



# Improving Outcomes for Students, Staff Morale, and Parent Satisfaction

Wake County Public School System

Board of Education

June 27, 2022



District Management Group | Helping Schools and Students Thrive

# Meeting Objectives

- 1 Provide background and approach for the project
- 2 Share findings about the current state
- 3 Share next steps

# DMGroup Team



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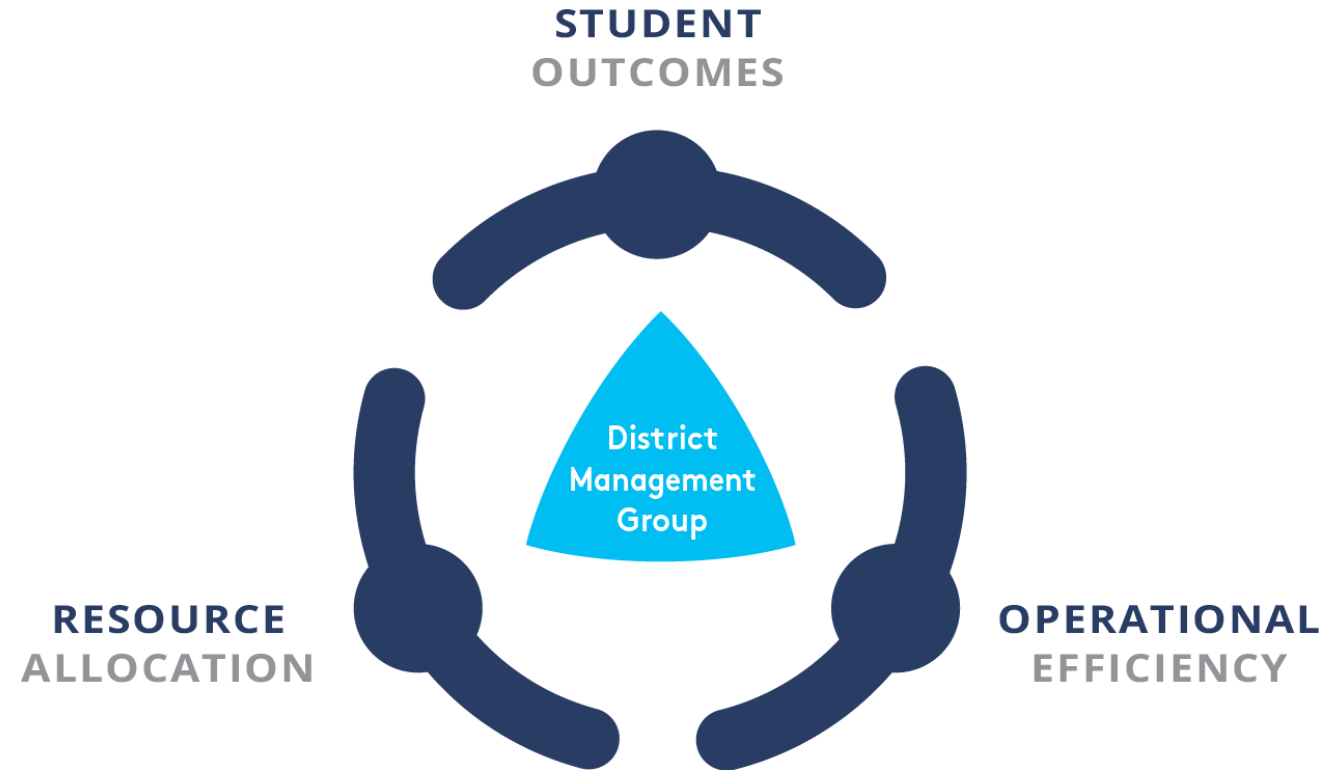
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**Our mission is to achieve systemic improvement in public education by combining management techniques and education best practices.**



We believe that a district must focus on meeting all three of these objectives to achieve lasting results for students.

Founded in 2004, DMGroup has partnered with hundreds of school districts across the US, helping them address their most pressing needs.

## All Sizes of Districts



1,700 students  
Rural



5,000  
Suburban



6,800  
Suburban



10,600  
Gateway



55,000  
Urban



100,000  
Urban

## Nationwide Experience



California



Minnesota



Texas



South Dakota

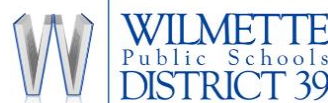


New York



Illinois

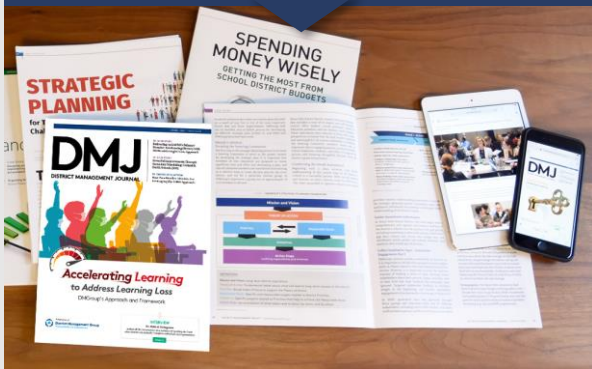
## All Types of Districts



Selected DMGroup Partner Districts

# DMGroup Offerings

## DM Learning



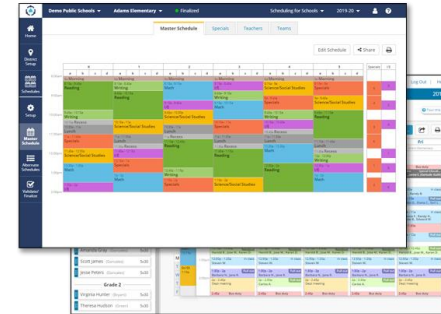
Best-in-class knowledge and professional development, and a membership community of forward-thinking leaders.

## DM Consulting



Customized management consulting support across a variety of practice areas.

## DM Schedules



Cloud-based software and/or service to help districts optimize use of resources through scheduling.

## Breakthrough Results



Structured and facilitated approaches to deliver tangible solutions to district challenges.

# The project is comprised of two distinct but interconnected workstreams over the course of eight months.

## Project Approach

November – December 2021



### **W0: BUILD UNDERSTANDING OF DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICES & COMMON ISSUES**

*Develop foundational understanding of common district issues and preliminary map of district special education services.*

#### **Key Activities:**

- Project kickoff
- Interviews with senior district leaders
- Review of special education service documentation
- Creation and validation of preliminary plan to resolve special ed issues

January – June 2022



### **W1: IDENTIFY WAYS TO STRENGTHEN STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND IMPROVE DISTRICT RESPONSIVENESS**

*Create a practical plan to better resolve parent and family issues and concerns related to special education.*

#### **Key Activities:**

- Analysis of existing issue reports or databases to identify common issues
- Focus groups with district stakeholders to understand root causes of issues and map current roles & responsibilities
- Identification of improvements to district issue resolution processes



### **W2: IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

*Deliver a prioritized set of opportunities to improve/rebrand special education services and programs.*

#### **Key Activities:**

- Inventory of district specialized programs
- Focus groups with district stakeholders to assess program strengths & weaknesses
- Identification of improvements to prioritized set of specialized programs
- Review management structures of specialized programs & propose refinements

Engage Steering Committee



## **WORKSTREAM 1**

# **IDENTIFY WAYS TO STRENGTHEN STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND IMPROVE DISTRICT RESPONSIVENESS**

**Workstream 1 builds on findings from stakeholder engagement and comprehensive analysis of WCPSS databases to refine understanding of the current state of issue resolution in the district and inform recommendations for the future state of issue resolution.**

## **Workstream 1 Overview**

Identification of Main Challenges & Common Issues

Stakeholder Engagement

Draft Current State Issue Resolution Process

Draft Future State Issue Resolution Process

Finalize Recommendations & Share Findings

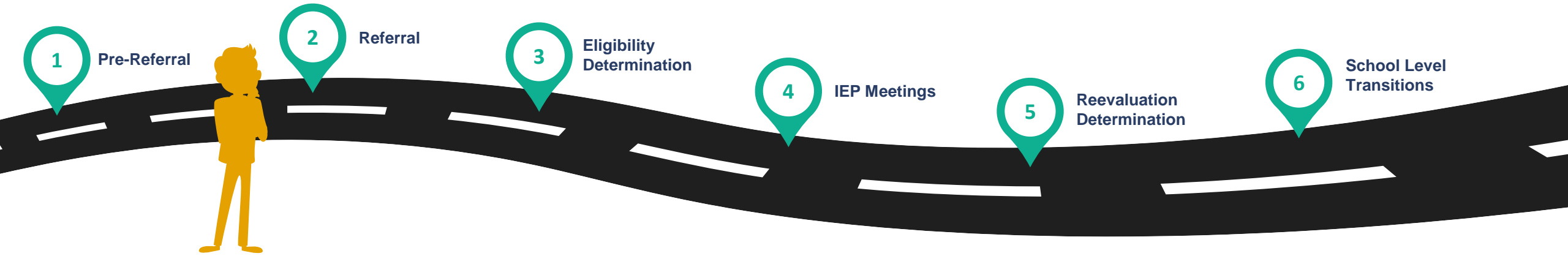
# DMGroup's findings and recommendation to improve the issue resolution process were developed from extensive data analysis and stakeholder engagement.

## Methodology

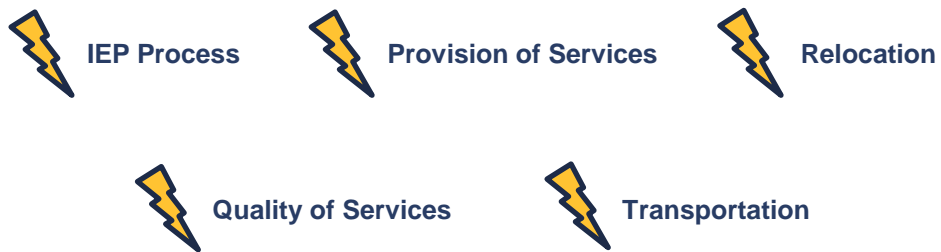


# There exist major trends in when inquiries are raised and about what.

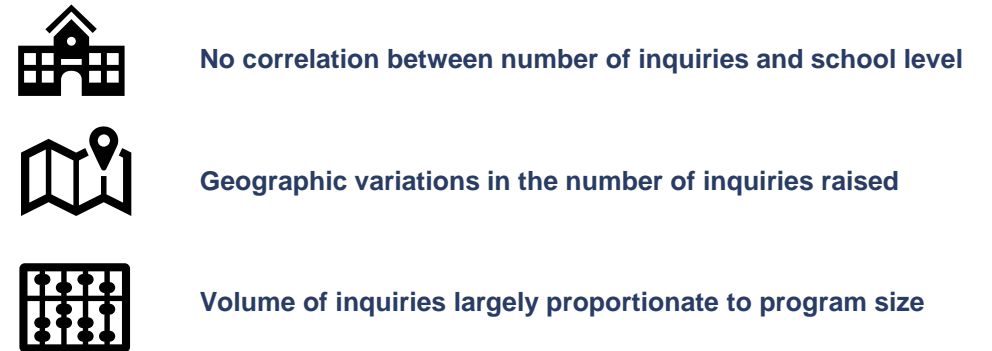
## WHEN ARE ISSUES MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR?



## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF ISSUES & INQUIRIES?



## WHO IS SUBMITTING INQUIRIES?



The main challenges facing the resolution process and causing escalation can be placed into three categories: roles & responsibilities, knowledge & resources, and relationships & communication.

## Issue Resolution Challenges



### **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

A lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities throughout the issue resolution process lengthens and complicates the process for both parents and school site staff.



### **KNOWLEDGE & RESOURCES**

Staff and families have inconsistent and/or misaligned levels of knowledge and understanding of available resources regarding navigating special education policies and procedures.



### **RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNICATION**

Relationship dynamics and the level and quality of communication between parents and staff members both greatly impact the issue resolution process.

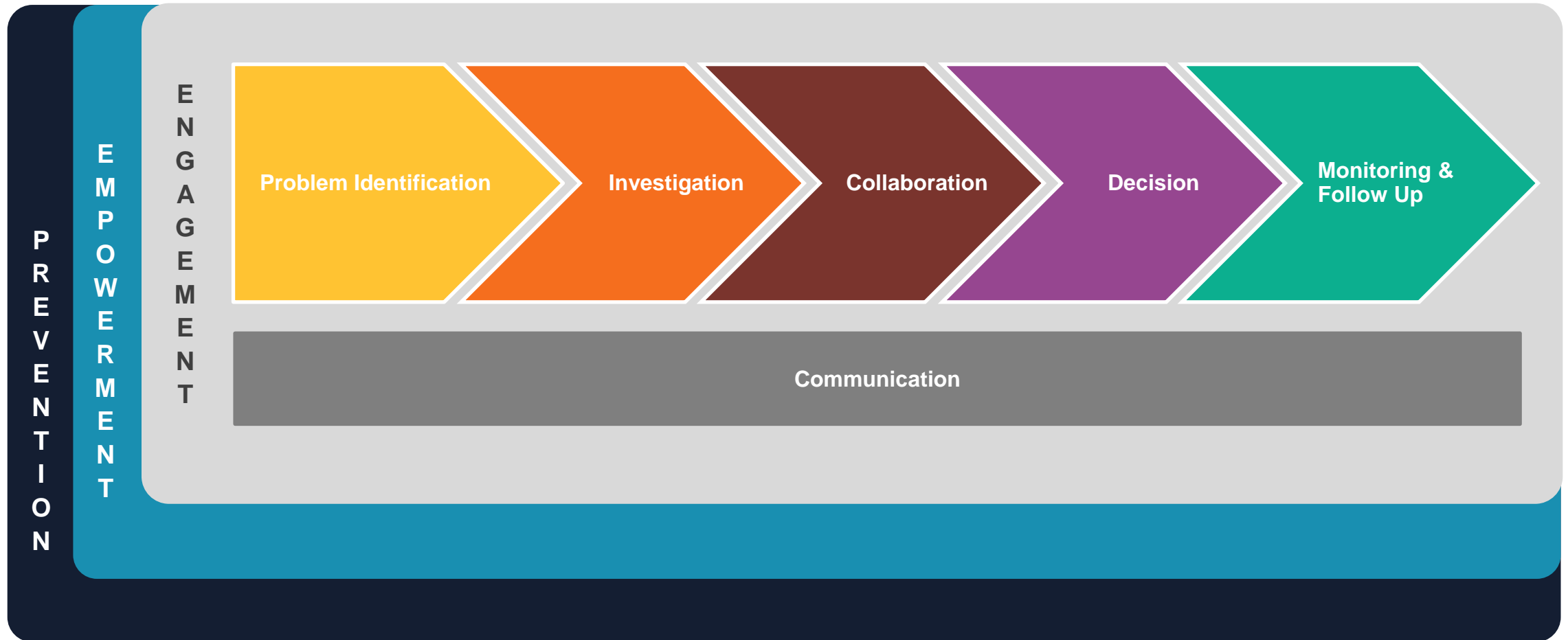
# The current state of issue resolution in the district follows five key phases and is framed by the IEP process and student lifecycle.

## Typical Resolution Process

	Problem Identification	Investigation	Communication & Collaboration	Decision	Monitoring & Follow Up
RESOLUTION PHASES	A parent brings an issue to their student's teacher, case manager, principal, or another contact at their school or district.	If a problem cannot be resolved when it arises, the next stage in the resolution process is to investigate and figure out what is happening.	IEP teams collaborate to come to an appropriate resolution. This should happen in partnership with families and district support.	Corrective action is decided, documented, and implemented. The decision is shared in the IEP meeting.	IEP teams ensure the corrective action is implemented and to continue communicating with the family to ensure satisfaction.
SUCCESS FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong family-educator relationships</li> <li>Clear point of contact for parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong systems and documentation</li> <li>Access to high-level support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative and aligned IEP teams</li> <li>IEP Pre-Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expert in special education policies and procedures in WCPSS</li> <li>Inclusive environment in IEP meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing communication</li> <li>Effective progress monitoring</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the correct point of contact for the issue</li> <li>Misalignment on issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent Tracking of Issues and Resolution Activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varying level of knowledge over special education policies and procedures and available options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of authority over decision</li> <li>Disagreement over appropriate solutions</li> <li>Management of IEP meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clear process and guidelines for monitoring situations</li> </ul>

Clearly articulating the school-level issue resolution process with a focus on prevention, empowerment and engagement will enable schools to more effectively resolve issues.

### Future State School-Level Issue Resolution Process



# Undergoing preventative initiatives in addition to clarifying and modifying the issue resolution process may reduce overall issue volume and reduce likelihood of escalation.

## Enabling Opportunities



### Engagement

*Families are actively and consistently engaged in their student's education through ongoing communication and collaboration between the parent, case manager, and the school. Proactive engagement and communications provide families the training, resources, and support to advocate for their children effectively.*

- 1. Relationships**
- 2. Knowledge Management**



### Empowerment

*Staff are empowered to handle disagreements and conflict with families through training and district support. The district provides clear procedures on how to handle disagreements and how to communicate with families. When conflict does arise, staff are knowledgeable about research-based strategies to address it.*

- 1. Training**
- 2. Knowledge Management**



### Prevention

*Schools and the district analyze trends in issues and take steps to prevent common issues from arising in the first place.*

- 1. Issue Analysis**

## **WORKSTREAM 2**

# **IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

**Workstream 2 was designed to synthesize strengths, opportunities, and recommendations to improve specialized programs using extensive analysis and stakeholder engagement.**

## **Workstream 2 Overview**

Database of Specialized Programming

Consistency Analysis Of Specialized Programs

Map of Strengths and Weakness of Programs

Draft Recommendations for Program Improvements

Finalize Recommendations with Draft Plans for Implementation

Review of Oversight and Management of Specialized Programming

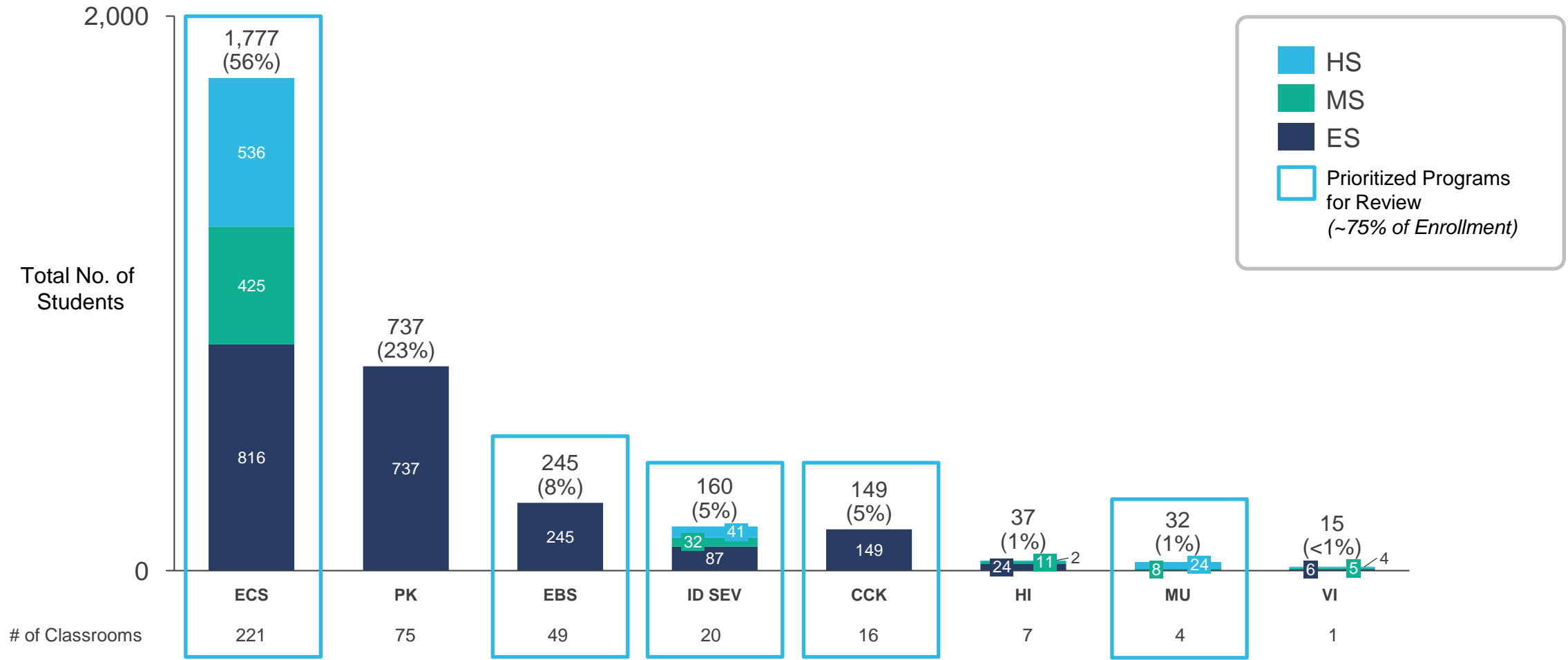
# Program strengths, opportunities, and recommendations were synthesized from extensive stakeholder engagement and analysis of district enrollment and staffing data.

## Methodology



# 8 main specialized programs serve over 3,100 students with more significant or complex needs, with over 75% of students being supported by the programs prioritized for review.

## Student Enrollment by Program Type\*



Source: WCPSS District Data \*Note: Other programs were excluded from this chart because of incomplete student enrollment data (i.e. 60 Occupational Course of Study programs)

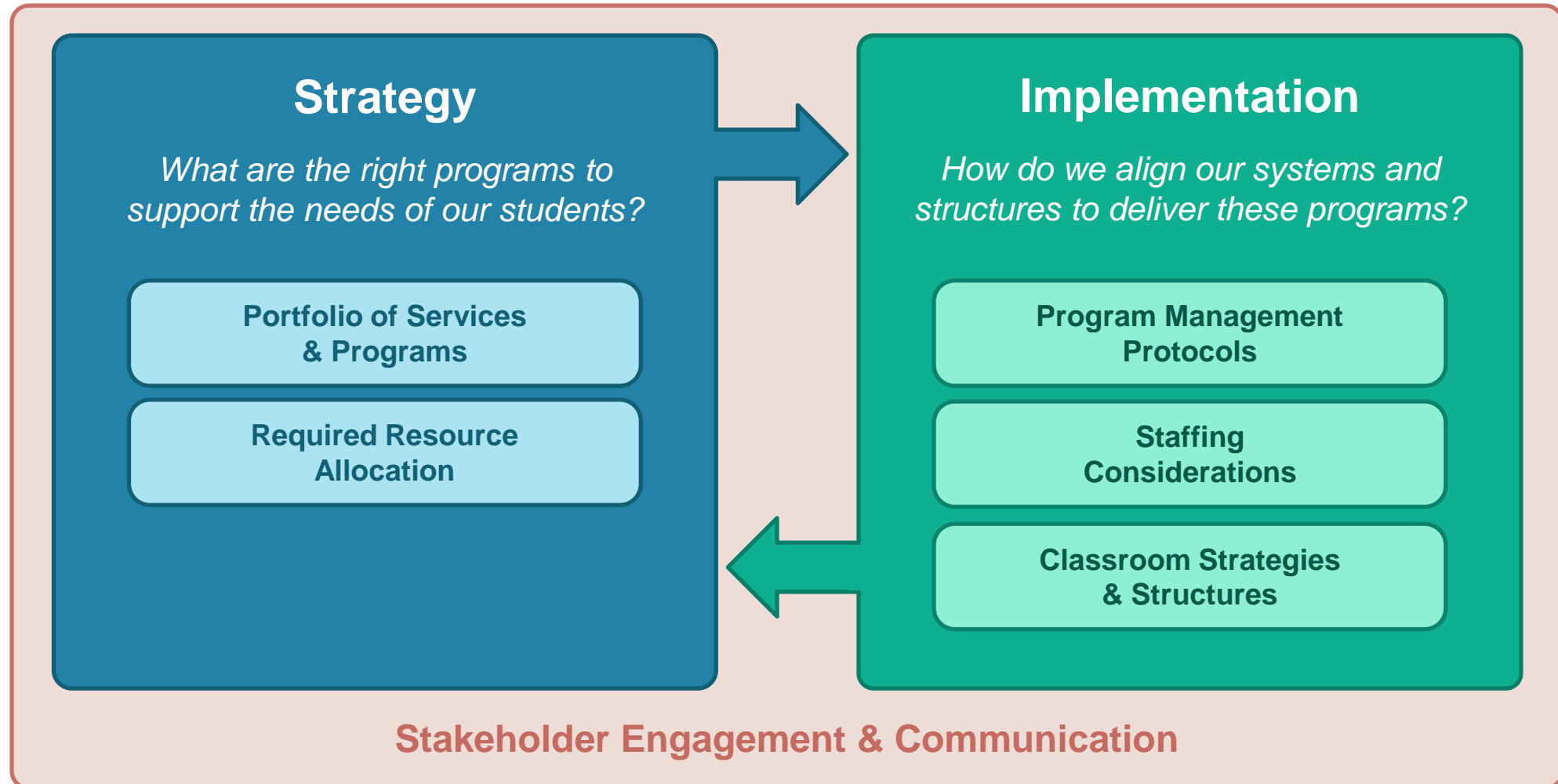
# Throughout the work, DMGroup identified a number of areas of strength across specialized programs and the services they provide for students.

## Program Strengths

- 1 Specialized program teachers and staff are **highly dedicated to their students** and committed to serving as **strong liaisons** for parents and families.
- 2 The strategic shift to **move more specialized programs back into base schools** has helped foster **more inclusive and collaborative school environments**.
- 3 An **enhanced focus on inclusion across the district** has created **more collaborative learning environments** and provided students, both with and without disabilities, an opportunity to learn from one another.
- 4 The configuration of programming to focus on how students access content and curriculum has expanded access to **more responsive and appropriate placements for students**.
- 5 Specialized programs in the district provide **high-quality instructional tools and supports** for students with unique needs.

To strengthen specialized programs, WCPSS should consider honing its strategy and aligning implementation to ensure that each program has the conditions for success.

## Framework for Program Opportunities & Recommendations



# The district landscape of opportunities highlights the most pressing needs of specialized programs, although each opportunity manifests differently for each program.

## Mapping of Districtwide Opportunities Across Programs

	Areas of Opportunity	Opportunities
Strategy	Portfolio of Services & Programs	<b>Opportunity 1:</b> <i>Need for clear program distinctions and descriptions</i>
	Required Resource Allocation	<b>Opportunity 2:</b> <i>Resources and staffing levels must align to program goals</i>
Implementation	Program Management Protocols	<b>Opportunity 3:</b> <i>Building administrators must be equipped to support programs and may require additional training or guidance</i>
		<b>Opportunity 4:</b> <i>Student assessment and placement process must be clarified</i>
	Staffing Considerations	<b>Opportunity 5:</b> <i>Staff may require more or refined coaching, modeling, collaboration, and support</i>
		<b>Opportunity 6:</b> <i>Impact of teacher shortage on increased school-based need</i>
Instructional Strategies and Structures	<b>Opportunity 7:</b> <i>Refining instructional materials and ensuring training on and consistent use of materials and structures</i>	
Comm	Stakeholder Engagement & Communication	<b>Opportunity 8:</b> <i>Sharing clear strategy and program options with stakeholders</i>

# The district should consider enhancing the strategy behind specialized programs and clarifying how structures and resources are aligned to the goals of each program.

## Districtwide Opportunities & Recommendations

	Areas of Opportunity	Opportunities	Recommendations
Strategy	Portfolio of Services & Programs	<p>1. The current portfolio of specialized programs may have unclear distinctions and descriptions that do not accurately represent the scope of services and supports provided as well as for which students various programs are designed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider refining the strategy, visions and descriptions for specialized programs to capture how students and their complex sets of needs are served by the variety of responsive and appropriate programs and services offered by the district.</li> <li>Consider adjusting program names when appropriate to reflect the student experience or the services rendered, rather than students' federal disability designations.</li> </ul>
	Required Resource Allocation	<p>2. Some stakeholders perceive that some programs in classrooms may require additional or different resources to be successful, such as facilities, additional or adjusted staff, materials, instructional materials, etc. especially in the context of each program's vision and description.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify the alignment between student needs and the required resources, including staffing levels, staff skill sets, facilities, and materials, to ensure that commensurate staffing and resourcing are aligned with identified student needs.</li> </ul>



## District Management Group

Helping Schools and  
Students Thrive

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