

## **The NYC Special Education Reform and Families of Incoming Kindergarten Students with Disabilities**

Two years ago, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) began a reform focusing on including more students with disabilities in the schools they would attend if they did not have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and on increasing their interactions with non-disabled peers in order to improve student achievement.

For too long, educating students with disabilities often meant placing them in separate (“self-contained”) special education classes away from their peers in general education. As a result, students with disabilities would spend the full day in a small special education class where they would do work in a curriculum that would not prepare them to graduate from high school or to succeed in college and the workplace because the curriculum and standards were not the same as for their non-disabled peers.

The reform reminds us that special education is not a “class” or a “place,” but is a wide range of supports and services. Your child’s IEP for Kindergarten may include different types of classes and services for different parts of the day. For example, a student who needs extra support for reading may receive reading instruction in a small class setting and spend the rest of the day in a general education class.

As a result of the reform, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, **all community schools** will be expected to serve the vast majority of children with disabilities. Therefore, the process of transitioning your child from preschool to Kindergarten will involve two very important components:

**Kindergarten IEP Development:** If your child currently receives preschool special education services, a DOE representative will be assigned to work on your child’s transition to Kindergarten. In most cases, the DOE representative will be a school psychologist or social worker who works at a local school or at the Committee on Special Education (CSE). The DOE representative will review your child’s file, including progress reports from your child’s preschool special education teacher and providers, and will determine whether or not to conduct additional assessments (including classroom observations). The DOE representative will then schedule an IEP meeting to develop your child’s Kindergarten IEP.

**Kindergarten Placement:** All students entering Kindergarten, including students with disabilities, should participate in the Kindergarten Admissions Process. You start this process by completing an application at your zoned school and any other schools of interest. In the vast majority of cases, your child will attend the school that accepts him/her through the Kindergarten Admissions Process, and that school will provide your child with the services on his or her Kindergarten IEP.

In cases where the school that accepted your child can not provide the appropriate services, the DOE will send you a placement offer for a different school. For example, students needing a specialized program or one at an accessible site, will receive placement offers from the DOE to a school that can accommodate their IEP.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/ParentResources/Enrollment>

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