



TO: P-12 Education Committee
Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES)
Committee

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SUBJECT: Targeted Improvement Activities and Resources to Improve
Results for Students With Disabilities

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SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To discuss critical areas for action and proposed improvement activities aligned with the Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities.

Background Information

In review of data results and consultation with stakeholders, Department staff has identified critical areas for action to improve results for students with disabilities. These include actions to:

- Improve outcomes for preschool children with disabilities;
- Increase the percentage of students in high quality inclusive programs;
- Improve quality of instruction through training and support to teachers;
- Increase percentage of students achieving at levels 2 and above on State assessments;
- Ensure appropriate graduation options; and
- Enhance transition activities to improve post-secondary outcomes.

BLUEPRINT FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Regents discussed a draft proposed Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities at their July 2015 meeting. This Blueprint was developed consistent with the mission of the New York State Education Department (NYSED), Office of Special Education - supported by all offices within NYSED - to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunities to benefit from high quality instruction, to reach the same standards as all students, and to leave school prepared to successfully transition to post-school learning, living and employment. As rigor and expectations for all students in New York State have increased, policy and practices must be adjusted to support students with disabilities to meet these challenges.

The Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities was developed in consultation with the Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education, parents and technical assistance providers. The principles in the Blueprint were carefully selected as those that are essential to achieve the goal of improved results. This statewide framework is intended to clarify expectations for administrators, policy makers and practitioners to improve instruction to prepare students with disabilities for success beginning in the preschool years to lay the foundation for post-secondary readiness and success.

While there are many components or key principles that are important for students with disabilities and their families, this Blueprint focuses on seven core principles and practices supported by research for all students with disabilities. Improving results for students with disabilities requires a renewed focus on these core principles.

- 1. Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.*
- 2. Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.*
- 3. Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.*
- 4. Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.*
- 5. Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.*
- 6. Schools provide high quality inclusive programs and activities.*
- 7. Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.*

This Blueprint will be used by the State to develop State policy and guidance and for schools to review their policies and practices to support students with disabilities. School districts and schools are encouraged to use these principles to review practice and

to identify areas where improvement is needed. A copy of the Blueprint with key principles and evidence statements is attached.

Proposed Improvement Activities

The following improvement activities are planned for continuation or initiation during the 2015-16 school year.

To promote student engagement in self-advocacy and in determining their own educational goals and plans:

1. Continue regional training and technical assistance on practices that promote student self-determination provided by transition specialists in the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC).
2. Meet three times per year with the Youth Advisory Panel, convened by the Office of Special Education, to discuss policy initiatives to further promote school practices that encourage student self-advocacy and self-determination practices.
3. Provide school districts with information regarding research-based practices to promote student self-advocacy.
4. Highlight resources and school districts that have quality practices in this regard.

To ensure parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child:

1. Initiate a pilot program of individualized education program (IEP) facilitation in Long Island and New York City beginning in the fall of 2015. IEP facilitation is a voluntary process that can be used when all parties to an IEP meeting agree that the presence of a neutral third party would help facilitate communication and the successful drafting of the student's IEP, most often utilized when there is a sense from any of the participants that the discussions at the IEP meeting are creating an impasse or acrimonious climate.
2. Meet regularly with representatives from the State's 14 Special Education Parent Centers to obtain feedback on parent issues and concerns, to share State proposed policy and to support their work to provide parents of children with disabilities with information, resources, and strategies to:
 - promote their meaningful involvement in their child's education programs, including information regarding the special education process (referrals, individual evaluations and IEP development and transition planning);
 - assist in understanding their child's disabilities;
 - promote early resolution of disputes between parents and school districts;
 - promote the use of resolution sessions and special education mediation;

- assist in understanding procedural due process rights, including the right to impartial hearings and appeals and the State complaint process; and
 - enhance parents' skills and levels of confidence to communicate effectively and work collaboratively with schools and stakeholders to advocate and actively participate in their child's education program.
3. Continue work with the Youth Advisory Panel to inform State policy development and technical assistance around the priorities identified by youth with disabilities.
 4. Annually collect data from a representative number of school districts to determine the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. Report data publicly by school district.
 5. Through the RSE-TASC and Special Education Parent Centers, conduct regional trainings on parent participation in the IEP process and the role of the additional parent member on the Committee on Special Education.

To ensure teachers design, provide and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to the general education curriculum and that teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities:

1. Conduct a State Forum and disseminate information on best practices in the education of students with learning disabilities.
2. Establish a State technical assistance center to provide ongoing professional development to improve instructional practices for students with learning disabilities.
3. Promote greater access to assistive technology for students with disabilities through policy and technical assistance.
4. Provide guidance to school districts and schools on appropriate scaffolds for curriculum instruction aligned with the State's Learning Standards and standards-based IEP development for students with disabilities.
5. Assign special education school improvement specialists from the RSE-TASC to provide up to three years of professional development and technical assistance to low performing districts in the areas of literacy, behavior, and specially-designed instruction.

To ensure schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support:

1. Provide regional training and webinars for preschool providers on systems of Recognition and Response¹ at the preschool level.
2. Provide regional training and targeted professional development to early childhood providers by the State Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions (PBIS) Technical Assistance Center and RSE-TASC behavior specialists with expertise in preschool education to improve behavioral supports for preschool students with disabilities.
3. Participate as a member of a multi-State agency team to promote use of Pyramid Model² for supporting social-emotional competence in young children.
4. Provide webinars and regional training and technical assistance to approximately 500 schools to support them in scaling up high-quality Response to Intervention (Rtl) programs, with targeted information sessions for parents in these schools, to promote early and appropriate identification of students with learning disabilities.
5. Assign behavior specialists from the State's RSE-TASC and representatives from the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality to support improvement activities in school districts where data indicates a need for improved behavioral practices to scale up high quality systems of positive behavioral interventions and supports.
6. Issue a Request for Proposals to provide up to 10 grants to middle schools to scale up Rtl processes through grade 8.

To ensure schools provide high quality inclusive programs and activities:

1. Develop State policy and guidance to promote high quality inclusive schools.
2. Conduct regional forums on preschool least restrictive environment placements, with action plans developed in each region with the highest rates of separate school placements to ensure that students with disabilities, statewide, have equitable access to regular early childhood programs.
3. Develop policy on instruction in the *Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core* in approved preschool programs for students with disabilities.

¹ **Recognition and Response** means, for preschool students, gathering formative assessment information by screening all of the children and monitoring their progress and providing an effective core curriculum, intentional teaching, and targeted interventions linked to formative assessments.

² The **Pyramid Model** for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children provides a tiered intervention framework of evidence-based interventions for promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children (Fox et al., 2003; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006).

4. In collaboration with the Office of Early Learning, support inclusion of students with disabilities in its expansion of Universal Prekindergarten Programs.

To improve transition planning and post-secondary results for students with disabilities:

1. Support development of career and technical coursework and work-based learning activities in school districts, boards of cooperative educational services programs, Special Act School Districts and approved private schools through three-year competitive grant awards using \$10 million of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds annually.
2. Continue outreach to businesses, the military and community colleges to inform them about the value of Regents-endorsed work-readiness credentials.
3. Continue the integrated work of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) Transition Unit (including 15 Senior Transition and Youth Specialists), Community Employment Specialists and the 25 Special Education Transition Specialists in the RSE-TASC.
4. Continue support of regional interagency councils, which include school personnel, adult service providers, schools, ACCES-VR community-based providers and Senior Transition and Youth Specialists, and higher education organizations to promote ongoing communication and sustainable partnerships around transition planning.
5. Continue annual monitoring of approximately 116 school districts annually, including NYC each year, on appropriately developed transition plans in IEPs.
6. In collaboration with ACCES-VR, consult with the Department’s Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities.
7. In collaboration with ACCES-VR, participate in the PROMISE Grant to improve the education and employment outcomes of youth recipients of supplemental security income (SSI).
8. Through ACCES-VR, issue a Request for Proposals for its Youth Employment Initiative to provide pre-employment transition services to VR eligible youth, ages 14-25, who are either in or out of school.
9. Continue to support and expand the development of summer work experience options for youth, supported through the partnerships of ACCES-VR and community providers under contract.
10. Through the Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) initiative at ACCES-VR, continue to develop consistent systems across the State, both within ACCES-VR and between agencies, to streamline and reduce barriers to students and youth to

post-secondary services necessary to obtain and maintain quality employment outcomes.

Next Steps:

With support of the Board of Regents, staff will:

1. Develop State policy and guidance to support actions.
2. Use the Blueprint to review school district effectiveness to support students with disabilities
3. Develop and share related resources for families, youth and schools.
4. Support professional development and technical assistance for schools and families in these targeted areas.
5. Disseminate the Blueprint and other critical information to schools, parents and the State's technical assistance networks

Attachment

New York State Education Department

BLUEPRINT FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The mission of the New York State Education Department (NYSED), Office of Special Education, - supported by all offices within NYSED - is to ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities to benefit from high quality instruction, to reach the same standards as all students, and to leave school prepared to successfully transition to post-school learning, living and working. Through this process, there are essential and fundamental procedural rights and protections afforded by federal and State law both to parents and students with disabilities.

The following principles were selected, in consultation with stakeholders, as a statewide framework of expectations to lay the foundation for improved instruction and results for students with disabilities. References to students with disabilities within this document includes preschool students with disabilities and school age students with any of the 13 disability categories of autism, blindness, deafness, deaf-blindness, emotional disabilities, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, orthopedic impairments, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, speech and language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment.

While there are many other components or key principles that are important in the education of students with disabilities, this Blueprint focuses on seven research and evidence-based core principles and practices for all students with disabilities. Improving results for students with disabilities requires a renewed focus on these core principles. Underlying these principles are the following essential understandings.

- Communities, boards of education, district and school leaders must provide systemic supports and professional development for teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, including appropriate identification and ensuring classrooms have necessary supports, rigorous and relevant learning environments and classroom and school-wide approaches are created to maintain a positive climate.
- School principals and special education administrators are fundamental in their roles as instructional leaders for students with disabilities.
- All teachers are teachers of students with disabilities and every teacher needs to be skilled in how to support and provide differentiated and specially-designed instruction to students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities must be held to high expectations and given the appropriate supports and services to meet those high expectations.
- Students and parents of students with disabilities need information and support to be meaningfully involved in the special education process.
- Students with disabilities should participate, to the maximum extent possible, in making recommendations for supports and services needed for their academic success and to meet their post-secondary transition goals.

Blueprint For Improved Results For Students With Disabilities

Guiding Principles

The following principles will be used by the State to review policy, technical assistance and other improvement activities. School districts and schools are encouraged to use these principles to review practice and to identify and act on areas where improvement is needed.

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN SELF-ADVOCACY AND ARE INVOLVED IN DETERMINING THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND PLANS.

This is evident when:

- *Students participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings.*
- *Students create and monitor their progress towards academic and social goals.*
- *Students engage in career planning and selection of courses of study to prepare them for post-secondary living, working and learning.*

PARENTS, AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, ARE ENGAGED AS MEANINGFUL PARTNERS IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS AND THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILD.

This is evident when:

- *Parents report that they understand the special education process and their due process rights and actively participate in the development of their child's IEP.*
- *Parents understand what their child is expected to know and be able to do to progress toward the State learning standards.*
- *Parents and educators engage in frequent, respectful and open discussion of the educational needs of the student.*
- *Families are invited into and feel welcome in all school environments.*
- *Parents have the information they need about effective strategies to support their child's learning and support transition from school to post-school activities.*

TEACHERS DESIGN, PROVIDE AND ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIALLY-DESIGNED INSTRUCTION TO PROVIDE ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE AND PROGRESS IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

This is evident when:

- *All teachers are responsive to the pedagogical needs of students with disabilities.*
 - *All students receive instruction in curriculum aligned with the State's Learning Standards.*
 - *IEPs are developed in consideration of grade level standards.*
 - *IEPs are implemented and reviewed by educators, families and students to ensure that students are meeting their annual goals.*
 - *Special and general education teachers of students with disabilities engage in intentional collaborative lesson planning to meet the needs of each individual student with a disability.*
 - *Individual student data are used to inform and design instruction for students with disabilities to progress toward grade level standards.*
 - *Students with disabilities receive instructional materials in alternative formats at the same time as other students in the class receive their instructional materials.*
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TEACHERS PROVIDE RESEARCH-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

This is evident when:

- *All teachers develop lessons that allow multiple entry points and multiple modes of engagement for students with diverse needs.*
- *All teachers of students are knowledgeable and skilled in providing explicit instruction in academics and social-emotional learning.*
- *Students with disabilities are taught strategies for self-regulated learning across the content areas.*
- *All teachers continually assess students' understanding of lessons to improve and target instruction to student needs.*
- *Students' individualized needs for assistive technology devices and services are considered and accommodated.*

SCHOOLS PROVIDE MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT.

This is evident when:

- *Educators collect and analyze student outcome data to plan, organize, deliver and evaluate the effectiveness of school-wide programs and instruction for all students.*
- *Educators disaggregate and analyze outcomes for students with disabilities to improve school-wide programs and interventions.*
- *Educators collect and analyze data to identify individual students in need of additional support.*
- *Evidence-based interventions are provided in a timely manner to students needing more support.*
- *Progress monitoring data are collected and inform decisions about the effectiveness and/or need for modification to those interventions.*

SCHOOLS PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

This is evident when:

- *Educators use the full continuum of services to ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment.*
 - *The needs of the students are the primary consideration in the configuration of special education programs and services to be provided to students with disabilities.*
 - *District/school leaders allocate human and financial resources to support scheduling and planning time to ensure all students receive rigorous and appropriate instruction throughout the continuum of special education programs and services.*
 - *Students with disabilities in inclusive settings are provided the accommodations and explicit and specially-designed instruction needed to progress in the curriculum.*
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SCHOOLS PROVIDE APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN WORK-BASED LEARNING.

This is evident when:

- *Students are provided age-appropriate transition assessments, guidance, courses of study and work-based learning opportunities to meaningfully engage in early and ongoing career planning and exploration.*
 - *Students with disabilities and their families are provided early and clear information on graduation requirements.*
 - *Students with disabilities receive instruction toward the Career Development and Occupational Studies Learning Standards beginning in the early grades.*
 - *Students are provided instruction to develop lifelong learning skills such as self-advocacy, social-emotional skills, higher order thinking, employability skills and consumer and life skills.*
 - *Students and their families actively participate in the transition planning process.*
 - *Schools facilitate timely student and family connections to post-secondary supports and services through ACCESS-VR and other State agency programs and services.*
-