



Biennial Special Education Plan

2008-2010

NISKAYUNA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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I. Introduction

Part 200. 2(c) of the Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education require that each school district board of education shall prepare biennial special education plans. The plan must describe:

- The District's special education programs and services.
- The numbers of special education students by type of disability and by recommended settings.
- The methods used to evaluate the extent to which program objectives have been achieved.
- The policies and practices of the board of education to ensure that appropriate space will be continually available to meet the needs of resident students in BOCES special education programs.
- The estimated budget to support such a plan and the date on which such plan was adopted by the board of education.

We will also include a description of our Academic Intervention Services, Educationally Related Support Services and the activities and practices of our Committee on Special Education, space allocated to District special education programs, staff training, and recommendations for the future.

In the process of developing this plan, the District has a great opportunity to review our special education programs and services and make plans to update and improve them. The plan will help us to deliver excellent services to our students with disabilities.

John D. Connolly,
Administrator for Student Support Services
August 2008

II. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and Educationally Related Support Services

A. Academic Intervention Services

1. Description of Services

Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are instructional interventions and student support services offered to help students at risk of not meeting the State Standards. AIS instructional interventions such as 1:1 and small group reading support in the early grades can help students to overcome academic difficulties so that they will not need special education services in the intermediate or upper elementary school grades. AIS services are sometimes described as *pre-referral services*, because students at risk of needing special education typically receive these services prior to referral to the Committee on Special Education. AIS include student support services such as counseling, social work services for students experiencing personal or behavioral issues, and peer mediation if students are having interpersonal conflicts.

The District provides a variety of Academic Intervention Services at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. What follows is a list of the services offered at each level:

Elementary:

- Reading Support - one-to-one and small group
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Writing Support – small group
- Math Support – small group
- General Education-Special Education Collaboration for math or English Language Arts
- Extended Day Kindergarten
- Summer Literacy Program
- Counseling
- Primary Mental Health Program
- Monitoring-Classroom Teacher Support

Middle School:

- AIS Reading and Math
- Consultant Teacher Services
- Summer AIS Reading and Mathematics Program
- Peer Mediation (Student-student conflict resolution process)
- Counseling
- Social Work Services
- Monitoring-Classroom Teacher Support for English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science

High School

- AIS for English, Math, and Social Studies (small remedial classes, 2 days/4 day cycle)
- High School Assistance Team (HSAT)– grades 9 and 10 (15 students in each grade taught by a team of English, math, science and social studies teachers. Teachers are in regular contact with parents. Students receive teaching assistant support.)
- Consulting Teacher Program – grades 9,10, and 11 (Classes co-taught by special education and general education teachers.)
- Monitoring/Classroom Teacher Support for English, Math, Science, and Social Studies
- Summer School
- Peer Mediation (Student-student conflict resolution process)
- Counseling
- Social Work Services
- Academic Support Lab (ASL) (study skills support provided by a para-professional)
- Individualized Success Plans (ISP) for students who receive quarterly grades with four or more Ds and Fs who are not receiving support from special education, HSAT or ASL. These students receive more intensive support from a school counselor who helps them with motivation, social-emotional and study skills issues. They also receive study skills support from a teaching assistant. This program is also considered to be a pre-referral service.

2. Eligibility and Exit Criteria for Academic Intervention Services

Students are selected for AIS based on their performance on several indicators including classroom work and tests, and local, standardized, and State exams. Parents, teachers, and building child study teams may refer students for AIS.

Students exit AIS when they can succeed in general education classes and meet the State Standards without support.

What follows is a table summarizing eligibility and exit criteria for AIS:

ASSESSMENT	INSTRUMENT	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	EXIT CRITERIA
Standardized Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimsweb Benchmark Assessments gr. K-3 Fall, Winter, Spring 	Scoring on or below the 35 th percentile	Achieving at a national percentile of 45 or higher and achieving a second criterion such as teacher recommendation
NYS Assessments	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoring below a level 3 in grades 3-8 Not achieving a passing score on Regents Exams 	Scoring a 3 or 4 on state exam, satisfactory performance on teacher developed parallel task, or passing a Regents Exam
Individual Classroom Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit Tests Class Work Participation in Class Homework Projects Teacher Observations Performance Based Tasks 	Records of unsatisfactory student performance with the recommendation of the building child study team	Satisfactory student performance with the recommendation of the building child study team

B. Educationally Related Support Services

Educationally Related Support Services are pupil personnel services offered to students on a temporary basis to help them succeed in school. These services include speech improvement (non-special education speech) and counseling services.

III. Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)

The Committee on Preschool Special Education held 155 meetings during the 2007-2008 school year. The meetings included initial referrals, program reviews and annual reviews. Pursuant to the regulations of the State Commissioner of Education, the CPSE makes recommendations to the Board of Education based on the needs of the students. As of December 3, 2007, the District had 51 preschool students with IEPs.

The criteria and procedures for eligibility, referral, evaluation, recommendations, and program implementation are slightly different for preschool students.

A. CPSE Membership

The required members of the CPSE are:

- The child's parent(s)
- The child's teacher/related service provider
- A parent member
- The school district representative
- The county representative
- For a child transitioning from an early intervention (EI) program (birth to 3 years old), a representative of the agency providing EI services

B. CPSE Process

a. Eligibility Determinations

Preschool children may be identified as having a disability if they exhibit significant delays in one or more functional areas related to cognition, language and communication, adaptive skills, social emotional development, and sensory or motor development that adversely affects a child's ability to learn. The CPSE considers all evaluations and compares the child's performance to accepted milestones for child development. The criteria for eligibility are:

- A 12 month delay in one or more functional areas; or
- A 33% delay in one functional area, or a 25% delay in each of two functional areas; or
- If appropriate standardized tests are individually administered, a score of two standard deviations below the mean in one functional area, or a score of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two functional areas; or
- Meet the criteria for a disability as described in the terms for school aged students.

C. Referral

A preschool child suspected of having a disability shall be referred in writing to the CPSE Chairperson. A referral may be made by the child's parents, a professional staff member of the school district or a preschool, a physician, or a judicial officer.

D. Evaluation

Upon the consent of the parent and the parent's selection of an approved evaluator, a multidisciplinary evaluation will be conducted. The resulting report will include a detailed description of the child's needs and a recommendation for services.

E. Recommendations

If the CPSE determines that the child has a disability, the committee shall recommend a program for the child. The committee is required to consider a continuum of services starting from the least restrictive to the most restrictive services (least intensive services to the most intensive). They must first consider placement in a part-time or half-time program in a setting where age-appropriate peers without disabilities are typically found. More restrictive placements may only be considered if education in a less restrictive placement would not succeed even with supplementary aids and services.

Transportation needs must also be considered.

The CPSE must develop an Individualized Education Program as described on page 12.

F. Implementation

A similar timeline for implementation of services must be followed as for K-12 students referred to the CSE.

G. Annual Review

The IEP of each preschool student must be reviewed at least annually.

H. Mediation and Impartial Review Process

Due process for preschool students with disabilities closely matches the due process for school-aged students. See page 13.

IV. The Committee on Special Education

The Committee on Special Education held 634 meetings during the 2007-2008 school year. The meetings included initial referrals, program reviews, annual reviews, and reevaluations (required at least every 3 years). Pursuant to the regulations of the State Commissioner of Education, the CSE makes recommendations to the Board of Education on the needs of those students referred to the CSE. Based upon those recommendations the District had 460 K-12 students with IEPs as of December 3, 2007.

A. CSE Membership

The required members of the CSE are:

- The child's parent(s)
- The child's general education teacher
- A special education teacher
- A school psychologist
- A district representative (CSE Chairperson)
- A parent member,
- The school physician, as needed (with at least three days notice).

Sometimes the CSE meets as a subcommittee. The CSE Subcommittee includes the child's parent(s), his/her general education teacher and the special education teacher. The subcommittee meets for routine case reviews and annual reviews. If the CSE plans on declassifying a student or placing the student in a more restrictive setting, e.g. from resource room to a special class placement, they meet as a full committee. The student support services office makes every effort to obtain a quorum for CSE meetings. If a quorum cannot be obtained, the CSE meeting is cancelled.

B. CSE Process

1. Pre-referral Interventions

Generally when a student is experiencing academic or social difficulties in school, the student's teacher will refer him to the building child study team to find strategies to help him. If these strategies are not sufficient, then the teacher will refer him for academic intervention services (AIS). These services include support for reading, mathematics, science, and social studies (See the classroom. Students at risk of failing to meet the State Standards are monitored closely by their classroom teacher and given extra help as needed. The second level of AIS is provided by an AIS teacher. Small groups of students meet two or more times per week with an AIS teacher who helps the children to improve their achievement.

If a student is suspected of having a learning disability, he will receive response to intervention services (RTI). This means that the student will be

offered reading/math instructional strategies or programs individually tailored to his needs for eight to twelve weeks in an attempt to remediate his weaknesses. During this period, the student is tested weekly to track his progress. If the student fails to progress, alternate interventions will be tried. If the student still fails to progress, he will be referred to the Committee on Special Education (CSE).

Some students may experience short-term personal or social problems that impede their progress in school. The District provides counseling or social work service on a temporary basis to assist these students.

Students with mild speech and language problems are provided speech improvement services. These students generally do not qualify as disabled.

At the high school, small groups of general education students at risk of school failure are seen by the study skills coach in the Academic Support Lab (ASL). She keeps in close contact with their teachers and parents and helps them to organize their work and study for tests. Other interventions include the high school assistance team (HSAT), which provides close teacher monitoring and teaching assistant support for a small group of ninth and tenth grade students.

Lastly we have an intervention for students who receive four or more Ds and Fs. and are not involved in special education or another program. For each of these students, an individual success plan (ISP) is developed with guidance from a school counselor assigned to these students. The school counselor provides the students with counseling related to motivation and study skills and the students receive support in study hall from a teaching assistant.

Child Study Team

The child study team (CST) in each building typically consisting of the principal, school psychologist, special education teacher, related service providers, the reading specialist, and general education teachers discusses students who are having problems in school. They develop practical responses to help the students overcome any obstacles to learning. Most students who eventually are referred to the Committee on Special Education first receive help from the CST. The CST is also responsible for planning scientifically based instructional interventions for students suspected of having a learning disability. The process of evaluating students, planning scientifically based interventions, implementing them and re-evaluating the student is referred to as *Response to Intervention* (RTI).

2. Referral

A student suspected of having a disability should be referred in writing to the CSE chairperson or a school principal. The referral may be made by the

student's parents, teacher or other professional staff member, a judicial officer, or the student him or herself if over 18 years of age.

The referral should state the reasons why the student is suspected of having a disability. Test results, records, and reports should be cited. Attempts to remediate the student's problems including RTI₂ should also be stated.

3. Evaluation

An individual evaluation shall be commenced by the CSE. The evaluation must include a variety of assessments including a psychological evaluation, achievement testing, RTI trials (individualized instructional intervention and weekly testing) for students evaluated for learning disabilities, a social history, a medical examination, and an observation of the student in his/her current educational placement. The initial evaluation and determination of eligibility must be completed by the CSE within 60 calendar days from the date when the CSE receives written parental consent to evaluate.

4. Eligibility Determination

The CSE makes the determination on whether or not the student has a disability after reviewing the assessments, teacher reports, and parental statements. Students being considered for classification as learning disabled must be given RTI trials. If the student fails to make adequate progress despite scientifically based interventions, the student will be classified as learning disabled. If the CSE is evaluating whether or not a student is learning disabled in reading, the student cannot be found learning disabled in reading unless he has been taught reading using a "balanced approach" including instruction in these elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension

A student can be identified because of mental, physical, or emotional needs as having one of the following disabilities:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impaired
- Learning Disability
- Mental Retardation
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Please refer to the appendix for definitions of these classifications.

5. Development of Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Prior to developing a recommendation to the Board of Education for special education services, the CSE must ensure that the student is receiving general education services including Academic Intervention Services as appropriate.

The CSE must develop an Individualized educational program (IEP) for each student with a disability. The IEP must list a student's academic, physical, social, and management needs and present levels of educational performance (PLEPS) for each major goal area. It must also include:

- The classification of the disability
- Measurable annual goals (and short term objectives and benchmarks for students with significant impairments who participate in the NYS Alternate Assessments)
- Evaluation criteria for each goal
- The recommended special education program and services
- Recommended placement
- The class size
- Supplementary aides and services the student needs
- Program modifications or supports for school personnel
- Beginning with the IEP to be in effect when the student turns 15, a statement of transition goals that will reasonably enable the student to meet measurable post-secondary goals
- A summary of Performance report for students graduating from high school indicating their performance levels in the academic, social,

physical, and management area and offering recommendations for future progress and programming

- Assistive technology devices needed
- Curriculum and testing modifications
- Date for initiation of services and end of services

Since September 2007, the law has changed to permit parents and the school district to agree to amend an IEP after the annual review meeting has been conducted without convening a CSE meeting (Chapter 378 of the Laws of 2007).

6. IEP Implementation

It is the District's responsibility to implement the IEP within 60 calendar days of the date that the parent signed consent for CSE evaluation of the student. That means that the services described on the IEP must be delivered within the timeline stated above. Under IDEIA the parents may refuse to allow the school district to implement an IEP. The District may not use due process to force the issue. Each student's parent and teachers must be provided with a copy of the IEP.

7. Annual review and Reevaluations

The CSE must review the IEP of each student with a disability at least annually and make recommendations for an updated IEP. The review will include a consideration of the progress the student has made in general and special education. Then the IEP is revised to address lack of progress in key areas and to meet the student's needs. Test and instructional modifications are reviewed and changed as needed.

Students are reevaluated at least every three years to determine if they continue to be eligible for special education services and if they are eligible, the CSE reviews and updates the IEP in light of present needs.

If a student is no longer eligible to be classified as a special education student, (s)he may be declassified with no further services or (s)he can receive a year of declassification support. These transitional services typically consist of a reduced amount of consulting teacher support, possibly related services, and continuation of testing modifications. The principal is responsible for seeing that these services are implemented.

8. Mediation and Impartial Hearing Processes

If parents disagree with the recommendations of the CSE they can ask for mediation to resolve their differences with the District or they can request an impartial hearing. Should they request an impartial hearing, the Board of Education appoints an impartial hearing officer to conduct the hearing. Prior to the impartial hearing, parents and the District are now required by IDEIA

2004 to meet for a resolution session with the hope they can reach an acceptable agreement and avoid the time and expense of a hearing.

Hearings are generally held in the Board room. Usually the parents are represented by an attorney at the hearing as is the District. The decision of the impartial hearing officer is final unless it is appealed to the State Review Officer.

C. Committee on Special Education Statistics

Year	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
# of meetings	634	740	908	899	837
# students classified	31	50	56	57	75
# students declassified	30	26	32	21	32
# new referrals	37	62	71	86	93
# of transfers in	15	18	23	18	34
# transfers out	22	30	19	13	19
# IEP students in private schools receiving support services	18	17	18	20	21
Total # of IEP students	460	452	505	509	499

* NA = Not Available

Trends

- The numbers of CSE meetings is decreasing because of mandate relief (parents and the District may agree on IEP changes without holding a CSE meeting), more efficient use of meeting time (e.g. combining annual review and re-evaluation meetings), a decreasing number of new referrals and good relations with parents of students with disabilities thanks to good by teachers and other staff.
- We are receiving fewer new referrals and we are classifying fewer students than in the past. More students' needs are being met by pre-referral interventions, e.g. AIS, speech improvement, non-IEP counseling, OT and PT consults, etc.

V. Section 504 Committee

Section 504 is a civil rights law guaranteeing equal access for all students with disabilities attending public schools. If a student has a disability that does not require special education, his parent, teacher, or other school professional can refer him to the Section 504 Committee. Such disabilities include hearing loss, orthopedic disabilities, visual impairments, attention deficit disorder, severe asthma, and other conditions. Section 504 is part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It requires public schools to provide accommodations to students with disabilities.

A. Description of the Section 504 Committee

The Section 504 Committee is made up of persons knowledgeable about the student's disability and needs. In our school district, we use the CSE as our Section 504 Committee.

B. Section 504 Process

The CSE acts as the Section 504 Committee in our district. A general education teacher familiar with the student's educational needs attends the meeting. Upon receiving a referral, the Section 504 Committee gathers information concerning the student's learning and/or physical needs, and then convenes a meeting at which they decide whether or not the student has a disability significantly affecting a major life activity such as seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, learning, etc. If the Committee finds that the student does have a disability, they develop a written accommodation plan to meet the student's needs. Typically a plan calls for practical measures to be carried out by general education teachers to ensure that a student with disabilities has full access to school district programs, e.g. for an orthopedically impaired student, ramping to gain access to a room, or preferential seating near the teacher for a hearing impaired student, etc.

Each building principal takes responsibility for the implementation of the 504 plan in their building. At the end of the first semester (January), the Student Support Services Office sends a roster of 504 students to each principal and asks the principal to certify that the 504 plans in his/her building are being properly implemented. All 504 plans are updated in the spring as part of the annual review process.

C. Section 504 Statistics

	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
Elementary	40	47	46	44	41
Middle School	28	20	19	20	21
High School	19	30	25	32	23
Total	87	97	90	96	85

Trends

The number of students with 504 plans has gone down somewhat over the past three years to about the same level as 2003-2004. These students have a variety of impairments requiring accommodation plans and sometimes related services, but they do not need special education instructional/support services. The number of 504 students may have declined because the District is requiring more stringent documentation of health conditions and their impact on academic performance.

VI. Description of Students with Disabilities

A. Preschool Students

As of December 3, 2007, the District served 51 three and four year old students as follows:

- 39 Full-time students at integrated preschools (meaning general education students are also instructed at each school).
- 2 Full time students at special education preschools
- 3 at Residential School
- 7 at Home

The students are instructed at these preschools:

Beginnings – Niskayuna, Achievements- Niskayuna, Schonowe Preschool – Rotterdam, Cloverpatch – Glenville, Crossroads Center for Children – Glenville,

Spotted Zebra Learning Center – Colonie and Helping Hands Pre-School – Clifton Park.

Typically our preschool students are speech and/or language delayed. Some are also cognitively delayed and may have fine motor needs (dressing, feeding, coloring, cutting, etc.) or gross motor needs (difficulty with walking and /or running).

Students who attend full-time programs have more severe needs: autistic, serious behavior management problems, or multiple disabilities.

Decisions on eligibility, planning, and placement are made by the District’s Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE).

On the next page is a table showing the placement of Pre-Kindergarten students over the past five years as of December 1 each school year:

Year	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
General Ed. Preschool for at least 80% of school day	35	43	22	37	27
Gen. Ed. Preschool for at least 20% of the school day but less than 80%	4	11	29	16	16
Separate Sped. Class	2	3	7	8	4
Home	7	1	0	0	1
Residential Facility	3	0	2	1	0
Total	51	58	60	62	48

Trends:

The great majority of our students are placed in general education pre-schools or integrated general education-special education preschools. They often receive special education itinerant teacher service and related services such as speech, occupational or physical therapy. During the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years, the students appear to have less involved needs judging by the decrease in the second category, “Gen. Ed. Preschool for at least 20% of the school day but less than 80%.”

We have seen a decrease in the population of pre-school students with disabilities which in turn has contributed to a decrease in the population of school-aged students with disabilities in the lower grades.

B. K-12 IEP Students

As of December 3, 2007, most of our students with disabilities (68%) received resource room, consulting teacher or related services 20% or less of the school day. Nineteen percent (19%) received a moderate amount of special education participating in resource room and related services or part-time special education for 21 to 60% of the school day. About 6% of the special education students were placed in district special education classes, 3% were in BOCES classes, 3% in private special education schools, and 1% were parentally placed in a private school within the District (St. Helen’s).

Here is a table showing the numbers of K-12 students with IEPs in each disability category over the past five years:

Disability	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
	# of Students	# of Students	# of Students	# of Students	# of Students
Learning Disabled	111	126	145	143	156
Other Health Impaired	167	169	160	153	138
Speech/Language Impaired	85	84	83	90	83
Multiply Disabled	34	37	44	44	47
Emotionally Disturbed	19	20	20	27	28
Autistic	32	32	34	30	27
Traumatic-Brain Injured	3	3	3	5	4
Orthopedically Impaired	4	4	6	7	5
Hard of Hearing	3	4	3	4	4
Deaf	0	0	1	1	1
Deaf-Blind	0	0	0	0	0
Visually Impaired	2	2	2	2	3

Mentally Retarded	0	2	4	3	3
Total	460	483	505	509	499
% of Total Pop. With IEPs	460/4441= 10.4%	483/4403= 11.0%	505/4470= 11.3%	509/4459= 11.4%	499/4396= 11.4%

Trends

- The size of the special education population as a percentage of the general education population has been decreasing for the past three years. Staff are careful to try using AIS first or other interventions before initiating a CSE referral.
- The number of students classified as LD continues to decrease. This may be related to the use of RTI as a way of targeting intervention to academically needy students.
- We are classifying more students as OHI (other health impaired). Students with ADHD, diabetes, mild autism or asperger's, obsessive compulsive disorder and other medical conditions are considered OHI.
- The numbers of students classified as ED (emotionally disturbed) and autistic have stabilized.
- The number of students classified as MD (multiply disabled) has decreased.

VII. K- 12 Special Education Programs and Services

In compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) and the Part 200 Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education, the Niskayuna Central School District provides the following continuum of services for our students with disabilities. The services are listed from least restrictive to most restrictive (least intensive to most intensive). Services are offered on a K-12 basis in all buildings unless otherwise specified. In this section we describe the District's programs and services, and we offer guidelines for entering and exiting the programs and services.

A. Related Services

Related Services are specialized instruction offered to students with needs in the areas of speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, hearing impairments and visual impairments. Service providers include speech language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, teachers of the

deaf/hearing impaired, and teachers of the blind/visually impaired. Students are served one-to-one or in small groups.

1. Speech/Language Services

Description of Speech/Language Services

The speech/language pathologists provide services to students who need help with articulation, fluency (stuttering), voice (hoarseness, nasality) or language (expressive and receptive language, limited vocabulary, abbreviated sentences, improper syntax, weak pre-literacy and literacy skills), pragmatics conventions of social language conversations, etc.) and related disabilities.

They also work with students needing help with auditory processing (ability to focus on critical information with competing noise in the background), cognitive aspects of communication (i.e. attention, memory, problem solving, planning and organizing), augmentative communication methods/devices (special communication methods or devices used by people with sensory or developmental disabilities), and with students who have hearing impairments.

Speech/Language therapists provide:

- Prevention Services
- Therapy
- Screening
- Consultation to parents, teachers and students
- Assessment and Diagnosis
- Follow-up, Management, and Monitoring
- IEP/504 plan development and implementation.

Entrance Criteria for Speech/Language Services

The following entrance and exit criteria are tempered by the clinical judgment of the speech/language pathologists on how well the student is able to function academically and socially given his/her communications ability.

Students whose problems can be corrected in a relatively short period of time receive *speech improvement* services (speech for non-disabled students). Students whose problems are long term in nature and but only have a mild impact on classroom performance receive speech therapy as part of a 504 accommodation plan. e.g. a student undergoing cleft palate repair who needs careful monitoring and some help with speech. Students whose problems are long term in nature and whose communications functioning is judged by the CSE to have an adverse impact on their educational progress are classified as *speech impaired* and receive IEP services for students with disabilities.

With regard to *articulation*, students who are not easily understood by the unfamiliar listener (less than 80% of the time) may be eligible for classification as speech/language impaired.

With regard to *language*, students with deficits in expressive, receptive or pragmatic language whose performance on standardized tests falls at least one standard deviation below the mean standard score may be eligible for classification as speech/language impaired.

With regard to *fluency*, students who display mild to moderate disfluencies across three varied settings along with noticeable tension and other secondary characteristics present may be eligible for classification as speech impaired. Students may also display speech rate and prosody (the varying pitches and accentuations of speech) that impede communication.

With regard to *voice* (hoarseness, nasality, denasality, pitch, intensity) problems of a serious nature that interfere with communication, classification may be considered. Parents of a child with such problems may be asked to refer the child for a medical evaluation.

Exit Criteria for Speech/Language Services

Students exit speech/language therapy when their speech/language problem no longer exists or no longer interferes with their educational performance. Speech /language therapy is also discontinued if students are no longer benefiting from the therapy, are no longer progressing having achieved their potential level given physical, emotional, or developmental factors, or have demonstrated appropriate compensatory behaviors.

2. Occupational Therapy Services

Description of Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapists instruct students who demonstrate impaired functioning in such fine motor skill areas as handwriting, cutting, or drawing. They also help students who demonstrate significant weakness in their upper bodies, difficulty performing activities of daily living such as dressing, feeding, or toileting, difficulties with organization, or difficulty processing sensory information (e.g. hypersensitivity to sound or touch).

Entrance Criteria for Occupational Therapy

Students receive occupational therapy services if their performance on standardized tests of skills such as fine motor skills and sensory processing abilities falls below the 15th to 21st percentile (depending on the skill being tested) and if the students have significant difficulties with activities of daily living as they impact functioning in school. Medical information, if available, is considered in making this decision.

Exit Criteria for Occupational Therapy

Students are discontinued from occupational therapy when they can function within normal limits or when additional therapy will not result in significant improvement. Occupational therapy may also be discontinued if other professional staff can carry over skills taught by the occupational therapist or provide needed modifications. Medical information, if available, is considered in making this decision.

3. Physical Therapy Services

Description of Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is provided to students who have significant gross motor, orthopedic or neurological issues. Students who need physical therapy may have difficulty with locomotor skills, body coordination, balance, low muscle tone, or limited range of motion in their joints.

Entrance Criteria for Physical Therapy

Students qualify for physical therapy based on standardized tests of gross motor ability. Generally, performance below the 15th percentile and difficulty functioning in the educational environment (including school building, bus, and playground) would qualify a student for this service.

Exit Criteria for Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is discontinued if a student can function safely and independently within the educational environment in such activities of daily living as walking, running, or lifting. Physical therapy may also be discontinued if additional therapy will not result in improved functioning.

See Appendix E for additional information on entrance and exit criteria.

4. Counseling Services

Counseling is provided to students on a short-term basis as an educationally related support service or on a long term basis if they have significant emotional or behavioral issues that interfere with their education. A school psychologist or

social worker generally provides counseling for students with disabilities. In some cases a guidance counselor provides it.

Entrance Criteria for Counseling

Teachers, the Committee on Special Education, parents, or students for themselves may make counseling referrals. The students are evaluated by the counselors and then offered counseling if it is warranted. In many cases students can be helped in a few sessions especially if they are motivated to change. Students with deep-seated emotional problems may receive counseling over several years.

Counselors inform parents of counseling available from outside agencies when counseling needs go beyond school related issues.

Exit Criteria for Counseling

Counseling is discontinued if the student is functioning well in school and no longer needs counseling in the judgment of the counselor, teachers, or the student's parents. Counseling may also be discontinued if continued counseling is not likely to be effective or if the student has refused to cooperate with counselor over a period of several months.

5. Teaching Assistant Service

The CSE provides teaching assistant services to students who need one-to-one or shared small group support in regular or special education classes in order to benefit from instruction. Teaching assistants help students to stay on task, complete work properly, keep organized, clarify directions, administer IEP/504 testing modifications, read texts, trade-books, worksheets and other materials, assist the students to organize their writing, prepare modified instructional materials, assist in implementing behavior plans, and so forth. Shared teaching assistants also help non-disabled students in the classroom as the teachers direct them.

One-to-one teaching assistant service is provided to students who have severe physical, cognitive or behavioral challenges and who need this service in order to benefit from instruction.

Either the classroom teacher or special education teacher can direct a teaching assistant. In any case teachers must provide directions and plans for the teaching assistants with whom they work.

Teaching assistants should foster student independence as much as possible. Their goal should be to help the student only as much as needed.

Entrance Criteria for Teaching Assistant Service

Teaching assistant services are provided to students who cannot function successfully in the general education classroom without additional adult support. These students have attentional, organizational, learning (especially reading and writing), or behavioral issues that impede their progress. The CSE will target teaching assistant service to particular subjects/classes in which it is needed.

Exit Criteria for Teaching Assistant Service

If a student can function successfully in the general education classroom with only the teacher's help, teaching assistant service is discontinued.

6. Other Related Services

Several other types of related services exist. For students diagnosed as deaf/hard of hearing, we offer the service of a teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing. For students with visual impairments we offer the services of teachers of the visually impaired, teachers of visual rehabilitation and teachers of orientation and mobility. If a student is the victim of traumatic brain injury, specialized teachers are available to assist the student with problems caused by the injury.

B. Special Education Services

1. Consultant Teacher Service

Consultant teacher service is the least restrictive special education service. It is supplemental support for students provided by the special education teacher directly to the student in a general education class or is provided indirectly when the special education teacher consults with the general education teacher. The purpose of consultant teacher service is to aid the student to benefit from his/her general education classes.

Service is provided for a minimum of two hours per week per student.

Entrance Criteria for Consultant Teacher Service

Students receiving consultant teacher service generally function at the 15th percentile or higher (nationally) on standardized tests in the areas of reading, written expression, and mathematics. They need the service to succeed in general education classes.

Exit Criteria for Consultant Teacher Service

Students will exit from consultant teacher services when their grades are satisfactory and they have shown that they can succeed academically working without consultant teacher support. Typically such students will demonstrate performance above the 35th percentile (nationally) on tests of reading, writing, or mathematics.

2. Resource Room Service

Resource room service is subject support provided directly by the special education teacher to the student on a pullout basis. The minimum service is three hours per week. Group size is up to five students.

Entrance Criteria for Resource Room Service

Resource room services are offered to students who generally function below the 15th percentile (nationally) in reading, written expression, or mathematics or who have great difficulty attending to instruction due to ADHD or health problems. Classroom performance, teacher recommendations and ratings on behavior scales are also considered. These students need at least three hours per week of subject support for general education classes and would not succeed with consultant teacher services alone. Resource room students can learn in the general education classroom but need the academic support offered in resource room.

Exit Criteria for Resource Room Service

Resource room services can be discontinued when a student passes all of his classes with minimal assistance from the resource teacher. The student may be able to succeed academically with consultant teacher services or with no special education support.

3. Part-Time Special Class (<40% per day)

Part-Time Special Class is direct instruction by the special education teacher usually for English Language Arts or Mathematics. In addition, at middle school or high school, social studies may be offered. Students with disabilities receive this service if they cannot be successful learning in the general education class with support. Group size can be up to 12 students.

Entrance Criteria for Part-Time Special Class

Students are scheduled for part-time special class if they cannot succeed in general education classes with teaching assistant, consulting teaching or resource room support. Such students typically have cognitive delays, severe learning disabilities, difficulty attending to instruction, or moderate to severe behavior management needs. They are typically functioning two or more years below grade level.

Exit Criteria for Part-Time Special Class

This service is discontinued if a student can succeed in a general education class with teaching assistant, consulting teaching or resource room support.

4. Special Education Classes (>60% per day)

These classes provide up to full-time special education for students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities. These classes are sometimes referred to as skills development classes.

Intake Process for Special Education Classes

In order to make appropriate placements of students in special education classes, we have developed an intake process.

1. Principal/school psychologist contacts administrator for student support services and explains why the student should be placed in the particular class. Supporting documentation such as progress reports, recent achievement and psychological testing results must be provided.
2. The administrator for student support services schedules an intake meeting including sending teachers and therapists, receiving special education teacher, school psychologist, principal and CSE chair.
3. At the intake meeting the intake committee reviews the documentation and discusses the student's needs, comparing the student's profile with the criteria for the class/strand, and decides whether or not student would be appropriately placed in the class.
4. If the intake committee decides that a student is appropriate for a district special education class, then a meeting is arranged between the parents and the school psychologist and the sending and receiving teachers. The principal may wish to participate as well.
5. For the final step, the CSE meets to develop/revise the student's IEP recommending the new placement.

Description of Special Education Classes

a) Skills Development Classes

These classes serve students with delayed language and/or cognition. Some students may also have mild to moderate emotional, motor, or sensory disabilities. A mixture of academic and functional skills is taught. When appropriate, mainstreaming with support is encouraged. Class size is 8 to 12 students. The students in the K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 classes push-in to general education classes as appropriate with support for much of their instruction. Students in the grades 9-12 class are not mainstreamed for core subjects.

-The grades K-2 class emphasizes language concepts, communication skills, academics, and social skills. It also serves as a diagnostic classroom for students with disabilities.

-The grades 3-5 class continues the emphasis on language, and focuses on social skills, functional academics and the Standards as appropriate.

-The grades 6-8 class continues to provide functional academic and social skills instruction, and introduces prevocational skills.

-The grades 9-12 class prepares students to graduate with strong functional academics, vocational skills, and social skills. Students generally receive IEP diplomas and are prepared for entry level adult work.

Entrance Criteria for Skills Development Classes

Students are selected for the Skills Development Strand classes who may have cognitive ability around the 15th percentile or below for their chronological age. Many have accompanying language needs (particularly at the K-2 level) that seriously affect their ability to succeed academically and socially. **These students need small group or one-to-one instruction for most of the school day.** They may receive instruction in regular education classes or in the skills development class.

Exit Criteria for the Skills Development Classes

Students exit the skills development strand if:

- They can function academically at or above the 25th percentile (nationally) on standardized tests.
- Their language skills are at or above the 25th percentile (nationally).
- Their needs can be met in a less restrictive placement, i.e. part-time special education class or with resource room support.
- Their progress is very inconsistent and they need more intensive special education services

b) Social – Emotional Program (Grades 9-12)

We offer a social - emotional program at Niskayuna High School for students with mild to moderate emotional problems. We have a resource room teacher who specializes in meeting the needs of these students. Most students are scheduled for support for at least two mods per day (about 80 minutes). The teacher gets to know each student's problems and concerns and provides practical counseling and academic support to assist them. Most of these students also receive social work services and some receive counseling from a school psychologist.

Entrance Criteria for the Social-Emotional Program

Students are selected for this program if their emotional/behavioral needs warrant more individual special education teacher attention or counseling than would be available in a typical resource room or consulting teaching program.

Exit Criteria for the Social-Emotional Class

Students exit this program if their needs can be met with consulting teacher or typical resource room support. Alternatively they may leave the program if they require more intensive services.

c) Consulting Teaching Program (Grades 9-12) (former IRP)

The consulting teaching program at the high school for grades 9, 10, and 11 is a push-in direct instruction and support service for selected students in their core Regents classes. The special education teacher consults/co-teaches an integrated group of special and general education students. Resource room is offered to provide extra support for the consulting teaching program students. In each grade we offer support as follows:

- Gr. 9 Regents English, Math and Global Studies
- Gr. 10 Regents English, Global Studies and Mastery Math
- Gr. 11 Regents English, American History and Mastery Math

Other consulting teaching available: We also provide consulting teaching for selected ninth and tenth grade students in English and math in sections separate from the above mentioned classes.

Entrance Criteria for the Consulting Teaching Program (Grades 9-12)

Students are considered for the consulting teaching program who have a range of learning disabilities or are other health impaired. The program helps the students to graduate from high school with a Regents or local diploma. To participate in the program, a student must be motivated to succeed academically and not have serious behavior management needs.

Exit Criteria for the Consulting Teaching Program (Grades 9-12)

A student will be discontinued from the program if they demonstrate that they can succeed academically with less intensive support. Alternatively, a student will be discontinued if they do not make the effort to keep up academically or if they do not have the ability to succeed even with the support of the program and having made a good faith effort to succeed.

e. High School GED Special Class

This class at Niskayuna High School serves students who wish to earn their GED. It includes students with disabilities and general education students. The class is an alternative for students who have struggled with the Regents curriculum. It serves twelve to fifteen students.

Students must be able to read at a ninth grade level in order to comprehend the GED tests. They must attend school for a minimum of 100 hours to prepare for the GED exam.

Students reading at less than a ninth grade level must study pre-GED materials.

Entrance Criteria for the GED Special Class

Students enter this program if they have not been successful in the general education program with resource room and other supports. They must have turned sixteen years of age in the prior school year.

Exit Criteria for the GED Special Class

Students exit the GED program when they earn their GED or if they leave of their own accord. A few may elect to return to the general education curriculum if sufficiently motivated.

VIII. Program Evaluation

The District evaluates the quality of the special education programs by closely examining three indicators:

- A. Student progress toward IEP goals as measured at annual review and triennial review IEP meetings.

- B. Student Progress on State Education Department tests and on standardized tests.
- C. Program Evaluation questionnaires completed by staff and parents.

IX. Staff Training

Training is provided on Superintendent’s Conference Days and at in-service courses, teacher conferences and summer training opportunities.

Some of the training goals we intend to pursue in the next couple of years are:

Elementary School Level

1. AIMSWEB Benchmark training – special education and AIS staff will participate in teams who will give all students brief tests of their early literacy and reading fluency skills in the fall, winter and spring. The results of the tests will help the staff determine which students need AIS or may be at risk for needing special education services.
2. The student support services core committee will research which programs are most effective for instructing students who display delayed phonics or reading fluency skills. Once good quality programs are identified, training for those programs will be provided to reading specialists, special education teachers and general education teachers. These programs will be alternatives to the District’s standard reading program.

3. Child Study Teams (CSTs) will need training on their role in the RTI process. If a student is referred to them for RTI, they must be familiar with research based programs and strategies in reading and math which could be used as interventions for the student.

Middle School Level

1. Train middle school teachers so we can expand RTI to assess the reading and math fluency of students in grades 6 – 8. AIMSWEB Benchmark tests could be given to all students while targeted RTI would be reserved for students having difficulty learning reading and math skills.

High School Level

1. Given that the number of students identified as having autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has increased in recent years, training is needed for all teachers on the nature of autism and asperger's syndrome and how best to instruct these students. More detailed training on instructing students with ASD should be provided to special education teachers.

2. At the middle and high school level, we need to plan well-orchestrated responses, including staff training, to the growing problem of students with mental health issues who do not attend school regularly or leave early skipping classes. At any given time we have eight to ten students who are quite capable of succeeding academically, but for various reasons related to their mental state do not attend classes.

2. A refresher on the latest research findings on adolescent physical, cognitive and emotional development would be helpful for our special education teachers and teaching assistants. In the past couple of years the special education staff began to explore how students develop cognitively during adolescence, but more training would be helpful.

X. Special Education Classroom Space

The District provides appropriate space for special education programs. All of our special education teachers and related service providers have adequate classroom space considering the type of services they provide to students. Resource room and related service classes are placed in smaller classrooms appropriate for the small groups they serve. As the building project is completed in each building, we expect that our related service providers will gain better quality space for their programs.

The District will host eight BOCES special education classes during the 2008-2009 school year. This allows some of our neediest students to be served in-district. The District will continue to provide space for BOCES classes subject to change based on District needs. Here are the BOCES classes located in each building and a brief explanation of the programs.

Craig Elementary School

1 Intermediate Steps Program Class

Iroquois Middle School:

- 1 Intermediate Steps Program Class
- 2 Comprehensive Developmental Skills Classes

Van Antwerp Middle School:

- 1 Skills Development II Class
- 1 Fundamental Skills Instruction Class

Niskayuna High School:

- 2 Social-Emotional Classes

Here is a brief explanation of the programming and student, teacher, aide ratios offered in the various types of BOCES classes:

- Comprehensive Developmental Skills, 12:1:4. The CDS program serves cognitively delayed, multiply disabled students.
- Intermediate Steps Program, 9:1:2. ISP classes serve students with cognitive delays and moderate behavior management needs.
- Skills Development II, 12:1:2. SDII classes serve students with learning disabilities who also have moderate behavior management needs.
- Fundamental Specialized Instruction, 12:1:1. FSI classes serve students who have mild to moderate cognitive delays.
- Social-Emotional Classes, 8:1:1 SE classes serve students with moderate to severe behavior management needs.

XI. Provision of Alternative Materials

The District has an obligation to provide alternative materials in a timely fashion that are needed by students with disabilities as specified in their IEPs. Alternative materials include large print books, audio taped versions of books, alternative tests, etc. The alternative materials must be available to the students with disabilities at the same time as instructional materials are provided to general education students.

We will meet this requirement by purchasing alternative materials over the summer after annual review IEP meetings. By purchasing the materials in a timely fashion, they will be available for our students with disabilities at the start of the new school year.

As regards provision of alternative materials for students who transfer in to our district during the school year, we will order such materials as soon as we receive the students' IEPs and records from their last placement.

XII. Budget

The special education budget for the 2008-2009 school year can be found in Appendix B. It includes all of the items in the 2250 special education code and the 2820 psychology budget code.

XIII. Student Support Services Core Team

The Student Support Services Core team is a District committee that studies how students with disabilities and students in AIS classes could be instructed more effectively. It is composed of reading specialists, special education teachers, general education teachers, school psychologists, the two CSE chairpersons, and a building principal. They have met at least monthly for over four years. Over the past year the committee has studied these areas:

- Response to Intervention (RTI) – Implementation of RTI in our district
- Research based reading, writing, and mathematics programs
- The creation of middle and high school level special education teacher handbooks to help the teachers organize their work to help meet student needs and legal mandates

XIV. Recommendations for the Future

What follows is a list of recommendations to consider for the next couple of years:

1. Ensure that the needs of students with disabilities continue to receive careful attention as the building project progresses.
2. Continue to evaluate students' reading needs using RTI, but consider using RTI to determine students' needs for math AIS in grades K-8.
3. Identify programs such as Wilson Reading that can be used as interventions for RTI. (Wilson is used for students who have difficulty learning to decode.)
4. Provide training to building child study team members about their role in implementing RTI especially in recommending interventions, i.e. strategies and programs to remediate student deficits in reading and math.
5. Continue the concerted effort at the high school level to provide excellent transition services. Use the resources provided by the Model Transition Program (MTP) grant to enable more of our seniors to participate in college preparation and work-study programs. This will result in a greater percentage of our graduates being successful in college or in employment.

6. Explore alternative staffing. Perhaps it would be more effective to employ a greater number of special education teachers especially for consulting teaching or co-teaching and fewer paraprofessionals.
7. Consider re-starting social – emotional classes at the elementary and middle school levels if there are enough students who need that service.

XV. Appendices

- A. Definitions of Disability Classifications
- B. Budget for Special Education and Psychological Services

Appendix A

A. Definitions of Disability Classifications

Autism: a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism include engagement in repetitive activities, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory stimuli.

Deafness: a hearing impairment so severe that a student is impaired in processing linguistic information with or without amplification. The disability must adversely affect educational performance.

Deaf-Blindness: a concomitant hearing and visual impairment so severe that the student cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness.

Emotional Disturbance: a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

- a. an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- b. an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- d. A generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes schizophrenia. It does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined they have an emotional disturbance.

Learning Disability: a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do in mathematical calculations. The term does not include learning problems that are the result of mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Mental Retardation: significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a student's performance.

Multiple Disabilities: means concomitant impairments the combination of which cause educational needs that cannot be accommodated in a special education class solely for one of the impairments, e.g. mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment.

Orthopedic Impairment: a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance, e.g. clubfoot, polio, cerebral palsy.

Other Health Impaired: means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems, e.g. heart condition, tuberculosis, attention deficit disorder.

Speech or Language Impairment: means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or voice impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

Traumatic Brain Injury: mean an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force or by certain medical conditions such as stroke or a brain tumor with resulting impairments that adversely affect a student's educational performance.

Visual Impairment Including Blindness: means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.