

FORWARD TOGETHER

Special Education Programming Plan



PORTLAND
Public Schools

Special Education

Systems and Structures for Inclusive Practices

The Purpose

The purpose of this strategic work is to present a comprehensive plan for systems and structures that support the understanding and implementation of inclusionary practices for students with disabilities in Portland Public Schools.

We fundamentally believe in providing a continuum of special education services and instruction to address the needs of our students that receive special education services.

The Process

In October 2021, PPS opted to have a third-party review of special education programming at PPS and how it aligns with the PPS Strategic Plan, [Forward Together](#). We partnered with the Urban Special Education Collaborative, a nationally recognized organization based at the University of Arizona, that works with school districts to increase inclusive special education services in schools and decrease the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classification rates, separate educational environments, and disciplinary actions. The review highlighted key shifts including the need to focus on a neighborhood school model.

- Implement a neighborhood school model of service delivery for students with disabilities.
- Implement a special education instructional model that is anchored in the Instructional Framework with high leverage practices and inclusive educational environments in service of students with disabilities.
- Adopt and support the principles of Universal Design for Learning as a key strategy to support all students' access to the core general education curriculum.
- Provide ongoing professional development for principals in leading for equity that includes leading for students with disabilities.
- Provide ongoing engagement opportunities for parents, caregivers and students to ensure their voices are integrated in the implementation of special education programming in PPS.

Special Education initiated development of a plan for program improvement integrating the key shifts, including a shift toward a neighborhood school model. The goal is to backward map and build out a comprehensive plan for systems and structures that support the understanding and implementation of inclusionary practices for students with disabilities. [The Special Education: Systems and Structures for Inclusive Practices Project Charter](#) is a key step toward meeting that goal and is based on key stakeholder feedback, the [PPS Vision & Graduate Portrait](#) and is aligned with the Instructional Framework. The comprehensive plan centered on the strategic goals described in the project charter above will be iterated annually. Action steps for the culmination of this year are outlined and assigned; each spring the team will evaluate and confirm tasks and due dates for the following year.



Strategic Goals

- Establish Systems and Structures for Inclusion
- Build the Advocacy Power of Students and Families of Students with Disabilities
- Promote an Inclusive Mindset
- Reimagine Relationships and a Sense of Belonging



Core Team & Stakeholder Engagement

Core Team

- Chief of Student Support Services
- Sr. Director of Special Education
- Project Manager for Chief of Student Support Services
- Assistant Director of Special Education

Collaborators

- Special Education Assistant Directors and Program Administrators
- Special Education Steering Committee (one or more): Special Education Teacher, Occupational Therapist, Paraeducator, School Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP)
- Culturally Specific Community Agents

Engaged Stakeholders

- Students' voices have been gathered at each type of our Focus Classroom (Social Emotional Skills classroom, Communication & Behavior classroom, Intensive Skills classroom) and at both the middle and high school levels
- Family listening sessions and survey in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Somali.
- Identified building administrators



Our Vision

PPS Special Education Services will develop inclusive academic and social emotional learners, promote belonging and engagement, and empower students to meet their futures proactively.

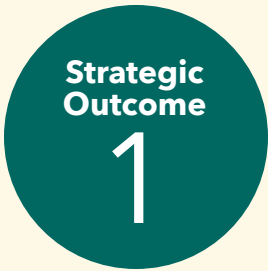
Our Mission

The Special Education Department is committed to providing instructional services in inclusive environments that will prepare students who receive special education services for life and careers.

Our Core Values

- 1 Belonging and Engagement
- 2 Inclusive Academic and Social Emotional Learners
- 3 College, Career and Post School Readiness





Establish Systems and Structures for Inclusions

Our system-wide capacity for inclusion of students is supported by the consideration of special education needs in planning for professional development, curriculum adoption, budget, MTSS, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and staffing. This ensures that every student can attain the Graduate Portrait, and every educator can develop their capacity to be inclusive and responsive to all diverse learners, as reflected in the Educator Essentials.

GOAL #1 District-wide planning for professional development, curriculum adoption, budget, MTSS, CTE, and staffing integrates special education.

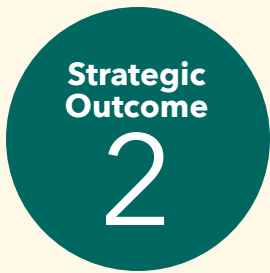
GOAL #2 Develop and fund an inclusion team that focuses on coaching support and mentoring for general education teachers around the inclusion of students with complex needs.

Milestones

- Align roles and responsibilities within the Special Education Department to align with Office of School Performance and ensure effective inclusive special education supports and services.
- Develop a schematic of what each school would look like when students with disabilities are educated in their neighborhood schools.
- Provide professional learning and engagement for PPS staff on IEP teams to plan and implement standards based IEP special education programs which are inclusive of strategies focused on amplifying students’ strengths and disability driven needs

Assessing Impact

- The academic achievement of Students with Disabilities, measured through MAP and Oregon State Assessments, will increase with engagement and involvement in core instruction.
- The percentage of Students with Disabilities time in Least Restrictive Environment of General Education will increase.
- Graduation rate of Students with Disabilities will grow.



Promote an Inclusive Mindset

We understand and implement inclusionary practices for students with disabilities, including full implementation of MTSS, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), comprehensive professional development, and tiered academic supports, aligned to the Graduate Portrait and Educator Essentials.

GOAL #1 Every educator receives professional training and resources to optimize opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed. The professional development is aligned with the Professional Learning Master Plan and includes a full implementation of UDL practices in special education and general education, and tiered academic supports, including culturally responsive pedagogy. This supports our belief that students with disabilities are everyone’s students and expands our understanding of the importance of inclusion.

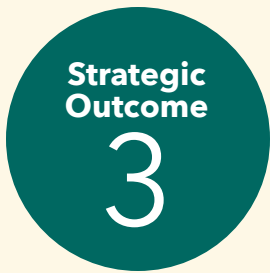
GOAL #2 We are reducing exclusions from general education by increasing awareness, reducing bias and discriminatory practices, and increasing inclusionary practices by educators in the general education setting.

Milestones

- All students have meaningful access to grade level content.
 - Staff approach students and instruction with an asset based mindset , affirming the validity of students backgrounds and identities.
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Assessing Impact

- Increase Neighborhood Schools and Sense of Belonging:
 - Percentage of Students with Disabilities who attend their neighborhood school or school of choice will increase.
 - Exclusionary discipline of Students with Disabilities will decrease.



Build the Advocacy Power of Students and Families of Students with Disabilities

We work with families and students to identify information needs and expand resources about all aspects of the special education process, including evaluation, eligibility, and Individual Education Plan (IEP) processes. We empower students to lead their own IEPs. Educators have the training and support to be fully inclusive of all families and students and help create connections between special education supports and the Graduate Portrait.

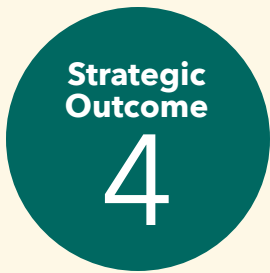
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- GOAL #1** We ensure that students with disabilities and their families understand the Graduate Portrait elements to help students realize them. We also explore those elements in an adapted Graduate Portrait for students with complex needs, in collaboration with students and families, to ensure that every student sees themselves in our Graduate Portrait.
- GOAL #2** Expand our Multilingual SpEd Family Toolkit to increase education and awareness for families and guardians, especially our historically underserved families, regarding special education processes and practices.
- GOAL #3** Use our expanded Multilingual SpEd Family Toolkit to increase student awareness and engagement in special education processes so that students can learn to lead their own IEPs and understand how special supports connect to meeting Graduate Portrait goals, especially for our historically underserved students.
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Milestones

- Intentional engagement for families of students with disabilities through advisory and parent education on special education within PPS, IEP process, and the IEP as the special education program.
 - Engage students, family and community members through this redesign process to get input and buy-in.
 - Increase students' and families' meaningful participation in IEP and Transition Plan development and implementation.
 - Expand and promote the Multilingual Family Toolkit.
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Assessing Impact

- Post school outcomes for Students with Disabilities will improve as indicated by an increase in:
 - Students with Disabilities enrollment in higher education, or
 - Students with Disabilities enrollment in post-secondary education/training, or
 - Students with Disabilities competitive employment within one year of leaving high school.



Reimagine Relationships and a Sense of Belonging Focus on inclusionary practices for students with disabilities

Our “design principles for belonging,” based on collaborative work with students, student groups, families and communities, and external research, build capacity throughout the system to reimagine relationships, foster community and belonging, and reimagine discipline. The design process identifies needed resources and creates the conditions for greater physical and emotional safety for students and educators.

GOAL #1 Complete a process of exploratory learning and gathering input on what is needed to build a sense of belonging and supportive relationships.

GOAL #2 Based on the results of goal #1, prototype a set of “design principles for belonging” that create the conditions for educators to foster emotional regulation and healthy environments for every student.

GOAL #3 Develop and implement a comprehensive plan, building on goals #1 and #2, that increases access to, and representation of, student-led activities that support cultural and social identity, enhancing a sense of safety and belonging at every school site.

Milestones

- Intentionally focus and support early implementers across the system who will then serve as demonstration sites.
- Center Neighborhood Schools assessment with the planning, improvement, and support efforts offered to each school site and instructional leadership team.

Assessing Impact

- Students with Disabilities will experience an increased sense of belonging as indicated by responses to the following questions on the annual Successful Schools Survey:
 - How well do people at your school understand you as a person?
 - How much support do the adults at your school give you?
 - How much respect do students at your school show you?
 - Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?



A Collaborative Effort!

The mission of the Special Education Department is to provide instructional services in inclusive environments that will prepare students that receive special education services for life and careers. This work is in support of the board goals and aligned to the vision as well as represented in the Portland Public Schools Strategic Plan, Forward Together. The Special Education Department, in collaboration with others, is developing a comprehensive plan integrated with Forward Together which will improve services to, and outcomes for, our students.

The Special Education department is committed to shifting district practice toward inclusion and improving outcomes for students with disabilities. We are focused on the strategic outcomes in our program improvement plan and leading the system forward. We fundamentally believe in providing a continuum of special education services and instruction to address the needs of our students that receive special education services, and our ability to meet the vast majority of those needs in our neighborhood schools.

The Special Education department has completed a comprehensive program review to examine our programming and its alignment to the district strategic plan and graduate portrait. Through extensive staff and community engagement, we have a deepened understanding of the necessary steps in order to achieve our program improvement plan outcomes. Through professional learning, appropriate instructional materials and the implementation of the **Instructional Framework**, educational equity is attainable for all students.