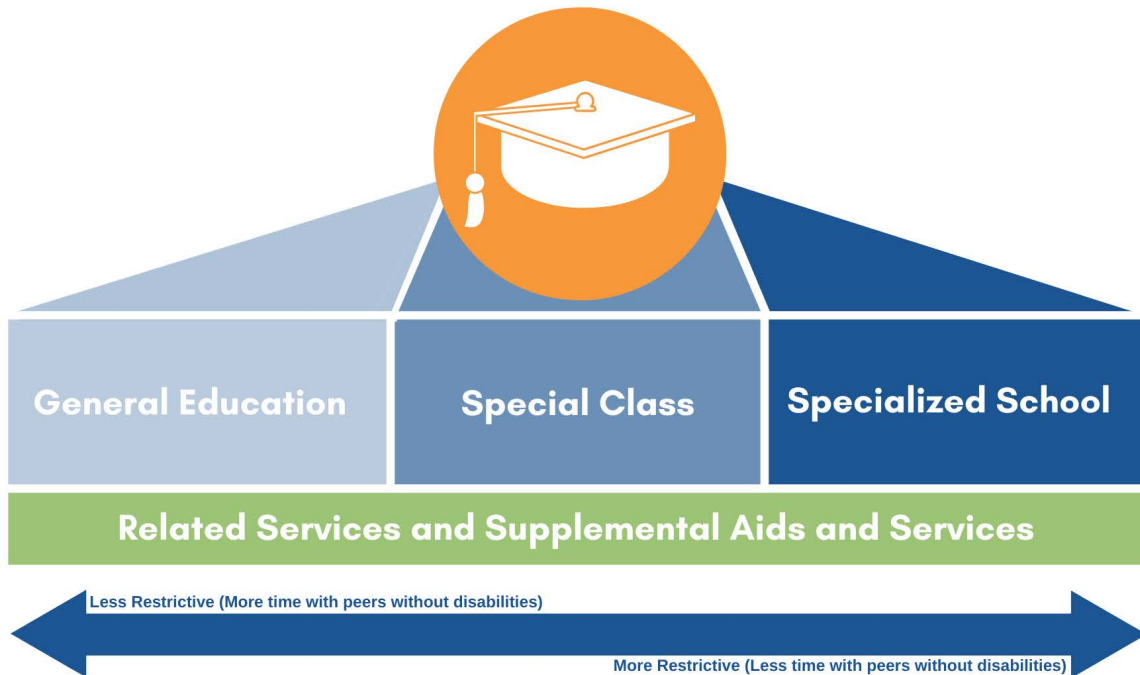


# Continuum of Special Education Services

Summer 2020



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## Background Information

It is more important than ever to create inclusive, welcoming learning environments for every student so that they feel safe and experience success. Truly inclusive schools recognize the interdependence of each member of the school community, and that there is huge collective benefit when we acknowledge, value, and promote each member's strengths. Ensuring this will enable us to address areas of inequity while continually strengthening and renewing our commitment to high quality instruction for every student.

It is a regulatory requirement that students with IEPs have access to the general education curriculum and an education with general education peers to the greatest extent possible, and as close to their home as possible, otherwise known as their *least restrictive environment*.<sup>1</sup> Placement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools or other removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved. Students may not be removed from the general education setting simply because adaptations, accommodations, or modifications are needed.

Part 200.6 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner's Regulations) states that "To enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate, specially designed instruction and supplementary services may be provided in the regular class, including, as appropriate, providing related services, resource room programs and special class programs within the general education classroom."

Both the restrictiveness and the level of service need to be considered and recommended to meet the individual needs of each student. The level of service is the amount of each school day when a student is provided special education programs and/or services. The Commissioner's Regulations state that "the percent of each instructional school day during which a student is provided any one or combination of the special education programs and services shall be in keeping with the unique needs of the student and the standards established." We can think of the level of service as being related to the intensity of service, which is explained below.

These are not just regulatory requirements but also moral imperatives<sup>2</sup>. Research shows that students who spend more time in inclusive settings have greater academic and social success than students who spend more time in separate settings<sup>3</sup>. Yet it is clear that students with IEPs continue to be educated separately from their nondisabled peers at a higher than expected rate, and with certain student subgroups disproportionately represented in more restrictive settings. We must improve outcomes for students with disabilities by providing full participation in schools, classrooms, and curricula that are highly effective for all students.

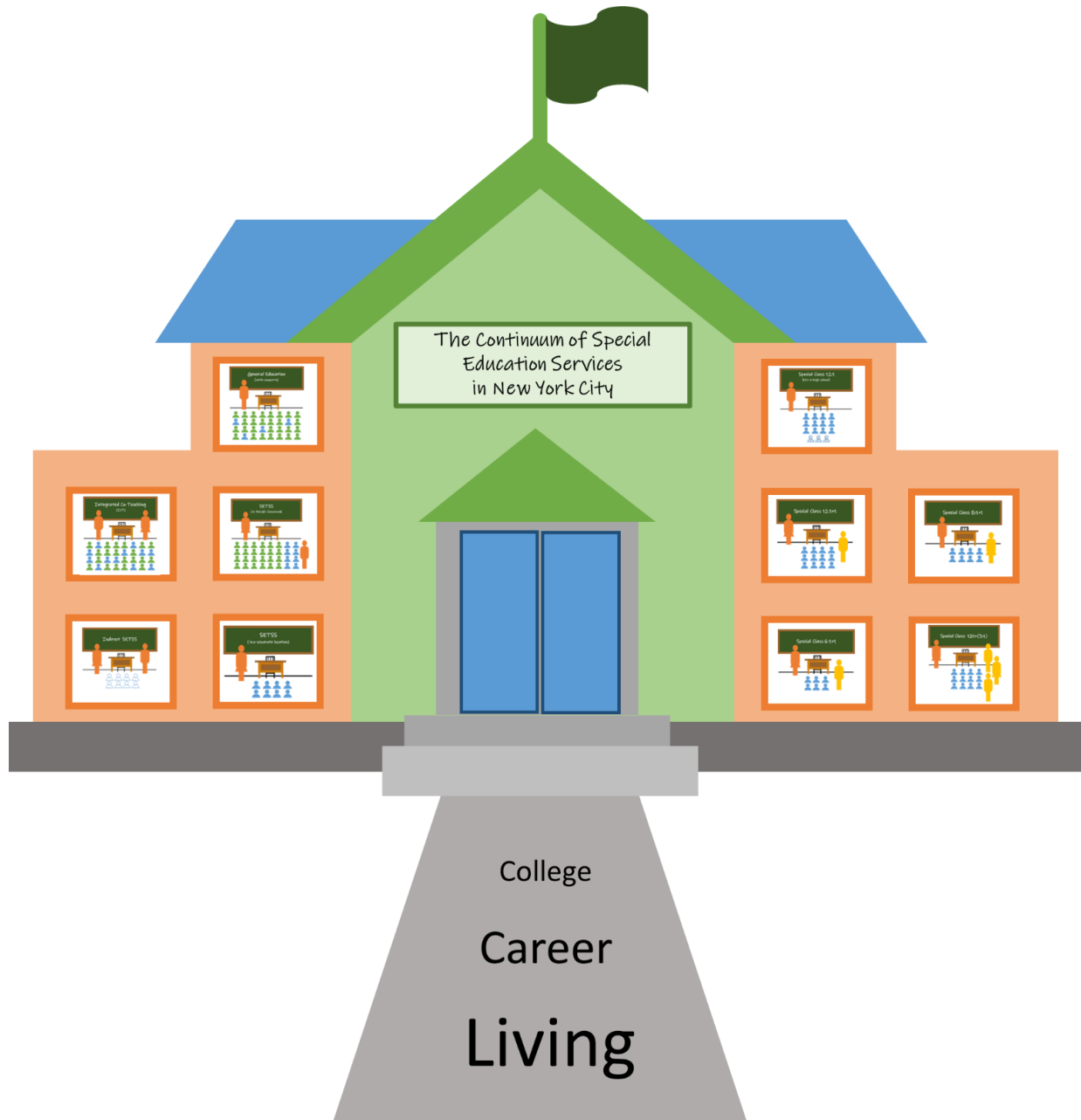
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<sup>1</sup> Some of the services in the continuum such as SETSS in the general education classroom and integrated co-teaching services are directly designed to support the student in their general education class. Others may or may not be provided in settings with non-disabled peers. This is one of the reasons the documentation of "location" in the IEP is important. The continuum of placement options is directly related to LRE placement decisions.

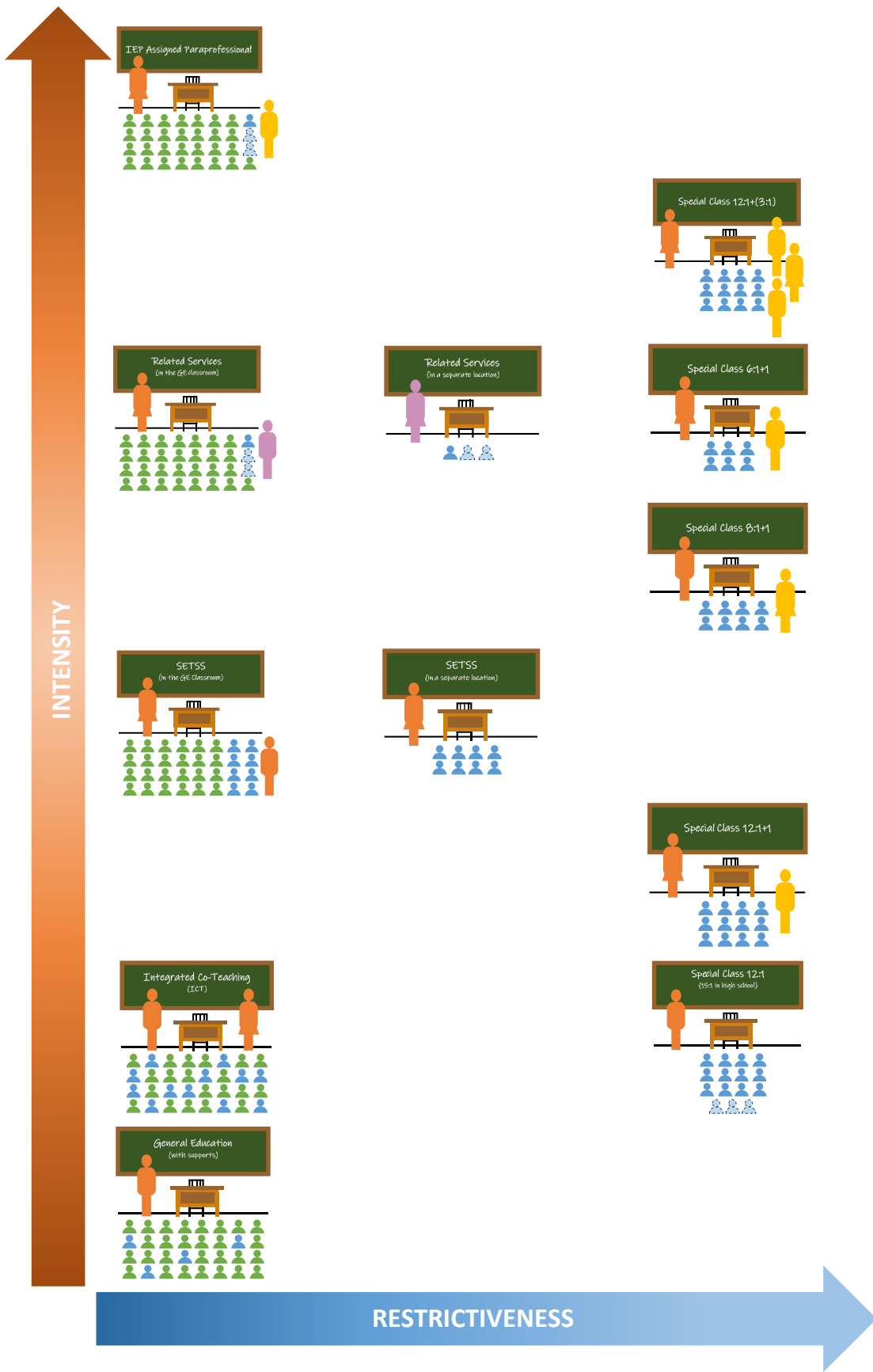
<sup>2</sup> For example see [Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences](#), Mel Ainscow (2020), *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6:1, 7-16

<sup>3</sup> See Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) summary of research at [Benefits of Inclusive Education for ALL Students](#)

## Implementation in New York City



**General Implementation:** Students may receive an array of special education programs and services according to their individual needs. Programs and services can each be measured by their level of restrictiveness, and their level of intensity. Level of intensity can be defined by the student to staff ratio and the frequency of the service. For example, if a student is receiving ICT for reading and math, this is delivered in a general education environment, so it is not restrictive. But if, within that environment, they receive one-to-one paraprofessional support for all classes and individual related services for 5 periods per week, this is a very high level of intensity of service. The continuum's intended flexibility is supportive of various combinations of special education supplementary aids and services and supports across the spectrum of available settings.



Both restrictiveness and intensity need to be considered when making IEP recommendations. In the chart above, restrictiveness is shown by the position on the horizontal axis and intensity by position on the vertical axis. These are examples and are not to be looked at as absolutes, as actual intensity and restrictiveness will differ according to variables that are not shown on the chart such as the frequency of a service. A general education class is not restrictive or intense, so it is in the bottom left corner. A special class with a high student to staff ratio is both restrictive (only students with IEPs) and intense (high student to staff ratio) so it is in the upper right part of the chart. This should also be considered when recommending related services and other services, such as IEP-assigned paraprofessionals. For example, if a student receives speech therapy individually in a separate location five times per week, this is a higher intensity of service because it is in a separate location with a high student to staff ratio (1:1) and a high frequency (5x). If a student receives speech therapy 2 times per week in a group of 5 within the general education classroom, this is a lower level of intensity of service. A recommendation for a paraprofessional also increases intensity and can sometimes have the unintended consequence of creating a situation where a student is isolated from their peers. For more information about considerations when recommending a paraprofessional see [NYSED guidance](#).

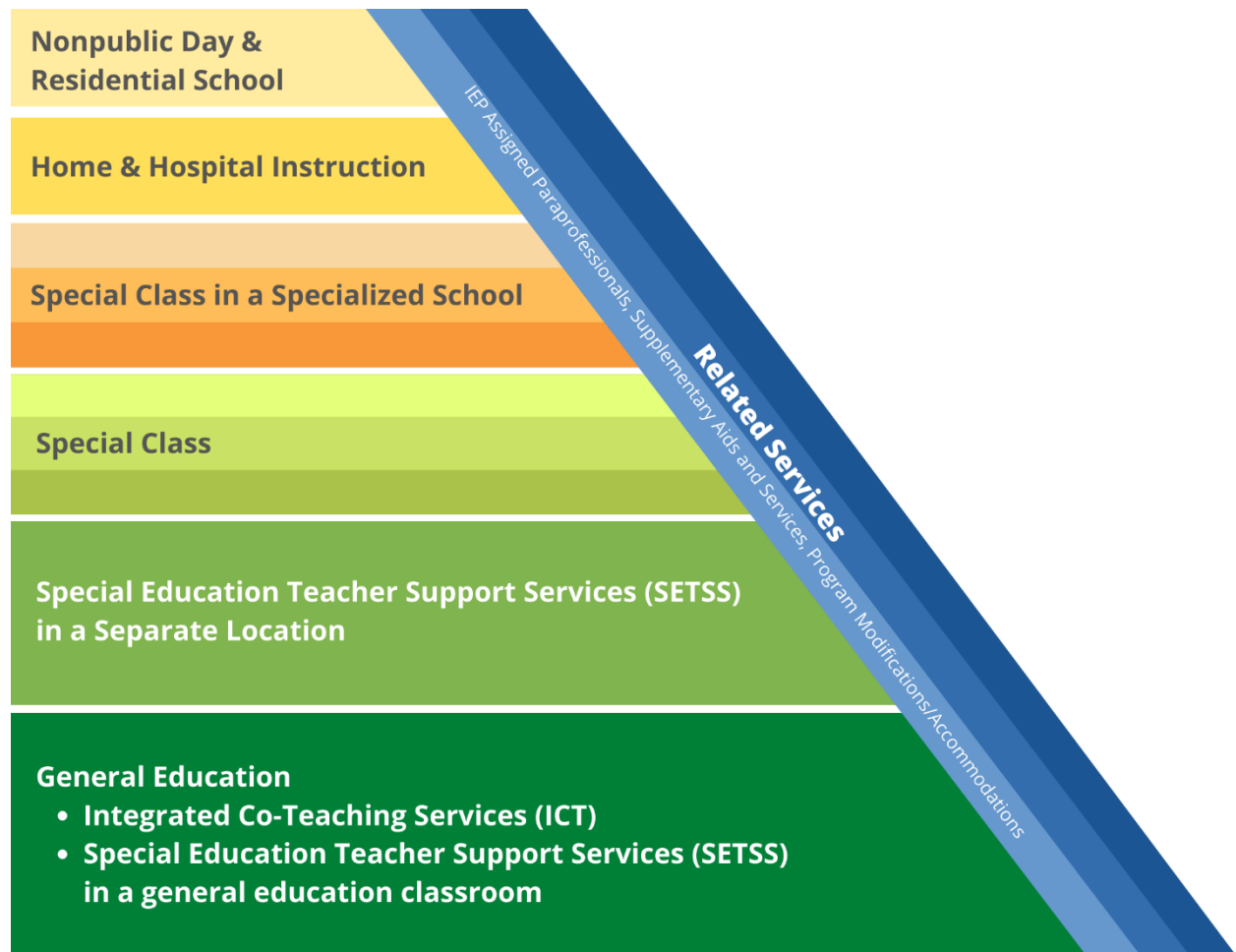
**Note regarding SY 2020:** While working in a remote instructional environment because of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers, administrators, related service providers, clinical staff, and paraprofessionals have all been collaborating to ensure that students with IEPs receive specially designed instruction aligned to their IEP goals. As we prepare to resume remote, blended, and in-person learning, staff will have trauma-informed resources to utilize when welcoming students back, and will be mindful that there will be much variability in what students' experiences have been during this time. Schools will implement a process by which they are able to identify students, with and without IEPs, who require additional support, and a means for providing that support. This is outside the scope of special education services. In a blended learning model, the use of technology will be purposeful and will provide core instruction, differentiation, and specially designed instruction for students at home and at school.

## Guiding Principles

- All students must have a sense of belonging and acceptance inspired and reinforced by their school community.
- General education is always the first consideration for any student with an IEP.
- Decision making regarding special education services is a team process inclusive of the family and student.
- Supplementary aids and services, accommodations, modifications, and specially designed instruction can and should be provided in the general education classroom.

## Visual Representation

When reviewing the visual representation below, it is important to remember that there are many service delivery options available within the programs and settings listed, and that any service or program can be provided for just some of the day. The different shadings in the special class sections represent student to staff ratios that can be recommended, and the shadings in the related services and supplemental aids and services section also represents variability in intensity based on how the services are delivered. The goal is to support students in meeting their vocational, career, and/or other community-based postsecondary goals by fostering independence, self-direction, and full participation in each student's least restrictive environment.

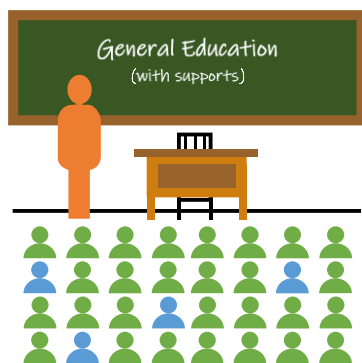


## Defining each of the program and service delivery models

Special education is a service, not a place. Remember that there is fluidity between service delivery models as well as within them. IEP team decisions about programs and services must be based on the individual needs of each student without “bucketing” them into a particular service delivery model. Most students with IEPs can and should be served in a general education classroom. When students require services in a separate setting or at a higher level of intensity, it may often be only for a period of time or for certain parts of the school day. Teams engage in ongoing decision-making to support students’ return to less restrictive, general education settings. Supplementary aids and services, accommodations and assistive technology should be considered and implemented based on student needs, regardless of setting and program recommendation, to promote student access, engagement and independence.

**Note for SY 2020:** It is likely that through a Blended Learning model, in-person group sizes will be reduced, meaning that intensity of service will increase.

### General education



All students should have access to general education classes, peers, and curriculum to the greatest extent possible. General education is taught by a general education or content area teacher. There are usually students with and without IEPs in general education classrooms. The general education teacher must consider the needs of students with disabilities when designing instruction.

#### Summary:

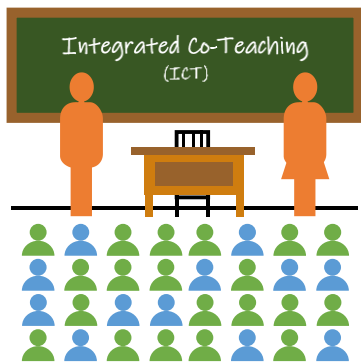
- Up to 25 (kindergarten), 32 (grades 1-5), 30-33 (middle school), or 34 (high school) students
- 1 teacher
- Students with and without IEPs
- Supplementary aids and services, accommodations and assistive technology provided to students with IEPs, as recommended on their IEPs

**Potential benefits** include access to the general education curriculum, access to nondisabled peers (for students with IEPs), access to peers with disabilities (for students without IEPs).

**Potential drawbacks** include a larger class size and higher student to teacher ratio without the direct support of a special education teacher.



## Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) Services



ICT services are directly designed to support students in the general education classroom and may be recommended to a student to support their access to a particular content area (e.g. ELA, math, social studies, etc.).

ICT service is provided to a group of students with and without IEPs by two teachers, one of whom is a general education or content area teacher and one of whom is a special education teacher. The special education teacher provides specially designed instruction based on the impact of students' disabilities in accessing the general education curriculum.

ICT is delivered using a range of different instructional models<sup>4</sup> that may vary from day to day, subject to subject, and lesson to lesson depending on a number of factors including, but not limited to, individual needs of students, individual progress toward annual or unit goals, and the particular content or activity in which students will be engaging.

To ensure the level of integration intended by ICT, the number of students with IEPs may not exceed 12 or 40% of the class. There is no maximum percentage of students without IEPs in an ICT class.

The essential difference between ICT and services such as Special Class, SETSS, and Related Services, is that ICT *must* be provided in the general education classroom for the purpose of ensuring that students with IEPs are learning alongside their non-disabled peers.

ICT is *different* from SETSS in the general education classroom in that both the general education teacher and special education teacher providing ICT share responsibility for the delivery of *primary* content instruction, planning and evaluation for *all* students rather than an individual or small group of students with IEPs.

### Summary:

- Provided exclusively in the general education classroom
- Up to 25 (kindergarten), 32 (grades 1-5), 30-33 (middle school), or 34 (high school) students.
- 1 special education teacher and 1 general education or content area teacher
- No more than 40% or up to a total of 12 students with IEPs (10 in kindergarten)
- At least 60% students without IEPs

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<sup>4</sup> Models include: Team Teaching, Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, Alternate Teaching, One Teach/One Assist, and One Teach/One Observe.

- Designed to provide primary content instruction

**Potential benefits** include access to the general education curriculum, access to nondisabled peers (for students with IEPs), access to peers with disabilities (for students without IEPs) a lower student/teacher ratio, providing the benefit of specially designed instruction to all students, improved teacher practice for both teachers. Taken together, the student/teacher ratio, 60/40, and the range of instructional models, make it possible to match the intensity and achieve the same goals as other, potentially more restrictive services while continuing to include students in the general education classroom.

**Potential drawbacks** include increased dependence on two teachers, particularly the special education teacher, need to be careful to implement with fidelity to avoid creating segregated groups within general education classes.

## Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS)

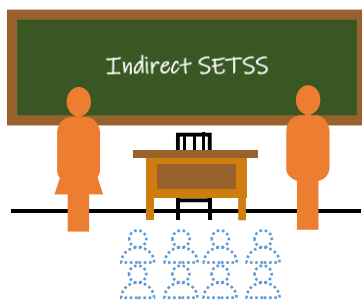
SETSS provide specially designed instruction delivered to an individual or small group of students (direct) or in consultation with a classroom teacher (indirect).

To be effective, SETSS require classroom and special education teachers to work cooperatively to address the needs of students with IEPs. The students' classroom teachers must be given the opportunity to participate in the instructional planning process with the special education teacher to discuss the objectives and to determine the methods and schedule for SETSS.

SETSS can be provided to a group of no more than 8 students<sup>5</sup> at a time. There is no maximum number of students recommended for SETSS who can be in a general education classroom. However, schools should carefully consider the impact the number of students recommended for SETSS will have on the instructional process.

District 75 provides SETSS in some D 1 – 32 schools to support students in general education classes in those schools.

### Indirect SETSS



Indirect SETSS is consultation provided by a special education teacher to a general education teacher to assist the general education teacher in adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying their instructional methods to meet the individual needs of students with IEPs in the general education class. Indirect SETSS and direct SETSS together in any combination need to total a minimum of 180 minutes per week and never more than 50% of a student's program.

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<sup>5</sup> SETSS groups may include students without IEPs provided that the group includes students with IEPs and does not exceed 8 students

Indirect SETSS is directly designed to provide the general education teacher with the skills, strategies, and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of particular students with IEPs.

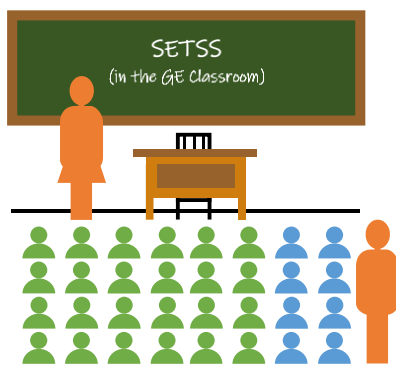
### Summary:

- Provided by a special education teacher to a general education teacher
- Can be conducted for an individual student or a group of students

**Potential benefits** include greater access to the general education curriculum for students with IEPs and improved teacher practice for the general education teacher. By enhancing the practice of general education teachers, more students may be able to access and make progress in the general education curriculum without the need for more intensive or restrictive direct services. When delivered thoughtfully, Indirect SETSS in the general education classroom may meet the needs of students who might otherwise be recommended for more restrictive services (for example special class 12:1 or 15:1).

**Potential drawbacks** are if this is not appropriately programmed into the schedule of the teachers it may be underutilized.

### Direct SETSS in the general education classroom



SETSS is provided in the general education classroom to adapt the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to support an individual or small group of students to successfully participate and progress in the *general education curriculum* during regular instruction. The goal of SETSS is to enable them to meet the educational standards that apply to all students. At all times when the students are not receiving SETSS, the students should be fully integrated in all classroom activities.

SETSS in the general education classroom is *different* from ICT in that it does not include providing *primary* content instruction to a student with an IEP.

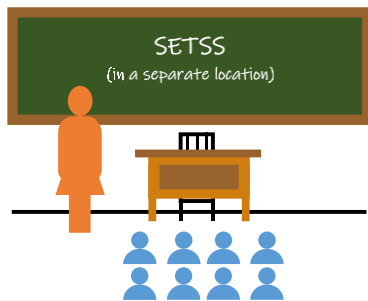
### Summary:

- Provided exclusively in the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher (planning collaboratively with a general education teacher)
- No more than 8 students in a group
- Designed to support a student in accessing their primary or core instruction

**Potential benefits** include access to the general education curriculum, access to nondisabled peers (for students with IEPs), exposure to peers with disabilities (for students without IEPs), intensive small group or individual support.

**Potential drawbacks** include increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher and separation within the general education classroom from nondisabled peers while SETSS is being delivered.

### Direct SETSS in a separate location



SETSS is provided in a separate location to deliver specialized *supplementary* instruction in an individual or small group of students (up to 8) for a portion of the school day. These services are provided for the purpose of supplementing the general education or special education classroom instruction of students with disabilities. This means that instruction is not provided in place of the student's regular academic instruction.

#### Summary:

- Provided in a separate location from the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher (planning collaboratively with a general education teacher)
- No more than 8 students in a group
- Designed to provide supplementary instruction rather than primary or core instruction

**Potential benefits** include access to the general education curriculum for the majority of a student's program, access to nondisabled peers (for students with IEPs), access to peers with disabilities (for students without IEPs), an opportunity for supplementary instruction that is not available in the general education classroom, and intensive small group or individual support.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, absence from instructional periods in a particular subject, and increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher.

### Special Class

A special class is a class consisting only of students with IEPs who have similar needs. Students in a special class receive their *primary* content instruction as well as specially designed instruction from a special education teacher separate from their nondisabled peers. Students can be recommended for special class in any number of subjects for all or part of their instructional program.

The age range of students in a special class who are less than 16 years old cannot exceed 36 months<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, a special class should not span more than two grade levels unless absolutely necessary or when appropriate for a given content area.

Special class is *different* from SETSS in a separate location in that students in special classes are receiving their *primary* content instruction rather than *supplementary* instruction.

Special class cannot be provided within the general education classroom. Integrated Co-Teaching was designed and added to the continuum expressly to meet the needs of students who might otherwise have required the support of a special class.

Special classes can have various levels of *intensity* depending on the number of periods a student receives their instruction in a special class, and the adult to student ratio<sup>7</sup>:

### Special Class 12:1 and 15:1 (high school)



Special class 12:1 and special class 15:1 are designed for those students whose individual needs consist primarily of the need for specially designed and primary instruction provided by a special education teacher and can best be accomplished in a class of no more than 12 students with IEPs in grades K-8 and 15 students with IEPs in high school.

#### Summary:

- Provided outside of the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher
- No more than 12 students (or 15 in high school)
- Includes only students with IEPs
- Designed to provide primary instruction

**Potential benefits** include intensive small group instruction from a special education teacher and greater opportunity for individual student/teacher interaction.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, difficulty transitioning into a typically sized class, concentration of students with similar academic and behavioral challenges

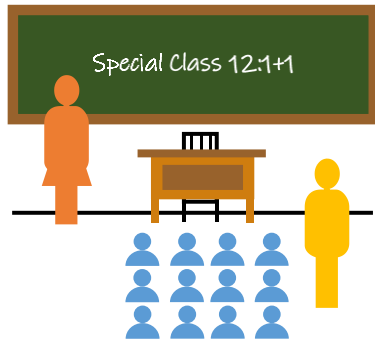
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<sup>6</sup> There are also no chronological age-range limitations for those students in special class 12:1+(3:1) with severe multiple disabilities, whose programs consist primarily of habilitation and treatment.

<sup>7</sup> The student/staff ratio of a special class does not impact the restrictiveness of an IEP recommendation. A smaller class size and/or a class with a paraprofessional is *not* inherently more restrictive. The amount of time a student receives special class and how far from their home determine restrictiveness. All special classes are equally restrictive if recommended for the same number of times per week. This includes special classes in District 75.

in one class, and increased dependence on intensive support from the special education teacher.

### Special Class 12:1+1



Special Class 12:1+1 is designed for those students who, in addition to needing specially designed and primary instruction provided by a special education teacher in a class of no more than 12, have management needs<sup>8</sup> that interfere with the instructional process to the extent that at least one additional staff member, in this case a paraprofessional, is needed during periods of instruction.

#### Summary:

- Provided outside of the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher and 1 paraprofessional
- No more than 12 students
- Includes only students with IEPs
- Designed to provide primary instruction
- Special classes with a ratio of 12:1+1 exist in both D 1 – 32 schools and D 75 programs

**Potential benefits** include intensive small group instruction from a special education teacher, support of a classroom paraprofessional during instructional periods, and greater opportunity for individual student/staff interaction.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, difficulty transitioning into a typically sized class, concentration of students with similar academic and behavioral challenges in one class, and increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher as well as the additional support of the paraprofessional.

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<sup>8</sup> Management needs which shall mean the nature of and degree to which environmental modifications and human or material resources are required to enable the student to benefit from instruction. Management needs shall be determined in accordance with the factors identified in the areas of academic achievement, functional performance and learning characteristics, social development, and physical development.

## Special Class 8:1+1



Special class 8:1+1 is designed for those students who, in addition to needing specially designed and primary instruction provided by a special education teacher, have intensive management needs that require a significant degree of individualized attention and intervention that can be best accomplished in a class of no more than 8 students with the support of at least one additional staff member, in this case a paraprofessional, during periods of instruction.

### Summary:

- Provided outside of the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher and 1 paraprofessional
- No more than 8 students
- Includes only students with IEPs
- Designed to provide primary instruction
- In NYC, classes with this ratio are typically part of D 75 programs. The exception is the ASD Horizon program, listed under Specialized Programs.

**Potential benefits** include intensive small group instruction from a special education teacher, support of a classroom paraprofessional during instructional periods, and greater opportunity for individual student/staff interaction.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, difficulty transitioning into a typically sized class, concentration of students with similar academic and behavioral challenges in one class, thus including no peer models of a typical learner or behavior, and increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher as well as the additional support of the paraprofessional.

## Special Class 6:1+1



Special class 6:1+1 is designed for those students who, in addition to needing specially designed and primary instruction provided by a special education teacher, have highly intensive management needs that require a high degree of individualized attention and intervention that can be best accomplished in a class of no more than 6 students with the support of at least one additional staff member, in this case a paraprofessional, during periods of instruction.

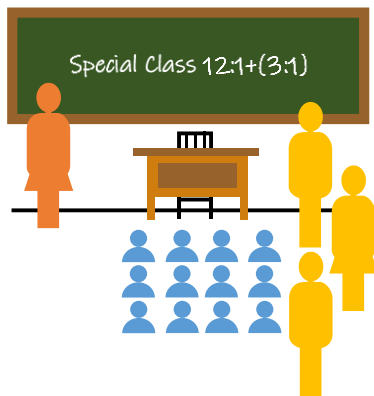
**Summary:**

- Provided outside of the general education classroom
- 1 special education teacher and 1 additional staff member, usually a paraprofessional
- No more than 6 students
- Includes only students with IEPs
- Designed to provide primary instruction
- In NYC, classes with this ratio are typically part of a D 75 program

**Potential benefits** include highly intensive small group instruction from a special education teacher, support of a classroom paraprofessional during instructional periods, and greater opportunity for individual student/staff interaction, intense focus on social skills, communication, and activities for daily living.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, difficulty transitioning into a larger group, concentration of students with similar academic and behavioral challenges in one class thus no peer models of a typical learner or behavior, and increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher as well as the additional support of the paraprofessional.

**Special Class 12:1+(3:1)**



Special Class 12:1+(3:1) is designed for students with severe multiple disabilities, whose programs consist primarily of habilitation (e.g., daily living skills) and treatment. In addition to the one special education teacher to 12 students (12:1) ratio, the staff/student ratio cannot exceed one staff member to three students at any given time. The additional staff, while often paraprofessionals, may also be other teachers, supplementary school personnel, and/or related service providers.

**Summary:**

- Provided outside of the general education classroom



- 1 special education teacher plus up to 4 additional staff members, usually, but not necessarily, paraprofessionals
- No more than 12 students
- Contains only students with IEPs separate from their nondisabled peers.
- Designed to provide primary instruction
- In NYC, this class ratio is typically provided by D 75 programs

**Potential benefits** include highly intensive small group instruction from a special education teacher, support of four additional staff members, greater opportunity for the provision of in-class related services, intense focus on social skills and activities for daily living.

**Potential drawbacks** include separation from nondisabled peers, difficulty transitioning into a larger group size, and increased dependence on the intensive support from the special education teacher and the additional staff members.

## Special Class and Small Class Programs in Specialized Schools

The majority of students participating in District 75 programs receive most of their instruction in small classes supported by a classroom paraprofessional. Many of these classes are IEP-recommended Special Classes<sup>9</sup>. IEP-recommended Special Classes, including those in District 75, must be taught by an appropriately certified special education teacher.

District 75 may also serve students in small classes taught by a subject area teacher, for students who do not require specially designed instruction (SDI) from a certified special education teacher in the particular subject but require a more supportive setting than can be provided in a full-size class or in a non-specialized school. *Such classes are not Special Classes and therefore are not recommended on students' IEPs.*

The IEP team will determine if an individual student requires the support of a certified special education teacher in each subject area (e.g., Art, Dance, Culinary Arts). If a student does not require the support of a certified special education teacher in a particular subject area (for example, if the IEP team determines that a student should be instructed by licensed art teacher, rather than a certified special education teacher in a small visual arts class), Special Class services in that subject area should not be included in the *Recommended Special Education Programs and Services* section of the IEP. If the student requires a small class setting (with or without the support of a classroom paraprofessional) in a particular subject area, but does not require the support of a certified special education teacher in that subject area, the IEP should:

- In the **Management Needs** section, explain the student's need for instruction in a smaller group (with the support of a classroom paraprofessional, if needed) and specify the subject area(s) and class size(s); and
- In the **Participation with Students without Disabilities** section, explain the extent to which the student requires small group instruction (separate from nondisabled peers and/or with the support of a classroom paraprofessional, if needed), and specify the subject area(s).

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<sup>9</sup> Per the on [Continuum of Special Education Services](#) for School-Age Students with Disabilities, a Special Class is one consisting of students with disabilities who have been grouped together because of similarity of individual needs for the purpose of receiving specially designed instruction (SDI) from a certified special education teacher.

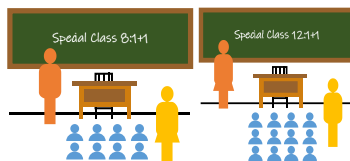
Note: Physical Education should not be included as a subject area on an IEP unless a student requires Adapted Physical Education; please see the [Standard Operating Procedures Manual](#) at *Recommending Adapted Physical Education* for how to recommend Adapted Physical Education. For additional information see [District 75](#).

## Specialized Programs

All specialized programs are programs in District 1 – 32 schools that exist to serve the specialized needs of certain students, described below, except the AIMS program, which is a D 75 specialized program. Specialized programs do not exist in every school. For more information see the [Specialized Programs page of the NYCDOE website](#).

- Academics, Career, and Essential Skills (ACES) – Provides students who are alternately assessed with the opportunity to learn academic, work-readiness, and independent living skills
- Access – Provides intensive supports for students with physical/health needs in inclusive settings
- Acquisition, Integration, Meaningful Communication and Social Skills (AIMS) – Provides students with autism an intensive program in grades K – 2 using a class ratio of 6:1+1 and includes behavior support by a BCBA and integrated speech services
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Horizon Program – Provides a small group setting (usually 8:1+1) for students with autism
- ASD Nest Program – Provides a reduced class size ICT setting and a strong social communication program for students with autism who engage in grade level work
- Bilingual Special Education (BSE) Program – Provides language and academic support for students with a language of instruction other than English on their IEP
- I Read Program – Provides foundational reading instruction in a reduced class size ICT model to students with a documented reading deficit and other students who benefit from a structured, developmentally appropriate reading program

## Day Treatment Programs

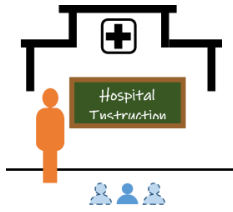


Day treatment programs are coordinated with the Office of Mental Health and usually serve students with severe emotional disabilities. Day treatment programs can use either a 12:1+1 or a 8:1+1 class ratio, and serve students with highly intensive social/emotional needs. The student must be accepted into the program by the Office of

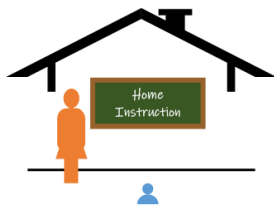
Mental Health first, and then is placed in a District 75 Day Treatment-aligned school.

## Home/Hospital Instruction

These services are provided to students with and without IEPs.



- Hospital instruction:
  - Academic instruction for students who are hospitalized and are unable to attend school
  - Provided until child is able to return to school or is discharged from the hospital

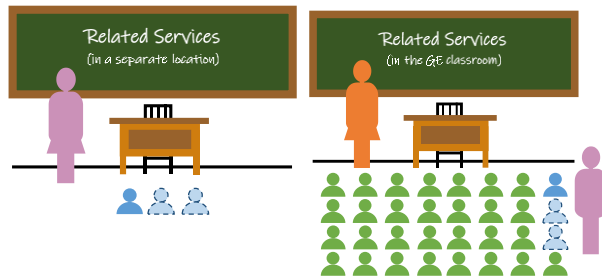


- Home Instruction:
  - May be recommended due to emotional or medical needs that prevent a student from attending a traditional school setting
  - May be recommended for student who is awaiting placement
  - Students receiving home instruction maintain an affiliation with the school in which they are registered
  - In NYC, elementary school students typically receive one hour a day of instruction
  - In NYC, middle and high school students typically receive two hours a day of instruction

## Supports and Services Provided Across Settings and Placements

All of the following supports and services are to be provided to students according to their individual needs in order to foster independence and access to the general education curriculum. A student must not be removed from a general education setting if they can be supported with services in that setting.

### Related Services



Related services can help a student participate in school and achieve their educational goals. They are recommended on the IEP and may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling, among others. Related services can be provided across any setting, including in the general education classroom, and can support student's access to their least restrictive environment. When related services are provided in the classroom rather than a separate location, it increases the opportunity for students to generalize their skills and for the classroom teacher to utilize strategies taught by related service providers throughout the school day. It also enables students to minimize the amount of classroom instruction they miss by leaving the classroom for services. For more information on related services see the [Related Services page](#) of the DOE website.

### Supplemental Aids and Services

Supplemental aids and services are aids, services, and other supports that are provided in any educational or nonacademic school setting such as lunchtime or recess to enable students with IEPs to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. Schools must ensure that students have access to supplemental aids and services to meet their unique instructional and social emotional needs.

## IEP-Assigned Paraprofessionals<sup>10</sup>



Paraprofessionals are one type of supplemental aid and service and provide assistance to students according to the recommendation in the IEPs. A paraprofessional may be recommended to support the student in:

- **Behavior Support** when a student's pattern of behavior is of an acute nature which is hazardous to the student or others, and other behavioral interventions have been exhausted. This is a temporary service and there must be a plan in place to reduce this support over time.
- **Health Support** when a student has health or medical needs that do not require the assistance of a nurse but do require additional support and monitoring beyond what the teacher can provide including the need for assistance in ambulation, self-care, medical monitoring or injury prevention.
- **Orientation and Mobility** when student's disability includes blindness or impaired vision and they require this support to teach and ensure safe movement from place to place during school activities. This requires reinforcement of orientation and mobility skills for independent movement and safety.
- **Toileting** for either toileting training or toileting assistance, depending on the needs of the student. Toilet training is temporary as the student learns to toilet independently. Toileting assistance often includes transferring student to and from the toilet, assisting with washing hands, etc. Toileting paraprofessionals are only recommended if they are the only paraprofessional assistance required. Otherwise, the student can be supported by the other paraprofessional, for example the health paraprofessional. In D 75 programs, toileting is generally provided programmatically rather than as an individual IEP recommendation.
- **Transportation** for when a student who is receiving transportation services by the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) exhibits a pattern of behavior that is hazardous and substantially beyond the norm of other students being transported. The behavior must be beyond the ability of transportation staff to manage and unable to resolve by adjusting current transportation service.

Many IEP-assigned paraprofessional services are temporary as students gain self-regulation skills and skills of independence. While not considered more *restrictive*, paraprofessional

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<sup>10</sup> Students who are recommended for special class or ICT services in a language other than English (bilingual special education or BSE) receive support from an Alternate Placement Paraprofessional who is fluent in their home language during subjects indicated on the IEP only when a teacher with a bilingual extension in that language is not available to teach a particular subject. Alternate Placement Paraprofessionals are not part of the continuum of services but are instead an interim language support intended to give students access to instruction delivered primarily in English until an appropriately certified teacher or a seat in a BSE program becomes available.

support is *more intensive*, has been shown to at times isolate students, and may increase the student's dependence on the level of support, so it is critical to continually monitor the student's progress.

### **Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology (AT) tools help students communicate and participate fully in school programs and activities. They are used to improve the functional capabilities of students who cannot access the curriculum or instruction through other means. This is different than instructional technology, which is available to all students.

### **Modifications and Accommodations**

Accommodations and modifications ensure equity and access to the general education curriculum in consideration to a students' unique needs related to their disability.

Accommodations are tools and procedures that give students equal access to instruction and assessment and include alterations in the way tasks or assignments are presented.

Modifications are changes in what students are expected to learn.

### **Supports for School Personnel on Behalf of The Student**

Supports for school personnel are provided to school personnel on behalf of the student in order for the student to advance toward attaining their annual goals, to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.

They help school personnel to more effectively work with particular students to meet their unique and specific needs. These may take the form of special training for a student's teacher, related service provider, or paraprofessional to meet the specific needs of the student.

Supports that may be provided for school personnel include, but are not limited to:

- information on a specific disability and implications for instruction
- training in use of specific positive behavioral interventions
- training in the use of American Sign Language
- behavioral consultation with school psychologist, social worker, or other behavioral consultant
- transitional support services

## IEP Decision Making

The sample guiding questions below are for consideration during IEP meetings and are not at all exhaustive or applicable in every situation. All members of the IEP team must have voice and agency, and the student's goals and full educational journey must be at the forefront of the decision-making process, even with younger students who do not yet have documented postsecondary goals.

### Sample Guiding Questions

1. How has the student been supported in the general education setting? If they have never attended school, how has the student been supported in their home and community?
2. What interventions and supports have been attempted to address the impact of the student's disability on their ability to interact with peers and adults? What has been successful?
3. If a more restrictive setting is being considered, what do you anticipate the student receiving in that setting that they cannot receive in a general education setting? Why can this only be provided in a different setting?
4. What is the parent's hope for their student? What are the parent's dreams for their student? What are their biggest concerns?
5. Is the same level of support and services needed throughout the school day, or is some support or services needed for specific parts of the school day only? Which parts and why?

During the IEP process, instructional decisions based on student's individual strengths, needs and goals are discussed. Interventions, supports and services are decided to enable maximum participation in the general education curriculum and environment. Location of services and placement decisions are not an either/or decision; rather, students can receive services and supports across a combination of settings. The ways in which their services and supports are provided are different, based on each student's individual needs. Also, similar students can receive services and have their needs met in different ways. See [LRE Checklist](#) for additional information and support.