

## February 2022 City Council Report

Throughout the pandemic and since the DOE's return to full-time, in-person learning this past fall, we have continued to prioritize students with IEPs by increasing the provision of IEP-recommended programs and services, working to address the shortage of special education teachers, expanding bilingual special education programs, and strengthening our communication with families.

In a major effort to improve communication with families around services provided in each school community, the DOE recently announced the addition of key special education compliance metrics to the [School Quality Snapshot](#). Families can now find data on the provision of IEP-recommended programs and related services on the "Supportive Environment" tab of the report. This inclusion of special education compliance data in the school quality snapshot is an important added accountability tool for schools, building upon last year's release of data on the provision of programs and related services in students' New York City Schools Accounts (NYCSA). Both provide families, as end users, with a clear understanding of whether their children are receiving the programs and services on their IEPs.

We continue to report to the City Council the most up to date information available on the services students with IEPs are receiving. Historically, we have provided data in the fall for the prior year in its entirety. Beginning in SY 20-21, the City Council began requiring data as of the end of October (this year November 1, as October 31 was a Sunday), but as part of our continued commitment to increased transparency and accountability in service of our students, we are again releasing recent data from mid-January at the same time to report on current delivery of service.

As part of our ongoing commitment to better serve our students with disabilities, we continue to make key improvements to deliver all special education programs and improve the provision of related services.

We have engaged in an ongoing analysis of the special education teacher gap across the system and have identified that a concentrated need for certified special education teachers continues to be a persistent challenge in a small number of schools with a higher need. This is particularly true in high school grades. This concentration offers the important opportunity to focus support and resources on a relatively small number of schools for an outsized gain in delivery of services. To accomplish the goal of increasing the number of special education teachers where they are most needed, the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality (TRQ) has implemented several key activities.

Special Education teacher staffing is a top priority for the DOE. During the pandemic, TRQ supported restoring and expanding teacher pipelines to meet the hiring needs of our schools. In addition, the office continues to build partnerships throughout the DOE and with external stakeholders to facilitate continuous recruitment cycles to be responsive to the special education hiring needs of our schools. DOE hires for the 2021 school year more than doubled in comparison to the 2020 school year with over 1,800 new special education teachers this school year as compared with just over 800 in 2020.

The DOE continues to implement targeted recruitment strategies to increase the special education teacher candidate pool to support the hiring needs of schools. Over the past year, the DOE invested in an Alternative Certification pipeline in a COVID-19 context to manage special education teacher staffing efforts, which account for more than two-thirds of all new hires in secondary special education. In addition, in summer 2020 and spring 2021, the DOE created recruitment programs specifically for

District 75 to ensure schools had access to the talent they needed. Throughout the hiring season, the recruitment team partnered with BCOs to host frequent virtual events for school leaders to connect with teacher candidates.

For related services, we have seen substantial improvement throughout the course of the fall, despite the continued staffing issues and provider and student absences associated with COVID-19. Since July 2020, we have hired approximately 700 OT, PT and speech therapists, with a priority placed on Bronx schools in Districts 7-12 and in District 75. This school year alone, we hired more than 400 new therapists, approximately one third of whom are placed in the Bronx.

**Implementation of Special Education Programs:**

As of January 17, the percentage of students receiving their recommended special education programs in full was ~86%, and the percentage of students fully *or* partially receiving their recommended programs was ~99%; both figures represent ***the highest performance ever reported for this time in the school year***. The 12-percentage point gap between partially and fully receiving students points to critical areas for improvement. These rates are a snapshot in time but are a useful reflection of the status of special education program and service delivery and demonstrate a positive trajectory toward providing all recommended services to all students.

Borough/citywide office (BCO) teams continue to engage in deep reviews of district and school-level data, with a focus on actionable improvements. Since early September, twenty-two superintendents and their teams have participated in direct support sessions with the Special Education Office and their respective BCOs to target specific areas of improvement. Every BCO has participated in support sessions aimed at building their capacity to directly support schools in this work.

Targeted interventions and support sessions have resulted in performance metrics that continue to outpace any previous school year, with the percentage of students fully receiving their recommended programs exceeding any previous school year by 5 to 10 percentage points each week since late September. Year over year, the provision of each of the separate programs, ICT, special class, and SETSS, has improved significantly, with the total percent of students fully served growing from ~54% to ~82%. (It should be noted that data from November 2020 was impacted by the reprogramming efforts required to support blended learning.)

**November 2020 Compared to November 2021**

Primary Program Type	Nov 2, 2020	Nov 1, 2021	Change in Percentage Points
	Percent Fully Receiving	Percent Fully Receiving	
<b>Integrated Co-Teaching Services</b>	55.9%	83.1%	+27.2 Points
<b>SETSS</b>	32.2%	78.3%	+46.1 Points
<b>Special Class</b>	57.0%	79.8%	+22.8 Points
<b>Total</b>	<b>54.4%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>+27.2 Points</b>

**November 2021 Compared to January 2022**

Primary Program Type	Nov 1, 2021	Jan 17, 2022	Change in Percentage Points
	Percent Fully Receiving	Percent Fully Receiving	
<b>Integrated Co-Teaching Services</b>	83.1%	87.6%	+4.5 Points
<b>SETSS</b>	78.3%	85.3%	+7.0 points
<b>Special Class</b>	79.8%	84.4%	+4.6 Points
<b>Total</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>86.3%</b>	<b>+4.7 Points</b>

Principals are participating in ongoing professional learning focused on the weekly reports they receive to identify and eliminate service gaps. These sessions provide staff with the tools to review and utilize the weekly reports to improve their schools' delivery of special education programs, to support them in implementing a resolution team structure to identify and correct unserved recommendations and system reporting errors, and to take appropriate steps to fully serve all students.

**Implementation of Related Services:**

On a citywide basis, service levels were at ~87% as of November 1<sup>st</sup>, a 15-point improvement compared to the same time last year.

**November 2020 Compared to November 2021**

Related Services Recommendation Type	Nov 2, 2020	Nov 1, 2021	Change in Percentage Points
	Percent Full Encounter	Percent Full Encounter	
<b>Counseling Services</b>	61.2%	85.2%	+24.0 Points
<b>Counseling Services Bilingual</b>	43.8%	53.9%	+10.2 Points
<b>Hearing Education Services</b>	77.7%	86.9%	+9.3 Points
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>	74.4%	83.0%	+8.7 Points
<b>Physical Therapy</b>	78.1%	88.2%	+10.1 Points
<b>Speech-Language Therapy</b>	77.1%	90.9%	+13.8 Points
<b>Speech-Language Therapy Bilingual</b>	65.3%	76.8%	+11.5 Points
<b>Vision Education Services</b>	71.1%	78.3%	+7.2 Points
<b>Total</b>	<b>72.0%</b>	<b>86.9%</b>	<b>+15.0 Points</b>

Since the November 2021 snapshot, we have continued to build on this progress; *as of January, citywide service levels are at ~92%, with four of seven BCOs above 95% of IEP related service recommendations fully-served.*

**November 2021 Compared to January 2022**

Related Services Recommendation Type	Nov 1, 2021	Jan 17, 2022	Change in Percentage Points
	Percent Full Encounter	Percent Full Encounter	
Counseling Services	85.2%	91.7%	+6.5 Points
Counseling Services Bilingual	53.9%	60.0%	+6.1 Points
Hearing Education Services	86.9%	90.1%	+3.2 Points
Occupational Therapy	83.0%	87.9%	+4.9 Points
Physical Therapy	88.2%	92.1%	+3.9 Points
Speech-Language Therapy	90.9%	94.9%	+4.0 points
Speech-Language Therapy Bilingual	76.8%	81.0%	+4.2 Points
Vision Education Services	78.3%	86.0%	+7.6 Points
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.9%</b>	<b>91.7%</b>	<b>+4.8 Points</b>

This improvement has been citywide, and particularly pronounced in historically hard to serve districts. For example, *monolingual Speech services in Bronx districts (D7,8,9,10,11,12) increased by an average of 19 points compared to last year*, and Speech services in Bronx High Schools increased by an average of 40 points. Similarly, *Bilingual Speech services in Bronx districts (D7,8,9,10,11,12) increased by an average of 20 points compared to last year*, and Speech services in Bronx High Schools increased by an average of 22 points.

Strategies for making further progress towards the goal of full service provision include:

- Working with providers and their supervisors to serve as many students as possible, consistent with IEP recommendations and safety measures, and to ensure that any unserved recommendations are identified and communicated quickly and effectively for action.
- Hiring aggressively, despite well documented labor market headwinds, to meet remaining unserved needs, with a priority on our hardest to serve communities.
- Consistently monitoring and aggressively following up with contract agencies utilized to meet needs not served by DOE staff.
- Regularly providing superintendents and borough/citywide teams with the data needed to support strategic action to improve service provision.



Despite the many challenges brought on by the pandemic that persist through this year, we continuously work to improve how we serve all our students, particularly those with IEPs. No aspect of in-person learning has gone untouched by the pandemic, including getting to and from school. The DOE has made great efforts to resolve challenges related to staffing paraprofessionals and school bus transportation, and the DOE will offer make-up services to impacted students, as needed. We continue to make every effort to maintain continuity of services safely throughout this time.