

LEARNING TOGETHER:

Lessons In Inclusive Education In New York City

REPORT OF THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT COALITION
New York, New York
October 2002

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Member Organizations: Advocates for Children of New York, inc.; Association for the Help of Retarded Children; Bronx Legal Services; Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc.; The Cooke Center for Learning and Development; The Learning Disabilities Association of New York City; The Legal Aid Society Juvenile Rights Division; Legal Services for Children, Inc.; MFY Legal Services, Inc.; New Alternatives for Children, Inc.; New York Lawyers for the Public Interest; New York Legal Assistance Group; New York State Protection and Advocacy Program for the Developmentally Disabled; Queens Legal Services Corp.; Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.; The Metropolitan Parent Center of Sinergia, Inc.; South Brooklyn Legal Services.

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Who We Are

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Coalition is made up of seventeen groups serving New York City school children. Our member agencies are: Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.; Association for the Help of Retarded Children; Bronx Legal Services, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc.; the Cooke Center for Learning and Development; the Learning Disabilities Association of New York City; the Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Division; Legal Services for Children, Inc.; MFY Legal Services, Inc.; New Alternatives for Children of New York, Inc.; New York Lawyers for the Public Interest; New York Legal Assistance Group; New York State Protection and Advocacy Program for the Developmentally Disabled; Queens Legal Services Corporation; Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.; the Metropolitan Parent Center of Sinergia, Inc.; and South Brooklyn Legal Services.

LRE Coalition members advocate on behalf of individual children with disabilities and their families with the New York City Board of Education, the New York State Education Department, and the United States Department of Education to enforce the LRE requirements of New York and federal law. The LRE Coalition was formed in 1999.

The mission of the Coalition is to assure that all students with disabilities are educated in the LRE appropriate for each child so that all students can learn to their fullest capacity. We seek to insure that, whenever appropriate, students with disabilities are provided with the supports, services, and physical accommodations they need to progress in the general education curriculum in general education classes in their neighborhood schools.

Acknowledgments

This report is the product of the LRE Coalition as a whole. Thanks foremost to all the Coalition members who reviewed and contributed to the report. Special thanks must also go to Jacquelyn Kamin who conducted the school visits and spent months writing early drafts for this report, and to Maggie Moroff, Coordinator of the Coalition, who also put in many hours writing and editing this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal and State law mandate that children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) -- that is, alongside their typically developing peers whenever appropriate. But last year, more than half of all students with disabilities in New York City spent most of their time in segregated, special education classrooms, where they had little-to-no contact with their non-disabled peers. Comparison to segregation rates for the country and New York State indicates that New York City is over-segregating its children with special needs. Last year, New York City placed 54% of its children in special education outside the regular classroom for more than 60% of the day. In 1999 38% of children with special needs were placed outside the regular classroom throughout New York State and 24% were so placed nationally.¹

In a time when the nation and state are proclaiming their commitment to improving educational outcomes and opportunities for all children, outcomes for children in segregated special education classrooms remain extremely unsatisfactory. Children in special education classrooms do considerably worse than their peers receiving services in integrated classrooms on standardized testing and graduation rates. The percentage of elementary students with disabilities who attended general education classrooms for 40% or more of the school day, and who scored at least on level 3 (proficient) on the New York State standardized English Language Arts and Mathematics tests was over three times as high as children in more restrictive placements. Less than 9% of children educated in segregated settings graduated after four years, compared to half of all students in general education settings (including both regular education and special education students).² Even after seven years in high school only about a third of the students in self-contained programs had graduated -- half had dropped out.³

School system personnel constantly tell our clients that their children cannot participate in more integrated educational environments because they will not be able to keep pace with the other children. Sometimes they say that the students' needs are simply too great. While inclusion may not be appropriate for all children, parents and advocates and some exceptional educators know that is simply not true for the majority of children with special needs, who can, with appropriate supports and services, succeed in inclusion.

This report, therefore, examines a group of programs in New York City public schools that prove that integration is not only possible but also desirable for children with many different types of disabilities and with differing needs.

From this examination, we propose the following recommendations for achieving greater integration of disabled children into general education classes in New York City public schools.

A. SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS MUST CREATE OPTIMAL CONDITIONS FOR INTEGRATION

1. Reasonable Special Education to General Education Student Ratios are Essential

To succeed, the ratio of children with disabilities to typically developing children in an integrated class should approximate the proportion in which these disabilities occur in the population. Across the country and in New York City children with disabilities represent approximately ten percent of the whole student population. All schools we visited emphasized the value of a heterogeneous class that represents or approximates the occurrence of disabilities in surrounding community.

2. Class Size Must be Reasonable

For integrated classes, smaller is better, particularly in the lower grades. Reasonable class size makes it possible for each child to receive teacher attention. In the successful elementary schools visited, integrated class size ranged from twenty-one to twenty-five students.

3. Planning Must be Flexible and Revisited Repeatedly

Administrators, teachers and parents stress that effective schools perform child-centered, flexible planning. If a child is not receiving appropriate benefit from his/her educational plan, the plan must be revised to provide whatever works. The programs themselves should be regularly re-evaluated and revised to meet the changing needs of the community and/or to try more promising models or techniques.

4. Integrated Programming to Assure Inclusion through the Course of a Student's Education Must be Consistent Throughout the Years

The program must provide appropriate integrated classes and inclusion⁴ opportunities consistently for children as they progress from grade to grade. If a student is educated successfully in inclusion one year, the opportunity must exist in each year that follows for that student.

B. SCHOOLS MUST BUILD STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS

Administrators of effective programs stress the importance of tapping their best teachers and paraprofessionals to work in integrated classes. These classes require teachers and paraprofessionals with talent and a willingness to adapt curriculum and lessons to accommodate children with special needs. To the greatest extent possible, teachers should volunteer to teach these classes. All teachers must receive:

1. Professional Development

All school communities agreed that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in inclusive classrooms need effective professional development. They must learn to identify learning styles and disabilities through classroom observation and use of assessment tools. They need to be able to address different learning needs and styles with research-proven techniques, to manage students' behavior positively, adapt curriculum and lesson delivery to accommodate all learners, and collaborate and develop the roles of each member of the instructional team.

2. Time for Collaborative Planning

Instructional teams must be compensated for meeting outside of school hours or provided classroom coverage by substitute teachers to permit them to meet during school hours.

3. Appropriate Classroom Materials

Schools must provide appropriate classroom materials in order to teach to a wide spectrum of ability levels and learning styles. These materials must include books on different reading levels, assistive technology, and other resources designed to teach students with multiple learning characteristics.

C. SCHOOLS MUST CREATE A “CULTURE OF INCLUSION”

1. Inspire the School Community

In every achieving school visited, parents and school staff stressed that the most important factor for school success was the school community's whole-hearted belief in the philosophy of inclusion. The staff and the parent body must be introduced to the philosophy and benefits of inclusion, how inclusion can be implemented in the school, and the specific services and interventions available at the school. Finally, the school community, especially teachers and students, must also receive disability sensitivity training.

2. Train Planners and Administrators

Effective schools have knowledgeable, dedicated, dynamic leadership. To develop such leadership, principals, Pupil Personnel Teams (PPTs)⁵ and School Leadership Teams (SLTs)⁶ must also receive professional development on the following: the legal requirement to provide mandated services and settings; the benefits of inclusion; the means to create effective models of delivery of services to children with disabilities in the LRE; and research-proven educational methodologies, prevention and intervention techniques.

D. DISTRICTS MUST PROVIDE EFFECTIVE PROGRAM SUPPORT

The effective programs we profile below receive varied levels of support from their school districts. The relatively small District 75 Office of Inclusive Education (OIE)

provides the most comprehensive model we found of district support for inclusion of children with special needs.⁷ OIE effectively creates and maintains programs educating students with the most severe disabilities in their LRE. The Board should consider expanding OIE and allowing other districts to contract with it for support. Alternatively, other school districts should emulate District 75 OIE's multi-level structure of support and one-on-one technical assistance for the instructional teams staffing their inclusive programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Last year, less than half of New York City children receiving special education services who completed high school earned Regents or local high school diplomas.⁸ In 1999-2000, only fifty-one students, less than 0.1% of the nine thousand, one hundred and seventy-three high school age special education students leaving the school system, received Regents diplomas.⁹ Over a third of all students with disabilities over fourteen years old who left special education just dropped out.¹⁰ Others graduated with IEP diplomas. Less than 3% of all school aged children receiving special education services in New York City, regardless of their need category are declassified each year from special education and returned to general education.¹¹ Children educated in segregated special education classrooms fared worst of all. While half of all students in general education settings (including both regular education and special education students) graduated after four years,¹² only about a third of the students in self-contained programs graduated even after seven years in high school. Even worse, half had dropped out.¹³ Too many students get stuck in dead-end self-contained classes, especially minority children.¹⁴ Last year, even with the newly implemented New Continuum of Special Education Services that emphasizes education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (see discussion and definition below), more than half of all students with disabilities spent most of their time in segregated classes or separate settings, despite the acknowledged benefits of learning in integrated classes: increased motivation, higher self-esteem, improved communication and socialization skills, and greater academic achievement.^{15 16}

This woeful record violates the mandate of federal and state law requiring that children with special needs receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), delivered in the LRE.¹⁷ Education in the LRE means that:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled and . . . removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.¹⁸

In June 2000, the New York City Board of Education adopted a new Continuum of Services (the new Continuum) requiring that all students with disabilities be given an appropriate education in the LRE.¹⁹ The Executive Summary to the new Continuum holds the document out as a means of effecting a “vision for a single, seamless and unified service delivery system for all students.” The new Continuum focuses on providing the services each child needs rather than assigning specific disability and program categories. It lays out a more flexible spectrum of options for delivery of services, from pre-referral targeted aids or supports and services for children who remain in the general education classroom, to special self-contained classes for those children who require more individualized and structured settings to learn. Any one of these settings may be the LRE for an individual child depending on the child’s specific needs.

The new Continuum differs from the prior framework in its emphasis on providing services in the LRE. For a child referred to special education, the new Continuum provides a number of ways to serve him or her in the general education environment – either in general education with related services, with special education teacher support, or in a team teaching situation. (See [Appendix A](#) for an outline of service and placement options under the new Continuum.)²⁰

Although the document is a strong step forward, it has been the Least Restrictive Environment Coalition’s experience in the last year that implementation has often been and continues to be problematic. Many children with disabilities were moved into general education classes, without proper supports and services, almost guaranteeing their failure in their new settings. At the same time, other children inappropriately left to languish in segregated settings were just as likely to fail to meet their specific educational needs.

In this report we spotlight several schools offering effective education in the LRE, and draw from them lessons for the rest of the city. We profile five schools offering various models for inclusion of children with special needs in general education: The Children’s School, PS 150 in District 30, PS 229 in District 24, Brooklyn College Academy/P77, and the New York City Lab School. As a model for development and support of inclusive programs, we examine the District 75 OIE, which effectively creates and maintains programs educating students with the most severe disabilities in their LRE.

II. METHODOLOGY

LRE Coalition staff visited the schools selected for study, observed classes, and interviewed principals, teachers, service providers and several special education coordinators. We asked both specific and open-ended questions to elicit candid assessment of the chosen models of service delivery, important reasons for their success, and the educators’ suggestions for creation or improvement of programs to include children with special needs in general education. We spoke to parents of children with special needs about their experience in inclusion classrooms as compared to self-contained, and to parents of typically developing children about their experiences with inclusion classes.

In our study of District 75’s OIE, we interviewed Director Dr. Catherine Rikhye at length on several occasions and reviewed materials her office has provided. We interviewed principals of schools working with OIE about the structure of their inclusion programs and the support OIE provides to them.

Our observations and interviews, supplemented by research on educational practice, have resulted in our recommendations for the NYC public school system as it moves forward in its implementation of the new Continuum and the advancement of the education of all students with special needs in the LRE.

III. SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY

A. THE CHILDRENS' SCHOOL, DISTRICT 15²¹

A Fully Inclusive Elementary School

The Children's School in Brooklyn, a well-established, successful inclusion program, is a collaboration between District 75, a citywide district serving students with some of the more serious special education needs, and Community School District 15. Founded in 1992 with two inclusive pre-kindergartens and two kindergartens, the school has grown incrementally. It now serves students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, educating general education students as well as students with mild, moderate and severe learning, speech and emotional disabilities, autism and mental retardation. The philosophy of inclusion pervades the school; there are no segregated classes. As Principal Lorraine Boyhan explains, "We don't focus on our differences, but our similarities."²²

In a school that itself has been kept small, serving approximately four hundred and fifty students, class size at the Children's School has also been limited. Classes are kept to twenty-five, with eighteen general education and seven special needs children (of whom at least two must be more severely disabled). This ratio, more favorable than the 15:10 ratio recommended by the new Continuum, more closely approximates the natural proportion in which disabilities occur in the general population. All classes but gym are taught with a collaborative team-teaching model employing a full-time general education teacher, a full-time special education teacher, and at least one paraprofessional.²³ The teachers at the school are able simultaneously to support the students' individual learning styles and needs while following a strong standards-based curriculum. To do this, classrooms are well stocked with a variety of age-appropriate reading material on different reading levels to support their Balanced Literacy²⁴ program (using authentic literature rather than basal readers or textbooks). The school also looks at the needs of individual students to provide whatever additional specific instruction they may need, including reading instruction based on phonics and the Orton-Gillingham²⁵ methods.

In addition to the two full-time classroom teachers in each classroom, several cluster teachers provide academic intervention, including individualized assessment, planning and tutoring, both during the school day and through an afterschool program. All these interventions are extraordinary in New York City and provide special needs children with the support and services they need to succeed. General and special education students follow the same curriculum and work on the same projects, at their own level of ability. Children with special needs are accommodated as needed with proper supports or services. They are, for example, given extra time or allowed to use a tape recorder, or assistive technology. When a child's IEP requires additional related services, service providers coordinate with the classroom teachers to decide whether the service will be provided as a push-in service (where the service provider comes into the student's classroom to work with the student there) or as a pull-out service (where the service provider works with the student somewhere other than the regular classroom). All

teachers on a grade level have common planning time three or four times a week, and at least one double period per week.

Parents have been involved in planning and implementing the program from its inception. The school has a well-established School Leadership Team and an active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). It also has an open school policy, encouraging parents to come visit and volunteer in the school. Parents respond. They are extremely active as volunteers in the school and they participate in workshops and programs at the school. One parent praised the focus on each child as an individual: "It's almost like each child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); each child has his own personal goals."²⁶ Others appreciate the social skills their children are learning: "The kids grow up with one another; they're friends. They're very accepting."²⁷

The school has been remarkably successful in meeting the needs of all students, with and without special needs. Many more parents apply to the school for their children than the school can accommodate. There is very little attrition of students. Teacher turnover rate is also quite low. The school has attracted attention and won grants and valuable partnerships from such places as the Brooklyn Museum, the New York City Ballet, and the Metropolitan Opera.

The school's commitment to full inclusion has been extremely successful in very measurable and concrete terms. Most impressive, student achievement demonstrates the Children's School's success. Both special education and general education students in the school's all-inclusive classes score very high relative to other schools in their districts.²⁸ Special needs students in inclusion classes score very high compared to students in segregated classrooms from the Citywide District 75.²⁹ On the state fourth grade English Language Arts and Mathematics tests, Children's School students outperform their peers in Community School District 15 and District 75.³⁰

B. PS 150 QUEENS, DISTRICT 30

Elementary School Offering Monolingual and Bilingual Inclusion Programs

PS 150 has children from 70 different countries, who speak 40 different languages.³¹ State and local agencies have commended the school as highly effective. The Board of Education has specifically recognized the school for effective practices in inclusion.

Principal Gloria Guzman relates that in 1993 the school was asked by Community School District 30 to pilot a bilingual (English/Spanish) inclusion program integrating English Language Learner students with disabilities into general education classrooms, something that still is a rarity anywhere in NYC's school system. The principal, together with an onsite special education supervisor, received funds through a grant from the Fund for the City of New York to District 30, which supported professional development, training, speakers and on-site staff development for four years. The grant made it possible for Ms. Guzman and inclusion teachers from the school to visit other successful inclusion

schools. They exchanged teachers for a week with the Children's School, discussed above. Ms. Guzman coordinated with New Visions for Public Schools, an organization that works with the public and private sectors to develop programs and policies to energize teaching and learning and raise levels of student achievement.³² Ms. Guzman describes the professional development they received as "very exciting, not the norm."³³ PS 150 has also sent a number of teachers to schools such as New York University, St. John's, and Teacher's College for further training, often on the teachers' own time.

PS 150 began its inclusion program with a kindergarten and first grade. They have since added a pre-kindergarten class and each year have extended the program to include second through fifth grade classes as the children aged up. Each of these classes is bilingual. In the first year of inclusion, PS 150 moved a whole self-contained special education class into a team taught class. In September 2001, the school added monolingual inclusion classes for first and second grade and they plan to expand those classes in the coming years.

Each inclusion class at PS 150 has fifteen general education and ten special education students (including, so far, the physically challenged, learning disabled, emotionally disabled and hearing impaired), team-taught by one general education and one special education teacher full-time.

The school combines all available resources to provide the support the student needs. For example, they use the Title 1 reading teachers and money to support all students. The Pupil Personnel Committee devises a program of Educationally Related Support Services, including counseling, to avoid referral to special education for any child with behavior problems sitting in a general education or a team-taught class. Classes are furnished with materials to meet a wide spectrum of student skill and need levels.

Until recently Ms. Guzman relied upon a paraprofessional in every one of her inclusion classes. This was particularly successful as the school uses the Success for All and Early Success literacy programs, which provide materials that can be used quite effectively by paraprofessionals. This year, however, Ms. Guzman had to pull those paraprofessionals from the classrooms due to budget cuts. Now classes have only IEP-mandated paraprofessionals and "it's difficult to get them on IEPs now."³⁴ The loss of those critical support staff regrettably weakens the classes.

To help the inclusion programs in District 30 run as smoothly as possible, the district employs a special education supervisor who supervises the teachers and meets with the principal to discuss what needs to be done. The special education supervisor plays a critical role by providing on-site oversight and professional development for teachers and by reviewing all of the children's IEPs to ensure the students actually receive needed services and are placed appropriately.

Principal Guzman says that in selecting the teachers for inclusion classes, principals must look for receptivity to the philosophy; "It takes a very special teacher to do team teaching."³⁵ She cautions that principals must provide time and training for staff,

including professional development in collaborative planning, positive behavior intervention and effective literacy pedagogy. Ms. Guzman strongly urges that schools allow their staff time for collaborative planning and review of children's IEPs and performance, intra-school staff development, and visitation between schools.

C. PS 229 QUEENS, DISTRICT 24

An Elementary School Using Diverse Models of Inclusion

PS 229 focuses on literacy and the arts across the curriculum and offers a variety of inclusion programs that integrate special education students into general education classrooms. The school's success with including students has been well recognized. As with PS 150 just discussed, the Board of Education has selected PS 229 to receive a grant based upon effective practices in inclusion of students with disabilities.³⁶ Principal Rita Silverman describes this elementary school's philosophy as "All kids belong here."³⁷

The school now has fourteen inclusion classes, using many different models of class configuration: an inclusion third grade class team-taught during the first half of the day, then broken into two groups for the second half, each teacher taking a group; a team-taught fifth grade class capped at twenty-five students (compared to general education classes which are up to thirty-two) and four fifth grade general education classes that each include several children with disabilities (totaling ten), with the special education teacher going into each class for some time each day and pulling all the children with disabilities out for one period for special work.

The school has implemented a number of models of integrating children with special needs into general education classrooms in an effort to find what works best for the students. For example, they tried a mainstreaming model, placing three children from a self-contained special education class in a general education class for one period per day during a subject suited to their skill levels. However, teachers found that those students receiving special education services did not feel that they were part of the class when they joined for only part of the day, even when they were at the same academic level as some of the general education students in the class. The school then changed to an inclusion model, by dividing the students of a self-contained class of seven-year-old students with mild disabilities into two second grade inclusion classes, with a ratio in each of sixteen general education students to five special education students. A special education teacher experienced in team-teaching taught one class; a general education teacher with a hands-on style taught the other. In selecting the students for these classes, they aimed to create heterogeneous classes.

The principal plans next to try placing individual children with special needs in a general education class, with push-in services as needed. The school still maintains four self-contained classes with twelve students, one teacher, and one paraprofessional for students who range from having mild learning disabilities to moderate mental retardation. Only if a child in one of the inclusive classes exhibits behavior so severe that neither a Functional

Behavior Plan³⁸ nor the additional support provided by a crisis management paraprofessional is sufficient, will the child be moved back to a self-contained classroom.

Teachers volunteer to teach the inclusion classes. They get a paid one-week internship during the summer and one paid professional conference a year. The teachers have been given common preparatory times to do collaborative planning. Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)³⁹ money that flows through the District pays them to meet before and after school as well. An inclusion facilitator from the district office meets with the teachers weekly in the school and monthly at the district office. Paraprofessionals are included in all staff development. The school uses funds from their district for inclusion classes to provide classroom materials for a wide spectrum of skill levels. They have developed extensive classroom libraries supporting their Readers Workshop literacy program.

Principal Silverman believes class size and quality of teaching is critical. She says that behavior problems dissipate with good instruction, both structured and flexible. She gives the example of one child in a self-contained third grade class with serious behavior problems whose misbehavior stopped once he was placed in general education. Before school each morning he received additional tutoring in the Orton-Gillingham method, a multi-sensory reading program. Often by successfully teaching students with dyslexia to read, specific reading programs like the Orton-Gillingham method also successfully lessen a young person's frustration level in school and consequently alleviate related consequential problematic behavior at school. That is exactly what happened in this case. The teacher who provided the tutoring was a special education teacher already in the cafeteria during that time supervising her own class' breakfast. The following year the child received only Resource Room services, and now in the fifth grade "he's really on grade level."⁴⁰

Like the previous schools discussed, PS 229's success is well documented. In 2001, PS 229 students outperformed their peers in District 24 on the State standardized assessments.⁴¹

D. BROOKLYN COLLEGE ACADEMY AND P77, ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT 75

Inclusion of Autistic Students in an Alternative High School

For the past six years Brooklyn College Academy (BCA) has collaborated with District 75 in a program that includes six students with autism in the classes and culture of an alternative high school that provides a college preparatory academic program. The curriculum is modified to accommodate the individual special needs of its students with autism -- students with neurological disorders that affect their ability to communicate, understand language, and relate to others.

BCA's relatively small school size and small class size (averaging twenty-five) allow familiarity between teachers and students. In pairs, the students with autism spend

almost all of their school day in general education classes, accompanied by a paraprofessional. A speech and language therapist comes once a week to work with the students and their teachers. Amy Salant, their special education class teacher, meets with each pair and their paraprofessional four times a week, and with the group as a whole in a self-contained special class another four periods a week. With Ms. Salant the students work on foundation skills such as reading and writing, and also have student-driven open discussions about sexuality and social behavior, for example.

The students in this program are learning to function independently in the world around them. Their goal is to transition to employment or supported employment. All students at BCA, including those with autism, are expected to come independently to school on time and dressed appropriately. During their time in general education classes, the autistic students learn to model their behavior on that of the non-autistic students. In their special class time they discuss what is and is not socially acceptable. The children are progressing dramatically in writing, reading and handling money. These gains extend beyond the school. Parents report that their children speak better, relate better, and are more independent since entering the inclusion program. They are all now travel-trained and able to move to and from school on public transportation. On Thanksgiving one of the students gave thanks for being able to travel by himself saying, "I'm thankful that now I feel like a real person."⁴²

The Board of Education uses New York State's Alternative Assessments to evaluate the progress of these special students. The students are exempted from Regents and certain other exams and held accountable to the specific goals and objectives on their IEP. They graduate with an IEP diploma, stating that they have met the specific academic goals laid out for them in their IEPs. Unfortunately, most colleges do not admit graduates with IEP diplomas, despite the fact that students with autism often are exceptionally skilled in discrete areas. For example, one student taught Ms. Salant how to use Excel to make a spreadsheet. "I no longer say these kids can't do -- they have proved to me time and time again that they can."⁴³

Student portfolios and parent reports document how the program has resulted in significant student achievement in the areas of comprehension, attention span, communication and behavior. This year the program has its first two graduates; one already has a job and the other is seeking supported employment. The New York State Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities recognized the program as a model of effective practices in inclusive education.⁴⁴

Ms. Salant offered a number of suggestions for creating inclusion programs. In addition to those highlighted earlier in discussions of other successful inclusion program, she urges that administrators make certain to: provide sensitivity training to promote acceptance of inclusion of students with disabilities; assure that the paraprofessionals for the program are comfortable with the curriculum and that they themselves have good language skills to aid language-impaired students; and, critically, inform parents of children with special needs of their rights and of the resources available to them to

participate effectively in planning for the child's transition to the world after high school, and to support the programs' efforts when their children are home.

E. THE NEW YORK CITY LAB SCHOOL FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION ("THE UPPER LAB SCHOOL"), MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL

Rigorous Academic Sixth through Twelfth Grade Program Including Children with Disabilities

The Upper Lab School serves grades six through twelve. Its curriculum is highly rigorous, and is aimed towards a Regents diploma. The school is committed to including children with learning disabilities throughout their program. About a third of their eleventh graders, including students with special needs, will achieve regular high school diplomas.

The Upper Lab School made its first foray into inclusion when it admitted a few children with serious emotional disabilities who were formerly educated in self-contained classes into their general education high school program. The classes are as large as forty, including six children with disabilities. Because many self-contained classes fail to adhere to the general education curriculum, the school found the academic deficits some children came in with after so many years in self-contained classes were simply too great to accommodate. The high school uses modified inclusion to meet diverse needs. The eleventh grade class, weak in verbal skills, still goes to a self-contained English class. Individual students who can handle a particular subject are mainstreamed into that general education class.

While the high school students have made progress, the school leadership decided that it would be better to begin the inclusion program in the sixth grade rather than the ninth grade to allow more time for skill-building and give greater coherence to the program. In the 2001-02 school year, the school added two sixth grade inclusion classes, each with twenty-four general education children and four to six children with learning disabilities who were formerly educated in self-contained classes. The students included in those sixth grade classes will continue to be educated in inclusion as they advance to and through high school.

The sixth grade special education teachers maintain a common classroom, open to any sixth grader, in which students can find copies of the material covered in their classes, prepare for quizzes, and take tests with extended time. Principal Sheila Breslow asserts, "At lunch the room is flooded."⁴⁵

The children with disabilities placed in the Upper Lab School's inclusion classes are selected for their desire to work in groups, following the Upper Lab School's philosophy of collaborative education. They are team-taught in the curriculum areas of math, science, humanities and global studies by one special education teacher and one general education teacher. In the classroom the special education teacher works with the general

education teacher to deliver content in a way that accommodates the needs of all students. He/she keeps track of the attention and engagement level of children with special needs and modifies their lessons as necessary.

A critical component of the school's success at including students with special needs is an after school class taught twice a week by a special education teacher to provide the students with additional skills development.

Principal Breslow stresses the importance of selecting talented teachers for the inclusion program: "Put your best teaching team on the inclusion level, then have the rest of the staff visit the class and learn from them."⁴⁶

Based on the Upper Lab School's experience, Ms. Breslow identified many of the same top priorities for successful inclusion programming as leaders of other schools highlighted in this report. Ms. Breslow stresses, in particular, training for all teachers in skills necessary for sharing classroom authority, and in identifying and teaching students with different learning styles. Further, Ms. Breslow urges that schools create support for inclusion among teachers and parents by reassuring them that the inclusion class will not fail for all the students placed there, and, in fact, will result in more enrichment for everyone. Well-planned and executed, a strong inclusion program will engender good will on the part of the entire school community.

F. LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Create A Culture Of Inclusion

In every achieving school visited, parents and school staff all stressed that the most important factor for the school's success was their community's whole-hearted belief in the philosophy of inclusion of children with special needs.

- Staff, parents and students should receive sensitivity training to increase awareness of the abilities of children with disabilities.
- Professional development must be given to all staff and the parent body explaining the philosophy of inclusion and how it is or will be implemented in the school;

2. Importance Of The Principal

To lead a school community to embrace the new paradigm of inclusive education, a school needs a talented, dedicated principal.⁴⁷ The effective programs we visited are all led by principals or directors who are:

- True believers in inclusive education;
- Actively involved with their teachers in both teaching and learning;
- Comfortable trying new techniques and accepting challenges.

3. Support For The Instructional Team

Every member of the instructional teams working in inclusion must receive adequate professional development and support from their schools and their districts in order to make inclusion successful.

- All instructional staff needs professional development in identifying and addressing different learning styles, modifying curriculum to accommodate special needs, and positive behavior management;
- Teachers of general education classes working collaboratively with full-time special education teachers or part-time with Special Education Teacher Support (SETS)⁴⁸ need additional professional development regarding techniques of collaboration;
- Teachers working collaboratively as team teachers or with SETS teachers need time outside of the classroom for collaborative planning;
- Classrooms need appropriate materials to reach students with a wide spectrum of ability levels.

V. EFFECTIVE PRACTICE ON THE DISTRICT LEVEL

District 75's Office of Inclusive Education (OIE) is widely praised for its support for the inclusive programs it maintains in collaboration with community school districts in public schools. These programs permit children with severe disabilities to receive an appropriate education in a less restrictive environment. District 75 does not yet have collaborative inclusion programs with every community school district, but the initiative has expanded greatly in the last six years. As of March 30, 2002, one thousand, two hundred and fifty-eight District 75 students were being served in inclusive general education classrooms supported by OIE.⁴⁹ Tens of thousands of children with disabilities attend non-District 75 programs, many of them in segregated classes. However, there is nothing like OIE's model of support for these children.

A. PROGRAM MODEL

OIE's programs range from full-time inclusion in programs like the Children's School, to part-time inclusion of selected students from self-contained classes located in general education schools. But OIE's most common inclusion model, often referred to as "the District 75 model of inclusion," involves moving two children with disabilities into a general education class with a full-time paraprofessional and a part-time District 75 special education teacher (called a Methods and Resources, or M&R teacher, and who resembles the SETS teacher discussed above). This model reflects the natural proportion of students with disabilities in the school population in each of these inclusion classes. These classes are often begun in school buildings in which District 75 was already running one or more self-contained classes.⁵⁰

In the OIE model, the general education teacher bears responsibility for the education of all students in the class, but collaborates with the paraprofessional and M&R teacher to make certain that all of the students' needs are met. The M&R teacher supports six to

eight District 75 children in three or four different classes. The M&R teacher plans with the general education teachers, adapts the curriculum, works with small groups of children, and provides classroom coverage as needed.

The classroom paraprofessional works with both teachers; he/she assists in curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and small group work. Parents and teachers insist that the paraprofessional is the most important element of the model. District 75 trains paraprofessionals along with teachers to handle different learning styles and challenging behaviors.

The building principal from the local community school and the District 75 principal collaborate to plan these inclusion classes. District 75 principals stress the importance of establishing a strong relationship with the general education school community because, at present, “District 75 is the asking party” in the development of inclusion classes.⁵¹ One principal described developing relationships with general education schools as a process of integrating children part-time, on a selective basis, in particular subjects suitable to their skills.⁵² Another invited reluctant general education teachers and parents to visit an existing program to allay their concerns.⁵³ Principals recommend sensitivity training for general educators and students to establish a welcoming climate for including children with disabilities.

B. SUPPORT FROM DISTRICT 75’S OFFICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (OIE)

We frequently hear from teachers who originally feared working in inclusive classrooms, but after a year, working in collaboration with District 75’s OIE and OIE’s inclusion facilitators, turned their hesitations to unqualified support. General education schools and teachers that include children with disabilities cite significant benefits to opening up inclusion classes in their schools.

OIE’s four borough-wide inclusion facilitators provide assistance to schools starting up inclusion classes in a number of ways. They provide professional development for staff, specific technical assistance to all members of the instructional teams, and they work with parents to involve them in every aspect of the inclusion process. Each of these three areas is described below in more detail.

1. Professional Development

District 75 trains its M&R teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the needs of students with disabilities before assigning them to classrooms. OIE provides citywide, borough-wide and school-based trainings. The OIE facilitators provide further professional development for the instructional team (both team teachers, the class paraprofessional and service providers). Training topics are highly focused. They include: the philosophy and vision of inclusive classrooms; adapting and modifying curriculum; positive behavior approaches; teaming and collaboration; and techniques of encouraging peer relationships.⁵⁴

Instructional teams can also call on staff developers at the district office who provide specialized training. For example, specialists provide training about positive behavior supports, which are critical because poor behavior, rather than poor academic skills, often cause a student's failure to progress in inclusion.

District 75 supports intervisitation between experienced and novice M&R teachers by providing teachers with guidance, time and class coverage. OIE matches new M&R teachers with experienced M&R teachers for peer tutoring and site visits.⁵⁵ The District recommends maintaining a cadre of trained substitute teachers to allow teachers to visit other classrooms, following New York University's Professional Development Laboratory model.⁵⁶

In addition, OIE holds an annual conference on strategies for successful inclusion for general and special education administrators, instructional staff, related service providers, paraprofessionals, parents, and agency and university personnel.

2. Technical Assistance

In addition to providing professional development on all levels of the system facilitators provide at-the-elbow expert technical assistance and mentoring to all members of the instructional teams serving inclusion classes, as well as to parents of children with disabilities.⁵⁷ These facilitators are successful because they: respond to questions of instructional team-members; offer direction based on years of training and experience; lead monthly meetings of all the borough's M&R teachers to share effective practices; refer children who would benefit from inclusion to appropriate programs; identify principals and teachers receptive to inclusion; chart students' progress in inclusion programs, and the success of the programs; mediate disputes between principals, teachers and/or parents; and monitor and encourage the growth of inclusion in their borough.

3. Parental Involvement

Informed, involved parents are critical to the success of the inclusion class. Parents are best positioned to monitor a child's progress and comfort level with the class. They can suggest strategies to the teacher. They can advocate for their child's rights and academic needs. To that end, OIE educates parents in the philosophy and practice of inclusion by inviting them to most of its professional development programs and offering convenient community workshops. The facilitators reach out to parents, serving as sources of information and buffers between them and an often-indifferent school system. In contrast, few community school districts provide such support to parents, thus wasting an untapped resource.

Parents praise the OIE-supported schools. Sandra Siguenza believes that three years of inclusion at P.S. 139 in Queens has "made a world of difference" for her 10 year old son, who has serious disabilities.⁵⁸ He is now just a year behind grade level in math and is

“writing beautifully.”⁵⁹ With accommodations such as extended time and the use of a calculator, he recently passed one of the citywide tests, something unimaginable before.

Still, the success of inclusion cannot be measured only by an improvement in grades or standardized test scores: Individual progress, increased motivation, higher self-esteem, and improved communication and socialization skills are far better criteria. Nora Cohen says that two years in inclusive classes at the Louis Armstrong Middle School, I.S. 227 in Queens have provided her son with “an unbelievable experience.”⁶⁰ Though he is not able to do everything, he is making progress and is happy in his class. This year he performed in a talent show, for which he auditioned with everybody else.⁶¹

C. LESSONS FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM THE OFFICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

These programs work because District 75 inclusion classes are nurtured from their inception.

- District 75 principals create enthusiasm for inclusion among general education educators and handpick the right teachers for their classes;
- The M&R teachers and paraprofessionals provide well-trained support;
- OIE provides on-going, focused professional development to all teachers, paraprofessionals, service providers and parents; and
- As issues arise, the facilitators are available to trouble-shoot.

Districts and schools creating or expanding inclusion programs should emulate the OIE’s multi-level structure of support, focused and effective system of professional development, and its commitment to on-going technical assistance for inclusion class instructional teams, principals, and parents of included children.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The effective programs that currently exist in New York City demonstrate just some of the ways schools can create and support inclusion classes that provide an appropriate education in the LRE. The District 75 Office of Inclusive Education illustrates how to support such programs on a system-wide basis. From these models, we draw our recommendations for delivery of quality education to all our children, with and without disabilities, in their LRE. Thus, we offer the following recommendations:

A. DISTRICTS MUST ENSURE THAT THE NEW CONTINUUM IS FULLY IMPLEMENTED

1. All Districts Must Provide a Full Spectrum of Service and Placement Options:

Most children with special needs can be educated in general education classrooms with appropriate supports and services in classes like those described in this report. Districts

must be required to provide a full spectrum of the placement options described in the New Continuum to meet the needs of their population from year to year.

2. Districts Must Enforce Students' Individual Education Programs:

An IEP is meaningless if not enforced. Therefore, effective programs require that a staff member at the district level, like the special education coordinator in District 30 described earlier in this report, oversees individual cases to ensure that IEP placements and services are provided.

B. SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS MUST CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION

1. Schools Must Prepare for Inclusion at All Grades

No child thriving in an inclusion class should be told that his/her school will not offer an inclusion class on the next grade level and that he/she will have to choose between being placed in a segregated class or being moved to another school.

According to principals and teachers in effective inclusion programs, children gain independence every year that they are in an inclusion class. Therefore, if a school is not going to create inclusion classes on every grade level at once, but wishes to start small, the school should create inclusion classes at the earliest grades of the school.

2. Special Education Services must be Reviewed Regularly

Effective schools perform child-centered, flexible planning. All interested parties (parents, special and general education teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers) must review the child's progress regularly to monitor the effectiveness of the pedagogy, services, and interventions given to that child. If he/she is not receiving appropriate benefit from his/her educational plan, it must be revised. In addition, the programs themselves should be regularly re-evaluated and revised to meet the changing needs of the community and/or to try more promising models or techniques.

3. Extra Time for Collaboration is Essential

The instructional teams, teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers need extra time for collaborative planning to discuss their students' progress. Team members should be compensated for any meeting time they spend outside of school hours. In the alternative, qualified substitute teachers should provide classroom coverage to permit classroom personnel and service providers time to meet during school hours.

4. Reasonable Special Education to General Education Student Ratios Should be Enforced

The ratio of children with disabilities to typically developing children in an inclusion class should approximate the natural proportions in which these disabilities occur in the general population. Thus, very few children with severe disabilities should make up the special education component of an inclusion class. Rather, there should be a somewhat greater proportion of children with mild to moderate disabilities.⁶² In any case, the ratio of special education students to general education students in a collaborative team-teaching class must be no higher than forty percent, as described in the New Continuum, but ideally should be lower, as in the Children's School. Moreover, the children counted toward the percentage of typically developing children in the class should not be children who are struggling in school; a class consisting solely of at-risk children and children with disabilities is unworkable.

5. Class Size Must be Limited for All Inclusion Classes

Even more so than in general education classes, smaller is better for inclusion classes, particularly in the lower grades. In the successful elementary schools visited, principals were adamant that inclusion classes be kept small enough for each child to receive teacher attention. In these schools, inclusion class size ranged from twenty-one to twenty-five students.

C. DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS MUST PROVIDE NECESSARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. For the School Community

The one factor most critical to the successful schools we visited was the whole-hearted support for the philosophy of inclusion of all children at the school.

This will not result from a single day's presentation of the New Continuum, which is the extent of training that most teachers have received up to now. To instill a philosophy of inclusion of children with special needs, parents and school staff all must understand and trust the school's plan for support and development of all children at the school. The entire community, staff and the parent body, must be introduced to the philosophy and benefits of inclusion. They need to be told specifically how inclusion will be implemented in their schools. They must know the services and interventions available at their neighborhood schools. Also important, the entire community, including students, must receive sensitivity training.

2. For the Instructional Team

To meet the needs of all children in the classroom, all teachers and paraprofessionals need effective professional development. They must learn to identify learning styles and disabilities through classroom observation and use of assessment tools. They must be able to employ research-proven techniques of addressing different learning styles.⁶³ They must learn to modify the curriculum and its delivery to accommodate all learners, to use positive behavior management,⁶⁴ and to read, understand and implement IEPs.⁶⁵ All

teachers and other in-class professionals, including those doing team-teaching and those working cooperatively with SETS or M&R teachers, must receive training to develop their roles in the classroom and collaborate with the other providers in the classroom.⁶⁶

3. For Administrators

Finally, school and district administrators also require specific training to make inclusion work. Principals, Pupil Personnel Teams and School Leadership Teams must learn how to create effective models of delivery of services to children with disabilities in the LRE. They should receive instruction in how to utilize and access available resources (staff, materials, and trainings) to provide research-proven educational methodologies, prevention and intervention techniques and mandated services and settings.

D. ALL DISTRICTS SHOULD FOLLOW THE DISTRICT 75 MODEL OF PROGRAM SUPPORT

Finally, other school districts should emulate District 75 OIE's multi-level structure of support and one-on-one technical assistance for the instructional teams staffing their inclusive programs with district level staff developers.

Districts must provide inclusion facilitators who can offer direct support to the instructional team, and provide ongoing, expert technical assistance and mentoring. The facilitators must be responsible for providing general trainings on the philosophy and practice of inclusion, as well as on topics suggested directly by the expressed and observed needs of teachers.

Districts must ensure that trained paraprofessionals are available, as needed, to assist in the classroom.

Lastly, districts must provide time and class coverage by trained substitute teachers in order to facilitate for intervisitation between experienced and novice inclusion class teachers.

VII. CONCLUSION

By law, and pursuant to best practice, all students with disabilities must be educated in the LRE. They must be given the opportunity to learn to their fullest capacity alongside their more typically developing peers. If the recommendations we have made in this report are implemented by schools and districts as greater numbers of inclusion programs are initiated and expanded under the New Continuum, we believe that all children, with and without disabilities, will be best served.

SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS UNDER NEW YORK CITY'S CONTINUUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In June 2000 The New York City Board of Education adopted a new Continuum of Services for Students with Disabilities. That document is a menu of services designed to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Required by law to educate all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, the City developed the Continuum to assure that any child who can learn in a general education class with supports and services will be. The Continuum also provides that children who can't learn in a general education classroom, even with supports and services, have available a spectrum of increasingly restrictive placements in which they can also receive services specially designed to meet their individual needs.

On these pages is an outline prepared by the LRE Coalition outlining the various special education services that will be available for students as they transition from preschool to school aged programs under the Board of Education's newly revised Continuum of Services for Students with Disabilities.

STRATEGIES AND SERVICES TO MAINTAIN STUDENTS IN GENERAL EDUCATION

If you're child is in general education and not receiving special education services his/her school must provide services to attempt avoid unnecessary or inappropriate referrals to special education. Specifically, each school must establish a Pupil Personnel Team (PPT), a committee responsible for the review, and evaluation of the needs of specific students having difficulty in general education. PPTs (in coordination with School Based Support Teams) work to identify and provide services and interventions for students having difficulty in an effort to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate referrals for special education services.

It's important to note that parents seeking to have their child evaluated immediately for special education services can refer their child at any time, and the PPTs cannot be used as a precondition for referral.

Services the PPT may recommend include, but are not limited to:

- **Educationally related support services**
- **Reading interventions**
- **Remedial instruction**
- **Behavioral support, and**
- **Social skills programs.**

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: Advocates for Children of New York Inc., Association for the Help of Retarded Children, Bronx Legal Services, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Inc., The Cooke Center for Learning and Development, The Learning Disabilities Association of New York City, The Legal Aid Society Juvenile Rights Division, Legal Services for Children Inc., MFY Legal Services Inc., New Alternatives for Children Inc., New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, New York Legal Assistance Group, New York State Commission on the Quality of Care, Queens Legal Services Corp., Resources for Children with Special Needs Inc., Sinergia Inc., South Brooklyn Legal Services.

Students with disabilities educated in any setting, may be provided with the following services as long as they are specifically identified on the IEP.

1. GENERAL EDUCATION WITH RELATED SERVICES

Related services are developmental, corrective and other support services required to help a student with a disability to benefit from instruction in the general education curriculum in general education classes.

These related services may include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling
- Hearing education services
- Occupational therapy
- Orientation and mobility services
- Physical therapy
- School health services
- Speech/language therapy
- Vision education services, and
- Other support services which include paraprofessional support services, sign language and oral interpreters, and
- cued speech transliterators.

Other support services that can be provided to children throughout the Continuum include, but are not limited to:

- Assistive technology devices
- Specific instructional practices
- Behavior intervention plans
- Instructional adaptations
- Curriculum modifications
- Adaptive physical education
- Travel training; and
- Toilet training.

Related services can also be provided as a support for the each of the following options under the Continuum, and are not limited to general education with related services.

2. GENERAL EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER SUPPORT SERVICES

(Formerly Consultant Teacher and Resource Room)

Special Education Teacher Support Services are specially designed, supplemental instruction provided by a special education teacher. That teacher may work directly with a student with a disability to support participation in a general education classroom, and/or indirectly with the student's general education teacher to adjust the learning environment and/or modify and adapt instructional techniques and methods to meet the student's individual needs. Special education teacher support services may be provided for as few as two hours a week and as much as 50% of each day.

3. COLLABORATIVE TEAM TEACHING

In Collaborative Team Teaching classrooms students with disabilities and general education students are educated together with a full-time general education teacher and a full-time special education teacher who collaborate throughout the day. The special education teacher in the class works to adapt and modify instruction for the students with special needs. The general education teacher is responsible for assuring the entire class has access to the general education curriculum.

←-----SPECIAL CLASS SERVICES -----→

Special Class Services are services provided for children with special needs in a self-contained classroom without general education students. They may be provided part-time or full-time, and in community school districts and high schools or in specialized schools

4. GENERAL EDUCATION PART-TIME AND SPECIAL CLASS SUPPORT PART-TIME
5. SPECIAL CLASS FULL-TIME IN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS/HIGH SCHOOLS
6. SPECIAL CLASS FULL-TIME IN SPECIALIZED SCHOOL (District 75)
7. STATE SUPPORTED/OPERATED SCHOOLS AND SED APPROVED NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS
8. HOME/HOSPITAL INSTRUCTION (temporary)

SPECIAL CLASS SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

Students will no longer be categorized as needing Modified Instructional Services (MIS) or Specialized Instructional Environments (SIE) as they were under the old Continuum, but some children will continue to require more individualized and structured, self-contained settings. **Students must be grouped for these self-contained special class services by similarity of educational needs.** Classes may contain students with the same disability or with different disabilities as long as they have similar education needs. As noted above, special classes may be located in Community School Districts and High Schools, Specialized Schools, or State Supported/Operated Schools and SED Approved Non-Public Schools.

Below are descriptions of the different student/staff ratios for special classes under the new Continuum.

Special Class Ratio 12:1 (elementary and junior/middle school) 15:1 (High School) **(Primarily for generalized instruction in a self-contained setting)**

A placement for students with **academic and/or behavior management needs** who require **specialized instruction** that can best be accomplished in a self-contained setting.

Special Class Ratio 12:1:1 **(Primarily for generalized instruction in a self-contained setting)**

A placement for students requiring **specialized instruction** that can best be accomplished in a self-contained setting **and** requires **additional adult support** due to **academic and/or behavioral management needs**.

Special Class Ratio 8:1:1

A placement for students requiring highly **individualized** instruction and intervention, intensive **behavior management**, and **adult supervision**.

Special Class Ratio 6:1:1

A placement for students who require intense **individual** programming, continual **adult supervision** and **specific behavior management plans for aggressive, self-abusive behaviors**.

Special Class Ratio 12:1:4

A placement for students with multiple disabilities needing a program primarily of habilitation and treatment.

←-----OTHER SERVICES-----→

TWELVE-MONTH SCHOOL YEAR SERVICES

Students with disabilities educated in any setting, may be provided with extended school year services if the IEP determines they are at risk of substantial regression during the summer months.

TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Transitional support services, such as consultation and or training may be provided for a short period of time to staff working with students with disabilities as they move from self-contained settings to less restrictive classrooms.

DECLASSIFICATION SUPPORT SERVICES

When a student is recommended for decertification from special education, support services may be provided for up to one additional year to help the student transition from special program to a general education. Declassification support services must be indicated on the IEP that recommends decertification.

Declassification support services may include, but are not limited to:

- Services that provide instructional support or remediation
- Instructional modifications
- Individual and/or group speech/language services, and
- Individual and/or group counseling.

ENDNOTES

¹ OSERS Twenty-Third Annual Report to Congress, at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/OSEP2001AnlRpt/Appendix_A_Pt1.pdf, PD -4 form for 2000-2001, and VESID report to the Bd of Regents on Special Ed. Data (April 2002).

² Only 2.3% of segregated District 75 students (who have more serious disabilities) graduated after four years. New York City Board of Education, The Class of 2001 Four-Year Longitudinal Report and 2000-2001 Event Dropout Rates, p. 20 (March 2002).

³ New York City Board of Education, The Class of 1998: Final Longitudinal Report: A Three-Year Follow-Up Study, p. 11 (March, 2002) at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/reports/Class%20of%201998.pdf>.

⁴ Inclusion is a term often used to describe a method of educating children in need of special education in a general education classroom in the school they would have attended if not disabled, with age appropriate peers, and with appropriate supports and services. An inclusive placement for a child may mean one of many things. The child may either be placed in a general education classroom with related services and other supports and services, including, but not limited to paraprofessional, and/or special education teacher support. S/he may also be placed in a team teaching classroom with a full time general education teacher and a full time special education teacher working collaboratively with all members of the class, including children receiving special education services and their more typically developing peers.

⁵ Pupil Personnel Teams are standing committees within each school charged with review and evaluation of the needs of specific students who are not demonstrating success in their current educational programs. The goal of intervention by a PPT is to avoid unnecessary referrals for special education services, maintaining students in general education through supportive strategies and services outside of special education.

⁶ New York State school governance laws require that each school establish a School Leadership Team. Parents must make up 50% of the membership for each school's SLT. The remainder of the team includes teachers and other school staff, including the school's principal. SLTs are responsible for: developing the school's educational plan; matching the budget to meet the educational goals of the school; communicating the goals to the schools community; and evaluating the quality of the school's educational program and its effect on student achievement.

⁷ District 75 is a citywide district with responsibility for children with the most severe disabilities. There are over 20,000 children served in District 75. District 75 primarily provides services to students in self-contained schools and self-contained special classes in Community School District public schools, with only about 1,200 of the students currently placed in "inclusive" settings. The Office of Inclusive Education serves only those students in inclusion.

⁸ Compared to 63% statewide. New York State Education Department Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Report to the Board of Regents on Special Education Data, (April, 2002).

⁹ 1999-01 New York City PD-5 Report at 15.

¹⁰ This figure does not include students listed simply as having moved. New York City Board of Education, Report of Students with Disabilities Exiting Special Education July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001, (PD 5 Report, 2000-2001), p. 15.

¹¹ Memorandum from Lawrence C. Gloeckler to the Members of the New York State Board of Regents, Updated Special Education Data, March 30, 2001.

¹² New York City Board of Education, The Class of 2001: Four-Year Longitudinal Report and 2000-2001 Event Dropout Rates, p. 23. Accessed at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/reports/Class%20of%202001.pdf>. The term "graduating" is defined as having received a high school diploma, GED, or special education certificate. New York State Education Department Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Report to the Board of Regents on Special Education Data, p. 2 (April, 2002).

¹³ 52% from self-contained classes in public high schools and 45 % from District 75 (the citywide school district serving the most severely disabled students, primarily in self-contained classrooms) dropped out. New York City Board of Education, The Class of 1998: Final Longitudinal Report: A Three-Year Follow-Up Study, p. 11 (March, 2002) at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/reports/Class%20of%201998.pdf>.

¹⁴ African American, Hispanic and American Indian children are more likely than white students to be referred to special education, to be placed in self-contained classrooms, and to drop out of school New York State Education Department Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with

Disabilities, Report to the Board of Regents on Special Education Data, (April, 2002); Last year the drop-out rate (The ratio of drop-outs of a specific ethnic group compared to all students of that ethnic group exiting special education in the 2000-2001 school year) was 32% higher for Blacks and Hispanics (and slightly higher for American Indians) than for White students. PD-5 Report for 2000-2001, p. 15.

¹⁵ New York City Board of Education, Report of all Students with Disabilities Placed as of December 1, 2000 (PD-4 Report for 2000-2001), p. 17.

¹⁶ See The Least Restrictive Environment Coalition website, www.lrecoalition.org for further information on this point.

¹⁷ Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C.A. Sec. 1400-87 (1997).

¹⁸ The IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)(A). The importance of LRE was emphasized in the 1997 amendments to the IDEA, 34 CFR Part 300.

¹⁹ New York City Board of Education, “Getting Started”-- Special Education as Part of a Unified Service Delivery System, the implementation plan for the new Continuum, is available at (and was viewed on August 24, 2001) <<http://www.nycenet.edu/spss/sei/gf.pdf>.

²⁰ See <http://www.nycenet.edu/spss/sei/ctm> for a copy of the new Continuum. See also, www.lrecoalition.org website for further information.

²¹ The Children’s School is one of several sites comprising P.S. 372K, a multi-site “school” serving 550 children with and without disabilities, under the joint authority of Community School District 15 and District 75.

²² Conversation between Jacquelyn Kamin and Principal Boyhan on November 21, 2000.

²³ The class will have more than one if several of the students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) require one-to-one paraprofessionals.

²⁴ Balanced Literacy refers to a program incorporating phonemic awareness and phonics development with a focus on authentic literature and writing. See Karen Diegmueller, “The Best of Both Worlds,” Ed Week (March 20, 1996), at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/vol-15/26read.h15>.

²⁵ A language-based, multisensory, structured and sequential approach that builds literacy from a foundation of studying sounds in isolation and working up through reading comprehension skills. The Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators at <http://www.ortonacademy.org/>.

²⁶ Conversation between J. Kamin and a parent from the Children’s School on November 21, 2000.

²⁷ Conversation between J. Kamin and a parent from the Children’s School on November 21, 2000.

²⁸ The scores of the special education children are reported in District 75, the general education students’ scores are reported in District 15.

²⁹ For discussion, see Beth Lief, The Children’s School: Lessons for Inclusion, Leadership, and School Success, Fordham Urban Law Journal, Vol. XXIX, no. 2 (December 2001), p. 721.

³⁰ 58% of the District 75 children in the Children’s school scored on Level 2 or above in the year 2000, compared to an average of 27.1% for other District 75 students; 90% of the District 15 Children’s School students scored on Level 2 or above, compared to an average of 83% in other District 15 schools.

³¹ New York City Board of Education, School Report Cards, accessed May 7, 2002 (and confirmed on August 6, 2002) at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/01asr/430150.pdf>.

³² See www.newvisions.org.

³³ Interview with Principal Gloria Guzman, January 25, 2002.

³⁴ Interview with Principal Guzman, January 25, 2002.

³⁵ Interview with Principal Guzman, January 25, 2002.

³⁶ BOR Allocation Memorandum No. 26, FY 2002, at FN. 24.

³⁷ Conversation between J. Kamin and Principal Rita Silverman, January 18, 2002.

³⁸ A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is an assessment and behavioral plan required under the IDEA for students in regular and special education with persistent problem behaviors.

³⁹ Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C.A. Sec. 1400-87 (1997).

⁴⁰ Conversation between J. Kamin and Principal Silverman, January 18, 2002.

⁴¹ On the English Language Arts tests, 64% of the general education students and 15% of the special education students at PS 229 showed proficiency (scored on Levels 3 and 4), while the averages for District 24 schools were 47% of general education students and 9% for special education students. In Mathematics, 63% of PS 229 general education students and 16% of special education students showed proficiency, compared to average percentages of 39% and 7% for students in other District 24 schools. District 24

Report Card, at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/01asr/924999.pdf> And PS 229 Report Card: <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/01asr/424229.pdf> accessed June 28, 2002 (and confirmed on August 6, 2002).

District 30 Report Card, accessed May 7, 2002 (and confirmed on August 6, 2002) at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/01asr/930999.pdf> and PS 150 Report Card, accessed May 7, 2002 (and confirmed on August 6, 2002) at <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/01asr/430150.pdf>.

⁴² Conversation between J. Kamin and Amy Salant, November 28, 2000.

⁴³ Conversation between J. Kamin and Amy Salant, November 28, 2000.

⁴⁴ From the VESID website, identifying BCA as an effective program. See <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/effective/effecippd1.html#Autism>

⁴⁵ Conversation between J. Kamin and Principal Breslow, March 1, 2002.

⁴⁶ Conversation between J. Kamin and Principal Breslow, March 1, 2002.

⁴⁷ See Beth Lief, *The Children's School: Lessons for Inclusion, Leadership, and School Success*, Fordham Urban Law Journal, Vol. XXIX, no. 2 (December 2001), p. 718.

⁴⁸ Under the new Continuum, SETS are specially designed, supplemental instruction provided by a special education teacher. That teacher may work directly with a student with a disability to support participation in a general education classroom, and/or indirectly with the student's general education teacher to adjust the learning environment and/or modify and adapt instructional techniques and methods to meet the student's individual needs. Special education teacher support services may be provided for as few as two hours a week and as much as 50% of each day.

⁴⁹ Conversation between J. Kamin and Charlotte Bloomberg, April 22, 2002.

⁵⁰ Though District 75 maintains some entirely self-contained buildings, most of its schools are composed of classes located in general education buildings. District 75 is allotted space in all new school buildings; new programs are developed based on the numbers and types of disabilities of the neighborhood's students.

⁵¹ Richard Marowitz, Principal of P 255 in Queens. He wishes the Board could "change the mindset" of the school system to embrace children with disabilities in Community School Districts.

⁵² Joan Washington, Principal of P 811 in Queens.

⁵³ Ivy Sterling, Principal of P77 in Brooklyn.

⁵⁴ District 75 Office of Inclusive Education, [Professional Development Options 2001-2002](#).

⁵⁵ District 75 Office of Inclusive Education, [Professional Development Options 2001-2002](#).

⁵⁶ See <http://www.nyu.edu/pdl/>, accessed May 29, 2002 (and confirmed on August 6, 2002).

⁵⁷ According to Catherine Rikhye, Director, District 75 Office of Inclusive Education, May 21, 2002, corroborated by principals of District 75 schools.

⁵⁸ Conversation between J. Kamin and Sandra Siguenza, June 20, 2002.

⁵⁹ Conversation between J. Kamin and Sandra Siguenza, June 20, 2002.

⁶⁰ Conversation between J. Kamin and Nora Cohen, June 20, 2002.

⁶¹ Conversation between J. Kamin and Nora Cohen, June 20, 2002.

⁶² For example, while autism occurs in from 2 to 6 individuals per 1,000, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects between 3 and 5% of school age children. The Autism Society of America website, accessed June 10, 2002 (and confirmed August 6, 2002) at <http://www.autism-society.org/whatisautism/autism.html#whatisautism>; the Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) website, accessed June 10, 2002 (and confirmed August 6, 2002) at <http://www.chadd.org/fs/fs1.htm>.

⁶³ Including multi-sensory instructional methodologies for children who have difficulty reading because of disabilities such as dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

⁶⁴ While the Board offered training on doing Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) as part of its menu of professional development opportunities, most of the principals of schools at which LRE Coalition staff have done trainings professed to be ignorant of the process, or else dismissed the technique as too time-consuming. In the effective schools studied, principals voiced mixed opinions of FBAs.

⁶⁵ Making IEPs available to the teacher will mean nothing if the teacher does not understand it.

⁶⁶ This was a suggestion made at every inclusive program visited.