

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 49

QUESTION:

What is the ideal caseload maximum ratio for speech-language pathologists? How does this compare to the MCPS proposed ratio for FY 2008? And if there is a difference, what is the impact on students? What is the rationale for reducing 6.5 speech pathologist positions?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: E - 23

ANSWER:

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the national organization that credentials speech-language pathologists, recommends a maximum caseload of 40 students for school-based speech-language pathologists. A maximum caseload of 25 is recommended for preschool students and lower caseloads are recommended for students who are technology dependent, medically fragile, or have other special or intensive needs. In addition, ASHA recommends considering total workload activities when determining the appropriate caseload in a particular setting. These activities include collaboration with teachers, consultation with parents, attendance at Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings, evaluations, and completion of mandated paperwork (such as therapy logs, Medical Assistance billing, IEPs, and evaluation reports).

The MCPS ratio for FY 2008 remains at 56.4 students for a speech-language pathologist at the K–12 level and 40 students at the prekindergarten level. The higher caseload ratio may reduce the time available for collaboration with teachers and consultation with parents, attendance at IEP team meetings, evaluations, and timely completion of mandated paperwork.

The rationale for reducing 6.5 speech-language pathologist positions for FY 2008 is a result of a reduced enrollment projection for speech-language services during the 2007–2008 school year. In FY 2007, there are approximately 8,920 students in Grades K through 12 receiving speech-language services. The projected number of students receiving the services in FY 2008 is 8,720, a reduction of 200 students. This accounts for a decrease of 3.5 speech-language pathologists. In FY 2007, there are approximately 1,350 prekindergarten students receiving services compared with a projection of 1,250 in FY 2008. The reduction of 100 students accounts for a decrease of 3.0 speech-language pathologists.