fastest Growing Budget Categories
FY 1998 through FY 2003

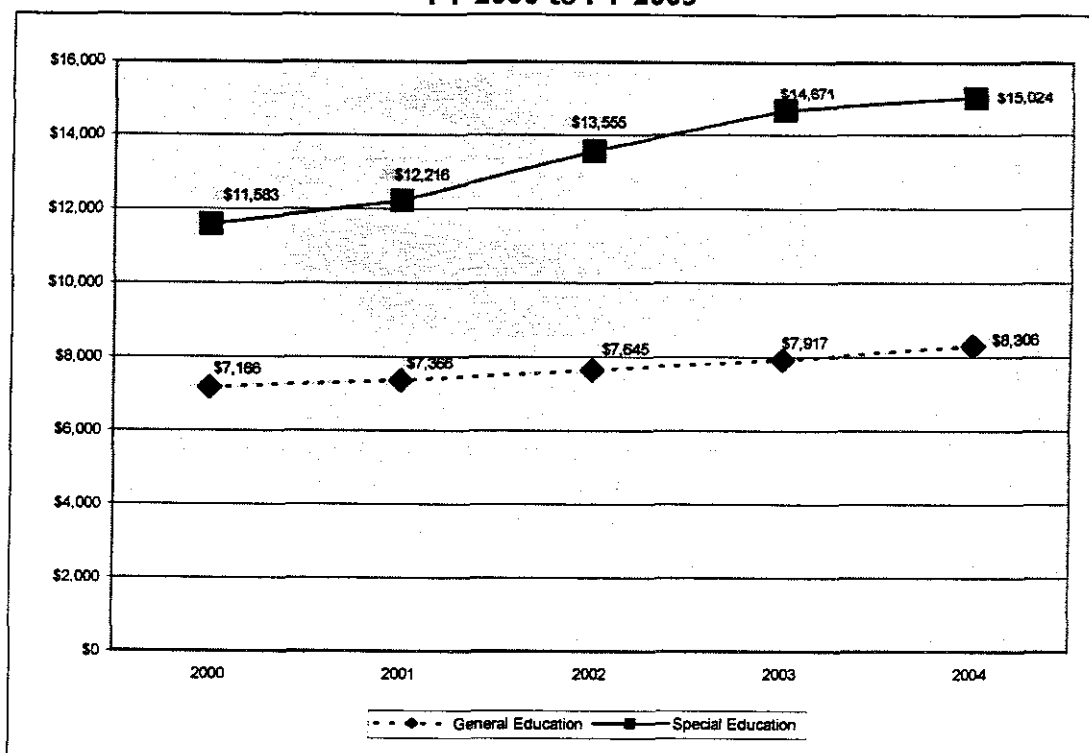
Expenditures	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	Total Increase from FY 1998 through FY 2002	Percent Increase over Five Years
Total Program Expenditures	\$162,374,277	\$176,291,104	\$198,525,795	\$223,779,749	\$239,692,201	\$77,317,924	47.6%
Teachers-Special Ed	\$87,305,772	\$95,225,996	\$104,471,234	\$120,890,575	\$131,770,517	\$44,464,745	50.9%
Instructional Assistants	\$15,320,643	\$16,970,688	\$18,907,800	\$18,021,443	\$20,521,674	\$5,201,031	33.9%
Teachers - Instructional Support	\$1,261,412	\$1,461,107	\$4,386,777	\$2,686,392	\$3,740,015	\$2,478,602	196.5%
Instructional Specialists	\$2,466,287	\$3,376,385	\$3,550,040	\$4,214,647	\$4,372,012	\$1,905,725	77.3%

Source: Office of Special Education, "Five Year Financial and Staffing Data," February 2003.

Increasing costs are also reflected in the cost per student. The *Superintendent's Budget for FY 2004* provides the cost per student for both special education and general education programs. As **Exhibit 10** shows, the cost per student for special education students is higher than that of general education students. This data includes the costs transportation and other contracted services that are not charged to the special education program budget. The special education cost per student has increased at

approximately double the rate of general education cost per student. In FY 2000, special education was 62 percent more expensive than general education; in FY 2004 it is 85 percent more expensive, despite the fact that FY 2004 expenditures are projected to level off somewhat.

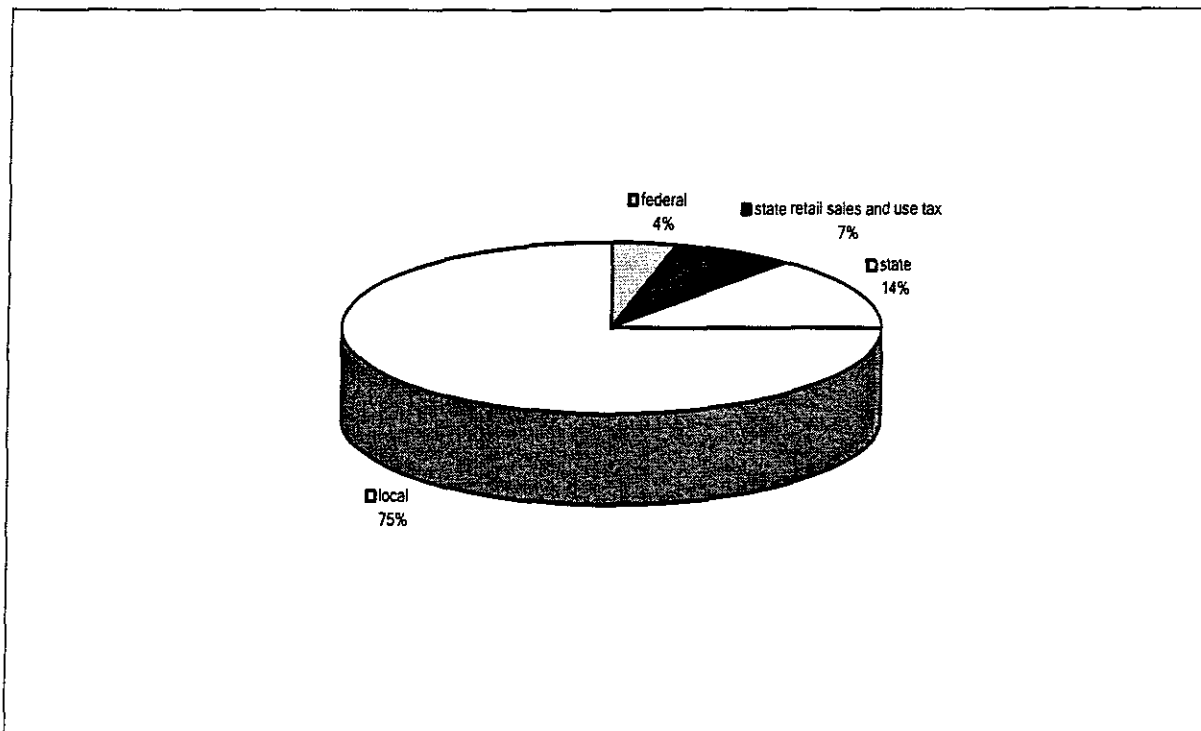
Exhibit 10
Budgeted Average Cost per Student
General Education and Special Education
FY 2000 to FY 2003



Source: FCPS Approved Budget, FY 2002; FCPS Superintendent's Proposed Budget, FY 2004.

Unfortunately, the increasing cost of special education in FCPS is not borne by the federal government or the Commonwealth of Virginia. While special education is a federally mandated program, it is not fully funded by the federal government. Despite specific federal and state requirements for special education services, 74 percent of special education revenue in FCPS comes from local funds. **Exhibit 11** presents the sources of revenue for Special Education for the FY 2002 school year: 4 percent from federal funds; 7 percent from sales and other taxes; 14 percent from the state funds; and 75 percent from local funds. The source of special education funding is important for the long-term budget planning. As special education costs grow, revenue sources outside FCPS are not likely to cover the district's needs. Additional expenditures in special education will continue to be increasingly supported by local funds.

Exhibit 11
FCPS Special Education Sources of Revenue FY 2002



Source: Office of Special Education, Budget Office, May 2003.

FCPS cannot continue on its current path of expenditure growth in special education without risking the impairment of the district's financial stability. Fortunately, there are ways to stop, if not ultimately reverse, these growth trends without negatively affecting the quality of services special education students receive. FCPS has initiated several strategies to begin to control expenditure growth; however, because of the recent growth and expected future budget shortfalls, we believe more aggressive approaches will be necessary.

A. REFERRALS

The Relationship between Initial Referrals and Special Education Membership

Increases in student membership in special education would not occur unless general education teachers, administrators, counselors, or parents initiated a referral for a special education evaluation. An initial referral is made because the student is failing to make adequate progress in school. Special education personnel are typically not involved in initiating referrals and, until an evaluation is officially requested, do not participate in the process. Once the evaluation has been completed by special education personnel, the IEP team must apply a two-part test to determine if the student qualifies for special education services. The test questions are:

1. Does he or she have a disability?
2. Does the disability interfere with progress and success in school?

If the answer to both questions is "yes," the student is eligible for special education services.

Since it would be illegal and unethical for special education personnel to deny special education services to students who legitimately qualify for them, the burden of reducing the number of initial referrals to special education (and ultimately, the total membership in the special education program) rests squarely on the shoulders of general education personnel. Of course, many referrals to special education are obviously appropriate and necessary. For example, students with visual and hearing impairments, students with serious and pervasive developmental disabilities like autism, and students with severe physical and cognitive disabilities are typically referred to special education very early in their lives because their disabilities are apparent at a young age. Early identification and services are critical to these students' progress. However, it is possible that students who have less serious disabilities that impact their progress less could be served in general education if appropriate support and services were available to them. Students with a learning disability, emotional disturbance, or other health impairment (including ADHD) could, in some cases, do very well with effective support levels common to all students, especially in reading.

The question for districts with an increasing percent of students in their special education program is this: When and how should initial referrals to special education be prevented? The answer to "when" is simple: When a student's needs can successfully be met in general education, then no referral to special education should be made. The answer to "how" is more complicated. Unnecessary referrals to special education can be prevented in several ways:

- Students' needs could be met in general education through improved instruction, especially in specific subject areas like reading.
- Remediation of difficulties could occur in general education through services like tutoring, re-teaching, computer-assisted learning, before or after school enrichment programs, individualized instruction, modifications and accommodations to the curriculum, alternative learning style approaches, and learning labs.
- Expectations for success from home and school could rise, along with support systems for low achieving students.
- Continuing problems with learning and behavior could be addressed by using a school-problem solving team process that effectively identifies alternative instructional settings—other than special education—that meet students' needs.

Federal and State Guidelines and Policy

In the re-authorization of IDEA, the federal government affirmed in its Findings section that, "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that...the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by...(F) Providing incentives for whole-school approaches and pre-referral intervention to reduce the need to label children as disabled in order to address their learning needs." School districts often have several interventions at their disposal to support students who are failing. More formal requirements for pre-referral intervention teams exist in many states, including Virginia. The Virginia Administrative Code uses the term "Child Study Committee" to describe a committee that "...enables school personnel, and non-school personnel, as appropriate, to meet the needs of individual children who are having difficulty in the educational setting." (§VAC 20-80-10). Child Study Committees are charged with reviewing existing data, making recommendations to meet children's needs, and reviewing the results of the implementation of those recommendations. The Child Study Committee may then refer students for evaluation for special education and related services. (§VAC 20-80-50).

Several recent federal initiatives are influencing education policy related to special education referrals, especially in the learning disability category. This category is the most common disability in FCPS, the state, and the nation. Among these federal initiatives is H.R. 1350, also called the *Improving Education*

Results for Children with Disabilities Act. The bill reauthorizes IDEA and was recently passed by the House of Representatives and referred to the Senate. The bill includes a provision revising the evaluation and eligibility criteria for a learning disability in order to reduce the number of students identified in this category. Implicit in the bill is a belief articulated at the federal level that many students identified with learning disabilities suffer not from an inherent learning problem but rather from poor reading instruction. H.R. 1350 comes on the heels of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), the landmark federal legislation committed to improving student achievement, especially in reading. NCLB requires states to include all student groups in state assessment systems. With additional pressure to raise test scores, districts may find it difficult to ensure the success of all students within the general education system and may be tempted to turn to special education as a solution to students' problems. Virginia's state plan to meet NCLB calls for assessing almost all students with disabilities on the Standards of Learning. The scores of students with disabilities are included in overall scores, then disaggregated and reported separately from those of general education students.

Assessment of FCPS Referrals

If the needs of struggling students are not met because there are few effective interventions available in general education, teachers and parents may feel that a referral to special education is the only way to get help. To prevent over-referrals, districts should have a system in place to provide assistance to struggling students quickly and effectively. The system should include campus-based teams of educators who can easily and quickly suggest a variety of general education interventions. These teams, in place throughout the nation, are often called *Teacher Assistance Teams*, *Student Intervention Teams*, or *Student Assistance Intervention Teams*. All have the same purpose: to support struggling students and their teachers.

FCPS does have the Child Study Teams required in the state regulations in place on many of their campuses. However, school visits made clear that the effectiveness of the teams varies. This perception was validated in the review team's interviews with Office of Student Services personnel. The district has assembled a packet that includes printed material related to the purpose and philosophy of the teams, a flow chart that describes how the process should work, guidelines for when a referral should be made to the Local Screening Committee (which initiates the evaluation process), and some suggested interventions. Like many processes that have been established over the years in public schools, this one will need to be reemphasized at FCPS. As more demands are placed on administrators and teachers, having another meeting may be the last thing school personnel desire. Unfortunately, when this happens, the problem-solving role of the teams is lost and the progress to a Local Screening Committee for referral may be accelerated.

It was not clear during the review that the Instructional Services Department has implemented a district-wide general education initiative to ensure consistent and effective use of the Child Study Teams or any other kind of problem solving teams. Clearly, preventing referrals to special education will need to become a general education responsibility, with support from special education. There is no evidence that requirements are in place to track referrals by school, to regularly evaluate data to determine if specific schools are making an excessive number of referrals, to train the school teams, to provide teams with materials, to monitor their progress, to support the teachers and administrators who participate in them, or to evaluate their success at serving struggling students. Without a systemic commitment to these components of the team problem solving model, the majority of the Child Study Teams will likely not be effective, despite their importance not only in preventing unnecessary referrals to special education, but also helping students achieve success within the existing general education system.

The data suggest that the current general education approaches to problem solving and student support are not succeeding. In the six years from 1998 to 2003, the number of general education students in FCPS increased 8.5 percent, while the number of special education students increased 21.6 percent, nearly three times higher than general education. Because FCPS does not calculate mobility rates for special education students, the review team could not determine whether the percent of students in special education increased or decreased because of students moving into or out of the district. For purposes of this review we assumed no net effect. We do know, however, that reducing the number of referrals is a preventive strategy for lowering special education costs, because more students lead to more services, which leads to more personnel, which increases costs.

Determining Where Referrals Can Be Reduced

Our first recommendation is to implement pre-referral intervention strategies, which will result in reducing the number of initial referrals to special education. In order to determine how best to do this, the review team examined FCPS campuses whose rates of initial referrals (the percent of their total school membership referred) are higher than the district average. Since rates of initial referral vary widely in elementary, middle, and high schools, we first determined the average rate of referral for each of these levels throughout the district. We also determined the average percent of initial referrals that do not qualify for special education (the number of non-qualifying referrals divided by total referrals). These non-qualifying referrals are of interest because they could indicate that campuses are looking to special education to solve problems not related to a disability, but caused instead by an inability to meet students' needs in general education, especially in reading and math. The average initial referral rate and average rate of non-qualifying referrals are presented in **Exhibit 12**.

Exhibit 12
District Average:
Rate of Initial Referrals and Qualification Rate By Level
FY 2003

Level	District Average: Rate of Initial Referrals to Special Education	District Average: Rate of Non-Qualifying Initial Referrals to Special Education
Elementary Schools	2.7%	13.5%
Middle Schools	1.4%	22.4%
High Schools	0.7%	19.6%

Source: Office of Special Education Budget Office, May 2003.

We then selected a sample of schools based on two criteria: (a) the average rate of initial referral to special education was above the district average for their level (elementary, middle, and high school) and (b) the percent of non-qualifying referrals was above the district average. We then excluded schools with fewer than 10 referrals, since their impact is not as significant. The resulting list of sample schools is presented in **Exhibit 13**. Because of the way FCPS tracks this data, the actual percentages may be different than those reported. However, for purposes of this report, we believe the aggregate results can be relied on to make conclusions and estimate fiscal impacts. In implementing our recommendations, FCPS should attempt to determine the exact numbers of referrals and non-qualifying referrals properly associated with each school.

Exhibit 13
Schools with Higher than District Average Annual Referral Rates and Percent Ineligible Referrals for Special Education, FY 2003

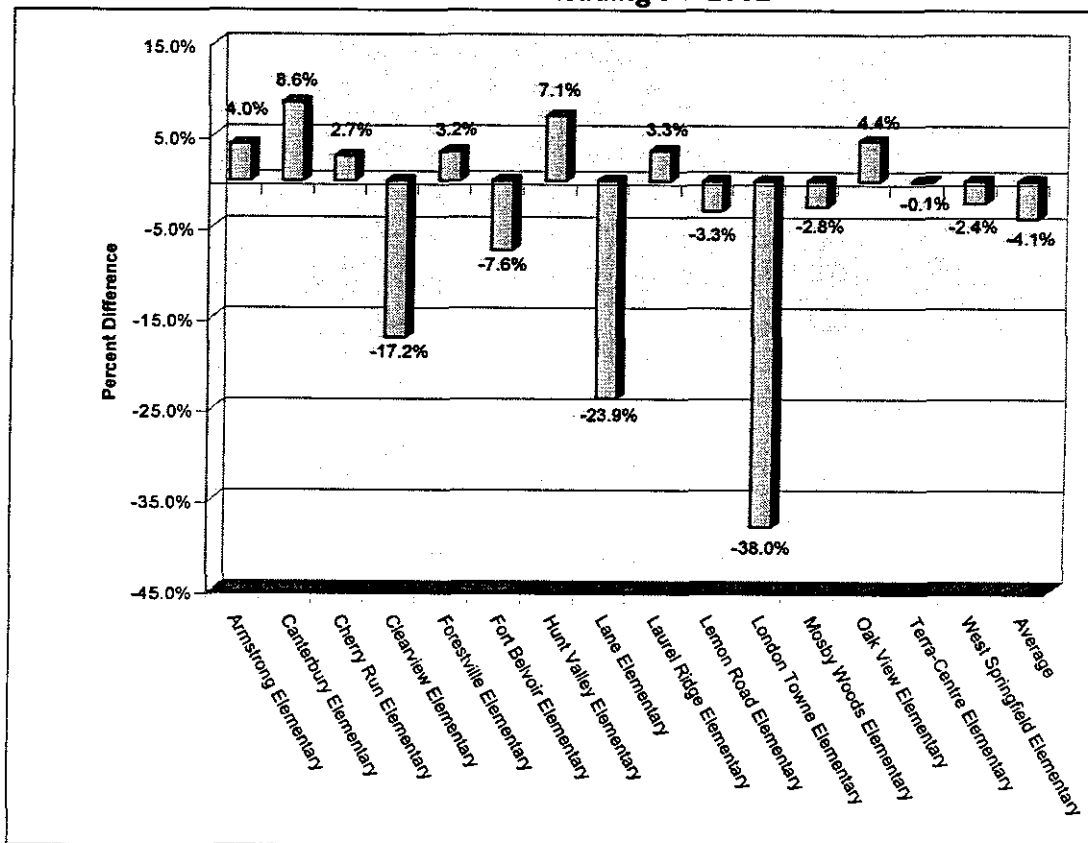
School	Annual Referral Rate	Non-Qualifying Referral Rate
<i>Elementary Schools (ES) - Sample</i>		
ES - 1	4.5%	25.0%
ES - 2	2.7%	42.1%
ES - 3	3.2%	23.5%
ES - 4	4.1%	26.3%
ES - 5	3.4%	22.9%
ES - 6	1.9%	26.0%
ES - 7	3.2%	35.0%
ES - 8	3.2%	32.4%
ES - 9	2.3%	33.3%
ES - 10	3.4%	30.0%
ES - 11	2.7%	26.1%
ES - 12	3.2%	41.2%
ES - 13	4.0%	22.2%
ES - 14	2.1%	46.2%
ES - 15	2.7%	27.3%
District Average for All Elementary Schools	2.7%	13.5%
<i>Middle Schools (MS) - Sample</i>		
MS - 1	2.1%	42.3%
MS - 2	1.7%	29.4%
MS - 3	1.7%	31.3%
District Average for All Middle Schools	1.4%	22.4%
<i>High Schools (HS) - Sample</i>		
HS - 1	1.0%	29.4%
HS - 2	1.4%	29.2%
HS - 3	1.1%	29.2%
District Average for All High Schools	0.7%	19.6%

Source: Office of Special Education, Budget Director, May 2003.

In order to determine whether the schools with higher than average referral rates and lower than average qualification rates may be over-referring because of issues related to instruction and overall student achievement, we examined these schools' academic achievement data. We looked at SOL scores in reading and math for third and eighth graders and end of course scores for tenth graders. Our main objective was to determine whether a relationship exists between low achievement and referrals to special education. If such a relationship does exist, it may eventually help the Instructional Services Department reduce the number of initial referrals to special education and, consequently, reduce the district's total special education membership. Providing support and more effective instruction for campuses with poor achievement should help all students and should focus resources, not just on potential special education students, but on all struggling students. This is most critical in reading, since poor reading achievement affects achievement in other academic areas and is also likely to result in referrals in the learning disability category, the category that includes more students than any other. However, this scope of this study did not include an evaluation of FCPS reading programs, nor did it analyze data or evaluate the effectiveness of reading or any other FCPS regular education programs.

Exhibits 14, 15, and 16 present SOL data related to each of the schools mentioned above. Failing rates of the elementary, middle, and high schools are compared to average failing rates for the district at each grade level for reading, math, and the English: Reading/Literature end of course exam. The data are presented as ascending and descending bars that represent the difference between the average failing rate for the district and the failing rate for each campus. If the bar descends below the district average, the campus had more failing students than the district average. The further the descent, the greater the difference in failing rates and the worse the students performed on the test. Conversely, if the bar ascends above the district average, the campus had fewer failing students than the district average. The higher the ascent, the better the students performed on the test.

Exhibit 14
Percent of Difference in the Fail Rate between Identified Schools and the District
Grade 3 SOL Reading FY 2002

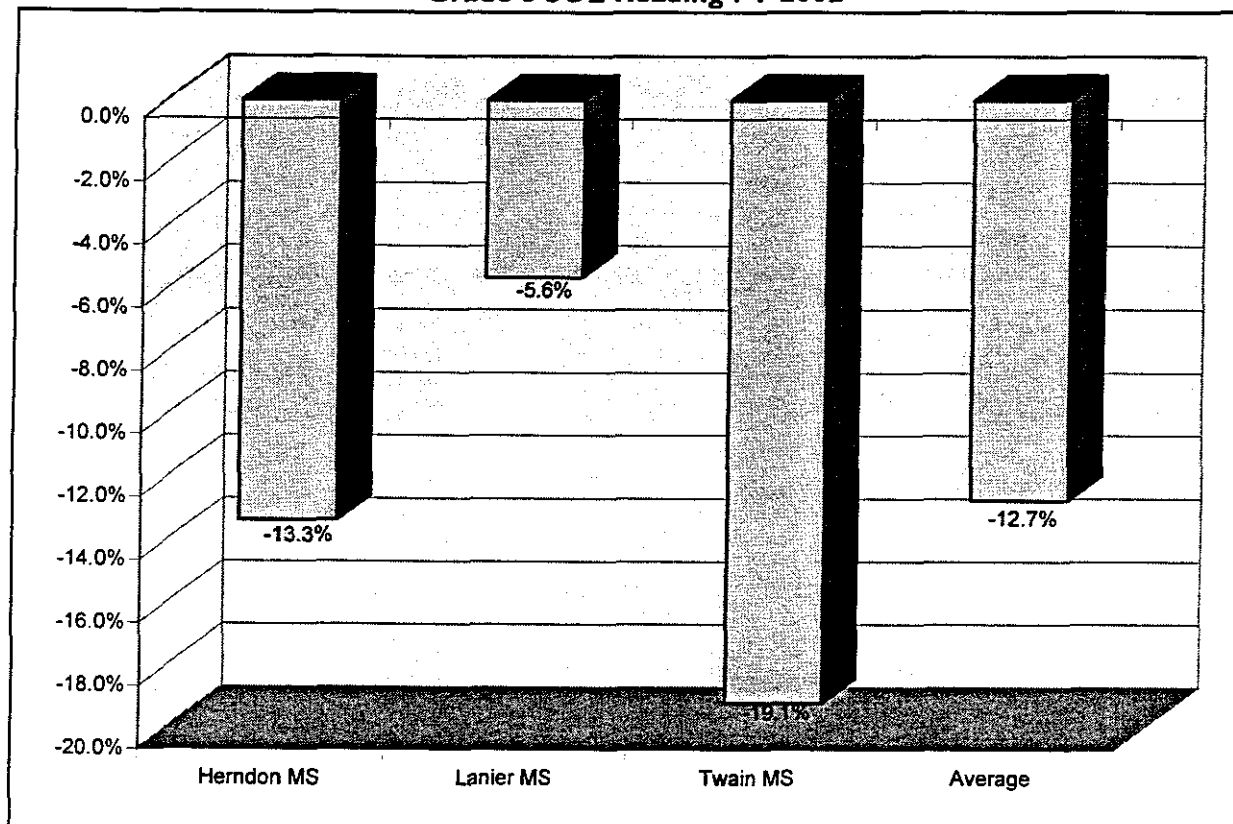


Source: Office of Student Testing, Department of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

As a group, the 15 selected elementary schools with high referral and low qualification rates did much worse than the district on the Grade 3 Reading SOL test. However, seven schools had fewer failing students than the district average. Unfortunately, the other eight schools had a higher failing rate than the district, ranging from only 0.1 percent to 38.0 percent. Many referrals to special education are made in areas other than a learning disability, so students' academic achievement cannot always be related to special education referrals. In addition, many referrals are made at the preschool level, the FCPS grade level with the most initial referrals. Obviously, reading instruction is not a factor in pre-school referrals and suggestions to prevent those referrals are beyond the scope of this review. Nevertheless, 25 percent of FCPS referrals are made in Grade 2 and Grade 3, when reading progress is first evaluated on the SOL tests. Assuming that poor academic achievement, especially in reading, is a major cause of special education referrals at those grades is logical.

Three middle schools met the referral and qualification criteria outlined above and the differences between their failing rates and the district's average failing rate on the Grade 8 SOL reading test are shown in **Exhibit 15**. Again, the group's failing rates were 12.7 percentage points higher than the district's average failing rate. Their failing rates exceeded the district average by 5.6 percent to 19.1 percent.

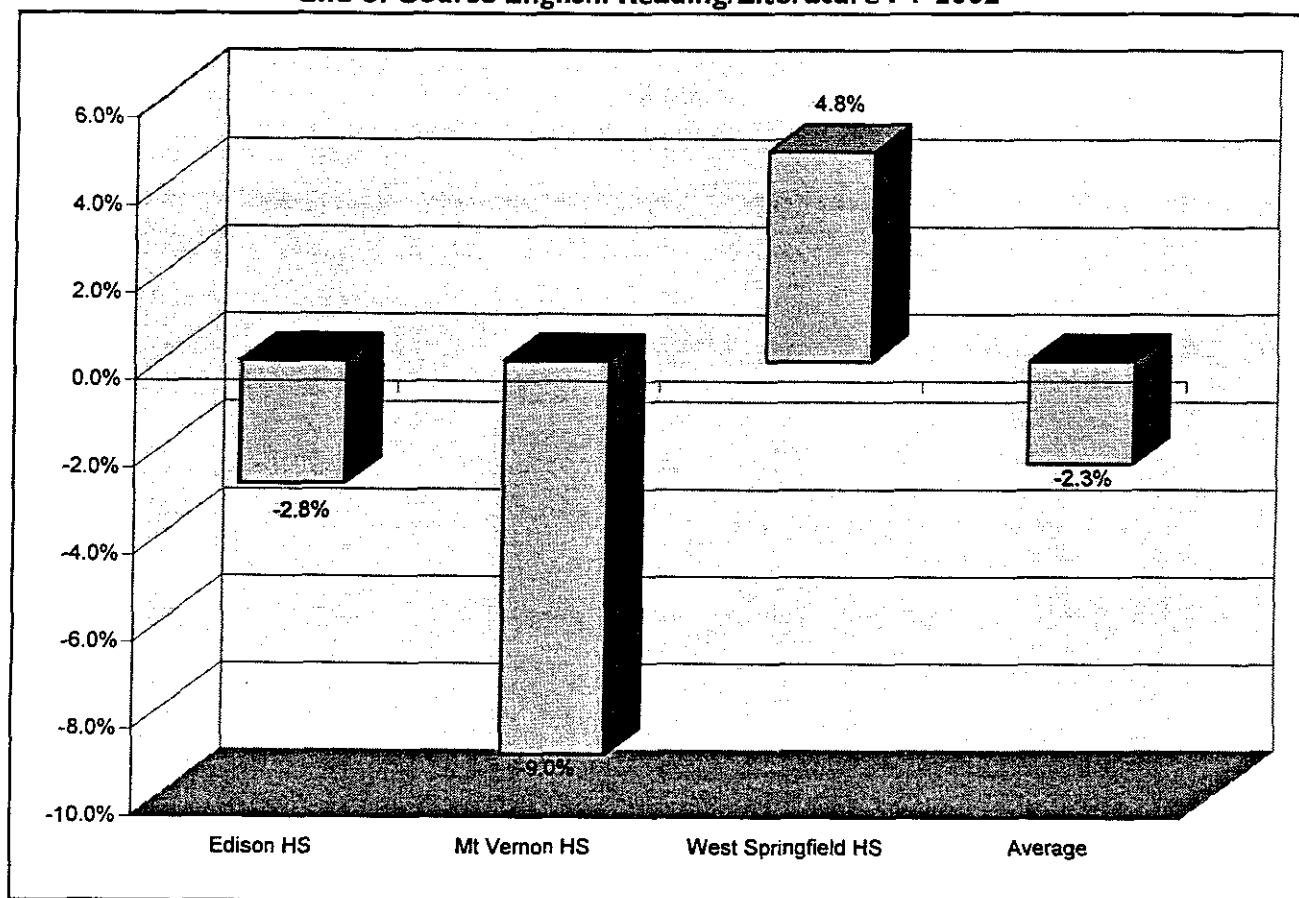
Exhibit 15
Percent of Difference in the Fail Rate between Identified Schools and the District
Grade 8 SOL Reading FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Department of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Of the three high schools whose referral and non-qualification rates exceeded the district average, the failing rates of two of them exceeded the average district failing rate on the English: Reading/Literature end of course exam. Fewer HS 3 students failed the end of course exam than the district average, but on average the three selected high schools had failing rates 2.3 percentage points higher than the district average.

Exhibit 16
Percent of Difference in the Fail Rate between Identified Schools and the District
End of Course English: Reading/Literature FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Department of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

By implementing strategies recommended later in this section, FCPS can reduce the number of students referred to special education.

Non-qualifying Referrals

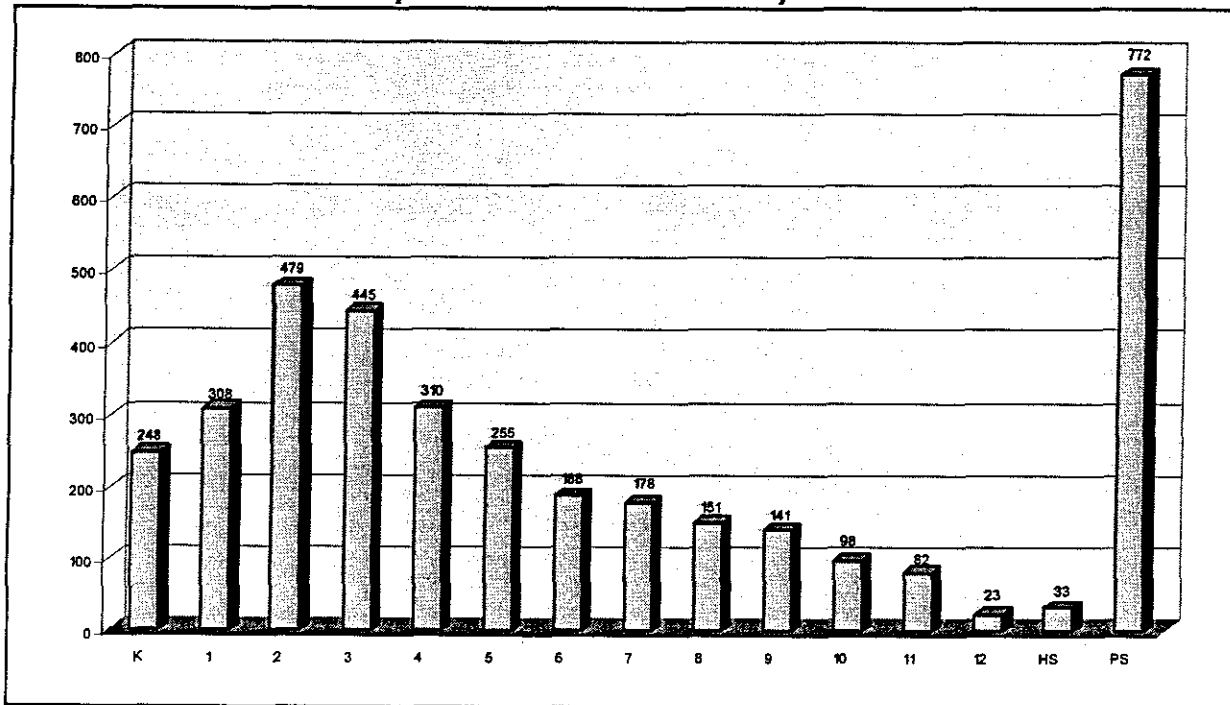
When students are referred for a special education evaluation but do not qualify (i.e., are not found to have a disability), the process can be costly to districts in two ways:

- The monetary cost of assessment staff time spent on the evaluation.
- The cost to students, staff, and parents in time that the assessment staff was not able to spend on other support services to students. Many of the assessment team members are psychologists or social workers, whose time could be spent on counseling; staffing with teachers, parents or others; problem solving with campus teams; or communication and coordination.

The cost of the assessment staff's time is minor compared to the long-term costs of special education for students who could have been served effectively in general education. However, since the review team examined the overall issue of referrals, the potential cost savings related to non-qualifying initial referrals was fairly simple to address. The district provided the review team with information about

initial referrals to special education for the FY 2002. **Exhibit 17** shows 3,711 initial referrals to special education for FY 2002. Of those 3,711 referrals, 520, or approximately 14 percent, did not qualify for special education services. The district could save in assessment costs by reducing the number of non-qualifying referrals.

Exhibit 17
Number of New Special Education Referrals by Grade Level for FY 2002



Source: Office of Special Education, Budget Office, May 2003.

A report from the *President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education* (2002) indicates that initial referral evaluations costs range from \$800 to \$8,000 nationwide. The district provided the review team with two estimates of the average cost of an evaluation. The Director of Psychological Services estimated the cost per assessment at \$1,800 and this cost estimate includes administrative and facility costs and is based on the more complex evaluations. The second estimate provided by FCPS is approximately \$460 per evaluation, described in **Exhibit 18**.

Exhibit 18
Cost Estimates for Special Education Eligibility
Referrals and Assessment per New Student

Item	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Psychologist Cost:			
Personnel Costs			
Local Screening Committee	1.0	\$34.27	\$34.27
Class Observation and Teacher Interview	1.0	\$34.27	34.27
Direct Testing	3.0	\$34.27	102.81
Scoring and Report Writing	1.5	\$34.27	51.41
Interpretive Conference	1.0	\$34.27	34.27
Eligibility Meeting	0.5	\$34.27	17.14
Subtotal Personnel Costs	8.0		\$274.16
Materials			
Testing Materials (consumable items)			\$4.50
Other Consumable Items			1.00
Test Protocols			6.00
Subtotal Materials			\$11.50
Total Psychologist Cost			\$285.66
Social Worker Cost:			
Personnel Costs			
Organization of Meeting	1.0	\$34.27	\$34.27
Face-to-Face Meeting With Family	1.0	\$34.27	34.27
Report Writing	2.0	\$34.27	68.54
Additional Coordination, Meeting and Follow-up	1.0	\$34.27	34.27
Subtotal Personnel Costs	5.0		\$171.35
Materials			
Consumable Items			\$2.00
Subtotal Materials			\$2.00
Total Social Worker Cost			\$173.35
TOTAL COST ESTIMATE FOR ASSESSMENT	13.0		\$459.01

Source: Office of Special Education Budget Office, May 2003.

The review team believes that the cost estimate of \$460 per assessment is unrealistically low. In order to be as accurate as possible, the review team is using a figure that "splits the difference" between the two estimates provided. The midway point between those two estimates is \$1,130. At a cost of \$1,130 per assessment, the total cost for the 3,711 evaluations conducted in FY 2002 was over \$4 million.

The costs of evaluation pale in comparison to the long-term costs of a special education instead of a general education. According to the FCPS FY 2004 proposed budget, the average cost per general education student is \$8,306 and the average cost per special education student is \$15,024, a difference of \$6,718 per student. For each student who is initially referred, assessed, and qualifies as disabled, the district is obligated to continue to provide special education services until the student is dismissed from special education or until the year that the student turns 22. Since 61 percent of students referred in FCPS are referred prior to grade four, the district can expect to be providing services for at least nine years; for the 21 percent of students referred while still in pre-school, services could last even longer.

Our first recommendation is intended to develop and implement district-level pre-referral intervention strategies. This should decrease special education costs by (a) reducing the number of students referred to and eventually placed in special education, and (b) reducing the number of non-qualifying initial referrals. To estimate the cost savings accurately, it is necessary to adjust for rising costs in special education and increasing rates of both total student membership and special education membership.

Recommendation I:

Develop and implement district-level pre-referral intervention strategies that are consistently applied across all schools.

To determine the fiscal impact of the number of initial referrals, and ultimately the number of students in special education, several steps are necessary. The following section explains how the fiscal impact was calculated.

FCPS total student membership increased at an average annual rate of 1.7 percent while the special education membership increased at an average annual rate of 4 percent from FY 1998 through FY 2003. The average rates of increase are presented in **Exhibit 19**.

**Exhibit 19
FCPS Special Education
Annual Rates of Increase
General and Special Education Membership
FY 1998 through FY 2003**

	Total District Membership	Annual Percent Increase	Special Education Membership	Annual Percent Increase
FY 1998	150,857		19,179	
FY 1999	151,418	0.4%	20,423	6.5%
FY 2000	154,523	2.1%	21,302	4.3%
FY 2001	158,331	2.5%	21,871	2.7%
FY 2002	161,385	1.9%	22,162	1.3%
FY 2003	163,719	1.4%	23,314	5.2%
Average Annual Increase		1.7%		4.0%

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Facilities Planning Services, "Countywide Membership History and 10-Year Projections", FY 2004 Superintendent's Proposed Budget, and Office of Special Education, "FCPS Special Education Enrollment", May 2003.

During FY 2002, the Office of Special Education received 3,711 initial referrals, or approximately 2.3 percent of FCPS students. Since only FY 2002 data on total annual referrals was available, 2.3 percent is used to project future referral totals. **Exhibit 20** displays projected membership and referrals for the years presented. FCPS enrollment projections were available through 2013. The last two years of the fiscal impact, 2014 and 2015, assume no change in projected enrollment from 2013 levels.

Exhibit 20
FCPS Special Education
Projected Membership and Referrals
FY 2004 through 2015

	Total District Membership	Referrals*
FY 2003	162,585	3,740
FY 2004	166,591	3,832
FY 2005	169,825	3,906
FY 2006	172,735	3,973
FY 2007	175,094	4,027
FY 2008	177,282	4,078
FY 2009	177,260	4,077
FY 2010	177,477	4,082
FY 2011	177,349	4,079
FY 2012	177,236	4,076
FY 2013	176,654	4,063
FY 2014	176,654	4,063
FY 2015	176,654	4,063

Source: Countywide Membership History and Projections,
October 2002

*Calculated at 2.3 percent of total membership

Cost per special education student has increased at a greater rate than cost per general education student during fiscal years 2000 through 2004. The average annual increase in special education cost per student is 6.8 percent, while the average annual increase of general education cost per student is 3.8 percent. Costs per student, the annual increase in cost per student and the average annual increase in cost per special and general education student are presented in **Exhibit 21**.

Exhibit 21
FCPS Special Education
Special and General Education Cost per Student

	Special Education	Annual Percent Increase	General Education	Annual Percent Increase	Difference
FY 2000	\$11,583		\$7,166		\$4,417
FY 2001	\$12,216	5.5%	\$7,366	2.8%	\$4,850
FY 2002	\$13,555	11.0%	\$7,645	3.8%	\$5,910
FY 2003	\$14,674	8.3%	\$7,917	3.6%	\$6,757
FY 2004	\$15,024	2.4%	\$8,306	4.9%	\$6,718
Average Annual Increase		6.8%		3.8%	

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, FY 2004 Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

Fifty percent of the average difference in costs per student is used to calculate the estimated net savings per special education and general education student over 12 years. The rationale behind this methodology is to account for the following assumptions:

- Shrinking a program does not necessarily mean that program costs can be reduced at the same rate; and

- Many of the students that are not placed in Special Education if this recommendation is implemented will still need supplemental support services.

Exhibit 22 shows the projected general and special education costs per student from FY 2004 through FY 2015.

Exhibit 22
Projected Cost per Special and General Education Student
FY 2004 through 2015

	Special Education	General Education	Difference	Net Projected Savings (50 % of Difference)
FY 2004	\$15,024	\$8,306	\$6,718	\$3,359
FY 2005	\$16,046	\$8,621	\$7,425	\$3,713
FY 2006	\$17,137	\$8,949	\$8,188	\$4,094
FY 2007	\$18,302	\$9,289	\$9,013	\$4,507
FY 2008	\$19,547	\$9,642	\$9,905	\$4,953
FY 2009	\$20,876	\$10,008	\$10,868	\$5,434
FY 2010	\$22,295	\$10,388	\$11,907	\$5,954
FY 2011	\$23,811	\$10,783	\$13,028	\$6,514
FY 2012	\$25,430	\$11,193	\$14,237	\$7,119
FY 2013	\$27,159	\$11,618	\$15,541	\$7,771
FY 2014	\$29,006	\$12,060	\$16,946	\$8,473
FY 2015	\$30,978	\$12,518	\$18,460	\$9,230

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

The district did not qualify 14 percent of the referrals in FY 2002; therefore only 86 percent of the students assessed were placed in special education. If the district reduced the number of students referred and placed in special education, the result would be a reduction in costs since the cost per special education student is approximately \$6,718 (FY 2004) greater than the cost per general education student. **Exhibit 23** provides examples of reducing qualifying referrals by 2 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent.

Exhibit 23
Projected Cost Savings of Reducing Referrals and Qualifying Students
FY 2004 through 2015

	Projected Referrals	Referrals that Qualify (86%)	2% Reduction in Qualified Referrals (Cumulative)	5% Reduction in Qualified Referrals (Cumulative)	10% Reduction in Qualified Referrals (Cumulative)
FY 2004	3,832	3,296	66	165	330
FY 2005	3,906	3,359	133	333	665
FY 2006	3,973	3,417	201	504	1,007
FY 2007	4,027	3,463	271	677	1,353
FY 2008	4,078	3,507	341	852	1,704
FY 2009	4,077	3,506	411	1,027	2,055
FY 2010	4,082	3,511	481	1,203	2,406
FY 2011	4,079	3,508	551	1,378	2,757
FY 2012	4,076	3,505	621	1,554	3,107
FY 2013	4,063	3,494	691	1,728	3,457
FY 2014	4,063	3,494	761	1,903	3,806
FY 2015	4,063	3,494	831	2,078	4,155

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

By meeting the needs of an increased number of students in the general education program, the district could achieve savings from \$37 million to \$185 million, as calculated in **Exhibit 24**.

Exhibit 24
Projected Savings from Reducing Number of Qualifying Students
FY 2004 through FY 2015

Year	50 % of Cost Difference Between General and Special Education	Reduce Qualified Referrals by 2% (Cumulative)	Savings	Reduce Qualified Referrals by 5% (Cumulative)	Savings	Reduce Qualified Referrals by 10% (Cumulative)	Savings
FY 2004	\$3,359	66	\$221,393	165	\$553,483	330	\$1,106,965
FY 2005	\$3,713	133	\$494,177	333	\$1,235,441	665	\$2,470,883
FY 2006	\$4,094	201	\$824,651	504	\$2,061,628	1,007	\$4,123,256
FY 2007	\$4,507	271	\$1,220,016	677	\$3,050,040	1,353	\$6,100,080
FY 2008	\$4,953	341	\$1,688,157	852	\$4,220,392	1,704	\$8,440,784
FY 2009	\$5,434	411	\$2,233,154	1,027	\$5,582,886	2,055	\$11,165,772
FY 2010	\$5,954	481	\$2,864,886	1,203	\$7,162,215	2,406	\$14,324,431
FY 2011	\$6,514	551	\$3,591,356	1,378	\$8,978,390	2,757	\$17,956,779
FY 2012	\$7,119	621	\$4,424,003	1,554	\$11,060,007	3,107	\$22,120,014
FY 2013	\$7,771	691	\$5,372,245	1,728	\$13,430,612	3,457	\$26,861,223
FY 2014	\$8,473	761	\$6,449,675	1,903	\$16,124,187	3,806	\$32,248,374
FY 2015	\$9,230	831	\$7,670,931	2,078	\$19,177,328	4,155	\$38,354,656
Total			\$37,054,643		\$92,636,608		\$185,273,217

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

In addition to the long-term cost reductions from students who could be served in general education instead of special education, additional cost savings would occur if the number of non-qualifying referrals was reduced. To determine these savings, some of the same steps described above can be used. However, it is also necessary to estimate the number of non-qualifying referrals annually and determine assessment cost increases over time.

The cost per referral for FY 2002 is \$1,130. Since special education costs are increasing at an annual average rate of 6.8 percent, the cost per referral is projected to increase at the same rate over the next 12 years. **Exhibit 25** presents the projected referrals, cost per referral and total cost of referral assessments for FY 2004 through FY 2015.

Exhibit 25
FCPS Special Education
Projected Cost per Referral and Total Cost of Referrals
FY 2002 through 2015

	Projected Referrals	Cost per Referral (Annual Increase 6.8%)	Total Cost of Referrals 2004 - 2015
FY 2002	3,693	\$1,130	n/a
FY 2003	3,740	\$1,207	n/a
FY 2004	3,832	\$1,289	\$4,939,448
FY 2005	3,906	\$1,377	\$5,378,562
FY 2006	3,973	\$1,471	\$5,844,283
FY 2007	4,027	\$1,571	\$6,326,417
FY 2008	4,078	\$1,678	\$6,842,884
FY 2009	4,077	\$1,792	\$7,305,984
FY 2010	4,082	\$1,914	\$7,812,948
FY 2011	4,079	\$2,044	\$8,337,476
FY 2012	4,076	\$2,183	\$8,897,908
FY 2013	4,063	\$2,331	\$9,470,853
FY 2014	4,063	\$2,490	\$10,116,870
FY 2015	4,063	\$2,659	\$10,803,517
			\$92,077,150

Source: Office of Special Education, and Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., June 2003.

During FY 2002, 14 percent of referrals did not qualify for special education. As shown in **Exhibit 26**, the district will spend \$14,108,684 over the next 12 years in assessments costs for students that are referred but do not qualify to enter the special education program. For the purposes of calculating this fiscal impact, our methodology assumes that the district could decrease the rate of non-qualifying referrals by providing additional training for teachers. However, it is unrealistic to assume that non-qualifying referrals could be reduced to zero. We therefore provide in our fiscal impact that non-qualifying referrals be reduced by incrementally, starting with 10 percent in FY 2004, 20 percent in 2004-05, 30 percent in 2005-06, and 40 percent in 2006-07. Referral reductions should then be held to 50 percent of projected levels for each subsequent year.

Exhibit 26
FCPS Special Education
Cost of Projected Non-Qualifying Referrals
FY 2002 through 2015

	Projected Referrals	Projected Number of Non-Qualifying Referrals (14%)	Cost per Referral (Annual Increase 6.8%)	Assessment Cost of Non-Qualifying Referrals	Rate of Reduction for Non-Qualifying Referrals	Estimated Savings
FY 2002	3,693	517	\$1,130	\$584,233	n/a	n/a
FY 2003	3,740	524	\$1,207	\$631,985	n/a	n/a
FY 2004	3,832	537	\$1,289	\$692,193	10%	\$69,219
FY 2005	3,906	547	\$1,377	\$752,999	20%	\$150,600
FY 2006	3,973	556	\$1,471	\$818,200	30%	\$245,460
FY 2007	4,027	564	\$1,571	\$885,698	40%	\$354,279
FY 2008	4,078	571	\$1,678	\$958,004	50%	\$479,002
FY 2009	4,077	571	\$1,792	\$1,022,838	50%	\$511,419
FY 2010	4,082	572	\$1,914	\$1,094,808	50%	\$547,404
FY 2011	4,079	571	\$2,044	\$1,167,247	50%	\$583,623
FY 2012	4,076	571	\$2,183	\$1,245,707	50%	\$622,854
FY 2013	4,063	569	\$2,331	\$1,325,919	50%	\$662,960
FY 2014	4,063	569	\$2,490	\$1,416,362	50%	\$708,181
FY 2015	4,063	569	\$2,659	\$1,512,492	50%	\$756,246
				\$14,108,684		\$5,691,247

Source: Office of Special Education, and Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., June 2003.

Many of the implementation steps mentioned below would not involve additional cost to the district. However, some would and the estimated costs of these strategies would reduce the overall cost savings the recommendation. Estimated costs would include additional training and campus grants as presented in **Exhibit 27**. It is also possible that additional staff could be assigned to campuses with money saved through implementation of the staffing recommendations in Section C of this report.

Exhibit 27
Costs to Implement Recommendation I
That Would Offset Savings

Implementation Step	Estimated Cost per Year
<u>Years 1-5</u> 2 days of Child Study Team Training: All Campuses <u>Substitute pay</u> <u>Materials</u> <u>Consultants/Presenters</u>	178 campuses, 5 staff members Per campus = 890 participants Substitute pay for 2 days per person For 890 people = 1,780 substitute days 1,780 substitute days @ \$100 per Day = <u>\$178,000</u> Materials selected by Department of Student Services 1,780 sets of materials @ \$50 per Set = <u>\$89,000</u> Presenters selected by Department of Student Services 16 days of training (2 days per cluster) 2 presenters Presentation fees and travel expenses 16 days for 2 Consultants/presenters = 32 days @ \$2,500 per day = <u>\$80,000</u> TOTAL for Child Study Team Training = <u>\$347,000 per year</u>
<u>Years 2-5</u> Additional training at 10 targeted campuses: Same as above	5% of total costs above = <u>\$17,350 per Year</u>
<u>Years 2-5</u> Competitive "Reduce the Referrals" Grants to 10 Campuses per year	Criteria for activities and selection set jointly by Department of Instruction and Department of Student Services 10 grants @ \$25,000 each = <u>\$250,000 per year</u>
Total Cost Estimate for the Child Study Team Training	\$614,350 per year

Scenario 1

Fiscal Impact of Reducing Number of Qualified Special Education Students by 2 percent, Reducing Assessment Costs for Non-Qualifying Referrals by 14 percent, Less the Costs of Implementing Child Study Team Training.

	Reducing Number of Qualified Special Ed Students	Reducing Number of Referrals	Cost for the Implementation of the Child Study Team	Total
FY 2004	\$221,393	\$69,219	(\$614,350)	(\$323,738)
FY 2005	\$494,177	\$150,600	(\$614,350)	\$30,427
FY 2006	\$824,651	\$245,460	(\$614,350)	\$455,761
FY 2007	\$1,220,016	\$354,279	(\$614,350)	\$959,945
FY 2008	\$1,688,157	\$479,002	(\$614,350)	\$1,552,809
FY 2009	\$2,233,154	\$511,419	(\$614,350)	\$2,130,223
FY 2010	\$2,864,886	\$547,404	(\$614,350)	\$2,797,940
FY 2011	\$3,591,356	\$583,623	(\$614,350)	\$3,560,629
FY 2012	\$4,424,003	\$622,854	(\$614,350)	\$4,432,507
FY 2013	\$5,372,245	\$662,960	(\$614,350)	\$5,420,855
FY 2014	\$6,449,675	\$708,181	(\$614,350)	\$6,543,506
FY 2015	\$7,670,931	\$756,246	(\$614,350)	\$7,812,827
Total	\$37,054,644	\$5,691,247	(\$7,372,200)	\$35,373,691

Scenario 2

Fiscal Impact of Reducing Number of Qualified Special Education Students by 5 percent, Reducing Assessment Costs for Non-Qualifying Referrals by 14 percent, Less the Costs of Implementing Child Study Team Training.

	Reducing Number of Qualified Special Ed Students	Reducing Number of Referrals	Cost for the Implementation of the Child Study Team	Total
FY 2004	\$553,483	\$69,219	(\$614,350)	\$8,352
FY 2005	\$1,235,441	\$150,600	(\$614,350)	\$771,691
FY 2006	\$2,061,628	\$245,460	(\$614,350)	\$1,692,738
FY 2007	\$3,050,040	\$354,279	(\$614,350)	\$2,789,969
FY 2008	\$4,220,392	\$479,002	(\$614,350)	\$4,085,044
FY 2009	\$5,582,886	\$511,419	(\$614,350)	\$5,479,955
FY 2010	\$7,162,215	\$547,404	(\$614,350)	\$7,095,269
FY 2011	\$8,978,390	\$583,623	(\$614,350)	\$8,947,663
FY 2012	\$11,060,007	\$622,854	(\$614,350)	\$11,068,511
FY 2013	\$13,430,612	\$662,960	(\$614,350)	\$13,479,222
FY 2014	\$16,124,187	\$708,181	(\$614,350)	\$16,218,018
FY 2015	\$19,177,328	\$756,246	(\$614,350)	\$19,319,224
Total	\$92,636,609	\$5,691,247	(\$7,372,200)	\$90,955,656

Scenario 3

Fiscal Impact of Reducing Number of Qualified Special Education Students by 10 percent, Reducing Assessment Costs for Non-Qualifying Referrals by 14 percent, Less the Costs of Implementing Child Study Team Training.

	Reducing Number of Qualified Special Ed Students	Reducing Number of Referrals	Cost for the Implementation of the Child Study Team	Total
FY 2004	\$1,106,965	\$69,152	(\$614,350)	\$561,834
FY 2005	\$2,470,883	\$150,600	(\$614,350)	\$2,007,133
FY 2006	\$4,123,256	\$245,460	(\$614,350)	\$3,754,366
FY 2007	\$6,100,080	\$354,279	(\$614,350)	\$5,840,009
FY 2008	\$8,440,784	\$479,002	(\$614,350)	\$8,305,436
FY 2009	\$11,165,772	\$511,419	(\$614,350)	\$11,062,841
FY 2010	\$14,324,431	\$546,906	(\$614,350)	\$14,257,485
FY 2011	\$17,956,779	\$583,623	(\$614,350)	\$17,926,052
FY 2012	\$22,120,014	\$622,854	(\$614,350)	\$22,128,518
FY 2013	\$26,861,223	\$662,960	(\$614,350)	\$26,909,833
FY 2014	\$32,248,374	\$708,181	(\$614,350)	\$32,342,205
FY 2015	\$38,354,656	\$756,246	(\$614,350)	\$38,496,552
Total	\$185,273,217	\$5,691,247	(\$7,372,200)	\$183,592,264

Implementation Strategy

The Instructional Services Department should manage this project, in coordination with the Department of Special Services. The following steps should be taken to reduce the overall number of students in special education, by reducing initial referrals:

- Focus on providing feedback to schools regarding their data in the areas of referral rates, qualification or non-qualification rates, area(s) of disability, etc.
- Require monthly reports from schools and review the data to determine trends, problems, and successes.
- Target campuses with high referral/low qualification rates for specific intervention.
- Write a staff development plan to re-train all campus Child Study Teams.
- Provide training and materials to all teams by cluster. Include topics related to flexible modifications, alternative instructional techniques, specific disability-related strategies, etc.
- Evaluate reading scores, including Stanford, DRA, and SOL data to determine possible over-identification of struggling readers, struggling math students, low income under-achieving students, and non English-speaking students who are failing.
- Provide additional training and support to campuses with excessive referrals related to the problems mentioned in the last suggestion.
- Provide competitive grants that are supervised by Department of Special Services professional staff members to schools to replicate national models, continue to refine successful practices, or initiate new models of pre-referral intervention. Activities could include site visits, conference attendance, materials purchase, staff development, etc.
- Review national models of effective whole-school intervention like *Success for All*, *Accelerated Schools*, etc. Consider piloting promising models at selected campuses with Instructional Services Department guidance and funding.
- Replicate in and out of district models from effective schools.

1. The review team was very impressed with the approaches taken at *Mount Eagle Elementary*, which included a team approach to all initiatives on the campus, a "can do" attitude, follow through after staff development, a focus on effective reading instruction, objective based teaching, flexible use of resources, data-based planning, high expectations, and strong parent involvement.
 2. The review team also suggests replicating the practices in place at *Frost Middle School*. The campus leadership, including department chairs, takes responsibility for all students' learning. The campus uses benchmarks and on-going testing, collaboration and co-teaching among general and special education staff, instructional teams that include both general and special education teachers, a commitment to inclusive approaches, flexibility in meeting students' needs, and strong staff development related to a diverse population to achieve this.
- Consider an evaluation of pre-school programs and referrals. The pre-school program was beyond the scope of this review, but since the number of referrals at that level is very high, a systematic review seems in order.

B. CENTERS

This section discusses the special education centers in FCPS. The centers are the most restrictive placements for students with disabilities in the school district. They are also some of the most expensive. While the potential savings from making changes to center-based services are significant, they will not be as great as the savings realized by reducing referrals or changing staffing formulas. However, the center-based service delivery model is highly restrictive and represents the inability of the district to successfully meet many students' needs on regular campuses. Most of the students in the centers have emotional disorders; however there are many other nationally recognized service delivery models that might provide better services to students with emotional disturbance at a lower cost to the district. Before examining the centers in more detail, it is helpful to understand how this instructional arrangement fits into a special education continuum of services.

Restrictiveness of Center Placements and the Law

A cornerstone of IDEA is the provision known as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirement, 20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a) (5), which states:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

A school district is required to maintain a full continuum of educational settings in which to serve students with disabilities. From this continuum of settings, the IEP committee is to determine, for each individual student, which setting is the LRE. The outcome of litigation in special education has, over the years, maintained a commitment to serving students in the least restrictive environment possible. The case of *Daniel R.R. v. El Paso ISD*, 874 F.2d 1036 (1989) helped provide guidelines to districts by setting out a four part inquiry that an IEP committee must consider in placing a child in the LRE:

1. May education in the regular classroom, with the use of supplemental aids and services, be achieved satisfactorily for a given child?
2. Has the school district taken good faith, not token, steps to accommodate the child by making modifications in the regular classroom?
3. What are the relative benefits to the child from mainstreaming, as compared to a more restrictive setting?
4. What are the effects on other students of placing the child in a regular class?

In reviewing the *Daniel R. R.* case, it is clear that a high standard must be met to show that a child should be removed from a regular campus to a separate school. In general, districts must show that all reasonable less restrictive options on a regular campus have been exhausted and that the student is too dangerous or disruptive to be served on the regular campus before a more restrictive placement can be considered. This is a very high standard to meet. At FCPS, 5.2 percent of special education students are served in centers instead of on a regular campus.

FCPS has made significant progress in achieving the school board target to increasing the capacity of all campuses to serve a broader range of students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools. The direct support provided for schools through the inclusive school teacher facilitators, the pyramid resource specialists, and through capacity building grants is highly effective. School-based staff members have access to a wide range of staff development opportunities related to inclusive schools. Data collected by the Department of Special Services indicates strong participation by general education and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and school based administrators. In 2002, the district received a commendation from the Virginia Department of Education during Federal Program Monitoring for exemplary inclusive school practices.

Demographic Information about the Centers

FCPS has 21 special education centers. The special education centers are categorized in the federal reporting system as separate public facilities and, except for day treatment, residential, and hospital placements, are the most restrictive special education environments in the district. Two of the 21 centers, Davis and Pulley, are Career and Transition centers that provide career and life skills development to students with disabilities. These two centers also coordinate transition to post

secondary service providers and typically work with older students, including some with mental retardation and multiple disabilities. Of the remaining 19 centers, three are stand alone centers and the other 16 are connected to a school and called "co-located." **Exhibit 28** illustrates the centers by type (stand alone or connected), and by level.

Exhibit 28
Special Education Centers by Type and Level

Center	Type	Level
Armstrong	Co-located Program	Elementary
Brookfield	Co-located Program	Elementary
Burke School	Separate Facility	Middle School
Bush Hill	Co-located Program	Elementary
Camelot	Co-located Program	Birth through Grade Six (Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
Cedar Lane	Separate Facility	High School
Chantilly	Co-located Program	High School
Davis	Separate Facility	Vocational/Transition
Franconia	Co-located Program	Elementary
Herndon	Co-located Program	Middle School
Key	Co-located Program	All Grade Levels
Kilmer	Co-located Program	Middle School
Laurel Ridge	Co-located Program	Elementary
Mount Vernon	Co-located Program	High School
North Springfield	Co-located Program	Elementary
Olde Creek	Co-located Program	Elementary
Pulley	Separate Facility	Vocational/Transition
Quander Road School	Separate Facility	High School
Saratoga	Co-located Program	Elementary
Twain	Co-located Program	Middle School
Woodson	Co-located Program	High School

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools website.

Approximately 5.2 percent of the district's special education students are placed in centers. **Exhibit 29** shows that the number of students served in each center ranges from a low 15 at Franconia Center of to a high of 106 at Woodson. Woodson, Quander Road and Cedar Lane Centers serve the largest percentage of center-based students. The review team was told that Franconia Center was scheduled to be closed at the end of FY 2003.

Exhibit 29
Number of Special Education Students Served
At Each Special Education Center

Center	Number
Armstrong	54
Brookfield	38
Burke School	52
Bush Hill	30
Camelot	47
Cedar Lane	90
Chantilly	70
Davis	70
Franconia	15
Herndon	54
Key	83
Kilmer	70
Laurel Ridge	38
Mount Vernon	83
North Springfield	30
Olde Creek	23
Pulley	58
Quander Road School	92
Saratoga	45
Twain	60
Woodson	106
Total Number of Students Placed in Special Education Centers	1,208
Percent of All Special Education Students Placed in Centers	5.2%

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Special Education, December 2002, Received March 2003.

Exhibit 30 illustrates the number of students by disability served at each center. The exhibit shows that most students served in centers have an emotional disturbance (52 percent). Students with multiple physical disabilities and students who are medically fragile are commonly served in separate settings. Highly intensive needs, such as those for health services, an adapted environment, access to specialized equipment, and other resources, often dictate center-based. For many students with emotional disabilities, a more restrictive placement, off a regular campus, is also a necessity. When students' emotional problems include severe disorders that require very close monitoring, intensive psychological services, safety management, medication monitoring, a very low student to staff ratio, or other related services, then a highly restrictive placement is appropriate and necessary. However, when patterns of placement become common just because restrictive placements are available, districts are likely to have difficulty controlling the enrollment in those restrictive placements. We believe that such is the case at FCPS.

Exhibit 30
Number of Students by Disability at each Center

Center	AUT	DD	ED	HI	SLD	MD	MOD	MR	OHI	OI	SD	SLI	TBI	VI
Armstrong	0	0	34	0	4	2	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0
Brookfield	0	0	29	1	2	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Burke School	1	0	34	0	10	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Bush Hill	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	8	15	0	0	0	0	0
Camelot	0	2	0	42	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cedar Lane	0	0	77	0	6	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Chantilly	0	0	49	0	9	3	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0
Davis	6	0	4	2	4	11	0	40	1	1	0	0	0	0
Franconia	0	0	13	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Herndon	0	0	37	0	7	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0
Key	4	0	0	0	0	13	0	8	1	0	56	0	0	1
Kilmer	11	0	0	0	0	10	2	1	1	0	45	0	0	0
Laurel Ridge	0	0	25	0	5	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Mount Vernon	2	0	66	0	2	6	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
North Springfield	3	0	17	0	4	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0
Olde Creek	1	0	15	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Pulley	3	0	1	1	1	7	5	37	2	1	0	0	0	0
Quander Road School	0	0	71	0	9	1	0	1	9	0	0	0	1	0
Saratoga	1	0	30	0	2	2	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0
Twain	1	0	45	0	6	1	0	0	7	0	0	1	0	0
Woodson	0	0	84	0	4	5	0	0	12	0	0	0	1	0
Total	33	2	631	46	77	83	8	96	124	2	101	1	2	1
Total %	3%	<1%	49%	4%	6%	7%	1%	7%	9%	1%	8%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Source: FCPS Office of Special Education.

Legend: AUT=autism, DD=developmental disabilities, ED=emotional disturbance, HI=hearing impairments, SLD=learning disabilities, MD=multiple disabilities, MOD=, MR=mental retardation, OHI=other health impairments, OI=orthopedic impairments, SD=severe disabilities, SLI=speech or language impairments, TBI=traumatic brain injured, VI=visual impairments.

Costs at Centers

The costs associated with educating students in highly restrictive, separate facilities are typically very high. **Exhibit 31** illustrates the total expenditures and expenditures per student at each center. Expenditures per student range from \$12,770 to \$38,726. Expenditures per student are highest at Burke, Franconia, and Olde Creek. Burke Center is a stand-alone middle school center that serves mainly students with emotional disturbance and some students with learning disabilities. Burke School serves 4.3 percent of all students in centers. Olde Creek Center, housed at an elementary school, serves 1.9 percent of all students in centers and hosts students who have emotional disturbances and multiple disabilities. Woodson has the lowest expenditures per student serves students with emotional disturbance, other health impairments, learning disabilities and multiple disabilities.

Exhibit 31
Total Expenditures and Expenditures per Student
At Each Special Education Center
FY 2003

Center	Total Expenditures	Expenditures Per Student
Armstrong	\$740,351	\$13,710
Brookfield	\$767,830	\$20,206
Burke School	\$1,710,908	\$32,902
Bush Hill	\$742,284	\$24,743
Camelot	\$1,249,151	\$26,578
Cedar Lane	\$2,203,676	\$24,485
Chantilly	\$1,270,654	\$18,152
Davis	\$1,579,747	\$22,568
Franconia	\$580,893	\$38,726
Herndon	\$1,286,633	\$23,827
Key	\$2,221,204	\$26,761
Kilmer	\$2,056,708	\$29,382
Laurel Ridge	\$668,357	\$17,588
Mount Vernon	\$1,477,950	\$17,807
North Springfield	\$508,106	\$16,937
Olde Creek	\$870,271	\$37,838
Pulley	\$1,494,127	\$25,761
Quander Road School	\$2,219,979	\$24,130
Saratoga	\$751,324	\$16,696
Twain	\$1,057,155	\$17,619
Woodson	\$1,353,677	\$12,771
TOTAL	\$26,810,985	\$22,195

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools FY 03 Budget (All Funds)

Exhibit 32 illustrates the combined FY 2003 budget for all centers, by type of expenditure. The majority of expenditures in centers are for teachers, instructional or specialized assistants, specialists and principals. In most cases, a center has only one principal and one specialist. While the 1,208 students in the district's special education centers represent approximately 5.2 percent of the students in the special education program, the \$26,810,985 cost of operating the centers is approximately 10 percent of the total special education budget.

Exhibit 32
Budget by Object for All Special Education Centers,

Center	Budget
Assistant Principals	\$425,121
Custodial Personnel	\$343,281
Equipment	\$25
Facilities Modifications	\$1,224
Hourly Salaries	\$193,847
Instructional Assistants	\$2,601,709
Materials and Supplies	\$422,482
Office Assistant Personnel	\$1,365,522
Overtime	\$4,400
Principals	\$1,828,526
School Initiatives	\$25,425
Specialists	\$2,272,635
Specialized Assistants	\$1,498,325
Staff Training	\$42,305
Substitute Costs - Leave	\$426,864
Substitute Costs - Training	\$4,794
Supplements	\$34,302
Teachers	\$14,427,236
Technical Personnel	\$894,667
Transportation	(\$1,705)
TOTAL	\$26,810,985

Source: FY 003 Budget (All Funds).

Personnel at Centers

Because the largest expense for centers is personnel, **Exhibit 33** illustrates the number of students, teachers and instructional/specialized assistants in each center. As outlined in the exhibit, the number of teachers and assistants is not contingent on the number of students served in that center. For example, Armstrong Center has 54 students and 9 teachers, whereas Burke School Center has 52 students and 19 teachers. Virginia has very clear staffing formulas, but these staffing formulas do not appear to be a consideration at the centers. However, Virginia also requires that each student in special education receive at least some services from a teacher who is endorsed in his or her disability status (§ VAC 20-80-45 2(c)). The impact of this requirement is discussed further in the next section on staffing.

Exhibit 33
Number of Teachers and Instructional or Specialized Assistants by Center*
FY 2003

Center	Number of Students	Teachers	Instructional/ Specialized Assistants
Armstrong	54	9	6
Brookfield	38	8.5	6
Burke School	52	19	8
Bush Hill	30	6.5	5
Camelot	47	13.5	11
Cedar Lane	90	22	11
Chantilly	70	14.5	7
Davis	70	17	14
Franconia	15	6	3
Herndon	54	14.5	10
Key	83	20.5	16
Kilmer	70	19	14
Laurel Ridge	38	8	5
Mount Vernon	83	18.5	11
North Springfield	30	5	4
Olde Creek	23	9	6
Pulley	58	16	14
Quander Road School	92	22	12
Saratoga	45	9	6
Twain	60	13.5	6
Woodson	106	16.5	10
TOTAL	1,208	287.5	185

Source: Office of Special Education. Communication in March 2003.

* Number of Students based on December 1 Count for 2002.

Exhibit 34 presents the ratio of teachers to students, assistants to students, and the ratio of the combined total of teachers and assistants to students. These ratios are, in most cases, lower than the state guidelines.

Exhibit 34
Teacher: Student Ratio and Instructional/Specialized Assistant: Student Ratio
For the Centers
FY 2003

Center	Teacher: Student Ratio	Assistant: Student Ratio	Teacher and Assistant: Student Ratio
Armstrong	1:6.0	1:9.0	1:3.6
Brookfield	1:4.5	1:6.3	1:2.6
Burke School	1:2.7	1:6.5	1:1.9
Bush Hill	1:4.6	1:6.0	1:2.6
Camelot	1:3.5	1:4.3	1:1.9
Cedar Lane	1:4.1	1:8.2	1:2.7
Chantilly	1:4.8	1:10.0	1:3.3
Davis	1:4.1	1:5.0	1:2.3
Franconia	1:2.5	1:5.0	1:1.7
Herndon	1:3.7	1:5.4	1:2.2
Key	1:4.0	1:5.2	1:2.3
Kilmer	1:3.7	1:5.0	1:2.1
Laurel Ridge	1:4.8	1:7.6	1:2.9
Mount Vernon	1:4.5	1:7.5	1:2.8
North Springfield	1:6.0	1:7.5	1:3.3
Olde Creek	1:2.6	1:3.8	1:1.5
Pulley	1:3.6	1:4.1	1:1.9
Quander Road School	1:4.2	1:7.7	1:2.7
Saratoga	1:5.0	1:7.5	1:3.0
Twain	1:4.4	1:10.0	1:3.1
Woodson	1:6.4	1:10.6	1:4.1
Average	1:4.3	1:6.8	1:2.6

Source: Office of Special Education Budget Office, March 2003.

Student Achievement at Centers

To determine the academic outcomes at the centers, the review team requested data achievement data. However, the achievement data available for the centers is not consistent and reflects a lack of data analysis at both the district level and at some individual centers. Virginia Standards of Learning test scores for elementary center students are not reported as a school; rather these scores are sent back to students' base schools and counted in the base school aggregate of scores. This practice was initiated by FCPS, with approval by the Virginia Department of Education, for purposes of state reporting. However, this information is still critical for local reporting and performance accountability. As a result of these reporting practices, center-based data were not available to the review team.

During our site visits, some center administrators were very focused on their students' academic progress, knew exactly how well students doing, and could articulate their instructional goals clearly. At one other center, an administrator informed the review team that academics were not a concern and that test scores are meaningless. This attitude is unfortunate since many students with emotional disorders are very bright and have great academic potential.

Examining scores on the SOLs by center should be done with caution. The total number of students taking the test (the "N") is very small and the N at each grade level is even smaller. This means that in many cases, one or two students' scores can have a great impact on overall failing rates. In addition, the students at the centers have very serious disabilities that impact their academic performance. However,

these data allow comparisons with other students in the district, which is helpful in determining what academic progress is being made. The overall cost per student in the centers is so high that outcomes should be a consideration in evaluating their effectiveness.

The next eight exhibits, **Exhibit 35** through **42** present FY 2002 SOL participation rates and achievement results for the centers in which the students take the SOLs (see Appendix D for FY 2001 achievement results). The achievement charts are similar to those in the referral section and show the failing rates of students taking the SOL tests at nine of the centers compared to the district's average failing rates on the same tests. The data are presented as ascending and descending bars (by reading scores) that represent the difference between the average failing rate for the district and the failing rate for the students taking the test at the center. If the bar descends below the district average, the students taking the test at that center had a higher percent of failing students than the district average. The further the descent, the greater the difference in failing rates and the worse the students did on the test. Conversely, if the bar ascends above the district average, the center had fewer failing students than the district average. The higher the ascent, the better the students did on the test.

Exhibit 35 shows the number of grade 3 students at each center who took the SOL English and mathematics tests in 2002.

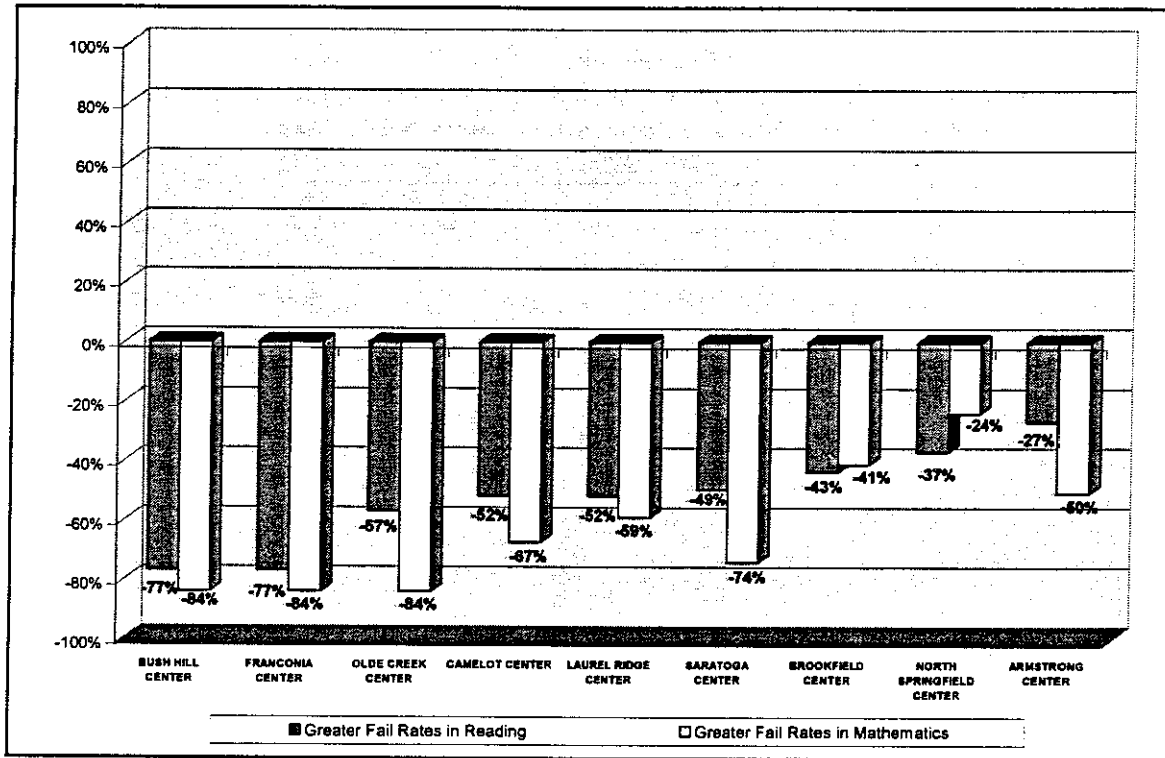
Exhibit 35
Number of Students Taking the SOL by Center and Test in Grade 3
2002

School	English	Mathematics
Armstrong Center	6	6
Brookfield Center	6	7
Bush Hill Center	2	1
Camelot Center	8	6
Franconia Center	1	3
Laurel Ridge Center	4	4
North Springfield Center	5	5
Olde Creek Center	5	5
Saratoga Center	11	10

Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Exhibit 36 shows the third grade scores. All of the centers had more failing students than the district average. The lowest reading and math scores were at Bush Hill, Franconia, and Olde Creek Centers. The failing rates for reading exceeded the district's failing rates by as much as 77 percent at some centers. In math, students' failing rates exceeded the district average by 24 percent to 84 percent.

Exhibit 36
Grade 3 SOL Reading and Mathematics Center Fail Rates for Students
Tested Compared to District Fail Rates
FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Exhibit 37 shows the number of grade 5 students at each center who took the SOL English and mathematics tests in 2002.

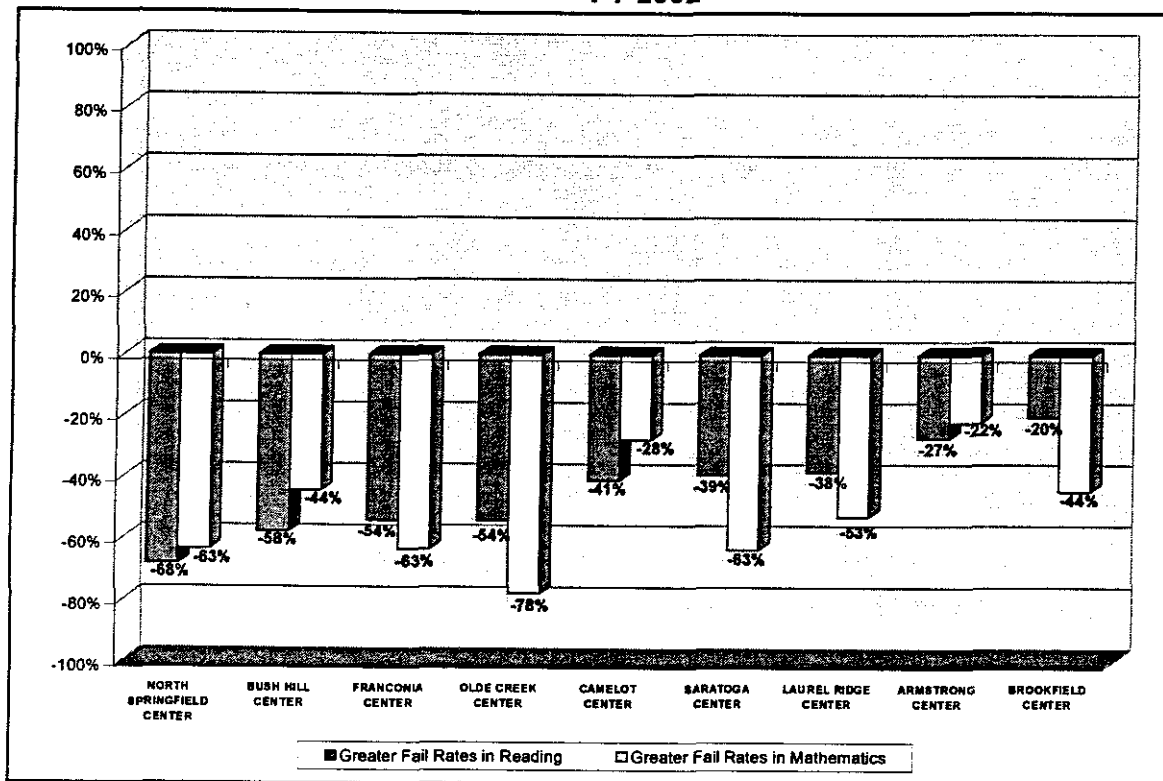
Exhibit 37
Number of Students Taking the SOL by Center and Test in Grade 5
2002

School	English: Reading	Mathematics
Armstrong Center	9	9
Brookfield Center	8	9
Bush Hill Center	4	3
Camelot Center	12	12
Franconia Center	7	7
Laurel Ridge Center	9	8
North Springfield Center	7	7
Olde Creek Center	7	7
Saratoga Center	23	21

Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Exhibit 38 shows the FY 2002 fifth grade SOL scores at nine centers. All of the centers had more failing students than the district average. The centers whose failing rates for reading exceeded the district average the most were North Springfield, Bush Hill, Franconia, and Olde Creek Centers. In math, students' failing rates exceeded the district average by 22 percent to 78 percent.

Exhibit 38
Grade 5 SOL Reading and Mathematics Center Fail Rates
For Students Tested Compared to District Fail Rates
FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003

Exhibit 39 shows the number of grade 8 students taking the SOL English and mathematics tests in 2002.

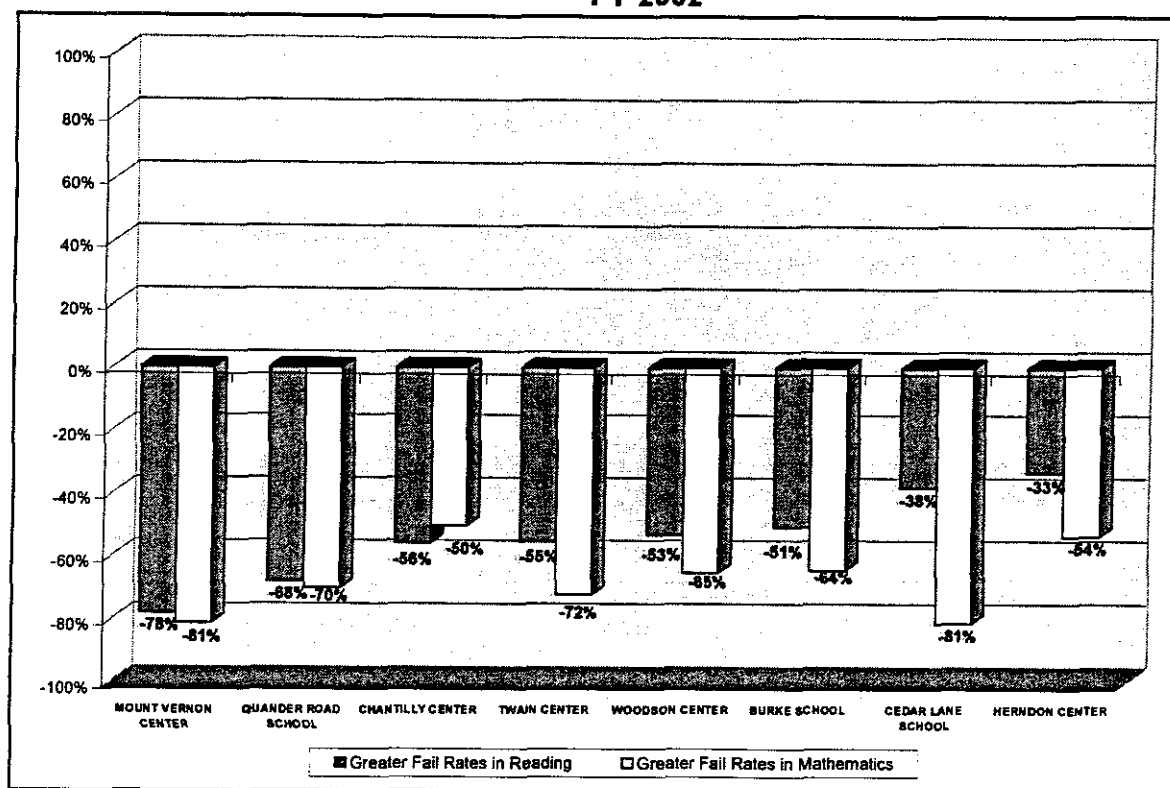
Exhibit 39
Number of Students Taking the SOL by Center and Test in Grade 8
2002

School	English: Reading	Mathematics
Burke School	33	30
Cedar Lane School	5	5
Chantilly Center	9	13
Herndon Center	29	29
Mount Vernon Center	6	6
Quander Road School	20	18
Twain Center	22	22
Woodson Center	20	25

Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

On the eighth grade reading and math tests, students' failure rates the district average at every center and ranged from 33 to 78 percent higher in reading and 50 to 81 percent higher in math (**Exhibit 40**). Mount Vernon and Quander Road centers exceeded the district average the most in reading. While in math, Mount Vernon and Cedar Lane centers exceeded the district average the most.

Exhibit 40
Grade 8 SOL Reading and Mathematics Center Fail Rates
For Students Tested Compared to District Fail Rates
FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Exhibit 41 shows the number of student taking the end of course SOL test, by center for 2002.

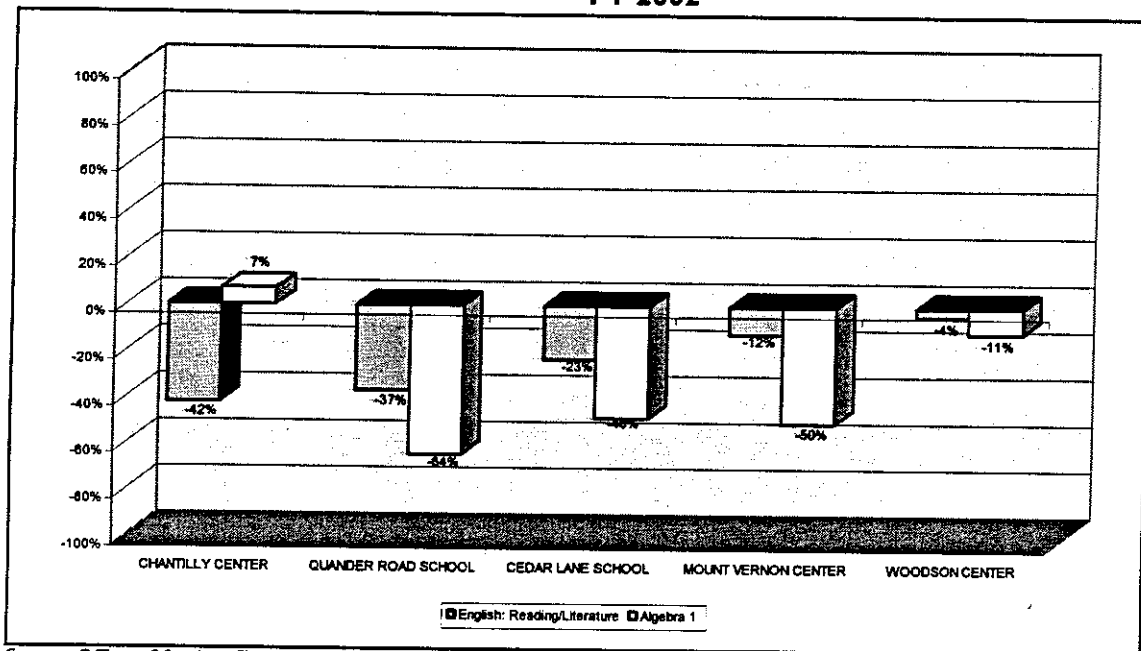
Exhibit 41
Number of Students Taking the End of Course SOL Test, by Center
2002

School	English: Reading/Literature	Mathematics
Cedar Lane School	14	24
Chantilly Center	11	13
Herndon Center	28	1
Mount Vernon Center	16	25
Quander Road School	23	18
Woodson Center	14	16

Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

The failing rates for students taking the English: Reading/Literature and Algebra I end of course exams are shown for the five high school centers in **Exhibit 42**. Again, all of the centers had failing rates that exceeded the district average on both exams except Chantilly Center in math and Woodson Center in reading. . Woodson Center's failing rates were the closest to the district average in both areas.

Exhibit 42
End of Course SOL English: Reading/Literature and Algebra I Center Fail Rates
For Students Tested Compared to District Fail Rates
FY 2002



Source: Office of Student Testing, Division of Educational Accountability, May 2003.

Conceptual Model of the Interaction between Center Costs and Student Achievement

In summary, the achievement outcomes of center students do not support the high costs of operating the centers. The per student cost of the centers is higher than every other special education instructional arrangement in FCPS. Conversely, the achievement levels of center-based students are among the lowest. These factors support the development of center alternatives targeted to improve the quality of service and reduce costs.

Recommendation 2:

Close two centers every two years, ultimately reducing the number of centers from 21 to 5.

Fiscal Considerations and Variables Related to Recommendations for the Centers

FCPS special education centers are expensive, both in terms of overall costs and cost per student. More importantly, the centers are extremely restrictive. While some of the co-located programs encourage students' education, for at least part of the day, with their non-disabled peers, many do not. These students in the centers have few opportunities to model appropriate social skills, participate in challenging academic classes, and begin a re-integration process back into mainstream school settings.

In determining the advantages of the individual centers additional data would have been helpful. However, the district lacks a consolidated data management system, making data collection very labor intensive for the school district. In the short time allowed for this review, it was impossible to gather and analyze data related to graduation rates for all center students, mobility rates for all center students, and most important, the number and percent of center students who successfully re-integrate to less restrictive settings. The only reliable data available for comparisons was the academic data. Given the cost of the programs and the lack of demonstrable positive outcomes, we recommend closing some of the centers in the FY 2005, and closing additional centers during the FY 2007.

Several variables were considered in selecting centers whose closing would have the least negative impact. The variables we considered were:

- The number of students served.
- Disabilities of and services provided to students.
- Achievement scores of students in reading and math.
- Total and per student expenditures.
- Age of students served, with special consideration given to not disrupting middle school students.
- Location of the centers and availability of other centers in the cluster.
- Opportunities for inclusion with non-disabled peers.

After reviewing each variable, we recommend closing Old Creek and Quander Road centers during FY 2005.

The review team also considered the disabilities of students at each center and the type of program, including specialized services not available elsewhere in the district. For these reasons, we suggest that the following centers remain in operation and not be closed:

- Key
- Kilmer
- Davis
- Pulley
- Camelot

For the centers that remain open, we suggest the district increase oversight of these programs, including:

- Academic accountability
- Attendance and truancy rates
- Graduation rates
- Number of students re-integrated to less restrictive environments
- Dropout rates
- Follow-up data on employment, continued education, independent living

Fiscal Impact for FY 2005

FCPS will save a total of \$1,575,276 in FY 2005 by eliminating 37.5 of 67 positions at Olde Creek and Quander Road. Incumbents should be used to fill existing vacancies where possible. The remaining 29.5 positions will transfer with students to other centers or schools. The following exhibits explain how the savings calculation was derived beginning with **Exhibit 43**, which shows the number of positions that will be eliminated and the number of positions to be transferred with the students.

Exhibit 43
Positions to be Eliminated or Transferred
at Olde Creek and Quander Road Centers
FY 2003

Position	Olde Creek	Quander Road	Total	Eliminated	Transfer with Student
Assistant Principal	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0
Custodial Personnel	0	4.0	4.0	4.0	0
Instructional Assistants	6.0	12.0	18.0	12.0	6.0
Office Assistant Personnel	1.5	3.0	4.5	4.5	0
Principal	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	0
Specialist	2.0	3.5	5.5	2.0	3.5
Teachers	9.0	22.0	31.0	11.0	20.0
Technical Personnel	0	1.0	1.0	1	0
Total	19.5	47.5	67.0	37.5	29.5

Source: FY 2003 and Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Exhibit 44 provides the percentage breakdown of positions to be eliminated throughout the district and those transferred with students to other locations.

Exhibit 44
Percent of Positions to be Filled or Follow Students
at Olde Creek and Quander Road Centers

Position	# of Positions to be Eliminated	# of Staff to Transfer with Students	Total	% of Positions to be Eliminated	% of Staff to Transfer with Students	% Total
Assistant Principal	1.0	0	1.0	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Custodial Personnel	4.0	0	4.0	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Instructional Assistants	12.0	6.0	18.0	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Office Assistant Personnel	4.5	0	4.5	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Principal	2.0	0	2.0	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Specialist	2.0	3.5	5.5	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
Teachers	11.0	20.0	31.0	35.5%	64.5%	100.0%
Technical Personnel	1.0	0	1.0	100.0%	0%	100.0%
Total	37.5	29.5	67.0	56.0%	44.0%	100.0%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Exhibit 45 shows the budgeted expenditures for positions and other related costs for Quander and Olde Creek Centers. These expenditures are used to determine the amount that will be saved.

Exhibit 45
Budget Expenditures for Positions and Other Related Costs
FY 2003

Position	Quander Road	Olde Creek	Total
Assistant Principals	\$93,450	\$0	\$93,450
Custodial Personnel	\$126,745	\$0	\$126,745
Instructional Assistants	\$266,555	\$121,631	\$388,186
Office Assistant Personnel	\$110,576	\$54,859	\$165,435
Principals	\$98,121	\$88,488	\$186,609
Specialists	\$216,655	\$134,506	\$351,161
Substitutes Costs	\$27,700	\$12,337	\$40,036
Teachers	\$1,203,588	\$448,482	\$1,652,070
Technical Personnel	\$24,297	\$0	\$24,297
Total	\$2,167,687	\$860,303	\$3,027,990

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Exhibit 46 shows the total savings of \$1,575,276 based on taking the total expenditures from **Exhibit 45** and multiplying by the percentages shown in **Exhibit 44**.

Exhibit 46
Savings for Positions and Other Related Expenditures
For Olde Creek and Quander Centers

Position	Total	Savings from Eliminating Positions	Staff to Remain in Special Education and Transfer with Students
Assistant Principals	\$93,450	\$93,450	\$0
Custodial Personnel	\$126,745	\$126,745	\$0
Instructional Assistants	\$388,186	\$260,085	\$128,101
Office Assistant Personnel	\$165,435	\$165,435	\$0
Principals	\$186,609	\$186,609	\$0
Specialists	\$351,161	\$126,418	\$224,743
Substitutes Costs	\$40,036	\$14,013	\$26,024
Teachers	\$1,652,071	\$578,225	\$1,073,846
Technical Personnel	\$24,297	\$24,297	\$0
Total	\$3,027,990	\$1,575,276	\$1,452,714

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Fiscal Impact for FY2007

FCPS will save a total of \$1,109,109 in FY 2007 school year and every year thereafter. This calculation takes the average of the total position expenditures for the remaining 13 centers that we recommend closing and uses the same percentages to determine the savings used for the Quander and Olde Creek Centers. The following exhibits will explain how the savings calculation was derived beginning with **Exhibit 47**, which shows the number of positions that will be eliminated and the number to transfer with students.

Exhibit 47
Savings for Positions and Other Related Expenditures
For Two Centers

Position	Total	Savings from Eliminating Positions	Staff to Remain in Special Education and Transfer with Students
Assistant Principals	\$6,373	\$6,373	\$0
Custodial Personnel	\$16,657	\$16,657	\$0
Instructional Assistants	\$144,851	\$97,050	\$47,801
Office Assistant Personnel	\$57,905	\$57,905	\$0
Principals	\$95,329	\$95,329	\$0
Specialists	\$119,939	\$43,178	\$76,761
Substitutes Costs	\$17,563	\$6,147	\$11,416
Teachers	\$605,814	\$212,034	\$393,780
Technical Personnel	\$19,881	\$19,881	\$0
Total Expenditures for 1 Center	\$1,084,312	\$554,554	\$529,758
Multiply by two	2 centers	2centers	2 centers
Total for Two Centers	\$2,168,624	\$1,109,108	\$1,059,516

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Fiscal Impact for FY2005 through FY09

Exhibit 48 displays the total savings for 2004-05 through 2008-09.

Exhibit 48
Savings for Positions and Other Related Expenditures
For Two Centers

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Savings from Quander and Olde Creek	\$1,575,276	\$1,575,276	\$1,575,276	\$1,575,276	\$1,575,276
Savings from Elimination of 2 centers beginning 2006-07	\$0	\$0	\$1,109,108	\$1,109,108	\$1,109,108
Savings from Elimination of 2 centers beginning 2008-09	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,109,108
Total	\$1,575,276	\$1,575,276	\$2,684,384	\$2,684,384	\$3,793,492

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Total Fiscal Impact of Recommendation

	Savings from Quander and Olde Creek	Savings from Elimination of 2 Centers Every Other Year	Total by Year
2004-05	\$1,575,276	\$0	\$1,575,276
2005-06	\$1,575,276	\$0	\$1,575,276
2006-07	\$1,575,276	\$1,109,108	\$2,684,384
2007-08	\$1,575,276	\$1,109,108	\$2,684,384
2008-09	\$1,575,276	\$2,218,216	\$3,793,492
2009-10	\$1,575,276	\$2,218,216	\$3,793,492
2010-11	\$1,575,276	\$3,327,324	\$4,902,600
2011-12	\$1,575,276	\$3,327,324	\$4,902,600
2012-13	\$1,575,276	\$4,436,432	\$6,011,708
2013-14	\$1,575,276	\$4,436,432	\$6,011,708
2014-15	\$1,575,276	\$5,545,540	\$7,120,816
Total	\$17,328,036	\$27,727,700	\$45,055,736

Implementation Strategy

The Department of Student Services should coordinate this project. The following steps should be taken to close the centers:

2003-2004

- Improve accountability over student performance in centers by making key data available to center principals, Cluster Directors, and Special Education management. Data elements should include:
 - SOL data
 - Alternative assessment data
 - Mobility rates
 - Attendance data
- Use the following model programs and sources to guide development of a plan to more effectively place students who are emotionally disturbed in general education environments.
 1. *Beacons of Excellence, an Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded project.*
 - This project identified factors associated with schools whose students with disabilities were achieving exemplary learning results within the context of all students achieving such results.
 - Studied how curricula, instruction, leadership, and other factors contribute to exemplary results for *all* high school students.
 - Modeled on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award framework.
 - Data-based model with a variety of data collection strategies.
 - Selected four schools from 114 nominated to see how they worked. Focused on standards-based learning and viewed a separate special education system as inconsistent with their goals. Schools were Fred J. Page High School, High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology, William H. Turner Technical Arts High School, and Sinagua High School.
 2. *MOSAIC, an EDC Report Series*
 - Focuses on inclusive practices in the context of school reform.

- Center for Applied Special Technologies (CAST) supports a view of universally accessible curriculum.
- 3. *Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice*
 - Focuses specifically on students with emotional disturbance and issues related to effective practices.
 - Examines restrictiveness of placements and the characteristics of programs that work.
 - OSEP funded to support research with this population.
 - Developed a *National Agenda* to serve as the basis for state planning and evaluation efforts.
 - Provides a list of "Success Stories," 19 programs nationwide that can be replicated. They include:
 - a. BEST professional development program implemented at Newman Elementary School and Bennion Middle School in Utah.
 - b. Kentucky IMPACT Program with wraparound services for families.
 - c. Stark County, Ohio program implemented at Stanton Middle School and Summit Elementary School in Canton using the Accelerated Schools model.
- 4. *Virginia Department of Education*
 - Provides information on "Best Practices" that are supported by scientific research.
 - Provides a list of Best Practice programs for violence prevention.
- Train teachers and administrators throughout the district in: inclusion practices, positive behavior supports, crisis intervention, and collaborative techniques.
- Obtain community support by holding public forums. Discuss IDEA, inclusion practices, and cost benefits for closing centers.
- Decide how to use the Quander Road facility.
- Decide where to place Olde Creek and Quander Road students, sending them to less restrictive placements whenever possible. This must be done before school opens in the fall of year two. Two choices exist for Olde Creek Center and three choices exist for Quander Road Center. Students currently served at Olde Creek could be sent to a less restrictive center such as Laurel Ridge. Olde Creek students might also go back to their base schools. In most cases only one student at any given elementary school. Students currently served at Quander Road may need to be placed at Cedar Lane, which is at the same level of restrictiveness as Quander Road. Quander Road students could also be placed at Woodson Center, a less restrictive center, or placed back at their base schools. The review team encourages that the least restrictive placement be considered for all students. Work collaboratively with schools who will receive students. This may necessitate the placement of some Woodson and Laurel Ridge students back at their base schools.
- Decide where to place current staff. **Exhibit 49** below illustrates the personnel for the two centers.

Exhibit 49
Personnel Staffed at Olde Creek and Quander Road Centers

Position	Olde Creek	Quander Road
Assistant Principal	0	1
Custodial Personnel	0	4
Instructional Assistants	6	12
Office Assistant Personnel	1.5	3
Principal	1	1
Specialists	2	3.5
Teachers	9	22
Technical Personnel	0	1

Source: FY 2003 Budget All Funds.

Use these guidelines to make the decisions:

- a) the two principals and one assistant principal could be placed in open positions, retire, or be placed at a campus in a new position as a special education assistant principal;
- b) 11 of the teachers should be placed in open positions, if available or terminated and the remaining 20 should be transferred with the students;
- c) 12 of the instructional assistant should be placed in open positions, if available or these positions should be eliminated and the remaining, 6 should transfer with the students;
- d) 2 of the specialists should be placed in open positions, if available or terminated and the remaining 3.5 should be transferred with the students;
- e) all 4.5 office assistant personnel should be placed in open positions, if available, or terminated;
- f) all 4 custodial personnel should be placed in open positions, if available, or terminated; and
- g) the one technical personnel should be placed in an open position, if available or terminated.

2004-2005

- Close Olde Creek and Quander Road centers.
- Continue to train teachers and administrators in: inclusion practices, positive behavior supports, crisis intervention, and collaborative techniques.
- Continue to obtain public support through public forums.

2005-2006

- Decide which two centers to close during year four based on the criteria presented earlier. Make the same types of decisions discussed above in deciding where to place the students.
- Continue to train teachers and administrators in: inclusion practices, positive behavior supports, crisis intervention, and collaborative techniques.
- Decide where to place current staff.

2006-2007

- Close two more centers.
- Continue to train teachers and administrators on campuses throughout the district in: inclusion practices, positive behavior supports, crisis intervention, and collaborative techniques.

2007-2008

- Decide which two centers to close during year six based on the criteria presented earlier. Make the same types of decisions discussed above in deciding where to place the students.
- Continue to train teachers and administrators in: inclusion practices, positive behavior supports, crisis intervention, functional behavior assessments, and collaborative techniques.
- Decide where to place current staff.

C. STAFFING

This section discusses current Virginia and FCPS staffing requirements for special education programs. It also provides a comparison between Virginia's two staffing options and FCPS' staffing ratios and makes recommendations for staffing changes in FCPS. This review specifically examines the staffing of special education teachers and instructional assistants (called paraprofessionals in VA Staffing Requirements) at the school-age level. The special education preschool program is beyond the scope of this review; therefore, non-categorical early childhood was not taken into consideration. Special Education staffing in Virginia is very complex, and is further complicated by Virginia teacher licensure requirements. We have attempted to present this issue in terms that can be easily understood, but the complex and technical nature of the information made this difficult. Part of the difficulty is due to the nature of special education; however, FCPS' staffing formulas add complexity to the equation.

The Department of Student Services (DSS) is to be commended for having already initiated the planning for a different staffing model. After obtaining input from principals, via focus groups, DSS staff members developed a conceptual model using a weighted formula approach; the proposed model is designed to be cost neutral consistent with principals' concerns that, at a minimum, the current special education staffing levels be maintained. Staff members have presented the conceptual model to the Leadership Team, principal groups, and the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities and also plan to present it to the school board prior to implementation.

Virginia provides two staffing options for its school districts. These two options specify the maximum caseloads that are allowed in classrooms that serve special education students. As discussed in the background, Virginia staffing is based on the services provided to students as defined by the student's IEP. One student may receive multiple services. For example, a student receiving Level 2 services (self-contained) for a learning disability (LD) may also receive Level 1 services (resources) for an emotional disability and related services (e.g., speech). This student would be counted into the staffing formula three times. Once for his or her Level 2 service in LD, once for his or her Level 1 services in ED, and once for his or her related speech service. Because staffing is based on services, we use the term service instead of student throughout this section.

The first option, shown in **Exhibit 50** is based on the ratio of services to teachers, with and without paraprofessionals. Using this formula, 9 or 10 Level 2 LD services can be staffed with one teacher and one paraprofessional; 8 or fewer Level 2 LD services can be staffed with one teacher and no paraprofessional. Services that are Level 1 are staffed one teacher to 24 services, regardless of the disability label.

Exhibit 50
Local School District Caseload Maximums*

Disability Category	Level II		Level I
	With Paraprofessional 100% of the Time	Without Paraprofessional 100% of the Time	
Autism	8	6	24
Deaf-Blindness	8	6	
Developmental Delay: Age 5-8	10	8	
Developmental Delay: Age 2-5	8 Center-Based 10 Combined	12 Home-Based and/or Itinerant	
Emotional Disturbance	10	8	24
Hearing Impairment / Deaf	10	8	24
Learning Disability	10	8	24
Mental Retardation	10	8	24
Multiple Disabilities	8	6	
Orthopedic Impairment	10	8	24
Other Health Impairment	10	8	24
Severe Disabilities	8	6	
Speech or Language Impairment			68 (itinerant)
Traumatic Brain Injury	May be placed in any program, according to the IEP.		
Combined Group of Students Needing Level I Services With Students Needing Level II Services.	20 Points (See exhibit titled "Values for Students Receiving Level I Services when Combined With Students Receiving Level II Services")		

Source: Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, March 2002.

* as funded by the Virginia Appropriation Act.

The second staffing option, shown in **Exhibit 51** assigns values to Level I services (less than 50% of the instructional day receiving special education support) and Level 2 services (50% or more of the instructional day receiving special education support). For Level 2 services, the values are assigned based on two factors: (a) the primary disability label and (b) whether there is a paraprofessional in the classroom 100% of the time. In this second staffing method, Level I services are all assigned a value of 1, regardless of the disability label. The values for each service are combined and the total value per classroom may not exceed 20. This formula allows schools to take a building average if children with disabilities in a single building receive academic content area instruction from multiple special education teachers. For example, a building average is computed by dividing the total weights for all services by the number of special education teachers. As stated above, the maximum number of points is 20 and the building average may not exceed this value when Level I and Level 2 services are combined. Buildings that only serve Level I services may not exceed a building average of 24. Itinerant teachers are counted according to the amount of time the teacher spends in the school. This option provides more flexibility for districts in assigning teachers and grouping students. In addition, the methodology used in calculating staff is simplified.

Exhibit 51
Values for Students Receiving Level I Services When Combined With Students Receiving Level II Services

Disability Category	Level II Values		Level I Values
	With Paraprofessional 100% of the Time	Without Paraprofessional 100% of the Time	
Autism	2.5	3.3	1
Deaf-Blindness	2.5	3.3	1
Developmental Delay: Age 5-8	2.0	2.5	1
Emotional Disturbance	2.0	2.5	1
Hearing Impairment / Deaf	2.0	2.5	1
Learning Disability	2.0	2.5	1
Mental Retardation	2.0	2.5	1
Multiple Disabilities	2.5	3.3	1
Orthopedic Impairment	2.0	2.5	1
Other Health Impairment	2.0	2.5	1
Severe Disabilities	2.0	2.5	1
Traumatic Brain Injury	2.0	2.5	1

Source: Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, March 2002.

Until recently special education staffing in Virginia was impacted by a rule regarding special education endorsements. Teachers in the state are endorsed in specific disability areas such as *Learning Disability*, *Emotional Disturbance*, *Mental Retardation*, and *Severe Disabilities*. Until recently students could be taught only by teachers endorsed in their primary or secondary disability (service), which made it difficult to limit staffing. For example, prior to 2002 a student with an emotional disability was to receive the majority of his or her instruction from a teacher with an emotional disability (ED) endorsement. Even if the instruction was in an academic area (eg., reading), which might be an area in which a learning disability teacher is available and well qualified, the previous requirement would mean that an additional position for an ED teacher could be needed. The endorsement rule is less restrictive now. Specifically it states: "The child shall receive some services for each disability from appropriately endorsed personnel." (8 VAC 20-80-45 A2c). Even though the word *most* was changed to *some*, this still poses problems for districts as they seek to find qualified teachers and as they assign staff to schools. The district may wish to consider working with the state to create a "generic" endorsement that would be appropriate for students with mild to moderate disabilities, regardless of the specific label.

Another recent change to Virginia regulations related to serving students with disabilities makes the weighted formula an attractive option for districts. This rule states that students with disabilities "may receive services with children with the same disability or with children with different disabilities." (8 VAC 20-80-45 A1).

Current FCPS Special Education Staffing Requirements

Exhibit 52 illustrates FCPS special education staffing requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals by disability. When there are small numbers of Level I services and no Level 2 services in the same disability area at the site, intervention is typically provided by itinerant teachers assigned centrally. This is noted in the table. Other exceptions are discussed in the end notes of the table.

The last column in the exhibit illustrates the difference in the number of services that could be provided without adding additional staff if the district were to adhere strictly to Virginia requirements using the formula based on caseload maximum. For example, Virginia's caseload maximum formula for staffing

requires that school districts use a ratio of at least 1 teacher for every 24 Level 1 autism services but the district uses a ratio of 1 teacher for every 15 Level 1 services, 24 if no travel. FCPS follows the state staffing formulas for Level 1 services when the teacher is assigned full-time to the school building; however, when the teacher must carry a caseload at several different school buildings, FCPS takes travel time into account in determining the caseload, as explicitly required by the state regulations.

Nevertheless, even with travel time considered, if FCPS strictly followed Virginia staffing requirements (caseload maximum), potentially 9 additional Level 1 services could be staffed with one teacher. Given the fact that FCPS special education personnel costs are rising at a significant rate, FCPS needs to consider its current staffing formulas in terms of costs in addition to quality of services. Expenditures for FCPS special education teachers have risen 50.9 percent from FY 1998 to FY 2002, and as compared to the special education budget, have risen 196 percent over the last five years. Clearly, staffing formulas should be examined for potential savings.

As discussed earlier Virginia requires most Level 2 services at a 1:8 ratio without a paraprofessional and 1:10 ratio with a paraprofessional. Therefore, if a class has 9 or 10 students, a paraprofessional must be added. In addition, class sizes of Level 2 students cannot exceed 10 students.

Exhibit 52

FCPS Special Education Staffing: Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Disability	Teacher Ratio		Paraprofessional Ratio		Maximum Additional Services if VA Regulations Used	
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
Autism	1:16.5 (itinerant)	1:6.5 ^a	0	1:6.5	0	1.5
Emotional Disturbance	1:24 1:16.5 (itinerant)	1:5 ^b 1:10	0	1:10	0	5 0
Hearing Impairment	1:12.5 (itinerant)	1:8.5	0	1:8.5	11.5	1.5
Learning Disability (elementary)	1:15	1:15 ^c	0	1:15 ^d 1:10	9 ^e	-5.0 ^e
Learning Disability (secondary)	0.5:17 0.5:14 0.5:12 ^f	1:10 (up to 30) 1:8 (30+)	0	1:10 ^g	4	0
Mild Retardation (elementary and MS)	No ratio	1:10	0	1:10	14	0
Mild Retardation (HS)	NA	1:10 (up to 30) 1:8 (30+)	0	1:10 ^g	0	0
Moderate Retardation	NA	1:10	NA	1:10	0	0
Severe Disability	NA	1:8 1:4 ^h	NA	1:8	0	0 4 ^h
Physical Disability (Orthopedic Impairment)	1:16.5 (itinerant)	1:8.5	0	2:8.5	7.5	1.5
Vision Impairment	1:12 (itinerant)	1:8	0	1:8	None	None

Source: FY 2003 Special Education staffing excel file provided by Department of Special Education

Exceptions to FCPS Staffing Formulas

^aAt some sites with an autism program, autism Level 1 services are provided by the school-based Level 2 autism teacher and are counted as 0.5 in the Level 2 (self-contained) ratios.

^bOne elementary ED center which serves students in the most restrictive setting is staffed at 1 teacher to 5 students.

^cLevel 1 and Level 2 LD services are added together for staffing purposes.

^dLD paraprofessionals are staffed on the number of Level 2 services at 1:15 for the first 15 services and 1:10 thereafter.

*Because FCPS staffs Level 1 and Level 2 services together, this difference changes depending on the number of services in the summation that are Level 1.

¹LD teachers are staffed on the number of Level 1 services at 0.5 for the first 17 services, 0.5 for the next 14 services, and an additional 0.5 teachers for every 12 services thereafter. This means that if there are 18 Level 1 LD students, there is 1 teacher; at 32 services, another 0.5 teacher is added; at 44 services, another 0.5 teacher is added and so on.

²LD and MR secondary paraprofessionals are capped at 3 FTE.

³Severe Disability Center Behavior Modification Class is staffed 1:4 for both teachers and paraprofessionals. Only two locations, Key and Kilmer Centers, have these classes and they are limited to students for whom they are appropriate.

NA=There are no Level 1 services for this disability except as an artifact of students receiving multiple services, which reduces their primary service to a resource (less than 50% of the day) Level.

None=Vision Impairment is not covered by the VA staffing formulas.

Recommendation 3: Change special education staffing formulas for teachers and instructional assistants to reduce expenditures related to staffing.

Method of Review

To calculate possible savings in special education personnel the review team conducted a study following accepted scientific research principles. This was done to insure accuracy. Because FCPS is so large, the review team selected a stratified random sample of schools.

Sample Selection

We calculated the number of teachers that would result using the two different staffing formulas developed by the state on a stratified random sample of schools. In stratified random sampling, the population of interest is divided into non-overlapping subdivisions, called strata, based on one or more classifications. Within each stratum, the sample is randomly selected. Our strata were grade level (i.e., elementary, middle school, high school) and cluster location. Approximately 5%, or 14 schools, in FCPS were selected (we did not include centers in our sample because they are discussed separately in Section B). A random number was used to choose the first school. Thereafter, we used the random number to count down through each cluster to select the sample. We counted down first through elementary schools, then through middle schools, and finally through high schools until the sample was chosen. The 14 schools sampled are listed in **Exhibit 53**.

Exhibit 53
Schools by Level, Enrollment, and Cluster Included in Sample for
Staffing Formula Calculations

School	Level	Total Enrollment	Cluster
Clearview	Elementary	545	1
Columbia	Elementary	386	3
Daniels Run	Elementary	777	7
Hayfield	Elementary	578	5
Oakton	Elementary	624	8
West Springfield	Elementary	379	6
Westbriar	Elementary	449	2
Woodlawn	Elementary	473	4
Hughes	Middle School	921	8
Thoreau	Middle School	769	2
Whitman	Middle School	941	4
McClean	High School	1,526	1
Robinson	High School	2,870	5
Stuart	High School	1,427	3

Source: FY 2003 Special Education Staffing-Gibson excel file; provided by Department of Special Services.

Data Used

Next, the review team needed to determine which data should be used to make our calculations. We required two pieces of information: the number of services at each school by level and by disability and the number of current special education teachers and instructional assistants staffed at each school. FCPS provided the review team with an excel file that provided this information (FY 2003 Special Education Staffing-Gibson). The file contained service counts from several times throughout the year (e.g., June 2002, Dec. 1 2002, Feb. 2003). Service counts varied from one part of the year to another. At the suggestion of the DSS Coordinator, Financial Management, we used the most current numbers available. Therefore, we used staff and services as of February 1, 2003.

Procedure

Virginia allows a district to determine staff, with and without paraprofessionals using the two formulas (i.e., caseload maximum and weighted) discussed earlier. We calculated the number of teachers using both of these formulas. The weighted formula applies different weights depending on whether a district uses paraprofessionals or not. Therefore, we used both weighted methods in our calculations. Instead of using an FTE of 1.0, we used 0.5 FTE to determine teacher and instructional assistant staffing. For example, Virginia's caseload maximum formula for staffing requires that school districts use a ratio of at least 1 teacher for every 24 Level 1 emotional disturbance (ED) services. If the school had 12 or less Level 1 ED services and these services were not provided by an itinerant, a 0.5 teacher was staffed. (Students with visual impairments are excluded from Virginia's Staffing Requirements and were not considered in the staffing examples). Schools that have small numbers, such as 4, of Level 1 services in a disability area where there are no Level 2 services of the same disability provide intervention with itinerant teachers. Because the exact number of itinerant teachers was not available for each school, FCPS staffing formulas were used to calculate the number of itinerant teachers. Itinerant teachers in FCPS are staffed centrally and are only considered in the weighted formula since this formula allows a district to combine Level 1 and Level 2 services allowing more flexibility in assigning teachers. Finally, we

defined paraprofessionals as instructional assistants. FCPS also has other paraprofessionals such as attendants. We did not consider these other positions in this review, nor did we count them as part of the current staff for comparison purposes.

Results

Two examples are illustrated and discussed here. The remainder of the examples can be found in Appendix E.

Example of Hayfield Elementary

The first example is of Hayfield Elementary. The current special education staff is illustrated in **Exhibit 54** and consists of 5 teachers, 6 paraprofessionals (one is staffed on unique needs), and .48 itinerant teachers.

Exhibit 54
Number of Special Education Staff at Hayfield Elementary
FY 2003

Position	Number
Teachers	5
Instructional Assistants	6*
Itinerants	0.48**

Source: FY 2003 Special Education Staffing-Gibson excel file;
provided by Department of Special Education

* One IA is staffed based on the unique needs of the campus.

** Excludes services for students with visual impairments.

Exhibit 55 shows the number of teachers and instructional assistants who would be assigned to the campus if the *caseload maximum* formula were used. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Hayfield Elementary,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the maximum caseload allowed under VA regulations, and
- the number of teachers and instructional assistants (paraprofessionals) that **could** be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the caseload maximum.

Hayfield Elementary has one Level 1 service with autism, three Level 1 services with emotional disturbance, three Level 1 services with hearing impairments, and one each of Level 1 and Level 2 services with visual impairments. As discussed earlier, we will not consider staffing for students with visual impairments because they are not part of the Virginia Staffing Requirements. The other seven services are staffed with itinerant teachers and will not be added into the formula caseload maximum.

Exhibit 55
Special Education Staffing for Hayfield Elementary:
Caseload Maximum Formula
Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals

Disability	Number of Services	Caseload Maximum	Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals
Autism LI	1	24	Itinerant
Emotional Disturbance LI	3	24	Itinerant
Hearing Impairment/Deaf LI	3	24	Itinerant
Learning Disability LI	9	24	0.5/0
Learning Disability L2	19	8/10	2/2*
Mental Retardation L2	18	8/10	2/2*
Visual Impairment LI	1	NA	Itinerant
Visual Impairment L2	1	NA	Itinerant
Total	55		4.5 teachers/4 paraprofessionals

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

*The number of teachers and paraprofessionals is based on staffing two teachers and two paraprofessionals for 9 and 10 services (LD) and two teachers and two paraprofessionals for two caseloads of 9 services (MR).

Exhibit 56 shows an example of the number of teachers and paraprofessionals that would be staffed using a weighted approach with paraprofessionals. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Hayfield Elementary,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the weight by which to multiply the number of services under VA regulations, and
- the total points and the number of teachers and instructional assistants (paraprofessionals) that **could** be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the weighted formula with paraprofessionals.

In this example and the next, the seven services (excluding services with visual impairments) staffed by itinerant teachers are added into the weighted formula because the weighted formula allows level 1 and level 2 services to be combined and provided schools greater flexibility in the ways intervention is provided.

Exhibit 56
Special Education Staffing for Hayfield Elementary:
Weighted Formula with Paraprofessionals
Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals

Disability	Number of Services	Weight	Assigned Total Points
Autism L1	1	1	1
Emotional Disturbance L1	3	1	3
Hearing Impairment/Deaf L1	3	1	3
Learning Disability L1	9	1	9
Learning Disability L2	19	2	38
Mental Retardation L2	18	2	36
Visual Impairment L1	1	NA	NA
Visual Impairment L1	1	NA	NA
Total	55		90/74*
Total Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals			4.5/4

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Totals are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of teachers

*Totals for Level 2 services are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of paraprofessionals.

Exhibit 57 shows an example of the number of teachers that would be staffed using a weighted approach without paraprofessionals. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Hayfield Elementary,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the weight by which to multiply the number of services under VA regulations, and
- the total points and number of teachers that *could* be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the weighted formula without paraprofessionals.

Exhibit 57
Special Education Staffing Example for Hayfield Elementary School:
Weighted Formula without Paraprofessionals
Number of Teachers

Disability	Number of Services	Weight	Assigned Total Points
Autism L1	1	1	1
Emotional Disturbance L1	3	1	3
Hearing Impairment/Deaf L1	3	1	3
Learning Disability L1	9	1	9
Learning Disability L2	19	2.5	47.5
Mental Retardation L2	18	2.5	45
Visual Impairment L1	1	NA	NA
Visual Impairment L1	1	NA	NA
Total	55		108.5
Total Number of teachers/paraprofessionals			5.5/0

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Totals are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of teachers.

As this example illustrates, FCPS has allocated Hayfield Elementary more special education teachers and instructional assistants than any of Virginia's staffing formulas would have. **Exhibit 58** shows the number of actual staff at Hayfield Elementary and the amount of savings possible if staffing formulas were changed to match the State of Virginia's Staffing Requirements.

Exhibit 58
Actual Staff, Staff Based on Formulas and Savings Based on Formulas

Position	Actual	Staff Allowed with Caseload Maximum Formula	Savings	Staff Allowed with Weighted with Paraprofessionals Formula	Savings	Staff Allowed with Weighted without Paraprofessionals Formula	Savings
Teacher	5/5.48*	4.5	\$26,900	4.5	\$52,754	5.5	(\$1,076)
Para-professionals	6	4	\$55,663	4	\$55,663	0	\$166,988
Total			\$82,563		\$108,417		\$165,912

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

*The first number is based on staffing using caseload maximum and the second is based on staffing using the weighted formulas.

Example 2: Stuart High School

Example two uses Stuart High School and shows their current special education staff **Exhibit 59**.

Exhibit 59
Number of Special Education Staff at Stuart High School, FY 2003

Position	Number
Teachers	17
Paraprofessionals	5
Itinerants	0.8

Source: FY 2003 Special Education Staffing-Gibson excel file; provided by Department of Special Education.

Exhibit 60 shows the number of teachers and instructional assistants who would be assigned to the campus if the *caseload maximum* formula was used. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Stuart High School,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the maximum caseload allowed under VA regulations, and
- the number of teachers and instructional assistants (paraprofessionals) that could be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the caseload maximum.

Stuart High school has seven Level I services with hearing impairments and four Level I services with physical disabilities. The II services are staffed by itinerant teachers and will not be added into the formula caseload maximum.

Exhibit 60
Special Education Staffing for Stuart HS:
Caseload Maximum
Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals

Disability	Number of Services	Caseload Maximum	Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals
Emotional Disturbance L1	21	24	1
Hearing Impairment/Deaf L1	7	24	itinerant
Learning Disability L1	84	24	3.5
Learning Disability L2	62	10/8	7/6*
Mental Retardation L1	5	24	.5
Mental Retardation L2	13	8/10	2/0
Physical Disability L1	4	24	itinerant
Total	196	NA	14/6

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

*The number of teachers and paraprofessionals is based on staffing six teachers and six paraprofessionals for 54 services and one teacher and no paraprofessional for 8 services.

Exhibit 61 shows an example of the number of teachers and paraprofessionals that would be staffed using a weighted approach with paraprofessionals. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Stuart High School,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the weight by which to multiply the number of services under VA regulations, and
- the total points and the number of teachers and instructional assistants (paraprofessionals) that **could** be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the weighted formula with paraprofessionals.

In this example and the next, the seven services (excluding services with visual impairments) staffed by itinerant teachers are added into the weighted formula because the weighted formula allows Level 1 and Level 2 services to be combined.

Exhibit 61
Special Education Staffing for Stuart HS:
Weighted Formula with Paraprofessionals
Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals

Disability	Number of Services	Weight	Total Points
Emotional Disturbance L1	21	1	21
Hearing Impairment/Deaf L1	7	1	7
Learning Disability L1	84	1	84
Learning Disability L2	62	2	124
Mental Retardation L1	5	1	5
Mental Retardation L2	13	2	26
Physical Impairments L1	4	1	4
Total	196		271
Total Number of Teachers/Paraprofessionals			14/7.5

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Totals are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of teachers. Totals for Level 2 services are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of paraprofessionals.

Exhibit 62 shows an example of the number of teachers that would be allocated using a weighted approach without paraprofessionals. Specifically, this exhibit shows:

- the disability categories served at Start High School,
- the number of special education services in each category,
- the weight by which to multiply the number of services under VA regulations, and
- the total points and the number of teachers that *could* be assigned if the district strictly adhered to the weighted formula without paraprofessionals.

Exhibit 62
Special Education Staffing for Stuart HS:
Weighted Formula without Paraprofessionals
Number of Teachers

Disability	Number of Services	Weight	Total Points
Emotional Disturbance L1	21	1	21
Hearing Impairment/Deaf L1	7	1	7
Learning Disability L1	84	1	84
Learning Disability L2	62	2.5	155
Mental Retardation L1	5	1	5
Mental Retardation L2	13	2.5	32.5
Orthopedic Impairment L1*	4	1	4
Total	196		308.5
Total Number of teachers			15.5/0

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Note: Totals are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of teachers. Totals for Level 2 services are divided by 20 to arrive at the total number of paraprofessionals.

As this example illustrates, FCPS has allocated Stuart High School with more special education teachers and instructional assistants than any of Virginia's staffing formulas would have. **Exhibit 63** shows the number of actual staff at Stuart High School and the amount of savings the State of Virginia's Staffing Requirements were used.

Exhibit 63
Actual Staff, Staff Based on Formulas and Savings Based on Formulas
Stuart High School

Position	Actual	Staff Allowed with Caseload Maximum Formula	Savings	Staff Allowed with Weighted with Paraprofessionals Formula	Savings	Staff Allowed with Weighted without Paraprofessionals Formula	Savings
Teacher	17/17.8*	14	161,402	14	\$204,442	15.5	\$123,741
Paraprofessionals	5	6	(55,663)	7.5	(\$69,578)	0	\$139,157
Total			105,739		\$134,864		\$262,898

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

*The first number is based on staffing using caseload maximum and the second number is based on using the weighted formulas.

Fiscal Impact

To calculate this fiscal impact, we used all fourteen examples from our stratified random sample (see Appendix E) and calculated an average for elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. We then used this average to calculate the fiscal impact. Using the caseload maximum to allocate teachers and instructional assistants results in a savings of \$19,223,661; using the weighted formula with paraprofessionals results in a savings of \$14,822,689; and using the weighted formula without paraprofessionals results in a savings of \$28,091,316.

The fiscal impact was calculated using the weighted formula without paraprofessionals since this approach results in the greatest amount of savings. FCPS must recognize that the calculated savings are based on a staffing formula that does not include paraprofessionals. If the district staffs with paraprofessionals in spite of using the higher weight, savings will be significantly reduced. To allow the district ample time to achieve the full savings impact of this recommendation, the fiscal impact chart assumes a phase-in implementation strategy, with 25 percent of savings resulting in year 1, 50 percent in year 2, and 100 percent thereafter.

	One-time Savings	Recurring Savings	Total Savings
FY 2005	\$0	\$7,022,829	\$7,022,829
FY 2006	\$0	\$14,045,658	\$14,045,658
FY 2007	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2008	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2009	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2010	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2011	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2012	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2013	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2014	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
FY 2015	\$0	\$28,091,316	\$28,091,316
Total	\$0	\$273,890,331	\$273,890,331

Implementation Strategy

The review team recognizes the exemplary services that FCPS provides its students with disabilities. The district should not dilute the quality of services by being too conservative in its staffing. Therefore, we expect that the district will not strictly adhere to Virginia's staffing requirements when staffing for its special education program. However FCPS costs for special education are high and increasing yearly (see background). The district must make changes in its special education spending practices or face the danger that quality of services for other students, such as general education students, will decline, especially since 74% of its special education funding is provided locally. Therefore, two considerations must be taken into account in implementing this recommendation: the quality of service delivery and the associated costs.

The Department of Financial Services should coordinate this project with the Department of Student Services and the Department of Human Resources. The following steps should be taken to change the current staffing requirements:

- Move primary responsibility for special education staffing to the Department of Financial Services. Special education staff can continue to provide a support role, but special education

staffing formulas are the only ones outside the scope of Financial Services, and we believe this may inadvertently contribute to the rapid growth in program resource levels.

- Prepare new staffing guidelines based on the weighted without paraprofessionals formula. This will provide FCPS with maximum flexibility in staffing and provide the most significant cost savings.
- Develop out-year targets for pupil-teacher ratios in special education, as well as pupil-IA ratios, and pupil-total special education staff ratios. These ratios should not fall below current levels of resource productivity, and efforts should be made, through implementation of these recommendations, to improve resource productivity (increase pupil-staff ratios).
- Track Full-Time Student Equivalent (FTSE) for special education students. This measure is a more appropriate measure to compare with costs, since headcount data does not reflect the level of services. Expenditures per FTSE special education student should be an additional measure compared to regular education.
- Develop additional guidelines for staffing paraprofessionals making sure that these guidelines do not staff paraprofessionals at the same weight as teachers. If FCPS staffs paraprofessionals at this weight, the end result will likely be increased costs. Use strategies such as staffing one paraprofessional to work on a flexible schedule with several classes; basing the number of paraprofessionals at sites in relationship with attendance rates (e.g., the lower the attendance rates, the fewer paraprofessionals staffed); and assigning no paraprofessionals to sites with low numbers of Level 2 services.
- Calculate the minimum number of teachers and instructional assistants at each school based on the new staffing guidelines and compare to current numbers. If the number of paraprofessionals is the same as currently staffed, redo paraprofessional staffing guidelines to be more conservative.
- Obtain school board approval for the new staffing guidelines.
- Develop training for principals, board members, staff members and others as the Department of Financial Services (if staffing responsibility is reassigned to DFS, training responsibility should go to DFS as well) deems necessary that explain the new staffing guidelines.
- Implement new guidelines. Reassign current personnel no longer needed to district job vacancies when possible.

Recommendation 4: Implement an incentive grant program for inclusion to encourage Level 2 services sent to centers to go back to the base school and to reduce the amount of time Level 2 services spend in special education resulting in a reduction of a Level 2 service to a Level 1 service.

FCPS serves about 50 percent of its special education population with Level 2 services. This practice affects costs and educational programming. First, staffing costs are much higher for Level 2 services. Second, overall costs are much higher for Level 2 services than Level 1 services. Finally, the IDEA states that students with disabilities should be served in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible. Level 2 services may be provided in self-contained classes, but may also occur because a special education student receives support from special education staff in a general education setting for more than 50 percent of the instructional day.

To encourage schools to take Level 2 services back to base schools and to reduce the amount of time Level 2 students spend in special education, FCPS should implement a grant program for inclusion. This incentive grant will provide 1 FTE general education teacher to a campus to set up a learning lab

designed to assist students with their content work. The school must match the FTE teacher with a 0.5 FTE instructional assistant. The learning lab should include the following features:

- Serve both special and general education students.
- Provide support to general education teachers to make modifications to instructional materials for students with disabilities.
- Provide a quiet place for students to take tests and complete assignments.
- Assist students in completing assignments.
- Set up a volunteer program that solicits mentors and tutors from the community to work with individual students.

Fiscal Impact

This fiscal impact assumes that 10 schools per year will participate in the incentive grant each year. The district should place a cap on the number of schools allowed to participate at 40. Each participating school will receive one teacher at an average cost of \$53,800 annually; \$1,000 in materials and supplies in the first year of participation; and \$300 in materials and supplies every year of participation thereafter. The fiscal impact by year is calculated as follows:

<u>Year 1</u>		<u>Year 2</u>		<u>Year 3</u>		<u>Year 4</u>	
<u>New Participants:</u>		<u>New Participants:</u>		<u>New Participants:</u>		<u>New Participants:</u>	
Teacher	\$53,800	Teacher	\$53,800	Teacher	\$53,800	Teacher	\$53,800
Materials	\$1,000	Materials	\$1,000	Materials	\$1,000	Materials	\$1,000
	\$54,800		\$54,800		\$54,800		\$54,800
	X10		X10		X10		X10
Total Year 1	\$548,000		\$548,000		\$548,000		\$548,000
		<u>Existing Participants:</u>		<u>Existing Participants:</u>		<u>Existing Participants:</u>	
		Teacher	\$53,800	Teacher	\$53,800	Teacher	\$53,800
		Materials	\$300	Materials	\$300	Materials	\$300
			\$54,100		\$54,100		\$54,100
			X10		X20		X30
			\$541,000		\$1,082,000		\$1,623,000
		Total Year 2	\$1,089,000	Total Year 3	\$1,630,000	Total Year 4	\$2,171,000

	<u>One-time Costs</u>	<u>Recurring Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>
FY 2005	\$0	(\$548,005)	(\$548,005)
FY 2006	\$0	(\$1,089,000)	(\$1,089,000)
FY 2007	\$0	(\$1,630,000)	(\$1,630,000)
FY 2008	\$0	(\$2,171,000)	(\$2,171,000)
FY 2009	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2010	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2011	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2012	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2013	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2014	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY 2015	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$ 0	(\$5,438,005)	(\$5,438,005)

Implementation Strategy

The Instructional Services Department should coordinate and manage this project, with the assistance of the Department of Special Services. The following steps should be taken to encourage schools to take Level 2 services back to base schools and to reduce the amount of time Level 2 students spend in special education:

- Develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an incentive grant and send it to all schools. The grant should include provisions for schools that are already doing well with inclusion and schools that would like to become more inclusive. For schools that are not inclusive, set a minimum number (e.g., five) of Level 2 students that must be taken back to the base school. This also supports Target 7 of the district's strategic plan.
- Establish guidelines for the learning labs.
- Develop a rating system and establish a panel of grant readers.
- Fund ten grants a year.
- Conduct an analysis of space needs after center closures to determine which, if any, schools need to be reconfigured to accommodate learning labs.

D. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DISTRICT

Below are additional recommendations that fall outside the scope of the three areas approved by the board. FCPS should use internal resources to implement these recommendations.

1. Conduct an IEP audit to determine if the number of services specified by the IEP is reasonable. In particular, look for double disability labels and speech services for students identified with emotional disturbance and for older students with mild disabilities.
2. Conduct a staffing review – similar to this review - of the preschool special education program and autism centers.
3. Conduct an attendance audit of the special education centers. We found that reported attendance was 30 percentage points above what was observed and represented as typical attendance in one center visited. Although not all centers were tested for attendance, because staffing is based on enrollment and not on attendance, we feel this would be a valuable analysis and could potentially lead to further cost savings.

E. FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY CHART

Year	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3	Recommendation 4	Total
FY 2004	\$561,834				\$561,834
FY 2005	\$2,007,133	\$1,575,276	\$7,022,829	(\$548,000)	\$10,057,238
FY 2006	\$3,754,366	\$1,575,276	\$14,045,658	(\$1,089,000)	\$18,286,300
FY 2007	\$5,840,009	\$2,684,384	\$28,091,316	(\$1,630,000)	\$34,985,709
FY 2008	\$8,305,436	\$2,684,384	\$28,091,316	(\$2,171,000)	\$36,910,136
FY 2009	\$11,062,841	\$3,793,492	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$42,947,649
FY 2010	\$14,257,485	\$3,793,492	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$46,142,293
FY 2011	\$17,926,052	\$4,902,600	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$50,919,968
FY 2012	\$22,128,518	\$4,902,600	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$55,122,434
FY 2013	\$26,909,833	\$6,011,708	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$61,012,857
FY 2014	\$32,342,205	\$6,011,708	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$66,445,229
FY 2015	\$38,496,552	\$7,120,816	\$28,091,316	\$0	\$73,708,684
TOTAL	\$183,592,264	\$45,055,736	\$273,890,331	(\$5,438,000)	\$497,100,331

