Special Education in Pittsburgh Public Schools 2012-2013

Dr. Jeannine French, Chief of School Performance
Dr. Jerri Lippert, Chief Academic Officer
Mary Jane Conley, Executive Director Special Education
“There is no correlation between more services and higher achievement; quality of service matters more than quantity.”

Mike Casserly
Council of Great City Schools
Program for Students with Exceptionalities (PSE) Achievements

• PSE transition programs are recognized locally and nationally and have been referred to by the Council of Great City Schools as “Promising Practices.”
• Revised protocols for school age ACCESS billing have resulted in an increase of over 100% in revenue, a total of $2.2 million.
• Fee for Service Model that will provide transition services to surrounding school districts.
• Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recognized PSE for the reductions of suspensions of students with disabilities.
• Two current PSE Administrators completed the PDE Fellowship Program as Special Education Leaders in the State.
Special Education Budget

- General Fund: $98,939,719
- IDEA Funds: $6,600,000
- ACCESS: $1,100,000
- Institutionalized Children's Fund: $1,013,181
Child Count Data

- 2007-2008 – 5378 (18.2% of PPS)
- 2008-2009 – 5016 (17.6% of PPS)
- 2009-2010 – 4848 (17.3% of PPS)
- 2010-2011 – 4750 (17.3% of PPS)
- 2011-2012 – 4616 (17.1% of PPS)
• Cost per General Education Student: approximately $21,000

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• Cost per Special Education Student: approximately $24,000
PSE has begun to address the challenges of improving student achievement while controlling special education costs.

We have done so by strategically assigning staff to support our schools and students in ways that build teacher capacity and maximize student achievement.
The following programmatic and departmental model is the result of thoughtful and analytical planning in collaboration with:

- Special Education Departments locally and nationally who have also re-thought their provision of services to affect student learning. Among these are Williamson County Schools, Tennessee; and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina
- PPS Consultants, Alvarez and Marsal
- The National Organization of the Special Education Urban Collaborative
- The Local Right to Education Task Force (Parent Group)
Phase 2 of the Sustainable District Model

- Utilizing data from the 2011 Special Education Child Count, teachers were allocated to each school based upon individualized student need
- All appropriate caseload requirements in the Collective Bargaining Agreement were observed
- Student performance data was analyzed for appropriate placement in courses for the 2012-13 school year
- Course selections for students with disabilities were scheduled first in each school to maximize teacher resources
- PSE has reduced site based staff by the following amounts: (58) teachers and (14) paraprofessionals
- The estimated savings from teacher/paraprofessional reductions is: $3,449,050.00
Phase 3 of the Sustainable District Model

**Goal:** Minimally restructure PSE central office and specifically define the 2012-13 Special Education Service Delivery Model to provide a more effective Team Approach to each school where:

- Responsibilities are defined and focused on supporting schools to accelerate student achievement
- A continuum of services is provided to meet the individual needs of all students with disabilities
- Schools are empowered to design successful educational/behavioral programs for students with disabilities
- Special education services will be better integrated within general education classrooms
Phase 3 of the Sustainable District Model Continued

- Professional development for general educators will be improved and expanded.
- PSE has reduced Central Office Staff by closing six (6) Central Office positions.
- PSE Central Office Restructuring cost savings: $580,857.16
- Contractual cost savings from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013: $669,082
- Non Contractual cost savings from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013: $338,062
- Total Phase 3 savings: $1,588,001.16
There are seven additional central office staff that perform general program administration and operations.
Resulting in a Service Delivery Model that will:

• Provide a team approach to address the needs of students with disabilities
• Enable better communication, collaboration and accountability within and among general and special educators
• Support schools in the development of expertise in the design of instructional programs that accelerate student achievement
• Strengthen the culture of inclusion to achieve academic and social behavioral success for students
Summary

- **PSE** has carefully examined the service delivery model for students with disabilities to continue to accelerate student achievement, while affording greater efficiencies.
- **Parents, Principals, Teachers and PSE Staff** will work together to further develop and design Co-Teaching, Collaborative Consultation and Learning Lab approaches to reach students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms.
- This **work has begun** and will be ready for the start of the 2012-13 School year.
- The Approximate Savings to the Special Education Department from Phase 2 and 3 reductions: **$5,037,751.16**
"I think the plan is well thought out. I particularly like the curriculum piece-I believe that it is where we should have been a while ago-but I do also understand that it takes time for changes to occur. I am pleased to say that the Pittsburgh Local Task Force on the Right to Education supports the Central Office reorganization plan as presented to us."

Christine Buffington,  
Parent and Chair  
Pittsburgh Local Task Force