

Special Education Overview

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In accordance with Federal Law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Students who are determined to be eligible for special education services receive these supports and services to allow access to the general curriculum and FAPE.

Special Education is defined as specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. A child with a disability is defined as an individual with special needs in one of the following areas as identified by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA):

- ~ Hearing Impairment
- ~ Speech or Language Impairment
- ~ Visual Impairment
- ~ Emotional Disturbance
- ~ Orthopedic Impairment
- ~ Autism
- ~ Deafness
- ~ Intellectual Disability
- ~ Other Health Impairment
- ~ Specific Learning Disability
- ~ Deaf/Blindness
- ~ Multiple Disabilities
- ~ Traumatic Brain Injury

Special education supports and services are provided in a variety of capacities. Most services are provided in the regular education classroom. The special education staff works within classrooms with the regular education teachers, team teaching, assisting with small groups, and providing individual instruction to meet the needs of students on individual education plans (IEPs). Some students need instruction or remediation outside of the regular education classroom. These students are pulled out for a portion of their day and receive instruction in a resource room setting. Besides instruction by special education teachers, related services are also available to students. Services including, but not limited to speech, occupational, and physical therapy as well as counseling, and aide support is provided to those students for whom their IEP requires such services.

Special education teachers and related service providers continue training in a variety of programs to stay current with research-based instruction and meet the unique needs of students with educational disabilities. The flexibility with delivery of instruction and commitment to professional development has helped avoid costly out-of-district placements in specialized programs or schools.

Preschool

There are one (1) Rye preschool students currently receiving special education services, at the Community School of SAU 50. There is a rolling enrollment to the preschool and identified students begin receiving services at the age of three. The Community School is supported primarily by the IDEA and Preschool grants and subsidized by the districts school budget. Merging the program with the Seacoast Community School (formerly known as the Community Child Care Center) has allowed SAU 50 to service the special education needs of identified preschoolers in a regular education setting. Having the children in one setting instead of a variety of area preschools allows our service providers the opportunity to collaborate and co-treat as well as provide services in a time efficient and ultimately more cost effective manner. It also facilitates smoother transitions to our district kindergartens with more accurate financial planning.

Kindergarten-Grade 8

Rye Elementary and Rye Junior High School have fifty-nine (59) students identified for special education services, 13.3% (as of October 1, 2015) of the student population. The National average of students with special needs to total student population is 12.9% (2011-2012 statistics) and the state average is 15.78% (as of October 1, 2014).

Grades 9-12

Portsmouth High School currently serves eighteen (18) Rye students identified for special education. In addition to services similar to those provided for students at Rye Elementary and Rye Junior High School, Portsmouth High School offers two specialized programs -The Developmental Disability (DD) Program and the Options Program. Students in the DD program have the support of a 1:1 aide and more intense services in order to meet their individual needs. The Options Program was developed to meet the needs of students with emotional issues who have difficulty managing a full day in public school. Both programs have students participating in mainstreamed classes to the maximum extent possible and are a contributing factor in keeping these students enrolled in a regular public school. There are currently no students enrolled in either the DD program or the Options program from Rye. In addition to Portsmouth High School, special education services are offered at the Robert J. Lister Academy (formerly known as the Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School or PASS). The Robert J. Lister Academy, a self-contained day school comprised of twenty-five (25) students from the seacoast is an innovative public high school designed for students who have been unable to succeed in more traditional settings. The school is purposefully located off the premises of the Portsmouth High School campus, but maintains the ability to access resources located within the traditional high school, such as: vocational, music, foreign language, and athletic programs. There is currently one (1) Rye student enrolled in Robert J. Lister Academy.

The Special Education Process

If a child demonstrates a pattern of serious difficulty in school, frequently exhibits learning problems, and is not responding to general education interventions, consideration of special education may be needed. Determination of eligibility for special education services is as follows:

Referral

A referral may come from a teacher, physician, parent, student, school administrator, or community agency. Within fifteen (15) days of receipt of a referral a Disposition of Referral meeting will be held. At this meeting, the parent, along with regular and special education staff from the Rye Elementary or Rye Junior High School, determine if alternative instructional strategies or accommodations are needed or if a multidisciplinary special education assessment should be completed. If it is determined that an assessment is needed, parents need to sign Permission to Test form before the evaluation process can be begin.

Evaluation

Once testing has been completed, the evaluation team, which includes parents, qualified examiners, special educators, and the classroom teacher, meet to discuss the evaluations and make a determination whether or not the student meets the criteria for eligibility for special education services.

Individualized Education Plan

If the student qualifies for special education services, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed. The plan will include appropriate services, modifications, and annual goals needed for the student to access the regular curriculum. The IEP is a legal document which the federal and state governments dictate the criteria that must be included in it. The plan is a working document that can be changed at any time with team approval. The team includes parents.

Vision

Staff continues to participate in advanced Social Thinking, Assistive Technology, and Collaborative and Proactive Solutions for behaviorally challenged students. The special education staff recently completed a two -day training in Social Thinking and Collaborative and Proactive Solutions. Additionally, they participated in a one day assistive technology conference.

Social Thinking is a strength based treatment ideology offering related treatment strategies for individuals who have social learning challenges and solid cognitive and language skills. Executive Functioning was the focus of this year's Social Thinking conference. Dr. Ross Greene also presented at the fall conference. Dr. Greene presented the concept of collaborative and proactive solutions to difficult behaviors. This approach focuses on the premise that children do well if they can, adult explanations guide intervention, being responsive to the hand you are dealt, and identifying when the environment exceeds a student's capacity to respond adaptively.

The special education department is continuing their work in Assistive Technology with the knowledge they obtained last year from Diana Petschauer, a RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America) Certified Assistive Technology Professional. Several team members have become leaders in assistive technology. One staff member is pursuing an Assistive Technology degree and another has provided professional development for the entire staff.

To date, all special education professional staff have received training in Bookshare, Read-Write-Gold, Clicker 6, and the SMART Table. The training has provided tools and knowledge staff require to identify high and low technology accessible options, in real time, to students who require assistive technology. The special education staff are training the classroom teachers on how to integrate assistive technology in their every day practice.

Special education has added training to all paraprofessionals as part of our short and long-term vision. The early release days have provided time for paraprofessionals to participate in coordinated, systematic trainings, which address the needs of Rye students. Training will be provided in the areas of CPI, Roles and Responsibilities, Supervision and Evaluation, Executive Functioning, Proactive Behavioral Approach, and explore future professional development activities using the Master Teacher program. Paraprofessional leadership is emerging as evidenced by pursuing advanced degrees, presenting professional development topics to peers, and reflecting on their practice through the supervision and evaluation process.

Special education continues to explore other funding options to address professional and staff needs, without increasing the special education budget. For example, the staff has written REF grants to obtain the SMART Table and six Clicker 6 apps, participated in Assistive Technology grant funded trainings last year, and have had Title IIA funds to provide current Assistive Technology training. Staff continues to commit their personal professional development funds to participate in trainings related to our staff goals and initiatives.



October 1 Count for Special Education Students (Preschool-12)

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Total	92	90	82	80	81
Preschool	4	4	2	3	1
K-5	29	31	35	34	39
6-8	32	29	20	16	20
9-12	27	26	25	27	21

Discharged as No Longer Educationally Handicapped

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Total	7	6	5	4	7
Preschool	0	0	0	0	0
K-5	2	2	1	1	1
6-8	4	2	2	0	3
9-12	1	2	2	3	3

October 1 Count for High School Enrollment (Regular Ed & Special Ed)

2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
181	194	193	197	204

Special Education Students Graduated with a Regular Diploma

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Special Education Seniors	6	7	7	5	5
Special Education Students Graduated with a Regular Diploma	4	6	5	4	4

Dropped Out of School (Special Education Students)

2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
0	0	0	0	0