

Reimagining Special Education

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From Chancellor David C. E



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Reimagining Special Education

Dear New Yorkers:

I am so grateful to our teachers and staff who work hard each day to serve our students with disabilities. Across our school communities, I see so much great work happening; and I see the need to make dramatic improvements to completely reimagine special education. Under the current structure, far too many families face difficulties obtaining basic services or have to look elsewhere for a school that works best for their child. While we have made improvements in special education over the years, we need to do better for the families of our 200,000 students with disabilities.

That is why, yesterday, I stood alongside families, advocates, and educators to launch an outreach process that will help sharpen our vision for transforming and rebuilding trust in our programs serving students with disabilities—[and to create a truly inclusive public school system](#).

At the center of this vision are three major improvements that will ensure that all our students with disabilities have access to the programs, supports, and services they need to soar:

Expanding Programs That Work

We are expanding four of our successful programs for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs—the student-specific plans that each student with a disability has) to communities throughout the city.

- Our ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Nest and Horizon programs work toward strengthening the academic and social skills of our students with autism. This year we have added 15 new programs, for a total of 49 ASD Horizon and 69 ASD Nest Programs across the city.
- Our SEED (Sensory Exploration, Education, and Discovery) Pilot Program serves students who display intensive sensory needs that can impact their academics, social-emotional learning, and behavior. We will expand SEED to 70 additional sites across the city by the end of the school year and work toward opening between one and four SEED sites in every district.
- The Path program, which serves students with significant emotional disabilities, will expand to seven classrooms at six schools by the end of the year.

Building Pathways to Careers for Students with IEPs

For the first time, high school students with a current IEP will be able to apply to participate in a paid internship on Saturdays in the field of related services. The internship will allow them to explore careers in physical, occupational, and speech therapy. This will be an invaluable experience for our students and create a pathway to careers after high school.

Empowering Families to be Partners in Building a Better Special Education System

Our re-imagining of special education wouldn't be complete without our brand-new Special Education Advisory Council, which will include parents, local leaders, university partners, advocates, students, and educators. We have empowered the Advisory Council to help identify gaps in instruction and programming and to make bold, meaningful recommendations for improving the way our schools serve students with disabilities.

I look forward to working alongside our entire community to reimagine special education and to offer dramatically better, brighter programs and services to our children and families.

Soaring high,
David C. Banks
Chancellor

Honoring International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Dec. 3 is the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities. "The observance of the Day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities," the UN's [website](#) states.

We join in this recognition, as we work to reimagine and dramatically improve the programs we provide to students with disabilities.

This series of videos spotlights some of the ways we're working to enhance the quality of education and scope of opportunities.

["A Day in the Life of a New York City Speech Pathologist"](#)

["New Lunch Program at Lillian Rashkis High School"](#)

["Work Programs at Lillian Rashkis High School"](#)

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