

We spend a higher percentage of our budget on special education than either the state as a whole or DRG B, and our spending has risen at a faster rate than theirs. Why?

- a. The data on % of spending on Special education does show that the share of education budgets devoted to special education has increased in our district, the DRG and the State. The overall trajectory is very similar. The state has gone from 18.3% in 1997-98 to 20.7% in 2008-09 to 21.7% in 2010-11. The increase in the most recent two years is most likely the result of ARRA which many districts used to increase spending on special education for two years. I expect the numbers will drop in 2011-12.
- b. Comparing individual districts on this particular scale is difficult. The higher percentage of the total budget being spent on special education could be due to a number of factors:
 - i) A higher prevalence rate of special education students
 - ii) Higher costs per special education student either due to the nature of the programs offered, the mix of students in that district – some students require more services than others, or the result of a few very high cost outplaced students
 - iii) Low regular education expenses per pupils relative to special ed cost per pupil
- c. Instead I prefer to look at the total special education costs divided by the total special education expenses and how West Hartford ranks there. The rankings are generally similar though recently the ranking for special ed has become higher than the ranking for regular ed

Year	WH Total Spending Rank	WH Spec Ed Spending Rank
2006-07	84	108
2007-08	89	106
2008-09	97	109
2009-10	113	98
2010-11	117	N/A

Why has our overall student to staff ratio dropped significantly from about 8:1 in 1999 to 5:1 in 2013. Why? How is special ed. staff determined?

- a. Special education staffing is assessed and determined on three primary factors.
 - 1.) Special Education caseload
 - 2.) IEP service hours reflecting the level of student need
 - 3.) Non-mandated student caseload.
- b. The staff student ratios are based only on the number of students with disabilities receiving special education services. The ratio does not reflect the special education teacher or related services staff providing services and support for at risk/struggling students in general education receiving SRBI tiered intervention.
- c. In the revised chart we have adjusted the numbers a bit, taking out counselors and school nurses who typically deal with all the students in the school and not just special ed students exclusively. We also separated out the special education teachers from the related services staff as those two groups of teachers interact in different ways with special education students.
- d. For 2012-13, the special education student to special education teacher ratio is 10.35:1 (this excludes 99 students who receive speech/language therapy only). This ratio is better than the recommended national average elementary (1:10) middle (1:12), and high school (1:15) as described in the EDC report. If we apply those ratios to the projected enrollments, the average projected student ratio would be 12.02:1.
- e. In many cases the national ratios assume a certain mix of special education students. That does not apply in all cases. For example we have 26 students in the high school STRIVE program. Applying the 15:1 ratio would suggest we should need 1.73 FTEs. We actually staff the program with 4 FTE's. The higher staff use reflects the specific needs of these students. Without those ratios, we would likely have to outpace the students at a far higher cost. In fact this program was established specifically to reduce our outplaced student count in the late 1990's

Also many of the special education teachers, especially at the elementary level support non-mandated students through the SRBI process.

All of these factors contribute to our lower student- teacher ratio.

- f. Related services positions have increased by 24.7 over the past 14 years with the largest increase seen among speech language pathologists (SLP) – up 10.5. The need to increase SLP's is related to the increase in students identified with autism and developmental disabilities who have significant language and communication disorders

requiring speech and language therapy. These teachers also serve the increased number of English language learners that we have in special education.

- g. The clinical/counseling staff ratios only reflect the number of students with disabilities. They do not include the significant and growing number of non-mandated students that they serve. Our psychologists and social workers provide evaluations, individual, group and family counseling, staff consultations, crisis interventions, and liaison/networking with outside agencies and service providers.

The drop in student to staff ratio is in Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disabilities, but Special Needs ratio has risen. Why?

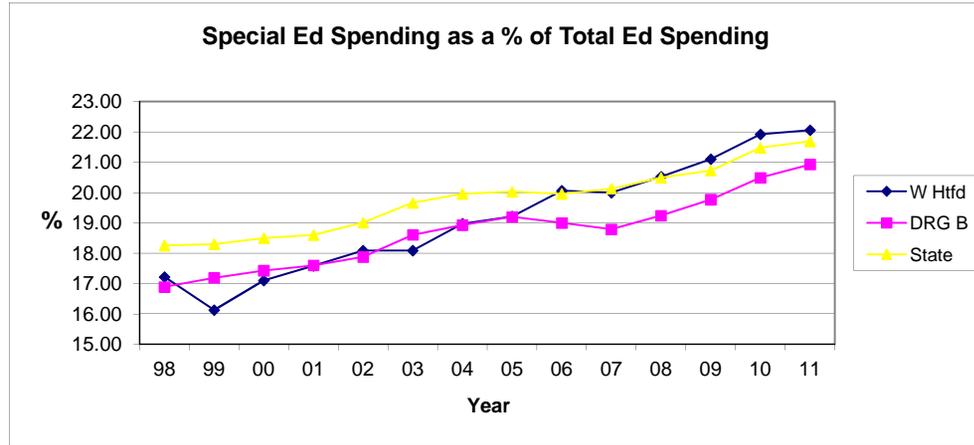
- a. While the budget identifies staff by specific disability categories, the district's recent practice is cross categorical, where special education teachers provide instruction to students who are identified as LD, ED and Special Needs. Specific comparisons of staffing ratios by student/staff identification are not directly comparable over 14 years.

Why has LD enrollment dropped so significantly since '99, are there really fewer kids with learning disabilities or are we not identifying them?

- a. The decrease in enrollment of student identified with learning disabilities is related to a change in the Federal and State guidelines for identification and eligibility (eliminating the discrepancy model) and implementing SRBI with an increased focus on early intervention services (EIS) and SRBI tiered interventions. This trend of a decline in students with learning disabilities is seen across the state and nationally.
- b. Special education staff provides support for the implementation of EIS and tiered interventions.

Sp Ed Spending as % of total Spending

	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
W Htfd	17.22	16.13	17.10	17.59	18.09	18.09	18.97	19.21	20.06	20.00	20.53	21.10	21.92	22.06
DRG B	16.89	17.19	17.43	17.60	17.88	18.61	18.93	19.20	19.00	18.79	19.24	19.77	20.49	20.93
State	18.26	18.30	18.50	18.60	19.01	19.66	19.96	20.03	19.96	20.13	20.49	20.73	21.48	21.69
W Htfd Sped Ec Per Spec Ed Pupil Ranking										108th	105th	109th	98th	



Source:

<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/dqm/grantreports1/SpTrExpSelect.aspx>

Sp Ed Student:Staff Ratio

	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13
In-District Students	1250	1342	1247	1228	1249	1220	1214	1220	1208	1157	1141	1133	1103	1056	1067
Staff	159.00	162.30	167.50	171.10	183.20	188.10	191.00	196.40	201.80	203.60	206.90	210.20	208.40	212.00	211.95
Counselors	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	24.00	24.00	24.00	25.00	25.50	25.50	25.50	25.50	25.50	25.50	25.50
Nurses	16.00	17.00	17.00	17.50	18.00	18.90	19.80	20.40	20.40	20.40	20.40	20.40	20.40	21.00	21.50
Net Staff	123.00	125.30	130.50	133.60	141.20	145.20	147.20	151.00	155.90	157.70	161.00	164.30	162.50	165.50	164.95
Student:Staff Ratio	7.86:1	8.27:1	7.44:1	7.18:1	6.82:1	6.49:1	6.36:1	6.21:1	5.99:1	5.68:1	5.51:1	5.39:1	5.29:1	4.98:1	5.03:1
Student /Net Staff Ratio	10.16	10.71	9.56	9.19	8.85	8.40	8.25	8.08	7.75	7.34	7.09	6.90	6.79	6.38	6.47
Special Ed Teachers	75.70	75.90	79.60	79.80	84.40	86.70	86.70	89.20	91.70	93.00	94.70	94.70	93.50	93.50	93.00
Related Services Staff	47.30	49.40	50.90	53.80	56.80	58.50	60.50	61.80	64.20	64.70	66.30	69.60	69.00	71.95	71.95
Student/Teacher Ratio	16.51	17.68	15.67	15.39	14.80	14.07	14.00	13.68	13.17	12.44	12.05	11.96	11.80	11.29	11.47
Student/Rel. Servi Staff	26.43	27.17	24.50	22.83	21.99	20.85	20.07	19.74	18.82	17.88	17.21	16.28	15.99	14.68	14.83
% of Staff in Rel Svcs	52%	53%	52%	53%	54%	54%	55%	55%	55%	54%	54%	55%	55%	56%	56%
% of Net Staff in Rel Svcs	38%	39%	39%	40%	40%	40%	41%	41%	41%	41%	41%	42%	42%	43%	44%

Student:Staff Ratio by Program

	<u>AC/LD</u>		<u>SpNeeds</u>		<u>Emo Dis</u>	
	99	13	99	13	99	13
In-District Students	904	643	107	193	114	68
Staff	40.20	47.50	16.00	23.00	14.00	14.50
Student:Staff Ratio	22.49:1	13.54:1	6.69:1	8.39:1	8.14:1	4.69:1