

CHILDRENFIRST

A Guide to Special Education for Principals (May 2007)

What do the Children First reforms mean for special education?

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

Over the past five years, parents, teachers and principals have been telling us what works and what doesn't work in special education. We've been listening and have made a number of improvements, including:

- Placing more students with disabilities into general education classrooms with their non-disabled peers. More than half of all school-age students with disabilities (52.2%) are now educated in general education classes with special education supports, an increase of 7.5% since the Mayor and Chancellor announced the Children First reforms in spring 2003. During the same time period, the number of students in collaborative team teaching classes has more than doubled from 10,068 students to approximately 22,000 students;
- Providing professional development focused on strategies to improve access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. Since 2003, more than 4,000 teachers have been trained in the Wilson Reading program, a research-validated Orton-Gillingham based reading program. Additionally, more than 2,500 teachers have been trained in Schools Attuned, a research-based program to assist teachers to differentiate instruction;
- Providing schools with more resources and flexibility than ever before for improving the performance of *all* students in the building, disabled and non-disabled, alike.

In order to help principals and other DOE personnel stay informed about changes in special education, we have compiled the following list of frequently asked questions about the reforms and the changes that will go into effect on July 1, 2007.

Q. Will the evaluation process change for students who are disabled or suspected of being disabled?

A. No. The 10 Committees on Special Education (CSE) offices and attendant records rooms will remain in their current locations. The CSEs will report to the Integrated Service Centers (ISC) and there will be no change in the evaluation process:

- Students in public schools will continue to receive evaluation services and have their IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings at their school, where personnel who know the child and are likely to provide services to the child can participate fully in this process.
- Students in non-public and charter schools as well as non-attending students will continue to receive evaluation services at the CSE offices. In addition, CSEs in collaboration with the Office of Student Enrollment, Planning and Operations (OSEPO) will facilitate placements of these students.
- All processes for non-public, charter schools and non-attending students, including impartial due process hearings, contracting out, related service authorizations, etc., will remain at the CSE while the same processes for public school students will occur at the ISC. However, the CSE will still open cases of all initial referrals and assign a CSE case number.

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- Below is a chart showing the ISC to which the CSEs will report. All **initial referrals** to special education for public school and non-public, charter and non-attending students continue to be sent to the CSE that serves your district as indicated below. This is being done in order to maintain the stability of the CSE and their attendant records rooms and to avoid any confusion among parents.

CSE	District(s)	ISC Borough
Region 1	9, 10	Bronx
Region 2	8, 11, 12	Bronx
Region 3	25, 26, 28, 29	Queens
Region 4	24, 30, 32	Queens
Region 5	19, 23, 27	Brooklyn
Region 6	17, 18, 22	Staten Island
Region 7	20, 21, 31	Staten Island
Region 8	13, 14, 15, 16	Brooklyn
Region 9	1, 2, 4, 7	Manhattan
Region 10	3, 5, 6	Manhattan

Q. What will happen to District 75?

- A. District 75 will remain in place to support District 75 schools. It will continue to be a separate citywide district for children with severe disabilities. The Children First school reforms seek to strengthen the district so it is serving children well and so its schools share best practices with one another. We will continue to work with the district to improve the delivery of services and increase options for students. District 75 schools that wish to receive non-mandated supports outside of District 75 may purchase services from the School Support Organizations, although they are not required to do so. The D75 Superintendent's Office will continue to arrange for all special education services and handle all related issues for D75 schools. The Queens ISC will have a singular D75 unit that will take the place of the ROC in providing business services to D75 schools (e.g., budget, procurement, and payroll).

Q. How will special education services be provided when the regions no longer exist?

- A. Services will be provided through three organizations:

Integrated Service Center (ISC)

Each borough will have an Integrated Service Center (ISC), which will offer *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. In the past, CSE personnel were required to perform many of the important operational functions for all public, non-public and charter schools, which stretched them beyond capacity. Many parents and educators reported that this slowed down the process of getting services to the children who need them. We believe this new system will streamline and improve the delivery of services.

Each ISC will have a Special Education Team consisting of a Director of Special Education Services, a Special Education Administration Manager, Operations Manager and three Administrative and Operations Specialists reporting to the Director. The team also includes experienced administrative and clinical experts who deliver high-quality support in all areas of special education. Additionally, the team at each ISC will include:

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- One IEP Manager and six IEP Specialists who will provide technical assistance, quality review oversight and enforce consistent standards for IEP development throughout the system.
- A Transportation Liaison to assist school IEP teams with making appropriate student transportation recommendations.
- Two Special Education Analysts, a Manager of Contracting and Related Service Authorization (RSA) as well as between 10 and 13 special education clerical support personnel. This team will streamline the process of deploying special education personnel, contracting out for services, and issuing and approving services by non-DOE independent providers (RSAs) for students attending public schools.
- Five Administrators of Special Education will provide support to schools and ensure that these services are being provided in a timely and appropriate manner. They will essentially serve as “guarantors” of special education services.
- Each ISC will have six Supervisors of School Psychologists, six Supervisors of Speech Teachers, two or three Supervisors of Occupational Therapy and one or two Supervisors of Physical Therapy, based upon caseload, to develop a strong team of senior-level service expertise and to collaborate with schools to improve service delivery.
- Special education attorneys and paralegals will be assigned by the Office of Legal Services to each ISC. These legal professionals will provide legal support to schools, the ISC and the CSEs to enable these organizations to meet their responsibilities related to Impartial Due Process Hearings.

Office of Student Enrollment Planning and Operations (OSEPO)

The central Office of Student Enrollment Planning and Operations (OSEPO) will continue to facilitate student placement, enrollment, zoning and choice programs on a citywide basis for all grade levels. We expect that to the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities will be served in their current schools. OSEPO will assume responsibility for placing public school students in collaborative team teaching and special education classes once they have been recommended for these services and the student cannot be served in his or her current school. However, where it is determined that students require services that cannot be provided at the school there will be shared accountability for these students. These students will remain on the Progress Report of the sending school as well as the receiving school. OSEPO will work with District 75 to identify and place students in need of District 75 programs. OSEPO will also assume responsibility for approving all transfers of special education students.

By transferring the special education placement process for public school students with disabilities to OSEPO, having five Enrollment Specialists for students with disabilities and assigning 32 placement officers and attendant clerical support to the Borough Enrollment Centers, all with the full weight and authority of the Chancellor, the DOE will ensure better access to special education programs across the City.

- OSEPO will continue to monitor enrollment data in order to determine where new special education classes will be opened. OSEPO will work with the central Office of Portfolio Development to secure space where needed for special education classes.
- OSEPO will also ensure greater participation of students with disabilities in choice programs that they administer.

School Support Organizations (SSO)

This spring, all principals, in consultation with their School Leadership Teams, chose a School Support Organization (SSO) that will provide curricular and instructional support for their students, including students with disabilities. Some of the SSOs will be led by and primarily made up of New York City public school personnel and others will represent the best that colleges, universities, and other non-profit organizations have to offer. Schools were able to choose the SSO that provides the support needed by their teachers and students. This will keep decision-making in schools and make it possible for schools with

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similar needs to easily share and replicate best instructional practices. District 75 schools have the option of choosing an SSO or they can choose to receive their support services from District 75.

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

A. Building Special Education Capacity:

- In response to parent demand for a standard Orton-Gillingham based reading program, the DOE now has more than 4,000 teachers trained in the Wilson Reading System, which will continue to be a key element of the core curriculum.
- The DOE will pilot a Special Education Lead Teacher program in 30 middle and high schools in September 2007. The program's goal is to foster mentoring relationships within a school and draw upon the skill and competence of experienced special education teachers to help improve instruction. The 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. Their classroom will become a "learning laboratory" developing best practices that can be used in their home school and replicated in others. This position will be funded jointly by the school and central headquarters.
- The central Office of Special Education Initiatives/Office of School Improvement (OSEI) will continue to provide technical assistance and support to schools' delivery of special education services.
- Twenty senior special education staff members will be allocated to OSEI to continue to build the capacity of schools to provide instructional and related services to students with disabilities.
- Thirty Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) teacher trainers will be aligned with school networks to provide teacher training on specific special education topics such as literacy, differentiated instruction and utilizing behavior management techniques in the classroom.
- To ensure that principals have in-depth knowledge of special education, a more rigorous and comprehensive special education component will be added to principal training provided through the Leadership Academy. We are also developing training for other school-based staff.

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. Providing rigorous academic content area instruction and the effective transitioning of students with disabilities to middle and high school will be given unprecedented attention.

Fair Student Funding (FSF)

Under FSF, schools receive funds based on how many periods each day a student requires special education classroom support rather than the service delivery model. In addition to weighting the funding formula for the percentage of time a student receives special education services, there are additional weights for poverty and academic performance, which can provide additional funds for students in special education. Starting in the 2008-2009 school year, the Department will provide funding to schools as students are transitioned to lower intensity support models in order to ensure that adequate support is maintained. Additional detailed information on this new funding will be provided during the summer months.

This funding model does not change our current methodology for providing funds to schools for IEP mandated services including Related Services, IEP teachers, IEP paraprofessionals and District 75 programs.

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Q. How will the Department increase accountability for the performance of students with disabilities?

- A. A major component of the Children First reforms is increasing school-level accountability. We will also improve the quality of information available about individual students and school performance.

The Special Education Component (SEC) of the student information system currently tracks students in every school receiving and awaiting special education related services including Speech, Counseling, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) as well as English as a Second Language (ESL). Every principal should be familiar with this system and use it on a regular basis to monitor caseloads in his or her school.

Special Education Compliance Report is a Web-based Special Education Compliance Report that will indicate the timeliness of special education evaluations and delivery of services including any inequities in the classification rate of English Language Learners and minority students will be made widely available during the 2007-2008 school year.

Other accountability tools include:

ARIS (Achievement Reporting and Innovation System) is a first-of-its-kind data management system that is being developed by the New York City Department of Education working with IBM. ARIS will collect and analyze information about student academic performance to help educators and parents make smart decisions that improve the academic progress of students and their schools.

Progress Reports will grade each school with an A, B, C, D, or F starting in September 2007. Schools that get A's will be eligible for rewards, while schools that fail will face consequences. Special emphasis will be 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 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** and click.

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 will the DOE provide parents with key information?

- A. We will address parents' questions and concerns with greater speed than we have in the past and provide them with high-quality information. Parents who have questions or concerns about the special education services their child is receiving will be able to go directly to the school and then to a representative in their Community School District or High School Superintendent's office, if necessary. We expect that most questions regarding services for individual students will be successfully addressed at the school level.
- A citywide directory of District Family Advocates in the Community School Districts will be available by the beginning of the school year. An interim directory will be provided by the end of this school year for issues that may arise over the summer. The CSE offices are also open during the summer to assist parents.

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- All parent coordinators and other family support personnel with positions created as a result of the Children First reforms will attend training on special education procedures and processes.
- Parent leaders will work with the Department to develop training for parent representatives and to make recommendations to increase responsiveness of schools to families of students with disabilities.
- A staff call center for school personnel will be created by OSEI and report directly to the Office of School Improvement to provide information to schools regarding special education issues so that schools, in turn, can provide timely and appropriate responses to parent inquiries. Issues that need more senior input will be escalated to professional personnel in the Office of School Improvement. Calls from the Mayor's 311 line will also be routed to the call center.