

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Board of Education

**FROM: Dr. Fern Aefsky, Asst. Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Vanessa Giudice-Weeks, Director of Special Education**

DATE: September 21, 2005

RE: District Plan for the Education of Students with Disabilities

The Board of Education is required to approve a District Plan for the Education of Disabled Students every two years as mandated by Part 200 of the Commissioner's Regulations. As you can determine from the criteria listed below, the District Plan more closely resembles a program description rather than a program plan in the traditional sense. Essentially, the District plan requires the following components:

1. A description of the nature and scope of special education programs and services currently available to students and preschool students residing in the district in terms of group size and composition;
2. Identification of the number and age span of students and preschool students to be served by type of disability, and recommended setting;
3. The method to be used to evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the program has been achieved;
4. A description of the policies and practices of the Board of Education to ensure the continual allocation of appropriate space within the district for special education programs that meet the needs of students and preschool students with disabilities;
5. A description of the policies and practices of the Board of Education to ensure that appropriate space will be continually available to meet the needs of resident students and preschool students with disabilities who attend special education programs provided by boards of cooperative educational services;
6. The estimated budget to support such plan;
7. The date on which such plan was adopted by the Board of Education;

The identified needs of students with disabilities create a need to develop new programs. During the past two years, we have analyzed data of students placed in programs outside of the Poughkeepsie City School District schools. Based on observations and student performance, we have created additional classes for students with disabilities in our schools.

I. Statement of Philosophy

The Poughkeepsie City School District is committed to the task of providing all students with an education that is challenging and rewarding. Each student is encouraged to fully develop their physical, cognitive, social and aesthetic maturity. Students with disabilities in the district are considered an integral part of the total student population and the district's commitment to provide excellence in education is directed toward students with disabilities to the same degree as non-disabled students. Opportunities are provided to all students with disabilities in order for them to achieve in accordance with their own abilities, the ultimate goal being to equip them with the skills necessary for personal academic and social success needed for independent, productive living.

At both elementary and secondary levels, there is a strong commitment to the concept that students with disabilities be placed to the maximum extent appropriate in classes with non-disabled peers. Students with disabilities need to be able to demonstrate competency on all state assessments and the coordination of curriculum and modifications of strategies and techniques need to be facilitated at all levels.

Students with disabilities are entitled to appropriate aids and services in order that each student benefit from the general classroom experience. This opportunity is essential to the development of self-worth and self-respect, in addition to helping prepare the student to live and cope in an adult world that may present significant challenges for the individual with disabilities.

In addition to academic skills, students at the secondary level are encouraged to enroll in courses in the areas of technology, home and career skills, art, music, and business. As more students participate in our high school programs, additional vocational opportunities have been provided.

The School-based Career Initiative (SCI) is designed to provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to be engaged in a journey of self-discovery. This program incorporates academic enrichment, job skill development and self-awareness activities to introduce students to basic life skills. These skills are provided through a school-based internship program where PCSD staff mentor the high school student for two periods, five days a week in their field of work. The mentor helps the student move closer to achieving their career education learning goals by providing work-site experience and serves as an adult role model.

Testing modifications continue to be available and identified consistently in student educational programs. The purpose of test modifications is to enable students with disabilities to participate in test programs on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers, as per regulations.

We will continue to work on improving services so that students with disabilities are offered opportunities to be successful learners.

These goals support Board of Education goals, including students demonstrating achievement in reading, writing and mathematics that is at or above grade level, ensure 100% graduation rate for students, train all staff to align instruction with state standards and district goals, and get all parents to actively participate in school activities.

**A. Resident Pupils with Disabilities Provided Special Education
(from the 12/1/04 PD 1/4 Report)**

Pupils provided special education by this district:	<u>947</u>
Pupils provided special education by BOCES:	<u>57</u>
Pupils provided special education in a residential school:	<u>8</u>
Pupils provided special education in an approved preschool program:	<u>109</u>
Pupils provided special education in the district preschool program:	<u>n/a</u>
Pupils provided special education by an approved private day school:	<u>38</u>

B. Resident School Age Students by Age and Classification Serviced by District and BOCES:

<u>Disability Category</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>12-13</u>	<u>14-17</u>	<u>18-21</u>	<u>Total</u>
Autistic	1	6	1	1	0	9
Emotionally Disturbed	1	26	27	39	7	100
Learning Disturbed	0	198	98	225	28	549
Mentally Retarded	0	7	5	9	0	21
Deaf	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hard of Hearing	0	2	2	1	0	5
Speech Impaired	29	118	6	4	0	157
Visually Impaired	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orthopedically Impaired	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Health Impaired	0	33	9	13	1	56
Multiply Disabled	2	55	24	21	2	104
Deaf-Blind	0	0	0	0	0	0
Traumatic Brain Injured	0	0	2	1	0	3
TOTAL:	33	445	174	314	38	1004

Consultant Teacher Services

Consultant teacher services means direct and/or indirect services, as defined in Part 200 Regulations, provided to a student with a disability who attends regular education classes and/or to such student's regular education teachers.

- (1) Direct consultant teacher services means specially designed individualized or group instruction provided by a certified special education teacher to a student with a disability to aid such student to benefit from the student's regular education classes.
- (2) Indirect consultant teacher services means consultation provided by a certified special education teacher to regular education teachers to assist them in adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying their instructional methods to meet the individual needs of a student with a disability who attends their classes.

Approximately 4 students receive this service.

Related Services Only

Related services means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a student with a disability and includes speech-language pathology, audiology services, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, health aide, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling services, orientation and mobility services, medical services, parent counseling and training, skilled nursing, school social work, assistive technology services, other appropriate support services.

Approximately 72 students receive related services only.

Resource Room

Resource room support provides supplemental instruction to students with disabilities who are in need of specialized supplementary instruction in an individual or small group setting for a portion of the school day.

Resource room programs are offered in all building for all grade levels. The profile of a student who receives resource room support is a student who has academic delays of less than 2 years.

Resource teachers deliver these services either through push-in or pull-out programs. The majority of delivery models are pull-out programs. However, some students at the elementary level receive services in their classroom.

Approximately 270 students receive resource room support services.

Inclusion support services are provided for some students in grades 3-7. Students receive support by a special education teacher in the regular classroom setting. Students with mild to moderate disabilities with no significant behavioral challenge, who are motivated learners are typically students who receive this level of service.

Approximately 95 students receive inclusion support services.

Special Class (self-contained)

Students placed in self-contained classes receive modified instruction that parallels New York State curriculum at all grade levels. Students receive support in either 15:1, 12:1:1 or 8:1:1 classes in district programs.

In our district, approximately 338 students receive 15:1 support, approximately 118 students receive 12:1:1 support and approximately 99 students receive 8:1:1 support (Circle of Courage and High School).

Program Summary

In accordance with the Commissioner's Regulations, each student with a disability has access to the full range of programs and services offered throughout the school district (including extra curricular activities) to the extent that such programs and services are appropriate to each student's special education needs.

Some children receive services outside of the special education classes. These include students receiving home instruction (usually on a temporary basis awaiting placement). In addition, 5 students receive services from teachers of the visually and hearing impaired provided through BOCES itinerant services.

Related services such as occupational and physical therapy are also provided to students within the school district whenever the services are recommended by the district's Committee on Special Education. At the present time, there are 74 students with disabilities receiving occupational therapy and 33 receiving physical therapy.

Speech therapists provide therapy to students exhibiting communication disorders such as articulation, oral motor and language impairments. There are 386 students with disabilities who receive speech/language therapy as a special education service.

A number of students with disabilities are entitled to counseling as a related service as determined by the Committee on Special Education. School psychologists and school social workers provide this service to 284 identified students.

Currently, 66 students with disabilities receive services in programs outside the district, 34 are assigned to classes within the Dutchess BOCES system, and 32 are enrolled in out-of-district, private day programs (NYSED approved), as per CSE.

Five students with severe disabilities are enrolled in residential treatment facilities (NYSED approved), located both in and out of state. These students exhibit social/emotional and management needs requiring a high level of supervision. They were placed in residential settings because of the degree of severity of the special education requirements and the inability for a day treatment program to be successful.

Students assigned to BOCES and other out-of-district programs re-enter into district classes when they are ready to return to the district. Re-entry is coordinated between the district and program, so that the student and parents understand what the child needs to accomplish prior to re-entering the district.

Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)

The CPSE arranges programs for preschool students with disabilities in order to provide an enriched, structured, developmental program for children, aged 3 to 5 years. There are approximately 67 students currently receiving services in center-based programs. The Poughkeepsie City School District employs a CPSE Coordinator who facilitates this process, under the supervision of the Director of Special Education and the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel.

These programs address the various needs of children who have significant delays in one or more of the following areas: language and communication, social/emotional skills, fine and/or gross motor development and cognition, in the least restrictive environment.

An additional 31 preschool students receive some level of itinerant services (special education, speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy) usually within a local regular education preschool program or at home. Therapists approved by the Dutchess County Board of Health provide these services.

Twelve-Month Schooling

In March 2000, Part 200 of the Commissioner's Regulations were amended to reflect the availability of twelve-month programming for students whose disabilities are severe enough to exhibit the need for a structured learning environment of twelve-month durations to maintain developmental levels. Some district students receive twelve-month programming, as do several students in residential and day treatment programs. Additionally, some students are eligible for related services only as a twelve-month service.

During the summer of 2003, the Poughkeepsie City School District initiated an approved summer program for students with disabilities. This year our program served approximately 86 students in a six-week summer program. The two programs approved by SED include a full-time center-based program and related services only (physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech).

IV. Evaluation Procedures

The evaluation of program objectives is ongoing. Specific evaluation conferences are held between the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel and the Director of Special Education. Data is gathered through building and district personnel, including teachers (special education and content teachers), speech therapists, psychologists, social workers, administrators, physical and occupational therapists, parents, and other members of our educational community. Program options and review is an integrated part of our focus in order to ensure that the Poughkeepsie City School District meets the needs of our students as well as compliance issues.

V. Space Allocation for Special Education Programs and Services

To ensure that adequate and appropriate space is made available for special education classes provided by the district, as well as in programs provided by the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), the Board of Education will allocate an appropriate amount of space in district facilities to meet the needs of student in such programs. The allocation will be part of the biennial district plan for the provision of special education programs and services, as mandated by the Commissioner. The building plan allowed for additional classroom space for students with disabilities in district programs.

Cited below are budget estimates for the 2005-2006 school year. It must be noted that a significant portion of our instructional and tuition expenses are offset through the following year's state aid (approximately 50% for BOCES and public school students; 70% for private tuitions). The school district is reimbursed at 80% within the current school year for twelve-month schooling.

Instructional, Instructional support and Related Services Expenses (Salaries):

\$7,973,033

Other Expenses (contracts, equipment, supplies, tuition, BOCES, etc.):

\$4,776,399

Approximate Total State and Federal Reimbursement for Instruction:

\$9,119,500

Approximate Transportation Expenses:

\$1,611,720

Approximate Reimbursement for Transportation:

90%

VII. New Regulations

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was reauthorized by Congress in 2004, and legal changes were required as of July 1, 2005. New York State challenged some of those requirements, resulting in New York's Governor Pataki signing legislation requiring compliance with changes by September 13, 2005. There is still conflicting information regarding those changes from the State Education Department and legal counsel.

The changes include:

- Revised due process dissemination requirements;
- Revised impartial hearing procedures;
- Revised process for determining eligibility of students with learning disabilities;
- Revised requirements for certification of special education teachers;
- CSE procedures when parents and schools agree;
- Monitoring and enforcement of programs;
- CSE responsibility for all students with disabilities in private schools located within district boundaries (budgetary implications).

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The special education administrative team consists of the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel and the Director of Special Education, working collaboratively to provide support for all aspects of comprehensive programs for students with disabilities. Responsibilities include planning, managing, supervising, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the delivery of special education programs for all students classified by the District's Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education. Together, they assume responsibility to assure compliance with Federal and State Regulations, on matters related to special education services. Supervision is provided through the formal observation/evaluation process, case conferences, and as a result of regular meetings with administrators and teachers.

Personalized attention and support is given to parents frequently throughout the school year to explain IEP recommendations and student needs as well as to integrate appropriate parent concerns within each child's special education program. A Parent University Program will continue to encourage participation of parents of students with disabilities as part of the district's Parent Involvement Plan.

Our shared goal is for students with disabilities to leave school prepared to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, pursue meaningful careers and enjoy integration in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of American society.

Ways that will enable the Poughkeepsie City School District to work towards goals include developing systematic processes for:

- Pre-referral intervention (IST)
- CSE referral processes
- Compliance with state regulations
- On-going analysis of student achievement

These initiatives have been implemented and will continue to be developed through district work, including the District Steering Committee, the Parent Involvement Plan, the Plan for Restructuring at our Middle School, and staff development activities. State education initiatives will assist the district in refining plans for increased student success and opportunities for ongoing staff development activities will be offered to district staff.