



**PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS
WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES
(PSE)
*Parent Guide***

Expect great things. 

PSE Vision:

All students with disabilities will receive an equitable education that addresses individual needs in order to achieve their fullest potential academically, socially, emotionally, and vocationally. Students are expected to achieve and succeed so that they can be productive, self-motivated citizens.

PSE Mission:

Each student has a right to a welcoming environment that is accessible, emotionally nourishing, culturally responsive, physically safe, purposefully engaging, and intellectually challenging.

Achieving this goal will require:

- research-based curriculum and instruction in the least restrictive environment driven by high expectations for all students with disabilities
- collaboration and shared responsibility of all stakeholders, including students, families, PPS staff, and community members
- optimizing student achievement through data-driven decisions that inform assessment, instruction, and progress monitoring
- providing teachers with professional learning, instructional support, and resources to impact student achievement

Theory of Action:

If teachers plan and implement effective instruction aligned to standards, using high-quality curriculum, and engage and challenge every student to meet their highest potential, then students will become confident and competent learners prepared for life and advocates of their own learning.

Special Education Programming

Special education helps children with special needs reach maximum potential. Students may be identified as needing special education when a multidisciplinary evaluation determines that a student meets eligibility criteria as a ***student with disability in need of specially designed instruction***. Students can be referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation by the school's MTSS team. Parents may also request a multidisciplinary evaluation in writing to their child's school.

PSE offers a full range of special education services and programs to eligible children:

Special Education Programs

<p><u>Speech and Language Support</u> - for children who have speech and language impairments and require services to develop communication skills.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assessments Provide direct services Consult with teachers 	<p><u>Learning Support</u> – for children whose greatest need of support is in the areas of reading, writing, math, and/or speaking or listening related to academics.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research-based direct instruction Reading and math intervention Specific skill building ESY, as needed
<p><u>Autistic Support</u> – for children with autism who require services in the areas of communication, social skills, and/or behavior.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic instruction and adaptive skills instruction Positive behavior supports Sensory Integration Strategies ESY, as needed 	<p><u>Emotional Support</u> – for children whose greatest need is in the areas of social, emotional, and behavior.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, EAIV-RBT, & Therapist Support Highly structured environment Behavior management system and interventions supported by RBT Social skills training Academic instruction Onsite outside agency partnership ESY, as needed
<p><u>Life Skills Support</u> – for children whose greatest need is to learn academic, functional, or vocational skills that will allow them to live and work independently.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized academic and adaptive skills instruction Positive behavior supports Community based instruction ESY, as needed 	<p><u>Multiple Disabilities Support</u> – for children with more than one disability, the combination of which results in severe impairment, and who require services in academic, functional, or vocational skills necessary for independent living.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized academic instruction and adaptive skills, self-care, and self-advocacy Positive behavior supports Sensory integration strategies ESY, as needed
<p><u>Blind and Visually Impaired Support</u> - for children who require services related to visual impairment or blindness. The IEP for these students must address the extent to which Braille will be taught and used.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensatory or functional academic skills, including Braille Orientation and mobility Individualized academic instruction and adaptive skills, self-care, recreation and leisure activities, and self-advocacy Use of assistive technology 	<p><u>Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support</u> – for children who require services related to deafness or hearing impairment. The IEP for these students must include a communication plan to address language and communication needs.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Audiologist serving the district Itinerant and resource levels of service Hearing impairment services Use of assistive technology ESY, as needed

Special Education Programs

- Sensory efficiency skills
- ESY, as needed

Physical Support - offers instruction to students who have a physical disability and require services in functional motor skill development.

Key features:

Related Services, i.e. PT, OT, Vision, Nursing, and Personal Care

Related Services:

Related services are support services that will help students with disabilities benefit from his/her special education program. PSE offers a full range of related services including **specialized transportation, therapies (speech, physical, occupational, or psychological therapy), interpreting services** for children who are deaf, **personal care assistance**, and **school health services** (such as school nurse services).

Transition Services:

Transition planning begins for **every student with a disability the year he/she will turn 14 years of age**.

Transition planning begins with a transition assessment with the goal of determining what a student will need in order to be successful in achieving his/her post-secondary goals. In PSE, transition is supported in a multitude of ways including:

Transition Supports

Travel Training - prepares students with disabilities (ages 14-21) for independent travel in the community.

Key features:

- Community-based instruction
- Lessons in anti-victimization and stranger awareness
- Skill development for travel

Secondary Transition Program and Community-Based Vocational Education (CBVE) - prepare students with disabilities for life after graduation.

Key features:

- Helps develop career goals
- Instruction at real work sites in the community
- Task analysis to determine strengths and needs

Start On Success - prepares youth for successful employment or post-secondary education or training.

Key features:

- Employment skills and exposure to the work place
- Mentorship in the community
- Transition curriculum
- Focused on employment and further education
- Community-based assessment
- Disability awareness, self-advocacy, self-determination, problem solving, leadership skills, time management, job readiness, job maintenance
- Resume and career portfolio development

City Connections Program - prepares students with moderate disabilities to live, work, connect and contribute in the community.

Key features:

- Provides an opportunity for young adults ages 18-21 with moderate disabilities to continue their educational program in an urban community-based environment outside of a traditional high school setting
- Individualized programming based on goals identified by the student, family and educational staff members
- Transition programming focused on real life outcomes

Transition Supports

- Mirrors the movement of their same age peers by providing a natural, age-appropriate setting with access to real work and real life in the community
- Learning environments include apartment sites and college campuses
- Instruction focused on the three post-school outcomes 1) post-secondary education/training, 2) employment, and 3) independent living
- Transition curriculum based on functional academics (banking/budgeting, reading a bus schedule, etc.) and daily living skills (cooking, cleaning, shopping, participating in community activities, etc.)
- Academic support for students enrolled in college classes (credit and non-credit)
- Opportunities for community-based assessments in a real work setting, job development and job acquisition
- Linkages to agencies and community resources upon graduation
- Partnerships with employment agencies that can provide continued support for students after graduation
- Opportunities for community-based assessments in a real work setting, job development and job acquisition

PSE Support Teams

A **Program Officer** for Special Education is assigned to each school to offer a multitude of supports/services to students with disabilities, their families and school personnel. Program Officers provide consistent support to schools.

Team Member	Contact Information Name & Email	Schools
Kellan Thompson	412- 529-3175 ktompson4@pghboe.net	Dilworth K-5, Linden K-5, Miller K-5, Minadeo K-5, Schiller 6-8, Spring Hill K-5, and Weil K-5
Kim Zangrilli	412- 529-3160 kzangrilli1@pghboe.net	ATA K-5, ATA 6-8, Banksville K-5, Concord K-5, Grandview K-5, Phillips K-5, and Roosevelt K-5
Amira Wolfson	412- 529-3167 awolfson1@pghboe.net	Arsenal K-5, Arsenal 6-8, Colfax K-8, Faison K-5, Lincoln K-5, Sci-Tech 6-12, and Sterrett 6-8
Jade Fiore	412-529- 3151 jfiore1@pghboe.net	Fulton K-5, Greenfield K-8, Manchester K-8, Montessori K-5 , Morrow K-8, and Woolslair K-5
Lindsay DelConte	412- 529- 3162 ldelconte1@pghboe.net	Beechwood K-5 , South Brook 6-8 , South Hills 6-8, West Liberty K-5, Langley, and Mercy Behavioral Health
Careen Lomago	412-529-2624 clomago1@pghboe.net	Arlington K-8, Brookline K-8 , Classical 6-8, POA, Westwood K-5, and Whittier K-5, EP
Cindy McKenzie	412- 529-3169 cmckenzie1@pghboe.net	Carmalt K-8, King K-8, Mifflin K-8, Liberty K-5, and Sunnyside K-8, Vision
Nicole Seddon	412- 529- 3155 nseddon1@pghboe.net	Brashear 9-12, Carrick 9-12, Obama 6-12, and U-Prep 6-12
Amber Dean	412- 529- 3154 adean1@pghboe.net	Allderdice 9-12, CAPA 6-12, Perry 9-12, Student Achievement Center, and Westinghouse 6-12

The role of the PSE Program Officer is to support students, families, and school personnel with the following:

- Understanding and ensuring compliance with District, State, and Federal regulations;
- Provides guidance with development and implementation of specially designed instruction (SDI) to meet the needs of students with disabilities;
- Provides guidance with development and implementation of individualized education programs for students with disabilities
- Support families as needed

Other Administrative Support for Schools:

Team Member	Contact Information Name & Email	Key Responsibilities
Amy Filipowski Executive Director	412-529-3135 afilipowski1@pghboe.net	Oversees the operations of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities
Tara McCrohan Senior Program Officer	412-529-3150 tmcrohan1@pghboe.net	Reports directly to the Executive Director and oversees/support Program Officers, Program Directors, OTs, PTs, and PSE Support Personnel
Kelly Papst Director of Speech & Hearing	412-529-3164 kpapst1@pghboe.net	Supervision and coordination of Speech, Hearing, Assistive Technology, & CITY Connections
Camilla Justice Director of Low Incidence Disabilities	412-529-5815 cjustice1@pghboe.net	Supervision and coordination of Low Incidence Programming, the Low Incidence Support Team, and ESY
Dr. Lillian Wright Director of Emotional Support Programs	412-529-3148 lwright1@pghboe.net	Supervision and coordination of Emotional Support Programming and the Behavior Support Team
Isaac Tarbell Supervisor of Psychological Services	412-529-3193 itarbell1@pghboe.net	Supervision and coordination of psychological services, Equitable Participation, Brain Steps, and Gifted
MaryBeth Olczak Board Certified Behavior Analyst/Supervisor	412-529-3132 molczak1@pghboe.net	Supervision and coordination of EA IV- Registered Behavior Technicians

Curriculum & Instruction, Behavior, Low Incidence, and Transition Support Teams:

PSE Support Teams (Behavior, Low Incidence, Curriculum, and Transition) have been developed to provide an additional layer of support to schools. PSE Coaches have also been added to work alongside new teachers or those that are having difficulty meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Administrators and teachers can request on-site assistance from the coaches or support teams at any time by submitting a referral.

Curriculum Support Team:

Team Members:

Mindy Sturgess- msturgess1@pghboe.net

Christina Wier- cwier1@pghboe.net

Alecia Granata- agranata1@pghboe.net

What is the purpose of the support team?

The purpose of the Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development Program is to support administrators, school-based teams, teachers, students, and their families. With a data-driven approach, our team seeks to help schools intervene early, increase academic engagement and improve outcomes for students with disabilities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. When a student, student group, special education program or school is not demonstrating measurable gains, our team is available to work collaboratively with school based teams to help them identify the problem, develop a plan, secure the appropriate resources, and provide follow up support and progress monitoring to ensure continued success.

Additional responsibilities of the Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development Team include planning and delivery of meaningful professional learning sessions throughout the year, use of the coaching model to improve instructional practices, and work collaboratively with other district departments to support student with disabilities.

What are key components of support?

- Oversee and provide curriculum for all programs
- When warranted, assess individual students to determine appropriate placement within curriculum

- Provide assessment tools to schools and teachers
- Provide professional development to all stakeholders
- Work closely with general education curriculum leads and coaches to ensure students with disabilities are included in all initiatives

PSE Instructional Coaches:

Team Members:

Becky Adrian- radrian1@pghboe.net

Holly Pribilovich- hpribilovich1@pghboe.net

What is the purpose of PSE Coaches?

The PSE Coach will work with general education and special education staff to apply research-based strategies and best practices to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment. They will provide job-embedded support by observing, modeling, co-teaching, mentoring, providing non-evaluative feedback, and problem-solving with teachers.

What are the key components of the PSE Coach Position?

- Work in the classroom alongside general education and special education teachers who struggle to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Support new teachers through modeling, co-teaching, planning, etc. to improve the teacher's practice to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Work alongside the reading and math coaches to support general and special education teachers

Behavior Support Team:

Team Members:

Jamie Crowell- jcrowell1@pghboe.net

Reena Hamade- rhamade1@pghboe.net

Dr. Julie Macha- jmacha1@pghboe.net

What is the purpose of the support team?

The Behavior Support Team is comprised of people with expertise around designing and monitoring function- based behavioral support plans and targeted group interventions with solid understanding of function-based perspective.

What are key components of support?

- On-site classroom management coaching and professional development
- On-site observation of students displaying behavioral challenges
- On-site support to administrative teams
- Collaboration with outside agencies
- Support in transitions of students

Low Incidence Support Team

Team Members:

Joyce Dzadovsky- jdzadovsky1@pghboe.net

Amiee Tenerovich- atenerovich1@pghboe.net

Melissa Ringold- mringold1@pghboe.net

What is the purpose of the support team?

The Low Incidence Support Team provides direct and consultative support to teachers and schools through an established referral system, which includes observations, collaboration, strategies, etc.

What are key components of support?

- Conduct observations and written follow up reports
- Assist in development and implementation of IEP
- Assist in preparation of functional behavioral analysis

- Assist in development of positive behavior support plans
- Provide assistance in use of visual communication systems (PECS)
- Provide professional development for schools and staff around autism
- Coordinate placements in regional classrooms or other settings determined by the IEP team

Transition Support Team

Team Members:

Crystal Evans; Coordinator Transition services and Transition Counselors- cevans1@pghboe.net

Ashely McFall; Coordinator Start on Success - amcfall1@pghboe.net

TBD; Coordinator CBVE-

Sarah Kaminiski. Coordinator of Travel Instruction, skaminski1@pghboe.net

Gayle Bair, Coordinator of CITY Connections, gbair1@pghboe.net

What is the purpose of the support team?

The transition teams purpose is to provide transition services and supports to students with disabilities (ages 14 – 21) in order to prepare them for life after graduation.

What are key components of support?

- Coordinate rehabilitation and transition services for students with IEP's beginning no later than age 14 and continuing through graduation as required by IDEA and PA State Performance Plan
- Services may include: career counseling and guidance, community and agency linkages, and planning/preparation for employment, post-secondary education & training and independent living
- Provide individual or group counseling on personal, academic, career, or transition related issues
- Complete transition assessment for each student, every year in order to identify and support students' post-secondary goals
- Use ongoing transition assessment to identify and support students' post-secondary goals and integrate results into the student's IEP
- Provide linkages to community agencies and resources where appropriate and with parental permission
- Coordinate services between educators, agencies, service providers, employers and employment specialists