The Rochester City School District’s Inclusion Revolution- The Road to Equity.
The Rochester City School District has embarked on a journey to dismantle the disproportionate classification, segregated placement, and suspension of students with disabilities. We are working to tackle these historic inequities across RCSD with a sense of urgency. We know that RCSD classifies students at a rate 55% higher than the national average. We also know that historically, once students are classified as having a disability in RCSD, more than half of those students are segregated in self-contained classrooms.

The District experienced a 40% spike of students being placed in self-contained classes, after the elimination of Integrated Co-Taught classrooms in grades 6-12. We are working to reverse that trend. RCSD's journey towards equity is rooted in high expectations for all students, and the belief that Disability does not prohibit our students from achieving success alongside their non-disabled peers. When we shift to the mindset that our goal for student success includes all students, we can do amazing things without relying on sending “special” students to “special” classes to learn.

The research is clear, Inclusive Education is a win for all, and RCSD was decades behind. In the 2019-20 school year RCSD expanded Integrated Co-Taught classrooms across the District in grades K-12. We are in the midst of an Inclusion Revolution in the Rochester City School District- with Equity and Access at our Core! – We’re All In.

-Kisha Morgan
Special Education Covid-19 Resources for Home Learning

Visit us on the Web to view online resources for home learning during COVID-19 School Closure:
https://www.rcsdk12.org/Domain/6277

Special Ed. COVID-19 Resources for Home Learning

- Message from the Chief
- Instructional Strategies for SWDs
- Parent Toolkit
- Instructional Resources
- Speech/Language Therapy Resources
- Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy Resources
- Social Learning Resources
- Resources for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students
- Resources for Visually Impaired Students
- Preschool Special Education Resources
- Transition Resources
- New York State Alternative Assessment (NVSSA) Resources

#WeKeepTeaching

Rochester City School District

Special Education Department

April 6, 2020
Greetings RCSD Families and Students,

I hope that each of you is safe and healthy at home with your family and loved ones.

As you are all aware, all schools in Monroe County and across New York State are currently closed as a precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. RCSD will resume holding Committee on Special Education (CSE), Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE) and Section 504 meetings on Monday, April 20th. Associate Directors of Special Education will reach out to families to discuss the virtual CSE meetings, and to re-schedule previously canceled meetings. Please reach out to the Special Education Hotline (585)-262-8220 with any questions and/or concerns.

The US Department of Education has released the following updated guidance regarding the provision of programs and services for students with disabilities: Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities.

The Rochester City School District is committed to providing a free and appropriate education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities as well as our teachers and staff providing education, specialized instruction, and related services. The most updated guidance from the US Department of Education outlines that the provision of FAPE may include, special education and related services provided through distance instruction (virtually, online or telephonically). During this school closure, RCSD may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided. While certain IEP services can be provided through the above mentioned methods, it may be unfeasible or unsafe to provide other types of services. RCSD continues to provide resources through RCSD Learns to students and families while learning at home. If your child does not know their student ID or password, please call our support hotline at 585-262-8700.

The supplemental resources below are designed to assist you while supporting your child to continue learning at home. You will find instructional strategies for students with disabilities, Instructional resources including video lessons, a parent toolkit, social stories, visual aids, at home tips for speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy and social learning.

Special Education Services
If you have questions related to special education services, please see the update from the Chief, visit the Department of Special Education or call 585-262-8220 for additional assistance. Currently, all Committee on Special Education (CSE), Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE) and Section 504 meetings are CANCELED through April 15.
The Department of Special Education is laser focused on supporting students with disabilities towards their graduation pathway. Through a cross-functional approach, we collaborated with the Department of Student Support Services and developed a Transition/Graduation Team.

The Transition/Graduation team meets with each school/program to determine graduation eligibility and pathway options, and review the following information: attendance, credits earned, credits in progress, exam scores, current special education program, CTE credits, work-based learning hours, transcript and current schedule.

The graduation rate for students with disabilities in the Rochester City School District has reached its highest percentage in over 20 years— with more than a 10% increase in the past two years.

Each Transition/Graduation Team reviews the following for each student:

- 4 year plan
- Transcript
- Course schedule and number of credits expected
- Attendance records
- Current Credits
- Potential credits for the 2018-19 school year
- Marking Period Grades
- Exam scores
- Current IEP programming
- Language Exemptions
- Possible Safety Net Options and Pathways
- Career and Work Readiness
STUDENT CENTERED DECISIONS

PRIORITY ON PLACEMENT
Parents across the Rochester City School District community have expressed frustration with the longstanding history of students with disabilities having to transfer from their home school or school of choice due to lack of options or changes in their IEP programming.

Due to the implementation of a District Level Centralized Committee on Special Education (CSE) and the expansion of options on the Continuum of Special Education Programs—there has been a 67% decrease in the number of students transferred from their home school due to a lack of Program availability as compared to the 2018-19 school year.
COMPELLING GAINS IN COMPLIANCE

CENTRALIZED COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION (CSE)
Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year the Department of Special Education initiated a District level Centralized CSE. As a result of the Centralized CSE, the District has demonstrated an overall improvement in compliance in the areas of overdue meetings, overdue evaluations, and disproportionate suspensions.

REDUCTION IN SUSPENSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
The Rochester City School District met the New York State target for suspension of students with disabilities in the 2018-2019 SY, and no longer is identified as a District in violation of Performance Indicators 4a and 4b. This demonstrates the Department’s unprecedented focus on disrupting the disproportionate suspension of black and brown students with disabilities.

The Department implemented both Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP) Protocols to ensure that each school establishes a BIP review team that consistently monitors the identification and implementation of behavioral interventions. Additionally, the use of restorative practices across the district has promoted a relational approach to problem solving and managing student behavior, which further reduces the suspensions of students with disabilities.

CSE MEETING COMPLIANCE
The chart to the right shows the dramatic decrease in the number of overdue meetings from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020 SY. Additionally, for the first time in decades, a Summer CSE was not required in RCSD to complete overdue meetings.

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

NELSON MANDELA
BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Foundations is an enrichment program designed to support academic success using developmentally appropriate strategies and culturally responsive practices. The speech/language therapist and classroom teacher collaborate to provide their students with opportunities for direct, specific, evidenced-based intervention targeting:

- Basic concepts
- Phonemic awareness
- Vocabulary development
- Language comprehension
- Social language

Why was the Program Created?

- To reduce inappropriate academic referrals to CSE.
- To develop foundational skills in grades K & 1 to allow access to grade level curriculum.
- To develop readiness in literacy and social language development.

Focused on Results!

During the current school year, approximately 4000 kindergarten and first grade students participated in the District-wide Foundations Language Enrichment Program.

At the end of the 18-19 school year, our kindergarten students achieved 27% growth in expanding their vast receptive vocabulary. Our students in self-contained classrooms achieved 19% growth in overall receptive vocabulary.

Our kindergarten students achieved 64% growth in knowledge and use of basic concepts, as demonstrated by their performance on the BOEHM Test of Basic Concepts. Our students in self-contained classrooms surpassed the District average with 77% growth!