

Special Education District Plan

December 2015 through August 2018



This is an update to the special education plan
Adopted by the BOE on September 18, 2013

Adopted by the Board of Education December 16, 2015

Acknowledgements

The original plan was developed as a result of continuous dialogue in recent years with administrators, supervisors, faculty members, our CSE (Committee on Special Education) chairperson, representatives from Questar III, RSE-TASC, and colleagues from neighboring districts. The plan was substantially shaped as a result of ongoing dialogue with special education department members and school psychologists. Thank you to all who have been part of the dialogue, thank you very much for your time and expertise in helping us to “chart our course” for the future. This revised plan is a result of continuous collaboration and efforts to maintain a program that is both responsive to student needs and in compliance with changing mandates and standards.

In accordance with Part 200.2 (c) the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the district plan for students is to provide the following:

1. A description of the nature and scope of special education programs and services;
2. Identification of number and age span of students to be served;
3. Methods to help the school district evaluate progress towards stated objectives;
4. A description of current and future space needs for special education programs;
5. A description of the method by which instructional materials will be made available in usable alternative format to students with disabilities;
6. Board of Education policies & practices associated with programs and space needs;
7. A budget to support the proposed delivery of special education programs;
8. Date when the plan was adopted by the Board of Education.

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Description of Special Education Programs:

The following description of special education services represents program options from the least restrictive environment to the most restrictive. Federal and State regulations, as well as best practice, require that students are educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that will meet their individual needs. The LRE is determined by the Committee on Special Education. Refer to BOE Policy 4321.1.

Current educational research data has shown that students who are taught in an integrated setting demonstrate better academic progress than students taught in segregated settings. While all LRE decisions are based on individual needs, the Taconic Hills District is committed to including as many special education students as possible in general education classes, where they have maximum exposure to grade level curriculum and an opportunity for enhanced social development. To this end, and based upon on-going meetings with our special education staff, school psychologists, and administrators, we continue to dedicate our resources toward providing Integrated Co-teaching district wide.

Related Services

This is the lowest level of special education services on the least restrictive environment continuum. Related services are developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that are required to assist the student with a disability. There follows a summary of available related services:

- ◆ The related service of speech/language therapy is available to both disabled and non-disabled students.
- ◆ The related services of occupational and physical therapies are available to disabled students as identified by the CSE/CPSE or Section 504 Committees, and in some cases to non-disabled students as appropriate.
- ◆ The related service of counseling is available to both disabled and non-disabled students.
- ◆ Additional related services such as teacher of the hearing impaired (THI), teacher of the visually impaired (TVI), and orientation and mobility services (O&M) are contracted through Questar III for delivery to students in district who are identified by the CSE or Section 504 Committees.
- ◆ A Traumatic Brain Injury [TBI] specialist is also available on a consultant basis as a resource to support CSE/Section 504 students and staff working with them in managing/navigating the challenges of a traumatic brain injury.

Consultant Teacher Services

The District provides direct and/or in-direct Consultant Teacher Services to students with disabilities in general education classrooms K-12. Special education consultant teachers collaborate with general education teachers to plan instructional accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities in general education settings. Instructional accommodations are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning and do not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. Accommodations may include changes in presentation or format of instruction and/or response format and procedures, instructional strategies and time/scheduling, environmental considerations, equipment and physical setting. Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn to provide opportunities to participate meaningfully and productively with other students in classroom and school learning experiences. Modifications may include changes in instructional level, content and performance criteria. These accommodations and modifications also benefit non-disabled peers. One way in which consultant teachers and general education teachers collaborate is through flexible grouping. Teachers meet weekly to discuss plans and to group students.

Integrated Co-Teaching

This program provides a special education teacher to co-teach with the general education teacher. At Taconic Hills, the Integrated Co-Teaching model is available in PK for all core instruction, grades K-8 in the areas of English/language arts and mathematics, and in grade 9-12 for English/language arts, algebra and geometry. There are several co-teaching models, including supportive teaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching and team teaching. The co-teaching model pairs a content specialist, the general education teacher, and an access specialist, the special education teacher, to insure that students with disabilities can be successful in the general education classroom.

- ◆ There may be no more than 13 students with IEPs in any general education co-taught classroom. Upon request, the State Education Department may grant a variance for one additional student for a total of 14 students. The percentage of students with disabilities in an integrated classroom does not exceed 50%.

Resource Room

This program is for students with disabilities who are in need of specialized supplementary instruction in a small group setting for a specific subject area such as math or reading.

- ◆ No more than 5 students may be placed in a resource room at any one time.

- ◆ Students are assigned to a resource room program for not less than three hours per week and not more than 50% of the school day.
- ◆ A teacher assigned to teach resource room full time might have a caseload of 20 students. If the teacher assigned to teach resource room and other special education classes, the caseload is prorated based on time in each assignment area.
- ◆ Students are assigned to a resource room based on similarity of individual needs according to levels of academic achievement, learning characteristics, social and physical development, and management needs.
- ◆ The resource room supports general education through small group review, reinforcement of skills, remediation of learning deficits, pre-teaching new concepts, and supplementing reading or math instruction.

Special Class Programs:

The district provides special class programs taught by a special education teacher outside of the general education setting. The chronological age range within special education classes for students less than 16 years of age may not exceed 36 months. If circumstances arise which would result in an age range greater than 36 months, the district would need to apply for a variance to Part 200.6 (g)(5). The district provides the following types of special class programs:

12:1:1

- ◆ The district operates 12:1:1 classes in the elementary (grades 3-5), middle school (grades 6 – 8), and high school (grades 9-12). A 12:1:1 class consists of 12 students, a certified special education teacher and a teacher assistant.
- ◆ Students in 12:1:1 special classes are in need of an alternate learning environment, in which they can receive small group instruction in reading, math, social studies and science. These students generally have a severe discrepancy between their academic skill levels and actual grade level that would prevent them from benefiting from instruction in the general education setting, even with supplementary aides and services.
- ◆ Students may spend all or part of their day in the 12:1:1 class, depending on the nature and severity of their academic and management needs. The majority of these students participate in general education classes for Music, Art, P.E., Technology, Home & Careers, and Health. High School 12:1:1 students may also participate in general education elective courses.
- ◆ The curriculum in 12:1:1 special classes parallels that of the general education program and includes extensive modifications to methodology that could not be accomplished satisfactorily in a general education setting.

- ◆ The High School 12:1:1 students earn units of credit toward a Regents or Local diploma.
- ◆ Students may also receive the new Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) credential in addition to a Regents/local diploma or in lieu of the diploma. The CDOS learning standards are a progression of standards for career development, integrated learning and universal foundation skills. The new NYS CDOS Commencement Credential requires documentation that the student has demonstrated knowledge and skills at the commencement level of the CDOS learning standards.

12:1:2

- ◆ In an effort to support students' needs in a district based program rather than an out-of-district placement, two 12:1:2 programs have been established.
- ◆ The district operates 12:1:2 classes in the elementary school for grade K-2 and the high school Titan PLUS program for grades 9-12. A 12:1:2 class consists of 12 students, a certified special education teacher, a teaching assistant, and a teacher aide. Additional support staff may be needed based on the needs of the students. Both programs include a counseling component.
- ◆ The Titan PLUS program has a goal of flexibility to support students who struggle in a less restrictive environment and/or who are more than a year behind in credits.
- ◆ Students in 12:1:2 special classes are in need of an alternate learning environment, in which they can receive small group instruction in reading, math, social studies and science. These students generally have a severe discrepancy between their academic skill levels and actual grade level that would prevent them from benefiting from instruction in the general education setting, even with supplementary aides and services.
- ◆ Students may spend all or part of their day in the 12:1:2 class, depending on the nature and severity of their academic and management needs. Some of these students may participate in general education classes and electives. High School 12:1:2 students may also participate in general education elective courses based on their program level. High School students may also participate in Career and Technical Education programs at the Questar III BOCES.
- ◆ The curriculum in 12:1:2 special classes parallels that of the general education program and includes extensive modifications to methodology that could not be accomplished satisfactorily in a general education setting. The PLUS class also includes a credit recovery component not available in the general education setting or 12:1:1 setting.
- ◆ The High School 12:1:2 students earn units of credit toward a Regents or Local diploma.
- ◆ Students may also receive the new Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) credential in addition to a Regents/local diploma or in lieu of the diploma. The CDOS learning standards are a progression of standards for career development, integrated learning and universal foundation skills. The new NYS

CDOS Commencement Credential requires documentation that the student has demonstrated knowledge and skills at the commencement level of the CDOS learning standards.

12:1 (3:1)

- ◆ The District operates one 12:1(3:1) class in the High School. Students in 12:1(3:1) class may have severe developmental or multiple disabilities and require a functional academic curriculum and pre-vocational skills training. Due to their cognitive and adaptive behavior delays, they cannot be accommodated satisfactorily in a general education setting even with supplementary aides and services.
- ◆ In addition to the teacher, there shall be one staff person to every three students. The additional staff may be teachers, supplementary school personnel and/or related service providers.
- ◆ There is no chronological age range limitation for groups of students placed in the 12:1(3:1) class.
- ◆ The students in the 12:1 (3:1) are provided with the NYS alternate assessment.
- ◆ The students in the 12:1(3:1) earn credit toward a new credential, the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential, a commencement certificate accompanied by documentation of the student's skills and strengths and levels of independence in academic work, career development, and foundation skills needed for post-school living, learning and working.

Questar III Operated Classes

If we can't meet a student's need(s), via one of our district's programs, Questar III is the "first call" for meeting that student's needs with an appropriate program. By combining student populations across multiple school districts, Questar III provides our district with the capacity to provide students with a program more closely tailored to the student's physical, educational, social, and management needs. Programs are supervised by Questar III administrators and monitored by our district's CSE.

Career Technical Education and Career Services Education classes are available through Questar III to all disabled and non-disabled students.

Privately Operated Programs

A student is placed in such a program when no public program is appropriate or available to meet that student's particular need(s). The program is supervised by the administration of that facility and is monitored by our district's CSE.

State Operated Schools

Such schools are administered by the State Education Department to meet the needs of severely impaired youngsters, through a variety of programs. A student gains entrance to such a school either through recommendation of the CSE or through a Commissioner's appointment following an independent parent/guardian application.

Preschool Services

Itinerant Services

Itinerant Services are special education or related services that focus on the nature of the child's disability. Itinerant services may be provided in the child's home or in a nursery school setting.

Related Services: Pre-school students with disabilities may have itinerant speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or social work services, depending on their individual needs. These services are provided at the convenience of the parent, in the home, day care, or nursery school setting.

Special Education Itinerant Teacher: A special education itinerant teacher (SEIT) provides instruction in pre-academic skills and/or social skills to a preschool child with a disability either in the home or in a nursery school setting.

Center Based Services:

Center based special education pre-school programs may be half-day or full-day programs. They address the overall developmental needs of the child, coupled with related services, according to each child's individual needs. The class size and staffing may vary depending on student needs.

Special Class in a Segregated Setting: Special classes in segregated settings do not include non-disabled peers in the same class as the pre-school student with a disability. This placement is generally recommended when a student has multiple or high needs for special instruction and services.

Special Class in an Integrated Setting: A special class program in an integrated setting includes both disabled and non-disabled students in the same classroom. This placement is generally recommended when a student has fewer needs or less severe delays, and also when it is felt they would benefit from the modeling of non-disabled peers, for social skills and language development. *Starting with the 2015-2016 school year, the District, in collaboration with Advance Therapy, is approved to offer an SCIS for pre-kindergarten*

students staffed with an THCS regular education teacher and teaching assistant co-teaching with a special education teacher and special education teaching assistant from Advanced Therapy which includes up to six special education students integrated into a classroom of up to eighteen students.

Methods to Evaluate Progress:

Taconic Hills utilizes student performance on Statewide ELA and Math examinations, NWEA testing, report cards, and performance on Regents Exams to measure student progress toward graduation. New York State Special Education Performance Plan Indicator data also assists in providing feedback regarding student achievement and graduation rates.

Students may be evaluated using group (NWEA) and individual achievement tests. Data is also collected on each student's Response to Intervention. For some students, the New York State Alternate Assessment provides a portfolio of skills and progress toward meeting their individual educational goals. Additionally, data collection for the new Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential and the CDOS credential will provide information regarding student progress.

Allocation of Space for Special Education Programs & Services

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to allocate adequate and appropriate space for special education classes, programs and services that are provided by the District or by BOCES. The Board affirms a commitment to serve students with disabilities in settings with non-disabled peers.

Therefore, school administrators will monitor the number of students with disabilities and the services required for those students and will anticipate future needs in order to identify current and future space needs. Planning for special education programs and services will maximize physical integration of regular and special education programs.

The Superintendent will consider special education space needs as part of the annual budget cycle and during all long range facilities planning.

Special Education Budget

A budget to support the proposed delivery of special education programs will be developed annually, based on the number of special education students and their individual needs. The budget will include the funding necessary to support in-house programs, as well as Questar III special education programs and private placements. An additional sum of money is added to the special education budget each year in anticipation of new special

education students moving into the district as well as an amount for unexpected additional needs of current students that might arise. The budget is prepared annually and reviewed by the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Business Office, Superintendent and the Board of Education.

Board of Education Policies:

BOE Policy # 4321 – Programs for Students with Disabilities under the IDEA and New York’s Education Law Article 89

BOE Policy # 4321.1 – Provision of Special Education Services in the Least Restrictive Environment

BOE Policy # 4321.2 – School-Wide Pre-Referral Approaches and Interventions

BOE Policy # 4321.3 – Allocation of Space for Special Education Programs

BOE Policy # 4321.4 – Independent Educational Evaluations

BOE Policy # 4321.5 – Confidentiality and Access to Individualized Education Programs, Individualized Education Services Programs and Services Plans

BOE Policy # 4321.6 – Availability of Alternative Format Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities

BOE Policy # 4321.7 – Districtwide and Statewide Assessments of Students with Disabilities

BOE Policy #4321.13 – Pre-School Special Education