



West Somerville Neighborhood School

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

September 2016 - September 2018

SCHOOL INFORMATION

School Name: West Somerville Neighborhood School

Grade Levels: PK-8

Principal: Kathleen Seward

Telephone: 617-629-5600

Address: 177 Powder House Boulevard

Fax: 617-666-7676

Web Site: <http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/wsns>

NCES ID: 25108900891

School Title I: Title I School (SW)

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Kathleen Seward, *Principal/Co-Chair*

Sophia Carafotes, *5th Grade Teacher/Co-Chair*

Victoria Macrokanis, *6th Grade Teacher*

Rami Bridge, *7th and 8th Grade Math teacher*

Leslie Lartey, *Counselor Educator*

Joyce Danis, *Reading Teacher*

Brenda Williams, *Parent*

Barry Rafkind, *Parent*

Laura Beretsky, *Parent*

Claire Suthar, *Parent*

Ann Haywood-Baxter, *Parent*

Table of Contents

2016-2018 School Committee Goalsiv

About West Somerville Neighborhood School..... 1

 Mission..... 1

 School Goals and Theory of Action 1

 School Information 2

 Students 2

 Staff 3

Student Wellness Foci for the 2016-2018 School Years 4

 Representative Family Engagement..... 4

Academic Foci for the 2016-2018 School Years..... 8

 Drastically Reduce the Achievement Gap for Special Education Students..... 8

Overview of Goals.....13

Appendix A

2016-2018 School Committee Goals

1. **Increase achievement and access for all students. Reduce all performance gaps by half.**
 - Reduce/eliminate gaps in college admittance and persistence
 - Increase Advanced Placement/Honors access
 - Reach an SGP of 60 in the aggregate and for subgroups: Special Education, ELL, Black
 - Increase graduation rate
2. **Develop and implement a comprehensive PreK-12 social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success.**
 - Student Initiated (self) referrals for counseling
 - Second Step consistency
 - Decrease dropout rate
 - Progress measure students receiving intensive social/emotions service
 - Decrease suspension rates, increase attendance rates
3. **Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live.**
 - Increase diversity of parent participation in decision-making processes at school and district levels (participation on committees and their roles)
 - Strategic plan to increase opportunities for parent/family engagement and leadership
 - Parent guardian attendance at teacher conferences and ongoing communication, including use of technology-based tools
4. **Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators.**
 - Creation of a cohesive targeted use of blended learning to address gaps and promote academic enrichment and performance-based tasks using best practice and online learning
 - Further development and implementation of broad-based whole school quality instrument
5. **Develop a comprehensive plan for Universal Kindergarten Readiness that supports intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth from birth to Pre-K.**
 - Early intervention services and outreach (number of referrals and subsequent number of children served, timeliness of referrals, parents feel like can get more info and services if they need it)
 - Increase in percent of outside providers/partners calibrating with SPS standards/program
 - Data tracking for birth-3 and playgroup participation
 - Successful implementation of online registration
6. **Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and talented staff.**
 - Trends in HR entry data relating to licensure, experience, race, ethnicity, language
 - Data on retention and from exit surveys
 - Staff climate surveys

About West Somerville Neighborhood School

The West Somerville Neighborhood School is a diverse learning community where we work to know all students and their families well. By doing so, we are able to meet their academic and social emotional needs to ensure growth and achievement for all students. We have adopted Responsive Classroom as a school-wide tier one social-emotional program to further develop our learning community. At the West Somerville Neighborhood school we have three school-wide rules that were created collaboratively and guide our work together.

Work hard
Be kind
Have fun

Mission

The West Somerville Neighborhood School focuses on building student writing, thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving to develop students with skills to become independent and self-sufficient adults who contribute responsibly to their community and the world.

School Goals and Theory of Action

Student Wellness Focus

Our goal is to develop a school community in which students and their families are known well and where parent and student participation in the life of our school is reflective of our overall school population.

We believe that by building an intentionally welcoming and inclusive school community, student and parent participation in events, initiatives, and planning groups become more reflective of the overall school population. We adopted the Responsive Classroom curriculum for the 2016-2017 school year with the intention of supporting this focus area.

Academic focus

We want to reduce our special education achievement gap by 50% while ensuring that all sub-groups and grade levels maintain and SGP of 60 or higher.

We believe that by developing a model for effective inclusion and co-teaching, we will be able to better meet the needs of our special education students and support the continued growth of our regular education students, including students who are ready for extension and more challenging work. Having special educators included in planning and data meetings for the grade levels they work with will build continuity and capacity and enable staff to work together to better meet the needs of all students.

School Information

Additional Data

Non-Academic	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Attendance	95.9%	95.4%	95.5%
% In School Suspension	0.5%	1.3%	0%
% Out of School Suspension	2.1%	1.8%	1.3%
Stability Rate	93.2%	94.9%	87.1%
Academic			
PPI (Proficiency Gap Narrowing)	92	99	75
Grade 3 ELA Proficiency	29%	39%	40%
Grade 8 Math Proficiency	60%	71%	66%
ELL % Making Progress	92%	55%	46%
Grade 5 Math Growth Percentile	94%	89%	67.5%

Students

West Somerville Neighborhood School students come from diverse and vibrant backgrounds and represent the full diversity of the city of Somerville. In addition to our strong core curriculum, there are a variety of enrichment and student support offerings at West Somerville. We have an active student Voice group that includes 7th and 8th graders. This group works on building school community and increasing student voice in the functioning of the community. We have many students participating in before and after-school tutoring, as well as intramural sports, peer mentoring, the before school BOKS exercise program, and various collaborations with Tufts University.

All students start their day by participating in a developmentally appropriate morning meeting led by school staff. This time allows student to prepare their minds for learning and the build connections to their classmates and teachers to enhance their academic and social-emotional achievement.

	2015-2016	2016-2017
Total Enrollment	359	377
Students with Disabilities	18.9%	17.5%
First Language not English	27.0%	26.5%
Limited English Proficiency	4.3%	4.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	38.2%	36.3%

Ethnicity	2015-2016	2016-2017
Hispanic or Latino	19.8%	20.8%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	80.2%	79.2%
Race	2015-2016	2016-2017

West Somerville Neighborhood School

White	74.5%	74.0%
Black/African American	18.3%	17.5%
Asian	4.8%	4.6%
Native American	0.0%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian	0.3%	0.3%
2 or more races	3.2%	3.5%

NOTE: Students in the race categories may also be Hispanic or Latino.

Staff

The teaching staff at West Somerville Neighborhood School is collaborative and hard-working. The staff includes a wide range of teaching experience from first year teachers, to teachers who have been in the field for over 30 years. Our staff also come from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds, and they are deeply committed to improving our school for the benefit of all students. All unit A teachers and were trained on Responsive Classroom in 2016 to prepare for our school-wide implementation that began in September 2016. A group of five 1st-5th grade teachers also met to research and plan for improving and creating a more cohesive school-wide approach to teaching writing. Both of these initiatives were started through a close look at school level data and staff conversations about how to best meet students' needs. Having a staff that is willing and able to assess current practice in relation to student needs and to plan for school and instructional improvements is a huge strength of the WSNS staff.

	WSNS	District	State
Total # of Teachers	25.2	420.5	72,384.1
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	100%	98.6%	97.4%
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	127	1,846	348,472
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.3 to 1	11.7 to 1	13.2 to 1

Student Wellness Foci for the 2016-2018 School Years

Representative Family Engagement

One of the SPS School Committee goals is to increase family engagement to be fully reflective of the community in which we live. This has also been an area of concern at WSNS, as the makeup of our School Council, PTA, and participants at various school events is not fully reflective of our school community. It is important to us that all families are comfortable and feel welcome to participate in school activities ranging from social events to leadership groups such as School Council and PTA. Our school will be better for all students if there is a wider range of voices at the table. We want to support students' academic and social/emotional growth by partnering effectively with all parents and guardians at a systemic level.

There are currently families who wish to be more involved with the school than they currently are, and we need to continue working on finding meaningful ways to tap into the skills, talents, and interests of our entire parent body to support the learning of all students.

Data Story

The West Somerville Neighborhood School administered a family communication survey in the spring of 2016 to better understand how families preferred to receive communications from the school and how they preferred to interact with school staff. Results of the survey suggested that many of the families that responded are interested in learning more about the school curriculum, instructional methodologies, and what is happening in class to support their children at home. Despite the feedback received, the responses were not as useful for making decisions about school policy because the response rate for the survey was low and the feedback received was not fully representative of the school community at West Somerville School.

Data from other events that were held during the 2015-2016 school year also show that participation at school events was not reflective of our overall school population. (Add 15-16 data to support this statement).

Table 1: Parent Leadership Body Membership and Student Population, SY2016-2017

	% Students	% PTA Board	% School Council
African American	14.2%	0%	10%
Asian	3.9%	0%	0%
Hispanic	19.5%	0%	0%
Native American	0.0%	0%	0%
White	58.2%	100%	90%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.0%	0%	0%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	4.2%	0%	0%

The table above shows that the majority of parents who volunteer for the Parent Teacher Association (PTS) or the School Council at West Somerville are white.

Table 2: Attendance at Sample School Events Compared to Student Population, 2016-2017

	Students	Classroom Events	Potlucks	Winter Concert	Parent-Teacher Conferences
African American	14.2%	15%	3%	12%	11%
Asian	3.9%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Hispanic	19.5%	13%	17%	18%	14%
Native American	0.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
White	58.2%	65%	67%	61%	66%
Nat Hawaiian/Pac. Isl.	0.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Multi-Race, Non-Hisp.	4.2%	4%	11%	5%	6%

The data above shows that our events have been more reflective of our school population during the first part of the 2016-2017 school year than they were during the 2015-2016 school year. We believe that this shift is a result of some of the changes and adjustments we have made as a school based upon data and feedback from the 2015-2016 school year. We are still striving to further increase the level of engagement of all families to fully support student learning.

Additional Information

Learning from Successes to Date

At the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, several changes were made to encourage more representative family engagement with the school. For example, ...

These changes seem to have resulted in engaging more families in addition to engaging a more diverse group of families. In light of the success West Somerville has experienced this year by making the changes above, the school has decided to continue to examine its family engagement practices and to take steps to better understand how to best engage and serve all of its families.

Understanding What Works for Our Families

In an effort to better understand... a survey was administered to families during a community potluck dinner and PTA meeting in January of 2017. The survey was administered at the community potluck in order to give a more diverse group of families the opportunity to have their voice heard as well. To date, 41 responses have been received but the school will keep the survey open until at least 50% of families at the school have responded. In order to reach this response rate, surveys will be sent home in backpacks, translated into the district's target languages, speaking with families before and after school and encouraging survey completion, and reminders will be posted in the school newsletter.

Defining and Understanding Parent/Family Engagement

Participation means different things for different families that make up the West Somerville School community. Some families volunteer at school events, others serve on school boards, some create

strong communication channels with school staff, while still others work with their children on academic pursuits or support their children in other ways. Because of the variation in how families “engage” with school, the West Somerville School recognizes the need to better define and understand parent engagement. This definition must be expanded to include more than attendance patterns at school events. What do parents consider engagement to look like? In what ways would they like to be more engaged (or less)? These are questions that the school is not yet able to answer but at the same time, these questions are critical to creating an open, inviting, environment that welcomes all families to support the success of their children at West Somerville and beyond.

To this end, West Somerville School will partner with the Urban Leaders Network (ULN) and the Somerville Family Learning Center (SFLC) to adopt the new ULN parent engagement survey. This partnership and the resulting data collected will help guide our plan to increase and improve family engagement in support of student learning.

Next Steps

Action	Person (s) Responsible	Timeline
Add smaller format music concerts on a monthly basis in the second half of the year.	Principal, Music Teacher	Monthly from January-June
Recruitment of more diverse parents for the 4 open seats on School Council in 2017-2018.	Principal/School Council Members/SFLC Liaison	January 2017-May 2017
Implement Responsive Classroom and share this work with parents and guardians, focus on “Knowing students and their families well.”	Principal/classroom teachers	Began in September 2016
Establish Committees and small groups to address areas of need in the school.	Principal, Liaison, School Council	Winter 2017 and ongoing
Learning spotlight addition to weekly memo.	Principal	January 2017
Develop a robust program of events/initiatives that are tied to school goals and needs as well as parent interests and strengths to support student learning based on data from 1/10 survey.	ILT, School Council, Grade level teams	Ongoing, complete in
Share family survey data with staff to plan for 2017-2018 activities.	ILT	Spring 2017

Theory of Action

Goal(s) for September 2016 – September 2018

- By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, attendance at school events will reflect, within 5 percentage points, the demographic make-up of the school.
- At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, the percentage of families (a representative sample) who report that they are happy with their level of involvement in the school will

increase by 10 percentage points as compared to the results of the 2015-2016 school year survey.

- At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, the percentage of families (a representative sample) reporting that they have adequate information from school to support student learning at home will be improve by 10 percentage points as compared to the results of the 2015-2016 school year survey.
- At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, the make-up of parent boards will more closely reflect the demographic make-up of the school

Academic Foci for the 2016-2018 School Years

Drastically Reduce the Achievement Gap for Special Education Students

One of the current School Committee goals is to eliminate achievement gaps. At West Somerville, we are committed to improving achievement for all of our students, and we believe that we will enable all students to move forward by focusing on our persistent achievement gaps. In looking at math and ELA data from 2012-2016 by sub-group, we have identified persistent achievement gaps of 20-30 CPI (composite performance index) points between our general education population and our special education students.

Data Story

Chart 1: MCAS English Language Arts Composite Performance Index, by Disability Status Over Time

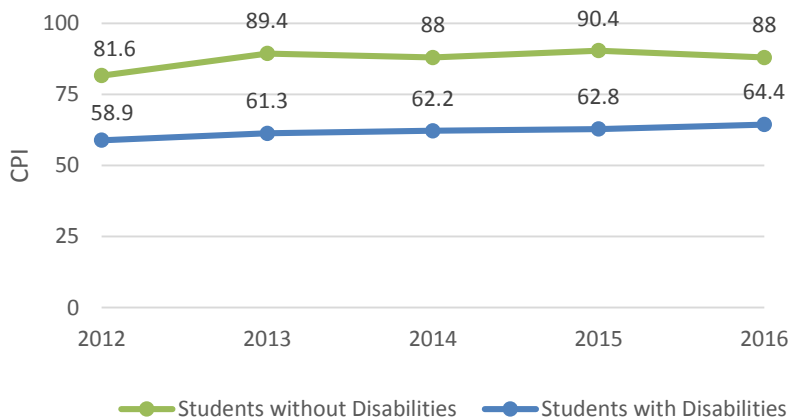
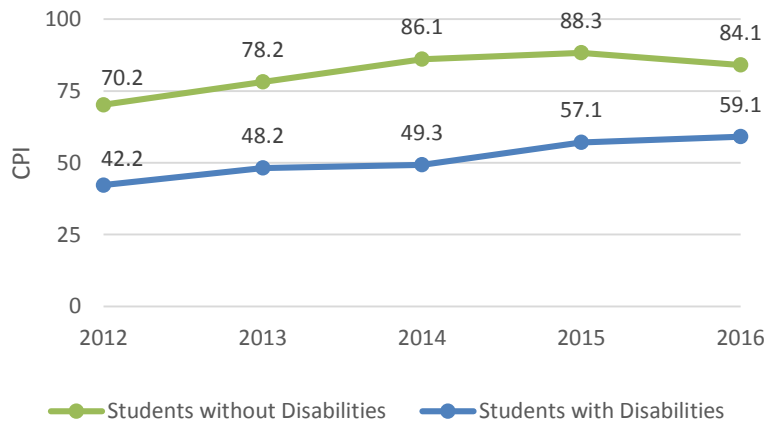


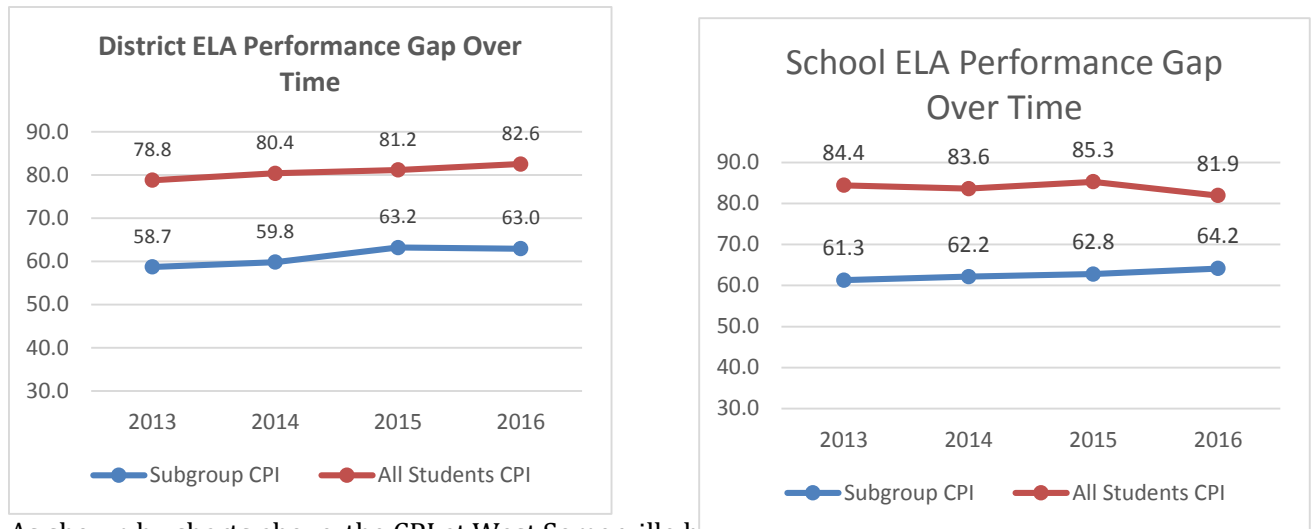
Chart 2: MCAS Mathematics Composite Performance Index, by Disability Status Over Time



The charts above show ...

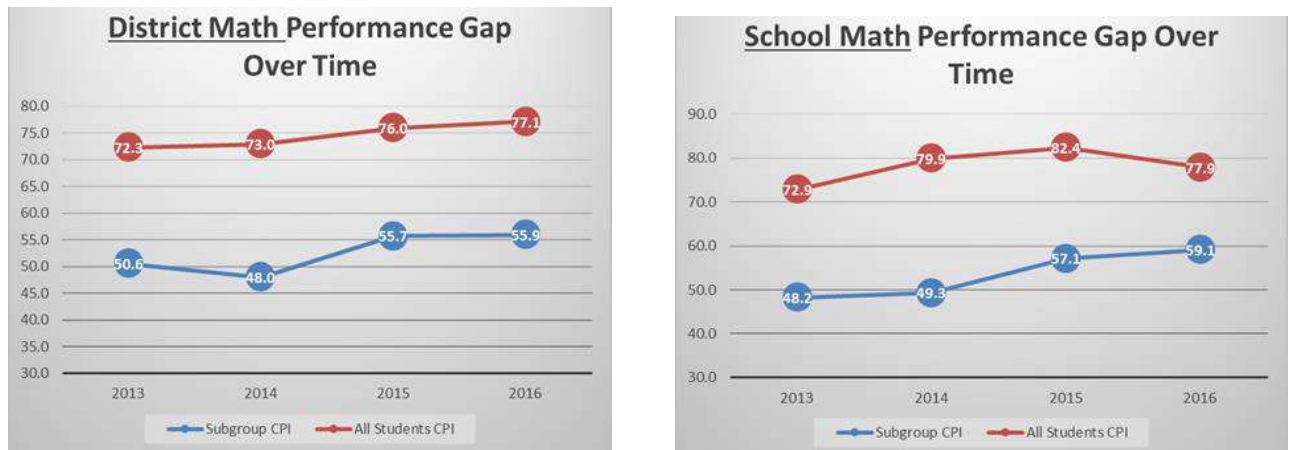
The data above suggest that there may have been specific types of questions or content tested by the MCAS assessment that students who receive special education services were less likely to answer correctly. In order to investigate this question, we analyzed the MCAS data by question type and standard area for each grade. In general, students receiving special education services at West Somerville out-performed other special education students in the district and state at 4th grade (ELA and math) 3rd grade (math). Additionally, there were no patterns in the data that suggested that students receiving special education services struggled more in certain MCAS standard areas or questions than in others.

Charts 2 & 3: West Special Education Performance Compared with the District Overall, ELA



As shown by charts above, the CPI at West Somerville has been historically higher than the district CPI for special education students. The CPI of all students at the school as compared to all students in the district is about the same as the district CPI although it should be higher given that the special education CPI has consistently been higher. Thus, it seems that our general education students are performing less well than their district peers in ELA.

Charts 4 & 5: West Special Education Performance Compared with the District Overall, Math



In mathematics, the students receiving special education services at West Somerville have had a higher CPI than students receiving special education services across the district. In addition, the performance of all students at West is higher or equal to the performance of all students at the district level on the MCAS math assessment. This is similar to the trend seen in the ELA data in *Chart 2* and *Chart 3*.

Table 1: MCAS ELA Student Growth (SGP) over Time

	2013	2014	2015	2016
4 TH grade	55	52	43	57
5 th grade	68.5	72.5	64	48
6 th grade	56	53	47	23.5
7 th grade	66	49	40.5	79
8 th grade	65.5	61	72.5	54

Table 2: MCAS Math Student Growth (SGP) over Time

	2013	2014	2015	2016
4 TH grade	55	80.5	62	61
5 th grade	60.5	94	89	67.5
6 th grade	41	73	28	22.5
7 th grade	77	76	57	58.5
8 th grade	63	64	78	57

In order to ensure that all of our students are making measurable progress on the MCAS, it is important to monitor student growth (SGP) over time. As shown by the tables above, in most grades and test areas, student SGP is consistently 60 or higher. There are some grades, however, where student SGP is below 50, indicating that on average, students did not make adequate growth from the prior year. It is essential to maintain high growth in order to improve the MCAS performance of all students and to ensure that students receiving special education services are progressing quickly enough to close the general education – special education achievement gap highlighted above.

Additional Information

Identifying Open Response as an Area of Concern

In looking at 3rd and 4th grade math and ELA data at the question and standard level, there were no noticeable patterns or trends regarding standards or question types as to what is causing the gaps in MCAS performance. West Somerville's grade-level teams, comprised of classroom teachers, were then involved in the discussion of the data in order to determine the root cause of the gaps, and to identify what steps can be taken instructionally to address them.

Grade-level teacher meetings were held in September and October of 2016. It became apparent that most students at West, both special education and general education, performed less well than the state in open response questions. Reviewing student classwork at grade-level Assess and Re-Teach Meetings over the first part of the 2016-2017 school year has helped to confirm that crafting

responses to open responses questions is indeed an area where many students at West Somerville struggle.

The open response questions in both mathematics and English Language Arts have been the most difficult for students across the grade levels. Students struggle with providing adequate details and with identifying the most important/relevant details when they are answering ELA open response questions. In math, students are not consistently able to illustrate the process they followed to solve a mathematics problem.

Strengthening the Inclusion Model

Students who receive special education services are either included in general education classrooms (where they receive support in accessing the content) or are pulled out of general education classrooms to receive support services. In order to provide all of our students with the support they need to access instruction content, it is essential that we provide opportunities for special education and general education teachers to collaborate. During this time together, general education teachers become aware of the services that students are receiving and how they are being implemented and special education teachers are made aware of the grade-level curriculum content and how it is delivered.

Due to the staffing model at West Somerville prior to 2016-2017, most special education services were provided outside of the classroom in resource rooms. Common planning time was limited. With the addition of a third special education teacher for the 2016-2017 school year, more services are delivered in the classroom and special education teachers now have a bi-weekly common planning time with grade-level general education teachers. Special education teachers are now included in Assess and Reteach meetings, which has enabled them to be part of planning for re-teaching students who need it. This table reflects a shift to providing services in an inclusionary setting, which is the best way to meet students' needs and to ensure that there is collaboration between special education and general education staff. The school will review current staffing allocations and its service delivery model in order to further develop and refine its inclusion model. The school's current staffing model is below.

Table 6: WSNS Special Education Staffing Chart

	Students serviced	Hours of Pull-out Services Called for in Current IEPs	Hours in Inclusion Services called for in Current IEPs	Estimated Time Needed for Testing and Meetings
PK-2 Teacher and Para	29	50	8	4
3-5 Teacher and Para	20	14.5	46	4
6-8 Teacher	19	10	25	3

*Note that the inclusion and pullout numbers reflect the total #of hours in IEPs for all students. Some students are in the same classes or in small groups for pull-out, so that when the special education teacher is in the classroom for 30 minutes, he or she could be providing services to multiple students.

Staff at grades K-2 have a larger caseload than teachers at higher grades because this staff member also provides reading support for all students in the building using the Wilson reading curriculum. There is little inclusion for students receiving special education services in grades PK to grade 2 because of this structure. Students in these grades do not receive instruction in the classroom during the times when they are pulled out of the classroom for specialized instruction.

When students with milder disabilities receive services in the general education classroom (push-in) they can receive specially designed instruction while also having access to core instruction and content. In order to pull fewer students out of the classroom at the younger grade, ensuring they do not miss critical content, the West Somerville will need to reorganize its use of staff in the table above.

Next Steps and Theory of Action

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
Align work in coaching cycles and ongoing professional development with the need to improve success with open response.	Coaches/teachers/supervisors	Ongoing
Continue to focus on writing in 1-5 grade PD to have a cohesive and unified approach to how we are teaching writing. (Open response was a relative weakness in all grades)	ILT	Monthly professional development meetings to learn strategies and share results
Work to develop and implement an inclusion model to ensure that special education and regular education staff are able to plan and teach together to best meet the needs of all students.	Administration/ILT/Staff	Monthly PD meetings; bi-weekly team planning meetings, 16-17, A&R meetings
Monitor growth of special education students in relation to non-disabled peers on DIBELS, STAR Review interventions and instructional approaches	Principal Grade level teams	February 2017, June 2017, September 2017, January 2018, June 2018
Assess current staffing levels relevant to student needs and make budget requests/staffing adjustments for 2017-2018	Principal/Assistant Principal	January 2017
Identify the most appropriate specially designed instruction for inclusion classrooms.	Principal/ILT/Spec. Education Dept.	Spring 2017

Goal(s) for September 2016 – September 2018

- By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, the composite performance indicator (CPI) gap between non-disabled and disabled peers will be reduced by at least 10 points in all tested areas.
- By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, WSNS students at all grade levels and in all sub-groups will have an SGP of 60 or higher.

Overview of Goals

	SY2015-2016 Data Summary	Sept 2017 Benchmark	September 2018 Goal
Representative Family Engagement			
Special Education Achievement Gap	20-30 point MCAS (ELA and Math) gap for sped and non-sped students	Reduce each existing gap by at least 5 points	Reduce gaps from 2015-2016 by at 10 points.

Appendix

Data Definitions

- **PPI (Progress and Performance Index)** – A PPI of 75 means that a school is considered by the state to be making progress towards narrowing proficiency gaps.
- **Suspensions** – Percentages represent the percentage of disciplinary events that led to a suspension.
- **Stability Rate** – The percentage of students who are enrolled in October 1st of the school year and remain enrolled through June 1st of the school year.
- **MCAS Proficiency** – The percentage of students who scored *Proficient* or *Advanced* on the MCAS Assessment.
- **Making Progress** – Based on performance on the ACCESS Assessment, the percentage of English Language Learners who are making progress towards English Proficiency.
- **Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)** – A measure of student progress that compares changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar scores in prior years. A school-wide SGP of 90 would mean that when all students at the school are ordered from highest to lowest scoring, the student in the middle had a 90 SGP. A 90 SGP means that this student scored as well as or better than 90% of students who had a similar achievement record over the past 3 years statewide, indicating very high growth.
- **K-Readiness** – A quantitative measure of overall performance on the Kindergarten Entry Skill Assessment (KESI). Scores fall between 1 and 3.
- **School Culture and Wellbeing** – These data were pulled from the Whole School Quality survey. Scores are on a scale from 0 to 5.
- **Composite Performance Index (CPI)** – A 100-point index that assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alt tests based on their performance. The total points assigned to each student are added together and the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed. The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes a district, school or group's CPI for that subject and student group. The CPI is a measure of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency (a CPI of 100) in ELA and mathematics.