

September 2014 Update

The attached publication "*A Question for Discussion- Can we hope to see the next Richard Branson, David Boies, Whoopi Goldberg, Charles Schwab, Steven Spielberg, and Wendy Wasserstein in New York City's Top Public High Schools?*" was posted on my website (www.davidrubelconsultant.com) in September 2013 (begins on page 7). New data available on the NYC-Department of Education (DOE) website shows that significant and positive changes, between school years 2011-12 and 2013-14, are taking place at the top 25 DOE high schools regarding students with an IEP. The data in the original publication was only from the 2011-12 school year. In the chart below, new data from school year 2013-2014 shows that the number of special education students enrolled and receiving services has increased by 66% from 428 to 712. Many high schools that had only had a handful of students now have enough for an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom (also known as Collaborative Teaching or Inclusion). Most importantly, a parent no longer has to worry that the school environment will lack a support system for their child.

How the information can help with selecting a NYC high school

- **This information is urgent for parents of 8th graders:** Every fall, thousands of parents of 8th grade students immerse themselves in the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE) high schools admissions system. It is not an easy system to figure out. For parents with a child that has been receiving IEP based services from the DOE, the selection process is even more challenging. The information presented here will be very helpful to parents of a high achieving child with an IEP. The evidence is compelling. The top 25 high schools are changing their learning environments to accommodate the needs of high achieving students that are entitled to and will benefit from IEP based academic support services.
- **For the top 25 DOE high schools, 284 more students enrolled or 66% increase in number of special ed students in just two years:** Between 2012 and 2014, the top 25 NYC public high schools have as a group increased enrollment of students with an IEP and receiving services by 66%. From a total of 428 in school year 2011-12 to 712 students in school year 2013-14. If only students receiving SETSS and ICT are counted, the increase is 160% (See second chart on page 5). This last piece of data is of great importance for parents with a special education child with dyslexia or some other learning specific disability. It shows that the increase is almost entirely due to the schools making internal changes so that there are more services and accommodations available for this group.

- For this year, 2014-15, for SETSS and ICT services, 208 more students enrolled is projected:** If the schools stick to their projected enrollments for this year 2014-15 (according to the school Fair Funding Budget submitted), there will be 208 more students with an IEP enrolled at the top 25 high schools. This is very encouraging news for parents trying to figure out the High School application process. If schools continue to enroll more students with an IEP, parents no longer will be afraid that their child will get lost in a school with little interest in their success.
- Now that there are more parents are on the inside, they can make schools responsive:** Parents have the most invested in making sure the IEP based services help their child. To make these gains in enrollment last, and students thrive, parents need to work closely with the school's special education staff, the School Leadership Team (SLT) and parent coordinator. Just providing the services is only the first step. Making sure that providers are held accountable for results is equally if not more important. With a critical mass of parents, requests for accommodations will also be more frequently made. The IDEA and NYS laws allow for a meaningful mix of instructional and academic support services for high school students. Other public school districts in NYS have already led the way.
- While progress has been made, there is still a ways to go:** at the end of school year 2013-14, the percent of students with an IEP and receiving services at the top 25 high schools is now at 2.5%. However, about 1/3 of the students are still concentrated in just three high schools. Leaving aside the question of what is a reasonable goal, few will argue that 2.5% is still a low figure. New York City can do much better here.

Top 25 NYC Public High Schools	2011-12 Special Ed Students	Total Student Register	% of Total Student		2013-14 Special Ed Students	Change From 2012 to 2014		Projected for 2014-15 SETSS/ICT Only
Baccalaureate School for Global Education	1	438	0.23		3	2		11
Bard High School Early College	5	617	0.81		2	-3		4
Bard High School Early College II	0	630	0.00		3	3		3

Baruch College Campus High School	10	432	2.31		24	14		35
Beacon High School	42	1160	3.62		56	14		62
Bronx Science	2	3011	0.07		41	39		28
Brooklyn Latin School	5	467	1.07		13	8		13
Brooklyn Technical High School	29	5326	0.54		49	20		23
Columbia Secondary School	2	474	0.42		20	18		38
Eleanor Roosevelt	6	507	1.18		15	9		27
Fiorello H. LaGuardia HS of Music and Art	25	2597	0.96		51	26		45
FRANK SINATRA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS	14	757	1.85		37	23		55
High School for Math Science and Engineering at City College	0	404	0.00		11	11		12
High School of American Studies at Lehman College	4	376	1.06		8	4		6
Hunter Science High School	17	454	3.74		31	14		39
Leon Goldstein	75	1,019	7.36		122	47		146
Medgar Evers College Preparatory School	3	1104	0.27		23	20		60
Millennium Manhattan	56	626	8.95		48	-8		54
NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies	85	579	14.68		80	-5		86
Professional Performing Arts High School	15	504	2.98		35	20		48
Queens Science High School at York College	1	417	0.24		0	-1		0

Scholars' Academy	11	1061	1.04		2	-9		29
Staten Island Technical High School	6	1104	0.54		13	7		1
Stuyvesant	12	3289	0.36		22	10		0
Townsend Harris	2	1138	0.18		3	1		15
Total	428	28491	1.5		712	284		840

ICT is Integrated Co-Teaching. Also known as Collaborative Team Teaching and inclusion classes.

Sources and Notes:

1. **All data comes from the New York City Department of Education.** The special education enrollment student data for year 2011-12 comes from the Special Education Service Delivery Report. Since these Reports haven't been updated since 2011-12 on the DOE website, another DOE source was used for school year 2013-2014 special education enrollment student data. For school year 2013-14, the official Register data for each school was used. The second column, "Special Education Students" means that the student is enrolled and receiving services. This is a one page form that is included on all DOE school websites. Information on the 2014-15 school year projected number of students receiving SETSS and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) services was taken from the **Fair Student Funding Budget for Projected 2014-15 School Year**. Every school has a Fair Student Funding budget with detailed breakdown of costs showing how many students will be receiving SETSS and how many will be receiving ICT. <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/funding/schoolbudgets/default.htm> .
2. **How the top high schools were selected.** NYC-DOE's own peer ranking system for school year 2011-12 was used to select the schools. To ensure consistency of data, there is a group of top schools that are not included here because these schools operate with a hybrid model of zoned students and screened students. This group includes Midwood in Brooklyn, Francis Lewis, and Cardozo in Queens. Each of these schools has a very large neighborhood zoned student population; these students are admitted based on their residence. The schools also operate honors programs in which admission is highly competitive. To be accepted into one of these programs, students must have high test scores (3 or 4) and grades (90 or above). Each of these schools also serves a large number of students with an IEP. However, it is impossible to know of the IEP group, how many of these students are in the selective programs and how many in the zoned school. This data is not available. Two other schools that are highly ranked, NEST and Queens Gateway, were not included because the official DOE data includes both their middle and high schools.
3. **Projected enrollment:** The last column is the number of students the DOE has projected for school year 14-15. Here is the DOE statement regarding this figure: **FY15 Projected Register:** Projected registers for Fiscal Year 2015 are generated based on historical enrollment trends for existing schools and enrollment targets for new schools. Schools work together with the Office of Student Enrollment and their Children First Network to project their registers using a web-based projected register tool. These projections are the basis for funding general education and special education students at a specific school.

4. **Chart below just shows SETSS/ICT only (no Related Services):** The chart below only shows the number of students receiving either SETSS or ICT services. For school year 2013-14, most of the students were receiving either SETSS or ICT services. Only about 15% were Related Services alone (Speech, PT, OT or counseling). The number of students receiving SETSS or ICT increased by 160% between 2011-12 and 2013-14. This piece of data is of great importance for parents with a special education child with dyslexia or some other learning specific disability. It shows that the increase in is almost entirely due to the schools making internal changes so that there are more services available for this group.

Top 25 New York City Public High Schools	2011-12 SETSS/ICT Students	2013-14 SETSS/ICT Students	Change from 2012 to 2014 +/-	Projected SETSS/ICT Enrollment for 2014-15
Baccalaureate School for Global Education	0	3	3	11
Bard High School Early College	3	22	19	4
Bard High School Early College II	0	0	0	3
Baruch College Campus High School	7	22	15	35
Beacon High School	33	54	21	62
Bronx Science	1	23	22	28
Brooklyn Latin School	0	8	8	13
Brooklyn Technical High School	14	27	13	23
Columbia Secondary School	1	17	16	38
Eleanor Roosevelt	5	14	9	27
Fiorello H. LaGuardia HS of Music and Art	25	45	20	45
FRANK SINATRA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS	11	32	21	55
High School for Math Science and Engineering at City College	0	10	10	12
High School of American Studies at Lehman College	1	4	3	6
Hunter Science High School	14	30	16	39
Leon Goldstein High School	38	116	78	146
Medgar Evers Preparatory High School	13	29	16	60
Millennium Manhattan High School	28	49	21	54
NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies	85	81	4	86
Professional Performing Arts High School	15	33	18	48
Queens Science High School at York College	0	0	0	0
Scholars' Academy	2	10	8	29
Staten Island Technical High School	5	1	-4	1
Stuyvesant	4	2	-2	0
Townsend Harris High School	1	0	-1	15
TOTAL	239	632	393	840

Source: all data comes from the NYC-DOE Fair Funding Formula:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/funding/schoolbudgets/default.htm>

What are SETSS and ICT?

5. **Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS):** Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) are specially designed and/or supplemental instruction provided by a special education teacher. These services help your child stay in the general education classroom while receiving services from a special education teacher. The special education teacher may work directly with your child to support participation in a general education classroom and provide direct specially designed and/or supplemental instruction to your child. This may include adapting the content being taught or using different instructional methods such as visual aids, highlighted work sheets and simplified directions (this is called “direct” instruction). The special education teacher may also work with your child’s general education teacher to adjust the learning environment and/or modify and adapt instructional techniques and methods to meet your child’s individual needs (this is called “indirect” instruction).

SETSS may be provided in the general education classroom, or in a separate location outside of the general education classroom or in any combination of general education classroom and a separate location;

When SETSS are provided in a group, the group may not include more than eight students;

SETSS may be provided for as few as three hours a week and as much as 50% of each day;

Your child’s IEP must state the number of periods a week that the services will be provided, whether those services will be provided directly with your child or indirectly with his or her general education teacher and where the services will be provided.

6. **Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT):** Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms include students with disabilities and students who are non-disabled educated together with two teachers, a general education teacher and a special education teacher. The teachers work together and collaborate throughout the day to adapt and modify instruction for your child and make sure the entire class has access to the general education curriculum. Children receiving ICT may also receive related services, assistive technology, para-professional services or other supplementary aids and services as necessary. ICT may be provided on a full-time or part-time basis. The periods of ICT must be specified on your child’s IEP, along with the content areas of instruction (for example mathematics) in which he or she will receive the services. The number of students with disabilities may not exceed 40% of the total class register or a maximum of twelve students with disabilities in an ICT class.

Source: A Parent’s guide to special education services for school-age children. NYC Department of Education.

A Question for Discussion- Can we hope to see the next Richard Branson, David Boies, Whoopi Goldberg, Charles Schwab, Steven Spielberg, and Wendy Wasserstein in New York City's Top Public High Schools?



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Summary: New York City is home to some of the most highly regarded and famous high schools in the nation. However, the wonderful opportunities these schools offer, exemplifying the democratic promise of free public education, rarely include children with learning differences such as dyslexia and ADHD. Steven Spielberg, Charles Schwab, David Boies and Richard Branson have all publicly discussed how they struggled as children with dyslexia. Despite the spectacular achievements of their adult lives, it is highly doubtful that as youth they would have been admitted to one of New York City's top 20 public high schools. According to the student enrollment data maintained by the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE), known as the *Special Education Service Delivery Report*, only a handful of students with an IEP are benefitting from the education offered at the City's top public high schools. Why does this issue exist, and what are the solutions, is hardly clear cut. What is clear is that highly regarded public high schools in other parts of the country enroll students with an IEP in comparable numbers to any typical neighborhood school. These schools do offer opportunities for students with learning differences such as dyslexia and ADD-ADHD. The chart below shows that only a tiny number of students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) attend and receive services at New York City's top public high schools. The good news is that the funding is already in place and Chancellor Walcott has put schools on notice to try harder to admit students with an IEP.

*The list of famous people with dyslexia and ADHD is a very long run. It covers all fields including the arts, science, politics and business. According to the list also includes Albert Einstein, Picasso, George Patton, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Nelson Rockefeller, Woodrow Wilson, Whoopi Goldberg, Greg Louganis, Tom Cruise, Pablo Picasso, Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, John F. Kennedy, Mozart, John Lennon, Walt Disney, Danny Glover, Cher, Magic Johnson, Carl Lewis, Bruce Jenner, General George Patton. Source: Learning Disabilities Resource Foundation.

Author's background interest: A few years ago, I was hired by two organizations to conduct research into why the Jewish yeshiva high schools in New York City had such low numbers of students with IEP receiving services. Based on data provided by the NYC-DOE, of the 90,000 students attending yeshivas and day schools in New York City, around 8,000 children in these schools had an IEP and were receiving services in grades K to 8. What was surprising to see is that the number dropped to just a few hundred or less than 3% for grades 9 to 12. To better understand the issue, I wanted to see how the NYC-DOE public high schools compare for student utilization of special education services and more importantly what kinds of programs they offer for high school students (as well as model programs from public high schools in other parts of the country). I was very surprised to see that most of the top NYC high schools had tiny numbers of students with an IEP attending. There were no programs to look at since there weren't enough students, with an active IEP, at any of the schools to even justify a small program. Other school districts have shown how the potential of the IDEA law can be fulfilled with a mix of Federal, State and local tax dollars (if you would like to know more about the yeshivas and special education, please see my newsletter on the website). While the issues of public schools are not part of my client base, I found the issue and findings too important to quietly site in my computer hard drive. It is the lead issue for my new public policy forum.

Here is what I have learned so far:

- The top 25 public high schools in NYC have a surprisingly low special education student enrollment of 1.5%:** The top 25 NYC public high schools have a total of 28,491 students including 428 students with an IEP and almost all receiving services. Included in this group are both the eight specialized test (SHSAT) high schools and LaGuardia as well as 16 other schools that are known as screened (based on grades, audition, NYS ELA and Math test scores, writing sample and/or interviews). The 1.5% enrollment figure contrasts sharply with the total public high school population of New York City; 13.7% of all students attending NYC public high schools have an IEP and receive services.
- Three of the top NYC public high schools show that the expectation of strong academic achievement does not have to exclude students with an IEP.** On the chart below, three schools included in the top 25, Millennium Manhattan, Leon Goldstein and Lab School for Collaborative Studies, all have tough entrance requirements AND have large enrollments of students with an IEP and receiving services. I don't know much about how services are provided or the range of services. On their website, the Lab School for Collaborative Studies offers inclusion classes (also known as Collaborative Team Teaching) for all four years of grades 9 to 12. According to data from the NYC-DOE, the Lab School for Collaborative Studies ranked 16th highest for SAT scores in 2011. It's mean student SAT score is equal, close to or well ahead of other schools that enrolled less than 1% of students with an IEP and receiving services. For example, Bard High School in Queens didn't have any students with an IEP in 2011-2012 but has a lower mean SAT scores than the Lab School for Collaborative Studies. It does seem clear that the 22 schools in the other group have a lot they can learn from these three schools (as well as high schools in other cities discussed below). To further explore this issue, it would be important to hear from the parents, teachers and the leadership at these three schools. Do students with learning differences thrive at these schools or struggle just to keep up and graduate?
- There is a large pool of students with a disability that can meet the top screened school's entrance requirements:** In 2012, 3,122 seventh grade students with disabilities scored either a 3 or 4 on the NYS math test and 1,397 seventh grade students with disabilities scored either a 3 or 4 on the ELA test. 17 high schools listed in the chart below are known as screened schools. Since

almost all of the screened high schools require either a 3 or 4 test score, a match that would increase the number of students attending the top 25 schools by several hundred shouldn't be that difficult. There is absolutely no need for any of these screened schools to compromise their high admission and academic standards to admit more students with a disability.

- **New York area suburban public high schools:** Unlike NYC's top public high schools, the public high schools of the affluent suburban communities of Great Neck, Mamaroneck, Scarsdale, Chappaqua and Ardsley all provide services to a large numbers of students with IEPs. These are zoned schools. Parents that want a public education for their child, regardless of how high or low their academic achievement is, have no other choice but to enroll their child in the town public high school. The group of schools selected here also represents some of the most affluent school districts in the State. At these schools, the number of students with IEP's and receiving services ranges between 11% and 17%. Evidently parents in these communities have found ways to make sure the local public high school is responsive to their child's needs.
- **Public high schools in other parts of the country offer a full and cutting edge menu of services for students with an IEP:** The solution that seems to make the most sense is to not to waive or dilute standards, but to create an environment where students with IEP's can thrive. Most suburban communities are served by only one high school. These schools still operate on what we call the zone system. If you live in within the borders of the suburb township, you are automatically allowed to enroll. Many experts in special education see high school as a very important time to be receiving services. However, the menu should be designed to meet the challenges of high school. For example, public high schools serving the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area in Montgomery County Maryland, Deerfield Park, Illinois and Brookline Mass all offer an expansive menu of academic support services including extra help with organization skills, social skills, time management, note taking, test taking, self-advocacy, writing and transition planning guidance for college. These schools offer a robust learning environment of support for a student with an IEP.
- **At least 150 American colleges and universities offer a full time resource center for students with learning disabilities.** To comply with Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and in general to provide for a more inclusive campus community, the colleges and universities have set up programs for students with learning differences especially dyslexia and ADHD. These

programs are offered as academic support centers for students admitted and matriculating towards a college degree. Included in this group are at least 50 colleges that are also in the top ranking according to US News and World Report. If the top colleges and universities are helping students with learning differences to attend and succeed, why can't New York City's top public high schools.

- The top elite private high schools in the New York City area provide in house support services for students with learning differences:** If you look at the elite private schools here in New York City, students with dyslexia and ADHD are not prevented from attending rather they are encouraged to attend and matriculate. Even though these schools are famous for demanding course work and long hours of homework, students with learning differences do attend these schools. While actual numbers are not available, at least six schools (Horace Mann, Fieldston-Ethical Culture, Spence, Packer, Nightingale-Bamford and Montclair Kimberley) have enough students to justify a full time academic support resource center.
- NYC-DOE is trying to address the issue:** The New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE) is well aware of this issue. According to an article in the New York Daily News on January 29, 2012, Chancellor Walcott issued a memo requiring these schools (except for specialized high schools that base admissions on the SHSAT test) to start admitting more students with an IEP. Several articles found in **Inside Schools** report that the DOE is moving forward with requiring some of the schools in the chart below to start accepting students with IEP's.

Top 25 New York City Public High Schools Ranking by % of Special Ed Students

	Top 25 NYC Public High Schools	2011-12 Special Ed Students	Total Student Register	% of Total Student
1	Bard High School Early College II	0	630	0.00
1	High School for Math Science and Engineering at City College	0	404	0.00
2	Bronx Science	2	3011	0.07

3	Townsend Harris High School	2	1138	0.18
4	Baccalaureate School for Global Education	1	438	0.23
5	Queens Science High School at York College	1	417	0.24
6	Medgar Evers College Preparatory School	3	1104	0.27
7	Stuyvesant	12	3289	0.36
8	Columbia Secondary School	2	474	0.42
9	Staten Island Technical High School	6	1104	0.54
10	Brooklyn Technical High School	29	5326	0.54
11	Bard High School Early College	5	617	0.81
12	Fiorello H. LaGuardia HS of Music and Art	25	2597	0.96
13	Scholars' Academy	11	1061	1.04
14	High School of American Studies at Lehman College	4	376	1.06
15	Brooklyn Latin School	5	467	1.07
16	Eleanor Roosevelt	6	507	1.18
17	FRANK SINATRA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS	14	757	1.85
18	Baruch College Campus High School	10	432	2.31
19	PROFESSIONAL PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL	15	504	2.98
20	Beacon High School	42	1160	3.62
21	Hunter Science High School	17	454	3.74
22	Leon Goldstein High School	75	1,019	7.36
23	Millennium Manhattan High School	56	626	8.95
24	NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies	85	579	14.68
	Total	428	28491	1.5

sources and notes on data: All data comes from the New York City Department of Education Special Education Services Delivery Report for School Year 2010-11. Students are receiving SETSS, counseling, speech or other IEP based services from the NYC-DOE. Notes: NYC-DOE's own peer ranking system for school year 2011-12 was used to select the schools. To ensure consistency of data, there is a group of top schools that are not included here because these schools operate with a hybrid model of zoned students and screened students. This group includes Midwood in Brooklyn, Francis Lewis, and Cardozo in Queens. Each of these schools has a very large neighborhood zoned student population; these students are admitted based on their residence. The schools also operate honors programs in which admission is highly competitive. To be accepted into one of these programs, students must have high test scores (3 or 4) and grades (90 or above). Each of these schools also serves a large number of students with an IEP. However, it is impossible to know of the IEP group, how many of these students are in the selective programs and how many in the zoned school. This data is not available. Two other schools that are highly ranked, NEST and Queens Gateway, were not included because the official DOE data also includes both their middle and high schools.

DISCUSSION of ISSUES:

1. **NYC's top Public High Schools seem to be stuck in a mindset from 50 years ago:** How is it possible that the City that prides itself on being most accommodating of differences, fair minded, intellectually sophisticated, could be so lagging in such an important area? Despite huge recent discoveries in scientific research in the area of dyslexia, brain structure and ADHD, and corresponding changes in media attention and public discourse, New York City's top public high schools are a throwback to the way things were 50 years ago. Sally Shaywitz, is the Audrey G. Ratner Professor of Learning Development at Yale University School of

Medicine, the author of the book “Overcoming Dyslexia”, the producer of an HBO documentary *the Big Picture* and director of the Yale Center Dyslexia and Creativity. Dr. Shaywitz is the nation’s leading spokesperson on dyslexia. Dr. Shaywitz’s research, conducted with her husband Dr. Bennett Shaywitz, shows that, through an Functional Magnetic Resonance Image (fMRI), differences in the structure of the brain can be detected between people with and without dyslexia. A person with dyslexia may have a very high IQ and still struggle with reading fluency. In a 2008 interview with Dr. Shaywitz, there is a discussion of how despite recent scientific advances, the public still misunderstands dyslexia. “New scientific findings have shown that there is a biological difference between dyslexic and typical readers; however, until functional imaging, these differences remained hidden from view. In addition, dyslexia is a paradox—that is, in dyslexia a person can be very bright, possess a strong intellect with outstanding reasoning and analytic abilities and yet read slowly, at times, speak with mispronunciations and hesitations (not be glib), and spell poorly. It’s easy to dismiss the fact that such a dyslexic person has a problem; easy, but also wrong.” Dr. Shaywitz is a leading proponent of allowing accommodations for long test taking time for the medical license exams. “Dyslexia is conceptualized as an encapsulated weakness resulting in slow reading surrounded by a sea of strengths. It is the sea of strengths in thinking and reasoning that, together with the accommodation of extra time, allows a slow-reading but good-thinking dyslexic to succeed. The accommodation of extra time on tests levels the playing field, allowing the hardworking dyslexic to access his strengths and demonstrate his knowledge.” One of the main findings from their research is that the same brain structure that causes a dyslexic person to struggle with reading may also enable them to excel with higher order, creative and what we now call “out of the box” thinking.

The Shaywitz’s are leading a national campaign to push Congress to amend the Americans with Disabilities Act to require accommodations, extra test time, for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) examination. The issue of accommodations shouldn’t be an issue for entrance into NYC’s top public high schools since extra time is allowed for the SHSAT test. The other top high schools accept students based on grades, NYS ELA and Math scores, interviews and writing sample. Why these schools still have less than 1% of students enrolled with an IEP and receiving services requires a deeper investigation.

It is no coincidence that some of the most accomplished people in the world struggled with dyslexia in grade school. What is very surprising is why would schools such as LaGuardia and the High School for the Performing Arts have such low enrollment figures of students with an IEP. Admission to these two schools is based mainly on a talent audition. The following actors have all discussed their childhood struggles with dyslexia: Whoopi Goldberg, Tom Cruise, Anthony Hopkins, Cher, Orlando Bloom, Kiera Knightly, Patrick Dempsey, Henry Winkler and Jay Leno among others. Given the large numbers of people found in the performing arts, one would think a school like LaGuardia would have a much higher enrollment figure of students with an IEP and receiving services instead of the 1% it presently has.

I think this observation below from Salman Khan, founder, Khan Academy, strongly overlaps with the research of Sally Shaywitz and the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity.

Right now, in STEM subjects, we assess someone's potential based on how well they can factor a polynomial or how many questions they get right on an S.A.T. math score or how well they can write an algorithm in a computer science class.

These things are important, but they aren't an actual measure of your real potential to be successful at science, technology and/or mathematics. This is like measuring the potential of a painter based on how well they mix paint.

Despite the STEM subjects' being about new ways of thinking and creating new things, many students don't perceive them as creative. And that's because, to a large degree, the type of filters we have for these subjects are actually filtering out our most creative people. If I had one wish in this area, it would be to see that creativity and invention became the central focus of STEM courses and that the traditional skills be viewed as what they are: tools to empower creativity.

This means more of the students' evaluation would be based on a portfolio of what they've done, as opposed to a score on a standardized test. This means more of class time would be devoted to exploring and inventing and less to lecturing and quiz-taking.

FINDING: According to test score data from NYC-DOE, in 2012, a total of 3,122 students with a disability scored a 3 or 4 on the New York State Math Test. Within this group, there must be several hundred students that could be enrolled in the top 25 schools without lowering admission standards. I'm sure more than a few of these students in this group would fall into a well know pattern of students with a disability. Because of a weakness in one area they compensate by exceling in another area.

All Kinds of Minds: Another well-known body of research and practice comes from the work of Dr. Mel Levine and the All Kinds of Mind (AKOM) organization. I wonder how many students with a disability, that scored a 3 or 4 on the ELA and Math Test, have also compensated by developing a serious interest or talent in art, music, acting, science or literature. The research here is filled with hundreds of examples of students that struggle in one area such as writing but also loves to do advanced math equations or science projects. These students need a public high school that will offer a learning environment that will ensure their strengths or assets reach their potential. Public schools all of the country are restructuring to incorporate the All of Kinds of Minds model of classroom learning. There is no reason why the DOE can't invite representatives from the organization mentioned here to help re-design its top public high schools to be more inclusive.

2. **It doesn't have to be this way, other school districts have already shown the way:**

As discussed in the findings section above, three NYC top high schools have been able to admit a comparatively large number of students with an IEP and provide services to them. This group includes the Lab School for Collaborative Studies, Manhattan Millennium and Leon Goldstein in Brooklyn. The Lab School in particular appears to be an impressive example of how a top academic NYC high school can be home to both to general and IEP students. Here is what the website **Inside Schools** says about the Lab School.

"The NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies is one of the most successful and sought-after small high schools in the city. The academics are challenging, but the atmosphere is laid-back. Kids who thrive there are high achievers who speak up, get involved and, in the spirit of the school's name, collaborate with others on projects and extra-curricular activities."

If you cross the border to Westchester and Nassau counties, the situation is completely different from New York City and its top public high schools. The affluent suburban communities of Great Neck, Larchmont, Chappaqua and Mamaroneck all have large numbers of high school students with IEP's receiving services. What makes these communities different? My take is that it's the parents that want to help their children thrive. In these communities, there is only one place to go for a free public school education- the neighborhood high school. Parents have no choice but

to fight to make sure the local public high school provides all of the services their child is entitled to under Federal and State law.

Source: NYSED SEDCAR system <http://data.nysed.gov/lists.php?type=district>

Other affluent communities also offer a robust menu of program opportunities for students with learning differences including the North Shore of Chicago and Montgomery County Maryland. In the appendix here, examples of the menu of services offered by Deerfield-Highland Park in Illinois and Montgomery County, Maryland show that public school districts are ensuring that students get the extra help they need to reach their academic potential. Ongoing support is given in the following academic skill sets: note taking, test taking, time management, organization, self- advocacy (moving from IDEA to Section 504) and writing a research paper. In the appendix here, one will find only a sampling of high schools that offer a robust menu of academic support services. If more research was undertaken, I am sure one would find that

New York Suburban Area Schools	Special Ed Students	Total Population	% of Total School Population
South Great Neck High School	148	1,321	11.2
North Great Neck High School	113	948	12
Mamaroneck HS 12th grade only (2008)	58	343	17
Chappaqua HS 12 grade only (2008)	33	314	10.5
Scarsdale HS 12 grade only (2008)	41	354	11.2
Ardsley High School 12 grade only (2008)	24	178	13.5

wherever you have a public high school serving a highly educated and affluent community, the special education services are provided in full.

This is not a money or tax levy dollars issue. Special educations services are an entitlement under Federal and State law. If another 1,000 high school students began receiving services, at an average cost of \$10,000 per student, or \$10 million total, our City budget wouldn't even notice. The NYC-DOE budget goes up a billion or so dollars every few years.

3. **America's top colleges offer support for students with learning differences:** *The K and W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD* covers over 200 universities colleges. Almost every single school included in the book has a campus support center offering professional help to students with learning differences such as dyslexia and ADHD. At least 50 of the schools are also on the US News and World Report College Ranking for the top 150 schools including schools such as Cornell, NYU, Brown, Berkeley and Stanford. If these schools have decided it's important to devote resources to ensure that students with learning differences can attend, why can't New York City's top public high schools do a better job. *The K and W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD* organizes the colleges into three groups depending upon how consumer friendly the campus resource center is. The groups are: 1) *structured programs or (SP)* 2) *coordinated services or (CS)* and 3) *services or (S)*. Structured programs offer the most, coordinated services the middle and Services the least amount.

Structured programs: offer the most comprehensive services for students with learning disabilities. Services are highly structured and students are involved in developing plans to meet particular learning styles and needs. “

Coordinated Services: “differ from the Structured Program in that the services are not as comprehensive. These services are provided by at least one certified learning disability specialist. The staff is knowledgeable and trained to provide assistance to students to develop strategies for their individual needs.”

Services: “Services is the least comprehensive of the three categories. Colleges offering Services generally are complying with the Federal mandate requiring reasonable accommodations to all students with appropriate and current documentation. “

The following colleges and universities were found in the second group of **Coordinated Services or CS**: Stanford, University of California at Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, UCLA, UC San Diego, Northwestern, George Washington University, Indiana University, University of Maryland, Boston College, Boston University, Clark, Emerson, Northeastern, University of Massachusetts, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, University of Missouri, Washington University in St. Louis, Colgate, Rochester Institute of Technology, SUNY Binghamton, SUNY Stony Brook, Syracuse, Duke, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wake Forest, Oberlin, Lehigh, Temple, University of Pittsburgh, Brown, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin at Madison. If this

group of selective and most selective colleges can offer support services and accommodations to students with learning disabilities, once again, why can't NYC's top public high schools. Many of the colleges in the "S" group such as NYU, offer a full time resource center with support services for LD students. A casual look at the percentage figures showed that most of the schools that reported the number of students receiving LD services hovered between 1.5% and 4% of total enrollment. Not all schools are included in the L and W publication. For example, at the University of Chicago Academic Skills Assessment Program, students can get help in any of the following areas: memory and concentration, time management, note taking and test taking. Any student with ADHD might find these workshops helpful.

4. **NYC-DOE Chancellor Dennis Walcott has already ordered top schools to admit more students with an IEP:** The good news is that this issue isn't news to the NYC-DOE. The DOE is well aware of the problem. According to an article in the New York Daily News in January of 2012, Chancellor Walcott issued a memo requiring these schools (except for specialized high schools that base admissions on the SHSAT test) to start admitting more students with an IEP. The NYC-DOE "Special Education Service Delivery Report" is prepared on an annual basis and posted on the DOE website. The most recent year is 2011-2012. In five years from now, it is possible that significant strides will have been achieved.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/chancellor-walcott-orders-top-high-schools-admit-students-special-article-1.1013405#ixzz2eM64Bokf>

This issue has also been reported on the Inside Schools ("Selective schools forced to take special ed students" by Anna Schneider, April 23, 2013) website along with a lively exchange of comments from readers. According to these articles, many schools have been forced to accept students with learning disabilities that do meet the schools entrance requirements.

The NYC-DOE has an official High School guide for parents with children applying to high school. It includes an FAQ: Here is an excerpt:

Q: The Directory of New York City High Schools indicates that students with special needs may apply to any school. How do I know that the school that accepts my child will be able to provide the support he or she needs?

A: Schools are expected to develop flexible special education supports for all students who are matched to their schools.

The DOE doesn't have to look very far for models to study. Between private and other public schools, many examples of existing support services can be found (all described below in the appendix). It is doubtful the DOE will be able to do this on its own. Parents and advocates must also play an active role.

5. **There is a large pool of students with a disability that can meet the top screened school's entrance requirements:** If the number of students with an IEP and receiving services increased at the top 25 public high schools by 1% or 2%, or 400 more students, that would be an impressive accomplishment. According to NYC-DOE official test score data, the top schools have a large pool of students with disabilities to choose from. In 2012, 3,122 seventh grade students with disabilities scored either a 3 or 4 on the NYS math test and 1,397 seventh grade students with disabilities scored either a 3 or 4 on the ELA test. 17 high schools listed in the chart here are known as screened schools (and eight schools make the up the Specialized High School Admissions Test or SHSAT group). Since almost all of the screened high schools require either a 3 or 4 test score, a match that would increase the number of students attending the top 25 schools by several hundred shouldn't be that difficult. There is absolutely no need for any of these screened schools to compromise their high admission and academic standards to admit more students with a disability.

6. **Many elite New York City private schools offer support to students with learning differences:** What is also interesting is that elite private schools do offer support services to students with learning differences. In the **appendix 3** below, are descriptions that were cut and pasted from the websites of the following schools: Horace Mann, Fieldston-Ethical Culture, Spence, Nightingale-Bamford and Packer Collegiate School. These are schools famous for maintaining the most academically challenging classes. The coursework and homework is staggering. If a student with learning differences can succeed in one of these schools with some extra professional support provided (which they are entitled to in a public school based on their

IEP), the question of why wouldn't they be able to succeed in a top public school offering the same services deserves an answer.

7. **Are Section 504 accommodations being used by students to take the Specialized High School Achievement Test (SHSAT):** The NYC-DOE does allow for accommodations for the SHSAT test. It would be helpful if the DOE would make public the following pieces of information: How many students requested accommodations for the SHSAT Test? How many got a high enough score for admission into one of the specialized high schools? How many choose to attend?
8. **Parent's Caveat:** When I first mentioned this issue to some parents of high school students with an IEP, they said that it is quite possible that these schools do have more than a few students with IEP's. These students could be attending just not receiving publicly funded services from the DOE. Parents could be paying out of pocket. For a parent, paying an extra \$5,000 a year for private tutor is certainly a huge bargain compared with tuition at a private school. The child gets the private one to one tutoring without the stigma and possibly a more talented tutor charging much more than what a DOE SETSS teacher can make. Most important, the teenage student doesn't have to carry around the label of being different. Another parent said that while this may be true it hardly justifies the exclusion of hundreds of families that can't afford paying out of pocket private tutor fees.
9. **Concluding thoughts:** The findings and observations presented here should be considered only as food for thought for parents of children with learning differences, advocates, school administrators and other stakeholders. All of my research projects are based on listening carefully to the involved and affected parties. In this case, parents, students, teachers and principals. How would they fix the problem? Much more input is needed here to arrive at a well thought out program strategy. Recommendations come later.

A few more comments: Since there are only tiny numbers of parents with children with IEP's actually enrolled in these schools, it is unrealistic to expect change to come from within. Real change will only come when political and social pressure from the outside forces these schools to be more responsive to the needs of students with an IEP. New Yorkers like to take pride in thinking of themselves as some of the most sophisticated, progressive enlightened and fair minded people in our country. *Here is one place where we are sorely lacking.* The good news is that the public funds are already there. So is the expertise. There are public high schools across the country with best practices waiting to be tried here. The DOE has a long track record of successfully tackling difficult issues. What is exciting about the recent research with learning differences is that this isn't just about doing what's right. To the extent that highly intelligent and creative students struggling with dyslexia, ADHD and other learning difference are given a chance to benefit from attending one of the top public high schools, based on future contributions, we will be a much better society. Finally, don't dilute or bypass the existing admissions standards at the top public high schools; instead make the schools more responsive to the needs of students with an IEP. The author does not see anything written here as justification for changing the screening or audition based admissions policies of this group of schools.

Appendices

- New York Daily News article January 29, 2012
- Sampling of programs offered at Public high schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, Highland Park Illinois, and Colorado.
- Elite private school academic resource center programs for students with learning differences

Appendix 1:

Chancellor Walcott orders top high schools to admit more students with special needs

Tells principals to comply or Education Department would place kids

BY **BEN CHAPMAN** / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

PUBLISHED: SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012, 6:00 AM

SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR [Dennis Walcott](#) has put the city's elite high schools on notice to admit more students with special needs, the Daily News has learned.

In a sharply worded email sent to principals this month, Walcott told administrators to admit as many students with special needs as neighboring schools or the Education Department would place the students for them.

"We recognize that this transition is a substantial one," wrote Walcott, adding that the department would beef up supports for disabled students to help them settle in the high-performing schools.

Last year, 11 of the city's screened high schools had fewer than three students with special needs, a News analysis shows.

And fewer than half of the city's 103 screened high schools took as many disabled kids as non-screened neighboring schools.

Screened high schools select students using a variety of criteria, such as test scores, essays and interviews. Advocates believe some students with disabilities may not have been encouraged even to apply or that schools were simply shutting them out.

[Bryan Stromer](#), an "A" student with cerebral palsy who is a junior at the Lab School for Collaborative Studies in Manhattan, said the city can do better.

"Sometimes the bar is set so low, it's like they're saying they don't have confidence in us," said Stromer.

Walcott said his push to put more kids with special needs in screened high schools, such as Bard High School Early College and Beacon High School, is part of the agency's effort to improve outcomes for all students.

"Ensuring that incoming ninth graders with disabilities have the same access to screened high schools is just one way that we're raising academic standards for all of our students," Walcott said.

The city's eight specialized high schools, such as Stuyvesant High School and Bronx High School of Science, are exempt from the Chancellor's new edict because they admit strictly on applicants' scores on the city's Specialized High Schools Admissions Test.

But officials said they were looking for ways to increase the number of kids with disabilities in those schools as well, as part of an overall effort to move disabled students to the mainstream.

Advocates applaud the agency's push to place disabled kids in elite schools, but said the city has to make sure adequate supports are in place.

"Placing more accountability on schools to ensure they admit more students with special needs is a good thing," said [Jaye Bea Smalley](#), co-president of the Citywide Council on Special Education. "The devil is in the details."

With [Rachel Monahan](#)

bchapman@nydailynews.com

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/chancellor-wallcott-orders-top-high-schools-admit-students-special-article-1.1013405#ixzz2eM5xXhfi>

Appendix 2:

Learning Differences and Transition Planning in Public High School Programs

1. Township High School District 113 (Illinois)

Deerfield High School and Highland Park High School

District 113 is located in the north suburban area of Chicago. It is comprised of two high schools in Highland Park and Deerfield. District 113 strives to create caring learning communities that recognize relationships as the foundation of learning. The district has a long history of excellence in education. Education is highly valued by the communities of this district. Parents are very active in every aspect of our schools. More than ninety-five percent of graduates go on to college after graduation. The structure of the district is site -based decision making with a central administration committed to supporting building based programs and initiatives. Information about the district's mission, long range plan and guiding principles are available on the District 113 website (<http://www.dist113.org/>) We are a member of the North Suburban Special Education District (NSSED) which provides a range of supplementary/related services to our schools, as well as, programs for students with moderate to severe disabilities. Overall the district is 8.8% Low Income, and 16% of the students population receive Special Education services.

Deerfield High School is located east of I-294 and west of I-41. The Deerfield community is bordered to the south by Northbrook and to the north by Lake Forest. The DHS community is largely residential with some industry along its southern boundary. Of the 1,716 students, 86.9 are white, 1.4% are Black or African American, 8.5% are Hispanic or Latino, and 3.2% Asian. The psych-social staff is part of the Special Education and Counseling Departments. There are four full time psychologists in the building, one of whom is a Ph.D., licensed clinical psychologist.

Highland Park High School is located 25 miles north of Chicago on Lake Michigan. The community is largely suburban residential with some light industry. There are four full time psychologists in the building, one of whom is the supervising psychologist on site. Of the 2018 students, 79% are White, 16% are Hispanic or Latino, 2% are Multi-Racial and 2% are Black or African American.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special Education Learning Strategies 850022 / 850024

Prerequisite: Department Recommendation

Students are taught specific learning strategies in the areas of academic skills, study strategies, self-advocacy, problem-solving, and post-high school preparation. Materials from students' academic course and supplementary material are used in the application of learning techniques. Instructional goals are developed for each student on an individual basis. Consultation with content area teachers is provided. The number of days of student attendance is determined by recommendation. Students who attend 4 periods or more per week earn .5 or a credit per semester and those who attend 2 periods per week earn .25 of a credit per semester. Learning Strategies is a pass / fail course and may be repeated.

Learning Strategies Essentials 854412 / 854414

Prerequisite: Department Recommendation

Students are learn strategies to support their achievement. Depending on student need, instruction may be provided in the areas of social skills, speech and language skills, and problem-solving skills. This course is intended for students who enroll in other Essentials courses. Students who attend 4 periods or more per week earn .5 or a credit per semester and those who attend 2 periods per week earn .25 of a credit per semester. Learning Strategies is a pass / fail course and may be repeated.

Managing Academic Performance 850322 / 850324

Prerequisite: Department Recommendation

Students develop skills and strategies to improve school functioning by learning to manage attention, organization, assignment completion, time management, conflict resolution, quiz/test preparation and attendance. In addition, each student works on their individual goals. Activities revolve around acquiring these skills and meeting goals, as well as focusing on problem-solving and communication skills with peers and adults. Supervised study time is structured support that focuses on study and organizational strategies as well as management skills. In addition to the above support, consultation with the classroom teachers is provided and crisis intervention is available as needed. The number of attendance days per week is based upon department recommendation. Students enrolled in two days per week earn .5 credits per semester. Students are also graded on the DHS standard grading scale based on the points they earn in class. This course is a year course and may be repeated

Counseling Program Internship Description

Historically the district has supported two ISPIC interns per academic year; one at Deerfield High School and one at Highland Park High School. Students with psych-social needs receive direct, individual or group counseling. Focus groups are formed each year according to a needs assessment. Usually groups are offered to address for example: freshman transition, eating disorders, divorce, COA, recovery, depression, grief & loss, gender issues.

Interns receive ongoing training and supervision from both licensed and certified psychologists focusing on developing meaningful and effective intervention components through best practices in assessment, prevention/intervention, consultation and supervision. Opportunities for research and evaluation are limited only by what is in the best interest of students. Interns can avail themselves of the many professional development opportunities afforded through the NSSSED Cooperative.

The psychologists' responsibilities include individual and group counseling, intervention and consultation with staff and parents, consultation with special and general education programs, crisis intervention and diagnostic assessment. An intervention based, problem-solving process is used to identify students with learning or adjustment difficulties. The problem solving teams meet weekly and are comprised of guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, educational diagnosticians, deans, school nurse and administrators. Each ISPIC intern will spend one day per week in the Drop-In Center at Highland Park High School. There is opportunity for system level consultation through participation in district wide initiatives (i.e. emerging RTI practices).

The internship plan is often individualized to address areas of personal interest such as emotional disability, autism, consultation, cognitive behavioral therapy, transition planning or assessment and planning for specific low incidence populations.

In addition to being involved with the District summer school program, additional summer options are flexible and coordinated through NSSSED. The majority of our interns have been able to utilize some of their time in the summer to work on their dissertation.

The intern receives a stipend of \$20,000. The intern's workweek of 40 hours is individually arranged but typically occurs between 7:00 and 4:30 PM. Both schools offer a rich array of extra-curricular activities and athletic programs. Interns may apply for activity sponsor and coaching positions as positions as they are available.

2. Brookline, Massachusetts

Learning Centers

Learning Centers are available in each of the elementary schools and the high school. The Learning Centers are designed to provide a range of services to students with varied mild to moderate disabilities. Learning Centers focus on assisting students in accessing the curriculum of each grade. Each student receives specially designed instruction and support services in areas of specific need as indicated in his or her Individual Education Program (IEP). Services may include instruction in reading, mathematics and written language, support with emotional and social development, and development of organization and study skills. Small

group instruction, individualized instruction, and collaborative instruction in the general education setting are used to assist students in achieving individual student IEP goals.

Close communication and consultation with parents and general education teachers is a key component of the Learning Center. Learning Center teachers also assist in the development and implementation of appropriate modifications and accommodations. Learning Center teachers provide students and teachers with a level of understanding of each student's disability(ies) and areas of strength as well as self-advocacy skills appropriate to the grade level of the student.

For students age 14 and older, Learning Centers will assist students with transition planning and post-secondary planning. This may include some or all of the following: college preparatory support, exposure to services at the college level, development of individual transition plans, exploration of post-secondary employment options, and identification of areas of continued learning needed to enhance job skills and exposure to adult service agencies.

Learning Center-Overview

- Assists students in accessing general curriculum
- Direct, specially designed instruction
- Academic support
- Organizational skill development
- Classroom accommodation and modification support
- Study skill development
- Executive function skill(s) development
- Instruction and assistance in use and application of assistive technology
- Disability awareness, ability awareness and development of self-advocacy skills appropriate to the age and needs of the student

Intensive Learning Centers exist in three elementary schools; Baker, Lawrence, and Devotion. The Intensive Learning Center Programs are designed for students with varied disabilities who require a higher level of services. The Intensive Learning Center Programs have a low staff to student ratio allowing for increased individualization. Students may receive higher levels of direct, specially designed instruction in academic areas within the Intensive Learning Centers. A high level of case management and coordination of services is provided by the Intensive Learning Center teachers. Although these programs are building based, when necessary other elementary schools may access these programs as district-wide options.

3. Chappaqua High School

Learning Center (grades 9-12)

Learning Center is a 9-12 grade-based program that provides academic support as outlined by IEP goals. It is intended to develop independent skills and strategies for problem-solving and self-directed learning. Ongoing program development continues to strengthen active and more reflective student involvement in learning. In Learning Center, students work to develop strategies in the context of their regular course work. All Learning Centers include daily independent choice reading, supported by research that correlates independent reading with academic achievement, and intended to help instill a lifelong love of reading. Learning Centers are provided by case managers/special education teachers to small groups of students with educational disabilities. Learning Center is scheduled as a non-graded class; it is not a pullout program.

The Transitional Support Program (TSP): (grades 9-12)

A flexible program providing students experiencing different levels of emotional distress regularly scheduled academic and therapeutic support. Educational supports include: direct instruction of coursework, study skills, organizational help, and assistance related to learning difficulties. Therapeutic supports include: individual, small group, and family counseling. Intensive case management services for students are available and include: teacher consultation, in class interventions, monitoring of student attendance, academic updates to students and families, individualized daily plans, consultation with private therapists, psychiatric consultation, and family meetings. Families become a component of the support plan designed for each student. The program's flexibility responds to a student's need, and can range from multiple contacts daily, course instruction for one or more classes, to a student initiated "check-in."

Crisis management services are available for students who cannot continue their school day because of emotional reasons, and include: assessment, de-escalation, development and implementation of coping strategies, follow-up to family and school personal, and progress monitoring. TSP faculty includes a psychologist, special education teachers, and teaching assistants. They provide consultation and support to classroom teachers who are working with students with significant social/emotional needs.

TSP may be an appropriate consideration for when students: return from hospitalization, residential treatment or other outside placements and need additional support; have experienced a decline in academic and/or behavior functioning; or have experienced significant social, family, or academic stress.

The TSP program is intended to help students transition to healthy, independent, and successful participation in general education classes as quickly as possible. It is not a long-term, self-contained special education placement.

The Pathways Program (grades 9-12)

The Pathways Program is an inclusive educational program for students whose unique needs require more than supported participation in the general education curriculum and

program. The Pathways Program provides students specialized opportunities to engage in individually designed programs in their own community school, Horace Greeley High School. A process of person-centered planning considers the student's strengths and affinities as well as his/her special needs to create a plan for an independent, productive life in the community. Experiential units are designed to foster the academic, vocational, social, and behavioral skills and personal self-awareness that will prepare students to reach their potential for living productive lives in the community. Individual exit criteria determine the duration, nature of educational programs and type of diploma credential to be awarded upon graduation. Exiting students move to higher education, competitive employment or assisted employment. Exiting students have developed the life skills which will support them in the community.

4. Walter Johnson High School, Bethesda, Maryland

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/wjhs/depts/asc/>

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

The special education services at Walter Johnson serve students with identified learning styles/needs/disabilities that require specialized instruction and accommodations to meet the academic requirements/functional life skills as outlined by their Individualized Education Plan. The decision to provide services is made by the IEP Team after completion and/or review of evaluative data by the qualified examiners. The services offered are:

RESOURCE

This model provides direct and/or consultative services. A variety of instructional models and strategies may be used to meet individual student needs. The resource service providers consult with school staff to provide intervention strategies and demonstration of effective instructional practices.

ASPERGERS

This model provides rigorous instruction across the academic areas while providing

adaptations, accommodations, and needed social skills supports. Students need more support than can be offered through their home school resource model.

GIFTED AND TALENTED/LEARNING DISABILITIES

This model provides rigorous instruction in the students' area of strength, while providing adaptations and accommodations in the areas of skill that are affected by their disability. Students may need more intensive supports than available in their home schools.

LEARNING AND ACADEMIC DISABILITIES

This model serves students with learning and academic disabilities by utilizing a program that may include components of self-contained classes, co-taught general education classes, and supported classes.

5. Cheyenne Mountain High School, Colorado Springs Colorado

By Salle from Colorado (Parent)

Published: May 5 2010

Our daughter Hillary was in the fifth grade when she was originally diagnosed with a language disability. It wasn't until she was a freshman in high school that her disability was given a name: Aphasia. Hillary's Aphasia is both expressive and receptive, meaning that reading, writing, processing information and speaking are all more laborious tasks for her than for other students. At the time of the diagnosis, doctors told us that college was an unrealistic aspiration for Hillary.

Hillary's strong work ethic got her through two difficult years of junior high school. It was clear from the beginning of high school, however, that it was going to take more than hard work and determination to keep Hillary's self-esteem and desire to succeed intact. The increased work load and more complicated

subject matter meant hours of studying every night. The results were barely passing grades and a student who was left feeling defeated and worthless. Although Hillary had an Individualized Education Program, neither she nor I were savvy enough to take full advantage of what it offered.

We are very fortunate to live in a school district that offers an innovative high school program called LEAD (an acronym which stands for Learning and Educating About Disabilities). This program, which is unique to Cheyenne Mountain High School in Colorado Springs, is under the direction of the school's Special Education Department Chair. LEAD is an accredited class made up of college-bound students with learning disabilities and AD/HD. During class time, LEAD students learn about disabilities and their legal rights as students with disabilities. They also learn that self-knowledge and self-advocacy are powerful tools for the student with LD and AD/HD.

The LEAD curriculum includes opening up the students' cumulative folders so they can examine and understand their own test scores and assessments. This information helps them support their requests for the accommodations and modifications they might be entitled to. Students learn about their legal rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and how to actively participate in their own IEP or 504. LEAD students learn not to rely on teachers and parents to advocate for them. It is a responsibility they take on themselves.

During the course of Hillary's four years as a LEAD student, she developed the habit of writing letters to each of her teachers at the beginning of the semester. These letters explained her disability, what accommodations she needed and why. Accompanying the letter were articles on Aphasia she had found on the Internet. Hillary educated teachers about her disability and they not only accepted her need for accommodations, but encouraged her to use them.

LEAD provided a niche for Hillary, a place where she could be accepted and understood. In addition, it taught her to focus on her strengths. One of LEAD's most important lessons is that a learning disability has nothing to do with intelligence. As Hillary's confidence and self-esteem grew, she became more successful at dealing with academic challenges and graduated from high school with an enviable grade point average.

Since its inception, 95% of the high school's LEAD students have gone on to college. Hillary is now one of those students. In spite of dire predictions from well-meaning professionals, Hillary is currently a freshman at a four-year college. Each day is a challenge, but the lessons of LEAD have served her well. She confidently explains to each of her college professors about her disability and how it affects her. She does not hesitate to use the accommodations that she knows she is entitled to. Hillary finished her first semester of college with grades that anyone would be proud of.

Although LEAD is unique to Cheyenne Mountain High School, it is my hope that some day all schools will offer a similar program that will teach students with learning disabilities the crucial skill of self-advocacy and the importance of self-knowledge. It takes commitment from administrators, parents and teachers, but all students with learning disabilities and AD/HD should be given the necessary tools for success, both in college and in life.

This story originally appeared in the [IDEA Parent Guide](#)

Appendix 3:

Many New York area elite private schools offer a full time professionally staffed academic resource center for students with learning differences

Some of New York City's most elite private schools do offer a full range of services to students with learning differences. I simply cut and pasted from the school's website the webpage with the support services provided. What is most interesting is that ALL of the services offered below by these schools can be covered by public funding as long as they are written in the student's IEP. The Federal IDEA law and State Special Education law covers all of these services. There are public schools in other parts of the country that do provide the robust menu of services that are offered at private schools. The issue is not money.

Horace Mann

Counseling, Guidance and Support Services

Counseling, Guidance, and Support Services personnel play a significant role in all divisions of the School. The services they provide fulfill Horace Mann's mission to support the personal, social and emotional development of all students. Professionals who provide these services include psychologists, social workers, school counselors, school nurses, learning specialists, speech and language pathologists, and college counselors. Counseling, guidance, and support services professionals work closely with academic deans, advisors, outside professionals, and teachers. The team approach is appropriate to the developmental needs of the students in each division.

Program Description

Support Services in the **Middle Division** are provided by a Director of Guidance, a Coordinator of Academic Support Services, a Learning Specialist, and a Life Skills teacher. The Director of Guidance coordinates the homeroom advisory program; manages the peer mentoring program; provides individual and small group counseling; offers counseling and referrals to families; serves as a resource to faculty; organizes student and family educational workshops with guest speakers; and oversees the Life Skills Curriculum. The Coordinator of Academic Support Services provides individual academic counseling; conducts student observational assessment, intervention and referrals; presents to faculty and parents on learning disorders; and summarizes outside educational evaluations with an emphasis on teaching strategies and classroom work. The Learning Specialist manages the Academic Center, provides individual remediation, and manages the test center where students access their test accommodations and take make-up exams.

The Director of Counseling and Guidance in the **Upper Division** oversees the work of a learning disabilities specialist, a social worker, a part-time psychologist and a health educator. Services include coordination of the advisory program; individual academic and emotional counseling; consultation and referrals with outside evaluators; facilitation of support groups for parents of students with learning disabilities; peer tutoring; and classroom programs that address the specific developmental needs of ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders. The Department also offers classes in Introductory and Advanced Placement Psychology, and provides a testing center where students have access to testing accommodations.

Ethical Culture-Fieldston School

Accommodating Learning Differences

[How to navigate Upper School, the ACTs, PSATs, and SATs: A handbook for Fieldston Upper School students with learning differences and their parents.](#)

[Click here to download](#)

The Learning Center is an integral part of Fieldston, providing support to students in Forms I-VI, who have learning difficulties and disabilities. There are four Learning Specialists whose role is to be a vital resource to faculty, administration, parents, as well as the entire student community. The Learning Specialists provide support in several ways:

- direct assistance to students in individual work sessions and/or small groups;
- consultation with faculty, administration, parents and students;
- coordination and consultation with the Guidance department and outside tutors;
- implementation of parent and faculty workshops;
- collaboration with the School's SAT/ACT Coordinator

Referrals for student support can come from teachers, students, Form Deans, or parents. In the spring of every year, one of our Learning Specialists meets with committees from Fieldston Lower and Ethical Culture. It is the goal of these meetings to assess the needs of all incoming students so that students' needs are met. In addition, communication is continuous throughout the year with Form Deans and teachers. This collaborative approach allows us to be vigilant and reflective as we provide student support in the most appropriate way.

Fieldston is committed to enabling all of its students to work to their highest capabilities and to become successful independent learners. In this regard, some students with learning disabilities will need reasonable accommodations or modifications. While the school does not have the resources available to meet every need of students who cannot achieve success in meeting the requirements of our curriculum, we are committed to determining, case by case, those accommodations that we can implement to enable those students to succeed.

SPENCE SCHOOL

In the Upper School

In the Upper School, Learning Specialists work with faculty to promote teaching strategies that benefit a range of learning styles. They also offer support programs for individuals and small groups of students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Grade 9 Transitions classes are designed to teach girls the time management, organizational and study skills necessary for success in Upper School, college and life. Students may also meet with Learning Specialists one on one to work on developing academic skills. The goal of all Upper School programs is to help girls understand their unique profiles of strengths and weaknesses and become self-confident learners.

PACKER COLLEGIATE

LEARNING SKILLS

Packer's commitment to diversity includes an appreciation of the broad range of thinking styles our students bring to school each day. Through our Learning Skills curriculum, we reinforce essential skills to support students as they keep pace with Packer's intellectually challenging academic program. The Learning Specialists are knowledgeable teachers and diagnosticians who work together with classroom teachers, school psychologists, and division administrators to identify the needs of students and develop plans to maximize their educational experience.

The below links and resources are available to Packer parents only via password.

[Program Description](#)

[Accommodations](#)

[Educational Testing](#)

[Standardized Exams](#)

[Parent Association Learning Support Committee](#)

[Suggested Resources](#)

Nightingale Bamford

Student Support

Nightingale's learning specialists provide academic advising, small group instruction, and skills-based information. We coordinate standardized test administration and accommodations for eligible students. Students in need of academic support receive individualized attention at school. Parent-teacher conferences are held to discuss ways of assisting anyone who is experiencing difficulties. The learning support team may recommend an educational evaluation to further delineate strengths and weaknesses and tailor extra help. We are committed to helping students develop their study skills and become independent learners in order to achieve their potential.

MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY STUDENT SUPPORT

Academic support at the Upper School is provided through a variety of means:

Campus Resource (CR) Team

The Campus Resource Team (including the Director of the Learning Lab, a school psychologist and learning specialists) provides support for those students identified with learning disabilities/differences or other disorders that interfere with their ability to learn effectively. There are two categories of students with whom the Campus Resource Team interacts: referred students and profiled students. Referred students are those whose academic performance has raised questions about whether they may have a learning difference that impacts their academic progress. Profiled students are those with a documented learning disability/difference or other disorder that leads to a written support plan.

Study Halls

Study halls provide students with a supervised environment for independent study; faculty members supervise study halls at all times. The goal is to have a proctor who knows the students assigned to the study hall, is aware of the students' needs, and is willing to do whatever is needed to ensure that students can spend the time productively. Depending on the size and location of the study hall, the proctor may allow students to spend time working collaboratively during the 75-minute period. All ninth graders are assigned to study halls in the fall; ninth graders who are on High Honor Roll at the end of the first semester are not assigned to study hall for the spring. Tenth graders are

assigned to study hall unless they were on the Honor Roll at the end of the preceding semester. Juniors and seniors who are on Academic Probation are assigned to study hall.

Common Work Period

The Common Work Period (CWP) provides students with a 25-minute block of time during each academic day to work with their teachers and peers. During the CWP, students may choose from among a variety of activities that support their learning: getting help from subject area teachers; meeting with advisors; working on homework, labs, or projects; researching in the library; working in computer labs or art studios; using extra time to finish assignments; or meeting with and collaborating with other students on class projects. In some cases, teachers use the CWP to extend instructional time for an individual student, a group of students, or an entire class. In addition, some classes - as designated in the *Curriculum Guide* - regularly use their once-a-cycle CWP.

Extra Help

Teachers are available on a regular basis to provide extra help to students. Teachers meet with students before the school day begins, during the school day, and after the school day ends. These meetings, the length and frequency of which will be determined by the student's needs, are held by appointment or on a drop-in basis.

Math Lab

The Math Lab provides a dedicated space where students can go to: get extra help on a specific assignment, review for an assessment, practice general skills or work independently on math homework. The Math Lab is staffed almost every period of the 8-day cycle, as well as before and after school. Students who go to the Math Lab can get individual help or work in small groups, with or without the assistance the supervising math teacher. While students may attend on a drop-in basis, some may be assigned to the Math Lab for required additional support.

Learning Lab

The mission of the Learning Lab is to provide time and space to help students develop and improve their academic strategies. It is available to all students who would like direction and support as they work to master a variety of academic skills. While the focus is on meta-cognitive strategies that train students to problem–solve given the context of their assignment, emphasis is given to concrete strategies and skills that prove useful in the classroom and during homework preparation. Faculty staffing the Learning Lab provide process-oriented guidance and support to students who are encouraged to attend by teachers, advisors, or parents, or are assigned for an assessment of their needs and subsequent support. Students often self-select for specific support on an assignment or on skill development.

Quiet Study

Students may work independently in the Learning Lab, using the space as quiet study area, even if they are not

working with a faculty member. This space provides an alternative for students who do not need to work collaboratively in the Library, and who work best in total silence.

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