

Implementing the Acceleration Agenda: Achieving significant academic growth for students with disabilities



One-fifth of BPS students have disabilities. Two years ago, Dr. Johnson invited a team of nationally-recognized special education experts from the Council of Great City Schools to observe BPS and make recommendations. Based in part on their suggestions, BPS created a new position -- the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services. Since his arrival, John Verre has reorganized the Office of Special Education and Student Services to focus on academic outcomes, aspirations for our students and regulatory compliance.

Today, BPS is ready to implement a round of significant improvements linked to the Acceleration Agenda that will provide better services and deliver a higher quality education to our students with disabilities. The reforms we are proposing will provide students with **more stability and continuity**, increase **opportunities for inclusion** and create **higher-quality programs** that are aligned with district efforts to help all our students reach a high standard.

- **Fewer transitions**

These reforms will finally make it possible for students with substantial disabilities to stay in one place, in classes at their own grade level, supported by experts and professionals who are highly trained in their specific challenge area. In the short-term, this means some students will move to different schools this fall. This is a necessary move that allows us to create a long-term solution.

- **Schools closer to home**

More special education students will attend schools in their home zones.

- **Improved services**

Through a renewed focus on addressing academic outcomes and the hopes and aspirations of families, BPS is putting the emphasis on what students need and families want.

Highly specialized strands will replace isolated and discontinuous substantially separate classes

This will allow students with disabilities to move from grade to grade within a single school, supported by highly trained, specialized staff. This provides predictability for families and replaces the old system, in which students often moved to different schools each year based on staffing availability and space.

Students will have more inclusive settings and services

We will add a small number of new inclusive schools this year, with more coming on-line in the future. This process requires a gradual implementation so schools and staff are prepared to provide quality services.

ETF and City-Wide ETF positions will be restructured

ETF positions will be replaced with new school-based "Coordinators of Special Education and Student Services," who will assist principals and headmasters in ensuring that schools have the right tools and training for quality student outcomes, family engagement, and regulatory compliance.

Special education administrative positions will be restructured

We will clarify the responsibility of OSESS for developing school-based settings and services, providing guidance and support for schools, and monitoring student outcomes, family engagement, and regulatory compliance.

Private, non-profit providers will be contracted for ABA assessment and direct services

Private and non-profit providers will offer Applied Behavior Analysis services at a higher level of quality and more efficiently.

To read the Council of Great City Schools report, visit www.cgcs.org/pubs/boston_09.pdf