

SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

School Committee Presentation Part 2: From Data to Action

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RE-GROUND: WHO ARE WE SERVING?

SY 2025-26 referrals: district-wide view



Among referrals with a completed eligibility determination, 56% were found eligible for special education services district-wide.

Race Comparison

WHITE STUDENTS

97 referrals

45 eligible
54%

STUDENTS OF COLOR

115 referrals

54 eligible
53%

**Race was not recorded for 51 referrals, including the Capuano. Race comparisons used records with race documents.*

Who made the referrals?

Parent/Guardians

159 referrals
65 eligible

Schools/CST/Teacher

64 referrals
38 eligible

Early Intervention

33 referrals

Other

7 referrals

RE-GROUND: WHO ARE WE SERVING?

Referral activity by school

Referrals, eligibility outcomes, and referral source			
School	Referrals	Eligible	Who made the referrals?
CAPUANO	47	32	33 Early Intervention • 12 Parent/Guardian • 2 Other/School
ARGENZIANO	46	25	30 Parent/Guardian • 16 School/CST/Teacher
BROWN	9	5	6 Parent/Guardian • 3 School/CST/Teacher
EAST	46	19	27 Parent/Guardian • 18 School/CST/Teacher • 1 Other
HEALEY*	10	7	10 Parent/Guardian
KENNEDY	25	15	18 Parent/Guardian • 7 School/CST/Teacher
WEST	24	14	17 Parent/Guardian • 7 School/CST/Teacher
WINTER HILL	25	8	15 Parent/Guardian • 8 School/CST/Teacher • 2 Other/not recorded
SHS	31	6	24 Parent/Guardian • 4 School/CST/Teacher • 3 Other

RE-GROUND: WHO ARE WE SERVING?

Student mobility add complexity throughout the year

55 Students were recorded as moving into the district during SY 2025-26

55

move-ins

Move-In Students include:

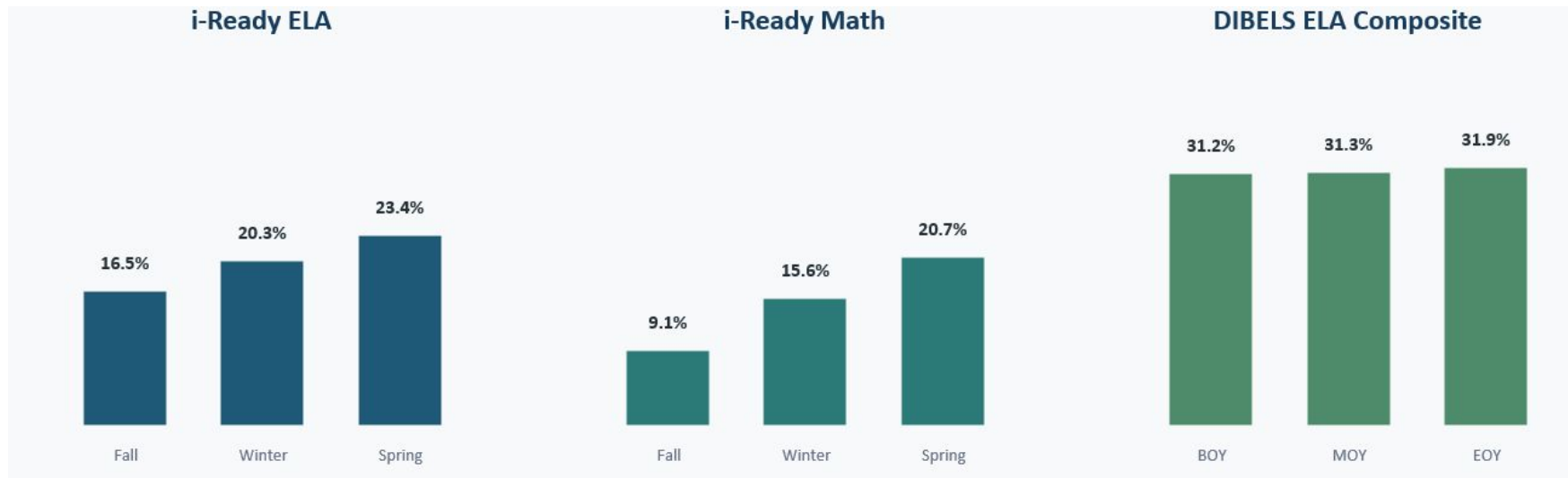
- Students entering from neighborhood districts, other states, charter/private settings
- Students requiring a range of placements - from neighborhood school to AIM, SEEK, Life Skills, Transition, Full Circle, and out-of-district programs
- Entries spanning preschool through transition-age programming

Planning implication: enrollment counts along do not capture the timing or intensity of needs entering the district during the year.

OUTCOMES: HOW ARE STUDENTS DOING?

Benchmark outcomes show growth and areas requiring continued focus

District-wide Special Education benchmark results, SY 2025-26



Takeaway: i-Ready proficiency increased in both ELA (+6.9pts) and Math (+11.6pts). DIBELS composite proficiency was comparatively stable, while underlying reading accuracy and decoding subskills improved.

OUTCOMES: HOW ARE STUDENTS DOING?

SY 2026-27 begins with a new baseline

Beginning/Fall benchmark data for students with IEPs

33.9%
DIBELS □□

251 students

18.9%
i-Ready ELA

381 students

12.0%
i-Ready Math

334 students

How we will use this data:

- Monitor progress across benchmark windows
- Identify school-level patterns that need targeted support
- Connect student outcome data to Tier 1 and inclusive-practice professional learning

OUTCOMES: HOW ARE STUDENTS DOING?

Spring 2026 MCAS: District-Wide Picture

Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations



Strengths and Areas for Focus

- Science was the strongest overall subject for students with IEPs.
- Achievement gaps remain substantial across all tested subjects.
- These results are considered alongside growth and benchmark data to target instructional support.

OUTCOMES: HOW ARE STUDENTS DOING?

MCAS Growth Adds Important Context

Growth provides another lens on student performance

ELA

12.6% Meeting/Exceeding

43 Median Growth

20.7% Met Progress Target

Without IEP: median growth 53; 49.3% met target

MATH

12.3% Meeting/Exceeding

45 Median Growth

18.8% Met Progress Target

Without IEP: median growth 58; 51.3% met target

Strength to build on: Grade 7 had the highest median growth for students with IEPs – 50 in ELA and 60 in Math

OUTCOMES: HOW ARE STUDENTS DOING?

MCAS by School: Strengths & Areas for Focus

Spring 2026 students with IEPs - Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

School	ELA	MATH	What we see
ARGENZIANO	14.9%	13.3%	ELA above district SWD rate
BROWN	66.7%	66.7%	Strongest rates; small group (n=12)
EAST	1.2%	2.5%	Targeted support needed
HEALEY	8.8%	10.0%	Continued focus
KENNEDY	27.1%	21.7%	Relative strength in both areas
WEST	12.8%	20.8%	Math is a relative strength
WINTER HILL	7.6%	7.6%	Continued focus
NEXT WAVE	7.7%	8.3%	Small group; continued focus
FULL CIRCLE	—	—	Suppressed: n < 10
SHS	12.2%	6.2%	ELA near district rate; Math focus

PROGRAMMING: HOW ARE WE MEETING STUDENT NEEDS?

District-Wide Special Education Enrollment

Grade	Number of Students
PreK	38
K	49
1	63
2	77
3	70
4	68
5	95
6	84
7	94
8	85

Grade	Number of Students
9	72
10	81
11	60
12	84
SP	16

PROGRAMMING: HOW ARE WE MEETING STUDENT NEEDS?

Placement / Program by School

School	Full Inclusion	Partial Inclusion	Substantially Separate	Public Day	Total
Capuano	27	8	16	-	43
Argenziano	79	3 Resource Room ♦ 11 LB	33 AIM	-	126
Brown	17	0	0	-	17
East	112	5	2	-	119
Healey	83	3 Resource Room ♦ 15 Multi Graded	0	-	101
Kennedy	66	1	14 Life Skills ♦ 5 SKIP ♦ 10 SEEK	-	96
West	61	2	0	-	63
Winter Hill	45	3	58 AIM	-	106
Next Wave	4	0	0	2	6
Full Circle	22	3	0	20	43
SHS	183	21	7 Resource Room ♦ 3 AIM ♦ 8 Life Skills 3 SHIP ♦ 7 Transition	-	232

PROGRAMMING: HOW ARE WE MEETING STUDENT NEEDS?**Placement / Program by School**

School	Full Inclusion	Partial Inclusion	Substantially Separate	Public Day	Total
Walk-Ins	25	2	-	-	27

Out of District**24 Public Day Programs ♦ 33 Private Day Programs****57**

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

SEEK WORKING GROUP: INCREASING MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

Goal: Expand belonging and access to grade-level peers while maintaining individualized supports.

- Convened a SEEK Working Group of general and special educators, support staff, and administrators.
- Established grade-level homeroom placements so SEEK students begin their day with grade-level peers through morning meeting/homeroom.
- Focused inclusion decisions on each student's IEP, strengths, needs, and readiness for meaningful participation.

The focus is purposeful integration, not simply placement, with supports matched to individual student needs.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES & CO-TEACHING WORKING GROUP

In 2025–26, SPS and the Somerville Educators Union convened a districtwide inclusion and co-teaching group.

2025–26

**WORKING GROUP
FORMED**

FOCUS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Examine current inclusive practices and co-teaching models. The group also reviewed educator feedback, survey data, and findings from the program review.

WHAT THE GROUP FOUND

Stronger inclusion requires changes in classroom practice as well as scheduling, planning time, staffing, and role clarity.

The working group findings and recommendations established a foundation for continued implementation, evaluation, and refinement.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The report defined five priorities for 2026–27 and a multi-year implementation path.

- 01 Expand co-teaching models**
- 02 Improve scheduling and shared planning**
- 03 Provide district wide professional learning**
- 04 Clarify staffing and educator roles**
- 05 Measure implementation and impact**

2026–27

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MOVES INTO IMPLEMENTATION

Dr. Jenna Rufo's professional learning and coaching help educators use inclusive Tier 1 practices in daily instruction.

2026–27

WORKING GROUP RECONVENES

The Inclusive Practices and Co-Teaching Working Group will reconvene to monitor implementation, review feedback and outcomes, and refine the district's multi-year approach.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

BUILDING FROM THE PROGRAM REVIEW

In 2025–26, SPS completed a comprehensive special education and intervention review with Dr. Jenna Rufo. The review established the foundation for the work now underway.

WHAT THE REVIEW IDENTIFIED

Somerville has strong inclusive structures. The review also found inconsistent scaffolding, curriculum adaptation, differentiation, and access to grade-level learning.

HOW WE ARE RESPONDING

We continued our work with Dr. Rufo through professional development, consultation, and coaching for schools, administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches.

FROM REVIEW TO ACTION: Moving from inclusive placement to inclusive instruction.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

SCOPE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Dr. Rufo's work is designed as ongoing implementation support, not a stand-alone training series.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Build shared knowledge of inclusive practice, UDL, standards alignment, meaningful participation, and student independence.

CONSULTATION & COACHING

Work alongside schools, administrators, coaches, and teachers to address barriers, plan next steps, and support implementation.

MULTI-LEVEL SUPPORT: Linking district systems, school leadership, and classroom practice.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & SUPPORT TIMELINE**

A coordinated sequence across roles and the school year



ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

HOW THIS WORK STRENGTHENS TIER 1

Dr. Rufo is helping educators use inclusive practices to make grade-level instruction accessible from the start.

START WITH THE STANDARD

Clarify the essential learning goal and what students need to know and do.

ANTICIPATE & REDUCE BARRIERS

Plan multiple ways for students to engage with content, access information, and demonstrate learning.

SCAFFOLD WITHOUT LOWERING RIGOR

Use modeling, visuals, chunking, guided practice, and flexible response options while maintaining the learning goal.

More students can access strong Tier 1 instruction and teams can identify who needs additional targeted support.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?**TARGETED SUPPORT FOR SUBSTANTIALLY SEPARATE CLASSROOMS**

Dr. Rufo is helping specialized educators connect classroom instruction to grade-level standards and expand meaningful access to the broader school community.

BRIDGE TO STANDARDS

Identify the essential learning target and use alternate standards, entry points, and essentialization to make rigorous content accessible.

PLAN PARTICIPATION

Design authentic ways for students to engage in general education learning, not simply be physically present.

BUILD TEAM CAPACITY

Coordinate roles across special education, general education, paraprofessionals, and related services while reducing over-reliance on adult support.

Clarity, access, and possibility for students with complex needs.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

HELPING ADMINISTRATORS & COACHES IMPLEMENT THE WORK

Dr. Rufo is training administrators and instructional coaches to recognize inclusive practice, support educators, and build consistency across schools.

KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for clear goals, flexible access and response options, purposeful scaffolds, participation, and student independence.

SUPPORT TEACHER PRACTICE

Use walkthrough evidence, feedback, problem-solving, and small “plus-one” moves to guide the next instructional step.

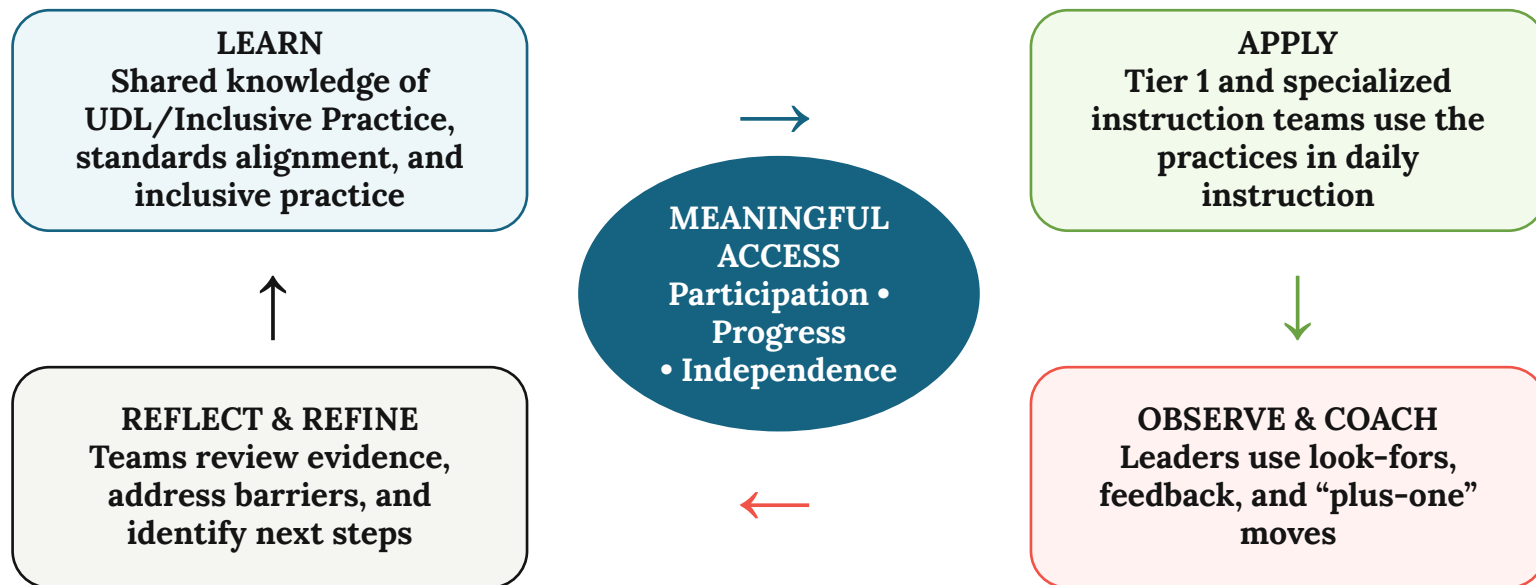
BUILD CONSISTENCY

Set shared expectations, address implementation barriers, and revisit progress across classrooms and schools.

Administrators and coaches help professional learning become consistent classroom practice.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?**CONTINUOUS AND COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE**

Professional learning, classroom application, coaching, and reflection reinforce one another.



ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

ADVANCING PARENT-PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION (A.P.P.L.E.): FAMILY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

In 2025–26, SPS, SSEPAC, and community partners participated in Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) A.P.P.L.E Institute to strengthen family–school collaboration.

TOOLS FOR FAMILIES

Created a Massachusetts IEP Quick Start Guide and expanded the SEPAC resource hub with plain-language information in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole.

FAMILY VOICE & CO-DESIGN

Developed a multilingual, anonymous survey with families to understand clarity, partnership, communication, and how data supports IEP decisions.

SHARED PURPOSE Listen, collaborate, and create a culture of belonging so students can thrive.

ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

WHAT FAMILIES ARE TELLING US

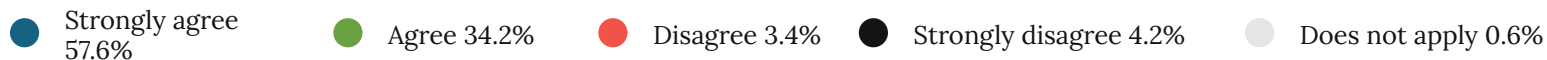
Current results from the multilingual, anonymous IEP meeting survey

59
TOTAL
RESPONDENTS

3
LANGUAGES

9
SCHOOLS /
SETTINGS

ALL SIX QUESTIONS COMBINED | 354 RATINGS

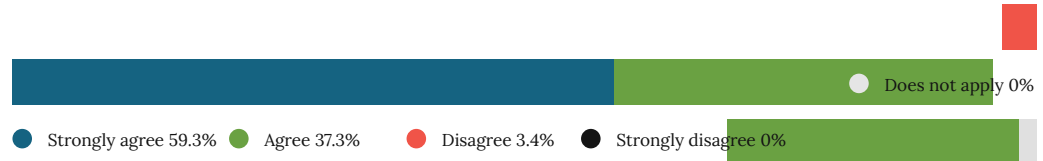


ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

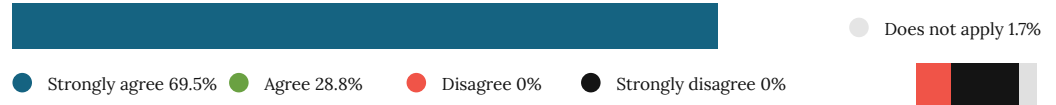
SURVEY RESULTS BY QUESTION

Percent of responses to each item (n=59).

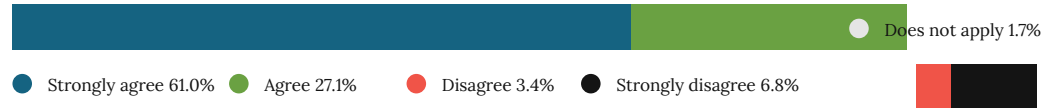
Q1 Understand process, rights, and information



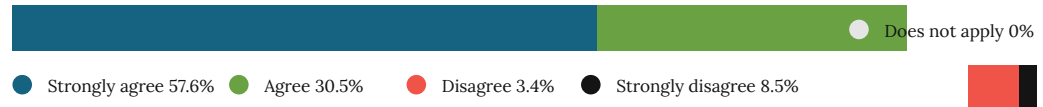
Q2 Purpose of the meeting stated clearly



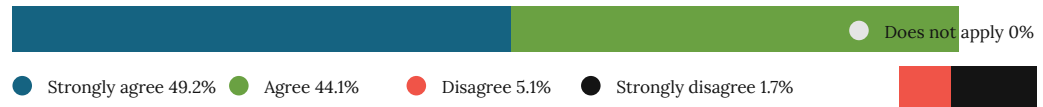
Q3 Input and concerns incorporated into the IEP



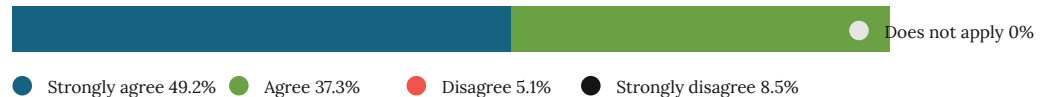
Q4 Treated as an equal and valued team member



Q5 Team responds within 2-3 school days



Q6 Data and observations drive decisions



ACTION: WHAT ARE WE STRENGTHENING?

CONTINUING THE A.P.P.L.E. WORK

The survey gives S-SEPAC and SPS an ongoing structure for listening, learning, and responding with families.

REVIEW & RESPOND

Review ratings, comments, participation patterns, and school-level themes regularly. Use recurring feedback to identify concrete improvements.

EXPAND & CLOSE THE LOOP

Increase survey participation across schools and languages, share what we are learning, and show families how their feedback informs action.

LOOKING AHEAD Sustain the APPLE partnership and use family feedback to guide shared priorities.

FROM DATA TO ACTION



WHAT WE KNOW

Special education demand is dynamic.

Referral activity is district-wide, and students with varied needs move into Somerville throughout the year.



WHAT WE'RE SEEING

Benchmark growth is present, but not uniform.

i-Ready proficiency increased in ELA and Math; literacy benchmark results show areas for continued focus



WHAT WE'RE DOING

Strengthening inclusive practices and family partnerships.

Working groups, Tier 1/Inclusive Practices professional learning, and family voice are being used to guide improvement