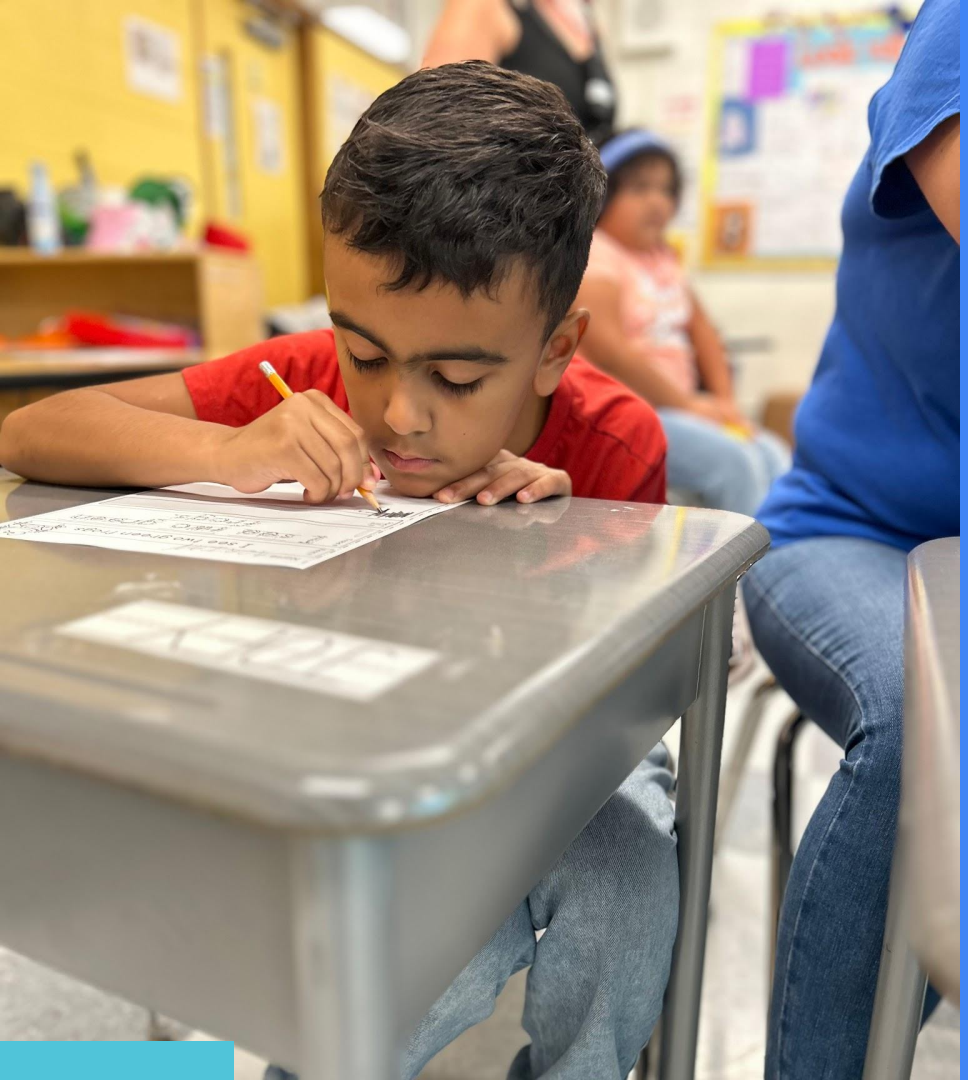


Special Education Advisory Committee

October 15, 2026

Chicago Public Schools | OFFICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



I am seen. I am valued. I belong. In every classroom at CPS.

OSD Mission

Through partnership and empowerment, we ensure that every student with a disability experiences success and secures their Rightful Presence in all academic and social settings.



Our vision is to fully support educators, school leaders, and families in securing the Rightful Presence and success of students with disabilities. By dismantling barriers, ensuring equitable access, and assuring compliance, we provide the resources needed for every student's academic and social success, guided by high-quality IEPs.



Our Shared Language

What We No Longer Use

- ~~Diverse Learner (DL)~~
- ~~DL Students~~
- ~~DL Teachers~~

These terms do not align with federal standards.

Our Preferred Language

- **Students with Disabilities**
- **Special Education**
- **Special Education Teachers**

This alignment with IDEA law provides clarity and access for families. This change more accurately reflects the population we serve and combats the stigma tied to the word "disability."

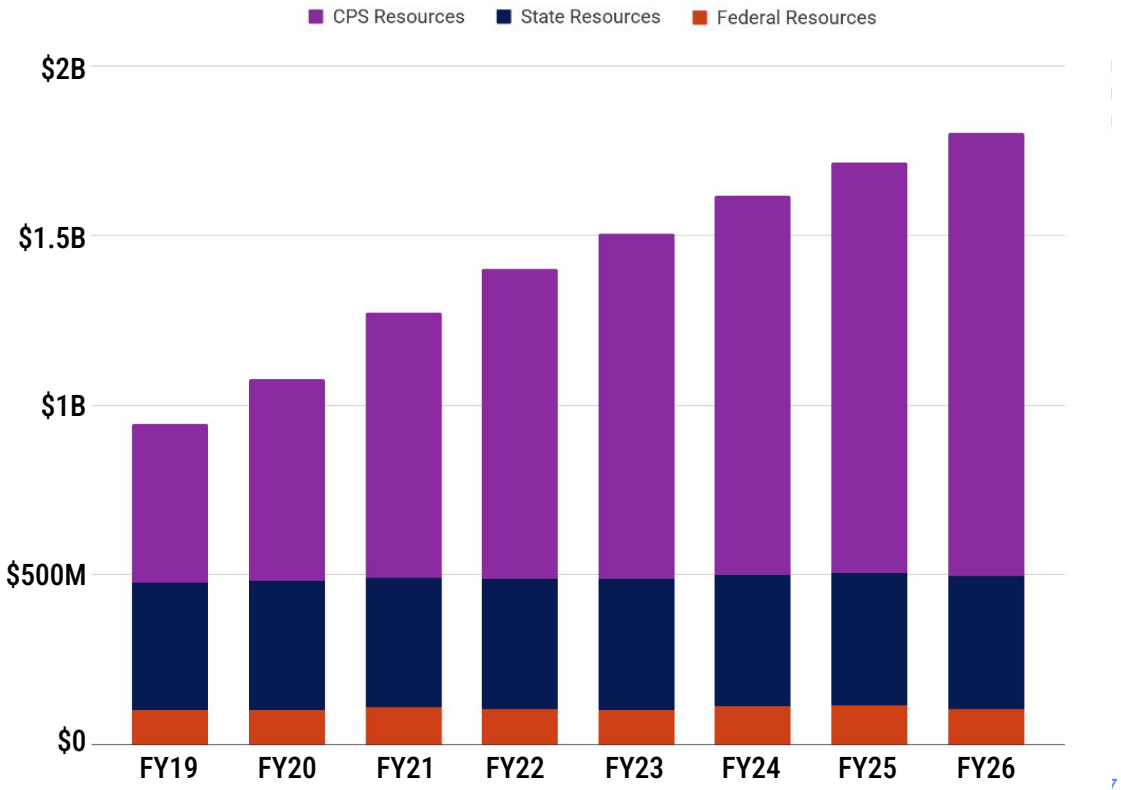
We invite you to join us in using these terms as we chart our path forward as the Office for Students With Disabilities

Special Education Resources

Example: Fed/State Special Education Revenue Streams Cover Less Of CPS' SpEd Obligations Every Year

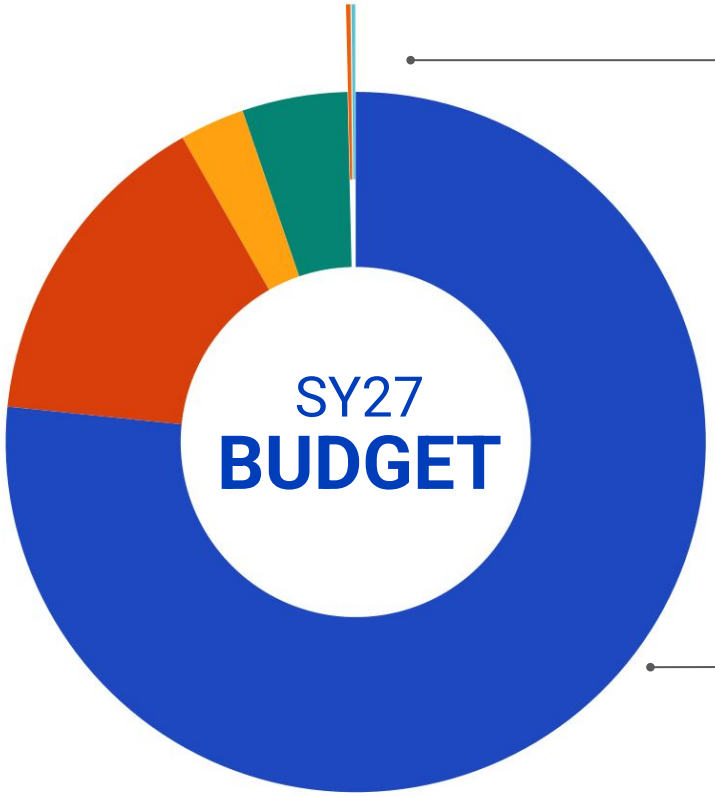
While student needs have grown year-over-year, the level of state and federal funding for special education has remained relatively flat.

- **In FY19,** state and federal funding for special education covered **about 50 percent** of CPS' total special education expenditures.
- **By FY26,** state and federal funding for special education covered **just 28 percent** of CPS' total special education expenditures.



SY27 Budget Breakdown

- Direct School Support
- School Support Personnel (RSPs)
- School Support Personnel (Citywide Teams)
- School Support Non-Personnel
- Central Office Personnel
- Central Office Non-Personnel



0.4%
Central Office Supports

99.6%
Direct School Supports

Special Education Positions in Schools - SY27 Approach

- Allocation model is rooted in student need - all schools treated the same
- Initial allocations were based on the high point of student need, Spring 2026 IEP data
- The goal was to stabilize schools without over allocating positions.
- Requests for additional programmatic positions (Dual Language, AP, etc) began in June 2026
- Case manager allocations remain separate from the teacher and SECA model. They are based on total special education enrollment and were updated after the 20th day of school and will be reviewed again at the start of second semester.

Staffing Adjustments

Automatic Enrollment-Based Adjustments

CPS conducted enrollment based reviews of staffing on the 5th and 10th day of school. Reviews were based on student enrollment and IEP service needs.

Enrollment-Based Appeals

The staffing appeals process opened on the 20th day of school.

Total CPS Current State

5426
SPED Teachers

487
Case Managers

8469
Paraprofessionals

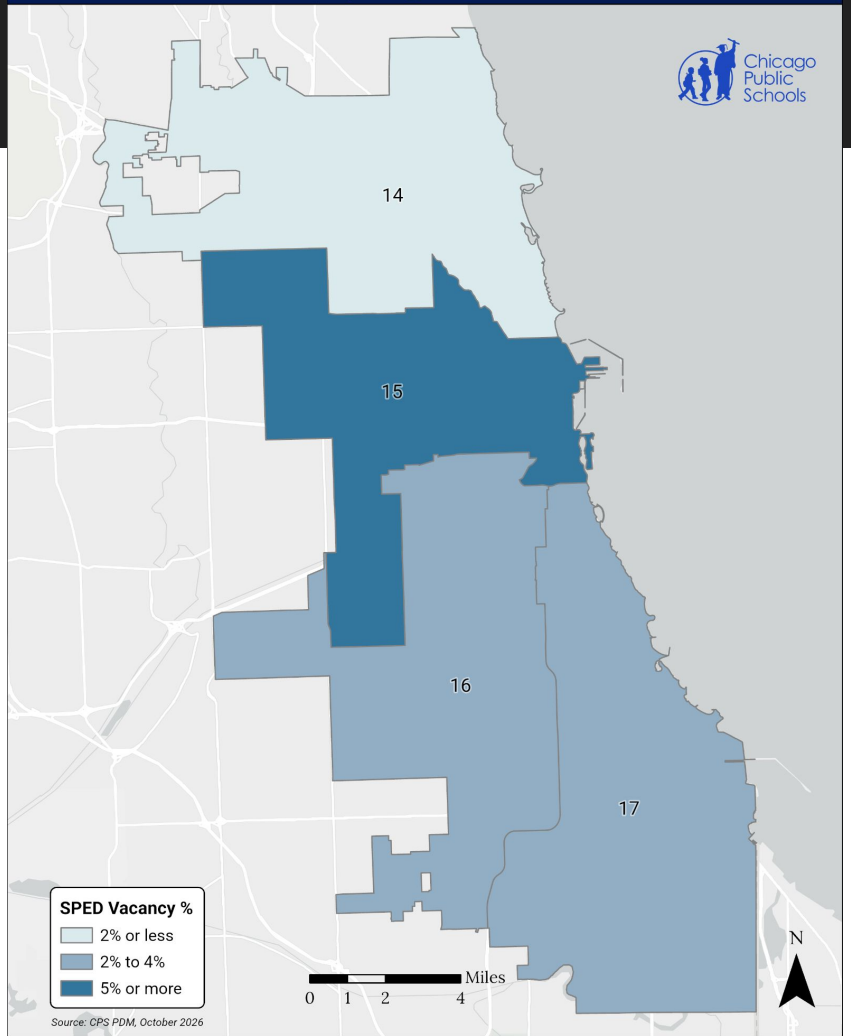
1967
School Service Positions*

98
CO Staff

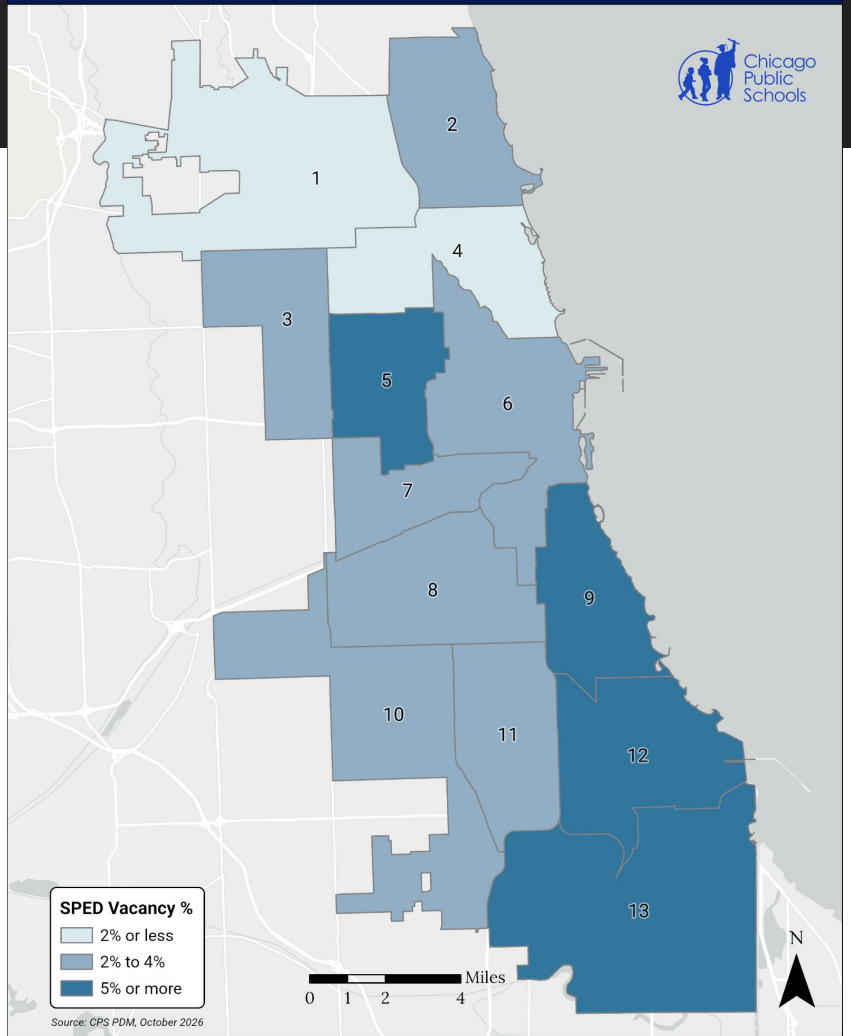
*including CO-based Teachers, RSPs, SECs

Chicago Public Schools

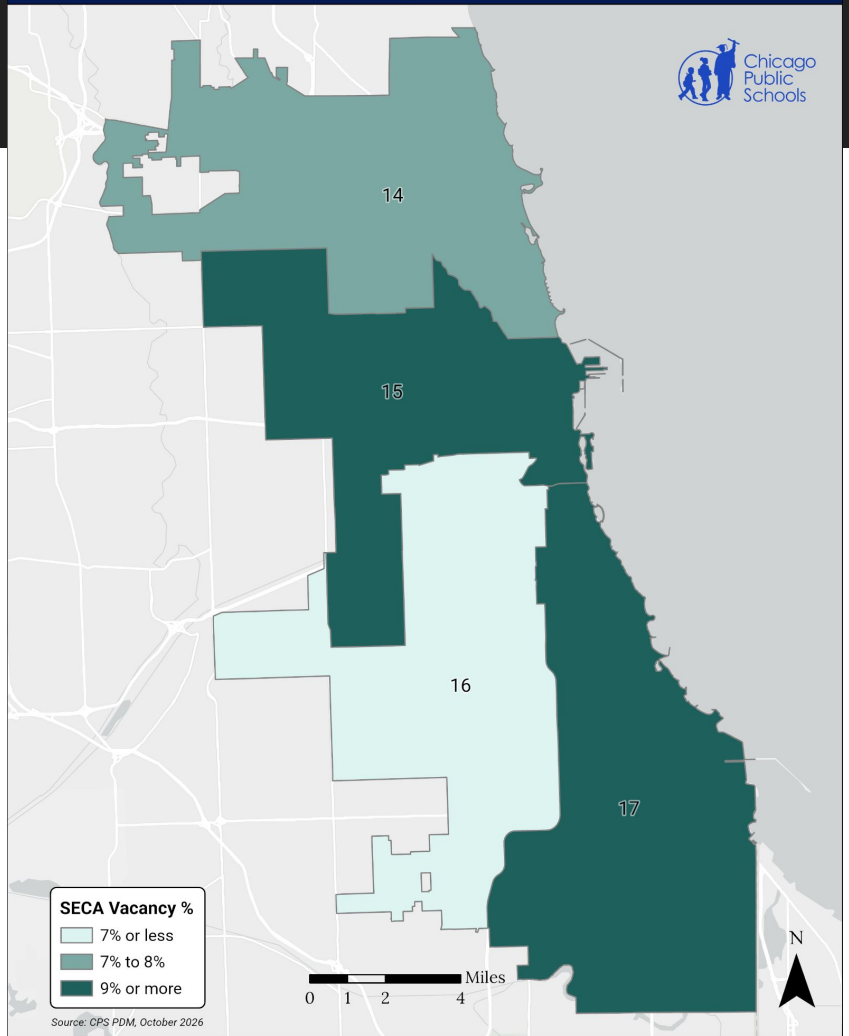
SPED Vacancies by High School Network, SY27



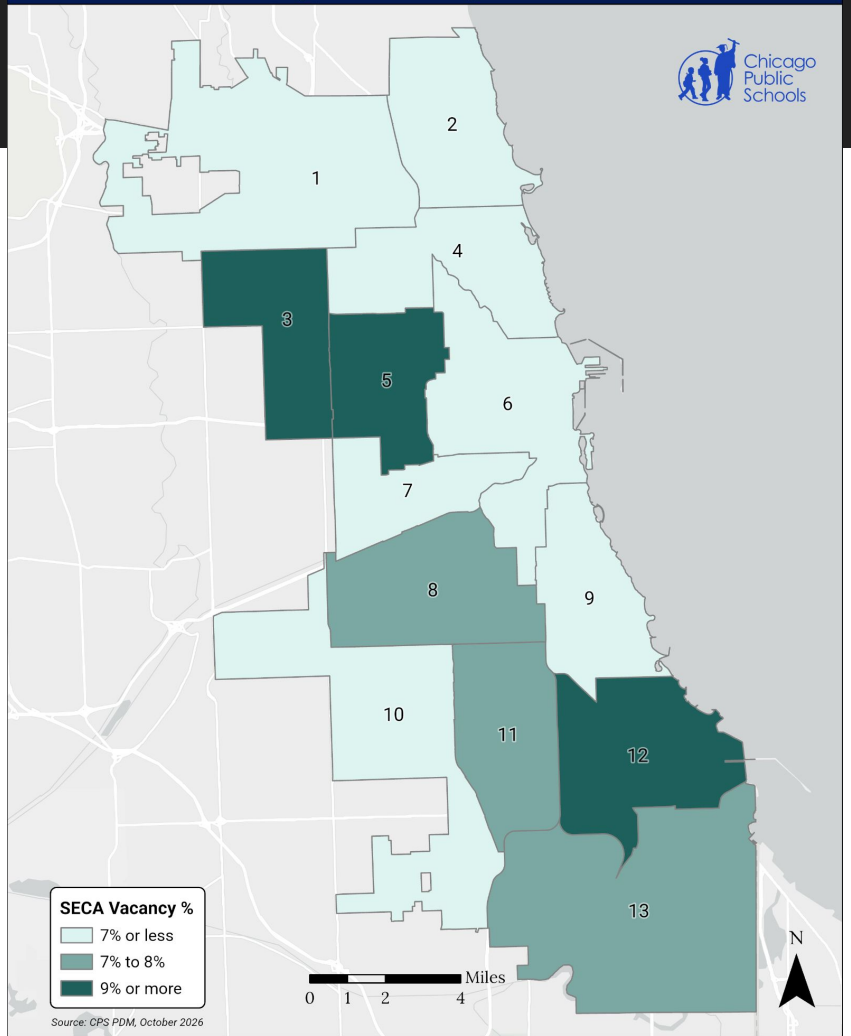
SPED Vacancies by Elementary School Network, SY27



SECA Vacancies by High School Network, SY27

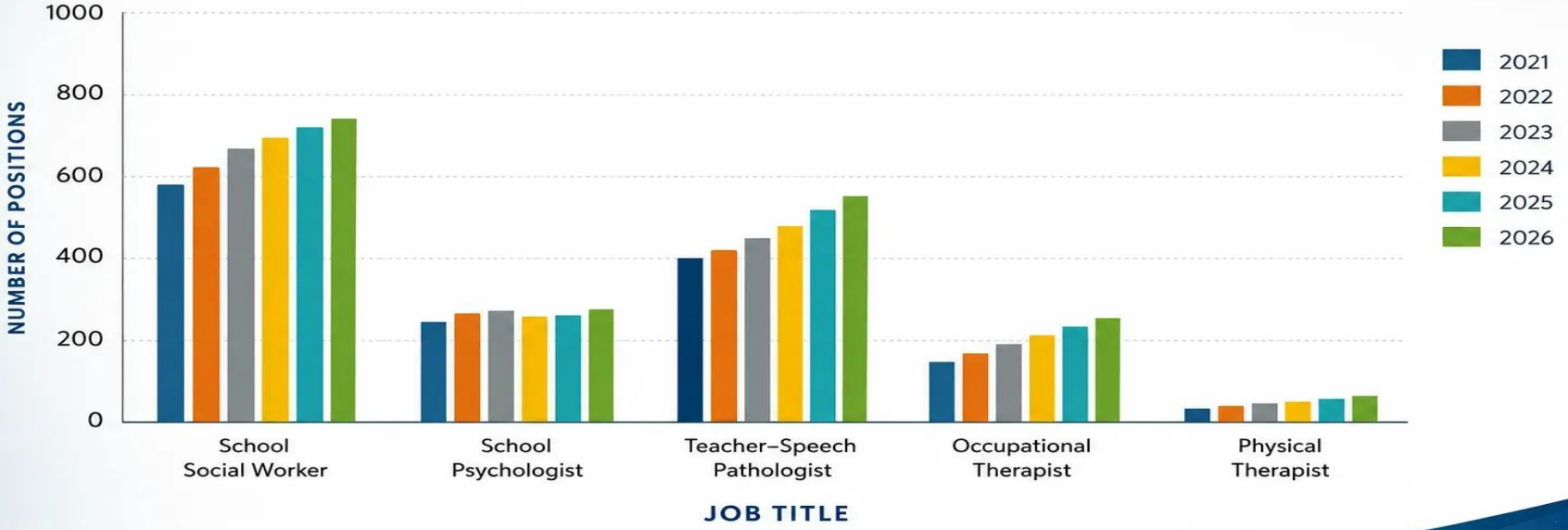


SECA Vacancies by Elementary School Network, SY27



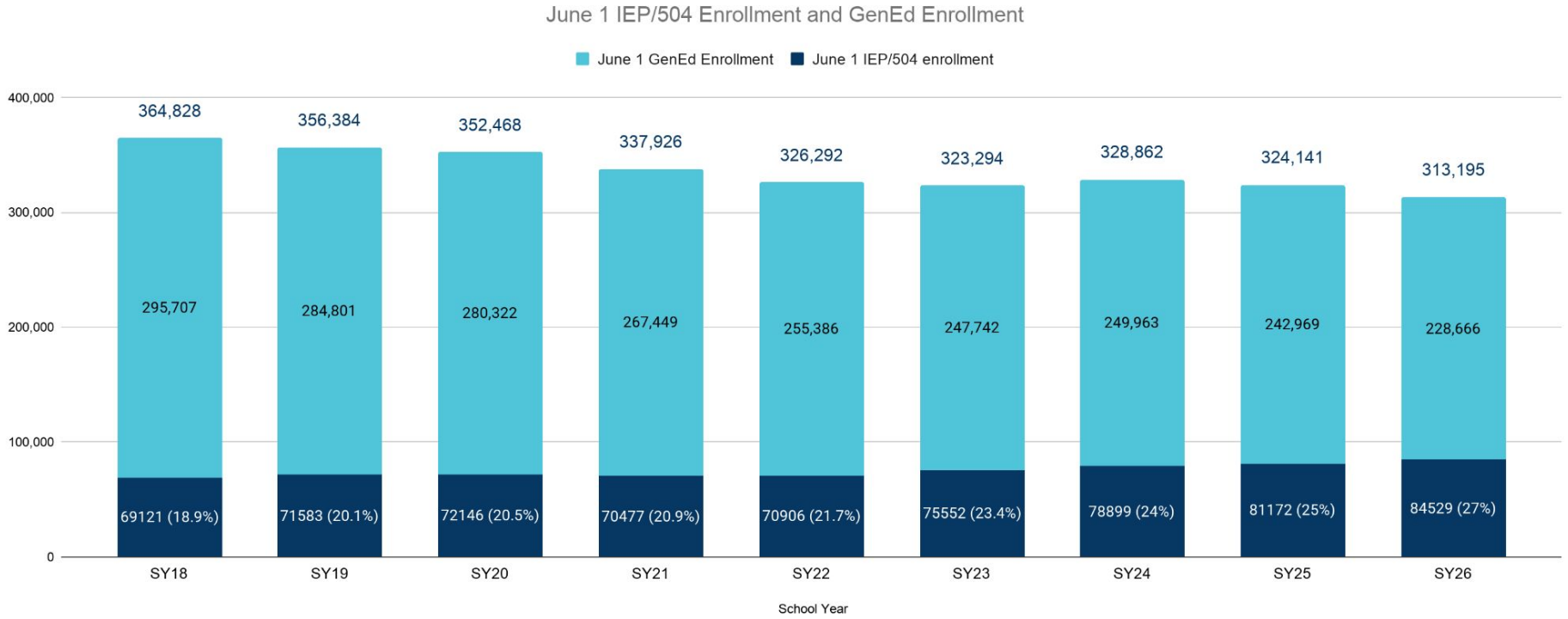
RSP POSITIONS OVER TIME

Sustained growth across all related service provider roles from 2021–2026 reflects our commitment to students and schools.



Student Enrollment, Identification and Least Restrictive Environment

Enrollment Trends - Overall



*All CPS Schools, Including District-Managed and Charter. All Numbers are June 1st

CPS Students with Disabilities - District Managed

Trends show:

Over

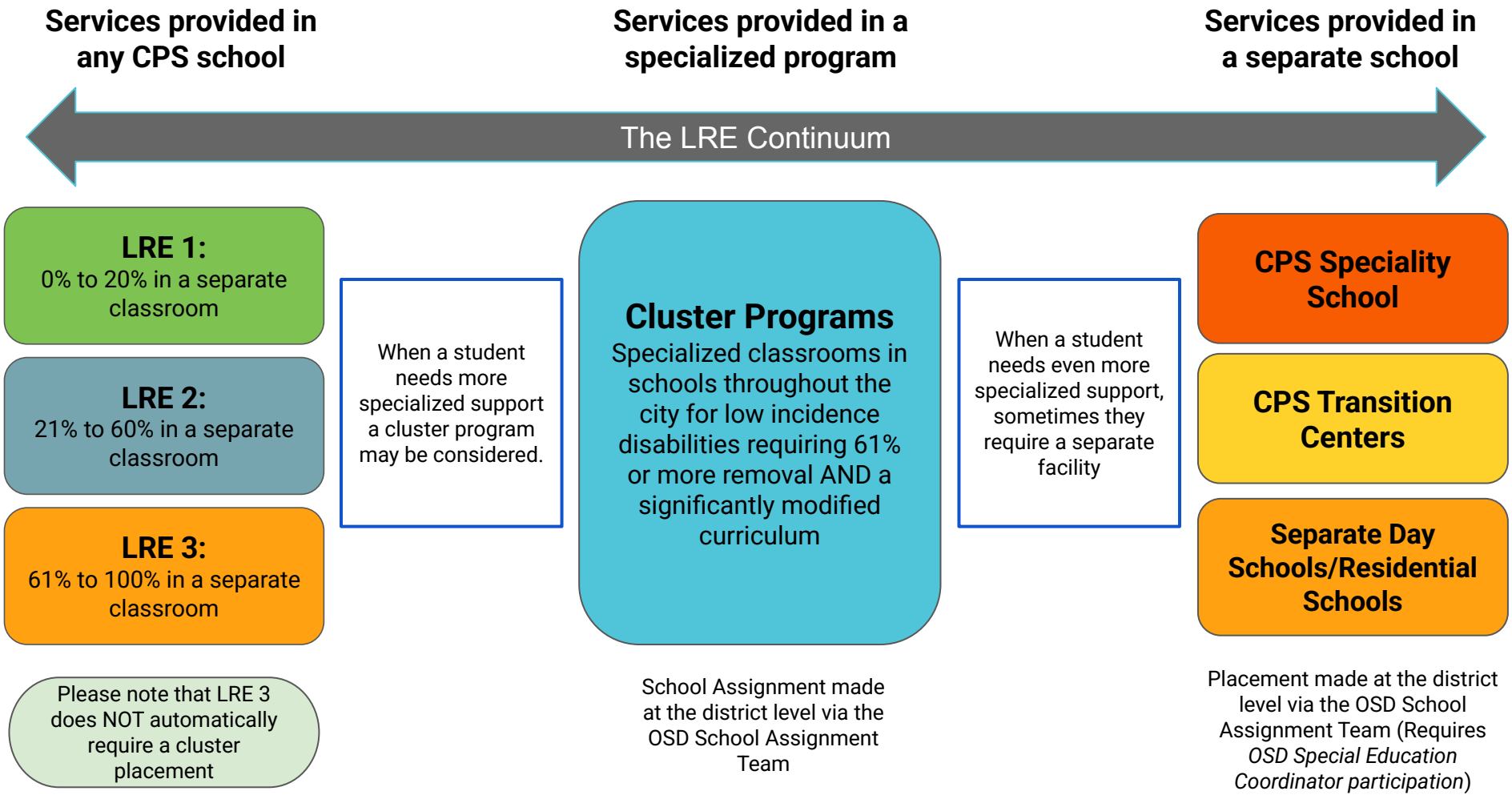
5 Years:

15.1% Increase in # of SwD

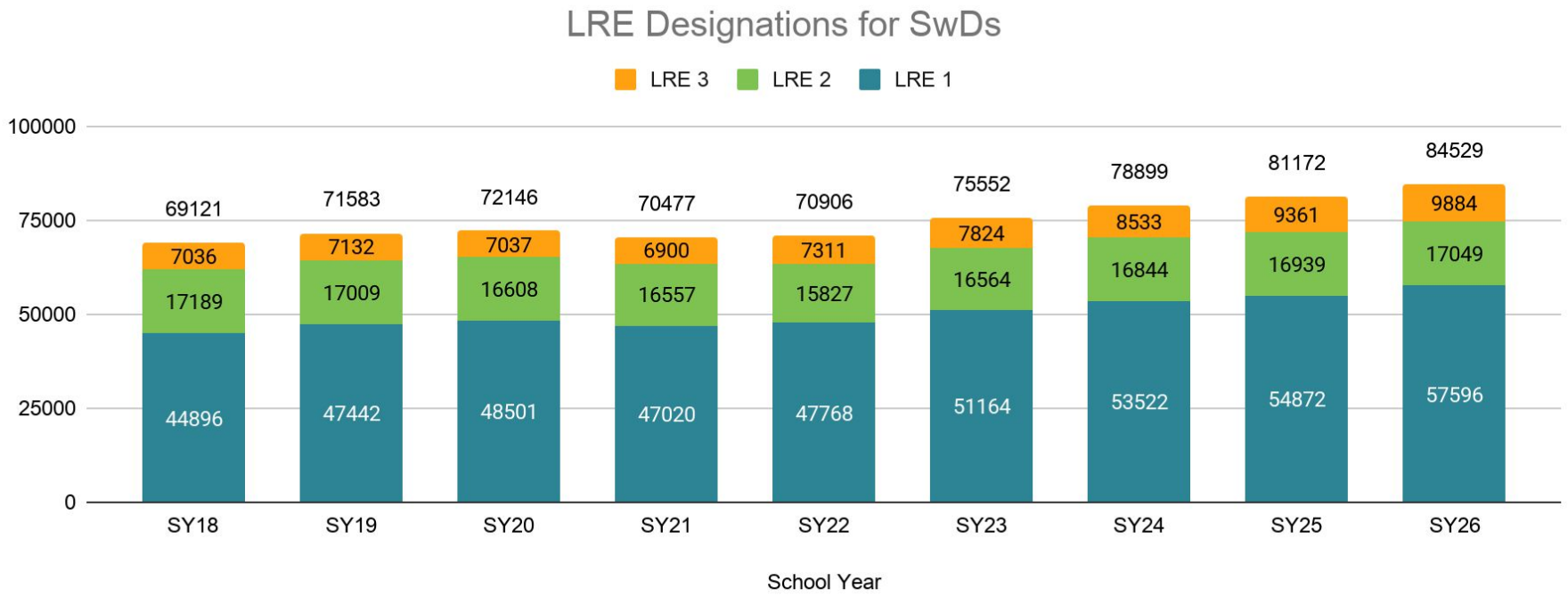
19% Increase in # Sped Teachers

56% Increase in # SECAs

Chicago Public Schools


Services provided in any CPS school
Services provided in a specialized program
Services provided in a separate school
The LRE Continuum
LRE 1:
0% to 20% in a separate classroom
LRE 2:
21% to 60% in a separate classroom
LRE 3:
61% to 100% in a separate classroom
Please note that LRE 3 does NOT automatically require a cluster placement
When a student needs more specialized support a cluster program may be considered.
Cluster Programs
Specialized classrooms in schools throughout the city for low incidence disabilities requiring 61% or more removal AND a significantly modified curriculum
School Assignment made at the district level via the OSD School Assignment Team
When a student needs even more specialized support, sometimes they require a separate facility
CPS Speciality School
CPS Transition Centers
Separate Day Schools/Residential Schools
Placement made at the district level via the OSD School Assignment Team (Requires OSD Special Education Coordinator participation)

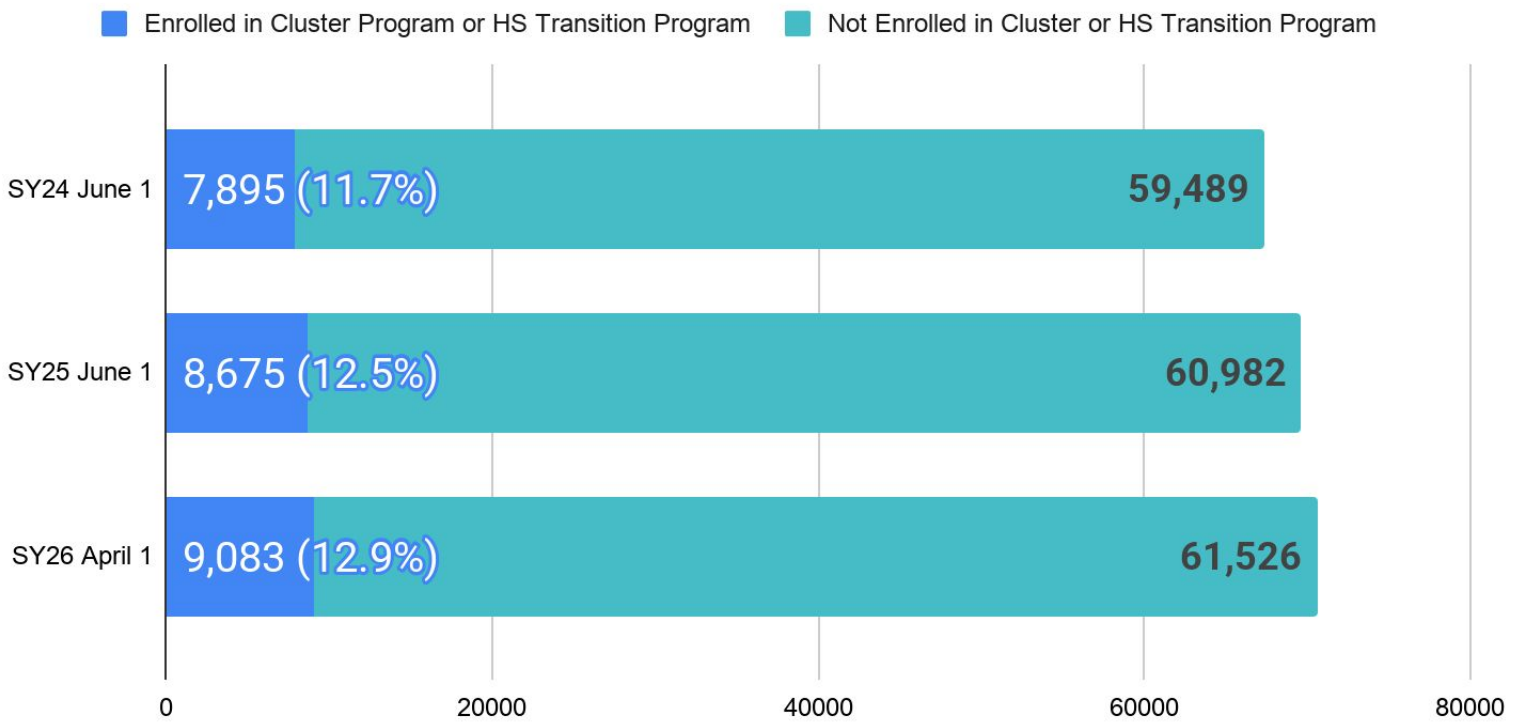
SY18 to SY26 LRE Designations



*All CPS Schools, Including District-Managed and Charter. All Numbers are June 1st

SY24 to SY26 SWDs in an Instructional Cluster Classroom or High School Transition Program

District-Governed Schools have had a consistent increase in Students in a Cluster Program or HS Transition Program.



*District-Governed Schools

Five-Year Strategic Plan, Rightful Presence and Office Alignment

OSD - Five-Year Goals

- **Increase trust with the families of students with disabilities** by providing accessible multi-modal parent training, direct support, and consistent two-way communication that includes a variety of ways for families to share their experience and feedback.
- **All schools will implement a full continuum of special education services** while enforcing students' right to be educated in their least restrictive environment.
- 100% of teachers in co-teaching roles and 100% of **IEP teams will participate in professional learning** on implementing guidelines on making placement decisions about the education of students with disabilities.
- Increase the percentage of **high school students with disabilities enrolled** in Career and Technical Education, arts, International Baccalaureate programming, selective enrollment, Advanced Placement, early college, and military academies.

Our Theory of Action

If OSD ensures Rightful Presence:

- **Every student with a disability is fully recognized** as rightful integral members of their school communities, actively valued, heard in all decision-making processes, and their needs are met through meaningful and targeted supports;
- **Every school creates the necessary conditions** for students with disabilities to receive rigorous, high-quality instruction, in the least restrictive environment, alongside their general education peers, while receiving the necessary individualized supports to thrive both academically and socially;
- **The District provides equitable resources and tailored support**, including specialized services, adaptive technologies, and instructional strategies that address the unique needs of students with disabilities.



Then:

- Students will have equitable, joyful, and rigorous daily learning experiences that promote their academic, social, and emotional well-being,
- Students with disabilities will achieve learning and have well-being to their fullest potential, gaining the skills and competencies necessary for success in school, access to advanced academic programs, and preparation for post-secondary opportunities, career pathways, and independent living.

Chicago Public Schools

Rightful Presence & Data

Core Instructional Conditions

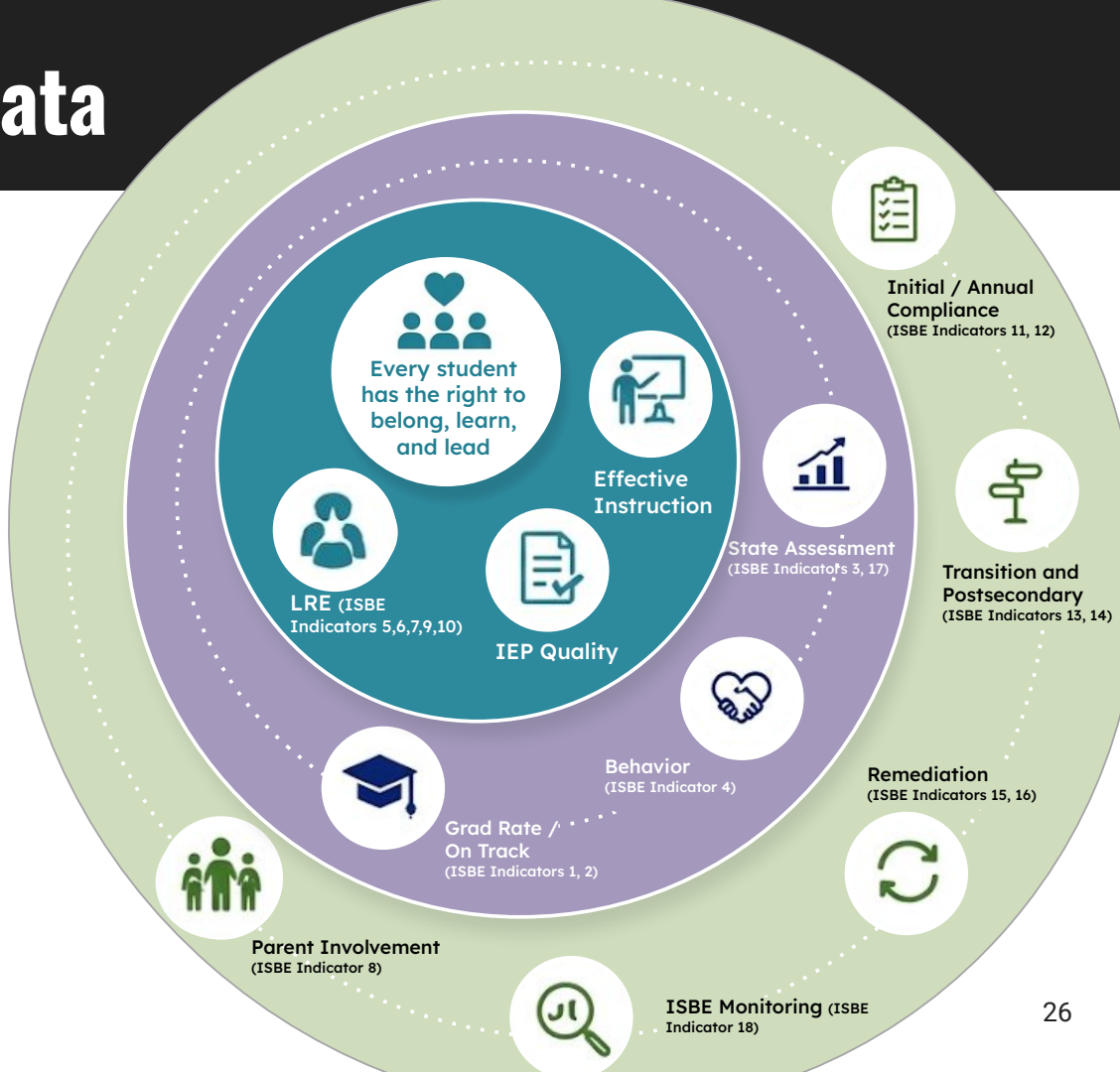
The foundation of access & participation

Student Experience & Outcomes

What students experience & achieve

Systems & Accountability Conditions

Systems that sustain and strengthen outcomes



Primary Indicators

Have we created a culture of Rightful Presence at the school?

Do our CORE INSTRUCTIONAL CONDITIONS support your students?

