

Student Services

Stephanie Powers, Administrator for Student Services

The Lincoln Public Schools offers a variety of services and supports to meet the needs of children with disabilities. There is a strong commitment to quality education and opportunities for all students. Special education and general education faculty and staff work in collaborative partnerships to effectively meet each child's needs. Through the development and implementation of individualized educational programs (IEPs) and 504 Accommodation Plans the Lincoln Public Schools makes a full range of supports, adaptations and services available to eligible students.

The Lincoln Public Schools acts in accordance with State (Chapter 766 of the Acts of 1972) and federal laws (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 known as IDEA, Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), regulations and policies. Under these laws, all eligible children with disabilities are provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through the process of identification, evaluation, and eligibility determination. This process may lead to the development of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or a 504 Accommodation Plan.

Special Education Faculty

Special education services are delivered by highly qualified faculty who collectively possess a comprehensive repertoire of knowledge, experience and skills. The staff includes special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists, social workers, school psychologists, and tutors. All are appropriately licensed and trained in research-based, instructional strategies and specially designed curriculum.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the district shifted the responsibility of conducting academic testing from the school psychologist to the special education teachers. The benefits of the model are an expansion of skills among the faculty, greater flexibility in the district's use of resources, and teacher engagement in a diagnostic prescriptive teaching and assessment model. Additionally, this change freed up some of the school psychologists' time for consultation and clinical support to address social, emotional and behavioral needs individually and in small groups.

K-8 special education teachers were trained to administer the Weschler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), a formal educational assessment used as a piece of data when determining special education eligibility and monitoring progress. Teachers have been using the WIAT and submitting their reports to the Administrator for Student Services for review. The teachers have taken on this new responsibility with skill and sophistication. The next step is for teachers to expand their skill beyond the WIAT to other tests of achievement during 2009-2010. Each teacher is being coached to self-select the next tool learn.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Individualized, student-centered special education programs are cooperatively developed by an individual education planning (IEP) team, which includes parents, general education and special education teachers, administrators, and, when appropriate, other specialists. These teams make every effort to provide appropriate special education programs to children in a setting as close to the general classroom as possible. When students require services beyond the capacities of the Lincoln staff, the district hires consultants and experts to collaborate with the schools or seeks special education placement out of the district. Currently the needs of the students have required input from a Psychiatrist, a Behavioral Consultant, and a Developmental Pediatrician. With the resources within and from outside the district, Lincoln offers a broad range of options that progress from inclusive to segregated.

Special Education Eligibility

Determining special education eligibility is a comprehensive process. A school-based team of professionals who examine formal, informal and curriculum-based assessment data determines eligibility for special education. Eligibility for special education is based on the presence of a disability that results in the student not making effective progress and indicates a need for specially designed instruction. Specially designed instruction may include content, methodology or performance assessment that is different from what is available through general education. Not all students who are referred to special education reach the rigorous eligibility criteria. In the 2008-2009 school year, 17 students were evaluated and found not eligible for special education. This is a decrease from the 2007-2008 school year when 30 students were evaluated and found not eligible for special education. The administrators and faculty monitors this group of children and supports are put in place through general education to meet any presenting social, emotional and academic needs.

Sometimes, students with disabilities make such substantial gains that they exit from special education. When this happens the student no longer shows evidence of the disability, is making effective progress, and/or no longer requires specially designed instruction provided by a special educator. Eight students in the 2008-2009 school year exited special education as compared to nine children in the previous year. This group represents 5.2% of the special education population.

Parent Involvement and Communication

The involvement of parents in the special education process is essential to the development of programs and services at the individual, group and district level. Parents provide important information regarding their child's social, emotional, behavioral and physical well-being and provide feedback for program improvement. The Student Services Department meets monthly with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council to communicate about services, programs, and other relevant information. Surveys are provided to parents following all IEP meetings and district

document were developed and mailed to parents to keep them informed. This includes a Special Education Services guide and parent-specific documents to explain assessment reports and what to expect at an IEP meeting.

504 Accommodation Plans

504 Accommodation Plans may be developed to meet the needs of a student with a disability who is not eligible for special education. The "504" in "504 plan" refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which specifies that no one with a disability can be excluded from participating in a public education program. "Disability" in this context refers to a "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities." This can include physical impairments; illnesses or injuries; communicable diseases; chronic conditions like asthma, allergies and diabetes; and learning problems. A 504 plan documents the adaptations and accommodations that will be needed for these students to have an opportunity to access school with their peers. It is written to assure that the students will be provided with the appropriate adaptations to prevent discrimination on the basis of their disability. For example, a student with attention deficits may need frequent prompting to attend and breaks from classroom work. Additionally, this student does not require specialized curriculum content, instruction that varies from what is provided by general educators or alternative assessment. In the schools, there are nine students with a Section 504 Accommodation Plans (as of October 1, 2009), which is a decrease from the 14 students during the 2007-2008 school year.

Special Education Population Demographics

Each year data is collected on October 1st regarding the students with disabilities and their programmatic needs. The current data showed that the number of students in special education has varied very little in the past five years and the percentage has remained well below the state average (*Massachusetts Department Of Education Students With Disabilities Annual Report: 2007-2008*).

Students in Special Education in the Lincoln Public Schools

Year	Number	Percentage	State Percentage
2005	165	13.0%	16.35%
2006	157	12.7%	16.68%
2007	157	12.0%	16.89%
2008	153	12.9%	17.10%
2009	123	11.7%	<i>Not available</i>

In accordance with IDEA, school teams categorize students by their most educationally relevant disability. An examination of the special education population has revealed that, consistent with state and national trends, the majority of the students have the diagnosis of specific learning disability and that overall the number of students by category has remained nearly the same for the past several years.

Students with disabilities in the Lincoln Public Schools by category

Primary Disability	2007	2008	2009	2007 for State* ages 3-21
Autism	10.2%	10.5%	10.6%	5.2%
Communication	24.8%	17.6%	15.4%	16.7%
Developmental Delay	12.7%	10.5%	13.0%	10.0%
Emotional	5.0%	3.9%	7.3%	8.4%
Health	12.1%	14.3%	13.8%	6.4%
Intellectual	1.3%	1.9%	1.6%	6.8%
Multiple	1.3%	.65%	0.8%	3.0%
Neurological	8.9%	15.0%	13.8%	3.7%
Physical	.63%	0.0%	0.0%	.94%
Sensory/Deaf/Blind	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.13%
Sensory/Hearing	1.3%	.65%	0.0%	.78%
Sensory/Vision	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.34%
Specific Learning	21.7%	24.8%	23.6%	37.6%

* most current state data available

The entrance of students in special education by disability within the past year indicates that the upcoming population of students continues to have nearly the same distribution. It is important to note however that students are often labeled at an early age, and their diagnosis may change as they get older. The majority of students entering special education in the Lincoln Public Schools are preschoolers (30%) and their profiles are likely to change with increased understanding of the child's needs, profile and development.

Students initially determined eligible for Special Education by disability

Primary Disability	Number 2007-2008	Percentage 2007-2008	Number 2008-2009	Percentage 2008-2009
Autism	2	5.1%	2	4.9%
Communication	6	15.3%	6	14.6%
Developmental Delay	11	28.2%	9	22.0%
Emotional	3	7.7%	4	9.8%
Health	5	12.8%	5	12.2%
Intellectual	1	2.5%	0	0.0%
Multiple	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Neurological	3	7.7%	2	4.9%
Physical	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sensory/Deaf/Blind	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sensory/Hearing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sensory/Vision	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Specific Learning	8	20.5%	13	31.7%
Total	39		41	

When the special education population is divided by school site and grade, few fluctuations are observed. This data is considered as resources are allocated by building and grade level. Adhering to rigid child to student ratios is often an unsuccessful strategy in special education. The nature of the child and the severity of their disability lead to a more individually responsive allocation of resources. Special education teachers are assigned caseloads after careful consideration of the number of students at each grade level, as well as the particular needs of each child and the program developed by their IEP team.

Distribution of Students in Special Education in the Lincoln Schools

	2008	2009
Preschool	8.2%	9.7%
Hanscom Primary	17.7%	17.8%
Hanscom Middle	22.1%	20.3%
Lincoln K-4	22.8%	21.1%
Lincoln 5-8	24.0%	27.6%
Educated in a Private Special Education School	5.0%	3.2%

As indicated by the small number of students with disabilities educated in out of district placements, the Lincoln Public Schools is committed to a quality inclusive program meeting the needs of students with a range of disabilities across all grade levels. Inclusive schools provide children with disabilities a diverse stimulating environment for learning; increased social interactions, relationships and networks; peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills; increased achievement of IEP goals; enhanced skill acquisition and generalization; and higher expectations. Hence, the majority of the students with special needs are educated in the public schools and only a small number require more intensive placement in a collaborative or private special school program. There are four students (three from Lincoln, one from Hanscom) currently placed in special education schools out side of the district and another three students that are projected to need this level of programming in FY11.

Budget Information

The special education budget for FY11 has been developed with an emphasis on providing this population with a high quality education in the least restrictive environment. Special education teacher employment has been financially supported to meet this goal with an appropriate teacher to student ratio that will provide the level of intensity required by the population. In addition, the need for special education tutors and aides has been determined through a comprehensive student-by-student analysis of all IEPs and the services indicated on them. For FY11 there is a reduction of one teacher and four tutors on the Hanscom campus due to the reduction of the special education population.

On the occasion when the Lincoln schools cannot meet a student’s needs within our

programs, the child's IEP is written for placement in a special education school outside of the district. The proposed budget identifies funds for their tuition and transportation.

Other components of the special education budget include curriculum materials, translation of special education documents, professional membership fees and resources, office supplies, evaluation supplies, repair and maintenance of equipment, and new materials necessary to implement student programs. A significant resource to the district comes through its paid membership to two local collaboratives – the Concord Area Special Education Collaborative (CASE) and the Education Collaborative for Greater Boston (EDCO). These regional organizations offer an array of programs for student, professional development for staff, consultation in specialized areas and transportation for student with disabilities.

Revenue resources specific to special education include federal IDEA grant entitlements, early childhood grants, state circuit breaker funds, and federal Medicaid reimbursements. The amounts provided vary year by year, but are most often based on the number of students with disabilities in the district and the services they receive.

Initiatives

Looking forward and predicting upcoming needs, the student services department has proposed one district-wide initiative for consideration. The purpose of this initiative is to expand the curriculum knowledge, skill, and teaching capacity of Lincoln's paraprofessionals so that they can have a maximum impact on student achievement. The role of instructional paraprofessionals has changed over time. Originally used as an additional resource to provide clerical assistance to teachers, paraprofessionals in the current classrooms perform multiple functions. Their current paramount role is in assisting teachers to instruct a wide array of students. A paraprofessional must be able to demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to assist in, instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics, or reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

The proposed plan is to provide paraprofessionals with a comprehensive professional development experience that expands the training experiences they have had over the past two years. In the 2008-2009 school year they were trained by outside consultants on the following topics: Rethinking Recess, Meeting the Needs of Children with Social Skill Deficits and Including Students with Challenging Behavior in the Classroom. During the 2009-2010 school year the paraprofessionals will engage in two training sessions on teaching English Language Arts (preK-8), two sessions on teaching Mathematics (K-5) and at least one session on a topic related to students with disabilities.

The initiative would include funding for 5 half days of training in the 2010-2011 school year. The training will take place on Wednesday afternoons with the following offerings: An orientation training session for new members, two sessions on teaching mathematics (PreK-8), two sessions on teaching English Language Arts (preK-8), and one session on a specialized training related to children who are struggling socially, emotionally or academically.

Lincoln CO - Special Education Office
Stephanie Powers

Requested
\$5,000.00

Priority Item Description

1 Professional Development for Paraprofessionals

\$5,000.00

Budget Manager

Stephanie Powers

School/Department

Lincoln CO - Special Education Office

Item Description

Professional Development for Paraprofessionals

Category

Expansion of Existing Program

Priority Rank

1

Justification and Documentation

The purpose of this initiative is to expand the curriculum knowledge, skill, and teaching capacity of Lincoln's paraprofessionals so that they can have a maximum impact on student achievement. The role of instructional paraprofessionals has changed over time. Originally used as an additional resource to provide clerical assistance to teachers, paraprofessionals in the current classrooms perform multiple functions. Their current paramount role is in assisting teachers to instruct a wide array of students. A paraprofessional must be able to demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to assist in, instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics, or reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

The proposed plan is to provide this group with a comprehensive professional development experience that expands the training experiences they've had over the past two years. In the 2008-2009 school year they were trained by outside consultants on the following topics: Rethinking Recess, Meeting the Needs of Children with Social Skill Deficits and Including Students with Challenging Behavior in the Classroom. During the 2009-2010 school year the paraprofessionals will engage in two trainings on teaching English Language Arts (preK-8), two trainings on teaching Mathematics (K-5) and at least one session on a topic related to students with disabilities.

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The total for this proposal is \$ 10,000 which would be shared equally by both campuses. The budget would include paying presenters (\$3500) as well as the paraprofessionals (\$1100 per session) for their time.

Implementation Period

September - April

Quantity

.5

Unit Cost

\$10,000.00

Unit Cost Total

\$5,000.00

Shipping and Handling

Installation

Other:

\$5,000.00 Total Cost

Hanscom CO - Special Education Office
Stephanie Powers

Requested
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Priority Item Description

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Budget Manager

Stephanie Powers

School/Department

Hanscom CO - Special Education Office

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