

Students with Disabilities

The New York City Department of Education wants to give all of our 1.1 million students, disabled and non-disabled, the best chance of successful, fulfilling, and productive lives in a world that increasingly demands high levels of knowledge and competence.

We want to keep families informed about what is happening in special education and to that end, we have compiled some questions and answers that we hope will address your concerns. Our choices are based upon what you have asked for and our desire to put our children's needs first by creating great schools designed to serve *all* of our students and families.

Q. How are evaluations provided for students who are disabled or suspected of being disabled?

A. Students in public schools receive evaluation services and have their IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings at school, where personnel who know a child and are likely to provide service to a child can participate fully in this process. Students in non-public and charter schools receive evaluation services at the Committee on Special Education (CSE) offices. The CSE offices report to the Integrated Service Centers (ISC).

Q. How are special education services provided?

A. Schools are assisted in providing special education services by three organizations:

Integrated Service Center (ISC)

Each borough has an Integrated Service Center (ISC) which offers all schools one-stop assistance with mandated and operational services related to human resources, payroll, budget and procurement, transportation, food services, facilities, grant management, technology, health and safety, student suspensions, youth development, and some elements of special education. Each ISC has a Deputy Executive Director of Special Education and is staffed with our best, most experienced managers, special educators, and analysts who will streamline the process of deploying special education personnel, contracting out for services, and issuing and approving services by non-DOE independent providers for students attending public schools. The exception is those students attending District 75 programs. District 75 performs these mandated services for their schools.

The Committees on Special Education (CSEs) are staffed by experienced managers and special education personnel who arrange for special education services including contracting out and issuing and approving services by non-DOE independent providers for students in non-public and charter schools.

In each ISC, there is also an IEP (Individualized Education Program) specialist unit that provides quality review oversight and enforces consistent standards for IEP development throughout the system. Supervisors of School Psychologists and Speech Teachers and many Supervisors of Occupational and Physical Therapy are located at the ISC to develop strong networks of senior-level service expertise and improve service delivery.

Office of Student Enrollment

The central Office of Student Enrollment facilitates student placement, enrollment, zoning, and choice programs on a citywide basis for all grade levels. They also place students in collaborative team teaching and special education classes once they have been recommended for special education services if these services cannot be provided in their current schools. The Office of Student Enrollment works with District 75 to identify and place students in need of District 75 programs as well.

School Support Organizations (SSO)

All principals, in consultation with their School Leadership Teams, select a School Support Organization (SSO) that provides curricular and instructional support for their students, including students with disabilities. Some of the SSOs are led by and staffed primarily by New York City public school personnel and others represent the best that colleges, universities, and other non-profit organizations have to offer. Schools select the SSO that provides the support needed by their teachers and students. This keeps decision-making in schools and makes it possible for schools with similar needs to easily share and replicate best instructional practices.

Q. What is the Department of Education doing to continue to improve special education instruction and services?

A. In response to parent demand for a standard Orton-Gillingham based reading program, we now have more than 5,000 teachers trained in the Wilson Reading System, which will continue to be a key element of the core curriculum.

The DOE is piloting a Special Education Lead Teacher program in selected middle and high schools. The program's goal is to foster mentoring relationships in a school and draw upon the skill and competence of experienced special education teachers to help improve instruction. A Special Education Lead Teacher will teach students for three periods each day and then provide three periods of professional development covering best instructional practices for students with disabilities.

There will continue to be an expansion of integrated services for students with disabilities by providing technical assistance and planning grants directly to schools, particularly at the high school level, to develop new inclusion programs and to replicate other best practices for providing services to students with disabilities.

The Office of the Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning will remain focused on special education instruction by supporting the replication of model programs and developing pilot programs in collaboration with colleges, universities, and other partners. The provision of rigorous academic content area instruction and effective transitioning of students with disabilities to middle and high school will be given special attention. In addition, the Teaching and Learning central Office of Special Education Initiatives provides technical assistance and support to schools on special education services. This support is enhanced by the addition of senior special education staff to continue to build the capacity of schools to serve students with disabilities.

Q. What has the Department done to increase accountability for the performance of students with disabilities?

A. A major component of the Children First reforms is increasing school-level accountability. We are improving the delivery of special education services by monitoring school performance, creating new incentives for better performance, and enacting consequences for schools that fail to meet benchmarks as part of the accountability initiative. We are also improving the quality of information you receive both about your child's performance and his or her school environment.

Special Education Service Delivery Report

Parents have told us how important it is for you to know whether your child's school is providing mandated special education services. To keep parents informed, we have created a Web-based Special Education Service Delivery Report that indicates the timeliness of special education evaluations and delivery of services. The report is available on each school's Web page under Statistics. Other accountability tools include:

Progress Reports that grade each school with an A, B, C, D, or F. Schools that get an A are eligible for rewards, while schools that fail will face consequences. Special emphasis is placed on the progress of students with disabilities.

Quality Reviews are 2-3 day visits by experienced educators who talk to parents, students and staff; observe classrooms; and review how schools use data and set goals to improve learning for all students. Schools receive an overall quality score which is reported on the Progress Report. The entire Quality Review report is available online: go to www.nyc.gov/schools. Enter the school code or name where it says **FIND A SCHOOL** and click **GO** – this will bring you to the school’s Web page. Under **About Us**, click on **Statistics** (a link on the left side of the page). Scroll down to where it says **Quality Review Report**.

Periodic Assessments are in-class assessments that students take to help teachers find out which concepts and skills students understand. Teachers use this information to learn what they should focus on with each child.

Q. How does the DOE provide parents with key information?

A. Parents who have questions or concerns about the special education services their child is receiving are able to go directly to the school and then, if necessary, to a parent representative in their Community School District Superintendent’s office. A citywide directory of parent representatives in the Community School Districts is available. Additionally, all parent coordinators and other family support personnel with positions created as a result of the Children First reforms have attended training on special education procedures and processes.

To make sure that our field personnel are able to respond in a timely and effective way to questions and concerns with high-quality information, the central Office of Special Education Initiatives operates a DOE Special Education Staff Call Center so that principals, parent coordinators, and other school personnel can make a single phone call to get fast, accurate information to answer families’ questions. Parents who have concerns with their child’s special education services and have not resolved the issues at the school or district level can contact 311 and request to be transferred to the Special Education Call Center.

For additional special education information, please access the department’s Web site at: <http://www.nyc.gov/schools/Academics/SpecialEducation/>