



Overview of Special Education

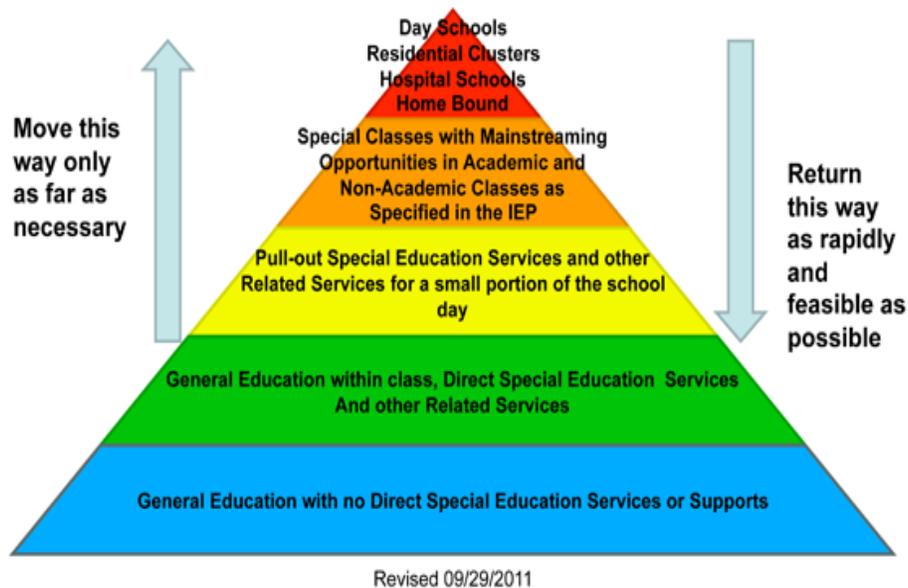
Overview

The Office of Student Services (OSS) strives to provide a broad continuum of services and supports that meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. The OSS is dedicated to ensure equitable access and excellence and promote the meaningful inclusion and success of all students across every domain of school and community life. Services are provided to students eligible for special education from the ages of 3-22 years. The OSS is committed to engaging with families, their supporters, general and special educators and school leaders in partnerships that promote equity and excellence for all.

The vision of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in the IDEA was designed to ensure and protect the rights of all students with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of disability, to be educated in their home schools alongside their peers to the greatest extent possible. This LRE principle is well-borne out by decades of research that show that the more normative the environment the better the long-term outcomes for children. The continuum of services and supports in special education and general education ensures that student's services and programs are based on individual needs. School districts are required to offer services and support that move across the continuum so that all students' needs can be met. As students' needs change, services may move up and/or down the continuum. The continuum of services is fluid. This means that as needs change, services and service delivery can change. Services designate what is being rendered and can be rendered in and throughout various settings both general education and separate. Programs designate a place in which various types of services are rendered, these are often sub-separate programs and placements individualized to meet students' needs and with the goal of moving towards less restrictive programming and placement as students make progress. For some students, programs can serve as a hub or home-base providing support and therapeutic and academic holding that enables students to be in their general education classes for much of the school day. In Massachusetts, the transition planning process begins no later than age 14. By age 14, students are invited to attend their IEP meetings and the development of a Transition Planning Form (TPF) must occur. Team discussions regarding transition planning will take place at a student's IEP meeting and are documented on the Transition Planning Form.

All students on IEPs are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and are provided equal opportunity to participate in educational, nonacademic, extracurricular and ancillary programs, as well as participation in regular education. All students receiving special education, regardless of placement, shall have an equal opportunity to participate in, and, if appropriate, receive credit for the vocational, supportive, or remedial services that may be available as part of the general education program as well as the nonacademic and extracurricular programs of the school.

Least Restrictive Placement in the Continuum of Services



Newton Public Schools Mission, Goals, and Values

The Newton Public Schools strives to “cultivate a culture of equity and excellence by creating and sustaining curriculum and instructional practices that lead to high-quality learning for each and every student.” The Newton Public Schools value diversity and shared commitment to the philosophy of inclusion by providing students with disabilities access to an education in their neighborhood schools and in their classrooms with same-aged peers. One of our core values is to: “Recognize the uniqueness and dignity of individuals of differing races, religions, classes, ethnicities, sexual orientations, learning styles and abilities. Newton believes that we achieve this goal by creating, “an environment where everyone feels known, safe, and valued.”

Inclusion in the Newton Public Schools

An inclusive education helps prepare students with and without disabilities for life and builds understanding and acceptance within the broader community. This is achieved through collaboration among families, administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and teaching aides to provide differentiated instruction and supports for all students to address their individual learning needs. The environment necessary to nurture and foster inclusion is built upon a shared belief system merging the talents and resources of all educators.

The Continuum of Special Education Services

All schools offer a range of services and supports designed to provide flexible and individualized programming for all students. Services and supports are provided both within and outside the general education classroom. The nature of this support varies and is specific to the students’ needs. They are customized based on individual needs, and are designed to be flexible and match each student as they learn and grow.

Adapted Physical Education (APE):

APE services are for students who need specialized instruction to access the general education physical education curriculum.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):

ABA services are for students who present with educational and behavioral needs that benefit from highly structured instruction and interventions inclusive of: systematic individualized instruction (e.g. discrete trial training, natural environment training, comprehensive behavior support plans). Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a scientifically validated method to teach a variety of skills and to address challenging behavior. A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) provides services and consultation to students and the student's IEP Team and direct service delivery is provided by a behavior therapist, a special education aide with specialized experience and training who implements ABA methods under the direction of a BCBA.

Assistive Technology:

Assistive Technology must be considered in conjunction with the student's IEP and, when recommended, must support IEP goals and objectives. Assistive technology consultation or assessment determines what is educationally needed for a student to make effective progress as part of FAPE. To determine which device and/or strategy will be the best fit for the student the Assistive Technology Specialist follows the SETT Framework, reviewing the student, their environment and the tasks they are asked to do in their educational setting to choose the appropriate tool for them.

Counseling Services:

Counseling Services are for students who have identified social-emotional or mental health needs that interfere with the student's ability to access their education. Services may include individual or group counseling, consultation with teachers, parents and outside providers. Services are provided by social workers, school psychologists, school counselors and counseling interns.

Music Therapy:

Music Therapy services are provided to assist students in accessing the curriculum. Individual and group music therapy sessions are provided based on student need. Music therapy services are provided through consultation, one-on-one, small group and in-class formats by a music therapist.

Physical Therapy (PT):

Physical Therapy services are for students, whose physical disabilities interfere with their ability to access their educational program and environment, including students with motor and/or functional limitations caused by neurological or orthopedic impairments. Physical therapy services are provided in consultation, one-on-one, small group and in-class formats by physical therapists.

Occupational Therapy (OT):

Occupational Therapy is a related service for students who qualify for special education services. Occupational therapy services promote the development of motor, play, social and adaptive abilities of children who experience a wide range of challenges. The OT evaluation provides information to assist the team in creating an appropriate educational plan to support the student's school participation. Occupational therapy services are provided through consultation, one-on-one, small group and in-class formats by registered occupational therapists (OTR) and/or certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA).

Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing:

Deaf and Hard of Hearing services are for students who have a diagnosed hearing loss. Deaf and Hard of Hearing services provide students with equal access to all communication, learning, and social activities in the school setting. Deaf and Hard of Hearing services are provided in consultation, one-on-one, small group and in-class formats by a staff of specialists for the deaf and hard of hearing, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, sign language interpreters, captionists, signing aides, and classroom aides, as well as a consulting educational audiologist.

Services for the Visually Impaired:

Vision and Orientation and Mobility services are for students who have diagnosed vision concerns. Vision and Orientation and Mobility services provide students with Braille literacy instruction, use of assistive technology, transportation access, community, vocational and academic access, and skills of daily living. Vision and Orientation and Mobility services are provided in consultation, one-on-one, small group and in-class formats by a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) and an orientation and mobility provider.

Speech and Language Therapy:

Speech and Language services are for students whose education is adversely affected by communication difficulties. Treatment can be provided to eligible students who have language, pragmatic, voice, fluency, articulation or augmentative/alternative communication needs that directly impact their ability to access the curriculum. Services are provided by Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP) and Speech and Language Pathology Assistants (SLP-A).

Special Education Programs

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>GRADES</u>	<u>SCHOOL</u>
<u>Early Childhood Education Program</u> Citywide Early Childhood Services – Preschool	Preschool	NECP
<u>Elementary School Programs:</u>		
STRIDE	Grades K - 5	Zervas/Cabot
Citywide ACHIEVE Program	Grades 2 – 5	Angier
<u>Middle School Programs</u>		
STRIDE	Grades 6 - 8	Brown
Citywide S.P.A.R.K. Program Citywide Project	Grades 6 - 8 Grades 6 - 8	Brown n
Citywide BOOST Program	Grades 6 - 8	Countryside
Citywide Bridge Program	Grades 6 - 8	Day
Citywide Reflections Program	Grades 6 - 8	Day
Citywide Language Based Learning Disabilities Program	Grades 6 - 8	Oak Hill/Day
<u>High School Programs</u>		
Connections High School	Grades 9 - 12	Newton North/Newton South
STRIDE	Grades 9 - 12 Ages 18 - 22	Newton North/Newton South
The Learning Program	Grades 9 - 12	Newton South
STEP	Grades 9 - 12	Newton North/Newton South
Citywide RISE	Grades 9 - 12	Newton South
<u>High School Alternative and Therapeutic Programs</u>		
Links	Grades 11 - 12	Newton North
Pilot	Grades 9 - 12	Newton
Southsid	Grades 9 - 12	North
Compass	Grades 9 - 12	Newton South
<u>Approved Public Day Program</u>		
Central	Grades 9 - 12	Education Center
<u>Post-Graduate Programs</u>		
Citywide Community Connections Program	Ages 18 - 22	Newton North/Education Center

Early Childhood Education Program

Early Childhood Education Program

Program: Citywide Preschool

School: Newton Early Childhood Program (NECP)

Grades: Preschool

Overview: NECP offers a wide range of identification, diagnostic, educational, and support services for preschool children. Integrated preschool classes are located at NECP. They enroll 15 to 16 children, seven to eight of whom have moderate to intensive special education needs and eight students without disabilities. A substantially separate classroom enrolls eight to nine students with intensive special needs.

- 3-hour integrated classes
- 5-hour integrated classes
- Full-day self-contained classes
- Afternoon programming
- Therapeutic-based programming

The goal of the program is to address student needs by providing a comprehensive range of services and a consistent, structured and supportive environment throughout the preschool day.

Student Profile: Children (ages 3, 4, and 5), including those turning 5 during the school year (5 after August 31st), who have special education needs and require educational and/or related services.

Description:

Staffing: Each classroom is staffed with a master's level teacher certified in early childhood special education, teacher aides, and behavior therapists as necessary. In addition, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers and board certified behavior analysts (BCBA), are part of the classroom interdisciplinary team. Additionally, a physical education teacher provides a weekly physical education program and a music teacher provides a weekly music education program.

Curriculum: Curriculum in the Newton Early Childhood Program is child-centered and offers developmentally appropriate activity based learning for preschool children following the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences.

Programming: The range of direct services varies widely depending on a student's individualized needs. The type and frequency of service are decided at the child's IEP Team meeting and are listed in the continuum of special education services.

Elementary School Programs

Elementary School Programs:

Service: STRIDE
School: Zervas/Countryside
Grades: K-5

Overview: STRIDE's mission is to provide comprehensive programming for students with autism and related disorders, ages 3-22, using the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to increase independent functioning and decrease maladaptive behavior. Research consistently shows that early, intensive instruction using the methods of Applied Behavior Analysis helps children with autism learn and reach their full potential.

STRIDE has established a unique learning environment for students with significant impairments in the areas of communication, behavior, social skills and academic functioning. Through this program, students can reach their full potential to become active learners and members of their school and broader community. Instruction is delivered individually, through small group activities, and via incidental teaching across settings, with opportunities for supported inclusion as appropriate. Opportunities to participate in the general education classroom are structured for each student based on the student's areas of strength and need. All activities and programming are designed to provide maximum opportunities for students to generalize their skills, practice social interactions, communication, and recreation skills across settings.

A range of evidence-based instructional strategies are employed including discrete trial instruction (DTI), natural environment training (NET), social skills training, and task analysis of complex skills. The program uses systematic reinforcement systems and consistent behavior skills development and programming.

The goal of the program is to increase students' independence and skill levels across all domains (academics, social, communication, daily living, leisure, and gross and fine motor) while providing intensive behavioral supports to facilitate appropriate social skills, emotional regulation, and the use of functional alternatives to challenging behavior. These skills are taught and practiced in a variety of settings to promote generalization.

Student Profile: Students in the STRIDE program typically have significant challenges with:
-verbal and non-verbal communication (may use augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices)
-behavior, including inflexibility and restricted/repetitive behaviors
-social skills, including very limited social interactions
-academics; most students are performing below grade level and have difficulty accessing traditional instruction

The majority of students have a diagnosis of autism. All students require intensive, highly specialized and individualized instruction and support to access learning.

Staffing: The STRIDE program is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team that includes certified special education teachers, board certified behavior analysts, occupational therapists, and speech & language pathologists with expertise in augmentative and alternative communication, a doctoral level psychologist and trained behavior therapists. Students are staffed at a 1:1 ratio and staff is rotated to promote generalization of skills. The STRIDE program's clinical consultation and oversight is provided by a doctoral level BCBA and the program is overseen district-wide by a certified special education administrator.

Elementary School Programs

Program: ACHIEVE

School(s): Angier

Grades: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Overview: Students with specific learning disabilities are supported academically and socially through individualized instruction, small group teaching, and modifications to the general education curriculum. This program is in heterogeneous classes with students without disabilities enrolled in the elementary school and students with disabilities who attend from various neighborhoods throughout the city.

The goal of the program is to address students' multiple needs by providing a comprehensive range of services and a consistent, structured and supportive environment throughout the school day. The Achieve Program enables students to fully participate in the general education curriculum, with additional supports to promote progress.

Student Profile: Students receiving supports through the ACHIEVE Program are primarily identified with specific learning disabilities and/or communication disorders. Given direct, explicit instruction and with strategies embedded throughout the day, students are working towards meeting grade level benchmarks. Students are working below grade level in literacy skills, and require instruction provided through a structured, sequential, multisensory, systematic approach to ensure all learning modalities are engaged.

Description:

- **Staffing:** The staff consists of a full time general education teacher, a full time special education teacher, and a full time intern. The school-based special education team meets regularly to discuss strategies to further support student achievement. The program is also supported by a speech language pathologist as well as consultation from a school psychologist and an AT specialist.
- **Programming:** The team utilizes evidence-based, specialized and targeted instruction to meet the academic needs of all students. Specialists work with students in the general education classroom as well as in individualized settings and groupings to ensure a streamlined and effective approach to meet all students' unique learning needs. Both the general and special education staff collaborate to meet students' IEP goals.

Middle School Program

Middle School Programs

Program: STRIDE

School: Brown

Grades: 6 - 8

Overview: STRIDE's mission is to provide comprehensive programming for students with autism and related disorders, ages 3-22, using the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to increase independent functioning and decrease maladaptive behavior. Research consistently shows that early, intensive instruction using the methods of Applied Behavior Analysis helps children with autism learn and reach their full potential.

STRIDE has established a unique learning environment for students with significant impairments in the areas of communication, behavior, social skills and academic functioning. Through this program, students can reach their full potential to become active learners and members of their school and broader community. Instruction is delivered individually, through small group activities, and via incidental teaching across settings, with opportunities for supported inclusion as appropriate. Opportunities to participate in the general education classroom are structured for each student based on the student's areas of strength and need. All activities and programming are designed to provide maximum opportunities for students to generalize their skills, practice social interactions, communication, and recreation skills across settings.

A range of evidence-based instructional strategies are employed including discrete trial instruction (DTI), natural environment training (NET), social skills training, and task analysis of complex skills. The program uses systematic reinforcement systems and consistent behavior skills development and programming.

The goal of the program is to increase students' independence and skill levels across all domains (academics, social, communication, daily living, leisure, and gross and fine motor) while providing intensive behavioral supports to facilitate appropriate social skills, emotional regulation, and the use of functional alternatives to challenging behavior. These skills are taught and practiced in a variety of settings to promote generalization.

Student Profile: Students in the STRIDE program typically have significant challenges with:
-verbal and non-verbal communication (may use augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices)
-behavior, including inflexibility and restricted/repetitive behaviors
-social skills, including very limited social interactions
-academics; most students are performing below grade level and have difficulty accessing traditional instruction

The majority of students have a diagnosis of autism. All students require intensive, highly specialized and individualized instruction and support to access learning.

Staffing: The STRIDE program is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team that includes certified special education teachers, board certified behavior analysts, occupational therapists, and speech & language pathologists with expertise in augmentative and alternative communication, a doctoral level psychologist and trained behavior therapists. Students are staffed at a 1:1 ratio and staff is rotated to promote generalization of skills. The STRIDE program's clinical consultation and oversight is provided by a doctoral level BCBA and the program is overseen district-wide by a certified special education administrator.

Middle School Programs

Program: Citywide S.P.A.R.K.

Program Schools: Brown

Grades: 6 - 8

Overview: S.P.A.R.K. provides opportunities to receive instruction in math, reading, writing, science and social studies in the S.P.A.R.K. sub-separate classroom. In these environments, students are able to access the general education curriculum in a small, supportive environment, with accommodations and modifications and at a pace appropriate to their needs. A special education teacher delivers the academic instruction, and the classroom is supported by teaching assistants and behavior therapists trained to work with students with the S.P.A.R.K. learner profile. Throughout all classes, students are supported in their ability to develop skills around self-awareness, regulation, social competency, and anxiety management.

Named by the students in the program in the fall of 2012, S.P.A.R.K. stands for:

Social
Pragmatic
S
Academic
S Respect
Knowledg
e

The mission of the S.P.A.R.K. program is to ensure a supportive, cohesive, and challenging middle school learning environment for students who exhibit difficulties with social thinking, anxiety management, and academic performance. Embedded in goals for students centered around increased skills and independence are consistent modelings, monitoring, and explicit teaching about flexibility, perspective-taking, and self-advocacy. We strive for cohesion by collaborating with individuals from each and every facet of our students' educational experiences so that we may build upon their strengths in order to enhance academic and social progress.

Student Profile: Students in the S.P.A.R.K. program may present with Autism or other similar disabilities with a variety of challenges including anxiety, social thinking, self-awareness, and executive functioning, as well as sensory and emotional regulation. In addition, students' learning may not be at grade level, and their needs are best met in a smaller, substantially separate classroom or co-taught environment.

Description:

- **Staffing:** A special education teacher delivers specialized academic instruction. The program benefits from additional consultation resources from speech language pathologists, psychologists and partners with experts in the field.
- **Programming:** Students receive academic strategies that target specific skills needed as a successful learner, such as organizational skills organizers, staying organized, studying for tests, and learning time management. In addition, students participate in meaningful inclusion opportunities such as physical education, health and the fine and applied arts rotation. Students receive social thinking, speech language, and counseling support as part of the

program. Additional related services are determined by the Team and written into the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Middle School Programs

Program: Citywide Project F.O.C.U.S.

School: Brown

Grades: Grades 6 - 8

Overview: Project F.O.C.U.S. is a community made up of diverse students with a wide range of interests, abilities, and skill sets. These students present with challenges in the areas of social thinking, self-awareness, executive functioning, perspective-taking, and emotional and sensory regulation. Students are fully included in grade-level academic classes with additional support as needed. Throughout the day, students are supported by staffs that are specifically trained in addressing the needs of this population. Services such as speech language therapy, occupational therapy, and school psychologist support are provided on a case-by-case basis.

Furthering flexibility

Optimizing executive functioning skills

Cultivating emotional and sensory awareness Understanding ourselves and others Strengthening social thinking

Members of Project F.O.C.U.S. strive to be:

- **Flexible**
- **Organized**
- **Centered**
- **Understanding**
- **Socially Intelligent**

The goal of Project F.O.C.U.S. is to ensure a supportive, cohesive, and challenging middle school learning environment for students who exhibit difficulties with social thinking, executive functioning, emotional regulation, and anxiety management. Our primary goals for students center on increased skills and independence within these areas in addition to flexibility and self-advocacy. We strive for cohesion by collaborating with individuals from each and every facet of our students' educational experiences so that we may build upon their strengths in order to enhance academic and social progress.

Student Profile: Project F.O.C.U.S. provides support for students who may present with Autism or other similar disabilities, are typically academically very capable, but have difficulty negotiating a large school environment and understanding and navigating social rules. Additionally, students in the program may have high levels of anxiety in the classroom and during unstructured times of their day. Students have access to the full range of courses and services that are available within the school.

Descripti

on

Staffing: Project F.O.C.U.S. is staffed by two inclusion facilitators, teaching assistants and behavior therapists. Project F.O.C.U.S. inclusion facilitators are the liaisons to guidance counselors, general education teachers, specialists, and students' families. The program benefits from additional consultation resources from speech language pathologists, psychologists and partners with experts in the field.

Programming: Students participate in the general education curriculum, with accommodations tailored to their learning style and current performance level as determined by the team and described in their IEP. In addition, students participate in Academic Strategies instruction with curriculum around social thinking, self-advocacy and awareness, and metacognition.

Middle School Programs

Program: Citywide BOOST Program – “Building Opportunities of Successful Transitions”

School(s): Bigelow

Grade: 6-8

Overview: BOOST is a citywide program for students with identified social-emotional disabilities, which provides specialized emotional, social, academic and behavioral interventions, instruction and supports for students. Program components, customized for student needs, include counseling, social skill and relationship development, self-regulation, anxiety, management and executive functioning skill development. The mission of the BOOST program is to ensure a supportive, cohesive, and challenging middle school learning environment for students who exhibit difficulties with emotional regulation, anxiety management, and related school performance and executive functioning issues.

Student Profile: Students who are referred for consideration in BOOST generally present as withdrawn from the larger school environment, and are spending significant portions of the school day or year outside of the classroom, or are not attending school, due to their social/emotional disability. Our primary goals for students center around increased skills and independence within these areas in addition to flexibility and self-advocacy. We strive for cohesion by collaborating with individuals from each and every facet of our students' educational experiences so that we may build upon their strengths in order to enhance academic and social progress. Ultimately, students learn to develop and utilize coping strategies and self-advocacy skills in the areas of academics and social interactions across domains.

Description:

Staffing: BOOST is staffed with two special education teachers, with content certifications, four teacher aides, one for each grade, plus an additional aide for general education classes, a full-time social worker, and a consulting BCBA and psychologist.

Programming: Students participate in the general education curriculum, with accommodations and modifications tailored to their learning style and current performance level as described in their IEP. The classrooms are structured with elements of Responsive Classroom, and use an incentive system for demonstrating coping strategies in both the BOOST and general education classrooms. Students participate in weekly 1:1 and group counseling sessions with the social worker and/or school psychologist. Per their IEP, students may also have speech language, social pragmatics, occupational therapy, or reading services with other special education providers in the building.

Middle School Programs

Program: Citywide Bridge

Program Schools: Day

Grades: 6-8

Overview: The citywide therapeutic Bridge program is designed to promote successful inclusion for students with significant emotional and behavioral learning needs. Students receiving support from the Bridge program receive intervention for social, emotional, and behavioral management skills both in and outside the general education setting. Students receive wraparound planning and coordination of care with outside providers and supports.

Student Profile: The Bridge program serves middle school students with emotional disabilities who require behavioral, emotional, and academic support throughout the school day.

Description:

Staffing: A special education teacher facilitates the program. Consultation is provided on a weekly basis by the school psychologist and counselor. The special education teacher consults and meets with the general education teachers ensuring coordination of care and consistency across settings.

Programming: Students participate in general education classes with wraparound social, emotional, and behavioral support as well as modifications to academic workload as needed. Students receive daily individualized academic support in a small group setting. They also participate in weekly group counseling sessions and individualized therapies as needed.

Middle School Programs

Program: Citywide Reflections Program

School: Day

Grades: 6 - 8

Overview: The Citywide Reflections program provides comprehensive and systematic small group instruction outside the general education setting. The curriculum parallels the scope and sequence of the regular education curriculum and is modified to meet individual student learning needs. Students work on building prerequisite skills and a foundation for life skills and independence.

Student Profile: Students receiving supports through the Reflections program require all major content area instruction in a small group setting, separate from the regular education environment. The needs of the students differ from students in other citywide substantially separate programming in that they need both a life skills component and a focus on academics.

Description:

Staffing: A special education teacher delivers specialized instruction in all content areas. Special education teacher aides support instruction in the self-contained classroom, and support successful inclusion opportunities. The school psychologist provides consultation and direct service in the area of social pragmatic instruction. A dedicated multidisciplinary team supports students based on individual need.

Programming: Students receive a total of 24 blocks of academic content (mathematics, English Language Arts, science, and social studies) within the six-day cycle. Additional blocks are allotted to provide academic support and related services based on individual need. The program provides an opportunity for students to participate in meaningful inclusion opportunities such as physical education and the fine and applied arts (FAA) rotation, as well as receive speech language services, social skill instruction, and participate in community trips as identified in their IEPs. Students have the opportunity to access the full school community, including after school activities and clubs.

Middle School Programs

Program: Language Based Learning Disabilities Program

School: Oak Hill/Day

Grades: Grades 6-8

Overview: The Language Based Learning Disabilities programs provide intensive instruction to address students' developing language skills. Given direct, explicit instruction and with strategies embedded throughout the day, students are working towards meeting grade level benchmarks. Students are working below grade level in literacy skills, and require instruction provided through a structured, sequential, multisensory, systematic approach to ensure all learning modalities are engaged.

Student Profile: Students have been diagnosed as having language based learning disabilities that significantly impact their reading and writing skills.

Description:

Staffing: Special education teachers have specialized training in language-based instruction.

A speech language pathologist collaborates with the special education teacher to plan and implement appropriate language-based supports throughout all content area classes.

Programming: While programming is individualized to meet students' needs, in general, students receive English instruction in a small class setting taught by a special educator. A speech and language pathologist provides consultation and/or direct services as needed. Students have the opportunity to receive math instruction in the inclusive setting with support, or in a substantially separate setting taught by a special educator. The instruction parallels the general education curriculum and is aligned with Massachusetts State Frameworks. Students can take classes in the other content areas in the general education setting, with the special education teacher providing consultation to embed language-based strategies across all content areas. Students in the program receive intensive instruction in reading from a teacher who has specialized training in this area. Students receive individualized programming targeting:

- Decoding and spelling
- Vocabulary and reading comprehension
- Written expression
- Executive Functioning-Note-taking/Organization Skills/Academic Strategies

High School Program s

High School Programs

Program(s): Connections

Schools: Newton North/Newton South

Grades: 9-12

Overview: The Connections program provides highly individualized services, programming, and special instruction to students according to their needs and IEPs. It is based on the belief that all students can learn together in the same schools and classrooms with appropriate supports.

The goal of the high school Connections program is to maximize the potential and independence of each student. An inclusive education helps prepare students with disabilities for an integrated adult life and builds understanding and acceptance within the broader community.

Student Profile: High school students serviced in the Connections program at Newton North High School and Newton South High School often have substantial multiple disabilities, which significantly impact their ability to access the general education curriculum. These disabilities may include, but are not limited to, autism, communication, cognitive, physical, sensory, and/or medical.

Description:

Staffing: Inclusion facilitators, special education assistants, and specialists staff the program. A case manager, a special educator with experience in intensive special needs, called an inclusion facilitator, plans appropriate interventions, coordinates services for students, models best practices in teaching students with intensive needs, and serves as a resource for students, faculty, and parents. The inclusion facilitator works closely with teachers, teaching assistants, specialists and the families of students to ensure that a meaningful educational experience is provided.

Curriculum: A critical component of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities access to the curriculum, regardless of the level. In order to provide successful experiences, an effort is made to place students in a variety of classes. The goal is typically to integrate students as much as possible. Special instruction in mathematics, English language arts, and other areas as needed.

Special Programming: Individual programming is based on each student's required modifications, accommodations, and need for specialized instruction in lieu of general education classes.

High School Programs

Program: STRIDE

School: Newton North/Newton South

Grades: 9-12 and up to age 22

Overview: STRIDE's mission is to provide comprehensive programming for students with autism and related disorders, ages 3-22, using the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to increase independent functioning and decrease maladaptive behavior. Research consistently shows that early, intensive instruction using the methods of Applied Behavior Analysis helps children with autism learn and reach their full potential.

STRIDE has established a unique learning environment for students with significant impairments in the areas of communication, behavior, social skills and academic functioning. Through this program, students can reach their full potential to become active learners and members of their school and broader community. Instruction is delivered individually, through small group activities, and via incidental teaching across settings, with opportunities for supported inclusion as appropriate. Opportunities to participate in the general education classroom are structured for each student based on the student's areas of strength and need. All activities and programming are designed to provide maximum opportunities for students to generalize their skills, practice social interactions, communication, and recreation skills across settings.

A range of evidence-based instructional strategies are employed including discrete trial instruction (DTI), natural environment training (NET), social skills training, and task analysis of complex skills. The program uses systematic reinforcement systems and consistent behavior skills development and programming.

The goal of the program is to increase students' independence and skill levels across all domains (academics, social, communication, daily living, leisure, gross and fine motor) while providing intensive behavioral supports to facilitate appropriate social skills, emotional regulation, and the use of functional alternatives to challenging behavior. These skills are taught and practiced in a variety of settings to promote generalization. In addition, students receive instruction in Activities of Daily Living and Vocational Skills. Community activities are planned and implemented to address student needs in order to be successful in the community. Students participate in community outings individually or in small groups with staff. Each student works on specific individual goals for each outing. Students at Newton North and Newton South can participate in a wide variety of elective courses for the development of vocational skills. Additionally, students participate in vocational opportunities through our Work Study Program, mainly in office work, but also in areas related to the Career and Technical Education programs. Students also generalize vocational skills through volunteer opportunities and paid employment in the community. Students have equal access to career and technical educational courses as related to their individual needs and interests. The goal of all programming is to ensure that each student builds a repertoire of academic, social and life skills that maximize independence, access and integration at school, home and in the community.

Student Profile: Students in the STRIDE program typically have significant challenges with:

- verbal and non-verbal communication (may use augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices)
- behavior, including inflexibility and restricted/repetitive behaviors
- social skills, including very limited social interactions
- academics; most students are performing below grade level and have difficulty accessing traditional instruction

The majority of students have a diagnosis of autism. All students require intensive, highly specialized and individualized instruction and support to access learning.

Staffing: The STRIDE program is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team that includes certified special education teachers, board certified behavior analysts, occupational therapists, speech & language pathologists with expertise in augmentative and alternative communication, a doctoral level psychologist and trained behavior therapists. Students are staffed at a 1:1 ratio and staff is rotated to promote generalization of skills. The STRIDE program's clinical consultation and oversight is provided by a doctoral level BCBA and the program is overseen district-wide by a certified special education administrator.

High School Programs

Program: The Learning Program

School: Newton South

Grades: 9 - 12

Overview of Program: The Learning Program is designed to provide an evidence-based multi-sensory learning environment with systematic evidence-based instruction across all areas with frequent review and practical application of new skills to aid students in acquiring and refining skills. The classroom setting is highly structured, homework is closely monitored and extra support time is available to facilitate learning. In addition, the use of graphic organizers and notebook supports, along with an emphasis on improving student skills, help students access and synthesize information.

Goals or Mission:

- To move students toward less restrictive classroom environments
- To develop skills needed for post-secondary education and/or work
- To provide support for academics
- To improve students' self-advocacy skills
- To provide compensatory strategies that will assist students in becoming independent learners
- To assist students in becoming aware of strengths and weaknesses in their learning styles
- To act as liaisons to general education teachers

Student Profile: The Learning Program is designed for students with diagnosed language-based learning disabilities. Students typically experience difficulties with reading comprehension, writing, study skills and organization of materials.

Description:

Staffing: The program is staffed by special education teachers. Learning Program teachers are liaisons to guidance counselors, general education teachers, deans and students' families.

Curriculum: While programming is individualized to student needs, in general The Learning Program offers English, history, and structured studies. A range of math and science courses, as well as a variety of electives, can be taken in supported general education settings as determined by the team.

High School Programs

Program: Citywide RISE Program

School: Newton South

Grades: 9 - 12

Overview of Program: This program is designed to offer students support with self-awareness and regulation, social competency and stress and anxiety management. Additional skills that are addressed through blocks of scheduled Academic Study include self-advocacy, organizational strategies, transition skills, preview and review and study skills. Student performance is monitored closely by maintaining effective communication with teachers, specialists, and families.

Goals or Mission:

- To develop skills needed for post-secondary education and/or work
- To provide support for academics
- To improve students' self-advocacy skills
- To provide compensatory strategies that will assist students in becoming independent learners
- To assist students in becoming aware of strengths and weaknesses in their learning styles
- To act as liaisons to general education teachers

Student Profile: Students in the RISE program may present with Autism Spectrum disabilities or other similar disabilities with a variety of challenges, including anxiety, social skills, self-awareness, and executive functioning, as well as sensory and emotional regulation. In addition, students' learning may not be at grade level, and their needs are best met in a smaller class size and/or a co-taught model. Students have access to the full range of courses and services that are available within the school.

Description:

Staffing: The RISE Program is staffed by a special education teacher and program aide. The RISE teacher is the liaison to guidance counselors, general education teachers, house deans and students' families.

Curriculum: The RISE Program supports student learning in selected general education classes.

All content courses are taken in a general education setting with support as determined by the team. Students receive Academic Study support with the RISE special education teacher.

High School Programs

Program: STEP

School: Newton South/Newton North

Grades: 9-12

Overview of Program: This program is designed to offer students support with self-awareness and regulation, social competency, and stress and anxiety management. Additional skills that are addressed include self-advocacy, organizational strategies and study skills. Student performance is monitored closely by maintaining effective communication with teachers, specialists, and families. Students are scheduled into blocks of Academic Study to support the goals and objectives in their IEP.

Goals or Mission:

- To develop skills needed for post-secondary education and/or work
- To provide support for academics
- To improve students' self-advocacy skills
- To provide compensatory strategies that will assist students in becoming independent learners
- To assist students in becoming aware of strengths and weaknesses in their learning styles
- To act as liaisons to general education teachers

Student Profile: The STEP program provides support for students who are typically academically very capable, but have difficulty negotiating a large school and understanding social rules. Additionally, students in the program may have high levels of anxiety in the classroom and during unstructured times of their day. Students have access to the full range of courses and services that are available within the school.

Description:

Staffing: The STEP Program is staffed by an inclusion facilitator and program aides. The STEP teachers are the liaison to guidance counselors, general education teachers, house deans and students' families.

Curriculum: The STEP Program supports student learning in selected general education classes. All content courses are taken in a general education setting with support as determined by the team. Students receive Academic Study support with the STEP special education teachers.

High School Programs

Specialized and Therapeutic Programs

High School Programs

Program: Compass

School: Newton South

Grades: 9 -12

Overview of Program: Identifying the strengths of each student and using them to overcome their deficits is integral in the design of the student's individual program. Each student has a schedule that specifically meets their emotional and academic needs and enhances their strengths. Students meet with their liaisons in the program three or four times per week and the counselor one time per week or on an as needed basis.

The goal of the program is to help the student manage academic, social and emotional stress. It seeks to enable the student to become fully integrated in a public high school setting, build positive communication skills and peer relationships, as well as self-esteem through success. The program also prepares students for their transition after high school.

Student Profile: The students in the Compass program share a common denominator of emotional vulnerability. Social-emotional concerns can impede their ability to succeed academically.

Description:

Staffing: Students receive support through a special education liaison and the program's school adjustment counselor and aide.

Curriculum: The Compass program services students with a variety of disabilities. The students take general education classes and receive support through a special education liaison and the program's adjustment counselor. The liaison and counselor engage in regular communication with parents, outside therapists, general education teachers, guidance counselors, department heads and housemaster to apprise them of the student's progress and status.

Special Programming: Students in the Compass program are also able to take a specially designed wellness course that is offered to juniors and seniors in a smaller environment that is more conducive to meet their emotional needs.

High School Programs

Program: Southside

School: Newton South

Grades: 9 - 12

Overview of Program: The Southside program is designed to address all of the areas of need described above. All members of the Southside Program are part of a community grounded by four "cornerstones": **respect** (for yourself, others, and your environment), **responsibility** (for your actions), **self-control** (of your behavior), and **repair** (the ability to fix things when needed). It is our belief that these cornerstones and a sense of belonging to a caring smaller learning community will help each student build healthy relationships, communicate effectively and develop respect for differences in other people in order to be successful in school. Family involvement plays an important role in this success; as such, parents and guardians will be involved as much as possible.

Goals or Mission: To provide students with the support to build the positive relationships, communication skills, sense of responsibility and community that will foster their success in school.

Student Profile: Southside provides a highly supportive, small, structured environment for students with needs in the emotional, social, behavioral and/or academic domains that have prevented them from succeeding in a mainstream academic environment.

Description:

Staffing: Students have Southside staff for some core subjects, as well as counseling support. In addition, the program works closely with the students' families, guidance counselors and housemasters and community agencies to ensure successful school experiences for all students.

Curriculum: Academic classes in the program are small and highly structured. Classes offered include English, history, science, health & wellness, as well as electives such as creative arts, psychology, and photography. Mathematics courses are taken outside of the program, but Southside students receive support from Southside staff as needed within these classes. While some students do take all of their courses through the program, students are encouraged to enroll in mainstream classes and electives to the extent that they can be successful in those courses.

Special Programming: The Southside program offers a therapeutic component that complements the students' regular core academic classes. This component includes community meeting, community service activities, structured community activities, health education and group counseling. Individual counseling is provided to students as needed to assist them in meeting their behavioral, social and emotional needs. Southside also utilizes a positive behavioral support and reinforcement system.

High School Programs

Program: Links

School(s): Newton North

Grades: 11-12

Overview of Program: The program provides students with smaller classes, flexibility in how they earn credits and a variety of counseling supports. Links provides a positive behavioral support and reinforcement system designed to engage and support students' success.

Goals or Mission: Links aims to provide every student with equal access to an excellent education. The program's mission is to enable students to graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary for post-secondary education and 21st century careers.

Student Profile: The Links program provides a highly supportive and flexible environment to support students with emotional disabilities. The program provides wraparound services and supports to engage students and support consistent attendance and engagement in all aspects of the educational environment. The majority of Links students are juniors and seniors.

Description:

Staffing: The program's full-time staff includes a school adjustment counselor, special education teachers, and teaching assistants. In addition, a vocational counselor and a prevention/intervention counselor facilitate groups. The program also has access to consultation from a Board Certified Psychiatrist with extensive expertise in working with high school age students.

Curriculum: Links courses are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as well as the NNHS department curriculum. Links courses are at a College Prep level course and are taught by teachers from the math, history, English and science departments. The classes are typically smaller (8-12 students) than College Prep sections, and they include accommodations and modifications that teachers create to address students' needs. Links follows the same schedule as NNHS so that students have access to the general education curriculum.

Special Programming:

- Classes - small, college prep level classes offered in English, history, math, and physical education.
- Modular curriculum - Students work independently, often under the supervision of Links staff, and earn credit based on the work they produce.
- A school adjustment counselor meets individually with students, makes home visits as necessary and engages with student's family and outside provider to ensure coordination of care.
- A vocational counselor provides vocational support, coordinates work-study opportunities, and assists with transition planning
- A prevention/intervention counselor facilitates a variety of clinical support groups.

High School Programs

Program: Pilot

School: Newton North

Grades: 9 - 12

Overview: The Pilot program at Newton North High School is a unique education program. In this program, teachers, students and parents work cooperatively to provide students with a comprehensive and effective educational experience. The program provides intensive, proactive therapeutic intervention within a highly structured academic setting.

The goal of this program is to provide students with the support they need to build positive relationships, strengthen decision making skills, feel a sense of responsibility and make connections to a community that will foster their success in school.

Student Profile: The Pilot program is designed to support students with significant social/emotional and/or behavioral needs who require a small, highly supportive program to ensure success.

Description:

Staffing: The program's full-time staff includes a manager, special education teachers, counseling staff, and special education assistants. The program also has access to consultation from a Board Certified Psychiatrist with extensive expertise in working with high school age students.

Curriculum: The Pilot program offers small structured classes in English, mathematics, science, social studies, MCAS prep and physical education. Students are encouraged to participate in general education courses while in the program. This allows students to broaden their academic course of studies while benefiting from the structure and support of the Pilot program.

Special Programming: In addition to their academic classes, students receive individual and group counseling services to address their social, behavioral and emotional needs. Emphasis is placed on community-building and appropriate socialization through formal recognition of positive behaviors.

Post-Graduate Programs

Post-Graduate Programs

Program(s): Citywide Community
Connections Schools: Education
Center/Newton North

Grades: Students who have completed the majority of their high school requirements (ex. May need to complete 1 to 2 required courses), who are 18-21 years old, and/or require substantial post graduate support in a number of transition related domains

Overview: Community Connections is a community based program designed to support students with disabilities, who are between the ages of 18-21, and are transitioning from school to adult life. This citywide program is currently based out of Newton North High School and uses community based locations as well as space at the Education Center to support learning opportunities. It is based on the belief that all students can learn together in the same schools, classrooms, and in the community with appropriate supports.

The goal of the Community Connections program is to maximize the potential and independence of each student, while promoting meaningful integration into the community. The program is for students who have completed four years of high school and may or may not be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Community Connections uses a person-centered approach to determine the transition related activities that are coordinated to build a student's weekly schedule. Schedules are developed to strengthen students' functional life skills. The Community Connections program supports students and families to develop relationships with adult service providers as well as other community based resources. Comprehensive transition opportunities occur across a range of community settings; these experiences are focused on independent living, employment, social/leisure/recreation, and lifelong learning.

Student Profile: Students who are supported in Community Connections often have substantial and/or multiple disabilities. These may include, but are not limited to, autism spectrum disorder, communication, cognitive, physical, sensory, and/or health disabilities.

Description:

Staffing: Inclusion facilitators, social worker, teacher aides, behavior therapists, and specialists staff the program. An inclusion facilitator, a special educator experienced in working with students with intensive special needs, plans appropriate interventions, coordinates services for students, models best practices in teaching students with intensive needs, and serves as a resource for students, faculty, and parents. The program is supported by a DESE endorsed transition specialist/facilitator and a doctorate level DESE endorsed transition specialist/coordinator.

Curriculum: For postgraduate students, the community is their classroom. The program integrates students into the community for a range of learning opportunities. Learning opportunities are developed to build skills related to personal finances, personal management, personal hygiene/self-care, household management, social skills, community involvement, health/safety practices, lifelong learning, and career development. The program combines classroom-based activities with community experiences to enhance student learning. The program is individualized to address each student's goals and objectives in order to best prepare them for transition to adult life.

Approved Public Day Program

Approved Public Day Program

Program: Central

School: Education Center

Grades: 9-12

Overview: Central is designed to meet the needs of a diverse population of students and allows them to make effective educational and emotional progress in a structured therapeutic environment. The school's staff works closely with students, helping them to identify and reach their goals. Central is founded on the belief that all students can reach their full potential and experience success.

Goals or Mission: The staff at Central strives to foster an environment where students' individual strengths and needs are supported in a way that leads to academic and emotional growth as well as successful decision-making. The resources and support in the Newton community create an atmosphere conducive to acceptance, diversity, and a belief that all students can learn. These ideals are core beliefs of Newton Public Schools and are an integral part of the Central program. The school strives to establish and maintain a safe and supportive environment for all of our students.

Student Profile: The Central Program is a citywide high school program serving students in grades 9 through 12. Through a small, therapeutic and connected community, Central provides individualized, wraparound services, supports and structures to meet the educational and therapeutic needs of its students.

Description:

Staffing: Central has a full-time social worker/manager as well as counselors who facilitate individual and group therapeutic intervention. Central teachers are either dually-certified or content certified. The program is also supported by a full-time administrator.

Curriculum: Academic instruction is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for all subjects. Teachers utilize differentiated instruction techniques within small, structured, classes. MCAS support is provided. Daily living skill development is included within Central's health and wellness curriculum. Students have access to the following elective courses: Fine Arts (jewelry making), Film Critique, and Culinary.

Special Programming: Students receive support from counselors through individual and group interventions that focus on topics such as: decision-making skills, age-appropriate social skills, coping skills, and developing/maintaining healthy relationships. Specialized academic programming and related services needs are also provided on an individualized basis. The program provides robust coordination of care maintaining regular contact with parents/guardians and other service and community providers involved with the students.