

September 1, 2010

Dear Parents,

We hope that you and your family have had an enjoyable summer. We would like to take a moment to tell you about an exciting initiative at your child's school that emphasizes student achievement, student success, and personalized support. A goal of this initiative is to better tailor special education supports and services that are provided in schools to each individual's unique learning needs and educational goals. What this means is that many students will be spending more of the school day, as educationally appropriate, with non-disabled peers. Studies show that many students with disabilities who participate in general education environments have stronger literacy skills, improved graduation rates, and greater success after high school.

Attached to this letter is a document that we hope will answer many of the questions you may have about this initiative. Additionally, this fall we will be holding a parent informational session in each borough. During these events, you will have the opportunity to learn more about educating students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers and get answers to other questions you may have. Your school will send home a flyer with more details.

As always, we encourage your involvement in your child's school. You are an integral part of your child's IEP Team and school community. We invite your ideas and feedback as we all work together to provide special education supports and realize higher achievement for our students with disabilities. If you have any questions about how your child's needs will be met, please contact your school.

Warm regards,



Laura Rodriguez
Deputy Chancellor

Answers to Parent Questions about Changes in Special Education – 09/01/2010

1. Will my child stay in his/her current school?

Yes. Keeping children in the school they currently attend is a goal of this initiative. Students will not transfer out of participating schools because of IEP changes unless they require highly specialized programs. Placements of students in District 75 will not be affected.

2. How will my child's needs be met differently in his/her school?

The goal of the reform is to tailor the special education supports and services that we provide in schools to each individual's unique learning needs and educational goals. Special education has often been regarded as a "class" or "place." However, effective special education is often an array of supports and services that can be used to achieve the goals on a student's IEP. The range of these supports and services is fully described in The Continuum of Services for Students with Disabilities and additional information is also available in the Parent's Guide: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/ParentResources>. Because the supports and services are individualized for each student, the extent of changes will vary from student to student.

3. What will stay the same in my child's school?

Your child will continue to receive instruction based on his/her individualized academic, social and emotional needs. All services that have been recommended in the IEP will remain the same unless there has been an IEP meeting or you have given written consent to amend.

4. What might change in the IEP meeting?

The process and procedures around IEP meetings will not change.

5. Who will be responsible for making sure my child is getting what is recommended on his/her IEP and be able to answer questions about changes in special education?

As always, if you have any concerns or questions about your child's education or school, make an appointment with your school's principal or his/her designee responsible for special education. Your child's principal is accountable for your child's success at school. If you still have concerns after that meeting, talk to the Leader of your school's Children First Network. This person's name and phone number will be in the "School Details" box on the main page of the school's website. You can also contact the Community Superintendent or High School Superintendent.

6. How will school staff be prepared to address my child's specific needs?

As always, all teachers who work with your child must receive and review a copy of your child's IEP. Teachers who co-teach groups of students with and without IEPs will plan their instruction collaboratively and review student assessments to monitor progress. Since early spring, the Department of Education has been preparing educators and schools that are participating in this initiative by providing a variety of learning opportunities, including a collaboration with the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project.

7. If my zoned school is participating in this initiative but my child is currently attending a different school, can we enroll in the zoned school?

Students zoned to participating schools but attending other schools may not transfer into the zoned school unless they are granted a transfer by the Office of Student Enrollment based on criteria such as medical or travel hardships, as described in Chancellor's Regulation A-101, Pages 7-8 (linked below). As a general rule, just as students are not transferring out of participating schools because of IEP changes, students will not transfer into participating schools. Students are only eligible for transfer with a documented hardship as stated in the transfer information provided here: (<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/ChancellorsRegulations/default.htm>).

8. What if I want to request a transfer?

All parents have the right to request transfers, which may be granted based on certain criteria, such as medical or travel hardships as described above in question number 7. To request a transfer, work with the Office of Student Enrollment in your borough.

9. What is the role of the parent in this initiative? How can I get involved?

Support from parents is always encouraged and welcomed - you are an integral part of your child's IEP Team and school community. Contact your school's Parent Coordinator, Parent Association, or principal to find out how you can become more involved in your child's school.

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